

"I heard," confessed Dan. "Wouldn't that be a shame now! That old skinflint! But sure now it won't be so long before you'll be gittin' murred."

"Me!" interrupted Chrissie, with bitter scorn. "Nobody ain't for murrin' me none."

"Why, I was thinking," stammered Dan, "I was thinking that them boys that's got money—"

"Aw, now," said the girl. "Don't you know them none? They won't be for murrin' nobody what ain't got nothing, like

me. I must for to go and work into a store over to Uniontown, so I must."

"Chrissie," burst out Dan, his voice only a choked whisper, "I haven't got money, Chrissie, but I like you sure. Would you be thinking of murrin' me, mebber?"

A coke-train went roaring by just at that moment, and words were useless. But Dan felt the hand in his yield slowly to his clasp, and, turning her face to his, he took an answer sweeter than words from her willing lips.



THE BEST-LAID PLANS.

By MARGARET ERSKINE.

LOVE was sent this way, Hate that,
Once upon a day,
In hopes that they would never meet
Traveling by the way,
For old Father Life had found
When they met together,
Fiercely raged the tempest then,
Stormy was the weather.

So Love went this way, Hate that,
Alack! By a stile
Love, he wandered from the path,
Dallied for a while,
Plucking this flower, plucking that,
Then he hurried on,
Quite forgetting *which* the way
That he should have gone.

Hate he never wandered once,
Hastened on his way,
So it happened that, alas!
Once upon a day,
In the middle of a heart
Love and Hate they met—
Neither one would turn aside—
There they're standing yet.

LOCHINVAR OF THE LAKES.

By J. OLIVIER CURWOOD,

Author of "Miss Evgelaine," "The 'Bannockburn' Widow," "The Law of the Lakes," etc.



It was the night of the big wedding in the little town of Dunkirk. Since early morning the guests had been coming, and the great house of Henry Ellery Dixon, fat, florid, hated, but the owner of ships, millions, and a beautiful daughter, was filled with them. Among them were men who represented tremendous corporate wealth and power—half a dozen presidents of banks, a dozen steel and ore men, twice as many kings of lake traffic lines, and influential chiefs of the powerful Lake Carriers' Association. With them were their wives and daughters. But with the exception of the minister and the servants, there was not a man or a woman among them who belonged to the common lake breed of the town of Dunkirk.

This was not a disappointment to the people of Dunkirk. The best of them had expected the slight, and they would have resented anything else. They had anticipated the affair, which was to be the biggest and grandest thing that had ever happened in their town so far as the oldest of them could remember; they had watched with interest the coming of the guests, and most of them were willing, if not a little anxious, to be somewhere near Dunkirk Hill when the great and last moment arrived.

But they would all be relieved when

everything was over. The event that was to transpire in the big house that night they had come to look upon as something like an execution. Certainly the sorrow and sympathy in their hearts would not have been greater had such been the case.

Miss Isobel was to be married—that is, she was to pass through the formality of a marriage, a sort of legal contract, stipulating that from a certain hour she was to consider herself owned and governed by a man for whom she possessed no love, and who knew it, yet who was immensely satisfied with his bargain.

From several view-points, everything was satisfactory. The bridegroom-to-be was securing youth and beauty, Henry Ellery Dixon was gaining the cooperation of new power and wealth, and his daughter, at the slight expense of a broken heart, was obeying his wishes to the letter.

The people of Dunkirk knew why this was so. Not many years had passed since the millionaire's wife had traveled a very short road to ruin, and, though Isobel did not proclaim it from the house-tops, the simplest minds in the place realized that her blind obedience was an atonement for another's sin.

For these reasons there had come a real grief into the hearts of the people of Dunkirk. In her sweet, unaffected way Isobel had worked herself into their lives, and her sacrifice now was the sacrifice of one of their own children. She had

grown up among them with her laughter, her smiles, and her help when help was needed, and from among them she had chosen the man whom she loved.

