

CHRISTMAS PUDDING

2019

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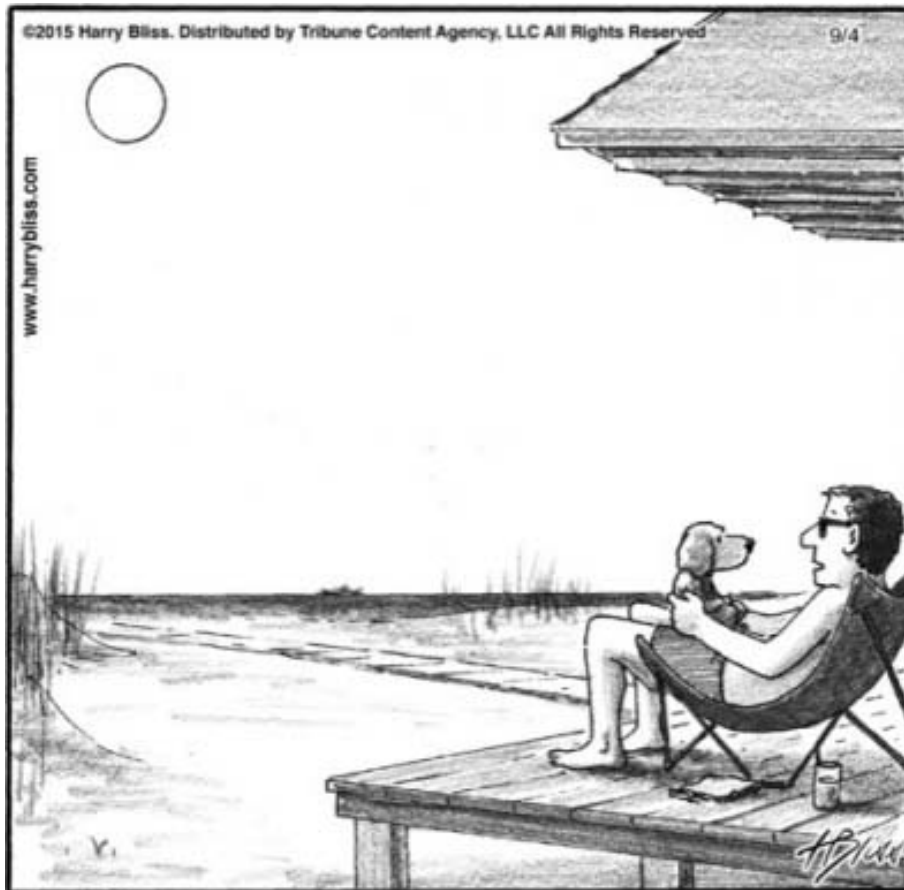
Robert Middleton

Christmas Pudding is an anthology devoted essentially to aspects of the use of language, particularly in poetry but also in wit and humour. Poetry is a vehicle for sharing ideas and emotions and, as such, is a mark of our civilisation and collective intelligence: it also promotes an understanding of the nature and importance of language, man's highest natural attribute. I am concerned that few people read poetry today and that the contemporary dominance of the visual media poses a threat to our command (and even understanding) of language and to a decline in writing skills.

After studying under Graham Storey and Frank Leavis in Cambridge, I was deeply influenced by the literary criticism of Yvor Winters at Stanford University in the early 1960s, by his rigorous insistence on the distinction between connotation and denotation in poetry and by his moral crusade against the decline of reason as a precept in art and literature (and life) since the end of the eighteenth century. The accompanying relaxation of content and meaning that characterises verse for the last two hundred years is, at least in part, responsible for a breakdown in communication between writer and reader: today, 'anything goes' - much verse is obscure and, if it were not divided into lines, would be indistinguishable from prose. I share Winters' view that the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century was a golden age for poetry and that several poets of this age developed a 'timeless' medium for poetic expression characterised by the clear communication of ideas and emotion, using words not only for their sound, rhythm and imagery but also to convey meaning. I recognise, however, that the poetry of this period may not be easily accessible to the general reader as a result of unfamiliar poetic conventions and shifts in the meaning of words. I also dissent from Winters' rather pessimistic view that not much of comparable quality has been produced since. Until 2011, *Christmas Pudding* drew heavily on poetry of the 'golden age'; since then I include much modern and contemporary verse that, in my opinion, meets Winters' strict criteria. If I no longer insist on form, my criterion remains nevertheless quality of language and content - and, a new ingredient, wit.

In addition to the desire to entertain and amuse, *Christmas Pudding* has thus a serious intent: I aim to include poems that use language in a rational and comprehensible way, that have a clear meaning with a minimum of decoration and cliché and that express feelings we can share. My choice is intended to show that poetry can be (I would even say, should be) a means of communication between normal rational people.

The inspiration for *Christmas Pudding* is *Christmas Crackers*, an anthology of wisdom, wit and linguistic surprise collected by the distinguished scholar John Julius Norwich. I have tried to emulate his mixture of humour and erudition, although a significant part of my raw material is drawn from the more mundane spheres of e-mail and the Internet. My title seems to me apposite: a Christmas pudding is full of varied, interesting and sometimes surprising ingredients, is well-rounded, requires a considerable amount of stirring in its preparation, is still good a long time after the first serving and is not heavy if enjoyed sparingly. Moreover, a pudding is the least pretentious of dishes and acknowledges Norwich's superior recipe.



"I'm not angry, but in the future I'd prefer it if you chewed up her Sue Graftons, not my P.G. Wodehouses."

He has the most distorted ideas about wit and humour; he draws over his books and examination papers in the most distressing way and writes foolish rhymes in other people's books. Notwithstanding he has a genuine interest in literature and can often talk with enthusiasm and good sense about it.

— *Dulwich College report on Wodehouse, 1899.*

For Mr Wodehouse there has been no fall of Man; no 'aboriginal calamity'. His characters have never tasted the forbidden fruit. They are still in Eden. The gardens of Blandings Castle are that original garden from which we are all exiled. ... Mr Wodehouse's idyllic world can never stale. He will continue to release future generations from captivity that may be more irksome than our own. He has made a world for us to live in and delight in. — *Evelyn Waugh, 1961*

ã Robert Middleton 2019

Cartoons from *The New Yorker*

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CHRISTMAS PUDDING 2019

The 'star' of this year's CP is Pelham Grenville (P.G.) Wodehouse (1881-1975),¹ one of the most widely read humorists of the 20th century and author of more than ninety books, forty plays, two hundred short stories and other writings between 1902 and 1974. After leaving Dulwich College (see extract from his 1899 school report on the facing page), he was employed by a bank but disliked the work and turned to writing in his spare time. After a number of school stories, he turned to comic fiction, creating characters described in *Wikipedia* alliteratively as "the jolly gentleman of leisure Bertie Wooster and his sagacious valet Jeeves; the immaculate and loquacious Psmith; Lord Emsworth and the Blandings Castle set; the Oldest Member, with stories about golf; and Mr Mulliner, with tall tales on subjects ranging from bibulous bishops to megalomaniac movie moguls."

In 1934 Wodehouse moved to France where, in 1940, he was taken prisoner by the invading Germans and interned in Berlin for nearly a year. A shadow was cast over his career by six broadcasts to the USA he made on German radio. Although these were humorous and apolitical, he was threatened with prosecution in the UK. As a result, Wodehouse never returned to England and lived in the USA from 1947 until his death in 1975, taking American citizenship in 1955. Shortly before his death, he was, however, knighted in the 1975 New Year's honours. As *The New York Times* pointed out at the time "the honor seems to be an official act of forgiveness, at the age of 93, for his wartime broadcasts."²

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¹ In this, I am not following the advice of my mentor, John Julius Norwich, who wrote in his very last Christmas Cracker: "Only one page of Wodehouse every four years, that's the rule." See *In memoriam*, page 4.

² Charlie Chaplin was knighted at the same time. In his case, however, although the recognition took an unseemly long time, it was more an act of sympathy for his treatment in the USA, where he had been denounced by Eugene McCarthy and the House UnAmerican Activities Committee for his supposed pro-Communist sympathies. "It smacked of persecution, the British felt, when the United States Attorney General ruled in 1953 that the comedian, who had taken his family to live in Switzerland, would have to apply for a new residence visa if he wished to return to the country he had lived in for 40 years and satisfy immigration officials he was qualified to do so." (*The New York Times*, 2.1.1975)

Seasonally Appropriate

<p>Ulla Hahn (*1945) <i>Winterlied</i> Als ich heute von dir ging Fiel der erste Schnee Und es machte sich mein Kopf Einen Reim auf Weh.</p> <p>Denn es war die Kälte nicht Die die Tränen mir In die Augen trieb es war Vielmehr Ungereimtes.</p> <p>Ach da warst du schon zu weit Als ich nach dir rief Und dich fragte wer die Nacht In deinen Reimen schlief.</p>	<p><i>Winter song</i> When I left you today The first snow fell And in my head It made a rhyme for 'go'.</p> <p>For it was not the cold That brought tears To my eyes - but something That had no rhyme or reason.</p> <p>And you were too far away When I called after you And asked you who Slept at night in your rhymes.</p>
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T T T T

Translated from Woof

OK, I'll finish the FT crossword, and then start on Christmas Pudding.³



T T T T

Preface to *Thank You Jeeves*

This is the first of the full-length novels about Jeeves and Bertie Wooster, and it is the only book of mine which I tried to produce without sitting down at the typewriter and getting a crick in the back.

Not that I ever thought of dictating it to a stenographer. How anybody can compose a story by word of mouth, face to face with a bored looking

³ With thanks to Hazel and Jacob Roffler.

secretary with a notebook is more than I can imagine. Yet many authors think nothing of saying 'Ready, Miss Spelvin? Take dictation. Quote No comma Lord Jasper Murgatroyd comma close quote said no better make it hissed Evangeline comma quote I would not marry you if you were the last man on earth close quote period Quote Well comma, I'm not the last man on earth comma so the point does not arise comma close quote replied Lord Jasper comma twirling his moustache cynically period And so the long day wore on.'

If I started to do that sort of thing I should be feeling all the time that the girl was saying to herself as she took it down, 'Well comma this beats me period How comma with homes for the feeble minded touting for customers on every side comma has a fathead like this Wodehouse succeeded in remaining at large all these years mark of interrogation.'

But I did get one of those machines where you talk into a mouthpiece and have your observations recorded on wax, and I started *Thank You, Jeeves* on it. And after the first few paragraphs I thought I would run back and play the stuff over to hear how it sounded.

It sounded too awful for human consumption. Until that moment I had never realized that I had a voice like that of a very pompous school-master addressing the young scholars in his charge from the pulpit in the school chapel. There was a kind of foggy dreariness about it that chilled the spirits. It stunned me. I had been hoping, if all went well, to make *Thank You, Jeeves* an amusing book - gay, if you see what I mean, rollicking if you still follow me and debonair, and it was plain to me that a man with a voice like that could never come within several miles of being debonair. With him at the controls the thing would develop into one of those dim tragedies of peasant life which we return to the library after a quick glance at Page One. I sold the machine next day and felt like the Ancient Mariner when he got rid of the albatross. So now I confine myself to the good old typewriter.

Writing my stories I enjoy. It is the thinking them out that is apt to blot the sunshine from my life. You can't think out plots like mine without getting a suspicion from time to time that something has gone seriously wrong with the brain's two hemispheres and the broad band of transversely running fibres known as the corpus callosum. It is my practice to make about 400 pages of notes before starting a novel, and during this process there always comes a moment when I say to myself 'Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown.' The odd thing is that just as I am feeling that I must get a proposer and seconder and have myself put up for the loony bin, something always clicks and after that all is joy and jollity.

