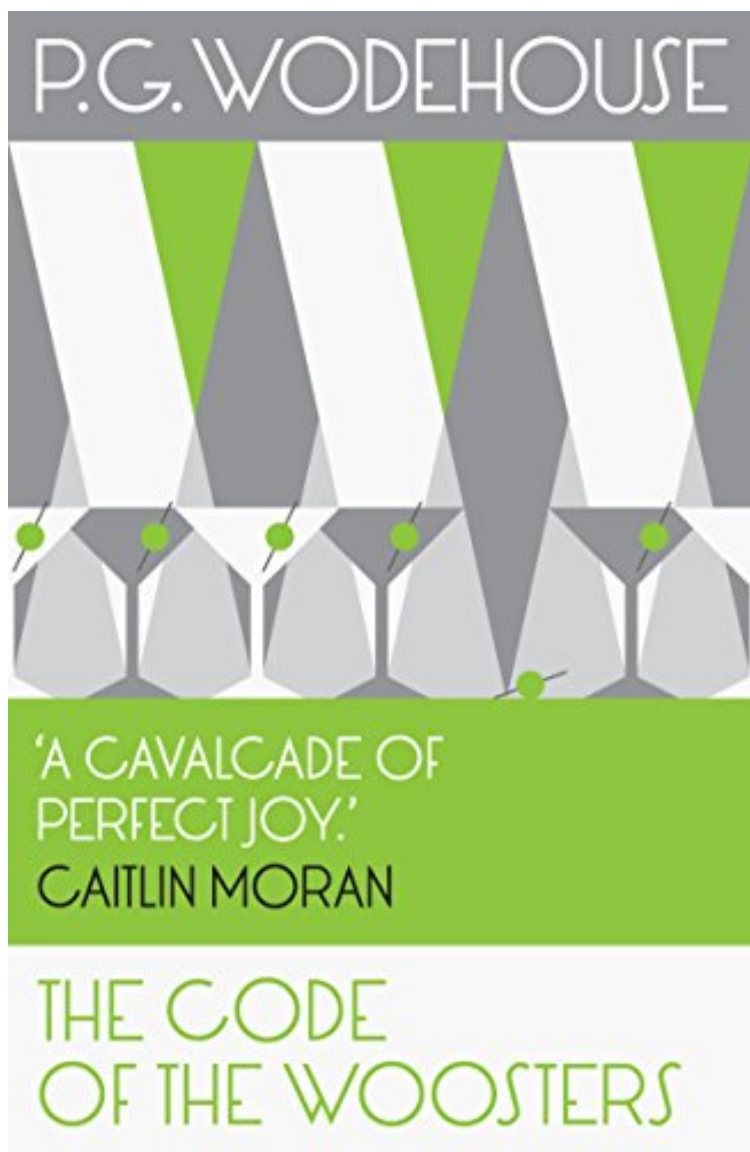


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The Code of the Woosters: (Jeeves Wooster)



Par P. G. Wodehouse
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA classic Jeeves and Wooster novel from P.G. Wodehouse, the great comic writer of the 20th century.Purloining an antique cow creamer under the instruction of the indomitable Aunt Dahlia is the least of Bertie's tasks, for he has to play Cupid while feuding with Spode.'A cavalcade of perfect joy.' - Caitlin Moran'Sunlit perfection... Bask in its warmth and splendour.' - Stephen Fry'The best English comic novelist of the century.' - Sebastian Faulks'The greatest chronicler of a certain kind of Englishness' - Julian FellowesExtraitchapter 1I reached out a hand from under the blankets, and rang the bell for Jeeves.'Good evening, Jeeves.' 'Good morning, sir.' This surprised me. 'Is it morning?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Are you sure? It seems very dark outside.' 'There is a fog, sir. If you will recollect, we are now in Autumn -- season of mists and mellow

fruitfulness."Season of what?"Mists, sir, and mellow fruitfulness."Oh? Yes. Yes, I see. Well, be that as it may, get me one of those bracers of yours, will you?"I have one in readiness, sir, in the ice-box.'He shimmered out, and I sat up in bed with that rather unpleasant feeling you get sometimes that you're going to die in about five minutes. On the previous night, I had given a little dinner at the Drones to Gussie Fink-Nottle as a friendly send-off before his approaching nuptials with Madeline, only daughter of Sir Watkyn Bassett, CBE, and these things take their toll. Indeed, just before Jeeves came in, I had been dreaming that some boulder was driving spikes through my head -- not just ordinary spikes, as used by Jael the wife of Heber, but red-hot ones.He returned with the tissue-restorer. I loosed it down the hatch, and after undergoing the passing discomfort, unavoidable when you drink Jeeves's patent morning revivers, of having the top of the skull fly up to the ceiling and the eyes shoot out of their sockets and rebound from the opposite wall like racquet balls, felt better. It would have been overstating it to say that even now Bertram was back again in mid-season form, but I had at least slid into the convalescent class and was equal to a spot of conversation.'Ha!' I said, retrieving the eyeballs and replacing them in position. 'Well, Jeeves, what goes on in the great world? Is that the paper you have there?'No, sir. It is some literature from the Travel Bureau. I thought that you might care to glance at it."Oh?' I said. 'You did, did you?'And there was a brief and -- if that's the word I want -- pregnant silence.I suppose that when two men of iron will live in close association with one another, there are bound to be occasional clashes, and one of these had recently popped up in the Wooster home. Jeeves was trying to get me to go on a Round-The-World cruise, and I would have none of it. But in spite of my firm statements to this effect, scarcely a day passed without him bringing me a sheaf or nosegay of those illustrated folders which the Ho-for-the-open-spaces birds send out in the hope of drumming up custom. His whole attitude recalled irresistibly to the mind that of some assiduous hound who will persist in laying a dead rat on the drawing-room carpet, though repeatedly apprised by word and gesture that the market for same is sluggish or even non-existent.'Jeeves,' I said, 'this nuisance must now cease.'"Travel is highly