

See page 5 for important news about the 2009 convention: *A Little Wodehouse on the Prairie!*



Manga!

BY ELIN WOODGER

NO, A MANGA is *not* a new type of dance. Rather, it is a type of comic book that is very popular in Japan. You can, in fact, call it a craze—the Japanese are just wild about mangas. And now they're becoming wild about P. G. Wodehouse, too, thanks to the combined efforts of two editors, a translator, and one very talented artist.

Mangas come in many forms, from slim magazines to thick books, from comedies to action adventures, and both adolescents and adults enjoy them. Characters with Western features predominate in most, and the plots may also focus on Western themes. In recent years, butlers have become extremely popular as a topic for many mangas, from the comic character Hayate the Combat Butler to—inevitably—Jeeves.

It was sometime last year that Maki Shiraoka, a senior editor at Hakusensha (publisher of more than 10 manga magazines and 400 comic books annually) conceived the idea of a manga featuring Bertie Wooster and Jeeves. She put the idea to another Hakusensha editor, Ayaka Tokushige, who in turn found Tamaki Morimura's translation of *The Inimitable Jeeves* and thought it provided a good basis for a manga. The idea was to include the new serialization—entitled “Please Jeeves”—in *Melody*, a bimonthly magazine of more than 500 pages, and then, at the end of the year, to collect the Bertie and Jeeves mangas into one volume. An artist was needed, and after a short search the perfect one was found: Bun Katsuta, who is known for her “retro” style. With Tamaki assisting in the translation department and Ayaka and Maki overseeing the project, Bun adapted the first “Please Jeeves” manga from four Wodehouse



Bingo Little's well-laid plans go wildly awry in this pivotal scene from “The Metropolitan Touch.”

(© Bun Katsuta/Hakusensha)

short stories. It was published in the April 2008 issue of *Melody*—and was an immediate hit. The June issue featured two PGW stories, and as of this writing two more mangas were planned for 2008.

Inevitably, Bun has had to adapt the stories to the manga format, and as Tamaki explains in an essay at the end of the first “Please Jeeves,” it was necessary to call Jeeves a butler because the Japanese are unfamiliar with the word *valet*. Also, in keeping with how most mangas are drawn, the characters are not only Western-looking but in many cases seem almost too young and attractive to be true, Bertie and Jeeves included. Yet it is impossible to quibble about these aspects, because the humor and detail in Bun’s drawings are so superb. Even if one cannot read Japanese, a true Wodehouse fan can immediately identify the story, as in the illustrations accompanying this article. Just as enjoyable is the rich detail in many of the pictures, from the buildings to the furniture to the characters’ clothing. In one two-page picture spread, for example, Bun depicts an English country fair to the life.

In March this year, Maki, Ayaka, Tamaki, and Bun came to London, where they were given a whirlwind tour of some of the areas Wodehouse knew best; they also visited the nearby Essex countryside. Their native guide was my better half, Norman Murphy, who acts as a long-distance adviser to Tamaki in her translations. During their four-day visit, the women positively thirsted for information, and when they returned to Japan, their suitcases were loaded with books illustrating clothing and furniture from the 1920s. Consequently, if the first “Please Jeeves” manga was impressive, the second one was a complete wow.

One cannot help but admire the results Bun has achieved in her quest to get it right. Her drawings are not only wonderful—they are supremely funny. With all this to commend them, may the mangas keep on coming!



Aunt Agatha, highly recognizable, from the very first Wodehouse manga, stares ominously while holding a well-coiffed Pekingese.
(© Bun Katsuta/Hakusensha)

My Own Private Jeeves

BY MAJOR THOMAS L. R. SMITH,
U.S. ARMY (RETIRED)

SOME YEARS AGO, I gave a talk at The Wodehouse Society convention in Toronto about military men in the Wodehouse canon. I went through Dan Garrison’s *Who’s Who in Wodehouse* and counted up the characters who either had military service in their backstories or held some sort of military rank. I counted 55 military characters and discussed a few of them. Now it seems that, in that lecture, I may have committed a grave mistake by overlooking the military service of one of the most important characters in Wodehouse: Reginald Jeeves. While this may be a grievous error for one who would like to think of himself as a minor Wodehouse scholar, I think I should be forgiven. In all of the stories regarding Jeeves, his military service is only mentioned once, in *The Return of Jeeves* (Wodehouse, 1953), the only Jeeves novel without Bertie Wooster. And that is a rather obscure, passing reference—so obscure that even Jeeves’s biographer and noted scholar C. Northcote Parkinson missed the reference and makes no mention of Jeeves’s military service in his 1979 work *Jeeves: A Gentleman’s Personal Gentleman*.

In addition to missing Bertie Wooster, *The Return of Jeeves* is full of military characters like Captain Brabazon-Biggar, Major Frobisher, and Colonel Wyvern. Jeeves’s employer in the story, the Earl of Rowcester (pronounced Roaster, we are told), also served in the military during the Second World War. We learn of Jeeves’s service in the following exchange between the Earl of Rowcester and Jeeves:

“Were you in the first world war, Jeeves?”

“I dabbled in it to a certain extent, m’lord.”

“I missed that one because I wasn’t born, but I was in the Commandos in this last one.

This is rather like waiting for zero hour, isn’t it?”

“The sensation is not dissimilar, m’lord.”

That is all we know about Jeeves’s wartime service: he dabbled in the war to a certain extent, and apparently he has some experience with waiting for zero hour, that moment when the conflict begins going over the top. It’s not a lot to build on, but there it is.

While I may have overlooked Jeeves’s military service, in an article published in 2005 in *Wooster Sauce*, John Fletcher speculated about that passage and suggested Jeeves may have served in the war as a spy. Mr. Fletcher makes a good argument. With Jeeves’s ability



to shimmer into and out of rooms undetected, his keen powers of observation, and his encyclopedic brain, he certainly would be an excellent candidate for the intelligence services. However, the type of service that Mr. Fletcher described for Jeeves would not necessarily have entailed military service. In fact, Mr. Fletcher's notion of Jeeves as spy is more a function of civilian intelligence agencies rather than military intelligence.* While he may well have served as a spy as described by Mr. Fletcher at some point in his career, I think Jeeves, in the passage above, was alluding to active service in the trenches. The question then remains: In what capacity did Jeeves serve?

Even with a major character like Jeeves, we still have little to go on. It is his reticence to talk about himself that gives Mr. Fletcher the idea that Jeeves may be a spy. However, I have run across many combat veterans who are equally reluctant to talk about their experiences. My father-in-law, for instance, was awarded a Bronze Star for valor during the Vietnam War. In the years I knew him, he never once talked about his wartime service. In my experience with combat veterans, it seems that those who talk the most about their combat experience have had the least.

So here we are. Jeeves dabbled in the war. But we want to know how, specifically, he dabbled. With his skills and abilities, there are many posts in the military Jeeves might have held. His shimmerability would have made him ideal for patrols behind enemy lines, a duty of the infantry, rather than military intelligence. Those same skills would have served him well as a member of the Army Supply Corps (now, I understand, "amalgamated" with the Royal Ordnance Corps, Royal

**Here, I speak with some authority. I served as the brigade logistics officer of the 201st Military Intelligence Brigade during my last two years of military service. And then there was that time . . . oh, well, never mind.*

Corps of Transport, and Royal Pioneer Corps into the Royal Logistic Corps).

But I'm guessing that Jeeves's service was even more mundane, and that he spent his time in military service, just as he spent the rest of his adult life: He was a batman, the British Army's equivalent of a valet. Officially known as "soldier-servants," we are told by Byron Farwell (1981) that these men "held coveted positions" (p. 134). Since their duties were to ensure that officers were well cared for, "they were excused from drills and the more disagreeable fatigues and, in general, led relatively comfortable lives, often with special privileges" (p. 134). Their army pay was supplemented by tips from the officers for whom they worked. While excused from drills, batmen had other jobs to do, according to G. D. Sheffield (2000). One pre-war soldier-servant's duties commenced each morning at 6 A.M., when he had to "take a glass of whiskey to his officer's bedroom, followed by two boiled eggs and more whiskey" (p. 118).

For middle-class officers, batmen were usually assigned to them from the unit's strength. Often this did not work well. Robert Graves (1929/1981) relates that upon reporting to duty, his adjutant gave him a dressing down because his batman failed to properly shine his buttons, belt, and shoes. Graves said that "never having owned a valet before, I did not know what to expect of him" (p. 72). In another memoir, which I can't seem to locate at the moment, Graves gave a description of his valet that reminded me of Baldrick—a thoroughly disgusting and stupid human being—who served Captain Blackadder in Rowan Atkinson's television program *Blackadder Goes Forth*. The rank of a batman depended on the rank of the officer he was assigned to. Batmen assigned to junior officers, lieutenants, and captains were privates. But as their officers rose in the ranks, so would the batmen. Majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels may get corporals, and a general would rate a sergeant.

While middle-class officers had to rely on the luck of the draw, or the whim of the sergeant major, to determine his batman, an officer from the upper classes may very well bring his own man into the service with him. I suspect that this is how Jeeves found himself dabbling in the war. And we find he did not dabble long. The war started in August 1914, and by September 1915, Jeeves first appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* in "Extricating Young Gussie" (Thompson, 1992). Perhaps Jeeves went off to war with a young master, only to lose said young master early in the war. Or perhaps he was invalided home. Nevertheless, Jeeves returned home and found employment with Bertie Wooster in 1915.

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New PGW Story Discovered?!

JOHN DAWSON has discovered, in the *Washington Herald* newspaper's *Literary Magazine* of February 27, 1910, an illustrated short story called "Providence and the Butler" by P. G. Wodehouse. It concerns the 12th Earl of Drexdale, his butler Keeling, and the Earl's son Lionel, who has become engaged to Margaret, a girl who rides horses bareback in a "sort of circus-spectacle" called "Prairie Days."

John says, "I believe this to be the earliest PGW story with an ancient family castle, a gruff, comical Earl, a conniving butler, and a son engaged to a disreputable young woman. These elements, of course, are contained in any number of later Wodehouse stories and books. It is surprising that the story hasn't surfaced in any of the British publications Wodehouse submitted stories to, and furthermore surprising that it should appear in the *Washington Herald*, in which no other Wodehouse stories have been discovered."

The bad news is that it appears that only the first page of the story has been scanned. John has

provided a link to the Library of Congress Chronicling America newspaper digitization site (<http://tinyurl.com/6cvov6>). John viewed every page of this issue, and the continuation of the story isn't there. So, alas, the denouement eludes us! We know the butler did it, but how and why?

John assumes that three possibilities exist: (1) The story was published in Britain under another title, and has yet to be identified; (2) the story was not published in Britain; or (3) the story was published but has never been found. According to John, "Providence and the Butler" is not identified in McIlvaine or any of the other known bibliographies he has found.

