The Custody of the Pumpkin

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF P.G. WODEHOUSE

Born in Guildford, England, to a Hong Kong based British magistrate, Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse was primarily raised by a nanny until he was old enough to be sent to boarding school. From the ages of 12 to 18, he attended Dulwich College, which he considered to be the happiest years of his life, and the school heavily influenced his earlier works. Following his graduation, Wodehouse intended to pursue further education at Oxford, but his family's financial troubles prevented this, and he instead became a junior banker. During this time, Wodehouse published 80 articles across nine magazines, and following the release of his first book, *The Pot Hunters*, in 1902, he resigned from his position to write full-time. From this point onward, he divided his time between England and America and began to write for the stage. Eventually, Wodehouse and his wife moved to Le Touquet, France, where he was imprisoned by German soldiers following the town's capture in World War II. After his release, he made five radio broadcasts to the U.S, over German radio, detailing his capture in a humorous light. His use of enemy broadcasting equipment caused outcry in Britain, where he was labeled a traitor and Nazi propagandist. In the wake of the war, Wodehouse moved to Long Island and remained there for the rest of his life. In 1975, he was awarded a knighthood and died just a month later at the age of 93. Over the course of his lifetime, Wodehouse authored over 90 books, 40 plays, and 200 short stories.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

At the time "The Custody of the Pumpkin" was published in 1924, Britain's long-established class system was experiencing major change. This cultural shift had largely been triggered by the Industrial Revolution, a period between the mid-18th and early 19th centuries in which Europe and the United States adopted mass manufacturing methods, and rural, agrarian societies experienced sudden urbanization. The technological and economic advancements of this era provided those from poorer backgrounds the opportunity to earn money through manufacturing, leading to the rise of the middle classes. Meanwhile, the upper classes found that in the face of rapid industrialization, they could no longer support themselves by agriculture alone. This shifting of power was compounded further when, thanks to their newfound wealth and the expansion of voting rights, the middle classes went on to seize substantial control over the House of Commons, and in the wake of the First World War, the British nobility were taxed heavily in order to pay off the country's debts. These factors combined lead to the general decline of the English aristocracy. By contrast, at the time of story's second publication in 1935, the United States was experiencing an economic upturn as a result of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal," a series of public works projects and financial reforms intended to help the country's economy recover following the Great Depression. These social upheavals are reflected in Wodehouse's work.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

"The Custody of the Pumpkin" is the third installment of what Wodehouse referred to as the Blandings Castle Saga, a collection of eleven novels and nine short stories featuring the Blandings estate and its residents. The first of these novels, *Something New* (1915) (alternatively titled *Something Fresh* in British releases), was Wodehouse's first work of farce, the chief genre for which he became known. Wodehouse had several other serialized stories in the same genre, most notably the Jeeves canon, which featured the popular characters Jeeves and Wooster, introduced in the short story collection *The Man with Two Left Feet* (1917). Comparable contemporary authors who used parody and humor in order to satirize the class system include E.F. Benson (*Queen Lucia*, 1920) and Ronald Firbank (*Valmouth*, 1919). Wodehouse's works went on to inspire the likes of Evelyn Waugh, whose novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) portrays a similar vision of the British aristocracy's fading relevance.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Custody of the Pumpkin
- **When Written:** 1924
- **Where Written:** England
- **When Published:** First published in 1924, then again in 1935
- **Literary Period:** Realism
- **Genre:** Farce, Short Story
- **Setting:** Blandings Castle
- **Climax:** Lord Emsworth is almost arrested in Kensington Gardens after illegally picking tulips.
- **Antagonist:** Lord Emsworth's general incompetence
- **Point of View:** Third-Person Omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Finding Blandings. Though Blandings Castle is entirely fictional, several attempts have been made to identify its

location. In 2003, a pair of researchers from University College London used a Geographic Information System to determine that the "true" Blandings estate was most likely Apley Hall in Shropshire.

British Backlash. After using German broadcasting equipment, Wodehouse faced such severe public backlash that several libraries removed his books from their shelves, and the BBC banned his content outright. Though public attitudes eventually softened, Wodehouse was blocked from receiving a knighthood twice due to lasting resentment over the issue.

PLOT SUMMARY

As the morning sunshine descends upon Blandings Castle, the estate's owner, Lord Emsworth, is playing with his new telescope and uses it to spy on his son, Freddie, who is in the embrace of a strange young woman. This revelation devastates Emsworth, who'd hoped his son would someday find an eligible girl belonging to a good family. After ambushing his son on the terrace, Freddie identifies her as Niagara "Aggie" Donaldson. She's American, and a "sort of cousin" of the estate's head gardener, Angus McAllister. Also, she's his fiancée. These details outrage Lord Emsworth even further, and he rushes to confront McAllister himself. Emsworth tells the gardener that if he does not send the girl away, he will lose his position at the estate. McAllister responds to this threat by calmly handing in his notice. Lord Emsworth, who rarely considers the consequences of his actions, is initially pleased with this result, but later has a realization: without McAllister, who will take care of Lord Emsworth's **pumpkin**?

The titular pumpkin is of great importance to Lord Emsworth, as it is the one vegetable his family has yet to win first prize for at the Shrewsbury Agricultural Show. Emsworth feels this "blot" on his family's record deeply, and when his winning vegetable begins to droop, he realizes the gravity of his mistake. Emsworth sends a telegram instructing McAllister to return at once. McAllister responds that he will not. Emsworth, who had never considered the possibility that McAllister might refuse, reluctantly decides that he must go to London—a city he despises—to find a suitable replacement.

Lord Emsworth's trip to the city, however, proves to be both unpleasant and fruitless, as he is unable to find even one candidate who matches his requirements. On the third day of his visit, he coincidentally bumps into Freddie, whom Emsworth had previously banned from London due to his habit of racking up tremendous amounts of debt. In an effort to avoid conflict, Freddie hands his father a note and quickly leaves. The note reveals that he and Aggie are now married. Lord Emsworth, delirious with shock, is overtaken by an urge to be among nature, and hails a cab to Kensington Gardens.

