

Chapter Three - The Warriors from the North

King Rinkitink was so much pleased with the Island of Pingaree that he continued his stay day after day and week after week, eating good dinners, talking with King Kitticut and sleeping. Once in a while he would read from his scroll. "For," said he, "whenever I return home, my subjects will be anxious to know if I have learned 'How to be Good,' and I must not disappoint them."

The twenty rowers lived on the small end of the island, with the pearl fishers, and seemed not to care whether they ever returned to the Kingdom of Rinkitink or not. Bilbil the goat wandered over the grassy slopes, or among the trees, and passed his days exactly as he pleased. His master seldom cared to ride him. Bilbil was a rare curiosity to the islanders, but since there was little pleasure in talking with the goat they kept away from him. This pleased the creature, who seemed well satisfied to be left to his own devices.

Once Prince Inga, wishing to be courteous, walked up to the goat and said: "Good morning, Bilbil."

"It isn't a good morning," answered Bilbil grumpily. "It is cloudy and damp, and looks like rain."

"I hope you are contented in our kingdom," continued the boy, politely ignoring the other's harsh words.

"I'm not," said Bilbil. "I'm never contented; so it doesn't matter to me whether I'm in your kingdom or in some other kingdom. Go away--will you?"

"Certainly," answered the Prince, and after this rebuff he did not again try to make friends with Bilbil.

Now that the King, his father, was so much occupied with his royal guest, Inga was often left to amuse himself, for a boy could not be allowed to take part in the conversation of two great monarchs. He devoted himself to his studies, therefore, and day after day he climbed into the branches of his favorite tree and sat for hours in his "tree-top rest," reading his father's precious manuscripts and thinking upon what he read.

You must not think that Inga was a molly-coddle or a prig, because he was so solemn and studious. Being a King's son and heir to a throne, he could not play with the other boys of Pingaree, and he lived so much in the society of the King and Queen, and was so surrounded by the pomp and dignity of a court,

that he missed all the jolly times that boys usually have. I have no doubt that had he been able to live as other boys do, he would have been much like other boys; as it was, he was subdued by his surroundings, and more grave and thoughtful than one of his years should be.

Inga was in his tree one morning when, without warning, a great fog enveloped the Island of Pingaree. The boy could scarcely see the tree next to that in which he sat, but the leaves above him prevented the dampness from wetting him, so he curled himself up in his seat and fell fast asleep.

All that forenoon the fog continued. King Kitticut, who sat in his palace talking with his merry visitor, ordered the candles lighted, that they might be able to see one another. The good Queen, Inga's mother, found it was too dark to work at her embroidery, so she called her maidens together and told them wonderful stories of bygone days, in order to pass away the dreary hours.

But soon after noon the weather changed. The dense fog rolled away like a heavy cloud and suddenly the sun shot his bright rays over the island.

"Very good!" exclaimed King Kitticut. "We shall have a pleasant afternoon, I am sure," and he blew out the candles.

Then he stood a moment motionless, as if turned to stone, for a terrible cry from without the palace reached his ears--a cry so full of fear and horror that the King's heart almost stopped beating. Immediately there was a scurrying of feet as every one in the palace, filled with dismay, rushed outside to see what had happened. Even fat little Rinkitink sprang from his chair and followed his host and the others through the arched vestibule.

After many years the worst fears of King Kitticut were realized.

Landing upon the beach, which was but a few steps from the palace itself, were hundreds of boats, every one filled with a throng of fierce warriors. They sprang upon the land with wild shouts of defiance and rushed to the King's palace, waving aloft their swords and spears and battleaxes.

King Kitticut, so completely surprised that he was bewildered, gazed at the approaching host with terror and grief.

"They are the men of Regos and Coregos!" he groaned. "We are, indeed, lost!"

