



Plum Lines

VOL. 14 No 4

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY WINTER 1993

Letters from Plum



Oct 7, 1914

Dear Brad.

Excuse delay in answering letter. Been busy getting married to Ethel Milton! We are here for tonight, then tomorrow to Melrose Grange, Bellport, Long Island. I'll write again from there. This is just a note to tell you of the marriage.

Your ever

Chickens

See page 2

Contents	Letters from Plum	1	The Great PGW-Net Quiz	8	A horse named Fink-Nottle	14
	The Night before Christmas	2	Jeeves Takes Charge again	9	New Philly chapter?	15
	A few quick ones	4	A nautical Jeeves	9	The way it should be	15
	New members	5	TWS stationery	10	Bolton & Wodehouse & Kern	16
	Want ads	5	"Thank you, Joe Kennan"	11	Reminiscences of Galahad	16
	Wooster of Yaxley, etc.	6	Goodbye to "Jeeves and Wooster"	12	Right Ho, Jeeves on stage	17
	Something new	7	Newt news	12	Proper sentencing	18
	P. G. Wodehouse Book of Days	8	Quiz answers	13	Christmas in New York	19
				14	Rebus	20

Letters from Plum

The letter on page one was written by P. G. Wodehouse to his friend Bradshaw on October 1, 1914. It is one of several early Wodehouse letters owned by Ronald Levine, a TWS member in Johannesburg, South Africa. Ronald kindly sent me copies of the letters so that they could be published in *Plum Lines* and give us some insight into Plum's early life—they are the raw material of literary history. I intend to publish others in later issues.

This letter may have been the first announcement of a most important event: his marriage to Ethel Wayman the previous day. The letter was written from the Hotel Astor in New York and reads as follows:

Oct 1, 1914

Dear Brad,

Excuse delay in answering letter. Been busy getting married to Ethel Milton! We are here for the night, then tomorrow to Melrose Grange, Bellport, Long Island. I'll write again from there. This is just a note to tell you of the marriage.

Yours ever
Chickens

There's a strange detail here: why on earth did he call her Ethel *Milton*? As Ronald points out, "Surely he inquired about her last name before the ceremony. Her maiden name was Newton and her two previous married names were Rowley and Wayman. No Milton at all. Maybe it was some private joke."

Does anybody know? Couldn't have been some mute, inglorious Milton, I suppose. (Reminds me of Katherine Hepburn's question to Humphrey Bogart in *African Queen*—"What is your name, darling?")

The "Brad" to whom he wrote was Leslie Havergal Bradshaw, a friend and fellow writer he had known in New York at least since the autumn of 1909. Bradshaw wrote the earliest biography of Plum for the March 1910 issue of *The Captain* magazine. In it he said, "P. G. Wodehouse has been nicknamed 'Chickens' among the writing fraternity. This is from his book *Love Among the Chickens* . . .

which was the first thing to bring him to the notice of American editors." He was still using the nickname four years later. Bradshaw was also Plum's *ad hoc* literary agent for a few years and they remained friends at least into the 1930s. (I swiped everything in this paragraph from Barry Phelps's *P. G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth*.)



Information and new memberships
Marilyn MacGregor

Dues payments and address changes
Tom Wainwright

Editorial contributions
Ed Ratcliffe, OM

Dues are \$15 per year.

All quotations from P. G. Wodehouse are reprinted by permission of the Copyright Owner, the Trustees of the Wodehouse Estate.

The Night before Christmas

by Charles E. Gould, Jr.

Twas the night before Christmas, and throughout the Hall
Stirred the creatures and features of Matchingam's Ball:
Like a limp stocking hung o'er the sty rail with care
Was Lord Emsworth, in White Hope that he wasn't there;
Young Edwin and Bonzo, each snug in his bed,
Never dreamed they were visions that danced in Plum's head.
Aunt Dahlia in kerchief and Voules in his cap
Were yearning alike for a long winter's nap,
While Galahad Threepwood, who never had gone
To his bed before midnight, awaited the dawn.
Full Moon on the crest of Big Money below
Shed the lustre of Joy in the Morning on snow.

As Galahad's sheaves once surmounted the sty,
Dry leaves before the wild hurricane fly,
And George Cyril Wellbeloved buttons his coat,
Aloof and alone like The Girl on the Boat.
Bobbie Wickham—a stitch, whether nit-wit or pearl—
Is ready with needle, and Oh! What a girl!
Sir Roderick Glossop, a man who can think,
Embellishes thoughtfulness duly with drink,
And daren't his juniors unduly demolish,
Made-up, as he is once again, in shoe polish.
Over there is Lord Uffenham, funny old elf,
And Chimp Twist and Soapy Molloy for the pelf.

Mr. Mulliner gets a few nods, though he's dressed
In the tweeds and the sweater of Angler's Rest,
Next to Pilbeam the Pustule, whose agents sublime
Are still Schwed and Meredith, both in their prime,
When what to our wondering eyes must appear
But Ukridge, aside, in his foul ginger-beer-
Wired spectacles gazing at Bertie and Jeeves.
Of a sudden, Sir Gregory Parsloe believes—
As the host upon whom almost everyone fawns—
That he sees in the sky a sleigh pulled by eight pawns;
And we heard him exclaim, as he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night."

A few quick ones

Peter Morris has an inquiry: "In a December 1947 letter to Bill Townend transcribed in the McIlvaine bibliography (p. 411), Wodehouse writes of a lawsuit filed on his behalf against Kleenex for having used Jeeves in a series of advertisements. Later (p. 414) he mentions settling for \$362.10. Has anyone ever seen the ad in question?"

David McDonough found three Wodehouse passages in the *Oxford Book of Villains* (edited by John Mortimer of Rumpole fame). "The first," he writes, "under the heading 'Master Crooks,' is from *Do Butlers Burgle Banks?* The second is in the 'Murderers' section, and it's Plum's classic discussion of the over-elaborate murder schemes that arch villains get into, from *Louder and Funnier*. The third, in the 'Tyrants' chapter, is, of course, about Aunt Agatha."

Barbara Hellering has found another Wodehouse dedication, this one to Wodehouse in Agatha Christie's 1969 *Hallowe'en Party*: "To P. G. Wodehouse, whose books and stories have brightened my life for many years. Also, to show my pleasure in his having been kind enough to tell me that he enjoys *my* books."

Bill Norman, with the help of A P Watt, literary agents of the Wodehouse Estate, has found a British source for videotapes of some of the "Jeeves and Wooster" television series. Video Direct Plus, P. O. Box 190, Peterborough PE2 6UW, England, is offering the following:

Jeeves and Wooster - The Entire First Series
(Two Cassettes), £14.99

Jeeves and Wooster - Vol. 1, £5.99

Jeeves and Wooster - Vol. 2, £5.99

Jeeves and Wooster - Vol. 3, £5.99

Purchasers in the UK can order by phone (0733 232800); from outside the UK the number is 44 733 232800. They accept credit cards.

