

Sheba Blake Publishing Corp.

A WODEHOUSE MISCELLANY

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First published by Sheba Blake Publishing Corp. 2022

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P. G. Wodehouse asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

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First edition

Cover art by Sheba Blake

Editing by Sheba Blake

This book was professionally typeset on Reedsy

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About the Author

One

Some Aspects of Game-Captaincy



To the Game-Captain (of the football variety) the world is peopled by three classes, firstly the keen and regular player, next the partial slacker, thirdly, and lastly, the entire, abject and absolute slacker.

Of the first class, the keen and regular player, little need be said. A keen player is a gem of purest rays serene, and when to his keenness he adds regularity and punctuality, life ceases to become the mere hollow blank that it would otherwise become, and joy reigns supreme.

The absolute slacker (to take the worst at once, and have done with it) needs the pen of a Swift before adequate justice can be done to his enormities. He is a blot, an excrescence. All those moments which are not spent in avoiding games (by means of that leave which is unanimously considered the peculiar property of the French nation) he uses in concocting ingenious excuses. Armed with these, he faces with calmness the disgusting curiosity of the Game-Captain, who officiously desires to know the reason of his non-appearance on the preceding day. These excuses are of the “had-to-go-and-see-a-man-about-a-dog” type, and rarely meet with that success for which their author hopes. In the end he discovers that his chest is weak, or his heart

is subject to palpitations, and he forthwith produces a document to this effect, signed by a doctor. This has the desirable result of muzzling the tyrannical Game-Captain, whose sole solace is a look of intense and withering scorn. But this is seldom fatal, and generally, we rejoice to say, ineffectual.

The next type is the partial slacker. He differs from the absolute slacker in that at rare intervals he actually turns up, changed withal into the garb of the game, and thirsting for the fray. At this point begins the time of trouble for the Game-Captain. To begin with, he is forced by stress of ignorance to ask the newcomer his name. This is, of course, an insult of the worst kind. "A being who does not know my name," argues the partial slacker, "must be something not far from a criminal lunatic." The name is, however, extracted, and the partial slacker strides to the arena. Now arises insult No. 2. He is wearing his cap. A hint as to the advisability of removing this *pièce de résistance* not being taken, he is ordered to assume a capless state, and by these means a coolness springs up between him and the G. C. Of this the Game-Captain is made aware when the game commences. The partial slacker, scorning to insert his head in the scrum, assumes a commanding position outside and from this point criticises the Game-Captain's decisions with severity and pith. The last end of the partial slacker is generally a sad one. Stung by some pungent home-thrust, the Game-Captain is fain to try chastisement, and by these means silences the enemy's battery.

Sometimes the classes overlap. As for instance, a keen and regular player may, by some more than usually gross bit of bungling on the part of the G.-C., be moved to a fervour and eloquence worthy of Juvenal. Or, again, even the absolute slacker may for a time emulate the keen player, provided an opponent plant a shrewd kick on a tender spot. But, broadly speaking, there are only three classes.

Two

An Unfinished Collection



A silence had fallen upon the smoking room. The warrior just back from the front had enquired after George Vanderpoop, and we, who knew that George's gentle spirit had, to use a metaphor after his own heart, long since been withdrawn from circulation, were feeling uncomfortable and wondering how to break the news.

Smithson is our specialist in tact, and we looked to him to be spokesman.

"George," said Smithson at last, "the late George Vanderpoop——"

"Late!" exclaimed the warrior; "is he dead?"

"As a doornail," replied Smithson sadly. "Perhaps you would care to hear the story. It is sad, but interesting. You may recollect that, when you sailed, he was starting his journalistic career. For a young writer he had done remarkably well. The *Daily Telephone* had printed two of his contributions to their correspondence column, and a bright pen picture of his, describing how Lee's Lozenges for the Liver had snatched him from almost certain death, had quite a vogue. Lee, I believe, actually commissioned him to do a series on the subject."

"Well?" said the warrior.

“Well, he was, as I say, prospering very fairly, when in an unlucky moment he began to make a collection of editorial rejection forms. He had always been a somewhat easy prey to scourges of that description. But when he had passed safely through a sharp attack of Philatelism and a rather nasty bout of Autographomania, everyone hoped and believed that he had turned the corner. The progress of his last illness was very rapid. Within a year he wanted but one specimen to make the complete set. This was the one published from the offices of the *Scrutinizer*. All the rest he had obtained with the greatest ease. I remember his telling me that a single short story of his, called ‘The Vengeance of Vera Dalrymple,’ had been instrumental in securing no less than thirty perfect specimens. Poor George! I was with him when he made his first attempt on the *Scrutinizer*. He had baited his hook with an essay on Evolution. He read me one or two passages from it. I stopped him at the third paragraph, and congratulated him in advance, little thinking that it was sympathy rather than congratulations that he needed. When I saw him a week afterwards he was looking haggard. I questioned him, and by slow degrees drew out the story. The article on Evolution had been printed.

“‘Never say die, George,’ I said. ‘Send them “Vera Dalrymple.” No paper can take that.’

“He sent it. The *Scrutinizer*, which had been running for nearly a century without publishing a line of fiction, took it and asked for more. It was as if there were an editorial conspiracy against him.”

“Well?” said the man of war.

“Then,” said Smithson, “George pulled himself together. He wrote a parody of ‘The Minstrel Boy.’ I have seen a good many parodies, but never such a parody as that. By return of post came a long envelope bearing the crest of the *Scrutinizer*. ‘At last,’ he said, as he tore it open.