

CARTERET COUNTY

NEWS-TIMES



Blackbeard

Raider of the Carolina Seas

Ben Wright

Governor Accepts Painting



Gov. Terry Sanford, left, accepts from W. B. Patterson, district manager of American Oil Co., the original watercolor painting featuring Blackbeard and his buccaneers. The picture was accepted by the governor, on behalf of the state, in April 1962. A portion of the painting appears on the cover page.

Reproduced on the cover page of this section of today's NEWS-TIMES is a portion of a painting, depicting Blackbeard, by the noted artist, H. Charles McBarron.

Mr. McBarron, consultant to the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D. C., is a recognized authority on early American dress and military uniforms.

He was commissioned to do the Blackbeard painting, one of a series of twelve dealing with American history, by the American Oil Co. The painting appeared in the Aug. 24, 1962 issue of Life magazine and the Aug. 28 issue of Look magazine.

The original watercolor painting, now owned by the North Carolina state art museum, was placed on exhibit in 11 major cities of the United States during the past year. Purpose of the exhibit, according to the sponsor, American Oil, was to encourage Americans to travel and visit sites of their American heritage. More than half a million persons viewed the exhibit.

The Blackbeard painting depicts the infamous pirate and his buccaneers burying treasure on North Carolina's Outer Banks. It is also featured on 1963 American Oil Co. calendars.

The Play Summarized

For people who like their reading in capsule form, this is a brief summary of the play appearing on the pages which follow.

The first act opens with Blackbeard on his flagship, Queen Anne's Revenge, headed north from Charleston, S. C., to Ocracoke, an island off the North Carolina coast. (Ocracoke was at one time part of Carteret county, but is now part of Hyde county.)

Aboard the Revenge are prisoners captured at Charleston. Among them is Loretta Thaxton, a young girl who was bound for England aboard the Silver Swan, a ship captured by Blackbeard. Also a prisoner is Theodore Buckman, mate aboard the Swan.

Blackbeard decides to hold Loretta for ransom. For some reason, the pirate also takes a liking to Buckman, because he is in love with Loretta, and hoping to protect her, ingratiates himself with Blackbeard and is made one of the pirate's aides.

While on the North Carolina coast, Blackbeard makes an agreement with Gov. Charles Eden, English governor at Bath, and Tobias Knight, the governor's secretary. Eden and Knight agree to let Blackbeard dispose of his spoils, hi-jacked at sea, at Bath, if the pirate will divide with them his loot.

While calling on Governor Eden, Blackbeard meets

and decides to wed Belinda Granville, a girl in her early teens. After they marry, Blackbeard leaves her at Bath and sails south to the West Indies, capturing prizes. Still aboard the Revenge as prisoners are Loretta and Buckman.

Blackbeard does not put in at Charleston and ask for ransom for Loretta as he at one time planned. Instead, he keeps her aboard as a servant, much to the dislike of the crew.

Loretta and Buckman, on the very few occasions they can get together, plan to escape, but realize their chances against the pirate horde are virtually futile.

They return to North Carolina and while at Ocracoke in November 1718, Blackbeard is besieged by Lt. Robert Maynard and two British sloops. They are sent by the governor of Virginia to put the pirate out of commission.

The governor took this action at the request of leading citizens of the Carolina coast who had suffered from the pirates' raids, and knew they could get no help from Blackbeard's accomplice, their own Governor Eden.

Lieutenant Maynard kills Blackbeard and sets Loretta and Buckman free. As they leave the Queen Anne's Revenge, Blackbeard's ghost appears, as even it does today, they say, on the dark of the moon, in the murky waters off Ocracoke where the nefarious sea bandit met his death.

Illustrations are by ...

With the exception of the cover page, the illustrations for the play, Blackbeard, were done by Mrs. James H. McLain, Morehead City. Mrs. McLain's name is Dorothy, but she is known by the nickname, Bunny.

A native of Milwaukee, Wis., she studied art for two years at Auburn (Alabama Polytechnic institute). She left school to be married and she and her husband have two daughters, Nancy, 8, a third grade pupil at Camp Glenn school, and Carol, 5, who is in kindergarten.

Since her marriage, Mrs. McLain has continued her art education. She took a course in interior decorating at the New York School of Interior Design, a course in portrait painting at Syracuse, and is now engaged in free lance commercial art work.

She recently studied art under Mrs. Frank Carlson, Morehead City and is former fine arts chairman, Morehead City Junior Woman's club.

She did the scenery for the 1963 Junior Woman's club production, Gulls and Buoys.

The McLains live at 211 Florida Ave., Mansfield Park. Mr. McLain is an electronics engineer,



Mrs. James H. McLain
... illustrator

engaged in marine radio repair and installation. He also owns and manages the Econ-O-Wash laundry, Morehead City. The McLains attend St. Peter's Methodist church, where Mrs. McLain teaches a kindergarten class in Sunday school.

Characters

(In Order of Appearance)

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Miguel | Madame Granville |
| Blackbeard | Belinda Granville |
| Stede Bonnet | Berto |
| Sailor | Fiddlers |
| Theodore Buckman | Wedding guests |
| Captain Grayson | First French crewman |
| Rolfson | Second French crewman |
| Loretta Thaxton | Governor Spotswood |
| Israel Hands | The Rev. Matthew Stithwyck |
| Ben | George Tommelson |
| Tombo | Michael Mayhew |
| Tobias Knight | John Howland |
| Governor Eden | Lt. Robert Maynard |

Watercolor Artist at Work



H. Charles McBarron, eminent artist and historian, was commissioned by American Oil Co. to do the Blackbeard painting. It was used in an advertising series in magazines.

About the playwright ...

Blackbeard, Raider of the Carolina Seas, was written by Ruth Peeling, Morehead City.

Miss Peeling, a member of the Carteret Community theatre, wrote the historical drama, Bonnie Blue Sweetheart, which was produced by the theatre in Morehead City high school in June 1959 and June 1960.

Bonnie Blue Sweetheart was based on the life of Emeline Piggott, a native of Carteret county, who served as a spy for Confederate troops during the war between the states.

Plans have tentatively been

made for production of Blackbeard by the theatre in 1964.

Blackbeard was written in observance of North Carolina's 300th anniversary, which falls this year. The state Carolina Tercentenary committee suggested that Tar Heels emphasize in the year-long observance the period between the granting of the Carolina charter, 1663, to colonial times. Time of the play is the early 18th century.

Miss Peeling is a 1946 graduate of Syracuse university school of journalism and Florida State university, 1953, where she received her master's degree in journalism.

She was managing editor of the Syracuse university newspaper, The Daily Orange, received the Sigma Delta Chi award for scholarship, and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi, national scholastic honoraries.

Miss Peeling, editor of THE NEWS-TIMES, is currently a member of the board of the North Carolina Editorial Writers conference.

In 1959 she won first prize in a statewide competition, sponsored by the Greensboro Writers club, for a children's story.

Miss Peeling is a past president of the Carteret Community theatre and is a recipient of the theatre's best director and service awards. She is president of the Carteret Business and Professional Women's club and a member of St. Timothy Lutheran church, Havelock.



Miss Ruth Peeling
... writes second drama

BLACKBEARD

Raider of the Carolina Seas

By Ruth Peeling

A Drama Based on 18th Century North Carolina History

Act One Scene One

Time: July 1718.

Place: Blackbeard's cabin aboard his sloop, Queen Anne's Revenge.

Setting: Lights in the theatre dim. Choral speaking groups, one of men and one of women, are backstage. Sound of storm at sea is heard in total darkness. Wave, wind and water sounds subside. Over them the choruses speak.

Men's Chorus: The dark waves roar like a million beasts.
A small ship bounces in their jaws.

Women's Chorus: And the winds shrill screaming through
the shrouds.

Men's Chorus: 'Tis a hellish night . . . is the devil abroad?
Aye, Blackbeard . . . seagoing robber of the
Spanish main.

(Storm sounds rise again. Curtain parts to reveal Blackbeard's cabin. Before curtain opens, stagehand sets overhead lantern, center stage, swinging, to convey feeling of rocking ship. Heavy oak table is in center of cabin, under lamp. Around it are three captain's chairs. At upper left are three narrow windows set close together, with panes of heavy, oiled paper. Up right center is bunk. At its head is a wooden cupboard or wine chest. At right, dark curtains blow in and out. Down right is a heavy sea chest and lying against it, asleep, is a member of the crew, in sweaty sailor garb.)

Blackbeard: (offstage): Curse the bloody capes of Carolina.

(He enters left with lantern. As he does, ship gives lurch that sends him reeling up left. He regains footing, shakes a fist and looks upward.)

Fire and damnation! A dozen farm wenches could handle
this ship better than you—you bunch of lily-livered scum.

(Sailor against chest stirs, giving a couple snorts and twitches. Blackbeard hears noise over subsiding storm and peers around. Two short snorts of snoring come again from sailor. Blackbeard draws sabre and moves around front of table toward sound. He recognizes sailor, gives him boot.)

Miguel!

Miguel (jumping up): Aye, aye, there's not a Spaniard in
sight. It's been a long watch, but I would have spotted a laden
ship I would have. Yes sir!

Blackbeard (makes motion as though to backhand Miguel
across the mouth): Belay your blubbering, you fool. What do
you do here besides sleep and smell up my quarters?

Miguel: You sent me to fetch your cutlass for sharpening.
While searching for that beautiful piece of Castilian steel, I come
upon some Madeira, not your best of course, and I took but one
seep. Like the keese of a beautiful woman, just one seep can
drive one mad unless he . . .

Blackbeard: I need not a lesson in love-making or drinking
you thieving pig. (Goes to curtained recess, reaches in and re-
turns with broad cutlass which he throws on table.) Never keep
weapons and wine where Spanish lovers of the pope can get their
sticky fingers on them.

Miguel (eager to be gone, snatches up cutlass): You are the
soul of wisdom, senor. Miguel will hone this blade so that it will
Part a head from a neck
With one swift fleck!

(Miguel swings blade, backs off, aims for the door and
smiles.) You did not know I was a poet, did you . . .

Blackbeard (takes step toward him): Get out! You misbe-
gotten son of a . . .

(Miguel dances out door. Sounds of storm have faded away. Blackbeard
replaces pistol at belt. Removes coat to reveal brace of pistols on shoulder
holster. He tosses coat on bunk as he moves to cupboard, takes bottle of rum
from it, pulls cork with his teeth, spits it out on floor and takes long draught
from bottle. He strides to table, sets bottle on table and sits in chair behind
table.)

Blackbeard (bellows): Bonnet! (He picks up bottle and
takes another long swig as chorus speaks.)

Men's Chorus: Like a storm Blackbeard rages, from isles of
the Caribbean to the Carolinas.
This was Edward Teach, once a lad of Bristol,
England, who longed to sail the sea.

Women's Chorus: At age 27, a rowdy robber,
Blackbeard sought to make his winnings
larger.

To the New World he went on venture-
some foray
And in the Barbados joined with Stede
Bonnet.

Blackbeard (roars): Bonnet!

Bonnet (enters calmly): Ah ha, my captain, you are in good
voice tonight.

Blackbeard (gruff but not angry with Bonnet's tone): Tie
your tongue. How are things above?

Bonnet: The mainsail is split, the jib . . . (reaches for Black-
beard's bottle.)

Blackbeard (snatches bottle): Fetch your own . . . what
else?

Bonnet (moving to cupboard): Things aren't good. This
storm was a ripper. There's a list to starboard.

Blackbeard: Hell's fire. Any milksop knows that. What
else?

Bonnet (returning to table and pouring rum into mug): Perk-
inson's out cold. Cracked his skull against a bulkhead. Morton . . .

Blackbeard: Men are easy to come by. The ship, Bonnet,
the ship! What's your estimate of our position?

Bonnet: I'm not the navigator. (Drinks from mug.)

Blackbeard: You're not much of anything, you cocky rooster.

Bonnet: Please be advised, Captain Teach. I am not here of
my own choosing.

Blackbeard: It suits me to have you here. If you'd stayed
on that garden patch in the Barbados, I wouldn't have ye clut-
tering up my quarters.

Bonnet (haughtily): That "garden patch" was 2,000 acres
of sugar cane.



Blackbeard shouts, "What do you do here besides sleep and
smell up my quarters?"

Blackbeard (takes swig from bottle): Gentleman farmer turned buccaneer. (Laughs uproariously.) That day y'sailed across my bow, run up y'er colors, then strutted the deck in fancy weskit and wig . . . only to become my prisoner!

(Blackbeard can go no farther, convulsed with the ludicrous recollection. Bonnet, miffed finally at being the subject of Blackbeard's merriment, calmly takes another draught from his mug, sets it down on the table, rises and starts out the door.)

I'm not through with you yet. What's our position?

Bonnet (turns): I'd say about 175 knots from Charleston, due east of Cape Fear.

