

Each to His Lights

BY JAMES B. CONNOLLY

THE crew were beginning to wonder if they would ever get the old *Martha* home. Her skipper alone felt no such fear; or at least, if he did, he gave no sign. To the wheel he stood now, easing her when he had to, driving her when he could.

For ten hours he had not left the wheel, not even to go forward for so much as a cup of coffee or for a turn about the deck to stretch his legs; and to himself he was beginning to admit a little weariness. What harm if she'd only go along like half a vessel?—but with her old planks loose and her gear chafed out—

Ever with an eye to windward, he saw it coming. "Watch out!" he warned.

It was a particularly fierce gust of the wild gale that swept down at the same moment that a huge comber came racing for her quarter. He saved her canvas from the force of the squall, and partly, but not altogether, her hull from the weight of the great wave that came tumbling over. If she were not so logy now! But she could not lift to it, and tumbling over her side came the green-gray mountain, rolling her down until once more the crew thought she really wouldn't come up again.

Aft it was the worst. More than a man's height of water was over the wheel-box. A tall man was the skipper; but here he went clean out of sight, and stayed under so long that the men, safe enough in her waist, cried out, "Cripes! but he's gone this time!" Yet, when she rose again, there was the iron man at the wheel, shaking his shoulders and winking his eyes, but clinging, ever clinging to the wheel.

"Better lash yourself, hadn't you, skipper?" called out a young fellow from between the nest of dories.

"I don't know but what I had, Arthur. Watch out for yourself you,—don't come aft," and the bit of seizing being flung

to him, he put it over one shoulder, around his waist, and thence made it fast to the weather-bitt. "Lord! but I 'most let go that time. It must be"—there was a touch of apology in his tone—"it must be I'm getting a bit tired."

"If she was only half a vessel!" he continued; "but thirty year old, and loose! I could 'most hear her old planks knocking together that time under and—"

Again he saw it coming. "Watch out! wa-a-tch out! And you, Arthur, grab something!"

Another tremendous comber struck her fore-rigging and came mounting aft. Away went the last of her dories, torn loose from their lashings and crushed like Japanese screen-wood.

"Don't it beat the devil now? Wouldn't you think the gripes would've held? And I was so hoping to bring home just one dory, anyway. Watch out! wa-a-tch out!" again came his warning.

W-r-r-p! away went her foresail, while a genial-looking fellow, Charlie Lennox, observing its flight, burst out: "Lord in heaven! but look at that! And if we're lost, may the owner of her burn in the lowest pit of the lowest hell for a million of eternities for the rotten gear he put in this blasted old ark!"

The skipper called then: "Come here one of you—you, Arthur, you'll do—and take the wheel for a minute. Here, lash yourself good and fast."

He jumped forward. "Take in what's left of that sail," he called to the men in the waist as he came. "And have a care to the wheel," over his shoulder. "Faster on that downhaul—there'll be another one along soon."

"Here is another one," called out Arthur from the wheel. The men, enveloped in the flapping sail, could neither see its coming nor hear the warning. Only the skipper saw. "Grab a reef-point everybody!"—he had to roar it out to be heard above the slatting canvas—

and himself jumped on to the break, with nothing to hold to. "Meet it if you can!" he roared through his funnelled hands to the helmsman.

"She's too much for me, I think," came back from the wheel.

The skipper made for the wheel. It struck before he could get there, moving at frightful speed. A good vessel might have lifted to it, but not the old *Martha B.* Ten feet above her rail the sea mounted, burying her to her lower reef-points almost. And it was cold to freezing.

In the waist were belated shouts and warnings, oaths and entreaties. "Blast her—hang on!" Almost buried under the flapping sail were they when it boarded. Futile clutching of wet canvas, stiff as sheet-iron almost, and of wet, half-frozen rope-ends. A yellow-clad body or two went floundering in the froth of the lee scupper. Shipmates hauled them back.

"Hang on! hang on! Here's another devil's son!"

The warning was hardly needed, for by then all hands were hanging on, with watchful eyes to windward, waiting to get their precarious bearings.

