

# LANG ANDREW

PRINCE RICARDO OF  
PANTOUFLIA: BEING THE  
ADVENTURES OF  
PRINCE PRIGIO'S SON

Andrew Lang

**Prince Ricardo of Pantouflia: Being  
the Adventures of Prince Prigio's Son**

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**Andrew Lang**  
**Prince Ricardo of Pantouflia: Being**  
**the Adventures of Prince Prigio's Son**

**DEDICATION.**  
**To Guy Campbell**

*My dear Guy,*

*You wanted to know more about Prince Prigio, who won the Lady Rosalind, and killed the Firedrake and the Remora by aid of his Fairy gifts. Here you have some of his later adventures, and you will learn from this story the advantages of minding your book.*

*Yours always,*

*A. Lang.*

## **Introductory. Explaining Matters**

There may be children whose education has been so neglected that they have not read *Prince Prigio*. As this new story is about Prince Prigio's son, Ricardo, you are to learn that Prigio was the child and heir of Grogno, King of Pantouflia. The fairies gave the little Prince cleverness, beauty, courage; but one wicked fairy added, "You shall be *too* clever." His mother, the queen, hid away in a cupboard all the fairy presents, – the Sword of Sharpness, the Seven-League Boots, the Wishing Cap, and many other useful and delightful gifts, in which her Majesty did not believe! But after Prince Prigio had become universally disliked and deserted, because he was so very clever and conceited, he happened to find all the fairy presents in the old turret chamber where they had been thrown. By means of these he delivered his country from a dreadful Red-Hot Beast, called the Firedrake, and, in addition to many other triumphs, he married the good and beautiful Lady Rosalind. His love for her taught him not to be conceited, though he did not cease to be extremely clever and fond of reading.

When this new story begins the Prince has succeeded to the crown, on the death of King Grogno, and is unhappy about his own son, Prince Ricardo, who is not clever, and who hates books! The story tells of Ricardo's adventures: how he tried to bring back Prince Charlie to England, how he failed; how he dealt with the odious old Yellow Dwarf; how he was aided by the fair magician, the Princess Jaqueline; how they both fell into a dreadful trouble; how King Prigio saved them; and how Jaqueline's dear and royal papa was discovered; with the end of all these adventures. The moral of the story will easily be discovered by the youngest reader, or, if not, it does not much matter.

## CHAPTER I.

### The Troubles of King Prigio

"I'm sure I don't know what to do with that boy!" said King Prigio of Pantouflia.

"If *you* don't know, my dear," said Queen Rosalind, his illustrious consort, "I can't see what is to be done. You are so clever."

The king and queen were sitting in the royal library, of which the shelves were full of the most delightful fairy books in all languages, all equally familiar to King Prigio. The queen could not read most of them herself, but the king used to read them aloud to her. A good many years had passed – seventeen, in fact – since Queen Rosalind was married, but you would not think it to look at her. Her grey eyes were as kind and soft and beautiful, her dark hair as dark, and her pretty colour as like a white rose blushing, as on the day when she was a bride. And she was as fond of the king as when he was only Prince Prigio, and he was as fond of her as on the night when he first met her at the ball.

"No, I don't know what to do with Dick," said the king.

He meant his son, Prince Ricardo, but he called him Dick in private.

"I believe it's the fault of his education," his Majesty went on. "We have not brought him up rightly. These fairy books are at the bottom of his provoking behaviour," and he glanced round the shelves. "Now, when *I* was a boy, my dear mother tried to prevent me from reading fairy books, because she did not believe in fairies."

"But she was wrong, you know," said the queen. "Why, if it had not been for all these fairy presents, the Cap of Darkness and all the rest of them, you never could have killed the Fire-beast and the Ice-beast, and – you never could have married me," the queen added, in a happy whisper, blushing beautifully, for that was a foolish habit of hers.

