

The Cruise of the Teddy

To my wife and shipmate

JULIE

The Cruise of the Teddy

ERLING TAMBS



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Publisher's Note

We would like to thank Barbara White of the yacht *Zoonie* who met with Erling Tambs's descendants, drew this book to our attention, and provided an initial scan and edit of the text; Allan Grey for scanning and enhancing the photographs; and the Tambs family, and Anne Nygren of the book's Norwegian publisher Flyt Forlag, for permission to produce this new English language edition.

PREFACE

In presenting this unpretentious narrative of our cruise to the English-speaking Public, I hasten to avert the wrath of stern critics by stating that I do not pursue any literary aim. If my English expression seems awkward I offer my humble apology.

However, to us of the *Teddy* this cruise, undertaken in an old pilot cutter with an ever-increasing family for a sole crew, has seemed to be so full of adventurous and interesting incidents that I trust my readers will derive some enjoyment from the account thereof, even though the account be given in a language with which I am not thoroughly familiar.

I owe it to the kind collaboration of Miss J. Macleod of Dunedin and Mr. H. T. Gibson of Auckland that the worst errors of language have been eliminated without disturbing the narrative.

From a personal point of view my book has one object, namely, to provide the financial bedding on which to build a new *Teddy*, another floating kingdom in which I may continue roaming about amongst sunny isles and hospitable shores. For your little share in assisting me to achieve this aim, please, Reader, accept my sincere thanks.

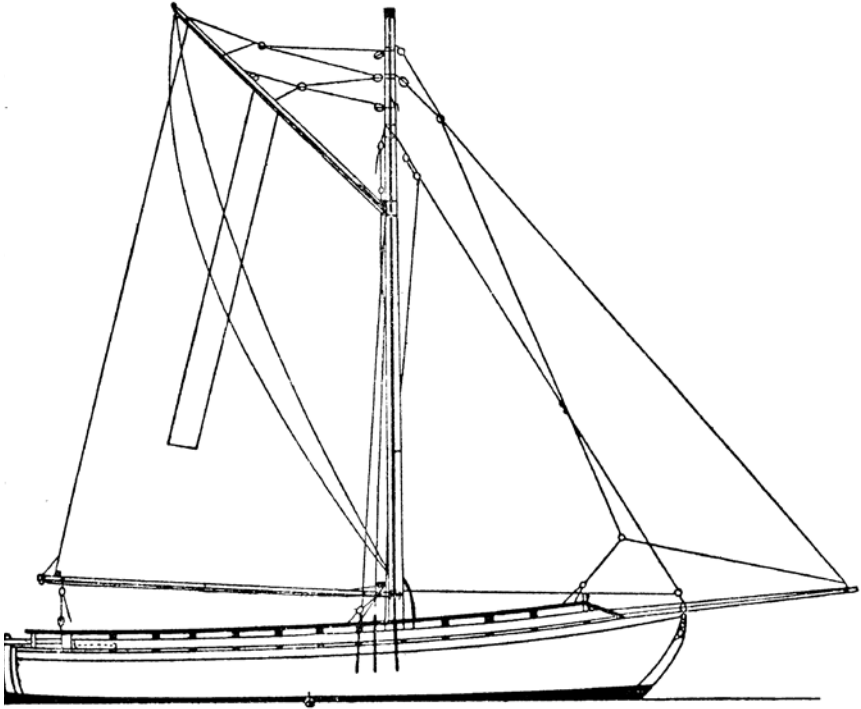
I also owe thanks to numerous friends we have made during the cruise for their assistance and encouragement, and in this respect I feel particularly indebted to the kindly people of New Zealand.

