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## Wodehouse on the Arno

BY BOB (OILY CARLISLE) RAINS

**I**N *The Luck of the Bodkins*, the Master speaks of “the shifty, hangdog look which announces that an Englishman is about to talk French.” Fortunately for Plum, he was never subjected to the modern-day Carlisles (Sweetie & me) mangling *l’Italiano* while we stroll from gelateria to gelateria in *la bella Firenze*, the capital of Toscana. Likewise lucky is Dante, the father of modern Italian.

It is well known that in World War II the U.S. Marines fooled our Asian foe by using Navajos to translate our coded messages into their native tongue. Those impenetrable Navajo code talkers had nothing on Sweetie and me. Not only can no American understand our Carlisian version of Italian, but—as repeatedly demonstrated in various *negozi* (shops)—neither can the most clever Italian.

Since the four-week summer course I teach in Florence, whenever I wangle it, meets at most two hours a day, I can find myself with time on my hands and only so much pizza and pasta that I can *mange* (eat) without serious physical consequences. Knowing this, I had brought along on our Florence junket this year my well-thumbed *Vintage Wodehouse* (edited by Richard Osborne) to help me while away the moments between meals. Then, to add *panna* (whipped cream) to gelato (no translation necessary, I trust), one day at the Libreria Martinelli on via Cavour, I found a whole shelf of Wodehouse in Italiano! I was *molto contento*! Naturally, I bought *Il Meglio di P. G. Wodehouse* (*The Best of P. G. Wodehouse*), a collection of short stories translated by Luigi Brioschi, Giovanni Garbellini, Dolores Musso, and Luigi Spagnol. By *buona fortuna*, two of the stories in *Il Meglio* are also in *Vintage Wodehouse*: “L’amica di Lord Emsworth” (“Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend”) and “L’incredibile mistero dei cappelli” (“The Amazing Hat Mystery”).

So, side by side sat Sweetie and me, sometimes over cappuccini, with *Vintage* and *Meglio* open, also side by side, working from Italian to English and back again, with our pocket dictionary ever close at hand. In the Italian, each story is translated sentence by sentence, which helped with our bilingual efforts.

Immediately I was struck with a couple of insights. I was reminded that the Master wrote some mighty long sentences with lots of dependent clauses. And, often it’s hard enough for me to translate 75-year-old English English and customs into modern American English and 21st-century life. Understandably translation into Italian can be no easy task.

I know the very first question that you want answered: how does one say “What ho!” in Italian? This phrase, with which you may be familiar, is uttered twice by Percy Wimbolt in “The Amazing Hat Mystery” upon greeting Elizabeth Bottsworth, whom he deems to be a “sound young potato” (translated as a *ragazza in gamba*, literally a “girl in leg,” or, one might say, a smart girl [on her toes]). No doubt, Giovanni Garbellini, translator of “L’incredibile



*Oily and Sweetie Carlisle (Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen) at the 2009 St. Paul convention, prior to their “career” as il traduttori di Plum*

mistero dei capelli” called up his friends, Luigi B., Dolores, and Luigi S., and asked them to put on their amazing thinking *cappelli* and cogitate over the “What ho!” conundrum. In Italian, “what” is *che* or *cosa*. But how to translate “What ho!”? For some reason, no doubt a printer’s error, our Italian-English dictionaries do not have an entry for “ho.” I guess that neither do the *dizionari* of the Luigis, Giovanni, or Dolores. So, Giovanni’s ultimate compromise solution is to use *Olà* for “What ho!” (By the way, my little pocket dictionary defines the Italian *olà* as a “Mexican wave.” Not terribly helpful, but I have been informed by Italian friends that this is the kind of wave that sports fans make at a stadium.)

Anyone familiar with Italy’s indecision in World War II as to which side it was on will not be surprised that the Italian translators remain at odds on what to do with “What ho!” In *Il Meglio*’s “La storia di Webster,” Luigi B. uses *Éhi* for “What ho!” Luigi S., in “Il tesoro sepolto” (“Buried Treasure”) opts for *Trallallera*. Clearly these are deep waters!

Perhaps even more difficult to translate than Plumisms like “What ho!” are English phenomena dating to the Edwardian era. You will, no doubt, recall that “Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend” takes place during the August Bank Holiday. Do the Italians even have an August Bank Holiday, or did they ever? I don’t really know. As far as I can tell, the basic rule with Italian banks is that they are never actually open; they only sit there, smirking. The best that Luigi B. (translator of “Lamica”) can come up with is “la festa nazionale dell’ultimo lunedì d’agosto” (the national holiday of the last Monday of August). It doesn’t have exactly the same ring as “August Bank Holiday,” but we must give Luigi B. an “E” for effort.

When Lord E. meets the girl friend, Gladys, he is at some loss for conversation. “Then, remembering a formula of his youth: ‘Er—been out much this Season?’” Poor Luigi B.! Did the Italians even have a Season for debs of the Upper Crust to go out in? Luigi B. substitutes “*Manca da molto?*” (Have you spent much time away?)

One can only imagine the depth of Luigi B.’s despair when he was confronted with possibly the greatest sentence in all of English literature. Gladys tries to explain to Lord E. that she thought it would be okay if she took some treats home to her brother, Ern, if she had none herself: “I thought if I didn’t ’ave none, then it would be all right Ern ’aving what I would ’ave ’ad if I ’ad ’ave ’ad.” Plum reports that



*Il Duomo in Firenze*

this simple explanation caused his lordship’s head, “never strong,” to swim a little. Luigi must have felt that he was drowning. Struggling manfully, he has Gladys justify herself thus: “*Pensavo che se io non prendevo niente, andava bene lo stesso se Ern prendeva quello che io non avevo preso.*” (“I thought that if I didn’t take anything, it would be okay if Ern took what I didn’t take.”) This adequately conveys Gladys’s rationale, but the magic of the Master’s original is lost in translation.

And here I must pause a moment to tip my *cappello* to our friend Tamaki Morimura, who translates such phrases into Japanese, no less! How does she do it? *Non lo so.* (I don’t know.)

Sweetie and I have had much joy in the morning (and afternoon and evening) struggling through *Il Meglio di P. G. Wodehouse*. One great benefit is that our faltering Italian forces us to read both *Il Meglio* and *Vintage* slowly, sentence by sentence. To be brutally frank, when I first read “The Amazing Hat Mystery” some time ago, I did not think much of it. But on rereading it with *Il Meglio* one sentence at a time, I found myself cracking up again and again. So, I now humbly confess error.

Indeed, one must love a story that includes the following scenario: When Percy appears before Elizabeth in his mysteriously ill-fitting hat, intending to escort her to the first day of Ascot, she remonstrates, “I know a joke’s a joke, Percy, and I’m as fond of a laugh as anyone, but there is such a thing as cruelty to animals. Imagine the feelings of the horses at Ascot when they see that hat.” Or, as Giovanni aptly puts it, “*Gli scherzi mi vanno bene, Percy, anche a me piace farmi una risata. Ma la crudeltà sugli animali, quella no. Pensa a come si sentirebbero i cavalli di Ascot al vedere un cappello del genere.*”

To which I can only add, “*Olà! Ehi! Trallallera!*”

# Collecting Wodehouse: *The Strand Magazine* and Other News

BY JOHN GRAHAM

THE OFT-QUOTED Wodehouse line “Any man under thirty years of age who tells you he is not afraid of an English butler lies” is the opening sentence of his short story “The Good Angel,” which debuted in February 1910 in *The Strand Magazine* in the United Kingdom and *Cosmopolitan* in the United States (in a slightly longer version under the title “The Matrimonial Sweepstakes”).

In book form, you can find “The Good Angel” in *The Man Upstairs and Other Stories* (Methuen, 1914) and in *The Uncollected Wodehouse* (Seabury, 1976). In case you have not read the story recently, it is worth another look. In it, we are introduced to Keggs, an early incarnation of Jeeves, who may (or may not) be the same butler as the one in *A Damsel in Distress* and *Something Fishy*. Interestingly, when “The Good Angel” appeared in *The Strand*, the accompanying illustrations (including one of Keggs) were done by a young artist named Charles Crombie. Over the next 25 years, Crombie illustrated many Wodehouse stories for *The Strand*, including some of the Jeeves short stories.

I was reminded that 1910 marks the centennial of “The Good Angel” thanks to a recent article entitled “Wodehouse in *The Strand*” in the October 2009 issue of *Book and Magazine Collector*, a U.K. periodical for, well, book and magazine collectors. The article is by Mike Ashley, an authority on British popular fiction magazines around the turn of the 20th century. (Ashley’s 2006 book on the topic, *The Age of the Storytellers*, published in the United Kingdom by the British Library and in the United States by Oak Knoll Press, is a colorful treasure trove of information on over 100 British fiction magazines, and as you might expect, it is chock full of Wodehouse references.)

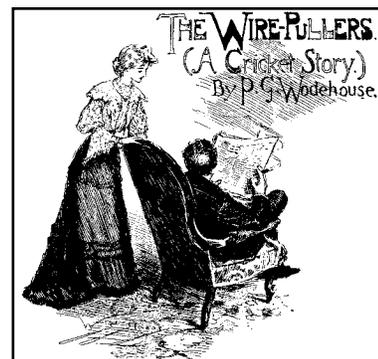
In “Wodehouse in *The Strand*” Ashley surveys all 216 issues (by his count) with stories by Plum, from “*The Wire Pullers*” in July 1905 to “*Bramley Is So Bracing*” in December 1940. “The Good Angel” was the fourth story in the series, and the first to be selected for book publication. From 1910 onward, almost everything Plum published in *The Strand* found its way into his books. Ashley provides a partial list of those which were not reprinted; Neil Midkiff has the full list online at <http://tinyurl.com/25cghr7>.

In addition to listing each individual issue of *The Strand* with Wodehouse contributions, Ashley provides a useful price guide. As a general rule, single issues of *The Strand* in very good condition sell for around 40–50 British pounds, but can run higher if they also feature

fiction by Arthur Conan Doyle. If you are willing to forego the ad pages, it is often cheaper to buy the six-month collected volumes which *Strand* publisher Newnes would reissue twice a year in distinctive blue boards. Ashley does collectors a real service by identifying three issues of *The Strand* with articles about Wodehouse himself; only one of these pieces (January 1929’s “Wodehouse at Home” by Plum’s stepdaughter, Leonora) is listed in McIlvaine’s *Strand* entries.

“Wodehouse in *The Strand*” is the 13th time *Book and Magazine Collector* has carried an article on some aspect of Wodehouse collecting, counting back to their first feature in August 1984. As far as I can tell, they have featured Wodehouse more often than any other single writer. You can order recent back copies on the magazine’s website ([www.bookandmagazinecollector.com](http://www.bookandmagazinecollector.com)), including the October 2009 issue. Unfortunately, earlier issues with Wodehouse articles (numbers 6, 48, 76, 108, 146, 170, 191, 209, 220, 236, 248, and 260) can still only be ordered over the telephone. Fortunately, used copies of many of these issues do appear with regular frequency on eBay.

