

A Girl on a Barge

By *Rupert Hughes*

Illustrations by Jules Gotlieb

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A Girl on a Barge

THE filthy little cabin of the filthy big barge where she had been born was still her home. It still dawdled back and forth between Buffalo and New York and New York and Buffalo.

In all her sixteen years, Miss Erie Kadden had hardly ever left the scow. It had grown so old that it was in peril of going to pieces, but she was just growing young for a woman.

Few people of her age had traveled farther, or traveled less. Always on the go, she never got anywhere. She had threaded life, running along thin streams of it like a white blood-corpuscle in the blood stream. She knew hardly more of land-life than a fish.

The speed of the scow's travel was so slow at best that being tied to a pier made little difference. She had seen much, and she had seen nothing. She stared at green hills and birch forests gliding by on the Northern waters. She stared at the stern palisades of the Hudson and the towers of New York. And they meant hardly more to her than a landscape means to a tired dog or a cow-eyed cow.

Heroic times for her were the ancient days her father and mother told lies about, when both were sober and the twilight drugged their tempers. The parents dated from the classic period when the Erie Canal was a canal, and the barges were towed by mules and the children rode them. Kadden had named the barge after the girl he was courting, Bridget Maria, and he still kept the name, though she had been his wife for years enough to rear the long family, which would have been longer but for losing one boy that was kicked into the canal by a mule, and Erie's elder sister who had caught the measles when left at a boarding-school—an experiment never repeated. It had cost twenty dollars a month.

In these degenerate days the barges were mere hulks pulled

by tugboats, and the Erie Canal was lost in wide rivers and lakes and deep channels.

But the change meant nothing to the girl. Her home was tied to a grimy wharf or tied to a tug by a rope, and she herself was still almost umbilically tied to her parents.

She could not leave the Bridget Maria when it was in motion, and when it was laid up at a town she was usually afraid to. Besides, there was always the work to do, helping her mother take care of the flock.

Skipper Kadden and his wife had named the children with unwitting grace after places important in the map of their eternal travel, the big beads in their rosary. The girl herself was named Erie; two younger sisters were named Oneida and Utica; her two brothers, Mohawk and Clyde. This last had a narrow escape from being labeled Schenectady. There was the babe in arms, a little girl named Saratoga—Sara for short.

TODAY as Erie paced the roof of the barge bound north, and hung out the clothes she had washed, she winced under the sleet of cinders blown back from the tug. When she realized that the smoke was destroying all the results of her hard scrubbing, her tough little heart swelled with rage.

She ran to the prow of the barge, shook her bony fist at the tug and shrieked: "Turn yer smoke the other way, or I'll—"

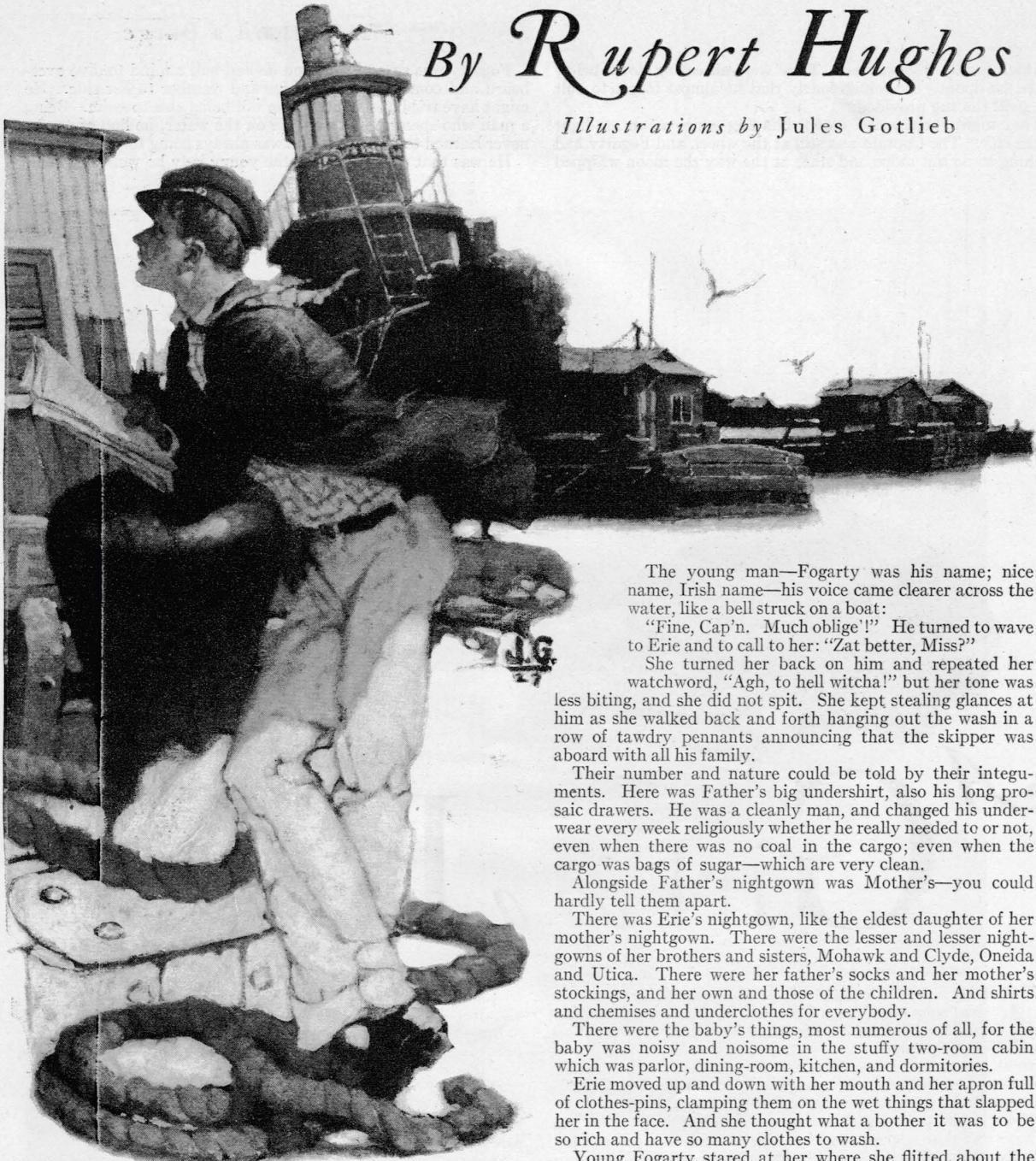
The tug had never answered these threats of hers until today, when a faint voice came back on the wind:

"Bridget Maria, ahoy! I'm sorry!"

She glared hard and made out a young man at the stern of the Martin Burson waving to her. She had caught him staring at her before. She had been taught that it is not virtuous or prudent for young ladies to accept even the stares of strange men. Her

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father had instilled the idea of modesty in her head by knocking her down once or twice for waving to passing males who had waved at her, and her mother had smacked her over for asking impertinent questions.

So now, being carefully bred to ignorance and circumspection, she made a face at the distant ogler, spat at him, flirted her back at him, and mumbled with ladylike disdain:

"Agh, to hell witcha!"

Then she went back to her chores.

Suddenly the smoke stream was mysteriously whisked from her clothes-lines, and blown aslant down-stream. A glance over-shoulder showed that the tug had shifted its course just enough to take the breeze to one side. Captain Burson was laughing from the deck-house at the young fellow who had been staring at Erie. The Captain's voice floated clear across the water:

"How's 'at, Fogarty?"

The young man—Fogarty was his name; nice name, Irish name—his voice came clearer across the water, like a bell struck on a boat:

"Fine, Cap'n. Much oblige'!" He turned to wave to Erie and to call to her: "Zat better, Miss?"

She turned her back on him and repeated her watchword, "Agh, to hell witcha!" but her tone was less biting, and she did not spit. She kept stealing glances at him as she walked back and forth hanging out the wash in a row of tawdry pennants announcing that the skipper was aboard with all his family.

Their number and nature could be told by their integuments. Here was Father's big undershirt, also his long prosaic drawers. He was a cleanly man, and changed his underwear every week religiously whether he really needed to or not, even when there was no coal in the cargo; even when the cargo was bags of sugar—which are very clean.

