



Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

Volume 42 Number 3 Autumn 2021

San Diego, Here We Come!

BY JOHN KAREORES

AFTER INNUMERABLE emails and Zoom meetings, your convention committee is happy to provide the official San Diego 2022 convention registration form in this exciting issue of *Plum Lines*. Actually, it probably fell out when you opened your copy of *PL*, so please check the floor or in the cushions of the couch if you can't find it immediately. But not to worry if the Peke chewed it up, because the form is also available on the TWS website (www.wodehouse.org) and on the Facebook page entitled "Where in the World Is Pelham? San Diego." It's never too early to formulate travel plans, gather appropriate attire or costume, and otherwise prep for the big event.

It's been a while since we've all thought about actually going to a TWS convention, so it might be a good time for a quick review:

1. **Event:** The 21st international convention of The Wodehouse Society
2. **Dates:** October 20–22, 2022
3. **Location:** San Diego, California
4. **Venue:** The beautiful U.S. Grant Hotel
5. **Activities:** The famous and much-loved Riveting Talks; a cricket match; a reception with



The U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego

musical entertainment by our own **Maria Jette** and **Dan Chouinard**; a harbor cruise; a lively Saturday night banquet; and, of course, browsing and sluicing and much, much more. Fun!

6. **Items to Pack:** Champagne, Blanton's bourbon, banjolele—oops, that's my list. That's a pretty good list, but you'll make your own.

A few points about our fabulous destination, San Diego, from the Tourist Bureau:

Beachside attitude, big city excitement: With near-perfect weather year-round, seventy miles of spectacular coastline, world-class attractions and a thriving urban core, complete with a sophisticated art, dining, and nightlife scene, San Diego has earned the name California's Beach City. . . . Don't miss sampling the area's signature Cali Baja cuisine or tasting one of the hundreds of craft beers and wines bottled in the region. If art and culture is your passion,

you'll find an exciting hub of creativity in San Diego. Often referred to as the "Smithsonian of the West," Balboa Park features seventeen museums, numerous galleries and performing arts venues, [and] the San Diego Zoo.

October is one of the best times to visit San Diego—the weather is a balmy 74 high/61 low (Fahrenheit) and it is much less crowded at that time. In future *Plum Lines* articles, we'll publish more information to help you take the best advantage of your visit.

Please take time to review the registration form and begin to decide which convention activities you wish to attend. It may early but October 2022 will be here before we know it. A splendid time is guaranteed for all. Or, as P. G. Wodehouse put it through Lord Pershore ("Motty") in *Carry On, Jeeves*: "What's the use of a great city having temptations if fellows don't yield to them?"

Bring Out Your Talks, Your Skits, and More

IN A PREVIOUS *Plum Lines*, we announced a call for proposals for convention talks and other clean, bright convention entertainment—skits, readings, musical offerings, contests, parlor games, etc. The deadline for proposals has been extended. Here's the skinny:

On the Saturday of the convention, we will gather to hear an edifying program of Riveting Talks relating to Our Hero—including, possibly, your talk. If you have a specific subject or unique take on the works, life, or world of P. G. Wodehouse that you're dying to share with your fellow Plummiess, this could be your moment. Please write a brief synopsis of your talk proposal and email posthaste to speaker coordinator (and TWS VP) Marie Jette. She will respond, agog.

But that's not all! Aside from Riveting Talks, previous conventions have featured original skits, dramatizations, readers' theatre, musical programs, talent and writing contests (poem, sermon, movie pitch), Fiendish quizzes, and many other highlights. If you have or your chapter has a skit or offering you'd like to share, please email activities coordinator Max Pokrivchak. He promises to respond, even more agog.

Please submit all proposals to the appropriate nib by December 15, 2021. (If you submitted your proposal previously for the now-postponed 2021 convention, please let us know if you're still ready and willing for 2022.) Thanks—and see you in San Diego!

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Plummy in Kaufmanland

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN

THE NEOPHYTE READER of Wodehouse often has no idea why they are laughing so hard and so continuously as they make their way through their first Blandings novel or Mulliner story. If they take the time to ponder, they will most likely first gravitate towards the idea that it's because the characters are so funny. If devoted to the Bertie and Jeeves stories, they may be charmed by the narration and start collecting Woosterisms such as "She fitted into my biggest arm-chair as if it had been built round her by someone who knew they were wearing arm-chairs tight about the hips that season." But after a dozen or so books under their belt, that same reader, now no longer a novice, often becomes more discerning and begins to realize that a large part of their enjoyment comes from the fact that Wodehouse was a genius at plotting.

Wodehouse's plots in his early period (1900–23) were all over the place, as he was writing whatever would sell, as well as experimenting a great deal while he searched for his ultimate signature style, which he fully realized in *Leave It to Psmith*. The fact that his plots during the middle period (1923–45) were becoming progressively more similar was obscured by the proliferation of new characters and the brilliance of his prose. After World War II, however, with all his significant characters created (and frequently revisited) and with his style set (if getting trimmer), his main concern was in coming up with plots, as he wrote to Bill Townend on Christmas Day 1950 (as quoted by Robert McCrum): "My only trouble is that I don't seem to get any ideas for stories." Critics began to notice this as well, with his first negative reviews commenting that he had gotten stale. A. P. Ryan's 1953 defense in the *New Statesman and Nation* refers to Wodehouse's "static scenario" in which he "made his comic spirit timeless and carried it to perfection"—a somewhat backhanded compliment.

McCrumb says: "So desperate was Wodehouse for a plot—any plot—to which he could attach his prose that he decided to buy one off-the-peg" and he purchased George S. Kaufman's "1925 screwball comedy, *The Butter and Egg Man*." So that play became the 1952 novel *Barmy in Wonderland* (*Angel Cake* in the USA).

In *A Wodehouse Handbook*, Norman Murphy explains Kaufman's title:

The phrase comes from Texas Guinan, who ran a speakeasy, the Three Hundred Club, in New

York during Prohibition and whose greeting “Hallo, suckers” became famous. One night in 1924, a customer came in, bought drinks all round and lavished money on her girls. She wanted to introduce him for a round of applause, but all he would say was that he was in the dairy business. So she got up and asked for a big hand for “my butter-and-egg man.” The phrase took off and Kaufman’s play about an innocent backing a New York show came out in 1925.

The plots of the play and the novel are, of course, extremely similar, but Wodehouse does some interesting things to the original. Kaufman’s play begins with—and centers on—the producers of a new play, Joe Lehman and Jack (“Mac”) McClure. They are vaudeville managers who are trying to break into legitimate theatre with a straight play. Desperate to raise money, one of them runs into Peter Jones, the “butter and egg man,” a young rube from Chillicothe, Ohio, who just came into a little money. Kaufman describes Peter as “a boy of twenty-one or so, and it may be said without exaggeration that there are some things he does not know about the world,” making him ripe for the taking; and Lehman and Mac take him for all he is worth. They are aided in this not just by their oleaginous wheedling, but also because he has fallen rather heavily for their “good-looking and neatly dressed” stenographer and office girl, Jane Weston.

The three-act plot is simple: In Act I, Peter Jones is talked into investing in the play. Act II takes place in Syracuse, where the play is being tried out: Scene 1 is in Peter’s hotel room before the play opens; Scene 2 is the postmortem review after the curtain comes down, which strongly hints that the play is a stinker, so much so that the original producers want out. Peter, utilizing techniques he learned from Lehman and Mac, convinces the stagestruck Oscar Fritchie, a not very bright hotel worker, to help him buy the play so he can stay close to Jane. Act III opens the day after opening night on Broadway, where, it turns out, the play is a huge hit, but a lawyer turns up to claim that his client really owns the play. Peter then sells the play back to the original producers, making a tidy profit in the bargain. The play ends with Peter and Jane, united, talking Oscar into a hotel venture.

In *Author! Author!*, Wodehouse says, “In the play, the hero is a guileless young American from the Middle West. . . . I made him a guileless young Englishman, added several characters, and changed the heroine a good deal.” He did a lot more than that. As Tony

Ring explains in *Nothing Is Simple in Wodehouse*, Wodehouse “wrote a completely new plot for the first half of his novel” and “he selected one of his Drones Club members—Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps—to be the starring character, but retained the American setting with the excitement of the Broadway district of New York.”

That “excitement” comes from the period in which the original play was set—the Roaring Twenties—not the period in which it was written—the dull Fifties. (The exact decade in which the novel takes place is a little confusing—as with much of his work in the late period—with the retention of references to vaudeville added to anachronistic references to “television” and the like.) Wodehouse was finding novel writing difficult right after the war and, settling in Manhattan, was trying to get back into the Broadway scene but having some difficulty in that endeavor. The book has the excitement of the Broadway he knew well, with a tinge of the frustration he was experiencing some three decades later with Broadway producers who either did not remember or did not care that he was once the darling of Broadway (in 1917) with an unprecedented five shows running at one time.

Changing the main character to an old Wodehouse favorite made sense commercially—his fans always longed to see their favorite characters again, and in the late period they purchased those books in greater numbers than the non-sagas—but Barmy doesn’t really quite fit the role, and it shows in several places.

The story is significantly improved by the “good deal” of changes that Wodehouse made to the female romantic lead, as the rather ordinary Jane Weston becomes the wisecracking, tough-as-nails, smart-as-a-whip, good-looking Eileen “Dinty” Moore (who I think ranks rather high in the pantheon of Wodehouse’s female characters). Wodehouse’s ending is also kinder to poor Oscar Fritchie. The remainder of the play’s characters, all minor, are retained pretty much as they were in the original.

But the biggest alteration—and most consequential—is the introduction of the new character of Mervyn Potter, actor and drunk extraordinaire (like Barmy, also repurposed from some of Wodehouse’s earlier stories). Besides the richly comedic material Wodehouse creates for Potter, the new character also provides motivation to critical plot twists that are unexplained in the play, including how the rube Jones/Phipps ends up at the offices of Lehmack Productions in the first place and even why the play becomes a hit.