"She'll make it. Aye, she will—no! the condemned old whelp, she's rotten! Her gear's rotten—whatever possessed the skipper to take her? Now she comes, fellows—now!"

And now it was the worst sea of the gale. Even while she was only quivering in the mere fear of it, they knew she would go down before it. Over she rolled, over, till her lee hatches were far under, till her fore-gaff was under, till the torn, fouled sail was under to the second cringle. One moment she held so, and then gently rolled down, and there lay, heaving to the sea, with her foremast all but flat out on the water.

"Hove down, by God!"

"Where's the skipper?"

"There he is!" It was a quick-eyed man in the weather fore-rigging that descried a sou'wester floating; but it was a quicker-eyed man, Charlie Lennox, who let himself down from the main-rigging where he had been perched calmly enough, and gaffed the floating body by the back of the black oil-jacket.

"Now then, in with him!" and on the

rail they balanced the all but drowned man, spluttering, choking, still very much in doubt as to his whereabouts, and stood him on his feet. "Whoo! whoo!" he coughed, and continued to cough, with each cough bringing up about a quart of salt water—it was like manning the pumps,—until happening to note the steeply inclined deck to the frothing sea, "Damn! but that was close enough!" he exclaimed.

But that was not getting the skipper. "Where is he?"

"And Arthur Snow's gone too."

"Hi-i—" they heard them then, and looking to her lee quarter, they saw the missing men—Arthur floating out in free water, cast away but for one hand just able to grasp the skipper's oil-jacket, the skipper himself hanging on to the main topping-lift.

"Cut loose that fores'l!" he called, and, extremely perilous work though it was, four or five of the crew at once got out knives and started for the foresail that was bellying in the water.

"I think she'll right in a minute or two now," hailed the skipper again, when he saw that they were making headway with the foresail.

"Aye," answered Lennox. "And if she does come, you hang on when she rights."

"Well, I warn't cal'ulating to let go right away," and through the mists of the flying spume they could see him smile.

The *Martha B.* began to right—slowly—slowly.

The crew were observing her: "You gray-whiskered old whelp, hurry—hurry!"

"Leave her alone—she's doing pretty well."

Back she sagged once or twice as if she regretted leaving the billowy ocean bed, but up she continued to come. It was marvellous—was she sure enough coming? Was she now? And yet if she did, there was the skipper. Could he hang on, with his own and Arthur's weight to support?

The skipper hung on. It was a great jolt when the last rush came; but there they were when she was upright again, the two men in the air, perhaps forty feet above the rail of the vessel, the skipper still sustaining the weight of Arthur Snow as well as himself.

"I'll bet he squeezed the tar out of that topping-lift," commented Lennox.

"Climb down, climb down, Arthur," called the skipper, and Arthur with infinite care climbed over the skipper and let himself down, while four men beneath, holding their own feet as well as they could on the pitching deck, stood by to catch him when he dropped.

The skipper came down less carefully. Waiting for the heave of the vessel to aid him, he swung himself into the swell of the mainsail, and letting himself slide, precipitately hit the boom with his heels, and from that bounced on to the house.

"Lucky she didn't come to while I was leaning against the sail—hah, what?" he remarked, at the same time massaging his right forearm with the fingers of his left arm. "Wow! but there was some strain there. And you're the lucky lad, Arthur, that somebody won't have to be writing to your old father and mother to be telling them how you were lost. But see if she didn't start something new that time."

They sounded her out then. She was leaking a thousand strokes.

"Well, it might be worse. But get to work on her, two men to each pump, and we'll get her home yet." There was a cheerful ring to that, and the men, joking and laughing, went to the pumps. But presently came a man out of the cabin to announce that something was wrong below, and before the skipper was well down the companionway one of the men at the pumps called after him: "This ain't any thousand strokes leak, skipper. If it ain't double that—"

"Four men to a pump, then, and drive her!" ordered the skipper, and dropped below, where he found that from under the floor of the run the water was bubbling like a spouting well. "Wow!" said the skipper; "get me an axe, and quick."

