

Summer Lightning

By P. G. Wodehouse

The Story Thus Far:

IN BLANDINGS CASTLE, England, lives Clarence, ninth Earl of Emsworth, whose chief interest is the Empress of Blandings, his prize pig. With him live his sister, Lady Constance Keeble; his niece, Millicent; his brother, the Honorable Galahad Threepwood, now writing his *Reminiscences*; his secretary, Hugo Carmody, secretly engaged to Millicent; and his nephew, Ronald Fish, secretly engaged to Sue Brown, a chorus girl. When Ronnie and Sue meet Lady Constance in London, Ronnie introduces Sue as Miss Schoonmaker, a wealthy American girl his mother has invited to Blandings.

Ronnie, with the butler's aid, steals the Empress and hides her in a disused cottage, planning to "find" her later, thus gaining his trustee's gratitude and a share of his own capital. Hugo is sent to London to get a detective, P. Frobisher Pilbeam.

At Mario's that night Sue and Hugo are dancing when Pilbeam appears and finds a long-sought opportunity to approach Sue. Ronnie finds her with Pilbeam and breaks their engagement. Next day Millicent breaks with Hugo. Sue goes to Blandings as Miss Schoonmaker to see Ronnie and explain.

Galahad accuses Parsloe, owner of the rival pig, of stealing the Empress and puts in his *Reminiscences* a ruinous story. Parsloe offers Pilbeam £500 to steal the manuscript. Lady Constance has already invited to Blandings the Efficient Baxter for the same purpose.

While Galahad is introducing Lord Emsworth to Sue in the garden Baxter hurtles through the air and lands in a flower bed.

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PROPERLY considered there is no such thing as an unsolvable mystery. It may seem puzzling at first sight when ex-secretaries start falling as the gentle rain from heaven upon the lobelias beneath, but there is always a reason for it. That Baxter did not immediately give the reason was due to the fact that he had private and personal motives for not doing so.

We have called Rupert Baxter efficient, and efficient he was. The word, as we interpret it, implies not only a capacity for performing the ordinary tasks of life with a smooth firmness of touch but in addition a certain alertness of mind, a genius for opportunism, a gift for seeing clearly, thinking swiftly, and Doing It Now. With these qualities Rupert Baxter was preëminently equipped, and it had been with him the work of a moment to perceive, directly the Hon. Galahad had left the house with Sue, that here was his chance of popping upstairs, nipping into the small library, and abstracting the manuscript of the *Reminiscences*. Having popped and nipped, as planned, he was in the very act of searching the desk when the sound of a footstep outside froze him from his spectacles to the soles of his feet. The next moment, fingers began to turn the door-handle.

You may freeze a Baxter's body, but you cannot numb his active brain. With one masterful, lightning-like flash of clear thinking he took in the situation and saw the only possible way out. To reach the door leading to the large library, he would have had to circumnavigate the desk. The window, on the other hand, was at his elbow. So he jumped out of it.

All these things Baxter could have explained in a few words. Refraining from doing so, he rose to his feet and began to brush the mold from his knees.

"Baxter! What on earth?"

The ex-secretary found the gaze of his late employer trying to nerves which

had been considerably shaken by his fall. The occasions on which he disliked Lord Emsworth most intensely were just those occasions when the other gaped at him open-mouthed like a surprised halibut.

"I overbalanced," he said curtly.

"How? Where?"

It now occurred to Baxter that by a most fortunate chance the window of the small library was not the only one that looked out onto this arena into which he had precipitated himself. He might equally well have descended from the larger library which adjoined it.

"I WAS leaning out of the library window . . ."

"Why?"

"Inhaling the air . . ."

"What for?"

"And I lost my balance."

"Lost your balance?"

"I slipped."

"Slipped?"

Baxter had the feeling—it was one which he had often had in the old days when conversing with Lord Emsworth

—that an exchange of remarks had begun which might go on forever. A keen desire swept over him to be—and that right speedily—in some other place. He did not care where it was. So long as Lord Emsworth was not there, it would be Paradise enow.