While Kaufman closes the second act in the Syracuse hotel with Peter expressing unrealistic

optimism for the play's opening, and then opens the third act in New York with that optimism miraculously and mysteriously fulfilled, Wodehouse provides a very different conclusion to the sad, pathetic hotel room scene with Barmy, Oscar Fritchie, and Dinty Moore nervously contemplating the future. Enter Mervyn Potter, whose exuberance contrasts sharply with the gloomy trio, and who launches into a long, hilarious monologue in which he ultimately reveals how to save the play:

Standing shoulder to shoulder like, as I believe I once mentioned to you before, the Boys of the Old Brigade, we will take this play into New York and knock their ruddy eyes out. I've had a great idea. Do you know what we're going to do, Phipps, old friend? We are going to play this charade for laughs. We're going to kid the pants off it and have the customers rolling in the aisles. This opus is not a drama, it's a farce.

One thing the master plotter Wodehouse knew that the master play-fixer Kaufman evidently did not is how important it is that a story make sense. As funny as the lines may be, as entertaining as the characters may be, if the audience or reader has to ask "Now why did that happen?" the work ends up a feeling a little flat, as *The Butter and Egg Man* does and as *Barmy* does not. Which is why the play, while adapted numerous times by various people into movies and books, is rarely performed today in the original, and *Barmy in Wonderland* is still read and reread frequently.

One thing I think the play gets right that doesn't work quite as well in the book is the transformation of Jones/Phipps into a hard-bitten, fast-talking, cliché-ridden Broadway producer. While Peter Jones slowly adopts and finally wears the new mantle perfectly, it doesn't quite seem to fit on Barmy, perhaps because he is British, or perhaps because he has a mammoth backstory that we all know and that doesn't quite work in the new context. Also, Kaufman has a lot of fun with the expression "butter and egg man," which, unfortunately, Wodehouse had to drop (Barmy doesn't precisely fit that description in the way Peter Jones does), so the expression, and the attendant puns and double entendres that Kaufman creates around it, never make their way into the book.

Again, from *Author! Author!*, Wodehouse recalls that "the reviewer of the *New York Times* was very nice about [the book], but he clicked his tongue in the final paragraph. He wrote: 'After all these years, by the way, Wodehouse has not learned to imitate colloquial

English. His Broadway characters talk like Aaron Slick of [sic] Punkin Crick, which rather tends to spoil the effect.'" Wodehouse then goes on to defend himself: "Every single line of the Broadway characters' dialogue was Kaufman's, that recognized master of Broadway slang." Virtually every Wodehouse scholar who writes about *Barmy in Wonderland* repeats this. But it is not strictly true.

While large swathes of the American dialogue are indeed lifted unchanged from the play, there are several critical passages that Wodehouse altered significantly. The best sequences are when Lehman and McClure are desperately hawking the play to Jones/Phipps. Here are the descriptions of Act Two, the first from the play (with Kaufman's numerous stage directions removed), the second from the book:

LEHMAN. Second act. Ten years later, and she's just getting out of jail. And she's sore—she's out to get square, and she's doped out a way to skin rich men out of their coin, and still they can't do nothing.

MAC. She stays within the law.

PETER. Say, *Within the Law* would be a good name for a play, wouldn't it?

LEHMAN. Now! She's laying plans to fleece a guy that's coming to see her! She don't know his name, see? And who does it turn out to be but this other guy that wanted to marry her.

PETER. What's he say?

LEHMAN. He gives her a long spiel, and she makes up her mind to go straight. But she can't. She tries it on the next guy and he won't stand for it. So she says what the hell, and men is all alike, and me for the easiest way. . . . And now comes the big punch. Next is the brothel scene. The dame has been going downhill and there she is, see? Only—before anything terrible can happen, who comes along but this priest. Remember him?

PETER. He used to be in the orchard.

LEHMAN. That's him.

MAC: He wants to close the place up.

LEHMAN. Of course, there's a big scene when he finds the girl in there. Everybody's standing around, he opens up on her, then *zowie!*—she comes back at him.

PETER. That's fine. I thought she would.

LEHMAN. That's where we bring in the strong talk. She calls him all kinds of names—we go the limit. Then she says "you priests and missionaries is all alike. You don't give a girl no

chance” and so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so—she faints dead away and somebody says, “Everybody get out of here, she’s sick.” That’s your second act.

MAC. Want me to tell the rest?

LEHMAN. No!—Act Three is her dream. She’s delirious, see, and dreams she’s dead and gone to Heaven. Here’s where we got all these angels coming down the aisles—

MAC. With long veils over them.

“Now! Second act. It’s twenty years later, and the feller’s out of jail. He’s gone to hide his head in one of them South Sea islands, and he’s gone down and down, and now he’s so far down he’s playing piano in one of them places,” said Mr. Lehman delicately.

“House of ill fame,” said Jack McClure.

“Yah, house of ill fame,” said Mr. Lehman. “He’s a broken man playing piano in a house of ill fame.”

“Don’t forget the priest,” said Jack McClure.

“Oh, yah. This priest. Remember him?”

“He was in the orchard.”

“That’s him. He’s a missionary now, working in this South Sea island, and he comes to close this place up, and you get a big scene. There’s a big party going on, everybody cutting up, and he comes in and opens up on them. And suddenly, *zowie!* This feller, the hero, comes back at him. That’s where we bring in the strong talk. He calls him all kinds of names. We go the limit. He says ‘You missionaries is all alike, you don’t give nobody no chance,’ and back and forth and back and forth and so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so, and that’s the end of your first scene, Act Two.”

“Lots of action,” said Barmy judiciously.

“Nothing to what comes later. Next scene is in the Governor’s house.”

“Whose governor?”

“The Governor of the island.”

“Oh, ah.”

“And who’s come to visit the Governor in the course of one of them around-the-world cruises but the dame that was going to marry the hero and her husband, because she married this other guy while the hero was in the coop. And the hero’s seen her driving to the house, and late that night he breaks in. Feels he must have a word with her,

see? So it’s her bedroom and she’s in a negligay, and in comes the hero through the window and says ‘Genevieve!’, and she says ‘Harold!’, and she says ‘Is it you?’, and he says ‘Yah, it’s me,’ and back and forth and back and forth, and then it comes out that the brother has died and confessed on his death-bed that it was him that dun it, and she says she loves the hero still but must stick to this guy she’s married because she’s the soul of honour, see, and they have a farewell scene, and suddenly in comes the husband and he thinks the hero is a burglar and plugs him with his gun and the hero falls to the ground a corpse and the dame falls on top of him and has a fit and dies on his body. The next act’s in heaven,” said Mr. Lehman, going to the water-cooler.

Barmy blinked.

“Heaven?”

“Heaven,” said Mr. Lehman, emptying his paper cup. Here’s where we got all those angels coming down the aisles——”

“Long veils over them,” said Jack McClure.

And the rest is pretty much the same as Kaufman’s play. Still, one can hardly say “every single line” was Kaufman’s after reading that. Clearly Wodehouse was uncomfortable with references to girls in prison, “strong talk,” “skinning” and “fleecing” rich guys, “brothels,” and such, so he changed things around (adding that rather nice play on the British usage of “governor”) to make it a little more palatable. He also ended up adding quite a bit to the play’s plot, making it even more ridiculous, thus making Potter’s solution even more understandable.

But the point is that Wodehouse did make substantial changes to Kaufman’s producers’ dialogue, despite his protestations otherwise. Still, I think we can say that Wodehouse captured the idiom perfectly, and that the *New York Times* reviewer was nonetheless completely wrong. I have to believe that somewhere from his past, dealing with the McClures, Lehmans, and Blumenfelds of his day, Wodehouse picked up quite a bit of the above dialogue at the source. In particular, his “back and forth and back and forth” added to Kaufman’s “so-and-so and so-and-so” rings so true that I think he simply had to have gotten that from Comstock, Ziegfeld, or Savage back in his Broadway days.

There is no question that without Kaufman’s *The Butter and Egg Man*, *Barmy in Wonderland* would never have been written. But I think it is equally true that *The Butter and Egg Man* would be completely forgotten today had Wodehouse not improved upon it so much in *Barmy in Wonderland*.

Letters to the Editor

IN “ROCKETT MAN” (*Plum Lines*, Summer 2021), Graeme Davidson invokes the reversed initials of Robert “Bobby” Jones to explain the change from Walter Rockett in the 1940 story “Tee for Two” to John Rockett in the 1959 versions of “Scratch Man” in *A Few Quick Ones*. Would it not be equally plausible to suggest that both are tributes to Walter John Travis, prominently mentioned in Graeme’s article? Note that the U.S. edition of *A Few Quick Ones* includes “Joy Bells for Walter,” a golf story featuring Walter Judson. The change to John Rockett may simply have been to avoid having two different golfers named Walter in a single volume.

Sincerely,
Neil Midkiff

LIA HANSEN noted Wodehouse’s use of “it stays” with a verb and its associated adjective to indicate a lasting effect (“Phrase Turner,” *Plum Lines*, Summer 2021). She found one source in “Anselm Gets His Chance,” but there are many more, singular and plural.

