

FREDDIE BARTHOLOMEW, BOY FILM STAR, TELLS LIFE STORY

Traveled to U.S. to Play 'Copperfield'

First Appeared in Public When 3, to Recite Short Poem.

BY FREDDIE BARTHOLOMEW
as told to
RUTH M' TAMMANY
Times Special Writer

"I was born in London, England, March 28, 1924. I am the youngest of three children—I have two sisters, Eileen and Hilda. There isn't much to tell about those early years but I presume I was rather a nuisance—although, from all reports, I was a good looking baby with dark curly hair and a smile."

"My father, Cecil Bartholomew, was in the office of the ministry of agriculture, and very busy. When I was 3 years old, he took us all to Wimborne to visit my aunt, Miss Millicent Bartholomew, whom I call Cissy. Wimborne is a beautiful English village, not far from London. I do not know how it came about, but my father returned to London with my mother and sisters and left me for a fortnight with Aunt Cissy."

"About there, I begin to remember. I know a beautiful lady was telling me a story about Pussy Cat—... and I know also I wanted to stay with her in the pretty little white house and hear more stories. I stayed . . . I never went back to London to live."

An Important Question

"Cissy used to go out a great deal on what she called charity errands. I have since learned that they were her activities in the British Legion and Women's Institute. I was three and one-half when she asked me an important question:

"'Freddie, would you like to receive one of your little verses at my church bazaar?'

"I must have answered 'individually'—I really don't know—at any rate that all sounds rather silly—now that I am 12. I went to the bazaar—I stood on a table so that all the ladies could see me and I recited 'Washing Dolly's Clothes' and the story of a London policeman directing traffic. I am glad they applauded the policeman story the most because, you see, it got me off on the right foot, as it were."

"What a sweet little fellow," said all the ladies who crowded around me and Cissy.

"What lovely curls he has."

Cissy Was Praised

"I never recited 'Washing Dolly's Clothes' again in public, but Cissy was pleased and she began teaching me lines from A. A. Milne's plays. I liked them tremendously and really felt like quite a man when I was 4 and went to London to recite in Wigmore Hall."

"I was 5. I liked Mark Anthony's speech best of all. I wanted to go to school, but Cissy thought she would teach me herself. She is a splendid teacher, you know, and I realized how much advanced work we did."

"When I was 5, Cissy came to me again with an important question. You see, Cissy and I have quite a system, really. She always asks me first if I want to go and so on. Then we discuss the matter and it is very nice because we always arrive at the same decision. So Cissy asked her question:

"Freddie, would you like to go to London to play a small part in a motion picture?"

"In pictures?" I said. "Why yes, if you will be my teacher."

"No, Freddie, you will have a director—man—and he will tell you what to do."

We Go to London

"So we went to London and I played a very small bit in a picture called 'Toyland.' When I was 6, I played another small part in 'Fascination.' I could not have been a very good actor because no one asked me to play in more parts. Cissy always has been kind enough to say that there were not many stories for motion pictures with children in them."

"When I was 7, I won a gold medal in an elocution contest for my reading of Tennyson's 'The Brook.' By this time I had made many friends through Wiltshire and was kept rather busy with such appearances. Perhaps Cissy thought I was getting out of hand a bit because soon after I received the medal, she sent me to school where I stayed for one year. I liked it, too . . . there were a great many boys to play with and everything seemed quite different."

"Cissy and I had been reading Dickens' 'David Copperfield' and sometimes I wonder what would have happened had I not read about David."

My Momentous Decision

"One evening Cissy and I sat reading and were in that part where David was being sent away to school. I always did feel sorry for the chap and would get very sad over his problems. Suddenly that evening I decided just what I wanted to do."

"'Cissy, I said, 'I must go to Hollywood.'

"'HOLLYWOOD?'

"She was too surprised to laugh and so just stared at me."

"I have just read in the papers that they are to make a picture of 'David Copperfield' and are looking everywhere for David."

"But, Freddie, have you any idea how far away Hollywood is?"

"I know exactly—across the Atlantic Ocean and another 3000 miles or so across the American continent. But it is so important, my going, because they can not find a David and I have known him ever so long. I understand him. Please, will you take me, Cissy?"

Great Adventure Begins

"That was the beginning of the great adventure—because during the following days I gave Cissy no rest until she finally said 'yes.'

"Then there was the exciting first ocean voyage—few days in the wonders of New York until we boarded a train for Hollywood. Nearing the end of our journey across the country, I began to won-

Appearing in 'Little Lord Fauntleroy'



Lillian Mae Bartholomew, arrived in the United States last week to start a court battle for guardianship of the boy, charging that his mother, Miss Millicent Bartholomew, had "kidnapped" Freddie and taken him to Hollywood.

Rosalind Russell Turns to Writing

HOLLYWOOD, April 13.—Rosalind Russell has turned writer, but anonymously. The story she is writing is based on incidents in her own life, but she says it is so fantastic that she will send it out under another name.

