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# Billy Ben's Pirate Play

BY

Rea Woodman, M. A.

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ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE  
Franklin, Ohio.



# Billy Ben's Pirate Play

A Dress Rehearsal in One Act.

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By H. REA WOODMAN.

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**Eldridge Entertainment House**

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[1912]

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### THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

The Pirate King.....Willie Benson  
(Otherwise "Billy Ben.")  
The Cannibal King.....Tommy Tompkins  
The Missionary.....Albert Ferrell  
First Pirate.....Mollie Benson  
Second Pirate.....Ethel Tompkins  
First Cannibal.....Della Benson  
Second Cannibal.....Cora Tompkins  
"The Audience".....Miss Margaret Williams

## BILLY BEN'S PIRATE PLAY.

(*The Sitting-room of the Benson Home, one Saturday afternoon. The furniture having been pushed to one side and carried out until a satisfactory stage space has been secured, Willie Benson, otherwise "Billy Ben," in a complete Indian suit, with a wooden sword and pistols, is explaining the arrangements to his aunt, Margaret Williams.*)

*Willie.* Now this much will be stage (*indicating with the sword*), and this much will be audience. (*another wave of the sword*). Do you think that'll be all right?

*Miss W.* (*seating herself in the audience part of the room*). Yes, that'll be fine. Are you going to have a curtain?

*Willie.* The curtain will be there, but we can't put it up until the day of the play. You see in a pirate play there is n't much scenery; it is the acting that counts. In a love play it is different.

*Miss W.* (*meckly*). I suppose that is true. Do you pay much attention to costumes in a pirate play?

*Willie.* (*largely, straightening his tippy headgear*). A good deal, but there is no change of costume. Pirates do not care much for clothes, and of course there are no wimmen in the play. Well, I guess everything's ready. Shall we commence? (*Miss Williams nods.*)—Come on in, Tommy Tompkins!—Tommy is the Cannibal King, you know.

(*Enter Tommy Tompkins, got up in what he conceives to be an appropriate winter costume for a Cannibal King. He carries a tin shield and a baseball bat.*)

*Tommy.* (*halting*). Oh, I didn't know your aunt was here!

*Miss W.* How do you do, Tommy.

*Willie.* (*taking his "position" on the stage*). She's going to be audience, you know, and see how we do it.

*Tommy.* (to *Miss W.*). We don't know it very well yet.

*Miss W.* Oh, you need n't be afraid 'of me.

*Willie.* (fixing his pistols securely in his belt). No, she don't know much about pirate plays; what *she* writes is love plays. I told her this was only the second dress rehearsal. Now we'll commence. Oh. (*He turns to Miss Williams.*) The play starts with a terribul shipwreck.

*Tommy.* (*repairing a rent in his shield*). No, it's a sea fight. Your ship and another ship—

*Willie.* Oh, of course there *was* a fight, but the fight is over, and my ship is sinking. I explained all that in my first speech. (*To Tommy.*) Get back there, and wait.

*Tommy.* You're too far on the front of the stage.

*Willie.* No, I aint. You go back there, and wait your turn. (*Tommy retires, temporarily, into the background. Willie assumes an attitude expressive of grief and despair, and declaims*): My ship is sinking fast. Hark I hear the wild waves gurgling in her hold. My brave men are dead around me, killed in a turrribul fight with a Spanish warship. We have met the enemy, and they are ours, but at what a cost, oh my countrymen!

*Tommy.* I think there ought to be some dead men there, don't you, Miss Williams?

*Willie.* I don't. I appeal there to the imaginashun of the audience.

*Tommy.* I don't think you ought to leave important things like that to the audience. How can they tell how many men have been killed?

*Willie.* Well, I think so, and this is my play. Keep still, and let me go on with my speech. (*retakes his "attitude"*). My brave men are dead around me, killed in a turrribul fight with a Spanish warship. We have met the enemy and they are ours, but at what a cost, oh my countrymen! Ah, my brave fallen comrades, how often will I think of you when I roam the ocean

o'er. You did not know the name of fear. Hark, what is that noise that confronts mine ears? (*in a louder tone*). Hark, what is that noise that confronts mine ears? (*A dramatic pause ensues. Then, angrily*)—Mollie, are you there?

*Voice from without.* Yes.

*Willie.* Then why don't you listen?

(*Enter Mollie Benson, dressed as The First Pirate, and carrying a small box filled with sand. Willie glares at her.*)

*Mollie.* The sand won't jiggle, somehow.

