Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

Volume 43 Number 1 Spring 2022

TWS 2022 convention articles on pages 2 & 3!

My Last Wodehouse

BY DAVID LANDMAN

David was a longtime member of The Wodehouse Society and a founding member of the NEWTS chapter. He was a Plum Lines *editor and contributor, a convention speaker, and more. His wife, Elizabeth, recently found this little treasure, which had been written shortly before he passed away in 2020. We offer it in the spirit in which David always wrote: with insight, erudition, and, of course, humor.*

FROM TIME TO TIME, there appears in this journal a most satisfying feature, "My First Wodehouse." Satisfying because the personal stories it relates illustrate how a happy entrée to soundness of mind has been and is still being passed from generation to generation by good people. I have already contributed to this journal the bittersweet story of how I read my first Plum while waiting at the Lahey Clinic in Boston for my revered teacher's diagnosis. It was dire, and shortly thereafter he died. I recounted then—if I may be forgiven for repeating the story—how when I told him the book *Leave It to Psmith* made me feel "wacky," he replied with approval, "You've got it." He knew whereof he spoke, for ever since then I turn in to sleep with my thumb in the valley of a Wodehouse novel.

And now that the drainpipe of life has been greased for my slither down—though there will be no 4 AM milk train to catch—I thought to venture on a companion feature that's been on my mind for some time. It would be called "My Last Wodehouse." If I am lucky enough to have some conscious time in hospital or hospice before some latter-day Emsworth stumbles and disconnects my respirator cord, I've been thinking about what Wodehouse I should like to be reading when I drop off the twig.

My first thought was *Sunset at Blandings*, Wodehouse's last. But on second thought, it became clear that the irony of it being unfinished while I was experiencing my own sunset would be too omnipresent for unadulterated enjoyment. But if not *Sunset*, what?

Perhaps *Joy in the Morning*, my favorite, and I dare say the favorite of many others, would be the ticket. I have a friend who reads the book religiously every June first and claims to have it memorized. I am not far behind. Then again, knowing with certainty what comes next would surely produce another irony into the adventure awaiting me. But if not *Sunset* or *Joy*, what?

Well, I tried them all—the early romances, the boys' books, the Bertie and Jeeves books, the Blandings Castle saga, the Ukridges, the Uncle Freds, and even the tongue-in-cheek autobiographical tomes. Nothing rang the proverbial bell until I turned to my first Wodehouse of so many years ago, *Leave It to Psmith*, and near the beginning I came upon these sentences:

> The castle, which is one of the oldest inhabited houses in England, stands upon a knoll of rising ground at the southern end of the celebrated Vale of Blandings in the county of Shropshire. Away in the blue distance wooded hills ran down to where the Severn gleamed like an unsheathed sword; while up from the river rolling park-land, mounting and dipping, surged in a green wave almost to the castle walls, breaking on the terraces in a many-coloured flurry of flowers as

it reached the spot where the province of Angus McAllister, his lordship's head gardener, began.

And I knew I had found the pot of gold. How beautifully the description has its counterpart in the language that rolled up from that great man's brain, dipping and rising until it breaks upon the page (and into our brain) in an elegant flurry of words and images!

This breaking swell of flowers ushers in a fictional Age of the Gods, like cherry-blossom time in old Japan, when the samurai charged with the order and protection of the country, feeling the safety and delight that the blossoms bring, would relax their vigilance and go wandering for cherry-blossom viewing. We cannot say that Emsworth fulfills the obligations of his class like a samurai, but his instincts are as human and pure as were theirs.

Examine the passage in greater detail and note the phrase "oldest inhabited." It is carefully worded because there are probably scattered over England ruins of much older piles that lie uninhabited. Note the unique visual image of the Severn as an "unsheathed sword," a warlike image that, even so, does not contradict the idyll because of its aptness, its beauty, and the fact that it lies below, a reminder perhaps of the early history of the castle. Note, too, the word "flurry," which tells us this is a wild English garden and not an Italianate formal parterre. (That is to be found in another portion of the grounds.) And as the pastoral description rolls, mounts, and dips, note that it does not go on overlong, but like a competent shop-girl measuring ribbon, it attains a perfect length and abruptly ends when we come upon the not-so-idyllic person of Angus McAllister, who rises from the garden like the ghost of Harrowby Hall and, as he is "a good deal hampered by Lord Emsworth's amateur assistance," returns us to the series of droll vexations (such as mislaying one's pince-nez) that constitute life in Blandings.

Step back and take a deeper, personal view to note how the supple prose, clear, and bright as the insignia of heraldry, loosens the rigidities of everyday mind.

Yes, if I am lucky enough to have the time, my last Wodehouse will be a return to my first so that when I finally cross the pale parabola I shall do so with a Wodehouse wind at my back.

A Riveting Article

by John G. Kareores

The two twin souls gazed into each other's eyes. There is no surer foundation for a beautiful relationship than a mutual taste in literature.
"Strychnine in the Soup"

There is not much more basic information that can be stated about the 2022 TWS convention, **Where in the World Is Pelham? San Diego!** So, first, herein lie gentle reminders, in case there are newcomers, latecomers, late bloomers, early risers, procrastinators, those who need constant reminding, and, unfortunately, those with the Covid blues. Here are the facts:

Location: The beautiful city of San Diego, California. *Venue*: The US Grant Hotel—historic and centrally located in the Gaslight District. *Dates*: October 20–23, 2022—as close to Plum's birthday as possible. *Activities*: Cricket, cruise, rummage sale, Friday night bash, and much more. *Dining*: Fancy Saturday banquet; many come in costumes. *Bag of Swag*: Another mug for your cabinet, as well as a new, never-before-seen item—notice the request for a shirt size on the registration form.

After I came across the PGW quote above, the real underlying reason we all gather for these conventions became abundantly clear to me. Yes, the browsing and sluicing are delightful (and much needed this year), and the fun activities, costumes, etc., are certainly a draw, but it is our "mutual taste in literature" and love for the Master's work that act as the impetus to gather us at a central meeting point every two years. (Okay, three this time, but well worth the wait.)

Conspicuous by their absence in the list of basic convention facts above, but perhaps the most important element of the convention, are the Riveting Talks on Saturday, a mainstay of our conventions from the very beginning. It is here that our speakers present a variety of papers that represent the world of Wodehouse. A talk might be educating, thought-provoking, witty, giving a new twist on an old theme, groundbreaking with new information, or just plain fun. Over the years, experts, authors, writers, educators, avid enthusiasts, and hog callers have spoken on their chosen topic to an enthralled Wodehousean audience. The array of subjects is boundless. Here are a few examples of past presentations:

At the 1991 New York City event, Charles E. Gould Jr., a well-known educator and Wodehousean, gave his talk "The Last of the Great Russians." Charles detailed (a bit tongue-in-cheek) the influence that Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov had on PGW's writings.

At Providence in 2007, Anne Cotton quizzed the audience regarding their personality traits to determine how they relate to their canine counterparts in "If Jeeves Were a Dog."

At Cincinnati in 2019, U.K. members Tim Andrew and Hilary Bruce earned a standing ovation for their report on the installation of a memorial stone to Wodehouse in Westminster Abbey.

This is just a small sampling of the wonderful topics and talks that have bemused and delighted conventioneers through the years.

If you have been following the convention updates, you will know that Vice President Maria Jette has accepted the responsibility of putting together this years' Riveting Talks, and she has done a grand job with it. In addition to two favorites—Elin Woodger and Elliott Milstein—she has lined up six first-time presenters, making this a superbly exciting and varied line-up. Have they come up with some new angles? Yes, indeed! We will hear about villains, thievery, prison, swearing, and insults, and we will end with a Hollywood pairing that's close to a *People* magazine scandal.

If you haven't made arrangements to attend this convention, please consider it now. You can use the registration form located in your *Plum Lines* envelope or download one from our website at www.wodehouse.org/extra/2022-ReservationForm.pdf.

The convention planners and the US Grant Hotel have put together a smooth and delightful event. Need another incentive to sign up? Prices rise after June 15, 2022, so commit now and save some money. How often do you get that opportunity anymore?

Those of us who have attended one or many conventions remember the wonderful and unique memories made at those events. After the 1991 NYC convention, I was heard to say, "We're having such a good time, we've already begun to reminisce." I said these words to one of the grand dames of TWS, the late Marilyn MacGregor, who collected original sayings and was compiling them for a book she was writing. Come make your own memories. And, you'll get to hang with nice folks with a mutual taste in literature.

Comestibles at the Convention Banquet

BY JOHN G. KARAORES

Several people have pointed out that the **Where in the World Is Pelham? San Diego!** registration form is rather deficient in its description of meal choices for the banquet. Vegetarians, we know, will choose the "vegetarian" option regardless and simply hope for the best. But for the omnivores, it is difficult to choose between "meat" and "fish" without any further description. I mean, is it a choice between open-faced yak burger or filet of sole, or perhaps a choice between Chateaubriand and tuna casserole?

Apologies for the mystery, but the options were not known when the form was created. We are now happy to reveal that the meat option will be short ribs and the fish option will be sea bass. If you've not yet sent in your registration, well, better get down to it. But if you have already sent in your registration form and would like to switch, there is plenty of time to do so. Simply send an email to Allie Weeks at allieweeks1@gmail.com and she will take care of the switch.

And while we are still working on the veggie dish, we promise it will not be a plate of overcooked noodles topped with lightly warmed frozen vegetables in a gummy white sauce that you may have found in other venues. In fact, our vegetarian committee members are working with the catering department to produce something quite special.

"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."

"You shall have it."

The Code of the Woosters (1938)

Wodehouse and Making a Piece of Work Really Work: Extending Life on a Pennyfarthing

by Graeme W. I. Davidson

In my article "F. R. Gruger: Something New, Something Old" (*Plum Lines*, Winter 2021), I drew attention to the publisher Pennyfarthing's use of early Wodehouse-related artwork to illustrate the front cover of their paperback edition of *A Pelican at Blandings*. Investigations have identified that this publishing house did not restrict such practice to just this book. For example, the cover illustration on their 1988 edition of *Bachelors Anonymous* is an image based on artwork by Gruger that was initially used in the *Saturday Evening Post* (*SEP*) serialization of *Sam in the Suburbs* in 1925. The picture shows Sam Shotter and Kay Derrick in conversation over the garden wall in Valley Fields. As with the previous example, the cover illustration is a cropped, tweaked, and colorized version of the Gruger artwork on which it is based.

By way of further example, the illustration on the cover of the Pennyfarthing edition (1988) of *Meet Mr. Mulliner* is an image based on artwork by American Harry Beckhoff that was initially used for the illustration (portraying Lord Hoddesdon and a critic of hats in conversation outside a Valley Fields hostelry) appearing in the September 20, 1930, issue of *Collier's* as part of their serialization of *Big Money*. Again, the earlier artwork has been reworked. Note that the name on the sign in the illustration has changed from the Blue Goose to the Anglers' Rest.

