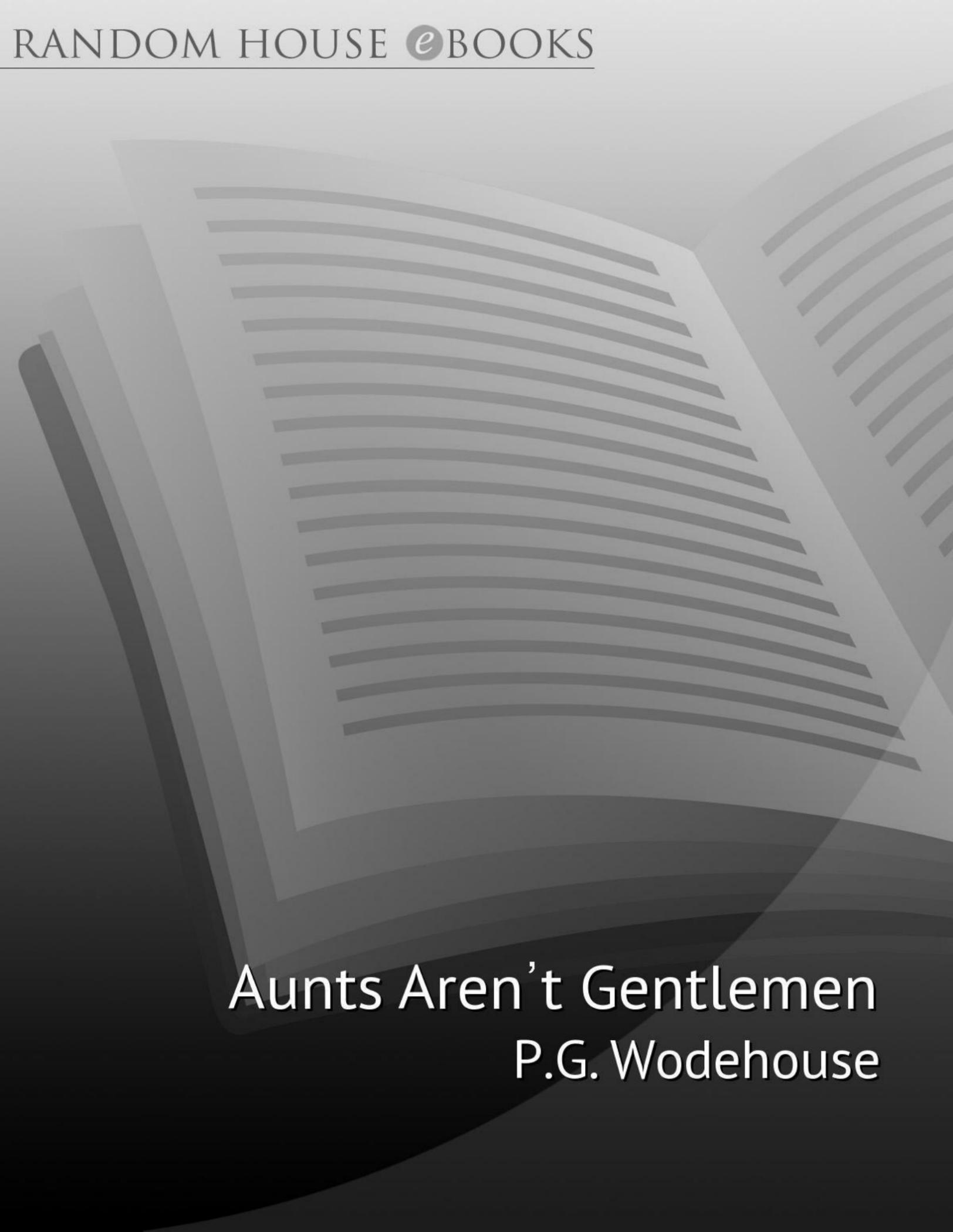


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Aunts Aren't Gentlemen
P.G. Wodehouse

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About the Book

A Jeeves and Wooster novel

Bertie Wooster has been overdoing metropolitan life a bit, and the doctor orders fresh air in the depths of the country. But after moving with Jeeves to his cottage at Maiden Eggesford, Bertie soon finds himself surrounded by aunts – not only his redoubtable Aunt Dahlia but an aunt of Jeeves's too. Add a hyper-sensitive racehorse, a very important cat and a decidedly bossy fiancée – and all the ingredients are present for a plot in which aunts can exert their terrible authority. But Jeeves, of course, can cope with everything – even aunts, and even the country.

