

# The Cruise of the *Alice*

Part I—*We Make a Late  
November Start for a Cruise  
to the Windward Islands*

By HENRY HOWARD

AFTER fifteen days of strenuous work all the last things had been completed and the *Alice* was in commission on November 29th of last year and provisioned for a full month offshore, to allow for accidents, although we expected to require only fifteen days, at the most, for the off-shore part of our voyage.

Mr. Ball, the head of the shipyard at Elizabeth City, N. C., had presented us with a fine fat wild goose for our Thanksgiving dinner and at 12 o'clock we started our *Bolinder*, a Swedish semi-Diesel engine, and with good-byes shouted and waved from the shore we were off for the West Indies — summer skies and tropical seas.

Our boat, the *Alice*, is the centerboard auxiliary ketch which I described in much detail in *YACHTING* in a series of articles, published in book form under the title of *The Yacht Alice*. She was designed by Ralph Munroe and is 44 feet long on the water line, 52 feet over all, 13 feet 7 inches extreme beam, and 4 feet normal draft, but at present drawing about 4 feet 2 inches because of extra supplies of all kinds, including water and provisions for six people for four weeks.

Our crew of six — no two of whom had ever sailed together before — included two paid men. One, the cook and steward, Ramon, was a young Spaniard from near Coruna, blond, faithful and always good-natured. He had been working in my house for a month under the direction of my wife and, starting with little or no knowledge, had developed into a wonderfully good cook. My second paid man, Midgette, was our able seaman, about 54 years old, but lean and all muscle. He is the owner of a small oyster schooner without power which he was accustomed to handle single-handed in Pamlico Sound, dredging for oysters, out of Elizabeth City. At one time he had been a preacher and was an ardent prohibitionist, a strong recommendation for a sailor in a cruise to the West Indies. He wanted to come with us because of the adventure and to "see the world."

The after guard was made up of Vincent Gilpin, a yachtsman of many years' experience and a well-known contributor to American yachting magazines. Charles Townsend, about 27 years old, who has recently gained some fame as one of the crew of the ill-fated *Rofa* — the yacht which was dismasted and lost in July, 1928, in the Spanish Transatlantic race. Then, last but not least, Luis Pelaez, 25 years old, a Spanish yachtsman who came all the way from Madrid for the express purpose of joining in our adventure.

On Thanksgiving morning I received a telephone call from Pelaez in New York saying he was unavoidably detained and would meet us on Sunday at Morehead City.



In the track of the trade winds.

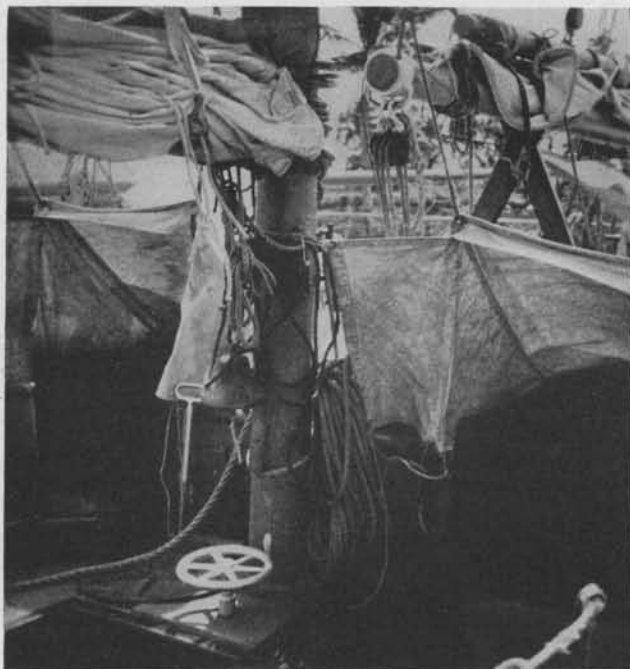
We ran with motor and sail in a light fair wind down the Pasquotank River across Albemarle Sound and some distance up the Alligator River where we anchored at 7:00 P.M. and enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner and a quiet night's sleep.

