



Plum Lines

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Eleanor Wodehouse's Paintings of P. G. Wodehouse and His Brothers

Long-Forgotten Treasures Come to Light

BY KAREN SHOTTING AND JOHN DAWSON

Did you know that P. G. Wodehouse's mother was a talented artist? Did you know she did paintings and drawings of her sons when they were youngsters? Perhaps you recall an article regarding this information from a 1984 Plum Lines supplement. Or perhaps not. Let us take you on a trip down memory lane for some background information, and then we'll share the good news about this treasure trove of lovely artistic works, showing a mother's dotting views of her sons.

ON A THURSDAY night in October 1981 in the sumptuous Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City, the Wodehouse Centenary Celebration opened. The celebration was to be a three-month exhibit of books, lyrics, and memorabilia to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Plum's birth on October 15, 1881. Lady Wodehouse attended the first night, of course, and the *New York Times* had a reporter there to record the event. An article dated October 17, 1981, describes Ethel's appearance there:

Greeting visitors from her chair in the marbled lobby of the Pierpont Morgan Library the other night, 96-year-old Lady Wodehouse might almost have been one of the nice rich aunts out of a novel by her late husband. A stranger would bend over to shake her hand. Then her grandson, Edward Cazalet, would lean down and announce the visitor's name. At last, likely as not, Lady Wodehouse, after a pleasant "hullo"

and a look through milky blue eyes, would yank the formally dressed guest down to her level and impart a great smacking kiss on the cheek.



Eleanor Deane Wodehouse and her three eldest sons (Pelham Grenville is on her lap) during their time in Bath

Plum Lines also had an intrepid reporter there, former TWS president Florence Cunningham. In the July 15, 1984, issue, she described the displays, including a selection from the collection of Canadian TWS member Ella Palmer (whose name should be trumpeted far and wide for preserving this historical treasure):

Drawings of P. G. Wodehouse from birth to nine years of age executed by his mother Eleanor Deane Wodehouse. These beautiful line drawings, painted in delicate watercolor, captured our hearts. Perfect in detail. The same quintessence in her artistry is in P. G. Wodehouse's writing, as elusive to definition as quicksilver to the touch.

Eleanor titled one drawing in fine lettering: "Baby [Plum] trying to climb in chair by himself." After the exhibition (which was later displayed at the National Theatre in London for two months), the paintings effectively disappeared. Mr. and Mrs. Palmer knew where they were, but The Wodehouse Society and the Wodehouse world at large lost sight of them.

From what we can gather, the album of Eleanor's drawings once belonged to the family of Plum's brother

Armine, who likely obtained them when Eleanor went to live with him and his wife, Nella, after Wodehouse's father Ernest died in 1929. Armine's grandson, Nigel Wodehouse, recalled that the collection "somehow slipped out of our hands at some point." Ella Palmer's daughter, Valerie Orton, takes up the narrative: "This beautiful collection of drawings and paintings came up for sale at a Sotheby's auction in London in December of 1977. It was purchased by an American and next appeared at a book fair in San Francisco in 1979. My mother was an avid Wodehouse fan and collector, and at one time her collection was one of the finest in North America. She bought the album at the fair and gave one page to Lady Wodehouse as a kindness. Mom passed away in 2002 and Dad would not part with anything of hers. When my father died in 2012, the album came to me."

Which brings us to our announcement. Past TWS president Karen Shotting says:

I'd wondered where these drawings were for years, ever since reading Florence Cunningham's account. I learned from Norman Murphy that the Palmer family still owned them but did not want to be contacted about them. I worried that this important historical record of Plum's early life would be lost to Wodehouse fans, researchers, and biographers, and John Dawson and I had discussions about their ultimate disposition. Then I learned from Nick Townend, a well-known British authority on Wodehouse's books and editions, that Valerie had contacted him about establishing the provenance of the collection. Nick and I corresponded about it, and, finally, upon learning through *Plum Lines* that John was working on a book about Wodehouse's early years, Nick asked me for John's contact information.

Wodehousean researcher and documentor John Dawson provides some additional background:

I'd been searching for these pictures for many years, but had been unable to locate them. For a long time, all I knew was that they belonged to a woman in Canada. That changed in late February of this year when Karen told me of Nick's inquiry. He offered to put me in touch with Valerie, with whom he had consulted on her late mother's vast store of Wodehouseana. I began a correspondence with Valerie, a very nice lady who has lovingly preserved her



*Ella Palmer, collector and preserver
(courtesy of Valerie Orton)*

mother's collection, which consists of several hundred Wodehouse books; sheet music; original scripts; and, of course, the album of Eleanor's drawings and watercolors. Valerie was very protective of the album (rightly so), but she realized recently that it was time to let it go, but only "to a good home." She named her price. I sent some samples of the drawings and paintings to Karen and an email about a possible joint purchase, and it was but the work of a moment for us to decide to split the cost and buy it. And so we did.

Karen says, "I consider the purchase of this early artifact relating to Wodehouse's childhood a dream come true. I have long been skeptical of the image of Eleanor, perpetuated by some Wodehouse biographers, that she was an uncaring and unloving mother. I hope Wodehouse fans who see these lovely pictures will reevaluate their perception."



"The Trio": Peveril, Plum, Armine

There are more than 150 never-before-seen images in the collection. Many of them are finely realized watercolors; the others are in pencil or ink. Over fifty of them (we haven't precisely cataloged them all yet) contain images of Plum, including drawings of "the trio" (Eleanor's words for Plum with his brothers Peveril and Armine); most of the remainder are Eleanor's drawings of his brothers Peveril, Armine, and Dick in various stages of their childhoods. The earliest ones of Plum were executed at Guildford, shortly after his birth; others were drawn in Hong Kong, Bath, and Guernsey (where he attended Elizabeth College from 1889 to 1891). Many of the images are breathtaking in their artistry, poignancy, and beauty. One can almost feel the love Eleanor put into each stroke of the brush. As works of art, many are of high quality and would, in our opinion, have been at home in any fine Victorian children's book.

Also included are drawings and watercolors done by the boys themselves, including drawings done by PGW when he was five years old. The pencil drawings by the young Plum are rudimentary, as would be expected of a five-year-old, but the watercolors by Armine and Peveril show that they inherited their mother's artistic talent. There are also a few drawings of buildings, including one of Plum's birthplace in Guildford and one of the drawing room at the Deane family home at 18 Sion Hill where Eleanor grew up. This house was next door to 17 Sion Hill, where the boys were domiciled with the nurse (nanny) Emma Roper from 1880 to 1885.

Although our plans for the images are in a very early stage, we agree on two basic aims: one, to produce a series of fine art prints that we will make available for public sale; and, ultimately, in consultation with the Wodehouse family, to seek a suitable repository for the pictures where they can be preserved for the ages and never "go missing" again. More immediately, a selection of the drawings will be published in *P. G. Wodehouse's Early Years*, John's book about Plum's life and work, 1881-1908, which should be in print this fall. Visit <http://madameulalie.org/jdawson/wey.html> for more information.

Stay tuned for more of "Eleanor's Lost Treasures."



A young Plum doing his daily six in Hong Kong



Peveril and Baby (Plum)

The Song of Songs: Sonny Boy and Me

BY THOMAS LANGSTON REEVES SMITH, PHD

Another of our thematic talks from the 2019 TWS Cincinnati convention, this item from Tom Smith studies both the song and how the song has somehow ensnared him through the years.

IT SEEMS THAT I have developed quite an intimate relationship with the song “Sonny Boy.” For those of you who frequent TWS conventions, you may have noticed that the two of us, “Sonny Boy” and me, have become interconnected, like eggs and b.

It all started at the 2003 Toronto convention. I had been asked to speak on the military men in Wodehouse. When it was my turn to speak, I rose up behind the lectern and, looking at the ground, shuffled my feet a bit. Then I looked up at the audience, feeling a bit of the shifty, hangdog look which sometimes announces that an Englishman is about to speak French. Instead, I announced, “I will now sing ‘Sonny Boy.’” It got a laugh. After I spoke, every speaker who followed, when they got up to the lectern, announced, “I will now sing ‘Sonny Boy.’”

A few years and a few conventions passed. Then, at the Dearborn convention, I was invited to talk again, this time on “Jeeves and Servant Leadership.” During the course of the talk, I explained how Robert Greenleaf was inspired by Herman Hesse’s *Journey to the East* to create the concept of servant leadership. About midway through the talk, I read a quote from Greenleaf that went like this:

In this story we see a band of men on a mythical journey, probably also Hesse’s own journey. The central figure of the story is Leo, who accompanies the party as the servant who does their menial chores, but who also sustains them with his spirit and song.

At that point, I stopped reading, looked up at the audience, and said, “While Greenleaf does not tell us what song Leo sang, my notes say I must now sing ‘Sonny Boy.’” I then proceeded to sing the first verse a capella. It got a laugh as intended.

Finally, we advance to 2014. Planning was underway for Psmith in Pseattle, our society’s 2015 convention. On the convention Facebook page, someone started a conversation speculating whether “Sonny Boy” would be sung in Seattle. Karen Shotting, then president of the society, mentioned I had sung the song in Dearborn.



Someone said that hearing me sing that song might be worth the price of admission and they would come to their very first convention just to see that. Challenges were made. Gauntlets were thrown down. Then, by presidential decree, President Shotting ordered me to sing it. I submitted, and on the opening night of the convention I sang both verses of the song, accompanied by Troy Fisher, the music director of Olympia Musical Theatre.