Erling Tambs

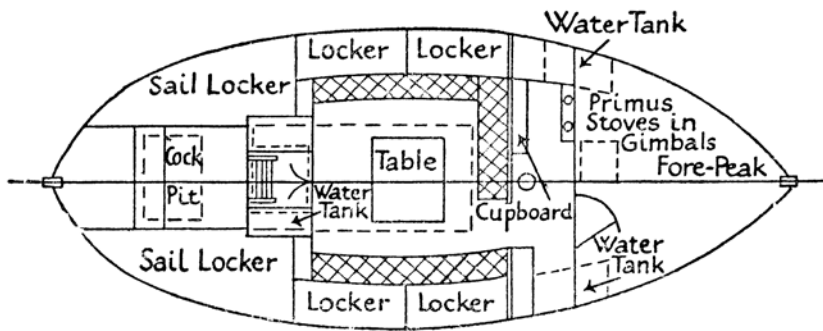
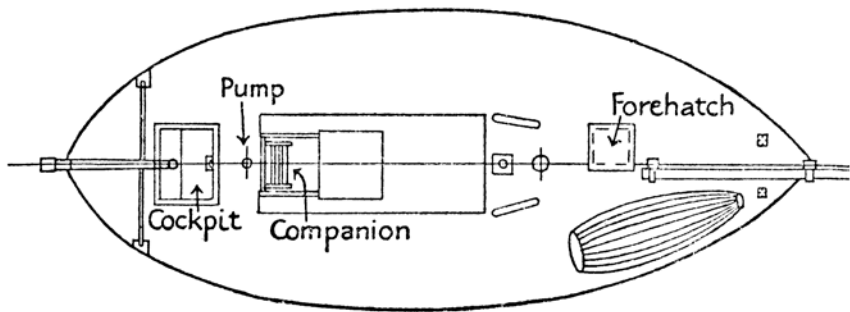
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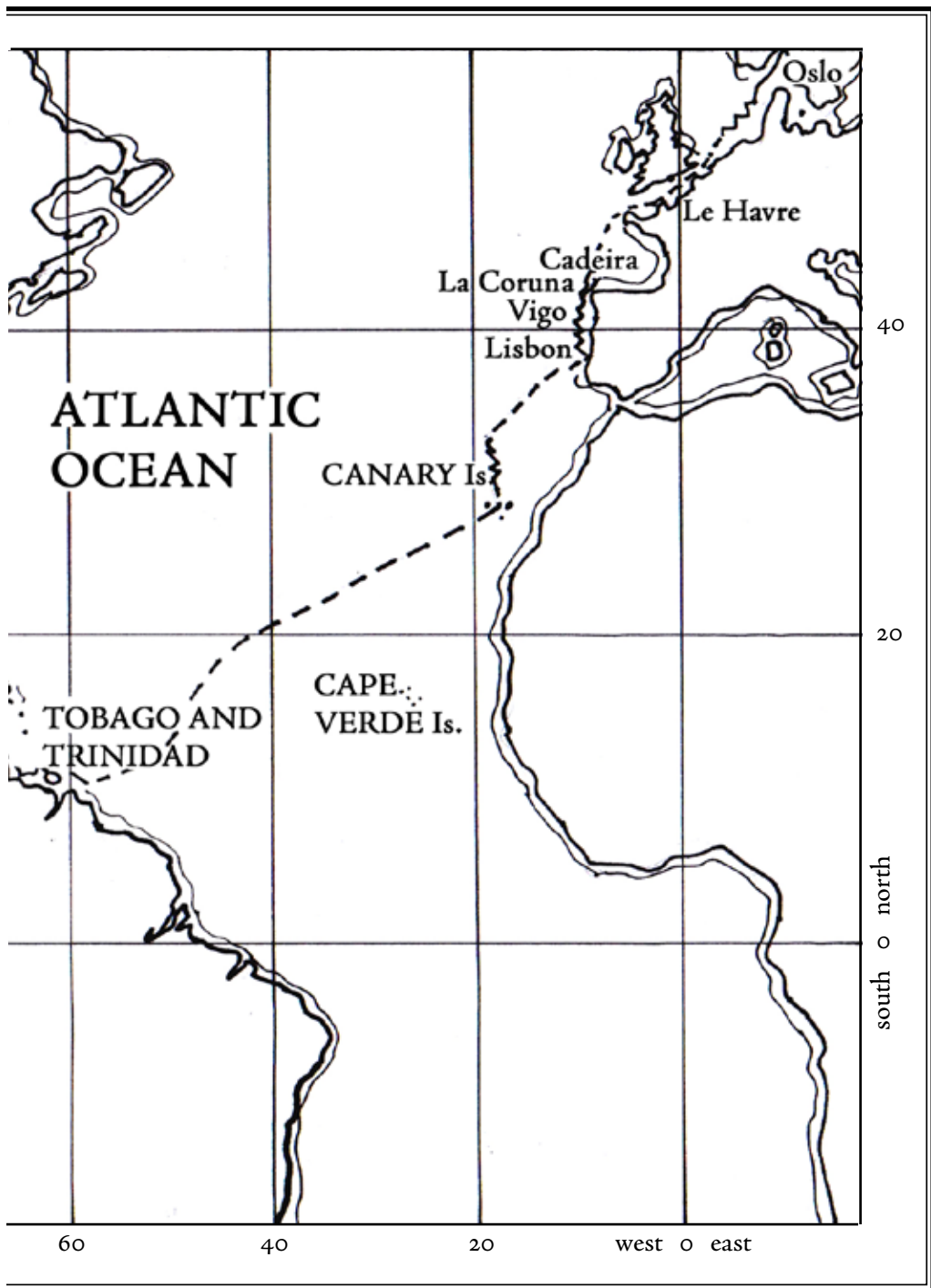


