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edit descriptions of this character Search for books...Search© 2025 BookBrief. All rights reserved.Privacy PolicyAbout © 1996-2014, Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates edit descriptions of this character aliases Freddie edit descriptions of this character Jump to ratings and reviewsTake Gussie Fink-Nottle, Madeline Bassett, old Pop Bassett, the unscrupulous Stiffy Byng, the Rev., an 18th-century cow-creamer, a small brown leather covered notebook and mix with a dose of the aged aunt Dahlia and one has a dangerous brew which spells toil and trouble for Bertie and Jeeves. 1268 people are currently reading22977 people want to readSir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, KBE, was a comic writer who enjoyed enormous popular success during a career of more than seventy years and continues to be widely read over 40 years after his death. Despite the political and social upheavals that occurred during his life, much of which was spent in France and the United States, Wodehouse's main canvas remained that of prewar English upper-class society, reflecting his birth, education, and youthful writing career.An acknowledged master of English prose, Wodehouse has been admired both by contemporaries such as Hilaire Belloc, Evelyn Waugh and Rudyard Kipling and by more recent writers such as Douglas Adams, Salman Rushdie and Terry Pratchett. Sean O'Casey famously called him "English literature's performing flea", a description that Wodehouse used as the title of a collection of his letters to a friend, Bill Townend.Best known today for the Jeeves and Blandings Castle novels and short stories, Wodehouse was also a talented playwright and lyricist who was part author and writer of fifteen plays and of 250 lyrics for some thirty musical comedies. He worked with Cole Porter on the musical Anything Goes (1934) and frequently collaborated with Jerome Kern and Guy Bolton. He wrote the lyrics for the hit song Bill in Kern's Show Boat (1927), wrote the lyrics for the Gershwin/Romberg musical Rosalie (1928), and collaborated with Rudolf Friml on a musical version of The Three Musketeers (1928).Displaying 1 - 30 of 2,460 reviewsSeptember 22, 2019A classic piece of Wodehouse silliness, involving Bertie Wooster, his formidable Aunt Dahlia and (of course) Jeeves in a scheme to steal an 18th century cow-creamer during a weekend party at an English country house. Written in 1939, it also features a would-be fascist dictator of England named Spode, head of an organization called "The Black Shorts" (by the time he started his movement, the shirts had already been taken). Laugh-out-loud funny. Highly recommended.October 25, 2023I think I'm pretty safe when I say that Code of the Woosters is generally considered one of, if not the, best when it comes to a Bertie & Jeeves book.And for good reason.It. Is. Hilarious.Wodehouse was really on top of his game when he wrote CotW.It starts Bertie nixing a cruise that Jeeves wants them to go on, moves on to Aunt Dahlia ordering him to sneer at an antique cow creamer, and somehow ends with our favorite Wooster (as he would say) in the soup.Roderick Spode (leader of the fascist Black Shorts) loves the drippy Madeline, the daughter of Sir Watkyn Bassett - a judge who once fined Bertie £5 for stealing a policeman's helmet. But Madeline is engaged to Bertie's ridiculous friend, Gussie Fink-Nottle - an idiot obsessed with newts. Oh, and Madeline is under the impression that Bertie is secretly in love with her and plans to marry him if anything goes awry with Gussie.Things happen, because of course they do, and it's Bertie to the rescue.Well, it's really Jeeves to the rescue, and the next thing you know Bertie is agreeing to go on that damn cruise. Because of course he does.This is the Gold Standard for Jeeves' fans, so if you haven't read it yet, make it a priority.audio classics favorites June 25, 2023Gussie (Augustus) Fink-Nottle is getting married, the shy, newt lover, (men need silly hobbies, to keep sane) to lovely Madeline Bassett, an unlikely pair, daughter of Sir Watkyn Bassett. A stern former magistrate, that the unfortunate Bertie, met officially once, not a happy memory. Madeline was Wooster's ex- fiancee (he didn't want to be one), the marriage averse Bertie, had given a bachelor party for his friend, at the Drones club. It was a drunken, deplorable affair, which might have been overdone (the celebration), just a little, but still the way the members all gentlemen, like it . When Bertie gets up from bed the next day, at last, and not very quickly, in his home, Mr.Wooster doesn't know whether it's morning or night. To an idle rich man, makes no great difference. Jeeves, his butler, and a genius (his boss, is sadly not), informs Bertie, his Aunt Dahlia, needs to talk to him, so he uncomfortably ...goes to see her . She has a wacky scheme involving an antique, cow-creamer, poor Bertie, females are always getting him into big trouble. After a misadventure inside a shop, with Sir Watkyn, how unlucky can a man be, Bassett buys the item mentioned before, not our errand boy ... And his friend the giant, frightening, Roderick Spoke a would be dictator of England scares Mr.Wooster, never a brave human being. Unfortunately Sir Watkyn, recognizes Bertie as the person that appeared before him, in court, but thinks he's only a petty criminal. Now by how's Bertie's dressed, he believes, has lifted himself up and has become respectable! Bassett congratulates him, for turning his life around, the wise Sir Watkyn's methods work ...Then Wooster embarrassingly collides with Sir Watkyn, outside, trying to take the silver cow-creamer ? Bertie gets invited later to the new, Justice of the Peace's home, guess who? By Gussie and Madeline, Sir Watkyn, has come into quite a lot of money, inherited he says, but Bertie is not quite so sure. Aunt Dahlia still needs Wooster to steal the cow-creamer, from Bassett, for her husband Tom, some women will never be discouraged. A fanatical collector of strange objects, his uncle is, and another weird hobby. Besides Sir Watkyn, wants to take Anatole the best cook in the United Kingdom, from the inflamed Aunt Dahlia (Wooster shudders)! Complication arise though, Stephanie Byng, Madeline's cousin demands that Bertram, take the local policeman's helmet... their in a feud. Where can you hide a helmet, though? She's engaged to one of the many friends, Bertie's acquired in his university days, the always hapless man knows by now, disaster will occur. Humiliation, and every conceivable thing which will show the world, Mr. Bertram Wooster, is not a real gentleman , he can't say no though. Bertie almost becomes engaged to Stephanie, and then Madeline, again ... Engagements here come swiftly, but are broken even faster, and what about the cow-creamer, how can he take that too? When Bertie is being closely watched by everyone, especially the suspicious, evil, Spoke, his connection to Aunt Dahlia was found out. Somehow all these things , will work themselves out for a happy ending, well, a satisfying one while Jeeves is still around ... The funniest P.G.Wodehouse novel...P.S. the code, never let a pal down !March 6, 2012No one weaves a plot like Wodehouse. Also, if you have a cow creamer, guard it with your life.The 2012 re-read:Aunt Dahlia dispatches Bertie to Totleigh Towers to purlorn a silver cow creamer coveted by his uncle Tom from Sir Watkyn Basset. Unfortunately, Bertie has his work cut out for him in the form of Stiffy Byng and Madeline Basset. Can Bertie escape with the cow creamer without winding up married to either woman?This is my second reading of Code of the Woosters and I can definitely say there is a reason I've been recommending it to people for the better part of a decade. P.G. Wodehouse was in mid-season form when he chiseled this masterpiece out of a block of stone. The Code of the Woosters should be handed out in writing classes as a prime example of how to orchestrate a plot. The twists are perfectly timed so the jaw-droppingest moments happen at the end of chapters.The writing is superb and Wodehouse moves his characters through the scenery like a master puppeteer. Gussie Fink-Nottle, that "ghastly gob of gorgonzola," makes his return, still bethrothed(ish) to Madeline Basset and is just as quirky. Who else would think to put newts in the bathtub after breaking an aquariam? La Basset is the same as she was in the previous volume. I'm not sure if Stiffy Byng or Stinker Pinker make appearances in other volumes but they are quite memorable here. Roderick Spode is by far the best supporting character of the book, though, a facist who cowers whenever someone mentions "Eulalie," the meaning of which is not clear until the end. As always, the narrative is a minefield of hilarious similes. The plot meanders all over Totleigh Towers. Like most Jeeves stories, Bertie gets himself deeper and deeper into the soup, the plot encircling such props as the aforementioned cow creamer, a notebook, and a policeman's helmet. As I mentioned before, the reversals of fortune are impecably timed.I could go on and on about this book. Suffice to say, it's an easy five and my go-to recommendation for people who want to give P.G. Wodehouse a shot. They didn't make an episode of the phenomenal BBC Jeeves and Woosters series starring Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie out of it for nothing!2012 favorites pants-shittingly-awesome April 29, 2023I think I will read a bunch of these in order to pick up this sort of fun talk!! As a novel, it is perfect. As a comedy, it is delightful.March 8, 2024It's a classic of English humor and always so refreshing! In this volume, young Bertram, a decadent English aristocrat of the 1950s, must confront a series of misunderstandings around a jar of cream in the shape of a cow. Always dubious plots follow one another to avenge a dog by stealing a gendarme's helmet, guard a cook by stealing the silver jar of cream, and recover a compromising notebook. Bertram faces many formidable trials without courage or common sense but with a natural talent for causing hilarious catastrophes.british-literature e-4 historical-fiction December 5, 2009Oh my god this is so, so, so funny. I was discussing Wodehouse with someone yesterday and, as he put it, "There are passages that you want to chase people around the house with, saying, 'Wait! Wait! Just listen to this bit!'" Haven't laughed so hard in a good long while. God, but I love Wodehouse.all-time-favorites classics comedy-parodyAugust 7, 2024Sinopse:«The Code of the Woosters involves Bertie Wooster going to Totleigh Towers, home of Sir Watkyn Bassett, to steal an eighteenth-century silver cow creamer that Sir Watkyn has dishonestly obtained.»A partir de um objet d'art, P.G. Wodehouse cria uma narrativa hilariante cheia de reviravoltas e uns diálogos deliciosamente humorísticos e de bom gosto com referências culturais e outras; o vocabulário escolhido provoca grandes gargalhadas mesmo na tradução portuguesa.Bertie Wooster envolve-se em tantas aventuras e situações insólitas que, a páginas tantas, diz:«Que bela moral a deste mundo do pós-guerra.»Bertie Wooster é autoconfiante:dêem-lhe um incentivo, mostrem-lhe que a festa está a aquecer e que a dança já começou, e ele não ficará atrás.Mas o que seria dele sem Jeeves, o seu mordomo, subtil, sempre sensato, com ideias geniais e planos inteligentes para ajudar a resolver todos os incidentes que se passam na casa de campo onde estão como convidados? A divisa de Jeeves é «ser útil».Um mundo excêntrico de ricos de classe social elevada- tios,tias, sobrinhas, sobrinhos, amigos - onde é permitida uma linguagem caricaturalmente coloquial como tratar uma tia por «velha relíquia familiar».Entre uma nateira de prata em forma de vaca, um capacete roubado a um polícia, casamentos autorizados depois de pequenas chantagens bem urdidas e segredos descobertos, tudo acaba em bem.Um fim perfeito.«Do ano, estamos na Primavera, do dia, na manhã; da manhã, na aurora; a encosta da colina está perlada de orvalho; a cotovia, nas suas asas; o caracol, no espinheiro; Deus encontra-se nos céus, e tudo no mundo em harmonia.»Penso que me esqueci de algo....já sei: Jeeves, o meu brandy!May 15, 2020There may be no better cure for pandemic blues than P.G. Wodehouse's incandescently funny prose. Reading Jeeves and Wooster is like snorting unicorn dust; not only does it energize you and make you feel giggly, but it also gets you kind of horny. (I mean like growing a unicorn horn, you pervs—Jeeves and Wooster do not, as a rule, arouse one sexually, though if one is turned on by hilarious Edwardian slang, then one might need to confine one's reading of these books to one's boudoir.) What's particularly delightful about this J&W story is that it's a full-length affair, so it takes all of the comedic misunderstandings, coincidences, and instances of impossibly bad timing in J&W short stories and amplifies them by 10, with Wodehouse conducting the whole thing like a puppeteer, pulling strings at just the right moment to make you think, “Oh, this can't possibly go…aaaaahhh! It did! It did go in that direction!”I really can't recommend these books highly enough. They legitimately make your soul happy.(And, many thanks to the good folks at the legendary Powell's Books in Portland for shipping me an essential care package this week.)January 14, 2025Bit repetitive but still funnyNovember 5, 2020Classic Wodehouse. It doesn't get any better than this...actually it doesn't get much different than this either. Perhaps that's not entirely fair. For me at least, The Code of the Woosters contains some of my favorite scenes and some of Wodehouse's most memorable characters. Herein his hero Bertie Wooster is at his daffiest, unable to accomplish the simplest of tasks, berating a cow creamer, without getting himself in thick soup. Soon after he's got a Bassett and that malodorous Spode badgering him to no end, and this is hot off the heels of a binge to-do in honor of his fish-faced friend Gussie Fink-Nottle, the newt fancier. Everything seems to converge upon poor Bertie in a most pitiless way, providing the reader with hoots galore and good old fashioned British hijinks. To go back to my original statement...The Code of the Woosters, while a good 'un, is not a vast departure from the normal. Book after book Wodehouse churned out pretty much the same story. But it matters not a lick! The sense of humor might put the starch up some people's collars, but it fits me like a worn-in pair of loafers. Not every book's a school prize winner, but I've seldom been disappointed. If you want to give Wodehouse a go, The Code of the Woosters is the stuff to give the troops! comedy favorites humor April 14, 2025I have read or listened to many P.G. Wodehouse books, including this one, but on this occasion I listened to a dramatic adaptation by LA Theater Works. I knew the silly story, which involves an eighteenth century cow creamer (which, it suddenly occurs to me, is very much an example of Hitchcock's “MacGuffin,” an object that just moves the plot along, an excuse for the action). Bertie Wooster gets into sticky wickets, and stuffy Jeeves gets him out of these jams (cf. sidekicks such as Bond's Moneypenny, Batman's Alfred, Ironman's Pepper, Sherlock Homes's Watson, and so on). Bertie Wooster and Jeeves are amusing names, but others are also smile-inducing: Gussie Fink-Nottle, Madeline Bassett, Stiffy Byng, old Pinker (nicknamed Stinker, of course), and they are just daffy people. But the real strength of his prolific output is his ability to make us laugh, mainly through goofy madcap dialogue, and this book makes the lists as one of his best ever.“There are moments, Jeeves, when one asks oneself, 'Do trousers matter?'””The mood will pass, sir.””“I could see that, if not actually disgruntled, he was far from being gruntled.””“Jeeves, you really are a specific dream-rabbit.””Thank you, miss. I am glad to have given satisfaction.””“She was definitely the sort of girl who puts her hands over a husband's eyes, as he is crawling in to breakfast with a morning head, and says: 'Guess who!'”“. . . as if Nature had intended to make a gorilla, and had changed its mind at the last moment.””“She laughed - a bit louder than I could have wished in my frail state of health, but then she is always a woman who tends to bring plaster falling from the ceiling when amused.”Written in 1939, it also features a would-be fascist dictator of England named Spode, head of an organization called The Saviours of Britain, or "The Black Shorts" (by the time he started his movement, the shirts had already been taken, ha ha; that's funny, right?). Interesting that he spoofs a dictator here. The main reason I read this now is because I had read an essay extolling Wodehouse's many virtues by Christopher Buckley, who doesn't ignore the fact that Wodehouse, while in Germany, was accused of writing propaganda for the enemy. He was cleared of the charges, finally, as the public service announcements he wrote in exchange for leniency by Germany turned out to be sort of lame, and British courts determined that he was really more of a political naif than an insurrectionist (of course). So he was aware of Hitler; he wrote a satirical character in part based on him.If you are needing a laugh, Wodehouse is your man.January 21, 2018"We must say to ourselves: "What would Napoleon have done?" He was the boy in a crisis. He knew his onions."Long have I resisted the fatal charm of P.G. Wodehouse. My previous forays into his oeuvre have been lacklustre. That was until, of course, The Code of the Woosters and I crossed paths. "He paused and swallowed convulsively, like a Pekingese taking a pill."So scrumptious. I should of known that I would of fallen into the trap sooner or later, given my proclivity for novels of a certain kind: you know, the jolly-hockey-sticks country house in Surrey à la Nancy Mitford, Evelyn Waugh and Stella Gibbons. "One doesn't want to make a song and dance about one's ancient lineage, of course, but after all the Woosters did come over with the conqueror and were extremely pally with him."I am afraid I have become a fan and will be keeping my eyes well and truly peeled for more Jeeves in Wooster in the future. Heartily recommend this instalment to those who think they don't like P.G. Wodehouse. (Spoiler: you do) "She was fully aware that she was doing something that even by female standards was raw, but she didn't care."April 14, 2025„Законът на Устър" е страхотен роман! Той се оказа не само симпатична плетеница от забавни ситуации, но същевременно притежава доста напрегнато действие, както и е изпълнен с превъзходни литературни препратки. Бърти Устър гостува в дома на известен съдия, като е изпратен от леля си Далия с доста опасна задача. Там определено е поставен под напрежение и се забърква в големи неприятности, от които може да го измъкне само гениалният Джийвс...„Когато започвам да разправям някоя история, никога не знам дали вече не съм я разказал и затова не съм наясно какви подробности да включа. Това е проблем, който трябва да се разглежда всестранно. Например, ако в дадения случай реша, че публиката ми знае всичко за Гъси Финк-Нотъл и продължа весело напред, онези мои слушатели, които не са следили жадно думите ми от самото начало, могат да останат в пълно неведение. От друга страна, ако преди да пристъпя към същността на въпроса, опиша жизнения му път в осем тома, други ще започнат да не сдържат прозявките си и да мърморят: „Стари работи. Карай нататък.“„Човек не може да вдига ръце в красноречиви жестове, когато кара кола със седемдесет километра в час. Иначе щях да го направя. — Точно този проблем ме разкъсва, Джийвс. Не мога да реша. Помниш ли оня, за който ми спомена веднъж, че не давал на не знам кое да надделее над нещо друго? Оня с котката. — Макбет, сър, герой от едноименната трагедия на покойния Уилям Шекспир. В пиесата той е описан като допускащ „не смея да надделее над ще го стоя“. — Точно така се чувствам и аз. Колебая се, двоумя се, ако използвам точните думи... — Съвсем точни са, сър.“„Не знам какво мислите вие, но аз съм забелязал, че от време на време, както си пасете кротко из попрището на живота, изневиделица ви сдрусват събития, преценявани като съдбовни дори от невъоръжено око. Вътрешен глас ви нашепва, че те вовеки веков ще останат запечатани в паметта ви. Година подир година редовно ще възкръсват в спомените ви тъкмо когато сте най-настроени за блажена дрямка и ще ви карат да се мятате в леглото като сьомга на кука.“„Джийвс несъмнено беше прав. Помежду им се бе опнала дълбока пропаст и освен трагичния аспект на положението ме измъчваше и неговата необяснимост...“„Джийвс — заобяснявах аз на Стифи, която, естествено, го познаваше бегло като безсловесна фигура, умело сервираща картофите по време на обяда ѝ при мен — е змей по отношение на психологията на индивида. Хруска я за закуска.“„Знам какво е направил. Но мотивите му за това са чисти като снощен сняг. Дори по-чисти. Остави ме да ти разкажа всичко и съм готов да се обзаложа на сто към осем, че когато свърша, ще признаеш, че той заслужава жал, а не обругаване. Дайте на Бъртрам Устър хубава ясна история, и той ще я разгърне превъзходно.“„Втренчих се в него. Леля Далия също. После очите ни се срещнаха и прочетох в нейните същото почтително преклонение и страхопочитание, което знаех, че се чете и в моите. Бях поразен. Допреди секунда бях обзет от тъпа безнадеждност, уверен, че нищо на света не може да ме измъкне от кашата. Вече чувах погребалния звън. И изведнъж това! Когато леля Далия говореше за Наполеон, спомена, че е бил ненадминат в моменти на криза, но аз бях готов да се обзаложа, че дори той не би надминал това върховно постижение. За кой ли път Джийвс улучи десятката...“„— Не съм мислил за това. Смяташ ли, че ще постигна нещо? — Без съмнение, сър. Госпожа Травърс и аз ще дадем необорими свидетелски показания. Вие сте в състояние да глобите сър Уоткин с голяма сума. — Да, нищо чудно да си прав. Явно затова подскочи така във въздуха, когато Споуд изпълни номера си. — Да, сър. Тренираният му юридически ум веднага е предвидил заплахата.“July 1, 2023This book was ridiculous from start to finish. Farcical mishaps with hilarious punchlines. A delightful romp of whimsy and charm!This book has everything, a snark journal, theft of police helmets, cow-creamers (Modern Dutch, perhaps?) and relationship boomerangs! I was laughing so hard that tears were streaming down my face. Wodehouse is a comedic genius and puts in the effort to pull you up on your gloomy days! Oh, it would be so fortunate to have friends like Bertie and Jeeves.Sarah ♡ {let's interact!