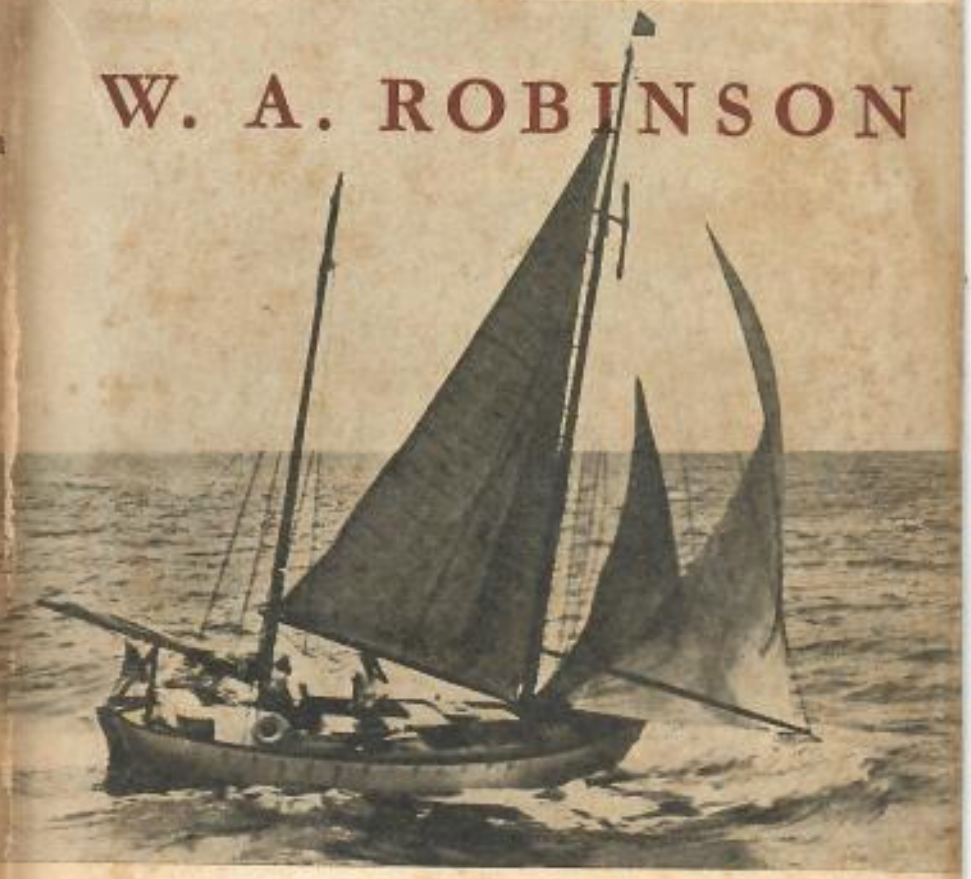
# DEEP WATER AND SHOAL

## W. A. ROBINSON



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DEEP WATER AND SHOAL

W. A. Robinson

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Mariners Library No. 4

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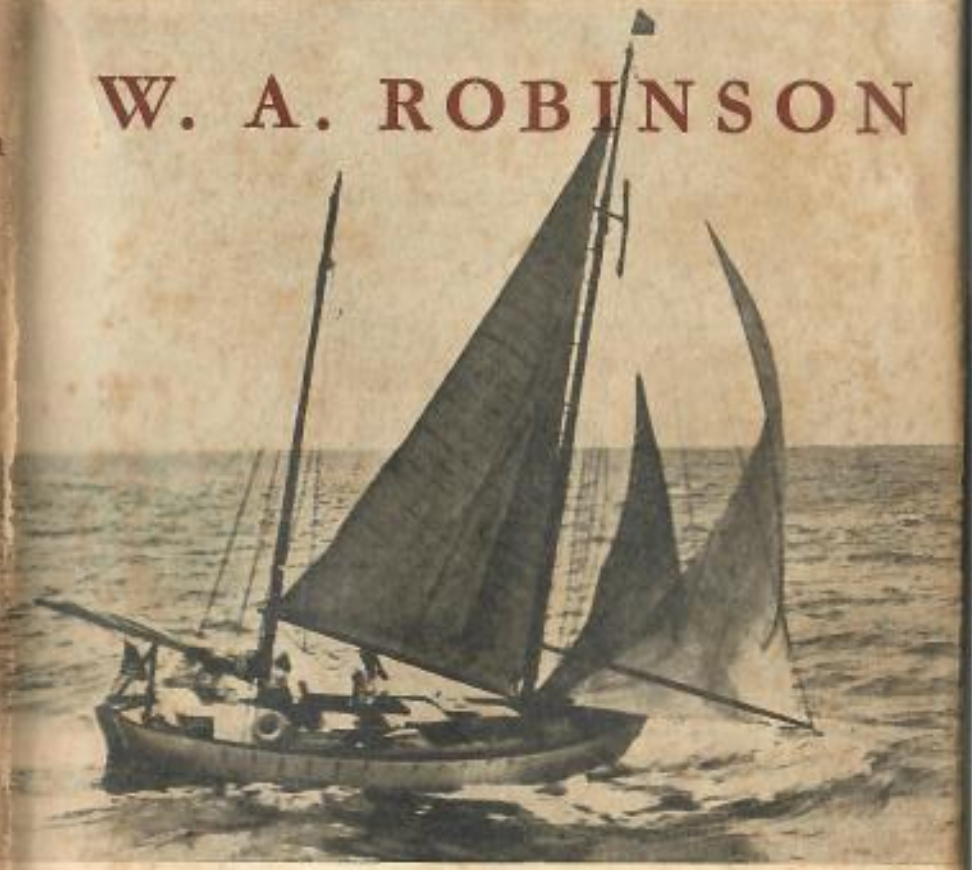

Introduction by
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DEEP WATER AND SHOAL

RUPERT HART-DAVIS


Yacht "Matador II Se Pua"

William Albert Robinson

THE MARINERS LIBRARY

# DEEP WATER & SHOAL

*by*

WILLIAM ALBERT ROBINSON

*With an Introduction by*

WESTON MARTYR

ILLUSTRATED


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# INTRODUCTION

I HAVE been asked to introduce Mr. William Robinson's book to British readers; but I hesitate to do so, because I remember it is the fate of the majority of British readers to have to catch the 9.15 three hundred times each year, and I think this book will make every season-ticket holder who reads it very restless and discontented with his life. However, the present reader has probably looked at Mr. Robinson's alluring illustrations already and consequently nothing I can say will prevent his reading the letterpress. Read on, then. Your blood be on your own head. But remember—I have warned you!

And, after all, the author himself had to catch the 9.15 for ten years running. At least, he *thought* he had to catch it. And then, one day, he saw a great light, and he let the 9.15 steam off without him. He refused to make *that* journey any more. Instead he made another. He bought a tiny boat and sailed her all around this world. It took him three and a half years and cost him every cent of his money. It cost him in all £1,000, but it will surprise me if he regrets it. For he has seen the Works of the Lord and His Wonders in the Deep. He has 'passed manye landes and many yles and countrees, and cherched many full straunge places.' He has listened to the trade-wind singing in his rigging and heard the beat of the Angel Azrael's wings. He has basked in the tropic sunshine and the shadow of death has chilled his bones. He has talked with kings and walked with captains and dined (once) with cannibals on human flesh. He has been stalked by water-spouts and hunted by dragons—or at any rate, by dragon-lizards. He has seen submarine volcanoes belching smoke from the sea and also a Ford car scrambling along the tiny beach of a lost and lonely South Sea atoll. He has even been captured and held to ransom by an Arab sheikh. And once he met a man with a wife, and a daughter older than his wife, and a grand-daughter older

than either! Need I say more? Now, all this seems dirt cheap at £1,000. And nothing can rob Mr. Robinson of his memories.

You will probably find it hard to believe a deal of this book. I should not be surprised if you found the whole story incredible. And so it is. But it all happened. It is true. In introducing his book, I have to go bail for the author. And I do this with complete confidence. The things he says he did and saw and heard, I know he *did* do and see and hear. I can vouch for that, although I was not with him. But I have been there or thereabouts, too. Mr. Robinson writes about those things which it is my livelihood to write about, and I am naturally jealous of any man who invades my field. If I could trip him up over his facts or catch him painting in the wrong shade of local colour, you can be sure I would give him away every time. But he gives me no chance. He knows too well what he is talking about. His facts are authentic and his work is sincere. In this it is quite unlike a number of sensational books on the sea and on wild and little-known parts of the earth which have been foisted on the public as veracious autobiographies during the last few years. Two of these books actually became best-sellers, although the alleged 'facts' they contained were laughably inaccurate to anyone familiar with the places and conditions described. Now I notice that the general public, which does not like being fooled, has become healthily suspicious of such books of late and refuses to buy them any more. Which is all to the good; but it would be a pity and also unjust if Mr. Robinson's book suffered on this account, and it is for this reason I emphasize and vouch for its sincerity and truth.

Mr. Robinson belies his name; he is a most uncommon sort of man. He wanted to see the world, so he hoisted himself out of his rut and saw the world. He could by no means afford to do this; but he did it just the same. He formed the opinion that *any* small boat, be she properly designed, built, rigged and handled, could be sailed *anywhere* in safety, and he backed his opinion by buying a little boat no longer than a Thames punt and sailing her safely all round the Earth. He enjoyed himself enormously, and he saw and did some very strange and





interesting things, as I have already hinted. They are all to be read of in this book, so I will not enlarge upon them. As the author describes them they are as large as life, for, besides being a man of action, he is an artist. He can write. A man who describes the delicious sensation of sailing before the wind, day after day, through the serene weather of the North-East trade region as: 'Rolling along over the sea with the swing of a poem' —well, he *can* write. And when a man like that sees something new, interesting, queer or beautiful during most of his waking hours for three and a half years, he gathers a considerable wealth of material worth writing about. The result is a BOOK.

The conclusions the author draws from the facts he observed are always interesting. His conclusions, however, are quite his own affair. Some of them, notably his scathing condemnation of some South Sea missionaries he met, are likely to cause him a deal of troublesome correspondence. For the author is quite fearless; he makes definite accusations and names names. 'The Mission of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, Limited' of New Guinea, for instance. What is the purpose of this Institution? Does it exist as a cure of souls, or for the curing of copra? The author gives us his conclusions; but we ought to hear what the other side has to say before coming to any conclusion ourselves.

Mr. Robinson, as he deserved to be, was lucky. He was extremely lucky in his boat. She is a remarkable little thing. She is the shortest vessel that has ever sailed around this world; but all the same all brands of weather seem to have been alike to her. She weathered various gales in perfect safety—and in comparative comfort, too, which is more unusual. She was easy on her gear and on her men, and she was very fast indeed for her size. She made one passage of 1,282 miles in nine days, an average of over 142, and her owner must have driven her hard and continuously to make her do that. He once got 190 miles out of her in 24 hours, which is an astounding feat for a boat only 27 ft. 6 in. on the waterline. And when I say astounding I mean astounding. I know what I am talking about. I once sailed across the Atlantic and back again in a boat nearly twice as long as the *Swaap*. Our boat was famous for her

speed and we had a good strong crew to drive her, but only once during the 80 days that voyage lasted were we able to make her sail as many as 190 miles from noon to noon. You may take it from me, the *Svaap* must be a grand little boat and her owner must be a fine seaman.

The author was also very, very lucky in his shipmate. Etera was a Polynesian, a native of Tahiti. When asked how long it would take him to get ready to sail around the world he said, 'Five minutes.' And he was as good as his word. Unlike most Polynesians, who are tall and handsome, Etera was an ugly little man only five feet high. He did not, however, allow these disabilities to cramp his style. He proved himself to be a real sailor. He produced good meals under the most difficult conditions. He never got rattled. And he smiled most of the time. Now these things may not sound impressive to those who have not made a long passage in a little boat; but those who have been through it know only too well what extremely rare birds *real* small-boat seamen are. And as for the man who can go on producing good hot meals out of very limited materials, with inadequate tools, in a battened-down, stifling galley on a tiny stove in violent motion, he is as precious as rubies and infinitely more rare. And only those who have been through it all can realize the difficulty, the practical impossibility, of living cheek by jowl with another man for long periods, under trying conditions, in a cramped, confined space from which there is no escape. Friction and quarrels are the inevitable result—and it is a wonder to me that a further result is not more often bloody murder. Now Etera and Robinson went through hell together for prolonged periods, several times, and they remained good friends through everything, right up to their journey's end. This speaks volumes for both men's characters; but only the small-boat ocean sailor will understand the magnitude of this miracle. It is true Etera got drunk and was jailed in most of the ports *Svaap* touched at. In this he was the traditional, old-fashioned salt. He did not, however, keep a wife in every port, as the old salts did. He kept several—even in ports he had never heard of before. In spite of all this I mean





to shanghai Etera when I start on my next voyage. He is a pearl without price.

Early on in his book the author points out that 'one cannot know the sea from steamships.' He is right. The steamship passenger is, in truth, removed very far from *reality*. He is protected from reality and deliberately insulated from Nature. The insulation provided nowadays is pretty effective too. One might be living in an hotel ashore when at sea in a modern liner. They keep the sea in its place there, and even the winds of heaven are held at a safe distance by plate-glass windows all round the decks. Fortunately no adequate insulation against sea-sickness has been evolved yet, so that even the incumbents of cabins *de luxe* are still brought into occasional touch with at any rate one phenomenon of nature.

To be insulated from Nature to the extent which now rules in highly civilized communities is to live an artificial life, an unnatural life, a *false* life. It is a safe life and a soft life—and a life so damnably dull that it is not worth living. That is the feeling that overtakes men like the author—and makes them miss the 9.15 one fine day. They take their bowler hats and stamp on them, kick the remains out-o'-window and sack the boss. Then they take their lives in one hand and the whole round world in the other—*and live*.

Having said which, I find I cannot round off this introduction in the properly pompous traditional manner. To tell you the truth, I have just been taking another look at that photograph entitled 'Before the NE. Trades,' not to mention that other one of the 'Golden-skinned Kitavans.' And I felt a sudden urge, which is not to be denied, to savage my bowler hat and clear out and blow the consequences and *live* again, too, for a change.

So all I have time to add is this: Do *not*, for heaven's sake, take the slightest notice of my first cautionary paragraph. No. Read what this man Robinson did, and then, by Gum! go thou and do likewise!

WESTON MARTYR.

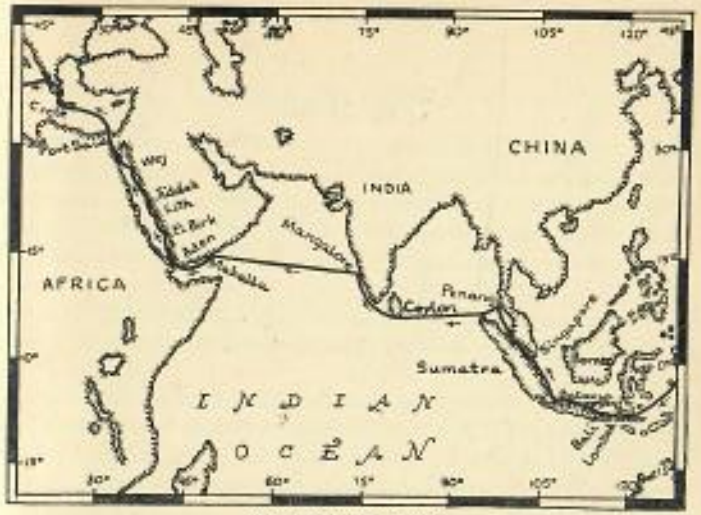
LONDON, 17th July, 1932.