Bibliophiles may be interested to note that, to the best of my knowledge, the connections described above have not previously been identified. This article is the first time (here and in *Wooster Sauce* a few months back) that these facts have been noted in print.

Pennyfarthing published some eight Wodehouse titles in 1988, each using early Wodehouse-related artwork for the illustration on the cover. It appears that the publisher's convention was to not to include a credit for the original illustrator or to identify the Wodehouse work which the artwork first illustrated. Instead, there was simply an acknowledgement on the copyright page along the lines of "Original art for cover illustration courtesy of Mr. James Heineman"—presumably because that eminent New York Wodehouse collector made available the original artwork for purposes of preparing the Pennyfarthing covers. While the acknowledgement was courteous, it was light on informative fact, and that has had consequences.

F. R. Gruger's illustration for the Saturday Evening Post *serialization (1925) of* Sam in the Suburbs

Front cover of the Pennyfarthing edition of Bachelors Anonymous

Harry Beckhoff's illustration for the Collier's *serialization of* Big Money

Front cover of the Pennyfarthing edition of Meet Mr. Mulliner

It seems from the terms of some catalogues that a number of book dealers, perhaps unaware of the identity of the original illustrator(s) or of Heineman's standing as a collector rather than as an artist-illustrator, and misconstruing the acknowledgement, have incorrectly described the Pennyfarthing books as having covers illustrated by Heineman.

That settles for the moment the matter of who originally created the artwork on which the images on the Pennyfarthing covers were based. Let's now look quickly at the matter of the original artwork's

provenance. It is my belief that that the artwork may have been held at one time in the Heineman collection. From my knowledge of some of the artwork involved, and supported (in my opinion) by McIlvaine, the Heineman collection included some, if not all, of the original artwork used by Pennyfarthing for purposes of generating cover artwork. But I was uncertain, at least on first consideration, whether the Gruger *Something New* piece showing Ashe Marson and Joan Valentine at the arched gateway was the original Gruger artwork that was held for a time in the Heineman collection. That uncertainty stemmed from the fact that the McIlvaine reference identifies the drawing as simply being of "Characters" from the installment of the *SEP* serialization appearing in the July 31, 1915, issue. That identification points to page 9 in the issue, a page that carries neither any portion of the Wodehouse story nor a Gruger illustration.

However, after more investigation, I am virtually certain that the piece is indeed the one once in the Heineman collection. The mention of page 9 is patently incorrect and may be a simple typo, given that it was page 19 on which the illustration appeared. Furthermore—and this is the clincher—the dimensions of the artwork, 10 x 13 inches, as supported by the catalogue entry for the auction, are identical to the dimensions given for the artwork in McIlvaine. The fact that the artwork was used as the basis for the front-cover illustration of *A Pelican at Blandings*, and that that edition carries the acknowledgement to Heineman, further adds to the conclusiveness.

To add further flesh to the history/provenance of Gruger's Marson/Valentine artwork, the following is also to be noted. Assuming that it was held for a time in the Heineman collection, and with other information gleaned from McIlvaine, it seems more than just possible that it was later included in one of the lots of items from the Heineman collection put up for auction at Sotheby's in New York on June 26, 1998. The Gruger artwork mentioned earlier as having initially been used for illustrating the 1925 *SEP* serialization of *Sam in the Suburbs* before being used as the basis for the Pennyfarthing cover of *Bachelors Anonymous* was also included in that same lot in that same auction.

Both pieces of Gruger artwork discussed here are now held by a British collector, along with Wodehouse's original notes and partial manuscript for *A Pelican at Blandings*. Having alluded to the 1998 dispersal of the Heineman collection, I am pleased to be reporting on how some pieces have come back together and are now in a collection that includes material which logically and rightly should sit alongside some of those pieces.

There may be a key lesson from this article for any who may be wary of the merit of spending time on research and whether it will yield any fruit. Despite the extensive work already carried out by many over a long period, so substantial is Wodehouse's output and what it has spawned that, even now, it is surprising how rich and untapped are the many veins still in the mine. It is a case of taking that first bash with a pick and seeing where it leads. The entertainment that the exercise provides to a person prepared to put in time is colossal and hugely satisfying.

A version of this article with more detail was printed in the December 2021 issue of Wooster Sauce, *the U.K. society journal. There may be additional discoveries from Graeme's work to be shared with us as he continues his studies of plural uses of Wodehouse-related artwork.*

Marjanne Otten-Scholten

by Peter Nieuwenhuizen

Marjanne Otten-Scholten passed away on November 28, 2021, at the age of 78. Marjanne was the widow of Jelle Otten, who was the former chairman of the Dutch Wodehouse Society. Jelle predeceased Marjanne in 2019.

Over many years, in addition to attending many of the Dutch society's anniversary celebrations, Marjanne was a regular visitor to TWS's conventions, where she and Jelle could be seen enjoying the company of their international Wodehouse friends. She was always enthusiastic and cheerful, and along with Jelle she would enter into the costume fun with glee.

We will miss Marjanne, as well as Jelle. Both embodied the Wodehouse spirit.

Marjanne Otten-Scholten and Jelle Otten

The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) Essay Prize

BY JO JACOBIUS

THE P G WODEHOUSE SOCIETY (UK) has launched an international essay prize with a top award of £1000 GBP. The first of its kind, the initiative marks the 140th anniversary of Wodehouse's birth (2021) and forms part of this year's celebrations of the U.K. society's 25th anniversary.

The prize commands cash awards: £1,000 for the winning entry for ages 19 and over, and £250 for the winning entry for ages 18 and under. These prizes will be awarded by a distinguished panel of judges including Stephen Fry, a society patron; Patrick Kidd, Diary Editor of the *Times* (London); and society member Dr. Sophie Ratcliffe of Oxford University, who will chair the panel.

Entry is free and open to all, regardless of whether entrants are members of any of the Wodehouse societies around the world. Tim Andrew, chairman of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), says, "We ask essayists to focus on Wodehouse's novels, stories, plays, and journalism, not his life and background. We hope the essays will throw scholarly new light on aspects of Plum's writing."

Entries, which must be original and previously unpublished, should be submitted to essayprize@pgwodehousesociety.org.uk by noon BST on Wednesday, September 1, 2022. Full details can be found on the U.K. society website at https://www.pgwodehousesociety.org.uk.

"Gentlemen," said Gussie, "I mean ladies and gentlemen and, of course, boys, what a beautiful world this is. A beautiful world, full of happiness on every side. Let me tell you a little story. Two Irishmen, Pat and Mike, were walking along Broadway, and one said to the other, 'Begorrah, the race is not always to the swift,' and the other replied, 'Faith and begob, education is a drawing out, not a putting in.'"

Right Ho, Jeeves (1934)

The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University

BY ANITA AVERY

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

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We will not have a column from Anita in this issue, but we want to continue to call attention to the collection by reserving this corner of our journal as a reminder of the great work done by many, and spearheaded by Anita, to fulfill the need for an American archive collection of all things Wodehouse. —*OM*

Letter to the Editor

I WOULD LIKE to acknowledge the editor's recent kind appreciation of my efforts in mailing out *Plum Lines*, but I must also give shared credit where credit is due. While the job did fall entirely on my shoulders during the shelter-in-place portions of the pandemic, most of the mailings were completed by the bulk of the Pickering Motor Company—especially Michael Smith—who are equally deserving of recognition and thanks.

—*Elliott Milstein*

The Whole Board and Nothing But the Board

OOPS! In my "OM Reflections" column from the Winter 2021 *Plum Lines*, I was tipsy beyond my normal editing method, perhaps a bit of top-shelf Scotch. In gratefully acknowledging the supportive members of TWS's board, I neglected to include our immediate past president, Tom Smith. My deep thanks go to Tom and the four elected officers, all of whom sit on our board of directors (a fact I really must remember). Onward!

—*OM*

Pelham Grenville Wodehouse: Volume 3: The Happiness of the World

BY GARY HALL

I've not been reticent to heap praise on Paul Kent's first two volumes of his masterwork, *Pelham Grenville Wodehouse*. In the Winter 2020 issue of *Plum Lines*, I reviewed *Volume 2: Mid-Season Form* and declared that Paul adds "his joy and light while giving us new insights into Wodehouse," and that I danced "trippingly through the pages and [looked] forward to each new chapter and revelation." In the Winter 2019 *PL*, I said that Paul's first volume ("*This is jolly old Fame*") was "a[n] educational adventure that entertains," and that "Paul's tone stayed true to the Wodehouse style."

And I'm not out of sparkling descriptions yet. I come not to bury his third work, but to again praise, and to say, "Get thee to the online bookstores and grab a copy or three!"

This volume is potent in a way that is a bit different, to my mind, from the other volumes. Those first two breezed through the early and midlife stages of Plum's development as a writer and presented a lot of material that was new to me. There are revelations in every chapter in this third work, and his writing style continues to be part of the reason I love to peruse it.

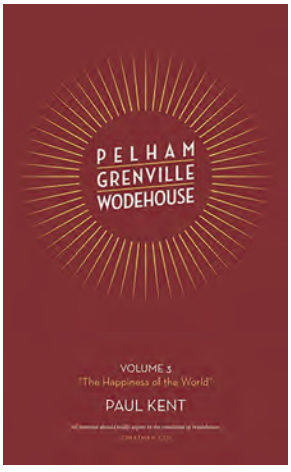
I'm one of those Wodehouseans who are in it mainly for the fun. The academic side is nice, of course, and I read all the biographies, essays, and studies—but I'm always in it for the joy of reading Wodehouse. Paul's methods and content fit my style of study perfectly, as he conveys his own delight in Wodehouse's writings and life.

Volume 3 covers the early, mid, and late bases, but with great attention to certain aspects of PGW's accomplishments. Paul begins his study with a lengthy introduction: "P. G. Wodehouse, Satirist." This sets the tone of the volume, as Paul explores how satire in pure form permeates Wodehouse's work much more extensively than some academics might argue. Paul shows that real life is woven into Wodehouse World to such an extent that satire can be and is part of the canon. He spends a good deal of time exploring how Wodehouse's satire was much more Horatian ("more often moved to amused irritation than bitter anger by the antics of his fellow men") than Juvenalian. Wodehouse just "couldn't stay mad for long." But don't think that you're in for a laborious stretch of dry, antiquarian studies. There is enough Wodehouse stirred in, and an ample dose of Paul's own magic, that the start of *Volume 3* made me very eager to get to the middle and conclusion, so as to get the full dose of this delectable dissertation.