They [unenterprising young men] are put to work when young, and they stay put. (“The Tuppenny Millionaire” in *The Man Upstairs and Other Stories*)

When a Mulliner plights his troth, it stays plighted. (“The Code of the Mulliners” in *Young Men in Spats*)

“When you come to a decision, it stays come to.” (Boko to Bertie in *Joy in the Morning*, ch. 19)

“And when I seal my lips,” said Freddie, “they stay sealed.” (*Full Moon*, ch. 2)

“When I give my heart, it stays given.” (Valerie Twistleton in “The Shadow Passes” in *Nothing Serious*)

“And when I bop them, they stay bopped till nightfall.” (Bertie in *Jeeves in the Offing*, ch. 6)

“You mean that once a Gilpin plights his troth, it stays plighted?” (Lord Ickenham to Archie Gilpin in *Service With a Smile*, ch. 9.3)

He was stout, bald, and middle-aged, and when a stout, bald, middle-aged man bestows his heart, it stays bestowed. (Horace Appleby in *Do Butlers Burgle Banks?*, ch. 11.2)

Sincerely,
Neil Midkiff

Mutual Admiration Society

TO GRAEME DAVIDSON: This afternoon I settled myself down with a nice cuppa to peruse (in the dictionary sense of that oft misunderstood word) the new *Plum Lines*, wherein I found to my delight your intriguing speculation in “Rockett Man,” which I thoroughly enjoyed. I particularly appreciated that, like a law school professor, you raised lots of issues but never provided the answer.

I remain yours,
Bob Rains

TO BOB RAINS: Latest issue of *Plum Lines* (Summer 2021) hit the Davidson mat this morning as Postie dropped off the post.

Have just to say what a splendid piece the Guarnaccia interview article is. I still have to revisit it and properly ingest it, and ask stuff of you, etc., but I could not let any longer pass without whizzing off this note of congratulations on a wonderful piece, full of interest and very nicely structured and written.

Well done, indeed. I always get a kick when I encounter awareness and appreciation of an important element in our enjoyment of, and recall of, Wodehouse’s work, related artwork playing such a useful peg/trigger when it comes to memory.

Best,
Graeme Davidson

Correction and Mea Culpa

AH, THE TRIBULATIONS of beginning to fulfill my destiny as Oldest Member, and the attendant Emsworthian forgetfulness. Not having an Efficient Baxter, I do err on occasion. In this case, I offer heartfelt apologies to Petra Hedgcock (Murray’s widow) and to Baroness Reinheld von Bodenhausen.

In some confusion, I made an error in transcribing Murray’s last letter to me in regard to the article “Spies in the Offing” in the Summer 2021 *Plum Lines*. The engineer mentioned in that letter was actually the father of Petra Hedgcock. When I transcribed, I accidentally named the engineer as Reinheld’s father.

Apologies to all, and to our readers. I offer our sympathies again to the Hedgcock family for the loss this year of Murray. Ever onward—we will continue to try to operate in the spirit of Murray and so many other Wodehouseans who have illuminated these pages.

—OM

Woe Is I

BY CINDY WAGNER



HERE ARE SOME Plum selections from *Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*, by Patricia T. O'Conner (Grosset/Putnam, 1996). This witty guidebook to (American) English grammar contains many nods to P. G. Wodehouse in the form of examples of good and bad linguistic behavior. Sadly, this volume has languished on my bookshelf far longer than it should have, its acquisition predating my membership in The Wodehouse Society. For those who may have missed these “quick ones” at the time, here are a few of O'Conner's Plum-honoring examples of correct grammar.

- To allude is to mention indirectly or to hint at—to speak of something in a covert or roundabout way. (Cyril suspected that the discussion of bad taste alluded to his loud pants.) To refer is to mention directly. (“They're plaid!” said Gussie, referring to Cyril's trousers.)
- An allusion is an indirect mention. (Gussie's comment about burlesque was a snide allusion to Cyril's hand-painted tie.) An illusion is a false impression. (It created the illusion of a naked woman.) A delusion is a deception. (Cyril clung to the delusion that his tie was witty.) Delusion is much stronger than illusion, and implies that Cyril has been misled or deceived—in this case, by himself.
- In behalf of means “for the benefit of,” or “in the interest of.” On behalf of means “in place of,” or “as the agent of.” Bertie presented the check on behalf of the Drones Club, to be used in behalf of the feeble-minded.
- All together means collectively—all at once or all in one place: Bertie's aunts were all together in the living room. Altogether means in sum or entirely: Altogether there were four of them. Bertie was altogether defeated.
- Born at the age of forty-three, the baby was a great comfort to Mrs. Wooster. As the sentence is arranged, the baby—not his mother—was forty-three. . . . Here's one way to rearrange things: The baby, born when Mrs. Wooster was forty-three, was a great comfort to her.

- Tail wagging merrily, Bertie took the dog for a walk. . . . Put the tail on the dog: Tail wagging merrily, the dog went for a walk with Bertie.

O'Conner's guide is likely to appeal to grammarphiles, but the author's rich assortment of cultural references drawn from literature, movies, sitcoms, old comedy routines, and the funny pages—in addition to Wodehouse—make it an entertaining and accessible reference for all.

What Is Wodehouse in French?

BY KEN CLEVENGER

FUNNY, OF COURSE. But the real question may be: What does Plum intend to accomplish when he uses French words and expressions mixed into his superb English prose?

Ole van Luyn, a member of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, proposes to help Wodehouse readers in English with an easily accessible lexicon of those not infrequent French terms. He recruited me as an assistant, and then lassoed several more members of the Dutch society as readers and reporters. With the invaluable support of Peter Nieuwenhuizen, who helped get the information hosted on the Dutch Society website (<https://wodehouse-society.nl>), this now-public lexicon is up and running under the “Research” tab on their home page. The page is called “French Words—Le Mot Juste” and you may find it at <https://tinyurl.com/mot-juste>. (One might also mention that the Dutch society website may be accessed via the link in the TWS website under “Other Wodehouse Sites.”)

The compilers are very grateful to Dan Garrison and Neil Midkiff of TWS for their kind and generous support in allowing the use of the story and book codes from the third expanded edition of their superb tome, *Who's Who in Wodehouse*.

In due course, we hope to find all the French that Plum used, allowing a reader to quickly obtain a useful translation into English, and to see where those phrases or words occur in each novel or short story, as well as in what other works Wodehouse used it.

The introductory description on the Dutch website is self-explanatory, and there are links for anyone else who wants to add their *deux sous*. You are encouraged and welcomed to check it out and revel in the Master's use of *le mot juste*, *au pied de la lettre*.

The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University

BY ANITA AVERY

Here is this issue's article about the collection, which came into existence in 2019 and which we believe is the premier American accumulation of Wodehouse's works and Wodehouse-related items. Thanks to the vision of several members of TWS, and to Anita's tireless oversight, the collection continues to grow and prosper.

WHILE STILL in the nascent stage, the holdings in "Section D: Periodicals" include several rare acquisitions and represent Wodehouse's versatility and adaptability to the needs and trends of various periodicals. Three issues of *Pearson's Magazine* (U.S.) from 1906–07 contain installments of the popular Kid Brady series. In the December 1909 *Ainslee's: The Magazine That Entertains*, "The Gem Collector" appears as a "complete novel."



Very notable is the 1969 *Story Paper Collectors' Digest* publication of *The Swoop!* in three parts, which was the first for that Wodehouse work since the rare 1909 Alston Rivers edition. Another significant item is *The Prince and Betty* from *Strand Magazine* (1912) in three parts, which differs from the U.K. and U.S. novels. The first six of eight serial installments of the *Grand*

Magazine (1924–25) appearance of *Bill the Conqueror* are highly regarded collectibles. The Oxford University Press *Periodical* (July 1939) contains speeches given at a ceremony during which an honorary doctorate was bestowed upon Wodehouse. Three of Wodehouse's entries in the detective genre are additions to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (various issues from 1950 to 1978). The March–April 1953 *Lilliput* cover prominently draws attention to the new story "Big Business."



Whatever gets them to buy the magazine!

Wodehouse is said to have remarked, "I'd love to have had a nom de plume, like 'Tab Hunter' or 'Mark Twain.'" During his *Vanity Fair* years, in addition to his own name, he actually did use several rather impressive pseudonyms: J. Plum, Pelham Grenville, P. Brooke-Haven, C. P. West, and J. Walker Williams. The personal tone of two *Punch* articles is telling in the careful thought Wodehouse gave to how his name would appear in print. "Name This Child" (1955), written in a light vein, also has more than a grain of truth about getting published: "I had been labelling my stories 'by P. G. Wodehouse' and this at a time when a writer who went about without three names was practically going around naked. . . . And here was I, poor misguided fool, trying to crash the gate with a couple of contemptible initials." He states that using Pelham Grenville Wodehouse "changed the luck," securing *Something Fresh* as a serial in the *Saturday Evening Post*. After the fourth serial with them, he "felt safe in going back to 'P. G. Wodehouse.'" "I'm in the Book" (1954) lays out sound reasons for having an unlisted telephone number, including avoiding sneers by swells that might infer that "you can't be very hot if you aren't important enough to keep your number a secret." But for his part, he writes, "A fig . . . for the snobs who will look down on me [for being listed in the telephone directory]." He

sums up his attitude: “Rugged, I suppose you would call me. No frills. Rather the Abe Lincoln type.”

During his lifetime, Plum had a five-decade association with the *Saturday Evening Post*. The collection includes three 1933 installments of *Heavy Weather*, illustrated in graceful period style by May Wilson Preston. Within the pages of the September 1980 issue is 1919’s “Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg.”

The cover of the January 2003 issue of *Firsts: The Book Collector’s Magazine*, a “P. G. Wodehouse Special Issue,” features a 1919 George H. Doran first edition of *A Damsel in Distress*. Three informative articles, a first-edition checklist with estimates of valuation, and numerous pictures of first editions with dust wrappers make this a collector’s delight.



Many thanks go to Arthur Robinson, who donated the majority of the collection’s splendid periodicals. We welcome any periodicals containing works by or about Wodehouse. To peruse what has been donated to date, consult the online database at <http://www.wodehouse.org/PGWCVU>. Click on the gold navigation bar for links to all sections. As always, our sincere thanks to all who have so generously contributed to the collection.



A Few Quick Ones

Unless otherwise credited, these items are courtesy of the prolific Evelyn Herzog and John Baesch.

