

Rinkitink In Oz

By

L. Frank Baum

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Introducing this Story

Here is a story with a boy hero, and a boy of whom you have never before heard. There are girls in the story, too, including our old friend Dorothy, and some of the characters wander a good way from the Land of Oz before they all assemble in the Emerald City to take part in Ozma's banquet. Indeed, I think you will find this story quite different from the other histories of Oz, but I hope you will not like it the less on that account.

If I am permitted to write another Oz book it will tell of some thrilling adventures encountered by Dorothy, Betsy Bobbin, Trot and the Patchwork Girl right in the Land of Oz, and how they discovered some amazing creatures that never could have existed outside a fairy-land. I have an idea that about the time you are reading this story of Rinkitink I shall be writing that story of Adventures in Oz.

Don't fail to write me often and give me your advice and suggestions, which I always appreciate. I get a good many letters from my readers, but every one is a joy to me and I answer them as soon as I can find time to do so.

"OZCOT"

at Hollywood in California, 1916.

L. FRANK BAUM
Royal Historian of Oz

The Prince of Pingaree

If you have a map of the Land of Oz handy, you will find that the great Nonestic Ocean washes the shores of the Kingdom of Rinkitink, between which and the Land of Oz lies a strip of the country of the Nome King and a Sandy Desert. The Kingdom of Rinkitink isn't very big and lies close to the ocean, all the houses and the King's palace being built near the shore. The people live much upon the water, boating and fishing, and the wealth of Rinkitink is gained from trading along the coast and with the islands nearest it.

Four days' journey by boat to the north of Rinkitink is the Island of Pingaree, and as our story begins here I must tell you something about this island. At the north end of Pingaree, where it is widest, the land is a mile from shore to shore, but at the south end it is scarcely half a mile broad; thus, although Pingaree is four miles long, from north to south, it cannot be called a very big island. It is exceedingly pretty, however, and to the gulls who approach it from the sea it must resemble a huge green wedge lying upon the waters, for its grass and trees give it the color of an emerald.

The grass came to the edge of the sloping shores; the beautiful trees occupied all the central portion of Pingaree, forming a continuous grove where the branches met high overhead and there was just space beneath them for the cosy houses of the inhabitants. These houses were scattered everywhere throughout the island, so that there was no town or city, unless the whole island might be called a city. The canopy of leaves, high overhead, formed a shelter from sun and rain, and the dwellers in the grove could all look past the straight tree-trunks and across the grassy slopes to the purple waters of the Nonestic Ocean.

At the big end of the island, at the north, stood the royal palace of King Kitticut, the lord and ruler of Pingaree. It was a beautiful palace, built entirely of snow-white marble and capped by domes of burnished gold, for the King was exceedingly wealthy. All along the coast of Pingaree were found the largest and finest pearls in the whole world.

These pearls grew within the shells of big oysters, and the people raked the oysters from their watery beds, sought out the milky pearls and carried them dutifully to their King. Therefore, once every year His Majesty was able to send six of his boats, with sixty rowers and many sacks of the valuable pearls, to the Kingdom of Rinkitink, where there was a city called Gilgad, in which King Rinkitink's palace stood on a rocky headland and served, with its high towers, as a lighthouse to guide sailors to the harbor. In Gilgad the pearls from Pingaree were purchased by the King's treasurer, and the boats went back to the island laden with stores of rich merchandise and such supplies of food as the people and the royal family of Pingaree needed.

The Pingaree people never visited any other land but that of Rinkitink, and so there were few other lands that knew there was such an island. To the southwest was an island called the Isle of Phreex, where the inhabitants had no use for pearls. And far north of Pingaree -- six days' journey by boat, it was said -- were twin islands named Regos and Coregos, inhabited by a fierce and warlike people.

Many years before this story really begins, ten big boatloads of those fierce warriors of Regos and Coregos visited Pingaree, landing suddenly upon the north end of the island.

There they began to plunder and conquer, as was their custom, but the people of Pingaree, although neither so big nor so strong as their foes, were able to defeat them and drive them all back to the sea, where a great storm overtook the raiders from Regos and Coregos and destroyed them and their boats, not a single warrior returning to his own country.

This defeat of the enemy seemed the more wonderful because the pearl-fishers of Pingaree were mild and peaceful in disposition and seldom quarreled even among themselves. Their only weapons were their oyster rakes; yet the fact remains that they drove their fierce enemies from Regos and Coregos from their shores.

