

CHILDREN OF THE SEA

By Elisabeth Latsch

VERY early one Sunday on one of those many thousands of islands of the Philippines, two little boys came down to the seashore with their father and mother. Along the coast were huge rocks. There they scrambled up almost tumbling down on the other side. The ocean waves came rolling and swishing towards the boys—one white-capped wave after another. It seemed the waves were running to meet them. Indeed, the waves were greeting the children and they were inviting them to play in the beautiful bay. The bright rays of the sun could not yet be seen, and the warmth could not yet be felt upon the big water.

Both boys took off their clothes. Slowly into the water they stepped. They were really just a little timid. Very soon, however, Juan who was the elder of the two, was much in advance. "Come here, come here," he called out to his little brother Wilfredo. But to his surprize he heard a thin little voice cry, "No, the water tickles my legs and the wind makes me shiver."

Juan laughed at Wilfredo. Then Juan thought of speaking wisely. "Wilfredo," he said, "boys must not mind such things. Anyway, it isn't cold at all after you are really under the water."

In the meantime their father and mother had gone out quite far. The water reached to their waistline. Both of them stood very still. Mother had kept on her bright red skirt and her pink bodice. She had raised her skirt to her knees. Much of it was bundled around her waist and the ends were firmly tucked in at the belt. She stood there with her arms folded. Be-



tween her lips she held a *cigarillo*.

But father, too, had kept his clothes on. His black trousers were rolled above the knees. He wore a white *camisa-chino*. His head was covered with a large grass hat, a *balangot*. A deep narrow basket was hanging upon his left arm.

Juan was having a wonderful time swimming about. But imagine! Wilfredo was still standing in the same place. Finally, his mother came over to him. As she approached him she splashed Wilfredo's head. Then he felt the water splashing over his shoulders and down his back. Soon his mother was splashing and splashing him all over. How Wilfredo laughed! He tried rubbing the water from his eyelashes, but there, splash—another fresh shower came down upon him. What fun it was having mother play with him like that! Really the water wasn't cold after all. And when he stayed under it entirely the wind could not blow against him. When mother stopped playing with him, Wilfredo began to splash about and he began to feel around in the bottom for shells and for many other sea toys.

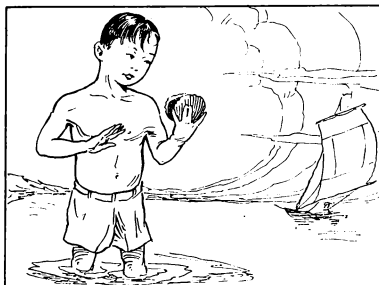
Wilfredo's mother had gone back to the place where father stood. Father had just dropped something into the long basket. Wilfredo wondered. Both his father and mother seemed to be standing very still again. There, mother's foot peeped out of the water. Wasn't there something between her toes? Why, it was a clam! So that was what they were really doing. They were feeling and digging around with their toes until they found the little clams. Certainly the water was not clear

enough to see down to the sandy bottom. Mother took the clams which she found over to father and dropped them into the narrow basket.

"Let me have the matches, please," he heard his mother say. "The fire in my *cigarillo* went out while I was splashing Wilfredo." Father raised his hand and carefully reached under his *balangot* bringing out a box of matches. Surely, the matches could not get wet on his head covered by that large grass hat.

When they had been in the water about two hours, their basket was quite full. "Juan and Wilfredo, we are going home now," called their mother. So they all walked back towards the rocks and stepped out of the water. The two boys dressed. They had hidden their clothes in a sheltered place between and under some rocks. But father and mother kept their wet clothing on. A long walk in the sunshine was yet ahead of them; and when they arrived at their pretty little nipa hut their clothes were quite dry.

By this time Juan and Wilfredo were very, very hungry. So mother cooked the dinner right away. After they had all eaten the little fresh clams and many, many helpings of the nice white rice, mother



fetched some of the short little bananas that grew in their own yard. And then all of them felt quite happy and contented. But they were just a wee bit tired and sleepy. So father went to the corner of the room and brought out a large buri mat, made from the fiber of the palm. Then mother helped him unfold it and together they spread it upon the bamboo floor.

There the whole family stretched out for a nice long afternoon nap. Juan had a wonderful dream. He found himself a grown man, a great fisherman, the owner of a *panandawan*. And Wilfredo dreamed again and again that his mother was still splashing him all over with the cool salty sea water.

DO YOU KNOW?

Some birds suffer from diseases as those suffered by human beings. Parrots are subject to asthma. Tuberculosis is a disease of pheasants and doves. And do you know that canaries become bald-headed?

Conversation of chickens is said to be understandable by humans. Scientists have discovered that there are 23 different notes made by chicks and their parents; and ten of these notes can be understood by one who cares for them.

Domestic cats are believed to be descended from Egyptian and European wildcats tamed centuries before Christ.

Chinese have fighting crickets. Do you know what a cricket is? A champion fighting cricket is worth as much as ₱100 in Hong Kong. The Siamese have fighting fish. Have you seen one?

The Philippines produces more copra than any other country in the world.

The ships which sailed between the Philippines and Mexico 250 years ago were called galleons and were mostly built in the Philippines.

Only 50 Filipino laborers can enter the United States every year.

Next year or next December when the Philippine Commonwealth will be established the name of this country will be *The Philippines*. It will not be called *The Philippine Islands* anymore.

The new king of Siam is a young boy 11 years old. The king of Yugoslavia is also a young boy. The king of Siam is called King Ananda; and that of Yugoslavia, King Peter.