Plum Lines

The quarterly newsletter of The Wodehouse Society Vol. 21 No. 1 Spring 2000

LIMP LAVENDER LEATHER

By Tony Ring

A talk delivered at the Houston convention of The Wodehouse Society, October 1999. Tony's rendition of the first poem was appallingly—and appropriately—earnest. He kindly supplied, at my request, copies of poems from newspapers almost a century old for reproduction here. The newspapers were, of course, part of Tony's vast collection of Wodehousiana. —OM

Be!
Be!
The past is dead,
Tomorrow is not born.
Be today!
Today!
Be with every nerve,
With every fibre,
With every drop of your red blood!
Be!
Be!

"Be!"

These lines, together with a further three verses whose secrets Plum Wodehouse did not reveal, earned Rocky Todd a hundred dollars in 1916 money and enabled him to stay in bed until four o'clock in the afternoon for a week. They are a none-too-subtle commentary on Wodehouse's view of contemporary poetry as rendered by others, and I shall be referring to other examples of his disdain later. First, I think, we should look at his own verse.

Wodehouse's own poetry was unashamedly written for money, ninety per cent of it during his apprenticeship in the first decade of the twentieth century. He was able to submit light verses on topical matters to daily or weekly papers and receive a pound or a guinea, manna indeed for one who had recently cast off the shackles of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. You may not realise how extensive his output of verse was: this limp lavender leather volume which you see before you contains a hundred and fifty of his poems, and is a long way from being complete. The editor of the only collection of his poems so far published, *The Parrot*, which emerged from the egg in 1989, made an elementary mistake by failing to list the source of any of its twenty-seven offerings.

Wodehouse contrasted writing light verse with the production of lyrics, another skill which he was to demonstrate with commendable felicity, mainly in the subsequent decade. He helpfully explained that he preferred to have a melody around which to create his lyric, otherwise he would find himself producing songs with the regular metre and rhythms of light verse. Clearly, to Wodehouse, regular metre and rhyme were fundamental requirements for his type of verse. I venture to suggest that this was at least in part because his market was the popular press, to whose readers the subtlety of blank verse may have been unmarketable.

The inspiration for much of his early poetry was the brief news report, rather as it was for his "Our Man in America" items for *Punch* in the 1950s and 1960s. His attention would be caught by an item or a quotation, and he would create a verse round it, as I will be demonstrating very shortly. But I would like you to notice just how relevant many of the topics about which he wrote seem today.

And I hope you will be both amused and pleasantly surprised by the following medley of extracts taken from the 1904 to 1907 press. First, to get you into the mood, a verse which foreshadowed the dislike of Galahad Threepwood for tea, which was written in response to a report that an eminent medical man had stated that the deteriorated physique of army recruits was largely due to their having drunk too much tea:

In training up your families
Don't give them any tea.
The men who fought at Ramillies
Drank beer in infancy;
When Marlborough won at Blenheim, he
Led soldiers reared on stout.
The teapot is an enemy:
Avoid its lethal spout.

He spotted a report that a younger son of an old English family had founded an American *Debrett* to which any citizen could pay £10 and have his pedigree traced:

I'm just a young fellow, you know,
A mere impecunious cadet.
But my brain is the cutest,
Most slick and astutest:
I've founded a Yankee *Debrett*.
If only the man of the States
The price that I ask can afford,
I make it my mission
To raise his condition
To that of a duke or a lord.
A twang I consider no sort of a bar
In a newly-made peer of to-day:
It really don't matter a bit what you are,
If only you're willing to pay.

Many of you will have heard the story of how in November 1906 he used his entire savings of £450, then a huge amount of money, to buy a motor car from Seymour Hicks, and how after a cursory lesson from the former owner he went out on his first solo drive, toppled into a ditch and left the car where it lay.

With what emotion did he write these verses which appeared on the 27th of that same month under the title "An Olympia Nightmare," Olympia being the name of a London exhibition centre. [Here's how the poem looked (*next column*) in *The World* of November 27, 1906.]

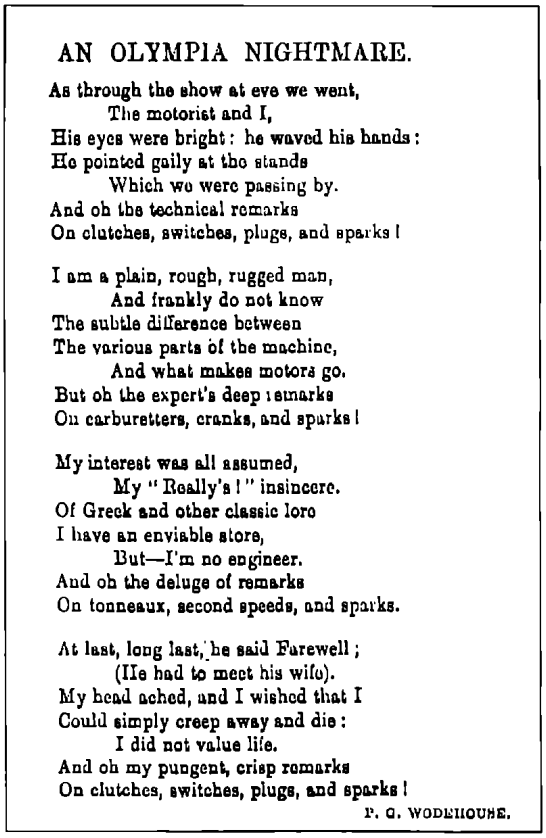
In his twenties, even if not in later life, Plum was alert to the possibilities for humour involved in politics, and offered his ironic thoughts on the unity of the government in 1906, when the cabinet was torn by internal disagreements. These lines could, of course, have been written in any decade, in any democratic country:

We are a happy Cabinet,
Secure against attacks;
All bosom friends with self-same ends,
We stick like so much wax.
Our peaceful life no kind of strife
Has e'er been known to mar:
We are a happy Cabinet,
We are! We are!! We are!!!

Of course it's true that some of us
Hold views that scarce agree
With those expressed by all the rest:
Still, hang it, Thought IS free.
Besides it's not exactly what
You'd call a hitch or jar.
We are a happy Cabinet.
We are! We are!! We are!!!

You may suspect from Gussie Fink-Nottle's reaction (eloping with the cook) when Madeline Bassett sought to separate him from the flesh of animals slain in anger, the approach Wodehouse would have taken to vegetarianism. And this 1903 verse shows that you would have been right:

[The poem (*top of next column*) was printed in *The Evening News and Evening Mail*, March 11, 1903.]



AN OLYMPIA NIGHTMARE.

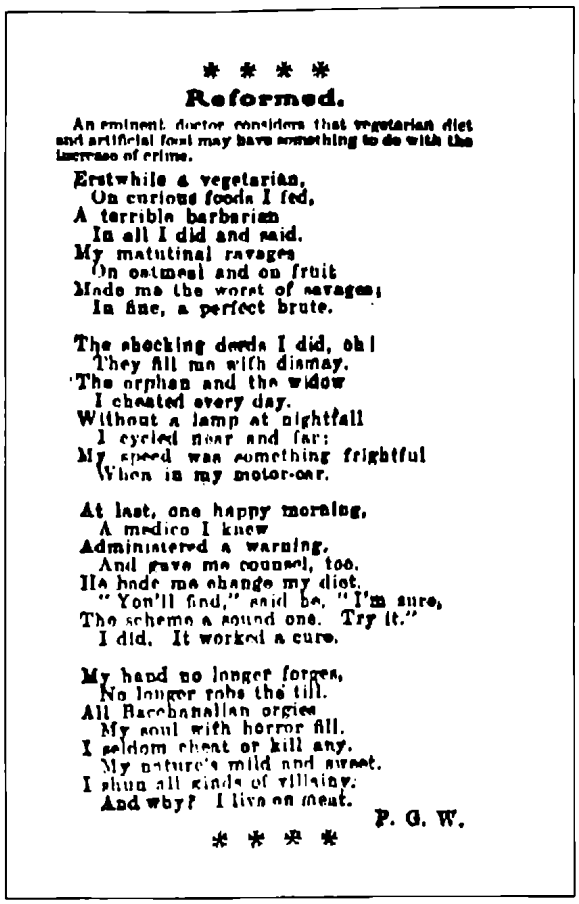
As through the show at eve we went,
The motorist and I,
His eyes were bright: he waved his hands:
He pointed gaily at the stands
Which we were passing by.
And oh the technical remarks
On clutches, switches, plugs, and sparks!

I am a plain, rough, rugged man,
And frankly do not know
The subtle difference between
The various parts of the machine,
And what makes motors go.
But oh the expert's deep remarks
On carburetters, cranks, and sparks!

My interest was all assumed,
My "Really's!" insincere.
Of Greek and other classic lore
I have an enviable store,
But—I'm no engineer.
And oh the deluge of remarks
On tonneaux, second speeds, and sparks.

At last, long last, he said Farewell;
(He had to meet his wife).
My head ached, and I wished that I
Could simply creep away and die:
I did not value life.
And oh my pungent, crisp remarks
On clutches, switches, plugs, and sparks!

P. G. WODEHOUSE.



* * * *

Reformed.

An eminent doctor considers that vegetarian diet and artificial food may have something to do with the increase of crime.

Erstwhile a vegetarian,
On curious foods I fed,
A terrible barbarian
In all I did and said.
My matutinal ravages
On oatmeal and on fruit
Made me the worst of savages;
In fine, a perfect brute.

The shocking deeds I did, oh!
They fill me with dismay.
The orphan and the widow
I cheated every day.
Without a lamp at nightfall
I cycled near and far;
My speed was something frightful
When in my motor-car.

At last, one happy morning,
A medico I knew
Administered a warning,
And gave me counsel, too.
He bade me change my diet.
"You'll find," said he, "I'm sure,
The scheme a sound one. Try it."
I did. It worked a cure.

My hand no longer forges,
No longer robs the till.
All Bacchanalian orgies
My soul with horror fill.
I seldom cheat or kill any.
My nature's mild and sweet.
I shun all kinds of villainy.
And why? I live on meat.

P. G. W.

* * * *

And finally, for the moment, let us hear Plum's thoughts on the tabloid press, that craven business of the submerged tenth which has become the bane of the life of anyone in the public eye: politicians, theatrical, cinema and pop stars, and, of course, royalty. This is what he had to say on the subject in 1906:

> But when a royal couple woo,
> It can't be done in private:
> For thousands rally round to view
> If they can but contrive it.
> With cameras behind the trees
> Reporters cut their capers.
> He gives her hand a tender squeeze—
> Next day it's in the papers.
>
> Oh, wretched is the monarch's lot:
> How he must long to end it!
> And mine, although it's humble, 's got
> Some points to recommend it.
> And so I hold that he who tries
> These royal folk to ape errs,
> Unless some plan he can devise
> To dodge the lynx-eyed papers.

As well as writing for the daily and weekly papers, Wodehouse was writing for the schoolboy market in such magazines as *The Captain*, and starting to have contributions, both prose and poetry, accepted in the adult monthly magazines such as *Pearsons*. Neither should one overlook his poetic contributions to *Punch*. Some of his excellent work with a sporting topic, such as cricket or field hockey, can be found in these papers, but I do not propose to do more than allude to them here.

