



QUALITY

by John Galsworthy

SUMMARY

The following chapter 'Quality' has been written by John Galsworthy. The story presents the ill fate of artists in the world of technology and advertisement. The German shoemakers known as Gessler brothers are true artists in shoemaking who value quality over money. This chapter recounts their struggles in trying to preserve their art while also earning some livelihood.

Gessler Brothers

This story revolves around a pair of perfect artists who had a shoemaking shop in London. The narrator had known Mr. Gessler from his childhood because Mr. Gessler made the boots for his father. Mr. Gessler lived with his elder brother in their shop in a small street in London. The shop didn't have any signs apart from the name of the Gessler brothers and a few pairs of boots in the display window. Mr. Gessler used to make boots only on order and those boots were always the perfect fit. Once, the narrator questioned Mr. Gessler if it wasn't hard to make these boots. He answered in his German accent that it was an art (Id is an ardt!).

The Boots of Mr. Gessler

It was not very frequent that the writer visited Mr. Gessler because their boots were made of great quality and they would last very long. To get the boots made, the narrator needed to calmly enter the shop and sit on a wooden chair. Then, he would wait for Mr. Gessler to come down from the stairs. Mr. Gessler was a little bent and always wore an apron with sleeves.

Mr. Gessler and the Russian Leather Boots

Once, the narrator asked Mr. Gessler to make him a pair of Russian-leather boots. At this request, Mr. Gessler went to the other part of the shop and came back with a piece of gold-brown leather. Then, he confirmed if the narrator liked the leather and then promised to deliver shoes after 2 weeks (fordnighd). If Mr. Gessler's elder brother took the order, he would ask his brother (brudder). Then, the narrator would leave while Mr. Gessler would go upstairs to work on the boots.

The Narrator's Complaint

The narrator could not forget the day when he complained to Mr. Gessler that his last pair of boots had creaked. Mr. Gessler remained quiet for some time and then told the narrator that it shouldn't have creaked (Id shouldn't 'ave greaked). Then, Mr. Gessler asked him if he got them wet (You god dem wed before dey found demselves). When the narrator said no, Mr. Gessler looked at the boots and asked the narrator to send them to him. He told the narrator that some boots are bad from the very beginning. He added that if he could not fix them, he would reduce its amount from the bill. (Zome boods.... are bad from birdt. If I can do noding wid dem i take dem off your bill).

Mr. Gessler's Views on Big Companies

On one occasion, while placing an order for boots, the narrator was a bit careless. He wore a pair of readymade shoes that he had bought from a big firm due to an emergency. Mr. Gessler quietly noticed his boots and remarked that they were not his boots (Dose are nod my bods). Then, he pressed at a point where the left boot was not comfortable (Id 'urds' you dere...Dose big virms 'ave no self-respect).

Mr. Gessler then talked about the hardships of his trade and remarked that the big firms attract customers with their advertisements and not with their work. Because of this, Mr. Gessler was losing business. (Dey get id all...dey get id by advertisement, nod by work. Dey take id away from us, who lofe our boots. Id gomes to dis— presently I haf no work. Every year id gets less. You will see.)

The narrator had heard such things from Mr. Gessler for the first time. He felt bad and therefore, ordered many pairs of boots instantly.

The Grief of Mr. Gessler

The narrator had ordered so many pairs of boots that he could not go to the Gessler's shop for the next two years. When he visited the shop after two years, he was told that the elder brother of Mr. Gessler had died. He was upset to notice that Mr. Gessler seemed to have grown older and weaker. The narrator ordered many pairs of shoes yet again. After a year, he left to go abroad. When he returned after a year, he went

back to his favorite boot shop again. Mr. Gessler looked even more aged. As usual, the narrator placed his orders and this time the boots were the best boots that Mr. Gessler had ever made. The narrator was so happy that he immediately wrote a cheque to pay the amount to Mr. Gessler.

Bitter End of the Artist

A week later, while passing by the little street, the narrator decided to visit Mr. Gessler to thank him for the amazing work on his newest boots. However, the name plate was missing from the shop. There was an Englishman inside who informed the narrator that Mr. Gessler had passed away due to starvation. Mr. Gessler had made the best boots in London all by himself, with the finest leather possible. Still, he lost his business because he took a long time in making and delivering each boot. Further, he never advertised his shop either. Everything that he would earn went into paying rent for the shop and in buying leather. He would skip his meals and used to work for hours for each pair of boots. He was a true artist who really made great boots.

Word – Meaning

Word	Meaning
By-street	a side street off the main thoroughfare
Distinction	a unique identity
Remarks	statements
Stretching	extending
Awfully	badly
Lasted terribly	to last very long
Essence	the basic or most important quality of something
Restfully	having a quiet and soothing quality
Guttural	produced in the throat, harsh sounding
Awakened	woke up from sleep
Whence	from what place or source
Incense	a gum, spice or other substance that is burned for the sweet smell it produces
Convenient	comfortable, without any trouble

Creaked	making a harsh, high-pitched sound when being moved or pressed
Inferior	of bad quality
Penetrating	piercing
Contempt	the feeling that a person or thing is beneath consideration or worthless
Omen	an event regarded as a portent of good or evil
Peered	to look closely or carefully
Wan	looking pale, giving an impression of illness or exhaustion
Pinched	tense and pale from cold, worry or hunger
Splendidly	excellent, extremely well
Flowery	full of, resembling or smelling like flowers
Penniless	used to denote no money at all
Starvation	suffering or death caused by lack of food