T T T T

Annotations to Wodehouse

Wodehouse was extraordinarily well read and in his works he throws out literary, biblical and other references at a rate of about twenty per chapter. In bringing to *CP* some of my favourite extracts from his works, I have included in the footnotes some details of his eclectic choices.

His taste is definitely late-Victorian, with well-worn references to the Bible and Shakespeare, smatterings of Pope, Gray, Hood, Leigh Hunt, Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, Browning, Tennyson, Longfellow, Walter Scott and Kipling but also with sudden and unexpected excursions into, among others, obscure areas of the Bible and legal terminology, music hall song and the Church Hymnal, and, *Nota Bene*, James Thurber.

Having begun a fascinating search from memory of some of the more obvious references, I found that someone (several people, actually) had been there before me, on a website devoted entirely to annotating a large part of Wodehouse's *opus*, thus saving me much effort - perhaps not time, because one annotation led inevitably to another and distracted from my main purpose.⁴

Even more amazing was my discovery of the Russian Wodehouse Society (Российское общество Вудхауза), whose website gives links to e-texts and many quotations.⁵

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John Julius Norwich - In Memoriam

Lord John Julius Norwich died on 1 June 2018. His *Christmas Crackers* were the inspiration for my *Christmas Pudding* I never met him, but we exchanged annual greetings, in one of which he was gracious enough to comment: "Your Pudding is so much richer and fruitier than my Cracker"

His Crackers (and scholarship) will be much missed.

⁴ See <https://www.madameulalie.org/index.html>. The Madame Eulalie site was started by members of the Yahoo! Blandings group, with the noble aims to (a) provide the text for early Wodehouse items which were never published in book form; (b) provide the text and graphics for stories and serialized novels which appeared in magazines, all pre-1924; and (c) provide annotations and other information, such as essays and analysis.

⁵ See <http://wodehouse.ru/rus.htm>.

T T T T

La Mort

Il y a quelque chose de plus fort que la mort, c'est la présence des absents, dans la mémoire des vivants. (Jean d'Ormesson)

La mort est le commencement de l'immortalité. (Robespierre)

Tu n'es plus là où tu étais, mais tu es partout là où je suis. (Victor Hugo)

Les morts ne sont vraiment morts que lorsque les vivants les ont oubliés. (Proverbe malgache)

T T T T

More Donald

I apologise for again devoting valuable space to Donald Trump, but he is still with us. While this may be an unmitigated blessing if we are talking about God, in the case of Donald it is less so. See if you can guess who wrote this:

You are liable some day to have a President supremely lacking in the qualities of a statesman, and one who is egotistic, impulsive, of immature judgment, a mere glutton of the limelight, ready to barter away prosperity and even his country's freedom for momentary popular applause.

If he is an autocrat, such as he, for the time, will your country be. Instead of a mighty nation, great in her physical strength and greater in her moral qualities, you may have a strutting, confiscating, shrieking, meddling America. (*Answer on page 54*)



Chapter 369 in which President Pooh gets stuck in his border wall



"Then you just hit 'tweet' and the whole world goes crazy"



"Just imagine the hole is world peace and the sand traps are nuclear Armageddon and the dub is your ability to deal calmly and rationally with complex situations."

T T T T

Sampling Wodehouse

Unde Dynamite (1948) is one of the best illustrations of Wodehouse's style, humour and reading. Here are some examples, showing wit, an ear for 'upper class' dialogue and excellent natural description.

'I don't suppose you remember me. Bill Oakshott.'

'Of course I remember you, my dear fellow,' said Lord Ickenham heartily and quite untruthfully. 'I wish I had a tenner for every time I've said to my wife "Whatever became of Bill Oakshott?"'

'No, really? Fine. How is Lady Ickenham?'

'Fine.'

'Fine. She once tipped me half a crown.'

'You will generally find women loosen up less lavishly than me. It's something to do with the bone structure of the head. Yes, my dear wife, I am glad to say, continues in the pink. I've just been seeing her off on the boat at Southampton. She is taking a trip to the West Indies.'

'Jamaica?' ⁶

'No, she went of her own free will.'

The human tomato digested this for a moment in silence, seemed on the

⁶ This was a current joke in my youth, i.e. 'd'you make her'.

point of saying 'Fine,' then changed his mind, and inquired after Pongo. 'Pongo,' said Lord Ickenham, 'is in terrific form. He bestrides the world like a Colossus.⁷ It would not be too much to say that Moab is his washpot and over what's-its-name has he cast his shoe.⁸ He came into the deuce of a lot of money the other day from a deceased godfather in America, and can now face his tailor without a tremor. He is also engaged to be married.'

'Good.'

'Yes,' said Lord Ickenham, rather startled by this evidence of an unexpectedly wide vocabulary.

It was the custom of Lady Bostock, when the weather was fine, to sit in a garden chair on the terrace of Ashenden Manor after luncheon, knitting socks for the deserving poor. A believer, like Lord Ickenham, in spreading sweetness and light,⁹ she considered, possibly correctly, that there is nothing that brings the sunshine into grey lives like a sock or two.

On the day following the events which have just been recorded the weather was extremely fine. Soft white clouds floated across a sky of the purest blue, the lake shone like molten silver, and from the adjacent flower-beds came the murmur of bees¹⁰ and the fragrant scent of lavender and mignonette. It was an afternoon to raise the spirits, lighten the heart and set a woman counting her blessings one by one.

Nor did Lady Bostock omit to do this. She recognized these blessings as considerable. It was pleasant to be home again, though she had never really enjoyed life in the country, preferring Cheltenham with its gay society. Mrs Gooch, the cook, had dished up an inspired lunch. And ever since the assignment of judging the bonny babies at the fete had been handed to his nephew William, Sir Aylmer had been in a mood which could almost be called rollicking, a consummation always devoutly to be

⁷ Shakespeare - *Julius Caesar* I, 2

"Why, man, he bestrides the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves."

⁸ *Psalms* 60, verse 8: Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe.

⁹ "Instead of dirt and poison, we have rather chosen to fill our hives with honey and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light. (Jonathan Swift, *The Battle of the Books* - 1704).

¹⁰ Tennyson - *Come down O Maid*

Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

wished¹¹ by a wife whose life work it was to keep him in a good temper. She could hear him singing in his study now. Something about his wealth being a burly spear and brand and a right good shield of hides untanned which on his arm he buckled - or, to be absolutely accurate, ber-huckled.¹²

.....

If you call at a country house where you are not known and try to get the butler to let you come in and search the premises for photographs of his employer's nephew, you will generally find this butler chilly in his manner, and Coggs, the major-domo of Ickenham Hall, had been rather chillier than the average. He was a large, stout, moon-faced man with an eye like that of a codfish, and throughout the proceedings he had kept his eye glued on Sir Aylmer's, as if peering into his soul. And anyone who has ever had his soul peered into by a codfish will testify how extremely unpleasant such an ordeal is.

.....

Lord Ickenham, unlike Sir Aylmer Bostock, was a man who believed in breaking things gently. With a tale to unfold whose lightest word would harrow up his nephew's soul and make his two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,¹³ he decided to hold it in for the time being and to work round gradually and by easy stages to what Pongo would have called the

¹¹ Shakespeare - *Hamlet* III, 1

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take Arms against a Sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them: to die, to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That Flesh is heir to? 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished.

¹² From a song by Hybrias, a Cretan poet, translated by Thomas Campbell:

My wealth's a burly spear and brand,
And a right good shield of hides untanned
Which on my arm I buckle.

¹³ Shakespeare - *Hamlet* I, 5

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combinèd locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine.

nub. With a gentle smile on his handsome face, he lowered himself to the ground and gave his moustache a twirl.

.....

The quiet home evening to which Lord Ickenham had so looked forward had drawn to a close. Curfews had tolled the knell of parting day, lowing herds wound slowly o'er the lea.¹⁴ Now slept the crimson petal and the white,¹⁵ and in the silent garden of Ashenden Manor nothing stirred save shy creatures of the night such as owls, mice, rats, gnats, bats and Constable Potter. Down in the village the clock on the church tower, which a quarter of an hour ago had struck twelve, chimed a single chime, informing Pongo, pacing the floor of his bedroom overlooking the terrace, that in just forty-five minutes the balloon was due to go up.

.....

The dinner hour was approaching. In her room, Lady Bostock had finished dressing and was regarding herself in the mirror, wishing, not for the first time, that she looked less like a horse. It was not that she had anything specific against horses; she just wished she did not look like one.

....

It was only some moments later, after he had hit the ceiling twice and was starting to descend to terra firma, that the mists cleared from his eyes and he was able to perceive that the intruder was not, as he had supposed, Sir Aylmer Bostock, but Elsie Bean, his old playmate of the rude sling days. She was standing by the door with a hand to her heart, panting a little, as housemaids will when they enter drawing-rooms at twenty minutes to one in the morning and find them occupied by the ruling classes.

The relief was stupendous. Pongo's equanimity returned, and with it a warm gush of the milk of human kindness.¹⁶ To a man who had been

¹⁴ Thomas Gray - *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*

The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me

¹⁵ Tennyson - *The Princess*

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font.
The firefly wakens; waken thou with me.

¹⁶ Shakespeare - *Macbeth* I, 5

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
What thou art promis'd. Yet do I fear thy nature,
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way.

anticipating an embarrassing interview with Sir Aylmer Bostock in his dressing-gown Elsie Bean was like something the doctor had ordered. He had no objection whatever to Elsie Bean joining him, quite the reverse. A chat with one of the finest minds in Bottleton East was just what he was in the mood for. He beamed on the girl, and having released his tongue, which had got entangled with his uvula, spoke in a genial and welcoming voice.

'What ho, Bean.'

'What ho, sir.'

'It's you, is it?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You gave me a start.'

'You gave me a start, sir.'

'Making two starts in all,' said Pongo, who had taken mathematics at school.

.....

Pongo uttered a curious hissing sound like the death-rattle of a soda-water syphon.

.....

The hands of his watch were pointing to twenty-seven minutes past one when through the glass of the outer door he saw the gaily appressed official who stood on the threshold to scoop clients out of their cars and cabs suddenly stiffen himself, touch his hat convulsively and give his moustache a spasmodic twirl, sufficient indication that something pretty sensational was on its way in. And a moment later the door revolved and through it came a figure that made him catch his breath and regret that the pimple on the tip of his nose had not yielded to treatment that morning. There is nothing actually low and degrading about a pimple on the tip of the nose, but there are times when a susceptible young man wishes he did not have one.

.....

"No, don't go yet. I want to tell you about Pongo."

"What about him?"

"He's worried to death, the poor pet. My heart aches for him. He was in here not long ago, and he just sat in a chair and groaned."

"You're sure he wasn't singing?"

"I don't think so. Would he have buried his face in his hands, if he had been singing?"

.....

Constable Potter was surprised. He was not conscious of having been obscure. It also came as a shock to him to discover that he had misinterpreted the twitching of his audience's limbs and the red glare in that audience's eye. He had been attributing these phenomena to the natural horror of a good man who hears from another good man of outrages committed on his, the second good man's, person and it seemed now that he had been mistaken.

"It's with ref. to this aggravated assault, sir!"

"What aggravated assault?"

"The one I'm telling you about, sir. I was assaulted by the duck pond."

The suspicion that the speaker had been drinking grew in Sir Aylmer's mind. Even Reginald Twistleton at the height of one of his midnight orgies might have hesitated, he felt, to make a statement like that.

"By the duck pond?" he echoed, his eyes widening.