}July 10, 2021I read The Code Of The Woosters as part of a Best Of Wodehouse anthology. I was already very familiar with this particular outing with Jeeves & Wooster. Yet, it had been a while...I used to turn to Wodehouse's work as a teen for some funny, light, summertime reading, and was also a fan of the ITV adaptation starring Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie. The Code Of The Woosters is regarded as being one of the best Bertie Wooster tales, and for good reason. It encapsulates everything that makes him such a great comedy character.He always manages to bumble his way into sticky situations, such as being accused of theft by Old Basset. He assumed that Bertie is a bag-snatcher because he had once tried to snatch a policeman's helmet. The main plot of this story is Bertie being implored to help with a plot to steal a cow-creamer.Of course, if any theft occurs, Bertie will get the blame... But will he be able to talk his way out of it?However, the real star of each story is Jeeves. He is the brains behind every operation, he has the cunning and wit to pull Bertie out of these, often disastrous, situations.Wodehouse's stories have a unique humour to them. If you are familiar with, or take a liking to, his style then you shall love this one.July 31, 2008I'm always shocked to find that hardly anyone in these United States has ever heard of or read the works of Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse.... most indians who read english stumble upon his works sooner or later-more so, I dare say, than the english themselves.I've always maintained that if a Wodehouse book cannot lift your spirits, you must be pretty close to suicide.Amazing plots, memorable characters and superb prose. Long winding complex sentences that never fail to incite peals of laughter, long after you've put the book down.Wodehouse is the master of the simile and the metaphor.He can nail a character with just one sentence. His stories are full of estranged lovers, funny misunderstandings, meddlesome aunts, young curates ambitious vicars and absent minded uncles and an absolutely convoluted plot.Bertram Wilberforce Wooster and his "Gentleman's personal gentleman"-the incomparable Reginald Jeeves will remain of of the most memorable characters in literature.Quotes like this will be peppered throughout the book"It was a confusion of ideas between him and one of the lions he was hunting in Kenya that had caused A. B. Spottsworth to make the obituary column. He thought the lion was dead, and the lion thought it wasn't.""I could see that, if not actually disgruntled, he was far from being gruntled. ""Memories are like mulligatawny soup in a cheap restaurant. It is best not to stir them. "QED.August 2, 2022PG Wodehouse removed the S-bend corset from the Edwardian Era, giving the masses a flawed aristocracy they could laugh with – and occasionally at – in the Saturday Evening Post.The Code of the Woosters is just one of many volumes in the long-running serial/book series centered around “idle rich” bachelor Bertie Wooster and his sagacious butler, Jeeves.Think… a male-centered I Love Lucy, with the hapless but charming Bertie constantly getting himself “in the soup” and his man Jeeves forbearingly fishing him out.Rory mentions the author in episode 5 of season 5, during a dinner conversation at her grandparents'. And really, I can easily imagine Bertie at one of Emily Gilmore's parties, having one too many Gin Slings and accidentally absconding with the King George II sauce boat.It's literary slapstick, served on a silver platter....This review is housed on my Rory Gilmore Reading Challenge site.October 13, 2016Many consider this book to be the funniest of the Jeeves/ Wooster team, and I agree (though IMO, I would give that crown to Right Ho, Jeeves) that it is indeed extremely hilarious. Bertie, saved from the scaffold (i. e. marriage to Madeline Basset who thinks that the stars are God's daisy chain and every time a fairy sheds a tear, a star is born) at the last moment by Jeeves, finds himself ensconced in the country estate of the girl's father along with Gussie Fink-Nottle, her fiancée and Roderick Spode (the leader of a fascist organisation built on the lines of a Patton tank), who is also in love with Madeline. To further complicate matters, Madeline's father (who is also the district magistrate) is under the impression that Bertie is a kleptomaniac: Roderick Spode is of the opinion that Gussie Fink-Nottle is a "butterfly who toys with women's hearts and casts them aside like soiled gloves" and therefore wants to "pull him inside out and make him swallow himself". Add to this concoction Stephanie Byng, Madeline's flighty cousin who wants her fiancée, the curate Stephen Pinker, to prove himself by stealing the local constable's helmet - and last but not least, Bertie's Aunt Dahlia who has a mission for him - steal Judge Basset's cow-creamer from his ancient brass collection for Uncle Tom.There are engagements which are broken and made up with alacrity, nightly escapades with Bertie on the run from pursuing females, a murderous would-be dictator and a pissed-off policeman, and crime and intrigue which could prove more than a plateful for Holmes and Poirot put together. In the midst of this all, calm and unruffled, is the figure of Jeeves who sets everything right by threatening to disclose the truth about 'Eulalie'.If you are down in the dumps, this is the book to read. Uncontrollable laughter is guaranteed.January 13, 2023Yıla eğlenceli bir başlangıç yapmaya çok ihtiyacım vardı. O yüzden bu yılın ilk kitabı Wooster Düsturları oldu. Eğer İngili mizahını seviyorsanız ve haftanızı şenlendirecek, yüzünüzü güldürecek bir kitaba ihtiyacınız varsa bu kitabı mutlaka okuyun.Yozlaşmış aristokrat sınıfının muazzam temsilcisi, cesaretten yoksun olduğu ölçüde bela çeken Bertie Wooster'ın evlilik korkusuyla bir aşçının yemeklerine duyduğu aşkın arasında sıkışıp kaldığı ve kurtuluşunun bir inek sütlüğüne bağlı olduğu mükemmel bir talihsizlikler macerası. Böyle özetleyince hiçbir anlamı olmadığının farkındayım ama gerçekten çok fazla detayla keyfi kaçırılmaması gereken kitaplardan birisi. Zaten okumaya başlayınca merakla ve “ay daha nasıl bir aksilik yaşanabilir ki” isyanıyla okuyacağınız ve “keşke hepimizin hayatında bir Jeeves'i olsa”düşüncesiyle bitireceğiniz kitaplardan birisi. En başta söylediğim gibi eğer İngiliz mizahını seviyorsanız ve size iyi gelecek bir kitap arıyorsanız, mutlaka okuyun.Bu arada kitabı sesli dinlemek isterseniz @storytel.tr de de mevcut. british-literature humor read-in-2023July 21, 2008"You might put it that Hell's foundations are quivering. That is not overstating it, Jeeves?""No, sir."P.G. Wodehouse was an English writer whose career spanned over seventy years and whose work included almost 100 novels, numerous short stories, 15 plays and 250 lyrics for some thirty musical comedies. Despite his impressive resume and reputation as a "master of English prose", I, unfortunately, wouldn't have known he existed if it hadn't been for Rory Gilmore. I guess that makes me more of a Bertie than a Jeeves.Many of his works include recurring settings and characters. One such set of characters, Bertram Wooster and his clever butler Jeeves, are at the heart of "The Code of the Woosters." "Bertie" is an old school English bachelor who rubs elbows with other upper-class British socialites. He's a bit dim yet extremely loyal (it's part of his own moral *code*), and to say that he has a knack for getting himself into situations is an understatement. Jeeves, his loyal servant, is there to get Bertie out of his entanglements by use of his good sense and keen problem-solving skills. (He's so good with information, he even had a search engine named after him--Ask.com was previously AskJeeves.com).Throughout reading, I was trying to decide how I would best describe Wodehouse's style. The best I could come up with was "Sherlock Holmes meets Three's Company." There are no mysteries here...no murders or missing person cases to be solved. But each particular mess Bertie finds himself in ("the spectacle of as raw a bit of underhanded skulduggery as has ever been perpetrated in a civilized country") requires as much instinct and "know-how" to tidy up as any case Holmes was called in on. The predicaments seem to follow the Three's Company philosophy of situational comedy: If it can happen, it will...and with the most inconvenient timing, ironically, and with things and body parts getting bruised and broken. Throw in some dry, deapan dialogue, a lot of black-mailing, and multiply the shenanigans by ten. His descriptions are some of the best and most comical ever written...On Gussie: "a fish-faced pal", "confirmed recluse", "a less promising prospect (for marriage) it would have seemed impossible to discover in a month of Sundays"On Madeline Bassett: "a droopy, soupy, sentimental exhibit, with melting eyes and a cooing voice and the most extraordinary views on such things as stars and rabbits"On Spode: "It was as if Nature had intended to make a gorilla and had changed its mind at the last moment"I can see myself being hooked on this series. It's light, it's intelligent, it's clever and engaging...as I am reading, I'm smiling inside.Erin *Proud Book Hoarder*July 9, 2017 “It's an extraordinary thing—every time I see you, you appear to be recovering from some debauch. Don't you ever stop drinking? How about when you are asleep?” As usual, I'm behind on reading goals - being the last to finish this buddy read with Evgeny and Dan 2.0My first foray into Wodehouse's writing, and I've fallen for him. The comical and cleverly coined style made this one a fun read, even if the plot only left behind a three-star impression.I finally see where the "Jeeves" came from - and I approve. The highlights of the story were when Master and butler collaborated, argued, or battled protective guard dogs over bed sheets. Fun times!It's now gotten my attention that this is the third interesting story I've read about this form of relationship, and I've enjoyed all three. Need to track down more eventually.Bertie runs into foul circumstances and somewhat annoying misunderstandings when he sets out to make things right for his aunt's cow creamer goal – only to end up sabotaging a friend's pending marriage, his possible freedom at the hands of a local magistrate, and bungling his aunt's cow-creamer dreams and his attachment to her cook's artistic food that he apparently would almost risk his soul for.Not all characters were likeable – I wanted to shake a particular girl – gah, what a nuisance!Kind of like an episode of Green Acres where it's funny because so many people are exasperating, but while I can stand a 20 something minute episode of Green Acres, I wouldn't want to sit down for an extended episode that lasted much longer than that. With this book it carried on a bit too much for my nerves, so it wasn't all fun and games, but still a classic worth reading.3-star a-own-book-form buddy-or-group-read May 19, 2011I really enjoyed this one. But my favourite joke in the whole thing was when Wooster refers to someone as a 'sensitive plant' and is told, “You know your Shelley!” To which he replies, “Am I?” That just about sums up everything I love about Wodehouse. The poetic reference Wooster only uses because he steals it from Jeeves and then his utter bewilderment at what he takes to be a bizarre adjective being used to refer to him. Utter joy.And the women in this one are even more selfish and manipulative than usual. Wodehouse's women are a complete joy, a species apart whether aunts or not. I also loved Wodehouse saying, in the darkest before dawn moment, that it would be impossible for all of the 'nice' characters in this to get their happy ending. This is something the reader can sympathise with when it is said, and marvel over, knowing even as it is said that somehow the master will untangle the whole mess in satisfyingly perfect fashion – in fact, even with apparent effortlessness.And a fascist even gets bossed around and humiliated by Wooster – someone not known for consistently having it over anyone. Wooster's all-too-human failings with life handing him the wrong end of the stick all being part of the delight these stories offer.Can't end this review without using the word 'joy' for a third time, but that is how I think of these books – something impossible to forget, like a warm smile on a cold afternoon.February 24, 2020For those familiar with the Wooster/Jeeves stories, this is yet another circus with Bertie as ring master. As with all Woodhouse stories, the plot constantly shifts which in turn, requires carefully executed plans, most often created by Bertie's manservant, Jeeves. When Aunt Dahlia comes into the picture, the results are laugh out loud experiences. With a silver 'cow creamer' as the object of attention, Bertie is continually roped into schemes, and as usual, they all backfire. Imagine Lt Clouseau with a British butler and you'd have the makings of the story. What I love about PG Wodehouse are the character names, British phrases (Ha!) and contrived plots all of which are hysterical. April 12, 2022So funny. After a slow start, all the pieces start weaving together over and over for hilarious effect, all the way through the end. Brilliant.May 16, 2016[illegible]March 13, 2012Wodehouse loves to pepper his texts with all kinds of wacky similes, so I would like to start my review with one too: reading one of his novels is like drinking a glass of chilled champagne, on a sunny morning, reclining in a chaisez longue on an impeccably trimmmed English lawn. And Code of the Woosters is a Grand Cru - one of the best years. My previous Wodehouse novels were written in third person, this time Bertie Wooster is the narrator and I noticed an increase in goofiness and general bonhomie. A self described boulevardier, he is a well heeled gent with an eye for good food and riotous parties, the only cloud on his horizon being the prospect of marriage. In his own words he feels "hounded like the dickens by a remorseless Fate" every time droopy Madeline announces the break up of her nuptials with Gussy Fink-Nottle.The plot of the Code of the Woosters is best described for me as "screwball" comedy of the kind popular in Hollywood in the 30's. To Romanian readers the reference would be Ion Luca Caragiale and his masterpiece "A Stormy Night" (O Noapte Furtunoasa) . I will once more let Bertie give the introduction: ... Little knowing, as I crossed that threshold, that in about two shakes of a duck's tail I was to become involved in an imbroglio that would test the Wooster soul as it had seldom been tested before. I allude to the sinister affair of Gussie Fink-Nottle, Madeline Bassett, old Pop Bassett, Stiffy Byng, the Rev. H. P. ('Stinker') Pinker, the eighteenth-century cow-creamer and the small, brown, leather-covered notebook The scene of the action : Totleigh Towers, a sumptuous country residence in Gloucestershire, where young people in love are struggling to overcome the opposition of parents and uncles and the various misunderstandings Fate chooses to throw in the path of their happyness. The arrival of good intentioned Bertie and suave Jeeves serves to complicate matters instead of providing solutions.The use of the English language, seasoned with the occassional French bon mot or Latin dictum, is as usual superb, and I gladly dived into a dictionary to check if a word is real or invented by the author. I am satisfied with "espieglerie" but my bean is still baffled at "bishing" , "mazzard" or "rannygazoo". To give another example of what constitues a running gag in the story, Stephanie "Stiffy" Byngs is affectionately called by Bertie as:- young pill- young squirt- young pimple- young shrimp- young loony (I might have missed a couple)Aunt Dahlia gets a simiar treatment as "old egg", "old flesh and bones" , "old ancestor" and so on, but what cracked me up regarding her is Bertie's rant about aunts in general: 'If I had my life to live again, Jeeves, I would start it as an orphan without any aunts. Don't they put aunts in Turkey in sacks and drop them in the Bosphorus?''Odalisques, sir, I understand. Not aunts.''Well, why not aunts? Look at the trouble they cause in the world. I tell you, Jeeves, and you may quote me as saying this - behind every poor, innocent, harmless blighter who is going down for the first time in the soup, you will find, if you look carefully enough, the aunt who shoved him into it.' Actually, I have given up extracting quotes from the text when I realized I interrupted my reading almost every page to jot something down. It's that kind of book. Regretfully, I have little chance now to sprinkle my conversations with Bertie's signature exclamations ("Dash it!" "What ho!" , "Rather!") and the stylish insults of yonder time are also out of style. It's easier to drop a four letter expletive than to call somebody a "ghastly goggle-eyed piece of gorgonzola". The alliteration pointing at Gussie, obviously.Having watched the BBC production of "Jeeves and Wooster" , reading the novel now was a very visual experience, and I feel I should congratulate the casting department for the excellent choices made. All the actors did an excellent job, especially Gussie, Spode and Madeline were spot on with the book.In closing remarks, this is an excellent candidate for a re-read at some point in the future, when I will need a pick me up lecture. Because : Well, this should certainly teach us, should it not, never to repine, never to despair, never to allow the upper lip to unstiffen, but always to remember that, no matter how dark the skies may be, the sun is shining somewhere and will eventually come smiling through. May 23, 20232023: This light-hearted read was *precisely* what I needed. My favorite phrase this reading was one I recognized from my own life recently: It was plain that for some reason the soul had got a flat tyre...2018: Laughter is guaranteed if you don't read too much of Wodehouse at one sitting. This is classic Jeeves and Bertie. Silly, ridiculous, hilarious, comic relief. I collected Wodehouse verbs: shimmered out, toddling up, whizzed by, pausing to pip-pip, bleated, biffed out, tucked in, beetled off, bowling along, potter about, swanking about, spouting vicarages, caught bonneting, heaved a silent sigh, snootered to bursting point. Nouns and noun phrases: nosegay of folders, tidal wave of telegrams, hornswaggling high-binder, self-respecting cudster, languid sauntering, sunk in hoggish slumber, underhanded skullduggery, harmless blighter, distinct simper, joyful yowl, the festive board, that unchummy manner. Exclamations: Yoiks! Tally ho! Quite! Rather! What ho! Tchah! Faugh! Dash it!Add in exquisite similes, crazy names, literary allusions, Latin misquotations, unusual abbreviations and you have a rollicking good read. I adore Overlook Press's Collector's Wodehouse set. I own eight. The complete set (99 volumes) sells for $1,975. If anyone wanted to pip in and buy this set for my library, I would gratefully give him/her my eight books.2018 2023 charming May 3, 2018Classic Wodehouse humor with an insane convergence of many plots all converging with Bertie Wooster at their center. Only his man Jeeves has the brain power to extract him unscathed from the perils that threaten over the silver cow creamer, constable's helmet, a brown notebook, and possible engagement to two young ladies. At its best when being read into one's shell-like.One thing I did notice after all these years is that I now know many more of the half-uttered quotations and references Bertie always has to ask Jeeves finish. Decades of reading actually can lead to self-education!Displaying 1 - 30 of 2,460 reviewsGet help and learn more about the design. edit descriptions of this character The following notes attempt to explain cultural, historical and literary allusions in Wodehouse's text, to identify his sources, and to cross-reference similar references in the rest of the canon. These notes were originally written by Terry Mordue, and can be seen in their original form here. They have been edited, expanded, and somewhat reformatted by Neil Midkiff [NM] and others as credited below. The Code of the Woosters was published simultaneously in the UK and US, by Herbert Jenkins, London, and by Doubleday, Doran, New York, on 7 October 1938. It was serialized in the Saturday Evening Post and the Daily Mail prior to book publication; see this page for details of serial appearances. Page references are to the Penguin edition, using the 1953 “set in Monotype Garamond” plates, reprinted at least through the 1980s. Notes flagged with ° are substantially revised; notes flagged with * are new in 2021–23. Return to top Chapter 1 (pp. 5–20) Autumn — season of mists and mellow fruitfulness (p. 5) Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun; Conspiring with him how to load and bless With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run; John Keats: Ode, “To Autumn” (1819) one of those bracers of yours (p. 5) We learn of Jeeves's “pick-me-ups,” “morning revivers,” or “bracers” in several stories; the first mention (in story chronology) is in “Jeeves Takes Charge” (1916): It is a little preparation of my own invention. It is the dark meat-sauce that gives it its color. The raw egg makes it nutritious. The red pepper gives it its bite. Gentlemen have told me they have found it extremely invigorating after a late evening. In other stories the recipe provides aid and succour to other gentlemen as well. [NM] he shimmered out (p. 5) Jeeves's movements in and out are usually described as noiseless and somewhat mystical. Here the allusion seems to be to a mirage, now seen, now unseen. [NM] Drones (p. 5) The Drones Club in Dover Street is a magnet for Wodehouse's idle young men about London, named after the male bees who do no work. It is first mentioned in Jill the Reckless/The Little Warrior (1920) and continues through Aunts Aren't Gentlemen/The Cat-nappers (1974). Norman Murphy (In Search of Blandings) identified aspects of the Bachelors' Club, the Bath Club, and Buck's Club contributing elements to its creation. [NM] Gussie Fink-Nottle … Madeline (p. 5) See Right Ho, Jeeves (1934) for the backstory of their relationship. The events of that novel take place during the “preceding summer” a “few months” before this novel in story time. [NM] Sir Watkyn Bassett, CBE (p. 5) Sir Watkyn Bassett's CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) does not entitle him to be called “Sir,” as it is one rank below a knighthood (which would be denoted by KBE — Knight Commander). And if, along with the “pot of money,” he had inherited a baronetcy, one would have expected him then to be described as “Sir Watkyn Bassett, Bart., CBE.” Also, other baronets in the canon, such as Sir Gregory Parsloe, are usually described as such, but nowhere is there any mention that Sir Watkyn is a baronet. We must assume, therefore, that he is a Knight Bachelor, an honour that entitles the holder to be called “Sir” but, because it does not belong to one of the established Orders of Chivalry, is not normally marked by any post-nominal letters. Knights Bachelor are by no means unusual: well-known modern examples are England's former rugby coach, Sir Clive Woodward CBE, and actor Sir Anthony Hopkins CBE. Jael the wife of Heber (p. 5) Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. . . . . Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. Bible: Judges 4:17–18, 21–22 Wodehouse was particularly fond of this story, which gets a mention in many of the books and stories, including “The Salvation of George Mackintosh” in The Clicking of Cuthbert, Ring for Jeeves ch. 18 (and the earlier play, Come On, Jeeves, Act III); Much Obliged, Jeeves ch. 8; Cocktail Time ch. 2; and Uncle Dynamite ch. 11. tissue restorer … reviver (p. 5) * A hint that Jeeves's mixture contains a little of “the hair of the dog” (i.e. some alcohol). Bertie frequently calls cocktails “tissue restorers”; see Sam the Sudden. [NM] nosegay (p. 6) Typically a term used for a bouquet of flowers to be held in the hands, rather than a collection of travel brochures. [NM] gruntled (p. 6) The Oxford English Dictionary cites this, Wodehouse's back-formation from “disgruntled,” as the first usage of the word. [NM] sands are running out (p. 7) From the old-fashioned hourglass, a metaphor for the time becoming shorter until a future event. [NM] Boat Race night (p. 7) The events described here are recorded in “Without the Option” (collected in Carry On, Jeeves!) in which the Bosher Street magistrate is unnamed; he remarks that “I am aware that on the night following the annual aquatic contest between the universities of Oxford and Cambridge a certain licence is traditionally granted by the authorities.” Beginning in 1829 and annually since 1856 except during the two world wars, a rowing race between the eight-man boats of Oxford and Cambridge has been held on the river Thames from Putney to Mortlake, about 4.2 miles. The 2017 race was held on Sunday, April 2. This is one of the most popular sporting events in Britain, with over 250,000 spectators lining the banks of the river to watch. No doubt some spectators still get in trouble for excesses of celebration (or the reverse) on the night of the event. Bertie seems to have had at least two such encounters with the police; he recalls being hauled up before the Vine Street magistrate during his second year at Oxford in Thank You, Jeeves (along with Chuffy Chuffnell) and Right Ho, Jeeves. He also recalls, in “Jeeves and the Chump Cyril,” having to bail out a pal who got pinched every Boat Race night. Other Wodehouse characters who celebrate to excess on Boat Race night include Oliver “Sippy” Sipperley in “Without the Option,” Lord Datchet in Piccadilly Jim, and Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps (recalled in “The Word in Season” and Joy in the Morning). Tipton Plimsoll pledges not to go on a real toot except on special occasions like Boat Race Night in Full Moon, ch. 10.5. [NM] Morten Arnesen points us to a web article with historical news reports since 1875 of Boat Race Night revelry and references to Wodehouse's use of it in his fiction. Bosher Street (p. 7) * A (fictitious) police court; see Summer Lightning. five of the best (p. 7) * Five pounds; roughly equivalent to £340 or US$450 in modern terms. See below. a pot of money (p. 7) * See Ukridge. not forgotten that man of wrath (p. 7) In Homer's Odyssey, the name Odysseus means “man of wrath.” See Love Among the Chickens for further literary parallels. toddling (p. 7) * See The Inimitable Jeeves. two shakes of a duck's tail (p. 8) Idiom: very quickly. Wodehouse is using a variant of the more common “two shakes of a lamb's tail,” a phrase that is thought to have originated in the US in the early 19th century. impending doom (p. 8) * These two words have long been coupled in literature; Wodehouse uses the phrase as early as 1912 (The Prince and Betty, US edition) and titled a 1926 short story “Jeeves and the Impending Doom.” Monty Bodkin is “becoming conscious of an impending doom” in Heavy Weather, ch. 7 (1933). Lord Shortlands flees to London to “postpone the impending doom” in Spring Fever, ch. 20 (1948). Bertie Wooster uses it for the threat of being married to Florence Craye in Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 13 (1954), and for Sir Watkyn Bassett's refusal to give Stinker Pinker a vicarage in Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 19 (1963). Anatole, her French cook (p. 8) * See “Clustering Round Young Bingo” (1925) for the story of how Anatole came to cook for the Travers household. browsing (p. 8) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. sconces and foliation … scrolls, ribbon wreaths in high relief and gadroon borders (p. 8) Examples of silversmiths' decorative patterns; sconces in this context are the tubular sockets of a candelabrum in which candles are inserted. Foliation is a leaf pattern; scrolls and ribbon wreaths are self-explanatory; high relief means deeply carved and/or highly molded to stand out from the surrounding surface. Gadroon borders are fancy edges of silver or gold items decorated with many small adjacent convex curves to give a beaded or rippled effect, as in the George II sauce boat at right. [NM] up to her Marcel-wave (p. 8) ° The Marcel-wave was introduced in 1872 by a Parisian hairdresser, Marcel Grateau, who had the idea of using a heated curling iron to produce natural-looking waves. Grateau's idea revolutionised the art of women's hairdressing and started a fashion that remained popular for nearly fifty years. The US magazine serial and US first edition have “marcelle wave” here. [Not merely women's hair; men with marcelled hair include Percy Pilbeam (Summer Lightning/Heavy Weather/Frozen Assets), Claude Winnington-Bates (Sam the Sudden), Stanhope Twine (Something Fishy), and some of the young men dancing at the Mustard Spoon night club in Money for Nothing. —NM] “What the Well-Dressed Man Is Wearing” (p. 8) The story of Bertie's sole literary effort is told in “Clustering Round Young Bingo” in Carry On, Jeeves! [NM] view-halloos . . . the Quorn, the Pytchley (p. 9) “View-halloo” is the huntsman's cry when a fox breaks cover. The Quorn and the Pytchley are two well-known hunts in central England, the Quorn primarily in Leicestershire, with some coverts in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, and the Pytchley straddling the Leicestershire–Northamptonshire border. an antique shop in the Brompton Road — it's just past the Oratory (p. 9) The London Oratory, built in 1893, was the first new Roman Catholic church to be built in London since the 16th-century Reformation. It is situated on Brompton Road, South Kensington, almost adjacent to the Victoria and Albert Museum. talking through the back of her neck (p. 9) * Slang for talking nonsense. Green's Dictionary of Slang online gives citations [you may need to click the horizontal-lines icon to the right of 2003 on the timeline to show quotations] for various forms of this phrase, including a 1912 one attributing “talk from the back of his head” to a Maori proverb. The precise form is cited from “Sapper” (H. C. McNeile, author of the Bulldog Drummond series) in 1924 and from Wodehouse in 1934 (Right Ho, Jeeves). Wodehouse uses it several times, half-a-dozen in Bertie's voice and half-a-dozen or so elsewhere.