Speaking of eBay, in early March a U.K. first edition of *Something Fresh* attracted 15 bids and sold there for slightly over \$2,500, confirming just how extremely rare this edition seems to be. If the copy had had a dust wrapper, the price could well have been ten times that amount. Also this spring, Clouds Hill Books in New York City offered a well-used copy of Rudyard Kipling’s *Just So Stories* inscribed “To Teenie with best love from P. G. Wodehouse (of Pimlico) Dec 19, 1902.” In case you don’t know Teenie, she was Ernestine Bowes-Lyon, cousin to the late Queen Mother. You may recall that Plum dedicated *The Pothunters* to Ernestine and her two older sisters Joan and Effie. I am told that this inscribed copy of *Just So Stories* sold quickly.



From *The Strand* (July–Dec. 1905)  
(graphic from Neil Midkiff)

# Wodehouse and the “Locked Room” Mystery

BY TONY RING

OVER A HUNDRED years ago, P. G. Wodehouse ventured into the then relatively peaceful world of the detective story to put an elegant and probably original slant on the still immature “locked room” form of mystery story. Having written it in 1908, as he told David Jasen, it lay—quite possibly in a locked drawer—until resurrected in 1914, when it was forwarded to the U.K. monthly *Pearson’s Magazine*, a journal to which Wodehouse contributed on a regular basis from 1904 to 1915, later reissuing it with a couple of serials in 1935 and 1937.

A couple of the 300 short stories he wrote in the next 60 years have somewhat bizarrely found their way into anthologies of detective stories, including “Jeeves and the Stolen Venus,” which in 1991, in German translation, found itself alongside works by Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, Ruth Rendell, and P. D. James in *Die besten 10-minuten Krimis*. But in reality he only wrote the one true detective story, and it needs a detective’s instincts to trace its bibliography. For one thing, it has been published with three distinctly different titles in English alone!

For another, the last quarter of the story, encompassing not only the solution to the problem but the explanation of the thought processes which enabled it to be reached, had been rewritten by the time it first appeared in a U.S. journal, *All-Story Cavalier Weekly* (ASCW), on March 13, 1915. Whether this major change was undertaken by Wodehouse himself (which would demonstrate that he already had an eye for the different preferences of the two sides of the transatlantic market) or by the editorial staff at ASCW (a view preferred by David Jasen) will never be absolutely certain.

The English original had the title “The Education of Detective Oakes,” but because of the changes to the story, an alternative title, “The Harmonica Mystery,” was more appropriate for the ASCW version. (ASCW had a short independent life, being merged in 1920 to become *Argosy All-Story Weekly*, and later, simply *Argosy*.) Any issue of ASCW has always been difficult to find, and the present article was stimulated by the appearance of two copies of the March 13 issue on eBay auctions within a month of each other in mid-2010.

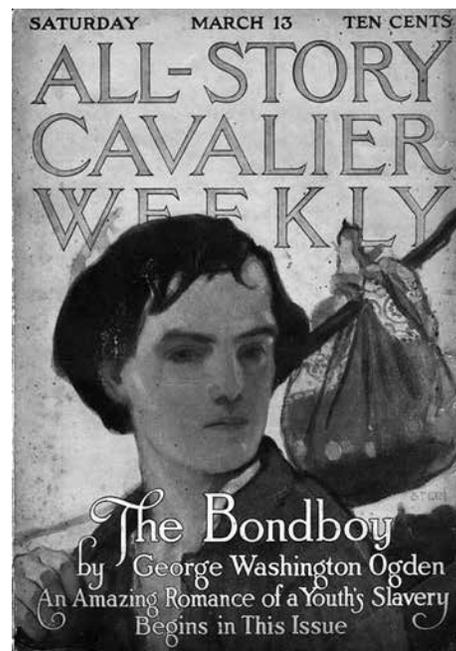
This was the first time I—or anybody else I knew—was able to read the text of the ASCW version, and I wanted to understand the extent to which its text varied from the *Pearson’s*.

I found three types of variation. The first is the sort one frequently finds in Wodehouse stories published on either side of the Atlantic, such as the setting in Southampton in the English version changing to Long Island in the American. And the minor changes in tone—with, for example, the constable in the English version addressing the doctor as “Sir” but the equivalent American officer calling him “Doc.”

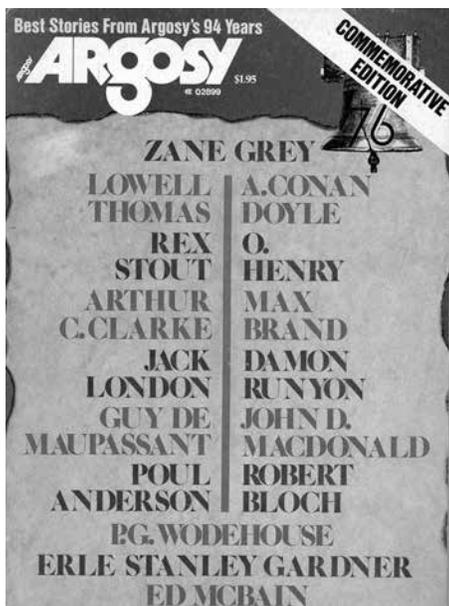
In several places two or three successive paragraphs of a descriptive or atmospheric nature simply do not appear in the earlier *Pearson’s*. Assuming that Wodehouse made no material changes to his original draft when it was submitted to *Pearson’s* in 1914 (indeed, he may already have been in the USA at the time with no access to it), this second version must surely have been imposed by the *Pearson’s* editor for reasons of space, rather than arising from a deliberate decision by Wodehouse. The omitted paragraphs are written very much in Wodehouse’s style and fit well with the surrounding text, so to me it seems most likely that they did form part of the original text, and very unlikely that they were added by ASCW editorial staff.

But as indicated above, the third—and by far the most interesting—variation is found in the endings of the two versions. The outcome was the same in each case, but the method of its revelation was radically different. In the English version, the solution was explained to the unsuccessful detective after the event in a manner similar to the typical disclosure by Holmes to Watson or that adopted later by Agatha Christie at the end of her Poirot mysteries. In the ASCW version, the revelation was part of a building of tension, with a sudden dénouement in the O. Henry style announcing the end of the story.

The next two appearances of the story of which I am aware both adopted the ASCW text—not surprisingly, as one was a serialisation in the *Duluth News-Tribune* in December 1915 (which may also have been repeated in local



Wodehouse landed on these pages in 1915.



The later evolution of  
All-Story Cavalier Weekly

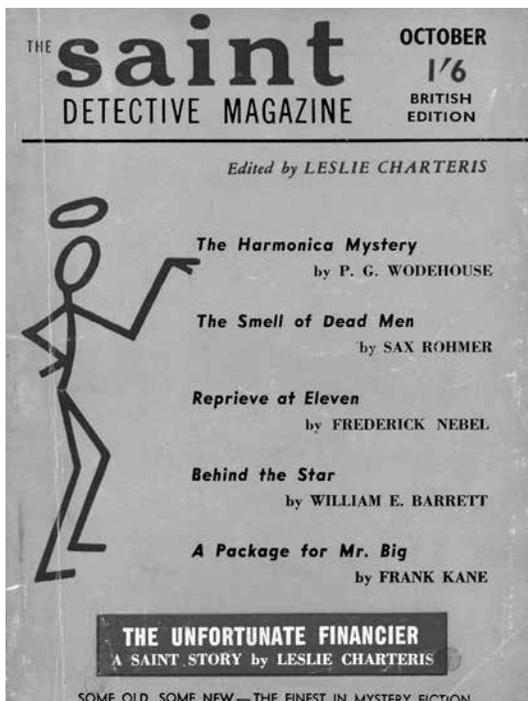
newspapers throughout America), and the other a reprint in *Detective Fiction Weekly* (formerly *Flynn's*) on October 13, 1928. Both used “The Harmonica Mystery” as the title.

So far, so good. But I can hear you asking: Which Wodehouse short story collection includes this work and which version? Surprisingly, the answer is that neither version appeared in any contemporary PGW short story collection, in the United Kingdom or the United States.

The next publication of the story of which I am aware came in various country editions of *The Saint Detective Magazine*. One notable change from the ASCW text appears—the name of the boarding house in which the death occurs is changed from the “Excelsior” to the “Reefton.” One can detect, though not prove, the hand of a cautious libel lawyer at work. Otherwise, although the *Saint's* editor, Hans Stefan Santesson, updated a few expressions and (somewhat inexplicably) removed almost a whole column of text, the result of which is obvious to a careful reader, the essence of the text is unchanged—whether you look at the American edition of June 1955, the English edition of October 1955, or the French, in translation (as “Le triomphe de M. Oakes”) in *Le Saint Detective Magazine* in March 1956. Readers familiar with the story will enjoy the irony of the French title.

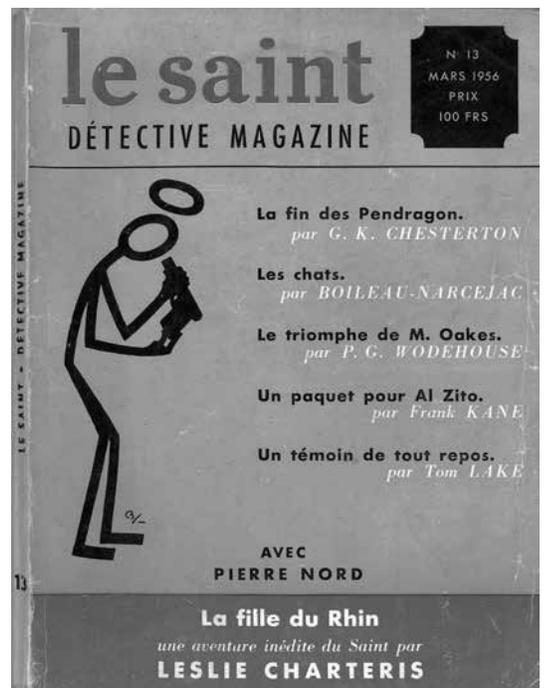
Moving forward to 1976, the year after Wodehouse's death, David Jasen published a compilation of stories not previously published in the United States in book form which he had been preparing for some time, with the title *The Uncollected Wodehouse*. One of the stories selected was this elusive detective story, which he retitled “Death at the Excelsior,” the third (or, if you count the French, the fourth) title attached to the story. He noted correctly that the first appearance (under the title “The Education of Detective Oakes”) had been in *Pearson's* in December 1914, and added that “the title was changed because of major editing alterations in the text.”

What Jasen did not disclose was how the text he presented came to exist, but he has agreed that this can be explained now. After meeting Hans Stefan Santesson, he produced a hybrid of the *Saint* and *Pearson's* versions, using the English setting, incorporating some minor additions of his own, and preferring the *Saint's* (i.e. ASCW) ending to that in *Pearson's*. But the important additional step that he took was to submit the whole manuscript of *The Uncollected*



The story in question  
continued its travels,  
appearing in The Saint  
Detective Magazine.

And then to the French  
version, under the title “Le  
triomphe de M. Oakes”



Wodehouse, including the revised version of this story, to Wodehouse himself for his stamp of approval.

