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P.G. WODEHOUSE

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RIGHT HO JEEVES

Selected and Edited by
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READING SCHEDULE

Right Ho Jeeves should take you a grand total of ten days. Here's the official schedule:

DAY 1:	Reading 1 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 85</i>	13
DAY 2:	Reading 2 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 86</i>	43
DAY 3:	Reading 3 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 87</i>	55
DAY 4:	Reading 4 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 88</i>	73
DAY 5:	Reading 5 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 89</i>	95
DAY 6:	Reading 6 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 90</i>	129
DAY 7:	Reading 7 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 91</i>	157
DAY 8:	Reading 8 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 92</i>	191
DAY 9:	Reading 9 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 93</i>	241
DAY 10:	Reading 10 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 94</i>	277

P. G. WODEHOUSE
1881-1975

Pelham Grenville Wodehouse is the last author in this series for several reasons. The first is that he's a lot of fun and so why not end on a happy note? The second is that Wodehouse is a hilarious example of someone taking a classical education and turning a profit on it. His prose is absolutely stuffed with literary, classical, and Scriptural allusions, but he always throws them into such an incongruous context that they end up being ridiculously funny. Wodehouse has his own very particular "voice" in his writing which is a mix of turn-of-the-century London club slang, very formal and proper aristocratic English, loads of literary references, and some Americanisms thrown in for good measure.

Wodehouse is noted for his lighthearted subject matter and complicated plots. His heroes are often highly educated nitwits, and frequently are members of the aristocracy who spend most of their time being ridiculous. He wrote more than ninety books in his life, as well as many short stories, and he was still writing all the way up until his death in 1975. Some of his books were stand-alone novels, others were in series involving the same settings or characters from book to book. The Blandings Castle stories form one prominent series, and another series features Bertie and Jeeves. This (as you may have noted from the title) is a Bertie and Jeeves book.

Bertie Wooster, our main character and narrator, is a wealthy young man in London in the early part of the twentieth century. He spends his time at the Drones Club in London or visiting his wealthy friends or relations in their enormous country homes. He was educated at Eton and Oxford, and therefore has the identical education as Lord Peter Wimsey. (You'll notice, however, that he uses that education rather differently.) His valet (man servant) is named Jeeves, and theirs is a complicated relationship, due to

the fact that Jeeves is the one with the actual brains, and is forever having to extricate Bertie from various scrapes - frequently engagements to women to whom he didn't want to be engaged. In many of Wodehouse's books the plot is driven by a romance, and the couple gets together in the end. However, in the Bertie and Jeeves books the happy ending is frequently achieved by the couple breaking up.

It should also be noted that, although Jeeves is the quintessential name for a man-servant now, this is because of Wodehouse. It's a cliché now, but it wasn't then - in the same way that "Sherlock" has now become synonymous with "detective."

Throughout this book, you won't have to answer any discussion questions. The reading is easy, fun, and entertaining, and you shouldn't have any problem understanding it. There are no hidden depths, profound themes, or complicated meanings - the story is just very straight-forwardly funny. The one thing that you should be on the look-out for however, are the allusions. In your poetry workbook you will find a list of all the prominent allusions from each day's reading, and your job is to look them up and figure out what Wodehouse is quoting. Hopefully by the end you should have an appreciation for what an absolutely vast store of poetry and Scripture Wodehouse must have had memorized for all of those allusions to come oozing out of him at such an astonishing rate. He will frequently mix a Shakespeare quote right in next to a random snatch from a popular Broadway musical or pop novel and it can occasionally be difficult to tell when his quotes are "classical" and when they're not. He truly was a master of grabbing other people's lines and working them into his own prose in an incredibly unique way.

The other thing to watch for is his use of metaphors. They just keep coming - each one possibly funnier than the last. His descriptions are amazingly colorful, and as you read, write down some of your favorites in the poetry workbook - preferably lines that made you laugh out loud. And if nothing in this book makes you laugh out loud then you have some soul-searching to do.

RIGHT HO JEEVES

- I -

“Jeeves,” I said, “may I speak frankly?”

“Certainly, sir.”

“What I have to say may wound you.”

“Not at all, sir.”

“Well, then——”

No—wait. Hold the line a minute. I’ve gone off the rails.

I don’t know if you have had the same experience, but the snag I always come up against when I’m telling a story is this dashed difficult problem of where to begin it. It’s a thing you don’t want to go wrong over, because one false step and you’re sunk. I mean, if you fool about too long at the start, trying to establish atmosphere, as they call it, and all that sort of rot, you fail to grip and the customers walk out on you.

Get off the mark, on the other hand, like a scalded cat, and your public is at a loss. It simply raises its eyebrows, and can’t make out what you’re talking about.