It is quite clear that, taking poetry as a broad subject, Wodehouse realised at an early date that he had a wide-ranging target for his brand of wit in a fictional context. This emerged in two ways: first in his use of the established poets and their work as a basis for quotation or, quite often, misquotation. And secondly, in the potential for creating funny members of the cast whose main characteristics were that they were poets. Who comes first to mind when you think of a Wodehouse poet character, apart from Rocky Todd, whom we have already mentioned? Gwendoline Moon, perhaps, Sippy Sipperley's fiancee in "The Inferiority Complex of Old Sippy," who wrote "Solitude"? Or Ralston McTodd, whose *Songs of Squalor* in *Leave It to Psmith*, bound in squashy mauve, included the immortal line:

> Across the pale parabola of joy

Or even Aileen Peavey, the poetess in the same book whose Canadian sales, in Psmith's opinion, had been quite high enough. In the play version of *Leave It to Psmith*, Aileen was credited with having written "Granny the Grafter—A Tale of Mother Love," over which half the crooks in Chicago cried themselves to sleep.

Psmith, if you recall, claimed whilst trying to get into character that he had himself been given an opportunity to write his own tribute to Herbert the Turbot. Wodehouse's perception of the popular view of this type of poetry was reflected in the reaction of the Blandings house-party to the news that Psmith, as Ralston McTodd, was to recite from *Songs of Squalor*:

> The news came as a shock from which they found it hard to rally. True, they had before now gathered in a vague sort of way that he was one of those literary fellows but so normal and engaging had they found his whole manner and appearance that it had never occurred to them that he concealed anything up his sleeve as lethal as *Songs of Squalor*. Among these members of the younger set the consensus of opinion was that it was a bit thick, and at such a price even the lavish hospitality of Blandings was scarcely worth having. Only those who had visited the castle before during the era of her ladyship's flirtation with Art could have been described as resigned. These

> stout hearts argued that while this latest blister was probably going to be pretty bad, he could scarcely be worse than the chappie who had lectured on Theosophy last November, and must almost of a necessity be better than the bird who during the Shiffley race-week had attempted in a two-hour discourse to convert them to vegetarianism.

Psmith even contemplated writing his own Introduction:

> The stag at eve had drunk his fill
> A doon the glen beyond the hill
> And welcomed with a friendly nod
> Wisconsin's pride, the brave McTodd.

Perhaps you remember Ann Chester, whose collection *The Lonely Heart* had been reviewed by Jimmy Crocker for the *Sunday Chronicle* with the result that she gave up poetry and bore a grudge against Jimmy for many years.

> Jimmy could recall the article he had written [from an interview with Ann], and the ghoulish gusto with which he had written it. He had had a boy's undisciplined sense of humour in those days, the sense of humour that riots like a young colt, careless of what it bruises and crushes.
>
> Poor Ann.

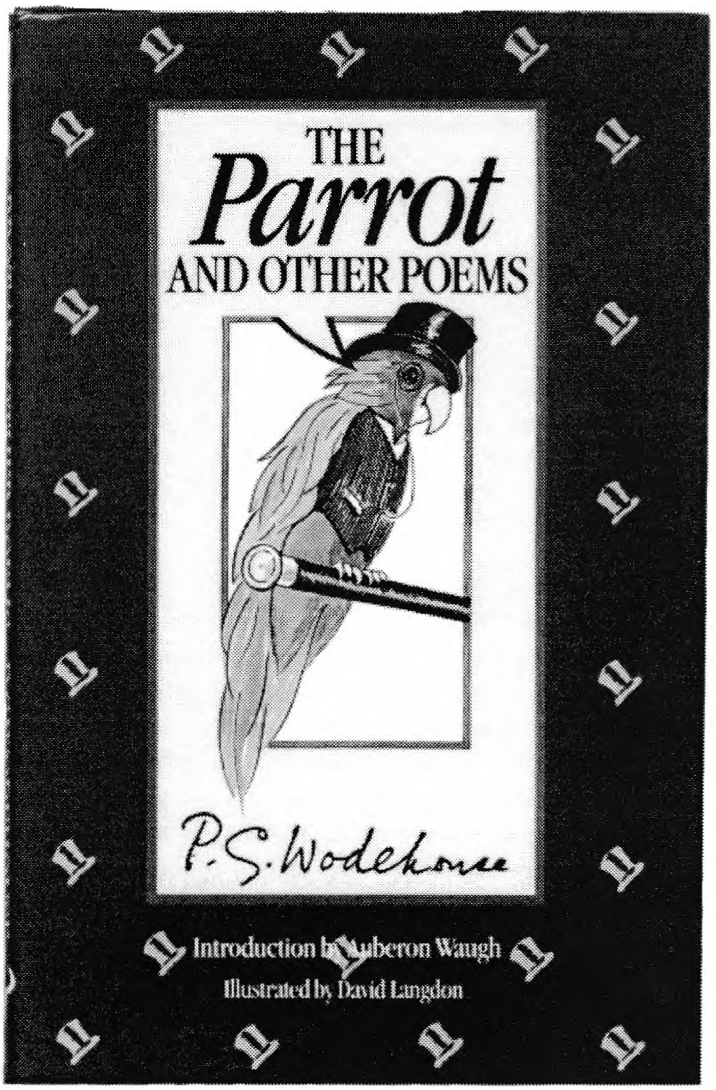
Then there was Charlotte Mulliner, whose conversion from *Vignettes in Verse* to the more robust concepts of "Good Gnus" we celebrated separately at this convention; Gladys Bingley, the Sweet Singer of Garbidge Mews; Wilbert Cream, who recited to Phyllis Mills from a book of limp purple leather; Reginald Sprockett, known for his own limp purple leather in *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*; and Bingo Little, who, while regretting that Cynthia Hammersley had not been christened Jane, still managed:

> When Cynthia smiles,
> The skies are blue;
> The world takes on a roseate hue:
> Birds in the garden trill and sing,
> And Joy is king of everything,
> When Cynthia smiles.

Also Roderick Pyke in *Bill the Conqueror*; Percy Gorringe, whose *Caliban at Sunset* was probably influential in obtaining for him the commission to dramatise Florence Craye's *Spindrift*; Alaric Gilpin; and, of course, Rodney Spelvin.

When we first met Rodney he was as virulent a poet as they come, producing slim volumes of verse bound in squashy mauve leather at the drop of a hat. He had no ambitions to follow his cousin George on to the stage, preferring, as he put it, to make "verbal harmonies," and he provided Wodehouse with a nifty outlet through which to express some of his prejudices against modern poetry.

> Only last week, a man, a coarse editor, asked me what my sonnet, "Wine of Desire," *meant*. I gave him answer: " 'Twas a sonnet, not a mining prospectus."



The only collection of Plum's poetry published to date, Hutchinson, London, 1989. We hope for more.

He arrived on the scene just as the diffident William Bates was hesitating over whether to actually propose to his childhood sweetheart Jane, with whom everyone believed he had an understanding that they would eventually marry. Jane had her Agnes Flack side and confided to the Oldest Member that what she really wanted was a dashing man, of the sort to be found in Louella Periton

Phipps's book *The Love That Scorches*, a volume presumably inspired by the erotic 1919 best-seller *The Sheik*, by E.M. Hull. William initially ignored the warnings given by the Oldest Member that Rodney might appear fascinating to Jane.

> "You don't seriously expect me to believe that there's any chance of Jane falling in love with a poet?" He spoke incredulously, for there were three things in the world that he held in the smallest esteem: slugs, poets, and caddies with hiccups.

But William's devotion to golf kept him from paying Jane the necessary attention, and within ten days the disaster occurred, for Spelvin had taken her in his arms, looked deep into her eyes and cried:

> "You are the tree on which the fruit of my life hangs; my mate; my woman; predestined to me since the first star shone up in yonder sky!"

And they fixed it up to marry in September.

Just as golf had given Spelvin the opportunity to make his move, so it was to prove Rodney's Achilles heel, but he did not finally fling away his prospects until, after upsetting the boat from which she was trying to hit her ball in a competition round and being decanted into the river, he declined to search around on its bed to find Jane's clubs.

Many years later, with William happily married to Jane and the father of the young budding golfer Braid, Rodney met and married Jane's sister Anastasia. Soon afterwards (though not too soon) Rodney and Anastasia produced a child of their own, whom they named Timothy. I suppose it may have been something in the water, but it was more probably the existence of young Timothy that was to blame for Rodney relapsing into his poetic ways. The first sign came when he picked up his ball in a golf match being played for money because in order to play a shot he would have had to crush a daisy.

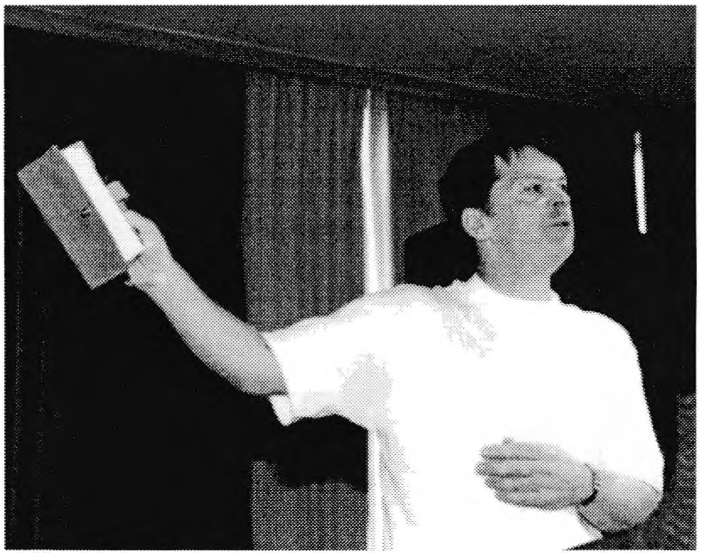
> "I couldn't crush a daisy. The pixies would never forgive me."

When the Oldest Member heard a report of this from William Bates, he knew at once that Rodney was in for another attack of poetry. It had been understood that Rodney had given up the squashy mauve leather, the sunsets, and the pixies when he had married Anastasia and brought Timothy into the world, and taken instead to writing mystery stories full of wholesome blood-stains.

And then the blow fell. It was not sunsets and pixies about which he started to write poetry again, but about his son Timothy. The disease took the form of whimsical material about an arch-villain called Timothy Bobbin. William, the two sisters, and the Oldest Member all immediately realised the implications for Timothy, which in years to come would be too awful to contemplate. He would grow up as the object of derision of all who knew him once the tabloid press revealed that it was he who was the Timothy Bobbin of the well-known poems, such as:

> Timothy Bobbin has a canary
> As regards its sex opinions vary
> If it just goes tweet-tweet,
> We shall call it Pete,
> But if it lays an egg, we shall switch to Mary.

These wondrous lines had not, of course, come spontaneously to Rodney Spelvin. He had worried long and hard about the object of Timothy Bobbin's affections. He had wondered whether the subject should be a puppy or a rabbit. But after he had eventually satisfied himself that "canary" was the *mot juste*, he moved on to pen an appalling and damning statement about the function of Timothy Bobbin's toes. It was when he suggested that Timothy Bobbin went hoppity hoppity hoppity hoppity hop that his friends really sat up and took notice.



Tony displays a volume in limp lavender leather

And I invite you to look again at the story "Rodney has a Relapse" to discover how it all comes out in the end.

