

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

Volume 31 Number 4 Winter 2010

Dearborn, Ho!

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN

IT IS OCTOBER 13, 2010, exactly one year from the commencement of **Happy 130th Birthday, Plum**, the next convention of The Wodehouse Society, and as I write this, outside it is a perfect Michigan day. The temperature is around 65 degrees, there is a light breeze, and the fall colors are at their most spectacular, with trees bursting into a blaze of red and orange and purple and gold and umber. Ahh, there is no autumn like a Michigan autumn! If we have weather like this on this day in 2011, then the 16th convention of our society will be the loveliest of any so far, I guarantee.

The Northwodes broke with tradition last year by extending the convention past the traditional Sunday Brunch with an afternoon at the races. The Pickering Motor Company has also found that 2½ days are simply not enough time for all the jam-packed fun we'll offer. However, rather than extending forward, we're starting early, with a unique event Thursday afternoon.

For those able to get in early, we have arranged a tour of the historic River Rouge plant through the auspices of The Henry Ford Museum. In an earlier article I described this Detroit institution. If you can manage to be at the Dearborn Inn lobby by 2 P.M. on Thursday, it is well worth the 14 smackers. Please note that The Henry Ford does offer these tours on a regular basis, but they fill up well in advance. We cannot guarantee a spot after June 16, so please decide early if you can. If you want to see the plant but cannot make it on Thursday, you can make separate arrangements, but again, this must be done well in advance. However, the plant shuts down Friday afternoon for the weekend, and it is most fun to see it while it is operating.



The Alexandria Ballroom at the Dearborn Inn

One of the most critical aspects of attending the 2011 convention will be planning your trip to The Henry Ford. As with any world-class museum, you can spend forever wandering around and finding new things to marvel at, but you should plan a minimum of two hours at the museum and two more at Greenfield Village. Elyse and I took advantage of the lovely weather and visited the village. We spent three hours there. It was decorated beautifully for Halloween, the attractions were fully staffed, and it was absolutely lovely.

The entrance fee to the museum is \$15 and to the village is \$22 (slightly less for seniors 62+). But if you purchase the combo ticket for \$32, you can visit each site on separate days. Both attractions are open from 9:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. There is a so-so commissary at the museum but a number of nice places for lunch in the village. So plan accordingly around the other events.

The Pickering Motor Company will be purchasing combo tickets at the group rate, which is \$28.80 (\$27 for seniors). If you wish to take advantage of the discount, send a check made out to Elliott Milstein before June 16, 2011, and you can collect your ticket at registration.

The enclosed registration form refers to dinner Thursday night at Miller's Bar. This is a Dearborn tradition, and Miller's makes the best burger in metro Detroit. But be forewarned. It is a neighborhood bar, *very* dressed-down, with just burgers, fries, onion rings, and the like. You gotta love this kind of thing to want to go. But if you like burgers, you won't want to miss this opportunity. If you prefer something a little more civilized, the hotel restaurant will be open.

The traditional informal gathering in the bar will follow dinner, wherever you choose to dine.

We have arranged a bus tour with Detroit Tour Connections for Friday from 9:30 A.M. to 2 P.M. The final details of the tour are still in preparation, but it will include a drive around beautiful Belle Isle, which, some of you may remember, Sally and Gerald enjoyed in *The Adventures of Sally*. We will also stop at the Fisher Building, another of Albert Kahn's masterpieces (the Inn and the River Rouge plant being the other two you will see); Old Mariner's Church, the oldest church on the Great Lakes (mentioned in the famous Gordon Lightfoot song); and Hitsville USA, the Motown Museum. Lunch will be at Lafayette or American Coney Island (they are next door to one another), where one can get the world-famous Detroit "coney dog" (a hot dog with chili and onions) or, if possessing a tender stomach, other victuals. We will finish up at John King Books, one of the finest used-book stores in the country, with a special guided tour of their rare book room.

The tour returns to the Dearborn Inn in time for the Cricket Experience at 2:30 P.M. If the weather holds next year as it has this year, we will have a wonderful afternoon for cricket. The Pickerings have secured a delightful spot for the cricketers to foregather and do their thing.

Friday night will provide a unique Wodehouse experience. We return to the traditional, simple reception (cash bar and simple hors d'oeuvres), followed by a quick bus ride downtown to the magnificent MGM Grand Hotel and Casino for dinner and gambling, a Wodehousean activity hitherto unexplored at a Wodehouse convention. A full rundown of dining options will be provided to conventioners, but suffice to say that the gamut runs from Starbucks to four-star restaurants. Then off you go to try Bingo Little's system at roulette or to match Aunt Dahlia's feats at chemin de fer. The last bus back to the Inn will leave at midnight.

I don't like to brag, but I must say that I think we have put together the finest slate of speakers for Saturday in living memory (or, at least, my living memory). Of course, you will have to endure another talk of mine, but reflect what follows: Paul Abrinko, John Graham, Tom Smith, Elin Woodger, Curtis Armstrong, Tony Ring, and the grand finale with Norman Murphy and the Hands Across the Sea Touring Company. And if that doesn't get you to Dearborn, I don't know what will.

Those who have chosen to go to The Henry Ford in the morning can join the lecture attendees at a fabulous barbecue lunch, or stay on at the Village and dine in one of their pleasant eateries. If you're tired of The Henry Ford by then but not interested in the lectures, we have arranged a fun and instructional cooking class with the Inn's chef (but we must have at least 20 attendees or the event will be cancelled).

Then, on Saturday night, dress to the nines for the 130th Birthday Bash for Plum with all the festivities of a party and all the glamour of a banquet in the exquisite Alexandria Ballroom. Browsing and sluicing at its best, costumes (optional), prizes, auctions, dancing, entertainment, and more. Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright will hold the chair. Need I say more?

Bring your supplies for a Jeeves pick-me-up after a night like that, because more fun continues with the Sunday Brunch, with skits and songs and general merriment among the eggs and b.

If you've been to conventions before, you will find this one will meet or exceed your expectations. If you've never been to one before, come on down to Dearborn and we'll show you just how much fun it is. Between the Wodehouse stuff, The Henry Ford, and the Detroit tour, you will have a blast.

I am finishing this article on October 16, and it has remained as lovely out as it was when I started on October 13. If it is this way in 2011, you will have a fantastic time and good weather—and if it rains, you'll just have a fantastic time!

Please see page 15 for additional convention information, particularly if you have an interest in doing a skit or other clean, bright entertainment!



Visitors at The Henry Ford museum having a fantastic time

The Heacham Heresy Refuted

AN INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN MILLER BY KEN CLEVINGER

Thanks to Ken for interviewing pig farmer Brian Miller. Ken reminds us that the title of this report refers to Lord Heacham from "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" who at one point cries, "Oh, curse all pigs!"

OUR ENGLISH COUSINS' quarterly journal *Wooster Sauce* is devoted to things Wodehousean, and a report was recently published in that esteemed journal about the 2009 TWS convention in St. Paul. The report highlighted the marvelous presentation on pigs by Professor Tom Molitor, and also mentioned the official sponsorship of the Berkshire breed by the The P G Wodehouse Society (UK).

I recently discovered another example of our North American society's expert porcinosity, if that is the word I want. Here for your pleasure is an interview with Brian Miller, TWS, and his Berkshire pigs, Clarence and Constance. Brian consented to meet at his farm near Philadelphia, Tennessee, as the accompanying photographs prove.

Ken: You are a pig farmer, but don't you have another job that allows you to afford to farm?

Brian: When I'm not leaning over a fence gazing at our Berkshire boar and sow, Clarence and Constance (we think of her practically as family and call her Connie), I work as the director of stores for a national bookstore chain. I like to think that an undergraduate liberal arts degree from Louisiana State University perfectly positioned me for a life in retail book sales and for manual labor on a pig farm.

Ken: Tell our readers about your interest in P. G. Wodehouse. When did you first read his works? Are the Blandings Castle stories of special interest? Any particular one?

Brian: I came late to my love of Wodehouse. Years ago I ran a rare book business in Knoxville, Tennessee. Copies of Wodehouse books passed my desk and out the door on numerous occasions. Dimly aware of Jeeves and Wooster, this particular well remained untapped. I read with interest the *Modern First* issue dedicated to the collector of Wodehouse in the early 1990s. But, alas, I never cracked open one of his books. At the time I was more of a fan of Evelyn Waugh's early satirical novels.

A few years after that, having sold my book business, I picked up a Penguin paperback edition of *Carry On, Jeeves* during a low moment. Since that day I've found it to be true, as Christopher Buckley said,



Brian Miller and his charges

that "it is impossible to be unhappy while reading the adventures of Jeeves and Wooster." The pleasure of reading Wodehouse is usually best and fully exhibited late at night, smothering my laughter to avoid waking [wife and helpmate] Cindy.

In 1999, or as we like to say, late in the last century, we moved to a farm. Quite by happenstance I pulled a copy of *Life at Blandings* off a shelf. Impostors, irresistible air guns, pig abductions, and Lord Emsworth leaning over his sty: a perfect combination. The Blandings saga contains my favorite cast of characters. Though, at the risk of sounding fickle, the fifth Earl of Ickenham in *Uncle Dynamite* is also a sentimental favorite as a character.

Ken: Our *Plum Lines* readers are passionate about pigs of all varieties—from chops to companions. Tell us about the joys and sorrows of raising pigs.

Brian: The late, lamented John Mortimer, author of the *Rumpole of the Bailey* series, lived on a small farm and raised pigs. He always named them Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner. That neatly sums up the joy of pigs: the plate. Yet they are curious creatures and a joy to observe. Like the Earl of Emsworth, I can spend hours

watching a pig. A 400-pound boar is most impressive when tucking into his slop; he's a real trencherman when at the trough. I do enjoy scavenging in the kitchen for bits of leftover Stilton, cantaloupe, yogurt, and bread to dump in our pig trough. Still, there are sorrows: James Herriot wrote of a man paralyzed with grief whenever his feeder pig was butchered. The poor fellow would cry, "But she was just like a good Christian, she was." Taking animals to slaughter does give one pause. I console myself with visions of pork chops, bacon, and incomparable salt-cured hams. And, too, experience records that if one does pause too long in a pig paddock, they will begin to dine on you.

Ken (stepping quickly back over the sty railing): How many pigs do you keep?

Brian: We direct-market all of our pork. That simply means we have customers who buy for their own tables, no middleman. We are pleased to say that a number of chefs and specialty butchers in the Knoxville area buy their meat from our farm. We raise anywhere from five to fifteen pigs at a time. Our latest crop is due to fulfill their destiny in December.

Ken: Are the sights, sounds, and scents of pigs soothing to the soul?