John concludes, "The next step will be for someone to contact the Library of Congress and see if it can provide the original newspaper in order that the conclusion of the story can be found. Any volunteers?"



Here is an image of the only page of the (heretofore unknown?) story "Providence and the Butler" that resides in the Library of Congress. You may view the page in detail per John's instructions in the preceding article. Who in the world of Wodehouse has additional information on the full story, or can follow up with the Library of Congress?

Paint Your Wagon for a Trip to “A Little Wodehouse on the Prairie”

PRAIRIES, LAKES, RIVERS, the north woods, and the Northwodes all meet in Minnesota, and so will the rest of The Wodehouse Society come next summer, when the biennial convention will be held in beautiful downtown St. Paul, June 12–14, 2009. Our headquarters will be the elegant, historic Saint Paul Hotel, with its extensive Scotch list and top-notch restaurant overlooking Rice Park. We'll gear up for the weekend's events with a superlatively informal cricket “experience,” a walking tour around F. Scott Fitzgerald's neighborhood, and perhaps a visit to the University of Minnesota Libraries' extensive Sherlock Holmes collection as arranged by local members of the Senior Bloodstain.

With luck there will be a home baseball game on the Thursday night—more important than the Twins are the St. Paul Saints and their pig mascot.

The year 2009 marks the 30th anniversary of the founding of The Wodehouse Society, as well as the Northwodes' 10th. To celebrate, several special features are planned throughout the convention, not least of which will be an illustrated talk on TWS's early years by Ed Ratcliffe and Len Lawson. Many other entertaining and erudite talks await us, such as a reading from award-winning novelist Faith Sullivan's new book, *Good Night, Mr. Wodehouse*; Norman Murphy on the Wodehousean aspects of horse racing; and tips on teaching Wodehouse from Professor Johanna Kheim. Taking advantage of other local connections and talent, Mike Eckman will compare the canon to the adventures of Dobie Gillis, and Josef Hegedus will explicate the original Hungarian version of *The Play's the Thing*. Other Plumemies interested in speaking, or chapters planning to present a reading or a skit, should contact Kris Fowler (info on back page) immediately, as the schedule is filling up nicely. And stay tuned for an announcement of yet another opportunity to exercise your creativity. (Do you sense a contest in the offing?)

Saturday evening's banquet will feature the traditional costume competition in a unique setting: our own private riverboat cruising the Mississippi River, serenaded by a banjo band. Imagine the scope for creativity this opens up! Fortunately, even poor sailors need not fear, as the ride is so smooth you can leave



Our boat, the Betsey Northrup, shown here cruising past downtown

the Dramamine at home. After Sunday brunch—not too early—we may have to bid farewell to some hurried convention-goers, but the more leisured will head for the races at Canterbury Park, there to lose our last remaining pocket money on the horses chosen for their Wodehousean names rather than form.

You might want to plan on staying extra days so you can catch a play at the Guthrie Theater, tour the historic home of railroad baron James J. Hill, buy a book at Garrison Keillor's bookshop, eat dinner at Babani's Kurdish restaurant, sample pastries at the Swede Hollow Café, check out Minneapolis's Mill City Museum, or go look at a bit of actual prairie. There's plenty to see and do, from the Minnesota Science Museum just around the corner from our hotel to the Mall of America (thankfully) a bit further away.

More information on the convention's festivities will be made available at <http://northwodes.org>, but we hope you can see already what a grand time is in store. The Northwodes look forward to welcoming you to St. Paul for A Little Wodehouse on the Prairie!



See the
registration
form included
in this issue;
register now!

A Trip to the Storied 1920s

A REVIEW BY STU SHIFFMAN

RECEIVING INFORMATION from fellow Wodehousian Diane Brinson about the Plummy content of an upcoming performance, I investigated further and managed to convince my faithful companion to accompany me to Town Hall for a program of short stories on June 29, 2008, which included “The Amazing Hat Mystery,” a tale for which the world is perhaps not ready. Wodehouse, alas, leaves her cold (the scales having fallen from my eyes, I still love her), but there was the promise of japes and curmudgeonly satire in the story by Dorothy Parker (one of her favorites), “The Standard of Living.” I didn’t recall “The Baby Party,” the F. Scott Fitzgerald story.

The venue was Seattle’s venerable Town Hall, in the historic First Hill neighborhood (also known as Pill Hill for the many hospitals). Town Hall hosts diverse music, arts and humanities, civic discourse, and world culture programming. It’s a great old historic Roman-revival-style building, the former Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist built in two stages, 1916–1922. Like most Christian Science churches, this one is built to resemble a public building with no religious symbolism inside or out. It is also a rather spiffing building.

The performance was in the lower level, perfect and minimalist. All seats were filled, and we ran into fellow Anglers’ Rest member Dan Shiovitz. This was the last of a season of *Short Stories Live*. It was produced and directed by A Contemporary Theatre (ACT)’s Artistic Director Kurt Beattie, with performances by local notable thespians David Pichette, Julie Briskman, Elise Hunt, Imogen Love, and himself. I’d seen most of them in various local productions, most recently Julie Briskman in the excellent and well-received ACT production of Clare Boothe Luce’s *The Women*. Each story, in the words of the program, “focuses on young people dreaming about money, marriage, and family. . . . How do they achieve meaningful lives in a materialist society devoted to . . . hedonism and replete with a lack of belief in traditional values? Do they connect deeply in a world rushing to feel good in the wake of a catastrophic war and the failures of an older generation? Each author posits an answer in this wild party of entertaining stories.” That’s a lot of pressure to put on poor little short stories, especially the fizzy and funny “The Amazing Hat Mystery.”

The show started with the Fitzgerald story, complete with narration as well as character parts. “The Standard of Living” is a very interesting and amusing look at two

suburban couples and a vast struggle arising out of a party for toddlers. One wonders if Fitzgerald had ever been asked to judge a Bonny Baby contest.

The Dorothy Parker story was presented by a single performer, Julie Briskman, and this tale of two office girls and their day off was well interpreted. My right-on-the-mark companion had reread the story the night before and enjoyed the performance very much. This was followed by an intermission in which we could refresh ourselves and prepare for the fizz and cosmic trauma of the Wodehouse story.

“The Amazing Hat Mystery” was also replete with character parts and narration, very true to the original texts (as were all the presentations) with minimal alteration. I found it to be a wonderful interpretation, with credibly plummy upper-class British accents and fine character presentations. Ah, those accursed hats and star-crossed love. I still giggle to think about it.

We spoke with Kurt Beattie after the program at the champagne browse-and-sluice. He is planning a program for Halloween, undoubtedly to include a less well-known Poe story and possibly Lovecraft. Alas, I neglected at the time to recommend that he include “Honeysuckle Cottage,” truly one of the most eldritch and blood-curdling tales of a psychically-possessed home and its baleful influences, far more frightening than *The Amityville Horror*.



The Rhodes to Wodehouse

RALPH DOTY found this encouraging little item. In spring 2008, Andrea Den Hoed became the 27th Rhodes Scholar chosen from the University of Oklahoma, with a little encouragement from The Master. Here is how in was reported in their alumni magazine (*Sooner Magazine*, vol. 28, no. 3, p. 17): “When Andrea discovered P. G. Wodehouse’s Jeeves and Wooster stories, she was free to explore a mysterious world called Oxford. ‘I think I must have been about 12 or so when I realized Oxford was a college,’ admits Den Hoed, a lively 22-year-old with a wry sense of humor. Preteen Andrea marched up to her mother and announced that someday she would be attending Oxford University, to which her mother deadpanned, ‘Well, you’ll have to become a Rhodes Scholar to afford it.’”

Deconstructing *The Globe By The Way Book*

BY JOHN DAWSON

Editor's note: This is a significantly abbreviated version of a long but fascinating article analyzing The Globe By The Way Book, which John (aka Sir Jasper Addleton) has described as "probably the most neglected and maligned book in the entire Wodehouse canon (for all the wrong reasons)." Not all of the reasons are detailed in what follows, which is primarily taken from John's introduction to his original 50-page article; there is also an extract with comments, which should provide a flavor of the book.

The Globe By The Way Book – A Literary Quick-Lunch for People Who Have Got Five Minutes to Spare. By P. G. Wodehouse and Herbert Westbrook. Published June 1908 by Globe Publishing Company, 367 Strand, London.

P. G. WODEHOUSE'S first contribution to the *Globe* evening newspaper was a snippet for the column "Men and Matters" on August 11, 1901, when Wodehouse was 19 years old. By August 1903 he had been hired by the paper to write and edit the "By The Way" column, which he did for about six years in all. Wodehouse scholar Norman Murphy says: "His time on the *Globe* instilled a discipline that stayed with him all his life. He had to arrive in the office by ten each morning, read the newspapers of the day before, see what was 'in the news'—and write a funny column about it by twelve noon. This was an unusual discipline requiring intense concentration."

Sometime in 1903, Wodehouse met Herbert Wotton Westbrook (1881–1959), a schoolmaster at Baldwin King-Hall's school in Emsworth, and got him a job on the "By The Way" column in 1905. Westbrook's big ideas but reluctance to settle down to hard work made him a major source for Stanley Ukridge, but he and Wodehouse collaborated on at least four projects: *Not George Washington* (1907), the play *The Bandit's Daughter* (1907), *The Globe By The Way Book* (1908), and the play *Brother Alfred* (1913).

I think there is little question that Wodehouse wrote the bulk of the contents of *The Globe By the Way Book*—perhaps with a contribution here or there from Westbrook. There is no evidence to suggest that Westbrook's contribution was anything but negligible at best, and given the various character sketches of Westbrook throughout the Wodehouse biographical oeuvre, it seems doubtful that Westbrook did any meaningful work on it at all.

The Globe By The Way Book, hereinafter referred to as *GBTW*, appeared in June 1908, a compendium of features, verse, cartoons, and snippets extracted from the column. Humorous calendars, the basis of the book, were used by *Punch* in the mid-19th century and by its copycat publication *Fun*, which was so similar to *Punch* that it was called *Funch*; Wodehouse had contributed three articles to it in 1901. *GBTW* was Wodehouse's tenth book, but it receives short shrift from Wodehouse scholars and biographers and is always dismissed with a sentence or two. Richard Osborne doesn't even mention it in the *Penguin Wodehouse Companion* (1976), though others do:

"It consists of extremely dated topical humor." (David Jasen, *A Bibliography and Reader's Guide to the First Editions of P. G. Wodehouse*, Archon, 1970)

"Today it seems an execrable mixture of puns and facetious comment . . ." (Frances Donaldson, *P. G. Wodehouse: A Biography*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1982)

But it is inappropriate to compare *GBTW* with Wodehouse's fiction—it is a commentary based on the personalities and events of 1903–08, as told by a discerning and witty observer. The people he writes about are equally divided into four categories: politicians, sportsmen, entertainers, and writers and journalists. A prominent theme throughout the book is other newspapers—their politics, styles, features, and editors—all of which provide ample targets for Wodehouse's sharp tongue. The challenge has been not just to identify the people he writes about, but to understand why he chose to comment about the. For instance, there is an entry: "Mr. Solly Joel writes biography of Mr. Sievier." Identifying these two men was relatively easy, but what was their connection, and where is the humor in the remark? Further research provided the answer, but only then does Wodehouse's comment make sense to a modern-day reader!