One chapter is called "The Best of Times . . . The Worst of Times" and covers "that persistent gorilla in the room, . . . the 'Berlin Broadcast Business,'" which "conspired to wreck that healthily symbiotic relationship" between Wodehouse World and contemporary reality. Yes, there are weighty sections, and Paul is fearless in addressing the topic of those who would have burned Plum's books. As well, he touches on the defenders who realized that Wodehouse "simply couldn't have been as politically aware" as they worked to save that career.

In the final chapter, "Aged Yet Ageless," Paul deals with the challenge of the "temporal dislocation at work in Plum's novels, giving the impression they exist in time-less dimension." Well, yeah! To my mind, reading this work is like reading all of the articles and insights in several issues of *Plum Lines,* coupling that with a pile of biographies, and adding the sugar and spice unique to Paul's style. So, again, his facts and analysis are thorough and edifying, but also new and exciting. Paul ends with an afterword entitled "What Next?" I, for one, would not mind additional output from Mr. Kent.

This is a major work. Paul's exploration of "Wodehouse World" is original in its presentation of the various stages of Wodehouse's life and works. If you haven't read the first two volumes, well, get 'er done. And then get Volume 3—you can order directly from the publisher at www.canofworms.net. It will be available at other online retailers, such as Amazon, in June, so you can preorder that way. The price is a pittance compared to the value within to the Wodehouse fan.



And don't forget Volume 1 and Volume 2, available at multiple online booksellers.

P. G. Wodehouse as Political Humorist

by David L. Leal, PhD

In a recent essay for *Plum Lines* ("Was Wodehouse a Partisan?", Winter 2021), I discussed how P. G. Wodehouse hit the Conservative Party with an axe throughout his adult life. While much of this writing is very funny, the humor should not distract from trying to understand the role of politics in his life and writings and its implications for his legacy.

My thesis was not that Wodehouse was a partisan who wanted to advance the Liberal or Labour parties or was "all for the Revolution." Instead, I argued that Plum was getting his own back on the *Globe*, his first journalistic employer. According to Norman Murphy, this newspaper had Conservative political views, and Plum was required to write "By the Way" columns in a fashion that criticized the Liberals. Once he quit the paper and reached the literary equivalent of man's estate, he took lighthearted revenge on the Tories for six decades.

I would not blame some readers for dropping their crumpets upon reading my essay. Wodehouse is often identified with what the journalist and historian Geoffrey Wheatcroft called "Tory England," a land of country houses, the established church, cricket, empire, and clubs. For Plum to mock the Tories from before the Great War up through the Vietnam War serves to "complicate" (to use trendy scholarly jargon) our understanding of his writing and legacy.

Building on this previous effort, my current essay argues that we should recognize and honor Plum as a political humorist. We all know he was England's greatest comic writer of the twentieth century, but as I will show, no small part of this humor was turned toward politics. Because we are more likely to associate Wodehouse with an escape from politics and other unpleasant realities, it is easy to overlook how this topic recurs in his writing. We may not choose to chisel "political satirist" into his well-deserved memorial at Westminster Abbey (long overdue, I might add), but his "jolly old fame" should include placement in the pantheon of British political humorists.

This essay will therefore examine the political references in his fiction. One caveat is that Wodehouse wrote about one hundred books and short-story collections, and by no means have I read them all. My findings therefore reflect my own quirky reading, as well as searching online through his out-of-copyright texts, but it does cover what is generally considered to be his most popular works—Blandings Castle, Uncle Fred, Ukridge, Mike and Psmith, the Drones Club, Mr. Mulliner, and, of course, Jeeves and Wooster.

I focus on his fiction, rather than his newspaper writing, because it is clearly his own, so any political characters and plot elements best represent the state of his knowledge and views. Gentle readers will undoubtedly recall additional political references, and I look forward to your letters to the editor rightly pointing out the startling gaps in my knowledge.

Was Wodehouse Aware of Politics?

This raises the broader question of whether Wodehouse was aware of politics. George Orwell was fairly typical when he argued for "Wodehouse's complete lack—so far as one can judge from his printed works—of political awareness." This was written to defend Wodehouse in the context of the Berlin radio broadcast controversy. Most fans of Wodehouse agree with Orwell that "the events of 1941 do not convict Wodehouse of anything worse than stupidity." This is also consistent with a key reason we read Wodehouse—to escape from the real world, which includes politics. While this view of a politically ignorant Plum conveniently sidesteps any potential culpability for what the *Times* (London) would ultimately call his Berlin "indiscretion," it may not necessarily square with the facts.

In my previous essay, I suggested that Wodehouse knew much about politics, but it was knowledge gained largely from his work on the *Globe*. He was required to read the daily news and learn about politics, so he did. This did not mean that he enjoyed it, or that he maintained the same level of political awareness throughout his life. Nevertheless, his formative work in journalism undoubtedly familiarized him with the political parties, figures, and controversies of the day. If Wodehouse learned about late Victorian and Edwardian politics, and occasionally incorporated it into his subsequent stories, we should not be surprised. Plum added many elements from his real life into his fiction, so the political elements are just one dimension of this pattern. It does not mean Plum was fundamentally interested in politics, held sophisticated views, or was trying to convey partisan or ideological messages to his readers.

Nevertheless, his writing reveals an accurate understanding of politics and government. Whether a story referenced a parliamentary election, British-Irish relations, or the honours system, he described the world he knew in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries. While his political references can be out of date, and were written to entertain and not educate, today's readers can learn quite a bit about the politics of the time.

Plum's political knowledge is reminiscent of a term from media studies—the "inadvertent audience." This was developed to describe Americans who watched TV news in the broadcast era not because they wanted to but because nothing else was on in the early evening time slots. They learned about politics, albeit unenthusiastically. In a similar way, Wodehouse learned about politics because his job required it, as well as from the everyday newspaper reading that was typical for people with his background and education. Regardless of his personal interest, he recognized good material when he saw it, and therefore sprinkled politics into his fiction throughout his career. A great writer does not need to love every element of a story, and while Wodehouse was happy to include his beloved cricket in many tales, not all fiction is autobiographical.

While the following examples are from stories set in the U.K., Wodehouse also showed an awareness of American politics, particularly the urban political machines of New York City in the early 1900s. He even wrote what might be called a crusading, anti-corruption novel, *Psmith, Journalist*. Given the amount of time he spent in New York, we might not be surprised that he took items from the news and used them as the foundation of a plot.

Another source of his political views is his letters, which I have not examined. An online essay by Bengt Malmberg of the Swedish Wodehouse Society discusses political references in his letters as well as examples from his fiction. Malmberg wrote that "my aim with the following analysis is to show how well informed politically Wodehouse kept himself if you read his stories and not the least his letters to his friends. Many letters have been published in *Performing Flea* (1953) and in *Yours, Plum*, a collection of letters by Francis Donaldson (1990)." He begins by citing some political references in Plum's fiction and then argues from a reading of his letters that "during the 1930s, Wodehouse is very clear about his opinion of the political situation in the world and Europe." Malmberg also notes that "towards the end of 1903, Wodehouse was asked to write daily poems for the front page of the *Daily Express*, commenting on a topical political controversy," and he includes several examples of these writings. He also describes two essays Plum contributed to *Punch* before the war that parodied German leaders.

In my view, these opinions and commentary from Plum on contemporaneous politics are not overly sophisticated and do not reflect uncommon knowledge. They strike me as the reactions we would expect from a man of his background who read the newspapers and became superficially familiar with current events. In that sense, they reflect the Orwell view that "there is nothing in Wodehouse's writings to suggest that he was better informed, or more interested in politics, than the general run of his readers." While these letters help to rescue Plum from a one-dimensional portrayal as someone ignorant of all politics, they are consistent with claims of his naiveté in Berlin.

Malmberg ends his essay by citing Auberon Waugh's view in *Homage to P. G. Wodehouse*: "Waugh is of the opinion that Wodehouse's influence politically is his sense of the ridiculous." He notes that "my conclusion together with Auberon Waugh and many others is that Wodehouse was really politically interested and well aware of what was going on. There are a lot of examples in his books and letters that prove that! But his aim was not to take part in politics, only to amuse." Both Waugh and Malmberg therefore help to make the case for understanding Plum as a political humorist, a dimension that has otherwise been largely neglected.

The following paragraphs will note multiple examples of political references in Plum's fiction, including campaigns and elections, the honours system, government, foreign policy, Ireland, fascism, socialism, and empire. In addition, my aforementioned previous *Plum Lines* essay discusses many of his fictional references to the political parties, which are not repeated here but also indicate his familiarity with politics.

Campaigns and Elections

The members of the Senior Conservative Club in *Leave It to Psmith* are described as looking like they had "dropped in after conferring with the Prime Minister at Downing Street as to the prospects at the coming by-election in the Little Wabsley Division." This could not have been written by anyone unaware of politics.

In *Pigs Have Wings*, we read of "an earnest young man with political ambitions, given . . . to reading white papers and studying social conditions." A white paper is a government document that discusses possible future legislation, not the sort of thing a politically ignorant writer would slip into a character description.

The short story "The Long Arm of Looney Coote" revolves around a parliamentary campaign and shows knowledge of canvassing, political meetings, and parliamentary voting. The clearly autobiographical narrator describes the candidate as "a man who would

probably spend his entire Parliamentary career in total silence, voting meekly as the Whip directed." Wodehouse is clearly knowledgeable about the internal workings of the Westminster world.

We also read the following: "It had not been my intention originally to take any part in the by-election in the Redbridge division. . . . But two things combined to make me change my mind. The first was the fact that it occurred to me—always the keen young journalist—that there might be a couple of guineas of *Interesting Bits* money in it ('How a Modern Election is Fought: Humours of the Poll')." These revealing sentences indicate an interest in politics only as a source of story ideas and fees. *Interesting Bits* is a thinly disguised *Tit-Bits*, the mass-circulation magazine that published Wodehouse's "Men Who Have Missed Their Own Weddings."

Also in *Leave It to Psmith*, we see in the Senior Conservative Club "little groups of serious thinkers who were discussing what Gladstone had said in '78." This is a remarkably informed political allusion, a reference to the start of the Midlothian campaign, a set of speeches that historians see as constituting the first modern political campaign. It led to Gladstone's Liberals defeating Disraeli's Conservatives in the 1880 election, and therefore to his second premiership.

Across Wodehouse's writing career, a surprising number of characters run in parliamentary elections or are considering such an effort. These include Sir William Bruce in *The White Feather*, Mr. Bickersdyke in *Psmith in the City*, Boko Lawlor in the aforementioned "The Long Arm of Looney Coote," Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe in *Summer Lightning*, Sir Gregory again in *Heavy Weather*, Sir Raymond Bastable in *Cocktail Time*, the Rev. Aubrey Upjohn in *Jeeves in the Offing*, and Ginger Winship in *Much Obliged, Jeeves* (published in the U.S. as *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds*).