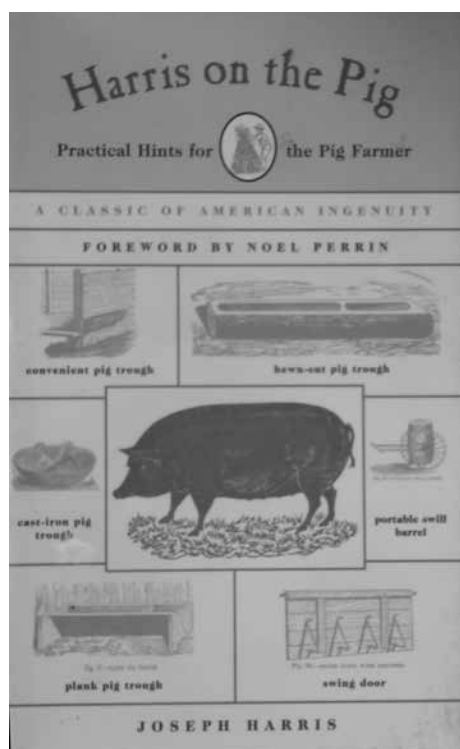
Brian: There are many satisfying sounds on the farm. But yes, the sound of the pigs answering the call of the clanging bucket, oinking back to me when I call their name, and snuffling up acorns in the woods, all of these soothe the savage, or at least overworked, breast.

Ken: Pig calling—is that for real?

Brian: In ["Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!"] an impecunious young man loves a Threepwood niece or ward. Trying to get in good with Lord Emsworth in order to win the girl of his dreams, he rescues the despairing Earl with an American pig call that puts the Empress back on her feed. Yes, there is power in being able to lean into the woods, throw one's head back, and shout "Pigeeeeee" and hear the thunder of ten or more pigs running from all directions.

Ken: The diet of pigs is—what is it?

Brian: Our pigs eat a custom blend of corn and soybeans, all the acorns and hickory nuts they can



*Brian Miller's copy of
Harris on the Pig,
originally written in 1870*

scavenge, the odd spare dozen eggs from our henhouse, and all the oversize zucchini (or courgettes, for our English cousins) from the garden they can gorge.

Ken: Other than Clarence and Constance, who are your named pigs?

Brian: It is an old but true axiom that one should never name animals that are destined for the plate. So our feeder pigs are only called names like Ham, Bacon, Prosciutto, etc. I wait for the day when I have a sow who is a worthy candidate for the name Empress.

Ken: Tell me about Clarence and Constance, qua pigs.

Brian: Clarence is definitely the man of the manse, unchallenged at the trough, and lord of the wallow. But honestly, Clarence the boar is a bit of a bore. Two slender threads drive his daily life: food and conjugal moments. Connie is not as insufferable as her namesake.

She is affectionate and will walk at a stately pace, for a 400-pound sow, through the woods when her name is called, all for the pleasure of having her back scratched.

Ken: Do Clarence and Constance share a fate? Predestined or plattered? Cased or cloistered?

Brian: Please keep this quiet, but the fate of Connie and Clarence is tied to their usefulness as parental units of Berkshire offspring. When Clarence can no longer remember where he keeps his Whiffle, then he graduates to the next grand adventure.

Ken: Do you have any books about pigs in sickness and health?

Brian: I have a rather extensive collection of agricultural books. One favorite volume is a reprint of *Harris on the Pig*, written in 1870 by an English immigrant to America. I once had an implicit faith in Whiffle's *The Care of the Pig* but later discovered the man used an alias. Such impostors abound in Wodehouse, but my pigs' health is no laughing matter.

Ken: Have you ever bounced a tennis ball off a pig's back?

Brian: I have not bounced tennis balls off the backs of my pigs. But, I regularly bounce tomatoes and eggs. Ah, the rustic at play.

Ken: Is a "pig in clover" really happy?

Brian: We do not happen to grow clover on this

farm, but I can tell you that a pig with tomatoes and eggs to slurp up is deeply content.

Ken: The contentedness of Brian Miller's pigs is obvious but no greater than his own pleasure in reading Wodehouse. Sadly, the work of a farmer is rarely done, and so he finds little enough time for such literary joys. It is therefore a special blessing that the pigs can often provide that little extra morsel of joy so necessary as the zest and seasoning in the good life.



Clarence and Constance enjoy a post-interview meal.

More Than One Way to Swing a Cat

BY DAVID LANDMAN

IN THE 1917 musical comedy hit *Oh, Boy!*, Jim and Jackie sing a duet entitled "Nesting Time in Flatbush" in which the following exchange takes place:

Both: When it's nesting time in Flatbush
We will take a little flat.

Jackie: With "Welcome" on the mat.

Jim: Where there's room to swing a cat
I'll hang up my hat in our Flatbush flat
Life will be so sweet with you.

Room to swing a cat! The line is funny because of its absurd implication that taking a cat by the tail and swinging it around is a habitual and much-relished pastime in a happy home. Wodehouse, undoubtedly, took the phrase in this sense.



More pedantic heads have told us that the expression originally made serious sense. In the navy, a jacktar who had committed an infraction was liable to punishment by flogging with a cat o' nine tails. His crewmates were obliged to witness the execution of this brutal punishment, and in an effort to preserve their shipmate from the worst (which, depending on the number of strokes mandated, could be death), they crowded around the wielder of the whip so that he could not bring the full force of his arm to bear. In other words, they gave him little room to swing a cat.

There is, however, an instance in European literature of the Middle Ages where a cat of the feline persuasion *was* swung, but for neither a domestic nor a punitive purpose. This particular cat was swung for a rattling good indecent purpose. In the 12th- or 13th-century Provençal troubadour song attributed to Guillem de Peiteus, Seventh Count of Poitiers and Ninth Duke of Aquitaine, "En Alvenhe Part Lomozi" ("Once in the Auvergne, Past Limousin"), the poet sings of how once he was on the road in the garb of a pilgrim and met with two women, the wives of Monsieurs Guari and Bernart, Lady Agnes and Lady Ermassen. He speaks to them in gibberish ("*Tarrababart / marrababelio riben / saramahart*") so that they will take him for a simpleton. And so they do, thinking that because he is mute, they can safely employ him for their pleasure without any danger of disclosure.

They take him home and order him to strip. Satisfied that he is eminently capable of satisfying, they seek to make sure he is not a fraud and genuinely incapable of cogent speech. "Quick," one says, "get the red cat! / If he's been faking / That'll make him talk."

Then the song relates how Lady Ermassen took the cat by the tail (*tira el cat escoyssen*) and started swinging. "That cat," the troubadour boasts (and I paraphrase), "must have clawed me a hundred times, but through it all I never flinched, and though the beast nearly killed me, I never gave myself away." The women, convinced that he is indeed *mutz*, avail themselves of his good will 188 times (*C et quatre XX VIII vetz*)!

It is an ironic twist to the story that the troubadour has revealed the names of the women who sought by so merciless a means to assure themselves of his silence. But he does not escape scot-free. He complains that he nearly "split his reins" and got the pox, to boot.

The song ends with the plea "*per m'amor / aucioz-l cat!*" ("for the love of me, drown that cat!").

The mute ploy reappears much later in Boccaccio's *Decameron* as the first tale of the third day. But lost somehow in the course of two centuries is the wanton swinging of the cat.

TWS's Presidential Insignia

BY NORMAN MURPHY

ONE OF THE FEATURES of TWS conventions that many members (to their shame, I might add) prefer to miss is the Dread Business Meeting. This generally takes place immediately after the lunch break during the Saturday talks and involves discussion of society business, including the election of officers. Finally comes the big moment when the outgoing president formally hands over office to his or her successor. This handover includes the physical transfer of the Tome—an enormous volume which contains a history of the Society, including signatures of those attending conventions—and the presidential insignia. For obvious reasons, the insignia is usually only seen at conventions, and then only fleetingly, so I thought it worthwhile to describe the two items involved and where they came from.

If you ever visit a British junk shop or antiques market, you will always see dozens of tea bells. These are small, decorative bells, usually made of brass or copper, and they stem from the days, roughly 1880–1939, when most British middle-class families had a live-in servant. The bell was used to call for more hot water for the teapot or to indicate when the next course at dinner should be served—that sort of thing. At establishments like Blandings, of course, you summoned Beach by pressing a button in the wall, but smaller establishments did not have this facility.

People often bought tea bells as souvenirs of visits to “Beautiful Brighton” or “Sunny Skegness,” and in 1924 the place everybody went to was the Empire Exhibition at Wembley in north London. It was an enormous affair, and we get an excellent description of it in “The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy.” Now, we know Jeeves accompanied Bertie, Biffy, and Sir Roderick Glossop on their visit there. The question is—what was Jeeves doing while Bertie and Biffy were enjoying their Green Swizzles? Well, we can be pretty certain he was doing what we all do on these occasions: buying postcards and souvenirs to send to his relations. And among the souvenirs he would undoubtedly have bought for his aunts Annie, Emily, and Mrs. Pigott were Empire Exhibition tea bells.

Sixty-two years later, I was helping out at a Bring-and-Buy Sale in a village in the Lake District, where my late wife and I then lived, and I was summoned to move some tables by the unmistakable tinkle of a tea bell. I asked to see it—and recognized it immediately. It was small and chrome-plated, with the date 1924 and a lion's head, the emblem of the Empire Exhibition—

well worth the 15 pence (30 cents) that I immediately paid for it. It was a nice little thing, but after I attended my first TWS convention in New York in 1991, it was clear where it should belong. Dash it, it could have been the one Jeeves had bought! So, when I attended my second convention (Boston 1995), I formally presented it to President Toni Rudersdorf as a means of calling members to order.

In 2001, at the Philadelphia convention, I was proud and happy to announce my marriage to Elin Woodger. By way of celebration, I procured for Elin, as retiring president, a medallion of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother suspended on a plum-colored ribbon, which she duly passed on as a badge of office to the incoming president, Susan Cohen. And I am delighted to have seen it worn subsequently at our Wodehouse dinners in London by Jan Kaufman, Jean Tillson, Kris Fowler, and most recently, Gary Hall.

If you are a numismatist and look closely at the medallion, you will recognize it as the five-pound coin minted to celebrate the Queen Mother's 100th birthday in 2000. And, as a numismatist, you will also know that the inscription to The Wodehouse Society on the reverse side is highly illegal! In the United Kingdom, as in America, there are severe penalties for “defacing the coinage,” and the first three jewelers I tried wouldn't touch the job. I was then lucky enough to find a Greek Cypriot jeweler who didn't know the rules (or didn't care), and he did it for me. But don't try and earn a reward by informing the authorities. I have subsequently learned that so many people now wear old coins as cufflinks or on charm bracelets that the authorities take a relaxed view. So future society presidents can wear this memento of their illustrious patron to dinners in London confident in the knowledge they will not be lugged off to the Tower.



