

A MANIFESTO FOR SCHOOLS BY P.G. WODEHOUSE
THE STORY OF THE HEDGEHOG



“ ... THE luncheon gong will be going in a minute.”

The Hon. Galahad sighed. There was always something, he reflected.

“What a curse meals are. Don’t let’s go in.”

“I’m going in, all right. My good child. I’m starving.”

“Pure imagination.”

“Do you mean to say you’re not hungry, Gally?”

“Of course I’m not. No healthy person really needs food. If people would only stick to drinking, doctors would go out of business. I can state you a case that proves it. Old Freddie Potts in the year ’98.”

“Old Freddie Potts in the year ’98, did you say, Mister Bones?”

“Old Freddie Potts in die year ’98,” repeated the Hon. Galahad firmly. “He lived almost entirely on Scotch whisky, and in the year ’98 this prudent habit saved him from an exceedingly unpleasant attack of hedgehog poisoning.”

“What poisoning?”

“Hedgehog poisoning. It was down in the south of France that it happened. Freddie had gone to stay with his brother Eustace at his villa at Grasse. Practically a teetotaller, this brother, and in consequence passionately addicted to food.”

“Still, I can’t see why he wanted to eat hedgehogs.”

“He did not want to eat hedge hogs. Nothing was farther from his intentions.

But on the second day of old Freddie’s visit he gave his chef twenty francs to go to market and buy a chicken for dinner, and the chef, wandering along, happened to see a dead hedgehog lying in the road. It had been there some days, as a matter of fact, but this was the first time he had noticed it. So, feeling that here was an opportunity, he pouched the twenty francs...”

“I wish you wouldn’t tell me stories like this just before lunch.”

“If it puts you off your food, so much the better. Bring the roses to your checks. Well, as I was saying, the chef, who was a thrifty sort of chap and knew that he could make a dainty dinner dish out of his old grandmother, if allowed to mess about with a few sauces, added the twenty francs to his savings and gave Freddie and Eustace the hedgehog next day en casserole. Mark the sequel. At two-thirty prompt, Eustace, the teetotaller, turned Nile-green, started groaning like a lost soul, and continued to do so for the remainder of the week, when he was pronounced out of danger. Freddie, on the other hand, his system having been healthfully pickled in alcohol, throve on the dish and finished it up cold next day.”

“I call that the most disgusting story I ever heard.”

“The most moral story you ever heard. If I had my way, it would be carved up in letters of gold over the door of every school and college in the kingdom, as a warning to the young. (from *Heavy Weather*)