Friday morning we reached the new canal and went through its 22 miles to the Pungo and Pamlico Rivers, thus eliminating the long tiresome trip down Pamlico Sound, and found a quiet anchorage for the night in Mouse Harbor. The next morning, Saturday, we had a long day under power in a drenching rain, with light wind, and reached the dock at Morehead City just before dark.

During this run, when swaying up the mainsail, the wire luff rope parted which, I feared, meant delay. The jib had just been to New York for a new luff rope but after a careful inspection at a local sail loft we thought the mainsail was all right. Sunday morning we found that there was no sailmaker in Morehead City, but there was an awning maker who had a sewing machine that could sew the canvas, and we arranged for him to be on hand Monday morning with his machine. Saturday night we succeeded in finding a  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch diameter galvanized tiller rope which was very flexible and which we believed would make a satisfactory luff rope.

This accident and the rapid deterioration of the wire luff rope in the jib demonstrates that this construction is unsuitable for use in tropical waters, undoubtedly due to the high salt content of the tropical sea water combined with the continual warm weather, both being conditions which accelerate corrosion. That the corrosion was due to salt water and not to the warm tropical rains is proved by the fact that in both the jib and mainsail the corrosion had occurred to a serious degree only in the lower part of both sails — the part that was frequently drenched by the salt water spray in the rough seas of the trade wind. The upper part of the luff rope in the mainsail was so good we left it in and spliced the new rope into it.

Sunday morning our Spanish friend arrived and our crew was complete. With him came the largest suit case I have ever seen — in reality a small trunk which necessitated alterations in the storeroom shelving before it could be stowed away. He also brought me a photograph



Spray hood over the cabin slide. Engine room on the port hand, main cabin on the starboard.

of King Alfonso on which the King had written my name with date and his autograph. The reason for this pleasing attention was that I had suggested and organized the Spanish Transatlantic race from New York to Santander in the summer of 1928, for cups given by the King and Queen of Spain.

Monday was a hectic day. The weather was perfect, with a very light westerly wind that could not be expected to last at that season, and we were very anxious to get away before dark as the entrance to the harbor is a dangerous undertaking for a stranger at night.

The luff of the mainsail was ripped open, all the grommets removed, the corroded part of the wire rope cut off, and the new one spliced on to the good part of the old rope. The sewing machine was then placed on deck, the sail thoroughly stitched up again and reinforced by a strip of new canvas also strongly stitched. Then came the question of new grommets. Of course, none were to be had in Morehead City, but four years before, in order to be prepared for some such emergency, I had purchased a box containing a gross of the right size, a steel punch for cutting the round holes in the canvas and dies for expanding and flanging them over, so we were able to make quick work of this part of the job.

It was just beginning to get dark as this was finished, when Captain Goodwin, in charge of the Coast Guard, who had been watching our efforts, kindly offered to tow us out to the sea buoy so that we could all work on bending the mainsail. We gladly accepted his help and at 5:15 P.M. we hoisted our sails on the open sea and, with our engine running, started on the long voyage.

There was barely wind enough to fill our sails, but what there was came from the west, a fair breeze. The air was quite cold, the fire in our cabin stove was burning brightly with everything warm, dry and cozy below. A beautiful sunset with indications for a moderate norther next day promised conditions that would be ideal for us. At 8:40 P.M., 19 miles S.W. x S. from Beaufort entrance, the temperature of the water was 65° F. At 9:38 P.M. we passed Cape Lookout Lightship and laid our course S.E. In spite of the coming of night the weather was appreciably warmer, and the temperature

of the water dipped up in a bucket from over side was now 72° F.