In *Jeeves in the Offing*, Wodehouse makes an accurate reference to "the Conservative Association" choosing the local Tory candidate, not the sort of detail a politically ignorant writer would get right.

We cannot forget that a parliamentary election is central to the plot of *Psmith in the City*. Wodehouse is clearly familiar with such elections, describing the political parties, the issues under debate, political meetings, heckling, public speeches, and institutions such as the Tulse Hill Parliament.

Wealth, Politics, and the Honours System

In "Comrade Bingo," Wodehouse reveals a practical understanding of the realities of the honours system. The title character says the following about his rich uncle, now Lord Bittlesham: "Ever since he married he's been launching out in every direction and economising on me. I suppose that peerage cost the old devil the deuce of a sum. Even baronetcies have gone up frightfully nowadays." As Nigel Cawthorne noted, this is a likely reference to the Lloyd George "cash for honours" scandal.

In *The Gem Collector*, we read of the main character's Uncle John, who has a career realistically portrayed as "proceeding from strength to strength, now head partner, next chairman of the company into which the business had been converted, and finally a member of Parliament, silent as a wax figure, but a great comfort to the party by virtue of liberal contributions to its funds."

In "Leave It to Jeeves," Jeeves brings to our attention a Mr. Digby Thistleton. When his depilatory turned out to grow hair, he changed his marketing and became so rich that "Mr. Thistleton was shortly afterward elevated to the peerage for services to the Liberal party." This predated the Lloyd George honours scandal, and therefore reveals that Wodehouse was aware of this rather unseemly (but legal at the time) practice before its excesses generated outrage and led to the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act of 1925.

Government

In the anti-cricket story "How's That, Umpire?" we see the following exchange between the unemployed Conky Biddle, who is dependent on his difficult uncle, and a girl who drove her car into said uncle:

> "What sort of jobs have you tried?"
> "Practically everything except Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster."

Of all the jobs in all the professions of England, for Wodehouse to slip in this obscure cabinet position (until recently, held by Michael Gove) suggests that he could hardly be ignorant of politics.

Despite such knowledge, or maybe because of it, Wodehouse had a fairly negative view of politics. In *Cocktail Time*, we read what may be Wodehouse's own view of the Mother of Parliaments, put into the mouth of Lord Ickenham: "Why do you want a political career? Have you ever been in the House of Commons and taken a good square look at the inmates? As weird a gaggle of freaks and sub-humans as was ever collected in one spot. I wouldn't mix with them for any money you could offer me."

Thirteen years later, in *Much Obliged, Jeeves*, Bertie Wooster gives the following advice: "The great thing in life, Jeeves, if we wish to be happy and prosperous,

is to miss as many political debates as possible." Many of Plum's readers have undoubtedly agreed with this sentiment.

Foreign Policy

We might also recall Wodehouse's parodies of the prewar invasion literature. This lucrative and alarmist genre was designed, depending on your perspective, to warn England about German aggression or to stir up war hysteria. His novellas *The Swoop!* and *The Military Invasion of America* are underrated stories that took courage to write in those times.

In the 1958 short story "The Fat of the Land," an uncle of a Drones Club member is discussing his potential engagement to a woman from Pittsburgh, a city Wodehouse associated with rich, older, single Americans looking for their next spouse. Their relationship had encountered a bump in the road, but the uncle looks forward to the day when "our talks would be resumed in what politicians call an atmosphere of the utmost cordiality." This phrase was new to me but sounded political, and some Googling reveals that it is from international diplomacy. It appears to be an old-fashioned construction, with most usages from the early and mid-twentieth century. In *Jeeves in the Offing*, Wodehouse makes mention of "the sort of banana oil that passes between statesmen at conferences conducted in an atmosphere of the utmost cordiality before they tear their whiskers off and get down to cases."

In 1915, Wodehouse penned a humorous tribute to the thriller writer E. Phillips Oppenheim. It regretted that the onset of WWI would curtail his "International Spy" writing, as nations were no longer engaged in clandestine intrigue but actually fighting. Here is Plum's description of a typical Oppenheim book:

> You know how the Oppenheim novel starts out. As he sups at London's most expensive and exclusive restaurant, the notice of the hero is attracted by a beautiful girl in company with a distinguished and red-ribbony sort of man. Enquiry elicits the fact that this is the French Ambassador.
>
> Why is he in London? Nobody knows. To those in close touch with international politics his presence there is sinister. The hero returns to his hotel, thinking deeply, and stubs his toe on something soft and squdgy under the bed. It is the body of the French Ambassador. . . . At this moment there is a tap at the window, the beautiful girl enters from the fire-escape, hands the hero a sealed envelope marked "Important papers. Keep dry," and retires. . . . In the end it turns out that the envelope contains material which, if disclosed, would inevitably plunge Europe into a general conflict.

While Plum's essay is not fiction and does not reveal any detailed knowledge of foreign policy, it does show he was aware of the spy genre and the prewar international jockeying for power. (Oppenheim also sounds like "just the stuff to give the troops" and I plan to start reading some of the over one hundred novels that Wikipedia says he published from 1887 to 1943.)

Ireland

Wodehouse was clearly aware of one of the most controversial topics of his time, Irish Home Rule and the British-Irish relationship. In the 1909 first U.S. edition of *Love Among the Chickens*, we read the following exchange between the narrator and the future son-in-law of an Irish professor:

> "I think, if I were you, I should *not* mention Mr. Tim Healy at lunch."
>
> I promised that I would try to resist the temptation.
>
> "And if you *could* manage not to discuss home rule—"
>
> "I will make an effort."
>
> "On any other topic he will be delighted to hear your views. Chatty remarks on bimetallism would meet with his earnest attention. A lecture on what to do with the cold mutton would be welcomed. But not Ireland, if you don't mind."

This reveals knowledge of the overall topic, an Irish nationalist politician, and a political economy question. In the 1921 edition, Mr. Tim Healy was replaced by Sir Edward Carson, home rule was dropped in favor of a general "Ireland," and bimetallism remains.

If the latter sounds familiar, it also made an appearance in *Strand* in "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" as part of Sherlock Holmes's description of his brother Mycroft: "We will suppose that a minister needs information as to a point which involves the Navy, India, Canada, and the bimetallic question; he could get his separate advices from various departments upon each, but only Mycroft can focus them all, and say offhand how each factor would affect the other." The story was republished in *His Last Bow* in 1917. Plum was a Sherlock Holmes fan, so perhaps he added this term as a tribute to Conan Doyle, though bimetallism was widely discussed at the time.

Fascism

Wodehouse's most famous venture into politics was his mocking of a thinly disguised Oswald Mosley through the character of Roderick Spode. In *The Code of the Woosters*, we learn that Spode is an "amateur dictator" who leads a group called the Saviours of Britain, known as the "Black Shorts" because all the shirt colors had been taken by other groups.

The most political speech in all of Wodehouse's writing is the following, which was given by Bertie Wooster when he was fed up with Spode:

> "It is about time," I proceeded, "that some public-spirited person came along and told you where you got off. The trouble with you, Spode, is that just because you have succeeded in inducing a handful of half-wits to disfigure the London scene by going about in black shorts, you think you're someone. You hear them shouting 'Heil, Spode!' and you imagine it is the Voice of the People. That is where you make your bloomer. What the Voice of the People is saying is: 'Look at that frightful ass Spode swanking about in footer bags! Did you ever in your puff see such a perfect perisher?' "

Because this episode is so starkly political, readers may see it as the exception that proves the rule. When taken together with his other political and partisan references, we might see it as representing continuity. Spode also makes it difficult to argue that Wodehouse somehow had fascist sympathies that found expression through his Berlin radio broadcasts. As Orwell noted in 1945:

> It is nonsense to talk of "Fascist tendencies" in his books. There are no post-1918 tendencies at all. Throughout his work there is a certain uneasy awareness of the problem of class distinctions, and scattered through it at various dates there are ignorant though not unfriendly references to Socialism. In *The Heart of a Goof* . . . there is a rather silly story about a Russian novelist, which seems to have been inspired by the factional struggle then raging in the U.S.S.R. But the references in it to the Soviet system are entirely frivolous and, considering the date, not markedly hostile. That is about the extent of Wodehouse's political consciousness, so far as it is discoverable from his writings.

In addition, as I discussed in my previous essay, Spode makes an appearance in one of Plum's last works, *Much Obliged, Jeeves*. As noted above, this book features a by-election, although the Tory candidate, Ginger Winship, is more interested in changing fiancées. Roderick Spode is speaking on his behalf and is clearly a member of the House of Lords on the Tory bench. It is remarkable that Plum has turned the former fascist leader into a Tory—still hitting the party with an axe in the Nixon and Heath years.

Socialism

As Orwell indicates, the Wodehouse canon contains many references to socialism. These instances are often unnecessary to the plot, superfluous to the characterizations, and not very well informed. Most prominently, as I discussed in a previous *Plum Lines* essay ("Psmith, Socialist?", Spring 2020), Wodehouse makes his sympathetic and much-loved character Rupert Psmith a socialist for no clear reason. From his school days to his young adulthood, Psmith claims to be a socialist not just to his best friend but also to a series of consequential people ranging from a hostile bank boss to a woman he hopes to marry. He does so with humor and perhaps not much understanding of socialism, but his views are a sustained character trait across several novels published from 1909 to 1923. At a time of communist revolutions abroad and socialist agitation at home, this is a remarkable yet superfluous introduction of controversial politics into his comedy.

In *Psmith in the City*, not only is Psmith a socialist but so is longtime New Asiatic Bank employee Mr. Waller. The latter not only believes in the cause but gives public speeches in Clapham Common, risking the opprobrium and brickbats of the local toughs. Both his ideas and his style are noted, which may have been adapted from real-life speakers Wodehouse saw at Hyde Park Corner, which makes an appearance in "Comrade Bingo." We learn that Mr. Waller "crouched to denounce the House of Lords. He bounded from side to side while dissecting the methods of the plutocrats. During an impassioned onslaught on the monarchial system he stood on one leg and hopped."

The plot of "Comrade Bingo" revolves around a socialist revolutionary group, the Heralds of the Red Dawn. They seek to "massacre the bourgeoisie, sack Park Lane, and disembowel the hereditary aristocracy." It is a remarkably political story, even if readers are tempted to focus on the inappropriate romantic enthusiasms of Bingo Little. He wants to marry the daughter of the group leader, Rowbotham, and to advance this goal, he invites them to lunch at Bertie's apartment. Rowbotham asks Bertie, "Do you yearn for the Revolution?" Bertie responds, "Well, I don't know that I exactly yearn. I

mean to say, as far as I can make out, the whole nub of the scheme seems to be to massacre coves like me; and I don't mind owning I'm not frightfully keen on the idea." A group member who is jealous of Bingo eats heartily at first but afterwards denounces the proceedings: "I wonder the food didn't turn to ashes in our mouths. Eggs! Muffins! Sardines! All wrung from the bleeding lips of the starving poor!"

