

My Castle in the Air

Sung by Hal Cazalet

Accompanied by Stephen Higgins

I've a wondrous castle that I've never lived in yet,
Built so many years ago in days that I forget;
It has no stone battlements and great big wooden
beams.

Its walls and its bars are the dust of the stars,
And its gate, the gate of dreams.

Chorus

Come out there for a visit, I've lots of room for friends.
And if you ask "where is it?" it's where the rainbow ends.
It's somewhere there in fairyland, where there's never
cloud or care.

We'll have joy and laughter, mirth and song,
And we'll all be happy as the day is long,
In the shelter of my castle, of my castle in the air.

Everything is perfect that you'll find there when you go,
Just beyond the milky way and where the moonbeams
glow.

No one every worries there for everything goes right,
The sky's always blue and no lover's untrue,
And your life's one long delight.

Repeat chorus

*Lyrics: P G Wodehouse; Music: Jerome Kern
From Miss Springtime, 1916*

The Dedication of a Memorial Stone to P G Wodehouse

Westminster Abbey

Friday, 20 September 2019

**The address, readings, and songs
from the Service of Dedication**

The Code of the Woosters, 1938

Read by Alexander Armstrong

"You see before you, Jeeves, a toad beneath the harrow."

"Yes, sir. The trousers perhaps a quarter of an inch higher, sir. One aims at the carelessly graceful break over the instep. It is a matter of the nicest adjustment."

"Like that?"

"Admirable, sir."

I sighed. "There are moments, Jeeves, when one asks oneself 'Do trousers matter?'"

"The mood will pass, sir."

The Mating Season, 1949

Read by Lucy Tregear

Two people were hareing towards us along the road. . . . Gussie and Constable Dobbs were in progress, in the order named. Not having been present at the outset of the proceedings, I can only guess at what had occurred in the early stages, but anyone entering a police station to steal a dog and finding Constable Dobbs on the premises would have lost little time in picking up the feet, and I think we can assume that Gussie had got off to a good start. At any rate, at the moment when the runners came into view, he had established a good lead and appeared to be increasing it.

The least thing upsets him on the links. He misses short putts because of the uproar of the butterflies in the adjoining meadows.

Unlike the male codfish which, finding itself the parent of three million five hundred thousand little codfish, cheerfully resolves to love them all, the British aristocracy is apt to look with a somewhat jaundiced eye on its younger sons.

Young Thos, poising the bucket for an instant, discharged its contents. And old Mr Anstruther received the entire consignment. In one second, without any previous training or upbringing, he had become the wettest man in Worcestershire.

Blanding Castle slept in the sunshine. Dancing little ripples of heat-mist played across its smooth lawns and stone-flagged terraces. The air was full of the lulling drones of insects. It was that gracious hour of a summer afternoon, midway between luncheon and tea, when Nature seems to unbutton its waistcoat and put its feet up.

A FEW QUICK ONES

**Read by Alexander Armstrong, Lara Cazalet,
Martin Jarvis, Lucy Tregear**

"I am Lord Tilbury," said his Lordship, looking like a man unveiling a statue of himself.

I attribute the insane arrogance of the later Roman emperors almost entirely to the fact that, having never played golf, they never knew that strange chastening humility engendered by a topped chip shot. If Cleopatra had been outed in the first round of the Ladies' Singles, we should have heard a lot less of her proud imperiousness.

She fitted into my biggest armchair as if it had been built round her by someone who knew they were wearing armchairs tight about the hips that season.

Years before, when a boy, and romantic as most boys are, His Lordship had sometimes regretted that the Emsworths, though an ancient clan, did not possess a Family Curse. How little he had suspected that he was shortly to become the father of it.

It is curious how you can be intimate with a fellow from early boyhood and yet remain unacquainted with one side of him. Mixing constantly with Gussie over the years, I had known him as a newt-fancier, a lover and a fathead, but I had never suspected him of possessing outstanding qualities as a sprinter on the flat, and I was amazed at the high order of ability he was exhibiting in this very specialised form of activity. He was coming along like a jack-rabbit of the western prairie. I liked his ankle work.

Dobbs, on the other hand, was more laboured in his movements and to an eye like mine, trained in the watching of point-to-point races, had all the look of an also-ran. One noted symptoms of roaring, and I am convinced that had Gussie had the intelligence to stick to his job and make a straight race of it, he would have out-distanced the field and come home on a tight rein.

Police constables are not built for speed.