At 1:00 A.M. the temperature had risen to 78° F. and we realized that we were fairly in the Gulf Stream which was as smooth as a mill pond, except for a peculiar uneasy motion which made two members of our crew exceedingly seasick. They continued so for a whole week — with much more excuse later on. One of these was our cook, but I take off my hat to him for his grit and determination because not one day on the entire cruise did he fail to cook three hot meals and afternoon tea and serve them properly on the cabin table — a statement hard to believe, but true.

The general plan of this cruise was made after careful study of the pilot charts so as to get fair winds if possible wherever we went. In this we were entirely successful. The trade winds are delightful (if a trifle strenuous) when they are with you or abeam, but it is a man-killing job for a small yacht to try to beat against them. Mr. Fenger in his delightful book, *The Cruise of Diabliesse*, went from Morehead City to St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands via Florida and Nassau. He left Morehead City on January 13th and arrived at St. Thomas on June 2nd. Allowing for the long stops he made in some ports, his actual sailing time was probably about six weeks, including overnight anchorages. His actual time from Nassau to St. Thomas was 21 days, including two short stops to repair damages and to rest after days of strenuous windward work.

Fenger's route via Florida and Nassau offers no very serious difficulty as far as Nassau, and from Nassau to Haiti, via Crooked Island passage, conditions are also good, but here the trouble begins. You have four or five hundred miles nearly dead to windward with a current of one to one and one-half knots against you. Moreover, with a deep-draft boat such as *Diabliesse*, you must do a good deal of outside sailing in northern waters, and in the winter bad weather is common between Morehead City and Jacksonville along the coast. On the other hand, by the offshore route, once across the Gulf Stream it is decidedly uncommon.

During our first two days out from Morehead City we saw "norther" clouds making up behind us over the Gulf Stream but they never reached us. The yawl *Temptress* which left Morehead City with us on the evening of December 3rd and followed the coast had very cold, stormy and disagreeable weather until well down in Florida. In fact, the conditions she encountered were quite similar to those described by Fenger.

My plan, therefore, was to cross the Gulf Stream as



Alice at anchor at Norman's Island, in the Virgin Islands.





Alice is 52 feet long and all boat.

quickly as possible and then take an easterly course so as to reach the longitude of the Virgin Islands before going below Latitude  $30^{\circ}$  N. In this way we could count on having the prevailing westerly winds of the north temperate zone with us. We also wanted to get south of  $35^{\circ}$  N. Latitude as soon as possible because of fewer storms and more moderate weather to be expected. Admiral Evans, the Naval Governor of the Virgin Islands, told me that he was very familiar with the waters over which we had sailed and that our experience was the usual one — that northers rarely crossed the Gulf Stream south of Cape Hatteras and when they did their intensity was much less than between the Gulf Stream and the coast of the United States. I firmly believe that if Fenger had followed our course he would easily have made St. Thomas in 14 days from Morehead City (Beaufort) under sail alone — he would have been nearly across the Gulf Stream before the norther reached him and when it did come it would have been a fair wind and undoubtedly much more moderate than the gale he encountered near the coast.

Our first course from Cape Lookout Lightship was, therefore, S.E. However, when the wind came from the S.S.E. a day or two later we did not hesitate to go east so as to make easting as fast as possible — but after a few hours it went around to S.W., so we promptly went back to our S.E. course.

During the first two days we had light north to northwest winds in spite of the heavy weather the *Temptress* was experiencing along shore. This was followed by a calm or very light winds during which light summer clouds began to rise slowly from the west and south. After about seven hours we had a nice little breeze from the south. The wind then died out and was followed by a light squall from the N.E. at 5:00 A.M. on the third day. This gradually worked to east and then south during the next two days, but was always moderate with nice, warm weather — in fact after crossing the Gulf Stream the temperature of the water only dropped to  $72^{\circ}$  F. The wind, up to December 9th, did not exceed force 5, but on the morning of the 9th it was southwest and reached force 6, with deluges of rain and occasional squalls. The whole of this day was rough and disagreeable but nothing to worry about. Our position was approximately Latitude  $28^{\circ}$ , Longitude  $67^{\circ}-30'$ .

