

"Why?" demanded Rosme, causing the boy to hesitate.

"Because Cousin Mattie said so."

"Perhaps her hair was kind of red."

"No, it wasn't."

"Some Princesses have red hair," said Rosme coldly. "Go on."

"The Prince wanted to go to the Princess. So he took his hat——"

"Cap," corrected Rosme softly.

"——and started off. But between the two hills there was a valley with a wood in it. And there was mist in the wood. It was nice there. So instead of going straight through, the Prince played around. Then when he wanted to go on he found that the mist had changed into millions of gray threads. His feet were all tangled up in them. And the gray threads were——"

"Spells!" cried Rosme delighted.

"Yes, spells. And he couldn't break them no matter how he tried, for it was a magic wood and not at all nice when you got tired of it. The Prince hated it, but he couldn't get out. He could go to the edge of the wood and see the Princess up on the hill, but he couldn't get to her."

"Not ever?"

The boy shook his head.

"Well, I think it's a horrid story. I could tell it much better than that. I would make the Princess stop playing ball and come down to get the Prince out. And I would have her hair kind of red, like mine, and so long she could sit on it. And I would tell exactly what she wore when they got married, and what the bride's maids wore, and——"

"But you can't! It isn't your story. Things that people wear are stupid anyway. Can you play pirates?"

"No, I can't."

"I could teach you if you'll promise not to be silly. Are you scared of blood?"

"N—no."

"Lots of blood?"

"No," firmly.

"Well, then, come on. This is a

dandy place to play. That log can be our ship and this long grass makes spiffing waves! Have you got a skull anywhere?"

Rosme did not have a skull. But she had an imagination which did not need one. And David was a good teacher. He was on his own ground here. He expanded and glowed. The old, gorgeous, gory names tasted strong upon his tongue. Under his vivid words the still, hot garden became the blistering Spanish Main. The log became a pirate barque. The black flag drooped at the mast. For the moment there was no prey in sight and the pirates drowsed. But suddenly, out of the west, a sail appeared! "Clear the decks! All hands to the culverins! Tumble up, tumble up!" (Rosme, unfortunately, had tumbled down). "Stand by to board and no quarter!"

Everyone who has ever played pirates knows the rest! Some, but perhaps not everyone, can cast their memory back recapturing something of the thrill, the shivering rapture which was Rosme's that day as, first mate to the great Blackbeard, she followed that hardy villain to deeds of blood and victory. All afternoon they played; many golden galleons they sank; many more they set on fire. Thousands of miserable Spanish walked the plank, amid the plaudits of British sailormen rescued and restored to freedom. Nor were the pirates' efforts unrewarded since treasure ships were thick as blackberries. Blackbeard and his trusty crew buried many chests of gold in various desert islands; and the sun was setting and Frances had whistled many times from the back door before Rosme heard, and knew that the pirate's cruise was over.

"I've got to go," she said ruefully, removing a black patch from her eye and restoring a much-crumpled middy to its original position. "Boy, I like pirates. If you wish you may come again."

(To be continued).