*Tommy.* (*coming forward*). You've got the box too full.

*Willie.* (*examining the box*). It worked all right last time.

*Tommy.* There's too much sand in the box. (*He removes a few handfuls, depositing it on the table.*) Now I'll bet she'll work.

*Miss W.* What's it for?

*Willie.* It's to make thunder with, and the sound of waves. Listen! (*He shakes the box.*)

*Mollie.* I don't think it makes very good thunder.

*Willie.* It makes perfectly good thunder, if you work it right. (*to Mollie*). Now, stand back there, and when I come to "Hark, what is that sound that confronts mine ears," you shake it. (*Mollie steps to one side. Tommy retires into the background, and Willie "takes the stage."*)

*Willie.* My ship is sinking fast. Hark, I hear the wild waves gurgling in her hold. (*Mollie shakes the thunder box. He pauses, and looks at her sternly.*) I did n't tell you to make thunder there! Now look how you've spoiled my speech!

*Mollie.* (*on the verge of rebellion*). Yesterday I shook it when you came to "wild waves gurgling in her hold." It's for waves and thunder both, you said.

*Tommy.* (*taking the thunder box and shaking it*).

It's no good. We ought to have tin thunder. I said so all along.

*Willie.* (thoughtfully chewing the end of his wooden sword). We can't. Papa won't let us. He cut his foot on some tin once, and he's scared of it.

*Miss W.* Well, don't have any thunder.

*Willie.* (frowning with masculine impatience). We got to have thunder. Who ever heard of a pirate play without thunder? I tell you what. Shake it softer for the waves, and louder for the thunder. Now, let's commence again. Get back there, Tommy. (He takes his position, having again secured the slipping pistols in his belt.) My ship is sinking fast. Hark, I hear the wild waves gurgling in her hold. (Mollie shakes the box vigorously, but hastily reduces the volume upon Willie's urgent gesture.) My brave men are dead around me, killed in a turribul fight with a Spanish warship. We have met the enemy, and they are ours, but at what a cost, oh my countrymen! Ah, my brave fallen comrades, how often will I think of you when I roam the ocean o'er! You did not know the name of fear. Hark, what is that noise that confronts mine ears? (Mollie shakes the sand with vigor.) Is it thunder? (Mollie shakes the sand with more vigor.) Yes, it is thunder. And hark, hark! (gestures urgently to Mollie) Hark, the waves are rushing over the decks! (totters) All is blackness and despair! We are lost! We are lost! (then dropping into an ordinary tone). That's an all right water sound, aint it, Aunt Maggie?

*Miss W.* Yes, it's pretty good, but if Mollie were not so close it would sound better.

*Willie.* She will be behind the scenes during the play, of course.—Now, Tommy, come on.

*Tommy.* (preparing to "take the stage"). You say that last part again.

*Mollie.* Is there any more thunder in the first act?

*Willie.* Yes, you stay right there. (Mollie seats herself on some stage properties.) —All right, Tommy.



(*In a dramatic tone, with appropriate gestures.*) Hark, the waves—(*aside to Mollie*). You need n't make thunder just for this.—Hark, the waves are rushing over the decks! All is darkness and despair! We are lost! We are lost!

Tommy. (*“entering” with eclat*). Oh King, live forever!

Mollie. Oh Tommy, you forgot! You've got your Cannibal clothes on!

Tommy. My Captain's suit is n't done yet.

Willie. (*to Tommy*). Go on. Commence again.

Tommy. (*retiring and “entering” again*). Oh King, live forever!

Mollie. I don't think a Pirate would say that.—Do you, Aunt Maggie? That's what they say in the Bible.

Willie. (*wheeling*). Who wrote this play?

Mollie. You did.

Willie. Who is the star?

Mollie. Oh you, of course. The author is always the star.

Willie. (*sternly*). Who is stage manager?

Mollie. (*reluctantly*). You are.

Willie. (*adjusting his pistols*). Then you keep still. Go on, Tommy.

Tommy. I won't enter again, would you?

Willie. No, you entered all right. Go on.

Tommy. (*saluting*). Oh King, live forever! (*Mollie watches all this with secret disapproval.*)

Willie. (*grasping his hand with fervor*). Ah ha, my brave Captain! How goes the night?—It ain't night really, Aunt Maggie, but they always say that in Pirate plays.