Once at the park, the well-set-out flowerbeds affect Emsworth something "like a drug." The Lord enters a trance-like state and, believing himself to be back at Blandings, proceeds to commit a crime of unspeakable proportions: he steps over the railings and begins to pick flowers. This flagrant criminal act attracts the attentions of the park-keeper, followed shortly by a crowd of spectators and a police constable. When Emsworth claims to be an Earl, the crowd—who see him as nothing more than a strange man in an ill-fitting suit—deride him. Emsworth is eventually spared from this ordeal by the fortuitous arrival of McAllister and Mr Donaldson, the former of whom affirms the Lord's identity. The onlookers disperse, and Mr Donaldson introduces himself as Aggie's father. Despite Emsworth's previous concerns that Aggie was not from a "good family," it turns out that Mr Donaldson is an extremely wealthy industrialist. Not only this, he sees great potential in Freddie and intends to put the boy to work in Long Island City. Thrilled by this development, Emsworth tells Donaldson to inform Frederick that he has his father's best wishes, and that there's no need to hurry home. Emsworth then turns his attentions to McAllister, who he begs to return to the castle. McAllister agrees—though only once Emsworth doubles his salary.

At the Shrewsbury Show, Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, Emsworth's rival, offers his congratulations to the Lord, while McAllister silently observes. The pumpkin sits in one of the largest packing-crates Shrewsbury has ever seen. The note attached reads, "PUMPKINS. FIRST PRIZE."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth – Lord Emsworth is Freddie's father and the protagonist of the story. An English aristocrat and owner of the Blandings estate, Emsworth is an amiable but absentminded man, described as being "capable of but one thought at a time." With little else to do around the castle, Emsworth primarily concerns himself with trivial and simplistic pastimes, such as playing with gadgets or fretting over his prize **pumpkin**. Emsworth's aimlessness and lack of meaningful responsibilities suggests that the 20th century nobility have become somewhat irrelevant in modern times. However, a traditionalist at heart, Emsworth continues to take great pride in his heritage, and as such he is furious to discover his son's engagement to Aggie, the cousin of the estate's head gardener, McAllister. Emsworth views Aggie as unworthy of his son due to her humble parentage, but his attempt to force McAllister to break up the couple results in the gardener's resignation, jeopardizing the health of Lord Emsworth's prize pumpkin. Emsworth's inability to control either his son or his employee imply that as well as having less relevance, modern earls no longer command automatic respect from their subjects. Emsworth eventually meets Aggie's father,

wealthy businessman Mr Donaldson, whose success exposes Emsworth's prejudiced assumptions as old fashioned and incompatible with modern reality. In the end, Emsworth puts aside his pride in order to undo the damage done while trying to sabotage the relationship. This newfound humility is what ultimately revives Emsworth's beloved vegetable and allows him to win first prize at the Shrewsbury Show.

The Honourable Frederick Threepwood ("Freddie") – A flighty and somewhat reckless young man, Freddie is Lord Emsworth's son and the primary source of his father's problems. Freddie is less traditional than Emsworth, and he cares little for agricultural pursuits—he is uncomfortable in the supposed "paradise" of Blandings Castle and openly mocks Emsworth's attachment to his **pumpkin** (which Freddie flippantly dubs "Percy"). Instead, Freddie finds himself much more at home in London, a city his father openly despises. Throughout the story, Freddie defies his father's wishes at every turn: though Emsworth has banned Freddie from visiting London due to his habit of amassing debt, he continues to do so, and he marries Aggie without approval. However, Freddie's love of the city and refusal to comply with the Earl's demands ultimately ends positively for both of them when Mr Donaldson offers his new son-in-law a lucrative career abroad. Freddie's attitude towards his father's interests and ultimate rejection of Blandings implies a cultural division between the older and younger generations. Whereas Emsworth cares deeply about his inherited land and familial responsibilities, Freddie views his royal heritage as unimportant, and, like many young men of the era, he instead turns to business in order to find success.

Angus McAllister – McAllister is Lord Emsworth's head gardener, having worked at the estate for over 10 years. In contrast to his bumbling, upper-class employer, McAllister is an intelligent and dignified working-class man, if "a bit short on sweetness and light." Despite his lower placement in the social hierarchy, McAllister is entirely unafraid of standing up to Emsworth's more irrational demands, and he refuses to follow orders unless given good reason to. McAllister's principles are so strong, that when he is asked to banish his own cousin, he simply resigns from his position and refuses to return until given adequate incentive to do so. McAllister is an exceptionally talented gardener, and it seems that he is singlehandedly responsible for the success of Lord Emsworth's **pumpkin** at the Shrewsbury Show.

Mr Donaldson – An American businessman and Aggie Donaldson's father. Due to Donaldson's nationality and lack of a noble title, Lord Emsworth assumes that the Donaldson family is poor, and feels superiority over them as a result. However, it later becomes apparent that unlike Emsworth, who was born into his status, Mr Donaldson is a self-made millionaire whose wealth and power outweighs Emsworth's by a significant degree. Mr Donaldson's success highlights not only Emsworth's outdated prejudices, but also the shifting social tide of the 20th century. Whereas in the past it was almost impossible for members of the working classes to improve their social circumstances, the industrial revolution has allowed men like Mr Donaldson to achieve greatness—so much so that they have surpassed the aristocracy themselves. Much to Emsworth's surprise, Mr Donaldson speaks highly of his new son-in-law, Freddie, and intends to put him to work in Long Island City.

Niagara "Aggie" Donaldson – Freddie's fiancée and, later in the story, wife. Lord Emsworth disapproves of Aggie due to his prejudiced assumption that she cannot financially support his son, given that she's cousins with the head gardener, McAllister. However, as Emsworth later discovers, Aggie is the daughter of millionaire entrepreneur Mr Donaldson, which proves this assumption false.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Beach – Lord Emsworth's butler who, much like McAllister, proves to be far more intelligent than the man he serves.

The Constable – A police officer who questions Lord Emsworth for the grievous crime of picking flowers at Kensington Gardens. A "staunch admirer of the aristocracy," the constable lets Emsworth go without consequence upon realizing that he is a noble.

The Park-Keeper – A keeper at Kensington Gardens who bears witness to Lord Emsworth's crime of picking flowers.

Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe – Lord Emsworth's rival and three-time winner of the **pumpkin** contest at the Shrewsbury Show.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

ARISTOCRACY AND POWER

"The Custody of the Pumpkin" begins when the story's protagonist, Clarence Threepwood, 9th Earl of Emsworth, discovers his son's "entanglement" with the daughter of his estate's head gardener, Angus McAllister. Incensed by the relationship, Emsworth takes on the "forthright truculence of a large land owner in the early Normal period ticking off a serf" and attempts to have McAllister banish the girl. In response, McAllister simply resigns, and in his absence the Lord's prize **pumpkin** (which he had hoped to win first place at the Shrewsbury Agricultural Show) begins to wilt. The rest of the story concerns Emsworth's

efforts to either reinstate McAllister or find a suitable replacement. Wodehouse's narrative portrays Emsworth as a bumbling and ineffective character, described as being akin to an "elderly leopard" and shown frequently being defied by his supposed subordinates. This could be seen as a reflection of the declining power of the English aristocracy at the time of the story's publication in early 20th-century England. Due to factors such as the Industrial Revolution, the rise of the middle classes, and financial pressure in the wake of the First World War, during this period the British landed gentry held less control than ever before, and Lord Emsworth's repeated (and failed) attempts to assert himself seems to parallel this. Overall, the story suggests that the aristocracy of old can no longer continue to act as they once did without being met with resistance, and it portrays an exchange of power occurring between nobility and the working class.

Throughout the story, the concerns of the upper classes are shown to be entirely trivial, which emphasizes their dwindling social influence. Emsworth's pumpkin represents this point, acting as a symbol of aristocratic power. Early on, the omniscient narrator notes that Emsworth views the vegetable as his contribution to his family's "scroll of honour." This attitude serves to highlight the diminished jurisdiction of Emsworth's lordly title. Whereas his ancestors had "sent out from Blandings Castle statesmen and warriors, governors and leaders of the people," Emsworth's ultimate goal is merely to earn first prize for best pumpkin at the Shrewsbury Show. However, despite his ambitions being far less grand than that of his predecessors, Emsworth views his task with equal (if not greater) importance, a fact illustrated by a dream sequence in which the King himself is furious over his inability to cultivate the vegetable. Emsworth's genuine anxiety over the pumpkin's success and fear of sovereign disappointment further demonstrates how insignificant the concerns of the British nobility have become.

However, while the role of the modern upper classes is shown to be far less substantial, members of the English aristocracy continue to act as if they hold the same authority as before, but this pretension is not without consequences. Emsworth, in particular, is punished by the narrative for attempting to invoke his lordly title in order to get his way. This is demonstrated at the story's beginning, when Emsworth makes unreasonable demands of McAllister despite knowing that "modern earls must think twice before pulling the feudal stuff on their employees." As a direct result of this action, McAllister resigns. This causes Emsworth's pumpkin—his sole noble responsibility—to wilt, and later in Kensington Gardens a crowd mocks the Lord and strips him of his rank. This scene is compared (albeit lightheartedly) to the French Revolution, a period of political upheaval in the late 18th century in which French citizens uprooted a centuries old feudal system and executed the country's monarchy.

Despite his title, it is not Lord Emsworth who is portrayed as having control, but his supposed subordinates, which speaks to the turning social tide in 20th-century England. McAllister represents this point best: when Emsworth attempts to exert authority over his head-gardener, McAllister simply chooses to hand in his notice. Wodehouse draws a humorous comparison between this action and the First War of Scottish Independence, in which the Scottish fought and succeeded against English rule. McAllister's action is thus framed as an act of rebellion and reclamation of control, and it represents the shifting attitude of the lower classes towards the monarchy. Additionally, while Emsworth views the pumpkin as his own noble duty, the success of the vegetable is ultimately McAllister's decision. It is not until Emsworth acts with humility and doubles McAllister's salary that the gardener elects to return, at which point he restores the health of the pumpkin and Emsworth is able to fulfill his goal by winning first prize the Shrewsbury Show.

Ultimately, it seems that Wodehouse's portrayal of Emsworth as being obsessed with the trivial and lacking in any real authority is a comment upon on the waning social influence of the era's nobility, and as such McAllister's resistance—symbolic of lower-class rebellion—appears to be a positive. This point is highlighted at the story's conclusion, where Emsworth receives credit for the pumpkin's success by his peers, while McAllister stands by as a silent witness. While Wodehouse emphasizes that the pair stand at one another's sides, implying a newfound equality between them, the audience is left to consider for themselves which of the two men is truly more deserving of the pumpkin and, by extension, the power.

NATURE VS. MODERNIZATION

"The Custody of the Pumpkin" takes place in two primary settings: the rural Blandings Castle (a recurring fictional location in Wodehouse's works) and London. Wodehouse initially establishes a strong contrast between these two locales, presenting Blandings as an idyllic countryside paradise and London as a loud, crowded, and "hopeless" town rife with materialistic opportunists. This contrast is further emphasized by the rift between the story's protagonist, Lord Emsworth (a traditionalist who views nature as a retreat), and his son Freddie (who is prone to piling up debts when left to his own devices in the city). Given this, the story may at first appear to be a criticism of the modern world, and a call to return to more traditional roots. However, at the story's end, Wodehouse subverts this established contrast entirely, with Emsworth accosted by an angry mob in the park, and Freddie seeing financial gain by moving to Long Island City. By setting up this divide between nature and the modern world only to later subvert it altogether, Wodehouse seems to suggest that modernization, although initially intimidating, need not necessarily be feared.

Blandings—and, by extension, nature itself—is deliberately portrayed at the story's beginning as a place of beauty and respite from the modern world, as well as being synonymous with tradition. From the very first paragraph, Wodehouse frames the estate as a picture of pastoral bliss, describing the morning sunshine as it lights the "green lawns and wide terraces […] noble trees and bright flowerbeds." With this opening statement, Wodehouse both emphasizes the charm of the countryside, while at the same time inextricably tying Blandings Castle to the natural world. Continuing from this, Lord Emsworth is repeatedly shown to have a deep affection for nature—so much so that the "main interest of his life" is his garden —and, most notably, owns the estate itself. In associating an aristocratic character like Emsworth with such positive portrayals of nature, there is an implication of traditionalism. Historically, the English aristocracy earned their keep through agriculture, and with this in mind, it seems that Wodehouse is deliberately harkening back to these days and choosing to portray them in an idealized light.