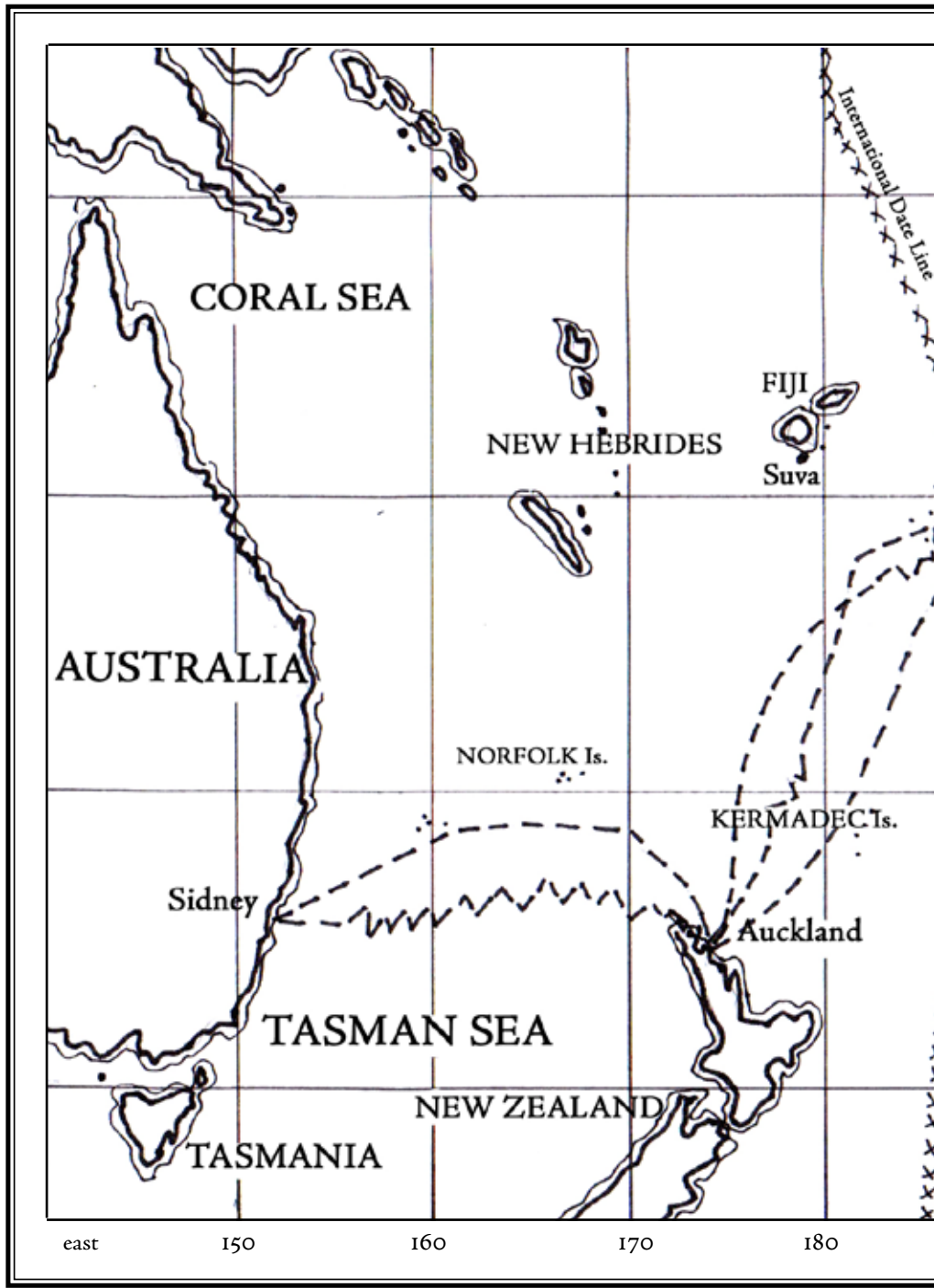
Teddy: Elevation

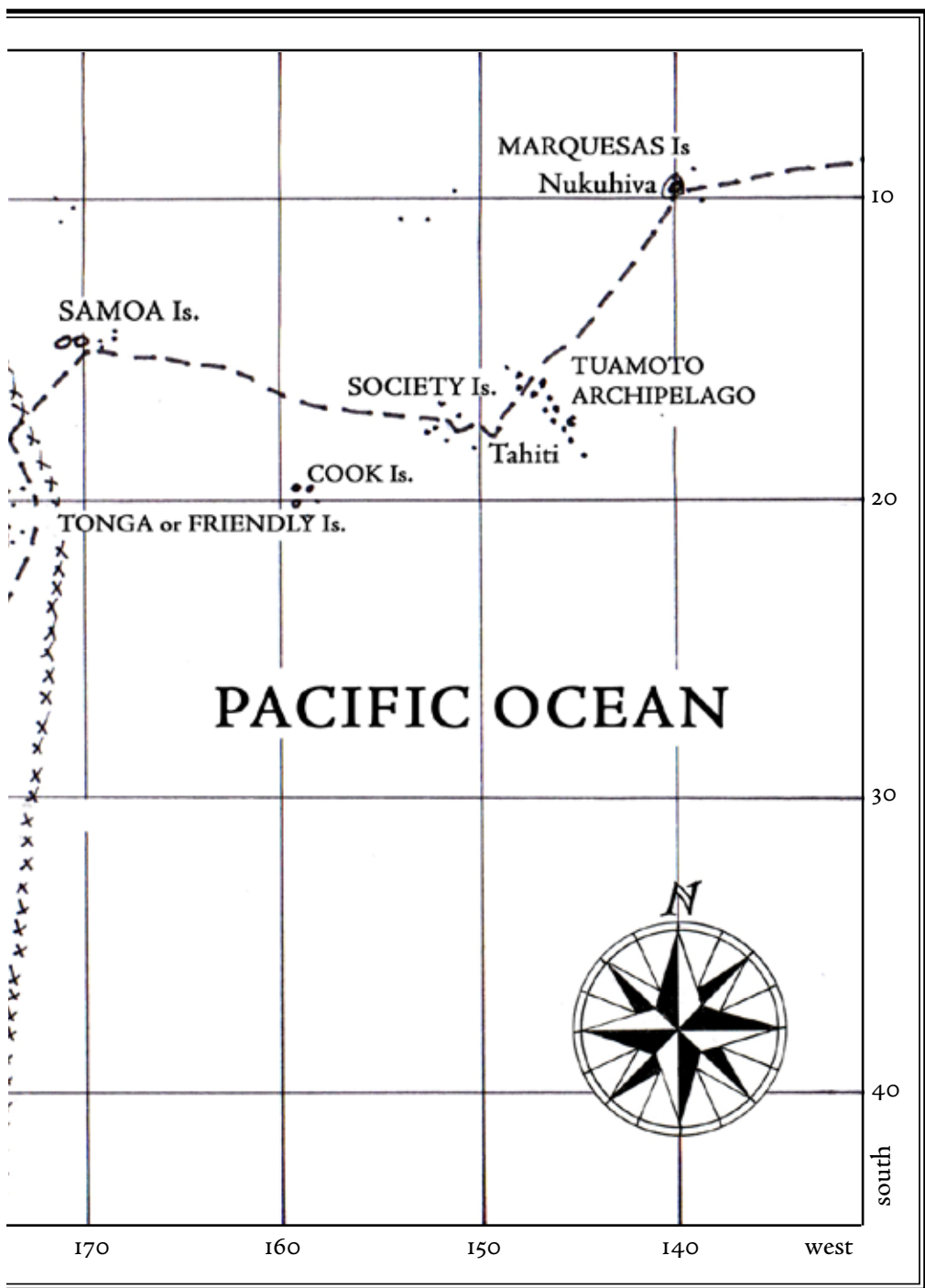


Teddy: Deckplan and accommodation









MARQUESAS Is

Nukuhiva

10

SAMOA Is.

SOCIETY Is.

TUAMOTO
ARCHIPELAGO

COOK Is.

Tahiti

20

TONGA or FRIENDLY Is.

