

John Pugmire, whom *EQMM* readers know for his translations of French author Paul Halter's work, has unearthed a buried treasure from the past, Henry Cauvin's *The Killing Needle* (Locked Room International, \$15.99 paper, \$7.99 e-book), first published in France in 1871 under the title *Maximilien Heller*, after the eccentric detective, and later as *l'Aiguille qui tue*. (Cont. p. 112)

French historians have assumed that Heller inspired Conan Doyle in the creation of Sherlock Holmes, and Pugmire's introduction lays out a persuasive case. Heller is an eccentric deductive genius knowledgeable about chemistry and forensic science, a master of disguise, and a drug taker. A doctor and friend narrates his case. And yes, Doyle read French. The novel preceded both Israel Zangwill's *The Big Bow Mystery* and Gaston Leroux's *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* as a locked-room mystery, and it pioneered a category of solution later discussed by John Dickson Carr and Clayton Rawson, as Pugmire explains in an afterword.

Unlike most past writers, Agatha Christie is always in print. The 75th anniversary edition of *And Then There Were None* (Morrow, \$16.99) is a handsome deckle-edged trade paperback with French flaps (the

jacket flaps), a biographical note on Christie, a paragraph from her autobiography about the writing of the 1940 novel, and the full content of the nursery rhyme at the center of the plot, now concerning (for political correctness) ten little soldier boys.

Other old books are bravely sent forth without any concern for present-day ethnic sensitivities. All you need to know about Sax Rohmer's way-over-the-top 1936 thriller *President Fu Manchu* (Titan, \$9.95) is found in the blurb of a 1970s Pyramid reprint: "With his vast army of slaves and zombies infiltrating every facet of American life, the evil doctor had incorporated a new and deadly weapon into his ever expanding arsenal: Political Rhetoric." Accompanying is "The Blue Monkey," one of the few short stories about Nayland Smith without his longtime Yellow Peril nemesis, introduced by William Patrick Maynard. ●

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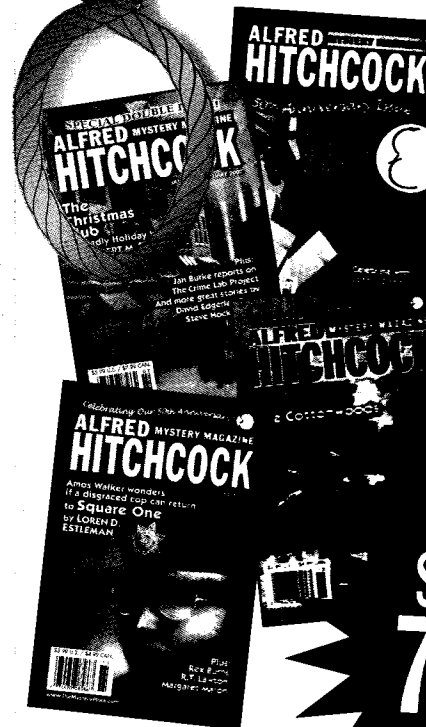
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