Meanwhile, in a sharp contrast to the calm and traditional "paradise" of Blandings, the story portrays London as the fast-paced, modern, and altogether less desirable epicenter of what Wodehouse describes as the "age of rush and hurry." This thematic distinction between the two locations is established in the city's introduction, in which Emsworth decries the "miserable town" for "its crowds, its smells, its noises: its omnibuses, its taxis, its hard pavements." This short list, depicting a flurry of senses and movement in quick succession, lends the city a frantic and impersonal air, particularly when contrasted with the altogether slower and more scenic introduction of Blandings and its inhabitants.

In addition to this atmosphere of overwhelming haste and detachment, the city is also associated with financial ruin and frivolousness. The character of Freddie demonstrates this point; his "spirited escapades" in London have frequently left him in debt (so much so that he has been forbidden from visiting altogether), and his father describes him as the product of a "crass and materialistic world". With these negative aspects so clearly defined, the reader might sympathize with Lord Emsworth's assertion that only an "imbecile should want to come to London when he could be at Blandings," as well as his desire to retreat back to nature and his traditional roots when feeling overwhelmed by the modern world.

However, these two directly opposing themes, despite being so firmly established by the narrative, are directly subverted in the story's final pages. This sudden contrast implies that while rapid industrialization might at first seem intimidating, and traditionalists such as Emsworth may feel a desire to retreat back into nature, in truth the modern world is not necessarily a threat. After a confrontation with Freddie in London that leaves Emsworth "profoundly stirred," an "imperative need for flowers and green trees" overtakes him, and he retreats to Kensington gardens. Given Wodehouse's previous portrayal of nature in the story, the reader might assume that the gardens will be a place of positivity. However, it is here that the largest conflict of the novel occurs, wherein Emsworth illegally picks some flowers and is accosted by a park-keeper, a constable, and a crowd of spectators. This is a hectic scene far removed from the natural tranquility portrayed thus far. Meanwhile, despite the city having been established as the root of Freddie's financial woes and a source of anxiety for Lord Emsworth (who, in addition to loathing the town, has frequently been forced to foot the bills for his son's "mischief"), in the end both men's problems are solved when Freddie's father-in-law, Mr Donaldson, a wealthy American businessman, offers his son-in-law a "steady and possibly lucrative job" in Long Island City. In the end, Lord Emsworth's view of nature as an implicitly safe space is exposed as an unrealistic ideal, while the modern world he so despises provides Freddie with the opportunity to make a name for himself—an opportunity that, by Emsworth's own admission, he never expected the boy to have.

By deliberately establishing a strong dichotomy between the natural world and the modern, only to later defy these established themes altogether, it seems that Wodehouse is directly addressing 20th-century anxieties over modernization. Through Emsworth, Wodehouse highlights these fears and lends validity to those with an idealized perception of nature. However, by having the story ultimately resolved by Mr Donaldson—a millionaire who has undoubtedly benefited from the Industrial Revolution—Wodehouse seems to imply that while these anxieties may not be entirely unfounded, it is certainly possible to find positivity in progress.

SUBVERSION OF SOCIAL CLASS

Throughout "The Custody of the Pumpkin," Wodehouse subverts the expectations of both his audience and his characters in order to satirize preconceived notions of nationality and social class. Wodehouse does this for comedic purposes, and also to question existing traditions and social hierarchies. The assumptions the characters make about one another (for instance, Lord Emsworth's assumption that his son's new girlfriend must be from a poorer background) are repeatedly demonstrated to be false and illustrate the shallow and ridiculous nature of the British class system at that time. Through this use of satire, Wodehouse invites his readers to re-evaluate their own biases and instead aim to judge others based upon their personal merits as opposed to arbitrary and outdated titles.

Throughout the story, Wodehouse's characters are shown making false assumptions about the social class of others and are demonstrated to be foolish for doing so. Indeed, the events of the story itself are triggered when Lord Emsworth, after discovering his son's relationship with the head gardener's

cousin, Niagara, assumes her to be of a lower social standing and therefore unable to meet his expectations (his one hope being that Freddie will find a girl "belonging to a good family, and possessing a bit of money of her own"). This assumption that Niagara's social status must match that of her cousin immediately exposes the character's outdated views of class and social mobility. While prior to the 18th century there were very few opportunities for lower class families to elevate their status, the Industrial Revolution altered this dynamic entirely, providing individuals with the means to improve their socioeconomic circumstances through manufacturing and business acumen. In presuming that all members of a single family must belong to the same class, Emsworth fails to recognize over a century of social progress. This ignorance is exposed to humorous effect at the end of the story when Emsworth meets with Niagara's father, Mr Donaldson, a self-made American businessman. During their conversation, it quickly comes apparent that despite lacking formal titles, the Donaldson family hold power far greater than Emsworth's own, Donaldson apologetically professing that he only has "so much as ten million dollars in the world." This interaction reveals that had Emsworth simply refrained from making a snap judgment about Niagara's socioeconomic status from the beginning, he could have avoided the events of the story altogether.

However, despite these presumptions about class being proven incorrect by the narrative, the characters continue to treat one another based upon their social status as opposed to their actions, ultimately perpetuating an arbitrary and ineffective system. The most obvious example of this social hypocrisy occurs in Kensington Gardens, where Lord Emsworth illegally picks some flowers, attracting the attention of the park-keeper, a constable, and a crowd of onlookers. In his "badly fitting tweed suit," Emsworth does not meet the public's preconceived expectations of nobility, and therefore when he claims to be an Earl he is met with derision. With no knowledge of his true title, the spectators judge Emsworth for his actions alone; the park keeper labels him as "the blackest type of evil doer," the constable questions him as he would an average citizen, and the crowd views Emsworth as being rightfully "put through it for pinching flowers." However, once Lord Emsworth is able to prove his noble status, he is no longer judged by his actions; instead, the constable, described as a "staunch admirer of the aristocracy," gains a sudden and inexplicable respect for the Earl, and dismisses him without consequence. In portraying a figure of legal authority excusing Emsworth's crime (even a crime as benign as flower picking) Wodehouse demonstrates the preferential treatment afforded to the British nobility based upon title alone, and exposes the unfairness of the social class system.

