

Plum Punch: School Days

P. G. WODEHOUSE

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Etext by Dagny
and the Blandings Group

FOOD FOR THE MIND

["Teach boys to cook. A man who cannot cook his own dinner is but half educated."—*Daily Mail*.]

On arriving at Choppun Taters, a sweetly picturesque little village, we inquired of an intelligent inhabitant the way to St. Savory's College. A walk of five minutes brought us to the headmaster's door. St. Savory's is a handsome stone building, resembling a pork-pie in shape, and decorated in the Gorgian style of architecture.

"Kindly step this way," said the Butler, as he answered our knock. We followed him. He halted before a door, through the keyhole of which floated an appetising smell of cooking.

"Er—if the headmaster is at lunch——" we began.

"Not at all, Sir," replied the official. "The chef is merely correcting the Sixth Form Irish Stew."

"Come in," said a curiously muffled voice in answer to his knock, and we went in. The chef was standing at a long table, on which were ranged some thirty dishes of Irish stew. He wore a white cap and apron. As we entered he appeared to swallow something, and, turning to a bright, handsome lad of seventeen, remarked, "H'm. Better than last week, but still far from perfect. A false quantity of onions, and the entire composition inclined to be somewhat heavy. You may go."

"Perhaps, as you are engaged——" we began tentatively.

"No, no. Certainly not. Pray be seated. You wished, I believe, to hear something of our educational methods at St. Savory's. Of what use hitherto has a public-school education been to a boy? Well, yes, as you say, he has possibly learned to play with a straight bat. But what else? Nothing, Sir, nothing. All the Greek and Latin he learned he used to forget as soon as he left school. Quite so. Now we, on the other hand, instill knowledge that is really useful, and which cannot be forgotten. We have a large and able staff of under-chefs, and, beginning with theoretical work, the boys rise by regular gradations until, by the time they reach the sixth form, they are capable of turning out a very decent dinner indeed."

"You mentioned theoretical work?" we said. "What exactly——?"

"Ah, yes. Well, they read short histories, such as the history of the Stewit dynasty, for instance, and write occasional essays. 'The relations of Church and Steak' is a good stock subject. But it is our practical work on which we pride ourselves. You see, it pays them to do their best. A boy who systematically fails to satisfy the examiners has to stay in after school and eat his work. Very few boys need this corporal punishment twice."

"And the results?" I ventured.

"Wonderful. Simply wonderful. This year, which is neither above nor below our usual standard, we have won no less than fourteen important trophies at the Universities. I will not recount them all. Suffice it to say that at Cambridge JONES (a ripe scholar, JONES, one of the finest clear soup composers we have ever had at the school) won the Porkson prize for mutton cutlets, and SMITH the Gravy Scholarship.

While in the Tripeos, as usual, the name of St. Savory's was well to the fore. As for our other triumphs, we have done well on the range. We were second in the contest for the Hashburton shield, and obtained the first five places in the Fry competition."

"Then," we said, "you would describe the new system as——"

"A colossal success. Go to the study of any of my boys. Once you would have found the shelves littered with dry Bohns. What do you find now? Meat. Good afternoon."

MAN'S INHUMANITY TO BOY

[According to Dr. F. E. TAYLER, of Liverpool, impositions and keeping-in are harmful. He strongly advocates corporal punishment in schools. "I think the birch a capital instrument," he says.]

A meeting of representatives of the Public Schools was held last Friday, the subject of debate being, "That this house approves of Mr. TAYLER'S remarks on corporal punishment."

Mr. TOM BROWN, of Rugby, the proposer, had, he said, sometimes been called a typical public-schoolboy. He did not know whether he justified the description. (Cries of "Yes, yes.") Very well, then. All he could say was that he had been flogged repeatedly in the first half of the book, before he met his friend ARTHUR, and it had never done him any harm. It had stung for the moment (Cheers), but the after-glow was rather pleasant than otherwise. (No, no.) At any rate, he thought it would be a bad thing if there was no flogging.

Mr. "STALKY" CORKRAN, of Kip's Home for Juvenile Demons, seconded. The fact of the biznai was, he said, that everybody except Gadarene swine and jelly-bellied flag-flappers *liked* being slain. He himself always gloated. Besides, how was an author to end up a story of real school life except with a flogging? He must hurry off, as he had to put some decomposing rats in Mr. PROUT'S bed.

