



# Plum Lines

VOL. 15 NO 1

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY SPRING 1994

## Dedication of Wodehouse plaque

by Frits Menschaar

On May 1 the Wodehouse Society will dedicate a plaque in The Little Church Around the Corner in New York City, commemorating the marriage there of Plum and Ethel Wodehouse on September 30, 1914. Frits Menschaar tells us how he and others went about the preliminaries.

FLORENCE Cunningham first proposed the plaque, and without her efforts it would not exist. The day after the 1991 Wodehouse Society Convention in New York City, Florence visited several sites connected with Wodehouse, including The Little Church Around the Corner. It struck her that there were quite a number of memorial plaques in the sanctuary of the church. Why not a Wodehouse plaque? Back home she wrote a letter to the church proposing just that.

The reply from the Church Rector, Father Norman J. Catir, pointed out that all permanent memorials had to be approved by the Vestry of the Church. In coming to a decision, the Vestry used the following three criteria:

1. the historic importance of the person to be memorialized,
2. his or her connection with the church, and
3. the amount of benefaction attached to the memorial.

Should these criteria be met, the Vestry would need a detailed description of the memorial with art work and text. Having done this preliminary work, Florence turned the matter over to then President Len Lawson.

Len asked me, as a New York City resident, to look into this and get an idea of feasibility and cost, including my assessment of what order of magnitude benefaction to offer with a proposal. I came up with a list of suitable locations for the plaque and recommended that we offer a benefaction of \$1200 as a part of the proposal.

The project was discussed at the 1993 San Francisco Convention and the majority opinion was to proceed along the lines I had proposed. John Graham, who lives near New York City, volunteered to join me in implementing the project.

We made a close inspection of the locations still available in the church sanctuary and selected what we deemed to be the most desirable place. It is in the middle of a side wall at eye level. To be compatible with an adjacent plaque, our plaque needed to a bronze casting 23 1/2 inches wide by 12 1/2 inches high.

Bids were invited from six suppliers. Murray Rackoff, Inc. Award Center offered

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the best terms at \$426 exclusive of installation.

Meanwhile, John and I went on work on what text to use. Florence had already suggested an eminently suitable quotation from the last chapter of *Uneasy Money*. Edward Cazalet, Len Lawson, Norman and Charlotte Murphy, Barry Phelps, and Toni Rudersdorf were amongst others who contributed to the selection of the text and plaque design. With text and design complete after three revisions, an official proposal was submitted on December 12.

Father Catir advised in his December 15 letter that the Vestry, "at its December 15 meeting had voted to accept the plaque in memory of P. G. Wodehouse to be placed on the north wall of the Church. They also wish to thank The Wodehouse Society for their gift of \$1200 to the Church."

It was decided to hold the plaque dedication ceremony on Sunday, May 1st, immediately following the church service, which itself will honor Wodehouse. The Church has invited all TWS members to attend both Service and Ceremony. Service will start at 11:00 A.M. and, depending on the length of the sermon (we understand a descendant of Steggle may be opening a book on this), the ceremony will start around 12:15 P.M. The Church is, not surprisingly, where Wodehouse tells us it is: the address is 1 East 29th Street. As we hope that a good many members will head for New York for the occasion, a TWS party is being planned for the evening of Saturday, April 30. [See details below.]

The design of the plaque is shown on the opposite page, much reduced in size.

We hear that TWSers will attend from Boston and from Washington D.C., along with Florence Cunningham and others from the Seattle area, President Toni Rudersdorf from Houston, and Vice President Elliot Milstein from Michigan—and, we hope, many other people from many other places.

Toni Rudersdorf provides the following last-minute news on events planned for the weekend of May 1 in New York City.

- Saturday, 10:00 A.M. A pilgrimage from

New York City to Remsenburg to visit the graves of Plum and Ethel.

- Sunday, 9:00 A.M. Breakfast at a restaurant near the church, within walking distance if possible.
  - Sunday, 11:00 A.M. Service at The Little Church Around the Corner.
  - Sunday, 12:15 P.M. approximately. Dedication of the plaque, followed by tea. Toni has invited Florence Cunningham to make a brief welcoming speech at the dedication, and Toni, as president of the Society, will make the dedication. The church has kindly invited those who attend the dedication to stay for tea afterward.
- For more information, and to let Toni Rudersdorf know whether you will go to Remsenburg, etc., call her at (713) 522 6220.

Information and new memberships  
Marilyn MacGregor

Dues payments and address changes  
Tom Wainwright

Contributions to *Plum Lines*  
Ed Ratcliffe, OM

Dues are \$15 per year.

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P. G. WODEHOUSE, 1881-1975, AUTHOR

married Ethel Rowley in 1914 in this church:

"...the only church that anybody could possibly be married at. It's on Twenty-ninth Street, just around the corner from Fifth Avenue. It's got a fountain playing in front of it, and it's a little bit of Heaven dumped right down in the middle of New York."

In loving memory,

THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY

# Edward Duke

THE English actor Edward Duke died in London on Saturday, January 8, 1994 at the age of forty.

Edward Duke attended a Jesuit school in Lancashire and the American High School in Tokyo, where his father was cultural attaché. He returned to London to study drama, had repertory seasons in the provinces, and made his first West End appearance at the age of twenty. He also appeared on television and in films, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* among others.

He is surely best known among Wodehouse fans for his one-man stage presentation *Jeeves Takes Charge*, in which he played something like thirteen parts, all of them flawlessly. Many of us saw the show, some of us several times. He first presented the show in Hammersmith, then in two West End theaters, where in 1980 his performance won him an Olivier Award for Most Promising Newcomer. He spent some years touring the United States with the show, and took it as far as Australia. His article, "Wodehouse in Performance," in the commemorative volume *P. G. Wodehouse: A Centenary Celebration 1881-1981*, describes in detail just how he developed the show and reveals how much thought and planning went into its preparation. A number of us in the Society attended his first San Francisco presentation together and sat in the second row, scrutinizing his work minutely, ready to cavil and carp at any error, and came away enthusiastic Duke fans. He very kindly met with us afterwards to discuss the show and answer our questions.

The drama critic of the *San Francisco Chronicle* had this to say about Edward Duke and his play:

It was a remarkable sound, on-stage and off, a honking, half-snorting laugh that was part donkey bray, part ratcheting motor car and purely, irresistibly human. The many San Francisco fans of Edward Duke won't soon forget it.

Duke made almost everyone who saw or met him smile. Audiences, socialites and waiters adored him, and so, in spite of themselves, did his theatrical colleagues he had a way of driving crazy. He arrived here in 1985. The show which he created, promoted

and oversaw with intolerance for a stagehand's slightest failing, was a minor masterpiece of satirized manners. It played San Francisco four times, most recently in 1992.

Producer Charles Duggan remembers Duke as a friend and a "character" who could "be the life and soul of any gathering and also be very, very difficult to work with. But for all that, he was one of the joys of my life in the theater."

Duke's mania for precision extended to his wishes for the dispersal of his cremated remains. He asked that half be scattered over his parents' graves in England and half returned to his adoptive home here. Half of the California half are to be scattered at Inverness [a small town near San Francisco] and half in the bay.

Frits Menschaar expressed what many of us feel: "I think his *Jeeves Takes Charge* the absolute best of all Wodehouse presentations on stage or screen. I also feel that, had old Master Wodehouse himself been able to see it, he would have hurried around to the stage door instanter to praise the actor. Edward undoubtedly served Wodehouse well."

