



WOOSTER SAUCE

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Plum, Pastiche, and Parody

by Charles E. Gould, Jr

In the introduction to *Thank You, Wodehouse*, by Dr J. H. C. Morris, Frances Donaldson says:

[Wodehouse] was not an author it was possible to parody. Many people have tried, but . . . no one that I have read has succeeded. . . . The tricks are there . . . but the spirit has escaped.

The McIlvaine Bibliography nonetheless lists a dozen such attempts, two of them laid on my own doorstep, like Huckleberry Finn's dead cat: "Lemme see him, Huck," says Tom Sawyer. "My, he's pretty stiff." Lady Donaldson adds that Dr Morris is not attempting parody, saying, "This is a work of exemplary scholarship, although the scholarship is itself part of the joke." The same is true of Norman Murphy's *Reminiscences of the Hon. Galahad Threepwood*. Though naturally writing in the voice of Galahad Threepwood, Norman is not parodying Wodehouse but amplifying him, moving from fiction into fact.

'Jeeves for Hire', by Basil Boothroyd (*Punch*, March 8, 1972), is parody, derived from a news item: "It is reported that this summer's American visitors, for a travel agency fee, may be escorted round our tourist attractions by purpose-trained Gentlemen's Gentlemen."

Bertram X. Wooster III, founder and President of General Dietary Beverages (Cincinnati) Inc., heaved himself up the bed into a rough right angle. His head swam. . . . "What the heck goes into that mule cure of yours, Jeeves? Jeeves!"

But Bertram X. Wooster was alone. He danced a step in the sunshine, hummed a snatch by Anon, and went to bathe.

I loved Basil Boothroyd's appearances in *Punch in propria persona*, but this smacks a little of Huck's stiff dead cat.

Jugged Journalism, by A. B. Cox (Herbert Jenkins, 1925), is a collection of lessons for writers, Lesson XIX concerning 'Literary Style'.

Suppose, for example, that Dr. Conan Doyle, having been asked to supply a Sherlock Holmes story to a certain magazine, suddenly developed measles or thought he would rather play golf instead, and so handed the thing over to Mr. P.G. Wodehouse to write for him.

HOLMES AND THE DASHER

It was a pretty rotten sort of day in March that dear old Holmes and I were sitting in the ancestral halls in Baker Street, putting in a bit of quiet meditation. At least Holmes was exercising the good old grey matter, while I was relaxing gently in an armchair. . . .

"Well, Watson," Holmes asked, splashing a little soda into his glass of cocaine. "As the jolly old poet says what, what, what?"

Cox has the advantage of being able to be funny on his own, while at the same time he manages to parody both Conan Doyle and Wodehouse.

Twice I myself have plumbed these murky depths. The Sherlock Holmes story of the Giant Rat of Sumatra (for which the world is still not ready) remains untold, and until Norman Murphy brought it to the surface, the story of Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe and the Prawns slept like the Kraken. But in my Christmas 1984 Catalogue I had published 'Prawns in Epic'.

THE SUN on Ascot richly shone, on many a Pelican and Drone, who down from London for the day had made his bright, effulgent way. . . . And soon there gleamed on Parsloe's sight, like some meteor trailing light, a shimmering form all butlerine which bore before



Peter Cannon wrote *Scream for Jeeves* in the style of H. P. G. Lovecraft, parodying both Wodehouse and Lovecraft.

him a tureen of prawns . . . and when the dust of battle cleared, the throng about him turned and cheered for what upon his brow was seen? A helmet? No! The prawn tureen!

As if that weren't enough, I then published the story in prose, as reconstructed from the True and Original Copy of a Journal by The Hon. Galahad Threepwood, *A Prawn at Ascot, or A Pawn in Aspic*. My friend the late David Lloyd, having in mind my monograph 'The Toad at Harrow', asked if this madness would cease or was I going to write 'A Stoat at Tooting Bec'. No further comment is necessary on my ventures except to say that what I have happen to young Tubby Parsloe is as un-Wodehousian as a toad with an Eton education can get at Harrow.

In *Scream for Jeeves* (1994), Peter Cannon, as H. P. G. Lovecraft, wrote three parodies of Wodehouse. In 'Cats, Rats and Bertie Wooster', Jeeves and Bertie leave London to investigate the rummy, sinister, spectral doings at Exham Priory,

". . . known for its peculiarly composite architecture, sir. Gothic towers rest on a Saxon or Romanesque substructure, whose foundation in turn is a Druidical or ante-Druidical thing which must have been contemporary with Stonehenge."

"Thank you, Jeeves." It beats me where Jeeves picks up this stuff, but the man is forever improving the mind by reading books of the highest brow.

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. In 'Something Foetid' and 'The Rummy Affair of Young Charlie', the same seems true.

Less successful than Mr. Cannon's work is *The Star Spangled Pig*, by James Carruth. In his presentation of this massive pastiche, publisher Robert A. Hall says, "In many instances, the story of a well-known work has been carried forward by one or more continuators," citing as examples *Don Quixote* and C. Northcote Parkinson's *Jeeves*. "It is in this noble tradition that James A. Carruth has given us a sequel to *Pigs Have Wings*." Just the first sentence will give you the idea.

It was a positively perfect sunny spring morning as Clarence, the Earl of Emsworth, and his younger brother, Sir (*sic*) Galahad Threepwood, sauntered through the smiling messuages of Blandings Castle, feeling at peace with all humanity, the brothers, that is, not the castle, even with all their assorted sisters.

The style is so overwrought as to turn, unintentionally, from pastiche into satire.

The danger in taking oneself too seriously looms large for the parodist and pastiche artist, especially the long-winded or pedantic one. Professor Robert A. Hall and Father James Carruth were among the earliest members of The Wodehouse Society (US), and one does not want to be too harsh on them, but Professor Hall's 'Clifford's Punctured Romance' is, in his words, "a re-telling, in a serious vein, of the

events narrated in Wodehouse's 'Mr. Potter Takes A Rest Cure.'" Why anyone would want to re-tell a Wodehouse story 'in a serious vein' is a mystery. In *Human Metamorphoses*, Professor Hall treats the transformation of Lavender Briggs (*Service With a Smile*) into Valerie Anne Pemberley, noting that the tale "is as explicit concerning sexual experience as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, but without his exaggerated emphasis on physical details and without the 'four-letter words.'" Though I'm no prude, I don't want to know that side of Lavender Briggs; but without the exaggerated emphasis on physical details and the four-letter words, what's it all about?

The parodist or pastiche artist labors under a particular difficulty when his subject is a humorist. 'Continuators', working in 'a serious vein', like jealousy mock the meat they feed on, unwittingly mocking themselves. *Punch* kept at it in the issue for September 25, 1974: "Ah, what a pity the *really* great storytellers never got their hands on TV drama series . . ."

A MAN CALLED IRONSIDE
by P.G. Wodehouse

IRONSIDE: What do we know about this fearful blister Graziano?

MARK: Not to put too fine a thingummy on it, Chief, he seems to strike all concerned as one of San Francisco's premier warts. My cousin Algy informs me that he is up to his spats in the Mafia and consequently an egg of almost unfathomable rottenness.

Wodehouse could so spin a cliché that it became an original, and to imitate it is merely to mangle it . . . and you get an egg of almost unfathomable rottenness.

A few months after Wodehouse died, Miles Kington (*Punch*, May 7, 1975) supposed that "If the musical *Jeeves* gets shot down by the critics, but the *Black Mikado* is a rave success, then clearly what we need" is

BLACK JEEVES
Bertie's Blues

When I wake up . . .
And that guy with the hammer is deep inside . . .
Hold on, I'm coming round, we can do it if we try,
We can make it through the day, my man and I.

A prolific writer with a strongly individual style will eventually parody himself unintentionally, as Wodehouse does in some of his later novels and in 'Honeysuckle Cottage' and 'Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court'. After a short time in Honeysuckle Cottage, inherited from his aunt, detective-story writer James Rodman begins to turn out her kind of bilge; and after a brief spell ("a ghastly spell that saps the strongest humanitarian principles") at Bludleigh Court, animal lover Charlotte Mulliner, who "loathes anything connected with sport", in the absence of the "gnus, moose, elks, zebus, antelopes, giraffes, mountain goats and wapiti which had had the

misfortune to meet Colonel Sir Francis Pashley-Drake” is soon whanging away with an air gun at Uncle Francis himself while he is sun-bathing on the boathouse roof. These are Mr Mulliner stories, some of which, like Buck-U-Uppo, move from credible fiction into incredible fantasy. That is why they both appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, in which Charles Sheffield (‘The Marriage of True Minds’) shows “what would happen if P. G. Wodehouse had chosen to write a fantasy using his Blandings Castle setting”. The story is about shape-shifting: Lord Emsworth and the Empress turn into each other, by dint of an amulet that falls into the hands of Lord Emsworth’s grandson George.



Charles Gould, no doubt after reading a genuine Wodehouse

From a line purified by centuries of inbreeding, no one expects too much in the way of brains. Even so, many people felt that Lord Emsworth, with a power of mind that had on occasion been compared unfavorably with that of a boiled potato, took the matter to extremes.

If I put these three stories together and hid the names of the authors, you might not be sure who wrote which.

Wodehouse’s skill, however, is such that he can engage in intentional self-parody with impunity. In the preface to the Jenkins edition of *Summer Lightning*, he says, “With my superior intelligence, I have outgeneralled [a certain critic] this time by putting in

all the old Wodehouse characters under the same names.” His masterpiece in this vein is ‘From a Detective’s Notebook’ (*The World of Mr Mulliner*), in which he parodies himself, the wind-bag narrator of the Mulliner stories, and Conan Doyle.

We were sitting round the club fire, old General Malpus, Driscoll the Q.C., young Freddie finch-finch, and myself, when Adrian Mulliner, the private investigator, gave a soft chuckle. This was, of course, in the smoking-room, where soft chuckling is permitted.

“I wonder,” he said, “if it would interest you chaps to hear the story of what I always look upon as the greatest triumph of my career?”

We said No, it wouldn’t and he began.

My late wife, Carolyn, read only one Wodehouse story, ‘Jeeves and the Yuletide Spirit’, saying that it would be impossible to do better than that. Or, to put it another way, as *Punch* did two days after Wodehouse’s 92nd birthday (October 17, 1973):

Jeeves Shimmered Out

Superstarmakers Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber have abandoned their plans to follow *Jesus Christ* with a musical based on Wodehouse’s Jeeves, because it proved too difficult a subject. Which would seem to bear out old Sam Johnson’s remark that “there is no difficulty in comprehending God, only in understanding His servants.”

P. G. Wodehouse chuckled softly.

Wodehouse Warmth in the Cold War

by Donald Davinson

In the depths of the Cold War, I was invited by the British Council to undertake a tour of Soviet Union universities and major libraries. Pre-briefing stern injunctions to avoid any topics likely to inflame the Comrades were solemnly noted. The presence throughout the trip of a KGB Captain (who spoke English more better than what I do) was clearly designed to prevent attempts on my part to foment counter-revolution, but since he was usually legless by early evening, I could have spent my night hours doing so with nobody any the wiser.

It was on a visit to the English faculty at Leningrad University that I felt the tendency for the ice to thin under my feet. At the conclusion of a short lecture, I was asked if they could ask questions. Flattered that my lecture had gone so well, I agreed. They had only two questions. Did I know an English author named P. G. Wodehouse? “Ah,” thought I with a flash of Woosterian searing intellect, “a trap! Watch yourself! PGW works full of aristos, Russian

aristos now deceased. PGW awash with bloated capitalism, Oofy Prosser and other Drones, servants ground under the heels of the former two categories. I am due at least a long tirade on Western decadence.” I essayed a tentative affirmation.

Assent was greeted with huge enthusiasm, however. Did I know the story ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’? Could I tell them how it ended? Apparently said story, shorn of its final four pages, had formed part of an examination they had just taken. The project set was to complete it in their own words. It seemed that their Professor was a secret imbiber at the Master’s fountain – ‘Up the Revolution, Brothers, down with the Capitalist running dogs’ by day but, under the sheets at night with a little torch, an avid disciple. He had told his flock that if they aspired to write the English language at its purest, PGW was the boy for them.

Of course, literature as subversive was not available to them – until, that is, I sent them some disguised as a fruit cake.

Chilly – but Challenging!

