



Plum Lines

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What the Well-Dressed Man Was Wearing: Sartorial Etiquette for the Polished Boulevardier, 1900–1940

BY MADELYN SHAW

At the 2017 TWS convention in D.C., Madelyn entertained us with a talk about the popular clothing fashions of Bertie's time. This information helps us understand Bertie's sartorial challenges—and perhaps advises us how to dress properly at these conventions!

IN DECEMBER 1926, the Associated Press reported that “Coolidge Visit Causes Dress Suit Panic” and “Trenton's Fear of Formal Clothes Allayed After Run On Tailors.” What precipitated this newsworthy sartorial crisis? It was President Coolidge's upcoming speech at the Trenton (New Jersey) Historical Society, which launched hysteria among ticket holders as to “what the well-dressed man should wear in the presence of the President.”¹

Sounds familiar, of course, since Bertie Wooster's journalistic effort for *Milady's Boudoir* was titled “What the Well-Dressed Man Is Wearing.” You will also recall that Bertie was rather coy on the subject of soft silk shirts with evening clothes and that Jeeves disapproved. One is moved to ask: If these two could differ so strongly on such a basic sartorial question, how could a fellow navigate the terrors of menswear in that golden age of men's fashion and be considered “well-dressed”?

“Oh, and give this to Jeeves, when you see him. It's the Husband's Corner article. It's full of deep stuff about braid on the side of men's dress trousers, and I'd like him to vet it. For all I know it may be Red propaganda.”

The Code of the Woosters (1938)



Madelyn Shaw preps all the men who were present at the 2017 TWS convention to be well dressed for the upcoming Cincinnati convention in 2019.

I call it a golden age because, by golly, it was. In the first half of the twentieth century there were very high standards, visible to the aspiring well-dressed man not only through shop windows but through the media of motion pictures, magazines, and newspapers. Even though the Academy Awards ceremony was not televised in the 1930s, no one would have dreamed of attending wearing sneakers with his dinner jacket—a combination first adopted by Woody Allen, a dubious sartorial role model, but taken up by any number of celebrities. And, while the contemporary menswear company OppoSuits claims that its clothes are for those who don't take themselves too seriously, they would probably also have made Jeeves wince visibly, as much

because of the tailoring as the sprightly coloring. Jeeves subscribed to the fashion tenets of Beau Brummell, who noted in the early nineteenth century, “If John Bull turns round to look after you, you are not well-dressed.”



Still from 1915 silent animated film
Men's Styles: Keeping Up With the Joneses

As is the case with so many of the younger literati, he dresses like a tramp cyclist . . . conveying a sort of general suggestion of having been left out in the rain overnight in an ash can. The only occasion on which I have ever seen Jeeves really rattled was when he met Boko for the first time.

Joy in the Morning (1946)

Perhaps in this era, men needed to know what was not only stylish but permissible, acceptable, and correct. Run a quick internet search on the phrase “what the well-dressed man is wearing”: The hits number in the tens of thousands, and not all of them mention Wodehouse. In 1928, for example, the *Washington Post* published a letter to the editor complaining that, while American youth were being told to emulate baseball hero Ty Cobb as an example of what the well-dressed man should wear, they might also, mistakenly, “cling to yellow shoes of the type worn by Babe Ruth,”² whose taste was apparently considered questionable.

Theatre programs, newspapers, and magazines such as *Vanity Fair*, *Town & Country*, *Men's Wear*, and *Life* prodded their male readers to aspire to being a well-dressed man, and coached them on how to achieve that goal. On occasion, they mocked it. The *Chicago Tribune* printed a photograph of the Prince of Wales on horseback in South Africa, with a kerchief around his head as a heat-stroke preventative. The caption suggested that the Prince's fashion would “soon be the finishing touch to the ensemble of our flaming youth.”³ Men were bombarded with advertisements, features, advice columns, and reports from the centers of fashion, from Savile Row to St. Louis.

The subtext of all of these ads and articles recalls Mark Twain's aphorism: “Clothes make the man; naked people have little or no influence in society.” Even Bertie, whose own sartorial excesses are pretty mild, would not have cared to be considered oddly dressed. A little stretching of the boundaries of accepted taste might make one a fashion leader. Too much will make one an eccentric, a character, to be amused by but not to emulate.



“For the Well Dressed Man,” *Vanity Fair*, 1922

“Nobody has a greater respect than I have for your judgment in socks, in ties, and—I will go further—in spats; but when it comes to evening shirts your nerve seems to fail you. You have no vision. You are prejudiced and reactionary. Hidebound is the word that suggests itself.”

“Clustering Round Young Bingo” (1925)

Bertie's forays into passing fads were, quite rightly, squelched by Jeeves, who recognized that for a certain type of man abiding by the rules is best. Had Bertie been less one of nature's rabbits, and more like Fred Astaire, surely Jeeves would have winked at his use of a necktie as a belt to hold up his trousers; had Bertie been more of a dasher, like Clark Gable, Jeeves might have

even allowed the white mess jacket for summer evening wear—not to mention the moustache. And Jeeves might not have recoiled from Bertie’s writer friends Rocky Todd and Boko Fittleworth had they adopted a mildly eccentric but still respectable signature style, like Mark Twain’s white suit.

Both Edward VII, Queen Victoria’s son and successor, and his grandson, who would briefly be Edward VIII, were fashion leaders in their day: the very model of the well-dressed man. There has been a lot of loose talk about the center crease in men’s trouser legs and how it was popularized in the 1920s by the Prince of Wales. In fact, the center crease apparently found its way into favor during the late nineteenth century, with the earlier Edward, Prince of Wales, before he became king, which is why it shows up in photographs of his grandson as a teenager, well before he began to set fashion on his own.

The fashion leaders of Bertie’s world were the Prince of Wales, Prince Nicholas of Romania (who brought sixty suits with him on his trip to the U.S. in 1926), and the stars of stage, screen, and sport whose wardrobes were scrutinized in the papers and magazines. Bertie had something in common with all of them: Their clothes were made to order (“bespoke”); they were created individually in consultation with one’s tailor. Together, tailor and client picked out the cloth and the lining, discussed the width of lapels and the set of the shoulders, and decided how much to pad out a narrow chest or disguise a portly stomach. A rung down the ladder you could order clothes “made to measure”—you sent your measurements to a merchant tailor establishment and they sent you the suit. Of course, these were not made with the same level of hand-workmanship, fitting, and attention to detail as a bespoke suit. The same held true of one’s shoes and shirts.

For the masses, however, the ready-mades that had trickled into the clothing trades in the nineteenth century, and become a flood by the early twentieth, made it possible for men of many social and economic levels to follow fashion and dress correctly for any given occasion. Mail-order businesses, department stores, and men’s specialty shops worked with textile manufacturers, developing weights, textures, and fiber contents for types of cloth to suit many different markets, all off-the-rack in standard sizing. The less affluent might buy either sturdy fabrics in classic styling that would both wear well and undergo some alterations as needed, or the newest fashions in the cheapest fabrics, knowing they would wear out at about the same time that the fad passed. It is a matter of conjecture, however, whether Bertie ordered his town suits with two pair of trousers,

or his country suits with both trousers and plus fours; advice routinely given to men of the middling sort, on a budget but aspiring to well-dressed status.



Hickey-Freeman workroom, Rochester, New York. showing ready-made and made-to-measure suits, 1920s

Just as surely as Wodehouse knew that his readers would recognize the cliché “What the well dressed man is wearing” from a thousand repetitions in print, he mined his own reading—and perhaps his shopping—for useful phrases. The “Broadway Special” was a well-advertised hat trademark, owned by Charles Levy & Sons of New York City, for at least twenty years after 1899, while the combination of the term “White House” and the name of President Taft had branded the Brown Shoe Company’s products in 1909, a decade before the “White House Wonder” became a hat, and a source of friction between Bertie and Jeeves.

According to an article written for *Ladies’ Home Journal* in 1900 by Mrs. Burton Kingsland, a well-known American author, the four areas of dress for men were morning, afternoon, evening, and sport. In 1935, the *Pittsburgh Courier* informed its readers that well-dressed etiquette required Full Dress, Tuxedo, Morning Dress, Business Suits, and Country Clothes. Morning Dress, so-called, was formal daywear. The outfit consisted of a cutaway or frock coat cut well below hip length, striped trousers, spats, white shirt, higher cut white waistcoat than was worn with full dress, black tie or an ascot, and a wing collar, although by the 1930s that latter item was no longer necessary with an ascot. Sats went out of fashion in the later ’30s. Morning dress was correct for a daytime wedding, Sunday church in town, business wear (in Britain), or as a pall-bearer, and on what were deemed “daytime occasions of ceremony.” It remained diplomatic dress for many years after it was no longer routinely worn for business.⁴

The lounge suit, with the shorter sack jacket, became the American business uniform by about 1890 and the town wear of choice in the U.K. and Europe shortly thereafter, having earlier been reserved for sport and

country wear. Cheviot is the name of a cloth found in a variety of subtle black and white patterns, originally made from the wool of Scottish cheviot sheep, and in texture something like a flannel—not as rough as a true sporting tweed. The sack jacket had gained a wide acceptance in the American Civil War, as the Union army’s field uniform of choice, worn even by General Ulysses S. Grant.

“I’m going to Wembley. Produce some fairly durable garments which can stand getting squashed by the many-headed, Jeeves.”
 “Very good, sir. The grey cheviot lounge will, I fancy, be suitable.”
 “The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy” (1925)

Period-correct styling for the 1910s had narrow-fitted trousers that ended just below the ankle bone, above the instep, thus displaying the spats worn over the shoes, and a slim rather high-waisted and narrow-shouldered suit jacket. In every recent period drama and the television versions of Wodehouse stories, the costumers have chosen to use a generic circa 1920s styling for the men, avoiding the silhouette that actors—and contemporary viewers—often find funny looking.



Simpson (Canada) catalog page, Fall/Winter 1928.

