



Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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BETTING ON BERTIE IS A SURE BET!

By Aunt Dahlia Travers

ON October 15, 1996, a small group gathered in New York City to celebrate P.G. Wodehouse's birthday in the best way possible: by attending a special, staged reading of *Betting on Bertie*, the last musical Plum and Guy Bolton wrote together.

As reported in the last *Plum Lines*, this show was to have been produced at the Hasty Pudding Theater in Boston, opening in mid-October. Alas for us Plummies, an unfortunate series of events—I believe Jeeves would have called it a concatenation of circumstances—resulted in *Betting on Bertie*'s withdrawal from the Hasty Pudding and its current search for a home in New York, without the benefit of road tryouts. To this end, the creators of the show decided to present two staged readings of the show to theater owners and their ilk. But what is a Wodehouse production without Wodehousians in the audience? And why not make the event a celebration of Plum's birthday? A call therefore went out, and those within earshot of the call responded. (Side note to the envious: What can I say? Not everybody could be invited, although that was a consummation devoutly to be wished.)

So it was that eighteen privileged Plummies from New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts gathered together at the Martin Kaufman Theater in Manhattan to be brought back to a time when men were men and musicals were musicals. And what a time it was! Even Peter Schwed, Plum's editor and perhaps sharpest critic of Wodehouse adaptations, said that the makers of *Betting on Bertie* could not have done

better in conveying the best and truest of all that is P.G. Wodehouse.

The background of *BoB* is this: In 1954, Bolton & Wodehouse wrote the play *Come On, Jeeves* (ref. Jasen, *Four Plays*). This evolved into the novel *Ring for Jeeves* (aka *The Return of Jeeves*), best known as the one in which Bertie Wooster does *not* appear. Instead, Jeeves has been loaned to his friend, Lord Towcester-Rowcester. (Many consider this to be the weakest of the Jeeves novels, lacking the Wooster narration as it does.) Years later, when approached by Frank Loesser to work on a new show with Robert Wright and George Forrest, Wodehouse resurrected the story and reinserted Bertie, in the process changing the name of the love interest from Jill to Zenobia, and adding a new character, Pongo Pilkington.

Aside from these changes, the plot line of *BoB* is identical to that of *Rff*. It is the summer of 1928, and Bertie, having been deprived of his income, is forced to quit Berkeley Mansions and retire to Wooster Abbey in

Southmoltonshire, England. There, he and his friend Pongo, in order to scrape up some money, decide to become bookies—but with disastrous results. They end up owing a huge sum to the manly Captain Bigger, big-game hunter extraordinaire. Captain Bigger shows up at Wooster Abbey with his daughter, Zenobia, with whom Bertie falls instantly in love. Amazingly, his affections are returned—and even more amazingly, Jeeves approves of the match!

Meanwhile, a major American



a familiar Wodehouse device. She falls in love with the place, but hesitates to buy it because of the dampness and frost heaves. More to the point, she falls in love with Captain Bigger, whom she had known some years back and had been searching for ever since. The usual Wodehousian fun and games then ensue, including misunderstandings and purloined jewels, until the inevitable happy ending is reached. But this one has a bittersweet edge to it. In fact, the story arrives at an unusual conclusion for a Jeeves & Bertie story, one which I hesitate to reveal for fear of spoiling the surprise for those who will see the production in the future. I can say this, however: Plum's intention for this show was to bring the Bertie & Jeeves cycle to a close, and the result is something that may jar some longtime readers. However, it all makes a lot of sense and, as presented by the company of players we saw, it is very touching in its presentation.

THE cast included: Keene Curtis as Jeeves; Douglas Holmes as Bertie Wooster; Emily Skinner as Zenobia Bigger; Ben George as Captain Bigger; Judy Kaye as Brenda Beaumont; Ken Bamett as Pongo Pilkington; Diane J. Findlay as Lady Monica "Moke" Carmoyle; Jack Eddleman as Lord Roderick "Rory" Carmoyle; Sam Reni as Police Constable Briggs, and Steve Ascioffa as the Radio Announcer. Each and every one was a delight, and captured their characters dead-on. If I were to quibble, I would pick on a certain inconsistency in the pronunciation of the name "Wooster," and Captain Bigger was occasionally hard to understand. But as played by Ben George, he was howlingly funny, especially in his scenes with Brenda Beaumont, played by Judy Kaye. Ms. Kaye is a Tony award winner, and it is easy to see why. She had flown in only the day before, learned her part in nine hours, and was belting out the numbers as if she had been singing them all her life. She also provided some of the funniest moments in the play, not to mention a couple of show-stopping numbers. (I understand the plaster is still falling from the ceiling of the Kaufman Theater.) All Plummies present agreed that she was nothing short of magnificent.

As for Bertie & Jeeves, I think the purists among us would find them *most* satisfactory. Keene Curtis, while perhaps displaying more emotion than Jeeves himself would, was quite good and played well off Bertie, who was perfectly personified by Douglas Holmes. Both these actors face an extremely difficult task when it comes to pleasing the die-hard Plummies in the audience — who among us, after all, does not have a personal vision of how Jeeves and Bertie should look and act? For myself, they pulled it off beautifully, and the ending scene was especially effective, as it did more than anything else to convey the affection and respect and, yes, *love* inherent in

Bertie's and Jeeves's feelings for each other.

As for the songs, the original Wodehouse lyrics have been retained and set to music by the afore-mentioned Messrs. Wright and Forrest. (To our joy, the composers were present in the audience and afterwards spent some time conversing with us about their time spent working with Plum.) With titles such as "Lament of a Gentlemen's Gentlemen," "Stiff Upper Lip," "On the Banks of the Zambesi," "I've Found Him!," and "Betting on Bertie," to name just a few, there were songs to please every palate. My own personal favorite was and always will be a lovely ballad that Jeeves sings about Bertie, called "Only If You Love." This song says it all about the relationship between Bertie and Jeeves. Plum's lyrics are, of course, brilliant, and in some cases may surprise those who didn't know the old boy had it in him. (I refer specifically to the song "Rough, Rugged and Robust," which has to be heard to be believed!)

THE production was directed by a very talented chap named Walter Willison. A Plummie to the core, Walter was recruited by Messrs. Wright and Forrest to bring *Betting on Bertie* to the stage, and oh! what a yeoman's job he has done! Walter's attention to detail has bordered on the near-fanatical. He was and is determined to please the most devout Wodehousian, and his determination has reaped magnificent results. But don't just take Auntie's word for it. Lady Bassett backed me up on this when she wrote to PGW-Net:

"*Betting on Bertie* is an Absolutely Wizard Show...The cast is nothing short of magnificent, each, all, and every one... You'd have been proud of us Plummies who attended; with no effort at all, we treated the theatre owners to the sight and sound of a delighted audience, guffawing, applauding, and weeping with joy..."

I have no doubt that Plum would have loved this show and approved of it, beginning to end. The book by Wodehouse and Guy Bolton was adapted by Douglas Holmes and Walter Willison. They worked very hard to retain the essence of the story's time period, yet still make it current and palatable for modern audiences. The good news is that they have succeeded admirably! Plummies and lay audiences alike can find much to applaud and laugh at in this production — and it's a dead cert that more of the as-yet uninitiated will be drawn to Wodehouse because of it.

So there you have it. Send your prayers in the direction of New York, so that *Betting on Bertie* may find the home it deserves and all Plummies may have the good fortune of being treated to a real and wonderful and original Wodehouse musical!

"SHE CHEESED THE RABBIT THEME"

—Right Ho, Jeeves

By William A. Carpenter

I have discovered an objective way to measure exactly the "greatness" of any particular author or literary work: The Welsh Rabbit Index (WRI). Merely count the number of times any particular author or book mentions Welsh rabbits (or rarebits), multiply by 1.0 and, voila!, you have that author's or book's WRI.

A few examples will suffice to demonstrate the unexpectedly close relationship between great literature and Welsh rabbits. First, I should perhaps say a few words about the history of Welsh rabbits. Originally cheese toasted on a long fork over a fire, it has come to refer to any dish that features melted cheese, often cooked with beer, served on toast.

Shakespeare certainly should appear on any list of great English writers and he has a perfectly acceptable WRI with references to toasted cheese in two plays.

"Nay, John, it will be stinking law; for his breath stinks with eating toasted cheese."

Henry VI - Part II, Act IV, vii

"Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will do 't."

King Lear, Act IV, vi

Robert Louis Stevenson should not, of course, be left off such a list and he comes through in *Treasure Island*.

"Well, many's the long night I've dreamed of cheese—toasted, mostly—and woke up again, and here I were."

But what about modern authors? Patrick O'Brian, currently enjoying cult-like status among admirers of nautical historical novels, knows his toasted cheese, as this example from *Post Captain* shows.

"I shall regale myself on toasted cheese."

Will Cuppy, in his delightful self-help book, *How To Be A Hermit*, provides us with one of literature's most powerful descriptions of a Welsh rabbit in his provocative essay on pancakes.

. . .this lady likes her pancakes Russian, with caviar and sour cream, and expects them to be surrounded by chicken Florentine Moray, clams Duxberry, Hawaiian curry with Major Gray's Indian chutney, cottage cheese, gooseberry jam, gingerbread, a cheese slipover consisting of a deep-dish apple pie with a Welsh rabbit melted over it, lobster stuffed and baked, broccoli Parmesan, crisp endive with Roquefort dressing, baked Alaska, coffee with grated orange peel and a clove, a Bacardi swizzle and a bottle of Fiora del Alpina, with a cashew nut to nibble and any other expensive or out of season comestibles obtainable or not.

Dorothy L. Sayers, in *Busman's Honeymoon*, just scores with this interesting description of Lord Peter.

"Pocket full o' bank notes and a nose like a cheese-faced rabbit—"

Not to be forgotten, of course, is the great Franklin W. Dixon. Just as you would expect from this master of the modern realistic novel, he does very well on the WRI, as in this example from the Hardy boys' first case, *The Tower Treasure*:

Suddenly there was a loud wail from Chet. "My Welsh rabbit! It's been standing so long it will be ruined!"

Surely no one will be surprised to discover that the world's greatest author, as measured by the WRI, is none other than P. G. Wodehouse. Consider his masterful use of Welsh rabbits in such classic lines as these:

I had a kind of feeling that I was about as popular with him as a cold Welsh rabbit.

