*Strife* shows us the caste feeling of Capital pitted against the caste feeling of Labour. *Strife* is a relentless tragedy of human conflict.

*Strife*, meaning strike, is not only the conflict between the Capitalist and the proletariat that Marx had predicted as an inevitable stage. The Capitalist exploitation of the Labour, the failure of negotiations leading to the overthrow of the capitalist system forms the structure of a Marxian work. Raymond William’s literary texts have been discussed as setting up conflicts between the base and superstructure, the former representing the Working class and the latter the Capitalist class. Long before the advent of Working class writers like Arnold Wesker, Galsworthy, in spite of his aristocratic background, pioneered the Marxian literature. *Strife* needs to be read as a forerunner of *Look Back in Anger*, which dramatizes class conflict, and Wesker’s trilogy, which represents the working class struggle against the Capitalist system. The play also, in the words of R.H. Mottram, deals with that:

…great wastage that takes place when antagonism is sufficiently bitter and sustained to leave the fighters, the best equipped shock troops on either side, still fighting long after the principles for which they fight have been forgotten and most of their adherents made peace and gone home.¹

The play *Strife* takes place on 7 February in the afternoon, close to Trenartha Tin Plate Works on the borders of England and Wales. The workers of this factory have been on strike since October. As it is
winter, the workers have been suffering terribly due to cold and starvation. The factory is in loss. They have lost fifty thousand pounds. The strike has been going on because of the uncompromising attitude of Mr. Anthony, the chairperson of the company, and Roberts, the leader of the workers.

The play opens with the Board meeting taking place in the dining room of Mr. Underwood, the manager of the factory. A special meeting of Board of Directors had been called to review the strike situation and to discuss the question with Harness, an official of the Union and the representatives of the workers.

Mr. Anthony presides over the meeting. He is a typical capitalist who believes that the workers should be paid as little as possible and should be dealt with an iron hand. The other directors of the company are Mr. Wilder, Mr. Scantlebury, Mr. Wanklin, and Mr. Edgar Anthony, son of Mr. Anthony. Edgar is very sorry about the sufferings of the labourers and their families caused by the prolonged strike. Wilder, Scantlebury, Wanklin are worried about the loss to the company and want to put an end to the strike.

As the meeting starts, Mr. Wilder says that the fire in the fireplace is very hot and asks for a screen to be put in front of it: “This house’ll be the warmest place they’ve been in this winter” (103). This device is shown by the dramatist to show the difference between the capitalists who enjoy and are comfortable in their warm rooms and
the labourers who are suffering from cold and starvation due to the strike. According to V. Dupont:

The fire in the first scene of Strife leaves the understanding audience in no doubt as to the very different conditions of material comfort existing in the homes of the strikers, thus focusing the whole situation when the play begins.²

Edgar has great sympathy for the workers and their families. He reads out an extract from a local newspaper. The paper says that if the Directors who control the factory from their arm-chair in London would condescend to come and see for themselves the condition of the workers during the strike even their hard hearts would melt with pity. Wilder says that the editor is “a Ruffian!” (102) and should be shot dead. Enid brings a screen and puts it in front of the fire. Tench reads about the last meeting of Directors in which it was resolved that a special meeting should be held on 7 February at the house of the Manager to discuss the situation with Mr. Harness and the representatives of the workers.

Mr. Wanklin asks Tench about the game of Union. Tench replies that the Union does not support the strike of the workers of Trenartha Tin Plate Works because they think that if the demands of the workers are reasonable, then their demands regarding the wages of engineers and furnacemen are excessive. They are afraid that if they support the demands of the engineers and furnacemen at Harper’s and Tinwell’s, factories will go on strike. But in spite of the lack of support from the Union, the strike continues for more than four months. This is because
the workers’ leader Mr. Roberts Wilder says that the strike is ruining their company and there is no compromise between capitalists and workers. The company is in loss. It is losing its customers and the value of their shares is going down.

Tench reveals that due to the strike, the company has lost fifty thousand pounds. This shocks the Directors. Wilder thinks that when the workers have sent Roberts to them in December they should have accepted some of the demands. But Anthony refuses to surrender. He is not prepared to accept any compromise. Wanklin feels that the strike is going on because of the rigid stand of Mr. Anthony and because of the strike the company is being ruined: “Seriously, Chairman, are you going to let the ship sink under you, for the sake of—a principle?” (106). Wanklin here uses a metaphor. The company is compared to a ship which is about to sink because of the wrong decision of the Captain.

Scantlebury asks Anthony to think of the interests of the shareholders. Edgar says that they should think of the sufferings of worker’s families. But Anthony is adamant. He says that if they gave way to the workers once they would soon come up with new demands. He replies that he has always fought against the workers and none could beat him to that day. Wilder says that Roberts is leading the strike because he has a personal grievance against the management. Edgar says that they did not pay him enough for his discovery. Tench tells them
that the company has paid him seven hundred pounds for his discovery out of which they made a hundred thousand pounds.

Wilder suggests that they should utilize the services of Harness to get the whole thing settled. Underwood says that Roberts would not let the men accept any compromise. Scantlebury says that Roberts is a fanatic person. Wilder says that he is not the only fanatic. At this moment Harness comes to the meeting. Now the Directors stop discussing among themselves. Harness tells them that the workers are far more in the right than they. The question arises among themselves whether they should start supporting the workers. Anthony says that they should start employing workers. He says that they would break the strike by employing free labour. But Harness tells that they cannot have free labour. He tells the directors frankly the attitude of the Union. They are not supporting the workers because their demands regarding the engineers and furnace men are in excess of the rates prevailing in other factories. Harness says that he would persuade the workers to withdraw their demands that afternoon and if they do so, the Union will support them. He asks the directors to stop war with the labourers: “For that word ‘just’ read ‘humble,’ Mr. Anthony. Why should they be humble? Barring the accident of money, aren’t they as good men as you?” (109). He tells them to recognize those people are men like themselves and they want what is good for them as we want for us. It is just a matter of chance that the Directors were born in rich families while the workers were
born in poor families. He asks them to end in a compromise and to make a firm and a right decision. Pity is not important for workers, they need justice to be done. He asks the directors to take their final decision only after they have discussed the question with the workers. Anthony nods and agrees to it.

Roberts, Green, Bulgin, Thomas and Rous come in. They are offered chairs but Roberts says that they would prefer to stand in the presence of Directors. Mr. Anthony asks them the purpose of their visit. Roberts says that they have come to hear what the Board has to say. Mr. Anthony replies that the Board has nothing to say. Then Roberts says that they are wasting the Directors’ time and they start to move. Wanklin speaks very politely to Roberts and detains him. Thomas tries to say something but he is not able to continue. Anthony tells Roberts that since the men had asked for this conference the Board wishes to hear what they have to say. Thomas tries to say something but he is unable to continue his talk. Roberts says that if he were to tell something about the workers lives, it would take him the whole day and if the Directors hear all the complaints they would never come there. Harness asks him to explain his proposals clearly and be reasonable. Roberts asks them to come to their quarters to see the sufferings of their families. Roberts sarcastically tells him to take some champagne with his lunch. Thomas says that they only want justice. Robert tells him that they cannot expect justice from these Directors. He
reminds Thomas that when he has gone to London to present the point of view of the workers, Mr. Anthony had told him they were discontented dogs—“never satisfied” (111) and that he was foolish, uneducated man who knew nothing of the wants of men he spoke for. Anthony tells him that there could be only one master, meaning that it is “Capital.” Roberts says that the labour will be the master. They remain silent. Underwood suggests that Roberts may permit the other workers to speak. They only stammer some words. Scantlebury tells Roberts to let the poor men call their souls their own. Roberts replies that the men should certainly be allowed to keep their souls intact because their bodies were languishing due to the actions of their employers.

When Wilder says, “Thank God…. “Ye will not dare to thank Him when I have done, Mr. Wilder, for all your piety. May be your God up in London has no time to listen to the working man. I’m told He is a wealthy God; but if He listens to what I tell Him, He will know more than ever He learned in Kensington” (111). Roberts says bitterly that his God is a wealthy God who has no time to listen to the grievances of the workers. Roberts says that they have been exploited so much that they cannot be squeezed any more as everyone of them are starving. But though they is starving they would prefer death to surrender. He wants to know whether their demands would be accepted. He says that they would not change their demands. Anthony tells him
plainly that they would not accept a single one of their demands. Roberts warns the Directors that it they were thinking that the men would surrender in a week or two they were wrong. He warns Anthony that this would be the last fight of his life. Anthony remains calm and adjourns the meeting till 5 p.m.

Everyone is shocked at the events that have taken place. When the workers’ representatives leave Harness comments that neither side has shown any conciliatory spirit. When Harness leaves Enid comes to announce that lunch is ready. The Directors start moving: “The ancient Trojans were fools to your father, Mrs. Underwood” (114). Turning to Enid, Wanklin says her that her father was even more obstinate than the people of Troy who carried on the fight against the Greeks till Troy was completely destroyed. Enid now tells them that she wants to talk to her father alone. Wanklin and Underwood leave. Tench is collecting the papers. Enid suggests him that he should go and have lunch. When he leaves Enid shuts the door and asks her father whether the strike is settled. He says no and tells her that he does not want to come to any compromise. She tells him that the workers are suffering a lot and Robert’s wife Annie is in a miserable state. Her heart is weak and since the strike began she has not been getting even proper food. Anthony asks his daughter to give Annie what she needs. But Enid says that Roberts does not allow her to take anything from them. Enid tells her
father to stop the strike and the suffering caused by it. She says that he is not giving any way to solve the problem.

Anthony tells her to remain interested in novels and music and not to advise him on matters of business. The problem of this industrial struggle is too far reaching or her to understand. If the demands of the workers are met they will ask for more and more: “In a few years you and your children would be down in the condition they’re in, but for those who have the eyes things as they are and the backbone to stand up for themselves” (115). Anthony’s bedrock principle is to wage a relentless fight against the demands of the labour. He is a hard liner who believes that the workers should be starved into surrender. He believes that the capitalist class must fight against the laboring class. Her culture and her comforts would then disappear and they would face the same problem like the labourers whom she is pitying Enid does not understand what relation all this has with the strike. Anthony says that it will take one or two generations to understand the significance of this class struggle. Enid says that the strike will ruin the company. Anthony tells her that she should allow him to be the best judge of that. Enid tells him that she cannot stand by and let poor Annie Roberts and the children of the workers suffer. She tells him that the strike is putting too much strain on him and Dr. Fisher has advised him not to take strain. She appeals to him to think of his children and change his rigid state.
Tench then enters on the pretext of getting some papers signed. After Anthony has signed the papers he tells him that he depends entirely on the company for his livelihood and he is passing sleepless nights because he sees the fortunes of the company declining. He tells that the Directors are going to overthrow him as chairman if he continued to stick to his strong views. This upsets Anthony. He asks Tench to ring the bell. When his servant Frost comes he asks him to bring whisky and soda. He tells him that doctor has advised him not to take drink on an empty stomach. Frost comes closer to him and says that the strike is putting too much strain on him. Anthony is left alone.

In the afternoon of the same day Mrs. Roberts a thin and dark haired women of about thirty five is seen sitting in an old arm chair in her cottage. She looks weak but her eyes show patience. There is a meager fire because there are very few coals. The other women in the kitchen are Mrs. Yeo Mrs. Rous, Mrs. Bulgin and Madge Thomas who is twenty two years old.

Mrs. Yeo says that in the whole of that week she had received only six pence. She notices that Mrs. Rous, an old lady, is shivering. So she asks her to come near the fireplace although there was not much fire in it. Mrs. Rous recalls that the winter of 1879, when her husband died was the severest. That year Mrs. Roberts was only seven years old. Her husband was working on the acid in the factory and got a poisoned leg and he died two days later. She says that in those days her husband
did not get anything from the factory because there were no compensation acts. Mrs. Yeo says that this winter is the severest because of the strike.

Mrs. Bulgin says that they had been living on bread and tea for four days. She says that it is very hard for the children to feed. She makes them lie down on bed for if they run they feel hungry. Mrs. Roberts asks Mrs. Rous to have some tea. But she refuses to take as there is only one cup of tea and she tells her to keep it for Roberts. The three women leave.

Madge Thomas is very much opposed to Roberts. She is in love with George Rous, the son of Mrs. Rous who is a strong supporter of Roberts. She tells George that she cannot have her as long as he supports Roberts. She tells that the suffering of the workers is due to Roberts. She wants her father and George Rous to lead the men against Roberts and end the strike. She tells Mrs. Roberts that Harness and workers have come and they have to decide that afternoon whether they should continue to support the demands of the engineers and the furnace men. Annie says that Roberts would never give up the cause of the engineers and the furnace men. Madge replies that it is because of Robert’s pride that the strike continues. Enid Underwood now comes to meet Mrs. Roberts. She asks how she is feeling. She replies that she is feeling better. Enid asks her why she had sent back the articles of food sent by her. According to R.H. Coats:
Should Annie have refused, as she did, the soup and jelly so kindly offered her by Enid? In one sense, the two women had nothing to do with the quarrel of their men-folk, and while it was being settled above their heads they might have allowed their feelings of womanly sympathy to find free and natural expression, especially as Annie was dying and the two were formerly good friends. Yet we can respect Annie for loving her husband loyally and for standing by her own social class first of all. How could she touch food, coming from the source it did, however well-meaning the bearer of it might be? It is important to notice that Enid is happy in a family of little children, whereas Annie Roberts are none. She has always wanted them, but her husband refuses to bring any such into a miserable world, where a poor man’s children have no chance. This, of course, is a grievance to Annie and a barrier between her and Enid which words cannot get over.³

Annie tells her that she did not need those things. Enid in reply tells her that Roberts is the main person to cause suffering among the workers. Madge in anger tells Enid not to come again and spy on them. Annie requests Enid to forgive Madge. Annie says that the workers say that it is because of Enid’s father that there is no compromise. Enid agrees with this. She wants to know what she can do to help her. She notices that Annie does not even have coal. Annie tells her that Roberts has to meet the men at four. Enid asks if she can stop his going. She just smiles. Enid says that she would be alright if she gets proper nourishment.
Enid tells Annie that she has sympathy with the workers but they demand more wages. Enid tells her that the share holders are really not better off than the workers. Mrs. Roberts does not believe this and only smiles. Enid adds that the workers do not have to pay taxes and if they do not waste money in drink and gambling they would not have suffering. Annie tells that the workers need some pleasure after their labour. Enid replies that Roberts does not involve in these pleasures but the other workers waste money. Annie says that according to Roberts, “a working man’s life is all a gamble, from the time’e’s born to he time ‘e dies” (123). They live from hand to mouth. The family are so undernourished that it is not certain whether a baby born in a worker’s family will draw the next breath or not. This uncertainty continues all his life. There is no security for a worker even in old age. When he is old, he has to live in a miserable place like a work place or he dies a premature death. They have no savings and whatever they have is spent and they have no money when they are sick. That’s why Roberts does not want to have children. Enid tells Annie that Roberts is given large amount of money for his new process but Annie says that it has been wasted in the strike. Annie suggests Enid to go away before Robert’s comes. Enid says that she wants to meet him and promises to remain calm. As R.H. Coats remarks:

It is pathetic to see how Enid tries to be kind to Annie and to explain things to her, from the employer’s point of
view, but class barriers rise to prevent them from even approaching a true understanding of one another.⁴

Roberts enters the room quietly. He pretends not to recognize Enid. Enid tells him that she wants to talk to him. Enid appeals him to come to some compromise at least for the sake of his wife. Roberts tells her not to appeal for the sake of her father. Roberts replies that Mr. Anthony stands for tyranny. Mrs. Roberts makes a movement to rise but sinks back in her chair. Enid tries to lift her up but Roberts shouts at her not touch his wife. Enid says that he is mad. Roberts then tells her that the house of a madman is not fit place for a lady. Enid makes her last attempt but she fails. She tells him to have pity on his wife. Roberts says that he has no more to tell. Just then Underwood comes there looking for his wife. Roberts tells him that there is no need for him to escort his wife. Before leaving Enid makes an appeal to him for the sake of his wife. But Roberts advises her to make this appeal for the sake of her husband and her father. Enid controls her feelings and goes out with her husband. Roberts asks his wife whether she is feeling better. He wraps his overcoat round her. He tells his wife that he has to attend the meeting at four. He says that none but the old robber Anthony is in a mood to fight. It would be difficult for him to persuade the workers to continue the strike. He says that they are cowards. Annie suggests that men cannot see their wives and children suffering. Roberts says that they only pretend: “They can remember the woman when their
own bellies speak! The woman never stops them from the drink; but from a little suffering to themselves in a sacred cause, the woman stop them fast enough” (126). The workers waste their money in drink. At that time they do not think of the suffering that this wastage of money will cause to their woman. But when they want to avoid suffering for a great cause, they pretend that they want to give up the fight because the woman are suffering. Mrs. Roberts then says that they should see the suffering of children. Then Roberts express his view that the labourers should not produce children because they are only breeding slaves. He says that they do save a penny for a time like this one. Annie tells him that it is natural for the men to lose their spirit in the face of starvation. She says that all of them are not as strong as he. Roberts tells her that his aim is to persuade the workers to send the Directors back to London without making any compromise: “He is really killing her by his inflexible stand for principle, and both of them know it.”5 He thinks that they will surrender very soon. He leaves for the meeting with the determination that he would rather die than surrender.

He goes out to attend the meeting. After some time Thomas arrives there. Annie tells him that Roberts has gone to the workers’ meeting. He says that they must arrive at a compromise with the Directors. Annie tells him that Roberts will never agree for compromise. Thomas replies that there is none to support him now except the engineers and George Rous. He has talked to the chapel people and they
are in favour of ending the strike. Mrs. Roberts is worried about Mr. Roberts.

Thomas replies that Roberts has done what all he can do and now he has gone against human nature. So chapel does not support the strike. Just then Thomas daughter appears and tells him to hurry up for the meeting. She appeals to him to oppose Roberts boldly this time.

George Rous comes there. Madge tells him that if he supports Roberts it would mean killing his own mother. Rous replies that he has taken an oath to support Roberts. Madge asks him whether he cannot break his word for the sake of his love for her. Then he decides to oppose Roberts and rushes off to the meeting. Madge is happy because she has turned Rous against Roberts. She finds Annie as cold as stone and tells her that she would get some brandy. But Annie refuses. Madge hears the sound coming from the worker’s meeting and complains that women are waiting.