After that, I declared that I would never sing the song again. Yet I still can't escape it. It haunts me. It follows me around like a puppy. It sneaks up beside me and, much like Lord Emsworth's girl friend, slides its little hand into mine. When in a group of Wodehouseans and the song “Sonny Boy” comes up, furtive glances are shot my way. After I retired from civil service, just a few years ago, I was looking for things to do with my newfound free time. I went on Facebook with a comment to the effect that I would like to start writing again, but I had run out of topics. Karen Shotting suggested I write about “Sonny Boy.” So here we are.

After this rather lengthy introduction, we finally get to our topic sentence: Why did Wodehouse decide to pick on “Sonny Boy”?

I can offer two possibilities. One is that Plum had an axe to grind. The other is that, as was frequently the case in his writings, he was going for economy of words. We will take the second possibility first. In my 2013 talk on Wodehouse and the military man, I leaned on a concept I first encountered in Kristin Thompson’s book *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes, or Le Mot Juste*. In her work, she points out that “Wodehouse’s originality lies, paradoxically, in his systematic dependence on previous works and in his insistence on convention and cliché.” I should note that the Wodehouse scholar Elliott Milstein noticed this concept even earlier than Ms. Thompson in his undergraduate thesis, way back in 1976. Following this logic in relationship to Wodehouse and the military man, I said in my talk:

By using a military title or attributing a military background to a character, Wodehouse economizes in building the character and then can proceed with the story at hand. Readers, with their preconceived notions of soldiers and the military, will provide much of the character’s background themselves. Introduce a colonel into the story, and most of us imagine a no-nonsense, tough, gruff older fellow. . . . When Plum needs a competitor for a major character’s love interest, all he needs to do is introduce a Guards officer. . . . Guards officers came from the best families and Guards commissions were expensive and hard to come by. . . . Guards units were the elite soldiers and were “the King’s Own.” So by introducing a competitor who is a Guards officer, Wodehouse is giving our hero stiff competition indeed.

The same argument can be advanced for Wodehouse and popular culture. In his story “Jeeves and the Song of Songs,” Wodehouse needed a popular song that his readers would recognize instantly. It wouldn’t much matter what song he chose, just as long as all of his readers recognized the song or, better yet, knew it intimately. Then, just by mentioning the song, Wodehouse could avoid a lengthy setup and get straight to the res. And such a song was “Sonny Boy.”

When the short story was published in the *Strand* magazine in 1929, Al Jolson’s recording of “Sonny Boy” had just become the first song ever to sell one million records. Jolson first sang the song in the 1928 movie *The Singing Fool*. Playing singer Al Stone, Jolson sings

the song to his son—Sonny Boy—while the boy is on his deathbed. The performance catapulted the song into music history. A review in *Photoplay* magazine said, “This is a better picture than *The Jazz Singer*, and it is guaranteed to pull your heart strings when you hear Jolson singing ‘Sonny Boy.’”

Norman Murphy reported that over twelve million copies of the sheet music for “Sonny Boy” sold in just four weeks in the U.K. in 1928. Many members of the listening public could probably sing or at least hum along when they heard it on the radio or in a nightclub. So Wodehouse may have chosen it because the song needed no introduction. All he needed to do was mention it and then get on with the story. By this theory, it’s not that Plum had anything against “Sonny Boy,” he just needed a foil.

That’s one way to look at it. While it may satisfy the question on a certain academic level, the other way to look at it satisfies, well, a certain *je ne sais quoi*. Perhaps Wodehouse did have something against the song. Well, maybe not the song itself, but perhaps one of the songwriters.

Before we venture further on this topic, first we should discuss Wodehouse and grudges. While he has the reputation of being an amiable gentleman who avoided conflict with his fellow man and who could be very forgiving, Wodehouse could also hold a grudge. We know, for instance, that his relationship with A. A. Milne, once one of mutual admiration, deteriorated during and after the war. He had another problematic relationship with Alfred Duff Cooper. As Information Minister at the beginning of World War II, Duff Cooper encouraged and approved William Connor’s attack on Wodehouse in a BBC broadcast.

Another grudge that is relevant to our topic was the one that developed between Wodehouse and Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein over the use of “Bill” in the 1927 Broadway musical *Show Boat*. When Kern decided to use the song in the musical, Hammerstein changed a few of the lyrics and then slapped his name on the thing. Wodehouse stewed for years. In a letter to Guy Bolton written in 1945, he complained that Kern should have asked him to make changes to “Bill,” and Hammerstein should have only touched the work if Plum was not available. By January 14, 1946, Guy Bolton, who shared fifty percent of Plum’s royalties for stage books and lyrics, had put up so much of a fuss that Hammerstein finally paid \$5,000 to Bolton and Wodehouse in back royalties and sent Plum a copy of the *Show Boat* revival program that gave Wodehouse credit for the lyrics for “Bill.” Just two weeks later, Plum had completely forgiven Hammerstein. In a letter to



Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II

Denis Mackail, Wodehouse wrote: “Don’t you think it was extraordinarily decent of O. Hammerstein to go out of his way to print a thing like that? He is one of the few men of whom I have never heard anyone say a bad word. Everybody likes him.”

All was now forgiven. Now, as we move back to the subject of “Sonny Boy,” keep this episode with “Bill” in mind.

“Sonny Boy” was written by a team of writers: B. G. (“Buddy”) DeSylva, Lew Brown, Ray Henderson, and Al Jolson. Two are of most interest, Jolson and Buddy DeSylva. It’s generally believed that Jolson did not really have much to do with writing the song. There are several stories circulating on the song’s creation and Jolson’s part in it.

One story was that Jolson insisted on writing credit for songs he would sing so he could get in on the royalties. According to *The Real Al Jolson Story*, Jolson felt that his performance was just as important in the creation of the song as the work of the writers and composers.

Another story has it that DeSylva, Brown, and Henderson wrote it in just a few minutes while in a hotel room in Atlantic City as a joke and sent it to Jolson as a novelty song. Jolson had other uses for the song. He took out its funny bits and intentionally added a heavy dose of schmaltz.

A third story is that while making the movie *The Singing Fool*, Jolson was unhappy about a scene in the film. He called Buddy DeSylva and told him to write a song for it. DeSylva asked for a setup. Jolson explained that in the scene he is “talking to a boy. Then I sing.” DeSylva, needing more information, asked how old the boy was. Jolson said that “he is about three and standing on my knee.” DeSylva responded, “I have two lines, ‘Climb upon my knee, Sonny Boy; though you’re only three, Sonny Boy.’ Why don’t you take it from there?”

Yet another story has Jolson getting the entire writing team on the phone, demanding a tearjerker. The team had four hours to come up with something.

They called back and played and sang the song over the phone.

Whatever the real story, we want to focus on DeSylva. He was an Al Jolson discovery. Jolson had heard some songs DeSylva had written for a California college group and immediately took to him. He brought DeSylva on board as one of his in-house songwriters. DeSylva introduced Jolson to George Gershwin at a New York party, when Gershwin was still a mere song pluggger. Gershwin played the tune “Swanee” for Jolson, and the rest, as they say, is history. The song would be one of Jolson’s signature songs and catapulted Gershwin’s career.

DeSylva became quite a fixture in New York, and in 1920, when P. G. Wodehouse was unavailable to finish work on the show *Sally*, DeSylva was called in to complete the work with Jerome Kern and Guy Bolton. While Wodehouse and DeSylva never actually collaborated on any work, at least as far as we can determine, and there is no indication that the two ever met, there were at least two songs that both Wodehouse and DeSylva worked on. One was “Look for the Silver Lining.” In *The Complete Lyrics of P. G. Wodehouse*, Barry Day tells us that DeSylva was given credit for the stage version, while Wodehouse was credited for the film version of the song. Tony Ring informed me that sheet music exists for both the theater and film versions



B. G. (“Buddy”) DeSylva

of the song, one that gives credit only to DeSylva, one that gives credit to Wodehouse. There is no sheet music giving joint credit.

The other song that both Wodehouse and DeSylva worked on was “Bill.” Recall that ill feelings resulted when Kern used the song in *Show Boat*. But it appears that Wodehouse had his feathers ruffled over the song even earlier, when Kern asked DeSylva to make changes to “Bill” for the 1920 show *Zip Goes a Million*, during which time Wodehouse was not available. In this show, the lead male character Monty, who was short on cash, was given the song to sing, but not about a guy named Bill. Instead, it was about the dollar bill. DeSylva’s new words were, in part:

He’s Bill, old Bill, who sticks to you until you
 need him most.
He’s willing to keep thrilling you,
By leaving your track and then
Hurry back again.
In these hard times, he’s worth about three
 dimes, but still—
I’m sure he can bring me happiness,
'Cause he’s my old pal Bill.

We don’t know to what extent Wodehouse’s feathers were ruffled, but *Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern* biographer Lee Davis says, “Plum, when asked permission for this transgression, must have flinched.” The implication is that Wodehouse eventually agreed to DeSylva’s changes, but he was not happy about it. In fact, with the two shows, song lyrics were being added and removed so frequently that Kern and Wodehouse sent nasty telegrams and letters to each other. Wodehouse claimed that Kern once wrote, “You have offended me for the last time!”

So here is the payoff. Wodehouse was already a little sore about Buddy DeSylva getting his fingers on not one but two of Plum’s songs. While DeSylva’s “Bill” was eventually dropped from the show, it’s possible Plum was still a little sore. When *Show Boat* came out in 1927, his pique was again piqued. Then, in 1928, DeSylva wrote the “song of songs,” “Sonny Boy,” which presented a perfect target for Wodehousean revenge.

There you have it. To answer the question “Why did Wodehouse decide to pick on ‘Sonny Boy?’” you have two choices. You can believe that Wodehouse had an axe to grind or instead follow Kristin Thompson’s theory and believe that Wodehouse used the period’s most popular song for economy of words. It will likely always be a mystery.

As for me, I will now sing “Sonny Boy.”

