

STRIFE

John Galsworthy

ROBERTS: For all that Mr. Simon Harness says, for all that Thomas, Rous, for all that any man present here can say— We've won the fight!

*The crowd sags nearer, looking eagerly up. With withering scorn.*

You've felt the pinch o't in your bellies. You've forgotten what that fight 'as been ; many times I have told you ; I will tell you now this once again. The fight o' the country's body and blood against a blood-sucker. The fight of those that spend theirselves with every blow they strike and every breath they draw, against a thing that fattens on them, and grows and grows by the law of merciful Nature. That thing is Capital! A thing that buys the sweat o' men's brows, and the tortures o' their brains, at its own price. Don't I know that ? Wash' the work o' my brains bought for seven hundred pounds, and hasn't one hundred thousand pounds been gained them by that seven hundred without the stirring of a finger ? It is a thing that will take as much and give you as little as it can. That's Capital! A thing that will say—" I'm very sorry for you, poor fellows—you have a cruel time of it, I know:" but will not give one sixpence of its divi→dends to help you have a better time. That's Capital! Tell me, for all their talk is there one of them that will consent to another penny on the Income Tax to help the poor ? That's Capital! A white-faced, stony-hearted monster ! Ye have got it on its knees ; are ye to give up at the last minute to save your miserable bodies pain ? When I went this morning to those old men from London, I looked into their very 'carts. One of them was sitting there— Mr. Scantlebury, a mass of flesh nourished on as : site& there for all the world like the shareholders in this Company, that sit not moving tongue nor finger, talon' dividends—a great dumb ox that can only be roused when its food is threatened. I looked into his eyes and I saw he was afraid—afraid for himself and his dividends, afraid for his fees, afraid of the very shareholders he stands for ; and all but one of them's afraid—like children that get into a wood at night and start at every rustle of the leaves. I ask you, men - *(he pauses, holding out his hand till there is utter silence)* - Give me a free hand to tell them: "Go you back to London. The men have nothing for you! *(A urmuring.)* Give me that, an' I swear to you, within a week you shall have from London all you want.