The workmen are crowded in an open muddy space near the high wall of the factory. Roberts stands a little away from the crowd leaning against the wall. Harness is standing on the platform and has been addressing the workers. Harness tells the workers to be reasonable. Some of their demands are in excess of the wages in other factories. He tells them if the Union supports them they are forced to support the strikes in a dozen factories. Unions live by justice to all. Their demands are excessive at the moment and if they cut them down they would support
them. He appeals to the workers to join hands with the Union and get victory. Jago asks Harness if the furnace men are paid enough. Harness replies that they are not paid enough, but they were paid as much as furnace men in other factories. Evans and Jago oppose Harness but other workers wants to turn them into blacklegs. He could rather starve than do that.

Thomas now moves towards the platform. He says that they are suffering not because of the employers or the Unions but because they had gone against nature. Chapel wants them to end the strike by accepting a compromise. He appeals to the workers to give the power to their representatives to talk to the Directors: “It iss petter to take our peating like men, than to tie like togs” (133). All God fearing people should accept the advice of chapel and accept compromise. The workers agree with him. Jago who represents the interests of engineers wants to go to the platform. But the workers do not accept it. He feels angry and says that everyone should have the right to say what he likes. He tells the workers that engineers and workers had at been in same boat so afar and now it is a dirty thing for the labourers to abandon them.

Now George Rous jumps to the platform. He says that they should yield to human nature. Roberts is shocked at his attitude. Rous tells him that he has changed his mind. He agrees with Harness who say, “Stand by us,” ‘e said, “and we’ll stand by you” (134). George Rous supports the Union. He says that Roberts had told them to fight
the robbers by themselves and to squeeze the breath out of them. But actually their own and that of their families are squeezed out. He says that Roberts is responsible for all their sufferings and tells them not to listen to him as his tongue has got hell fire. He supports Harness and his Union telling that without Union they are like a handful of dried leaves, a puff of smoke. He appeals to them to give them authority to negotiate terms with the employers. The crowd seems to agree with him.

Roberts now quietly ascends the platform. At first the workers are not in a mood to listen to him. Later he faces the crowd with great confidence. He controls the crowd by his powerful speech. He tells Bulgin that if he wants to break his head he can do so after his speech. He asks them if there was anyone there who stood less to gain and more to lose from the strike than he. He is against the faith of Thomas in nature. He says nature is not pure or honest, just or merciful. Those who live over the hills and are going home when it is snowing at night have to fight every inch of it. A man can be a man only by fighting against nature. The principles of Thomas are only his selfishness. For his own purpose Thomas had invented the idea of chapel and nature. He tells that Thomas wants them to go to the employers on their knees kin the hope that they will throw a crush of bread on them.

Roberts says that surrendering is the work of cowards and traitors. Harness is a clever person but they should not believe his words. He says that the Union had deserted them. He wanted to remind them what
their fight was. He says that it is “The fight o’ the country’s body and blood against a blood-suckers” (136). It is a fight of labour against exploitation. “That’s Capital! A white-faced, stony-hearted monster!” (136) which fattens on the sweat of the labourer’s brows. Roberts tells the workers that Capital is white-faced monster whose lips are red because it has been sucking the blood of labourers and their wives and children since time immemorial. He appeals to them to fight against this monster as a united body and force it surrender. If they give up the fight at this stage the monster will go on sucking their blood and that of generations to come forever, and they will lead a life of utter humiliation and will have to life like dogs. It buys their bodies and their brains at its own price. He says that they have seen his work and paid him seven hundred pounds and they gained one hundred thousand pounds by it. Capital is a great blood-sucker who becomes fat by exploiting the hard work of the labourers. They make the labourers work a lot with empty sympathy and will not give a sixpence out of their dividends to help. He appeals to the workers to give him a free hand to tell the Directors plainly that the workers will have nothing to do with them unless all their demands are met.

He tells them that the present strike is aimed for the benefits of the labourers and their children and grand children and not for themselves alone. He says that they have to defeat the Capitalists or else their lives would become miserable. He says that they should not lose
their hope when victory is within sight. The crowd is tremendously excited. Evans and Jago strongly support Roberts. Roberts is a powerful orator who can convert even a hostile crowd into his strong supporters. He is completely dedicated to his cause.

At this critical turn when the entire crowd has turned in favour of Roberts, Madge appears and tells Roberts that his wife is dying. He does not believe it. Thomas repeats the news. He leaps down from the platform and runs home. Madge tells the men that Roberts need not hurry as his wife is already dead. She calls the striking men as blinded hounds and warns them that if the strike continues many more wives will die. A.C. Ward comments:

In *Strife* the case for both sides is seen for a space, clearly and in due proportion. When the play begins, old John Anthony is presiding, with adamant resolution, over a meeting of the directors of going on for four month, through a hard winter, a tentative movements on both sides towards a settlement are prevented from making progress only by the persistent. No compromise! Cry of John Anthony for the owners, and the equally unyielding No surrender! Of David Roberts, the men’s leader. But at a critical moment, when the men are wavering, Robert’s wife dies. Both sides yield simultaneously, and throwing over their leaders, accept the precise terms they had rejected four months earlier. In the interval there has been suffering, privation and death on the side of men, and heavy financial loss by the owners. In the earlier part of the play the scales are held dispassionately by the dramatist, and the
audience feels only the desperate futility of the tragic pride and prejudice on both sides. But then by his choice of incidents at the climax of the play, Galsworthy destroys in a moment the illusion of immortality. The death of Mrs. Roberts is not an appeal to human instincts of harmony and justice. It is an appeal to humanitarian sentiment which fundamentally has no bearing upon the real problem of Strife.\textsuperscript{6}

Thomas says that Roberts has been punished as he has gone against the nature and Chapel. Evans tells them that Roberts has lost his wife in fighting for their cause so they should support him instead of over throwing. Rous, on the other hand says that Mrs. Roberts death is a warning to all the workers. If the strike continues they will have the same tragedy in their houses. Now most of the people turn against Roberts.

Thus Roberts is overthrown in the very moment of his victory. A fight starts between supporters and opponents of Roberts. Very soon the supporters of Roberts are over powered by the opponents. Rous sums up the feeling of the crowd by saying that they will make their terms and talks with the Union. Commenting on the technical perfection of the play setting two equal forces of against each other, R.H. Coats observes:

From the point of view of technique, \textit{Strife} is faultlessly constructed; the parallelism of the play is perfect. Anthony balances Roberts, Enid balances Annie, Edgar balances Thomas, the Directors balance the workers. Even Rous, who wavers because of devotion to his sweetheart, balances
Wilder, who wavers because of anxiety about his wife. The whole play closely resembles a game of chess, with the pawns arrayed in front and the more powerful pieces drawn up behind. As in that game, the fortunes of war sway critically from side to side, grievous havoc is wrought among combatants swept off the board; and the end at last is—stale-mate.  

It is five o’clock in the evening. Edgar and Enid are seen sitting in the drawing room of Underwood. Edgar tells his sister that the strike is a beastly business and he wished that their father should not attend the Director’s meeting. Enid tells Edgar that she has gone to Roberts house and has seen the condition of Mrs. Roberts. Roberts is simply killing his wife. Edgar has sympathy towards workers and says that Directors are killing her. Enid says that she does not feel half as sympathetic with them now as she did before she went there. She says that they are continuing the strike because they hate the Capitalists as a class. Enid describes the pathetic condition of Mrs. Annie and she says she still supports Roberts. The condition of the families is miserable. She hopes that her father would make some concessions to stop the strike and suffering of the workers. Edgar says that his father will not change his mind and the result will be that he will be voted down. Enid says that other Directors will not dare to remove him from the chairmanship. Edgar says that they are panic because of the losses of the company due to strike. Enid says that it would be a shock for their father as he has worked as a chairperson for thirty years. Edgar says
that his sympathies are entirely with the workers. Enid tells her brother to do all he can to support their father. Edgar promises to do all he can to prevent any embarrassment to him. He goes into the dining room.

Anthony comes into the drawing room. He asks her whether she has gone to Roberts house. She admits that she did: “You think with your gloved hands you can cure that trouble of the century” (142). Anthony tells her that she is trying the impossible task of bridging the gulf that separates Capital from Labour. It is like filling a sieve with sand. He says that conflicts between the two classes began during Industrial Revolution. As Hermon Ould comments:

Galsworthy is said to have denied that Strife arouse from meditating on the facts of the industrial system which permits men of fine caliber to waste themselves in a war of attrition in which both lose. ‘The play arouse in Mr. Galsworthy’s mind from his actually having seen in conflict the two men who were the proto types of Anthony and Roberts, and thus noted the waste and in efficacy arising from the clash of strong characters unaccompanied by balance. It was accident that led him to plays the two men in an environment of capital and labour. In reality, both of them were, if not capitalist, at any rate on the side of capital.’ Thus William Archer. Be this as it may, once having begun on Strife any pre conceptions born of theory went to the winds, and, although the human interest of the play is fastened on to Anthony and Roberts, the protagonist is really the modern industrial system.8
Enid says that she is thinking of what would happen to him if he is beaten in the meeting. She appeals to him not to go to the meeting as he is not well. Anthony does not listen to her and goes into the dining room where the other directors are present.

Enid tells Frost to bring the representatives of the workers to the drawing room when they come. Frost tells her that Mr. Anthony had eaten nothing the whole day. He had taken two pegs of whisky on an empty stomach. He is very difficult person to deal with. Regarding the strike his idea is that the Directors should outwardly support Mr. Anthony and then quietly fulfill the desires or demands of the workers. If they oppose him he will become violent. He tells Enid that he had suggested Mr. Wanklin to humour Mr. Anthony. Mr. Wanklin suggested that he should tell Mr. Anthony about his principle. He asked Mr. Anthony that morning whether the strike was worth the trouble that he was taking. Mr. Anthony asked him to mind his own business. Enid asks Frost whether he knows Roberts. He says that Roberts is not one of the harmless socialists. He says that he has got prejudice against Capitalists. He is against all persons belonging to the higher classes just because he is born in a lower class. Enid asks Frost to go and ask the Directors whether they would have any tea. As Frost opens the door one can hear sounds of discussion going on between the Directors.

Madge now comes to see Enid. She tells her that Annie Roberts is dead. Madge says that Annie died of cold and hunger. She looks at
Enid so bitterly if she is responsible for Annie’s death. Madge says that she and her father have killed her. Enid tells her that her father is not well. Madge says that Anthony will become alright if he hears that Mrs. Roberts is dead. Madge leaves after insulting Enid.

Anthony enters the room and sits calmly on an armchair. Edgar comes and tells that Wilder had insulted him. Edgar says that Wilder had called his father as a old and feeble person and he does not know what he was doing. Wanklin and Scantlebury come into the room. Wanklin tells Anthony that Wilder had sent his apologies through him. Then Wilder himself comes in and asks Anthony to forgive him. Mr. Anthony accepts their apology. They all settle down and conference starts there.

Wanklin says that if the strike is not ended before the General meeting of the share holders the Directors will be severely criticised. Anthony wants them to remain firm. Wilder says that businessmen should adjust themselves according to the circumstances. Wanklin says that they are a part of a machine and they should see the profits of the company: “we must bring it to an end, on the best terms we can make” (147). He appeals to Anthony to bring the strike to an end. Anthony bluntly refuses.

Edgar now comes from the dining room and tells about the death of Mrs. Roberts. Edgar asserts that all of them were responsible for her death. Anthony replies that “War is war” (148). But Edgar tells them
that they should not wage war against women. Wanklin comments that in such conflict women are generally the worst sufferers. Edgar says that he would prefer to resign his position on the Board rather than go on starving women like this. He says that all that had happened was that they had starved one woman to death. He says that a struggle like this finds out the weak spot in everybody. If this strike would not have been like this the woman would not have died and all the misery would not have taken place, Wanklin tells him that none of them is opposed to settlement except Mr. Anthony.

Wilder then passes an amendment to the Chairman’s motion that the dispute should be settled by Mr. Simon Harness. He requests the Chairman to put it to vote. Before putting it to vote Anthony gives a fine speech representing the Capitalists.

Anthony, the solitary fighter, says that he has been made the target of an attack by his colleagues on the Board and he wants to answer their criticism before putting the amendment to vote. He says that he is seventy six years old and he has been working in the company as Chairman for thirty two years. He has seen the company pass through good and evil days. He fought against the workers for four times and defeated them every time. He asserts that he is strong enough to uphold his principles. He says that the workers have received fair wages. Their complaints have been listened to. It is argued that times have changed. He says frankly that he will not change with the time.
There can be only one master in a house. People say that Capitalists and Labourers have same interests. But it is not true. It is absurd. Their interests are poles apart. Wanklin had stated that the Directors are only parts of a machine but it is false. The Directors are the machine. Sentimentalism and Socialism is rotten. If some of the demands of the workers are considered they would immediately ask for more. This will ruin the company.

Anthony says that he has been fighting to protect the interests of the capitalist class of his country who are facing the threat of confusion and mob government.

*Strife* alludes to Marxian ideas and analysis centering on capitalist working and class confrontation. But the play goes beyond the dialectic and probes deeper and wider the humanitarian aspects. As Schalit puts it:

This is a great and powerful drama and I do not think that, so far, Galsworthy has surpassed it. The writer has treated his subject with the utmost conscientiousness; according to his own words, he had the opportunity from 1899 to 1904, of studying the relations of capital and labour at first hand. But to particularize the work as a profound study of social problems would not be doing justice to its ethical and artistic content. All the suffering comes from the implacability of the two extremists, Anthony and Roberts. So it is ever in party struggle—extremism with its demagoguery and its pride and its greed of power waste human life, cause infinite trouble. Only through mutual
toleration, mutual concession and agreement can human society progress. And, however much we may sympathise with the Anthonys and Robertses of this life, iron-wild and high-principled, they are none the less enemies of society. *The Fisher of Men*, Milton in *The Patrician* and many other Galsworthian autocrats arouse our absorbed interest and sympathy, but we should never dream of wishing that such dictators should come to power.⁹

Then he comes to the attack which has been made upon him by his son that he is responsible for Mrs. Roberts death. He says that in a fair fight enemy has to suffer and he cannot be blamed for it. They should have thought of this before they started the fight. Edgar tells him that it is not a fair fight and strike is the only weapon for the workers.

Anthony replies that employers encourage the workers to go on strike. He would never accept it. “Laconicism is put to good use: we have, in *Strife*, a portrait of Anthony, with his brief utterances and reduced vocabulary, where No and Never figure so constantly.”⁹ Edgar tells him that they should be merciful. Anthony replies that they should be just.

Edgar says that what he considers just may be unjust to another person. By hearing these words from his own son Anthony breaks down. His own son has accused him of injustice, inhumanity and cruelty. In *Strife*, Galsworthy dismissed the idea of Anthony having a stroke at the end of the play. Coming on the top of Mrs. Robert’s death, this would have meant two physical collapses in the same drama.
Anthony says that if the amendment is carried they will be failing in their duty to themselves and to all the Capital. In fact, they will have to fly like dogs before the whips of their own workers. He tells them if they are prepared for all these things, they may vote for the amendment. He puts the amendment to vote. Except Anthony, all the Directors vote for the amendment. He resigns as Chairman telling that they have disgraced him.

The representatives of the workers are brought in. Thomas, Green, Bulgin and Rous stand in a row. Wanklin asks Thomas about their meeting. Thomas tells that Harness would speak to them on their behalf. Harness enters with a piece of paper in his hand to settle the matter. According to V. Dupont:

In Strife we have perhaps the clearest example of minute preparation and dove-tailing, resulting in a most acceptable and effective sequence of surprises. Towards the end of Act III Roberts, delayed by his wife’s death, arrives late for the meeting with the directors; he knows nothing of the settlement that has been reached and believes the men to be still holding out. The opportunity is thus given for him to make his speech of defense and go down, fighting.¹¹

Then Roberts who does not know what happened in the worker’s meeting arrives and tells Anthony to go back to London as the worker’s demands will not change and will not surrender. Harness tries to stop Roberts but he gives his speech saying that the workers will not surrender. He says that they may break the body but not their spirits.
Harness tells Roberts that he has no authority to speak and many things had happened in his absence. The Directors quickly sign the agreement. Harness tells Roberts that the agreement is signed by both sides and the strike has come to an end. F.C. Steinermayer in his excellent study, *The Evolution of John Galsworthy’s World and Artistic Points of View*, perceives in these protagonist two heroes who struggle vainly against the compromising mass or average human nature all around them.¹²

Roberts is shocked and with a lot of agony and anger he tells his fellow workers that they had deceived him. Roberts checks the agreement and sees that it is not signed by Anthony. He says that the agreement is not valid. But Harness tells that the Board has signed it and Anthony is no more a chairperson. Roberts now bursts out into a half mad laughter.

The play has no heroes in the traditional sense of word. Neither Roberts nor Anthony is a heroic figure. They are the two best men, both broken. A. Nicoll rightly says:

Galsworthy makes neither Anthony nor Roberts a man who governs events. Both have iron will and are determined to fight to the better end, but they are not drawn in individualistic heroic terms. The one takes his strength from what may be called the Capitalist faith, the other from the faith of the rebels.¹³
Harness tells him to go home. The word “home” (155) pains Roberts immensely because with the death of his wife he has no home. Anthony rises with an effort, lifts his hand as it to salute Roberts but lets it fall. Roberts wonders. Anthony and Roberts bend their head to each other in a token of respect and they go out. According to R.H. Coats:

In *Strife*, Capitalist caste feeling encounters the class consciousness and revolt of Labour. It is true that the chief protagonists in this, which may be termed Galsworthy’s masterpiece, are not groups but individuals; yet these two men interest us, quite apart from the inherent strength of their personalities, largely because they represent slowly evolved social forces of great magnitude and importance, whose dire coming together is like the meeting of vast, accumulated thunder-clouds charged with electricity. For this reason, *Strife* is a fine example of what we have above described as ‘social tragedy.’