Lesley Tapson reports on our February 18 meeting

On a grim, drizzly winter evening, 40 or so hardy souls gathered upstairs in The George to devote themselves to all things Wodehouse. Despite the inclement weather, there was the usual feeling of bonhomie amongst the devoted horde.

As per usual, the meeting scheduled to start at 6.30 pm started promptly at 7. There is inevitably something of a delay to the commencement of the proceedings at these bashes, usually due to the fact that those who attend have a habit of gassing away, and it's impossible to get them to stop nattering! That's what comes of getting a bunch of convivial coves with a common interest together under one roof.

When eventually our glorious Chair, Hilary Bruce, called the meeting to order, the parish notices made for marvellous entertainment in their own right. The Swedish Wodehouse Society had been in touch to announce the birth of eight piglets born to the Empress of Malmo. A request was made for names for the tiny porkers (four girls, four boys) to be provided, and suggestions came a-plenty: Monica (but of course!), Dahlia, George (see Monica), and Clarence were but a few. The Swedish Society had also sent a dedicated, silver plated pig-scratching tool (no modern pig should be without one). Candidly speaking, the silver-plating looked suspiciously like silver foil, but that may be the cynic in me coming to the fore.

We were informed of several Wodehouse-inspired works. Tony Ring announced that an entertainment, 'Poet in the City', would be taking place on April 14 at Kings Place [see review on page 6]. Norman Murphy, the Society's Remembrancer, had arrived laden with copies of his recent tome, *Phrases and Notes* [see review on page 14], being offered at a discounted price. Copies were changing hands for used tenners at a pretty snappy rate!

The main news of the evening was the announcement that the Society has a new President. Warm and enthusiastic applause followed the confirmation by Hilary that Sir Terry Wogan had accepted an invitation to become our new President. The general consensus was that this was v. good news indeed: Sir Terry is a worthy successor to the much missed Richard Briers.



A short break followed this announcement to enable the more parched members of the throng to recharge their glasses. It was just as well that bracers were imbibed because what followed that brief adjournment in the proceedings was sufficient to make strong men cry! A fiend in human shape appeared in the form of Paul Kent, the Society's entertainment impresario. The evening's entertainment took the form of a PGW quiz. Team names included 'The Dulwich Dusters', 'Chimp and the Twists', and 'Wogan's Heroes' (the eventual winners). One might expect a quiz such as this would be a doddle to a group of aficionados such as these. How wrong can



Teams wrack their brains; the victorious team, Wogan's Heroes, toast their victory (below).



one be?! What kind of a person asks for the names of all of Wilfred Mulliner's creations – *except* for Buck-U-Uppo?* Or the preferred noggin of each of the 19 habitués of The Angler's Rest?! Suffice it to say that had bread rolls been to hand, I suspect several would have been lobbed at our quizmaster. We can all guess what he had been reading recently!

It was, of course, a thoroughly entertaining evening. The camaraderie, as ever, was there in bucket-loads. The evening closed with a reminder that the next meeting will take place on July 15 at The George. The entertainment is to be arranged once again by PK! We have been warned!

* For those of you who need to know, they were: Raven Gypsy Face Cream, Snow of the Mountains Lotion, Reduce-O, and Ease-O.

Society News

Our July Meeting

As the deadline for this edition of *Wooster Sauce* loomed, a reeking messenger staggered into the Editor's office, not unlike Pheidippides legging it back from the battle of Marathon to impart the glad tidings. "Stop the presses!" he gasped. "The impresario has finally had an idea!"

"And not before time!" the Editor sternly replied, giving her desk calendar the basilisk stare. "Well? Out with it, man."

"He's going to re-run the Great Sermon Handicap!"

"What? Is The George to be inundated with rural clerics? It'll take forever! Not to mention the clearing up afterwards."

"No, no," said the messenger. "Here's the cunning of it. He's going to perform a shortened version of one of Mr Wodehouse's best-loved short stories – the one about the sermon handicap – and the assembled multitudes have to guess how long he's going to take to read it, in minutes and seconds. Just like in the plot! Whoever's guess is the closest wins the customary apes, ivory, and peacocks. Dashed clever, I call it!"

The Editor sighed in a Paxmanesque manner and sucked her teeth. "Well," she said at last, "it's so crazy it might just work. Anyway, it's got to be better than that wretched bingo he foisted on us last year. My head's *still* aching."

"And he said be sure to remember to tell everyone it's on July 15 at 6.30 p.m. at The George in the Strand. And if they don't come, they'll hold their manhoods cheap and think themselves accursed they were not there – or something."

And with that the messenger dashed out. Presumably in fear of being shot.

– Paul Kent

Ninth Formal London Dinner

Thursday October 16, 2014

The Society's ninth formal London dinner is to be held on Thursday, October 16, 2014. It will once again take place at The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, London WC1. Dinner will be 7.00 p.m. for 7.30; dress code is black tie.

We have once again been lucky enough to be offered very generous sponsorship, which means we have been able to keep the cost at £95 per head, the same price as two years ago. For this, those who attend will enjoy a champagne reception and a splendid four-course dinner, including wine.

This year's dinner is being held within a few days of the 100th anniversary of Wodehouse's marriage to Ethel in New York, a fact that has not escaped the attention of those planning the evening's theme and customarily brilliant after-dinner entertainment. It promises to be a very special evening, all in the stunning surroundings of the Gray's Inn Hall and in the company of many of our patrons.

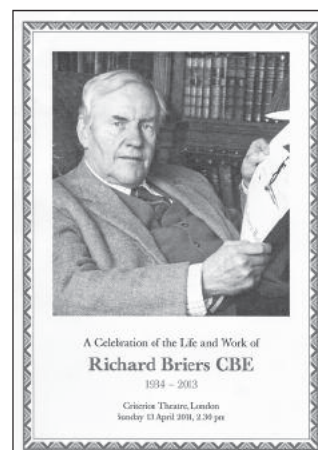
Further details of how to apply can be found on the application form included with this edition of *Wooster Sauce*. Members who have attended previous dinners will be aware how quickly the places are booked. Gray's Inn Hall has a capacity of about 120 diners, and this year we expect demand to be particularly high. Places will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. It is therefore strongly recommended that members apply for tickets by return, using the form enclosed with this issue.

Applications will be acknowledged in late July, *but only if you enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope*. Letters of confirmation will be sent out at the end of August. As usual, some places will be kept in reserve until mid-August for overseas members who will not be able to return the form as quickly as UK residents.

– Tim Andrew

Remembering Richard Briers

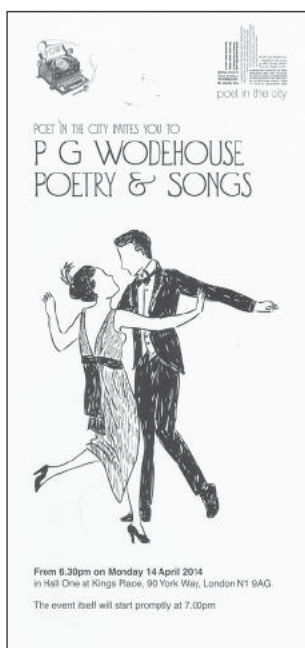
On April 13 a celebration of the life and work of the Society's late President, Richard Briers, was held at the Criterion Theatre in London. Attended by many of the great and good from the entertainment industry, as well as several Society members, the occasion was marked by much laughter and applause as film clips of Richard's work on screen and stage were shown. Tributes and readings were offered by fellow actors Peter Egan, Sheila Hancock, Peter Bowles, Dame Penelope Keith, and Sir Kenneth Branagh (whose eulogy was particularly perceptive and amusing), while members of his family – including his wife, Annie, daughters Kate and Lucy, and grandchildren Harry and Rachael – offered their own touching recollections of a warm, loving, and generous man. No mention was made of his association with the world of Wodehouse, but among the film clips shown was one from his first movie, *The Girl on the Boat* (1961), based on the PGW novel of the same name. It was clear that Richard will always be remembered with smiles and affection – not a bad legacy at all.



Peerless Poetry from PGW

by Peter Read

Recipe for a magical evening of poetry and song: assemble a stellar cast, recruit Tony Ring to navigate same through a sublime selection of Wodehouse material, and round off with a tear-jerking rendering of the Society anthem ‘Bill’, sung by Lara Cazalet.



The evening of April 14 at Kings Place in London saw a sprinkling of Wodehousians joining a full house of poetry aficionados, many clearly new to PGW, judging by their excited response to some of the best-known excerpts. These were brilliantly read or performed by Simon Brett, a clutch of Cazalets (Hal, Lara, and David), and Lucy Tregear, supported by Stephen Higgins on the piano, he of the Wodehouse Dinners. The between-verses commentary was supplied by Tony, Simon, and Sophie Ratcliffe (editor of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*).

Far be it from me to suggest the event was a plug for Tony’s new book of 100 PGW poems, *What Goes Around Comes Around* [see review on page 15], but that tome showcases many of the poems we heard during the evening; these included ‘Thoughts on a Recent Wooing’ (1906), an examination of the role of the paparazzi in Royal affairs. The reading of verses concluded with the better-known ‘Printer’s Error’, a verse vilifying poor proofreading:

Some vile, careless, casual gook
Had spoiled the best thing in the book
By printing ‘not’
(Yes, ‘not’ great Scott!)
When I had written ‘now’.

Anything Goes, Cazalet Style

On April 16 in *The Times*, Patrick Kidd led his *Diary* column with a paragraph about Poet in the City’s ‘Evening of P. G. Wodehouse Poetry and Songs’. He included the new verse which Hal Cazalet had written and added to his rendition of Wodehouse’s UK adaptation of the song ‘Anything Goes’. A snippet:

Today we all agree
To pay our licence fee
To the BBC
To watch reality
Where up a jungle tree
Sits a ‘celebrity’
That nobody knows.
Anything Goes.

The entertaining links related most of the poetry to contemporary life. And then there were the songs. There was one of my absolute favourites, ‘If Ever I Lost You’ – a duet performed by Hal and Lucy – with its immortal lines: “Think how a sausage’s hope would be dash’d / If one day it awoke and miss’d its mash”. The big finish of the formal programme – ‘Anything Goes’, with English lyrics by Plum – brought the house down as it included a 21st-century version of political scandals and other contemporary events. And to top it all off, there was ‘Bill’ as an encore.

For those who missed it, and indeed for those who enjoyed the evening, we shall have to wait for a reprise someday, ‘Till the Clouds Roll By’.

‘Rule Sixty-Three’: A Newly Discovered Wodehouse Story

As this issue was being prepared, word arrived of the discovery of a previously unknown Wodehouse short story. Found accidentally by Charles Stone-Tolcher while he was doing some research at the University of Queensland, Australia, ‘Rule Sixty-Three’ was published in *The Novel Magazine* in March 1915 and, to the knowledge of Wodehousean scholars who ought to know, never re-published since then.

Until now. Thanks to the website *Madame Eulalie’s Rare Plums*, the story can be read online (see link below). Keen Wodehouseans will see in it intimations of *Bachelors Anonymous* to come, with its plot revolving around an employee of the Systematic Disentangling

Agency. The SDA “systematically disentangles those young couples who, unsuited to each other in every way, propose to go through life together on the strength of having the same idea of how to dance the Tango or because their judgment, such as it is, is temporarily clouded by the effects of romantic fiction and a little moonlight”.

After Charles announced his discovery in an email, Ananth Kaitharan learned that a version of the story had been filmed and released in the USA in August 1915. Thanks are due to the Wodehouse Estate for permission to publish the story on *Madame Eulalie*; see <http://bit.ly/1o0qmx6>.

The Great Cocktail Cabinet Debate

The whole thing started with David Tang's 'Agony Uncle' column in the *Financial Times* of March 8. Responding to a reader's suggestion that the best way to store liquors "would be in a beautiful art deco cocktail cabinet", Mr Tang noted that for such a cabinet to look right, "it has to stand in a room filled only with art deco furniture, all Jeeves and Woosterish".

This prompted a letter written by Society member Christopher Bellew, published on March 15:

Sir, David Tang evokes the Wodehousian world of Jeeves and Wooster as being Art Deco and is probably right. However, there would not have been an Art Deco cocktail cabinet at Bertram Wooster's home in Berkeley Mansions; Jeeves prepared his high octane pick-me-ups in his kitchen and at cocktail time wafted in with a drinks tray to keep his master's tonsils lubricated. Pip pip.

