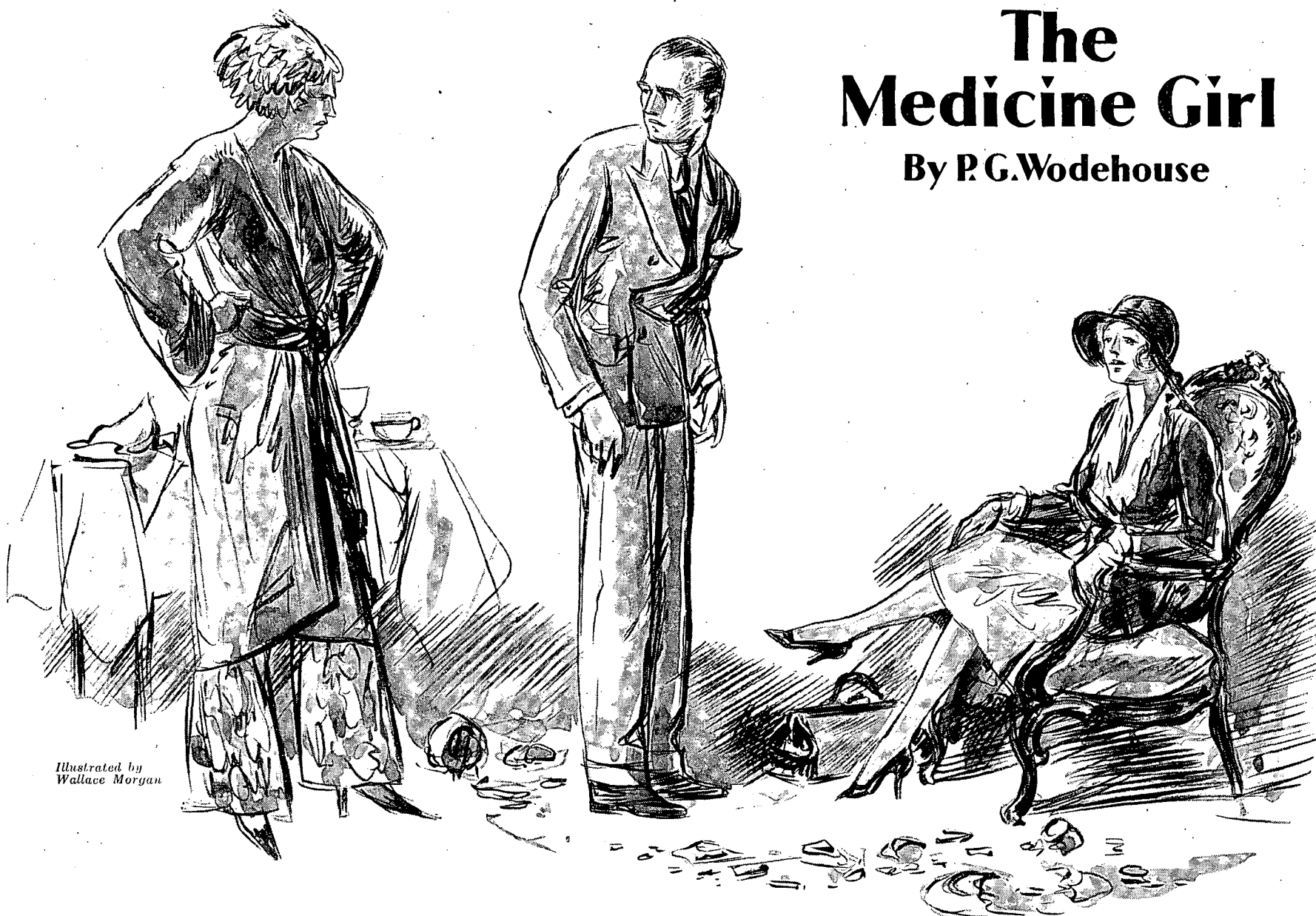


The Medicine Girl

By P. G. Wodehouse



Illustrated by
Wallace Morgan

She glared. Bill, watching, was disturbed to see her hands go to her hips in a well-remembered gesture

The Story Thus Far:

BILL BANNISTER, dedicated to the delightful pastime of rearing pigs in Hampshire, goes to London—and promptly disappears. Whereupon his uncle, Sir Hugo Drake, nerve specialist, learns that the missing pig-rancher has gone to beautiful Bingley-on-Sea accompanied by a female "of flashy appearance." . . . What to do, to save William? The answer is easy: go to beautiful Bingley-on-Sea.