"I think I will go indoors and wash my hands," he said.

"And face," suggested the Hon. Galahad.

"My face, also," said Rupert Baxter coldly.

He started to move round the angle of the house, but long before he had

The garden seemed to the detective to rock gently. "Never!" he gasped. "Certainly not! I have never been connected with any paper called *Society Spice*"



Illustrated by
John H.
Crossman

got out of hearing, Lord Emsworth's high and penetrating tenor was dealing with the situation. His lordship, as so often happened on these occasions, was under the impression that he spoke in a hushed whisper.

"Mad as a coot!" he said. And the words rang out through the still summer air like a public oration.

They cut Baxter to the quick. They were not the sort of words to which a man with an inch and a quarter of skin off his left shinbone ought ever to have been called upon to listen. With flushed ears and glowing spectacles, the Effi-

cient Baxter passed on his way. Statistics relating to madness among coots are not to hand, but we may safely doubt whether even in the ranks of these notoriously unbalanced birds there could have been found at this moment one who was feeling half as mad as he did.

Lord Emsworth continued to gaze at the spot where his late secretary had passed from sight.

"Mad as a coot," he repeated.

In his brother Galahad he found a ready supporter.

"Madder," said the Hon. Galahad.

"Upon my word, I think he's actually worse than he was two years ago. Then, at least, he never fell out of windows."

"Why on earth do you have the fellow here?"

Lord Emsworth sighed.

"It's Constance, my dear Galahad. You know what she is. She insisted on inviting him."

"Well, if you take my advice, you'll hide the flower-pots. One of the things this fellow does when he gets these attacks," explained the Hon. Galahad, taking Sue into the family confidence, "is to go about hurling flower-pots at people."

"Really?" said Sue.

"I assure you. Looking for me, Beach?"

The careworn figure of the butler had appeared, walking as one pacing behind the coffin of an old friend.

"Yes, sir. The gentleman has arrived, Mr. Galahad."

"Show him up to the small library,

Beach, and tell him I'll be with him in a moment."

"Very good, sir."

THE Hon. Galahad's temporary delay in going to see his visitor was due to his desire to linger long enough to tell Sue, to whom he had taken a warm fancy and whom he wished to shield as far as it was in his power from the perils of life, what every girl ought to know about the Efficient Baxter.

"Never let yourself be alone with that fellow in a deserted spot, my dear," he counseled. "If he suggests a walk in the woods, call for help. Been off his head for years. Ask Clarence."

Lord Emsworth nodded solemnly.

"And it looks to me," went on the Hon. Galahad, "as if his mania had now taken a suicidal turn. He's the living image of a man I used to know in the nineties."

"The first intimation any of us had that this chap had anything wrong with him was when he turned up to supper at the house of a friend of mine—George Pallant. You remember George, Clarence—with a couple of days' beard on him. And when Mrs. George, who had known him all her life, asked him why he hadn't shaved, 'Shaved?' says this fellow, surprised. Packleby, his name was. One of the Leicestershire Packlebys. 'Shaved, dear lady?' he says. 'Well, considering that they even hide the butter-knife when I come down to breakfast for fear I'll try to cut my throat with it, is it reasonable to suppose they'd trust me with a razor?'"

Quite stuffy about it, he was, and it spoiled the party. Look after Miss Schoonmaker, Clarence. I shan't be long."

Lord Emsworth had little experience in the art of providing diversion for young girls. Left thus to his native inspiration, he pondered awhile. If the Empress had not been stolen, his task would, of course, have been simple. He could have given this Miss Schoonmaker a half-hour of sheer entertainment by taking her down to the piggeries to watch that superb animal feed. As it was, he was at something of a loss.

"Perhaps you would care to see the rose garden?" he hazarded.

"I should love it," said Sue.

"Are you fond of roses?"

"Tremendously."

