



## The Amateur Pirates

By J. O. Curwood

Illustrated by Dan Sayre Groesbeck



HE sun was sinking like a blood-red ball in a field of fire—as the sun should set on the eve of a sanguinary struggle at sea. So thought Rusty, captain of the *Lady Gwendolyn* and her pirate-crew. The pirate-ship rested heavily in an almost motionless waste of water, but there was breeze enough partly to fill her sail and to flaunt, at the peak of the single mast, the half of a table-cloth, on which was painted bold and clear the skull and cross-bones which proclaimed her calling.

Edging up across Lake Erie an eighth of a mile away was a small, full-rigged schooner, looming picturesquely against the western sky under a dirt-gray cloud of canvas. The pirate-crew had watched her slow approach, and for a quarter of an hour Captain Rusty had stood on the sloop's cabin roof, a twisted glass which distorted shapes amazingly screwed to his right eye. About his shock of bright-red hair he had tightly bound a red bandanna, and from

under this his thin, freckle-strewn face shone red and dirty. In the belt about his middle he carried a carving-knife, and in the leg of one of his boots, which were big enough for two pirates of his size, were concealed a pistol, a box of cartridges, a case-knife, and other things which were prized. The others of the *Lady Gwendolyn*, four in number, were the raggedest, dirtiest urchins that had ever sailed a ship, and for three minutes one of these had kept his eyes leveled along a piece of gas-pipe which had been fitted over the bow of the pirate-ship. At last the gunner turned about and called out in shrill disgust,

"Ain't yer ever goin' t' tell me t' shoot?"

"Fi-yer-r-r-r-r!" yelled the captain.

With a spasmodic jerk the gunner lit a match and touched the flame to a short fuse in the end of the improvised cannon. Then the crew of the *Lady Gwendolyn* ducked. A moment later there came a deafening explosion, and half a pound of pebbles sang on their way to the schooner.

"Load 'er up!" shrieked Rusty, coming from cover and swinging his arms joyously. "Load 'er up!"

Two or three men ran to the rail of the passing schooner, and the pirates heard a warning voice. The gas-pipe roared in response. Never in his life had Rusty been more in his element than at this moment. But suddenly, in the middle of a yell which seemed as though it would split his throat, he choked himself off with a gasp of astonishment. There had come an unexpected tremble in the great white wings of the schooner, and while the pirate-crew stared in silent stupefaction the canvas crumbled down like melting banks of snow, and from the vessel's side a boat shot out, filled with four of the biggest, most determined looking men that the *Lady Gwendolyn's* crew had ever seen.

"Holy Gee!" ejaculated the gunner. He looked up at the captain, but Rusty's face was blank. A few minutes later the four seamen towed the *Lady Gwendolyn* astern of the schooner, where they tied her as a prize, and one after another the captured pirates scrambled, in all of their warlike toggery, over the side of the ship. All of this had happened almost too quickly for Rusty's comprehension. Nipped in the bud was the bloody and picturesque career which he had mapped out for himself. He was stunned, ashamed, and as he toppled over the schooner's rail, hoisted with good-natured force by a seaman behind, he saw that he was being laughed at by half a dozen men and women gathered on the after-deck. As he scrambled to his feet and the other pirates came pouring over, a girl ran out from the little group and leveled a boxlike thing at Rusty.

"Oh, keep quiet, keep quiet—please do!" she cried. "There! One, two, three—the light is so poor—four, five, six—" and so she counted up to a dozen, and Rusty, knowing that his picture was being taken, strengthened proudly with his right hand on his hip, threw out his chest, and stood without a quiver. When the girl had done, she looked straight into his eyes, and laughed one of the prettiest laughs that Rusty had ever heard.

"Thank you!" she said.

Even in this moment of sore defeat Rusty's fertile mind reverted to his favorite pirate-heroin, who had met the beautiful heroine in just this way, and he straightway fell in love with Miss Virginia Cloud, who, in company with her parents and a young man whom Rusty had not yet seen, was

making a cruise of the lakes in one of her brother's ships. The pirate-captain and his crew were given quarters under an awning back of the cook's house, and there they discussed their misfortune until the cook took them into his kitchen and filled them with a supper such as they had not seen in many days. The cook was a negro, and after the meal was over he came in, grinning broadly, and carrying a basket heaped with oranges.