Officer Garroway, the New York policeman in *The Small Bachelor*, was also a budding poet, refining his art under the tutelage of Hamilton Beamish. Beamish had instructed him as follows:

"The world is not pretty at all. It's stark. Stark and grim. It makes your heart ache. You think of all the sorrow and sordid gloom which those roofs conceal and your heart bleeds. I may as well tell you, here and now, that if you are going about the place thinking things pretty, you will never make a modern poet. Be poignant, man, be poignant!'

In accordance with those instructions, Garroway returned some days later with a poem about the area of his beat, by which time Beamish had fallen in love and was seeing the world through different coloured monocles:

"Streets!"
"That is the title, eh?"
"Yes, sir. And also the first line."
"Is it vers libre? Doesn't it rhyme?"
"No, sir. I understood you to say that rhymes were an outworn convention. And a great convenience I found it. It seems to make poetry quite easy."

Streets!
Grim, relentless, sordid streets!
Miles of poignant streets,
East, West, North,
And stretching starkly South;
Sad, hopeless, dismal, cheerless, chilling
Streets!

I pace the mournful streets
With aching heart.
I watch grey men slink past
With shifty, sidelong eyes
That gleam with murderous hate;
Lepers that prowl the streets.

Men who were once men,
Women who were once women,
Children like wizened apes,
And dogs that snarl and snap and growl and hate.

Streets!
Loathsome, festering streets!
I pace the scabrous streets
And long for death.

If despite this valiant attempt you are still in any doubt as to how Wodehouse regarded modern poets, remember the words in the opening chapter of *Right Ho, Jeeves* when Bertie the narrator, describing Madeline Bassett for the first time, admitted that she was pretty enough in a droopy, blonde, saucer-eyed way, but that she had seemed to take the stuffing out of him so that his vocal chords had been paralysed and the contents of his brain reduced to cauliflower:

What caused this disintegration in a fairly fluent prattler with the sex was her whole mental attitude. I don't want to wrong anybody, so I won't go so far as to say that she actually wrote poetry, but her conversation, to my mind, was of a nature calculated to excite the liveliest suspicions. Well, I mean to say, when a girl suddenly asks you out of a blue sky if you don't sometimes feel that the stars are God's daisy-chain, you begin to think a bit.

Captain Biggar's love for Rosalinda Spottsworth brought him within an ace of writing poetry. And indirectly, Mordred Mulliner was to win Annabelle Sprockett-Sprockett through his skill in generating the unpleasant, acrid smell of burned poetry, of which "To Annabelle" is a sample:

Oh, lips that smile! Oh, eyes that shine
Like summer skies, or stars above!
Your beauty maddens me like wine,
Oh, umpty-pumpty-tumty-love!

Although Mordred was man enough to think that the last line needed polishing up.

Wodehouse was, of course, very familiar with the output of many leading poets, and there are dozens of references to them and their work dotted throughout the texts. He had his favourites as to both poets and individual poems. Only a cynic would suggest that his preferences were defined by their scope for incorporation into his stories.

And by the way, Wodehouse did write a poem entitled "The Cynic."

Browning, Burns, Coleridge, Thomas Hood, Keats, Kipling, Longfellow, Scott, Shakespeare, Shelley, Tennyson, Wordsworth—all appeared regularly, with Abou Ben Adhem, Pippa Passes, Mariana in her Moated Grange, Stout Cortes (or, of course, Balboa), and Eugene Aram worthy of specific mention. Tennyson might perhaps be the favourite of all favourites for potential humorous effect, as evidenced by this exchange between Freddie Widgeon and April Carroway concerning her younger sister Prudence, taken from "Trouble Down at Tudsleigh":

"She is obliged to remain in those bushes," said April Carroway, "because she has nothing on."
"Nothing on? No particular engagements, you mean?"
"I mean no clothes. The horse kicked hers into the river."
"A horse kicked her clothes off?"
"It didn't kick them off me," said the voice from the bushes. "I was playing Lady Godiva, as you ad-

vised me to."

"When did I ever advise you to play Lady Godiva?"

"You told me I couldn't go wrong in imitating any of Tennyson's heroines."

Perhaps the most famous lines on poets and poetry came when Bertie, speaking to Madeline Bassett, remembered something Jeeves had once called Gussie:

"Have you not sometimes felt in the past, Bertie, that, if Augustus had a fault, it was a tendency to be a little timid?"

"Oh, ah, yes, of course, definitely. A sensitive plant, what?"

"Exactly. You know your Shelley, Bertie."

"Oh, am I?"

Wodehouse revived his journalistic career to some degree in the 1950s and 1960s, when the market for short stories and his type of musical comedy had all but disappeared, and he took to writing topical articles and occasionally poems for such journals as *Punch*, *Cavalier*, and *Playboy*. I will content myself with a single short item from *Cavalier* of November 1966:

The Only Game in Town

by P. G. Wodehouse

"I am sure that if Arnold Palmer would give me three — no, make it four — strokes a hole, he would have a delightful afternoon, nip and tuck all the way."

A poet once wrote these stirring words:

Caddie, give me my driver, caddie,
Watch my style on the first few tees;
Keep your eye on my wrist-work, laddie,
Notice the way I twist my knees.
The year's at the full and the morn's at eleven,
It's a wonderful day just straight from Heaven,
And this is a hole I can do in seven –
Caddie, my driver, please.

and we know that his heart was in the right place even if his ball

[The last sentence surely ended with "was not."]

His best-known piece from this era, of course, is the classic "Printer's Error."

I would like to finish more or less as I started, with a few short early Wodehouse efforts on topical contemporary matters, such as the Suffragettes. These, though, are all examples of his attempts to master the limerick, which the *OED* tells us had only emerged as a separate verse form in 1898.

A maid of Newcastle on Tyne
Desired as a martyr to shine.
She would languish, she cried,
In a gaol till she died
But some humorist stumped up her fine.

There was a young girl from a mill
Who fought with such vigour and skill
That Constable Y
Whom she hit in the eye
Is wearing a shade on it still.

A truculent person from Thanet
Took a pin from her hat, and then ran it
With much vigour and vim
Into somebody's limb
Then coolly remarked "You began it."

He had thoughts on the new craze of flying:

A boastful young man said "Look here,
With what ease my balloon I can steer."
He started for Spain
Via Salisbury Plain
But the spot that he reached was Cashmere.

A daring New Yorker said "Gee!
Aerial racing for me!"
But something went pop
And he started to drop.
No flowers by request. R.I.P.

The reform of the House of Lords in the UK has been a sort of soap opera, only running longer, but the abolition of most of the inherited seats finally took effect in November 1999. This is what Wodehouse had to say almost a hundred years ago.

A juvenile Viscount said "What!
Abolish the Peers! Bally rot!
Why, if we shut up shop,
The whole show goes pop.
You want brains? Well that's just what we've got."

A cool-headed Marquess from Surrey
Said "No change can be made in a hurry
So I think we're all right
If we only sit tight.
Look at me. Do I quail? No. Why worry?"

And, finally, two limericks which demonstrate that not only are the expressions favoured by youth not always new, but that the preference on the part of some members of the younger generation for sloth may be inherited.

> A puzzled young fellow at school
> Said "I used to be called 'Flannelled Fool,'
> So I started to work
> And they now say I shirk.
> I'm inclined to describe it as 'Cool.' "
>
> There is a young fellow at Eton
> Whose slackness has never been beaten.
> When invited to run
> He says "No, dear old son,
> Such foolishness I am not sweet on."

I would like to think that this last had been spoken by Psmith and that "psweet on" was spelt with an initial silent "p."

About the only aspect of Wodehouse poetry on which I have not touched is the occasional piece of rhyming prose which he wrote in the form of a newspaper report of a significant event. I commend you to revisit *Indiscretions of Archie* to read about Washington McCall's success in the pie-eating competition. You will be more familiar with the celebration of the Empress's third triumph at the end of *Pigs Have Wings*, with wording which differed slightly in the UK and US publications.

In either edition it is superb.

Gone to Texas '99: Loot for Sale

Didn't make it to the Houston convention, but want to pretend *that you did? Never fear—there is still plenty of lovely loot available, almost all of it featuring the "Gone to Texas" logo. The price list follows. Order while supplies last!*

A Kit of Loot, including the Program, Guide, and Songbook	$50
The Kit contains the following 8 items, which can also be ordered separately:	
Embroidered tote bag	$28
Cloisonné pin	$10
The mug, gold on dark blue	$9
Zipper wallet	$3
Fabulous Pig Pencils	$3
Pig-in-a-top-hat bank	$3
Convention pens	$2
Program, Guide, and Songbook (28pp!)	$8
Also available (not part of the Kit):	
Fish Slice, packaged for that couple you know	$20

A Texas flag bandana will be thrown in with any order (while they last!).

Please add $4 postage domestic, $15 overseas. Make your check payable to "The Drone Rangers" and send your order to: Bill Rudersdorf, 215 Hawthorne, Houston, TX 77006.

Mean Streets Meet Clubland

Derek Pedder found, in the English *Daily Telegraph*, a brief note about a recent play whose title forms the headline of this article. "The play has undertaken the curious task of exploring links between Raymond Chandler and P. G. Wodehouse. The play originates in a little-known coincidence. For in 1900 Chandler and Wodehouse were both at Dulwich College. Chandler arrived as Wodehouse left, admits the play's author, Lesley Bilton."

And that is all the information we have about this elusive play—not a word about time, place, or even country, although I presume the country is Britain. If any member has more information, I'd like to hear from him, her, or it. —OM

Cricket Patches

TWS Cricket Club patches, popular at the Houston convention, are still available to them what wants 'em, at a cost of $5 apiece or (for those who have three arms) 3 for $12. Postage is included in the price and orders should be sent to Jean Tillson, 4 Fales Place, Foxboro MA 02035.

Your patch kit will include instructions on how to attach it to clothing, and will even recommend (for we colonials are innocent in these matters) which clothing to attach it to. Jean will also tell you how to order your own dandy cricket cap, as worn by so many of the best and brightest at Houston. —AD

SPOTTED ON THE INTERNET

By Amy Plofker

With the assistance of fellow Internet-connected Wodehouse*ns Sushila Peterson, Richard Morrissey, and Ann Bianchi, Amy will be reporting for *Plum Lines* on some of the most interesting items plucked from cyberspace, as contributed by on-line Plummies (most of whom are referred to by their "noms de Plum"). –AD

This new column provides a sort of "Best Of" sampling from postings to the electronic mailing list PGW-Net and the newsgroup, alt.fan.wodehouse. We will also try to mention exciting upcoming Wodehouse events/books/opportunities from Wodehouse-related or other websites—when we're aware of them, that is! Please let me know if you see something "cherse" by penning a quick and snappy note to AmyPlf@aol.com.

The two most rousing feasts of reason in recent months on PGW-Net have been the discussions on

- What other books do Plummies like?
- Is the adjective form of our favorite word "Wodehousian" or "Wodehousean"?

Debate on the latter has been surprisingly heated, with "Wodehousian" fans going so far as to cite the *OED*, and "Wodehousean" advocates going for the *ad hominem* approach of pleading that their spelling contains "Wodehouse." How heated has it been? Cautious people, those fearing a swift coshing, are now spelling it "Wodehous*an." But it was Ranny Gazoo who summed it all up perfectly for us:

The word "Wodehousean" y'see
Can be spelled with an i or an e
But you'll find much more practical
The adjective "Wodehousical"
It all seems quite perfect to me.