In addition to cheviot, the standard fare of men’s town or business lounge suits included dark blue, black, and shades of gray suitable to the season. These could be solid colors or with the addition of subtle patterning, such as striping of a single-colored silk yarn; tiny flecks of colored wool spun into an otherwise somber yarn; or the heather mixture, in which wool fibers of various shades (possibly just black and white, possibly a base of gray with a range of color harmonies) are spun together into yarn, giving the finished woven cloth a hazy shading. The town suit was worn everyday in town, for traveling on trains (and later on airplanes), to church, in the country, and—in navy blue or black only—for small weddings in the country. In the summer, the coat of a blue suit might be worn with white flannel trousers for a lunch or to church in the country—the origins of the navy blue blazer. Suits in rough-surfaced tweeds or unusual colorings were to be worn only in the country, for informal daywear, for sport, and occasionally for travel. *Vogue* stated in 1925 that, fashion-wise, ships were “the country,” while trains were “town” (a tidbit that I owe to Alden O’Brien, curator of Costume and Textiles at the DAR Museum).

I had on a rather sprightly young check that morning. . . . It was, perhaps, rather sudden till you got used to it. . . .
 “Oh, Jeeves,” I said, “about that check suit. . . . Is it really a frost?”
 “A trifle too bizarre, sir, in my opinion.”
 “But lots of fellows have asked me who my tailor is.”
 “Doubtless in order to avoid him, sir.”
 “Jeeves Takes Charge” (1916)

There were various little rules about color, pattern, and silhouette that defined dressing well and separated it from the choices expected of racecourse touts, private detectives, traveling salesmen, and others whose judgment was stereotypically thought to lean to loud. The menswear dictum “Don’t wear brown in town” was initially a London businessman’s rule, and brown for business wear was still generally a no-no as late as the 1980s. At the other end of the sartorial scale, brash patterns were part of the persona of characters such as the gambler played by Victor Moore in the Astaire-Rogers movie *Swing Time* or the demimonde of a Damon Runyon story.

Fads for wide-legged trousers saw a few incarnations during the 1920s and 1930s. Oxford bags were all the rage for a few years in the mid-1920s, while in 1935 the Prince of Wales was said to have adopted “trouserings

in the straight outline . . . which touch the wearer in but one place, and then only if he is sitting down. When walking he has to take two steps while the trouserings take one.”⁵ The Prince could get away with it—those lower down the social totem pole just looked foolish. This type of garment touches the serious side of fashion: In the 1930s, Europe and the U.S. were in the midst of the Great Depression; encouraging the use of more fabric in making clothing was one way to put people back to work in those many shuttered textile mills.

The world of summer, resort, or warm weather wear was, in those days when men asked permission to remove their suit coat in mixed company, still largely the preserve of wool. Cricket and tennis flannels were usually an off-white in color and lightweight. Sometimes, for breathability, the fabric was woven with a fine cotton warp instead of wool, and it was meant to be hand-washable, although it often yellowed with washing. Tropical-weight suitings were made of the fine hard-twisted wool called worsted. Palm Beach cloth was an American invention, mixing mohair instead of wool with cotton so it didn’t cling when damp. During World War I, wool was so scarce that silk manufacturers introduced men’s silk suitings in substantial weaves suitable for tailoring. One such silk was branded “HavAcoke” by its maker, the Victory Silk Company of Paterson, New Jersey.

“Pardon me, sir, are you proposing to appear in those garments in public?”

...

I had been wondering when my new plus fours would come under discussion, and I was prepared to battle for them like a tigress for her young.

Very Good, Jeeves (1930)

Bertie did not give us details of his sporting wardrobe. Golf, as we know, requires an easy dash—and plus fours provided it. Even those, however, were a style negotiation. Fashionable golf costume included knickers, plus twos, plus fours, and even plus sixes. They might be worn with brightly colored shirts with attached collars, solid or two-toned sweaters, and socks color-matched to one’s shirt. Only duffers played in gray flannel trousers with a patch at the knee.

As one arbiter of taste put it, a well-dressed man would never step onto a golf course in a stiff shirt and derby hat or be seen in knickers or tennis shoes around the streets unless just coming from or going to his sport.⁶ Because shipboard was country, however, knicker suits and the like were permissible on deck, worn with a

soft cap, not a hat. Fashion advice even followed men into new modes of sport. The A. G. Spalding Co. admonished the readers of the magazine *Airway Age* in 1929 that the sportsman pilot should choose a white coverall flying suit to make him look flyer-ish, and not garage-attendant-ish.



A. G. Spalding advertisement, *Airway Age*, December 1929

Men’s evening wear was divided into the formal, or full dress (the “soup and fish”), and the informal dinner jacket. Full dress required a black wool tailcoat with trousers to match. The trousers had black silk braid along the side seams and no cuffs. The tailcoat was worn open in the front to show off the white stiff-bosomed evening shirt with a separate wing collar, white tie, and white waistcoat. The ensemble was finished with gleaming black evening shoes, black silk socks, and the black silk top hat. All as worn superbly and iconically by Fred Astaire, but also by fellow actors such as William Powell, Robert Taylor, and Gary Cooper, whose immaculate and faultless evening wear gave generations of men a standard to emulate.

In the world depicted in *Downton Abbey*, the dinner jacket was considered the thin end of the wedge in the disintegration of civilization by the formidable Dowager Duchess, who remarked that the men of the family

looked like waiters and asked if the next step would be for them to dine in pajamas. The dinner jacket (or, in American English, the tuxedo) was, according to my personal favorite of its several origin stories, introduced by an American man named Griswold Lorillard at his home in Tuxedo, New York, in the 1880s. Originally an informal evening garment worn by upper-class men only when no women were present, after the cataclysm of the Great War, the tuxedo, worn with a stiff-bosomed shirt, a black or possibly patterned silk waistcoat, and a black tie, was admitted into women's presence. It did not, however, qualify as "dressing" if you wanted entry into an exclusive restaurant or club, as readers of the Lord Peter Wimsey mysteries will no doubt recall. In the 1930s, white dinner jackets were permitted in the summer months or even year-round in hot climates. The white mess jacket, beloved by Bertie, was, as Jeeves knew, primarily for resort wear. It was styled after the British military officers' formal mess (dining) coat. This was cut rather like a tailcoat in that it was not meant to close, but was cropped at waist length all around.

One of those silk contrivances, you know, which you tie round your waist instead of a waistcoat, something on the order of a sash only more substantial. . . . I knew there would be trouble with Jeeves when I did, it being a pretty brightish scarlet.
The Inimitable Jeeves (1923)

The cummerbund, usually made of silk fabric pleated onto a stiff backing, was a very recent innovation when Bertie bought his rather fruity scarlet one to wear in Roville. *Vanity Fair* permitted a cummerbund in place of a waistcoat only for informal summer wear in 1923; this rule relaxed in the 1930s. Bertie's choice of red was very daring for the 1920s. Only the most avant-garde male introduced color, and only in very small doses, into his evening clothes. Not until the later 1930s did the definition of correct evening wear begin to include more color choices such as summer dinner jackets in pastel shades or dark blue hues for winter. For many men, even choosing midnight blue instead of black for one's evening suit was just too avant-garde.

Although Jeeves apparently approved of a mauve silk shirt in 1916, in 1923's *The Inimitable Jeeves*, he returned to the shop some that Bertie had ordered. Perhaps it was just the shade of mauve that he disliked rather than having a blanket disdain for the color. Except for evening, silk shirts—and pajamas—were one of the perks of wealth. The middling and lower sorts mostly made do with cotton in a somewhat bewildering

variety: plain or striped percales (what we know as fine sheeting) or fancy weaves known as Madras (not the 1960s version, which were cotton plaids from India in which the colors softened as the dyes bled into each other in the wash). In the 1920s, Madras was simply a light cotton cloth with a fancy woven pattern. It was used for curtains equally with shirts and blouses, and rolled off both Indian looms and Scottish by the millions of yards. Even before World War I, textile manufacturers added luster to men's cotton shirtings by adding stripes or small geometric figures of artificial silk (dubbed "rayon" in 1924), making them seem more silk-like for the aspirational dresser. These inexpensive mixed shirtings were popular with what Bertie might have termed "the lower orders."

Reading from left to right, the contents of the bed consisted of Pauline Stoker in my heliotrope pajamas with the old gold stripe.
Thank You, Jeeves (1934)

A 1922 advertisement for a man's "sleep coat" tagged it as "Something New." Although the Blandings Castle

Faultless sleep coat advertisement, 1922

novel *Something New* predated this ad by some seven years, it appears that the phrase was, like others we have seen, common enough in advertising of the day. In any case, pajamas could be pretty spiffy in those days, although not then generally patterned for adults with superheroes and other cartoon characters. Men who shied away from color during the day and evening might let themselves go in their nightwear. It would be interesting to know Jeeves's thoughts on the sleep coat, a V-necked below-knee length, loose-fitting garment. In styling it is reminiscent of the dressing gown worn by Pop Bassett, of bright purple with yellow frogs, which smote Bertie like a blow in one midnight encounter.

"Jeeves, can I mention men's knee-length underclothing in a woman's paper?"

"No, sir."

"Clustering Round Young Bingo" (1925)

Although in the mixed company of a TWS conference presentation it might be best to observe a reticence similar to Bertie's regarding discussion of male undergarments, the fact is that underwear pops up a number of times in the Bertie/Jeeves stories. For the most part, Jeeves is tasked with handing Bertie his BVDs after his pre-dinner bath. Both woven and knitted versions were available, but the lack of elastic meant that there was generally a button-front yoke.

"Not those socks, Jeeves," I said. . . . "give me the purple ones."

