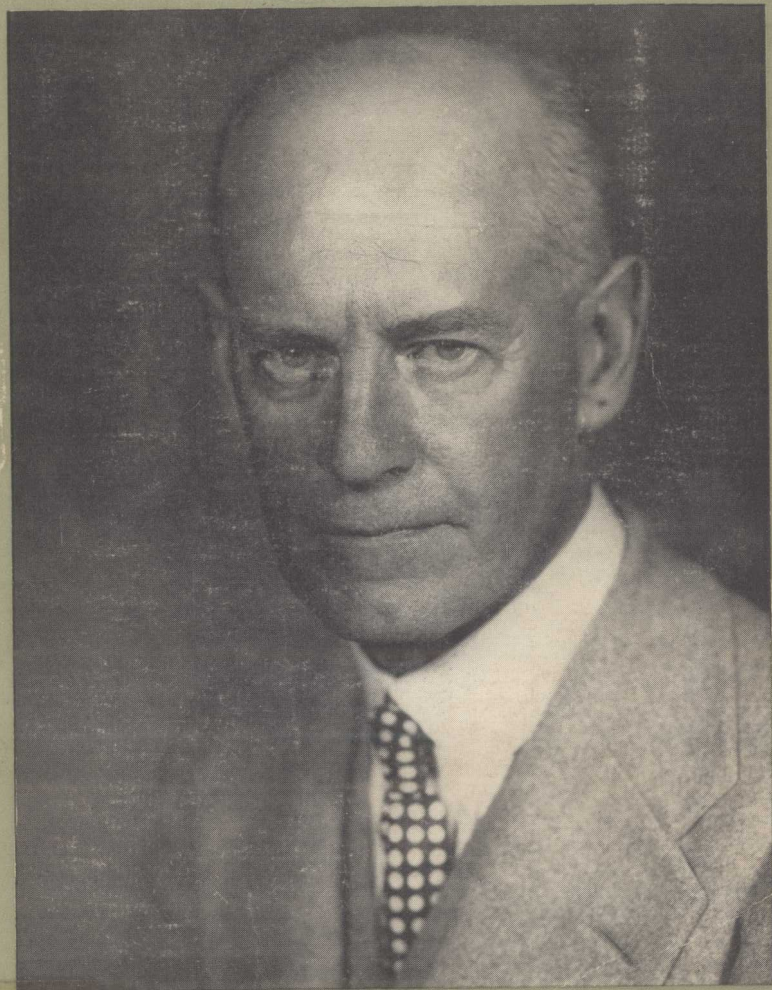


外语系

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GALSWORTHY

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STRIFE

外语系

A Drama in Three Acts



JOHN GALSWORTHY

With school and acting notes by
JOHN HAMPDEN, M.A.



DUCKWORTH

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CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

JOHN ANTHONY, *Chairman of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works*

EDGAR ANTHONY, *his son*

FREDERIC H. WILDER

WILLIAM SCANTLEBURY

OLIVER WANKLIN

} *Directors of the same*

HENRY TENCH, *Secretary of the same*

FRANCIS UNDERWOOD, C.E., *Manager of the same*

SIMON HARNESS, *a Trade Union official*

DAVID ROBERTS

JAMES GREEN

JOHN BÜLGIN

HENRY THOMAS

GEORGE ROUS

HENRY ROUS

LEWIS

JAGO

EVANS

A BLACKSMITH

DAVIES

A RED-HAIRED YOUTH

BROWN

} *the workmen's committee*

} *workmen at the Trenartha Tin
Plate Works*

FROST, *valet to John Anthony*

ENID UNDERWOOD, *wife of Francis Underwood, daughter of
John Anthony*

ANNIE ROBERTS, *wife of David Roberts*

A CROWD OF MEN ON STRIKE

ACT III. *The drawing-room of the Manager's house.*

The action takes place on February 7th between the hours of noon and six in the afternoon, close to the Trenariha Tin Plate Works, on the borders of England and Wales, where a strike has been in progress throughout the winter.

*This play was written
in 1907 and first performed
in 1909*

ACT I

It is noon. In the Underwoods' dining-room a bright fire is burning. On one side of the fireplace are double doors leading to the drawing-room, on the other side a door leading to the hall. In the centre of the room a long dining-table without a cloth is set out as a board table. At the head of it, in the Chairman's seat, sits JOHN ANTHONY, an old man, big, clean shaven, and high-coloured, with thick white hair, and thick dark eyebrows. His movements are rather slow and feeble, but his eyes are very much alive. There is a glass of water by his side. On his right sits his son EDGAR, an earnest-looking man of thirty, reading a newspaper. Next him WANKLIN, a man with jutting eyebrows, and silver-streaked light hair, is bending over transfer papers. TENCH, the secretary, a short and rather humble, nervous man, with side whiskers, stands helping him. On WANKLIN's right sits UNDERWOOD, the Manager, a quiet man, with a long, stiff jaw, and steady eyes. Back to the fire is SCANTLEBURY, a very large, pale, sleepy man, with grey hair, rather bald. Between him and the Chairman are two empty chairs.