"Jeeves and the Chump Cyril"

For some moments after the line had gone dead, he sat motionless, his soul seething within him like a Welsh rabbit at the height of its fever.

"Tangled Hearts"

Algy moved on, and Archibald, his soul bubbling within him like a Welsh rabbit at the height of its fever, sank into a chair and stared sightlessly at the ceiling.

"The Reverent Wooing of Archibald"

These quotes evince a careful knowledge of the actual methods for cooking a Welsh rabbit. Did Wodehouse like to cook a little cheesy something late at night? This provides a fascinating glimpse into the previously unknown Culinary Wodehouse.

As he sipped his sarsaparilla, his soul seemed to heave and bubble like a Welsh rarebit coming to the boil.

"Feet Of Clay"

We do not yet know all of the details about the close relationship between great literature and Welsh rabbits, but we can see that, in the hands of a master, the relationship is interesting indeed. Consider the last quotation above and note the very rare use of "rarebit" instead of "rabbit." This may be especially significant when one takes into account PGW's use of "dream rabbit"—but that is a subject for another essay.

Dumb-Bells in the Bath.

(CULLED FROM A DEVOTEE'S DIARY.)

9 a.m. See notice on board. The following . . . must be at the Bath at 4.20. School stops at 4.15. Happy thought. Am supposed to be a quick-change artiste. Shades of Fregoli! Never thought I had it in me. . . .

4.30 p.m. Have dropped in at the Bath, not literally, as it is boarded over, but metaphorically. Happy thought. Work this up into joke-form, stir gently, season to taste, and serve it up in a complete state. Must look out for a chance. . . . Find on enquiry that we are to do dumb-bells, an amusement which combines all the salient characteristics of apoplexy. Go and gather some dumb-bells. . . . On adjourning to dumb-bell emporium find that some scheming scoundrels had appropriated all the light ones. Look everywhere for a wooden pair. Happy thought. "Look everywhere for a wooden pair" would be a good beginning for a didactic poem on dumb-bells. It comprises in a short space the whole science. . . . No good, all gone. Have to take heavy pair. Gloomy forebodings. . . . Gloomy forebodings fully realised. Am told to fall in. Happy thought. Now is the time for that joke *re* the boarding over of the Bath. Spring it. Great success. Feel more cheerful now. . . . First exercise fairly soft thing: could keep on for weeks. . . . Change to second exercise. Begin to feel my muscles. Never knew I had so many. Am aching all over. Cheerful fellow-performer says it is very good for one. Happy thought: so is complete rest. . . . Change to third exercise. Never bargained for this sort of thing. It takes a great mind to fully fathom its intricacies. As far as I can see, you bend back till your head touches the ground and then attempt to rise, breathing regularly the while. Must be a practical joke. . . . No, they seem serious enough about it. So am I. No joke at all. Happy thought: The muscles of his brawny arms were strong as German bands. Wonder if mine are. Should like to drop dumb-bell and feel. Am aching all over. . . . What! All over? Hooray! Wonder if the Butt's shut. Must go and see at once. (Exeunt severally).

WAS this anonymous article written by P. G. Wodehouse? Jan Piggott, Archivist of Dulwich College, found the article in *The Alleynian*, Vol. XXVII, no. 199, December 1899. Jan "strongly suspects" it is by Plum, and on grounds of style, humor, and the writers' viewpoint so clearly expressed, it's tempting to agree.

It's also tempting to see in this early article the nucleus of the incident in which Bertie Wooster dropped into the swimming pool of the Drones in full evening dress. But Norman Murphy's *In Search of Blandings* suggests that the source was Plum's much later acquaintance with the swimming pool of the Bath Club in Mayfair.

William Hardwick notes with a muted and gentlemanly sorrow that the recent efforts of our horses on the English turf are not causing sleepless nights in the stables of their competitors:

Plum First	5 outings	Third once
Winsome Wooster	6 outings	First once
Pelham	7 outings	Second twice

Eighteen outings and four finishes in the money. It's a little hard to know what to advise in the present situation. One wonders if the manufacturers of pet food are in need of raw material.

INDIAN WODEHOUSE

SOCIETY FORMS

Sidney Kitson provided the following article from a recent issue of a Calcutta, India, newspaper. —OM.

WHAT is Jeeves's first name? Which book does Clarence, Earl of Emsworth, always read before going to bed at night? Who was the chorus girl his younger brother, Galahad Threepwood, wanted to marry but could not because of opposition from his family? Which nephew of Mr Mulliner nearly had his engagement broken because of a cat?

These are some of the questions aspirants to membership will have to answer if they expect a favourable response to their applications from The Wodehouse Society, to be formed in Calcutta, India, on the master's 114th birth anniversary, October 18. [His actual birth date was October 15, 1881—OM]

Sidney Kitson, a former Director-General of the West Bengal Police and the leading light of this organization, insists that only those with a "serious" and insatiable interest in Wodehouse will be admitted. He himself is preparing a dissertation on policemen in the novels and stories and visited England in August to get a feel for the country. His principal collaborators include P. Lal, the proud recipient of a letter from Wodehouse.

To encourage research, the society will hold regular lecture-and-discussion sessions. It plans to build up a comprehensive collection of Wodehousiana, comprising two sets of the complete works, first editions, posters, and stills from films and plays.

DISCOVERING THE HEROIC IN WODEHOUSE

By Nigel Williams

Peter Morris found this unusual view of Wodehouse in the Hong Kong *Sunday Standard* of October 13, 1991. As one writer's view of another writer it may have special validity.

THERE is nothing immediately heroic about P. G. Wodehouse. Apart from a brief and undistinguished career as a bank clerk, Wodehouse spent most of his long life writing some of the best comic novels written this century.

And, although I admire him greatly as a prose stylist, I am normally of the opinion that writers shouldn't make heroes of other writers.

But there is a quality in Wodehouse the man that is most definitely of heroic proportions. I glimpsed it first in the early 1970s, when I watched a BBC interview with him at his home in Long Island.

The interviewer devoted at least half of the time asking Wodehouse questions about his wartime broadcasts. He had been living in Le Touquet at the start of World War II and was unable to get back to Britain. He was interned in Germany, and then released in [1941] on grounds of age (he was by then 60).

Trapped in Berlin, he gave a series of humorous, non-political broadcasts on German radio with the intention of reassuring his American fans as to his safety. These harmless pieces were monitored by the BBC listening service and became a hot political issue. Wodehouse was branded as a fascist, which he wasn't.

Thirty years on, it was a subject which obviously made him very uncomfortable, and the line of questioning, designed chiefly to elicit his feelings on the issue rather than to clarify the facts of the case, did nothing to make the old boy look any happier.

The pauses between question and response grew longer and longer, until, at the last question, "Do you still think of yourself as an Englishman?" Wodehouse looked long and hard at his knees, and then off to the right, for about ten seconds before replying .

"I suppose I do," was his response, and after he'd said that he looked away into the distance as if in the hope that some other chap would come along with the kind of response the BBC might consider satisfactory. They had left the camera running on his silence, and that was how the film ended, with an image of an old man, broken and betrayed by the England he had written about so well. But there was something about that image that puzzled me. I wouldn't have said there was a heroic quality to his

silence but I wanted to know more, and, with the intention of penetrating that reserve, I found myself nearly 20 years later making a biography of Wodehouse for the BBC. As I trailed from survivor to survivor, almost the only firm impression I managed to gain was that he was extremely shy. People referred to his genuine innocence, his unhappy childhood or his kindness and gentleness in human relations, but I never really felt they had known the man about whom they were talking. It was as if the man I was pursuing wasn't really there at all.

Some people told us about the "Wodehouse glide." If there was any danger of what his sister-in-law Nella Wodehouse called an "atmosphere" he would trickle from the room rather as Jeeves trickled into Bertie's bedroom after his master had had a particularly hard night. Puzzled, I went back to that BBC footage. There was the old man in the garden. There were the questions, and there, once again, was Wodehouse looking off into the distance for what seemed an age.

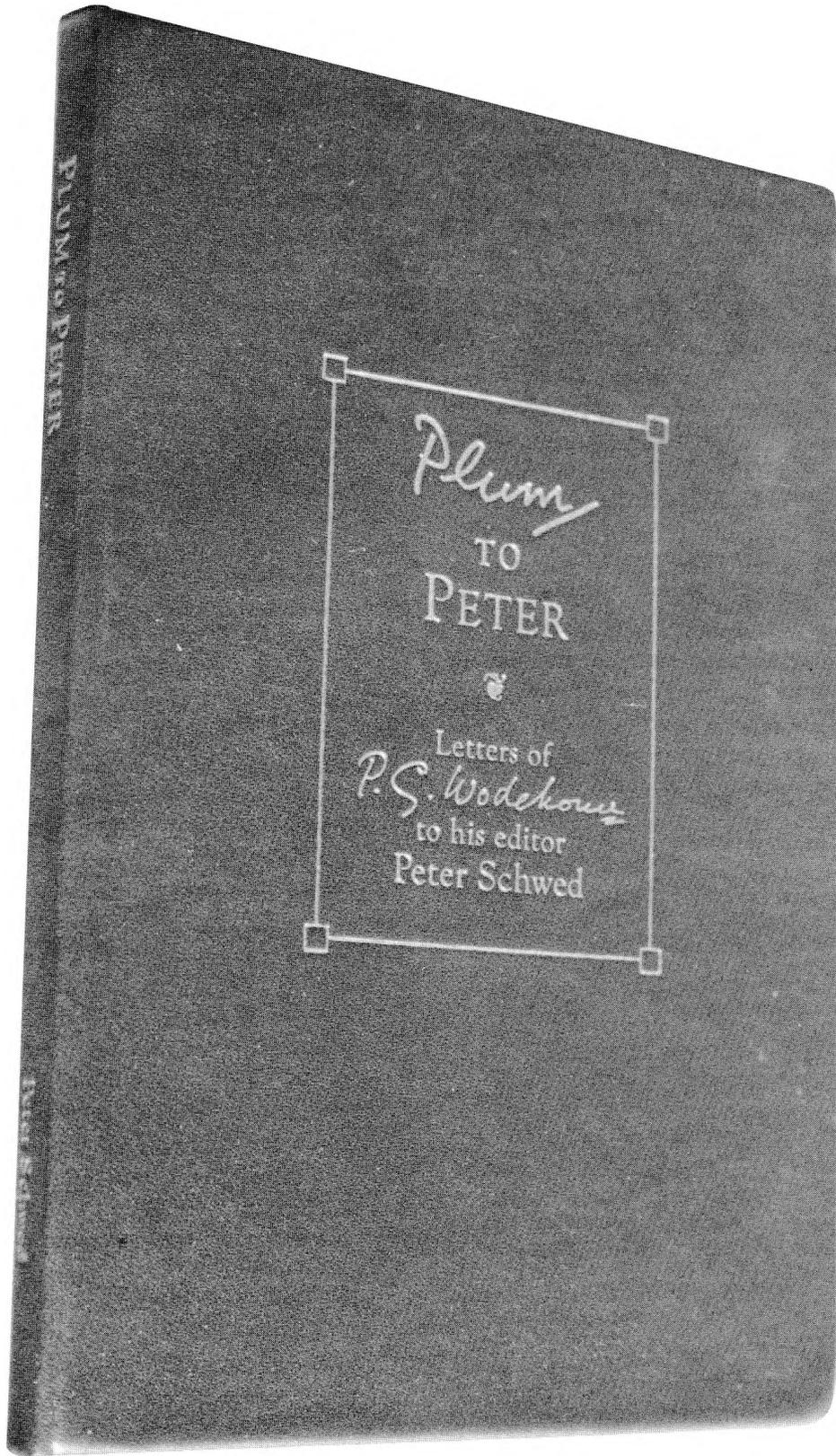
Except, now, I wasn't so sure that this silence masked a deep grief about his exile. After running the film about 15 times the editor and I decided he looked positively cheerful.