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The Orange Plums Chapter Report



NOW HEAR THIS: Admiral George J. “Fruity” Biffen here, checking in with the latest from the Orange Plums. I’ll be brief, shipmates.

As with everyone and everything else, the COVID situation continues to curtail our chapter’s activities. No Boat Race Nights. No bunging of Infant Samuels. No browsing. No sluicing. No placing bets with that scoundrel Steggles. We have, however, continued our monthly meetings via Zoom as have so many others, and as is indicated in the candid screenshot below.



Our current group reading takes us back to Blandings Castle in the form of *A Pelican at Blandings*—a corker! What a happy surprise to find myself mentioned fairly early on among the laughs. Always good to witness one’s name in print—unless, of course, discovered in the fourth estate as brought before the bench and having drawn multiple days without the option.

Till next time, then, I remain, faithfully yours,
Admiral George J. “Fruity” Biffen (Jeff Porteous)

Editorial Faux Pas

IN MY EAGERNESS to inflict editorial savagery upon the many wonderful articles submitted for publication, I occasionally get a bit overzealous. In David Leal’s excellent article in our Summer 2020 issue (“Christ Church or Magdalen”), he was considering why Norman Murphy might have had a “kick against” Magdalen College as Bertie’s alma. I modified “kick” to “concern” but neglected to modify “against” to “about”. Upon reflection, that is below stellar level, and I herewith offer a mea culpa to David, who kindly did not kick me when I said we’d gone to press that way.

—OM

Letters to the Editor

MICHAEL ECKMAN’S convention talk (“The Valet and the Heretic,” Summer 2020 *Plum Lines*) opens with a nifty suggestion about Spinoza in *Playboy*. It was an excellent opening to a spiffy article. Unfortunately, however, Mike has jumped to the conclusion that the *Playboy* version of “Jeeves and the Greasy Bird” is the same as in *Plum Pie* and *The World of Jeeves*. The magazine version is very much abridged, about 37% of the length of the *Plum Pie* version, and it does not include the mention of Spinoza. Bertie simply asks, “I wonder if you could spare me a moment of your valuable time, Jeeves” at that spot in the magazine story.

—Neil Midkiff

THE PAPERS in the Summer 2020 *Plum Lines* about Jeeves and Spinoza (Michael Eckman) and Bertie and Oxford (David Leal) sharpened a couple of questions I’ve had for some time about both topics.

First, did Wodehouse actually read Spinoza, even in condensed encyclopedia form, or did he just pick Spinoza, as Michael suggests, to fit with *Spindrift*? (Indeed, why not pick *Spindrift* to fit with Spinoza?) I assume Wodehouse read classical philosophers at Dulwich, but I don’t remember seeing in the letters or the biographies any suggestion that the adult Plum read much beyond Shakespeare and popular fiction. I hope other Wodehouseans can enlighten me.

Second: how does Bertie’s Oxford education (whether at Magdalen or Christ Church) square with the universal opinion (including Bertie’s own) that he is an airhead and silly? Some writers have tended to present Oxford as a playground for the young, rich, and idle, but the record shows otherwise. Surely Oxford in Wodehouse’s day had entrance standards greater than simply being rich and an old Etonian (or at least a public-school boy), and surely the academy demanded even then that its undergrads study or be sent down. Again, I ask others to enlighten me.

The real point, though, is that, as many scholars have marvelled over the years, Bertie the airhead is also Bertie the superb writer. He must have learned something at Oxford, or studied to a grade that his dons found acceptable. I think it’s time we abandon Bertie the airheaded-but-kind chump and substitute Bertie the writer who is more learned than he likes to let on. Something like his creator. I have long harbored the idea that Bertie is Plum, or at least Plum’s view of himself.

—Noel Bushnell

New Yorker's Plum Epidemic

BY CINDY WAGNER

OUTBREAKS OF P. G. Wodehouse mentioned in the pages of the *New Yorker* reached near-epidemic proportions this spring. (Of course, such outbreaks are more remedies than maladies.)

First came "Two Paths for the Comic Novel (and the Funniest Books to Read in Quarantine)" by Katy Waldman, posted online on April 27. The author's chosen curative for current conditions was *Right Ho, Jeeves*, which, she writes, "was delightful: full of human decency, happy endings, low stakes, and the sort of immaculate plotting that suggests an ordered cosmos." One might quibble over this essayist's definition of "low stakes," but even among Plum's greatest admirers it might be said that it takes all kinds. You can find the article at <https://tinyurl.com/ycl3wo8s>.

Not a month later, the magazine issued a second Wodehouse-related essay of a more serious nature: "Wartime for Wodehouse" by Rivka Galchen, published online on May 25 and in the June 1 print edition. The essay begins: "Camp was really great fun,' the English comic novelist P. G. Wodehouse wrote to an old school friend. He was speaking of the forty-eight weeks between 1940 and 1941 that he spent in a series of German-run civil-internment camps. He lost nearly sixty pounds. He was separated from his wife. He slept on a straw-filled mattress, and tried to avoid scabies and lice."

In addition to the tale of Wodehouse's internment and subsequent controversy for his radio broadcasts, the writer recounts Bertie and Jeeves (respectively) tangling and untangling dilemmas in *The Code of the Woosters*: "It's low stakes at its highest; an epic form for the supremely minor."

Interestingly, the writers at the *New Yorker* seem obsessed with this "low stakes" business. Still, the article is worth a read for anyone not up to date on the historical matters described therein. It can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/yb8zoma3>.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the Daily Crossword published on May 25 contained this clue: "Famed frenemy of P. G. Wodehouse." (20 Across, 7 letters)

I mean to say, what? Selecting the "reveal" option in the online puzzle showed the solution to be "AAMILNE." What I don't know about P. G. Wodehouse would fill about 250 books, so the apparently famed enmity between the creators of Jeeves and Winnie the Pooh led me to research online and discover several articles addressing the subject.

It seems the two writers had been friends and collaborators before World War II, but Milne wrote scathingly of Wodehouse's wartime broadcasts from Germany. A 2013 article in the *Paris Review* notes that Wodehouse then "reportedly told one interviewer, 'Nobody could be more anxious than myself . . . that Alan Alexander Milne should trip over a loose bootlace and break his bloody neck.'"

I found myself nodding in agreement with a 2004 *Boston Globe* article on the subject, which concluded that "history would avenge him [Wodehouse] over and over—remembering Milne as a writer for the nursery, and Wodehouse as one for the ages."

Let's hope the Plum epidemic becomes a pandemic!

Owing to the restricted nature of his position and the limited range of vision which he enjoys, virtually the only way in which a man who is hiding under a bed can entertain himself is by listening to what is going on outside.

Fish Preferred / Summer Lightning (1929)



Treasurer's Report for 2019

BY INDU RAVI

Balance as of December 31, 2018 \$16,716.00

Income:

Membership dues	\$15,785.00
2019 convention income (registration, rummage, auction, etc.)	\$41,869.60
Donations	\$60.00
Interest	\$2.38

Total Income \$57,716.98

Expenses:

<i>Plum Lines</i>	
production and mailing	\$12,446.16
2019 convention	
general expenses	\$41,495.16
2021 convention	
general expenses (advance)	\$6,000.00
PayPal fees	\$260.16

Total Expenses \$60,201.48

Total Balance

as of December 31, 2019: \$14,231.50

TWS 2021 Convention Update: The Grant Hotel

BY JOHN KAREORES

HEAR YE! HEAR YE! Conventioneers, it's time for another update about the eagerly anticipated San Diego TWS convention on October 15–17, 2021.

The Grant Hotel started out as the Horton House in 1870, the first major hotel in the newly established City of San Diego. It was a three-story, 100-room hotel that was managed by the Horton family until 1895, when it was purchased by Fannie Chaffee Grant, wife of U. S. Grant, Jr., and daughter of Jerome B. Chaffee, Colorado's first senator. The original structure was torn down in 1905 to make way for the new eleven-story, 437-room palace designed by the famous architect Harrison Albright. While the hotel was still under construction, work stopped due to a massive earthquake on April 18, 1906. Work resumed in 1907, and the doors were officially opened on October 15, 1910. (Why does that particular day in October sound so familiar?) A downturn in the economy led to a plan to demolish the hotel in 1979, but it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of an inner-city renovation project and was brought back to its original glory.

The hotel has played host to fourteen presidents and many celebrities and dignitaries. At one time one of the largest radio towers on the West Coast was installed on the top of the hotel; Franklin Delano Roosevelt took advantage of that to give one of his first radio addresses to the nation from there.

The hotel is built on land originally belonging to the Kumeyaay Indians, one of four tribes indigenous to San Diego County. On December 3, 2003, the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Indians purchased the Grant. From the hotel's own website:

Distinguished by quiet glamor and enduring sophistication, the Grant Hotel . . . has welcomed guests for over 100 years. Nestled in downtown San Diego, in the vibrant Gaslamp Quarter, our hotel provides an ideal location to explore the city. Iconic attractions like the San Diego Zoo, Petco Park, and Balboa Park are situated nearby, providing ample opportunities for adventure and exploration. Retreat to your guest room and suite, where nuanced details like contemporary art, opulent finishes and sleek technology await. Join us for a meal at the Grant Grill, serving spectacular AAA/

CAA Four Diamond cuisine in a stunning Art Deco setting or allow worldly cares to melt away with a tailored spa treatment. Innovative meetings and downtown events occur in our historic venues, including one that was once a Prohibition-era speakeasy. When the sun sets in San Diego, unwind with a glass of Chablis at Rendezvous, our French-inspired cocktail bar.