Dave Rosedahl came across an interesting mention of P. G. Wodehouse and his stories in *The Long Week-End (A Social History of*

Great Britain 1918-1939), by Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, 1940. The book says, somewhat to my surprise, that as late as the Thirties "it had been generally agreed that the short story was good only for desultory holiday reading or for longish railway journeys. The *Strand's* list of contributors changed little from year to year. E. Phillips Oppenheim, P. G. Wodehouse, Dornford Yates, and the rest were names that smelt of the station-platform and restaurant car."

Jim Earl found an amusing early reference to the song "Bill," whose lyrics are usually considered to be among the best of the 400 or so Wodehouse wrote. An English review of "Showboat" in 1928 complained of "the ridiculous 'Bill' song, more suited to Gracie Fields' repertory than to a singer of Marie Burke's ability. Nor is there is any excuse for including such a song." Ha!

Tina Griffin sends a contemporary comment on the new style of musical comedy presented by the team of Bolton, Wodehouse, and Kern in the 1917 *Leave It to Jane*. The *New York American's* reviewer found that "The old timers will soon begin to grieve sorely as they view the new form of rational musical comedy pushing the old style where it belongs. No more are we asked to laugh at the bottle-nosed comedian as he falls downstairs; no longer is the heroine a lovely princess masquerading as the serving maid, and no more is the scene Rurutania or Monte Carlo. Today is rationally American, and the musical show has taken on a new lease of life." See Lee Davis's new book *Bolton & Wodehouse & Kern*, mentioned elsewhere in this issue, for much more on the subject.

I cannot do better than leave you with this bit of news from a Wodehouse column in a 1963 *Punch*, by way of Len Lawson:

One more word before we part. There is a law in Atlanta, Georgia, which makes it a misdemeanor to tie a giraffe to a street light. Our liberties are being gnawed away one by one.



The Oldest Member

New members

Want ads

For sale

Prices include postage within US.

1. **THE WHITE FEATHER**, London: A&C Black, 1914. 2nd issue in same format as very rare 1907 first edition (except no gold on spine and later date on title page). Very good. \$250.
2. **THE PRINCE AND BETTY**, London: Newnes, 1925? An early reprint of the English version never published in book form in US. Very good. \$75.
3. **ANGEL CAKE**, New York: Doubleday, 1952. Rare first edition. Very good minus ex. lib. copy in a complete DJ which is 14" too short for the book. Red on spine has faded. \$55.
4. **THE OLD RELIABLE**, New York: Doubleday, 1951. First edition. Very good plus in a nice DJ which is price clipped and spine faded. \$50.
5. **EGGS, BEANS AND CRUMPETS**, London: Herbert Jenkins, 2nd printing. Fine in fine DJ; slimmer than but otherwise the same as the first edition. \$55.

Wanted

Videotapes of "The World of Wooster" (TV series), "Wodehouse Playhouse" (TV series), "Thank You, Jeeves" (1936 film), "Piccadilly Jim" (1936 film), and "A Damsel in Distress" (1937 film).

Wooster of Yaxley & Wodehouse of Kimberley: Parallel Peerages

by Barry Phelps

Reviewed by
John
Kinnane

A publisher's announcement of this book appeared in a recent issue of *Plum Lines*. Here's a review from *Antiquarian Book Monthly*, June, 1993.

Barry Phelps has written in *Antiquarian Book Monthly* about Saki and, more recently, Terry Pratchett, but to the great world of letters he is recognised more readily as a leading expert on P. G. Wodehouse and all that pertains to him. Indeed, Mr. Phelps's biography P. G. W. (*P. G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth*) was published by Constable last year, and was much praised.

In his latest work Mr. Phelps has investigated the parallels and relationships between the two noble houses of Wooster of Yaxley (in Suffolk) and Wodehouse of Kimberley (in Norfolk), with special emphasis, of course, on the recent scions of those families, Mr. Bertram Wooster and Sir Pelham Wodehouse.

A considerable width of knowledge is necessary for this sort of project, and it is a measure of this author's variety of researches that his other publications are listed as *Endeavour: The Venetian Tramway System 1857 - 1902* and *Haute Cuisine de Lhasa a La Paz*. It is a so far unsubstantiated rumour that he is working on a volume of Trappist sermons.

Anyway, the present volume is a scholarly and imaginative trawl through the (remaining) records, and much pleasure and amusement is to be had from the results of it. It is, for example, little known that the Wooster and Wodehouse families were related by marriage in the distant, and hence Bertram and Sir Pelham are related, however remotely. Many literary and historical connections are examined, abetted in part by accidents of history, not least the happy existence of *lacunae* in the Agincourt Roll.

There is not room here to rehearse the

many connections the author uncovers, but I can safely say that all family friends of Mr. Wooster and Sir Pelham will want a copy of this book, as will collectors of their printed works. And thereby hangs a problem, for the said collectors are many and the copies of this book are few - only 99 (98 - I've got one), and there is a guarantee from the author that there will be no second edition before the next millennium.

There are, I believe, a few left, but those readers who are too late to secure one may like to know that they are printed on fine paper, bound in navy-blue buckram, lettered in gilt, in a semi-opaque dust wrapper, and are, all in all, very agreeable.

Wooster of Yaxley & Wodehouse of Kimberley: Parallel Peerages, by Barry Phelps. 99 signed and numbered copies. £50 (\$95). ISBN 1 870304 063. Irene Editions, Suite 49, 67 Hatton Garden, London EC1N 8JY

A letter to the editor in the same issue of the magazine raised a serious question. The letter, with the editor's title, ran thus:

Beards R Us

What conspiracy is afoot?

The bearded editor of *Antiquarian Book Monthly* has commissioned the bearded Barry Phelps to write on the bearded Terry Pratchett for the leading article in your May issue. And you carry photographs of all three, those of Pratchett and Phelps being as big as any seen in the magazine.

Then you follow Phelps's piece with an article concerned with the 'little red-bearded Captain Kettle.'

Many great authors, Charlotte and Anne Bronte, for example, were unbearded. (I am less certain about Emily.) Please give the hirsutely disadvantaged a fair share of your editorial space.

Cecily Roberts (Mrs.)
Hemel Hempstead

Something new

Bob Elliott reports that two PGW golf stories were reprinted in the magazine *Golf Illustrated* for June, 1993: "The Heart of a Goof" and "Chester Forgets Himself." In the introduction to the stories is this sage comment: "... it is a happy coincidence for those who love to read that three of the wittiest, sharpest, and most insightful writers ever to touch on golf—Bernard Darwin, P. G. Wodehouse, and Henry Longhurst—came out of the British Isles." An interesting woodcut illustration of the three authors is included. I think it's an issue well worth having in your collection.