About the Author

Pelham Grenville Wodehouse (always known as 'Plum') wrote more than ninety novels and some three hundred short stories over 73 years. He is widely recognised as the greatest 20th century writer of humour in the English language.

Wodehouse mixed the high culture of his classical education with the popular slang of the suburbs in both England and America, becoming a 'cartoonist of words'. Drawing on the antics of a near-contemporary world, he placed his Drones, Earls, Ladies (including draconian aunts and eligible girls) and Valets, in a recently vanished society, whose reality is transformed by his remarkable imagination into something timeless and enduring.

Perhaps best known for the escapades of Bertie Wooster and Jeeves, Wodehouse also created the world of Blandings Castle, home to Lord Emsworth and his cherished pig, the Empress of Blandings. His stories include gems concerning the irrepressible and disreputable Ukridge; Psmith, the elegant socialist; the ever-so-slightly-unscrupulous Fifth Earl of Ickenham, better known as Uncle Fred; and those related by Mr Mulliner, the charming raconteur of *The Angler's Rest*, and the Oldest Member at the Golf Club.

Wodehouse collaborated with a variety of partners on straight plays and worked principally alongside Guy Bolton on providing the lyrics and script for musical comedies with such composers as George Gershwin, Irving Berlin and Cole Porter. He liked to say that the royalties for 'Just My

Bill', which Jerome Kern incorporated into Showboat, were enough to keep him in tobacco and whisky for the rest of his life.

In 1936 he was awarded The Mark Twain Medal for 'having made an outstanding and lasting contribution to the happiness of the world'. He was made a Doctor of Letters by Oxford University in 1939 and in 1975, aged 93, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II. He died shortly afterwards, on St Valentine's Day.

To have created so many characters that require no introduction places him in a very select group of writers, lead by Shakespeare and Dickens.

Also by P.G. Wodehouse

Fiction

Aunts Aren't Gentlemen

The Adventures of Sally

Bachelors Anonymous

Barmy in Wonderland

Big Money

Bill the Conqueror

Blandings Castle and Elsewhere

Carry On, Jeeves

The Clicking of Cuthbert

Cocktail Time

The Code of the Woosters

The Coming of Bill

Company for Henry

A Damsel in Distress

Do Butlers Burgle Banks

Doctor Sally

Eggs, Beans and Crumpets

A Few Quick Ones

French Leave

Frozen Assets

Full Moon

Galahad at Blandings

A Gentleman of Leisure

The Girl in Blue

The Girl on the Boat

The Gold Bat

The Head of Kay's
The Heart of a Goof
Heavy Weather
Hot Water
Ice in the Bedroom
If I Were You
Indiscretions of Archie
The Inimitable Jeeves
Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit
Jeeves in the Offing
Jill the Reckless
Joy in the Morning
Laughing Gas
Leave it to Psmith
The Little Nugget
Lord Emsworth and Others
Louder and Funnier
Love Among the Chickens
The Luck of Bodkins
The Man Upstairs
The Man with Two Left Feet
The Mating Season
Meet Mr Mulliner
Mike and Psmith
Mike at Wrykyn
Money for Nothing
Money in the Bank
Mr Mulliner Speaking
Much Obligated, Jeeves
Mulliner Nights
Not George Washington
Nothing Serious

The Old Reliable
Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin
A Pelican at Blandings
Piccadilly Jim
Pigs Have Wings
Plum Pie
The Pothunters
A Prefect's Uncle
The Prince and Betty
Psmith, Journalist
Psmith in the City
Quick Service
Right Ho, Jeeves
Ring for Jeeves
Sam me Sudden
Service with a Smile
The Small Bachelor
Something Fishy
Something Fresh
Spring Fever
Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves
Summer Lightning
Summer Moonshine
Sunset at Blandings
The Swoop
Tales of St Austin's
Thank You, Jeeves
Ukridge
Uncle Dynamite
Uncle Fred in the Springtime
Uneasy Money
Very Good, Jeeves

The White Feather
William Tell Told Again
Young Men in Spats

Omnibuses

The World of Blandings
The World of Jeeves
The World of Mr Mulliner
The World of Psmith
The World of Ukridge
The World of Uncle Fred
Wodehouse Nuggets (edited by Richard Usborne)
The World of Wodehouse Clergy
The Hollywood Omnibus
Weekend Wodehouse