"Miss Virgin'y sent you these, an' sed she'd lak t' see you," he announced, nodding at Rusty.

The youthful pirate's heart thumped wildly inside his jacket. He distributed the oranges, thrust his own in one of his pockets, and rose from the table. He felt that something momentous was about to happen.

"Youse fellers go back an' lay low," he whispered as the cook turned to his work. "Don't say nothin', but be ready!"

As he went on deck he paused for a moment in the growing shadow of the caboose, fished out a cigarette from deep down in his boot-leg, lighted it and then walked forward, where he found the girl watching the rippling sea under the bow of the slowly moving schooner. As she heard him thumping up in his heavy boots she turned, and once more she laughed merrily in Rusty's face.

"My goodness, how fierce you look!" she cried. She held out one of her pretty, white hands, and shaking as if with the ague, Rusty thrust one of his own dirty ones into it. He saw now that the girl was very pretty. But there was something about her eyes which troubled him. They were red, as though she had been crying, and Rusty thought he saw a tear halfway down her cheek.

"What's the matter?" he asked guilelessly. Something strange inside him seemed urging him to drop his cigarette, and he did. The girl saw the act, and almost hugged him up beside her.

"Nothing," she replied, yet Rusty knew that there was a tremble in her voice. "I just wanted to talk with you. Will you tell me your name?"

"I ain't got none."

"What! No name?" The girl tilted up his freckled face, and gazed squarely down into it.

"Nothin' but Rusty," he answered. He could not help looking into the girl's eyes, and he noticed that a sudden change came



RUSTY THREW OUT HIS CHEST AND STOOD WITHOUT A QUIVER

into them. At times Rusty had dreamed that away back in the misty past he had known such eyes as those, filled with that same gentle softness.

"No name!" repeated the girl. "And haven't you a home or—or—" She did not finish.

"Guess I had one once, but I don't know where," informed Rusty. "They had me in a orphan asylum for two weeks, though." He grinned, as though this fact were unusually amusing; but the girl turned her face out toward the lake and slipped an arm around his shoulders. For several minutes there was silence. In Rusty's little soul things were happening which he had never experienced before. For the time he forgot that he was a pirate. He could not remember ever having had a woman's arm around him like this, and unconsciously he snuggled closer to the girl.

"Rusty," she said suddenly, "would you like to escape?"

The question almost took the boy's breath away; it brought him back to the realization of being a captured pirate. In a flood his old ambitions returned to him, but they were almost immediately replaced by the desire to remain with the girl. He wanted to tell her this, and was just beginning when she interrupted him.

"Would you like to escape, to-night, and take me with you?"

Filled with joy, Rusty replied that he would. Then, with her head bent down very near to his, Miss Virginia described her plans. When she had done, the pirate-captain straightened, almost bursting with the great secret she had confided to him. At that moment a man came and stood within a few feet of them. He was a young man, and he held his hat in his hand. But the girl had turned. Her chin was high in the air, her lips were closed very tightly, and Rusty wondered what was the matter. In a moment the young man turned and slowly walked away.

"Who's dat guy?" asked Rusty.

"He? Oh, just a man," replied the girl. Under a sudden impulse she faced Rusty and put both her arms around him. "I want you to promise me one thing, Rusty. You won't go near *him*, will you?"

"You bet I won't, if you don't want me to!" said the boy.

Miss Virginia bent down and pressed her warm lips upon one of Rusty's dirty cheeks, and for an hour after that the pirate-captain could think of nothing much beyond this soft caress. He went back to his crew under the canvas awning, but not until the evening was well advanced did he tell them of the venturesome work in store for them that night. For a time the pirates amused themselves by playing cards in the light of a deck-lantern. Then they doubled up

back in the shadows, and still later Rusty crept out cautiously and going to the girl's cabin knocked lightly on the door. In a moment it was partly opened, and the pirate-captain slipped in.

"You're a little early, Rusty." The girl had been writing, and held a pen in her hand. The boy's enthusiasm was subdued by the whiteness of her face.