Marilyn MacGregor found "Death at the Excelsior" in a Signet anthology titled *More Mystery Cats*, \$4.99. The McIlvaine bibliography shows the surprising durability of this obscure short story. It has been published eight times, under three names, in five magazines and three books:

- 1914 "The Education of Detective Oakes," *Pearson's Magazine*, London
- 1915 "The Harmonica Mystery," *All-Story Cavalier Weekly*, New York
- 1955 "The Harmonica Mystery," *The Saint Detective Magazine*, New York
- 1976 "The Harmonica Mystery," *Argosy, for Men*, publication date uncertain
- 1976 "Death at the Excelsior," *The Uncollected Wodehouse*, New York
- 1976 "Death at the Excelsior," *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, New York
- 1982 "Death at the Excelsior," *Ellery Queen's Eyewitnesses* (book), New York
- 1983 "Death at the Excelsior," *Ellery Queen's Anthology*, New York
- 1993 (?) "Death at the Excelsior," *More Mystery Cats*

Why, I hear you asking, did the title waver and flicker like that? The first change is a mystery to me, but David Jasen, editor of *The Uncollected Wodehouse*, says the second change, to "Death at the Excelsior," came about "because of major editing alterations in

the text." So it's not quite the same story our ancestors read in 1914. But it has been in print, off and on, for very nearly eight decades.

The publication history of this minor short story, far from PGW's best work, shows why no Wodehouse bibliographer can ever be sure his work is finished. The McIlvaine bibliography indicates that Plum's work has appeared in no less than 152 magazines, and the list is surely incomplete.

Chelsea Books, of Bethesda, Maryland, has sent its fall catalog containing 393 items "Handpicked for Anglophiles." Ten of those items are by Wodehouse, including several first editions. The catalog also includes "a large number of books by other English humorists and anthologies which contain Wodehouse quotes or analysis of his work." The catalog is \$1 from Chelsea Books, P. O. Box 30532, Bethesda MD 20824.



P. G. Wodehouse Book of Days

Reviewed
by Amanda
Deweese

This book does not need much reviewing, since it is designed so that the owner can fill it in. It does, however, contain a wealth of information, from the trivial to the vital, about the many important dates in Plum's life. It is designed for the browser rather than the serious scholar (there is no index) and provides a generous monthly and day-by-day listing of dated events such as the publication of books, short stories, and articles; openings of plays with lyrics by Plum; and other occasions such as travels, meetings with Important Personages, and the occasional marriage. There is rarely a date without two or more events listed, and on the few days when Heineman reports that Plum "loafed," we can be sure that he was probably hard at work on a new article or story.

The book, like all of James Heineman's productions, is beautifully designed, from the rich Plum-colored half-"pigskin" binding, to the gold-stamped title on the spine (in Latin, yet!), to the purple grosgrain ribbon bookmark, to the deft van Straaten illustrations.

Each month begins with a half-page van Straaten illustration followed by a dozen or so events of that month in Plum's life. Each day has its own page, beginning with the date, a small but regal black pig, a listing of two or so events in Wodehouse's life, and fifteen or so lines for your own dates. Wodehousians will find this a delightful book to give or receive, although they may feel it a desecration to write in such an elegant thing. Whether or not they choose to record the happenings of their own lives beneath those of Plum's, this book contains plenty to keep the Wodehousian absorbed.

Let this review end as Jimmy Heineman's introduction does, with a cry of Carpe Prunum!!

P. G. Wodehouse Book of Days, 408 pages, published by James H. Heineman, Inc., 475 Park Avenue, New York NY 10022, \$16.95.

The Great PGW-Net Quiz

This is an abbreviated version of The Great PGW-Net Quiz, perpetrated by Toni Rudersdorf, Elin Woodger, and possibly others too. The highest score I've seen was David McDonough's 95%. The number of points is given after each question. Answers are on page 14.

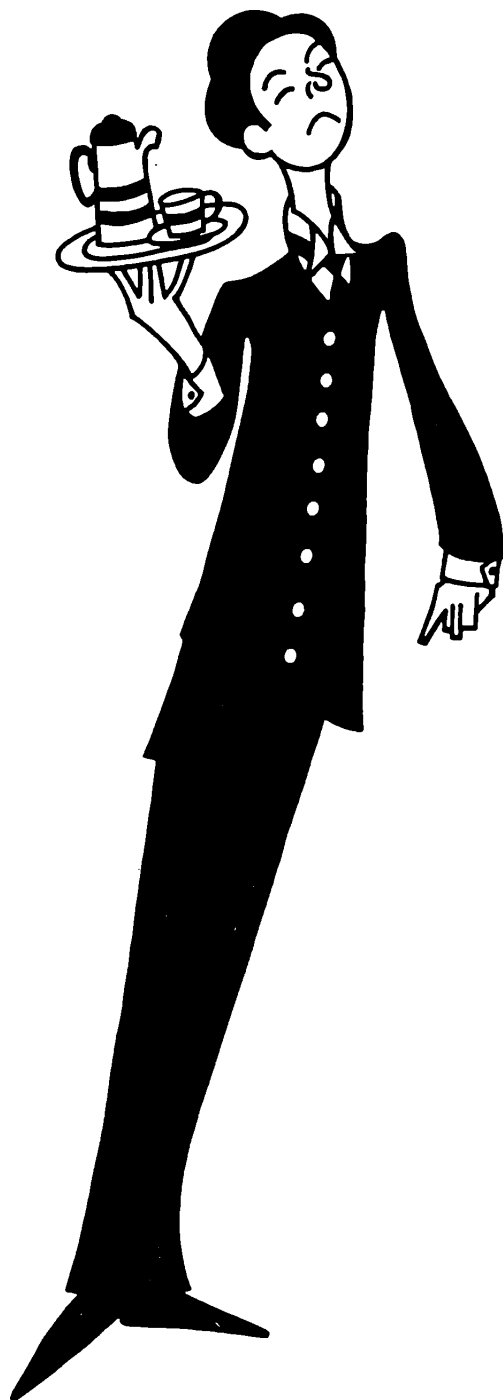
1. What two methods are most prescribed by Jeeves for the removal of shoe polish from one's face? (5)
 2. Name the cat whose disapproving gaze caused Lancelot to shave daily and knock off smoking. (3)
 3. What caused this cat's fall from grace? (2)
 4. Name the alternative title of *The Cat Nappers*. (3)
 5. What is (was) the name of the barmaid at the Criterion? (10)
 6. No two of her customers order the same drink. Name her and the bar at which she worked. (3)
 7. Who was Gally's accomplice in putting the phosphorus-coated pig in Plug Basham's bedroom? (5)
 8. Name obsessions (contest or otherwise) of the dreamy peer, Lord Emsworth. We all know of the Empress; no points for that. (2 for each obsession.)
 9. Who or what is "Eualie Soeurs?" (4)
 10. Who doubled back the rings over the pool? (4)
 11. What is Uncle Tom's middle name? (3)
 12. Who nobbled Towser? (5) With what? (2)
 13. Where did PGW get the name Jeeves? (5)
 14. What is common to C. P. West, P. Brooke-Haven, and Basil Windham? (3)
 15. It is often said, usually critically, that in the world of Wodehouse no one ever dies. While death is rare, "never" is not correct. Name five characters we know of who die between books. (3 for each.)
- Name four characters we know of who die in the course of a book. Two of these characters die in the same book. In two books, an important character is an alcoholic (but does not die). (8 for each character who dies and 5 for each alcoholic.)