The Edwardian music hall, which Wodehouse loved, is well represented in *GBTW* with colorful personalities as Seymour Hicks, Gertie Millar, Harry Lauder, Phyllis Dare, and a host of other entertainers and producers. Journalists, writers, editors, composers, playwrights—and yes, female novelists—all play roles in Wodehouse's

“By The Way” world. Some he treats gently, others to devastating effect.

As I researched Wodehouse’s comments and jokes, and when I finally understood what he meant by the more obscure of them—and why they would have been funny to a Londoner of 1908—I was reminded of my reaction to his other books. What he wrote then is *still* funny 50, 75, even 100 years later. With all respect to his esteemed biographers, when they wrote about *GBTW*, they just didn’t know what they were talking about! This was Wodehouse’s world, and his job; his journalistic humor glides as lightly across the years as his fiction does, if one gives it the chance.

Following are an extract from the book and comments explaining some of Wodehouse’s references.

November 1908 – the weather is “wet, blizzards, sleet, storms, deluge, still raining, more snow.”

1. Mr. Harvey du Cros stung on nose by wasp.
2. *Autocar* appears with black border.
3. Mr. du Cros interviewed by *Lancet*.
4. *Lancet* contains article headed “Motorists and Wasps.”
5. Hall Caine tells what he thinks of dangerous insects.
6. The Radicals explain their latest defeat at the By-Elections.
10. The German emperor says his Navy is wanted to protect Germany from invasion by Persia.
14. Fresh attack on the House of Lords by the Radicals.
16. President Roosevelt says something must be done about the Trusts.
17. Hall Caine tells us what he thinks of the Trust system.
19. Miss Gertie Millar photographed side face.
20. The photographer called upon to apologize.
21. Mr. Keir Hardie advocates every man to work and save money.
22. Mr. Keir Hardie advocates weekly wages for those who don’t work and save.

Harvey du Cros: Irish sportsman, cyclist, and industrialist, served as a Conservative Member of Parliament in 1906, played a major role in developing pneumatic tires, and cofounded the Dunlop Tire company. He made a fortune with the introduction of the automobile.

Autocar: Magazine founded in 1895 “in the interests of the mechanically propelled road carriage” when, it is believed, there were only six or seven cars in the

United Kingdom.

Lancet: One of the oldest medical journals in the world, founded in 1823

Hall Caine: (1853–1931) Novelist and playwright of the late Victorian and the Edwardian eras; was exceedingly popular and at the peak of his success his novels outsold those of his contemporaries . . . Although Caine’s books can be romantic and emotionally moving, they lack humor and are earnest and serious. Wodehouse, who detested pretense in any form, but especially among writers, lampooned Caine mercilessly throughout *Our Rapid Calendar*, portraying him as a self-absorbed, self-promoting know-it-all.

Radicals: In 1900 representatives of various trade unions and of the Independent Labour Party, Fabian Society, and Social Democratic Federation agreed to form a labour party, backed by the unions with Keir Hardie as its leader. It then affiliated with the Socialist International Party and in 1906 changed its name to the Labour Party.

German emperor: Prince Frederick William Victor Albert of Prussia (Kaiser Wilhelm) (1859–1941), last German emperor and king of Prussia 1888–1918. Nothing William II did in the international arena was of more notoriety than his decision to pursue a policy of massive naval construction. Most felt he was arming for war.

Gertie Millar: (1879–1952) One of the most famous English singer-actresses of the early 20th century, known for her performances in Edwardian musical comedies. She was one of the most photographed women of the Edwardian period. She married Lionel Monckton in 1902, and he continued to write hit songs for her in subsequent shows.

(James) Keir Hardie (1856–1915) Scottish socialist and labor leader. In the 1892 General Election, he became the country’s first socialist MP. The tradition at that time was for MPs to wear top hats and long frock coats, and Hardie created a sensation by entering Parliament wearing a cloth cap and tweed suit. In Parliament he advocated a graduated income tax, free schooling, pensions, the abolition of the House of Lords, and women’s right to vote.



The Tragical Historie of Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend

BY JEAN TILLSON

Earlier this year, members of the New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS) were invited to address a meeting of the Boston Athenaeum's culinary discussion group. Jean based the following article on the talk she gave at the Athenaeum, and wishes to express her gratitude to Norman Murphy for his help with the historical detail.

P. G. WODEHOUSE is justly famous for his lighthearted, comic tales in which nothing more dreadful usually occurs than the loss of a half-read mystery novel. It is true he very rarely deviated from this style, but in the short story "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend," he showed he was capable of writing real drama. In fact, this heartwarming tale of a diffident man inspired by a young maiden's faith in him to rise up against his seemingly invincible oppressors contains pathos on a level with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

"Now you go too far!" I hear you cry. Well, let us examine some of the parallels.

Queen Gertrude is proved to have turned a culpably blind eye to the motives and conduct of Hamlet's uncle; Lady Constance is guilty of blithely supporting Angus McAllister's nefarious scheme for tearing up the mossy carpet in Blandings Castle's famous yew alley.

Hamlet, we are *almost* sure, is not quite as mad as he pretends to be; Lord Emsworth, it turns out, is not quite as weak-willed as he normally seems. When sufficiently inspired, Clarence, like Hamlet, is at last able to haul up his socks and face his enemies with true courage.

The most telling similarity between the two stories, however, involves their heroines. At first glance, Ophelia's situation seems much more dramatic than Gladys's, but that is because Shakespeare used flowers to underscore the wretchedness of his heroine's condition, while Wodehouse used food to highlight the misery of his. Pansies and violets pack an emotional punch that buns and "jem sengwiches" definitely lack, unless, of course, one truly understands what they mean to young Gladys; even light snacks can be symbolic, but we must first comprehend the significance of a thing before it can affect us.

For example, when Ophelia gives King Claudius fennel and columbine, the gesture is more poignant if we know these flowers symbolize flattery and infidelity. When she gives Queen Gertrude rue and tells her, "there's rue for you; and here's some for me," we are all the more moved if we know the flower symbolizes regret. And, when Ophelia says, "I would give you some

violets, but they withered all when my father died," our hearts are fairly broken if we know she is really saying that faithfulness has gone out of her life forever.

And so it is with Gladys's tokens, but let us first refresh our memories with a brief synopsis of the story.

Lord Emsworth first meets Gladys on the morning of the annual village school treat, when he is sent into Blandings Parva to judge the cottage garden flower displays. In the last of these, Gladys saves him from attack by the family dog. Wodehouse describes her thusly:

She was a small girl, of uncertain age—possibly twelve or thirteen, though a combination of London fogs and early cares had given her face a sort of wizened motherliness which in some odd way caused his lordship from the first to look on her as belonging to his own generation. She was the type of girl you see in back streets carrying a baby nearly as large as herself and still retaining sufficient energy to lead one little brother by the hand and shout recrimination at another in the distance.

As Gladys and Lord Emsworth chat, his gratitude for her help with the dog grows into a profound regard, especially when her little brother Ern appears carrying a beautiful bouquet of flowers and Gladys relates the story of how she copped Angus McAllister on the shin with a stone when he caught her picking them.

Lord Emsworth is pleased to learn that his new friends are planning to attend the school treat and says they must look out for one another there. He then takes his leave and meets Lady Constance outside the garden gate. She has heard there is a little girl from London staying there and wants to warn the child to behave herself at the fête.

That afternoon, Lord Emsworth, stifling in his uncomfortable morning dress, enters the tea tent and promptly has his top hat knocked off by a well-aimed rock cake. This is too much for him and he flees, taking refuge in a nearby cow shed. In the shed he is amazed to find a weeping Gladys; she has been put there by Lady Constance as punishment for pinching things from the tea tent. When asked what she has pinched, Gladys responds, "Two buns, two jem-sengwiches, two apples and a slicer cake," which she planned to take home to Ern, who had that morning been forbidden to attend

the treat when Lady Constance took exception to his biting her in the leg. And then Gladys says something that shocks Lord Emsworth to his very soul.

“I thought if I didn’t ’ave nothing myself it would make it all right.”

“Nothing?” Lord Emsworth started. “Do you mean to tell me you have not had tea?”

“No, sir. Thank you, sir. I thought if I didn’t ’ave none, then it would be all right Ern ’aving what I would ’ave ’ad if I ’ad ’ave ’ad.”

His Lordship’s head, never strong, swam a little. Then it resumed its equilibrium. He caught her drift.

“God bless my soul!” said Lord Emsworth. “I never heard anything so monstrous and appalling in my life. Come with me immediately.”

“The lidy said I was to stop ’ere, sir.”

Lord Emsworth gave vent to his loudest snort of the afternoon.

“Confound the lidy!”

Lord Emsworth takes Gladys into the castle and instructs Beach to give her tea and make up a parcel of food she can take back to Ern.

“Ernest would like a little chicken, perhaps?”

“Coo!”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.”

“And a slice or two of ham?”

“Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.”

“And—he has no gouty tendency?”

“No, sir. Thank you, sir.”

“Capital! Then a bottle of that new lot of port, Beach. It’s some stuff they’ve sent me down to try,” explained his lordship. “Nothing special, you understand,” he added apologetically, “but quite drinkable. I should like your brother’s opinion of it.”

When Lord Emsworth asks if there is anything else Ern would like, Gladys requests some “flarze,” which Beach correctly translates as flowers. His fear of Angus McAllister makes Lord Emsworth hesitate, but only for a moment. As Gladys is picking the flowers, however, that Glaswegian man of wrath rushes up in a fury, causing Gladys to take shelter behind Lord Emsworth, who is not feeling so frightfully good himself. His knees are shaking and his soul, we are told, is quivering within him. “And then,” Wodehouse writes, “something happened, and the whole aspect of the situation

changed.”

It was, in itself, quite a trivial thing, but it had an astoundingly stimulating effect on Lord Emsworth’s morale. What happened was that Gladys, seeking further protection, slipped at this moment a small, hot hand into his.

It was a mute vote of confidence, and Lord Emsworth intended to be worthy of it.

And worthy of it he is, putting the terrifying McAllister in his place not just about the flowers, but about the yew alley, too. The mossy carpet shall remain!

