Come All Ye Jolly Ice-Hunters

Come All Ye Jolly Ice-Hunters

Come all ye jolly ice-hunters and listen to my song
I hope I won't offend you' I don't mean to keep you long.
'Tis concerning an ice-hunter, from Tilton Harbour sailed away.
On the fourteenth day of March, eighteen hundred and thirty-three.

William Burke was our commander, the "Daniel O'Connell" was our good ship's nam
e;
We had twenty-eight as smart a lads as ever crossed the main;
As off with flying colors to the northward we did steer,-
So mark what followed after, to you I will declare.

'Twas on the fourth of April, right well I mind the day,
About four o'clock in the evening our towline gave away;
The wind came from the northwest and bitterly did blow;
Our captain cries, "Stand by, my b'ys' out of the ice we'll have to go!

"Stand by your topsail halliards; stand by to let them go;
Be quick, I say, make no delay, your topsail clear also!"
He watched his opportunity and soon he had her free,
Saying, "God bless the brave 'O'Connell'! See how she stems the sea!"

At six 0'clock next morning we were a dreadful wreck;
Our topmast went overboard about three feet from the deck;
In this perilous condition for two long days we lay;
So we left her to God's mercy, and to the raging sea.

We could not keep a light below, the seas ran mountains high,
And expecting every minute that we were doomed to die.
At eight o'clock next morning all hands were called on deck,
Some to rig up jury masts, and more to clear the wreck.

Now a few days after, assistance was at hand,
As six o'clock in the morning, the watch espied the land;
So now, thanks unto Providence, we're safe on shore at last;
We'll drink to one another and drown sorrow in the glass.

This song comes from Greenleaf's "Ballads and Sea songs of Newfoundland". It is really a storm-at-sea/ship-wreck song, but the ship in question was a sealer as indicated by the term "ice-hunter" in the title and first stanza. Greenleaf obta ined the song from Gerald S Doyle. Doyle was quoted, "This song was written in 1 833. It is about the oldest song of a sealing nature now in existence, and has '

brought down the house' in the for'castle of many a sealer in the days of the Sq
uare Riggers."

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