The Grant has all the amenities that you expect from a five-star hotel with excellent reviews. In addition to the restaurants and cocktail bar, there is a very well-equipped fitness room. The hotel is pet-friendly (for a fee) and offers both self-parking (\$39/night at this writing) and valet service (\$49/night at this writing). There is WiFi in the public areas and, of course, a spa. Here's the website: <https://tinyurl.com/yxpbb67k>.

There are a few more things to remember when you are planning your trip. The Grant does not have shuttle service to or from the airport. At this writing, it is estimated that a one-way taxi ride is approximately \$18. There are shuttle services available at the airport (which I will check closer to the convention to ensure they are still running), so you might share a ride with friends and save a few dollars.

The Grant Hotel is part of the Marriott Luxury chain, and there is a members' program called Marriott Bonvoy. You collect points for use on bonus items and other rewards. It is free to join, and even if you don't move higher than the basic level, you get free WiFi in your room during your stay.

Finally, fellow Convention Committee member Max Pokrivchak is coordinating activities for the convention. His article on page 15 calls for program talks, skits, and other convention participation. Please check it out and respond with your delightful offerings. The sooner we know your intentions, the sooner we can plan accordingly.

Stay safe and we'll all be together soon enough in beautiful San Diego.



The Grant Hotel's grand entrance

Wodehouse and the Stuffed Eelskin of Fate

BY PAUL KENT

Author Paul Kent gave us this nifty at the 2019 Cincinnati convention, where he said: "This talk is going to be about a battle royal. A fight for who—or what—controls Wodehouse World."

IF YOU DRIVE fifty or so miles south of London, you come to Shaw Farm in the middle of the Sussex countryside. It's a lovely spot on the edge of the South Downs and close to the village of Plumpton Green, where you'll find the rather excellent Plough Inn, a horse-racing track, and . . . not much else. Apart, that is, from what remains of P. G. Wodehouse's personal library. The main building of Shaw Farm has been extended many times, and it houses—at one end of the extensive roof space—the books that originally lined the walls of his home in Remsenburg, New York. It is a cozy and fascinating place to poke about in, and, when I was granted access to it (thanks to the generosity of Plum's grandson, Sir Edward Cazalet), one of the first things that struck me was that it isn't a "collector's" library, but what one might call a "practical compendium" curated by chance and serendipity. There's all sorts of stuff in there from just about every genre of writing—high, medium, and lowbrow—including, on Shelves 18 and 19 (of 53), a number of books about writing, publishing, and literary theory with titles such as *How to Write 10 Different Bestsellers* and *How Not to Write a Play*. And these books weren't merely a form of interior decoration. Judging by the state of them, with their broken spines and torn or missing dust jackets, they were thumbed regularly.

But then, in among the thrillers and books about cricket, there's something you might be surprised to find: a section comprising over sixty books on the subject of spiritualism and related esoterica. Actually, I'll qualify that remark by saying that it certainly surprised me. Plum, I had come to believe, was sufficiently exercised by the demands of the here and now, and had neither the time nor inclination to venture much beyond it. His most recent biographer, Robert McCrum, describes him as "strenuously agnostic," and despite having no fewer than four uncles in the church, Wodehouse was still hedging his bets into his nineties when asked about any spiritual faith he might have. It was awfully hard to say, he told the *Paris Review*. "It varies from day to day. Some days I have, and other days I haven't." Which indicates that while he might have experienced the gravitational pull of a settled faith, he could not

honestly commit to one. It's most likely he died with the issue unresolved, although for one who didn't believe in any formal sense, he did manage to write this passage, from 1922's "The Purity of the Turf":

There's something about evening service in a country church that makes a fellow feel drowsy and peaceful. Sort of end-of-a-perfect-day feeling. Old Heppenstall was up in the pulpit, and he has a kind of regular, bleating delivery that assists thought. They had left the door open, and the air was full of a mixed scent of trees and honeysuckle and mildew and villagers' Sunday clothes. As far as the eye could reach, you could see farmers propped up in restful attitudes, breathing heavily; and the children in the congregation who had fidgeted during the earlier part of the proceedings were now lying back in a surfeited sort of coma. The last rays of the setting sun shone through the stained-glass windows, birds were twittering in the trees, the women's dresses crackled gently in the stillness. Peaceful. That's what I'm driving at. I felt peaceful. Everybody felt peaceful.

It's about the most beautifully lyrical yet precisely controlled passage Plum ever wrote—in fact, you could be forgiven for mistaking it for the work of another writer entirely. In it, the attraction of organized religion seems to be all about aesthetics and atmosphere, certainly not dogma and creeds. There is transcendence, but it is immanent in the present time rather than somewhere up- or out-there in a distant heaven. Plum permits us to share a moment of perfect communal calm: the content of the sermon has ceased to matter, the children's energy is spent, and the congregation is momentarily united in a glorious suspension of anything resembling discord. It's as if we have just caught the world—and everything in it—slowly breathing out.

And then, being Wodehouse, this supremely expressive peacefulness is shattered by "EE-ee-ee-ee-ee! Oo-ee! Ee-ee-ee-ee!"—what "six hundred pigs having their tails twisted simultaneously" would sound like, but is in fact "the kid Harold"—a choirboy who has had a beetle inserted down the back of his neck. Serious contemplation rarely lasts long in Wodehouse. But there can be no doubt that the dear old Church of England was in Plum's DNA. His stories and novels

are brimful with over fifty bishops, deans, vicars, rectors, and curates. His writing is packed with biblical quotations and allusions, his sentences resonant with the rhythms and cadences of the 1611 King James version. Nowhere is that consummation more fondly celebrated than through the minor clerics of “The Great Sermon Handicap,” in which Sunday oratory gets mixed up with betting on the horses. The plot is pleasingly subversive, satirical, and perhaps a tad disrespectful in its cheeky association of God and Mammon, but it’s clearly born of a deep affection for the established church, complete with its myriad glorious eccentricities.

Everything about the C. of E. sounds wonderful, whether you believe in God or not. To begin with, note Bertie’s remarks on old Heppenstall’s “regular, bleating delivery that assists thought,” like some rhythmical mantra that encourages meditation by substituting sound for sense. Then there are the names of the reverend’s ritual garments: If he had been a cleric of the High Anglican persuasion, he would have been robed in full cassock, alb, and dalmatic or chasuble (complete with decorative orphrey), and perhaps girdled by a cincture. (In “Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo,” the Reverend Stanley “Pieface” Brandon is ticked off by his bishop for wearing too many orphreys on his chasuble.) And then there are the pleasingly evocative and wonderfully plausible rural parishes Plum invents for his handicap’s runners and riders: Little-Clickton-in-the-Wold, Badgwick, Bousted Magna, Bousted Parva, Fale-by-the-Water, Gandle-by-the-Hill, and Twing, to name but a few. There is a whole realm of unorthodox sounds to be discovered in the Anglican communion, now as then. In *Wooster Sauce*, the journal of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), there’s an occasional feature compiled by Murray Hedgcock of “Appointments in the Clergy” as reported in the *Church Times*, in which entries like this can still be found:

Dr. Adrian Armstrong, formerly priest-in-charge of North and South Muskhams, and of Averham with Kelham (Southwell), has become honorary curate (known as honorary assistant priest) of Wiveliscombe with Chipstable, Huish Champflower, and Clatworth (Diocese of Bath and Wells).

Wouldn’t you just love to live in a village called Huish Champflower (it’s in deepest Somerset in the west of England, down the lane from Clatworthy), just so that you could say its name out loud? Or to quote this, taken from its parish magazine: “A house called ‘Washbottle,’ which stands on the River Tone as it flows



Paul Kent

through the village, represents the watermill which ground the corn for the village from 1086 until World War I.”

Nothing is really an open-and-shut case with Wodehouse, and the issue of his relationship to the beyond is no exception. So far, it’s perfectly possible to claim that what I’ve quoted so far isn’t religion or spirituality at all, but a meditation on a particular kind of Englishness that was, in Plum’s lifetime, already under threat. We might say he was experiencing premature pangs of nostalgia that we, reading his stories nearly a hundred years later, might feel even more acutely. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, a longing for something else—whatever that might be—was urgently felt in just about every walk of life, even as those fondly remembered rural parishes were busy opening subscriptions for memorials to honor their dead. Just about every community in the British Isles has one, either in the church or on the village green. Huish Champflower is among them.

Which takes us back to those shelves of esoterica in Plum’s library. Many of the volumes date from that immediate postwar period of questing, bearing eloquent testimony that even Plum, that beacon of self-possessed equanimity, might have been on the lookout—like many other writers of the time—for something beyond the tangible that might buttress his understanding of the world he was living in. It should also be remarked that his interest was no nine-day wonder, confined to a particular period in his long life. Publicly skeptical but privately less so, the chronological spread represented by those books indicates that this was a topic that kept buttonholing his attention, with well-thumbed copies of *Life Beyond Death with Evidence* (published in 1937), *More About Life in the World Unseen* (1956), *Nurslings*

of *Immortality* (1957), and *The Ministry of Angels* (1959) nestling on his shelves. As with many of Plum's other interests, spiritualism found its way into his writings, and he wasn't averse to poking fun at it. In 1927's *The Small Bachelor*, he creates a certain Madame Eulalie (the stage name of one May Stubbs), who sets herself up as a clairvoyant. She is not the most convincing palmist in the world, so it's just as well she has gullible customers like Mrs. Waddington, who was "not a woman who, as a rule, exercised her brain to any great extent":

"The letter M. seems to be forming itself
among the mists."

"I have a stepdaughter, Molly."

"Is she tall and dark?"

"No. Small and fair."

"Then it is she!"

But then again, in *Sam the Sudden*, Sam tells anyone who cares to know that his grand amour for Kay Derrick has been foreseen by a palmist (a seemingly competent one this time), and they end up married—which evens up the score.