Finally, Lady Constance approaches, demanding that Lord Emsworth return to make his speech; he refuses, saying he’s going to put on some comfortable clothes and go with Gladys to visit Ern. If a speech must be made, she can get the vicar to do it, or better yet, make it herself!

So, a highly satisfactory ending, yes, but what is so dashed poignant about it all? Can Gladys, as a heroine, truly compare with poor Ophelia, half-mad with disappointed love and filial grief? Indeed she can, if we fully comprehend her situation.

Gladys has most likely never been outside London before; has probably never even been very far from Drury Lane, where she tells Lord Emsworth she lives. In the 19th century, Drury Lane was one of the worst slums in London, particularly infamous as a center of prostitution, and in 1926, when this story was first published, it was still an extremely poor neighborhood. Gladys is only 12 or 13, but Wodehouse describes her as “wizened” due to “a combination of London fogs and early cares.” What would those cares have been?

Well, a primary one would have been hunger. Gladys’s main diet would have consisted of bread and potatoes. On the bread, she might receive a thin spread of “dripping” (rendered animal fat). This combination was known as “bread and scrape” because one only got a small amount of dripping literally scraped across the bread.

She would sometimes have eaten “greens,” which is what she would have called the wilted cabbage leaves she or her mother managed to collect from nearby Covent Garden, and she might have eaten meat as often as twice a week, but this would have consisted of fatty scraps and overripe stuff the local butcher couldn’t sell.

In addition, food adulteration was still a problem in London during the 1920s. At its worst, from 1890 to 1908, publicans regularly watered their beer, and grocers put sand in the sugar: 1 part in 10 was considered “acceptable.” At the time in which the story

is set, milk was still so often tainted that many households in London kept their own cow.

Now think about what Gladys has pocketed from the tea tent for Ern: two buns, two jam sandwiches, two apples, and a slice of cake. This doesn't sound terribly opulent to us, but then Ophelia's flowers don't mean a whole lot to most of us at first glance, either. The fact is, these little treats would have made an unprecedented banquet for Gladys, and an unimaginable feast for little Ern.

First, the buns. These would have had a texture similar to what Americans call cinnamon rolls, but made with cardamom seeds, currants, or citrus peel, depending on whether they were of the Bath, Chelsea, or Hot Cross variety. Gladys would have seen these in shop windows, but would rarely have had the chance to eat one.

Next, the "jem sengwiches." Jam was another widely adulterated product of the time, produced from anything that could be made to jell. To Gladys, jam with actual fruit in it would have been a revelation.

After that, apples. Common enough today, yes, but in 1920s England, strictly a seasonal fruit. Gladys's only experience of apples would have been the half-rotten and/or half-eaten ones she was lucky enough to pick up in Covent Garden, and even these she would have considered a luxury.

And finally, a "slicer cake." This would not have been a light, spongy thing with pink icing and sugar roses, but something much more substantial, similar to what we think of as a fruitcake. Gladys's mother would have dreamed of being able to make a "proper cike" some day. Gladys had probably never tasted one before.

Now let yourself imagine the level of self-control and sisterly devotion Gladys must have felt to deny herself any of these delicacies in order to save them for her little brother. And then, in the midst of all that plenty in the tea tent, to be publicly accused of theft and put into a cow shed for the rest of the day, banished from all the other delights of the fête . . . well, if that isn't pathos, I'm sure I don't know what is.

Lord Emsworth certainly thought it was, and it moved him so deeply he took Gladys straight off to the castle (in open defiance of Lady Constance's orders) and fed her on all that was best to be had there. In addition, he instructed Beach to wrap up a parcel of food for her to take back to Ern, including a "little chicken" and "a slice or two of ham." Gladys's reaction to these luxuries is one of downright shock. It is as if he has offered her



Lord E's Girl Friend?

diamonds and pearls! After all, there had been no chicken or ham at the treat; these are foods reserved for the nobility, as far as Gladys is concerned.

And then there is the port. Its inclusion is a reminder to us that Lord Emsworth is acting naturally (for him) and that he is as oblivious to the social ramifications of his behavior as he is to the fact that it is unusual to provide small children with strong wine (or at least to solicit their opinions of its finer qualities). Lord Emsworth's actions are those of a man who can conceive of no earthly reason to withhold food from a hungry child. Contrast his behavior with that of Lady Constance, who most certainly *does* understand Gladys's plight. Ultimately, Lord Emsworth's conduct endears him to us all the more because he does *not* fully

appreciate Gladys's situation; his behavior is so moving because he acts purely from his own innate sense of decency and generosity, treating her as an equal rather than a charity case.

And so, having used food to such dramatic effect in this story, why does Wodehouse choose to make "flarze" the catalyst for Lord Emsworth's triumph over his oppressors in the final scene? At least partly, no doubt, because they are another thing Lord Emsworth has plenty of that Gladys does not. Remember the proximity of Drury Lane to Covent Garden and picture a young Eliza Doolittle selling flowers in the rain and dreaming of a job in a florist shop if only she can learn to speak "more genteel." Flowers, in Gladys's world, are currency. To her, having them merely to *enjoy* is an astonishing idea, and would have made her feel like a queen.

But there is even more than that going on here. Wodehouse was, as we all know, a truly kind man and deeply sensitive in a quiet, diffident sort of way; very much like Lord Emsworth, in fact. He was also as familiar with the plays of Old Bill Shakespeare as anyone; mightn't he have had that other tragic heroine in mind when he suddenly switched his focus from food to flowers? Concentrating on drama instead of comedy for once, perhaps he was thinking, "Oh! If only Lord Emsworth had been there to help poor Ophelia!"



Chapters Corner

IT'S FUN BEING with other fans and reading about what others are doing. So please use this column to tell the Wodehouse world about your chapter's activities. Representatives of chapters, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page). If you're not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member, you may get in touch with the contact person listed.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)

Contact: Susan Collicott

Phone:

E-mail:



Tea time at Anglers' Rest

ON SUNDAY, JULY 20, Anglers' Rest packed their best country weekend outfits and grabbed the local at the downtown station to the lovely estate of Barbara Combs for an enjoyable afternoon tea and viewing of a few talkies. In attendance were the charming hostess Ms. Combs, Ron Louie, Stu Shiffman, Michael and Eloise Sheldon, Thomas Smith, Loveday Conquest, Fred Kleinschmidt, and Susan Collicott. The sumptuous spread was enlivened by shared Wodehouse items, discussion of other authors' works, a cardboard sextant, books about the British Royals, and much jocularity. Adjourning to the theater afterward with their libations, the Anglers were treated to *Wodehouse Playhouse* episodes and a Wodehouse documentary. After having exhausted our hostess, toured the estate, and teased the cat, the Anglers tottled back to town with fond memories of a delightful bucolic day. Grand thanks go to Mr. Louie and the Sheldons for shuttling members on extended country viewing trips to and from the estate.

Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)

Contact: Caralyn Campbell

Phone:

E-mail:



THE BIRMINGHAM BANJOLELE BAND met on August 30 at Milestone Books in Vestavia Hills. We are preparing for an October Wodehouse reading at Elder's Bookstore in Nashville. We will also have a Birmingham-area reading after the first of the new year at Milestone Books.

Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)

Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe

Phone:

E-mail:



The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)

Contact: Amy Plofker

Phone:

E-mail:



A GOODLY CONTINGENT of the Broadway Special met in The Grill Room, within easy reach of the bar, at The Players in Manhattan's Gramercy Park on July 18 for a discussion of "Jeeves and the Impending Doom." Only one at table (M.E. Rich) was able to report being attacked by a disgruntled swan.

Fish also figured into our discussion, in terms of what there is about that particular comestible that confers Jeevesian intelligence. One proffered theory concerned the Salmon of Knowledge in Celtic myth, which bestows absolute omniscience upon him who consumes it. But Wendy Walters was of the opinion that the celebrated salmon allowed himself to be eaten, thereby becoming part of a human being, so that he could have hands.

Our conversation reached rarified Wodehousian heights, ranging over topics including boats, boat races, lakes, silly names of hamlets, Bingo Little, and Greek drinks with or without coal (carbonation).

Worthy of note is the fact that Wendy Walters and John Brinkman's short video "How to Steal a Policeman's Helmet" may be found on YouTube.com under that engaging title.

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson
Phone:
E-mail:



ON SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 20 CapCap members gathered for dinner in the Wine Room of a Washington, D.C., hotel for good food, fellowship, and to hear a presentation by the noted Wodehousian author David A. Jasen. David talked about Plum's years writing books and lyrics for musical comedy in the thriving New York theater scene. In the Q&A session after the presentation, David chatted about his "fan-to-friendship" relationship with Wodehouse, and how his many conversations with Plum led David to write his biography *P. G. Wodehouse: A Portrait of a Master*. David said that Plum "gave me a life, career, and an abiding interest." That's quite a testimony. At the close of the evening, David signed copies of the biography for appreciative CapCap members.



David Jasen signs his book for the CapCappers.

Capital F.O.R.M.
(Friends Of Ralston McTodd—Ottawa and vicinity)
Contact: Megan Carton
Phone:
E-mail:



Chapter One
(Greater Philadelphia area)
Contact: Susan Cohen
Phone:
Fax:
E-mail:



THE MAIN EVENT of our June meeting was our annual read-aloud. Producer and director Herb Moskowitz selected stories that relate to our noms. Today we had a Rosie M. Banks story, the very funny "Sonny Boy." Once Rosie married, she turned into a kind of aunt. And you know what aunts are like. As if this isn't enough to keep Bingo on edge, he and Rosie have a baby that looks "like a homicidal fried egg." We gurgled with laughter as we had not only one but two dolls playing the babies in the story. One was a Cabbage Patch doll, another the spitting image of the sandwich board Cary Grant wore

when he was a young stiltwalker advertising hot dogs at Coney Island. Kudos to our illustrious cast: Opening Narrator (Stephanie Patterson); Bingo Little (John Sherwood); Rosie M. Banks (Susan Cohen); The Pieface (Bob Gordon); Oofy Prosser (Will Jordan); Charles "Charlie Always Pays" Pikelet (David Ruef); Policeman (Herb Moskowitz); Corker the Valet (John Baesch). And special kudos to our main narrator, Dan Cohen. Dan is to be commended for getting through the whole thing without ending up with laryngitis. We will meet again after a long summer of reading Wodehouse on Sunday, September 21.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate
(Chicago and thereabouts)
Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison
Phone:
E-mail:



The Clients of Adrian Mulliner
(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)
Contact:
Phone:



The Drone Rangers
(Houston and vicinity)
Contact: Toni Oliver
Phone:
E-mail:



THE DRONE RANGERS are an energetic and attractive band of Wodehouse enthusiasts who meet at the Barnes & Noble Bookshop on Westheimer near Gessner in Houston, Texas, every other month to discuss a book they have read that was written by the Master. For our July 25 gathering, we read the collection called *Murder at the Excelsior*, which is also a short story collected in the slender volume. This is Plum's one mystery, and it is a corker. The D-Rangers had a great time discussing it and the other stories, although it was sometimes difficult to understand them clearly. This was due to Susan Garrett having brought lemon cake and lemonade to celebrate Toni's recent divorce. The message was "when life hands you lemons, make lemonade," and everyone was browsing and sluicing with enthusiasm.