He chopped a hole large enough for his body to squeeze through. In a moment his head was back again. "You'd think it was sent up by a fire-engine. She's sprung down by her keelson wide enough to all but put your leg through. Get me a maul and a chisel and some underclothes from my closet—or better, some bedclothes from my bunk, too. And hurry now."

And these being brought, the skipper dropped beneath the cabin floor again, where he stayed for two hours, working feverishly, most of the time under water. Every few minutes he came up to breathe and say a word, but generally his head was out of sight.

He was done at last. "She's all right now," and slapped his hands against his thighs. "D'y' know but 'twas blessed cold under there? How are the pumps now?"

"A lot easier."

"That's good." He rummaged in his bunk, looking for some dry clothes. "Oh, what's the odds?" he said, when he could find none—"they'd soon be wet again."

The man he had saved by way of the topping-lift had been eying him solicitously, admiringly—yes, even adoringly. Now he suggested timidly, "I think I've got a suit of dry underwear in my bunk for'ard, skipper."

"Have you? Well, go and get them."

He brought them. The skipper inspected them. "They are nice and dry, aren't they?"

"Yes, sir, they are."

"Well, put them on."

"But I got them for you, skipper."

"Did you now? And what partic'lar build of animal d'y' think I am, hah? Put them on, I tell you, or I'll—" He did not wait to finish, but ran up on deck. There he reestimated the chances.

"Hard going, old girl, hard going. A crime it was to send you to sea again. I knew you were in bad shape, but I had no idea you were anything like this." He looked her over. "Dories gone, gurry-kids gone, booby-hatches and half her rail gone—a wonder the house isn't gone. You're cert'nly a splendid old collection of driftwood now. A fine old raft from the Saragossa Sea like. Only if once they caught you in the Saragossa Sea, they'd never let you escape. Leaking in half a dozen places below, and—How are the pumps?"

"Coming faster."

"H-m—"

"And the cook's discovered another leak for'ard."

"H-m-m—he's damn ingenious, that cook. If he'd only discover a new way to make hot coffee in bad weather!" He went forward and dropped below. Soon

he returned. "She's a sieve for certain. We might's well've put to sea in a lobster-pot and be done with it." He raised his voice. "Who was it saw a light from the rigging a while ago? You, Peter?"

"Yes, sir. Up to the west'ard—a white light—"

"A white light? Let's see. Four days ago we were abreast of Sable Island No'west Light, and we came—" mentally he figured it out. "Yes," he spoke aloud again, "we ought to be handy to Liverpool now. That 'll be Coffin Island Light. We ought to hear the whistling-buoy soon. Anybody know the way into Liverpool harbor? You, Peter?"

"I do on a clear day, skipper, but a pretty bad harbor to make on a night like this is goin' to be, and in a gale like this, and—"

"And an old raft like this, steering mostly sideways, eh? That's what it is, boy. What I was thinking of was if any of you were sure of the way, I'd stick to the wheel myself. I'm pretty well used to all her twists and jumps now. And if any of you knew the way well enough to smell it out—for smell it out it 'll be,—and would go aloft and pass the word down— But if not, I'll go aloft myself, and one of you take the wheel—you, Charlie. And as you love life, keep her to it as I sing out. If we manage to get in, we'll stay just long enough to pump her out or plug her up in one or two places and all hands to get a good sleep, and then to-morrow or next day we'll out and on our way again."

"It's hard, hard," he muttered to himself, swinging up the swaying fore-rigging. "The years I've been master of a fisherman and never before did I have to put into a harbor on a passage. Often I've had to reef, and more than once come down to a try's'l. But, Lord! 'twas blowing some each time. But to heave to—never before. I used to boast of that. And now it's run into harbor when I ought to be making a passage. But she's no vessel—Lord! she's no vessel; and there's the wives and families of the men—and my own wife. God keep her!"