"Yes, sir."

"How the devil can you be assaulted by a duck pond?"

Constable Potter saw where the misunderstanding had arisen. The English language is full of these pitfalls.

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Borowitz

LONDON (*The Borowitz Report* , 8.6.2019)—A British woman quit her job, on Friday, after being forced to spend the better part of a week with Donald J. Trump, the woman has confirmed.



Speaking to reporters at her office in London, the woman said that, although she had spent years trying to get the job, having to endure several days in the company of Trump convinced her that "life is too short."

"When I started this job, I knew that a certain amount of my responsibilities would involve dealing with members of the public," she said. "But had I

known that I also would have to spend hours listening to Donald Trump talk, I certainly would have applied for a different position.”

Compounding the woman’s nightmare, she was required to spend time not only with Trump but with his adult children as well. “Having to talk to that Eric person reduced me to tears,” she said.

The woman said that she has been amazed to learn that more than ten people have come forward to say that they would like to be her replacement. “Whoever gets my job should be warned: at some point, you may have to spend a week with Donald Trump,” she said. “Are you really up for that?”

LONDON (*The Borowitz Report*, 12.7.2018)—Queen Elizabeth II has cancelled a scheduled Friday meeting with Donald J. Trump after complaining of a “flare-up of bone spurs,” Buckingham Palace has confirmed.

The announcement took many royal watchers by surprise, because in her sixty-six-year reign the Queen had never before complained of bone spurs.

But, according to the Queen’s spokesman, Peter Rhys-Willington, Elizabeth had intentionally kept her chronic bone-spur condition a closely guarded secret until now. “Her Majesty is a very brave woman, and has not wanted to unnecessarily worry her subjects,” Rhys-Willington said. “And so, for decades, she has suffered in silence.”

The Queen referred to her bone spurs obliquely in an official statement issued on Thursday. “We are sorry to have to cancel the engagement, but we feared that meeting Donald Trump would be most painful,” the Queen’s statement read.

T T T T

Hymns

*Praise to Ishtar, (from an Akkadian hymn)*¹⁷

She is clothed with pleasure and love.

She is laden with vitality, charm,
and voluptuousness.

Ishtar is clothed with pleasure and love.

¹⁷ <http://www.mindspring.com/~mysticgryphon/inhymn.htm>. Ishtar (Inanna) is an ancient Mesopotamian goddess associated with love, beauty, sex, desire, fertility, war, justice, and political power. She was originally worshipped in Sumer and was later worshipped by the Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians under the name Ishtar. She was known as the "Queen of Heaven" and was associated with the planet Venus. The Akkadian Empire was the first ancient empire of Mesopotamia, centered in the city of Akkad and its surrounding region. It thrived in the third millenium BCE. (Wikipedia) (Translated by Ferris J. Stephens)

She is laden with vitality, charm,
 and voluptuousness.
 In lips she is sweet; life is in her mouth.
 At her appearance rejoicing becomes full.
 She is glorious; veils are thrown over her head.
 Her figure is beautiful; her eyes are brilliant.
 The goddess - with her there is counsel.
 The fate of everything she holds in her hand.
 At her glance there is created joy,
 power, magnificence, the protecting deity and guardian spirit.
 She dwells in, she pays heed to compassion and
 friendliness.
 Besides, agreeableness she truly possesses.
 Be it slave, unattached girl, or mother, she
 preserves (her).
 One calls on her; among women one names her name.
 Who - to her greatness who can be equal?
 Strong, exalted, splendid are her decrees.
 Ishtar - to her greatness who can be equal?
 Strong, exalted, splendid are her decrees.
 She is sought after among the gods;
 extraordinary is her station.
 Respected is her word; it is supreme over them.
 Ishtar among the gods, extraordinary is her station.
 Respected is her word; it is supreme over them.

From *The Sacred Hymns of Pachutec Inca Yupanqui*¹⁸
 Oh Creator, root of all,
 Wiracocha, end of all,
 Lord in shining garments
 who infuses life and sets all things in order,
 saying, "Let there be man! Let there be woman!"
 Molder, maker,
 to all things you have given life:
 watch over them,
 keep them living prosperously, fortunately

¹⁸ See <http://www.jps.net/redcoral/Pach.html#Hymns>. Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui was the ninth ruler (1418-1471/1472) of the Kingdom of Cusco which he transformed into the Inca Empire. Machu Picchu was built as an estate for him. The hymns of Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui, composed around 1440-1450, are among the world's great sacred poetry. (Wikipedia)

in safety and peace.
Where are you?
Outside? Inside?
Above this world in the clouds?
Below this world in the shades?
Hear me!
Answer me!
Take my words to your heart!
For ages without end
let me live,
grasp me in your arms,
hold me in your hands,
receive this offering
wherever you are, my Lord,
my Wiracocha.

*Isaac Watts (1674-1748)*¹⁹

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;
Then I am dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

¹⁹ Watts was not only a prolific writer of hymns (more than 750 to his name) - their literary quality is unmatched. This hymn is sung to the magnificent tune Rockingham - see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9eCUqz_x5A.

T T T T

The St. Peter page



"Actually I preferred 'Heaven' too but then the marketing guys got hold of it"



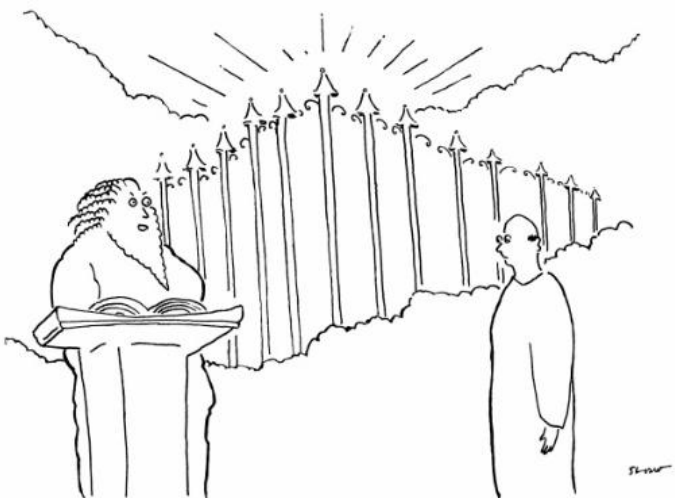
"You're lucky that your parents donated a building to Heaven"



"Denier - eternity for two"



"Tell me you didn't pull up in a limo"



"Sure, you're in, but it's not really heavenly until you upgrade to premium Heaven"



"Oh, come on. I just want to see if my friend is in there"

Don't be a juggins – why some words deserve to fall out of use

Sam Leith, *The Guardian*, 16.11.2018²⁰

Conservationists are all around us, forever appearing on our televisions with their pleas for this noble, endangered mountain lion or that cute, imperilled subspecies of vole. But 70-year-old Edward Allhusen is one of a slightly different stripe. Instead of trying to prevent creepy-crawlies going extinct, he is trying to save the lives of words. In a new book, *Betrumped: The Surprising History of 3,000 Long-Lost, Exotic and Endangered Words*, he has included a sort of highly endangered list of 600 vocabulary items, culled according to no more systematic criterion than personal preference, from Johnson's Dictionary of 1755.

"Due to lack of care by us, the users, many of these words have slipped away into obscurity," he says, poignantly. "Here, in this retirement home of language once inhabited by Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde, these gems of the English language will soon be forgotten unless we make an effort to use them at least once a day. Otherwise, they could become extinct within a generation."

Among these words are such corkers as juggins, fizgig, hobbledehoy and condiddle. Also on the way out, as reported, are words I thought were still relatively well understood, among them defenestrate, caterwaul, crapulence, amanuensis, pettifogging, trollop, vamoose, lickspittle and conk.

Sympathise with him though many of us no doubt will – who doesn't love a fizgig? – there seem to me to be both theoretical and practical difficulties with his project. The theoretical difficulties were outlined by none other than Dr Johnson himself in the introduction to his dictionary: 'When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to

²⁰ While I have no problem with the loss of words that are genuinely archaic (i.e. no longer used at all), I am not happy at the disappearance of useful words like 'lickspittle' (so much more graphic than 'obsequious' - and how useful, viz. some politicians) and 'defenestrate' (how can we forget the associations with Prague?). I also regret the loss of nuances of meaning; 'enormity' is so apposite when describing Boris Johnson's behaviour. (*O tempora, O mores!*)

change sublunary nature, or clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation.

'With this hope, however, academies have been instituted, to guard the avenues of their languages, to retain fugitives, and repulse intruders; but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain; sounds are too volatile and subtile for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength.'

Language, in other words, changes all the time and there's nothing much we can do about it. Words are as mortal as you and me. You might as well try to lash the wind, as Johnson said – and which most of us will sing in our heads in the voice of Donovan. Indeed, linguistic change – the amazing porousness of English to influence, its macaronic glory – is exactly what gave us all these interesting words in the first place: Allhusen boasts of finding roots for his 3,000-strong canon in more than 100 languages. Nor is linguistic change simply an additive process. It involves what the economist Joseph Schumpeter called 'creative destruction'; old words change meanings or make way for new ones.

So for the practical difficulties, most of these words have vanished or are vanishing from our language because they have either been superseded by other words for the same things – or because the things they describe have ceased to exist or gone out of fashion. Who now keeps an amanuensis? If you offer to show your tarse to even the most biddable trollop these days it won't go well for you. And if we're to use defenestrate, as Allhusen suggests, "at least once a day", we're going to have to start throwing a lot more stuff out of windows – which is not nice and raises health and safety issues.

All this is at the heart of the absurdity of the sort of people who turn purple when they hear on the news that a city has been "decimated by mortar fire". Can this ignorant newsreader, they scoff, intend to mean that one man in 10 of a Roman legion has been put to death as a collective punishment? No, of course, the newsreader does not mean that. Decimated has been repurposed to mean "wiped out" because there isn't much of a call for words to describe the mass killing of Roman legionaries these days. Some will think this a good thing.

Likewise, another bugbear of self-styled pedants, enormity. It means moral wickedness, they shriek: not enormousness. But, as Oliver Kamm points out in his book *Accidence Will Happen: The Non-Pedantic Guide To English Usage*, enormousness meant moral wickedness before it meant enormousness, so where does that leave us?

Caterwauling, I expect.

T T T T

Donovan

Donovan, full name Donovan Philips Leitch, was born in 1946. *Catch The Wind* was Donovan's debut single. The title was similar to Bob Dylan's *Blowin' In The Wind* and was also played on an acoustic guitar with harmonica and a melody similar to Dylan's *Chimes Of Freedom*. According to Wikipedia: "He taught John Lennon a finger-picking guitar style in 1968 that Lennon employed in *Dear Prudence*, *Julia*, *Happiness Is a Warm Gun* and other songs."

Catch The Wind

In the chilly hours and minutes
Of uncertainty, I want to be
In the warm hold of your love and mine

To feel you all around me
And to take your hand along the sand
Ah, but I may as well try and catch the wind

When sundown pales the sky
I want to hide a while behind your smile
And everywhere I'd look your eyes I'd find

For me to love you now
Would be the sweetest thing 'twould make me sing
Ah, but I may as well try and catch the wind

Di di di di, di di di di

When rain has hung the leaves with tears
I want you near to kill my fears
To help me to leave all my blues behind

For standin' in your heart
Is where I want to be and long to be
Ah, but I may as well try and catch the wind

Ah, but I may as well try and catch the wind.²¹

²¹ Hear it on

https://youtu.be/9yQKDj_V4Gk?list=SRdonovan%20catch%20the%20wind.

