

Ye Olde Plum News

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THE ABODES OF THE EMPRESS

THE OLD PIG-STY

"The boudoir of the Empress was situated in a little meadow, dappled with buttercups and daisies, round two sides of which there flowed in a silver semicircle the stream which fed the lake."

It was close to the road between the Main Gate and the Castle, around halfway. Lord Emsworth was worried for her security, and built her a new sty behind the Castle. (Heavy Weather, 1937)

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### THE NEW RESIDENCE

"This new sty," proceeded Lord Emsworth, having switched the torch on and off six times, 'is an altogether more suitable place. As a matter of fact I had it built specially for the Empress in the spring ... this sty is a new sty, with all the latest improvements. It is up to date, in keeping with the trend of modern thought, and, what is more - and this I consider very important - it adjoins the kitchen garden."

It was also close to the pig-mans cottage, which made it easier to guard. It was "in a small paddock ... a squat building of red brick and timber". It "had a stout tiled roof." The only thing we know about the interior is that it had straw on the floor, and for a short time also Gally's Memoirs. (Heavy Weather, 1937)

Like the old sty, it was placed in a meadow dappled with buttercups and daisies (Sunset at Blandings, 1977)

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ABANDONED COTTAGE

Ronnie Fish pignapped the Empress to get money out of Lord Emsworth, and kept her in the old game-keeper's cottage. He arranged with Beach to feed her. In this humble cottage she lived for some days and nights until Hugo Carmody and Millicent Threepwood happened to find her and pignapped her again for their own purpose.

The dilapidated-looking cottage was situated in the West Wood, had two floors connected by crazy stairs and smelled mouse and mildew. (Summer Lightning, 1929) Beach called it an extremely humble place and Eve Halliday called it horrible-looking. The low, squat, shedlike building had funny windows and a stained door. Downstairs was a single sitting-room and the interior consisted of a table with red cloth, a chair, three stuffed birds in a glass case at the wall and a small horsehair sofa. (Leave it to Psmith, 1923) The cottage was hardly a resi-

dence worthy the Empress, but she took the visit with equanimity.

Sir Parsloe's Queen of Matchingham also resided here for a while. (Pigs have Wings, 1952)

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### BAXTER'S CARAVAN

Baxter arrived at Blandings in a big yellow caravan which he parked in a small spinney in the park. He was invited to live in the castle by lady Constance so the caravan was empty. Hugo Carmody and Millicent Threepwood moved the Empress from the game-keepers cottage to the caravan, where she spent an afternoon, before she was returned to Lord Emsworth. (Summer Lightning, 1929)

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THE GARDEN SUITE BATHROOM

The Duke of Dunstable claimed that he had been promised the Empress by Lord Emsworth, which the latter absolutely denied. Baxter (at that time secretary to the Duke), on his order, stole her and put her in the bathroom of Dunstable's suite at Blandings. "She found the bathroom odd. It was the only place she had ever been where there appeared to be a shortage of food. The best it had to offer was a cake of shaving-soap, and she had been eating this with a thoughtful frown." (Uncle Fred in the Springtime, 1939)

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### VERONICA WEDGE'S BEDROOM

Freddie and Gally moved the Empress into the Castle, to the bedroom of Veronica Wedge. Her reaction when she entered the room was to scream: EEEEEEEEEEEE!!! The effect of this was, as Gally had anticipated, that Tipton Plimsoll came running and Veronica took shelter in his arms. The desired engagement was a fact. As always equipped with a healthy appetite, the only food the Empress could find in her temporary sty was one of Veronicas camisoles, but she settled for that. (Full Moon, 1947)

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THE STY AT MATCHINGHAM HALL

Lord Emsworth's rival, sir Gregory Parsloe, owned two fat pigs: the Pride of Matchingham, and the new, still fatter, Queen of Matchingham.

Gally stole the Queen but Sir Parsloe's pig-man Wellbeloved made a counter-strike by stealing the Empress. He kept her in the Queen's empty sty at Matchingham Hall. This stalemate lasted for some days. (Pigs Have Wings, 1952)

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### KITCHEN OF VILLA SUNNYBRAE

This red brick building, in the outskirts of Market Blandings, one mile away from Blandings Castle, was until recently rented by Admiral Biffen. It looked like a house in a suburb of London but it contained a cosy living-room and a kitchen. As Gally knew the house was empty, he choose it as a temporary sty, first for the (stolen) Queen later for the (back-stolen) Empress. (Pigs Have Wings, 1952)

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UNFULLFILLED MOVING PLANS

- When the Empress was found in Dunstable's bathroom at Blandings he had planned to take her to his estate in Wiltshire, put her on a diet and give her exercise. (Uncle Fred in the Springtime, 1939)

- Lord Emsworth and Lord Ickenham considered to hide her away at Ickenham Hall until Dunstable left Blandings. (Uncle Fred in the Springtime, 1939)

- Lavender Briggs planned to steal the pig and sell her either to Dunstable or to Lord Tilbury. Her accomplice gave her away and lord Emsworth sacked her. (Service With a Smile, 1961)

- Dunstable blackmailed Lord Emsworth to get the sow, but Lord Emsworth bought her back before she was moved. (Service With a Smile, 1961)

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### THE EMPRESS' REACTIONS

Her motto was *nil admirari*. (Uncle Fred in the Springtime, 1939) "Down in her budoir by the kitchen garden, Empress of Blandings ... looked about her, happy to be back in the old familiar surroundings. It was pleasant to feel settled once more. 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) She endured all excursions with forbearance and kept stiff upper lip as long as she had something to eat.

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