



The Head of Kay's

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Set at the fictional public school of Eckleton, the story centres upon the "house of Kay's", the riotous boys therein, its tactless, unpopular master Mr Kay, and Kennedy, the head boy.

The Head of Kay's Details

Date : Published July 1st 2008 by Classic Books Library (first published January 1st 1905)

ISBN : 9781600967740

Author : P.G. Wodehouse

Format : Paperback 152 pages

Genre : Fiction, Humor, Academic, School

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From Reader Review The Head of Kay's for online ebook

Dave says

“The Head of Kay’s” is a slight step backward for P. G. Wodehouse. Originally published on October 5th of 1905, it was a return to the school stories which he departed briefly for his humorous children’s history of William Tell. Wodehouse creates a public school this time, in the form of Eckleton, with most of the action taking place with members from Kay’s and Blackburn’s houses. Once again, sports play a big role in the story, this time including Cricket, Football, and track and field sports, with just a little bit of boxing thrown in. Wodehouse also throws in a slightly different venue during part of the book with some of the boys at camp.

Though this book doesn’t have as many problems as some of the earlier novels, it does seem to be a step backward from his previous school book “The Gold Bat”, and his previous book “William Tell Told Again”. Many of the situations he has covered before, and overall the book had less of the humorous feel than his better efforts, even during his early career. That being said, this is also better than some of what he wrote before.

There is no single lead character in this book. When the story opens, it is mostly focused on the current head of Kay’s House, Robert Mowbray Fenn. This is true even when Fenn isn’t where the action is taking place. Fenn is on the verge of nearly single-handedly winning the Cricket Cup for Kay’s House. They need just a small score of 79 to win the cup, and Fenn has personally scored more than 80 in all his previous efforts during the tournament. The particular Mr. Kay, though has gotten on Fenn’s nervous a bit too much, and after a disagreement he holds Fenn out from the match until it is almost over. Fenn returns, but makes a critical mistake and they lose. The students in Kay’s get some revenge on their master at the school concert when Fenn is given an ovation and then he treats them to an un-approved encore which really gets them into an unruly mood which results in the concert ending early.

The action then moves to camp, where Kennedy and Jimmy Silver of Blackburn’s House are attending. Both of them are good friends with Fenn, but think little of the other members of Kay’s house, some of whom have their own tent at camp. When the students return to Eckleton, they learn that Kennedy has been made the head of Kay’s. This disrupts the relationship between Fenn and Kennedy, and for a while Kennedy is the main character of the book as he strives to make something out of Kay’s House, though he is not able to make much headway without the help of Fenn.

Fenn again becomes the center of the action, as he breaks a significant school rule and goes out after hours, knowing full well that others who have done so in the past have been dismissed from school. He nearly gets caught, and leaves evidence behind, which seems to be causing him more and more problems. At the same time, Jimmy Silver is trying to play the peacemaker between Fenn and Silver. Ultimately he succeeds, and just when Fenn appears to be on the verge of being kicked out, a miracle of sorts saves him. Together, they work to bring Kay’s into some order, and when Mr. Kay leaves and is replaced with Mr. Dencroft, they House is much improved. They set their sites on the Sports cup, and the story finishes with the results of those competitions.

After two books which showed a great deal of improvement, it is somewhat predictable that he would take a step backwards now and then. This story is stronger than three of the five books which came before it, but weaker than the most recent two. It has its moments, but in general it doesn’t have as much humor as one usually gets with Wodehouse. The characters are fairly well done, but by creating yet another school a lot of

time is spent on exposition about the school and the history of the houses and the people.

Joe Stevens says

I've now read half a dozen of these school boy type books as I work through a complete read of The Master. I've given up looking for The Master in The Apprentice and I'm just in it for survival. Really aside from a complete read of all the works of Wodehouse I can see little to recommend this book to anyone not infatuated with Britian's turn of the century schools and 100 year old play by play descriptions of sports like Cricket and Rugby.

As I read this massive public domain e-book of Wodehouse, I can't help fearing that folks will try this and give up the author as a bad read. Please trust me when I say that something like 'Joy in the Morning' (Jeeves & Wooster) or 'Uncle Fred in the Springtime' (Blandings) is where you want to start. For short stories, try 'Blandings and Elsewhere' or The 'Inimitable Jeeves'.

Amrith says

The master, much like the early part of the innings of an aggregator of great scores, keeps things mostly subtly, unfussy-ly ticking along, with a touch of a flourish here and there, showing flashes of what is to come.

Neil says

The title refers to the head boy of Kay's "house" at Eckleton public school. Wodehouse is still very much learning his craft a very uneven book alternating between good and dull. The first four chapters are fairly good following Fenn the original "head of Kay's," the book then follows his replacement Kennedy for 9 chapters and goes rapidly downhill, before switching back to Fenn for the books best section (chaps. 13 to 21), before getting bogged down in some rather dull sporting activities for the last 3 chapters.