Tench tells Harness that it was a very painful scene. Harness says that the result of the strike is waste and suffering, a woman dead and the two best men broken: “D’you know, sir—these terms, they’re the *very same* we drew up, together, you and I, and put to both sides before the fight began? All this—all this—and—and what for?” (156). Tench replies that the agreement is the same as it was before the fight. A strife only causes unnecessary suffering. It yields no other results. Tench, here is a mouthpiece of Galsworthy. Peace can be established by
compromise and extremism leads to strife which results in suffering and colossal waste. Allardyce Nicoll points out:

Society, that invisible presence, determines that the rich shall be preferred to the poor. So in Strife Galsworthy does not make either Anthony, director of the company, or Roberts, leader of the workers, a man who governs events. Both, possibly posses iron wills. They have determined to fight to the bitter end, but they are not individualities as the Shakespearean heroes were. Anthony takes his strength from what may be called the Capitalist faith, Roberts takes this from the faith of the rebels. Fundamentally, each is incapable of doing otherwise than he does. The play well illustrates Galsworthy’s fine treatment of that tremendous impression of waste which Prof. Bradley so ably discerns in the Shakespearean drama. All the modern author’s tragedies gain poignantly from this impression. Strife ends with wasted lives and settlement the terms of which are precisely the same as those proposed at the beginning of the struggle.15

Strife appeals to us on many levels of meaning. It is a play about the clash between Capital and Labour, the nemesis of extremism, the conflict between opposing wills, the generation gap represented by Anthony and his children—Enid and Edgar, the lack of cohesion between leaders and followers, the conflict between two classes, the inability to change with the times lead a life of peace and prosperity, and the logic that ‘fanaticism and inflexibility alike over reach themselves in a society which ought to thrive on mutual understanding,
especially in trade disputes. In a bigger way, the play illustrates the idea that class is destiny. Anthony does not fight for himself but for his class. He represents the Capital. His belief is that masters and servants are two different classes. They have different fates and destinies. Their sensibilities, their ideologies, their attitudes are different. Masters and men cannot be equal. Where two men meet the better man will rule.

The interests of the two classes the Labour and Capital, are poles apart. They can never be same. As Leon Schalit states:

The drama conveys at times an impression of fate moving like sum irresistible and precise machine toward an inevitable crash. It is a drama of irreconcilable extremisms embodied in the figures of the two chief characters. It is a play on the old Greek theme of hybris—violence that leads to catastrophe—and is by inference a plea for moderation. The protagonist fall through the back-sliding of supporters whom, in their violence, they have outdistanced. They fall despising their followers and bowing their heads in admiration before each other. And, ironically, we admire and pity them who have caused all the trouble, and not their unhappy and moderate followers. Strife has been reproached with being ‘cold to the heart,’ in reality it is a volcano with a crust of ice.16

Though written about a topical problem, a five-month old strike in a Tin plate factory, Strife has a touch of universality in its theme. In simple terms its gist is the Marxian thesis of class struggle in history. Galsworthy points to the way of peace and prosperity in the midst of
class struggles. It is the way of ‘mutual understanding the way which Tench and Harness had found out before the strife began. Philosophically too, the play has a universal idea. It is, in Galsworthy’s own words, the perishing of the sword by the sword. The fatal things, says the dramatist, is strong will minus self control and balance.

In *Strife* Galsworthy presents conflict at various levels. The dual fight takes place between two uncompromising ideologies, Capital and Labour. Simultaneously runs the tug between two individuals, Anthony and Roberts, representing these ideals respectively. Within the Capitalist group there is a tension between the two generations. Anthony the father behaves in the ‘rule with the iron hand’, and his children Edgar and Enid plead for a more compromising and tolerant outlook to such problems. Within the same group there are few like Scantlebury who are not so stubborn or fanatic, but on the other hand are prepared for compromise. They are ready to yield and let down even their leader as they do finally in the case of Anthony. Similarly within the Labour group we find some ideals existing. Collectively, almost following the mob–instinct, they glamour for certain general privileges but their social awareness has not yet become strong enough to withstand all pressure and resist temptations. People like Madge and Rous still have only half understood ideals. Their’s is not a conscious revolt. They turn against their own leader and make black legs of themselves.
Another parallel conflicting trend is at the individual level when there is a clash between opposing ideals within one’s own mind. Duty towards one’s family runs counter to this type is Roberts. Galsworthy shows the disastrous effects of extremism when individuals identify themselves with the causes they represent. Roberts and Anthony in Strife are victims of such extremist attitudes. He made it clear that the strike theme was just a foil and that the Universal appeal was not conditioned by the exigencies of the topic. The audience should go not to see Capital and Labour ‘get a hoist’ but “to see human nature in the thick of fight, the heroism of die-hardism and the Nemesis that dogs it.”

The protagonists, Anthony and Roberts, are “heroic” in their dogmatism and stubbornness. And, apart from this, they represent the eternal and universal friction of the two great powers always at work in nature, the friction between which supplies the energy that drives the world forward. Thus, in a limited sense it becomes a necessary evil and an inevitable condition for social progress. Leon Schalit rightly observes:

In this play right and wrong, tragedy and irony seem equally distributed between the enemy camps. The assertion ‘everything has two sides’ was probably never so justified by any modern drama as by Strife. Certainly the author pities the sorely suffering workmen, in particular their wives and children, more than the well-fed share holders who pocket their dividends; but he shows ‘Labour’ as hardly less in the wrong than ‘Capital.’ And, in the struggle between John Anthony, Chairman of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works and David Roberts, leader of the strikers, out sympathy and
antipathy constantly waver between the two; at the end, we feel profound pity for both of them.\(^{18}\)

Galsworthy is a master of situations. *Strife* abounds in such extremely tense dramatic moments. The meeting between Enid and Annie Roberts is striking instance. Enid is torn between her affection for Annie and a sense of superiority and insult because of Robert’s cynical and hostile attitude. Annie has no other choice except to stand by her husband’s honour and ideals, in spite of her affection and respect for Enid. Roberts has to fight his soft feelings and evince attitude of hostility towards Enid. When the three characters meet, tension is created because they represent not only their individual selves, but clashing ideals. Another instance of Galsworthy’s mastery over situations is the scene when Madge the fire brand breaks into Enid’s room to inform her of Annie’s death. A very suggestive and mildly symbolic touch is effected by the baby frock Enid had been stitching. Madge in her typical sardonic manner tries to make Enid feel uneasy and perturbed. A very significant contrast is drawn here by the slight touch. Madge, coming from Annie’s house conveying the news of her death represents life that is barren and wasted. Annie who was longing for children had to die childless. Here is an atmosphere of waste, frustration and hopelessness, contrasted with a prosperous flowering life as envisaged by Enid.
Galsworthy’s masterpiece is the last scene where Anthony and Roberts meet. W.L. Courtney remarks about the impact on the average audience:

It is impossible to avoid a feeling of dissatisfaction with a play which is intended to excite the keenest interest, but which finally resolves itself into a drawn battle….ending in an impose or on a note of interrogation. But it also explains why such a drama can never be popular in the best sense of the term and must belong to the intellectual drama of a clique rather than to the nation at large.\textsuperscript{19}

This criticism is not applicable to \textit{Strife} because the very purpose with which it was written was quite different. Being a problem–play, it specifically concentrates on class–war and its undesirable effects.

Galsworthy claims that he is an impartial observer in the clashes between his major characters. This is true but not absolutely. In \textit{Strife}, Roberts and Anthony are allowed to present their cases with utter objectivity, yet we find that Galsworthy’s sympathy is with Roberts. A.C. Ward comments:

In the earlier part of the play, the scales are held dispassionately by the dramatist, and the audience feel only the desperate futility of the tragic pride and prejudice on both sides. But at the end of the story, Galsworthy destroys in a moment the illusion of impartiality.\textsuperscript{20}

In \textit{Strife} as well as in other plays of similar themes, Galsworthy makes the invisible social structure the hero and the characters act as mere puppets. They have very little independent existence. Even when
they are individualised they are intensely typical. All of them show their weakest spots in a time of struggle. All of them are selfish human beings. They suffer from internal schisms and rivalries. Anthony and Roberts are left alone their followers drift away from them and end the strife on their own terms. Hence it is not the personal hero that governs the events of the play. It is the social structure and that is where the fun comes in Galsworthy’s plays. In conclusion, as Leon Schalit states:

… this play … this play created the greatest sensation both in London and New York and consolidated the author’s fame as a playwright …. Not even today, in spite of all social revolutions and changes brought about by the war, has Strife lost any of its ‘eternal value.’ On the contrary, the vast strikes of recent years only go to prove that no essential change has taken place in the relation between Capital and Labour—outwardly perhaps, much, inwardly hardly any. That problem today is as unsolved as when Strife was penned. As for the underline theme of hybris, according to immutable lasts, the struggle between extremists for power, goes on now as then. In this work, Galsworthy has well shown the width of his conceptions.21

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In Loyalties Galsworthy presents the deep human truth that we all have our special prejudices or loyalties. The play deals with racial prejudice but Galsworthy has given the play a universal significance by suggesting that it is just human to have prejudices. Loyalties breathes the typical Galsworthian irony in the very title. It is a synonym for caste–
fanaticism, the tendency of people of the same race to cling together whether right or wrong, when they have to face any ‘external attack’. It is a manifestation of a false sense of espirit de corps. Galsworthy alters the common pattern in such themes, it is the Christian who is at fault. Loyalty to the class as well as individual loyalty are dealt with. The Play Loyalties opens in Meldon Court the house of Mr. Charles Winsor. The house is situated near New market, a racing centre. Winsor’s friends namely Lord St. Erth, General Canynge, Major Colford, Captain Ronald Dancy (retired), Ferdinard De Levis and Miss. Margaret Orme stay with him. According to Leon Schalit:

The theme of this play in three acts and seven scenes—dramatically one of the author’s most effective—may be said to be international. In every country, and every caste, in politics, in all national, rational and religious questions, in corporations, unions and cliques, in all marriage, family, amical and social relations, does the conception of “loyalty”, of faithful adherence, of esprit de corps crop up. Repeatedly the problem arises: If one of ‘ourselves’ puts himself into the wrong, is guilty of a shady action, how far are his social equals, his intimate friends and relatives, under an obligation to warn and advice him, to shield him and parry his assailant? For, if his unprincipled behavior becomes public, not he alone is compromised there by; it may lead to the exposure and humiliation of the whole community, family, or what not of which he is a member. The closes and stronger the tie of friendship or blood, the higher the opinion we have of the person implicated, the more difficult is it for us to believe in his guilty?22
Winsor is a tall, handsome man of about thirty eight. His wife Lady Adela is a beautiful lady about thirty five years old. Lord St. Erth is a peer of the realm and a typical English man. General Canynge is a slim man of about sixty. He has preserved his health well. He is keenly interested in racing. Infact, he is called as an a racing oracle. Ferdinand De Levis is a dark, good looking, rather Eastern youngman. He is a Jew: “That young man has too much luck—the young bounder won two races to-day; and he’s as rich as Croesus” (633). Here Winsor has used a simile. De Levis is said to be as rich as Croesus. Winsor has prejudice against Jews and so he cannot help disliking De Levis. He won two races that day. The Christians do not like him but Lady Adela has invited him because she has got some Jewish blood herself and she sympathized with De Levis. Dancy gave him a mare named Rosemary because he did not think highly of her and could not afford the expenses of keeping her.

De Levis, however had sold her to a bookie for £1000 that very day, the very money which has just been stolen from him. He lost a bet of 10 pounds that evening to Captain Dancy who look a standing jump to a bookcase for feet high. But De Levis made fun of Dancy for his parlour tricks. Captain Ronald Dancy behaved like a hero in the war, a thorough sportsman, a lover of horses has recently retired from the army life to live peacefully. He loves adventure. His wife Mabel is a pretty young woman. They were recently married.
Dancy and Colford are great friends. They shared many adventures together. Margaret Orme is a society girl. She has a lot of common sense and is sincere at heart. The first scene takes place in Winsor’s room. It is about eleven thirty at night. Winsor has just come back and is getting ready to go to bed. He calls his wife from the adjacent bedroom and asks whether she had won in the bridge game. Lady Adela replies that she had no luck and the persons who won were Lord St. Erth and De Levis. Winsor replies that De Levis is very lucky. He wants to be in a high position and wants to mingle with high society. He wants to become a member of the jockey club which controls all horse racing in England. That is why he is trying to win the favour of Lord St. Erth and General Canynge. Winsor says that Dancy is in financial difficulties. It is strange that in these situations he thought of getting married. Mabel, his wife is a very nice girl and they love each other very much. But Winsor thinks that she loves him much more than he loves her. Winsor says that he likes Dancy very much but he is unable to understand him.

Lady Adela returns to her bed room. There is a knock at the door and De Levis comes in. He is wearing pyjamas and flowered dressing gown. Winsor is surprised at his visit. De Levis is in a disturbed state and he tells Winsor that £1000 in notes have just disappeared from under his pillow. He says that he had gone to bath room after locking up the door of his room which opened into the
gallery. He must have been away only for about fifteen minutes. He tells Winsor that he got this money from Kentman, a bookie as the sale price of his mare. Winsor is shocked to hear all this. He is very unhappy that the theft took place in his house.

Winsor does not want any fuss to be made in his house. He feels that it is a private house and not a hotel. If there is a house search and a regular investigation it would bring a bad name to Meldon Court. He trusts his servants and does not want them to be suspected: “Let’s have as many alibis as we can” (636). He wants to suppress the whole thing and wants to declare everyone in the house innocent. The question of suspecting any guest does not arise. When De Levis asks the names of the persons staying in the room adjacent to his, Winsor gets annoyed. Lady Adela comes into the room and both of them examine the loss of De Levis.

Winsor thinks that the thief must have come into the room through the balcony and the open window during the fifteen minutes while De Levis was in the bath room and he must have gone out the same way. De Levis quite naturally wants to get his money back as it is not a small amount. De Levis wants the police to be informed. This is the last thing that Winsor wanted. A police investigation would create a big scandal. But De Levis insists on the police being informed. Winsor accepts it and asks his wife to ring up the police station at New market. But Winsor wants them to believe that De Levis lost the money
at the race course and not in his house. He feels that such a thing does not happen in a decent hour.

Treasure, the butler is called. He has been in the house since he was a child. Winsor trusts him. De Levis suspects Treasure and also Roberts who was working for him as a valet. De Levis tells them that he had kept the shoe in his box and locked up the box. When he came back from dinner he took the money and had put it under his pillow and gone to the bathroom. When he came back from the bathroom he found that the money was gone. Treasure suggested that they should search the house thoroughly. But Winsor absolutely refused to suspect anybody.

General Canynge is informed by Lady Adela and he comes in. Canynge asks Treasure about the height of the room. Treasure informs them that the balcony is twenty three feet high from the terrace. He replies that there is only one heavy ladder in the stables but it has not been moved from there.

De Levis is annoyed at the unsympathetic attitude of Canynge and Winsor and he leaves the room saying, “When the police come, perhaps you’ll let me know” (639).

Lady Adela comes with Margaret Orme. She tells that Inspector Dede of the New market police station is coming on his motor cycle like the wind. Margaret does not take the whole thing seriously. She asks if she is suspected. She is asked whether she has seen or heard
anything between 11:15 and 11:30. She replies that she heard only the sound of De Levis taking bath and had seen nothing. She continues to smoke and refuses to take things seriously.

Dancy and Mabel then enter into the room. Dancy looks pale and determined. Dancy feels uneasy when he hears that the police is called. He replies that he had seen no one. He tells that he was writing letters in the hall after he finished playing billiards with Colford. He tells that he had come up only ten minutes back. The sound of Inspector’s motor cycle is heard. Dancy leaves with his wife saying he is dog tired.

When the Inspector comes, Winsor and Canynge take him to De Levis’s room. The Inspector asks De Levis to describe exactly how the theft took place. He examines everything with his magnifying glass. He pretends as if he is an experienced person but he has no common sense. He thinks that if the thief were to come to the room he would search for the money in the places in the following order: the clothes, the dressing table, the suit case, the chest of drawers and the bed. The General feels that a thief would search the bed first but he keeps quiet. The Inspector forms his theories about the theft.

According to him there are four possibilities. The thief might have been in the room hiding under the bed and might have taken the money when De Levis went to the bathroom, or when he went to inform Winsor. Or he might have come inside with a master key while De Levis was in the bath room, or he might have come through the
window with the help of a rope or a ladder and have gone on the same way. The Inspector’s own idea is that the thief walked in while the dinner was going on and he hid under the bed all the time, took the money and escaped through the window. The Inspector makes a silly mistake by seeing the mark of a big boot. He feels that the thief had left his boot mark in the balcony. But the General points out and tells that it is the mark of Inspector’s own boot.

Winsor and Canynge tell the Inspector not to suspect anyone in the house as they don’t want a Meldon Court scandal. The General suggests him to go and get the numbers of the notes from Kentman, the bookie. The Inspector agrees and goes out to examine the grounds for any footprints.

De Levis now tells Canynge that he knew who had taken the money. He says that it is Dancy who had taken money. He visualizes how the whole thing might have happened. He says that Dancy knew that De Levis had been paid £1000 by Kentman on that day. He felt cut up because Rosemary is his own mare.

Dancy enters the room when De Levis is in the bathroom. He tries the door of De Levis but finds it locked, but he sees that the window is opened. Dancy goes into his room, goes to the balcony and from there he jumps to the balcony of De Levis, steals the notes and fills the pocket book with shaving papers. He twists and crushes the creeper in order to mislead the investigation. Then he jumps back to his own
balcony to mislead the investigation and goes down to the hall. The whole thing takes place in for minutes. The space between the two balconies is very little over seven feet and a person who takes a standing jump to a book case four feet high can easily take this jump. Mrs. Dancy does not know about this and has been sleeping in her bedroom all this while. Hearing this General gets angry and asks him to withdraw the accusation immediately: “If I were in Dancy’s shoes and he in mine, your tone to me would be very different” (647). But De Levis is not prepared to do such a thing. He says if Dancy returns his money and apologies to him, he will not take any action.

Canynge tells Winsor about this accusation and he is shocked. Canynge calls Dancy and asks him whether he knew about the sale of the mare. Dancy denies it. Canynge by change puts his hand on Dancy’s arm and finds it wet. It is raining outside. Dancy says that he did not go out at all. Canynge wonder how can his sleeve be wet. He thinks that Dancy had jumped from his balcony to that of De Levis. The General then concludes that Dancy had committed the theft and remains calm.

De Levis keeps quiet and Dancy goes back. When the Inspector comes back to the room the General and Winsor afraid that De Levis might tell him about his suspicion. But De Levis keep quiet. The Inspector does not get any clue and is puzzled. He says that he will ask the bookie about the numbers of the notes. He asks whether they are
suspecting anyone in the house. De Levis remains quiet but Winsor emphatically says, “No” (650). the Inspector leaves having found no clue at all.