"It is quite true," said the king, "and therefore I thought it best to bring Dick up on fairy books, that he might know what is right, and have no nonsense about him. But perhaps the thing has been overdone; at all events, it is not a success. I wonder if fathers and sons will ever understand each other, and get on well together? There was my poor father, King Grogno, he wanted me to take to adventures, like other princes, fighting Firedrakes, and so forth; and I did not care for it, till *you* set me on," and he looked very kindly at her Majesty. "And now, here's Dick," the monarch continued, "I can't hold him back. He is always after a giant, or a dragon, or a magician, as the case may be; he will certainly be ploughed for his examination at College. Never opens a book. What does he care, off after every adventure he can hear about? An idle, restless youth! Ah, my poor country, when I am gone, what may not be your misfortunes under Ricardo!"

Here his Majesty sighed, and seemed plunged in thought.

"But you are not going yet, my dear," said the queen. "Why you are not forty! And young people will be young people. You were quite proud when poor Dick came home with his first brace of gigantic fierce birds, killed off his own sword, and with such a pretty princess he had rescued – dear Jaqueline? I'm sure she is like a daughter to me. I cannot do without her."

"I wish she were a daughter-in-law; I wish Dick would take a fancy to marry her," said the king. "A nicer girl I never saw."

"And so accomplished," added Queen Rosalind. "That girl can turn herself into anything – a mouse, a fly, a lion, a wheelbarrow, a church! I never knew such talent for magic. Of course she had the *best* of teachers, the Fairy Paribanou herself; but very few girls, in our time, devote so many hours to *practice* as dear Jaqueline. Even now, when she is out of the schoolroom, she still practises her scales. I saw her turning little Dollie into a fish and back again in the bath-room last night. The child was delighted."

In these times, you must know, princesses learned magic, just as they learn the piano nowadays; but they had their music lessons too, dancing, calisthenics, and the use of the globes.

“Yes, she’s a dear, good girl,” said the king; “yet she looks melancholy. I believe, myself, that if Ricardo asked her to marry him, she would not say ‘No.’ But that’s just one of the things I object to most in Dick. Round the world he goes, rescuing ladies from every kind of horror – from dragons, giants, cannibals, magicians; and then, when a girl naturally expects to be married to him, as is usual, off he rides! He has no more heart than a flounder. Why, at his age I – ”

“At his age, my dear, you were so hard-hearted that you were quite a proverb. Why, I have been told that you used to ask girls dreadful puzzling questions, like ‘Who was Cæsar Borgia?’ ‘What do you know of Edwin and Morcar?’ and so on.”

“I had not seen *you* then,” said the king.

“And Ricardo has not seen *her*, whoever she may be. Besides, he can’t possibly marry all of them. And I think a girl should consider herself lucky if she is saved from a dragon or a giant, without expecting to be married next day.”

“Perhaps; but it is usual,” said the king, “and their families expect it, and keep sending ambassadors to know what Dick’s intentions are. I would not mind it all so very much if he killed the monsters off his own sword, as he did that first brace, in fair fight. But ever since he found his way into that closet where the fairy presents lie, everything has been made too easy for him. It is a royal road to glory, or giant-slaying made easy. In his Cap of Darkness a poor brute of a dragon can’t see him. In his Shoes of Swiftness the giants can’t catch him. His Sword of Sharpness would cut any oak asunder at a blow!”

“But you were very glad of them when you made the Ice-beast and the Fire-beast fight and kill each other,” said the queen.

“Yes, my dear; but it wanted some wit, if I may say so, to do *that*, and Dick just goes at it hammer and tongs: anybody could do it. It’s *intellect* I miss in Ricardo. How am I to know whether he could make a good fight for it without all these fairy things? I wonder what the young rogue is about to-day? He’ll be late for dinner, as usual, I daresay. I can’t stand want of punctuality at meals,” remarked his Majesty, which is a sign that he was growing old after all; for where is the fun of being expected always to come home in time for dinner when, perhaps, you are fishing, and the trout are rising splendidly?

“Young people will be young people,” said the queen. “If you are anxious about him, why don’t you look for him in the magic crystal?”