On December 10th, the seventh day out, we had

made at noon 900 miles from Morehead City with wind moderate and about southwest. December 11th we reached Longitude  $64^{\circ}$  W. and then headed south with wind light W.S.W. Nearly all of the time since leaving Beaufort our engine had been running night and day. The pilot chart indicated that we could expect to reach the N.E. trade in Latitude  $25^{\circ}$  N., and on the afternoon of December 11th, in Latitude  $25^{\circ}-25'$  and Longitude  $64^{\circ}-18'$ , we saw signs of a heavy squall bearing down from the N.E. while we were still sailing with a light westerly. Sail was immediately shortened to a double-reefed mainsail, and the mizzen and jib both furled. The squall struck us with considerable force; the wind was about E.N.E. and as night was coming on, we decided to take it comfortably under this very short sail.

The next morning we were well in the trade wind belt. Bright sunshine with the fleecy white clouds and occasional short showers — water so blue that even when you looked over the side it seemed as if there must be blueing in it. The great rollers, 15 to 20 feet from trough to crest, covered with rushing white crests, is an experience never to be forgotten. And, withal, the weather so warm that we dispensed with oilskins and substituted bathing suits. Our blankets had long since been carefully folded and put away under the mattresses.

After breakfast the jib was set and one reef taken out of the mainsail and we simply tore along, continually coasting down the front of the big friendly rollers as they came rushing up behind us.

We were long since well settled down to our sea routine, divided into three watches so that we all got four hours on and eight hours off. This gave plenty of time to sleep and read so that this ocean voyage, instead of being hard work and somewhat exhausting, as I had anticipated, turned out to be most enjoyable and restful. There were no buoys or lights to watch for and no dangers to be avoided as in coastwise navigation, so that when you turned in to sleep you could do so with an easy mind.

In strong winds with quartering or following sea, the *Alice* behaves wonderfully well. Under these conditions the centerboard is always pulled all the way up, mizzen furled, and a vang set up on the end of the main gaff to hold it just where we wanted it. This enables us to



The after guard. (Left to right) Vincent Gilpin, Luis Pelaez, Henry Howard, Charles Townsend.

slack off the main sheet so that the boom makes the same angle as the gaff with the fore-and-aft line of the boat, thereby making it possible to keep the entire area of the mainsail at its most effective angle. The jib is eased well off and pulls like a horse. Under these conditions *Alice* carries a light weather helm with no tendency to broach-to as the cresting waves come up from astern.

If, however, the centerboard were dropped to the point generally used in going to windward there would be another story to tell — a strong tendency to broach-to as the crest of the following wave reached us and an uneasy motion imparted to the whole boat. This motion was so unmistakable that in the early part of the cruise, before the crew was convinced of the importance of keeping the centerboard up when reaching or running in a heavy sea, I was able to determine while lying in my berth, simply by the "feel" of the boat, that the board had been lowered.

The cause of this difference is very simple. The surface water at the top of a cresting wave has an actual forward motion, and in a quartering or beam sea, when this moving water reaches the stern, it carries the stern with it, thus making the tendency to broach-to. If the centerboard is up and the boat has the same draft forward as aft this tendency is almost instantly neutralized by the moving water pushing the bow off to leeward. If, however, the centerboard is down, it is immersed in water that has relatively no forward motion, so that the passing crest of a wave pushes the stern to leeward but cannot do so with the bow, as the centerboard holds it to windward. This means that the proper course can only be maintained by an energetic use of the rudder and it is easy to see that under these conditions, with increasing wind and sea, a point is reached when it is no longer safe to run and the boat must be hove-to. With the *C.B.* up however, I have never encountered conditions which necessitated heaving to in the *Alice*. This also explains the comfort and seaworthiness of a properly designed and handled centerboard boat as compared with a keel, especially when the keel is cut away and the ends are fairly long.