Alongside Father's nightgown was Mother's—you could hardly tell them apart.

There was Erie's nightgown, like the eldest daughter of her mother's nightgown. There were the lesser and lesser nightgowns of her brothers and sisters, Mohawk and Clyde, Oneida and Utica. There were her father's socks and her mother's stockings, and her own and those of the children. And shirts and chemises and underclothes for everybody.

There were the baby's things, most numerous of all, for the baby was noisy and noisome in the stuffy two-room cabin which was parlor, dining-room, kitchen, and dormitories.

Erie moved up and down with her mouth and her apron full of clothes-pins, clamping them on the wet things that slapped her in the face. And she thought what a bother it was to be so rich and have so many clothes to wash.

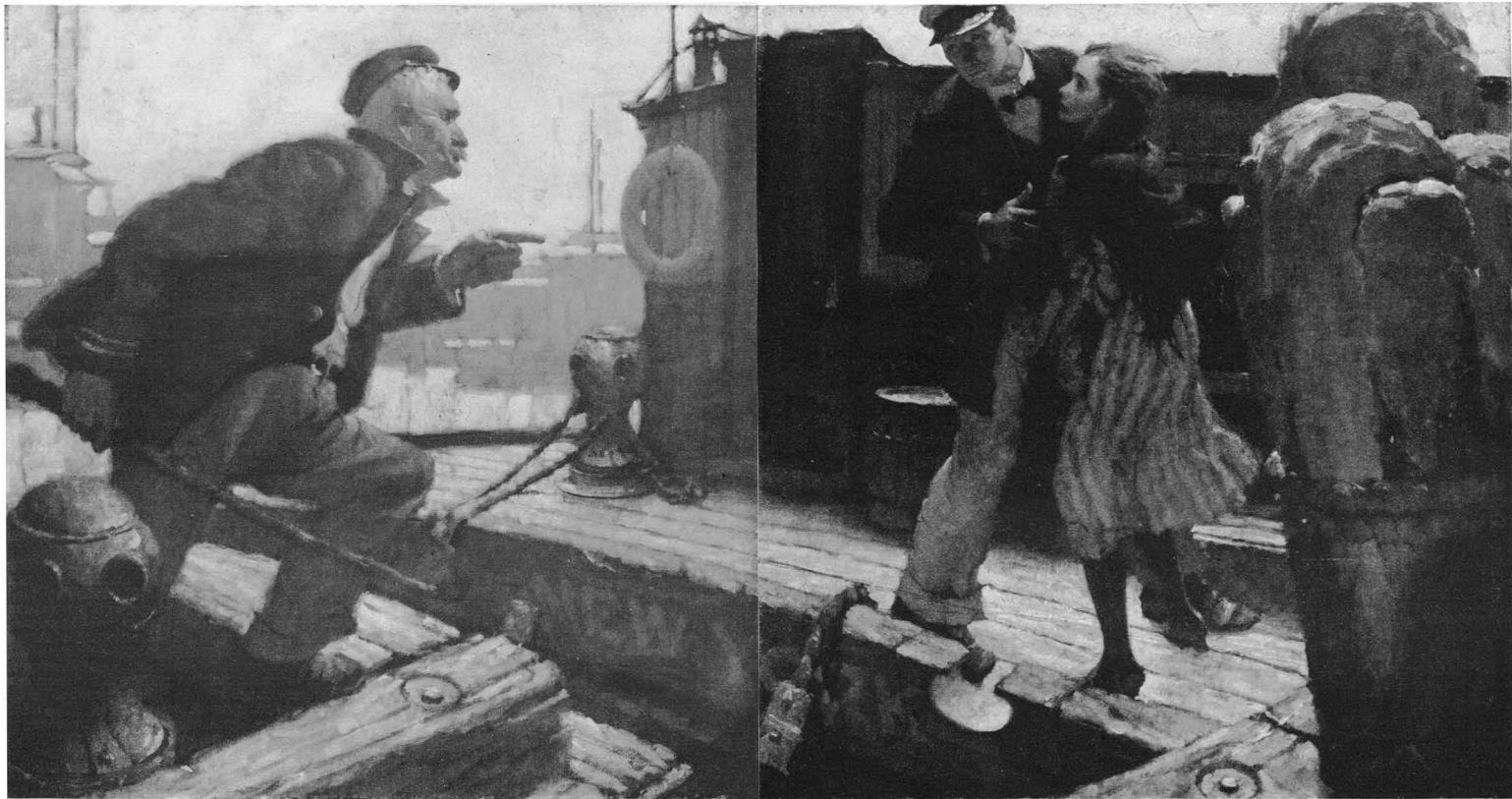
Young Fogarty stared at her where she flitted about the barge, outlined against the sky, with the sun making a fur of fire about her wind-blown body.

And he wished to heaven there was some way of knowing her and talking to her. He got mighty sick of the tugboat crew. He was a first deck-hand already with a pilot's license, and he did his trick at the wheel when the pilot slept. The pilot was the owner, Captain Martin Burson. He had named the tug after himself and he was no worse than the other captains. He had moments of being kind unexpectedly. You could ask a favor of him once in a while and not have it denied just to prove who was who. Hadn't he shifted the course a little to save the Kaddens' wash at Fogarty's prayer?

Erie would vanish now and then down into the cabin with an empty basket, and clamber up with it so full that she had to stagger.

Fogarty put out his hand to help her, but he could not reach all that long way. And of course her old man wouldn't lend her a lift, the lazy lump sitting and smoking. And the brats of brothers had strength for no end of skylarking, but never a thought of their sister.

When sunset turned the Hudson to a river of cherry wine, the



CSkipper Kadden let out a roar like all of Daniel's lions let loose: "Off the barge!" And Erie had to hold Fogarty from tearing the old man to pieces.

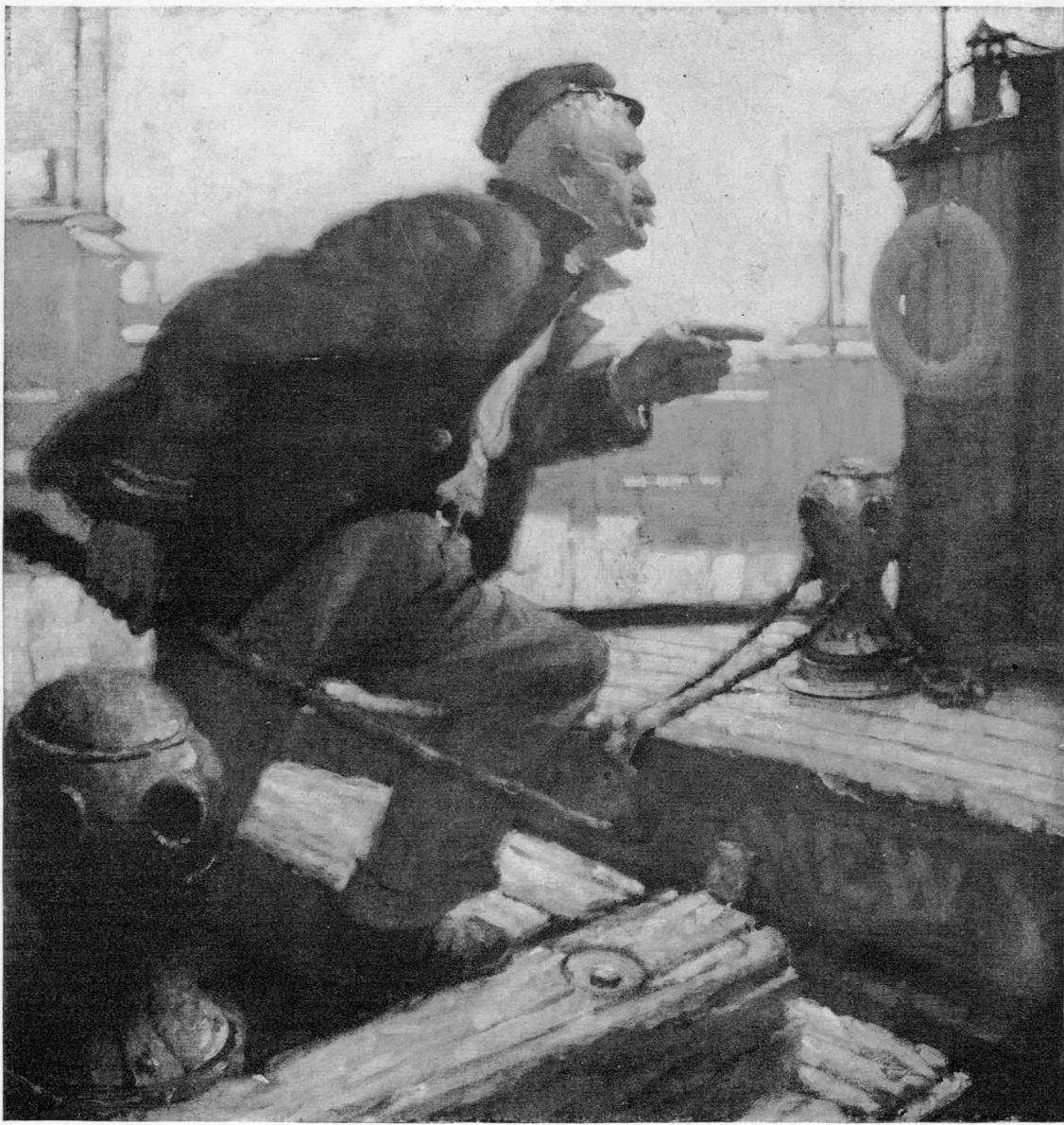
Kadden family disappeared. They were all eating down below there, no doubt. He felt so lonely that he almost forgot to bolt the swill the tug provided.