The version by Joan Baez and her sister Mimi Fariña is superb:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icOA3ECMj70>). Dylan and Donovan sang together on Dylan's 1965 UK tour (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgcDJon02sg>).

Donovan wrote another successful song, also recorded with (and by) Joan Baez.²²

Colours

Yellow is the colour of my true love's hair
In the morning, when we rise
In the morning, when we rise
That's the time, that's the time
I love the best

Blue is the colour of the sky-y
In the morning, when we rise
In the morning, when we rise
That's the time, that's the time
I love the best

Green is the colour of the sparkling corn
In the morning, when we rise
In the morning, when we rise
That's the time, that's the time
I love the best

Mellow is the feeling that I get
When I see her, m-hmm
When I see her, hmm,
That's the time, that's the time
I love the best

Freedom is a word I rarely use
Without thinking, oh yeah
Without thinking, m-hmm
Of the time, of the time
When I've been loved

T T T T

Brexit and Blimp

Parliamentary and TV debates over the past months reminded me of David Low's cartoons of the 1930s and 40s. These are the myths and prejudices encapsulated in Brexit.

²² Hear a version with the incomparable Pete Seeger in 1966 on *Rainbow Quest* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpUSQNvtzsk>) and his début with Joan at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival (<https://youtu.be/QAmSKkmZWZQ>).



"VERY WELL, ALONE"

(Copyright in All Countries.)

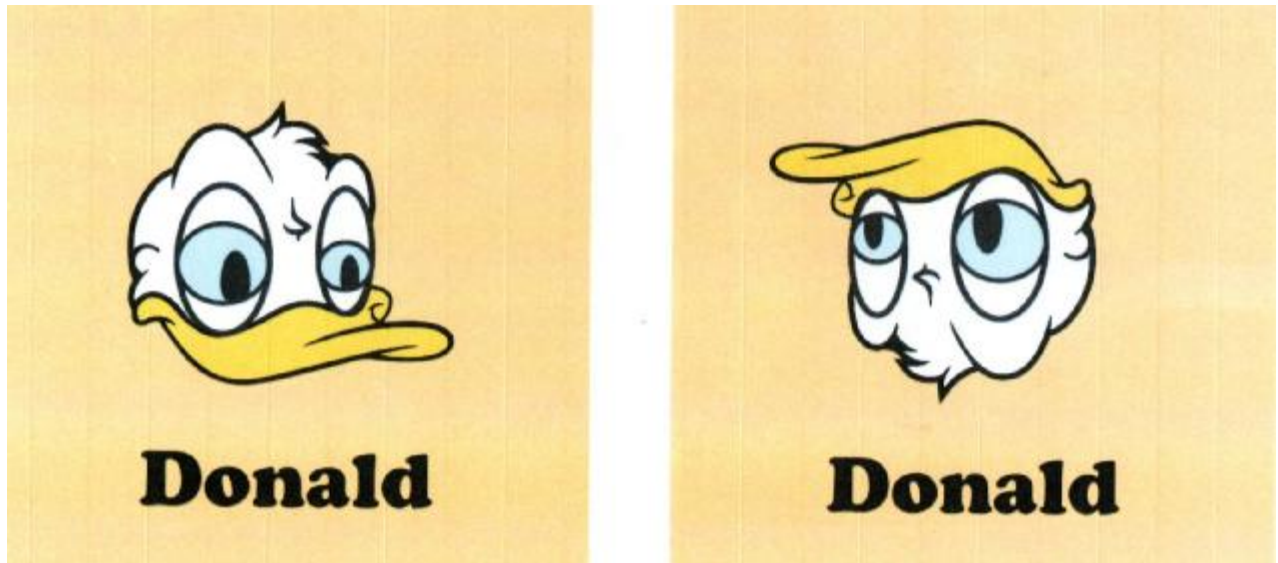
In short, as Low's friend Colonel Blimp said in the Turkish Bath only yesterday, "Gad, sir, Lord Beaverbrook is right. Splendid Isolation is the policy for England. If we refuse to trade with the dashed foreigners in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, and send the dashed Dominions about their business, the future



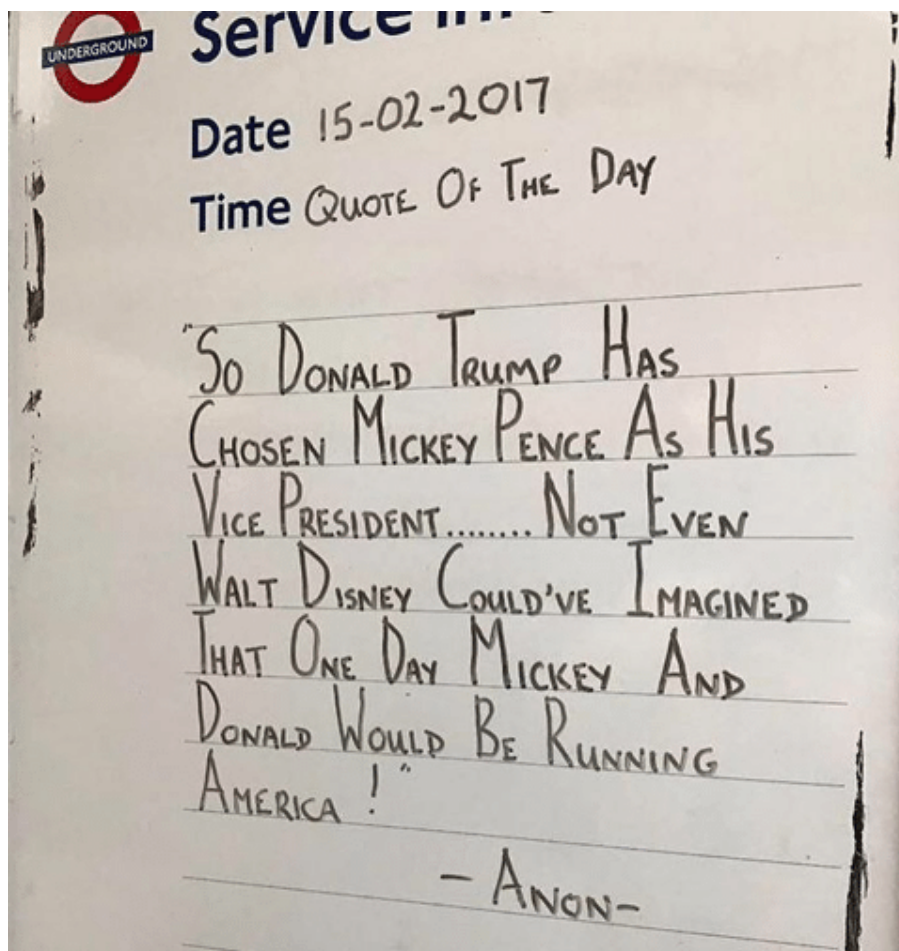
TTTT

Reversible Heads

CP 2018 included "reversible heads" by various artists. Here is another (anonymous).²³



In the same vein:



²³ With thanks to Cathie Barton.

T T T T

Bali resort bans smartphones from poolside to enforce relaxation

‘Digital detox ruling’ extends to all devices and is an attempt to untether people from obsessively checking their phones

Hannah Ellis-Petersen, *The Guardian*, 23.11.2018

Guests at the resort [Ayana, *et al.*] are encouraged to swim, read a book or just relax, instead of looking at their phones.

Does a hotel pool even exist if you don’t put it on social media?

It’s a question one Bali resort is encouraging its guests to put to the test by banning phones and mobile devices by the pool, in a bid to encourage people to absorb their surroundings rather than staring at a screen.

The enforced “digital detox ruling” at Ayana Resort in Bali, which extends to all smartphones and digital devices, is an attempt to forcibly untether people from the global addiction of checking the news, compulsively taking photos, updating social media and replying to emails even when on holiday.

Instead guests are encouraged to swim, read books, or play a game of Jenga, or just “truly relax and be in the moment”, according to a hotel spokesperson.

The phenomenon of being unable to switch off, or be parted from your phone, has even been given a name: nomaphobia, now described as the “21st century disease”. Social media use has also been linked with depression, particularly among young people.

A recent survey of American holiday-makers by OnePoll found that more than 20% said they checked their smartphones once per hour during their most recent vacation, while about 14% said they checked it twice per hour. Nearly 8% said they checked it more than 20 times per hour. In a Deloitte survey in Britain in 2017, 38% of adults said they thought they were using their smartphone too much.

As a result, there has been a surge of interest in so-called digital detox holidays, as people look for ways to take a break from their phones, with travel companies and hotels cashing in on people’s inability to switch off their devices unless forced.

Ayana resort’s no-phone policy is unlikely to be popular with everyone however. Another recent survey by Travelzoo found that 30% of respondents booked holiday destinations on the basis they would make great fodder for social media.

Smartphones



"I'm downstairs"



"All the better to ignore you with"



"O.K. Mom, I'm off the plane. I'll call you when I check into the hotel and when I check out of the hotel, when I get on the plane home and when I get off the plane home, I'll call you when I'm in the driveway. Glad you're not worrying"



"Auto reply: I am dead and will have limited access to e-mail."



T T T T

Pass the Port

An HR manager was knocked down by a bus and killed. St. Peter welcomed her at the Pearly Gates. “Before you get settled in” he said, “We have a little problem...you see, we’ve never had a HR manager make it this far before and I have higher orders for you. You have to choose where you want to be. There's a lift behind you.”

Suddenly she was at the doors of Hell. She stepped out onto a beautiful golf course. Around her were many friends and former fellow executives, all smartly dressed, happy, and cheering for her. They ran up and kissed her on both cheeks, and talked about old times.

They played a perfect round of golf and went to the country club where she enjoyed a superb steak and lobster dinner. She met the Devil (who was actually rather nice) and she had a wonderful night telling jokes and dancing.

Before she knew it, it was time to leave. The elevator went back up to heaven where she spent the next 24 hours lounging around on clouds, playing the harp and singing. At the day's end St. Peter returned. “So,” he said, “You’ve spent a day in hell and you’ve spent a day in heaven. You must choose between the two.”

The woman thought for a moment and replied: “Well, heaven is certainly lovely, but I actually had a better time in hell. I choose Hell.”

St. Peter took her to the elevator again. When the doors opened she found

herself standing in a desolate wasteland covered in garbage and filth. Her friends were dressed in rags, picking up rubbish and putting it in old sacks. The Devil approached and put his arm around her.

“I don’t understand,” she stuttered, “The other day I was here, and there was a golf course, a country club, steak, lobster and dancing. Now all there is, is just a dirty wasteland of garbage and all my friends look miserable.”

The Devil looked at her and smiled, “Yesterday we were recruiting you, today you’re staff.”²⁴

T T T T

Aubrey De Vere

Aubrey de Vere (1814-1902) was an Irish poet. According to Wikipedia, Byron was his first admiration, but was instantly displaced when his father gave him Wordsworth’s *Laodamia*. I find this surprising, because his sonnets are superior not only to *Laodamia*, but also to those of Wordsworth (and Byron); note the complex rhyme sequences of all three sonnets below.

Incompatibility

Forgive me that I love you as I do,
Friend patient long; too patient to reprove
The inconvenience of superfluous love.
You feel that it molests you, and 'tis true.
In a light bark you sit, with a full crew.
Your life full orb'd, compelled strange love to meet,
Becomes, by such addition, incomplete:--
Because I love I leave you. O adieu!
Perhaps when I am gone the thought of me
May sometimes be your acceptable guest.
Indeed you love me: but my company
Old time makes tedious; and to part is best.
Not without Nature's will are natures wed:-
O gentle Death, how dear thou makest the dead!

