

Ye Olde Plum News

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BICYCLE TROUBLES

LACK OF PRACTICE

Gally and Jerry Vail were in the cottage Sunnybrae. "You'd better wait here and entertain Beach. He will be arriving shortly." "Walking?" "Bicycling," said Gally. "And it will be a lasting grief to me that I was not able to see him doing it." ... It was about ten minutes after he had gone that there came from the great outdoors the unmistakable sound of a butler falling off a bicycle. ... "Have a nice ride?" he asked. A shudder made the butler's body ripple like a field of wheat when a summer breeze passes over it. "Not very enjoyable, sir," he replied in a toneless voice. "I have not cycled since I was a small lad, and I found it trying to the leg muscles." ... "Unpleasant, falling off a bicycle. Shakes up the old liver." "Precisely, sir," said Beach, closing his eyes.

(Pigs have Wings, 1952)

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### PAYMENTS

"There was a bicycle and photograph shop down near where I lived a couple of years ago, and I happened to see a tandem bicycle there which I rather liked the look of. So I ordered it provisionally from this cove. Absolutely provisionally, you understand. ... Well, after about a week the fellow asks if there are any further particulars I want to learn before definitely buying the muck. I say I am considering the matter, and in the meantime will he be good enough to let me have that little clockwork man in the window which walks when wound up?" "Well?" "Well, damme," said Ukridge, aggrieved, "it didn't walk. It broke the first time I tried to wind it. Then a few weeks went by and the bloke started to make himself dashed unpleasant. Wanted me to pay him money! ... Fortunately, I had given him a false name - " "Why?" "Just an ordinary business precaution," explained Ukridge.

(No Wedding Bells for Him, 1923)

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ABERDEEN TERRIER

The constable, I say, was riding without his hands: and but for this the disaster, when it occurred, might not have been so complete. I was a bit of a cyclist myself in my youth - I think I have mentioned that I once won a choir boys' handicap at some village

sports - and I can testify that when you are riding without your hands, privacy and a complete freedom from interruption are of the essence. The merest suggestion of an unexpected Scottie connecting with the ankle-bone at such a time, and you swoop into a sudden swerve. And, as everybody knows, if the hands are not firmly on the handlebars, a sudden swerve spells a smeller. And so it happened now. A smeller - and among the finest I have ever been privileged to witness - was what this officer of the law came. One moment he was with us, all merry and bright; the next he was in the ditch, a sort of macédoine of arms and legs and wheels, with the terrier standing on the edge, looking down at him with that rather offensive expression of virtuous smugness which I have often noticed on the faces of Aberdeen terriers in their clashes with humanity. ... Stiffy, the owner of the dog Bartholomew came along. "What on earth," she demanded, "did you do that for? ... Well, you shouldn't ride a bicycle. Bartholomew hates bicycles... You can't expect a dog to pass up a policeman on a bicycle. It isn't human nature."

(The Code of the Woosters, 1938)

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### VILLAGE MOTHERS ON OUTING

Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps was in love with Angela Briscoe, the daughter of a reverend. The church arranged an annual Outing for the Village Mothers of Maiden Eggesford, and she required him to take care of the Outing. Sixteen Mothers were assembled in an open motor coach. No sooner were they out of sight of the vicarage than they began to effervesce to an almost unbelievable extent. The first intimation Barmy had that the binge was going to be run on lines other than those he had anticipated, was when a very stout Mother in pink bonnet and a dress covered with bugles suddenly picked off a passing cyclist with a well-directed tomato, causing him to skid into a ditch.

(Tried in the Furnace, 1935)

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BOASTING AND DARKNESS

On suggestion from Jeeves, Bertie late one evening rang the fire bell at Brinkley Court, Aunt Dahia's place. All the servants attended a ball at Kingsham, four miles away. The inhabitants and guests eva-

cuated the house and then found themselves locked out. On top of that they found out it was a false alarm. Jeeves suggested that Bertie would ride a bike to Kingsham, and fetch a key. Jeeves said to Aunt Dahia: "Yes, madam, Mr Wooster would perform the task admirably. He is an expert cyclist. He has often boasted to me of his triumphs on the wheel." ... "That's right" said Tuppy. "Bertie has always been a great cyclist. I remember at Oxford he used to take all his clothes off on bump-supper nights and ride around the squad, singing comic songs." ...

It was dark outside and the bike had no lamp. I found myself wobbling badly, and all the stories I had ever heard of nasty bicycle accidents came back to me with a rush. One of the stories was about a chap who run into an elephant, left over from a travelling circus. ... Apart from the ceaseless anxiety of having to keep an eye skinned for barking dogs, and once I received a most unpleasant shock when, alighting to consult a signpost, I saw sitting on top of it an owl that looked exactly like my Aunt Agatha.

In Kingsham he learnt that all spare keys were at Brinkley, so his sufferings were in vain. He had nothing else to do than to ride the four miles back in the night. At Brinkley Court he found a happy party going on in the house. Jeeves had "found" a spare key soon after Bertie's departure. The common enjoyment about Bertie's unnecessary suffering though had accomplished one thing, it had reunited sundered hearts. This was what Jeeves had anticipated, but 'forgot' to tell Bertie.

(Right Ho, Jeeves, 1934)

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### MALICIOUS MACHINERY

It looked low and furtive. Its handle-bars curved up instead of down, it had gaps in its spokes, and its pedals were naked and unashamed. A sans-culotte of a bicycle. The sort of bicycle that snaps at strangers. ... He (Soapy Molloy) climbed on to the machine, and after one majestic wobble passed through the gates into the park, pedalling bravely.... Bolt smiled. He had been bitten by that bicycle himself.

(Money for Nothing, 1928)

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