Still life of TWS presidential insignia: bell and medallion

Collecting *Cosmopolitan* and *Collier's* Wodehouse

By JOHN GRAHAM

MY PREVIOUS collecting column was devoted to Wodehouse stories in the *Strand Magazine*. This one looks at Wodehouse in two important American magazines, *Cosmopolitan* and *Collier's*. The year 2010 marks the 100th anniversary of Plum's debut in both magazines, which published more Wodehouse than any other American magazines except for the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Cosmopolitan was founded in 1886 as a monthly "first-class family magazine," and quickly became a venue for top writers even before William Randolph Hearst acquired it in 1905. *Collier's* began as a small weekly in Ohio in 1886; by the first decade of the 20th century it was well-established as a national forum for muckraking journalists and high-profile short stories, including some of the adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

From his own words, we know that breaking into *Cosmopolitan* and *Collier's* was an important event in Wodehouse's literary development. In a 1969 preface for a Herbert Jenkins reissue of *Uneasy Money*, Wodehouse writes: "When I went to New York in 1909 . . . I instantly sold a short story to *Collier's* for \$200 and another to *Cosmopolitan* for \$300 . . ." In the early 1960s, Wodehouse gave a slightly different and fuller account to his biographer David Jasen: "I took a single room at the Hotel Earle in Greenwich Village. . . . There were several other writers also living there. . . . One of the fellows put me on to Seth Moyle, who became my next literary agent in New York. I certainly wasn't up to selling a couple of short stories myself. Moyle sold 'The Good Angel' to *Cosmopolitan* for \$200 and 'Deep Waters' to *Collier's Weekly* for \$300, both in the same morning." Putting aside the issue of which magazine actually paid more, what mattered to Wodehouse was that he had grossed \$500 in just one day, or as he put it, "As I had never got more than £10 for an opus in England, I felt that here was a country where I was going to be appreciated."

After this promising start, however, things did not continue to go smoothly. In the *Uneasy Money* preface, Wodehouse claims the editors of *Cosmopolitan* and *Collier's* "let me down. I did my part all right, never failing to give them the opportunity of obtaining their regular Wodehouse, but they refused to meet me half way . . . for not another story did either of them buy." As we will see, this is not true, but it is true that after a brisk start in both magazines, Wodehouse disappeared from their pages for almost ten years.



August 1928 *Cosmopolitan* cover
announces another Wodehouse story.

Plum felt particularly let down by the editors of *Cosmopolitan*, who "when my little thing was published had said the public would be well advised to watch my progress, as in their opinion I was going to be a second O. Henry," but "you can't be a second O. Henry if editors will not cooperate." This part of his story is true. Wodehouse magazine collector extraordinaire Gus Caywood has discovered that, in the January 1910 issue, the editors of *Cosmopolitan* did indeed publish the following announcement:

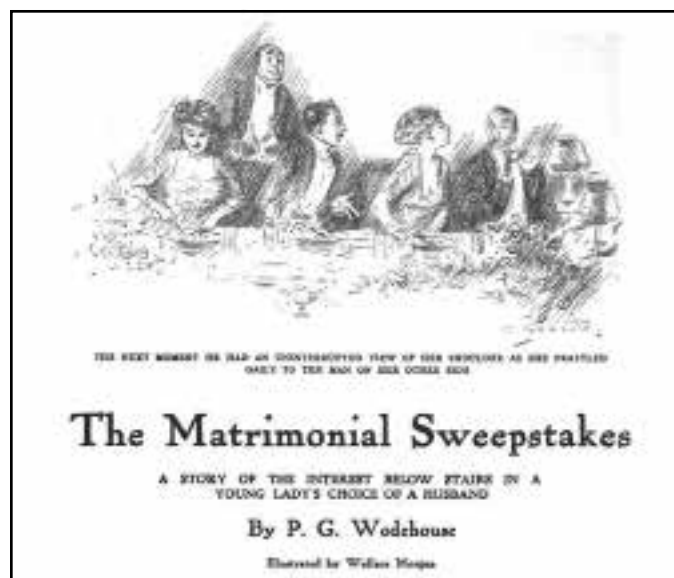
In the next issue we are printing a story by another author, now unknown, who we think, will prove to be a second O. Henry. His name is Wodehouse—P. G. Wodehouse, a name it is well to remember. You will see it often, since we have arranged with him for quite a series of humorous stories.

As promised, the February issue carried “The Matrimonial Sweepstakes,” which was the *Strand Magazine*’s “The Good Angel,” rewritten with an American setting. (Neil Midkiff has discovered that the *Cosmopolitan* version contains Wodehouse’s earliest reference to a character named Lord Emsworth.) The story was illustrated by Wallace Morgan, who would go on to illustrate more Wodehouse stories than any other American artist. “The Man Up-Stairs” followed in March, illustrated by James Montgomery Flagg, who would prove to be *Cosmopolitan*’s favorite Wodehouse illustrator. Two more stories were published in June and August, but after that *Cosmopolitan* carried no more Wodehouse until 1920. By comparison, *Collier’s* treated Plum a little better in those early years. They published “Archibald’s Benefit” on March 19 and “Deep Waters” on May 28, 1910. Both stories were illustrated by Wallace Morgan. In all, *Collier’s* would publish a total of nine Wodehouse short stories from 1910 to 1913. After that, they did not publish another one until December 6, 1919.

With a new agent (Paul Reynolds) and a growing reputation, Wodehouse returned to the pages of *Cosmopolitan* in May 1920 with “The Man Who Married a Hotel,” the first of ten related stories (which ran until February 1921) that Wodehouse would revise for book publication as *Indiscretions of Archie*. In a letter to his daughter Leonora dated May 1, 1921, Wodehouse writes: “The editor of the *Cosmopolitan* told the editor of *Collier’s* who told me, that the e. of the *Cosmopolitan* had more letters from readers about the Archie stories than about the whole of the rest of the magazine put together.”

Not surprisingly then, almost every issue of *Cosmopolitan* from December 1921 through January 1924 carried another new Wodehouse—first 11 Jeeves stories and then ten Ukridge stories. A batch of Mulliner stories came next, starting in 1928, and more Jeeves stories starting in 1929. From January to June 1934, *Cosmopolitan* serialized *Thank You, Jeeves* with illustrations by James Montgomery Flagg, some of which were reused on the Little, Brown dust wrapper.

Between 1920 and 1932, *Collier’s* serialized six full-length novels, beginning with *The Little Warrior* stretched across 18 issues, and ending with *Hot Water* in 12 issues. In between came such Wodehouse classics as *Summer Lightning* and *Big Money*. After World War II, *Collier’s* was one of the few American magazines to continue to serialize Wodehouse novels, but now mostly in condensed form. The last Wodehouse novel to appear in their pages was *Something Fishy*, published in two parts in late summer 1956.



The first page of Wodehouse's first story in Cosmopolitan

Unlike *Collier’s*, *Cosmopolitan* published only two of Wodehouse’s stories after the war. One of them was “Joy Bells for Barmy,” which Plum called “the best short story I have ever written” in a December 24, 1947, letter to Bill Townend. Surprisingly, it was never republished until Tony Ring included it in *Plum Stones* in 1994. One Wodehouse contribution to *Cosmopolitan* has never been republished. It is “My Year Behind Barbed Wire” from October 1941, billed as “cabled from Berlin, passed by the Nazi censors, here is a firsthand account of life in a German internment campus by the famous British humorist.” It is accompanied by a drawing by Roese (who did some dust wrappers for Doubleday) of Wodehouse in captivity, cheerfully hard at work as the pages fly off his typewriter.

According to McIlvaine, Wodehouse appeared in a total of 72 monthly issues of *Cosmopolitan* and 95 weekly issues of *Collier’s*. If you have the patience to search and the room to store them, it is the work of a moment to accumulate quite a stack of them. Local flea markets, magazine fairs and eBay are all good sources; prices are surprisingly low, especially if you are accustomed (like me) to paying first-edition prices. Even though almost all of these stories have been republished in book form, Wodehouse magazine appearances are highly desirable for their illustrations, which were rarely republished, and for often fascinating textual variations from later book appearances. Like Gus Caywood and Neil Midkiff, you may find there are new Wodehouse discoveries still waiting to be uncovered.



A Calendar of Wodehouse Saints

BY KEN CLEVENGER

AS FAR AS WE KNOW, P. G. Wodehouse was not observant of religion as an adult. But in his youth he was constantly exposed to the rites of the established Church of England, through his family and schools. He had uncles who were clergymen and devout, or at least conforming, aunts as well. As a result, his writing shows a keen interest in the church and its liturgy, clergy, and calendar. One notable aspect of this exposure to things churchly is that saints appear, not infrequently, in his fiction.

As Norman Murphy has demonstrated, Wodehouse's fiction is grounded in factual circumstances. It is little wonder, then, that Plum would freely use the names of saints from the religious calendar. In fact, the names of more than a score of recognized saints appear in the books of Wodehouse. St. Paul makes several appearances, most memorably as the London cathedral dome whose noble shape is compared to Stilton Cheesewright's head in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*. St. Monica is remembered in a notorious girl's school with several alumnae at large in the Wodehouse tomes. Of course, St. Michael and St. George both are obligated to appear in stories so English in setting and tone. Saints Vitus, Sebastian, Cecilia, Crispin, Peter, Andrew, Stephen, John, Martin, and James are all honored in the canon. St. Thomas is doubtless in there somewhere, and we can shout out a "hey" to St. Jude. Hospitals, churches, villages, boats, and newspapers are all named for saints. We read of Saints Luke and Louis, Francis and Barnabas, and Saint Christopher travels with us as we traverse the literary world of Wodehouse. But not St. Matthew, the patron saint of tax collectors. Plum could respect and honor religious sentiment and belief but not tax collectors!

St. Anthony also inhabits the canon. He's the saint who is said to help one resist temptation, but Plum could not resist inventing a few more saints. So here, from Wodehouse's writings, I offer you a calendar of saints, some real and some fictitious. Saints normally are honored with feast days; here, in this Wodehousean hagiology, I will honor each saint with a month of imaginary festivities and patronage.

January heads the calendar, and we'll give this month to St. Saviour, the patron saint of bachelors. Jeeves, a practicing bachelor, is good at deus-ex-machina activity, but it never hurts to have a saint on your side for insurance. In *Pigs Have Wings*, an imbroglio prevents a marriage in the London St. Saviour church (a

real church) in Pimlico. Just as the determined bachelor Jeeves is an effective "anti-connubilent" for Bertie, so apparently St. Saviour intercedes to save bachelors in distress in the church vestry. Saviour's saintly acts seemingly were also at work for James Rodman in the Mulliner short story "Honeysuckle Cottage." You will recall that "Mr. McKinnon, a stout bachelor," told James that he, James, was "too young to marry," which elicited the classic biblical allusion from James: "So was Methuselah."

February will be devoted to St. Aurea. Who could be more appropriate as the patron saint of Wodehouse girls than Saint "Gold"? Okay, yes, but there isn't a St. Diamonds! Surely many of "Plum's Peaches," to borrow D. R. Benson's ripe phrase, have been under the special care and protection of St. Aurea. How else has Roberta Wickham managed to survive? Perhaps it was the saint's protecting hand that compelled Bertie to "pause and remind myself that an English gentleman does not slosh a sitting redhead" in *Jeeves in the Offing*. St. Aurea helps even Madeline Bassett gain a band of gold. Gwladys Pendlebury from "A Spot of Art" romps home too, albeit not with Bertie, in spite of Aunt Dahlia's prescient warning to all young men about her name. Our radiant saint also provides a refuge for Bertie in "The Aunt and the Sluggard." But read the canon carefully! Dahlia also warns us about Ysobel and Ethyl, and isn't it an Aunt "Isabel" who puts Bertie out of his New York flat and into the arms of the St. Aurea hotel in nothing flat? A miracle? Maybe not, but Dahlia's claims to sainthood should at least be considered.

