

"OUR MR. ARNOLD"

Mr. John Halton, representing Bramshaw & Lane, Limited, of London, found two letters waiting for him in the commercial-room of the George Hotel, Midstone.

One was from his firm and the other from his wife. He opened the latter first, and learned that the baby had cut her first tooth, and that the bright little woman in the Brixton flat hoped that business was good.

The letter from his firm acknowledged two cheques and a small order, and there was a postscript in the handwriting of the managing director: "We trust you will endeavor to open an account with Norris Brothers. This firm are the largest buyers in Midstone, but we have not done business with them for years. On your last journey you reported that you called twice and were unable to see their buyer, Mr. Arnold. We trust you will be more fortunate this time. The man we need is a man who can open new accounts."

There was a troubled expression upon Halton's freckled, good-humored face as he placed the letter in his pocket. He looked at his watch. It was half-past five, late to make a call and he had a very tiring day; but, leaving his bag in the commercial-room, he picked up the small leather case containing his catalogues and price lists, and set off for Norris', the big wholesale and retail ironmongers in Bridge Street.

It was Thursday evening, and it had been a rotten week. One of those weeks when everything goes wrong—big orders just gone to a rival; men away on a holiday; gone to London for the day.

"Been in and went out a moment ago!"

A veteran might have accepted the situation philosophically, but John Halton was not a veteran. He had only been "on the road" three months; he was still on his trial.

And his old job in the London warehouse had been filled. It was a disconcerting thought that if he ceased to represent Messrs. Bramshaw & Lane in the Southern Counties he would cease to be in the employ of the firm with whom he had started as an office-boy nearly twenty years ago.

And he had not asked for the job; it had been thrust upon him. He had done a little travelling in the suburbs, and then had been chosen to succeed a rather crotchety old man, who had kept his vow to die in harness, but had kept together barely half his connection. Halton had hated leaving his wife and child from Monday morning until Friday night, and had discovered that a traveller's life is not a bed of roses, though until this last week he had thought he was doing fairly well on his job.

Now, coming on top of an almost blank week, the managing-director's postscript disturbed him. There seemed an ominous note in it—a hint that he was not rising to expectation.

He passed Messrs. Norris Brothers' big shop in Bridge Street, and turned down a little side street to the warehouse and office entrance.

An office-boy left his task of copying letters to take his card into an inner office, and a clerk returned with it.

"You want to see Mr. Arnold?" he said. "But he's just left for the day."

"Would you mind placing my card on his desk, and telling him I'll call in the morning?" said Halton.

"Oh, very well!" replied the clerk listlessly; and Halton returned to the hotel.

He had not much expected to see the buyer at such a late hour; but, at all events, he would report to his firm that he had tried; and that was all he could report that day—a day of trying without result.

And after his tea he wrote a letter to his firm, and went out to post it. It started to rain, and anyway he felt too tired to go for his usual walk; so he went back to the George Hotel, politely refusing to make up a four at solo, and, with a couple of hours before he could very well go to bed, he entered the billiard-room.

Two men were playing, and a man sat on a settee watching them. One of the players he recognized as the landlord of the hotel. The other player, who had just made a break of thirty as he entered, was a rather portly little man, with a short grey beard and a somewhat aggressive manner. But he could certainly play billiards, and just after Halton entered he brought off a fine losing hazard and ran out an easy winner.

The landlord excused himself playing again, as the man who had been watching wanted to see him on business, and the two men went out, leaving the victorious player and Halton alone.

"Care for a game?" asked the victor carelessly. "I'll give you what points you like."

When John Halton had married he had practically ceased to play billiards. When he had gone "on the road" he had decided never to play, nor on account of the expense—his games would cost him little—but for fear that it would lead to late hours and an unfitness for work in the morning. This man, however, was far above the average player, an opponent after his own heart, and a game would take him out of the gloomy chain of thought into which he had fallen.

"I'll play you with pleasure, sir. I should say we are pretty evenly matched."

The bearded man's eyes

brows lifted slightly. "I don't often play in this hotel, but when I do I expect to give points. However, if you can do without them so much the better."