During the last hours preceding the wedding the women of Dunkirk talked of these things. They recalled days that had passed, years before, when barefooted, sunburned Jackie McCarr, called "Tarry" for short, played along the beach with pretty, golden-haired Isobel Dixon, despite the protests and threats of the high-toned mother and father on the hill. But the business of the master of the house was in Buffalo, where he remained for weeks at a time, and for this reason the chumship of a rich man's little girl and a fisherman's son continued unbroken.

The men and women of Dunkirk had watched the courtship that followed, and it was the most beautiful thing that had ever come within their lives.

When Jack broke away from the fishing fleet to seek his fortune among the big steel ships of the lake highways, they confidently predicted success for him; when, one day, he returned third mate of a six-thousand-ton ore-carrier, they rejoiced in a public celebration in his honor, and that same day Isobel had met him at their tryst on the other side of Dunkirk Hill, and with glistening eyes told him how proud she was of the man who was doing all these things for her.

"When I become a captain," said the young mate, "your father will not hate me so."

Isobel had believed him, and, strong in the knowledge of the girl's great love, the plucky young sailor had won his way until he came into the command of a ship. Almost that same day there happened on the hill the scandal which changed all things for Isobel Dixon and the man who had become Captain Jack McCarr.

So, to the people of Dunkirk, the wedding this night was the last chapter in a living romance which they had all followed from the first page to the last. In that last chapter Isobel had been bar-

gained for and sold. They had seen the young captain's final efforts to move the heart of stone which lay in the breast of the millionaire ship-owner; they had watched him in his almost frantic attempts to win the girl from her determination; some of them had even taken a part in the drama which was being enacted before their eyes; but, in spite of it all, the tragic end came, and with it the disappearance of Captain Jack McCarr.

Men and women wondered where he was this night as they looked at the great house aglow with light on the top of Dunkirk Hill. For weeks the fisher-folk had not heard of him. Some believed that he had changed his command, others inclined to the rumor that he had given up the lakes and was now on the ocean; and all of them prayed, deep down in their souls, that vengeance in full measure would fall upon the head of Henry Elbery Dixon and the man who was to become his son-in-law.

With Isobel Dixon the struggle against her old love had been a long and bitter one, but, in a way, she had triumphed, and deep in her heart she had smothered her passion as a stoker in one of her father's ships might have banked his fires. Now and then the old feeling would burst through, and, while at these times her determination would never weaken, she would think of her absent lover for hours at a time.

During the few days preceding the wedding these spells had come to her oftener than before, and she was thankful that the young captain was not near. But in these same moods she often wished that she knew where he was. She pictured him in a hundred different places, and the old spirit that she was trying to kill groped out for him, searching—always searching. Yet she knew that if her lover appeared to her in person she would send him away again.

But still, this something that went off from her, this telepathic message which she unconsciously directed, was working

in a way of which she little dreamed. At the end of the thousand-mile highway which leads to Duluth it found Captain Jack McCarr, and, seizing upon him, like a messenger of life and death, it called for him to return.

Three days before the wedding Captain McCarr's ship left Duluth, and burned half a hundred tons of coal more than she should before she drew up in the night off the town of Dunkirk.

With the exception of the men of his own crew, no one saw Captain McCarr when he came ashore in one of the ship's small boats. He landed on the beach an eighth of a mile below the Dixon home, where a row of old willows concealed the stretch of white sand over which he and Isobel had walked, a thousand times together. Through these trees he could see the glow of light on the top of Dunkirk Hill.

Swiftly he ran along the beach until he came to a rough seat built between two trees, from which he could see the windows of Isobel's room. More times than he could remember he had come to this place, and had signaled his presence to his sweetheart on the hill. His heart seemed ready to burst as he stood there now, and he gave a choking sob or two, as a man sometimes will when alone with a great grief. He knew the hour of Isobel's marriage; and he pictured her already prepared for the ceremony. Perhaps the guests were even now assembling in the great Dixon hall. He pulled out his watch, and saw by the light of a match that there was still three-quarters of an hour before the ceremony.

Indistinctly the sound of music floated down to him, and as he heard it he staggered out beyond the shadow of the willows, softly crying Isobel's name. He approached nearer and nearer to the big house on the hill. The music came to him, plainly now, and he could hear the laughter of men who were smoking on the veranda overlooking the lake.

