



BY THE WAY

Occasional Newsletters from The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

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Wodehouse's Crooks – Part I

Since the meaning of the word 'crook' depends so much on the viewpoint of the reader, we cannot claim this list will be fully comprehensive. For example, despite her many transgressions, Dahlia Travers will not be featured. Neither will Galahad Threepwood, despite his intimate acquaintance with police cells, constables, and sundry law courts; nor the Earl of Ickenham, despite his self-confessed conviction about the day at the dog races. But it is only because the many serious crimes of Sir Gregory P-P and the Duke of Dunstable have not been tested by the courts that their names do not appear here. We apologise for those omissions of crooks you would like to have seen, or for including a favourite character whose faults, perhaps, were but minor.

We believe that this review will occupy the June slot in *By The Way* until 2017.

Appleby, Horace

After an apprenticeship with the Duplessis mob, he became head of the Appleby gang of gun-free criminals whose favourite technique was to obtain a post as butler and organise an inside job. When visiting Wallingford, he was himself held up and robbed, but his wallet was recovered by Ada Cootes, to whom he went on to be engaged. His final job before retirement was planned to involve Bond's Bank, and he went as far as to fire decoy shots to draw the police to Mallow Hall before investing £50,000 in a gamble on the Bank's future.

(Do Butlers Burgle Banks?)

Appleby, Professor

A large and benevolent-looking confidence trickster in a senatorial frock-coat whose white beard completed the impression of a minor prophet. On meeting the introspective Cooley Paradene Sr on a train from San Francisco, he sought to fulfil his dream of a major heist, and came frighteningly close to achieving his goals.

(Bill the Conqueror)

Baxter, Rupert J.

A swarthy, thickset, young man (with the vaguely grubby and supercilious expression and appearance typical of young men of bad complexion), Baxter was intolerant of all but perfection in others (though not, of course, in himself).

Baxter was guilty of conspiracy in relation to the stealing of pigs, causing criminal damage by means of flowerpots, telling untruths to his employer and assorted other departures from normal standards of behaviour.

(Leave It to Psmith, Service With a Smile and other stories in the Blandings series)

Belpher, Viscount Percy

Percy Wilbraham Marsh, bovine and obese son and heir of the Earl of Marshmoreton, was fined for slugging a cop in the stomach without the excuse that he was drunk.

(A Damsel in Distress)

Benyon, John

He robbed the New Asiatic Bank of \$100,000 and, after being convicted, jumped bail with it to Algiers, where he lived for five years. He was addicted to baseball, and on hearing that two famous American teams were about to play an exhibition match at Chelsea Football Ground, he accepted the risk of discovery and attended.

(‘One Touch of Nature’ in The Man With Two Left Feet)

Binns, ‘Porky’

Depending on whether your source of information is the British *Nash's Magazine* or the American *Burr McKintosh Monthly*, he was either a member of the Frith Street Gang, and pinched by PC Keating, or of the Groome Street Gang, when Officer Kelly did the honours (or should we say, honors).

(‘Misunderstood’)

Bond, Sir Hugo

The recently deceased uncle of Mike Bond, he had been a rubicund bachelor who had bought both Mallow Hall and popularity by embezzling from the bank which bore his name on an impressive scale.

(Do Butlers Burgle Banks?)

Bott, J. Gladstone

He was fated to be the lifelong rival, in fame or notoriety, of Bradbury Fisher. The latter was the first to make his first million, but JG's first divorce suit took half-a-column more to report than Fisher's. At

Sing-Sing, where each spent several happy years of early manhood, they ran neck and neck for the prizes which that institution had to offer.

(‘High Stakes’ in *The Heart of a Goof*)

Brown, Ellen

Known by the milkman Alf Brooks as ‘Little Pansy-Face’, Ellen lived and worked as a maid in a second-floor flat in York Mansions. She was charged by her employer Jane on one occasion with the theft of money, and on another with the theft of money and a brooch. Although not guilty of extracting cash, she did admit to borrowing the trinket. She was uncomplaining when arrested by PC Eddie Plimmer, who waited for her as she served her sentence.

(‘The Romance of the Ugly Policeman’ in *The Man With Two Left Feet*)

Buffin, James ‘Spider’

A small, ugly professional pickpocket of just 105lb, whose eyes showed suspicion and secrecy. He sought to pursue his hobby, revenge, after being sent down for sand-bagging the arresting officer.

(‘Misunderstood’)

Butler, ‘Rabbit’

As with Porky Binns, the details differ according to source. What is certain is that he was arrested whilst assaulting a policeman.

(‘Misunderstood’)

Carlisle, Gordon (‘Oily’)

After a temporary estrangement from his wife Sweetie, this tall, slender, almost excessively gentlemanly conman took the name M le Duc de Pont-Andemer, with supposed estates in Touraine, for a visit to St Rocque. There he tried to double-cross his friend Soup Slattery before, to his considerable surprise, Sweetie reappeared in his life. He ‘lent’ fifty pounds to Cosmo Wisdom, and sought to recover it a million-fold from any one of several sources using a combination of theft, blackmail and violence.

(*Cocktail Time and Hot Water*)

Carlisle, Gertrude (‘Sweetie’)

A strapping young woman with bold hazel eyes, a determined chin, and muscles developed for the wielding of bottles, coshes, vases and other weapons. At one time known as ‘Gum-Shoe Gertie’, she had been Oily’s business partner until a year after their marriage, when her enforced stay in hospital nursing a broken leg gave him the freedom to see another lady friend. After emerging to express her

opinion with a vase, she left to re-emerge in the persona of Medway, maid to Julia Wedge.

(*Cocktail Time and Hot Water*)

Chicago Dick

A kidnapper well known to the police.

(‘The Mixer: Breaking Into Society’ in the *Red Magazine* version of the story)

Chicago Ed

The Little Nugget assumed that if it had not been Buck MacGinnis who tried to kidnap him, it would have been Chicago Ed.

(*The Little Nugget*)

Chicago Ed

The name of a kidnapper played by Bingley Crocker onstage in *This Way Out*, brought to life by him in a later virtuoso performance involving the Little Nugget.

(*Piccadilly Jim*)

Chicago Kate

The person ‘recognised’ by Mr McGee proved not to be Chicago Kate after all.

(‘Mr McGee’s Big Day’, uncollected)

Chippendale, ‘Tidy’ Thomas

A cousin of Reginald Chippendale, Crispin Scrope’s butler, he had once cleaned out a church down Hammersmith way.

(*The Girl in Blue*)

Cincinnati Kid

A fictional character who went round in a mask with lots of revolvers. Kay Derrick was about to learn what happened next when she was interrupted by her governess and the source material burned. Kay never found out what happened in the little room behind the bar in the Blue Gulch Saloon, and years later she realised that she would never know what would have happened if she didn’t agree to marry Sam Shotter.

(*Sam the Sudden*)

Cincinnati Sue

The authorities at Police Headquarters were clearly of the opinion that if Mrs Waddington had told them that her thief had had a snub-nose and two moles on her chin, they would have known it was Cincinnati Sue.

(*The Small Bachelor*)

Clayborne, Bernadette (‘Barney’)

The sister of Homer Pyle, she had kleptomaniac tendencies and was arrested for shoplifting at Guildenstern’s Stores.

(*The Girl in Blue*)