

Ye Olde Plum News

No 6 November 2020

THEME WITH 6 VARIATIONS

INTROD: Dudley Finch

In the short story **The Awful Gladness of the Mater** (1925) P. G. Wodehouse introduced us to Mr. Dudley Finch. In the end of the story he went to Australia to get as much Ocean as possible between himself and Roberta "Bobbie" Wickham, his former girlfriend, and her mother, Mrs Wickham. He fled from their home at night, under gunfire. This was, however, only a prelude to the horrors he was going to face, and which Plum later also exposed other characters to.

~~~~\*~~~~

### THEME: Dudley Finch Returns

Two years later (Wodehouse time) Dudley returned to England. In the short story **Dudley is Back to Normal** (1940) he once more falls under the spell of Bobbie Wickham. She asks him to accompany her and her cousin, Mr. Cuthbert Wickham, to a restaurant in the evening. Cuthbert is intoxicated and threatening. Miss Wickham deserts them, excusing herself with a headache. The menacing Cuthbert, his dog Tulip and Dudley are thrown out from a restaurant and from a night club because of the appalling behaviour of Cuthbert and Tulip. Then they go to the Wickham house. Here Dudley's horror culminates. Threatened by Cuthbert he tries to get into the house, is taken for a trespasser, is shot at by Mrs. Wickham and chased by the raging Tulip. From this haven in a tree in the garden he overhears Miss Wickham coming home and telling Cuthbert that her headache was pretended and just an excuse to get away to another party. Her duplicity and her abusing of him makes her spell over him to break. Dudley is now profoundly vaccinated against Bobbie's charm and he returns to Australia.



~~~~\*~~~~

1st VAR: Barmy Fotheringay Phipps

1946, Wodehouse published a sketch of a Barmy story in the magazine *Carnival* with the title **A Wedding Has Been Arranged**. A more elaborated version came 1947 in *Cosmopolitan*.

~~~~\*~~~~

### 2nd VAR: Joy Bells for Barmy

P. G. Wodehouse evidently liked both the plot and many formulations in **Dudley is back to normal**, so he reused it, as he often recycled good plots, jokes and formulations in new stories. The short story **Joy bells for Barmy** (*Cosmopolitan*, 1947) mainly consists of stuff from **Dudley is Back to Normal**. In this story Dudley is replaced by the well-known drone Barmy Fotheringay Phipps, and Miss Wickham is replaced by a Miss Hermione Brimble, daughter to a bishop. Barmy is in love with her and behaves saintly to impress on her, but she rejects his proposal. She however asks Barmy to accompany Mr. Merwyn Potter, a relative to her, for an evening. Barmy still has hope and can't refuse. He experiences almost exactly the same horrors as Dudley did. He is actually not shot at by the girl's mother, but in order to hide for a servant with a gun and a fierce dog he is forced to climb a tree in the garden.

The end is changed. Merwyn tells Hermione about the events of the evening and blames Barmy for everything. She realizes that Barmy is more of an adventurer than a saint and that she loves him. Barmy overhears this from the tree and they fall into each other's arms.

~~~~\*~~~~

3rd VAR: Barmy in Wonderland

In 1952 Wodehouse wrote his only novel about Barmy Fotheringay Phipps and then integrated the horror story with minor changes. The scene is now New York. A friend of Barmy, miss Hermione Brimble is engaged to Mr. Merwyn Potter. She asks her friend Barmy to accompany Merwyn and his dog Tulip for an evening. Merwyn is drunk and threatening. The horrors with him and his dog at a restaurant and the scene in the garden, where Barmy is being shot at and chased up a tree, are almost identical as in the short story *Joy bells for Barmy*.

The ending is different. Hermione tells Merwyn never to touch alcohol again or the engagement is over. He complies.



~~~~\*~~~~

### Var 4 - 6: The Right Approach

Wodehouse squeezed still more out of this plot. He wrote **The right Approach**, and published **three** different versions of it: 1958 in *Liliput*, 1959 in *Playboy* and, also 1959, in the collection **A Few Quick Ones**.

All three versions are very similar, but there are also important differences. It's obvious that Mr. Wodehouse departed from the 2<sup>nd</sup> variation **Joy Bells for Barmy** from 1947.

### 4th VAR: A Few Quick Ones

Here Mr. Mulliner at The Angler's Rest tells us about Augustus Mulliner and his wooing. To impress on Hermione Brimble, Augustus behaves saintly, but she rejects him. Augustus was standing outside the house where she lives when Oswald, an intoxicated but friendly relative to miss Brimble arrived after a wet evening at a restaurant together with a friend. They tell him about the happenings in the restaurant. To help Augustus in his wooing one of them throws a bottle through a window, and the other sings a serenade pretending to be Augustus. A servant with a gun and a dog chases Augustus up a tree. Oswald talks to Hermione and tells her that Augustus was the spirit behind everything, also in the restaurant. His lies about Augustus however did the trick. To be a man of action, not a saint, was the right approach.

### 5th VAR: Liliput

The story seems to be a shortened version of the one in *A Few Quick Ones*, with the same persons, the same events. Many formulations are the same, but it is shortened with 10-20%. The narrator it is not Mr. Mulliner and the introduction at The Angler's Rest is removed (but the name of the wooer remains).

### 6th VAR: Playboy

The last time Mr. Wodehouse used this plot in a story was for *Playboy*. This version differs somewhat more. Like in *Liliput* it is not a Mulliner story and the restaurant scene has disappeared.

Visiting Droitgate Spa, Augustus Brattle meets Evangeline and realizes that she is what the doctor ordainates. Her mother is there to cure some illness and Evangeline accompanies her. Augustus pretends illness to make it easier to get in contact with them. He proposes, but his proposal is rejected. Augustus goes to the home of the family to put things right. In the garden the same things as in *A Few Quick Ones* occurs, with a loaded Oswald with a friend, bottle-throwing, a serenade and climbing a tree to escape an armed servant. Augustus overhears how Oswald is blaming him for everything, but Evangeline regards him with new eyes and the Happy End occurs.

~~~~\*~~~~