Note: I want to thank John Hoppe, Jan Kaufman, Frits Menschaar, and Rhoda Robinson, who contributed to this obituary.

## New Houston group

TONI Rudersdorf, our fearless leader, informs me that the Houston chapter of the Wodehouse Society held its first meeting at the River Oaks Bookstore in Houston on Friday evening, March 11. Toni had posted announcements in many bookstores around Houston and at Rice University, and was rewarded with a turnout of about two dozen people. She reports that a good time was had by all and the group discussed proposals for future activities.

# A Plum celebration in 1995

by Elin  
Woodger

NINETEEN ninety five may come to be known in Wodehousian circles as a Year of Plum. This is because TWS President Toni Rudersdorf and Vice President Elliott Milstein, aided and abetted by a gaggle of enthusiastic NEWTS, have begun preparations for the convening of the Eighth International Convention of the Wodehouse Society. So get out your calendars now and mark these important details in indelible ink: October 20-22, 1995, at the beautiful Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts.

Wodehousians the world over murmur musingly among themselves: "Oh, ah. A convention. Capital, capital. But what will make this one any different from the rest?"

"Ah," we reply, "you may well ask!" For with a respectful nod to past great conventions, Toni, Elliott, and the NEWTS have promised that this will be the most fun-filled action-packed convention yet!

"Details!" you are quick to respond, "Give us details." And so we shall, in this and future issues of *Plum Lines*, right up to the time of the convention. To tickle your fancy, we offer the following tantalizing highlights from our work-in-progress:

- (1) A theme of "Plum in 1895," focusing on Wodehouse in his early years;
- (2) an expanded, two-day program of talks and activities, encompassing both the scholarly and the light-hearted sides of our devotion to Plum, and guaranteeing something for everybody; and
- (3) among other activities, a visit to the Head of the Charles Regatta, offering us the opportunity to stage our very own Boat Race Night.

And that's just for starters! Interested? And well you should be, for this convention will be an experience not to be missed. Our only caveat: Boston in October is an extremely popular and therefore busy place. Thus, early hotel reservations will be encouraged, if not downright necessary. To that end, beginning with the next issue of *Plum Lines*, we will make available a listing of

hotels and rates which will be updated continuously until October, 1995. And for those who cringe in horror at Boston hotel rates (and have no Oofy Prosser to touch for assistance), we will also run a roommate-matching service. Share a room with a fellow Wodehousian and save money while you're at it—who could ask for anything more?

Remember, now:

1995  
October 20-22  
Boston  
Copley Plaza Hotel  
Indelible ink

Got it? Jolly good! See you there!

## New Philadelphia group

by Daniel Cohen

WE are pleased to announce the formation of a new and as yet unnamed chapter of the Wodehouse Society in the Philadelphia area. On January 20, ten of the faithful gathered at Philadelphia's very British Dickens Inn to eat shepherds pie or toad-in-the-hole, down a few pints of the landlord's best, and talk Wodehouse.

Franklin Axe, a member of founder Bill Blood's tiny Wodehouse Society in its earliest days, noted that that group had met very nearby, and we could thus lay claim to being the direct descendants of the Original Wodehouse Society. It is an honor we may claim, whether we deserve it or not.

We will gather again at the Dickens Inn in mid-April, a time chosen to honor to one of Plum's favorite activities, paying his income tax. Any Wodehouse fan in the region is urged to show up and join in. You'll be missing a good thing if you don't.

# Farewell to *Jeeves and Wooster*

**I**N the previous *Plum Lines* we said goodbye to the recent British TV series. Here we add a final comment to that leave-taking. Mark Richards, Artistic Director of the City Lit Theater Company of Chicago, recently adapted *Right Ho, Jeeves* for his company, and the result was a critical and popular success. "A huge success," I hear from those who attended, and a reviewer called it "a far more accurate rendition of Wodehouse's ingenious style" than the British TV production. So I think Mark's comments about the TV series are worth our attention:

It seems to me the series went most profoundly and fundamentally astray in its elimination of Bertie's narrative voice from the stories. Plum's great trick in these stories is his way of giving the reader a kind of double vision, the ability to see the world from Bertie's "mentally negligible" point of view and yet, at the same time, "to see it steadily and see it whole." An enormous amount of the comedy depends on this simultaneous perception, on the audience's part, of what Bertie thinks is happening versus what we know is happening. By deciding not to tell the stories subjectively, from Bertie's point of view, the series sacrifices an absolutely vital aspect of their deliciousness. We see Bertie from the outside only and, therefore, as nothing more than the genial half-wit he appears to those around him. Who would care a jot about Hamlet if the soliloquies were removed and we never really knew what he was thinking? Ah, well. Life is full of sadness.

One final word (the editor always gets the last word) and we're done: Considered only as a TV series it was good, better than most TV fare, but it represented Wodehouse's work as something far less than it is.

# PGW birth certificate

**I**F you've entertained doubts that P. G. Wodehouse existed, Jim Earl can set your mind at rest. He has obtained Plum's birth certificate from the General Register Office of England. He sent me a copy of it by way of Marilyn MacGregor and I present it to you on the following page, slightly reduced in size. It's not a photocopy of the 1881 original, whose entries would surely have been made in a fine flowing hand—such copies aren't available. It's a modern certificate. It's interesting to note that the birth was registered by Plum's mother in person on the day after the birth—not a common occurrence today, I believe.

The modern certificate is printed in red and carries a faint overall background pattern consisting of the words "General Register Office" repeated many times—thus discouraging erasures and preventing the wicked among us from rearranging their lineage and claiming William the Conqueror as their father.

Sherlock Holmes, Miss Marple, and Hercule Poirot did their investigations of wills and birth records in the majestic Somerset House on the Strand, before the Record Office was banished from it to a suburban outback in 1973. If Jim went in person to the new office for this record, I'll bet he found no majesty at all.

Maiden Eggesford, like so many of our rural hamlets, is not at its best and brightest on a Sunday. When you have walked down the main street and looked at the Jubilee Watering Trough, there is nothing much to do except go home and then come out again and walk down the main street once more and take another look at the Jubilee Watering Trough.

"Tried in the Furnace,  
*Young Men in Spats*, 1936

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number PA 5 2596/93

REGISTRATION DISTRICT <u>Guildford</u>
<u>1993</u> BIRTH in the Sub-district of <u>Guildford</u> in the <u>County of Surrey</u>

Columns:- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10\*

No. When and where born Name, if any Sex Name and surname of father Name, surname and maiden surname of mother Occupation of father Signature, description and residence of informant When registered Signature of registrar Name entered after registration

252	fifteenth October 1951 Yale Place Epsom Road Guildford GU3 5LE	Palham Green	Boy	Henry Ernest Wodehouse	Eleanor Wodehouse formerly Deane	Magistrate Civil Service Hong Kong	Eleanor Wodehouse mother Yale Place Epsom Road Childhood	sixteenth November 1951	Chas. Bond Registrar	
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CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 23rd day of November 1993

\*See note overleaf

BXBZ 512605

CAUTION:- It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

WARNING: THIS CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON PRESENTING IT.