King Kitticut was only a boy when this remarkable battle was fought, and now his hair was gray; but he remembered the day well and, during the years that followed, his one constant fear was of another invasion of his enemies. He feared they might send a more numerous army to his island, both for conquest and revenge, in which case there could be little hope of successfully opposing them.

This anxiety on the part of King Kitticut led him to keep a sharp lookout for strange boats, one of his men patrolling the beach constantly, but he was too wise to allow any fear to make him or his subjects unhappy. He was a good King and lived very contentedly in his fine palace, with his fair Queen Garee and their one child, Prince Inga.

The wealth of Pingaree increased year by year; and the happiness of the people increased, too. Perhaps there was no place, outside the Land of Oz, where contentment and peace were more manifest than on this pretty island, hidden in the besom of the Nonestic Ocean. Had these conditions remained undisturbed, there would have been no need to speak of Pingaree in this story.

Prince Inga, the heir to all the riches and the kingship of Pingaree, grew up surrounded by every luxury; but he was a manly little fellow, although somewhat too grave and thoughtful, and he could never bear to be idle a single minute. He knew where the finest oysters lay hidden along the coast and was as successful in finding pearls as any of the men of the island, although he was so slight and small. He had a little boat of his own and a rake for dragging up the oysters and he was very proud indeed when he could carry a big white pearl to his father.

There was no school upon the island, as the people of Pingaree were far removed from the state of civilization that gives our modern children such advantages as schools and learned professors, but the King owned several manuscript books, the pages being made of sheepskin. Being a man of intelligence, he was able to teach his son something of reading, writing and arithmetic.

When studying his lessons Prince Inga used to go into the grove near his father's palace and climb into the branches of a tall tree, where he had built a platform with a comfortable seat to rest upon, all hidden by the canopy of leaves. There, with no one to disturb him, he would pore over the sheepskin on which were written the queer characters of the Pingarese language.

King Kitticut was very proud of his little son, as well he might be, and he soon felt a high respect for Inga's judgment and thought that he was worthy to be taken into the

confidence of his father in many matters of state. He taught the boy the needs of the people and how to rule them justly, for some day he knew that Inga would be King in his place. One day he called his son to his side and said to him:

"Our island now seems peaceful enough, Inga, and we are happy and prosperous, but I cannot forget those terrible people of Regos and Coregos. My constant fear is that they will send a fleet of boats to search for those of their race whom we defeated many years ago, and whom the sea afterwards destroyed. If the warriors come in great numbers we may be unable to oppose them, for my people are little trained to fighting at best; they surely would cause us much injury and suffering."

"Are we, then, less powerful than in my grandfather's day?" asked Prince Inga.

The King shook his head thoughtfully.

"It is not that," said he. "That you may fully understand that marvelous battle, I must confide to you a great secret. I have in my possession three Magic Talismans, which I have ever guarded with utmost care, keeping the knowledge of their existence from anyone else. But, lest I should die, and the secret be lost, I have decided to tell you what these talismans are and where they are hidden. Come with me, my son.

He led the way through the rooms of the palace until they came to the great banquet hall. There, stopping in the center of the room, he stooped down and touched a hidden spring in the tiled floor. At once one of the tiles sank downward and the King reached within the cavity and drew out a silken bag.

This bag he proceeded to open, showing Inga that it contained three great pearls, each one as big around as a marble. One had a blue tint and one was of a delicate rose color, but the third was pure white.

"These three pearls," said the King, speaking in a solemn, impressive voice, "are the most wonderful the world has ever known. They were gifts to one of my ancestors from the Mermaid Queen, a powerful fairy whom he once had the good fortune to rescue from her enemies. In gratitude for this favor she presented him with these pearls. Each of the three possesses an astonishing power, and whoever is their owner may count himself a fortunate man. This one having the blue tint will give to the person who carries it a strength so great that no power can resist him. The one with the pink glow will protect its owner from all dangers that may threaten him, no matter from what source they may come. The third pearl -- this one of pure white -- can speak, and its words are always wise and helpful."

"What is this, my father!" exclaimed the Prince, amazed; "do you tell me that a pearl can speak? It sounds impossible."

"Your doubt is due to your ignorance of fairy powers," returned the King, gravely. "Listen, my son, and you will know that I speak the truth."

He held the white pearl to Inga's ear and the Prince heard a small voice say distinctly: "Your father is right. Never question the truth of what you fail to understand, for the world is filled with wonders."

