



'The Colonel talks to the exchange.'

# The Colonel cuts the mustard



G K Chesterton described **H M BATEMAN** as 'the Master of Wild Exactitude.' **DIANA WILLIS** looks back at the extraordinary work of her cartoonist father



**M**y father's reputation as one of the funniest men in Britain during the '20s and '30s culminated in the 'Man Who' series for *Tatler*, based on the awful consequences of wearing the wrong

sort of hat in Ascot's Royal Enclosure, or failing to drive the ball off the first tee at St Andrews. His ability to express extremes of emotion by economical lines was a refreshing change from the elaborate cross-hatching and static presentations of previous years.

With the ending of hostilities in 1918, a flood of ex-service personnel swelled the existing population. My father had personal experience of the army, having served briefly as a private before being 'booted out' for health reasons, and he held all things military in great respect. But the sudden influx of retired army officers and their families was seized upon with gusto by him, and he selected the Colonel as his specific subject. The colonels retained their military bearing and air of authority, and sported carefully cultivated moustaches of greater or lesser amplitude – my father favouring the neatly clipped variety.

It was behind closed doors that the Colonel's nature made its greatest impact. Seldom conducting verbal interactions at anything less than full blast, his voice and temper provoked fear and trembling. Servants fled the room, wives were often reduced to tears and even rendered unconscious, so violent was his reaction to otherwise common occurrences. Finding one of the cook's hairs in the soup, the late arrival of dinner-party guests, trying to conduct a conversation with a telephone operator or idiot railway porters were all grist to the mill.

**T**he steady output of Colonel drawings came together in book form in 1925 when Methuen published *Colonels*, sixty full drawings and assorted potent snippets devoted entirely to the activities of these individuals; it was an instant success. The spectacular impact with which it was received resulted in men of otherwise impeccable valour in the field of battle absenting themselves from home when it was rumoured that H M Bateman was in the neighbourhood, fearing that they might become a target for ridicule.



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Top: 'A quiet half-hour with the Times.'

Below: 'To Account Rendered.'

