

Tom Cunliffe



Tom's Book of the Month recommendation September 2022

A Yachtswoman's Cruises by Maude Speed



Passing the Needles ~ one of the delightful sketches by the author

*A Yachtswoman's
Cruises*

by Maude Speed

Published by

*Longmans, Green &
Co. 1911*

While the mighty schooner *Atlantic* and her huge rivals were plunging across the Western Ocean in a death-or-glory race manned by the greatest professionals of 1905, there was another side to Edwardian yachting. Going quietly about their recreation in tiny yachts was a slowly growing breed of Corinthian sailors, men and women who, like most of us today, paid their own bills, washed out their own paintbrushes and sailed their yachts themselves. Many had jobs to go to and, of course, none of their boats had auxiliary power, so cruises were often unambitious by our standards, but they were, in their way, pioneers.

One such couple were the Reverend H F Speed and his wife, Maude. We know nothing of the gentleman beyond the fact that he was ‘of the cloth’ and that his wife describes him as ‘the skipper’. Maude was the daughter of the Vicar of Lymington, the Rev. Maturin, and we can glean much from reading her work and enjoying her fine paintings and sketches. There is a nonchalant charm about her writing that speaks of modesty, self-confidence and the sort of natural good manners one tends to assume from English ladies of her period.

Her 1911 book, *A Yachtswoman’s Cruises*, and in particular the chapter describing her first cross-Channel trip in 1905, is enchanting. It’s also not without humour. The contrast with today’s yachting yarns of doom and destruction makes Maude required reading for all who care about what we’ve lost as well as what we’ve gained in the last hundred years.

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