

Rex and Zendah in



THE MOMENT the children turned and saw the next gate, they both exclaimed, "How beautiful!" It certainly was the most beautiful gate they had seen up to the present.

The pillars on each side were formed like peach trees, with bunches of fruit hanging in clusters from every branch. The gate itself was of polished copper and at the top, a copper sun sinking halfway below a copper sea, each ray of the sun having a little hand at its tip.

A narrow pillar ran up the centre of the gate, and poised on the top of this, just under the setting sun, was a pair of scales. One pan swung right up in the air and the other was weighed down with a ball, gleaming with many colors.

"This is the Land of the Balance," said Rex, "so I wonder if before we may go inside we have to find what fills the other pan to make it swing evenly?"

"We had better look and see if we have anything to put in," said Zendah, searching in her pocket. But she had nothing except a handkerchief, while Rex found only the knife that he had nearly lost outside the other gate.

Standing on tiptoe, they tried to put these things in the pan; nothing happened. But then they hardly thought that these would be enough. Looking round, they noticed just under the central pillar of the gate, a casket, with the words engraved on it, "Choose well, choose wisely."

Opening it they found inside a collection of small bags of gold, several golden hearts, many

little daggers, and numbers of small books.

Rex seized the little bags of gold, and reaching up, piled them into the scale, but yet they did not move. Then he collected a handful of the daggers and put them in. Still the pan remained up in the air. They tried all the little books, but with no results.

"Well, there is only one thing left now," said Zenda, "so that must be right," and into the pan they piled the little gold hearts. Immediately the scales began to swing and down, up and down, until they came to rest at last level.

The moment they did so, music sounded, and voices sang to the chord. "Give the Password of the Just balance."

"Harmony," replied the children.

The gate glided open, so quietly and gently, that they wondered how it opened so noiselessly.

Just inside stood Father Time. They stared with open eyes for he looked so different. Gone was his dark cloak of the Land of the Sea-Goat; instead he now wore a dress of silvery white, covered all along the edge with sparkling stones and green embroidery. He reminded the children of one of those beautiful sunny days in winter when the snow hangs like diamonds on the fir trees. He smiled when he saw their astonishment and said:

"I can only wear this dress when I come to visit Queen Venus. People always expect me to look sad in the other lands, but I am not really so severe when you get to know me. Learn all you can here and consider—Queen Venus will tell you how."

Taking his dark cloak and hourglass from a



MUSIC SCALES

niche by the gate he went out, after which it closed behind him.

“Consider—consider what?” inquired Rex.

“I am sure I don’t know,” said Zendah, “but I expect we shall soon find out.”

They began to look around. It was very lovely; the sky was alight with the most beautiful sunset they had ever seen. The perfume of many flowers met them on every side, but it was difficult to say what they were because the fragrance was so different from anything they knew at home.

Seven roads lay in front of them and along one of these, coming in their direction, were a man and a woman with their arms linked together. They were very charming to look at, but the surprising thing was, that they were not walking on the road, nor on the grass, but floating in the air, just above the ground. They were both dressed in robes of the same colour as the deep blue sea when a hot summer sun is shining on it, and wore copper belts, set with rows of opals.

They hardly seemed solid, for sometimes the children thought they could see through them.

