WHY THE OCEAN IS BLUE

by Raymond Fuller Ayres

Of course, you all know that there are schools of fish in the ocean. If you do not, any fisherman will tell you so, but if you are not careful he will tell about all the fish he has caught, too, and how much they weighed, and about the whopping big ones that get away. You have to look out for that.

If you are very, very lucky you may find a fisherman who will tell you about mermaid schools, for, of course, it would be very silly to have school for fish and none for mermaids; for mermaids must be ever so much smarter than fish, or they would get caught, and you know they very seldom are. And your teacher will tell you that smart people should be encouraged and educated just as much as possible, so that proves that this story might be true if it wanted to.

One evening down at the bottom of the sea a bright little mermaid was going home from school, and all at once a newspaper that had blown overboard from a steamer above floated down at her feet. This little mermaid, whose name was Coralie, could read beautifully, without even stumbling over big words like "contiguousness," so she picked up the big newspaper and read it all through on her way home. The paper was full of things about New Year's Day, and she could hardly believe her eyes. The paper said that the very next day would be New Year's Day, and the only New Year's Day Coralie had ever heard of came in the very middle of the spring. You see, up here we have fiscal years, and down at the bottom of the sea they have fishcal years, which are very different.

Coralie thought about that newspaper and New Year's Day until it was time to go to bed, and the more she thought the surer she was that she just ought to have a holiday on the next day.

After breakfast the next morning she took her school books as usual, but instead of going to school she just went off for a long swim, intending to go to a seaweed grove and have a picnic all by herself. Before she had gone very far she saw a lot of little fishes, all in rows, sitting on their tails and listening with a great deal of attention to a larger fish who read to them out of a little book. Coralie knew at once that it was a school of herrings, and she thought it would be a fine chance to find out why it was that New Year's Day above the water did not come at the same time as it did in the bottom of the sea. She was sure that the large fish, who was the teacher, could tell her, for, you know, teachers know everything, or if they don't they never let you find it out.

Coralie went up to the teacher, and she said she had come to visit the school and see how clever the little scholars were. The teacher was very much pleased, for no one had ever visited his school before, and he made all the little fishes sit up very straight, fold their fins and behave. They recited their lessons beautifully, and everything went well until Coralie said that she would like to ask the scholars one question. The teacher looked worried, but he said to go ahead by all means. Then Coralie asked the little herrings if they knew why the people up on the land had New Year's Day on a different day from the mermaids and fishes. The little herrings looked at each other, and then they said that, please, ma'am, they had not got as far as that in their histories yet.

"No, indeed," said the teacher. "That was a very long time ago, before the ocean was blue. Now, can any little fish tell me why the ocean is blue?" Not one single little fish could tell that, and so the teacher said he would tell the school and the visitor all about it himself, and he hoped it would be remembered by them all. Then he cleared his throat, put the book under one fin and began:

"A very great many hundreds of years ago the water was not blue as it is now, but of no color at all, and perfectly transparent like window glass. It was much lighter down here then and more pleasant, but there was a fearful drawback, which became so serious that it is a wonder there are any fish now alive to tell the tale. Men began to eat fish. They eat them now when they can catch them, but in those days they did not raise vegetables as they do now, so, of course, they had to depend more upon fish for food, and, besides, fish were much easier to catch then. The men would sail out in a boat, and lower a long, thin wire with a noose on the end of it into the water. The water was so transparent and clear that they could see all the way to the bottom, and all they had to do was to look for a fish which was taking a nap, wriggle the wire so that the noose passed over the fish's head, and then pull him up. They caught thousands of fish in this way before anything was done about it, and all the fish were in danger of being caught and eaten. The fish asked King Neptune what they were to do about it, but Neptune only said that any fish that was so foolish as to get caught by a little piece of wire deserved it, and that the rest were well rid of him.