The latest so far found: He seemed to me to be talking through the back of his neck, the last thing you desire in a personal attendant. Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 24 (1963) The scales fell from my eyes (p. 9) And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. Bible: Acts 9:18. See Biblia Wodehousiana. register scorn (p. 9) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. nolle prosequi (p. 10) Latin: will not prosecute. In English law (and, with substantially the same meaning, in US law), nolle prosequi is a technical term which signifies a formal undertaking by the plaintiff in a civil action, or by the attorney-general in a criminal action, that he intends to proceed no further with the action. Bertie is very fond of nolle prosequi, which he invariably interprets as representing that he is unable to do something. oscillate the bean (p. 10) * shake the head; bean is US baseball slang for the head, as in bean ball. The OED cites Wodehouse from 1924’s Bill the Conqueror: Have I got to clump you one on the side of the bean? my little chickadee (p. 10) In North America, “chickadee” refers to any of about half-a-dozen species of songbirds of the genus Parus, members of which, elsewhere in the world, are commonly known as tits or titmice. Aunt Dahlia seems to be using the term affectionately; in colloquial English, “chick,” “chick-a-biddy,” and “chick-a-diddle” are all used as affectionate forms of address to a child, and it is possible that “chickadee” is a corruption of the last of these. [The American comedian W. C. Fields (William Claude Dukenfield, 1880–1946) first spoke this endearment in the 1932 film If I Had a Million and freely inserted it in his scripts thereafter; his 1940 film pairing with Mae West was even titled My Little Chickadee. —NM] as cool as some cucumbers, as Anatole would say (p. 11) * This is one of the phrases that Wodehouse borrowed from Barry Pain’s The Confessions of Alphonse (1917; reprinted in Humorous Stories, 1930). The narrator of the stories in that book is a French waiter whose English is easily recognizable as the source of Anatole’s mangled expressions. “And he get up and reach for his hat as cool as some cucumbers” comes from Alphonse, for instance. “There he was, advancing on you with glittering eyes and foam-flecked lips, and you drew yourself up as cool as some cucumbers, as Anatole would say, and said ‘One minute, Spode, just one minute. It may interest you to learn that I know all about Eulalie.’” Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 15 (1954) She remained what Anatole would have called as cool as some cucumbers. Much Obliged, Jeeves, ch. 6 (1971) tight as an owl (p. 11) * See Sam the Sudden. the summer afternoon … when Gussie, … full to the back teeth with the right stuff, had addressed … Market Snodsbury Grammar School (p. 11) See Right Ho, Jeeves, chapter 17. [NM] publicans (p. 11) Bertie’s use of “publicans” for “members of my public” seems to be his own invention; more usual senses of the word are the tax-collectors who worked for Rome in New Testament times, tax-collectors generally, heathens or unbelievers, and those who owned or ran public taverns. [NM] bimbos (p. 11) Bertie uses the older sense of the word, originally from the US in the 1910s, of a chap or fellow, referred to informally or sometimes contemptuously. Later in the 1920s the term began to be applied in a derogatory way to women, especially ones more noteworthy for looks than for brains or virtue, and that sense is better known today. [NM] shell-like ears (p. 11–12) * Victorian cliché for delicately-formed feminine ears: This, with more tender logic of the kind, He poured into her small and shell-like ear Thomas Hood: “Bianca’s Dream” Sentences so fiercely flaming In your tiny shell-like ear, I should always be exclaiming If I loved you, Phœbe, dear. W. S. Gilbert: “To Phœbe” from the Bab Ballads. don the spongebag trousers (p. 12) According to the OED, sponge-bag trousers are “men’s checked trousers, patterned in the style of many sponge-bags”; the first cited usage is in novelist Virginia Woolf’s Voyage Out, in 1915. [These are worn only as part of the “morning suit”; see the Gentlemen at Ascot illustration in this brief introduction with some period illustrations online. —NM] the fatheaded girl thought I was pleading mine (p. 13) * See Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 10 (1934). she handed Gussie the temporary mitten (p. 13) ° Colloquial: jilted him temporarily. The earliest use so far found in Wodehouse for breaking an engagement: “He was keeping company with a young lady once who got saved and give him the mitten the same evening, so he’s prejudiced.” “Keeping It from Harold” (1914) In addition to breaking an engagement, the phrase can also refer to someone being dismissed from his job: It transpiring, moreover, that he had looted a lot of other things here and there about the place, I was reluctantly compelled to hand the misguided blighter the mitten… “Jeeves Takes Charge” [collected in Carry On, Jeeves (1925)] The origin is unknown, but it perhaps derives from the Latin mittere, to send. Also used in The Inimitable Jeeves, Carry On, Jeeves!, The Girl on the Boat, Money in the Bank, Very Good, Jeeves, Mr. Mulliner Speaking, Uncle Fred in the Springtime, Summer Lightning, Thank You, Jeeves, and probably many others. straightened out at the eleventh hour (p. 13) ° See Love Among the Chickens and Biblia Wodehousiana. the two pills (p. 13) * See Hot Water. within an ace of (p. 13) * See Leave It to Psmith. the sort of hornswoggling highbinder (p. 14) American slang. To hornswoggle is to cheat, to pull the wool over someone’s eyes. Would she have the generosity to realize that a man ought not to be held accountable for what he says in the moment when he discovers that he has been cheated, deceived, robbed—in a word, hornswoggled? The Little Warrior/Jill the Reckless, ch. 19 (1920/21) The “High-Binders” was the name of a gang of lawless vagabonds that operated in New York early in the 19th century. The name subsequently came to be applied abusively to denote a swindler, especially a fraudulent politician. hailed a passing barouche (p. 14) See Summer Moonshine. Although the barouche was the height of fashion in the first half of the 19th century, by the first half of the 20th century barouche-spotting had ceased to be a worthwhile activity, except during State processions. [Bertie is just using a jocular substitute for “taxicab” here, I think. —NM] act of kindness (p. 14) * The Boy Scout requirement to do a daily act of kindness forms part of the plot of “Jeeves Takes Charge” (1916). the dead past was the dead past (p. 15) See Sam the Sudden. hep (p. 15) * See Money for Nothing. up-and-down (p. 15) * See The Inimitable Jeeves. wind-shields (p. 15) * So far, searches in the OED and slang dictionaries have not yet uncovered this colloquialism for “eyeglasses”; this may be a Wodehouse coinage. He uses it in “The Story of Cedric” (1929; in Mr. Mulliner Speaking, 1929); of Gussie Fink-Nottle in The Mating Season, ch. 10 (1949); of Percy Gorringe in Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 15 (1954). US edition of this book has windshields without hyphen. salver (p. 15) * See Leave It to Psmith. rising on stepping-stones of his dead self (p. 16) See Something Fresh. to the gills (p. 17) * See Carry On, Jeeves!. the better the day, the better the deed (p. 17) * A conventional proverb, often used as an excuse for doing work on a Sunday or other religious holiday. The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs finds a 14th-century French source: a bon jour bone euvre. distinguish between meum and tuum (p. 17) See Something Fresh. give Aunt Dahlia’s commission the miss-in-balk (p. 17) See Love Among the Chickens. get outside another of Jeeves’s pick-me-ups (p.17) Wodehouse did not invent the phrases “get outside” and “wrap oneself round” as humorous inversions of the act of putting food and drink inside oneself, but he did much to popularize these uses, beginning in 1906; see “How Kid Brady Joined the Press” and the endnote there on this phrase. [NM] harts panting for cooling streams (p. 17–18) As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. Bible: Psalms 42:1 The phrase that Wodehouse uses is from a paraphrase of Psalm 42 made by Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady in their English Metrical Psalter (New Version), published in 1696: As pants the hart for cooling streams When heated in the chase, So longs my soul, O God, for Thee And Thy refreshing grace. See also Money in the Bank. I wasn’t expecting the heart to leap up (p. 18) See Summer Moonshine. It was a silver cow (p. 18) From Bertie’s description, can this be anything other than the cow-creamer pictured, or another one by the same maker? See the Victoria & Albert Museum site for more on this item, made in London in 1758–59 by John Schuppe. It is indeed “about four inches high” (9.6 cm) and “six long” (14.8 cm). The V&A web page summary tab mentions that “Such was their renown that they merited inclusion in 20th-century literature: Bertie Wooster, the hero of tales by the author P. G. Wodehouse, found these cow creamers quite disgusting.” [NM] cudster (p. 18) Clearly a term for “one that chews cud” but not included in the OED nor found in this sense in a Google Books search, so apparently a coinage by Wodehouse. [NM] a different and a dreadful world (p. 19) * See Very Good, Jeeves. skipping like the high hills (p. 20) “leaping” in the US first edition; omitted in the US magazine serial. The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. Bible: Song of Solomon 2:8 The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. Bible: Psalms 114:4 Why leap ye, ye high hills? Bible: Psalms 68:16 This was one of Wodehouse’s favourites and he continued using it almost to the end: When she went off unexpectedly under their feet like a bomb, strong men were apt to lose their poise and skip like the high hills. Quick Service, ch. 11 (1940) You will start skipping like the high hills, not that I’ve ever seen high hills skip, or low hills for that matter. Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen, ch. 16 (1974) Though none of the Biblical sources exactly matches Wodehouse’s usage, the example from Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen suggests that he may have had Psalm 114 in mind. up in the tenor clef (p. 20) * A fairly obscure reference to the symbol indicating that a five-line musical staff has middle C on the second line from the top. This is used most often for instruments whose ranges cross the usual division between bass and treble staves, such as the bassoon, cello, and trombone. Most vocal music for tenors is written on the treble staff an octave higher than it is sung, and denoted with a treble-clef symbol with a small figure 8 just below it, which is sometimes loosely called a tenor clef. In any event, this means that Bassett had a high voice, and shows that Wodehouse’s musical knowledge was greater than sometimes claimed. in the neighbourhood of Sloane Square (p. 20) Sloane Square lies south-east of Brompton Oratory, from which, by the shortest route “down byways and along side streets,” it is about 1 km distant. turned off at the main (p. 20) * The US equivalent would be in reference to electricity switched off at the fuse box or circuit-breaker panel. Return to top Chapter 2 (pp. 21–36) my earlier adventures with Gussie Fink-Nottle (p. 21) * Recounted in Right Ho, Jeeves (1934). a tidal wave of telegrams (p. 21) * See Right Ho, Jeeves, chapter 3. to re-establish the mens sana in corpore what-not (p. 22) Bertie is quoting the Roman satirist Juvenal (55–130 AD): Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano Our prayers should be for a sound mind in a healthy body Satires, X, 356 I sank into a c. and passed an agitated h. over the b. (p. 22) Several possible interpretations of this sentence come to mind: I sank into a coma and passed an agitated hour over the bedclothes; or, I sank into a canter and passed an agitated horse over the bridge; or, I sank into a crouch and passed an agitated hawser over the bow . . . . . . but the likeliest is: I sank into a chair and passed an agitated hand over the brow. all of a twitter (p. 22) * See The Inimitable Jeeves. the young seigneur (p. 22) A seigneur is a feudal lord, in this case used figuratively to describe Bertie’s status as Jeeves’s employer. lighted a feverish cigarette (p. 22) An example of one of Wodehouse’s favourite devices, the transferred epithet. There are other examples later in this chapter and in ch. 5. private school (p. 23) * See p. 62, below. telegraph … post office (p. 23) * See p. 43, below. Yes, that’s all very well… (p. 23) * For one who had chided Bingo Little as a wasteful telegraphist in “The Metropolitan Touch” (1922; in The Inimitable Jeeves, 1923), Bertie is surprisingly wordy here. The messages he gets in return are more economically worded, e.g. “Surely merely twisting knife wound.” a bag of three (p. 24) * Here “bag” is used in the sportsman’s sense of the game, fish, or other targets caught in a day’s shooting, fishing, etc. Popgood and Grooly (p. 24) * See Ice in the Bedroom. Jeeves left the presence (p. 24) * Bertie, probably jocularly, refers to his bedroom as if it were a royal bedchamber and Jeeves a courtier. got the pip about something (p. 25) * From pip, a disease of poultry, humorously extended to anything that causes annoyance or depression in people. The OED cites Wodehouse’s use of it in The Inimitable Jeeves (1923; originally in the 1922 story “Aunt Agatha Takes the Count”). hoggish slumber (p. 25) * Norman Murphy (A Wodehouse Handbook) suggests a derivation from Shakespeare, either “hog in sloth” from King Lear or “swinish sleep” from Macbeth. But the immediate and precise source must be Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Ebb Tide (1893): from the moment he rolled up the chart, his hours were passed in slavish self-indulgence or in hoggish slumber. my fluttering old aspen (p. 25) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. May green fly attack his roses (p. 26) * See Something Fishy. May all his hens get the staggers (p. 26) The “staggers,” otherwise described as dizziness or vertigo, is not a disease but a symptom of some malady, such as lack of drinking water or worms in the nostrils. It affects mostly fat or over-fed birds. A bird afflicted with the staggers will often shake its body and turn round and round until it falls over and dies. white ants, if there are any in England (p. 26) There aren’t. “White ants” are termites, of the order Isoptera. Although not related to the ants (cockroaches are closer relatives), they are similarly social, living in colonies which may contain as many as a million individuals. They live in warm climates, especially in the tropics, where their huge mounds are a common feature. Termites are omnivorous and frequently do great damage, especially to wooden buildings and structures. Of the 2000 or so known species of Isoptera, only two occur naturally in Europe, one confined to the Mediterranean coastlands, the other ranging as far north as northern Italy and the Bordeaux region of France. this Machiavelli sicked him on to it (p. 27) See A Damsel in Distress. cigarette … advertisements, ought to have been nonchalant (p. 29) * A slogan for Murad cigarettes; see this 1929 example. bradawl (p. 29) * See A Damsel in Distress. through the seat (p. 29) * J. Wellington Gedge … shooting from his chair as if Miss Putnam had left a pin in it. Hot Water, ch. 1.2 (1932) The monstrous word affected Jeff like a bradawl through the seat of the trousers. Money in the Bank, ch. 8 (1942) It was Pongo who spoke next, as if impelled to utterance by a jab in the trouser seat from a gimlet or bradawl. Uncle Dynamite, ch. 9.1 (1948) Indeed, she shot up as if a gimlet had suddenly penetrated the cushions and embedded itself in her person. Sally Painter in Uncle Dynamite, ch. 11.4 (1948) He quivered as if some hidden hand had thrust a bare bodkin through the seat of his chair. Barmy in Wonderland, ch. 11 (1952) He could indeed scarcely have started more violently if a bradawl had come through the seat of the deck chair in which he was reclining and impaled his lower slopes to the depth of an inch and a quarter. Company for Henry, ch. 8.2 (1967) In fact, I jumped about six inches, as if a skewer or knitting-needle had come through the seat of my chair. Much Obliged, Jeeves, ch. 6 (1971) getting your hooks on the thing (p. 29) * Slang for hands; OED cites uses from 1829 on, including a 1926 tract from the Society for Pure English defining get one’s hooks on as “get hold of.” making … heavy weather (p. 29) * Allowing one’s emotions to be stormy; making a fuss about something. Wodehouse used Heavy Weather as the title of a 1933 Blandings Castle novel. you follow me, Watson? (p. 29) Only once does Sherlock Holmes pose a question in this form to Doctor Watson: “And when I raise my hand — so — you will throw into the room what I give you to throw, and will, at the same time, raise the cry of fire. You quite follow me?” “Entirely.” Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: “A Scandal in Bohemia,” in The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1892) velvet hand beneath the iron glove (p. 29) * A humorous inversion of the usual “iron hand in a velvet glove”—ascribed to Napoleon, as in Thomas Carlyle’s “Model Prisons” (1850) in Latter-day Pamphlets. Wodehouse used this misquotation a few other times: “But you seemed to sense the velvet hand beneath the iron glove? No, dash it, that’s not right,” said Monty, musing. Heavy Weather, ch. 5 (1933) It is at moments like this that a man realizes that the only course for him to pursue, if he is to retain his self-respect, is to unship the velvet hand in the iron glove, or, rather, the other way about. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 1 (1954) She said it sounded as if Jeeves must be something like her father—she had never met him—Jeeves, I mean, not her father, whom of course she had met frequently—and she told me I had been quite right in displaying the velvet hand in the iron glove, or rather the other way around, isn’t it, because it never did to let oneself be bossed. Emerald Stoker in Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 2 (1963) over my head like the sword of — who was the chap? (p. 29) Damocles was his name. According to legend, Damocles was a sycophant at the court of Dionysius the Elder, tyrant (i.e. ruler) of the Sicilian city of Syracuse in the 4th century BC. He so persistently praised the power and happiness of Dionysius that the tyrant ordered a banquet at which Damocles was the guest of honour but at which he found himself seated beneath a sword that was suspended from the ceiling by a single horse hair. Dionysius explained that the rank and power of the tyrant were no less precarious. The story is told by the Roman orator Cicero in his Tusculan Dispuations (Book V, 61) the middle of the pheasant season (p. 29) In England and Wales, the pheasant season begins on 1st October and continues until 1st February. beetled off (p. 30) * See Very Good, Jeeves. ate a moody slice of cold bacon (p. 30) See p. 22. wins the mottled oyster (p. 30) * Though the general idea is clear from the context, the precise meaning of this one is obscure. The phrase has not yet been found in slang dictionaries, but it is not a Wodehouse coinage; Google Books scans of the old US humor magazine Life (not the more familiar photo-journalistic magazine of the same name founded in 1936) show a 1927 usage: “I have seen many terrible college movies in my day, but this one wins the mottled oyster. It is just plain awful.” The film reviewed, The Fair Co-Ed, starred Marion Davies as “Marion Bright,” and if the rest of the writing was as formulaic as that pun on “merry and bright” one can see why the reviewer was not impressed. Wodehouse, however, made the term famous by using it here, and by giving the name of The Mottled Oyster to a nightclub in Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit (1954) and Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin (1972). The name was adopted by a real-life bar in the Belmond Cadogan Hotel in Chelsea, London, and by a chapter of The Wodehouse Society in San Antonio, Texas. personal effects in the dickey (p. 30) See Summer Moonshine. singing some light snatch (p. 30) * A short portion of a melody or tune, an excerpt from a song. had circumstances been different (p. 30) * Had circumstances been different from what they were—not, of course, that they ever are—I might have derived no little enjoyment from this after-dinner saunter… Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 11 (1954) the bowed-downer did the heart become (p. 30) See Sam the Sudden. the situation is a lulu (p. 31) * The OED says that the slang term lulu is originally American for something remarkable or wonderful, often used ironically. One 1886 citation is hyphenated lu-lu; the next one, without the hyphen, is from George Ade’s Artie (1896), known to be one of Wodehouse’s sources for American colloquial speech. start [life] as an orphan (p. 31) * Rather a cruel wish for one’s mother, isn’t that? Not that Bertie probably thought the implications through when he said it. “Don’t they put aunts in Turkey in sacks and drop them in the Bosphorus?” (p. 31) An odalisque was a member of the harem, ranking below concubines and wives. The Bosphorus is a 20-mile long strait that connects the Sea of Marmara with the Black Sea and separates the continents of Europe and Asia. It runs through the heart of Istanbul, past several Ottoman palaces, and it is said (in Brewer’s Dictionary, for example) that if the sultan wished to be rid of one of his harem, the unfortunate woman was tied in a sack and thrown into the Bosphorus. going down for the third time in the soup (p. 31) * The folk wisdom about “going down for three times” before drowning is debunked at The Straight Dope. (The phrase is also used with respect to a prizefighter knocked down three times, but that doesn’t seem to apply here.) For “in the soup,” see The Inimitable Jeeves; also note p. 65 below and p. 204 below. out pops the cloven hoof (p. 31) See The Clicking of Cuthbert. eating their bread and salt (p. 31) * In other words, as an honored guest; see Carry On, Jeeves!. sticky (p. 32) * See Laughing Gas. the cat chap (p. 32) Bertie is referring to Macbeth, who is described by his wife in such terms: Art thou afeard To be the same in thine own act and valour As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that Which thou esteem’st the ornament of life, And live a coward in thine own esteem, Letting “I dare not” wait upon “I would,” Like the poor cat i’ the adage? Shakespeare: Macbeth, Act I Scene 7 The adage referred to by Lady Macbeth is “All cats love fish but fear to wet their paws,” said of one who is anxious to obtain something of value but does not care to incur the necessary trouble or risk (Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable). See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse for over twenty references to this passage. wabble (p. 32) * This variant form appears in US editions and original Penguin paperback plates; some UK editions substitute “wobble.” See A Damsel in Distress. my name at Totleigh Towers is already mud (p. 32) * In other words, his reputation with Sir Watkyn is already soiled. a combination of Raffles and a pea-and-thimble man (p. 32) For Raffles, see Something Fresh. A pea-and-thimble man is a small-time con-man who makes his money by a trick that involves pushing around three thimbles, under one of which is a pea, and inviting the audience to bet on which thimble conceals the pea. Here a little knot gathered round a pea and thimble table to watch the plucking of some unhappy greenhorn and there, another proprietor with his confederates in various disguises . . . sought by loud and noisy talk and pretended play to entrap some unwary customer, while the gentlemen confederates . . . betrayed their close interest in the concern by the anxious furtive glances they cast on all new comers. Charles Dickens: Nicholas Nickleby, ch. 50 Bertie is perhaps suggesting that Sir Watkyn views him as having the appearance of a gentleman and the morals of a small-time crook. Public Enemy Number One … Two … Three (p. 32) * According to Wikipedia, the term originated with Chicago authorities in 1930 to describe Al Capone, and was next applied to John Dillinger by the FBI in 1934. An audio interview with the FBI historian disputes that to some extent; in fact the FBI got its name only in 1935, and even when they came out with the Ten Most Wanted list in 1950 the criminals on it were not ranked or numbered. More applicable to Wodehouse is the use in the book (originally by Wodehouse and Guy Bolton, revised by Lindsay and Crouse) and lyrics (by Cole Porter, to his own music) of the 1934 musical Anything Goes. Some of the plot complications involve the hero, Billy Crocker, being mistaken for “Snake Eyes” Johnson, Public Enemy Number One; he becomes involved with “Moonface” Martin, who is dissatisfied with his ranking of Public Enemy Number Thirteen and wants to pull off a big crime to rate higher on the list. In Wodehouse’s 1936 novel Laughing Gas, George, one of the supposed kidnappers, has hopes to become a screenwriter, and describes his story about another Public Enemy Number Thirteen, who is superstitious about the number 13 and wants to change his ranking with a crime. the native hue of resolution (p. 33) Thus conscience does make cowards of us all; And thus the native hue of resolution Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought, And enterprises of great pith and moment With this regard their currents turn awry, And lose the name of action. Shakespeare: Hamlet, Act III Scene 1 See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse for more references to this passage and a discussion of pith versus pitch. See also p. 201 below. about the tonnage of Jessie Matthews (p. 33) One of 11 children of a Soho costermonger, Jessie Matthews (1907–1981) was a popular musical comedy star of the 1930s. Ill-health and the onset of war put an end to her film career, but she later made a come-back as a radio performer, playing the title role in BBC’s long-running soap drama, “Mrs Dale’s Diary.” Jessie Matthews was variously described as “gamine” and “waif-like.” [The American first edition (Doubleday, Doran, 1938) has “about the tonnage of Maureen O’Sullivan” here. Probably best remembered as Jane to Johnny Weissmuller’s Tarzan in five films, the Irish-born actress (1911–1998) was slight (5′3″) and slender; her career was busy during the 1930s and by her own choice less intense afterward, though she continued acting in films and TV movies into the 1990s. PGW knew her in Hollywood and dedicated his 1931 novel Hot Water to her. Neither actress is mentioned in the US magazine serial. —NM] stately home of E. (p. 34) * See Leave It to Psmith. Childe Roland to the dark tower came (p. 34) Edgar: Child Rowland to the dark tower came, His word was still,—Fie, foh, and fum, I smell the blood of a British man. Shakespeare: King Lear, Act III Scene 4 There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides—met To view the last of me, a living frame For one more picture! in a sheet of flame I saw them and I knew them all. And yet Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set, And blew. “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.” Robert Browning: “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” (1855) Shakespeare is referring to an ancient Scottish ballad in which “childe Roland,” youngest brother of “fair burd Helen,” who has been taken by elves, successfully rescues his sister from Elfland. Browning’s poem is not connected with the ballad, nor is there any connection between Shakespeare “Childe Roland” and the paladin Roland of mediaeval romances. [But Browning’s poem does cite Edgar’s mad song in Lear. Jeeves will utter the same allusion in Ch. 5 of The Mating Season, and Bertie will then later look into the history of the quotation. —NM] rather deeply graven on my heart (p. 34) * See Bill the Conqueror. the sort of eye that can open an oyster at sixty paces (p. 34) * “But watch out for Spode. He’s about eight feet high and has the sort of eye that can open an oyster at sixty paces.” Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 2 (1963) “She takes after my late father, a man who could open an oyster at sixty paces with a single glance.” Galahad Threepwood speaking of Lady Constance in A Pelican at Blandings, ch. 8.2 (1969) Sherlock Holmes … Hercule Poirot (p. 35) * Two of the most famous detectives in literature, created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Dame Agatha Christie respectively. a place where Man was vile (p. 35) See Sam the Sudden. vis-à-vis (p. 35–6) French: face to face. to shoot the works (p. 36) Slang: at games of chance, to risk all on one play; hence, to make the maximum effort, to exert oneself to the fullest extent. third waistcoat button (p. 36) * See Thank You, Jeeves. Return to top Chapter 3 (pp. 37–61) a Dictator on the point of starting a purge (p. 37) * This has to be one of the most chilling of Wodehouse’s rare mentions of tragic events in the real world. Josef Stalin’s “Great Purge” in the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s was a pretext to consolidate his power and eliminate political opposition; something on the order of a million people were executed or died in prison or exile. Although the show trials of former leaders were reported, the full extent of the purges was not known in the West at the time Wodehouse was writing, and I suspect Wodehouse would not have referred to it in a humorous book if he had known then what the world learned later. decent habiliments (p. 37) * Historically, this phrase refers to adequate or appropriate clothing; the earliest usage so far found is in a play, A Jovial Crew, or, the Merry Beggars by Richard Brome (1641), in which a beggar asks for money “to furnish us with linen, and some decent habiliments.” Bertie’s reference, of course, is to the distinction between country tweeds and the more muted colors and patterns suitable for London attire. Given that his own preference was for “sprightly” check suits (see “Jeeves Takes Charge”) one wonders how outrageous old Bassett’s frightful tweeds must have been. follows me everywhere, like Mary’s lamb (p. 38) * See Blandings Castle and Elsewhere. bloomer (p. 39) * See A Damsel in Distress. other half of the sketch (p. 39) * Here sketch is used in its theatrical sense, as a short dramatic or comedic piece which would be one item in a revue or vaudeville show. So Bertie is referring to the married couple as the cast of a two-person playlet. on the map (p. 40) * On his face. See The Clicking of Cuthbert. ewe lamb (p. 40) * See Biblia Wodehousiana. better element (p. 40) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. the King’s Remembrancer (p. 40) The King’s Remembrancer was formerly an officer of the Exchequer whose primary responsibility was to collect debts owed to the sovereign. Business relating to the Exchequer was recorded in Memoranda Rolls whose name, like that of the King’s Remembrancer, reflect their memory-aiding function. this absolute Trial of Mary Dugan (p. 41) ° The film The Trial of Mary Dugan (1929), directed by Bayard Veiller (who also wrote the 1927 Broadway play on which it was based), featured one of the stars of the silent era, Norma Shearer, in her first talking picture. Mary Dugan (Shearer), a Broadway showgirl, is accused of killing her lover, a rich playboy, by stabbing him with a knife. Dugan is defended by a lawyer friend who, however, decides not to cross-examine witnesses and later withdraws mysteriously from the case (and is finally unmasked as the real killer). There was a re-make in 1941, directed by Norman Z. McLeod. Neither version featured cow-creamers, baronets or would-be dictators. thoughtfully sucking the muzzle of his gun (p. 41) * Rather unexpected for such a forceful character as Spode. Compare the ineffectual characters Motty, Lord Pershore, in “Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest” (1917), “sucking the knob of his stick”; Eggy Mannering, in Laughing Gas, ch. 14 (1936), “sitting on the edge of a chair, sucking the knob of his stick”; and Cosmo Wisdom, in Cocktail Time, ch. 5 (1958), “nervously sucking the knob of his umbrella.” Compare also Freddie Threepwood, who “chewed the knob of his cane” in Something New, ch. 2 (1915), and Ferdinand Dibble, who “gnawed the handle of his putter” in “The Heart of a Goof” (1923). once lived in Arcady (p. 42) See Something Fresh. pancake (p. 43) * The OED has no citations for this slang usage, but Green’s Dictionary of Slang finds 1930s examples from Damon Runyon of its use for an attractive young woman. cut-and-thrust stuff (p. 43) * See Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit. telegram … telephone … post office (p. 43) * In Britain the General Post Office was given a monopoly on telegraph communication in 1869 and a near-monopoly on telephone services by 1912. This combined setup lasted until the British Telecommunications Act 1981. 