Miss W. (*dubiously*). I see.

Willie. Would you have it in, or would n't you?

Miss W. Why, if Pirates always say it, I suppose I would.

*Mollie.* They don't say it in the *day* time. . . . .

*Miss W.* What do you think, Tommy?

*Tommy.* (*wagging his head*). I think it sounds fine.

(*Enter Della Benson, dressed as The First Cannibal. She carries a large cat.*)

*Della.* Is it my turn now?

*Willie.* (*with a frantic wave of his sword*). No! Go back and keep still!

*Della.* (*advancing slowly*). How funny Tommy looks!—How do you like the play, Aunt Maggie?

*Willie.* Go back, Della! You're not in the first act!

*Della.* I came to see Aunt Maggie. I dess I can see her if I want to!—I am a Cannibal, Aunt Maggie. This is my lion.

*Willie.* Make her go back, Aunt Maggie!

*Miss W.* Let her be audience, Billy Ben.—Come sit by me, Sweetheart.

*Della.* (*making a "face" at Willie, and sitting down by Miss Williams*). Cora is a Cannibal, too. She's painting her face all wed.

*Willie.* Now listen here, Della Benson. If I let you stay in here you've got to be good.—Let's commence again, Tommy.—Get further back there, Mollie.

*Della.* My lion only eats people I tell him to, Aunt Maggie.

*Willie.* (*striding wrathfully up to Della*). Gimme that cat!

*Della.* (*holding the cat very closely*). I won't! He's my lion!

*Willie.* (*trying to take the cat*). Gimme that cat!

*Miss W.* (*interferring gently*). Oh be careful, Billy Ben! Give me the cat.

*Tommy.* Take him out.

*Willie.* (*struggling*). Gimme that cat!

*Mollie.* Let her alone. The cat is n't hurting you, Willie Benson!

*Miss W.* (to the struggling Della). Let me hold the cat, Sweetheart. (She gets final possession of the cat.)

*Willie.* (picking up his fallen pistols). This is the way it goes. Della always upsets things when we're practicing.

*Della.* (sobbing). You said you wished you had some lions for the play! (Miss Williams motions Mollie to take the cat from the room, which the latter does, with her head up.)

*Willie.* Real lions I said, goosey!

*Della.* You'd be afraid of real lions! So there! You're 'fraid of tigers!

*Miss W.* Never mind, Billy Ben. Go on with the play. (Della keeps her face hidden.)

*Willie.* Oh well, it makes me tired! Girls are so silly. (He takes his "position" on the stage.) Come on, Tommy.—Ah ha, my brave Captain! How goes the night?

*Tommy.* (painfully self-conscious). All is lost. We must escape for our lives.

*Willie.* Is it e'en so? How many men have we left?

*Tommy.* (resting on the other foot). Out of your five-and-twenty faithful men, but two survived the fight, oh King!

*Willie.* Don't be so stiff. You look like a smoke-stack! Say that again.

*Tommy.* (changing feet nervously, and grimly gripping the ball bat). Out of your five-and-twenty faithful men, but two survived the fight, Oh King!

*Willie.* That's better. You must act prouder. (slaps his forehead). This is a blow indeed. How far are we from land?

*Tommy.* (acting "prouder"). Such is life on the high seas. (There is a pause.)

*Willie.* Go on. That aint all you say.

*Tommy.* I forget what comes next.

*Willie.* (fishing some crumpled sheets of paper from

*his pocket*). Wait. I'll prompt you. (*After much fumbling, and several false starts, he finds the place, and reads*): Such is life on the high seas. We are within fifty leagues of a desert island, inhabited by cannibals and wild beasts.—Now, go on. (*smites his foreheads*). This is a blow indeed. How far are we from land?

*Tommy*. Such is life on the high seas. We are within fifty leagues of a desert island, inhabited by cannibals and wild beasts.

*Willie*. It is well. Bid them lower a boat. We will repair to that hospital shore. ♪

*Della*. (*intensely interested*). What is a "hospital shore?"

*Willie*. Keep quiet. You make us forget.—It is well. Bid them lower a boat. We will repair to that hospital shore. Hark! Hark, the thunder is getting worse!—Where's Mollie? (*calls, impatiently*). Oh Mollie!

*Della*. (*to Miss Williams*). Is a "hospital shore" like where they took Papa when he was hurted?

(*Enter Mollie, with streaks of desperate black on her face.*)

*Mollie*. Do I come on now?