Dot Wordsworth, in her “Mind Your Language” column in the October 2, 2020, issue of the *Spectator*, referred to “What ho, what ho, what ho!” from the first act of *Othello*. She then studied how Bertie took ownership of the phrase, with exchanges like this when Lord Pershore (“Motty”) comes to Bertie in the morning after the latter had returned “spifflicated from a night out” in “Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest”:

“What ho!” I said.

“What ho!” said Motty.

“What ho! What ho!”

“What ho! What ho! What ho!”

After that it seemed rather difficult to go on with the conversation.

Fave columnist Michael Dirda, in “Gentlemen (and Ladies) Prefer Comedy” (*Washington Post*, April 1, 2021) mentioned that, “for many, the first and foremost proponent of [wholly frivolous comic fiction] is P. G. Wodehouse.” While mentioning some other well-known authors of that subgenre (E. F. Benson, Jerome K. Jerome, and others), Michael focused on a less familiar example, the prolific J. Storer Clouston’s *The Lunatic at Large*. Michael concluded: “Rest assured, however, that Clouston unites all his characters . . . with marriage vows intact and no hearts broken.” Sound familiar?

Michael Dirda’s article in the April 29, 2021, *Washington Post* (“Fabulous Stories of How Prolific Writers Found Their Voices”) included a section about John Dawson and his terrific (and newly published) work *P. G. Wodehouse’s Early Years: His Life and Work 1881–1908*. Other biographers have portrayed the child Plum as “neglected and unwanted,” but John provides a much brighter version. Michael also noted how Dawson shows Wodehouse’s high professionalism. We’re very happy that John has had his new book highlighted so prominently.

The May 20, 2021, *Baltimore Sun* published an article entitled “City Roared Back to Life from the Deadly 1918 Flu Pandemic.” One of the roars was heard as “theater patrons snapped up tickets to the Jerome Kern–P. G. Wodehouse musical *Oh, Boy!*” (One of the competitors to the show was the *Ziegfeld Follies*, so it was a hot time in the old town.)

Roderick Spode: Shrewd Businessman?

BY MIKE ECKMAN

IN *The Code of the Woosters*, Bertie and Jeeves use their knowledge that Roderick Spode designs lingerie in order to control him. In *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, Bertie again looks forward to cowing Spode with the information and lets Aunt Dahlia in on the secret. Unfortunately, Spode informs Aunt Dahlia, “Oh, I haven’t anything to do with that any longer. I sold out ages ago.” If Spode sold out before World War II began, the sale may indicate that he was a shrewd businessman.

In *The Splendid and the Vile*, his book about the first years of the Second World War, Erik Larson tells of the increase in sexual activity in 1940 as the Germans began to bomb London and invasion appeared imminent. Larson wrote, “As bombs fell, libidos soared.”

Later in the book he quotes from the diary kept by Olivia Cockett: “She noted how someone had altered the notice ‘Blinds must be kept down after dark’ to ‘Blonds must be kept down after dark,’ which was subsequently amended to ‘Knickers must be kept down after dark.’”

He goes on: “There may have been a lot of sex, but lingerie wasn’t selling. Maybe it seemed too much of a luxury for wartime, or maybe in that supercharged sexual milieu the added oomph of sexy lingerie was perceived as unnecessary.”

Larson quotes one shop owner who said that “I have never in all my life experienced or thought of experiencing such a terrible season. We don’t have a customer all day, hardly. It’s heartbreaking.”

So was Spode shrewd when he sold his interest in Eulalie Soeurs? And when did Spode sell out? The answer to the second question can be estimated using information in the books about Aunt Dahlia’s ownership of *Milady’s Boudoir*. The books I will consider and their publication dates are given below.

<i>Right Ho, Jeeves</i>	1934
<i>The Code of the Woosters</i>	1938
<i>Joy in the Morning</i>	1946
<i>The Mating Season</i>	1949
<i>Ring for Jeeves</i>	1953
<i>Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit</i>	1954

In *Right Ho, Jeeves*, Aunt Dahlia admits that *Milady’s Boudoir* is on the rocks. Bertie asks, “But wasn’t it turning the corner two years ago?” This implies that Aunt Dahlia has been publishing the paper for two years. She may have purchased it two years before this conversation, thinking that it was turning the corner.

In *The Code of the Woosters*, Bertie finds out about Spode’s connection to Eulalie Soeurs and Aunt Dahlia is still trying to turn *Milady’s Boudoir* into a profit-making enterprise. The publication features in *Joy in the Morning*, but Spode is absent from the book. *The Mating Season* features neither the magazine nor Spode.

Ring for Jeeves is different. It is definitely placed after World War II, has an unnamed narrator, and features Jeeves without Bertie. Jeeves reports that Bertie is at “an institution designed to teach the aristocracy to fend for itself . . . in case the social revolution should set in with even greater severity.” Neither Spode nor *Milady’s Boudoir* feature in the book.

Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit brings Bertie, Spode, and *Milady’s Boudoir* back together. Aunt Dahlia entertains Mr. Trotter, who is a potential buyer for the paper, and Uncle Tom invites Spode to view his silver collection. In the book, however, Spode has been made the 7th Earl of Sidcup by the death of an uncle. Besides having sold Eulalie Soeurs, Spode appears to no longer lead the Saviours of Britain (the Black Shorts).

In *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, Bertie states that Aunt Dahlia “has been running [*Milady’s Boudoir*] for about three years, a good deal to the annoyance of Uncle Tom, her husband, who has to foot the bills.” By the end, Mr. Trotter is ready to buy *Milady’s Boudoir*, partly due to the impact of one of Jeeves’s “morning mixtures.”

Allowing for some leeway in Bertie’s estimates of the number of years that Aunt Dahlia has owned the paper, it appears that about two years elapse between the events of *Right Ho* and *Feudal Spirit*. This puts Spode’s sale of Eulalie Soeurs before the war. Another support for this time frame is that in *Feudal Spirit*, Aunt Dahlia comments, “Fancy him owning Eulalie Soeurs! He must make a packet out of it. I was in there last month, buying some cami-knickers, and the place was doing a roaring trade.” What Aunt Dahlia describes is certainly different from Erik Larson’s description of the wartime lingerie trade.

So, was Spode shrewd or lucky? The circumstances of his elevation to a peerage and the possibility that he wanted to avoid any further embarrassment, such as that which Bertie had inflicted on him, due to his ownership of the shop may have encouraged him to sell. For myself, I would like to think that Spode at least had the qualities of a good businessman (along with a good eye for determining the value of jewelry) and sold out when the market was high.

Wodehouse and the Nuptial Spirit

BY KAREN SHOTTING

An unexpected surprise: an as-yet-unpublished talk from the TWS 2019 convention, by the always erudite and entertaining Karen Shotting. Enjoy!

WODEHOUSE AND wedding bells! Hmmm. Not a phrase that immediately springs to mind among the cognoscenti. Perhaps it would be more correct to say (paraphrasing Wodehouse and Keats), “Forlorn! the very word ‘wedding’ is like a knell”?

The perceived wisdom seems to be that the Wodehouse bachelor “shied like a startled mustang” at the merest hint of the tintinnabulation of wedding bells and would run in the opposite direction from any female with marriage on her mind. Many Wodehouse bachelors express a lack of enthusiasm and outright distaste for, and, indeed, utter horror of entering into the bonds of matrimony. Can we assume that these characters’ utterances are Wodehouse’s way of not-so-subtly signaling his own opinion?

Perhaps. Certainly, some of his biographers think that he has done so, and have cherry-picked his characters’ quotes as evidence of Wodehouse’s own thoughts. Wodehouse himself is no longer around to agree or deny, and thus his biographers’ speculations have remained unchallenged.

But his characters have also expressed opinions other than the cherry-picked quotes. And, let us not forget that Wodehouse did not merely write hilarious fiction. There are his letters, in which he did express his own opinions, and of which we have an abundance, thanks to the efforts of Sophie Ratcliffe (*P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*) and Frances Donaldson (*Yours, Plum*), among others. Perhaps he reveals himself therein. His own actions provide additional evidence.

What I have to share with you is my own—admittedly—completely nonscientific survey of some of his writings on the subject of matrimony, and my own conclusions regarding his feelings on the subj.

The Case Against

IN *Wodehouse: A Life*, Robert McCrum opines that “Wodehouse preferred his heroes to be bachelor—as Bertie [Wooster] is and remains despite the designs of some twenty fiancées.” (Note that his number of fiancées is somewhat overstated. See Tony Ring’s excellent *Wodehouse in Worcestershire*, referenced below, for the correct number.)

Bertie is, of course, an excellent example of the perpetual bachelor. He generally quivered like an aspen

when his various fiancées started to discuss calling in the bishop and selecting bridesmaids. And he certainly had a few choice words to say about the matter. Nor was Bertie unique among Wodehouse’s characters in voicing concern and dismay . . . not by a couple of parasangs.

Let’s study a few of the thoughts that some of Wodehouse’s characters have voiced regarding the marital state.

“Marriage is not a process for prolonging the life of love, sir. It merely mummifies its corpse.”

(*The Small Bachelor*)

Now, I have to say that I think that’s a bit harsh, but it does seem to be pretty definitive. Based on this statement alone, one could easily reach the conclusion, or at least a tentative hypothesis, that Wodehouse’s own attitude was less than favorable toward the holy state.

The speaker of this sound bite is Ferris, English butler to Sigsbee H. Waddington. Ferris is a dyspeptic, disgruntled denizen of New York City. He would much rather be in England in Little-Seeping-in-the-Wold, a village with many advantages, not least of which is its absence of the mosquitoes that he encounters on Long Island. Prolonged exposure to these nasty little insects has blighted his outlook on life, so perhaps we should take his words with a grain of salt (like Angus McAllister, he would never be mistaken for a ray of sunshine). His words, nonetheless, admirably set forth the case for the prosecution.