Lord Emsworth found himself warming to this girl. Her personality pleased him. He seemed dimly to recall something his sister Constance had said about her—something about wishing that her nephew Ronald would settle down with some nice girl with money like that Miss Schoonmaker whom Julia had met at Biarritz. Feeling so kindly toward her, it occurred to him that a word in season, opening her eyes to his nephew's true character, might prevent the girl making a mistake which she would regret forever when it was too late.

"I think you know my nephew Ronald?" he said.

"Yes."

"That boy's an ass."

"Why?" said Sue sharply. She began to feel less amiable toward this stringy old man. A moment before, she had been thinking that it was rather charming, that funny, vague manner of his. Now she saw him clearly for what he was—a dodderer, and a Class A dodderer at that.

"Why?" His lordship considered the point. "He throws tennis-balls at pigs," he went on, getting down to the ghastly facts.

"Does what?"

"I saw him with my own eyes. He threw a tennis-ball at Empress of Blandings. And not once but repeatedly."

THE motherly instinct which all girls feel toward the men they love urged Sue to say something in Ronnie's defense. But, apart from suggesting that the pig had probably started it, she could not think of anything. They left the rose garden and began to walk back to the lawn, Lord Emsworth still exercised by the thought of his nephew's shortcomings.

"Aggravating boy," he said. "Most aggravating. Always up to something or other. Started a night-club the other day. Lost a lot of money over it. Just the sort of thing he would do. My brother Galahad started some kind of a club many years ago. It cost my old father nearly a thousand pounds, I recollect. There is something about Ronald that reminds me very much of Galahad at the same age."

Although Sue had found much in the author of the Reminiscences to attract her, she was able to form a very fair estimate of the sort of young man he must have been in the middle twenties. This charge, accordingly, struck her as positively libelous.

"I don't agree with you, Lord Emsworth."

"But you never knew my brother Galahad as a young man," his lordship pointed out cleverly.

At this moment Beach came in sight, a silver salver in his hand. The salver had a card on it, and an envelope.

"For me, Beach?"

"The card, your lordship. The gentleman is in the hall."

Lord Emsworth breathed a sigh of re-

lief. "You will excuse me, my dear? It is most important that I should see this fellow immediately."

He bustled away, glad to go, and Sue became conscious of the salver, thrust deferentially toward her.

"For you, miss."

"For me?"

"Yes, miss," moaned Beach, like a winter wind wailing through dead trees. He inclined his head somberly, and was gone. She tore open the envelope. For one breath-taking instant she had thought Ronnie might have seen her. But the writing was not Ronnie's familiar scrawl. It was bold, clear, decisive writing, the writing of an efficient man.

She looked at the last page: *Yours sincerely, R. J. Baxter.*

SUE'S heart was beating faster as she turned back to the beginning. When a girl in the position in which she had placed herself has been stared at through steel-rimmed spectacles in the way this R. J. Baxter had stared at her through his spectacles, her initial reaction to mysterious notes from the man behind the lenses cannot but be a panic fear that all has been discovered.

The opening sentence dispelled her alarm. Purely personal motives, it appeared, had caused Rupert Baxter to write these few lines. The mere fact that the letter began with the words *Dear Miss Schoonmaker* was enough in itself to bring comfort.

At the risk of annoying you by the intrusion of my private affairs, [wrote the Efficient Baxter, rather in the manner of one beginning an after-dinner speech] I feel that I must give you an explanation of the incident which occurred in the garden in your presence this afternoon. From the observation—in the grossest taste—which Lord Emsworth let fall in my hearing, I fear you may have placed a wrong construction on what took place. (I allude to the expression "Mad as a coot," which I distinctly heard Lord Emsworth utter as I moved away.)

The facts were precisely as I stated. I was leaning out of the library window, and, chancing to lean too far, I lost my balance and fell. That I might have received serious injuries and was entitled to expect sympathy, I overlook. But the words "Mad as a coot" I resent extremely.