Bingo also gives a speech at Hyde Park that includes the following mocking of Bertie and Lord Bittlesham: "There you see two typical members of the class which has downtrodden the poor for centuries. Idlers! Nonproducers! Look at the tall thin one with the face like a motor-mascot. Has he ever done an honest day's work in his life? No! A prowler, a trifler, and a bloodsucker! And I bet he still owes his tailor for those trousers!"

In *The Intrusion of Jimmy* (UK title *A Gentleman of Leisure*), we read that "a burglar is only a practical Socialist. People talk a lot about the redistribution of wealth. The burglar goes out and does it." In *Something Fresh*, it appears in the context of discussing how juries are biased in favor of plaintiffs in breach-of-promise cases because of "all this socialism rampant."

In "Came the Dawn," we meet the impoverished poet Lancelot Mulliner, who asks Lord Biddlecombe for the hand of his daughter Angela. Before throwing him out, the aristocrat attempts to sell him a miscellany of items, including an "ingenious little mousetrap and pencil sharpener." Lancelot reflects that "[m]any of the aristocracy . . . had been forced into similar commercial enterprises by recent legislation of a harsh and Socialistic trend." This likely refers to increases in the income tax (to 30% by the time of writing) and estate tax (to 40%), which may explain why Lord Biddlecombe needed every shilling.

In another story, "Archibald and the Masses," we read of the temporary socialism of Mr. Mulliner's nephew Archibald. He is converted by his valet, a member of a socialist group who hopes to hasten the revolution and bring about "massacres and all that." But socialism makes Archibald gloomy, and he has trouble enjoying a party because "I don't think a chap ought to be dancing at a time when the fundamental distribution of whatever-it-is is so dashed what-d'you-call-it." The nephew also mentions that Stalin, James Maxton, and Sidney Webb, three prominent figures of the times, wouldn't dance either. He then tries to visit the "martyred proletariat" in the East End and give bread to what he thinks is a needy child, but the child, wanting candy, throws the bread back at him and "strikes a vicious blow on the nape of the neck." After other misunderstandings, Archibald loses his love for the masses.

In *A Damsel in Distress*, socialism makes two appearances, one upstairs and one downstairs. For the former, we learn that "the hatred which some of his order feel for Socialists and Demagogues Lord Marshmoreton kept for rose-slugs, rose-beetles and the small, yellowish-white insect which is so depraved and sinister a character that it goes through life with an alias—being sometimes called a rose-hopper and sometimes a thrip." The butler has opposite views, however: "It was, indeed, an open secret among the upper servants at the castle, and a fact hinted at with awe among the lower, that Keggs was at heart a Socialist." Might this suggest that Blandings' Beach was likewise a socialist?

In *Service with a Smile*, pigman George Wellbeloved and secretary du jour Lavender Briggs both hold views that are "strongly communistic." We also learn that Wellbeloved gained his broken nose by expounding such views at the Emsworth Arms. Nevertheless, Miss Briggs wishes to become a capitalist entrepreneur by setting up her own typewriting business, which may speak to the vagueness of political ideology in the Wodehouse canon.

Eugenics

I am grateful to members of the P. G. Wodehouse listserv PGWnet for discussing (not at my suggestion) *The Coming of Bill* / *Their Mutual Child*, a book I have not read. The thread points out that eugenics is a key part of the plot, and that reviewers of the time noted this aspect. For example, the *New York Tribune* found that it "pokes a lot of fun at Eugenics" and the *Evening Missourian* said that "riotous fun is poked at eugenics."

The story is not considered a comedy classic today. Nevertheless, it made fun of a controversial contemporaneous topic, and we might consider it similar in this way to *The Code of the Woosters*. Both books took courage to write, although whether this dawned on Plum at the time is unclear. Eugenics is not a funny subject—it was associated with immigration restriction and forced sterilization—but neither is fascism, and Plum mocked both.

Empire

Lastly, we should recall the many ways in which the British Empire plays a role in Wodehouse's stories. These references seem so natural in the Edwardian context that we pay them little attention, yet they certainly come under the heading of politics and government. To take one example, the opening line

of the short story "Ukridge Rounds a Nasty Corner" describes a former colonial governor: "The late Sir Rupert Lakenheath, K.C.M.G., C.B., M.V.O., was one of those men at whom their countries point with pride." This shows an understanding of the honours system and, specifically, the types of decorations a colonial governor might receive.

Norman Murphy observed that "empire builders occur frequently in Wodehouse because they were part of his world in which he grew up. . . . He was born into an 'Imperial' family. . . . Seven of Wodehouse's immediate family were Colonial civil servants (his father, his brother, five uncles) as were innumerable cousins." These included everyone from a governor of Bombay to the last British resident commissioner in the Kingdom of Hawaii.

Plum's father received the CMG, which is the third class of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, and just a tier below Sir Rupert's KCMG. This decoration was primarily for those who served the nation and empire abroad. Another family example is his older cousin Sir Philip Edmond Wodehouse, a colonial administrator who was governor of the Cape Colony and then Bombay. He received the CB (Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath) in 1860, was promoted to KCB (Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath) in 1862, and received the now-defunct GCSI (Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India) in 1876.

Plum's knowledge of empire may therefore have derived from this family background rather than an interest in current events. Again, we might see this as knowledge he absorbed from his everyday life rather than actively sought.

Conclusion

These familiar stories not only entertain but also indicate that Plum knew much about politics and government. Taken together with the many references to the political parties discussed in my prior essay, they reveal him to be a political humorist of the first water.

Such references go well beyond the famous episode of Spode and the Black Shorts. Whether the topic was elections, parliament, Ireland, or empire, Wodehouse was not only familiar with many aspects of politics but knew the topic well enough to parody it. It takes knowledge to effectively make fun of something (or someone), and a politically ignorant writer could not have written these passages and created these characters.

An important caveat is that this knowledge is focused on late Victorian and Edwardian politics, which likely reflects his early work in journalism rather than a personal interest in the subject. In addition, while Plum is knowledgeable about many aspects of politics, he would have been a fish out of water in the world of Westminster. Can we imagine him as an MP? Robert McCrum referred to his "innate lack of political awareness," and I do not see Plum as a "political junkie" with sophisticated views. Had he been one, we might interpret his Berlin radio broadcasts not as "a looney thing to do" but as something far more serious.

In sum, let us thank whatever gods may be that Plum gave us a chance to laugh at politics, that necessary evil of human existence. If we could not laugh, we would cry, and I am grateful that he provides yet one more way for us to endure, and occasionally to enjoy, the shenanigans of our fellow humans.

References available from Professor Leal on request. You may contact the OM at wodehouse@beyondbb.com for such requests.

J. Randolph ("Randy") Cox

by Gary Hall

John Randolph Cox passed away on September 14, 2021, in Northfield, Minnesota, at the age of 84. He was a longtime member of The Wodehouse Society.

Randy attended St. Olaf College and received his Masters in Library Science from the University of Minnesota. He returned to St. Olaf as a reference librarian from 1962 until retiring in 1996. Randy taught one of the first college courses on detective fiction in the United States. After retirement, he led classes at the Cannon Valley Elder Collegium for many years.

Randy was a dedicated Sherlockian, working with the Baker Street Irregulars as early as 1967 (The Conk-Singleton Forgery Case). He edited the *Dime Novel Round-Up* from 1994 through 2012 and was considered the foremost expert on Nick Carter. Randy served in many other academic and volunteer roles during his life.

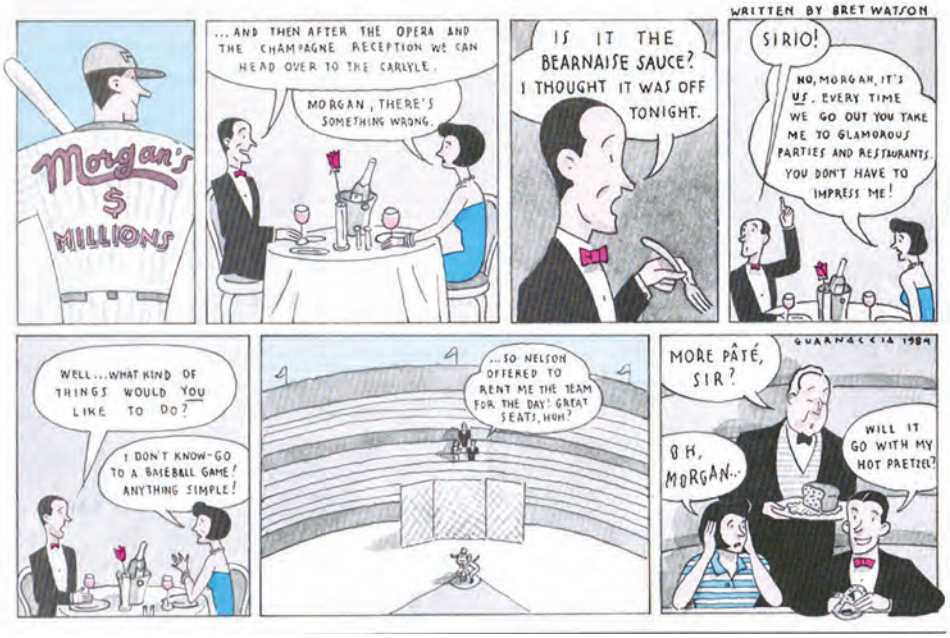
In 2014, Randy was presented with the Munsey Award for a lifetime of promoting pulps. He authored many books, articles, and profiles. Randy shared his expertise and information with anyone who asked. He will be missed by his friends, family, and peers.