Ferris has a soulmate in Exhibit B, Reggie Pepper, who tells us:

I’m rather by way of being the stern, soured man who’s jolly well fed up with the sex. If any girl wants to marry me now, she has got to come after me with a rope.

(“The Test Case”)

Bertie Wooster’s precursor, Reggie Pepper, is a series character who is featured in eight early Wodehouse stories. Like Bertie, he remains a bachelor throughout the series, though not through lack of trying to find a woman with whom to perform the Wedding Glide. The thing is that he’s had a bit of trouble getting the party of the second part to enter into the spirit of the thing, and it has, unfortunately, turned him into the “stern, soured man.” Fair enough. He, too, takes a somewhat jaundiced view.

Bertie himself is not reticent concerning his views:

Ghostly, what? I'd always had an idea that marriage was a bit of a wash-out, but I'd never dreamed that it demanded such frightful sacrifices from a fellow.

(“Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch”)

My Exhibit C is, perhaps, everyone's favorite bachelor, Bertram Wilberforce Wooster. Aunt Agatha has been known to express her view that what Bertie needs is a woman like Honoria Glossop. Agatha's choice of the right partner for Bertie is completely wrong for many reasons. In fact, in “Sir Roderick,” Honoria immediately demands that Bertie get rid of Jeeves! This unacceptable course of events is what causes him to opine about frightful sacrifices and the ghastliness of the wedded state.

Wodehouse's stories are full of lovable bachelors, with Bertie Wooster probably being the most famous. Bertie is continually snootered by his Aunt Agatha, one of the toughest of twenty-minute eggs, who heartily agrees with Honoria's opinion regarding Jeeves. But, she does have one thing going for her, although I'm not sure Bertie would agree—she has actual corporeal existence.

In “Honeysuckle Cottage” we find James Rodman's aunt interfering from beyond the grave. James Rodman, my Exhibit D, has a “congenital horror of matrimony”:

Though a young man, he had allowed himself to develop a great many habits which were as the breath of life to him; and these habits, he knew instinctively, a wife would shoot to pieces within a week of the end of the honeymoon.

His iron resolve to avoid marriage is tested severely when he takes up residence at Honeysuckle Cottage and is faced with the effects of his deceased aunt's incorporeal essence, an essence that fills the house with her miasma of oleaginous romantic schlock. The charged atmosphere almost causes James, against his will and better judgment, to propose to soupy, soppy Rose Maynard. He is saved from this dire fate by the dog William, who, luckily, knows when the time has come to change the conversation. But:

His eyes today have that unmistakable look which is to be seen only in the eyes of confirmed bachelors whose feet have been dragged to the very brink of the pit and who have gazed at close range into the naked face of matrimony.

(“Honeysuckle Cottage”)

James Rodman, with William's help, escaped from Honeysuckle Cottage and Rose Maynard. But, not all of Wodehouse's confirmed bachelors escape. Exhibit E, Smedley Cork, suffers from a similar ocular attack.

Warm though the morning was, he shivered, as only a confirmed bachelor gazing into the naked face of matrimony can shiver.

(*The Old Reliable*)

It is Wilhemina (“Bill”) Shannon who causes the shivering. Despite the shivering and the conviction that marriage was not for him, he does periodically suffer from doubts:

Once or twice only that instinct for self-preservation which saves Nature's bachelors in their hour of need had prevented him from asking [Bill] to marry him. Occasionally, in black moods, he regretted this. Then the black mood would pass. The mere thought of being married appalled Smedley.

Ultimately, however, all doubt is removed by Bill herself, who changes his mind for him.

Smedley Cork is not allowed to escape, but he is not alone in his feelings of dismay. I present you with Exhibit F: Jill Mariner's Uncle Chris, another perpetual bachelor, who has to work up the nerve to propose to Mrs. Peagrim in order to get his hands on her money, despite the fact that “marriage had always appalled him.” (*Jill the Reckless*)

Six exhibits are sufficient evidence to support the theory that Wodehouse could be considered anti-marriage. But he didn't stop there. He also presented his characters' thoughts about the prelims. You see, it is not merely the idea of marriage that freezes our bachelors to the marrow; there is the whole issue of the proposal.

The Soul-Searing Preliminaries

Reflect what proposing means. It means that a decent, self-respecting chap has got to listen to himself saying things which, if spoken on the silver screen, would cause him to dash to the box office and demand his money back.

(*Right Ho, Jeeves*)

BEFORE ONE can marry, there is the matter of the actual proposal. How does one go about it? Bertie considers that when a chap is faced with this dire prospect, it is madness to attempt it without the preliminary noggin. Of course, the proposal may not

be a problem when the party of the second part takes matters into her own hands. Some of the characters who become engaged through misadventure: Jeff Miller and Myrtle Shoemith; Bertie Wooster and Madeline Bassett, Honoria Glossop, and Heloise Pringle; Biffy Biffen and Honoria Glossop; Lord Uffenham and an usherette named Marlene, as well as four other unnamed fiancées; Ivor Llewellyn and unnamed fiancées.

Jeff, Bertie, and Biffy find themselves engaged, much to their dismay, when the bride manages the situation. Lord Uffenham and Ivor Llewellyn are both victims of the drop-it-into-casual-conversation technique.

Jeff Miller knows that it is his buzzing that gets him in trouble, but still he is “quite at a loss to understand how the ghastly thing had happened. . . . The whole thing [was] absolutely sudden and unexpected, like an earthquake or a waterspout.” (*Money in the Bank*)

Bertie’s desire to be a preux chevalier puts him in pickles: “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.” (*Much Obligated, Jeeves*)

Biffy, of course, hasn’t a chance against Honoria Glossop, he being in a weakened state due to his loss of his own true love, Mabel, and Honoria being “an Act of God. You might just as well blame a fellow for getting run over by a truck.” (“The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy”)

Lord Uffenham proposes in five instances, but not because he wants to get married. It is because he has a habit of proposing marriage to girls “whenever the conversation seemed to be flagging a bit and a feller felt he had to say *something*.” (*Something Fishy*)

Ivor Llewellyn admits that he has a tendency to propose when “not knowing what to say to them after the first ten minutes. You can’t just sit there.” (*Bachelors Anonymous*)

The Horror of the Ceremony Itself

ASSUMING THE bachelor manages to get through the proposal, there is still the ceremony itself to be endured. This can lead to speeches, undesirable relatives, a veritable panoply of supporting characters, and the appearance of chumpishness:

A fellow looked such a chump getting married. (*Indiscretions of Archie*)

The ghastly ordeal of the . . . service, with its bishops and assistant clergy, its bridesmaids and the influx of all the relations you have been trying to avoid for years . . . the speech you would be compelled to make at the wedding breakfast. (*Bachelors Anonymous*)

Those Who Never Learned from Their Mistakes (or Maybe They Did)

BUT THEN there are the multiple offenders at the opposite end of the spectrum, such as Elmer Chinnery, Vincent Jopp, and Ivor Llewellyn, who are not at all put off by the difficulties of proposing or the soul-searing ceremony itself. These men just don’t know when to stop, apparently feeling that if one marriage is good, two must be better . . . or three . . . or more.

[Elmer Chinnery] had married young and kept on marrying, springing from blonde to blonde like the chamois of the Alps leaping from crag to crag. (*Summer Moonshine*)

Vincent Jopp . . . was one of those men who marry early and often. (“The Heel of Achilles”)

And then there was Ivor Llewellyn, married and divorced five times (to five different women). (*Bachelors Anonymous*)

We never learn whether Vincent Jopp and Elmer Chinnery break the habit, but Ivor Llewellyn does take steps to stop the madness by joining Bachelors Anonymous, a group run along the lines of Alcoholics Anonymous. In his next-to-last book (not counting *Sunset at Blandings*, which was never finished) Wodehouse came up with the ultimate solution for his hapless bachelors.

Clearly, sixty years of thinking about the matter led to a genius idea: a support group where a man who felt the urge to commit matrimony could find the timely help he needed to resist the temptation. Wodehouse’s affection for his bachelor heroes is evident in this idea. And yet engagements are contracted in the aforementioned books, albeit with anti-marriage quotes:

The Small Bachelor: Hamilton Beamish and Madame Eulalie (May Stubbs); George Finch and Molly Waddington

Jill the Reckless: Wally Mason and Jill Marriner; Freddie Rooke and Nellie Bryant

The Old Reliable: Smedley Cork and Wilhemina Shannon; Joe Davenport and Kay Shannon

Right Ho, Jeeves: Tuppy Glossop and Angela Travers

Bachelors Anonymous: Ephraim Trout and Amelia Bingham

Despite the beleaguered bachelors in these stories, there seems to be quite a bit of marrying going on—and not

just the multiple offenders, who seem to get married only to get divorced.

There are a number of bachelors in these books who have other thoughts about matrimony, men who embrace the idea—even some unlikely candidates like Smedley Cork, who decides to jump off the dock with Bill Shannon, and Hamilton Beamish, who is famous for advocating *The Marriage Sane*. He ends up proposing to Madame Eulalie, not because of a reasoned process, ruled by the intellect, but because he is quite smitten with her. Ephraim Trout is a charter member of Bachelors Anonymous, but finds he has no desire to avoid marriage with the comfortable and comforting Amelia Bingham.

The Case For

LET'S GO BACK to our favorite bachelor, Bertie Wooster. "During his illustrious career as chronicled by P. G. Wodehouse, Bertie was engaged sixteen times, with thirteen named fiancées, plus three unnamed." (*The Millenium Wodehouse Concordance: Wodehouse in Worcestershire*)

Tony Ring's figure of sixteen fiancées for Bertie is less than McCrum's twenty, but it's still an impressive showing in the matrimony-avoidance stakes. Wodehouse unquestionably preferred that Bertie, his most popular series character, be a bachelor—an essential element for keeping the series going. Bertie's fiancées are legion. Like Lord Emsworth's sisters, they keep multiplying because Wodehouse made up another one every time he came up with a plot where none of the old ones would do.

