



The Old Reliable

P.G. Wodehouse

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King Solomon, Brigham Young and Henry VIII may have enjoyed marriage but Smedley Cork had doubts—much to the regret of Wilhelmina 'Bill' Shannon.

Other people had their problems too, at the Hollywood home of Adela Shannon, Empress of Stormy Emotion, none more than Phipps, butler extraordinary and safe-cracker cum laude...

When Smedley found the revealing diary of a torrid film star, eagerly sought after by the Studios in exchange for cash by the handful, it looked as though joy would be unconfined for the many.

Yet, as some wise bird once said, there's many a slip... and Phipps proved a very slippery customer indeed...

The Old Reliable Details

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Author : P.G. Wodehouse

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Melissa says

It's nice to know that a Wodehouse book need not contain a Bertie, a Baxter, an Emsworth, or a perfunctory P to be uproarious. This happens to include a woman named Bill, a former queen of the silent screen, and Phipps, who I have on good authority is not the world's only safe-cracking butler (in retrospect, why shouldn't there be dozens of safe-cracking butlers? provided that they have better morals than Phipps does).

"Ah, Hollywood, Hollywood,' said Bill. 'Home of mean glories and spangled wretchedness, where the deathless fire burns for the outspread wings of the guileless moth, whose streets are bathed in the shamed tears of betrayed maidens.'" Or something along those lines.

Lesli says

This is a great Wodehouse. One of the few where the female love interest is not young and pretty. One of the things I like about Wodehouse is that he sees women as real people. (too bad so often he had the female love interests young and pretty--though not always the male love interest handsome, and the girls always looked beyond that. But did the boys ever think to look beyond girls looks? Ah well. We can't ask for everything in a Wodehouse.)

Ankita says

Bill 'The Old Reliable' Shannon is easily one of my favourite characters on script now- clever, witty and funny as only a Wodehouse creation can be. A fast read, set in the house of the ex-Mexican star Carmen Flores over the course of two days- the comedy is full of twists and laughs. Loved the book. Wodehouse as previously mentioned, is forever brilliant.

Iblena says

Entretenida, divertida y amena comedia de situaciones, que recuerda mucho a esas películas de principios de los años 40's. Humor inteligente, mordaz e ingenioso. No para reírse a carcajadas, pero si capaz de provocar muchas sonrisas. Phipps y Wilhelmina 'Bill' Shannon, los mejores personajes.

Uma says

Another from my re re re re re re read list... the first time I read it was from my grandfather's collection....

Eadie says

Book Description:

Following the death of Carmen Flores, the lubricious Mexican star, Adela Cork buys her Hollywood house. Hoping to escape from the domineering Adela, her brother-in-law Smedley, who has lived with her since losing his money, searches the house for Carmen's legendary lost diary, in the belief that its scorching revelations about the sex life of her fellow stars will make him millions. He is helped and hindered by a safe-blowing butler, a pompous movie mogul, a posse of unemployed scriptwriters, and the redoubtable Adela herself. Fortunately, Adela's sister, 'Bill' Shannon, not for nothing nicknamed 'the Old Reliable', is on hand to ensure a satisfactory outcome. This is a light comedy which is also a sharp satire on Hollywood mores.

I found this book full of humor and wit with a clever plot that was full of twists and turns. This was my first read by P.G. Wodehouse and I enjoyed it very much and look forward to reading another one of his humorous books.

Daniel says

Pretty sure this is my first Wodehouse without any of the series characters. Enjoyed it very much. This one stands out for being set in California instead of England, though an English butler features prominently and one of Wodehouse's typical goofy young English upper-class men also features, somewhat less prominently. Not sure if I'll do a proper review later, not a lot to say beyond it's Wodehouse and it's hilarious. :)

Benita Prins says

Well, this is P.G. Wodehouse. It goes without saying that it's brilliant. Whilst I give it five stars, however, the ending seems a teeny bit, ever so slightly, abrupt. Other than that: characterisation, superb. Use of English language, already classified as Wodehouse and therefore skilful and elegant. And plot, classic Wodehouse.

Everyone around Adela Cork's home is poor except for Adela Cork (who's rolling in the stuff). Adela's brother-in-law Smedley's dreams hinge on the diary of Carmen Flores, the movie star who originally owned the Cork home and led a wild life. Smedley's reasoning goes that he could blackmail any number of people thanks to the information in this diary. He just has to find where Flores hid it... Bill (a.k.a. Wilhelmina, Adela's sister) and Joe want to run a literary agency; they just need the \$20,000 to buy it. What shall we do? Why, help Smedley find the diary and then touch him for that measly sum, of course.

But they don't reckon on Phipps, the evil genius.

Always include your English butler in the equations for your get-rich-quick schemes.

Jyoti says

This is one of the few Wodehouse books that didn't keep me in splits from start to finish. For the first 3/4, I

felt like I was reading a collage of previously read works. It was only after that point that the plot thickened for a while and gave some funny moments, but that didn't last too long.

The characters are all familiar and similar to ones seen in other, more popular works. Phipps' character was the only one that was new to me, but didn't hold much appeal.

Wodehouse, however, as always proved to be the king of incredibly humorous similes. The hollywood and superba theme was a lot funnier in Pearls, girls and Monty Bodkin.

Ian Wood says

Wilhelmina 'Bill' Shannon ex staff writer of Ikey Llewellyn's film company Superba-Llewellyn is ghost writing her sister Adela's memoirs. Adela Shannon was a star of the silver screen who is living in what was the Hollywood home of torrid film star Carmen Flore, who was known to have kept a diary. Smedley Cork, whom Bill is devoted to, and the ex safe cracker butler, Phipps, are both searching for this diary conscious of the money it could fetch from a gossip magazine.

Also on the premises are Adela Shannon's niece Kay and her two suitors, Jack Davenport, whom Kay loves but Adela does not, and Lord Topham, whom Adela loves but Kay does not.

I think we all know how it's going to end up but as ever with Wodehouse the chase is better than the kill. If only every thing in life was as reliable as a Wodehouse plot conclusion.

Michael Baranowski says

I was feeling a little low, I hadn't read any Wodehouse in a while, and there was The Old Reliable sitting on my shelves, calling to me. Not at the level of his best work, but even mediocre Wodehouse is awfully good stuff.

Kirini says

Il libro più esilarante che abbia mai letto. Eccezionalmente ben scritto, di un'astuzia meravigliosa!

Diskojoe says

An apt description of the author himself. Excellent summer reading for putting the mind in Neutral & luxuriating in the prose of the Master.

Neil says

A solid but unremarkable Wodehouse novel. It's said that the plot of this one is too close to that of the slightly earlier "Spring Fever" personally I find that after a while all Wodehouse's plots merge into one anyway so it doesn't really matter.

Rozonda says

Adoro a Wodehouse pero su humor siempre me ha parecido más sutil y suave que el de otros escritores de humor, no es el tipo de humor que te arranca carcajadas, pero en este libro de situaciones absurdas y personajes irresistibles si que lo consigue y más de una vez. Wodehouse conoció bien el mundo de Hollywood y aquí se burla de su irrealidad y los absurdos sueños e ideales de muchos que allí viven. Genial.