These experiences make clear one reason why long-ended boats are so unsuitable for ocean cruising where heavy weather cannot be avoided. The long overhang aft makes the boat uncomfortable and even dangerous when running with the wind well abaft the beam, while a long overhang forward makes a boat uncomfortable in a head sea, and a vessel of the spoon bow type will pound so badly as to endanger the boat by opening up the seams.

While the *Alice* has all her ballast inside, there is no lack of stability, and her righting moment would be at its maximum if she were knocked down on her beam ends. The reasons for this are that, unlike many centerboard boats, she has plenty of deadrise and a moderate beam, 12' 7" with 44' water line—a ratio of 1 to 3½—less beam than is found on a good many keel boats. Then her raised deck gives a rapidly increasing righting moment when it is most needed. About one-half of the ballast is cemented into the boat and cannot move and the other half is packed in closely under the floor, which is screwed down so securely that the boat could be rolled completely over without danger of the ballast shifting.

I read with great interest the series of articles in *YACHTING* last year by E. G. Martin on "Deep Water Cruising" and immediately adopted his scheme of canvas covers tightly battened over skylights, but provided with flaps which can be laced down in rough weather and opened up in pleasant weather without

disturbing the battens. This arrangement was a perfect solution of the problem of keeping all openings absolutely watertight. The booby hatch over the forecabin was the place where it was most valuable because the moment conditions were smooth enough the men would unlace the flap and open it up for air and ventilation, with the knowledge that it required only a minute's work to make it absolutely watertight again. This arrangement gave me an inspiration for designing covers for the companion slides which allowed them to be kept open for ventilation in heavy winds and rains and accomplished what Weston Martyr, in *The Perfect Ship*, claimed was impossible.

This canvas cover is made as follows: First, a water stop or strip of wood about one and one-half inches high, or higher, if necessary, is fastened to the deck between the guides of the companion slide so that the slide touches it when wide open. Second, a loose fitting canvas cover is fitted over that point of guides where the slide rests when it is wide open. This cover is fastened by battens to the guides and to the cross piece referred to in this first paragraph, thereby making a watertight pocket over the slide in its open position. Third, beginning at the after end of the slide in its position when open, the canvas top slopes up at an angle of about 30° and continues on this slope until it is even with the after end of the companion slide opening. The sides of the sloping cover are, of course, closed, and fastened by battens to the companion slide guides in such a way as not to interfere with closing the slide. In addition, two side flaps or wings are provided which keep the rain out of the opening when the wind is abeam, or these flaps may be used to close the opening if the rain is coming from astern. Reference to the photograph will make this description clear.

In the run from Morehead City to St. Thomas we were eleven and a half days at sea — frequent rains and spray flying most of the time during the last five days — and yet our carpets and cushions were never wet and needed no drying upon our arrival at St. Thomas.

#### Chafing

Everyone who has written about ocean cruising has emphasized the troubles to be expected from chafing. I have heard of one case where the chafing of the mainsail against the shrouds day after day when running before the wind wore the sail almost through. This can be avoided by the application of "Bag-wrinkle," which you will nearly always see on the topping-lifts of fishing schooners and on other parts of the wire rigging that is likely to chafe against any of the sails. "Bag-wrinkle" may be obtained from the United Sail Loft Co., Inc., Gloucester, Mass., and is not difficult to apply. It is wound round and round the wire stay and additionally secured by half-hitches and marline. Enough is generally put on to make a bunch about 12 inches long and bunches provided every six to ten feet, as conditions require, on the wire rope to be protected.