Arrived, he does *not* find William. Whereupon, a watchful waiter, he turns to golf—and meets a girl. Sally Smith. American. Young. Pretty. And a doctor! To Doctor Smith he confides his troubles.

Meanwhile, at one of beautiful Bingley-on-Sea's most expensive hotels, the siren for whom Mr. Bannister has deserted his pigs—Mrs. Lottie Higginbotham—receives a surprise. One of her former husbands, Lord Tidmouth (known to his intimates as "Squiffy"), calls unexpectedly. A charming fellow, Lord Tidmouth. And extremely romantic. He kisses the fair Lottie, and—

In walks William Bannister! . . . Is William perturbed? He is *not*. Instead, he is delighted to meet his old friend, Lord Tidmouth; and, when the lady leaves the room, he confides in his lordship. "Squiffy, my friend," he whispers, "take her—you're welcome. I love another! I don't know her name. But I've seen her playing golf—and I'm gone!" Lord Tidmouth, no diplomat, gives Lottie the latest news. Lottie swoons. "Squiffy," orders William, "run for a doctor!" His lordship obeys. Presently the girl William had seen, and loved on sight, enters. "Who," gasps William, "are you?" "I," says the girl, "am the doctor."

II

I REALLY can't waste time like this," said Sally coldly. "If you don't want me to attend the patient, I'll go."

"But . . . she can't see a doctor now."

"Why not?"

"She isn't well."

Sally's momentary pique faded. This extraordinary young man amused her. "My dear good man," she said, "are you always like this, or have I just struck one of your bad days?"

Bill writhed.

"I know I'm an idiot . . ."

"Ah! A lucid moment."

"It's the shock of seeing you walk in like this."

"Why shouldn't I walk in? You sent for me."

"Yes, but you don't understand. I mean, I've seen you out on the golf links."

"So you said before."

"You see—Mrs. . . ."

"Miss."

"Thank God!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Nothing, nothing. I—er—that is to say—or, putting it rather differently . . . Oh, my goodness!"

"What's the matter?"

"You take my breath away."

"For shortness of breath try a juggle. And now, please, my patient."

"Oh, yes . . ."

Bill went to the door of the bedroom and called softly:

"Marie!"

Marie appeared in the doorway.

"Yes, sir?"

"How is she?"

"Asleep, sir."

"Fine!" said Bill, brightening. "See that she doesn't wake up." He came back to Sally. "The maid says the patient has fallen asleep."

Sally nodded.

"Quite natural. Sleep often follows violent hysteria."

"But, I say, how do you know it was hysteria?"

"By the broken china. Long-distance diagnosis. Well, let her have her sleep out."

"I will."

There was a pause.

"Tea," said Bill at length, desperately. "Won't you have some tea?"

"Where is it?"

Bill looked about him.

"Well, on the floor, mostly," he admitted. "But I could ring for some more."

"Don't bother. I don't like tea much, anyway."

"You're American, aren't you?"

"I am."

"It's a rummy thing, Americans never seem very keen on tea."

"No."

There was another pause.

"**I SAY,**" said Bill, "I didn't get your name."

"Doctor Sally Smith. What's yours?"

"Bannister. William Bannister."

"You live here?"

"Certainly not," said Bill, shocked. "I'm staying at the Majestic. I live down in Hampshire."

"One of these big country houses, I suppose?"

"Pretty big."

"I thought so. You look opulent," said Sally, pleased that her original opinion had been confirmed. A rich idler, this man, she felt. Not unpleasant, it was true—she liked his face and was amused by him—but nevertheless idle and rich.