March marks a month for St. Asterisk. This wholly fictitious saint's name is also given to a boy's school that merits a brief mention in *The Head of Kay's* and a couple of other Wodehouse stories. But we will designate Asterisk's lasting fame as the patron saint of the city of Berlin. During World War II, Plum made statements purely as a humorist and as a man who disliked any kind of conflict. Indeed, so impersonally did he take his internment that many of his countrymen felt that his escutcheon was a bit blotted. Like those who denigrate a great sports hero suspected of using illegal performance-enhancing drugs, some will place an unfortunate asterisk beside Wodehouse's name. The devout pray to St. Asterisk for a second chance after an initial blunder. For Plum, this second chance came in the final three decades of his postwar life, as he continued to make great contributions to joy and literature.

April will be St. Asaph's month, and he will be the patron saint of the Drones (a distinct subset of bachelors). Asaph has a school named for him at Bramley-on-Sea in the short story "Bramley is So Bracing," collected in *Nothing Serious*. Drones Club member Bingo Little was a pupil there. One does not envy St. Asaph for his burden in watching over the Drones. Certainly their hearts are almost always in the right place, but a more complete school of hammerheads has never been imagined. That the first day of April is under this saint's aegis is no accident.

May is the season of spring, when warm zephyrs blow and young men bring out their open two-seater automobiles. So St. Austin will serve as the patron saint of motorcars in Wodehouse. Plum must have felt forsaken by this saint as his personal relationship with cars was quite rocky. But when you examine the canon closely you will find that two-seaters and other automobiles make many vital contributions. What, besides a train or a taxi, gets one to Brinkley Court in time for one of Anatole's superb dinners? If coshes need to be retrieved from the flat in the metrop., how best to buzz along there? When escaping from St. Monica's girls' school, what better conveyance? And if you want a girl to transfer her affections, how better than to have her run over the new boyfriend with her automobile just outside your flat? In short, cars are so versatile it would take a saint to keep up with all their manifold ways of doing good in Wodehouse's fictional world.

We will name St. Ethelburga as Plum's patron saint of wives, and she will hold dominion in June. Mind you, this feminine saint from "Jeeves and the Kid Clementina" in the U.S. edition of *Very Good, Jeeves*, miraculously appears as St. Monica in the U.K. version of that story. But saints can do these things. Like so many other saints, Wodehouse named a school after St. Ethelburga. As this was the girls' school that produced the "one-girl beauty chorus" Bobbie Wickham, we rather doubt the saintly connection. We see a similarity to the affianced Eileen "Dinty" Moore, a Broadway producer's secretary, from *Angel Cake* or *Barmy in Wonderland*, who "took over the conduct of affairs with the quiet, efficient smoothness so characteristic of women when they are about to embark on a course of action not scrupulously honest." This may indeed be the overarching womanly spirit that pervades St. Ethelburga's school for girls (and wives in training). This same spirit might also account for the occasions wherein Jeeves exercised a certain latitude with regard to the facts also. For in Jeeves, many people see the wife that Bertie never had.

Mysterious St. Adela will hold sway in July. She is said to be the patron saint of Wodehouse's aunts (whence

the phrase: "Bless my sainted aunt!"), although how and why aunts generally merit patronage in the canon is itself a mystery. Sure, Aunt Dahlia is Bertie's "good" aunt. But what price such good aunts? Blackmail, secret necklace pawning, coshing, burglary, strong language—and that's just in one or two novels! Yet the evidence of auntly goodness and miracles is also there. As we learn in *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, Aunt Jane, "like so many aunts . . . was gifted with a sort of second sight." Or take the case of the aunt in *The Girl in Blue* who pawned a relative's "false teeth in order to contribute to the mission for propagating the gospel among the unenlightened natives of West Africa." However, as with St. Ethelburga and St. Monica, we find that St. Adela, when gracing a girl's school with her name, also fails to ennoble the female scholars cloistered therein. Consider the girls of St. Adela's: Rosie M. Banks and Miss Laura Pyke, her old school chum. These two chums were quickly at daggers drawn over old jealousies when stranded with Bertie by Jeeves. Also recall the girl named for St. Adela in *Spring Fever*. She is described as what is technically known as a tough baby. "Her bite spells death." We don't know if all these females are aunts but we suspect as much.

Fittingly, St. Rocque, the saint who will be given the *mois très chaud* August, will have under his special protection cold drinks and waiters, *les boissons frais et les garçons*. Not that there is actually any ice in France except on the upper slopes of Mont Blanc and perhaps a bit of frost on de Gaulle in his prime. But this Wodehousian St. Rocque, while admittedly a real saint on the Spanish calendar, is merely a fictional place in the novel *Hot Water*.

September is the month for Wodehouse's St. Brule, the patron saint of desserts. Like St. Rocque, St. Brule, in the short story "Sundered Hearts," is a seaside village, this one in the south of France. But when Mary, or Mabel to be frank, disappears like a new ball in the tall rough, it puts Mortimer Sturgis off his game and feed. This being a Wodehouse love/golf story, you know that they will end up unsundered. St. Brule may be the *crème de la crème* of Plum's saints, as demonstrated by the number of characters of large caliber in the Wodehouse canon: Sir Gregory ("Tubby") Parsloe-Parsloe (who resembles "a captive balloon"); the Duke of Dunstable (the "largest trouser-seat in the peerage"); Lady Malvern (in an armchair "build round her by someone who knew that they were wearing armchairs tight about the hips that season"); and, of course, the Empress of Blandings, gloriously described as a "bulbous mass of lard and snuffle."

In October, we will celebrate the lean characters with St. Swithin, whom we'll designate the patron saint

of lankness. Now, we'll admit the anomaly of that large, beefy, boxing blue, the Earl of Havershot, who represents the Swithin family in *Laughing Gas*. Still, St. Swithin's devotees are well represented in Wodehouse. The Earl of Ickenham, Frederick Altamont Cornwallis Twistleton, ranks highest among the thin and titled. Rupert (or Ronald) Eustace Psmith is doubtless the thinnest commoner, if we don't count the fellow in "Archibald and the Masses" who hadn't tasted bread for five days. This saint, who is apparently opposed to Anatolian comestibles, also has a metropolitan hospital named in his honor in Chapter 12 of *Bachelors Anonymous*. Finally, Gally Threepwood, that classic man about the metrop., may well be the epitome of trimness, though perhaps not always saintliness.

As cooler weather returns in November, St. Botolph, anointed as the patron saint of drinks in Wodehouse, will be toasted throughout the world (or at least in the northern hemisphere). The aforementioned St. Rocque could not provide Mr. Mulliner with a hot Scotch and lemon libation, but St. Botolph's remit extends to any potable alcoholic substance. There is, we are told in "The Story of Webster," a church in Knightsbridge named in honor of St. Botolph. St. Botolph's influence is omnipresent in the world of Wodehouse. Apart from the morally uplifting schoolboy tales, so many of Wodehouse's stories feature strong drink in a positive light. Where would Bertie be without a stiffish whisky and soda? Can you imagine Beach without his port? Or an entirely sober Drone? My own dry research among the Mulliner stories finds only five of 43 without some specific alcoholic libation being mentioned and consumed. St. Botolph may owe his canonization in part to the exertions of Lord Yaxley, or Uncle George, "who discovered that alcohol was a food well in advance of modern medical thought" in "The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace."

The year, and our calendar of Wodehouse saints, closes with Wodehouse's St. Beowulf. He will be the patron saint of Plum's pigs. So the Empress of Blandings and her archrivals, the Pride of Matchingham and the Queen of Matchingham, are under the protective gaze of Beowulf's great big eyes. St. Beowulf is recognized in a church name, St. Beowulf in the West, in "The Bishop's Move." And appropriately so, as the villain in the story, Old Fatty Hemel, aka Lord Hemel of Hempstead in the breeder's guide, was known as a "greedy little beast" and as a swiller of buns, potted meat (we are not told pork so it may have been beef or mutton), and also brown boot polish on bread.

This whole business of sainthood is fascinating. Unfortunately, it seems that martyrdom is frequently

an essential prerequisite to become sainted. Then there is the general requirement that the saint-to-be lives a clean life. In regard to that latter aspect, I feel rather like Lady Monica Carmoyle in *Ring for Jeeves*, who, when asked if she could speak Spanish, candidly replied: "I don't know. I've never tried."

There is not, yet, a St. Pelham or a St. Grenville, but we may still accord Wodehouse a deep degree of devotion, veneration, and even adoration for his endless good works.

[There is, however, Saint Neri, the "Humorous Saint," who said, "Do something today that you are afraid might make you look a little ridiculous." Fair advice! -Ed.]

"I would bestow this vacant living on you without a moment's hesitation. But an unforeseen complication has arisen. Unhappy lad, my wife has instructed me to give the post to a cousin of hers. A fellow," said the bishop bitterly, "who bleats like a sheep and doesn't know an alb from a reredos."

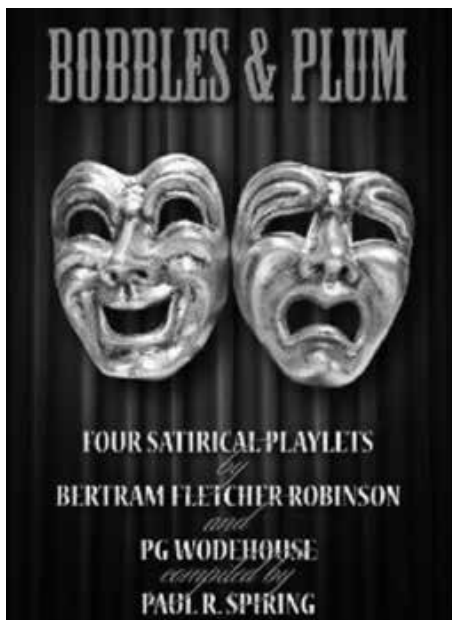
"The Bishop's Move" (1927)

Bobbles & Plum

BY GARY HALL

IN THE FIRST DECADE of the 20th century, P. G. Wodehouse collaborated with journalist Bertram "Bobbles" Fletcher Robinson on a series of four politically satirical playlets. Paul R. Spiring, by trade a biologist and physicist, has written books about Arthur Conan Doyle and Bertram Fletcher Robinson, and now has compiled these playlets into a book entitled *Bobbles & Plum*. Published in 2009 by MX Publishing Ltd. in London, the book sports a foreword by Hilary Bruce (chairman of The P G Wodehouse Society [UK]) and an introduction and numerous well-researched annotations by Norman Murphy and Tony Ring.

The slim volume makes for enjoyable reading after studying the explanations of context prepared by Norman and Tony. Though full of obscure politically dated meaning, the prose is brisk and witty and the verse and songs are well-constructed, balanced, and creative. The playlets give the impression of political cartoons set to the stage. In the first work, "A Fiscal Pantomime: The Sleeping Beauty," the character played by "Herr Spoofoheimer" sings, and Wodehouse's skill at spoofing the German accent is on early display: "Englant long will rule der main / If she keeps out Chamberlain!"



