

me, I thought, one of my natural-history puzzles, as an excuse for going, and I will be accompanied by the loveliest maiden I know, the sight of whose fair face and beautiful smile will be enough to compensate for the interruption. So, one summer evening, at sunset, we sauntered along the north shore, on the edge of the cliff, and so came into Prof. Agassiz' grounds. There below, among the rocks, high and dry, lay the dory, in which the Professor's wife and son have taken those delightful rows by day and night, by moonlight, or when the sea was lit by its own wonderful phosphorescence, described in their "Seaside Studies." With what pailfuls of marine treasures have they climbed this bank! What delight to study as they studied, if one only knew enough to begin!

Looking wistfully up at the laboratory, we were delighted to see that the Professor was there, and made bold to go and knock at the door. "Come in," said a pleasant voice, and we entered a small anteroom, encumbered with boxes and casks, and smelling of alcohol. The door stood open into the laboratory, and we went in. On each side of the entrance was a little wooden stand, on which lay the white corpse of a skate, with its interior arrangements dissected, and piled upon its clammy body. Gathering up our garments from the slimy drops which trickled down, we passed between the grewsome anatomist, among the accumulated scientific appliances of that much-encumbered room, to the table where the kindly-faced *savant* had been sitting, smoking over his broad folios.

I introduced myself and the beautiful maiden, and then produced my puzzle and asked my question. It was one of those "sand-saucers," so common on our beaches; a curious thing, found of different sizes, but always the same shape, its texture as firm as damp pasteboard, apparently made wholly of sand, of much such a form as would be given by molding it upon one of those flat, round inkstands, which spread out into a wide circumference to prevent upsetting, and opening it down one side in order to remove it.

"What is this?" I asked. "I sometimes find Lynn beach covered with them, and I have seen them also on the New Jersey coast."

"Yes, doubtless," he said, "and you might have found them beyond the gulf of St. Lawrence, or on the coast of Florida, or in South America. I have picked up such near Rio Janeiro. For the animal which makes them has a wide *habitat*. You have

seen the large snails which burrow in the sand below high-water mark?"

I knew them well.

"Those large snails," said he, "lay their eggs in a gelatinous ribbon, which would be straight and flat, were it not bent into this form by passing between the firm body or 'foot' of the animal and its shell. The central column of the shell molds this neck; its newer margin forms this wider rim."

"But," I remarked, "this seems to be all sand."

"See," he said, holding it up to the window; and, by the waning light, I saw the cellular structure he pointed out to me. "The eggs are laid under sand always, and the sand penetrates the gelatinous mass, and becomes a part of it, serving to protect these cellular specks, in which are the eggs. If you should obtain one of these so-called 'saucers,' before the sun or wind had dried it, and put it into sea-water, in three or four days there would come out of each of these specks—no larger than pin-points—several snails, shells and all, barely visible at first, but swimming freely and growing rapidly."

"If this gelatinous strip is always produced under the sand," I asked, "how was it possible to discover its origin?"

He smiled. "It is our profession. We are trained to it. We must watch for hours in vain, but at last we find."

He answered one or two other questions for me, mostly geological, and then as I rose to go, I thanked him for the information he had given me, saying, "I have asked many persons about this sand-saucer, but could never find any one who could tell me what it was, and, of course, until I knew under what name to look for it, books were of no use in the matter."

"And if you had known the name," he replied, "you would not have found what you wished to know. I have not published what I have told you this evening."

His pleasant voice, his foreign accent, his simple style, his eager interest in the subject, all made it delightful to hear him talk. His manner was kind and cordial, and he invited us to come again when we had questions to ask.

Then I, and the beautiful maiden, who had sat silent, wishing that clay were in her hands to model a likeness of his fine head, went away, passing again between the chilly dead monsters at the door, and so out into the twilight. The red light was kindled on Egg Rock, and, far beyond, the light-houses on Marblehead shone out like golden stars.—*Advance.*