*Willie*. No. We want more thunder. (*Mollie takes up the sand box.*) I'll say that over again. You must listen and be here, if you're going to be thunder man.—It is well. Bid them lower a boat. We will repair to that hospital shore. Hark! (*Mollie shakes the sand.*) Hark, the thunder is getting worse. Bid them make haste. (*Tommy retires into the background, and Willie turns to Mollie.*) You must make it awful loud there,—there's a storm coming up, you know. (*He paces back and forth, his arms folded, a heavy frown on his brow.*) We can but sink. For myself I do not care, but I sorrow for these brave men. To be consumed by cannibals—to be consumed by cannibals—(*slowly*), to be consumed by cannibals—er to be—(*consults his rustling, crumpled manuscript*), to be consumed by cannibals,—the very thought makes the blood run cold.—Now, Tommy.

*Tommy.* (*striding onto the stage, and saluting*). The boat is lowered. It will be a rough night. (*Mollie shakes the thunder box with enthusiasm.*)

*Willie.* Farewell, my fallen comrades. You did not know the name of fear.—No, that don't come in here.—Farewell, my fallen comrades! Ye shall be buried in the ship ye loved so well. (*takes off his Indian headgear reverently*). Peace to your ashes!

*Tommy.* (*doffing his headgear*). Peace to your ashes!

*Willie.* (*smashing on his head-piece*). Lead on, my brave Captain! We will follow the Black Flag! (*They retire to the background. Mollie shakes the sand.*)

*Willie.* (*sinking down on a pile of stage properties, exhausted*). That's the end of the first act. Is it all right?

*Miss W.* It's fine, Billy Ben!

*Della.* I frink it is a beautiful play.

*Tommy.* That thunder at the last is the storm gathering in the distance, you know.

*Willie.* That was Tommy's idea, to have thunder at the last. (*rises*). The second act opens on the desert island. I make the first speech.

*Della.* (*climbing down from her chair*). Oh goodie, it's my turn!

*Willie.* You go outside and wait. I'll tell you when to come in.

*Della.* (*going*). And must Cora come, too?

*Willie.* Yes.—Where's Albert? And Ethel? Everybody is in this Act.

*Della.* I'll tell them! (*She runs out.*)

*Mollie.* (*putting the box on the table*). We don't have any thunder in the second act.

(*Enter Albert Ferrell, in black clothes, with ministerial accessories. All told, he presents a most preachery effect. Miss Williams nods a welcome to him.*)

*Willie.* (*sizing him up*). Gee, but you look out of

sight.—Don't he, Aunt Maggie? He's the Missionary, you know.—Where's your Bible?

*Albert.* My mother would n't give it to me. She says it is n't respectful.

*Willie.* Well, I don't know that it's disrespectful.

(*Enter Ethel Tompkins, dressed as a Pirate; a costume, like Mollie's, curiously composite, part Pirate, part school girl.*)

*Miss W.* (*nodding to her*). Well, Ethel. And what are you?

*Ethel.* I'm the Second Pirate.

*Willie.* (*looking her over silently, then giving orders coldly*). You fellows wait back there. (*Tommy and Albert wait in the background.*) You girls get ready to come on the stage. (*He readjusts his slipping pistols.*) Are you ready? Come on. (*The three Pirates advance onto the stage. Willie looks back.*) Don't walk so close to me. And walk prouder. And keep your swords ready to strike. Let's do that over. Now. (*They advance again.*) Now, I'll commence. (*He declaims*): All night we have wandered over this desolate isle, seeking rest and shelter and have found none. My heart is heavy within me, for I fear my faithful men will perish of hunger. (*gazes moodily afar, then points with his sword*). Only yesterday my good ship rode those waves proudly, and now—how are the mighty fallen! (*Sighs deeply, leaning on his sword.*)

*Ethel.* (*stepping forward*). Do not be downhearted, oh—

*Willie.* (*angrily*). You don't say that yet. I'm meditating.

*Ethel.* Oh. (*She steps back. Mollie giggles. Willie glares at them, then resumes his meditating.*)

*Willie.* (*with gloomy sighs*). Would that I were sunk beneath the waves with you, my gallant Captain! Had you been—had you been—been spared, I—er I—

*Mollie.* —I would gladly have died for you.

*Willie.* Oh, yes, of course. You people make me forget.—Had you been spared, I would gladly have died for you. Alas, and shall I never again clasp you to my buzzum! How are the mighty fallen!