Paperback Omnibuses

The Golf Omnibus
The Aunts Omnibus
The Drones Omnibus
The Jeeves Omnibus 1
The Jeeves Omnibus 3

Poems

The Parrot and Other Poems

Autobiographical

Wodehouse on Wodehouse (comprising Bring on the Girls, Over Seventy, Performing Flea)

Letters

Yours, Plum

P. G. WODEHOUSE

*Aunts Aren't
Gentlemen*



CHAPTER ONE

MY ATTENTION WAS drawn to the spots on my chest when I was in my bath, singing, if I remember rightly, the Toreador song from the opera *Carmen*. They were pink in colour, rather like the first faint flush of dawn, and I viewed them with concern. I am not a fussy man, but I do object to being freckled like a pard, as I once heard Jeeves describe it, a pard, I take it, being something in the order of one of those dogs beginning with d.

'Jeeves,' I said at the breakfast table, 'I've got spots on my chest.'

'Indeed, sir?'

'Pink.'

'Indeed, sir?'

'I don't like them.'

'A very understandable prejudice, sir. Might I enquire if they itch?'

'Sort of.'

'I would not advocate scratching them.'

'I disagree with you. You have to take a firm line with spots. Remember what the poet said.'

'Sir?'

'The poet Ogden Nash. The poem he wrote defending the practice of scratching. Who was Barbara Frietchie, Jeeves?'

'A lady of some prominence in the American war between the States, sir.'

'A woman of strong character? One you could rely on?'

'So I have always understood, sir.'

‘Well, here’s what the poet Nash wrote. “I’m greatly attached to Barbara Frietchie. I’ll bet she scratched when she was itchy.” But I shall not be content with scratching. I shall place myself in the hands of a competent doctor.’

‘A very prudent decision, sir.’

The trouble was that, except for measles when I was just starting out, I’ve always been so fit that I didn’t know any doctors. Then I remembered that my American pal, Tipton Plimsoll, with whom I had been dining last night to celebrate his betrothal to Veronica, only daughter of Colonel and Lady Hermione Wedge of Blandings Castle, Shropshire, had mentioned one who had once done him a bit of good. I went to the telephone to get his name and address.

Tipton did not answer my ring immediately, and when he did it was to reproach me for waking him at daybreak. But after he had got this off his chest and I had turned the conversation to mine he was most helpful. It was with the information I wanted that I returned to Jeeves.

‘I’ve just been talking to Mr Plimsoll, Jeeves, and everything is straight now. He bids me lose no time in establishing contact with a medico of the name of E. Jimpson Murgatroyd. He says if I want a sunny practitioner who will prod me in the ribs with his stethoscope and tell me an anecdote about two Irishmen named Pat and Mike and then another about two Scotsmen named Mac and Sandy, E. Jimpson is not my man, but if what I’m after is someone to cure my spots, he unquestionably is, as he knows his spots from A to Z and has been treating them since he was so high. It seems that Tipton had the same trouble not long ago and Murgatroyd fixed him up in no time. So while I am getting out of these clothes into something more spectacular will you give him a buzz and make an appointment.’

When I had doffed the sweater and flannels in which I had breakfasted, Jeeves informed me that E. Jimpson could

see me at eleven, and I thanked him and asked him to tell the garage to send the car round at ten-forty-five.

‘Somewhat earlier than that, sir,’ he said, ‘if I might make the suggestion. The traffic. Would it not be better to take a cab?’

‘No, and I’ll tell you why. After I’ve seen the doc, I thought I might drive down to Brighton and get a spot of sea air. I don’t suppose the traffic will be any worse than usual, will it?’

‘I fear so, sir. A protest march is taking place this morning.’

‘What, again? They seem to have them every hour on the hour these days, don’t they?’

‘They are certainly not infrequent, sir.’

‘Any idea what they’re protesting about?’

‘I could not say, sir. It might be one thing or it might be another. Men are suspicious, prone to discontent. Subjects still loathe the present Government.’

‘The poet Nash?’

‘No, sir. The poet Herrick.’

‘Pretty bitter.’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘I wonder what they had done to him to stir him up like that. Probably fined him five quid for failing to abate a smoky chimney.’

‘As to that I have no information, sir.’

Seated in the old sports model some minutes later and driving to keep my tryst with E. Jimpson Murgatroyd, I was feeling singularly light-hearted for a man with spots on his chest. It was a beautiful morning, and it wouldn’t have taken much to make me sing Tra-la as I bowled along. Then I came abaft of the protest march and found myself becalmed. I leaned back and sat observing the proceedings with a kindly eye.