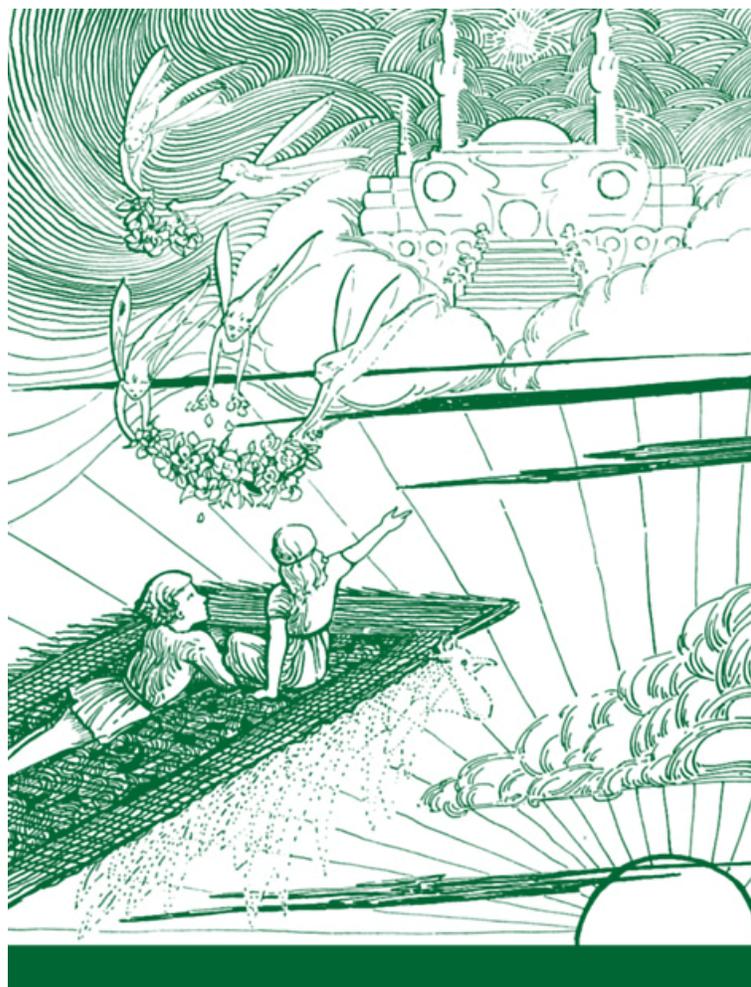
Coming to rest on the road near Rex and Zendah, they were joined by another man and woman, and together the four sang the chord like that heard at the entrance.

Immediately hundreds of tiny fairies floated up, holding a many colored carpet that looked rather like a sunset cloud. With smiles and waving arms, the fairies invited the children to sit down on this carpet, when gently it rose from the ground and they were started on their voyage in the air.

So smoothly they travelled, they hardly knew that they had left the ground. It was quite easy for them to see everything as they passed and they thought it was much nicer than any other method of transportation they had ever tried.

One very curious thing they did notice was that every house was suspended in the air; not one was built on the ground, and they wondered where the foundations were laid.

Whichever way they gazed, there were beautiful



gardens, and many flowers, lilies and violets and roses, all in bloom, and over them hovered hundreds of bees.

Hearing very faint music, they looked around and found that it was the fairies singing the flowers to sleep, so that they could place the honey inside the flowers’ storehouses for the bees to find the next day. A burst of glorious music above their heads made them look up, and high above them, they saw the palace.

It was made of sunset clouds, its towers and pinnacles were of all colors—ruby, orange, green and purple, and that beautiful blue you see only in the sky at sunset, on a clear day. Up and up they floated to the entrance, fairly flying to greet them with garlands of roses, which they threw round their necks. Leaving the carpet, they ascended the magic steps and entered the hall, and everywhere found there were flowers and fairies. Soon they came to a series of rooms, seven of them, all of the

same size, but each of a different color—red, orange, green, yellow, blue, violet, and indigo.

Each room seemed more beautiful than the preceding and as they crossed the threshold, a note of music sounded.

The rooms affected them differently. Going through the red room they felt lively and energetic; nothing troubled them, and they stepped along as to a marching tune; in fact the note of music in that room sounded like a march to them.

In the orange room, they felt as if they were in the sunshine and wanted to sit down and just enjoy it and make plans for what they wished to do.

The yellow room made them feel clever, and Rex thought of the sums that he could not do at school and found he knew all the answers, and Zendah remembered all the dates in her history that had always seemed so hard.

In the green room Zendah recalled she had forgotten to feed her rabbits the night before, and had never helped mother in the garden as

she had promised, while Rex remembered the boy with the broken leg, who lived in the cottage down the road and who had asked him to go and read to him.

The blue room felt like a church and they stepped on tiptoe and talked in whispers. They fancied they saw angels all round the walls, and heard an organ playing music, such as they heard on Sundays.