As Halton selected a cue from the rack he decided that this man must be the crack player of the town, who rather resented anyone claiming to be able to meet him on level terms. Even out of practice as he was, Halton felt sure that, with anything like luck, he would be able to more than hold his own.

They made it a couple of hundred up. For the first hundred the bearded man, who had evidently took the game very seriously, and scarcely spoke a word, scored nearly twice as fast as he did. Then Halton made a faultless break of forty-six and drew level.

Two men had dropped in just before he completed it and they were loud in their applause. The bearded man was looking grim.

"You play a very good game, sir," he said. "You've got your eye in now, and I shall be a proud man if I succeed in beating you."

Halton had got his eye in, and the balls were running well for him. He had made twenty-two, and had the red over the top pocket. As he leaned over the table to take the shot, he heard one of the men ask his companion if he knew who the players were.

"Don't know the big-break merchant," came the half-whispered reply, "but he was in the commercial-room for tea. The bearded chap is the buyer for Norris, the big ironmongers here. Man in the paint trade pointed him out to me last time I was here. They say he's a good player, but a poor loser."

And Halton miscued, and left the balls beautifully for his opponent.

"Hard luck, sir!" said the talkative traveller sympathetically.

And it was hard luck. John Halton had been delighted over that forty-six break. It would have been fine to tell the missus when he got home how he had beaten a cocky little chap, and got to within twenty of his record break, despite playing on a strange table and being out of practice. He had set his heart on winning the game.

But if he won he would certainly not open an account with Mr. Arnold, the buyer for Norris Brothers, when he called upon him the next morning.

The billiard-room was filling up. News of a great game in progress had been conveyed by the waiter who had brought drinks for the two spectators. The bearded man scored twenty-five off the fine opening he had given him.

And John Halton went to the table to play to lose.

He hated it—hated it not only because he was so keen on winning, but on the principle of the thing. A game was a game, play it; but, also business was business. At the back of his mind was the little flat in Brixton, a woman and a tiny mortal who had just cut her first tooth; they depended upon him.

His business was to open new accounts. The fact of having played billiards with the elusive Mr. Arnold should be of value when he called to see him in the morning. To "open" with Norris Brothers would wipe out the stigma of an almost blank week.

Halton made a pretty fifteen. His breakdown on a fine round-the-table cannon elected murmurs of sympathy. It would never do to go all to pieces suddenly.

The bearded man was fretting and fuming. He had told the landlord before that the spot ball was not running true. Would that gentleman with the cigar get a little farther away from the table? Smoke made it so difficult for him to see.

Halton cleverly missed two good opportunities, and placed the balls each time for his opponent; then, with twenty wanted to win, he scored eighteen, and could almost see Mr. Arnold's hair standing on end.

He wanted Mr. Arnold to remember him in the morning.

"One hundred and ninety-two—one hundred and ninety-eight," called the marker, who had appeared upon the scene.

Halton had left the balls in such a position that he was confident his opponent would easily run out. But the bearded man was obviously nervous. The room was tense with excitement. He went in with the red, brought the red down over the middle pocket, and went in again. He wanted two for game, and had an easy cannon on.

But he missed it.

"One hundred and ninety-eight all," came the voice of the marker.

"Confound the man!" thought Halton. He was making things difficult for him. The balls were rather awkwardly placed; so Halton, anxious not to score, but at least to have the satisfaction of letting the bearded man see that he knew as much about the game as he did, played for a brilliant round-the-table cannon.

He played to miss by three or four inches, but miscalculated the amount of side necessary.

"Game!" called the marker as the balls clicked; and, amid great applause, the bearded man put on his coat and paid the marker.

"Thank you, sir!" he said shortly to Halton. "A very good game indeed. I regret I cannot ask you to let me have my revenge, as I must be getting off."

And Halton, forcing a smile in reply to the congratulations of excited spectators, refused to play again, put on his light coat and, filled with dismay, went for a short walk ere he went to bed.

And about ten o'clock the next morning he presented himself at the

—and the worst is yet to come



office of Messrs. Norris Brothers, hoping devoutly that Mr. Arnold would prove a better sportsman than his manner the previous night had suggested.

A clerk took in his card. "Come this way, please. Mr. Norris will see you," he said.

