

## *The Adventures of Rex and Zendah In the Land of the Fishes*

**B**EFORE THEY KNOCKED at the Gate of the Fishes, they stood for a few minutes looking at it—for it was so difficult to see where to knock. The sides of the gate were like two great waves and between them appeared lines of shifting water, never still for one moment, and shining with all the colors you see in a deep sea shell. Circling round and round, in the centre of the gate, were two fishes following each other, one copper colored and one looking like zinc. In the middle of this beautiful gate was a priceless pearl, wonderful in shape and color, which reflected, as in a mirror, a face—changing continuously. At one moment this face was so hideous, while at the next so dazzlingly beautiful, that one could hardly bear to look at it.

Zendah noticed a sea-shell trumpet lying at the foot of the gate.

“Blow it,” said Rex, “they always sound a trumpet at the entrance of a giant’s castle in the fairy tales we have read.” Zendah blew the shell trumpet. A soft note sounded, and all the movement ceased; the fishes stopped swimming round and formed themselves on either side of the pearl, just like this:



“Who demands entrance?” cried a voice. “Let him give the password.”

“Rex and Zendah from earth,” they said, “and the Password is *love*.”



*The Land of the Fishes*

“Then by virtue of love, enter Rex and Zendah,” echoed many voices, and the gates swung slowly open.

As the gates rolled back, Zendah looked at Rex with astonishment and exclaimed, “Look Rex, look, it is nearly all sea!” They found themselves standing on the silvery sand of a seashore, and as far as they could see there were miles and miles of rippling waves, dotted about with many small islands. Far out at sea on the largest island stood a

castle constructed of mother-of-pearl. A beautiful little boat soon drew up at their feet with two children on board, one a boy who had hair of a flaxen color and the other a girl, so fair that her hair shone like silver.

The boat was in the shape of a flying fish and they learned that it could rise out of the water and fly in the air at the wish of the steersman.

“Oh, do let us see it fly,” cried Rex as they took their seats at one end. The boat slowly rose into the air, then dipped into the waves, and then rose again, for it did not seem able to climb to any great height above the water. The children were shown that it was driven by electricity. In the bottom of the boat were copper plates just under the seat of the girl who steered. She wore curious sandals; the left foot had a copper sole and the right sole was made of zinc, and when she wanted the boat to rise she pressed with both feet, but only with the right foot if she wanted to sink onto the waves again, while pressure on the copper sole brought the boat to a standstill. They heard curious music as they glided along, and not seeing any birds, they asked where it came from.

“It is the fishes,” they were told. “They are quite tame and they sing to us, for we have no birds in the Land of the Fishes.”

Passing numbers of small boats like the one they were in, they soon arrived at the Pearly Castle, and embarking on a small quay, they walked up a path made of different kinds of shells between rows of girls clad in cloaks of pale mauve. Their shoes were most beautiful, and nearly all the jewels they wore were on their feet.

There were no bright colors anywhere in the castle. The walls were of white marble and pearl shell; the pillars appeared to be moonstones. It reminded them of the mist they had once seen on an early morning at the seaside, with the sun shining through. All the walls and pillars gave out a musical note when they were touched, and everyone they met in the passages had a musical instrument.

After passing through many halls and twisting stairways, they at last stood in the throne room and saw King Neptune. His throne was made of a massive sea shell, with cushions of violet silk. In his hand he held a long wand of some white, shining

metal at the top of which were three branches, each tipped with a pearl.

“Neptune’s trident,” they whispered to each other.

He bade them welcome and turned to a beautiful lady who stood at his side, and asked her to show the children the wonders of this country.

“Queen Venus spends many hours in this land helping me,” he said, “and she understands children much better than I do.”

They were taken from room to room in the castle. In one they found an orchestra of many children, each child playing a different instrument, yet the music was the most beautiful they had ever heard. One or two sat quietly in a corner, seemingly doing nothing.

“Why are they not playing with the others, have they been naughty?” asked Rex. “Hush,” said Venus, “they are listening to the angels’ music, and presently they write it down for the others to play.”

In another room they found everyone busy writing, and every now and then as a child would stop and appear to be thinking hard a little cloud with hundreds of tiny pictures in it would gather over its head.

“They are writing stories and poetry,” said Venus, answering the children’s unspoken question. “All those little pictures are the ideas that come to them.”

Leaving these rooms and passing down the castle steps, they came into a courtyard where there were all sorts of animals, some lame, some with bad ears, birds with broken legs or wings, and many others with different complaints. Children of all ages were trying to mend their broken limbs or heal their wounds. Rex and Zendah looked at their Guide with questioning eyes.

“When any animals get hurt on earth, they come here to be cured,” said Venus, looking rather stern. “Children, too, must come here to learn to be kind and loving to all animals, for here are found the hospitals where both men and animals may be cured.

“But before you go, I will show you something very precious,” said Venus. Stepping into another flying fish boat like the first, they were taken to an island near the Pearly Castle.

It was quite small and almost entirely covered by a circular glass temple, guarded by two knights

in shining armor, with shields bearing the emblem of a silver cup on a blue background. They, too, demanded the password, and being given it, allowed the children to pass.

There was nothing inside, except an altar at one end and a large mirror. On the altar shone a brilliant light like the full moon; within this they could faintly see a crystal cup which sparkled as a diamond, or perhaps it was more like the sun shining through a dewdrop.

“Children,” said Venus, “when King Arthur came to live among the stars, he brought with him the Magic Cup, which has the power of giving everyone what he most wishes for. But you must be certain that you really know what you want. It must be something you can share with those you love. It will never go back to earth again until people stop quarreling with each other.”

Pointing to the mirror, she said, “In this, if your eyes are strong enough, you can see everything that has ever happened or will happen. I will give you a small magic mirror like this one, Zendah, and if you use it well, when you are in difficulties, you will be able to see exactly what to do.

“Rex, wear this pearl, and when you do, remember the password of this land and so help to bring the Holy Cup back to earth once more.”

Very quietly, they almost tiptoed back to the

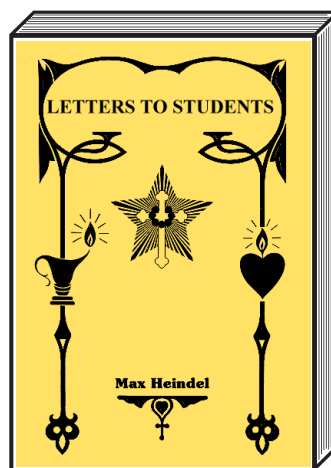


temple porch, carrying their gifts with them, and re-entered the flying boat, leaving Queen Venus, with a smile on her face, standing on the steps. Soon they were back on the seashore by the gate of the Land of the Fishes, and once outside, they turned to look for the Land of the Water Carrier, sometimes known as “the Man with the Pitcher.” □

(To be continued.)

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