Norman states that, given Fletcher Robinson's background and inclinations, it's likely that he wrote the political plots and Wodehouse contributed the lyrics. Any Plummy reader will spot similarities to other later Wodehousean writings and hints of his budding talent and phrasing. While some of the humor is less compact and astute than his later work, that seems natural since these works were written before 1910.

Wodehouse's lighthearted touch is evident, as is his use of classical and poetic elements. Here's an excerpt of a song by King Arthur in "A Winter's Tale: King Arthur & His Court":

Oh, the life of a king is not skittles and beer at all;
Worries pursue him wherever he flies . . .

.....

Oh! *vitae* (to quote from the Classical) *taedia*!
Life (to translate) is a poor sort of show.

The lyricist uses a variety of rhyming techniques and metric methods. Norman points out that many of the lyrics bear a stylistic resemblance to Gilbert & Sullivan, and indeed, Wodehouse did attend G & S shows. Lyrical patterns are numerous. The chorus is sometimes used to echo the last lines of the soloist ("She spoke that line in a manner free / And now she's a ruler of societee"), and there are singsong passages that certainly show Wodehouse's gentle touch:

I'm one, you know, as modest as they make 'em,
With women I am diffident and shy;
Around the waist I never wish to take 'em,
I sort of rather blushes when they're by.

The wide range of lyrical shape indicates that Wodehouse was already developing the techniques that would serve him well in the theatre:

On the river our Fleet
Is progressive and neat,
Though no passengers there you may see,
I would have you to note
That the crews have a vote;
And that is sufficient for me.

In "The Respectable Peer" from "The Progressive's Progress: Some Memories of 1906," we even get something resembling a limerick:

Plain water I take at my meals:
I don't like French cooking at all.
But the radical presses
Denounce my excesses
In a manner designed to appal.

A large majority of the content becomes accessible to the reader by relying on the excellent contextual notes that Norman and Tony have prepared. My first reading of parts of the playlets left me bewildered by the numerous dated social and political references. The second pass, after being educated by the introduction and by relying on the annotations, was much more entertaining and satisfying.

One important item of context to understand is the set of writings known as the Parrot poems. In late 1903, Wodehouse contributed several poems that imitated Poe's "The Raven" by ending each verse with "Your food will cost you more." These were targeted toward some proposed import tariffs after 60 years of free trade, and there is some evidence that these poems gave the tariff opponents a tag phrase that helped defeat the tariff reform. Despite this foray into political waters, Norman points out that Wodehouse's views were probably not very committed, since he wrote this verse in 1904:

I sometimes read the *Daily Mail*,
Sometimes the *Daily News*,
And thoroughly agree with each
That nought is true but what they teach.

So, we can guess that most of the politics in the show are Fletcher Robinson's. He also wrote various other items, but unfortunately, he died at age 36 in 1907, and his potential was not realized. It's good, then, that we have this little volume that, as Norman says, "has a wit and charm we can appreciate today."

Review of *Just Enough Jeeves*

BY KEN CLEVENGER

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY's new compilation *Just Enough Jeeves*, is, in fact, scarcely enough Jeeves and barely enough else. It reprints the novels *Joy in the Morning* and *Right Ho, Jeeves*. It also includes the U.K. version (with the funny French Wodehouse preface) of *Very Good, Jeeves*.

It is very good Wodehouse, of course, and for a person wanting to add these three titles to his or her library, a fine volume. The cover images are interesting and evocative. The print is clear and easy to read. At just over 700 pages, it is a real tome. As a minor gripe, the 11 short stories from *Very Good, Jeeves* should have been individually identified by title on their page headers, instead of just repeating "Very Good, Jeeves" a hundred times or so. Also, to highlight Plum's collaboration in the musical theatre with Cole Porter in the short biographic note seems unneeded and pandering, but these are small points.

It is Robert McCrum's introduction that gives this tome tone. Again one could quibble: Is it fair to lump Agatha and Dahlia together as equally "fearsome" aunts? Is "global furor" a fair description of the response to Plum's aptly characterized "ill-judged" Berlin broadcasts? But quibbles aside, Mr. McCrum clearly is at his best in placing Wodehouse's work in a literary context. A "nonsense elegy for Edwardian England" is a fine phrase, well-wrought and well-thought. The introduction provides a wonderful summary of the fictional world of a writer whose working life covered such a significant span of time and yet seemingly and delightfully is frozen in a season and place.

I would recommend any book that contains Gussie's prize-giving speech at the Market Snodsbury Grammar School, and any book with unedited Wodehouse fiction of the quality in *Just Enough Jeeves*. Add in the all-but-too-short introduction by Mr. McCrum, and Wodehouse readers will probably treasure the volume.

"You will be much better off without him. Surely your terrible experiences of that awful night have told you that Jeeves needs a rest. The keenest of thinkers strikes a bad patch occasionally. That is what has happened to Jeeves. I have seen it coming on for some time. He has lost his form. He wants his plugs decarbonized."

Right Ho, Jeeves (1934)

The 2013 Convention!

THIS IS THE LAST MONTH for chapters to prepare their bids for the 2013 convention. **All bids must be submitted to Elin Woodger by January 14, 2011.**

For full host chapter selection criteria, you may download the CSC Charter from our website, or your may request a copy from Elin at the e-mail address or street address listed above.

Wodehouse, Thriller Writer



DAVID McDONOUGH sends us information about a new book called *Thrillers: 100 Must Reads*. The description on the cover says: "Today's Best Thriller Writers on One Hundred Classics of the Genre." The book was just published (August 2010) by Oceanview Publishers and is edited by David Morrell and Hank Wagner. Included are the usual suspects: *The Hound of the Baskervilles*; *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; *Riddle of the Sands*; *The 39 Steps*; *And Then There Were None*; and then, chosen by R. L. Stine, *Summer Lightning*!

David quotes Stine (author of the *Goosebumps* series) from his four-page essay in the book:

What ugly secrets does the old mansion hold?

Why is more than one visitor willing to pay big money to have the teller of the secrets silenced?

Can it be that several guests are not who they claim to be? Why do they sneak off in the dark of night to meet in secret?

Which guest is responsible for the shocking theft of the owner's most priceless possession?

Stine then goes on to say that, "Having written both humor and thrillers, I've chewed off many an ear with my theories about how the two are closely connected. P. G. Wodehouse is my favorite author."

And ours, too!

[David also was kind enough to send a link to an article that he wrote about the Cambridge Footlights Show, and he was proud to get a Wodehouse reference in the very first paragraph! You can check out the article at <http://tinyurl.com/35nsmfl>. -Ed.]

Jeeves in Bloom on Lake Minnetonka

BY MIKE ECKMAN

A DELEGATION of 14 Northwodes took advantage of a beautiful fall Sunday afternoon to gather at the Old Log Theater on Lake Minnetonka to enjoy *Jeeves in Bloom* by Margaret Raether. [Note that in the Summer 2010 issue of Plum Lines, Daniel Love Glazer reviewed the Oak Brook, Illinois, production of the play.]

One could describe the play as a “cut and pastiche” as it is made up of scenes from *Right Ho, Jeeves*. While at Cannes, Aunt Dahlia lost the money her husband Tom had given her to pay the printer of *Milady's Boudoir*. She summons Bertie to Brinkley Court, and he brings Gussie Fink-Nottle with him since Madeline Bassett is staying there. (Gussie is in love with Madeline, from whose dog's paw he had extracted a thorn.) Dahlia wants Bertie to steal her diamonds and pawn them so she can pay the printer. Tom Travers fears burglars and patrols at night with his shotgun. There is Wodehousean mayhem, and happy endings ensue.

The actors seemed to enjoy the show as much as the audience did. Jane Froiland as Madeline was pitch-perfect; it was easy to believe that she really does think that every time a fairy blows its nose, a baby is born. Gussie was portrayed by Clarence Wethern and was appropriately tongue-tied, except when drunk or talking of newts. Steve Shafer, an Old Log Theater veteran, did double duty as Tom Travers and Anatole. Mr. Shafer has appeared in a great many comedies at the Old Log, and this experience showed as he shifted effortlessly between the two roles.

Aunt Dahlia, as portrayed by Sally Ann Wright, was appropriately forceful with Bertie. But with her short red hair and businesslike demeanor, she appeared to be too good a businesswoman to gamble the printing

money away and dream up elaborate schemes to get it back. David McMenomy's most recent role before Bertie was Hamlet, and the seriousness of that role may have rubbed off on the portrayal of Bertie, who appeared to be a little more able and smart than the Bertie we know and love. James Cada, who played Jeeves, is a veteran of the Twin Cities theater scene and gave us a Jeeves older than the Stephen Fry portrayal, but a Jeeves who was appropriate and provided a good counterpoint for the others in the cast. Only Jeeves remained above the fray, could deal with Tom's indigestion (another magic elixir), and was able to flatter Anatole into submission.

We saw a wonderful drunk Gussie but unfortunately did not hear the prize giving at Market Snodsbury Grammar School. Anatole leaves in a huff, but since Gussie does not climb up to the skylight over Anatole's room, we do not hear Anatole's best speech.

In the end, all the troubled characters turn to Jeeves for help, all problems are eventually resolved, and Bertie escapes with Jeeves (“The car is already packed, sir”). While there are some other small plot flaws in this adaptation, our group enjoyed the play. We were recognized from the stage before the show, though “Northwodes” was mispronounced (as if it rhymes with “Spode's”), and our fearless leader was addressed as “Kim” Fowler.

In compliance with the Northwodes' bylaws, we gathered at Jake O'Connor's Pub after the show for the required browsing and sluicing. For Plummies venturing north during the cooler months, the play continues its run at the Old Log Theater (the program promises “rustic charm in Excelsior, Minnesota”) through February 5, 2011.

TWS in the Netherlands

BY JELLE OTTEN

RECENTLY a brand-new chapter of the TWS family was founded in Amsterdam, capital of the Netherlands. The Dutch chaps will hold regular meetings three times a year at Mulliner's Wijnlokaal, which in English would be something like Mulliner's Wine Bar.

We have chosen the name of the chapter after Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586), one of Wodehouse's heroes. During the Dutch war of independence, Sir Philip took part in the Battle of Zutphen, a town in the Netherlands. During the siege, he was shot in the thigh. Lying wounded, he gave his water bottle to another wounded soldier, saying the famous words: “Thy necessity is yet greater than mine!” Twenty-six days later, he died from his injuries.

Next meeting is on February 12, 2011, at 1:00 P.M. One of the highlights on the program is the annual cock-and-bull stories contest. This will be handled, of course, in the tradition of Mr. Mulliner's stories.

The address of Mulliner's Wijnlokaal is Lijnbaansgracht 266–267 in downtown Amsterdam (near Leidseplein). Contact information for the new chapter is on page 21 of Chapters Corner.