And John Halton, greatly puzzled, followed him along a corridor. He had asked to see Mr. Arnold. Why was he being taken to a man who was presumably one of the partners?

The clerk opened a door, and John Halton, hat in one hand and brown leather case in the other, found himself face to face with the man with whom he had played billiards at the George.

"Good-morning, Mr. Halton!" said the bearded man quite genially. "You asked for our Mr. Arnold; but I learnt your identity from the landlord before I left the hotel last night, and I resolved to remove the name of your firm from our black list."

"Black list, sir!" gasped the bewildered Halton.

"There are certain travellers who have annoyed me—men who won't take 'No' for an answer—men like your firm's last representative, a self-opinioned old ass, sir. I never see those men again. They are told that Mr. Arnold is the buyer, and they call to see him, but never succeed for the simple reason that there is no such person in our employ."

John Halton gazed at him blankly. "You must keep this secret, Mr. Halton. I have told it to you because I have respect for you. I respect any man who can beat me level at billiards. I feel that — But we must get to business. I think I can make you up a decent order. And next time you're coming to Midstone, drop me a line a week or so ahead, and I'll keep the date free in order to try and get my revenge."

Half an hour later John Halton departed with an order that more than made up for the poor week he had had; and he had "opened" with Norris Brothers, and was on very good terms with the senior partner, who had promised to put all he could in his way.

And it was a very happy, confident man who set off back to the little flat in Brixton.

Testing the Age of Eggs.

Fill a tumbler two-thirds full of water and then place in it a newly-laid egg and it will sink to the bottom of the glass. The egg is composed largely of water, and therefore is heavier while it is fresh. The older the egg, the lighter it becomes on account of the water evaporating from the white of the egg, which causes the empty space at the thick end of the egg to become enlarged. Hence, at three weeks of age the egg will lean in the water. When three months old it will stand perfectly straight, with pointed end of the egg barely touching the bottom of the glass. The larger the empty space becomes the more the egg will rise in the water, until finally it reaches the surface.

He Wanted Variety.

Not long ago there occurred a big fire in a Massachusetts town, and the crowds that gathered were soon reformed by others from near-by places.

While running to this fire one man overtook another in the road who was proceeding in the same direction.

"Where's the fire?" asked the last-mentioned man, out of breath. "Don't tell me it's the carpet factory. I've seen that twice already."

Motor traffic that kill and a gun that "I didn't know was loaded" are in the same category. It is time that the motorist awoke to the fact that he is driving a deadly weapon and that every time he ignores traffic regulations he is pointing a loaded gun at a fellow mortal's head.

He Qualified.

"Sir, I understand you said I had a face that would stop a clock."

"So I did. Any well-regulated clock would pause and hold up its hands in admiration at the sight of your lovely face."

PRINCESS' CHOICE PLEASES ENGLAND

KING'S ONLY DAUGHTER TO WED VISCOUNT.

Interest is Renewed in the Marriages of the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York and Prince Henry.

The betrothal of Princess Mary has been joyously received all over England, largely because she is marrying an Englishman, says a London despatch. The action has had the effect of reassuring the mind of the British people on a subject about which much has been spoken and little written—the forthcoming marriages of her brothers, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York and Prince Henry. It has been obvious that the war had completely altered the situation regarding eligible royal alliances for the Princes of the blood, and it is now likely and certainly highly desired that they will go back to the old tradition of the English throne before the royal marriage act was passed.

There was a stringent restriction in the Stuart times, but previously there had been many instances of marriages outside reigning families. Many Plantagenets married outside royal strains, and three daughters of Edward I, who had a high sense of royal dignity, married knights, two of whom were English earls holding titles no higher than that Princess Mary's future husband will bear.

Question of Royal Marriage.

The eldest daughter of Edward III, married a French knight who was created Earl of Bedford. Under the Stuarts, royal blood marriages were strictly insisted upon, though James, Duke of York, married Ann Hyde, but it was kept a secret. With the Georges the passion for restricting marriages to royal families reached its height.

George III, and his consort Anne were both fanatics on this subject, and were greatly angered when two of the King's brothers married commoners. A sequel to this was the royal marriage act, which tightened the restrictions, which still prevail.

