

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.

The two men had been growing closer together mentally, they had been companions in a way, and now as Jean leaned on the rail talking to the other, all of a sudden, and apropos of nothing in particular, he said :

" And by the way, when I told Cochard what I did when I came on board it was not all. I'm here standing beside you now because I killed a man."

" Yes ? " said Yves.

" It was done more through accident than anything else ; still, there you are, and now I've told you I feel better for it. I've got to stand the racket, anyhow, and I'm pretty sick of things and don't much care, but I've taken a liking to you and I'm glad I've told you."

" But how was it ? " asked Yves, more interested than shocked. " Was it in a fight ? "

" Yes ; and it was about a woman. A woman I didn't care a sou for—not a sou."

Staring across the glassy blue of the sea, he visualised again the Baroness Hauptmarch against the background of the armour-covered walls of that fatal room.

He saw again the easel and the picture on it. He saw again Stein attacking the picture, the incredible and cruel ruin—and then Stein lying on the floor, dead.

He could not possibly tell Yves all this. The good Yves would not have understood. Still, he wanted to tell as much as possible, and he began about Karan and how he had met her, and how in a way his meeting with her had brought about the whole catastrophe, for Stein would not have invited him to Ragusa but for the sketch of Karan which he had made in the avenue at Serajevo.

Once started he told the whole story, Yves leaning

on the rail beside him, and the sound of the bow wash filling the pauses of the tale.

When he had done, Yves spat into the sea.

"There are women like that," said Yves. "Once you meet them you are done for."

Was he referring to the Baroness Hauptmarch or to Karan?

"I have seen it," went on Yves. "There are women like that sure to bring bad luck to any man who has to do with them." He paused and spat into the sea.

Then he went on :

"If they are after you you will be caught at Marseilles, sure. There is only one way for you. We stop at Oran, you can come ashore with me and I will lose you."

Jean did not for a moment understand. Then he remembered that Oran was the gate through which all the recruits for the Legion pass.

Marseilles, Oran, Sidi-Bel-Abbès or Saida. And the Legion spelt sanctuary, at least safety.

He gazed down into the blue depths broken by the swirl of the bow wash, as though trying to read there his future or find a decision.