*Ethel.* Oh, I did n't know you said that twice!

*Willie.* Said which twice?

*Ethel.* "How are the mighty fallen."

*Willie.* Yes, I used that twice. They always repeat when they are meditating. Now it's your turn.—Alas, and shall I never again clasp you to my buzzum? How are the mighty fallen!

*Ethel.* (*advancing*). Do not be downhearted, oh King! (*Mollie advances*.)

*Willie.* (*smiting his remorseful breast*). I have brought you here, only to die of hunger and thirst, or to be eaten alive by howling savages. Unhappy one that I am, thus do I requite your bravery!

*Mollie.* Our place is by our King. (*In the grandeur of her gesture, she drops her wooden pistol, and recovers it, giggling*.)

*Ethel.* (*giggling*). Our place is by our King!

*Mollie.* You have led us to fame and fortune, (*giggles*), and we will not desert you now, in misfortune's darkest hour.

*Ethel.* (*solemnly enough, but shaken by nervous giggles*). Where you go, we will go; your people shall be our people, and there will we be buried.

*Willie.* (*sternly*). That aint right! (*Mollie giggles softly*.)

*Ethel.* (*giggling heroically*). Where you go, we will go; where you die, we will die, and there will we be buried.

*Willie.* (*in dreadful tone*). Giggle, giggle, giggle! I'd rather die than be a girl!

*Miss W.* (*softly*). Billy Ben! Careful!

*Willie.* (*in a dreadfuller tone*). Giggle in the morning, giggle at night; giggle at school, giggle at church,

giggle in the street. (*Gazes at them scornfully.*) You're the limit. That's what you are!

*Miss W.* Billy Ben! I thought you were a King!

*Willie.* I am. Show me a King that likes wimmin. Show me! (*To Ethel, with magnificent resignation.*) Well, say that speech again.

*Ethel.* Where you go, we will go; where you die, we will die, and there will we be buried.

*Mollie.* (*falling on her knees*). We swear allegiance to thee, and thee only, King of the Pirate Wave!

*Ethel.* (*falling on her knees*). To thee, and thee only, King of the Pirate Wave!

*Willie.* Don't kneel so close to me. I got to gesture some. (*The girls rise, and kneel, further back.*)

*Miss W.* King of the Pirate *what*, Billy Ben?

*Willie.* The Pirate Wave. It means that I am king of the ocean.—Now (*to Ethel*), say that again.

*Ethel.* To thee, and thee only, oh King of the Pirate Wave!

*Willie.* You are honest fellows. (*He weeps.*) I would not give your manly hearts for all the gold on Wall Street. I will protect you with my life. Rise. (*They rise, stiff, solemn, giggleless.*) Let us resume our journey. Keep your guns ready. We may meet a band of Cannibals at any time. (*They solemnly stalk into the background.*)

*Miss W.* (*applauding*). I like this act. You have some fine Pirates there!

*Willie.* (*stolidly*). Now it's Tommy's turn. We all wait here till he says his speech. (*They range themselves in the background, and Tommy "takes the stage" with painful precision.*)

*Tommy.* How lovely is this beautiful isle! Behold the stately pam trees! There, (*with a pistol-like gesture*), behold the cocoanut tree! There, behold the bread-fruit tree! And there, behold the banana tree, all made for the food of man!



*Willie.* I got all that out of the geography, of course, Aunt Maggie. (*To Tommy.*) Make more gestures. That is a strong speech.

*Tommy.* (*with galvanic action.*) A cannibal's life is the life for me! I owe not any man! The desert is mine, and the fullness thereof. (*Listens.*) Is that a lion I hear approaching from ambush? (*Lifts his ball bat.*) No, 'tis but the wind. There are lions and wild cats everywhere, but I fear them not.

(*Enter Della and Cora Tompkins, as Cannibals. They range themselves with the actors, in the background, with much stifled giggling.*)

*Willie.* (*frowning at the little girls, but addressing Tommy.*) No, that part about the sea comes next.

*Tommy.* I thought that sounded queer. (*strikes a reflective attitude.*) It is very lonely here. No sound is heard save the roar of the sea and the call of wild beasts. On every side of the island is the sea, moaning like a lost child, but—

*Albert.* What's the use of saying that? Of course the sea is all around the island; that's the reason it's an island.

