

The Explorer

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W.S.Maugham

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出版者:Lightning Source Inc

出版时间:2005-10

装帧:Pap

isbn:9781598186666

The sea was very calm. There was no ship in sight, and the seagulls were motionless upon its even greyness. The sky was dark with lowering clouds, but there was no wind. The line of the horizon was clear and delicate. The shingly beach, no less deserted, was thick with tangled seaweed, and the innumerable shells crumbed under the feet that trod them. The breakwaters, which sought to prevent the unceasing encroachment of the waves, were rotten with age and green with the sea-slime. It was a desolate scene, but there was a restfulness in its melancholy; and the great silence, the suave monotony of color, might have given peace to a heart that was troubled. They could not assuage the torment of the woman who stood alone upon that spot. She did not stir; and, though her gaze was steadfast, she saw nothing. Nature has neither love nor hate, and with indifference smiles upon the light at heart and to the heavy brings a deeper sorrow. It is a great irony that the old Greek, so wise and prudent, who fancied that the gods lived utterly apart from human passions, divinely unconscious in their high palaces of grief and joy, the hope and despair, of the turbulent crowd of men, should have gone down to posterity as the apostle of brutish pleasure. But the silent woman did not look for solace. She had a vehement pride which caused her to seek comfort only in her own heart; and when, against her will, heavy tears rolled down her cheeks, she shook her head impatiently.

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