Had this incident not occurred, I would not have dreamed of saying anything to prejudice you against your host. As it is, I feel that in justice to myself I must tell you that Lord Emsworth is a man to whose utterance no attention should be paid. He is to all intents and purposes half-witted. Life in the country, with its lack of intellectual stimulus, has caused his natural feebleness of mind to reach a stage which borders closely on insanity. His relatives look on him as virtually an imbecile and have, in my opinion, every cause to do so.

In these circumstances, I think I may rely on you to attach no importance to his remarks this afternoon.

Yours sincerely,
R. J. BAXTER

P. S. You will, of course, treat this as entirely confidential.

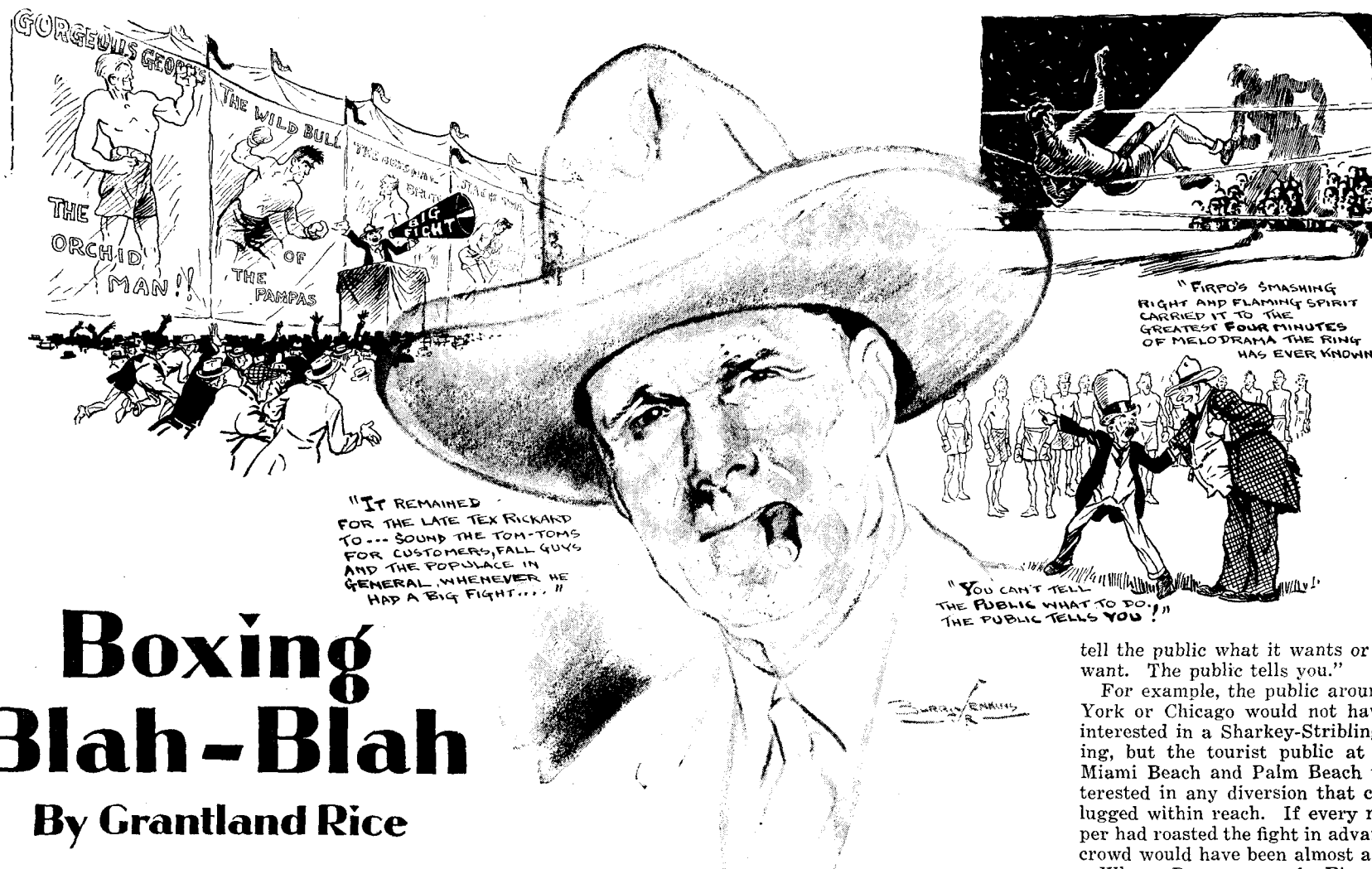
P. P. S. If you are fond of chess and would care for a game after dinner, I am a good player.

