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# Voyage in Wonderland

The Cruise of the 'Teddy.' By Erling Tambs. (Cape. 7s. 6d.)

IN the late summer of 1928 Mr. Tambs, a Norwegian novelist and journalist, decided to spend the proceeds of his latest novel not on cocktails for the critics but very wisely on a boat; and since the proceeds of novels are so often lilliputian the boat was to be small also, a sort of Woolworth boat, a plaything, just large enough for a crew of two. The craft turned out to be the 'Teddy,' a 38-year-old cutter of fine construction, 40 ft. long, already famous along the dangerous Norwegian coast as a pilot-boat, and about to be discarded in favour of a power-boat. So Mr. Tambs, who had in fact had his eye on her for years, bought her, reconditioned her, married a wife, announced his intention of sailing round the world on a sort of dateless and prolonged honeymoon, made a contract with a Norwegian newspaper to deliver articles about it all, and prepared to set sail minus spare sails, decent instruments, books and charts. "But no!" the authorities cried, "Stop! This is madness. This will end in disaster." However, Mr. Tambs triumphed. Discovering that even the marine department and the police combined could not legally stop him, he set sail with a fair wind and the words of the downcast authorities in his ears: 'If I were younger, I should love to go with you.'

Thus began a most extraordinary voyage round the world. *The Cruise of the 'Teddy'* might be the title of a fairy tale; and the voyage which it recounts might very well turn out to be the invention of a fertile mind, for it is full of the most improbable adventures, the most amazing escapes from death, the most topsy-turvy seamanship. It is written also with a naïve faith and devotion which is both enthralling and touching:

"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 fairy tales attribute to kings, as the exclusive privilege of princes."

And these are the words of a man who on his own admission

had only the most elementary knowledge of navigation and who had set out without either a decent set of charts or a sextant and with nothing to guide him but an old card compass "which ran wild whenever there was a bit of sea going." Later he acquired a sextant, which true to the fairy-tale air of the whole voyage, turned out to be about as much use as a frying-pan. At any rate, sextant or frying pan, they succeeded in reaching the Canary Islands by way of Spain and Portugal, shipping a dog on the way. And then, in the Canaries, as though they hadn't trouble enough, Mrs. Tambs increased the size of the crew by a 13-pound baby. They set sail again, baby and all, after six weeks, crossed the Atlantic, miscalculated their position once or twice, got lost, but succeeded in arriving after 48 days of sailing at Curaçao in the West Indies. From there they went through the Panama Canal, crossed the Pacific, explored those islands of the Southern Pacific whose names seem also to have come out of fairy tales and arrived in New Zealand just in time for the great earthquake of 1931. And in New Zealand, again as though they hadn't trouble enough, Mrs. Tambs dutifully increased the crew of an undermanned boat by a baby girl, while Mr. Tambs himself raced the 'Teddy' against all comers and beat them. But sailing from New Zealand they met the inevitable. The prophecies of the Norwegian marine authorities came true. The 'Teddy,' caught in an unexpected and powerful current, was driven on the rocks, irrevocably, leaving her crew marooned and funereal. "I had seen her dear and pretty lines," says Mr. Tambs, "for the last time." The fairy kingdom had vanished for ever.

But for those who love ships and believe in the fairy tales of reality and who take strange voyages in their minds because they cannot take them in actuality, Mr. Tambs has reconstructed the voyage and the kingdom. *The Cruise of the 'Teddy'* is an excellent book, a worthy record of an amazing voyage, a lively memorial to a lovely ship.

H. E. BATES.