Then he bethought himself, for the first time, of his wonderful pearls. Turning quickly, he ran back into the palace and hastened to the hall where the

treasures were hidden. But the leader of the warriors had seen the King enter the palace and bounded after him, thinking he meant to escape. Just as the King had stooped to press the secret spring in the tiles, the warrior seized him from the rear and threw him backward upon the floor, at the same time shouting to his men to fetch ropes and bind the prisoner. This they did very quickly and King Kitticut soon found himself helplessly bound and in the power of his enemies. In this sad condition he was lifted by the warriors and carried outside, when the good King looked upon a sorry sight.

The Queen and her maidens, the officers and servants of the royal household and all who had inhabited this end of the Island of Pingaree had been seized by the invaders and bound with ropes. At once they began carrying their victims to the boats, tossing them in as unceremoniously as if they had been bales of merchandise.

The King looked around for his son Inga, but failed to find the boy among the prisoners. Nor was the fat King, Rinkitink, to be seen anywhere about.

The warriors were swarming over the palace like bees in a hive, seeking anyone who might be in hiding, and after the search had been prolonged for some time the leader asked impatiently: "Do you find anyone else?"

"No," his men told him. "We have captured them all."

"Then," commanded the leader, "remove everything of value from the palace and tear down its walls and towers, so that not one stone remains upon another!"

While the warriors were busy with this task we will return to the boy Prince, who, when the fog lifted and the sun came out, wakened from his sleep and began to climb down from his perch in the tree. But the terrifying cries of the people, mingled with the shouts of the rude warriors, caused him to pause and listen eagerly.

Then he climbed rapidly up the tree, far above his platform, to the topmost swaying branches. This tree, which Inga called his own, was somewhat taller than the other trees that surrounded it, and when he had reached the top he pressed aside the leaves and saw a great fleet of boats upon the shore-- strange boats, with banners that he had never seen before. Turning to look upon his father's palace, he found it surrounded by a horde of enemies. Then Inga knew the truth: that tile island had been invaded by the barbaric warriors from the north. He grew so faint from the terror of it all that he might

have fallen had he not wound his arms around a limb and clung fast until the dizzy feeling passed away. Then with his sash he bound himself to the limb and again ventured to look out through the leaves.

The warriors were now engaged in carrying King Kitticut and Queen Garee and all their other captives down to the boats, where they were thrown in and chained one to another. It was a dreadful sight for the Prince to witness, but he sat very still, concealed from the sight of anyone below by the bower of leafy branches around him. Inga knew very well that he could do nothing to help his beloved parents, and that if he came down he would only be forced to share their cruel fate.

Now a procession of the Northmen passed between the boats and the palace, bearing the rich furniture, splendid draperies and rare ornaments of which the royal palace had been robbed, together with such food and other plunder as they could lay their hands upon. After this, the men of Regos and Coregos threw ropes around the marble domes and towers and hundreds of warriors tugged at these ropes until the domes and towers toppled and fell in ruins upon the ground. Then the walls themselves were torn down, till little remained of the beautiful palace but a vast heap of white marble blocks tumbled and scattered upon the ground.

Prince Inga wept bitter tears of grief as he watched the ruin of his home; yet he was powerless to avert the destruction. When the palace had been demolished, some of the warriors entered their boats and rowed along the coast of the island, while the others marched in a great body down the length of the island itself. They were so numerous that they formed a line stretching from shore to shore and they destroyed every house they came to and took every inhabitant prisoner.

The pearl fishers who lived at the lower end of the island tried to escape in their boats, but they were soon overtaken and made prisoners, like the others. Nor was there any attempt to resist the foe, for the sharp spears and pikes and swords of the invaders terrified the hearts of the defenseless people of Pingaree, whose sole weapons were their oyster rakes.

When night fell the whole of the Island of Pingaree had been conquered by the men of the North, and all its people were slaves of the conquerors. Next morning the men of Regos and Coregos, being capable of no further mischief, departed from the scene of their triumph, carrying their prisoners with them and taking also every boat to be found upon the island. Many of the boats they had filled with rich plunder, with pearls and silks and velvets, with silver