I went back to the interviews I had filmed, and, in the transcript of a conversation with his biographer, Frances Donaldson, I found the clue that unlocked his character and began my realisation that there was something heroic about him.

"He wasn't," Lady Donaldson had said, "really there at all. He spent nearly all his waking life in the company of Jeeves and Bertie Wooster. And that was where he belonged." She was right.

The man had disappeared into his work, and there are very, very few writers good enough, or self-effacing enough about the craft of fiction, to be able to do that.

His isolated, impassioned pursuit of a fictional world that to a man as clever and well read as he was must have often seemed irrelevant or absurd (it is very important not to confuse Wodehouse with Wooster) presents all serious writers, especially those who dare to make jokes, with an ideal that can only be described by the word "heroic."



WODEHOUSE AND "THOSE HEARTLESS, HAPLESS DRONES"

By Jan Piggott

Dr. Piggott is Archivist and Head of the P. G. Wodehouse Library of Dulwich College. In the argot of the underworld the following article might be described as an inside job.

—OM

THE origins of writers' numinous words are always interesting. Wodehouse in his penultimate year as a schoolboy sang a song about some Drones at an end-of-term Concert in the Great Hall at Dulwich College, on 31 July, 1899. We reproduce the evening's programme here. "Hybrias the Cretan," Wodehouse's choice, has a lyric by the neglected Scottish poet, Thomas Campbell (1777-1844). Campbell was known as the "Bard of Hope": he wrote "The Pleasures of Hope" in reply to Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), the "Bard of Memory" who wrote "The Pleasures of Memory." Campbell's lyric describes the bringing into obsequious submission the unsporting and the pacifists by the energetic Hybrias the Cretan; these feeble creatures are described as "heartless, hapless drones;" Wodehouse presumably shared the contempt for these, as if they were slacking or swotting schoolboys. This is the lyric:

Song of Hybrias the Cretan

My wealth's a burly spear and brand,
And a right good shield of hides untann'd,
Which on my arm I buckle:
With these I plough, I reap, I sow,
And all around me truckle.

But your wights that take no pride to wield
A massy spear and well-made shield,
Nor joy to draw the sword:
Oh, I bring those heartless, hapless drones,
Down in a trice on their marrow-bones,
To call me King and Lord.

Wodehouse was an editor of the College magazine, called *The Alleynian* (after the Founder in 1619 of Dulwich College, Edward Alleyn, the famous actor who created the main roles for the first nights of Christopher Marlowe's plays). There are many uncollected and unpublished pieces by Wodehouse to be found in *The Alleynian*, with examples of his developing wit and standpoint. The "Poem on the New Football Ground" published in February 1899 is fairly well known, with its sparkish

February 1899 is fairly well known, with its sparkish rhyming of a satiric view of the schoolboy's academic life as compared to the sporting life: "a book of Coptic" is followed by "met my optic." This was signed by the initials P.G.W.; most of the contributions to the magazine in those days were unsigned or given a clever *nom de plume*. Reviews were always anonymous. Two reasons lead me to believe that the review which follows of the same concert published in *The Alleynian* Vol. XXVII, no. 197, pp. 260-1, is by the boy Master himself: the description of Wodehouse's own performance discreetly avoids a comment on the quality of the singing; then there is the general tone, the reference to Lewis Carroll, and even the (possibly subliminal) echo of Campbell in the use of the word *drone*—admittedly with another quite different semantic reference.

The tone of the review stands at an ironic angle to the conventional, in the same way as in a contemporary photograph of Arthur Herman Gilkes the famous Master (Headmaster) of Dulwich College posed in front of the great College doors with his prefects, Wodehouse is the only boy conspicuously not aligning his face fully with the photographer. He stands, a pillar of the establishment, against a marble pillar and Gothic capital. The reviewer in his account of the song is also obviously fascinated (as Wodehouse would be) with the play of meaning, the absurdities of the pseudo-classical syntax and the stage properties of the lyric, and with the ludicrous contrast of the turn-of-the-century schoolboy singing the song of the swaggering self-satisfied Cretan.

Wodehouse was so loyal to his school and to *The Alleynian* that he continued for many years, until the onset of War, to write up the College's first team cricket and Rugby football matches, even when he was already a celebrated writer and had to cross the Channel from Le Touquet to watch the games. It was also in *The Alleynian* that he chose to publish the only statement which he made in Britain about his internment and the broadcasts, made shortly after the close of war, in the form of an extract from a letter he wrote to R.T. "Beaky" Rees, a Dulwich master.



Jan has provided another *Alleynian* article which he "strongly suspects" is by Wodehouse. It includes a mention of "dropping in at the Bath." Sound familiar? See the article on page 4. —OM

Dulwich



College.

PROGRAMME

of Concert

... ON ...

Monday, 31st July, 1899.



PROGRAMME

Part I.

1. SCHOOL SONG "Pueri Alleynienses"
2. SELECTION from "L'ALLEGRO" *Handel.*
 - (1) *Recit.* — "Hence, loathed Melancholy."
 - (2) *Chorus* { "Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter, holding both his sides."
 - (3) *Chorus* { "Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe."
3. PIANO SOLOS (1) "Lied ohne Worter" ("The Bees' Wedding") *Mendelssohn.*
H. B. STEVENSON.
(2) "Polish Dance" *Scharwenka.*
M. L. HYDES.
4. SELECTION from "L'ALLEGRO" *Handel.*
 - (5) *Solo* — "Mirth, admit me of thy crew."
J. J. ANDERSON.
 - (6) *Solo* — "Let me wander not unseen."
W. D. GIBSON.
 - (7) *Chorus* { "And young and old, come forth to play,
On a sunshine holy-day."
5. VIOLIN TRIO *Wickl.*
MR. GOTTHEIMER, H. W. A. FOSTER, AND G. F. T. OAKES.
6. SELECTION from "L'ALLEGRO" *Handel.*
 - (8) { *Solo &* "Populous cities please us then,
Chorus And the busy hum of men."
J. J. ANDERSON.
 - (9) *Chorus* { "These delights, if thou can'st give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live."

The Concert.



THE basis of this year's concert was "L'Allegro," words by J. Milton, music by Handel. The choir had spent a good deal of time over this fine piece, and did themselves justice on Concert Night. What solos were required were despatched by Anderson in fine style. Anderson has a very good, clear voice. He was especially good in "Populous Cities." This number was, perhaps, the best, the drone accompaniment to "and the busy hum of men" blending with the voice to perfection. Anderson also had another solo, in which he again distinguished himself. Sing, then, muse, of the "Diver," as ably rendered by Luscombe. Luscombe is of the "vox et praeterea nihil" class. The voice is certainly there, but where are the words? They softly and silently vanish away, like the man who saw a Boojum instead of a snark. In the last line of the "Diver" a special run was inserted for positively this occasion only. The run started on the lowest note possible, and then went steadily lower and lower. A most creepy effect. How can we describe Gibbon in "Songs of Araby?" It was immense. Gibbon was in fine voice, and as "Songs of Araby" is one of the best of tenor songs, the result was magnificent. The "Pilgrim's Hymn" did not go quite as well as at rehearsal, but it was distinctly well rendered, considering the difficulty of the piece. After this Wodehouse sang "Hybreas the Cretan." From this song we learn that, if there is but one thing that Wodehouse works in more than a burly spear and brand, it is a massy shield of hides untanned, which on his arm he buckles.

The concert ended with the school song "Good-bye," which was admirably sung by Gibbon.

"God save the Queen," "Auld Lang Syne," and the usual cheers, brought the proceedings to a close.

Part II.

7. GUN "Since first I saw your face" *Ford*
 8. MINUET AND ALLEGRO, from "Concerto No. 5." for Strings *Handel.*
 9. SONG "The Diver" *Loder.*
G. S. LUSCOMBE.
 10. PART SONG "The Bride hath paced into the hall" *Barnett.*
(For Boys' Voices) (From "THE ANCIENT MARINER")
 11. CLARINET SOLO "Serenade" *Thür.*
A. RAWORTH.
 12. SONG "I'll sing thee songs of Araby" *Clay.*
W. D. GIBSON.
 13. PIANO SOLO "Norwegian Bridal Procession" *Grieg.*
L. S. MORTON.
 14. PILGRIMS' CHORUS, from "Tannhäuser," for Men's Voices *Wagner.*
 15. EUPHONIUM SOLO "O ruddier than the Cherry" *Handel.*
C. W. THOMAS.
 16. SONG "Hybris the Cretan" *Elliott.*
P. G. WODEHOUSE.
 17. VIOLIN SOLO
 18. SCHOOL SONG "Good-bye" *Handel.*
W. D. GIBSON.
- — —
"AULD LANG SYNE"
— — —
"God Save the Queen."

