

PG. Wodehouse



"In a world trembling with uncertainties, there is always Pelham Grenville Wodehouse." . . . John K. Hutchens

TRAVEL TIPS: In a debriefing session conducted by our expert and eager debriefing staff, Richard Morse, TWS, confessed that he was pleasantly impressed by The English Bookshop in Paris, started in 1903 by one W. H. Smith. It is located at 284 Rue de Rivoli, a handy piece of information in the event that, while in Paris, you are interested in finding an English bookshop with a nice restaurant and tea room. It has, he says, "...the largest selection of PGW Penguins that I had ever seen."

READERS OF THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION, a highly respected periodical, will find a new column, DENTALESE, written by Dr. Jay Weiss, TWS. With the influx of migratory workers in the professions, he notes a distinct relaxation of our high linguistic standards. He finds that dentists and patients alike are over-fond of permitting their participles and modifiers to dangle precipitously, and he provides ways and means of undangling them. Like the fine professional we know him to be, he anesthetizes us with injections of humor, then painlessly extracts the decayed parts of speech and exhibits them in a convincing manner. Good Dinkum, Bravo, etc.

QUESTION AND ANSWER DEPARTMENT: This dept has usurped our SUPPLEMENT in this issue...because...Betty Ganns, TWS, sent a question (or was it a request?) which our staff, for all it's erudition, couldn't answer. SO we sent the question/request to Richard Osborne, who could. OM edited Richd's reply, NOT to improve it...who could improve on the happy prose of R. Osborne?...but to make it fit our PL format. Then Richard edited OM's version, and Bob Fall unscrambled it and produced our supplement. We hope that Betty, Richard, and YOU are pleased with it.

We suggest that you read it at your normal reading speed; then, next Saturday, having first ensconced yourself in your favorite chair, surrounded by such beverages as assure your comfort, start a more diligent reading at ELEVEN A.M. sharp, beginning at "...Wrykyn is playing Sedleigh..." Stop reading promptly at ONE P.M. for lunch, being careful to resume the sitting posture at TWO P.M. At this point "...The Sedleigh team of eleven go into the field..." and you continue reading slowly, seeing in your imagination manly skirmishes and feats of derring-do, and harking to occasional cries of "...How's that, Umpire?"...with, now and then, polite ripples of applause from the several sections of the stands. At FOUR P.M., or thereabout, take a brief tea break, but return promptly to resume your analytical reading. SIX-THIRTY P.M. will inevitably roll around, "...and the Umpires pick the balls off..." and the game is over. You needn't be all that methodical, but we're trying to make the point that you should spend some time in your second reading. Then you can appreciate the care with which Richard Osborne, TWS, has explained the intricacies of cricket. If you know the game, OM believes that the Supplement to this issue of PLUM LINES will help you to explain the game to others.

A NEW PGW BOOK you should know about: The title page reads WODEHOUSE NUGGETS / selected by Richard Osborne / H / James H. Heineman, Inc. / New York, NY. The front flap shows the cost to be \$13.95 (which OM paid for his copy...plus PA tax), BUT the publisher, Jimmy Heineman, TWS, offers a discount to bona fide TWS members. If you order directly from James H. Heineman, Inc., 475 Park Avenue, New York, NY, 10022, the price will be \$11.85 plus \$1.50 postage and handling (prices in US dollars). Overseas members may order from Hutchinson/Barrie & Jenkins, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6JD, United Kingdom. Their price is £6.95. (OM recently learned that you can make a fairly passable pound symbol by superimposing a t over an f, or vice versa. Only a purist would notice that OM's typewriter is not international.) A bright anthology of Plum's similes, metaphors, observations, and scintillating wit, this book should be on your shelves.

Abbreviated Financial Statement, as of 31 December 1983: -


Balance in Treasury, 31 December 1982:	\$919.58
Receipts, 1983.....	\$1522.10
Expenditures, 1983.....	\$1027.37
Balance for 1983.....	\$494.73
Balance in Treasury, 31 December 1983:	\$1414.31

Full financial records may be examined by TWS members at 82 Evergreen Drive, New Britain, PA.

Promptness in payment of dues is urged. As of 15 March about 65% of our members have paid. Notices of membership termination are being sent to 12 members who paid no dues in 1982 nor 1983. Our membership policies are rather liberal...but.....