He crept still nearer, crouching now

like a criminal, until he could look almost straight up into Isobel's window. In that room was all that he had ever lived for. Isobel had been his guiding star; she had fired him with ambition; she had made of him what he was. With-out Isobel!—The captain's fingers came in contact with cold metal in his pocket. Why not kill himself here? They—the people in there, Isobel, all of them, would hear the shot and would rush out and find him, and Isobel, he knew, would take him in her arms, would kiss him—God, but it was a terrible temptation! He drew the pistol from his pocket.

"Isobel! Isobel!" he murmured softly.

From the veranda a man's laughter came down to him. It jarred upon him, and into his head there came the thought that he would like to kill somebody up there as well as himself. At the last moment why should he not steal in and destroy the man who was taking his life from him? If he could only kill them all—all but Isobel, and carry her away with him!

At the thought his heart seemed to leap up within him, like a living thing just released from chains. He sprang to his feet and turned his face in the direction of the ship, every nerve to him throbbing with excitement. He lighted another match and looked at his watch. There still remained twenty-four minutes. Twenty-four—twenty-four. He repeated the words tremblingly, and then, turning down the hill, he ran like a deer, past the seat among the willows and up the hard water-run of the beach to the small boat.

"Quick, to the ship!" he panted. He caught the boat by the prow and shoved it out into the water, the sailors running in ankle-deep to catch him. In the glow of the boat-lantern they saw his face, and rowed with the fervor of men who knew that minutes were precious.

Half a dozen times in the short trip to the ship Captain McCarr looked at his watch, but only once did he speak to the

men, and then it was to urge them to make greater speed. To him the time seemed slipping away with fearful rapidity. There were only nineteen minutes left—now eighteen—seventeen—fifteen!

In his excitement he stood up in the boat and shouted the names of his first and second officers, and by the time he shot alongside the steel freighter a score of astonished men were lining the rail.

"Schreck!" he called. "Schreck, your hands!"

He stretched himself up, and the giant first officer leaned over and hoisted him as easily as an ordinary man would have lifted a child. The men knew why they had raced day and night from the northernmost sea, and most of them stared fixedly through the darkness shoreward, confident that their captain had done something for which he was being pursued.

Their thoughts were interrupted by Captain McTarr.

"Men, I want a dozen volunteers to go back with me and stop that marriage!" he cried, pointing toward Dunkirk Hill. "We've got ten minutes. Who'll go?"

Schreck was a Dunkirk man, and understood. In an instant he was running to the midship davits, calling for others to follow, and half a dozen men crowded with him about the falls.

"A dozen!" shouted a voice disdainfully. "A dozen! We'll all go!"

A sailor launched himself down into the small boat beside the freighter, and others came after him as fast as they could slip safely over the rail. With a splash the midship boat dropped into the water, and an instant later the third boat went down on the other side of the ship.

Captain McTarr's boat got away first, and started for the shore with four men pulling at the oars. The second fell close in its wake, and a little later the third shot around the freighter's bow, loaded to the gunwales with excited, eager men. Three-quarters of the crew were following their captain.

For the first time in weeks the heart of Isobel's lover thrilled with hope. He had not stopped to consider the consequences of what he was doing; he only knew that he would stop the wedding, that he would see Isobel and save her from the man who had taken her from him—if he reached the Dixon home in time. He gave no thought as to what would be the outcome for the men of his crew. They were backing him, and that was the most satisfying thing that could happen just then.

As the first boat scraped in the sand of the beach, Captain McTarr sprang out and started on a slow run toward Dunkirk Hill, with six or eight men close at his heels. Schreck soon overtook him, accompanied by others, and by the time they were half-way up the slope the men of the third boat were following swiftly in their trail.

As the little crowd of men, led by Schreck and the captain, came nearer the Dixon home, they could see that the verandas were deserted, and the thought that they were too late sent Captain McTarr ahead like a shot, with Schreck close at his side.

Together the two men rushed up the front steps of the house, a dozen rough, excited fellows at their heels. The big doors were open, and through them now came the soft strains of the wedding-march.

