

# \*Ye Olde Plum News\*

No 61 November 2024

## SECOND USE OF ART

### BRUCE "CORKY" CORCORAN

A portrait-painter, he called himself, but as a matter of fact his score up to date had been nil. You see, the catch about portrait-painting – I've looked into the thing a bit – is that you can't start painting portraits till people come along and ask you to, and they won't come and ask you to until you've painted a lot first. He was asked by his uncle Mr. Worple to paint a portrait of his baby son. Might this be the break? Mr. Worple saw the portrait for the first time. "Oosh!" he exclaimed. And for perhaps a minute there was one of the scaliest silences I've ever run up against. "Is this a practical joke?... And this – this – is what you have been wasting your time and my money for all these years! A painter!" ... I gave you this commission, thinking that you were a com-petent worker, and this – this – this extract from a comic supplement is the result!... Booosh!"

Jeeves suggested: *Mr. Corcoran's portrait may not have pleased Mr. Worple as a likeness of his only child, but I have no doubt that editors would gladly consider it as a foundation for a series of humorous drawings... Corky was glaring at the picture, and making a sort of dry sucking noise with his mouth. He seemed completely overwrought. And then suddenly he began to laugh in a wild way. "If I might make the suggestion, Mr. Corcoran – for a title of the series which you have in mind – "The Adventures of Baby Blobs."* The series became a big hit and gave Corky a prosperous life.

(The Artistic Career of Corky, 1916)

~~~~\*~~~~

### BRANCEPETH MULLINER

Lord Bromborough's daughter Muriel was in love with the young artist Brancepeth Mulliner. "Listen, I've got a job for you." "What sort of a job?" "A commission. Father wants his portrait painted.... His sinister design is to present it the local Men's Club. I don't know what he's got against them. A nasty jar it'll be for the poor fellows when they learn of it." She describes her father as all moustache and eyebrows... It seemed to Brancepeth, indeed, that the job before him was more one for a landscape artist than a portrait painter. Before Brancepeth started painting, a little accident changed the

outset. *He took out his lighter and gave it a twiddle. Then, absently, he put the flame to the cigarette between his host's lips. Or, rather, for pre-occupation had temporarily destroyed his judgement of distance, to the moustache that billowed above and round it. And the next moment there was a sheet of flame and a cloud of acrid smoke. When this had cleared away, only a little smouldering stubble was left of what had once been one of Norfolk's two most outstanding eye-sores. A barely human cry rent the air, but Brancepeth hardly heard it.*

Lord Bramborough was furious. But to Brancepeth the future looked bright. His days as a portrait painter was over. In Lord Bramborough's de-bearded face he had seen the traits of a character with wonderful possibilities on the comic screen: Ferdinand the Frog.

(Buried Treasure, 1937)

~~~~\*~~~~

### GWLADYS PENDLEBURY

Miss Pendlebury had painted a portrait of Bertie, which now was hanging in Bertie's flat. Jeeves didn't like it. "For some reason this spot of art fails to appeal to you. What do you object to about it?" "Is not the colour-scheme a trifle bright, sir?" "I had not observed it, Jeeves. Anything else?" "Well, in my opinion, sir, Miss Pendlebury has given you a somewhat too hungry expression." "Hungry?" "A little like that of a dog regarding a distant bone, sir."

Gwladys run over her friend Mr. Lucius Pim just outside Bertie's flat and put him to bed in Bertie's bedroom for medical care. Lucius Pim was a brother of Mrs. Slingsby, whose husband owned "Slingsby's Superb Soups". Gwladys and Lucius blamed Bertie for the accident. The Slingsbys were coming to visit Mr. Pim and to rebuke Bertie. To avoid his occupied flat, Bertie went to Paris and left Jeeves in charge in London.

On his return to London, Bertie's eyes were met by giant posters: *At the top of it were the words: - SLINGSBY'S SUPERB SOUPS and at the bottom; - SUCCULENT AND STRENGTHENING. And in between, me. Yes, dash it. Bertram Wooster in person. A reproduction of the Pendlebury portrait,*

*perfect in every detail... I saw now what Jeeves had meant when he said that the portrait had given me a hungry look. In the poster this look had become one of bestial greed.*

Gwladys and Lucius, supported by Jeeves, had made a deal with the Slingsbys. They were allowed to use the painting in advertising if they did not take legal action against Bertie.

(The Spot of Art, 1929)

~~~~\*~~~~

### JOSS WEATHERBY

Joss was employed by Jimmy Duff as an advertising painter. Some years ago, Joss had painted a portrait of Mrs. Chavender, earlier engaged to Jimmy Duff. Mrs. Chavender had given the portrait to her sister, Mrs. Steptoe of Claines Hall. Jimmy Duff met miss Sally Fairmile, who lived with the Steptoes. "Seen that portrait of her (Mrs. Chavender) that's there?" "Of course." "Is it like?" "It's good." "It really gets that snooty expression of hers?" "Oh, yes." Mr Duff sighed wistfully. Jimmy Duff wanted it. He tried to buy it, but it was not for sale. He then tried to get somebody to steal it for him. There was a hullabaloo, but in the end Jimmy Duff and Mrs. Chavender were lovers again.

"Jimmy," said Mrs. Chavender, an earnest note coming into her voice, "let's talk about that portrait. Did you take a real good look at it?" "Ah." "Anything strike you about it?" "How do you mean?" "Listen, Jimmy," said Mrs. Chavender, "I was giving it the once before I've got something. Here's what I thought. It seems to me people must be getting tired of seeing nothing but pretty girls in the advertisements of Paramount Ham. Isn't it about time you gave them something different? You may think I'm crazy, but I can see that portrait as a poster." ... in that portrait he's given me a sort of impatient, imperious look, as if I was mad about something and didn't intend to stand for it. And what I just thought was that if you took the portrait just as it is and put underneath some gag like – well, for instance: "Take this stuff away. I ordered Paramount!" you'd have a poster that got a new angle."

(Quick Service, 1940)

~~~~\*~~~~