THE HOLY TERROR!

Story of a World Dictator

By H. G. WELLS

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CHAPTER XVIII

RUD EXPLODES

Rud woke up on Sunday morning in a state of extreme irritation, or rather he emerged by degrees from a dreaming exasperation to an aching discontent. He woke up and stared at his discolored ceiling. A realization of absolute ineffectiveness overwhelmed him.

"Defeat!" he whispered. "Defeat. Self defeat. Here's the Popular Socialist demonstration will be petering out as usual in Hyde Park as if nothing had happened; here's a plain situation before us that won't wait, that can't wait, and I'm doing nothing. My guns are spiked.

"What good am I?"

"I might as well not exist."

The tension accumulated. It reached the breaking point. He exploded.

"Oh God!" he screamed.

He leapt out of bed as though some unseen beast in it had bitten him. He threw his bedclothes into the corner; he gashed his chin shaving; he kicked his shoes across the room, he quarrelled with his shabby suit of clothes and broke his only pair of braces. He made hay of his room in his search for a piece of string or a safety pin to repair the damage. Instead of cooking his egg he beat it up raw in his milk and drank it like that with a trembling hand. He was too agitated to light his Primus and make tea.

He bolted himself to Camborne Square.

He shouted Steenhold out of bed and stamped and bawled about the room. He was determined to act, and now, at any cost. It was not only Steenhold he bawled into action, but himself. "Now or never," he said. "The time has come to act. Now, when no one expects it, is our moment. I have waited—I told you the other night I was waiting. Well—the time is now."

Steenhold received his announcement in a state of stunned admiration. He had always felt the latent explosives in Rud's composition and here at last, thank the Gods, they were exploding!

"You mean get the boys together?"

"I mean get them together now."

"Right, Chief."

Steenhold went to the telephone and began dialing. "Funny!" he said. "Bodisham gave me this list of names three days ago. And I didn't see what it was for. Really! Didn't see what it was for . . . That you Rogers? . . . Rogers!—The Hour has come."

The group and its associates assembled bit by bit. A miscellany of odd cars parked outside in the Square. Rud was exalted and they listened with close attention. He walked up and down, he sat and twisted himself about, he back of his chair, reiterating his conviction of a crisis.

"They've shot men in South Carolina. They landed marines to cooperate with the state police. British marines shooting American strikers. Think of it! The affair can't wait. Don't you see how urgent it is and what it means to us?

"I begged and prayed the Boss to take a line and he put a flat veto on the whole thing. . . . I must spear. There are things that must be said.

"How and where? I'll tell you exactly. . . . There's that platform in Hyde Park with one or two trained droolers, drooling his old stuff. . . . We go there. We take control." . . .

Bodisham thought for a while, grasped Rud's idea and began to fill in particulars.

"We go there by twos and threes and gather round the platform," said Bodisham. "Then when Rud thinks fit we put him on the platform. There'll be some raw greenhorn in charge. If necessary Rogers and you other stalwarts can hustle him. . . .

"Can we get reporters? I don't mean news-hounds, I mean reporters."

"I know a man or two," said Irwell.

"Shorthand?"

"We could have a man for a verbatim report," said Steenhold. "We ought to have a man for a verbatim report."

"And after your speech?"

"I don't know," said Rud. "But get what I say reported. Get it reported. And now I'm going ups'airs to be still—perfectly still—until it is time to go."

He vanished.

"He'll do it," said Steenhold not at all clear in his own mind what it was Rud would do.

The conspirators ate casually, wandering about the flat with mugs and chunks of bread and cheese. There was a lot of staring out of the window—as though the Future might be visible there already. After one o'clock they began to depart by twos and threes for Hyde Park.

* * *

PURPLE SUNDAY

The park was vastly crowded that afternoon, but over it hung a peculiar effect of inconsequence. It had less the quality of a popular forum than of an aimless promenade of useless people. It was a fermenting crowd, uneasy, and with no perceptible direction. There was something of the quality of one of those heavily clouded, brooding days on which there falls no single drop of rain. The processions had been swallowed up in a shapeless swarm of listeners and mockers and lookers-on. Over it all hummed a plane from which an officer was directing the movements of an unobtrusive but numerous police force by wireless. This plane and two little fleets of police vans were a recent and provocative innovation by the new Police Commissioner, but this afternoon it hummed above a stormless, quaking marsh of people. No need to move them on. They kept moving on.

The B. M. Gas converged. Rud made his way, silent but determined, among the platforms, towards his particular objective.

