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The Late Mr. George O. Barratt.

An Appreciation: by W. Clarke Saunders.

A NOTABLE figure in confectionery circles has dropped out, and the industry, to which he was a credit, will be the poorer for the loss. Mr. George Osborne Barratt, the founder of the great manufacturing concern which bears his name, passed away, after much suffering, on the afternoon of the 3rd inst, at the advanced age of seventy-nine years. It was my privilege – a sorrowful one – to sit by his bedside at Holly Mount, Crouch Hill, three weeks before his demise, and as I listened to his feebly expressed regrets at his inability to be present at the firm's September Exhibition to welcome old friends and see that his "boys" were making everyone comfortable, I could not help noticing how strong the "ruling passion" showed itself in this frail old form that was so near its end.

Mr. Barratt was a strenuous worker from the days when he first started out to labor in the vineyard of life until within a few years of his death. Enforced idleness chafed him – it was like a bearing-rein on a war-horse – and the three long weary months in bed had made him fretful and restless. He wanted to get up – he wished to do something but his brain was stronger than his body. The insidious disease from which he died – jaundice – held him fast. The various surgical operations he had undergone during the past six years had weakened him. The inextinguishable love he had always felt for his wife – who made the same dread journey only thirteen months previously – practically broke his heart, and grief and jaundice together killed him. When I left the room he was crying – sobbing not at the thought of approaching death, but at the recollection of the loss of a woman who had been a model wife, a good helpmate, and an affectionate mother.

The late Mr. George Osborne Barratt was the son of Mr. William Barratt, wholesaler book-binder, of London and Oxford. His wife, Sarah, was the daughter of Mr. William Peterson, the well-known boot factor, of Poultry, E.C. When the deceased left school he entered a lawyer's office, where he remained some years. After his marriage he went into business with his brother, a pastrycook, but the partnership was soon dissolved and he started to make a name for himself. He essayed public life as an Islington vestryman, and took a keen interest in local affairs, but on going to reside at Croydon he gave up his seat, and devoted himself entirely to his business. His hobbies were few – his pleasures simple.

As I chatted with him in his private office at Wood Green sixteen months ago, whilst a few of his old customers dropped in to congratulate him upon recovering from a recent severe illness, it seemed incredible of belief that I was talking with a man who had worked over thirteen or fourteen hours a day for more than half a century. His eyes were bright, his recollection keen, his movements quick. He was a fine looking old gentleman, with an abundance of snow-white hair, a pleasant fresh-colored countenance – from which depended a white beard – and a spare figure that was as erect then as it was fifty years ago. I experienced some little difficulty in getting him to talk of old times, for he was somewhat modest about his own share in popularising certain confections with which every youngster is familiar. When I started in the confectionery business acid drops were made by hand, cut with scissors, and pressed out with the thumb and finger," he said, thoughtfully. That was over fifty years back – the trade has progressed since then, and profits are smaller, much smaller. Strange to say, Mr. Barratt was not a practical confectioner. He couldn't make sweets, but he could "think" them. One of his specialities was a brandy snap, for which there was a large demand. Mr Barratt used to sell the goods. He was as punctual as a clock in setting out on his journeys. There came a morning, however, when the brandy snaps were not ready for him. Let me have them as they are," was his request, and he took them away half-baked. As usual, he sold everything he had with him. Mr. Barratt was always a good salesman. He has been known to collect as much as £12,000 on a week's journey. His habit when travelling was to start by the newspaper train on Monday morning at 5.15, work Wakefield,

Bradford, and Leeds then on to Hull same evening. Well, the next time he went on his rounds the people would insist upon having the soft brandy snap. There was a regular cry for it, and Mr. Barratt, in want of a better name, used to call the goods "Jumbles."

His invention of "Stickjaw" was brought about in a very similar manner, as will be seen later. After leaving his brother he started as a confectioner – with the help of his good wife and a sugar boiler-in Shepherdess-walk. Mr. Barratt himself did the travelling, with a small pony and trap, in London and suburbs for some years Then his eldest son, George – at that time about seventeen years of age – took up his journeys, and the old gentlemen worked the country or the next twenty years. His son George then took over the country journeys. His son Edward, who was with him at that time, went on the London journeys, being followed by his son Albert. His son Frank always devoted himself to the manufacturing. His greatest helpmate was his wife, who used to assist by looking after the indoor part while he was out travelling. His eldest daughter, Elizabeth (now Mrs. Stennett), undertook the management of a large number of work girls, and she will long be remembered for the consideration and kindness she showed to those under her care. It was in a great measure the assistance which Mr. G. O. Barratt received from his wife and all his children, combined with punctuality in calling for, and promptitude in delivering, orders, that ensured the prosperity of the firm.