If blood truly is thicker than water, however, the most compelling influence on Plum's enthusiasm for esoterica must have been his older brother. Armine Wodehouse had joined the Theosophical Society in 1908 and traveled to India, ending up as mentor to the future "world messiah" Jiddu Krishnamurti. According to the *Times of India* there's still a Wodehouse Road in southern Mumbai commemorating Armine and not his more famous brother.

Theosophy sets great store by revelation through communication with the spirits. Not a method we might immediately associate with Plum, though he attended at least three séances in 1924 and 1925. These events were recorded by H. Dennis Bradley in *The Wisdom of the Gods*, although quite what Plum took from them is once more "awfully hard to say." On balance, I'd say his willingness to believe (which should be distinguished from actually believing) appears not to have been damaged by the sometimes ludicrous theatricality of what he experienced.

The first evening, Sunday, October 12, 1924, took place at Bradley's house in Kingston, in southwest London, where Plum found a rather glitzy crowd of media folk. He didn't have much luck speaking with the dead, failing to recognize a spirit voice that was apparently trying to contact him, but American actress Frances Carson did become the star of the show when her late husband (who had died from pneumonia eight years previously) suddenly shouted, "Frances, darling!

It's Eric!" in what Bradley describes as "an agitated manner." Nothing happened for Plum, though. Nor on the next occasion. But the third time was a charm on April 12, 1925. I'll let Bradley take up the story:

To Mr. P. G. Wodehouse a voice volunteered the name of "Ernest Wodehouse." This apparently was a cousin of Mr. Wodehouse's, who had passed away during the war. In answer to a question, the spirit said he had passed over a few years ago, and it also volunteered something about being with Mr. Wodehouse when he was in the town of Harrogate about a year ago. When the voice had gone, Mr. Wodehouse said it was true that he had been in Harrogate a year ago, but he could not understand why the voice had referred to this incident.

And the spirit didn't lie: As Plum wrote to Armine over ten years later, he had been taking the waters in Harrogate in 1924, during which visit he had had a "rather odd" experience in which he "got the idea for a short story, 'Honeysuckle Cottage,' absolutely complete one morning . . . and wrote it practically at a sitting." To compound the intrigue, the story concerns a young writer of thrillers who has been left an idyllic country cottage by his dead aunt (also a novelist) and finds that her syrupy writing style starts to infect his own. Plum writes that it is "as if her vibrations have set up a sort of miasma of sentimentalism in the place, so that all who come within its radius get sappy and maudlin."

Did exactly the same thing happen to Plum? He confined his feelings about the coincidence to two remarks: "Curious, wasn't it?" and "I have never known what to make of it"—but something odd was definitely going on, prompting him to remark to Bill Townend in December 1925, "I think it's the goods." And it has to be said that "Honeysuckle Cottage" is among the finest of his short stories. Did he get a bit of supernatural help writing it? Two years later, Plum was still asking Townend if he had had "any more results" from his own spiritualist researches, while pondering the operations of the planchette, a device used in experiments with so-called "automatic writing." Perhaps God had been sidelined—but in favor of . . . what, exactly?

Well, the answer to that is "Fate," a concept which a Crumpet tries to explain to an Egg with a hangover in a short story called, appropriately, "Fate":

I mean to say, it's no good worrying and trying to look ahead and plan and scheme and weigh your every action, if you follow me, because

you never can tell when doing such-and-such won't make so-and-so happen—while, on the other hand, if you do so-and-so it may just as easily lead to such-and such.

Exit Egg on a mission to the pharmacy.

On some occasions in Wodehouse, Fate is far from being mere happenstance, but is an outside agency with an agenda—and not always a good one. To begin with, there's all those occasions when Bertie senses something bad is about to happen, the first of which occurs in 1916's "Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest":

I rather fancy it's Shakespeare—or if not, it's some equally brainy lad—who says that it's always just when a chappie is feeling particularly top-hole and more than usually braced with things in general that Fate sneaks up behind him with the bit of lead piping.

Sometimes its weapon of choice is an eelskin, as wielded by Aunt Agatha in Bertie's imagination in the same story; indeed, she is portrayed as Bertie's personal nemesis, a single-client harpie perched just on the edge of his consciousness "polishing up her hatchet." At the beginning of the aptly titled "Jeeves and the Impending Doom," Bertie isn't his usual chipper self, his feelings prey to some "nameless dread"—the identity of which is obvious to everyone but him. Indeed, Aunt Agatha's accustomed behavior (as reported by Bertie) seems inspired by that of the female fates and furies in classical and Norse mythology: she kills rats with her teeth and devours her young (*Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*) and she "eats broken bottles and wears barbed wire next to the skin" (*The Code of the Woosters*) and "turn[s] into a werewolf at the time of the full moon" (*Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*). It's not just Bertie who is beset by outrageous fortune: In *Uneasy Money*, Fate itself suddenly administers the blow to Lady Wetherby:

A moment before, [she] had been feeling completely contented, without a care on her horizon. It was foolish of her to have expected such a state of things to last, for what is life but a series of sharp corners, round each of which Fate lies in wait for us with a stuffed eelskin?

Once, Plum used this trope on himself, writing to Guy Bolton, "Isn't it the damndest thing how Fate lurks to sock you with the stuffed eelskin?" There's a touch of malice in this kind of fate, the kind that operates in the tragedies of Shakespeare. Fate has got it in for mankind,

and likes to let him know who's ultimately in charge—usually, as Bertie repeatedly tells us, when he's at his happiest.

By and large, however, Fate obliges Plum's characters by not treating them too badly for extended periods of time or by treating them in a way that can be put right at some later date. And you get the feeling that Plum was less than enamored of authors who believe that Fate is only here to cause the bad things in life—like Thomas Hardy, for example, who comes in for some stick in 1969's *A Pelican at Blandings*:

It is not too much to say that at this point in his progress Lord Emsworth was feeling calm, confident, and carefree; but a wise friend, one who had read his Thomas Hardy and learned from that pessimistic author's works how often and how easily human enterprises are ruined by some unforeseen Act of God, would have warned him against any premature complacency. One never knew . . . around what corner Fate might not be waiting with the stocking full of sand.

Fate may vary its choice of weapon, but it remains, loitering with malign intent. Plum must have been reading "that pessimistic author" a fair bit in his later years: In 1972's *Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*, Hardy is said to be able to get "a three-volume novel" out of a young couple's sundering. And here again in *Bachelors Anonymous* from 1973: "I don't like the thought of two loving hearts being parted by a misunderstanding. Who do you think I am? Thomas Hardy?"

Plum's version of fate isn't like that, though. In his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy quotes the German philosopher Novalis, one of whose better-known maxims is "Character is Fate." And for Hardy's characters, if you have a weakness in your personality, Fate will exploit it, leaving you to merrily jog down the road to perdition.

Not so Wodehouse. His Fate is altogether kinder and is more bound up with situation than character. His creations don't have anything so damning as tragic flaws that will lead them to their doom; they simply get themselves into a mess that can be sorted out. It's an entirely different form of causation and deliberately anti-tragic. Fate, in short, is both flexible and fixable. Which is why, if we were fictional characters, we'd prefer to appear in a Wodehouse novel than to star in one of Hardy's. There is not much room for maneuver in either, but at least with Wodehouse you're not destined to suffer and die.

Indeed, there appear to be several different kinds of benevolent Fate gathered together and working full tilt in another of Plum's late novels, 1970's *The Girl in Blue*. First, there's the all-human do-gooder in the person of Willoughby (Bill) Scrope. Chances are he's a good guy simply because he's called Bill, but he doesn't mind advertising his philanthropy occasionally, as on this occasion to his elder brother Crispin:

"Did you ever read *Oliver Twist*?"

"I suppose so, as a kid."

"Remember the Cheeryble brothers?"

"Vaguely. Sort of elderly boy scouts, weren't they?"

"Exactly . . . I'm both of them rolled into one."

Although he wasn't a huge fan of Dickens (and, by the way, the Cheeryble brothers actually feature in *Nicholas Nickleby*, not in *Oliver Twist*), Plum did find something to admire in Dickens's tubby humanitarians, once again bringing to mind Article 1, Clause 4, of the Theosophists' Constitution, wherein it speaks of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. For that is exactly the kind of unconditional, airy philanthropy the Cheerybles believe in and tirelessly work towards. Although Wodehouse's Crispin Scrope is more self-interested than these paragons of generosity, he's squarely on their side. In fact, *The Girl in Blue* is drenched in goodwill, and Plum wheels out some of his favorite phrases and quotes pertaining to cheerfulness and assembling them in one place. Fresh from his meeting with Willoughby, Crispin can't help but feel a "glow of happiness . . . coursing through him":

He was not familiar with the works of the poet Browning, but had he been he would have found himself in cordial agreement with the statement of his Pippa in her well-known song that God was in his heaven and all right with the world. . . . He did happen to know that bit in the Psalms about Joy coming in the morning, and would have contested hotly any suggestion that it didn't. He was, in a word, in excellent shape, in fact, sitting pretty with his hat on the side of his head.

Only the rainbow round his shoulder is missing; every other trope is present and correct; and, as an added bonus, Bill's act of philanthropy has cured his brother of the pain in his neck—literally and metaphorically. Everything comes right in the end, just how Plum had

planned it and just as he always liked it—and just how we always like it. For ultimately, in any story, the writer is always Fate. And Plum was a kind man.



Call for TWS Convention Talks, Skits, Etc.

BY MAX POKRIVCHAK

IT IS JUST over a year until the next TWS convention—October 15–17, 2021, in San Diego, California—and the excitement is building! The 2019 convention was a hoot, and when you add the sun, sand, and surf of San Diego, as well as the swamp of alcohol Plum promises us in *Laughing Gas*, the mind boggles at what a super-colossal bash this will be.