Mr. ERIC WILLIAMS, of Rosslyn, opposed. Flogging, he said, was all very well for the villain or the comic-relief characters, but when it came to the hero—! He had been flogged. Did he burn with remorse and shame at the conclusion of the ceremony? No. With rage and passion. He attributed to the effects of his punishment his subsequent theft of Mr. GORDON'S pigeons and the funds of the cricket club. Had he not been flogged, he thought he would not have taken to drink. Previous to the operation a small lemonade had satisfied him. Afterwards he saw life in a glass (of beer) darkly.

A Winchester representative rose to second the last speaker. He agreed with Mr. WILLIAMS that flogging was a bad thing. Not that he minded the birch. But there were fives-bats and ash-plants. He resumed his seat with an expression of pain.

Mr. JONES, of Haileybury, said that he approved of flogging, because it lent a distinction to the school. Why was Haileybury famous? Because Mr. CORNWALLIS had lowered the 'Varsity record for the Half-mile? No. Because its headmaster was related to the Colonial Secretary? No. Why, then? Because on the day of the relief of Ladysmith the whole school broke bounds, and were flogged at one gigantic swoop clean off the reel.

Mr. ROBINSON, of Harrow, said that flogging was a jolly sight better than lines. Besides, you could always use a folded towel or something. (Deafening applause.)

Mr. WILLIAMS now rose for the second time. It seemed to him, he said, that the matter was capable of a very simple solution. Masters should rule by kindness rather than force. How much more lasting an effect it would have if, instead of brutally assaulting a boy, a master were to present him with an orange or a sponge-cake, together with a few gentle words of reproof. There might be a sort of sliding-scale arranged for the purpose. Thus, if found out of bounds, the culprit might receive butterscotch. For misbehaviour during school, a bag of pear-drops. For theft or smoking he would suggest a substantial tea with muffins and anchovy paste. Under such a regime the Perfect School would be a certainty.

The motion was then put to the vote, and lost by a large majority. Mr. WILLIAMS was desired to forward details of his scheme to the headmasters of all the schools in the country.

OUR BOYS AGAIN

[According to a daily paper, the boys of a school at Marseilles revolted recently, and had to be subdued by the headmaster with a revolver, backed up by a strong police guard.]

AUTHORS who have tried to write public-school stories will have realised the difficulty of combining sensational detail with probability. The episode quoted above should prove helpful. We would recommend something on the following lines:—

There was no fear in HARRY'S heart as he tapped at the bomb-proof door of the headmaster's study. Yet he knew why he had been sent for. His cap and a signed photograph of himself, abstracted from his locker for that purpose, had been left by the bully in the room from which the examination papers had been stolen. Suspicion rested upon him, perhaps not unnaturally. If he could not prove his innocence the consequences might be serious. But was he down-hearted? No! He knew that the school was with him, and would help him in his hour of need.

"Come in," said a voice.

HARRY entered the room.

The headmaster was sitting at the combination of desk and Maxim gun at which he wrote those sermons which filled every pew in the school chapel on Sundays.

"Well, TREVELYAN," he said gravely. "You know why I have sent for you?"

"Yes, Sir," replied HARRY, looking straight at him with his clear blue eyes, "but the charge is unjust. It was not I who stole the examination papers."

"This brazen attitude will avail you nothing," said the headmaster. "I must ask you, TREVELYAN, to bend over in the customary manner."

"Stay, Doctor CRAKSHOT," cried HARRY with flashing eyes. "I will not endure this wrong."

"I have you covered, TREVELYAN," said the headmaster significantly, tapping the feeder of his Maxim.

"And I you," retorted HARRY, producing a natty little Smith and Wesson. "Besides, I happen to know that gun isn't loaded. I heard you telling my house-master this morning that it jammed yesterday while you were taking the Sixth Form in *Thucydides*, and hadn't been right since."

"Sdeath!" growled the now infuriated headmaster. Then a look of relief came into the doctor's scowling face. He had heard footsteps.

The door opened abruptly. "Saved!" shouted the doctor, as the form of the senior mathematical master (popularly known as 4.7) appeared at the door.

"Arrest that boy!" shouted the doctor. "If he resists, shoot him down."

"It is useless," panted the mathematical master. "All is over. We are defeated. The school has risen to a boy. The corps is even now digging trenches in the cricket-field. The football fifteen have routed the junior school masters at the fives-courts and driven them into the river. The French masters have suffered a reverse from the gymnasium six, and are in full retreat for the Upper Fourth Form-room. The cloisters are mined. The prefects are advancing in echelon across the gravel. They demand the return of HARRY the HERO."

"And if we refuse——!" muttered the headmaster, grinding his teeth.

"Then every master on the staff will be put to the sword."

"In that case, TREVELYAN," said the headmaster with forced calm, "I will consent on this occasion to overlook your offence."

"Thank you, Sir," said HARRY.