Jasen's version was used by the *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* reprint in the U.S. edition of May 1978 (and presumably also in its Japanese translation in November that year, and in the anthology of 20 stories in Italian translation published by Ellery Queen under the title *Estate Gallia* in 1984). The copyright notice on both the American and the Italian editions notes that the copyright is with "The Estate of P G Wodehouse, 1976."

In recent years there have been a plethora of editions of books including "Death at the Excelsior" and other early Wodehouse stories from a variety of small publishers and offered for sale in various formats on the web. I have not checked, and can only assume, that they use the 1976 Jasen hybrid. Provided they are not offered for sale in Europe or other countries where Wodehouse's 1914 work is still in copyright, this is perfectly legal.

The only posthumous reprint of one of the first two formats that I have seen also came in 1976, when *Argosy* celebrated 94 publishing years (under its various names) by producing two bicentennial special editions. The original ASCW text seems to have been faithfully reproduced in the second of those books, with its original title ("The Harmonica Mystery").

In his article "About These Mystery Stories," written for the *British Strand* magazine in June 1929, Wodehouse satirizes what he sees as the limited inventive ingenuity of the majority of authors as respects plots, detectives, and villains, and offers the suggestion that if he were writing a detective novel, the villain (or villains) would not have appeared in the book at all. He goes on to promote the idea of the book's publishers themselves (such as Hodder and Stoughton) as suitable substitutes.

Perhaps he was thinking back to this one successful detective story, in which he created an original solution sufficiently bizarre to satisfy many of the later professional detective-story writers who sought ever

more extreme explanations for their plots. While it would be paltering with the truth to suggest that the perpetrator did not appear in the story at all, it can be fairly said that the reported death was directly caused by a character mentioned at an even later stage in the American version than in the original English text. But evidently, having stretched credulity so far, he felt diffident about taking that one extra step, and incriminating Barrie, or Jenkins, in a later tale, so we never were able to read a genuine detective story from the pen of a mature Wodehouse.



## Blame It on Plum

BY AJAY RAMACHANDRAN

I WAS ALREADY late to the meeting. And worse, I had forgotten it was my turn to buy breakfast for the group. The Harley-Davidson owners group for zip code 75038 is a laid-back, well-meaning group which meets once a month to socialize and take pride in an HD ride. On the matter of breakfast, and the skipping thereof, they are very strict.

It had been a long night. I had barely slept a wink when my alarm went off. Alarms are all loud, insensitive, and pushy, whether they are used to wake you up, or to warn you about your seat belt, or to alarm you about smoke. But this one wasn't pushy enough to get me to the ride on time.

I tried to apologize, but George, the organizer, whose appetite is as big as his motorcycle tank, said, "Don't worry about it!" I knew that, as a result of my tardiness, all drinks would be on me that evening. After-dinner drinks would be my punishment for failing to buy the morning's doughnuts, but I had to accept it like a man. At least he didn't ask why I failed in my task, which was a great relief as it would necessitate exposing my nocturnal life. He only said nonchalantly to his wife Vickie, "Dear, this here gentleman has deprived us of our morning nourishment." She replied with an insinuation: "Then I hope she was worth it."

I felt sheepish. What was I supposed to say? How could I explain, contrary to their suspicions, that the only damsel I was with was *A Damsel in Distress*?

Guys pick up women in strange places. I can say the same thing about books. The previous evening I'd stopped at a furniture store to see if there was a barstool



The magazine in which Jasen's hybrid version of the story appeared in 1976.

I liked. I liked some, but they were out of my financial league. As I walked out, I noticed a big sale poster attached to a cardboard box of used books. I looked at the box as if it were a gleaming stack of treasure. After wading through a pile of cookbooks and self-help drivel, I found a couple of brand new Plums, for \$1.50 each. "What's a woadhouse?" asked the checkout lady, thinking the books were for some kind of a summer project of mine.

This has always been my story, folks. As a small boy I would dodge invitations to play hide-and-seek, go on treasure hunts, compete in local marble tournaments, etc., for the opportunity to read the adventures of Bertie Wooster and Ukridge. College was brutal. In a world of Steeles, Grishams, Folletts, and Sheldons, my allegiance to Wodehouse was an oddity. My parents could not understand why my grades were consistently straddling the thin line that separated pass and failure despite being always seen with a book. Grad school was an eye-opener. When I landed in the USA, I wasn't comfortable in the presence of a computer. I knew as much about computers as George Costanza (*Seinfeld*) knew about risk management. Classes started and assignments were given. I was reading *The Indiscretions of Archie* when I should have been finishing up my homework. On the social front, I'd known that American girls liked things British. I thought I'd be a natural, knowing so much about Plum. But my collegiate ramblings with the womenfolk were the acme of foolishness.

I tried the well-bred approach. After all, Indians are English, in a way, minus the accent. To sound like a grassroots version of a Renaissance man, I read books by James Joyce, Yeats, Bob Dylan, and even Barack Obama. But I was not happy because always, at the back of my mind, I was craving the Drones Club and Blandings Castle.

I've squandered friends, reputation, money, and many a sound sleep because of you, Mr. Wodehouse. It is all your fault, old sock. You are responsible for what I am today. I know you turned in your dinner pail a while ago, so I cannot question or chastise you in person. All I can say is—has anyone seen my *Right Ho, Jeeves*?

## The 2013 Convention!

**Y**ES, THE 2013 CONVENTION can be yours! Details are available in TWS's Convention Steering Committee (CSC) Charter. If you are unable to get it from TWS's website (<http://www.wodehouse.org/twsCSCcharter.html>) for some reason, please write to Elin Woodger for a copy (see below).

**All bids for the 2013 convention must be submitted to Elin Woodger by January 14, 2011.**

The host chapter selection will be made well in advance of the 2011 Detroit convention. The CSC Charter mandates: (1) Any chapter wishing to host a convention must submit their bid to the Committee by nine months before the next convention (in this case, by January 14, 2011). (2) The Committee will notify bidding chapters whether their bids have been successful at least six months before the next convention. Thus, chapters wanting to host the 2013 convention will be notified by April 14, 2011, whether their bid has been successful or not. (3) If the Committee receives no bids by the nine-month deadline, they will use those nine months to make their own convention plans—which may mean selecting a likely chapter and inviting them to play Persian Monarchs, with the honor of hosting the 2013 convention as the stakes.

For full host chapter selection criteria, you may download the CSC Charter from our website, or you may request a copy from Elin.

## Just Enough Jeeves

**W**. W. NORTON & COMPANY has kindly forwarded us an advance copy of their new publication *Just Enough Jeeves*. Scheduled for release on October 18, 2010, and priced at \$18.95, the paperback book sports an introduction by Robert McCrum and contains the novels *Joy in the Morning* and *Right Ho, Jeeves*, as well as the short story collection *Very Good, Jeeves*.

The back cover says, "This collection brings old favorites to those [diehard] fans in a sparkling package and will introduce new readers to the funniest writer in the English language." The cover has a variety of Jeeves and Bertie cartoon figures in various poses.

Robert McCrum offers interesting background on the three pieces continued in the collection. He observes that Wodehouse described *Joy in the Morning* as "the supreme Jeeves novel of all time," and states that the novel "is an anthology of Wodehouse's favorite comic situations." There is much more of interest in the introduction. Oddly, McCrum sets Wodehouse's year of death as 1974, but hopefully that will be corrected in the first public edition in October. All in all, the collection is a nice bit of work that we hope will gain a wide readership and introduce many more readers to the joy of Wodehouse at any time of day.

# Finding Wodehouse in the Most Unlikely Places

BY BOB BUCHANAN

THE NOVEL *The Remains of the Day* was written by the Japanese-born Englishman Kazuo Ishiguro and published by Faber & Faber in 1989. It won the Booker Prize that year and was adapted for the cinema by the Merchant Ivory production team. I suggest that the work of P. G. Wodehouse influenced the development of this book. Indeed, I believe the success of *The Remains of the Day* is substantially dependent upon the public's embrace of the world created and perpetuated by the Master in his many books and stories.

*The Remains of the Day* is a sensitive and bittersweet story told with the quiet attention to delicate detail we associate with the oriental perspective. But its subject matter is wholly English. The story is that of Stevens, the butler at Darlington Hall, whose service is in its thirty-somethingth year in 1956. In the opening scene, Stevens's new employer, an American who has bought the hall after Lord Darlington's death, encourages Stevens to take a holiday and see some of the glories of England. Stevens replies that he has no need to travel since, as he states, "It has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years, sir, within these very walls."

The novel then proceeds as a series of reminiscences that engulf Stevens as he travels to the West Country to visit a former housekeeper whom he hopes will return to the great house. He looks back over his career to reassure himself that he has served humanity by serving a great gentleman. It is through these memories that the reader learns the history of Stevens's service to Lord Darlington between the world wars. The surprising truth Stevens finally must confront is artfully revealed, bit by bit, as seemingly insignificant incidents are added, like layers of lacquer, to create the portraits of Stevens, Lord Darlington, and other characters.

If you haven't read this book, I do not want to lessen the enjoyment you will have if and when you do. Comparisons to characters created by Wodehouse could be readily drawn. But I will cite some evidence of the Wodehouse influence within that constraint. Three aspects of Ishiguro's narrative point to this: first, the general profile of the model domestic servant is drawn from a Jeeves stereotype; second, elements of the action could have been lifted straight out of the Wodehouse canon; and third, specific topics are used by Ishiguro that are closely connected to the Master.

Ishiguro was nearly six years old when he moved to England in 1960. His life and education before 1989



suggest that it was highly unlikely that he had any occasions to experience firsthand the world of butlers, valets, chauffeurs, and chambermaids. I am convinced that his viewpoint about domestic service in England's great houses and his appreciation for the relationships between employers, guests, and staff come from his having read about Beach at

Blandings, Seppings at Brinkley Manor, and above all Jeeves, who, you will recall, butled for Lord Rowcester (aka Towcester in the U.S. version) in *Ring for Jeeves*. Moreover, I believe that Ishiguro assumes (correctly) that the reader's familiarity with this milieu likewise is based on that same reader's knowledge of Wodehouse. It is important to note that Ishiguro is not a writer of light, humorous, romantic fiction à la Wodehouse. Indeed, Ishiguro has been quoted as saying that he tries not to put too much plot into his novels.

Stevens's introspection begins with a meditation on what qualities define a great butler. The author assumes that his readers will have Jeeves in mind as the prototype of a great butler. Because Ishiguro knows that Jeeves is a gentleman's gentleman, early on he has Stevens distinguish between the duties of a valet and those of a butler. This step is essential to his being able to develop Stevens as a servant character distinct from Jeeves. Stevens concludes that the sine qua non of a great butler is dignity. He points out that the popular notion (based on Jeeves, as I believe) that butlers must have refined accents, extensive vocabularies, and a great store of general knowledge is not, in fact, the secret of greatness. Those traits are instead only attractive ornamentation like decorative icing on a cake.

Certainly Jeeves's manner of speech could be the model for much of the dialogue and monologue included in the narrative. "Indeed" and "disturbing" are very prevalent. Stevens's speech is formal, succinct, and self-satisfied. His conversations with his employers are restrained. To the reader, Stevens sounds like a butler because Stevens sounds like Jeeves.

