

The Twelfth Surprise - THE LAND OF THE CIVILIZED MONKEYS

I must now tell you of a very strange adventure that befell Prince Zingle, which, had it not turned out exactly as it did, might have resulted in making him a captive for life in a remarkable country.

By consulting Smith's History of Prince Zingle you will notice that from boyhood he had a great passion for flying kites, and unlike other boys, he always undertook to make each kite larger than the last one. Therefore his kites grew in size, and became larger and larger, until at length the Prince made one twice as tall as himself.

When it was finished he was very proud of this great kite, and took it out to a level place to see how well it would fly, being accompanied by many of the people of Mo, who took considerable interest in the Prince's amusement.

There happened to be a strong south wind blowing and, fearing the kite might get away from him, Zingle tied the string around his waist. It flew beautifully at first, but pulled so hard the Prince could scarcely hold it.

At last, when the string was all let out, there came a sudden gust of wind, and in an instant poor Zingle was drawn into the air as easily as an ordinary kite draws its tail. Up and up he soared, and the kite followed the wind and carried him over many countries until the strength died out of the air, when the kite slowly settled toward the earth and landed the Prince in the top of a tall tree.

He now untied the string from his waist and fastened it to a branch of the tree, as he did not wish to lose the kite after all his bother in making it.

Then he began to climb down to the ground, but on reaching the lower branches he was arrested by a most curious sight.

Standing on the ground, and gazing up at him, were a dozen monkeys, all very neatly dressed and all evidently filled with surprise at the Prince's sudden appearance in the tree.

"What a very queer animal!" exclaimed an old monkey, who wore a tall silk hat and had white kid gloves on his hands. Gold spectacles rested on his nose, and he pointed toward the Prince with a gold-headed cane. By

his side was a little girl-monkey, dressed in pink skirts and a blue bonnet; and when she saw Zingle she clung to the old monkey's hand and seemed frightened.

"Oh, grandpapa!" she cried; "take me back to mamma; I'm afraid the strange beast will bite me."

Just then a big monkey, wearing a blue coat with brass buttons and swinging a short club in his hand, strutted up to them and said:

"Don't be afraid, little one. The beast can't hurt you while I'm around!" And then he tipped his cap over his left ear and shook his club at the Prince, as if he did not know what fear meant.

Two monkeys, who were dressed in red jackets and carried muskets in their hands, now came running up, and, having looked at Zingle with much interest, they called for some one to bring them a strong rope.

"We will capture the brute and put him in the Zoo," said one of the soldier-monkeys.

"What kind of animal is it?" asked the other.

"I do not know. But some of our college professors can doubtless tell, and even if they can't they will give it some scientific name that will satisfy the people just as well."

All this time Prince Zingle remained clinging to the branches of the tree. He could not understand a word of the monkey language, and therefore had no idea what they were talking about; but he judged from their actions that the monkeys were not friendly. When they brought a long and stout rope, and prepared to throw one end of it over his head, in order to capture him, he became angry and called out to them:

"Stop--I command you! What is the meaning of this strange conduct? I am Prince Zingle, eldest son of the Monarch of Mo, and, since I have been blown into your country through an accident, I certainly deserve kind treatment at your hands."

But this speech had no meaning in the ears of the monkeys, who said to each other:

"Hear him bark! He jabbbers away almost as if he could talk!"

By this time a large crowd of monkeys had surrounded the tree, some being barefooted boy-monkeys, and some lady-monkeys dressed in silken gowns and gorgeous raiment of the latest mode, and others men-monkeys of all sorts and conditions. There were dandified monkeys and sober-looking business monkeys, as well as several who appeared to be politicians and officials of high degree.

"Stand back, all of you!" shouted one of the soldiers. "We're going to capture this remarkable beast for the royal menagerie, and unless you stand out of the way he may show fight and bite some one."

So they moved back to a safe distance, and the soldier-monkey prepared to throw a rope.

"Stop!" cried Zingle, again; "do you take me for a thief, that you try to bind me? I am a prince of the royal blood, and unless you treat me respectfully I shall have my father, the King, march his army on you and destroy your whole country."

