

**ON THE SEABOARD; A
NOVEL OF THE
BALTIC ISLANDS.
[CINCINNATI-1913]**

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On the Seaboard; A Novel of the Baltic Islands. [Cincinnati-1913] by August Strindberg & Elizabeth Clarke Westergren

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AUGUST STRINDBERG & ELIZABETH CLARKE WESTERGREN

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ON THE SEABOARD

A NOVEL OF THE BALTIC ISLANDS

FROM THE SWEDISH OF
AUGUST STRINDBERG

AUTHOR OF
"EASTER," "LUCKY PEHR," ETC.

TRANSLATED BY
ELIZABETH CLARKE WESTERGREN

AUTHORIZED EDITION

CINCINNATI
STEWART & KIDD COMPANY

1913

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PREFACE

August Strindberg's first literary productions were warmly received, and would have aroused lasting enthusiasm and admiration had the young author's prolific pen been less aggressive, in this, for his country, a totally new style of novel. His intrepid sarcasm which emanated from a physical disability, known only to a few of his most intimate friends, called forth severe criticism from the old aristocrats and the conservative element, which drove the gifted dramatist from his own country to new spheres. Life's vicissitudes at Vierwaldstätter See, and Berlin, also later on at Paris from whence his fame spread rapidly over Europe, changed his realism to pessimism.

After years of ceaseless work, during which he dipped into almost every branch of science, he suddenly determined to transfer his activities to this side of the Atlantic, where he was desirous of becoming known. For this purpose his most singular novel was chosen for translation; meantime some invisible power drew him back to his birthplace, Stockholm, and a new generation cheered his coming.

PREFACE

Later on critics called him "A demolisher and a reformer that came like a cyclone, with his daring thought and daring words, which broke in upon the everlasting tenets and raised Swedish culture."

His delineations are photographic exactness without retouch, bearing always a strong reflection of his personality.

MAGNUS WESTERGREN.

Boston, Mass.

April, 1913.

ON THE SEABOARD

CHAPTER FIRST

A FISHING boat lay one May evening to beam-wind, out on Goosestone bay. "Rokarna," known to all on the coast by their three pyramids, were changing to blue, while upon the clear sky clouds were forming just as the sun began to sink. Already there was dashing outside the points, and a disagreeable flapping in the mainsail signified that the land-breeze would soon break against newborn currents of air, from above, from the sea and from aft.

At the tiller sat the Custom House Surveyor of the East Skerries, a giant with black long full beard. Occasionally he exchanged a look with two subordinates who were sitting in the bow, one of whom was tending the clutch-pole, keeping the big square sail to the wind.

Sometimes the steersman cast a searching look at the little gentleman who was crouching at the mast seemingly afraid and frozen, now and then drawing his shawl closer round his body.

The surveyor must have found him ridiculous, for frequently he turned leeward with a pretense of spitting tobacco juice to conceal a rising laugh.

The little gentleman was dressed in a beaver-colored spring coat under which a pair of wide moss-green pants peeped out, flaring at the bottom round a pair of crocodile shagreen shoes topped with brown cloth and black buttons. Nothing of his under dress was visible, but round his neck was twisted a cream-colored foulard, while his hands were well protected in a pair of salmon-colored three-button glacé-gloves, and the right wrist was encircled by a gold bracelet carved in the form of a serpent biting its tail. Ridges upon the gloves showed that rings were worn beneath. The face, as much as could be seen, was thin and haggard; a small black mustache with ends curled upwards increased the paleness and gave it a foreign expression. The hat was turned back, exposing a black closely cut bang resembling a calotte.

What seemed most to attract the indefatigable attention of the steersman was the bracelet, mustache and bang.

During the long voyage from Dalaro this man, who was a great humorist, had tried to get up a cheery conversation with the Fish Commissioner, whom he had in charge to take to the station at the East Skerries, but the young doctor had shown

an injured unsusceptibility to his witty importunities which convinced the surveyor that the "instructor" was insolent.

Meanwhile the wind freshened as they passed Hanstone to windward and the dangerous sail began to flutter. The fish commissioner, who had been sitting with a navy chart in his hand, noting the answers to his questions, placed it in his pocket and turned toward the man at the tiller saying in a voice more like a woman's than a man's:

"Please sail more carefully!"

"Is the instructor afraid?" asked the helmsman scornfully.

"Yes, I am careful of my life and keep close hold of it," answered the commissioner.

"But not of other's lives?" asked the helmsman.

"At least not so much as my own," returned the commissioner, "and sailing is a dangerous occupation, especially with a square sail."

"So, sir, you have often sailed before with a square sail?"

"Never in my life, but I can see where the wind directs its power and can reckon how much resistance the weight of the boat can make and well judge when the sail will jibe."

"Well, take the tiller yourself then!" snubbingly remarked the surveyor.

"No! that is your place! I do not ride on the