

## Chapter 2 I Meet the King and Queen

I was very ill now.

'I think he is going to die,' said the farmer. 'I will show him more before he dies. Then I can make more money.'

He began to show me in the big cities. The first was Lorbrulgrud, the greatest city in Brobdingnag. The king lived there. He wanted the farmer to show me to the queen.

'Perhaps the queen will help me,' I thought.

The queen asked me some questions about my country and my travels, and I answered them.

'Would you like to live here?' she asked me in her language.

'Yes,' I answered, 'but I work for the farmer. I'm his servant. I'll have to stay with him.'

'Perhaps he will sell you to me,' the queen answered.

The queen bought me from the farmer for a lot of money.

'Can his daughter work for you?' I asked the queen. 'She's a good friend. I don't want to leave her.'

Glumdalclitch came with me and we were very happy.

One day, the queen took me to the king. He was very busy with his books and papers. He looked at me on his wife's hand, but only quickly.

'So you like *splacknucks* now!' he laughed.

The queen laughed with him and put me in front of the king. He asked me some questions and I told him my name and about my travels.

He sent for his men. They watched me, and they talked about me for hours. Then they spoke to the king.

'This thing,' they said, 'is not an animal. It cannot fly or run very fast. It cannot climb trees, or run away under the ground. It is not a very small person because it is smaller than the smallest person in the world. It is a Thing - and nobody planned this Thing. It is a Mistake.'

I spoke to the king.

'I'm not a Thing,' I said. 'In my country there are millions of men and women of my size. The animals, trees and houses are the right size for us. We have our language, our ruler and our laws.'

I told him about England and the other countries of Europe. He listened carefully. Then he sent his men away.

'I want to hear more from this little man,' he told the queen. 'Build a house for him.'

The queen sent for the best woodworker in the country and he made a box for me. He was a very good worker, and in three weeks I had a big room. It was about five metres long, five metres wide, and three metres high. It had two windows and a door. Glumdalclitch could open the top and clean the room. She took my bed out in the morning and put it in at night.

The queen liked me very much. At dinner time I sat at my table on her dinner table. The queen always cut my food as small as she could. Then I cut it again with my knife and ate it slowly.



*The queen liked me very much.*

On Wednesdays nobody worked, and every Wednesday the king had dinner with his family. Then the king liked to have me and my table near him. He asked me questions about Europe and its people, its laws and ideas, and its rulers.

I spoke to him about our wars, our great rich families, the fights between our churchmen, our rulers and Parliament. The king laughed and made a loud noise.

He said to the queen: 'Now we know that we are stupid! We think we are important people. But these funny little people think they are important. Perhaps they build a lot of houses in the same place and call them cities. Perhaps they fight, and say bad things about one friend to another friend. Perhaps they are not very different from other people.'

Of course I was angry.

'How can he say these things about England?' I thought. 'England is a good and great country. We win wars ...!'

Was I right when I was angry? To me, these people were not big and ugly and noisy now. Perhaps I will laugh at the people in my country when I see them again.

The king was very interested. He often asked for me. I had to talk about my country, and I did that happily.

'My country,' I told him, 'is really three great countries under one great ruler. The three countries are in two islands, but we also have places in America.'

'But there were people in America before the Europeans went there,' he said. 'Why don't these people have an American ruler?'

I tried to tell him the answer to this, but he could not understand.

Then I told him about our English Parliament.

'It makes the laws for our country,' I said. 'There are two Houses in this Parliament. One is the House of Lords. (Lord: very important men had the word *Lord* in front of their names) Some great families have a place in this House. A father gives this place to his son when he dies. The House of Lords helps the king or queen. It discusses the laws from the other House, the House of Commons.'

The king had more questions. 'How do these men learn about the laws?' he asked. 'It is difficult work. They have to know that a law is good for the country — and not for them. Do they learn these things when they are boys, or young men?'

'No,' I answered. 'They learn when they go to the House of Lords. Before that, they learn to kill animals, and they learn to fight.'

'The House of Commons is very different. The people of the country send men to it, and those men speak for them. Nobody pays them, but they want to help people.'

'A new law first goes through the House of Commons. Then the House of Lords discusses it. Sometimes, the ruler wants more money from the people, and then he has to ask the House of Commons.'

'How can the men in the House of Commons do this work for no money?' the king asked again and again. 'Perhaps some men are bad! Perhaps they take money from people when they make a law. Perhaps they get more money from the people for the ruler or his friends?'

He did not understand my answers, so I told him other things about my country.

'I do not like,' he said, 'to hear about wars. They cost your country a lot of money. Perhaps, my little Grildrig, you are now better than your little people because you know other places in the world. You are a good man - but sometimes stupid because, of course, your head is very small.'

I was angry. 'We are small people with small heads,' I thought, 'but we know a lot of things in our country. I'll tell him about gunpowder.'

'We have very clever men in my country,' I began. 'They can make a dangerous powder. They push this powder into a long gun. Inside the gun there is a very hard ball. When you put fire near the powder, there's a loud noise. The powder pushes the ball from the gun, and the ball flies out very fast. When it hits something, it breaks it. A ball from the biggest gun will kill a lot of men. Or it will break the strongest wall, or send the biggest ship to the bottom of the sea.'

'Who can make this powder?' the king asked me.

'A lot of people, from good schools,' I said. 'I can make it. I can show your workmen and they can make big guns — perhaps sixty metres long. With twenty or thirty of these guns, you can break down the walls of the strongest town in your country in hours.'

'Stop!' the king said. 'Never speak of these things again! Don't talk about them to me or to anybody in my country. Or you will die!'

'This is strange!' I thought. 'He is a good king, and he understands a lot of things. But sometimes people want changes - and he doesn't want to hurt anybody! What will he do when they don't want a king here?'

'Your rulers, your men in Parliament and your clever men are not working for the people of your country,' said the king. 'A good farmer, with his fruit or vegetables, helps his people better than them.'