Now the magic crystal was a fairy present, a great ball of glass in which, if you looked, you saw the person you wanted to see, and what he was doing, however far away he might be, if he was on the earth at all.<sup>1</sup>

“I’ll just take a look at it,” said the king; “it only wants three-quarters of an hour to dinner-time.”

His Majesty rose, and walked to the crystal globe, which was in a stand, like other globes. He stared into it, he turned it round and round, and Queen Rosalind saw him grow quite pale as he gazed.

“I don’t see him anywhere,” said the king, “and I have looked everywhere. I do hope nothing has happened to the boy. He is so careless. If he dropped his Cap of Darkness in a fight with a giant, why who knows what might occur?”

“Oh, ’Gio, how you frighten me!” said the queen.

King Prigio was still turning the crystal globe.

“Stop!” he cried; “I see a beautiful princess, fastened by iron chains to a rock beside the sea, in a lonely place. They must have fixed her up as a sacrifice to a sea-monster, like what’s-her-name.”

This proves how anxious he was, or, being so clever and learned, he would have remembered that her name was Andromeda.

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<sup>1</sup> You can buy these glasses now from the Psychological Society, at half-a-crown and upwards.

“I bet Dick is not far off, where there is an adventure on hand. But where on earth can he be?.. My word!” suddenly exclaimed the monarch, in obvious excitement.

“What is it, dear?” cried the queen, with all the anxiety of a mother.

“Why, the sea where the girl is, has turned all red as blood!” exclaimed the king. “Now it is all being churned up by the tail of a tremendous monster. He is a whopper! He’s coming on shore; the girl is fainting. He’s out on shore! He is extremely poorly, blood rushing from his open jaws. He’s dying! And, hooray! here’s Dick coming out of his enormous mouth, all in armour set with sharp spikes, and a sword in his hand. He’s covered with blood, but he’s well and hearty. He must have been swallowed by the brute, and cut him up inside. Now he’s cutting the beast’s head off. Now he’s gone to the princess; a very neat bow he has made her. Dick’s manners are positively improving! Now he’s cutting her iron chains off with the Sword of Sharpness. And now he’s made her another bow, and he’s actually taking leave of her. Poor thing! How disappointed she is looking. And she’s so pretty, too. I say, Rosalind, shall I shout to him through the magic horn, and tell him to bring her home here, on the magic carpet?”

“I think not, dear; the palace is quite full,” said the queen. But the real reason was that she wanted Ricardo to marry her favourite Princess Jaqueline, and she did not wish the new princess to come in the way.

“As you like,” said the king, who knew what was in her mind very well. “Besides, I see her own people coming for her. I’m sorry for her, but it can’t be helped, and Dick is half-way home by now on the Shoes of Swiftness. I daresay he will not keep dinner waiting after all. But what a fright the boy has given me!”

At this moment a whirring in the air and a joyous shout were heard. It was Prince Ricardo flying home on his Seven-league Boots.

“Hi, Ross!” he shouted, “just weigh this beast’s head. I’ve had a splendid day with a sea-monster. Get the head stuffed, will you? We’ll have it set up in the billiard-room.”

“Yes, Master Dick – I mean your Royal Highness,” said Ross, a Highland keeper, who had not previously been employed by a Reigning Family. “It’s a fine head, whatever,” he added, meditatively.

Prince Ricardo now came beneath the library window, and gave his parents a brief account of his adventure.

“I picked the monster up early in the morning,” he said, “through the magic telescope, father.”

“What country was he in?” said the king.

“The country people whom I met called it Ethiopia. They were niggers.”

“And in what part of the globe is Ethiopia, Ricardo?”

“Oh! I don’t know. Asia, perhaps,” answered the prince.

The king groaned.

“That boy will *never* understand our foreign relations. Ethiopia in Asia!” he said to himself, but he did not choose to make any remark at the moment.

The prince ran upstairs to dress. On the stairs he met the Princess Jaqueline.

“Oh, Dick! are you hurt?” she said, turning very pale.