Blackbeard: Ye would, would ye? (Pauses). Bonnet, I hope you know more about growin' sugar than you do seamanship. My silver-handled pistol against your emerald ring that we're due east of Topsail inlet and on a northwest course will raise Ocracoke in six hours with a fair wind.

Bonnet: My dear captain. You won my emerald ring on our last navigation wager. With the ship in the shape she is, you'll do well to see Ocracoke in two days, fair wind or foul.

Blackbeard (getting drunker): Tell Berto to set a northwest course. Make what repairs we can and quit flappin' y'er tongue. (Bonnet turns to leave) And Bonnet . . . how many prisoners aboard . . . besides you? (Chuckles.)

Bonnet (turns): Five, counting the woman.

Blackbeard: Too many. Prisoners are useless. Lessen they can pay their way. (Rises, chuckles). Luck was with us at Charleston. There she was, ship in full sail, comin' over the bar, bound for England. (Pokes Bonnet in ribs and laughs). But she didn't get very far, wot?

Bonnet: Neither did her 3,000 pounds in gold, my share of which I have yet to see.

Blackbeard (ignoring Bonnet's complaint): Four ships in two days and eight more bottled up in Charleston harbor. Stick by me, Bonnet, m'boy, and you'll be a rich man.

Bonnet: You're a blackhearted braggard, Teach.

Blackbeard: Also the richest bucko in the Americas, also the best sea fighter, and also getting a bellyful of you. How you made out at raiding ships will puzzle me 'til doomsday. Lucky I came along when I did or the fish and crabs would have been

fat on you long ago. (Bonnet turns to leave.) Bonnet! Tell Rolfson to bring me the prisoners.

Bonnet: The Charleston prisoners?

Blackbeard (snarls): What others are there?

Bonnet: The woman too?

Blackbeard (smiling slyly): Most particularly the woman.

(Bonnet leaves. Blackbeard returns to his chair, drinking and glowering, occasionally smiling evilly. The chorus speaks.)

Men's Chorus: Blackbeard enjoyed his rum, ho-ho, and his whiskey . . .

Women's Chorus: AND his ladies.

Men's Chorus: 'Tis said that he had 13 wives.

Women's Chorus (shocked): Thirteen wives?

Men's Chorus: Aye.

Women's Chorus: All at once?

Men's Chorus: Aye. He wed them one by one, port by port . . .

Rolfson (offstage left): Move along. Lift y'er clods.

(Door flies open. Sailor in dark outfit is shoved through door. His hands are bound behind him, his head has a bloody white rag around it.)

Git! Git! Move lively when ye'r goin' to see the captain!

(Another sailor, Ted Buckman, coat hanging open showing white shirt with blood stains, comes through door. His tousled dark hair hangs over his forehead, hands are tied in front. He's followed by grey-haired man, Captain Grayson, in dark coat, trousers, gold buttons, captain's cap. Coat hangs open; his hands are tied behind him. Rolfson follows, pulling after him Loretta in a conservative-colored but expensive gown, with rip on left sleeve. She jerks her right arm away from Rolfson as she gets on stage and stands with others, up left.)

Blackbeard (scowls as he watches, speaks after all have entered): Welcome aboard Queen Anne's Revenge. Come here, the lot of ye.

(The prisoners reluctantly move forward slightly.)

Rolfson: Jump! Cap'n Teach is speakin' to ye.

(He herds the prisoners forward to the left of the table where Teach is seated.)

Ted (sneering): CAPTAIN Teach.

(Captain Grayson casts Ted a reproving glance but Blackbeard seems not to have heard.)



Blackbeard appraises the value of his captive, Loretta Thaxton, in his cabin aboard the Queen Anne's Revenge.

Blackbeard: I count four. Where's the fifth?

Rolfson: He's poorly. Out of his head with the fever.

Blackbeard: Fever?

Rolfson: Yes sir.

Blackbeard: You know my orders about sick prisoners.

Rolfson: Yes sir.

Blackbeard: Move! You son of a turtle.

(Rolfson exits.)

Captain Grayson (intervening): Captain Teach . . .

Blackbeard (rising from table and approaching prisoners as Rolfson leaves): Speak when ye're spoken to, Grayson.

(Blackbeard walks in front of prisoners, by sailor, Grayson, Ted and Loretta. Grayson stares straight ahead, sailor hangs head, Ted watches Blackbeard. Loretta stares ahead, but her eyes follow Blackbeard as he moves to her left, then in back of line. As he walks slowly behind them air is rent by man's scream and large muffled splash. Grayson stiffens, sailor looks fearfully over his shoulder, Loretta buries her head in her hands.)

Ted (through clenched teeth): Blackbeard, you'll pay for that!

Blackbeard (coming in front of prisoners again): Did someone speak? (Silence). The sharks are hungry critters. And so am I . . . so am I.

(He walks in front of Loretta, surveys her from head to toe, reaches out and tips dress back off her left shoulder. She turns away from him and cringes halfway to her knees. He looks down and notes marking in back of dress.)

Loretta: Ted!

Ted (steps forward and helps Loretta as best he can with hands tied): Keep your filthy bloody claws off of her!

Blackbeard (roars with laughter, returns to table and takes another long draught from bottle): The lady wears a dress made in London. Woman, where were ye bound for?

(Rolfson re-enters and stands up left, having shoved the sick prisoner overboard.)

Loretta: Boston.

Blackbeard (slamming bottle down on table and picking up papers in front of him): You lie. The Silver Swan, Malachi Grayson, captain—and Theodore Buckman, mate, was bound for Bristol.

(Blackbeard strides over in front of her, papers clenched in his hand, glowering.)

Loretta (biting lips): Maybe so. I . . . I am confused.

Blackbeard (returning to table): Do all your clothes come from England?

Loretta: My . . . my father is a merchant (she glances right, but too late to see that Grayson is shaking his head and frowning at her.)

Blackbeard: A merchant eh? A rich Charleston merchant.

Loretta: Oh no! Just a . . . just a little merchant.

Blackbeard (smashing empty bottle on edge of table, strides in front of her): You lying wench. You're Loretta Thaxton. Your family is one of the wealthiest on the seaboard. Your father's a trader, merchant, ship's chandler . . .

Loretta (angered): All right! And he'll have a fleet of ships after you so fast you'll wish you had never laid eyes on me!

Blackbeard (roaring with laughter): Hear that Rolfson? (Rolfson enjoys the joke). Get Bonnet.

Rolfson (moves toward door): Bonnet! (He calls "Bonnet" again offstage.)

Blackbeard: Miss Loretta should bring a right healthy sum in ransom, eh Captain Grayson?

Grayson: Captain Teach . . . I . . .

Blackbeard: Captain Teach, SIR . . .

Grayson: Captain Teach, sir, I beg of you. Miss Loretta was put in my personal care for her trip to England. Her father is not well. To learn that Miss Loretta has fallen into, well . . .

Blackbeard: Say it, man.

Grayson: To learn that Miss Loretta is no longer en route to England could kill him.

Blackbeard: Miss Loretta and you are the welcome guests of Blackbeard, highly respected buccaneer. Your friend, Thaxton, will get his daughter back when he coughs up enough pounds to make it interesting to me to put into Charleston next time we're in those waters. (Bonnet enters.) Bonnet, we've got a doxey here worth good English money.

Bonnet (moving right, glances disinterestedly at prisoners): I prefer Spanish gold.

Blackbeard: Pounds will buy rum and shot.

Bonnet: What do we do with the others? Carry them along for company?

Blackbeard: They eat too much.

Bonnet (surveying Loretta): What makes you think the girl is worth . . .

Blackbeard: A thousand pounds?

Bonnet: Or even 500?

Blackbeard (walks by prisoners to Loretta): She's worth it all right. (He cups her chin in his hand, looks at her lecherously. She stares at him defiantly). On second thought, maybe I don't want any ransom at all.

(Ted leaps at Blackbeard and brings his bound hands down on Blackbeard's arm, knocking his hand away from Loretta's face. Bonnet bounds forward with cutlass he has grabbed from table and poses tip at Ted's throat.)

Blackbeard (surprised, angered, takes cutlass from Bonnet, picks up another from table, tosses it to Ted): Stow it, Bonnet!

(Ted catches cutlass, even though hands are bound. Grayson, sailor and Loretta draw back, leaving Blackbeard and Ted downstage.)

Free his hands, Bonnet.

(Bonnet whips ropes quickly from Ted's wrists. Blackbeard engages him in duel. Ted fights well, mainly defensively, warding off the swathlike swipes of the cutlass Blackbeard swings on him. Blackbeard laughs, taunts, enjoying what he considers to be a playful duel. Ted beats him back at one point, when with a sudden motion, Blackbeard knocks Ted's weapon from his hand and it clatters to the floor. Loretta screams. Ted dives for the cutlass but Blackbeard is on him like a cat. Ted is stopped mid-way in his motion to retrieve his weapon by Blackbeard's blade at the side of his neck.)

Blackbeard (smiles): Enough?

Ted (panting, nods): Enough. (Ted rises, leans against the table.)

Blackbeard (moving down right to Bonnet so prisoners can't hear): The upstart fights well.

Bonnet: He's extra baggage.

Blackbeard: We can use him. Besides, he likes the girl and this could furnish me with amusement from time to time.

Bonnet: What of the other two?

Blackbeard: South of Ocracoke there's an island. We'll put them ashore.

Bonnet: I don't like it.

Blackbeard: I'm putting ashore others, too, who are giving me reason to doubt their worth. Maybe you should be among them. (Turns from Bonnet). Rolfson! (Rolfson enters). Take Grayson and the sailor below. Bonnet, take the girl to the starboard cabin.

(Rolfson herds Grayson and sailor out door. Bonnet makes sweeping bow before Loretta and gestures toward door. Loretta sweeps by him and out door.)

Blackbeard (to Ted who is still standing in front of table): Theodore Buckman, eh? How long were you on the Silver Swan?

Ted: A year.

Blackbeard (going to cupboard and returning with bottle): Well, matey, you're going to be around here a long time. (He pulls cork with teeth and spews it out. Hands bottle to Buckman). Have a drink.

(Ted, hesitates, looks at bottle, then at Blackbeard, suspecting trickery.)

Blackbeard (shoving bottle to Ted): Drink!

(Ted puts bottle to mouth, takes swallow, coughs, sputters, nearly chokes. Blackbeard throws back his head and roars with laughter.)

CURTAIN

Act One Scene Two

Time: Two days later.

Place: Ocracoke where ship, Queen Anne's Revenge, is being repaired.

Setting: Same as scene 1. Brawling party is in progress. Prior to opening of curtain, chorus speaks.

Men's Chorus: DRINK to the sight of gold-laden ships!
DRINK to the hope of good times ashore!
DRINK when you're happy, DRINK when
you're not.
Rum's better, they say, than the water
they've got.

(Curtain parts. Blackbeard is seated at table center, facing audience. Seated in chairs at his right are Bonnet and Israel Hands; at his left, Ben and Tombo. All are roaring with laughter as though a tremendously funny story has just been told. All have mugs in front of them.)

Blackbeard (rising and going to cupboard to fetch bottle): And now, me hearties, once more to the brim, and the one who downs it first gets command of the brig we took at Charleston.

(Mugs already have rum in them. He tops them off, men eagerly put mugs forward with happy shouts of approval at the captain's proposal—all except Bonnet. He lets his mug be filled, but his reaction to Blackbeard's proposal is deadpan.)

Blackbeard (pulls pistol from holster): Hands on mugs! (Men grasp handles of mugs which sit on table). When I fire, down the hatch!

(Blackbeard thrusts pistol toward ceiling and fires almost before he finishes speaking. Buccaneers quickly raise mugs to lips and slurp noisily. Bonnet drinks but seems to be merely holding mug to lips, while leaning on one elbow on the table. Blackbeard looks from one to the other, cheering them on.)

Come on Tombo. Y'er sippin' like a lady at a tea party. Ben's 'way ahead of ye. Hands? Now that's a man who knows how to drink. Bonnet, you'll never get y'er own command that way.

Hands (rising as he reaches bottom of mug, holds it aloft upside down): Hold, mates! Ye've just been scuttled.

Blackbeard (clapping hand on Hands' back): Here's the new captain, my lads. And which of these fine refugees from the King's Navy will ye be havin' for first mate?

Ben (jumping up): I'll sail with ye, Hands, and proud to do it!

Blackbeard (glowers): You're mighty quick about volunteerin' to leave my ship. You don't like the way I run this ship?

Ben (sitting): She's a well run ship. (Others grow silent, apprehensive as to what Ben's innocent "insult" to Teach may lead to.)

Hands: I choose ye, Ben . . . with the captain's permission.

Blackbeard (hastens to cupboard and seemingly is in good spirits again): Let's drink to it, boys!

Bonnet (sarcastically): Aye. Let's. I feel a dry spell about to o'ertake me. (Men roar with laughter.)