## A few quick ones

Mrs. Alexandra Siebert, friend and neighbor of the Wodehouses in Remsenberg, has sent word of a memorial luncheon near Remsenberg, last month. "Friends and neighbors of the late P. G. Wodehouse were brought together," she writes, "at the invitation of his grandson the Hon. Sir Edward Cazalet and his wife the Hon. Lady Camilla. The Cazalets flew in from England a few days previously to visit P.G.'s old home on Basket Neck Lane and his resting place in the Remsenberg cemetery." Mrs. Scibert and Ms. Margaret Zbrozek, former housekeeper of the Wodehouses, were among the guests.

John Fletcher sends, via Jan Kaufman, a British advertisement for "Bertie Roosters," an American-style fried chicken place just two miles from Dulwich College. "The ad shows," says Jan, "an odd-looking chicken partially clad in feathers and in evening dress, sporting a top hat and a cane. They offer free delivery within two miles, which means the Dulwich boys can order this chicken when they're hungry."

Carol Landmann found another Plum quote, this one from *New York, A Literary Companion*, published by Pushcart Press:

"The Sheridan Apartment House stands in the heart of New York's Bohemian and artistic quarter. If you threw a brick from any of its windows, you would be certain to brain some rising interior decorator, some Vorticist sculptor or a writer of revolutionary vers libre."

What was Vorticism, anyway? The *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, calls it "a British art-movement of the early twentieth century, characterized by abstractionism and machine-like forms." It was named by Ezra Pound in 1914: "The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can . . . call a Vortex, from which . . . ideas are constantly rushing . . . And from this necessity came the name vorticism." The movement died, along with Imagism and Futurism, in the First World War. I knew you'd want to know.

William Hardwick found another example of how Wodehouse creations have entered the language. *The Hour of the Pig*, a new British movie, is set in the fifteenth century, when animals as well as humans were tried by the courts. The defendant in this case is a black pig, charged with murder. Since we mustn't be allowed to identify too closely with murderous pigs, we are not surprised when the film's director is quoted as saying, "I avoided the nice, fat P. G. Wodehouse kind of pig."

Jim Earl found an interesting sidelight on Plum in a recent *Spectator* column by Frank Keating:

A handful of scoffing letters and calls followed my throwaway claim in this corner a couple of weeks ago that P. G. Wodehouse considered his first novel, *Mike*, to be his best. [It was his ninth. OM] Someone's been having you on, they all sneered; how could the master have nominated his first school-boy yarn about cricket from all his ensuing 66-year output from 1909? Well, he did, so there, and he was not the only decent writer to think so.

In Malcolm Muggeridge's autobiography *The Infernal Grove*, he writes of the day he introduced Wodehouse to George Orwell in Paris in 1944:

They just talked cricket. The two of them got on very well. . . . Orwell and I talked a lot about Wodehouse later and I mentioned, as an example of how very little writers can judge their own work, that Wodehouse had told me he considered his best book to be *Mike*—an early and surely immature school-boy story. Of it, Wodehouse told me—in all seriousness, too—that the book had captured the 'ring of a ball on a cricket bat, the green of the pitch, the white of the flannels, the cheers of the crowd', or words to that effect..

'Certainly,' said Orwell to my immense surprise, 'Wodehouse is perfectly right. *Mike* is certainly his very best book.'

Tony Ring found several references to Plum's books in the "best-selling and mammoth work" *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth:

One female character (Malati) advises another (Lata) to 'read a P G Wodehouse or two' to cheer herself up. And when Lata goes

to the bookshelf to select *Pigs Have Wings*, the narrator added: "Malati, though flip-pant, both meant and prescribed well." Lata later moves on to *Galahad at Blandings*.

"The story," says Tony, "is set in the early 1950s, and so, although we would all approve of its sentiments, we are jealous of the fact that *Galahad at Blandings* was available to its characters more than ten years before it was actually published. It just shows how even meticulous authors can slip up on their research."

Elizabeth Rosenberg found a reference to P. G. Wodehouse in an unexpected context. In *Queen Victoria's Grandchildren*, by Lance Salway, the author writes of the German Emperor Wilhelm II as follows:

The First World War was an inevitable consequence of the growth of . . . Wilhelm's hatred of Britain. . . At the war's end the disillusion and despair of the German people brought the House of Hohenzollern to its knees. . . In the end he was forced into exile in Holland, where he spent the last twenty years of his life leading the quiet life of a country gentleman, growing roses, drinking English tea, and reading the novels of P. G. Wodehouse."

How Plum must have enjoyed the irony!

Paul Pickerill provides convincing evidence that the original Jeeves, the cricket player from whom Wodehouse took the name, was *Percy Jeeves*, a *Warwickshire* cricketer. The Winter 1993 *Plum Lines* reported the italicized words incorrectly. Paul's evidence consists of (1) a copy of a page from *The History of the Warwickshire Cricket Club*, in which Jeeves's first name and his membership in that club are made abundantly clear, and (2) a copy of a letter from PGW to a Mr. Ryder, dated October 26, 1967, in which he confirms that Jeeves played for Warwickshire.

Marilyn MacGregor found another example of how art imitates art. "If I read the credits correctly as they scrolled past at eleven P.M., Richard Brain is the actor who plays the head of the research unit for the

Conservatives in the Masterpiece Theater production *House of Cards*. In a different production he'd played Gussie Fink-Nottle. What made me jump for joy as I watched *House of Cards* was first to recognize him, then to see how his biggest scene ends—drinking orange juice! He's at a breakfast table in a hotel when another character inadvertently tips over his glass as she leaves, and seeing his look of dismay says, "Here, take mine, I can't stand the stuff."—He drinks it down.

Charles Gould has comforting news. The Winter 1993 *Plum Lines* reported Plum's distressing discovery, thirty years ago, that it was a misdemeanor in Georgia to tie a giraffe to a street light. Charles has found through exhaustive research that nowhere in America is it a misdemeanor to tie a street light to a giraffe. He cautions us, however, that "in Egypt, Syria and other Arab countries, tying a camel to a street light is a *fellah-ny*; but in Arab countries there is less liberty, harsher punishment than we enjoy here. Nonetheless, I just made up that joke myself, Copyright ©1994, and if you print it and change the last word to 'felony' we'll be looking at a case of justifiable homicide."

OM

The Oldest Member



# The NEWTS turn two

by Elin  
Woodger

**T**HIS January, 1994, marks the second anniversary of the New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS) as an active chapter of the Wodehouse Society. And active is definitely the word! From the start, we have blazed happy trails of Wodehouse- and non-Wodehouse-related fun and games, and have had a topping good time in the process. To cite just a few examples of NEWTish hyperactivity:

- A tradition of treating visiting TWS-ers like royalty was begun in April 1992 when Carolyn Pokrivchak came to town and was taken to tea at the Ritz by a small group of NEWTS. Unfortunately, said NEWTS mistook the Ritz for the Drones, and the ensuing merriment resulted in their being driven out into the streets by the management—though nary a bread crumb was tossed! Carolyn, no stranger to boisterousness, played a key role in all this and thus enjoyed herself thoroughly, as all our visitors seem to do.
- In October 1992 Bob and Grace Noyes hosted a gathering of eighteen NEWTS for a visit to Nantucket. This laughter-and-breadroll-filled weekend in their huge, 200-year-old house cemented many new friendships and introduced us to “killer croquet,” as practiced by Randall Burkett.
- In April 1993 the NEWTS gathered at Bill Claghorn’s home in Princeton, Massachusetts and were treated to a discourse by the eminent Wodehouse scholar, Charles Gould, on the pitfalls of literary allusion. There wasn’t a dry eye in the house when he concluded—our tears of laughter were unstoppable!
- In May a small group of NEWTS trekked to Remsenburg, Long Island, to pay their respects at Plum’s grave and to be entertained by Alexandra Seibert, a delightful expedition previously reported in *Plum Lines*.
- August saw the inauguration of NEWTS

headquarters at Maria Sensale’s new home in NEWTon Centre, Massachusetts, with a visit from Tony Ring and his family. Tony and his daughter entertained the troops with a reprise of their talk from the San Francisco convention. Everyone present agreed that the Ring family was the alligator’s eyebrows, and we hope they will return soon.