47, Charles Street, Berkeley Square (p. 44) In In Search of Blandings, Norman Murphy notes that this was the address of Wodehouse’s friend and colleague, Ian Hay (real name John Hay Beith). assignment re you know what (p. 44) * Here re is legal Latin for “with regard to”–a useful abbreviation when telegraphing. veiled woman … treaty (p. 44) * See Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen. barometer … “Stormy” … “Set Fair” (p. 44) * In most temperate climates, the barometric pressure is one fairly reliable indicator of the weather in the immediate future, so traditionally barometer dials would have these general markings as well as a numeric scale of the actual air pressure. Larger dials might have “Set Fair” between the “Fair” and “Very Dry” labels shown here. as if I were a rabbit which she was expecting shortly to turn into a gnome (p. 44) * In Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 10, Madeline had told Bertie: “When I was a child, I used to think that rabbits were gnomes…” the Seigneur Geoffrey Rudel (p. 45) ° Geoffrey Rudel, a minstrel, is said to have fallen in love with Melisande, daughter of the Count of Tripoli, merely on the strength of reports of her beauty. According to the story, he set off for the East, accompanied by his friend, Bertrand d’Allamanon, but became very ill and feared that he would die without ever seeing his lady. When their ship neared land, Bertrand went ashore and hurried to ask the Countess if she would agree to come and meet her unknown lover, which she did, whereupon Rudel showed his gratitude by pegging out in front of her. No doubt taken aback by this display of gross bad manners and wishing to avoid a recurrence, Melisande hastily donned widow’s clothes and retired to a convent. There was indeed a historical Geoffrey or Jaufré Rudel, prince of Blaye or Blaia, and “in all probability” he went on crusade in the year 1147, but apparently the other details of the legend are unsubstantiated. The story was elaborated many times in literature, including by John Graham (1836), Robert Browning, and Giosuè Carducci (1888). cami-knickers (p. 45) * A one-piece female undergarment combining a camisole and knickers, first cited in the OED in 1915. (Thanks to Stefan Nilsson for pointing us to this image.) Even at the Drones Club, where the average of intellect is not high, it was often said of Archibald that, had his brain been constructed of silk, he would have been hard put to it to find sufficient material to make a canary a pair of cami-knickers. “The Reverent Wooing of Archibald” (1928; in Mr. Mulliner Speaking, 1929) p’fft (p. 46) * The OED lists many varying forms of phut, pfft, phfft and so forth, dating from the late nineteenth century, originally onomatopoetic for a small explosion or release of air under pressure or the noise of the passage of a bullet. American gossip columnist Walter Winchell popularized it as an adjective for a failed romance or marriage; he usually spelled it phffft. In other contexts for failure, Wodehouse often uses phut: “he made it clear all right that my allowance has gone phut again.” Bingo Little speaking of his Uncle Mortimer in “Bingo and the Little Woman” (1922; as chs. 17–18 of The Inimitable Jeeves, 1923) My closely-reasoned scheme had gone phut. “The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy” (1924; in Carry On, Jeeves!, 1925) But in the sense of a failed romance, Wodehouse uses p’fft once more: I had the disquieting impression that it wouldn’t take too much to make the Stilton-Florence axis go p’fft again... Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 3 (1954) crossword puzzle … a shrewd “Emu” (p. 46) * See Sam the Sudden for the crossword fad in general. Wodehouse pokes gentle fun at it in many stories with frequent mentions of the sun god Ra and the flightless Australian bird Emu as simple entries in the puzzles. Only later, in Something Fishy, ch. 3 (1957), does he allude to a more modern style of cryptic puzzle clues. parted brass rags (p. 46) ° Slang: quarrelled. See Carry On, Jeeves!. shirty (p. 46) * See Uncle Fred in the Springtime. All Clear had been blown (p. 46) * See The Inimitable Jeeves. straight from the horse’s mouth (p. 46) * Inside information, as if a racetrack tip were communicated by the horse itself. hotsy-totsy (p. 46) * See Hot Water. his imitation of Beatrice Lillie (p. 47) ° Beatrice Lillie (1894–1989) was a Canadian-born comedienne who achieved considerable success in London and, later, New York in musical comedies and revues. A good friend of Noel Coward, she worked with him on several productions and introduced his song “Mad Dogs and Englishmen” in The Third Little Show (1932). During WWI, when so many men were being called to war, her slim build and short-cropped hair meant that she was often cast in male roles, something that would, no doubt, have made it easier for Catsmeat to imitate her. [Conversely, the stout Smedley Cork in The Old Reliable (1951) would have been a less plausible imitator.] something Jeeves had once called Gussie (p. 47) * See Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 13. a sensitive plant, what? (p. 47) A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew, And the young winds fed it with silver dew, And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light. And closed them beneath the kisses of Night. Percy Bysshe Shelley: “The Sensitive Plant” (1820) See the notes to Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 13, for more about the plant and a modern-day encounter with one. “Oh, am I?” (p. 47) * Bertie has obviously misheard Madeline’s reference to Shelley, thinking it to be a descriptive term like silly or surly after “you’re” rather than “your.” mixed alcoholic stimulants (p. 48) * See Bill the Conqueror. all-in wrestler (p. 48) * See The Mating Season. vapid and irreflective observer (p. 48) * See the notes to episode 5 of The Head of Kay’s for the literary background of this term. sunset … reminded him of a slice of roast beef (p. 48) * See the last note to The Matrimonial Sweepstakes for similar references elsewhere in Wodehouse. you can’t call a girl a liar (p. 48) * Bertie had a similar problem with Heloise Pringle in “Without the Option” (1925): I think the girl was lying, but that didn’t make the position of affairs any better. I wish I had a bob (p. 49) * That is, a shilling; one-twentieth of a pound sterling. The Bank of England inflation calculator suggests a multiplication factor of 67.8 from 1939 to 2019, so this is roughly £3.40 or US$4.50 in present-day terms. There she spouts (p. 49) More usually rendered as “There she blows!,” this was the cry of the look-out on a whaling ship at the sight of a whale. See also Money in the Bank. something distinctive and individual about Gussie’s timbre (p. 50) * Timbre is a musical term for the quality or tone color of an instrument or voice. The adjectives may be influenced by the “distinctively individual” advertising slogan for Fatima cigarettes; see Ukridge. abaft the teapot (p. 50) * Bertie uses a nautical term here meaning “behind, toward the rear of the vessel”; one wonders if Wodehouse picked it up at his preparatory school, which specialized in preparing boys for the Navy. Gussie was straddling the hearthrug (p. 50) * Compare: Charles Augustus Pettifer took up a commanding position on the hearth rug, and stated that he was not going to see the Coronation. “Some Reasons and a Sequel” (1902) [Uncle Chris] straddled the hearth-rug manfully, and swelled his chest out. Jill the Reckless/The Little Warrior, ch. 6.2 (1920) The vicar, his hands behind his coat-tails, was striding up and down the carpet, while the bishop, his back to the fireplace, glared defiance at him from the hearth-rug. “Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo” (1926; in Meet Mr. Mulliner, 1927) The Hon. Galahad strode to the hearthrug and stood with his back to the empty fireplace. Racial instinct made him feel more authoritative in that position. Heavy Weather, ch. 10 (1933) And similarly: Colonel Egbert Wedge stood supporting his shoulderblades against the mantelpiece over the fireplace. Galahad at Blandings, ch. 4 (1965) Mussolini (p. 50) See Summer Moonshine. could have taken his correspondence course (p. 50) * See The Inimitable Jeeves. Others abide our question (p. 51) Others abide our question. Thou art free. We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still, Out-topping knowledge. Matthew Arnold: “Shakespeare” (1849) See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse for other allusions to Arnold’s poem. bien-être (p. 51) * French, “well-being”; a comfortable state. hunky-dory (p. 51) * American slang for “satisfactory, fine” from mid-nineteenth century; see Green’s Dictionary of Slang for a possible derivation. given the cue (p. 52) * Bertie is so coversant with theatrical jargon that he often applies it to everyday life. We are as little children (p. 53) Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Bible: Matthew 18:3 wedding breakfast (p. 53) * See The Inimitable Jeeves. certified boob (p. 54) * A boob is a fool, a stupid or blundering person (originally US slang from early 1900s); a certified boob must be one who has been classified as such by a professional. Man of Destiny . . . Napoleon (p. 54) The Man of Destiny is the title of a play (1898) by George Bernard Shaw in which the young Napoleon Bonaparte finds himself entangled with a “Strange Lady.” Saviours of Britain . . . Black Shorts (p. 54) Roderick Spode and his “Black Shorts” are a parody of Oswald Mosley (1896–1980), founder of the British Union of Fascists, whose members, particularly the more extremist ones, wore distinctive black shirts. Throughout his career, Mosley showed an inability to settle within the confines of a political party. At the 1918 General Election, he won Harrow for the Conservatives, becoming the youngest MP in Parliament, but at the 1922 election, disillusioned with the Conservative Party, he contested (and won) Harrow as an Independent. Two years later, he joined the Labour Party and, after the 1929 election, served as a member of Ramsay MacDonald’s government, only to resign the following year. In 1931, he founded his own party, the New Party, but it failed to win a single seat in the 1931 election, and after meeting Mussolini in Italy, Mosley disbanded the party in 1932 and founded the British Union of Fascists. In 1936, Mosley, by now a Nazi sympathiser, married his second wife, Diana Mitford, at a ceremony which took place in the Berlin home of German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels in front of six guests, one of them Adolf Hitler. In May 1940, Mosley and his wife were detained under Defence Regulations as persons likely “to endanger the safety of the realm” and the BUF was banned a few days later. The Mosleys were released in 1943, on grounds of his ill-health, and, though they remained in England for a few years after the war, they finally left in 1949, eventually settling in France. one of those detectives (p. 54) This is the sort of deductive exercise at which Sherlock Holmes excels: “It is simplicity itself,” said he; “my eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by someone who has very carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey. As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform, with a black mark of nitrate of silver upon his right forefinger, and a bulge on the right side of his top-hat to show where he has secreted his stethoscope, I must be dull, indeed, if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession.” “A Scandal in Bohemia,” in The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1892) “Beyond the obvious facts that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else.” “The Red-Headed League,” in The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1892) “When a gentleman of virile appearance enters my room with such tan upon his face as an English sun could never give, and with his handkerchief in his sleeve instead of in his pocket, it is not difficult to place him. You wear a short beard, which shows that you were not a regular. You have the cut of a riding-man. As to Middlesex, your card has already shown me that you are a stockbroker from Throgmorton Street. What other regiment would you join?” “The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier,” in The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes (1927) Footer bags (p. 54) Baggy knee-length shorts, as favoured by football players of that era. Among its more social activities, the British Union of Fascists established its own football teams. gasper (p. 55) * A cigarette, especially an inexpensive or harsh one. Pont Street (p. 55) * Also the town address of Bertie’s Aunt Agatha; see Very Good, Jeeves for more on this desirable address. a man who has found the blue bird (p. 55) L’Oiseau bleu (1908), translated into English as The Blue Bird (1909), is a play by the Belgian author and 1911 Nobel laureate, Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949). It tells the story of two children, Tyltyl and Mytyl, the son and daughter of a poor woodcutter, who are sent off by the Fairy Bérylune to search the world for the Blue Bird of Happiness. After much searching, they return home to find that the Blue Bird has been in their bird-cage all the time. From the programme for the revival of the play at London’s Haymarket Theatre in 1912: “The Blue Bird, inhabitant of the pays bleu, the fabulous blue country of our dreams, is an ancient symbol in the folk-lore of Lorraine, and stands for happiness.” Tenor Jan Peerce’s hugely popular 1945 record “The Bluebird of Happiness” served to keep the expression in the public mind. The play has been filmed several times, twice as a silent film, in 1910 and 1918, and most famously in 1940, with Shirley Temple playing the role of Mytyl. A further film, in 1976, with Patsy Kensit as Mytyl and Elizabeth Taylor playing the part of Bérylune, was a resounding failure. Those who make the nation’s songs (so much more admirable than its laws) advise us to look for the silver lining, to seek the Blue Bird, to put all our troubles in a great big box and sit on the lid and grin. Bill the Conqueror, ch. 2.2 (1924) It had a dullness, a lack of tone. It was the voice of a butler who has lost the bluebird. “The Crime Wave at Blandings” (1936; in Lord Emsworth and Others, 1937) That night [Bingo] dressed for dinner moodily. He was unable to discern the bluebird. “All’s Well with Bingo” (1937; in UK edition of Eggs, Beans and Crumpets, 1940) In that shop, on the other hand, he had given the impression of a man who has found the bluebird. Sir Watkyn Bassett in The Code of the Woosters, ch. 3 (1938) But, unlike him, she had not found the bluebird. Money in the Bank, ch. 22 (1942) “I saw no ray of hope. It looked to me as if the bluebird had thrown in the towel and formally ceased to function.” Joy in the Morning, ch. 1 (1946) But it takes more than that to buck a fellow up permanently who is serving an indeterminate sentence in a place like Deverill Hall, and it was not long before I was in somber mood again, trying to find the bluebird but missing it by a wide margin. The Mating Season, ch. 7 (1949) “The sun shining and the bluebird back once more at the old stand.” “Jeeves Makes an Omelet” (1959; in A Few Quick Ones) The hors d’oeuvres seem to whisper that the sun will some day shine once more, the cold salmon with tartare sauce points out that though the skies are dark, the silver lining will be along at any moment, and with the fruit salad or whatever it may be that tops off the meal, there comes a growing conviction that the bluebird, though admittedly asleep at the switch of late, has not formally gone out of business. The Ice in the Bedroom, ch. 9 (1961) Crispin … was wearing the unmistakable air of a man who has failed to find the bluebird. The Girl in Blue, ch. 12.3 (1970) a carefree cat on hot bricks (p. 55) The idiomatic expression “like a cat on hot bricks” (in US, “on a hot tin roof”) means “uneasy, or very nervous, and unable to keep still.” Wodehouse presumably wishes us to understand that Sir Watkyn was behaving in this agitated manner, but not from any uneasiness (hence “carefree”). See also The Girl in Blue. clicked (p. 55) * In this sense, been successful in his wooing; had his proposal accepted. “I tried to muster up the nerve, but we got to Southampton without my having clicked. What a dashed difficult thing a proposal is to bring off, isn’t it!” Eustace Hignett in Three Men and a Maid, ch. 8 (1922) “Keep steadily before you the fact that almost anybody can get married if they only plug away at it. Look at this man Bessemer, for instance, Ronnie’s man that I told you about. As ugly a devil as you would wish to see outside the House of Commons, equipped with number sixteen feet and a face more like a walnut than anything. And yet he has clicked.” Money for Nothing, ch. 7 (1928) “He made his presence felt right from the beginning to an almost unbelievable extent, and actually clicked as early as the fourth day out.” “Fate” (1931; in Young Men in Spats, 1936) “I don’t want to shatter your dreams and all that, but are you sure you’ve clicked in that direction quite so solidly as you imagine?” Summer Moonshine, ch. 8 (1937) “Yes, you can start pricing wedding presents. A marriage has been arranged, and will shortly take place.” “Good for you, Johnny, Tell me more. When did this happen?” “Tonight. Just before I came here.” “You really clicked, did you?” A Pelican at Blandings, ch. 2 (1969) hauled up her slacks about me (p. 56) Wodehouse employs the same phrase elsewhere, though it does not seem to be in common use. From the context, it seems to mean making a special effort or employing exaggeration when describing something or someone. As for Clarence, how easy it would be to haul up one’s slacks to practically an unlimited extent on the subject of his emotions at this time. “The Goal-Keeper and the Plutocrat,” in The Man Upstairs Secondly, as there appears to be no law of libel whatsoever in this great and free country, we shall be enabled to haul up our slacks with a considerable absence of restraint. Psmith, Journalist, ch. 9 Of course, if in the vein, I might do something big in the way of oratory. I am a plain, blunt man, but I feel convinced that, given the opportunity, I should haul up my slacks to some effect. Psmith in the City, ch. 15 He hauled up his slacks thus: Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen, ch. 20 (1974) See also The Inimitable Jeeves. a cross between Robert Taylor and Einstein (p. 56) Robert Taylor (1911–1969) was a film star and matinee-idol; nicknamed “the man with the perfect profile,” his good looks frequently secured him leading roles for which he then received unfavourable reviews from critics who could not bring themselves to accept that so handsome an actor could act. Albert Einstein, who formulated the theory of relativity and turned classical physics on its head, needs, as they say, no introduction. One hopes that Gussie is referring to Robert Taylor’s looks and Einstein’s brains, as the alternative hardly bears thinking about. the full moon influences the love life (p. 57) This is certainly true of some undersea creatures. For example, seahorses (Hippocampus spp) perform their mating rituals around the time of the full moon, while ostracods (tiny crustaceans) synchronise their mating cycles with the phases of the moon. dumb chums (p. 57) * In the sense of “without speech” rather than “unintelligent,” this is a frequent phrase for Wodehouse’s characters when referring to pets or other animal friends. In fact the first OED citation for “dumb chums” is from Wodehouse: Arrived at man’s estate, he [Gussie] retired to the depths of the country and gave his life up to these dumb chums. Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 1 (1934) An earlier usage: “…Our Dumb Chums’ League, of which I am perpetual vice-president” Orlando Wotherspoon in “Open House” (1932; in Mulliner Nights, 1933) Norman Murphy noted in A Wodehouse Handbook that the above league was clearly based on Our Dumb Friends League, an animal welfare charity founded in 1897 in London. It used a Blue Cross emblem for its fundraising campaigns, and by 1950 changed its organizational name to The Blue Cross. And others, showing variety of species: I can’t see why Jeeves shouldn’t go down in legend and song. Daniel did, on the strength of putting in half an hour or so in the lions’ den and leaving the dumb chums in a condition of suavity and camaraderie… Thank You, Jeeves, ch. 18 (1934) “This girl Dahlia’s family, you see, was one of those animal-loving families, and the house, he tells me, was just a frothing maelstrom of dumb chums. As far as the eye could reach, there were dogs scratching themselves and cats scratching the furniture. I believe, though he never met it socially, there was even a tame chimpanzee somewhere on the premises.” A well-informed Crumpet recounting Freddie Widgeon’s tale in “Good-bye to All Cats” (1934; in Young Men in Spats, 1936) The six Pekes accompanied [Bingo] into the library and sat waiting for their coffee-sugar, but he was too preoccupied to do the square thing by the dumb chums. “Bingo and the Peke Crisis” (1937; in Eggs, Beans and Crumpets, 1940) “In a nutshell, then, Aunt Hermione advised Aunt Dora to wait till Prue had popped out with the dumb chums and then go through her effects for possible compromising correspondence.” Freddie Threepwood, speaking of his cousin taking the dogs for a walk, in Full Moon, ch. 3.6 (1947) …in this shovel one noted what seemed to be frogs. Yes, on a closer inspection, definitely frogs. [Constable Dobbs] gave the shovel a jerk, shooting the dumb chums through the air as if he had been scattering confetti. The Mating Season, ch. 21 (1949) “I see you’re lushing up the dumb chums.” Freddie Widgeon notes that Mr. Cornelius is giving lettuce to his rabbits in Ice in the Bedroom, ch. 1 (1961). And note the article “Dumb Chums at Riverhead” (Punch, September 7, 1955) about a man who raised armadillos. like a Pekingese taking a pill (p. 57) Wodehouse is, no doubt, writing here from personal experience: Pekingese were their favourite dogs and even in Berlin, after Wodehouse was released from internment and Ethel joined him, she was accompanied by their Pekingese, Wonder. out of the night that covered me (p. 58) Out of the night that covers me, Black as the Pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be For my unconquerable soul. William Ernest Henley: “Invictus” (1875) He eats a lot of fish (p. 59) * See Very Good, Jeeves for a discussion of this topic. I played on you as on a lot of stringed instruments (p. 59) * See The Clicking of Cuthbert. safely under the wire (p. 60) * That is, safely married; a figurative allusion to the imaginary wire across the finish line of a horse-racing track. hunting newts in Africa (p. 60) * Bertie’s adaptation for Gussie of the usual rejected suitor’s trip to shoot grizzly bears in the Rocky Mountains; see A Damsel in Distress. Return to top Chapter 4 (pp. 62–86) as you jog along (p. 62) * In recent years, the verb jog has so often been used for running at a moderate pace for aerobic exercise that we tend to forget its original senses. Transitively, to jog something meant to shake it up, give it a jerky push or nudge. Intransitively, to jog was to move unsteadily or as if shaken, “to move with small shocks like those of a low trot” (Samuel Johnson). So Bertie’s usage here is less like a smooth trip around a fitness track and more like being jolted continually through life by random events. leap . . . like a gaffed salmon (p. 62) Lord Emsworth … leaped on his settee like a gaffed trout. Heavy Weather, ch. 17 (1933) He had been sitting hard by, staring at the ceiling, and he now gave a sharp leap like a gaffed salmon and upset a small table containing a vase, a bowl of potpourri, two china dogs, and a copy of Omar Kháyyám bound in limp leather. Tuppy in Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 14 (1934) Bingo, who had given a sharp, convulsive leap like a gaffed salmon, reassembled himself. “The Editor Regrets,” in Eggs, Beans and Crumpets (1940) It caused Lord Shortlands to leap like a gaffed salmon and Terry to quiver all over. Spring Fever, ch. 14 (1948) A gaff is a hook used to land large fish; because a gaffed fish is not dead, it will usually writhe convulsively. private school (p. 62) * The distinction between private and public schools in Britain at this era was not the same as in modern American usage. Neither was government-run, like the American public school system. (Government-run schools in Britain had other names such as state school or council school.) A British public school, like Eton, Harrow, or Wodehouse’s alma mater Dulwich, was chartered as an institution for public benefit, with an endowment and a board of trustees or governors; in the USA it would be classified as a nonprofit organization. A private school in Britain meant one that was privately owned and operated as a commercial venture; typically the headmaster and the proprietor would be the same person. Thus any money not spent on feeding the students would mean more in the headmaster’s pocket, so it was no wonder that Bertie was attracted by the possibility of a late-night biscuit. biscuits (p. 62) * Even in the US first edition book, Bertie uses the British term for what Americans would call cookies. (The first three paragraphs of chapter 4 are omitted in the SEP serialization.) bounder (p. 62) * See Bill the Conqueror. sang-froid (p. 62) * French, literally “cold blood”; figuratively, calmness. map (p. 62) * As with p. 119 below, see The Clicking of Cuthbert. élan and espièglerie (p. 63) French: élan — impetuosity, dash; espièglerie — frolicsomeness. All right up to the neck, but from there on pure concrete (p. 63) * See Very Good, Jeeves. gumboils (p. 63) * See The Mating Season. the Scotch express (p. 63) * See The Inimitable Jeeves. Man as Nature’s last word (p. 63) * For instance: …if man be the highest object submitted to direct study, it is in man, and man in his highest capacities, functions, and employments, that we find Nature’s last word and most important revelation. Patrick Edward Dove: The Logic of the Christian Faith (1856) The phrase is used again in ch. 11, p. 195. full many a glorious morning (p. 63) Full many a glorious morning have I seen Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye, Kissing with golden face the meadows green, Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy; Anon permit the basest clouds to ride With ugly rack on his celestial face, And from the forlorn world his visage hide, Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace: Even so my sun one early morn did shine With all triumphant splendor on my brow; But out, alack! he was but one hour mine; The region cloud hath mask’d him from me now. Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth; Suns of the world may stain when heaven’s sun staineth. Shakespeare: Sonnet XXXIII See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse for other references to this sonnet. put the bee on (p. 64) * A slang phrase with varying derivations and meanings. Wodehouse uses it in the sense of quash, finish off: this development absolutely put the bee on the wedding. Everybody sympathized with Claude and said it was out of the question that he could dream of getting married. “No Wedding Bells for Him” (1923; in Ukridge, 1924) the old boy most fortunately got the idea that I was off my rocker and put the bee on the proceedings. “Without the Option” (1925; in Carry On, Jeeves!, 1925/27) Yes, all the love which I had lavished on this girl two years ago and which I had supposed her crisp remarks at Cannes had put the bee on for good was working away at the old stand once more, as vigorously as ever. Laughing Gas, ch. 23 (1936) I put the bee on this suggestion with the greatest promptitude. Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 24 (1963) Green’s Dictionary of Slang derives this sense of bee from the initial letter of “bag” as in the phrase “put the bag on” meaning to halt or interfere with. This sense is distinguished from another initial-letter abbreviation of put the bite on (with a play on bee as something that stings) meaning to blackmail, to extort, to press for a loan. “I’m in the soup.”“Up to the thorax.” (p. 64) * For “in the soup,” and some of its variants, see The Inimitable Jeeves; also note p. 31 above and p. 204 below. In mammals, the thorax is the chest, so Gussie is more deeply involved than one who has consommé splashing about his ankles, is knee-deep in the bisque, or is waist high in the gumbo; but at least he is not yet going down for the third time as above. trust in a higher power (p. 64) * See Carry On, Jeeves!. the lemon (p. 65) * One’s own head; see The Inimitable Jeeves. exclamash (p. 66) * Exclamation, clipped as in the 1920s craze for shortened words, such as the Gershwin song “’S Wonderful” (1927), whose verse rhymes humble fash and tender pash. And falls to earth (p. 66) I shot an arrow into the air, It fell to earth, I knew not where; For, so swiftly it flew, the sight Could not follow it in its flight. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: “The Arrow and the Song” (1845) sole meunière (p. 67) * See Sam the Sudden. It biteth like a serpent (p. 67) Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Bible: Proverbs 23:31–32 See also Money in the Bank and Joy in the Morning, ch. 1. doing the heavy father (p. 67) * See Money for Nothing. forbidding banns (p. 67) * See Uncle Fred in the Springtime. drop a silent tear (p. 68) But we forbear, out of sympathy to our readers’ bones. Western travellers . . . will have a respectful and mournful sympathy with our unfortunate hero. We beg them to drop a silent tear, and pass on. Harriet Beecher Stowe: Uncle Tom’s Cabin, ch. 9 (1852) The shades of evening were beginning to fall pretty freely (p. 68) See Sam the Sudden. this serene slop (p. 68) “Slop” here means “policeman”; it is an example of “back slang,” where a word is written backwards and a new word coined from the result — another example is “yobbo,” or “yob,” which originated as back-slang for “boy.” A fine Aberdeen terrier (p. 68) The Wodehouses owned an Aberdeen terrier, Angus, but Wodehouse claimed to find him too austere and Presbyterian — he described the dog as looking like a Scottish preacher about to rebuke the sins of his congregation — and Angus eventually went to another home, but not before being immortalised as Bartholomew. hell-for-leather (p. 68) * At a breakneck speed; recklessly fast; the OED cites Kipling (1889) as the first to use this form, also found as “hell-bent for leather.” stepping high, wide and handsome (p. 68) High, Wide and Handsome was the title of a film released in 1937, starring Irene Dunne, Dorothy Lamour and Randolph Scott, with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and music by Wodehouse’s former collaborator, Jerome Kern. According to the OED, “high, wide and handsome” was originally US slang, meaning “in a carefree manner, in good style.” The first recorded example is in a collection of Western stories, Arizona Nights (1907), by S E White — “Tim could talk high, wide, and handsome when he set out to.” One of the other examples cited is from Uncle Fred in the Springtime, ch. 3 (1934) — “He has a nasty way of lugging Pongo out into the open and . . . proceeding to step high, wide and plentiful.” See also Cocktail Time. Nemesis is at his heels (p. 68) In Greek mythology, Nemesis was a goddess “who measured out to mortals happiness and misery, and visited with losses and suffering all who were blessed with too many gifts of fortune” (A Smaller Classical Dictionary, ed E H Blakeney, 1910), and this is the sense intended here. Nemesis later came to be regarded, like the Furies, as the goddess who punished crimes. I think I have mentioned that I once won a choir boys’ handicap (p. 68) * See Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 22 (1934). Butler Beach of Blandings Castle had won a similar race in his boyhood; see Pigs Have Wings, ch. 10.3 (1952). a sudden swerve spells a smeller (p. 69) Smeller: slang for a heavy fall. The OED cites an example from Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 9 (1934): “A man’s brain whizzes along for years exceeding the speed limit, and then something suddenly goes wrong with the steering gear and it skids and comes a smeller in the ditch.” a sort of macédoine (p. 69) A mixture of finely-chopped pieces of fruit or vegetable; figuratively, a medley or mixture of unrelated things (derived, according to the OED, from “Macedonia” and having reference to the diversity of peoples in the Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great). that rather offensive expression of virtuous smugness (p. 69) See above. attractive young prune (p. 69) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. If Scotties come, can Stiffy be far behind? (p. 69) Be through my lips to unawaken’d earth The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind, If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? Percy Bysshe Shelley: “Ode to the West Wind” (1820) If butlers come, can cocktails be far behind? Summer Lightning, ch. 13.3 (1929) If Pirbright came, he reasoned, could Celia Todd be far behind? “Tangled Hearts” (in Nothing Serious, 1950) “As the fellow said, if stuffed frogs come, can ripe solutions be far behind?” Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 12 (1954) If Scotties come, I ought to have said to myself, can Stiffy be far behind? Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 8 (1963) If Sandy Callenders come, he would have said if he had been more poetic than he was, can letters to be answered at once be far behind? Galahad at Blandings, ch. 7.1 (1965) like Venus rising from the foam (p. 69) See Something Fresh. fight this case to the House of Lords (p. 70) The House of Lords is the highest court of appeal for civil and criminal matters in England and Wales and Northern Ireland and for civil matters in Scotland. Appeals from lower courts are heard by one of two Appellate Committees, each of which consists of at least five Lords of Appeal in Ordinary (‘Law Lords’). The Law Lords, of whom there are twelve active judicially, are usually appointed from the ranks of the Lords Justices of Appeal. Appellate Committees usually sit in a House of Lords Committee Room but their decisions are delivered in the Chamber of the House of Lords, preserving the “fiction” that it is the Court of Parliament which hears appeals. With the development of the European Union, the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, both in Strasbourg, have become the final courts of appeal for some matters that would previously have terminated in the House of Lords. See also Money in the Bank. returning to the res (p. 72) The crux of the matter, the point at issue (or “point at tissue” as PC Oates would say) (Latin: the thing). what I believe is known as a moue (p. 72) French: a grimace of discontent, a pout. seeking whom he may devour (p. 72) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Bible: 1 Peter 5:8 Justice of the Peace (p. 72) Justices of the Peace, commonly known as magistrates, represent the lowest tier in the judicial system. Their origins date back to 1195, when Richard I commissioned certain knights as “Keepers of the Peace,” to maintain the peace in areas of unrest. JPs are unqualified and unpaid (unlike “stipendiary magistrates,” who are qualified lawyers) and were traditionally appointed from among the landed gentry, though they are now drawn from a much broader spectrum of the population. JPs, usually sitting as a “bench” of three, preside in magistrates’ courts, where they deal with the overwhelming majority of criminal cases, either deciding cases and passing sentence themselves, or, in more serious cases, hearing the preliminary evidence in proceedings for commital to the Crown Court. Magistrates’ courts also deal with such non-criminal matters as applications for liquor licences, while a magistrate’s signature is required before certain legal documents, such as search warrants, can be served. Star Chamber (p. 72) The Court of Star Chamber evolved out of the king’s royal council. During the reign of Henry VII, it developed into a separate judicial entity, distinct from the king’s council, primarily to hear appeals. Under Henry VIII, plaintiffs were encouraged to bring their cases directly to the Star Chamber, bypassing the lower courts entirely. From an early stage, the court could order torture, prison, and fines, but it did not have the power to impose the death sentence. The power of the Court of Star Chamber grew considerably under James I and Charles I, who both used it to suppress anti-monarchist opposition; court sessions were held in secret (they had been held in public under the Tudors), there was no right of appeal, and punishment was both swift and severe to any enemy of the Crown. As a result, Star Chamber become a byword for Royalist abuse of power and, under the Long Parliament, in 1641, it was abolished. The name survives to designate arbitrary and secretive proceedings in opposition to personal rights and liberty. looking like Judge Jeffreys (p. 72) George Jeffreys, 1st Baron of Wem (1645–1689), was a lawyer who prospered during the reigns of Charles II, who appointed him Lord Chief Justice, and James II, under whom he was created a Baron, the first Lord Chief Justice to be ennobled while still in office. A few months later, in August 1685, he presided over a commission set up at Winchester to try those accused of complicity in the failed Monmouth rebellion. His conduct at Winchester led to him being branded “Hanging Judge Jeffreys” and the trials are now known to history as the “Bloody Assizes” — at least 320 people were executed and hundreds more were transported to work as slaves in the West Indies after trials which, in many cases, were a mockery of justice. James II, however, was sufficiently pleased that he rewarded Jeffreys with appointment as Lord Chancellor. When, in 1688, William of Orange invaded England and James fled the country, Jeffreys tried to do likewise, but he was recognised, arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London, where he died a few months later. [Reference omitted in US magazine serial.] putting on the black cap (p. 73) Not a cap, so much as a square of black silk, which a judge placed on his head before sentencing a prisoner to death. Putting on the black cap before imposing a fine was not regarded as good judicial practice. taken his pound of flesh (p. 73) A reference to Shylock’s demand: What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong? You have among you many a purchased slave, Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules, You use in abject and in slavish parts, Because you bought them: shall I say to you, Let them be free, marry them to your heirs? Why sweat they under burthens? let their beds Be made as soft as yours and let their palates Be season’d with such viands? You will answer “The slaves are ours”: so do I answer you: The pound of flesh, which I demand of him, Is dearly bought; ’tis mine and I will have it. If you deny me, fie upon your law! There is no force in the decrees of Venice. I stand for judgment: answer; shall I have it? Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice, Act IV Scene 1 See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse for more references to this passage. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings! (p. 73) O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. Bible: Psalms 8:1–2 See also Biblia Wodehousiana for a New Testament reference in Fr. Rob’s commentary. on a skewer (p. 74) * See Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit. tartare sauce (p. 74) * A mayonnaise-based sauce, often spiced with mustard, containing chopped salty-and-sour vegetable ingredients such as pickles, capers, and/or olives; typically served with fish. From the French sauce tartare, attributing it to the peoples of Central Asia once called Tartars. Typically now spelled tartar sauce in the US. ecstatically, I think — I should have to check up with Jeeves (p. 74) * Repeating a gag from Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 14: Jeeves could tell you the word I want. I think it’s “ecstatic,” unless that’s the sort of rash you get on your face and have to use ointment for. do the dialect (p. 74) * This is the only instance so far found where the dialect is baby talk. Sometimes this phrase involves an actual English dialect, as of an ethnic joke or a reconstruction of an imagined conversation: Mr. Bellamy … said that that reminded him of another, of which the protagonists were a couple of Scotsmen, Donald and Sandy. He apologized for not being able to do the dialect, and then did it, revealing these North Britons as a pair of eccentrics who conversed in a patois which was not exactly Cockney and yet not wholly negroid. Big Money, ch. 8 (1931) “I’ll put it on the mantelpiece, Dad,” no doubt the son had said. “It’ll look well up there,” to which the old gaffer had replied “Aye, lad, gormed if ’twon’t look gradely on the mantelpiece.” Or words to that effect. I can’t do the dialect, of course. Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 10 (1963) Bertie also uses it for earlier varieties of the English language: I was recalling the story … about the fellow who had written a book and his dog Diamond chewed up the manuscript; the point being what a decent chap the fellow was, because all he said was ‘Ah, Diamond, Diamond, you little know what you have done’. It ought to be ‘thou little knowest’ and ‘what thou

hast done', but I can't do the dialect. Aunts Aren't Gentlemen, ch. 17 (1974) (In chapter 8 of the present book, Bertie tells the same story of Diamond and wavers between ancient and modern pronouns in the same way; see p. 155 below.) In the voice of a well-informed Crumpet, or of Wodehouse himself, it can refer to foreign languages too: It was the voice of the croupier, chanting his litany. "Cinquante louis à la banque. Un banco de mille." I can't do the dialect, you understand, but what he meant was that somebody holding the bank had run it up to a thousand francs. "Noblesse Oblige" (1934; in Young Men in Spats, 1936) The snails you eat in France with garlic sauce ... come mostly from Austria, and I was shocked to find that the Austrian boys who track them down get only sixty shillings for sixty pounds of them. (Schillings, of course, it is really, but I can't do the dialect.) "The Snail Situation (Latest)" in Punch, 19 January 1955; also in "The Meteorite Racket" in America, I Like You (1956) and "Bridges, Snails, and Meteorites" in Over Seventy (1957) Magdalen (p. 75) * That is, Magdalen College, Oxford University, not to be confused with Magdalene College, Cambridge University. Both are pronounced "maudlin." before he saw the light (p. 75) * Although Fr. Rob did not choose to include this in Biblia Wodehousiana, this phrase for a sudden religious conversion probably derives from Acts 9:1–4, in which Saul of Tarsus, while persecuting the disciples of Jesus, "came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven" and the voice of Jesus asked why he was persecuting him. As a result of this experience he became a Christian evangelist, known as Paul the Apostle. how the other three-quarters lives (p. 75) * A play on "how the other half lives"—a common phrase. See Thank You, Jeeves. cures souls (p. 75) * Bertie is perpetrating a humorous archaism here, reaching back to the roots of the title of curate; both in the noun and verb sense, cure as relating to giving spiritual assistance and comfort is just as old in the language as the medical sense of treating disease. The OED, though, says that the verb sense of the spiritual care has become obsolete, while the noun sense is still used, commonly in the phrase "a cure of souls" and as adapted in the title of a curate. See also A Damsel in Distress. large, lumbering Newfoundland puppy of a chap (p. 75) * As a dancer, in fact, [Bill West] closely resembled a Newfoundland puppy trying to run across a field. Uneasy Money, ch. 6 (1916) Sam Marlowe is described in Sam the Sudden, ch. 12.2, as "something in between a cyclone and a large Newfoundland puppy dressed in bright tweeds." den of the Secret Nine (p. 76) * And while I stood there, feeling like the hero when he discovers that he is trapped in the den of the Secret Nine, the door opened. "Without the Option" (1925; in Carry On, Jeeves!) "Well, I do seem properly trapped in the den of the Secret Nine, what?" Monty Bodkin, in Heavy Weather, ch. 11 (1933) And no more chance of getting him away from that malign influence than if he had been trapped in the underground cellar of the Secret Nine. "The Come-Back of Battling Billson" (1935; in Lord Emsworth and Others, 1937, and the US edition of Eggs, Beans and Crumpets, 1940) When you get trapped in the den of the Secret Nine, you want something a lot better than Gussie to help you keep the upper lip stiff. The Mating Season, ch. 1 (1949) Assisted by the lift man, I got him out, and he then stoutly declined to go through our door, which he obviously assumed led to the Den of the Secret Nine. Wodehouse, describing the first visit of his foxhound to his New York high-rise apartment on Park Avenue, in a letter to Bill Townend dated November 18, 1952 in Performing Flea. "Is Blandings Castle the den of the Secret Nine? Is Emsworth a modern Macbeth?" Sunset at Blandings, ch. 1 (1977) Also, James Rodman is writing a crime novel called The Secret Nine in "Honeysuckle Cottage" (1925; in Meet Mr. Mulliner, 1927). Gally Threepwood finds himself "in the position of a Private Eye who is listening in on the intimate agenda of the Secret Nine" in Pigs Have Wings, ch. 6.3 (1952). mere thews and sinews (p. 76) Muscular strength. "Thews" by itself used to mean the physical strength of a person, and was used in that sense by Shakespeare. Brown, accustomed to judge of men by their thews and sinews, could not help admiring his height, the breadth of his shoulders, and the steady firmness of his step. Sir Walter Scott: Guy Mannering, ch. 25 (1815) "That villain," exclaimed the Dwarf, . . . "has thews and sinews, limbs, strength, and activity enough, to compel a nobler animal than himself to carry him to the place where he is to perpetrate his wickedness" Sir Walter Scott: The Black Dwarf, ch. 6 (1816) With all these cares on his mind, my fellow traveller, to judge by his thews and sinews, was a man who might have set danger at defiance with as much impunity as most men. Sir Walter Scott: Rob Roy, ch. 3 (1817) The OED cites the example from Rob Roy as the first recorded instance of the two words being used in combination, having overlooked the two earlier occurrences. Whereon Captain Butler offered to draw and fight, to which Amyas showed no repugnance; whereon the captain, having taken a second look at Amyas's thews and sinews, reconsidered the matter, and offered to put Amyas on board of Sir Humphrey's Delight, if he could find a crew to row him. Charles Kingsley: Westward Ho!, ch. 11 (1855) See also Money in the Bank. Roberta Wickham, who once persuaded me to ... puncture his hot-water bottle (p. 76) * See "Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit" (1927; in Very Good, Jeeves, 1930) bonneting their parishioners (p. 77) * The OED lists two current verb senses of bonnet: most common, to put a bonnet on (oneself or another); also, in British and Australian slang, to pull someone's hat down over his or her eyes. Wodehouse uses it here in the unrecorded sense of stealing a hat, and in Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, to mean striking a blow to the head. have a dekko (p. 78) * Have a look; British army slang from the 1890s, derived from Hindi dekho, imperative form of the verb "Look!" Freddie Threepwood . . . Blandings (p. 78) ° A rare cross-reference between the Wooster and Blandings sagas. Bertie had earlier mentioned "Lord Emsworth! Not the one we know? Not the one at Blandings?" in "Jeeves Takes Charge" (1916; in Carry On, Jeeves!, 1925/27). In this reference, Freddie's cousin Gertrude (daughter of Lady Alcester) wants to marry the Rev. Rupert "Beefy" Bingham in "Company for Gertrude" (1928; in Blandings Castle and Elsewhere, 1935). a vicarage which he has in his gift (p. 79) * See Blandings Castle and Elsewhere. Also mentioned in Chapter 9, p. 165 below. insert a spanner in her hopes and dreams (p. 79) A typically Wodehousean mangling of the colloquial expression, "to throw a spanner in the works" (meaning to cause disruption, to interfere with the smooth running of something). The expression is now common, but its first recorded use, according to the OED, was by Wodehouse himself, in Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 11 (1934) — "He should have had sense enough to see that he was throwing a spanner into the works." [But see the notes to Leave It to Psmith for earlier Wodehouse uses beginning in 1920. See also p. 224 below. —NM] chilled steel (p. 79) * A frequent Wodehouse metaphor for calm firmness; see also p. 207 below. For the metallurgical basis of the term, see Blandings Castle and Elsewhere. "I'm adamant. I'm granite. I'm chilled steel." The White Hope, ch. 7 (1914; later as The Coming of Bill, 1920) "You know—and you would admit it if you were honest with yourself—that this girl is hard. She's got a chilled-steel soul." Uneasy Money, ch. 20 (1916) By four o'clock, when the vehicle put her down at the corner of Burberry Road, her resolution was as chilled steel and she had got her next move all planned out. Sam in the Suburbs, ch. 30 of magazine serial / Sam the Sudden, ch. 22.2 (1925) "As far as Miss Wickham is concerned, Bertram Wooster is chilled steel." "Episode of the Dog McIntosh" (1929; in Very Good, Jeeves, 1930) "On the one hand, a man with a soul of chilled steel who can look his gorilla in the eye and make it play ball." "Monkey Business" (1932; in Blandings Castle and Elsewhere, 1935) As I turned the corner into Piccadilly, I was a thing of fire and chilled steel... Thank You, Jeeves, ch. 2 (1934) "I'm not proposing to let any bimbo come the man of chilled steel over me just because I happen to kiss an old friend." The Luck of the Bodkins, ch. 11 (1935) Tubby remained the man of chilled steel. Summer Moonshine, ch. 24 (1938) "You don't realize the sort of fellow Bertie is. His nerve is like chilled steel, and when it is a question of helping a pal, he sticks at nothing." Joy in the Morning, ch. 12 (1946) "Chilled Steel Oakshott, we used to call him." Uncle Dynamite, ch. 6.3 (1948) "Are you one of these men of chilled steel one reads about?" Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 15 (1954) You have to be a man of chilled steel to get away with that sort of thing. [That is, signing only your initials when asked to autograph one of your books.] "Something Clever" in Punch, October 6, 1954 "Chilled Steel Ickenham they used to call me in the old regiment." Cocktail Time, ch. 7 (1958) "In the eyes of many people, I suppose, I seem one of those men of chilled steel you read about, and I'm not saying I'm not." Jeeves in the Offing / How Right You Are, Jeeves, ch. 4 (1960) Here Ernest Simms paused and seemed to choke, as if, man of chilled steel though he was, his feelings had become too much for him. The Girl in Blue, ch. 8 (1970) adamant (p. 79) * In alchemy, a fabled rock or mineral of surpassing hardness and other legendary properties; later poetically attached to diamond. Figuratively, hard, firm, not easily affected by emotions or arguments. "No, Jeeves," I said firmly, "it's no use. When we Woosters are adamant, we are—well, adamant, if you know what I mean." "Clustering Round Young Bingo" (1925; in Carry On, Jeeves!) Samson . . . Delilah (p. 79) ° See Love Among the Chickens. See also Biblia Wodehousiana for Fr. Rob's commentary. "I once contributed an article to it..." (p. 79) * See p. 8 above. gassing away (p. 81) * Talking excessively; compare Right Ho, Jeeves. throw myself into the part (p. 81) * Bertie is familiar with theatrical jargon, and here speaks as if he is getting into character for a stage role. do my stretch at Dartmoor (p. 82) The prison at Princetown, in the heart of Dartmoor, was built between 1806 and 1809 to house French captives taken during the Napoleonic war. It also housed Americans taken prisoner during the war of 1812. After being unoccupied for over 30 years, it reopened in 1850 as a civilian prison for convicts sentenced to long terms of imprisonment or to hard labour. Both the prison and its surroundings are bleak and forbidding, and the prison has long been regarded as a place to which the most recalcitrant prisoners are consigned. Though the prison is by no means as "escape-proof" as is sometimes suggested, its isolated location and the rugged nature of the surrounding moorland add to the difficulties facing would-be escapers. landed in the jug (p. 82) * Imprisoned; see p. 161 below. ants in the pants (p. 83) * Though even some of the earliest citations of this slang phrase refer to sexual excitement, Wodehouse uses it only in the sense of irritation, itchiness, fidgetiness, lack of repose or calm. The limbs twitch, the eyeballs roll, the illusion that there are ants in his pants becomes more and more pronounced, until eventually the urge to be closer to the center of things grows so imperious that he yields to it. Uncle Dynamite, ch. 14.1 (1948) The irony of the thing was like ants in the pants, causing him to toss restlessly on the pillow. "The Shadow Passes" (1950, in Nothing Serious) He shifted uneasily in his chair, like a man troubled with ants in the pants. Jeeves in the Offing/How Right You Are, Jeeves, ch. 12 (1960) Gawd-help-us (p. 83) * See Aunts Aren't Gentlemen. "Slip it across." (p. 83) * Here, meaning simply "Hand it over." Compare another form of the phrase at p. 116, below. cherishing . . . a harmless newt-fancier in his bosom (p. 84) An allusion, as the subsequent mention of a snake confirms, to Aesop's fable of the farmer and the snake. The farmer sees a snake frozen stiff with cold and, taking pity on it, puts it in his bosom to warm it, only to receive a fatal bite when the snake revives. To cherish a snake (or viper) in one's bosom is to befriend someone who is treacherous and ungrateful. this lax post-war world (p. 84) The war in question is World War I, which had ended some 20 years earlier. With hindsight, we now know that World War II was less than 12 months away, but Bertie can be excused for not knowing that he is living in a lax pre-war world. Many chaps might have resented his tone. I did myself... (p. 85) * See Hot Water. the muster of the vultures (p. 85) ° The Muster of the Vultures is the title of a thriller, published in 1929, by Gerard Fairlie (1899–1983). Fairlie, who, in the late 1930s, succeeded "Sapper" (H. C. McNeile) as the author of Bulldog Drummond stories, is described by Barry Phelps (Wodehouse: Man and Myth) and Robert McCrum (Wodehouse: A Life) as one of Ethel Wodehouse's "gentleman friends" and, according to McCrum, he stayed with the Wodehouses shortly after they moved to Hollywood. See also Uncle Dynamite. just a black tie (p. 86) * Short way of referring to a dinner jacket (same as US tuxedo), the way one would dress for a family dinner; a more formal dinner with outside guests would warrant "white tie" including a tailcoat. Compare Ronnie Fish and his choices in chapter 6 of Heavy Weather, the clearest example of this distinction. Return to top

Chapter 5 (pp. 87–104) Mona Lisa (p. 88) Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come," and the eyelids are a little weary. Walter Pater: Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873) The "Mona Lisa" (or "La Gioconda") is one of the world's best-known paintings. Painted by the Florentine artist and inventor, Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), and dating probably from around 1503–05, it depicts a young woman, whose enigmatic expression has been the subject of endless speculation and debate. Pater, a Victorian essayist and critic, elsewhere described the subject of the painting as "older than the rocks among which she sits." The "Mona Lisa" hangs in the Louvre in Paris. See also Summer Lightning and Bill the Conqueror. a toad beneath the harrow (p. 88) See The Clicking of Cuthbert. the mathematician Archimedes (p. 89) Archimedes of Syracuse (287–212 BC) was a mathematician, engineer and inventor. According to legend, he was lying in a bath when he discovered the hydrostatic principle (that the buoyancy force acting on body immersed in fluid is equal to the weight of fluid displaced by the body) and, in his excitement, jumped from the bath and ran naked through the streets shouting "Eureka" ("I have found it"). Archimedes also discovered the transcendental number pi, and made important discoveries concerning the centre of gravity of plane and solid figures. As an inventor, he is credited with inventing the Archimedes screw (a helical device for raising water) and the compound pulley, among others. He played a prominent part in the defence of Syracuse, when it was besieged by a Roman army under Marcus Claudius Marcellus, in 213 BC, but when, in late 212 or early 211, the city fell to the Romans, Archimedes was among those killed by Roman soldiers as they sacked the town. all flesh is as grass (p. 89) See A Damsel in Distress. lighted a thoughtful cigarette (p. 89) See p. 22. to snooter me (p. 89) To harass, bedevil, snub. According to the OED, the word only occurs in the works of Wodehouse; it is derived from US slang "snoot" for "nose". The OED cites three examples: My Aunt Agatha . . . wouldn't be on hand to snooter me for at least another six weeks. The Inimitable Jeeves, ch. 3 (1923) "As far," replied Mr Finch frigidly, "as a bloke can be said to be all right . . . who has been . . . chivvied and snootered and shot in the fleshy part of the leg —" "The Awful Gladness of the Mater" (1925; in Mr. Mulliner Speaking, 1929/30) Would this idea be any good to you? Downtrodden young peer, much snootered by aunts, etc, has become engaged to two girls at once . . . Letter of 13 August 1932, in Performing Flea (1953) Gwladys what-was-her-name (p. 89) * The young lady was Gwladys Pendlebury; her boy friend with the broken leg was Lucius Pim. The story is in "Jeeves and the Spot of Art" (1929; in Very Good, Jeeves, 1930). Pauline Stoker (p. 89) * See Thank You, Jeeves, especially Chapter 7. When Bertie finds her in his bed and in his pyjamas (the heliotrope ones with the old gold stripe) she has already removed her wet bathing suit, in which she swam ashore from her father's yacht in the harbor. none of that sex, however deadlier than the male (p. 89) When the Himalayan peasant meets the he-bear in his pride, He shouts to scare the monster, who will often turn aside. But the she-bear thus accosted rends the peasant tooth and nail, For the female of the species is more deadly than the male. When Nag the basking cobra hears the careless foot of man, He will sometimes wriggle sideways and avoid it if he can, But his mate makes no such motion where she camps beside the trail. For the female of the species is more deadly than the male. When the early Jesuit fathers preached to Hurons and Choctaws, They prayed to be delivered from the vengeance of the squaws. 'Twas the women, not the warriors, turned those stark enthusiasts pale. For the female of the species is more deadly than the male. Rudyard Kipling: "The Female of the Species" (1911) See also Money in the Bank. the chap whose name led all the rest (p. 89) See A Damsel in Distress, as well as p. 103 below. she's the top (p. 89) Presumably an allusion to the song "You're the Top," music and lyrics by Cole Porter. In one verse, Porter paid a tribute to his friend and fellow song-writer, Irving Berlin: You're the top, you're a Waldorf salad, You're the top, you're a Berlin ballad. You're a baby grand of a lady and a gent You're an Old Dutch Master, you're Mrs. Astor, you're Pepsodent. You're romance, you're the Steppes of Russia. You're the pants on a Roxy usher. I'm a lazy lout that's just about to stop But if, baby, I'm the bottom, you're the top. The song was written for the 1934 musical "Anything Goes," for which Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse wrote the original script. When they were not available to do the total rewrite demanded by the producer, Vinton Freedley, the job was passed on to the musical's director, Howard Lindsay, who was assisted by Russel Crouse. However, Bolton and Wodehouse were given the main credit and also, thanks to their original contract, enjoyed a larger share of the proceeds than did Lindsay and Crouse. And when Paramount Studios decided to film the musical, with Bing Crosby and Ethel Merman as the leading artists, it was Bolton and Wodehouse who produced the screenplay (1936), not altogether successfully, as they jettisoned many of the hit songs from the stage version and the producers kept only a few lines of "You're the Top." Wodehouse also re-wrote Porter's lyrics for the 1935 London West End production of "Anything Goes." In addition to giving the lyrics an English slant, he also substituted his friend George Gershwin in place of Irving Berlin: You're the top–you're a Russian salad, You're the top–you're a Gershwin ballad. You're the boy I'd swipe for the perfect type of male. You're an old Dutch master, you're Lady Astor, you're Chippendale. You're supreme–you're the gates of Heaven. You're the cream from the shire of Devon. I'm just in the way–as the French would say, "de trop," But if, baby, I'm the bottom, you're the top. See also Money in the Bank. The Prince Consort (p. 90) "Prince Consort" was the title bestowed by Queen Victoria on her husband, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, in 1857. Albert was quite liberal in matters of social reform, but, if one is to judge by the way in which he is said to have berated his eldest son, the future Edward VII and a notorious philanderer, for his behaviour, it is likely that he would have had stern words for a young woman of Stiffy's propensities. the assumption of formal evening dress has a stimulating effect on the morale (p. 90) Jeeves apparently subscribes to the notion that clothes make the man. In Right Ho, Jeeves he adduces similar reasons in recommending that Gussie Fink-Nottle attend a fancy-dress ball in the costume of Mephistopheles. As Gussie explains: "Jeeves is a great believer in the moral effect of clothes. He thinks I might be emboldened in a striking costume like this." the full soup and fish (p. 90) As the context makes clear, the "full soup and fish" is formal evening wear, i.e. white tie and tails, as distinct from black tie and dinner jacket (cf. Spode's comment at the end of chap. 4 when he refers to a black tie as being "quite informal"). stop-press events (p. 91) * See Uncle Fred in the Springtime. compash (p. 91) * Shortened form of compassion; see Very Good, Jeeves. the surgeon's knife (p. 91) * An allusion to accepting temporary pain in order to effect a longer-lasting improvement. restorative (p. 92) * See Sam the Sudden. pie-eyed (p. 92) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. like stars, started from their spheres (p. 92) ° See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse. See also Summer Moonshine and p. 123 below. niff (p. 92) * British slang for "to smell, especially unpleasantly; to stink"; first recorded as schoolboy slang at Derby in a 1900 glossary. posish (p. 92) * Shortened form of position; see Very Good, Jeeves. French aristocrats waiting for the tumbril (p. 93) * See Heavy Weather. a statuette of a shepherdess (p. 94) Statuettes of shepherds and shepherdesses, produced in porcelain by factories such as those at Dresden and Derby, were popular household ornaments in Victorian times: When she came into the room, my first thought was how like she was to a statuette of a Dresden shepherdess which had always stood at one end of our mantel-piece, coquetting with the shepherd lad on the other side of the clock. Richard Harding Davis: Captain Macklin (1902) little grey cells (p. 93) * See Uncle Fred in the Springtime. the shot is not on the board (p. 95) ° "Shot on the board" is a US colloquialism which refers to a bet at the odds posted on the tote board in horse-racing, as, for example, "—— was the longest shot on the board at odds of 27–1." A horse that had been scratched from the race was no longer on the board, so a bet would not be allowed. Wodehouse uses the phrase "not on the board" to mean that something is not to be allowed or tolerated: To brawl with a fellow-man in a public street had been bad, but to be brawled with by a girl—the shot was not on the board. Absolutely not on the board. Indiscretions of Archie, ch. 15 (1921) Paul Jenkinson suggests an alternate explanation from the game of darts, with which Wodehouse would certainly have been familiar. In the most common form of the game, the points scored by a player in a turn of up to three throws are deducted from an initial score of 501. In order to win, a player must reduce the score to exactly zero, and the last shot must be a bullseye (50 points) or a double (the outer ring of the numbered sectors 1 to 20). Thus the highest score from which it is possible to win is 170 (treble 20, treble 20, bullseye of 50). However, there is no combination of three or fewer shots which adds up to 169, 168, 166, 165, 163, 162, or 159. In such cases, it is idiomatic British English to say that "the shot is not on the board"—i.e. there is no permissible finish. all of a doodah (p. 96) In a state of excitement. According to the OED, it derives from the refrain of the plantation song "Camptown Races": De Camptown ladies sing dis song — Doo-dah! doo-dah! De Camptown racetrack five miles long — Oh! doo-dah day! An alternative meaning is "dithering," for which the OED cites Wodehouse: Poor old Clarence was patently all of a doodah. Pigs Have Wings, ch. 1 (1952) "You might put it that Hell's foundations are quivering." (p. 97) At the sign of triumph Satan's host doth flee; On then, Christian soldiers, on to victory! Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise; Brothers, lift your voices, loud your anthems raise. Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus going on before. "Onward, Christian Soldiers," a popular English hymn (1871), words by Sabine Baring-Gould and music (hymn tune known as "St. Gertrude") by Sir Arthur Sullivan. "Hell's foundations are quivering and the game is up." "Without the Option" (1925; in Carry On, Jeeves, 1925/27) I don't know if you have ever had that rummy feeling which seems to whisper in your ear that Hell's foundations are about to quiver, but I got it the moment I caught sight of her. Ukridge narrating in "A Bit of Luck for Mabel" (1925; in Eggs, Beans and Crumpets, 1940) "I was telling you of the way hell's foundations have been quivering since I got home." Aunt Dahlia in Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 7 (1934) Hell's foundations quivering briskly just now. The Saturday Evening Post have rejected The Luck of the Bodkins—my first rejection in America in twenty-one years. Letter to Bill Townend dated February 4, 1935, in Performing Flea (1953) And I was just going through the hall when the door of my aunt's study opened, and I heard her calling to me to come here for a moment in a voice which in my experience has always heralded trouble and a general quivering of hell's foundations. Ukridge narrating in "The Come-Back of Battling Billson" (1935; in Lord Emsworth and Others, 1937) "Hell's foundations will quiver." Laughing Gas, ch. 13 (1936) "Hell's foundations have been quivering." Joy in the Morning, ch. 11 (1946) "I could," agreed Freddie, "and I would if I wanted hell's foundations to quiver and something like the San Francisco earthquake to break loose." Full Moon, ch. 9.2 (1947) And if he mentions this little matter to your sister Adela, hell's foundations are going to quiver. Spring Fever, ch. 6 (1948) Little wonder, then, that as I brooded over this one—eyeing it, as I say, askance—I was asking myself if Hell's foundations were about to quiver again. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 8 (1954) "In fact, it sometimes seems to me that the more curved and lissome the members of the opposite sex, the more likely they are to set Hell's foundations quivering." Jeeves in the Offing/How Right You Are, Jeeves, ch. 11 (1960) "Hell's foundations are quivering." Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 13 (1963) But the mildest cop can stand only so much, and it seemed to me, for I am pretty shrewd in these matters, that in about another shake of a duck's tail hell's foundations would be starting to quiver. Aunts Aren't Gentlemen, ch. 2 (1974) found the going so sticky (p. 97) In hunting and horse-racing, "sticky going" refers to the condition of the ground when, after heavy rain, it is soft and yielding underfoot. oviform chocolate pot (p. 98) Oviform means egg-shaped. A chocolate pot is a vessel in which hot chocolate was served. It is similar in form to the coffee pot, but is distinguished by a small hole in the lid into which a stirring rod, or molionet, could be inserted so that the chocolate could be crushed and stirred while the cover remained closed, keeping the contents warm. The earliest surviving chocolate pot dates from 1685 and was made by George Garthorne, an English silversmith. a terracotta figure of the Infant Samuel at Prayer (p. 98) See The Clicking of Cuthbert. the mot juste (p. 99) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. the cleft stick in which he found himself (p. 99) * Literally, a wooden stick split along the grain forming a narrow notch; figuratively, a tight place, a position where movement seems impossible, a fix. OED citations date back to Cowper in 1781. say on, old thicker than water (p. 101) Old relative (deriving from the traditional saying that "blood [in the sense of "kinship"] is thicker than water"). some chink in his armour (p. 101) * Literally, a gap or weak spot in armor that could be pierced by an arrow; figuratively, a weak spot in his moral pose of superiority, a dirty secret that he would not want exposed. Suppose we knew that Spode had shot a fox (p. 101) In most countries, if a fox raids the chicken run, one sets a trap, lays out poisoned bait, or takes a gun and shoots it. The English landed gentry abhor such hit-and-miss methods and believe that if the fox is to suffer the inconvenience of being killed, it is only right that his killer should risk his own neck in the process. Consequently, if an Englishman wishes to rid himself of a troublesome fox, he dons a scarlet hunting jacket, mounts a strong horse, and, with a few like-minded friends, and accompanied by a pack of foxhounds, he rides at breakneck speed across ploughed fields and over ditches and hedges, confident that, though he may not survive to see it, there is a faint possibility that the hounds will run the fox to earth and tear it limb from limb. A person who takes the easy option and simply shoots the fox is despised and derided as a spoilsport. Or rather, such was the case until recently. The British Government recently brought in legislation that outlaws the killing of foxes by hounds. The sporting English gentleman can still risk his neck by "riding to hounds" but if the fox is run to earth, by law it must now — horror of horrors! — be shot! A St. Bernard dog (p. 102) See Something Fresh. pukka sahibs (p. 102) Gentlemen, socially acceptable (an Anglo-Indian term). the Junior Ganymede . . . in Curzon Street (p. 102) ° Norman Murphy, so indefatigable in researching the origins of Wodehouse's characters and localities, had to confess defeat in his first book in his efforts to locate an original for the Junior Ganymede Club, though he believed that Wodehouse knew of such an establishment and noted that: . . . when he placed the Junior Ganymede "off Curzon Street" he showed again his accuracy for description. "Off Curzon Street" ... would be the perfect spot for a club like the "Junior Ganymede," away from the great Mayfair houses but central enough to meet the needs of the men who served them. In Search of Blandings, ch. 7 Murphy later (A Wodehouse Handbook, vol. 1, ch. 21) identified the Junior Ganymede with the pub named I Am the Only Running Footman, just around the corner from Curzon Street, at 5 Charles Street at Hay's Mews. Now named merely The Footman, its website confirms that "it was frequented by the footmen who were in service to the households of Mayfair." Wodehouse would certainly have known of it, since the house of his playwriting partner Ian Hay stands across the road at 47 Charles Street. Wodehouse borrowed Hay's address for Aunt Dahlia's town house. Ganymede, in Greek mythology, was cupbearer to the gods, so the name seemed appropriate for a meeting place for those who served wine to aristocrats. Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party (p. 102) This phrase is often stated to be a typing drill proposed by a teacher named Charles E. Weller. In fact, Weller was the author of a book, The Early History of the Typewriter (1918) in which he stated (without taking any credit for himself) that the sentence was devised to test the speed of the first typewriter, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the autumn of 1867. The phrase was popularised by Ulysses S. Grant, who adopted it as the Republican Party slogan for the 1868 presidential campaign. "The time when old Stoker was after me and I had to black up with boot polish" (p. 103) * Recounted in Thank You, Jeeves (1934), beginning in Chapter 13. "the occasion on which I came home after Pongo Twistleton's birthday party and mistook the standard lamp for a burglar" (p. 103) * Details of this event seem to be reserved for members of the Junior Ganymede; any other mention of it by Bertie has not yet been found. He goes to one such party at the Drones in Right Ho, Jeeves, chapter 3, coming home well after four, but says nothing about a lamp or a burglar there. Abou ben Adhem and the Recording Angel (p. 103) * See A Damsel in Distress. leaving not a rack behind (p. 104) ° Be cheerful, sir. Our revels now are ended. These our actors, As I foretold you, were all spirits and Are melted into air, into thin air: And, like the baseless fabric of this vision, The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe itself, Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, Leave not a rack behind. Shakespeare: The Tempest, Act IV Scene 1 See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse for other references and a discussion of rack versus wrack in this passage. Return to top

Chapter 6 (pp. 105–112) festive board (p. 105) In freemasonry, "festive board" refers to the formal meal served after a lodge meeting. This is one of a number of freemasonry terms that are scattered throughout the canon. According to Phelps (Wodehouse: Man and Myth), Wodehouse was himself initiated as a freemason in March 1929. divine fire (p. 105) * Artistic inspiration, creativity. An allusion to the legend of Prometheus. As the fellow said, better a dinner of herbs (p. 105) ° The "fellow" is Solomon: Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. Bible: Proverbs 15:17 Wodehouse's short story "The Best Sauce" appeared in the US magazine Pictorial Review in 1913 under the title "The Dinner of Herbs." A stalled ox is one that has been confined and fed for fattening rather than allowing it to graze in a pasture and get exercise. The New King James Version renders it "fatted calf" as in the Prodigal Son story of the New Testament. blow-out (p. 105) * The OED has citations for the colloquial sense of this word, both with and without a hyphen, to mean a meal or party generously provided with food and drink, beginning with Sir Walter Scott in 1823. The US first edition omits the hyphen. turned the food to ashes in my m. (p. 105) ° See Biblia Wodehousiana. The fruit is turned to ashes in his mouth at the fancied moment of enjoyment Capt. Frederick Marryat: The King's Own, ch. 59 (1830) Had the apples of Sodom turned to ashes in my mouth, I could not have felt a more startling revulsion. Herman Melville: Typee, ch. 8 (1846) The afternoon had turned to ashes in his mouth; Robert Louis Stevenson: Weir of Hermiston (1896) I felt myself surrounded as with deserts of friendlessness, and the delight of my welcome was turned to ashes in my mouth. Robert Louis Stevenson: St Ives, ch. 17 (1897) Then understanding that the case was hopeless, I left him and he glowered after me, for fear had made him cruel. He had won the long game and success had turned to ashes in his mouth. H. Rider Haggard: Finished, ch. 20 (1917) This was neither the first nor the last time that this happened to Bertie: I was lunching at my Aunt Dahlia's, and despite the fact that Anatole, her outstanding cook, had rather excelled himself in the matter of the bill-of-fare, I'm bound to say the food was more or less turning to ashes in my mouth. "Jeeves and the Spot of Art" (1929; in Very Good, Jeeves, 1930) There was a certain uncomfortable something about the atmosphere which more or less turned the food to ashes in my mouth. Thank You, Jeeves, ch. 11 (1934) But lunch had come and gone, the duck and green peas turning to ashes in my mouth, and still no sign of him. The Mating Season, ch. 13 (1949) I don't say I pushed it away untasted, as Aunt Dahlia had described Percy doing with his daily ration, but the successive courses turned to ashes in my mouth. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 11 (1954) He left me with the heart like lead within the bosom and the sausage and bacon turning to ashes in my mouth. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 20 (1954) And Reggie Havershot had a similar experience: The prunes turned to ashes in my mouth. Not that it altered the taste of them much. Laughing Gas, ch. 12 (1936) Comrade Butt also uses this image: "I wonder the food didn't turn to ashes in our mouths!" "Comrade Bingo" (1922; in The Inimitable Jeeves, 1923) making bread pills (p. 105) * Sitting next to Florence, who spoke little, merely looking cold and proud and making bread pills, I had ample leisure for thought during the festivities, and by the time the coffee came round I had formed my plans and perfected my strategy. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 11 (1954) women should have legged it (p. 106) * At the time, according to British etiquette for a formal dinner, after the last course has been finished, the hostess and female guests retire to the drawing room, allowing the host and his male guests to turn the conversation to more masculine topics, and to enjoy an after-dinner drink, typically port. The US edition has would instead of should here, and should instead of would in the next part of this sentence. inside dope (p. 106) * Information straight from the source; data not generally known. The first OED citation for the phrase is from 1919; the third citation is this sentence. a ticket-of-leave man (p. 106) Historically, a "ticket of leave" was the colloquial name for an "order of licence," whereby a convict in the Australian penal colonies was freed, under certain restrictions, before serving out his full sentence. got in by crashing the gate (p. 106) A gate-crasher is someone who enters a sporting or social event without a ticket or invitation, hence an unwanted guest. The term began to be popularised in the mid-1920s. I hadn't had a notion that that was what butterflies did. (p. 107) * A remarkably subtle and smooth way of pointing out Spode's mangled metaphor. Other suitors accused of being fickle as butterflies include: "Are you insinuating that I am the sort of man who turns lightly from one woman to another—a mere butterfly who flits from flower to flower, sipping . . . ?" Frederick Mulliner to Jane Oliphant in "Portrait of a Disciplinarian" (1927; in Meet Mr. Mulliner, 1927/28) "Gooch," he said, "You are not one of those thoughtless butterflies, I hope, who go about breaking girls' hearts?" "No, no," said John Gooch, learning for the first time that this was what butterflies did. "Those in Peril on the Tee" (1927; in Mr. Mulliner Speaking, 1929/30) "But the real reason was that he thought Boko was a butterfly." I couldn't follow her. She had me fogged. Anything less like a butterfly than good old Boko I've never set eyes on. "A butterfly?" "Yes. Flitting from flower to flower and sipping." Nobby Hopwood, to Bertie Wooster, about Lord Worplesdon's view of Boko Fittleworth, in Joy in the Morning, ch. 6 (1946) "I haven't seen Pongo since we were kids." "Even then he was flitting from flower to flower like a willowy butterfly." Bill Oakshott and Lord Ickenham, in Uncle Dynamite, ch. 1 (1948) "This butterfly stuff. The way you've got of flitting from flower to flower and sipping." Bill Oakshott to Pongo Twistleton, in Uncle Dynamite, ch. 8.2 (1948) "I think young Mike Cardinal is a butterfly, Shorty; the kind that flits from flower to flower and sips." Terry Cobbold to Lord Shortlands in Spring Fever, ch. 15 (1948) "And this will show you the sort of flitting and sipping butterfly the hound is." Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright, to Bertie, about Esmond Haddock, in The Mating Season, ch. 2 (1949) Like so many young doctors with agreeable manners and frank blue eyes, Ambrose Gussett continued to be an iodoform-scented butterfly flitting from flower to flower but never resting on any individual bloom long enough to run the risk of having to sign on the dotted line. "Up from the Depths" (in Nothing Serious, 1950) "He is a flitting butterfly and a two-timing Casanova." Valerie Twistleton, speaking of Horace Davenport in "The Shadow Passes" (in Nothing Serious, 1950) "Don't you understand the facts of life, my child? Joe is a butterfly, flitting from flower to flower and making love to every girl he meets." "Is that what butterflies do?" "You can't stop 'em." Kay Shannon to her aunt Wilhelmina Shannon about Joe Davenport in The Old Reliable, ch. 11 (1951) For some time past, it appeared, he had been flitting round this girl like a pimpled butterfly, and it had suddenly come to him with a sickening shock that his emotional nature had brought him to the very verge of matrimony. Oofy Prosser's self-realization in "The Word in Season" (in A Few Quick Ones, 1959) "And you stand revealed as a cross between a flitting butterfly and a Mormon elder," said Sally with spirit. "You and Brigham Young, a pair." Sally Painter to Freddie Widgeon in Ice in the Bedroom, ch. 8 (1961) "The trouble with you, Bertie, is that you haven't got it in you to understand true love. You're a mere butterfly flitting from flower to flower and sipping, like Freddie Widgeon and the rest of the halfwits of whom the Drones Club is far too full." Gussie Fink-Nottle accusing Bertie Wooster in Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 14 (1963) some few months earlier at Brinkley, when young Tuppy Glossop had come to my room (p. 107) * Recounted in Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 11 (1934). See Right Ho, Jeeves for this and other instances of "make him swallow himself." dislocate his cervical vertebrae (p. 108) * Technically just about the same as breaking his neck. should he ever do Madeline Bassett wrong (p. 108) Possibly an allusion to the 19th century folk ballad, "Frankie and Johnnie," which is referred to more specifically in Money in the Bank. gooseflesher (p. 108) ° "Goose flesh" is a rough, pimply condition of the skin, produced by cold or fear, and resembling the skin of a plucked goose. Although the term has been used in various ways (e.g. goose-fleshed, gooseflesby, goosefleshing), the use of "gooseflesher" to describe a book that induces such a condition is relatively rare; this coinage is not in the OED. Wodehouse first used it in Thank You, Jeeves, ch. 12 (1934), but he didn't coin it; the earliest instance so far found is in Percy Hammond's review in the New York Herald-Tribune of an Edgar Wallace play called On the Spot, quoted in a New York Times display advertisement, October 31, 1930. Will Cuppy used it in a Herald-Tribune book review in 1931, and the term pops up in the Publishers Weekly and Book Review Digest in the same year. The US edition hyphenates goose-flesher. pure to the last drop (p. 111) * An echo of the Maxwell House coffee slogan "Good to the last drop" dating from 1915. Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner (p. 111) French: To understand all is to pardon (or forgive) all. The phrase is often attributed, erroneously, to Madame de Staël. Working Men's Institute (p. 111) The Working Men's Institutes grew out of a social movement in the mid-19th century which had as its aim the education and "improvement" of the working class. The first working men's institute opened in Salford, Lancashire, in 1852 and was described as providing the working man with "social intercourse, innocent amusement, mental improvement and mutual helpfulness." dawn, when the milk train leaves (p. 112) * See Uncle Fred in the Springtime. Return to top

Chapter 7 (pp. 113–132) dish the dirt (p. 113) * Fairly fresh slang at the time meaning to gossip or to spread uncomplimentary information; the earliest uses seem to be from about 1926, though the OED ignores the phrase. Wodehouse's frequent collaborators Ian Hay and Guy Bolton had used it in their 1930 play A Song of Sixpence. "Dishing up the dirt to the young master can scarcely be described as gassing all over the place." Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 2 (1934) "Then he couldn't dish the dirt to those Customs sharks!" The Luck of the Bodkins, ch. 7 (1935) Come what might, the dirt would have to be dished. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 21 (1954) a squad of butlers forming a hollow square (p. 114) * See If I Were You. probably on the roof (p. 115) * Bertie is no doubt remembering the time (Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 20) when Gussie fled to the roof of Brinkley Court when Tuppy Glossop was chasing him, found no safe way to descend, and made faces at Anatole through the skylight of Anatole's bedroom, trying to get him to open the skylight. Spode, quâ menace, if quâ is the word I mean (p. 116) * The Latin word quâ (sometimes also encountered as quā or qua) has been used as a preposition in English since 1647 to mean "as; as being; in the capacity of"; its use in English is fairly formal, so this is one of the bits of a classical education that stuck in Bertie's brain. Various sources describe the Latin original as a relative pronoun, an interrogative adjective, or, with the sense of "in so far as," an adverbial usage of the ablative singular feminine of quī "who"; this site is not qualified to judge which of these descriptions is best. to slip it across the man (p. 116) * Green's Dictionary of Slang cites only one quotation in the sense of "to fool, to 'do down', to upset": Wodehouse, in Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 6: "This seemed to slip it across him properly." Many usages of "slip it across" are just a slangy way of saying "hand it over" as Bertie says to Stiffy Byng about Gussie's notebook in chapter 4, page 83, and chapter 8, page 139. But with a personal noun or pronoun after "across" it has the force of "thwart; baffle; gain advantage." See Money in the Bank. stuffed by some good taxidermist (p. 117) * See Summer Lightning. surprise and hauteur were nicely blended (p. 117) * See Leave It to Psmith. like the deaf adder of Scripture (p. 117) The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely. Bible: Psalms 58:3–5 See also Money in the Bank. space which I require for other purposes (p. 117) * Bertie remembered this gag and used it on Stilton Cheesewright in Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 4 (1954): "You were taking up space which I required for other purposes." and on Major Plank and Pop Cook in Aunts Aren't Gentlemen, ch. 19 (1974): "(a) Why are you taking up space in my cottage which I require for other purposes, and (b) What the hell are you talking about?" Aunt Dahlia uses it too: "I admit that I'm always happier when I don't have Spink-Bottle breathing down the back of my neck and taking up space in the house which I require for other purposes, but the girl was as welcome as manna in the wilderness." Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 17 (1963) in your puff (p. 118) ° A colloquial expression, probably by transference from puff: breath of life, for "in your whole life": You never saw the like of it in all your born puff. James Joyce: Ulysses, ch. 12 ("Cyclops") (1922) (page 510 in Everyman edition) The OED cites Wodehouse from Mr. Mulliner Speaking: "Did you ever see a hat like that, Stinker?" "Never in my puff," replied his friend. "The Passing of Ambrose" (1928) See also The Inimitable Jeeves. perisher (p. 118) * See Heavy Weather. unmasking my batteries (p. 118) * In military artillery, this means removing the camouflage coverings from one's array of cannons or other gunnery. Figuratively, it means revealing one's ability to fight. with a perfectly familiar map (p. 119) See The Clicking of Cuthbert. the work of a moment (p. 120) * See A Damsel in Distress. ancient Roman gladiators (p. 120) Bertie is thinking of the retiarius ("net man"), a gladiator whose principal weapons were a large net and a trident. Unlike other gladiators, who were usually well-armoured and often carried a large shield, the retiarius wore minimal armour and relied on speed and agility to evade his opponent. His only protection was a leather or padded arm-guard (manica), which extended to cover the shoulder and left side of the chest, and sometimes a metal shoulder shield (galerus), which protected the neck and lower face. purler (p. 120) * A headfirst fall or trip; British colloquial from mid-19th century. the ham-like hand which was impeding my progress (p. 121) * See Bill the Conqueror. as reason began to return to her throne (p. 122) * See Hot Water. The US first edition capitalizes Reason here. burnous (p. 122) * The hooded cloak of light-colored fabric commonly worn by Arabs and Moors in desert climates. More usually spelled burnoose in recent American usage. York and Ainsty Hunt (p. 122) * A fox-hunting club in Yorkshire (see this 1899 book on its history); apparently now divided into North and South clubs. like quills upon the fretful porpentine (p. 123) See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse. See also p. 92 and p. 202. a dead snip (p. 123) * An easy task, or a certain or confidently anticipated winner of a contest, as in the horse race referred to in this sentence. The OED has citations dating back to 1894, and quotes Wodehouse: "Wooster," the word flew to and fro, "is the deadest of snips. He throws a beautiful dart." Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 2 (1954) I remember once, during a temporary rift with Jeeves, engaging a man [who] set fire to the house and tried to slice me up (p. 123) * This was Brinkley in Thank You, Jeeves, chapter 13 (1934). like an adagio dancer (p. 124) In ballet, and other styles of dance, an adagio dancer is one who moves relatively slowly and is often lifted or carried, as distinct from an allegro dancer, whose movements are typically faster and usually involve lots of leaping and spinning. The OED cites Wodehouse's use of "adagio dancer" in Joy in the Morning (1946), but overlooks this rather earlier example. full of beans and buck (p. 124) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. the man pales beneath the tan a bit (p. 127) * See Uncle Fred in the Springtime. a sort of Soul's Awakening look (p. 127) ° "The Soul's Awakening" is a painting by the Victorian artist James Sant RA (1820–1916). The painting, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1888, is a portrait of the artist's 13-year-old great niece, Annie Kathleen Rendle. The sentimentality of the subject appealed to the Victorian public and the painting was widely reproduced in engravings and prints. See The Inimitable Jeeves for links to images of the painting. The other work for which Sant is now remembered is a painting which was first exhibited in 1853 under the title "Speak Lord for Thy Servant Heareth" but which is now better known under the title given it when it was reproduced as an engraving, "The Infant Samuel". an aunt who dandled one on her knee as a child (p. 127) In "Clustering Round Young Bingo" Bertie refers to his Aunt Dahlia's marriage to Tom Travers in terms that seem to imply he had not met her before (from which one would suppose that Tom Travers is his maternal uncle and Dahlia merely an aunt by marriage). But that supposition seems to be contradicted by Bertie's recollection of having been dandled on Dahlia's knee when a child. [Four of the later novels, from Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit (1954) onward, as well as "Jeeves and the Greasy Bird" in Plum Pie, have Bertie referring to Aunt Dahlia as his father's sister, so that is explicit. There seems to be no reason not to suppose that Bertie's mother, about whom we know very little, might have been sister to Uncle Tom Travers, so that both family relationships might be true. —NM] this bally Bassett (p. 128) * The adjective "bally" (see The Inimitable Jeeves) is a rather strong one to use on a woman, even a soppy one like Madeline; this gives some idea of Bertie's pique with the situation. (The Penguin 1953 plates incorrectly capitalize "Bally" here; the capitalization is not in original editions.) drained the bitter cup (p. 128) Experienced disappointment, humiliation, pain, anguish. The phrase is usually assumed to allude to the words of Christ, in which he speaks of his coming agony as "a cup": But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? Bible: Matthew 20:22 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. Bible: Matthew 26:39 There may be a secondary allusion to the fate of Socrates, who was condemned to die by drinking a cup of hemlock. As in the present instance, however, Wodehouse rarely uses the phrase to denote emotions any more severe than disappointment or irritation: "Golly! Uncle Tom must be frothing at the mouth a bit," I said, for I knew the old buster's distaste for guests in the home. Even a single weekender is sometimes enough to make him drain the bitter cup. Jeeves in the Offing, ch. 1 "The demeanour of Mr. Travers cast something of a gloom on the proceedings. He was low-spirited." "He always is when Aunt Dahlia fills the house with guests. I've known even a single foreign substance in the woodwork to make him drain the bitter cup." Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 1 It can be something as serious as an undesired engagement or marriage, though: Bertram was for it. He would have to drain the bitter cup, after all. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 20 (1954) rotten at hunt-the-slipper (p. 129) ° "Hunt the Slipper" is a traditional English children's game. Those taking part sit in a circle, all except one, who sits in the middle, eyes closed and with his hands covering his eyes. The others pass a slipper around the circle, behind their backs, while chanting: Cobbler, cobbler mend your shoe, Have it done by half past two. The player in the centre of the ring then chants: Cobbler, cobbler tell me true, Which of you has got my shoe? As he finishes, the other players stop passing the slipper and the player in the centre opens his eyes and tries to guess, from facial appearances, which of the other players has the slipper. If he guesses wrongly, he changes places with the person holding the slipper. In Jeeves in the Offing / How Right You Are, Jeeves, ch. 10 (1960), Bertie's lack of skill at hunt-the-slipper is compared to that of Sir Roderick Glossop, who was expert at it as a child. he has cropped out (p. 129) ° The OED gives no definition for this usage. Something is said to "crop out" when it comes out, appears, or discloses itself accidentally, as, for example, a topic which arises unexpectedly during the course of a conversation. Wodehouse's meaning seems to be that the threat from Spode has been eliminated or cut off (hence "cropped"). [As it turns out, this is a Penguin misprint for "dropped out," which appears in the US magazine appearance in the Saturday Evening Post (August 13, 1938), the US first edition book, the UK newspaper serial (Daily Mail, 1 October 1938), the UK first edition book, the 1990 Vintage UK paperback, and all other sources I can find. —NM] this Becher's Brook (p. 129) Becher's Brook is a notoriously difficult obstacle in the Grand National horse-racing circuit at Aintree, Liverpool. It is named after Captain Martin Becher, who rode in the first National to be run at Aintree, in 1839; his horse, Conrad, refused to jump the sixth fence, catapulting Becher over the fence and into the brook. Becher's Brook is jumped twice in the Grand National, as the sixth and 22nd fence. The fence is a fairly modest 4 feet 10 inches on the take-off side, but on the landing side there is a two-foot wide brook and — what makes the fence so difficult — the ground is nearly two feet lower than on take-off. The drop used to be even greater on the inside of the track but the landing area has now been levelled off, in an effort to reduce the number of horses killed or injured at this fence. To add to the difficulty of the fence, it is situated just where the course makes its first turn, with the result that the extra drop on landing comes as even more of a surprise to the horses. gird up your loins (p. 130) Prepare for work, or for a journey. Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: Bible: 2 Kings 4:29 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; Bible: Luke 12:35 tying itself into reefer knots (p. 131) A reefer knot is a square (or 'reef') knot with a loop in it that allows the knot to be untied quickly. It takes its name from the days of sailing ships, when the act of reefing the sails (folding them up and tying them to the cross-yard) was an essential precaution if strong winds threatened to rip the sails or make the ship impossible to handle. two minds with but a single thought (p. 132) See Right Ho, Jeeves. like a Scottish elder rebuking sin (p. 132) See p 68. Return to top