Blackbeard (pouring another round and seating himself at table): Me hearties, I've a plan afoot. King George has offered pardon to all who sail the seas and take prizes as we do. What say you, we become honest men?

Hands (dumbfounded): Beggin' yer pardon sir, but are ye aillin' with the fever?

Tombo: Ye can't be serious-minded, captain.

Ben (shaking head): I doubt the boys will like it.

Blackbeard: We've been faring right well, but I wonder, mayhap, could we do better sailing with the blessings of His Majesty, AND the governor, Charles Eden, who lives at Bath.

Tombo: Bath, England?

Bonnet: Nay, idiot. Bath, yonder on the sound across from this benighted place called Ocracoke.

Blackbeard: Ocracoke suits me well. The harbor is hard to enter; and were the shoals not as they are, we would not be able to repair storm damage as we do now.

Hands: Do I understand ye right, captain? You mean we sail, even after we're pardoned?

Blackbeard: Why not? With Georgie's pardon and the governor's papers in our pockets, those who would call us pirates would see that we were only about the fair and square business of privateerin'.

Tombo: But nobody's at war with anybody. Who would we be privateerin' for?

Hands: That's a stupid question. For ourselves. That's who!

Tombo (jumping up): I'm fer it!

Ben: Let's weigh anchor for Bath.

Bonnet: You seem to be overlooking one small point, gentlemen. How long do you think the king's governor at Bath is going to let you sail under false colors? He'll have the whole British Navy bearing down in our wake. (Happy pirates become glum.)

Hands: Aye. That I hadn't thought of.

Blackbeard: I have. Eden's got lots of goods, money, but he's not satisfied. He wants more.

Hands: You mean we go shares with him?

Blackbeard: Mayhap.

Ben (whining): We'll end up poor men!

Bonnet (sullenly): We'll end up with our necks in a noose.

Blackbeard (rising): I've already decided. When I'm through with Eden, he'll be right here. (He gestures with his thumb toward the palm of his big cupped hand.)

Hands: Shall we drink to it?

Blackbeard: I don't give a devil's due whether ye drink to it or not. Anyone who puts his feet under my table, drinks when I do and does as I say.

Bonnet: One question, my good captain. (Blackbeard raises

mug to lips but pauses when Bonnet speaks.) What has happened to your plans to collect ransom for the young lady?

Blackbeard: For the time being, she stays here.

Ben: I dislike a woman on shipboard.

Hands: Shut up. If we're sailing the other ship, what quarrel have you?

Blackbeard: Well spoken, Hands.

Tombo: The sooner we sail for Bath, the better I like it.

Blackbeard: This ship sails for Bath when I'm ready to have her go. Hands, with the other ship, stays here. When we come back from Bath, we set course for Charleston. There we demand ransom for the woman.

Hands (raising mug): Three cheers for Captain Teach!

Tombo (rising and lifting mug): After Bath, honest men are we!

(Hands starts marching around table waving mug and singing drunkenly, "Honest men are we." Tombo follows, one hand on Hands' shoulder, other holding mug. Ben follows Tombo. They march around table singing and swinging mugs, quite drunk.)

Blackbeard (rises, lifts mug): Three cheers for Eden!

Men (all except Bonnet who remains seated): H'ray, H'ray, H'ray!

Blackbeard (picking up pistol from table and raising mug with other hand): Here's to Charleston!

(Men respond with three Hurrahs and keep marching around room. Blackbeard glances at Bonnet.)

Drink, Bonnet!

(Bonnet lifts his mug, Blackbeard suddenly takes aim with pistol, shoots Ben. Ben grabs shoulder, drops mug, lets out howl of pain. Other men stop, startled.)

Bonnet: Now what the devil did you do that for?

Blackbeard: If I do not now and then kill one of you, you'll forget who I am. (Laughs uproariously as Bonnet stalks out door. Tombo and Hands help Ben out.)

CURTAIN

Act One Scene Three

Time: Three days later.

Place: Blackbeard's cabin. Ship still under repair at Ocracoke.

Women's Chorus: The sky is a royal blue
The sea below matches it true.
This is heaven's season in Carolina.
White clouds pile high in mounds
overhead
Sea oats swing tall from their soft sand
bed.
The mullet jumps in sheer delight.
In no other place is the world so bright.

Men's Chorus: Aye, but look who comes
To darken the day . . .
A buccaneer from down Carib way.
He loves well the Carolina coast.
To his fleet Ocracoke plays unwilling host . . .

Setting: Curtain opens revealing Bonnet in his usual finery looking out windows up left, hands clenched behind him. Blackbeard bounds in, grabs spyglass on table, goes to window, shoves Bonnet aside, flings open window. Bright light streams in. Blackbeard trains glass out window and peers intently.

Bonnet (by table): Friend or foe?

Blackbeard: No ship's a friend of mine.

Bonnet (walking in front of table): Good. Then she's a foe. And if we weren't rotting here we could be on the high seas, as she is, woo her and win her. But nay, here we sit while Blackbeard dreams of his grand audience with Governor Eden.

Blackbeard (still peering through glass): She's a British merchantmen, southbound.

Bonnet: Are you sure? No doubt she's a British man-of-war with enough guns to blow us to the devil where all good pirates go.

Blackbeard: Bonnet, your tongue is loose at both ends and one of these days I shall have it out.

Bonnet: Why don't you let me resume command of my ship and then we could sail together, accomplish our missions and yet you would not have to put up with my prattling nor I with your boorishness.

Blackbeard (slamming spyglass together and walking toward center of cabin): There's nothing wrong with my boorishness. It's as good as anybody's.

Bonnet (pacing back and forth down right, hands clasped behind back): Quite so. Quite so. (Pauses). You haven't answered my question.

Blackbeard (sitting at table): I'm NOT putting you aboard your ship. I told you that yesterday . . . and the day before and the day before that. I don't trust you, Bonnet. I want you right where I can put a knife at your throat.

Bonnet: In my back is more likely. (Pulls a chair out from table and seats himself at right of Blackbeard.) You're not a friendly sort a'tall.

Blackbeard (pulling dagger from belt and testing edge with his fingers): You get more than your share of our profit. Do I have to be friendly, too?

Bonnet: It would make my life more pleasant mayhap. (He picks up spyglass from table, moves to window and looks out.) The sail has disappeared. (Sighs.) Aye, there goes another rich prize that could have been ours were we not dilly-dallying about cleaning our bottoms, doing a fancy stitch on the sails and dreaming about the great meeting with Governor Eden. (He returns and sits at table.)

Blackbeard: I'll have no craft under me that can't run swift or take more than any other vessel her make and size. A ground-grubber like you, Bonnet, does not understand that. While your high-soundin' prattle tickles my fancy from time to time, when it comes to these ships, button y'er lip.

Bonnet: Not only I, but the men are tired of this. Since you put Grayson and those other six on the island below here, the men are grumbling. There are settlements near. The castaways may find their way to the mainland, tell their story and we'll end up with a price on our heads.

Blackbeard (throwing head back and roaring): Price on our heads! My head has so many prices on it, the figures make the Spanish treasury look like a beggar's hoard. And just where might the scum we left to the south'ard get to a settlement?

Bonnet (shrugging): There's a village called Fishtown not far from here.

Blackbeard (scowling): If they can get to the mainland, let 'em. Do you think a bunch of farmers and fishermen are going to row skiffs and fishboats over here to do battle with Blackbeard? (Laughs).

Bonnet (ignoring Blackbeard): And they don't like having that girl on this ship.

Blackbeard: I will have need of her. Her ransom will help pay for these days here at Ocracoke.

Bonnet (rising and pacing): Then let's get out of here, go down to Charleston and get the ransom (he leans across table to Blackbeard) and we could take that merchantman (points toward sea) on the way. If we sail on the next tide, we could overtake her before sundown tomorrow.

Blackbeard: No.

Bonnet (through clenched teeth): I say yes.

Blackbeard (angered): I say NO. We sail on the next tide for Bath. YOU are going ashore to announce that I will follow to call on Governor Eden. I will see Eden day after tomorrow. We pick up the ransom when I am of a mind to turn the girl loose. NOW, my little Poppinjay, you will tell Buckman and the girl I would feign see them (points to door). Get . . . OUT!

(Bonnet stares back hard at Blackbeard, eyes narrowed. Then, shrugging his shoulders, leaves cabin at leisurely pace. Blackbeard picks up dagger and tosses it, point down, into table several times, its point penetrates the wood, handle quivering upright. Then he tests its sharpness by running blade up his arm. It shaves the hair off and he meticulously blows the hairs off the knife blade, and brushes his arm clear of the cut hair. Loretta appears at door.)

Blackbeard (without turning): Come in, dearie. (Loretta steps into cabin wearing same dress as in scene 1. When she takes no more than one step, Blackbeard turns and smiles). I said, come in, dearie, come in where we can (he rubs his hand over his lips) . . . "talk."

(He pulls out chair at right of table and sits. She stands at left of table, facing audience. He leans back in chair, smiles, studies her.)

I think we shall have some wine. You may fetch it. That closet over there.

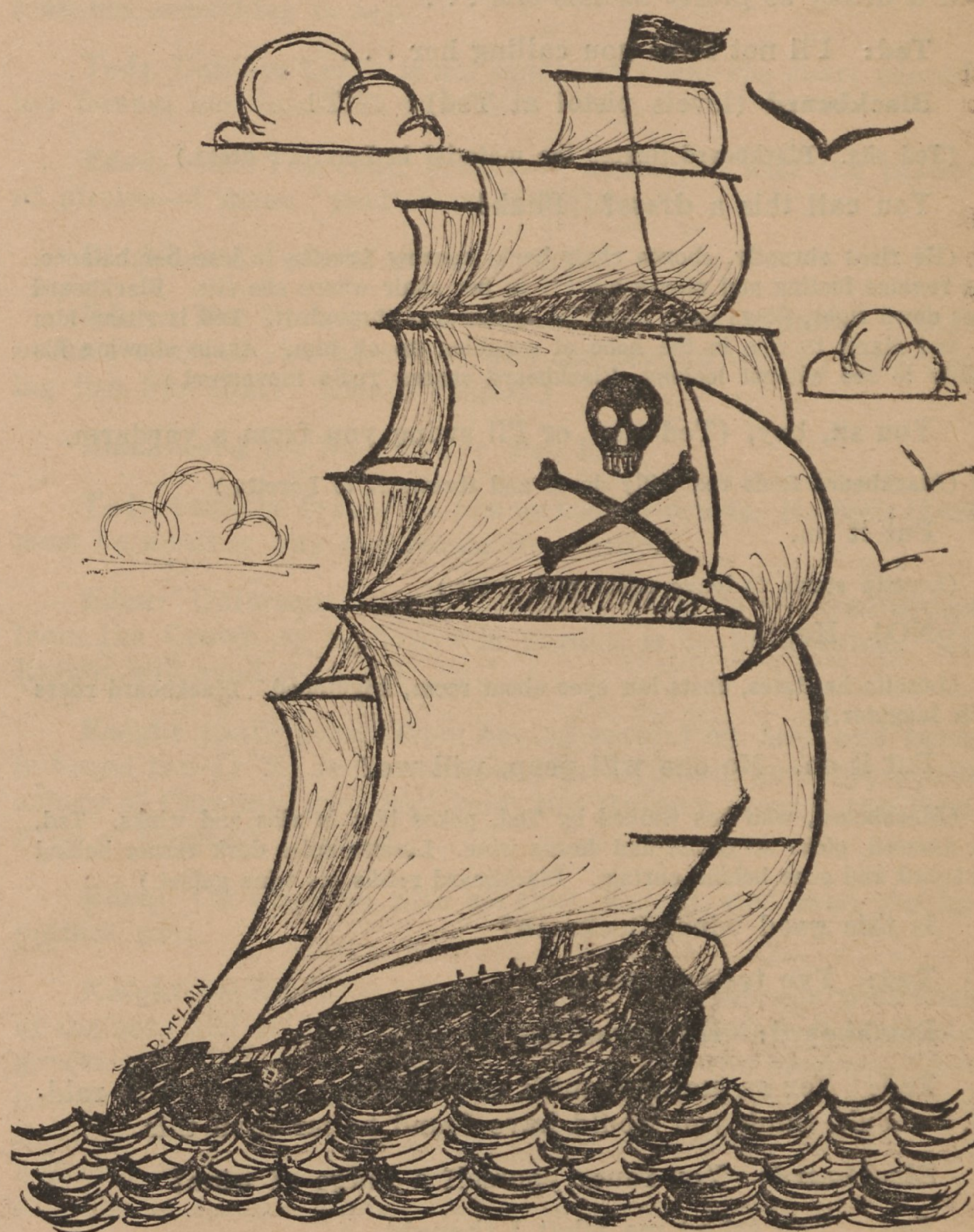
(Loretta glances over her right shoulder, sees him gesture up right to the cupboard. She moves toward cupboard. As she does so, Ted appears at door. He has on clean shirt. Loretta turns from cupboard with wine bottle, sees Ted. Their eyes meet.)