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

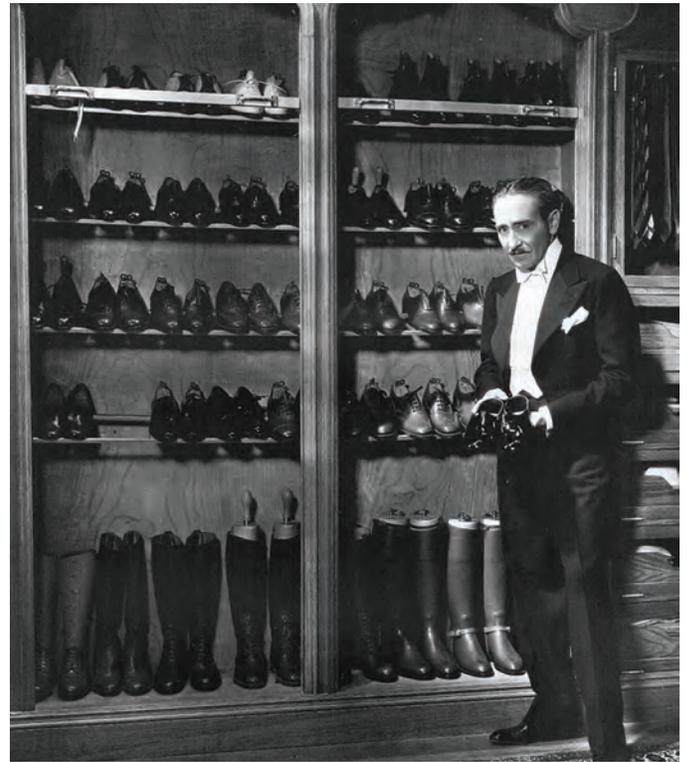
"Those jolly purple ones . . ."

He lugged them out of the drawer as if he were a vegetarian fishing a caterpillar out of a salad.

The Inimitable Jeeves (1923)

Silk socks were essential, in black, for evening and formal morning dress. As with pajamas and ties, men could choose from a riotous selection of colors for the rest of their day. Cotton lisle hosiery, made from mercerized cotton (which had been treated to make the yarns smooth) was worn by the better off of the middling sorts, and wool socks ranging from fine to bulky were uniformly the thing for cold weather, sports, and country clothes. Socks with clocks or other ornamentation knitted or embroidered up the side or instep were very popular, although I can't recall Bertie ever mentioning it.

It is a falsehood to equate extravagant shoe acquisition solely with the female gender. Actor Adolphe



Actor Adolphe Menjou and his shoe closet

Menjou was photographed in the 1930s showing off the contents of his shoe closet, with its eight pair of riding boots and forty pair of assorted shoes.

"Then bring me my whangee, my yellowest shoes, and the old green Homburg. I'm going into the Park to do pastoral dances."

The Inimitable Jeeves (1923)

Bertie's shoe wardrobe may not have required its own closet, but it would have included several pairs of evening shoes, both patent-leather pumps and lace-ups; brown and black town shoes; ditto walking shoes for the country; shoes and boots for golf, tennis, and riding; and summer oxfords in white. Yellow shoes meant tan, with lighter and yellower shades suggestive of lightheartedness rather than correctness in footwear.

. . . a pair of jazz spats which I had dug up while exploring in the Burlington Arcade. Some dashed brainy cove . . . had recently had the rather topping idea of putting out a line of spats . . . in your regimental or school colors.

"The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace" (1922)

Spats were only worn in the daytime, with formal morning dress or town suits; shades of gray, beige (which might tilt into a yellowish shade for the fashion

forward), and white were widely accepted. Spats, like soft silk shirts, were not worn with evening clothes. One can see why Jeeves might gaze frostily at Bertie's Old Etonian spats, which would have been black, striped with pale blue.

I was prepared to to concede that it would have been more suitable for rural wear, but against that had to be set the fact that it unquestionably lent a *diablerie* to my appearance, and mine is an appearance that needs all the *diablerie* it can get.

Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves (1963)

Finally, we come to hats (and let me tell you how hard Bertie had to work to find a blue alpine hat with a pink feather, a thing I was unable to do even after more than thirty pages of internet images). Alpine diablerie aside, the well-dressed man wore a silk top hat with formal evening wear—a collapsible one if going to the opera or the theater. A pearl gray homburg, more structured and more formal than a soft felt fedora, was correct for more formal town or business wear until into the 1930s. Green homburgs, another of Bertie's choices, were perfectly permissible for less formal daywear.

Now that you know the rules, you can decide for yourselves whether you are a rule-following rabbit or a rule-breaking non-rabbit when you dress for the next Drones Club dinner or weekend at Brinkley Manor. You might cast a keen eye over the various television versions of the Wodehouse canon and other period dramas to catch them in errors of style and silhouette. Jeeves (and Wodehouse) understood the psychology of clothing. In our current anxious global climate, it might be well to remember that in January 1932, during the depths of the Great Depression, the National Association of Merchant Tailors announced that the new spring styles would be cheerful, “applying a general mental stimulus, making gloom impossible, and arousing new hope and new ambitions through the medium of revitalized appearance.”⁷

Endnotes

- ¹ “Coolidge Visit,” *Boston Globe*, December 29, 1926.
- ² “Junior: A Problem of Youth,” *Washington Post*, February 23, 1928.
- ³ “What the Well-Dressed Man is Wearing,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 21, 1925.
- ⁴ Mrs. Burton Kingsland, “The Prevailing Etiquette for Young Men,” *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1900; “What the Well-Dressed Man Should Wear,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 2, 1935.

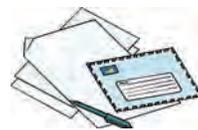
⁵ Irvin S. Cobb, “Observations,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 1935.

⁶ A. T. Gallico, “Men's Fashions,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 1, 1924.

⁷ “Styles to Uplift the Morale,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1932.

I was sauntering on the river bank . . . and a large, hefty dog came galloping up. . . . And I was just commending my soul to God and feeling that this was where the old flannel trousers got about thirty bobs' worth of value bitten out of them.

The Code of the Woosters (1938)



Letter to the Editor

Sir: The report of the Wodehouse memorial to be placed in Westminster Abbey (*Plum Lines*, Winter 2018, p. 22) stated that Patrick Kidd is “a patron of the UK society.” This is incorrect: Patrick, a well-known and highly respected journalist, is a longtime member of The P G Wodehouse Society but not a patron (yet). Your proofreader who overlooked the error—herself a member of the UK society—ought to know better.

Yours sincerely,

Elin Woodger Murphy
(aka the guilty proofreader)

Confessions Corner

JOHN DAWSON, who has so kindly contributed portions of his significant work *Wodehouse's Early Years*, pointed out that your loyal editor made a significant faux pas in our most recent (Winter 2018 *Plum Lines*) published chapter from that work. It was a series of errors that led to an incorrect caption. The photograph depicting the infant Plum being held by his mother Eleanor had both the name and the year misstated. We published the photograph as being from 1892 and as showing Plum's brother Dick. Not so! The actual date should have been 1882 and the child pictured is the already luminous PGW. We stand corrected. When we post this issue in the online archive on the TWS website, we will make the correction in that version of the Winter 2018 issue so that it will be proper for all eternity.

Jeeves and the King of Clubs: Not Wodehouse, but Fun Stuff Anyway

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN

I AM NOT a “purist.” I actually enjoy it when people take liberties with my favorite books. It doesn’t always work, but it’s often fun and if the book in question is truly great, it can stand a few liberties. Think of the depths of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies* and *Clueless*. Still Jane Austen endures.

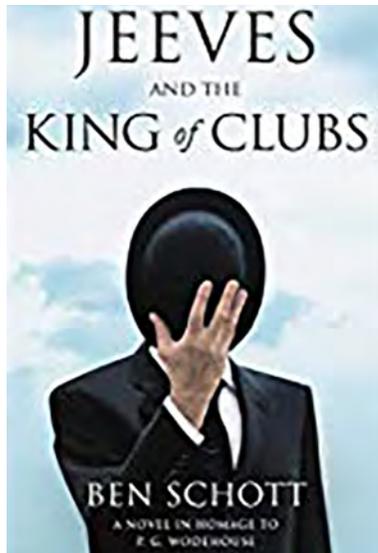
Continuing the stories of a beloved character after the original creator has tendered his or her resignation, however, is always fraught. Consider the sad tales of James Bond post-Fleming or Ace Atkins’s Spenser books. But occasionally you get something really fine in the process, like Laurie R. King’s Mary Russell/Sherlock Holmes novels. So one should always approach these things with an open mind.

That being said, taking on P. G. Wodehouse is a formidable and forbidding task. You can create a new story for Bertie and Jeeves easily enough, but you simply cannot tell it the way Wodehouse would. And, unlike Bond, Spenser, Holmes, and the like, the brilliance of the books is not in the characters or plots, but in the sublime, irreproducible prose which brings them to life; that prose is just not sustainable by any writer but Wodehouse. One might squeeze out a sentence or two that sounds right. A really good writer can do it for about four or five paragraphs. But after that you inevitably hit that false note.

It was for that reason that, as much as I admired and enjoyed his effort, Sebastian Faulks’s *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells* simply did not fulfill. And that is why I approached this new book by Ben Schott, *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*, with some trepidation.

Well, the dissonance started with the very first sentence “when in buttled Jeeves with the quenching tray.” Nothing shows the genius of Wodehouse’s “shimmered” more than the use of this strange expression. (Besides the fact that it just sounds wrong; Jeeves isn’t a butler, which Schott surely knows.)

It’s as if he would do anything to avoid utilizing constructs Wodehouse did, even though Wodehouse himself frequently used the same phrase or expression several times. So instead of repeating things that are pitch-perfect, he goes slightly atonal with things like “Aunt Agatha, who sacrifices livestock by the light of the moon and chews broken glass to sharpen her teeth”;



“monkey suit” instead of “soup and fish” for evening wear; and “stinker” instead of “gasper” for a cigarette—not to mention strange new expressions like “Dronesmen” for Drones Club members.