“No, not I; but the monster is. I had a capital day, Jack; rescued a princess, too.”

“Was she – was she very pretty, Dick?”

“Oh! I don’t know. Pretty enough, I daresay. Much like other girls. Why, you look quite white! What’s the matter? Now you look all right again;” for, indeed, the Princess Jaqueline was blushing.

“I must dress. I’m ever so late,” he said, hurrying upstairs; and the princess, with a little sigh, went down to the royal drawing-room.

## CHAPTER II.

### Princess Jaqueline Drinks the Moon

When dinner was over and the ladies had left the room, the king tried to speak *seriously* to Prince Ricardo. This was a thing which he disliked doing very much.

“There’s very little use in preaching,” his Majesty used to say, “to a man, or rather a boy, of another generation. My taste was for books; I only took to adventures because I was obliged to do it. Dick’s taste is for adventures; I only wish some accident would make him take to books. But everyone must get his experience for himself; and when he has got it, he is lucky if it is not too late. I wish I could see him in love with some nice girl, who would keep him at home.”

The king did not expect much from talking seriously to Dick. However, he began by asking questions about the day’s sport, which Ricardo answered with modesty. Then his Majesty observed that, from all he had ever read or heard, he believed Ethiopia, where the fight was, to be in Africa, not in Asia.

“I really wish, Ricardo, that you would attend to your geography a little more. It is most necessary to a soldier that he should know where his enemy is, and if he has to fight the Dutch, for instance, not to start with his army for Central Asia.”

“I could always spot them through the magic glass, father,” said Dick; “it saves such a lot of trouble. I hate geography.”

“But the glass might be lost or broken, or the Fairies might take it away, and then where are you?”

“Oh, *you* would know where to go, or Mr. Belsham.”

Now Mr. Belsham was his tutor, from Oxford.

“But I shall not always be here, and when I die – ”

“Don’t talk of dying, sire,” said Dick. “Why, you are not so very old; you may live for years yet. Besides, I can’t stand the notion. You must live for ever!”

“That sentiment is unusual in a Crown Prince,” thought the king; but he was pleased for all that.

“Well, to oblige you, I’ll try to struggle against old age,” he said; “but there are always accidents. Now, Dick, like a good fellow, and to please me, work hard all to-morrow till the afternoon. I’ll come in and help you. And there’s always a splendid evening rise of trout in the lake just now, so you can have your play after your work. You’ll enjoy it more, and I daresay you are tired after a long day with the big game. It used to tire me, I remember.”

“I *am* rather tired,” said Dick; and indeed he looked a little pale, for a day in the inside of a gigantic sea-monster is fatiguing, from the heat and want of fresh air which are usually found in such places. “I think I’ll turn in; goodnight, my dear old governor,” he said, in an affectionate manner, though he was not usually given to many words.

Then he went and kissed his mother and the Princess Jaqueline, whom he engaged to row him on the lake next evening, while he fished.

“And don’t you go muffing them with the landing-net, Jack, as you generally do,” said his Royal Highness, as he lit his bedroom candle.

“I wish he would not call me Jack,” said the princess to the queen.

“It’s better than Lina, my dear,” said her Majesty, who in late life had become fond of her little joke; “that always sounds as if someone else was fatter, – and I hope there is not someone else.”

The princess was silent, and fixed her eyes on her book.

Presently the king came in, and played a game with Lina at picquet. When they were all going to bed, he said:

“Just come into the study, Lina. I want you to write a few letters for me.”

The princess followed him and took her seat at the writing table. The letters were very short. One was to Herr Schnipp, tailor to the king and royal family; another was to the royal swordmaker, another to the bootmaker, another to the optician, another to the tradesman who supplied the august family with carpets and rugs, another to his Majesty's hatter. They were all summoned to be at the palace early next morning. Then his Majesty yawned, apologised, and went to bed. The princess also went to her room, or bower as it was then called, but not to sleep.

She was unhappy that Dick did not satisfy his father, and that he was so careless, and also about other things.