Bonnet says ladies don't like to drink from the bottle. Bring glasses. Come sit, Buckman.

(Blackbeard hasn't looked at either of them. He tries to disconcert them with his uncanny ability to see without looking. Loretta turns back to cupboard after putting bottle on table. Ted, resisting desire to watch her every move, sits in chair at left of table. He studies Blackbeard, who is still playing with dagger. Loretta turns from cupboard with two pewter mugs.)

Not those, dearie. The goblets. We're going to do our drinking in style.

(Loretta, disconcerted, because Blackbeard obviously had not seen what she had in her hands, replaces them in cupboard, finds two goblets, puts them at Blackbeard's right with the bottle.)



Queen Anne's Revenge, Blackbeard's flagship, heads south from Ocracoke, bound for the Caribbean.

We need another one for you.

Loretta: I'm not . . .

Blackbeard (pouring wine): We need another one for you.

(Loretta hesitates, appeals with her eyes to Ted, who nods that she is to go to cupboard and get another goblet. She does so and puts it on the table by Blackbeard. She stands there. Blackbeard pours wine, shoves it to his right.)

Sit!

(Loretta sits. Blackbeard fills second goblet, shoves it in front of Ted, then fills his own, smiles.)

Shall we drink? What shall we drink to? (Silence). Ah, I know, we shall drink to Charleston.

(He leans over grandly and touches his goblet to Ted's which Ted is holding in his hand, then to Loretta's who has her hand on it but has not lifted it from the table. She lifts the glass slightly as Blackbeard touches his to hers. He looks at her tauntingly.)

. . . Yes, to Charleston.

(He downs all the wine in one gulp. Ted takes a swallow, Loretta a sip.)

Loretta (hopefully): Captain Teach, sir, are we about to sail for Charleston?

Blackbeard: Well, yes and no.

Loretta: My parents are probably frantic, and I . . .

Blackbeard: Don't fret, little bird. They probably think you are halfway to England by now. Besides, if your father doesn't find the ransom money, you'll be here a long time.

(He pulls pistol from shoulder holster and lays it on table. Ted downs his wine. Blackbeard leans over and fills Ted's goblet. Bottle empties.)

Another bottle, Miss Thaxton.

Ted: Sit still, Loretta. (To Blackbeard). She's not a servant.

Blackbeard: She is as I choose her to be. Get another bottle, girl, for if I have to ask again, it will be your friend, here, who gets the wine and he may not live long enough to fetch it from cupboard to table.

(Loretta rises hastily, goes to cupboard and returns with bottle. As she puts it at Blackbeard's right, he puts his arm around her waist and pulls her to him):

How would you like to sit here by me?

(Loretta stiffens, but Blackbeard's strength pulls her to sitting position on arm of chair.)

Ted (leaps to feet): Leave her alone!

Blackbeard (picks up pistol with left hand and points it at Ted): Sit! I like a woman close to me. There's no harm if she sits here awhile.

(He smiles up at Loretta, but keeps pistol trained on Ted. Loretta turns her head away.)

Ted: You black, villainous dog of evil . . .

Blackbeard: It's been a long time since Cap'n Teach has seen a doxey as pretty as this one . . .

Ted: I'll not have you calling her . . .

Blackbeard (levels pistol at Ted): SIT!

(Ted sits. Blackbeard fingers the material in Loretta's dress.)

You call this a dress? Phah!

(He rises abruptly, shoves chair back, causing Loretta to lose her balance. She regains footing and moves quickly to her chair where she sits. Blackbeard goes down right, flings open trunk lid, rummages through it. Ted is sizing him up and starts to rise in the hope of sneaking up on him. Again showing his ability to see without looking, Blackbeard senses Ted's movement.)

You sit, boy, (Ted sits) or I'll swing you from a yardarm.

(Blackbeard finds red frilly dress and throws it to Loretta.)

Put it on.

(Loretta starts to leave cabin with dress.)

NO! Here!

(Loretta hesitates, casts her eyes about room, frightened. Blackbeard roars with laughter.)

Put it on. No one will peep, will we?

(Blackbeard, who has walked by Ted, pokes him in ribs and winks. Ted, not amused, picks up goblet and downs wine. Loretta spies dark corner behind cupboard and goes behind curtain. Blackbeard refills his wine goblet.)

Is this good wine, Buckman?

Ted: I've tasted better.

Blackbeard: Have you now?

Ted: For as many Spanish merchantmen as you have raided, I should think you would have found better than this.

Blackbeard: You fancy yourself a judge of wine?

Ted: You asked me what I thought.

Blackbeard: I consider myself a judge of women.

Ted: On what basis?

Blackbeard: On knowing more women in more countries than you will in a lifetime.

Ted: You consider quantity, then, a substitute for quality?

Blackbeard: You talk almost as high-falutin' as Bonnet. (Wine is beginning to tell on Blackbeard.) I don't understand much of what he says, but he's a change from the usual. (Ted says nothing). You speak Spanish?

Ted: A little.

Blackbeard: French?

Ted: Some.

Blackbeard: Bonnet's a Frenchman. I don't need any more Frenchmen. Portuguese?

Ted: Not very well.

Blackbeard (sizing Ted up): But some . . . Bein' able to TALK to a woman helps. But that's not what you need most. (Shakes head). You need . . . gold, mayhap . . . a gay, care-free look in the eye, full of the devil it must be, and a firm hand (he turns to Ted to drive his point home) . . . ye must be master of the situa . . .

(He turns to look over his right shoulder upon seeing that Ted is not listening, follows Ted's gaze to where Loretta has come out of the shadows in the dazzling red dress. Loretta's previous pallor-like make-up has been brightened to heighten the impact of the transformation.)

Ha! Now that's more like it!

Loretta (annoyed that she pleases Blackbeard): Do you expect me to walk around the ship in this?

(Ted has risen half out of his chair, captivated anew by her beauty.)

Blackbeard (rising): No, dearie. You need walk no farther than that.

(He goes to her, picks up her hand, plants a big rough kiss on it, leads her to front of table, picks her up and sits her on it.)

Ted (on his feet): You touch her once more . . .

Blackbeard: You know, Buckman, you are beginning to be troublesome. I was going to let you see my method of wooing and winning a lady, but I don't like interruptions. So get out. (Ted sits down in chair. Blackbeard picks up pistol.) Get out before I put a ball between your eyes.

Ted (hesitates, rises): Je m'en, cherie, mais pas plus loin que l'autre cote de la porte. Je ne te perdrai pas de vue un seul moment. Je ne le permettrai pas te faire de mal. N'aies pas peur. (Translation: I'm going, darling, but no farther than the other side of the door. My eyes won't leave you for a moment. I won't let him harm you. Don't be afraid.)

Loretta (answering quickly): Je n'ai pas peur, mon cheri. Je n'ai peur que pour toi. Prends garde. (Translation: I'm not darling. Only for you I'm afraid. Be careful.)

Blackbeard (keeps pistol trained on Ted as Ted backs to door, opens it, goes out and leaves it ajar. Blackbeard roars with laughter): What a brave sweetheart you have! (Puts pistol on table and turns to Loretta.)

Loretta (jumps down from table, walks to her right around back of table, picks up bottle): Shall we have more wine?

(Blackbeard doesn't answer, but stalks around the other end of the table, his eyes never leaving her. Loretta pours wine in one goblet, then pretends bottle is empty.)

Oh, Captain Teach, the bottle is empty.

Blackbeard (reaching for her): No matter. I don't want wine.

Loretta (draws back, flashes smile): Oh, my dear captain, first a sip of wine, and then, perhaps, a kiss? Would you get a bottle for me . . . please?

(Blackbeard, seeing that apparently his conquest is going to be so easy, grins, goes to the cupboard. Loretta quickly takes from her bosom a small vial, uncorks it and pours a colorless liquid from it into the glass of wine she has poured for herself. Blackbeard comes back to the table, uncorks the bottle and sloshes wine into a goblet for himself.)

Loretta (moves to front of table away from Blackbeard, holds up wine goblet): To Charleston!

Blackbeard (comes around other side of table and meets her center front): To Charleston.

(As Loretta raises her goblet in her right hand, Blackbeard, whose goblet is in his right hand, puts his right forearm across Loretta's and keeps her from raising her goblet to her lips. She looks at him questioningly.)

The wine in your goblet looks deeper red and smells better. I always demand the best for myself.

(His eyes never leave hers and with his left hand he takes her goblet and hands her his goblet with his right hand.)

Loretta (reaches for her poisoned wine): But Captain Teach . . .

Blackbeard (smiling). To Charleston. (Loretta hesitates, then realizes it be far better that he be poisoned than she.) Drink!

(Blackbeard downs the wine into which Loretta has put the poison, puts his goblet on table and watches Loretta as she slowly drinks. When she finishes, he takes goblet from her. She stands frozen, as though hypnotized. He takes her in his arms, kisses her, her arms hang limply. His back is to door. Ted rushes in from doorway, unarmed, picks up chair and is about to swing it against Blackbeard's shaggy head, when Blackbeard suddenly reels backward, braces himself on table, groans, falls to floor unconscious. Ted puts down chair and rushes to hold Loretta who is crying convulsively.)

CURTAIN

Act Two Scene One

Time: Two days later.

Place: Government house at Bath.

Setting: Gov. Charles Eden's reception room. At desk right a spare, austere, hawk-eyed man, Tobias Knight, governor's secretary, writes with quill pen. As he does so, chorus speaks.

Women's Chorus: Did Blackbeard die?

Men's Chorus: Ah, if that were true,
His history, rewritten, would be something
new.
More than poison would end his life.
He lived on — to take another wife!

(Door at left opens and Eden comes bustling in, a sheaf of papers in hand. He crosses to Knight.)

Eden: Knight, get these dispatches off at once. There simply isn't enough time in the day to attend to all these pressing matters. I'm behind schedule and have a very important visitor coming in this morning. (He strokes his satin coat, flits about the room, flicking away imaginary pieces of dust.) Nobody knows the trials and tribulations of a governor of these colonies . . . Knight!

Knight (continues writing): Yes, Governor.

Eden: What time did Captain Teach's emissary say the captain would arrive?

Knight: The captain is due now, sir.

Eden: I knew it! I knew it! And I'm not anywhere near ready for him.

(Eden moves to window, looks out, then wanders aimlessly.)

Knight: Governor.

Eden: Eh?

Knight: The Machapunga tribe brought in its tobacco yesterday.

Eden (pleased): Did they now?

Knight (puts down quill, leans back, smiles): Yes. The gods, they say, have been very kind to them this year. They have had good corn and tobacco crops.



The fiery Blackbeard, in one of his peaceful moments, woos his 13th wife-to-be, while her mother and three other men find it difficult to accept what is happening.

Eden (eyes a gleam): How many pounds did they bring?

Knight: The number demanded: 150.

Eden (delighted): Good, good!

Knight: This is being entered in the records as indemnity for the damage they caused on that raid in the western part of the province last year. (Picks up pen.)

Eden: Not all 150 pounds!

Knight (writes): No, governor. Fifty pounds.

Eden: Good, good. (Pause.) You stored the other hundred?

Knight: In our warehouse.

Eden: Not the royal warehouse . . .

Knight: I said OUR warehouse.

(Men's voices are heard off left. Blackbeard, Ted and third voice. "The governor is expecting you." "Good day, sir," etc. Knight resumes his scribbling. Governor bustles to door and flings it open. Blackbeard enters, followed by Buckman.)

Eden: Ah, my good Captain Teach. It is splendid to see you again.

Blackbeard (nods): Governor Eden.

Eden: Come in, gentlemen, come in. You are acquainted with my secretary, Mr. Knight . . . (Motions toward Knight who nods to Blackbeard. Blackbeard glowers. Eden looks at Buckman.) And this is . . .

Ted: Ted Buckman.

Blackbeard (smiles maliciously): My new lieutenant.

(Pulls out long black cigar, puts it in mouth, doesn't light it.)

Eden: Your recent voyage seems to have agreed with you, Captain Teach. You're looking prosperous.

(Eden crosses to door, closes it.)

Blackbeard: My senior lieutenant, Stede Bonnet, spoke to you yesterday.

Eden: Yes, he did indeed. And it was a noble suggestion he made. We are always happy to hear that our Robin Hoods—heh, heh—of the high seas wish to take advantage of His Majesty's pardon.

Blackbeard (slumps on couch, throws leg over end. Knight

looks up, shows silent contempt for Teach's ill manners): Buckman has something to say.

Ted: Captain Teach is not enthused about the court procedure Bonnet has described to him.

Eden: Oh. The court procedure connected with the pardon of pirates—I mean "gentlemen of fortune."

Blackbeard (growls through cigar): Right.