Jeeves Takes Charge again

Rhoda Robinson, on a recent visit to South Africa, found that Edward Duke's one-man show, *Jeeves Takes Charge*, was revived there this past summer. Malcolm Terry, the performer, had also presented the show in an award-winning performance in South Africa in 1984, and has wide experience on the stage, television, and radio.

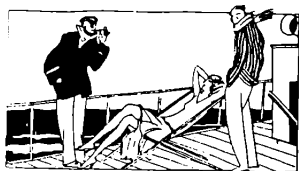
Rhoda saw a performance, enjoyed it, and reports that the revival ran for fourteen weeks at two theaters: the Richard Haines Theatre and Theatre on the Bay in Doornfontein, Johannesburg.

The elongated gentleman just to the right is from the first page of her theater program, which was autographed by Malcolm Terry.



A nautical Jeeves

Robert Mueller brings the happy news that at least one butler survives: Geoffrey Coughtrey, a man of distinctly butlerine aspect and function who serves the penthouse suites aboard the *QE2*. The dignified, white haired Coughtrey wears a dark, conservative uniform of which Jeeves would surely approve. This information comes to us in an item titled "Jeeves at Sea" in *Town & Country* magazine of May, 1993, which notes that "Coughtrey has smoothed the passage for... an assemblage of worldly eccentrics who still make him chuckle. 'Quite apart from the countess whose diamonds had to be washed nightly in gin, there was this delightful lady on the *Queen Mary* who asked us to make a miniature life jacket for her pet pigeon.' Then there was the woman he assisted in 'tossing all her gigolo's clothes overboard' when she discovered the cad courting another.'"



The Wodehouse Society

538 San Lorenzo Avenue
Felton, California 95018

The Wodehouse Society

Several members have suggested that our Wodehouse society needs letterhead stationery. John Hoppe, in particular, has been urging me to do something about a letterhead for longer than I would ever admit.

At my request Doug Stow has designed and printed some sample sheets and envelopes, and a specimen of each is shown above. Doug makes a living (well, part of a living) by designing and printing beautiful letterpress, and has produced a large number of programs and other items for our society over the last ten years.

Doug prints very nearly the way Gutenberg did, setting type with a composing stick and printing each sheet and envelope one at a time on a small, antique, hand-operated press. The photocopy process I use to reproduce *Plum Lines* does not, believe me, begin to show you the quality of the result. His blacks are black, every character is crisp, every line has authority. When I run my fingertips lightly over the printed page I almost feel that it should be done only in private by consenting adults.

He has offered to supply this stationery, with your address imprinted, at the less than commercial rate of \$35 for fifty sheets and envelopes. Without an address the price is \$20 for fifty sheets and envelopes. Sheets are eight and one-half by eleven inches, envelopes four and one-quarter by nine and one-half. The paper is what in my ignorance I can only describe as sort of cream colored, but Doug is an accommodating man and would probably print on puce paper if that's what you want.

On the sheet, the name (The Wodehouse Society) is set in Broadway and the address in Univers Medium. On the envelope the name is in "Broadway" and the address in Univers Light. (I put the second Broadway in quotes because, although the font was sold to Doug as Broadway, it isn't Broadway. Probably Eighth Avenue.) Clearly this stationery is only for the elect, but those few will have stationery so lovely that they won't be able to give it up and will write narcissistic letters to themselves, leaning over a pool while they do so.

For the rest of us, who are part of the Submerged Tenth and still want Wodehouse Society letterheads and envelopes, I have no proposals right now. The commercial sources I know of aren't inexpensive, even for stationery printed in quantity for a Wodehouse chapter. Those of us who have computers, plenty of fonts, and a laser printer can produce things like

The Wodehouse Society
with the flick of a finger, but I believe we are a small minority. Any suggestions?



"Thank you, Joe Kennan"

by Peter
Cannon

In his *Penguin Wodehouse Companion* Richard Osborne states: "A great number of people have tried to parody the 'Bertie Wodehouse' style in print. Rather fewer have tried to imitate it without parody. None has succeeded." Well, I have good news for Mr. Osborne: someone has succeeded. Joe Keenan, billed as a young playwright and lyricist (how promisingly Plum-like), has produced not a parody nor strictly an imitation, but in fact something far better. In two novels, *Blue Heaven* (1988) and *Putting on the Ritz* (1991), as well as in one short story, "Great Lengths" (1990), he has adapted and updated the Bertie-Jeeves formula to his own original and side-splitting ends.

Here, to give you the flavor of Keenan's style, is the opening paragraph of *Blue Heaven*:

Looking back on the whole ghastly affair, what surprises me most is that when news of Gilbert's plan first reached me I felt no sense of foreboding whatsoever. I didn't blanch, I didn't tremble, nor did I rush to a pay phone to call an airline and inquire about low fares to the Canary Islands. My early warning system, usually so reliable where Gilbert was concerned, had completely shut down. I was at a gallery opening you see, and cheap wine does that to you.

The Bertie-like voice belongs to Philip Cavanaugh, a struggling young writer, who is speaking of his old friend (and former lover) Gilbert Selwyn. Gilbert and a female accomplice plan to get married for the wedding presents they figure they can count on receiving from their wealthy families. Gilbert wants Philip to act as his best man. It is left in the end to their mentor and fellow classmate from Our Lady of Perpetual Prayer High School, Claire Simmons, to pull the boys out of the soup, when it develops, among other myriad complications, that the groom's mother's rich new husband is a paid-up member in good standing of the Mafia.

The farcical plot is as filled with twists and turns as unexpected and inventive as any in Wodehouse. *Putting on the Ritz*, the sequel, moves to a higher if no less vulgar plane of New York society, featuring two billionaires

with competing magazines, and including a singing debut by the talentless wife of one of them at the Rainbow Room that for hilarity rivals Gussie Fink-Nottle's performance at the Market Snodsbury Grammar School. Claire must once again exert her extraordinary brain power to extricate Philip and Gilbert from another fine mess.

An ingenious plot is all very well, of course, but the real test for anyone laying claim to the Master's mantle is in the language. In the simile and metaphor department, I'm pleased to report, Keenan does not let his public down. Here is a sample from *Blue Heaven*: "He didn't take it well. He fluttered and twitched. He also cowered, goggled, and gasped and, at one point, simply sat in a chair and vibrated. It was like watching Marcel Marceau mime an entire day at Disney World."