"And why does the king want all these tailors and hatters so suddenly, telescope-makers and swordmakers and shoemakers, too?" she asked herself, as she stood at the window watching the moon.

"I *could* find out. I could turn myself into a dog or a cat, and go into the room where he is giving his orders. But that is awkward, for when the servants see Rip" (that was the dog) "in two places at once, they begin to think the palace is haunted, and it makes people talk. Besides, I know it is wrong to listen to what one is not meant to hear. It is often difficult to be a magician and a good girl. The temptations are so strong, stronger than most people allow for." So she remained, with the moon shining on her pretty yellow hair and her white dress, wondering what the king intended to do, and whether it was something that Dick would not like.

"How stupid of me," she said at length, "after all the lessons I have had. Why, I can *drink the moon!*"

Now, this is a way of knowing what anyone else is thinking of and intends to do, for the moon sees and knows everything. Whether it is *quite fair* is another matter; but, at all events, it is not *listening*. And anyone may see that, if you are a magician, like the Princess Jaqueline, a great many difficult questions as to what is right and wrong at once occur which do not trouble other people. King Prigio's secret, why he sent for the tailor and the other people, was his own secret. The princess decided that she would not find it out by turning herself into Rip or the cat (whose name was Semiramis), and, so far, she was quite right. But she was very young, and it never occurred to her that it was just as wrong to find out what the king meant by *drinking the moon* as by listening in disguise. As she grew older she learned to know better; but this is just the danger of teaching young girls magic, and for that very reason it has been given up in most countries.

However, the princess did not think about right and wrong, unluckily. She went to the bookcase and took down her *Cornelius Agrippa*, in one great tall black volume, with silver clasps which nobody else could open; for, as the princess said, there are books which it would never do to leave lying about where the servants or anybody could read them. Nobody could undo the clasps, however strong or clever he might be; but the princess just breathed on them and made a sign, and the book flew open at the right place – Book IV., chapter vi., about the middle of page 576.

The magic spell was in Latin, of course; but the princess knew Latin very well, and soon she had the magic song by heart. Then she closed the book and put it back on the shelf. Then she threw open the window and drew back the curtains, and put out all the lights except two scented candles that burned with a white fire under a round mirror with a silver frame, opposite the window. And into that mirror the moon shone white and full, filling all the space of it, so that the room was steeped in a strange silver light. Now the whole room seemed to sway gently, waving and trembling; and as it trembled it sounded and rang with a low silver music, as if it were filled with the waves of the sea.

Then the princess took a great silver basin, covered with strange black signs and figures raised in the silver. She poured water into the basin, and as she poured it she sang the magic spell from the Latin book. It was something like this, in English:

"Oh Lady Moon, on the waters riding,  
On shining waters, in silver sheen,  
Show me the secret the heart is hiding,

Show me the truth of the thought, oh Queen!

“Oh waters white, where the moon is riding,  
That knows what shall be and what has been,  
Tell me the secret the heart is hiding,  
Wash me the truth of it, clear and clean!”

As she sang the water in the silver basin foamed and bubbled, and then fell still again; and the princess knelt in the middle of the room, and the moon and the white light from the mirror of the moon fell in the water.

Then the princess raised the basin, and stooped her mouth to it and drank the water, spilling a few drops, and so she *drank the moon* and the knowledge of the moon. Then the moon was darkened without a cloud, and there was darkness in the sky for a time, and all the dogs in the world began to howl. When the moon shone again, the princess rose and put out the two white lights, and drew the curtains; and presently she went to bed.

“Now I know all about it,” she said. “It is clever; everything the king does is clever, and he is so kind that I daresay he does not mean any harm. But it seems a cruel trick to play on poor Ricardo. However, Jaqueline is on the watch, and I’ll show them a girl can do more than people think,” – as, indeed, she could.

After meditating in this way, the princess fell sleep, and did not waken till her maid came to call her.

“Oh! your Royal Highness, what’s this on the floor?” said the faithful Rosina, as she was arranging the princess’s things for her to get up.

