

READING TIME FOR YOUNG FOLKS**THE PRINCE'S HEIR***A Scientific Story**Earth, Sea, and Sky*

SOME HUNDREDS of years ago there lived a Prince, and, as many of the princes were at that time, he was very powerful; though he loved his people well, his word was law and his will absolute.

It happened that the Prince had no children, so there was no heir to the throne. This caused the Prince a good deal of anxiety, for he was fearful of what might become of his country after his death. He could not choose from among his wise counsellors for fear of giving offence, so he resolved to make a great test.

At the yearly meeting of the wise council the Prince sat on his throne, and all the people flocked into the Court, for at this annual festival all came to hear the great Prince dispense judgment.

When the Prince had finished the business with his wise advisers he rose.

"People of my country," he said, "I have tried to rule you wisely and well, and have given you all the gifts in my power, but yet have failed to fulfil a great need by presenting to you a Prince to reign in my place when I am gone. Now, I have decided to choose for you the wisest man in the land as my heir, and it will be he who excels at the great test which I am going to make, and which is open to you all. Will you have the wisest man in the land to be your Prince?"

And all the people shouted "Yes."

"The three great features of our country, as of any other," the Prince went on, "are these: the earth, the sea, the sky. Three men among you shall offer for this test, one choosing the earth, one choosing the sea, and the other the sky, and from his own choice that man must bring me the most lasting and beautiful gift his element can supply. To him who brings the eternally beautiful I shall leave the crown after my death."

When the acclamation which greeted this speech had died down, there was a long silence as each man looked at his neighbor and wondered who would volunteer.

After a time an old man with a white beard arose, and he was recognized by the people as the wisest and most clever of all the Prince's counsellors.

"I accept your test, O Prince," he cried, "and take for my choice the all-fertile earth, the life-giving mother of us all."

For he had thought of all the wonderful flowers that the earth produces, of the

gorgeous precious stones, of the brightly colored plumage of birds who live in the trees, of the variety and splendor of the butterflies, and the grace and beauty of the wild animals. "Neither in sea nor sky," he thought to himself, "can one find anything to equal these things."

But among the counsellors there was another very learned man who knew all about the sea and its marvels, so he rose to his feet soon after his brother counsellor had finished speaking.

"I will bring you what you desire from the great blue sea, O Prince," he said, "and you shall judge whether the mighty waters do not excel everything on earth or in the sky."

Then again there was a long pause—longer than before—for everyone felt that the best had been chosen, and a murmur of scornful mirth was heard as the futility of the last choice dawned on the multitude. It was checked by the rising of a tall, dark-haired youth from among the mass of people, and there was instant silence to hear his words.

"There is no choice left for me, O Prince," he said; "but as those who extract the oyster ever cast away the shell containing the pearl, I accept the despised treasure. From the great white light of heaven I shall bring you the secret of both sea and land."

Surprise at the daring of this youth, called by his companions Anak, whom everyone knew to be the son of a peasant, nearly took away the breath of the court. It had never occurred to them that an offer would come from anywhere but the council, and they gasped and then laughed as Anak made his way through the seething mass.

"He is going to look for a ladder long enough to reach the sun," jeered one.

"Mind you don't burn your fingers, Anak," laughed another.

"Or knock your head against a cloud," added a third.

But the Prince called for silence; and the people dispersed quietly, talking among themselves of nothing but the strange test, and surmising as to the result.

A whole year passed away before the judging day of the test came, for the two counsellors had demanded that time should be allowed them to collect the wonders they were to offer the Prince. On the judgment day every man, woman, and child in the land was there, eager to see the new heir.

In the order in which they had offered the Prince received the gifts. First came the old white-haired counsellor, who had declared the earth to be the ruling element. He had behind him a whole retinue of servants bringing the treasures of the earth. Caged animals of wild beauty and wonderful color he showed first. Then birds of every hue, butterflies and insects, exquisite flowers of every shade and variety, and precious stones.

The people gasped at the marvels he produced, and the Prince's pleasure in their wonder and beauty was seen by everyone.

After this exhibition came the man who had chosen the sea, and he was accompanied by a crowd of retainers and horses pulling great cases of fish and marvellous sea animals. The colors of these amazed the people, who knew only the dull colors of their inland fish. Wonderful shell formations followed, built by marvellous animals too small to be visible to human eyes. Then he showed interesting sea-plants, the like of which no one had ever

*(Please turn to page 406.)*

## THE PRINCE'S HEIR

*(Continued from page 390)*

seen before.

It was, indeed, a remarkable sight, and the people applauded loudly.

Anak was standing near the throne, and, at the call of the Prince, he stepped forward. But there was no retinue of followers behind him, and he held nothing in his hands except what appeared to be a little, insignificant piece of glass.

There was the sound of a short laugh here and there, at which the good Prince frowned, for he liked this dark, long-limbed peasant, whom he now feared had failed.

"Well, Anak, have you found the task impossible?" he said kindly.

"O Prince, I have for you the key which tells that, though the earth may be covered with abundant beauty, and the sea swarm with the marvels of life, yet without the white light of sky they cannot exist. The light of the sky holds the marvellous paints to which they must all come for their colors; while their beauty passes away, that of the light of the sky is everlasting, always renewing both earth and sea."

At the Prince's puzzled look Anak held up the piece of glass in his hand. It was a triangular, wedge-shaped

## HENNY-PENNY

*(Continued from page 388)*

backing out of the hole, she ran off home as fast as her trembling legs would carry her.

And that is how it was the king never knew the sky was falling.—*Reprinted by Permission.*

object. Then he placed it in a ray of sunlight which fell on to the white steps of the throne.

Immediately on the steps there were the most marvellous shades of blue and green, of yellow and violet and red, and every imaginable color. A great cry of amazement went up, for no one in those days had ever heard of the spectrum or a spectroscope, and no one knew anything about the wonderful rays of broken light.

Then the Prince came down the steps and held his white robe in the wonderful colors of the rainbow. He took Anak by the hand.

"My heir—your future Prince," he cried to the people.

And the people shouted with delight. From their own number had been chosen their future ruler, for had he not proved himself to be the wisest man in the land?

## CHASED BY A LION

*(Continued from page 392)*

ran with all his might. The boy spurred his pony on. Luckily they did not have to cross the grassy land. If they had come into the high prairie grass they would have been lost. The grass would have hindered the short legs of the pony.

The pony made for an opening in the corral fence, and in a few moments pony and rider were within the enclosure. The tall thorn bushes and branches, which made the fence, kept the wild animals out. The boy sprang from his pony and threw thorn branches into the opening. Then with his rifle in hand he awaited the appearance of the lion.

But the lion did not appear, although the boy knew the animal was somewhere near. He kept his rifle ready for instant firing should the beast attempt to penetrate the fence. Fortunately the corral was not very large, and the thorn fence was high enough to prevent wild animals from jumping over. The natives had been very careful in selecting this place in which to keep cattle during the night safe from attacks of wild beasts.

The boy knew that the lion was lurking outside of the enclosure but could not

*(Please turn to page 411.)*