This is where you come in. On Saturday we will meet to hear an entertaining and edifying program of Riveting Talks including—possibly—yours. If you have a specific subject or unique take on the works, life, or world of Wodehouse that you'd love to share with your fellow Plummies, this is your moment. Please write a brief synopsis of your proposed talk, and email said info posthaste to Speaker Coordinator (and TWS VP) Maria Jette. She will respond, agog.

But that's not all! Aside from the Riveting Talks, past conventions have included original skits, musical programs, fiendish quizzes, featured readings, adaptations, talent contests, etc. If your chapter has a skit or other creative offering, please email Activities Coordinator Max Pokrivchak. He will respond, even more agog.

The deadline for proposals is October 15, 2020. Decisions will be announced to proposers in early January 2021.

We hope to see you all in 2021 at **Where in the World Is Pelham? San Diego!** Please submit all proposals to the appropriate nib as soon as you can but no later than October 15. Also, for thorough information about the fabulous convention hotel, please see the article by John Kareores on page 10 of this issue.

Psmith at Oxbridge: The Lost Campus Novel

BY DAVID L. LEAL, PHD

WHEN WODEHOUSE went into a bank instead of up to Oxford, the world lost a classic Oxbridge novel. *Psmith at Oxbridge*, one of the greatest books never written, was stopped in its tracks by a rupee devaluation. As all members of Wode's House know (to make a public school joke), Plum was hoping to attend Oriel College, Oxford, when his father felt the pinch and decided that one son at the 'Varsity was enough (Armine at Corpus Christi).

When you think of the Dreaming Spires and all that rot, the novels that come to mind are *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh and *Zuleika Dobson* by Max Beerbohm. If Wodehouse had gone to Oxford, is there any doubt he would have published a book worthy of inclusion in this pantheon? Given his lifelong practice of writing about what he knew, he would have mined his Oxford experience for a classic novel of student life.

Because nothing in life is free, this book would have come at a cost: the disappearance of *Psmith in the City* and *Not George Washington* from the Wodehouse canon. As much as I enjoy both books, I would support this literary trade-off. My sense is that Wodehouse's firsthand accounts of working in banking and journalism are largely read because of their autobiographical content. Historians might be interested in the turn-of-the-century details about these professions, but most of us want to learn about the young Plum. And while *Psmith in the City* does include valuable information about other aspects of daily life in 1900, such as cricket, politics, soccer, and clubs, I would still rather read about Oxford.

We learn in *Psmith, Journalist* that Mike and Psmith are at Cambridge, but the novel has little to say about their lives. In the last chapter, we glimpse a college scene, but it is short on detail. The young men are living a stereotypical and idealized varsity life of college blazers, a warm fire, and "joy, jollity, and song"—in other words, the life that Wodehouse glimpsed from his visits to Armine at Oxford but never directly experienced.

I write *Psmith at Oxbridge* instead of *Mike and Psmith at Oxbridge* because (as others have noted) there is not much you can do with the adult Mike. Wodehouse would have given Mike a role in his Oxbridge stories, albeit a minor one. Mike has no interest in the world of learning and by his own admission is meant for the outdoor life. Can we imagine him dutifully writing weekly essays for his "p-p-preposterous tutor"? He would grow bored of the curriculum and spend as

much time as possible playing sports; I can picture him practicing in the nets at The Parks, hanging out in the OUCC pavilion, and joining Vincent's Club. He might have learned his Wrykyn lesson and done enough work to scrape a Fourth-Class "Gentleman's" degree, but *Leave It to Psmith* does not say if he graduated. All we know is that he met the fragile Eve when visiting his family, married her (perhaps impulsively and precipitously), and was forced to become a schoolmaster when his agent job disappeared. He is never heard from again after presumably buying the farm (literally, not figuratively) thanks to Psmith, once again his savior.

The Oxford experience might have changed Wodehouse's literary output in other ways. In particular, it might have extended the Psmith series. At the bank, Mike and Psmith meet a variety of odd characters who are living their second-best life. While some have interesting quirks, like the young man with "a costume which suggested the sportsman of the comic papers," their lives are circumscribed by unexciting jobs in London and eventual assignment overseas. I see little that Wodehouse could do with them.

By contrast, Oxbridge opens up many possibilities. With three or four years at Oxford, Plum would have met a treasure trove of students, tutors, townies, porters, and scouts. He could have written more than one novel about Oxbridge, and perhaps a series that followed Psmith post-Varsity rather than wrapping him up in *Leave It to Psmith*. Psmith is a larger-than-life character, a type of Oscar Wilde, who had great literary possibilities. Plum could have written about him for decades, just as he did with Ukridge.

Another possibility is that Wodehouse would have written more detective stories. His "Death at the Excelsior" (1914) shows interest in the genre, and mystery fans know that something about Oxford stirs the murderous spirit. So many stories have been set at Oxford that critics are amazed that any students or tutors managed to survive. You may recall the series by Colin Dexter (Inspector Morse), Veronica Stallwood (featuring Kate Ivory), and Edmund Crispin (the pseudonym of Robert Bruce Montgomery, creator of Gervase Fen). Notable individual novels include *Ghostwalk* (Rebecca Stott), *The Oxford Murders* (Guillermo Martinez), *The Cambridge Murders* (Dilwyn Rees, the pseudonym of scientist Glyn Daniel), *An Oxford Tragedy* (John Cecil Masterman), *Death at the President's Lodging* (Michael Innes), and *Gaudy Night* (Dorothy Sayers).

After several years in Oxford, Plum might have caught the detective spirit, especially as he was a fan (and cricket teammate) of Arthur Conan Doyle. While Wodehouse later said he avoided the genre because it had limited humorous potential, he was more than capable of devising a unique take. For instance, he might have imagined Psmith as an early Gervase Fen, a larger-than-life character lightheartedly solving mysteries among the gardens, chapels, dining halls, and senior common rooms of the colleges. Who could resist “Psmith and the Poisoned Port,” “Psmith and the High Table Hallucination,” and “Psmith and the Evensong Ectoplasm”?

Because Wodehouse never wrote any Oxbridge novels, the implications are clear: you and I should do so. We need more pastiche novels beyond Bertie and Jeeves, but capturing Wodehouse’s style and humor is not easy. Unlike writing new Sherlock Holmes adventures, the writer must do more (say the uncharitable) than follow a Ronald Knox-ian plot pattern and get some mannerisms right. Nevertheless, we should not be discouraged but rather draw inspiration from the Obama campaign slogan—“We are the ones we have been waiting for”—and give it the old college try.

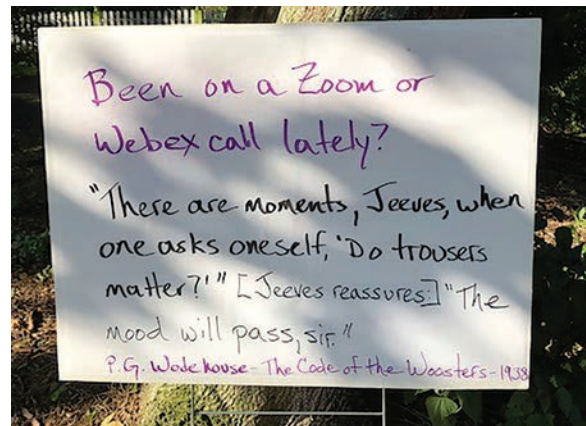


David Leal has not yet said goodbye to all cats. He also has written multiple essays relating to Wodehouse characters and their education and politics. You’ve enjoyed a couple of his works in the last two issues of Plum Lines. We expect to publish more of his articles soon—it will be our informal “Leal” column.

A Few Quick Ones

Unless otherwise credited, these items are courtesy of our prolific Quick Ones providers, Evelyn Herzog and John Baesch.

Madelyn Shaw received this photo from a friend who was out on a morning walk in a local park in northern Virginia. It is nice to know that Plum is prevalent in these tough times. Perhaps it was even a TWS member who posted it?



Karen Shotting found an article by David Rees in the June 14, 2020, *New York Times Magazine* entitled “Jeeves and Reacher.” Mr. Rees described how his reading of Wodehouse and Lee Childs have helped him get through self-quarantine with his “two favorite heroes in all of literature”—Jeeves and Jack Reacher. He found that these two disparate characters “share one thing in common: thrilling levels of efficacy.”

British author Nina Stibbe (*Reasons to Be Cheerful*) said that she has “a little tower of P. G. Wodehouse nearby” and that she finds him “simultaneously hilarious and soothing and a good influence on [her] own rhythms.” (“By the Book,” *New York Times*, August 4, 2019)

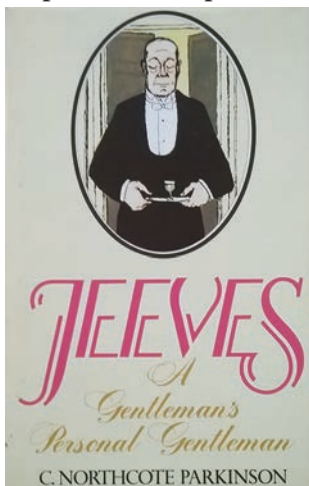
In the March 19, 2020, *Washington Post*, TWS’s good friend Michael Dirda mentioned PGW and others as providing “much-needed respite from stressful reality” and then offered a couple of other writers of “fantasies and weird tales”: Edward Heron-Allen and Jean Ray. Any recommendations from Michael are good ones. At our 2017 TWS convention in D.C., he gave a terrific after-dinner speech listing a number of humor writers worth reading in parallel to Wodehouse, which helped us set up a nice little column for a good chunk of 2018—and is perhaps even more relevant in these sequestered times. (See the *Plum Lines* 2018 Spring, Summer, and Autumn issues for details.)