THE DRONES VISIT LE TOUQUET

By Tony Ring

THE years rolled back to the 1930s as four members of the Drones Club, together with associated ladies, set out on 29 September to determine whether the facilities of Le Touquet and its golf links would meet the exacting standards required for the Club's autumn golf weekend. They trickled along to Biggin Hill International Airport, forced open the front door, and climbed aboard a nine-seater Piper Navajo to start their journey.

One of the advantages that P. G. Wodehouse claimed for Le Touquet was that it was only an hour by plane from England, and so it proved, forty minutes being ample for the pilot to drop us down at the airport (opened in 1936), right into the middle of a scene which could easily have featured in *Frozen Assets*.

If you recall, Jerry Shoesmith went to a Paris police station to report that he had lost his wallet, only to discover that it had been handed in as lost property to the police sergeant to whom he spoken. After taking down all the details, and clearing the matter with his superior, he showed it to Jerry and told him he could collect it from a different location in three days. Even though Jerry needed to return to England the following day.

The context of our arrival differed slightly, but still featured a policeman with almost shaven head and Poirot-style moustaches who was determined to make, as Anatole would have put it, two mountains out of some molehills. Four golfers had arrived on an earlier flight, and been apparently stranded at the airport with not a taxi in sight. The foresight of the Drones had caused a minibus to be waiting for us, and the *chauffeur* had presented himself early. Being filled with the right spirit, he had welcomed the foreign guests, learned of their distress, and taken them the couple of miles to their hotel. By the time of his return, two registered taxis had shown up, and the drivers, taking exception to his gesture of European coopera-

tion and *bonhomie*, promptly blocked the minibus and called the police. To watch "M. Poirot" (yes, we know he's really Belgian) get out his little table from the police van, sit down, call for documents and take statements brought a cheerful smile to all our faces. We were never quite sure that the performance had not been staged for our benefit.

In the sweepstake to determine which hotel would be lucky enough to act as our host, Oofy Prosser had drawn the Westminster, so, inevitably, it was the Westminster which came out of the hat. It provided an excellent lunch for Le Touquet's *maire* and his wife, its Director of Tourisme (a title awarded the winner of the "most-out-of-period experience" of the weekend), and the curator of its museum. Despite the temptation of three separate speeches, each fortuitously short, the Drones inexplicably chose to eat their bread rolls rather than throw them. Two of them (the Drones, not the bread rolls) each exhibited a look of furtive shame, the shifty, hangdog look immortalised by Monty Bodkin, as they conveyed appropriate thanks and greetings to our guests.

It is well known that one of the finest houses in Le Touquet has been and still is Low Wood, on the junction of Avenue du Golf and Avenue Allen Stoneham. This property, owned by the Wodehouses in the 1930s, is for sale, and in an astute move, the Drones kidnapped the estate agent and received the grand tour. It was clear from photographs that one end of the house had been reconstructed, possibly following wartime damage, but the bulk of the property was recognisably the same, and the grounds of around an acre were still well maintained, with lawns, flowerbeds and many trees.

In the first chapter of *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* (*Bravo, Oncle Fred* in the French translation) some of the action takes place on the fourteenth



fairway of the golf links at Le Touquet, and at the house adjacent to it. The fourteenth hole became the ninth when the course was reconstructed in the 1950s and is now the eighteenth, but astute readers will have guessed that it was the hole which abuts Low Wood. Two of the Drones clambered over the barbed wire on to the fairway and walked the remainder of the hole, reversing the steps of Claude Port and Valerie Twistleton-Twistleton.

After excellent browsing and sluicing first at Le Manoir hotel and then at one of those restaurants you wished you could find round the corner, it was decided to try our luck at the Casino. In many of his letters P. G. Wodehouse reported mixed fortunes at the tables, but for some inexplicable (I checked the spelling with Ikey Llewellyn) reason tended to concentrate on the three milles francs or so which he won, alongside the similar sum which Ethel had lost.

Our plans were initially thwarted by the refusal of the casino management to admit us, not because they thought we had brought along Bingo Little's infallible system, but because they thought we might have been under eighteen. Or so it seemed, for when three of the more intrepid members of the party returned later with passports showing photographs and dates of birth, we were admitted without a murmur.

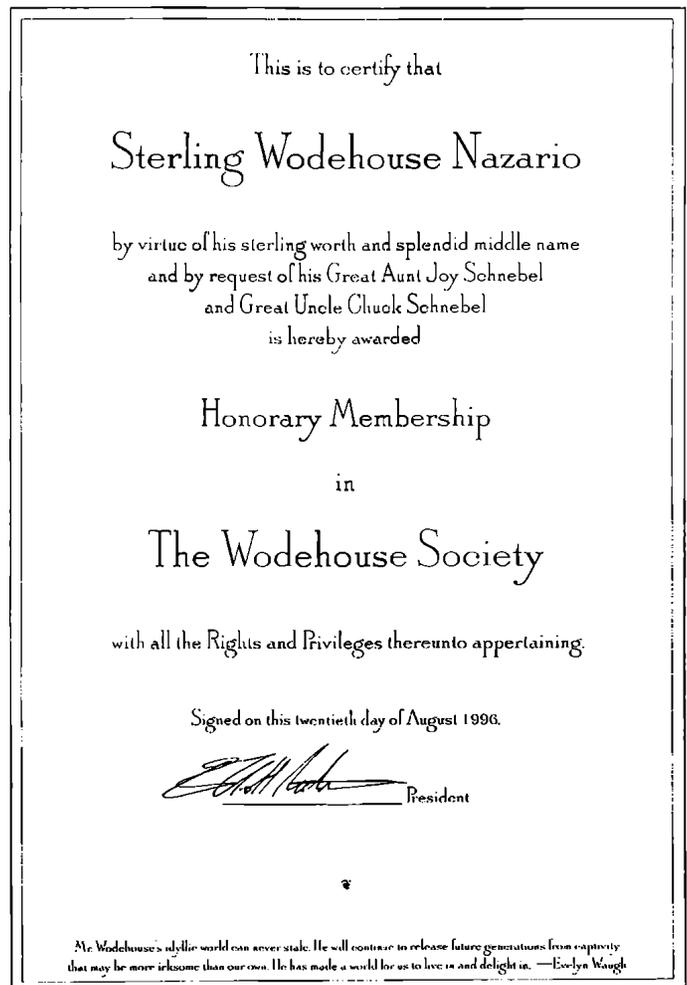
The weather on Sunday remained dry, but the main topic of conversation was whether the wind, now strong enough to blow the trees almost horizontal, would prevent our return that afternoon. This particularly concerned the one of our number who was due to preside over Boshier Street Police Court at 10.30 the next day. A secondary aspect of the matter was what the future might hold, or might not hold, if the wind took its toll after our planned lunchtime feast under the guidance of a local Anatole.

These problems were put on one side during a visit to the Museum, which features an excellent history of the town which was founded in 1882 with the name *Paris-Plage*, reflecting its creation as an escape from the capital. This exhibition is backed up by modern and mainly impressionist art, with something to cater for all tastes.

To the regret of some, but relief of others, the wind level was low enough for a safe, if bumpy, return flight. The sight of a horizontal windsock bearing the advertising legend 'Airfix' caused raised eyebrows as we contemplated the solidity of our aircraft's infrastructure, but we landed safely enough.

Before parting we agreed our recommendations to the Entertainments Committee of the Drones: that Le Touquet would be a most suitable location for the autumn weekend, but that due to its lack of decoration and suitable furniture we should not seek to rent Low Wood as our headquarters.

STERLING WODEHOUSE NAZARIO



OUR society has just acquired a very special honorary member. Joy and Charles Schnebel of Laguna Niguel, California, joined recently and asked whether a great nephew, born in May, might be granted honorary membership in our society. When we learned that the baby's name was Sterling Wodehouse Nazario, and that his parents had chosen that magic middle name in tribute to Plum, there could be only one answer. It was but the work of a moment to cobble up a certificate and ask President Elliot Milstein to sign it and send it to the Schnebels for their new relative.

We welcome Sterling Wodehouse Nazario with warmth and delight, and wish for him a lifetime of joy and innocent pleasure with the stories of our beloved Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse. It is surely appropriate to refer to Sterling as the Youngest Member, or YM. —OM

NEW MEMBERS

WODEHOUSE ON TELEVISION

Donald Daniel and Alex Hemming sent me this article from a December 1995 issue of the English *Daily Telegraph*. It was printed just before the first showing of *Heavy Weather* on television in Britain, and looks at the history of transferring P. G. Wodehouse to the little screen. —OM

PROBABLY the best TV adaptation of P.G. Wodehouse yet put on our screens was the original Jeeves and Bertie series, *The World of Wooster*, produced by the BBC in 1965. It had the late Dennis Price as Jeeves and Ian Carmichael as Bertie, and I can still remember the split-level set which represented Bertie's plush maisonette in Berkeley Mansions, Mayfair.

Regrettably, the series also had audience laughter on the tape, but that was because, like all its immediate successors, it was produced by Light Entertainment. Wodehouse himself approved of Price's wonderfully urbane Jeeves and conceded that Carmichael was the best Bertie available, in the unavoidable absence of Ralph Lynn.

When Sir Pelham ('Plum') Wodehouse died in 1975, forty-five days after receiving his belated knighthood, he left more than ninety books (one for every year of his life), around thirty stage works, uncounted lyrics, and a reputation, slightly dented in the post-war years but long since recovered, as our greatest humorous writer. At least two of his characters—Bertie Wooster and his valet Jeeves—have passed into national [worldwide! —OM] folklore. Twenty years after his death Wodehouse societies flourish, especially in the United States. In India alone, his books sell a million copies annually. In Japan and some European countries they are set exam texts.

Attempts to translate the world of Wodehouse to other media, including several which did not exist when he began writing, have hardly lagged behind his popularity in print. The cinema (silent and talking), television, stage and radio have all offered their versions of the Master's creations, a parade of English eccentrics second in richness and variety only to those of Dickens. Jeeves has even been made into the hero of a Lloyd Webber musical.