That night there was a moon, blinding white as an arc-light in the city. The Captain was still at the wheel, and Fogarty had nothing to do but mope and stare at the way the moon whipped

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Fogarty was sure of this, and he had half a mind to dive overboard and come up by the barge and clamber to her side. He might have tried it, too, except for not being able to swim. Being a man who spent most of his life on the water, he had of course never learned to swim. But he was always going to.

He was that mad to call on the young lady he wondered if he



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the wake of the tug and rained its soft powder on the old barge wallowing along like a whale on a rope, and after that, other barges wallowing along.

He had been there a short forever when he saw a ghost come out of the barge cabin and move slowly along to the bow and sit there. He had a notion that she was staring at him.

Perhaps she was, but she was staring also at nothing, and at everything. She had found it more than usually stupid down in the hold with the dishes to wash, and the baby squalling, and the four children fighting and quarreling, and Paw ugly drunk, and Maw ugly sober. So she finished her tasks and came up for air.

Ordinarily she would have flopped down anywhere, the nearer the cabin the better. But tonight she went forward to the prow. Perhaps the nearness of another lonely youth drew her like a tow-line.

could not go hand over hand along the rope. He laid hold of the big cable, but it was all prickly and he misdoubted he could make all that distance. Besides, the rope sagged so that it was in the water as much as out of it, and with his weight on it, it would lower him to drowning depth.

He would have called to her, but voices resounded so on the water he was sure he would wake her old man and have the other deck-hands, the cook, the engineer and the fireman about his ears. And the girl would probably snub him at that.

So he lingered and suffered the madness of youth for youth.

That may have been what saddened her, but she did not know it. She did not know much of anything.

She could not read. She knew a few words as she knew people's faces. The names of the great Hudson day liners, the names of some of the barges, and the names of towns in big letters on piers

or in electric lights—she could recognize them as she could recognize certain patterns. But the solace of a book or a newspaper against the corrosive monotony of her life, she did not have.

Her father believed, with many of the most eminent benefactors of an earlier day, that it was not well to teach poor children, especially girls, to read and to write since it made

swam the skies before nightfall, or the mystic fish that she sometimes saw darkling in the deep water when she lay flat on her stomach and peered into the river. Yet there was growing inside her skimpy clothes a new body that was straining the seams. New flames sent brief fevers through her. She was pitiful for lack of a namelessness, but she hardly knew her hunger.



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them discontented, disobedient and, worst of all, ambitious. Skipper Kadden had saved his daughter from all these dangers, not so much from any settled plan as from the lack of it. He never knew where he would be when nor for how long. To send the children to a school was impossible, without casting them adrift on the world. So Erie had grown up with no more restlessness than a turtle, and no more ambition to be a fine lady than a turtle has to be an eagle—if an outsider may venture to guess what goes on inside a turtle.

Erie had seen well-dressed women and children on the steamers and on the streets of the towns they passed. But they were usually so far away that they were like pygmies of another breed. Now and then a gleaming yacht went by with swells lounging under canopies, but they were impossible, fantastic creatures. She envied them as little as she envied the clouds of crimson that

Through this long gloaming she sat musing upon nothing that was yet something. Ahead of her was a tugboat as almost always there was, and it was growing dimmer and dimmer, and the fellow named Fogarty was blurring away with the shadow. But she seemed to feel eyes there.

And they were there, smoldering eyes that fed upon her with a stubborn eagerness.

When Fogarty was called to the wheel, Erie was still sitting on the prow of the barge, kicking her heels in a drumming rhythm that he could not hear. The river was little frequented along this lonely stretch, and while he swung the wheel sleepily, this way and that, he kept twisting round to look back. Now and then he would start as he caught sight of the crooked wake and the barges out of line, and realize that he was *(Continued on page 97)*

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steering awry. He would correct his course and gaze straight ahead until his eyes were pulled round, and he would be studying anew the little figure so vague at last in the gathering dusk that he could not be quite sure whether she had gone in or not.

He almost ran down a rowboat crossing the broad river. The howl of the oarsmen fetched him back to attention just in time. When the danger was over, and he could look round, the whole river was smoking with mist and the barge was hardly to be seen.

It was grand there on the water, but lonely. The engine chugged away like a big heart. It was hard work dragging those great bulks through the stout current, but tugs were gluttons for work. Tugs could shove or lug ocean liners into place. And Fogarty could make the tug obey the least twist of his wrist. But he could not talk to that girl. He would stare back at the barge, sound asleep and dark except for the signal-light. And he imagined the young lady where she slept. And he wished to heaven she might be standing alongside him and letting him learn her how to steer a boat, and he staring at the moonlight on her instead of the black barge bumming along off there so near and so far.

The long night brooded over the river and he kept his watch till early morning released him from his task. The world blazed with a gaudy dawn but no one was astir on the Bridget Maria, and he turned into his bunk to sleep.

When he was up again, he was only a deck-hand once more. He must help polish the bits of brass, wash down the decks and touch up the woodwork with a paint-brush. He kept glancing across the gap of water to the barge, and when the girl was visible the world seemed to be inhabited.

Evidently her home was one of those old-fashioned barges that had no comforts aboard. The crazy stovepipe sticking out of the cabin and smoking like an old broken pipe showed that, not to mention the rotten paintless planks and the gaping uncalked seams between them.

She came up by and by with a baby in her arms, and it stuck a knife in him to wonder if it could be hers. Such things happened.

She had the heart of mother in her. She dandled the baby, sang to it, tossed it in air, poked her finger at it, showed it the world and the river. She even pointed its hand at the tug and flopped the little mit. So Fogarty waved a response to the salute.

The girl turned away again, but very slowly now. She paced up and down, singing, likely, to the brat. Then the old woman waddled out and sat on a broken-backed chair and took the baby and put it to nurse. And that took a great strain off Fogarty's mind.

At last they turned out of the Hudson westward into the state Barge Canal, and now the sunset was in their faces as they came to a lock. Here the tug and the barges were all huddled together while they rode on the water-elevator to the next level.

Fogarty had a chance now to speak to the girl, but he wasted a lot of precious time plucking up the courage. Which was funny, since he had never been afraid of a start.

Fogarty knew people. He could dance. He had had girls, some wild ones, some wise ones, and some who were very much both.

But he felt strangely shy of this little scrawn. He walked back and forth along the lock walls half a dozen times without quite coming to the point even of passing the time of day.

At last he had a grand idea. He hustled to the tug and found a newspaper that he had kept to read over again, having read it only twice to the last advertisement, and the sporting news three times.

Fogarty was a scholar. He could read. He always had his nose in an extra. The other deck-hands called him book louse.

It was something of a sacrifice to give up the newspaper before he had really finished it. It

was like passing the kid a bunch of orchids. But let her have it.