Aloft he lashed himself to the foremast-head, and as he picked out one landmark after the other from the shadows, he motioned with his arms to Peter at

the mainmast-head. Now and then he looked back and down to see that Peter was getting his directions. He was, and passing them down to another half-way down the rigging, who in his turn was roaring them to Charlie Lennox. The skipper at the fore and the man at the mainmast-head were really inspiring objects as the vessel, leaping and diving, swung them through the night in great arcs; but to them Charlie, clinging grimly to the wheel, was the wonderful sight, though all they could see of him was his head and chest when he lifted from under the heavy seas. "Man! but a wet job Charlie's got!" said they to the masthead.

They got her in at last, and with a lighter to one side and a tugboat to the other, the lighter holding her up while the tugboat pumped her out, the men drew their first unhurried breaths in a week.

The torn sails were furled, supper was over, and they were taking account of things below. "Blessed peace I call it," said Lennox, and from under his mattress drew out pipe and tobacco, which he examined anxiously. "A little damp, but soon's we get a fire—Peter-boy, hurry up on the kindlin's—with a fire 'twill soon be dry. My first smoke in four days. Lord! even damp it smells good."

"If a man had only a stitch of dry clothes!" It was one under the overhang who was discouragedly overhauling his swamped bunk before he should decide to change one suit of wet clothes for another suit just as wet.

The skipper glanced at the clock. "Half past eleven. Too late to do any more to-night, but in the morning we'll give her another calking and pumping, with the tug to help, and put out to sea with her again. And maybe get her home after a while. Half past eleven," musingly he said it, as his eyes again met the clock. "The children, they'll be to bed now; but the wife, she'll be waiting. Every night now she'll be waiting. I know she's been looking for me for a week. Well, I only hope she won't worry too much. And that's tough, too. We have it hard enough sometimes—about as hard as we can stand, anyway; but a woman's job ashore, that's certainly hard. Hah, Charlie?"

"That's what, skipper." Charlie, who had been discovering good signs in his tobacco, smiled now and chirped, and, reaching over, slapped Peter on the shoulder. "Eh, boy, how'd you like to have a woman's job ashore?"

"Ashore? No, nor afloat."

"But I mean, as the skipper was saying, don't you think they have it harder than we do?"

Peter, about to split a stick of hard pine, held the hatchet poised in mid-air. "Harder? A woman's job harder? Watchin' and waitin'? A damn sight harder," and not only split the stick, but drove the axe-edge into the wet floor by way of emphasis.

The young fellow under the overhang came out and held a damp undershirt up to the bulkhead lamp. His action threw into shadow one who was looking for an incomprehensible leak in his jackboot; and he burst out with:

"Man, what a nuisance! To-day it was half the crew to gaff him in over the rail—like to be lost, only for Charlie there. And look at him now, overhaulin' his old rags like he was goin' to a ball. Out of the light there!"

The man from the overhang paid no particular attention, but— "Well, what if it is wet? It's a change, anyway," he announced, and contentedly trotted back.

"There's your fire," announced Peter.

"Good work, Peter. And this blessed pipe— I got it going at last," chirruped Charlie Lennox.

"And dry clothes yet. Lord! but that's all right too," chanted the man of the overhang, hopping into the light again and hanging a varied assortment over the stove.

And others hung up theirs, until soon the stove could not be seen for mitts and socks and the various pieces of underwear. Forward the men went then and had a cup of coffee and a bite with it. And, returning one after the other, they sat around on lockers or lay in their bunks, and had a smoke or an argument or a bit of a growl, while the fire roared and the wet clothes threw a grateful steam over all. 'Twas a beautiful hour altogether down there in the cabin, with a night's rest before them, and throughout the old *Martha B.* reigned a great content.

Land

BY HELEN HUNTINGTON

BACK to my mother, the Earth,
 From that stranger, the Sea;
 Deep in the hills to have birth,
 In the fields to be free;—
 Free from the fretting of wave,
 From the hissing of foam,
 And fears of a fathomless grave;
 I am home, I am home.

Peace of the islands once more,
 With the scent of the sod,
 Dwellings of men on the shore,
 And the forests of God;
 Safe from the dread of the deep,
 From its drunken embrace,
 Earth, in your arms I may sleep!
 I am back in my place.