The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University

BY ANITA AVERY

THE McIlvaine *Bibliography* and the later *Addendum* (Section L) contain 33 examples of tributes to Wodehouse in “parodies, imitations, biographies of his characters, and other flights of fancy.” In the years following, many entertaining titles have joined their ranks. This installment features such highlights from the P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University.

Jeeves: A Gentleman's Personal Gentleman (1979), by C. Northcote Parkinson, provides a plausible biography of Jeeves's life and career, with a satisfying conclusion. After years of Jeeves contriving Bertie's many escapes from marital bliss, the reader finds Bertie (without Jeeves's assistance or interference) as 9th Earl of Yaxley, happily ensconced at Wooster Castle with Bobbie Wickham as his countess. Jeeves is the new landlord of Anglers' Rest, a mere twelve miles distant.



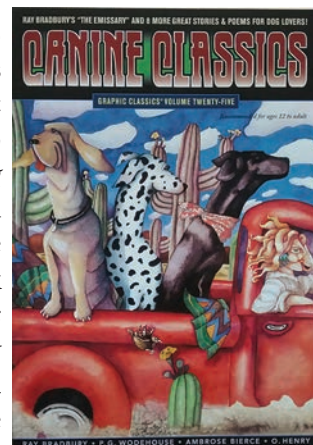
In Ian Strathcarron's *Crikey! How Did That Happen?: The [Refreshingly Unauthorized] Biography of Sir Bertram Wooster, KG* (2018) one breezes through ten short stories of Bertie's life from age seven through Eton, Oxford, the Jeeves years, WWII, a cabaret career, Hollywood, the Himalayas, and a 1970 murder mystery.

On an imbibing theme, *The Hungover Cookbook's* recipes fall into six hangover types as classified by Wodehouse in *The Mating Season*. In *The Jeeves Cocktail Book*, an introduction by Bertie is followed by excerpts from Plum's works interspersed with cocktail recipes.



The collection holds two forms of P. H. Cannon's parody *Scream for Jeeves*, which presents three tales of Jeeves and Wooster investigating “the paranormal with the utmost decorum and good taste.” Two appear in issues of the periodical *Crypt of Cthulhu*, enhanced by the author's annotations and autograph. *The Lovecraft Papers* contains all three.

A facsimile of the 1948 paperback described as “the first Wodehouse comic book” introduces us to *De Grote Match* (*The Big Match*), which was based on *Psmith, Journalist*. The Graphic Classics comic book anthology *Canine Classics* delivers a handsomely illustrated adaptation of a short-story favorite, “The Mixer.”



In his 2013 homage to Wodehouse, *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*, Sebastian Faulks has Jeeves playing the willing Pandarus, ensuring Bertie's marriage to Georgiana Meadows. Fortunately, Jeeves can remain in Bertie's employ as Jeeves, too, is to be married. In the realm of “flights of fancy,” we have Ben Schott's *Jeeves and the King of Clubs* (2018), which reveals the Junior Ganymede Club to be an elite arm of the British Secret Service and Jeeves and Wooster as spies for the English crown.

Throughout *Goodnight, Mr. Wodehouse* (2015), Faith Sullivan weaves the peripheral thread of the protagonist's 56-year love of Wodehouse: her delight at discovering his books and reading his new titles, and culminating with a treasured first edition and letter from him. Apropos of the current times are her deeply felt sentiments: “Wodehouse is my savior. If I'm down in the dumps, I run away to his books. Everybody needs a place like that where they're happy and safe.”

As with all sections of the collection, we welcome donations of parodies, imitations, and homages, including shorter pieces or other more recent titles not listed on the database. This quarter, 48 books, recordings, etc., have been added to the collection, for a total of 764 items across those sections, with an additional 40+ TWS documents and ephemera. The online database may be seen at <http://www.wodehouse.org/PGWCVU>. Click on the gold navigation bar for links to all sections.



Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Please send all news to Gary Hall (see page 24 of this issue). Note that webmaster Noel Merrill keeps chapter items posted on the society website. It's good to send advance info about upcoming events to Noel; his contact information is also on page 24.

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



JUST A FRIENDLY reminder that in these stressful times—where staying safe and sane makes strategic sense—we can all use a bit of social silliness. So on the supreme Sunday of the month we have our session of stories, skits, soliloquies, and song. Subalterns, scientists, singers of all song, seamstresses, salesmen, sailors, socialites, and psychiatrists show up. So before I sent you off on your summer's sojourn, scratch down that final Sunday of the month on your schedule. (OK, enough with the Ss!)

We last met on Sunday, August 30. We are regularly joined by members of the Chicago Accident Syndicate, NEWTS, new chapter members, and folks who have never been to their local chapter meeting in their part of the country but read about the Blandings Zoom calls in an issue of *Plum Lines*. We also have had the privilege of being joined by a number of our British colleagues, which does raise the bar of the meeting until we start discussing plumbing and the different pronunciations. Good fun is reverently, and sometime irreverently, had by all. As one of the participants pointed out, "Zoom in Gallery View is a bit like *Hollywood Squares*," the reference being to an old American TV game show with nine pseudo-celebrities sitting at desks in a sort of tic-tac-toe office block.

In July, we met our newest member, Bonnie Stewart, Ian and Rose's first child, who was born in late June. We discussed the P.G. Wodehouse Book Club on Facebook, restaurants that appear in the Wodehouse canon, and the Madame Eulalie annotations (a really useful companion for reading for the book club). We shared a common wish that we can all come together in San Diego. We ended with Steven Strauss singing "We'll Meet Again," which resulted in a lovely conversation about Vera Lynn. As is normal when old friends come together, the conversation ran far and wide, and for that single fact I am grateful for weeks after these sessions.

For non-Blandings Castle Plummies who wish to join our Zooms, please email Lord Emsworth. I tend to send out a reminder email around the 15th of the month. I send another email with Zoom details about a week prior to the meeting. Each session is typically on the last Sunday of the month at 1 PM Pacific, which is 9 PM in London.

Sincerely, yet not sycophantically, your servant,

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: Mark Reber



CHAPTER ONE'S Zoom colloquia continued on May 4 and June 9, 2020. The May session focused on "Uncle Fred Flits By," the short story that first unleashed Frederick Altamont Cornwallis Twistleton, Earl of Ickenham. Here was a character who knew what it meant to be locked down at home for months and then to move on to less restricted activities. We all took enormous delight in reading, discussing, and possibly envying Uncle Fred's liberated loopiness.

The June meeting was all about Wodehouse and A. A. Milne—including their decades-long friendship and its demise after the Berlin broadcasts. We reviewed

a chronology of their relationship and had fun with two comic pieces of literary and theatrical criticism that each wrote in 1919. And we talked about Plum's 1949 story "Rodney Has a Relapse," with its not-so-gentle mocking of the Christopher Robin poems.

Our June gathering was held a few weeks after YouTube's weekend streaming of *By Jeeves*, the Andrew Lloyd Webber–Alan Ayckbourn musical. Just before we darkened our screens, Michael Ladenson read Ayckbourn's description of his meeting with a very elderly Plum (and a cautiously watchful Ethel) in the 1970s.

CHAPTER ONE gathered again on July 28. We Zoomed far and wide, welcoming veteran members who had moved to Spokane, Washington, and Charleston, South Carolina.

After some fond reminiscing about past chapter glories and TWS conventions dating to the early 1990s, we turned our collective attention to the perils of ante-post betting. Chaps offered their favorite pearls from "The Great Sermon Handicap." We also talked about how often this Plum delight was anthologized; our members headed to their bookshelves to retrieve the volumes in which they first encountered it. Bob Rains showed us his collection of translations of the story into no less than 57 languages, including Chaucerian English and Amharic.

Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen had attended a reading of an abridged version of the tale by an esteemed actor in London. They reported that prior to the reading, bets were taken on how long the presentation would last. Andrea placed second in the running.

—Mark Reber

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



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



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



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



THE MELONsquashville team remains in self-imposed isolation as far as physical meetings are concerned. We have not yet done virtual meetings; the de facto group leader (who is penning this column, hence has all rights to make judgment) is both a technophobe and technomoron. So I have been enjoying my Wodehouse the old-fashioned way. The one exception is that I, and a few other Melonsquashvillagers, have also been enjoying Comrade H. Glossop's P.G. Wodehouse Book Club on Facebook. Lots to enjoy and learn there, if you can catch it.

Whenever we next meet, we have a doozy of a program: an adaptation by Linda and Ralph Norman of *Joy in the Morning* which we will read together. That is in the hands "of whatever gods may be" (from W. E. Henley's "Invictus," of course). We continue to be Wodehousianly optimistic about a bright future.

Finally, here's a note concerning the reasons to be optimistic about that future being bright: As summer fades to fall and freezes to winter, we think there will be two new books about Wodehouse, his life, and his

works. We are looking forward to the next installment by Paul Kent (to follow his rousing *Pelham Grenville Wodehouse: Volume 1: "This is jolly old Fame"*—you can read a review of that tome in the Winter 2019 *Plum Lines*). Also, John Dawson's eagerly awaited book on Wodehouse's early years is expected soon.

—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 met via Zoom in August with members attending from the Boston environs, Luxembourg, London, and Buffalo, New York. The highlight was a reprise of the Great Sermon Handicap event as staged long ago (2007) at the Providence TWS convention. Fr. Wendell Verrill extemporized a sermon from a randomly selected Bible passage after NEWTS cheerily placed bets on his running time. The selected passage was 2 Kings 6:23–25, about Elisha and children and bears. Time was ten minutes and something, and the winners were Indu and Jaganathan (Ravi) Ravi.

