

# \*Ye Olde Plum News\*

No 48 November 2023

## STIFF UPPER LIPS

### STIFF UPPER LIP, JEEVES!

This philosophical attitude, with ancient models, Plum found significant for an aristocratic mind, for a gentleman (and for a gentleman's gentleman). Plum stressed this by giving this title to a novel in the Jeeves & Wooster Saga, 1963.

~~~\*~~~

### HORACE

*It was the poet Horace who, speaking in Latin as was the custom in the circles in which he moved, recommended the keeping of a calm mind in even the most trying circumstances. Aequam mentem rebus in arduis servare mentem was the way he put it. (Frozen Assets, 1964)*

Jane Hubbard was a girl who by nature and training was well adapted to bear shocks. Her guiding motto in life was that helpful line of Horace ... (For the benefit of those who have not, like myself, enjoyed an expensive classical education, - memento - Take my tip - servare - preserv - aequam - an unruffled - mentem - mind - rebus in arduis - in every crisis.) (The Girl on the Boat, 1922)

... to translate freely, 'Buck up, and never mind what happens.' (On Fast Bowling, 1907)

~~~\*~~~

### SOCRATES AND JOB

The Oldest Member of the golf club told how he learnt self-control: "I cured myself by thinking of Socrates." "The Greek bozo?" "The, as you say, Greek bozo. Job would probably have answered equally well, but for some reason I preferred Socrates... He, if you remember, had his troubles... it can't have been at all pleasant for him to have to drink that bowl of hemlock... but he refused to get him down, bearing them consistently with good-humoured calm, and a stiff upper lip." He was wrong about Job who as a matter of fact did complain bitterly (Joy Bells for Walter, 1959)

~~~\*~~~

### MR BENNET'S VALET

"Webster," said Mr. Bennett, "I'm a dying man!" "Indeed, sir?" "A dying man!" repeated Mr. Bennett. "Very good, sir. Which of your suits would you wish me to lay out?" ... "Did you ring, sir?" "Webster," cried Mr. Bennett, "it's all right! I'm not dying after all, Webster!" "Very good, sir," said Webster. "Will there be anything further?" (The Girl on the Boat, 1922)

~~~\*~~~

### ENGLISH BUTLERS IN GENERAL

*My dear Smedley, you can't stick lighted matches between the toes of an English butler. He would raise his eyebrow and freeze you with a glance. You'd feel as if he had caught you using the wrong fork. (The Old Reliable, 1951)*

~~~\*~~~

### JEEVES

"Jeeves," I said, "we start for America on Saturday." "Very good, sir," he said; "which suit will you wear?" (Extricating Young Gussie, 1915)

For the first time in our long connection I observed Jeeves almost smile. The corner of his mouth curved quite a quarter of an inch, and for a moment his eye ceased to look like a meditative fish's. (The Aunt and the Sluggard, 1916)

"Well?" I said. Jeeves appeared perturbed. He allowed his left eyebrow to flicker upwards in a concerned sort of manner. (The Metropolitan Touch, 1922)

"It is disturbing, sir." ... He allowed a muscle at the side of his mouth to twitch regretfully. (Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, 1954)

"I see, sir. Most disturbing." "What did you say it was?" "Most disturbing, sir." "I snorted a trifle. 'Oh?' I said. "And I suppose, if you had been in San Francisco when the earthquake started, you would just have lifted up your finger and said 'Tweet, tweet! Shush, shush! Now, now! Come. Come!' The English language, they used to tell me at school, is the richest in the world, crammed full from end to end with about a million red-hot adjectives. Yet the only one you can find to describe this ghastly business is the adjective 'disturbing'. It is not disturbing, Jeeves it is ... what is the word I want?" (Episode of the Dog McIntosh, 1929)

~~~\*~~~

### BEACH

To such an observation the well-trained butler, however sympathetic, does not reply "Whoopee!" or "You said it, pa!" Beach merely allowed his upper lip to twitch slightly by way of indication that his heart was in the right place. (Pigs Have Wings, 1952)

~~~\*~~~

### BERTIE WOOSTER

On behalf of Aunt Dahlia, Bertie had to go to Totleigh Towers, to meet face to face with Sir Watkyn Bassett and Roderick Spode, and furthermore to steal a silver cow creamer for her.

Stiffy Byng also wanted him to go there and do something for her. But what does she want me to do for her? That's the question. Probably something completely unfit for human consumption. So I've got that to worry about, too. What a life!" "Yes, sir." "Still, stiff upper lip, I suppose, Jeeves, what?" "Precisely sir." (The Code of the Woosters, 1938)

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. (The Code of the Woosters, 1938)

This parting of the ways with Jeeves had made me feel a bit as if I had just stepped on a bomb and was trying to piece myself together again in a bleak world, but we Woosters can keep the stiff upper lip. (Thank You, Jeeves, 1934)

~~~\*~~~

### GALAHAD THREEPWOOD

It has been said of Galahad Threepwood from the old Pelican days onward that blows beneath which lesser men reeled and collapsed left him as cool and unconcerned as a halibut on a fishmonger's slab, and indeed there were very few socks on the spiritual jawbone that he could not take with a stiff and nonchalant upper lip. (A Pelican at Blandings, 1969)

~~~\*~~~

### LADY CONSTANCE

It would be difficult to find a better illustration of all that is implied in the fine old phrase *Noblesse oblige*. At Lady Constance we point with particular pride. (Summer Lightning, 1929)

~~~\*~~~

### THE EMPRESS OF BLANDINGS

Her motto was "nil admirari". (Uncle Fred in the Springtime, 1939)

She was a philosopher and could take things as they came, but she did like a quiet life. All that whizzing in cars and being dumped in strange kitchens didn't do a pig of regular habits any good. (Pigs Have Wings, 1952)

~~~\*~~~