

miles attached to the map that it was at least two hundred.

Well, there was the whole position. One single chance a ship, and no single indication as to how he should steer for the best chance of hailing one.

Then came Temptation. The temptation to make back for the coast, risk capture, and seize the certainty of escape from death by thirst.

Though the coast was gone from sight, the morning sun still gave its position, which was not far away as yet. A few hours' sailing would bring him up to it. The alluring idea also came that he might land and fill the breaker, and put to sea again.

Yet he well knew that inhospitable cinder of a coast, and the miles he would have to travel in search of water, should he land anywhere but at a town. The idea and the temptation lost hold on him, and he let the boat keep her course. Chance at her prow and the viewless wind her follower.

CHAPTER XX

THE SHIP

TOWARDS noon the wind died down to a gentle breathing intermittent and fitful, the sail would fill and the sheet tauten; then the canvas would fall slack, shudder, half-fill again and fall slack.

The sea surface under run by a gentle swell showed here satin smooth, and here roughed by the breeze that passed like a violet shadow.

Jean could not tell how the boat's head lay; north, south, east and west were all the same, and did not matter for the *Karan* now was scarcely

moving. Sometimes for perhaps half a minute the wind would take hold of the sail and she would forge ahead bravely to the tune of the ripple against her planking, then the sail would die, the tinkle of the ripple cease and the boat be delivered again to the nursing and rocking of the swell.

Any one who knows this part of the Adriatic well knows the meaning of "light and variable winds" just here, and the time they may last once they set in.

Jean knew nothing of this. He only knew that the wind had almost ceased, he trusted that it would come back again after midday. And by tying the sheet to an oar he managed to stretch the sail and make a slight protection against the sun.

He was thirsty. Hungry too, but he dared not eat for fear of increasing his thirst. He leaned over the boat's side and looked down into the water.

It was aquamarine colour and clear, he could see tiny scraps of fucus floating a fathom deep. And now he could see a jelly fish shaped like a saucer, it had purple spots on it and it was in movement driving itself along by contracting and expanding, closing on the water like a hand. It passed and another followed, there was a school of them, and then—nothing but the deep, clear water.

Far, far down a grey shadow moved then, rising, became clear—it was a fish. Visible for a moment it passed from sight, flicked away into the world around it—the vague green world so full of life and which yet only dead men can inhabit—the world that said to the man looking down into it, "drink me."

The imaginative man dies the soonest from thirst. It was the dropping of the wind and the suggestion of indefinite delay that unloosed the demon upon Jean.

True, the wind had been taking him nowhere in particular, the whole thing was a gamble, he would be as likely to meet a ship drifting like this as under sail. All the same, the wind had given him movement and a sense of freedom, and had soothed his imagination which now, all at once, became vigorously alive.

He saw himself drifting indefinitely, all chance of water gone. He had to sit and face it alone and within the confines of a small boat.

A sudden nerve crisis came on him, his lips became dry as cinders and the muscles of his throat worked. Thirst had for the moment been driven away by terror, not the terror of death, but a panic terror akin to claustrophobia.

He dabbled his hand in the water alongside, and wetted his head and his throat, and the terror passed, his lips became moist again and his sight, which had gone for a moment, returned. He felt weak and shaken, but he was master of himself again. He sank down in the bottom of the boat, his arm resting on a thwart. He was master of himself, but not of his fate or the thirst that had now come back to torment him.

It was in his head as well as his throat, it had become part of his mind, a desire picturing before him not water, but cooling drinks, long tumblers that gave the clink of ice. He fought these pictures down and became drowsy. He had not slept for many hours and sleep came hovering about him now.

He was in the hotel at Serajevo for a moment, and the waiters were bringing in tankards of beer. Stein was sitting opposite to him at the table, they were waiting for beer that never came, the waiters were too busy serving other folk. And now he was with Karan, on Beljazi, and Cavani was coming

along with a bucket of water drawn from the well; he seized the bucket and it was empty—the bung had come out—it had turned into a breaker, and Cavani had turned into Herdjinan with whom he was having a furious, feverish quarrel. Then the dream faded out and he was in the boat. The wind had risen slightly and the sheet was tugging at the oar to which he had fastened it. A sound came from somewhere in the distance, an insistent drumming sound that made him raise himself on the thwart.

Ah! Ah! What was that, a ship? Downcoming on him less than quarter of a mile away, a steamer with the sun on her bridge canvas, and the foam showing at her stem.

The thirst, half-born of imagination, had vanished as though it had never been.

Which way? Which way? He almost cried out the question. Was she making for the open sea, or was she making towards Fiume. He could not tell. He had lost direction and north, south, east and west were all the same to him. He must cling to Chance.

He stripped off his coat and standing clinging to the mast, waved the coat.

She seemed to be coming straight at him. Then a tiny puff of white smoke rose from the 'scape pipe by the funnel, followed at once by a puff of sound. Her siren had spoken, and now, her course slightly altered, the bow plates showed on her port side and the white mark that was her name.

She had stopped her engines, and as she came now gliding and bowing across the swell, her name stood out clearly to be read.

Morclar.

That told nothing of her nationality, nor did he bother; he had unseized the oar from the sheet and stood for a moment undecided. Should he get

out the other oar and row for her? No, she had way enough on to reach him, and her steersman had the situation under control. He threw down the oar and seized the boat-hook, and standing with it in his hand watched as she came ever so gently, immense and rust red, the water creaming about her stem and the swell washing her plates, black heads watching over the rail and an arm waving gently as though to say, "that's right, hold on so."

And now the rusty iron wall was alongside and something came flying through the air, a rope; it struck him on the left shoulder and seizing it he tied it to the thwart. Holding on to the rope and looking up, he saw the ladder being lowered.

CHAPTER XXI

THE "MORCLAR"

THERE were only four men on deck, and the man who helped him over the rail, a black-bearded man wearing a peaked cap, was the first to speak.

To ask questions? Not a word.

He was not speaking to Jean, but to the others, giving them directions for getting the boat on board, in French and with a terrible Provençal accent. It was a business requiring care.

Speed in the mercantile marine is money; it is, in fact, another term for cargo space, and every revolution of the engines means a cent gained.

Cochard was a man like that; he was not only captain but part-owner of the *Morclar*; he was also not in too good a temper. Picking up a derelict was picking up worry, an entry in the log, a man to be