

THE TUPPENNY MILLIONAIRE

—adapted from P. G. Wodehouse by Philip Campion with a 30 point critique

¹In London at one time there existed some thousands of ²respectable, neatly-dressed, mechanical, unenterprising young men, employed at modest salaries by various banks, corporations, stores, shops, and business firms. They were put to work when young, and they stayed put. They were mussels³. Each had his special place on the rock⁴, and remained glued ⁵to it all his life.

⁶To these thousands George Albert Balmer belonged. He differed in no detail from the rest of the great army. He was as respectable, as ⁷neatly-dressed, as mechanical, and as unenterprising. His life was bounded, ⁸east, west, north, and south, by the Planet Insurance Company, which employed him; and that there were other ways in which a man might fulfil himself than by giving daily imitations behind a counter of a mechanical figure walking in its sleep had never seriously crossed his mind⁹.

On George, at the age of twenty-four, there descended, out of a dear sky, a legacy of a thousand pounds.¹⁰

Physically, he remained unchanged beneath the shock. No trace of hauteur¹¹ crept into his bearing. When the head of his department, calling his attention to a technical flaw in his work of the previous afternoon, addressed him as 'Here, you--young what's-your-confounded-name!' he did not point out that this was no way to speak to a gentleman of property. You would have said that the sudden smile of Fortune had failed to unsettle him.¹²

But all the while his mind, knocked head over heels, was lying in a limp heap, wondering what had struck it.

¹³To him, in his dazed state, came Harold Flower, one of the most ¹⁴assiduous money-borrowers in London. He had listened to the office gossip about George's legacy ¹⁵as if to the strains of some grand, sweet anthem. He requested the temporary loan of a sovereign. George refused.

¹⁶'Ho!' said Harold. 'Afraid you can't spare it, can't you? A gentleman comes and asks you with tack and civility for a temp'y loan of about 'arf nothing, and all you do is to curse and swear at him. Do you know what I call you--you and your thousand quid? ¹⁷A tuppenny millionaire, that's what I call you. Keep your blooming money. That's all I ask. *Keep it*. A vegetable--that's all you are. A blanky little gor-blimey vegetable. ¹⁸I seen turnips with more spirit in 'em than what you've got. And Brussels sprouts. Yes, *and* parsnips.'

¹⁹It is difficult to walk away with dignity when a man with a hoarse voice and a watery eye is comparing you to your disadvantage with a parsnip, and George did not come anywhere near achieving the feat.

²⁰But soon came the day of his annual vacation.

'Er--Flower,' he said.

'Me lord?'

'I am taking my holiday tomorrow. Will you forward my letters? I am popping over, to a hotel in Monte. Monte Carlo, you know!'

²¹The George who strolled that pleasant morning on the Promenade des Strangers differed both externally and internally from the George who had fallen out with Harold Flower. For a day after his arrival he had clung to the garb of middle-class England. On the second evening he had observed a man wearing an arrangement in bright yellow velvet without attracting attention. The sight had impressed him. Next morning he had emerged from his hotel in a flannel suit so light that it would have been unanimously condemned as impossible by his Planet Insurance Company workmates. ²²For the first time in his life he was seeing colour, and it intoxicated him.

²³Splendid as everything was in this paradise of colour, there was nevertheless something lacking. You had to be in love to get the full flavour of these vivid whites and blues. He saw himself proposing--eloquently--accepted, married, living happily ever after. He became elated as he day-dreamed.

But he had no illusions as to his place in the social scale. The Lady Julias of this world did not marry insurance clerks, even if their late mother's cousin had

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left them a thousand pounds. The day-dream was definitely ended, but not the strange new desire. He needed distraction for his new heart-ache.

That night George fled with his hopeless passion to the ²⁴boule tables in the casino, where, for a price, the sorrowful may obtain oblivion by means of the ingenious game. Boule is a fascinating game. ²⁵A wooden-faced high priest flicks a red india-rubber ball into a polished oaken bowl, at the bottom of which are holes, each bearing a number up to nine. The ball swings round and round like a planet, slows down, stumbles among the holes, rests for a moment in the one which you have backed, then hops into the next one, and you lose. If ever there was a pastime calculated to place Cupid in the background, this is it.

He placed a franc on number seven and lost. Another franc on six suffered the same fate. He threw a five-franc cart-wheel recklessly on evens. It won. He settled down to make a night of it. George gazed with a new hauteur at the ²⁶croupier, a man with a pointed moustache and an air of having seen all the sorrow and wickedness that there had ever been in the world. ²⁷A thrill permeated his entire being, starting at his head and running out at his heels. He felt tremendous--a sort of blend of Oliver Cromwell, a Berserk warrior, and Sir Galahad.

²⁸But it was not long before he hadn't a ²⁹parsnip to his name. ³⁰At the end of the summer vacation period a mild, steady-going person in the drab tweeds of middle class England returned to work sporting a striking tan. George would soon spend a long time as a perfunctory figure back at Planet Insurance Company, wishing drearily that he had consented in the first place to become a creditor to Harold Flower.

1 **The Exposition**

2 Note the use of the listing method here for types of young men and types of employment

3 Sarcastic Metaphor

4 Extension of the metaphor

5 Extension of the metaphor

6 **Introduction of central character** as stereotype

7 Triple list [of adjectives]

8 List

9 Mocking analogy

10 **The Trigger Event**

11 Arrogance

12 **Character Development**

13 **Introduction of the rival character**, with a funny name. **Tension created.**

14 Persevering

15 Comparison, simile.

16 Variation in narrative method: use of dialogue and local accent and slang [a change of register].

17 **Conflict** is established.

18 Use of comedy, reverse psychology.

19 **Development** of story or plot.

20 Further **complication** and Plot development.

21 Interesting and comical description, use of colour and contrast.

22 **Character development**

23 **Plot development.**

24 French Roulette table

25 Caricature and an excellent example of **descriptive writing.**

26 Boule table operator.

27 **Climax**—that turns into an **anti-climax.**

28 **Resolution**—with a twist or reversal.

29 One of a number of echoes of the earlier part of the story.

30 Ironic ending.