Mr Tang replied a month later (April 19):

I didn't say there was a cocktail cabinet at Bertie's home. It certainly is true that in the famous television series of Wooster and Jeeves, played by Hugh Laurie and Stephen Fry, there was only a tray for drinks in the drawing room, and Jeeves always prepared his concoctions in the kitchen. Should we rely on one stage interpretation? I was always surprised that the kitchen opened into the drawing room and this must raise suspicion, especially when there was a perfectly good dining room in which he occasionally entertained his aunts. The main point is I've not read in Wodehouse any specific mention that there was NOT a cocktail cabinet in Bertie's drawing room. As an honourable member of the Wodehouse Society, I stand to be corrected!

And Christopher could not resist a riposte (April 26):

David Tang makes Heavy Weather of my suggestion that at Cocktail Time the drinks did not come from a cocktail cabinet. For a definitive answer I suggest we Ring for Jeeves, hoping that he hasn't taken French Leave to go shrimping at Herne Bay.



But this was not the end of the matter! Keen-eyed Wodehouseans who noticed the exchange began debating the facts of the case: did Bertie own a cocktail cabinet, or did he not? Two answers came via PGWnet, where Norman Murphy asserted: "When you wanted a drink at Blandings, you rang the bell for Beach. When Bertie wanted a drink, he called Jeeves, so why would he need a cocktail cabinet? . . . From memory, PG had a cocktail cabinet in his house at Remsenburg, so it is possible that, in his last years, he may have mentioned them in his stories. But if such a thing appeared in a Bertie/Jeeves story, I would be more than surprised. That would have been a severe error on PG's part."

Meanwhile, Ian Michaud pointed out that in 'Bertie Changes His Mind', it is "quite clear that Jeeves prepares the drinks in his lair and then delivers them":

"Oh, dash it, Jeeves!" he said, manifestly overwrought. "I wish at least you'd put it on another table for a change. . . . Every night, dash it all, . . . you come in at exactly the same old time with the same old tray and put it on the same old table. I'm fed up, I tell you. It's the bally monotony of it that makes it all seem so frightfully bally."

Bertie's views change by the end of the story:

"Jeeves," said Mr. Wooster when I brought him his whisky and siphon one night about a week later, "this is dashed jolly. . . . Cosy and pleasant, you know. I mean looking at the clock and wondering if you're going to be late with the good old drinks, and then you come with the tray always exactly on time, never a minute late, and shoving it down on the table and biffing off, and the next night coming in and shoving it down and biffing off, and the next night I mean, gives you a sort of safe, restful feeling. Soothing! That's the word. Soothing!"

Readers can make up their own minds, but with two learned Wodehouseans voting nay to the cocktail cabinet, we can only say: David Tang, take note!

"You can't beat an Undertaker's Joy."

They were all so perfectly delightful and appeared to have his interests so unselfishly at heart that William could not bring himself to choose between them. He solved the problem in diplomatic fashion by playing no favorites and ordering all three of the beverages recommended.

The effect was instantaneous and gratifying. As he drained the first glass, it seemed to him that a torchlight procession, of whose existence he had hitherto not been aware, had begun to march down his throat and explore the recesses of his stomach. The second glass, though slightly too heavily charged with molten lava, was extremely palatable. It helped the torchlight procession along by adding to it a brass band of singular power and sweetness of tone. And with the third somebody began to touch off fireworks inside his head.

(From 'The Story of William', 1927)

The Four Seasons of Wodehouse

by Jen Scheppers

It is commonly understood that, far from representing a bygone age, P. G. Wodehouse created an idealised England that never really existed. Personally, I remain determined to find fragments of Wodehouse in real life, and in October 2012 I immigrated to England in search of Plumtopia.

I arrived in time for a glorious autumn – my favourite season. Surprisingly, Wodehouse sets only one novel in autumn (that I can recall).

I reached out a hand from under the blankets, and rang the bell for Jeeves.

“Good evening, Jeeves.”

“Good morning, sir.”

This surprised me.

“Is it morning?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Are you sure? It seems very dark outside.!”

“There is a fog, sir. If you will recollect, we are now in Autumn season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.”

“Season of what?”

“Mists, sir, and mellow fruitfulness.”

The Code of the Woosters (1938)

After a stunning autumn, the English spring of 2013 was disappointing by comparison, especially when Wodehouse’s spring promises so much:

“In the spring, Jeeves, a livelier iris gleams upon the burnish’d dove.”

So says Bertie Wooster, with a little help from Tennyson, in a story originally published in *The Strand* magazine as ‘Jeeves in the Springtime’ (1921) and later as ‘Jeeves Exerts the Old Cerebellum’ in *The Inimitable Jeeves* (1923). It is among his finest and best loved.

I don’t know if you know that sort of feeling you get on these days around the end of April and the beginning of May, when the sky’s a light blue, with cotton-wool clouds, and there’s a bit of a breeze blowing from the west? Kind of uplifted feeling. Romantic, if you know what I mean. I’m not much of a ladies’ man, but on this particular morning it seemed to me that what I really wanted was some charming girl to buzz up and ask me to save her from assassins or something.

Earlier, Wodehouse had contributed lyrics for the Broadway musical *Miss Springtime* (1916) and continued the spring motif with the novels *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* (1939) and *Spring Fever* (1948). In his other work, spring is arguably the default climate.

The sunshine of a fair Spring morning fell graciously upon London town. Out in Piccadilly its heartening warmth seemed to infuse into traffic and pedestrians alike a novel jauntiness, so that bus-drivers jested and even the lips of chauffeurs uncurled into not unkindly smiles. Policemen whistled at their posts, clerks on their way to work, beggars approached the task of trying to persuade perfect strangers to bear the burden of their maintenance with that optimistic vim which makes all the difference. It was one of those happy mornings.

Something Fresh (1915)

This passage neatly expresses a kind of shared joviality that I’ve witnessed in England, when the sun blesses us unexpectedly on a spring morning.

In *Blandings* it’s always spring – with the Shropshire Agricultural Show keenly anticipated – or else it’s summer. *Leave It to Psmith* (1923) begins precisely on “June the thirtieth, which is the very high-tide time of summer flowers”, and the cast return (without Psmith) in *Summer Lightning* (1929). In *Pigs Have Wings* (1952) the “sultry summer” heat prevents Maudie Stubbs from walking over to Matchingham Hall to settle a grievance with Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe.

Beyond *Blandings*, Wodehouse gave us *Summer Moonshine* (1937), and in *Right Ho, Jeeves* (1934) Bertie tells us it is “July twenty-fifth” when he returns from a trip to Cannes “looking bronzed and fit”. Although we can’t always be sure of the season, it’s clear that Wodehouse, unlike the great Russian novelists, prefers to bask his characters in



sunshine and light.

In *The Mating Season* (1949), for example, Bertie must catch a 2.45 a.m. milk train and hide in the shrubbery outside The Larches, Wimbledon Common, to intercept the morning post. He complains bitterly about his experience, not least the beetles down his back, but his author resists the literary tradition of meteorological symbolism.

Though howling hurricanes and driving rainstorms would have been a more suitable accompaniment to the run of the action, the morning or morn, if you prefer to string along with Aunt Charlotte was bright and fair. My nervous system was seriously disordered, and one of God’s less likeable creatures with about a hundred and fourteen legs had crawled down the back of my neck and was doing its daily

dozen on the sensitive skin, but did Nature care? Not a hoot. The sky continued blue, and the fat-headed sun which I have mentioned shone smilingly throughout.

Even in trying circumstances, the V-shaped depressions are usually metaphorical.

If somebody had told Frederick Fitch-Fitch at that moment that even now a V-shaped depression was coming along which would shortly blacken the skies and lower the general temperature to freezing-point, he would not have believed him.

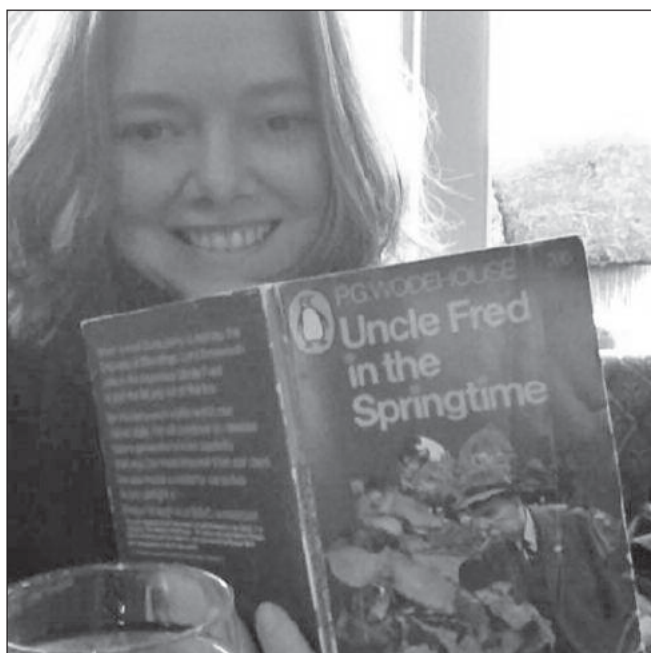
'Romance at Droitgate Spa' (1937)

Of winter, I can find very little. There is 'Jeeves and the Yule-tide Spirit' (1927) and a poem, 'The Cricketer in Winter':

Now, as incessantly it pours,
And each succeeding day seems bleaker,
The cricketer remains indoors,
And quaffs mayhap the warming beaker.
Without, the scrummage heaves and slips;
Not his to play the muddied oaf. A
Well-seasoned pipe between his lips,
He reads his Wisden on the sofa.

Perhaps this last extract best explains Plum's fondness for the warmer, sporting months when school is out and there's cricket, tennis, and golf to be played. So many of Wodehouse's best scenes occur out of doors – it's little wonder he chose not to limit his characters to rainy days indoors.

But how wonderful it would be to have a peep into Wodehouse's world all year round.



In her guise of Honoria Plum (Facebookers know her as Honoria Glossop), Jen has been writing a blog, 'Plumtopia', from which the above essay was taken. To read more of Jen's musings on the world of Wodehouse, and view the pictures she has posted, go to <http://honoriaplum.wordpress.com/>.

Summer Lightning

by Ian Alexander-Sinclair

Ian wrote this lighthearted review of Summer Lightning for his book club in 2004.

Evelyn Waugh was a great admirer of Wodehouse, whose books, he wrote, "are almost impossible to review". One should simply lie back, armed with a glass of champagne like Galahad Threepwood in his hammock on a sunny afternoon, and enjoy them.

I declare an interest as a member of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) (I am wearing the tie) and will attempt to explain why I enjoy his works. The simple truth is they are extremely amusing, and Wodehouse possesses the ability to make me laugh out loud more than any other author. Waugh can have the same effect. It is no coincidence that both had a unique command of our language and delighted in the eccentricities of the upper classes, a rich field for any humorist worth his salt. There are no messages, hidden or otherwise; Wodehouse's sole purpose is to amuse, and he was immensely successful in amusing a vast number of people across the world.

He was a prolific author, producing about a hundred books, 18 plays, and countless song lyrics. *Summer Lightning* was the third of 11 Blandings novels centred on the eccentric Earl of Emsworth, kicking off with *Something Fresh*, published in 1915, and finishing with *Sunset at Blandings*, published in 1977, two years after Wodehouse's death at 93; he published three novels after he was 90.

He created a timeless world of his own, inhabited by some of the most memorable humorous characters one could hope to come across. You are always on the right side with Wodehouse. Generally, aristocrats are feckless; relatives are frightening; butlers and valets are worldly wise and erudite; pig men are fickle; girls are pretty; chaps are dunces and inclined towards matrimony. The sun shines perpetually, and everyone drinks a tincture or tissue restorer too often – a world, Waugh said, of "pristine, paradisaic innocence". But it is predominantly a male one which is more likely to appeal to a reader on the right of the political spectrum. There is one exception to this view, and a distinguished one: asked the reason for her love of Wodehouse, H.M. the Queen Mother is reputed to have replied, "It's so realistic."