With a shout to those behind him, McTarr launched himself into the Dixon hall, and led a half of his breathless men into the great room where a hundred guests were assembled.

"Isobel!" he cried. "Isobel! Isobel!"

He stared about him, almost blinded by the glare of light, his men crowding close behind him like wolves ready to spring forward at his bidding. The orchestra had stopped playing. Startled men and women sat for the moment as if transfixed by the sudden apparition of the wild-looking crowd, and before they had recovered from their astonishment

Schreck came in, accompanied by half a dozen men from the third boat.

"She's out there!" he said quietly, pulling the captain toward the hall. "Hurry with your business. I'll keep these people back!"

McTarr went out, and at the head of the stairs he saw Isobel looking down upon the scene below, her face white and startled. Beside her was the man whom he had almost determined to kill. He bounded up toward them, three steps at a time, and when the girl saw him she uttered a piercing cry which rose above the voices of men and the frightened screams of women in the drawing-room.

The man beside her advanced a little to intercept the other, and when they came together they went down in a close, smothering grip at the girl's feet.

When McTarr disentangled himself a few moments later, and the other remained in a limp heap, Schreck, who saw it from below, was afraid that the worst had happened.

The captain hurried to the girl, his face white and bleeding.

"Isobel, you must come with me!" he said deliberately. He seemed faint and swayed a little as he stretched out an arm for her. "You must come!"

The girl made no resistance as he led her down the stair. As if in a stupor, she followed him to the open door. Behind them were now the sounds of struggling men and of rough voices filled with exhortation and command. But Isobel was unconscious of it all. She only realized that her lover was with her, and that he had come at a moment when it seemed as though her whole life was slipping away from her. For a moment she forgot. She clung to his hand, she ran when he told her to, she murmured his name again and again, incoherently, joyfully.

Still running, they came down to the edge of the lake. Then, when she saw the lights of the ship, the old sense of duty returned to her. It came like a shock, weakening her, and she dragged

back, falling upon her knees in the sand.

"Jack! Jack! What have you made me do!" she sobbed. "I can't go with you—I can't—I can't!"

Captain McTarr knelt beside her and caught her in his arms, pressing his face close to her own and whispering his passionate entreaties. He knew there was no time to lose. Back on the hill the sailors were slowly retreating, and he could hear their loud voices, suddenly punctuated by a number of pistol-shots. At the sound of the reports, Isobel gave a cry of alarm and struggled to free herself from her lover's embrace.

"Go, Jack! Please go!" she pleaded. "I can't go with you. I won't go!"

She thrust out her hands forcefully, but the captain only held her closer. Suddenly he lifted her from the ground and ran toward the boats with her in his arms. His determination robbed the girl of her strength, and when at last he placed her gently in one of the boats, he thought by her silence that she had surrendered to him. But when he brought one of the lanterns and looked down into her eyes, his nerves tingling with the joy of possessing her, he saw something in them which startled him. He might have thought that the girl despised him. He struggled to speak; but his tongue seemed tied. The next moment two of the sailors hurried up, bringing the little Dunkirk preacher between them.

"Jack 'n' me, we've collared the preacher, cap'n," said one of the men. "We figgered as 'ow he might be wanted, so we brung him!"

"Let him go!" commanded the captain. He held out his hand to the little man, who gripped it with an enthusiasm which the other did not guess the meaning of. "They didn't know," he explained. "I didn't intend that they should do it, Mr. Wilfred."

One of the sailors expressed his astonishment audibly. Isobel sprang to her feet with a little cry, and involuntarily the

minister's friendly grip relaxed. Deep accusation shone in the girl's eyes as she flashed them at Captain McTarr.

"Then you meant to take me out there—alone?" she said, in a low voice. But the little minister heard her, and in an instant he had jumped into the boat and was at her side.

"No, he didn't mean that!" he cried, looking at the captain sharply. "Sit down, Miss Isobel. I'm going with you!"

Captain McTarr's gratitude filled him with a desire to embrace Mr. Wilfred, who had cleverly turned an embarrassing situation, but almost immediately the first of the retreating sailors came running along the edge of the lake, and the boat was soon filled with noisy, hard-breathing men.