P. P. S. S. Or bezique.

Sue thought it a good letter, neat and well-expressed. Why it had been written, she could not imagine. It had not occurred to her that love—or, at any rate, a human desire to marry a wealthy heiress—had begun to burgeon in R. J. Baxter's bosom. With no particular emotions, other than the feeling that if he was counting on playing bezique with her after dinner he was due for a disappointment, she put the letter in her pocket, and looked out over the park again. (Continued on page 56)



"Well, I'm sorry you're not the man," said the Hon. Galahad. "I've been wanting to meet him. He wrote a very offensive thing about me."



Boxing Blah-Blah

By Grantland Rice

The late Tex Rickard, Barnum's most successful disciple, applied the ballyhoo principle to boxing, and found that it worked—sometimes

ACCORDING to a number of dictionaries, the word "ballyhoo" is an obscure slang expression meaning "a barker at the door of a show or a shop."

It remained for the late Tex Rickard to fix "the ballyhoo" as a symbol for sounding the tom-toms and beating the bushes for clients, customers, fall guys and the populace in general, whenever he had a big fight in prospect.

The ballyhoo today is largely connected with all the advance noise and publicity that precedes a big boxing match whereby thousands fall under the hypnotic spell and dash in to buy tickets, even though they might be "ringside tickets" 200 feet away from the ring.

Rickard's main idea was to get two fighters a lot of people were talking about—two fighters who could command a bale of publicity with little outside pressure. For example, when Jack Johnson was the heavyweight champion of the world, it never occurred to Tex to dig up some promising young heavyweight and build him up, for the simple reason that Jim Jeffries was still an unbeaten, retired champion. Jeffries' name could get columns of publicity where anyone else would be lucky to get paragraphs.

It made no difference whatever that Jeffries had not fought for six years—that he had been out of training—that he was slightly bald and quite portly and that only a miracle could ever swing him back to anything approaching his old fighting form. Jeffries matched with Johnson could draw the crowd and the money, and if the fight had been held as first arranged in San Francisco the gate undoubtedly would have passed well beyond the \$300,000 mark. Which was quite a gate nineteen years ago.

Even as it was, with the fight switched to Reno, Rickard's selection drew almost every well-known fight writer in the

United States there. It was Jack London who lifted the ballyhoo to a high crescendo in labeling Jeffries "the abysmal brute," Jeff at the time being a rather easy-going, middle-aged citizen who never had any particular liking for the fighting game.

After Dempsey had won the heavyweight championship, Rickard again looked around for the next man who could be counted upon to steam up publicity and, in turn, steam up public interest. He selected Georges Carpentier, the soldier of France, the Orchid Man, haloed with the heroship of the late war. It didn't matter a lick that the odds on Dempsey were quoted 4 to 1 and that hardly a critic gave the older, shopworn, war-worn, slender Frenchman a chance to last six rounds. Every device of publicity that would make good reading was brought into play, even to Carpentier's secret training and mystery punch, and the result was a mass of 90,000 spectators highly pleased to pay out \$1,625,000, to see an unequal contest which Dempsey might have won in a single round.