As is always the way with the DRs, gustatory pleasures are ever present, and our August meeting was held at The Raven Grill on the last Saturday in August. Any TWSers in the area are invited with word and gesture to join our meetings.

The clash of titans, otherwise known as the cricket match between the Mottled Oysters and the Drone Rangers, is still being planned for late in October.

The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw

Phone:

E-mail:



ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 3, members of the Flying Pigs gathered for our third annual outdoor BBQ at the home of Susan Brokaw and Dirk Wonnell. We welcomed our newest (and youngest) member, Katherine Jordan, who drove from Lexington, Kentucky, to be with us. In anticipation of Dirk and Susan's trip to Moscow for the Russian Wodehouse Society's Old Home Week, we read Wodehouse's "The Clicking of Cuthbert." Dirk was our whip-cracker and narrator. Since we did the reading after dinner (and a few drinks) it was a rather mirth-filled production, with Todd Bell as a very convincing Vladimir Brusiloff. It was a fun evening and we look forward to our fall gathering.



The Flying Pigs barbecue Wodehouse at their summer fling.

The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss

Phone:

E-mail:



The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: David Landman

Phone:

E-mail:



The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:

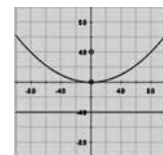


The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity)

Contact: Peter M. Nixon

E-mail:



THE PALE PARABOLITES . . . those who are seeking the Pale Parabola of Joy . . . whatever that may be. The Pale Parabolites' motto is *nil admirari*. Like the Empress of Blandings, the Pale Parabolites take things as they come and marvel at nothing.

The Pelikan Club

(Kansas City and vicinity)

Contact: Sallie Hobbs

E-mail:



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Karen Shotting

Phone:

E-mail:



KAREN POINTS OUT that the picture of 1315 Angelo Drive, credited to her in the Summer 2008 issue of *Plum Lines*, was actually taken by Carey Tynan.

The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

Phone:

E-mail:



THE ANNUAL MEETING of the Pickering Motor Company shareholders and board of directors was held at the home of Michael and Sherry Smith on May 13, 2008. Members were treated to the kind of extraordinarily sumptuous feast that they had become accustomed to in recent months. A spirit of bonhomie and joy reigned in the midst of growing friendships and expanding appreciation of the works of the Master. But a cloud of rather massive proportions suddenly shaded the feast. Just as the plates were being cleared, the port and cigars were being passed, and the meeting proper was to commence, word came of a wildcat strike at the Pickering Gem plant, immediately and unexpectedly shutting down production. (The Pickering Giant plant was unaffected.) Naturally, under such conditions, the meeting was immediately suspended and no discussion of the book, *Money for Nothing*, would take place. All members immediately left to take their places in the various positions necessary to meet the needs of the company and begin negotiations with the workers.

It didn't take long to deal with the grievances of Pickering's employees. It seems the issues had nothing to do with pay, working conditions, or pensions, but rather having inadequate time during the work week to read Wodehouse. As the Board was extraordinarily sympathetic to this position, a new contract was quickly negotiated which allowed plenty of time during the work week for such an important pursuit, and the workers returned to the plant and quickly met the backlog of orders for the Pickering Gem.

The shareholder and board of directors annual meeting recommenced at the home of Elliott and Elyse Milstein on July 1. Elyse, recognizing the proximity of the national holiday to the new meeting time, prepared a traditional Independence Day cuisine of BBQ hamburgers and hot dogs with all the fixings: baked beans, coleslaw, corn on the cob, etc. Only when all members had filled to the Plimsoll line, and then some, did the discussion of *Money for Nothing* begin. The spirited talk was led off by Michael Smith's assertion that the book could not have been written by P. G. Wodehouse. The serious discussion commenced once Michael had been shouted down. Larry felt the book started too slowly, but then picked up in the second half. Sue did not agree; she said it grabbed her right from the start and the "mystery" aspect of the plot kept her glued till the end. LuAnn and Sherry were lukewarm on it, and discussion turned to the next selection. David insisted that the next book be a Jeeves. Elliott suggested *Joy in the Morning*, and the motion passed unanimously.

A post-adjournment note: although not specifically charged to do so, board member Michael Smith took it upon himself to establish the Pickering website, which all TWS members are invited to visit at <http://tinyurl.com/59ogvy>.

The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)
(Portland, Oregon and vicinity)

Contact: Carol James
Phone:
E-mail:



The Size 14 Hat Club
(Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Contact: Jill Robinson
E-mail:



The Soup & Fish Club
(Northern Virginia area)

Contact: Deborah Dillard
Phone:
E-mail:

A New Niagara Chapter?

LAURA WOODGER LOEHR (who happens to be Elin Woodger Murphy's sister) from Alden, New York (near Buffalo) has an exciting announcement: She and another member, Shirley Sampson, are trying to start a new chapter in western New York. Laura says there's no chapter name yet, but they'll be meeting on Saturday, October 18, at a place yet to be determined, for lunch and talk. If you have interest, please contact Laura. Shirley will be handling the e-mail, and Laura is placing flyers in bookstores and English departments. They'd love to hear from you!

If Plum Had Been a Lawyer

BOB RAINS, of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, who often is known by his nom de Plum of Oily Carlisle, is the proud author of *True Tales of Trying Times: Legal Fables for Today*, a collection of law cases retold in fable form, complete with rhymed morals, and with illustrations by TWS member Andrea Jacobsen (aka Sweetie Carlisle) and Elisabeth Jacobsen. "These tales are for everyone: not just lawyers, but people too." Whilst no valets appear in *True Tales*, there are two golf-related stories, including the fable of the golfer who sued for the supposed constitutional right to walk on a municipal golf course, and the tale of the stripper who declined to display her assets on the links (she was dismissed from the Miss Nude World International Pageant for her subpar behavior). Of course, there are plenty of tales of love gone wrong and crime gone wrong. The book is available in the United States from Bob's website at <http://www.willowcrossingpress.com>. TWS members will be given a 10% discount on the purchase price.

True Tales of Trying Times
Legal Fables for Today

PROFESSOR BOB RAINS
Illustrated by E.A. Jacobsen



With a Foreword by
Justice J. Michael Eakin
Pennsylvania Supreme Court
Wiley, Simmonds & Hill Publishing / Willow Crossing Press

Collecting “Gone Wrong”

BY JOHN GRAHAM

OF THE CHARMING Wodehouse stories you have never read, “Gone Wrong” may be the most delightful. It’s about Stiffy, a friendly and unaffected bull terrier (with variations), living in Beverly Hills, California. Friendly and unaffected, that is, until he lands a contract with Isadore Wertheimer’s Bigger and Better.

“Bigger and Better, what?” I asked, perplexed.

“Studio, of course, you poor chump . . . doing a picture with Clarry.”

“Clarry?”

“Clara Svelte. A nice little thing. I could wish no better support. I see no reason why I should not use her in my next, unless this girl Garbo is as good as they say. I am having Greta watched closely, with a view to taking her on. That Swedish accent is a bit of a drawback, of course, but I could carry her.”

You won’t find this story in *A Wodehouse Bestiary* (Ticknor & Fields, 1985), in which Donald R. Bensen collected 14 of Plum’s best animal stories; nor will you find it in *The Hollywood Omnibus* (Hutchinson, 1985), although all the rest of the stories about Dottyville-on-the-Pacific are there. In fact, as far as I know, “Gone Wrong” has never been published in any volume of Wodehouse-only stories.

According to McIlvaine, the only place you will find “Gone Wrong” is in *The Cecil Aldin Book*, published in London in 1932 by Eyre and Spottiswoode. Of course, you may not want to trust McIlvaine completely. To begin with, she spells Aldin with an *e* rather than an *i*. She also fails to mention an American edition published the same year by Charles Scribner’s Sons. (The American issue was printed in England and appears to be the same as the English edition except for the publisher’s name on the title page and spine.) The book contains short stories and light essays about dogs and other animals by about a dozen contributors (Wodehouse gets top billing), along with eight color plates, seven half-tone plates, and 95 black-and-white drawings by the English sports and animal artist Cecil Aldin.

Given where it was published, it is not surprising that “Gone Wrong” tends to get overlooked in most books about Wodehouse. Dan Garrison misses it in *Who’s Who in Wodehouse*, and I could find no mention

GONE · WRONG



BY P. G. WODEHOUSE

HOLLYWOOD is a good place for dogs. At least, when I say Hollywood, I mean Beverly Hills. Hollywood itself is a noisome spot, where no self-respecting dog would live, but Beverly Hills is different. It is an oasis in a rather depressing countryside, consisting of a series of parallel roads with nice houses dotted along at intervals. Each house has a lawn in front of it, running unfenced down to the pavement, and on each lawn sits a dog. And, as you pass, each dog comes down to the edge of its lawn and chats with you.

Stiffy, when I first saw him, was not on his lawn. He was out in the road, dodging a motor and laughing his head off. Presently he came trotting back, took a sniff at me, decided that I smelled all right, and became friendly.

Stiffy was a sort of bull-terrier, with variations. His hind legs were pure black, his body white with a few black stripes.

A page and plate from “Gone Wrong”

of it in anything written by Richard Usborne or by any of Wodehouse’s biographers. Tony Ring does include a reference to Stiffy in volume 8 of *The Millennium Wodehouse Concordance*. The story fares somewhat better on internet Wodehouse guides. Neil Midkiff has it on his comprehensive list of short stories compiled in 2001 (<http://home.earthlink.net/~nmidkiff/pgw/story.html>), and a fellow in the United Kingdom named Reggie includes it on his new (at least to me) online guide and companion to the world of Wodehouse (<http://www.blandings.org.uk>).