Chapter 8 (pp. 133–156) canine excrescence (p. 134) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. till the cows ... came home (p. 134) * A proverbial expression, already a "saying" in 1610 when first recorded in the OED citations, for an indefinitely long time. This seems to be its first usage by Wodehouse. I can write novels till the cows come home. What slays you is this gosh-darned autographing. "Something Clever" in Punch, October 6, 1954; also in America, I Like You (1956) and Over Seventy (1957) "You can vouch for this?" "Till the cows come home." French Leave, ch. 10 (1956) "I love you, old girl, and I shall continue to love you till the cows come home." Sidney McMurdo to Agnes Flack in "Scratch Man" (in A Few Quick Ones, 1959) "You can say 'Oh, Freddie!' till the cows come home, but the question still remains moot." Ice in the Bedroom, ch. 25 (1961) "And while girls can break engagements till the cows come home, men can't." Ginger Winship in Much Obliged, Jeeves, ch. 13 (1971) "You take the jewel case, ostensibly to leave it with the bank, and on the way there you throw it into some convenient pond or river, where it will remain unseen till the cows come home." Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin, ch. 10.3 (1972) like a bump on a log (p. 134) Unmoving, inactive, stupidly silent (American idiom dating from the mid-1800s). Freddie Widgeon ... chased on to the top of a wardrobe by an Alsatian (p. 134) * The story is recounted in "Good-bye to All Cats" (1934; in Young Men in Spats, 1936). Heir of the Ages (p. 134) "Heir of the Ages" is an epithet often applied to mankind. The Heir of the Ages is the title of a book by James Payn (1888) and of an unrelated silent movie (1917) I wonder what Adam'd think of me—as a specimen. Civilisation, eigh? Heir of the ages! I'm nothing. I know nothing. I can't do anything—sketch a bit. Why wasn't I made an artist? H. G. Wells: The Wheels of Chance, ch. 27 (1896) Corner Table, heir of the ages; victor of Waterloo, Corner Table, Modern man as his master want him to be. A docile little porker, sitting in the money-sty, drinking Bovex. George Orwell: Keep the Aspidistra Flying, ch. 1 (1936) Man, "heir of the ages," is a demoralised spendthrift, in a state of galloping consumption, living on stimulants. H. G. Wells: The New World Order (1940) come over with the Conqueror (p. 134) See Summer Moonshine. Aunt Agatha's McIntosh (p. 134) * The story is recounted in "Jeeves and the Dog McIntosh" (1929; in Very Good, Jeeves, 1930). Upon my Sam (p. 134) See Love Among the Chickens. lazar house (p. 135) A house for diseased persons, especially lepers (from Lazarus, a sore-ridden beggar in the parable of the rich man: Luke 16:19–31). a visit ... to my Aunt Agatha ... I was chivvied ... by an angry swan (p. 135) * The story is recounted in "Jeeves and the Impending Doom" (1926; in Very Good, Jeeves, 1930). pourparlers (p. 136) French: informal discussions preliminary to actual negotiations. like a Volga boatman (p. 137) The Volga Boatman (1926) was a film by Cecil B. DeMille. Set at the time of the Russian Revolution, it tells the story of Feodor, the boatman of the title, who, until he becomes caught up in the revolution, spends his days yoked together with a dozen or so companions as they haul barges by rope up and down the Volga river, "with a slow and dragging step." A Volga Boatman is also a cocktail drink consisting mainly of vodka, with which are mixed smaller amounts of kirsch and fresh orange juice, the general effect being to leave one incapable of anything more than a "slow and dragging step." making the world safe for democracy (p. 137) On 2 April 1917, US President Woodrow Wilson addressed an extraordinary joint session of Congress which he had summoned in order to seek a Declaration of War against Germany. During his speech he stated that "The world must be made safe for democracy." another point d'appui (p. 138) French: point of support, a fulcrum, but used figuratively to refer to a strategic point. to tickle the ivories (p. 138) ° To play the piano: the keys of a piano were traditionally covered with ivory. Harold broke the slides (p. 138) * Those of us who grew up with 35mm Kodachrome slides in 2x2-inch cardboard mounts may be surprised that slides can be broken, but this reference is relatively early; 35mm Kodachrome dates only from 1936, and some early projection slides were mounted between two pieces of glass sealed with tape around the edges. Alternatively, these may possibly have been Autochrome glass plates for larger-format cameras and projectors, or even black-and-white photographs, printed on emulsion-coated glass slides, then hand-colored. the W.1 postal district of London (p. 139) * Most of the fashionable areas of London, including Mayfair, Piccadilly, Grosvenor Square, Hanover Square, Harley Street, Oxford Street, Regent Street, Savile Row, Fitzrovia, Marylebone and others lie within the W1 postal district. the heart bleeds (p. 139) ° This phrase was presumably already of some antiquity when it was included in Webster's Dictionary of 1828, with the explanation "used to denote extreme pain from sympathy or pity." Indeed, Shakespeare used it ca. 1600 in that sense: But I tell thee, my heart bleeds inwardly that my father is so sick: and keeping such vile company as thou art hath in reason taken from me all ostentation of sorrow. Shakespeare: Prince Henry, in The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, II, ii Time, the great healer (p. 139) See Right Ho, Jeeves. alarm and despondency (p. 140) * See Ukridge. content merely to sit and stare (p. 140) What is this life if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare? No time to stand beneath the boughs, And stare as long as sheep and cows: W. H. Davies (1871–1940), "Leisure" full of strange oaths (p. 140) All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages. At first the infant, Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms. And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel, And shining morning face, creeping like snail Unwillingly to school. And then the lover, Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier, Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard, Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel, Seeking the bubble reputation Even in the cannon's mouth. Shakespeare: As You Like It, Act II, sc 7 See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse for other references to this passage. clap a hand to her throat, like someone in a play (p. 140) * Florence clapped a hand to her throat, a thing I didn't know anybody ever did off the stage. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 13 (1954) ...found myself confronted by a girl in housemaid's costume who put a hand to her throat like somebody in a play and leaped several inches in the direction of the ceiling. Jeeves in the Offing/How Right You Are, Jeeves, ch. 7 (1960) ...Linda had sprung to her feet, uttered a choking cry like Gally's friend who swallowed the aspirin tablet, and clutched at her throat in the manner of the heroine of a mystery play when there is a shriek in the night. A Pelican at Blandings, ch. 9.2 (1969) See also Spring Fever. her demon lover (p. 140) See Summer Moonshine. the little geezer (p. 140) * Wodehouse uses "geezer" somewhat unusually; typically in British slang it is a somewhat derisory term for a man, often but not always elderly. Syd Price uses "old geezer" of Ma Price in If I Were You, ch. 20; Reggie Havershot uses it for Miss Beulah Brinkmeyer/Brinkwater in Laughing Gas, ch. 7; Horace Pendlebury-Davenport uses it for the elderly female Peke-breeder in Uncle Fred in the Springtime, ch. 16; Mrs. Bingo's mother is an old geezer in "Sonny Boy" in Eggs, Beans and Crumpets. Bertie calls Angela Travers a "young geezer" in Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 19; Master Seabury a "silly little geezer" in Thank You, Jeeves. So for Wodehouse's output through 1939 we have four older women, two young women, and a boy of twelve called geezers of one variety or another. The only cases so far found of older men called geezers in later stories are Bulstrode the chemist in Pigs Have Wings, ch. 11.5, and a reference to Hermione Bostock's parents as "old geezers" in Pongo's thoughts in Uncle Dynamite, ch. 3. Otherwise, the geezers are all female, including Aunt Dahlia, Dame Daphne Winkworth, Mrs. Purkiss, Nannie Byles, and two young geezers, Nobby Hopwood and Phyllis Mills. young pimple (p. 140) * As with "young prune", the adjective "young" modifies what is usually a term of contempt into a wary blend of admiration and caution. Bertie had called Angela Travers a young pimple in Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 19. see him steadily and see him whole (p. 141) * See The Clicking of Cuthbert. my nonage (p. 141) Legal infancy, minority, period of immaturity (from French nonage, literally "not of age"). catch him in Lent (p. 141) In the Christian churches, Lent is a period of abstinence prior to the Easter festival. It takes its name from Old English lencten — Spring, the period when the days lengthen. In the early days of Christianity, the length of this period of abstinence varied greatly, but by the 7th century it was more or less fixed at 40 days (excluding Sundays), commencing on Ash Wednesday and ending on Easter Sunday. While it was generally agreed that abstinence should involve eating no more than one meal each day, in the evening after the service of nones, and that no meat should be eaten on Sundays during Lent, the degree of abstinence otherwise varied greatly: Pope St. Gregory (d. 604) endeavoured to establish uniformity, insisting that the daily meal during Lent should include neither flesh meat nor what comes from flesh (i.e. milk, cheese and eggs). In recent times, the Lenten restrictions have been increasingly relaxed and there is no reason to suppose that, even in Lent, Rev. Pinker would resemble the "lean, finely trained" Stinker of old. incapable of walking through the great Gobi desert without knocking something over (p. 142) * The fact was that Bill [Lister], though an admirable character, was always a little large for any room in which he was confined. To ensure his not kicking over cake tables, you would have had to place him in the Gobi Desert. Full Moon, ch. 8.2 (1947) "You move in a mysterious way your wonders to perform, Stinker. I believe you would bump into something if you were crossing the Gobi desert." Bertie to Harold Pinker (again) in Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 3 (1963) as if conscience were gnawing at his vitals (p. 142) That haunting visitation left Duane sitting there in a cold sweat, a remorse gnawing at his vitals, realizing the curse that was on him. Zane Grey: The Lone Star Ranger, Book 1 ch. 2 (1915) The anguish that the recollection of his treachery caused him was worse than a physical pain gnawing at his vitals. W. Somerset Maugham: "A Man with a Conscience" (1939) preaches about Hivites, Jebusites and what-not (p. 143) The Hivites and Jebusites were two of the Canaanite tribes which were conquered by the Israelites after the latter's exodus from Egypt (eg Exodus, xiii, 5). The Hivites have been identified with the Hurrians, whose name occurs frequently in ancient Near-Eastern texts. Jebusite was a 17th-century nickname for Roman Catholics. See also Money in the Bank. speaks the word in season (p. 143) ° A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good it is! Bible: Proverbs 15:23 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. Bible: 2 Timothy 4:2 Wodehouse titled a 1940 magazine short story "The Word in Season"; it was later revised and combined with the central situation of the newspaper story "Bingo Little's Wild Night Out" for its book appearance under the old title in A Few Quick Ones (1959). sticking on dog (p. 145) "Put on the dog" is a phrase which now means "get dressed up," but when it first appeared in the late 19th century, as "put on dog" it meant to be pretentious, to put on airs, which is the sense intended here. a Red Indian at the stake (p. 145) * See Aunts Aren't Gentlemen. tantamount to shooting a sitting bird (p. 145) A crime as heinous as shooting a fox. When shooting grouse or pheasants, Englishmen employ beaters to harry the birds into flight, thus making the task of shooting them (the birds) more challenging. at twelve pip emma (p. 146) That is, 12 pm. The phrase is RAF slang (in which "ack emma" is morning and "ack-ack" is "anti-aircraft') and derives from a phonetic alphabet that was developed in the trenches in WW I by field telephone operators, when "ack," "emma" and "pip" were respectively the phonetic equivalents of the letters "a," "m" and "p." A similar usage still persists in the name of a well-known charity, Toc H, that takes its name from the initials of Talbot House, in the Belgian town of Poperinge, where it was founded during WW I: in the phonetic jargon, "toc" stood for the letter "t." trying to keep on the straight and narrow path (p. 147) See Love Among the Chickens. Wormwood Scrubs (p. 147) * See The Clicking of Cuthbert. calm insouciance (p. 147) Indifference, lack of concern (from French). expelled it nonchalantly (p. 148) * See p. 29 above. I mentioned ... laughing down from lazy eyelids ... (p. 148) * Indeed, this was mentioned in an earlier book; see Right Ho, Jeeves. ground beneath the iron heel (p. 148) The Iron Heel (1908) is a futuristic novel by Jack London which tells of the overthrow of democracy in the United States by a fascist capitalist oligarchy, the "Iron Heel." The phrase is thought, however, to date from 20 years earlier, 3 December 1888, when President Grover Cleveland, delivering his annual address to Congress, commented: "As we view the achievements of aggregated capital, we discover the existence of trusts, combinations, and monopolies, while the citizen is struggling far in the rear or is trampled to death beneath an iron heel. Corporations, which should be the carefully restrained creatures of the law and the servants of the people, are fast becoming the people's masters." lika a two-year-old (p. 148) * See Carry On, Jeeves. with knobs on (p. 149) The OED defines this as "jocular slang phrase as equivalent to "that and more" (indicating ironic or emphatic agreement, or in retort to an insult, etc)" and includes this Wodehouse example among its citations. quaver in the v. (p. 149) * voice turned on the h. (p. 149) * heel started going oomp (p. 150) * This onomatopoetic spelling of a woman's sobs is apparently unique in Wodehouse. Lottie Blossom, in The Luck of the Bodkins, ch. 11, moans "oomph" while sitting on Monty Bodkin's bed in his stateroom; that spelling is usually reserved for a synonym for sex appeal. Not to be confused with "oompus-boompus," another way of referring to rannygazoo or skulduggery. wheeze (p. 151) * Here used as a synonym for "scheme"; more often used as a catchphrase or repeated joke; see Right Ho, Jeeves. a beezer twice the proper size (p. 151) * See Hot Water. looking at him with a wild surmise (p. 151) See p. 218 below and The Clicking of Cuthbert. knuckleduster (p. 152) * See Uncle Fred in the Springtime. that Stiffy and I are that way (p. 152) * That way is a phrase with several euphemistic meanings; the OED gives citations for the sense of "in love" from 1865 until modern times. overwhelming relief (p. 153) * In Jeeves in the Offing/How Right You Are, Jeeves, Bobbie Wickham announces her engagement to Bertie Wooster for a similar reason, merely as a ploy to soften up her mother Lady Wickham so that her actual engagement to Kipper Herring will seem like a better alternative and come as a relief. a walk-over (p. 153) * See Summer Lightning. specific dream-rabbit (p. 153) * A slangy encomium indeed! In The Luck of the Bodkins, ch. 1 (1935), Monty Bodkin writes a letter to Gertrude Butterwick with the salutation "My Precious Dream-Rabbit." In "The Code of the Mulliners" (1935; collected in Young Men in Spats, 1936) Archibald Mulliner calls Aurelia Cammarleigh "my precious angel dream-rabbit." Bingo Little addresses his wife as "my precious dream-rabbit" in the book version of "The Word in Season" (in A Few Quick Ones, 1959). like billy-o (p. 154) * See A Damsel in Distress. Kipling was right. D. than the m. (p. 155) See p. 89. some Roman gladiator—one of those chaps who threw knotted sheets over people (p. 155) * See p. 120 above. the call-boy shouting his number in the wings (p. 155) * Theatrical jargon for a stage manager's assistant who gives backstage announcements to the performers, here using the terminology of a music-hall revue or vaudeville show in which a "number" is one of the individual acts, whether or not it is a musical piece. Oh, Diamond, Diamond (p. 155) The reference is to a story about the great English scientist and mathematician, Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), who is said to have had a dog named Diamond. As recounted in Brewer's Dictionary, 1894 edition, one winter's morning, while attending early service in Trinity College, Newton inadvertently left the dog shut up in his room. Returning from chapel, he found that Diamond had knocked over a burning candle, setting fire to papers that contained "the unfinished labours of some years." Newton is said to have cried "Oh Diamond, Diamond! Thou little knowest the mischief thou hast done!" "Yoicks! Tally-ho!" (p. 156) * Cries from the fox-hunting field. Return to top

Chapter 9 (pp. 157–170) It has been well said of Bertram Wooster by those who know him best (p. 157) * Bertie's gentlemanly modesty forces him to use this formula several times in putting forward his good qualities: It has been well said of Bertram Wooster by those who know him best that, whatever other sporting functions he may see fit to oil out of, you will always find him battling to his sixteen handicap at the annual golf tournament of the Drones Club. "Jeeves and the Kid Clementina" (1930; in Very Good, Jeeves) It has been well said of Bertram Wooster that, while no one views his flesh and blood with a keener

and more remorselessly critical eye, he is nevertheless a man who delights in giving credit where credit is due. Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 4 (1934) It has been well said of Bertram Wooster that he is a man who is at all times glad to see his friends and can be relied upon to greet them with a cheery smile and a gay quip. Thank You, Jeeves, ch. 9 (1934) It has been well said of Bertram Wooster by those who enjoy his close acquaintance that if there is one quality more than another that distinguishes him, it is his ability to keep the lip stiff and upper and make the best of things. Joy in the Morning, ch. 5 (1946) It has been well said of Bertram Wooster that though he may sink onto rustic benches and for a while give the impression of being licked to a custard, the old spirit will always come surging back sooner or later. The Mating Season, ch. 10 (1949) It has been well said of Bertram Wooster that when he sets his hand to the plough he does not stop to pick daisies and let the grass grow under his feet. Much Obliged, Jeeves/Jeeves and the Tie That Binds, ch. 8 (1971) Wodehouse even used a similar phrase about himself in a humorous essay; see Summer Lightning. Compare also: Ask anyone at the Drones, and they will tell you that Bertram Wooster is a fellow whom it is dashed difficult to deceive. “The Indian Summer of an Uncle” (1930; in Very Good, Jeeves) But it has often been said of Bertram Wooster that in moments of intense peril he has an uncanny knack of getting inspiration, and this happened now. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 16 (1954) Those who know Bertram Wooster best are aware that he is not a man who readily slops over when speaking of the opposite sex. He is cool and critical. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 17 (1954) It is pretty generally recognized in the circles in which he moves that Bertram Wooster is not a man who lightly throws in the towel and admits defeat. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 21 (1954) “Wooster,” those who know me have sometimes said, “may be a pretty total loss during the daytime hours, but plunge the world in darkness, switch on the soft lights, uncork the champagne and shove a dinner into him, and you’d be surprised.” Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 6 (1963) If you ask about me in circles which I frequent, you will be told that I am a good mixer who is always glad to shake hands with new faces… Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen, ch. 5 (1974) rise on stepping-stones of his dead self (p. 157) See p. 16. with leaden feet, as the expression is (p. 157) * This is a fairly early example of Wodehouse’s use of the expression. He passed from the room with leaden feet, and, proceeding upstairs, changed into morning clothes and a top hat. “The Story of Webster” (1932; in Mulliner Nights, 1933) With leaden feet he stumbled to State-room B 36. The Luck of the Bodkins, ch. 13 (1935) On leaden feet Anselm left the room. His hopes were shattered. “Anselm Gets His Chance” (1937; in Eggs, Beans and Crumpets, 1940) Presently she rose and made her way with leaden feet to her room. Money in the Bank, ch. 2 (1941) An hour’s aimless rambling through London’s sunlit streets had taken Terry to Berkeley Square, and she had paused to survey it and to think with regret how they had ruined this pleasant oasis with their beastly Air Ministries and blocks of flats, when she was aware of a bowed figure clumping slowly towards her on leaden feet. Spring Fever, ch. 20 (1948) It was hardly worth going in, he felt, when he reached the club, but something seemed to force him through the doorway: and he was approaching the smoking-room on leaden feet, when the door opened and out came Barmy Fotheringay~Phipps and Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright. “The Shadow Passes” (in Nothing Serious, 1950) He was pacing the terrace with bent head and leaden feet, like a Volga boatman. Cocktail Time, ch. 22 (1958) George Porter, who had just appeared, gave the impression, as he advanced toward us on leaden feet, of having had his insides removed by a taxidermist who had absent-mindedly forgotten to complete the operation by stuffing him. “Joy Bells for Walter” (in A Few Quick Ones, 1959) I came away from the telephone on what practically amounted to leaden feet. Jeeves in the Offing/How Right You Are, Jeeves, ch. 2 (1960) You will recall my telling you (p. 157) * See the second paragraph of Chapter 4; biscuits are defined at p. 62 above. the binge under advisement (p. 157) * Wodehouse sometimes uses binge in its usual slang sense for a spree, a bout of drinking, but he also uses it ironically for a situation, a scheme, a tricky plan which may not be as enjoyable as a real spree. This sense is not yet recognized in the OED but is noted in Green’s Dictionary of Slang, with three Wodehouse citations from 1923 to 1960 under definition 3, “a situation”; click on the horizontal-line icon to the right of the timeline to display the citations. Another: Like some great general forming his plan of campaign on the eve of battle, Archie had the whole binge neatly worked out inside a minute. “The Wigmore Venus” (1921, also in Indiscretions of Archie) to keep a tryst with the headmaster (p. 157) * In this sense, an appointment in his office for special punishment such as caning. he in tweeds and a dirty look (p. 157) * A rare Wodehouse example of zeugma, a rhetorical device of making a grammatical parallel between two items of different classes. See If I Were You. put the lid on the shrinking feeling (p. 157) * See Ukridge. sanctum (p. 158) * See Cocktail Time. in statu pupillari days (p. 160) Latin: literally, in a state of wardship, but more usually denoting the condition of being schoolboys. Quis custodiet ipsos custodes (p. 160) Latin: who is to guard the guards themselves? (from Juvenal, Satires, VI, 347–8) the late Lord Asquith (p. 160) ° Herbert Henry Asquith (1852–1928), 1st Earl of Oxford and Asquith, was a prominent Liberal politician of the late 19th and early 20th century. He served as Home Secretary under Gladstone and as Chancellor of the Exchequer under Campbell-Bannerman, before succeeding the latter as Prime Minister in 1908. In December 1916, he was forced from office and replaced by David Lloyd George, an event which divided the Liberal Party and from which it has never recovered. Asquith is said to have used the phrase “wait and see” so often, in response to Opposition questions about the 1910 Budget, that it became inextricably associated with him and when, during the War, his Government seemed to lack a clear policy and a sense of direction, his opponents were quick to use it as a taunt. See Bill the Conqueror. Wodehouse dedicated Meet Mr. Mulliner (1927) to Lord Asquith. letting the dead past bury its dead (p. 160) See p. 15. pince-nezing me coldly (p. 160) Pince-nez (literally “pinch-nose’) are spectacles which are kept in place by a spring clipped to the nose. Only Wodehouse, one suspects, would have thought to turn the word into a verb: the OED recognises the adjective “pince-nezed” but overlooks Wodehouse’s usage. a certain license is traditionally granted by the authorities (p. 160) * Here, Sir Watkyn uses the same language as the unnamed magistrate in “Without the Option”; see Boat Race night above, p. 7. This further corroborates Bertie’s report that the magistrate was Sir Watkyn himself. chokey . . . Bastille . . . jug (p. 161) Three words with but a single meaning: prison. “Chokey” (also “choky,” “chokee,” “chowkie” and other variants) is English slang deriving from the Hindi word chauki, meaning a shed, watch-house or lock-up. The Bastille, in Paris, was a royal castle built by Charles V between 1370 and 1383. It was later used as a state prison and came to symbolise the tyranny and oppression of the French monarchy. The storming of the Bastille by a Paris mob, on 14 July 1789, heralded the start of the French Revolution and 14 July, Bastille Day, is now a French national holiday, having much the same significance in France as Independence Day does in other countries. “Jug” (originally stone-jug) was a nickname for Newgate prison, and hence for prison in general: He shall be kept in the Stone Jug, Charley, like a gentleman. Charles Dickens: Oliver Twist, ch. 43 (1838) Take newts, I was saying. You wouldn’t think it, but Gussie Fink-Nottle tells me they get it right up their noses in the mating season … waggling their tails at the local belles. (p. 162) * “Do you know how a male newt proposes, Bertie? He just stands in front of the female newt vibrating his tail and bending his body in a semicircle.” Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 2 (1934) in another half-jiffy (p. 163) * See Leave It to Psmith. not put into the world for pleasure alone (p. 163) * Although this sounds like a quotation from a sermon, so far it has not been found earlier than this book. Wodehouse returned often to the idea: “Every young man starting out in life ought to wear a false beard, if only for a day or two. It stiffens the fibre, teaches him that we were not put into this world for pleasure alone.” Galahad Threepwood to Bill Lister in Full Moon, ch. 6 (1947) With restored equanimity he dismissed him from his thoughts and settled down to dictate a letter to the Consolidated Nail File and Eyebrow Tweezer Corporation of Scranton, Pa., which would make them realize that life is stern and earnest and that Nail File and Eyebrow Tweezer Corporations are not put into this world for pleasure alone. Spring Fever, ch. 1 (1948) You come out of it a finer, deeper, graver man, not perhaps so fond of French prison warders as you used to be, but with a wonderful feeling of having had your soul tried in the furnace and the realization that life is stern and earnest and that we are not put into this world for pleasure alone. May 11, 1942, letter to Bill Townend, in Performing Flea (1953) “You know,” she said, as we reached the open spaces, “we really ought to do something about Oates, something that would teach him that we’re not put into this world for pleasure alone.” Stiffy Byng in Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, ch. 24 (1963) A snippet from the House of Lords debates in 1980 gives credit to Wodehouse for the phrase: “in the memorable words of Mr. P. G. Wodehouse, a salutary reminder that we are not sent into this world for pleasure alone.” Wodehouse occasionally referred to those who ignored this admonition: One sometimes thinks that aunts live entirely for pleasure. “The Rough Stuff” (1921) The Subject, who appeared to be abroad somewhere, for there was frequent mention of a Casino, was evidently one of those people who live for pleasure alone. Uncle Fred in the Springtime, ch. 1 (1939) And unfortunately they [armadillos] are noisy and rowdy and seem to live for pleasure alone. “Armadillos, Hurricanes, and What Not” in Over Seventy (1957) Sometimes one feels that aunts live for pleasure alone. Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen, ch. 4 (1974) And conversely: Constable Evans, resentful of the implication that the police force of Market Blandings lived for pleasure alone, replied that this was far from being the case. Galahad at Blandings, ch. 10.2 (1965) a pea on a hot shovel (p. 163) * He did not say, “She is coming, my own, my sweet,” but leaped like a pea on a hot shovel, spraying brilliantine in all directions. Lionel Green in Money in the Bank, ch. 24 (1941) It was with a distinctly fevered hand that Florence reached out for a dressing-gown, and in her deportment, as she hopped from between the sheets, I noted a marked suggestion of a pea on a hot shovel. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 13 (1954) ...the large young man standing facing him, whose deportment resembled rather closely that of a pea on a hot shovel. Jerry Shoesmith in Biffen’s Millions/Frozen Assets, ch. 1 (1964) She liked him least when he behaved like a pea on a hot shovel. Lady Hermione, considering Galahad Threepwood in Galahad at Blandings, ch. 2.2 (1965) like a rocketing pheasant (p. 163) The Common Pheasant, Phasianus colchicus, is noted for the noisy and abrupt manner in which it takes flight if disturbed: “Takes off with loud burst of wing-beats, and in sustained flight, wings continue to make distinctive whirring noise. . . shows marked ability to climb fast out of close surroundings. . . Capacity for steep rises, even through foliage, on sudden alarm offset by extremely limited endurance. . .” S Cramp & K E L Simmons (eds), The Birds of the Western Palearctic, vol II (1979) plucked the gowans fine (p. 163) Gowan is a general name for various white or yellow field flowers. When used without qualification, it is usually taken to refer to the common daisy, Bellis perennis. The phrase “plucked the gowans fine” is an English translation of phrase from a well-known Scottish poem and song: We twa hae run about the braes, And pou’d the gowans fine, But we’ve wander’d monie a weary fit, Sin auld lang syne. Robert Burns: “Auld Lang Syne” (1788) a stage wait (p. 164) * Once again Bertie shows his familiarity with theatrical jargon. This term means a pause, usually unexpected, in the performance of a play, during which nothing is happening. Most often this means that an actor has failed to enter on cue or has forgotten a line. a sound like the death-rattle of a dying duck (p. 164) * See The Mating Season. the greatest compliment a man can pay a woman (p. 164) * “You have paid me the greatest compliment a man can pay a woman, Mr. Waterson——” “The Rough Stuff” (1921; in The Clicking of Cuthbert, 1922) “She would look at the man and smile tremulously and say, ‘I’m sorry, so—so sorry. You have paid me the greatest compliment a man can pay a woman. But it cannot be.’” Sam the Sudden, ch. 18 (1925) “You have paid me the greatest compliment a man can bestow on a woman. And yet . . .” “The Story of William” (1927; in Meet Mr. Mulliner, 1927/28) “You don’t seem to realize that I have paid you the greatest compliment a man can pay a woman—or so I read somewhere.” Joe Vanringham to Jane Abbott in Summer Moonshine, ch. 5 (1938) “If she proposes to you, just blush a little and smile tremulously and say ‘I’m sorry—so, so sorry. You have paid me the greatest compliment a woman can pay a man. But it cannot be.” Nobby Hopwood to Bertie about Florence Craye in Joy in the Morning, ch. 12 (1946) “You have paid me the greatest compliment a man can pay a woman, or so they all tell me, but I still maintain you’re non compos. You simply can’t go talking like this to one whose troth is plighted to another.” Frozen Assets/Biffen’s Millions, ch. 2 (1964) tidings of great joy (p. 165) And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. Bible: Luke 2:10 that vicarage that you have in your gift (p. 165) * See p. 79, above. from base to apex (p. 166) * Bertie must have occasionally paid attention in mathematics class, as these are the technical terms in geometry for the bottom and the point of an upright pyramid or cone. So figuratively, this means “all over”: from sole of foot to top of head. A powerful convulsion shook me from base to apex. Reggie Havershot, in Laughing Gas, ch. 4 (1936) A sharp spasm shook him from base to apex. Tuppy Glossop, in Right Ho, Jeeves, ch. 15 (1934) neck and neck (p. 167) * Horse-racing jargon for “side by side”; neither one ahead of the other. Brinkley Court in the preceding summer (p. 167) * The events of that summer are recounted in Right Ho, Jeeves (1934). rolling in the stuff (p. 167) * Figuratively, having enough money to wallow in a heap of currency. other indications of bien être (p. 168) French: well-being. R. Austin Freeman’s Dr. Thorndyke was a great believer in the importance of measuring footprints: in Mr. Pottermack’s Oversight (1930), his meticulous attention to the details of a set of footprints leads him to a solution of the mystery. And we are told by Sherlock Holmes himself: I found the ash of a cigar, which my special knowledge of tobacco ashes enables me to pronounce as an Indian cigar. I have, as you know, devoted some attention to this, and written a little monograph on the ashes of 140 different varieties of pipe, cigar, and cigarette tobacco. Arthur Conan Doyle: “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” in The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1892) pumpkin-headed foozlers (p. 169) A foozler is a bungler (later applied to one who plays golf badly). the Ogpu (p. 169) Ob’edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie’, or OGPU, the Combined State Political Directorate, was formed in 1923, when, as a result of the creation of the USSR, the various regional State Political Directorates were unified under a single authority. OGPU ceased to exist in 1934, when it was incorporated into the NKVD, the forerunner of the KGB. The OGPU was not merely a secret police force; it also ran a network of prisons and forced-labour camps, forcibly implemented Stalin’s policies of mass collectivisation and deportation of the kulaks (wealthy peasants), and was responsible for staging the show trials which Stalin used to rid himself of all opposition. Return to top Chapter 10 (pp. 171–182) drooping on her stem (p. 171) * This metaphoric comparison of Miss Bassett to a wilting flower is rare in Wodehouse but not quite unique: Dolly paused, panting a little, and Soapy’s lower jaw fell slowly like a tired flower drooping on its stem. Ice in the Bedroom, ch. 16 (1961) like the Mona Lisa … sorrows of the world (p. 171) See p. 88 above. coming over the plate a bit too fast (p. 171) * See Leave It to Psmith (1923) for a much earlier usage of this baseball metaphor. flash in the pan (p. 171) * See the Urban Dictionary for this proverbial phrase. blew a fuse (p. 171) * Fizzled out, as an electric circuit does when overloading it causes a fuse (or more recently a circuit breaker) to disconnect it. The earliest instance so far found: If anything goes wrong, I scream for an A.A. [Automobile Association] scout. It’s a system that answers admirably as a rule, but on the present occasion it blew a fuse owing to the fact that there wasn’t an A.A. scout within miles. “Jeeves and the Old School Chum” (1930; in Very Good, Jeeves) another wash-out (p. 171) * Slang for a total failure; see The Inimitable Jeeves. working in a spot of stage business (p. 171) Throughout his narrative, Bertie uses a number of stage terms: just before Gussie hits Spode with the painting, he is described as making a “sort of gasping gulp from up-stage”; Stiffy, seeing Stinker at her bedroom window, claps a hand to her throat “like someone in a play”; and after Bassett sends his butler to find Stiffy, “a stage wait then occurred.” Stage “business” denotes minor acts — e.g., lighting a cigarette, picking up a cup of tea, or re-arranging cushions on a sofa — that are not called for by the plot and that do nothing to further the action. cold collation (p. 171) * An informal meal of cold dishes served buffet-style. a cheese straw (p. 171) * A cheese straw is a cheese-flavored stick of baked pastry, usually well-shortened with butter to be intermediate in texture between a breadstick and a pie crust. the inev (p. 172) * The inevitable; something that cannot be avoided. low-down (p. 172) * See Leave It to Psmith. a satyr (p. 173) In Greek mythology, the satyrs were woodland gods, supposed to be comapnions of Bacchus. The Greeks represented satyrs as having the long ears and tail of a horse, but the Romans depicted them as part-goat and, like “goat,” “satyr” came to signify a lustful or lecherous man. that tout comprendre, c’est tout pardonner stuff (p. 173) See p. 109 above. pot-pourri (p. 173) * From the French, meaning a collection of mixed flower petals as a source of fragrance. Among many other uses in Wodehouse: There was a jar of pot-pourri on the drawing-room table, and he had derived considerable pleasure from sniffing at it. The Girl on the Boat, ch. 15 (1922) the crashing downfall of a small table containing a vase, a jar of pot-pourri, an Indian sandalwood box of curious workmanship, and a cabinet-size photograph of the Earl of Emsworth’s eldest son, Lord Bosham… Leave It to Psmith, ch. 11.2 (1923) took the air again (p. 173) * This phrase could possibly be interpreted in a number of contexts: in a musical sense where “air” means melody, it might mean “sang the same tune”; in the context of radio broadcasting, it might mean “went to the microphone again.” But the vast majority of uses of “took the air” so far found in Google Books searches of the 1920s and 1930s refer to an airplane being launched, and it is possible to interpret the present instance as an equivalent of “launched into the same atmosphere.” Any of these metaphors are plausible in the context; the root meaning is that she reiterated the same point. The only other instance so far found of “took the air” seems to mean “went for a walk” instead: And, mark you, Elizabeth Bottsworth was a girl a fellow could chat with without getting a crick in the neck from goggling up at her, the way you had to do when you took the air with Diana Punter. “The Amazing Hat Mystery” (1933; in Young Men in Spats, 1936) in a topper and a buttonhole (p. 174) * A short way of referring to formal morning dress, with a top hat and a flower in the buttonhole of one’s morning coat. we all had our cross to bear (p. 174) And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Bible: Matthew 10:38 pure as the driven snow (p. 175) * The metaphor, for snow that is still being blown in drifts and has not yet been walked upon, can be traced to the late 1500s. Wodehouse used it as early as 1926 in The Small Bachelor and as late as 1974 in Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen. more to be pitied than censured (p. 175) * See Leave It to Psmith. squiggle-eyed (p. 175) * See Ice in the Bedroom. plumb spang (p. 175) See Sam the Sudden. “Happy Days Are Here Again” (p. 175) See Summer Moonshine. with one finger (p. 175) * See Very Good, Jeeves. get outside a curried egg or two (p. 175) * See p. 17 above. throwing in the towel (p. 176) * Acknowledging defeat; see Right Ho, Jeeves. right in the mazzard (p. 176) In the face. stop, look, and listen (p. 177) ° “Stop, Look, and Listen” was the title of a song, lyrics by Ralph Freed, that was recorded by the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra in 1934. See also Leave It to Psmith. Snootered to bursting point (p. 177) See p. 89. slip it across Roderick Spode (p. 177) * See p. 117, above. pent up f’s (p. 178) * pent-up feelings soaping of the loofah (p. 179) ° A loofah is a stiff bath sponge used especially for scrubbing the back. It takes its name from a vine, Luffa aegyptiaca, or sponge gourd, a relative of the pumpkin which is native to tropical Africa and Asia. The vine produces a fibrous fruit, looking not unlike a large cucumber, that can grow to a length of up to two feet long and a diameter of about 3 inches. When the fruit is allowed to grow to maturity, then dried and peeled, it contains a fibrous skeleton which can be used as a sponge or even as a pot scourer. “I’m dashed if I do.” (p. 180) * See A Damsel in Distress. dragged home the gravy (p. 180) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. the Wreck of the Hesperus (p. 181–2) “The Wreck of the Hesperus” (1840) is a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Bertie quotes the first verse and Jeeves the second verse, both nearly word-perfect. promesso sposo (p. 182) Italian: betrothed man (literally, promised spouse). a consummation devoutly to be wished (p. 182) To be, or not to be: that is the question: Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to, ’tis a consummation Devoutly to be wish’d. Shakespeare: Hamlet, Act III Scene 1 See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse for more references to this passage. Return to top Chapter 11 (pp. 183–198) tacking about the room (p. 183) * Moving in a zigzag fashion, as a sailboat does when heading toward the direction from which the wind is coming. starting to pluck straws from his hair (p. 183) * See Bill the Conqueror. one man’s peach (p. 183) The usual phrase is “one man’s meat is another man’s poison,” but Wodehouse uses “peach” not just here but in The Man with Two Left Feet (“Wilton’s Holiday”) (1915/17) and Indiscretions of Archie, ch. 19 (1921, originally in magazines as “Paving the Way for Mabel”). meeting-place of the nations (p. 184) * I had looked on Maiden Eggesford as somewhere where I would be free from all human society, a haven where I would have peace perfect peace with loved ones far away, as the hymnbook says, and it was turning out to be a sort of meeting place of the nations. Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen, ch. 6 (1974) the spot marked with an X (p. 184) * See A Damsel in Distress. preferred . . . turn his face to the wall (p. 185) In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord. Bible: 2 Kings 20:1–2 stick to the res (p. 185) * See p. 72, above. tooth-bottle … jug (p. 186) * A country house might have only one bathroom for several bedrooms, so each bedroom would be furnished with a pitcher or jug of water and a bowl for washing one’s hands. Tooth-bottle is a little more obscure, and this online discussion has several suggestions, but since Gussie normally doesn’t drink liquor, I’m inclined to go with Grunyon there, who says “Sounds to me like a bottle ostensibly containing water for brushing one’s teeth. For situations where there is no ready access to tapwater.” At a guess, this might be boiled or filtered water for cleanliness, whereas the water in the jug might not need to be as pure. Market Snodsbury Grammar School (p. 186) * See Right Ho, Jeeves, chapter 17. nonnettes de poulet Agnès Sorel (p. 187) See Right Ho, Jeeves. like a gramophone record running down (p. 188) * Even though the process of recording phonograph records had become electrified over a decade earlier, many homes still used purely mechanical record players, with the vibrations of the needle in the groove amplified acoustically by a horn, and with the turntable driven by a spring mechanism which had to be occasionally wound up with a crank. the occasion at Chufnell Hall, when Sir Roderick Glossop had become locked up in the potting-shed (p. 188) * Recounted in Thank You, Jeeves, chs. 20–21 (1934). He is well stricken in years (p. 188) Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age Bible: Genesis 18:11 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. Bible: Luke 1:7 rather have a cup of tea (p. 188) Constable Oates would seem to be a disciple of Hash Todhunter: “When you’ve seen as much of life as I have,” he replied, “you’d rather have a cup of tea.” Sam the Sudden, ch. 1 (1925) feeling that Mr. Fink-Nottle’s need is greater than hers (p. 189) * See Right Ho, Jeeves. the boy who stood on the burning deck (p. 191) See A Damsel in Distress. ant’s egg (p. 192) * Before the development of modern flaked foods for aquarium fish, ant’s eggs were harvested and packaged for fish food. doing the old cat-in-an-adage stuff (p. 194) See p. 32. a cabinet photograph (p. 194) * See Leave It to Psmith. kick his spine up through his hat (p. 194) * See Hot Water. Man as Nature’s last word (p. 195) * See p. 63, above. There . . . but for whatever it is (p. 197) The phrase is “There, but for the grace of God, go I,” words attributed to John Bradford, a Protestant chaplain, as he watched a condemned criminal being led to his execution. Bradford was ordained in 1550, but when Mary Tudor came to the throne, in 1553, she moved quickly to suppress Protestant clerics and, within a month, Bradford was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London. In January 1555, after nearly two years in the Tower, he was removed to Newgate prison, where he was burnt at the stake as a heretic. hoof-beats of a galloping relative … touched in the wind (p. 197) * Affected in one’s breathing, exhausted. The OED definition of the phrase applies it to horses rather than humans, so Wodehouse is likening Aunt Dahlia to a racehorse at the end of a run, as his use of hoof-beats and galloping shows. Return to top Chapter 12 (pp. 199–206) cheesed the bird imitation (p. 199) * Stopped doing it; see The Inimitable Jeeves. taking an easy in the arm-chair (p. 199) * The colloquial noun sense of an easy meaning “a short rest” has only British citations in the OED, dating from 1885 to 1928. This noun sense is not shown in the late-20th-century UK and US dictionaries consulted so far. a parfit gentil knight (p. 199) He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde In al his lyf unto no maner wight. He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght. Geoffrey Chaucer: “The Knight’s Portrait,” from the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales a porringer (p. 199) ° A small shallow bowl of metal, earthenware, or wood, with one or two flat handles extending horizontally from the rim, from which soup, broth, porridge, and the like, is eaten. Bertie’s porringer would very likely have been made of silver, as in the image at right from Wikimedia. preux chevalier (p. 199) French: literally, valiant knight. The phrase was very common in the literature of the 19th century; examples can be found in the works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, William Makepeace Thackeray and Charlotte Yonge, in addition to those quoted below. Here have we gained a victory, unparalleled in history—and your behaviour is praised by every living mortal to the skies—and the Prince is eager to thank you in person—and all our beauties of the White Rose are pulling caps for you,—and you, the Preux Chevalier of the day, are stooping on your horse’s neck like a butter-woman riding to market, and looking as black as a funeral! Sir Walter Scott: Waverley, ch. 50 (1814) Mannering, agreeably flattered by this allusion to the fame of his celebrated ancestor, replied by professing himself only a distant relation of the preux chevalier, and added, “that in his opinion the wine was superlatively good.” Sir Walter Scott: Guy Mannering, ch. 36 (1815) Aurora sat with that indifference Which piques a preux chevalier — as it ought: Of all offences that’s the worst offence, Which seems to hint you are not worth a thought. Lord Byron: Don Juan, Canto XV (1819–24) . . . but our other knight—our other preux chevalier, sans peur et sans reproche—at whose feet will he lay his trophies, Marie? Anthony Trollope: La Vendée, ch. 5 (1850) “Come and give Mrs. Bold your arm,” said Charlotte, “while I set you on a piece of duty which, as a preux chevalier, you must immediately perform. Your personal danger will, I fear, be insignificant, as your antagonist is a clergyman.” Anthony Trollope: Barchester Towers, ch. 42 (1857) “You need not be ashamed,” said Madalina. “I have heard how well you behaved on that occasion. You were quite the preux chevalier; and if any gentleman ever deserved well of a lady you deserved well of her.” Anthony Trollope: The Last Chronicle of Barset, ch. 46 (1867) She had been most gracious to me at the Governor-General’s rout, and indeed I was looked upon by all as her preux chevalier—which is French for a much worse word. Rudyard Kipling: “The Dream of Duncan Parrenness,” in Life’s Handicap (1891) came within the veriest toucher (p. 199) * For toucher see Money for Nothing. The now-rare adjective “veriest” is an intensifier with the sense of “truest; fullest; most characteristic of its kind”; OED citations begin at 1530 but stop at 1878. the Berks and Bucks (p. 200) * That is, a hunting club in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Today, instead of chasing a live fox, the Berks and Bucks Draghounds club members follow on horseback a pack of hounds who are following a scent trail laid down in advance by a human. Not a check from start to finish. (p. 200) * In hunting, a check happens when the pack of hounds loses the scent and stops to try to pick it up again. So Aunt Dahlia is saying that Constable Oates was in continuous pursuit of her until Harold Pinker hit him in the nose. popped up out of a trap (p. 200) * See Bill the Conqueror. howl like a banshee (p. 200) In Celtic folklore a banshee (from Gaelic bean-sidhe — a woman of the fairies) is a female fairy who announces her presence by shrieking and wailing beneath the windows of a house in which one of the occupants is dying. like a stuffed wombat (p. 200) * It is unclear why the image of an Australian marsupial, and a stuffed one at that, comes to Aunt Dahlia’s mind. One is mentioned in Bulwer-Lytton’s The Caxtons (1849). As far as I can find, the Steiff “Womby” plush wombat toy had not been introduced when The Code of the Woosters was written.Other incidental references to wombats include Captain Jack Fosdyke’s awkward recantation in “Monkey Business” (1932; in Blandings Castle and Elsewhere, 1935) and a mention by Jill Wyvern and Captain Biggar in Ring for Jeeves, ch. 10 (1953). the native hue of resolution (p. 201) See p. 33 above. fretful porpentine (p. 202) * See p. 123 above. had passed through the furnace (p. 203) Been sorely tried — the reference is to the Biblical story (Daniel, chapter 3) which tells of the ordeal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were cast into a burning fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar but emerged unscathed. (See A Damsel in Distress.) See also Money in the Bank. gorgonzola (p. 203) * See Sam the Sudden. spinneys (p. 203) * Small woods or clumps of trees, especially those intended as a shelter for birds and game, either planted or kept uncut between farm fields or pastures. save me from the soup (p. 204) * See p. 64 above. hear the beating of its wings (p. 204) * See Ukridge. Wodehouse used this phrase several times, often figuratively as in the original speech referenced at that link, but never with such comic incongruity as this close association of soup and wings. the man had rung the bell (p. 204) A reference to an attraction that used to be popular at fairgrounds and where the aim was to strike a metal plate, using a sledgehammer, with enough force to push a sliding block up a post until it struck a bell at the top; any one who succeeded in doing so won a small prize. entitled to the cigar or coconut (p. 204) This choice seems to have been Wodehouse’s standard image of a fairground prize, as in the item immediately above. He used it in “The Politeness of Princes” (1905); Love Among the Chickens, ch. 9 (1906, 1909 and 1921 editions); Psmith in the City (serialized as The New Fold, ch. 6 (1908); Psmith, Journalist, ch. 10 (1909); “Abe” (1910); A Gentleman of Leisure/The Intrusion of Jimmy, ch. 11 (1910); “The Knightly Quest of Mervyn” in Mulliner Nights (1933); “Trouble Down at Tudsleigh” in the UK Young Men in Spats (1936); Full Moon, ch. 9.2 (1947); The Mating Season, ch. 14 (1949); Jeeves in the Offing/How Right You Are, Jeeves, ch. 14 (1960); Much Obliged, Jeeves/Jeeves and the Tie That Binds, ch. 15 (1971). [NM] “Then upsy-daisy!” (p. 205) * The OED first cites the phrase (then spelled Upsa daesy!) from an 1862 book on dialect words from the neighborhood of Leeds, used “when a child, in play, is assisted in a spring-leap from the ground.” The OED citations for the succeeding century seem to be used to children in play, when lifting them from a fall or into a bathtub, and so forth. Wodehouse seems to have used it first in 1933 in Heavy Weather, ch. 7, where Monty Bodkin is releasing Lord Tilbury from imprisonment in the Blandings potting-shed: “There’s a sort of wooden gadget that needs a bit of shifting. All right. Done it. Out you pop. Upsy-daisy!” Wodehouse continues to use it from one adult to another, often as a jocular substitute for “Come along!” or “Get a move on!” where the use of a phrase more often spoken to a child is meant to keep the situation light-hearted, as here with Bertie and Gussie. Using the phrase, Joss Weatherby coaxes Howard Steptoe into a stiff-bosomed dress shirt in Quick Service, ch. 8 (1940); Augustus Robb talks the hung-over Stanwood Cobbold out of bed in Spring Fever, ch. 2 (1948); Galahad Threepwood persuades Lord Emsworth to go to bed with his cold rather than visiting the Empress’s (empty) sty in Pigs Have Wings, ch. 7.3 (1952); Mortimer Bayliss urges Roscoe Bunyan to sign a contract in Something Fishy/The Butler Did It, ch. 17 (1957). It has more of its original sense a few times, too: Prudence Garland speaks it as she assists Tipton Plimsoll to stand up after a fall in Full Moon, ch. 6.2 (1947); Mervyn Potter says it to himself as he picks himself up after a fall in Barmy in Wonderland, ch. 13 (1952); Cosmo Wisdom is “placed right end up again with a civil ‘Upsy-daisy!’” after overbalancing in a tilted-back office chair in Cocktail Time, ch. 13 (1958). one could see that the faithful fellow was tickled pink (p. 205) * The OED’s first citation of “tickled pink” is in a 1922 volume of American plays. Wodehouse is cited in the OED from “The Shadow Passes” (in Nothing Serious, 1950), but seems first to have used it in “Open House” (1932; in Mulliner Nights, 1933). We can be quite certain that the imperturbable Jeeves did not actually turn pink, and that Bertie was speaking figuratively of him. His motto is “Service.” (p. 205) * See Hot Water. number eight [hat] (p. 205) * Traditional US and UK hat sizes are roughly the diameter in inches of a circle whose circumference is equal to the tape-measured circumference of the head, although for unexplained reasons US size numbers are larger by 1/8 than UK: a medium hat is a 7 in the UK and a 7 1/8 in the US. A British number eight would be an XXXL if it were not off the end of the chart on most hatters’ website sizing guides. Chuffy estimates Jeeves’s hat size as nine-and-a-quarter in Thank You, Jeeves, ch. 6 (1934); Bertie puts it as high as number fourteen in chapter 4 of The Mating Season (1949). Bertie estimates Percy Gorringe as taking a number nine hat in Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 22 (1954). shot its bolt (p. 206) * Applying to a location what is usually a phrase about a person; see Right Ho, Jeeves. sitting pretty (p. 206) * See Sam the Sudden. rannygazoo (p. 206) Described by the OED as “chiefly US dialect or slang,” “rannygazoo” (also ranikaboo, reinikaboo or renicky-boo) is a prank, trick, horseplay or nonsense. The OED cites two examples from Wodehouse: I’ll hang around for a while just in case friend Pilbeam starts any rannygazoo. Bill the Conqueror, ch. 11.3 (1924) Her lips were tightly glued together, her chin protruding, her whole lay-out that of a girl who intended to stand no rannygazoo. Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen, ch. 7 (1974) The OED missed what is apparently Wodehouse’s initial usage of the word, in the mouth of Psmith: “But, of course, there are drawbacks to everything, and last night’s rannygazoo perhaps shook your nervous system to an extent greater than we at first realized.” Leave It to Psmith, ch. 12 (1923) V-shaped depressions (p. 206) See Summer Moonshine. Return to top Chapter 13 (pp. 207–217) clocking in (p. 207) * The never-employed Bertie rather oddly uses a commercial phrase here, as if he had punched a time clock in the manner of a factory or office employee arriving at work. Such devices had been introduced in the 1880s, although not in use at the London office of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, nor at the Moon Assurance Company in Not George Washington, where employees signed or initialed a book upon arrival. Just a couple among many uses, some figurative, some literal: ...a strange, almost eerie atmosphere in Room 726, as of a room in a haunted house that is waiting for its spectre to clock in and start haunting. Barmy in Wonderland, ch. 14 (1952) His statement that the Embassy staff were expected to clock in at an early hour proved next morning to have been strictly accurate. Biffen’s Millions/Frozen Assets, ch. 2.4 (1964) clubman and boulevardier (p. 207) A clubman is one who frequents clubs, a man-about-town; a boulevardier is one who frequents boulevards, particularly those of Paris, and is another synonym for man-about-town. man of chilled steel (p. 207) The Man of Chilled Steel is the title of a novel which Eunice Bray (“The Rough Stuff” in The Clicking of Cuthbert) has been reading. See also p. 79 above. pest house (p. 207) * Historically, a hospital for patients with infectious diseases such as plague or cholera; figuratively, any place perceived as the locus of wickedness or iniquity. one damn thing after another (p. 207) * Wodehouse had sanitized this phrase in earlier works, for instance “Concealed Art” (1915): ...life seems to have been just one thing after another. Norman Murphy (A Wodehouse Handbook) suggests several possible sources for the unexpurgated version, as far back as 1911 when the Supreme Court ruled against Standard Oil and one of the directors was quoted with the phrase. Also a 1925 Noel Coward song and a 1926 London revue used the phrase as a title. Wodehouse returned to it later, most often in Bertie’s speech: As perfect an instance of one damn thing after another as I have ever experienced. Joy in the Morning, ch. 8 (1946) I was conscious of a passing pang for the oyster world, feeling—and I think correctly—that life for these unfortunate bivalves must be one damn thing after another, but my principal emotion was one of astonishment. Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, ch. 12 (1954) Johnny frowned darkly. Life these days, he was thinking, was just one damn thing after another. Cocktail Time, ch. 20 (1958) “As always seems to happen when you are mixed up in the doings, life has become one damn thing after another, and I think I am justified in demanding an explanation. Bertie to Bobbie Wickham in ch. 4 of Jeeves in the Offing/How Right You Are, Jeeves (1960) straight into Colney Hatch (p. 208) See Love Among the Chickens. goop (p. 208) * See Hot Water. the private-school masters and the public-school masters (p. 208) * See p. 62 above. That would be the hand of doom now, if I mistake not (p. 209) * Possibly an echo of Sherlock Holmes, as in “The Problem of Thor Bridge”: ”But here, if I mistake not, is our client…” I did not immediately fling wide the gates (p. 209) See Love Among the Chickens. the Assyrian comes down (p. 210) The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold, And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold; And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea, When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee. Lord Byron: “The Destruction of Sennacherib” (1815) Ogden Nash’s poem “Very Like a Whale” provides an amusing analysis of this passage from Byron. take the rap (p. 211) * The OED’s earliest citation in the sense of accepting responsibility and consequent punishment dates from 1919, when it was used in quotation marks in the Chicago Tribune, so must have been recent slang, and probably American in origin. Stiffy must have been reading crime novels from the USA. Carter Paterson (p. 212) Carter, Paterson was a haulage and delivery company which flourished in the period before WW II. The company was founded by James Paterson, with his brother Robert and their friend Walter Carter. In 1946, Carter, Paterson merged with its main competitor, Pickfords, to form the Joint Parcel Service; two years later, the firm was nationalised and ceased to have a separate existence. Nick Carter (p. 212) Nick Carter was a popular detective fiction character who made his first appearance in September 1886, in the New York Weekly. The character quickly became so popular that dozens of writers were involved in turning out stories for dime magazines. Sidney Carton (p. 212) Sydney (not Sidney) Carton is a character in Charles Dickens’s novel A Tale of Two Cities. A drunken English barrister, he is in love with a young Frenchwoman, Lucie Manette, who is also loved by a young French aristocrat, Charles Darnay. Darnay is condemned to the guillotine, but Carton, taking advantage of the resemblance between them, takes Darnay’s place in prison and goes to the guillotine in his stead, so that Darnay may marry Lucie. See also Money in the Bank. small-time stuff (p. 212) * Lower-class; second-rate. Originally “small time” referred to a lower tier of vaudeville theaters toured by less-famous acts, as opposed to the “big time” of larger houses in bigger cities which would expect nothing but the best available entertainers. getting the wind up (p. 212) * Getting nervous, becoming upset. See The Word Detective online. unshipped my front uppers (p. 212) * Literally, to unship something is to remove it from a ship, to offload cargo to the shore. Figuratively here, Bertie feels that the shock almost made him lose his front teeth. Eureka, sir. Like Archimedes. (p. 212) * See p. 89 above. making the floater of a lifetime (p. 214) * Floater is slang, originally from British universities, cited in the OED from 1913, for a social mistake or faux pas. The earliest Wodehouse usage so far found: “Can’t you get it into your nut,” said Hugo with justifiable exasperation, “that you’ve been making floaters and bloomers and getting everything mixed up all along?” Summer Lightning, ch. 12.3 (1929) take a dekko (p. 217) Take a look (from Hindi dekho, imperative of dekhna, to look) a silver salver (p. 217) See Leave It to Psmith. Return to top Chapter 14 (pp. 218–238) Bethnal Green (p. 218) Bethnal Green is a district in the East End of London, in the Borough of Tower Hamlets. costermonger (p. 218) See The Clicking of Cuthbert. Then the scales fell from my eyes (p. 218) See p. 9 above. like some watcher of the skies . . . Darien (p. 218) See p. 151 above. pinched a fish slice (p. 220) * Stole a silver serving utensil: see Thank You, Jeeves. put it up the spout (p. 220) Pawned it: “spout” was the name for a lift used in pawnbrokers’ shops to transfer goods to storage and, by a transfer of meaning, came to be used for a pawnshop. gyves (p. 221) * See Ice in the Bedroom. “I may be making a change before long.” (p. 221) * In other words, he is thinking of trading the cow-creamer to Uncle Tom in exchange for Anatole’s services. in what is known as durance vile (p. 222) * Imprisoned; from the old French durance for duration, and vile meaning base, degrading, ignominious. bunged a spanner into Stiffy’s romance (p. 224) * See p. 79 above. so busy rejoicing in spirit (p. 226) In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: Bible: Luke 10:21 Velouté aux fleurs de courgette (p. 228) * A cream soup based on a chicken or veal stock, thickened with flour as for a white sauce then further enriched with egg yolks, cream, and butter; zucchini blossoms are then added and cooked only lightly in the soup base. Consommé aux Pommes d’ Amour (p. 228) * A clear soup based on a rich clarified beef stock, with tomatoes. Caviar Frais (p. 228) * Fresh caviar. Cantaloup (p. 228) * A sweet orange-fleshed melon; “cantaloupe” in English. Sylphides à la crême d’Écrevisses (p. 228) * Puff pastry “boats” filled with a lobster mousse and a sauce made with crayfish, carrots, shallots, and butter. Mignonette de poulet petit Duc (p. 228) * A chicken fricassee served with truffled mushrooms and a Madeira sauce; named for the “little Duke” Richard I of Normandy, 932–996. Probably served with coarse-ground black pepper, which is known in France as mignonnette according to the Larousse gastronomique. Points d’asperges à la Mistinguette (p. 228) * Asparagus tips served in a style named for the French singing actress of that name (1873–1956). Suprême de foie gras au champagne (p. 228) * In French cooking, suprême refers to the breast meat of chicken or other poultry. The Larousse gastronomique says nothing about Suprême de foie gras, so it is unclear whether this is a serving of fattened goose liver in the shape of a chicken breast, or if it is a chicken breast garnished with foie gras. [The US first edition has the typo “fois gras” here.] when the fields are white with daisies (p. 229) See Sam the Sudden. though he had snootered me (p. 231) See p 89. Murder her? (p. 232) Bertie’s grip on reality has surely deserted him if he believes not only that Spode might actually be a murderer but that Jeeves would be prepared to keep the fact quiet. thought that the curse had come upon me (p. 233) See Summer Moonshine. vanished like the dew on the what-is-it (p. 233) This may be an allusion to Sir Walter Scott: Like the dew on the mountain, Like the foam on the river, Like the bubble on the fountain, Thou art gone, and forever! “The Lady of the Lake,” Canto III, Stanza 16 (1810) like the troops of Midian (p. 236) See Something Fresh. that thing of yours about larks (p. 236) See Something Fresh. sleep which does something (p. 237) Methought I heard a voice cry “Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep,” the innocent sleep, Sleep that knits up the ravell’d sleave of care Shakespeare: Macbeth, Act II Scene 2 See Shakespeare Quotations and Allusions in Wodehouse for discussion on this passage and Wodehouse’s references to it. Wodehouse’s writings are copyright © Trustees of the Wodehouse Estate in most countries;material published prior to 1930 is in USA public domain, used here with permission of the Estate.Our editorial commentary and other added material are copyright © 2012–2025 www.MadamEulalie.org. aliases Aunt Agatha; Agatha Wooster; Mrs. Spencer Gregson; Agatha Gregson; Agatha Worplesdon [close] Aunt Agatha; Agatha Wooster; Mrs. Spencer Gregson; Agatha Gregson; Agatha Worplesdon edit descriptions of this character