Firpo Justified the Ballyhoo

The next reason, or excuse, for the ballyhoo was big, shaggy-haired Firpo from the Argentine, a crude giant who could knock your head off with a right hand, who had unlimited courage but who in turn couldn't uncross his feet and who might just as well have carried his left hand in his pocket. That fight nearly resulted in a massacre inside of fifty seconds, but Firpo's smashing right and his flaming fighting spirit carried it on to the greatest four minutes of melodrama the ring has ever known. And once again Rickard had justified the ballyhoo and laid the scene for the two Tunney-Dempsey fights in Philadelphia and Chicago that drew

more than 200,000 people who paid in more than \$4,500,000.

Why did Rickard risk an outlay of \$300,000 for the Madison Square Garden Corporation to put on the Sharkey-Stribling fight at Miami Beach? Once again he saw the possibilities of proper publicity. He knew that fight in New York, Boston or Chicago would not draw \$200,000. He also knew there would be few writers on hand from other cities. But with Stribling representing the South against the Northern invader, with crowds at Miami and Miami Beach from all parts of the country, with the wealthy colony at Palm Beach only ninety miles away, Rickard could foresee the final rush for ringside seats.

The fight never promised to be anything but what it was. Sharkey had been a big disappointment ever since Dempsey stopped him. Stribling had been a flop against almost every fighter of class for two years—with defeats by Berlenbach and Loughran, two light-heavyweights, marked against him. But the setting was all there for the ballyhoo and the result was a gate of \$400,000.

What will get them talking? What will bring in the publicity? What will steam up the crowd? Anyone who can figure that out has a sure-fire financial hit, even though the show is a flop.

The ballyhoo doesn't always work, however. Not even Tex Rickard could send its appeal to the crowd when he matched Gene Tunney and Tom Heeney—the first largely a defensive boxer and the second a light hitter who was outclassed in every way. Heeney had no crowd appeal, no color, and the result was a \$300,000 deficit. There has to be color and personality, at least on one side, a slugger or a chance-taker who can hit.

Who is responsible for the ballyhoo? The crowd puts the blame on the newspapers when the show is a flop, as too many are. Newspaper editors believe the crowd is interested and they are merely meeting public demand for news.

A. L. Erlanger, one of the smartest of all showmen, once said: "You can't

tell the public what it wants or doesn't want. The public tells you."

For example, the public around New York or Chicago would not have been interested in a Sharkey-Stribling meeting, but the tourist public at Miami, Miami Beach and Palm Beach was interested in any diversion that could be lugged within reach. If every newspaper had roasted the fight in advance, the crowd would have been almost as large.

When Dempsey and Firpo were matched hundreds of letters came in from indignant readers denouncing the matching of a trained fighter like Dempsey against a crude, ungainly invader who could not even uncross his feet when trapped out of position. Yet they are still talking about that fight after six years.

Public Interest is Essential

The Dempsey-Firpo fight promised to be a one-sided slaughter and it would have been if Dempsey had used his head. The McLarnin-Miller meeting should have been a wow after their Detroit hurricane and it turned out to be one of the prize duds of the year.

Can an effective ballyhoo be launched and put over when there is no advance public interest? I doubt it. There must be a foundation of public interest to build upon and this, of course, can be increased by more and more publicity. It has been claimed that publicity helps to make the Yale-Harvard, Army-Notre Dame and Stanford-California games such popular fall festivals. This can also be doubted. Just a mere announcement of the dates is all that is necessary. But a flood of publicity, started weeks before the Tunney-Heeney fight, couldn't sell half the seats at the Polo Grounds with a heavyweight championship at stake.

In their primes Jack Dempsey, Paul Berlenbach and Jack Delaney made their own ballyhoos. Max Schmeling, the German heavyweight, has hammered out the same. The public is keenly interested in his next appearance. He will get his full share of space. Whether he earns it or not, he seems to be the best chance.

The main trouble today is that while they can ballyhoo the fighters they can't make them fight. The boys have discovered they can collect a lot of money without having to earn it. This is going to have a serious and blighting effect upon the loudest ballyhoo ever sounded unless there is a sudden and decided change. The public has shown it can be a glutton for punishment, but there must be a limit. Or is there?