WILDER. [*Who is lean, cadaverous, and complaining, with drooping grey moustaches, stands before the fire*] I say, this fire's the devil! Can I have a screen, Tench?

SCANTLEBURY. A screen, ah!

TENCH. Certainly, Mr. Wilder. [*He looks at UNDERWOOD.*] That is—perhaps the Manager—perhaps Mr. Underwood——

SCANTLEBURY. These fireplaces of yours, Underwood——

UNDERWOOD. [*Roused from studying some papers*] A screen? Rather! I'm sorry. [*He goes to the door with a little smile.*]

We're not accustomed to complaints of too much fire down here just now. [*He speaks as though he holds a pipe between his teeth, slowly, ironically.*]

WILDER. [*In an injured voice*] You mean the men. H'm!
[UNDERWOOD goes out.]

SCANTLEBURY. Poor devils!

WILDER. It's their own fault, Scantlebury.

EDGAR. [*Holding out his paper*] There's great distress amongst them, according to the *Trenartha News*.

WILDER. Oh, that rag! Give it to Wanklin. Suit his Radical views. They call us monsters, I suppose. The editor of that rubbish ought to be shot.

EDGAR. [*Reading*] "If the Board of worthy gentlemen who control the Trenartha Tin Plate Works from their arm-chairs in London, would condescend to come and see for themselves the conditions prevailing amongst their workpeople during this strike——"

WILDER. Well, we *have* come.

EDGAR. [*Continuing*] "We cannot believe that even their leg-of-mutton hearts would remain untouched."

[WANKLIN takes the paper from him.]

WILDER. Ruffian! I remember that fellow when he hadn't a penny to his name; little snivel of a chap that's made his way by blackguarding everybody who takes a different view to himself.

[ANTHONY says something that is not heard.]

WILDER. What does your father say?

EDGAR. He says "The kettle and the pot."

WILDER. H'm! [*He sits down next to SCANTLEBURY.*]

SCANTLEBURY. [*Blowing out his cheeks*] I shall boil if I don't get that screen.

[UNDERWOOD and ENID enter with a screen, which they place before the fire. ENID is tall; she has a small, decided face, and is twenty-eight years old.]

ENID. Put it closer, Frank. Will that do, Mr. Wilder? It's the highest we've got.

WILDER. Thanks, capitally.

SCANTLEBURY. [*Turning, with a sigh of pleasure*] Ah! Merci, Madame!

ENID. Is there anything else you want, father? [ANTHONY *shakes his head.*] Edgar—anything?

EDGAR. You might give me a "J" nib, old girl.

ENID. There are some down there by Mr. Scantlebury.

SCANTLEBURY. [*Handing a little box of nibs*] Ah! your brother uses "J's." What does the manager use? [*With expansive politeness.*] What does your husband use, Mrs. Underwood?

UNDERWOOD. A quill!

SCANTLEBURY. The homely product of the goose.

[*He holds out quills.*]

UNDERWOOD. [*Dryly*] Thanks, if you can spare me one. [*He takes a quill.*] What about lunch, Enid?

ENID. [*Stopping at the double doors and looking back*] We're going to have lunch here, in the drawing-room, so you needn't hurry with your meeting.

[*WANKLIN and WILDER bow, and she goes out.*]

SCANTLEBURY. [*Rousing himself, suddenly*] Ah! Lunch! That hotel—— Dreadful! Did you try the whitebait last night? Fried fat!

WILDER. Past twelve! Aren't you going to read the minutes, Tench?

TENCH. [*Looking for the CHAIRMAN'S assent, reads in a rapid and monotonous voice*] "At a Board Meeting held the 31st of January at the Company's Offices, 512, Cannon Street, E.C. Present—Mr. Anthony in the chair, Messrs. F. H. Wilder, William Scantlebury, Oliver Wanklin, and Edgar Anthony. Read letters from the Manager dated January 20th, 23rd, 25th, 28th, relative to the strike at the Company's Works. Read letters to the Manager of January 21st, 24th, 26th, 29th. Read letter from Mr. Simon Harness, of the Central Union, asking for an interview with the Board. Read letter from the Men's Committee, signed David Roberts, James Green, John Bulgin, Henry Thomas, George Rous, desiring conference with the

Board; and it was resolved that a special Board Meeting be called for February 7th at the house of the Manager, for the purpose of discussing the situation with Mr. Simon Harness and the Men's Committee on the spot. Passed twelve transfers, signed and sealed nine certificates and one balance certificate."