Canynge tells Winsor about his suspicion of Dancy. Winsor also suspects Dancy now. But their loyalty is to him and so they decide to support him and make De Levis silent. They call De Levis and tell him that Dancy is an officer and a gentleman. De Levis replies, “My tongue is still mine, General, if my money isn’t!” (650). General then tries social blackmail to keep De Levis silent. De Levis is the member of three clubs and he wants to become a member of the Jockey Club. Canynge is the important member of the governing bodies of the clubs. So he warns De Levis that if he makes this allegation against Dancy again, they will completely dissociate themselves from him. Then he cannot be the member of the Jockey Club and he may be expelled from the other clubs. Here Canynge and Winsor show their class loyalty. They know that Dancy is a thief but they want to shield him and shed the mouth of De Levis because he is a Jew. “Better, then, to warn him at the outset, help him as best we can, but not blindly follow him to thick and thin.”

Three weeks after the theft Lord St. Erth, Winsor, General Canynge and Augustus Borring are seen playing Bridge in the club. Lord St. Erth and Canynge say that Whist is much better game than Bridge. Winsor says that Bridge is better than Whist. Suddenly Lord St.
Erth informs them that De Levis had not been elected as member of the jockey Club. This makes Canynge and Winsor uneasy because they have given promise to De Levis that they would make him the member of jockey Club if he remains silent. They are also informed about Rosemary which won the Cambridgeshire horse race. This is the same mare that Dancy had given to De Levis and which is again sold to Kentman for £1000. They think that Kentman must have won a lot of money. They feel that Dancy must be mad because he had given the mare to De Levis for nothing. De Levis must have been equally sad because if he had not sold Rosemary he would have got a lot of money after this race.

Dancy and De Levis are playing in-door games in different rooms of the club. When De Levis hears that he is not elected as a member of the Jockey Club, he becomes very angry and he is no more bound to his promise. He openly says that Dancy had taken his money and he is a thief. When Colford heard this in the billiard room he comes and tells Canynge that De Levis is saying openly that Dancy had robbed him at Winsor’s house. Canynge asks Colford to call De Levis to his room. Lord St. Erth asks Winsor whether Kentman had given the numbers of the notes to the police. Winsor informs him that Kentman had the numbers of only two of the notes. The police is unable to trace them.

De Levis is called there. He is in a highly excited mood. Canynge tells him that his conduct in accusing another member of the
theft is scandalous and he must explain his conduct and one of the two will have to be removed from the membership of the club. St. Erth calls him a “venomous young man” (654). De Levis says that they are chasing him like a pack of hounds because he is a Jew. He calls Dancy: “a common sharper!” (655).

Winsor tells him that he is making this accusation without any proof. De Levis says that Dancy knows that Rosemary is sold to kentman. Dancy can jump like a cat. There is not foot print on the ground near the window. The creeper on his balcony is crushed. All this prove that Dancy had jumped to his balcony and took the money. Lord St. Erth tells De Levis that he is saying this without any proof. A case can be brought against him for making this accusation: “I’m marked for Coventry now, whatever happens. Well, I’ll take Dancy with me” (655). De Levis tells them that he would expose Dancy to such an extent that he too will be expelled from polite society as they have banished him from their club and their society. Courts need proof and without it he may be fined and even sent to prison. De Levis wants to be confronted with Dancy. When Dancy is called and then this accusation is made, his reaction is very strange. Dancy wants to know on what grounds De Levis is making this allegation. When De Levis tells him his reasons, Dancy tells him that he can settle it with any weapon when and where he likes.
Lord St. Erth says that if De Levis does not withdraw his accusation he has to take it to the court to save his honour. When Dancy calls De Levis a “damned Jew!” (656), De Levis calls Dancy a thief and says, “You called me a damn Jew. My race was old when you were all savages. I am proud to be a Jew. Au revoir, in the courts” (657), and challenges him to bring his action in the court. St. Erth asks him to consider his membership of the club suspended. De Levis tells him not to trouble himself about his membership as he has resigned it. De Levis tells Dancy that he is proud to be a Jew. Then he tells him that they will again meet in the court. Dancy is asked a few questions. They suspect Dancy but they want to support him. Canynge says that it is for De Levis to prove what he alleged. Lord St. Erth says that for upholding the honour of the club of which he is a member, Dancy has to file a defamation suit against De Levis. Dancy replies that he has to think over it and he is in financial difficulties and litigation is a costly process. Canynge says that De Levis has made the allegation of several members. If he does not file a suit against De Levis people will think that there is some truth in the allegation. Dancy leaves after saying, “I might prefer to look on the whole thing as beneath contempt” (657). St. Erth and Borring are suspicious of him. Canynge knows that Dancy has stolen money because he had touched Dancy’s wet sleeve after the theft, but he wants to support him because of his loyalty to his fellow army officers. Winsor also knows that Dancy had committed the theft but he
supports him because he has known him since he was a child. Colford supports Dancy because Dancy is his true friend. Colford says, “You may have my head if he did it, Lord St. Erth” (657). His loyalty to “An old school-fellow, a brother officer, and a pal” (658). is absolute. He declares, “He didn’t. But if he did, I’d stick to him, and see him through it, if I could.” (658).

The next day Margaret Orme and Mabel Dancy are sitting on a couch in the centre of the sitting room and are talking in an excited manner. Margaret tells her that her husband had stolen money at Meldon Court. Mabel is surprised to hear this and tells her that her husband did not tell her about this. Mabel says that De Levis must be a beast to make such an allegation. She says that she was in her bedroom that day. Margaret asks whether the door between her room and Dancy’s room was open. Mabel replies that she does not know. She gives an indefinite answer. Margaret tells her that in the court she must say that the door was open. Mabel feels sad when she hears about the court. Margaret explains to Mabel that Dancy should bring a suit against De Levis to vindicate his honour. Mabel asks her if his honour would be fully vindicated if the verdict in the court is in his favour. Margaret is not sure. Margaret tells her that Canynge is supporting Dancy but is like lukewarm on his support. At this Mabel says, “I hate half-hearted friends. Loyalty comes before everything” (660). Margaret replies, “Ye-es; but Loyalties cut up against each other sometimes, you know” (660).
Mabel goes to ring up to her husband. Meanwhile Lady Adela arrives. “Enter the second murderer!” (660). She has also come to talk about the accusation against Dancy. Margaret tells Lady Adela that Mabel does not know anything about the theft till then. She tells her that there would be a court case and they would be witnesses. Lady Adela tells her in confidence that General thought Dancy is the thief because he touched the arms which were wet after the theft. Margaret tells her that she must support Dancy against the Jew. Margaret says that Dancy is one of those persons who cannot live without danger. They are in their elements when fighting a war or shooting maneaters. They are in love with adventure. But when there is no excitement they will do the maddest things for no mortal reason except the risk involved. Margaret also tells Lady Adela that before his marriage to Mabel, Dancy was in love with a foreign looking girl. As Margaret tells about Dancy’s past, curiosity is seen in Adela to know more about him. V. Dupont remarks:

An excellent example of delayed exposition delicately treated occurs in Scene II, Act II, of Loyalties. The conversation between Margaret Orme and Lady Adela is a perfectly naturally piece of gossip, throwing considerable light upon Dancy’s past career, as well as revealing plainly the spirit of clanship existing among his friends.  

But Margaret does not say anything further. Adela says, “Meg, you’re very tantalizing!” (661). She tells Margaret that she has aroused her interest and she is not satisfying it now.
While they were talking Mabel comes back. She could not contact Dancy on the phone. Margaret suggests Mabel that if there is going to be a case they should engage Mr. Jacob Twisden as their solicitor. Just then Dancy comes back. He understands that these ladies must have told everything about the theft. He does not like to hear any words of sympathy from them. Lady Adela and Margaret leave the house.

When two of them are left alone, Mabel embraces Dancy and kisses him but he remains rigid and does not respond. He only says that he wanted to see De Levis first before telling her. He feels that life in London is dull and boring. He proposes her that they should go to Nairobi and start a new life there. But Mabel objects that the people will say that they had run away. Dancy says that he does not care for what the people will say. In spite of everything that he might do people will suspect him. He cannot prove his innocence. Mabel however insists that they must stay and fight. Mabel has absolute faith in his innocence. Dancy says that they should consult an advocate.

De Levis comes to their house. They are surprised to see him alone. He tells her that he has come because Dancy went to see him when he was out and he says that he is not afraid of him. Mabel tells De Levis that he is making her husband to get bad name. She says that she does not believe that her husband is a thief: “Your wish is mother to your thought, that’s all” (663). De Levis replies that a wife chooses to forget things when her husband is in danger. De Levis says that she
is not telling a lie but what she is saying was prompted by her wish that her husband is innocent. De Levis admires her trust in her husband’s innocence. Mabel appeals him to withdraw the charge and write an apology that he can show to everyone.

De Levis replies that on the previous day before the incidents in the club, he could have done all that to spare her but the word “damned Jew” (664) called by Dancy hurt him a lot. De Levis says that he could not tolerate his whole race being insulted. Just then Dancy comes with a draft of an apology in his hand which he wants De Levis to sign. De Levis refuses to sign it because he does not want to withdraw the charge. Dancy gets angry and he wants to give him a thrashing. He tells Mabel to leave them alone. Mabel prevents them from coming to blows: “Quite right, Mrs. Dancy. Black and tan swash-buckling will only make things worse for him” (664). Dancy tears the paper to bits and throws it into the fire and shouts at him, “Get out of here, you swine!” (664). De Levis leaves the house. Then Dancy asks Mabel whether she believes him to be a thief. At first she doubts him and later asks him if he really stole the money. Dancy does not tell her truth. Mabel is an ideal wife and she feels sad that she had suspected her husband. She tells him that she believes in him. She trusts him though all the world regards him as a thief. Later Mabel and Dancy go to meet Mr. Jacob Twisden and a defamation suit is filed against De Levis.
After three months the case has made considerable progress. Dancy’s solicitors are Twisden and Graviter, and his counsel Sir Frederic. The Jews are all sympathizing with De Levis but the general public wants Dancy to win. Twisden is in his office, busy with Dancy’s case. Mr. Gilman, head of a firm of grocers, comes to discuss a very important issue with Twisden. Mr. Gilman talks very leisurely. He talks about his business, Twisden’s reputation as a lawyer, Graviter is bored by his talk. He is asked to wait for Mr. Twisden in another room.

Winsor and Margaret arrive and they inform Graviter that the witnesses of De Levis have been examined. Winsor informs Graviter that General Canynge is summoned by the court to give evidence. The numbers of the two of the stolen notes have been printed in the evening papers. Winsor says that this case has caused as much sensation in England as the Dreyfus case had caused in France: “It’s becoming a sort of Dreyfus case—people taking sides quite outside the evidence” (668). All the Jews are supporting De Levis. Margaret does not like it. Jacob Twisden now comes in. He is an old man of sixty eight and everything about him seems to be narrow. He is dedicated to his profession, law. Winsor informs Twisden that the General in the course of his evidence, may mention the fact of the wet sleeve and that may go against Dancy. He says that General is a truthful person. So Dancy should be ready with his explanation: “I’ve been sitting in that Court all these three days, watching, and it’s made me feel there’s nothing we like better
than seeing people skinned” (669). Winsor and Margaret was not to tell this to Dancy in the absence of Mabel because Mabel trusts her husband seeing this Twisden starts to suspect Dancy. He feels upset.

Twisden now calls Gilman the grocer, who says that he has come from a sense of duty. He has been following the Dancy case and at half past two that afternoon he read in the evening paper the numbers of the stolen notes.

He remembered having given change for a fifty pound note. So he went to his cash box to make sure that it is not a stolen note. He remembers that he gave change to Mr. Ricardos, an Italian wine seller and one of his old customers. He at once went to Ricardos and showed him the stolen note. He says that he is an honourable person but could not say where he got the note from. Gilman tells him that he is going to Mr. Twisden, who handles Dancy’s case. Ricardos agrees to come and is sitting in the cab outside. Gilman says that he would be glad if the discovery of this note helps Dancy to win the case. He says that he doesn’t like Jews because they are very good in organising business and they prosper well in it. He is against the Jews because of his loyalty to the Christians and Jews are successful rivals in his trade. Now Ricardos is called in. He is an Italian-looking man. He is very anxious. When he is asked about the stolen notes he says that he would tell everything in private. Mr. Twisden gives £50 to Gilman for his note and tells him that
he has done his duty well. He advises him not to speak about it to anyone, and Gilman takes his leave.

Now Twisden and Graviter examine Richardos about the recovery of the stolen notes. At first Ricardos does not want to say anything about the stolen note. Twisden tells him that it will be his duty to inform the Bank of England that the stolen note has been traced to him and he will have to explain to them how he came in possession of it. Now Ricardos tells everything. He says that it is a painful thing for him because it concerns the good name of his daughter. The money given to him in settlement of a debt of honour and he did not know from where that gentleman got money. He gives Mr. Twisden the £100 note also the number of which had appeared in the papers. Graviter asks him how much is he paid for it. Richardos says thousand pounds and it is paid in the middle of October. Twisden asks whether it is Dancy. Ricardos hesitates and wants to be assured that his daughter will not hear it. Ricardos says that Dancy had made all this. He admits that he blackmailed Dancy for money and threatens him that he will tell his wife about him, if he does not give him money. Then Dancy gives Ricardos £1000. He invests everything except £100 in her name. Mr. Twisden keeps the stolen note and allows him to go. Graviter takes his address.

Twisden now comes to a conclusion that Dancy is a thief. He decides that he will not take the case anymore. He wants to inform Sir
Federic, who conducts case in the court, about the latest developments of the case. Twisden has loyalty to his profession. Graviter shows sympathy toward Dancy and his wife because they have kept confidence in them. He tells Twisden that Ricardo and Gilman won’t talk. So money should be paid to De Levis and case should be closed. But Twisden does not accept it. He says that his loyalty towards his profession is more important than his loyalty towards the client. He insists that they should withdraw the case. He asks Graviter to call Dancy on the phone. But they find that Mrs. Dancy has come there to see them. She tells them that Dancy is not at home. Colford had taken him out last night.

Twisden says that he has to meet Dancy before the court meets the next day. He tells her that there is no need for her to come to the court the next day. He tells her that he has given up the case. Mabel leaves. For Twisden professional loyalty comes before all other feelings with him. He wants to meet Sir Frederic but he is told that the counsel had gone to Brighton for the night. He thereupon gets his address and decides to go and meet him there. Sir Frederic agrees with him completely and has decided to give up the case. Dancy comes to meet Twisden. Twisden covers the two notes on the table with a blotting sheet. Then Dancy comes in. Twisden tells him not to go to the court. He uncovers the two notes and tells him that Ricardos has come and explained all the story. Now Dancy understands that the whole thing is
out. Twisden tells him that he has given up the case. He warns Dancy that a warrant may be issued for his arrest any time. He strongly advises him to leave the country at once as arrest is possible for him any moment. He suggests him to take the first train which will take him to a port, from there he can go to France. From France he can ship over the border to Spain and get a job as a soldier. He advises him to go at once and leave him to break the news to his wife.

Canynge and Graviter come to Twisden’s room. Graviter informs Twisdens that as soon as the court met, Sir Frederic got up and said that he was withdrawing the case. Canynge praises De Levis for his shrewdness because immediately after the theft he had suspected the right person. Colford is angry with the lawyers because they have withdrawn from the case. They are not playing the game. Whatever the client might have done, the lawyer must remain loyal to him. But Twisden explains that he had to sacrifice his duty to his client for the sake of a higher duty to his profession. In this conflict of loyalties they have remained loyal to their profession. Colford is a true friend of Dancy’s and he decides to stand by his side whatever happens to Dancy.

Margaret offers her jewels to pay De Levis and save Dancy but she does not realise that money cannot save Dancy. Twisden says that he has advised Dancy to go to Spain and take up a job there. Canynge writes a letter to a friend of his in the Spanish war office who can help
Dancy to get a job. Dancy suddenly appears and tells rudely that he will not tolerate any pity for him. He tells Twisden that he would go and tell his wife everything. General gives him the letter of introduction. He thanks him but he does not know whether he will use it or not. De Levis suddenly appears there. He warns them that a warrant is to be issued for Dancy’s arrest. He says that he does not want any money. He faces Dancy who looks at him with nothing alive in his face but his eyes. De Levis waits for a sign from Dancy but does not say anything. Then De Levis shrugs his shoulders and walks out. “The Jew here exemplifies the individual storming the closed phalanx of Society, this time with a somewhat negative result, for, as in so many more or less similar cases in Galsworthy’s works, he does not really enjoy his triumph. To call de Levis a ‘Shylock in evening dress’ is fundamentally absurd; Shylock hates because, according to his whole nature and development, he cannot do otherwise; de Levis defends himself because they want to crush him.” When De Levis has gone Dancy is aroused as from a dream. He walks and slowly goes out.

Dancy goes to his house. He sees Mabel reading the newspapers which give the details of the theft done by him. Mabel asks Dancy if her presence is important and is needed in the court. Dancy tells her that the case has collapsed. Mabel in her innocence asks him whom they have found out. Dancy replies that it is he who has done all this. He tells all the story to Mabel and what made him to rob the money: “You
didn’t see the brute look at me that night at dinner as much as to say: ‘You blasted fool!’ It made me mad” (682). He nobly confesses that he is unworthy of her. He paid a debt to a woman whom he loved before. But now he loves his wife: “You supplanted her. But if you’d known I was leaving a woman for you, you’d never have married me” (682). He tells her that he may soon be arrested, prosecuted and sent to prison and so he had been advised to go to Morocco. Mabel is determined to be loyal to her husband until death. She says that she will stick to him and will not leave him. Incase if he is imprisoned she will wait for him until he returns. Whatever happens she will remain loyal to him. “Noblest of all these loyalties, because the most selfless and sacrificial, is Mabel’s wifely loyalty to her husband. At the moment when all the hideous facts about him come to light, and he stands utterly disgraced before the world, a beaten man, she never falters in her forgiving and affectionate devotion. Mabel Dancy is very differently situated from Mrs. Jones, Ruth Honeywill, and Clare Dedmond. Yet all four of them stand out as splendid examples of Galsworthy’s power of depicting the noblest side of woman’s nature.”26 Just then the door bell rings and the police arrive. They knock the door. Dancy knowing this goes into the room. Mabel engages the police so that Dancy can escape. The Inspector says that they have come there to arrest him and start searching. She appeals them to go away and comeback within half an hour. But the Inspector is loyal to his profession: “The Law’s the Law” (684). He has to
perform his duty sincerity however painful it might be. Colford and Margaret come to the house. Dancy says from within, “You can come in now” (684). They hear the lock being opened. Then there is a pistol shot. Mabel rushes into the bedroom followed by the Inspector, Margaret, Colford. They find that Dancy has shot himself. “He dies as a brave soldier, which goes far to reconcile us to him, and is, at the same time, a relief. Bad intent could so twist facts that it might be said: ‘The Jew drove him to his death.’ Actually it is unbridled temperament, his unconsiderate willfulness, his arrogant nature which have brought him to this pass. During the war, he was in his element; after the war, he is at a loose end. His daring, his resolute strength come to grief against his adversary’s courage of conviction and brain power, and this it is which finally drives him to death.”