- Planning for the 1995 convention to be held in Boston began in earnest when TWS President Toni Rudersdorf and Vice President Elliott Milstein visited the NEWTS in October. As is typical of most of our meetings, it took close to two hours of eating, drinking, gabbing, and laughing before settling down to business. But preliminary plans show that the NEWTS have a treat in store for TWS-ers in 1995!

- The end of 1993 and the beginning of the third year of NEWTS chumminess were celebrated late in December with the very willing and able assistance of honored guests Cora and Kay Teel. We are pleased to report that they entered into the spirit of things so well that, as reported later to PGW-net, “when last seen they were headed towards a fountain in Harvard Square, muttering something about catching a few newts for their collection.”

- Plans are in progress for a gaggle of NEWTS to travel to New York City for the dedication of the Wodehouse plaque at The Little Church Around the Corner on May 1.

And the above doesn’t even touch on our regular meetings (about once every three months) nor on the separate, social gatherings of those NEWTS who have become staunch friends. All in all, we are proud to say (without a lick of modesty) that we are an unqualified success, and look forward to many more years of NEWTish fun together. We currently boast twenty-one active members, and generally average twelve to fifteen people at each meeting. While most of our membership comes from around the Boston area, a few have found it worthwhile to drive in from distant locations such as Holyoke, Massachusetts and Norwich, Vermont in order to join in the conviviality, congeniality,

and all-around happy confederacy that is the NEWTS.

## Right Ho, Jeeves

Marge Meisinger has sent, via Marilyn MacGregor, a couple of newspaper reviews of a theatrical version of *Right Ho, Jeeves*, recently presented by the City Lit Theater Company of Chicago. I quote excerpts below.

OR *R*IGHT *Ho, Jeeves*, a jolly little confection  
OR cooked up by City Lit Theater Company, should please both the initiated millions of fans of P. G. Wodehouse and the innocent few who have yet to enjoy his writings.

Mark Richards, who deftly adapted the novel for the stage and also plays the charming airhead Bertie, has accomplished both tasks with great relish, and he and director Patrick Trettenero, an expert in this kind of stylized nonsense, have gathered a grand group of character actors to flesh out Wodehouse's characters. Scarcely skipping a syllable, they race through this blessedly light entertainment with noticeable verve and pleasure. The two standout performances, notable for their stylish eccentricity, come from Amelia Barrett as Gussie's beloved Madeline—she conveys the sort of wonderfully off-kilter drippiness that was the specialty of actresses like Joyce Grenfell in the 50s—and Aunt Dahlia, who in full bellow sounds very much like the roaring mastodon to which Wodehouse compared bellowing aunts.

Though this show lacks the elegant detail and madcap zaniness of the recent PBS [British] versions of Wodehouse's tales, it's a far more accurate rendition of Wodehouse's ingenious style [Bravo! Bravo!], and makes for a very diverting couple of hours.

We solemnly rejoice in the news that Wodehouse was once more presented to a world that needs him, and we earnestly thank City Lit (oh *most* earnestly, my dear fellow!) for a job so well done.

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## Spring, etc.

**I**T's spring, the season when a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove and a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love. It's also the time when we send out dues reminders to most of our members. If you have a yellow page attached to the front of your *Plum Lines*, you're *it* this time around.

When you're writing out that check, why not add an extra \$5—or \$10—or more—for our benefaction to The Little Church Around the Corner? Think of the warm, cuddly feeling you'll have, knowing you have done a Good Deed and helped to commemorate a most important event in the life of our beloved Plum. Thanks most awfully.

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## Wodehouse Playhouse

**P**ETER Schwed writes that television station WNYC in New York City will reshoot the excellent series *Wodehouse Playhouse* soon, probably in April. The series was originally presented some years ago and has rarely been seen since. Peter and I agree that it's the best of all the Wodehouse television shows.

As far as I can find out, it is not being broadcast on the nationwide PBS network, but it may be shown on individual stations around the country, and you should check with your local station. It's too good to miss.

# *The Reminiscences of the Hon. Galahad Threepwood*

edited by N. T. P. Murphy

Reviewed  
by Jan  
Wilson  
Kaufman

THE most dreaded and anticipated event in London's world of publishing has finally occurred, as the Hon. Galahad Threepwood's memoirs have seen the light of print at last, through the good offices of Mrs. Ronald Fish (Sue Brown that was). It turns out that Gally wrote a secret copy of his manuscript which he gave to the safe-keeping of Messrs Watson, Watson, Watson, Watson and Watson of Lincoln's Inn, so Sue could hide it from her terrifying mother-in-law Lady Julia Fish, the most formidable of all Gally's sisters.

Now we can all share in the rich mixture of late-Victorian England's high and low life, with this scandalous collection of stories about that vanished world first brought to us by the pre-eminent social chronicler of our times, Sir Pelham Wodehouse. The editor says that "in immortal prose, Sir Pelham has related stirring accounts of theft, blackmail, imposture and feuds, both porcine and internecine, that purged the emotions of the reader with pity and terror."

The prize of a bottle of wine is offered to any reader who can fully separate fact from fiction by June 1st, 1994, but only those who have the intelligence, cultural background and specialized knowledge of recent English social history to match those of Jeeves should dare to try. Every story, no matter how improbable it seems today, has a factual basis or at least one written source for background. For instance, the six matched pairs of footmen, over six and a half feet tall, who stood in the corridors as guests marched in to dinner, were then a famous feature of the hospitality at Londonderry house. Or consider Lord Fitzwilliam, who named all of his eight sons William and all of his six daughters Mary, possibly in honor of the monarchs who'd given the family their earldom. Sir Claude Champion de Crespigny was known for giving each of his five sons his exact same name, but Gally mainly remembers him for challenging all his potential employees for

every job from hall boy to head-gardener to a match in the boxing ring. He continued this invariable practice through his eighties.

Today's best sellers often have a very practical ring with a lot of how-to advice, and this book too is full of inspiring information, such as we find in Chapter 13, "Crossing, or Twenty Ways to Raise the Ready." Considering that one of the suggestions is to sell your moustache, it will be seen how useful these memoirs can be. There is also sound advice about how to shop when traveling, and how not to pack, especially in Scotland. Some famous London restaurants have been known to hold secret midnight rat catching parties as sporting events, and Gally now gives all the scandalous details.

The editor was refused access to the Dunstable and Parsloe family archives, which may account for the fact that these otherwise excellent memoirs have some misinformation in the matter of Tubby Parsloe and the prawns (even the redoubtable Charles Gould has had some lapses with regard to this story). Fortunately these marine events were fully clarified at the 1993 San Francisco Convention in the skit presented by the Blandings Castle Chapter, and there exist video tapes entitled *Fish and Prawns* to prove it.