"I crave your pardon, dear father," said the Prince, "for clearly I heard the pearl speak, and its words were full of wisdom."

"The powers of the other pearls are even greater," resumed the King. "Were I poor in all else, these gems would make me richer than any other monarch the world holds."

"I believe that," replied Inga, looking at the beautiful pearls with much awe. "But tell me, my father, why do you fear the warriors of Regos and Coregos when these marvelous powers are yours?"

"The powers are mine only while I have the pearls upon my person," answered King Kitticut, "and I dare not carry them constantly for fear they might be lost. Therefore, I keep them safely hidden in this recess. My only danger lies in the chance that my watchmen might fail to discover the approach of our enemies and allow the warrior invaders to seize me before I could secure the pearls. I should, in that case, be quite powerless to resist. My father owned the magic pearls at the time of the Great Fight, of which you have so often heard, and the pink pearl protected him from harm, while the blue pearl enabled him and his people to drive away the enemy. Often have I suspected that the destroying storm was caused by the fairy mermaids, but that is a matter of which I have no proof."

"I have often wondered how we managed to win that battle," remarked Inga thoughtfully. "But the pearls will assist us in case the warriors come again, will they not?"

"They are as powerful as ever," declared the King. "Really, my son, I have little to fear from any foe. But lest I die and the secret be lost to the next King, I have now given it into your keeping. Remember that these pearls are the rightful heritage of all Kings of Pingaree. If at any time I should be taken from you, Inga, guard this treasure well and do not forget where it is hidden."

"I shall not forget," said Inga.

Then the King returned the pearls to their hiding place and the boy went to his own room to ponder upon the wonderful secret his father had that day confided to his care.

The Coming of King Rinkitink

A few days after this, on a bright and sunny morning when the breeze blew soft and sweet from the ocean and the trees waved their leaf-laden branches, the Royal Watchman, whose duty it was to patrol the shore, came running to the King with news that a strange boat was approaching the island.

At first the King was sore afraid and made a step toward the hidden pearls, but the next moment he reflected that one boat, even if filled with enemies, would be powerless to injure him, so he curbed his fear and went down to the beach to discover who the strangers might be. Many of the men of Pingaree assembled there also, and Prince Inga followed his father. Arriving at the water's edge, they all stood gazing eagerly at the oncoming boat.

It was quite a big boat, they observed, and covered with a canopy of purple silk, embroidered with gold. It was rowed by twenty men, ten on each side. As it came nearer, Inga could see that in the stern, seated upon a high, cushioned chair of state, was a little man who was so very fat that he was nearly as broad as he was high. This man was dressed in a loose silken robe of purple that fell in folds to his feet, while upon his head was a cap of white velvet curiously worked with golden threads and having a circle of diamonds sewn around the band. At the opposite end of the boat stood an oddly shaped cage, and several large boxes of sandalwood were piled near the center of the craft.

As the boat approached the shore the fat little man got upon his feet and bowed several times in the direction of those who had assembled to greet him, and as he bowed he flourished his white cap in an energetic manner. His face was round as an apple and nearly as rosy. When he stopped bowing he smiled in such a sweet and happy way that Inga thought he must be a very jolly fellow.

The prow of the boat grounded on the beach, stopping its speed so suddenly that the little man was caught unawares and nearly toppled headlong into the sea. But he managed to catch hold of the chair with one hand and the hair of one of his rowers with the other, and so steadied himself. Then, again waving his jeweled cap around his head, he cried in a merry voice:

"Well, here I am at last!"

"So I perceive," responded King Kitticut, bowing with much dignity.

The fat man glanced at all the sober faces before him and burst into a rollicking laugh. Perhaps I should say it was half laughter and half a chuckle of merriment, for the sounds he emitted were quaint and droll and tempted every hearer to laugh with him.

"Heh, heh -- ho, ho, ho!" he roared. "Didn't expect me, I see. Keek-eek-eek-eek! This is funny -- it's really funny. Didn't know I was coming, did you? Hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo! This is certainly amusing. But I'm here, just the same."

"Hush up!" said a deep, growling voice. "You're making yourself ridiculous."

Everyone looked to see where this voice came from; but none could guess who had uttered the words of rebuke. The rowers of the boat were all solemn and silent and certainly no one on the shore had spoken. But the little man did not seem astonished in the least, or even annoyed.

King Kitticut now addressed the stranger, saying courteously:

"You are welcome to the Kingdom of Pingaree. Perhaps you will deign to come ashore and at your convenience inform us whom we have the honor of receiving as a guest."

