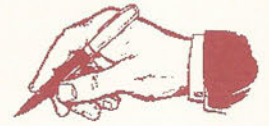


BY THE WAY



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Wodehouse's Russian References: History

In this issue, as in the June issues for 2006 and 2008, we are presenting a selection of Wodehouse's references to matters Russian, to accompany Masha Lebedeva's series of articles in *Wooster Sauce*.

From *The Small Bachelor*, ch 1 (1927)

I saw her first lunching at Plaza with a woman who looked like Catherine of Russia. Her mother, no doubt.

From *Came the Dawn in Meet Mr Mulliner* (1927)

With all his worldly prospects swept away and a large bruise on his person which made it uncomfortable for him to assume a sitting posture, you might have supposed that the return of Lancelot Mulliner from Putney would have resembled that of the late Napoleon from Moscow.

From *The Old Reliable*, ch 3 (1951)

"Doom, desolation and despair. Well, see you in the headline," said Bill, and moved ponderously to the door, a female Napoleon retreating from Moscow.

From *Jill the Reckless*, ch 2 (1920)

It has perhaps been sufficiently indicated by the remarks of Parker, the valet, that the little dinner at Freddie Rooke's had not been an unqualified success. Searching the records for an adequately gloomy parallel to the taxi-cab journey to the theatre which followed it, one can only think of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. And yet even that was probably not conducted in dead silence. There must have been moments when Murat got off a good thing or Ney said something.

From *The Little Nugget*, ch 14 (1913)

Sam appeared again in a gap in the trees, walking slowly and pensively, as one retreating from his Moscow.

From *Mike*, ch 31 (1909)

Mike nodded. A sombre nod. The nod Napoleon might have given if somebody had met him in 1812, and said, "So you're back from Moscow, eh?"

From *Summer Lighting*, ch 2 (1933)

Mac had admirable qualities, but not tact. He was the sort of man who would have tried to cheer Napoleon up by talking about Winter Sports at Moscow.

From *The Swoop*, pt 1, ch 7 (1909)

It was obvious that the superior forces of the Germans and Russians gave them, if they did but combine, the key to the situation. The decision they arrived at was, as set forth above, as follows. After the fashion of the moment, the Russian and German

generals decided to draw the Colour Line. That meant that the troops of China, Somaliland, Bollygolla, as well as Raisuli and the Young Turks, were ruled out. They would be given a week in which to leave the country.

From *A Prince for Hire*, ch 9 (1931)

And in New York, in this day and age, Smith knew, a man with money and without scruples could come rather nearer to having his own way than a Russian czar before Petrograd became Leningrad.

From *A Gentleman of Leisure*, ch 9 (1910)

"You don't wish you was in Russher," said a voice.

"Yus, I do wish I was in Russher," retorted a shrivelled mummy of a cabman, who was blowing patiently at a saucerful of coffee.

"Why do you wish you was in Russher?" asked the interlocutor, introducing a massa Bones and Massa Johnsing touch into the dialogue.

"Because yer can wade over yer knees in bla-a-a-ad there," said the mummy.

"In wot?"

"In bla-a-ad – ruddy bla-a-ad! That's why I wish I wos in Russia."

"Cheery cove that," said Lord Dreever. "I say, can you give us some coffee?"

"I might try Russia instead of Japan," said Jimmy, meditatively.

From *The Head of Kay's*, ch 4 (1905)

Anything modern was taboo, unless it were the work of Gotsuchakoff, Thingummyowsky, or some other eminent foreigner.

From *Archibald and The Masses in Young Men in Spats* (1935)

"I. [ie Meadows, Archibald's valet] have been a member of the League for the Dawn of Freedom for many years, sir. Our object, as the name implies, is to hasten the coming revolution."

"Like in Russia, do you mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"Massacres and all that?"

From *The Story of Webster in Mulliner Nights* (1932)

... and he replied to his nephew's communication with a vibrant letter in which he emphasized the grievous pain it gave him to think that one of his flesh and blood should deliberately be embarking on a career which must inevitably lead sooner or later to the painting of Russian princesses lying on divans in the semi-nude with their arms round tame jaguars.