Eden: But that is mere routine, my good captain. I shall order a court of vice-admiralty and the pardon will be forthcoming just like that! (Snaps fingers.)

Blackbeard (to Buckman): Tell him!

Ted: Captain Teach, sir, has no use for courts. He feels there must be another way to execute the pardon.

Eden: Unfortunately, there is not. We have received orders from the Crown as to how this pardon is to be granted. Mr. Knight will read it to you . . .

Knight (pulls paper from among several on desk and reads in bored tone): To the honorable Charles Eden, governor of the colony of Carolina, greetings from His Majesty, George the First, King of England, ruler of . . .

Eden: Oh dispense with all that, Knight, and read the important part.

Knight (moves eyes down sheet): . . . that any plunderer of the seas and shipping thereon who cometh before the colonial governor before the fifth day of September in the year seventeen hundred and eighteen and does so declare that he, henceforth, shall no more engage in his nefarious business on the seas, its adjacent straits, sounds, rivers or bays, shall be granted by act of a court of vice-admiralty full pardon and . . .

Eden: Enough, enough. You see, my dear Captain Teach, my requirement of a court of vice-admiralty is only the execution of an order already given by His Majesty. (Blackbeard snorts.) You DO understand, captain. I am carrying out orders.

Knight: Governor Eden . . . these is something else.

Eden: Oh yes. Lieutenant Bonnet mentioned that you wished to be declared a privateer.

Blackbeard: Aye.

Eden: That, of course, will require a bit of doing, my dear captain. Because, at present, England is not at war with Spain. We are not at war with any of the nations represented by ships that ply our Atlantic or West Indies trade routes.

(Blackbeard gestures to Buckman to make reply.)

Ted: Captain Teach knows that. But he also says that the governor is able to commission a privateer if he believes that a privateer could be of service to His Majesty at some future date. Let us assume that this captain and his ship are at sea and war should be declared. It may be some time before the captain would put into port and find that a state of war exists. Meanwhile, he and the enemy have been on the high seas as the best of friends.

Eden: You plead your captain's case well.

Ted (after fleeting pause): Each has his reason for doing as Captain Teach bids.

Eden (sits down right, puts tips of fingers together in front of his chest): A privateer's commission can be arranged. Albeit, there will be some difficulty involved. This requires extra work on the part of my secretary.

(Blackbeard motions to Ted to come to him. Ted does so. Blackbeard whispers in his ear. Ted nods.)

Ted (turns to Eden): Lieutenant Bonnet told you, I believe, that arrangements could be made whereby granting of the privateer's commission could be personally advantageous to the governor and his secretary.

Eden: Yes. Yes, I believe he did mention something of that.

Ted: As a privateer, Captain Teach could legally board, search and take possession—for His Majesty—of such vessels as he deemed worthy of taking. It would be advantageous to the captain if he had a port where he could sail those vessels and discharge their cargo. Bath is such a port.

Eden: And?

Ted: And in return, one-sixth of all the goods acquired would become the personal possession of Governor Eden.

Eden: How would I be assured that what was delivered to me was one-sixth—and not less?

Ted: Captain Teach says that the ship's papers listing cargo will come into his possession when he takes the vessel. He will turn these papers over to you so that you may determine for yourself whether you received the share agreed upon.

Eden: And Mr. Knight?

Ted: The captain feels that you will split your gain, half and half, with Mr. Knight.

Eden (turns to Knight): What say you, Knight?

Knight: I believe our services to Captain Teach in giving him a pardon, furnishing him a commission as a privateer and providing a base of operations warrant a higher commission than his lieutenant offers.

(Blackbeard rises from couch, strolls to window.)

Ted (reading displeasure in Blackbeard's move): I doubt, Mr. Knight, if the captain is willing to readjust his offer.

Blackbeard (looking intently out of window, beckons to governor): Eden! (Eden goes to window, Blackbeard points outside.) Who is she?

Eden: Ah! The widow Granville.

Blackbeard (snarls): Not the old woman. The young one.

Eden: Oh. That is her daughter, Miss Belinda.

Blackbeard (to Ted): Go fetch her.

Eden (protests): Oh, I say, Captain Teach, one does not . . .

Blackbeard (to Ted, ignoring Eden): Fetch her.

Ted (moves to window): It may be well that I see the one I am to fetch.

Knight (rises): Begging your pardon, gentlemen. I know the ladies of whom Captain Teach speaks. Perhaps the captain would consider increasing the governor's share of the privateering business to a fifth. If so, I think I can have Miss Belinda here in a few moments.

Blackbeard (turns to him): Take the fifth and be hanged.

Knight (pleased): You will sign an agreement to that effect?

Blackbeard (pierces Knight with his eyes but speaks to Ted): Tell him, Buckman.

Ted: Captain Teach will sign such an agreement.

(Knight nods slightly, gives thin smile and exits.)

Eden (walks to desk, picks up pen, talks as he writes): I always believed you just and fair-minded, Captain Teach. I somehow couldn't believe some of the stories I heard about you. No sir—always admired you. When I met you on the warehouse docks last winter, I said to myself, "Now there's a man who can command men. There's a man who should be in charge of the governor's fleet—if the governor had a fleet."

(Blackbeard is still looking out window. Buckman has walked down left. Eden puts quill in holder, stands with paper in his hand.)

I've drawn up a brief agreement here. It states our terms. Would the good captain be so kind as to step here and sign it? (Blackbeard gestures to Buckman to read agreement. Ted crosses to desk, reads.)

Ted: The agreement seems to be in order, Captain Teach.

(Door opens. Madame Granville sweeps in, followed by plump, blonde daughter of 15. Both are overdressed. Blackbeard turns. Knight follows two women in.)

Eden (advances from behind desk): Ah, Madame Granville. What a delight to see you again. (Kisses her hand.)

Mme. Granville (titters): Dear governor, the pleasure is all mine.

Eden (goes to Belinda): And my dear. (Kisses her hand. Belinda giggles.) I would like to have you meet some friends. (Teach walks from window and kisses Madame Granville's hand.) Captain Teach, Madame Granville. And her daughter, Miss Belinda. (Teach kisses Belinda's hand. Belinda is smitten with the giant pirate. Eden motions toward Buckman.) And this is Captain Teach's lieutenant, Theodore Buckman, Madame Granville, Miss Belinda. (Buckman acknowledges introduction by bowing to both from his position down right. Knight moves to desk and reads agreement Ted had placed there after reading it.)

Eden (motioning to couch): Won't you sit down, Madame?

Mme. Granville: Oo la, thank you. It's quite warm. And I was just saying to Belinda, when Mr. Knight greeted us, that I would welcome a few moments in a soft settee.

(Belinda and Blackbeard have gone down left. Blackbeard has pulled from his pocket a gold chain with jeweled pendant, shows it to Belinda. They are smiling, talking.)

Ted (slightly astounded at Blackbeard's behavior, tries to divert attention from him): You live in Bath, Madame?

(Eden has gone to desk where Knight is seated. They confer in whispers over agreement Eden has drawn.)

Mme. Granville: No. Ever since my dear husband died, little Belinda and I have been living, with the few servants we have left, on the Granville plantation ten miles from town. When Sir Herbert—my husband—was living, we lived in town during the

winter and moved to the plantation in the summer. It's on the sound, you see, and so much cooler. I do mind the heat. (She fans herself with lacy handkerchief.) But my husband died, owing quite a few debts. It was a choice between the town house and the plantation. I did love our house in town so much (dabs at her eyes) but I had to make a choice. (Gives her nose a lusty blow.)

Belinda (runs to Mother dangling necklace in hand): Look, Mama, isn't this beautiful?

Mme. Granville (immersed in her misfortunes, glances at it, nods): Dear Governor Eden bought the town house . . .

Belinda: May I have it? Captain Teach says I may have it.

(Knight and Eden are now watching. Ted glances at Teach who is beaming and knocking imaginary ashes from his cigar.)

Mme. Granville (examining necklace): Why this looks like a very expensive piece.

Belinda: It's so pretty. May I have it, Mama?

Mme. Granville (torn between propriety and desire for jewelry): Why, Belinda, I don't think . . . (she glances at Teach who is looking off in distance.)

Belinda (interrupting): Please, Mama. Captain Teach told me a wonderful story about it. And he says there are earbobs and pin to match! (Madame Granville is impressed, as are Eden and Knight.)

Blackbeard (barks): Buckman!

Ted (steps toward Mme. Granville): Madame, Captain Teach would consider it a most gracious gesture of friendship if you would permit your daughter to accept this . . . this trinket.

Mme. Granville: Well, I . . . I . . .

Eden (concerned that Blackbeard hasn't yet signed the agreement and seeing before his eyes the treasures to be had from piracy): Madame Granville, Captain Teach is a very dear friend of mine. He does not bestow his favors lightly, and I would consider it a kindness to me if Miss Belinda were permitted to accept the necklace.

Mme. Granville (relieved): All right, dear, and thank Captain Teach kindly.

Belinda (rushes back to Teach, curtsies): Thank you, Captain.

(Teach touches one of the long blonde curls hanging over her shoulder. Belinda smiles, puts on necklace, and the two continue talking.)



Blackbeard rejoices over treasure while, Berto, pirate member of his crew, digs hole on shore of Pamlico Sound. There the treasure was buried.

Mme. Granville (to Eden): Belinda is such an impulsive child. It's difficult to deny her anything.

Eden: She's a lovely girl, Madame. The young swains about town have taken note of the fact.

Mme. Granville: Ah yes. That's the way it was with me when I was a girl. (Rises.) Governor, this has been a delightful visit.

Eden: Can't I send for some tea?

Mme. Granville: Thank you, no. Belinda and I have shopping to do and calls to make . . . Come, Belinda.

Belinda: Yes, Mama. (She continues to talk with Blackbeard, giggling. He smiles occasionally.)

Eden: Please call on Mistress Eden. She would be pleased to see you.

Mme. Granville (to Ted): Good-bye, lieutenant.

Ted (bows): It's been a pleasure, Madame.

Mme. Granville: Mr. Knight.

Knight: Good day, Madame.

(Madame Granville goes to Belinda and Teach, starts steering Belinda toward door.)

Mme. Granville: Thank you, Captain Teach, for your kindness toward my daughter.

Blackbeard (takes cigar from mouth, bows, smiles): Only a beautiful woman like you could have a daughter like Miss Belinda.

(Buckman, amazed and amused, clears his throat, puts hand to his mouth as he turns away to hide smile. Knight looks up in surprise and Eden shows further anxiety to get the women out.)

Mme. Granville: Why thank you, Captain Teach.

(Eden is holding door open. Belinda giggles and waves goodbye to Teach as she goes out door. Eden follows two women, closing door after him.)

Knight: Is the captain now ready to sign?

(Blackbeard makes no reply. Moves quickly to window to watch departing women. Knight looks at Buckman. Buckman shrugs his shoulders.)

Eden (re-enters, bustles to desk): Let's see, now. Where were we? Ah yes, I believe Captain Teach was about to sign the agreement. (Eden holds pen and looks hopefully toward Blackbeard.) Captain Teach?

(Teach continues to watch through window, then suddenly strides to desk, takes pen from Eden and makes large X on the paper. Eden smiles with relief.)

We shall plan the vice-admiralty court for next week. Let us say Tuesday?

Ted: Very well.

Eden: And on the day following, we shall issue the privateer commission.

Teach (strides back to window, looks out): The governor need be in no rush. Methinks I'll need two weeks to woo and win a bride.

(Knight and Eden look at one another in amazement. Ted sinks, disgusted, in chair down right.)

CURTAIN

Act Two Scene Two

Time: Ten days later, wedding day of Teach and Belinda.

Place: Near shore on Granville plantation.

Setting: Outdoors. Shrubs divide stage into two sections, one about three-fourths of stage width. Wedding festivities take place in larger part which is banked with trees and foliage. In smaller part, left, Blackbeard will bury treasure. Bushes, in form of low hedgerow, down front, form screen for treasure-burying scene.

Men's Chorus (as house lights go down):

And so it was, the day had come;
Blackbeard another wife had won.
Blonde Belinda, a comely lass.
A bride at 15 years . . . she was
Teach's 13th wife . . . and last!

Women's Chorus: It was a festive wedding day.

Teach's men made it that way.
His crew moored their boats in the sound.
Belinda's friends came from miles around.

(Curtain opens. Three fiddlers are up right, fiddles under their arms. Governor Eden, officiating at ceremony, faces audience. Blackbeard and Belinda face him. She wears long white gown, ankle length, shoulder veil, carries nosegay of flowers. Blackbeard is dazzling in all his flashy finery. At Belinda's left are her mother and several of her mother's friends, genteel townfolk. At Blackbeard's right are Bonnet, Ted Buckman, Hands, Tombo. Bonnet is dressed in his finery. Ted is in ordinary seaman's outfit, Tombo and Hands in colorful, mismatched pieces of elegant clothing they have acquired on their voyages.)