"One day Neptune was asleep in his hammock in the backyard of his palace, when a man who was in a boat above, on the top of the water, let down his wire with the noose and caught Neptune on the big toe. The first thing Neptune knew about it he was being jerked up through the water lickety-split, and his big toe was stretching like a piece of warm molasses candy. Neptune flopped around like a patent churn and made more noise than four crowds at four baseball games, but he went up and up, and there is no telling what might have happened if the wire had not broken and let him down again. He came down hard enough to break every bone in his body, but he happened to land on Mrs. Neptune, who had come outdoors to see what the fuss was about. She had on her best bonnet, and Neptune squashed it all out of shape, and she told him he ought to be ashamed of himself to be cutting such capers, and at his age, too!

"Neptune went into the house to put a bandage on his big toe, and then he sent for all the most prominent fish in a great hurry. They all came at once, and Neptune received them in the front parlor. He told them what had happened, and they said it was perfectly scandalous.

"'Now, see here,' said Neptune. 'This wire slip noose business has got to stop, and I don't want to see any of you grin like that again, either!'

"Then they talked about ways to stop the men fishing, but they could not think of any good ones. The fishes who were good to eat proposed that the fishes that were not good to eat get caught so that the men would get disgusted and stop fishing, but they said they felt they were really needed at home, and could not be spared, and proposed that the fishes who were good to eat get caught, just as fast as the men could pull them up, so the men would all get dyspepsia and stop eating fish, but these said they were afraid their families would be lonesome without them, and refused. Then the flying fishes said that if the trunk fishes would aid them they would try to help the matter, and Neptune said that if the trunk fishes refused to help they had better not let him hear of it. Then the trunk fishes said they would only be too delighted.

"As soon as it was dark the flying fishes all assembled in front of Neptune's palace and met the trunk fishes, who were waiting for them. They swam to the top of the water and each flying fish took a trunk fish on his back and flew into the sky. When they got there each trunk fish took a piece of the blue sky and put into his trunk. Then the flying fishes flew down again to the water and they all swam down in Neptune's palace. They got there just as Neptune was finishing breakfast. He came out at once and as each trunk fish took a piece of blue sky out of his trunk Neptune stirred it up until it mixed with the water. By the time the last piece of blue sky was well stirred the water had lost its clearness and transparency and had become blue just like the sky, and no one could see through it from above as before. The blue spread all over the ocean and even up the rivers and now all water is blue. Men still catch fish when they can, but it is much harder for them than it used to be."

By the time the teacher had finished the story Coralie was ready to drop, and if the story had lasted much longer she would have been talked to death. She did not ask a single question, but thanked the old herring, and as soon as she was able started back to her home, thinking very hard.

PERSEVERANCE.

The zeal that springs up suddenly
Soon runs its brief career;
While patient labor brings reward
If we but persevere.

'Twere vain to seek for precious ore
By lightning's blinding glare,
But miners using tiny lamps
Find many treasures rare.

One of the latest examples of rope railways has recently been constructed in Ireland between Ballinphelle and Ballinhassig. It is intended for the conveyance of bricks from a brickwork situated about eight miles from Cork. The line is four miles in length, and has a transporting capacity of 12 tons per hour. There are 126 buckets, which travel at the rate of four miles an hour, each holding 3½ cwt. The rope is of steel, and there are 43 supports consisting of steel trestles, the height of which is sufficient to allow the buckets to travel overhead clear of all obstructions.

Color-blindness is said to be often produced by smoking "black shag" and "cut cavendish" tobacco. Both these have a detrimental effect upon the optic nerve which it is impossible to cure.

NONSENSE VERSE.

AN ILLUSTRATED RHYMING REBUS.

When you have solved the rebus properly you will have a number of verses. Write them all down in their proper order, and then you will have an acrostic, which, when solved, will be a message to our little friends.

ENIGMA.

My first is in vinegar but not in wine,
My second is in apples but not in cherries,
My third is in zinc but not in brass,
My fourth is in gold but not in silver,
My fifth is in horses but not in dogs,
My sixth is in girls but not in boys,
My seventh is in balls but not in tops,
My eighth is in stockings but not in shoes,
My ninth is in play but not in study,
My tenth is in boats but not in cars;
My whole is the name of a well known millionaire.