Troilus and Cressida

Had I been worthy of the love you gave,
That love withdrawn had left me sad but strong;
My heart had been as silent as my tongue,
My bed had been unfevered as my grave;

²⁴ With thanks to Alexander

I had not striven for what I could not save;
Back, back to heaven my great hopes I had flung;
To have much suffered, having done no wrong,
Had seemed to me that noble part the brave
Account it ever. What this hour I am
Affirms the unworthiness that in me lurked:
Some sapping poison through my substance worked,
Some sin not trivial, though it lacked a name,
Which ratifies the deed that you have done
With plain approval. Other plea seek none.

Flowers I Would Bring

Flowers I would bring if flowers could make thee fairer,
And music if the Muse were dear to thee,
(For loving these would make thee love the bearer);
But sweetest songs forget their melody,
And loveliest flowers would but conceal the wearer:
A rose I marked, and might have plucked; but she
Blushed as she bent, imploring me to spare her,
Nor spoil her beauty by such rivalry.
Alas! and with what gifts shall I pursue thee,
What offerings bring, what treasures lay before thee,
When earth with all her floral train doth woo thee,
And all old poets and old songs adore thee,
And love to thee is naught; from passionate mood
Secured by joy's complacent plenitude.

T T T T

Numbers Count

Those of us who are fortunate enough to live in the canton de Vaud fully appreciate the logic of 'septante', 'huitante' and 'nonante' for, respectively, 70, 80 and 90. The absurdity of the French system of 'soixante-dix', 'quatre-vingts' and 'quatre-vingt-dix' leads me sometimes to tease the French by saying 'cinquante-dix-neuf' or 'septante-quinze'. Beware, as in German, of beginning to write down a telephone number too early: just as 'sieben und fünfzig' does not begin with 7, 'quatre-vingt-dix-neuf' is not 4 20 10 9.

The French are not the only ones causing difficulty for foreigners. In Denmark, for example, tens from forty to ninety are actually based on a *vigesimal* system, using twenty as a base unit, and fractions as multipliers. The fractional system used is as follows: first half is $\frac{1}{2}$, second half is

1½, third half is 2½, and so on.

Fifty is *halvtreds*, which stands for *halvtredje-sinds-tyve*, meaning 'third half times twenty or 'two twenties plus half of the third twenty'. Sixty is *tres*, short for *tre-sinds-tyve*, which means 'three times twenty'. Seventy, or *halvfjerds*, is short for *halvfjerdt-sinds-tyve*, meaning 'fourth half times twenty', or 'three twenties plus half of the fourth twenty'. Eighty is *firs*, short for *firsindstyve*, or *fire-sind-styve*, meaning 'four times twenty'. And ninety, *halvfems*, short for *halvfemsindstyve* or *halv-fem-sinds-tyve*, means 'fifth half times twenty', or 'four twenties plus half of the fifth twenty'.

An additional complication is that forty, or *fyrre*, short for *fyrretyve*, is an exception, as it derives from the Old Norse word *fyrirtiughu*, which means “four tens” (even if *fyrretyve* would directly mean “four twenty”).

Little wonder that the Danes consider themselves among the happiest people on earth: if you handle this, you can handle anything.²⁵

Vigesimal systems are common in Africa, for example in Yoruba, and in Asia, for example in Bhutan. Twenty was also a base in the Maya and Aztec number systems and is currently so in Albanian and Georgian and some variants of Celtic/Gaelic languages.²⁶ Some of us also remember that the UK pound (RIP) once comprised 20 shillings.²⁷

Good luck on your next trip to Denmark - fortunately, contrary to the French, most Danes speak English.

T T T T

Historical analogies

"[The court of Henry VIII] was a fearfully dangerous place where courtiers jostled for the favor of a capricious monarch. When execution was the fate of the losers, the survivors would rush to fill their places and claim their goods. MacCulloch portrays the king as “terrifyingly unpredictable,” given to “destructive whims” and “habitually erratic” decision-making, “a thorough coward when it came to personal confrontations,” and “almost impossible to serve successfully.” He tactfully declines to draw an analogy with any

²⁵ See <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2018/>. The Danes share the top rankings with the Swiss, the Norwegians and, in 2018, the Finns. It may be noted that, in this report, Togo moves up 17 places from the bottom of the list.

²⁶ Wikipedia lists other systems, such as quaternary (base 4), quinary (5), senary, septenary, octal, nonary and so on.

²⁷ Complicated by the fact that a shilling comprised 12 pence and that a guinea comprised 21 shillings (still used if you want to buy a horse).

modern head of state, though some of his American readers may be tempted to do so." (Review by Keith Thomas of Diarmaid McCulloch's "Thomas Cromwell - A Revolutionary Life " - *NYRB* 17.1.2019

T T T T

Rainer Maria Rilke

<p>Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen, die sich über die Dinge ziehn. Ich werde den letzten vielleicht nicht vollbringen, aber versuchen will ich ihn.</p> <p>Ich kreise um Gott, um den uralten Turm, und ich kreise jahrtausendelang; und ich weiß noch nicht: bin ich ein Falke, ein Sturm oder ein großer Gesang.</p>	<p>I live my life in widening hoops that fit tightly over all things. It may be that I cannot fix the last one – but I will certainly try.</p> <p>I encompass God, and the age-old tower, and my hoops are millennia long; and I can't yet say whether I am a falcon, a storm or a resounding song.</p>
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T T T T

More Port

Paddy buys a donkey over the internet.
He sends off 100 euros, then borrows a horse box.
But the vendor greets him with the news that the donkey is now dead.
"Then I'll have my 100 euros back," says Paddy.
"Not possible, I've already spent it," replies the vendor.
"In that case I'll take the donkey - help me to get it into the horse box."
"But it's dead!"
Some weeks later they meet again.
"What did you do with the donkey?" asks the vendor. "I auctioned it at 2
euros a ticket, got 500 takers, and made 898 euros profit."
"But it was dead - didn't people complain?"
"Only the winner, and I gave him his 2 euros back."
Paddy now works for a major bank.²⁸

T T T T

Indian Hills

The community of Indian Hills in Jefferson County, Kentucky, is among the highest-income locations in the United States as of the 2000

²⁸ With thanks to Ian Harris.

U.S. census. Perhaps that explains why the members of their Community Center have a most unusual sense of humour.





T T T T

Bridled Views - Ian Duhig (*1954)

I will be faithful to you, I do vow
but not until the seas have all run dry
et cetera. Although I mean it now
I'm not a prophet and I will not lie.

To be your perfect wife I could not swear:
I'll love, yes; honour (maybe); won't obey,
but will co-operate if you will care
as much as you are seeming to today.

I'll do my best to be your better half,
but I don't have the patience of a saint
and at you, not with you, I'll sometimes laugh,
and snap too, though I'll try to show restraint.

We might work out. No blame if we do not.
With all my heart, I think it's worth a shot.

When I'm Sixty Four - The Beatles

From *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967)

When I get older losing my hair
Many years from now
Will you still be sending me a valentine
Birthday greetings, bottle of wine?
If I'd been out till quarter to three
Would you lock the door?
Will you still need me, will you still feed me

When I'm sixty four?

You'll be older too
And if you say the word
I could stay with you

I could be handy, mending a fuse
When your lights have gone
You can knit a sweater by the fireside
Sunday mornings go for a ride
Doing the garden, digging the weeds
Who could ask for more?
Will you still need me, will you still feed me
When I'm sixty four?

Every summer we can rent a cottage in the Isle of Wight
If it's not too dear
We shall scrimp and save
Grandchildren on your knee
Vera, Chuck and Dave

Send me a postcard, drop me a line
Stating point of view
Indicate precisely what you mean to say
Yours sincerely, wasting away
Give me your answer, fill in a form
Mine forevermore
Will you still need me, will you still feed me
When I'm sixty four?
Ho!

T T T T

More Wodehouse

Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest

Lady Malvern was a hearty, happy, healthy, overpowering sort of dashed female, not so very tall but making up for it by measuring about six feet from the O.P. to the Prompt Side.²⁹ She fitted into my biggest arm-chair as if it had been built round her by someone who knew they were wearing arm-chairs tight about the hips that season. She had bright, bulging eyes and a lot of yellow hair, and when she spoke she showed about fifty-seven front teeth. She was one of those women who kind of numb a fellow's faculties. She made me feel as if I were ten years old and had been brought into the

²⁹ See <http://www.word-detective.com/2008/08/op-prompt-side/>.

drawing-room in my Sunday clothes to say how-d'you-do. Altogether by no means the sort of thing a chappie would wish to find in his sitting-room before breakfast.

Motty, the son, was about twenty-three, tall and thin and meek-looking. He had the same yellow hair as his mother, but he wore it plastered down and parted in the middle. His eyes bulged, too, but they weren't bright. They were a dull grey with pink rims. His chin gave up the struggle about half-way down, and he didn't appear to have any eyelashes. A mild, furtive, sheepish sort of blighter, in short.

Jeeves and the Impending Doom

The Right Hon. was a tubby little chap who looked as if he had been poured into his clothes and had forgotten to say "When!" and the picture he conjured up, if you know what I mean, was rather pleasing. "It is no laughing matter," he said, shifting the look of dislike to me.

The Awakening of Rollo Podmarsh

His ball was five yards away, but he aimed for the back of the hole and brought his putter down with a whack. Straight and true the ball sped, hit the tin, jumped high in the air, and fell into the hole with a rattle.

"Oo!" cried Mary.³⁰

Cocktail Time

Bill Oakshott was there, balancing a walking stick on the tip of his nose.

That the young squire of Ashenden in essaying this equilibristic feat had not been animated by a mere spirit of frivolity, but was endeavouring rather, as men will in times of mental stress, to divert his thoughts from graver issues, was made clear by a certain touch of the careworn in his manner. It is not easy to look careworn when you are balancing a walking stick on the tip of your nose, but Bill Oakshott contrived to do so.

.....

Butlers came in three sizes - the large, the small and the medium. Albert Peasemarch was one of the smalls. Short and somewhat overweight for his height, he had a round, moonlike face, in which were set, like currants in a suet dumpling, two brown eyes. A captious critic, seeing, as captious critics do, only the dark side, would have commented on the entire absence from these eyes of anything like a gleam of human intelligence: but to anyone

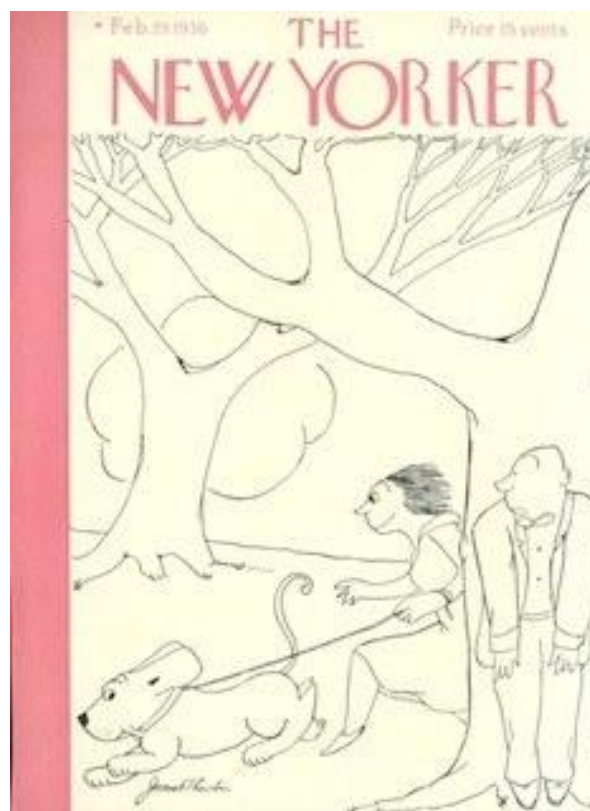
³⁰ The Editor of *The Plums of P.G. Wodehouse* comments: "As a climax, D.H. Lawrence has nothing to touch this." (With thanks to Dinah Lee Küng for breaching her rule never to lend books.)

non-captious this would have been amply compensated for by their kindness and honesty. His circle of friends, while passing him over when they wanted someone to explain the Einstein Theory to them, knew that, if they were in trouble, they could rely on his help. True, this help almost invariably made things worse than they had been, for if there was a way of getting everything muddled up, he got it, but his intentions were excellent and his heart in the right place.

