



"It grows harder each year to review new Wodehouses because everything seems to have been said and they keep on being so good that something must be." ...May L. Becker (Booklist 1 Nov '38)

Latest editorial argot: TOOLINCLES = Tor late to include in PLUM LINES or Membership List.

We have been advised by its founder, Herr Kees van Rijswijk, of a new (13 Nov 1982) P. G. Wodehouse Society in The Netherlands with 51 members on the date of its official birth. Most members are journalists, gentlemen (and ladies?) of the Fourth Estate. We have, as a natural matter of course, initiated overtures to develop an associate relationship, hoping that these Hollanders will become an important link in our international Wodehouse Society.

Barry Phelps, TWS, our London bookseller-journalist, collector and disburser of Wodehouse books and ephemera, can sell you a new copy of Dr. J. H. C. Morris's Thank You, Wodehouse at the publisher's list price plus postage, all amounting to 7.80 pounds or \$14.00 (US) at current exchange rates. OM's copy, recently acquired, proves to be an interesting commentary on the major inhabitants of Plum's world, with special emphasis on Bertram and Jeeves. It is done with the thoroughness which one reasonably expects from the pen of one who is an Honorary Fellow of Magdalen College, an Honorary Bencher of Gray's Inn, and a Fellow of the British Academy. It adds immensely to the extensive body of literature about Wodehouse. In an ill-advised moment, Dr. Morris declined our offer to join TWS "...Because I don't like to join clubs..." evidently under the impression that we are some sort of club, with leather upholstery, rather than a motley aggregation of Plum's readers and admirers. After you order (or borrow) his book and finish reading it, you'll want to write him to say "Thank YOU, Morris."

Rumor has it that PLUM LINES was recently described as "unabashedly amateurish." OM likes that, for it is rewarding to know that one's cool professionalism is so well disguised as to seem the work of a mere amateur. The true professional labors hard and long to achieve this effect, to hide the ease with which words pass from the disciplined brain through practiced fingers to the sheet of paper which, once bare of intelligence, now becomes a seemingly amateurish mish-mash. Of course, PLUM LINES, being a paper, is abashless; but its editorial staff is not, and spends at least half its time thinking up alibis for past, present, and future omissions and egregious errors. Or is this, again, professionalism cloaking itself in the garments of amateurism?

Statements for 1983 annual dues (Jan. - Dec.) are sent with this mailing. If you find no statement, it means that you are paid through 1983, so take a deep breath and relax. Members who, through oversight, paid no dues last year and who fail to pay by 1 March 1983 will, regretfully (for we hate to see our membership decline), be EXPUNGED from the rolls; with the option of re-entry upon later payment. Strong masculine-type men shudder, and delicate ladies swoon, at the mere thought of expungement, a gruesome and ignominious sort of drumming-out. One dislikes this palaver about money, but the consensus is that members should help support the Society through the payment of dues.

*OM*  
The Oldest Member

Instead of the scholarly supplements to which you may have become accustomed, OM kindly offers advice on building a collection of books. Unlike most unsolicited advice, this is fraught with invaluable information and reeking with veritable pearls of wisdom.

Being Plummiess, it is assumed that you will concentrate your collecting efforts on Sir Pelham's books. His sheet music, records, theater programs, magazine first-appearances, and the multitude of other possible ephemera may seem secondary, but are facets of Plum's unusually versatile career which will greatly enhance your collection.

OM contends that every book collector should have as many first editions of his favorite author as opportunity and budget permit; for a nucleus of first editions is the heart of any collection. But why this insistence on first editions? What is so special about them? P. H. Muir, London publisher and collector, in his Book-Collecting as a Hobby, said, "The first-edition collector wants to own the book in the form in which it first came into the world; in the form...in which the author himself first saw it." We acknowledge, through having at least a few first editions, a striving to reach beyond the book to the mind and spirit of the author.

Merle Johnson, American bibliographer, noted that prices are higher for first editions of famous authors because..."Generations of readers have thumbed to pieces all but a few of the original copies." As the supply diminishes, their rarity increases; and with it, their price. Any bookseller worth his salt will point to the increasing number of customers asking for Wodehouse books and the difficulty of finding them. OM has been told with astonishment that Plum's books are so expensive! Answer: Have you priced any first editions of Maugham, Evelyn Waugh, Faulkner lately? If two dealers are asking widely differing prices for what seems to be the same book, the condition of the book may be the reason. Your public library may have some books about book-collecting which tell how dealers describe the condition of books for sale. Learn these terms, and learn to tell one condition from another by stopping in at a good bookseller's shop, talking to him and examining his books. He'll be glad to spare the time, if he is of the pattern of most booksellers.

If you collect Plum's books, David Jasen's Bibliography and Reader's Guide to the First Editions of P. G. Wodehouse, or the Heineman-Bensen P. G. Wodehouse; a Centenary Celebration, 1881-1981, with its McIlvaine bibliography, or both, will be indispensable. If you collect other authors (and there are others) equip yourself with bibliographies of their works; for bibliographies are the tools of collectors. If you are really serious about collecting, a subscription to AB - Bookman's Weekly, P.O.Box AB, Clifton, NJ 07015, a trade journal of the used- and rare-book trade, may be worthwhile.

We of the Society are fortunate in having three members who specialize in Wodehouse books and ephemera: Charles E. Gould, Jr., Barry Phelps, and David Jasen, whose addresses are in the Membership List. In addition, Jeremy Thompson has THE PGW BOOKMART, a book-exchange service, and Edward Lehwald will order in-print PGW books for members. When you are able to procure Plum's books in a book store, or at auction, attribute it to serendipity, or better than average luck.

SUPPLEMENT TO PLUM LINES...continued

You might want to collect books about Plum. OM has 20 such books, believing that the more you know about an author the more you can appreciate his writing. Plum's epistolary autobiographies (Performing Flea and Author! Author!) manage to bring you a little closer to the human being behind the 97 books than even his best biographers succeed in doing.

And now that you've been told almost all there is to know about book-collecting (at least all that OM is able to tell you), you may (a) proceed along the aforementioned lines or (b) totally ignore the entire matter and get back to Joy in the Morning.

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Doodling Space