Owing to the necessity of excluding Roman Catholic princesses the royal field since the war is very barren. It is certain that public opinion would never tolerate the marriage of any Prince with a German, and the number of marriageable princesses in Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway is remarkably small. The imperial family of Russia has utterly disappeared and the Greek princesses would not be popular here now. The remaining royal families, those of Spain, Italy and Belgium, are Roman Catholics.

In these conditions it is inevitable that some at least of the King's sons must marry outside royal circles, and there is no doubt that the people would cordially welcome such a selection. It is no secret that the Prince of Wales prefers to take an English girl, and undoubtedly the people would acclaim the selection with such enthusiasm that the House of Lords would set aside the marriage act. It is accepted here as almost certain that the old superstitions about the blood royal must give way to modern ideas, and the betrothal of Princess Mary is regarded as the first step in this direction.

Smuts Was Snubbed.

General Smuts told an amusing story a short time ago.

"I was at a social gathering with General Botha," he said. "Two flappers came up and asked me for my autograph. In a daintily bound book I signed my name with the proffered pencil. The girl studied my signature with a frown. 'Aren't you General Botha?' she asked. 'No,' I replied, 'I'm General Smuts.' She turned to her friend with a shrug. 'Lend me your india-rubber, May,' she said."

One inch of rain means 100 tons of water on every acre.

THE AUTOMOBILE



KEEP MUFFLER CLEAN AND NO CUT-OUT NEEDED.

One of the parts of an automobile most neglected by many owners and drivers is the muffler. As a boy with a dirty face puts off the cleaning up process just as long as possible, so the motorist with a muffler that needs attention procrastinates and thinks perhaps he will fix it up to-morrow. And to-morrow never comes. But to-day is always here with its greater use of gasoline and various other complications that a dirty muffler causes.

The muffler is located under the car, and being out of sight is usually out of mind. It is therefore often neglected or misused. And yet it ought not to be. The muffler is placed on the end of the exhaust pipe of the engine so that the driver of an automobile while taking pleasure himself does not wholly deprive others of it.

Let us consider the use of the muffler. The exhaust valve opens while the burned gas is still under pressure of from twenty-five to thirty pounds per square inch. If this were exhausted directly into the air the resulting noise would stifle conversation in the car, annoy everybody along the street and quickly get the driver into trouble with the police. The muffler prevents all this. It provides a chamber in which these exhaust gases may expand and cool somewhat and at the same time breaks up the pressure by allowing it to leak out slowly through a number of very small holes, instead of letting it loose in one "big noise."

The "Cut-Out" Valve.

In the early history of the automobile mufflers were not used and everybody for blocks around knew when an auto was coming. As the automobiles increased in number this became a nuisance and was stopped by law. Then they sought, indeed, had been seeking, a means of stifling the sound. In the early muffler there was trouble because the gas would back up in the cylinder and decrease the power of the motor. It was thought there was no way to decrease the sound without decreasing the power; therefore, the manufacturers devised a valve to "cut out" the muffler on the car whenever extra power was desired.

Sometimes the back pressure was so great as to interfere when driving through heavy roads or up hills. The "cut out" let the gas exhaust directly into the air instead of going through the muffler. At the present time nearly every city has a law prohibiting the use of "cut outs."

As a matter of fact, those well posted on automobile engines understand to-day that the "cut out" is absolutely unnecessary on a modern car if the muffler is kept in proper condition. Muffler manufacturers have been able to produce a design in which there is no back pressure at all. For this reason manufacturers discourage the use of the "cut out" on their cars, and

some of them will no longer install one except as an "extra." The average driver, however, does not know that his muffler needs as careful attention as any other part of the mechanism, and so he neglects it. In these days of noiseless cars it requires a great number of very small holes inside the muffler. These become clogged with soot or carbon from the exhaust. The deposit collects very rapidly, especially when the grade of oil used is poor or too much oil is used. It also results when the carburetor is adjusted to give too rich a mixture.

Openings Become Clogged.

When these small openings become clogged the exhaust gases cannot escape readily, and naturally the cylinder of the engine is not cleaned at the exhaust stroke. Result: It is impossible to bring in a full cylinder of new gas on the next intake stroke. There is not a full charge to explode, and this means a loss of power to the engine.