PACIFIC OCEAN

30



40

south

170

160

150

140

west

I



How I Acquired Independence

The northern summer was on its decline when we started on our cruise. It was towards the end of August, 1928.

Our home in the years to come was to be a forty-foot cutter built some thirty eight years ago, in my home town, Larvik, by Colin Archer, the famous constructor of Dr. Frithjof Nansen's polar ship *Fram*. The crew consisted of two only, my wife and myself.

Teddy, my ship, had served her day as a pilot boat on the rock-strewn and dangerous Norwegian coast. She had a past—a glorious past, indeed!

I had known her for many years, since the days when I was a small boy and she was the talk of all small boys; when this boat, a wonderful combination of speed and seaworthiness, was the envy of competing pilots unable to boast of a craft so fast and so strong. Many a time did she put to sea through foam and darkness, when winter storms of demonic violence lashed the sea into fury and forced all other boats to seek refuge in port. Surely she had played her part.

Now she had been put out of commission, although she was as hale and sound as ever. But as modern times had made power boats a necessity, *Teddy* had become out of date. This was my chance. I loved the boat and I scorned engines. With the proceeds of my latest novel I bought her. To refit her and purchase the necessary stores and equipment emptied my purse and exhausted my credit; but what did it matter? I had a home now, which, like a Magic Carpet or like an Enchanted Trunk, could take me whither I wanted to go.

I managed to make a contract with a leading Norwegian paper,

Tidens Tegn, which agreed to buy a stipulated number of contributions from me as I sailed along, and even advanced some £60 on this contract. The money all disappeared in the boat, as paint, as tools, as ropes, as canvas. Oh, I wanted a great many things!

Although I supplied my own labour, filling the various roles of carpenter, sail-mender, painter, decorator, expenses of purchase and preparation mounted to nearly £500. By then my resources had run unmistakably dry, but the old boat was transformed into a trim yacht, and no writ was nailed to her mast.

The inside equipment of *Teddy* was simple; indeed it was very much as it had been when she was a pilot boat. Save for the fresh water tanks, a partition, a few lockers and shelves, and a door leading in to the fore-peak, I had not altered her much. The fittings of our *Teddy* were meant for service, not for appearance.

And yet, what with warm colours, cheerful decorations, gay cushions, velvet curtains, and bright metal, the cabin of the old boat was a very cosy place. It was somewhere about nine feet by nine, with plenty of headroom and two built-in bunks on each side. The narrow openings to the bunks were covered with curtains sliding on shining brass rails, as was also the door leading to the galley.

In the galley two single Primus cookers, swinging in gimbals, formed our unpretentious kitchen facilities, which proved nevertheless entirely satisfactory. On each side of the galley was a 110-gallon water tank with taps within convenient reach of the cook. A third tank of the same capacity was placed under the companion floor aft.

Later experience proved that this 330-gallon water supply could, in emergency, be made to last us as long as five months.

The possibility of occasionally replenishing my water supply with rain has often been suggested to me. That idea had indeed prompted me to provide three separate tanks instead of one. So far, however, this scheme has not proved practicable. At times the boat is rolling too much; at others the wind is too high or the sails are a hindrance. Fortunately the problem has never become urgent.

To proceed with our narrative.

Leaving Oslo we followed the south-east coast, calling at our home town, Larvik, to make some final preparations, and later at Arendal, where our dinghy, a 'pram' specially built for me, was awaiting delivery.

When at anchor in this port, and while I was away on some business ashore, the Chief of Police came on board, apparently with instructions from the Marine Department, to prevent us from setting out on what they considered a foolhardy venture. My reception of these disquieting tidings can surely be imagined. My whole heart and my last penny had been devoted to the realization of my lifelong dream: was all doomed to frustration? For one brief moment I even entertained the desperate project of quietly slipping my cable and escaping under cover of night. Recollection of my wife's pledged word that I would not leave without the consent of the authorities rendered this solution impossible. I had to stay.

On the following day, the Chief paid a second visit, accompanied on this day by an expert in the person of the Arendal harbourmaster. After a few pertinent questions, they announced their decision that they considered the *Teddy* unfit for a long voyage. Ah, didn't they know all about that? Hadn't they read the papers? And how could I explain my big fresh water tanks and the various other fittings, indicative surely of my ambitious intentions. Ambitious but foolhardy, they declared, including with a sweeping gesture the lack of spare sails, the absence of nautical instruments, books, tables, charts, etc., etc. In short, owing to the insufficiency of equipment and the shortcomings of the crew, they must condemn my *Teddy* as utterly unfit to cope with the difficulties of an ocean voyage, and they—The Authorities—were there to see that we did not enter upon an adventure that could not but end in disaster.