It is hoped that in the not-too-distant future, TWS funds and private donations will be used to erect a memorial for Plum at Remsenburg, NY.

Word comes from Dulwich College that "Jeeves Takes Charge" will show there in May; that Derek Grimsdick, one of Plum's earliest publisher friends, has given the Memo Book and the Townend letters to the college; and that Barry Phelps, TWS, has loaned his PGW collection for the use of scholars. Mrs. Slythe, TWS, Librarian, P.G. Wodehouse Library, adds: "So we are gathering an impressive P.G. Wodehouse archive on this side of the Atlantic." To which we add: BRAVO!

The Oldest Member


QUESTION: -

The schoolboy books fascinate me. Life at Dulwich comes alive. Nowhere else has Wodehouse so intimately shared a part of his life. Consequently, I feel that I am missing something when the cricket passages prove so baffling. ... Is there anyone out there willing to compose a simple explanation, plus a glossary of terms? Surely there are other untutored members who stand to benefit as much as I. We would like to visit Lord's, but not until we have some idea of what is going on. *Elizabeth Ganns.*

ANSWER: -

I can't tell you in a paragraph or two, or three, the basics of cricket, nor have I been able to reread the Wodehouse school books to pick out the bits that might be baffling to Americans. But I was, in my day, a keen cricketer, and I'll see if I can usefully answer Mrs. Ganns' appeal. And I may say that doing it in typescript, without pictures, gestures, or inflexions of the voice is, to use the old simile, like describing a spiral staircase on the telephone. Here, nonetheless, goes. And it will be of intolerable length.

Cricket is played between two teams each numbering eleven men. A match is decided by the number of runs (batsmen running the 22 yards from wicket to wicket) each team makes. A single-innings match (each team batting, and fielding, once) may take a day (11 am to 1 pm, 2 pm to 6:30 pm, with half an hour for tea). A two-innings match may go to two, three, or more days. As far as I remember there are some two-day matches in the Wodehouse school novels ... matches between schools, not between houses in a school. But mostly they are one-innings matches, played in one day (probably a Saturday): twenty-two men in white trousers, white shirts and white boots with nails in the soles to prevent slipping. Two umpires, in white coats, one for each end of the wicket.

Wrykyn is playing Sedleigh. An umpire tosses a coin. Wrykyn's captain (or skipper) calls HEADS. The coin falls TAILS. It is for Sedleigh's captain to choose whether his team will bat first or make Sedleigh's team bat. He chooses that Sedleigh shall bat first. At 11 the Wrykyn eleven go into the field to "field," hoping to defeat ten of the Sedleigh batsmen and dismiss them (out) back to the pavilion, by bowling down their stumps, or by making them hit the bowling up in the air so that the ball is caught, or by any of several other permissible methods. In a single-day, single-innings match, as this is, with its six hours for play, if Sedleigh are all out for 150 runs by lunch-time, it has been fast scoring, but Wrykyn have done well on time. They have four hours now, after lunch, to make 151 runs to win.

Out in the middle of the cricket field there is a pitch, with wickets (three stumps topped by bails, at each end, 22 yards apart). There will be a batsman for each end, and the bowlers bowl alternately, A from one end, B from the other, six balls in succession. Those six balls constitute an "over." Then the bowler at the other end bowls his six balls, and so on. If someone writes about a "maiden over" it means an over of six balls when the batsman hasn't scored a run off any of them. Anyone who tries to be funny about "bowling a maiden over" isn't English ... it is such a whiskery and corny old "joke."

The Sedleigh batsmen (never 'batters'), wearing pads, at least on their legs, and padded gloves to protect their hands, now come onto the field from the pavilion. One walks to one wicket, the other to the other. It is these batsmen, ten in all, in succession, that Wrykyn must dismiss before the Sedleigh innings is complete.

