

Mr Richards worked in a shop which sold, cleaned and repaired hearing-aids. One day an old gentleman entered and put one down in front of him without saying a word.

'What's the matter with it?' Mr Richards said. The man did not answer. Of course Mr Richards thought that the man must be deaf and that his hearing-aid must be faulty, so he said again, more loudly, 'What's wrong with your hearing-aid, sir?' Again the man said nothing, so Mr Richards shouted his question again as loudly as he could.

The man then took a pen and piece of paper and wrote: 'It isn't necessary to shout when you're speaking to me. My ears are as good as yours. This hearing-aid is my wife's, not mine. I've just had a throat operation, and my problem is not that I can't hear, but that I can't speak.'