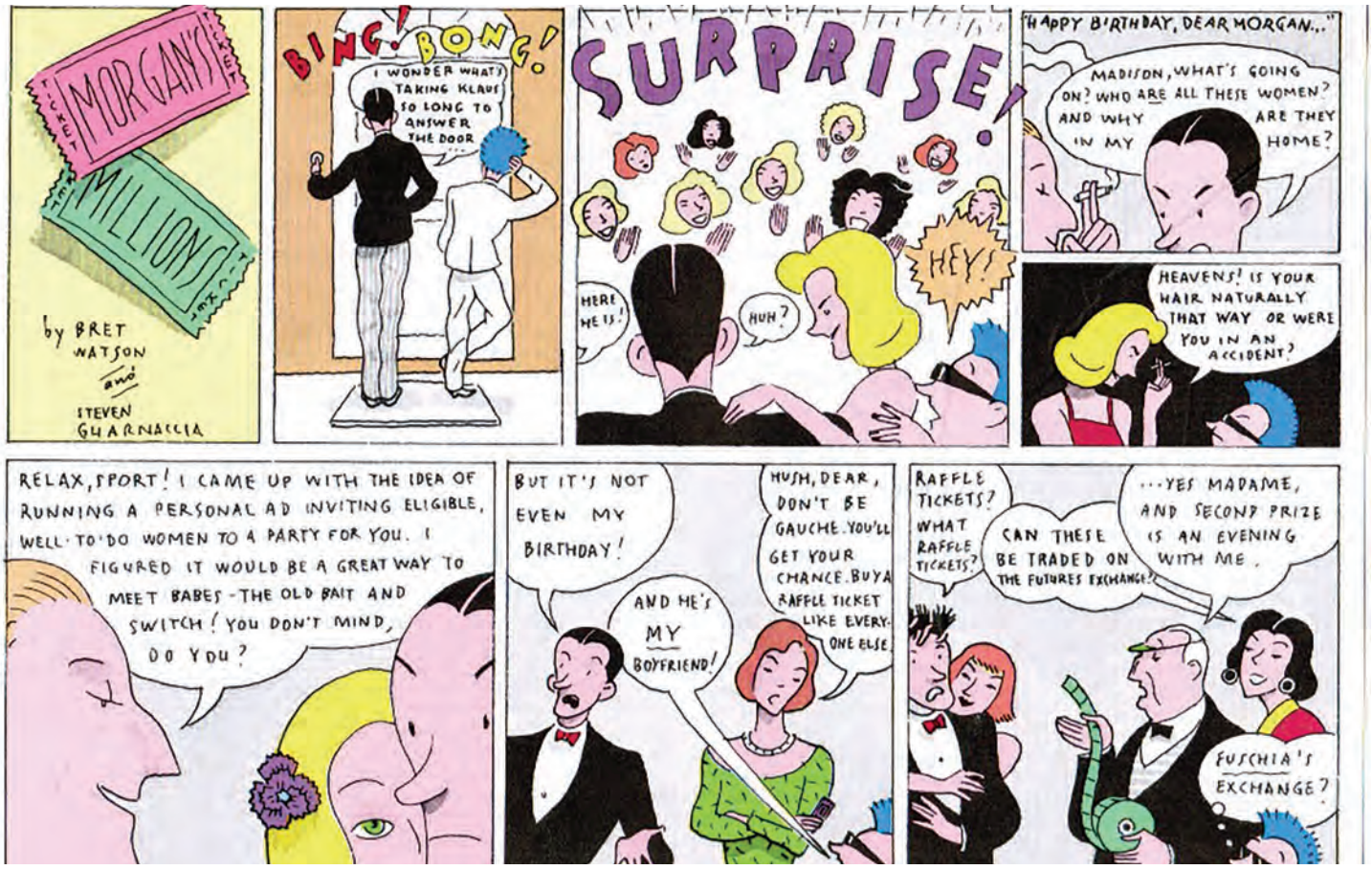
Steven Guarnaccia and Bret Watson

In the Summer 2021 issue of *Plum Lines*, regular contributor Bob Rains treated us to an interview entitled "Wodehouse Cover Illustrator Steven Guarnaccia."

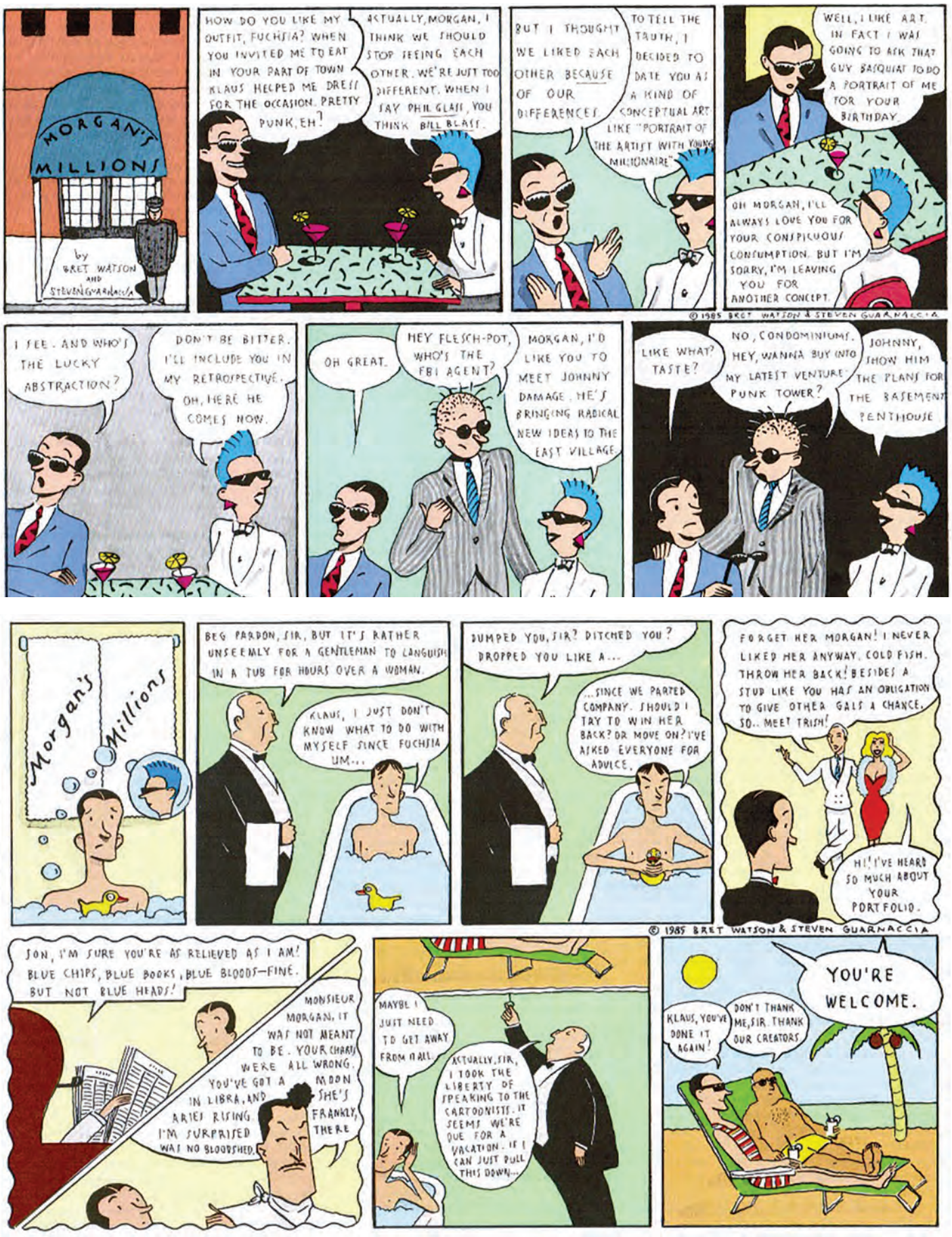
It turns out that Steven G. also illustrated a comic strip for *Avenue* magazine in the 1980s that was meant to update Bertie and Jeeves into a New York City setting. The strip was written by Bret Watson, who went on to great success with Watson Adventures, a scavenger-hunt operation. (You can find out more about that company at watsonadventures.com.)

So, with kind permission from Steven and Bret, here are a few of the strips for your enjoyment. Steven says that they "might be of interest to *Plum Lines* readers in an archaeological sort of way." Fortunately, most of us have a bit of appreciation of humor written in the past—and of course we're fans of those who work to perpetuate the Bertie and Jeeves tradition in new ways.




MORGAN'S
MILLIONS
by BRET WATSON and STEVEN GUARNACCIA
BING! BONG!
I WONDER WHAT'S TAKING KLAUS SO LONG TO ANSWER THE DOOR...
SURPRISE!
HERE HE IS!
HUH?
HEY!
"HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR MORGAN..."
MADISON, WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO ARE ALL THESE WOMEN? AND WHY ARE THEY IN MY HOME?
HEAVENS! IS YOUR HAIR NATURALLY THAT WAY OR WERE YOU IN AN ACCIDENT?
RELAX, SPORT! I CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF RUNNING A PERSONAL AD INVITING ELIGIBLE, WELL-TO-DO WOMEN TO A PARTY FOR YOU. I FIGURED IT WOULD BE A GREAT WAY TO MEET BABES - THE OLD BAIT AND SWITCH! YOU DON'T MIND, DO YOU?
BUT IT'S NOT EVEN MY BIRTHDAY!
AND HE'S MY BOYFRIEND!
HUSH, DEAR, DON'T BE GAUCHE. YOU'LL GET YOUR CHANCE. BUY A RAFFLE TICKET LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.
RAFFLE TICKETS? WHAT RAFFLE TICKETS?
CAN THESE BE TRADED ON THE FUTURES EXCHANGE?
...YES MADAME, AND SECOND PRIZE IS AN EVENING WITH ME.
FUSCHIA'S EXCHANGE?


MORGAN'S MILLIONS
by BRET WATSON & STEVEN GUARNACCIA
FUCHSIA, THIS IS MY PERSONAL CHEF, HENRI ROBES BIERE. WHAT'S ON THE MENU TONIGHT CHEZ MORGAN?
WE START WITH AVOCADO SOUP, THEN A CRISP SPINACH SALAD WITH BAMBOO DRESSING. THE ENTREE: BOUDIN DE BROCOLI AVEC SPROUTS.
AND FOR DESSERT: A SOY SORBET. DELICIEUX!
HENRI, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GET OFF THIS RABBIT-FOOD KICK OF YOURS?
IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, MR. M. THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING. FAMINES ARE COMING. LOOK AT THE JET STREAM
LOOK, JUST BECAUSE SOME HEIRESSES ARE EATING THEIR LAWNS AND MUNCHING ON PINE CONE SALAD DOESN'T MEAN...
I SAID JET STREAM NOT JET SET. BETTER GET USED TO GRAINS AND GRASSES NOW, MR. M.
I SUPPOSE YOU GET THIS FROM YOUR YOGI. THERE HASN'T BEEN ANYTHING IN THE PAPER ABOUT IT.
THEY'RE JUST A POLITICAL TOOL. ALL LIES. EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT
EXACTLY!
COME NOW, EVEN THE LEISURE SECTION?
CERTAINEMENT! DID YOU SEE THEIR RECIPE FOR TOFU REMOULADE? A SCANDAL!
I SENT THEM A LETTER, BUT OF COURSE THEY WOULDN'T PRINT IT!
PARDON, SIR, I'VE MADE SOME FRANKS AND BEANS DOWNSTAIRS. WOULD YOU CARE TO JOIN ME?
I'LL BRING THE POTATO CHIPS!
HOLD ON! "FUCHSIA WITH FRANKS" IS A NON-CONCEPT. BRING ON THE SOY SORBET!