“Why, what is it?” asked the princess.

“Ever so many – four, five, six, seven – little shining drops of silver lying on the carpet, as if they had melted and fallen there!”

“They have not hurt the carpet?” said the princess. “Oh dear! the queen won’t be pleased at all. It was a little chemical experiment I was trying last night.”

But she knew very well that she must have dropped seven drops of the enchanted water.

“No, your Royal Highness, the carpet is not harmed,” said Rosina; “only your Royal Highness should do these things in the laboratory. Her Majesty has often spoke about it.”

“You are quite right,” said the princess; “but as there is no harm done, we’ll say nothing about it this time. And, Rosina, you may keep the silver drops for yourself.”

“Your Royal Highness is always very kind,” said Rosina, which was true; but how much better and wiser it is not to *begin* to deceive! We never know how far we may be carried, and so Jaqueline found out.

For when she went down to breakfast, there was the king in a great state of excitement, for him.

“It’s *most* extraordinary,” said his Majesty.

“What is?” asked the queen.

“Why, didn’t you notice it? No, you had gone to bed before it happened. But I was taking a walk in the moonlight, on the balcony, and I observed it carefully.”

“Observed what, my dear?” asked the queen, who was pouring out the tea.

“Didn’t you see it, Dick? Late as usual, you young dog!” the king remarked as Ricardo entered the room.

“See what, sir?” said Dick.

“Oh, you were asleep hours before, now I think of it! But it was *the* most extraordinary thing, an unpredicted eclipse of the moon! You must have noticed it, Jaqueline; you sat up later. How the dogs howled!”

“No; I mean yes,” murmured poor Jaqueline, who of course had caused the whole affair by her magic arts, but who had forgotten, in the excitement of the moment, that an eclipse of the moon, especially if entirely unexpected, is likely to attract very general attention. Jaqueline could not bear to tell a fib, especially to a king who had been so kind to her; besides, fibbing would not alter the facts.

“Yes, I did see it,” she admitted, blushing. “Had it not been predicted?”

“Not a word about it whispered anywhere,” said his Majesty. “I looked up the almanack at once. It is the most extraordinary thing I ever saw, and I’ve seen a good many.”

“The astronomers must be duffers,” said Prince Ricardo. “I never thought there was much in physical science of any sort; most dreary stuff. Why, they say the earth goes round the sun, whereas any fool can see it is just the other way on.”

King Prigio was struck aghast by these sentiments in the mouth of his son and heir, the hope of Pantouflia. But what was the king to say in reply? The astronomers of Pantouflia, who conceived that they knew a great deal, had certainly been taken by surprise this time. Indeed, they have not yet satisfactorily explained this eclipse of the moon, though they have written volumes about it.

“Why, it may be the sun next!” exclaimed his Majesty. “Anything may happen. The very laws of gravitation themselves may go askew!”

At this moment the butler, William, who had been in the queen’s family when she was a girl, entered, and announced:

“Some of the royal tradesmen, by appointment, to see your Majesty.”

So the king, who had scarcely eaten any breakfast, much to the annoyance of the queen, who was not agitated by eclipses, went out and joined the tailors and the rest of them.

## CHAPTER III.

### The Adventure of the Shopkeepers

Dick went on with his breakfast. He ate cold pastry, and poached eggs, and ham, and rolls, and raspberry jam, and hot cakes; and he drank two cups of coffee. Meanwhile the king had joined the tradesmen who attended by his orders. They were all met in the royal study, where the king made them a most splendid bow, and requested them to be seated. But they declined to sit in his sacred presence, and the king observed that, in that case he must stand up.

“I have invited you here, gentlemen,” he said, “on a matter of merely private importance, but I must request that you will be entirely silent as to the nature of your duties. It is difficult, I know, not to talk about one’s work, but in this instance I am sure you will oblige me.”

“Your Majesty has only to command,” said Herr Schnipp. “There have been monarchs, in neighbouring kingdoms, who would have cut off all our heads after we had done a bit of secret business; but the merest word of your Majesty is law to your loving subjects.”