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

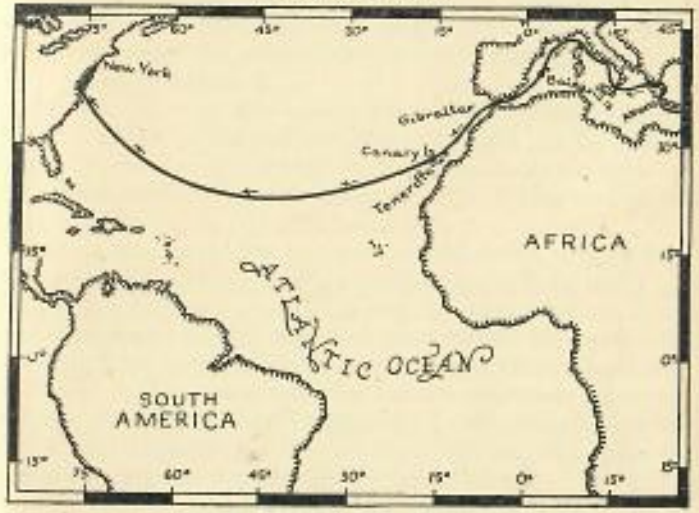

FIRST STAGE


SECOND STAGE






THIRD STAGE




FINAL STAGE

*To my Mother*

# PROLOGUE

We set sail from New York on the evening of June 23rd, 1928, pointing the bow of our tiny ketch-rigged yacht southward for Bermuda. I took a last look at the rapidly disappearing shoreline of North America, which I was destined not to see again for forty-two months. Suddenly I realized that I was in for it—that I was irrevocably started on my ambitious plan to live out my dreams of sailing around the world in my own boat in search of remote islands, strange peoples, and the beauty of new landfalls.

I was only twenty-five, and most of the money I had saved had gone to buy *Svaap** and her equipment. There was enough left for a few months, but after that? . . . Perhaps I could make enough from my writing to carry on. If not, I'd have to earn it in some other way, but carry on I would, sailing new seas, far from hampering schedules or itineraries, leading the life I love. I hoped to study, write, explore, do a bit of research, but always enjoy the never-ending adventure with just enough uncertainty to flavour it.

No one, not even my family, knew what I planned to do. I had a dread of starting something I might not be able to finish. There are few things so pitiful as those projects—so numerous recently—which commence in a blaze of glory, only to fizzle out shortly afterwards.

And so we headed for Bermuda on what was to be a trial voyage. Should *Svaap* prove her worth as a sea-boat, and I my ability as a navigator, we would carry on as planned.

A finer test of both man and boat could not have been devised. Four hundred miles east of Cape Hatteras we met with one of the greatest storms I have ever seen. It was a strange jest of Fate that we should experience such weather at the very beginning, when we were untried, and relatively inexperienced, but it was a splendid object-lesson.

* 'Svaap' means 'dream' in Sanskrit.

The gale swept down, driving appalling hurricane seas before it. Amazed by the fury and the beauty of it, we rode to a sea anchor—a large conical bag that acts as a drag in the water to keep the bow facing the storm. We used oil on the water to reduce somewhat the breaking seas.

For a week we rode it out beneath that ominous North Atlantic sky with its leaden racing clouds. At first I hardly believed that *Svaap* could perform the impossible and conquer those thundering avalanches that menaced her. From one roaring crest we could see the horizon on all sides—horizon of jagged peaks and valleys. Then we would topple over and rush sickeningly down into the pit. At the last moment, when it seemed as if *Svaap* would keep on going downward and bury herself deep under the next mountain of destruction, she would point her bowsprit at the sky and lift like a gull. Only the muttering crests swept over the sturdy little ship. Each time she fought her way to the top my confidence grew, and in the end I knew that she would be equal to anything she might meet and that my faith in her had been deserved.

We made a perfect landfall on St. David's Head, Bermuda, on July 5th, twelve days out. My navigation—acquired evenings at the New York Public Library—had proved as successful as my ship.

The friends who accompanied me had returned to college, and I chose a Bermuda boy, Willoughby Wright, to be my crew. As it happened, life in the South Seas was too much for poor Bill, and he left me in Tahiti. There, in that lovely voluptuous mid-Pacific isle, I was to find Etera, a golden-skinned South Sea Islander who became a real Man-Friday and remained as my solitary crew to the very end of the voyage.

Soon we were fitted and provisioned for the run down through the West Indies to Panama, where I felt the real voyage would commence.

Now began my real training in handling *Svaap* in nearly all the varieties of weather that we were to meet during our three years in the tropics. On the 2,000-mile voyage to Panama,





during which we stopped only in Haiti and Jamaica, we went through a complete course in diagnosing approaching squalls or local storms, and perfected ourselves in the art of reducing sail to the proper extent at the proper moment.

I began to feel more of a permanence about things and settled comfortably into the routine.

I was beginning to know my ship.

At 2.30 on the afternoon of August the 12th we anchored at Cristobal, the eastern entrance to the Panama Canal. We delayed our passage through the Canal to make a trip to the San Blas coast. My stay among the San Blas Indians serves as an example of the advantage of sailing without schedule. Had I been following a definite itinerary I would have missed one of the most delightful months of my life. That month, however, holds a story of its own; what matters here is the *cayuca* or native dugout canoe which I brought back from the San Blas Indians. Previous to her stay among them *Svaap* had been dependent upon shore boats, having no tender of her own.

A ship so small can hardly carry a lifeboat on deck—there is no room; and if anything happens at sea you are just out of luck. She can, however, carry some sort of small boat sufficient to get ashore in when in port, and I found the *cayuca* to be satisfactory. It was light, could easily be pulled on deck, and fitted comfortably alongside the cabin house without taking too much room.

We used a *cayuca* as tender on the entire voyage.

Returning to Panama, we were given the freedom of the port by Port Captain Kidd, and every possible assistance by the Panama Canal authorities.

Admeasurer Frederick Williams applied a great deal of higher mathematics to *Svaap* and arrived at the conclusion that she was ten tons net, which meant that at the rate of 75 cents a ton we would pay $7.50 plus a measurement fee of $5.00 to go through the Canal. This was the total charge, pilot included, for putting the boat through the greatest canal in the world.

At the end of the voyage I paid $28 to go through a few miles of the most miserable canal on earth—the privately-owned Delaware-Raritan Canal, connecting Delaware Bay with New York. There is something to be said for government ownership, after all.

I spent two days at the Hydrographic Office at Cristobal equipping *Swaap* with charts, sailing directions, light lists, etc., sufficient to take her around the world. I had definitely decided that she was capable of going anywhere, and that I would seriously undertake the realization of my dream. Previously there had always been some uncertainty in my mind, but now I began to see quite clearly what the future held for me. I had at last developed complete confidence in myself and in my ship, and with that confidence no barrier was too great.

The real voyage now lay ahead, beckoning us on.

I consulted Captain Kidd and arranged to start from the Atlantic end on the evening of September the 14th. We would transit the Gatun locks by night, and the Pedro Miguel and Miraflores locks at the other end by day.

I had hoped to be allowed through without a pilot, but Captain Kidd stood by his decision, and accordingly we waited at the Strangers Club that afternoon for Pilot Thompson, who had been appointed. He arrived a little after six, quite amused at the size of *Swaap*, and fully prepared for a hard night.

We were off at once, for we were to go through with the King Line ship *King James*, of London. It was only a short run across Limon Bay. The *King James* slid past us with engines stopped, a great black mass with many twinkling lights. We too were drifting, to let her pass, and waited for her to enter the left-hand lock as directed by the illuminated semaphore. Then we started up our little Kermath and slipped boldly in behind her.



## CHAPTER I

There was a faint sound of distant machinery. The great gates behind us glided shut. We were cut off from Atlantic waters at last.

We were at the bottom of a great pit, the dank, slimy, dripping walls riding high above our masts, topped by little lights.

The shouts of the Panama Canal employees and the lockmaster giving directions to us came faintly, as if from another world. Our own voices echoed about us and beat back upon our ears. The great ship ahead of us was neglected, for everything runs so smoothly that the business of taking a 20,000-ton vessel through is nothing at all. Our little 10-tonner was quite another question. We were too low for the electric locomotives to hold us in position and pull us ahead, so we were given manila lines forward and aft. They vanished straight overhead into the dark, to the canal men who handled the other ends. These two lines were supposed to keep us in position.

Suddenly *Swaap* shuddered and trembled, and we felt rather than heard the disturbance of a tremendous volume of water in violent motion. The eight-foot manholes which perforate the floor of the basin were starting to belch forth their contents, and the placid waters about us now boiled and surged angrily.

*Swaap* was thrown about like a chip, the perpendicular lines affording hardly any control. I had been warned that we would be practically helpless in the grasp of the milling waters, but had never expected such a tempest. We were almost at the mercy of the diabolical forces under us, and the pilot threw off his dignity with his coat, and helped us in our struggle to get more fenders over the sides, coils of spare line, rolls of old canvas, anything to keep us from grinding away our bulwarks and planking as we were thrown against the wall.

One minute the bow would leap and strain on the line, and the men on the other end would strive to keep it in place. Then

point due east of Fangahina the night before landfall, and thus could sail due west and hit the spot sooner or later than the figured time, according to the error in the chronometer. If it was slow we would get there sooner, one mile for each four seconds error. At 6 p.m. on the last day of 1928 we had only sixty miles to go according to two evening sights. We were twenty-five days out, but surely the chronometer could not be hiding an error of more than a minute on the calculated time! Assuming it to be correct, we should be within sight of the island at 4 a.m. provided we held the same speed. There would be bright moonlight then.

Fangahina is just a beach and some coco-nut trees—only a few feet above sea level and thus visible only half a dozen miles. A tiny bit of land to find.

The year was waning. My Dream Ship slipped peacefully through the silver sea and left a luminous wake, and the squaresail shone in the moonlight. What, I wondered, had the New Year in store?

Dawn, January 1st, 1929. A pair of eyes at mast-head, and a pair on deck, both staring through the grey at an empty ocean. Pink tinged the grey. The long Pacific swells rolled under us, made a momentary bulge on the horizon ahead, and were gone. Then there came one which rolled out of sight, and wonder of wonders, the bulge remained and became a fringe of palms. Our New Year had begun.

A half-hour later, as the freshening breeze put whitecaps on the sea, we ran past the little atoll and feasted our eyes on the intense green of the palms and the yellow of the beach. Here were colours that we had not seen for weeks, nor had we ever seen the white cresting foam of breakers such as these, nor listened to such thunder as they mounted higher and higher and crashed upon the little ring of coral. Inside, through the palms, we saw the mirror-smooth blue surface of the lagoon. This was the perfect atoll of fiction, a narrow strip or ring of beach and palms encircling a placid lagoon, that proffered invitation but whose invitation could not be accepted, for there was no pass.





Our glimpse was all too short, and then we changed our course to SW. to run for Reka Reka, 112 miles distant. This enabled us to put up the mainsail and jigger and still use the squaresail too, and to make out four or five knots with only a very light breeze from the east. The 1929 Nautical Almanacs had not been issued when I left Panama, and so I was obliged to start recalculating the material in the old one when taking sights later in the day, and for the remainder of the voyage. The wind worked a little to the south of east and gradually increased, so that by evening we were doing seven knots under square and jigger. The square was clewed down to the bowsprit, so that the sail was like a great misshapen balloon jib that nearly lifted the ship from the water as we fairly flew along.

After nightfall the wind increased still more, but became squally, so that the sky was clear one moment with stars blazing, and covered the next by black clouds that raced over and dropped their contents as they passed. The squalls seemed to be preceded always by two or three queer steep seas that gave the boat a strange lift, like a fast elevator.

By midnight we were blasting along on the howling wings of a heavy endless squall, doing at least eight knots. In the observance of due caution we should have reduced canvas, but with a godsend such as a wind like this to drive us through a region where we expected calms and light variables, and the urge to make port after almost a month at sea, we carried on and took a chance.

The Tuamotus are referred to as the Dangerous Isles, or the Dangerous Archipelago, and well they might be. The atolls, some eighty of them, are strung out in a chain a thousand miles long, and with most of them the visibility is hardly more than a mile or so. They are surrounded by currents of uncharted direction and velocity. And so, when I saw that we were going to make Reka Reka by night, I altered the course to pass a safe distance of some fifteen to twenty miles to the north of it. In this way we could not possibly come upon any of the other atolls until after daylight.

In the black an hour or so before dawn there was a sudden booming of surf dead ahead, and up loomed an island. We were already in the surge that precedes the breakers. There was just time to get the mainsail on, sheet the squaresail flat, and bear away to the south. We passed the point of the reef so close that we could see the coral itself.

We were in a quandary and could not explain the island at all, and when it was daylight we were out of sight of any land. I held a tentative SW. course while the sun tantalized us by staying behind clouds so that observations were impossible. Later on, from the mast-head, we made out a long chain of tiny islets ahead which might have been either the Marutea or Hikueru group, depending upon which way the current had set us. The sun came out and we were more at a loss than ever, for the observations put us in an impossible position, due to some strange condition of the atmosphere, probably undue refraction from the intense evaporation going on in the countless lagoons about us. At noon a good latitude sight showed that the low atoll group we were abreast was Hikueru, and by working our course backward I found that the island we had nearly run into in the night was Reka Reka, after all. A current had set us almost twenty miles to the south in twelve hours.

The little islets of the atoll ran in a broken chain out of sight to the west, and a two-masted schooner lay beached on the lagoon side of the eastern end. We ran in very close to the village, just outside the breakers, and all the people rushed about on the beach expecting us to stop. A red church steeple showed above the palms, and an empty flagstaff. A brand-new-looking Ford scurried among the palms, the most incongruous thing I had seen in a long time. It could only go about a quarter of a mile then was obliged to turn back or run into the sea. So it darted back and forth like a mouse trapped in a box as long as we could see the island. Then a heavy squall completely veiled the group, although we were only a few hundred yards off, cleared for a moment and we had a glimpse of the lagoon, and the curtain was drawn again.

We now had practically clear sailing ahead of us to Tahiti,





and only 390 miles to go. Luck had been with us in getting by the Dangerous Archipelago, for we had romped through in thirty hours instead of being delayed by the calms I had expected.

The next land we saw was the steep little island of Mehetia, sixty miles east of Tahiti, and when dawn came on January 6th, the great bulk of our goal loomed fifty miles distant, shrouded in haze and clouds. All day we gazed upon the astonishing mountains and gorges that grew ever larger and more spectacular ahead of us, while our breeze gradually deserted us and our hearts sank at the thought of another night at sea, and so close to port.

And then just at sunset our guardian angel sent a land breeze out to us laden with perfume. We approached the land and got within its protecting influence. We had the almost forgotten sensation of sailing in smooth waters. There are no smooth waters at sea.

Point Venus light, where Captain Cook made his famous observations, shone out for us, and all along the great barrier reef lights twinkled to guide us along the shore. We pondered at these reddish twinkling lights, and later found that they were the natives torch-fishing along the reef.

We ghosted along within sound of the surf, looking for Papeete, and suddenly there it was—a crescent of tiny lights. Becalmed directly off the town we unshipped the squaresail yard, unbent the sail and stowed it below. For a month this sail had been off but once, and then only thirty hours. It was worn. The yard lacing was temporarily patched in many places. The sail itself was practically blown out of the bolt-ropes half the way round. It would have to be almost remade before it could be used again. But if anyone should ask me I should say it was SOME sail.