Wodehouse reaffirms the existence of outdated social hierarchies in the real world by exploiting the assumptions of the readers themselves. In doing so, he invites his audience to readjust their own perceptions of class. Throughout the story, Wodehouse uses his audience's preconceptions in order to subvert expectations and generate humor. This is demonstrated in the novel's very first scene, in which Lord Emsworth is shown with his eye to a "powerful telescope." At first, a 20th-century reader might assume Emsworth is a figure of dignity and intelligence, given his noble title and depiction with a scientific instrument. However, these assumptions are quickly proven false when Emsworth fails to remove the cap from the telescope before looking through it. In peppering these comical subversions throughout the story, Wodehouse highlights the similarities between the readers and the characters he portrays, demonstrating that his audience is culpable of the same biases as Lord Emsworth himself. Because the Lord is depicted as a foolish man who is narratively punished for his prejudices, in drawing this comparison Wodehouse asks his readers whether it is truly wise to emulate the character's behavior.

Overall, "The Custody of the Pumpkin" suggests that the class system is an absurd and outdated mode of judgment which leads people to treat one another with unfairness. By exposing people's propensity to stereotype others, Wodehouse invites his readers to reconsider their prejudices surrounding class, and to instead aim to make judgments based upon individual actions as opposed to first impressions and arbitrary titles.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

LORD EMSWORTH'S PUMPKIN

Wodehouse uses Lord Emsworth's pumpkin to explore ideas of aristocracy, power, and the shifting cultural dynamics of the British class system. To Emsworth, the pumpkin represents the continuation of his noble lineage. In ensuring the vegetable's success, he feels that he is making an important addition to his family's legacy, thus justifying his own place in the social hierarchy. Emsworth's intense anxiety over the pumpkin's welfare highlights the character's traditional sensibilities, as well as the reduced responsibilities of 20th-century aristocrats—while his ancestors were fighting in great battles, Emsworth is in charge of overseeing a pumpkin. By contrast, Emsworth's son, Freddie, cares little for the pumpkin and finds his father's attachment to it laughable. Freddie's dismissive attitude towards the pumpkin implies a disregard for his upper-class heritage, and it shows a shifting generational attitude towards the aristocracy of old. Freddie views the pumpkin not as a respectable and noble pursuit, but a trivial quirk of his father's. The story concludes with the pumpkin winning first place at the Shrewsbury Show, and Lord

Emsworth's rival, Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, offering his congratulations. This is in spite of the fact that McAllister—not Emsworth—raised the vegetable. The two nobles praising one another for the achievement of a working-class man shows the self-congratulatory nature of aristocracy, and it calls the fairness of the existing class system into question.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Cambridge University Press edition of *Stories of Ourselves* published in 2018.

The Custody of the Pumpkin Quotes

If [Freddie] was allowed to live at London, he piled up debts and got into mischief; and when you jerked him back into the purer surroundings of Blandings Castle, he just mooned about the place, moping broodily. Hamlet's society at Elsinore must have had much the same effect on his stepfather as did that of Freddie Threepwood at Blandings on Lord Emsworth.

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth, The Honourable Frederick Threepwood ("Freddie")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 116

Explanation and Analysis

This is the reader's first introduction to Freddie, which serves to establish the character's defining traits (financially irresponsible and prone to "mischief") and neatly summarizes the driving conflict between Lord Emsworth and his seemingly irresponsible son. Where Emsworth adores Blandings Castle, which acts as both literal and symbolic confirmation of his noble heritage, Freddie hates the estate and longs for a more modern existence in the city. Freddie's rejection of Blandings implies a disregard for his aristocratic legacy, and speaks to the 20th century's fading interest in the monarchy. Notably, Emsworth compares himself here to the character of Claudius from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a King who earned his power illegitimately and acts as the play's major antagonist. By likening himself to a corrupt King, Emsworth inadvertently paints himself as the villain of this conflict—not to mention exposes himself as being rather clueless.

And, though normally a fair-minded and reasonable man, well aware that modern earls must think twice before pulling the feudal stuff on their *employés*, he took on the forthright truculence of a large landowner of the early Normal period ticking off a serf.

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth, Angus McAllister

Related Themes:

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

After the castle's head gardener, Angus McAllister, refuses Lord Emsworth's unreasonable order to banish Aggie, Emsworth responds with a desperate attempt to pull rank on his employee. This attempt highlights Emsworth's frustration over his decreased authority as a 20th-century aristocrat. The Lord directly acknowledges that as a "modern earl," he should know better than to expect unquestioning obedience from his employees, and by comparing his own attitude to that of a "large landowner of the early Norman period" (which occurred nine centuries prior), he admits that this is a comically outdated way for an aristocrat to behave. However, despite this flicker of self-awareness, Lord Emsworth doubles down on his demands.

A curious expression came into Angus McAllister's face—always excepting the occupied territories. It was the look of a man who has not forgotten Bannockburn, a man conscious of belonging to the country of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce.

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth, Angus McAllister

Related Themes:

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, McAllister resists his employer's inappropriate attempt to flaunt his power. Whereas Lord Emsworth represents the modern nobility, here the story establishes Angus McAllister as a symbol of the modern working class, who as of the early 1900s had begun to take back some control from the nobility. During this period, the lower classes had seized primary control over the House of Commons, and the rise of trade unions saw workers

demanding better rights and greater respect from their more wealthy employers. The comparison between McAllister's refusal to follow orders and Bannockburn—a battle during the First War of Scottish Independence in which the Scottish fought for their freedom against King Edward I—particularly cements McAllister's role as a figure of rebellion against the British aristocracy.

He had gone with King George to show his Gracious Majesty the pumpkin promising the treat of a lifetime; and, when they arrived, there in the corner of the frame was a shrivelled thing the size of a pea. He woke, sweating, with the Sovereign's disappointed screams ringing in his ears[.]

