

The Silent Shore. A Romance

John Bloundelle-Burton

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They had left Cowes a fortnight ago, and had been yachting pleasantly in the Channel since, putting into Cherbourg on one occasion, into Ste. Mere Eglise on another, and Havre on a third; and now, as ill-luck would have it, it seemed as if they were doomed to be weather-bound in, of the many dreary places on the coast, the dreariest of all, Le Vocq. The first night in the inn, to which they had come up after seeing the vacht made snug and comfortable in the harbour below, and the sailors left in charge of her also provided for, passed easily enough. There was the hope of the storm abating - which was cheering - and they had cards, and some Paris newspapers to read, and above all, they were fatigued and could sleep well. But, on the next day, the storm had not abated, and they were tired of cards, the old Paris papers had been read and re-read, and later ones had not arrived, and they were refreshed with their night's rest and wanted to be off. But there was no getting off, and what was to be done? They had stood all the morning looking out of the window disconsolately, had smoked pipes and cigarettes innumerable, and had yawned a good deal, and sworn a little. "What the deuce are we to do to prevent ourselves from dying of ennui, Philip?" the one asked the other. "Jerry," the other answered solemnly, "I know no more than you do. There is nothing left to read, and soon - very soon, alas! - there will be nothing left to smoke but the caporal obtainable in the village. That, however, might poison us and end our miseries." Then the one called Philip began looking about the salon that was at their disposal, and whistling plaintively, and peering into the cupboards, of which there were two: "Hullo!" he suddenly exclaimed, "here is another great mental treat for us - a lot of old books; and precious big ones, too! I wonder what they are?" "Pull them out and let us see. Probably only Le Monde Illustre, or Le Journal Amusant, bound up for the landlord's winter nights' delectation, after they have been thumbed by every sailor in the village." "Oh, confound the books!"



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