[*He pushes the book over to the* CHAIRMAN.

ANTHONY. [*With a heavy sigh*] If it's your pleasure, sign the same.

[*He signs, moving the pen with difficulty.*

WANKLIN. What the Union's game, Tench? They haven't made up their split with the men. What does Harness want this interview for?

TENCH. Hoping we shall come to a compromise, I think, sir; he's having a meeting with the men this afternoon.

WILDER. Harness! Ah! He's one of those cold-blooded, cool-headed chaps. I distrust them. I don't know that we didn't make a mistake to come down. What time'll the men be here?

UNDERWOOD. Any time now.

WILDER. Well, if we're not ready, they'll have to wait—won't do 'em any harm to cool their heels a bit.

SCANTLEBURY. [*Slowly*] Poor devils! It's snowing. *What* weather!

UNDERWOOD. [*With meaning slowness*] This house'll be the warmest place they've been in this winter.

WILDER. Well, I hope we're going to settle this business in time for me to catch the 6.30. I've got to take my wife to Spain to-morrow. [*Chattily.*] My old father had a strike at his works in '69; just such a February as this. They wanted to shoot him.

WANKLIN. What! In the close season?

WILDER. By George, there was no close season for employers then! He used to go down to his office with a pistol in his pocket.

SCANTLEBURY. [*Faintly alarmed*] Not seriously?

WILDER. [*With finality*] Ended in his shootin' one of 'em in the legs.

SCANTLEBURY. [*Unavoidably feeling his thigh*] No? God bless me!

ANTHONY. [*Lifting the agenda paper*] To consider the policy of the Board in relation to the strike. [*There is a silence.*]

WILDER. It's this infernal three-cornered duel—the Union, the men, and ourselves.

WANKLIN. We needn't consider the Union.

WILDER. It's my experience that you've always got to consider the Union, confound them! If the Union were going to withdraw their support from the men, as they've done, why did they ever allow them to strike at all?

EDGAR. We've had that over a dozen times.

WILDER. Well, I've never understood it! It's beyond me. They talk of the engineers' and furnacemen's demands being excessive—so they are—but that's not enough to make the Union withdraw their support. What's behind it?

UNDERWOOD. Fear of strikes at Harper's and Tinewell's.

WILDER. [*With triumph*] Afraid of other strikes—now, that's a reason! Why couldn't we have been told that before?

UNDERWOOD. You were.

TENCH. You were absent from the Board that day, sir.

SCANTLEBURY. The men must have seen they had no chance when the Union gave them up. It's madness.

UNDERWOOD. It's Roberts!

WILDER. Just our luck, the men finding a fanatical fire-brand like Roberts for leader. [*A pause.*]

WANKLIN. [*Looking at ANTHONY*] Well?

WILDER. [*Breaking in fussily*] It's a regular mess. I don't like the position we're in; I don't like it; I've said so for a long time. [*Looking at WANKLIN.*] When Wanklin and I came down here before Christmas it looked as if the men must collapse. You thought so too, Underwood.

UNDERWOOD. Yes.

WILDER. Well, they haven't! Here we are, going from bad to worse—losing our customers—shares going down!

SCANTLEBURY. [*Shaking his head*] M'm! M'm!

WANKLIN. What loss have we made by this strike, Tench?

TENCH. Over fifty thousand, sir!

SCANTLEBURY. [*Pained*] You don't say!

WILDER. We shall never get it back.

TENCH. No, sir.

WILDER. Who'd have supposed the men were going to stick out like this—nobody suggested that.

[*Looking angrily at TENCH.*]

SCANTLEBURY. [*Shaking his head*] I've never liked a fight—

never shall.

ANTHONY. No surrender!

[*All look at him.*]

WILDER. Who wants to surrender? [*ANTHONY looks at him.*] I—I want to act reasonably. When the men sent Roberts up to the Board in December—then was the time.

We ought to have humoured him; instead of that, the Chairman

—[*Dropping his eyes before ANTHONY'S*—er—we snapped his

head off. We could have got them in then by a little tact.

ANTHONY. No compromise!

WILDER. There we are! This strike's been going on now

since October, and as far as I can see it may last another six

months. Pretty mess we shall be in by then. The only

comfort is, the men'll be in a worse!