Bill, by this time, had gradually become something more nearly resembling a sentient being. Indeed, he was now quite at his ease again and feeling extraordinarily happy. That this girl and

he should be sitting chatting together like this was so wonderful that it put him right on top of his form. He straightened his tie, and threw his whole soul into one devoted gaze.

Sally got the gaze and did not like it. For some moments now she had been wishing that this perfect stranger would either make his eyes rather less soulful or else refrain from directing them at her. She was a liberal-minded girl and did not disapprove of admiration from the other sex—indeed, she had grown accustomed to exciting it—but something seemed to whisper to her that this William Bannister could do with a little womanly quelling.

"Would you mind not looking at me like that?" she said coolly.

The soulful look faded out of Bill's eyes as if he had been hit between them with a brick. He felt disconcerted and annoyed. He disliked being snubbed, even by a girl for whom his whole being yearned.

"I'm *not* looking at you like that," he replied with spirit. "At least, I'm not trying to."

Sally nodded tolerantly.

"I see," she said. "Automatic, eh? Very interesting, from a medical point of view. Unconscious reaction of the facial and labial muscles at sight of a pretty woman."

Bill's pique increased. He resented this calm treating of himself as something odd on a microscope slide.

"I am sorry," he said haughtily, "if I embarrassed you."

Sally laughed.

"You didn't embarrass me," she said. "Did I seem to you to show embarrassment? I thought I had my vascular motors under much better control."

"Your—what did you say?"

"Vascular motors. They regulate the paling and flushing of the skin. In other words, I didn't blush."

"Oh, ah! I see."

The conversation flagged again.

"Do you know," said Bill, hoisting it to its legs again, "I was most awfully surprised when you said you were a doctor."

"Most men seem to be."

"I MEAN, you don't look like a doctor."

"How ought a doctor to look?"

Bill reflected.

"Well, most of them seem sort of fagged and overworked. Haggard chaps. I mean, it must be an awful strain."

Sally laughed.

"Oh, it's not so bad. You needn't waste your pity on me, Mr. Bannister. I'm as fit as a fiddle, thank heaven, and enjoy every minute of my life. I have a good practice and quite enough money. I go to theaters and concerts. I play games. I spend my vacations traveling. I love my work. I love my recreations. I love life."

"You're wonderful!"

"And why shouldn't I? I earn every bit of pleasure that I get. I like nice clothes, nice shoes, nice stockings—because I buy them myself. I'm like the Village Blacksmith—I owe not any man. I wonder if you've the remotest idea how happy it can make a woman feel just to be a worker and *alive*—with good nerves, good circulation and good muscles. Feel my arm. Like iron."

"Wonderful!"

"And my legs. Hard as a rock. Prod 'em."

"No, really!"

"Go on."

She looked at him with amusement.

"You're blushing!"

Bill was unable to deny the charge. "Yes," he said. "I'm afraid my vascular motors aren't as well controlled as yours."

"Can't you admire a well-rounded, highly perfected leg in a purely detached spirit as a noble work of nature?"

"Sorry—no. I'm afraid I've never quite managed to do that."

"Why, in some countries the women go swimming with nothing on."

"And the men buy telescopes."

"Don't snigger."

"Forgive me," said Bill. "I laugh, like Figaro, that I may not weep."

She regarded him curiously.

"What do you want to weep about?"

Bill sighed.

"I'm feeling a little depressed," he said. "In the life you have outlined—this hard, tense, independent, self-sufficient life with its good nerves and good circulations and muscles of the brawny arm as strong as iron bands—don't you think—it's just a suggestion—don't you think there's something a little *bleak*?"

"Bleak?"

Bill nodded.

"Well, frankly . . ."

"Always be frank."

"FRANKLY, then," said Bill, "it reminds me of the sort of nightmare H. G. Wells would have after cold pork. It seems to leave out the one thing that makes life worth living."

"You mean love?"

"Exactly. I grant you one hundred per cent of nerves and circulation and general fitness—I admire your biceps—I'm sure your leg muscle is all it should be—and I take off my hat to your vascular motors . . . but doesn't it strike you that you're just the merest trifle lacking in *sentiment*?"

She frowned.