The shopkeepers at that time ordered small quantities, but Mr. Barratt astounded them once, when he took round a three-pound slab of diamond-shaped toffee, built up in layers (from which the trade-mark of the firm is taken), and urged them to put it in their windows. Many refused point blank, because they would never be able to sell so much. However, by dint of persuasion, and promises to take back all that was unsold, Mr. Barratt got a number of them to stock the toffee. Before very long they were selling four or five slabs weekly – a prodigious amount! This was looked upon as phenomenal, and some of Mr. Barratt's contemporaries shook their heads and prophesied that the demand would not last for a month. They were out in their reckoning, though. The sales not only continued, but actually increased.

At that time cocoanut candy used to sell fairly well. One morning Mr. Barratt found that his sugar boiler had not grained the batch There was no time to wait, and so, anxious to be punctual as usual, he had it poured into tins, trusting that it would set before he reached the shopkeepers to whom he was going to offer it. It sold as usual, little or no notice being taken of its altered appearance. When he made his next call every one of the customers, without exception, gave a repeat for what they termed "that stuff that sticks to the jaw." Thus it was that "stickjaw" first saw the light of day, and to his insistence upon punctuality Mr. Barratt again owned a rare stroke of luck. Stickjaw made his name. Every child in London was munching it, and it was soon selling in hundredweights instead of pounds.

Then the little factory in Shepherdess-walk was enlarged. Houses at the back in Underwood-row were demolished to make room for the extension, and the size of the shop, which by this time had become a kind of a landmark to every retail confectioner in London, was also increased. New goods were then brought out. For a time they consisted solely of boilings, such as butter toffee, raspberry toffee, and ginger toffee. They all had their respective successes, but the line to create a perfect furore was Jordan rock, which was made round and heaped up with almonds, each piece weighing about four pounds. This was registered at Somerset House, and "for a time," said Mr. Barratt, in telling me the story, "we could not make it fast enough. From the introduction of this almond rock," he added, "I practically date my success as a wholesale confectioner." The world, however, has to thank Mr. Barratt for a number of other well-known lines in confectionery, besides those I have mentioned. It was his inventive brain that first thought of crystalised cocoanut chips, which had an immense sale. Even today Barratt's, perhaps, turn out more of this class of confection than any other house in the Kingdom, for in the manufacture of it they are using up over fifty thousand nuts a week. When he began to get even with the demand for cocoanut chips, Mr. Barratt devoted his attention to pan goods, his first essay in this direction being Coffee Almonds, followed by Brandy Nips. Then came another big success in the form of Ching Chang Marbles. These goods, as is well known, had a thin ring round them, and Mr. Barratt's competitors were sorely puzzled as to the way in which it got there. As a matter of fact, the balls were run along an arrangement in the shape of a fiddle the strings being tinted a suitable

color. After this he introduced Coker Tines, a panned line with a boiled centre, and also, at a later period, invented glazed pan goods. These were followed by another bonanza, a pulled rock in which the figure of Tichborne was inserted. This was the first time that anything approaching the outline of a man had been worked into a rock, and to say that it "caught on" is expressing very mildly the way in which it sold. There was barely a confectioner's shop in the Kingdom which did not display in the window a box of Tichborne Rock with a card bearing these words:-

"Crack the rock where'er you will,
You'll find Sir Roger in it still."

I suppose this particular line was more talked about than any other piece of confectionery Mr. Barratt had ever made, and, as I have pointed out, he had invented a good few. Sticky Toffee was another of his great hits. It had a label showing a policeman asking a boy, "Sonny, what yer crying for?" "Barratt & Co.'s Sticky Toffee". Mr. Barratt was always very original in the names he gave his sweets and in sketching the pictorial labels for them, which fact undoubtedly helped them on to an enormous sale. The well-known Letter Rock so much in evidence at seaside resorts, such as Blackpool, &c., was the outcome of another of the ideas evolved by Mr. Barratt's active brain: Immense quantities of this rock are still made annually and orders are booked for thirty-ton lots at a time. He was the first to sell an ounce block of butterscotch for a half-penny, which he followed up with raspberry and chocolate toffees. They speedily sprang into popularity, and Mr. Barratt took a factory in which to make these goods and nothing else. Gutta-percha toffee was likewise a happy innovation of his.