EDGAR. [*To UNDERWOOD*] What sort of state are they

really in, Frank?

UNDERWOOD. [*Without expression*] Damnable!

WILDER. Well, who on earth would have thought they'd

have held on like this without support!

UNDERWOOD. Those who know them.

WILDER. I defy anyone to know them! And what about

tin? Price going up daily. When we do get started we shall

have to work off our contracts at the top of the market.

WANKLIN. What do you say to that, Chairman?

ANTHONY. Can't be helped!

WILDER. Shan't pay a dividend till goodness knows when!

SCANTLEBURY. [*With emphasis*] We ought to think of the

shareholders. [*Turning heavily.*] Chairman, I say we ought to think of the shareholders. [ANTHONY *mutters.*]

SCANTLEBURY. What's that?

TENCH. The Chairman says he *is* thinking of you, sir.

SCANTLEBURY. [*Sinking back into torpor*] Cynic!

WILDER. It's past a joke. I don't want to go without a dividend for years if the Chairman does. We can't go on playing ducks and drakes with the Company's prosperity.

EDGAR. [*Rather ashamedly*] I think we ought to consider the men. [*All but ANTHONY fidget in their seats.*]

SCANTLEBURY. [*With a sigh*] We mustn't think of our private feelings, young man. That'll never do.

EDGAR. [*Ironically*] I'm not thinking of our feelings. I'm thinking of the men's.

WILDER. As to that—we're men of business.

WANKLIN. That *is* the little trouble.

EDGAR. There's no necessity for pushing things so far in the face of all this suffering—it's—it's cruel.

[*No one speaks, as though EDGAR had uncovered something whose existence no man prizing his self-respect could afford to recognize.*]

WANKLIN. [*With an ironical smile*] I'm afraid we mustn't base our policy on luxuries like sentiment.

EDGAR. I detest this state of things.

ANTHONY. We didn't seek the quarrel.

EDGAR. I know that, sir, but surely we've gone far enough.

ANTHONY. No. [*All look at one another.*]

WANKLIN. Luxuries apart, Chairman, we must look out what we're doing.

ANTHONY. Give way to the men once and there'll be no end to it.

WANKLIN. I quite agree, but—— [ANTHONY *shakes his head.*] You make it a question of bedrock principle? [ANTHONY *nods.*] Luxuries again, Chairman! The shares are below par.

WILDER. Yes, and they'll drop to a half when we pass the next dividend.

SCANTLEBURY. [*With alarm*] Come, come! Not so bad as that.

WILDER. [*Grimly*] You'll see! [*Craning forward to catch*

ANTHONY'S *speech.*] I didn't catch——

TENCH. [*Hesitating*] The Chairman says, sir, "Fais que—que—devra——"

EDGAR. [*Sharply*] My father says: "Do what we ought—and let things rip."

WILDER. T'cha!

SCANTLEBURY. [*Throwing up his hands*] The Chairman's a Stoic—I always said the Chairman was a Stoic.

WILDER. Much good that'll do us.

WANKLIN. [*Suavely*] Seriously, Chairman, are you going to let the ship sink under you, for the sake of—a principle?

ANTHONY. She won't sink.

SCANTLEBURY. [*With alarm*] Not while I'm on the Board I hope.

ANTHONY. [*With a twinkle*] Better rat, Scantlebury.

SCANTLEBURY. What a man!

ANTHONY. I've always fought them; I've never been beaten yet.

WANKLIN. We're with you in theory, Chairman. But we're not all made of cast-iron.

ANTHONY. We've only to hold on.

WILDER. [*Rising and going to the fire*] And go to the devil as fast as we can!

ANTHONY. Better go to the devil than give in!

WILDER. [*Fretfully*] That may suit you, sir, but it doesn't suit me, or anyone else I should think.

[ANTHONY *looks him in the face—a silence.*

EDGAR. I don't see how we can get over it that to go on like this means starvation to the men's wives and families.

[WILDER *turns abruptly to the fire, and SCANTLEBURY puts out a hand to push the idea away.*

WANKLIN. I'm afraid again that sounds a little sentimental.

EDGAR. Men of business are excused from decency, you think?

WILDER. Nobody's more sorry for the men than I am, but if they [*lashing himself*] choose to be such a pig-headed lot, it's nothing to do with us; we've quite enough on *our* hands to think of ourselves and the shareholders.

EDGAR. [*Irritably*] It won't kill the shareholders to miss a dividend or two; I don't see that *that's* reason enough for knuckling under.

SCANTLEBURY. [*With grave discomfort*] You talk very lightly of your dividends, young man; I don't know where we are.

