

BOYS AND GIRLS

A Gift From the Sea

(By Walter Palmer, in 'Forward.')

Storms and disasters are frequent on the New England coast, and especially is this true of the long, sandy points that run out into the Atlantic. On these desolate, wind-swept flats are isolated houses and farms, and straggling settlements and towns, whose



HE LIKED TO WALK ALONG THE BEACH.

one industry depends on the caprices of the sea. Sometimes, when wind and wave are favorable, there is rejoicing; but more often there is a hardened, hopeless endurance. The men are always watching to take the sea and sky at advantage, and the women wait, passive alike to hope or fear. Even the children have learned to accept danger as part of their daily life.

It was on one of the wildest and most desolate of these points that Peter Gradt built his little cabin. There were but two lines to his horizon, one of sand and one of sea, and although the sea line was sometimes cut in twain by the masts of fishing smacks, the land line always remained unbroken. No tree or shrub had the hardihood to aspire to this dangerous exposure; only tough thistles and wire grass were able to withstand the fierce lashings of the sand and rain storms.

But Peter Gradt did not lack for building material. He had only to walk along the shore and make a selection. He had a taste for color and variety, and so his cabin was made of rare woods from many lands. The doors and windows of the cabin, the benches round its sides, and the few shelves and brackets, were of rosewood and mahogany and of other rare woods whose surface was like polished marble; and as the years went by the shelves and brackets became loaded with queer things which he picked up among the wreckage or brought back from his fishing trips.

Jacob Gradt, the second son, was something like his father. He had a passion for collecting, and he liked to walk along the beach, and to sail out into the dreary distances, with no companions but his own thoughts, the winds and the waves, and perhaps a few mews sailing dreamily overhead.

He had once found a seaman's chest on the beach, and this was filled to overflowing with the treasures which the sea had brought to him. Somehow, by a word or sentence at a time, he had managed to pick

up what was considered a good education for that section. A few books had come into the family's possession; Peter Gradt had a Don Quixote, inherited from his father; his wife had a Bible and a history of the early martyrs, and one day a sea-stained, dilapidated copy of Shakespeare had been found among the 'débri's on the beach. These were supplemented by several seed catalogues, an almanac, and an old copy of a Boston newspaper.

With these, and such small and unreliable help as his father and mother could give, Jacob had educated himself. There were no schools or neighbors, so what he could not understand was supplied by his own vivid imagination; and these brief glimpses into an unknown world fired him with a determination to see for himself. He longed to go away to school, to college; to some place where he could learn about the things which the sea and the sky and the winds were always whispering to him, but which he could never comprehend.

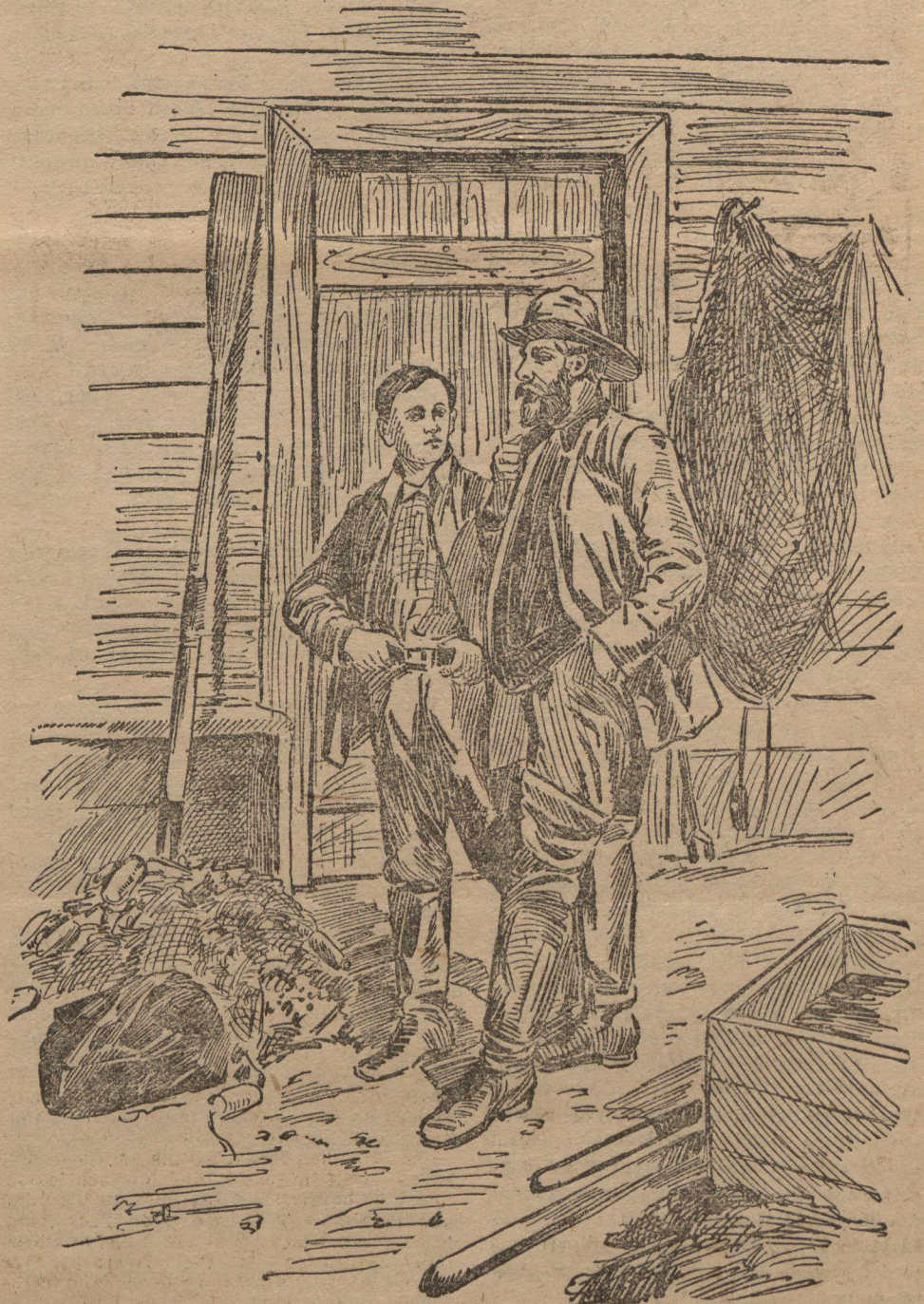
He would require money; he understood that perfectly well. But how was he to obtain it? His family, like the few neighbors along the coast, lived mostly on fish and birds. Two or three times each year they carried fish to the nearest town and exchanged them for the few necessities they

required. They had small need for money, and seldom saw it. Jacob was nearly seventeen, and he had never owned a dollar in his life.

He had an idea that it would cost a great many dollars to go away to school. He did not know how many, but feared that it would be more than he could possibly earn. There were no employers in this region; the only marketable things he could get were fish, and they were of little value in this fish country. The local dealers accepted them in exchange for merchandise, but no one would pay money. And the nearest of the large towns was two or three days' journey away. His boat was too small to carry much of a load, and too frail for a trip that would require at least a week to go and come. He felt how useless it would be to attempt such an impossible feat.

When he spoke to his father of his hopes, the old man laughed and told him that he knew too much about books already. His mother was less outspoken, but her silent disapproval was more eloquent than words. Jacob said no more about school, but his longing grew more intense with its repression.

One day, as he was walking on the beach, he found a large block of some curious ash-gray substance. At first he thought it was



HOMSUMEVER, IT'S TOO BIG AN' AWK'ARD TO HAVE LYIN' ROUND.