As it pulled out for the ship, Schreck's voice could be heard on shore commanding his men to make a dash for the second and third boats. The rowers in the first boat rested on their oars and looked expectantly to see what would happen, but those who had expected excitement were disappointed.

The crowd of black-frocked, white-shirted men who had come in pursuit hesitated, then stopped, as Schreck and the second officer fired half a dozen shots from their revolvers into the air. A triumphant shout rose from the sailors, but Captain McTarr was silent. Never had Isobel seemed so far from him as at the present moment, and until he reached the side of the ship he maintained a silence which began to cool the enthusiasm of the crew.

He was the first to climb aboard, and as he lifted the girl up over the rail he held her so close that he could feel her breath on his cheek.

"Forgive me, Isobel—forgive me if I am doing wrong," he whispered.

He led her across the deck into the officer's parlor, and there the girl flung herself in a chair beside the cabin-table and buried her face in her arms.

"Isobel—if I had known——" said the man gently, his voice trembling. "If I

had known, perhaps I wouldn't have returned." He looked tenderly upon the sobbing girl, his face tense with suffering. "At the last moment something seemed to call me to you, Isobel, something I couldn't resist. I kept my reason until I went ashore and looked up at your windows from the old seat under the willows; then——"

He leaned over until his lips touched the girl's silken hair. For many minutes he let them rest there, and Isobel made no effort to push him away. He began whispering of his love again, of the hope that had risen and fallen, and of what she meant to him, when the telephone on the end of the table rang interruptingly. He reached out and pulled the receiver to him. It was Schreck at the other end.

"They're getting a big freighter under way in the harbor," he called. "I think it's one of the old mau's ships!"

Captain McTarr answered quietly: "That looks like——"

"Hell!" came the response, firmly and convincingly.

McTarr turned toward the girl. She had raised her head and was looking at him, white-faced, questioning.

"They're pursuing us!" he said.

"What's that?" came the first officer's voice.

"Wait a moment, Schreck," called the captain.

He placed his hand over the transmitter. "They're pursuing us, Isobel," he repeated. "Quick, dear, say that you will marry me—that you will let Mr. Wilfred——"

"I can't say that, Jack. I can't say it! I won't say it!" she cried.

Captain McTarr faced the telephone. "Let her go, Schreck!" he commanded. "Head up the lakes, and blow her up if you see we're not winning!"

He hung up the receiver with a bang. When he looked at the girl again it was with a consciousness that everything he possessed was at stake. Something in his face, an unnatural flush gathering in

either cheek, a daring—even menacing—glitter in his eyes told the girl a little of what was in his mind.

"You told me once that you despised cowards, Isobel," he said. "Wouldn't I be a coward if I gave you up now? I'm going to fight for you to the end; I'm placing my position and my liberty in the balance, and, if it comes to the point, I'll risk my life. Your conception of honor, your determination to make restitution for another by the sacrifice of yourself, makes you more priceless than ever to me. I don't know what I'm going to do. I have no plans. But as long as we've got a ton of coal in our bunkers and a mile of clear sea ahead I give you my word of honor—we'll win!"

The captain gathered enthusiasm as he spoke. He took both of Isobel's hands in his own, and no anger or reproach shone in the tearful eyes that looked up into his.

"It will be a splendid race, dear," he continued, his voice vibrating with partly suppressed excitement. "It will be a magnificent race! Listen!"

From under their feet came the dull, trembling throb of the freighter's engines.

"Schreck's getting us under way!" he murmured. "They're all with me, Schreck, the ship, and the crew. There's only your father against me—and you! I ought to win!" He bent over and kissed the girl, and then walked quickly out, closing the door behind him.

Schreck was watching for him. He shouted from the freighter's bridge, and as the captain came up he saw a little group of men standing under the pilot-house. Their arms and shoulders were naked and from the armpits down they wore woolen shirts. They were long-armed, sinewy men, with faces burned brick-red by stoke-hole fires. There was one exception, and that was little Robinson, the second engineer. The men were silent as McTarr passed them, for sullenness comes naturally and without meaning to men who spend a third of their lives in the blazing bowels of a ship.

