

THE HOLY TERROR!

Story of a World Dictator

By H. C. WELLS
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And suddenly almost within touching distance were flushed faces and bright eyes, and mouths that quivered with excitement. They were quite young girls and their excitement poured out upon him.

"That's enough," said Rud, dismissing them abruptly, and turned away. The apparatus clicked and was still.

"All over the world," said Quinlan. "Thank you," said Rud, dismissing him, and went out through a further arch that opened upon a rick garden. He strolled slowly up a winding path with occasional steps, and came to a pavilion in which he seated himself. "All over the world," he repeated. "And here I am—solitary."

"All over the world." He had never thought of his home for years—he had indeed deliberately not thought of it. Now he imagined that forgotten family of his joining in the world chorus. Would they realize that this great Rud was indeed the forgotten one of them, thrusting all the rest of them out of the way, came his vehement little cousin Rachel. He had slapped her and then he had pulled her soft abundant hair and they had scuffled. It all came back to him intensified. He saw and felt her face very vividly close to his. She was gripping his wrists, she was putting out her sharp red tongue at him as if saying "Kassas" at him. Was she still someone in this conquered world, marvelling at him? He hoped she was still in the world. He hoped like to feel he had got square with her.

What had become of her? What would she be like now? Quiser, but she must be, she was the only girl he had ever come to grips with. He had never seen her since her mother took her abroad, to South Africa was it? Or Australia. And after that slowly he had become aware of his Destiny. Slowly his Destiny had enveloped him, absorbed him.

He imagined Cousin Rachel was sitting beside him and that he was talking to her about the intervening years. "In a way I have done my task too well. I stand out in the world like that mighty archangel you may have seen out there, the Guardian of the Revolution. I am frozen in the same attitude. On guard against any reaction. But I am not really frozen through. I am not really a mighty archangel. I am frozen, I am something more. I am a living man—most terribly alone."

(What was that book novel spoke about? The Golden Bough and sacrificial kings? I must read it.)

"You are wonderful," said Cousin Rachel sitting beside him in his imagination. "Sacrificial king of the world. For whom no sacrifice could be too great, my master!"

Rud started at the extravagance of his own thought and looked round guiltily for fear that some one might have observed what he was thinking. Cousin Rachel had evaporated. His haunting fear of self-betrayal asserted itself and again. This sense of an ever-watching eye in the open spaces cancelled, as it so often did, the ease of his Atheism. He sat up and then let himself drop into a pensive pose as who should think thoughts for a l the world.

CHIFFAN TALKS TO HIS PHOEBE
Chiffan was the least administrative of all the Group out of which the world was made. He remained what used to be called a Minister without Portfolio. He joined in the regular council meetings infrequently and on increasingly infrequent occasions he talked to Rud and Rud answered his ideas.

He was the great philosopher, the one who was developing their own methods of dealing with one another, and the new conjunct sessions of the Law, Education and Biological (Health) Boards were acting as an organ for arbitration and taking more and more responsibility on the shoulders of the council. Rud maintained his closest relations with the World Police under Thrip and the rather ill-defined ministry for the Protection of the World State, and Chiffan with his general salary as consultant—general, was as near an approach to the old-fashioned "independent gentleman" as the new world could show. He spent his days in appreciative living and in appreciative working. With the rapid increase of the world's wealth, a new leisure class of released and super-annuated workers was appearing. There were more gentlemen than ever, and more and more. The normal life labor contribution was now twenty-five thousand hours there was already great freedom in the way this could be distributed over the lifetime, and it ensured a comfortable minimum existence throughout life. Above that level, to be earned by competent contributions to the world, was the surplus of life, there was a great variety of rewards and fortunes.

Chiffan lived in a pleasant villa in the Rhode Valley, ten minutes flying from the Centre, and there he lived with the most intelligent and congenial of all the women he had ever met, his wife, Phoebe Chiffan, who was indeed the twenty-ninth "real mistress" of his gallant career. Their mutual affection was as manifest as their mutual tolerance, and though she was, as people say, "faithful to him, she viewed his active and imaginative interest in the whole spectacle of woman kind, with an amused sympathy. The only person in the world about whom she felt a twinge of jealousy was Rud. She felt Rud was a monster, she thought, his leadership of the Group uncertain. When she saw that Chiffan was troubled in his mind and asked him point blank what he was worrying about, and when he said "I'm bothered a bit over Rud," she said "I thought as much."