He went past her once or twice where she sat hunched up under a shawl, with her face screwed into a misery that probably indicated meditation. At length he stopped opposite her and murmured:

"It's colder, nights, up north here."

She looked at him as if he had frightened her almost to death with some terrible saying.

Her fright scared him a little too, but he braced himself for another try. He took the newspaper from his jacket pocket, and said:

"I see by the paper that the Wint'rop moorder trile is in the hands of the jury."

She looked up at him as if had accused her of committing the crime and then looked down as if she were guilty of it.

He smiled a little. He liked to have his women afraid of him. With the condescension of a raja tossing a string of moonstones to a pet slave, he flipped the paper across to her and said: "You'd like to read about it belike."

In a panic she stared at the wind-whipped paper, then at him. The paper began to blow along the deck. She ran after the priceless thing, and had a battle with its frantically flapping sheets. It was like trying to quiet an eight-winged angel.

At last she got it together and folded it up and proffered it to him. He waved it aside.

"Aw, I'm t'rough wit' it."

She was so horribly bewildered that she stammered her dreadful secret: "But I can't read."

He stared at her: "My Gawd! Can't read?"

She shook her head.

He thought of all the blessings of learning, the luxury of literature, the jokes, the short stories, the murders, the baseball games. He had it in his power to spill a bushel of diamonds at her feet. He leaped across the crevice, squatted, bunted her along the cracker box and sat himself down beside the most frightened Miss Muffet in the world.

"Here, lea' me learn you your letters, anyway. See this kind of a step-ladder with one rung? That's Ah." He had come over from Ireland as a child and still kept a bit of his Irish teaching. So he called A "Ah." He pointed out the letter with a nobly grimy forefinger, and commanded, "Say it!"

"Ah!" she said.

"That's fine and don't be forgettin' it. Next cooms—here's wan—this funny feller with the straight back and the curlicues—that's Bay."

"Bay! Bay with the straight back and the curlicues! Bay!"

And so he picked out the letters and made her repeat their names and find others for herself. It was the most fascinating game she had ever played, and the close contact with her teacher and tormentor kept her throbbing with confusion.

They had reached what he described as "Haitch—you'll be knowin' it fer bein' like two posts with a cross-bar."

Suddenly she saw stars and felt her ear being lifted sky-high. She followed it to a tiptoe posture. Her mother had come up and caught her. Being yanked about was too familiar a thing to have distressed Erie greatly but she almost perished with the shame of hearing her mother abuse her first caller:

"Off the barge, you greasy roustabout, or I'll call her father to throw you off. And if he sees your dirty face around here again, he'll bust it off."

Fogarty protested, "Aw, I was on'y—"

"Don't give me any of your on'ies, or—"

She turned to call her husband.

Fogarty threw at Erie a glance of wretched helplessness, and she answered it with a look of woe. Then he hopped across to the lock wall and shuffled away.

Erie went below, still clutching the newspaper. She hid it in her bunk as if it were

filled with the "Lives of the Saints" instead of their opposites. Since it was too bulky to carry with her, she tore off the front page with the glorious head-lines and stuffed it into the bosom of her dress. Whenever she had a chance she would take it out and hunt for the letters she knew.

The letters beyond H were maddening. She got to know them by their outlines, but their names were a torment of mystery. She tried to think up things to call their unknown symbols, but this was beyond her. She was like an early scholar trying to fathom hieroglyphics.

She took delight, however, in picking out the letters she knew on the boats and barges that passed or on the sign-boards of the big factories in the towns along her way.

Such study was a kind of prayer in which she communed with the young god who had descended into her life bringing wisdom in his teachings, and had been reviled and driven away as young gods have always been.

And Fogarty thought of her with an equal gratitude, for she was the first girl he had ever encountered who looked up to him with awe and meekly accepted instruction from him. The other rags he met up with treated him like he was dirt and you couldn't tell 'em nothing. They were a bunch of wise-crackers who read too much of the wrong stuff that no lady hadn't ought to be allowed to read, or if she did she'd ought to lie out of it.

The incompleteness of Erie's alphabet tormented the teacher as much as the pupil, for of all things information and advice are pleasanter to give than to receive; and he was frantic to be quit of his undelivered lore.

Fogarty plotted so desperately to meet Erie again that he did nothing right. Piloting through the Barge Canal was far more complex than drawing a straight line through the wide Hudson. The channel was tortuous. It ran across lakes and ponds, through rows of buoys that must be watched for. It meandered along meandering streams. There was no time to think of both a girl and the course.

Along about twelve o'clock Fogarty ran the tug aground, and jarred Captain Burson out of bed in the first sweet sleep of night, and a spirit in the feet of Burson wafted Fogarty out of the pilot's cabin. The barges came lurching forward on their own impetus, taking up their slack and banging together, knocking Kadden and the other barge-masters out of their bunks.

An eastbound tug was held up with its convoy, and the peaceful reaches of the stream were resonant with blasphemy.

With bitter eyes Fogarty noted that the Kadden barge was covered with a family of nightgowns dancing about like a week's wash in a high wind or a meeting of the fairies in Ireland. He knew which one of the wraiths was Erie, and his heart grew more and more bitter. Fogarty was tempted to jump in the canal and thank heaven for never learning to swim.

At last the tug was backed off and sent forward, the barges were yanked slithering out of the mud and the reeds, and the procession moved on, saluted with the mocking toots of the passing tug, whose master called out to Fogarty's master: "Who let you loose at night without a license?"

To a veteran like Burson this was a hard quip to endure.

He was too near apoplexy to think up an answer ribald enough, until the other tug was out of sight and hearing. He made up for it when he called Fogarty to him.

Erie, shivering in her nightgown, could hear the bawling-out her angel was receiving and she cowered under it, but not because of the unladylike language of the Captain. She was used to all the worst words; it was the best words that she had never heard.

The thing that crushed her was the humiliation of her hero. Tears poured down her cheeks with sorrow for him, the while her little mouth

repeated all the Captain's obscenities with a change of names. She substituted the Captain's for Fogarty's.

If she had known how to reach the tug, she would have gone there in her nightgown to scratch the Captain's eyes out and show them to him before she chucked them overboard.

The final shout she heard from him struck her like the back of her father's hand in the face:

"One last thing I'm tellin' you, Fogarty. This is the last voyage you make on my boat, so help me. When we reach Buffalo, you're done. And if you ever ask me for another job, I'll—"

What he promised was as impossible as it was indecent, but Erie did not mind the impropriety of the language. What murdered her was the thought that she had lost the chance to know more of Mr. Fogarty and his alphabet.

The knowledge that nothing could make worse their lot made them both a little desperate. And the next night Fogarty, who had softened Captain Burson's heart a little by the perfect meekness of his subordination, figured it out that the Captain would not dare fire him before they reached Buffalo, and could do no more than fire him whatever he did.

So at the ambiguous hour when the sunset was black with night or the night was red with sunset, he lowered into the water unbeknownst to the Captain, the skiff the tug carried, and dropping into it, vanished into the mist-smoke blooming again upon the water.

He rose from the mist at the very feet of Erie, who was perched on a corner of the prow of the Bridget Maria, staring at the tug.

She nearly fell overboard as she saw what and who had tapped her on the foot. But when Fogarty, in whispers, bade her make the painter fast to a cleat at her side, she did, and he stood talking up to her and she down to him like an aquatic Romeo and Juliet.

When her mother called to her she answered with an "Anon, good nurse," in modern prose: "Oh, all right, Maw!"

But she did not go. When Fogarty started to tell her what had happened to him, her language was even less Shakespearian:

"I heard every word the old s. b. said, and—"

"Cripes, but you know your alphabet grand!" cried Fogarty, so proud of her that he nearly danced the boat out from under him.

He patted her ankles and clung to them till he pulled the boat back into place with his toes under the thwarts.

He told her his plan, so mad a scheme that only an angel could have thought of it. When the Captain went to sleep, he would get one of his friends in the crew to stand to the wheel and another one to pay out the rope till the skiff fell back to the barge with him.

Then she must drop down into the skiff and ride in it with him back to the tug. There she could spend hours going over her alphabet and many important matters with him.