"We'll need the second shift," explained Schreck. "We fed our furnaces sixty times an hour coming down; we'll feed each of the twelve every fifty seconds going up. It'll take six men."

He followed the captain to the end of the bridge, and the two looked back at Dunkirk harbor. The pursuing ship was already well out, gathering speed slowly, her lights slipping out into the night at right angles to Captain McTarr's trust ship, then heading on as the vessel came into the lake.

Schreck, upon whom the possibilities of the whole affair were steadily growing, had sent instructions down into the engine-room, but now his fingers set other gongs clanging with greater and more thrilling import. The wheelman looked down at the second officer with the excitement of battle shining in his eyes. A sudden thrill passed through the captain as he saw Schreck's fingers playing on the signal-board, and Schreck himself allowed his voice to quiver in a subdued way as he turned and asked for instructions.

But McTarr had thrown aside the dignity of his position as master of an eight-thousand-ton freighter. An hour had changed the men about him from hirelings into friends, even to the men of the galley and the furnace-rooms; and upon them now depended everything that he possessed.

So he held up his hand to the wheelman, and said: "Joe, it's all up to you. I've got no instructions to give. I want to lose that ship behind as quickly as possible. If we can do that we'll shift our course and make Buffalo; if we can't do it—well, there isn't a wheelman on the lakes that can play a better game than you!"

He turned with Schreck and descended the pilot-house stair, and the two headed the file of waiting men down into the engine-room corridor. In the furnace-pits the signals of the first officer had resulted in a rumbling of fire that was rapidly growing into a deafening roar. Four

men, naked to the waist and grimacing in the heat like black ghouls through their coating of coal-dust, were working like fiends in their endeavors to feed the twelve furnaces. In an instant the second and third shifts plunged into the glare of the pit, and the noise of the freighter's engines was drowned in the booming of the charges which followed.

McTarr shouted encouragement from the edge of the furnace-room, and then returned to the deck, followed by Schreck.

Hardly were their ears free from the booming of the fires than they heard the screeching of the whistle on the pursuing vessel. As the blasts continued, Captain McTarr ran into the forward deck and mounted the pilot-house stair three steps behind him.

"Any lights?" he cried.

"Plenty of them," replied the wheelman. "But those two—out there—*are coming up fast!*" He spoke slowly and with emphasis, and pointed to starboard of the Dunkirk ship.

A mile in the offing McTarr discerned a pair of lights keeping pace with the trust ship, and even as he looked other lights flared up beside them and the strange vessel changed her course until they seemed to group themselves in a few square feet of space.

In Schreck's eyes there was undisguised alarm, expressed in a thrilling curse as a rocket went sputtering up into the blackness of the night from the deck of the pursuing freighter.

"A distress-signal, by God!" he shouted.

The words had barely left his lips when a second rocket shot into the air, and an instant later there came a series of signals from a modoc whistle on the third ship. McTarr grinned into Schreck's startled face, then turned down the stair and hastened to the cabin in which he had left Isobel.

As he opened the door he was greeted by the little Dunkirk minister. Isobel was standing, her face flushed and her cheeks wet with tears.

"I want you to come with me, Isobel," said the captain, approaching the girl and taking her by the hand. "Will you—please?"

For a moment the girl hesitated. Then she allowed her lover to lead her out upon the deck. The pursuing ship had loomed up clear of the coast lights now, and Captain McTarr pointed her out as a third rocket streaked the sky with a ribbon of fire.

"Your father is sending up distress-signals to a revenue cutter out there!" he explained, guiding her eyes to the rim of lights bearing down upon them. "Those rockets are asking for help. It looks bad for me, doesn't it?"

Unconsciously the girl allowed a little cry to escape her lips. Captain McTarr watched her silently as she leaned over the rail. For several minutes they stood without speaking, and during that time the Dunkirk ship dropped back until her lights seemed to mingle with those of the cruiser.

"We're beating them," said Isobel, turning to him, at last. "I believe—"

She caught herself as the captain came up and put his arms around her, firmly, gently, as he had done many times before. The girl was very white, but McTarr could still read the firmness in her eyes, which told him that the little slip of her tongue was unmeant.

