

Ye Olde Plum News

No 54, April 2024

UNCONVENTIONAL PETS

MENAGERIE AT A HOTEL

"My uncle's hotel is a fashionable hotel. Rich Americans, rich Mahara-jahs, rich people of every nation come to my uncle's hotel. They come, and with them they have brought their pets. Monsieur, it was the existence of a nightmare. Wherever I have looked there are animals. Listen. There are an Indian Prince. He has with him two dromedaries. There is also one other Indian prince. With him is a giraffe. The giraffe drink every day one dozen best champagne to keep his coat good... There is a guest with a young lion. There is a guest with an alligator. (The Man Who Disliked Cats, 1912)

~~~\*~~~

### MONKEYS

Lady Wetherby had a beloved monkey called Eustace. "If you please, m'lady – the hape!" It was Wrench's custom to speak about Eustace in a tone of restrained disgust... The hape is behaving very strange, m'lady," said Wrench frostily... The hape is seated on the kitchen-sink, m'lady, throwing new-laid eggs at the scullery-maid. (Uneasy Money, 1917)

I believe, though he (Freddie Widgeon) never met it socially, there was even a tame chimpanzee somewhere on the premises. (Good-Bye to All Cats, 1934)

~~~\*~~~

BULL-FINCH

Beach kept a bullfinch in his pantry. In the butler's absence she (Penelope Donaldson) was endeavouring to fraternize with his bullfinch, a bird of deep reserves who lived in a cage on the table in the corner. So far, however, she had been unsuccessful in her efforts to find a formula ... Outside, there had become audible the booming sound of a bulky butler making good time along the stone-flagged corridor. The bull-finch, recognizing the tread of loved

feet, burst into liquid song. (Pigs Have Wings, 1952)

~~~\*~~~

### ALLIGATOR

"Are you aware, miss, that there is a living organism in that basket, a living organism that snaps at you when you raise the lid and would pretty near have took the top of my thumb off if I hadn't of looked slippy?" Miss Blossom answered: "Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you. That's my alligator." This happened on board the R. M. S. Atlantic. The alligator, named Wilfred, belonged to the film star Miss Lotus Blossom. (The Luck of the Bodkins, 1935)

~~~\*~~~

NEWT

"Mr. Fink-Nottle has a strong newt complex ... Well, Gussie has always been a slave to them ... The trouble spread ... The craving grew upon him ... 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." (Right Ho, Jeeves, 1934)

Gussie was a guest at Totleigh Towers and of course brought his newts, but got problems. "I broke the glass tank in my bedroom, and the bath was the only place to lodge the newts. The basin wasn't large enough. Newts need elbowroom." Gussie's host, Sir Watkyn Bassett went to take a bath... Gussie yelled: "Oh, my gosh, you silly old ass, be careful what you're doing with those newts." (The Code of the Woosters, 1938)

~~~\*~~~

### USEFUL RED-BELLIED TURTLE

Robert Gilpkin was a gate keeper at the local zoo when a young man approached him with a red-bellied turtle. "Ah," said Mr. Gilpkin. "A red-bellied turtle, eh? Just what we happen to be short of. Come in and let me have it." The young man came in and let him

have it on the base of the scull. Then, stepping over his prostrate body, he took a hundred dollars from the gate-house cash-register and withdrew. Asked by the reporters how it felt to be beaned with a red-bellied turtle, Mr. Gilpkin replied that it was about the same as being beaned with any other kind of turtle. Nothing much in it either way, he said. (Plum Pie, 1966)

~~~\*~~~

BITTEN

Claude Pott was asked by Lord Ickenham for help with hiding Lord Emsworth's pig, the Empress. He refused and told Lord Ickenham: "Well. Between you and me, Lord I," said Claude Pott, discarding loftiness and coming clean, "there's another reason. I was once bitten by a pig." "Not really?" "Yes, sir. And ever since then I've had a horror of the animals" Lord Emsworth hastened to point out that the present was a special case. "You can't be bitten by the Empress ... She's as gentle as a lamb." "I was once bitten by a lamb." Lord Ickenham was surprised. "What an extraordinary past you seem to have had, Mustard. (Uncle Fred in the Springtime, 1939)

~~~\*~~~

### BULL-FROG

"Speaking", said my uncle James, "of dogs, did I ever tell you about Egbert, my bull-frog? I class Egbert among the dogs, partly because of his faithfulness and intelligence, and partly because his deep bay – you know how these bull-frogs bark – always reminded me of a bloodhound surprised while a trail of aniseed. He was my constant companion in Northern Assam, where I was at a time planting rubber. He finally died of a surfeit of hard-boiled egg, of which he was passionately fond, and I was as miserable as if I had lost a brother. (Egbert, Bull-Frog, 1914)

~~~\*~~~