.....

Sir Raymond Bastable, meanwhile, questing hither and thither like a Thurber bloodhound, had begun to regret that he had not availed himself of his shipmate's co-operation. Having no means of knowing the whereabouts on this infernal island, Mr Saxby had seen Lord Ickenham tacking to and fro and crouching down; he was in the position of one who hunts for pirate gold without the assistance of the yellowing map which says 'E. by N.20,' '16 paces S.' and all that sort of thing, and anyone who has ever hunted for pirate gold will tell you what a handicap this is. The yellowing map is of the essence.

I began to draw a bloodhound, but he was too big for the page... He had the head and body of a bloodhound; I gave him the short legs of a basset.



A Thurber Bloodhound³¹

³¹ More to come in *CP 2020*.

.....

Old Mr Howard Saxby was seated at his desk in his room at the Edgar Saxby literary agency when Cosmo arrived there. He was knitting a sock. He knitted a good deal, he would tell you if you asked him, to keep himself from smoking, adding that he also smoked a good deal to keep himself from knitting. He was a long thin old gentleman in his middle seventies with a faraway unseeing look in his eye, not unlike that which a dead halibut on a fishmonger's slab gives the pedestrian as he passes. It was a look which caused many of those who met him to feel like disembodied spirits, so manifest was it that they were making absolutely no impression on his retina. Cosmo, full though he was of roast beef, roly-poly pudding and Stilton cheese, had the momentary illusion as he encountered that blank, vague gaze that he was something diaphanous that had been hurriedly put together with ectoplasm.

T T T T

Love Poems for People with Children

By John Kenney, *The New Yorker* 26.8.2019

My Six-Year-Old Got Hold Of My Phone

My apologies, Reverend.

My six-year-old

got hold

of my phone

and sent you

142 poop emojis.

Please know

that this in no way

reflects my opinion of you

or the Church.

(Although it does make me wonder if there is a God.)

To my father-in-law, Lou.

No grandparent should ever receive

a *GIF* of Fabio not wearing pants

dancing suggestively

with the words

Let's get it on!

I was sure I had deleted that.

To my boss, Gary.

Did you happen to receive a photo

of a baboon's ass

with a note reading
Found this picture of you.
I sent that one.

3:32 A.M. And I Am Sure The Infant Is Taunting Me

The Navy *SEALs* do a thing
so I have heard.

Hell Week.

Days and nights
with almost no sleep.
Pushed to their limit.
Except it only lasts five days.

This makes me laugh
as I stand holding you
in the bathroom
in my underwear
and spit-up-covered T-shirt
with the shower running.

Why?

Because you
tiny baby
like the sound of the water.

But you won't go to sleep.
And this is the third time you've been up
wide awake

looking at me
like an instructor at *SEAL* training
waiting for me to crack.

I laugh again at what weenies
the Special Forces are.

Get a baby! I think.

Take an infant baby into combat, why don't you!

Except I say that last part out loud.

And notice my wife standing at the door.

Give me the baby, she says quietly.

I look at my darling
who spits up on me again
and appears to mouth *dickhead*.

I am sure of it.

I Am Fully Aware That The Wheels On The Bus Go Round And Round

I get it.

I know about the wheels and the horn and the babies.
 Everyone knows that.
 Here's something you might not know.
 The daddy on *this* bus is thinking
This is not what I signed up for.
 And maybe the driver on the bus
 is thinking the exact same thing.
 Maybe he looks over at the daddy
 and he doesn't go *Move on back.*
 Maybe instead he nods and smiles.
 And the daddy nods and smiles.
 And the driver hits the gas
 and goes zoom, zoom, zoom
 so fast that the mommies on the bus say
Jesus Christ almighty, slow down!
 And the driver screeches to a halt at the corner
 because he sees a sign for a bar called Open at 9 A.M.
 and he and the daddy get off the bus and go into the bar.
 Call an Uber
 because this bus is out of service.
 Sing *that* verse, why don't you.

T T T T

More Alexa ³²

Disturbing Digital Coincidences - By Don Steinberg, *The New Yorker*, 25.3.2019

I am beginning to experience what I would call disturbing digital coincidences. Call me crazy, but on Wednesday I asked my Amazon Echo Dot, "Alexa, what time is it?" On Thursday, I got an e-mail from Wayfair suggesting that I might like to order a thirty-inch farmhouse-style wall clock that lends any room a touch of charm. Coincidence?

While chatting with a colleague via Skype, I cleared my throat and coughed twice. Hours later, my Facebook feed displayed an ad for Mucinex. On Sunday night, I watched a YouTube video of ICE agents hassling immigrants. On Monday morning, the first song in my Spotify "Discover Weekly" playlist was "Cold as Ice" by Foreigner.

On a phone call using my landline, I told my parents that Janice and I were thinking about having another child. Moments later, the doorbell rang. It

³² See *CP 2018*.

was a door-to-door salesman selling First Response Early Result Pregnancy Test Kits.

Janice and I went to a far corner of the living room to discuss our idea of moving to Brooklyn. We made sure to whisper to each other, our hands cupped over our lips. Nevertheless, we both received “pins you might like” suggestions from Pinterest for boards featuring photos of bearded men pushing luxury baby strollers.

My cough began getting worse. My throat grew raw and sore. During a FaceTime conversation with my sister, I had a coughing fit so bad that I was forced to put down the phone. When I picked it up, there were four marketing e-mails from health clinics and hospitals. Several real-estate agents called and said they had heard that we might be selling the house. Bonobos.com e-mailed me with suggestions for jackets “that might match that Galapagos Blue shirt you’re wearing.”

I deactivated the smart doorbell, because I felt that it might somehow be snooping on us, and I flushed my Fitbit down the toilet. The Bluetooth-connected light bulbs seemed safe for the moment. Advertisements for various kinds of clocks continued to follow me on Web pages across the Internet: a cuckoo clock for sale on Etsy, a vintage but possibly broken clock (“not tested”) offered on eBay, a digital clock displaying the time as a series of equations on ThinkGeek.com.

Janice and I worked out a crude sort of sign language to communicate silently. I pointed at my mouth to indicate that I was hungry. My phone buzzed with a coupon from Grubhub. We sneaked out to the driveway, pretending that we were going out to smoke cigarettes. The lawn was strewn with fallen tree limbs from the stormy winter, and the gutters above the garage overflowed with dead leaves. A neighbor came over carrying a printout of local landscapers from Angie’s List.

I got in my car and drove, just to clear my head. At the end of the street, the “check oil” light on the dashboard came on. When I pulled into a gas station, the attendant was holding containers of motor oil high, one in each hand. “Thanks for getting here so quickly,” he said. “How’s your cough?”

T T T T

I love all things beginning with B

Baked beans and buns and hot buttered bread;
Barbecues, bangers and bacon to fry,
Blankets and biscuits and breakfast in bed,

Blossoms and brambles and birds in the sky,
 Buttercups, butterflies, beach by the sea;
 Buffets, baklava and sauce béarnaise,
 Burgundy, Beaujolais, Bordeaux and Brie,
 Big Ben, barley loaves, songs of Joan Baez
 Blue Danish, Bath Olivers, beefsteak broiled rare,
 Blackberries, blueberries, blackcurrants, briers,
 Bright beautiful bubbles blown in the air,
 Birthdays and banquets, balloons, bumper cars,
 Bananas and butterscotch, brandy and beer,
 Bicycles, May balls, bargains, bazaars,
 Blond babies in blue, bells, belvederes,
 Brigitte Bardot, bikinis, billiards and bars,
 Bumble bees, badgers and bathing in brooks,
 Cricket balls, bowling, the whack of the bat,
 Berlin and the Baltic, and browsing in books,
 Bagpipes, bassoons, brass bands in b flat,
 All of the Bachs, Beethoven, baroque,
 Brahms, Boccherini, Barber, Bizet,
 Balakirev, Berlioz, Bruckner and Bruch,
 Big sailing barges and boats in the bay,
 Boukhara, Basel, Bern and Bangkok,
 Burnished gold Buddhas, Badakhshan and Bartang,
 St. Beuve, Baudelaire, Hilaire Belloc,
 Boaters and boules, bubbly bottles with bang,
 Bosch, Botticelli, Brueghel and Blake,
 Birches and beeches with brown sticky buds,
 Bouguerau, Beckmann, Bellini and Braque,
 Baths and bath salts in great big bathtubs.
 [also Bertie, Blandings, Bingo, and Beach]

T T T T

Linda Pastan (*1932)³³

Meditation by the Stove

I have banked the fires
 of my body

³³ Linda Pastan served as poet laureate of Maryland from 1991 to 1994. She has received the Dylan Thomas Award, Di Castagnola Award, Bess Hokin Prize of Poetry Magazine, Virginia Faulkner Award from Prairie Schooner, and a Pushcart Prize. A Fraction of Darkness won the Maurice English Award. (With thanks to Gordon Read.)

into a small but steady blaze
here in the kitchen
where the dough has a life of its own,
breathing under its damp cloth
like a sleeping child;
where the real child plays under the table,
pretending the tablecloth is a tent,
practicing departures; where a dim
brown bird dazzled by light
has flown into the windowpane
and lies stunned on the pavement--
it was never simple, even for birds,
this business of nests.

The innocent eye sees nothing, Auden says,
repeating what the snake told Eve,
what Eve told Adam, tired of gardens,
wanting the fully lived life.

But passion happens like an accident
I could let the dough spill over the rim
of the bowl, neglecting to punch it down,
neglecting the child who waits under the table,
the mild tears already smudging her eyes.

We grow in such haphazard ways.

Today I feel wiser than the bird.

I know the window shuts me in,
that when I open it
the garden smells will make me restless.

And I have banked the fires of my body
into a small domestic flame for others
to warm their hands on for a while.

Prosody 101

When they taught me that what mattered most
was not the strict iambic line goose-stepping
over the page but the variations
in that line and the tension produced
on the ear by the surprise of difference,
I understood yet didn't understand
exactly, until just now, years later
in spring, with the trees already lacy
and camellias blowsy with middle age,
I looked out and saw what a cold front had done

to the garden, sweeping in like common language,
unexpected in the sensuous
extravagance of a Maryland spring.
There was a dark edge around each flower
as if it had been outlined in ink
instead of frost, and the tension I felt
between the expected and actual
was like that time I came to you, ready
to say goodbye for good, for you had been
a cold front yourself lately, and as I walked in
you laughed and lifted me up in your arms
as if I too were lacy with spring
instead of middle aged like the camellias,
and I thought: so this is Poetry!

Deer

To the secret places
of the garden, deer come
eating their way through
the milky blossoms of impatiens,
the blur of azalea leaves.
How enigmatic their eyes are
and how swiftly they move.
With their soft mouths
they destroy
everything we grew.