"Sit down," she said, with a little smile that made Rusty fear she was losing courage. "I'll be ready in a minute." After a few moments she turned to him again. "Hadn't you better get your men in the boat?" she asked. "I'll be there by that time."

After Rusty had gone she slowly read over the pages she had written:

DEAR MAMA: Please don't be frightened when you read this. To-night I am helping the boys to escape, and I am going with them. You know why, but I want you to tell father and Captain Marks that I did it just for a little fun. You'll do this, won't you? Mr. Brown is our guest, and it would embarrass him if the others knew about the affair. It is almost unnecessary to say that he came to me again this afternoon. I was perfectly fair with him, but he was too stubborn for anything. In other words, he said pointblank that I would have to give up my idea of studying operatic music, that he did not want a wife whose interests were divided between home and the stage. At that I slipped off my engagement ring, and then—well, he took it and walked away. I never want to see him again, and I want you to please

tell him so. The boys will put me ashore, and I will take a train for the Soo, where I will rejoin you. HE, of course, will have sense enough to leave the boat at Detroit. Now please don't worry, mama.

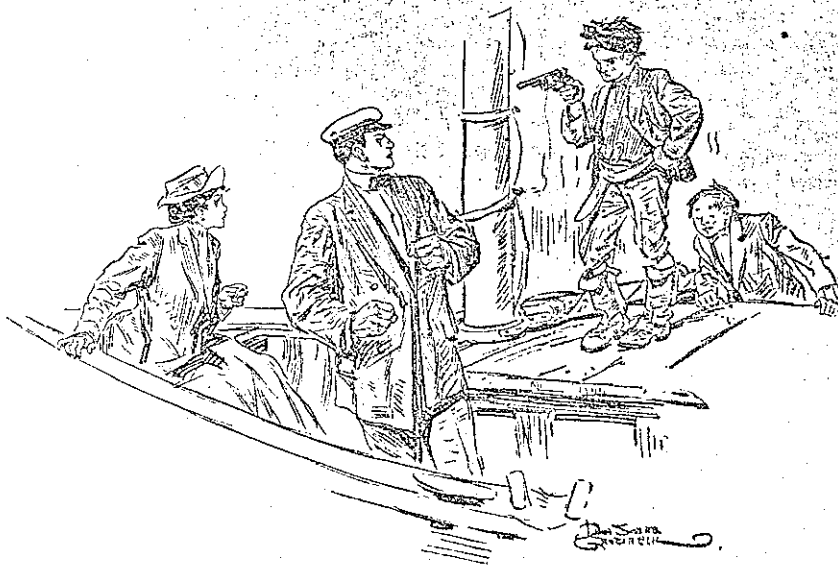
In haste,

VIRGINIA.

P. S. Of course you know I intended to do as Dick wished. But when he said I must I said I wouldn't, and now I never will!

The girl sealed the letter, addressed it to her mother, and placed it on her dresser where it would be seen in the morning. Then she put on a hat and a light coat, and with a dressing-bag in her hand slipped quietly out of her cabin into the gloomy stern of the ship. By their united strength Rusty and his pirates had worked the *Lady Gwendolyn* in until her stub of a bowsprit rubbed against the schooner's rudder, but even then the passage down seemed a perilous one to the girl. Rusty was waiting for her with a length of rope in his hands.

"We'll git y' down in a jiffy!" he said encouragingly. "I'll tie this rope under yer arms and ease y' down that way. See?" He showed her how the trick was to be done, and was so eager in his work that he did not notice a dark form stealing toward him in the shadow of the bulwark. As Miss Virginia was lowered into the sloop this figure paused, as if undecided whether to approach nearer or to retreat.



"SET DOWN 'R I'LL BLOW YER 'EAD OFF"

"Ahoy, down there!" hissed Rusty, when he knew that his passenger was safely aboard. "Lay to 'n' be ready! I'll be back in a minit!"