The epilogue recounts two remarkable and hitherto unknown incidents in the early life of Lord Emsworth. In one, the girl he loved came from such an exalted family that we cannot even hint at her august name. Equally startling is the possibility of what happened to the elegantly inscribed pistol that Emsworth took to Austria on a pre-World War I holiday.

Beach's mother will like this book and so will you. My general view is that the editor can put my name on his jellied eel barrow any time.

*The Reminiscences of the Hon. Galahad Threepwood*, edited by N. T. P. Murphy, 1993. (£12.99, \$21.95 US). Published by Porpoise

Press, 68 Altwood Road, Maidenhead S16 4PZ, England. 263 pages. Six illustrations. ISBN 1 870304 13 6.

The book may be ordered from its publisher in England, listed above, or from the usual Wodehouse specialists in the US. Frits Menschaar (140 Cabrini Blvd, Apt 132, New York NY 10033) and Charles Gould (Kent School, Kent CT 06757) spring to mind at once, and there may be others.

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Readers of this austere journal will have noticed that our rule is, "One book, one review," a motto graven on our office wall in coal-black, blood-red letters. But the *Reminiscences* deserve more; after all, we've been waiting for them since *Summer Lightning*, sixty five years ago. So here's another appraisal of the book, this one from Hugh Massingberd in the *Spectator*, 18-25 December, 1993.

The conventional literary view of P. G. Wodehouse used to be that his idyllic world was pure fantasy. None of his creations, asserted Evelyn Waugh in his otherwise sympathetic essay, "An Act of Homage and Reparation to P. G. Wodehouse" (1961),

have any identity with the real life of any period. Mr. Wodehouse's characters are not, as has been fatuously suggested, survivals of the Edwardian age.

However, the remarkable investigations carried out over the last 20 years by the Wodehousian sleuth of the Savage Club, Lt. Col. Norman Murphy, seem to have proved Waugh wrong—without in any way detracting from the Wavian judgment that "the gardens of Blandings Castle are that original garden from which we are all exiled." In 1975 Murphy published a pioneering article in the now sadly defunct *Blackwood's Magazine* on "The Real Drones Club," which argued that

far from creating a never-never land, Wodehouse could justly claim, as he did latterly, to be a social historian as much as a novelist.

Murphy connected the fictional Drones to the real-life Pelican Club, an establishment founded in the 1880s by a raffish group of

aristocratic, theatrical, equestrian and journalistic layabouts whose adventures were chronicled in such books as *A Pink 'Un* and *A Pelican* (the Pink 'Un being the club's favoured reading matter, the *Sporting Times*) and *Pitcher in Paradise* by Arthur ("the Pitcher") Binstead.

Murphy went on to develop the theme in his master work, *In Search of Blandings* (originally privately published in 1981 and now in Penguin paperback), which provided an extraordinarily instructive and entertaining analysis of who's really who and what's where in the Wodehouse fiction. The key character in Murphy's unraveling of the

group of men and women who set a pattern of behaviour that we find hard to accept today but which Wodehouse used for his characters for 60 years

was Galahad Threepwood, the Earl of Emsworth's younger brother. We are first introduced to Gally—

a short, trim, dapper little man of the type one associates automatically with checked suits, tight trousers, white bowler hats, pink carnations and race-glasses bumping against the left hip

—in *Summer Lightning*, one of the best *Blandings* novels. Wodehouse sets out Gally's credentials (all presumably more or less drawn from life when the young author-journalist was at large in Edwardian London):

He had been a notable lad about town. A beau sabreur of Romano's. A Pink 'Un. A Pelican. A crony of Hughie Drummond and Fatty Coleman; a brother-in-arms of the Shifter, the Pitcher, Peter Blobbs and the rest of an interesting but not strait-laced circle. Bookmakers had called him by his pet name, barmaids had simpered beneath his gallant chaff. He had heard the chimes at midnight. And when he looked in at the old Gardenia, commissionaires had fought for the privilege of throwing him out.

Small wonder, then, that the threat of old Gally writing his *Reminiscences* hung like the sword of Damocles over his fellow survivors from those carefree days. In *Sum-*

*mer Lightning* he is summed up as a man

who should never have been taught to write and who, if unhappily gifted with that ability, should have been restrained by Act of Parliament from writing *Reminiscences*.

The saga of the *Reminiscences* is continued in *Heavy Weather*. Eventually, after being stolen, mislaid, retrieved, re-stolen, sold and resold, Gally's magnum opus is consumed by the Empress of Blandings. Col. Murphy, who describes this disaster as

a loss to the literary world on a par with the destruction of the library at Alexandria or the burning of Carlyle's French Revolution,

now reveals that, in fact, Gally subsequently sat down to write another version. Through the good offices of Mrs Ronald Fish (Gally's niece by marriage) this second effort—"they aren't a patch on the manuscript that finished up inside the Empress, but I think they'll do the trick"—found their way into the safe hands of Col. Murphy.

And so now, at long last, we have the chance to revel in the Golden Age of Galahad through his own Pelican eyes—rather than those of the "young bank-clerk-writer who used to live near us in Shropshire," an important distinction. At a brisk, anecdotal pace, we are trotted around the turf and down the Strand into Romano's where we are regaled with the original story about the bet on the Law Courts clock. We are taken on jaunts to Brighton, South Africa, the Highlands and the Wild Western ranches of several reprobate British nobs. Gally gives us tips on "twenty ways to raise the ready" (including No. 17: "Sell your moustache") and the benefit of his views of the peerage, the clergy, the theatre, clubs and the servant question, as well as love and marriage.

It is all rollicking good stuff, confidently handled. Real-life personalities such as the artist Phil May, Marie Lloyd, the miserly Marquess of Clanricarde and George Edwardes of the Gaiety Theatre intermingle with such Wodehousian characters as Gally's old friend the Earl of Ickenham (the life-

enhancing "Barmy" Twistleton, alias "Uncle Fred," surely the Master's greatest creation) and his old enemy, Sir Gregory "Tubby" Parslow-Parslow, Bart, of Much Matchingham, the ratting cheat.

Evidently Col. Murphy had done a phenomenal amount of research and his footnotes endearingly convey his manic enthusiasm for the task. He tells us, for instance, how he watched the demolition of the original Pelican clubhouse ("a tile from the old bar has pride of place on my desk") in Denman Street; and how he drank a glass of beer on the last day of the soon-to-be-demolished pub called the Final in King William IV Street; and how he discovered a recently used cockpit near the Garrick Club. Only very occasionally does he fail to correct one of Gally's slips: Moncreiffe and Frewen are misspelt and Lord Frederick Hamilton actually had seven sisters, every one of whom married a duke, marquess or earl, not five.

To his great credit, though, the gallant Colonel does not become bogged down in pedantry. He remains faithful to the true romantic spirit of Mr Threepwood, who was not called Galahad for nothing. In reality the Pink 'Uns and Pelicans—"noblemen who have gone wrong," as W. S. Gilbert put it in *Pirates of Penzance*—were probably the most ghastly collection of bruisers, bounders, and bores. (Their number included, after all, "the Screaming Scarlet Marquess" of Queensberry and the "Yellow Earl" of Lonsdale—"almost an Emperor but not quite a gentleman.") Yet, brushed by the magical Wodehousian wand, they too now belong in that Garden of Eden—an Edwardian Utopia in which the Great War never took place.