The air was full of voices; the nearer ones patchily audible, saying stereotyped things, the further ones a felt of raucous sounds. All the speakers seemed bored. Everybody seemed bored and dissatisfied. It was all politics and no reality. There was a big Labor Party demonstation, to show once again and for all time that no considerations of human warfare could shake for one moment the stern resolve of the established British trade union leaders to have no truck with Liberal politicians, men of science, men of ideas, Communists, Americans or anyone who might attempt to share the honors and emoluments that come at last to the implacably obstructive in political life. There was a dissentient Labor platform concerning itself with defining the fine differences in organization that justified its dessent. There was a Liberal platform trying to steal Labor votes by its insistence upon the trouble in the Ukraine and the Mysore prison scandal. There was a Free India group and a platform of miscellaneous people pinning their faith to the South Welsh prison scandals as a means of raising a useful indignation. General objectives had long since vanished in the intricacies of party strategy. At every Socialist and Liberal platform, the common man was being warmed ad incited against every other Socialist or Liberal group—probably with justice. One gathering charged the government with responsibility for the recent outbreak of measles. The Ministry of Health had done or not done this, that and the other thing, and at another point the Ministry of Agriculture was being challenged very manfully about some intricate manurial technicality. Isolationist platforms clashed with demands for intervention in Spain, China, Siam, the West Indies and Lithuania. Amidst the confusion religion reared its head to reply to infidelity, and antivivisection called on all mankind to end the greatest horror in the world. Communists in alliance with Catholic, Communits of the Trotsky heresy, Pro-Mexican Communists, New Communists and True Blue Communists, beat upon the air and warned the common man against deleterious imitations. It was less of a forum than a fair with every platform trying to sell some monopoly of its own.

Overhead bumbled the plane, directing the unobtrusive movements of the police, mindful of nothing said provided that nothing was done. It was a very symbol of the invincible determination of the government and institutions of Britain to yield to nothing less than blazing operations in reaction to any conceivable world reconstruction. And not to argue about it. They did not need to divide and rule. They ruled a fissiperous Opposition. That pervasive soft drening gave the exactest expression to the airless, gentle firmness of the British constitution at home and to its increasingly persistence in vaguely Imperialist assertion abroad.

The recent happenings in South Carolina played a minor role in that crowd's confusion of thought and feeling. The press had tempered the facts of the American social war to the mentality of the British public, and the general ignorance of American geography in England had prevented any realization of the steady extension of the conflict from state to state. The loss of confidence in the remedial powers of Congress and the lapse of the whole South and Middle West first towards sporadic lawlessness and then towards an organized insurrectionary movement, had been masked by the fragmentary nature of the news and overshadowed by the de facto war in the Ukraine and the Bulkans. No one had yet drawn a working analogy between the Transatlantic and the European situations.

The informal powers that worked through the forms of the British constitution, however, were from their own point of view, more alert to the realities of the American situation; they had always had close associations, financial and social as well as political, with the reactionary Republicism of Big Business, and they were in the closest sympathy with the methods of obstruction, non-co-operation and counter-attack that had defeated Franklin Roosevelt's well-meant but notalways well-balanced efforts to adapt the traditions of private capitalism to the economic and social stresses of a new age. They shared the same disregard of the warnings of the times, the sameuncompromising convertism of heart. They both wanted to pull the community back to the happy eighties, and they were quite prepared for just as much repression of the uneasy masses, repression direct or indirect, legal or informal, and as unobtrusively violent as possible.

Things were rather larger, more obvious and rougher on the American side, but the issues were essentially the same. The general public voted and demonstrated, but its voting seemed to lead to nothing. It felt that things were done behind its back and over its head but it could never understand clearly how. It never seemed able to get sound news out of its newspapers nor good faith out of its politicians. It resisted, it fumbled, it was becoming more and more suspicious and skeptical, but it was profoundly confused and ill-informed.

Rud's quick realization that something profoundly significant was happening across the Atlantic, or at least something that could be presented as being profoundly significant, was well ahead of the popular intelligence, but not so much ahead of it as to be out of touch with its latest possibilities.

Spectators far outnumbered demonstrators in the Park that Sunday, and never had they found the flow of eloquence so trite. They drifted from platform to platform. For anything fresh they heard they might as well have been at Matins or Evensong. The Popular Socialist platform had as usual contrived to get itself within irritation length of the main communist gathering. That was now its established place. It was within irritation length but it had long since ceased to irritate. Its normal function in the past had been to provoke violence and be rescued by the police in a scrimmage which justified the arrest of what the authorities, for the obscurest reasons, regarded as undesirable characters. But now that worked no more.