#### Halliards

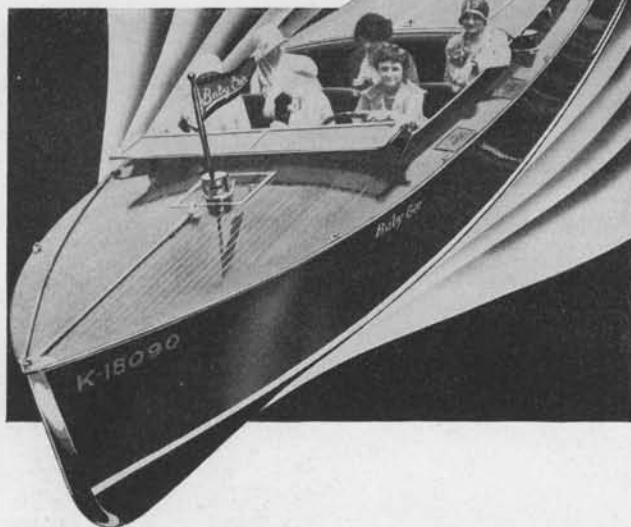
Mr. Martin also spoke of a combination wire and manila rope which is used by the North Sea fishermen and which he has used with great success on the *Jolie Brise*. As I had had trouble with both jib and peak halliards chafing and parting at different times in a heavy sea, this interested me and on investigation I found it was made in the United States under the name of Durable Wire Rope, by the Durable Wire Rope Company, Boston, Mass.

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We suggest that you place your order now for late fall or early winter delivery in southern waters.

Baby Gar "30" - \$2950 - \$3550  
 Baby Gar "40" - 4500 - 5350  
 Baby Gar "50" - 8950 - 10,950  
 Baby Gar "55" - 10,950 - 12,950



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### The Cruise of the Alice

(Continued from page 58)

The usual quality is made of plain steel wire and depends on the marline woven around it for protection against corrosion. I do not consider this safe for use in the tropics. But for a slightly increased cost this firm will make up to order a grade in which only galvanized steel wire is used, and this is what I bought for halliards for my jib, mainsail and mizzen, and also for my mizzen sheet. The disadvantages of this rope as I see them are:

(1) More expensive than manila; (2) does not run through blocks as freely as manila; (3) when new gets tar on hands and marks the sails; (4) more difficult to coil.

The advantages which developed are:

(1) Resists chafing far better than manila. (2) Diameter about the same as manila. It is much better to pull on than wire halliards, and after a few weeks' use there was no further trouble from tar getting on the hands. (3) Can be coiled down readily if care is taken always to make the coil the same diameter. (4) Went through the season, sailing 5500 miles, without parting any of this rope, and it looks good enough for one or two more seasons.

I would not dream of using this for main sheet or jib sheet but did use it successfully on the mizzen sheet. My reason for using it here is that this sail has frequently to be sheeted down very hard and it is rarely necessary to let it run off quickly. Moreover, durable wire rope will not stretch. It was an interesting experiment and I plan to use the same halliards next season.

#### Life-Lines

One of the greatest dangers on a small boat in rough weather is falling overboard. Such an accident at night means almost certain loss and in the day time the chances of rescue when running before a heavy sea are exceedingly small, owing to the difficulty of keeping the man in sight from a point so low as the deck of a small boat. This is certainly a case where an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure and we always rig a double row of lines both forward and aft, the top row being a little more than waist high and the bottom row about knee high. The rope used for this purpose should be strong enough to hold the weight of a man thrown violently against it.

(To be Continued)

### Under the Lee of the Longboat

(Continued from page 84)

schooner fit these conditions? Staysail-rigged schooners do not cruise — too many sails, too much gear, too much work. Even the racing staysail schooner is fast disappearing, for the same reason — witness the demise of the big schooners, and the flagging interest in the Seawanhaka Schooners, the latter a fine class of boats with a rig which is extremely difficult for an experienced racing crew to handle, let alone the average crowd out for fun on a week-end cruise, or longer. Certainly the rig has as much to do to qualify a boat as a cruiser as the hull. There is surely a lot to say in favor of barring the staysail schooner rig in races for cruising yachts. Anyone who thinks so, or to the contrary, is hereby invited to spill his dope on this page.