Christmas Eve will see the latest of the oeuvre, a ninety-five minute version of the 1933 novel *Heavy Weather*, involving the ninth Earl of Emsworth, his irrepressible brother Galahad, his formidable sister Constance, and his prize pig Empress of Blandings. Unlike earlier BBC adaptations, it has been largely shot on location. It's also the first time that a complete Wode-

house novel, as opposed to distillations from the short stories, has been put on the TV screen.

As a Wodehouse buff since the age of 12, I have always felt slightly uneasy about even the best-intentioned efforts at turning the books into scripts. In his vintage years—which is to say, roughly between the two world wars—the Wodehouse brand of humour moved unstoppably from semi-straight comedy to farce and then closer to inspired fantasy, though he always maintained that his characters were rooted in personal experience. And once you put flesh on fantasy, trying to pin down the sublime barminess of Lord Emsworth, or the superhuman aura of Jeeves, you risk destroying it.

The ultimate magic, as all admirers will tell you, lies in his prose. Pick up any prime Wodehouse and reading the descriptive passages is like running a hot knife through best butter. Half a century on they still make me chuckle. Not even Douglas Livingstone, the veteran TV writer who has adapted *Heavy Weather*, or its distinguished director, Jack Gold, could hope to find a television equivalent for Wodehouse's evocation of the Empress tucking into her bran mash: 'A sort of gulpy, gurgly, plobby, squishy, waffle-some sound, like a thousand eager men drinking soup in a foreign restaurant.'

Livingstone, creator of *Boys from the Bush* and many one-off TV plays, analyses part of the Wodehouse problem as 'trying to reconcile the energy of the plots with the languor of most of the characters.' Or, putting it another way, trying to convey to a modern audience the depth of anguish aroused among the Wodehousian *beau monde* by the wearing of the wrong kind of evening tie, or the publication of scandalous reminiscences by an elderly roué (almost the sole motivation of the *Heavy Weather* plot).

Wodehouse appeared to be laying down a definitive view on adaptation when he wrote in his preface to the first *Jeeves Omnibus*: 'Jeeves knows his place, and it is between the covers of a book.' That, however, was in 1952. By the time the BBC had secured the rights to the first Jeeves series, the Master had modified his tune. He was, he said, no longer worried about selling his soul for gold. 'I just asked them how much gold they had in mind.'

Gold had in fact been flowing from non-literary sources since early on in the author's career. Hollywood put him on the silent screen with *A Gentleman of Leisure* as long ago as 1915. Wodehouse himself co-scripted many film

adaptations in the 1920s and 1930s. David Niven played Bertie in a 1936 Jeeves movie and Richard Briers, one of next Sunday's stars, turned up in a 1961 version of *The Girl on the Boat*.

Television, in contrast, was remarkably slow to catch up, but then it was not invented until Wodehouse was in his midfifties. The 1965 *World of Wooster* was followed by a batch of Blandings tales, with Sir Ralph Richardson as a highly credible Lord Emsworth and Stanley Holloway horribly miscast as Beach, the butler.

Then came Ukridge, Wodehouse's latter-day Micawber eternally on the verge of making his fortune, played by Anton Rodgers, and John Alderton and Pauline Collins in a selection of the Mr Mulliner stories, which for my money are some of the funniest in the Wodehouse canon. Benny Green, a dyed-in-the-wool aficionado, considers these to have been the best adaptations ever, scoring 100 per cent for authenticity in least two episodes.

After that—from the mid-1970s onwards—there was an unaccountable gap. It was the literary agent of the Wodehouse estate, Rod Hall, who decided the time had come for a TV revival. Whether moved by a posthumous sense of duty to the author or by the financial benefit to Wodehouse's heirs, he suggested to independent producer Brian Eastman that some new Jeeves and Wooster series made on handsome film locations and without audience laughter, would go down well.

And so it did, earning hit ratings for Granada Television for four years up 1993 and the qualified approval of buffs such Norman Murphy of the Wodehouse Society who believes that the play of emotion across the expressive features of Hugh Laurie as Bertie ('Shock, horror, revelation, and back to horror again') came closest mirroring Wodehouse's eloquent prose.

Sticking my neck out, I predict that Sunday's piece, the longest chunk of TV Wodehouse so far delivered at a sitting, will find general favour. If it lacks a clinching overall style, it is undeniably faithful to the original. It is agreeably located at Sudeley Castle—the Gloucestershire pile on which Wodehouse is said to have based Blandings and has splendid performances of just the right farceur weight from Richard Briers as Uncle Gally, Roy Hudd as a twinkly, avuncular Beach, and Sarah Badel as the snooty Lady Julia Fish.

SOMETHING NEW

John Fletcher reports that *Wodehouse Among the Chickens*, the third volume of the Wodehouse Concordance, has just been published. It covers the Ukridge stories. John notes that "The cover says 'Vol. 4' instead of 'Vol. 3,' so the story we are putting about is that there has been a delay with Volume 3, which will come out next year, ready for the Chicago convention. It will deal with the school stories."

William Hardwick notes that "BBC have issued a new cassette entitled 'The Oldest Member,' consisting of dramatisations of six golfing short stories. The cassette number is (?) ZBBC 1783, ISBN 0-563-38802-1, price £7.99. They were originally broadcast during Dec 94/Jan 95 and reported in *Plum Lines* Spring 95, page 11."

Jan Kaufman and Pauline Blanc report that A Common Reader offers the Donaldson biography and thirty-seven of Plum's books, all in paperback, as well as *Yours, Plum*, *The Letters of P. G. Wodehouse*, and *The Amazing Adventures of the Wodehouse Society* in hardcover. *Amazing Adventures* is Norman Murphy's account of our Wodehouse Pilgrimage of 1989; the small book was beautifully produced by Jimmy Heineman.

In addition, and this is a quite remarkable offer, A Common Reader lists the six-volume set of "The Great Sermon Handicap" published by Jimmy Heineman in many languages, for only \$50, a great reduction from its original price. "In limited supply" the catalog says, so act quickly if you want a set.

This is an excellent source for anyone beginning a collection. To order or request a catalog, call (800) 832-7323.

Catalogs have been received from the following P. G. Wodehouse specialist booksellers: Charles E. Gould Jr., Fritz Menschaar, and Nigel Williams.

[The policeman] was taut and alert, as became an officer who, after a jog-trot existence of Saturday drunks and failures to abate smoky chimneys, finds himself faced for the first time with crime on a colossal scale.

Uncle Dynamite, 1948

WODEHOUSE AND *THE ALLEYNIAN*

By Benjamin Wolf

Alex Hemming, an Old Alleynian himself, kindly provided this article from a 1995 issue of *The Alleynian*, the Dulwich College magazine. Benjamin Wolf is the editor of the publication.

THIS academic year was the centenary of P. G. Wodehouse's entrance into the college [on May 2, 1894]. To mark this occasion Dr. Piggott [Archivist and head of the Wodehouse Library] presented an exhibition in the Wodehouse library on 'Wodehouse and Dulwich.' This article...is largely based on the information in that exhibition.

There are various mentions of Wodehouse when he was at the College. The first of these is in the Upper Third B team cricket listings of November 1894. Wodehouse's sporting achievements were considerable, and his fine bowling performances for the College's first XI are recorded in the *Alleynians* of the late 1890s.

More interesting than these are the mentions of Wodehouse's musical performance. the following is an extract from a concert review of July 1899:

...After this Wodehouse sang 'Hybreas the Cretan.' From this song we learn that if there is but one thing Wodehouse works in more than a burly spear and brand, it a massy shield of hides untanned, which on his arm he buckles.

This from February 1900, when Wodehouse was one of the four editors of the magazine:

Wodehouse then informed the audience kindly but firmly of his intention of departing for 'for'ing' parts on the morrow...At the repetition of the last verse, the gallery joined in the chorus. The start was fair, but the superior stamina of the many told in the end, and, after a grueling race, the singer was beaten by a bar and two notes.

There were several contributions made by Wodehouse to the magazine, which perhaps showed evidence of his literary talents. From 1898:

On the New Football Ground

As I was strolling through the field,
I heard a sudden call come!
A silvery sound stole o'er the ground,
And whispered—'Let 'em all come!'

I raised my eye (which I had fixed

Upon a book of Coptic),
And close at hand a dauntless band
Of diggers met my optic
I watched them dig; I watched them rest,
(Which happened rather often!)
And then I threw myself into
The breach, their work to soften.

And oft did we, although disturbed
By rain and wintry breezes,
Remove by force from off the course
The weighty trunks of treeses!

To move a trunk that weighs a ton
Demands no meager caution;
And these were but a little bit
From off the upper portion!

Besides the trees were countless piles
Of bricks and other rubble;
And heaps of clay we cleared away
With spade, and cart, and trouble!

But now at last the deed is did!
Our toil at length is ended!
With great success we've cleared the mess
And all in the garden's splendid!

On Purely Hypothetical Subjects

If a person decides that a fee of five shilling
For joining a club is immense
And states in the Press that he's very unwilling
To go to such fearful expense;
If with scathing replies angry OA's should rout him,
And hint that if he will not pay,
Perhaps they can manage to get on without him,
Oh, will he be popular, eh?

If a double-dyed scoundrel should say that the Boarders
Possess a plethora of hats,
Whereas one cap for all, he is perfectly sure, does,
Who, prithee, will not reply—'Nonsense!'
But if he retracts this disgraceful suggestion,
Unworthy Alleynian's pen,
I think I am right in proposing this question:
Oh! will he be popular, then?

Wodehouse was extremely fond of his school, and this fondness extended to the magazine of which he had once been editor. He continued to subscribe to the magazine after he left. Indeed contributions from Wodehouse continued. There is a long article in May 1902 entitled 'My Friend the Villain,' which discussed the villain in school stories. He also reviewed sport in 1902-05 and in 1920-39.