Of course the acid test of imitating Wodehouse are the similes. A few of Schott’s seem harmonious, like “his mouth flapped open like a landed carp,” but most miss a beat or two: “Miss Bassett is as soupy as New England clam chowder” or “I leaned on the bell like a drunkard at a bar.” Of course one has to commiserate

with him when it comes to similes. Nobody has a chance on that score.

There are moderate successes. When he gives a try at his own disgruntled-gruntled gag, while missing the guffaw, he definitely got a chuckle out of this reader. Several other classic Wooster moments come in for a copy with similar results, and old friends pop up in interesting new guises. Not a clarion call, but not completely out of tune.

What is most off-key, however, is how much of it just sounds too smart to be Bertie. “I was inclined to take such braggadocio cum a hefty grano of salis”; “Lead on, McJeeves!”; “Chuffy and I auto-defenestrated”—really?

It was happening so frequently that it finally occurred to me that perhaps he isn’t trying to imitate Wodehouse at all. Wisely realizing that such a thing is a mug’s game (especially in the simile department), I think Schott is choosing to do something else entirely. This is not a continuation of the Bertie and Jeeves saga; this is Bertie and Jeeves in an alternate universe. Schott is showing us what Wodehouse could have done if he were a different kind of writer, with different life experiences, approaching his characters in a different way. His cacophony, like Stravinsky’s in *The Rite of Spring*, is purposeful. Does it work? Not all the time, but frequently enough to make the journey fun.

What drove this notion home for me is the structure of the book. The plot is a clever conceit centered on the idea that Roderick Spode (okay, Lord Sidcup, but, as Bertie says in the real Wodehouse world, “he will always

be Spode to me”) is a serious political menace and the SIS has to keep tabs on him, using many civilians to do so, including, in this tale, our favorite duo. Clever, as I say, but really just enough fodder for a short story. So Schott adds numerous unrelated subplots and long diversions.

Wodehouse wrote to Townend in 1923 that “the more I write, the more I’m convinced that the only way to write a popular story is to split it up into scenes, and to have as little stuff between the scenes as possible.” Schott takes the opposite approach, providing pretty much only the stuff in between. This fills up pages with some fun sequences, but the storyline billows like a muumuu on a ballet dancer, and the plot has more holes than the roads in Blackburn, Lancashire.

But the fun stuff is fun: minute details of the mundane, quotidian events of a real-life *entre deux guerres* Bertie Wooster. We have exhaustive accounts of him at his bank making a withdrawal, at his tailor buying a new suit of clothes, window shopping in St. James’s Street, gambling at an unlicensed floating casino, engaging in membership committee work at the Drones—not to mention long discourses on snuff and snooker and other arcane Edwardian habits and pursuits. It’s basically the parts of Wooster’s world that Wodehouse left out.

Schott helpfully explains how he knows all this stuff in copious footnotes, reminding me of the delightful Flashman books by George MacDonald Fraser, delineating what is real, what is stretched, and what is fiction, and expanding on the information as well as documenting it. It’s rather like reading Norman Murphy’s *Wodehouse Handbook* set in story form.

In his afterword, Schott humbly praises Wodehouse and, appropriately, directs any reader who has not yet sampled Wodehouse’s writing to do so forthwith. All well and good. But I can’t help wondering what such a hapless individual would think after reading this book and then diving into *Right Ho, Jeeves* for the first time. The mind boggles. But if, like me, you’ve read *Right Ho, Jeeves* and *The Code of the Woosters* a time or two—and you’re not a purist—then *Jeeves and the King of Clubs* makes a piquant divertimento before heading back to *Carry On, Jeeves* to remind yourself who Freddie Bullivant is. And, of course, who P. G. Wodehouse is.



Guess who?

Asian Plums

TONY RING has informed us (via PGWnet) that five Jeeves books have been translated into Simplified Chinese and were published in 2018 by Dook Media Group Limited (www.dookbook.com).

In addition, publisher Hyundae Munhak Publishing Co. (www.hdmh.co.kr) put out a single volume in Korean of 1,159 pages that included 39 assorted Wodehouse short stories, including samplings of Jeeves, Drones Club, Mulliner, Ukridge, and golf stories.

Wodehouse continues to conquer the world!



Thurber Prize

FOLLOWING UP from the terrific “Rivals” article about James Thurber that Bob Rains penned for our 2018 Winter issue of *Plum Lines*, we heard from the Thurber Society that the 2018 Thurber Prize for American Humor (“The Highest Recognition of Humor Writing in the United States”) was awarded to Patricia Lockwood. Patricia’s book *Priestdaddy* is a personal, often comic, but also deeply serious, memoir that follows the unconventional Catholic priest Father Greg Lockwood and his family. Congratulations to Patricia, who is obviously an author worth checking out. Runners-up included Jenny Allen’s *Would Everybody Please Stop?* and John Hodgman’s *Vacationland*.

Warming the Buffalo Winter

Laura Loehr, chapter president of Buffalo’s Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham, has informed us that the January 20, 2019, *Buffalo News* reprinted a review from the *Washington Post*. The article was about “three great audiobooks to stave off the winter blues.” At the top of the list was *My Man Jeeves: The Jeeves and Wooster Series* to “mark the 100th anniversary of the appearance of P. G. Wodehouse’s greatest gift to the world: Bertie Wooster and Jeeves.” (Specifically, the event was the re-release by Blackstone of Jonathan Cecil’s narration of eight stories.) The review ends with: “A festival of language, happy conceit, and peerless delivery: This is a recording for the ages.” Laura was happy that the local editors of the *Buffalo News* are paying attention to news of the Master.

Madame Eulalie's Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions

BY NEIL MIDKIFF

This announcement was recently made on PGWnet, but certainly is of interest to all TWS members. Neil's post was originally seen in January (on Twelfth Night), which seemed appropriate as a holiday gift for all from the Madame Eulalie caretakers.

I HAVE THE privilege of introducing a great new resource for Wodehouse readers, now hosted at Madame Eulalie: Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in the Works of P. G. Wodehouse (<https://madameeulalie.org/annots/pgwsqa.html>).

Our own Diego Seguí from Argentina is the creator of this work. This resource has been brought to web publication with the help of our team of Madame Eulalie editors, including Ananth Kaitharam, Ian Michaud, and myself. Diego has a Master of Arts in Classical Philology (Ancient Greek), has translated everything from medieval Latin to the poetry of J. R. R. Tolkien into Spanish, occasionally teaches historical linguistics and literature, and has been reading Wodehouse for some thirty years.

I'll let Diego explain the details of the project itself by referring you to his introduction at the top of the page linked above. It will grow over time beyond its current state with additional research and also as it becomes cross-linked with the other annotations on Madame Eulalie. Diego's scheme is to present the original Shakespeare passages in the order that they appear in the plays, and to group together, beneath each passage, the excerpts from Wodehouse which quote, allude to, or (occasionally) mangle the source.

With the 2019 updates to the "Items by Title" menu and this project, we are also introducing an expanded system of reference codes for Wodehouse items. It's based on the scheme initiated by Daniel H. Garrison for *Who's Who in Wodehouse*. It will be used in the forthcoming third edition of *Who's Who in Wodehouse* as well.

In the Shakespeare project, the codes are extremely easy to use: just hover your mouse pointer, or finger-tap on your tablet screen, on a code in blue type; a "bubble" caption will pop up to spell out the details of title, publication, and date associated with that code. Enjoy this latest addition and all the Madame Eulalie treasures!



With the upcoming TWS convention in Cincinnati, in the Chinese Year of the Pig no less, we're seeing pigs everywhere. In this case, the Bailiwick of Guernsey issued a pig stamp that brightens our journal.

Powell: More Like Proust or Wodehouse?

ANTHONY POWELL wrote the ambitious twelve-novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time*. Two of our members spotted PGW references in regard to Mr. Powell, who was sometimes called "the English Proust." Bob Rains sent along an article in *Harper's Magazine*, wherein columnist Christopher Taylor offers some passages and then goes on to say, that "exchanges like these make it possible to see what V. S. Pritchett had in mind when he likened *A Dance* to Proust translated by P. G. Wodehouse."

Evelyn Herzog also spotted an article in the November 12, 2018, *New Yorker* by Charles McGrath, who states that Powell was much less introspective than Proust, "but also much funnier—at times more Wodehouse than Proust."

"He's very young," [Lady Constance] said dubiously.

The Duke's attention was engaged once more with the photograph of Lady Constance's husband.

"Funny-shaped head Schoonmaker's got. Like a Spanish onion."

It was a statement which at any other time Lady Constance would have contested hotly, but her mind was on Sir Roderick Glossop's junior partner.

"He's very young," she repeated.

A Pelican at Blandings (1969)

Pigs Fly in Cincinnati

BY BILL SCRIVENER



DID YOU notice the registration form for the twentieth international TWS convention in the last issue of *Plum Lines*? No? Missed it? Threw it out by mistake, did you? Well, fear not! There's another one accompanying this issue. And it's not too late to register!

Whether you're an experienced conventioneer (this will be my ninth convention) or have never been to one before, let me tell you, *this* is the one to come to. Located in that spectacular city of Cincinnati, aka the Queen City (for you Monarchists) and Porkopolis, there will be much to do both at the convention and in the city. Your intrepid Flying Pigs chapter in Cincinnati has been hard at work to provide you with an occasion for merriment, elucidation, camaraderie, and browsing and sluicing.

What can you look forward to? Glad you asked. To begin with, you will be staying at the sumptuous Netherland Hilton. This Art Deco gem is in the heart of downtown and within easy walking distance of all sorts of entertainment. There will be an opportunity to cruise the mighty Ohio River on riverboats. The Cincinnati Public Library will be hosting a Wodehouse exhibition. We have a full roster of Riveting Talks, covering such topics as: "About Pigs and Prawns—Wodehouse in a Dutch Monastery," "All His World's a Stage: Theatrical Jargon in Wodehouse," and "Wardrobe Guide for the Female Impostor at Blandings Castle."