Tahiti is entirely surrounded by a barrier reef which lies anywhere from a few yards to a half-mile or so from shore, upon which the sea almost always breaks heavily. There are passes here and there through which vessels may enter, but strong currents make caution necessary.

The Pilot Book says of the Papeete pass that one must take a pilot and enter by day. But there are two red range lights on shore that make it possible to come in at night, and I had a good chart of the harbour. We had been at sea just a month and had sailed 3,700 miles. The twinkling lights were a magnet that was irresistible.

So just after midnight we found the pass through the reef, brought the red lights to bear in a straight line, and ran in with the thunder of the surf on both sides. Once in the fairway along the shore we turned sharp east and slowly glided along the famous Papeete water-front, to tie up to a buoy in the inner harbour just off the government dock.

The air was heavy with the scent of lovely flowers, and there were strange land noises. We could hear a milkman making his way about town, and soon all the sounds of a community awakening. Birds, dogs, cattle—it was all so strange to us. I put up the quarantine flag and gave myself over to the ecstasy of it all—the glorious feeling that comes only at the end of such a voyage—a feeling of utter relaxation and peace, and of accomplishment.



## CHAPTER VI

One might almost say that Tahiti is inhabited by men who came for a vacation and stayed for ever. That is, of course, speaking of the white population. As for myself, I stayed eight months and was filled with regret when I finally watched the towering bulk of Tahiti and its sister island Moorea fade into the dusk of evening as we sailed out to sea again.

Twice *Svaap* was hauled out in Ellacott's little Tahitian shipyard for painting and overhaul. She emerged from her metamorphosis a glistening white, the only practical colour for the tropics, and sported a new after-cabin in place of her old cockpit. I had long wanted to do this. The fairly large cockpit, desirable for ordinary sailing, was only a waste of valuable space for us. So I tore it out and built in a little after-cabin which gave me a great deal more storage space and separate quarters for my crew of one. It left us a small steering-well between the two cabins. The arrangement proved so successful that I would never have a cruising boat again without it.

The days spent in the little shipyard were pleasant, for Ellacott proved to be the most conscientious shipyard man I have ever met. Born of a half-caste Tahitian mother with a bit of both German and Italian blood, and an English father, he was more Tahitian than anything else, as was his massively proportioned, kind-hearted wife. In the evening the whole family would gather in the little coco-nut grove next to the house and tell me of old Tahiti. Daudet the son would climb a palm for drinking-nuts, and the girls would sing the age-old chants that told of ancient rites and deeds.

One naturally develops many passing friendships on a trip of this sort. Tahiti was no exception. I had soon made many friends, all of whom I will remember as having been very kind. But fortune gave me something better yet—one of those rare lasting friendships that one will travel far and wait for years to

On mail day we would also watch each lot of tourists do the same thing: buy the same picture post-cards of nude Tahitian girls bathing in a waterfall (which they would not think of doing, except in the post-cards), and get a bottle of perfume from George Sage at his unique South Sea barber shop. We saw them return from their quick tour on the automobile road as far as Maraa, and we listened to their comments as they gathered to await the deep-throated blast that would call them back to the *Makura*, or the *Maunganui*, after several hours of the most utterly superficial and deceiving glimpse of Tahiti that could be devised.

They are disappointed. Middle-aged maiden school-teachers are disappointed because they came to be shocked at South Sea life and found nothing to be shocked at except perhaps that many attractive Tahitian girls wore bobbed hair and other accessories of flapperdom which have found a devious way to these islands. Two middle-aged salesmen are indignant because after several hours of vigorous searching for the traditional brown-skinned beauty of large affections they had found only a couple of professional prostitutes who actually had the nerve to demand 100 francs for their favours.

The Club, of course, was the place of places. It lost its usual flavour on mail day and assumed an air of excitement and tenseness. Alec—bar-tender extraordinary of international reputation—circulated from table to table overflowing with stories for the tourists, who warmed to the heart at this glimpse of real Tahitian life, and bought another drink.

When the last transient had gulped the final Rainbow cocktail and fled, the Club resumed its customary quiet and the little cliques found their accustomed tables on the wide veranda, and, disdaining the crowd of natives, half-castes, and lesser whites on the wharf, prepared to watch the steamer warp out into the fairway and get under way. Then Tahiti would be more or less normal until another mail day. I could no longer strut before the tourists with a knowing air, but as I leaned on the balcony and waved the departing ship off I felt as if I were one of the old islanders. Someone would ask me if I'd seen



A coral island

The *Seaqb* in Tahiti

A stream in Tahiti



Turia; there was a moment's conversation with a planter I had not seen since last mail day; and on the way home I would know every bend and hill, every Chinese store; and the little cheerful Annamite road-workers with babes at their breasts would wave to me as I passed and smile a betel-stained but friendly smile. It had come to be home, for a time at least.

It was a source of never-ending interest to me to watch the comings and goings of the little island schooners, and the Tuamotu cutters, with their colourful cargoes of humans, cows, chickens, pigs, copra, pearl shell, trade goods, and so on indefinitely—all mixed helter-skelter on a deck you'd swear would accommodate but a tenth of what it did.

Native feasts occurred with surprising regularity, and I became fond of the exotic foods that burdened the tables in astounding profusion, and were prepared in the native oven of heated stones in the ground. The simplest of feasts would always have its raw fish with 'mitihaari' or coco-nut sauce, shellfish and several species of variously prepared fish, poi of bananas or paw-paws or some other fruit, taro, yams, native sweet potatoes, fei (the local plantain that must be cooked), pota well soaked in coco-nut sauce, fowl, sucking pig, and fruits.

To the novice raw fish has a repulsive sound, but to the initiate there are few foods so delicious as this dish of cube-cut fish that has been well soaked in salt and lime-juice for several hours and is eaten with a generous bath of sauce. The pota, too, is a dish that once eaten is never forgotten. It is a species of greens—the tops of taro—and is cooked with bits of pork and chicken and perhaps onion, and develops a flavour that is peculiarly its own and delicious.

The native dancing never lost its charm. I had plenty of it, for I happened to be there for the great festival that started on June 18th and lasted ten days, to be revived for another week on the French national holiday—July 14th.

During this period, and for a month previous, when all the districts were practising for the competitive dancing, I lived to the accompaniment of drums and chanting, and spent the

work for them, the lagoon of Maupiti seemed the most utterly beautiful thing we had ever seen. We believed, as we had been told, that it was the most lovely of all the atolls of the Pacific. A practically round barrier reef of twenty-mile circumference, a narrow band of shining little islets of white sand and palms framed by mounting white-crested breakers, encircled a lovely body of placid water only eighteen feet deep in the deepest places. The varying bottom of wondrous formed coral and coral sand shaded the water through all the colours of the spectrum and surely many hues that exist nowhere but in coral coloured lagoon waters. And, thrust up from the middle of this aquatic Garden of Eden, a rough diamond in a rainbow setting, all cliffs and knife-ridges and perpendicular bluffs, stood the island of Maupiti.

In a dream we sailed between the little guardian islets of the pass, Teiti Ahe and Teapaa, and heard the sighing of the palms. On into the big lagoon we sailed, winding our way through the spots where the coral sent up castles and pinnacles almost to the surface. Every detail could be seen on the bottom: every twig and filament of the tree corals; every crevice, spire and rosebud, and the flashing hordes of grotesque and lovely fish.

The little village clustered comfortably at the foot of the bluff on the eastern side, and boasted a tiny quay, to which we tied, with an anchor fore and aft to keep us from touching. There were six inches of water under our keel. A large boat could not enter the lagoon, but *Svaap* with her draft of scant five and a half feet could just do it. Our heaving-line fell short of the shore, and at once a little boy threw off his pareu and dived for it, glistening in the water as he crawled out like a chocolate toy. Frisbie, dressed up as no American islanding in the South Seas ever does, stood there with the natives. He afterwards explained that he had thought it was the Governor paying an official call.

The village was a disappointment. Here, in this most supremely lovely spot of all, lived about 200 natives, poor, rather dirty, and completely the reverse of our friends in Bora Bora.



Etera

Some of Etera's conquests



There is nothing for them to do here, no copra to speak of, and a boat perhaps once a year. Originally they would have had a clean, self-contained and contented community. But most of them had lived in Tahiti, Raiatea, or some of the other more civilized places and had learned a different standard, had acquired new wants and necessities, and had now fallen into a state of abjectness and forgotten their arts and customs. Although the venereal diseases which infest the more 'civilized' centres seem not to have acquired a strong foothold here as yet, there was plentiful evidence of lung trouble, and nearly every person on the island was coughing, or sniffling with colds. Kippis, in a history of the voyages of Captain Cook, refers to the early voyages to the South Seas in the following manner:

'Some rays of light must have darted on their infant minds. . . . Perhaps our late voyages may be the means appointed by Providence of spreading, in due time, the blessings of civilization among the numerous tribes of the South Pacific Ocean, and preparing them for holding an honourable rank among the nations of the earth. There cannot be a more laudable attempt than that of endeavouring to rescue millions of our fellow-creatures from that state of humiliation in which they now exist.'

I later had opportunity to explore more primitive groups where the natives were in that state of 'humiliation', having escaped the 'blessings of civilization'. I was ashamed to make the comparison with those that civilization has reached.

Frisbie, who considers the Tahitians a decadent race (the term Tahitian applying to Society Islanders in general), said that I would find the Cook Islanders a virile, energetic race on a much higher plane. He should know, for he married one. This lone roamer of the South Seas is a lover of solitudes, waste islands, and his tale of the great Puka trees on Vostok, and the millions of fish and birds at this and other of the uninhabited Line Islands, almost intrigued me into changing my plans and including a trip there in spite of the greatly increased distance. I continually found that my appetite for exploring the Pacific was beyond the possibilities of a single cruise.

## CHAPTER IX

We had been several days at sea. I think the gods that control the destinies of sailors were trying to make up for previous hardships. A gentle trade-wind caressed our sails as we slipped mile after mile over a lazy ocean. Days were blue, intensely blue, with white fleeting clouds. But the nights were sublime, unforgettable, with a crescent moon and weird flickering phosphorescent lights on the horizon. One night, with a soft thud, *Svaap* touched a great fish—a sleeping whale, perhaps. I always took the second of our two six-hour night watches, from 1 a.m. to 7 a.m. Almost with regret I would watch the dawn of day.

Then came the night before landfall. We were both on deck at 1 a.m., changing watches. Just then a gorgeous meteor floated out of the sky in a stream of green brilliance, so slowly that it might have been attached to a parachute. Etera gasped, mumbling to himself in Tahitian.

'That means a hurricane comes in one month to destroy many islands,' he said in a hushed voice filled with foreboding.

I tried to persuade him that there could be no connection between a meteor and a hurricane, but he insisted that it would be as he said. Next month he reminded me of this meteor while we were clinging desperately to the edge of a tiny motu in the big reef-bay of Tongatabu, with three anchors straining to hold us against the storm that spread death and destruction in the Fijis and Tonga.

With the usual contrariness of weather, the snorting easterly that we had been expecting came in shortly after I went on watch that morning, just when we wanted more tranquil seas for landfall.

We drove through the night, eyes and ears straining for warning of land, when suddenly there it was: a black lump ahead, a white line of surf.





We hove to and waited for daylight. Soon the curtain of dawn rose, and the speck of uninhabited American soil took on definite shape—just a tiny bump of an island two hundred yards across and only eleven feet above sea level, all bulging with trees as if they were trying to push each other off the yellow beach into the sea. Over it hovered a black halo of thousands of sea-birds.

The atoll rim, the reef, was a wide-flung thing, enclosing a lagoon two miles across. We skirted it, following around to the leeward side to look at the pass. It was a peculiar reef, very wide and backed with an unbroken barrier of black lumps sitting on the top of the slate red of the reef itself. The pass was deep enough to enter, and wide, but I saw that a tremendous current piled out of it, so that we could not enter.

My heart was set on landing on this mysterious island of ours, for the novelty of it partially, but more with a certain unsuspected romantic desire to set foot on American soil under these strange conditions.

So we skirted the reef to the most protected place near the little island and launched the canoe. Foreseeing the possibility of an upset, I put my camera, knife, and some food in a press-lid tin, and started off, leaving Etera to sail *Svaap* off and on.

I waited a calm moment and paddled hard for the reef—but an unexpected breaker came along, grew higher and higher until I thought the canoe would do a cartwheel. That sea took me absolutely clear of the reef—completely over it so that I never touched—and deposited me in the spent water running off into the lagoon, fully a hundred feet away. A heavy paddle against the wind across the lagoon followed. Many birds knocked my hat off trying to frighten off the intruder. It was hard work, but I did not care, for I would soon be on American territory again. It was a supreme moment.

The canoe grated on a steep beach of broken shell. I leaped out like a young and solitary Captain Cook. I mounted the little bank. Before me stood a grey, solid-looking monument with a bold inscription:

ROSE ISLAND
AMERICAN SAMOA
TRESPASSING PROHIBITED
WARREN J. TERHUNE
JAN. 10, 1920 GOVERNOR

I walked around to the other side of the monument, and there it was again, this time on a bronze tablet: TRESPASSING PROHIBITED.

I collapsed on the sand and laughed until it hurt. I had sailed miles out of the way to risk my life getting ashore on this isolated atoll, just to walk once more on American soil. And I found trespassing prohibited!

It must be a monument to someone's vanity, or to American System. Certainly no one is likely to come along and claim Rose Island for himself when it has been charted since 1819 and recognized since 1904 as American territory. And no one could want the tiny motu, for it is too small to do anything with, and has no water. There are exactly seven coco-nut trees. I counted them. In fact, I brazenly climbed one to get drinking nuts, and looked guiltily around. But no one had seen my lawless act—only a sleepy booby perched on the very monument itself.

I circled the island in a few minutes and explored the dense growth of Pisonia Grandes trees, sheltering under one of them from a heavy shower. There was an intense loneliness about the place, almost personified. I had a feeling that I was being followed, and continually looked behind me.

A storm was coming up, so I hurriedly launched the canoe and crossed the lagoon to the pass, where I shot out with the current. The storm swept closer. I had about a half-mile to paddle to *Svaap*, with a large shark alongside.

It was a close shave. We just got the canoe on deck and all snugged down when it hit us like a small tornado and sent us flying on our way to the Manua Group of American Samoa.

It was only a day's run to Tau, the first of the Manua Group,





but the weather turned against us and we made heavy going of it with a high sea and a nasty cold dripping wind. Sunset that night was a fearful spectacle. Sundogs threatened, and a stormy-looking sky with every imaginable type of cloud all mixed up helter-skelter made us a bit uneasy. At midnight it was blowing very hard. We were running nearly on our course. Tau was somewhere on our port bow, hidden in the black.

All night it rained and blew and we carried on, striving to tear aside the curtain with our eyes to discern the 3,000-foot bluffs of the island. It was nearly time for dawn when a dim black wall loomed up close by, resolving itself slowly out of the murk and later advertising by its profile the fact that it was Tau.

We seemed almost invariably to make our landfalls at night, although the hours of daylight in the tropics much outnumber those of darkness.