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 119

Explanation and Analysis

Following McAllister's resignation, Lord Emsworth becomes concerned for the wellbeing of his prize pumpkin, which he had hoped would win first place at the Shrewsbury Show. His anxiety over the vegetable's success causes a vivid dream in which the pumpkin dies, and Emsworth's failure disappoints the King himself. This sequence exposes Emsworth's skewed and inflated sense of importance as an aristocrat, truly believing that his pumpkin would not only attract the attentions of the King, but that the King would find it to be "the treat of a lifetime." For Emsworth, the death of the pumpkin would mean failing his responsibilities as an Earl and, as a consequence, failure to uphold the standards of his noble heritage. This dream, however, presents Emsworth's concerns as entirely ridiculous, implying that the affairs of the modern nobility are largely insignificant.

He hated London. He loathed its crowds, its smells, its noises; its omnibuses, its taxis, and its hard pavements. And, in addition to all its other defects, the miserable town did not seem to be able to produce a single decent head gardener. He went from agency to agency, interviewing candidates and not one of them came within a mile of meeting his requirements. He disliked their faces, he distrusted their references.

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth

Related Themes:

Page Number: 120

Explanation and Analysis

After traveling to London in search of a new head gardener, only to come up short, Emsworth vents his frustrations by reflecting on his hatred of the city. Emsworth's description paints London as an intense attack on the senses, listing the town's defects in quick succession so as to emphasize its fast-paced and overwhelming atmosphere. The Lord's attitude towards London are reflective of his feelings of displacement and irrelevance as an aristocrat in the 20th century. In addition to these feelings of insignificance, Lord Emsworth's rejection of the city and all it has to offer underlines his prejudiced attitude and unnecessary distrust of the modern world. He demonstrates these biases when he denies candidates based on the arbitrary reasoning that he "disliked their faces, distrusted their references."

In a crass and materialistic world there must inevitably be a scattered few in whom pumpkins touch no chord. The Hon. Frederick Threepwood was one of these. He was accustomed to speak in mockery of all pumpkins[.]

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth, The Honourable Frederick Threepwood ("Freddie")

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 122

Explanation and Analysis

Upon meeting Freddie in London, the Lord becomes convinced that cats have destroyed his beloved pumpkin—a notion that Freddie finds hilarious. This scene once more establishes a sharp generational divide between father and son. Whereas Emsworth views his pumpkin as a matter of grave importance, Freddie, like the reader, finds his father's anxiety over the vegetable laughable. Freddie's dismissal of the pumpkin, which the story has firmly established as a symbol of aristocracy and familial legacy, implies a shifting social attitude towards notions of heritage, particularly in

younger generations. Unlike Emsworth, Freddie does not feel any inherent responsibility towards his ancestors, nor does he take any pride in their accomplishments.

There is that about a well-set-out bed of flowers which acts on men who love their gardens like a drug, and he was in a sort of trance. Already he had completely forgotten where he was, and seemed to himself to be back in his paradise of Blandings.

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth

Related Themes:

Page Number: 123

Explanation and Analysis

After learning of Freddie's sudden elopement with Aggie Donaldson, the head gardener's cousin, Lord Emsworth becomes dazed and seeks refuge in Kensington Gardens. In stark contrast to the city, Emsworth considers the gardens to be a place of peace and respite. This is largely due to the fact that they remind him of a place where he is still recognized as having some level of authority, namely his "paradise" of Blandings. Emsworth's instinct to retreat back to Blandings when faced with a modern and fast-paced world that he cannot control implies a desire to return to a more traditional social hierarchy in which his title is acknowledged and respected.

It is interesting, though, that despite Aggie being cousins with Emsworth's gardener—and this being his primary issue with her—Emsworth still chooses to take refuge in a garden here. This perhaps also reflects the changing social tide, as the garden is not just a symbol of pastoral, aristocratic life, but is also McAllister's domain.

Without a thought of annoying or doing harm to anybody, he appeared to have unchained the fearful passions of a French Revolution; and there came over a sense of how unjust it was that this sort of thing should be happening to him, of all people – a man already staggering beneath the troubles of a Job.

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth

Related Themes:

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis

After illegally picking flowers in the park, a displeased mob confronts Emsworth. This scene is a continuation of the theme of revolution and civil uprising against an increasingly useless monarchy. Emsworth emphasises this point by his comparison between his "unjust" punishment and the French Revolution, a period in 18th-century France that saw the monarchy executed for their incompetence and greed. However, Emsworth once again fails to recognize the relevance of his own metaphor, and he is completely bewildered by his persecution, despite the fact that he has committed a blatant (if only minor) crime. Emsworth's reaction to the mob suggests that despite the declining social standing of the aristocracy, many nobles, such as Emsworth, fail to recognise their own lowered societal position, and continue to expect preferential treatment.

There is every reason to suppose that Mr Donaldson had subscribed for years to those personality courses advertised in the magazines which guarantee to impart to the pupil who takes ten correspondence lessons the ability to look the boss in the eye and make him wilt. Mr Donaldson looked Lord Emsworth in the eye, and Lord Emsworth wilted.

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth, Niagara "Aggie" Donaldson , Mr Donaldson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 125

Explanation and Analysis

This is the reader's first introduction to Mr Donaldson, Aggie Donaldson's father. Until this point, Lord Emsworth has held the misplaced belief that due to the Donaldsons' lack of noble heritage, the family must be beneath him. However, their first interaction categorically disproves this point, and it establishes the primary contrast between the two characters. Emsworth's assumption that Mr Donaldson learned how to wield power through "correspondence lessons" implies that Donaldson's influence is the result of hard work and effort, whereas Emsworth was simply born into his title. Of the two, it is ultimately Donaldson who comes across as the more authoritative, having the ability to

make Emsworth "wilt." Mr Donaldson's immense success suggests that in the modern world, those who have earned their positions through great effort hold greater social sway than their upper-class counterparts.

> "Ten million? Ten million? Did you say you had ten million dollars?"