Suddenly there came the thunder of one of the cruiser's guns, and the man's arms tightened so fiercely that the ship-owner's daughter cried out with pain.

"We were beating them," he said, his voice trembling with a passion which he vainly attempted to conceal. "It's a coward's trick—I mean, it's *unfair*, to set a war-ship after us. I've got to break with the government now!"

He released the girl as running footsteps sounded behind them. It was Schreck, his eyes still filled with the light of battle, his face eagerly questioning.

"Does that make any difference?" he cried.

"No!" thundered McTarr. "Tell Joe to get into Canadian waters as soon as he can."

As his first officer ran back the captain caught Isobel's hands firmly in his own again. "It's war!" he almost shouted at her. "It's war, and you're going to see me fight it through. I'm going to show you what men will do because they know I'm right. Did you see Schreck? God! but he's true—they're all true!"

He hurried the girl toward the engine-room companion. The two ships behind had separated again, and the cutter, ablaze with light, was forging swiftly ahead of the Dunkirk vessel. A half of her broadside was visible as she edged out into the lake in her design to cross the fleeing ship's beam, and as Isobel and the captain paused for a moment to look at her there came a vivid flash of fire from her bow and the report of a second gun.

With a word of caution to the girl, McTarr climbed down the stair, and Isobel followed him. In an instant she was hurried into the chaos of the ship's vitals, where five hundred tons of iron and steel were groaning and crashing, and where Muldoon, the first engineer, and Robinson, the second, were sweating and swearing, and exhorting the greasy helpers around them.

As she looked into this network of fighting machinery a glow came into the girl's face, and her eyes flashed with a little of the fire that was in Captain McTarr's. For an instant Muldoon's eyes gleamed white at her from out of his black countenance, but that lightning-flash of attention was all that he gave her or the captain. Isobel felt a sudden thrill pass through her as she watched these men, and, forgetful of the significance of it all, she betrayed her admiration as she looked at the captain.

Suddenly a gong clanged near Muldoon's head, and one of the engineer's naked arms shot out and grasped a lever. In that instant he sent an inquiring

glance at Captain McTarr, and the master of the ship hurried to his side.

"He wants more!" shouted Muldoon. He pointed a black finger at the steam-gage, where the little indicator-hand was hovering restlessly over a figure which gave warning that the ship had reached her maximum steam capacity. "He wants more! Shall I—?" Captain McTarr nodded his head and thumbed a line ten-pounds ahead.

When he turned he found Isobel had come up close behind him. Her face was flushed a deeper red. There was excitement in her eyes, a glowing, thrilling look which made McTarr's heart leap within him. She looked inquiringly at him, questioning him with silent lips.

"We're ready to blow up," he cried, in her ear. "Are you afraid?"

He led her into the furnace-room corridor and swung back a steel door. It was as if a flood of fire had rolled into the girl's face. She drew back, gasping for breath, and covered her face with her hands. When she looked again McTarr was down in the pit, and she followed him. When he took her out a minute later, she seemed to have had a vision of a bursting inferno of flame and heat. The men, the grim faces, the charging, roaring fires and the swinging of furnace doors had been only indistinct details in a dazzling picture that filled her with terror.

McTarr saw that she was trembling, and he put an arm around her as they returned to the companion. Before they had ascended it the second engineer rushed out of the engine-room door and intercepted them.

"We've gone twelve pounds beyond the limit!" he almost shrieked. "They're still calling for more! We can't give it! We can't give it!" His voice was filled with emphatic warning.

McTarr hurried up the companion, half-carrying the girl with him. "I'll see what's the matter, Robinson!" he called back.

There was alarm in his voice, and unconsciously Isobel clung tightly to his hand as they came on deck. Even she could understand now what those signals coming down into the engine-room had meant. The war-ship was rapidly overtaking the freighter. She could easily distinguish men working about the cruiser's forward deck-gun, and as she looked it spouted out a tongue of flame, and the report came in an ugly, jarring sound.

"That was a loaded gun," said McTarr. "I say, Isobel, it looks bad for me, doesn't it?"

He repeated the question of a few minutes before with a little laugh which made Isobel shudder.

