

THE Silent Shore
OR,
the Mystery of St. James' Park
By
JNO BLOUNDELLE-BURTON

"To die is landing on a silent shore,
Where billows never beat, nor
tempests roar."

one had announced that nothing should induce her to leave her dear friend until she had entirely recovered from the shock, and she had willingly abandoned the wearing of her pretty new frocks and had donned those more suited to a house of mourning; and she resigned herself to seeing no more racing, and to the loss of Mr. Fulke's agreeable conversation, and had devoted herself to administering to Ida. But as Mr. Fulke and young Montague had betaken themselves to a hotel not far off and had promised that they would look round before quitting the neighborhood, she probably derived some consolation from knowing that she would see the former again.

"This is a dreadful affair, Penryn!" the baronet said, when he received his future son-in-law in the pretty morning room that Ida's own taste had decorated. "The shock has been too much for you, who looked upon Cundall as a dear friend, but it has perfectly crushed my poor girl. You know how much she liked him."

"Yes, I know," Penryn answered, finding any reply difficult.

"Has she told you anything of what passed between them recently?" Sir Paul asked.

"No," Penryn said, "nothing." But the question told him that Ida had informed her father of the dead man's proposal to her.

"She will tell you, perhaps, when you see her. She intends coming down to you shortly." Then changing the subject, Sir Paul said: "She tells me you met the poor fellow at Lady Chester's ball. I suppose you did not see him after that, until—before his death?"

Lord Penryn hesitated. He did not know what answer to give, for, though he had no desire to tell an untruth, how could he tell his questioner of the dreadful scenes that had occurred between them after that meeting at the ball?

"Then he said, weakly: 'Yes; I did see him again at 'Blackie's.'"

"At 'Blackie's?'" Sir Paul exclaimed. "I did not know he was a member."

"Nor was he. Only, one night—Friday night—he was passing and I was there, and he dropped in."

"Oh!" Sir Paul said, "I thought you were the merest acquaintances."

And then he went on to discuss the murder, and to ask if anything further was known than what had appeared in the papers? And Penryn told him that he knew of nothing further.

"I cannot understand the object of it," the baronet said. He had had but little opportunity of talking over the miserable end that had befallen his grand friend, and he was not adverse now to discuss it with one who had also known him.

"I cannot understand," he went on, "how any creature, however destitute of wit, would have murdered him for his watch and the money he might chance to have about him. There must have been some powerful motive for the crime—some hidden enemy in the background of whom no one perhaps, not even he himself—ever knew. I wonder who will inherit his enormous wealth?"

"Why?" Penryn asked, and as he did so it seemed as though, once again, his heart would stop beating.

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"Because I should think that man would be in a difficult position—unless he can prove his utter absence from London at the time."

To Penryn it appeared that everything pointed in men's minds to the same conclusion, that the heir of Walter Cundall was the guilty man. Every one was of the same opinion. Sir Paul and the man going to Alect who seemed like a lawyer and, as he remembered, he had himself said the same thing to Smerdon. "What would the world think of him?" he had asked, "if I should come to know that they were brothers, and that, let me say, he was the father of that wretched fortune?" Yes, all thought alike, even to himself.

As these reflections passed through his mind it occurred to him that, at all, it would not be well for him to be close to Ida the fact that he and Cundall were brothers, would she not know then that he was the heir, and might she not also then look upon him as the murderer? If that idea should ever come to her mind, she was lost to him for ever. Not Philip Smerdon was right; she must never learn of the fatal relationship between them.

"By the way," Sir Paul said, after a pause, "what on earth ever made you go to that hotel in town? Obedience House is comfortable enough, surely?"

Again Penryn had to hedge before an answering, and again he had to equivocate. He had gone out of the house—that he thought was no longer his—with rage in his heart against the man who had come forward, as he supposed, to deprive him of everything he possessed; and never meaning to return to it, but to openly give to those whom it concerned his reasons for not doing so. But Cundall's murder had opened the way for him to return, the letter written on the night of his death had bidden Penryn do everything he had hitherto done; and so he had gone back, with an honest desire in his heart to obey his brother's behest as to reinstate himself.

But those two or three days at the hotel had surprised everybody, even to his valet and the house servants; and now Sir Paul was also asking for an explanation. What a web of falsehood and deceit he was weaving around him!

"There were some slight repairs to be done," he said, "and some alterations afterwards, so I had to go out."

"Then I wonder you did not come down here. The business you had to do might have been postponed."

He could make no answer to this, and it came as a relief to him when a servant announced that Miss Tauchton would see him in the drawing room. Only, he reflected as he went to her, if she, too, should question him as her father had done, he must go mad!

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CHAPTER X.

When he saw the girl he loved so much pale and wan and pale from the couch on which she had been seated waiting for his coming, his heart sank within him. How she must have suffered! He thought, "What an awful blow Cundall's death must have been to her to make her look as she looked now, as she rose and stood before him!"

"My darling Ida," he said, as he went towards her and took her in his arms and kissed her, "how ill and sad you look!"

She yielded to his embrace and returned his kiss, but it seemed to him as if her lips were cold and lifeless.

"Oh, Governor!" she said, as she sank back to the couch wearily. "Oh, Governor, you do not know the horror that is upon me. And it is a double horror because at the time of his death, I know of it."

"What?" he said, springing to his feet from the chair he had taken beside her. "What?"

"I saw it all," she said, looking at him with large distended eyes, eyes made doubly large by the hollows round them. "I saw it all, only—"

"Only what, Ida?"

"Only it was in a dream! A dream that I had, almost—"

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