With daylight we skirted Tau, heading for the chief village, which lies on the north-west side. Ofu and Olosenga, the other islands of the group, were now also in sight, shrouded in rain. All these islands are towering in appearance, but have rounded and verdure-clothed slopes in contrast to Tahiti's sharp and jagged peaks. The bluffs drop steeply into the sea, making roads impossible and anchorages scarce. Nasty squalls broke out of the north-west from time to time, so that we dared not anchor in any case. Instead, we hove to a half-mile off Tau village. I did want to go ashore.

A bonito canoe, well made and ornamented with shells, came out to us with three natives who were tattooed a solid blue-black about the hips and legs. They moved like the wind with lightning-like flicks of the paddles. One of them spoke in broken English.

'Where you come?' he asked, looking all over the ship in amazement, and particularly at Etera, who had not understood his first query in the Samoan tongue. He wondered what manner of man this was who looked like a Samoan but did not speak the language.

pants tattooed on.' The missionaries tried to abolish the practice, and later laws were made against it, but it is still widely practised. A young man is not supposed to meet other men on equal terms until he has been tattooed.

The tattooing of a young man is accompanied by feasting and the giving of presents. The design is practically the same for everyone—a solid colour from a line above the hip bones down to the knees. The operation is naturally very painful and takes days. The young man is apt to be laid up for several weeks and there is an occasional death.

A few of the women tattoo also, preferring small designs on the legs or the back of the hands.

The custom will doubtless disappear before long, but to-day it is quite prevalent.

It was a tremendous change to drop suddenly from the indolence and leisure of the islands into a model of American Efficiency with officials for ever consulting, reports being produced and read by the score, messengers dashing about as if their lives depended upon it, and typewriters and calculating machines rattling away frantically.

TIME—that unknown quantity in the islands—had suddenly taken on a vast importance. DETAIL likewise. The Commander was upset because the naval laundry cleared only $20 the previous month. A dozen mislaid shovels put the whole public works department up in the air. I went about in a daze meeting all the officials under the guidance of a friendly customs official. I was an intruder from another world as remote as the farthest star.

Samoan dancing can be good or bad. I saw some 'Sivas' that were as fine as any dancing in the Pacific. One night I saw the worst. It was only a guise for the ulterior motive of financial remuneration. There was only one who could dance—a tiny little tot who was charming. The rest strained pitifully in an attempt to simulate sex appeal, thinking thus to entice a few coins from us. I can think of nothing more revolting than to watch a troupe of filarial beggars use a miserable Siva as an





excuse to collect money *à la* Salvation Army, dancing with a tin plate in their hands.

There was one amusing, although pathetic incident. A woman came out to dance, wearing the Siva skirt and the usual *brassière*. The latter revealed the outlines of unusually beautiful breasts. Nothing is more admired in a young Polynesian woman than full, well-rounded breasts. Later, with the agitation of the dance, strange things began to happen to the woman's figure. The beautiful breasts, curiously enough, became misplaced, the *brassière* slipped down, and two half-round coco-nut shells fell to the ground and rolled away. The woman bit her lip and held the narrow band of fabric up to cover empty, flaccid breasts. She danced on, but her eyes were moist.

On the whole I was disappointed in the Samoan natives, perhaps because I did not get to know them in the remoter parts where they were unspoiled. Most of those I met were lacking in the charm and hospitality of the Cook Islander or the Tahitian. Some were avaricious and even a bit insolent, but only in the immediate vicinity of the Naval Station. It is unfortunate that close contact with the Caucasian must bring about this change, but it is almost invariable. I have seen cases where exceptional white men have coaxed the natives through that dangerous transitional period, but these have been sympathetic, tolerant, understanding men that are rarely found. Wise choice of white representatives in our islands can be of vast future importance to us. Let us hope that we can benefit by the experience of New Zealand in Western Samoa, and our own troubles in Hawaii, and make something different of American Samoa.

There is still time for this. The islanders are healthy and prolific. The blood is still pure. There is not the conglomeration of races that so complicates the Hawaiian situation. The contamination is not far advanced. Let us not try to make of them something they never can be. We must remember that no race can survive if it must make in a year or so the changes which took us thousands of years. These people are funda-

mentally peaceful and kind, quick to acquire the white man's vices, but equally quick in modelling themselves after men of fine character. It will all depend upon the men under whose guidance the islands fall.

The non-magnetic yacht *Carnegie* was also in Pago Pago. Captain Ault and I had become friends in Tahiti. One night in Samoa we had dinner together with Commander Phelps and his wife. The next day, after giving me final instructions about some scientific work I wanted to do in the Western Pacific, Ault bade me good-bye and sailed for Apia.

'So long, Robbie,' he said. 'We'll meet again.'

Perhaps we will meet again some day—but it will be in another world. Twenty-four hours later Ault was dead. The world lost a splendid man and a valuable scientist. Loading petrol, the *Carnegie* blew up and burned to the water's edge. Captain Ault was blown into the sea, rescued, but died on the way to hospital.

'Don't leave me, boys,' he said, and then he died.

We were now close to the hurricane season, so we did not linger in Samoa. I was in a hurry to get through Tonga and on to Fiji to find a safe cyclone cellar for *Svaap*.

On the way to Tonga we had fickle, in-between-season weather: beautiful breezes with white-capped seas, sudden squalls with such preposterous quantities of water in them that the helmsmen gasped for air, heavy blows of several hours' duration that kicked up uncomfortable seas, rainbows and double rainbows and beautiful sunsets and calms. In the calms I ran the engine, in a hurry to get to Tonga.

On the morning of December 2nd we saw Vavau ahead of us, dim and purple. Later we coasted along under the 500-foot cliffs that boldly barricade this island from the north and west, perforated here and there by gaping holes like the homes of ancient cave-dwellers, and level as a monstrous table on top. There was no outer reef, so we sailed close in.

It seemed we would never open out the entrance between





Vavau and Hunga, but at last we came to an abrupt point and there stretching in before us was the channel. It led to an inland sea with countless blue and green islets of all sizes and shapes.

We sailed in among the little islands as the sun dropped low and the breeze became lighter. Little cutters loaded to impossible depths came out past us with singing and laughing crews. Several motor-boats came out and ran close alongside.

'Where from?' they would shout, and go on their way.

Then, reading and following directions in the Pilot, we found the last turn and slid through the narrows into the perfect landlocked harbour of Vavau, girded by green hills. We were in the last Kingdom of the South Seas.

that prevails during southerlies revealed a dim grey shadow in the south. It was Erromango, the first of the New Hebrides.

We were driving *Svaap* off before the most enormous seas we had ever sailed her in. Our stern would be thrown high, the breaking crest of the towering wave would burst under us with a roar and for a breathless moment we would ride forward with it like a surf-board. Then we would sink back and slide stern first down the back of the wave, pointing our bowsprit high in the air. It was dangerous—but with the islands before us we had no sea room and could not heave to. And besides—we knew that the little ship could do it.

Snipe-shooting is rolling off a log compared with taking sights on a day like this. We were making a landfall on Efate Island. Our position must be exact. With legs clamped about the mizen boom and an arm around the mast, I would wait for a propitious moment to take a quick shot from a wave-crest when the horizon was clear. Doubting the accuracy, I took many to get a fair average. All morning I took and worked sights as fast as I could. They put us within a few miles of the island, but we could not see a thing. The haze was almost fog.

Noon came and went. Our eyes ached from straining through the murk. Suddenly a momentary lifting—a dim shadow ahead—then it was gone, but we were content, for we knew we were right.

The sea grew worse. We nursed her through, putting oil over the stern, with only twenty miles to Vila harbour. We made it that night, but nearly experienced tragedy because the lighthouse was not lit.



## CHAPTER XII

Vila is the capital of that political monstrosity the British-French Condominium, but actually it is French. It is nothing less than a miniature Papeete. The political situation here is, to say the least, extraordinary. There is no other country like it in the world. The French and the British are supposed to have equal rights and authority. Hence everything is in duplicate. Each nationality has its commissioner and full staff. All papers, reports, etc., must be in duplicate. There is a French hospital and a British one. But the legal end of it is the most amusing, for in court sits not one judge but three: a French judge, a British judge, and a Spanish judge, who acts as umpire. Justice must not miscarry in this dual administration. The jumble of interpretation that prevails during a case is indescribable, for besides the European languages there are the native tongues and the *bêche de mer* or pidgin English. Peculiarly enough, when in the Balearic Islands two years later, I met Señor Moysi Seurch, retired Spanish President of the Condominium Court. From him I learned many of the details of this most interesting court of justice.

There is difficulty in the New Hebrides in reconciling the two opposite policies. The French encourage their subjects to marry natives, and French half-castes become French citizens, with all their rights. The British object to marriage with natives, and refuse to recognize their half-castes, who remain natives in status with no rights. All in all, it is a most peculiar situation.

I stayed several days in Vila, which is a charming little settlement abounding in hospitality—mostly French—for although the regime is supposed to be evenly divided it is predominantly French. However, Mr. Joy, the British Resident Commissioner, was also very kind—extending the hospitality of the Residency and all information I wished. I learned that

cannibalism still exists to an unknown extent in the interior of the islands among the bush people. It is more ritual or ceremony than anything else. The last white killing was in 1923, on Santo, this island and Malekula being the two most savage and least known. The interior population, Mr. Joy said, is probably very large. That way of putting it is expressive of the knowledge of these islands. The interior is almost unknown. The bushmen live entirely inland, the most distant tribes having contact with the next, who are in contact with others, and so on down to the sea. The real bushmen rarely get to the sea, but runners sometimes communicate back and forth in stages. There is sporadic tribal warfare. Until one sees the character of the bush in these islands, and their configuration, it is hard to realize exactly what savage conditions actually do exist.

It was in Vila that I started on a daily dose of quinine. We were now in the malarial region, the first that we had reached in the Pacific. The old-timers here did not seem to worry unduly about it, and said that it would be worse farther to the west. Constant consumption of good French wines they said, is a good preventative measure. Wines here were very fine and very cheap, so we put in a stock of both red and white varieties.

On May 10th we sailed from Vila late at night, in order to arrive at Epi by daylight. The Southerly Buster still blew, slightly diminished, but still half a gale. It seems perhaps foolish to sail in such weather, but we expected it to continue for several days, and if we delayed everywhere on account of heavy weather we would get nowhere. It was blowing with us and we would travel fast.

So with a full moon we negotiated the very dangerous seas off Devil's Point, a place much feared, and tore down the lee of the island through the night. Day found us passing the several intervening volcanoes—steep, conical islands like those off Tonga. In the afternoon we anchored behind the reef off Ringdove Bay. There was a small trading-station here, belonging to Hagen Company.





Here I had a most peculiar reception. When I went ashore I was very pointedly avoided by the four white men who lived there. Entering the building, I was rather suspiciously asked if I wanted something from the store, with the implication that if I did not, what was I doing there. The manager at length warmed up enough to ask me to sit down, but only because I almost forced him into it. Only my curiosity to see the people of 'Mosquito Bay' of *Isles of Illusion* made me wish to intrude upon these strange folk. I will say that I have never seen such a peculiar group of whites as these Australians, for although American yachts, or any other boats for that matter, are certainly not in the habit of popping into Ringdove Bay every day, not one of them even came near the beach to look at the strange craft.

In the morning we again ventured forth into the same southerly, and after a very rough voyage came to the Island of Malekula, passing great Ambrym on the way, smoking and rumbling furiously. In the big eruption last year the Government took off some five hundred people, and not many were lost. One young Frenchman I met in Vila rescued some 150 natives from the flaming liquid death. The eruption came in the night, which made it all the worse. A white missionary, with wife and child, awakened to find the trickling lava all about. They had paid no attention to the explosions and rumblings, for these occur always. They found their world ablaze with fast-flowing lava and the sea boiling. There was torrential rain to make it worse. They found a sheltered mound and clung to it for the night. In the morning they were taken off by a launch. In another place two streams of lava came to the sea, flowed along the coast and closed off a large triangle of land. Most of the natives escaped before the streams met, but some were trapped within and watched death creep upon them.

We now anchored in Port Sandwich, one of the most beautiful harbours I have ever seen. There we cut our last bonds with civilization for a long, long time. We were at last in the most savage of the Pacific Islands.

It had been a wild voyage across to Malekula, with boisterous seas that continually reared their threatening bulks astern as we fled before them, and a wind that screamed at us. Rain-squalls had obscured our destination, but in due time the Maskelynes had appeared, and soon the big island itself. We had plunged and wallowed our way to the pass in such a confusion of motion that now—deep in the great still inlet, with mangroves and white beaches, and here a hut in the dark bush, and there a big canoe hidden in dense foliage—it seemed another world.

There was no settlement, but we had passed a shoal and had doubled back around a sandy point into a miniature blue lake where lay a white clipper-bowed ketch and a tiny stone jetty—both swarming with black men. It was in this harbour—which he found to possess many advantages and which he named Port Sandwich—that Captain Cook anchored while he lay at Malekula in 1774 on his second voyage around the world. Here he received a very warlike reception, was the target for poisoned arrows, and landed in the face of four or five hundred people assembled on shore, all armed with bows and arrows, clubs and spears, but who after peace tokens were exchanged made a very favourable impression upon the great navigator, although he calls them the most ugly and ill-proportioned people he had ever seen. He describes them as very dark coloured and rather diminutive, with long heads, flat faces, short curly hair, and countenances which have some resemblance to that of a monkey. Although it was Pedro Fernandez de Quiros who discovered the northern islands of this group in 1606—considering them a part of the Southern Continent—it remained for Cook to explore the whole Archipelago, which extends in a long chain of volcanic islands some five hundred miles in length, and it was Cook who gave the group its present name.

It was necessary to report our presence in Malekula to the French Resident, and so I started out over the bush trail to his home on the promontory by the sea. It is a gloomy path. There is the silence of the deep jungle, made more intense





by occasional bird twitterings. A brown human form is seen for an instant, but disappears. A tiny village appears, people all vanished for the moment, but the pigs remain rooting about among the refuse. You pass a line of ancient cannibal sacrificial stones, upright slabs set into the earth, and breathe strange accents. It is like being in a tunnel. At last there is a strange rumble, the pounding of the heavy sea, and soon the compound of the mission comes in view, and the Resident's house.

At the French Marist Mission, where I stopped for a moment to talk with the Father, I learned that the French Resident and his wife were down with fever, as was the Father himself to a slight extent. At the Resident's house I was received by a fiery Corsican and an equally fiery wife, side by side in bed with fever. They were new, only two months here, and very likeable. Their small son was not sick, but very pale.

Life here is a continual battle with fever, without which these islands would be among the most tempting in all the Pacific. There are some of the loveliest bays and inside passages that I have seen anywhere. What a shame that the group did not escape the curse, as did close-by New Caledonia and Fiji. As it is, the New Hebrides mark the eastern and southern limit of the malaria belt in the South Pacific. We relied on a prophylactic dose of five grains of quinine daily to bring us through, for although the authorities differ on the subject, this seems the most accepted method. In addition, mosquito nets were installed and could be let down over the bunks.

The two Corsicans were convalescent enough to extend themselves in hospitality, but after partaking of some fine Médoc with them and receiving certain local information which I desired, the sun was so low that it was time to leave. There was the three-mile trail to cover before dark. No sooner had the sun gone down than the full moon took charge, and the rambling bay and our small toy lagoon were bathed in soft golden brilliance, and the cool night air came down from the mountains fresh with strange odours—suggestive of the unknown.