A Few Quick Ones

Karen Shotting sent a rather spicy article from the August 7 issue of the *Spectator*. In this article, writer Lucy Vickery summarizes the results of a competition in which readers were invited to submit a bedroom scene written by a novelist who would not normally venture into such territory. One winner (W. J. Webster) emulated Wodehouse and wrote a scene with Bertie Wooster and a feisty lady. While we can't print the article, the final line sums it up in a reasonable facsimile of Bertie's speech: "This begetting business clearly wasn't the doddle it's cracked up to be in the O. T."

In the July 2 issue of *Seven* (in the *Sunday Telegraph*), Richard Johnson writes of the greatly improved artistry that is going into the making of audiobooks nowadays. He opens with a description of Marvin Jarvis channeling, in an almost seance-like style, 16 characters in his new recording of *Service with a Smile*.

In the June 1 issue of the *Times* (London), Libby Purves explains why her new job as *Times* chief theatre critic fills her with joy. At one point she quotes P. G. Wodehouse: "Has anybody ever seen a dramatic critic in the daytime? Of course not. They come out after dark, up to no good."

Everyman Library has published its 70th Wodehouse title since 2000. As a result, Mark Sanderson ("Literary Life" column in the March 28 *Seven* supplement in the *Daily Telegraph*) suggests that Wodehouse himself "might have to revise his jaundiced opinion of publishers."

Roderick Easdale quotes Wodehouse in the July 14 issue of *Country Life* ("18 Fairways to Heaven") as saying that "he once wrote that anyone wishing to contact him could do so 'c/o the 6th bunker, The Addington Golf Club, Croydon, Surrey.'"

Philip Hensher wrote a humorous article for the July 21 *Daily Telegraph* in which he discusses rampant, and occasionally intentional, word mangling. Starting with Sarah Palin's accidental use of the word *refudiate*, he mentions various literary masters and their deliberate products, including Lewis Carroll ("slithy" for "lithe and slimy"); Shakespeare (turning nouns into verbs, as when Cleopatra says, "I shall be window'd in great Rome"); and, of course, Wodehouse ("I can out-Fred the nimblest Astaire").

Lucy Merrill found a passing reference to Plum in *Friends and Lovers* by Helen MacInnes (1947). Commenting on the excellence of his hostess's library, the protagonist notes: "He could spend a couple of hours here in peace, and take his choice in Stendhal or Dorothy Sayers, in Tolstoi or Wodehouse . . ." Lucy says that she particularly likes the juxtaposition of Wodehouse with one of those impenetrable Russian writers he so loved to needle.

Call for Performances, Skits, Readings, and Other Clean, Bright Entertainment at Convention 2011

DUDLEY PICKERING was a dull, plodding individual who planned meticulously and left nothing to chance. The Pickering Motor Company board of directors is much the same. And so, rather than letting the convention's performances and festivities just fall into place, they are planning to carefully vet all acts and monitor the times and places of all such events.

With that in mind, The Pickering Motor Company cordially requests that any chapter, group, or individual with a desire to provide some clean, bright entertainment at the 2011 convention, and with a desire to be added to the official program (of course, nothing can stop you from doing your thing in the hotel lobby), please give a brief description of the performance, noting precisely how long it will take. Once all submissions are received, a schedule and timetable will be issued.

Deadline for submissions is April 15, 2011 (a deadline most Americans can remember), but please don't all wait until the last minute.

Submissions can be, well, submitted to Elliott Milstein.



In the Autumn issue, we attempted to print a picture of Clint Eastwood coming out of The Only Running Footman pub. Due to some odd printer issue, the picture did not print—so, here we try again!

Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER



AND SO WE approach the end of another year and wonder what on earth we did with it. As I look back at the jolly old calendar, I can see the annum has been filled with Wodehouse even more than usual, starting with the Impostor's Wodehouse Walk I described in my last letter and finishing—almost—with the UK Society's biennial dinner at Gray's Inn in London. I say "almost" because, as I write this, there is still the Society's annual general meeting to take place (mid-November), but you don't need to hear about that.

What I must tell you about is, first of all, the tremendous presence that Wodehouse has had on the airwaves over here this year. The summer was an especially busy time, with mentions of Wodehouse popping up in one way or another on various radio and television programs. In July, BBC Radio 4 broadcast a two-part dramatization of *Summer Lightning*, adapted by Martin Jarvis, and the following month, on BBC television, the first installment of a three-part series entitled *In Their Own Words: British Novelists* included footage of an interview with Wodehouse at his home in Remsenburg sometime during the 1960s. For more details on all these programs and mentions of PGW, see the September issue of *Wooster Sauce* (p.18), but I'd like to pay special tribute to the *Summer Lightning* broadcast, which was absolutely smashing. The cast included such British acting luminaries as Charles Dance (playing Gally), Patricia Hodge (as Lady Constance), Tim Pigott-Smith (as Beach), and Samuel West (as Hugo Carmody), but the big surprise was Matt Lucas, a comedian best known over here for his satirical series *Little Britain*. Lucas played Percy Pilbeam and was the epitome of smarminess—an oily delight.

Martin Jarvis himself played Lord Emsworth, and he was woolly-brained perfection in the part. Martin, a patron of the UK Society, is one of those disgustingly talented people who can do just about anything with tremendous skill and panache. In addition to acting, writing, and producing, he also records Wodehouse audiobooks for CSA Word (www.csaword.co.uk), and he is unquestionably one of the best readers of Wodehouse stories, with a real gift for characterization. Another UK Society patron, Jonathan Cecil, also deserves mention in this regard. Jonathan records Wodehouse stories—brilliantly—for BBC Audiobooks (see www.audiogo.co.uk), and unlike Martin's recordings, Jonathan's are unabridged. Furthermore, he is the most prolific reader of Wodehouse ever, having recently recorded his

40th(!) title, *Big Money*. Between them, I'd say Jonathan and Martin have cornered the market on Wodehouse audiobooks—no others need apply.

So there was a lot of Wodehouse on the airwaves, there are always mentions of him in the press—and there have been doings in the theater as well. This was the year when it seemed every small company in the south of England decided to perform *Come On, Jeeves*. In March, Norman and I saw a production in Crayford, Kent, and we had a jolly good time, particularly in the second half, when the entire cast kicked into full gear for some wonderfully comic moments. Especially fun was Bill Towcester's dance with Mrs. Spottsworth, with Bill maneuvering her in an attempt to shake loose the pendant resting comfortably upon her bosom. The audience roared, and with good reason, as the two actors hilariously captured the moment that Wodehouse describes in *Ring for Jeeves*: "Nothing is more difficult than to describe in words a Charleston danced by, on the one hand, a woman who loves dancing Charlestons and throws herself into the right spirit of them, and, on the other hand, by a man desirous of leaving no stone unturned in order to dislodge from some part of his associate's anatomy a diamond pendant which has lodged there."

In sharp contrast to such joyful moments, there was much sadness in July when another Society patron, Sir Simon Hornby, died. Simon was married to Sheran Cazalet Hornby, PGW's granddaughter, and he was a man of many interests and talents, as well as an enthusiastic supporter of the UK Society from its founding. His nephew David Cazalet wrote a very touching tribute to Simon for the September issue of *Wooster Sauce*. He will be greatly missed.

Autumn brought Wodehousean enjoyment of a different sort when the Royal County of Berkshire Show took place in Newbury the weekend of September 18–19. The morning of the 19th saw the judging for the Berkshire Pig Champion of Champions, and for the fifth year in a row, the UK Society sponsored the prize. The championship entails a veritable sea of black Berkshires being herded endlessly around the show ring while a judge determines their merits and sorts the wheat from the chaff, as it were. As the pigs parade, an announcer describes them, and at Newbury, the chap was particularly well-informed on Wodehouse, Lord Emsworth, and the Empress of Blandings; he happily shared many details on these subjects for the crowd's

enjoyment and edification while the judge took her time arriving at a decision. Unlike the shows of Lord Emsworth's day, fatness is no longer the primary criterion for arriving at a winner; indeed, each judge will have his or her own personal ideas about what makes an ideal Berkshire pig, and size is rarely a consideration. The winner this year was a good-sized though unnamed boar. The ecstatic owner went off to call his wife, and by the time he returned to be interviewed by some of us Wodehouseans, the couple had decided to name their winning pig Emperor, in honor of the Empress. How fitting is that?

The big event of the year was, of course, the formal dinner at Gray's Inn. This is the UK Society's equivalent of our conventions, except that it all takes place on one night—and what a night! Among its delights on



This year's Berkshire Champion of Champions, Emperor, enjoys a post-victory snack while sporting his victor's sash.

(Photo by Tony Ring)

October 28 were delicious food and drink consumed in splendid, historic surroundings; an abundance of Wodehouseans enjoying themselves to the fullest; and a sparkling entertainment—an adaptation of "Uncle Fred Flits By" written by Tony Ring and performed by Wodehouse's talented great-grandchildren, a couple of the Society's committee members, a professional actor named Tim Brooke-Taylor (who made a perfect Uncle Fred), and (no less) the Duke of Kent. To say that it was all pretty dazzling would be an understatement.

Remarkably, despite the economic woes that have struck so many in these austere times, this was

the biggest dinner in the Society's history, with 147 in attendance. Furthermore, 14 of those had come all the way from the States, including TWS's current president, Gary Hall, and his consort, Linda Adam-Hall. Gary is providing his own report of the occasion (look no further than immediately after this article), and that includes a picture of our American 14, so I won't provide all the names here, but I will point out that our numbers encompassed no less than four ex-presidents of TWS: Dan Garrison, Elliott Milstein, Kris Fowler, and yours truly. And to add to the evening's already lustrous sheen, our own Elliott—who, with his wife, Elyse, and other members of the Pickering Motor Company, is organizing next year's convention in Dearborn (see page 1 if you don't believe me)—gave the evening's main toast, to Wodehouse and to The P G Wodehouse Society (UK). He was nothing short of brilliant, wowing the crowd with lines like: "What better way to stiffen the sinews against the day than to pick up a Wodehouse, open it at random and read something like 'she resembled a Ziegfeld Follies girl who had been left out in the rain and swollen a bit'?"

All in all, it was a spectacular event, made all the more pleasurable by the presence of good friends with American accents—all of whom I look forward to seeing (and hearing) again in Dearborn next year!

Letter from . . . the USA!

BY GARY HALL

ATTENDING THE biennial dinner of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) for the first time, Linda and I expected all manner of surprises and new experiences, and we were not disappointed. I hired my suit from Moss Bros, Linda (on excellent advice from Hilary Bruce) picked up a bit of a frock, we learned again to look last to the right before crossing the street, and spent a good deal of time minding the gap as we bopped around town on the Underground. It had been nine years since we had visited London, and some things have changed (subway Oyster cards) but the trip was every bit as enjoyable as the other times we've been. (Oddly, we always visit in October, November, December. What is a warm London like?)