Wodehouse's plots, which gave him as much trouble as they give pleasure to his readers, are intricate if knockabout. The stories move, as does *Summer Lightning*, at a cracking pace, and one needs one's wits about one to keep up. But what amuses above all is his mastery of the language with his similes, metaphors, and extravagant descriptions – in Waugh's words, the "extreme felicity" of his writing.

Every enthusiast has his favourite passages. I would select two from this book, although there are many more.

As Ronnie Fish plugs a Mario's waiter in the stomach in his eagerness to reach Pilbeam to serve him likewise, scattering broken glass all over the place, we learn:

To the management . . . the vital issue was all this broken glass. The waiter had risen from the floor, but the glasses were still there, and scarcely one of them was in a condition ever to be used again for the refreshment of Mario's customers.

The head waiter, swooping down on the fray like some god in the Iliad descending from a cloud, was endeavouring to place this point of view before Ronnie.

And who could better the following description of an indispensable if humdrum item of country house equipment?

From the direction of the hall there came a new sound, faint at first but swelling and swelling to a frenzied blare, seeming to throb through the air with a note of passionate appeal like woman waiting for her demon lover. It was that tocsin of the soul, that muezzin of the country house, the dressing-for-dinner gong.

I am drawn to the Blandings novels by an accident of geography. I was brought up within five miles of Emsworth; my aunt lived for 40 years in Record Road, Emsworth, where Wodehouse lived for some years in a house called Threepwood. Record Road was previously named Beach Road, so the Threepwood family name, the earl's style, and his butler's name all reek with nostalgia for me. Further, the foremost authority on Wodehouse's life, Norman Murphy, has identified the original Empress of Blandings as the pig in the sty at Hunstanton Hall, Norfolk, where Wodehouse stayed with the Le Strange family a number of times in the 1920s.

Nor can I resist the distinctive orange bindings, with the centaur emblazoned on the spine, in which Herbert Jenkins published many of the Blandings novels, including *Summer Lightning*. To me they are redolent of Wodehouse. A row of these gives me as

much pleasure as Lord Emsworth derived from watching the Empress hoisting aboard a large tubful of the finest bran mash and potato peelings.

Finally, there is *Summer Lightning* itself; let me attempt to summarise the brilliant and ingenious plot. The good eggs, the dunces Ronnie and Hugo, with the vital aid of Galahad and Beach, need to obtain the consent of Lord Emsworth to marry Sue Brown and Millicent Threepwood, respectively, against the determined opposition of Lady Constance, who enlists the help of two bad eggs – if not positive blisters – the Efficient Baxter and the avaricious enquiry agent Percy Frobisher Pilbeam, who incidentally fancies Sue Brown. The rotter Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, Bart, who has poached his Lordship's pig man, is also roped in by Lady Constance as an auxiliary. Lord Emsworth is a curate's egg, solid and resolute whenever the interests of the Empress are threatened but soft and wobbly when faced with Lady Constance on the warpath.

In the struggle, no holds are barred on either side. There are thefts, attempted thefts, and conspiracies to steal the Empress and the Pride of Matchingham (Parsloe's porker), as well as Galahad's spicy memoirs and Baxter's letter to Sue denouncing his Lordship as half-witted. There are several assaults and a little battery, a blatant perjury and a spot of attempted blackmail, not to mention an impersonation – Wodehouse might have been making a play for crime writer of the year. Events follow on each other thick and fast as the plot thickens; Percy Pilbeam would have been in no condition to follow it after Beach's excellent gin and vermouth cocktails. But relax! This is Wodehouse and the good eggs triumph. Baxter retires hurt, Pilbeam does not get his £500, and Lady Constance is thwarted. Beach retires to his pantry and his Lordship disappears to the sty. On balance, I would describe the book as a bit of a corker.

I have heard that some people do not enjoy Wodehouse. This is not a crime, but one's heart goes out to them. But then I am led to believe some chaps do not enjoy cricket, Madeira, or port either.



What to Read While Waiting for the Police

The London bookstore Slightly Foxed regularly emails its regular customers with news of the shop as well as recommendations for reading. LESLEY TAPSON recently sent along one of their newsletters, which began with this interesting tale:

At the shop we love the idea of people escaping into a book, but we're not so fond of people trying to escape with *our* books. The other day was a case in point: an otherwise respectable-looking man was caught on our cameras stuffing book after book into his Barbour pockets. Tony calmly locked the door, refused to let the man leave, and rang the police. Our thief sat quietly in the shop, reading, of all things, a bit of P.G. Wodehouse. He left with the local constabulary, perhaps wishing he had the help of Jeeves to get him out of the soup. All very civilised!

My (First) Wodehouse Experience

by Gerard Palmer

The discovery, somewhat late in life, of The P G Wodehouse Society was, for me, rather on the lines of St. Paul's experience when he was trying to get to Damascus. Until then, you see, I was a secret Wodehouse addict, under the impression that I was alone in confining my reading almost exclusively to the works of the Master. The discovery that there is a multitude in the same condition – many, indeed, in an even worse condition than myself – brought a feeling of relief and comradeship.

I think it was when I was in my mid-teens that I first made the acquaintance of Bertie Wooster, Jeeves, and all the rest of them, and for over 60 years they have kept me amused. The television series by Granada with Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie is, in my opinion, the best adaptation I have seen. They seem to have got the settings, characters, and costumes just right.

Many people have commented on the ability of Wodehouse to bring balm to the bruised soul – indeed, some have gone so far as to suggest that doctors should prescribe him instead of tranquilizers, since he has no known side effects. I tend to fully agree with this sentiment as I have always found that he calms the spirit and induces, at times, helpless laughter, which, as we all know, is good for mind and body.

In my opinion, PG has still not received the recognition which he richly deserves. Some say he is the greatest comic writer of the 20th century, but I maintain he is one of the greatest writers of all time. Any fool can write a lot of obscure drivel and be hailed by the intelligentsia, but it takes a genius to

write comedy. Admittedly, there have been a few other talented individuals who wrote a bit – Shakespeare, Byron, and the like – but they seldom make one laugh out loud.

My point is that PG is so much more than that. Both in his stories and in his personal life, he exemplifies the qualities that should guide us through life: hard work, a cheerful outlook, and lending a hand to others. Now, you may think that if you have a large income, comfortable accommodation, and someone to look after you, it is not that hard to be cheerful. But Wodehouse displayed his refusal to be downcast even when arrested by the Germans and sent to an internment camp. His description of the journey across Europe in a cattle-truck is humorous, if a little wry, and his comment on arriving in Poland – “If this is Upper Silesia, what must Lower Silesia be like?” – shows the mettle of the man.

His characters display the same sterling qualities of stiff-upper-lip – looking on the bright side, being kind to animals, and never letting a pal down, even at a cost to oneself. And, they were all neatly and correctly dressed at all times – with, perhaps, the exception of the Earl of Emsworth, whom we can readily forgive because of his devotion to his pig.

As far as I am concerned, good old PG is up there with great philosophers and a darned sight better than most of them because he did not indulge in finger-wagging, boastful homilies such as those of St. Paul, who I believe is much over-rated as a guide to doing the decent thing.



Jette and Chouinard Do It Again

A few years back, Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard brought joy to the Wodehouse world when they released *In Our Little Paradise: Songs of P. G. Wodehouse*. That CD featured 18 superlative PGW songs with music by numerous different composers, including, of course, Jerome Kern. This time, with *The Siren's Song*, the focus is exclusively on PGW's collaboration with Kern. The CD's 21 songs have been selected from nine of the shows they worked on together. Familiar songs such as 'Napoleon' (*Have a Heart*), 'Bungalow in Quogue' (*The Riviera Girl*), and 'The Church Round the Corner' (*Sally*) are entertainingly performed along with lesser-known pieces such as 'We're Going to be Pals' (*Oh Boy!*) and 'Days Gone By' (*Sitting Pretty*). The collection includes the title song (from *Leave It to Jane*), and Maria gives us one of the most beautiful renditions of 'Bill' (*Oh, Lady! Lady!!*) you will ever enjoy.



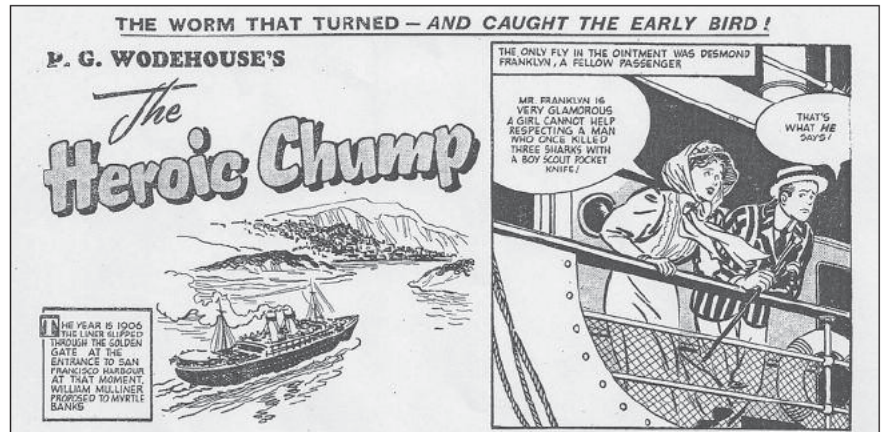
The First Wodehouse Comic Book: *The Big Match*

by Peter Nieuwenhuizen

One of the minor areas of Wodehouse research is the comic or comic magazine. In 1959 the short-lived English magazine *Top Spot* featured 'The Heroic Chump' (based on 'The Story of William' and 'The Bacon and Egg Affair' ('The Reverent Wooing of Archibald') by Cecil Orr. In the Netherlands in 1961, the newspaper *Rotterdams Dagblad* featured *Laat't maar aan Psmith* (*Leave It to Psmith*) in 100 instalments drawn by Georges Mazure. This was published as a comic book by Boumar Publishers in 2007 and is still available. In 2009, the Japanese artist Bun Katsuta began what would become the three-volume manga series of Jeeves novels entitled *Please, Jeeves*.

A recent discovery is the 1948 Netherlands comic book entitled *De Grote Match* (*The Big Match*), based on *Psmith, Journalist*. This was drawn by Leen Spierenburg and written by Jack Spieger, although they were one and the same person. Spierenburg liked using pseudonyms, of which another was 'Bing Reupers', an anagram of his name.

In 1940 the cartoonist Alfred Mazure (brother of Georges Mazure) produced popular comic books the size of a cigarette packet recounting the adventures of the detective Dick Bos. After the war, from 1947 to 1954, the popularity of these comic books was such that illustrators quickly introduced new heroes, cowboys and Indians, detectives, sporting heroes and the like. To keep up with the demand, they sometimes 'borrowed' from others, and in 1948 Spierenburg produced his sixth comic book of 95 pages. It had the note 'based on an idea of P.G. Woodhouse' (*sic*), but the title of the Wodehouse book is not given.



'The Heroic Chump' was adapted from Wodehouse's 'The Story of William'

Plot Summary and Differences

Spierenburg clearly used the novel *Psmith Journalist* but rearranged the names of the characters. In his version, the hero Panther Bill (Psmith) is enlisted by Jimmy Maloney (Mr J. Fillken Wilberfloss), the editor of the New York newspaper *Sunday Star* (*Cosy Moments*). Their friend Joe Windsor from Wyoming (Kid Brady) is the fighting editor (protecting the editorial staff) and also writes a column for the paper about his career as a light heavyweight boxer. There is an office boy: Micky Wilberfloss (Pugsy Maloney).

Editor Maloney has written about Pleasant Street, a slum neighbourhood, and tries to find the owner of the tenements with the help of Panther Bill and Windsor. They meet the villainous Mr. Parker (Francis Parker), a well-dressed representative of the tenement owner, who offers them bribes to stop the articles. The editors are then attacked by members of the Long Island City gang, Patsy Milligan and Tommy Goodley. Later on they are almost kidnapped in a taxi.

They lie in wait for the rent collector Wogan (Gooch) to shake his employer's name out of him;



Georges Mazure's take on *Leave It to Psmith*

this turns out to be the German Richard Kreutz, later naturalised into Richard Cross (Stewart Waring), a candidate for city Alderman. Jimmy, Panther Bill, and Joe are again attacked by Parker's gang but they overpower them; one of the gang members is Kid Brady (Jack Repetto), the

world champion light heavyweight boxer. Brady can regain his freedom if he agrees to fight against opponent Joe Windsor, next Friday at the Highfield Club. A pickpocket nearly makes off with their signed proof of Cross's involvement, but Panther Bill steals it back. Just before the fight, Joe Windsor is knocked down by a gang member and Panther Bill steps in the ring for the boxing match against the world champion Kid Brady and wins. (The defeated Kid Brady appears on the front cover of the comic book, right.)