Colford and Margaret reappear supporting Mabel who faints. In Loyalties, the thief ends by doing what he considers the only decent thing left for him, liberating his wife from association with a dishonoured man. Colford takes from her hand an envelope which is addressed to him. In his farewell message Dancy writes, “This is the only decent thing I can do. It’s too damned unfair to her. It’s only another jump. A pistol keeps faith. Look after her, Colford” (685). Colford blames Inspector for Dancy’s death. “you’ve done for my best friend” (685).
Margaret refers to Dancy’s statement that a pistol keeps faith. They were all loyal to Dancy but could not avoid the tragedy. Colford promises that he will look after Mabel according to Dancy’s last wish.

“Keeps faith! We’ve all done that. It’s not enough” (685). Margaret’s words contain the essence of the play. One should of course be loyal to one’s own race or nation or religion or class or profession. This loyalty is necessary for the smooth working of our daily life. But this loyalty should be kept within limits. Loyalty at the cost of justice and morality is no virtue at all and may have tragic consequences. The friends of Dancy, who knew that guilty should have persuaded him to confess the guilt and return the money to the Jew. If they had done this everything would have been all right. But these people were loyal to him supported him, encouraged him and so they were all responsible for his tragic end. As Leon Schalit remarks:

The great interest of this drama, the technique of which is masterly from first to last, consists in the attitude taken by each individual to the accusation brought against the leading character. And here be it premised that Galsworthy had not the faintest intention of writing a ‘pro-Semite’ play. Apart from the cosmopolitan touch which most great creative artists possess, Galsworthy is so English in every fibre of his being that he would assert, indeed, has asserted, that he is neither sufficiently interested nor competent enough, to treat of specially Jewish problems. De Levis, the Jew stands out as the individual arrayed against Society. But Galsworthy might, with equal right, have singled out any
‘outsider’, not recognized by English society as a social equal. By the fact, however, that the ‘outsider’ happens to be a Jew, the conflict gains in salience, in actuality, and universality. With the writer’s impartiality, nowadays almost unique, each pro and con has been weighed so conscientiously, light and shade so equally distributed, that it is hard to understand how this drama could cause Galsworthy to be stamped by critics and public as either Philosemite and Antisemite.\textsuperscript{28}

Commenting on the social vision and artistic integrity of Galsworthy’s \textit{Loyalties}, Cunliffe suggests how this play was a breakthrough in his career:

During and after the war Galsworthy produced and published a number of plays, some of which did not meet with the approval either of the critics or of the public. Of these it is enough to say, in the words of St. John Ervine, that they belong to “the class of work done by a distinguished man on a wet day when he is rather tired”. The list of comparative failures was, however, broken by two remarkable successes—\textit{The Skin Game} and \textit{Loyalties}. The former sets forth the havoc wrought by the incursion of a pushing northern manufacturer into a country society. The aristocrat succeeds in driving him out but only at the sacrifice of every delicacy of feeling which makes aristocracy worth its salt. The ‘Hillerists’ and the ‘Hornblowers’ are admirably characterized and contrasted (perhaps with a little extra sympathy for the aristocratic side), and Galsworthy shows unusually clever stage-craft in
the management of material which at times demanded very
delicate treatment.

*Loyalties* is even a better play, with an exciting plot, which
would have turned to melodrama but for the defects of the
handling. It revolves round the theft in a country-house of
£1000 from the bedroom of a young Jewish guest who
makes himself sufficiently disagreeable to alienate the
sympathies of his fellow-guests—and of the audience. He
suspects a wild young officer who occupies the next room,
and in spite of the social pressure brought to bear upon
him, he does not keep his suspicion to himself. The matter
becomes one for the club of which both are members and
is ultimately the subject for an action for slander. The
young D.S.O.’s solicitor and counsel receive privately
convincing proof of his guilt, and withdraw from the case.
The young officer finds the only solution in suicide. The
theme of the play is indicated by its title, but is not unduly
stressed in the action, which brings out, subtly and
naturally, clashing loyalties of the various characters—
loyalty to one’s race, to one’s friends, to one’s profession,
to one’s regiment, to one’s club and so on.²⁹

Suggesting the importance of stylization in drama, A.C. Ward finds

*Loyalties* denuded and threadbare:

In *Loyalties* the treatment and the language are so denuded
of superfluity as to be almost threadbare. Dialogue in a
play though it must be free of cloudiness and ambiguity
and tautology, cannot afford to be meager and bare. The
illusion of life upon the stage depends mainly upon the
quality of the dialogue, which must have warmth and
certain richness and even, what might be called, a fine excess. Simplicity of aim and singleness of purpose are merits in literature, but when these are carried too far, the result is bloodlessness and absence of human warmth. *Loyalties* is saved from bloodlessness only by the character of Jacob Twisden, the old solicitor, but neither he nor any other character in Galsworthy’s more recent plays can compare with Mrs. Jones, the charwoman, in *The Silver Box*, or John Anthony in *Strife*.\(^{30}\)

Philip in his criticism draws attention to Galsworthy’s penchant for the exceptional happenings and exceptional men in the play like *Loyalties*. With an artist’s eye he sees the ironic and the paradoxical:

Mr. Galsworthy as a dramatist has dealt almost exclusively in those cruel exceptions whose suffering proves the rule. If he permits justice to intrude on his stage, it is in the form of miscarriage of justice. If he tolerates an accident one may be sure that it is a particularly wanton accident. If there is any luck going it will be bad luck. His point of view as a dramatist, from the days of *The Silver Box* to the days of *Loyalties*, is an extension, a projection upon the stage of the faintly oppressive humanitarianism which haunts his earlier writings. He seems to pity humanity with the mild monotony of a figure in a *Pieta*. He regards life rather as a retired inspector of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children must regard parents. The sight of a butterfly makes him think of wheels; and he can hardly bear a look at a fly without remembering the cruel amber. It is a point of view, like another; and Mr. Galsworthy has embalmed it in an admirable series of plays. Haunted by
the cruelty of life, he tends somehow to specialize in the sort of people to whom life is always cruel, in that concave type which appears to have been designed to meet the impact of the disaster in those shadowy figures who seem to wait, effaced in their little corners, for the inquest and the corner. the faintly ineffectual charwoman who flits across the tragedy of *The Silver box*, the helpless little clerk broken in *Justice*, even gesticulating emptiness of the post-war dare-devil who succumbs to the complex of *Loyalties* are all, one feels, congenial to Mr. Galsworthy’s rather nurse-like taste for weakness. He seems to prefer his little men and women to hang about apron-strings; and it is almost always the Red Cross, scarcely ever the fiery cross, that he raises. The rare group of Mr. Galsworthy’s plays is only half due to the subject. They owe the other half to the concentration of his method. You will never find in anyone of his pieces that there’s a word in the mouth of any character which is not strictly relevant to the tussle round which the play is built. There are no stray snatches of conversation, none of those little irrelevancies of which the real life is so full; because if you are to state a case in three hours, there is no time for them. His people are exhibited with the one or two salient points of character which are necessary for the play, and one hardly imagines them in any other situation. One seems to see them always in relief, never in solid, three dimensional sculpture. The method—one may call it economical or meager, according to taste—suffices admirably for the drama. But for the novelist it is a frail equipment.31
Hermon points to the Shakespearean feeling in Galsworthy’s plays. In Shakespeare’s dramas the opening scene is an exposition scene introducing the theme or themes which are elaborated in the course of the play. In *Loyalties* we find the main motive of *Loyalties* running across without a let up:

*Loyalties* is a model of its kind. The statement of the situation in the first scene could hardly have been more concise or more provocative: the atmosphere becomes tense at once, and the tension is maintained with little letting up, until the end of the play. Once more we have a case of an abstract idea dominating the whole work; the idea of loyalty—to class, to club, to friends, to employer, to wife, to husband to one’s profession, to the traditions of the army. Galsworthy was amazingly fecund in inventing situations which enabled him to rub his moral; but even more amazing was his skill in combining them all in one play, inter linked and mutually dependant without losing verisimilitude. It is only when the play is over and one looks back on it that the true theme—loyalty, or more properly, the inadequacy of loyalty, is made clear. The play stands firmly on its feet as a drama, rather thrilling, vivid and it times moving; it would have made its appeal as ‘a slice of life’ even if no moral had been implicit.32

In his assessment of Galsworthy’s plays Allardyce Nicoll stresses the novelty of his method of investing ordinariness with a heroic potential:

All of his plays exhibit the same features—the omnipresence of the fundamental social problem expressed in a severely
natural manner, without straining of situations or exaggeration of final issues; corresponding naturalism of dialogue, leading at times to an apparent ordinariness; a native kindliness of heart added to the sternness of the true tragic artist; and a complete absence of sentimentalism even when pitiful scenes are introduced. These mark the most outward features of Mr. Galsworthy’s realistic theatre, but there is one another quality which is often overlooked by his critics. The very titles of his dramas give a due to this quality. It is not Macbeth and Hamlet that Mr. Galsworthy writes, not even of Mr. Stockmannas or of Nans; his characters are all ordinary, common place men and women such as we might meet with everyday. Sometimes, indeed instead of being above they seem to be below the general average of human intellect and of human power. This has led a number of critics to question the force of his tragic appeal. No great hero is presented to us in these plays. They say; therefore our highest passions are not called out as they are summoned irresistibly forth by king Lear and Othello. These critics seem mistakenly to have stumbled upon what marks out Mr. Galsworthy’s tragedies as distinctive in their time. Instead of taking as his heroes the men of individualised and peculiarly great qualities, he has adopted the faiths, ideals and forces of modern social life. In this, perhaps, he is but expressing more forcibly than others a tendency visible everywhere in the early twentieth century, and in one respect he had thus anticipated the methods on which Toller’s ‘expressionistic’ style is based. When Mr. Bernard Shaw reduced that old Victorian ideal, Napoleon Bonaparte, to a rather ordinary human being, and displayed Cleopatra as Kittenish young scape grace, he was
but doing cynically what Mr. Galsworthy would do seriously. The age of hero-worship seemed to have passed by. Individualism was a Renaissance product; in the highly civilized twentieth century the faith and the class seemed to swallow up the personalities who threw themselves into this or that movement. Men did not stand against as Napoleon; their terror was aroused by forces which might seem dominated by one single figure, but which they realized were after all, that one man’s invincible master. The class-war which faced men was not the creation of Capitalist or Communist; it was the creation of the twentieth century social condition.  

Several characteristics of drama are blended together in *Loyalties*. The age-old feud between the Jew and the Christian introduced against the modern background when it assumes the form of the class-war becomes very effective. The elements of a detective play are also interfused with crime, suspense, thrill and discovery. There is another traditional theme of ‘honour’ introduced in the last part of the play. It is to make amends for the wrong he did to the Italian girl that Dancy had to give her a thousand pounds. It is because of all these elements which are combined; construction, conflict, climax, catastrophe, characterization, ironic treatment, humour in grave situation are all masterly. It is again a duel with unbuttoned foils; again as in so many of his dramas, a rebellion of the weaker, of the individual against the phalanx of society. According to Schalit:
In New York, in Vienna, Berlin and other German towns, this play, which has made Galsworthy famous everywhere, has roused the furious anger, the burning indignation of all extremists, Gentile or Jew, without, however, any effect whatever on its triumphal career. Some ebullient critics took refuge in pillorying the play as a ‘criminal play’, ‘detective and cinema drama’, and, whereas the writer had formerly been labeled ‘critic of Society’, it was now thought fit to stigmatise him as a ‘skilful, blatant melodramatist’, while all the surface details of the plot were seized on, without the slightest effort being made to understand the essential idea of Loyalties. But these absurd fanaticisms drop off this powerful work like water off a duck’s back. In Vienna and Berlin, the play also aroused lengthy polemics between jurists over the correctness of the lawyer’s conduct in the Dancy—De Levis case, which, however, was founded on the facts of a somewhat similar cause célèbre a generation ago, in England.34

Galsworthy has deviated from the traditional pattern followed in handling such a theme where the Jew will invariably be a typical Shylock and the rival Christian will be a paragon of virtues. But here the Christian is at fault in more than one way and is driven to suicide when the truth is brought to light. The ending is rather theatrical, but it fits in naturally with the course of events and the character of Dancy. Leon Schalit rightly says that:

It is very seldom that a writer not only understands the theatre but can also create a drama of ideas. In Galsworthy we find this combination, rare to-day, yet this is sometimes
put to the debit of his reputation. Theft, police, cross-examinations, court of justice, suicide, elements, despised of some, are absolutely essential in *Loyalties* for the furthering of the theme. They are not the end, but the *means* to the end. The theft here is as little a vulgar theft as that in *The Silver Box*, and the more striking the drama of the piece, the more surely has the writer gained his end; i.e., to stir up the audience, to make them reflect, to awake in them a new perception and conscience, more humanitarian sentiments and deeper sympathy.²³

As R.H. Coats remarks:

In *Loyalties* all are true to what they believe to be the best traditions of the set or class to which they happened to belong. Winsor is true to his ideal of gentlemanly hospitality; Canynge, to the fine traditions and *esprit de corps* of a British Army officer; Berring, to codes of honour prevailing in his club. De Levis is moved by Jewish national pride. ‘My race was old,’ he says, ‘when your all savages.’ Twisden feels he must not depart from the best legal etiquette, or sully the good name of his profession. ‘When you have been as long in your profession as I have been,’ he remarks to Major Colford, ‘you will know that duty to your calling outweighs duty to friend or client.’

Similarly, Ricardos is loyal to his daughter, the butler and foot-man to their employer, the police sergeant to his superior officer, and Margaret Orme and Major Colford to their ideals of friendship. Even the young clerk in Twisden’s office is intensely absorbed in his employer’s case. ‘It’s like football,’ he explains. ‘You want your side to win.’ Finally Dancy himself is loyal to his own
conception of a manly, dare-devil, military life. He has always believed in recklessness and bravado, in doing the crazy thing for no mortal reason except the risk, and it is this daring element in him that has won him the D.S.O. After all, loyalty to one’s class, though better than selfish egoism, still comes short of what is required of us. Cast feeling isolates and antagonizes. Only sympathy and cooperation unite. For groups, as well as for individuals, imagination is needed if we are ever to enter adequately into the minds of others.36

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The Eldest Son, with its basic idea of dual morality resembles The Silver Box. In construction, too, this drama, with its parallelism, bears a strong resemblance to The Silver Box. When compared with The Silver Box, The Eldest Son is more mature, more delicate, more finely shaded and more interesting in its character drawing. The Silver Box ends on a hopeless note, the rich carry the day, but in The Eldest Son, free spirit triumphs, and the “better class” (255) suffers a moral reverse. As Leon Schalit states, “The Eldest Son is, in milieu and characters, indeed, one of Galsworthy’s most typically English plays.”37 In The Eldest Son, the stand taken by the Cheshire family and the rapid evolution of Freda’s feelings are far more important than the love story.

The Eldest Son is a play which deals with class-consciousness. The opening scene takes place in Sir William’s house where Freda is seen standing at the stair-case with yellow and white roses. She is the daughter of Studdenham, head-game keeper in Sir William Cheshire’s
service. She gives white roses to Mabel Lanfarne, their guest, and yellow roses to Christine, William’s eldest daughter as Lady Cheshire said. Freda informs them that their under-keeper, Dunning, will not marry Rose Taylor as he has taken up another girl. Rose is the village siren with whom the under-keeper has had an entanglement. Christine feels sorry for it. Her husband Ronald Keith talks about Freda’s father and asks if he has gone for hunting. Hearing about Dunning’s news, Ronald says that Sir William will never keep a servant who has made a scandal in the village. In the play, the story of the village girl is soon felt to have great meaning; or it may be conveyed in a tableau, an attitude, a gesture: the motionlessness of Freda in the centre of the opening picture, while her social betters only pass before her, quickly indicates the waiting-maid as one of the leading figures in the coming drama. John Latter, a clergyman, is engaged to Sir William’s youngest daughter Joan.

In *The Eldest Son*, Bill, Sir William’s eldest son and heir to the title and estate, returns home after a longtime: “He is a tall, good-looking edition of his father, with the same stubborn look of veiled choler” (161). He is in love with Freda, a game-keeper’s daughter and maid to Bill’s mother. No one in the house knows their love affair. When Freda sees Bill coming she says that she has something to tell him after the dinner. All the family members have their dinner. After dinner Christine asks her mother if she knows about Dunning and Rose
Taylor. As they talk about Dunning, Dot interferes in their talk and asks why Dunning should marry Rose if he is not interested in her. Dot is serious, talkative, straightforward, dominating, always after her sister Joan. She asks them why people should get married if they are not in love. She asks them if they were in love with their husbands before marriage. Dot’s mother tries to shut her mouth but she repeats the same question. She keeps quiet when she hears that Rose Taylor is pregnant: “The approaching infant! God bless it!” (163). Seeing John and Keith, Dot reminds them about the rehearsal of the play. When Mabel asks Dot why she has selected the play Caste, she replies, “...it’s the only play that’s not too advanced” (164). Keith and John start discussing Dunning’s affair: “If a man wrongs a woman, he ought to right her again. There’s no answer to that” (164). John Latter wants Dunning to get married to Rose but Keith is against the marriage as Dunning is not interested: “Sir William and you would just tie Dunning and the girl up together, willy-nilly, to save appearances, and ten to one but there’ll be the deuce to pay in a year’s time” (164-165). According to him, Dunning marrying Rose is of no use as he is tired of her. It is just like taking the horse to the water but not being able to make it drink. Latter disagrees with it as he is a parson.

