

THE KING OF NO-LAND.

BY B. L. FARRISON.

(Continued.)

A WHITE-ROBED WOMAN, BATHED IN SWEET AIR, DOWN HE SCRAMLED, HAND UNDER HAND, AS ACTIVE AS A SQUIRREL, AND AS THOUGH HE HAD BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO CLIMB TREES ALL HIS LIFE. DOWN HE PLUMPTED IN THE MIDST OF HIS ATTENDANTS, AND RAISED SUCH A DUST THAT THEY RAN A FEW PACE AWAY TO SAVE THEIR EYES. HE LEMMED HIS BACK AGAINST THE TREE, AND LOOKED AT THEM JANUALLY. AS THEY ADVANCED TOWARD HIM WITH INTENTION OF SEIZING HIM AND TREATING HIM ROUGHLY MAYHAP, HE SPOKE TO THEM IN HIS NATURAL TONGUE, AND BADE THEM BE CAREFUL, FOR HE WAS RATHER TIED.

"It is the Prince," they cried, in amazement. "His manner was so comical that the Prince laughed long and blithely, and the doddery old jackdaw made such an effort to renew its youth that it shed its last feather, and almost shook itself into a fit."

"And in these clothes," they explained, as they surrounded him. "He has been waylaid and robbed!"

The Prince held up his hobnailed boots for inspection, and then walked slowly up and down among them, to give them the opportunity of admiring the easy fit of his garments. There were no bounds to their indignation.

"Where is the robbery?" they shouted. "Can your Royal Highness describe his person?" They gazed about in such a state of excitement that one might have fancied they were going to lay violent hands on each another.

"It was a nut," said the Prince. "A nut! That fell upon my head as I was walking alone. It hurt me, too!"

"Surely your Royal Highness," said the attendant upon whose bald pate the Prince had let the marble fall—"surely they drop about to-day. It must have been a nut that fell upon my head." He rubbed the sore place as he spoke.

"Thank you, stars it was not such a nut as mine. Listen," and the Prince illustrated his words with appropriate action. "Down dropped the nut, I picked it up, and cracked it—now you know how I am of nuts! But when the cracked shell was between my teeth, I felt that something living was inside. I put it out quickly, and the kernel rolled from the shell, and looked at me, in the shape and likeness of a man. He gazed at me, and I became fascinated by its beauty, and it grew and grew until it was as high as my knee, and there it stood growing. It was dressed in the brightest green and scarlet, and its eyes glimmered with purple. It claimed a distant kinship with me, and said, indeed, that it was one of my poor neglected relations—which I could scarcely credit, so far as regards the plea of poverty, when I looked at the creature's beautiful clothing. But these things went watching into my mind, and I said to myself, 'What a nut! It is a nut, and I have been through all our lives. It told me so many strange lessons, and taught me so many strange lessons, that I was as entranced. I remember no more about it except its name, which was 'Nut,' and which was 'Nut.' It was 'Nut!'"

"Humph! Humph!" they muttered, and questioned one another, but no one had heard of such a creature. "Your Royal Highness's poor relations—indeed! Are they not all provided for? This Prince is a beggar, and a nut!" But we will find him. Call out the guards, and let the woods be searched."

"Stand up the bell-shaped flowers," shouted the Prince, mimicking them. "Place a sentinel at every tree, and build a fence of forget-me-nots around the forest!"

Some were actually about to see to the carrying out of these orders, when he called to them.

"Hold! I was but jesting! As you love me, do not make a fuss!" They clustered about him in this adjuration. As they gazed at him, two Grand Old Sticks, with white heads, giggled with delight, like a couple of school-boys, at the ecstatic honor of being thus appealed to.

"No one to blame but I, I give you my honor, so no word be said. Regard this as a trick, and let it be a close secret between you and me. Do you understand? Mmm! If you break my confidence," he added with a malicious twinkle, "I'll cut down all your salaries when I am king. Now, then, let us pledge each other. Take the word from me, Mmm!"

They stood before him with their fingers on their lips, and took the oath. "Mmm!" said the Prince, quoting from the last original drama. "Let me rest a while."

His back was still against the tree, and he looked about him with regret, that so glorious a day was nearly at an end. Directly in front of him, but at some distance, on an eminence, was the west wing of the palace, behind a network of trees. The sun was setting, and muffled troops of heavy shadows were invading the palace, and as they passed the windows glared out with threatening eyes.

"How beautiful the sunset!" he said, in a low voice, and then he turned to his attendants and bade them to depart. "We are ashamed to see your Royal Highness in such mean attire."

"And yet I enjoy it," he said, "Look about you at the clouds. What lovely fancies dwell in them! Here are an angel's wings, stretched forth beneficently, blessing mankind in fiction and silk. See their feathery tips, and the pale purple fields that hide the body of the glorious being. Here is a great hill, with a many-towered castle built on its peak. The landscape opens—the hill grows smaller, the castle larger. A forest of pollards rises up beyond it—overhanging the dissolves it. The airy trees and land melt into a lake, or the lake on of many-tinted pearls, which lie beneath. See—sight is coming: the shadows creep into the lake's lacert. Weeping willows rise on either bank—rise and overlap the water. They bend toward each other from the opposite banks with delicate gracefulness. Is it not tea time?"

They gazed above and around, and then at one another. They saw none of these things. Their unsympathizing looks chilled the Prince.

"There go my fancies," he said, bitterly, pointing to some battlements that were rising before him. "And here is a troop of caterpillars, creeping, oh, so slowly and lazily, up the old elm. Come, let us creep to the palace, caterpillar-like."

To be continued.

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