The next day we were awakened by a shrill whistle and the rumble of pounding metal. The *La Perouse*, the small island steamer, come to collect copra, had anchored at the very mouth of our tiny harbour, announcing that she was ready to take cargo. Lancon, our friend from Vila, was aboard, and the little clipper ketch was his, waiting to take him to his plantation down the coast. The launch from the mission, the various planters' launches and cutters, and native canoes, came like bees to honey from all the arms of the big inlet, clustering along the black iron sides of the ship, into whose maw the copra soon vanished. Planters gathered aboard ship to arrange for their shipment and gossip in the bar. One or two Australian vacationists marched around the deck, and a few French passengers sipped drinks at wicker tables.

A hundred yards away was the edge of cannibal land. A mile or so away the bush guarded its dark secrets from these intruders.

On May 14th we left early for Bushman's Bay, a short sail along the coast, and arrived there at noon. The only sign of life on this stretch of coast was Lancon's plantation, where the little ship now lay in a small break in the reef. The gale and high sea were over and it was perfect weather. We coasted along at six knots, a fine trade-wind in our mainsail and spinnaker. It was the first comfortable sailing we had had since within a hundred miles of the New Hebrides, and so we revelled in the relaxation of it. Deep in the big bay we anchored just off the mouth of a small inlet, which we sounded presently in the canoe and found to be two fathoms to the very head. Therefore we moved *Svaap* in and anchored her with bow pointing out to sea (there was barely room to swing her) and a stern line ashore to a mango-tree.

This was the home of the British Resident Agent for this part of the group, Charles Adams, a tall lean Britisher who with his charming wife extended every kindness possible during our short stay.

The coco-nut radio operates to full perfection here, the drums being a good medium of communication, spreading





news mysteriously with usual island rapidity. Mr. Adams had been informed by natives that an American canoe was coming long before we had arrived in Bushman's Bay. Any strange craft in the island groups of the Pacific is at once heralded as American, which speaks highly for the venturesome spirit of Americans.

There is constant tribal warfare inside, and cannibalism. The following description, which I quote from Erskine, held true in full until very recently, and in part to-day:

> 'The people are inveterate cannibals. Enemies slain in war are eaten by them. They will go to other villages and exhume bodies that have been buried two, three, or more days, bring them home, cook and eat them. It is their custom, when they wish to make peace, to kill one or more of their own people, and send the body to those with whom they have been fighting to eat. On the death of chiefs it is a frequent custom to kill one, two, three, or more men to make a feast for the mourners.'

They have found human flesh preferable to pork, and strangely enough the connoisseurs claim the flesh of the native to be superior to that of a white man, which they say has a salty taste. There is in the Bishop Museum in Honolulu a New Hebridean belt hung with 135 incisors, the tally of so many victims of its former owner—a chief, for the commoners were never so fortunate as to have so many opportunities to indulge in their unique appetites. It is worthy of note that the worst cannibals in the Pacific were also the most skilled workers, as is seen from the Maori and Marquesan carvings, Solomon Island canoes, New Hebridean mats and figures. When the Adams' house was being built, the carpenter was shocked one day when a leg was sent out to his workmen as a special gift.

The occasional salt-water native who can converse with the white man uses pidgin English, or *bêche de mer*, or Bechelamarre,

as it is variously called—really a language all its own. Among themselves the confusion of Babel seems to rule, for each tribe, almost, has its own language, and even on much smaller islands than Malekula there may be several mutually unintelligible tongues.

We left Bushman's Bay at dawn one morning after clearing the decks of the black layer of ash from the ever-active volcano Ambrym; and with a favourable tide sailed along the coast past the little islands of Uri and Uripiv, past the two harbours of Port Stanley and Norsup Bay; and safely weathered the tide rips off Point Pinalum to glide between the mainland and beautiful Rano Island; and anchored behind Wala in a tiny white sandy cove swarming with canoes and naked savages, all armed with guns.

This was the beginning of the most intensely interesting period of the whole voyage so far, in which we visited the small but densely populated little islands of Wala, Atchin, and Vao; entered the savage Big Nambass country from the northwest coast of Malekula; and explored the most primitive region of Espiritu Santo.

Wala, lying just off the big island Malekula, is the southernmost of three small islets which present in miniature the most complete picture obtainable of New Hebridean life, for here, concentrated in two or three square miles, one can see in a day or so what would require almost months of dangerous travel to find in the great main islands with hamlets scattered miles apart. There is no white man on Wala.

Finding just one native with a slight knowledge of *bêche de mer*, I persuaded him, by the judicious use of tobacco, to act as guide, and thoroughly explored the little island. We investigated the several villages first, and then examined the five *hamils*, as the sacrifice and dance places are called. They were deep in the bush, a dim weird light filtering through from the great banyans and massed foliage that shut off the sky far overhead. Here were the huge carved figures, drums, stone altars, stone crypts, devil devils, and so on, and the ancient museums of treasures, skulls and pig jaws and tusks. Here I





was shown the abiding-place of powerful spirits, and the stones where the sacrifices are made. These places are taboo to women —who would be killed if they were found there. We saw also the long gloomy men's club houses, up to 100 feet in length, with innumerable collections of bones, the interior of the roof being entirely concealed by the bundles which were suspended from the rafters. No objection was offered at any time to my thorough search throughout the island, but I had to exercise constant care not to break any of the many taboos.

The next island—Atchin—provided quite a surprise, for we found there two white people: an American Seventh-Day Adventist missionary and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Parker. They are 60 and 62 years old and have been in the islands since 1898. They had just returned from long leave to find their substitute dying of blackwater fever, but they saved his life and sent him in a small boat to Santo, where there is medical service. These people are wonderfully sincere, but fanatical in the extreme. Mrs. Parker has rather a bad case of elephantiasis, which would be quickly arrested should she consent to return to a temperate climate, but their zeal for the work will not permit this. I listened to tales of attacks upon Mr. Parker's life, wars among his natives and with them, recent cannibalism, and so on. This little island is very little Christianized, and the larger proportion of its inhabitants remain heathen.

Mr. Joy, the British Commissioner in Vila, had told me of a native madman who was somewhere in this region. While in Atchin I learned that he had been captured and tied up in one of the villages, so Mr. Parker and I at once set out to investigate. Arriving there, we found a scene of great excitement, for just a minute or so before, the crazed man, very powerful in build, had escaped and run amok. He had set fire to six houses, which still flamed and fell in ruins, stabbed his brother, who was chief, shot at two men, and finally smashed a number of canoes and escaped to Malekula in another craft.

The villages and *hamils* of Atchin proved to be very much like those of Wala, but less elaborate. The Parkers were very kind, and set upon the table surprisingly inviting vegetarian

these pigs the men buy their wives. However, a very good tusk pig is considered more valuable than a woman.

These natives have a species of money which consists of finely ground shell fragments strung together. With about four yards of it a man can buy a good tusker, while two yards will buy a wife.

I was amused to find that in Malekula, a larger island, the missionaries do not recognize this buying of wives with pigs. They passed a law that a good wife would cost five pounds sterling. Just where the natives were to get all that money I don't know, nor can I see that this raises the status of woman very much; in fact I would say that it lowers it, for to the savage a good pig has a certain definite value, whereas money is nothing more than certain useless bits of metal.

I chose a man to act as guide, and we went ashore in his canoe. A truce had been called for the day in honour of the occasion, and we went through the various warring villages, and examined the *hamils* and men's common houses, which were very much like those of Wala. A war conference of the old men of the tribe was in progress at one *hamil*, and I very nearly precipitated a new, and what would have been a slightly one-sided, conflict by taking out my camera. No objection had been made to it heretofore, but now the men all leaped to their feet and started forward. I hastily put the thing away. My guide spoke to them. They settled back on their haunches and glared. You walk a narrow path with these people, safe enough until you break one of their numerous taboos. Members of the younger generation may overlook your false step, but not the older ones. You can read your danger in their eyes.

This taboo system which one meets with throughout the Pacific is an amazing thing.

> 'The early voyagers found almost everywhere on the islands they touched a system of which the name has become a common English word. They recognized it as the method of prohibition against which they were constantly striking, but to the present day no





> one has fully treated of the wonderful political and religious engine by which the Polynesian first, the Melanesian in imitation, controlled the wishes and acts of the common people. It was a mighty power in the hands of the ruler, whether priest or chief, and it might be exemplified in the strip of white kapa that, bound around a coco-nut tree, preserved the fruit from all marauders, or the tuft of the same fragile material at the end of a slender wand which placed in the path would turn an army aside into the jungle. It might be temporary, as the order of silence which at stated times fell on the island and not even a dog might bark or a cock crow while the taboo lasted, or it might be the lasting prohibition which denied to woman certain choice articles of food which man was free to eat.
>
> 'The origin of taboo is unknown, but it must have been remote, so elaborate had the system become. It had grown until it became so complicated that the understanding of the common people could not compass it, and even to the chiefs its restrictions grew unbearable.'

My chances of getting into Big Nambass country looked slim. Without a trusted guide it could not be done, I was told. But I had never let these things discourage me—so off we sailed to the most promising section of coast near this district. Something within me said that adventure lay ahead.

Having spent two years among the primitives of the South Pacific, I am continually being asked whether there is still any cannibalism. I searched long and diligently throughout the Society Islands, and found the natives eating nothing more romantic than tinned beef. In Atiu, of the Cook Group, I learned that the last feast had been one hundred years ago, when the entire population of a neighbouring island had gone into the pot. Fiji—that old centre of cannibalism—had more recent feasts to tell of. But nowhere could I actually meet and

shake hands with a living, black, naked cannibal. That was before I came to the New Hebrides.

These islands, about eighty in number, are inhabited by Melanesians. Quiros discovered the group in 1606, thinking he had found the long-sought southern continent of Australia. Somehow they have remained the most primitive of all the South Sea Islands. Less is known about them than any other group. Their inhabitants are countless warring tribes speaking various languages unintelligible in other localities. Many of these tribes are cannibals to-day, but their extent and number are unknown to the Government. Bush tribes are warring among themselves and with the coastal people. They appear to me to be thriving. They have not yet been attacked by the depopulating effect of the white man's disease or by the debilitating effect of having his totally unsuited religion and code of morals thrust upon them.

The work has begun, of course, but it has not as yet progressed very far.

But as to the cannibalism. . . . Is it promiscuous? Do they depend upon human flesh as a major item of their diet? Is it that which gives the men their strong bodies and their complete superiority over the women?

The answer is: No. Then where does the cannibalism come in? It is more often than not in connection with a ritual or ceremonial occasion. And if the body of a powerful enemy falls into the hands of a tribe it is only natural that they partake of some of the parts to absorb the valorous qualities of the fallen hero.

Anchoring for a few days in a bay on the north-west end of Malekula, near the Big Nambass country—probably the most savage region of the New Hebrides—we made friends, mainly through overtures in the form of gifts, with a tribe we found living almost an hour's march inland. One tribesman had picked up a few words of 'pidgin' somewhere, and became my particular shadow and interpreter. I learned that a large war party had gone out from the jungle village a couple of days





before. And when, late that afternoon, great drums started beating in a weird intoxicating tempo, I knew that the warriors were returning.

A quarter of an hour later an ageing, grey-haired, but powerfully built warrior brushed aside some vines that partially hid the beginning of a trail leading to the jungle. After him, in single file, came a silent, serious band. The drums ceased their throbbing and hardly a word was spoken. One man was badly wounded in the side, just above the hip. Several of the people started to minister to him in silence. His face was impassive. Another of the returned party carried two guns instead of one. A feeble old man, covered from head to foot with scars and skin disease, touched the second gun with a look of inquiry. Its bearer handed him the weapon and muttered one low guttural word in reply. The old man nodded and went off to resume his seat by the fire. He said nothing. His son had owned the gun, but now had no further use for it. The expedition had failed. Their enemies had been warned and were in waiting. The party had been lucky to escape with only one killed and one wounded.

The head men squatted about the fire on their haunches —a stoic, glum-looking lot. There was much talk. I sat on the outside watching, my friend explaining now and then in a few words of pidgin. The women were cooking a meal which ended the parley after an hour or so. I ate a few mouthfuls to be polite.

The meal finished, the younger men went a short distance out along all the numerous trails and began cutting trees and brush. They worked hard and soon had the paths all pretty thoroughly blocked.

A raid is usually made as the day is dawning. The warriors creep upon the sleeping village, wait for dawn, and make a rush. They rely upon the surprise of a swift blow and an immediate retreat for success. With the roads blocked this retreat is hindered, and the villagers, knowing their own bush intimately, can reply to the attack with a vengeance. They proposed that I stay as their ally.

'Gun belong white master, he strong fella; maybe he stop shoot along Big Nambass,' my interpreter said.

This did not appeal to me, and I returned with my guide to the sea and *Svaap*. But next day we again entered the bush. As we followed the almost subterranean trail, a gloomy, dank, slippery tunnel through great banyans, mangoes, lianas, and vines, we heard the penetrating throb of the drums, great hollowed logs, carrying a triumphant message.

We found the village greatly excited. As expected, there had been an attack, but the enemy had been repulsed without a single casualty to the defenders.

I finished my bartering for several implements and was ready to go. But it was time for the midday meal, so once again I squatted with them. You take your food from a big common wooden bowl with all the rest. They suck their fingers and reach in for more. The food is burnt, and all in all it is an unappetizing thing, to say the least. But you have to do it, for with these people you must make no wrong move. So I did my bit and, forcing a smile, patted my stomach in the universal sign that it was a grand feast. My interpreter friend grinned too, and rubbed his.

'Him one fella Big Nambass,' he said, pointing first in the general direction of the enemy tribe, and then at the bowl of food before us. 'We fella kill 'im dead finish long time sun he come up.'

I think that even my forced grin vanished at that moment for suddenly I felt as one feels just previous to being very sea-sick.

What did it taste like? you ask. Like veal, as one of our well-known African explorers has stated? Or even like pork, which another has had the temerity to claim?

If you'd like me to be absolutely truthful—which I know you don't, for it is so awfully prosaic—I'd have to answer that the darn meat was so burnt and covered with ashes that it could have been almost anything. So if you must know what it tastes like to be a cannibal you will have to go there yourself.



## CHAPTER XIII

For four days we sailed without sighting land after leaving the primitive New Hebrides and covered 400 miles with continually shifting breezes, squalls and calms. The live-stock—chickens and a pair of very small sucking pigs—which we had acquired by barter from the natives of Santo gradually diminished, and we lived high. After the first day the sky was constantly overcast and we ran on dead reckoning only, wondering what the currents were doing with us. Then, on the morning of Saturday, May 24th, the sun shone forth and gave us a position line that ran bang through the middle of Santa Anna, our destination.

So we altered course and followed the line, and at eleven o'clock that morning we saw the twin islands dim on the horizon ahead and simultaneously the wind drew around, so that instead of running off with spinnaker set we were beating to windward. We made the little outposts of the mighty Solomons that night, however, and anchored in the lagoon of Owa Raha (Santa Anna) just after a gorgeous sunset on Bauro's massive mountains across the burnished-gold strait. We had no chart of the island, so followed the reef looking for a pass. It was a wide and deep one, letting into a spacious lagoon, deep to the very beach, where we found about five fathoms near shore. A native village hid among the palms and canoes lay drawn up on the sand. Two or three came alongside filled with very pleasant, handsome natives, quite Polynesian in appearance instead of black as we had expected.