"Thanks; I will," returned the little fat man, waddling from his place in the boat and stepping, with some difficulty, upon the sandy beach. "I am King Rinkitink, of the City of Gilgad in the Kingdom of Rinkitink, and I have come to Pingaree to see for myself the monarch who sends to my city so many beautiful pearls. I have long wished to visit this island; and so, as I said before, here I am!"

"I am pleased to welcome you," said King Kitticut. "But why has Your Majesty so few attendants? Is it not dangerous for the King of a great country to make distant journeys in one frail boat, and with but twenty men?"

"Oh, I suppose so," answered King Rinkitink, with a laugh. "But what else could I do? My subjects would not allow me to go anywhere at all, if they knew it. So I just ran away."

"Ran away!" exclaimed King Kitticut in surprise.

"Funny, isn't it? Heh, heh, heh -- woo, hoo!" laughed Rinkitink, and this is as near as I can spell with letters the jolly sounds of his laughter. "Fancy a King running away from his own ple -- hoo, hoo -- keek, eek, eek! But I had to, don't you see!"

"Why?" asked the other King.

"They're afraid I'll get into mischief. They don't trust me. Keek-eek-eek -- Oh, dear me! Don't trust their own King. Funny, isn't it?"

"No harm can come to you on this island," said Kitticut, pretending not to notice the odd ways of his guest. "And, whenever it pleases you to return to your own country, I will send with you a fitting escort of my own people. In the meantime, pray accompany me to my palace, where everything shall be done to make you comfortable and happy."

"Much obliged," answered Rinkitink, tipping his white cap over his left ear and heartily shaking the hand of his brother monarch. "I'm sure you can make me comfortable if you've plenty to eat. And as for being happy -- ha, ha, ha, ha! -- why, that's my trouble. I'm too happy. But stop! I've brought you some presents in those boxes. Please order your men to carry them up to the palace."

"Certainly," answered King Kitticut, well pleased, and at once he gave his men the proper orders.

"And, by the way," continued the fat little King, "let them also take my goat from his cage."

"A goat!" exclaimed the King of Pingaree.

"Exactly; my goat Bilbil. I always ride him wherever I go, for I'm not at all fond of walking, being a trifle stout -- eh, Kitticut? -- a trifle stout! Hoo, hoo, hoo-keek, eek!"

The Pingaree people started to lift the big cage out of the boat, but just then a gruff voice cried: "Be careful, you villains!" and as the words seemed to come from the goat's mouth the men were so astonished that they dropped the cage upon the sand with a sudden jar.

"There! I told you so!" cried the voice angrily. "You've rubbed the skin off my left knee. Why on earth didn't you handle me gently?"

"There, there, Bilbil," said King Rinkitink soothingly; "don't scold, my boy. Remember that these are strangers, and we their guests." Then he turned to Kitticut and remarked: "You have no talking goats on your island, I suppose."

"We have no goats at all," replied the King; "nor have we any animals, of any sort, who are able to talk."

"I wish my animal couldn't talk, either," said Rinkitink, winking comically at Inga and then looking toward the cage. "He is very cross at times, and indulges in language that is not respectful. I thought, at first, it would be fine to have a talking goat, with whom I could converse as I rode about my city on his back; but -- keek-eek-eek-eek! -- the rascal treats me as if I were a chimney sweep instead of a King. Heh, heh, heh, keek, eek! A chimney sweep-hoo, hoo, hoo! -- and me a King! Funny, isn't it?" This last was addressed to Prince Inga, whom he chucked familiarly under the chin, to the boy's great embarrassment.

"Why do you not ride a horse?" asked King Kitticut.

"I can't climb upon his back, being rather stout; that's why. Kee, kee, keek, eek! -- rather stout -- hoo, hoo, hoo!" He paused to wipe the tears of merriment from his eyes and then added: "But I can get on and off Bilbil's back with ease."

He now opened the cage and the goat deliberately walked out and looked about him in a sulky manner. One of the rowers brought from the boat a saddle made of red velvet and beautifully embroidered with silver thistles, which he fastened upon the goat's back. The fat King put his leg over the saddle and seated himself comfortably, saying:

"Lead on, my noble host, and we will follow."

"What! Up that steep hill?" cried the goat. "Get off my back at once, Rinkitink, or I won't budge a step."

"But-consider, Bilbil," remonstrated the King. "How am I to get up that hill unless I ride?"

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