

22. The Queen of Plenta

The soldiers of Kwytoffle wanted to hang their old master at once, for he had won their enmity by abusing them in many ways; but Prince Marvel would not let them do this. However, they tied the false sorcerer to a post, and the captain gave him a good whipping--one lash for each letter in the words "grasshopper" and "June-bug." Kwytoffle howled loudly for mercy, but no one was at all sorry for him.

Wul-Takim tied a rope around the impostor's neck, and when the party left the castle they journeyed all through the kingdom of Auriel, and at every town or city they came to the reformed thief would cry out to the populace:

"Here is the terrible sorcerer Kwytoffle, who threatened to change you into grasshoppers and june-bugs. But you may see that he is a very common man, with no powers of sorcery whatever!"

And then the people would laugh and pelt mud at their former tyrant, and thank Prince Marvel for having exposed the false and wicked creature.

And they called the son of their old king back to his lawful throne, where he ruled wisely and well; and the hoarded wealth of Kwytoffle was divided among the people again, and soon the country became prosperous once more.

This adventure was very amusing to the pretty High Ki of Twi. It afforded them laughter for many days, and none of the party ever saw a grasshopper or a june-bug afterward without thinking of the terrible sorcerer Kwytoffle.

They left that disgraced person grooming horses for his board in the stables of the new king, and proceeded upon their journey.

Without further event they reached the splendid southern Kingdom of Plenta, which was the most delightfully situated of any dominion in the Enchanted Island of Yew. It was ruled by a good and generous queen, who welcomed the strangers to her palace and gave a series of gay entertainments in their honor.

King Terribus was especially an object of interest, for every one had heard his name and feared him and his fierce people. But when they beheld his pleasant countenance and listened to his gentle voice they began to regard him with much love and respect; and really Terribus was worthy of their friendship since he had changed from a deformed monster into an ordinary

man, and had forbidden his people ever again to rob and plunder their weaker neighbors.

But the most popular personages visiting at the court of the Queen of Plenta were the lovely High Ki of Twi. Although beautiful girls abounded in this kingdom, none could compare with the royal twins, and their peculiar condition only served to render them the more interesting.

Two youths would approach the High Ki at the same time and invite them to dance, and in united voices they would accept the invitation and go whirling around the room with exactly the same steps, laughing at the same instant and enjoying the dance equally. But if one youth asked his partner a question, both the twins would make answer, and that was sure to confuse and embarrass the youth. Still, the maids managed very well to adapt themselves to the ways of people who were singular, although they sometimes became a little homesick for Twi, where they were like all the other people.

The bald-headed Ki kept watchful eyes on their youthful rulers, and served them very cheerfully. But with all their travels and experiences, the old men could never be convinced it was better to be singular than double.

Prince Marvel was the real hero of the party, and Nerle received much attention on account of his master's popularity. He did not seem as unhappy as usual, and when the prince inquired the reason, his esquire answered that he believed the excitement of their adventures was fast curing him of his longing for something he could not have. As for the pleasure of suffering, he had had some experience of that, too, and it was not nearly so delightful as he had expected.

Wul-Takim was not a society man, so he stayed around the royal stables and made friends with the grooms, and traded his big black horse for two bay ones and a gold neck-chain, and was fairly content with his lot.

And so the party enjoyed several happy weeks at the court of the good Queen of Plenta, until one day the terrible news arrived that carried them once more into exciting adventures.