[For the record, your *Plum Lines* editors have chosen "Wodehousian" as its spelling of choice; see the Spring 1998 issue, page 11.–AD]

A discussion in December of other books and authors beloved by Plummies was a joy, with many people discovering favorites in common, or being introduced to new favorites! As Pighooey commented, this was very handy just before one's holiday shopping. Aunt Dahlia compiled an official list, so just ask any PGW-Netter for a copy.

As we go to press, a new discussion concerns the preferred site for a Wodehouse Utopia, Retreat, or Theme Park. The Eggs, Beans, and Crumpets on the list are not quite sure what should be contained in such a utopia or park, but we know the place we honor must have a worthy name. Some of the contenders mentioned so far:

- Blanding, Idaho
- Pelham, New Hampshire
- Agatha, Idaho (surely not for a Utopia?)
- Wooster, Ohio
- Worcester (pronounced "wooster"), Massachusetts

Bill Rudersdorf addressed the possibilities of the Drone Star State: "Being a Texan, I modestly mention that Texas encompasses Plum and Pelham, Bertram, Augustus, Baxter, Webster, as well as Bartholomew Crossing and Pigman Windmill. Try and beat that, will you?"

Elsie Bean nominated Madison, Nebraska based on its pre-eminent hog-calling contest, "Days of Swine and Roses," but this seeming top contender was not a runaway. The Old Etonian objected: "As a native of the state, I fear I must raise a severe monocle against the plan. A *nolle prosequi*, if you follow me. The village in question is some 120 miles northwest of Omaha in the middle of the farmbelt. To borrow a line, 'when you have walked down the main street and looked at the Jubilee Watering Trough, there is nothing much to do except go home and then come out again and walk down the street once more and take another look at the Jubilee Watering Trough.' "

Elsie Bean retorted, "The Old Etonian seems to think Madison is too small, rural, and sleepy a back-water ever to be deemed worthy of Wodehous*an honour. Not so, sir! On the contrary, it sounds delightful. Just the sort of health-giving abode a Harley Street physician would recommend to Bertie when the latter is plagued by spots on the chest. Apple-cheeked villagers, no doubt, and plenty of rose-and-pig-scented ozone—just what we all need!"

But Piccadilly Jim countered: "Well, I just can't see Bertie or Tuppy or Bingo Little settling down in Madison, Nebraska, or in Ohio for that matter. At least, not by choice. No, these are fellows who yearn for the hurly-burly of the great metrop and the quiet (?) of their clubs."

As for how we would utope, Albert Peasemarch wrote: "What Wodehouse theme park would be complete without a Senior Conservative Dining Room and Hog-Calling Venue? Being a bald-pated banker myself, I've longed for such an outlet. The hog-calling in our cafeteria just doesn't rate. The acoustics are all wrong."

> [The butler] Slingsby loomed in the doorway like a dignified cloudbank.
>
> *If I Were You*, 1931

WHERE WAS PLUM IN 19-ONE?

By David McDonough

Known to his Chapter One compatriots as Jas. Waterbury, David submitted this paper with the note: "As we leap —or are pushed, screaming—over the precipice of the 21st century, it is only fitting to stop and consider what the Master was doing at the turn of his century." We agree, and are grateful to Jas for supplying the details, which he originally presented at a Chapter One meeting in Philadelphia on January 9, 2000. —AD

> "The chapter on the fall of the rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational for a young girl."

That quote, of course, is not from P.G. Wodehouse, but is taken, out of context, from Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. I have chosen to begin with that directive because at the turn of the century, the rupee loomed large in Plum's legend. Who knows what his future might have held if that Indian monetary unit had not intervened.

Although the title of this talk refers to the year 1901, that is mere airy persiflage. In reality, we need to go back to 1900, a highly significant year in the life of Wodehouse. In the British empire of 1900, the Boer War was raging in South Africa. Queen Victoria was just one year from death (although it would have been rude to mention it to her), and the Edwardian era was about to begin. Australia had just been voted its right to sovereignty, (which would take place Jan 1, 1901). In parts of Great Britain, particularly Scotland, the new year was seen in by the tradition of "first footing," the idea that the first person across your threshold in the new year would bring either very good or very bad luck. (The best luck would come from a dark-haired man bearing a gift. We don't know what kind of luck emanated from an amiable, bald-headed novelist bearing a book. The worst luck, presumably, would come from a blond man with no gift, so having Donald Trump in your house at the dawn of the annum was a calamity—as it is today.)

In 1900, Pelham Grenville Wodehouse was a schoolboy without a care, finishing his last year at Dulwich, and looking forward to going on to Oxford. In that peculiar custom of the British Victorians, the three (later four) Wodehouse boys had attended a series of schools in England while their parents lived for years in Hong Kong. When Armine Wodehouse was sent to Dulwich, his younger brother Plum visited him, fell in love with the place, and begged to be sent there. He entered the college in May 1894, aged 12 1/2.

Dulwich was a good middle class school in the suburbs of London. Among its other alumni from around that period were the explorer Ernest Shackelton, and the author Raymond Chandler. As Plum put it,

> We were all the sons of reasonably solvent but certainly not wealthy parents. And we all had to earn our living later on. Compared with Eton, Dulwich would be something like an American state university compared with Harvard or Princeton. Bertie Wooster's parents would never have sent him to Dulwich, but Ukridge could very well have been there...

Plum was very fond of Dulwich, and the school reciprocated. By 1900, he stood out as a popular and well-respected upper classman, neither a sports-mad Mike nor a languid Psmith. Modesty always prevented him from listing his accomplishments, but his classmate and lifelong friend William Townend wrote: "Plum was an established figure in the school, a noted athlete, a fine footballer and cricketer, a boxer. He was a school prefect, he had a fine voice and sang at the school concerts, he edited the Alleynian, he was in fact, one of the most important boys in the school."

Plum, a singer? Well, one can imagine that the author of "Bill" and "Put Me In My Little Cell" would have a deep love for music. Far harder, for us, to imagine Plum as a prefect, that figure of authority, ordering small boys about and thrashing recalcitrants who wouldn't play fives for School House, or at least lurk about crying "Well-played," as Kipling's Stalky, Beetle and M'Turk refused to do.

In 1900, Wodehouse was selected for the first eleven in cricket and the first fifteen in Rugby, and was one of the five editors of the school magazine, in which this scouting report on Plum's progress was filed:

> Rugby: a heavy forward. Has improved greatly, but is still inclined to slack in the scrum. Always up to take a pass. Good with his feet. Still inclined to tackle high. Cricket: a fast righthanded bowler with a good swing, though he does not use his head enough. As a bat he

was improved and he gets extraordinarily well to the pitch of the ball. Has wonderfully improved in the field, though rather hampered by his sight.

Biographer Barry Phelps states categorically that the above report was written by the young Wodehouse himself; and indeed, the self-deprecating, brutally honest opinions stated seemed to bear that out.

Dulwich's headmaster, A.H. Gilkes, of whom Plum always spoke most fondly, was also no mincer of words when it came to his students. At the end of the winter term of 1899, he reported to the Wodehousian parental units that:

> He has done just fairly in the summer exams, but no more. I fear he has spent too much thought upon his cricket and the winning of colours. He is a most impractical boy—continually he does badly in examinations from lack of the proper books, he is often forgetful, he finds difficulties in the most simple things and asks absurd questions, whereas he can understand the more difficult things. He has the most distorted ideas about wit and humour; he draws over his books and examination papers in the most distressing way and writes foolish rhymes in other people's books. Notwithstanding, he has a genuine interest in literature and can often talk with much enthusiasm and good sense about it. He does some things astonishingly well, and writes good Latin verses. He is a very useful boy in the school and one is obliged to like him in spite of his vagaries. We wish him all success, and if he perseveres he will certainly succeed.

Now, unwittingly, what Gilkes had done in the above report was simply to give one of the best descriptions of a writer that I have ever heard. "Difficulty in the simple things, but grasps the complex ones...Distorted ideas about humor...interest in literature..." If the boy described in that prognostication didn't go on to be a scribbler, it would have been more amazing. And, in fact, the writer in Wodehouse was not lying dormant. One of the most significant aspects of the year 1900 (although the world populace didn't know it yet, the poor saps) was the first sale of an article by P.G. Wodehouse. In February 1900, he placed a piece entitled "Some Aspects of Game Captaincy" with *Public School* magazine. By the way, he noted in his diary that he wasn't paid until April 9, (which means editors haven't changed much) and got the sum of two shillings and sixpence. Barry Phelps writes that in those days it would have bought 21 ice creams from the school tuck shop; today it would buy one.

The article is reprinted here in its entirety:

> To the Game-Captain (of the football variety) the world is peopled by three classes, firstly the keen and regular player, next the partial slacker, thirdly, and lastly, the entire, abject and absolute slacker.
>
> Of the first class, the keen and regular player, little need be said. A keen player is a gem of purest rays serene, and when to his keenness he adds regularity and punctuality, life ceases to become the mere hollow blank that it would other wise become, and joy reigns supreme.
>
> The absolute slacker (to take the worst at once, and have done with it) needs the pen of a Swift before adequate justice can be done to his enormities. He is a blot, an excrescence. All those moments which are not spent in avoiding games (by means of the leave which is unanimously considered the peculiar property of the French nation) he uses in concocting ingenious excuses. Armed with these, he faces with calmness the disgusting curiosity of the Game-Captain, who officiously desires to know the reason of his non-appearance on the preceding day. These excuses are of the "had-to-go-and-see-a-man-about-a-dog" type, and rarely meet with that success for which their author hopes. In the end he discovers that his chest is weak, or that his heart is subject to palpitations, and he forthwith produces a document to this effect, signed by a doctor. This has the desirable result of muzzling the tyrannical Game-Captain, whose sole solace is a look of intense and withering scorn. But this is seldom fatal, and generally, we rejoice to say, ineffectual.
>
> The next type is the partial slacker. He differs from the absolute slacker in that at rare intervals he actually turns up, changed withal into the garb of the game, and thirsting for the fray. At this point begins the time of trouble for the Game-Captain. To begin with, he is forced by stress of ignorance to ask the newcomer his name. This, of course, an insult of the worst kind. "A being who does not know my name," argues the partial slacker, "must be something not far from a criminal lunatic." The name is, however, extracted, and the partial slacker strides to the arena. Now arises insult No.2. He is wearing his cap. A hint as to the advisability of removing this piece de resistance not being taken, he is ordered to assume a capless state, and by those means a coolness springs up between him and the G.C. Of this the Game-Captain is made aware when the game commences. The partial slacker, scorning to insert his head in the scrum, assumes a commanding position outside, and from this point

criticizes the Game-Captain's decisions with severity and pith. The last end of the partial slacker is generally a sad one. Stung by some pungent home-thrust, the Game-Captain is fain to try chastisement, and by these means silences the enemy's battery.

Sometimes, the classes overlap. As for instance, a keen and regular player may, by some more than usually gross bit of bungling on the part of the G.C., be moved to a fervour and eloquence worthy of Juvenal. Or again, even the absolute slacker may for a time emulate the keen player, provided an opponent plant a shrewd kick on a tender spot. But broadly speaking, there are only three classes.

A remarkable piece of work for a 19-year-old. Note the Wodehouse touches coming to the fore early-on: The use of clichés ("joy reigns supreme"), the classical reference, done in a manner indicating assurance that the reader will greet said reference with a glimmer of recognition ("a gem of the purest rays serene" from Thomas Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard") the ironic tone (the disgusting curiosity of the Game-Captain). Even then, a style is being formed.