Eden (reading from small black book): I now pronounce you man and wife!

(Belinda turns and kisses her mother. Pirates slap Blackbeard on back, let out whoops. Fiddlers strike up merry tune. One of young men of the town and his girl start to dance a lively peasant-type folk dance. Music suddenly stops, almost as soon as it has started. Madame Granville advances down front from up right where she had ordered the fiddlers to stop.)

Mme. Granville: No, no, no! That is not the kind of music for Belinda's wedding. (Turns to Teach.) Captain Teach, my dear son, and Belinda, darling. You must lead the first dance. Come, come now.

(Pirates laugh and poke each other in ribs as Mme. Granville herds Belinda and Blackbeard down front. She pairs Ted with pretty girlfriend of Belinda, brings forward another couple, then Bonnet steps forward.)

Bonnet (bows before Mme. Granville): May I have the honor, Madame?

Mme. Granville (delighted): Oh, indeed, indeed.

(She waves a handkerchief in the direction of the musicians who begin playing a stately minuet. Bonnet and Mme. Granville execute it perfectly. Others dance well, but Blackbeard has never seen a minuet in his life, much less danced one. Belinda tries to guide him through it, but he sweats and grumbles. Mme. Granville is so entranced by Bonnet that she doesn't notice. Ted notices and pretends not to. Town wedding guests try to hide amused smiles, but Blackbeard's men are not so diplomatic. They have never seen their rugged captain in such a ridiculous situation. Hands and Tombo start laughing. A couple of other pirates wander in from left. Two start to mimic the dancers, prancing and mincing. The other wedding guests are convulsed with laughter at this turn of events. Ted begins to show alarm as he sees that Blackbeard is quickly tiring of the nonsense. Suddenly Blackbeard sees the two pirates mimicking him. With a roar of rage, he leaves Belinda and grabs one of them by the front of the shirt. The music stops. The other pirate exits left at full gallop. Berto, in Blackbeard's clutches, tries to wheedle his way free.)

Berto: Ah, now, Cap'n, we was just havin' a little fun.

Blackbeard: You ill-begotten son of a dog.

Berto (cringing): Captain, I meant no harm, sir. It's been a long time since we been to a party.

Blackbeard (shoving Berto from him): Wretched, rag-picking thief . . .

Belinda (rushing in front of Blackbeard): Please, please—it's my wedding day.

(Blackbeard looks down at her as though he doesn't know who she is.)

Berto (backing away as he moves offstage left): A thousand pardons, madame.

(Ted goes quickly to fiddlers. Orders them to play a lively tune. Music starts, couples resume dancing. Belinda leads Blackbeard to stage center, trying to coax him back to good humor. Hands and Tombo roll barrel in from right. Others bring mugs which are filled from barrel. First drink goes to Blackbeard who downs it in one gulp.)

Ted (comes forward, raising mug high): To the bride and groom!

(Pirates cheer. Blackbeard tosses his empty mug to one of the pirates, laughs, picks up Belinda by the waist and swings her around.)

Blackbeard: The bonniest bride in all the Americas!

Bonnet: Captain Teach, I would be greatly honored were I permitted to escort your lovely bride in the next dance.

Blackbeard: Miss Belinda, do you want to cut a figure with this strutting peacock?

Bonnet (wags finger at Teach): Tut, tut, my captain. One must not be so selfish as to degrade and belittle others when you have at your command, now and forever, all the charms of this beautiful girl. Rather, you should share her, so that others might have a notion of the magnitude of your conquest!

(Blackbeard throws back head and laughs. Bonnet leads smiling Belinda to join couples. Blackbeard glances around, sees everyone engaged in revelry, then walks casually to shrubbery area left. The following is pantomime which takes place at the left while wedding festivities proceed at right. As soon as Blackbeard moves from wedding scene, he ducks behind low shrubbery. Then he raises head, facing offstage left toward water. He gives low whistle—three plaintive notes like a bird call. He repeats whistle once, then passes hand in arc over his head from one side to the other as a signal. In a few seconds a pirate, Berto, approaches from the left. He and Blackbeard confer in whispers over the hedge. Pirate darts off left again; Blackbeard watches him and occasionally checks to see that wedding guests do not wander near. In a few seconds, Berto returns with a small chest. He carries it down front, in front of shrubs. Blackbeard comes down front. He lifts lid, takes out sparkling jewels, necklaces, bracelets. He smiles, picks up large diamond ring, holds it up so light catches it. Berto smiles, nods, admires it. Blackbeard hands ring to Berto, who cannot believe Blackbeard is giving ring to him, but then, pleased, he accepts it, nods happily and indicates to Blackbeard that he thinks Blackbeard is a mighty fine fellow. Blackbeard rearranges treasure in chest as Berto tucks ring in sash at his waist. Blackbeard lowers lid and motions to pirate to carry it behind hedge. Berto follows as Blackbeard leads way.

They proceed to bury chest. Their motions, screened somewhat by low shrubs, must convey to audience what is going on. At one point Berto takes a handful of dirt (from bucket of dirt behind hedge) and unthinkingly tosses it over hedge to front of stage. This angers Blackbeard who gestures angrily and conveys his feelings in pantomime to the pirate. The fellow is contrite and promises not to throw any more dirt where someone might see it. Wedding revelry drowns out any noise the two might make. Blackbeard picks up chest, pats it fondly, then places it in hole that has been dug behind hedge. Both shove dirt back over chest. They stand when job is done, grinning.

Blackbeard motions to Berto to peek around hedge toward wedding celebration to see if everything is clear. As he does so, Blackbeard takes a dagger from his waist and plunges it into pirate's back. He quickly drags body behind hedge, hastily digs shallow grave, puts body in, takes some loose branches and

throws them over body. He comes from behind hedge, brushes off his wedding clothes, strides back to wedding scene, snatches up mug and goes to barrel to fill it.)

Blackbeard (calls out happily): My bride, where's my Belinda?

(Dancing stops. Belinda, who has been dancing with Ted, runs to Blackbeard and curtsies. Blackbeard waves mug and crowd comes forward as he speaks.)

Every bride should have a special gift on her wedding day. (Girls clap and laugh.) And so I want to give this (he holds aloft sparkling diamond ring he had removed from body of Berto) to my wife!

(Belinda takes ring and gasps with delight. Blackbeard hands mug to pirate standing nearby. Girls crowd around.)

Here, I'll put it on.

(Belinda hands ring back to Teach and he puts it on her finger. Onlookers cheer, clap, laugh.)

Eden (pushes way through crowd to front of stage): On this auspicious occasion, I want to add my felicitations and good wishes to this newly-wedded couple. It makes me happy to announce that Captain Teach has just been commissioned a privateer in the name of His Majesty. And a braver, more daring, more noble captain cannot be found to fly the colors of Carolina and our gracious monarch, King George I. (Crowd cheers.) This Pamlico river country, our vast sounds and the ocean beyond will be safe from raiders and wax prosperous on shipping as long as we have men like Captain Teach who are willing to risk their lives for those who live ashore. In a fortnight he leaves his bride for a business trip to the West Indies. We wish him the best of fortune.

(Crowd cheers. Ted, who has been standing down left, does not cheer, shakes his head, and walks slowly off left. Revelry resumes. Pirates are now dancing with town ladies. As curtain closes, sounds of merry-making fade. Over sounds, chorus starts to speak before curtain closes completely.)

Women's Chorus: And so it was, that they were wed,
Blackbeard and Belinda . . .

Men's Chorus: And one pirate lay dead!

Women's Chorus: But that the townfolk never knew,
Genteel wedding guests soon joined the crew,
Pirates danced, supped, wooed the girls
Who flirted and tossed their pretty curls,

Men's Chorus: While one pirate lay dead!

Women's Chorus: Young ladies were smitten by these
buccaneers
Ashore a few days, then gone for years.
Blackbeard himself won wide renown
For leaving a wife in 'most every town.

Men's Chorus: Some didn't tarry long enough to marry,
But children were fathered by these
seafaring men . . .
The sons grew tall
And their sons, too.
They called Carolina their home.

Women's Chorus: Buccaneers have left the seas,
Their exploits live only in story,
Yet a fabled past still loves on:
Coastal Carolina reflects their glory.

Men and Women's Choruses:
The deep blue of a seafaring eye,
The whip of sail 'neath a sunny sky,
The courage of men who can never die—
This is the legacy of the buccaneer!

(Curtain closes before choruses finish. When last line is spoken, house lights go up.)

Act Three Scene One

Time: Three weeks after Blackbeard's marriage to Belinda.

Place: High seas.

Setting: Blackbeard's cabin aboard the Queen Anne's Revenge.

(Loretta is seated at table as curtain opens, polishing pewter mugs. Door left opens slowly. It makes slight creaking sound. Loretta looks up as Ted enters quickly, shuts door and stands, back against the wall, listening.)

Loretta (rises): Ted!

(Ted puts finger to his lips to warn her to be quiet. She rushes to him. They kiss. There is a thud and sound of footsteps in the companionway outside door. The two break apart. Loretta quickly returns to table, resumes polishing. Ted draws dagger at his waist, but footsteps fade away. He rushes to table and sits in chair at Loretta's right, so he can watch door.)

Ted: I don't know how long I can stay. I've been watching for a chance for hours. Miguel stays by that door as though he's tied to it.

Loretta (stops polishing, grasps his hand): What have you found out? Where are we going?

Ted: The West Indies.

Loretta: Are we stopping at Charleston? Is he going to demand ransom from Papa?

Ted: I'm not sure. But what about you? You're in this cabin all the time!

Loretta: He doesn't pay me much attention.

Ted: You're not just saying that . . .

Loretta: No, truly. He says I lack fire. He badgers me, but I act doltish — and . . . uninteresting.

Ted: I only wish that poisoned wine had killed him. But, thank God, he drank it instead of you. (Ted grasps Loretta's hand and kisses it.)

Loretta: I shall never understand it. I don't think he saw me put poison in the goblet. Yet, he seems to have eyes in the back of his head. It's frightening.

Ted: If I led the life he leads, I'd have to see with my ears, hear with my eyes!

Loretta: . . . And if he did know that I poisoned my wine, why did he drink it?

Ted: What does he think caused him to pass out?

Loretta: I believe he thinks it was bad wine. He's touched nothing but rum ever since.

Ted (rises): I'd like to cut the black devil's heart out.

Loretta: Don't provoke him, please. Things could be much worse.

Ted: I shan't provoke him. I'm doing my best to be of some use to him, just so I can be near you. But in one second, everything could change. The men could mutiny. We could be captured by other freebooters — or by the British Navy. And Blackbeard would kill us. He'd never let prisoners live who could recite his crimes.

Loretta (resignedly): We'll have to go on — existing on hope, hope that some day he'll let us go.

Ted (desperately): We've got to get off this ship! If only we'd stop at Charleston.

Loretta: You're sure we won't?

Ted: From the little I can learn, he wants to capture prizes on the southbound run. The men are restless. They grumbled about the lay-up at Ocracoke. Teach's marriage, followed by his two-week honeymoon, put them in a nasty mood. If we lay off Charleston, waiting for ransom, Teach might have trouble on his hands. The crew wants to get clear of you, but they're also hungry for gold.

Loretta: If we stopped at Charleston, Papa would pay the ransom.

Ted: And Teach still may not let you go. But to keep the crew under control, he would either have to let you go, or . . .

Loretta: Or what?

Ted: Never mind.

Loretta: Or kill me. (Rises). Can't YOU escape? If you could get ashore . . .

Ted: I'll not leave this ship of my own will as long as you're aboard. (Pauses). There is one hope. Bonnet is getting less tolerant of Teach each day.

Loretta: Bonnet could help us?

Ted: Possibly. But it would mean for him a clean break with Teach.

Loretta: He's as much a prisoner as we. Except he shares in the plunder.

Ted: If we don't drop anchor off Charleston, we will soon be in Bonnet's home waters. I may be able to convince him that the three of us should make a break for it.

Loretta (eagerly): Ted, darling, try! Offer him money. Offer him anything. I'm going mad — out of fear of what might happen to you!

(Blackbeard is heard offstage, roaring orders. There's a rushing of men and thudding, the sound of getting-ready-for-battle.)

Ted (grabs Loretta, kisses her): Hang on, darling. We'll make it. Just keep on loving me.

(Ted rushes out door. Loretta looks after him. Blackbeard's bellowing sounds nearer. She drops in her chair and resumes polishing industriously.)

Blackbeard (enters left): My cutlass, woman. Check the pistols.

Loretta (looks up): There's going to be fighting?

Blackbeard: You bet your bloomers there's going to be fighting. We're closing in on a Frenchman. Move, you dolt!