And in opening my report of the complex case of Gussie Fink-Nottle, Madeline Bassett, my Cousin Angela, my Aunt Dahlia, my Uncle Thomas, young Tuppy Glossop and the cook, Anatole, with the above spot of

dialogue, I see that I have made the second of these two floaters.

Cannes is on the French Riviera, quite near Monaco.

I shall have to hark back a bit. And taking it for all in all and weighing this against that, I suppose the affair may be said to have had its inception, if inception is the word I want, with that visit of mine to Cannes. If I hadn't gone to Cannes, I shouldn't have met the Bassett or bought that white mess jacket, and Angela wouldn't have met her shark, and Aunt Dahlia wouldn't have played baccarat.

Yes, most decidedly, Cannes was the point d'appui.

Right ho, then. Let me marshal my facts.

I went to Cannes—leaving Jeeves behind, he having intimated that he did not wish to miss Ascot—round about the beginning of June. With me travelled my Aunt Dahlia and her daughter Angela. Tuppy Glossop, Angela's betrothed, was to have been of the party, but at the last moment couldn't get away. Uncle Tom, Aunt Dahlia's husband, remained at home, because he can't stick the South of France at any price.

So there you have the layout—Aunt Dahlia, Cousin Angela and self off to Cannes round about the beginning of June.

All pretty clear so far, what?

Baccarat is a card game played by gamblers and in casinos.

We stayed at Cannes about two months, and except for the fact that Aunt Dahlia lost her shirt at baccarat and Angela nearly got inhaled by a shark while aquaplaning, a pleasant time was had by all.

On July the twenty-fifth, looking bronzed and fit, I accompanied aunt and child back to London. At seven p.m. on July the twenty-sixth we alighted at Victoria. And at seven-twenty or thereabouts we parted with mutual expressions of esteem—they to shove off in Aunt Dahlia's

car to Brinkley Court, her place in Worcestershire, where they were expecting to entertain Tuppy in a day or two; I to go to the flat, drop my luggage, clean up a bit, and put on the soup and fish preparatory to pushing round to the Drones for a bite of dinner.

“Soup and fish” is Bertie’s funny way of referring to his dinner jacket - what we would call a tuxedo jacket. The Drones is a gentlemen’s club.

And it was while I was at the flat, towelling the torso after a much-needed rinse, that Jeeves, as we chatted of this and that—picking up the threads, as it were—suddenly brought the name of Gussie Fink-Nottle into the conversation.

As I recall it, the dialogue ran something as follows:

SELF: Well, Jeeves, here we are, what?

JEEVES: Yes, sir.

SELF: I mean to say, home again.

JEEVES: Precisely, sir.

SELF: Seems ages since I went away.

JEEVES: Yes, sir.

SELF: Have a good time at Ascot?

JEEVES: Most agreeable, sir.

SELF: Win anything?

JEEVES: Quite a satisfactory sum, thank you, sir.

SELF: Good. Well, Jeeves, what news on the Rialto? Anybody been phoning or calling or anything during my abs.?

JEEVES: Mr. Fink-Nottle, sir, has been a frequent caller.

I stared. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that I gaped.

“Mr. Fink-Nottle?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You don’t mean Mr. Fink-Nottle?”

“Yes, sir.”

“But Mr. Fink-Nottle’s not in London?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, I’m blown.”

And I’ll tell you why I was blown. I found it scarcely possible to give credence to his statement. This Fink-Nottle, you see, was one of those freaks you come across from time to time during life’s journey who can’t stand London. He lived year in and year out, covered with moss, in a remote village down in Lincolnshire, never coming up even for the Eton and Harrow match. And when I asked him once if he didn’t find the time hang a bit heavy on his hands, he said, no, because he had a pond in his garden and studied the habits of newts.

The big cricket match between the top two boys’ boarding schools.

I couldn’t imagine what could have brought the chap up to the great city. I would have been prepared to bet that as long as the supply of newts didn’t give out, nothing could have shifted him from that village of his.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You got the name correctly? Fink-Nottle?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, it’s the most extraordinary thing. It must be five years since he was in London. He makes no secret of the fact that the place gives him the pip. Until now, he has always stayed glued to the country, completely surrounded by newts.”

“Sir?”

“Newts, Jeeves. Mr. Fink-Nottle has a strong newt complex. You must have heard of newts. Those little sort of lizard things that charge about in ponds.”

“Oh, yes, sir. The aquatic members of the family Salamandridae which constitute the genus Molge.”

“That’s right. Well, Gussie has always been a slave to them. He used to keep them at school.”

“I believe young gentlemen frequently do, sir.”