In his portrait of present-day New York society, Keenan is more strictly satirical than Wodehouse ever was (the two billionaires in *Ritz* resemble Donald Trump and Malcolm Forbes), yet he is never mean-spirited. And for all the four-letter words, Cavanaugh's world is scarcely less innocent than Wooster's. The homosexual main characters never fear gay-bashing or AIDS, since these unpleasant realities would seem simply not to exist. As for those readers who may cock an eyebrow at "deviance," rest assured Keenan keeps it clean—at least by the standards of today's liberal urban sophisticate. Like George MacDonald Fraser's Flashman, Philip isn't shy in remarking on the sex lives of himself and others, but he rarely peeps behind the bedroom door and even then stops short of outright indecency.

Collectors who want to get in on the ground floor should note that *Blue Heaven* was published as a trade paperback original. *Putting on the Ritz* appeared in hardcover, and subsequently in trade paper. These two volumes are all the more appealing for their exceptional cover art by Daniel Torres, whose illustrations nicely capture the texts' gay (in the old-fashioned sense of the word) spirit.

A final note: If the parallels between the two authors aren't already obvious, Keenan pays homage to the Master when in *Blue Heaven* he has Gilbert give Philip "a first edition of a Wodehouse novel" for Christmas. Wodehousians could do themselves no less a favor by giving each other a Keenan novel for Christmas.

Goodbye to "Jeeves and Wooster"

The "Jeeves and Wooster" television series is no more, and I cannot mourn its passing. Several members have sent me their reactions to the latest series and they were almost unanimously negative. Here are excerpts from Peter Schwed's letter:

A portion of your column in the Autumn 1993 issue of *Plum Lines* inspires me to put in my two cents worth. I guess, as Plum's one and only editor for the final quarter of a century of his life, I'm entitled.

I refer to the review you quote from the *Mail*, praising the television series performed by Hugh Laurie and Stephen Fry . . . Now I'm always delighted to see anything occur which perpetuates and glorifies the name and works of P. G. Wodehouse, but at least in my humble opinion the series is no better than fair. Of course there are gems in it: how could there fail to be when the series has been adapted from the works of PGW? However I'm sad that this important TV exposure to innocents in this country took this form, particularly when something exists that is infinitely better.

What is wrong with the Laurie/Fry stuff? Well, for one thing, the performers are. Laurie and Fry are excellent British comics, and they continue to be in the series, but they are Laurie and Fry, not Jeeves and Wooster. I'm exaggerating, but it's almost as if Laurel and Hardy had been assigned the roles. But more important than that, no matter how good his novels are, it is in the short stories that Plum's genius reached its heights. At least that's my unalterable opinion.

I wrote that there is something infinitely better, and it is in fact superb. This is the series titled "Wodehouse Playhouse," which relies on the great Mulliner and golf short stories, and only lasts half an hour, which is perfect for sustaining such humor. Equally perfect is its star, John Alderton, who truly and riotously conveys the true essence of a whole series of Mulliners. . . . The fact is that everybody in "Wodehouse Playhouse" is superb. Wodehouse as it should be!

John Hanna, emoting pretty freely, asks:

Am I the only member of TWS who thinks that the latest Fry/Laurie series is appalling? The first installment was so frenetic, and the characters so overdrawn, that I couldn't bear to sit through it. I

turned on another episode the other night . . . and was treated to Jeeves in drag. I'm absolutely certain that Wodehouse never presented Jeeves or Bertie as female impersonators.

To make matters worse, Russell Baker's commentary [he introduces the series on American TV] gave the impression that this was typical Wodehouse stuff. . . One wonders whether he has read Wodehouse.

I want Plum's genius to be kept alive. But this series is a travesty. . .

Bob Elliott, fulminating only slightly, writes:

I am writing (and the dudgeon is high) to protest the treatment of the Master's works in the current "Jeeves and Wooster" series. . . I am aware that some liberties must be taken in adapting PGW's stories to a television series. However, I feel that care should be taken to keep the finished product in the same vein and mood as he intended.

Getting the boys into complications that they can't get themselves out of. . . is completely outside of anything Wodehouse have written (or have been guilty of).

This is all complicated by Russell Baker finding it necessary to . . . explain Wodehouse's eccentricities . . . and apologizing . . . for the British tendency toward dressing in drag. Does he think Milton Berle was English?

The sad part in all this is that the general public, who by and large do not know Wodehouse, are led to believe this to be the way he wrote. As I understand it, these are supposed to be the last of the series, and it can't happen any too soon.

Ann Whipple, in a letter addressed to Russell Baker, principally criticizes the cross-dressing and notes that

Wodehouse upholds Jeeves's dignity throughout, with the merest hints of amusements or romantic entanglements; Jeeves is the fountainhead for correctness and good taste. However easily we—and the British theatre-goer—may accept transvestism, Wodehouse's Jeeves simply would not. The question never arises.

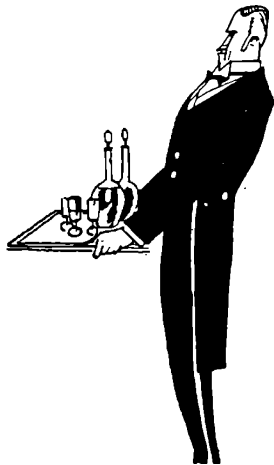
My own reaction to the series has been, until recently, that some Wodehouse is better than no Wodehouse, but I can't feel so tolerant of this last set of stories. My objection is simple: the stories seriously misrepresent Wodehouse. It would have made a good enough stand-alone series, but it shouldn't be blamed on The Master.

The world of Bertie and Jeeves was the *real* world, the everyday, commonplace world—tilted just a little. Clive Exton, who adapted the stories for television, does not understand just how small that tilt was, and Russell Baker, who introduces the stories on American television, seems hardly to have read Wodehouse at all.

An example of the excess tilt is Jeeves's transvestism. Jeeves would never have cross-dressed. It was beneath his dignity; it was not in good taste. In making Jeeves behave as he did Exton betrayed his misunderstanding of the character created by Wodehouse and presented to us a quite different character.

So much for improbabilities of the script. I will not even consider other matters of script quality, lest I self-combust.

We are fortunate that this series is the last. The next would have presented Bertie zooming through distant galaxies in the Starship *Enterprise* with Jeeves at the controls.



Newt news

Marilyn MacGregor, our far-flung newt correspondent, brings us the latest newt news from the San Francisco Bay Area, clearly a hotbed of newt culture. Last year, you remember, she reported that a regional park in Berkeley had closed a major road for months to encourage newt love. Well, they've done it again this year, proving that there's something about a newt that inspires loyalty in more than Gussie Fink-Nottle. And now it's Stanford's turn. The following excerpts are from a story in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 5, 1993.

If some biology students get their way, Stanford University may have a six-inch-long California tiger salamander for its school mascot. Stanford is already home to the largest number of California tiger salamanders in the Bay Area, and a student campaign has begun to save the creature from extinction.

"If the University of California at Santa Cruz can have the banana slug as its mascot, we could have the salamander," said Duncan Elkins, a senior.

Concern over the salamanders led Stanford to cancel this year's Big Game bonfire and a mud volleyball tournament.