"Between nine and ten, I suppose. Not more. You must remember," said Mr Donaldson, with a touch of apology, "that conditions have changed very much in America of late. [...] But things are coming back. Yes, sir, they're coming right back. I am a firm believer in President Roosevelt and the New Deal."

Related Characters: Mr Donaldson (speaker), Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth

Related Themes:

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

During their first meeting, Lord Emsworth discovers Mr Donaldson to be immensely wealthy. This fact further disproves Emsworth's preconceived notion that the Donaldsons must be poor, and it turns Mr Donaldson himself into a symbol of the Industrial Revolution, and the unprecedented financial success many derived from the era. Whereas prior to the revolution a man like Mr Donaldson may have never found success, in the aftermath he has proven himself able to not only match the wealth of nobles such as Lord Emsworth, but to have exceeded it. This once again suggests that the modern social climate is changing, with the majority of the power shifting away from the British gentry and towards industrialists such as Mr Donaldson. Donaldson's reference to President Roosevelt's New Deal—a series of financial reforms created to relieve the effects of the Great Depression—affirms this social shift, implying a new era of economic prosperity for business owners.

> In an age of rush and hurry like that of today, an age in which there are innumerable calls on the time of everyone, it is possible that here and there throughout the ranks of those who have read this chronicle there may be one or two who for various reasons found themselves unable to attend the last Agricultural Show at Shrewsbury.

Related Characters: Clarence Threepwood, Ninth Earl of Emsworth, Angus McAllister

Related Themes:

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

In this final scene, Emsworth, having reconciled with Angus McAllister, attends the Shrewsbury Agricultural Show with his titular winning pumpkin. Though this is indeed a success for Lord Emsworth, Wodehouse's narration acknowledges that for many, such successes will go unnoticed, as the majority of people are too preoccupied by the modern world and its "innumerable calls" to so much as acknowledge the monarchy. This once more highlights the triviality of the upper classes, whose achievements are now so minor that the general public simply ignore them. The story ends with a suggestion that in this "age of rush and hurry," the British aristocracy might eventually be forgotten altogether.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

THE CUSTODY OF THE PUMPKIN

As the sun rises on the idyllic pastures of the Blandings estate, Lord Emsworth, accompanied by his faithful butler, Beach, sits with his eye to a powerful telescope. Emsworth quickly announces that the telescope is a sham, and that he can see nothing but black. Beach, an "observant man," gently reminds his employer that in order to see through the instrument, one must first remove the cap from the lens. Doing so, Emsworth can now see a cow. Pleased by this development, the "fluffy-minded" man watches the animal until his son, Freddie Threepwood, waltzes into view.

The opening scene shows Lord Emsworth surrounded by symbols of enlightenment, bathed in light and wielding a telescope. At first glance, the reader might mistake him for a dignified or intelligent figure. However, his inability to use the telescope quickly proves this first impression false, and when Beach corrects him, the audience learns which of the two men is truly the more intelligent. This exchange introduces the story's core theme of class subversion: despite the symbolism surrounding the Lord and his aristocratic title, he is no better than his supposed subordinates.


Freddie is an endless source of anxiety to his father, who has no idea what to do with the boy. Though Freddie loves London, Emsworth has banned him from the city due to his habit of amassing debt and getting into "mischief." At the same time, Freddie despises the "purer surroundings" of Blandings and is generally weighed down beneath a "crushing misery" when forced to be there. As such, Emsworth finds his son's cheerful demeanor suspicious, and he watches the boy with the telescope until an unknown woman emerges from the woods and rushes into Freddie's arms.

Here the narration immediately establishes an ideological divide between Emsworth and his son. While Emsworth considers the Blandings to be a "pure" kind of paradise, Freddie only lives there because of his wrongdoings and feels stifled or "crushed" by his lack of freedom. In this respect, to Freddie the family estate is closer to a punishment than a paradise.

Emsworth is devastated by this revelation. He had hoped that someday Freddie would marry an "eligible girl, belonging to a good family, and possessing a bit of money of her own." However, the Earl reasons that if this were an eligible girl, his son would not being meeting her in secret. Emsworth ambushes Freddie on the terrace and demands to know the girl's identity. Freddie assures his father that the relationship is nothing inappropriate—the girl is his fiancée, Niagara "Aggie" Donaldson. She's an American, and a "sort of cousin" of the estate's Scottish head gardener, Angus McAllister. This information rattles Emsworth even further. While he had imagined many "unpleasant visions" of his son's future, not one of them had involved the cousin of a gardener.

Emsworth is quick to jump to conclusions about Aggie. Before he has learned so much as her name, he decides that she is most likely from a poor background. Freddy's revelations about Aggie only serve to strengthen Emsworth's misguided preconceptions even further. The girl is American, which already makes her unlikely to hold a noble title, and even worse, she is related to a member of the working class. According to Emsworth's old-fashioned worldview—which hinges on a rigid social hierarchy, family status and titles, and inherited wealth—this means that Aggie, too, must be working class, and therefore unworthy of his son.

Following this conversation, Emsworth rushes across the terrace to confront McAllister. Despite being "well aware that modern earls must think twice before pulling the feudal stuff on their *employés*," Emsworth threatens to fire McAllister if he does not send the girl away. McAllister is overcome by a curious expression—the "look of a man who has not forgotten Bannockburn, a man conscious of belonging to the country of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce." The gardener bluntly resigns from his position, and Emsworth leaves the "battlefield" without any remorse. That is, until, he realizes that with McAllister gone, the **pumpkin** may suffer.

This conflict between Lord Emsworth and McAllister is reflective of the 20th century's changing views towards the ruling classes. Whereas in the past a man of Emsworth's status may have been able to "pull the feudal stuff" in order to control his employees, this scene suggests that members of the modern working class are less willing to blindly accept the whims of the aristocracy. In refusing to follow orders, McAllister performs a small but meaningful act of rebellion, emphasized by his comparison to William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, both of whom fought against English rule in the First War of Scottish Independence. Emsworth continues to hold an exaggerated view of his own power, believing that he won this "battle" even though he didn't actually get what he wanted.