But, as I was stressing a moment ago, Augustus Fink-Nottle, in addition to being a flat racer of marked ability, was also a fathead, and now, when victory was in his grasp, the fatheaded streak in him came uppermost. There was a tree standing by the roadside and, swerving off the course, he made for it and hoisted himself into its branches. And what he supposed that was going to get him, only his diseased mind knew. Ernest Dobbs may not have been one of Hampshire's brightest thinkers, but he was smart enough to stand under a tree.

Oh Gee! Oh Joy!

**Sung by Hal & Lara Cazalet
Accompanied by Stephen Higgins**

Yea bo, but isn't love great! Gee whiz!
Heigh ho! I'm willing to state it is.
Don't know who the chap was who first began it,
But it's the only thing on this planet.

Chorus

Oh gee, oh joy! The birds are singing.
Because why? Because I am in love.
Oh gee, oh joy! The bells are ringing
Because why? Because I am in love.
And all the while I seem in a dream,
I never was so happy.
Folks complain I'm insane,
Because I act so sappy.
Oh gee, oh joy! The birds are singing,
Because why, because I am in love.

*Lyrics: P G Wodehouse; Music: Ira Gershwin
From Rosalie, 1928*

Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend (in *Blandings Castle*, 1933)

Read by Martin Jarvis

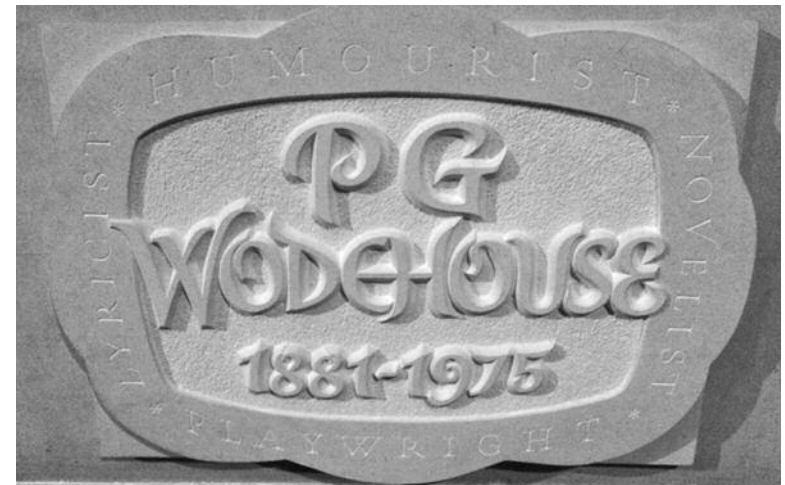
The technical title of the orgy which broke out annually on the first Monday in August in the park of Blandings Castle was the Blandings Parva School Treat, and it seemed to Lord Emsworth, wanly watching the proceedings from

them. The effect was to turbo charge the operetta-style entertainments of words and music and give them a potent comic panache – and enormous new popularity.

This remarkable ability with a turn of phrase paired with extraordinary, but lightly worn, erudition is also what makes Wodehouse such a compelling comic novelist and a storyteller of the very highest calibre. The single word “Jeeves” brings a smile to the lips of half the world, and summons one of the most beautifully wrought comic presences in literature. Jeeves, with his unmistakably British “mandarin omniscience” of another age, has won himself fans all over the planet.

The dedication today of a memorial stone in this historic Abbey is not only a tribute to Wodehouse's longevity and status as a writer of national importance but also an acknowledgement of the enduring quality of his work and the affection in which he is still – and I think always will be – held.

So, Tussauds, we see your wax and we raise it to stone.



of *National Biography* as “the greatest of all English humourists”.

Wodehouse was a dazzling all-rounder, writing with three different pens: as Journalist and Essayist; as a Writer for Stage and Screen; and as a Novelist and Short Story Writer. His achievements in any one of these careers would be enough to earn him lasting renown, but to have been revered in all three is just another mark of the sheer quality and scope of his output. And that output was prodigious. He wrote more than 70 novels – all of which are still in print, itself a record – and about 19 volumes of short stories (totalling roughly 300 short stories), as well as the lyrics for over 200 songs. His books have been translated into 33 different languages, including Russian and, more recently, Chinese. He wrote more than 20 plays. In 1917, Plum established a Broadway record by having five shows running simultaneously, then achieved a similar record in London in 1928 when he had three new plays in the West End: a feat unequalled to this day.