So here is Plum Wodehouse in 1900, now a published author, looking forward to a bright future joining his brother Armine at Oxford, and already determined to become a full time writer. Enter the rupee.

When Ernest Wodehouse retired from the civil service in either 1896 or 1898 (he had been a magistrate in Hong Kong since 1867), his pension was paid in the rupee, the monetary standard of India. Like so many Englishman before him, Ernest's second son was to find his life changed radically by India's presence in the British empire. Here is how Wodehouse described the situation:

> The trouble in the Wodehouse home at the beginning of the century was that money was a good deal tighter than could have been wished. The wolf was not actually whining at the door and there was always a little something in the kitty for the butcher and the grocer, but the finances would not run to anything in the nature of a splash. My father, after many years in Hong Kong, had retired on a pension, and the authorities paid it to him in rupees. A thoroughly dirty trick, in my opinion, for the rupee is the last thing in the world—or was then—with which anyone who value his peace of mind would wish to be associated. It never stayed put for a second. It was always jumping up and down and throwing fits, and expenditure had to be regulated in the light of what mood it happened to be at the moment. "Watch that rupee!" was the cry in the Wodehouse family.
>
> The result was that during my schooldays my future was always uncertain. The Boy, What Will He Become? was a question that received a different answer almost daily. My brother Armine had got a scholarship and gone to Oxford, and the idea was that, if I got a scholarship too, I would join him there. All through my last term at Dulwich I sprang from my bed at five sharp each morning, ate a couple of petit beurre biscuits and worked like a beaver at my Homer and Thucydides, but just as scholarship time was approaching, with me full to the brim with classic lore and just spoiling for a good whack of the examiners, the rupee started creating again, and it seemed to my father that two sons at the University would be a son more than the privy purse could handle. So Learning drew the loser's end, and Commerce got me.

Commerce was the Hong Kong and Shanghai bank in Lombard Street, London, where Ernest arranged for a job for Plum. He left school after the summer term in 1900, and, in September of that year, began his career in banking, at a salary of 80 pounds a year. The idea was that young men like Plum (or rather, not at all like Plum, as we shall see) would be trained in the London office, and then sent off to the Far East to manage branch offices. "You only have three years here, and then you get your orders, and go to one of the branches in the East, where you're the dickens of a big pot straight away, with a big screw and a dozen native Johnnies under you," is how one of Mike Jackson's co-workers explains it to him, in *Psmith in the City* (1910), a novel which drew heavily on Plum's own experience in the bank.

Banking, even ordering natives around, simply wasn't what Plum had in mind for his life. Propelled from his pleasant schoolboy life and deprived of his roseate-hued future plans, he had reached a low point. Witness his 1910 description of Mike, having been similarly thrust from school to bank in short order, and faced with the necessity of securing lodgings:

> There is probably no more depressing experience in the world than the process of engaging furnished apartments...It was a repulsive room. One of those characterless rooms which are only found in furnished apartments. To Mike, used to the comforts of his bedroom at home and the cheerful simplicity of a school dormitory, it seemed about the most dismal spot he had ever struck. A sort of Sargasso sea among bedrooms.

Soon, Mike enters the New Asiatic Bank for the first time:

> Inside, the bank seemed to be in a state of some

confusion. Men were moving about in an apparently irresolute manner. Nobody seemed actually to be working. As a matter of fact, the business of a bank does not start very early in the morning. Mike had arrived before things had really begun to move. As he stood near the doorway, one or two panting figures rushed up the steps, and flung themselves at a large book which stood on the counter near the door. Mike was to come to know this book well. In it, if you were an employee of the New Asiatic Bank, you had to inscribe your name every morning. It was removed at ten sharp to the accountant's room, and if you reached the bank a certain number of times in the year too late to sign, bang went your bonus.

Psmith In the City, while a comic novel, is really the only time we see how desperately unhappy Plum was in his banking days. In his first person, autobiographical writings, he typically made light of the experience:

> If there was a moment in the course of my banking career when I had the foggiest notion of what it was all about, I am unable to recall it. From Fixed Deposits I drifted to Inward Bills—no use asking me what inward bills are, I never found out—and then to Outward Bills and to Cash, always with a weak, apologetic smile on my face and hoping that suavity of manner would see me through when, as I knew must happen 'ere long, I fell short in the performance of my mystic duties. My total inability to grasp what was going on made me somewhat of a legend in the place. Years afterwards, when the ineptness of a new clerk was under discussion in the manager's inner sanctum and the disposition of those present at the conference was to condemn him as the worst bungler who had ever entered the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank's portals, some white-haired veteran would shake his head and murmur, "No, no, you're wrong. Young Robinson is, I agree, an almost total loss and ought to have been chloroformed at birth, but you should have seen P.G. Wodehouse. Ah, they don't make them like that nowadays. They've lost the pattern."
>
> Only two things connected with the banking industry did I really get into my head. One was that from now on all I would be able to afford in the way of lunch would be a roll and butter and a cup of coffee, a discovery which, after the lavish midday meals of school, shook me to my foundations. The other was that, if I got to the office late three mornings in a month, I would lose my Christmas bonus. One of the great sights in the City in the years 1901-02 was me rounding into the straight with my coat-tails flying and my feet going pitter pitter pat and just making it across the threshold while thousands cheered. It kept me in superb condition, and gave me a rare appetite for the daily roll and butter.

What Plum did in his spare time, with admirable single-mindedness of purpose, was write. In those days in England, there were dozens of pulp magazines: the *Nash*, the *Storyteller*, the *London*, the *Royal*, the *New*, the *Novel*, the *Grand*, the *Pall Mall*, the *Windsor* and many others, and Plum wasted no time in retiring to his bed-sitting room in the evenings and churning out the stuff. Although he played down his work ("Worse bilge than mine may have been submitted to the editors of London in 1901 and 1902, but I should think it very unlikely"), the fact is that he began to publish almost immediately. In November 1900, just two months after he entered the solemn doors of the bank, he sold his first humor piece, "Men Who Missed Their Own Weddings" to *Tit-bits*.

Another significant event occurred when Plum went to see William Beach-Thomas, a former master at Dulwich, now the assistant editor at a London newspaper called *The Globe*. Beach-Thomas edited a column called "By the Way," and he arranged for Wodehouse to fill in for him whenever he needed a day off. The fateful first day was August 16, 1901—Beach-Thomas wanted a holiday, and Plum Wodehouse, feeling a slight chill, found himself unable to fulfill his day's duties at the bank.

The Globe was one of the leading papers in town, although its owner could have given Oofy Prosser lessons in how to squeeze a shilling 'til it squeaked. The following anecdote is from Sir Charles Petrie's *The Edwardians* (1965):

> London was not yet reduced to a mere two evening papers, but had the choice of half a dozen, among which one of the liveliest and best written was *The Globe*. It was owned by a certain Sir William Madge, who, owing to his parsimonious treatment of his contributors, was generally known in Fleet Street as "Manure Madge." He paid his leader-writers at space rates, and it was his habit to write himself the opening sentences of each leader, the relevant deduction then being made from the leader-writer's cheque. He met his match in one member of his staff, allegedly P.G. Wodehouse, who indicated on the proof that Madge's lines were to be printed in italics, and then continued, "This represents the point of view of the ordinary stupid, unthinking Englishman."

In September 1902, Plum was asked to fill in for five weeks while Beach-Thomas took an extended holiday. Obviously, even Plum couldn't think of enough excuses

cash department of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank and a new ledger came in and was placed in my charge. It had a white, gleaming front page and suddenly, as I sat gazing at it, there floated into my mind like drifting thistledown the idea of writing on it a richly comic description of the celebrations and rejoicings marking the Formal Opening of the New Ledger, and I immediately proceeded to do so.

It was the most terrific "piece," as they call it now. Though fifty-five years have passed since that day, it is still green in my memory. It had everything. There was a bit about my being presented to his Gracious Majesty the King (who, of course, attended the function) which would have had you gasping with mirth. ("From his tie he took a diamond tie-pin, and smiled at me, and then he put it back.") And that was just one passing incident in it. The whole thing was a knock-out. I can't give the details. You will have to take my word for it that it was one of the most screamingly funny things ever written. I sat back on my stool and felt like Dickens when he had finished Pickwick. I was all in a glow.

Then came the reaction. The head cashier was rather an austere man who on several occasions had expressed dissatisfaction with the young Wodehouse, and something seemed to whisper to me that, good as the thing was, it would not go any too well with him. Briefly, I got cold feet and started to turn stones and explore avenues in the hope of finding some way of making everything pleasant for all concerned. In the end I decided that the best thing to do was to cut the pages out with a sharp knife.

A few mornings later the stillness of the bank was shattered by a sudden yell of triumph, not unlike the cry of the Brazilian wild cat leaping on its prey. It was the head cashier discovering the absence of the page, and the reason he yelled was that he was feuding with the stationers and for weeks had been trying to get the goods on them in some way. He was at the telephone in two strides, asking them if they called themselves stationers. I suppose they replied that they did, for he then touched off his bombshell, accusing them of having delivered an imperfect ledger, a ledger with the front page missing.

This brought the head stationer round in person calling heaven to witness that when the book left his hands it had been all that a ledger should be, if not more so.

"Somebody must have cut out the page," he said.

"Absurd!" said the head cashier. "Nobody but an imbecile would cut out the front page of a ledger."

"Then," said the stationer, coming right back at him, "you must have an imbecile in your department. Have you?"

The head cashier started. This opened up a new line of thought.

"Why, yes," he admitted, for he was a fair-minded man. "There is P.G. Wodehouse."

"Weak in the head, is he, this Wodehouse?"

"Very, so I have always thought."

"Then send for him and question him narrowly," said the stationer.

This was done. They got me under the lights and grilled me, and I had to come clean. It was immediately after this that I found myself at liberty to embark on the life literary.

A great story? Absolutely. True? Not really. The cold, hard, less romantic facts reveal that Plum tendered his resignation to the bank on September 9, 1902, to edit "By the Way" and pursue his career as a writer. And his timing was impeccable. On September 17, 1902, he made his first appearance in *Punch* with "An Unfinished Collection." On September 18, his first book, *The Pothunters,* a school story, was published. It was 4 years until Ukridge, 7 years to Psmith and 15 years before Jeeves, but Wodehouse was on his way. Never again, for the next 73 years, would he ever do anything for a living except write. For which we are profoundly grateful.

Dictionary of Literary Biography

Marilyn MacGregor, membership secretary of our society, has written a major contribution for the recently published *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Yearbook: 1998*. Marilyn's four-page article, entitled "Worldwide Wodehouse Societies," describes the founding, activities, and present details of seven Wodehouse societies in various parts of the world, with particular attention to chapters of our own society. Interested Wodehouse readers wishing to join any of these societies are provided with the necessary information. For those whose appetite for Wodehouse cannot be sated by paper and ink, eleven sites on the Web are included.

It's a well-written and informative article, and will surely bring us more members. —OM

Convention 2001: A Wodehouse Odyssey

By Hope Gaines

Things that originated in Philadelphia:

The Declaration of Independence
Tastykake
Mother's Day
The Constitution of the United States of America
Frankie Avalon
Patti Labelle
The National Football League
Lucretia Mott
Extravaganza parades
The Wodehouse Society**
Zoos*
Little Richard
Public hospitals
Dion
Fire insurance*
Mario Lanza
Libraries*
Bill Cosby

* American
** All right, it was in Bucks County, but who's looking?