The other merchants murmured assent, for King Prigio was really liked by his people. He was always good-tempered and polite. He never went to war with anybody. He spent most of the royal income on public objects, and of course there were scarcely any taxes to speak of. Moreover, he had abolished what is called compulsory education, or making everybody go to school whether he likes it or not; a most mischievous and tyrannical measure! “A fellow who can’t teach himself to read,” said the king, “is not worth teaching.”

For all these reasons, and because they were so fond of the queen, his subjects were ready to do anything in reason for King Prigio.

Only one tradesman, bowing very deep and blushing very much, said:

“Your Majesty, will you hear me for one moment?”

“For an hour, with pleasure, Herr Schmidt,” said the monarch.

“It is an untradesman-like and an unusual thing to decline an order; and if your Majesty asked for my heart’s blood, I am ready to shed it, not to speak of anything in the line of my business – namely, boot and shoe making. But keep a secret from my wife, I fairly own to your Majesty that I can *not*.”

Herr Schmidt went down on his knees and wept.

“Rise, Herr Schmidt,” said the king, taking him by the hand. “A more honourable and chivalrous confession of an amiable weakness, if it is to be called a weakness, I never heard. Sir, you have been true to your honour and your prince, in face of what few men can bear, the chance of ridicule. There is no one here, I hope, but respects and will keep the secret of Herr Schmidt’s confession?”

The assembled shopkeepers could scarcely refrain from tears.

“Long live King Prigio the Good!” they exclaimed, and vowed that everything should be kept dark.

“Indeed, sire,” said the swordmaker, “all the rest of us are bachelors.”

“That is none the worse for my purpose gentlemen,” said his Majesty; “but I trust that you will not long deprive me of sons and subjects worthy to succeed to such fathers. And now, if Herr Schmidt will kindly find his way to the buttery, where refreshments are ready, I shall have the pleasure of conducting you to the scene of your labours.”

Thus speaking, the king, with another magnificent bow, led the way upstairs to a little turret-room, in a deserted part of the palace. Bidding the tradesmen enter, he showed them a large collection of miscellaneous things: an old cap or two, a pair of boots of a sort long out of fashion, an old broadsword, a shabby old Persian rug, an ivory spy-glass, and other articles. These were, in fact, the

fairy presents, which had been given to the king at his christening, and by aid of which (and his natural acuteness) he had, in his youth, succeeded in many remarkable adventures.

The caps were the Wishing Cap and the Cap of Darkness. The rug was the famous carpet which carried its owner through the air wherever he wished to go. The sword was the Sword of Sharpness. The ivory glass showed you anyone you wanted to see, however far off. The boots were the Seven-league Boots, which Hop-o'-my-Thumb stole from the Ogre about 1697. There were other valuable objects, but these were the most useful and celebrated. Of course the king did not tell the tradesmen what they were.

“Now, gentlemen,” said his Majesty, “you see these old things. For reasons which I must ask you to excuse me for keeping to myself, I wish you to provide me with objects exactly and precisely similar to these, with all the look of age.”

The tradesmen examined the objects, each choosing that in his own line of business.

“As to the sword, sire,” said the cutler, “it is an Andrea Ferrara, a fine old blade. By a lucky accident, I happen to have one at home in a small collection of ancient weapons, exactly like it. This evening it shall be at your Majesty’s disposal.”

“Perhaps, Herr Schnitzler, you will kindly write an order for it, as I wish no one of you to leave the palace, if you can conveniently stay, till your business is finished.”

“With pleasure, your Majesty,” says the cutler.

“As to the old rug,” said the upholsterer, “I have a Persian one quite identical with it at home, at your Majesty’s service.”

“Then you can do like Herr Schnitzler,” who was the cutler.

“And I,” said the hatter, “have two old caps just like these, part of a bankrupt theatrical stock.”

“We are most fortunate,” said the king.

“The boots, now I come to think of it, are unimportant, at least for the present. Perhaps we can borrow a pair from the theatre.”

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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