Into his head had come a daring thought. The piratical blood was surging through his veins again, and now, as he turned and crept stealthily back, his eyes were open wide for plunder. Rusty was not a thief. If a boy ashore had accused him of being such he would have fought, and fought hard. But he *was* a pirate, and to a pirate all things of value are legitimate plunder. Near the cook's cabin was a big coil of rope, and very cautiously Rusty dragged this across the deck. Suddenly he heard a noise behind him, and, turning, he saw a figure between him and the stern. The spirit of a man came into Rusty. He saw that the situation demanded action, and reaching down into his boot-leg he pulled out his revolver, sneaked up as quietly as a cat, and shoved the weapon close up under the nose of the young man against whom the girl had warned him that evening.

"Hands up, mister!"

The man obeyed. In the darkness Rusty could not see that he was laughing silently, despite the fact that the revolver was within a few inches of his face.

"Don't shoot!" he begged. "Don't shoot! I'll go with you."

Rusty's heart throbbed with delight. Here was a prisoner, perhaps a valuable one, instead of a coil of rope. Visions of a ransom filled his brain. In a shrill voice that trembled with excitement he commanded his prisoner to walk into the stern and climb down into the sloop. He was even more delighted with the alacrity with which the man obeyed. It was so dark that the pirates below could not see who was coming down, and Rusty did not inform them until he was among them himself. After he had cut the tow-line he whispered the story of his capture. Without a word the prisoner had seated himself. The girl was in the bow, a dozen feet away, concealed in darkness and unconscious of what had occurred.

"Is that you, Rusty?" she called in a low voice.

"Yes," replied the captain. "Don't anybody make a move until the schooner's out of hearin'," he added warningly, and for a few minutes there was a deep silence aboard the sloop. Slowly the schooner's lights grew more and more distant, and at

last Rusty ordered the *Lady Gwendolyn's* sail hoisted, and a lantern brought from the little cabin. He was eager for the girl and his prisoner to see him as a captain in active command. While still enveloped in darkness he transferred his weapons from his boot-leg to the belt about his waist. Then he stood up square and stiff on the cabin roof just above his prisoner's head, and as one of the pirates came up behind him with the light he placed a hand over his eyes and stared tragically out into the blackness of the night. In a moment the sloop was dimly illuminated. Rusty heard a sharp, sudden little scream, then a man's voice calling a name—just once. After that there was silence. Still the pirate-captain stared out over the lake. It delighted him to think that his attitude had startled the girl and the prisoner; he tilted himself perilously over the edge of the boat, one hand surreptitiously sought his revolver as if he detected approaching danger, then—

"Brute!"

Surely that name had not been applied to him! He regained his proper equilibrium with a jerk. The man had partly risen, with his hands stretched out toward the bow. Up there sat the girl. Rusty wondered what she was looking at. She seemed staring at least six feet above his head, her lips set tightly, her hands clenched in her lap. He looked up, but saw nothing of interest. Then he looked at the man again. It occurred to him now that the girl had warned him against this man. She feared him; possibly he had done her some great wrong, or was planning to hurt her. Determinedly he drew a bead on the back of the prisoner's head.

"Set down 'r I'll blow yer 'ead off!" he yelled.

The man turned, smiled up at Rusty, and sat down. Still holding his cocked revolver menacingly, Rusty approached the girl. She looked at him sternly, with a peculiar gleam in her eyes that Rusty had not seen before.

"Didn't I ask you not to tell *him*?"

"I didn't," replied the pirate-captain in a whisper. "'E was goin' to squeal on us, an' I bagged 'im! 'E's a prisoner!" He pronounced the last words with a tragic emphasis.

Despite herself, the girl smiled. But Rusty was a barrier between herself and the man.

"I wish you could get rid of him in some way, Rusty," she murmured. There was an appealing look in her eyes, and the boy's face became very sober. He walked back and whispered among his men. After a little they approached the prisoner and coolly proceeded to tie his hands and feet. The man looked at the girl and laughed, but this time she had turned her back toward him. Soon she heard a noise which grew suspiciously louder until out of curiosity she glanced over her shoulder. The five pirates had dragged their helplessly bound prisoner to the edge of the sloop, and he was already halfway over when she shrieked out Rusty's name.

"What are you doing?" she cried.