"Nothing of the kind. All I'm lacking in is sentimentality. I don't droop and blush and giggle . . ."

"No, I noticed that," Bill remarked. ". . . But naturally I don't intend to exclude love from my life. I'm not such a fool."

"Ah!"

"Why do you say 'Ah'?"

A touch of dignity came into Bill's manner.

"Listen!" he said. "You're the loveliest girl I ever met, but you've got to stop bullying me. I shall say 'Ah' just as often as I please."

"I merely asked because most people, when they stand in front of me and say 'Ah,' expect me to examine their throats."

She paused.

"Why are you so interested in my views on love, Mr. Bannister?" she asked casually.

Even Bill, quick worker though he had been from boyhood, would have shrunk—had the conditions been other than they were—from laying bare his soul at this extremely early point in his association with this girl. Emotion might have urged him to do so, but Prudence would have plucked at his sleeve. So intense, however, was his desire to shatter his companion's maddening aloofness . . . still, was aloofness exactly the word? . . . dispassionate friendliness described it better . . . no, *detached* . . . that was the word he wanted . . . she was so cool and detached and seemed so utterly oblivious of the importance of a Bannister's yearnings that he let Emotion have its way. And if Prudence did any plucking, he failed to notice it.

"I'll tell you why," he said explosively. "Because, the moment I saw you out there on the links, I knew you were the one girl . . ."

"You mean you've fallen in love with me?"

"I have . . . The news doesn't seem

to surprise you," said Bill resentfully.

Sally laughed.

"Oh, it's not such a terrible shock."

"You've heard the same sort of thing before, from other men, I suppose?"

"Dozens of times."

"I might have known it," said Bill gloomily. "Just my luck. And I suppose—?"

"No. You're wrong."

Bill became animated again.

"You mean there's nobody else?"

"Nobody."

BILL'S animation approached fever point.

"Then do you think . . . do you suppose . . . might it happen . . . would it be . . . or, putting it another way, is it possible . . .?"

"Crisper, crisper. And simpler. What you're trying to suggest now is that perhaps I might one day love you? Am I right?"

"You take the words out of my mouth."

"I had to, or they would never have emerged at all. Well, if I ever love a man, I shall inform him of the fact, simply and naturally, as if I were saying 'Good morning.'"

Bill hesitated.

"Tell me," he said, "have you ever—er—wished a man good morning?"

"No. That experience has yet to come."

"Wonderful!"

"Not so very wonderful. It simply means I haven't met the right man."

Bill could not allow a totally false statement like this to pass uncorrected.

"Yes, you have," he assured her. "You don't know it yet, but you have."

He advanced towards her, full of his theme. "You have, really."

"Oh?"

"Yes," said Bill. He drew a deep

breath. "Gosh!" he exclaimed. "I feel as if a great weight had rolled off me. I had always hoped in my heart that women like you existed, and now it's all come true. Don't laugh at me. It's come upon me like a whirlwind. I never expected it. I never guessed. I never . . ."

"Excuse me, sir," said Marie, appearing at the bedroom door.

Bill regarded her with marked displeasure. In the past, Marie had always seemed to him rather a nice girl, but now he felt he had seldom encountered a more pronounced pest.

"Well," he said irritably, "what is it?"

"If you please, sir, she's awake now."

Bill could make nothing of this. The girl appeared to him to be babbling. Sheer jibbering from the padded cell.

"Awake?" he said. "What on earth are you talking about? Who's awake?"

"Why, Moddom, sir."

Bill blinked like an awakened somnambulist.

"Moddom?"

Sally laughed.

"I think you had forgotten our patient, hadn't you?"

She turned briskly to Marie.

"Ask her to come in, please. I will examine her at once."

It was a calmer and more subdued Lottie who emerged from the bedroom. But it was plain that the volcano was not altogether extinct. In her manner, as she suddenly beheld a charming and attractive girl in Bill's society in her sitting-room, there were obvious indications that something of the old fire still lingered. She stiffened. She glared in hostile fashion. Bill, watching, was disturbed to see her hands go to her hips in a well-remembered gesture.

"Oh?" said Lottie. "Who may this be?"

