

318 THE BEACH OF DREAMS

those. I want a good sea boat and the fisher-boats I have seen here seemed to me good, and the men are the right sort of men. I am going to buy one — or hire one — well, we shall see. I want you to help to get it ready for us. How good the smell of this place is," she paused to sniff the tar-sea scents brought by the afternoon wind. It was like the smell of Freedom.

Then they came on to the fisher wharf and right into the arms of Captain Jean Bontemps.

Captain Jean was about five feet in height and he seemed five feet in thickness. He was propped against a bollard and he was in his shore-going clothes. The girl's eye told her at once that here was a useful man, a man of authority and knowledge. She approached him, and as he took his pipe from his mouth and removed his cap, she opened her business without parley or hesitation.

She wanted to buy or hire a fishing boat, price no object.

He did not understand her at first. He seemed suffering from some form of deafness. Then when she repeated the statement he shewed no surprise.

He himself was a fishing boat owner, Captain Bontemps of the *Arlesienne*, and he was quite willing to sell his boat, for a sum — two thousand pounds he asked, and she did not know that he was speaking in jest, just as one might speak to a child.

"If your boat suits me, I will pay what you ask," said she, "let me see it."