(Loretta runs to dark recess by cupboard, returns with pistols, daggers, cutlasses and places them on the table. Blackbeard gets looking glass from trunk and starts to pull his hair out straight from his head and face. He prides himself on his fierce appearance in battle. He finishes as Loretta watches, spellbound. He turns to table, straps on shoulder holster with Loretta's help, conceals knives at his waist and in boot-tops. A heavy crunching sound indicates that two boats have come together. Tremendous shout goes up as pirates engage in battle.)

Blackbeard (grabs Loretta around waist): A kiss for luck, lass!

(The kiss never materializes, for at that instant a crewman from the French ship bursts through the door. Blackbeard engages him. The two fight to stage down right. Loretta cringes against back wall. Bonnet backs into cabin, fencing with another crewman from the French ship. Blackbeard runs through his opponent, as Bonnet's assailant wounds Bonnet. The sword goes along Bonnet's side, away from the audience. As Bonnet staggers backward, Blackbeard roars and with one angry swipe of his cutlass, kills Bonnet's attacker. Shouting exuberantly, he rushes out door to engage in battle topside. Loretta rushes to Bonnet, who lies groaning on the floor.)

Ted (runs in from left, shirt bloody, to Loretta): Darling, are you all right?

Loretta: You're hurt!

Ted (glances at bloody shirt): It's blood, but not mine.

Loretta (kneels by Bonnet): Bonnet, he's . . .

Ted (kneeling): I don't think it's serious. But he's losing a lot of blood.

Loretta (desperately): He mustn't die! He can't!

Ted: Get some rags. Get something. We've got to stop this flow.

(Loretta rushes to dark recess by cupboard and returns with stack of cloths. Sounds of battle fade as Loretta and Ted work over Bonnet.)

Blackbeard (enters left, followed by Tombo and Miguel to whom he speaks): Where's the Frenchie's captain?

(Tombo grins and makes throat-cutting gesture, indicating that captain is dead.)

Blackbeard: The mate?

Miguel: Topside.

Blackbeard (glances at bodies): Heave them over the side. After you've got all the stuff we want off the Frenchman, set her afire. Put the prisoners on Hands' ship. (Moves to cupboard for rum bottle as each pirate drags out a body, pulling it by the feet. Blackbeard downs some rum.) How much alive is Bonnet?

Ted: He's breathing.

Blackbeard: The stupid land lover.

Ted: He ought to be taken out of here.

Blackbeard (removes holster, checks pistols): Where'd he get it?

Ted: Chest, muscle under his left arm.

Blackbeard: That all?

Ted: It's a nasty wound.

Blackbeard: He should have been punctured before, then he wouldn't be so full of hot air. (Bonnet mumbles). What'd he say?

Ted: Nothing.

Blackbeard (walks to Bonnet, looks down): What'd he say?

Ted: He told you in some impolite French to go to blazes.

Blackbeard (goes to table): That's a bad sign. Means he's going to live. Get him out of here.

(Ted and Loretta help Bonnet to his feet, as Tombo, Miguel, two other pirates, followed by two more, carry large chest into cabin. Chest is put on floor down front. Pirates are bloody, but happy, pay no attention to Loretta, Ted, Bonnet as they exit. Blackbeard walks to chest, throws back lid, lifts gold bar.)

Was it worth it, mates?

(Pirates crowd around chest, whoop with joy, drape themselves in jewels, bite ducats and other coins, and engage in rowdy celebration.)

CURTAIN

Act Three Scene Two

Time: Early in November 1718.

Place: Governor Spotwood's office, Williamsburg, Va.

Setting: Governor is seated behind desk, over which hangs royal coat of arms. At right of governor is Lt. Robert Maynard, in British Naval uniform. At center and right center stand a planter, two shippers, and a Church of England clergyman. Prior to opening of curtain, as house lights dim, choruses speak.

Women's Chorus: Blackbeard sailed on,
Into the Caribbean

Men's Chorus: Ship after ship fell into his hands.

Women's Chorus: The Protestant Caesar . . .

Men's Chorus: Four sloops out of Boston . . .

Women's Chorus: Three English vessels . . .

Men's Chorus: A Spaniard . . .

Women's Chorus: A French brigantine.

Men's Chorus: If they resisted, the wake of the departing
Pirate fleet churned the sea red with blood!

Women's Chorus: Then to the north Blackbeard sailed . . .

Men's Chorus: Drunk with success, drunk with rum,
His wealth increased by a considerable sum.

Women's Chorus: Bound for Bath was he
Where a governor and a bride waited.
Others feared this buccaneer
Who made lust and death his wild career.

Men's Chorus: Carolina traders and planters rose in wrath,
But knew they'd find no succor at Bath.
Teach's ties with Eden protected the raider,
So they turned for help to their Virginia
neighbor.

(Curtain opens)

Spotswood: You gentlemen from Carolina honor us with your presence. Your interest in making shore towns and coastal waters safe from Blackbeard's raiding is likewise Virginia's interest. Our people, too, have suffered, but not in the same measure as you. I have called in Lieutenant Maynard. In my estimation, he is one of the most promising officers in His Majesty's fleet. (Spotswood rises.) Lieutenant Maynard, may I present the Rev. Matthew Stithwyck of the Albemarle? (The clergyman bows and Maynard nods.) George Tommelson, planter, of Bath; Michael Mayhew of Bath and Ocracoke, owner of merchant ships in the West Indies trade; and John Howland, Beaufort, captain of a vessel that narrowly escaped capture by Blackbeard only last month. (All acknowledge introductions by bowing. Spotswood comes from behind desk and walks slowly in front of group.)

I am willing, gentlemen, that Navy vessels and men be used on this mission to rout Blackbeard. But the commander of this expedition should, in my estimation, be a volunteer. Frankly, I would like Lieutenant Maynard to be that man. Should he decline, however, I would not think harshly of him. He has a family, and Blackbeard, I have been told, has a charmed life. Those who have challenged the man have not lived to relate the encounter. (Pauses, turns to Maynard.) What say you, Maynard?

Maynard: I appreciate the faith the governor has in me . . . Should I accept command of the expedition, would I be permitted to choose my men? Could I determine the number and kinds of vessels to be used?

Spotswood: Of course, lieutenant. Anything within reason.

Clergyman (to Maynard): If I may be so bold, may I add my plea to that of the governor? Those of us who dwell on the Carolina shores retire with fear each night. Two years ago a crew of Blackbeard's men raided a small village on the north shore of Albemarle Sound. A young girl was carried off—her parents have not seen her since. Five of the men of the village were killed. Our little chapel was stripped of its few gold pieces. The pirates land frequently at plantations along the rivers, terrorize the women, steal provisions, set fire to the crops . . .

Tommelson (shakes fist): And that double-dealing Eden is in league with them.

Howland: Aye . . . but can we prove it?

Spotswood: You appreciate my position. I am actually ordering the British Navy into waters over which another governor, Eden, has jurisdiction.

Mayhew: I feel confident, however, that if Blackbeard's flag vessel is captured, we will find evidence to prove that Eden has been aiding Blackbeard, and thus justify your action, Governor.

Maynard: If I may say so, the fact that Eden gave Teach privateer papers is evidence enough that the governor was not acting in the best interests of the people.

Tommelson: In that alone, gentlemen, I say he was violating admiralty law and moral law.

Howland: They say he is holding two captives, one a woman taken off the Silver Swan out of Charleston, early in the spring.

Mayhew: The Swan's captain, Grayson, I believe, and a crew member were abandoned at Portsmouth . . . left there to die by Teach. But some Indians found them and took them to Fishtown.

Howland: Begging your pardon, Matthew, the town is Beaufort.

Mayhew (shrugs): Fishtown, Beaufort—whatever you call it. The captain said Blackbeard wants ransom for the girl.

Tommelson: Heaven knows what kind of treatment she has received if, indeed, she is still alive.

Howland: Blackbeard must be stopped at any cost.

Clergyman (to Maynard): I pray, son, that you will accept this mission.

Maynard: I do, sir—willingly.

Clergyman (grasps Maynard's hand): Bless you, my boy.

(Mayhew and Howland clap each other on shoulder, laughing with relief. Tommelson shakes hands with governor.)

Spotswood (to Maynard): How soon, lieutenant, do you think you can get under way?

Maynard: I intend to use two small sloops. Blackbeard, I understand, is now at Ocracoke. The harbor is tricky. Unless you know the channel well, even vessels of light draft could run aground before we get within range of Blackbeard's ships. Yet, I feel that to attack him there is better than an encounter at sea. I don't know how long he will be there, so I would say it is important that we get under way almost immediately. It is now November. Bad weather could set in any time after the end of the month.

Howland: Aye. Do you think you can surprise the devil?

Maynard: Perhaps, but I doubt it.

Tommelson: There's a reward of 500 pounds on his head.

Maynard (smiles): I'll enjoy collecting it.

Clergyman: God go with you, my son.

Maynard: Father . . . may I have your blessing? (He kneels before clergyman. Others bow heads.)

Clergyman (places hand on Maynard's head): Go with this youth, dear Lord. Gird him with strength that shall make the wrong fail, the right prevail, bringing peace on earth, good will to men. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

CURTAIN

Act Three Scene Three

Time: Nov. 22, 1718, soon after dawn.

Place: Ocracoke harbor.

Setting: Blackbeard's cabin aboard the Revenge. Hands is up left, looking out windows. Blackbeard is seated at table, center, with Bonnet and Tombo. Loretta is up right, checking Blackbeard's arsenal, daggers, pistols, cutlasses. Tenseness forbodes battle. Only Blackbeard is in good spirits.

Bonnet: How many ships is this British upstart bringing against us?

(Blackbeard takes a slug of rum from bottle.)

Hands (leaves cabin window): He left the mouth of the James River with two.

Bonnet: Sloops, brigs, schooners, man o'wars, what?

Hands (moves toward Loretta): Sloops, light draft.

Tombo: How many men?

Blackbeard: Who the devil cares how many? We'll know when he gets here. 'Tis a shame the British will lose this day a fine officer, two vessels and promising young men of His Majesty's Navy. 'Tis sad, sad, sad.

Bonnet (ignoring Blackbeard's sarcasm): How do you know the information you have on this expedition is reliable?

Hands: It's reliable all right. Not only have we heard from —ahem—our usual contacts ashore, but by this time it's common talk in every tavern from here to Cape Henry.

Bonnet: I still say we should get out of here.

Tombo (drinks from bottle): When?

Bonnet: Right now. Already we've waited too long.

Hands (returns to table): Bonnet, you ever heard of low water?

Bonnet (angered, rises from chair and strides to window): So the tide's out. It wasn't out several hours ago. We sit here and watch it come and go. Ever since we heard that we're the target of the British Navy, we've been sitting here sucking our thumbs. At sea we have the whole world to hide in. What have we here? Thin water and no place to run to.

Blackbeard: Shut up. I choose to dispatch Lieutenant Maynard in my harbor of a thousand shoals, shoals which can spell nothing but trouble for anyone who dares approach.

Voice (offstage): Sail ho-o-o!



"Damnation seize my soul if I give you quarter or take any from you!"

Blackbeard (rises): Get topside, Tombo. (Tombo hastens out door. Bonnet starts to follow.) You stay here, Bonnet. (Bonnet walks to table, pours himself mug of rum, sits.)

Hands (lifts bottle): Here's to another victory over the British Navy.

Bonnet (smiles ruefully): Let us never forget the Scarborough.

Blackbeard (laughs): Aye, the Scarborough! (Blackbeard and Hands drink.) Man o' war. Thirty guns. And she run for cover in the Barbados.

Hands: Teach chased the pride of the British Navy. The Scarborough slunk away like a cur, her tail between her legs.

Blackbeard: That was before your time, Bonnet. Before you found fame and fortune with Blackbeard.

Bonnet: Aye, but I know the tale well.

Tombo (rushes in left): Two sloops coming in from the north northeast.

Blackbeard (strides to window): What flag?

Tombo: No flag. Leastwise, we can't see nothin' yet.

Blackbeard (peers out): Thinks he can fool me by sneaking in with no colors, the lily-livered pipsqueak. (Goes to table, picks up spyglass, returns to window and uses it.) Ha-ha! This will be a fight they'll never dare mention in Navy logs. How many hours to the tide, Hands?

Hands: Three.

Blackbeard: He doesn't dare come in 'til then. Bonnet, look to things below deck. Put two men on the powder cache. Hands, run your ship up the sound. Tombo, check the weapons on the forward deck. (Men leave as each receives his order. Blackbeard peers out window, laughs). Come, come, me hearty! There's a big reception a'waitin' ye. This is as good a way as any to die.

(Loretta stops polishing cutlasses and watches him curiously as curtain closes briefly to denote passage of time.)

Men's Chorus: Time and tide, tide and time . . .
Maynard's sloops approach the shore
Where Blackbeard waited . . .

Women's Chorus: To settle a score!

Men's Chorus: Blackbeard said he couldn't lose
And laced himself with jubilous booze.
The odds were all on the pirate's side.
Soon the wait was over—

Men and Women's Chorus: It was high tide!