If you're coming early or staying late, you might want to check out what's playing at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Ensemble Theater of Cincinnati, or the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company. The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra will have an 11 AM performance on Friday. The Cincinnati Art Museum and the Taft Museum of Art always have wonderful exhibitions. There are many and varied dining opportunities and you will receive information about them.

Of course, there will be the usual TWS festivities, including an opening reception on Friday evening and the reception/banquet/costume party on Saturday evening. It's not too soon to be thinking about which Plum character you might wish to portray. Shy, are you? Or perhaps just a tad squeamish about appearing in costume? Not to worry. Many attend conventions in plain old civvies and have a rip-roarin' good time.

12 *Plum Lines* Vol. 40 No. 1 Spring 2019



Music Hall / Cincinnati Arts

Now I want to take a moment to address those out there who have never attended a convention. Perhaps you think you need to have read all 96 books or memorized all the lyrics to fit in. *Au contraire!* Attendees who have just watched the Fry-Laurie shows and never read a word come and have a wonderful time. You can even get some ideas on what book to start with. (I think it should be *Right Ho, Jeeves*, but many think *Very Good, Jeeves* is the superior choice. Ask around. All of the attendees will have their own opinion and they are usually happy to share.)

Perhaps you think you'll be standing in the corner feeling lost and forlorn because you've no friends attending. Once more, you would be wrong. At a Wodehouse convention, we're all friends. And of course, once the sluicing begins, we're even friendlier. Speaking for myself and, I suspect, for many others, one big draw is the opportunity to reconnect with old friends and make new ones. As the Grateful Dead once sang, "Such a long, long time to be gone and a short time to be there." Please join us and make our short time together memorable.

One more thing to make you get out that fountain pen and checkbook: Prices go up on June 15, so now's the time. Go ahead. Fill out and send in the registration form. We can't wait to show you a great time in our favorite city. Come to Ohio and find out "why the sea is boiling hot and whether pigs have wings"!



Findlay Market in Cincinnati



Cincinnati on the Ohio River



The Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza Hotel

The Burgeoning Public Domain

SEVERAL OF our TWS compatriots informed us of the very large number of famous works of fiction published during 1923 that have entered the public domain in the USA as of January 1, 2019. And there are many more to come in the years ahead. This includes a multitude of works by Kahlil Gibran, Marcel Proust, Willa Cather, D. H. Lawrence, Agatha Christie, Joseph Conrad, Edith Wharton, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Frost, and many more—including P. G. Wodehouse.

While it will have significant negative financial consequence for publishers and literary estates, it will certainly provide a great wealth of editions for readers—though many of the new editions might not be top of the line, since anyone can do them—and will open the door to aspiring writers who want to riff on classic works without potential legal ramifications. Bertie and vampires? Jeeves the prestidigitator? Watch out. In fact, *The Inimitable Jeeves* is one of the many works coming off protection, and there will be more as the years go by.

The reason for the wave of newly available works relates to a 1998 congressional act that extended copyrights for twenty years. In effect, that law reset the copyright term for work published from 1923 to 1977 for twenty additional years. And now that extension has run out for 1923 works.

While it will be interesting to see the fallout, the bottom line for Wodehouseans is that Wodehouse is not going to be outdone at his own game. We'll watch with interest, enjoy what can be enjoyed of the flood, and then turn back to our favorites and continue to explore the canon in its original, and masterful, purity. [Note: Wodehouse's 1923 publications in magazines are now online at the *Madame Eulalie* website—Ed.]

A Few Quick Ones

These items are courtesy of Evelyn Herzog and John Baesch. They keep their eyes attuned to those Plummy keywords. If you see Evy and John in Cincinnati, be sure to buy them a Quick One!

In the March 2017 *Esquire*, Dwight Garner provided some useful advice in an article called “The Tipping Point.” The teaser gave a good idea of the topic: “Don’t Call it a Bribe: How the Occasional Well-Targeted, Slightly Excessive Gratuity Can Change Your Life.” Dwight knew his sources, as he said that “sometimes you need to spread a bit of what Bingo Little, in P. G. Wodehouse’s novels, called ‘the stuff.’”

In the article “Chez Newts,” in the June 3, 2017, *Spectator*, Simon Barnes argued that newts “have acquired comic value from their obscurity, for the enthusiasm they arouse in unexpected people, and for their bizarre appearance.” Of course, he references the familiar: “P. G. Wodehouse never tired of the fact that Gussie Fink-Nottle—the one who, being a ‘glutton for punishment,’ stared at himself in the mirror—kept newts. The newt-keeping was almost as absurd as his taste for orange juice and Madeline Bassett.”

Dot Wordsworth, in the “Mind Your Language” column in the May 27, 2017, *Spectator*, referenced the use of the Americanism “hep” by P. G. Wodehouse in 1917’s *Piccadilly Jim*. (“In a word, I am hep.”) [Note that Plum used “hep” as early as 1910 in “*The Pitcher and the Plutocrat*.”—Ed.] She went on to say how much Wodehouse loved to play with American English. She also mentioned Plum’s use of the word “goof”: she cited his description of Bingo Little “with his mouth open and a sort of goofy expression in his eyes” and (from “The Heart of a Goof”) how golf can morbidly affect a man until his “goofery unfits him for the battles of life.”

The Wodehouse Cult?

BY NOEL BUSHNELL



I WOULD LIKE to bring to the attention of my fellow Wodehouseans a Down-Under critique of PGW and of Geoffrey Jaggard's *Wooster's World*, from *The Bulletin* of July 29, 1967. The Bully, as it was affectionately known, was an Australian newsmagazine, like *Time* or *Newsweek*, which unfortunately succumbed to the internet in 2008 after 128 years of publication.

I found this piece via Madame Eulalie. While viewing its new additions, I noticed a listing for a Wodehouse yarn from a 1913 edition of the *Kangaroo Island Courier* and I wondered how on earth Ananth Kaitharam had dug out something from such an obscure source. I mean, K.I. may not be the most out-of-the-way place in the world, but it's definitely a contender. Anyway, I thought he must have used the Australian National Library's Trove database, so I called it up, typed in "Wodehouse" and waited. The *KI Courier* didn't figure in the results but, inter alia, I found by way of compensation an article entitled "Wodehouse Cult" by a Beverley Tivey. The author, as far as I can gather from very limited internet data, was a reasonably well-known Australian writer and critic (particularly of film) through the 1950s and '60s.

In these days when P. G. Wodehouse is practically a standard author in English literature (albeit, gnash, middlebrow!) and is about to have a memorial stone in Westminster Abbey, it is a peculiar feeling to view the man and his work from the perspective of half a century ago. I was already a committed reader then and as a teenager regarded Wodehouse as a satirist alongside—well, I don't know . . . I was only a teenager.

If I'd read Tivey's opinion at that time, perhaps I might have agreed with her. For example: Books that are "skittish and diverting" and short stories that are "in their slight way models of construction" by a man who "could be regarded as a minor recorder of a lost age" indeed "make it absurd to take him seriously." Well, I know many people on whom the Wodehouse magic dust has not settled, and I have read more modern opinions that are not so far removed from Tivey's.

Somewhat contradictorily, Ms. Tivey then declared the Jeeves-Wooster short stories were "favorite bedside books," so it's clear she was familiar with the canon.

What got me thinking a bit was the next sentence about Jaggard's "sort of concordance . . . an honor I'd thought reserved for Shakespeare and the Bible." Little did she know. Even though she starts her whole article with the view that Wodehouse had been "made the

subject of a cult," implying she realized something was afoot among Wodehouse readers, she goes on to deny an obvious next step. If she were with us today, would she be able to say that *Wooster's World* is a curious feat of—well, not scholarship, but misapplied perseverance? Like building models of the Harbour Bridge out of dead matches or making enormous balls of silver paper, it's a harmless pastime but of "very little practical value." What would she have to say about Madame Eulalie, or about Tony Ring's continuance of Jaggard's work in his eight-volume *Millennium Concordance*?

I asked Tony what he thought. "She is wrong when she says that it is 'of very little practical value,'" he replied. "With the research that has taken place since, and the questions which come into the [Wodehouse] societies (and PGWnet), I find my *Concordance* to be of incalculable value in answering them. If not mine, then [Daniel H.] Garrison's *Who's Who in Wodehouse*, or Jaggard."

The fact is that the world of Wodehouse has developed from Tivey's supposed cult—a smallish band of devotees practicing mysterious rites—into a global cottage industry supporting many levels of activity from professorial ponderings to groups of deep thinkers to pub trivia quizzes. Wodehouse societies flourish around the globe. For heaven's sake, the Empress of Japan is a keen reader. Whole blogs on the internet—two concepts people in 1967 could not have imagined—are dedicated to Wodehouse. Academics publish scholarly treatises on subjects such as nodal humor in comic narrative or a semantic analysis of two stories by Twain and Wodehouse. Tributes seem to flow constantly; speakers and writers routinely make Wodehouse references almost reflexively and almost in the way Shakespeare is used. *Plum Lines* alone would have been enough to have Beverley Tivey examining her mind to see if it bogged.

Ms. Tivey reckoned no one needs a Wodehouse concordance because "it's much more fun to read the originals." Well, yes, but if I just want to sample a few nifties, contemplate the bulk of butlers, and chortle at the dumb-chummery as an aid to removing the daily grind from my consciousness and happily drifting off into the dreamless, I've found there's nothing better than lifting *Wooster's World* out of my Wodehouse bookcase and randomly picking my way through it. Or *Blandings the Blest* (Jaggard) or Norman Murphy's handbooks. Does it every time.

Wodehouse's Early Years, 1881–1902: Part Three

BY JOHN DAWSON

In the Autumn 2018 issue of Plum Lines, we printed the introduction and first chapter (“Sion Hill”) of John’s very detailed work about the early years of P. G. Wodehouse’s life. In the Winter 2018 issue, we continued with “Hong Kong” and the first installment of “Ernest and Eleanor.” We hope you’re having as much fun reading it as we are! We’ll print more in this and subsequent issues, to give you a good sense of what the book includes, and hope that a good number of you will be interested in procuring the entire volume when it becomes available.