The second area of Wodehousian influence is found in aspects of the action. Life at Darlington Hall is occasionally as comic as life at Blandings Castle or Brinkley Manor. Stevens recounts the misadventures of two houseguests who took to drink one afternoon

and set out by car to visit the nearby villages of Morphy, Saltash, and Brigoon, all because these village names reminded the two of them of the then popular music hall act of Murphy, Saltman, and Brigid the Cat. Of course, the author's purpose is not just humor, so generally the settings and situations differ markedly.

At another instance Stevens recalls the occasion when a private diplomatic conference was taking place at the hall. One of the attending diplomats brought his 23-year-old son to act as his secretary. This young man was engaged to be married, and his father was concerned that he had never had a frank birds-and-bees talk with his son. Stevens was deputized to impart this sensitive sex-education information. His description of finding the young man alone for this private conversation reminds one of various Wodehouse scenes in which the characters communicate completely at cross-purposes. And just as Jeeves occasionally adopts a new identity to further the action, Stevens sometimes slips out of his role as a butler.

The third area where I believe that Wodehouse's influence is manifest in *The Remains of the Day* is in the wealth of detailed subject matter that Ishiguro employs but that was used initially by Sir Plum. Stevens makes references to music hall entertainment and seaside settings and other servants, as does Wodehouse in his works. Stevens reveres his membership in the Hayes Society, an honorary club for butlers of only the very first rank. Jeeves has his Junior Ganymede Club on Curzon Street. "The Club Book," of both great joy and pain to Bertie, appears in Ishiguro's "A Quarterly for Gentlemen's Gentlemen," in which professional matters are shared by the High Society butlers. Stevens at one point illustrates his analysis of what constitutes a great butler by asking if it were necessary to possess a "general knowledge on wide-ranging topics such as falconing or newt-mating."

Well, there you have it! I cannot accept the possibility that any writer could invent the notion of a butler having a knowledge of "newt-mating" without a firsthand familiarity with *The Code of the Woosters*, *The Mating Season*, and *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

Allow me to quote one brief passage and ask you to imagine Jeeves in the same situation. Stevens again is discoursing on the dignity characteristic of great butlers, and to illustrate the point he tells the following (apparently true) story.

A certain butler traveled with his employer to India and served there for many years, maintaining among the native staff the same high standards he had commanded in England. One afternoon this butler entered the dining room to make sure all was well for dinner when he noticed a tiger languishing beneath the dining table. The butler left the dining room quietly, taking care to close the doors behind him, and proceeded calmly to the drawing room, where his employer was taking tea with a number of visitors. There he attracted his employer's attention with a polite cough, then whispered in the latter's ear: "I'm very sorry, sir, but there appears to be a tiger in the dining room. Perhaps you will permit the twelve-bores to be used?" According to legend, a few minutes later, the employer and his guests heard three gunshots. When the butler reappeared in the drawing room some time afterward to refresh the teapots, the employer inquired if all was well.

"Perfectly fine, thank you, sir," came the reply. "Dinner will be served at the usual time and I am pleased to say there will be no discernible traces left of the recent occurrence by that time."

Tigers or swans, Jeeves would have responded in just the same fashion.

Michael Ondaatje, the Canadian author of *The English Patient*, has referred to Ishiguro as "one of the finest prose stylists of our time." He also opines that Ishiguro's book

explores "the one-dimensional cliché of the butler" and finds "a wonderful humor and tenderness" that was not imagined by P. G. Wodehouse. If true, it is understandable, as "tender" is not a word one would usually associate with Jeeves or any Wodehouse butler, unless caught by an airgun pellet on his trousers seat while bending over.

But while Ishiguro draws from Wodehouse in creating Stevens, Stevens's personality and psychological makeup is not like Jeeves's. They share a standard of professional conduct and other personal mannerisms, but at heart they are as different as night and day. While Stevens is left at the book's conclusion to ponder his moral obtuseness in what remains of his day, we know that Jeeves and the world of Wodehouse butlers carry on, quietly, competently, usually triumphantly, and happily in that special world which will never die.

I cannot accept the possibility that a writer could invent the notion of a butler having a knowledge of "newt-mating" without a firsthand familiarity with *The Code of the Woosters*, *The Mating Season*, and *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

# Oh, Boy! Rings and Things in the Windy City

BY DAN GARRISON

NEWS FROM CHICAGO: Tony and Elaine Ring visited Chicago in June to give an illustrated talk on Wodehouse to the Caxton Club. The June 17 talk, entitled “Beyond Jeeves and Bertie: The Quirks, Peculiarities, and Uses of a P. G. Wodehouse Collection,” was illustrated with pictures from his unparalleled archive of Wodehousiana, items that provide a detailed view of Plum’s books, stories, musical lyrics, and letters. In the dinner program, Sir Edward Cazalet (Wodehouse’s grandson) described the scope of Tony’s collection: “Tony Ring has assembled the greatest collection of materials by and about P. G. Wodehouse. His archive contains well over 10,000 items, including more than 2,000 magazines; 1,000 theatre programs; 1,000 foreign translations; up to 1,000 other dramatic items (theatre and cinema); letters, photographs, film stills and probably 1,500 ephemeral items.”

In his talk, Tony explained the complexity of tracing (and even enumerating) Wodehouse’s 97+ novels, many of which were published and serialized multiple times under different titles and in different versions. In recent years he has digitally scanned portions of his archive, much of which survives in only a single known copy on increasingly fragile paper. It was a fascinating talk, and Tony remains one of the most, if not the most, active collectors of things Wodehousean.

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THE OTHER BIG Wodehouse event in Chicago this summer was the new production of the musical *Oh, Boy!* produced by City Lit Theater. The original production of *Oh, Boy!* opened in 1917 in New York. Jerome Kern and Guy Bolton wrote this first collaboration with P. G. Wodehouse. *Oh, Boy!* ran for 463 performances, to be followed the next year by *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*, whose run was curtailed by the Spanish flu epidemic. This pair of epochal productions redefined musical theater and inspired the jingle

This is the trio of musical fame,  
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.  
Better than anyone else you can name  
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.

Dorothy Parker remarked that by the middle of August 1918, “You can get a seat for *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* for about the price of one on the stock exchange,” and she declared Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern to be “my favorite indoor sport.”

Now, in Chicago, we have been able to see firsthand what all the fuss was about. City Lit Theater, home to many fine Wodehouse adaptations over the years, opened its revival of *Oh, Boy!* on May 29, and the show was popular enough to be held over to July 11.

This tiny production (City Lit works in a 99-seat theater at the top of Lake Shore Drive) was created out of a ragged script provided by Tams-Witmark Music Library, supplemented by sheet music and additional material from other sources. It attracted considerable attention, including that of Tony Ring, who braved the volcano to fly in with Elaine to see the show and take part in the cast’s post-performance talkback, attended by members of the Accident Syndicate.

*Oh, Boy!* blossoms out of music and lyrics that became the most beloved in the musical theater songbook. “You Never Knew About Me,” “Till the Clouds Roll By,” and “Nesting Time in Flatbush” bring tears of delight to the eyes of the most stonehearted cynic. “A Packet of Seeds,” “A Little Bit of Ribbon,” “The Land Where the Good Songs Go,” and more than a half dozen other songs float up from a plot of weightless fluff descended from Greek and Roman comedies that Wodehouse read as a schoolboy.

The ancient formula calls for two romantic couples. The first couple, George Budd (Sean Knight) and Lou Ellen Carter (Harmony France), are already in a secret but unconsummated marriage. (In the ancient originals she would be well into pregnancy.) The antagonists are Lou Ellen’s tough mother (Rosalind Hurwitz) and her covertly naughty father, Judge Carter (Kingsley Day, who doubles as the show’s music director and pianist). The fledgling marriage teeters on the edge of disaster as a series of beautiful women slip in and out of George’s apartment, his bedroom, and even Lou Ellen’s intimate garments, just ahead of (or behind) Lou Ellen’s parents.

The second couple fall in love during the action. George’s playboy friend Jim Marvin (Adam Pasen) and the delectable Jacky Samson (Jennifer T. Grubb) are thrown together when Jacky bursts into George’s apartment to avoid hot pursuit by a policeman and enlists his aid, somehow ending the night in Lou Ellen’s blue silk pajamas and George’s bed.

True to the formula of ancient New Comedy, the first couple are well fitted to domesticity (as explained in the lyrics of “An Old Fashioned Wife”) while the second live only for pleasure (“A Pal like You”). Jacky and the girls of the chorus explain their preference for

any number of boys in “Rolled into One.” Jim is a tall, snappy dresser with curly, butter-colored hair; Jacky is a lissome brunette with a beautiful, toothy mouth.

The casting is spot-on throughout. Character roles include Briggs, George’s butler (Alex Shotts); Constable Ira Sims (Brian-Mark Conover); and George’s Quaker aunt, Penelope Budd, ably created by Patti Roeder, who plays a very special drunk scene when she unknowingly tosses down three stiff cocktails. As director Terry McCabe, City Lit’s artistic director since 2005, remarked to me, “You can’t miscast a show in Chicago.”

[Note: *City Lit* produced the show as *Oh, Boy*, without the exclamation point. We chose to stick with the traditional version—Ed.]

## Quotations and Misquotations: A Never-Ending Search

BY NORMAN MURPHY

AT THE END of the introduction to Volume 2 of *A Wodehouse Handbook*, I apologized for the quotations I was sure I had missed. It is just as well I did, since many people have pointed out omissions—as well as helpfully pointed out the odd errors which somehow occurred. I was slightly worried that the majority of these concerned American rather than British topics, but came to the conclusion that this was only to be expected. I should have realized it was unlikely that Al Jolson was really as prolific a songwriter as my English reference sources said he was, and my knowledge of baseball is slight. And while I am prepared to argue with anybody about the Gaiety Theatre and the Gaiety Girls (since I have nearly a dozen books on the subject), I should have accepted the possibility of the occasional laughable misunderstanding in my comments on Tin Pan Alley, American songwriting, and the film industry.

One of the questions I am often asked is: How did I know quotations were quotations if I didn’t recognize them in the first place? Well, roughly, it’s in the sound, the rhythm. If you read your Wodehouse long enough, you realize there is a rhythm to Wodehouse’s words. And time and again, it was a glitch, a pause in that rhythm, that put me on the track. We all remember that master hog caller, Fred Patzel, from “Pig-Hoo-o-o-ey!,” while in “The Pride of the Woosters Is Wounded,” we read that “Fred Thompson and one or two other fellows had come in, and McGarry, the chappie behind the bar, was listening with his ears flapping.”

When you think about it, those names stick out like sore thumbs. They don’t fit, they don’t sound “right”—

and in Wodehouse, that nearly always means they’re real names, which they were. And that brings me to a quotation that I found recently.

Not every reader of *Plum Lines* is aware of the work your editor and others put into it. And part of the process is that when my spouse, Elin, decided to marry me and spread sweetness and light in Britain rather than America, she deserted her editorial post on *Plum Lines*, though she has continued to act as copyeditor/proofreader when asked to do so. One morning, as she bent her editorial eye over the proofs for a past edition, she asked me to check a quotation from *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*. We had no idea where it was in the book, but luckily I am a fast reader and found it at page 181 (for some reason, they are always at the end of the book, never the beginning). As I turned the pages, though, something caught my eye. Chapter 9 begins with Bertie arriving at Brinkley Court and reporting in to Aunt Dahlia. He asks how she is, and the next four lines read:

“Oh, I’m fine.”