(Noise of men shouting, sounds of battle, firing of pistols, cannon, angry voices of men fighting, screams, violent crashing come from backstage. As curtain opens, with melee in background, stage is dark except for Blackbeard, center. He faces audience, arms outstretched, one holding cutlass. He leers, eyes shining. Into his hat are stuck white sparklers, lighted just before the opening of the curtain. The audience's glimpse of Blackbeard is fleeting for almost simultaneously with opening of the curtain, lights on stage go up. Lt. Maynard bursts in door left. Loretta has taken cover behind the heavy chest down right and is not seen when curtain opens. Maynard has sword ready and stands poised for battle the second he sees Blackbeard.)

Blackbeard (faces Maynard and levels cutlass at him): Welcome aboard, Sonny Boy!

Maynard: Blackbeard, I'm giving you one chance. Surrender your ships and your men!

Blackbeard (playfully maneuvers cutlass back and forth): In return for what, Lieutenant?

Maynard: In return for your life.

Blackbeard (laughs lightly, laughter grows, then suddenly stops): Sonny Boy, you offer a poor bargain. I would hang in a gibbet with all my mates if I cashed in my chips. You can't offer me my life, 'cause you ain't got it to give. Damnation seize my soul if I give you quarter or take any from you.

(He slashes cutlass in tremendous swipe at Maynard who deftly evades it.)

Maynard (parries as Blackbeard begins duel in earnest): I don't expect quarter from you . . . nor shall I give any.

(As they fight, backstage sounds of battle which faded slightly as Maynard and Blackbeard talked, come up full. Blackbeard and Maynard fight back and forth in cabin, turning over furniture. Ted slips in. He avoids duelists. Blackbeard taunts his adversary, as Maynard backs out of door left, fighting off Blackbeard who keeps after him. Ted is on stage.)

Ted (frantic): Loretta!

Loretta (from behind chest): Here, Ted.

Ted rushes down right, helps Loretta to her feet. She leans against chest,

Ted (slaps her wrists): Loretta, listen to me. You understand what I'm saying? (Loretta nods.) We're going to leave the ship. We can't wait any longer. I have a dinghy ready. In the midst of the fighting, no one will notice us. We'll row ashore.

Loretta (shakes her head): He'll come after us.

Ted: I don't give a farthing what he does.

(Tremendous shout goes up backstage. Loretta and Ted look at each other questioning. Bonnet rushes in, clothes torn and bloody. He's distraught, wild-eyed.)

Bonnet (rushes to chest): He's dead! (Bonnet struggles with latch on chest. Loretta stands close to Ted.)

Ted: The young lieutenant?

Bonnet (still struggling with latches): No, no, no! Teach! (Flings lid back and looks in chest as Loretta gasps upon hearing that Teach has been killed.)

Ted (draws Loretta closer to him): What in hell's fire are you doing, Bonnet?

Bonnet (rummages in trunk): Where is it?

Ted: What are you looking for?

Bonnet: Teach's jewels, gold. Where are they?

Ted: How should we know?

Bonnet (jumps up, points to Loretta): She knows!

Ted (steps in front of Loretta, faces Bonnet): You dirty scum. Get out. Teach wasn't fool enough to keep his loot here. If, like a rat, you're running from a sinking ship, you'd best go empty-handed. The sea sucks to its depths men laden with gold. (Bonnet starts to retreat toward door as Ted advances on him, fists clinched.) Hurry, Bonnet. I can hear the creak of the gibbet as it sways in the wind, its iron bands encircling the body of Stede Bonnet, pirate. (Bonnet eyes Ted warily, still backing toward door as Maynard enters, bloody, bedraggled, breathing heavily.)

Maynard (cutlass in hand, addresses Ted, nods toward Bonnet): Who's he?

Ted: Stede Bonnet.

Maynard (aims cutlass at Bonnet): Don't move. (To Ted): Who're you? (Bonnet darts for door, Maynard moves as if to follow, stops.) He'll not get far. I'm Lt. Robert Maynard of the Royal Navy.

Ted: Ted Buckman, second mate, Silver Swan, out of Charleston. (Turns to Loretta.) This is Miss Loretta Thaxton, who was aboard the Swan as passenger when Teach took the ship. (Loretta curtsies.)

Maynard (nods): Miss Thaxton. I heard that you were an prisoner aboard. It is gratifying to find you both safe.

Loretta: We shall ever be indebted to you, lieutenant.

Ted: I didn't believe you had the slightest chance of overpowering Blackbeard. Miss Thaxton and I were planning to escape, if we could, in the midst of the fighting.

Maynard: Luck was with us. Teach's ship ran aground as he was trying to lure us on a shoal. When the ships came together, he thought all my men were topside. I had concealed twenty below deck. They came up as reinforcements when Teach's men thought they had us licked.

Loretta: He's really dead?

Maynard: Very dead. One of my schooners is in no shape to sail right now. But the other is. We will take you aboard. Now I must check on the men. (Bows to Loretta.) Miss Thaxton.

Ted (shakes hands with Maynard): My thanks.

(Maynard leaves. Ted walks toward center stage to Loretta, lights go down, spotlights on Loretta and Ted.)

Loretta (as Ted puts his arm about her waist and they start toward door): I can't believe he's dead. He seemed so . . . so indestructible. (Blackbeard's uproarious laughter comes from right). Wait!

Ted (stops): What, my dearest?

Loretta: Didn't you hear?

Ted: I hear nothing.

Loretta: I heard him laugh.

(Lights go up behind scrim, up right, revealing Blackbeard elevated over stage. He stands with hands on hips in his finest regalia. Loretta turns toward stage right, but doesn't look directly at Blackbeard.)

It seemed to come from over there.

Ted: Come, darling. You're imagining things.

Loretta: I wonder what he did do with his treasure.

Blackbeard: Nobody but the Devil and myself know where my treasure is and the longer liver of the two shall have it all!

Loretta: There! Didn't you hear that?

Ted: I hear nothing but your sweet voice. Now, you're going to forget about that devil, Blackbeard, as will all the world, and we'll never hear his name again.

(As Ted and Loretta exit left, Blackbeard throws back his head in uproarious laughter, which gradually fades as curtain closes.)

END

Blackbeard Glows with Evil's Allure

Blackbeard, Raider of the Carolina Seas, is not the first drama written about the legendary pirate, Edward Teach, nor will it be the last. His life was colorful and is rich in dramatic possibility.

The play is based on fact, but with fictional embellishment. Some authorities on pirate lore say that Blackbeard had 13 wives, others say 14, still others say 15. The New World is not noted for accurate record-keeping in those lusty days, so it is doubtful if anyone can prove exactly how many women the boisterous pirate might have married. But all agree that his last wife was a resident of Carolina and wed him there.

Many will recognize the name, Israel Hands, who was one of Blackbeard's men, and believe the character to be borrowed from Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island. Actually, Hands was one of Blackbeard's men, according to books on piracy, and it was Stevenson who borrowed the name for his Treasure Island story.

Ocracoke, Blackbeard's lair, was not known as "Ocracoke" in the early 18th century, but the modern word is used here to easier establish identity with today's Ocracoke island.

The romantic attachment between Loretta Thax-

ton, the heroine, and Theodore Buckman is fictional, as are the characters themselves. Little is known about who Blackbeard actually took prisoner. Most of his prisoners were either killed immediately or if they were invited, joined the freebooters. Thus it was with Stede Bonnet (pronounced Bo-nay), a pirate in his own right, until Blackbeard captured him. (Appearing above Blackbeard's head in an illustration on page 14 is the flag authenticated by American Heritage as the official "Jolly Roger" of the infamous Blackbeard.)

Some authorities disagree on the actual date of Blackbeard's death at Ocracoke. But most place it on Nov. 22, 1718. Edward Rowe Snow, New England writer on pirates and piracy, owns a relic that he can convincingly authenticate as Blackbeard's skull. It is silvered and the grisly memento reportedly hung for scores of years in a tavern.

Many residents in North Carolina's Pamlico Sound country are descended from Blackbeard himself. Some don't like to admit it; others will brag about it. In Carteret, a few families proudly own up to the fact that one or more of their ancestors were pirates.

Among the references used in writing Blackbeard,

Raider of the Carolina Seas, were the following: Pirates, Pirates, Pirates, by Phyllis R. Fenner; Pirates of the Spanish Main, American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc.

Pirates: Rascals of the Spanish Main, A. B. C. Whipple; The Outer Banks of North Carolina, David Stick; True Tales of Buried Treasure, Edward Rowe Snow; The English Dancing Master, by John Playford; Ocracoke, Alice K. Rondthaler.

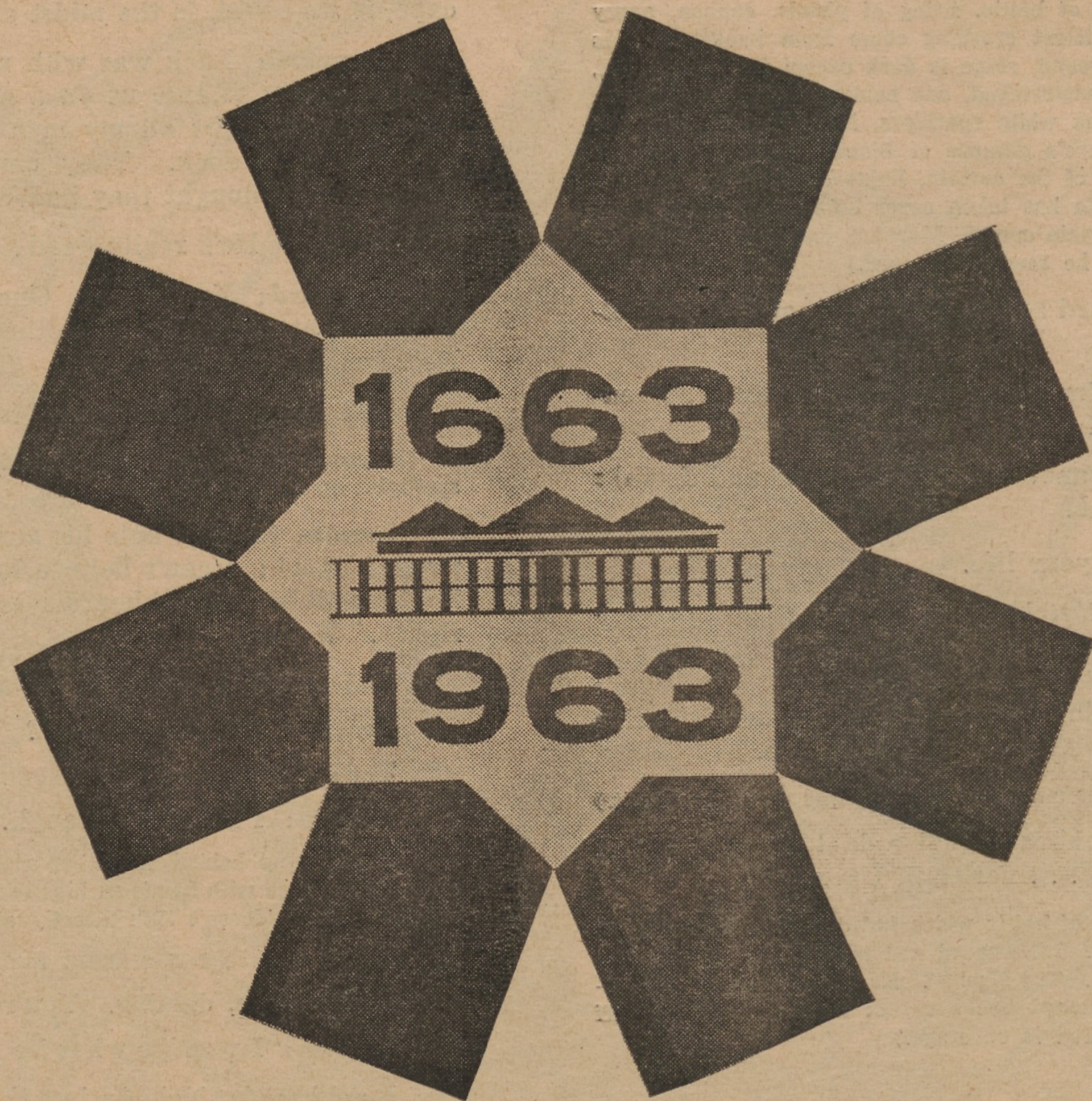
Pirates and Buccaneers of the Atlantic Coast, Edward Rowe Snow; Handy Handbook of Buccaneers, an article in the October 1960 issue of Friends magazine; Florida's Fabulous Treasure Bay, an article in the August 1962 issue of Argosy, the Encyclopedia Britannica, Choral Speaking Technique, Agnes Curran Hamm, and The Speech Choir, Marjorie Gullan.

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