From *A Damsel in Distress*, ch 21 (1919)

"This foolery of titles and aristocracy. Silly fetish-worship! One man's as good as another ..."

"This is the spirit of '76!" said George approvingly.

"Regular IWW stuff," agreed Billie. "Shake hands with the President of the Bolsheviki!"

From *Love Among the Chickens*, ch 6 (1920)

It was the disagreeable, sardonic-looking bird which Ukridge, on the strength of an alleged similarity of profile to his wife's nearest relative, had christened Aunt Elizabeth. A Bolshevik hen, always at the bottom of any disturbance in the fowl-run, a bird which ate its head off daily at our expense and bit the hands which fed it by resolutely declining to lay a single egg.

From *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, ch 5 (1974)

I could see how this must have rankled. I do not keep pigs myself, but if I did I should strongly resent not being allowed to give them a change of air and scenery without getting permission from a board of magistrates. Are we in Russia?

From *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, ch 8 (1974)

Of course he may have been brooding because he had just heard that a pal of his in Moscow had been liquidated that morning, or he had murdered a capitalist and couldn't think of a way of getting rid of the body ...

From *Right Ho, Jeeves*, ch 11 (1934)

... the only cook that has ever been discovered capable of pushing food into him [*ie Uncle Tom*] without starting something like Old Home Week in Moscow under the third button is this uniquely gifted Anatole.

From *The Code of the Woosters*, ch 4 (1938)

"I'm fed up with this police persecution. One might as well be in Russia."

From *The Clicking Of Cuthbert in The Clicking Of Cuthbert* (1921)

"Let me tell you one vairy funny story about putting. It was one day I play at Nijni-Novgorod with the pro against Lenin and Trotsky, and Trotsky had a two-

inch putt for the hole. But, just as he addresses the ball, someone in the crowd he tries to assassinate Lenin with a rewolver – you know that is our great national sport, trying to assassinate Lenin with rewolvers – and the bang puts Trotsky off his stroke and he goes five yards past the hole, and then Lenin, who is rather shaken, you understand, he misses again himself, and we win the hole and match and I clean up three hundred and ninety-six thousand roubles, or fifteen shillings in your money. Some gameovitch!"

From *Big Money*, ch 6 (1931)

... for his companion was only too obviously a man who entertained a strong dislike for City clerks. This became sickly manifest when he began to speak with a sort of gloating note in his voice of knocking their heads off and stamping them into the mud, even if – or, perhaps, even more strongly because – they went swanking about in grey top-hats. That, as far Lord Hoddeson was able to follow his remarks, was, it appeared, the way Stayling would have behaved in Moscow, and what was enough for Stayling was, the cloth-capped man frankly admitted, good enough for him.

From *Joy in the Morning*, ch 7 (1947)

I am always stiff in my manner with elderly gentlemen who snort like foghorns when I appear and glare at me as if I were somebody from Moscow distributing Red propaganda.

From *Hot Water*, ch 7 (1932)

"Well, Father [*ie Senator Opal*] did tell me his valets never stayed with him more than a week or so, but he said he thought it must be due to this Bolshevik spirit that you see springing up on all sides."

From *Thank You, Jeeves*, ch 13 (1934)

Like a sheep wandering back to the fold, this blighted Bolshevik had rolled home, twenty-four hours late, plainly stewed to the gills.

From *Thank You, Jeeves*, ch 16 (1934)

The occupant of the Dower House was no mere gardener. It was Moscow's Pride, the unspeakable Brinkley ...

From *If I Were You*, ch 3 (1931)

A butler of spirit does not like to be worsted by a snip of a boy, and there was not much change, he realized sadly, to be got out of young Syd. Young Syd had a way of twisting your remarks and making them recoil on you like boomerangs. The result, the butler presumed, of spending half his time arguing with his Bolshie friends.