Green Thumb

No bigger than a thumb
and palest green,
a tree frog
has stowed away
on one of the plants
my husband brought inside
for winter,
and in the darkness
it fills the spaces
of this house
with disproportionate
song. The dogs bark,
fearing a creature
they cannot see,

and partly to quiet them
we search in vain
among the stems
and roots and leaves
for that balloon
of swollen sound --
either lovelorn,
or joyful, or hungry.
I'm never sure
I want the woods inside,
though circumscribed in pots
these plants seem safe enough --
contained explosions of green
at every frozen window.
Whatever my husband touches
grows. Tonight when he
touches me, black earth
still rings the moons
of all his nails.
I think it is a naked
infant's call
the tree frog's song
reminds me of.

Croaises

They come
by stealth, spreading
the rumour of spring --
near the hedge . . .
by the gate . . .
at our chilly feet . . .
mothers of saffron, fathers
of insurrection, purple
and yellow scouts
of an army still massing
just to the south.

T T T T

Can you take any more Wodehouse?

Cocktail Time

'The trouble in this world,' said Lord Ickenham, ignoring the slur, 'is that so many fellows deteriorate as they grow older. Time, like an ever-rolling

stream,³⁴ bears all their finer qualities away, with the result that the frightfully good chap of twenty-five is changed little by little into the stinker of fifty. Thirty years ago, when he came down from Oxford, where he had been a prominent and popular member of the University rugby football team, Raymond Bastable was as bonhomous a young man as you could have wished to meet. The jovial way he would jump with both feet on the faces of opponents on the football field and the suavity of his deportment when chucked out of the Empire on Boat Race night won all hearts. Beefy, as we used to call him, was a fourteen-stone ray of sunshine in those days. And what is he now? I am still extremely fond of him and always enjoy his society, but I cannot blind myself to the fact that the passing of the years has turned him into what a mutual friend of ours – Elsie Bean, who once held office as housemaid under Sir Aylmer Bostock at Ashenden Manor – would call an overbearing dishpot. It's being at the Bar that's done it, of course.'

.....

He seated himself, dodged a lump of sugar which a friendly hand had thrown from a neighbouring table, and beamed on his young friends like a Cheshire cat. It was his considered view that joy reigned supreme. If at this moment the poet Browning had come along and suggested to him that the lark was on the wing, the snail on the thorn, God in His heaven and all right with the world,³⁵ he would have assented with a cheery 'You put it in a nutshell, my dear fellow! How right you are!'

.....

As early as the middle of Chapter One he had discovered that there is a lot more to this writing business than the casual observer would suppose. Dante could have told him, and so could Juvenal, that it does not come easy. Blood, they would have said, is demanded of the man who sets pen to paper, also sweat and tears. However, as their fellow poet Swinburne would

³⁴ Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away:
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day. (Isaac Watts, Hymn version of Psalm 90)

³⁵ The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearl'd;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven
All's right with the world! (Robert Browning, *Pippa Passes*)

have reminded them, even the weariest river winds somewhere safe to sea.³⁶

.....

'My dear old Beefy, you must be feeling like Mariana at the moated grange.'³⁷

.....

'Very good, madam,' said Albert Peasemarch, and went off to heat saucepans with the heavy heart of a man conscious of having missed the bus. Possibly there were ringing in his ears the words of James Graham, first Marquis of Montrose: He either fears his fate too much Or his deserts are small, That dares not put it to the touch, To win or lose at all. Or, of course, possibly not.

.....

It was in uplifted mood and with buoyant step that Sir Raymond a few moments later entered the small smoking-room, which was where visitors at the Demosthenes were deposited. He found his nephew huddled in a chair, nervously sucking the knob of his umbrella, and once again experienced the quick twinge of resentment which always came to him when they met. A social blot who was so constantly having to have something done about him had, in his opinion, no right to be so beautifully dressed. Solomon in all his

36

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.
(Algernon Charles Swinburne, *The Garden of Proserpine*)

37

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'
(Tennyson, *Mariana*)

glory³⁸ might have had a slight edge on Cosmo Wisdom, but it would have been a near thing. Sir Raymond also objected to his beady eyes and his little black moustache.

.....

I remember a singularly handsome, clean-cut face and on the face a look of ecstasy and exaltation such as Jael, the wife of Heber, must have worn when about to hammer the Brazil nut into the head of Sisera,³⁹ but... no, the mists rise and the vision fades. Too bad.

.....

Externally unchanged in the four hundred years during which it had housed the family of Pearce, internally, like so many country mansions of the post-second-world-war period, Hammer Hall showed unmistakable signs of having seen better days. There were gaps on the walls where tapestries had hung, hiatuses along the floor where chests and tables were missing. A console table which was a particular favourite of his, Lord Ickenham observed, had folded its tents like the Arabs and silently stolen away⁴⁰ since his last visit, and he was sorry to see that that hideous imitation walnut cabinet, a survival from Victorian days, had not gone the same way, for it had always offended his educated eye and he had often begged his godson to get rid of it.

T T T T

More David Low

*The Pig Got Up And Slowly Walked Away*⁴¹

One evening in October

When I was about one-third sober

³⁸ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (*Matthew 6*, 28-29)

³⁹ Then Ja'el Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. And, behold, as Barak pursued Sis'era, Ja'el came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sis'era lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. (*Judges 4*: 21-22)

⁴⁰ And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares, that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.
(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Day is Done*)

⁴¹ Early 1930s: Music: F W Bowers / Lyrics: Benjamin Hapgood Burt.

And was taking home a load with manly pride
My poor feet began to stutter
So I lay down in the gutter
And a pig came up and lay down by my side
Then we sang "It's All Fair Weather"
And "Good Fellows Get Together"
Till a lady passing by was heard to say
She says, "You can tell a man who boozes
By the company he chooses"
And the pig got up and slowly walked away
Yes, the pig got up and slowly walked away
Slowly walked away, slowly walked away
Yes, the pig got up and he turned and winked at me
As he slowly walked away



" THE FIG GOT UP AND SLOWLY WALKED AWAY. "

I also well remember
One evening in November
When I was creeping home at break of day
For in my exhilaration
I engaged in conversation
With a cab-horse, right on the corner of Broadway
I was filled up to the eyeballs
With a flock of gin and highballs

So I whispered to the cab-horse old and grey
I says, "It's these all-night homeward marches
That gave us both our fallen arches."
And the old horse laughed and slowly walked away
Yes, the old horse laughed and slowly walked away⁴²

T T T T

Measure for Measure

Those of us who watched from abroad the Brexit saga unfold in Parliament will have been struck by the quaintness of some of the customs. For real quaintness, explore the realms of measurement.

Acre, Furlong, Stone, Chain, Rod, Pole and Perch were all used in mathematical exercises in my school and some, such as acre, stone and furlong, are still used today: for example, the bowling area of a cricket pitch is one chain in length (22 yards).

Try to work out the following: "There are 40 square perches to a rood (e.g., a rectangular area one furlong - 10 chains i.e. 40 rods - in length by one rod in width), and 160 square perches to an acre (an area one furlong by one chain - i.e. 4 rods). This unit is usually referred to as a perch or pole even though square perch and square pole were the more precise terms. Confusingly, rod was also sometimes used as a unit of area to refer to a rood." (Wikipedia)

I well recall a headline in the mid-1960s: "Britain goes metric, inch by inch".

T T T T

Portuguese days

If you enjoyed the Danish vigesimal system of counting, you will love the names for days in Portuguese. The following is extracted from an Internet language course.⁴³

Latin and most European languages refer to the Sun, the Moon and pagan Gods for the days of the week. In Portugal, the days of the week are named as a numbered series of market days, except for the days of the weekend - sábado and domingo.

⁴² Low's 1935 cartoon actually lampoons Walter Elliott, at the time Minister of Agriculture; the book he is reading is *Wickedness of Birth Control among Pigs*.

⁴³ See (slightly edited) <https://www.learn-portuguese-with-rafa.com/days-of-the-week-in-portuguese.html>.

So the days of the week in Portuguese are:

Segunda-feira [second market] - Monday.

Terça-feira [third market] - Tuesday.

Quarta-feira [fourth market] - Wednesday.

Quinta-feira [fifth market] - Thursday.

Sexta-feira [sixth market]- Friday

Sábado - Saturday.

Domingo - Sunday.

In day-to-day conversation, people normally drop the word "*feira*", because it's understood that "*segunda*" means "*segunda-feira*".

Therefore, people often say things like:

"Na terça vou à praia" - *On Tuesday, I'm going to the beach.*

"Sabado" - *Saturday* - *in its turn, refers to the Sabbath from the Jewish.*

It's also quite likely to see the Portuguese days of the week abbreviated:

Segunda-feira - 2^a.

Terça-feira - 3^a.

Quarta-feira - 4^a.

Quinta-feira - 5^a.

Sexta-feira - 6^a.

Sábado - *Sab.*

Domingo - *Dom.*

So you may see something like this on shop doors indicating the opening hours: *Aberto de 2^a a 6^a das 9.00 às 18.00.* - Open from Monday to Friday from 9h to 18h.

T T T T

Klein Erna - Ganz Dumme Hamburger Geschichten

For my Hamburger friends - Hummel, Hummel!



In Schule

Klein Erna ihre Lehrerin hat ins Verkehrsheft geschrieben:

- Werte Frau Pumeier! Klein Erna riecht immer so streng, und ich bitte Sie, Klein Erna regelmässig zu waschen!

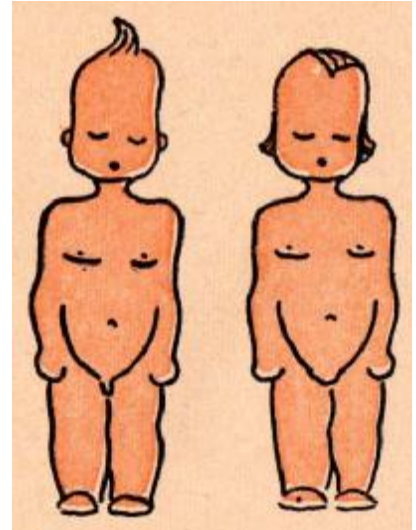
Antwort: - Wertes Frollein! Klein Erna is keine Rose, Sie solln ihr nich riechen, Sie solln ihr lernen!

Die Schokoladenpuppe

Klein-Erna steht mit ihre Freundin vor'n Schokoladenladen. Klein-Erna sagt: "Wenn die Schokoladenpuppen zehn Pfennig kosten, kauf ich mich eine, ich frag mall" Sie geht rein und sagt: "Was kosten die klein Schokoladenpuppen?" Sagt die Tante: "Zehn Pfennig, mein Kind!"

"Dann geben Sie mich man eine", sagt Klein-Erna.

"Ja, möchts du wohl'n klein Schokoladenjung oder'n Mädchen?" "Ach denn geben Sie mich man ein Jung, da is mehr an!"



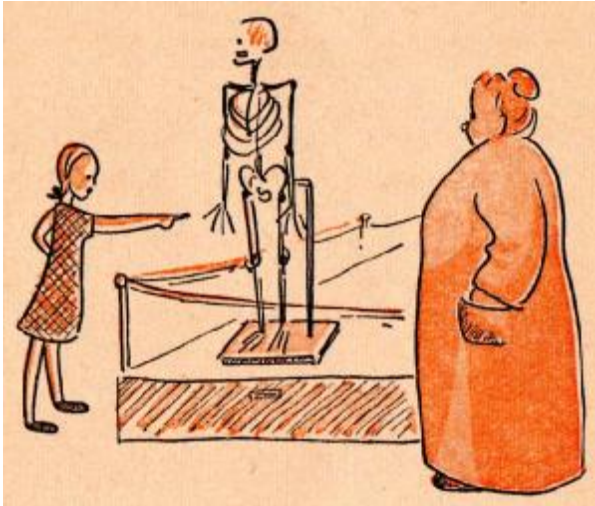
Bei Hagenbeck

"Klein-Erna, geh nich so nah ran an Eisbärn ... bist sowieso schon so erkältet!"

