

# \*Ye Olde Plum News\*

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## ALLUSIONS TO MARCUS AURELIUS

### HELP TO CALM DOWN

My mother looked at me over her book. 'You are restless, Margie,' she said. 'There is a volume of Marcus Aurelius on the table beside you, if you care to read.' (Not George Washington, 1907)

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### EMPLOYERS WITH PATIENCE

There was that about Master Bean which made it practically impossible for anyone to employ him for long. A syndicate of Galahad, Parsifal and Marcus Aurelius might have done it, but to an ordinary erring man, conscious of things done which should not have been done, and other things equally numerous left undone, he was too oppressive. (The Man, The Maid and the Miasma, 1910)

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### IN DISTRESS

Nutty talks about uncle Ira: You remember the time he had it all worked out that the end of the world was to come at five in the morning one February? Made me stop up all night with him reading Marcus Aurelius! (Uneasy Money, 1917)

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### STOIC CHILD

Marcus Aurelius would have liked William Bannister Winfield. They belonged to the same school of thought. William took things as they came. He endured everything stoically. (The Coming of Bill, 1919)

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### ORDEALED BY GOLF

The Oldest Member of the Wood Hill Golf Club advised another member: Imitate the spirit of Marcus Aurelius. 'Whatever may befall thee,' says that great man in his 'Meditations', 'it was preordained for thee from the everlasting. Nothing happens to anybody which he is not fitted by nature to bear.'

I like to think that this noble thought came to him after he had sliced a couple of new balls into the woods, and that he jotted it down on the back of his scorecard. For there can be no doubt that this man was a golfer, and a bad golfer at that. Nobody who had not had a short putt stop on the edge of the hole could possibly have written the words: 'That which makes the man no worse than he was makes life no worse. It has no power to harm, without or

within.' Yes, Marcus Aurelius undoubtedly played golf, and all the evidence seems to indicate that he rarely went round in under a hundred and twenty. The niblick was his club. (Ordeal by Golf, 1919)

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### AN IDEAL SON-IN-LAW

Mr. Brewster's general idea was that fortune had smiled upon him in an almost unbelievable fashion and had presented him with a son-in-law who combined in almost equal parts the more admirable characteristics of Apollo, Sir Galahad, and Marcus Aurelius. (Indiscretions of Archie, 1921)

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### LARGE-BRAINED BLOKE

I doubt if the idea that came to me (Bertram Wooster) at this juncture would have occurred to a single one of any dozen of the largest-brained blokes in history. Napoleon might have got it, but I'll bet Darwin and Shakespeare and Marcus Aurelius wouldn't have thought of it in a thousand years. (Fixing it for Freddie, 1925)

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### VITAL QUESTIONS IN LIFE

Mr Hoke had lived on a diet of large whiskies and small sodas all the afternoon which had left him in a state of uncertainty on three cardinal points. These were: (a) Who was he? (b) Where was he? (c) Why was he?... In a way, it was the sort of thing Marcus Aurelius used to worry about. But Mr Hoke had an advantage over the Roman Emperor. The latter sought for some explanation of his present existence in the great world of men. (Big Money, 1931)

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### NO CURE FOR STUBBED TOES

Jeeves to Bertie: 'I was endeavouring to convey my appreciation of the fact that your position is in many respects somewhat difficult, sir. But I wonder if I might call your attention to an observation of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. He said: 'Does aught befall you? It is good. It is part of the destiny of the Universe ordained for you from the beginning. All that befalls you is part of the great web.' I breathed a bit stertorously. 'He said that, did he?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Well, you can tell him from me he's an ass.'

Bertie passed these words of wisdom on to Gussie. 'It's part of the great web, what?'

'Great web?' 'One of Marcus Aurelius's cracks. He said: 'Does aught befall you? It is good. It is the part of the destiny the Universe ordained for you from the beginning. All that befalls you is part of the great web.' From the brusque manner in which he damned and blasted Marcus Aurelius, I gathered that, just as had happened when Jeeves sprang it on me, the gag had failed to bring balm. I hadn't had much hope that it would. I doubt, as a matter of fact, if Marcus Aurelius's material is ever the stuff to give the troops at a moment when they have just stubbed their toe on the brick of Fate. (The Mating Season, 1949)

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### SEIZE THE DAY

'Remember that man's life lies all within this present, as 'twere but a hair's-breadth of time. As for the rest, the past is gone, the future yet unseen.' 'Eh?' 'Marcus Aurelius, m'lord.' (Ring for Jeeves, 1953)

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### HIGHLY ESTEEMED BY JEEVES

His young employer's distress pained Jeeves, and as it had always been his view that there was no anodyne for the human spirit, when bruised, like a spot of Marcus Aurelius, he searched in his mind for some suitable quotation from the Emperor's work. (Ring for Jeeves, 1953)

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### APPOSITE WISECRACKS

Like Marcus Aurelius, Kuala Lumpur's favourite son always seemed to have up his sleeve something apposite to the matter in hand, whatever the matter might be. But where the Roman emperor, a sort of primitive Bob Hope or Groucho Marx, had contended himself with throwing off wisecracks, Captain Biggar preferred the narrative form. (Ring for Jeeves, 1953)

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### FACE-LIFT

His face had shaded away to about the colour of the underside of a dead fish, and Jeeves, eyeing him with respectful commiseration, wished that it were possible to bring the roses back to his cheeks by telling him one or two good things which had come into his mind from the Collected Works of Marcus Aurelius. (Ring for Jeeves, 1953)

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