However, the most important piece of evidence concerning Wodehouse's feelings for Dulwich and its magazine came in 1945. Wodehouse had been attacked in the British press for the broadcasts he made while [in Berlin during the war]. He was accused, wrongly, of aiding Nazi propaganda efforts. Wodehouse was distressed by the negative attitude towards him that was prevalent at the College, and wrote a letter, which defended his actions, to R. T. Reese for publication in *The Alleynian*. It appeared in the magazine in 1945. There is not sufficient space to quote the letter in its entirety, even though

it was not published in full in the first place, but these extracts will hopefully suffice (all ellipses in these extracts are not original):

Sir,

I have received from Mr. P. G. Wodehouse a letter which is too long for publication in full, but extracts from it may interest your readers. It begins:

"I had a letter from Bill Townend a few days ago, handing me on the gist of a letter which you wrote to him regarding the feeling at Dulwich about me. He writes:

'Rees says he feels you ought to know that Dulwich opinion regarding the broadcasts is very critical, even hostile, because the general idea is that you were persuaded to broadcast by the Nazis in order to add interest to their propaganda in return for some measure of liberty, and that what is needed is a brief account of what actually happened.

'I don't know if you have read a book by Harry Flannery called—I think—*Berlin Assignment*, in which he states that a representative of the German propaganda office came to see me in camp and arranged with me that I should be released in order to broadcast. This is absolutely untrue...

'What happened was this. I was released on June 21, 1941, a few months before I was sixty...

'On arrival in Berlin I ran into a very old friend of mine, a German who had been at Hollywood with me. I was telling him about life in camp, and a friend of his, who joined us, suggested that I might like to broadcast an account of my experiences to my American readers... All through the last ten months of my internment I had been receiving letters from American readers, very anxious to know how I was getting on and I had not been able to answer any of these, as in camp you are allowed to write only to near relatives.

'I felt that these people, not knowing the circumstances, would be thinking me ungrateful and ungracious for ignoring their letters, and it seemed to me that by broadcasting my experiences I could make a sort of interim acknowledgment... I can see now, of course, how idiotic it was of me to do such a thing and I naturally regret it very much, but at the time it never struck me that I was doing anything wrong...

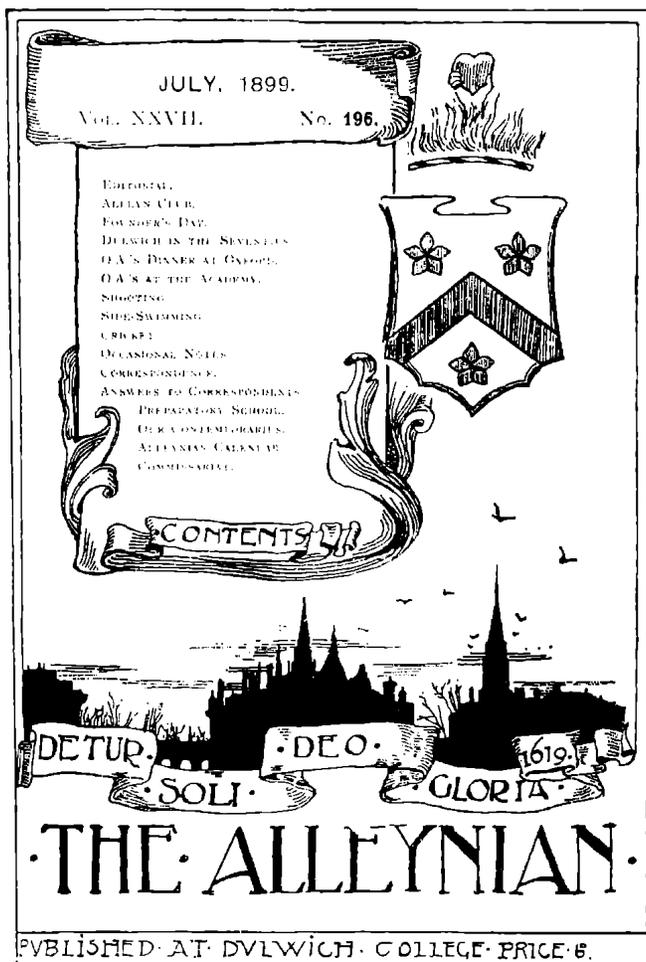
'...it was only after my wife arrived in Berlin on July 28, just after the last talk had been broadcast, that I heard of the reaction in England.

'I can see now, of course, that I was tricked into making these talks, and I naturally feel a damned fool, but I hope I have made it clear that there was never anything in the nature of a bargain with the Germans...'

Mr. Wodehouse says that he has already given this account to Government Officials, but he would like to have the main facts published in *The Alleynian*.

I am, Sir, Yours, etc.

R. T. Reese



PRINTED AT THE COLLEGE HOUSE STATIONERY SHOP, DULWICH.

The July 1899 cover of *The Alleynian*, at the time when P. G. Wodehouse was an editor. This was the month of the school concert at which Plum sang "Hybrias the Cretan."

Wodehouse continued to subscribe to *The Alleynian* after the end of the war, despite living in America. References to the magazine, some less than complimentary, are found in several of his letters, especially those

written to McCullough Christison, who was affectionately known as 'Slacker':

Dec 7 1945
36 Boulevard Suchet, Paris

Dear Slacker,

Will you note the above address and send *The Alleynian* to me here instead of to the British consulate. Directly I can get a cheque book I will send you a cheque for the various subscriptions I must owe.

I got the November *Alleynian* but not the October number, so I don't know if there were any comments on the letter I wrote. Did you hear of any? I hope all my friends at Dulwich found my explanation satisfactory.

March 1, 1969
Remsenburg
New York 11960

Dear Slacker,

...I hear OAs are no longer to get the *Alleynian*. Not much loss in my opinion, for they have ruined it with all this art photography and bad poetry.

April 1, 1969

Dear Mr. Lloyd,

I was making my will yesterday, and I chalked up five thousand dollars for the Building Fund, so they will get it all right eventually.

I think the reason I shake my head a bit at the present *Alleynian* is that as an old football reporter it shocks me to see so little space given to Ruggie. In my day it never took less than two pages.

I will certainly dig up something for the anniversary issue.

With best wishes
Yours sincerely

P. G. Wodehouse

Wodehouse's relationship with *The Alleynian* continued, and an article he wrote on his time at Dulwich appeared in the Summer 1969 issue. Then, in 1975, when Wodehouse died, *The Alleynian* published an obituary in which he was praised for his 'constant interest in the affairs of the College and the fondness with which he spoke of his days at Dulwich'; a fitting end to a lifetime's association.

CHICAGO 1997!

Mark your calendars now! Make travel plans early!

Chicago and All That Jazz! October 2 to 5, 1997

The Chicago Accident Syndicate is gathering its forces, and plans for big doings are underway. More news soon!

A FEW QUICK ONES

John Fletcher writes that he was part of a small group of Wodehousians who gathered one evening in May to hear The Thames Singers in concert at the Dulwich Picture Gallery. The second half of the concert quite properly included a number of songs with lyrics by Wodehouse. "Bill," for one. John notes that "**Tony Ring** arrived having driven like a mad thing from Scarborough where he had been seeing *By Jeeves* and writing the programme notes for it. He had also briefed the compère at Dulwich so that he made the right announcements about PGW, and for that he and **Elaine** had to sit in front to collect the magnum of napoleon brandy which was the society's way of saying 'thank you.' " We all have our burdens to bear.

I printed **David Landman's** poem *Wode* in the last *Plum Lines* with half a line missing, making David look semi-literate at best. Here's the way the stanza should have appeared:

Kowtowing I say, "Ma'am, I've no sins for
All the horses of passion I've whoa'd.
But I'm no chevalier for old Windsor
The House that I'm preux for is Wode."

My apologies to David for de-scansioning his poem.

—OM

"Your sermon was a success?"
"Well, they didn't rush the pulpit."
"You're too modest, Bill Bailey. I'll bet you had them rolling in the aisles and carried out on stretchers."

Service with a Smile, 1962

SECRET WARTIME PGW PAPERS RELEASED

LONG-SECRET documents released by the British Public Record Office on September 30, 1996 reveal a great mass of official opinions about Wodehouse's activities in the Second World War. They conclude, to put it very briefly, that he was not a traitor and was guilty of nothing worse than bad judgment. As far as I can see they add nothing of importance to the *information* presented in Iain Sproat's *Wodehouse at War* (New Haven and New York, 1981), although they do present distasteful displays of high officials who were themselves making very bad judgments. The whole affair is probably well known to most members of our society, but those unfamiliar with it will find a brief description in "How Whitehall tried to ban Wodehouse" elsewhere in this issue.

The contents of the official documents make one wonder why they were ever considered secret. They contain a great deal of internal government correspondence about Wodehouse,—official vilifications, official proposals about what to do with him and his writings, and so on, but what all that has to do with the defense of the realm is a mystery. Sproat thinks the papers may have been classified as secret because another internee, who was released at the same time as PGW, traveled to Berlin with him, and was named in the papers, might have been a traitor.

The release of the secret papers received considerable attention in the British press, often on the front pages, before and after September 30. The newspaper articles sent to me, covering a broad political spectrum, were uniformly sympathetic to Wodehouse. It is sad to see that some letters to the editor, responding to the articles, still describe Wodehouse as a traitor more than half a century later. An editorial in the *English Daily Telegraph* of October 1 perhaps sums up the present feeling best. It concludes as follows:

Given that Britain was in peril, and that Hitler's forces were conquering Europe, apparently inexorably, during 1940 and 1941, the outrage expressed by Wodehouse's detractors is understandable. But, fifty years on, his fall from grace is best seen as a token of this century's barbarism, from which Wodehouse's fiction stands delightfully apart. His cardinal error, in this literal and unforgiving epoch, was to tell mild jokes about the Nazis; he described the narrow enclosure in which he was confined as being "constructed, apparently, by an architect who had seen the Black Hole of Calcutta and admired it. . ."

For this, he was to suffer for the rest of his life. It is ironic that he should have been made to pay for a misjudgment arising out of his incarceration, for, as Evelyn Waugh said: "He will continue to release future generations from captivity that may be more irk-

some than our own." The reason Wodehouse is widely read and loved is the same reason he was excoriated; it is that we live in the irksome captivity of a century so earnest it is deadly.