Wodehouse did not always require his series characters to be bachelors. Bingo Little's marriage to Rosie M. Banks does not end his chronicles, and Bill Bates and Jane Packard are featured in two stories after vowing to love and to cherish. But generally I think that Wodehouse found it easier to continue a saga with a bachelor hero. Psmith, for instance, disappeared after becoming engaged to Eve Halliday.

But if there is a continuing thread throughout Wodehouse's writing that seems to advocate the life of a bachelor, there is also a prevalent and ongoing theme about marriage being the wonderfully happy ending when one finds the right life partner. Certainly we can see that the previously mentioned inveterate bachelors may have had some reasonable justification for their anti-marriage attitudes: Mrs. Cork, Mrs. Peagrim, Rose Maynard, Madeline Bassett, Honoria Glossop, Myrtle Shoemith, and their ilk are certainly enough to give a chap the pip. But now it's time to examine the other side of the issue.

A Consummation Devoutly to Be Wished
"You ought to be thinking of getting married. Marriage might make something of you."
("Aunt Agatha Makes a Bloomer")

WE KNOW that despite his sixteen fiancées, Bertie never met the right woman, although perhaps Pauline Stoker came pretty close.

Bertie's Aunt Agatha was all for the idea of him marrying, and, as was usual for this scourge, she had strong opinions on the subject. We can only deprecate her efforts at finding the right partner for Bertie—I mean to say, a bit heavy-handed and wrong-headed—Honorina Glossop? Aline Hemmingway?—but, conceptually, she was on the right track.

Nor was she alone in espousing this philosophy. And in this matter, if no other, genial sweetness-and-light-strewing Uncle Fred was in complete agreement:

Of course the great thing is to get the young blighter safely married and settled down, thus avoiding the risk of his coming in one day and laying on the mat something with a platinum head and an Oxford accent which he picked up on the pier at Blackpool. (*Uncle Dynamite*)

Uncle Fred, of course, did a better job than Aunt Agatha of finding and uniting (or reuniting) the right man with the right woman. In *Uncle Dynamite*, he reunites Pongo and Sally Painter while engineering the union of Hermione Bostock and Bill Oakshott.

The right partner is of the essence. Bertie Wooster's abysmal track record is the result of a parade of wrong ones—one shudders to think of the soupy Madeline, the reformers Florence Craye and Heloise Pringle, and the anti-Jeeves Honoria Glossop—all of whom lead to hilarious contretemps, and certainly did not lead to marriage for Bertram.

The Preliminaries

WHEN THE HERO finds the right woman—which is bound to happen when Frederick Altamont Cornwallis Twistleton, fifth Earl of Ickenham, is in charge—there is still the tricky issue of proposing. Lord I., faced with the bachelor's reticence (described so eloquently by Bertie Wooster above) recommends not alcoholic stimulants but that his hero adopt the Ickenham System, which, according to the inventor, involves waggling her about a bit, claspng her to one's bosom, and showering her upturned face with kisses. "You needn't say much. Just 'My mate!' or something of that sort." (*Uncle Dynamite*) A direct, forthright,

take-charge method, which I'm pretty sure Wodehouse would not have recommended in real life. Perhaps he would have favored something more conversational, along these lines, where Bill Bates makes an offer to Jane Packard:

"I say, old girl, what about it?"

"What about what?"

"What about marrying me? Don't if you don't want to, of course, but I'm bound to say it looks pretty good to me."

(*"Rodney Fails to Qualify"*)

This is probably my favorite Wodehousian marriage proposal, even if Jane does refuse Bill in the mistaken belief that she is in love with Rodney Spelvin. Rodney, a poet (horrors!) and a non-golfer (even worse!), is all wrong for Jane, so the two golfers, Jane and Bill, are united in the end. (Note: I have a bet with myself that this is a verbatim rendition of Plum's proposal to Ethel, but I digress.)

The Case for Marrying the Right Person for the Right Reasons

IN A WODEHOUSE story, if a marriage is to ensue, it has to be to the right person:

"You're like me, a gentle coffee-caddie. . . . And what the coffee-caddie needs is . . . a jolly little soul who, when he bills, will herself bill like billy-o, and who will be right there with him with bells on when he starts to coo."

(*Uncle Dynamite*)

Here Uncle Fred explains to Pongo what he should be looking for in a mate, and he explicitly states that Pongo is making a mistake in engaging himself to Hermione Bostock, a lady novelist with "flashing eyes." Finding the right partner is of the essence—a belief that the creator of all of these characters clearly shared.

Peter really is ideal. . . . He's the most charming, unaffected fellow in the world, and he will make the most wonderful husband. . . . I'm so happy about it that I want to tell everyone I meet.

(Wodehouse to Leonora, 1932)

Wodehouse made this point to his daughter Leonora when told of her engagement to Peter Cazalet. There were no concerns about whether the single life might be better for his beloved daughter. He told her that Peter was a "sound egg" and that it was wonderful that she

should be marrying a man who liked exactly the sort of life she liked. "You're bound to be happy," he told her.

Well, married life is suiting me splendidly. It is certainly the only life if you're suited to each other, as we are.

(Wodehouse to Lillian Barnett, 1914)

Wodehouse had made this same point to his friend Lillian Barnett about his own marriage eighteen years earlier. And Ethel seemed to have suited him just fine.

You ought to see the Light of the Home in her Paris dresses. A pip, believe me. She flashed the blue one with the white fur collar on me the other day and I keeled over.

(Wodehouse to Leonora, 1924)

In this letter, Wodehouse is echoing his own character, Archie Moffam, who called his wife "light of my home," among other affectionate nicknames. In his 1969 preface to *Something Fresh*, Wodehouse refers to Ethel as an "angel in human form." So I guess that Plum thought marriage was a bit of all right. And many of his characters expressed similar cheery, ringing endorsements:

"Garny, old boy, . . . take my tip. You go and [get married]. You feel another man. Give up this bachelor business. It's a mug's game. Go and get married, laddie, go and get married."

(*Love Among the Chickens*)

This is one of my favorites—a ringing endorsement, and from Ukridge of all people. When we first meet Stanley Featherstonehaugh Ukridge, he's newly married and exceedingly vocal as he endorses the idea that marriage is a good, or even the best, thing. Later, when Wodehouse decided to make him a serial character, he moved the stories to Ukridge's bachelor years, because the author preferred that his serial characters, like Bertie Wooster, be bachelors—it gave him more scope in plotting.

But in his first appearance, Ukridge is married and recommending that Jeremy Garnet go and do the same. And when Jeremy does just that, Ukridge congratulates him with further praise of marriage.

"By Jove, old boy, I wish you luck. 'Pon my Sam I do. Fancy you engaged! Best thing in the world for you. Never knew what happiness was till I married. A man wants a helpmeet."

Love Among the Chickens, like most Wodehouse stories, ends happily—in this case as an epilogue contained in the 1906–09 editions of the book. At the conclusion of Jeremy and Phyllis’s wedding reception, Wodehouse tells us: “They catch the train and live happily ever afterwards.”

Other young couples have similar happy endings—or beginnings, depending on how you look at it. Archie and Lucille Moffam’s pleasure in each other’s company is evident throughout.

Mrs. Archie Moffam . . . was so altogether perfect that Archie had frequently found himself compelled to take the marriage-certificate out of his inside pocket and study it furtively, to make himself realize that this miracle of good fortune had actually happened to him.

(*Indiscretions of Archie*)

Sally Nicholas and Ginger Kemp are single throughout most of *The Adventures of Sally*, but in the last chapter we are actually given a peek into the happily-ever-after of their married life:

Sally . . . stood on the gravel, outside the porch, drinking in the sweet evening scents, and found life good. . . . She looked in the direction of the sound [of Ginger’s footsteps] and once again felt that pleasant, cozy thrill of happiness which had come to her every evening for the last year. . . . Although a married man of nearly a year’s standing, Ginger was still moving about a magic world in a state of dazed incredulity, unable fully to realize that such bliss could be.

(*The Adventures of Sally*)

Often, at the end of a story, we can assume that the united couples are headed to a future of wedded bliss, but here we see their home life one year later. We also are given information about Sally’s brother, Fillmore, and his wife, Gladys, another perfect couple living happily in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (But then, who wouldn’t be living happily in that paradise?)

Both Archie and Ginger give us their philosophy regarding the matter of marital life, philosophies that differ considerably and are a delightful departure from that ghastly wheeze about the mummification of the corpse of love. Archie puts the thing rather succinctly:

“I mean to say, whatever you say for or against marriage—personally I’m all for it and consider it a ripe egg.”

Ginger seems to agree:

Ginger in his time had seen many things that looked good from a distance, but not one that had borne the test of a closer acquaintance—except this business of marriage.

Wodehouse, in speaking for himself shortly after marrying Ethel, gave the holy state his own ringing endorsement. Ukridge, as we’ve seen, told his friend Jeremy Garnet that he “never knew what happiness was until he married.” Wodehouse had similar feelings.

Married life really is the greatest institution that ever was. . . . For the first time in my life I am absolutely happy.

(Wodehouse to Leslie Havergal Bradshaw, 1914)

What Makes for a Happy Marriage?

MAC, THE Regal Theatre’s stout stage-door guardian in *A Damsel in Distress*, gives us his philosophy (perhaps not in the most grammatical form, but heartfelt nonetheless). He, too, thinks that marrying the right person is essential for a lasting relationship. And his formula for marital happiness correlates very closely with Wodehouse’s:

“You seem to understand the art of being happy, Mac.”

“It ain’t an art, sir. It’s just gettin’ ’old of the right little woman and ’aving a nice little ’ome of your own to go back to at night.”