"Gettin' rid of 'im!" shouted Rusty. "Now, men, one, two—"

"Stop!" she screamed. "Rusty you're a—you're a——" She stopped, but Rusty knew that he was in disgrace.

"A clever joke!" growled the man, "a blamed clever joke!" Rusty knew that there was some good reason why he should free his prisoner, and he did so. For a long time after that he kept very quiet. Two or three times the man spoke to the girl, but she deigned no reply. At last she called to Rusty, and the boy crept up to her, feeling that he had lost all favor in her eyes; but she reached out and put an arm around him, and the pirate-captain felt as though he would burst with joy.

"Rusty, where are we going?" she asked.

"I dunno," he replied. "We're just sailin'. We might hit land any time."

"I know, but what land may we hit?" Rusty became nervous. He clawed at the rotten rail of the sloop, and wondered if he had better guess something at random.

"I—I ain't sure," he said truthfully. "Meby we're goin' t'ward Canada, meby we're goin' t'ward—what's that United States state off there?" He pointed, and the girl told him that it was Ohio.



THE FIVE PIRATES HAD DRAGGED THEIR HELPLESSLY BOUND PRISONER TO THE EDGE OF THE SLOOP

"Well, meby we'll hit that!" he concluded hopefully.

For a long time after that Miss Virginia sat very still, her face turned out to the darkness of the lake ahead, and Rusty tried hard to picture in his mind the things she might be thinking about. Her arm was still around him, and that gave him some comfort.

"You—you're mad?" he dared to whisper at last.

"Just a little, Rusty," she replied. "But not at you," she quickly added, with a re-

assuring pressure of her arm. Rusty felt that she was going to say something more to him soon, and he waited patiently, peering up into her face now and then.

"You wouldn't shoot, ever, would you, Rusty?" she asked.

"No-oo-oo-oo," replied Rusty doubtfully. Miss Virginia gave a relieved sigh. "I'm

he could hardly hold it. Once, filled with a knowledge of his power, he came up close to his prisoner and grinned sardonically in his face. The night passed tediously after this—at least to the girl and the man. The girl especially was becoming more and more miserable. She begged Rusty to find out from the man what time it



SUSPENDED FROM THE BUSH WAS A CHUNK OF BACON, AT WHICH THE MAN WAS PECKING LIKE A BIRD

so glad," she said. "I wouldn't have you hurt him, but——"

"But what?" urged Rusty, after waiting for a moment.

"When we reach land I want you to get him away from me. I don't want him to be near me or know where I go. Will you?"

Rusty said that he would, and during the next hour he invented a scheme so big that

was, and inwardly prayed that something would happen soon to relieve the situation. A little before dawn her prayer was answered. Warning first came in a slight jar and a scraping under the *Lady Gwendolyn* as though she were passing over drifting brush. Then came a jolt which flung the girl to the bottom of the sloop, and above her cry of alarm there sounded a shrill yell of

terror from one of the pirates as he was hurled head foremost into the lake. The man had half gathered the girl in his arms when the boy who had been flung overboard stuck his head over the edge of the boat.

"Land ho!" he yelled lustily.

"Where 'way?" cried Rusty.

"We're on it!" informed the partly submerged pirate. "I'm standin' on bottom now."

Rusty saw the girl struggling with his prisoner, but before he could lend her assistance she had freed herself. The man said something which he could not understand, then turned and jumped into the lake. The pirate-captain could hear him splashing on his way to the shore.

"He's gone!" he said. There was a note of disappointment in his voice as he saw the end of the great achievement which he had planned.

"I'm glad, Rusty," replied the girl. "Now, how am I going to get ashore?"

"Wade," advised Rusty promptly. "It ain't over yer head!"

To prove his assertion he dropped over the side, and found the water only up to his armpits. "You afraid?" he asked.

"Noo-o-o-o-o," said the girl hesitatingly, "but—"

"You needn't undress," comforted the pirate-captain.

Miss Virginia laughed, and the man ashore, hearing her merriment, swore to himself as he strode up from the beach.

"I'll have to change my clothes afterward, Rusty. If you'll be very careful, and will carry this bag without getting it wet, I'll follow you."

