

# Mr. butt

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Stephen Butler Leacock (1869-1944) is a Canadian author. He will long be remembered for his best-selling book *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) as well as the numerous awards and honors he received during his illustrious life as an author, professor, lecturer and humorist. Leacock published *Literary Lapses* in 1910, with the financial assistance of his brother George. It is a best-of compilation of his previously published writings. It sold out quickly and propelled Leacock into being known as one of the most popular authors in the English-speaking world.

In 1911, Leacock's collection of parodies, *Nonsense Novels* successfully followed. 1912 saw the release of Leacock's satirical masterpiece, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. Based on his many summers spent in Orillia, Ontario, and other childhood experiences, it was very popular in Canada, the United States, and England. His sanitization of city life, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, was published in 1914. And in 1915 the book “*Moonbeams From the Larger Lunacy*”. And it was a success. This book includes 17 parts. There are short stories that deal with the real-life of the author.

It also includes the story “*Afternoon Adventures At My Club*”. And I am going to give a detailed characterization of the main character of its 9th chapter, “*The Hallucination of Mr. Butt*”, Mr. Butt. Stephen Leacock is famous for his brilliant ability to portray characters that represent different types of contemporary people. The characters he describes still exist nowadays, so we should collect the pieces of wisdom which he covered with his gleaming humor. And in this chapter, we met an old man who used to come to the author's club, as many men did.

But he was not the ordinary man, so that is why the author told us about him. We learn about Mr. Butt from the author's direct commentary at the beginning and through his own appearance, actual speech, behavior, and actions during the chapter. I am going to analyze his personality through his speech in detail and touch upon his appearance, behavior, and actions in brief. To begin with, I'd like to comment on the name of Mr. Butt. It is closely charged with connotation, as the word "butt" is defined as "to hit or push against with the head or horns" in dictionaries.

But I guess that the most interesting and appropriate connotation in our case is the definition of the phrasal verb "to butt in": "to interfere or meddle in other people's affairs". And I think that is what all this character is about. And there is also an interesting fact about this word. As soon as the story was published and read by a number of people the word "butt" gets another meaning: "a person or thing that is an object of wit, ridicule, sarcasm, contempt, etc." as the author treated his character with concealed irony and sarcasm. I'd translate the name "Mr. Butt" as «?????? ??????» into Russian.

He was all around those who never needed his help, but he "insisted". Such a name surely reflects his character which can be named "I-care-about-you-and-only-I-know-what-is-good-for-you". Such a connotation of this person describes us all the way this man lived. We expect him to be a person who cared about everyone else's business as much as he could. The chapter meets our mere expectations, and his name is in accord with his personality. Through the chapter, we see Mr. Butt with the author's eye, but he gives us his direct commentary only at the beginning. From what the author tells us about Mr.

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Butt, we realize that “ at whatever cost of time and trouble to him” he helped people and even “ insisted on helping them along”. The author also underlines the beaming face of Mr. Butt with his unstoppable eagerness “ to some sort of benevolence”. All this draws a picture of a very thoughtful, exceptionally kind and sunny eager beaver, who should be a God’s gift to all the people he met. But it’s common knowledge that too much pudding will choke a dog. And if we read the author’s remarks more attentively we will easily come to the conclusion that Mr. Butt possessed many positive traits, but they were too exaggerated to seem positive.

We read: “ Whatever people appear to desire it or not” and we no longer suppose him to be thoughtful enough to be somebody’s shoulder on time, but not just all the time. As we all are used to find bad things in a person as soon as we said he is not very perfect at all, I will not reject such an unconscious “ approach” to interpreting any man’s personality. So, seeking some intolerant and pushy stuff to collect we can easily find the examples. He seemed to be very boastful about what he did, and even about what he was going to do, I guess: “ My dear fellow,” said Mr. Butt, “ I only wish I could. I wish I had the time.

I am sure it would cheer you up immensely if I could. But I'm just going out. ” And unfortunately, to hear him speak, you’d think he is boastful about the things he shouldn’t be so boastful. “ I can easily find it,” he said about the way he is going to find a house of his friends, as he used to tell us. And to our great surprise, we read further: “ I have a very simple system for finding a house at night by merely knocking at the doors in the neighborhood till I

get it. " And it almost scares us, as we all know that it is very intolerant to do so. So Mr. Butt started his pleasant full of benevolence trip.