Her fright at the other happenings was as nothing to her fear of this audacity. Yet he had only to say:

"It's our on'y chance to get acquainted. Would you lose it, Miss Whoever-you-are?"

"My name's Erie Kadden, and I wouldn't lose it—the chance, I mean. The name I don't mind losin', when the right man comes along."

"He's here—at your feet just, Erie dearie."

So she said she would go. What did she risk but a beating-up by her father? And that might come from oversalting the soup.

Her mother called and she ran, and he rowed back. He fastened the painter to the tug and swung aboard just as the Captain shouted for him to take the wheel.

The other two deck-hands were enchanted with the double opportunity of fooling the old man and importing a romantic girl aboard, and so as soon as they heard the famous Burson snore quawking, Gus relieved Fogarty at the wheel and Hank, who had lengthened the painter of the skiff with enough rope, helped Fogarty down into the skiff, then let

the rope slide through his hands till the slack showed that he had reached the barge.

And by and by he felt the two sharp jerks agreed upon, and he began to haul in. The water was so dense with mist that the skiff came alongside like a tarpion from the depths. He wrapped the painter round a cleat, and thrust his long arms down till his hands were filled with a wisp of girl. He hoisted her aboard with a sense of terror, and let Fogarty fend for himself.

He watched the two kids tiptoeing to the stairway up to the pilot's cabin, and when Gus came down they laughed till their cuds choked them. They could not see what was going on in the pilot-house. They could not imagine the sacredness and terror of the young couple in each other's presence.

Fogarty was no saint, but Erie was so ignorant of everything, so eager and so young in life, that he treated her as gently as any packing-case marked, "Fragile. Handle with care. Use no hooks. This end up. Insured for \$100."

As for her, the pilot-house was a shrine on a hill that moved. The pilot was a man of appalling knowledge and power.

Who could have believed that the first hour of their converse was spent in quizzing her on the alphabet? They came to a city with a huge electric sign, every letter gleaming. It proclaimed the "Zephyr Sewing Machines" and was full of new letters in the infra-H region. Other smaller signs almost completed the alphabet.

Between whiles, he would explain the art of the pilot. He would set her little fingers on the handles of the wheel and with his own tough palms over them would show her how to make the tug answer the least call of the rudder.

Standing there enveloping her little body with his own big hulk and her tiny hands like a chicken's claws in his big fist, it was not easy to keep from dealing with her as he would have dealt with most of the girls he had danced with and fooled with in parked automobiles. But it would have been harder to betray her helplessness, and the intuition that she would probably not know enough to resist anything he did. It was the improbability of her fighting him that made her somehow sacred to him. Being Irish, he loved a fight with anybody that would grant him one; but where would be the fun in breaking this wren?

She was clever, too, at learning the wheel, and he let her manage it alone for a moment or two while he stood with hands poised above hers to check any false move that might roll the Captain out of his berth.

Finally Erie was so expert at the wheel that he stood away and leaned against the wall of the deck-house to watch her.

She passed another tug, too, without sinking it, and avoided a buoy that swung up right alongside out of the curdling haze.

Next he taught her how to ring the bell that gave the engineer his orders to slow up, speed up, stop, reverse. He let her sound the bell once or twice when the need arose.

He patted Erie's gaunt little shoulder-blades and said: "You've the makin's of a pilot's woman, old lady, and when I get a boat of me own and you into it, I'll let you spell me. And I'll put some fat on them bones, too."

She answered meekly: "If Heaven's any better'n this, I wouldn't wish for it."

It was Gus who dissipated the clouds of paradise by warning them that the Captain was beginning to toss about like waking, and Fogarty's watch was nearly over.

So Gus took the wheel, and Fogarty steered Erie down the steps and along the deck to where Hank sat on the side-rail waiting. Fogarty let himself down into the bouncing skiff, and Hank took Erie into his arms as if she were a kind of divine sack of white meal and lowered her into Fogarty's hands.

The mists were gone and the barge came toward them with a looming ruthlessness. Fogarty met it standing and steadied the skiff into position.

As he held the barge with one hand and

turned to help her up, his left arm could not help drawing her to his heart for a moment. When he looked down into her upswung face, he had to kiss her. He nearly smothered her before he could let her go, what with the grief that was stopping her heart in her and his arms crushing her little ribs.

"So long, Kid," he mumbled. "Watch out for yerself till—till next time."

She could think of nothing to say grand enough, but as she obeyed his orders and set one foot on his bent thigh and made ready to set the other on his shoulder, she kissed him on one eye in passing.

And as she rose in air, gripped the rail of the barge and scrambled and sprawled over, she kicked him in the nose and almost into the river.

But he took it as a caress and managed to fall into the boat. Kneeling, he looked up and caught a glimpse of her face like a tiny moon swinging out to gleam down at him before it was eclipsed in the black cloud of the barge.

Then he gave the rope two sharp jerks and was drawn back to his lonely jail.

When the Captain came up to the wheel wading uproariously, he found Fogarty on duty and received a respectful salute and a "Good night, Sir."

Erie had lingered to watch the skiff till it reached the tug. Then she had picked her way to the cabin of the barge, had taken off her shoes and her clothes on the steps and made her way to the little shelf in the wall where she was stored of nights.

No one was the wiser for her absence except her crowded heart.

The next day she hardly took her eyes off the tug. But there was no chance to exchange more than a remote gesture until Buffalo was reached. And there she had no chance to bid him good-by even with a gesture. Something happened to keep her below while he hung about in vain, paid off and warned off.

They lingered at Buffalo for a week, but the baby was sick and so scarlet that the doctor quarantined the barge.

One day the doctor took her aside and gave her a letter, the first she had ever had. He explained: "A young fellow named Fogarty asked me to give you this. I've seen him hanging around a lot."

Erie clutched at the letter so fiercely that she fairly scratched it out of the doctor's hand. He smiled as she ran away with it.

In the shelter of a stack of packing-cases Erie studied the envelop. She knew her name and the name of the family barge, but once she had opened the envelop she found a cryptogram without a code. Fogarty had printed it for her sake in capitals. But she had not learned the occult formation of letters into words. She stared at the page with delight in its beauty but in a frenzy of despair as to the meaning of those pretty signs:

ERIE DERIE IF YOU CANT REDE
THIS GIT SUMBOADY ELS TO REDE
IT TO YOU IME SORY I CANT GIT
TO SEA YOU AGANE BUT I TRIDE
IN VANE I GOT A JOB ON A NOTRE
BOAT THE LIZZIE LOBDELL CAP-
TAIN JOHN BOODY I START FOR
NEW YORK TODAY GOOD BUY
HOPPING TO SEA YOU SUNE
YOURS TRUELY WITH LOAVE
FRANCIS X FOGARTY

After almost straining her little brain trying to wrest the meaning out of the letters by brute force, she lay in wait for the doctor to ask him to read it for her.

But she was afraid to share her Fogarty with a stranger. Besides, the doctor, when he came up, shook his head solemnly. The baby was worse. It died at last and its mother was so grief-broken that she could not go to the funeral.

Erie had her first hack-ride, but she did not relish it. Her father's grief was terrible to see when he was sober, and ghastly when he had drink taken. The barge had to be fumigated

and lost its chance for a cargo. It lay idle for weeks, to the vast loss of savings.

Finally it was called upon to take a load of grain from a floating elevator, and at last its prow was hauled around to the East and it was fastened to a stake-boat till the convoy was ready.

Captain Cregan of the new tug, the Rowley Towing Co. No. 8, called upon Erie's father, but old Kadden was drunk to the world and sprawling on the cabin floor like a huge dropped oyster. Mrs. Kadden was sick in her berth.

So Erie had to play captain of the barge and pretend that her father had twisted his ankle and could not leave his bed.

At last they got away and she retraced with unbearable stupidity and leisure the path of glory she had traveled with Fogarty. She was mad with impatience to overtake him, but Rowley No. 8 was an idiot of a tug and as slow as an ox.

The puzzle of the letter kept her from going insane with impatience. By sheer pounding at it she worked out a few words. "New York" she knew, of course. "Lizzie Lobdell" she recognized at once, for she had seen the tug often and could have described its every feature to a portrait-painter. "John" was impossible, but "Boody" became "Bay-oh-oh-dee-eye." And she prayed that Captain Bayohohdee-eye would be good to her Fogarty.