“And Uncle Tom?”

A cloud passed over her shining evening face.

“Tom’s a bit low, poor old buster.”

I paused, looked again, and then again. What’s this “shining evening face” business? Wodehouse never wrote that. It didn’t have the Wodehouse rhythm—so whose rhythm was it? Google produced lots of similar-sounding quotes but not this one; neither did any of my nine dictionaries of quotations (which vary far more in their content than one would think). So I sat and brooded for a bit and reckoned it was another of the quotes Wodehouse had altered to fit his purpose, as he so often did when Bertie is telling the story. But what bit had he altered?

I was lucky enough to get it quickly. Bertie tells us he arrived at Brinkley in “the quiet evenfall.” It was the “evening” bit that was wrong. Look up “shining morning face,” and any dictionary of quotations worth the name will immediately refer you to *As You Like It*, 2.7. It is the “All the world’s a stage” speech, and the 28 lines contain phrases familiar to every Wodehouse enthusiast: “one man in his time plays many parts”; “mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms”; “creeping like a snail unwillingly to school”; “full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard”—they are all in there. And the seventh and eighth lines read: “. . . the whining schoolboy, with his satchel / And shining morning face . . .”

One more to add to the amendments Elin has insisted I make to Volume 2 of the *Handbook*. Still, it keeps me out of the pubs, I suppose.

# Perpetual Samuel

ON JULY 28, Jean Tillson and Elin Woodger visited Remsenburg, where they took in the usual sights: the Bide-a-Wee animal shelter that the Wodehouses helped to start, the pet cemetery where several of the Wodehouse pets are buried (Jean trimmed a bush that was obscuring the gravestone), the house where Plum and Ethel had lived, the creek where Plum used to go swimming—and, of course, the churchyard where the two are buried. There, Jean and Elin left a special gift, seen sitting to the left of the book atop the gravestone.



*A gift from Jean and Elin*

This is, of course, the Infant Samuel, now an angel, reading *The Best of P. G. Wodehouse*. Jean managed to inscribe that title on Samuel's book in indelible ink, and on the base of the statuette she wrote: "What ho from The Wodehouse Society 7/28/10." Will Samuel remain at his post, undisturbed, for some time to come? Perhaps the next pilgrim to Remsenburg can report.



*The Infant Samuel reads Plum's book.*

You could tell it was classical music, because the banjo players were leaning back and chewing gum; and in New York restaurants only death or a classical specialty can stop banjoists.

*Uneasy Money (1917)*

# A Few Quick Ones

*Thanks to all contributors; special thanks to Evelyn Herzog and John Baesch, prolific QO finders.*

In the April 2 *Daily Telegraph*, Cassandra Jardine discusses the rodent problem in the House of Lords. Apparently, there were good comments made in the House about this significant national problem, for she points out that neither P. G. Wodehouse, Pinter, nor Monty Python "could equal Lord Brabazon of Tara for the dry, incisive . . . comic touch."

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In the July issue of *British Heritage*, Wodehouse is quoted: "It was my Uncle George who discovered that alcohol was a food well in advance of modern medical thought."

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Luke Leitch, the associate fashion editor at the *Times* (London), writes in the June 16 issue about how the hats upstage the horses at Royal Ascot. The pink novelty top hat worn by explorer and Chief Scout Bear Grylls was, according to Leitch, "more unbelievably vile than anything P. G. Wodehouse would have written onto Bertie Wooster."

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In the July 3 *Spectator*, Charles Spencer describes his addiction to purchasing things from Amazon (CDs, books, even Grateful Dead T-shirts). He writes how futile it is to try to cut back and compares it to the sense of impending doom that was "so often the case with Bertie Wooster when he faced an interview with his fearsome Aunt Agatha."

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In the "Home" column of the June 13 *Sunday Times* (London), Roland White describes a one-bedroom flat in an Edwardian block that you can rent for a 130-year lease (!) for £995,000. The address is Flat 18, 73 St James Street, and he goes on to mention that this "is where Bertie Wooster would have lived if he'd had a proper job."

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As John Baesch says, you would not normally expect to see an article on PGW in a publication like *Latin Mass*. But "Notes from the Real World" columnist Susie Lloyd writes of "The Pointless Peerless P. G. Wodehouse," where she makes the case that, despite critics who say that Wodehouse is "deep as a birdbath in a dusty July," Wodehouse offered "glimmers of the workings of human nature—that blighted thing. . . . [H]e had human nature in the bag all right."

Karen Shotting sent us a link to an online BBC article that was found by TWS member Francis Taunton. Karen says that “This is a great article about Dulwich, Wodehouse, and Chandler. It reads like an article in *Wooster Sauce* or *Plum Lines*!” You may enjoy this article at <http://tinyurl.com/2dyqb6y>.

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In an article entitled “The Healing Powers of Jane Austen” in the March 30 *Daily Telegraph*, Jojo Moyes describes how Emma Thompson fought off depression by immersing herself in *Sense and Sensibility*. Later in the article, Moyes lists several other writers who have been used for comfort by others during difficult times. One of these examples is award-winning writer Andrew Brown “who confesses to memorizing *The Wasteland* when miserable at school” and who “says P. G. Wodehouse helps him ward against “incipient self-pity and depression.”

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The May 14 *Times* (London) published an obituary of Bree O’Mara, who was killed in the Afriqiyah Airways crash in Libya this past spring. Ms. O’Mara was the satirical Irish author whose 2007 debut novel *Home Affairs* won the Citizen Book Prize. According to the article, O’Mara was born in Durban in 1968 and “raised on P. G. Wodehouse and British comedies from *Round the Horne* to *Hancock’s Half Hour*.”

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Bill Carter, in the April 12 *New York Times*, writes of the episode of *House* that was directed by the star of the show, Hugh Laurie, and described the arduous task that occupies Laurie the actor as he maintains an American accent in and out of character. There is a reference to his role as Bertie Wooster in British television, and quotes Laurie, who says he’s also found humor in *House*: “The show is . . . broadly farcical sometimes. It’s clownish at times. It’s sophisticatedly verbal at times.”

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Katherine Lewis informs us that biographer Gillian Gill, in her work *Agatha Christie: The Woman and Her Mysteries*, repeatedly notes Ms. Christie’s debt to P. G. Wodehouse, especially in the 1925 novel *The Secret of Chimneys*. She appears to have been aware of many of his creations, and was especially free in using place names similar to those of Wodehouse.

It was a confusion of ideas between him and one of the lions he was hunting in Kenya that had caused A. B. Spottsworth to make the obituary column. He thought the lion was dead, and the lion thought it wasn’t.

*Ring for Jeeves* (1953)

## Mosley & Spode Revisited, and a Correction (or Two—or Three)

IN THE SUMMER 2010 issue of *Plum Lines*, we published a superb article by Todd Morning, entitled “That Frightful Ass Spode: Wodehouse Takes on Mosley.” We added a couple of editor’s notes that, in the interest of accuracy, must now be corrected. Thanks to Todd for clarification!

The added note that “European politics were not important to most Americans” is not accurate. The American newspapers covered the Munich crisis and its aftermath as extensively as any of the British newspapers. A large number of books reviewed in American papers concerned the situation in Europe. By late 1938 a typical line in a newspaper article would say that “Americans are starting to look at events in Europe with a great deal of trepidation.”

The second item in need of correction is the historical placement of the Oxford by-election and the Oxford Union debate. The Oxford by-election occurred on October 27, 1938, about a month after Chamberlain returned from Munich with his “peace in our time” announcement. (The winner was the pro-appeasement candidate Quintin Hogg, who later led the attack on Wodehouse in the Commons during the time of the Berlin broadcast controversy.)

Apparently Norman Murphy, usually a paragon of preciseness, confused the by-election with Oxford Union’s 1933 debate on the proposition “This house refuses to fight for King and Country.” Norman writes from London: “Because the 1933 debate is so imbedded in our consciousness over here, I simply assumed Todd had confused the two events. The Oxford by-election was indeed won by the Appeasement candidate, Quintin Hogg (who had opposed the Motion in the 1933 debate) and maybe this led to my gross error. I hope Todd will accept my apologies.”

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An incorrect edit was made to last month’s NEWTS entry in Chapters Corner. The entry should read: “The newest of the efts, the anagrammatical ‘Stef’ Adams . . . brings a dash of youthful springtide to our chapter, and as a professional welder of titanium bicycles, she is especially welcome to the chapter’s president, who by all indications will soon be in the market for a bespoke walker.” We inappropriately printed “bespoked.” My guess is that any well-read newt would have known better than to change that!

# Henry Ford Center Stage at Convention 2011

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN

IN THE LAST ISSUE of *Plum Lines*, we told you about the change of venue for the 2011 Convention to the lovely and historic Dearborn Inn. We can now tell you that the contract has been signed and rooms have been reserved for the convention at a rate of \$115 a night, plus tax. As with the other recent conventions, the number of reserved rooms has been kept low to reduce potential liability to the Society (unused reserved rooms must be paid for), so we encourage all those who are planning to attend to make their reservations as soon as possible.

Reservations may be made with Marriott at 1-800-228-9290. Mention that you are reserving at “The Dearborn Inn” for “The Wodehouse Society Conference 2011.” They will not take reservations until October 15 of this year. The dates are Oct. 14–16, 2011, but you may come on the 13th to get a full day in on Friday.

We remind you that the Dearborn Inn is right across the street from the Henry Ford, a museum complex consisting of the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. Promoted primarily as an exhibition of the history of the automobile, the two facilities together actually represent the largest and finest museum detailing the history of the late Industrial Revolution.

Yes, there are cars galore, just about every make and model you can think of, including rare items like the Bugatti Royale and a Tucker 48, as well as one-of-a-kind cars such as various presidential limousines (including the car Kennedy was shot in), Bonnie & Clyde’s getaway car, and the pioneering recreational vehicle (RV) that Henry Ford lent to Charles Lindbergh for his cross-country holiday. There is also a wonderful exhibit on the automobile in American life, with recreations of roadside diners and motels.

But beyond the cars there is so much more, including displays on the history of railroads, business machines, electrical generators, and so on. Items of historical interest include the chair Lincoln was shot in, George Washington’s camp bed, and the first lunar module from Apollo 8.

In beautiful Greenfield Village you can see a recreation of the bustling new town of Detroit at the turn of the last century, with shops, factories, and a working farm. You can step into Thomas Edison’s workshop and see the first light bulb. Visit Henry Ford’s workshop and drive a Model T. Walk through the Wright Brothers’ bicycle shop and see an incomplete version of the first airplane. Oh, did I mention that these are not reproductions, but the actual places and items which

were taken apart bit by bit, shipped to Dearborn, and reassembled? And this is only the tip of the iceberg of what is on offer here.