We had a terrifically enjoyable stay at Norman and Elin's townhouse in north London. As might be expected, the house is a multiroom library, with all manner of scholarly items. In our bedroom, for example, I saw what appeared to be complete collections of hardbound issues of the *Strand*, *Punch*, *The Captain*, and other ancient periodicals of the Wodehouse world. Elin and Norman were most excellent hosts, with a personalized



The "American 14"

Back row: Dirk Wonnell, Susan Brokaw, Gary Hall, Bill Franklin, and Dan Garrison

Middle row: Linda Adam-Hall, Carey Tynan, Kris Fowler, Karen Shotting, Karen Latterell, Tina Garrison, and John Moore

Front row: Elliott Milstein and Marilyn MacGregor

Photo by Francis Taunton (using Bill Franklin's camera)

B&B approach, which extended to B&L and B&D service! And bed & cheese, for that matter. Norman is quite the expert on cheese, and we discussed the relative merits of various chunks of Cheshire and Wensleydale as we sipped a wide and fine variety of wine and port. Norman's scholarship is preeminent and covers all the bases: He reads Charles Lamb's *The Essays of Elia* on the subway and he helped us blend in by lending us *How to Act Like a Brit*. Elin's cow creamer collection in their kitchen hinted at past TWS conventions, her pig menagerie is growing snortingly well, and there were quaint touches like the dragon figurine sleeping in the matchbox and the pewter cats and mice surrounding the blown-glass octopus. Norman took us on a tour of St. Albans. (This quick trip also served as a handy introduction to driving on the left side of the road, since Linda and I would follow the London visit with a week of driving about Ireland. Add "driving instructor" to Norman's resume!)

The UK Society's dinner was preceded by a gathering of the Americans at the Bunghole, a pub that won out over several others as a result of thorough research by Robert Bruce, the consort of the UK Society's Chairman, Hilary Bruce. We were joined by a couple of Brits, including Francis Taunton and the very erudite Murray Hedgcock, who has been a frequent contributor to *Plum Lines* and *Wooster Sauce*. We had a delightful time 'elloing and quaffing champagne by the bucketfuls. Properly primed, we moved over to Gray's

Inn for the dinner itself, and the entertainment began in earnest.

The Inn is down what we in the U.S. might call an alley, or at best an alcove, but once inside, the grandeur is evident. The Inn's walls have portraits of Charles II and Sir John Holt and various other lords and luminaries, so you know you're in the presence of greatness. Before dinner began, I had the great fortune to meet His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, and before the festivities concluded, Sir Edward Cazalet.

Most of the Americans were at two tables, and we were quite jolly, as I recall. We continued to take good advantage of the wine and the various comestibles. Bill Franklin got us started on "first times for Wodehouse," and we heard stories ranging from Bill's, where the presence of three Wodehouse books may have saved him, Bertie-like, from an early romance, to Dan Garrison's, whose first time reading Wodehouse may well have helped to save his life.

The formal presentations began, and we were quite pleased to see the American contingent represented (and represented very well!) by Elliott Milstein, who offered the toast to Plum—with plum wine, of course. A reading of "Uncle Fred Flits By" was certainly a highlight of the night, and it was turned into a musical as Hal and Lara Cazalet sang appropriate PGW numbers at certain spots in the script. Our only question is, where was the parrot? We heard not from the bird.

Aside from the lack of psittacinal voicings, the evening was a true delight. Chairman Hilary Bruce wrapped up with thanks to the various parties who participated, and who make the dinner possible from year to year.

The dinner is quite different from our three-day American conventions. It's rather a compressed version of that, with a little bit of speech, a little bit of show, and a goodly amount of conversation. And, of course, fine food and drink. Interestingly, they have about the same attendance as our conventions.

As the festivities wound down, we wandered out into the night, warm from conversations with new friends, warmer still from friendly and lively visits with old friends. I would heartily recommend that you try to attend one of these dinners during the years between our conventions. You will not be disappointed!



TWS President Gary Hall and consort Linda Adam-Hall share amusement at the U.K. dinner festivities.

Chapters Corner

IT'S FUN BEING with other fans and reading about what others are doing. So please use this column to tell the Wodehouse world about your chapter's activities. Chapter representatives, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page). If you're not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member, please get in touch with the contact person listed. Note that this month we have a new chapter from the Netherlands: The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney. For more on the Knights, see page 14. Welcome!

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott
Phone:
E-mail:



Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)
Contact: Caralyn Campbell
Phone:
E-mail:



Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)
Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe
Phone:
E-mail:



The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)
Contact: Amy Plofker
Phone:
E-mail:



THE BROADWAY SPECIAL celebrated PGW's birthday (a little late) on October 23, with a brunch at the Washington Square Hotel in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. The hotel recently has been given an art deco makeover and has been polished up considerably since the days when Wodehouse himself stayed there, but something of the Master's spirit still remains in the hotel and the Washington Square neighborhood.

This gathering featured no formal program or reading, but there was, naturally, a good deal of insouciant conversation and fine fellowship. A highlight came from Susan and David Jasen, who displayed a small album of snapshots of Plum and the Jasens, taken

during their 1962-63 visits to our hero's Long Island home. David also displayed a new Touchstone edition of *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, which he had just acquired, that had been dedicated to him.



The lobby of the Washington Square Hotel

In all, it was a grand way to spend an early afternoon as sunny and temperate as Wodehouse's world always is.

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact: Jeff Peterson
Phone:
E-mail:



CAPITAL! CAPITAL! gathered together 33 revelers on October 15 to celebrate the 129th anniversary of P. G. Wodehouse's birth. The evening included a presentation by Michael Dirda, Ph.D., a Pulitzer Prize-winning literary critic, author, university lecturer, and self-confessed Wodehouse nut. Mike read excerpts from some of his publications about Plum and about the Chicago TWS convention he attended some 13 years ago. He also talked about his attempts to assess the best Wodehouse books, short stories, etc., eventually throwing up his hands as they all are great examples of Plum's mastery of the English language. The evening included a fine buffet dinner, a large birthday cake, and a rousing rendition of "Happy birthday, dear Pelham, happy birthday to you." There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)
Contact: Herb Moskovitz
Phone:
E-mail:



THE CHAPS held their first meeting of the fall at the Dark Horse Tavern in Philadelphia's historic Head House Square on September 12.

A mysterious, young, and beautiful Russian woman named Nadia, possibly the missing great-granddaughter of Vladimir Brusiloff, joined us and shared the information that General Alexei Brusiloff was a famous and successful general in the Great War, whose name would surely have been known to PGW for the Brusiloff Maneuver, not to be confused with the Heimlich Maneuver.

After an introduction by our acting chair, Herb Moskovitz, a general discussion of topics literary and otherwise ensued until the repast had been demolished. This included what passed for old and new business, e.g., a discussion of revamping our communication system to include additional e-mail addresses and a report about a new Wodehouse publication titled *Just Enough Jeeves*. [See the review on page 13.] As Nadia pointed out, discerning the meaning depends whether there is a comma after the first two words!

The leaders of the meeting, Hope Gaines and David Mackenzie, then kicked off the first of the day's activities. We each had to pick a favorite minor Wodehouse character, briefly telling the assembly why he/she was selected, and reading a brief passage by or about that character and epitomizing the essence of that character. David began with a description by Lord E. of Angus McAllister (since Angus never, or rarely, speaks in the entire opus). Hope chose Bobbie Wickham; Bob Nissenbaum picked Bill Hollister (he likes "buzzers"); Nadia went with Miss Tomlinson (from "Bertie Changes His Mind"); Bob Rains chose his alter ego Gordon "Oily" Carlisle (Bob lives in Carlisle, PA); John Baesch liked Mike Jackson; Evelyn Herzog described Miss Mapleton; Herb advocated for Vladimir Brusiloff; Debbie Dugan was all about Doctor Sally; and Larry Dugan took Alpine Joe.

John Baesch then passed around some interesting Plum-related articles, a few of which were from U.K. periodicals. We also heard an e-mail from Janet Nickerson with a quote from John Lennon referring to Plum and another quote about Uncle Henry and the 11 rabbits in his bedroom.

We found that not enough time remained to engage in an in-depth literary discussion of our assigned short story from 1910 ("The Man Upstairs"), but we did have a brief discussion, and Bob Rains pointed out the similarities to O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," published in 1906. (Gasp!)

The next get-together was to be held on November 14 at the Dark Horse.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate (Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

Phone:

E-mail:



The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

Phone:



The Dangerous Intellectuals

(Florida)

Contact: Alison Currie

E-mail:



The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Contact: Toni Oliver

Phone:

E-mail:



The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw

Phone:

E-mail:



Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham

(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)

Contact: Laura Loehr

Phone:

E-mail:



The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss

Phone:

E-mail:



THE MOTTLED OYSTERS AND JELLIED EELS pulled off their annual Plum's Birthday Party, thanks mostly to Clark and Angela Adams, who so generously provide the hall and the lion's share of the feast. In attendance were most of the usual suspects, including the Oldest Member. The fish slice was not in its usual place of honor, so some of us felt a bit lost, but otherwise the event went off swimmingly, no pun intended.

Upcoming, we have our scheduled meetings with discussions of *Not George Washington*, *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*, and *A Man of Means*. That should keep

us out of mischief for a while. In order to accommodate the schedules of some of our members, we are alternating meeting on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The Wednesday night meetings find us in Jellied Eel mode, and the Thursday night meetings we all wear our Mottled Oyster skins. We are nothing if not a varied, easygoing, and flexible but dignified group.

If any of you are ever down San Antonio way on the second Wednesday/Thursday of the month, please consider visiting with us.

On a more serious note, I would be remiss were I not to mention the passing of former member Bea Adams, wife of Bob (Oldest Member) Adams and mater to two of our Mottled members as well. We will miss you, Mom.

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: David Landman

Phone:

E-mail:



ABRILLIANTLY VARIEGATED (if the word still means what it used to) New England October day providing the camouflage, the NEWTS formed a nottle (i.e., assembled) at the Bedford home of Indu and “Ravi” Ravi, with a splendid vegetarian (if one discounts the Swedish meatballs—well, you’ve got to eat something!) buffet. A draft of a playlet that the NEWTS are (secretly) preparing for next year’s convention was read and approved by a unanimous waggle of tails. Since the Benchley Society was unable to join us as expected, we compensated by viewing videos of the Round Table wit’s cinematic short subjects. Our own treasurer’s report was given, and it is estimated that we might have around two or three hundred dollars in hand.

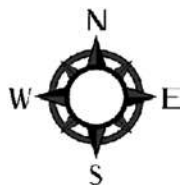
The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Karen Shottling

Phone:

E-mail:



WE WELCOMED four new members into the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Company

at our August meeting, including a poor benighted individual who had never (shudder) heard of P. G. Wodehouse. He was just an innocent bystander sitting at our book group table, and after being corralled and shanghaied into listening to reason, he joined the company following a lively discussion of *Money in the Bank*. We at PZMPCo ascribe to Uncle Fred’s philosophy of spreading sweetness and light to all and sundry. Our September reading of *Something Fresh* led the group to wonder how a person would react to the sight of a purple cow (we all agreed that we would rather see than be one) and to contemplate the dilemma of the male codfish and the British peer faced with the mixed blessings associated with multiple offspring.

In November we will be reading the four Rodney Spelvin golf stories, and we will return to the Huntington Library, Art Collections & Botanical Gardens in San Marino for our annual holiday tea in December.

