



# The Angel of Terror

*Edgar Wallace*

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## **The Angel of Terror** Edgar Wallace

Richard Horatio Edgar Wallace was born illegitimately in Greenwich, London, in 1875 to actors Mary Jane Richards and T.H. Edgar. As an infant he was adopted by George Freeman, a porter at Billingsgate fish market. Aged eleven, Wallace sold newspapers at Ludgate Circus and upon leaving school took a job with a printer. He later enlisted in the Royal West Kent Regiment, before transferring to the Medical Staff Corps, and was sent to South Africa. In 1898, he published a collection of poems called 'The Mission that Failed', and subsequently left the army to become correspondent for Reuters. South African war correspondent for 'The Daily Mail' followed and his articles were later published as 'Unofficial Dispatches'. His outspokenness infuriated Lord Kitchener, who removed his credentials. He then edited the 'Rand Daily Mail', but gambled disastrously on the South African Stock Market. Returning to England, Wallace at first reported on crimes and hanging trials, before becoming editor of 'The Evening News'. It was in 1905 that he founded the Tallis Press, publishing 'Smithy', a collection of soldier stories, and 'The Four Just Men'. The latter was published with the ending removed as an advertising stunt and he offered 500 to readers who could successfully guess the ending. Unfortunately, many did and he was almost bankrupted. At various times Wallace also worked as a journalist on 'The Standard', 'The Star', 'The Week-End Racing Supplement' and 'The Story Journal'. In 1917, he became a Special Constable at Lincoln's Inn and also a special interrogator for the War Office. The Daily Mail sent Wallace to investigate atrocities in the Belgian Congo, a trip that provided material for his 'Sanders of the River' books. In 1923, he became Chairman of the Press Club and in 1931 stood as a Liberal Parliamentary candidate for Blackpool. Wallace's first marriage in 1901 to Ivy Caldecott, daughter of a missionary, ended in divorce in 1918 and he later married his much younger secretary, Violet King. Along with countless articles, some 23 screenplays and many short stories, Wallace wrote more than 170 books, which have been translated into 28 languages and sales of which have exceeded 50 million copies. Over 160 films have been made from his books - more than any other author. In the 1920's one of Wallace's many publishers claimed that a quarter of all books read in England were written by him. His sales were exceeded only by 'The Bible'. He died in 1932 whilst working on the screenplay for 'King Kong', having moved to Hollywood after being offered a contract by RKO.

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