"No—you are."
"He's getting into a—a state of lonely misery."
"Isn't that his own affair?"
"You're inhuman."
"I'm feminine."
"And he to you. It's fifty-fifty."
"I've got a sort of maternal feeling about him. I've known him—"
"Four times as long as you have known me. What right has a man to be maternal?"
"Men are—and even some women."
She leapt out of the hammock and pulled up his chair. "All right, Chiffan," she said. "Tell me about your Rud."

"What I—what we have always liked about him," said Chiffan, "is a sort of diabolical energy. He is a something that all intrigues in me. There are times when I want to follow that man about like a child following a circus show. Why does he do things. He's an abject coward—these are things not to be repeated, my dear—and also he is a desperate fighter. Do you know I think at times that he is the master of the world to-day simply because he has a frantic fear of power—in the hands of anyone else."

CHAPTER XII
PROBLEM CHILD
Phoebe ruffled Chiffan's hair by way of showing she was listening. "So he has got the earth into his own hands," she said. "And he doesn't know what to do with it, and now he doesn't know what to do with himself," replied her husband.

"But isn't he putting the world in order at a tremendous rate. Everybody says so."
"No. We are. At least, the others are. All that he does is to watch—and make that keyhole Minister of his Thrip, watch what nobody anywhere turns any official authority conceded him, into power. And Thrip—well, Thrip bothers him with suspicions. Things are going well with the world, but unless they go a little wrong, what is the use of Thrip? Thrip sees to it that Thrip keeps him irritated and uneasy and he has no distractions. I'm sorry, darling Phoebe—you know I love you, you know how I love you—I don't want my ugly little Thunder-god to culminate in misery. He has made the whole spectacle of life rich and ridiculous for me. And now he is—he has a sort of greyness. He is bored or angry or afraid—afraid of things coming back—all day, and at night they give him drugs—and the best of drugs lower you and give you dreams. I know he has dreams. I didn't think things would

take this turn with him and it distresses me. It distresses me, my dear. Love me, love my Rud, Phoebe. I did a lot to make him what he is. You help me with Rud."
"How can I help?"
"Advice. The wisdom of your sex. Give me ideas what to do for him. You are all born with a natural interest in us. You are twenty years younger than I, and all the ages wiser."
"It is good for me to have such beliefs," said Phoebe. "But you must tell me first what you think, and then I will tell you just how right you are."
"That may be the way of it," said Chiffan.



stant reassurance still. That is plain enough even for you to see, my dear."
"Did you say just now that I was all the ages wiser than you?"
"Yes. When things are put before you but what I have only glimpsed by fits and starts about him—until quite recently—is something else. Rud, I realize, has a profound, maybe innate dread of the closest of all forms of domination—love."
"Go on."
"His capacity for love—if he ever had much capacity for love—has atrophied. Or you can put it, if you like, in quite another way. It has vanished and then returned in a vague, cloudy desire to be appreciated, admired, obeyed—loved by all the world. Without any return. All this accumulating desire for public adoration, all this increasing exhibitionism."
He thought profoundly.
"You see, Phoebe, you and I assume each other's egotisms. To a very considerable extent. Unless they get washed, or crippled or perverted in some way, men and women get together as you and I have got together at last. . . . We get a domination over one another. And so keep on with 'love-making'—but the long as things seem fair and equal chemistry of body and mind works so as to give us a control over each other and love-making—yes, we (Continued on Page 5, Col. 6)

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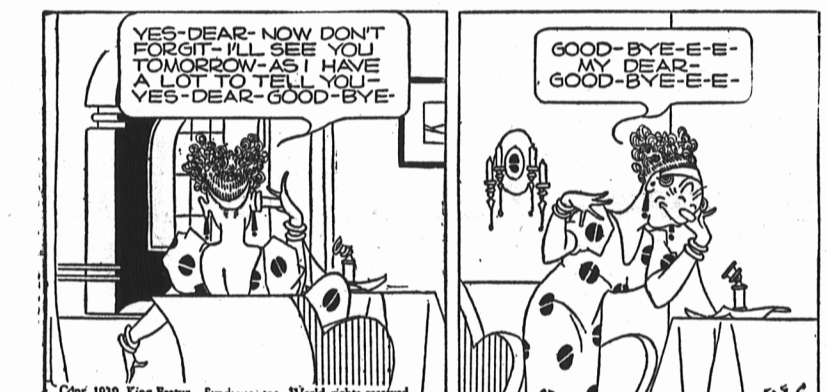
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