—Lynn Vesley-Gross

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Mike Eckman



CCOVID-19 forced the Northwodes to change plans. On May 9, ten weeks after our February meeting, Joe Dolson and Janna Kysilko hosted our first Zoom meeting. We discussed “The Clicking of Cuthbert.” Our successful meeting sparked a hunger for more.

With lots of time on our hands, we decided to read *Uneasy Money*. At our June 4 Zoom, our little group spent some moments discussing the various traumas our country and world are going through. We then moved onto the problems of Bill, Elizabeth, and Eustace the monkey. It was a moment of much-needed escape. The story came out right, but our group definitely didn't like Plum killing Eustace, and we felt that a strong letter to the *Times* should be written.

Keeping the quick pace going, on July 7 we Zoom-discussed *Piccadilly Jim*. This novel was a great publishing success for Plum: his first book to get a second printing, first to be translated into a foreign language (Swedish), and first book to be published by Herbert Jenkins. We didn't think that Jimmy and Ann's marriage would last long, but we enjoyed the subplot with the explosive Partridge and with Lord Wisbeach as an almost-spy, and we agreed that Ogden is obnoxious.

As always, the discussion was wide-ranging. Dogs with tails, we learned, make friends more quickly than dogs with docked tails. It's a body-language thing. The word “seisin” describing Jimmy's return to NYC was quite apt, which we always expect from the impressive Plum. And the boxer Jerry Mitchell, having had enough of Ogden's needling, hits the kid, explaining that he “lost [his] goat.” Our Janna, an expert horsewomen, pointed out the frequent use of goats as calming stablemates for highly strung horses. One excellent way to snooter an opposing racehorse was to steal its goat, which causes the horse to get unstable, so to speak.

—Mike Engstrom

The Orange Plums

(Orange County, California)

Contact: Lia Hansen or

Diana Van Horn

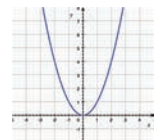
Please see page 8 for the Orange Plums chapter report!



The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity) Contact:

George Vanderburgh



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Doug Kendrick



Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein



THE PICKERINGS held their first Zoom meeting. It was a success, which was something of a miracle since we are not technology geeks.

The reading assignment was *Joy in the Morning*. Elliott pointed out that this was written while Plum was interned by the Nazis. The only book Plum was allowed to take into captivity was Shakespeare's complete works. This accounts for the plethora (43, more than any other PGW novel) of Shakespearean references in the book.

We then discussed Florence Craye and the proposal that all of her ex-fiancés should form a club. We discussed whether she ever married. Apparently, the answer is no. Not surprising considering her imperious manner and desire to force a man to read philosophy instead of detective stories.

Somehow, the discussion turned to whether there was ever any mention of premarital sex in Wodehouse. Elliott knows of two, in *Heavy Weather* and *French Leave*. The discussion turned to family size. There seems to be a pattern of characters of Bertie's generation having one or two children while the prior generation produced many offspring; for example, all of the Mulliner relations, Lord Emsworth and his sisters, etc.

We then discussed the practice of serializing Wodehouse novels in magazines, which faded after World War II. That led to a discussion of magazines in general. This led to the discovery that many Pickerings were fans of *Spy Magazine* (1986 to 1998). It published some great satire and we do miss it.

The next meeting is September 11. The reading assignment is *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*.

—Robert Walter

The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) Contact:

Allison Thompson



The Plum Crazyes

(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)

Contact: Betty Hooker



THE PLUM CRAZIES met on July 14 via Zoom. Andrea Jacobsen set up the meeting, generously sharing her technical expertise and her Zoom account. We were happy to welcome two new Wodehouse fans to the proceedings: Uttam Paudel, who will be attending Penn State–Harrisburg in the fall, and Jeff Decker, a Sherlock Holmes fan who may have room in his heart for another favorite author. The theme of the meeting was sports in Wodehouse. In addition to the familiar golf passages, topics ranged further afield to boxing and big-game hunting.

Chair Betty Hooker began by reading Plum's introduction "Fore!" to the golf collection *The Clicking of Cuthbert*. The piece tells of the change in Plum from a cheerful writer of light fiction to a man of hidden depths and sorrows, all because he took up golf.

Tom Hooker followed with "A Plea for Indoor Golf" from *The Uncollected Wodehouse*, edited by David Jasen. It describes an indoor golf course set up at Wodehouse Manor. The details in this piece ("Clarence the cat, a moving hazard" and the "glass-and-china cupboard") suggest that the piece may have a strong basis in fact.

Bruce Montgomery read from "The Salvation of George Mackintosh," one of Plum's golf stories. The crux of the story is here:

"Well, the fact is," said Celia, in a burst of girlish frankness, "I rather think I've killed George."

"Killed him, eh?"

It was a solution that had not occurred to me, but now that it was presented for my inspection, I could see its merits. In these days of national effort, when we are all working together to try to make our beloved land fit for heroes to live in, it was astonishing that nobody before had thought of a simple, obvious thing like killing George Mackintosh. George Mackintosh was undoubtedly better dead, but it had taken a woman's intuition to see it.

"I killed him with my niblick," said Celia.

I nodded. If the thing was to be done at all, it was unquestionably a niblick shot.

Leaving the field of golf, Andrea Jacobsen presented excerpts from "The Exit of Battling Billson," which is part of the Ukridge series.

William Campbell reported on discovering a Wodehouse devotee during a meeting on county courthouse row offices. The Master surfaces everywhere!

Bob Rains shared excerpts from "Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court" (from *Mr. Mulliner Speaking*)

including Charlotte Mulliner's famous poem "Good Gnu." Having gotten into the gnu spirit, Bob wrapped up with Flanders and Swann's "The Gnu Song." Tom Hooker astounded all—wife included—by announcing he had seen Flanders and Swann in Detroit in the 1960s. He reported that "the audience didn't get it."

On that cheerful note, the happiest Zoom meeting ever concluded. We plan to meet to discuss the aunts at our next meeting.

—Betty Hooker

The Plum Street Plummies

(Olympia, Washington and vicinity)

Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith



The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Contact: Peter Nieuwenhuizen



<https://wodehouse-society.nl>

THE MEETING of the Knights on June 13 at the Pilsener Club in Amsterdam couldn't take place because of the COVID-19 measures. We decided to gather via the Zoom platform.



Knight Anton Weda read his favorite Wodehouse passage and lectured about U.K. prime minister Boris Johnson, who once said, "I'd rather be dead in a ditch than ask for Brexit delay." Had Johnson, a Wodehouse aficionado, filched the words "dead in a ditch" from Wodehouse? Anton found the expression in "The Story of Webster" in *Mulliner Nights*, but some research showed that it was also used in *Uneasy Money*; *Indiscretions of Archie*; *Bill the Conqueror*; *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*; and *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds* (aka *Much*

Obliged, Jeeves). In the latter story, we read in the first chapter: "If a girl thinks you're in love with her and says she will marry you, you can't very well voice a preference for being dead in a ditch. Not, I mean, if you want to regard yourself as a *preux chevalier*, as the expression is, which is always my aim."

Ole van Luyn talked about some of the hundreds of entries in the new *Who's Who in Wodehouse* by Dan Garrison and Neil Midkiff. Ole also offered some Wodehouse novels for sale for charity purposes.

Donald Duk presented his idea of a new Wodehouse club hymn, based on the Mozart *Magic Flute* Papageno musical number "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja" ("I am the birdcatcher, yes"). It was a nice try, but a bit too difficult to sing along,

Member Rob Sander had written an article in our club magazine (*Nothing Serious*—you can find it on our website) about the intriguing English money system, and he organized a quiz about it: (1) How many 1/8 farthings equals 1/3 guinea? (2) How many Jersey pence equals one Jersey guinea? (3) How many pence equals the British Honduras real? For the answers, see below. Donald's twin brother, Ronald, won the quiz.

After the meeting we watched the 1991 movie *The Mysterious Stranger* (aka *Kidnapped!*), based on *Thank You, Jeeves*. The black-faced minstrels were a prelude to a Black Lives Matter discussion by our chapter's group on WhatsApp.

The next regular meeting of the Knights, depending on the pandemic developments, will be on October 17, 2020, at 1 PM, at the Pilsener Club, Begijnensteeg 4 in Amsterdam.

Quiz answers: (1) 2688; (2) 273; (3) 10.

—Peter Nieuwenhuizen

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



Bradbury P. Foss

WE WERE NOTIFIED at press time that **Bradbury P. Foss**, a longtime member of The Wodehouse Society, passed away on July 4, 2019. He is survived by his wife, Barbara, and his sister, Stephani. Barbara told us that “he was an ardent fan of PGW and all the work [TWS] has accomplished. He worked with past presidents and contributed to the annual district dinner sessions. In fact, one year he organized a special evening and generously awarded champagne to the winner(s). It was for all a delightful evening. In 2017, Bradbury contributed many of his Wodehouse books to the TWS D.C. convention auction. *The Washington Post* obituary said that “he was a true gentleman with a passion for sharing his love of art, music, Greek literature, gardening and baseball.” Upon his retirement following 38 years at IBM, he served on various D.C. community boards: The Friends of Book Hill Park in Georgetown, the Newark Street Community Garden, the Camellia Society, and many more. Bradbury will be missed by his family and The Wodehouse Society.

Drones Ties Still Available!

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT Tom Smith tells us that there are still five Drones Club ties available for sale: two bow ties (\$68), one regular four-in-hand tie (\$78), and two extra-long four-in-hand ties (\$88). All orders should add \$10 for shipping and handling. Contact Tom for details.

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We appreciate your articles, Quick Ones, etc. 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.

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She was aware subconsciously that the matter went deeper than that. The world is full of men who ought never to shave their upper lip, and Blair Eggleston was one of them.

Hot Water (1932)