These and other wonderful things, or reminders thereof, are yours to investigate, savor, and remember when you come to the 2001 Wodehouse Odyssey, Chapter One's joyous version of the biennial TWS convention, to be held the weekend of October 12-14, 2001, in Philadelphia. (You may have seen or heard tell of other dates; that's because no one actually had a calendar in front of them until now. These are the Real Dates.)

You can beat the crowd by booking your room now, at the friendly and charming Sheraton Society Hill Hotel. Call 1-215-238-6000 and mention The Wodehouse Society when you chat with the reservation people. Convention room rate is $169, which is also in effect for three days before and three days after the dates of the bash.

Watch future issues of *Plum Lines* for good gnus about events and programs, more attractions, historic and cultural notes, and whatever we can think of to entice you. Meanwhile, even if you don't book your room now, be sure to block out that all-important weekend in 2001!

UPDATING MCILVAINE

By Tony Ring

After the successful example of cooperation between societies which resulted in the publication of the new anthology, *What Ho! The Best of P. G. Wodehouse*, the International Wodehouse Association (IWA) is turning its attention to an update of parts of the standard bibliography by Elaine McIlvaine, which was published in 1990. With Ms. McIlvaine's support, the IWA plans to have available a simple printed Addendum in time for the Philadelphia convention of The Wodehouse Society in October 2001.

McIlvaine tabulated a huge amount of information concerning Wodehouse books, plays, magazine articles, etc., about which the compilers were aware. Such was PGW's capacity for work, however, and such is his ongoing popularity, that much important material was omitted.

Many new books (including a large number in translation) have been published, many older items not known to the compilers have been found, again in many languages, and in at least two cases (audiotapes and videotapes) material not included in *McIlvaine* has gained a sufficient commercial hold as to warrant compilation.

Members are thus asked to notify a representative of the IWA (see below) if they have any material in the following categories which does not appear in *McIlvaine*:

Section	
A	The original editions of books by Wodehouse. The mere printing of a collection of stories, most of which have appeared in books, would not be considered for entry in this section.
B	Omnibus volumes of novels or short stories by Wodehouse.
C	Plays by Wodehouse, or collaborations between PGW and another.
D	Periodicals in relation to material written *by* Wodehouse but not *about* Wodehouse—in *all* languages and countries.
E	Contributions to books by other authors by way of Introduction or Preface but not by contribution of a story to an anthology.
F	Translations of books by Wodehouse *or* of full-length books about Wodehouse.
H	Full-length works about Wodehouse.
J	The Dramatic Wodehouse. Information about plays, musicals, and films to which he contributed, including location, dates, and number of performances.
New	Commercially produced records and audiotapes.
New	Commercially produced videotapes.

The timing of the project is such that information needs to be collected not later than December 31, 2000.

If you are in the fortunate position of being able to contribute information relating to a number of areas, please send it to the address below *as it becomes available*. You do not need to accumulate it until you have reviewed your whole collection!

For U.S. members of The Wodehouse Society: Send your contributions to David Landman, 197 Woburn Street, Lexington, MA 02420.
For members of The Wodehouse Society outside the U.S.: Mail directly to Tony Ring, 34 Longfield, Great Missenden, Bucks HP16 0EG, England.

THE PICKLED NEWT?

By Francine Morris Swift

Francine, our far-flung pub reporter, sent along this observation from England. —AD

What happens if you cross the Higher Clergy with Buck-U-Uppo? A pub called "The Pickled Newt," of course. We came across the place in the Portswood district of Southampton in 1997, but it was outside of licensing hours and we didn't have a chance to investigate. In September of 1999, we had time.

Somewhat confusingly, the signs also read "The Mitre." When I asked the barmaid whether it was "The Mitre" morphing into "The Pickled Newt" or the other way around, she said, "Well, neither, actually." She told us that the pub is called "The Mitre," but had formerly belonged to a now-defunct brewery called "The Pickled Newt." We have never heard of it, but we put a friend in Southampton on the trail along with Reggie Musgrave of the P.G. Wodehouse Society, UK. If it's out there, they'll find it.

For the record, the pub is at 200 Portswood Road, slightly southeast of the university. There's a small parking lot. It's quiet at noon, with Greene King, Abbot Ale, IPA, and Foster's on the hand pumps and a fairly standard assortment of bar snacks, but at least they don't call it "Fayre." Anything that close to a university probably gets lively nights and weekends.

TREASURER'S REPORT, 1999

By Tom Wainwright, Treasurer

Balance as of Dec. 31, 1998		$8,142.85
Income: Dues and Fees		$13,450.00
Expenses:		
Plum Lines Production and Mailing	$14,274.58	
Correspondence	$586.10	
		$14,860.68
Balance as of Dec. 31, 1999		$6,732.17

The *Plum Lines* expenses for 1999 are larger than usual, reflecting the fact that five issues were produced in that year since the Winter 1998 issue came out early in 1999.

LE TOUQUET: THE LATEST

"Ranny Gazoo" (**Ed Bronstein**) originally sent the following item to PGW-Net. —AD

A number of you....requested further information about the Bed and Breakfast conversion of the Wodehouse home in Le Touquet in France. The following is taken from a note from my correspondent: "You might remember that when you were in Le Touquet, the house where Wodehouse had lived was up for sale. It was bought by the Mayor of the Touquet, and is certainly one of the most beautiful—in a town where there are a number of very beautiful houses, with a distinctive architecture created near the beginning of the 20th century, shortly after the town had been founded on the English Channel, in the sand dunes. It is located in the forest, across from the immense golf course, and has a very beautiful garden and surroundings.

"The lady of the household decided recently to turn one of the wings of the house into a small apartment to be rented out to visitors, on a 'bed and breakfast' basis. It is not yet listed in any of the guide books.

"The address is:

Madame Florence Bourleville
"Low Wood"
Avenue Allen Stoneham
62520 Le Touquet, FRANCE

The telephone is: 33 3 21 05 47 52"

ASK JEEVES

Word from several sources is that A.P. Watt, London literary agents for the Wodehouse estate, are in "amicable discussions" with officials of Ask Jeeves, proprietors of the Internet search engine, regarding the use of the name "Jeeves." According to reports, the Internet company did not obtain permission to use the name before it began operations a couple of years ago. Discussions have apparently been going on for some time, and A.P. Watt states that "we are confident [they] will result in a mutually favorable outcome." Nothing definite to report yet, but we'll keep you informed. —OM

PLUM LINES INDEX

Norman Murphy has produced an index for the first twenty years of *Plum Lines*, covering the period 1980-1999. I happened to share a cab to the airport with Norman after the Houston convention the third weekend in October, and I mentioned casually (I *think* it was casual) that we needed an index for *Plum Lines*. Norman immediately volunteered for the job and sent me the finished index in early December. Considering that he had to do some nominal eating and sleeping in the interval, it was a remarkably quick piece of work. (He lacked a few early issues, and Doug Stow supplied those.) Elin and I are putting the finishing touches on the Index this very moment, and we hope to have it ready by Spring.

The Index currently runs to 18 pages and is in the familiar two-column *Plum Lines* format. As Norman explains in his introduction, "minor editing errors have occasionally occurred...and we are fortunate in having not one but two volumes 17 and 18..." Thus, after twenty years of *Plum Lines*, the final volume is not Volume 20, but the second Volume 18.

So what number should we give this volume, whose first number you are reading—should it be 19, in numerical order, or 21, in step with the 21st year of publication? We have chosen to call it Volume 21, and don't bother to look through that pile of papers over there for Volumes 19 and 20. Mobs raging through the streets, demanding that we give them back their missing volumes, will be treated with the haughty disdain that met similar mobs on a less important occasion in 1752, when the British government imposed the Gregorian calendar and *whoosh*! went those eleven days.

We intend to include an Annual Index at the end of every annual volume in the future, and to keep the General Index (the one we now offer) updated and available at all times.

Price of the Index is $2, including postage. Checks should be made out to The Wodehouse Society.

We editors (AD and OM) will find the index immensely useful, and on behalf of ourselves and all other drudges who search through back issues, we congratulate Norman Murphy most warmly for his excellent work.

—OM

A FEW QUICK ONES

Alfred Masciocchi spotted the following in *The New Yorker* of October 4, 1999, page 37, and shared it on PGW-Net. The article concerned some of the candidates for the newly created position of mayor (as opposed to Lord Mayor) of London: "The front-runners are an eclectic bunch: Jeffrey Archer, the pot-boiling novelist and multimillionaire; Ken Livingstone, a cheerfully unreconstructed Socialist who is known to keep newts; Glenda Jackson, the breast-baring star of *Women In Love*..." Noted Alfred (expressing a sentiment with which we can heartily concur): "My vote is with Mr. Livingstone and his newts!"

Ben Jenson forwarded what he termed "a bone for Plum Lines pickers": "No doubt other Plummies noticed the under-quoted and brought it to your attention. Let me join them. In the *NY Times* Week in Review (September 26, 1999), Gore Vidal was first on the scene in the flap over Edmund Morris's biography of Ronald Reagan. As is usual with mentions of Wodehouse, that is, out of the blue sky, at the end of the first paragraph:

"'I would have fallen on the floor had I not been able to clutch at a passing console, courtesy of P.G. Wodehouse.'

"Clearly," says Ben, "Vidal is grateful to PGW for the metaphor, or possibly for the console itself. The bone that is thrown to our erstwhile combers is, of course, Where? When? Under what blow? What, only once?"

Stephen Brown noticed that even *Sports Illustrated* can't resist a Plummie reference—and this one was entirely a propos. In the October 24, 1999 issue, writer Franz Lidz notes: "In P.G. Wodehouse's *Code of the Woosters*, blustering bully Roderick Spode threatens Bertie Wooster with this locution: 'I shall immediately beat you to a jelly.' At a prefight press conference on Oct. 20, bullying British featherweight champion Prince Naseem Hamed—whose royal title derives from his imagination, not the House of Windsor—threatened opponent Cesar Soto with this locution: 'I'm gonna beat you till you're marmalade. I'm gonna spread you out.' " And he will dance on the remains, no doubt, in hobnailed boots.

Tina Woelke has pointed out that Hugh Laurie has written another novel, this one called *The Gunseller*. Says Tina, "It is very accurately described as a cross between P.G. Wodehouse and Ian Fleming... The book is hilarious, and in his introduction the author credits Plum as one of his inspirations." Both Laurie and Stephen Fry, of

Jeeves and Wooster fame on the BBC and PBS, have frequently given Wodehouse a well-deserved nod in their literary efforts.

Marlene Gatz is the first to answer Beth Carrol's question in the last issue of *Plum Lines*. Beth asked for the source of the quote attributed to Wodehouse by "Miss Read" that begins "The rich smell of mixed liquors, the gay clamour of carefree men arguing about the weather . . ." Neither Beth nor your editors thought this sounded much like Wodehouse. But Marlene had read "Archibald and the Masses" the day before *Plum Lines* arrived, and recognized the quote at once. It introduces the segment of the story describing Archibald's experiences in a pub in Bottleton East. Marlene will receive our usual Finders' Prize: sixty tons of topsoil, delivered *right* to her front door.

