

## Arthur Gaylor. A county tale by Frederick Brittain.

Arthur Gaylor, was a Bedfordshire man. During the greater part of the year he cultivated his own little piece of land at Clophill, but every summer he went south. Having left someone in charge of his cottage and land, he made his way, by a series of car-lifts, to Knightsland Farm, between Barnet and South Mimms. There he worked for Walter Mossman until all the grass had been cut, made into hay, carted, and stacked.

He worked at Knightsland 6 days a week with a bit of milking on Sundays thrown in, and slept very soundly every night on straw in a disused pigsty. He enjoyed his work, and his only relaxation was a daily visit to the Green Dragon, which stands very near the farm.

Arthur, in short, was a tactful man; and this was never more in evidence than when he was dealing with trespassers at Knightsland. Such uninvited guests were numerous, because the meadows, reached the main road and every fine Sunday throughout the summer, at least one group of them will settle in the hay fields for a picnic and roll in the long grass, ignorant or reckless of crop damage. They usually resented being ordered off and, when they went always left behind them a trail of tins, broken bottles, cigarette packets, and newspapers.

As Walter Mossman sat in his dining-room one fine Sunday morning in June, wondering whether to start mowing next day or leave it till Tuesday, he heard merry voices coming from the very field which he had decided to cut first. Looking out of the window, he saw seven strangers sitting in the long grass.

Being a kind-hearted man, and knowing the diplomatic skill of Arthur Gaylor, he went to the back door and called "Arthur!"

"Yes, Mast' Walter?" Arthur answered from the granary steps, where he sat playing his fiddle. "*You might go and move that picnic party out of Fifteen Acres, will you?*" "*Roight you are, Mast' Walter!*"



Arthur on the granary steps

Three minutes later, just as Mr. and Mrs. Brown, their three daughters, and two business friends of Mr. Brown were comfortably seated at their meal in the long grass, they were startled to see Arthur's face suddenly appear over the hedge, looking at them with a serious though not a severe expression.

"*Morning!*" he said. "*Noice morning. Oi reckon it wun't raain whoile Tuesday; but, dew yew know, if Oi was you, Oi shouldn't stop there.*" "Why not?" asked Mr. Brown, somewhat sharply.

"*Whoy not? Whoy, because this is where our bull comes for 'is exercoise. They let 'im ewt every morning, and . . .*"

"The bull?" asked Mrs. Brown in alarm. "*Do you mean to say the bull comes here ?*"

"*Ah! that 'e do, every toime,*" Arthur answered. "*That's all right, my dear,*" said Mr. Brown reassuringly. He prided himself on his knowledge of animals. "*I don't suppose it's a mad bull.*" "*Well, no, maaster,*" said Arthur gravely. "*Oi caan't say as 'e's partic'lar mad, but o' course 'e gits a bit woild loike at toimes. Oi don't forgit 'ow 'e clahed that poor chap a year agoo laast Whitsun. Jist abewt where you're sittin' now, it war. Awful soight, that it war.*" Then, looking at his watch, he added : "*'They ought to be lettin' 'im ewt now. It's jist abewt toime.*"

The women screamed and began to throw the plates and glasses into the picnic-basket.

"*'Ark!*" said Arthur, raising a finger in solemn warning as the low of a cow rang over the fields. "*Do you 'ear thaat? Stroikes me they're jist a- lettin' 'im ewt.*"

Then, glancing nervously over his shoulder, he roared in an agonised voice : "*Mussy on us! 'ere 'e comes,*" and rushed for shelter as fast as he could move.

That evening, when the last can of milk had been loaded on to the float for Barnet, Arthur made his way to the Green Dragon, according to his custom. As he passed the adjoining tea-garden, he noticed a party of seven sitting round a table under the apple trees.

"*Look, mother!*" said one of the girls. "*There's the nice kind man who saved us from the bull.*" Mrs. Brown ran to the gate and shook Arthur warmly by the hand. "*Thank you so much!*" she said. "*It was most kind of you. We are so thankful you came along just at the right moment,*" and she pressed half-a-crown into his seemingly reluctant hand.

"*Thank ye, ma'am!*" said the hero, humbly, as he accepted the thanks of the admiring group. "*Oi'm only too glad as Oi were there. Thank ye! Oi dunno as Oi can say mooare. Good noight!*" and, with a coy smile, he passed into the Green Dragon.

"*What I like about these farm hands,*" said the well-informed Mr. Brown, as the party took their seats again, "*is that they are so simple. Some people think country folk are silly. I don't. They're simple, I grant you; but, when you know them as well as I do, you'll find they're not by any means silly. They're not very quick in the uptake, I admit, and they're easily taken in; but . . .*" He was interrupted by a roar of laughter from within. The simple farm hands were apparently being entertained by some simple story told by Arthur Gaylor. Yet Mr. Brown and his friends could not understand why four or five faces peered so curiously at them out of the window as soon as the laughter had subsided.