The next crisis for the salamander will be its annual migration from the foothills where it lives during the dry months into Lake Lagunita as the lake fills with water from the first rains. Cars traveling on Junipero Serra Boulevard all too often mash the slow-moving creatures before they can reach the lake. A rescue operation is being organized . . . and students and residents are being sought to herd the salamanders safely into the lake.

Things are tough all over for newts. William Hardwick reports that a breeding colony of great crested newts living in a Gloucestershire pond were threatened recently by an industrial park. Local councilors, newt-aware, have so far blocked construction, and we are duly grateful.

Quiz answers

These are the answers to the abbreviated Great PGW-Net Quiz on page 8.

1. Butter, petrol
2. Webster
3. Lapping up some spilled liquor
4. *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*
5. Two barmaids at the Criterion were named Maudie:
(a) Maudie Beach Stubbs, who eventually married Sir Gregory Parsloe. Galahad knew her as Maudie Montrose at the Criterion.
(b) Maudie Wilberforce, who was Uncle George Wooster's barmaid.
6. Miss Postlethwaite at the Anglers Rest
7. Puffy Bengier
8. Punpkins; flowers, especially roses; maintaining the mossy floor of the yew alley; income taxes, etc.
9. The name of Roderick Spode's ladies underclothing company.
10. Tuppy Glossup
11. Portarlinton
12. Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, with steak and onions.
13. Reginald Jeeves, a Gloucestershire cricketer.
14. Pseudonyms of PGW
15. Characters who die between books: Psmith's father dies between *Psmith in the City* and *Leave It to Psmith*; Elmer Ford dies between *The Little Nugget* and *Piccadilly Jim*; Bertie's Uncle Willoughby dies sometime after the action in "Jeeves Takes Charge;" Joe Keeble leaves Connie a widow sometime after *Leave It to Psmith*; Bingo Little's Uncle Wilberforce has died by the time of "Jeeves and the Old School Chum."

Characters who die in the course of a book: Hank Jardine and John Bannister die in *The Coming of Bill*; Eustace the monkey is shot and killed in *Uneasy Money*; and Charles Cornelius falls out of his aeroplane in *The Ice in the Bedroom*, leaving his fortune to his brother, Percy Cornelius.

Alcoholics: Robert Dwight Penway, artist and illustrator in *The Coming of Bill*, and Claude Nutcombe "Nutty" in *Uneasy Money*.

A horse named Fink-Nottle

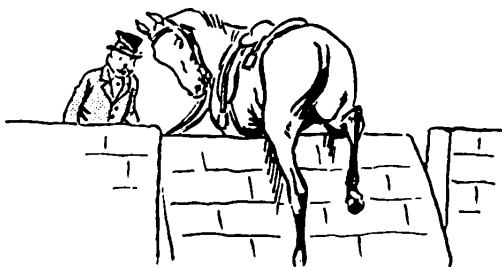
William Hardwick gladdens our heart with the news that the English turf has two more Wodehousian horses. With Jim Earl's Bertie Wooster and Winsome Wooster they make a total of four.

The last time I wrote I mentioned that I had discovered a horse called Gussie Fink-Nottle. I have been keeping half an eye on the racing pages of the newspaper and I enclose a cutting from [the *Daily Telegraph*?] of Tuesday June 15, showing the race card for Thirsk In one glorious race, the 3:15, there are two horses which catch the eye, the aforementioned Gussie and a new one, Plum First. I also include the result; sadly our horses came second and third.

On Saturday, June 12th, Winsome Wooster won at Sandown by a short head, a 6-5 favourite, which as far as I can see is her only success this year.

I'm sure all these horses are like Prince Hal, hiding their talents until they "may be more wond' red at." Just you wait!

Thirsk is a sportier town than you may think. Thomas Lord, of Lord's cricket ground, was born there in 1755.



New Philly chapter?

Daniel and Susan Cohen send this clarion call to fellow Wodehousians not too far from Philadelphia:

Dear Fans of P. G. Wodehouse:

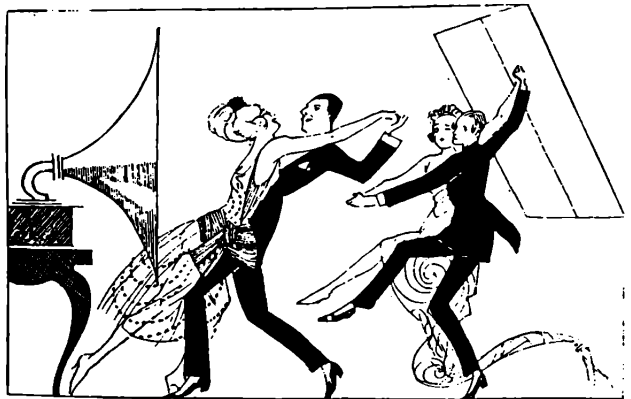
Like you we are members of the Wodehouse Society. After attending the goofy and wonderful Wodehouse Society convention in San Francisco last summer we decided we didn't want to wait until the next convention to make total fools of ourselves.

So we looked at a membership list and a map and decided there are enough of us in the general Philadelphia area to form a Wodehouse chapter of our own, one open to anyone who appreciates Plum.

We've come up with a possible name, The Junior Ganymede Club, and a motto: "In Jeeves We Trust." If you would like to meet in the city periodically for some browsing, sluicing, and droning, and to honor Plum and all his works, call us, write, or even fax us at the numbers below.

We have no hard and fast plans. We need ideas and suggestions. If there is enough interest the City of Brotherly L. will have a Wodehouse chapter of its own before you can say, "What Ho!"

An excellent idea! Drop this newsletter and write, phone, and fax at once! A typical Wodehouse chapter meeting is shown at right.



The way it should be

Bob Elliott, Jon Lellenberg, and Ann Whipple found a laudatory reference to Plum in a review of the film "The Remains of the Day" in a recent *New Yorker*. It seems that the filmmakers, like almost everyone else who is compared to Wodehouse, should have done it his way. (We've always known that!)

The reviewer confesses to having "an unfortunate and incurable problem with regard to this tale: having been drenched in P. G. Wodehouse from an early age, I find it impossible to take the master-slave relationship entirely seriously. It can't just sit there and stagnate, but needs to be enlivened by subtle transactions of power. Even Hegel knew that, and he never got to read Wodehouse, although you can't help wishing he had. How could any decent butler follow his leader to the bitter end, allowing him to be reviled as an appeaser, when Jeeves—a mere valet by comparison—won't even let Bertie pick his own spats?"

It isn't just the "subtle transactions of power" that the reviewer admires, its also the brevity: "The scene in which . . . a former butler proclaims his ideal of dignified service . . . is stretched beyond all endurance; he's telling a joke, of sorts, but Wodehouse would have made the same point in half a paragraph."

Bolton & Wodehouse & Kern *The Reminiscences of the Hon. Galahad Threepwood*

I'm delighted to tell you about two important new books related to Wodehouse. The titles are shown above. I cannot reproduce the title *Bolton & Wodehouse & Kern* accurately, because its ampersands are actually treble clefs. A large part of the publisher's announcement follows.