Cases are known where the throttle was opened wide without any increase in power. Trying to find out what the matter was, the driver opened the "cut out" and this caused the machine to accelerate very rapidly.

In other cases when the engine was cranked there would be a few explosions, a sputter and a stop, and the reason was that the muffler was so clogged that it was impossible to exhaust the gas from these few explosions; the cylinder remained full of burned gas, and, of course, could not take in a further supply. These, of course, are extreme cases.

The writer had the following experience not long ago:

He was riding in a car that could hardly make headway against a strong wind blowing. This meant frequent use of the second-speed gear, which in itself causes an undue use of gasoline. He found on experimenting that the muffler "cut out" pedal could be used in place of the accelerator pedal; that is, when the muffler "cut out" was open the engine had considerably more power and immediately speeded up. In fact, he kept the "cut out" open most of the way home and had no more trouble in bucking the head wind.

Of course, where the engine is stopped or there is a decided decrease in power the owner will hunt for the trouble, and find it, perhaps, in the muffler. He might not notice less serious cases where, while the muffler is somewhat clogged, it does not decrease the power strikingly; but even in these less serious cases it will often be found that the power of the motor may be materially increased by having the muffler cleaned; yet it is seldom done, even when the car is supposed to be overhauled completely. Many drivers seem to think the muffler can take care of itself.

Land of Our Birth.

Land of our birth we pledge to thee Our love and toil in the years to be, When we are grown and take our place As men and women with our race, Father in Heav'n, who lovest all, Oh, help Thy children when they call, That they may build from age to age, An undefiled heritage.

Teach us delight in simple things, And mirth that has no bitter springs, Forgiveness free of evil done, And love to all men 'neath the sun. Land of our birth, our faith, our pride, For whose dear sake our fathers died, O Motherland, we pledge to thee, Hear, heart and hand thro' the years to be!

Teach us to look in all our ends, On Thee for judge and not our friends, That we with Thee may walk uncowed, Teach us the strength that cannot seek.

By deed or thought, to hurt the weak, That under Thee we may possess Man's strength to comfort man's distress. —Rudyard Kipling.

A Prospect of Retrospect.

When I think how time will pass Until this Now is turned to Then, Like smoke that fades within a glass, Seem the curled fancies of my pen.

For this year's sturdy discontent Will read as words a boy mis-spelled, When I have weighed the Much life meant Against the Little that it held. —Edward Davison.

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One inch of rain means 100 tons of water on every acre.

Love's Lantern.

Because the road was steep and long And through a dark and lonely land, God set upon my lips a song And put a lantern in my hand.

Through miles on weary miles of night That stretch relentless on my way, My lantern burns serene and white, An unexhausted cup of day.

O yolden lights and lights like wine, How dim your boasted splendors are, Behold this little lamp of mine, It is more starlike than a star!

—Joyce Kilmer.

Turk Says He is 146 Years Old.

The eternal wrangle over claims of being the oldest living person has broken out here again with the arrival in Marseilles on the way to London of a Turk named Djoure, who asserts he is 146 years old, says a Paris despatch. If this is true he outdistances the American Indian Kabenahgwayence (Wrinkled Meat), who was declared to hold the Western Hemisphere record, by twelve years.

Unlike a majority of such claimants, Djoure produced what purported to be a birth certificate showing that he was born in 1775 in Bitlis, in the Caucasus. Until he left Constantinople he was still working as a market porter, and on landing in Marseilles he carried his baggage on his shoulders.

There has been a slump in the number of French centenarians since 1886, when the Government investigated the claims of 184 such persons shown in the census books. Only sixteen of these produced baptismal certificates. Nothing could be learned about forty-eight, and the rest were regarded as stretching the facts concerning dates of their births. The oldest man then living in France was declared to be a Spaniard. He was living in Turbos and was 116 years old.

The great steamship "Mauretania" was greatly damaged recently by a fire caused by a carelessly dropped cigarette stub. Similar stubs have destroyed Canadian forests that would have supplied the wooden decks and interior fittings for a hundred "Mauretania's."