The natives were quite loaded with ornaments, armlets of thick solid white shell worn above the elbow, nose rings and pins, fantastic combs in their hair, and necklaces of various sorts made with shell, tusks, teeth, tortoise shell, seeds and so on. The great variety of materials used in personal decoration

## CHAPTER XV

Upon the beach stood a tall gaunt white man clad in sleeveless flannel shirt and frayed white ducks cut off at the knee. Around his neck hung a red bandana. A few straggling locks of faded blond hair protruded beneath a battered old felt hat. Above his heavy boots and spiral puttees projected bony sunburnt knees. Around him clustered a group of perhaps two score golden-skinned, black-eyed native girls. They were clad in chic little grass ballet skirts and wide smiles, and those who were near enough clung lovingly to the tall exile.

Never have I seen a more perfect musical-comedy setting than the scene which was presented there underneath the palms of the shining white beach. Only the ukuleles were missing. As I stepped ashore from the canoe this haggard Don Juan waved a possessive hand over his numerous harem.

'Take your pick, but don't be in a hurry,' he said; 'there are plenty more waiting up at the house. I guess half the girls of the island are there by now, because we saw you coming.'

We climbed the path to his house, a rambling frame structure surrounded by innumerable goats. Y—— has been building this house for many years, but it never progresses beyond a certain point, for that would spoil everything, and there would be nothing to plan for. We arrived, accompanied by the super-Ziegfeld chorus, and found that he had been very modest in his estimate. I think that *all* the girls of the island were there. And what about the men, you ask? Oh! yes, there were one or two native men working about the place, making copra perhaps, but none came near the house. Y—— does not like to have men about the place.

We reviewed the assembled harem and took our ease in low deck chairs. Eventually the confusion died away and only a favoured few remained to amuse us with their ridiculous little tricks, their Jew's-harp music and their laughter. They danced



Head-hunters at an initiation ceremony

A New Hebrides chief and his wife

Golden-skinned Kitavans came to beg for tobacco



for us that night beneath silvery palms in a sensuous rhythm of desire.

I pieced together from fragments of conversation a bit of the history of this eccentric recluse. Later, while in New Guinea, I learned more from a friend of his family. It seems that Y—— is the oldest son of a very aristocratic family in Tasmania. He became estranged from them through some youthful folly and never returned, exchanging the wealth and vast estates to which he was heir for life on a tropic isle. First he had gone to New Guinea in the gold rush; but moved on to Kitava, where he found a life utterly free from convention and restraint, and he would live and die on this idyllic island beneath his slender palms.

We stayed several weeks until, under the tuition of Y——, bachelor extraordinary, I learned a good deal of the ways and thoughts of these interesting people. I was especially interested in their elaborate system of mythology and their sorcery, which plays a very important part in their lives. Sorcery among primitive peoples is something which a Caucasian mind cannot fully understand. Formerly I was very sceptical myself, but after two years among the various races of the Pacific I have come to realize that there are things connected with the life of primitives of which we have no comprehension. There is something intangible, something upon which one cannot lay one's finger, something which one cannot even believe—but still it is there. Pouri Pouri it is called here, black magic in Africa. Invisible, intangible, it permeates both the waking and the sleeping hours of these primitives. So absolute is their belief in sorcery that they will die from nothing more than fear of it. Such was the case of Makaibasi and Potubomata.

Makaibasi possessed a beautiful wife. Another coveted her. Makaibasi learned that sorcery was being employed to accomplish his death. One day he found in his path a small split stick holding a fragment of poisoned glass, placed where he must surely walk. He found it before it had slashed his leg, and he examined the instrument carefully that night. I was told that this is a favourite means of ensuring non-failure of a magic spell.

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## CHAPTER XVII

Ever since reaching the easternmost of the South Sea Islands I had been studying the procedure and results of missionary work. Although I am fundamentally tolerant, seeking the good in people and institutions, I had found very little that was praiseworthy in this calling. Working westward to the more primitive groups, the New Hebrides, Solomons, and New Guinea, I found still less to be pleased with, although I did find a splendid example of commercialism in the missions, which have become the most profitable enterprises in this region. They acquire everywhere the most desirable lands and compete unfairly with legitimate traders, and with other creeds.

I had seen competition between the various missions wherever I had gone. I remember particularly one little island in the New Hebrides that had been all Catholic. The père returned from a vacation to find the whole island gone Protestant, reconverted during his absence by a newly arrived missionary. There was a case in the Solomons, where the population of an island was pretty evenly divided between two rival faiths. Both gave out a ration of tobacco to the converts. Suddenly one mission stopped this practice. All their converts went over to the opposition, which still supplied the weed. This is illustrative of the depth to which religion penetrates the primitive mind.

This unscrupulous competition was particularly rife on the north coast of New Guinea. It was a virgin field for mission work. The bewildered 'heathen' would go to the highest bidder. Hijacking of converts grew apace. Just when a mission was running smoothly another would come along offering a more delightful heaven, or perhaps a shinier medal for the convert to wear around his neck as a reward for his conversion. Thus rivalry and ill-feeling became intense, and to avoid further trouble there was an arbitrary division of religious spoils. The Lutherans obtained all the coast as far as Fin-



In the interior of New Guinea

A Sepik River native showing keloids

car with innumerable coloured lights, so that as it comes down the street it resembles an over-decorated Christmas tree on wheels, like some I saw in Java. An insinuating man approaches you cringingly every few minutes with some proposition, and between times he goes off and argues vociferously with a man in a fez and a Kaiser Wilhelm moustache. The prettiest of all is the rare Javanese girl in typical Java sarong, bright scarf over her head, and heavy gold bracelets and anklets. She hides behind her veil from your glance and then you notice that she is smoking. It somehow seems incongruous.

You enter the market. It is late and many of the vendors are asleep on the floor. American newspapers are serving their ultimate destiny, being made into thousands of paper bags for the morrow's sales, or being wrapped around a sarong length of Java batik made in Germany. All through the Pacific, the East Indies, and the far East, one gets one's marketing wrapped in old *San Francisco Examiners*, *Boston Americans*, and so on. In fact I received most of my news of current events (perhaps a year old) in this manner for two years.

By now you have learned the game of bartering in the bazaars. You know, if you have been long enough in the East, that the $2 slippers can ultimately be bought for 25 cents, and that the sarong which cost the vendor $9.50 will be sold to you after a half-hour's debate for $1.75. Your coin is bounced on the stone floor to see if it is genuine, for there is much false money in circulation.

You will have seen by now that I am somewhat fond of Malaya. I was even going to tell about the sorcerer and his pupil, the pupil who was being made invulnerable and who died when the sorcerer speared him to show him how invulnerable he was—but there is no time.

Mr. Parry, Chief of the Harbour Board, offered the use of the oldest dry dock in the East and all service and work in overhauling *Svaap* without cost. All that was necessary, he said, was to indicate to the superintendent what was desired, and it would be done. This is the spirit that one meets with constantly in the East. The day after *Svaap* came out of dry dock we left.



William Albert Robinson

tore through the Strait of Bab-El-Mandeb before a southerly gale and entered the Red Sea. The strait was only a mile wide between the Arabian coast and Perim Island. A bright moon in its first quarter threw the jagged mountains of the cape in black silhouette against the sky and cast their fantastic shadows across the angry waters.

The next day we sought shelter behind Jebel Zukur, an uninhabited barren island of black volcanic stone and sand. For two days we clung there with full scope of chain, while the gale swooped down upon us from the hills, whistling like a blizzard at home. Then, without warning, the wind whipped around to the north and nearly cast us upon those hungry rocks. With only inches to spare we clawed off and reached open water and safety.

I was confronted with two plans of action in tackling the Red Sea. I could stay in the centre, avoiding the dangers of reef and pirates, or else I could go 'reef crawling.' The first was safer, but less interesting. Also, I doubt whether we would ever have reached Suez against the fierce northerly winds and short steep seas that prevailed there in the centre. I chose to go 'reef crawling.'

Along the Arabian coast stretch a series of poorly charted coral reefs. For three or four hundred miles one can pick a devious way among them in protected but dangerous lagoons, seeking anchorage at night. The head-winds which funnel down the centre of the Red Sea lose their force here near shore, and there are no heavy seas to contend with. We might even get land winds at times to help us along, and would see more of the Arabs and their country. Uncharted reefs presented a constant danger, but although my three years of familiarity with them had not bred contempt, I had the experience and knowledge of coral conditions that gave me complete confidence. The only danger I feared on this inside route was that of scuttling.

So on we sailed, past Mocha, famed for its coffee, and along the Yemen coast until we came to the island of Kamaran, where we entered the reefs



Makalla

'I found a blood-letter plying his trade'

## CHAPTER XXVI

*Arrived Port Said after strenuous Red Sea Voyage—Will Meet you Villefranche France noon July Twenty-third.*

NEVER in all the three years of the voyage had I promised to arrive anywhere on a certain day. Fate and the elements control the movements of a small sailing-vessel to a greater extent than its skipper. But now, bursting with confidence at having conquered the Red Sea, I looked forward to the mere Mediterranean with a feeling of superiority. In a weak moment I sent the above cable to my grandmother, who had come over to meet me in France, fulfilling a promise made at the beginning of the trip. As soon as the message was irrevocably on its way I regretted my bravado. The sailor's superstitions which even I, with my methodical, scientific mind, had absorbed from long association with the sea, were aroused. I knew I never should have made that rash promise. Having made it there was nothing for it but to try and carry it out.

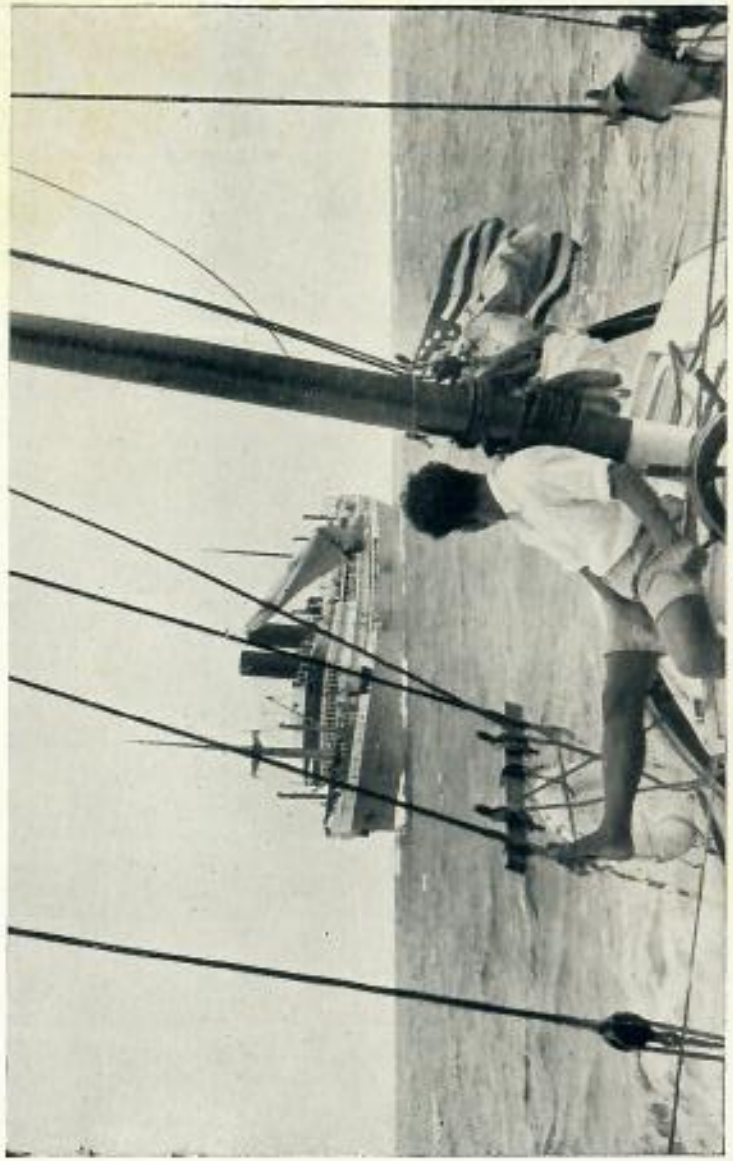
After passing through the Suez Canal, *Svaap* was overhauled at Port Said, largely through the kindness of Monsieur Maurice Lauzanne, of the Suez Canal Company, who placed the great workshops at my disposal. Then, glistening in her new paint and flaunting a new suit of sails, the little ketch put to sea again. Soon hospitable Port Said and the coast of Egypt dropped below the horizon and we set a course for the Greek Islands. I was on my way to fulfil another of my dreams: to invite my soul upon the ancient shrines of Athens, Corinth, and Delphi.

The voyage was in its last stages now. Success was drawing nearer. I began to live in a little circle of suspense. So many undertakings I knew of had failed with the goal almost in sight. Was mine to be of that sort, I wondered, or was that magnificent self-confidence which I had developed to result in successful completion?

Those gods that I had outraged in my arrogant cable lay in



Cabin of the *Svaap*



'By appointment'

## SABANG—BUT ONLY JUST

We had a glorious sail from Penang to Sabang, the little island off the north end of Sumatra, one of the best runs of all. The monsoon blew fresh abaft the beam, and we did the 325 miles in just 48 hours, and a quarter of this time we were under jib alone. As a matter of fact this was the one time my dead reckoning was out—way out, too—and was a warning that it is never safe to relax a minute from careful navigation. At 7 a.m. on the second morning I estimated that we had 65 miles to go to Sabang, and turned in for a nap. I awoke an hour later to find land dimly visible through the mist on our port beam. A hunch, and the general contour of the thing made me suspect it to be Sabang—with us heading in the general direction of Ceylon, a thousand miles away, with almost no supplies aboard. So we quickly headed in, and saw that it really was Sabang. If we had run another half-hour we could never have made it against the sea that was running, and Ceylon would have been the only alternative.

Captured at Lith by the Arabs

Welcomed at El Wej by order of the King of the Hejaz



Captain Wickham, the administrator, gave me what local information he had of the coast, warning me especially to avoid the Loheiya region which lay a day's sail from Kamaran.

There, he said, we would surely have trouble with the Arabs. Beyond, he did not know.

The Pilot Book for this region is less than useless. Time and again it refers to 'A conspicuous bush' as a landmark by which to locate an island or a harbour. When it is necessary to use bushes as outstanding landmarks it speaks poorly for the landscape.

We progressed slowly for several days after leaving Kamaran, groping along through an annoying sand haze from the desert, unable to see reefs or little sandy islets until almost upon them. Nights we anchored in uncharted lagoons, or behind off-shore reefs, avoiding the few settlements we saw because of the fearsome reputation of the inhabitants. The scorching arid breath of the desert alternated with the saturatingly humid sea wind. Both felt as if they came straight from the door of a blast furnace. Even at night the thermometer was 95 or more. Strangely enough, Etera, child of the tropics, felt it much worse than I did and was constantly complaining. It was a parched and sunburnt land of endless forlorn sand dunes.

Then one day the barometer tumbled, and from the south came a driving gale. In company with a large cumbersome Arab dhow we flew down the coast, seeking shelter. I planned to find a little anchorage called Khor Nohud on the chart. Just before we reached it the dhow turned in through a different break in the reef. Confident that they, with local knowledge, had chosen the best shelter from the storm, I cautiously followed them in, to a snug little coral-girt basin.

An hour later we were prisoners, not of the swarthy Arabs that manned the dhow, but of the white-robed Emir of El Birk —the fantastic Bedouin village of conical brush huts and stone houses that hung beneath a few palms on the barren burnt hillside.