Let me recommend Iain Sproat's *Wodehouse at War* as by far the most detailed, careful presentation of the whole sad affair of P. G. Wodehouse, the German government, and the British government in the Second World War. Sproat was, when his book was published in 1981, a Conservative Member of Parliament for South Aberdeen, and is now Sports Minister. He proposed a knighthood for Plum in 1972, three years before it was granted, and it is doubtful that he would have been allowed access to the secret files in 1980, even after much effort, if he had been an ordinary citizen.

For the material in this article I am indebted to several members in England and America: **Pete Barnsley, Pauline Blanc, Donald Daniel, William Hardwick, Alex Hemming, and Helen Murphy.** —OM

WHEN WE'RE DRINKING PORT WITH BEACH

By Sue Marra Byham

All the world's within our reach
When we're drinking port with Beach.
Everything is bright and rosy
In his pantry, safe and cozy.
Bullfinch singing in his cage;
The merest drone becomes a sage.
The merest scheme grows sound and fruity;
Why should a policeman do his duty?
The law is definitely an ass!
(Australian uncles too shall pass.)
An angel as a butler dressed
Shares bottles of the very best.
Have another snifter, do!
Beach and port will get us through.

HOW WHITEHALL TRIED TO BAN WODEHOUSE

by David Millward and Nell Tweedie

Pete Barnsley, Wilfrid de Freitas, William Hardwick, and Helen Murphy found this article in the English *Daily Telegraph* of January 3, 1996.

PLANS to ban the work of P G Wodehouse because of his wartime broadcasts from Germany have emerged in Whitehall files opened yesterday under the 50-year rule.

The papers, made available at the Public Record Office in Kew, show how the Government was ready to silence a man regarded as the most English of writers.

Wodehouse, who was living as a tax exile in France, was interned by the Germans in 1940. After an initial spell at [an internment] camp, he and his wife, Ethel, were put up at the Hotel Adlon in Berlin and later at the equally opulent Hotel Bristol in Paris.

In return, during the summer of 1941, he broadcast from Berlin to then neutral America on several occasions, in addition to writing short stories that were carried in French fascist magazines. His behaviour caused uproar in Britain.

The broadcasts, however, were not virulently pro-German but whimsical descriptions of his internment intended merely to entertain his American audience.

But the author's wry portrayal of German captivity went down badly in Britain, especially with the families of prisoners of war.

The *Daily Express* dubbed him Herr Wodehouse and Whitehall's anger at his behaviour punctuates the yellowing files that show how several Government departments tried to devise a ban on the publication of any new work.

The issue was raised after the offending broadcasts by A P Watt & Son, Wodehouse's literary agents, who wanted to publish a next novel, *Money in the Bank*, and an article 'My Year behind Barbed Wire.'

The manuscript for *Money in the Bank* had been brought out of Germany by Stephen Laird, the Berlin correspondent for the magazines *Time* and *Life*.

But the book, which concerned the musings of Lord Uffeham, was given a hostile reception in Whitehall.

C. J. Radcliffe of the Ministry of Information wrote on Sept 26, 1941: 'Neither of these ought to be published in this country if it can be legitimately prevented. I quite appreciate that there will be American publication in one form or another and that Wodehouse's existing books are being sold without interference in this country.

'If he is to be allowed to produce a new publication

here, though in itself innocuous, there will be a widespread feeling that there was a dangerous laxity of attitude in the authorities, and an indifference to popular feeling.'

A draft order, under the Defence of the Realm Act, was produced forbidding anyone to publish or distribute anything he produced after he left Britain, but lawyers suggested it could not be sustained in court.

The Home Office concluded on Jan 27, 1942: "However desirable it may be to prevent Mr Wodehouse or his publishers from making more money, we think it is impossible to hold that a prohibition on the publication of his new novel or any future novels is necessary in the interest of the defence of the realm or the efficient prosecution of the war."

A variety of alternative routes was considered, including banning the books because of the wartime paper shortage: The Board of Trade suggested that the work could be stopped on the grounds that publishing the books would be "trading with the enemy." The novel, which was published by Doubleday Doran in New York, was finally printed in Britain in 1946.

One admirer, Lt-Col Norman Murphy, said yesterday that the author had been "set up" by Baron Eric von Barnekow, a friend from pre-war days, who persuaded him to take part in the broadcasts.

"Wodehouse was one of the most patriotic Englishmen there has been. He recorded the broadcasts after being asked by his fellow prisoners, who found them very funny. One has to remember that Wodehouse was a prisoner—he didn't know about the war."

Wodehouse was arrested as a German collaborator after the liberation of Paris in 1944 but was finally released in January 1945 and moved to [America] in 1947.

His rehabilitation was completed on January 1, 1975 when he was knighted. He died [six weeks] later, aged [93].



Corrections: Wodehouse did not make the broadcasts "in return" for his release from internment or his housing in luxury hotels, as the author implies. He was released because of age and lived in the hotels at his own expense. He made the broadcasts to his American fans who had written to him in his internment, as his only means of assuring them that he was all right. Internees were allowed to write only to their families.

—OM

MR. MULLINER AND HIS RELATIVES

By Robert Creamer

As far as I know the following article is the first serious analysis of the genealogy of Mr. Mulliner's *very* extended family. I think Bob Creamer has some surprises for us. The second and last part of the article will appear in the next *Plum Lines*. —OM

I wouldn't be surprised to learn that an analysis of Mr. Mulliner's relatives has been done before. And better. But as I haven't seen such a work I offer this attempt to tie together the loose twigs from Mr. Mulliner's family tree.

Some ground rules:

Because of Mr Mulliner's high regard for the truth, I take his delineation of relationships at face value. "All the Mulliners," he said, "loved the truth and hated any form of deception." I assume that when Mr. Mulliner says "nephew" he doesn't mean a vague relation. He means the child of one of his siblings. Similarly, when he says "cousin" he means "first cousin," the child of one of his parents' siblings.

That these narrow definitions are justified is evidenced by Mr. Mulliner's use of "cousin." Casual speakers may apply the term to amorphous relationships, but Mr. Mulliner's language is precise ("I trust that this revelation will prove sedative," he says in "Strychnine in the Soup") and he does not use it carelessly. At various times he refers to "my cousin," "my cousin Clarence," "my cousin Rupert's son," "a young second cousin of mine," "a distant cousin of mine," "the daughter of a distant cousin of mine," and "a distant connection of mine." The distinctions are clear. When Mr. Mulliner says cousin he doesn't mean any old cousin. He means first cousin. And when he says nephew he means nephew. Period. The child of a cousin is thus a "first cousin, once removed." Mr. Mulliner doesn't use this term, but I do.

In the 42 Mulliner stories Mr. Mulliner mentions 56 people who are blood relatives of his or who, by a stretch of the imagination (my stretch, which may be challenged) can be assumed to be blood relatives. By my reckoning they include 1 ancestor (the Sieur de Moulinières), 1 uncle (William), 1 aunt (Serena), 6 brothers (Wilfred, Joseph, Sholto, and three who are unnamed), 2 sisters (his nephew Adrian's Aunt Elizabeth, and his nephew Eustace's Aunt Georgiana Beazley-Beazley), 1 niece (Charlotte), 25 nephews (George the stammerer, Percival, Ferdinand, Augustine, Augustine's unnamed little brother, Lancelot the poet, Frederick,

George the doctor, Archibald, Ignatius, Osbert, Adrian, Sacheverell, Eustace, Egbert the editor, Cyril, Bulstrode, Mordred, Brancepeth, Augustus, Theophilus, Reginald, George the twin, George's twin brother Alfred, and an unnamed Argentinian); 8 first cousins (John San Francisco Earthquake, Clarence, Cedric, Lady Wickham, Lady Wickham's daughter's aunt Marcia, Edward, Rupert, and Egbert the obese), 5 first cousins, once removed (Roberta Wickham, Roberta's aunt Marcia's son Wilfred, Lancelot the cat sitter, Mervyn, and Anselm), 1 second cousin (unnamed and divorced), 4 distant cousins (James Rodman, Agnes Flack's mother, Agnes Flack and Montrose Mulliner), and 1 distant connection (Wilmot Mulliner).

Here's a dossier on the Mulliners along with their relationships to the Sage of The Anglers' Rest, apparent or surmised, and the stories in which they appear. "MULLINER" in all capital letters means that Mr. Mulliner, the narrator, uses the surname Mulliner in referring to the character and we thus have a positive ID. "Mulliner" with only the initial M capitalized means the name is not stated in the stories but is obviously Mulliner (Mr. Mulliner's brothers, for example). "Mulliner (?)" means the name is possible but cannot be verified in the text. A question (?) after a relationship indicates a beautifully worked out assumption on my part, one that is possible but which can be verified only by tortuous reasoning. A dash (—) means a name is not available. The stories are listed here in the order of their appearance in *The World of Mr. Mulliner*.

Here we go:

The Truth About George

1. MR. MULLINER, himself.

A fisherman. Has never told a lie in his life.

2. GEORGE MULLINER, Mr. Mulliner's nephew.

Stammers. Lives in village of East Wobsley, where he was born. Noted for speed of foot. Will marry Susan Blake of East Wobsley. Does not work, but his late father:

3. — — Mulliner, Mr. Mulliner's brother, left him with a comfortable income.

A Slice of Life

4. **WILFRED MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's brother.

Dark hair. Clean cut. The "clever one of the family," a chemist and creator of Mulliner's Magic Marvels, including Snow of the Mountain Lotion, Raven Gipsy Face Cream, Buck-U-Uppo and many other preparations. Club: Senior Test-Tubes. Married Angela Perdue, ward of Sir Jasper Finch-farrowmere of Finch Hall, Yorkshire. Two sons:

5. The small, or **PERCIVAL Mulliner**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew.

6. The large, or **FERDINAND Mulliner**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew.

Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo

7. **AUGUSTINE MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew.

Flaxen hair, weak blue eyes and (before taking Buck-U-Uppo) the general demeanor of a saintly but timid cod-fish. Curate at Lower Briskett-in-the-Midden under the vicar, later his father-in-law, the Rev. Stanley Brandon. Augustine is later secretary to the Bishop of Stortford, later still vicar of Steeple-Mummery, Hants and later still ("Gala Night") vicar of Walsingford-below-Chiveney-on-Thames.