“He kept them in his study in a kind of glass-tank arrangement, and pretty niffy the whole thing was, I recall. I suppose one ought to have been able to see what the end would be even then, but you know what boys are. Careless, heedless, busy about our own affairs, we scarcely gave this kink in Gussie’s character a thought. We may have exchanged an occasional remark about it taking all sorts to make a world, but nothing more. You can guess the sequel. The trouble spread,”

“Niffy” means smelly.

“Indeed, sir?”

“Absolutely, Jeeves. The craving grew upon him. The newts got him. Arrived at man’s estate, he retired to the depths of the country and gave his life up to these dumb chums. I suppose he used to tell himself that he could take them or leave them alone, and then found—too late—that he couldn’t.”

“It is often the way, sir.”

“Too true, Jeeves. At any rate, for the last five years he has been living at this place of his down in Lincolnshire, as confirmed a species-shunning hermit as ever put fresh water in the tank every second day and refused to see a soul. That’s why I was so amazed when you told me he had suddenly risen to the surface like this. I still can’t believe it. I am inclined to think that there must be some mistake, and that this bird who has been calling here is some different variety of Fink-Nottle. The chap I know wears horn-rimmed spectacles and has a face like a fish. How does that check up with your data?”

“The gentleman who came to the flat wore horn-

rimmed spectacles, sir.”

“And looked like something on a slab?”

“Possibly there was a certain suggestion of the piscine, sir.”

“Then it must be Gussie, I suppose. But what on earth can have brought him up to London?”

“I am in a position to explain that, sir. Mr. Fink-Nottle confided to me his motive in visiting the metropolis. He came because the young lady is here.”

“Young lady?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You don’t mean he’s in love?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, I’m dashed. I’m really dashed. I positively am dashed, Jeeves.”

And I was too. I mean to say, a joke’s a joke, but there are limits.

Then I found my mind turning to another aspect of this rummy affair. Conceding the fact that Gussie Fink-Nottle, against all the ruling of the form book, might have fallen in love, why should he have been haunting my flat like this? No doubt the occasion was one of those when a fellow needs a friend, but I couldn’t see what had made him pick on me.

It wasn’t as if he and I were in any way bosom. We had seen a lot of each other at one time, of course, but in the last two years I hadn’t had so much as a post card from him.

I put all this to Jeeves:

“Odd, his coming to me. Still, if he did, he did. No argument about that. It must have been a nasty jar for the poor perisher when he found I wasn’t here.”

“No, sir. Mr. Fink-Nottle did not call to see you, sir.”

“Pull yourself together, Jeeves. You’ve just told me that this is what he has been doing, and assiduously, at that.”

“It was I with whom he was desirous of establishing communication, sir.”

“You? But I didn’t know you had ever met him.”

“I had not had that pleasure until he called here, sir. But it appears that Mr. Sipperley, a fellow student with whom Mr. Fink-Nottle had been at the university, recommended him to place his affairs in my hands.”

The mystery had conked. I saw all. As I dare say you know, Jeeves’s reputation as a counsellor has long been established among the cognoscenti, and the first move of any of my little circle on discovering themselves in any form of soup is always to roll round and put the thing up to him. And when he’s got A out of a bad spot, A puts B on to him. And then, when he has fixed up B, B sends C along. And so on, if you get my drift, and so forth.

*The cognoscenti
are those “in the
know.”*

That’s how these big consulting practices like Jeeves’s grow. Old Sippy, I knew, had been deeply impressed by the man’s efforts on his behalf at the time when he was trying to get engaged to Elizabeth Moon, so it was not to be wondered at that he should have advised Gussie to apply. Pure routine, you might say.

“Oh, you’re acting for him, are you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Now I follow. Now I understand. And what is Gussie’s trouble?”

“Oddly enough, sir, precisely the same as that of Mr. Sipperley when I was enabled to be of assistance to him. No doubt you recall Mr. Sipperley’s predicament, sir. Deeply attached to Miss Moon, he suffered from a rooted

diffidence which made it impossible for him to speak.”

I nodded.

“I remember. Yes, I recall the Sipperley case. He couldn’t bring himself to the scratch. A marked coldness of the feet, was there not? I recollect you saying he was letting—what was it?—letting something do something. Cats entered into it, if I am not mistaken.”

“Letting ‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would’, sir.”

“That’s right. But how about the cats?”

“Like the poor cat i’ the adage, sir.”

“Exactly. It beats me how you think up these things. And Gussie, you say, is in the same posish?”

“Yes, sir. Each time he endeavours to formulate a proposal of marriage, his courage fails him.”

“And yet, if he wants this female to be his wife, he’s got to say so, what? I mean, only civil to mention it.”

“Precisely, sir.”

I mused.