Oscar Hammerstein, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, and the Gershwin brothers all acknowledged Wodehouse’s important influence on the development of the modern American musical. Before Plum, the songs in musicals were largely interludes from the narrative, bearing little or no relation to the action. Unlike his hero W S Gilbert, in writing lyrics Wodehouse preferred to be given a melody and then to fit the words around it. Using his astonishing ear for the rhythms and cadences of vernacular speech, he would craft lyrics whose natural stresses and comic inflections worked *precisely* with the grain of the melodic line and fitted equally precisely the character who sang

under the shadow of his top hat, that if this was the sort of thing that schools looked on as pleasure, he and they were mentally poles apart. A function like Blandings Parva School Treat blurred his conception of Man as Nature’s Final Word. . . .

A masterful figure loomed at his side.

“Clarence, you look a perfect sight.”

“I know I do. Who wouldn’t in a rig-out like this? . . . It’s this top hat, it’s exciting the children. Just now a small boy threw a portion of coco-nut at it.”

“If you will identify the child,” said Lady Constance warmly, “I will have him severely punished.”

“How the dickens,” replied his lordship, “can I identify the child? They all look alike to me. And if I did identify him, I would shake him warmly by the hand. A boy who throws coco-nuts at top hats is fundamentally sound.”

It always seemed to Lord Emsworth, in analysing these entertainments, that the Saturnalia reached a peak of repulsiveness when tea was served in the big marquee. Conditions during the tea hour, the marquee having stood all day under a blazing sun, were generally such that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, had they been there, could have learned something new about burning fiery furnaces. Once in the tent, it took Lord Emsworth’s experienced eye but a moment to discern that the present feast was eclipsing in frightfulness all its predecessors.

Young Blandings Parva, in its normal form, tended rather to the stolidly bovine than the riotous. It was seldom that the local infants offered anything beyond the power of a

curate to control. What was giving the present gathering its striking resemblance to a reunion of sans-culottes at the height of the French Revolution was the admixture of the Fresh Air London visitors.

About the London child there is a breezy insouciance which his country cousin lacks. When he is amused by any peculiarity in the personal appearance of members of the governing classes he finds no difficulty in translating his thoughts into speech. Already, up and down the long tables, the curate's unfortunate squint was coming in for hearty comment. Lord Emsworth was not as a rule a man of swift inspirations, but it occurred to him at this juncture that it would be prudent to take off his top hat before his little guests observed it and appreciated its humorous possibilities.

The action was not, however, necessary. Even as he raised his hand, a rock cake, singing through the air like a shell, took it off for him.

Lord Emsworth had had sufficient. Even Constance, unreasonable woman though she was, could hardly expect him to stay and beam genially under conditions like this. The curate was trying to form a provisional government consisting of himself and the two school-teachers, but there was only one man who could have coped adequately with the situation and that was King Herod, who – regrettably – was not among those present. All civilized laws had obviously gone by the board and Anarchy reigned in the marquee.

Feeling like some aristocrat of the old regime sneaking away from the tumbril, Lord Emsworth edged to the exit and withdrew.

THE ADDRESS

by Alexander Armstrong

In the summer of 1974, a specialist sculptor was sent out to America to take precise measurements of PG Wodehouse and – to the ghoulish fascination of his subject – to find the perfect match for his eye colour from amongst the tray of glass eyeballs he had brought with him. The sculptor was from Madame Tussauds, whose museum on Marylebone Road had announced they wished to have a waxwork of the great writer – an inclusion, Plum later said, he had always looked on as “the supreme honour”. And who would argue with that? To be curator of Madame Tussauds is to be nothing if not the ultimate arbiter of fame, reputation, and national standing. Who gets to join the waxy ranks, who is moved sideways to the Chamber of Horrors, and who, by the judicious addition of a wick, becomes a candle in the directors' dining room are all dictated by that most brutal of barometers: a paying public. And for the nonagenarian Plum, in what was to be the last year of his life, this must have been an unalloyed pleasure, a sweet coda with which to close what had been an uneasy post-war relationship with his country of birth and the home of so much that he loved.

Today we are commemorating, not the flesh of Wodehouse, whose measurements have been minutely examined these past 80 years, but the bones: the colossal and enduring achievements of the man Evelyn Waugh called “the master of my profession”, a man acknowledged as one of the greats by Beerbohm, Kipling and A E Housman (two of whom are already commemorated here in the Abbey), and summed up by the *Oxford Dictionary*