As Sir William is a baronet he is worried about Dunning’s issue. When Freda’s father Studdenham comes to meet him he asks the reason why Dunning is refusing marriage with Rose. Studdenham says that
Dunning has nothing to do with her and he feels that he is superior to her. Class difference is seen here. Sir William does not accept it and he wants no scandals in the village. He cannot have a keeper of his playing fast and loose in the village like this. Sir William, who “can’t have open scandals in the village” (166), has required the young man to marry the girl: “I’m not forcing you,” he explains. But “If you refuse you must go, that’s all” (167). He wants Dunning to marry Rose as he is a keeper in his house. He does not want any problems in his house. Studdenham says that Rose is willing to marry him though she does not love him. She sticks to it that Dunning shall marry her, while Lady Cheshire points out the dangers of marriage without affection. Lady Cheshire says that without any love for each other, if they marry their life would be miserable. Rose maintains an obstinate sullenness, until, softened by Lady Cheshire’s offer of friendship, she breaks out with: “I’m not so ‘ard, really. I only want him to do what’s right by me” (175). This is a master touch, showing the girl’s better nature piercing through her plate-armour of stolidity. Sir William does not agree to it. He especially likes to have everything properly conducted on his estate and he is naturally wroth when he hears that his under-keeper, Dunning, has got a young woman of the village, named Rose Taylor, into trouble. Such conduct cannot be allowed, and he tells Studdenham that he has to marry her or else he will lose his job: “He must toe the mark or take himself off” (166).
To quote Leon Schalit,

This little affair out of the way, the Squire proceeds to tackle his son Bill for spending too much money and not taking his position as the heir to a baronetcy seriously enough. Sir William, like Horace Pendyce in The Country House, has a very exalted opinion of the duties and position of a squire in national life.38

Studdenham leaves and sends Dunning in. Dunning is told by Sir William to either marry Rose or take his dismissal. He goes in a mild manner: “The thing’s in your hands. Take it or leave it” (167). He does not insist but he wants Dunning to understand the situation as he knows that it is the custom of the country: “You should have looked before you leaped” (167). He gives Dunning a day to decide. Mabel is interested in Bill and is always after him. But Bill tries to avoid her. Lady Cheshire asks Bill if he likes her. As everyone in the house likes Mabel as she is nice and Irish, Lady Cheshire asks Bill’s opinion. He says that she is alright but does not agree to marry her. Lady Cheshire changes the topic and asks him about his debts. Bill is a person who does not have any profession. He keeps on wasting his time and money on unnecessary things. He takes life in an easy manner. Lady Cheshire advises his son not to spend more money than his allowance. She diverts the topic and asks if he knows about Dunning. Bill does not react to it and says these things are common in the country. Sir William advises his son to change his mode of life. He says that he has paid his debts twice and cannot pay anymore as his mother supports for his
extravagance. Sir William wants to modify his son’s attitude. He wants to make a proposition but Bill tries to postpone it to the next day. Sir William says, “‘To-morrow’ appears to be your motto in life ” (170). He wants his son to participate in elections, work for constituency, get married to Mabel Lanfarne, and settle down his life: “He wishes Bill to marry Mabel Lanfarne, whom Bill greatly admired a short while back, and then go into Parliament. The ‘infernal Radicals’ are pressing on from all sides and ‘everybody must buckle to and save the landmarks left while there is still time.’ But Bill neither wants to stand for Parliament nor to marry.” Sir William wants his son to think seriously and take a decision:

The more I see of the times the more I’m convinced that everybody who is anybody has got to buckle to, and save the landmarks left. Unless we’re true to our caste, and prepared to work for it, the landed classes are going to go under to this infernal democratic spirit in the air. The outlook’s very serious. We’re threatened in a hundred ways. If you mean business, you’ll want a wife. When I came into the property I should have been lost without your mother (171).

All these days he has been enjoying his life and now Sir William wants him to be a responsible person. Bill refuses to marry Mabel. Sir William warns his son not to be a blackguard. Bill in reply says that he cannot force him like Dunning: “You can’t force me like young Dunning” (172). A domestic scene appears inevitable, but the gentle Lady Cheshire, who reminds one of Margery Pendyce but is more worldly and
energetic, prevents a clash.40 Lady Cheshire interferes and takes Sir William away from the room.

Freda comes to meet Bill. Bill says that he was away from her for eight weeks. Freda tells that he has forgotten her and gives back his diamond ring. She breaks to him the news that she is expecting a child. She tells that all his family members like Mabel, and they want her to marry him. She tells him to marry Mabel and she will keep their affair a secret. Freda is ready to leave him. Bill says that he is not interested in Mabel. Freda slips away saying that she is in the same condition as Rose Taylor.

In the next scene Rose Taylor, the village girl, comes to meet Lady Cheshire. Lady Cheshire knows that their engagement is broken off and asks if it is the wisest thing for her to marry Bill: “But for you both to marry in that spirit! You know it’s for life, Rose. I’m always ready to help you” (175). Rose tells that she is not interested in him but she wants to marry him as he has cheated her. Lady Cheshire advises her that their marital life would be miserable without love. As Leon Schalit remarks: “Lady Cheshire is vainly endeavouring to convince Rose, the stolid village girl, that if she tries to force Dunning to marry her, the marriage cannot be a happy one. Shortly afterwards, she experiences the painful shock of seeing Freda in the arms of her son.”41 Rose thanks Lady Cheshire for her advice and says that she wants Dunning to do what is right for her. Lady Cheshire assures her that she is ready to
Dot is busy with her rehearsal. With a book named *Caste*, Dot arranges the room. All the family members are involved in this drama. Dot makes them practise the scene: “the old-fashioned play, Caste, whose moral is that difference in caste need not necessarily be a barrier to love.” The real theme of the play is expressed by Dot Cheshire. “Morality in one eye and your title in the other!” (190) When it comes to that, the fundamental issue, the result is not likely to remain long in doubt. Strong family tradition and caste feeling are almost certain to prevail over the plain dictates of conscience and morality.”

She is interrupted by Studdenham. He comes in and tells that he had brought spaniel pups. All of them except Mabel and Bill go out to see the puppies. “In *The Eldest Son*, the head-keeper at a critical point in the play produces two spaniel puppies from his pockets and talks to them in a way which startlingly, but quite unconsciously, brings out the relations which exist between the two betrayed girls, Freda Studdenham and Rose Taylor. The deeper significance of the whole play is thus symbolically represented before the audience by a simple and ingenious device.”

They talk about the dogs and about themselves. As they are talking Freda enters the room. Seeing Freda Mabel leaves the room. Bill says Freda that he has not slept last night. He says that he has a plan. He wants to take her away to Canada. He does not want her to suffer. He assures her that he is not a blackguard. Freda comes closer and flings
her arms round his neck and clings to him. Lady Cheshire opens the
door and stares at them. She experiences the painful shock of seeing
Freda in the arms of her son. Freda has muffled her face but Bill turns
and confronts his mother. Lady Cheshire tells Freda to go out. Bill stops
her by holding her hand. Bill tells his mother that he is in love with
Freda and wants to marry her. Hearing this Freda gives a wild stare and
turns away. Lady Cheshire asks if that was the truth. Freda remains
silent. Bill tells his mother not to scold Freda as it was not her mistake.
He says that he fell in love with Freda last summer and is engaged to
her two months before. He says it is not her fault. She did not trap him
nor he did it. They love each other and tells his mother to accept the
truth. Lady Cheshire tells Freda to go out. She asks his son whether he
is still in love with her. When she gets the answer yes, from her son
she doesn't admit the truth. She says it is an awful thing and quite
impossible thing. His family cannot accept her. Bill says he cannot leave
her, he does not want to be in their path. He would marry her and
settle in Canada.

According to Leon Schalit:

To Lady Cheshire, stunned by the blow, only one thing is
clear: this marriage must be prevented at all costs, it would
only spell misery for two young people, too utterly
dissimilar in every respect to be able to live together for
long. She gives vent to words of wisdom and truth about
marriage, which she knows so well from personal
experience.45
Lady Cheshire does not agree to it. She feels that all such marriages end in wretchedness. She doesn’t like him getting married to her maid: “You haven’t a taste or tradition in common. You don’t know what marriage is. Day after day, year after year. It’s no use being sentimental—for people brought up as we are, to have different manners is worse than to have different souls. Besides, it’s poverty” (181). She says his father will never forgive him. Besides, he doesn’t have any profession and how will he be able to get on with such a woman, it ends in misery. Lady Cheshire tries to convince him but in vain. In her distress she moves to the next room.

Lady Cheshire talks to Freda. She tells Bill to leave them alone. She asks Freda how long their affair had been, does Bill really love her. Freda in reply says that they had been in love last summer and they love each other. Lady Cheshire asks if her father knows all about it: “There’s nothing more dreadful than for a woman to hang like a stone round a man’s neck” (182). She tells Freda that she knows about her son for thirty years. When Bill wants certain thing he will have it and then he is sorry. Lady Cheshire does not accept her and says it shall not go on: “If men are like gunpowder, Freda, women are not. If you’ve lost him it’s been your own fault... When they want a thing they must have it, and then—they’re sorry”. (182) She tells Freda to be in her position and think whether it is right or wrong: “Put yourself in our position” (182). “Freda replies with a tu quoque, “‘Put yourself in my position’—
a much more difficult operation. Can nothing, then, be done? Cannot Freda be hushed up or otherwise disposed of?\textsuperscript{46} She remains silent and looks into Freda’s eyes and asks if Mr. Sir William knows it. Bill enters the room and says that he does not know it and its time for him to know the truth. All of them leave the room. Sir William’s voice is heard. He is dressed in hunting clothes. He gets his glove buttoned by Freda and goes out. Lady Cheshire is worried. Seeing her, her daughters come to know that something has happened between Bill and mother. They come to know that Bill is in love with Freda. They feel it as an awful thing. When Mabel enters all the three sisters remain silent. When Mabel asks the reason for their silence they do not reply. She thinks that they want her to go away from their house. Just then Bill enters the room and says his sisters and Mabel that he is in love with her mother’s maid Freda. All of them stare at Bill. When his three sisters talk about this Studdenham comes and shows two spaniel puppies. He says he will keep one for his daughter and asks them to take the other. Dot thanks him and leaves the room.

In the next scene Bill is seen conversing with his brother Harold. Harold asks his brother Bill if he is really in love with Freda. Bill accepts it. Harold tells his brother that he has to face so many problems in the family if he does so. Bill in reply says that he cannot leave Freda and is ready to face any situation. Bill is determined to stand by her: “I’m not the sort that finds it easy to say things.” (187) A sentence

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which is characteristic, not only of the landowner class, but of the reticent British race, of reserved British breeding.” 47 Seeing John Latter Bill goes out. Harold and John talk about Bill's affair with the maid-servant. “Cat on hot bricks is nothing to him. This is the sort of thing you read of in books, John!” (188) Harold is worried about the responsibilities which fall on him as his father cuts his relation with Bill.

In this present situation in the house, Harold reminds John Latter the play for which they are rehearsing. The play for which they are practising rehearsals is based on ‘Caste.’ The moral of the play is: “Caste don’t matter” (188). All the family members are involved in this play but in their family they are not able to accept a maid-servant: “In this play the god who rules their destinies is the god of Caste, and again it is the social conventions which play the determining part.”48

John Latter feels that Bill has done a disgraceful thing. As they discuss about this, Ronny, Joan, and Christine enter the room. Knowing this from his wife Christine, Ronald is very upset. When Harold asks him about his father Ronald says that he is in Clackenham and will be back within ten minutes. They come to know that Miss Mabel is leaving the house. They wanted to say goodbye to her as if nothing had happened. Ronald makes the family members think about the situation when Sir William comes to know the truth. He says that Sir William will cut his relation with Bill: “Man who reads family prayers, and
lessons on sunday forbids son to —” (190) No mortal power can help him if Bill proceeds in his way. Dot tries to support her brother Bill, saying if Freda is not a maid-servant in their house, she would have been like all other ladies. Dot asks the question why cannot Bill marry Freda and go to Canada. Christine interferes and tells Dot not to be cynical. It’s time for them to find a way to stop Bill getting married to Freda. At first they decide to convince Bill but taking Keith’s suggestion they decide to convince Freda. Lady Cheshire with a pale, worried face enters the room. She sees Sir William coming and talking to Bill in another room. Christine motivates her mother to talk to Freda and end up the matter orelse they would be a laughing-stock of the whole country. She hypnotizes her mother saying she is the only person who can convince Freda and stop the situation going further. At last Lady Cheshire gets motivated and raises suddenly. She looks towards the billiard room and sits down again as Sir William enters. His face is grim and set. All of them move away except Lady Cheshire. She asks him about Bill. He says that his son is a fool, blackguard. He is unable to digest the news. He is very much upset. He is afraid of his reputation. He cannot face the situation. He is afraid that everyone will laugh at his family if Bill marries his maid. He feels it a death blow. “Good-bye to any prestige, political, social, or anything! A man’s past—his traditions—he can’t get rid of them. They’re—they’re himself!”

All the socialists and radicals will laugh at him. He tells his wife that it
is a tragedy to him and his wife. He had brought up the children with certain principles, beliefs and habits and now he has to face the tragedy. He never expected that his eldest son Bill would do like that. He says he cannot lose his traditions. He will never let the marriage go on. He does not want his eldest son to ruin his life. He plans to stop the marriage. Lady Cheshire says that she has tried to stop but it was of no use. Sir William in a desperate mood says that Freda is born in the same place, in the same house earned with his money has broken the rules of gratitude and decency. The humiliation of the proud is often shown by the necessity for eating one’s words, a rather unexpected outcome of previous preparation. The greater the arrogance, the more profound is the abasement that ensues. We have typical examples in The Eldest Son, and in The Silver Box: Sir William Cheshire, in the former play, takes a high stand and insists on morality being upheld, when his under-keeper is concerned; but his argument turn against him when his own son is in question. He tells his wife to convince Freda. Lady Cheshire says that she had done it before but in vain: “There are things one can’t do” (192) ..“I have been to her; I’ve tried; I (putting her hand to her throat) couldn’t get it out” (194). Sir William in anger says that he will cease his son to exist. Lady Cheshire says that she will go to Bill and beg him on her knees to stop the marriage. She cannot but deplore such a union, will not desert her son. Instead of going to Bill, he insists his wife to plead Freda. Sir William sweeps over us, in The
*Eldest Son*, when he hints to his wife that she should manoeuvre Freda into sacrificing herself. His remark: “She’s soft. She’ll never hold out against you” (194). discloses something in the nature of the man from which we recoil. Galsworthy obviously realizes that the human heart is so made that hostile emotions have a stronger hold upon it than sympathy. Lady Cheshire does not accept it and says that she had tried it before. Sir William warns Lady Cheshire and tells her to send Freda in. Freda enters the room. She is asked to sit but she does not. Sir William asks Freda about her age, how long she has been attached to his eldest son and so on. He scolds his son and finally asks her what made her to forget herself and there is no excuse for her for what she has done. Seeing Freda stand so absolutely motionless, he turns abruptly and opens the billiard room door to speak to his son Bill. Sir William therefore sternly forbids his son’s marriage. If it takes place, he will be cut off with a shilling warns his son Bill saying that he will not receive anything from him if he marries Freda. His brother will take his place. Bill is firm in his decision. He wants to marry Freda. Bill cross questions his father that he has one rule for Young Dunning and another for him. Bill, no less obstinate than his parent, remains obdurate: “You put the butt end of the pistol to Dunning’s head yesterday, you put the other end to mine to-day. Well! Let the d—d thing off!” (195) He says that he is not going to leave Freda alone and is ready to face the consequences. Sir William with suppressed emotion tries to show Bill
the disaster that they are going to face with this marriage. Inspite of Sir William’s efforts, Bill sticks on to his own decision and feels sorry for his father. Just then Jackson comes and tells that Studdenham wants to meet them. Studdenham comes and tells them that Young Dunning had accepted to marry Rose and banns will be announced next sunday. Bill says Studdenham that he is engaged to his daughter Freda and are going to be married. Studdenham is shocked to hear this news. At first Studdenham cannot grasp it, and moves his hands as if wringing the neck of a bird: “My girl was — was good enough for any man. It’s not for him that’s — that’s — to look down on her” (198). Freda and Studdenham are summoned before the family assembly. Sir William says him that Young Dunning case is repeated. Studdenham wants to see his daughter. Freda is sent in. He asks Sir William how can his daughter in that position love his son. Are men not available for his daughter that she has chosen his son for the marriage. Bill tells Studdenham that he has made all this and he is to be blamed. Studdenham keeps on asking his daughter how it happened, is she engaged to him, when did it take place and so on. Listening all this from his daughter, he tells them that he needs some time to think. Seeing all of them silent, Studdenham asks Sir William about his decision.

Sir William is against their marriage. If Bill marries Freda, Bill has to make his own way. Studdenham tells Freda to speak. Freda turns slowly and looks up at Sir William, her eyes travel onto Lady Cheshire
who faces her but so deadly pale that she looks as if she were going to faint. The girl’s gaze passes onto Bill, standing rigid, with his jaw set. Freda’s more scenic volte face at the end of the same play is also quite comprehensible under the sting of humiliation. Freda replies, “No!” (198) for the marriage. As Sir William utters a sound of profound relief, Studdenham’s emotion turns to anger. There is a violent reaction on the gamekeeper’s face when Freda proudly rejects Bill’s offer of marriage, feeling it to be inspired by a sense of duty, he sides with his daughter and shakes the dust of the Cheshire house off his feet: “She may ha’ slipped her good name, but she’ll keep her proper pride. I’ll have no charity marriage in my family”, he growls. “If the young gentleman has tired of her in three months, as a blind man can see by the looks of him—she’s not for him!” (198) Then her father tells Sir William not to worry as the marriage will not take place. The betrayal of his daughter naturally angers him. “Men ha’ been shot for less,” (197) he says bitterly. But he sees that Bill does not really care for Freda and that a union between them is impossible. “Don’t be afraid, Sir William! We want none of you! She’ll not force herself where she’s not welcome.” (198) They do not need anyone from their family. Studdenham says that he will not have charity marriage in his family. When Bill comes forward to marry her, Studdenham says no to it. Saying these things are common in the world and she is not the first or the last to suffer, Studdenham takes hold of Freda and leaves the house. Sir William
becomes calm. Bill following Freda and her father stops at the shut
door. Mabel leaves the house: “Freda, the apparently weak, passive girl,
and her father, an old man in a dependent position, have carried off the
moral victory. The Cheshires can breathe in relief, but they remain
discomfited.” Thus the play has a sad end. Two lovers are parted due
to class consciousness. This is not in all respects a very satisfactory
conclusion, but there is probably none better.