A Sedleigh batsman faces the bowling. He needn't hit the ball with his bat, but he must defend his wicket. If the ball goes past his bat and breaks his wicket, he's out. He can stop the ball with his bat. He can hit it hard enough to give him time to make a run (he and the other batsman run, each to the other's wicket, before any fielder can

throw the ball to break a wicket with the batsman still outside the crease). If the batsman hits the ball hard, past all the fieldsmen, to the boundary, it counts four runs and he doesn't have to run them once he sees the umpire signalling a boundary to the scorer's box on the side of the ground. If the batsman hits it in the air clear over the boundary it counts six runs. (I have a feeling that, certainly in *Mike*, there were no boundaries ... certainly no "sixers." Very exhausting to have to run all your shots out ... i.e., keep crossing with your partner until the ball is thrown back to the wicket. If the batsman hits the ball a long way, but not as far as the boundary, he has got to 'run it out'.)

Some good batsmen score fast (a run a minute for a single batsman is considered fairly fast): some good batsmen score slowly but surely (e.g. ten runs in an over). Some good batsmen can suit their scoring to the state of the game, the needs of the match, the pace and skill of the bowlers, the state (wet and sticky, hard and dry) of the wicket. But in this case, Sedleigh is all out at 1 o'clock, after two hours of fast-scoring play, batsman succeeding batsman, for a total score of 150. The captain has made, let's say, 60 ("a captain's innings"), two others have made 20's, two have made noughts (ducks = ducks' eggs) and the other four 10 each. That makes 140 runs. But there have been 10 Extras ... a bowler has bowled wide of the wicket = one run to the batting side; or the wicket-keeper behind the stumps has let the ball, unhit by the batsman, go through his padded legs to the boundary = 4 byes. If the ball glances off the batsman's leg and goes to the boundary it is 4 leg-byes.

The teams have lunch together. Then the Sedleigh team of eleven go into the field and, after their captain has chosen his first two bowlers, they await the incoming batsmen. It is now Sedleigh's turn, to try to get ten of the eleven Wrykyn batsmen out for a total of less than 150.

The white-coated umpires stand at each end of the pitch, to count the balls bowled by each bowler and to settle disputes. For instance, the fielding side may think that a batsman has just touched (with his bat) a ball that has gone straight into the wicket-keeper's gloves. The fieldsmen will then shout "How's that, umpire?". If the umpire thinks that the batsman has touched the ball, and so it was a 'catch', he will lift a singer into the air and the batsman 'walks' (heads back to the pavilion). Or it may be a race for a batsman taking a run to get 'home' before a fieldsmen throws his wicket down. The "How's that, umpire?" means 'was his bat inside the crease at the moment the balls went flying?'. If the umpire keeps his hands in his pockets, it means 'Yes, he was back in his crease, so he wasn't out'. The appeal has failed.

And so one long afternoon wears on. Wrykyn were taking their time ... they think they've got plenty ... until they find they have been playing too safe, too slowly. It's 6:16 pm. Stumps are to be drawn (end of play) at 6:30. Wrykyn's score is 130 and they have 'seven wickets down'. So they have four batsmen left and 21 to make to win the match, but only 15 minutes ... say 5 overs = 30 balls ... to make them in. As their batsmen are 'tail-enders' ... the batting riff-raff (the wicket keeper and three bowlers) ... not a proper batsman among them ... it gets exciting. If the batsmen hit hard, they are all the more likely to get bowled or caught. If they play with dead bats, they can only bring the match to a draw. Now, at 6.28 pm, the last two (bad) batsmen are in, and it is the last over ... 6 balls in which to capture the last wicket, but the score is 148. A bad batsman may get a fluke snick through the slips and see the ball go to the boundary. In which case Wrykyn has won the match by two runs in the last minute ... the umpires pick the bails off and the Sedleigh fieldsmen follow the two undefeated batsmen off the field towards the showers in the pavilion. It is to be a two-day, two-innings match, then at 11 a.m. tomorrow those past two Wrykyn batsmen come in again, and they may score 12 more runs before one of them ... and thus the whole team ... is dismissed. So Sedleigh begin their second innings 14 runs behind; otherwise, the game is as yesterday.

Well, that's roughly the game of cricket. You can see there are some similarities between cricket and baseball. PGW was himself a pretty good schoolboy cricketer, and he

always read the sports news in the paper before anything else, all his life. That story "How's that, Umpire?" was a very professional, and funny, horse-laugh at the game he had enjoyed ... a game that is, and has been, very important in "public" (i.e. private) school life ... see *Tom Brown's Schooldays* ... the match between Rugby School and the Marylebone Cricket Club from London (the MCC). Cricket is England's national summer game, and England has taught the game to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan, and the West Indies. All these countries can now field cricket teams to defeat our best.

