

Rhab the Rabbit.

BY FRANK RICHARDSON

THE sun shone white in the Courtyard of the Great King's Palace, while the Keeper of the Royal Rabbits gave a mid-day meal to his charges in their dwellings of cool porphyry.

Opposite to them in his marble cage lay the Great King Snake, torpid from comfortable eating. Through the golden bars one could see his monstrous coils of amber and jade green and Royal purple shimmering in the sunlight. The Rabbits also could see this thing.

Then the Forefather of all the Rabbits called to his side Rhab—"the peaceful one"—the youngest and whitest of them all, whose coat was of fine ermine, without blemish and without stain.

"My son," said he, "you are the fairest of my children. Your fur is white as snow upon the mountain, and your eyes are pink with the pinkness of a pearl. To you, of a surety, is it given to bring high honor to my house, O Rhab."

"Is it so O, my Forefather? Tell me after what manner this thing shall fall?"

"After this manner it shall fall, O Rhab. So long as the King Snake shall live, so long shall the Great King be seated on his throne, but at the death of the Snake, then the King also shall surely perish. Thus is it written and thus it shall befall; for the life of the Monarch and the life of the King Snake are as one (though the reason of this thing not even the wisest of the Rabbits can ever hope to compass). But, therefore, it is that the King-Snake fares delicately, and before him are only

placed Rabbits of the purest white, tender and succulent, even as you, my son."

"Even as I, my father?" said Rhab; and his little white whiskers shivered with fear.

"On an appointed day, the Keeper of the Rabbits shall come and shall place you between the golden bars; thus shall great honour come to my house."

"But I, O my father? What will become of me?"

"You will become a portion of the King-Snake, an upholder of the Empire of the Great King."

Tears came into the eyes of Rhab, and his little nose, made of the purest white velvet, tipped with pink, moved quickly to and fro from fear.

"Is it not possible that this great honor should pass me by, O my Forefather?"

"No," said the ancestor of all the Rabbits, "you are too white. The honour will surely be yours."

Every day when the sun was hottest Rhab beheld the Keeper of the Rabbits place between the golden bars a shivering ball of whiteness. . . . And the thought of the honour that was to come upon him caused cold fear to flutter in his heart. Nevertheless, both by day and by night, he thought of that honour and of naught else.

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Now Pshaw was the wisest of all the King's Counsellors. So wise was he that no man hearkened to his counsel. For only those who were themselves as wise as