"He barks louder," said the soldier. "Look out for him; he may be dangerous." The next moment he threw the rope and caught poor Zingle around his arms and body, so that he was helpless. Then the soldier-monkey pulled hard on the rope, and Prince Zingle fell out of the tree to the ground.

At first the monkeys all pressed backward, as if frightened, but their soldiers cried out:

"We've got him; he can't bite now."

Then one of them approached the Prince and punched him with a stick, saying, "Stand up!"

Zingle did not understand the words, but he resented being prodded with the stick, so he sprang up and rushed on the soldier, kicking the stick from his hands, his own arms being bound by the rope.

The monkeys screamed and rushed in every direction, but the other soldier came behind the Prince and knocked him down with the butt of his gun. Then he tied his legs with another rope, and, seeing him thus bound, the crowd of monkeys, which had scattered and fallen over one another in their efforts to escape, came creeping timidly back, and looked on him with fear and trembling.

"We've subdued him at last," remarked the soldier who had been kicked. "But he's a very fierce animal, and I shall take him to the Zoo and lock him in one of the strongest cages."

So they led poor Zingle away to where the Royal Zoological Gardens were located, and there they put him into a big cage with iron bars, the door being fastened with two great padlocks.

Before very long every monkey in the country learned that a strange beast had been captured and brought to the Zoo; and soon a large crowd had gathered before Zingle's cage to examine him.

"Isn't he sweet!" said a lady-monkey who held a green parasol over her head and wore a purple veil on her face.

"Sweet!" grunted a man-monkey standing beside her, "he's the ugliest looking brute I ever saw! Scarcely has any hair on him at all, and no tail, and very little chin. I wonder where on earth the creature came from?"

"It may be one of those beings from whom our race is descended," said another onlooker. "The professors say we evolved from some primitive creature of this sort."

"Heaven forbid!" cried a dandy-monkey, whose collar was so high that it kept tipping his hat over his eyes. "If I thought such a creature as that was one of my forefathers, I should commit suicide at once."

Zingle had been sitting on the floor of his cage and wondering what was to become of him in this strange country of monkeys, and now, to show his authority, one of the keepers took a long stick and began to poke the Prince to make him stand up.

"Stop that!" shouted the angry captive, and catching hold of the stick he jerked it from the keeper's hand and struck him a sharp blow on the head with it.

All the lady-monkeys screamed at this, and the men-monkeys exclaimed:

"What an ugly disposition the beast has!"

The children-monkeys began to throw peanuts between the bars of the cage, and Zingle, who had now become very hungry, picked them up and ate them. This act so pleased the little monkeys that they shouted with laughter.

At last two solemn-looking monkeys with gray hair, and wearing long black coats and white neckties, came up to the cage, where they were greeted with much respect by the other monkeys.

"So this is the strange animal," said one of the new-comers, putting on his spectacles and looking sharply at the captive; "do you recognize the species, Professor?"

The other aged monkey also regarded the Prince critically before he answered:

"I can not say I have ever seen a specimen of this genus before. But one of our text-books mentions an obscure animal called Homo Peculiaris, and I have no doubt this is one of that family. I shall write an article on the creature and claim he is a Homo, and without doubt the paper will create quite a stir in the scientific world."

"See here," suddenly demanded Prince Zingle, standing up and shaking the bars of his cage, "are you going to give me anything to eat? Or do you expect me to live on peanuts forever?"

Not knowing what he said, none of the monkeys paid any attention to this question. But one of the professor-monkeys appeared to listen attentively, and remarked to friend: "There seems to be a smoothness and variety of sound in his speech that indicates that he possesses some sort of language. Had I time to study this brute, I might learn his method of communicating with his fellows. Indeed, there is a possibility that he may turn out to be the missing link."

However, the professor not yet having learned his language, Prince Zingle was obliged to remain hungry. The monkeys threw several cocoanuts into the cage, but the prisoner did not know what kind of fruit these were; so, after several attempts to bite the hard shell, he decided they were not good to eat.