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Bill's first emotion was one of excusable wrath at the spectacle



"That's the funniest thing I ever heard," roared DeMar. "Wait till I tell the gang"

THE newspaper-reading public never learned the details of the Manhattan Commercial Bank and Trust Company robbery. The story was made a secret for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the humiliating part played in it by the police.

In missing the inside story of this robbery, the public also missed a glimpse of one of the strangest persons living in Manhattan. The brilliant sleuth and silent avenger of the bank disaster was himself a former bank clerk. His name was Willis Perkins. There are a great many people like Willis Perkins, but few of them, because of their very nature and disposition, attain to a parallel success.

Perkins, a thin, frail, prematurely aged and almost childlike man of forty-odd years, lived alone on the top floor of a brownstone apartment house in the Chelsea district. He was familiar to most of the people in the environs of his lodgings because he had dwelt there for more than twenty years. However, he was so shy that few of them had acquired even a casual acquaintance with him. Early in his childhood his consuming passion had been born, and two decades spent over the ledgers of a downtown bank in no way served to dim his purpose. Willis Perkins had decided at the age of twelve that he was created to be a detective.

If he had applied for a position on the New York police force, his application would certainly have been greeted with laughter. The departmental concept of a detective is far removed from vague gray eyes, stooped shoulders and thin trembling hands, so Perkins' course

was necessarily different. He joined six libraries. He had read almost every mystery story produced by publishing houses since 1905. He had devoured textbooks on criminology and he had devoted many of his evenings to a study of psychology and to chemistry in the Extension Courses of Columbia University.

Perkins had also saved his money, so that after twenty years of arduous labor and careful investment his accumulated pittance had become a sum sufficient to afford him an income for the rest of his life. He had then resigned from the bank and embarked upon the serious business of being a detective.

NEEDLESS to say, his career thereafter was partly fantastic, partly absurd and almost wholly pathetic. The front room in his apartment in Chelsea was crammed to the ceiling with his books. In the back room was his

In a Hole

Willis Perkins, amateur sleuth, seeks a problem worthy of his genius, and finds one

By Philip Wylie

Illustrated by E. F. Ward

chemical laboratory and there he lived, waiting, watching and hoping for the occurrence of a crime. It is a matter of record that in the vicinity a crime did occur and that, although Perkins devoted to it the full benefit of his self-training, his clues were unreadable and his conclusions worthless. The solution of that particular crime was arrived at by accident, and the part Perkins played in it gave him an introduction if not an entrée to the local branch of the police department, but after the few stirring days surrounding that single sordid misdeed, Perkins relapsed to his old manner of living.

Perkins kept a private file of all crimes recorded in the newspapers. He might occasionally be seen on the fringe of a crowd that gaped at the comings and goings of the police and reporters near a scene of violence. At other times, in dead hours of night, Perkins might have been observed slinking through

mid-downtown streets, his eyes prying suspiciously into every dark corner and his nose almost sniffing the air in the hope of detecting sinister maneuvers. . . .

On a hot evening in August Perkins was on his way home from an investigation of some suspicious-looking boxes he had noticed in the subway station at Times Square, when he joined with several other loungers to observe an excavation which was being conducted on a twenty-four-hour-a-day schedule. The excavation was deep—driving toward bed rock to make a foundation for a future skyscraper, and it furnished a rather handsome spectacle. Some of the steel work had already been put in place, and the last blasting and drilling was being done under floodlights. The lurid glare of the floods, the pools of yellow water, the diminutive men, the giant arms of the cranes as they carried their colossal burdens back and forth, and the occasional roar of an explosion, made a scene which might have been in the infernal regions.

FOR a long time Perkins watched these pygmies who worked in the gloom; but of all the bystanders he was the only one who noticed that the excavation was being made next door to the Manhattan Commercial Bank and Trust Company. It was natural that he should do so; Perkins was a safeguarder of the public. His first observation was that the actual physical stability of the bank might be in some measure endangered by the propinquity and depth of the excavation. His next observation was that in the intricate tiers of rock and machinery a nice chance would be afforded to pierce the wall of the bank