Rusty reached up for the bag and waded ashore with it. Immediately after him came the girl, and after her trailed all of the pirates but one, who remained behind to care for the *Lady Gwendolyn*. Then Rusty and his men went a dozen rods up the beach and built a big fire out of driftwood. By the time it was burning well the girl rejoined them, wearing a beautiful, clinging, creamy dress that made Rusty stare in open-mouthed admiration. She went straight up to him and gave him a hug.

"Dear Rust," she cried, "you're a—you're a brick! And every one of your men is a—brick!" She knew that word expressed worlds to Rusty. Then she went from pirate to pirate and kissed each of them, and thanked them so beautifully for

all that they had done for her that they were ready to get down and eat sand for her if she requested it. After a little, one of the pirates went out into the dim dawn and returned not many minutes afterward with the information that they were wrecked "on a island no bigger'n Grand Circus Park," which meant that there were about half a dozen acres in it.

In the firelight the girl's face showed her alarm. "I know! It must be Middle Sister Island!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Rusty!" There was a sob in her voice. "There isn't a soul on it, and *nobody* ever comes here! Oh, dear—dear—dear!" Rusty knew that she was really crying now, with her face buried in her arms, and he gulped hard two or three times and silently beckoned his men away. He knew what was the matter, too. She was afraid of the man. He told his men this, and he revealed other things to them. Then he signaled the other pirate from the *Lady Gwendolyn*, and all of them went out as silently as shadows in a search for the escaped prisoner. In Rusty's great scheme force was not to play a large part, for he had reasoned that the man would be more than their equal, unless he shot him, and that he had promised the girl not to do. He would lie to him. He would tell him that the girl wished to talk with him, but that he and his men would allow him to go near the girl only as a prisoner, with his hands securely tied behind his back. After the man's arms were helpless Rusty was sure that he would be an easy prey. Then he would inform him that the girl never wanted to see him again, and that he and his crew were therefore doing their duty.

The girl had raised her tear-stained face just in time to see Captain Rusty and his men disappear. She knew that they were not deserting her, so she sat beside the fire and cried and shivered and laughed by turns, until the day came in a ribbon of red over the lake. Then the pirates returned. One of them was limping grievously, and his dirty face had been cleansed in streaks by many tears. Shamefacedly Rusty showed one closed and swollen eye and an upper lip that bulged. But there was something in his manner which spoke of triumph.

"We hed a scrap," he explained, his articulation a little thick because of the condition of his lip. He did not know that the girl misunderstood him. She looked from the limping, tear-stained pirate to Rusty's



battered countenance, and mentally concluded that the two had engaged in a combat.

"You shouldn't fight," she reproved, trying to keep a sober face. But the humor of the situation overcame her, and she smiled. Rusty was delighted. He could see that she was already greatly relieved at being freed of the man.

"We done 'im good an' plenty this time!" he further elucidated, edging up to her confidentially.

"We!" exclaimed the girl, looking pityingly at the other injured pirate, who was standing almost entirely upon one leg and grinning cheerfully. "We, did you say? How many of you attacked him?"

"The hull of us!" said Rusty. He could not account for the girl's silence. He expected some words of approbation, and not receiving them soon turned his attention to the stranded sloop. Some weeks previously the pirates had resurrected the *Lady Gwendolyn* from a mud-bar where for several years she had been allowed to rot and warp. There was not a sound board in her, and in the collision with the shore she had crushed in a half of her bottom. Undismayed by the loss of their craft, the pirates whistled and shouted in the joy of their adventure as they brought their stores ashore and piled them near the dying fire. Captain Rusty's provisions began with a peck of potatoes and ended with an emaciated strip of bacon.

For a time the girl watched the pirates' operations with interest. Then she strolled slowly along the beach, looking sharply to guard against an encounter with the man, whom she still desired to evade. She wondered where he had gone. From a point which she soon gained she could see down both sides of the island, but he was not in sight. Her curiosity became acute. She continued her walk until she had entirely encompassed the island. Rusty had roasted a few potatoes and fried some bacon, and the choicest of the fare he had placed on a tin plate for the girl.

"We're goin' to build a raft," he informed her soon after. "When we get it built we'll go out there 'n' be picked up."