Col. Murphy has done the trick all right. Now, in this era of sequels, perhaps he might care to turn his monocled eye to producing first the memoirs of Uncle Fred and then the ultimate "dream ticket" of Bertie and Jeeves joining Psmith, Gally et al at Blandings.

Get the book. Don't examine it first. Just throw some money on the counter and tell the man you want the book. It's that good.

# New members

## Financial report, 1993

Tom Wainwright, treasurer

Beginning balance, December 31, 1992		\$4665.98
Income		
Dues and other charges	\$6527.00	
Contributions to benefaction for Church of Transfiguration	640.00	
Interest earned	<u>55.48</u>	
		7222.48
Expenses		
<i>Plum Lines</i> copying and mailing	\$5400.13	
Correspondence (stationery, supplies, postage, copying and mailing back issues of <i>Plum Lines</i> )	1070.23	
Bank fees	9.00	
Benefaction to Church of Transfiguration	<u>1200.00</u>	
		<u>7679.36</u>
Ending balance, December 31, 1993		\$4209.10

# Collecting Wodehouse Can Be Taxing

by Tony Ring

Tony Ring and his daughter Melanie entertained and informed us at the 1993 San Francisco Convention with this discussion of P. G. Wodehouse's tax problems and his views on them. To quote a prominent twentieth century writer, it seemed to take us into a different and a dreadful world. Melanie provided a pleasant counterpoint by reading much of the poetry, lyrics, short quotations, and one part in the conversations. The talk was accompanied by background music—"Bongo on the Congo"—whose lyrics are about you-know-what.

SEVERAL years ago, when I first heard the lyrics of Wodehouse's "Bongo on the Congo" from the show *Sitting Pretty*, I was President of the UK Institute of Taxation, a professional body representing tax practitioners. I immediately recognized the line:

You simply hit them with an axe

as the only possible title for a Wodehouse research project I had been idly contemplating for some years.

From 1970, I developed my career as a tax adviser, employed by a series of companies with varying industrial and commercial activities, and while researching a US tax problem had become aware that Wodehouse had been the subject of a number of reported US tax cases. I had said to myself then, that that would be an interesting topic to follow up . . . but I had done nothing about it. By 1981, the time of the Centenary Exhibition, I was asking myself the question quite seriously, "Was there an opportunity for a tax professional to provide a balanced and informed view of the Wodehouse tax experience?"

And I came up with the answer, "Yes."

But I still did nothing about it.

Numerous books about Wodehouse were published around the time of the Centenary, but even Frances Donaldson's book does not do justice to the tax skirmishes, relatively comprehensively though she does cover them. It occurred to me that this could still be a fruitful area, and although Barry Phelps invaded my territory somewhat in his biography last year, I believe my judgement was correct.

Can the story of one man's tax problems be made interesting? Or funny? Well, let me take a show of hands, to see if we can at least agree that it can be a matter for astonishment and concern.

Put up your hand if you have filed your 1992 tax return.

Keep your hand up if you filed your 1991 return.

Put your hand down if you did not keep a copy.

Those of you with your hands still up, put them down if you *don't* think you could find a copy of your 1985 tax return.

. . . your 1975 tax return.

. . . your 1968 tax return.

My notes now say, "If anyone still has his hand up, he should put it down unless he has lived in *at least* three countries since 1968."

They go on to say, "Any remaining organised and worldly-wise Wodehousians with their hands still raised should now put them down unless they have been interned in a prisoner of war camp *and* had their house requisitioned by the enemy *and* had all their records destroyed."

Should we be surprised that the show of hands evaporated some few questions ago? Not really. I didn't expect it to last too long. But the interesting thing about the Wodehouse tax cases, apart from numerous matters of fascinating and highly technical tax law and procedure, is that in 1948, one of the charges being made was that Wodehouse was unable to prove that he had filed his 1923 tax return, and under established

US law, it was his responsibility to prove that he had! Despite his personal circumstances having been the most extreme combination of those we have just considered! And bearing in mind the little matter of the lack of photocopying equipment in 1924.

And to crown it all, the Internal Revenue Service refused to give evidence in court as to whether and to what extent they had checked *their* files to see if they had a copy of the return, despite their having been instructed to do so by the judge.

Wodehouse won that part of the case.

I am not sure if this alone makes it clear that the circumstances surrounding an individual's tax problems can be funny (funny peculiar if not funny ha-ha), or can be interesting to those with no direct professional involvement, but I like to think it does. And this possibility was brought home all the more forcibly when I started a periodic reread of his works, and realised just how many references to tax he had included. I have seen more than ninety in forty-three separate books, and a further 120 in the letters, magazines, plays, and songs.

I decided to put together as comprehensive a collection as possible of Wodehouse's writings, primarily to compile a chronological list of all his references to tax, to see whether their frequency or bitterness depended to any degree on the state of his own tax affairs at the time. The more I thought about it, the more the project seemed to have great attractions as my time became more available, and explicit quality of life replaced implicit workaholicism as a personal objective. The question of cost would have to take care of itself, with photocopies available as acceptable substitutes if originals could not be found or were too expensive.

It might be of interest if I quote some examples now, to give you an idea of the different contexts of the references that I was hunting.

First, from his early writings in *Punch*, the poem, "The Lost Leader," concerning the retirement of the Rev Sir Owen Kettle, KCB, appeared in the 4 March, 1903 issue:

You were not built for the joys of peace, your business is on the sea.  
The bridge of a tramp is the place for you, my reverend KCB.  
You were not born to be slothful, sleek, payer of tax and rate,  
Leave such a life to lesser men—yours is a nobler fate.

Shortly before the first world war, Wodehouse undertook some work in co-operation with Charles Bovill, including a theatrical revue, *Nuts and Wine*, at the Empire Theatre. This included a song called "The Chancellor of the Exchequer," which mentioned a wide range of taxes. Here are two of the later stanzas, sung by a conductor on a London bus:

Why don't they tax all pastry cooked  
For on pastry I have never looked  
In the Strand, Regent Street—Pass along, mind the step  
Tax for the good of the revenue  
The crusty bits and the crummy bits too  
In the Strand, Eccles Cakes—Turnovers—Maids of Honour.  
Yes put a tax on pastry—if not, why not  
The contents of each pastry cart  
A penny on a pancake and twopence on a tart  
In the Strand for the sake of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Why not tax all domestic pets  
Alligators and suffragettes  
In the Strand, Trafalgar Square, Hyde Park and on the Links  
Tax bachelors and married men  
Whether for good, or only now and then.  
Houseboats, hotels, flats, Abodes of Love—  
These attacks on a tax on taxis  
Flags up

So are the roads  
There's a tax on Stocks and Shares should be  
But let Marconigrams go free, do you see  
For the sake of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

And so the song went on. *Nuts and Wine* ran, I'm afraid, for a mammoth seven performances.

There was one other meaningful and disparaging reference to taxes in the show. In the opening dialogue of Act II, a representative of His Majesty's police force is talking to Mr. Punch:

. . . On your right your will observe the Gerrard Street Telephone Exchange.

But why has that been moved here?

Well, you see, sir, when the County Council found they'd no use for the Aldwych Island site they turned it into a sort of refuge where public nuisances are deported. . . What we've got here is an asylum containing public buildings and folk that are driving other people insane. (*He points*) There's Somerset House, the home of the Income Tax nuisance.