A cricket ball is about the same size as a baseball (I think), but harder, and with a red leather covering. Bats are made of willow-wood, and the wood can be made more resilient with oiling. Many cricket clubs have their own colours ... caps, blazers, silk scarves, silk ties in special designs and stripes. Lord's Cricket Ground in London is the home of the MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club) and is, I suppose, the cathedral of the whole cricket religion, just as Wimbledon is of lawn tennis. I have heard an American lady refer to Lord's as 'the playground', an awful misuse of language. When I was engaged to an American girl, and her mother came for her first visit to England, to see and inspect 'that man' whom her daughter proposed to marry, she arrived on a day when, by long pre-arrangement, I was to play in a cricket match. To this day I think that my wife doesn't understand how I *could not* be there at the airport to meet her dear mother. These days I do not play cricket, but I enjoy watching the good matches on TV, so long as my wife doesn't want to watch another programme, or can't do the ironing in the kitchen.

I'll try to define the words that Mrs. Ganns asks about specifically:

- Innings: A batsman is having an innings so long as he is in the field and undefeated.
- Lobs: If you bowl underarm, you are bowling lobs. I don't believe anybody in first class cricket bowls lobs these days. You can get some fearsome breaks off the pitch on a ball bowled underarm, but you can't get any speed.
- Drive: A ball hit hard and forward.
- Volley: A ball hit before it bounces.
- Wickets: The shaven square in the middle of a cricket ground is the wicket. Or, more exactly, the space 22 yards by 3 yards down which a bowler bowls to the batsman. "He defended his wicket for half an hour" = he prevented the bowler breaking his wicket (i.e. knocking his stumps down), or "he hit his wicket" can be done if you slip or are careless while making a shot. Then you're out, and the score books say "hit wicket".
- Strike: "He struck the ball with all his might" is self-evident. Or "Jones took strike" = 'went to the wicket at which the bowler will bowl'. Or "Jones is on strike" = 'is at the wicket against which the bowler is bowling'.
- Splice: The wedge-shaped end of the handle of a cricket bat ... the wedge being glued into the blade of the bat. Phrase 'to sit on your splice' = to bat very slowly.
- Toss: Perhaps 'throw slowly', as "Mike tossed the ball to Psmith." Or the toss of the coin at the beginning of a match.
- Hop: A 'long hop' is a ball bowled very short, so that a batsman can watch it wasily and probably easily score runs off it.
- Point: The position of a fieldsman quite close to the bat, on the off side square.
- Yorker: Name given to a ball bowled so that it lands just longer than a half-volley, just shorter than a full volley. Very difficult to play and very difficult to score runs off.
- Googly: The type of delivery that a clever bowler can sometimes produce which looks, as it leaves the bat, that it is designed to be a leg-break, but is actually an off-break, or it goes straight through without breaking at all.

- Stumped:** If a batsman's feet are outside his crease (i.e. the line $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in front of his stumps) and his bat is in the air after trying to hit the ball, the wicket keeper behind the stumps may have time to collect the ball in his gloves and whip the bails off before the batsman can get back into his crease. The wicket keeper (or any fieldsman) may shout "How's that?" and, if the umpire puts his finger up, the batsman is out, or stumped.
- Silly mid-on:** A fieldsman's position near the boundary on the leg-side behind the bowler.
- Square leg:** A fielding position square of the wicket on the leg side.
- Silly mid-off:** A fielding position close to the bat on the off side. Dangerous.

I could probably dredge from my memory another fifty jargon words or phrases understood or used by cricketers. The vocabulary is always being added to by cricketers and journalists. I will quote one of Harry Graham's "Ruthless Rhymes" and see if you can follow it ...

You know Lord's? Well, once I played there,
 hit a cracking pull to leg,
 struck the umpire's head and stayed there
 as a nest retains its egg.
 Bustling up, the wicket keeper
 took a stump and prized about.
 Had it gone two inches deeper,
 he would not have run me out ...
 and I minded all the more
 as the shot was well worth four.

... *Richard Usborne*