WILDER. There's only one sound way of looking at it. We can't go on ruining *ourselves* with this strike.

ANTHONY. No caving in!

SCANTLEBURY. [*With a gesture of despair*] Look at him!

[ANTHONY *is leaning back in his chair. They do look at him.*]

WILDER. [*Returning to his seat*] Well, all I can say is, if that's the Chairman's view, I don't know what we've come down here for.

ANTHONY. To tell the men that we've got nothing for them—— [*Grimly.*] They won't believe it till they hear it spoken in plain English.

WILDER. H'm! Shouldn't be a bit surprised if that brute Roberts hadn't got us down here with the very same idea. I hate a man with a grievance.

EDGAR. [*Resentfully*] We didn't pay him enough for his discovery. I always said that at the time.

WILDER. We paid him five hundred and a bonus of two hundred three years later. If that's not enough! What does he want for goodness' sake?

TENCH. [*Complainingly*] Company made a hundred thousand out of his brains, and paid him seven hundred—that's the way he goes on, sir.

WILDER. The man's a rank agitator! Look here, I hate the Unions. But now we've got Harness here let's get him to settle the whole thing.

ANTHONY. No!

[*Again they look at him.*]

UNDERWOOD. Roberts won't let the men assent to that.

SCANTLEBURY. Fanatic! Fanatic!

WILDER. [*Looking at ANTHONY*] And not the only one!
[*FROST enters from the hall.*]

FROST. [*To ANTHONY*] Mr. Harness from the Union, waiting, sir. The men are here too, sir.

[*ANTHONY nods. UNDERWOOD goes to the door, returning with HARNESS, a pale, clean-shaven man with hollow cheeks, quick eyes and lantern jaw—FROST has retired.*]

UNDERWOOD. [*Pointing to TENCH's chair*] Sit there next the Chairman, Harness, won't you?

[*At HARNESS's appearance, the Board have drawn together, as it were, and turned a little to him, like cattle at a dog.*]

HARNESS. [*With a sharp look round, and a bow*] Thanks! [*He sits—his accent is slightly nasal.*] Well, gentlemen, we're going to do business at last, I hope.

WILDER. Depends on what you *call* business, Harness. Why don't you make the men come in?

HARNESS. [*Sardonically*] The men are far more in the right than you are. The question with us is whether we shan't begin to support them again.

[*He ignores them all, except ANTHONY, to whom he turns in speaking.*]

ANTHONY. Support them if you like; we'll put in free labour and have done with it.

HARNESS. That won't do, Mr. Anthony. You can't get free labour, and you know it.

ANTHONY. We shall see that.

HARNESS. I'm quite frank with you. We were forced to withhold our support from your men because some of their demands are in excess of current rates. I expect to make them withdraw those demands to-day: if they do, take it straight from me, gentlemen, we shall back them again at once. Now, I want to see something fixed up before I go back to-night. Can't we have done with this old-fashioned tug-of-war business? What good's it doing you? Why don't you recognize once for

all that these people are men like yourselves, and want what's good for them just as you want what's good for you——
[*Bitterly.*] Your motor-cars, and champagne, and eight-course dinners.

ANTHONY. If the men will come in, we'll do something for them.

HARNES. [*Ironically*] Is that your opinion too, sir—and yours—and yours? [*The Directors do not answer.*] Well, all I can say is: It's a kind of high and mighty aristocratic tone I thought we'd grown out of—seems I was mistaken.

ANTHONY. It's the tone the men use. Remains to be seen which can hold out longest—they without us, or we without them.

HARNES. As business men, I wonder you're not ashamed of this waste of force, gentlemen. You know what it'll all end in.

ANTHONY. What?

HARNES. Compromise—it always does.

SCANTLEBURY. Can't you persuade the men that their interests are the same as ours?

HARNES. [*Turning ironically*] I could persuade them of that, sir, if they were.

WILDER. Come, Harness, you're a clever man, you don't believe all the Socialistic claptrap that's talked nowadays. There's no real difference between their interests and ours.

HARNES. There's just one very simple little question I'd like to put to you. Will you pay your men one penny more than they force you to pay them? [WILDER is silent.]

WANKLIN. [*Chiming in*] I humbly thought that not to pay more than was necessary was the A B C of commerce.

HARNES. [*With irony*] Yes, that seems to be the A B C of commerce, sir; and the A B C of commerce is between your interests and the men's.

SCANTLEBURY. [*Whispering*] We ought to arrange something.

HARNES. [*Dryly*] Am I to understand then, gentlemen, that your Board is going to make no concessions?