Day after day now passed away, and, although crowds of monkeys came to examine Zingle in his cage, the poor Prince grew very pale and thin for lack of proper food, while the continuance of his unhappy imprisonment made him sad and melancholy.

"Could I but escape and find my way back to my father's valley," he moaned, wearily, "I should be willing to fly small kites forever afterward."

Often he begged them to let him go, but the monkeys gruffly commanded him to "stop his jabbering," and poked him with long sticks having sharp points; so that the Prince's life became one of great misery.

At the end of about two weeks a happy relief came to Zingle, for then a baby hippopotamus was captured and brought to the Royal Zoo, and after this the monkeys left the Prince's cage and crowded around that of the new arrival.

Finding himself thus deserted, Prince Zingle began to seek a means of escape from his confinement. His first attempt was to break the iron bars; but soon he found they were too big and strong. Then he shook the door with all his strength; but the big padlocks held firm, and could not be broken. Then the prisoner gave way to despair, and threw himself on the floor of the cage, weeping bitterly.

Suddenly he heard a great shout from the direction of the cage where the baby hippopotamus was confined, and, rising to his feet, the Prince walked to the bars and attempted to look out and discover what was causing the excitement. To his astonishment he found he was able to thrust his head between two of the iron bars, having grown so thin through hunger and abuse, that he was much smaller than when the monkeys had first captured him. He realized at once that if his head would pass between the bars, his body could be made to do so, likewise. So he struggled bravely, and at last succeeded in squeezing his body between the bars and leaping safely to the ground.

Finding himself at liberty, the Prince lost no time in running to the tree where he had left his kite. But on the way some of the boy-monkeys discovered him and raised a great cry, which soon brought hundreds of his enemies in pursuit.

Zingle had a good start, however, and soon reached the tree. Quickly he climbed up the trunk and branches until he had gained the limb where the string of his kite was still fastened. Untying the cord, he wound it around his waist several times, and then, finding a strong north wind blowing, he skilfully tossed the kite into the air. At once it filled and mounted to the sky, lifting Zingle from the tree and carrying him with perfect ease.

It was fortunate he got away at that moment, for several of the monkeys had scrambled up the tree after him, and were almost near enough to

seize him by the legs when, to their surprise, he shot into the air. Indeed, so amazed were they by this remarkable escape of their prisoner that the monkeys remained staring into the air until Prince Zingle had become a little speck in the sky above them and finally disappeared.

That was the last our Prince ever saw of the strange country of the monkeys, for the wind carried his kite straight back to the Valley of Mo. When Zingle found himself above his father's palace, he took out his pocket-knife and cut the string of the kite, and immediately fell head foremost into a pond of custard that lay in the back yard, where he dived through a floating island of whipped cream and disappeared from view.

Nuphsed, who was sitting on the bank of the custard lake, was nearly frightened into fits by this sight; and he ran to tell the King that a new meteor had fallen and ruined one of his floating islands.

Thereupon the monarch and several of his courtiers rushed out and found Prince Zingle swimming ashore; and the King was so delighted at seeing his lost son again that he clasped him joyfully in his arms.

The next moment he regretted this act, for his best ermine robe was smeared its whole length with custard, and would need considerable cleaning before it would be fit to wear again.

The Prince and the King soon changed their clothes, and then there was much rejoicing throughout the land. Of course the first thing Zingle asked for was something to eat, and before long he was sitting at a table heaped with all sorts of good things, plucked fresh from the trees.

The people crowded around him, demanding the tale of his adventures, and their surprise was only equaled by their horror when they learned he had been captured by a band of monkeys, and shut up in a cage because he was thought to be a dangerous wild beast.

Experience is said to be an excellent teacher, although a very cruel one. Prince Zingle had now seen enough of foreign countries to remain contented with his own beautiful Valley, and, although it was many years before he again attempted to fly a kite, it was noticed that, when he at last did indulge in that sport, the kite was of a very small size.