It is nonsense to us, how spineless were all those people he disturbed! He said:" I had to knock at twenty houses at least to get it" and we are laughing through the tears at him. Analyzing the night at the Everleigh-Joneses's we find these two " poor souls" to be fluently played on by our dear Mr. Butt the Wonder. They were like birds in a cat's grasp, but the disturber pays no attention to that, so he can be called really thick-skinned. And to make things still worse he went on boasting about that accident, as I tend to call it from the position of the embarrassed couple:" I can talk, you know, when I try. Needless to say, Mr. Butt kept on surprising us. the Everleigh-Joneses were too permissive to say no, so Mr. Butt was imposing himself to them:" Every little while Jones would say, 'By Jove, it's half-past twelve,' or 'it's one o'clock,' and so on. I took care, of course, not to stay too late. But when I left them I promised that I'd come back to-day to help straighten things up. They protested, but I insisted". It all characterizes him as a very pig-headed gate-crasher. He also seemed to be a pain in the neck every time he imposed himself to his " disabled", as he thought, couple.

He was this very kind of person, that gives him an inch, and he would take your arm. Too self-important with all his " I" s in every sentence he was also selfish and, what is more, self-centered. Here is what makes us think this way:" they'd been trying to put them up by themselves in the morning. I had to take down every one of them--not a single one right. " It was very self-righteous and self-willed of him to do this. It's common with all the people in

the world to say:” When in Rome, do as the Romans do”, and we all obedient the rules of others at their places. But to tell the truth, I realized that Mr.

Butt liked himself to be such a “ traveling Rome” more than to obedient to anyone or anything. To add some words to it, I’d say he was bossy as well, as we read his insisting words:” Drink it” or “ they never told me or sent for me--just like their grit--meant to fight it out alone. ” To continue these chain he seemed to see all his “ friends” as children who had no idea of how the things were to be done, he used to treat them with parenting patience and love, what were reflections of his bossy, pushy and inconsiderate character though:” no one there but themselves, no one to cheer them up”, “ My dear boy”, “ those two poor souls”, “ poor chap”, “ that dear little woman”, “ that kind little woman”. Though there was much I said about him, it is not all the personality he is about. Mr. Butt embodies a complex mixture of positive and negative traits. To be frank, he is such a sunny nature to look at. He is spreading all his positive energy all around, trying to make the world better, brighter, kinder:” let's make things a little brighter here”, “ Presently about midnight they seemed to brighten up a little. ” That was the real reason for all his deeds.

His soul was full of good intentions. He was very sympathetic to all those he helped:” I’m going out there at once”, “ I went in and soothed him”, “ I haven't had an evening to me since it began. ” Wasn’t he generous in his actions? I should say he was. He was so enthusiastic about helping others; he couldn’t spend a day without altruistic deeds on his list:” You may see the beaming face of Mr. Butt appear at the door of all those of his friends

who...”, “ I never mind the rain,--does one good”, “ said Mr. Butt one day with an anxious face”.

Though he acted very inconsiderately, he did it in such a friendly and polite manner, that people couldn't fail to obey him:” I don't mind a bit”, “ I only wish I could”, “ my dear fellow”, “ the way I look at it is...”, etc. To crown it all, he was very grateful to his friends, and it appeals to me very much:” I'm alone in the world and my friends are all I have. ” The author treats his character with sarcasm and irony, I guess: “ I knew he wanted me to say it”, “ A few days later Mr. Butt gave me a further report”, “ After that Mr. Butt was very busy selecting the piano...”, “ Eventually, thanks no doubt to Mr. Butt's assiduous care, Everleigh-Jones got well”, etc. He was such a busy body with a lot on his plate all the time, such a born helper, wasn't he? Of course, he was, but he was too flat and static to reflect this changing world and its reality. The leopard can't change his spots. Such people will always live in our world. Though the past reasons for their actions are loneliness, unhappiness, the lack of satisfaction, and the wishes that haven't come true, they make the world better, they have good intentions, and they inspire people and encourage them.

But these personalities are always only seen as weirdoes. People don't see their positive sides as usual, as it is easier to call them bad than try to find their good traits. And the reality is that we do not accept their presence around us unless in great trouble such a weirdo guy gives us his hand and helps us with his plan of solving everything. And only then we understand. I

admire Mr. Butt and his intentions, though he was not all positive. But...  
What is positive? Everything is relative in this world.