

Deep Water and Shoal.
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DEEP WATER AND SHOAL

DEEP WATER AND SHOAL. By WILLIAM ALBERT ROBINSON. With an Introduction by WESTON MARTYR. Illustrated. (Jonathan Cape. 10s. 6d. net.)

To be able to sail the oceans in one's own yacht implies, to most people, the possession of an abundance, if not a superfluity, both of leisure and of means. Mr. Robinson's account of his remarkable voyage of circumnavigation furnishes a triumphant and practical refutation of any such idea. It demonstrates that anyone with the requisite courage, vision, and freedom from domestic ties to be able to break loose from the insistent demands of the "grubstake" can sail thirty thousand miles across most of the world's oceans, refit when necessary, and visit innumerable continents and islands east and west, on a capital little larger than would suffice to set him up in a fish-and-chip business. Needless to say, Mr. Robinson's cruise did not run to luxuries. Occasionally funds were so low that he had to live "off the country"; and he records that he "saw India and crossed the Indian Ocean on an expenditure of ten dollars."

The *Svaap*, in which Mr. Robinson's voyage was carried out, the name being the Sanskrit word for "dream," was a jib-headed ketch thirty-two feet in length, originally intended for offshore cruising, and built at Shelbourne, the Nova Scotian port which was the birthplace of the great Donald McKay. Mr. Robinson altered her in one or two particulars during his voyage; in particular he added to her rig a yard and squaresail, which he found of inestimable value when running free. She was fitted with a small auxiliary, which helped her owner out of more than one kind of tight place. "I would never go on an extended cruise without one," is his considered conclusion, "whatever may be the sentimental pleasure to be derived from relying on sail alone." His "crew," for the greater part of the time, was a Polynesian from Tahiti, all but amphibious like most of his race, with a habit of painting red nearly every port the *Svaap* touched at. His navigation Mr. Robinson learned in the evenings at the New York Public Library, mainly from Poor's "Nautical Science" and Claud Worth's "Yacht Navigation." "Those who know the science of navigation," he says, "are apt to make it appear much more difficult than it really is." He is, however, unduly modest in this respect, for no amount of book learning will make a navigator without that indefinable quality known as "sea sense." He timed his voyages so as to avoid as far as possible the seasons for hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons in their respective oceans, and there is a certain irony in the fact that perhaps his narrowest escape was on a dangerous lee shore off the mouth of the River Tiber.

The author's pet bugbears are officialdom and missionaries. The administration of the New Zealand mandated islands comes in for some adverse comment; but in this, as in some similar matters, he must have largely taken his opinions from hearsay, since his stay was not long enough to enable him to form them at firsthand. The methods of the various missionary organizations in the Pacific also come in for strong criticism, more especially their commercial enterprises. It should, however, in fairness be borne in mind that such undertakings on the part of a religious body do not necessarily imply a disregard of the spiritual side of its activities, as the work of the Salvation Army sufficiently proves.

Such controversial matters happily come up but seldom. For the most part the book is a succession of travel pictures and incidents described with a zest, a sense of essentials, and a certain quality of engaging naivety which make it all very excellent reading. There are the barren and desolate Galapagos, with their dead volcanoes, their giant turtles, their bright-hued birds, their lizards spitting fury. There are days in the Trades, "rolling along over the sea with the swing of a poem." There is Rarotonga, "like the island of a pirate king"; and Tahaa, whose delicious vanilla scent might still be smelt far out at sea. There is the vast dark island-continent of New Guinea, where a few miles from a Government post "a man is still not a man unless he has taken the head of an enemy." There are ports of the Dutch Indies where the *Svaap* anchored close to Célèbes praus with high poops, "looking for all the world like the ships in which Columbus crossed the Atlantic." There is Bali, "a rather blurred dream . . . of beautiful people living only for the beautiful things in life and for their splendid religion, which has given them arts unequalled." There are dragon lizards as tall as a man in Komodo, and hostile Beduin on the Red Sea Coast. "All this," as Mr. Weston Martyr expresses it, "seems dirt cheap at £1,000."