

“How long have you lived?” asked Button-Bright.

The King coughed again and turned a bit bluer. “That is considered an impertinent question in Sky Island,” he answered, “but I will say that every Boolooroo is elected to reign three hundred years, and I’ve reigned not quite—ahem!—two hundred.”

“Are your kings elected, then?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“Yes, of course. This is a Republic, you know. The people elect all their officers from the King down. Every man and every woman is a voter. The Boolooroo tells them whom to vote for, and if they don’t obey, they are severely punished. It’s a fine system of government, and the only thing I object to is electing the Boolooroo for only three hundred years. It ought to be for life. My successor has already been elected, but he can’t reign for a hundred years to come.”

“I think three hundred years is plenty long enough,” said Trot. “It gives someone else a chance to rule, an’ I wouldn’t be s’prised if the next king is a better one. Seems to me you’re not much of a Boolooroo.”