

Ye Olde Plum News

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HOBBIES

GATEWAY TO A MAN

Psmith remembered how they had "corralled" comrade Outwood at Sedleigh by joining the Archaeological Society. "Precisely," said Psmith. "Every man has his hobby. The thing is to find it out. In the case of comrade Rossiter, I should say that it would be either postage stamps, dried seaweed, or Hall Caine." (Psmith in the City, 1910)

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### OLD SILVER

Thomas Portarlington Travers, husband of Bertie's Aunt Dahlia, was an eager collector of old silver. This uncle is a bird who, sighting a nephew, is apt to buttonhole him and become a bit informative on the subject of sconces and foliation, not to mention scrolls, ribbon wreaths in high relief, and gadroon borders, and it seemed to me that silence was best. Bertie was engaged to visit an antique shop and sneer at a cow-creamer, to register scorn and claim it was a modern Dutch thing, thus paving the way for Uncle Tom to get it at a lower prize. Sir Watkyn Bassett was also a silver collector and Tom's hardest competitor. He managed to snatch the cow-creamer just in front of Tom. (The Code of the Woosters, 1938)

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PHILATELY

Sir Leopold Jellaby was a millionaire and a philatelist. Anselm Mulliner, the young curate, was in love with Sir Jellaby's daughter Myrtle but too poor to dare to propose. He inherited a stamp collection from his late godfather, insured for five thousand pounds. Sir Jellaby looked at the collection and offered to buy it for five pounds.

Anselm got the chance to preach at the evening-song. Every curate throughout the English countryside keeps tucked away among his effects a special sermon designed to prevent him being caught short, if suddenly called upon to preach at evensong... Anselm cleared his throat and gave out the simple text of *Brotherly Love*. Even in manuscript form, without the added attraction of the young man's beautifully modulated tenor voice, one can clearly sense its magic... It gave remarkable consequences.

"Mulliner," said Sir Leopold Jellaby, "you find me in tears. And why am I in tears? Because, my dear Mulliner, I am still over-whelmed by that wonderful sermon of yours on *Brotherly Love* and our duty to our neighbours... It has made me a different man. I wonder, Mulliner, if you can find me pen and ink inside the house?... I wish to write you a cheque for ten thousand pounds for that stamp collection of yours... When you showed me those stamps yesterday, I recognized their value immediately – they would fetch five thousand pounds anywhere – so I naturally told you they were worthless. It was one of those ordinary routine business precautions which a man is bound to take.... But your sermon tonight has made me see that there is something higher and nobler than a code of business ethics. (Anselm Gets his Chance, 1937)

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### SCARABS

Mr. J. Preston Peters was an American with digestion problems. His nerve specialist recommended him taking up a hobby. The very word hobby seemed futile and ridiculous to him. His hobby was avoiding hobbies and attending to business... He disliked writing unnecessary cheques, and, if the only way to avoid doing so was to have a hobby, a hobby he must have... "Now my hobby," said the specialist, "is the collecting of scarabs. Why should you not collect scarabs?... Perhaps," he said "you would care to take a glance at my collection? It is in the next room. That was the beginning of Mr. Peters' devotion to scarabs... Later, an expert had talked to Mr Peters for nearly two hours about the New Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, Osiris, Ammon, Mut, Bubastis, ... That talk changed J. Preston Peters from a supercilious scooper-up of random scarabs to a genuine scarab-maniac. (Something Fresh, 1915)

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ORNITHOLOGY

Mr. Alexander Worple was a renowned American ornithologist. He had written a book named "American Birds," and was writing another, "More American birds." When he had finished that, the presumption was that he would begin a third,

and keep on till the supply of American birds gave out. (The Artistic Career of Corky, 1916)

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### JEWELRY

Jeeves had several hobbies. "I spent some months at one time studying jewellery under the auspices of a cousin of mine who is in the trade."... "It just happens that jewellery is something of a hobby of mine... To ascertain the genuineness of a diamond it would be necessary to take a sapphire-point gramophone needle – which is, as you are no doubt aware, corundum having a hardness of 9 – and make a small test scratch on the underside of the suspect stone." (Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, 1954)

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NEWTs

Gussie had always been a slave to them. He used to keep them at school... The newts got him. Arrived at a man's estate, he retired to the depths of the country and gave his life up to these dumb creatures. (Right Ho, Jeeves, 1934)

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### DRIED SEAWEED

Their house was not far from the links; Eunice was not engaged to be married; and the aunt made a hobby of collecting seaweed, which she pressed and pasted in an album. One sometimes thinks that aunts live entirely for pleasure. (The Rough Stuff, 1920)

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SNUFF-BOXES

Ukridge's aunt had a collection of valuable snuff-boxes. All her surplus cash is devoted to adding to her collection of mouldy snuff-boxes. When I look at those snuff-boxes and reflect that any single one of them, judiciously put up the spout, would sent my feet on the road to fortune, only my innate sense if honesty keeps me from pinching them. (Buttercup Day, 1925)

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