MORGAN'S MILLIONS
by BRET WATSON AND STEVEN GUARNACCIA
HOW DO YOU LIKE MY OUTFIT, FUCHSIA? WHEN YOU INVITED ME TO EAT IN YOUR PART OF TOWN KLAUS HELPED ME DRESS FOR THE OCCASION. PRETTY PUNK, EH?
ACTUALLY, MORGAN, I THINK WE SHOULD STOP SEEING EACH OTHER. WE'RE JUST TOO DIFFERENT. WHEN I SAY PHIL GLASS, YOU THINK BILL BLASS.
BUT I THOUGHT WE LIKED EACH OTHER BECAUSE OF OUR DIFFERENCES.
TO TELL THE TRUTH, I DECIDED TO DATE YOU AS A KIND OF CONCEPTUAL ART LIKE "PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST WITH YOUNG MILLIONAIRE"
WELL, I LIKE ART. IN FACT I WAS GOING TO ASK THAT GUY BASQUIAT TO DO A PORTRAIT OF ME FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY.
OH MORGAN, I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU FOR YOUR CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION. BUT I'M SORRY, I'M LEAVING YOU FOR ANOTHER CONCEPT.
© 1985 BRET WATSON & STEVEN GUARNACCIA
I SEE. AND WHO'S THE LUCKY ABSTRACTION?
DON'T BE BITTER. I'LL INCLUDE YOU IN MY RETROSPECTIVE. OH, HERE HE COMES NOW.
OH GREAT.
HEY FLESCH-POT, WHO'S THE FBI AGENT?
MORGAN, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET JOHNNY DAMAGE. HE'S BRINGING RADICAL NEW IDEAS TO THE EAST VILLAGE.
LIKE WHAT? TASTE?
NO, CONDOMINIUMS. HEY, WANNA BUY INTO MY LATEST VENTURE: PUNK TOWER?
JOHNNY, SHOW HIM THE PLANS FOR THE BASEMENT PENTHOUSE
Morgan's Millions
BEG PARDON, SIR, BUT IT'S RATHER UNSEEMLY FOR A GENTLEMAN TO LANGUISH IN A TUB FOR HOURS OVER A WOMAN.
KLAUS, I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH MYSELF SINCE FUCHSIA UM...
DUMPED YOU, SIR? DITCHED YOU? DROPPED YOU LIKE A...
...SINCE WE PARTED COMPANY. SHOULD I TRY TO WIN HER BACK? OR MOVE ON? I'VE ASKED EVERYONE FOR ADVICE.
FORGET HER MORGAN! I NEVER LIKED HER ANYWAY. COLD FISH. THROW HER BACK! BESIDES A STUD LIKE YOU HAS AN OBLIGATION TO GIVE OTHER GALS A CHANCE. SO.. MEET TRISH!
HI! I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOUR PORTFOLIO.
© 1985 BRET WATSON & STEVEN GUARNACCIA
SON, I'M SURE YOU'RE AS RELIEVED AS I AM! BLUE CHIPS, BLUE BOOKS, BLUE BLOODS—FINE. BUT NOT BLUE HEADS!
MONSIEUR MORGAN, IT WAS NOT MEANT TO BE. YOUR CHARTS WERE ALL WRONG. YOU'VE GOT A MOON IN LIBRA, AND SHE'S ARIES RISING FRANKLY, I'M SURPRISED THERE WAS NO BLOODSHED.
MAYBE I JUST NEED TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL.
ACTUALLY, SIR, I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF SPEAKING TO THE CARTOONISTS. IT SEEMS WE'RE DUE FOR A VACATION. IF I CAN JUST PULL THIS DOWN...
KLAUS, YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN!
DON'T THANK ME, SIR. THANK OUR CREATORS
YOU'RE WELCOME.

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.

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Blandings Castle Chapter
(Greater San Francisco Bay area)
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Our little band of deep thinkers continues to meet on the last Sunday of the month. This virtual chapter meeting draws Wodehouse fans both domestically and from around the globe. Neither snow nor mandatory power outages nor California wild fires nor gloom of pandemic stays these Wodehouseans from the swift zooming at our appointed time on the last Sunday of the month!

Recent meetings have included a wonderful summary of the U.K. society's formal dinner at Gray's Inn in October 2021; Halloween and Wodehouse, which (as always) brought up a discussion of Honeysuckle Cottage, which led to a short discussion of Wittgenstein; Penguin book collecting; cricket; the writing process; and Covid and the various constraints which have resulted in these gatherings.

Through the magic of screen sharing on Zoom, we often refer to a number of reference materials and sites as we study the works of the Master, and Neil Midkiff helps us navigate and understand the rich information that he and others have put into https://www.madameulalie.org. I am very thankful for that site. I often find using Google is a bit like searching for a specific puzzle piece in one of the thousand-piece puzzles of some Cézanne painting. Kind of hit and miss as to how long it takes to find the piece you are looking for, and sometimes it is not even on the table, but is the one piece on the floor and being chewed up by one of the Springer Spaniels.

If you ever care to join us on the last Sunday of the month at 1 pm Pacific Time, which in months when we change to or from daylight savings has caused some rannygazoo, please contact Lord Emsworth at sfblandingscastle@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

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On Thanksgiving weekend, we had a smaller attendance, but with the same zest as always. We discussed Wodehouse and Thanksgiving; Madame Eulalie; Paul Kent's upcoming *Wodehouse on Food* pamphlet—the first in a series from publisher Can of Worms; and what a Wodehousean might want in their Christmas stocking. We checked in on how everyone is holding up. On Boxing Day (December 26, 2021), we had a lovely call, but I had to jump off abruptly as the wind storm was moving fairly large patio furniture. It was wonderful to see Hilary and Robert, Tim, Noel, Kathleen, Maria, Freda, Neil, Lynn, Jeff, and so many others this fine Boxing Day. I failed to save the chat, but both Maria and Neil had some wonderful quotes.

—Bill Franklin

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Chapter One
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Our preliminary discussion on November 30, 2021, focused mostly on news of chapter members not recently in attendance at our regular meetings, in person or on Zoom. We shared updated news of Bob Nissenbaum and Norma Frank, Susan Cohen, and Herb Moskovitz. We all expressed hope that they will be with us again soon for meetings and fellowship.

The night's meeting was primarily devoted to a spirited, if not always professionally enacted, reading from a script for the Mulliner story "Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court." It was adapted for Readers Theater by Ed Powell. Narration duties were shared by Mark

Reber and Bob Sloan. The lead roles were read by David Ruef, Hope Gaines, and Tom Hooker. Aside from a few stumbles of the inevitable sort over the script, especially with one of the narrators frequently laughing aloud at his own lines, the performance went quite well. All things considered, enthusiasm, affection for the material, and a sense of humor and sympathy for our shortcomings carried the day. Murray Wilson was disappointed, though, in one of the joking similes in the Bludleigh story that was at the expense of a person with disabilities.

Some of the story's humorous aspects (especially those involving gnus) reminded us of the comic singing duo of Flanders and Swann, who were very popular after World War II and continued to perform long thereafter. They were stars in the West End of London, and perhaps their most famous comic song was "The Hippopotamus Song": "Mud, mud, glorious mud, nothing quite like it for cooling the blood." We recalled that their act was simply fun. Murray explained that the idea for "The Gnu Song" came to Michael Flanders from a random sighting of a license plate that bore the letters GNU (indicating it was from Derby, England, Murray's hometown).

We agreed that the plan for the next meeting would include two stories that became an adaptation for an episode of the *Jeeves and Wooster* series of the 1990s, with Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie. (Look on YouTube for the episode titled "The Con, or Pearls Mean Tears.") The stories from which it was adapted were "Aunt Agatha Makes a Bloomer" in the October 1922 issue of *Cosmopolitan* and "The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy" from the *Strand* issue of October 1924. Both stories can be found on Madame Eulalie.

—Bob Sloan

We met by Zoom on January 11, 2022, for a session devoted to Bertie and Jeeves, focusing on the aforementioned two stories and the *Jeeves and Wooster* episode.

We launched our session by welcoming new member Uttam Paudel, a graduate student who hails from Nepal and is a fan of PGW. Conversation then ranged widely until settling on the topic at hand.

In general, the Chaps felt that the stories were far stronger than the television adaptation, even given Hugh Laurie's piano skills and wonderful physical humor. A particular delight in the Aunt Agatha story was Bertie's opportunity to get a bit of his own back, as he scolds his intimidating aunt for having been foolishly deceived by a pair of scammers and thieves and even wanting Bertie to marry the female thief. It was generally agreed that the video failed to adequately capture Bertie's ferocious indignation.

We also loved several of Plum's choice phrases. These were read aloud. A mystery, however, went unsolved. In the second story, Biffy describes the father of his intended as running "a milk-walk in Clapham." Bob Rains asked, "What is a milk-walk?" We failed to provide a satisfying answer, even with the help of Norman Murphy's wonderful *Wodehouse Handbook*.

—Mark Reber

The widely dispersed members of Chapter One gathered by Zoom on the evening of February 22, 2022, and paid a visit to the haunted confines of "Honeysuckle Cottage." We performed a dramatic reading of this Mulliner story, with dual marquee players for several of the parts. David Ruef and Bob Sloan found their inner Lee Strasberg and ably shared the role of protagonist James Rodman. The best supporting nods clearly went to Hope Gaines and David Mackenzie, who provided the moans of the dog William. Their didgeridoo provided an excellent approximation of William's bassoon-like sound. Overall, the experience was a delight.

The next meeting of Chapter One was held on Wednesday, April 13, when we discussed *William Tell Told Again*, Plum's only children's story.

—Mark Reber

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The Clients of Adrian Mulliner
(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)
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On Saturday, January 8, 2022, a Junior Bloodstain was held via Zoom in advance of the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI) weekend. Aficionados of Sherlock Holmes and the stories of P. G. Wodehouse met to discuss an early short story by Wodehouse, "The Adventure of the Split Infinitive." This work featuring Wotsing and Burdock Rose was enjoyed for its many Sherlockian references and great humor.

—Elaine Coppola

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In *Uncle Dynamite*, Pongo has bitter words for Uncle Fred: "You're like the Black Death or one of those pestilences of the Middle Ages, taking their toll of thousands." Aware of our own ongoing pestilence, we have refrained from in-person events for two years and have shared most of our common Wodehouse joy via Zoom meetings. The downside of the virtual world is offset by having a broader scope of attendance, often even across chapters that are too distant to do the in-persons together as we did in the "old days."

In September, October, and November 2021 we discussed three Jeeves and Wooster novels: *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, *Joy in the Morning*, and *Right Ho, Jeeves*. The consensus was that they were all three in the top rank of Wodehouse's work. And the ability of Wodehouse to overcome the wartime complications involved in writing *Joy in the Morning* was a great testimony to his disciplined approach to writing. Unable to quit cold turkey, we tapered off in December with a short-story reading, "Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit."