“Well, I suppose this was inevitable, Jeeves. I wouldn’t have thought that this Fink-Nottle would ever have fallen a victim to the divine p, but, if he has, no wonder he finds the going sticky.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Look at the life he’s led.”

“Yes, sir.”

“I don’t suppose he has spoken to a girl for years. What a lesson this is to us, Jeeves, not to shut ourselves up in country houses and stare into glass tanks. You can’t be the dominant male if you do that sort of thing. In this life, you can choose between two courses. You can either shut yourself up in a country house and stare into tanks, or you can be a dasher with the sex. You can’t do both.”

Divine Passion

“The sex” is Bertie’s shorthand for “the fair sex.”

“No, sir.”

I mused once more. Gussie and I, as I say, had rather lost touch, but all the same I was exercised about the poor fish, as I am about all my pals, close or distant, who find themselves treading upon Life’s banana skins. It seemed to me that he was up against it.

I threw my mind back to the last time I had seen him. About two years ago, it had been. I had looked in at his place while on a motor trip, and he had put me right off my feed by bringing a couple of green things with legs to the luncheon table, crooning over them like a young mother and eventually losing one of them in the salad. That picture, rising before my eyes, didn’t give me much confidence in the unfortunate goof’s ability to woo and win, I must say. Especially if the girl he had earmarked was one of these tough modern thugs, all lipstick and cool, hard, sardonic eyes, as she probably was.

“Tell me, Jeeves,” I said, wishing to know the worst, “what sort of a girl is this girl of Gussie’s?”

“I have not met the young lady, sir. Mr. Fink-Nottle speaks highly of her attractions.”

“Seemed to like her, did he?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did he mention her name? Perhaps I know her.”

“She is a Miss Bassett, sir. Miss Madeline Bassett.”

“What?”

“Yes, sir.”

I was deeply intrigued.

“Egad, Jeeves! Fancy that. It’s a small world, isn’t it, what?”

“The young lady is an acquaintance of yours, sir?”

“I know her well. Your news has relieved my mind,

Jeeves. It makes the whole thing begin to seem far more like a practical working proposition.”

“Indeed, sir?”

“Absolutely. I confess that until you supplied this information I was feeling profoundly dubious about poor old Gussie’s chances of inducing any spinster of any parish to join him in the saunter down the aisle. You will agree with me that he is not everybody’s money.”

“There may be something in what you say, sir.”

“Cleopatra wouldn’t have liked him.”

“Possibly not, sir.”

“And I doubt if he would go any too well with Tallulah Bankhead.”

“No, sir.”

“But when you tell me that the object of his affections is Miss Bassett, why, then, Jeeves, hope begins to dawn a bit. He’s just the sort of chap a girl like Madeline Bassett might scoop in with relish.”

This Bassett, I must explain, had been a fellow visitor of ours at Cannes; and as she and Angela had struck up one of those effervescent friendships which girls do strike up, I had seen quite a bit of her. Indeed, in my moodier moments it sometimes seemed to me that I could not move a step without stubbing my toe on the woman.

And what made it all so painful and distressing was that the more we met, the less did I seem able to find to say to her.

You know how it is with some girls. They seem to take the stuffing right out of you. I mean to say, there is something about their personality that paralyses the vocal cords and reduces the contents of the brain to cauliflower. It was like that with this Bassett and me; so much so that

I have known occasions when for minutes at a stretch Bertram Wooster might have been observed fumbling with the tie, shuffling the feet, and behaving in all other respects in her presence like the complete dumb brick. When, therefore, she took her departure some two weeks before we did, you may readily imagine that, in Bertram's opinion, it was not a day too soon.

It was not her beauty, mark you, that thus numbed me. She was a pretty enough girl in a droopy, blonde, saucer-eyed way, but not the sort of breath-taker that takes the breath.

No, what caused this disintegration in a usually fairly fluent prattler with the sex was her whole mental attitude. I don't want to wrong anybody, so I won't go so far as to say that she actually wrote poetry, but her conversation, to my mind, was of a nature calculated to excite the liveliest suspicions. Well, I mean to say, when a girl suddenly asks you out of a blue sky if you don't sometimes feel that the stars are God's daisy-chain, you begin to think a bit.

As regards the fusing of her soul and mine, therefore, there was nothing doing. But with Gussie, the posish was entirely different. The thing that had stymied me—viz. that this girl was obviously all loaded down with ideals and sentiment and what not—was quite in order as far as he was concerned.

Gussie had always been one of those dreamy, soulful birds—you can't shut yourself up in the country and live only for newts, if you're not—and I could see no reason why, if he could somehow be induced to get the low, burning words off his chest, he and the Bassett shouldn't hit it off like ham and eggs.

"She's just the type for him," I said.