He pointed out over the lake where, two or three miles away, a trail of smoke marked the ships' highway. All that morning the pirates worked like beavers. By noon the raft was completed. With ropes and wire taken from the sloop, pieces of wreckage

and driftwood had been fastened together, and in the center of the crude craft had been erected a short mast bearing a part of the *Lady Gwendolyn's* sail. All of this Rusty proudly pointed out to Miss Virginia.

"And do you expect me to ride on that, Rusty?" she asked.

"Sure not!" replied the pirate-captain. "We're going out there 'n' stop a ship. Then we'll come back 'n' resky you." He spoke with confidence, and in watching their embarkation the girl forgot that she was being left alone with the man. Not until the pirates were well out did she think of this, and then she screamed to Rusty and waved frantically for him to return. Rusty seemed to comprehend, for his voice came back in a faint but cheerful shout:

"He won't hurt y', Miss Virgin'y. We've settled fer him!"

The girl wondered what he meant. She was not alarmed at first because she knew that the man was big enough to care for himself. But as the afternoon passed and the raft became only a speck out in the lake, a fear that something had really happened to her lover began to possess her. If the man had suddenly appeared and had held out his arms to her, she would have gone into them promptly. Her pique had partly disappeared at breakfast that morning. It was entirely gone now. She longed for her adventure to come to an end, and with only the lonesomeness of the lake about her and that silent, mysterious bit of wilderness behind her, fear came quickly where before there had been anger and defiance. And soon after the sky darkened until it was almost as gloomy as at evening. An occasional lightning flash streaked the sky. Up out of the south came the distant rumbling of thunder. The girl wanted to cry aloud, but something seemed to command her not to break the heavy silence that preceded the storm, so she only sobbed as she hurried around the island again. She thought of the pirates, and prayed that some ship would pick them up before the wind came. Then she looked up fearfully at the black growth of trees in the center of the island, in which handfuls of wind flung out by the approaching tempest made mournful, thrilling sounds. Up there was her lover. Perhaps he was dead. She drew nearer until she stared wild-eyed into a thickness that was fast growing black.

"Dick!" she called softly. "Dick!"

Dick!" She parted a mass of bushes. One step, two, three, and she was enveloped in the gloom. Almost above her head the sky opened in a panel of fire, and there came after it a rumble of thunder that seemed to jar the earth under her feet. For a time there was silence so absolute that she could hear her heart beat.

"Dick! Dick! Where are you?"

She went in deeper. Foot by foot she penetrated, trembling, listening, until she could not tell from which direction she had come. She stumbled between rocks, she scratched her face and hands on thorn-covered vines, and then she came to an open spot. In the edge of that opening was the man. He was sitting with his back against a sapling, behind which his hands were tied. In front of him was a swaying bush, and suspended from the bush by means of a string was a chunk of bacon, at which the man was pecking like a bird. He was maneuvering for a nibble when the girl saw him. She stood for an instant as silent as the rocks about her. Then she ran to him.

"Dick! I've found you! Thank God, I've found you!" And her arms were around him.

The next afternoon the girl and the man came close down to where the remnants of

the *Lady Gwendolyn* lay scattered upon the beach. A quarter of a mile out a sail was bearing down upon the island. It was a trim little yacht, with canvas as white as snow; brass glittered along her gunwale, a long pennant fluttered at her peak, and suddenly, as she luffed under a gust of wind, a large square flag filled out below it. Boldly designed upon this was the skull and crossbones!

"I told you we could depend upon Rusty," said the girl.

The pirate-captain was first ashore. He was very sober when he saw the man, but the girl met him with open arms.

"It's all right, Rusty," she said, hugging him to her. "There's been an awful big mistake, dear, and when you take us ashore I'm going to marry him! And, Rusty"—she hugged the astonished little fellow tighter—"you're going to be *our* boy now, forever and forever!"

"And we'll get you a bigger and better ship than any you ever had, Rusty," the man added. "But, tell me, boy, where did you get *that* boat?"

The last spark of piracy in Rusty rose for a moment triumphant. He straightened with a bit of his old pride.

"We cut 'er out!" he said briefly.