3. Ernest and Eleanor (Part Two)

NORMAN MURPHY felt that the families were “almost certainly” acquainted long before the marriage, yet told me: “I knew Patrick Wodehouse [1920–2011], P. G.’s nephew, quite well. And he certainly told me that she had come out on the fishing fleet. Having seen many photos of her and learning of her ‘forthright’ attitude and decided lack of maternal instincts, the phrase always surprised me but Patrick assured me it was so.” No doubt Murphy faithfully portrayed his conversation with Armine’s son. Patrick and his mother, Nella (née Helen Hartnett), were interviewed for a 1989 BBC documentary and both used the term “fishing fleet,” although neither said they had heard it from Eleanor. One must accept Patrick’s and Nella’s statements to be the truth as they understood it, although all of Nella’s comments about Eleanor (in Donaldson’s book) are derogatory and insulting.

There is nothing in letters, oral histories, or firsthand accounts related by sons or other relatives that discusses how the parents met. In my opinion, no one can say that Eleanor wanted to come to Hong Kong to hook a husband, or to live with her brother’s family, or to simply be with Ernest. Perhaps all three, but her motivations are in fact unknowable. To recap, Ernest and Walter Deane met, ostensibly for the first time, in April 1867, a decade before the marriage, and there is strong circumstantial evidence the families may have been acquainted as early as the 1850s. Think of what an extraordinary coincidence it would have been for Eleanor, parasol atwirl, to step off a slow boat to China one day expecting just another port full of fresh fish, but instead discovering that her future husband was an old friend of the family and had been working alongside her brother for ten years.

A more reasonable theory, supported by a proven timeline, would suggest that Eleanor and Ernest could

have met in England in 1873, reunited in Hong Kong in 1874, and conducted a courtship like any normal couple.

Plum’s parents were married on February 3, 1877, at the Cathedral in Hong Kong and remained so for 52 years until Ernest’s death in 1929. From the *Bexhill on Sea Observer*, February 5, 1927: “Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Wodehouse, the parents of Mr. P. G. Wodehouse, the popular humorist, celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary at their residence, 13 Jameson-road. Mr. P. G. Wodehouse came down to Bexhill from London for the anniversary.”

Ernest and Eleanor wasted no time starting a family. A son, Philip Peveril John Wodehouse (Pev or PPJ), entered the world on September 26, 1877, which confirms a premature birth. McCrum wrote that Eleanor and Ernest lost a set of twins in childbirth the following year. If that is true—he cited no source—I believe the event warrants more than a dismissive mention. The parents’ grief would have been devastating, and could well have affected future decisions regarding their children. The couple’s second son, Ernest Armine, who was always known by his middle name, was born on May 11, 1879, in Hong Kong.

Ernest’s career proceeded apace. Over the next few years he worked in the Colonial Secretary’s office, served as Auditor General, and filled vacancies in the coroner’s office, fire brigade, and police hierarchy. In March 1881, he was named to one of six police magistrate benches. These courts dealt primarily with Chinese and maritime crime. He remained in the prestigious position until retirement in 1898.



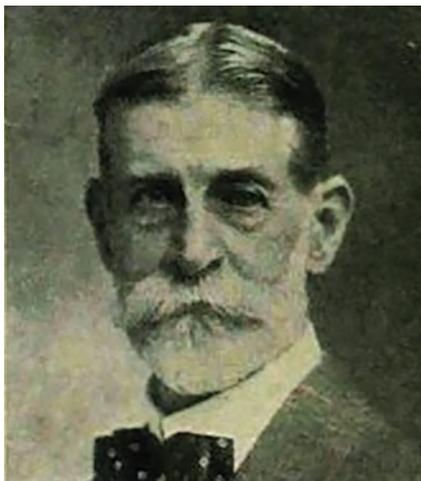
Snowdenham House

The parents took home leave from June 1880 to May 1881, at which time they placed Pev and Armine at 17 Sion Hill. Eleanor, in the early months of her pregnancy

with Plum, went to stay with her sister Rose and her children at Snowdenham House, situated on a 264-acre estate in Bramley, three miles south of Guildford, Surrey. Eleanor's mother and two of her sisters, Emmeline and Mary, arrived in September 1881 to await Plum's birth.

Pelham Grenville was born on October 15, 1881, at One Vale Place, Epsom Road, Guildford. (The raw work at the font was performed by Rev. W. T. Jones, Rector of St. Nicholas Church in Guildford, at his November 17 christening.) Jasen wrote that Eleanor was "visiting a sister at One Vale Place, Guildford, when she rather unexpectedly gave birth to her third son." Through no fault of his own, Jasen's statement was askew because Rose actually lived in Bramley; Plum evidently did not know that. One Vale Place, an upper-middle-class home in the old village of Merrow, was about five miles north, and in 1881 it was occupied by a retired Army major named Edgar Gardner and his family. McCrum repeated the error thirty years later. There is no known connection between the Wodehouse, Deane, and Gardner families, and it is an open question why Eleanor delivered her baby at Guildford while indications seem to point to Snowdenham House as Plum's intended birthplace.

His namesake was Pelham von Donop (1851–1921), a son of Vice Admiral Edward Pelham Brenton von Donop, a longtime neighbor of the Deanes on Sion Hill. Pelham von Donop attended Royal Somersetshire College and the Royal Military Academy, and had a long and colorful career in the Royal Engineers. He was a noted cricketer and Association football player as well and played on the winning R.E. teams in the F.A. cup finals of 1874 and 1875. He competed in the 1882 Wimbledon tennis championships and won the West of England Championship in 1884. The von Donops may have recommended Elizabeth College in Guernsey for the Wodehouse boys; Pelham's older brother, Edward Brenton von Donop, had attended school there.



*Pelham von Donop,
Plum's namesake*

Plum's middle name can be traced to one of two family members. Richard Grenville Deane (1837–1855) was the youngest son of Rev. George Deane, rector of Bighton, Hants. He springs from the Nethercote branch of the family, from whom Plum's great-grandfather Charles Meredith Deane was descended. Richard was killed in an assault in Sebastopol on September 8, 1855, at the age of eighteen, while serving as Ensign in H.M.'s 30th Regiment, South Wales Borderers. His namesake and nephew, Richard Grenville Deane II, was born in 1856 and served in the same 30th Regiment under General Edmond Wodehouse, brother of Sir Philip Edmond Wodehouse. He died in 1876. Grenville Zinzan (more information in the complete work, Chapter 10, "Formidable Aunts and the Real Mary Deane") might be complicit as well.

WHILE THEIR livelihoods offered service to country, security, and respectability, colonial parents were faced with profoundly difficult decisions when it came to their children, many of whom were born in faraway places. To begin with, the Wodehouses knew that their sons could not receive a proper English education in Hong Kong. Although some schools for military children in India were operating fairly well, failure to attract qualified teachers to Hong Kong had stunted efforts to build and staff proper educational facilities. Two or three schools were operated by missionaries to the Chinese, but these were unsuitable for British parents. Importantly, a child raised in Hong Kong would not grow up with England's cherished institutions, traditions, and culture.

More critical was the health risk to Caucasian children. Native infant mortality on the island was overwhelming, and European children, having no immunities to tropical diseases, were at particularly high risk. In those days, water, fresh fruit, and vegetables had to be sterilized. In March 1881, while Eleanor was safe at Bramley carrying Plum, Hong Kong port was quarantined due to smallpox. Bubonic plague caused the evacuation of 100,000 people in 1894, the year Plum entered Dulwich. Murphy describes "the complete misinterpretation of the parents sending the three boys back to the U.K. from Hong Kong. They did it to save their lives; the incidence of European children dying in the tropics was so great, every parent who could did so."

Colonists were flesh-and-blood people, not monsters who abandoned their children. A British education for a colonial child was a long-standing need, and the selfless sacrifice had been made by parents from the earliest days of the Empire. Every family faced its own unique circumstances. Many children such as the

Wodehouse brothers and their Deane cousins were brought to England as infants and cared for by nannies and relatives. When they reached school age, they were sent to boarding schools and shared among relatives at holidays. The children might see their mothers every second or third year and their fathers perhaps every five years.

Other children were raised overseas until school age, generally five or older, and were uprooted when their parents sent them to England. The sad stories related in Vyvyan Brendon's *Children of the Raj* (2003) echo four sentiments: bewilderment at the actions of the parents for separating the family, despair at having to leave their homes, feelings of being abandoned and unloved, and difficulty adjusting to their new lives. Some of these children suffered a breaking of parental bonds. Their childhood memories are of desertion, fear, and abandonment. (The term "Raj" actually refers specifically to British rule on the Indian subcontinent, not Hong Kong or other British possessions.)

Not all Raj children were so affected. Colonists had stocked England with generations of emotionally healthy, well-educated, and productive citizens since the beginning days of the Empire. Generalizations such as "Children of the Raj must suffer from childhood trauma" cannot be applied universally. How the parents managed the children's transitions was all-important and undoubtedly depended on the individual child as well. Plum told Jasen the truth as he understood it, and never spoke of his parents with rancor. As Jasen points out: "Eleanor and Ernest wanted their boys to have a good education and a proper English upbringing and were clearly prepared to make the sacrifice of leaving the children in England in order to accomplish this."

Pev, Armine, and Plum's first years were spent with parents, grandparents, and aunts in the Deane family enclave in Bath. They were sent to carefully selected schools. At Croydon, Guernsey, and Dulwich, they met other boys of their peer group. There can be little doubt they had all heard the speech: We are serving our country in a place far away. We are making a great sacrifice for you because we love you, we want you to be safe, and we want to give you the best education in the world. It is your duty to obey, study hard, and make us proud of you. You must bear up like proper English gentlemen.