CHAPTER TWO

WHATEVER THESE BIMBOS were protesting about, it was obviously something they were taking to heart rather. By the time I had got into their midst not a few of them had decided that animal cries were insufficient to meet the case and were saying it with bottles and brickbats, and the police who were present in considerable numbers seemed not to be liking it much. It must be rotten being a policeman on these occasions. Anyone who has got a bottle can throw it at you, but if you throw it back, the yell of police brutality goes up and there are editorials in the papers next day.

But the mildest cop can stand only so much, and it seemed to me, for I am pretty shrewd in these matters, that in about another shake of a duck's tail hell's foundations would be starting to quiver. I hoped nobody would scratch my paint.

Leading the procession, I saw with surprise, was a girl I knew. In fact, I had once asked her to marry me. Her name was Vanessa Cook, and I had met her at a cocktail party, and such was her radiant beauty that it was only a couple of minutes after I had brought her a martini and one of those little sausages on sticks that I was saying to myself, 'Bertram, this is a good thing. Push it along.' And in due season I suggested a merger. But apparently I was not the type, and no business resulted.

This naturally jarred the Wooster soul a good deal at the moment, but reviewing the dead past now I could see that my guardian angel had been on the job all right and had

known what was good for me. I mean, radiant beauty is all very well, but it isn't everything. What sort of a married life would I have had with the little woman perpetually going on protest marches and expecting me to be at her side throwing bottles at the constabulary? It made me shudder to think what I might have let myself in for if I had been a shade more fascinating. Taught me a lesson, that did - viz. never to lose faith in your guardian angel, because these guardian angels are no fools.

Vanessa Cook was accompanied by a beefy bloke without a hat in whom I recognized another old acquaintance, O. J. (Orlo) Porter to wit, who had been on the same staircase with me at Oxford. Except for borrowing an occasional cup of sugar from one another and hulloing when we met on the stairs we had never been really close, he being a prominent figure at the Union, where I was told he made fiery far-to-the-left speeches, while I was more the sort that is content just to exist beautifully.

Nor did we get together in our hours of recreation, for his idea of a good time was to go off with a pair of binoculars and watch birds, a thing that has never appealed to me. I can't see any percentage in it. If I meet a bird, I wave a friendly hand at it, to let it know that I wish it well, but I don't want to crouch behind a bush observing its habits. So, as I say, Orlo Porter was in no sense a buddy of mine, but we had always got on all right and I still saw him every now and then.

Everybody at Oxford had predicted a pretty hot political future for him, but it hadn't got started yet. He was now in the employment of the London and Home Counties Insurance Company and earned the daily b. by talking poor saps - I was one of them - into taking out policies for larger amounts than they would have preferred. Making fiery far-to-the-left speeches naturally fits a man for selling insurance, enabling him to find the *mot juste* and enlarging

the vocabulary. I for one had been corn before his sickle, as the expression is.

The bottle-throwing had now reached the height of its fever and I was becoming more than ever nervous about my paint, when all of a sudden there occurred an incident which took my mind off that subject. The door of the car opened and what the papers call a well-nourished body, male, leaped in and took a seat beside me. Gave me a bit of a start, I don't mind admitting, the Woosters not being accustomed to this sort of thing so soon after breakfast. I was about to ask to what I was indebted for the honour of this visit, when I saw that what I had drawn was Orlo Porter and I divined that after the front of the procession had passed from my view he must have said or done something which London's police force could not overlook, making instant flight a must. His whole demeanour was that of the hart that pants for cooling streams when heated in the chase.

Well, you don't get cooling streams in the middle of the metropolis, but there was something I could do to give his morale a shot in the arm. I directed his attention to the Drones Club scarf lying on the seat, at the same time handing him my hat. He put them on, and the rude disguise proved effective. Various rozzers came along, but they were looking for a man without a hat and he was definitely hatted, so they passed us by. Of course, I was bareheaded, but one look at me was enough to tell them that this polished boulevardier could not possibly be the dubious character they were after. And a few minutes later the crowd had melted.

'Drive on, Wooster,' said Orlo. 'Get a move on, blast you.'

He spoke irritably, and I remembered that he had always been an irritable chap, as who would not have been, having to go through life with a name like Orlo, and peddling insurance when he had hoped to electrify the House of Commons with his molten eloquence. I took no umbrage,