Wodehouse and Mac appear to be in agreement regarding the formula for a happy marriage, which involves having a cozy home and the right partner to come home to.

I never appreciated married life so much as last night. I came home, tired and hungry . . . and there was a fine dinner and a blazing fire, and E. fussing over me, and all sorts of good things.

(Wodehouse to Bradshaw, 1914)

Sally Painter, Pongo Twistleton’s love tells us:

“I think that’s what so splendid about us. Each helps each. It’s the foundation of a happy married life.”

(*Uncle Dynamite*)

Mortimer Sturgis puts a golfing spin on it:

“He had discovered that practically all the finest [golfers] were married men; and the thought that there might be something in the holy state which improved a man’s game, and that he was missing a good thing, troubled him a great deal.”

(“Sundered Hearts”)

Here Mortimer Sturgis theorizes that being married helps to improve one’s golf handicap. Now, there’s certainly a thought for the golfing bachelors. If true, this fact could also be put on the credit side of the to-marry-or-not-to-marry ledger.

Wodehouse’s Final Word?

ABOUT A YEAR before he died, after nearly sixty years of marriage, he still appreciated his wife and was in the habit of writing love letters that seem to indicate that he thought sweetly of their long life together:

My precious darling Bunny whom I love so dear. How I wish this was one of my ordinary love letters . . . instead of one when you were off to hospital. . . . Isn’t it wonderful that after sixty years we love each other more than ever!

(Wodehouse to Ethel while she was in the hospital, March 1974)

Certainly Not Wodehouse’s Final Word

“Marriage is not a process for prolonging the life of love, sir. It merely mummifies its corpse.”

AND SO, we come back to the mosquito-bitten Ferris and his opinion of marriage. Did Wodehouse agree with Ferris’s opinion—words that he deliberately chose to put in the butler’s mouth? I do not think that to be the case.

Was Wodehouse’s steadfast refusal to allow Bertie Wooster to marry an indication that he himself considered marriage anathema? I definitely think that is not the case.

Can we conclude that he was in favor of matrimony? Yes, I think so—provided that one had the great good fortune to find the right life partner.

This happily married man could easily write about confirmed bachelors with a stern outlook towards the opposite sex, and he could just as easily write about happily married couples. But, let’s face it, his bachelors are funnier, and those are the characters for which he is best-remembered.

Of course, that’s just my opinion. For whatever it’s worth.

“I don’t mind informing you that in my opinion you are behaving like a hound, a skunk, a worm, a tick, and a wart hog. Good gosh! This beautiful girl loves you. Her father very decently consents to an early wedding. And instead of being delighted and pleased and tickled as—er—as anybody else would be, you are planning to edge away.”

“But, Chuffy . . .”

“I repeat, to edge away. You are brutally and callously scheming to oil out, leaving this lovely girl to break her heart—deserted, abandoned, flung aside like a . . . like a . . . I shall forget my own name next . . . like a soiled glove.”

“But, Chuffy . . .”

“Don’t try to deny it.”

“But, dash it, it isn’t as if she were in love with me.”

“Ha! Isn’t she so infatuated with you that she swims ashore from yachts to get at you?”

“She loves you.”

“Ha!”

“She does, I tell you. It was you she swam ashore last night to see. And she only took on this binge of marrying me to score off you because you doubted her.”

“Ha!”

“So take the sensible viewpoint, old man, and bring me butter.”

Thank You, Jeeves (1934)

Two More Quick Ones Before We Go



While you’d need a black light to appreciate it, there is in nature a luminous rabbit. We knew about platypuses and opossums, but apparently the springhare—a nocturnal species of rabbit-sized rodent found in southern and eastern Africa—is naturally fluorescent (*New York Times*, February 23, 2021). Bertie might be able to have Jeeves bring an actual springhare (and a black light) along with the Giant Squirt on their way to Bleaching Court in “The Ordeal of Young Tuppy.”

In the April 17, 2021, issue of the *Spectator*, writer Philip Hensher summarized Paula Byrne’s *The Adventures of Miss Barbara Pym*. According to Hensher, “Pym’s world is very strongly her own, with as particular a flavor as E. F. Benson’s Tilling, or P. G. Wodehouse’s Blandings.” Such flavors certainly can help one’s cause!

P. G. Wodehouse *Translations in Dutch*

REVIEWED BY GARY HALL

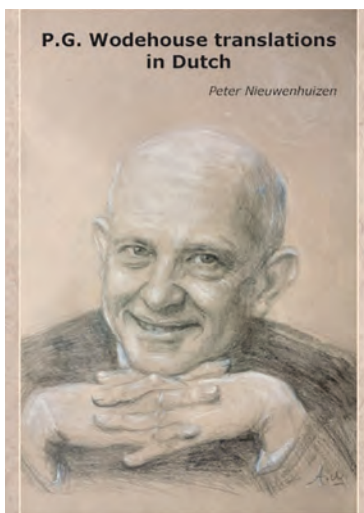
ONE OF THE great advantages of being the editor of this journal of humor is that I receive new publications from a variety of global luminaries. The topic at hand is Peter Nieuwenhuizen's delightful recent work, *P. G. Wodehouse Translations in Dutch*, which documents not only book publications in The Netherlands but also in Belgium, as a bonus. The book's occasion is the fortieth anniversary of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, though it's been in the works for a while. In his introduction, Peter describes how, during the 1981 celebrations of the centenary of Wodehouse's birth, Louise Sherby started an inventory of Wodehouse books and translations worldwide. (Sherby's inventory can be found in the McIlvaine Wodehouse bibliography.) In 1984, Rob Kooy, a board members of the Dutch society, compiled a bibliography of Dutch works. It was in 1994 that Peter started his first bibliography project, and so there's a lot of history to this current endeavor.

Peter has separated the contents into chapters for books and translations, plays, anthologies, and other references to Wodehouse. The book is 327 pages in length and is very colorful; there are graphics on almost every page, with an enormous variety of cover designs from all of the different works mentioned.

In addition to the cover illustrations, Peter lists the publisher, translator, cover designer/illustrator, and, where appropriate, the original U.K. and U.S. titles. As a result, it's a wonderfully comprehensive compendium of the Wodehouse-related items that have been produced or translated in that part of the world.

For those who have interest in international Wodehouse, you will be amazed at the breadth of the works documented. The Dutch translators have been busy, and I'd expect that over the years there will be plenty more Wodehouse-related works and translations in Dutch, so here's to the second edition in a few years!

You can find ordering information at <https://tinyurl.com/yp42cdnt>.



Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Please send all news to Gary Hall (see back page). 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 on the last page of this issue.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)

Contact: Susan Collicott



Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)

Contact: Bill Franklin



WITH MORE than sixteen months of lockdown, our global community of Blandings has had fourteen meetings at the Virtual Emsworth Arms. Early on in the pandemic we—Silicon Valley types—realized that our experience with global teams for work, Zoom, and our ability to read a world-time clock, allowed us to invite far more of our distant Wodehouse friends to join us at a virtual meeting than ever before. So we began open meetings on the last Sunday of each month at 1 PM Pacific Time, which is 4 PM Eastern, 9 PM U.K., and 6 AM the following Monday morning in eastern Australia. We continue to have global attendance from a number of chapters scattered across the world. Occasionally we have folks dial in who have no society affiliation but are just curious about Wodehouse.

Our meetings tend to be like that period of time immediately after a convention dinner when we gather at the bar discussing this and that, as opposed to convention prime time with its sweet and scholarly talks. That is not to say that our conversation is not thoughtful, measured, and full of Wodehouse scholarship, but it is far-reaching, inclusive, and filled with non sequiturs. Over the months, we've had convention updates—and convention descriptions for members who have not been to a convention; book reviews and book previews from Neil Midkiff, Paul Kent, and others; discussions on the color-banding meaning and spine numbers of Penguin Books; and Wodehouse references to flooding or forest fires or epidemics. We have also discussed book collecting—Penguin Collectors Society to be specific; food recipes; children's books; music; what

the Wodehousean is currently drinking during the meeting; where we got our jabs; and, of course, coping with COVID.

As much as this reporter sometimes feels guilty that we are not following in the footsteps of other chapters doing book readings, skit performances, and other scholarly endeavors, we at Blandings continue to pursue our own path. The sweetness and light that we spread each last Sunday of the month keeps people coming back and expands our reach. As Noel Bushnell stated: "It is marvellous that a group as diverse as ours, both in personalities and geography, can chat amiably about anything and everything for a couple of hours in the face of, at times, considerable distress. When we talk about Wodehouse, one thing leads to another in a galaxy far, far away, thus proving repeatedly Norman Murphy's observation of Wodehouse's connection to the real world." As Robert Bruce so aptly put it: "Anything which once a month keeps a disparate bunch of Wodehouseans around the world happy in the midst of a pandemic for anything up to two hours is working very well." Indeed!

Should anyone wish to drop by the Virtual Emsworth Arms please reach out to the above email contact with your email address, and either Lord Emsworth or Baxter will get back to you.

—Bill Franklin

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



Capital! Capital!
(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Parsons



Chapter One
(Greater Philadelphia area)
Contact: Mark Reber



THE CHAPS MET on July 27 via Zoom; the meeting began with some informal, collective musing about a possible return to traveling. We shared memories of pre-pandemic excursions to places like Canada and the Caribbean.

Our meeting's official topic was the 1975 *Wodehouse Playhouse* adaptation of the 1924 story "Rodney Fails

to Qualify." Although the title character was a self-centered poet who evoked little sympathy, we enjoyed this adaptation. One significant change from the story was that the actor John Alderton did not have the physical appearance to fully portray the large, plodding character of the protagonist. There were numerous Pauline Collins fans among us.