The violet room! They could never quite explain how they felt there. It reminded them somehow of the Land of the Fishes and the Temple of the Holy Cup.

Lastly, they entered the deep-sea blue room, the great hall. There, at the far end, they saw Queen Venus smiling at them from a carved ivory throne. The throne curved right above her head, so she seemed to be sitting in a ball of ivory.

It had a wonderful blue cushion and behind it, on the wall, were blue silk hangings, covered with

pictures worked in many colors.

Vases of flowers stood everywhere, and all the attendants had wreaths on their heads. Queen Venus herself was dressed in pure white silk, bordered with blue and opals.

The children ran toward her and caught hold of her hands.

“Sit down on the cushions at my feet,” she said, “and consider.”

They looked at each other and whispered, “Consider again? What does it mean?” Sitting down on the cushions pointed out to them, they watched. Many people came into the hall with sad,

gloomy, or angry faces. Queen Venus bent toward them and whispered a few words in their ears, and sent them away with one of the attendants.

In a short time they came back, looking quite different, and kissing the Queen’s hand, left the hall.

“Do you wonder what is the matter with all these people?” she said, turning to the

children. Rex nodded.

“They are all discontented or unhappy, and they come to learn to be peace-makers instead of trouble-makers in the world. They do not understand that everyone has his own note of music and also his own colour, and if he does not use his own note he sings out of tune. So I send these people into the halls through which you passed, to find their own note and to learn to sing it properly.

“Then they go back to Earth and sing in tune, and they will never grumble any more. Everything has its own note; listen to the waterfall and the wind in the trees and you will hear theirs. Even the stars sing. Listen!” She held up her hand and everyone in the hall was silent.

She stood up and sang a few notes of a song.

Above them in the air appeared a harp with seven strings. First one note murmured and

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swelled and sang, then another and another until all the seven were singing together, and a star flashed out over the harp and then disappeared.

They had never heard anything like it, and it was so grand that they almost felt a little awed, and crept up close to Queen Venus.

Smiling at their amazement she said: "That is the music of the seven planets; only poets and great musicians ever hear it on Earth, and it is because they find it so difficult to write down and for other people to play that they are usually so dissatisfied with their work. If you always think of beautiful things and endeavor to make happiness wherever you go, then you will be able to come back to this land and hear the music of the planets again, for this land is harmony.

"That is what Father Time meant when he told you to consider; consider before you speak, that you may not say unkind words which hurt and upset the harmony of the world; consider before you act whether the thing you do helps other people or is just for yourself.

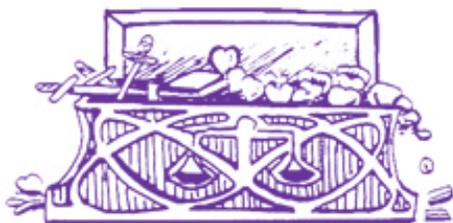
"To remind you of this land, take this five-pointed opal star, Zendah, and you, Rex, take this small seven-stringed harp, that you may try to make real music for the world."

Both children kissed her hand when they said good-bye, and told her they were very sorry to leave her, but she smiled and said they would see her again before they went home.

Outside the palace they took their places once more on the magic carpet and sailed away toward the gate. Instead of getting off, they found themselves floating through it.

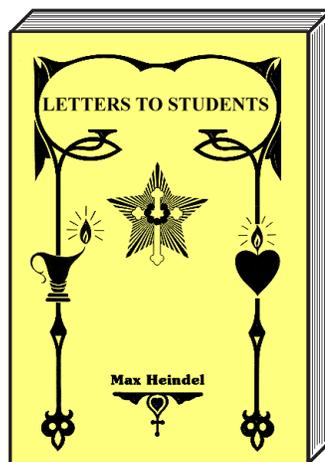
The carpet and the fairies disappeared, and they sank slowly down, until they stood outside.

The balance was again empty on one side; the setting sun at the top of the gate disappeared below its copper sea and slowly everything went dark. (Continued) □



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