The modern American Musical Theatre did *not* begin on March 31, 1943, with the opening of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*, according to theatre historian Lee Davis in his new book, *Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern: The Men Who Made Musical Comedy*. It occurred 28 years earlier, with the opening, at the tiny Princess Theatre at Sixth Avenue and 38th Street, of the Jerome Kern-Guy Bolton musical *Nobody Home*. Richard Rodgers himself admitted in his autobiography that, when he sat through the second Princess musical, *Very Good Eddie*, six times, he ". . . was watching and listening to the beginning of a new form of musical theatre in the country." "Somehow," he continued, "I knew it and wanted desperately to be a part of it."

It was the triumvirate of Guy Bolton, P. G. Wodehouse, and Jerome Kern who severed the American Musical Comedy from European Operetta and saw it through its youth and adolescence. And that merry journey is the subject matter of *Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern*.

Other show business shibboleths are challenged in the book, too. Among them:

1. *Anything Goes*, originally written by Bolton and Wodehouse with Cole Porter, was, according to accepted legend, rewritten by Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse because of the similarity between the plot and the Morro Castle disaster. [The Morro Castle was a ship that burned at sea with great loss of life.—OM] Not so, says Mr. Davis, and proves it with excerpts from the original script—which was a Hollywood satire—and heretofore unpublished letters.

2. P. G. Wodehouse's books were banned, and Wodehouse himself refrained from returning to England after the notorious [sic]

Norman Murphy's long-awaited book has either just been published or is just about to be. All I know about it now is that it's published by John Fletcher's Porpoise Books, 68 Altwood Road, Maidenhead SL6 4PZ, England, the price is £12.99, it has 263 pages with a bibliography and index, and it offers a prize: "A prize of a bottle of wine will be given to any reader who can fully separate fact from fiction. This offer closes on June 1, 1994." *Nobody* is going to win that bottle.

More on both these books in the next issue.

Wodehouse short wave broadcasts beamed by Nazi Germany to the world [in World War Two].

3. Guy Bolton, the most prolific and popular librettist on Broadway in the Twenties, is finally given his proper place in theatrical history. And the escapades of this most colorful member of the trio provide intimate glimpses into the world of Broadway.

Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern is certain to become one of the most important and valuable historical works ever to be written about the American musical theatre. But more than this: it's also a high spirited and vigorous recreation of the lives and times of three of Broadway and Hollywood's most important and fascinating men.

Bolton & Wodehouse & Kern, by Lee Davis, 480 pages, 16 pages of illustrations, with bibliography, notes, and index. Published by James H. Heineman, New York NY 10022. Distributed by Bookworld Services, Inc., 1933 Whitfield Loop, Sarasota FL 34243, phone (800) 444-2524. \$29.95

Jan Kaufman tells me the book is beautifully designed and produced, like all of Jimmy Heineman's. Lee Davis spoke at our 1991 New York convention.

Right Ho, Jeeves on Chicago stage

Good news! A stage production of the novel *Right Ho, Jeeves* opened in Chicago earlier this month. Here are excerpts from the press release.

In the holiday season of goodwill and cheer City Lit Theater offers P. G. Wodehouse's classic farce, *Right Ho, Jeeves*, as hilarious fare for Chicago audiences. *Right Ho, Jeeves* opens December 3rd at the Chicago Cultural Center's Studio Theatre, 77 E. Randolph, in downtown Chicago. Adapted by Mark Richard, *Right Ho, Jeeves* is the second novel in Wodehouse's well-loved Bertie and Jeeves series.

Regular performances are Thursdays and Fridays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 3 and 7 p.m., and Sundays at 3 p.m., December 3rd through January 15th. Tickets are \$15.00.

Special holiday performances are scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday, December 21st and 22nd; there will be no performances on Friday and Saturday, December 24 and 25, or on Friday, December 31st, New Year's Eve.

A charming English tea will be offered on Saturdays and Sundays at 2 p.m., before the matinee performance. The English tea includes savory finger sandwiches, scones with whipped cream and preserves, chocolate, lemon, and almond biscuits, and a selection of fine teas. Tickets for tea and show will be \$26.00.

Discounts for groups, students, and seniors. For reservations and information call (312) 271-1100.

Mary Hatch, Managing Director, says that City Lit Theater has been adapting literature for the stage for fourteen years. Its previous presentations of Wodehouse's work were a series of Sunday matinee readings in 1986, so popular it led to an encore series, and its 1987 *Leave It to Psmith*. "City Lit's style is uniquely faithful to the text," she says. "I'm sure loyal Wodehouse fans will be very pleased with this show." Maybe we should send Clive Exton around to see it.

December 3 - January 15



presented by

CITY LIT THEATER

AT THE CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER
Tickets \$15, discounts available for groups,
students and seniors

**For a special treat, indulge yourself with
our charming pre-performance tea.**

For more information and reservations, call:
CITY LIT THEATER 312-271-1100

They had gone on to the opening performance at the Flaming Youth Group Centre of one of those avant-garde plays which bring the scent of boiling cabbage across the footlights and in which the little man in the bowler hat turns out to be God.

Service with a Smile, 1962

Proper sentencing

by Richard
Brain

Leonard Frey found, in a recent *Times Literary Supplement*, a review of what looks like a most useful book on grammar and style. (Of course it's not needed by people like I.) Wodehouse is mentioned only briefly in the review, but the book itself seems worthy of our attention. Its author, Michael Dummett, was Reader in the Philosophy of Mathematics and then Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford. Excerpts from Richard Brain's review follow.

Professor Dummett has unfurled his banner in a crusade that should concern all users of the English language: against the infidels of illiteracy, and in an attempt to recover the holy places of correct English expression and usage as they were understood and taught fifty years or so ago; not quite Victorian values, but definitely Georgian ones.

The author... expects his readers already to be familiar with grammatical or linguistic words like "preposition," "vowel," "transitive" and "verb." His first two chapters, "Parts of Speech" and "Some Grammatical Principles," assume a great deal of this prior acquaintance with terminology, as they make all manner of valid points on topics ranging from Articles, through Conjunctions and Interjections, to Participles and Gerunds—what proportion of the English-speaking population has even heard of some of these terms these days? Dummett's expectation here may well be a lost cause; but every point he makes (and details clearly with examples) is absolutely correct, firmly and stylishly put.

Those with no taste for firm and stylish correction should not pay money for this book. Professor its author is (if now Emeritus), and he teaches magisterially. Of participles and gerunds, for example, both ending in -ing, he writes:

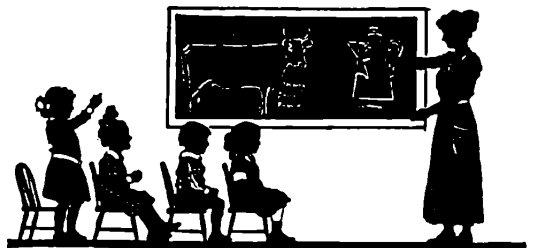
To ignore the grammatical difference between them is therefore to cause, or to invite, confusion. To decide which is which, one needs to think exactly what one means, but this is no bad thing: everyone should cultivate the habit, when writing, of always thinking whether what he has written says just what he intended to say.