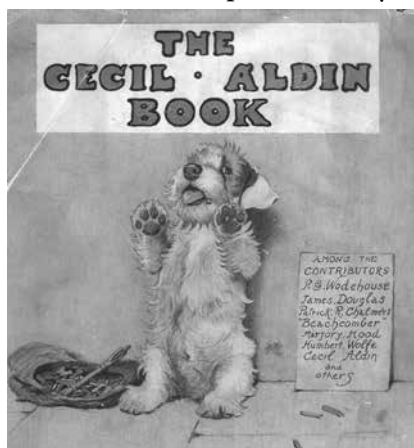
How and when Wodehouse came to write the story and why it ended up in Cecil Aldin’s book is a mystery I have been unable to solve. Norman Murphy conjectures that “Gone Wrong” was probably written in early 1931. He has seen a letter Plum wrote to Bill Townend on January 16, 1931, hinting at a funny incident about Winky, Plum and Ethel’s beloved Pekinese. With her mistress away on holiday, the Peke is frightened early one morning when she mistakes Plum for a masked stranger. Apparently he had forgotten to remove the eye patches that he always wore at night. This incident finds its way into “Gone Wrong” as gossip told by Stiffy to the story’s unnamed narrator about the Peke living at 1005 Benedict Canyon Drive (which was Plum and Ethel’s actual address at the time). By the way, no matter when it was written, “Gone Wrong” has the distinction of being Plum’s first published Hollywood story. (“Monkey Business” comes in second, published in the *Strand* magazine in December 1932.)

Why did “Gone Wrong” end up in *The Cecil Aldin Book* rather than a magazine, the usual placement for

Wodehouse short stories? Here Plum's letters provide no help. I even went so far as to read Cecil Aldin's 1934 autobiography, but could find no mention of Wodehouse there. The only clue the book did provide is that it turns out Aldin and the Wodehouses shared a love not only for animals but also for French resort towns like Le Touquet. It could be that Aldin met Plum somewhere in France in the late 1920s and asked him to contribute to his new dog book. By that time, Cecil Aldin was a well-known and highly successful artist and author. His animal drawings still command high prices today. Search "Cecil Aldin" on eBay and you are likely to find nearly as many listings as you do for "Wodehouse."

Speaking of eBay, if you search both "Aldin" and "Wodehouse," you might be lucky enough to find a copy of *The Cecil Aldin Book*. If you do, expect to pay around \$50 for a copy in very good or better condition. Most copies tend to be in pretty good condition, as the book was quite well made. In the rare event you find a copy for sale in dust wrapper, it is likely to sell for around \$200.

Even though I was unable to solve the mystery of the story's publishing history, I did uncover one interesting new fact: In the 1990s, "Gone Wrong" was finally reprinted (along with Cecil Aldin's illustrations for the story) in a book called *Best Dog Stories*, edited by Lesley O'Mara and introduced by Gerald Durrell. It was published in England by Michael O'Mara Books in 1990 and in the United States by Wings Books in 1991; the ISBN for the U.S. version is 0-517-06498-7. I got my copy for just \$5 on Abebooks.com. There are plenty more copies available there at similar prices. A final word of warning: Don't confuse this book with another one called *The Best Dog Stories*, published in 2007. That book also contains a dog story by Wodehouse, but it's not "Gone Wrong." Rather, it is "The Mixer" from *The Man with Two Left Feet*—a delightful story too, but one which has been reprinted many times.



The dust cover of The Cecil Aldin Book. How did "Gone Wrong" find its way into these pages?

A Mulliner Menagerie: Introduction and Miscellanea

BY KEN CLEVENGER

To our great delight, Ken Clevenger has offered a new regular column, wherein he studies the creatures that populate the Mulliner stories. Here's the first in the series.

TO QUOTE AUBREY TREFUSIS, aka Aubrey Bassinger in "Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court": "My views on kindness to animals are rigid." I think Mr. Wodehouse let a little of himself creep into his story here. While we might not refer to Plum as a philatelist (as that term is understood by a Small Bass in "Anselm Gets His Chance"), he was distinctly kind to animals. Indeed, *A Wodehouse Bestiary* celebrates this fact, and all the biographies of Plum contain references to his many domesticated fauna. Therefore it is hardly surprising to see the animal motif appear so significantly in the Master's work.

I have made a study of Plum's use of animals in the context of 43 Mulliner stories, collected in *The World of Mr. Mulliner* (1972 Barrie & Jenkins edition), plus "Romance at Droitgate Spa," which was unaccountably omitted therefrom. I propose to present this amazing "Mulliner Menagerie" as an irregular series of short vignettes. Indeed, the editor rather insisted that a small portion at a time in *Plum Lines* would be best for our readers.

The taxonomy, if that is the word I want, is somewhat obvious. Amphibians, cats, dogs, farm animals, fish, fowl, insects, reptiles, rodents, sea life, wild animals, and worms all deserve individual categories. There will be some specialized subcategories, of course. For instance, in the categories of farm animals and fowl, each animal's appellation may be used qua animal or, as in the case of lamb, chicken, or duck, qua comestible. And in animals qua human descriptions, one may be horse-faced, hawk-nosed, have eyes like a prawn, eat like a pig, or be as crazy as a coot.

A few other categories are deemed worthy. There are some cartoon animals to address. Rabbits deserve their own billing, not least because of the eternal conflict over "pets or fryers." Likewise, named animals seem to merit special recognition. And so do gorillas. Given the normal leading role of human characters in the Mulliner stories, a primate category would defeat the menagerie intent. Finally, what taxonomy would be complete without a miscellaneous section?

To illustrate what you might risk learning by reading any future installment of this series, the miscellaneous

category has two entries. First is the iguanodon, an extinct dinosaur, which is mentioned only in “Strychnine in the Soup” but with references therein to both the lesser and larger iguanodon, and a description how, in stalking its prey, it would rarely trip over lamp cords in the dark around midnight in the country house bedroom of the mother of the girl it loved.

The second misc. animal is the dragon. This mythical animal (contrary claims by devotees of St. George notwithstanding) appears in “Honeysuckle Cottage” as a simile, wherein that fateful cottage “lurks like an evil dragon.” The second reference is in “The Knightly Quest of Mervyn,” as per the classical allusion captured in the story title. In the latter story, the fair damsel wants no scaly dragon ear but rather strawberries in winter. And the role of the dragon is played to perfection by a tall, haughty, reduced duchess in black satin acting as the fruit seller in an exclusive Piccadilly shop. The final dragon reference is again classical. In “The Fiery Wooing of Mordred,” our hero Mordred Mulliner, upon seeing the love of his life for the first time, is instantly ready to “tackle dragons” to win her love. Curiously, the dragon reference has nothing to do with the alleged fire-breathing capacity of that beast or the combustible title of the story. And a rationalist, understanding all the facts (that this initial meeting takes place in a dentist’s office and the “hero” gladly gives up his earlier place in the examining chair to the girl) might even question the real nature of his motives. Love indeed!

So there you have it. I hope you are now crouching like a cat at the proverbial mouse hole, all a-quiver for the next appearance of “A Mulliner Menagerie” in a future edition of *Plum Lines*. Will it be dogs? Do cats get pride of place? Or will it be something fowl? Hold your horses and stay tuned!

Mulliner, . . . I have had it in for that dog since the second Sunday before Septuagesima, when he pinned me by the ankle as I paced beside the river composing a sermon on Certain Alarming Manifestations of the So-called Modern Spirit.
“Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo” (1926)

A Few Too Many

WILLIAM A. (TOM) THOMAS, in his May 26, 2008, copy of the *New Yorker*, found an article about hangover cures: “A Few Too Many” by Joan Acocella. Naturally, Bertie makes an under-the-weather appearance, meets Jeeves, and drinks his first picker-upper. As Tom says, we can all only hope for our own private Jeeves.

Psmith at 100

BY RUSSELL CONNOR

More lovable than Ukridge, more self-confident than Bertie Wooster, at times more potent even than Jeeves, Psmith is the most eloquent and commanding of all Wodehouse’s creations.

Robert McCrum, *Wodehouse: A Life*
(Norton, 2004)

HOW OFTEN HAVE WE HEARD the question, “Can we ever repay members of the P. G. Wodehouse societies for keeping the flame alive?” Not often enough, I venture. Thoughtful and witty discussions at meetings, learned papers disrupted every two minutes by gales of laughter, all concluding with generous toasts to the Master and lifelong friendships formed—that’s what we expect of them. Then there are always new discoveries. Even I, rankest of amateurs, have just made one. The eternally youthful Psmith is serenely strolling into his second century.

Leave It to Psmith has just spilled off the shelf, drenching me in a flood of nostalgia and revelation. Bertie Wooster may be as immortal as Huckleberry Finn, but I never wanted to be Bertie, or Jeeves, or Ukridge, or Pongo Twistleton-Twistleton, or Gussie Fink-Nottle. At 16, I wished heartily, for at least a good week or two, to be Psmith. Capital P-s-m-i-t-h.

I’m sure I wasn’t the only one.

When *Leave It to Psmith* was published in 1923, it was viewed as an Edwardian fairyland world, the reality of which had perished on the battlefields of France. The charm of Blandings Castle’s dotty ambience had been an escape for millions by the time I discovered it in 1945. Now, in what I wistfully call the unrecognizable present, rereading *Leave It to P.* has inspired me to trumpet the joys of its inspired lunacy, and I reserve my fanfare for that paragon of persiflage, the inimitable Psmith (the “p” is silent, as in pshrimp).

The first time around, I had skated over the artfully tangled plot, pausing only to attend to the dizzying but elegant, fancifully decorated language of Psmith himself. Coming back to Psmith is like meeting an eccentric old friend from one’s youth and realizing that this unlikely figure left real traces on one’s soul that color one’s thought and speech.

The word *cool* goes in and out of fashion, but it clings to Psmith like a wet glove. His air of superiority is hurtful only to mean, villainous types, since he is the kindest of creatures, ever ready to see all sides of every question. Evelyn Waugh said he embodied aristocratic

values more than any other Wodehouse character. He is loyal, courageous, and a romantic of the most dedicated kind. When he falls for Eve Halliday, we know the breathless but eloquent courtship will overcome all obstacles. This could not help but be heartening to the adolescent spirit, accustomed to frustration and rebuff. Had I the means to bring him to life in Arlington, Massachusetts, I would have hired him as my Cyrano like a shot.

If some unlucky readers have not met this spectacular character, I must advise that Psmith's mode of speech may strike the unsuspecting plain speaker as artificial, mannered, and periphrastic. But how much charm has mankind heartlessly discarded in its zealous worship of the great god Efficiency? Oodles of the stuff, I'd say.

Here, for example, is his first appearance in the book. Responding to a knock on the door, a housemaid discovers a tall, thin, monocled young man.

"A warm afternoon," he said cordially.

"Yes, sir."

"But pleasant," urged the young man. "Tell me, is Mrs. Jackson at home?"

"No, sir."

"Not at home?"

"No, sir."

The young man sighed.

"Ah well," he said, "we must always remember that these disappointments are sent to us for some good purpose. No doubt they make us more spiritual. Will you inform her that I called? The name is Psmith. P-smith."

"Peasmith, sir?"

"No, no. P-s-m-i-t-h. I should explain to you that I started life without the initial letter, and my father always clung ruggedly to the plain Smith. But it seemed to me there were so many Smiths in the world that a little variety might well be introduced. Smythe I look on as a cowardly evasion, nor do I approve of the too prevalent custom of tacking another name on in front by means of a hyphen. So I decided to adopt the Psmith. The p, I should add for your guidance, is silent, as in phthisis, psychic, and ptarmigan. You follow me?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"You don't think," he said anxiously, "that I did wrong in pursuing this course?"

