

CHAPTER XXII

THE CABIN

JEAN awoke to find the morning sun shining into the cabin. He had slept sixteen hours without moving, without dreaming, dead to his whereabouts, his past and his future.

The pounding of the screw shook the swinging lamp swaying in its gimbals with a tinkling sound, and the slight roll of the ship sent the water of a bottle swung in the rack by the door moving, glock, glock.

A coat of the captain's, hanging from a hook on the other side of the door, moved now and then with a pendulum swing, one of its side pockets bulged, stuffed with things, and part of a collar protruded from it. The captain evidently used the pockets of the swinging coat as hold-alls.

Jean took in all the little details even to the picture of a girl cut from *La Gandriole* and pinned to the wall at the foot of the bunk. The lady's only garment was a muff.

He remembered everything clearly and distinctly, the coming on board, the boat being swung up, the cabin and the brandy, and the face of Cochard. Turning, he put his hand to his side pocket. His money was there, the bundle of notes he had shown Herdjiman, seven hundred francs or so, partly in French, partly in German money.

He had not bothered about it till now, hadn't thought of it. But now as he lay taking in his new surroundings, and alive to the world that had

returned to him and his position in it, the question of money was one of the first ideas to come to him.

It was as though he had gone over everything during his profound sleep, accepted his position as a thing neither to be altered nor grumbled at, and come to the decision that the first essential to him was the means of paying his way.

He no longer felt any fear, nor did it seem unnatural to him that he should be a fugitive like this! He was so—it had happened, and he had adapted himself to the situation.

So you will see a man with a disfiguring disease, with a cancer or a mortal wound. The thing has become part of him and so, in a way, natural to him.

He turned out of the bunk and, taking the water-bottle from the rack, half-emptied it. There was a little mirror hanging by the rack, and a hair-brush and comb on a ledge by the mirror. He looked at himself, brushed his hair, pulled his necktie straight and came out through the main cabin where breakfast things were laid, on to the deck. He remembered how the day before Cochard had said something about their going to Marseilles, so he knew that they were making out of the Adriatic. He stood for a moment with his hand on the port rail.

Ah! what a gorgeous morning! fresh and blue, and breezy. Three men showed above the bridge canvas, their heads and shoulders outlined against the sky, and one was turning to come down the companion ladder to the deck. It was Yves, the mate, just relieved by Cochard. Yves, the big blond northerner, and as he came aft towards the deck-house he nodded to Jean in passing.

Nodded with a smile, as much as to say, "Ah, there you are, and welcome."

Jean took an instant liking for the big sailor, all

the more perhaps because he had not stopped and bothered him with questions.

And now as if Yves were the good fairy of the scene came the smell of coffee, and a negro in an old blue and white striped jacket came aft at a run, half-waddling, half-running, a tin coffee pot in one hand and a bread basket full of hot rolls in the other.

The negro grinned and nodded to Jean as he passed, and drove forward, his hand holding the coffee pot, in the direction of the deck-house, as if to say "Breakfast."

Yves was already at the table and he spoke now, welcoming the other, but shyly. There seemed a good deal of the child about this big fellow, but after a while he spoke up, answering questions and even giving information on his own account.

The *Morclar* was out of Trieste, she was calling at Sfax and Oran, with Marseilles for destination. Yes, that was it, she would not go beyond Marseilles, most of her cargo was for there. After that, why, after that, she would go where trade told her. A ship has to go where she will find cargo. Of course it must be understood that she would not leave the Mediterranean or the Adriatic, that was her beat. Most probably after Marseilles she would come back to the Adriatic.

A feeling came to Jean just at that moment, and as Yves was saying this, such as one might fancy a bird experiencing after its first contact with a glass window.

The sea had been to him a thing as vague as the word Freedom. Away at sea and bound for some distant port he would be free. But, look, the *Morclar* was like a thing in a cage, she went no farther than Marseilles, she was tied to the Mediterranean and Adriatic.

Marseilles, what would he do in Marseilles ?

Oh, all at once, piercing the dull acceptance of his condition and thrusting aside fear of the Law, came that question—what would he do in Marseilles, what could he do anywhere, where could he go, how could he live ?

The immediate necessity of escape and the sharp environment of the boat had kept ultimate questions away ; even on awaking it had been the same. It was only now, here alone with the friendly and quiet Yves, bound safely in an old tramp steamer for Marseilles and sure in his mind of getting there, that the screw came home.

And he did not know the worst. He did not know the formalities of the sea, the sharp eye of Port Authorities, or the conduct of a ship and the questions sure to be asked at Marseilles.

If he had known I doubt if the knowledge would have increased his sudden misery of mind ; on the contrary, it would have given him something definite to fear and fight against.

He crushed his feeling down, and the talk went on.

CHAPTER XXIII

YVES

Two days later Jean was standing on the fo'c'sle head looking over the rail, when Yves came up and stood beside him.

It was just after eight bells, noon, the sky cloudless, the sea unruffled and the only sounds the muffled tramp of the engines and the wash of water at the bow.