Loring Lee is pleased to see that the merits of Dulwich are recognized by more than the merely literate. Loring reports that Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman have recently bought a house in Dulwich. "The house," says Reuters, "is located...near a prestigious school for boys called Dulwich College." The house cost $3.28 million, has nine bedrooms, a driveway to accommodate ten cars, and clearly indicates that this couple does nothing by halves. Peacehaven and its sphinxes could probably be tucked unnoticed into any corner. And **Tina Griffin** reports that Tom and Nicole have enrolled their son at Dulwich College. Bully, one must say, for them.

Florence Cunningham proudly announces that our Plum has been nominated "Person of the Century" by Jim Kershner, a columnist for *The Spokesman-Review* of Spokane, Washington. "P. G. Wodehouse," writes Kershner, "provided more laughs over more decades than any other author." Second on Kershner's list is Yogi Berra, the baseball player. "He was no theoretical physicist," notes Kershner, "but there is no denying the truth behind such remarks as, 'Nobody goes there anymore; it's too crowded.' " Next are such nobodies as Winston Churchill and Mohandas Ghandi. It's good to find a man who has his priorities straight.

The cricket match at our recent Houston convention led to many an explanation of the game by the English and the Indians for those less fortunate, but we like **Jeremy Thompson**'s best of all. He snatched it from *The Cricketer*, November, 1977:

> You have two sides, one out in the field and one in. Each man that's in goes out to go in, and when he's out he comes in and the next man goes in until he's out. When they are all out the side that's out comes in and the side that's been in goes out and tries to get those coming in out. Sometimes you get men still in and not out.
>
> When both sides have been in and out including the not outs, that's the end of the game.
>
> HOWZAT!

Our efforts to get the BBC to release ***Wodehouse Playhouse*** on videotape can now be extended to include some catalogs that sell the occasional PBS or BBC television series. *Signals* and *The Video Catalog* recently listed the 1970s series *No, Honestly*, which starred John Alderton and Pauline Collins (who also starred in *Wodehouse Playhouse*). Both catalogs noted that they were providing this series in response to customer demand. That being the case, they will now be plagued with demands for *Wodehouse Playhouse*, if we have anything to say about it! *Signals* can be contacted via their web site, www.signals.com, while e-mail can be sent to *The Video Catalog* at vidcat@rivertrade.com.

Be sure to send a note encouraging them to obtain *Wodehouse Playhouse*.

AD and OM

Aunt Dahlia and The Oldest Member

> She made me feel that there was nothing in the world I wouldn't do for her. She was rather like one of those innocent-tasting American drinks which creep imperceptibly into your system so that, before you know what you're doing, you're starting out to reform the world, by force if necessary, and pausing on your way to tell the large man in the corner that, if he looks at you like that, you will knock his head off.
>
> "The Artistic Career of Corky," 1925

"THE SWOOP!"

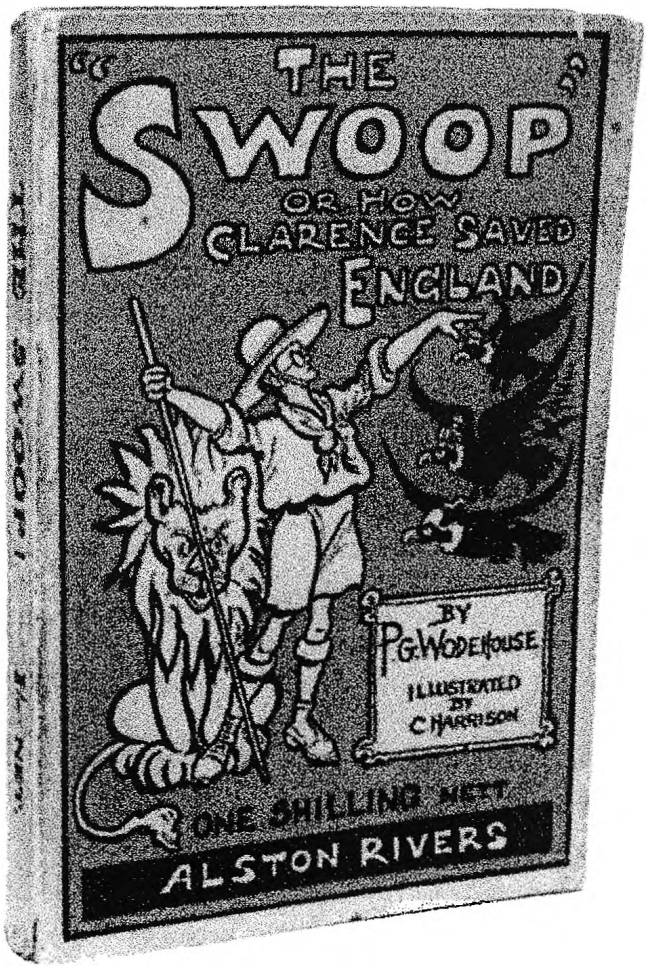
By Tom Smith

Tom Smith's discussion of a lesser-known Wodehouse story suggests that our "innocent" writer was not *that* innocent. Tom's well-documented presentation of historical background will help many of us understand what have always seemed (to me, at least) oddities in the story. It's a quite respectable slab of research. Tom's interest in things Wodehousian began with the Jeeves and Wooster TV series; his interest in British history, especially the "Georgian Summer," led him to "The Swoop!" The McIlvaine bibliography notes that "*The Swoop* [sic] and *The Globe By the Way Book* are among the rarest Wodehousiana." —OM

P. G. Wodehouse, it is often said by both admirers and critics, was politically naive, out of touch with the real world, and created a world that did not exist or never existed. Evelyn Waugh called Wodehouse's world a product of "pure fancy."[1] Yet, as Norman Murphy points out, many of the characters in Wodehouse's world are based on real people and the situations Wodehouse puts them in are derived from events going on in the real world around Wodehouse. Many characters and events are either public or private references to people and events Wodehouse witnessed.[2] In fact, Wodehouse's humor would be ineffective if Wodehouse was not an astute observer of the world around him. This is especially the case with Wodehouse's short story, "The Swoop! or How Clarence Saved England: A Tale of the Great Invasion," which, to Barry Phelps, shows that "when he wished, Wodehouse could turn his perceptive gaze on the political as well as the social scene."[3]

Of course England was not invaded in 1909, which was the premise of the story. The story was, according to Kristin Thompson, one of Wodehouse's early attempts to satirize a certain genre of fiction—in this case the "Invasion of England" sub-genre of War fiction. The first of these invasion stories was *The Battle of Dorking* by Sir George Chesney, serialized in *Blackwood's Magazine.* Chesney's idea was repeatedly copied between 1880 and 1900. T. A. Guthrie used the invasion premise in his *The Seizure of the Channel Tunnel* in 1882; H. G. Lester borrowed the idea in 1888 for *The Taking of Dover;* and an anonymous writer had the French Army invading England in *The Sacking of London in the Great French War of 1901.*[4]

But this type of story was not just a flash-in-the-pan or some type of literary oddity. The invasion story, according to historian Lawrence James was "a well-established and highly popular literary genre by 1900."[5] Between 1900 and 1914, the invasion fantasy story would find even greater popularity. These stories all had in common the invasion of an unprepared Britain by one or more of her Imperial rivals. One writer, William le Queux, specialized in writing the invasion fantasy. In his novel



Cover of the first edition, Alston Rivers, London, 1909

The Great War of 1897, Britain was invaded by France and Russia. His second invasion novel, *The Invasion of 1910*, had Germany invading England. This story was serialized in the *Daily Mail* in 1906. The book was financed by Lord Northcliffe, a noted Germanophobe, and "concocted by Field Marshall Lord Roberts."[6]

To James, these stories are an important part of late Victorian and Edwardian culture. They showed a culture concerned about the state of the Empire and were "hints that major war was imminent, even welcome."[7] The stories showed an England in decline and influenced Brit-

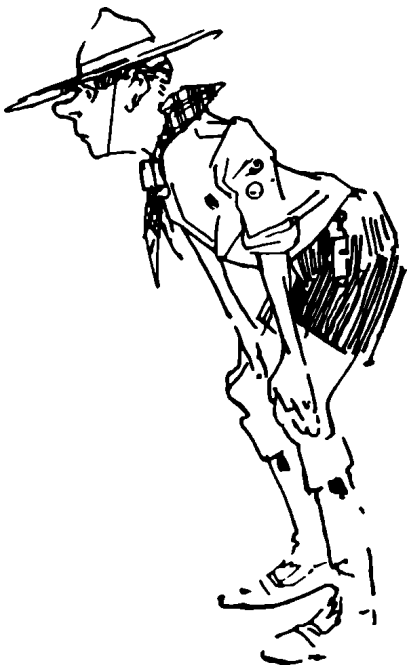
ish opinion. One impact of the le Queux stories was a convulsion of "spasmodic bouts of spy mania with rumours of an underground army of German secret agents and equally ridiculous reports of nocturnal Zeppelin flights over Yorkshire."[8] The invasion stories were merely the literary manifestation and careful exploitation of what James calls "that intense, irrational fear of sudden invasion which had long been imbedded in the national psyche."[9]

But was this fear all that irrational? From 1870 onwards, Britain was finding itself an Empire besieged, confronted by the growing Russian Empire in Central Asia; France in Africa; the United States in the Pacific, Caribbean, and Atlantic; and Germany on the Continent, in the Middle East, and at sea. Of all the Great Powers, Britain had the most to lose from the growth of any of the other Great Powers and the most to gain from the weakening of any of them.[10]

In addition to the threat presented to Britain's Empire by the growth of the other Powers, Britain had other problems. By 1900, Britain was the world's largest empire with 12 million square miles and a quarter of the world's population.[11] But it was an empire in decline. Britain's military might as the world's Greatest of the Great Powers rested on its commercial and industrial strength. This, too, was in decline. Britain's industrial growth rate had dropped from four percent per year during the early 1800s to less than one and a half per cent by 1894. Britain had dropped to third place behind Germany and the United States in industrial output.[12] British society was also falling behind the United States and Germany in the race to produce scientists, engineers, and technicians to maintain the industrial competition. Britain was relying on "inspired amateurism" to sustain its industry, and it just wasn't enough.[13] To many British Imperialists, Britain's industrial decline was more frightening than the frequent colonial wars Britain fought and frequently did poorly in.[14]

The decline of the British Empire was not just industrial. Britain was struggling with declining standards of living and health among large portions of its population. During the Boer War, many of the recruits for the Army were found to be physically unfit for service because of malnutrition.[15] Almost one third of the British population lived in a poverty matching conditions considered "third-world" today.[16] The Edwardian period saw increasing feelings of unrest among the labor force and the beginning of a mass exodus from the Empire which would peak at 460,000 people leaving the Empire after 1910.[17]

In response to fears of Britain's decline, many in England would take steps to restore the power of the Empire. As a partial result of Britain's poor showing in the Boer Wars, Robert Haldane was appointed to reorganize the Army. Part of his reorganization was the introduction of the Officer Training Corps in Public Schools and Universities to train officers for future emergencies.[18] The introduction of OTC and the nature of the Public School were responsible for developing what William H. McNeill describes as a "Cult of Heroism" which would lead Britain to war.[19] As part of this Cult, Empire Day, instituted in 1904 to celebrate the achievements of the Empire, along with new school texts to extol its virtues, were intended to promote Imperial and military spirit among Britain's youth.[20]



Clarence Chugwater, drawn by Peter Van Straaten.