Not much humour a few fun similes in the second Fenn section but that's about it, hard to believe it's Wodehouse at times. The only earlier book of PGW's I've read so far was "a prefect's uncle" at least it's better than that. Chapters 13 - 21 were almost enough to push it up to 3 stars... but not quite.

Illiterate says

Beaks, prefects, swots, & fags. Corps, dorms, prep, & rags. All that rot.

Phil Syphe says

Set around the time of its 1905 publication, "The Head of the Kay's" is another of P. G. Wodehouse's school

stories.

Eckleton is the name of the all-boys' establishment. Mr Kay is master of one house and is unpopular. He is unhappy with his head boy, Fenn, and arranges for Kennedy – of Blackburn's house – to come and take over as head prefect. Thus there's a rivalry between Fenn and Kennedy whilst other members of Kay's also cause trouble for the new arrival.

Thankfully Wodehouse didn't spend his career on this type of story, otherwise it's doubtful he'd ever become as famous as he did – if at all. The other school stories that I've read range from below average to average, but this is his worst book out of all that I've read of his so far.

The plot is simple to non-existent, featuring few surprises. The characters are dull, samey, and all male. Wodehouse became good at creating love interests. I miss the witty and beautiful female character(s) included in later books, plus the haughtier interfering women he portrays so well. Even the humour he is famed for is scarce in this novel.

Leslie says

One of Wodehouse's "School Stories", this book takes place at a minor public school named Eckleton's and deals with the difficulties faced by the boy who is the head of Kay's house (mostly caused by the "beastly" behaviour of Kay himself).

I found this story to be less outrageously funny than many of Wodehouse's books and more of a straight-forward 'boy at school' book. I enjoyed it but I doubt that I will ever reread it.

Brian's Bookshelves says

PG Wodehouse is really finding his form in this.

Again set in school and centred around sport Cricket, rugby and Athletics all feature heavily. but this novel has a good plot behind it. A large complicated you come to expect from a blandings novel

It follows 2 boys who become head boy of Kay's House and there attempts to keep order. Throw in a burglary and a late night escapade and this short novel zips along

Pure Joy If you like English sports

Evan Leach says

The Head of Kay's is the fifth of Wodehouse's school stories, and his sixth published work overall. Like the other early school stories, these are simple, relatively short novels that were probably intended for younger readers. The action takes place at the fictional public school of Eckleton, where one of the houses (Kay's) has a reputation for unruly behavior, due in large part to its incompetent and unpopular master. Over the course of the school year the house faces changes in administration, takes place in a number of sporting events, and experiences the joy of early 20th century summer camp.

Wodehouse was a prolific writer, and this is one of his earlier works. However, his skills improved notably between the earliest school story and this novel. The humor is strong (although this book is actually a bit less “laugh out loud” funny than some of Wodehouse’s earlier work), and the plot is simply better than the ones featured in earlier stories. It’s much more focused and engaging, and the description of school sporting events never threatens to take over the book, a problem with some of the other school stories.

While Wodehouse’s best was certainly still to come, this is an entertaining, quick read by a true master of English humor. **4.0 stars**, recommended!

Shawn Cooke says

A pretty standard, by-the-book example of turn-of-the-century school fiction. The characters are clearly drawn, and we can easily pick out our protagonists from our antagonists. The former are all athletic stars who maintain respect by being willing to beat up anyone who disagrees. The latter are low, underhanded dogs who don’t respect the protagonists... and I’m not sure quite why else.

But this is not the sort of story for thinking about too much. The adventures of these school boys as they navigate dormitory life and summer camp is fun to follow. And if their methods are far different than one would observe in a school today, it’s a fascinating glimpse into the history of the educational system.

Eddy says

Not as good as his later masterpieces, as you'd expect, but you can see the beginnings of his talent at work in this school story.

Spiros says

Again, an instance of finding the Overlook Wodehouse irresistible; yes, this is one of Plum's early, public school novels, but once I hold one of these, which I have not yet read, I have to have it. It was with grave reservations, and memories of *The Gold Bat* and *The Pothunters* that I purchased this.

Well, I am happy to report that this book is where Plum turns the corner; while there is far too much about Footer and Sports Day, and while the characters aren't as sharply individuated as they would shortly become, Plum is fully in charge of his plot here. And in the characters of Jimmy Silver and Kennedy, you can descry the advent of Psmith and Jackson.

Francis Pellow says

enjoyable collection of school stories. early Wodehouse showing glimmers of his great wit.

Samyuktha jayaprakash says

First school based book of wodehouse I am reading. While I have read a lot of all girls school book this is the first all boys book I've read and it was fun! :D it felt like I could finally connect to a boy's brain :P Cricket , football , sports , breaking the rules , headmasters and jam - this books makes me yearn for the boarding school I never attended ?

Pratyush Khaitan says

Early Wodehouse. You can see the command and mastery in English although the wit Wodehouse was known for later appears in brief blinks. I liked how the school life was portrayed. There was a matter of factly telling of the tale compared to a lot authors tend to over dramatise. Still, it is an average book at best.