What could I say, or do? I was no lawyer, and even if I had been, what chance would I have had in a dispute about enactments and amendments with a Government Department and its officials? I explained that I had been trained in square-rigged ships, that I had had experience in sailing small craft single-handed, and that I thought that my seamanship would surely counterbalance my shortcomings as a navigator. Oh,

fiddlesticks! Was I conceited enough to think that unaided I could successfully handle a heavy boat like the *Teddy*?

Say what I would, my visitors remained adamant. But suddenly I pricked up my ears. An unwary remark on the part of my main adversary gave me my cue. Though only a vague hint, it nevertheless gave me the impression that the Marine Department, in their instructions to the Police, had admitted the absence of a law which applied to my special case. I decided to make a bold move. I rose. 'Pardon me, gentlemen,' I said, 'but I must get busy.'

'Busy? What with?'

'Weighing my anchor,' I replied casually, 'the wind is fair.'

The two officials looked at each other, then smiled. 'I suppose the game is up,' said the guardian of the law after a while, 'Unfortunately you are right in assuming that we have no legal grounds for stopping you. Although'—he continued musingly—'I dare say that if you would give me some little time to study the issue, I should eventually find a paragraph that would be applicable to your... hm... case.'

'I am afraid that I shall not have time to wait for the outcome of your researches, sir,' I retorted, 'and it would be lamentable if their thoroughness should suffer from the disadvantage of undue haste. You may let me know the result of your legal studies when I come back.'

The old gentleman shook his finger at me. Then he offered his hand and said earnestly: 'Well, I hope that you will come back, and—may neither of you ever repent of this foolishness. Meantime, good luck and God speed you.'

'We have done our best to prevent you from going,' said the harbour-master, when he shook hands with me, and then, lowering his voice, he startled me by adding rather wistfully, 'but if I were younger, I should have loved to go with you.'

The Authorities departed. The old chief kept waving us farewell, as the launch tore her way towards the town. I felt rather sorry for him. He had not achieved his aim.

We sailed along the coast as far as Ulvoysund, a pretty little cluster of fishermen's white dwellings among the skerries outside Kristiansand.

In the snug shelter of this little cove we passed our last night on Norwegian territory, and thence we set out for the freedom and romance of the deep blue sea.

When the rocky coastline of our Norwegian homeland disappeared behind haze and horizon, my wife in truth shed a tear or two, but for me happiness was unalloyed. It was a glorious morning and the world lay open before us. I felt the cheerful jingle of about one shilling and sevenpence in my pocket—not a large purse, to be sure, to start with on a cruise around the world, but what did that matter? Our sturdy craft was heeling to the wind, responsive and willing, fleeing from care and winter, heading for the sunny land of my dreams.

What need for money? I was a freelancer, dependant for sustenance on whatever loot I could make with my pen. No misgivings felt I about the future; I would assuredly make plenty.

As a side issue, I would call at some of the treasure islands on the way and carry away the riches that my predecessors had left there and that could hardly be of use to them now. Why, money was entirely superfluous at the start!

Would I have changed places with a king? Not I; for I was a king myself. Mine was the staunchest craft, mine was the pluckiest girl, and mine was the utmost degree of independence that mortal man may attain.

I was responsible to no-one. My boat was safe enough for any waters; she would transport me whither I willed. Time and space were at my disposal, seemingly illimitable. I had that feeling of sovereign freedom which fairytales attribute to kings, as the exclusive privilege of princes. Surely there was excellent reason for my high spirits.

True enough, there were a few flaws in our equipment; we had practically no charts; we had neither instruments, nautical books, nor other navigation facilities—only an old card compass, which ran wild whenever there was a bit of sea going. We had no spare sails, and a few other things were missing which to some people would seem indispensable.

But, among the various possessions at our disposal, there figured a bag of potatoes and a fishing line; thus our fare appeared well secured.

The boat was in good condition; likewise her sails and her rigging. Her white-enamelled sides glistened wet and smooth like polished ivory. The heavy canvas of her sails bulged evenly in the strong and steady breeze. She was a beauty!



Fishwives at Lisbon



Teddy at Santa Cruz



Teddy at Cristobal



Teddy at Balboa