"N-no, sir."

"Splendid!" said the young man, flicking a speck of dust from his coat-sleeve. "Splendid! Splendid!"

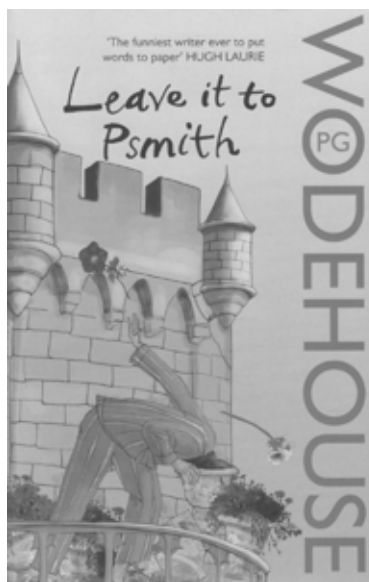
And with a courteous bow he descended the steps and made his way down the street.

The hero of *Leave It to Psmith* was considered the first flowering of the mature Wodehouse style, and the book was his most successful ever in England. Ironically, it was not Psmith's first appearance, but his last—a cause for puzzlement, considering his popularity and the Master's eye for a ready buck.

Plum first made his mark as a writer of stories for boys, based on life in England's public schools, appearing in periodicals like *Chums* and *The Captain*. Psmith ("an old Etonian") first appeared as a rich, sophisticated classmate of the hero, Mike Jackson, in *The Lost Lambs* of 1908. Here was a character who appealed to adults as well as schoolboys. In 1910, in *Psmith in the City*, based on the author's two years' employment in a bank, he and Mike contend with and triumph over management. In *Psmith Journalist* (1915) we find him jousting with an American gangland culture that had attracted Wodehouse ever since he began his frequent New York visits in 1904.

Robert McCrum, in his admirable *Wodehouse: A Life*, assigns Psmith to a literary and dramatic tradition, a role going back to the fops and dandies of Restoration comedy and the plays of Sheridan. He describes him as a progenitor of Bertie, who had some of his innocence, and Jeeves, who had much of his culture, without explaining why the author abandoned his brilliant original and stayed with his offspring for 60 years. A simple explanation is that Wodehouse, urgently wanting to establish himself as a writer of adult fiction, thought he must leave behind a figure indelibly linked with his schoolboy stories.

It seems just as likely that Psmith was an unattainable ideal, for him and for readers. He needed a hero that readers could like but feel superior to. In joining Bertie with Jeeves, he not only continued another theatrical tradition of simpleminded master and



Psmith's popularity is undiminished by a century of pstories.

wily servant, he made a playground for the two sides of his own character. In life, the incredibly productive, money-conscious, woman-shy Wodehouse would often present himself as a sort of helpless Bertie, while the superior Jeeves in him watched the store. But his essential kindness comes through in the stories, just as his essential innocence would get him in trouble while interned by the Germans in World War II, making what now seem harmless broadcasts, ending his career in England and forcing him to begin anew in the United States.

Around the same time, I also had to abandon an unattainable ideal and begin anew. The girls in Arlington High School seemed to find my dash and savoir faire as a faux-Psmith unconvincing, or more likely, incomprehensible. Something has lingered, however. Over the years I have grown used to the sight of friends standing on one foot, glancing wistfully at a passing bus, as I try to finish a sentence in an interesting way. Of course, Psmith had the wisdom to recognize our problem: "I endeavor always in my conversation to instruct, elevate, and entertain, but there is no gainsaying the fact that a purist might consider enough of my chit-chat to be sufficient."

Drone's Fizz?

WALTER KORNTHEUER spotted the article "How's Your Drink?" by Eric Felten, in the May 10, 2008, edition of the *Wall Street Journal*. In this article Mr. Felten takes to task the Mimosa, a popular (and, according to him, generally dreadful) semi-alcoholic drink made from orange juice and champagne. He laments that, too often, the drink is made with reconstituted orange juice and "the cheapest of small-C champagnes."

To solve the problem, Mr. Felten recommends the Buck's Fizz, which originated from Buck's Club in London in the 1920s. (Alert readers will know from Norman Murphy's *Handbook* that Buck's Club is a primary source for the Drones!) The ingredients are the same as the Mimosa (2 oz. freshly squeezed orange juice, 4 oz. champagne), but "the Buck's Fizz never quite lost its posh connections." According to Mr. Felten, the Buck's Fizz was invented by a bartender named McGarry. And, more to the point, "when Bertie Wooster visits Buck's 'for a quick bracer,' he runs into his love-struck pal Bingo, who is blithering on about the latest girl he worships [and] 'McGarry, the chappie behind the bar, was listening with his ears flapping.'"

Jeeves Intervenes

(A THEATRE REVIEW)

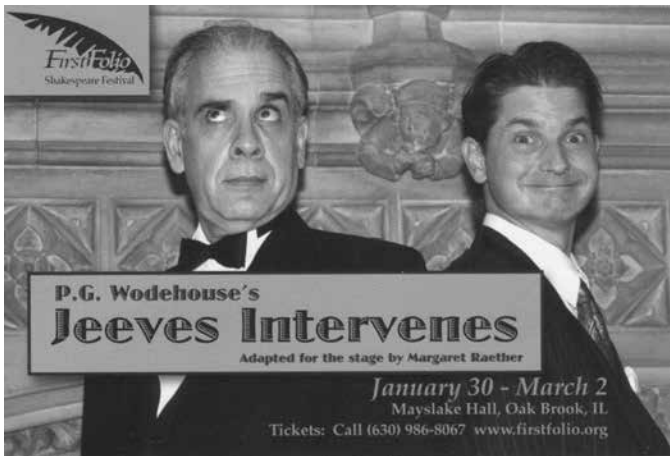
BY DANIEL LOVE GLAZER

UNTIL RECENTLY, Wodehouse devotees in the Chicago area were blessed by the ministrations of Chicago's City Lit Theater, which for a dozen years put on a superb adaptation of a Wodehouse story annually. Alas, this happy state of affairs ended several years ago, coincident with the advent of a new Artistic Director (Mark Richard, the previous A.D., was not only the major adapter of the stories for the stage, but also a superb Bertie Wooster) and Managing Director (Page Hearn, who died in May, was the previous M.D. and had expertly sustained the role of Jeeves in nine productions).

Lo and behold, this season First Folio Shakespeare Festival has filled the breach by presenting *Jeeves Intervenes*, adapted for the stage by Margaret Raether and purportedly based on the story "Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg." First Folio presents its productions in the Chicago suburb of Oak Brook, in the former library of Mayslake Hall, in the pile known as the Peabody Estate. My wife and I saw the show near the end of its month-long run.

You will recall "Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg" as the episode when Bertie, residing in New York, does a favor for his friend Francis Bickersteth ("Bicky"), who depends on a monthly allowance from his uncle, the Duke of Chiswick, the "hard-boiled egg" of the title. Bertie has just grown a mustache, much to Jeeves's displeasure. The Duke is arriving in New York to visit Bicky, who has led his uncle to believe that he (Bicky) is a successful businessman. At Jeeves's suggestion, Bertie lends his flat (and Jeeves) to Bicky in order to maintain the illusion. Of course, when the Duke sees how well-off Bicky is, he announces he will cancel the monthly remittance, which Bicky had been counting on to enable him to start a chicken farm. Jeeves then concocts the idea of charging tourists for the privilege of shaking the Duke's hand, but the Duke shortly discovers the scheme and scotches it. Jeeves saves the day by suggesting that Bicky sell the tale of the Duke's hand-shaking for money to the newspapers. The Duke, who loathes publicity, capitulates and gives Bicky his money. In gratitude, Bertie has Jeeves shave his mustache.

Jeeves Intervenes retains a few elements of "Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg," but 90 percent of it is a potpourri of themes and language deriving from other parts of the canon. The setting is not New York but Bertie's flat in London. Francis Bickersmith has become



Eustace Bassington-Bassington (“Bassy”), while the Duke of Chiswick has become Bassy’s uncle, Sir Rupert Watlington-Pipps. Two other characters also appear in the sketch: Aunt Agatha and her goddaughter, Gertrude Winkesworth-Bode, modeled on Florence Craye.

The play opens with Jeeves administering one of his patented pick-me-ups to Bertie, who has overindulged at the Drones in an attempt to assuage his sorrow at being ordered by Aunt Agatha to her country lair, thus preventing him and Jeeves from visiting Cannes as planned. As a counterpart to the mustache in the original story, Bertie here incurs Jeeves’s displeasure by sporting a scarlet cummerbund. And in another parallel, Bertie lends Bassy his flat to impress his uncle.

Here are some of Ms. Raether’s borrowings from other parts of the canon:

Bertie describes someone as being “far from grunted.”

Jeeves performs his riff on the three branches (Shropshire, Hampshire, and Kent) of the Bassington-Bassingtons.

Bertie describes Aunt Agatha as wearing barbed wire next to her skin, eating broken bottles, coming after him with her hatchet, and turning into a werewolf at the full moon.

Bertie tells Gertrude that someone (Bassy) loves her, and Gertrude, like Madeline Bassett, assumes the lover is Bertie and announces that she will be Bertie’s wife.

Gertude, who plans to “mold” Bertie, plies him with *Types of Ethical Theory*, with Nietzsche to follow.

There is a reference to mastodons bellowing across primeval swamps.

Bertie applies to Bassy the line about the girls he has loved, if placed end to end, reaching halfway down Piccadilly.

There were others, but I couldn’t make note of them in the dark.

Upon meeting Gertrude, Bassy immediately falls head over heels in love. Of course she is engaged to Bertie, but Bassy eventually wins her away by pretending to be her intellectual soul mate. He accomplishes this by regaling her with passages from *Types of Ethical Theory* and Nietzsche, prompted by Bertie, who, hidden behind the couch, displays the texts for Bassy to read.

It is revealed that Aunt Agatha and Sir Rupert knew each other in their youth and wanted to marry, but Agatha’s parents forbade the match, thinking Sir Rupert, then a young military officer, was unworthy. I expected that the couple would renew their entanglement (Aunt Agatha is portrayed as widowed and available), like Lord Yaxley and the barmaid Maude, but such was not the case.

At the story’s end, Sir Rupert learns that the flat is not Bassy’s but Bertie’s and announces that he will end Bassy’s allowance. But just as in the original story, Jeeves uses the threat of publicity get the uncle to relent. Naturally, Bertie forfeits the scarlet cummerbund—and since Jeeves has “forgotten” to cancel the reservations, the trip to Cannes is on after all.