"They can't hurt you, can they, Jack?" she whispered, coming very close.

"No—not exactly hurt," said the man. "That shot fired across our bows means they'll give me three minutes in which to heave to. If I comply, they'll take me back to Dunkirk, where I'll probably receive a sentence for abduction and a fine for breaking the laws of navigation. If I don't heave to—"

"If you don't, Jack—" urged the girl.

"Well, if I don't they'll send a solid shot through me somewhere. Then I'll be treated as something of a pirate, and will probably spend a few years in prison."

He did not see the look of terror that came into the girl's blanched face, for Schreck had come back into the lantern-glow of the stern, and the two men looked into each other's faces with grim understanding. The first officer held an open watch in his hand and McTarr pulled out his own.

"There's two minutes and ten seconds," he said. He spoke to Schreck, but the girl caught the meaning of his words, and

her two hands tightened in a convulsive clasp about the captain's arm.

McTarr turned from Schreck and put his arms around her.

"My fate rests with you now, Isobel," he said, so low that the first officer could not hear him. "You can save me, even from the charge of abduction; but if I keep up the fight for two minutes longer, and I will unless you do save me, I shall be ruined!"

Schreck saw the girl throw her arms around McTarr's shoulders, and he turned away.

Twenty seconds later the captain shot to the engine-room companion and disappeared down it in a single leap. "Muldoon!" he roared. "Muldoon! Muldoon!" He rushed to the door of the engine-room, shouting the engineer's name above the crash of the machinery. "Muldoon, cut 'er down!" he commanded. "Cut 'er down like lightning!"

He saw the engineer's arm shoot out, heard the roar of steam and the throbbing, metallic coughing of retarded engines, then sprang up the companion and called to Schreck.

"Where's Mr. Wilfred?" he cried.

"In the cabin," replied the first officer.

McTarr turned and caught Isobel's hand in his own, his face shining with joy in the lantern-light.

"He's in the cabin, Isobel," he repeated. He caught Schreck by the arm as he hurried forward with the girl. "We'll want you for a few minutes in the cabin, Schreck—if you'll be so kind!"

A few minutes later, as the United States cutter ran alongside, Mr. and Mrs. Jack McTarr came hand in hand from the parlor cabin of the trust ship, prepared to explain matters to the captain of the cruiser.

BILLINGS—HOBO.

BY EDWARD S. PILSWORTH,

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IV.—THE APPEAL OF THE FEMININE.

A Complete Story.



court-room.

The town had a bad name, but a strong order from the despatcher's office had cleared the train of tramps, and now he was cast adrift with this threat hanging over him. As he wandered up the main street he saw a man step out of the court-room and size him up, and, though he was aching for food, he did not dare to beg or even to buy, for fear that some charge might be trumped up against him. He went on through the outskirts into the fields and country. He turned for a moment to gaze over at the water-tank in the distance, but there was no freight out in the time allowed, and he struck once more toward the fields.

He hoped to find a patch of woods in which to sleep, or a place where he might get a "poke-out." The next freight was in the small hours, and if he could find a place where he might get a bite to eat and a spot to snore in, it would suit him well. Fumbling in his rags, the fingers

closed tightly on a few coins, and he ran them through with much care.

"Three-forty," he muttered. "That's all right. It ain't going to be healthy to take no chances of bein' dumped with that floater over me, so fifty cents goes to the shacky."

He had come to a place where a neat farmhouse, with a well-kept lawn in front, stood by the roadside, and, throwing a glance at one of the fence-posts, he saw a circle with a cross in it, drawn with charcoal, and promptly stepped into the drive and around to the back door.

A comely young woman opened it to his knock, and he took off his battered hat and stood waiting.

"Well?" she asked.

"Kin yer give a poor man, what's out of work, a bite to eat, lady?" he whined. "I suppose so," replied the woman. "But there seems to be a lot of you tramps coming round here lately."

Billings thought of the sign on the fence, then lied with fervor.

"I ain't no tramp, ma'am. I'm a hard-working man, out of a job, and with a sick wife and a helpless gel back home. She's got a short leg and can't do nothin'."