It was parental absence, but it did not have to be parental abandonment.

Some biographers insist that Eleanor "deserted" her sons. Donaldson claims to intuit her innermost feelings with a conflation of societal whim and maternal love: "It is very curious how much the fashion of society at any

moment can increase or diminish such an apparently basic emotion as maternal love." The comment exemplifies the perils of writing a biography with a college textbook as one's authority.

None of Plum's biographers were aware that Eleanor spent a full year in Bath after she brought Plum home at age three. More significantly, Ernest leased another home on Sion Hill from 1883 to 1886. Gothic Cottage at 27 Sion Hill is an eight-room residence about one hundred yards south of the three other houses. His lease spanned the entire period of time that Plum was in Bath, which strongly suggests that Eleanor stayed in the country for protracted periods over the ensuing three years. There is no other discernable reason the Wodehouses would have paid to lease these homes, within yards of their sons, while away in Hong Kong.

The families had many years of experience with their colonial children. There were eleven of them among Plum's aunts and uncles, and Eleanor would have known how best to handle the inevitable separation from her own sons. Her sister-in-law Juliette had done the same with her three young daughters, who were also living on Sion Hill. The large Wodehouse and Deane families were stocked with upstanding British clergy and distinguished career soldiers, and none of their children were ever abandoned to perfect strangers. It would have been unthinkable.



Eleanor Wodehouse

Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Chapter representatives, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page).

Please note that our webmaster, Noel Merrill, tries to keep chapter activities posted on the society website, so it's a good idea to send information about upcoming events to Noel on a timely basis. His contact information is on the last page of this issue.

A Little More Bertie Than Jeeves
(Waynesville/Sylva, North Carolina)
Contact: Erin Watras



The ALMBTJ Chapter assembles at the NC Stage Theatre.

OUR NEW TWS chapter went on its first field trip in February 2019. We traveled to Asheville, North Carolina (the next town over), to attend *Jeeves at Sea* at the NC Stage Theatre. We had a very Drones-ey time and even got to meet the cast afterwards—they were brimming with pleasure to have “real Wodehouse fans” at the show!

At our next meeting on March 11, we discussed the short story “Tried in the Furnace.” Report to follow.



The NC Stage cast of Jeeves at Sea gathers with the merry Wodehouseans.

Anglers' Rest
(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott



Birmingham Banjolele Band
(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)
Contact: Caralyn McDaniel



Blandings Castle Chapter
(Greater San Francisco Bay area)
Contact: Bill Franklin



The Broadway Special
(New York City and vicinity) Contact:
Amy Plofker



Capital! Capital!
(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact: Scott Daniels



Chapter One
(Greater Philadelphia area) Contact:
Herb Moskovitz



AN EAGER GROUP assembled in the bar parlor of Cavanaugh's on Head House Square. It was Sunday, November 4, 2018, a clear, cool, fall day. We all had the pleasure of extending warm “hellos” to Emily and Harry Booker, former members of the Plum Crazy Chapter, who had recently moved to Philadelphia.

After the usual trenching and sluicing, we participated in a group reading of a play from the Mulliner story, “The Truth About George.” The script had been prepared by Ben and Steve Wieland and closely adhered to the original story. Parts were assigned so that all could participate—with Mr. Mulliner's narration divided among five readers. The part of George Mulliner was taken by Bob Rains, who proved to be a capable stammerer and improviser of melodies.

Following our absolutely captivating and delightful reading, we had a brief discussion of the story led by Bob Nissenbaum. The Chaps speculated that, given

his own shyness, Wodehouse must have loved writing about a diffident man who overcomes his inhibitions. It was also suggested that the Mulliner stories were the high point of Plum's output. All agreed that this tale showed him to be a great craftsman.

Thanks and kudos to Ben and Steve Wieland for preparing the text, making copies for the members, and organizing the reading.

JANUARY 27 was so warm that the Farmer's Market was in full swing, and so the Chaps of Chapter One fled from the bustle into Cavanaugh's. Inside, no one was watching football. The Eagles had lost their playoff game two weeks earlier. Cavanaugh's patrons are Philly fanatics, but also philosophical.

We watched and discussed the 1975 *Wodehouse Playhouse* adaptation of 1929's "Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court," in which two gentle poets become bloodthirsty hunters. Bob Rains brought the Wendy Cope poem "Kindness to Animals" (1989) which was commissioned for the (real!) book *The Orange Dove of Fiji: Poems for the Worldwide Fund for Nature*, but rejected as unsuitable. Thus, life imitates art, echoing the commission and rejection of the poem "Good Gnus" in the Wodehouse story.

Chicago Accident Syndicate
(Chicago and thereabouts)
Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison



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



ON SATURDAY, January 12, 2019, a Junior Bloodstain was held at 10:30 AM in the Roosevelt Hotel during the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI) weekend in New York City. Aficionados of both Sherlock Holmes and P. G. Wodehouse enjoyed a performance of "The Rubies of Stoke Moran" by Headon Hill, dramatized by William Hyder. The rubies of Stoke Moran are missing or stolen! The Duchess calls in Sadface Hones and his partner Smartin Amule to investigate. They conclude that Sterling Champion and Molly McEachern are the culprits. The tutor Mr. Lupin is found dead hanging by the neck in the water well of the manor. Superintendent Foster takes charge of the case and goes down the

well himself, retrieves the jewels, and subsequently confronts the duchess with her crime and gives her back her rubies. Shortly after, Hones and Amule storm out of the room, and Sterling and Molly marry and live happily ever after.

The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine
(Denver and vicinity)
Contact: Jennifer Petkus



The Drone Rangers
(Houston and vicinity)
Contact: Carey Tynan



The Flying Pigs
(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)
Contact: Susan Pace or Bill Scrivener



Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham
(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)
Contact: Laura Loehr



The Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society
(Tennessee)
Contact: Ken Clevenger



The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels
(San Antonio and South Texas)
Contact: Lynette Poss



The New England Wodehouse Th ingummy So ciety (NEWTS)
(Boston and New England)
Contact: Lynn Vesley-Gross



or Roberta Towner

THE NEWTS held a rousing December meeting, slithering in just before the holiday season truly had us by the throats. We welcomed the arrival of winter in

New England at an exceptional venue new to us, NEWT Stef Adams's workplace: a bicycle factory! It was brave of Stef to welcome a NEWT swarm into the fabulous Seven Cycles in Watertown, Massachusetts. There were no accidents resulting in combinations such as Nicholls and Jackson getting all tangled up and resulting in something called Nixon (as related by Jeeves to Bertie before Bertie sets out on his famous nighttime bicycle journey). In fact, the event was remarkably accident-free—even on the factory tour, no newts were caught playing with the welding equipment. Note in the photo (below) that all NEWTS were wearing safety goggles.



Seven Cycles' awesome custom-built bicycles look as though they could do a Brinkley-Court-to-Kingham-Manor key recovery in a cool twenty minutes.

After enjoying suitable refreshments and circulating among the bicycles while discussing Wodehouse, there was a spirited group reading of "Jeeves and the Yuletide Spirit." Also, rehearsals continue for the skit to be presented at the upcoming TWS convention in October. Stirring developments will be revealed, possibly influencing sporting competitions at future Shropshire Agricultural Shows.

Some NEWTS visited the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston after the gathering and were shocked and saddened to find the newt exhibit with our chapter plaque on it has been dismantled and taken down forever. Alternative plans are being considered to honor the local aquatic members of the family *salamandridae* which constitute the genus *molge*.

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Mike Eckman



The Orange Plums

(Orange County, California)

Contact: Lia Hansen or
Diana Van Horn



YOURS TRULY, Admiral George J. Biffen here (aka Jeff Porteous), "Lord of the Seas," reporting in to note that the O. Plums were indeed at their Plummiest during our annual Christmas soirée at The Olde Ship Pub and Restaurant in Santa Ana last December 1. Gathering for our yuletide debauch—and for yet another holiday helping of our traditional Boat Race Night gambit—a total of twelve O. Plummiest were present, which was merely one sailor short of full-squadron strength, and a total rarely seen at our regular monthly get-togethers. Exciting—and raucous! Regrettably, the one oarsman missing, a certain Angus McAllister (aka Susan Hardman—yes, I'm naming names, and I mean it to sting)—had been the prior winner, keeper, and caretaker of the gaudy behemoth of a second-place trophy emblematic of this organized chaos. (The first-place winner is actually so honored by *not* having to take home said vile eyesore.) So, only a small, fabric flying pig, coincidentally on hand and pressed into service, could be given as a stand-in prize to the vanquisher of all but one lucky foe in this most keen of aquatic contests. This also meant, of course, that no photos could be taken of the foul object, so we'll have to offend you with those in some future installment.

The game goes (after all the usual browsing and sluicing and generally not discussing the meeting's assigned reading) as follows: Member/players are tasked beforehand with creating and contributing a number of multiple-choice trivia questions, each taken from readings previously assigned to the chapter members. In this case, the assignment was from the Master's novel *Uncle Dynamite*. Said players are then represented by tiny boat game pieces moved along a customized game board divided into lanes. Turns are taken and when a question is answered correctly, a roll of the die determines advancement. Only the second player to cross the finish sails home with the winner's trophy. Questions are read aloud by our traditional Master of Ceremonies, Orlando Maltravers (aka Doug Kendrick, also keenly associated with The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation Chapter). A wittier purveyor of trivia questions you will not encounter anywhere.

Though confusion does threaten during these boisterous competitions, laughter nevertheless reigns, despite the frequent and good-natured contesting of questions and answers by all and sundry. For example,

one of my own submitted questions concerning quills upon the fretful “porcupine”—taken verbatim from the typeset pages of my particular edition of *Uncle Dynamite*—was actually overruled to be “porpentine” simply because the latter had so often appeared as such elsewhere in the PGW canon. Imagine!