"Yankee Panky," a low-boiled sweet which has sold for the past twenty years, was also one of his inventions as were also "Rose Pastilles" and "Refresher Sticks." In connection with "Yankee Panky" it should be mentioned that this was the first line that was ever wrapped in wax paper in this country, tin foil having previously been used. Mr. Barratt used to make his own wax paper, and for two years managed to keep the secret to himself, notwithstanding the fact that he regularly supplied it to other people at 12s. a ream. Then, again, he was the first confectioner to put a name and address card into the boxes of goods, besides being also the first to use a colored box label. Money goods, which had such an enormous run, were also of his creation. They were known as chocolate mines, miner's boxes and turnovers, and were frequently ordered in thousand gross lots – in fact the firm, for many years, made over twenty thousand gross a week, side by side with the sale of these lines there existed a demand for surprise packets, which Barratt's set about filling with such success that to-day they lay claim to an output three or four times larger than any other makers of this class of goods in the world. This list by no means exhausts the many money-making confections which Mr. Barratt first brought under the notice of his thousands of patrons. But I think I have instanced enough to show that the magnitude of the operations of the firm of Barratt & Co. is due to brains and work-manual labor and sound common sense – to which one must add integrity and commercial cleverness.

This history I gathered from Mr. Barratt's own lips as I chatted with him that May afternoon in 1905. Other people have told many things about the old gentleman – all to his glory. He was the possessor of an enormous amount of house property in many parts of London, particularly Wood Green, and he was beloved by his tenants, for he was never known to deal harshly with any of them. His investments in ground rents, and his holding of gas and water shares, will I think, be found to be very heavy. The amount his will is to be proved at cannot be known for some weeks – it will be a huge sum, no doubt. One thing is certain. None of the four members of the firm – Messrs George Barratt, Albert Barratt, Frank Barratt and Joseph Stennett – are likely to benefit under it. They keep the business, whilst Mr. Edward Barratt, who retired from the firm a few years ago, and the six daughters of the deceased, will, I am told, be found to be the sole beneficiaries. It may be mentioned, as an illustration of the deceased's fairness of purpose, that when his eldest son, Mr. George William Barratt, reached the age of thirty (he is now about fifty-five) his father made him, and his eldest daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Stennett, partners, giving each a quarter share of the business. When Mr. Frank Barratt became thirty years old he was made a partner, with a quarter share and the same good fortune attended Mr. Albert Barratt when he arrived at the age of thirty. But when the two latter joined the firm, their father charged them each with a quarter of the cost of the additional buildings,

machinery, &c., that had been erected after the entry of his eldest son and daughter into the business. Thus every member of the family shared proportionately. The deceased himself, for some years past, therefore, had no financial interest in the concern.

The news of Mr. Barratt's death came as a surprise to confectioners generally, but to those who, like myself, knew the dangerous nature of his illness, it was not unexpected. Telegrams of regret and letters of sympathy reached the family from all parts of the Kingdom and the Continent. Never, I should think, has so much genuine sorrow been expressed at the loss of any other "giant" in the trade. Locally the deceased was almost worshipped. Thousands of people lined the roadways through which the funeral cortège passed on the 6th inst. On all sides there were evidences of respect. Flags were lowered to half-mast. Women bowed their heads and men raised their hats and caps. Poor costermongers joined with prosperous traders in silently expressing their grief. The police had no trouble in keeping the crowds in order. Outside the factory, where the procession halted for a few seconds, the pathways were almost impassable. The majority of the sightseers here were, of course, Barratt's own employés. Young girls and old men were heard discussing the good qualities of the "old guv'nor," as they called him. He was a general favorite, evidently, with the workers. A hush fell upon all as the plume-crowned hearse bearing the coffin, covered with flowers, approached. Not a man or boy refrained from uncovering his head. Many women shed tears. They had lost a true friend. Following the first hearse were four others, literally full of wreaths, &c. Then came the mourners. In the front coach were Messrs. George, Edward, Frank and Albert Barratt; in the second, Messrs. Stennett, senior, Pither, Roberts and Langewische; in the third, Messrs. Folker, J. Stennett, junior, O. Reeves and H. Barratt in the fourth, Messrs. Roberts, B. Roberts and G. O. Barratt, Junior; in the fifth, Messrs. F. Peterson, Unger, Nunn and Parkins; in the sixth Messrs. Risky, Willcox, Triston and Wood. After these were five coaches containing twenty old employés of the firm, with an aggregate service of six hundred and twenty-seven years, some of them being pensioners. In the twelfth coach were Mr. Diprose and Dr. Cambridge, whilst the private carriages of Mr. G. W. Barratt, Mr. Frank Barratt and Mr. Albert Barratt brought up the rear. Slowly the procession wended its way to Highgate Cemetery, and there, in the family grave in which the earthly remains of Mrs. G. O. Barratt rested, the coffin was lowered amid a silence which was broken only by the solemn tones of the officiating clergyman and the sobbing of mourners.