*Mollie.* That's what I say. (*Tommy looks dubiously from one critic to the other.*)

*Willie.* (*loftily.*) But a cannibal don't know what an island is. Do you think cannibals know *geography*?

*Tommy.* (*changing feet.*) Yes, don't you see? A cannibal thinks an island is something different. (*He resumes his speech and action.*) It is very lonely here. No sound is heard save the roar of the sea and the call of wild beasts. On every side of the island is the sea, moaning like a lost child, but it is truly beautiful to look upon! (*listens.*) Is that a lion I hear approaching from ambush? (*lifts his ball bat.*) No, 'tis but the wind. There are lions and wild cats everywhere, but I fear them not. I have not tasted meat these three days; my men are wild with hunger.

*Cora.* (*starting forward*). Now it's our turn, Della. (*Ethel detains her.*)

*Willie.* No, wait.—Della, get back! (*He subdues the giggling Cannibals with his severe glance.*)

*Tommy.* Where was I at?

*Willie.* (*gazing sternly at the Cannibals*). I have not tasted meat these three days; my men are wild with hunger.

*Tommy.* My men are wild with hunger. Woe betide the white man that approaches them before their hunger is quenched!

(*Della and Cora rush at Tommy with giggling haste.*)

*Willie.* You come back here! (*He pulls them back with grim violence.*) Now don't move until I tell you. Do you hear?

*Tommy.* I wish you'd let me alone! How can I remember my speech when you're jumping at me all the time? (*He shades his eyes with his hand, and gazes afar.*) Yonder I see my men looking for food. Poor fellows, they are very hungry. I will call them hither. (*Calls.*) Ahoy! Ahoy!

(*Upon a motion from Willie, Della and Cora run forward, giggling.*)

*Cora.* (*grunting and rubbing her stomach*). Ugh! Me hungry! Me hungry!

*Della.* (*grunting*). Me eatee an Englishman! Ugh! Ugh!

*Tommy.* They are starving. Alas, I have nothing for them, wretched King that I am! (*The Cannibals rub their stomachs, rolling their eyes, groaning and giggling.*)

*Willie.* If you giggle, you can't be in the play.

*Tommy.* (*contemplating the agonized Cannibals*). Your King is powerless. (*covers his face with his hands*). Must I see my faithful followers die before mine eyes? (*He weeps.*)

*Ethel.* A Cannibal King would n't cry. I don't think.

*Albert.* Wring your hands, why don't you? (*Della gets in some first-class groaning during this side discussion.*)

*Willie.* What do you think, Aunt Maggie? Would you weep or wring your hands?

*Miss W.* (*gravely*). Let him turn away his face, if he can't stand it.

*Willie.* Try that, Tommy.

*Tommy.* Your King is powerless. Must I see my faithful followers die before mine eyes? (*He turns his face, as if his neck were a pivot.*)

*Albert.* I like that best. (*Willie nods thoughtfully.*)

*Tommy.* Only a shipwreck can save us now. We have eaten everybody on the island.

*Cora.* (*touching his arm, and point afar*). Ugh! Oh see, King! A man!

*Tommy.* (*looking*). There's a white man on the beach! . . . . He's coming this way! We are saved! (*The Cannibals dance with glee, brandish their paste-board knives.*) Get wood! Wood! A fire! (*He makes the motions of cutting off a head and limbs, and eating the same.*) He's a dead man. Get wood!

(*Cora and Della bring in some logs and some kindling from the property pile in the background. They pile them up, under Tommy's sign commands.*)

*Della.* (*grunting*). Ugh! Ugh! Me eatee his head!

*Willie.* Groan louder, and dance around the fire. (*Della and Cora groan and circle the woodpile, brandishing their knives between giggles.*)

*Tommy.* (*contemplating this dance*). Poor fellows, they are almost famished!

*Della.* (*turning suddenly*). We're going to have ice cream when the 'hearsal is over, Aunt Maggie.

*Willie.* Be still, Della! Go on groaning.—Ethel, get further back there.—You next, Albert.