He also experimented with knocking the tax collectors in numerous *Vanity Fair* articles, such as "Poor Drama" in January 1918:

For the Theatre has got it right on the back collar-stud. What with the war-tax and the income-tax and the super-tax and Red Cross Benefits and Liberty Loans and women who knit instead of attending matinees, the Drama is experiencing the worst slump in many years, and the writings of a dramatic critic on a monthly magazine are coming to have a merely archeological interest.

I'm sure that you are all aware of the aversion Uncle Tom Travers has to income tax. In *Right Ho, Jeeves*, or, if you prefer it, *Brinkley Manor*, we learn about the demand for £58 1s 3d which he had just received. Aunt Dahlia is talking to Bertie:

"I'll tell you, Bertie. Up till now, when these subsidies were required, I have always been able to come to Tom in the gay, confident spirit of an only child touching an indulgent father for chocolate cream. But he's just had a demand from the income tax people for fifty-eight pounds, one and threepence, and all he's been talking about since I got back has been ruin and the sinister trend of socialistic legislation and what will become of us all."

I could readily believe it. This Tom has a peculiarity I've noticed in other very oofy men. Nick him for the paltriest sum, and he lets out a squawk you can hear at Land's End. He has the stuff in gobs, but he hates giving up.

The same cast is involved in Chapter 9:

"Is he still upset about that income tax money?"

"Upset is right. He says that Civilization is in the melting-pot and that all thinking men can read the writing on the wall."

And there is another arguably autobiographical piece in *Hot Water*, when Mr Gedge is talking to his wife:

"What," asked Mr Gedge, taking the chair vacated by the secretary, "is all this about your going to England? Medway tells me you're sailing on the afternoon boat."

"I have had a letter from my lawyer in London. There has been some trouble about English Income Tax, and he says he must see me."

It could not have taken Wodehouse too long to think up that part of the plot, written as it was in 1932, just a few months after he had used the same words in real life!

And later in the book, he felt it was necessary to summarise where all the principal characters were to be found:

Mrs Gedge was in the office of her lawyer in London. His operations on her behalf in the matter of evasion of English Income Tax had dissatisfied her, and she was talking pretty straight to him.

Tax rears its ugly head in the Blandings Castle series too. In *Pigs Have Wings* it takes the form of the appearance of professional advisers, first when the Earl of Emsworth is asking Constance and Penelope Donaldson:

“What’s she going to London for in weather like this? Silly idea.”

“She has a fitting. Her dress for the County Ball. And Orlo has to see his lawyer about his Income Tax.”

“Income tax!” cried Lord Emsworth, starting like a war horse at the sound of a bugle. Pigs and income tax were the only two subjects that really stirred him. “Let me tell you—”

“I haven’t time to listen,” said Lady Constance, and swept from the room.

Later, Gally’s conversation with Orlo Vosper is interrupted by an announcement that Mr Wapshott has arrived for an appointment with Orlo, and Gally is as inquisitive as ever about the affairs of others:

“Who is this Wapshott?”

“My income tax chap,” said Lord Vosper. “Fellow who looks after my income tax,” he added, clarifying the situation still further.

In his book, *Lord Emsworth’s Annotated Whiffle*, James Hogg accurately highlighted the peer’s antipathy to income tax:

Seekers after sensation will go to great lengths to dress up a meat which in my view needs no improvement. The Romans are said to have fed their pigs on dried figs and honeyed wine to enrich the flavour (apart from being unnecessary it would not be an economic proposition today, with the iniquitous burden of tax borne by the propertied class).

The annotation of “Lord Emsworth” in the margin reads:

Whiffle absolutely right about this.

My single favourite reference to tax comes from *The Mating Season* and forms part of a conversation between Catsmeat Pirbright, the first speaker, and Bertie Wooster:

“Why, dash it, if I could think of some way of doing down the income tax people, I should be a rich man. You don’t know of a way of doing down the income tax people, do you, Bertie?”

“Sorry, no. I doubt if even Jeeves does.”

And so the parameters of my project became set. I would prepare—not necessarily for publication—THE comprehensive review on Wodehouse and tax, explaining the context of his spats with the authorities, quoting from his letters to his friends, and from his fictional output. Should I look out for anything else at the same time?

As I have explained, my interest in Wodehouse has always been much wider than merely his fascination with taxes. I also started to look carefully for examples of self-derivation, of which he did so much, and of his famous polishing. The magazines provide great examples. Even ignoring the severely abridged versions, such as those appearing in *Playboy*, they regularly throw up minor or major points of interest. Here are three examples.

When *The Small Bachelor* was serialised in *New Magazine* from December 1926 to May 1927, it contained the following nifty in the February issue:

That’s the way to get on in the world—by grabbing your opportunities. Why, what’s a grapefruit but a lemon that saw its

chance and made good?

But in book form, published in April, the simile had become:

Why, what's Big Ben but a wrist-watch that saw its chance and made good?

The second example is rather more fundamental. One problem Wodehouse faced as a result of his dispute with the US tax authorities was the fact that his US customers—*Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan*, Doubleday Doran—were each served with a lien which prevented them from paying any money at all to him until the disagreement was settled. His letters show that he had a number of ingenious ideas—though ingenious might be a better term—to get around this problem. The most relevant was the idea of seeking to repeat the achievements of his *Vanity Fair* days and writing in the US under a pseudonym. He wrote to Bill Townend that it would be interesting to see if he could build up another market.

He had written a story for magazine publication in the UK, where it appeared in the *Strand* with the title "The Masked Troubadour." It used familiar characters including Freddie Widgeon and Lord Blicester, and was set in the Drones Club. He now rewrote it with wholly new names for the characters, gave it the title "Reggie and the Greasy Bird," and offered it for publication in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Ironically, by the publication date, his tax dispute was over so the story could and did appear under his own name. It was admittedly not as good as the original—in another letter to Townend he said:

I heartily concur with your remarks about "Reggie and the Greasy Bird." In that shape, rotten.

The third example takes us further into the beyond. If you want to win a bet against your Wodehousian friends, ask them to trace the connection between "The Right Approach" in *A Few Quick Ones*, and the novel *Barmy in Wonderland*. The initial key can be found in an unpublished Bobbie Wickham story, "Dudley is Back to Normal," in the *Strand* of December 1939. A major scene in this story is replayed in "Joy Bells for Barmy" in *Cosmopolitan* for October 1947—a short story involving Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps and Mervyn Potter. It was then reproduced, still quite faithfully, as a scene in the novel *Barmy in Wonderland*. Meanwhile the remainder of the plot of "Joy Bells for Barmy" was hijacked for "The Right Approach," converted into a Mulliner story, and published in the British magazine *Lilliput* in 1958.

At that time *Playboy* was Wodehouse's main US magazine outlet, but *Playboy* never took material previously published elsewhere. Rather than let a good thing go to waste, he again rewrote the story with totally different characters for inclusion in the January 1959 issue. Finally, the *Lilliput* version with minor changes appeared as the "standard" version in both the UK and US editions of *A Few Quick Ones*.

Understanding the history of this story was a good lesson. It was now clear that to do even a reasonably comprehensive job I would not only have to reread the books and short stories, but also as much of the magazine material as possible: 600 items in *Punch*, the US *Vanity Fair*, and the *Strand* alone, in addition to all the other hundred-plus magazines.

