



Galley Slave (Seafarers' Voices)

Jean Marteilhe

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This remarkable memoir tells of the miseries of Jean Marteilhe of Bergerac, 'a Protestant condemned to the Galleys of France for his Religion', who, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, attempted, like so many French Huguenots, to escape to the more sympathetic Protestant countries bordering France. In 1700, heading through the Ardennes towards Charleroi, he was captured by French Dragoons and thrown into gaol. In 1707 he then found himself, like so many Huguenots, condemned to serve in the French Mediterranean galleys. Little is known of life as a galley slave on these oared vessels. Certainly no accounts have come down to us from ancient Greece or Rome, though a little is known from the time of the Crusades. So Marteilhe's racy account represents the only authentic record of the miseries of a galley slave who experienced all the horrors of 'whips and chains' and the dreaded 'bastinado' - foot whipping. For six years he pulled his oar, often seeing friends and co-religionists lashed - sometimes to death - under the whips of the overseers. He himself sustained almost fatal injuries in a bloody engagement with the British off the mouth of the Thames before being released under a general amnesty in 1713. *Galley Slave* brings vividly to life the sufferings and conditions on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century galleys and is a unique and unforgettable account.

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