In *The Eldest Son*, the crisis may be said to begin with Freda’s
disclosure to Bill, which occurs very near the opening. In detecting the
initial fact of a play we may sometimes be led astray by mistaking the
play’s real purpose. In *The Eldest Son* this is not only a love at air
between two young people, either Bill and Freda, or between Bill and
Mabel, but the momentous decision to be taken by the whole Cheshire
family, consequent upon the entanglement into which the eldest son has
got himself. R.H. Coats states:

The theme which finds expression in *The Eldest Son* makes
its appearance again in the novels of Galsworthy. When
George Pendyce, in *The Country House*, gets into
difficulties through his relations with Mrs. Bellew, he
receives from his mother the sympathy and understanding
which only love can give, but his father, Horace Pendyce,
takes up towards him an attitude of hostility very similar to
that adopted by Sir William Cheshire towards his son Bill.
Again, the plot of *The Patrician*, like that of *The Eldest
Son*, turns on the conflict between intense love passion and
family tradition. In both novel and play we find that
romantic love, when it happens to run counter to powerful caste prejudice, may be tempestuously strong and intoxicatingly sweet—for a time. But it is none the less, in these circumstances, a devastating and destructive passion, and it is almost inevitably bound in the end to give way, at the cost of intense suffering and loss, to the force of class feeling and dominating social interests.\textsuperscript{51}

According to Leon Schalit:

Sir William Cheshire, one of the writer’s most clearly visualised figures, is a typical John Bull, perhaps even more so than Horace Pendyce. He is not unlike the Reverend Hussel Barter. Later on, Bill will be exactly the same bumptious aristocrat, like the more staid George Pendyce. But for his upbringing Bill might try a new life, farming or what not with Freda, who would probably make him an excellent and loving wife. As it is, he is destined to an existence of social nothings and idle sport. The system has brought him up to be a country gentleman, with plenty of people to work for him. As portrayed by the author, he would be \textit{bound} to be unhappy with Freda. Sooner or later he will no doubt marry a Mabel Lanfarne, and lead the same life as Sir William and Lady Cheshire, as Horace Pendyce and Margery, his wife.\textsuperscript{52}

Leon Schalit states “And Galsworthy’s intention was just to throw an ironical light on average human nature and show that social fusion is not the easy matter some would have us believe. However we may talk of equality, we can’t change human nature. (\textit{Vide} also \textit{A Commentary, Fraternity, The Pigeon, Windows.}) Galsworthy’s reformers always come to grief on the immutability of human nature. When this is
once clear to the readers, they will cease to talk of “tendency” in his works.”

The main action of the play is centred round the two young people; its successive episodes are Freda’s revelation to Bill, the coming to a decision by the latter, his conflict with Sir William and then with Studdenham, and the final general explanation that brings about the conclusion of the play. In this central triangular encounter, the Freda and Bill couple face the menace of being crushed or humiliated by a world of traditions, mainly represented by the Cheshire family, as a whole. But along with this major plot, there are many side issues, struggles within individual consciences, clashes and discussions between characters dissociated from their respective groups. Bill has misgivings about the wisdom of the course he chooses to follow; his mother is torn between love, prudence and loyalty; Sir William, who lays down strict rules about honour, has to go against his creed and eat his words when his own good name is involved. Freda and Studdenham revolt against convention, and by their revolt regain both their freedom and their self-respect. At the end of the last act of *The Eldest Son* a double surprise is achieved in the two successive climaxes —the decision of the Cheshire family not to recognise Bill’s marriage, followed by the unlooked-for reaction of Freda and her father.

Broadly speaking, it is not the curtain-raisers or the experimental plays, not the comedies or the poetical symbolical dramas, not even *The
Pigeon, original and valuable as it is, that we have in mind when we think of Galsworthy as a playwright; but his naturalistic dramas, such works as The Silver Box, Strife, The Eldest Son, Loyalties e.t.c. In number they hardly makeup one half of their author’s dramatic output; but they are most representative of what may be called the Galsworthian atmosphere, which is no other than the phantasm of Galsworthy’s personality.

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The Skin Game is a play which depicts the conflict between the landowning aristocrats and the newly rich class of the owners of industry. Coats observes, “In The Skin Game caste feeling finds its antagonist not in morality but in vulgarity, if that is not too strong a term.”

Hillcrist, a dried-up, gouty aristocrat of fifty-five, tries to be kind and just, and to maintain the traditions of a gentleman. He owns an estate of many acres at Deep-water. His family have been squires and country gentlemen ever since the time of Queen Elizabeth. Hillcrist is a humane landowner, but he makes no attempt to develop his property. He is the last of his school, a lover of tradition, a stickler for points of honour, one who will play the game always, a martyr to the gout, and a perfect English gentleman. The play opens with a discussion between Jill and her father Hillcrist on cads. Jill asks her father if Mr. Hornblower is a cad. Hillcrist does not accept it and they talk about
Hornblower’s family. Jill tells Hillcrist that Rolf, the younger son of Hornblower is a nice person. Hillcrist tells his daughter that no person in these days is nice and how could she say that Rolf is a nice person. Jill says that Rolf differs from his father in his behaviour. She tells that Rolf is not amorous, does not like discipline, bars his father and has got his own ideas: “He thinks old people run the show too much. He says they ought n’t to, because they’re so damtouchy. He says there’ll be no world fit to live in till we get rid of the old. We must make them climb a tall tree, and shake them off it” (516). He asks if Rolf’s father agrees to him. Jill says that Rolf does not talk to him as his mouth is too large. Hornblower is a man who has made much money by the manufacturing of pottery. He flourished in his pottery works and is unpleasantly ostentatious, but an able manufacturer: “Hornblower is a predecessor of De Levis in Loyalities, but incomparably less cultured, more ruthless and pushing.” 55 Jill asks his father why Hornblower’s attitude is like that. Hillcrist replies that they are pushing: “It takes generations to learn to live and let live, Jill. People like that take an ell when you give them an inch” (517). Jill calls it a skin game.

Hillcrist replies: … all life’s a struggle between people at different stages of development, in different positions, with different amounts of social influence and property. And the only thing is to have rules of the game and keep them. New people like Hornblowers haven’t learnt those rules; their only rule is to get all they can. (517).
Jill supports Hornblowers but Hillcrist says that he too had the same impression at first and later he changed his decision. Hillcrist sold Longmeadow and cottages to Hornblower and he also got Clovenhoof and is changing the atmosphere of Deepwater by his potteries: “...those potteries of his are demoralizing—the whole atmosphere of the place is changing” (517). He has got the cut-throat spirit. Jill and her father continue their conversation on the attitude of the people. Jill asks her father about her mother. According to Jill her mother reminds her of England, always right whatever she does. Hillcrist calls his wife a perfect woman. Jill tells her father that he is imperfect as he has got gout. He accepts it and tells her to call Fellows.

According to Jill, a perfect gentleman is a person who gives Hornblower his due. She wants her mother to call Hornblowers. Fellows enters and Hillcrist shares his pain with him. Fellows informs Hillcrist that Jackmans have come to see him. Mr. & Mrs. Jackman enter the room and say that they have got a notice to quit the cottage within a week. Hearing this Hillcrist says that he sold Longmeadow and the cottages on an understanding that Hornblower should not cause any disturbance to the tenants. Mrs. Jackman replies that not only they but also Mrs. Harvey and the Drews have to quit the cottage. Hillcrist himself wants a cottage for his cowman and now he thinks that he cannot get it: “By George! This is a breach of faith” (519). Jackman does not want to leave the cottage because he has been living there
with his family for thirty years. Jackman says that Hornblower wants to have the Centry to put up more chimneys. He wants the cottages for his workmen who do the pottery. Mrs. Jackman adds to it saying that the beautiful, pretty spot of the Deepwater would be changed: “Loveliest spot in all Deepwater, I always say. And your father owned it, and his father before ‘im. It’s a pity they ever sold it” (520). They request Hillcrist to help them and to protect their land from Hornblowers. The Jackmans say that Hornblower is a dreadful person who do not care the neighbours or people until he makes his money: “havin’ got rich so sudden” (520). They say that Hornblower would meet him. Hearing this Hillcrist assures them that he would do something for them.

Mr. & Mrs. Hillcrist discuss the problem caused to the Jackmans and they come to a decision to do something for them. According to Leon Schalit:

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Despite Mrs. Hillcrist’s inimical attitude, Hornblower is at first prepared to settle matters amicably; he offers an indemnity to the Jackmans; for all his defiance, he would fain convince the Squire of his peaceful intentions. But the gentleman in Hillcrist jibs at the parvenu’s lack of consideration, he looks upon himself as the protector of the weak, and rejects all compromises with his neighbour.56
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They do not want their beautiful spot to be ruined. They are against Hornblowers decision. According to Amy, Hornblower is a person without traditions, who believes in nothing but money and push.
They plan to shift the Jackmans over the stables if Hornblower does not agree them.

Mr. Dawker, Hillcrist’s agent enters the room. Hillcrist complains about his gout and asks if he had heard the Jackmans. Dawker nodding says that Hornblower is a smart man and “never lets grass grow” (521). He wants to buy the Centry. But Miss. Mullins would not sell the place says Hillcrist. Dawker says that Miss. Mullins is ready to sell the place for the price which they want. In reply Mrs. Hillcrist says, “He wants it for spite; we want it for sentiment” (522). He wants Hillcrist to give him the figure so that he can talk to Mullins. Just then Fellows enters and tells that Hornblower has come. Hillcrist sits on a chair as he has a gout and tells Fellows to send Hornblower in. He wishes Hillcrist good morning and says that he has not seen him for a long time. Hillcrist replies that he has not seen him after the purchase of Longmeadow and cottages. Hornblower tells that he has come there to talk about the issue. Seeing Hillcrist he asks if he has got gout and tells that he is unfortunate and he is fortunate and lucky of not getting it.

Hornblower feels proud that he has future and says to Mrs. Hillcrist, that they are aristocrats who are hard people with their manners and love to lay a body out: “That’s your aristocratic rapier-thrust” (523). Hillcrist tells him that Jackmans have come with their complaint about the cottages and asks him why he has done such a thing in spite of his promise that he will not interfere with the tenants
in the cottage. In reply Hornblower tells that he did not need the cottage when he bought but now he is in need for his workmen as he has important works to do. Hillcrist says that the Jackmans too have got their importance, “Their heart’s in that cottage” (523). Hornblower tells him to have sense. He wants to make his fortune. He has got his ambitions. He does not want him to interfere in this matter. He thinks that Hillcrist is quite contented in his life as his fathers have made it and if at all he wants to support the Jackmans he wants Hillcrist to build a cottage by himself in his place.

Hillcrist does not want Hornblower to break his word. But Hornblower does not care his words “… ye’ve not had occasion to understand men like me. I’ve got the guts, and I’ve got the money, and I don’t sit still sit on it. I am going ahead because I believe in meself. I’ve no use for sentiment and that sort of thing. Forty of your Jackmans are’nt worth me little finger” (524). He sticks on to his decision. Argument takes place between Hillcrist and Hornblower. There emerges then a fierce social struggle between Hillcrist and Hornblower: “The tragedy of such a conflict is rapidly revealed and how that in it one cannot keep one’s hands clean, that for the sake of victory one must resort to ignorable means.” The burning issue between them is the possession of the Centry, some hundred acres of land. Hornblower will pay anything in order to spite Hillcrist by the erection of a pottery factory. Hillcrist will give every penny he can spare in order to spite
Hornblower and save the view from his drawing-room windows:

“Hornblower began the duel with the black injustice of his high-handed measures against the Jackmans.”58 And “It is to be a ‘skin game,’ gone into without mercy, and ‘fought to the buff,’ in army phraseology.”59

When Hillcrist asks about the Centry, Hornblower says that his son Charlie is going to buy the land from the old lady. Hillcrist with a deep anger calls it a skin game. Hornblower says that it is a nice expression: “‘Skin game!’ “Well, bad words break no bones, an’ they’re wonderful for hardenin’ the heart” (525). R.H. Coats remarks:

But there is more in The Skin Game than this Ostensibly a study of feud between two classes of English society, it was really originally intended, as only H.W. Massingham had the quickness to discern, to be an allegory of the Great War. We have all, now, only too sad occasion to admit that that stupendous conflict became in very truth ‘a skin game,’ with a certain amount of lowering of ideals, and even a resorting to unworthy weapons on all sides, inextricably bound up with it.60

Hornblower feels that Hillcrist is an obstruction. His attitude does not please him. He has his own work with the cottages. Hillcrist says it’s a declaration of war. Reacting to it Hornblower says, “I’m the risin’ and you’re the settin’ sun, as the poet says” (525).

Hillcrist sends for the Jackmans. When Jackmans enter Hillcrist tells them that he tried a lot to convince Hornblower but was in vain. Hornblower speaks to the Jackmans and tells that he would give them
five pounds to vacate the cottage. But Jackman replies that he had been living there with his family for thirty years. They brought up three children there and buried two of them. They are very much attached to the cottage. Even if he gives fifty pounds they are not ready to leave the cottage. Hornblower in anger gives them another week to vacate the cottage or else he would put their things in the rain. Mrs. Hillcrist asks the Jackmans to stay with them for time being. Mrs. Jackman drops her courtesy and looks seriously towards Hornblower. Mr. Jackman tries to control his temper. Hornblower tells them not to come in his path and he would call the police if he utters threat. On Hillcrist’s saying the Jackmans move out. After their exit Hornblower makes a comment saying, “I never met people with less notion of which side their bread was buttered.” “And I never met anyone so pachydermatous” (527) is the reply given by Hillcrist.

Hornblower in a polite manner tells Hillcrist that he has got his own plans, he is going to stand for Parliament, he is going to make this a prosperous place, if Hillcrist treats him as a neighbour, he would not lay chimneys on the Centry. Hornblower wants to bargain and join hands with Hillcrist. Hillcrist rejects it saying unless the tenants are undisturbed he cannot be his neighbour. Hornblower has sent Charlie and his wife to buy the Centry. He gives last chance for Hillcrist to join hands with him: “I think ye’re the best of the fossils round here; at least, I think ye can do me the most harm socially” (527). Hillcrist says
even if he brings the Centry ten times he will not join hands with him and refuses him: “Your ways are not mine, and I’ll have nothing to do with you” (528). Just then Jill enters the room with Charles, his wife Chloe and Rolf. Hillcrist gives a stiff little bow, standing at the window. Hornblower asks his son Charles whether he has got the Centry or not. Charlie gives a negative answer saying he was about to get the Centry for three thousand five hundred pounds but just then Dawker has turned up and changed the mood of the old lady: “She came back looking wiser than an owl” (528,529). She did not tell the fair price but she said that she would put it up to auction. Hearing this Hornblower starts scolding Dawker and is angry with Hillcrist for what he has done. Jill steps forward and argues with Hornblower. She says it is not fair enough for him to break his promise. It is a shame on his part to turn the poor people out of their cottages. She says that always she had been supporting their family but now she has changed her decision on them. Rolf interferes and supports Jill. When he talks against his father, he is told to shut his mouth as it is elder’s matter. Jill, the daughter of Hillcrist, and Rolf, the younger son of Hornblower, do all they can to assuage the strife and carry on their love affairs in peace. Hornblower does not want to bring revolt in his family. He knows what is right and what is wrong. He says that he is answerable to God for his actions or deeds and not to the young people. When Mrs. Hillcrist and Dawker enter the room, seeing Dawker Hornblower insults him saying he is a
dog who is after Hillcrist. Seeing Chloe, wife of Charles, Mrs. Hillcrist asks who she is and insults her to go out of her house. Hillcrist feels sorry for it and apologizes: “There is no reason why the ladies of your family or of mine should be involved in our quarrel. For Heaven’s sake, let’s fight like gentlemen” (530). Hornblower goes out saying that he will not spare them and he will certainly get the Centry.

Dawker tells to Hillcrist that Mrs. Mullins would put up to auction as she is a money minded woman. Jill asks her mother why she has insulted Chloe. Mrs. Hillcrist says that she has right to make her own decisions. Jill is upset with her mother’s behavior: “Mother’s fearfully bitter when she gets her knife in” (531). Hillcrist tries to convince her. Jill is worried about the skin game between Hornblower and her father. She wants her father to take care of his health. Hillcrist asks Jill if there is any affair between her and Rolf. In reply she says that they are only friends and does not want to have any relation with him until the problem is settled. Hillcrist tells how important the Centry is for him. He shares his childhood memories with that place with his daughter. Rolf again enters the room to take the Vanity bag of Chloe which she has dropped. Argument takes place between Rolf and Jill. Rolf asks Jill why her mother has insulted Chloe. Jill asks Rolf why his father broke his promise. Rolf says that his father is an abled person. He knows what is right and is determined and does not allow anyone to come in his way. He tells Jill to be just. Jill does not accept this and
asks if he likes his home to be spoilt. Rolf says that they do not want their home to be taken away: “Jill, Hillcrist’s plucky daughter, and Rolf, Hornblower’s young son; they are united by a feeling of comradeship, would like to reconcile their families, and yet finally part as enemies, each taking the part of his and her family.” Before leaving the room, Rolf says that she had developed prejudice against him.

