

Rex and Zendah in



REX AND ZENDAH stood before the Gate of the Lion for some time and admired it, in fact they could never quite make up their minds which was the more beautiful, this or the Gate of the Balance.

It was formed of gold; some parts were dull, and some parts were polished until they glittered, and reflected every ray of light. On each side was a tall tower, the gate hung between them with a portcullis over the top. A golden sun formed the gate, while the rays from it made the bars. There was a small door in each of the towers with a knocker in the shape of a lion's head.

Rex went up to one of these and knocked; a small wicket opened in the top of the door and a face appeared and demanded: "Who goes there?"

"Rex and Zendah," they replied.

"Give the Password."

"Faith," said both the children together.

A fanfare of trumpets sounded and the portcullis drew up, the gate opened, and they found themselves on the drawbridge leading to another portal.

They went on toward this next door, which opened slowly before them, but there they stopped suddenly—for barring their way were two very fierce looking lions, one with a black mane, and the other with a brown one. The worst of it was, the lions were not chained and appeared to be able to jump at them if they desired. They could not go back, for the drawbridge behind them was raised;

they must go forward.

Zendah had an inspiration—the bread that Hermes had given them in the Land of the Virgin—she had just a few crumbs left! So putting her hand in her pocket, she took them out, and timidly offered them to the lions.

You can imagine how great was her surprise when the lions took the bread, started to purr, and put their heads down to be patted. To be sure their purr was rather alarming for it was more like distant thunder as compared with the purr of their cat at home.

"They are quite tame, if you are brave, but they would prevent any cowards coming into this land," said a voice.

Looking up, they saw a knight dressed in golden armor over which hung a white linen cloak, and on this was sewn a red heart above a red cross.

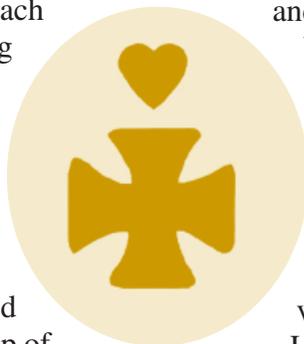
He took the children by the hand and cried: "In the name of the King, open the gates."

The further door flew open, and they stood at the beginning of a broad highway lined with people, all dressed in beautiful robes of gold, crimson and purple.

Knights in armor, page boys with trumpets, attendants with flags, and a band composed of all kinds of musical instruments, formed themselves in ordered rows.

A magnificent coach drew up before them, and they were invited to step inside.

The drum major gave the signal to the crowd, the band started to play, and the whole procession



went off down the road, with the coach containing Rex and Zendah in their midst.

On each side of the road as they passed, the people cheered and waved flags.

Looking out of the coach windows as they rode along, they noticed that there were no small houses anywhere. Each one stood in a park or large garden of its own, and everywhere grew hundreds of sunflowers and marigolds; and celandines made a sheet of gold for one's feet. Coming at last to the palace itself, they saw that this park was circular, and the boundary was a wide walk lined with magnificent cedar trees. At equal intervals were twelve entrances, from which twelve drives went up to the palace, each of which was shaded with cedar trees. The shade was needed, as the Sun shone very fiercely down upon them, for it was always summer in the Land of the Lion!

Dismounting from the coach at one of the gates they walked upon a fine purple carpet to the main entrance, escorted by several pages.

Two heralds met them there, and preceding them to the throne room, blew a fanfare on their trumpets. The curtains were flung back—they stood and looked round with astonishment, for the hall was circular like the park and all the walls were made of gold, while the floor was one large red ruby.

Leading out of this great hall were five smaller ones, also with walls made of gold. Hanging from the ceiling in front of the throne were burning seven red lamps. At the side of the throne were braziers, scenting the air with perfumed smoke, like those in the land of the Scorpion-Eagle.

The attendants and the great lords alike had hearts embroidered on their cloaks or tunics in red and gold.

A chime of bells struck twelve; immediately everyone in the hall turned toward the golden



throne with its arms formed by two lions. A sun was carved on the back of the seat similar to that on the entrance gate.

The scented clouds swirled and swayed until the children imagined they could see weird animals and mountains and giants—but gradually shining through them all, right up near the roof of the hall, was a brilliant star. The mist of smoke cleared and they saw the star shining on the forehead of an Angel with golden wings; so tall was he that he reached from the floor to the ceiling.

Then the cloud of incense settled over the throne itself and as it slowly cleared, a bright light appeared, so bright that Rex and Zendah covered their eyes. Not every one can look at the Sun! A kind, deep voice bade them welcome, and looking up, they saw a beautiful man sitting on the throne.

He was young, and yet he looked so wise, and kind too. His curly hair reminded them of the Sun's rays. His dress was of shining yellow, something like chain armor, but made of little leaves of gold, and he wore a massive chain, from which hung a heart-shaped ruby. In one hand he held a crystal ball with a cross on the top, and in the other a golden scepter.

As they were being escorted to seats near the throne, they noticed curtains at the far end of the hall gradually drawn on one side, behind which was a stage.

A hidden orchestra played an overture and this was followed by a play showing the adventures of a young man seeking for hidden treasure.

Difficulties met him wherever he went; in gloomy caverns the gnomes opposed his passage; on the sea furious storms caused the waves to delay him, and many times he was nearly wrecked. The air fairies blew mighty winds to prevent his landing on the Golden Treasure Island, and when he did land, he must pass through a circle of fire before he could even start to climb the Treasure Mountain.

On his way up the mountain, fierce animals barred his progress and though he had to fight his way through, he did not come to any harm so long as he pressed on fearlessly.

Reaching the top, he discovered a dragon coiled across the entrance to the cave. After a fearful fight he conquered it and, entering the secret chamber, found the Ruby Heart, which is the treasure of the Land of the Sun. A burst of music and voices chorus-ing a song of rejoicing greeted the victor, the curtains closed, and the play was ended.

After this two pages conducted them into one of the side halls where they saw children studying maps of the worlds and drawing many plans. They had to work very hard, so one of the pages told them, for they were learning to be rulers and kings, and they must know and understand how every-thing was done before they would be able to show

others.

Rex thought that it was rather hard work learning to be a king. He thought so still more when he saw how these children spent their play time in learning to run and jump, and how to use all kinds of weapons so that they could protect their subjects if they were attacked, though they never fought unless they had to protect someone.

The pages escorted them back into the great hall, and once again they stood in front of the King. From a cushion held by an attendant, he took a gold chain from which hung a ruby and placed it around Zendah's neck. This chain resembled the one he himself wore.

"You know the watchword of this land," he said, "keep your heart kind to all, and look for the best in everyone. So will your ruby always shine brightly."

Turning to Rex, he placed in his hand a golden rod also tipped with a ruby. "This will give you power to organize and rule wherever you are placed, but remember you must never order anyone to do anything that you cannot do yourself. Now you must go and this being the land of the Third Guardian of the Winds, you will travel swiftly to the gates."

Everyone rose and silence fell on the great hall—they heard whispered another strange word that they did not know. Voice after voice joined in, until there was a chord of beautiful music chanted by hundreds of voices. As each one joined in, a wind began to sweep round the hall, becoming swifter and swifter as more and more voices were added to the chorus.

Last of all the King rose and sang one Word in a wonderful tone and then the song of the others sank into a whisper.

The hall shook as it did in the Land of the Scorpion-Eagle—and without any more warning, they found themselves outside the gate.

"The third earthquake," said Rex. □

—Esme Swainson