The villain, Richard Cross, turns out to be the owner of the boxing hall. He threatens Panther Bill, but young Micky Wilberfloss distracts the gang members and Panther Bill overpowers them again. *The Sunday Star* is the winner.

About Leen Spierenburg

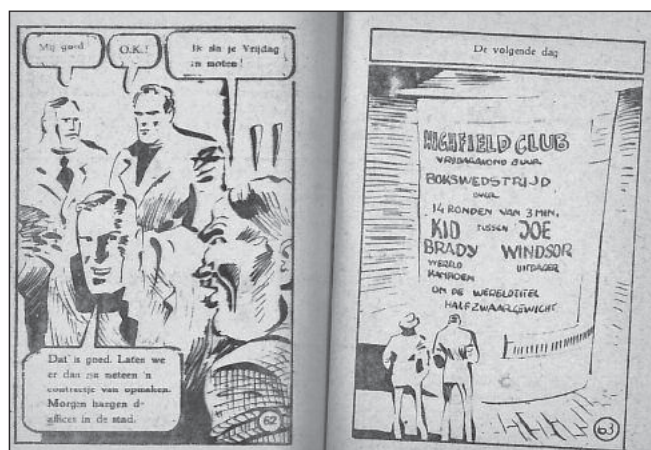
Leendert Spierenburg (1922–71) was trained by the Haarlem painter Henri Frédéric Boot (1877–1963), together with Kees Verwey, later a famous Dutch painter himself. Spierenburg, who became a noted painter, illustrator and water-colourist, worked for the



Cover of *The Big Match*, drawn by Leen Spierenburg



Above and below: panels from *The Big Match*, which is based on Psmith Journalist.



Dutch publisher Spaarnestad in Haarlem, who also published a Wodehouse novel in 1941 in Dutch (*The Small Bachelor* as *De verlegen vrijgezel*). His colleague Herman Giesen drew the dust jacket of this book. Spierenburg also designed book covers, advertising posters and provided illustrations for children's books. Later on he became chairman of the Haarlem artist society Kunst zij ons doel ('Art be our purpose').

Together with his wife, Gerda, Spierenburg started the *Panterserie* (Panther series) in 1947, a 12-volume comic book series about the hero William Brown, alias Panther Bill, involved in a series of adventures, but with no connection to Wodehouse. The books were sold for 25 cents, covered around 100 pages of black & white drawings, and were published by Bonum Unitas publishers in Haarlem.

Spierenburg died relatively young; a street in his home town, Spaarndam, was named after him. His daughter Annemieke (1946, ceramics) and son Léon (1952, water colourist) have inherited their father's artistic capabilities and are themselves painters.

Leen Spierenburg will be remembered by us for drawing the first Wodehouse comic book in the world. At the moment the Dutch P.G. Wodehouse Society is trying to produce a facsimile of this first Wodehouse comic book, with the help of the Spierenburg family.

Jack Spieger & Leen Spierenburg: *De Grote Match*. Haarlem: Bonum Unitas, 1948.

Georges Mazure & P.G. Wodehouse: *Leave it to Psmith!*. Zutphen: Bouma Publishers, 2007.

Phrases and Notes: *P.G. Wodehouse's Notebooks 1902–1905* Book review by Graeme W. I. Davidson

The latest book by Wodehouse guru Norman Murphy is essentially what it says it is on the tin. It is Norman's transcription and annotations of phrases and notes squirreled away in commonplace books by Wodehouse between 1902 and 1905, in the early stages of his career, evidencing a young man intent on organising himself as a professional writer.

The phrases and notes comprise random musings and ideas for scenes, characters, jokes, incidents, dialogue, and plotlines, quite a number clearly displaying the sign of a Wodehouse who had not yet evolved into the Wodehouse of his great middle-period writing. Some of them are clearly prompted by overheard remarks or experiences of, or recounted to, Wodehouse; others are from his imagination or otherwise uncredited to a source. Possible uses to which the scribbles might be put are also frequently given, such as a plot for a story, a theme for an article, or a title for a book.

Cannily, these musings, lines of dialogue and the like were reduced by Wodehouse to writing, safely recorded in his notebooks, so as to be there for him when he might return later for inspiration, seemingly already wakeful to the enormity of a future output that would make heavy and constant demands on him for ideas.

Ten appendices by Norman supplement the notebooks and annotations, covering topics such as the Wodehouse family, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, Dulwich College, and certain key social and professional connections and influences. They act as a purposeful backcloth to, and help inform our comprehension and appreciation of, the writings of Wodehouse.

As well as throwing light on specifics, the book serves a wider purpose in reminding us of Wodehouse's genius. The ease with which Wodehouse prose reads can mislead a reader as to the craft, artistry, and effort needed to bring that prose about. This book, in showing us gems that are uncut and unpolished and out of their settings, helps correct that. Don't read it to be entertained in the

way you would read a finished piece of Wodehouse. Rather, read it to be informed and the better to appreciate Wodehouse when next you read some.

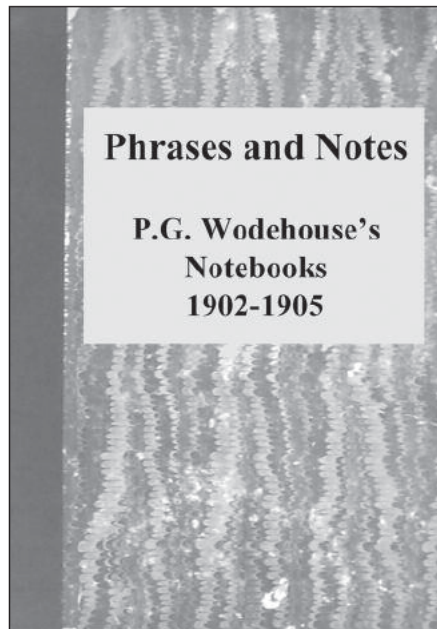
This book, jam-packed with erudition, could scarcely be improved upon textually as regards the annotation and comment, but improvements could be made presentationally, to aid assimilation, accessibility, and navigation. There is so much information in *Phrases and Notes* that an index, and a detailed one at that, is essential in allowing it to be used to its best. It is, after all, a book that is to be dipped back into, time and again.

Formatting-wise, it would aid greatly if the typeface used for the text comprising the Wodehouse notebooks' contents differed from the typeface used for the annotations. Similarly, the typeface for the Appendices could be another different typeface. That would allow the eye more readily to move and navigate to and from different areas it wished to dart between.

It would also help if the annotations were set out not towards the end of the book, or of a substantial section, but as footnotes at the foot of the page containing the text to which the footnote relates. That would avoid continual flipping back and forth, and be particularly helpful in a book where the items making up the text being commented on are thematically

disparate and do not comprise part of a larger unified piece which lends itself to being covered by a group of footnotes clustered together.

The above tweaks are suggestions for doing the justice that Norman's work richly deserves and are emphatically not criticisms from a textual standpoint. Cutting to the chase, *Phrases and Notes* is a splendid and essential work for the shelves of any Wodehouse enthusiast of whatever knowledge and standing.



A241. Story of the woman writer who got a penny novelette accepted & sent up another. It was returned because "it had too many dukes in it." "So now," she said, "I am going to put a viz-count in."

(One of Wodehouse's notes in *Phrases and Notes*)

What Goes Around Comes Around A Celebration of Wodehouse Verse

Book review by Eddie Grabham

Tony Ring has done it again! Following his exhaustive research and analysis of Plum's straight plays (*Second Row, Grand Circle* (2012)), he has now turned his attention to the intriguing and revealing history of the great man's verse.

Before he became the early 20th-century doyen of Broadway lyricists, P. G. Wodehouse had honed his writing skills by creating a considerable amount of witty, vaguely satirical, occasionally parodic verse for various journals. Members will be conversant with his wonderful lyrics, equalled only by his distinguished predecessor W. S. Gilbert. Now, because of Tony Ring's scholarly and orderly compilation of some 100 Wodehouse verses, we can not only appreciate the sources, but sit back and be thoroughly amused.

Ninety-nine verses in the book – including his first, written when he was only five years old – were published between 1901 and 1957, while the final verse is actually a revised lyric for 'Till the Clouds Roll By' from *Oh, Boy!* (Broadway, 1917). Thus, the selection includes Plum's first and last known verses.

The contents are organised in sections, highlighting his comical preoccupation with – among other topics – crime, entertainment, sport, and games. He even touches upon politics and political correctness in a section which seems surprisingly relevant today. For Plum, it was the small but no less intriguing stories which caught his eye. What goes around does indeed come around! Unlike modern satirists, he was not concerned with the big issues, like international squabbles and conflicts; however,



Wodehouse's principal concern in all his writing was how to increase its entertainment value to his reading or watching public. He did not trust his ability to write seriously, or to provide any sort of philosophy, moral or message for future generations although it can be said that he may unconsciously have done so with the Fifth Earl of Ickenham's oft-repeated mantra that his objective was to spread sweetness and light.

Extract from Tony Ring's notes in
What Goes Around Comes Around

he could not resist commenting upon the then current tariff reform debate in the section devoted to part of his contribution to the topical 'Parrot' series of satirical verse on the front page of the *Daily Express* during the last quarter of 1903.

It's difficult to pick any favourites from such a rich store – is it the combination of longing with kleptomania or the fond if tearful farewell to the Royal Aquarium and Winter Gardens in Westminster? The poem poking gentle fun at the Burnley authorities when they ban children from dancing the cakewalk is also highly amusing. What makes this book irresistible, however, is

Tony's diligent research: he succeeds in coupling many of the verses with contemporary references while organising the contents quite cleverly.

So, thank you, Tony, for opening up the world of Plum's verse for all of us to enjoy – and helping us to put it into context into the bargain. Verdict: thoroughly recommended.

It seemed to me only too certain that Rodney Spelvin was in for another attack of poetry.

I have generally found, as I have gone through the world, that people are tolerant and ready to forgive, and in our little community it was never held against Rodney Spelvin that he had once been a poet and a very virulent one, too; the sort of man who would produce a slim volume of verse bound in squashy mauve leather at the drop of a hat, mostly on the subject of sunsets and pixies. He had said goodbye to all that directly he took up golf and announced his betrothal to William's sister Anastatia.

(From 'Rodney Has a Relapse', 1949)



Letters to the Editor

Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

From Norman Dodson

I have once more commenced reading all of the PGW books in order of date of publication. The Everyman editions make this easier, and they are sufficiently compact to be taken just about anywhere. I always take one on my coach trips with the local branch of the RSPB, and as PGW's incredible facility with words often makes me laugh out loud, I find I invariably have a double seat to myself.

I have just completed, once more, *The Girl on the Boat*. When asked about the funniest stories by PGW, one often hears 'Uncle Fred Flits By' and one or two others. However, in *The Girl on the Boat* the writing rises to great heights and stays up there. This, I believe, is the big breakthrough from excellence to genius.

From Dilip Joshi

I am a bit surprised that Bertie's musing about "how many sons of Melbury-cum-Kingston had died at Sevastapol" from the *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells* by Sebastian Faulks should strike such a jarring note to Murray Hedgcock. [See *Wooster Sauce*, March 2014, p.13.] I entirely agree that there should be no death in Wodehouse, and there has been none so far as I know. I have not read the book, but Bertie's remark appears to be mere allusion. The Master's work abounds with such allusions. I wish I had a quid each time an Indian coolie is devoured by a tiger or a peasant is polished off by a wolf in the Siberian steppes or an African bearer is killed either by a crocodile or a lion or by some mysterious sickness (to be buried before sunrise). I wonder what Mr Hedgcock feels about those allusions. English sons dying on foreign soil is not quite white eh what, I say? Allusion to Barons found murdered in library with a dagger of Oriental design in their back is not infrequent. So why this peeve? But I respect Mr Hedgcock's right to express his opinion, just as I have.

