

“JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING”

BY P. G. WODEHOUSE

Background on the Selection

This *Reading* includes a short story by P. G. Wodehouse (1881–1975), “Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend,” one of his stories set in Blandings Castle, with a Foreword by Joseph Bottum, editor of the journal *First Things*.

Group Discussion Questions

- 1 Did you enjoy the story? Did it make you laugh? What about it appealed to you, or failed to? What did you think of the character of the Earl of Emsworth?
- 2 In the Foreword, Bottum suggests that much of what Wodehouse wrote was a waste, at least as conventionally understood. How do you respond?
- 3 Do you think that the twentieth century was “deficient in laughter”? Why do you think so, or why do you disagree? Do you see parts of society today that are deadly serious? How might celebration be a counterweight to despair?
- 4 Do you read “escapist” literature? Why or why not? Who is challenged when writers like Wodehouse present a case that the world might be different than it is today?
- 5 How do you respond to Lord Emsworth’s passion about maintaining the yew alley? What is his argument? Do certain types of efficiency and improvement lead to a slippery slope that can destroy beauty?
- 6 What is it about Gladys that appeals to Lord Emsworth? What virtues in her does he admire?
- 7 Why is Lord Emsworth so amused at his sister calling him “master” of Blandings Castle? Is he peer or peon? To whom or what does he answer as the story begins? What about as the story ends?

8 Lord Emsworth compares the exploits of Gladys and Ern to those of “heroes and demigods” and later draws courage himself from their example. Do any similar battles need fighting in your own context? To whom do you look for examples of courage?

9 Consider the case of the garden flowers, described so evocatively. Why does McAllister the gardener resist their being picked? Why does Lord Emsworth allow Gladys to pick them? What does this say about their purpose?

10 What elements of life does the story celebrate? What does Lord Emsworth most enjoy? Does anything give you similar sorts of pleasure? Do you have a place or activity in which you can lose yourself (or find yourself)? Where do you find joy or laughter in life? Where do you find beauty and rest?

Further Reading

- “Leaf by Niggle” by J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Trinity Forum Reading*, 2003
- “Revelation” by Flannery O’Connor, *The Trinity Forum Reading*, 2005
- Vigen Guroian, *Inheriting Paradise: Meditations on Gardening* (Eerdmans, 1999)
- Vigen Guroian, *The Fragrance of God* (Eerdmans, 2006)
- Josef Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture* (St. Augustine’s Press, 1998)
- Gilbert Meilaender, editor, *Working: Its Meaning and Its Limits* (Notre Dame, 2000)