

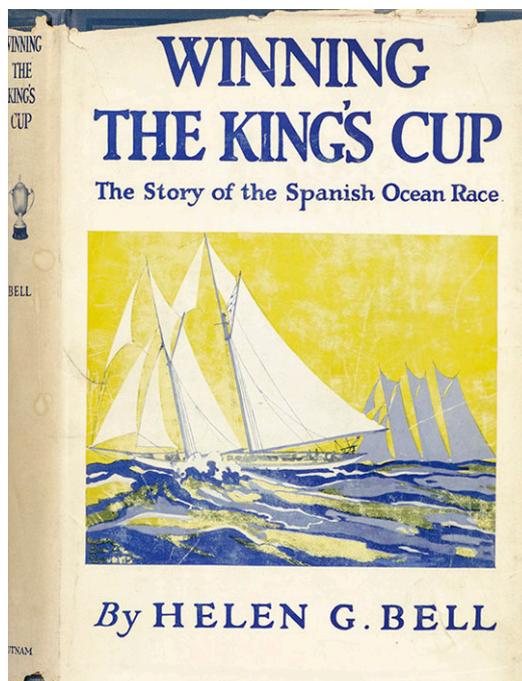
Tom Cunliffe



Tom's

Book of the month recommendation
April 2022

Winning the King's Cup
by
Helen G Bell



Winning the King's Cup
An account of the Elena's
Race to Spain
Published by G P Putnam's
Sons
The Knickerbocker Press
1928

This month I've raided Roz's bookshelves for the recommendation. She's been collecting books written by women about the sea for many years. At last count these numbered around three hundred. This one dates from 1928 and comes not only with numerous black and white images, but also fold-out charts.



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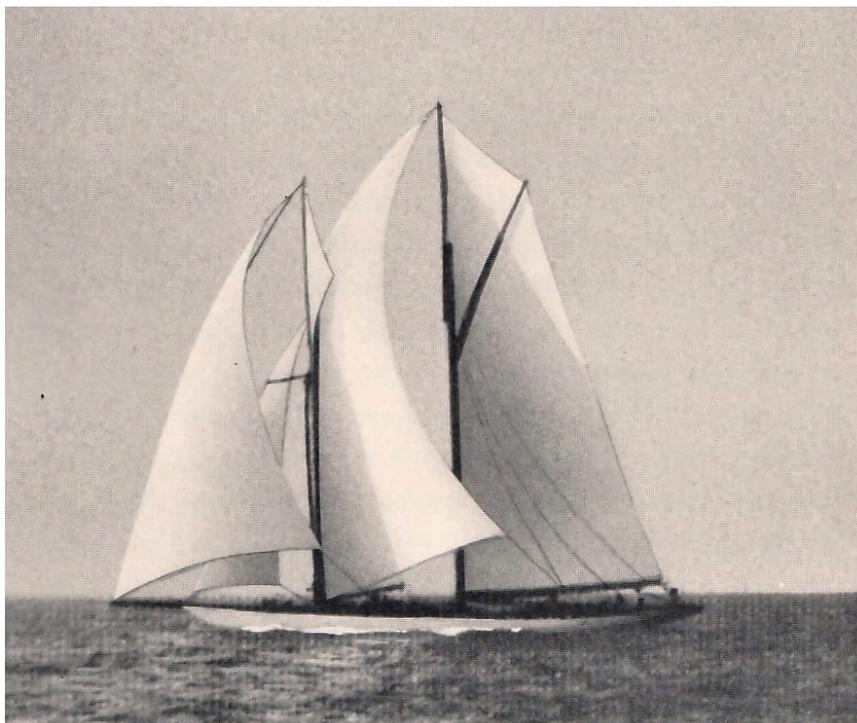
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Tom Cunliffe - Yachts and Yarns

In July that year Helen G Bell, on board her father's schooner *Elena* with her father, her mother, her friend Miss Marian Walters and fifty or so paid hands, raced across the *Atlantic*. I can do no better than let her describe how she came to be there.

I think that, in a way, I had begun preparing for this moment in my cradle. One of my earliest remembrances dates back to the time when we lived in a house by the sea and my father used to go out with me on the stone terrace and draw plans with a piece of chalk of the yacht we would have some time. When we bought the Elena two years ago, I felt that we had taken a great step toward our goal, and when we learned last winter that the King of Spain had offered a cup to the winning yacht with a waterline of more than fifty-five feet in a race from America to Spain, I had a curious feeling that fate had found us out at last.



The Elena. Taken from the Atlantic at noon of the second day

The golden age of schooner racing fell between 1900 and the outbreak of WWII. In 1905 Captain Charlie Barr battled the three-master *Atlantic* from New York to the Lizard in a remarkable 12 days and 4 hours, a record that stood for 75 years.

Captain Barr then became sailing master of the giant Herreshoff schooner *Elena*, pitted against the grand old *Atlantic* and two others for 'The King's Cup'. The race incorporated a separate challenge for the 'Queen's Cup', fought out by four smaller schooners. The eventual winner of this was the Starling Burgess-designed *Nina*, a vessel so 'state-of-the-art' that Uffa Fox described her as a cutter with a tiny foremast breaking up the foretriangle. There was nothing radical about *Elena* and her own sparring partners, however. Full-blown gaff schooners in the American fishing and pilot-boat tradition that spawned *Bluenose* and the *America* herself, they were among the most powerful yachts ever seen.

Right from the beginning however, *Elena* has problems, including desertion by the crew, having to house the topmast to get under the Brooklyn Bridge, and a drunken steward.

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