*Albert.* Tommy, say your last speech again. (*The Cannibals continue to groan between whiles.*)

*Tommy. (looking at the Cannibals and the wood-pile). Poor fellows, they are almost famished! (Willie signs for Albert "to take the stage.")*

*Albert. (advancing meekly). Oh, my poor lost brother, have you thought on your sins this day? Have you fed the widowless, the orphans and the afflicted?*

*Tommy. Whence cometh thou, oh Pale Face?*

*Albert. I come from a far country, to teach you how to be good.*

*Tommy. (lifting his ball bat). Thou sayest well, oh Pale Face! Art prepared to die?*

*Albert. (brushing the bat aside). I forgive you, brother. Let us dwell in peace.*

*Tommy. Ha, ha! We will dwell in peace, oh Pale Face! (makes as if to smite him with the bat). Art prepared to die? My men are groaning aloud for food and will not be satisfied. I will tear you limb from limb! Down upon your knees! (He forces Albert to his knees. Della and Cora make airy passes at him with their knives, alternately groaning and giggling.) Art prepared to die?*

*Albert. (stretching his hands benignly toward them, with saintly calm). Fie, brothers, put up your swords! I come from a distant land to teach you to be good. Don't you want to be good?*

*Tommy. (seizing him by the hair). I am hungry! Talk not to me of being good! We have not tasted meat for three days. How can a hungry man be good? (to Della and Cora). Bind his arms. Bind him fast. (The Cannibals bind Albert's arms and legs gleefully, with a rope hastily handed them by Willie, taken from the "property pile.")*

*Albert. (in the process of being tied). I come to teach you to be good. Will you not listen to the words of wisdom? This is a wicked thing you do. You will not go to Heaven if you kill me.*

*Tommy. (trying the famous "bold, bad laugh"). He comes to teach us to be good! Ha ha ha!*

*Della.* (tying knots). Ha ha!

*Cora.* (tying knots). Ha ha!

*Albert.* I come to teach you to be good. (*He stands erect, bound, the Cannibals holding tightly to him.*)

*Willie.* He ought to be standing near the woodpile. Move him over. (*They move Albert, with the grave assistance of Mollie and Ethel.*) There. Now don't anybody move until Tommy makes his speech. (*Della tickles Albert's neck with the end of the rope.*)

*Ethel.* I think he ought to weep some. (*Della tickles Albert more, to his helpless misery.*)

*Willie.* No, he is cam. He is not afraid to die.

*Mollie.* He ought to act scared, I think.

*Albert.* (nearly toppling over). Ouch! You quit that!

*Willie.* What's the matter?

*Albert.* (squirming painfully). Della's tickling me. (*Cora giggles and giggles.*)

*Willie.* Della Benson, if you can't behave, you need n't be in this play!—Aunt Maggie, make her behave!

*Miss W.* No, she does n't make a very good Cannibal. Is n't there any other little girl you can get to take her place?

*Della.* (scared). I won't tickle him any more! Cross my heart!

*Willie.* Well, see that you don't.—Now, Tommy, go on with your Cannibal speech.

*Tommy.* (clearing his throat, and crossing his arms). I—I—how does it commence?

*Ethel.* (eagerly). I am a Cannibal King. My name is known—

*Tommy.* (loftily, facing the group of victim and Cannibals). I am a Cannibal King. My name is known to the uttermost parts of the island. When I speak, men tremble and fall upon their faces. (*Willie follows this speech with intense interest, leaning forward, his lips moving as he follows the lines.*) When I lift my good

broad sword, my enemies bite the dust. My fathers ruled here before I was born; my grandfathers ate little men like you, on yonder mountain top, and hurled their bones into the sea. You say you come here to teach us to be good. Who told you to come? Who are you? I rule here alone. I, the Cannibal King! I hurl your cry for mercy back into your teeth! (*Willie sinks back with a sigh of satisfaction, wagging his head.*)

*Albert.* (*quite awed*). Oh King, hear me! Hear me!

*Tommy.* (*with a shrug*). Throw him into the fire! We will eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. (*They put Albert, protesting feebly, on the woodpile, a process difficult of execution, and accomplished at last only with Albert's secret connivance.*)

*Willie.* Lay on your back. Shut your eyes. (*He signs Tommy to proceed.*)

*Tommy* (*lifting the ball bat high*). It is enough. Die the death! (*Willie rushes up, with the Pirates, Mollie and Ethel, whooping fiercely.*)

*Willie.* (*lifting the wooden sword*). Hold! (*After a superb pause, he lowers his sword, and his tone, and turns to his Aunt.*) That's all, Aunt Maggie. That's the end of the second act.

*Albert.* (*sitting up on the woodpile*). Untie me, somebody! (*Ethel and Mollie untie the ropes.*)

*Della.* (*running to Miss Williams*). Were you scared when the Pirates yelled, Aunt Maggie?