Murray replies: I don't think Bertie's comments can be waved aside as "mere allusion". The casualties of Sevastapol – unlike PGW's coolies, peasants, African bearers, or barons (baronets?) found with a dagger of Oriental design marking the spot – were all too real. The Crimean War siege of Sevastapol is estimated to have resulted in 128,000 Allied deaths, and 100,000 Russian. Sevastapol was all too true and tragic. It's a discordant note Plum would never have struck: his world was and always will be cosy fantasy. Thank heavens.

From Barry Lane

Doubtless Susan Walker is aware that Leslie Howard attended Alleyn's School, Dulwich. [See *Wooster Sauce*, March 2014, p.16.] You will probably know that Edward Alleyn's original Foundation in the early 1600s was split into two halves in the late 1800s. One half became

Dulwich College and the other half became Alleyn's. Surely Elizabethan actor/manager Edward Alleyn and Plum would both have been delighted that the National Youth Theatre was founded at Alleyn's by Michael Croft plus the fact that an ex-Dulwich boy, Chiwetel Ejiofor, has just been awarded the BAFTA for Leading Actor for his performance in the film *12 Years a Slave*.

At the start of World War II, Leslie Howard was tragically shot down by the Luftwaffe while flying in a passenger aircraft from Portugal to Britain following a lecture tour.

From Murray Hedgcock

In the cautionary tale of 'Ukridge and the Home from Home', we hear Ukridge lament that the trouble in life "is that you can never be sure when you won't come up against the Man Who Knows, the nib, the specialist, the fellow who has studied the subject".

In that tale, the subject was drains. In my case, it was London buses. In the March 2014 *Wooster Sauce* [p.13], I took issue with a reference in *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*, asserting: "The No. 27 bus does NOT go to Richmond."

Oh dear. Tony Ring, way back a resident of the area, pointed out that once upon a distant past, the No. 27 jolly well DID go to Richmond. And I have now found a facsimile map for 1939 which records the 27 route thus:

Archway (Highgate) Station, Tufnell Park, Kentish Town, Campden Town, Hampstead Road, Great Portland Street Station, Baker Street Station, Paddington, Notting Hill Gate, Kensington High Street, Olympia, Hammersmith, Stamford Brook, Turnham Green, Gunnersbury, Kew, **Richmond**, Twickenham, Teddington Station.

Today the 27 goes from Chiswick Business Park to Chalk Farm (Morrisons). It doesn't sound nearly as much fun.

We Remember: Katherine Lewis

The Society was saddened to learn of the sudden death in March of one of our American members, Katherine Lewis. Kathy was not just a devoted Wodehousean; she was also passionate about jazz music. The June 1998 *Wooster Sauce* featured Kathy's article on 'Wodehouse and All That Jazz', showing the links between her two most favourite subjects. She had recently resigned as president of the Chicago chapter of The Wodehouse Society (the Chicago Accident Syndicate), having been instrumental in their hosting of TWS's hugely successful biennial convention last October. A good friend to all who knew her, Kathy will be missed very much.

News of Forthcoming Books

We are delighted to inform members of two new books on the horizon – one a work of fiction that pays homage to Wodehouse in a delightful way, the other a German-language biography of Wodehouse. Both are by Society members.

Rannygazoo

Or, The Mystery of the Missing Manuscript

by Yasmine Gooneratne

In the March 2012 *Wooster Sauce*, Yasmine Gooneratne gave us an incisive analysis of Bertie Wooster's family tree. Her research then was connected to a novel she was working on, in which P. G. Wodehouse would play an important role. That book is now complete and awaiting publication. The author of several novels and literary studies, Yasmine writes that *Rannygazoo* "doesn't attempt to imitate a style that can't be imitated. On the other hand, it does, I hope, express my heartfelt gratitude to PGW – hope he's listening! – for helping me through a personal crisis not dissimilar to that of my character, Herbert." Should an editor or publisher want to see the novel, write to the Wooster Sauce Editor (see page 24), who will pass on contact details.

Synopsis

Herbert Wijesinha, retired Sri Lankan public servant, is lonely and depressed. Two passions help him to deal with his predicament: one for cricket, the other for English literature, especially the stories of P. G. Wodehouse. Inspired by the latter, he indulges in a bit of Wodehousean whimsy: the creation of a family tree for the Wodehouse character Bertie Wooster. To do this, Herbert sets aside, unpublished, a memoir he had been compiling about local politics and politicians. When his manuscript goes missing, the chase to recover it is well and truly on.

Who will get to it first – Pachabahu Horasalli, fraudulent businessman, who wants to sell it to the highest bidder and bribe his way out of jail? Herbert's daughter Latha, who fears for her father's life if the book appears in print? His nine-year-old grandson Sanath and his hand-picked team of keen-

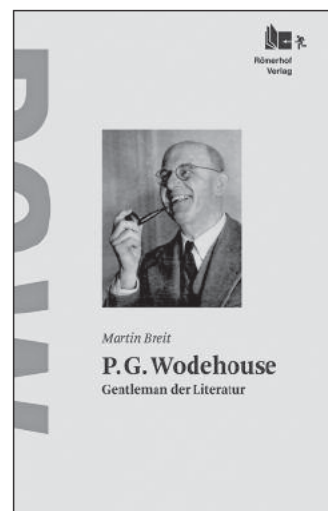
eyed detectives? His nephew Ranil Wijesinha, sexual buccaneer, who wants to add it to his armoury of seduction? Ranil's siblings Colin and Christopher, loyal defenders of Herbert's right to publish his book? Their kinswoman ex-President Moira, who wants to destroy the manuscript and protect her family's reputation?

In this merry sequel to *The Sweet and Simple Kind* (2010), Yasmine Gooneratne simultaneously demonstrates her admiration for the works of Wodehouse and her faith in the healing power of humour.

P. G. Wodehouse: Gentleman der Literatur

by Martin Breit

In October 2014, Martin Breit's biography *P. G. Wodehouse: Gentleman der Literatur* will be published – just in time to help celebrate Plum and Ethel's 100th wedding anniversary. For the first time, German-speaking readers will be introduced to the life and works of the great English humorist. Apart from the story of Wodehouse himself and an introduction to his major characters, the book will feature a foreword by the renowned Swiss scholar Fritz Senn.



Society member Martin Breit wrote his Master's thesis about Wodehouse's cultural influence.

Martin Breit: *P. G. Wodehouse. Gentleman der Literatur*
Mit einem Vorwort von Fritz Senn | Hardcover
ISBN 978-3-905894-20-2 | CHF 38.00 | EUR €32.00

Phrases and Notes Amendments

From NORMAN MURPHY, editor of *Phrases and Notes* (reviewed on page 14):

(1) Wodehouse's note number B144 (page 83) refers to the 'Rev. A.L. Porteriana', a name I was unable to identify. I should have realized his name was the Rev. A.L. Porter, not Porteriana. Wodehouse used the 'iana' suffix as he did with 'Gilbertiana' on the same page, i.e. comments made by/about Porter. A.L. Porter (1864-1937) was at Marlborough and Cambridge. He played for Somerset and Hampshire and, in 1899, was vicar of

Braishfield, Hants. Playing for Hampshire Rovers against United Services Portsmouth, he scored 96 of a total of 669 for 7. In the same match Conan Doyle scored 55, and Brutton (B147) made 108. My thanks go to Peter Lobbenberg for picking up the error and providing the information above.

(2) At page 106 is an early photograph of Wodehouse taken by Florence Mason, which was auctioned at Bonham's in 2012. My thanks go to Ananth Kathairam for finding it and publicizing its existence.

Judge Not, Lest Ye Be Judged

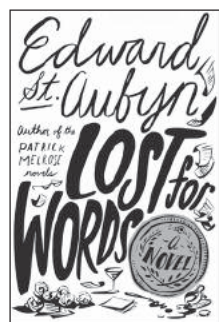
The Hay Festival has now joined the Chelsea Flower Show as a start-of-the-Season social event. Among the prizes awarded at this shindig is the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize (founded in 2000), the only UK literary award for comic writing. The list of previous winners includes Michael Frayn and Terry Pratchett, while runners-up include Alan Bennett and Garrison Keillor.

The standard is generally pretty high, and this year was no exception. Although Sebastian Faulks' *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells* made the short list, the winner was, ironically, Edward St Aubyn's *Lost for Words*, a satire on literary awards and those who award them. Apparently, if one is an aficionado of such events, many of the fictional judges in his book are identifiable, but that adds to the fun. Some critics have found it funny, some have not, but the judges at Hay did. Mr St Aubyn, who has won a few awards already, will receive a jeroboam of Bollinger, 52 Wodehouse books from Everyman, and a Gloucestershire Old Spot pig that will be named after his book. (It should be a Berkshire, of course, but at least it shows the right spirit.)

And who were the judges? James Naughtie, the broadcaster, Everyman publisher David Campbell, and Hay festival director Peter Florence. While I suppose any book satirising judges of literary awards has a head start, it is clear that the Everyman publisher is among the righteous and so, as I happen to know, is James Naughtie. On the one occasion we met, it was apparent that he knew his Wodehouse and even knew my Wodehouse stuff, so I think we can assume that this year, at least, the award was made on merit.

Elsewhere, the Long Room at Lord's also hosted a literary award, the Cricket Book of the Year. It was won by James Astill for *The Great Tamasha*, a book on cricket in India, but two runners-up will be familiar to *Wooster Sauce* readers.

One was Brian Halford's *The Real Jeeves*, the cricketer Wodehouse saw playing at Cheltenham in 1913 and whose name he adopted for his most famous character. The second was *The Authors XI*. This is an account of the matches played by some writers who, in 2012, decided to revive the Authors XI, which had last played in 1912. It was well-known in its time since among the literary giants of the day who played for it were Arthur Conan Doyle, A. E. W Mason, E. W. Hornung (Raffles) – and the young P. G. Wodehouse. Reassuring to see today's authors realising there's more to life than just prodding away at their computer.



– Norman Murphy

Cosy Moments

Clichés: Avoid Them Like the Plague!, by Nigel Fountain (2012) (from Barry Chapman)

In discussing the overuse of the phrase 'emotional roller-coaster', Fountain notes: "It is a slightly worrying thought that the great English humorist P. G. Wodehouse, the creator of Jeeves and Bertie Wooster, and so much else, may have started the rot in his 1962 novel *Service With a Smile*: 'Her emotions were somewhat similar to those of a nervous passenger on a roller coaster at an amusement park . . .'"

Earlier in the book, Fountain cites Shakespeare, Milton, and Dickens, who created many of the expressions that later became clichés: "Their observations were dazzling insights, new ways of seeing the world. Then someone else said them. And someone else repeated them, and eventually someone said, look, I know this is a cliché, but all the same . . ."

So, is PGW's line about a Scotsman and a ray of sunshine destined to become a cliché?

An Appetite for Wonder, by Richard Dawkins (2013) (from Charles Gould)

Charles came across two Wodehouse references – though this is not surprising in a book by Dawkins, whose admiration of PGW is expressed on page 88:

One evening Ga ows [Headmaster Ma com Ga oway] noticed *The Jeeves Omnibus* on a she f in my dormitory and he asked whether any of us knew P.G. Wodehouse. None of us did, so he sat down on one of the beds and read a story to us. It was 'The Great Sermon Handicap,' and I suppose he must have spread it over severa evenings. We loved it. It has remained one of my favourite Jeeves stories, and P.G. Wodehouse one of my favourite authors, read, reread, and even parodied to my own purpose.

And on page 126 Dawkins relates this emotional episode:

[Teacher of German Boggy Cartwright] once caught a boy reading P.G. Wodehouse and furious y tore the book cean in two. He had evident y bought into the ca umny—assiduous y fostered by Cassandra of *The Daily Mirror*—that Wodehouse had been a German co laborator during the war, on a par with Lord Haw-Haw or—the American equiva ent—Tokyo Rose. But Mr. Cartwright had the story even more garb ed than Cassandra's s ander. 'Wodehouse once had the opportunity to kick a German co one downstairs, and he didn't take it.' That makes him sound ike an angry man. He rea y wasn't, except under extreme provocation, which, bizarre y, P.G. Wodehouse (he said 'Woadhouse' instead of the correct 'Woodhouse') seems to have constituted.

Mr Bunting suggested that Lord Tilbury should arm himself with something solid from the bag of golf clubs which was standing in the corner of the room. He recommended the niblick. Lord Tilbury felt that it was a wise choice. He had had no previous experience of intimidating a burglar, but instinct told him that it was a niblick shot.