ETHEL AIMEE PEREIRA.

"Do stop your complaining," said the owl.
"In croaking I beg that you pause."
"Your pardon I beg," said the crow;
"I never complain without caws."

BY MABEL L. EATON.

It was New Year's Day, and the Brook children, Marion and Leonard, had invited a few of their particular friends "to come over to the house."

"It isn't a party," said Leonard, when he gave the invitation. "No eating, except apples and candy and nuts and popcorn—just when we feel like having some—but Marion has a great scheme in her head, and she wants to talk it over with you."

They all sat round the big dining room table while Marion explained:

"It's a club," she began; "a secret club! My cousin, Pauline, wrote me about one she belongs to. It is so secret that no one except themselves and their mothers know what their name is. Other people only know the initials of the name, which are 'T. Q. L. Y.,' and she said everyone in town is trying to guess what those letters stand for. Pauline wouldn't even tell me what they stood for."

"So Marion wants to get up a club with initials that Pauline can't guess?" said Leonard.

"No, I don't!" retorted Marion. "That is that isn't the only reason. I thought it would be nice to have a secret club, but not just all for fun; partly to do some good with."

"I think that would be great!" said Jack Holland.

"So do I!"

"I do, too!"

Everyone seemed to be agreed.

"What shall we call it?" some one finally asked.

"I've thought of a name," said Marion. "I'll give you the initials. See if you can guess what they stand for—G. R. C."

"Great red cats!" ejaculated Jack.

"Grave rattling caterpillars!" suggested Leonard. After that the guesses came thick and fast. Marion shook her head at every one.

"You're not honestly trying to guess," said Marion, reproachfully. "It is Good Resolution Club."

"Oh! Oh!" came a chorus of groans.

"You know we all make good resolutions on New Year's Day."

"And you know we all break them," said Leonard.

"Yes, but I thought," said his sister, "that if we made them all together in our club, and had them written down, and paid a fine into the treasury every time we broke one, and met every week to tell each other whether we had broken any or not, perhaps we might keep them."

"Perhaps!" said Jack.

"What would we do with the fines?"

"Well, give a party or a sleigh ride—"

"Whew! We'd all want to be breaking our resolutions, so as to get the party—"

"Give them in honor of some boy or girl who never can afford to have a sleigh-ride or a party," continued Marion.

"Even then we would all want to have fines enough to secure the party," said Alice Ward. "How would it be to have a regular tax on all the members that would exactly cover the expenses of the party or ride, and let the resolution breakers pay the tax just the same, but stay home from the party?"

"There wouldn't be any party," said Joe Sanderson. "At least, only the guest of honor would be there."

"Well, it seems ridiculous that we boys and girls are not smart enough to keep resolutions," said Alice Ward.

"I bet we are," said Fred. Roland. "I say, let's make some now, and keep 'em. I'll begin. I hereby resolve not to call Sister Meg a crybaby even when she is."

"I never am," said Meg, stoutly. "But I resolve not to get mad when you call me one."

They finally chose a president, Marion; a treasurer, Fred, and a secretary, Joe, who straightway wrote down all the resolutions. They all resolved to meet one week from that day to report progress, and that is how the great G. R. C. was founded.

German physicians are applying a new remedy—lecithine—to the cure of diseases which require treatment of the nerves and nutrition. Lecithine and its compounds are said to have a tendency to increase weight and growth.

RAINFALL AND WHEAT.