*Miss W.* (*pushing back Della's hair*). It was a pretty scarey time.

*Albert.* (*being untied*). I tell you what, Tommy, that's a dandy speech of yours!

*Tommy.* (*taking off his headgear*). That's the finest speech in the play. (*Willie examines the funeral pyre, oblivious of this praise.*)

*Della.* (*fanning herself with a tiny handkerchief*). Oh, I'm so hot! I think it's ice cream time. Come on, Cora, I'll beat you! (*They run out.*)

*Miss W.* The Cannibals are still hungry.

*Willie.* Come on, we got to get the stage ready for the next act. (*All hands fall to, removing the pyre to the background.*)

*Tommy.* (*carrying a log*). We ought to have more wood. This is n't enough to roast a man with.

*Willie.* (*piling kindling*). Mamma won't let us bring any more wood into the house.

*Mollie.* She says it makes too much dirt.

(*Enter Della, waving a spoon.*)

*Della.* Come on, Mollie, and cut the cake, Mamma says.—Ethel, you can help, if you want to. There are three kinds of cake. (*Mollie and Ethel go out, Della dancing ahead of them.*)

*Willie.* I don't think we ought to have refreshments till the rehearsal is over. (*Tommy and Albert occupy themselves in the background, with the properties and the thunder box.*)

*Miss W.* How many more acts are there?

*Willie.* (*throwing himself into a chair, flushed with success*). One more. There are always three acts in a pirate play.

*Miss W.* Oh. What is the rest of the play?

*Willie.* (*unfolding his crumpled manuscript*). The Missionary converts the Cannibals to Christianity, and they all become Pirates.

*Miss W.* So you do really save the poor fellow?

*Willie.* Yes, I save him. The next act opens with the Missionary on his bended knees, thanking me for preserving his life. Then I say, (*rises, and takes "position"*), Arise, my dear Sir. It is nothing—nothing. Don't mention it. Any man would have done the same. A Pirate is but a man.—Come on, Albert, and say your speech.

*Albert.* (*shaking the thunder box softly*). Which speech?

*Willie.* (*hunting through the manuscript*). The speech where you convert the Cannibals to Christianity.

*Albert.* I don't know it well enough.

*Willie.* Aw, come on. You need n't be afraid of my aunt.

*Albert.* (*sheepishly*). I aint afraid of your Aunt. I don't know that speech, honest.

*Miss W.* You can rehearse the Third Act tomorrow afternoon. How does the play end?

*Willie.* I build a new ship, and we all leave the island forever.

*Miss W.* The Missionary, too?

*Albert.* Yes, I leave because there are no more Cannibals to convert, you know.

*Tommy.* But first, he makes a speech about wanting to see his wife and children.

(*Enter Della.*)

*Della.* (*running up to Miss Williams*). The 'freshments are ready! Come on! (*Miss Williams rises, holding her hand.*)—Come on, Tommy and Albert.

*Tommy.* (*rubbing the pirate black off his face*). I'm not fit to go to the table.

*Miss W.* You're all right, Tommy. It's a dress rehearsal supper, you know.

*Della.* (*pulling her along*). There's pink sugar kisses. Mamima got them for an exprise. (*They go out.*)

*Willie.* (*taking out his jack knife, and whittling the edge of his sword*). I tell you what, fellows, if this play's a success, let's give it at the opera house, and charge admission. And have a real ship in the first act.

*Tommy.* (*polishing his face and hands*). How much would you charge?

*Albert.* And we'd have to have a real bonfire in the cannibal scene.

*Tommy.* And real thunder. People won't pay for thunder like this.

*Willie.* (*whittling*). That thunder's good enough for anybody.



Tommy. Tin thunder beats it all out.

Albert. Just pounding a spoon on a dishpan makes fine thunder. Did you ever try it?

Willie. (*whittling*). The thunder we got is good enough for me.

Albert. We'll have to have more pirates and cannibals.

Willie. (*whittling*). Well, you bet we won't have any more *wimmin*.

(*Enter Della, eating cake.*)

Della. Your ice cream's all meltin'.

Tommy. I'm ashamed to go to the table.

Della. Mamma says are you comin'? (*She goes.*)

Willie. (*to Tommy, polishing desperately*). Oh, what do you care? They're only *wimmim*. (*They make hasty preparations.*) Come on, you fellows. We got to go. (*They clatter out.*)

CURTAIN.

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