(From *Frozen Assets*, 1964)

Mastermind Quiz 11: Children in Wodehouse

1. In ‘The Crime Wave at Blandings’, Lord Emsworth’s grandson George has his air gun taken from him after shooting whom in the ‘trouser seat’?
2. In *Laughing Gas*, Reggie Swithin, third Earl of Havershot, switches bodies after a mix-up at the dentist with which Hollywood child star?
3. Edwin, younger brother of Florence Craye, is always doing ‘acts of kindness’. In *Joy in the Morning*, what is the name of the cottage, rented by Bertie Wooster, that Edwin burns down after he has cleaned the chimney with gunpowder and paraffin?
4. In *Galahad at Blandings*, what does Huxley Winkworth, son of Dame Daphne Winkworth become convinced that Empress of Blandings needs?
5. Ogden Ford, the lazy, spoiled, and overweight son of Mrs Nesta Ford, later Mrs Nesta Pett, appears in which two novels?
6. Name the title appropriate to this quiz’s theme of a Jerome Kern musical with book and lyrics by Guy Bolton and Wodehouse that first opened on Broadway in 1917.
7. In ‘Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend’, why does Lady Constance put young Gladys in the shed?
8. Who was the headmaster of Malvern House, the preparatory school where Bertie Wooster won a Scripture prize?
9. What was the American title of the 1920 novel *The Coming of Bill*?
10. What is the name of Aunt Agatha’s only son?

(Answers on page 21)

The Truth about Nietzsche

Society member TOM SMITH, who lives in Washington State, USA, writes for and edits a state Department of Transportation newsletter, *The Hybrid Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Report*. As you might guess from the title, the subject matter can get, well, a little dry sometimes, so Tom sometimes tries to liven up the copy with a Wodehouse reference or two. In the newsletter for May 15, 2014, the following statement is made: “Your electric car won’t make you sick. It won’t kill you. And if Friedrich Nietzsche is to be believed, it may make you stronger.”³ Tom’s footnote reads as follows:

Puzzling Thoughts

If ever there was an indication needed of Wodehouse’s continuing popularity today, it is found in the world of crossword puzzles. References to his books and characters show up continually, delighting those Wodehouseans who spot them – and send them in to *Wooster Sauce*.

For example, CAROLYN DE LA PLAIN submitted a sighting in the March 31 *Daily Telegraph* ‘Herculis’ puzzle: clue 31 across was ‘——— Twistleton; character in the Uncle Fred books by P. G. Wodehouse (5)’. (If you don’t know the answer to that one, shame on you!)

BARRY CHAPMAN is always spotting Wodehouse references in the *Times Literary Supplement* crosswords. On March 21, the clue for 8 down in Crossword 1017 was: ‘Wodehouse character. Not the errand boy or fetch ’n carry man he sounds? (2, 6)’. (Give up? The answer is ‘Go Getter.’) However, another one Barry reported was truly puzzling. In the April 4 *TLS*, Crossword 1019, the clue for 5 across read: ‘He was seen as inimitable, yet 37 years later, still in the offing (6)’. Barry, quite understandably, assumed the answer was ‘Jeeves’, but the answer, revealed in the May 2 *TLS*, was ‘Bunter’ (he of Lord Peter Wimsey fame)!

The *Sunday Times* of May 12 featured a Spring Crossword special, in which clue 37 down read: ‘1 —, P G Wodehouse novel originally published in the US as *Fish Preferred*’. The start of the clue actually refers back to the clue (A season) and answer (Summer) to 1 across. A similar teaser was used for five other clues.

It is that sort of cleverness that drives some solvers mad, including our own PGW. LEILA DEAKIN sent an item from *The Times* of March 8 in which Rose Wild opened her article announcing the introduction of a new weekday cryptic crossword ‘of intermediate difficulty’ with a recollection about Wodehouse’s ability in that field:

Eighty years ago, when the *Times* crossword was in its infancy, P. G. Wodehouse wrote to the letters editor to complain about the smug people who’d been writing in to boast about how fast they could finish it. ‘On behalf of the . . . humble strivers who, like myself, have never yet succeeded in solving an entire *Times* crossword puzzle, I strongly resent [them] flaunting their skill in your columns. Rubbing salt into the wounds is what I call it. To a man who has been beating his head against the wall for 20 minutes over a single anagram it is g. and wormwood.’

As usual, Wodehouse said it best!

3 “From life’s school of war: what does not kill me makes me stronger,” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer* [*Götzen Dämmerung, oder, Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert*], Leipzig: C. G. Neumann, 1889. However, we know from P. G. Wodehouse that “you would not enjoy Nietzsche, sir. He is fundamentally unsound”; from “Jeeves Takes Charge,” *Carry On, Jeeves*, London: Herbert Jenkins, 1925.

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

A Private Collection of Wodehouse – Yours for £58,000

Bloomsbury Auction's Modern Literature auction of 11 April 2014 contained what it called 'A Private Collection of P.G. Wodehouse'. Substantial Wodehouse collections only appear at auction relatively infrequently: the stock of the late Nigel Williams, a well-known dealer, was auctioned at Bloomsbury in April 2011 (see 'Wodehouse Under the Hammer', *Wooster Sauce*, June 2011, p9), but one has to go back to March 2001 to find a collector's collection under the hammer (see 'The Bonhams Auction', *Wooster Sauce*, June 2001, p20). Although Wodehouse collectors are no doubt so full of soul that they collect purely for love, not money, it is possible that non-collectors may be interested to know something of the state of the Wodehouse market.

There were 59 lots in the Private Collection, plus two lots described as being 'The Property of A Gentleman', who was revealed to be the Society's very own Norman Murphy in the auction catalogue (which can still be viewed on the Bloomsbury website), and one lot from a third party. The 62 lots had a lower estimate of £30,030 in total and an upper estimate of £43,020. On the day, 60 of the lots sold, for a total hammer price of £46,450, so 8% above the upper estimate. Of course, to the hammer price one has to add the buyer's premium of 24% payable to the auction house, so the total amount that actually changed hands was £57,598. Of the 60 lots that sold, 13 went for below the lower estimate (£2,550 against an estimate of £3,300), 24 went for above the upper estimate (£32,000 against an estimate of £22,850), and the remaining 23 sold within the estimated range (£11,900 against a range of £10,030 to £14,020), albeit two of these sold for exactly the lower estimate and four sold for exactly the upper estimate.

The Private Collection was undeniably a very nice collection of UK first editions, but there were some gaps in it. Several of the scarcest titles did not appear (namely *Not George Washington*, *The Globe By The Way Book*, *The Swoop*, *Something Fresh*, *Uneasy Money*, and *The Man with Two Left Feet*; although the first and third of these were Norman Murphy's items), nor did various other pre-1940 titles (*A Gentleman of Leisure*, *Piccadilly Jim*, *A Damsel in Distress*, *The Girl on the Boat*, *The Adventures of Sally*,

Leave It to Psmith, *The Heart of a Goof*, *Money for Nothing*, and *Hot Water*). Surprisingly, several post-1945 titles were also missing (*Cocktail Time*, *A Few Quick Ones*, *Frozen Assets*, *Galahad at Blandings*, *Company for Henry*, *Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*, and *Sunset at Blandings*).

Taking into account the buyer's premium, *Love Among the Chickens* was the highest achiever, selling for £4,712. Two other titles broke the £3,000 barrier:

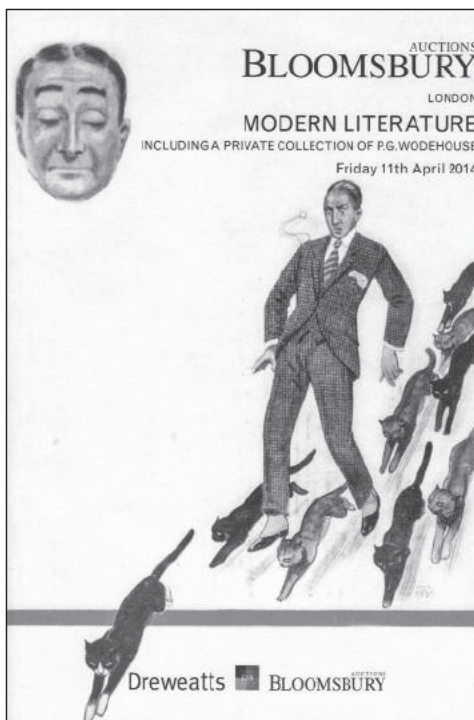
The Pothunters at £3,968, and *The Clicking of Cuthbert* (in a dust-wraper) at £3,100. Five other titles sold for more than £2,000: *Bill the Conqueror* (£2,976; d/w); *Not George Washington* (£2,480; signed by Herbert Westbrook, together with a handwritten letter by him and a typed poem signed by him); *Thank You, Jeeves* (£2,480; d/w); *The Inimitable Jeeves* (£2,356; d/w); and *Summer Lightning* (£2,232; d/w, and signed by Wodehouse). All eight of these titles sold for above their upper estimates (£19,600 against an estimate of £14,100).

Thirteen other titles sold for more than £1,000, and 11 other titles sold for more than £500. 28 lots sold for less than £500. The two lots which failed to sell were *Mike* and *The Small Bachelor* (US

edition, d/w), with bids for the latter only reaching £180 against an estimate of £350 to £450.

One might deduce from the prices achieved that the Wodehouse market is in fairly rude health. However, there are some who seemingly believe that the market has further to rise. I have identified that at least 14 of the 60 lots were bought by dealers, as the books have resurfaced on various dealers' websites, typically at a mark-up of about 100% on the total price paid at the auction. This seems (at least to me) somewhat optimistic, given that the auction was well-advertised, that most serious Wodehouse collectors would have been aware of it, that they would have bid if they were keen on a title, and that the prices achieved at the auction can therefore reasonably be assumed to represent what the market will currently bear.

However, if one did neglect to bid at the auction, one should now visit the websites of Peter Harrington and Jonkers Rare Books. One can thereby acquire such items as *Ukridge* (d/w) for £4,000, *The Clicking of Cuthbert* (d/w) for £6,000, and *Love Among the Chickens* for £9,500. Best be quick.



Perfectly Nonsensical

The accolades for *Perfect Nonsense*, playing at the Duke of York's Theatre, continue to roll in. Best of all was the news in April that the play written by brothers Robert and David Goodale had won the Olivier Award for best comedy! In his acceptance speech, Robert said:

At the end of last year, I stepped in for one of the cast and a woman in the audience got very excited and said "This is wonderful. One of the actors is off, but the writer's on in his place." To which her husband replied: "What? P. G. Wodehouse?" So that's just a gentle nudge to remind us that this is also for him.

He may have more such experiences in the future, as word is that Robert will be taking over the role of Seppings (succeeding Mark Hadfield) at the end of June. In April, Mark Heap and Robert Webb replaced Matthew Macfadyen and Stephen Mangan as Jeeves and Bertie, and the general consensus in the press is that the new cast is giving every bit as much entertainment to its audiences as the old. Even so, Heap and Webb will be succeeded on June 30 by Olivier award winner John Gordon Sinclair as Jeeves and James Lance as Bertie, so there will be more opportunities to compare and contrast for those who love this production. *Perfect Nonsense* continues at the Duke of York's Theatre until September 20, after which it will go on tour.



The Olivier presented to Perfect Nonsense
(Courtesy of Robert Goodale)

Plum in Moscow



This photo of Christopher Bellew and Masha Lebedeva was taken in July last year by Ian Alexander Sinclair, who wrote: "As you see, Masha and Christopher are spreading the word in Red Square against the background of St. Basil's. I am sure Vladimir Brusiloff would have something to say about it."

Poet's Corner

To a Policeman Poet

Whene'er I met you in the street,
I own I found it hard
To recognise that on your beat
There paced a brother bard.
And when I saw you boldly stand
And rule converging traffics,
I little thought that white-gloved hand
Had manufactured Sapphics.

When by my door at night you passed
You searched, I thought, for crime.
Your quarry, I perceive at last,
Was nothing but a rhyme.
I knew not why you seemed so moved,
Nor why your bosom heaved.
The only numbers you approved
Were cabmen's, I believed.