J. T Wills investigated the relation of the rainfall to the wheat product per acre in South Australia for the six winter months (the growing season there), and found that for the seven best years there was a yield of 12.4 bushels of wheat with 18.5 inches of rain; for the next best years there were 10 bushels of wheat with 15.4 inches of rain, and for the six worst years there were 6.6 bushels of wheat with 13.5 inches of rain. The product of wheat in the first case was nearly twice as great as in the last. If such a relation holds for the United States, it is easy to understand what great effect a general drought may have on the food product. If the amount of wheat raised in the United States were reduced one-half or even one-third by a year of deficient rainfall, it is easy to imagine an enormous strain on the business of the country, and with a succession of such years the effect might mean disaster. Such a deficiency in the wheat supply, with wheat at 50 cents a bushel, would mean for a single year a direct loss in wealth of more than $100,000,000: it would mean that nearly all the wheat which is usually shipped abroad would be needed at home; it would mean that thousands of railroad cars and ships which ordinarily transport this grain would lie idle; that hundreds of men who usually handle this grain in transport would be out of employment; that farmers in large numbers would be unable to meet their obligations; and consequently, that banks and business of all kinds would suffer.—The Popular Science Monthly.

Even in this age of record-breaking, it will be found difficult, says the Jewish Chronicle, to quote another case where five brothers out of a Jewish family of six have been serving their King and country during the present campaign. Yet such is actually the case in Johannesburg. Mrs. Tayfield is the proud mother of six sons, of whom Sam. Tayfield served with the South African Light Horse, Alec and Nathan Tayfield joined Bethune's Mounted Infantry, and Abraham and Morris Tayfield distinguished themselves in Orpen's Light Horse. The youngest son would probably have joined but for his immature age.

The latest pet of the British Embassy at Constantinople is a young bear. It was performing one day on the quay in front of the Embassy, and one of the secretaries thought it would be happier if he bought it. It is quite young and amusing, but is getting rather large. The other day it managed to escape, and started to walk about the quay. When its escape was known at the Embassy, all the attendants, in their gorgeous scarlet uniforms, went in pursuit, and it was eventually recaptured.

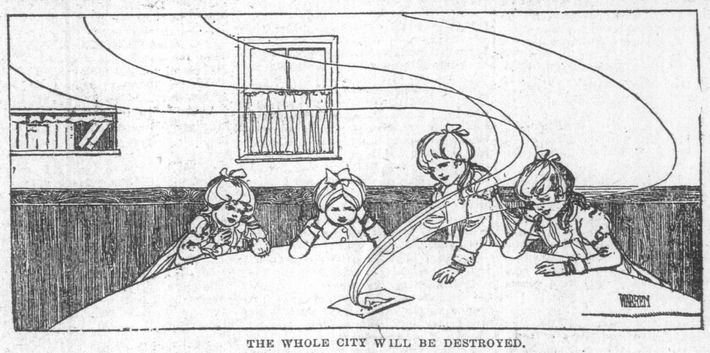
THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

AN EVENING PARTY TRICK.

You should first read some good account of the eruption of the famous volcano which destroyed the beautiful city of Pompeii. No doubt many of our little friends are familiar with the popular book which finishes with this grand scene of nature's fireworks. You should know enough about the tale to be able to tell your friends a little story about it. And to do this you should draw a picture of the volcano on a good-sized piece of paper. Then you should make each one of the party draw in the foreground a picture of a man, a child, a horse, a goat, a house or something that will fill in the picture naturally.

When your picture is complete and each one in the company has contributed his or her bit of drawing, you are ready for the eruption. You must have in your pocket, wrapped in paper, a bit of potassium, about the size of a pea, which you can get at any drug store for two or three cents. Get a cup of water and a small soft camel's-hair brush. Dip the brush in the water until it is thoroughly soaked, and tell your friends that you are about to show them the course of the burning streams of lava as they flowed down the mountain side and destroyed the city. Place the wet brush on the very top of the mountain and then draw crooked, snaky lines down the mountain side and through each of your figures that your friends have drawn on the paper. Be sure that the line is wet and that it does not break anywhere.

Now shake the potassium out of the paper directly on the wet spot on the top of the mountain, being very careful not to touch it with your fingers if they are wet. The bit of potassium will roll along the line of wet paper, burning as it rolls and leaving a blackened track on the paper. Of course, it will roll through all of the figures that have been crossed by the line you drew with your wet brush, and the whole city your friends have drawn will be destroyed just as if it had been done by a real eruption of a real volcano.



THE WHOLE CITY WILL BE DESTROYED.