Sprechstunde

Wie Klein-Erna in die Jahre kommt, geht sie mal zun Aazt, sie rennt gleich da rein wo "Sprechzimmer" an steht, und da ist denn auch'n Herr in weissen Kittel in. Klein-Erna klagt ihm gleich ihr Leid und sagt, er soll ihr mal tüchtig untersuchen. Das tut er denn auch. Und geht raus und bringt noch 'n Herrn in weissen Kittel mit, der untersucht ihr dann auch gründlich und sagt: "Nee, Frollein, da könn' wir auch nix bei machen, da waaten Sie man noch'n Augenblick bis der Arzt kommt, wir sind nämlich bloss die Malers."





Zoologie

Mama geht mal mit Klein-Erna in Museum am Schweinemaakt. Wie sie nu in die Abteilung Säugetiere kommen, steht da auch ein menschliches Skelett.

"Oh, Mamma, seh mal," ruft Klein-Erna, "was' das denn für'n komisches Tier?"
 "Das' gaakein Tier," sagt Mama, "das's das, was von'n toten Mensch nachbleibt."
 "Och nee," sagt Klein-Erna, "kommt denn bloss der Speck in'n Himmel?"

Platzmiete

"Ich war gestern wieder in Theater." - "Zu'n Vergnügen?" - "Nee - Abonnemang!"

Die Diagnose

Klein-Erna hat mal furchbarn Liebeskummer. Sie mag nix essen, nix trinken und is ganz blass. Mama geht mit ihr zu'n Aazt. Der untersucht sie und sagt zu Mama: "So kann ich noch nichts finden, vielleicht ist es nur Aufregung, da muss ich erstmal die Psyche ihrer Tochter gründlich studieren."

"Das hab ich mir gleich gedacht, Herr Doktor," sagt Mama, "ich hab Ihnen gleich'n klein Flasche voll mitgebracht."

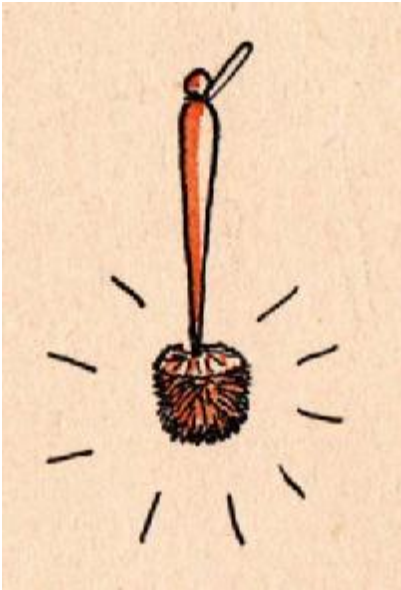


Drillinge

Die annere Freundin von Klein Erna, die Frieda, mit der sie schon in Schule gegangen is, die wo so belesen is - scheden Tag liest sie die Bildzeitung-, die hat scha gleich in ersten Jahr in ihre Ehe Drillinge gekriegt!- Klein Erna geht mit'n schön Blumenstrauss zu Frieda inne Klinik!

"Na, Frieda", sagt sie, "das ischa viellei'n Ding, gleich mit Drillinge anzufang!" - "Scha, ulkich nich?" sagt Frieda. "Wo ich doch neulich inne Zeitung gelesen hab, dass Drillinge nur das dreitausendsiebenhundertste Mal vorkommen!"

Klein Erna: "Da versteh ich wirklich nich, Frieda, wie du denn noch zu deine Hausarbeit gekommen bist!"



Die Klosettbürste

Klein-Erna kriegt von Tante Frieda ne wunderschöne Klosettbürste zur Hochzeit, ordentlich so'n stabiles Ding!

Klein-Erna freut sich ja auch ganz furchbar und hängt sie gleich in ihr Tolette auf!

Als Tante Frieda nach ne Zeit mal wieder zu Besuch kommt, da is da keine Klosettbürste mehr auf Tolette!
"Aber Klein-Erna", sagt sie, "wo is denn meine Klosettbürste?" "Ach, Tante Frieda, manchmal is sone Klosettbürste ja ganz schön, aber eins will ich dir sagen: 'Papier bleibt Papier!'"

Dichtkunst

In Schule sagt mal der Lehrer: "Wer kann ein schönes Gedicht aufsagen?"

"Ich weiss ein," sagt Klein-Erna :

'Ein Fischer sass am Meeresstrand
und hielt 'ne Angel in der Hand.
Er möchte fangen einen Barsch,
das Wasser ging ihm bis zum Knie.'

"Das reimt sich ja aber gar nicht,"
sagt der Lehrer.

"Doch," sagt Klein-Erna, "warten Sie
man, bis Flut is, denn reimt sich das!"



Klapperstorch

Fragt Klein Erna ihre Tante: - Sag mal, Tante, warum hast du und Onkel eigentlich noch keine Kinder?

Antwortet die Tante: - Weißt du, Erna, der Klapperstorch hat uns noch keine gebracht!

- Ach so - meint Klein Erna - wenn ihr noch an den Klapperstorch glaubt, dann ist mir alles klar!

Mottenkugeln

Klein Erna kommt inne Drogerie und sagt: "Möcht gern ein Pfund Mottenkugeln."

Nach ne Stunde kommt sie wieder und sagt: "Bitte noch'n Pfund Mottenkugeln." --

Wie sie nach ne Zeit noch mal Mottenkugeln ham will, fragt der Verkäufer: "Was in aller Welt machs du mit sonne Masse Mottenkugeln?" Sagt Klein Erna: "Mein Sie denn, dass ich mit jede Kugel son Biest treff?"

Zum Friedhof

Klein Erna sieht ihre Oma mit dem Fahrrad davonfahren. Sie fragt ihre Mutter, wohin Oma denn fahre. Die Mutter antwortet: "Zum Friedhof!" Erna daraufhin nachdenklich: "Und wer holt das Fahrrad nachher dort ab?"



Bei'm Aazt

Klein-Erna ischa nu schon 10 Jahr verheirat und hat immer noch kein Kind in die Wiege! Da sagt denn ihre Freundin: "Klein-Erna, du muss mal zu'n tüchtigen Aazt gehn, der kann dir sicher helfen!" Na, Klein-Erna geht ja denn auch hin und erzählt ihm ihr Ärger. Der hört sich das mit'n ganz ernsten Gesicht an und sagt: "10 Jahre? Schwieriger Fall, aber woll'n mal sehen was sich machen lässt; ziehn Sie sich mal aus!"

"Och, Herr Dokta, das erste Kind wollt ich ja zu gern von mein Mann haben!"

T T T T

A Deep Dive to Remember

"A Love Story Between Business Managers, Written by a Business Manager"
- By Evan Williams, The New Yorker , 15.1.2017

For years, Sara had gazed at him across the cafeteria with the faint idea of asking him out, but it had just never seemed scalable. Until today.

"Jared," Sara began, with a quiver in her voice, "I just wanted to reach out and see if you had the capacity to connect with me over drinks tonight."

Jared did not facilitate a response immediately, and, as she waited, Sara began to wonder whether she'd dropped the ball on this entirely. Should she have added value first, with small talk? Probably, but it was too late now.

"Unfortunately, I can't," Jared finally said.

Sara felt her heart break apart, like an animated pie chart in one of her slide decks. I should never have actioned this, she thought.

"But," Jared pivoted, "I have bandwidth to do Thursday."

Her heart circled back to a better space. He hadn't rejected her; they had just hit a roadblock.

"Let me check my calendar," she said, having learned that appearing to be cool in situations like these can be key.

"Actually, you know what?" Jared said. "Back to your initial proposal of connecting today. What were you thinking in terms of timelines?"

"6:30 p.m.?" she said.

"With some restructuring, I think I will be able to give you some face time then," he said.

"That's a good outcome," Sara said, with a grin. "I'll see you E.O.D."

That afternoon, her workflow was significantly compromised. Going forward, there was simply no prospect as exciting as touching base with Jared. She spent the rest of the day overwhelmed by a raft of feelings that she could not unpack, which was strange, because unpacking issues was usually one of her core strengths.

As 6:30 p.m. rolled around, she felt sick in the pit of her stomach, like when she looked at a sentence that didn't contain an acronym. I can't believe this is actually about to tee off, she thought to herself.

When Jared arrived, his shirt was slightly unbuttoned and his tie was loosened, revealing robust chest hair—a real game-changer.

Unfortunately, the conversational touch points were not nearly as robust.

"I guess one of us should go up and order drinks," Sara said, to break the cycle.

"Oh," Jared said, fumbling for his wallet. "Let me spearhead that."

After the first couple of margaritas, they began to find some shareable content. And, by the third, they found themselves on a deep dive, deeper than either of them had ever dived before during an initial one-on-one. Midway through the fifth drink, they were holding hands.

"You're such a thought leader," Jared whispered in Sara's ear. The synergy was electric.

"We're closing up," the bartender boomed.

"Closing up?" Jared said. "But it feels like we only just started drilling down!" They laughed, and pursued an exit strategy.

"Well, this is me—where I do my life admin," Sara said at her doorstep.

"It was great to synch up with you tonight," Jared said.

They stood awkwardly for a few moments, unsure of whether this was an L.A.O (Lip-Alignment Opportunity).

“O.K. then, I’d better be off,” Jared said, reluctantly.

“Best,” Sara said. “Best,” Jared said.

He had barely begun executing his walk home when he heard Sara call out.

“Wait!” she yelled. “I know this is a bit weird because we just met and all . . . and I’m just ideating here . . . but in terms of next steps, do you think there’s any chance I could . . .” She sighed, frustrated by her inability to communicate efficiently and effectively. “Do you think I could onboard you into a relationship?” she asked.

Jared lit up. “I think,” he said, “that your offer will get a lot of pickup.”

They hit the ground running, toward each other. And there, in the moonlight, they aligned passionately, on the mouth.

T T T T

Odds and Ends

Politicians and diapers must be changed often and for the same reason.
(Mark Twain)

Fate l'amore non fate la dieta (Make love, don't diet) - seen on a billboard in Naples advertising a bakery.

'Diplomacy is the art of letting other people have your way'⁴⁴

"He got mugged by a snail and a tortoise once. The police asked him if he got a description. 'I don't know,' he said. 'It all happened so quickly.'" (Attributed to Ronnie O'Sullivan, describing Peter Ebdon's slow play.)

Il n’y a pas longtemps qu’un bon honnête ministre huguenot prêcha et écrivit que les damnés auraient un jour leur grâce, qu’il fallait une proportion entre le péché et le supplice, et qu’une faute d’un moment ne peut mériter un châtement infini. Les prêtres et ses confrères déposèrent ce juge indulgent ; l’un d’eux lui dit, Mon ami, je ne crois pas plus l’enfer éternel que vous ; mais il est bon que votre servante, votre tailleur & même votre procureur le croient. (Voltaire)

Answer to question on page 4: No, it was not Nancy Pelosi, Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders - it was Mark Twain in Vol. 3 of his memoirs on 28.8.1907, quoting Samuel W. McCall, Republican Congressman from Massachusetts, on Theodore Roosevelt.

⁴⁴ With thanks to Paul and John Brown.