He is a favorite of his Aunt Angela Mulliner, nee Perdue, wife of Mr. Mulliner's brother Wilfred, who sends him Buck-U-Uppo. Married Jane Brandon, daughter of Rev. Stanley Brandon. She later had the mumps ("Gala Night").

The Bishop's Move

Augustine Mulliner again, and his younger brother:

8. — — **Mulliner**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew, who is a student at Harchester. Face resembles a ripe tomato. Is a professional liar (fee £2).

Came The Dawn

9. **LANCELOT MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew.

Recently come down from Oxford. Is 24 and a poet since shortly after his 22nd birthday. Pen name: L. Bassington Mulliner. Writes threnodies. Sent to Oxford by Jeremiah Briggs of Villa Chutney, Putney, an uncle on his mother's side, proprietor of Briggs's Breakfast Pickles. Loves and loses Angela, daughter of the Earl of Biddlecombe, of Berkeley Square. Chucks poetry and pickles to become a movie actor in Hollywood. Proud of:

10. **SIEUR DE MOULINIERES**, Mr. Mulliner's ancestor, who came over with the Conqueror.

The Story of William

11. **WILLIAM MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's uncle.

Promised his mother he would not drink until he was 21, or 41—he could never remember which. Tea exporter,

world traveler. His eldest son is:

12. **J.S.F.E. (JOHN SAN FRANCISCO EARTH-QUAKE) MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's first cousin.

Note: William Mulliner was Mr. Mulliner's father's brother. Since J.S.F.E. Mulliner, was the "eldest" son, there had to be other children, possibly several. More on this later.

Portrait of a Disciplinarian

13. **FREDERICK MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew.

Doesn't like boiled eggs. Will marry Jane Oliphant. His brother is:

14. **DR. GEORGE MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew (the second named George) whose consulting room is in Bingley-on-Sea.

The Romance of a Bulb-Squeezer

15. **CLARENCE MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's first cousin.

Photographer. Member Amalgamated Bulb-Squeezers and could be their next president. Whispered he'll be on next Birthday Honours List. Half Scotch on his mother's side. A man of volcanic passions. Fiery temper. Sued by Jno. Horatio Biggs, newly elected mayor of Tooting East, for prodding him (Biggs) out of window with sharp end of tripod. Married Gladys Biggs, daughter of Jno. Horatio Biggs. The couple left the church under an arch of crossed tripods.

Note: Clarence may be one of William's sons, a younger brother of J.S.F.E.

Honeysuckle Cottage

16. **JAMES RODMAN**, Mr. Mulliner's distant cousin.

Mystery story writer. Bachelor. Londoner. Nephew of Miss Leila J. Pinckney of Honeysuckle Cottage, the sentimental novelist. Did not marry Rose Maynard.

The Reverent Wooing of Archibald

17. **ARCHIBALD MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew.

Exceptionally pinheaded. Mental age of nine. Had his brain been silk, not enough material to make camiknickers for a canary. Superannuated from Eton. Feels it was decent of Bacon to write Shakespeare's plays for him, although it may have been because Bacon owed Shakespeare money. Has a man, Meadows. Club: Drones. Skilled at imitating a hen laying an egg. Loves Aurelia Cammarleigh.

The Man Who Gave Up Smoking

18. **IGNATTUS MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew.

Artist, portrait painter. Makes a comfortable living.

Enjoys smoking but gives it up, temporarily. Will marry Hermione Rossiter, of Scantlebury Square, Kensington, sister of George and Cyprian Rossiter, both subhuman.

The Story of Cedric

19. **CEDRIC MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's first cousin. 45 and fat, with 45-inch waistline. Lives in London in comfortable rooms at the Albany. Lunches at home of Lord Knubble of Knopp in Grosvenor Square. Neat, trim, fussy, precise. A snob. One of six registered bores at his club.

Mr Mulliner is not fond of him.

An established authority on the subject of dress (the second son of a Marquis once sought his advice). Rumored to be writing his Memoirs or a monumental history of Spats. Impeccably dressed, except for yellow shoes. Will marry his secretary, Myrtle Watling, of 7, Nasturtium Villas, Marigold Road, Valley Fields.

The Ordeal of Osbert Mulliner

20. — — **Mulliner?** Mr. Mulliner's young second cousin, male. Married 11 months, filed for divorce because his wife would open her eyes to their fullest extent, put her head to one side like a canary, and say, "What?"

21. **OSBERT MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew.

Lives in South Audley Street, London. Pampered by Fortune since birth. Some skill at contract bridge. Has a man, Parker, who is five feet five in his socks. Collects old jade. Club: United Jade Collectors. Has a reputation as a brawler, unjustified. Will marry Mabel Petherick-Soames (niece of Major General Sir Masterman Petherick-Soames), who had been courted by J. Bashford Braddock, the explorer.

Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court

22. **CHARLOTTE MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's niece.

Poet. Ample private income. Inconsistent loather of blood sports but an excellent shot, nonetheless. Loves and will marry Aubrey Bassinger (pen name Aubrey Trefusis), younger brother of Reginald Bassinger, older brother of Wilfred Bassinger, son of Sir Alexander and Lady Bassinger, nephew of Colonel Sir Francis Pashley Drake, the big-game hunter, all in residence at Bludleigh Manor, Lesser Bludleigh, Goresby-on-the-Ouse, Bedfordshire (Telephone 28 Goresby).

Note: The Bishop of Stortford, Augustine Mulliner's benefactor, is a guest at Bludleigh Manor. The connection suggests that Charlotte may be Augustine's sister.

Those in Peril at the Tee

23. — — **Mulliner(?) FLACK**, Mr. Mulliner's distant cousin, a Devonshire Mulliner and mother of:

24. **AGNES FLACK**, Mr. Mulliner's even more distant cousin.

Scratch golfer. 5' 10" in her stockings. Shoulders and arms the envy of vaudeville strong women, eye like one of more imperious queens of history, laugh that causes strong men to clutch their temples. Has the appearance of one who is about to play Boadicea in a pageant. Loves Sidney McMurdo, who weighs 210 pounds, is also a scratch golfer and was once a semi-finalist in the Amateur championship.

Something Squishy

25. **LADY WICKHAM**, Mr Mulliner's first cousin.

Novelist. Pen name: George Masterman. Lives at Skeldings Hall, Hertfordshire (milk train leaving at 3:15 a.m. gets you into London at 6:45). Her daughter is:

26. **ROBERTA (BOBBIE) WICKHAM**, Mr Mulliner's first cousin, once removed. Remarkably beautiful, glorious red hair, hazel eyes. Looks sensational in a green negligee. Walks springily. Drives too fast. Likes snakes.

Note. The text says Lady Wickham is Mr. Mulliner's cousin but does not indicate whether she is from Mr. Mulliner's father's side of the family or from his mother's (or non-Mulliner) side. She *could* be one or the other. You could toss a coin to decide—a florin, perhaps.

To settle this and other iffy questions, I have promulgated Creamer's Law of the Flipped Florin. In such even-money, yes-or-no, one-way-or-the-other matters, the florin, once tossed in the air, shall always come down, purely by chance, on the Mulliner side.

(I will brook no argument about the validity of this procedure, for the simple reason that I have no defense.)

The florin is flipped and, lo, Lady Wickham is a Mulliner by blood. And since her Mulliner parent (flip it again) turns out to a paternal uncle of Mr. Mulliner's rather than a paternal aunt, her maiden name was Mulliner.

Lady Wickham may be another of Uncle William's many children.

The Awful Gladness of the Mater

Lady Wickham again, her eye a combination of gimlet and X ray, her chin reminiscent of a battleship going into action.

Roberta Wickham again. Tends to be late.

The Passing of Ambrose

Lady Wickham again.

Roberta Wickham again, and Roberta's aunt:

27. **MARCIA Mulliner(?)** — —, Mr Mulliner's first cousin (?)

Lives in Eaton Square and has a son:

28. **WILFRED** — —, Mr. Mulliner's first cousin once removed(?)

Note: We use the Florin Law here, too. Bobbie Wickham's aunt Marcia could be either Bobbie's father's sister or her mother's sister. Flip the florin. Marcia is Lady Wickham's sister and, like Lady Wickham, Mr. Mulliner's first cousin and a Mulliner by birth. Her son Wilfred is thus Mr. Mulliner's first cousin once removed. How nicely these things work out.

The Smile That Wins

29. **ADRIAN MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's nephew
Detective. Came down from Oxford. Member of firm of Widgey and Boon, Investigators, of Albemarle Street. Not as amply remunerated as he could wish, but the firm hints at a rise next Christmas.

Dark and thin, has dyspepsia, wears an air of inscrutable melancholy. Smiles with difficulty. Result is like the Mona Lisa's: underlying note of the sardonic and the sinister, virtually a leer, conveying suggestion he knows all. Club: Senior Bloodstain (in Rupert Street).

Will marry Lady Millicent Shipton-Bellinger of 18a, Upper Brook Street, a radiant blonde and younger daughter of Reginald Alexander Montacute James Bramfylde Tregennis Shipton-Bellinger, fifth Earl of Brangbolton.

Has an aunt:

30. **ELIZABETH Mulliner (?)** — — —, Mr. Mulliner's sister(?).

Note: Adrian's aunt is his aunt, not his great-aunt, and is therefore the sister of either Adrian's father, who is one of Mr. Mulliner's brothers, or of his mother. It was but the work of a moment for the Florin Law to determine that Aunt Elizabeth is on the paternal side and that she is a sister of Mr. Mulliner.

The Story of Webster

31. **LANCELOT MULLINER**, Mr. Mulliner's first cousin, once removed, the second Mulliner relative named Lancelot (the other is Mr. Mulliner's nephew Lancelot, the poet turned Hollywood actor). He is the son of:

32. **EDWARD Mulliner**, Mr. Mulliner's cousin, now dead.

Lancelot, 25, is an artist, engaged to Gladys Bingley, the *vers libre* poet. A comely youth, orphaned early, raised by his uncle Theodore, vicar of St. Botolph's in Knightsbridge, later Dean of Bolsover, later Bishop of Bongo-Bongo in West Africa, owner of the cat Webster.

Note. Creamer's Law does not apply here. I cannot establish that Uncle Theodore is Lancelot's father's brother and thus a Mulliner. See "Cats Will Be Cats," below. [Next issue! — OM]

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