Speaking of Uncle Fred, we are planning a group outing to attend one of John Lithgow’s performances of “Uncle Fred Flits By” at the Mark Taper Forum (as part of the U.S. tour of his *Stories by Heart*) in January/February 2011 (date to be determined).

PZMPCo meets on the second Sunday of the month at 12:30 P.M. Meetings are held at Vroman’s Bookstore in Pasadena unless otherwise noted.

The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

Phone:

E-mail:



The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)

(Portland, Oregon and vicinity)

Contact: Carol James

Phone:

E-mail:



The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Contact: Jelle Otten

Phone:

E-mail:

The Size 14 Hat Club

(Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Contact: Jill Robinson

E-mail:



AFTER SEVERAL particularly abundant fishing seasons, and sparked especially by the generous

bequest of Fergus James Brown to the Halifax Library of a complete new set of PGW books, the Size 14 Hat Club, the first Canadian chapter of the PGW Society, has zealously rededicated themselves to spreading the gospel of the spirit-lifting silliness of P. G. Wodehouse and converting the unconverted for their own good! We are an enviably ecumenical group, with members ranging from teenagers to octogenarians, and we harbour those who discovered PGW in ridiculously remote climes to those most lucky of individuals who were introduced to the Master in childhood. We have plans to submit articles of irrefutable scholarship and weight to *Plum Lines*, conduct readings in local seniors homes, and possibly even storm that Bastille of symbolic fellowship—the biennial conventions.

Spotted on PGWnet

FOR THOSE OF YOU who surf the web like native Californians at Malibu, and who are all comfy and warm when you get to sit down with today's e-mail, but who have not yet hopped on to PGWnet, all I can say is "Egad!" You are missing a constantly flowing source of Plum-related information and humorous exchange.

To subscribe to this always entertaining e-mail forum, send an e-mail to listserv@hmssurprise.org, and in the body of the e-mail put nothing but SUBSCRIBE PGWNET. Magically, you will become signed up. Every e-mail you get from the service will have instructions at the bottom about how to unsubscribe, so you can easily turn it off at any time. You can also find much more information about PGWnet on our website at <http://www.wodehouse.org/pgwnet.html>.

Here's just a tiny sampling of the topics that have recently exploded on that forum:

An explanation of what a "police rattle" is, after someone read *Right Ho, Jeeves*, and was mystified by that reference in Chapter 22.

An answer to the owner of a parrot who wanted the title of the story about Uncle Fred and the parrot. The discussion soon became another chapter in the eternal debate of what is the best Wodehouse story.

A discussion of the best way to make hotel reservations for the upcoming conventions.

A rapid cataloging of many of the horse references in the canon.

A realty link referenced as "home linked [incorrectly!] to P. G. Wodehouse's Blandings Castle."

And so on. See what fun you can have with a comfortable chair and a computer? More to come in future issues.

Wodehouse's Critique of *The Great Gatsby*

BY DICK HEYMANN

*As you may recall, Dick Heymann gave quite a humorous talk at the St. Paul convention about the "llaboration" (since there was no "co") between Wodehouse and F. Scott Fitzgerald. We published most of his talk, and the imaginary letters between Wodehouse, Fitzgerald, and Rosie M. Banks, in the Summer 2010 issue of Plum Lines. There was one more item we didn't publish: Dick's invented letter that Wodehouse wrote to Fitzgerald, critiquing an early draft of *The Great Gatsby*. It's a bit of fun, so for your enjoyment (whether you attended the convention or not), here it is!*

Dear Scott,

What ho! I read with great interest the drafts you provided for your new book, the one about the odd chap with all the money who seeks to recover the girl who once was his but might not actually have been his and in any event wound up not being his and then became somebody else's, at which point he wishes she had been his all along and would like her to become his once again (assuming she truly was his in the first place), whilst she would probably be better off if she were his but doesn't know it or at least doesn't know that he is back in the picture, let alone back in the picture with all that money, and could be his now.

It was flattering of you to ask for my comments. I am not accustomed to being asked to collaborate with serious writers. The only requests like yours that I receive tend to be from old pals who think the most one can hope for from a writer is an accurate report of yesterday's cricket matches.

Anyway, here goes: I'll start with the atmosphere of the Long Island "gold coast." Atmosphere, of course, is so important. It was one of the best features of Greek drama, you know. Aeschylus—if Aeschylus is the word I want—once said to Euripides "you can't beat atmosphere," and Euripides said he often thought so, too. I was wondering if we might lighten up on Gatsby's neighborhood a bit. It's really not as bleak as Nick Carraway, the play-by-play chap, implies. To hear him tell it, you can't throw a brick there without hitting either an investment banker or his defense counsel. Maybe we could brighten up the atmosphere by moving some of the action to one of the many golf clubs in the vicinity.

Perhaps at page 12, where Nick says "I lived in West Egg, the—well, the less fashionable of the two, though

this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them,” he could say “I lived in West Egg, barely fifty yards from the fourteenth tee. In fact, it was there I first noticed Jordan Baker, a pal of my second cousin (once removed) Daisy. She had just sliced badly, landing somewhere in Gatsby’s garden, and her face was buried in her hands. Without realizing it I found myself standing alongside, scratching the top of her head with a number three iron in an effort to comfort and console.”

Not only does this cast the neighborhood in a more amiable light, but it also takes some of the edge off the Baker character. As presently hewn, La Baker is one of those women who speaks with such charm and such confidence, her whole air so like that of a well-bred crocodile who hasn’t had lunch yet, that a wiser and more experienced man than Nick would have climbed the clubhouse wall and pulled it up after him. I think Jordan Baker might sell more copies if she were someone about whom Nick could rhapsodize “What a girl! She has a four handicap and she can write a letter with no postscript!” As it is, he is more likely to feel enthusiastic about Jordan only when he views her in his mind’s eye as falling off Daisy’s dock and, going down for the third time, he sees himself offering to save her by throwing her an anvil.

Overall, though, I think the characters are carefully drawn. Nick is likeable and seems well-suited to his role. What do you think about pairing him with another fellow, say a butler, with whom he could share reports and insights *re* the locals? Something like:

Carraway: “I’m off to the Buchanans tonight.”

Butler: “Very good, sir. Will you be wearing the white mess jacket?”

Carraway: “Not tonight, I’m afraid.” The poor man is fond of my white mess jacket, but doesn’t seem to understand that just because it plays well in St. Paul that doesn’t mean you can wear it in New York. “No,” I said, “besides, I expect we will all take a dip in the Sound before dinner. All except for Mrs. Vanderbilt, of course. She’ll likely roost in a big armchair on the porch where she fits as if it were built around her by someone who knew they were wearing armchairs tight around the hips this season.”

The Daisy Buchanan character seems a little ambiguous to me. It might be easier to feel sorry for her—one is supposed to feel sorry for her, I take it—if she were a bit easier to swallow. Perhaps we could give

her a personality—ease into it, maybe have Carraway say something like “Daisy was a girl of a radiant loveliness. Nature gave her no more than about as much brain as would fit comfortably into an aspirin bottle, feeling no doubt, that it was better not to overdo the thing, but apart from that she had everything.” Then follow it up with “she laughed—the gay, wholehearted laugh of youth. Nick remembered that he had laughed like that in the days before he had begun to see so much of his neighbor, Gatsby.”

As for Gatsby himself, I like his shroud of mystery. But the hint of an unsavory past—not to mention an unsavory present—tends to give away the punch line. If I remember the ending correctly, the reader first thinks Gatsby is dead (and that the living might as well be dead, too). It isn’t until one begins to reflect—as one will, having taken the time to read a whole novel where all the characters turn out to be like disagreeable aunts—that one figures out that Gatsby and Daisy actually ran off to North Dakota to raise chickens. I did get that right, didn’t I?

Anyway, I thought perhaps we could balance Gatsby’s ominous aura by showing more of his bright and cheerful side. Maybe something like

Ever one to share his good fortune, Gatsby liked nothing better than to do it one truckload of champagne at a time. Sometimes even he was surprised by how widespread had become the fame of his parties. Indeed, their glamour and raw excitement must have come as rather a shock. He must have felt like a lighthearted fellow who, stooping to pick wild flowers by the railroad tracks, unexpectedly takes the full brunt of the 20th Century Limited in the small of the back.

I hope these comments are helpful. I worry that they may seem to you like the comments of one R. M. Banks (a writer of, pardon the expression, romance novels) once seemed to me. For reasons that mercifully escape me, I found myself having tea with her. She proceeded to explain for three quarters of an hour how she came to write her most recent beastly book, when all that was necessary was a simple apology.

Our best wishes to you and Zelda,



Books for Sale

JOHN A. MORSE's father, R. K. Morse, was a huge Wodehouse fan and member of TWS. When R. K. died in 2006, he left his collection of Wodehouse books to John. There are 150 books, including some first-edition hardbacks. If you're interested, please contact John. [Note that we advise those with such collections to consider charity, libraries, or other options also.]

Call for Articles

DO YOU HAVE a bright idea for a *Plum Lines* article? Or maybe you've already written something up! Then please send it in. While convention talks usually generate a good supply of articles, this time there are several additional months between conventions, which means we will be shy on that type of material. We welcome original humorous or scholarly articles, contributions to our "My First Time" series, recommendations for articles that we might be able to reprint, reviews of Wodehouse-related books and plays, and anything that might be appropriate for "A Few Quick Ones." Send your ideas and articles to Gary Hall, AOM, at the address on this page.

Contents

- 1 Dearborn Ho!
- 3 The Heacham Heresy Refuted
- 4 More Than One Way to Swing a Cat
- 6 TWS's Presidential Insignia
- 7 Collecting *Cosmopolitan* and *Collier's* Wodehouse
- 9 A Calendar of Wodehouse Saints
- 11 *Bobbles & Plum*
- 13 Review of *Just Enough Jeeves*
- 13 The 2013 Convention!
- 13 Wodehouse, Thriller Writer
- 14 *Jeeves in Bloom* on Lake Minnetonka
- 14 TWS in the Netherlands
- 15 A Few Quick Ones
- 15 Call for Performances, Skits, Readings, and Other Clean, Bright Entertainment at Convention 2011
- 16 Letter from England
- 17 Letter from . . . the USA!
- 19 Chapters Corner
- 22 Spotted on PGWnet
- 22 Wodehouse's Critique of *The Great Gatsby*
- 24 Books for Sale
- 24 Call for Articles

Volunteer Officers

President of The Wodehouse Society and
Editor in Chief, AOM (Apprentice Oldest Member):
Gary Hall

Treasurer (dues payments):
Kris Fowler

Editor Emeritus: Ed Ratcliffe

Membership Secretary (new-member inquiries,
contact information changes):
Ian Michaud
<http://www.wodehouse.org/inquiry/>

Proofing Editor: Elin Woodger

Final Proofreading & Technical Assistance, Printer/
Mailer Liaison, Rosters, Dues Sheets, and Website
Maintenance: Neil Midkiff

Website address: www.wodehouse.org
Website Hosting: Shamim Mohamed, aka Pongo

We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, My First Time tales, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above!

All quotations from P. G. Wodehouse are reprinted by permission of the Copyright Owner, the Trustees of the Wodehouse Estate.