As another answer to the problem of the decline of Britain's youth, a number of paramilitary organizations emerged. Among the organizations designed to both stop social decline and instill military and imperial spirit were the Church Lad's Brigade, Lord Rodney's Cadets, the Navy League, the Knights of King Arthur, the Church Army, the Boys' Brigade, and the Lads' Drill Association. Even the Salvation Army used military rank and organization to assist in restoring Edwardian society.[21] But most influential of the organizations in preparing British society for war was Lord Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts. The Scouting movement had a major impact on the thinking of British society: between 1908 and 1910, the period when Wodehouse wrote "The Swoop!", over 100,000 boys joined Boy Scouts and by the Great War, thirty four per cent of England's male population would belong to Boy Scouts.[22] And it was an organization concerned with the possible invasion of England. The cover of Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* is described by Dennis Judd: "it showed a boy lying down, his Scout staff and broad-brimmed hat on the ground beside him and peering round a rock, intently watching men landing from a mysterious ship." The illustration, itself, bore the message that Britain was besieged, but one wonders, could this

boy have been Wodehouse's Clarence Chugwater?[23]

These were the conditions that would inspire the invasion fantasy stories and Wodehouse's lampoon of them. But Wodehouse was not just lampooning a literary subgenre; he was lampooning the attitudes of a society preparing for war. What Wodehouse is doing is apparent early in "The Swoop!":

> Clarence, on this sultry August afternoon, was tensely occupied tracking the family cat across the dining-room carpet by its foot-prints. Glancing up for a moment, he caught sight of the other members of the family.
>
> "England, my England!" he moaned.
>
> It was indeed a sight to extract tears of blood from any Boy Scout. The table had been moved back against the wall, and in the cleared space Mr. Chugwater, whose duty it was to have set an example to his children, was playing diabolo. Beside him, engrossed in cup and ball, was his wife. Reggie Chugwater, the eldest son, the heir, the hope of the house, was reading the cricket news in an early edition of the evening paper. Horace, his brother, was playing pop-in-taw with his sister Grace and Grace's fiancé, Ralph Peabody. Alice, the other Miss Chugwater, was mending a Badminton racquet.
>
> Not a single member of that family was practising with the rifle, or drilling, or learning to make bandages.
>
> Clarence groaned.[24]

It is clear that Wodehouse was keenly aware of Baden-Powell's 1904 warning to the subscribers of *Union Jack* and the *Marvel* that they needed to learn military drill and marksmanship, and his request to soccer and cricket team captains to write him if their teams wanted to learn to fight.[25] Furthermore, it is clear that Wodehouse is aware of the Britishers who bemoan the fate of England:

> Once more Clarence snorted bitterly.
>
> "I'm sure you ought not to be down on the floor, Clarence," said Mr. Chugwater anxiously. "It is so draughty, and you have evidently got a nasty cold. *Must* you lie on the floor?"
>
> "I am spooring," said Clarence with simple dignity.
>
> "But I'm sure you can spoor better sitting on a chair with a nice book."
>
> "*I* think the kid's sickening for something," put in Horace critically. "He's deuced roopy. What's up, Clarry?"
>
> "I was thinking," said Clarence, "of my country—of England."
>
> "What's the matter with England?"
>
> "*She's* all right," murmured Ralph Peabody.
>
> "My fallen country!" sighed Clarence, a not unmanly tear bedewing the glasses of his spectacles. "My fallen, stricken country!"[26]

Clarence echoes Baden-Powell's exhortations to the youth of Britain, especially to slackers, that they should be ashamed as their forefathers look down from heaven "and see you loafing about with your hands in your pockets . . ."[27] But he also echoes Field Marshall Lord Roberts who often addressed the National Service League and the Lads Drill Association at their public meetings and lamented the state of England.[28]

If this isn't sufficient to show that Wodehouse has his finger on the pulse of a nation worried about the fate of the Empire in the World, we can look at the list of enemies that invade England in "The Swoop!" Not only do the Germans invade England, but Russia as well, and both were countries that the leaders of the Empire expected to face in future wars. And these were frequently the rivals England faced in the invasion novels. But Wodehouse doesn't leave it there. In the invasion are also troops from China, who invade Wales, the Mad Mullah captures Portsmouth, and Raisuli's Moroccan's land at Brighton.[29] And these were opponents that British troops had, in fact faced, often performing poorly, in the years preceding the novella.[30]

Finally, Wodehouse takes on the leaders of England and lampoons them as well:

> The foe had taken full advantage of . . . the fact that, owing to a fit of absent-mindedness on the part of the Government, England had no ships afloat which were not entirely obsolete. Interviewed on the subject by representatives of the daily papers, the Government handsomely admitted that it was perhaps in some ways a silly thing to have done; but they urged, you could not think of everything. Besides, they were on the point of laying down a *Dreadnought*, which would be ready in a very few years. Meanwhile, the best thing the public could do was to sleep quietly in their beds. It was Fisher's tip; and Fisher was a smart man.[31]

In this short paragraph, Wodehouse packs a lot. The reference here is to the reform of the Royal Navy under the First Sea Lord, Admiral Lord Fisher. Under Fisher, the Royal Navy scrapped 150 smaller vessels in favor of Fisher's Dreadnought class of battleships. The Dreadnoughts were the largest ships afloat and took over a year to build, although one had been built in a record eleven months. But Wodehouse wasn't just lampooning the

decision to build dreadnoughts, but Fisher as well. Fisher had suggested that Britain launch a preemptive strike against Germany in 1904 and 1908, to which Edward VII responded "My God, Fisher, you must be mad." This suggestion and Edward's response made the press in England and Germany. Lawrence James describes Fisher as "a pugnacious, effervescent sexagenarian, well aware of his intellectual superiorityover his brother admirals . . ."[32] It is obvious that Wodehouse was well aware of these events and Fisher's opinion of himself.

"The Swoop!" then, is not the product of a man who is politically naïve or out of touch with the world around him. It is instead the work of a man who has made astute, broad-ranging observations of his society, taking on literature, social and political opinion, and current events.

Bibliography

Farwell, Byron. *Mr. Kipling's Army: All the Queen's Men*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989.

Flannery, Harry W. *Assignment to Berlin*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942.

James, Lawrence. *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*. New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1995.

Judd, Dennis. *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 1996.

Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

McNeill, William H. *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A. D. 1000*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Murphy, N. T. P. *In Search of Blandings*. London: Penguin Books, 1987.

Phelps, Barry. *P. G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth*. London: Constable, 1992.

Reynolds, Paul. *The Middle Man: The Adventures of a Literary Agent*. New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1972.

Stephen, Martin. *The Price of Pity: Poetry, History and Myth in the Great War*. London: Leo Cooper, 1996.

Thompson, Kristin. *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes or Le Mot Juste*. New York: James H. Heineman, 1992.

Orwell, George. "In Defence of P. G. Wodehouse." *Dickens, Dali & Others*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1946.

Waugh, Evelyn. "An Act of Homage and Reparation to P. G. Wodehouse." *The Essays, Articles, and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*. London: Methuen, 1983.

Wodehouse, P. G. "The Swoop! or How Clarence Saved England: A Tale of the Great Invasion." *The Swoop! and Other Stories*. David A. Jasen, editor. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.

Notes

[1] Evelyn Waugh, "An Act of Homage and Reparation to P. G. Wodehouse," *Sunday Times,* 16 July 1961, reprinted in *The Essays, Articles, and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Methuen, 1983), 564, citation from the reprint; Paul Reynolds, *The Middle Man: The Adventures of a Literary Agent* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1972), 108; George Orwell, "In Defence of P. G. Wodehouse," *The Windmill* (November, 1945) reprinted in *Dickens, Dali & Others* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1946), 226, citations from reprint; Harry W. Flannery, *Assignment to Berlin,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 312, 352.

[2] N. T. P. Murphy, *In Search of Blandings,* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 2-3.

[3] Barry Phelps, *P. G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth* (London: Constable, 1992), 91.

[4] Kristin Thompson, *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes or Le Mot Juste* (New York: James H. Heineman, 1992), 92.

[5] Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1995), 334.

[6] James, 334; Phelps, 90.

[7] James, 334.

[8] James, 334-5.

[9] James, 335.

[10] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 227.

[11] Kennedy, 224.

[12] Kenedy, 228.

[13] Martin Stephen, *The Price of Pity: Poetry, History and Myth in the Great War* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), 4.

[14] Kennedy, 228-9; Byron Farwell, *Mr. Kipling's Army: All the Queen's Men* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989), 163.

[15] Dennis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 205.

[16] Stephen, 4-5.

[17] Stephen, 3.

[18] Farwell, 162.

[19] William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A. D. 1000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 307.

[20] Judd, 209-10.

[21] Judd, 205-6.

[22] Judd, 203, James, 330.

[23] Judd, 203.

[24] P. G. Wodehouse, "The Swoop! or How Clarence Saved England: A Tale of the Great Invasion," in *The Swoop! and Other Stories,* David A. Jasen, editor (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 4. "The Swoop!" first appeared as a shilling paperback in 1909 published by Alston Rivers in London.

[25] James, 330.
[26] Wodehouse, 5.
[27] Baden-Powell, quoted in G. Pearson, *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (1983), 113-4, in James, 330.
[28] James, 327.
[29] Wodehouse, 10-1.
[30] Judd, 207.
[31] Wodehouse, 15.
[32] James, 336-7.

EVERYMAN, EVERY BOOK

John Fletcher has just e-mailed the news that Everyman's Library has decided to produce "a complete (?) Wodehouse in 80 hardback volumes, cost in England £9.99 each, over the next ten years." The books may be published only in England, but I'm sure booksellers such as Blackwell's in Oxford would be happy to fill our orders.

The first four books, due in March, are *Right Ho, Jeeves*, *The Code of the Woosters*, *Pigs Have Wings*, and *Ukridge*. Five more are promised for the autumn. Check the website www.thwack.cwc.net/WODE/index.htm for details, and watch future *Plum Lines* for the complete scoop on what, with cleverly assumed British understatement, we call a terrifically sensational event. —OM and AD

CONTENTS

"UNCLE FRED" ON VIDEO

Tina Woelke writes: "After reading of the transatlantic victory of the short story 'Uncle Fred Flits By,' I looked up the title on the Web; there I discovered that a late-1950s TV show called *Telephone Time* had an episode by the same title, starring David Niven." Intrigued, Tina ended up buying a videotape of the episode and discovered that in fact it was part of an anthology show called *Four Star Theater*. (The tape also contains a *Telephone Time* episode called "The Intruder.") And the good news from Tina? "It IS the Wodehouse story, and a very fine version! David Niven is a wonderful Uncle Fred (he also directed the episode), and the plot is very true to the original story."

Tina notes that she bought her tape for $19.95 from the Hollywood's Attic site, which is located at: http://www.discountvideotapes.com/classctv.asp. It is also available from other online cult TV show vendors. —AD

VOLUNTEER OFFICERS

Information and new memberships
Marilyn MacGregor

Dues payments
Tom Wainwright

Address changes and e-mail updates
Neil Midkiff

Contributions to *Plum Lines*
Ed Ratcliffe, OM Elin Woodger, AD

Dues are $20 per year, payable to The Wodehouse Society.

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