With these daunting numbers, I know my review can't be fully comprehensive. There are at least four short stories I know about and have never seen, together with hundreds of articles and essays in the scarcer magazines. There are also numerous magazine versions of stories, or instalments of serials, which I have not been able to get my hands on. Some of these would undoubtedly have something to contribute to my researches.

And then, in trying to understand Wodehouse's approach to the subject of income tax, it seemed sensible to read letters he wrote to friends and business partners, to find relevant items. And how did his peers approach the subject? Was tax avoidance of the type he sought to practice acceptable by the standards of the day? Were his personal circumstances unique? Or relatively common, with the undoubted injustice of some of the tax rules affecting him most because he was so financially successful? Some tentative look into the autobiographies of contemporaries was called for.

And how were his attempts to avoid tax to be compared morally, for example, to the wartime attempts of people in England to "avoid" conscription? That was, it could be argued, every bit as anti-social as tax avoidance, yet seems not to have troubled the consciences of some who sneered at Wodehouse's tax saving ideas.

We have already seen some hints of the autobiographical awareness of taxation in his novels. I offer two

more extracts now. The first, from the play *Don't Listen, Ladies*, invites the question, "Was he aware that his correspondence with friends on the subject was a bit boring and repetitive?" Early in the play Daniel is speaking to his wife Madeline:

"I see. If your wife has a lover, you should accept it as one accepts bad weather or the income tax? Minor misfortunes that only dull people talk about?"

The second is drawn from *Quick Service*, where he stifled a protest about an increase in US tax rates from 10% to 33%, to which he personally would be liable. The American millionaire J B Duff is conversing with Miss Pym:

"Who's Hetty Green?"

"She was one of the richest women in America."

"I suppose everybody makes tons of money there?"

"Yes, and when they've made it, what happens? Does Mister Whiskers let 'em keep it? Not a hope. Listen," said Mr Duff, beginning to swell, "lemme—"

He paused. He had been about to speak freely and forcefully of some of the defects of the existing Administration in his native country, but he felt that a *titre-à-titre* with a charming woman was not the place for it. Better wait till he was back with the boys at the Union League Club.

"Plenty taxes in America these days," he said, condensing the gist of it into a sentence.

The prospective boundary for the collection had expanded considerably by this time. What else needed to be studied? I mentioned earlier the changes likely to occur between magazine and book; but what about those between book and book? We all know about the revisions to *Love Among the Chickens* in the second edition, and the regular relatively minor changes between US and UK texts, as briefly described by Jasen in his bibliography. But it was fun to come across a development which had been largely ignored, as far as one can tell, as occurred with *Something New*, the first Blandings novel. Both the *Saturday Evening Post* serial and the US book edition included an episode stolen from *Mike and Psmith*, and excluded from the UK book *Something Fresh*. It was also excluded from the later simultaneous US paperback printings (by Beagle and Dell) in 1972, making the latter two US firsts.

What about the short stories which have not appeared in book form? There is no comprehensive list. Although the McIlvaine bibliography mentions most of them, it does not specify separately those which are unrepublished or which were unrepublished until the (then forthcoming) production of *Plum Stones* in the autumn of 1993. Dan Garrison's *Who's Who in Wodehouse* has a nearly complete list, but still has a few omissions, such as "The Kind-Hearted Editor," "The Great Fat Uncle Contest," and "The Eighteenth Hole," and begs a few unanswered questions. Jasen's *Bibliography and Reader's Guide* made no attempt to list them.

Furthermore, when you try to list the stories, you realise that, despite appearances, different titles hide the same text, and, worse, the same title hides different texts—sometimes because Wodehouse has provided, or changed, the story's frame (ie, the method selected for narrating the story, such as Mr Mulliner, the Oldest Member, the Drones Club, or a first person narrative) when published in book form. A classic example of this phenomenon is another Bobbie Wickham story, "The Awful Gladness of the Mater." When this story was published in the *Strand* in May 1925, it was straightforward Bobbie Wickham, if anything involving that young redhead can be said to be straightforward. But by the time it was included in *Mr Mulliner Speaking*, the story had been converted into a Mulliner tale and Bobbie was forevermore blessed with the sage as one of her relations.

I therefore set about preparing my own list of short stories, and where they appeared in magazines and books, no more foolproof than anyone else's, but for my purposes an advance on what came before, even though it is not yet annotated by changes in narrator between the different versions. It is based on the McIlvaine bibliography, with a lavish helping of Garrison, washed down by information about items from my own collection.

I said that for my tax research project even a poor photocopy of an unrepublished story will suffice. For a collection, photocopies will do only until something better comes along, if ever. And sometimes something does come along in a most unexpected way. Last spring, for example, I was offered a 1966 bound set of the

entire issue of *Vanity Fair*, from 1912 to 1935, beautifully reproduced in facsimile form, and acquired by a UK dealer from a monastery in, I think, Connecticut. This, of course, contains all the Wodehouse articles which appeared under various pseudonyms in that magazine. While browsing through it, what should I find—an obvious Wodehouse piece unrecorded, and under yet another pen-name: Melrose Grainger. How did I know it is Wodehouse? Because it is a chapter from *Love Among the Chickens*, set in a new frame, and converted into a self-contained story.

I have barely mentioned the theatre. It is possible, though difficult and now extremely expensive, to collect the plays, scores, and individual sheet music. Some CDs, cassettes, and records are available. Inevitably, several of the songs and plays have references to the bloodsuckers of the Revenue services. Since there are so few published plays and musicals, how can one study the theatrical works properly? To the extent that the shows were put on in the UK, there is a reference copy available in the British Library—the copy originally submitted for censorship clearance. And if one is prepared to take some trouble, and has the time to plan one's visits to review specified material, access can often be arranged. And one can be rewarded, for example, by a conversation between the Marquis and Rose in *The Golden Moth*, which included a thoughtful assessment of the public attitude to taxes:

"But look here, if it's aristocratic crooks you want, why worry to look further?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, if the Blackbird's the King of them, I'm the Ace."

"Do you really mean to tell me you're a robber?"

"A robber? Well, I nearly became an Income Tax Assessor."

And in Act 3, the joy of a tax-free society is expressed in the second stanza of "The Island of Never Mind Where":

It's a Paradise, where no sorrow or sin come.  
Income Tax is nothing, for they haven't any income!  
No one pays milliner's bills,  
Girls don't put on any frills!  
In the Island of Never-Mind-Where  
Never-Mind-Where.

References to tax also appeared in *Oh, Lady, Lady!*, *The Cabaret Girl* and *The Beauty Prize*. In the latter case we merely have a reference to tax added in Wodehouse's hand to one of the songs on the submitted copy—the reference does not appear in the published score.

Of course, one's concentration on a single author is prone to waver if one's attention is grabbed by other things. Wodehouse's tax cases were replicated in part by others, including Rafael Sabatini and Sax Rohmer, and significant concern about the various tax regimes were expressed in biographies of a number of Wodehouse's contemporaries. Evelyn Waugh, Hugh Walpole, E Phillips Oppenheim and Guy Bolton to name but four. And Ira Gershwin followed Wodehouse's lead by producing some lovely references to taxation in his lyrics. So even a highly specialised theme in a collection can take in unexpected detours. Which of us would have it any other way?