The production was enjoyable, enlivened by some good physical comedy. As Bertie, Christian Gray was fine, though not up to the standard of Mark Richard, City Lit’s longtime Bertie, or of Hugh Laurie. Jim McCance, as Jeeves, was excellent, but he occasionally betrayed a kind of condescension to Bertie not present in the stories. He did this by an occasional look askance and by remarking, after Bertie and Bassy recount being classmates at “Malvern Prep,” that “Malvern Prep has a lot to answer for.” Jill Shellaburger was superbly imperious as Aunt Agatha. Roger Mueller was the very model of a gruff, take-no-prisoners Wodehouse military man, and Kevin McKillip was a properly cloth-headed Bassy. The one weak link was Lydia Berger as Gertrude, who fell short of the dominant persona called for.

The show was a delight, and the audience heartily approved. I hope that First Folio will do more Wodehouse in the future.

Editor’s note: A shortened version of this review appeared in *Wooster Sauce*, June 2008.

She buzzed off, and I turned to Jeeves, deeply moved. He had saved me from an ordeal at the thought of which the flesh crept . . .

“Heaven help the tarpon that tries to pit its feeble cunning against you, Jeeves,” I said. “Its efforts will be bootless.”

“Jeeves and the Greasy Bird” (1965)

The Club Book—How Does It Work?

ASKS MURRAY HEDGCOCK

THE CLUB BOOK troubles me. I am not at all sure about its contributors, its presentation, or its protection.

That last concern is justified by the ease with which the unspeakable Bingley—a country member of the Junior Ganymede, as Jeeves dismissed him—was able in *Much Obligated, Jeeves* (1971; aka *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds*) to swipe the volume containing no fewer than 11 pages recording the Rugger Night and other dubious exploits of Ginger Winship.

When Bertie Wooster, properly alarmed at learning of this explosive record of misbehavior, had sought confirmation from Jeeves that the book was safely under lock and key, he received the assurance that it was “safely bestowed in the secretary’s office.” How inadequate that was is promptly proven by the ease with which Bingley (aka Brinkley in *Thank You, Jeeves*) popped into the secretary’s office during that official’s lunch hour, popped the book into the large brief case he had brought with him, and popped off—to begin his evil efforts to profit from his ill-gotten gains.

It is in *The Code of the Woosters* that we learn of the Club Book, when Jeeves explains to Bertie his membership of the Junior Ganymede, and the Rule 11 requirement for every new member to supply full information regarding his employer. “This not only provides entertaining reading, but serves as a warning to members who may be contemplating taking service with gentlemen who fall short of the ideal.” Bertie is alarmed: “What happened when you joined—did you tell them all about me?”; Jeeves responds, “Oh, yes, sir.”

The size of Bertie’s entry is unique: that for G. D’Arcy Cheesewright, for example, was limited to the record of his habits, when moved, of saying “Ho!” and of “doing Swedish exercises in the nude each morning before breakfast.”

But mark that comment of Jeeves, about recording Bertie’s past when he joined the Junior Ganymede. Was he not already a member? Why not in his earlier incarnation serving Lord Worplesdon, Mr. Montague-Todd, or Lord Brancaster? Is there no Jeeves entry dealing with previous employers? There must have been much worthy of record of Lord Worplesdon, whose temper, it may be recalled, was volcanic, and whose dress sense prompted Jeeves to leave his service because he could not see eye-to-eye with His Lordship’s desire to dine in dress trousers, a flannel shirt, and a shooting coat.

It is in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* that Bertie makes his pitch:

“You couldn’t tear the Wooster material out of that Club Book, could you, Jeeves?”

“I fear not, sir.”

“It contains matter that can fairly be described as dynamite.”

“Very true, sir.”

“Suppose the contents were bruited about and reached the ears of my Aunt Agatha.”

“You need have no concern on that point, sir. Each member fully understands that perfect discretion is a *sine qua non*.”

Well—perhaps so.

Curiously, Bertie twice benefited from the dark secrets of the Club Book. Most famously, *The Code of the Woosters* has Bertie learn of Spode’s dark secret (mention the name Eulalie, and watch him curl up like a salted snail), passed on by Jeeves after a telephone inquiry to the club secretary. Detail is, of course, not to be publicized—but the saga ends with Bertie promising to go on the world cruise for which Jeeves hankers; in return, he is told “in the strictest confidence” that the would-be dictator designs ladies’ underclothing and owns the Bond Street lingerie emporium of Eulalie Soeurs.

And the unspeakable Bingley did good by Our Hero when he recorded (as Jeeves was to discover) that while in L. P. Runkle’s service, he found that fly in Aunt Dahlia’s ointment had spent time in an American prison for bribing a juror and, in grave danger of a further sentence in connection with a real estate fraud, had jumped bail and headed to Canada in a false beard.

But it is the logistics of the Club Book that most puzzle me. It was not in fact a single chunky volume, as Bertie judged it: “It must be the size of a house” (*Much Obligated, Jeeves*). “No sir, the records are in several volumes. The present one dates back some twelve years.”

My concern is *how entries were physically added*. That they are in alphabetical order is confirmed in “Jeeves and the Greasy Bird.” Jeeves informs Bertie that glancing at the G section, he found reference (provided by Sir Roderick Glossop’s butler Dobson) to the nerve specialist’s dilemma—that Lady Chufnell refuses the banns until Honoria Glossop is safely married off.

But how was this order arranged? Were there several spare pages left between each letter, to allow for later additions? And were entries pasted into a sort of scrapbook? In that case, they would need to be typed, or handwritten, only on one side of a sheet of paper.

And in time this would make for a very chunky, hard-to-handle, and quite heavy volume.

Or was the Club Book a series of ring binders, allowing new entries, or additions, to be slotted in at the right place by unclipping the rings, and slotting the new pages into place at the appropriate spot? The ring-paged book can be awkward to handle, sits uneasily on a shelf, and does not exude authority.

Then—what of the content? How reliable was it?

Jeeves, of course, was scrupulously honest in his recording of Bertie's ups and downs—but how far could we accept the entry contributed by such as the awful Bingley? Or those of Jeeves's predecessors, not least the light-fingered Meadows (assuming he was a Junior Ganymedian)?

The Bingley account of life with *Wooster, Mr. B. W.*, was no doubt totally unfounded and duly libelous. Libelous, that is, if it was on the lines of Bingley's recollection, when Bertie called on him to seek the return of the Club Book, that BW drank and smoked too much, and had been "stewed to the eyebrows," which led to the burning of their cottage.

And how would Bingley have recorded his little local difficulty with Ginger Winship—namely, that his employer's shirts did not fit him when purloined? Possibly Bingley's entry under *Winship, Mr. Harold* would read: "A very pleasant gentleman, but check comparative shirt sizes before accepting employment."

As for Meadows; was he a club member? If so—what did he write about his late employer? Did he complain of this reluctance of B. W. Wooster to share the wealth, and allow his valet to acquire Wooster socks (silk)? Or did he simply record leaving Bertie's service because of "personality differences"?

It is in *Much Obligated, Jeeves* that the full menace of the Club Book is brought home. Bertie learns that Jeeves's early-morning activity at his typewriter involved updating the Wooster entry by adding the latest Totleigh Towers events, including accusations of theft of the amber statuette and the night spent in the cells. "The rules with reference to the Club Book are very strict, and the penalties for omitting to contribute to it severe. Actual expulsion has sometimes resulted," he is told.

Implored to water down the detail, Jeeves is firm: "The full facts are required. The committee insists on this." At this point Jeeves explains that the Club Book is "a historic document." (A bit of surprise, that; surely Jeeves would have said, "an historic document"?) He adds: "It has been in existence more than eighty years." While explaining the multivolume aspect of the work and the age of the present volume, he also reveals that

most employers are covered in only a few lines—"your eighteen pages are quite exceptional."

Bertie is startled: "Eighteen? I thought it was eleven"—to which the answer is: "You are omitting to take into your calculations the report of your misadventures at Totleigh Towers, which I have nearly completed. I anticipate that this will run to approximately seven."

Bertie is clearly a standout—but contributions by other club members could be well worth reading. What did Seppings report of Aunt Dahlia and Uncle Tom? What did the unworthy Herbert Binstead, he who consorted with pigmen off-duty, write in the Club Book of Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe?

But there is no escaping the final and biggest mystery concerning the Club Book. No explanation is given for Jeeves's extraordinary volte-face, which might pass almost unnoticed by the casual reader of *Much Obligated, Jeeves*, as it is recorded singularly and unobtrusively on the final page. All in this tale has been resolved—except for the continuing shadow of The Book, hanging over Bertie's past, and even more so over his future. He makes one more effort, in the wake of Bingley's demonstration of how easy it is to put it to gross misuse:

"Who can say that another Bingley may not come along and snatch it from the secretary's room? I know it is too much to ask you to burn the beastly thing, but could you at least destroy the eighteen pages in which I figure?"

"I have already done so, Sir."

This momentous announcement is succeeded by just four brief sentences, as Bertie records:

Words failed me, but in due season I managed three. "Much obliged, Jeeves."

"Not at all, sir."

But—you must ask—what happens next? Bertie must have been thrilled—but what of the Junior Ganymede, when the committee learned of this mutilation of the records, as it surely must have done, immediately anyone picked up that same volume?

I believe Jeeves, as a man of honor, would have felt it incumbent to resign his membership immediately—if he had not done so already. This would surely have led to a change of occupation, perhaps even emigration.

Did Jeeves stay in London, or perhaps retreat to the country, and set up some sort of equivalent of today's "Agony Aunts" ["Dear Abby"] called, say, "Gentlemen's Friend," to help young men about town? He could have

provided advice and problem solutions of the sort produced so regularly to save Bertie's bacon in their years together.

Or did he go to the Colonies—perhaps America—and there find employment with some wealthy gentleman who would be more impressed than concerned that his new valet had upset the stuffed shirts of the Drones?

Speculation is complicated by the fact that the removal of the Club Book pages came not in the final Jeeves book; that marvelous man was to appear once again three years later, in 1974 (*Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, aka *The Cat-Nappers*). It may be worth noting, however, that most of the action in that book takes place far away from the Junior Ganymede, at Maiden Eggesford, near the South Coast, where Jeeves could not make his customary lunchtime or evening club visits.

The outcome must remain a mystery. But in an age when kiss-and-tell memoirs, by everyone from politicians to sportsmen, are surefire bestsellers, imagination boggles at its best seller prospects if the Club Book were to be published for the mass market.

Failing reality, might a Wodehouse scribe care to reconstruct the Club Book for our own information, entertainment, and amusement? This would be an enterprise well worthy of sponsorship by any Wodehouse Society. I leave my fellow members with that thought.

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We appreciate your articles, Quick Ones, and observations. Send them to Gary Hall at the addresses above!

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