

Ye Olde Plum News

No 27, April 2022

IMPOSTORS AT BLANDINGS

JOAN VALENTINE

Joan Valentine accompanied her close friend, Aline Peters to Blandings as her maid, **Miss Simpson**, despite the danger of being revealed: Freddie Threeepwood who once had courted her was there. She was close to get exposed but got away.

'Joan Valentine!' cried Judson, bringing his hands down on the tablecloth with a bang. 'I've just remembered it. That was the name of the girl Freddie used to write letters and poems to. And that's who it is I've been trying all along to think you reminded me of, Miss Simpson. You're the living image of Freddie's Miss Joan Valentine.' (Something fresh, 1915)

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### RONALD PSMITH

On a mission from Lady Constance Lord Emsworth went to his club in London to entertain the Canadian poet **Ralston McTodd** and bring him as a guest to Blandings. Psmith told Lord Emsworth what happened: *"When I came into the smoking-room of our mutual club that afternoon when you had been entertaining Comrade McTodd at lunch, I found him on the point of passing out of your life for ever. It seems that he had taken umbrage to some slight extent because you had buzzed off to chat with the florist across the way instead of remaining with him. And, after we had exchanged a pleasant word or two, he legged it, leaving you short of one modern poet. On your return I stepped into the breach to save you from the inconvenience of having to return without a McTodd of any description. No one, of course, could have been more alive than myself to the fact that I was merely a poor substitute, a sort of synthetic McTodd, but still I considered that I was better than nothing, so I came along."* He later replaced Rupert Baxter as Lord Emsworth's secretary. (Leave it to Psmith, 1923)

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RUPERT 'BEEFY' BINGHAM

Rev. Bingham, an old friend of Freddie Threeepwood, was a big guy with hands like hams. He and Gertrude, a niece to Lord Emsworth, were in love, but as a poor reverend he was not regarded a suitable wooer by Lady Constance. Gertrude was deported to Blandings. Freddie suggested his friend to go to Blandings and ingratiate himself with Lord Emsworth so he would give him a vicarage. Lord Emsworth told Gertrude: *'A friend of Frederick's is coming down here tonight for a visit. His name I understand is Popjoy. So you will have some young society at last.'* Beefy/Popjoy wasn't successful in ingratiating himself and Lord Emsworth said: *'I think he is the most appalling young man I ever met.'* To get rid of him, and at the same time annoy Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe of Much Matchingham, Lord Emsworth gave Beefy the vicarage of Much Matchingham. (Company for Gertrude, 1928)

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### SUE BROWN

Sue was the daughter of Dolly Henderson, Gally's only, but lost love. She was a chorus girl at a theatre, when she and Ronnie Fish, son of Lord Emsworth's sister Julia, fell in love. Ronnie introduced her to Lady Constance as **Myra Schoonmaker**, a rich American girl who was expected at Blandings. Sue and Ronnie sent the real Myra a telegram, signed Lady Constance, that there was scarlet fever at the castle. The answer was received by Baxter, who exposed Sue's true identity to Lady Constance and Lord Emsworth. Gally intervened. *'I said (to Lady Constance) that, if she gave up acting like a barbed-wire entanglement in the path of true love, I would undertake not to publish the Reminiscences.'* He told Sue: *'I don't say that you can actually count on an aunt-in-law's embrace from my sister Constance - in fact, if I were you, I wouldn't risk it. She might bite you - but apart from that, everything's all right. The wedding bells will ring out.'* (Summer Lightning, 1929)

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LORD ICKENHAM and COMPANIONS

Lord Emsworth was in London to bring **Sir Roderick Glossop** to Blandings. Accidentally he insulted his intended guest who refused to come. Lord Ickenham made a suggestion to his friend Lord Emsworth: *'You are in urgent need of a Sir Roderick Glossop. She (Polly Pott) is in urgent need of an impressive father. I am prepared to play both roles. Tomorrow, by suitable train, Sir Roderick Glossop will set out with you for Blandings Castle, accompanied by his daughter and secretary. ... The present task will be a childishly simple one to a man of my gifts.'* Polly Pott played his daughter **Gwendoline Glossop**. The horrified Pongo Twistleton played his nephew and secretary **Basil Glossop**. *As always when fate had linked his movements with those of the head of his family, he was feeling like a man floating over Niagara Falls in a barrel.* (Uncle Fred in the Springtime, 1939)

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### BILL 'BLISTER' LISTER

'Prue' Garland, daughter to Lord Emsworth's sister Dora, was in love with William G. Lister, a godson of her uncle Gally. As a poor artist he was not a suitable wooer and Prue's mother detained her at Blandings. Uncle Gally told Bill to go to Blandings to paint a portrait of Lord Emsworth's pig: *'One of the first confessions extracted from Prue, while undergoing the third degree, was that her heart throb's name was William Lister. You'd better call yourself Messmore Breamworthy.'* When Lord Emsworth criticized a draft of the portrait, Bill got angry and Mr. Breamworthy was thrown out. Gally had the solution: *'Clarence is coming to consult me about getting another artist to paint the Empress. ... When he arrives, I shall present you as my selection for today.'* This time he introduced Bill as **Mr. Landseer**. *'Why Landseer?'* he asked at length. *'Clarence has always*

*admired your 'Stag at Bay'' said the Hon. Galahad. Lady Constance said that the stagpainter was dead, but Gally responded: 'No. I mean the Landseer that paints pigs.'* The resemblance between Mr. Breamworthy and Mr. Landseer was because they were halfbrothers. His real identity was blown away by Freddie who, on his arrival at Blandings, surprised to see his old friend, exclaimed 'Blister!' (Full Moon, 1947)

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CUTHBERT 'BILL' BAILEY

Bill was engaged to Myra Schoonmaker. Myra's father had left her in Lady Constance's charge and she regarded the alliance as absolutely unthinkable as he was a curate without a bean. Lady Constance lugged the poor girl off to Blandings. Lord Ickenham brought Bill there, under the name **Cuthbert Meriweather**. Lord Ickenham manipulated (=blackmailed) the Duke of Dunstable to give Myra a cheque on thousand pound, so Bill and Myra could elope to London and get married. (Service With a Smile, 1962)

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### SAMUEL 'SAM' BAGSHOTT

Sandy Callender, Lord Emsworth's secretary had broken her engagement with Sam Bagshott, son of a friend to Galahad. Gally brought Sam to Blandings and presented him to Lord Emsworth as **Augustus Whipple**, author of 'On The Care Of Pigs.' *'You have some objection to being an authority on pigs?'* *'Yes, I have, considering that I don't know a damn thing about them.'* *'... 'No need for concern. Clarence will do all the talking.'* (Galahad at Blandings, 1965)

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MAUDIE STUBBS

Gally to Clarence: **Mrs Bunbury** isn't Mrs Bunbury. *She is the widow Stubbs. Her maiden name was, of course Beach, though when I knew her in the old days as a barmaid at the Criterion, she called herself Maudie Montrose. ... Later she married the proprietor of a private detective agency.* Gally wanted a 'detective' at Blandings and introduced her as Mrs Bunbury, an old friend of the American Mr Donaldson. (Pigs Have Wings, 1952)

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### SOME OTHER IMPOSTORS

At the same time as Psmith there were other impostors at Blandings: Eddie Cootes was a criminal who failed to enter as Ralston McTodd but entered as **Psmith's valet**, Miss Simmons was there as the **parlourmaid Susan**. Miss Eileen Peavey was a poet, invited by Lady Constance who didn't know that she also was known in criminal circles as 'Smooth Lizzie'. (Leave it to Psmith, 1923)

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