Discussion touched on the Oldest Member narrator as a framing device for the plot, and on the TV episode's introduction by Wodehouse in what turned out to be the final year of his life. It was generally thought that this opening added little of substance, but may have seemed like a bonus for viewers. We especially appreciated the humor around the attempt to use the niblick club and a boat to get out of the water hazard, rather than simply take the penalty. Wodehouse's knowledge of golf and affection for the game allowed him to convey the almost-religious devotion of its adherents.

Out of concern for the ongoing uncertainty over the pandemic's persistence, it was decided that we are not yet ready to resume in-person meetings of Chapter One. Our next meeting, on Zoom, will be on Tuesday, September 28, 2021, at 7:30 PM.

—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 CLIENTS sadly mark the passing of cofounder Jon Lellenberg on April 24, 2021. With Susan Jewell and Marilyn MacGregor, he established our chapter in 1993 for devotees of Wodehouse and Sherlock Holmes.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner will hold a Junior Bloodstain on Saturday, January 15, 2022, during the Baker Street Irregulars weekend in New York City; details are pending.

—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



WHAT HO! The Flying Pigs are back! After a long hiatus, they met for cream tea on Sunday, July 18, at the home of Rick and Nancy Arnest. We even had a new member attend—what fun! After tea we retired to the sitting room for a group reading of an excerpt from *Summer Lightning*—an appropriate choice considering the frequent storms we’ve been having here. No date for our next meeting was set, though we’re hoping to do one sometime in September or October. So, all Plummies in the vicinity of Cincinnati, Ohio, let me know who you are. We’d love to add you to our Flying Pig email distribution list so you’ll be the first to know about the next gathering.

—Susan Pace

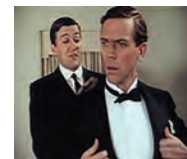


The treats that a Flying Pig enjoys

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



The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)
 (Boston and New England)
 Contact: Lynn Vesley-Gross,



or Roberta Towner

The NEWTS met in mid-April, a time we’ve traditionally avoided because of Mud Season here in the Northeast, but given that Zooming doesn’t require putting on wellies and tramping through mud, we had a good turnout. One member happily sipped a cocktail called a Chrysanthemum (absinthe, dry vermouth, and Bénédictine with an orange twist), and the rest of us writhed in envy over our own bottled water.

We rallied to read the first act of *The Play’s the Thing*, a Ferenc Molnar play adapted by Wodehouse in 1926. The territory was familiar to Wodehouse from his years on Broadway: a playwright of advancing years (he is “on the shady side of 50,” at a time when Wodehouse himself was on the sunny side) concocts a way to save the engagement of a young composer to a charming prima donna. The fiancée has been overheard at 2 AM receiving the advances of a pompous older actor. How will our hero the playwright fix everything? The NEWTS are eager to learn at our next meeting, although of course there’s a Wikipedia page for the plot.

—Roberta Towner



IN JUNE, the NEWTS continued with the reading over Zoom of *The Play's the Thing*. Act I had been read in April. Everyone studiously read a summary of Act II in between the Zoom sessions and we picked it up with Act III. We were able to reach the satisfactory consummation. The French names were sailed through by readers like so many knives through butter. Our reward for all that performing comes in August, when the NEWTS will hold an in-person nottle for the first time in a year and a half. We look forward to studying how newt behaviors weather a global pandemic.

—Lynn Vesley-Gross

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Mike Eckman



ON MAY 27, 2021, the Northwodes met to discuss *Cocktail Time*, the third Uncle Fred novel. Stirred by Fred's stealthy Brazil-nut-slingshot attack, his stodgy old friend Beefy Bastable writes *Cocktail Time*, a book far too scandalous for him to acknowledge. This leads to confusion, blackmail, con artists, and romantic complications for four different couples. Only Uncle Fred's deft use of sweetness and light can resolve the mess. Many thought the novel's ending left many unresolved story lines and relationships. Richard Rames said Gilbert and Sullivan would have resolved all the couplings, plots, and subplots, and provided a great song, too. Janna Kysilko noted that it's more like a Jane Austen ending: "Oh, well, we wrapped up the major points, now use your imagination to figure out how everything else worked out." Was Plum an Austenian?

July 1 found us discussing *Jill the Reckless*, a traditional romantic novel. Janna liked the way Wodehouse returned several times to the use of minor characters in the novel becoming observers of the main action of the plot. There's a restaurant proposal scene observed by a red-faced man—a private moment, intruded upon by an observer. Later, at the very end of the book, Jill and Wally's rooftop moment of engagement is watched by the office girls across the street. Jill then muses that all the people down in the

city had no idea about the couple's singular happiness. The internal awareness of the observer and the observed is an ongoing thread throughout the story. It's a theme of theatre and performance. Perhaps Wodehouse is bringing the reader into the story too.

—Mike Engstrom

The Orange Plums

(Orange County, California)

Contact: Lia Hansen, or Diana Van Horn



AHOY THERE! Biffen here, your favorite maritime mansplainer with the latest from the O. Plums.

I'm happy to report that the whole crew has indeed come up from below decks to join in-person PGW revelry once again. How long this will last with the Delta variant now rearing its spiked head remains to be seen, but for now we are certainly enjoying each other's fully vaccinated company again after our long pandemic pause.

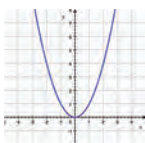


The Duchess, our beloved cow creamer mascot, has come out of hiding too—though just barely. You've got to look pretty closely to note her silver bovine bean poking out at the right of this attractive arrangement of flarze. (Can you tell we've been reading "Lord Emsworth and the Girlfriend," by the way?)

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,
Admiral George J. "Fruity" Biffen (Jeff Porteous)



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



The Pickering Motor Company
(Detroit and vicinity)
Contact: Elliott Milstein



The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club
(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) Contact:
Allison Thompson



The Plum Crazyies
(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)
Contact: Betty Hooker



THE PLUM CRAZIES gathered on August 15 at the home of Tom and Betty Hooker. After a sumptuous lunch, we viewed the *Wodehouse Playhouse* production of “Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court.” We delightedly welcomed new members Nancy and Chuck Buckley, Uttam Paudel, and Lisa and Russ Vriezen.

A trip to the Allenberry Theater in Boiling Springs is planned for Saturday, October 23. We will lunch at a nearby restaurant and then travel to the theater to enjoy *Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery*, by one of our highly favored playwrights, Ken Ludwig. Contact Betty Hooker for additional information.

—Betty Hooker

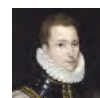
The Plum Street Plummies
(Olympia, Washington and vicinity)
Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith



AFTER MEETING virtually since February 2020, the Plummies met in real time and space in June at our regular haunt in Olympia. We will meet there again (Casa Mia on Plum Street) in July and August and then have our mini-golf tournament in September.

—Thomas Smith

The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney
(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
Contact: Peter Nieuwenhuizen
<https://wodehouse-society.nl>



THE ZOOM MEETING of the Dutch Wodehouseans on June 19 was quite lively and included a fascinating quiz about butlers and valets. In thirty questions the members were guided through the world of Masters of the House and gentlemen’s personal gentlemen. Some questions were simple, like who were Jeeves’s uncle (Charlie Silversmith), a butler with an affection for Ukridge (the ex-butler Bowles), and a lord who was a butler to himself (Lord Uffenham as Cakebread)? But there were also some difficult ones: the valet who stole Bertie Wooster’s socks (Meadowes) and his other drunk pyromaniac valet (Brinkley). And who was Bertie’s friend impersonating the other valet Meadowes (Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright)? Elsbeth Westerman won this quiz with a perfect score.

There were activities related to the 40th anniversary of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society. Hans Muller digitized all issues of the society’s magazine, *Nothing Serious*, for this jubilee. On the society’s website there is now a research department, with topics like “Le Mot Juste: French Words Used in Wodehouse’s Novels,” with research by Ken Clevenger and Dutch member Ole van Luyn. (<https://tinyurl.com/mot-juste>) The anniversary dinner is planned for October 30 in The Hague, but the date is provisional, depending on COVID developments.



Journalist Willem Pekelder read his favorite Wodehouse fragment, from the Blandings Castle story “The Castaways.” This story about Hollywood scriptwriters is based more or less on Wodehouse’s own experiences as a scriptwriter in the 1930s.



Pointes d'asperges à la Mistinguett

In the society's magazine there was a third Anatole recipe, this time for *Pointes d'asperges à la Mistinguett*, known from *The Code of the Woosters*. The asparagus recipe was named after the French actress and singer Jeanne Florentine Bourgeois (1875–1956), aka Mistinguette. The dish was pronounced delicious.



French actress and singer Jeanne Florentine Bourgeois

Some ideas were announced for the 4th Wodehouse Film Festival, which will be held on November 6, 2021, at Theater Perdu in Amsterdam. We'll also sponsor a Wodehouse poetry evening in December.

Finally, the Knights watched a video adaptation of "Trouble Down at Tudsleigh" about Freddie Widgeon and the use of the Tennyson poem—"The Lady of Shalott"—as a means to win the heart of April Carroway. In the 1978 video, John Alderton plays Freddie. Of course, we also know that plot from Sam Marlowe and *The Girl on the Boat*.

—Peter Nieuwenhuizen



Anna Fox and John Alderton in Wodehouse Playhouse's 1978 "Trouble Down at Tudsleigh"

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



The Size 14 Hat Club
(Halifax, Nova Scotia) Contact: Jill Robinson



"And," I added in a softer voice, "when my time is up and I come out into the world once more a free man, let Anatole do his best. A month of bread and water or skilly or whatever they feed you on in these establishments will give me a rare appetite. On the night when I emerge, I shall expect a dinner that will live in legend and song."

The Code of the Woosters (1938)

San Diego Scenes



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*Or contact Lynn at <http://www.wodehouse.org>;
click on the Membership tab for contact forms.*

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We appreciate your contributions. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail (addresses above). Deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1.

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