The next scene takes place in a billiard room in a provincial hotel, where things are bought and sold. Both parties stoop to mean expedients: “The property of such vital importance to both Hillcrist and Hornblower is being put up to auction, and they are bidding each other. An exceedingly vivacious, realistic scene, with constant flashes of grim humour, showing the two enemies, feverishly carried away, like obsessed gamblers—till Hillcrist at least is bidding far above his means.” Dawker and Mrs. Hillcrist make their entry through the door at the back. They see Hornblower and Charlie sitting in the audience. Mrs. Hillcrist asks Dawker at what time does the auction begin. Dawker says that it won’t be over punctual as it includes Centry selling only. They see Mrs. Chloe and other fellow at the entrance. Mrs. Hillcrist tells Dawker to keep an eye on Mrs. Chloe. Mrs. Hillcrist asks where her husband is and asks the last price limit for the auction. Dawker replies that it is six thousand and tells if he reaches this limit and if they want to continue further asks Mr. Hillcrist to blow his nose, if he wants to stop, Dawker wants him to blow his nose for second time. He wishes
Mrs. Hillcrist good luck and moves on. Standing at the foot of the steps Chloe calls Mrs. Hillcrist and asks her if she had done any harm to her. Mrs. Hillcrist says no and does not care her and tells her to leave her alone. Mr. & Mrs. Hillcrist along with Jill sit at one side while Rolf and Chloe sit on another side. Chloe feels very hot and Rolf goes to bring water. Meanwhile Mrs. Hillcrist tells her husband to offer smelling salts to Mrs. Chloe. Mr. Hillcrist taking the salts thanks God for a human touch. Jill takes the smelling salts and offers to Chloe. She at first rejects it but later accepts it. Jill with Chloe’s permission goes through the sales particular papers. Just then Rolf comes with water. Jill passes her way and slides over her seat. They see Ms. Mullins, auctioneer, solicitor, Charles and Hornblower coming. Auctioneer gives the details of the land (Centry) in the Deep water and starts bidding from two thousand. Mr. Spicer, Dawker, Hornblower participate in the bidding. When the bid goes upto Six thousand Mrs. Hillcrist tells her husband to blow the nose. Dawker then continues bidding. Auction continues and the bidding price reaches upto nine thousand by Hillcrist. At the auction sale of the Centry estate, the bidding goes up by leaps and bounds. Hornblower does not give any response. Auctioneer taps twice for nine thousand pounds. Just then a voice from behind says nine thousand and five hundred pounds. All of them see the person who is bidding and think that he is Duke’s agent. Hillcrist stops bidding thinking that the land has gone into a gentleman’s hand and not Hornblower. He feels
excited that Hornblower did not get the land. After the completion of the auction Hillcrist thanks God that the Centry is safe in gentleman’s hand. Hearing this Hornblower laughs and says that the Centry has not gone into gentleman’s hand or a fool’s hand. He says that he has got the Centry. The man or the agent who bought it is his agent. Hornblower calls it a skin game: “Mr. Hillcrist had an agent bid for him— I had an agent bid for me. Only his agent bid at the beginning’, an’ mine bid at the end. What’s the trick in that?” (544). But Hillcrist calls it a foul game and believes that the law would stop ruining his property. Mrs. Hillcrist says that they too will play the foul game. Hornblower says that he has done this because she has insulted his daughter-in-law. Hillcrist asks his wife not to interfere and asks Rolf if his father is right. Rolf says no and is told by his father to be quiet. Hornblower takes his daughter-in-law’s arm saying that he will build chimneys within six months. Near the exit door they see Dawker and a stranger standing. Seeing them Chloe faints and gives reply that she is not well. Hornblower takes Chloe and passes through the door followed by Rolf. Leon Schalit observes:

What with the hints of Hillcrist’s agent—Dawker, a bull-terrier of a man who hates the Hornblowers— and a stranger who confirms them, we begin to know that Chloe has a past. Hillcrist protests against making use of such means, but his wife takes the matter out of his hands, and resolves to summon Hornblower and to put the choice to him; either he must re-sell them the property at its proper
value, a third of what he gave for it at the auction, or Chloe’s secret shall be revealed, and his family disgraced.\textsuperscript{63}

Mrs. Hillcrist moves up to Dawker and stranger and they talk secretly. Hillcrist asks them what is going on between them. Now is the time for Mrs. Hillcrist to have her revenge. She has learned some very unsavoury facts regarding the past life of Chloe. It appears that she was formerly “a woman who went with men, to get them their divorce” (561). V. Dupont remarks:

\begin{quote}
Conspiracy may thus be the natural and concrete out-come of identity of views and interests among members of a social group. Galsworthy uses it as the back bone of many plots; there is family conspiracy in \textit{The Skin Game}, and class conspiracy in \textit{The Silver Box}.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

At first Mrs. Hillcrist hesitates to tell as Jill is with them but later when Jill herself says it doesn’t matter, she tells the truth: “It’s a scandal to have a woman like that in the neighbourhood” (547). Hillcrist asks how they knew all this. Dawker points out the stranger and tells that he was one of the agents and knew all this before. When Hillcrist asks the stranger he tells that he remembers Chloe very well and her name was different. Hillcrist does not want to hear all that and he rejects to use her as a weapon against Hornblower: “We use her secret as a lever” (546). Mrs. Hillcrist does not agree to this. “I was brought up never to hurt a women. I can’t do it, Amy—I can’t do it. I should never feel like a gentleman again” (547). She wants to use Chloe as a
dirty weapon against Hornblower as he had played a foul game and cheated them. Anyway, “this is our salvation, and we must use it” (546). These facts she threatens to make public unless Hornblower resells the Centry to her husband for the sum of four thousand five hundred pounds. This would mean serious financial loss to Hornblower, as well as a confession of defeat in the skin-game on which he had staked everything. She wants to take revenge on Hornblower. She wants to tell Hornblower about the character of Chloe. In this matter Jill also supports her mother and asks her father to agree: “You pride yourself on plain speech, Jill. I pride myself on plain thought” (547). Argument takes place between Mr. & Mrs. Hillcrist. Mrs. Hillcrist tries to convince him: “We do it to save our skins.” (547). Hillcrist and Jill move out. When Dawker enters she tells that she will send a note which makes Hornblower to come the next day morning. She tells Dawker to bring the stranger the next day morning. He accepts it and tells the stranger that they will get back the Centry at a decent price.

The next scene takes place in Chloe’s room. She is seen standing. The door opens and her maid Anna enters and calls her for dinner. She says she cannot have it as she has got headache. Anna tells her to take rest, as she smiles Chloe asks her why she is spying on her. Anna does not accept it and she is said by Chloe to take her wages the next day. She asks her to leave her alone. Rolf enters and asks her if he could do anything for her. She says that she does not like the quarrel between
Hornblower and Hillcrist. She asks if he likes it. In reply Rolf says no. Chloe tells Rolf to stop the quarrel and asks him to do a favour. She tells him to call Dawker and see her at the window at eight o’ clock when Hornblower and Charles are at the dinner. Chloe sets a plan and sends Anna to bring medicines. Hornblower comes to Chloe and reads the note which he got from Hillcrist. In it is written that Hornblower has to meet Hillcrist the next day morning at eleven o’ clock to hear an important news about his daughter-in-law and is a vital thing related to the happiness of his family. Hornblower asks Chloe if she is hiding anything from him. She says nothing and tells about her father. She diverts the topic saying that her father is a bankrupt. Hornblower takes it in an easy manner and feels relief when he confirms the matter. Hornblower wants to pay them if they play pranks with him: “The bitter snobs! I’ll remember it in the account I’ve got with them” (551). Chloe asks him to stop the quarrel with Hillcrist but he does not accept it as he had to pay a lot of money to get the Centry:

He’s a part of the whole dog-in-the-manger system that stands in my way. Ye’re a woman, and ye don’t understand these things. Ye wouldn’t believe the struggle I’ve had to make my money and get my position. These country folk talk soft sawder, but to get anything from them’s like gettin’ butter out of a dog’s mouth. If they could drive me out of here by fair means or foul, wou’d they hesitate a moment? Not the! See what they’ve made me pay; and look at this letter. Selfish, mean lot o’ hypocrites! (551).
He does not want to take back step and he wants to build chimneys infront of Hillcrist’s house: “I’ll not leave much skin on them” (551). Chloe feels tensed when Hornblower sits near the window (where Dawker is supposed to meet) and starts to give reply to Hillcrist’s letter. She pretends that she is suffering from headache. Seeing her Hornblower tells her to take rest and leaves the room. She locks the door and Dawker enters the room. He asks him why she has called him. She asks him why he is doing all this with her when she has not done any harm to him. Dawker replies that it is a part of the game. She asks him why he is dragging her in between when she has nothing to do with the quarrel. Dawker says that he hates Hornblower’s family and serves Hillcrist’s family. As she is a pawn in the game he wants to use her as Hornblower’s does not know her past life. Chloe pleads him, gives him pearls and money to keep his mouth shut. Dawker does not agree it: “I’m a plain dog, if you like, but I’m faithful, and I hold fast. Don’t try those games on me” (553). Chloe losing control begins to scold him and asks him why he has kept Anna to spy her. Chloe asks him what he needs for not spoiling her life. Dawker tells that he is going to use her and let her down: “She begs him not to betray her, offers him her pearls, finally—even herself—in vain. Then she feels like a rat in a trap. She will bring shame upon Hornblower, who is so good to her, will lose the love of her husband, Charles, whom she also loves dearly, and whose child she is expecting.” As he goes through the window,
she unlocks the door and lies on the sofa. Charles comes in quietly and stands over her. He asks about her health. She says that she is pregnant and tells him that it is not right time to tell his father. Charles feels happy hearing that news. Chloe asks Charles to stop the quarrel.

Leon Schalit remarks:

A strong, a recurrent idea in Galsworthy’s work: Reflect carefully before rushing into a feud, it leads to nothing. Once begin a quarrel, you never know when and how you will end it. A seeming conquest is as bad as a defeat, (Vide also *The Silver Spoon.*) Settle the matter peaceably; try, instead of quarrelling, to approach your opponent in a human manner; this, too, was the message in *Strife.* As in *Strife,* Annie Roberts falls an innocent victim; so here, Chloe, who in reality has nothing to do with the fight, is cruelly destroyed. Not Hillcrist, nor even his wife, can really rejoice in their victory. Still more loudly than from *Strife* resounds from this drama of hate and brawling the writer’s cry: ‘More understanding! More forbearance!’

But Charles does not understand her agitation and says that he cannot as his father had paid huge amount for that land. He tells her not to worry about the insult done to her by Mrs. Hillcrist. He is going to ruin the Deepwater within six months. He tells her goodnight and goes out of the room.

The next scene takes place in Hillcrist’s study room. Rolf comes to meet Jill. Rolf asks her why she is behaving like that and asks her
whether they cannot be friends like before. Jill says that it is his father who has started the quarrel. Rolf asks her why Chloe was insulted by her mother: “Snobbish. She may not be your class; and that’s just why it’s snobbish” (557). Rolf tries to convince her but she does not. In reply she says, “We’re all out for our own. Your father’s motto—‘Every man for himself.’ That’s the winner—hands down. Good-bye!” (558). Rolf leaves the room with a painful gesture. Just then Fellows comes and tells that Dawker and two strangers have come to see Mrs. Hillcrist. They stay in the room and Jill leaves the room. Mrs. Hillcrist enters and says Dawker that she had sent a second note to Hornblower. The two strangers are sent into another room. Hornblower comes and shows the two letters sent by Mrs. Hillcrist and asks her why she is after their family. Mrs. Hillcrist tells Hornblower about his daughter-in-law’s past life. She asks if he is familiar with the law of divorce. She says when the cases are arranged, the man who is to be divorced often visits the hotel with a strange woman and his daughter-in-law before marriage was in the habit of being employed as such a woman. Hearing this Hornblower becomes angry. He does not believe it and says that it is a lies. He says that they have planned a trick to let him down. Hornblower goes out and brings Chloe along with him. He asks her to tell the truth. Chloe does not accept it and says that it is a lie.

Mr. Dawker opens the door and the first stranger comes and calls by her old name as Ms. Vane. She pretends as if she does not know
him. He shows a notebook and says that three years ago on 3 Oct she had met some person in a hotel Beaulieu for twenty pounds. She had made genuine entries. Hornblower checks it and looks at Chloe. Chloe says it is all lies. Dawker again opens the door and the second stranger makes his entry saying Henry. Seeing him Chloe throws up her hands, gasps, breaks down and covers her face with hands showing her confession. Hornblower stands staggered. The two men with Dawker and Mrs. Hillcrist leave the room. Hornblower scolds Chloe and feels ashamed to have such a daughter-in-law: “So that was your manner of life! So that’s what ye got out of by marryin’ into my family! Shame on ye, ye Godless thing!” (562). He is worried about his family, his works and his future. She has brought him into shame. Chloe feels sorry for it and tells him not to tell the truth to Charles as she is pregnant. She says that she loves Charles and cannot live without him. Hornblower makes a bewildered gesture and tells her to sit in the car and wait for him. He therefore refuses the terms offered. But Mrs. Hillcrist is implacable and unscrupulous, and the facts are dragged to light, though Hillcrist does what he can to stay her hands: “If you harm us we shall harm you” (563). Coats points out, “The agony of suffering which this exposure will cause to Chloe, who is now a reformed and loving wife, trying to live down her past, may be imagined.”

To maintain this as a secret Mrs. Hillcrist finalises a deal and says, “it’s a blackmail” (563). Thus “Hornblower has been brought to his
knees by a sort of blackmail." He says okay to the deal only when he gets the confirmation from Mrs. Hillcrist that she and her agent would keep their mouth shut and would not tell the secret to anyone. Hornblower signs the document only when Mrs. Hillcrist and Dawker had sweared on the Bible. He gives them a deadly look and leaves. Hillcrist feels happy that at last he has got the Centry but feels sorry for Chloe. Rolf comes to Chloe and asks why she met Jill in the morning. She does not give him any reply and tells him to leave her alone.

When Mr. Hillcrist and Jill are talking, Chloe comes in: “She looks like a lost soul” (566). and requests them not to tell the truth to her husband as he has seen her going out to Hillcrist’s house, he got suspicious and is after her to know the truth. She tells that she is a true wife to him: “When I deceived him, I’d have deceived God Himself—I was so desperate” (569). She says that a man isn’t going to be satisfied when there’s something he suspects about his wife. As she passes through the window Charles comes and asks about the story. Hillcrist tries to cover it by saying that Chloe has come just to clarify some accounts. Charles calls them liars and tells that Dawker had told all the truth. He calls his wife a living lie and he does not want to own the child of such a woman. Hearing this, Chloe who is behind the curtain passes through the window. In an angry mood Charles asks where his wife is. Hillcrist and Jill try to calm him but he is not in a mood to
listen and moves out. Hillcrist and Jill go in search of Chloe: “With child! Who knows where things end when they once begin?” (571).

According to V. Dupont:

More striking still are those endings where world victory still conceals the inner defeat that dwells in deep-felt humiliation, that of the soul before itself as a judge: we have it in *The Silver Box*, in *The Eldest Son*, in *The Skin Game*. Galsworthy adopted this sort of solution deliberately and after long discussion with himself and with his friendly critics; it is similar to the one occurring in his novel *The Man of Property*.69

Hornblower comes to Mrs. Hillcrist and asks them to give back the document as Charles had known the truth. Dawker says that Charles has come to him, abused him and threatened him to tell the truth. So he has to open his mouth. Hornblower suddenly turns on Dawker. He sees the document in Dawker’s pocket and makes a snatch at the deal. Dawker springs at him, and they two stand swaying, trying for a grip at each other’s throat. Rolf and Jill appear suddenly and they seize Dawker’s hands which have reached Hornblower’s throat. Jill stops the quarrel and tells them to see through the window. They see Hillcrist and Charles carrying Chloe’s motionless body in their arms as she puts herself in the gravel pit. According to V. Dupont:

Chloe’s attempted suicide in *The Skin Game* is pure melodrama, indeed the whole figure of Chloe is melodramatic. Saddled with a regrettable past, she has contrived to marry into a wealthy self-made family. She
sincerely loves, and is beloved by, her husband, Charles Hornblower, to whom certain details of her earlier existence are unknown. A conflict arises between the county, on one side, and the Hornblowers on the other, in the course of which the stigma attaching to Chloe’s reputation is exploited to the full as a means of ridding the neighbourhood of the unwelcome new riches. Chloe, in a desperate bid for secrecy, even offers her person as a bribe to one of her trackers, but in vain. The truth comes out and, unable to face her husband, she tries to destroy herself.\textsuperscript{70}

Rolf and Charles take her to their car. Hornblower blames Hillcrist that he was beaten and disgraced, destroyed his son’s marital life, killed his grandchild because of them and he will not stay in that spot and if time comes he will certainly do harm to their family. Hillcrist says sorry to it. Hornblower goes out saying Hillcrist as hypocrite. Mrs. Hillcrist tells them to call Dr. Robinson and send him to Hornblower’s house. She asks her husband if she and Dawker are to be blamed for it but he says no.

According to R.H. Coats:

The conclusion of the whole matter is that Hornblower, in order to hush up the scandal, forfeits six thousand pounds, yet has his name dragged in the mire all the same, and all his social aspirations brought to ruin. Hillcrist too is defiled and degraded by the sordid quarrel. His wife has been guilty of foul play and he himself has stooped to falsehood. Charles, perhaps, suffers as much as anyone, for what can his married life be to him now?\textsuperscript{71}
The Jackmans make their entry and thank them for their help. He remains silent: “I’d had forgotten their existence. What is it that gets loose when you begin a fight, and makes you what you think you’re not? What blinding evil! Begin as you may, it ends in this—skin game! Skin game!” (573,574); “And he comes to the conviction that, in such a fight, one loses oneself, that it is impossible to keep one’s hands clean” 72 The word “hypocrite” touches his heart and is worried. The whole idea dominating The Skin Game, for instance, is summed up in Hillcrist’s questions: “What’s gentility worth if it can’t stand fire?” (574).

The play ends with Hillcrist’s questions:

“When we began this fight, we had clean hands—are they clean now? What’s gentility worth if it can’t stand fire?” (574). R.H. Coats notices:

Very noticeable in this play (which leans somewhat to staginess and melodrama) is the fairness with which Galsworthy brings out the good points as well as the defects of both sides during the deadly struggle. Inevitably, however, in contests of this kind, where it is war to the knife, any weapon is likely to be resorted to that will bring victory, no matter how mean or discreditable it may be. Neither party really wins, and each party suffers extreme moral degradation, besides losses of other kinds, in the wretched conflict. Galsworthy’s sympathies, and ours, naturally go out to the younger people, who want to assuage the strife and live in peace. ‘A plague on both your houses!’ 73
References:


30 Alfred C. Ward, *John Galsworthy* 41, 47.

31 Philip Guedalla, Mr., *John Galsworthy In a Gallery*, (New York: Putnam’s,) 1924) 85, 97.

32 Hermon Ould,: *John Galsworthy*, 133.

33 Allardyce Nicoll, *British Drama* 97.


49 R.H. Coats, *John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist*  137.


51 R.H. Coats, *John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist*  138-139.


54 R.H. Coats, *John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist*  139.


59 The exact meaning of American term “Skin Game” is “An unscrupulous tricky piece of conduct.” Quoted in R.H. Coats, *John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist*  141.

60 R.H. Coats, *John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist*  144.


64 V. Dupont, *John Galsworthy: The Dramatic Artist* 63


69 V. Dupont, John Galsworthy: The Dramatic Artist 68.


71 R.H. Coats, *John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist* 142-143.


73 R.H. Coats, *John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist* 143.