Perhaps it was well that another tug took the barge back to New York and that the Bridget Maria was at the far end of the string, for Erie could not have spared a moment with Fogarty.

Her mother lay moaning in the cabin. Her father drank harder than usual. The other children behaved like wildcats. Erie had to mother them all and play the skipper, too.

One evening after she had washed the dishes, she stood on the chill deck beating herself with her own arms to keep from freezing. She recited her alphabet with lapses of memory. The later letters escaped her, and she longed for Fogarty to correct her.

She went over her pilot lesson and twirled an imaginary wheel, talking to herself, ringing an imaginary bell and cursing the engineer for misunderstanding it.

She remembered how Fogarty had stood back of her, his hands on hers, his chin knocking on the top of her head. Loneliness swept down on her like a wind.

The sun slipped out of the cloudy sky, but no stars came in. It was not their night. A thick haze shrouded the river. She could only dimly see the stars of a city they were passing. She was mortal lonely. She would never see Fogarty again. She could not even remember the letters at the end of the alphabet.

Suddenly on the black sky there flamed out a great letter. It was the forgotten last letter of all.

"Z."

She cried out its name. It was followed by another, one of the earlier ones.

"E."

She knew that and as the next ones fell into line, she fairly shouted their beautiful names, "Pay—Haitch—Why—Air!"

Then all at once the sky was illuminated with the gorgeous words, "SEWING MACHINES."

It was as if Fogarty had lighted them up. They blinked out again, but she knew they would return upon the night. There they came:

"Z-E-P-H-Y-R Sewing Machines."

They vanished, but they were always rekindled. She watched them till a forested hill took them from her.

Finally she reached the Hudson, and it was good to be rushing south with the current speeding the barge till the tug was put to it to keep the tow-line taut.

There came, however, hurricanes that picked up whitecaps and set the old scow slewling and rolling and leaking. Erie had to call the children out to help her put the heavy hatches in place and make fast the tarpaulins that plunged like stallions.

Just in time they made it as the lightning

came down the river like a raid of bomb-dropping black airplanes. The children were frightened into shrieking hysteria, and Erie was even more afraid, but she had to bluff it through.

She drove the kids down into the cabin with their wailing mother and their spewing father, and paced the deck to keep the watch the law required. She lighted the signal-lanterns and secured them in place, then dressed herself in her father's wet-weather uniform.

His rubber boots were hip boots to her. His nor'easter helmet rested on her shoulders and his slicker flowed around her feet. And she had to carry it about her knees as if it were a train.

The tempest overtook the barge and the fugitive tug, and the lightning stabbed the river on all sides like the enormous needles of a gigantic Zephyr sewing machine.

Erie wept and crouched against the cabin and made up prayers to fill the void in her religious education. Her petitions differed little from the swear-words her father used in his own storms, but they seemed to serve the purpose, for the barge was not touched.

Still, she could not be sure that the next swirl of fire from the clouds would not destroy her entirely, barge and all. And the thunder seemed to knock together the heads of the mountains.

The search-light of the tug ahead kept whipping the world and the other boats struggling through the night like lost pedestrians. Blown against the cabin so fast that she hardly could and hardly dared escape, she gasped as the search-light shot along a string of barges bouncing north, and picked up last of all the plunging tug.

She thought she knew that boat whose search-light swept her own tug and its tow. The crisscrossed shafts of light fenced in the murk, and finally the flare from her tug painted on the night the other deck-house where two men wrestled with the wheel.

Beneath them was the name of the tug:

LIZZIE LOBDELL.

She threw up her hands and screamed with all her might, "Fogarty! Fogarty!"

As if the cry that the wind swirled back into her throat had carried across the tossing waters, the search-light of the Lizzie Lobdell ran to her and blindly proclaimed her to the world.

But neither of the men at the wheel turned his eyes from the rollers ahead, and she slipped to the deck sobbing, forlorn, forsaken, ignored, and added her tears to the downpour from the shattered sky.

She rose at last with her boots full of water and every stitch on her soaked. But she had only her own shivering to keep her warm.

Fogarty had reached New York and was bound north again, perhaps to Canada. There was no hope of seeing him when she reached the big town. She would never see him again. What was there to live for?

Only the lifelong training of a bargeman's daughter kept her to her duty. She proved herself a skipper, even while she whimpered and hugged her wagging head like the heart-broken child she was.

The storm died out, the dawn came forth as if the sky were an unimaginable field of rain-washed red clover. But there was no daybreak in Erie's night.

She watched the splendors of New York creep slowly up the river, the parks, the white palisades of buildings. On both sides of the river cities slid north as the barge followed its leash. Incredible towers stabbed the sky and hid the lowly old steeples. The river became a Broadway of thickening traffic.

Tugs innumerable swam here, swam there like coots and terns, and ferry-boats like vast brown geese wabbled and waited for the barges to pass, and quawked ridicule at them for their lack of grace. Erie did her best to take her father's place and howl back curse for curse, but her heart was not in her repartee.

Down around the tip of Manhattan Island and north again, up the East River under the

bridges the barge dogged the parade, hanging back now against the rope.

Erie's father crept out on deck when the barge was nudged up to the elevator for unloading, but he was weak as a sick cat. Her mother could not even roll out of bed. The children ran into every danger, and Erie saved their lives a dozen times.

When the barge was emptied of its cargo, it was carried away to the colony at Greenpoint and tucked in among a score of scows of every sort, fine new ones, and two with electric-lighted cabins, and others even worse than the Bridget Maria and with more people aboard. There were three thousand people in the barge colony of New York, and they made up a separate people with tragedies all their own.

One thing had helped Erie through her dark hours: the hope that the barge might be laid up in some place long enough for her to go to school and learn to read. But the way to the shore was over half a dozen barges and she was afraid of the streets, the fearsome people that crowded them, and the fatal cabs and drays that bombarded them.

To the barge next door a little girl was carried across the planks with a broken back. A truck had got her. Two barges away, the children had brought home from school nothing but cases of diphtheria. A friend of her mother's, six scows removed, fell ill and was carted off to the hospital in an ambulance. She never came back.

The gentleman next door on the left was always reading, and Erie was just mustering up the courage to ask him to teach her when he went mad and tried to kill his wife, who ran and jumped into the water to save her life—and didn't. It took three policemen to take him away.

The captain of one of the barges went ashore one night and was found with his skull cracked by thugs. Such things filled the gossip that flew from clothes-line to clothes-line.

So it seemed safer to stick close at home. And then the Bridget Maria was likely to move at any minute. Three or four times it was hauled away on odd jobs to New Jersey and Staten Island.

Never had her father behaved so hopelessly. He had lost all pride in his career. Somehow he found the way to new supplies of liquor when he went ashore.

He sobered up enough one day to go in search of a job, and came back sober and alert, his old self. But he found his wife in such agony that a doctor had to be fetched. And when he came he demanded that she be hurried to the hospital.

It was a ticklish job getting the big and writhing hulk of a mother across the barges to the ambulance. There was some mysterious talk of a necessary operation. What it was Erie never learned except that it was "internal," an "abdominal operation." Whatever it was, she had to be left in the hospital for weeks, and when she was toted back she must keep to her bunk for months.

Erie hardly saw the sky except when she had to go outside to hang up the wash. It was too cold now to set the tub outside, and the worst of it was, it was too chilly above for the children to play or the skipper to smoke there.

One fine sleety day Erie was almost convinced that her home was overcrowded. At that, it had a two-room cabin where the poorer scows had but the one. Each of the rooms was all of twelve-foot square. But in the galley there was the stove, and that was packed like a street-car with the big pan where the beef was boiling and others for the veg'ables. The coffee-pot was squeezed in alongside the pan where broth was cooking for her sick mother. Add to that the big boiler where the water was heating for the wash-tub, and the stove did well to keep on its rickety legs.

In front of it Erie had set the wash-tub on a wobbly horse, and the clothes-wringer clung to the edge of that. Cupboards for plates and dishes, pans and skillets, flour, crackers, sugar, salt and the like, filled one wall, and the long

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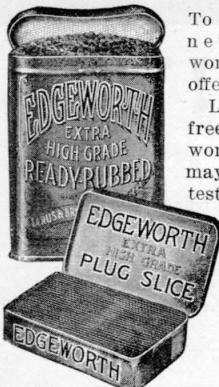
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bunk for Father took up another. The door to the parlor, dining-room and general sleeping quarters was cut in the other. And there were only four walls.