Sometimes the instruction shows a schoolmasterly sarcasm: after he has cited "The Natural Cure to Baldness" and (from an Oxford University publication) "Notes of Guidance," the comment by Dummett is almost worthy of A. E. Housman: "Those who use the wrong preposition risk being complimented on how well they speak English."

His little book is a model of logical arrangement, moving on from parts of speech and grammar to "Some Stylistic Maxims," "Punctuation," "Vocabulary," "Spelling" and "Ideological and Other Usages" in a descending order of importance. There are both helpful cross-references throughout... and an accurate and essential index.

Michael Dummett has an admirable, and just, page-and-a-half on the value of an education in Latin; in the absence of that, and saturation in the works of P. G. Wodehouse "with attention to his use of language," his own *Grammar and Style* should be bought in gross by all offices and organizations in Britain, at least, if not in the English-speaking world, and imposed on all their employees who still have to communicate in written words... It is not a lost cause.

Grammar and Style: For examination candidates and others. 128pp. Duckworth (UK). Paperback. £8.95. ISBN 0715624229



Christmas in New York

by P. G.
Wode-
house

Len Lawson provides this Wodehouse tribute to department-store Santas. It's from *Punch*, December 23, 1953.

When I yielded to popular clamour and consented to write an article on Christmas in New York it was, I must confess, with the feeling that it would consist of the words "Christmas in New York is much about the same as Christmas anywhere else," which would, of course, have made the thing run a bit short. But now that my staff of researchers have rolled up with their material I begin to see that there are certain features of the festive season in these parts which distinguish it from the f. s. in—say—Ashton-under-Lyme or such places as Little-Wigmarsh-in-the-Dell and Higgleford-cum-Whortleberry-beneath-the-Hill. One of these is the high pressure advertising of the department stores, which at this time of year take off the wraps and really let themselves go.

I don't want to do anyone an injustice, but the thought has sometimes crossed my mind that some of these department stores are trying to make money out of Christmas. I asked Mr. Macy and Mr. Gimbel and one or two other fellows about this, and they were horrified at the suggestion. "Absurd," said Mr. Macy. "Good heavens, no, dear old chap," said Mr. Gimbel. But I still have my doubts. I cannot help thinking that to certain persons in New York—I name no names—Christmas is not just a season of homely good will but an opportunity to gouge the citizenry out of what little savings it has managed to accumulate in the past year.

And the silly thing is that their efforts are wasted unless they happen to sell ties or scarves. New York at Christmas becomes a seething maelstrom of people buying each other scarves and ties. The man in the street reads an advertisement like

Men!!!

Have you bought her her Christmas present yet?

She is expecting something good, remember.

Why not get her a

WILBERFORCE-KRAMER SELF-COMPENSATING
CONCRETE MIXER

and watch her face light up?

and it leaves him unconvinced. "What shall we give Mabel?" says Mrs. John Doe. "A scarf," says Mr. John Doe. "And George?" "A tie," says Mrs. John Doe. While over at George and Mabel's it is being decided that what John and Mrs. Doe draw respectively are a nice tie and one of those nice scarves. Unless, of course, both parties come to the conclusion that what will really be appreciated is a jolly Christmas card showing two cats playing the banjo in the snow.

Just at the moment there is something of a crisis in this matter of Christmas cards, due to the activities of the extremists. For some reason these last few years the normal-sized card has lost favour with the addicts, who have been going in either for things the size of the *New York Times* or minute objects about the dimensions of a postage stamp, these last being considered cute. And the Post Office authorities have now exploded a bombshell by announcing that anything in an unsealed envelope measuring less than four inches by two and three-quarter inches will require three cents postage instead of the customary two cents. It has caused consternation in a million homes of those who believe in being cute at Christmas.

Christmas in New York brings out the Santa Clauses like flies. Go into any store, and there is a Santa Claus sitting in a chair with children crawling all over him. "Our humble heroes!" are the words that spring to my lips as I see them, for these stores are always warmly central-heated, and you cannot be a Santa Claus without covering your face with beard and whiskers and padding yourself liberally about the middle. At the end of a business day these devoted men must feel like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and also probably not unlike King Herod, a Biblical character of whose forthright methods I have heard several of them speak with admiration.

I interviewed one of them the other day in a drug store whither he had gone in his brief time off to refresh himself with a small wassail bowl.

"Don't you ever falter?" I asked.

He gave me a look.

"A Santa Claus who faltered," he replied stiffly, "would receive short shrift from the rest of the boys. Before you could say 'Saks Fifth Avenue' he would find himself in a hollow square of his fellows, being formally stripped of his beard and stomach padding. We are a proud guild, we Santa Clauses, and we brook no weaknesses. Besides," he went on, "though the life of a department Santa Claus is admittedly fraught with peril, he can console himself with the reflection that he is by no means so badly off as the shock troops of his profession. Take the case of a Santa Claus in whose whiskers a child deposits his semi-liquefied chewing gum."

"Not pleasant," I said.

"Far from pleasant," he agreed. "A man who has had to comb chewing-gum—or for the matter of that almond chocolate—out of the undergrowth at the close of the working day becomes a grave, deeper man. He has seen life. But do we quail?"

"Don't you quail?"

"No, sir, we do not quail. We say to ourselves that this is nothing compared to what a man like, for instance, Butch Oberholtzer has to go through. Butch is the Santa Claus attached to a prominent monthly magazine, and it is his task to circulate among the advertisers during Christmas

week and give them a hearty greeting from his employers. Well, you know what sort of condition the average advertiser is in during Christmas week. A surfeit of office parties has left him a nervous wreck. Let so much as a small fly stamp its feet suddenly on the ceiling and he leaps like a jumping bean. You can picture his emotions, then, when as he sits quivering in his chair a Santa Claus steals up behind him, slaps him on the back and shouts 'Merry Christmas, old boy, merry Christmas!' On several occasions Butch has escaped with his life by the merest hair's breadth. I wonder if his luck can last."

"Let us hope so," I said soberly.

He shrugged his shoulders

"Ah, well, he said, "if the worst happens, it will be just one more grave among the hills, and he will have done his duty." He finished his wassail bowl and rose. "Ho, hum," he said. "Back to the old grind."

I have little more to add. Oh, yes, the Yule log. The ceremony of bringing in the Yule log is one that—for reasons of space—has almost completely fallen into desuetude in New York, if desuetude is the word I want. Some lovers of the old customs still, I believe, bring in the Yule wooden toothpick, but even that is not generally done. You know what these modern apartments are like. You need every inch.

Rebus

by Francine Kitts

