



# *The New Princes And Princesses*

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Historical

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If there ever had been an ideal kingdom with an ideal king then Artois and its Noble King Jean Marie would rank amongst the top contenders for the distinction.

The Kingdom of Artois spread from Eastern Bavaria to the River Seine in the south. This French riviera with the most fertile soil would be any king's ultimate wish for his subjects.

King Jean Marie and his Queen Sofia had two grandsons, the elder Jerome who had a wife Rafael and the younger Joel.

One year it so happened that the kingdom received almost negligible rains. The following year it rained even less. And in the year that followed there was a drought-like scenario.

The beautiful River Sonne which flowed across the vast kingdom, brimming with cool water and full of fish was almost dry. Sonne was the lifeline of the kingdom and the sad state of the river bothered one and all including the Royal Family.

It was decided that King Jean Marie and his two grandsons would travel to Rome to meet the Pope. It was a journey of several weeks on horsebacks.

The three for several weeks and finally reached Rome. When they met the Pope, he was in prayer and meditation. In the small chapel they had to wait for some time. The Pope slowly opened his eyes and started speaking very softly. He said he was aware of the situation in the kingdom of Artois. He continued that the situation was the result of the weakest in the kingdom of Artois not being cared for. There were lot of children in the Kingdom of Artois who were orphans and leading miserable lives. These lot had no place for shelter, would roam around in the daytime and do menial work for petty wages or even beg for a living. The orphans in the kingdom numbered several hundreds and the maximum were in the capital. The Pope added that the scenario was not much different in the nearby kingdoms of Spain and Portugal. The Pope added that if the Royal Family continued to overlook the plight of the weakest lot in the kingdom then the same would surely invite the wrath of God on the kingdom. He suggested that these children had to be given safe and secure environment where they would be protected and cared for and not be bullied, harassed or inhumanly treated. He concluded by saying that such an act of providing a secure heaven for the young ones would be an ideal act of reverence to the Almighty which would surely please him.

When King Jean Marie returned to his capital he conveyed his learned ministers what the Pope had suggested. So it was decided by the King that the orphan children in the kingdom were the responsibility of the state. Queen Sofia who attended all the meetings of the Royal Council suggested that she was willing to be the Queen Mother of all the orphans in the state. Prince Jerome suggested that comfortable homes be build across the kingdom for the young children who were homeless. The houses, apart from the children, would have a cook trained by the Royal Chief cook, who would be an expert in all the Royal cuisines of Artois, and a guardian mother who would stay with the children for a fixed period of time away from her own family. The guardian mother would be allowed to meet her own family frequently but would have to stay with the less fortunate children nurturing and caring them. The state would employ adequate caring mothers as guardian mothers. He further suggested that there should be a guardian mother for 10 to 15 children so that each child would get the attention of the guardian mother. Earl Simeon, the Chief Minister and son in law of the king interrupted. After having humbly asked permission from the King, he said the plans of setting up homes with such amenities would cost a huge sum. There had to be a way to fund the homes for orphans. To this Prince Joel answered that the state would build large amusement arenas across the kingdom. These arenas based on the famous fables and folktales would give the people and especially children a chance to see, learn and enjoy the

treasures of the land. The arenas would have stages where popular scenes would be enacted and also feature people dressed up as popular characters from the fables who would be available to interact with the children and their guardians. This would lead to the children knowing more about their own culture through a medium which most of them liked. The arenas would also have acrobats performing hair raising feats and other performers from various corners of the kingdom.

King Jean Marie was very pleased with the suggestions of his two grandsons. He thanked his Queen for showing willingness for being the Queen mother of the less fortunate ones of the kingdom. The King then issued a Royal Proclamation that the work on building the amusement arenas would be started immediately. Revenue from the amusement arenas would be partly used to fund the homes of the less fortunate children who would henceforth be called Princesses and Princes.

In no time the amusement arenas were ready. These arenas had the age old culture of the kingdom at display. Young and old thronged to these arenas. Artois was a kingdom where most were passionate about their fables and folktales. In the arenas they could interact with the famous characters which in a way brought the pages of these classics to life. These arenas were a runaway success with the masses who had been starved of any form of entertainment. The state was also minting money. The King and Queen were very pleased at the success of the amusement arenas and promptly decided to order beginning of work on the homes across Artois.

The King made special efforts to see that the homes for the less fortunate ones – the new princes and princesses would be no less than the Royal Castle in terms of comfort. The children were delighted to move into their new homes where their guardian mothers were present to greet and welcome them with a warm hug. They were later served with lots of goodies.

All in all hundred homes were build across Artois, which was more than sufficient for all the orphans in the kingdom. The state also saw to it that the children were allowed to attend daily training in reading, writing and arithmetic.

What no one noticed amidst all the happenings was that the kingdom received decent rainfall that year. And slowly the situation improved. Neighbouring Spain and Portugal also emmulated Artois build homes to house their weakest ones.

The River Sonne was back to its vibrant best. There was plenty of water and fish once again. And so smiles returned to the faces of the Royal Family and they all lived happily for many many years ...

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