When notes I saw you jotting down,
I thought you wrote in prose.
I never dreamed that thoughtful frown
Was due to lyric throes.
A Tennyson you may have been,
But nought there was to show it.
Your hair was short, your eye was keen.
You didn't look the poet.

And yet who else so fit to don
The crown the Muse bestows?
Perpetually moving on,
Each lyric smoothly flows.
And when reports I chance to read
Of motor legislation,
I gather from your views on speed
Your keen imagination.

From *Daily Chronicle*, November 1902

Answers to Mastermind Quiz

(Page 21)

1. Rupert Baxter
2. Joey Cooley
3. Wee Nooke
4. More exercise
5. *The Little Nugget* and *Piccadilly Jim*
6. *Oh, Boy!*
7. Because she stole food from the tea tent
8. The Rev. Aubrey Upjohn
9. *Their Mutual Child*
10. Thomas 'Thos' Gregson

Recent Press Comment

Daily Telegraph, February 25 (from Carolyn De La Plain)
An article by Harry Wallop entitled 'What Ho, Jeeves! There's trouble at the boys' club' described problems at the East India Club. It started with the sentence "It is a tale straight out of the P G Wodehouse classic *Jeeves and Wooster*" and was illustrated by a photograph of Hugh Laurie as Bertie Wooster, "who was a member of the fictional Drones Club". (See also May 4 item, next page.)

The Times, March 4 (from Iain Anderson)
In a book entitled *Dresden* by Frederick Taylor, mention had been made of Martin Mutschmann, the Reich governor of Saxony, who had held various management positions in lace and underwear companies. The article referred, of course, to the fact that "P. G. Wodehouse's character Roderick Spode was leader of an organisation called the Black Shorts. His dictatorial plans are at constant risk lest his talent for designing ladies' underwear . . . became known."

The Lady, March 7
(from Caroline Franklyn)
In examining the presumed link between *The Lady* and *Milady's Boudoir*, Matt Warren decided to spend a day as Bertie Wooster, with John Giles-Larkin acting as his Jeeves. We doubt, though, whether Bertie would have been driven around London in a Rolls Royce!

The Observer, March 9
(from Terry Taylor)
Robert McCrum wrote a profile of John Le Carré in which he said that George Smiley had joined the immortals of English fiction such as Sherlock Holmes and Bertie Wooster, and noted that Le Carré cherishes the work of PGW.

Daily Telegraph, March 10
Alan Tyers introduced an article entitled 'How Do You Tell a Friend His Partner Is a Nightmare?' with a quotation from Jeeves (originating with Ralph Waldo Emerson) in 'Bertie Changes His Mind': "A friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature." Tyers endorsed the concept but warned the reader of today that by their 30s or 40s they rarely see friends more than once every few months, and may well be faced with the dilemma posed in the article's heading. After producing Bertie's retort ("Well, you can tell Emerson from me next time you see him that he's an ass."), he concluded that the older you get, the more friendship takes a back seat to family, and interfering even from the best motives will leave you with nothing to do but pick up the pieces later.

The Times, March 10
Patrick Kidd reported in the *Times Diary* that behaviour at the annual Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race dinner has become so bad that some Blues have taken to holding a separate meal elsewhere. The chairman of the executive disdains in particular a tendency for drinking wine out of

shoes. Patrick suggested that he would prefer a return to the dignity of Bertie Wooster's day, when the only rowdy Boat Race tradition was to steal a policeman's helmet.

The Times, March 11 (from Christopher Bellew)
A profile of UKIP leader Nigel Farage revealed that he was educated at Dulwich College, "where he idolised the alumni Ernest Shackleton and P G Wodehouse".

The Times, March 11 (from Pauline Grant)
An obituary of the actress Kate O'Mara mentioned her struggle with depression; her cure, she said, was "listening to J.S. Bach and reading P.G. Wodehouse. . . . The great thing about Wodehouse is that his books are so

full of romantic problems and yet so hilarious that it puts things in perspective." (Tony Ring recalls receiving a telephone call some ten years ago from Kate O'Mara discussing the possibility of finding a play by Wodehouse which would be suitable for a tour by a production company in which she had an interest, but nothing resulted from the conversation.)

The New Yorker, March 27
A long article by poet and novelist Brad Leithauser effusively praised Wodehouse's oeuvre, especially the Jeeves and Wooster books with which he was most familiar.

The Guardian, April 2
Catherine Love interviewed Mark Heap in connection with his forthcoming role as Jeeves in *Perfect Nonsense*. He pointed out that the

play has two levels: "The Wodehouse meat and the froth of watching people struggle to double up and play with all the theatrical conventions." He suggested that it is precisely because the characters are so of their time that they continue to tickle audiences, tapping into a very British brand of nostalgia; and that, unlike Shakespeare, whose works have been reset in every era and location imaginable, Wodehouse stories demand to be set in the early 20th century, and any attempt to update them would be hopeless.

The Herald Sun (Australia), April 2
Contained a review of a new book, *Is It True* by Max Cryer, in which he dispels the simple truths which are actually untrue. These include the myth that the expression "Elementary, my dear Watson" was said by Sherlock Holmes. According to Cryer, "Sherlock Holmes never actually said it and neither does it appear in any of the 60 Holmes stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The expression was first mentioned by author P G Wodehouse in his 1909 novel *Psmith, Journalist*. Twenty years later it was used in the film *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* and has been popular ever since."

The Times, April 2
Reported that Dulwich College had won rugby union's

The second series of the TV programme *Blandings* on BBC1 received generally more favourable reviews from many sources than the first series in 2013. The change in cast of *Perfect Nonsense*, with Mark Heap and Robert Webb replacing Steven Mangan and Matthew Macfadyen on 7 April, resulted in a series of new published reviews for the show. Further reviews of Sebastian Faulks's novel *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*, generally in overseas newspapers and journals, have also been appearing quite regularly through the internet. In view of the amount of attention given to these matters in recent issues, and the lack of any significant new insights, mention of specific articles here has been strictly limited. (With regard to *Perfect Nonsense*, see page 21).

NatWest Schools Cup at under-18 level, and in the School Sport Magazine National Schools Under-13 Cup final share the cup with the appropriately named Woodhouse Grove School.

The Times, April 5

A review by Paula Byrne of *Language! 500 Years of the Vulgar Tongue*, by Jonathon Green, pointed out that although Green had previously gone into print saying that as a young man he had loved the author Wodehouse, he barely mentions him (or Shakespeare, if it is any consolation) in the book. Nevertheless, Byrne devoted nine lines to Wodehouse's 1,756 entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* by way of illustrating what Green had missed.

Daily Telegraph, April 15 (from Carolyn De La Plain)

Charles Spencer's review of Noel Coward's *Relative Values* at the Harold Pinter Theatre contained two passing references, to "the spirit of P G Wodehouse" and Rory Bremner's performance as "the Jeevesian butler".

Pick of the Week (Radio 4), April 20

Selected an extract from the first part of the two-part serialisation *Ring For Jeeves*, with Michael Bamber and Martin Jarvis. This edition of POTW was broadcast just 3½ hours after the serial's first transmission!

The Guardian, May

The May choice of a book for the *Guardian Reading Group* was *Leave It to Psmith*. Thoughtful analysis as well as readers' reactions and comments have been collected on a blog. Go to <http://bit.ly/SboUNJ> and click on the links for the May discussions.

Saga Magazine, May (from Stephen Payne)

In discussing writing techniques, Bernard Cornwell noted: "The great P G Wodehouse, when he finished a page in the typewriter, would pin it to the wall. If he wasn't happy with the page, it went low down; if he was happy, it went high up. So that when he looked around the room he could see which pages needed work."

Crisis Response (A Voice for the Faithful Catholic Laity), May 1

James P. Bernens suggested that the time of celebrating "the triumphant Resurrection of Our Lord at Easter" is also a time to celebrate the singular gift of laughter. He goes on to propose in a long, thoughtful article that there could be no better means of doing so than with the "whimsical stories of the most joyful, ebullient and exhilarating English author of the previous century". Simply stated, he added, "Wodehouse's comic stories . . . are beyond comparison or imitation".

Daily Telegraph, May 1 (from Jeremy Neville)

Max Davidson decried the possibility that U.S. golf courses may expand the size of the golf hole from 4¼ to 15 inches, in an effort to make the game more popular. Pointing out that the humiliation of missing a short putt is an essential part of the game, he quoted Wodehouse: "I attribute the insane arrogance of the later Roman emperors almost entirely to the fact that, never having played golf, they never knew that strangely chastening humility which is engendered by a topped chip-shot." Davidson added: "Wodehouse did not take life too seriously, but he would have been appalled at the thought of golfers putting into holes the size of dinner

plates, just to spare their blushes. And he would have been right."

Sunday Telegraph, May 4

In his weekly column, 'Wogan's World', the Society's President, Terry Wogan, referred to the *Daily Telegraph* article of February 25 (see above) and forcefully defended the Drones Club from invidious comparison with the East India gentlemen's club – pointing out *inter alia* that the subject of money would never have raised its ugly head at the Drones.

London Evening Standard, May 7

Matthew d'Ancona's essay on immigration compared UKIP leader Nigel Farage to Roderick Spode. He ended by quoting Bertie Wooster's famous denunciation of Spode in *The Code of the Woosters*.

New Indian Express, May 13

An article on how high achievers cope with stress began: "Quantum mechanics and P G Wodehouse, an English humorist, can coexist after all. Meet Dhanya Bharath, one of the SSLC toppers who did not stop reading her novels in the process of scoring 621 marks."

Finding Wodehouse in Unexpected Places

by James Hogg

In the heart of many Wodehouse fans, East Anglia holds a special place. On a recent drive through the region, I thought in elevated terms of the Wodehouse family seat at Wymondham and of PGW's retreats to Hunstanton Hall, the setting and inspiration for some of his finest work. But I little expected, having stopped for lunch in a pub, to be forcibly reminded of one of the classic Bertie Wooster sequences – the one from *Joy in the Morning* where he gets landed with buying Florence Craye's book *Spindrift*, in his terms the very definition of hard-going.

For there on the table was an array of beer mats announcing the availability of a new, locally-brewed speciality: 'SPINDRIFT – Bright . . . Crisp . . . Refreshing'. Florence's book threatened to be the very opposite of that, and the mats announcing its name in large print were enough to have put Bertie right off his lunch. I had to overcome a twinge of disloyalty as I enjoyed a cooling draught.



Future Events for Your Diary

Perfect Nonsense at the Duke of York's Theatre

The hit play based on *The Code of the Woosters* continues into September. Stephen Mangan and Matthew Macfadyen have been succeeded by Robert Webb and Mark Heap, who will themselves be succeeded by James Lance and John Gordon Sinclair. See page 21 for more.

June 20, 2014 Gold Bats vs. The Dulwich Dusters

Our annual match against the Dulwich masters will start at 4 p.m., with a break for the always lauded tea.

June 22, 2014 Gold Bats vs. Sherlock Holmes Society

We will be convening at the West Wycombe cricket club, with play starting at 11.30. Contact Mark Wilcox if you would like to play

for the Gold Bats.

July 15, 2014 Summer Meeting at The George

As it's summer, it only seems right to put on a Great Sermon Handicap; see page 5 for details. As always, we will gather at The George from 6 p.m.

August 10, 2014 Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Richard Burnip is leading a Wodehouse-themed walk

for London Walks. The usual fee is £9, but Society members get a discounted price of £7. No need to book a place; just be at exit 2 (Park Lane east side) of Marble Arch Underground station at 2.30 p.m., and identify yourself as a Society member.

October 16, 2014 Dinner at Gray's Inn

Act fast to reserve a place at our biennial dinner, where we will be celebrating a special date in Wodehouse's life. Details on page 5, and the application form is enclosed with this issue.

October 26 Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Richard will again lead a Wodehouse-themed walk for London Walks. See August 10, above, for details on time, place, and cost.

November 18, 2014 Autumn Meeting at The George

The programme for this evening will be announced in the September issue, or check the Society's website.

October 29–November 1, 2015 TWS Convention

Advance notice of The Wodehouse Society's 18th biennial convention, 'Psmith in Pseattle'.

Ferdie the Fly had the invaluable gift of being able to climb up the side of any house you placed before him, using only toes, fingers and personal magnetism.

(From *Do Butlers Burgle Banks?*, 1968)

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