The orthodox Communist bunch was not taking much notice of the little band of purple shirts that afternoon. From 1937 onward an almost genteel discretion had permeated the Communists. They had found long since that indignation and violence were far less effective against Lord Horatio's once-dreaded following than ridicule. They would kill his trained speakers by listening to them in a pseudo-awe-stricken silence—in which they stumbled and fell—or they would disconcert them by sudden baffling interruptions. But this afternoon, because of the general vague dissatisfaction, even the sport of ragging the Popular Socialists was proving a poor draw.

Three or four dingy young Reds were attempting to get capital out of the absence of Lord Horatio at Liverpool.

"Where's Horry to-day? Taking a day off with his girl? Hi Jeams! Long Jeams there! Where's his Ludship? . . ."

Rud contemplated the scene.

"Well?" said Rogers.

"All our men are here?"

"Yes. And now?"

"We go onto the platform. Which way up?"

"Those trained speakers of Horry's are no good at all," said Irwell, leading the way round the crowd. "Sheer waste of money. Listen to that fool—a chick ofthree days old could heckle him down."

"I'll speak," said Rud.

"This way," said Bodisham.

A tall young man wearing one of the prohibited purple shirts (But one costume does not make an indictable uniform.) seemed to recognize Rogers. He was acting as the day's usher of the ineffective Popular Socialist eloquence. Rud found himself hoisted to the platform by his henchmen. He elbowed his way towards the front of the platform.

"You're not going to speak?" said the tall man.

"I am going to speak."

"I've heard nothing about it from Hoggin."

"Change of plan at the last moment."

The tall young man turned to Rogers and asked in an audible aside: "Who is this fellow?"

"He's all right," said Rogers. "You hear him."

"But what are you going to say, Mister—?"

"You listen," said Rogers.

"When?"

"Right now," said Rud. "Don't you bother me." And he pushed his way to the forefront of the platform and stood glaring. The audience had been having a routine time with the trained "Booners" and they hailed a new face as a pleasant variation of the afternoon's proceedings. "Ullo Beethoven!" said a red-faced, frizzy-haired little man, giving a name that was not unhelpful to Rud on later occasions. "Ullo Bottle-imp! The Things old Bohun catches!"

Rud faced the interrupter with an outstretched hand. "Here Gollywog," he said, "listen to me."

"Gollywog" fitted. Shouting and pushing subsided. This might be worth listening to.

(To be Continued)

YEO'S THEATRE

SOURIS—Thurs.
MONTAGUE—Sat.

Eastern Guardian

..*This column is reserved for news of local interest but advertising of a newsy nature may be inserted at 4 cents a word strictly payable in advance.

..*SUBSCRIPTIONS to the Charlottetown Guardian may be handed to their Rept. Archie Hume.

..*ROBIN HOOD FLOUR is economical. More loaves of better bread from each bag.

..*W.M.S. MEETING — The regular monthly meeting of the W.M.S. of the United Church, Montague, was held on Tuesday evening at the Manse. The president, Mrs. Leslie MacDonald was in the chair. Mrs. Ethan Stewart conducted the worship service, bringing a special Christmas message in reading, poems and hymns which was most interesting and thoroughly enjoyed by those present. After the minutes and roll call the following officers were elected for the New Year: President, Mrs. L. H. Coffin, First Vice President, Mrs. Leslie MacDonald; Second Vice President, Mrs. W. J. Fraser; Recording Secretary, Mrs. Neille Fraser Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. R. K. Clement; Treasurer, Mrs. L. A. Johnston; Strangers' Secretary, Mrs. J. E. Fraser; Christian Stewardship, Mrs. D. MacDonald, Mrs. Ethan Stewart, Mrs. A. Hume. Missionary Monthly, Mrs. G. Gordon; Temperance, Mrs. M. MacLean; Associate Helpers, Mrs. N. Fraser. After the meeting closed dainty refreshments were served by the hostess, Mrs. Long.—L.

PERSONALS

..*Mr. Kenneth Beer medical student in Dalhousie University has arrived in Montague to spend the Christmas holidays with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Beer.—L.

..*Mr. Jack Murdock, student in Acadia College, is spending his holidays with his mother, Mrs. J. W. Murdock, Montague.—L.

..*Students from Saint Dunstan's home for holidays are Mr. Clarence Murphy, Mr. P. Landry, Mr. Vincent Grant and Glen Murphy all of Montague.—L.

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CLEANING UP!

