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creative writing
workshops

An Homage to Wodehouse

by Nick Parnell

Some of you may recall that sometime ago I wrote a rather successful piece for my Aunt Dahlia's rag, 'M'lady's Boudoir'. Well she's asked for another and I've found that the creative juices have rather dried up. But we Woosters are not ones to give up lightly and so I have taken the rather drastic action of signing up to a night class to improve the old pen and ink skills. I had not, however, anticipated the dreaded homework and this week it's a real stinker.

I didn't dare ask Jeeves for advice but I did take myself off to the Dog and Duck, a hostelry that he often frequents on his nights off. I reasoned that as he has more brains than you can reasonably shake a largish stick at, that there might be something in the beer, unique to this inn, to stimulate the dormant grey cells. On the other hand perhaps I should have had the Dover sole, rather than the beef wellington, for lunch at the Drones.

I sat there at a corner table nursing a pint of the liquid gold, notebook open at a blank page, desperately trying to come up with the goods but able only to think of Granny Sprocket's Poodle, the nag that had fallen in the last furlong of the 2.40 at Sandown that afternoon, losing me more bobs than I care to mention. I was drawn from this fruitless reverie by a familiar voice.

“Good evening sir,” came the mellow tones of Jeeves, who seemed to have oozed into the room without me noticing.

“What ho, Jeeves. Come for a pre dinner stiffener?”

“Not exactly sir. I am in the darts team of the Dog and Duck and we have an important match tonight. May I ask sir how you come to be here as I thought you were at the theatre this evening.”

As he imparted these words the usually inscrutable man eyed my notebook suspiciously.

Well what with that and my complete failure to write anything I spilled the beans and told him about my night school wheeze.

“So you see Jeeves I’m in a bit of a spot. The tutor chappy, dashed clever type, wears glasses and everything, has set me and my scholarly pals the task of writing a whopping 500 words – I didn’t know there were 500 words – on anything we like. But the catch is that somewhere in the narrative I have to slip in the following sentence: ‘The story of my childhood is a complicated sentence that I am always trying to finish.’ Rather rum what. Haven’t a clue what it means.”

“A quote sir, from Hilary Mantel’s memoir ‘Giving up the Ghost’. It is certainly an interesting exercise that you have been set. May I hazard sir that you could write your piece about the difficulty that you have been having in writing this piece and therefore, by necessity, use the challenging sentence.”