If these two museums are not enough to keep you busy, we will also be arranging, in conjunction with the Henry Ford Museum, tours of the historic Ford River Rouge Plant. Developed between 1917 and 1928, the Rouge was an “ore to assembly” automotive factory. Henry Ford’s idea was to achieve “a continuous, nonstop process from raw material to finished product, with no pause even for warehousing or storage.” Although Ford’s idea was never completely realized, the Rouge remains today the most complete example of a vertically integrated manufacturing facility. Much of the facility was designed by world-famous architect Albert Kahn (who also designed the Dearborn Inn), including the magnificent glass manufacturing facility. Tours will be organized for Wodehouse conventioners.

Besides the Rouge tour, a walking tour of Detroit is being arranged where one can see famous landmarks such as the Old Mariner’s Church (the oldest church on the Great Lakes—memorialized in the Gordon Lightfoot song), the Mo-Town Museum (new special exhibit on Michael Jackson), the Renaissance Center (headquarters of the car company that all Americans own, General Motors), and the Fisher Building (another Albert Kahn building and one of the finest examples of art deco architecture in the world).

To find out more about the Henry Ford and to plan your time there effectively, go to [www.thehenryford.org](http://www.thehenryford.org). Members of the Pickering Motor Company will also happily assist you in your endeavors.

In the next issue of *Plum Lines* we will detail more events at the convention itself.



*The Henry Ford Museum, ready for the impending invasion of TWS in 2011.*

# A Few More Quick Ones

**Max Pokrivchak** writes: “In Richard Russo’s novel *That Old Cape Magic*, the main character’s father, a professor, relaxes by reading Wodehouse, and Jeeves is mentioned by name a few times. However, the warm, fuzzy glow of recognition this produces in the reader is quickly dampened for listeners of the audio version when the narrator pronounces the first part of Plum’s surname as if it rhymed with Spode. Censorious missives should be addressed to Random House, who should know better.”

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**David Landman** received (anonymously) a copy of an article from the men’s magazine *Stuff*, which includes an interview with Dina Selkoe, the co-owner (with husband Greg) of the hip clothing company Karmaloop. Dina is pictured reading *Ice in the Bedroom*, and she explains that an original signed edition is “one of her favorite objects.” She was hooked in college after a literature course introduced her to Bertie and Jeeves, and the signed novel was given to her by her husband—without any agenda, as far as the article lets on.

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**David Landman** found a dandy picture of some gadroons in an article in the May 8–9 *Wall Street Journal*. As the article explains, the “row of narrow concave arches” are called gadroons. This should help you picture the scene in *Jeeves in the Offing*: “. . . ribbon wreaths in high relief and gadroon borders . . .”

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**Ralph and Jeanette Dody** alerted us to a dedication to Plum from Kerry Greenwood, who has written a series of period mysteries featuring the Hon. Phryne Fisher, a sort of Australian Bobbie Wickham. Ms. Greenwood included the following in the acknowledgments from her novel *Murder in the Dark* (2009): “. . . in loving homage to the master of us all, P. G. Wodehouse.”

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“Helen Simonson entertains in the P. G. Wodehouse tradition with her first novel, *Major Pettigrew’s Last Stand*.” So says reviewer Karen Brady in the June 13 “Life” section of the *Buffalo News*. Thanks are due to **Laura Loehr**, president of the Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham chapter in Buffalo, New York, for this very interesting comparison.

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**Ken Clevenger** (and **John Baesch**) sent along an obituary of CIA public affairs official Angus MacLean Thuermer from the May 5 *Washington Post*. Obit writer T. Rees Shapiro describes Mr. Thuermer’s encounter

with PGW on December 6, 1940, thus: “. . . Wodehouse was ‘cheerfully writing a book’ in an old padded cell. ‘Well, my, my,’ Wodehouse told Mr. Thuermer. ‘It certainly is grand of you to come down to see me.’”

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**Francine Kitts** noticed that John Paul Newport, in his “Golf Journal” column in the June 5–6 *Wall Street Journal*, used Francine’s favorite Wodehouse quote: “The least thing upset him on the links. He missed short putts because of the uproar of butterflies in the adjoining meadows.”

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**Luceil Carroll** tells us that the March issue of *Vanity Fair* contains two Wodehouse references. Christopher Hitchens writes that he’s been seduced into listening to audiobooks, due to the artistry of Martin Jarvis reading the novels of P. G. Wodehouse. Meanwhile, in his “Editor’s Letter,” Graydon Carter writes about his challenge to convince Hitchens to take the plunge, and then segues to a comparison of Wodehouse’s “singular and indelible world” with the one created by writer and director John Hughes (*Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, the *Home Alone* movies, etc.).

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The May 18 *Times* (London) reported that Kevin Telfer’s book *Peter Pan’s First XI* is now available. The book documents the Allahakabarries, the eccentric amateur cricket team that *Peter Pan* author J. M. Barrie captained, and says that the team “turned out some of the greatest writers of the 20th century, including Arthur Conan Doyle, A. A. Milne, P. G. Wodehouse, and Jerome K. Jerome.”

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*Clint Eastwood was spotted earlier this year having a pint at The Only Running Footman. This is the pub that Norman Murphy has identified as the source for The Junior Ganymede.*

*(Could there be something compromising about him in the Club Book?)*



# Innuendo in Wodehouse

BY KEN CLEVENGER

P. G. WODEHOUSE was the master of humorous, light romantic fiction in the 20th century, but sex was not at the tip of his pen. Indeed, it is rare to find sexual references in his short stories and novels, even those published in *Playboy* magazine. Yet it could be said that some of Plum's work was sexually suggestive.

Tony Ring makes this observation in the Summer 2005 edition of *Plum Lines* when writing in "Wodehouse on the Boards" about Plum's "purple patch as a playwright." Tony attributes a significant portion of the purple prose to the fact that Plum was adapting the works of "a spirited assortment of continental European playwrights." But Tony does not address Plum's licentious lyrics.

Wodehouse was a professional—he wrote what would sell. And in this period it was his masterful lyrics, written for the musical comedy stage, that drew the wolf whistle. Lee Davis, in his book *Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern: The Men Who Made Musical Comedy* (factually flawed but interesting), says that 1925 "was the period in which nudity was almost de rigueur in large Broadway musical comedies." In the biography *Jerome Kern: His Life and Music*, Gerald Bordman notes the prevalence of "off-color material so often employed in musicals." Chorus girls, daringly clad or unclad, were a key element of any such show.

To illustrate the reigning racy tone of new musicals of the time, let's look at some of Wodehouse's contributions to the genre. Consider the 1918 show *The Girl Behind the Gun* (called *Kissing Time* in the 1919 West End production). In the song "Oh, How Warm It Is Today!" the married heroine entertains her avuncular guardian, who feels the need to encourage her thusly:

Oh, how wonderful 'twould be, you must agree,  
If when next I pay a visit, I should see  
Half a dozen kiddies playing round your knees.

She fails to take the broad hint. Her repeated refrain of "Oh, how warm it is today!" fails to dissuade. Her guardian presses on:

You would find me daily cultivating gaily  
Branches on the family tree.  
Damme! it's your duty! You're a pretty beauty  
Shirking in this idle way!  
Come along—get action! Give me satisfaction

.....

Come now, time is flying, there's no harm in  
trying.

In Barry Day's excellent book *The Complete Lyrics of P. G. Wodehouse* (the source for the quoted lyrics in this article), he sums up *Kissing Time/The Girl Behind the Gun*: "The heroine . . . flirts outrageously . . . [there is an] attempted love-affair . . . [and] many other flirtations . . . all leading up to a general 'kissing time.'" The final sentence of the report concludes that "the compromising situations and misapprehensions are handled with dexterous propriety . . ."

This frank advice to procreate, and do it now, finds an echo in the story "Scoring Off Jeeves" when Aunt Agatha tells Bertie that he "should be breeding children" in one of the very few raw scenes in the canon.

In *The Rose of China* (1919) conjugal relations are again the subject in the song "In Our Bungalow." Tommy and Ling Tao are not yet married as they sing this duet, but conjugal bliss is definitely being contemplated.

To some far spot we'll go away, out in the jungle,  
And build a little bungalow, for oh! I love to  
bungle.

.....

We will live on love and kisses,

.....

In our breeze-y free and easy,  
Hug and squeeze-y will you please-y,  
Come and sit up on my knees-y  
Bungalow.

The musical *The Little Thing* was never produced per se, though it eventually turned into the hit musical comedy *Sally*. The former featured a song called "When You Come Back," which also anticipates a married relationship. The heroine and her girlfriend sing to the departing soldier boy:

When you come back, dear, nothing will be too  
good for you;  
We'll pet you when we get you—yes, that's what  
we'll do.

To which the soldier replies:

When I come back, dear, nothing will be too  
good for you;  
You bet I shan't forget how brave you've been  
and true;  
Each morning I will prove afresh how much I  
adore you.

Later, the girlfriend of the heroine sings this censor-friendly line: “He means that he’ll get up and light the furnace for you.”

Sometimes, Wodehouse’s rhyming couplets could clearly imply unmarried coupling. From *Miss Springtime* (1916) we have Kern’s composition “Saturday Night”:

She was a very good girl on Sunday,  
Not quite so good on Monday,  
On Tuesday, she was even worse,  
On Wednesday and Thursday—good night,  
Nurse!  
She seemed to lose by Friday  
All sense of what was right.  
She started out quite mild and meek,  
But her virtue seemed to spring a leak,  
She kept getting worse, all thro’ the week,  
And, oh, you Saturday night!

In his biography of Jerome Kern, Michael Freedland says that Herbert Reynolds wrote the lyrics for “Saturday Night.” But the published sheet music and the Copyright Office credits Wodehouse with this lyric.

The prevalence of this type of sexual suggestiveness on the stage is mocked in the never-produced show *Ladies, Please!* The song “I Mean to Say” says:

There’s always a scene in a bedroom, I mean  
And at nothing, by Jove, will they stop.  
The procedure, in fact, is to see the first act  
And then rush out and call for a cop.

Frequently, the passion was set in a faraway paradise, an aspect of fantasy well understood by the lyricist and librettist. Consider the song the unmarried Mr. Carp sings with his single friend Josephine in the 1927 show *The Nightingale*:

In some far-off Tropical Isle,  
We could love—jungle-style;  
“Back to Nature” just for a while.  
Love like Adam  
And his Madame.

.....

There we’ll both defy convention.  
Do things we mustn’t mention;  
No one near to interfere;  
For we will love  
Primitive.  
Josephine—Josephine  
There with you—we can do  
Everything—anything . . .

Josephine then adds: “I don’t know what you mean.” But her following verses betray her pretended innocence:

Sundays as well as Mondays  
We’ll need no heavy undies,  
We’ll dress in leaves, that is all.

Similarly, in *The Golden Moth* (1921), the song “The Island of Never-Mind-Where” tells us about the girls there:

They have such flowing tresses  
Why should they bother with dresses?  
In the Island of Never-Mind-Where  
Clothes are a simple affair,  
Some mustard and cress is a full evening dress,  
In the Island of Never-Mind-Where.

The implication of nudity is stark, but more frequently the lyrical suggestiveness is to clothing that revealed what should be concealed.