I had seen it coming, when a boatload of heavily armed men

Nero's canal



wait. Approaching Kaso Strait, between Scarpanto and Crete, where we would enter the Cyclades—the archipelago of Diana and Apollo—we were met by a screaming north-west gale, dead ahead, and for one solid week battled to get through that narrow body of water.

Finally we gave up and sought the shelter of mountainous Crete, and coasted along its southern shores. Even here we were not secure, for gusts and whirlwinds of great intensity shot off the mountains upon us. One of these blasts did a peculiar thing. It whipped the full length of our heavy tarred trolling line out of the water and flew the spinner in the air like a kite. This will give some idea of the force of the wind.

Passing Hierapetra and other towns of Ancient Roman history, we came to the 'Leon' promontory of the ancients. It resembles a crouched lion greatly. Just beyond was the little rockbound port of Fair Havens, where St. Paul anchored his ships, and then we crossed Messara Bay, where he was wrecked. St. Paul was evidently not a navigator, for he tried to make this crossing at the most imprudent hour of all—the early morning when the squalls are most violent. We chose night, and had better luck.

Dawn was magnificent, the valleys and gorges dispelling their blanket of night in spectacular colours. Before us lay the little town—ancient Phœnice—now Port Lutro, nestling at the foot of abrupt mountains by a tiny cove. It clung there to the side of a cliff quite placidly. Ancient ruins threw jagged shadows from heights here and there, and soon the water took on an intense blue, and reflected the whole scene inverted. We anchored close in, a stone's throw from the beach.

Next day we sailed on past the spectacular 8,000-foot Madara peaks with their sweetly smelling fir and cypress vales, and came to the western end of Crete. My usual persistency asserted itself, and again we tried to get to Athens, a flank attack this time, via the Antikithera Channel. Our old enemy, the nor'-wester, was caught napping. We reeled off a hundred miles before another storm forced us to seek shelter in a cove

*Saturday, Oct. 10th—Noon.*—Continued fine easterly weather. Ran the whole night under mainsail and small spinnaker. Our bosun birds are with us as usual. They must sleep on the sea.

*Sunday, Oct. 11th—Noon.*—We have made 940 miles—one week out. Very light easterly. If it does not improve by to-morrow we turn south again. I thought we had come down far enough, but now it seems not.

*Monday, Oct. 12th—Noon.*—We have finished our first thousand miles, and are pretty well out at sea. Our pair of bosun birds use the yacht as a rendezvous each morning. They circle round and round, talking to us as they fly. We have a pet fish who has been with us all the way from Teneriffe. He is about a foot long, silver and blue.

*Tuesday, Oct. 13th—Noon.*—Have made only 200 miles in the last two days, but I am not worrying, for it is better not to reach the western half of the ocean until the end of the month. We are evidently on the very edge of the trade-wind—very light following breezes every day.

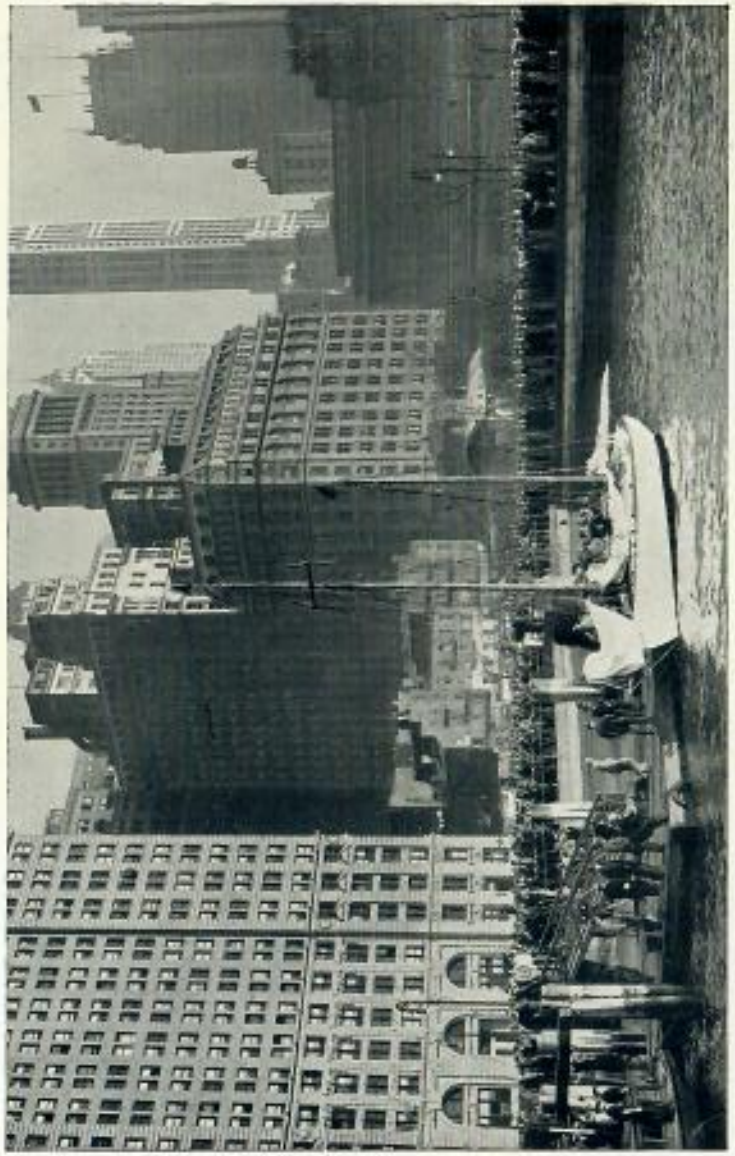
*Wednesday, Oct. 11th—Noon.*—Another 24 hours of almost calm. We have made only 60 miles, and have turned our bow SW. for we are evidently too far north for the 'trades.' It may be a general calm, but there is no use trying to stick to our course if there is a chance of better winds farther south.

The continued presence of our bosun birds, old acquaintances now, and the petrels, along with our tame fish—provides daily amusement. The birds can light on the water sometimes and rest, but I fear our ocean-crossing fish will be worn to a shadow. It surely proves that a fish is so constituted that he either needs no sleep, or can sleep and swim at the same time. He makes little sorties now and then, after small fry, but flies back home like lightning after these little skirmishes.

*Thursday, Oct. 15th—Noon.*—Perfectly calm night and an indescribably beautiful dawn and morning. Never, I think, have we had lovelier sunrises than these last few days. And a calm like this in mid-ocean is something powerful. It is very warm these days—even at night—so I am content. The swim-



Before the NE. Trades



New York



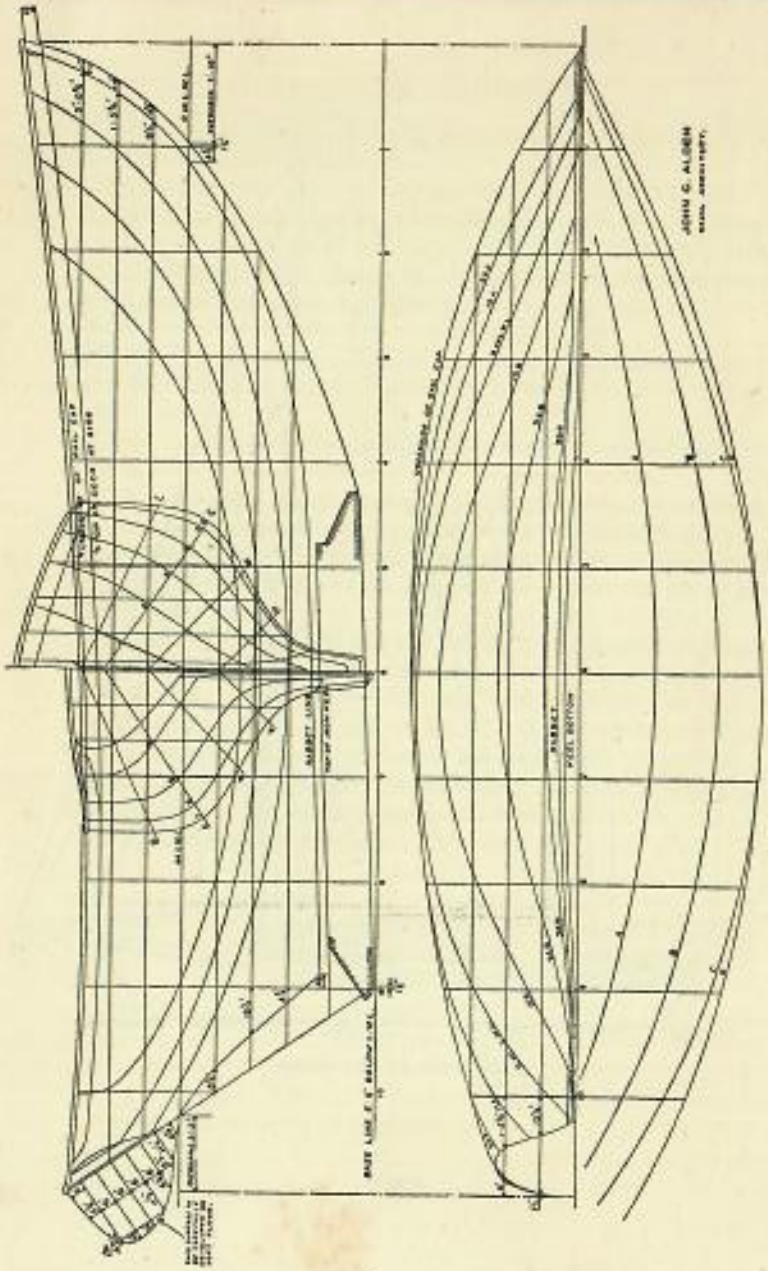
ming is perfect. When I think of the cold, miserable winter that awaits us at home I shudder, and linger a bit longer on the end of my tow-rope when bathing. We sail through whole squadrons of delicate coral-coloured Portuguese men-o'-war now. They are one of the earth's most wonderful creations. Still we are in the doldrums, an astonishing thing, for all available advices state that there should be nothing but easterly trade-winds here. The very seasons change, and prevailing winds cease to function that our voyage be as difficult as possible. Ever since the Indian Ocean we have been beset by unfavourable weather. This is the most amazing of all, that trade-winds should join the general conspiracy. I am running the engine to get farther south. All our precious petrol that I meant to save for the variable regions south of Bermuda will be gone. But we have got to get out of these doldrums. The barometer is normal, but I have a hunch that a hurricane is playing about in the West Indies, upsetting conditions generally over this section of the ocean. A tremendously long swell comes rolling out of the west. Only a powerful disturbance could cause this and a complete disorganization of the 'trades.'

. . . . .

We went down below latitude 20 and still were in the doldrums. Then after several days, light breezes began to blow—but from the *west*—dead ahead. We were firmly convinced that Poseidon was determined to keep us at sea for ever. Westerly winds in the middle of the trade-wind belt are unheard of.

For days we crept slowly to windward, wondering if it would ever end. Even our fish got bored. He went off and left us for two or three days at a time. But he always came back. The pair of tropic birds were with us every day. I think the shore-sighting birds which Buddha speaks of as being used to find the position of ships in ancient times were probably bosun (or tropic) birds.

Not until October 25th did we get a fair wind. Then the trade at last came back, to blow against a mountainous hurricane swell from the north-west—the most enormous I have ever



# APPENDIX

*Deep Water and Shoal* is not a technical book, nor is this a technical appendix. The following are merely brief notes that may interest the general reader.

## THE BOAT

*Svaap* was not specially built to go around the world. She is a fine example of a small modern cruising boat built for offshore use. She was designed by John Alden, Boston, naval architect.

*Svaap* is 32 feet 6 inches long over all, 27 feet 6 inches on the water line, 9 feet 6 inches extreme breadth, and 5 feet 6 inches draught. She is rigged as a jib-headed ketch. Originally designed to carry 660 square feet of sail, her mast heights were reduced a little for added safety on a long voyage, reducing her sail area about 100 square feet.

When I started out she had the conventional lay-out of trunk cabin, and cockpit aft. I found that the cockpit was unnecessary and a great waste of space, so I tore it out when in Tahiti and built an after-cabin in its place. This utilized all the former waste space in the after part of the boat, giving me a great deal of storage room and separate quarters for my crew of one.

Every inch of the interior was available. Forward there was a fo'c'sle about 7 feet long, for sails, anchor chain, and spare gear of all sorts. On the port side was a small toilet. Then came the main cabin with my berth, transom seats, a folding table, and my library of some 200 books. Under all berths and seats were lockers. Just aft of the cabin was the galley with its swinging two-burner oil-stove. Then, under the narrow deck between the two cabins, there was the little 10-h.p. Kermath auxiliary motor. Behind it was the after-cabin with the berth for the crew, a table, and a great deal of storage space for thirty-two feet of boat.

The jib-headed ketch rig proved ideally simple and safe. I believe that the ketch is the finest rig for a small ocean-going boat. At present I am designing what I think is the ideal variation of the ketch rig for short-handed extended cruising: an unconventional trysail ketch with auxiliary square rig on the mainmast.

*Svaap* has a moderately deep hull, easily driven, with three tons of ballast outside on the keel and about a ton inside. She stood more hard driving than any other boat I have ever seen, and made faster passages than I believed possible in so small a ship. We never could quite do 200 miles a day, but managed to make 190 from noon to noon once, and often did better than 175. My policy was always to drive the ship to the limit, thus getting the maximum of sport out of the game and staying longer in favourable wind systems. The following table of a few of our voyages will give an idea of the time required for long passages under sail in a small boat.

| *Passage* | *Nautical miles* | *Duration* |
|---|---|---|
| Canary Is.—Morehead City, N.C. | 4,000 | 38 days |
| Galapagos—Tahiti | 3,700 | 32 days |
| Mangalore, India—Makalla, Arabia | 1,517 | 16 days |
| Penang—Ceylon | 1,282 | 9 days |
| San Miguel Bay, Panama—Galapagos | 1,050 | 16 days |
| Bermuda—Haiti | 1,012 | 10 days |

*Dates of departure from various places*

| | |
|---|---|
| New York | June 10th, 1928 |
| Bermuda | July 19th, 1928 |
| Panama | Sept. 27th, 1928 |
| Galapagos | Dec. 6th, 1928 |
| Tahiti | Aug. 28th, 1929 |
| Suva, Fiji | April 30th, 1930 |
| Sourabaya, Java | Oct. 25th, 1930 |
| Singapore | Dec. 28th, 1930 |
| Ceylon | Feb. 4th, 1931 |
| Mangalore, India | Feb. 20th, 1931 |
| Aden, Arabia | Mar. 27th, 1931 |
| Suez | June 17th, 1931 |
| Nice, France | Sept. 3rd, 1931 |





| | |
|---|---|
| Gibraltar | Sept. 19th, 1931 |
| Canary Islands | Oct. 4th, 1931 |
| Arrived New York City | Nov. 24th, 1931 |

Total distance sailed—32,000 miles.
Duration of voyage three years, five and a-half months.

## STORMS

People find it hard to understand how a small boat can survive the tremendous storms one meets occasionally at sea. Since completing the voyage I have been asked about this continually.

'Why, when I came over last month on the *Mauretania*,' a friend said, 'the seas broke over the flying bridge, lifeboats were crushed, and parts of the rail were torn away! Surely your little boat would never have a chance in anything like that!'

If *Svaap* were being driven through the water at the rate of speed the *Mauretania* is, she *wouldn't* have a chance. She would be crushed like an eggshell, smothered, and buried by the seas in less time than it takes to tell.