educational, sir."I can't do with any more education. I was full up years ago. No, Jeeves, I know what's the matter with you. That old Viking strain of yours has come out again. You yearn for the tang of the salt breezes. You see yourself walking the deck in a yachting cap. Possibly someone has been telling you about the Dancing Girls of Bali. I understand, and I sympathize. But not for me. I refuse to be decanted into any blasted ocean-going liner and lugged off round the world."Very good, sir.'He spoke with a certain what-is-it in his voice, and I could see that, if not actually disgruntled, he was far from being grunted, so I tactfully changed the subject.'Well, Jeeves, it was quite a satisfactory binge last night."Indeed, sir?"Oh, most. An excellent time was had by all. Gussie sent his regards."I appreciate the kind thought, sir. I trust Mr Fink-Nottle was in good spirits?"Extraordinarily good, considering that the sands are running out and that he will shortly have Sir Watkyn Bassett for a father-in-law. Sooner him than me, Jeeves, sooner him than me.'I spoke with strong feeling, and I'll tell you why. A few months before, while celebrating Boat Race night, I had fallen into the clutches of the Law for trying to separate a policeman from his helmet, and after sleeping fitfully on a plank bed had been hauled up at Boshier Street next morning and fined five of the best. The magistrate who had inflicted this monstrous sentence -- to the accompaniment, I may add, of some very offensive remarks from the bench -- was none other than old Pop Bassett, father of Gussie's bride-to-be.As it turned out, I was one of his last customers, for a couple of weeks later he inherited a pot of money from a distant relative and retired to the country. That, at least, was the story that had been put about. My own view was that he had got the stuff by sticking like glue to the fines. Five quid here, five quid there -- you can see how it would mount up over a period of years.'You have not forgotten that man of wrath, Jeeves? A hard case, eh?"Possibly Sir Watkyn is less formidable in private life, sir."I doubt it. Slice him where you like, a hellhound is always a hellhound. But enough of this Bassett. Any letters today?"No, sir."Telephone communications?"One, sir. From Mrs Travers."Aunt Dahlia? She's back in town, then?"Yes, sir. She expressed a desire that you would ring her up at your earliest convenience."I will do even better,' I said cordially. 'I will call in person.'And half an hour later I was toddling up the steps of her residence and being admitted by old Seppings, her butler. Little knowing, as I crossed that threshold, that in about two shakes of a duck's tail I was to become involved in an imbroglio that would test the Wooster soul as it had seldom been tested before. I allude to the sinister affair of Gussie Fink-Nottle, Madeline Bassett, old Pop Bassett, Stiffy Byng, the Rev. H. P. ('Stinker') Pinker, the eighteenth-century cow-creamer and the small, brown, leather-covered notebook.*No premonition of an impending doom, however, cast a cloud on my serenity as I buzzed in. I was looking forward with bright anticipation to the coming reunion with this Dahlia -- she, as I may have mentioned before, being my good and deserving aunt, not to be confused with Aunt Agatha, who