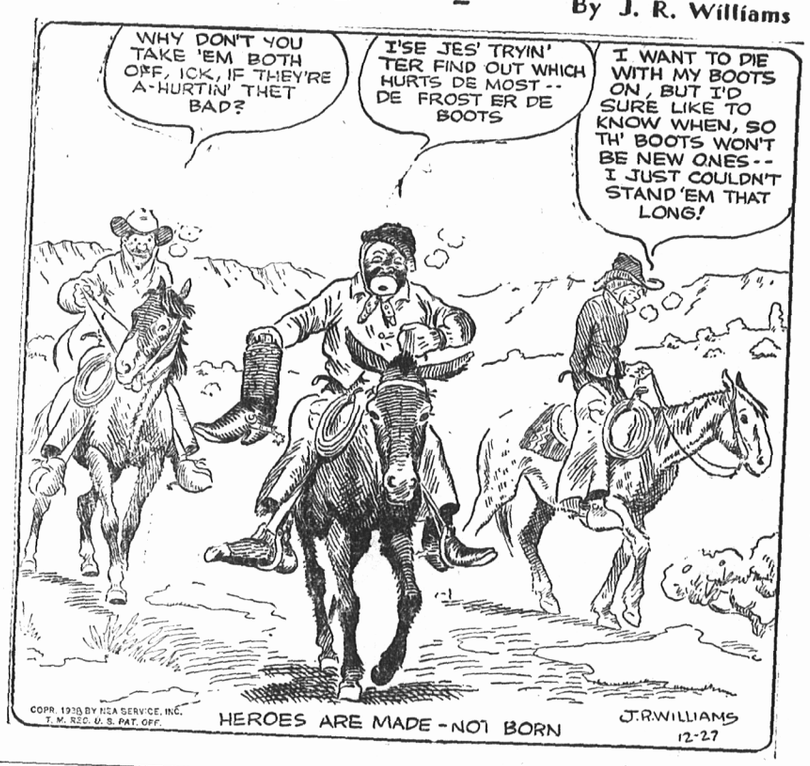
During this week we will be at our store cleaning up prior to vacating.

We have a small balance of Coats, Dresses, Sweaters, Skirts, Etc., still on hand. If you want a real bargain call in while we're here.

NO REASONABLE OFFER WILL BE REFUSED ON ANY ITEM

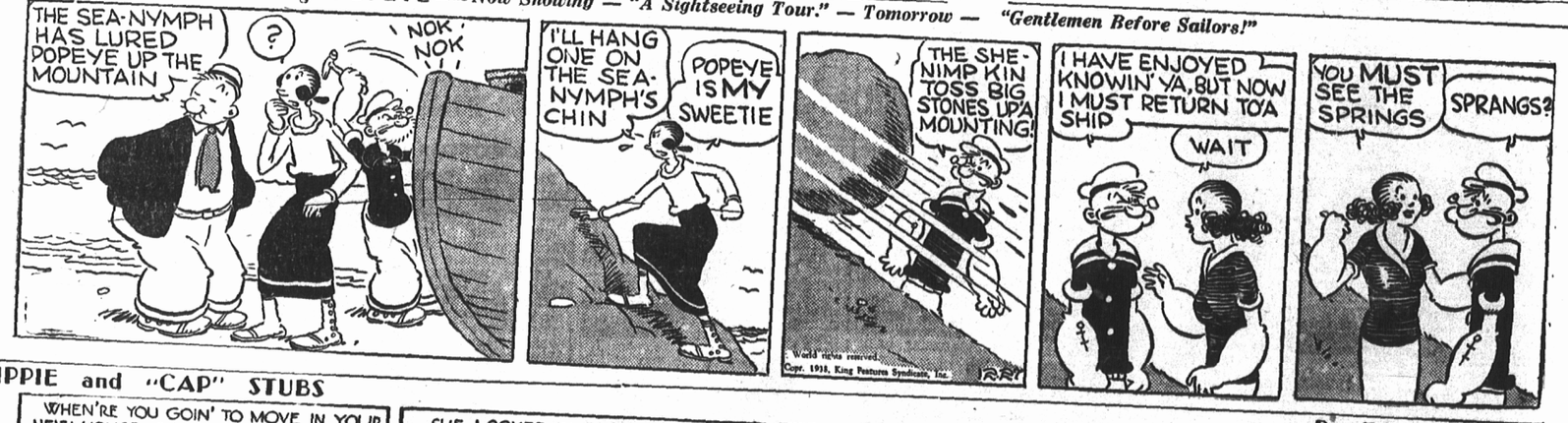
R. P. SIMPSON

OUT OUR WAY — By J. R. Williams



OUR BOARDING HOUSE — With — Major Hoople

Thimble Theatre, Starring POPEYE — *Now Showing — "A Sightseeing Tour." — Tomorrow — "Gentlemen Before Sailors!"*



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