We saw the new year in with another delightful short-story reading, "Uncle Fred Flits By." And our February treat was a discussion of *Uncle Dynamite*. I think it is safe to say that the Fifth Earl of Ickenham has captured our hearts and minds. Richard Usborne wrote that Plum thought Lord Ickenham was a "sort of elderly Psmith." But we tend to share the opinion that Psmith was more of a Galahad Threepwood type in his later years. Which all folds into the discussion of what makes a saga and if the Blandings, Wooster and Jeeves, or Uncle Fred segments of the canon are saga-worthy. That and pondering why Jeeves is content to serve Bertie can fill an hour fairly quickly.

We Zoom every second Tuesday of the month at 7 PM in the Eastern Time Zone, and anyone would be welcome to join in. Just contact me for the link. In future reports, we'll opine about the production of Margaret Raether's *Jeeves Intervenes* by the NC Stage Company in Asheville, North Carolina. The show was presented in February and March, and we were able to get a group up there. Stay tuned for more information!

—Ken Clevenger

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The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)
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The NEWTS planned their traditional holiday gathering for December and reserved bicycle factory space with Stef Adams, who has generously offered her place of work, Seven Cycles in Watertown, Massachusetts, as a venue for the past several years. Rapidly changing Covid conditions and regulations resulted in a difficult decision at nearly the last minute to convene online instead. The bicycles probably were

relieved to not be painted red this year. Gifts had been wrapped and food and drink prepared. The NEWTS could be seen against Zoom backgrounds unwrapping their own gifts and consuming their own treats. All seemed pleased with the experience. Exchange of the latest New England Wodehouse news was followed by a spirited reading of portions of *Jeeves and the Feudal S*.

In February, the NEWTS came out of hibernation briefly to swarm online and catch up on things. Congratulations to the valiant readers of "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend," who breezed through Latin names of flowers and passed off a Glaswegian or a Drury "Line" accent with only small hitches. Our next nottle will take place in May.

—Lynn Vesley-Gross

The Northwodes
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On December 2, 2021, the Northwodes discussed *The Mating Season* and were surprised by petite and pretty Corky's use of "bitches" and "bastard." Holly Windle noted that Claude "Catsmeat" Potter-Pirbright becomes Claude Cattermole "Catsmeat" Pirbright. Kris Fowler argued the acceptability to include or exclude the hyphenated surname. Bruce Willey noted Jeeves didn't have a lot of lines in this book but is a deus ex machina, causing and resolving complications. Richard Rames loved the description of the village concert, especially of Rev. Sidney Pirbright as "a tall, drooping man, looking as if he had been stuffed in a hurry by an incompetent taxidermist."

On January 13, 2022, we considered *Big Money*, set in Valley Fields, a thinly disguised Dulwich. Joan Rabe liked how Biscuit, none too bright yet a good planner, kept counting fiancées and coming up with two. Ann goggled at penguins in St. James's Park, but as far as Holly knows, there were no penguins in St. James's Park. (Pelicans actually have been there since 1664.) Lady Vera Mace is George Smiley in a posh frock and coordinated hat. Major Flood-Smith's "you have the haemorrhagic insolence to stand there and tell me it's quite all right" allows Plum to avoid the word "bloody." For Bill Sippel, the economic themes of Plum's plots are changing over time from people trying to marry someone to improve their class position to people who have lost their position trying to align themselves with people who have "made it."

On February 26, 2022, we returned to Valley Fields with *Ice in the Bedroom*, which, as Joan pointed out, contains giant chunks of *Sam the Sudden*. Freddie's cousin George is educated, socially smooth, urbane, and, as Joe Dolson noted, just as clueless and gullible as any village flatfoot. Percy Cornelius, the housing agent without a sister, secretary, or wayward son, is happier than Lord Emsworth. Dick Sveum wondered about Freddie's age, as he first appeared in 1931 and in this 1961 book is remarkably well-preserved. Mike Eckman opined that Wodehouse freezes his characters but allows the world to change around them. We all liked romance novelist Leila Yorke, and wished she'd had more appearances in the canon.

—Mike Engstrom

The Orange Plums
(Orange County, California)
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Greetings from the Seven Seas! Or rather, from my spot in the queue just off the coast as I line up to offload, doing my bit to help with the ongoing supply chain crunch. Yes, Admiral Biffen here with the latest on the doings of the Orange Plums, reporting as usual via the maritime wireless while I wait.

Our traditional Christmas Season Boat Race Night Bash was another big hit—a laugh a minute as we moved nautical pieces around the gameboard after correctly answering member-created PGW trivia questions from the ridiculous to the sublime. This is our most anticipated chapter activity—beyond the usual browsing and sluicing, of course—and we still highly recommend anything like it to fellow chapters looking to get a bit more boisterous or rousing in their revelries, should their regular meetings have become a little on the staid side. Give it a whirl, as der Bingle used to say.

When the smoke cleared, it was our beloved Lia Hansen (nom de Plum Billie Dore) who had tragically—and very begrudgingly—won the detested second-place spot, meaning she was obligated to take home our enormous eyesore of a trophy,

which is a credible threat to pedestrians and traffic. (As you may recall, the first-place winner's prize is not having to carry home the foul object.)

Sadly, our January meeting was cancelled, as spiking local Covid rates once again torpedoed a face-to-face as too risky for most. Certainly we all hope to be back together in person soon, once again raising hefty mugs of grog in the crew's mess, finally finishing our discussion of *Ice in the Bedroom*, and, as always, celebrating PGW and each other's continuing pluck.

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

The Pale Parabolites
(Toronto and vicinity)
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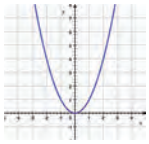

The Pickering Motor Company
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The Pickerings met at Sue and Dicron's home on October 9, 2021. The reading assignment was *The Old Reliable*. We began by congratulating Elliott on his fine article in *Plum Lines* about *Barmy in Wonderland* (*Angel Cake* in the USA). We were positively fawning over him.

There was some discussion about the 2011 convention we hosted. Those of you who attended may remember our outing to Miller's Bar. It is now for sale. We hope the new owner will keep it as it is.

We then had a long digression about the Flashman and Aubrey/Maturin novels, which we also like. Luann brought us back to our subject by asking why Bill was so reliable. Elliott said she was unique among Wodehouse heroines because she was middle-aged, thus not young; big and not petite; and worldly, so not innocent. Unlike many Wodehouse heroines she pursues her man instead of being pursued by him.

The Pickering Motor Company held its annual holiday gathering at Larry's home on December 12. Larry served the traditional delicacy shakshuka, a wonderful baked egg dish. Get the recipe on Google and try it!

President for Life Luann was not present; Elliott was nominated by acclamation to preside. As sometimes happens at our meetings there was a literary digression, this time a discussion of *Ulysses* by James Joyce.

The reading assignment was *Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*, one of the last novels Plum wrote. Charlie said he preferred the more flowery language of the earlier novels. Mike and Sue liked the simpler language of the later novels. Like *The Old Reliable*, the heroine pursues the hero, who has no idea he is her prey. Plum also uses the old standby theme of the imposter visiting a country house, in this case Chimp Twist, who pretends to guard what he intends to steal.

Our next meeting is April 30. For that meeting, we will read *Thank You, Jeeves*.

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The Knights of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society (PGWS) have had to continue to cope with the Covid restrictions. The fourth P. G. Wodehouse Film Festival on November 6, 2021, had to be postponed until April 9 of this year. And the Wodehouse Poetry Evening on December 3, with Tony Ring and Hal Cazalet, has also been postponed until later this year. The celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Dutch society on November 27 took place in The Hague on October 30

The Dutch Wodehouse society members enjoy the fare and fellowship at the Societeit De Vereeniging.

in the gentleman's club Societeit De Vereeniging. The club is quite stylish, with a library, a billiard room, and a bowling alley. Many members attended the walking tour through the historic centre of The Hague. There were speeches, riveting talks, camaraderie, and a silent auction.

Dutch Wodehouse society president Peter Nieuwenhuizen rivets the membership with his talk.

The regular meeting on February 12 had to take place via Zoom again, hopefully for the last time. Our patron, HRH Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, sent some wonderful Christmas greetings to our society. The annual storytelling contest, in the tradition of Mr. Mulliner, was won by Donald Duk, who told a story about his twin brother, Ronald, who was injured as a miller, and a story about his ancestors who also were millers and also were wounded in the course of this work. The prize was a choice between a coconut and a cigar, in the Ukridge tradition.

The twelfth new Wodehouse stamp was introduced by Herman van Riel. The Dutch artist Anne-Marie van Ulden had drawn a portrait of Wodehouse for the new Dutch bibliography, and this same picture was the basis for the new Wodehouse stamp.

Jannes Koster presented his new translation of *French Leave*, which had not previously been translated into Dutch. Jannes hopes to have it published very soon.

The fifth Anatole recipe for friandises (from *The Code of the Woosters*) was published in our society journal. At the time of the meeting, no member had tried it. For our Favorite Fragment section, Anne-Sophie Andela read from *Joy in the Morning* about the country-life theme in the Wodehouse novels. Her story was followed by a Wodehouse quiz about the same theme, with questions like: Where did Gladys and Ern live? (Blandings Parva); Where did Wilmot, Lord Pershore, live? (Much Middlefold); and where is the cottage Wee Nooke located? (Steeple Bumpleigh and also Maiden Eggesford).

Finally, in the meeting section we call "Present Premium," each member was given a copy of the Dutch translation of the 1931 Wodehouse story "Quest" ("Aardbeien") from the July 1931 issue of the magazine *Favoriet*.

—Peter Nieuwenhuizen

Rugby in All Its Niceties
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The Size 14 Hat Club
(Halifax, Nova Scotia)
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OM Reflections

I HAVE LEARNED much from many and there's more to come, I'm sure. It's interesting, isn't it, when a comment from a teacher or friend or parent can stay with us for our entire lifetime? Yes, we learn formal lessons in formal settings. And we involve ourselves in schemes (like being editor in chief of a literary journal) that put us in cahoots with super-proofers who teach us all the things we missed in grammar class.

My late father with one sentence could make an impact that still reverberates and reminds, whether it was about estimating the velocity of approaching cars or standing up straight (he was a military guy—named "Guy," incidentally) or other practical and responsible things. Or my mother could ask me in 1973 if college exams made me "uptight," which stunned me, because I didn't know that mothers used that word in 1973. (To her credit, she introduced me to Wodehouse's stuff.)

So, where will that next random lesson come from, and from who-knows-who? Send me those lessons that you learned offhand like that. Maybe some will become useful to me for the balance of my time. And the fulcrum of that balance is moving ever further along, so I'd best collect my lessons while I still can.

Contents

Officers & Volunteers

We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above. Deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1.