The reason that a properly designed, built, and handled small boat can live through a storm at sea is that she is purposely kept from moving through the water at more than a negligible speed. When a huge sea comes along she lifts with it, like a cork or any small floating object. If it is a breaking sea, she will recoil with it, instead of receiving a terrible blow, for she is light and buoyant.

We once rode out a violent storm in the Pacific, near the island of Vate. It was uncomfortable aboard, but we sustained no damage and were at no time in danger, for we had plenty of sea-room. When the storm was over we sailed into the island harbour and found that the heavily-built seawall had been almost destroyed by the seas. The wall was inflexible, like a big ship, and had to take the full, overwhelming force of the waves and simply could not stand it.

## NAVIGATION

The science of celestial navigation (ascertaining one's position at sea from observation of sun or stars) has long been fenced about with mystery to the uninitiated. Those who know are apt to make it appear much more difficult than it really is, jealously guarding their knowledge as one would a trade secret. Actually anyone with a normal amount of mentality and education can by serious application teach himself to navigate in a short time. The usual formidable volumes on the subject can be dispensed with. I taught myself the theory and method of modern navigation in the evenings, during the winter of 1927–28. Some of the material I found in the New York Public Library, and some in books which I bought. I believe I found all that was necessary in Poor's *Nautical Science*, supplemented by a still simpler layman's explanation in Claud Worth's *Yacht Navigation*. Although I had learned the theory and the way to apply it, I never used a sextant or worked an actual sight until I put to sea in *Svaap*. Then it was a case of sink or swim. I am a strong advocate of the principle that the only way to learn to do something is to get out and do it.

At various stages of the voyage I tried different methods of navigation. I found that by far the simplest method, with least possibility of error, is the method the U.S. Hydrographic Office gives in Publication No. 203—*The Sumner Line of Position furnished ready to lay down upon the Chart by Means of Tables of Simultaneous Hour Angle and Azimuth of Celestial Bodies*. The book costs $2.25. The only equipment necessary is a nautical almanac, chronometer (which is merely a time-piece especially constructed so as to keep a uniform rate), a sextant (an instrument with which to measure angles), a course protractor, and the chart.

In a few words the process is to measure with a sextant the angle between the sun (or star) and the horizon, and to calculate your position in relation to that of the heavenly body whose movements are known, having been plotted long ago by astronomers and put into convenient form in the nautical





almanac. Formerly this calculation was complicated, requiring higher mathematics and logarithms. The H.O. No. 203 method eliminates all this, having tabulated all possible combinations of the basic calculation. All that is necessary is simple addition and subtraction, so that navigation is now within mental reach of almost anyone.

## SELF-SAILING

Many men who sail small yachts endeavour to make them sail themselves a goodly part of the time. I am against this practice. *Svaap* can be trimmed to sail herself easily except with winds aft of the beam. Even then she can with difficulty be made to hold some kind of a course. But only upon rare occasions has *Svaap* been left to herself in this way. It is simply asking for trouble, for one thing; and furthermore it does not appeal to me, for the simple reason that, except when close-hauled, one must always sacrifice something in trimming the sails to make the boat hold the course. The mizen must not be trimmed too slack, or the jib too flat. You do not get the greatest efficiency from your sails. And when I am at sea I prefer to make the greatest possible mileage and get somewhere. So *Svaap* was continually sailed twenty-four hours a day, carrying all the sail she could day and night.

We found it most satisfactory to split the night into two six-hour watches. This gave us both a chance to get one good sleep, something one cannot do with four-hour watches. Sometime during the day each of us would get a two-hour nap, so that we really had sufficient sleep except under extraordinary circumstances.

## SUPPLIES AND WATER

People have an idea that it is very difficult to carry sufficient food and water on a trip of this nature. Modern concentrated and tinned foods have so simplified this problem that it is really no problem at all. The main thing is to obtain wherever possible fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats, eating them as long

as they last to the exclusion of tinned and prepared foods. Dairy products are rarely obtainable in the islands, so we always had a large supply of tinned milk, butter, and cheese aboard. We accustomed ourselves to adopting the local produce wherever we were—foods often strange to our palates, but offering that vital, necessary, fresh quality. As a result of this policy I was constantly in perfect health.

We were always very careful about water on account of the diseases it can spread when polluted. When at all doubtful as to the purity of its source we would chlorinate it. *Snaap* has a permanent capacity of forty gallons in a built-in galvanized-iron tank. On the long trips we never consumed more than half a gallon per day per man, using fresh water only for cooking and drinking and brushing the teeth. We washed in sea water with salt-water soap. Thus we had a forty-day supply with a full tank. On long ocean passages we would sometimes start out with a small extra supply in five-gallon petrol tins, but this was always an unnecessary precaution. Even in the heat of the tropics our water never went bad, as it is sometimes reported to do, and with the exception of once or twice among the islands when we preferred not to fill our tank with doubtful water, we never ran short.

## EXPENSE

*Snaap* was built in 1925, in Shelbourne, Nova Scotia. I bought her in the fall of 1927 after a long search for a suitable boat that would fit my pocket-book. Reconditioned and equipped to start the trip in June, 1928, she had cost me about £400 in all. During the voyage, which lasted three and a half years, I spent approximately £600 exclusive of a small salary to Etera, my Tahitian crew. This included everything, food for two, fuel, repairs and replacements for the boat, charts, etc. Thus it is possible for two men to buy a boat and make a protracted voyage around the world on a total of £1000, but it is not easy. I did it because it was all I had.

The financing was the only haphazard part of the voyage. I had no independent income, but relied entirely upon my





writing. The determination to live my dream was so strong that I chanced it, never knowing whether I would have sufficient funds to continue or not. When cheques came through all was well. When they did not we managed somehow—taking passengers occasionally among the islands, carrying a ton or so of freight, or bringing supplies to far-isolated officials for the government.

Often, for months on end, we practically lived off the country—fishing, hunting, and bartering with natives. We always did our own work upon the ship, beaching her regularly for painting, overhauling, and repairs. We lived simply and economically, and were never the worse for it.

All in all, the uncertainty added greatly to the charm of the trip. The spice of having worked for them, made the rewards much greater.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

There is no place here for a discussion of photography, but I would like to warn those who may be considering similar trips against the unusual conditions which caused me almost a year of dismal failures.

To begin with, a peculiar quality of the light in the tropics requires more than the usual exposure. This you will ascertain by experiment.

Your films will be ruined by heat and humidity in a short while if they have not come from the manufacturer in individual soldered tins—not merely tins with adhesive tape holding the covers on, or soldered tins with half a dozen rolls inside, but each roll in a soldered tin.

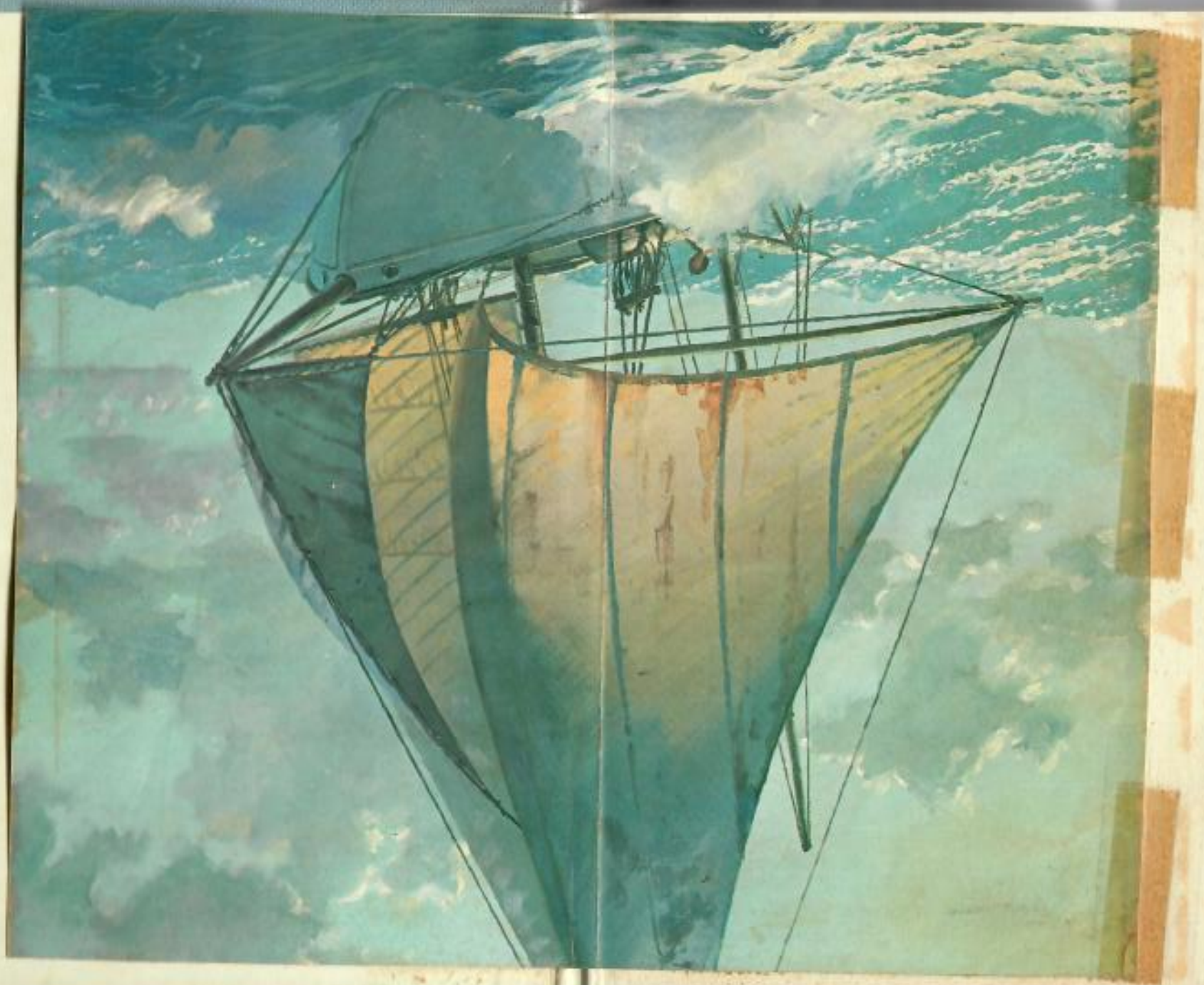
Open a tin only when ready to use the film, and expose it as soon as possible. If it remains in the camera more than a day or so it is in danger of spoiling.

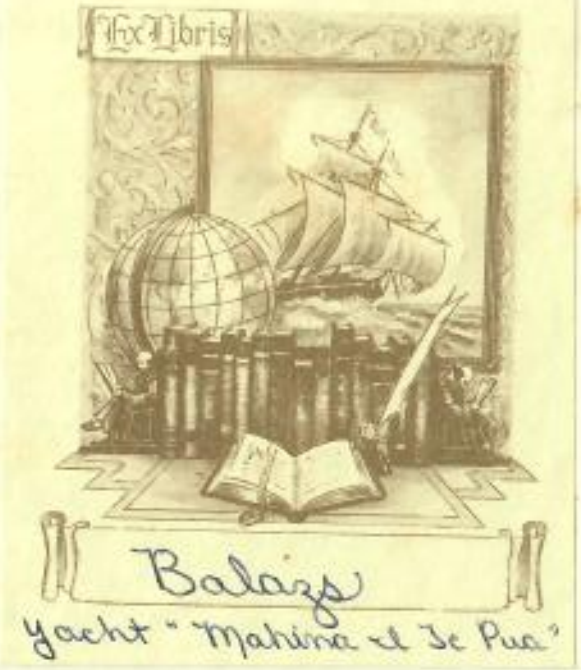
If possible be prepared to develop your films yourself, in which case unless you have ice you will have to use some hardener such as chrome alum during the developing process to prevent the gelatine on the film from running, due to the high temperature. If you cannot develop them or have them

developed within twenty-four hours you will have to repack them along with some hygroscopic material and seal them up, possibly with hot paraffin wax. The hygroscopic material will abstract moisture from the air and will ensure that the film is surrounded by dry air. Dry paper or chemicals are used.

I give no definite instructions because a great deal of research is being done at present and new methods are being discovered. Consult the tropical research department of one of the large film concerns, or the Society of Motion Picture Enginers for the latest developments.

For still photography I tried several cameras and finally found the Leica camera ideally suited to my work. It is a small but beautiful piece of mechanism with the widest range of adaptability of any camera I have owned. The films are five-foot sections of standard motion picture film, compact and relatively inexpensive. They are very easy to develop in broad daylight in a tiny special tank, and will stand enlargement up to almost any size.






William Albert Robinson

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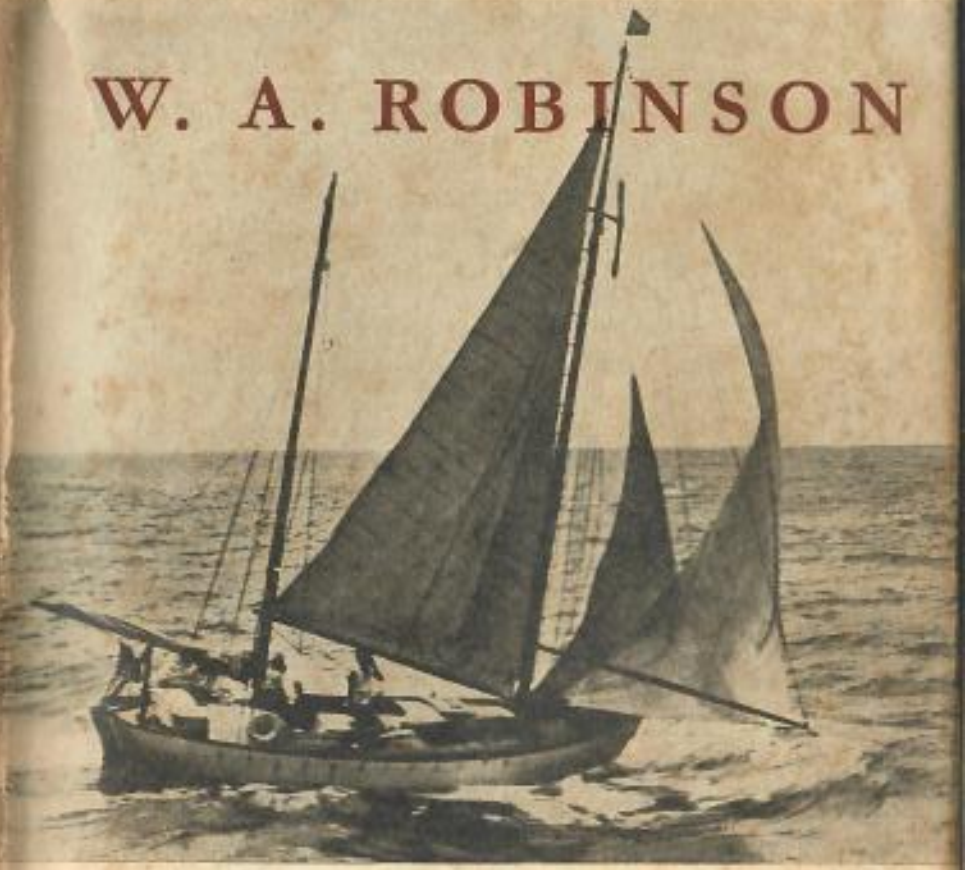

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