In *Oh, Boy!* (1917) we meet the character Jane Packard (originated by Marion Davies), who sings in celebration of the absence of her stays in “A Little Bit of Ribbon”:

For a little bit of ribbon,  
And a little bit of lace,  
And a little bit of silk that clings,  
When together they are linking,  
Always sets a fellow winking,  
And they also set him thinking things.

Not every lyrical suggestion reveals a male fantasy. Sometimes frustration is revealed.

In *The Girl Behind the Gun*, we hear the character Pierre Breval singing “Women Haven’t Any Mercy on a Man!”

I flirted with the littlest girl in Paris  
But still my wife gets sore with me and kicks,  
As if you’d been and gone and overdone it,  
And flirted with a perfect thirty-six.  
For women haven’t any sense of justice,  
They never make allowances at all;

.....

I could hardly do her homage,  
This petite piece of fromage;  
(It’s that unjust view that rankles,  
You could hardly see her ankles—)  
Women haven’t any mercy on a man!

In that same show the song “I’ve a System” suggests not only the “good results” to be obtained but finds an echo in the Ickenham System of Wodehouse’s prose fiction (*Uncle Dynamite*). The song says:

I’ve got a system.  
A simple little system.  
And it gets good results,  
It’s never missed them  
It’s not hard to learn  
For the secret is this:  
Never waste your time in talking,  
When you’ve got a chance to kiss.

Sometimes we find girls wishing for a man. For a 1947 revival of *The Chocolate Soldier* (originally produced in 1908), Guy Bolton rewrote Oscar Straus’s book and, privately, Wodehouse claimed credit for the revised lyrics. In the following passage, Nadine, Aurelia, and Moscha sing “We Are Rounding Up the Foe” with a chorus of soldiers:

Life is so lonely,  
Oh, so lonely,  
If you haven’t got a man.  
You can try it but deny it if you can.

.....

Oh, how sad a woman’s plight is!  
What a waste of naughty nighties.  
Ev’ryday it’s getting tougher  
And the birthrate’s bound to suffer.  
For a kiss I’m almost frantic!  
I feel even more romantic!

The suggestiveness of a song is not always the only or the best joke, of course. For example, from *The Cabaret Girl*, in another song with a theatrical theme, “You Want the Best Seats, We Have ’Em”:

Plays with a bed scene; French farces  
That made the censor frown.  
Plays by Barrie, plays by Milne; and all extremely  
good;  
Plays where people stab themselves, or where  
you wish they would.

.....

We’ve Eastern dramas where they dress  
In strings of beads, or less.

.....

Plays where wives behave as wives should never,  
never do;

In fairness I must note that these sexually suggestive songs are a small percentage of all the lyrics Plum wrote. Of course, there are many other songs and shows that might have made the list. “Bongo on the Congo,” from *Sitting Pretty* (“girls . . . wear little but a freckle as a rule”); “Cleopatterer,” from *Leave It to Jane* (1917) (“Her clothes were few, but full of style”); and so on. It is also true that the lyricist must follow the librettist. And in Guy Bolton, Plum had a notorious Lothario as a librettist. Few chorus girls were off-limits from Bolton’s romantic attention.

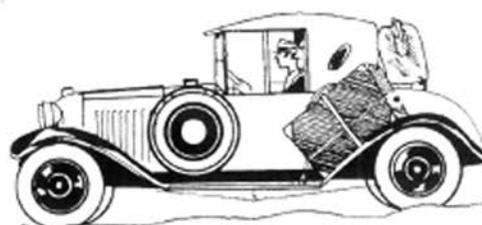
But while sexual suggestiveness in Plum’s lyrics is common, if not rife, only on rare occasions are the suggestions just barely concealed. *The Cabaret Girl* features one such song, “Oriental Dreams,” in which we hear of actual body parts:

Oh, your pale white arms,  
Oh, your ruby lips,  
From your honey charms  
There the love-bee sips.  
Oh, your snow-white breast  
Oh, your silken hair,  
In supernal rest,  
Let me hide me there . . .

In fairness to Wodehouse, George Grossmith Jr. is credited as a co-lyricist on this song.

Finally, there is suggestiveness concealed in an image so dated that it almost defies modern comprehension. It is important to recall that most of these lyrics were written beginning as early as 1914 and well before the 1930s. It was a different time and a different world. Consider the song “Low Back’d Car,” whatever that is, from the show *Miss 1917*:

No flower was there that could compare  
To the blooming girl I sing.  
As she sat upon her low back’d car  
The man at the Turnpike bar  
Never asked for his toll  
But just rubbed his old pole  
And looked after the Low Back’d Car.



# Chapters Corner

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

## Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)  
Contact: Susan Collicott  
Phone:  
E-mail:



## Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)  
Contact: Caralyn Campbell  
Phone:  
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## Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)  
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## The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)  
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E-mail:



**T**HE BROADWAY SPECIAL'S July 30 meeting at The Players Club in Manhattan focused on Plum's Reggie Pepper stories, the idea being to confront Bertie Wooster's prototype and examine a world with a Bertie-like character but without a Jeeves. There was genuine dialectic discourse for a time: Philip Shreffler suggested that Bertie's literary "voice" was the matured and considerably more subtle version of Reggie's, while Laurie Manifold averred that it is Jeeves's voice that truly makes a Jeeves-Wooster story and represents a marked improvement over the Pepper tales. Amy Plofker drew gasps when she suggested that Jeeves is a two-dimensional character (which is probably not exactly what she meant, but by this time martini consumption had given way to a lot of noise and the beginning of a breakdown in orderly Socratic give-and-take).

There were comments to the effect that aunts in both Wodehouse and H. H. Munro are similar horrors, but that Plum's stories are "sweet" whereas Saki's are "sour" and his aunts purely evil; that *Brother Alfred* is a perfect one-act play; and that if the Sherlockian members of The Broadway Special attempt to play their irregular game of pretending PGW's world to be real and capable of historical analysis, they dishonor the author's true genius.

Eventually the convocation grew raucous and enthusiastic, with dialogue overlapping worse than in a Howard Hawks film (even if it did still evince very worthy ideas), such that President Shreffler proclaimed, "This has become a Roman orgy!" To which Susan Rice, with perfect timing, replied: "Except for the food and sex."

## Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)  
Contact: Jeff Peterson  
Phone:  
E-mail:



## Capital F.O.R.M.

(Friends Of Ralston McTodd—Ottawa and vicinity)  
Contact: Megan Carton  
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## Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)  
Contact: Herb Moskovitz  
Phone:  
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**T**HE CHAPS MET on May 16 at our usual spot, the Dark Horse Tavern. Meeting leaders Hope Gaines and Debbie Bellew explained the theme of the meeting, namely Spring and its festivities as related by Plum.



*Hope and Debbie spruced up the Pickwick Room of the Dark Horse with springtime decor.*



*One of Hope's pig cookies. Perhaps the "Emperor of Blandings"?*

Many of the Chaps were festooned in period costumes. Hats and other paraphernalia were provided for those who needed same. These items included a genuine vintage niblick and scarves. Our leader, Herb "Brusiloff" Moskovitz, had a bobby's helmet. All costumes and props were universally admired.

After self-congratulations for passing what appears to be the 16-year mark of our chapter, photos of the 2001 convention in Philadelphia were presented, as were articles from a 1993 *Plum Lines* announcing plans for the formation of the chapter. There was also a discussion of a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article about our member artist Lou Glanzman, describing his career as an illustrator of books and magazines and his historical paintings. John Sherwood has left Philadelphia for Port Huron, Michigan, but swears he will keep up his dues forevermore.



*Chapter One members show off their Spring finery.*

The executive finance committee decided that since all communication is now electronic, we'll dispense with the annual dues. (Someone better tell John Sherwood or he will be sending in money forevermore.) However, we will keep up the collection of funds for the feeding of the newts at the Philadelphia Zoo. Herb gave us an update on the newt finances; Pongo sent in a report saying he visited the newts at the zoo and all is well.

Next, we discussed the story "Jeeves in the Springtime." We then read springtime quotes. All those who found and read a quote were presented with one of Hope's delicious pig cookies.

We then discussed various related (and some unrelated) topics, such as the writings of Rosie M. Banks, which are referred to in the story, and a lively one: What is a mazzard?

Future meeting topics were tossed around, followed by delicious anniversary cake. The next meeting was to be held on September 12 at the Dark Horse.

**The Chicago Accident Syndicate**  
(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison  
Phone:  
E-mail:



**The Clients of Adrian Mulliner**  
(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor  
Phone:



**The Dangerous Intellectuals**  
(Florida)

Contact: Alison Currie  
E-mail:



**T**HE JUNE MEETING of the Dangerous Intellectuals was a riproaring good time. Bread rolls were thrown, silly names were given to new members, and we chose *French Leave* as our first reading selection. The plans for the Best of Bad Wodehouse Contest were discussed and seemed to be shaping up nicely. Plans were also made to see *Spamalot* in April 2011 and to meet up at the Currie residence in December for home-brewed cider, ale, and holiday cheer. A groupwide call was made for photos to be put on the Dangerous Intellectuals Facebook page and the official website. If anyone knows of an artist who will make a quality logo for peanuts, we would appreciate an introduction. Our next meeting was to be held at the Book Lover's Cafe in Gainesville on August 14 at 5:00 P.M. All of our meetings are open to anyone interested in attending.

**The Drone Rangers**  
(Houston and vicinity)

Contact: Toni Oliver  
Phone:  
E-mail:



*Your friendly editor once again missed a chapter entry intended for the summer issue, and thus you will see two reports by Toni in this issue. Apologies go out to all who were on the edge of their seats wondering what was what with the Drone Rangers recently!*

**S**PRING REPORT: The Drone Rangers have continued with their policy of "live, laugh, love, and be happy." To that end, we have been meeting at the new Barnes & Noble bookshop on Shepherd and W. Gray, which is directly across the street from a delicious bakery. Meetings have gotten shorter, but dining after meetings has expanded, as have we all.

The book for March was *Thank You, Jeeves*, and the book for May was *The Return of Jeeves*. It is clear that the Jeeves motif has bitten us in the leg, and we intend to keep it up until we tire of it.

April was dining month, and the Drone Rangers have always looked upon our dinner with reverence. It gives us pleasure to don the feedbag together and natter along until all the comestibles have been consumed and our waistcoats are bulging.

\*\*\*\*\*

**S**UMMER REPORT: The Drone Rangers scrupulously maintain a high level of oojah-cum-spiff and regularly engage in spritely carousing that causes headwaiters about the metrop to wince when we arrive, commence slapping them on the back, and call them laddie. It was no different when, early in May, we dined en masse at Crapitto's. A week later (and not because the law was pursuing them), three of our band left for Europe, where they dined and shopped their way across Spain, Italy, and Greece, returning with enough photos and stories to make the rest of us turn a lovely green shade of envy. The intrepid travelers gave their report at our June 4 meeting, where we also ate coconut cake to celebrate the 25th wedding anniversary of Susan and David Garrett and discussed *The Return of Jeeves*, which we had all read for the meeting.

David Garrett read a paper by John Hannah about *The Return of Jeeves*, enlightening us with regard to the play of the same name, cowritten by Guy Bolton and Plum prior to the book being written.