The **pumpkin** is a matter of grave importance to Lord Emsworth, as it marks a gap in his family's "scroll of honour." While at first glance his ancestors might appear to have a lengthy record of "notable deeds," no Earl of Emsworth has ever won first prize for pumpkins at the Shrewsbury Show. Emsworth feels this mark on his family's history deeply. Ten days after McAllister's departure, the Lord suffers a terrible dream in which King George himself arrives to view the pumpkin, only to find that it has shriveled to the size of a pea.

Emsworth's attachment to his pumpkin represents how trivial and out of touch the concerns of the ruling classes have become. The phrase "scroll of honour" highlights this detachment from reality. For many in the wake of the First World War, the term "scroll of honour" referred to the commemorative certificate that the families of deceased soldiers received. While others earned these scrolls by laying down their lives in combat, Emsworth hopes to earn his placement with a particularly good pumpkin.

Emsworth wakes with the "Sovereign's disappointed screams ringing in his ears," and decides that while reinstating McAllister would mean "surrender," he needs the gardener back for the **pumpkin**'s sake. The following morning, Emsworth sends a telegram to McAllister, demanding his immediate return. McAllister refuses. After this exchange, Emsworth decides to visit London, where he is confident he will find a new and even better head-gardener.

Despite the objective insignificance of his task, Emsworth's dream sequence illustrates that he views his work as no less important than any other noble deed.

On the third day of this visit, after failing to find a single suitable candidate, Emsworth reflects on his hatred of the city, in particular "its crowds, its smells, its noises; its omnibuses, its taxis, and its hard pavements." It is here that he stumbles across Freddie. To avoid any conflict, Freddie hands his father a note and quickly exits the scene. The note informs Emsworth that, despite his disapproval, Freddie and Aggie have eloped—and have also borrowed his car for the honeymoon. Emsworth finds himself overwhelmed by the news, and an "imperative need for flowers and green trees" comes over him. In a daze, he hails a cab to Kensington Gardens.

Here, Emsworth directly expresses his distaste for London, which he views as a confusing and overstimulating flurry of sights, smells, and sounds. Freddie further adds to the chaos with his note, which introduces several new facts all at once. The scene leaves Emsworth—and perhaps the reader—overwhelmed. As such, Emsworth's sudden and "imperative" need to retreat to nature may seem entirely reasonable.

A short time later, peace comes across Lord Emsworth as he enters the park, and takes in the "consoling glory" of nature. Recovering from shock and entranced by the flowerbeds, the Earl becomes dazed. Believing himself to be "back in his paradise of Blandings," he scales the low railing and, to the resolute horror of the nearby park-keeper, begins picking flowers.

Emsworth takes refuge from the hectic modern world in Kensington Gardens, as they remind of his own estate and, by extension, his noble heritage. It is possible that because the modern aristocracy holds so little power at this point, Emsworth finds comfort in environments where he feels a sense of control. However, this control is quickly revealed to be an illusion.

With this act, the park-keeper labels Emsworth "a dangerous criminal" and "the blackest type of evil-doer." The keeper begins to scold Emsworth, which attracts the attentions of both a police constable and a small crowd. When Emsworth identifies himself as a Lord, the crowd—who merely sees a man in a "badly fitting tweed suit and a hat he ought to be ashamed of"—begins to laugh. They scorn him even further when he fails to produce his card-case (a wallet that contains confirmation of his title).

Without Emsworth's card case and, by extension, confirmation of his title, the crowd judges him by his appearance and his actions alone, much in the same way Emsworth himself judged Aggie at the beginning of the story. However, unlike Aggie, Emsworth is actually guilty of a crime, and without the mask of nobility he almost experiences the consequences of his actions.

It is at this moment Emsworth glances at his spectators and finds among them McAllister and Mr Donaldson. The Lord appeals to McAllister for help, and despite what has passed between the two men, the Glaswegian affirms his former employer's story. The constable—a "staunch admirer of the aristocracy"—regrets his zeal, and commands the crowd to move along.

On realizing that Emsworth is truly an Earl, the police constable develops a sudden and disproportionate reverence for this flower picker in a "badly fitting tweed suit" and ushers the crowd along. This scene illustrates that despite the fact that the aristocracy are dwindling in relevance and power, the British public continue to hold nobles to a different—and clearly unfair—standard.

With his ordeal over, Emsworth finally meets with Aggie's father, Mr Donaldson. Emsworth prepares for this conversation by drawing himself up "with hauteur," but he quickly finds himself outmatched by the other man's "authoritative appearance." Donaldson introduces himself as the founder of Donaldson's Dog-Biscuits, and apologetically admits that he is not a rich man—he doubts, "if, all told, that [he has] as much as ten million dollars in the world." This figure renders Emsworth speechless, and Donaldson surprises him further when he offers Freddie a career in Long Island City. Emsworth, in awe, gives his hearty approval.

The mere existence of self-made businessman Mr Donaldson challenges Emsworth's prejudices and outdated beliefs regarding social class. Contrary to Emsworth's immediate assumptions about Aggie, her family's wealth surpasses Emsworth's own, and though he enters the conversation with a sense of superiority, drawing himself up "with hauteur," he leaves it awed and intimidated by a man whose success is his own.

With this conversation done, Emsworth turns his attentions to McAllister. Though Emsworth's "tongue seem[s] to cleave his palette," he puts aside his pride and begs the gardener to return. After negotiating a new salary, McAllister agrees.

Emsworth's realization of his own relative insignificance seemingly inspires him to approach McAllister with a more reasonable attitude—though conceding defeat does cause him near physical pain.

Some time later, Emsworth and McAllister attend the Shrewsbury Show. Lord Emsworth's sworn enemy, Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, offers the Earl his congratulations, while McAllister stands to the side as a "silent, beard waggling witness of the scene." The pair turn and stare into a large packing case. Affixed to the outside of this case is a card, which reads "**PUMPKINS**. FIRST PRIZE."

In the end, McAllister's return assures the success of Emsworth's pumpkin. However, it's significant that Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe does not acknowledge McAllister, but instead offers his praise to Lord Emsworth, who readily accepts. Though Emsworth and McAllister stand side by side in the end, implying a level of camaraderie, this scene calls attention to the self-congratulatory nature of the aristocracy, and it leaves the reader to question which of the two men is truly more deserving of the award.

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