The number of seagoing circumnavigations of the game board necessary to determine a winner is limited only by the patience of the proprietor of the hosting eatery. In this case, a typically agonized second-place finisher had to be hurriedly declared before a hasty group eviction from our game table could allow other patrons of the establishment to be accommodated.

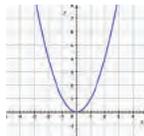
Worry not though, dear reader: Visiting former TWS queen pin Karen Shotting and I had indeed, when all was said and done, managed to spend a brief moment discussing one of the two stories assigned for the meeting. Our noble purpose was thus not altogether lost, and chapter members were not forced to form a hollow square and stoically endure the snipping off of all their ranking buttons and insignia. All was well. So well, in fact, that we hope other TWS members may perhaps deign to join us for future Boat Race Nights—that is, if willing to risk the nobbling of related wagers by our own Rupert Steggles (aka Tom Campbell).

Until next time, then, I remain, nautically yours, Fruity.



The Orange Plums, in their holiday accoutrements, take part in the Boat Race Night festivities.

The Pale Parabolites
(Toronto and vicinity)
Contact: George Vanderburgh



The PeliKans
(Kansas City and vicinity)
Contact: Bob Clark



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation
(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Doug Kendrick



The Pickering Motor Company
(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein



The Pickerings pickeringing in the winter.

THERE ARE TWO meetings to report on this time. At the previously reported meeting, in deciding what should be read next, the general consensus was that the next five selections should be Wodehouse’s five best novels. This decision in turn led to a spirited discussion on what those would be. The group agreed on the first four and tabled the discussion of what would be the fifth to a future meeting.

So it came to be that, on November 9, 2018, the Pickerings gathered at the home of David and LuAnn Warren. The novel assigned for this meeting was *Heavy Weather*. Almost everyone had read it (the guilty party will not be named), so a very full discussion of the book took place. There was general agreement that, as it has a complex plot line and Wodehouse was writing at the height of his powers, the book should be read slowly to savor the writing. The way in which all of the plot lines come together at the end is masterful (which, of course, we expect from Wodehouse).

In most of the Blandings books there is conflict between Clarence and one of his sisters. In this one we saw some disagreement and conflict between Lady Constance and Lady Julia, the only time this involves two sisters. Elliott put forth his belief that Lady Julia is the best character of all the Emsworth sisters that Wodehouse created, reiterating many of the points he had made in his talk at the previous TWS convention. (You may read Elliott’s complete talk in the Winter 2018 issue of *Plum Lines*.) One of the constant Wodehouse

themes we see in this book is that chorus girls are good eggs.

We met again at Larry Nahigian's home on December 15, 2018. By tradition, there is no reading for the holiday meeting so that all can concentrate fully on Larry's wonderful egg dish, shakshuka. This traditional Middle Eastern dish comes to us from Armenia via Larry's great-uncle Horeghbeyr. Most agreed that this year's batch was the best ever.

Elliott had just finished reading a book of essays entitled *Middlebrow Wodehouse*, edited by Ann Rea. He reported his findings on it, resulting in a long discussion of British highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow culture and humor. Our notes are not as complete as they should be, so we cannot give you a clear explanation of how this theme evolved into a discussion of Baxter's yellow pajamas in *Leave It to Psmith* and trying to remember which Wodehouse characters wore mauve pajamas or heliotrope stripe pajamas, but it happened. You had to be there.

On January 12, February 23, and March 30, Mike Smith led a Detroit Architecture Tour. Mike knows his stuff—he prepared the guidebook to the Detroit bus tour at the Detroit (Dearborn) TWS convention in 2011. The next meeting was held March 9, 2019, and the reading assignment was the second in our list of Wodehouse's top five novels, *Right Ho, Jeeves*. Report to follow.

The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

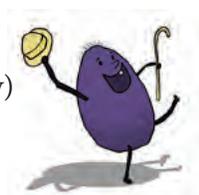
Contact: Allison Thompson



The Plum Crazyies

(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)

Contact: Betty Hooker



The Plum Street Plummies

(Olympia, Washington and vicinity)

Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith



THE PLUM STREET PLUMMIES met at the Smithery on December 8, 2018, for browsing, sluicing, and socializing. Members brought their favorite tea treats.

Troy Fisher (the pianist who, at the 2015 Pseattle TWS convention accompanied convention organizer Tom Smith on "Sonny Boy") played some of the music from the Fred Astaire movie *A Damsel in Distress*. Troy and Tom Smith also performed "Till the Clouds Roll By" (Wodehouse and Kern) and "If I Ever Lost You" (Wodehouse and Novello). Then the assembled masses withdrew to the drawing room to watch *A Damsel in Distress*. A discussion followed, comparing the book to the movie.



Tom Smith regales the crowd, to Troy Fisher's accompaniment.

The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Contact: Peter Nieuwenhuizen



ON NOVEMBER 1, the Dutch Wodehouse Society had the privilege of receiving the first copy worldwide of the new Wodehouse novel *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*. The Waterstones Bookshop in Amsterdam was the host for this special occasion, and the first copy (signed by author Ben Schott) was presented by Random House's Pauline Konink to the Dutch society's president Peter Nieuwenhuizen. Pauline reminded us of the former occasions when the Dutch Knights were lucky enough to receive the very first copy of *A Life in Letters* by Sophie Ratcliffe (2011) and *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells* by Sebastian Faulks (2013). The tradition continues!

On Saturday, November 24, the Second Wodehouse Film Festival took place in Amsterdam in the Perdu Theatre. Admittance was free, and the Knights gathered with a lot of guests to introduce them to the works of Wodehouse, with free books and drinks. Many of

the films were shorter pieces, episodes from various Wodehouse series. We had the *Wodehouse Playhouse* Mulliner episode “Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court” (1975), with John Alderton and Pauline Collins, introduced by P. G. Wodehouse himself. This episode included the magnificent poem “Good Gnu,” of course, recited by Charlotte Mulliner (Pauline Collins). We also saw “Jeeves and the Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace” (1966), from *The World of Wooster* series, with Ian Carmichael as Bertie Wooster and Dennis Price as Jeeves. The style was markedly different: more distant, with an older Bertie than we typically think of him. The Fry and Laurie *Jeeves and Wooster* version of “Tuppy and the Terrier” (1990) had the delicious “Sonny Boy,” sung by Al Jolson.

The icing on the cake was the 1924 short (and silent) film *Rodney Fails to Qualify*, shot in the same year that the story was published. Phyllis Lytton played Jane Packard and Victor Robson was Rodney Spelvin. The festival ended with another Mulliner episode from *Wodehouse Playhouse*, “Romance at Droitgate Spa” (1975).

Afterwards, the Knights had an Anatolean meal in the Szmulewicz Restaurant, Bakkersstraat 12 (off Rembrandtplein) in Amsterdam. This is also where the next regular meeting of the Knights will be on June 15, 2019, at 1 PM.

Rugby In All Its Niceties
(Rugby, Tennessee Region) Contact:
 Donna Heffner



The Size 14 Hat Club
 (Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Contact: Jill Robinson



The West Texas Wooster
 (West Texas)
 Contact: Troy Gregory



Emelie Levinson

PATRICIA LEVINSON WRITES: It is with a sigh and a tear that I write to inform you that my mother, TWS member Emelie Levinson, has read her last PGW story. Born in Chicago in 1918, Mom was a Wodehouse aficionado. Her favorite story was “The Truth About George.” She felt that the beauty of Wodehousian prose was captured in one sentence: “I do not know what the existing record for the Sitting High-Jump is, but she undoubtedly lowered it; and if George had been a member of the Olympic Games Selection Committee, he would have signed this woman up immediately.”

Mom died peacefully on May 12, 2018. She was 100 years old. She had four children, and while we all enjoy a wicked sense of humor, I am the only one she could persuade to begin reading Wodehouse, when I was fifteen. (I will be seventy this year.) I became as much an enthusiast as she. On my way back from a trip, I read in a United Airlines flight magazine about a Wodehouse convention to be scheduled in Chicago for 1997. I shared the information with Mom, and she decided that we would both attend. We both enjoyed the experience and carefully avoided being pelted by bread rolls! (I believe that the British Consul at the time was flinging the dough with the best of ‘em!)

We attended Chicago 1997, Toronto 2003, Los Angeles 2005, and Providence 2007. We met many friendlies. Because Mom was computer savvy, she communicated with many Wodehouse fans. Due to her failing eyesight and increasing arthritis, she reluctantly eventually gave up her email. However, she was not bereft of Wodehouse. My sister and I would read and reread Wodehouse stories to her. We read *Plum Lines* to her, as well.

Thank you for promoting and providing humor, literacy, and joy to my family. I continue to be a member, but miss reading *Plum Lines* to my Mom.



Cincinnati Autumn



Cincinnati Spring Grove Cemetery and Arboretum



The riotous colors along a Cincinnati road

Contents

- 1 What the Well-Dressed Man Was Wearing:
Sartorial Etiquette for the Polished
Boulevardier, 1900–1940
- 8 Letter to the Editor
- 8 Confessions Corner
- 9 *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*:
Not Wodehouse, but Fun Stuff Anyway
- 10 Asian Plums
- 10 Thurber Prize
- 10 Warming the Buffalo Winter
- 11 Madame Eulalie's Shakespeare
Quotations and Allusions
- 11 Powell: More Like Proust or Wodehouse?
- 12 Pigs Fly in Cincinnati
- 13 The Burgeoning Public Domain
- 13 A Few Quick Ones
- 14 The Wodehouse Cult?
- 15 Wodehouse's Early Years, 1881–1902: Part Three
- 18 Chapters Corner
- 23 Emilie Levinson
- 24 Cincinnati Autumn

24 *Plum Lines* Vol. 40 No. 1 Spring 2019

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Quick Ones (unless otherwise credited) courtesy of
John Baesch and Evelyn Herzog.

We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, tales of My First Time, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above. Deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1. If you have something that might miss the deadline, let me know and we'll work something out.

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