On Sunday, June 6, several D-Rangers met at Brennan's for brunch. On Saturday, June 26, we had planned to visit another eatery, which your narrator has momentarily forgotten the name of, but where one may get Berkshire pork served with mixed veg and mashed potatoes.

### The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw

Phone:

E-mail:



**O**N SATURDAY, JUNE 5, members of the Flying Pigs chapter gathered in Versailles, Kentucky, for a late spring picnic, Wodehouse reading, and long-overdue visit. Our hostess (with the mostest) for this binge was Katherine Jordan, our Lexington (also Kentucky) chapter member. With help from her mother, she laid out a cold collation the equal of any Anatole creation. In addition to her culinary skills, she also managed to order up perfect weather for the afternoon: sunny skies,

comfortable temperatures, and just the right amount of breeziness to keep the mosquitoes and flies from being a menace. We shared out parts from the next chapter of *Pigs Have Wings* and whiled away the rest of the afternoon in casual conversation. We wondered aloud whether this might be the first time Wodehouse was read aloud in the Kentucky edition of Versailles. We may never know. So from all of us in attendance that day: "Thanks, Katherine!"

### Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham

(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)

Contact: Laura Loehr

Phone:

E-mail:



### The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss

Phone:

E-mail:



### The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTs)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: David Landman

Phone:

E-mail:



**T**HEIR CIRCULATIONS invigorated by a glorious July day, the NEWTS swarmed at the Ashby home of Lisa and Tom Dorward, where the main topic of discussion was a potential joint meeting with the local Robert Benchley Society in the early fall. Watch this space for future developments.

### The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:



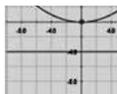
**T**he Northwodes met Mr. Mulliner at our June 22 book discussion. Both new and familiar readers commented on the unusually rich narrative style. We leisured readers could perhaps appreciate this better than a captive listener might, even though we had nothing stronger than Wilde Roast Cafe's excellent coffee to sustain us. (Maria Jette bravely tried the bottled shandy so that the rest of us now know to avoid it.)

The fourth Tuesday of August was our next planned date to bring forth the book group. Angie Meyer, the organizer, has been extremely careful not to let her personal preference for Blandings influence the reading list, but we're finally going to start that saga. It will be interesting to see (at least, interesting to the one person who brought an edition other than Overlook to the previous meeting) how many attendees are in the *Something New* versus *Something Fresh* camp.

July 6 saw a lucky few Northwodes enjoying Gilbert & Sullivan and other operetta classics ("Indian Love Call") courtesy of the Official Wodehouse Society Soprano (the aforementioned Maria) and her comrades. The next planned arts outing is to *Jeeves in Bloom* at the Old Log Theater on September 26—let us know now if you can join us and get in on the group rate! Some doubts about the wisdom of rearranging *The Master* have been expressed, but we hope to enjoy it as much as the Chicago Accident Syndicate did the production in their area (as previously reported in *PL*).

### The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity)  
 Contact: Peter M. Nixon  
 E-mail:



**T**HE PALE PARABOLITES . . . those who are seeking the Pale Parabola of Joy . . . whatever that may be. The Pale Parabolites' motto is *nil admirari*. Like the Empress of Blandings, the Pale Parabolites take things as they come and marvel at nothing.

### The Pelikan Club

(Kansas City and vicinity)  
 Contact: Sallie Hobbs  
 E-mail:



### The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)  
 Contact: Karen Shotting  
 Phone:  
 E-mail:



**E**VERY MONTH the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation continues to meet for discussions of the Master's work and occasional browsing and sluicing. Recent readings have included "Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo" and *Money in the Bank*. Please check our Yahoo! Group page at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PZMPCo> for future readings and

events. We look forward to welcoming one of our U.K. members to our September meeting.

In other news, the PZMPCo board of directors met in executive session to discuss ways and means for attracting new members. The executive vice president in charge of marketing proposed a guerrilla marketing campaign targeting the local libraries and bookstores, and a form of leaflet was presented to the board. After the chairman's endorsement of the idea and a round of "yesses" from the yesmen and enthusiastic nodding from all of the nodders, a team was dispatched to the Central Los Angeles, Pasadena, Glendale, and Valencia libraries, as well as Vroman's and Barnes & Noble bookstores. The leaflets, offering free membership in our group and an e-mail contact address, were inserted in all Wodehouse books (paper and audio) and videos. It was great fun, and we have had three responses so far. If anyone is interested in seeing the leaflet, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please come to one of our meetings if you are in the area, and you may catch one of us in one of our new PZMPCo T-shirts!

### The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)  
 Contact: Elliott Milstein  
 Phone:  
 E-mail:



**B**ROWSING AND SLUICING hit new heights as the Pickerings gathered at the home of Elyse and Elliott Milstein for a BBQ extravaganza. New member Robert Walker delighted and amazed all with his prodigious knowledge of the Master's works, and somewhat newish member Adam Bayer tore himself from wife and new baby to join in as well. Discussion on *Jill the Reckless* was completed—one of our better book discussions actually—and while work on the convention is keeping everyone busy, the idea of dropping all Wodehouse reading was anathema to all (especially Dicron), so it was agreed that we would read and discuss "Honeysuckle Cottage" for the next meeting.

The rest of the meeting naturally was taken up with convention business, the details of which are being kept secret at this time. More on that in this (see page 14) and upcoming issues.

If you live in the Detroit area, have a love for Wodehouse, and would enjoy working on the next TWS Convention, please join the Pickering Motor Company as soon as possible. We have a lot to do and many more beverages to consume before we do it.

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

Contact: Carol James  
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E-mail:



**The Size 14 Hat Club**  
(Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Contact: Jill Robinson  
E-mail:



**P**LUMMY BLOSSOMS continue to unfold as a result of the Wodehouse books given to the Halifax Public Library from the bequest of Fergus Brown. Readers of the new PGW items at the library are emailing me for interest in Wodehouse and the Size 14 Hat Club. I have had four emails in just a month! The last one asked for help “translating some of Plum’s expressions.”

I wrote to tell Joey Brown (the widow of Fergus Brown) what a success the whole thing had been: books, lectures, new members, etc. I also forwarded a sample book to Mrs. Brown, with a copy of the custom bookplate. She wrote a very nice thank-you note: “The book is a treasure! I might even become a P. G. convert! Isn’t it gratifying that Ferg’s bequest has had such an impact? It would thrill him I know. Thanks to you and Ken for making all this happen!”

So the news from the Size 14 Hat Club is all good, with a new member joining approximately each month.

**The Soup & Fish Club**

(Northern Virginia area)  
Contact: Deborah Dillard  
Phone:  
E-mail:



## Sara Morris

**S**ARA MORRIS, who was an 11-year member of the Blandings Castle chapter, passed away on April 9, 2010. Sara’s nom de Plum was Ginger Winship. Her daughter Margaret says: “My Mother was an absolute delight. She never met a stranger and everyone loved her. She was a virtual P. G. Wodehouse encyclopedia and when the topic arose she was delighted to share her love of PGW. She often talked about all the friends she met through [the] Blandings group and was very fond of all of you. . . . It’s indeed hard to believe that such a bubbly, enthusiastic person—so full of life, zeal, and zing—is no longer with us. Thank you Ginger/Sara for everything.”

## A Plummy Publication

**E**VERY YEAR the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction is awarded to the novel (published in the previous 12 months) “that has best captured the comic spirit of P. G. Wodehouse.” This year Ian McEwan won the prize (which included a pig!) for his novel on climate change, *Solar*. [Note: *Everyman’s Library* is the publisher of the *Everyman Wodehouse* series of hardcover books, which just published its 70th Wodehouse title this year. This series is published in the States by Overlook Press.—Ed.] Reviews have been many and varied. The reviewer in the April 10 issue of *Elle* describes the work as a “comic novel about global warming, entropy, and doom.” Michael Wood, in the May 13 *New York Review*, is generally complimentary, referring to “brilliant mockery,” “accidents on the level of plot that are crafty strokes of intention on the level of plotting,” and judging that “the slowness works in the novel’s favor.” The *Baltimore Sun*’s Julia Keller states that “McEwan’s sentences are too rich, too beautiful, too full of thought and meaning, to be leapt over like cracks in the sidewalk when you’re running late.” She calls the book “unskimmable,” indicating that one must take time with it. But in the *New York Times Book Review*, Walter Kirn has a different take, saying that the book is “so good—so ingeniously designed, irreproachably high-minded, and skillfully brought off—that it’s actually quite bad.” Mr. Kirn goes on to say that it’s “impeccable yet numbing, achieving the sort of superbly wrought inertia of a Romanesque cathedral. . . . It’s impressive to behold but something of a virtuous pain to read.” [We’d welcome any PL reader’s comments!—Ed.]



## Education, Ho!

**F**ROM TIM RICHARDS: An article in the July 11 *Sydney Morning Herald* in regard to election preparation by the Australian Labor Party “Linda Beattie, who will contest Mackellar, was keen to lay out her campaign. ‘I want to get P. G. Wodehouse on the English curriculum. That will be my contribution to the education revolution. What ho!’”

# P. G. Wodehouse to Eric Beardsworth George

SOPHIE RATCLIFFE is making good progress with her edition of the letters of P. G. Wodehouse, which should now be published in 2011. She is, however, missing a small part of a crucial early letter. Photocopies of this letter exist in various archives, but they have been incompletely photocopied, and one edge of the letter has been cut off, obscuring certain words. Sophie is therefore anxious to contact the owner of the original to see if they would be kind enough to supply a full copy of the letter.

The letter is part of a group of correspondence from P. G. Wodehouse to Eric Beardsworth George. The letter in question is dated “Sept. 1899” and written from “Old House. Stableford. Salop.” The opening reads: “Jeames, friend of me boyhood, & companion of me youthful years, list, I prithee. Your letter was very welcome & prompt. I have not answered it before because I have been wurking! That scholarship at Horiul, Jeames me lad, is a certainty. I am a genius.”

These letters were sold at Sotheby’s, New York, as part of a lot of four letters. The catalogue number was NY7151, and the date was Friday, June 26, 1998.

If readers are able to help to locate the letter, Sophie would be most grateful.

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*We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, My First Time tales, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above!*

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## Contents

- 1 Wodehouse on the Arno
- 3 Collecting Wodehouse: *The Strand Magazine* and Other News
- 4 Wodehouse and the “Locked-Room” Mystery
- 6 Blame It on Plum
- 7 The 2013 Convention!
- 7 *Just Enough Jeeves*
- 8 Finding Wodehouse in the Most Unlikely Places
- 10 *Oh, Boy!* Rings and Things in the Windy City
- 11 Quotations and Misquotations: A Never-Ending Search
- 12 Perpetual Samuel
- 12 A Few Quick Ones
- 13 Mosley & Spode Revisited, and a Correction (or Two—or Three)
- 14 Henry Ford Center Stage at Convention 2011
- 15 A Few More Quick Ones
- 16 Innuendo in Wodehouse
- 19 Chapters Corner
- 23 Sara Morris
- 23 A Plummy Publication
- 23 Education, Ho!
- 24 P. G. Wodehouse to Eric Beardsworth George