Rosalind hadn't been working long before she struck a snag. All her writing has to be done after her day's work in "Suicide Club," and her cook has threatened to leave, because she can't sleep through the noise of nocturnal typing.

We Arrive in Hollywood

"I felt better and went to sleep. The next day we arrived in Hollywood. I had thought it was a small place with motion picture studios in the center and little houses all around them, where the actors lived. But I found, instead, a tremendous city and I felt very bewildered. The very next day I walked up to police-directing traffic.

Arrived in London

"Will you kindly direct me to the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, sir?" "Sure, little fellow, 12 miles south."

"Twelve miles. But I . . ."

"Light's changing; you said, 'you and the lady better step lively.'

"We took a taxi and as we rode along in the congested traffic, I looked at Cissy and saw a tear trickle down her cheek."

"I wonder if we should have come, Freddie," she said.

"Keep up your courage, Cissy . . . remember, I am going to be David Copperfield."

An Actor in the Lot

"When we got to the big studio, everything seemed to be a tremendous rush and endless questions. In some way, I really can't say, because we were really too confused—when we arrived at the outer office of David O. Selznick. It was full of boys—dark-haired, yellow-haired, and they were quite noisy. Cissy and I took seats and one of the boys giggled at us—some one whispered, 'Keep up your courage, Cissy . . . remember, I am going to be David Copperfield.'

In Order to Check Up on the Receipts

in order to check up on the receipts. It was a day of good business. After the last show Mr. Stone said he would call it a bargain by keeping the money and withdrawing from

the show.

Start Brother Act

When the circus men attempted to stop him, he picked up a sword and cut the ropes of the main tent. While the crew tried to keep the big top from collapsing, the elder Stone and his son made their getaway. Pa Stone then started out to manage his boy as an individual performer.

Maries Aliene Crater

The show opened in October, 1902, at the Davidson Theater in St. Louis. During the run, Fred met and married Aliene Crater, who played the Lady Lunatic in the piece. The couple had worked together for two years before romance blossomed.

Slowly they worked their way up in the variety world through the museums and old-time concert halls.

Edward had the ill luck to break a leg and while incapacitated, a younger son, Edward, also got the performing flair and took up acrobatic practice. He and Fred tramped throughout the West in a "brother" act, which consisted of a black face duet, tumbling and acrobatics and ended with a tight wire finale.

Trains on Tight Wire

When he returned to the farm, his mind was made up. He was going to be a tight-wire walker. Begging a pair of stockings from his mother, sewing them to a pair of swimming trunks, Fred completed the costume with the spangles still had recovered most of them.

Slowly They Worked Their Way Up

With Fred performing on the tight wire, his father operated a concession at which customers could watch the remaining Negro performers. A younger son, Edward, also got the performing flair and took up acrobatic practice. He and Fred tramped throughout the West in a "brother" act, which consisted of a black face duet, tumbling and acrobatics and ended with a tight wire finale.

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Stone, Montgomery Hit

It was just at the time that the old song, "Pasma Man" was written. Stone and Montgomery sang it and overnight were a hit. But the minstrel show floundered in New Orleans and Stone wanted Montgomery to return to Texas with him. The latter was ambitious, however, and persuaded Fred to go to East with him. They pawned two small diamonds for their fare to Chicago, got an engagement at the old Casino on Wabash-ay there.

Within Six Months

Within six months, Fred had mastered every trick he had seen the professional do in Wellington. A few weeks later a traveling circus came to town. An acrobat went through some difficult stunts on a high wire. When the act was over, Fred grabbed a balancing pole, scooted backward up the guide wire and went through his own act to the amazement of his friends and the enjoyment of the rest of the audience. The manager was not so pleased. He cut off Fred's ears, then cut off his hands.

When He Returned to the Farm

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He Came Back and Said, "O. K."

"Cissy and I went into the other office and I stood before a big desk. Cissy sat down—she looked frightened. My lips seemed to go suddenly dry and I kept moistening them with my tongue—my throat felt most queer. But Mr. Selznick didn't have gray hair or a beard—he was quite a young man, really, and when he smiled at me, I felt quite at ease.

"How long have you been in Hollywood, Freddie . . ."

"Bartholomew, sir . . . just a day."

"Well, well, and why did you come here?"

"To be David Copperfield, sir."

"You came all the way from England to play David Copperfield?"

"Not exactly, sir—I came from England to be David Copperfield. Oh please, sir—I can do it. I know all about him. I have been through all his troubles with him—I understand how he felt when his father struck him—I can see how he loved his young stepmother, because she was kind to me. I have had experience, sir, in some of these matters."

"It was out at last—I didn't dare look Cissy's way. I just stood there—and my lips got dry again. Maybe I said a little prayer to myself—I didn't know, but Mr. Selznick kept looking at me and I kept looking at him. We both smiled."

"Freddie," he said, "come to the studio tomorrow at 10 . . . for a test."

"And so . . . I became an actor."

(To Be Continued Tomorrow)

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