Among the hundreds of floral tributes of sympathy which were placed alongside the grave were the following: –

Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Barratt, cross, "In loving memory of a fond father"; Mr. and Mrs. Stennett, pillow, "Loving remembrance"; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Barratt, heart, "In loving memory of Father"; Mr. and Mrs. Edward Barratt, harp, "To Father, in loving memory"; Mr. and Mrs. Albert Barratt and children, crown, "To crown a noble life, in loving memory"; Mr. and Mrs. Langewische, wreath, "Loving memory"; Ada and Oliver Reeves, wreath, "In loving memory" Mr. and Mrs. Plaistowe, junr., wreath, "A token of regret"; Maggie and Horace Folker, wreath, "In loving memory"; Mr. G. W. Barratt's other children, wreath, "In affectionate remembrance of Grandpa"; Mr. and Mrs. Stennett, junr., broken column, "In loving memory of Grandpa"; Mr. G. O. Barratt, junr., wreath, "In memory of Grandpa"; Miss Stennett, cushion, "In loving memory of Grandpa"; Mr. J. B. Stennett's children, harp, "To the dear memory of our Great-grandpa"; Mrs. and Mr. Drewitt, heart and harp, "In tender memory of Father"; Heads of Office and Country Travellers, wreath, "*Labor et Probitas*"; and with sincere condolences to his bereaved family, as a mark of deep affection to their venerated late employer, Mr. George Osborne Barratt"; Country Office, star, "A token of sympathy and regret"; Town Office, wreath, "With deepest sympathy" Mr. Cocking's Office, diamond, "With sincerest sympathy"; Carmen and Stablemen, heart, "A token of sympathy and regret"; Mr. Saunders' Room, anchor, "A token of sympathy and regret"; Wheelwrights and painters, wreath; Packers, harp, "With sympathy and regret"; Mechanical Staff, harp, "Our last token"; Old Shepherdess-walk Hands, artificial wreath, "With the old S.-W. hands' deepest sympathy, and a token of respect"; Old Shepherdess-walk Hands, cross, "From old hands from Shepherdess walk"; Mrs. Blower's Room, wreath, "With sincere sympathy"; Yard Men and others diamond, "A token of sympathy and regret"; Pan-room and Mr. Armstrong, harp, "With

deepest sympathy" Mrs. Cooper and Staff, harp, "In sympathy"; Coconut-room, Town Stock, Bottling, Checking, and Country Bottling, Sample-room, Sherbet-room, and Bottle Washers, crown, "A token of respect to the Founder of the Firm"; Residents of Stroud Green, harp, "As mark of sorrow and respect from tenants of business premises at Crouch Hill"; Town Travellers, wreath, "With sincere sympathy and regret"; Mr. Whiting, Mr. Hussey, and Starch-room Staff, wreath, "As a mark of respect of our deceased master, and with sincere condolences"; Town Boilers, G. H. and N. Blocks, cross, "In deepest regard to our deceased master, Mr. G. O. B."; Mrs. Beale's Room, wreath, "With sincere sympathy and respect" and The Drivers and Conductors, Green-lanes Tramways, wreath, "With deepest sympathy."

We Mourn a Loss.

THE event of the month is the death of Mr. G. O. Barratt, the "King of Confectioners," as he has been called by the daily press. His demise created a sensation in all parts of the country. Over five hundred papers referred to it, many of them giving some very interesting details of the deceased's past life. Our own recollections of our old friend will be found on another page, together with snapshots of the funeral procession. Mr. Barratt was a loving husband, a kind father, an honest merchant, and an upright citizen. *Requiscat in pace!*

Tribute from Old Hands.

IN connection with the death of Mr. G. O. Barratt we are asked to publish the following letter, which was addressed to Mr. G. W. Barratt on the 4th inst. by the employés who used to be at the Shepherdess Walk factory :

A meeting of the old hands was held last night, and it was unanimously resolved that the deepest sympathy be shown to you and all the family, for the great affliction you have all had in the loss of your father.

An Open Letter to the Members of the Confectionery Trade.

On behalf of the family of the late George Osborne Barrett, I take this opportunity of returning our heartfelt thanks for the expressions of sympathy which have reached us from all parts of the Kingdom and the Continent in connection with our recent bereavement. It would almost be impossible to indite a personal communication to the hundreds of ladies and gentlemen in the confectionery trade whose tributes of his esteem for our father helped to assuage our grief, and I therefore trust they will accept this public acknowledgement of our sincere appreciation of their kindness.

Barrett & Co., Wood Green,
October 10, 1906

Faithfully yours,
GW Barrett