Inside the adjoining chamber was the dining-room table with its furniture, a long bunk where Mother slept, spilling across the edge like dough oozing over a baking dish. Above her head was the combined couch of Oneida and Utica. They were so snug that when Oneida sneezed, Utica shot out into space.

Across from them was the short shelf where the lank Mohawk kept falling off whenever he fell asleep. Clyde had a mattress on the floor.

And Erie had a whole folding cot to herself. What with hooks where hats and caps, rain-coats and sweaters and overcoats, and all the children's things were hung, swinging and falling into faces at every jar; and places for boots and shoes and a chest to hold underclothes and the Lord only knows what all, not to mention the wash-basin, the toilet cranny, a few chairs and a bench, and the dozens of other things a family of seven accumulates, the cabin was full to overflowing when it was empty.

When everybody was at home during a meal, undressing for bed at night or dressing in the morning, or when there was a storm on, the cabin was surely snug enough. It was not lone-some at least, especially now that Maw was sick and Paw was so frequently peevish drunk and banging about, smacking heads together, and roaring:

"Begod, it's like livin' in a can of fishin' worms."

On this particular afternoon he was away and Erie was working like mad to get the washing done before he squeezed in again. Her mother was keening with pain and weeping for the lost baby and her wasted life. And the children fell to quarreling over a game of craps on the floor, and Erie was pretty well distraught.

But she kept rasping the clothes on the wash-board and scalding her hands and arms and trying to swear enough like a mule-driver to keep from crying like a little girl. And then some tug swung some barge against the side of the Bridget Maria like smashing it with a ten-ton hammer. And the wash-tub tipped over; and the boiler slid off the stove, and the coffee-pot turned a somersault, and the oven door flew open emitting the baking potatoes.

The floor was awash with boiling water and a flotsam and jetsam of clothes and dinner and yawling children. And Mother all but pitched over into the soup.

Erie did not even swear. No one had probably yet invented the words for her thoughts. To cry would be hopelessly inadequate. So she laughed as she darted in forty directions at once, pushing her mother back into place, smacking brothers and sisters out of the way, rescuing what salvage was possible, and then mopping up the ruins.

She was good and tired when she was done, and she went up on deck for a breath of icy air and room for collecting her wits.

And this was the time that Heaven chose to let Fogarty find Erie again.

She was sitting on the deck alone, lonely beyond even the effort to hold his letter in her hand. Her father was away on the hunt for a job, the children below scrambling out of wet clothes into dry.

With dead eyes Erie bleared at the dismal chilly world. Her eyes were gray and her nose was red. Then through the haze, as once when he stood up out of the mists on the river, she made out a blur, a tall young man skipping across the barges. He walked into the distant focus of her eyes and she thought him a dream, till she heard him cry out, "Erie dearie!"

Then he came loping like a billy-goat, and that dressed up, you'd think he owned a warship. And he jumped at her and swung her into the air and crushed her on his chest and made her see stars with a kiss that would have roused the dead.

She laughed and she cried and she danced, and she would not let him talk till she had taken the letter from her pocket and made him read her every word of it. It was so frayed from being pondered that he said:

"Murder in Irish, it's time I was writin' you a new one."

"Oh, write me no more till you learn me to read them."

Then the tears broke down like a rain-squall on the Hudson, and Fogarty holding her and patting her and saying:

"Turn on the faucets and fill the pails! Don't mind me new coat. The Yid that sold it me guaranteed it would shed wather like a duck's back. But it ain't gonna rain no more, for I'm going to whisk you out of this as soon as you're old enough to marry, and that's only a matter of two little years or so."

To think of Heaven only two years away was so beautiful that she cried a bucketful more. She stared at him in such blissful woe that she could only whisper: "Oh, Gawd! Oh, Fogarty!"

And then her father came across the barges on one of his dignified drunks. He carried his cane like an alderman and it was a heavy cane that had cracked many was the skull.

When he saw Fogarty hugging his daughter, he let out a roar like all of Daniel's den of lions let loose.

Fogarty turned and greeted him as polite as an apostle, and Erie faltered a formal introduction. But nothing would appease the haughty liquor that made up the old man's cargo.

"Off the barge!" was still his motto, and he kept striking at the dodging Fogarty, who could not decently attack the father of his Erie. Erie tried to shield him and got a crack across the forearm that nearly broke it.

Then she had to hold Fogarty from tearing the old man to pieces for that. Running and dodging, she implored him, for her sake, to go away till her father sobered up.

He hated to, but he had to, and he let himself be chased from the scene.

By the time her father had sobered up, Fogarty's tug was off on another commission, out on the raging Atlantic bringing in through a blizzard an ocean liner trimmed with icicles.

Dull times, a strike among the tugmen, a coal strike and an early winter finished the hopes of Erie. New Year's Eve found her sitting out alone on the barge-deck with sharp-fanged winds whipping the blankets and the quilts she had brought out from her bed.

She wanted to hear the revelry in New York, the whistles blowing and the search-lights playing and the horns squawking.

Her father celebrated with a grand spree, and then took an oath that he would never drink again so long as he lived. The children loved that oath, for it had been known to keep him sober for as long as a month at a time.

He kept it long enough to help his wife out of bed and about the cabin, and to superintend the taking on of a load of coal for some unknown destination.

This was always a nice thing for the barge. Everything turned black. They breathed black air, ate black food with black hands, and left black marks on all the black things they touched. They washed in black water and rubbed it in with black towels.

Erie grew vicious enough to blurt out, "I'm black inside and out, and I've nothing but black thoughts inside me black head."

The only good thing about it was that they could steal enough coal to keep the home fires burning for a long while.

When the stuff was all stowed, a tough and stubby tug came up and yanked the barge away from the old homestead and pulled it up and across the river through a shrapnel fire of sleet to the barge colony off East 96th Street on the New York side. There were fifty barges here, each of them holding five hundred tons of coal and more or less of a family.

And there they stayed while Erie wondered



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how on earth or the waters thereof her Fogarty could ever trace her. The weather was so vile that she almost hoped he would not even try.

The month of January had come in like a polar bear and was trying to go out like a bull walrus. Sleet and rains, snows and blows kept the barges jostling and jouncing and the cables groaning.

At last Captain Kadden reached the end of his patience and set out for shore on an important mission—"to see a certain party." The children knew that the other party would be old John Barleycorn, and Mohawk shocked the other children by speaking what they were all thinking: "I hope the old booze-hound falls off the dock."

Erie was wishing that Fogarty might chance to come along while the coast was clear, though the sky was not.

Along about four o'clock in the afternoon the weather went drunk and crazy. The tide was on the ebb, and a northwest wind tore at it and drove it away in a panic. The barges grinded and bucked at the cables, and there was an ominous feeling in the air that something had to happen.

The clouds were torn down in a fury of hail and rain that turned the deck into a great snare-drum. The barges began to mill and gore one another in short rushes and clashes like bullocks about to stampede.

Suddenly the wind screamed and broke in a tidal wave of air. Cables snapped with the boom of cannon-shots, and a clutter of thirty barges split loose as an ice-floe breaks free.

Out into the wide swirl and leap of the river they swept, banging and twisting and running seaward with an unknown speed.

Erie must be skipper now, and she put on her father's great boots and slicker and cap, and ran up the steps and forced open the cabin door. It took all her strength. Hail, rain and chunks of air smote her.

A yammer of fear came up from the cabin where the hailstones and the rain pelted the children. The door banged shut with a deafening noise. She looked down at the children clinging to their mother and she praying on her knees.

Erie could not bear to stay in the dark and die there. She hurled herself against the door and slipped through, holding her hands before her to keep the hail from beating her eyes out.

In snatched glimpses she noted that the river was pitching its waves high with an oceanic frenzy. The barges were churning round and round in the great eddies. More cables were snapping. Men were running to and fro on tilting decks. Dogs were yelping, children and women howling for help.

The wind was shunting the barges toward the rocky shore of Welfare Island with an insane energy. The current in the river fought them away, and tried to pile them up on Mill Rock.