eats broken bottles and wears barbed wire next to the skin. Apart from the mere intellectual pleasure of chewing the fat with her, there was the glittering prospect that I might be able to cadge an invitation to lunch. And owing to the outstanding virtuosity of Anatole, her French cook, the browsing at her trough is always of a nature to lure the gourmet. The door of the morning room was open as I went through the hall, and I caught a glimpse of Uncle Tom messing about with his collection of old silver. For a moment I toyed with the idea of pausing to pip-pip and enquire after his indigestion, a malady to which he is extremely subject, but wiser counsels prevailed. This uncle is a bird who, sighting a nephew, is apt to buttonhole him and become a bit informative on the subject of sconces and foliation, not to mention scrolls, ribbon wreaths in high relief and gadroon borders, and it seemed to me that silence was best. I whizzed by, accordingly, with sealed lips, and headed for the library, where I had been informed that Aunt Dahlia was at the moment roosting. I found the old flesh-and-blood up to her Marcel-wave in proof sheets. As all the world knows, she is the courteous and popular proprietress of a weekly sheet for the delicately nurtured entitled *Milady's Boudoir*. I once contributed an article to it on 'What The Well-Dressed Man Is Wearing'. My entry caused her to come to the surface, and she greeted me with one of those cheery view-halloos which, in the days when she went in for hunting, used to make her so noticeable a figure of the Quorn, the Pytchley and other organizations for doing the British fox a bit of no good. 'Hullo, ugly,' she said. 'What brings you here?' 'I understood, aged relative, that you wished to confer with me.' 'I didn't want you to come barging in, interrupting my work. A few words on the telephone would have met the case. But I suppose some instinct told you that this was my busy day.' 'If you were wondering if I could come to lunch, have no anxiety. I shall be delighted, as always. What will Anatole be giving us?' 'He won't be giving you anything, my gay young tapeworm. I am entertaining Pomona Grindle, the novelist, to the midday meal.' 'I should be charmed to meet her.' 'Well, you're not going to. It is to be a strictly tte--tte affair. I'm trying to get a serial out of her for the *Boudoir*. No, all I wanted was to tell you to go to an antique shop in the Brompton Road -- it's just past the Oratory -- you can't miss it -- and sneer at a cow-creamer.' 'I did not get her drift. The impression I received was that of an aunt talking through the back of her neck.' 'Do what to a what?' 'They've got an eighteenth-century cow-creamer there that Tom's going to buy this afternoon.' 'The scales fell from my eyes.' 'Oh, it's a silver whatnot, is it?' 'Yes. A sort of cream jug. Go there and ask them to show it to you, and when they do, register scorn.' 'The idea being what?' 'To sap their confidence, of course, chump. To sow doubts and misgivings in their mind and make them clip the price a bit. The cheaper he gets the thing, the better he will be pleased. And I want him to be in cheery mood, because if I succeed in signing the Grindle up for this serial, I shall be compelled to get into his ribs for a biggish sum of money. It's sinful what these bestselling women novelists want for their stuff. So pop off there without delay and shake your head at the thing.' 'I am always anxious to oblige the right sort of aunt, but I was compelled to put in what Jeeves would have called a *nolle prosequi*. Those m...*Revue de presse*' 'Wodehouse is the funniest writer--that is, the most resourceful and unflagging deliverer of fun--that the human race, a glum crowd, has yet produced.' --Anthony Lane, *The New Yorker* Bertie and Jeeves are at their best in *The Code of the Woosters*. --Newsweek