A fire-boat put away from a dock, its siren whistles whooping the signal of distress. A police boat came hooting to the rescue. A ferry-boat abandoned its passengers and sidled out with its walking-beam swaggering.

Three bulldog tugs slogged up-stream to join the fight. Erie prayed that one of them might be the Lizzie Lobdell, and then commanded the prayer and begged God to keep Fogarty out of the peril, for the barges were skirling along the river in a way that would crush any boat they hit.

At length the fire-boat and the police boat and the three brave tugs formed in line and came on like police reserves advancing on a crazy mob. They crept up on the barges and charged on them, crowded them together in bunches, and nosed them away from the rocks on Welfare Island, began to drive them slowly back toward the East Ninety-sixth Street pier where throngs had gathered to watch the drama in spite of the tempest.

It grew dark and the fire-boat and the others turned on their search-lights.

The Bridget Maria was gliding reluctantly back to its place, and in one sweep of the lights

Erie caught sight of her father on the pier, bracing his feet against the string-piece and wringing his hands in drunken yearning for the safety of his children.

She understood him in a flash of pity and longed to be restored to him, and to love him again as she had loved him before she had known any other love.

Then, just as the riot seemed quelled, there came the charge of a new hurricane blast. A black pack of night winds rushed the barges and scattered them with a crackling of the last cables and a ripping of timbers as they broke away from one another and their guards.

The fire-boat all but foundered as the Bridget Maria smote it amidships, caromed off to the police boat, dealt it a staggering smash, and rolled away down the river alone, while the other barges went their separate ways, huge buzz-saws weighing five hundred tons each.

Down the river the barge shot in the pitch-dark, and all that Erie could do was to run into the cabin and light the red lanterns, and run up again and hang them in place.

She went out to the prow and stood there waving a red lantern to warn the world that she was on the way to her doom. As the barge whirled she was as often astern as forward.

All the river boats were letting off blasts of alarm. Search-lights were weaving a net of fire over the river, and every shaft of light was a chaos of hail and rain.

Suddenly she saw that her barge was being chased by a tug. The long arm of its search-light fastened on her and clung, blinding her till she hid her aching eyes in the crook of her elbow.

The barge that had always been a helpless thing—they called it "nonslef-propelled"—had taken on engines of speed and the tug's engines were driven to their utmost.

On one wide swerve of the barge she was carried out of the tug's search-light and the tug ran into another light. She read the name Lizzie Lobdell. Clear as day she could see Fogarty peering over the spokes of the wheel.

He had a wolf-look on his face. His teeth were white in his snarl.

She stumbled over her long skirts to a broken cable and made ready to hurl it. The tug shoved alongside, and she swung the line over toward the deck-hands, who clutched it and fell on it and made it fast as Erie fell on her face from the effort she made.

Farther aft, the deck-hands flung another line aboard the barge and Erie gave it a place to hold. And now she could hear that Fogarty was trying to yell something to her as he rang the "Reverse engines!"

The storm was too noisy and the rattle of the hail on her raincoat was deafening. So she scrambled aboard the Lizzie Lobdell and stamped up the steps to the pilot-house, and wrapped her arms around Fogarty's neck and kissed him aft the ear and howled lovingly:

"What is it you was saying, Fogarty?"

He roared at her: "Go back!"

"Why?"

"Get your people off."

"Why?"

"That barge is li'ble to sink anny minyoot—or bust loose again. Hurry!"

So Erie clattered down the steps and made her way back to the Bridget Maria and down into the cabin, and herded the family out into the gale, and got them all across to the tug.

She stuffed them all into the engine room and then went up to Fogarty.

The ebb-tide and the mad wind and the eddies and the weight and momentum of the barge on the seaward current gave the tug a fearful enemy to overcome. Dead ahead was a stalled Sound steamer, unable to back for lack of sea room in the crowded river, afraid to push forward for uncertainty of the barge.

But Fogarty set his teeth and bunted the barge slowly round and round in a great circle that grazed the bow of the liner and tore off the buffers from the side of the tug. Slowly, bitterly, the Lizzie Lobdell, like an ant lugging a dead beetle home, pulled round into the



Made for men I like it!

I'm one of thousands who asked Mennen for a different face lotion. One that was cooling, refreshing, soothing, healing, antiseptic and mildly astringent. It had to remove objectionable face shine. I wanted something in a handy, sanitary container—no glass to break—hence the tube.

I asked for a lotion that was never greasy or sticky, one that would disappear and dry quickly on the face.

Mennen made Skin Balm for me. It gives a big kick that refreshes, tingles—a zippy sensation that sets you up, makes you feel wide awake, fit for the world's test—and what an invigorating odor!

I am told dozens of formulas were developed and discarded. The one they adopted they called Skin Balm and it gives my face what I like.

Prolongs the soft, smooth feel left by Mennen Shaving Cream. Protects against weather. Heals blotches, cuts, scratches and cracked lips. Smooths chapped red hands—any roughened skin.

Skin Balm was made for me and thousands of other men like me. I like it. So will you. Try it—and watch how your face improves. Start tomorrow morning after shaving.

The Mennen Company, Newark, N.J., and Toronto, Ont.



MENNEN SKIN BALM

teeth of the gale and set out for far-off Ninety-sixth Street.

In the crisis of this new labor, while the deck-hands and the cook were trying to fix a hawser to the stern of the tug so that it could be free to tow the barge, the storm ripped off a flapping sign-board from a pier and hurled it through the air, with a boomerang twist.

It cracked through the pilot-house window and caught Fogarty in the head. He went down in a heap. Erie dropped to her knees with a cry and caught his bleeding head to her breast.

Her upward glance of agony saw the wheel rolling this way and that. She felt the boat rocking and gyrating.

She leaped to her feet, clutched at the handles of the flying wheel, barked her knuckles, but gripped, held, braced her shoulder against the devil's power beneath, and wrestled till she won. The wheel obeyed her, and she was compelling her memory to restore the lessons Fogarty gave her.

The deck-hands ran up to see what had happened. They found her with her eyes fixed on the night ahead, the hail pounding her face in handfuls of gravel. They did not know how to steer and she did. She ordered them to take care of her Fogarty, and asked where the hell was the Captain of this tug.

One of the deck-hands explained that the Captain had gone ashore and Fogarty had taken the tug out on his own responsibility when he first saw the barges loose. He would undoubtedly lose his job for doing it.

She nodded. She understood. She even laughed a little.

When the blood was washed out of Fogarty's eyes and the fog out of his brain, he took the wheel from her. But he was so weak that she had to help him.

At last they pulled up to Ninety-sixth Street and found the other barges already driven back into the corral. With the aid of the police boat and the fire-boat, the Bridget Maria was persuaded to accept a berth and a set of new lines. It was her last escapade.

Skipper Kadden was sober if not by any means dry when he rejoined his reunited family in the cabin. The place was in a state and thicker than a can of fishing worms, but rather snug at that when you listened to the storm outside.

There was quite a piece in the papers the next day, with head-lines on the front page. Erie went almost mad to know what they said. But she would not let her father read them to her as he might have done, having gone to school in his early days before he committed himself and his posterity to the slow but ruthless restlessness of the barge life.

When Fogarty called, he gave Erie a grand reading lesson in the head-lines, "30 Drifting Barges Sweep East River." But the text was made up of small letters that she did not know—as yet, and when he read the story of the wild night and added the words, "The hero of the occasion was Miss Erie Kadden, who is to be the bride of Francis X. Fogarty, as soon as he gets another job, if ever," she looked him in the eye and snickered.

"You dirty liar, it says nothin' of the kind."

"Read it for yourself," he said, thrusting the paper at her. She stared till the tears blinded her poor ignorant eyes, and she sobbed:

"I can't read! I can't read!"

"And a fine thing for me that you can't," said Fogarty, "for if you could, you'd not be needin' me to learn you how. You'd be runnin' off with some reporter—or a lib'arian belike."

"Beliike hell!" said Erie.

Fogarty glared at her hard: "Before you become Mrs. Fogarty, you've some things to unlearn, Miss, and piratical grammar is one of them."

"Ay, ay, Mr. Fogarty."

"And that's the first letter that cooms aither Haitch—I. Say it! and we'll go on from there."