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BILLY WHISKERS

By FRANCES MONTGOMERY

Billy Whiskers, Stubby and Buttons sailed by the Goddess of Liberty and entered New York harbor, after being in France ever since our troops entered the war. They had gone over on one of the troop ships and it just so happened that they returned on the same ship and with the same captain and crew.

They were returning home covered with scars and wounds received while performing acts of bravery, but what cared they for scars and wounds so long as they had not lost an eye, ear or leg, and were feeling perfectly well and strong? To be sure, Billy had lost the tip of his tail when he was blown up by a bomb, but that did not matter.

You never saw three such happy animals as these were, to be able once again to lay eyes on their beloved country, the United States of America, the glorious country of their free and the brave.

"Gee, I feel so happy I could jump out of my skin!" exclaimed Billy with glowing eyes, as the three stood on deck watching the familiar shores slip by them and the skyscraper buildings grow taller and taller as they approached the city.

"See!" said Billy. "We are about to dock. Now the next thing to settle is where we are going when we first land."

But the question was settled for them in a most unexpected way. For before Billy's remark could be answered, all three of them felt ropes being slipped around their necks and heard the loud ruffaws of three sturdy sailors as they pulled the ropes tighter, saying "This is the time we caught you fellows off your guard!"

"We surely could not elude as a whistle," remarked one of the sailors. "And now we have you, we are going to carry out the captain's orders and look after you until he hears from France via the wire we are to take you back to your regiments when we return with more troops, or keep you here."

"Return to France?" cried Stubby. "Just when we are so much home safe and sound after braving all the terrors of submarines, sunken mines and dropping bombs? To be captured and sent back is really too much! I don't feel as if I would survive the disappointment; do you, Billy?"

Billy Determined "Not on your life will I go back," replied Billy. "Not unless they take me overboard. For I shall fight to the last drop of my blood before I submit to being shipped back."

"And so will I," said Buttons. "I'll scratch their eyes out first. And from this day forward I shall begin to let my claws grow long and sharp for that very purpose. I'll see whether or not they take me back."

"But they haven't started back yet, and there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. We'll have two or three weeks to make a getaway before they sail, as they have to coal the ship before even thinking of sailing. And if in that time we three can't put our heads together and think of some way to slip through their fingers, we are pretty stupid and deserve to be shipped back. Don't pull back or make any fuss," counseled Billy, "but just go along with the sailors and watch for a chance to escape. It may come any minute. And remember, if any of us sees a chance he is to take it and not wait for the others. Just get free and then wait around until the rest of us get loose."

"Seems to me you have a good deal of baing to do this morning, Mr. Billy," said the sailor who was holding the rope around Billy's neck, as he stood watching the ship tie up at the pier. "Guess he must be giving orders to his chums," replied a second sailor who had Stubby in charge. "Seems like it," said the one who held Buttons. "I expected them to fight like the very dickens, didn't you?"

Captain Appears "I surely did," answered the one who had spoken first. "But it is not too late for them to show fight yet, and that is what I want. His Royal Highness, King Billy, has been doing has been orders to his chums to fight later on. You just wait and see."

Just then the Captain appeared on deck and ordered the sailors to take the goat, dog and cat ashore and tie them in the warehouse on the dock until he could find some place to board them until he heard from France what to do with them.

"They are too valuable to leave just on the dock. They might get loose or be stolen. Feed and water them, and when I go up to the city I will look for some trustworthy person to take care of them. By the way, don't one of you know some one ashore who could house and feed them until we hear?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" replied one of the sailors. "I have an uncle who lives close to the docks. He keeps a small, cheap boarding house for sailors. He is a very kind-hearted man and fond of pets. I could take them there and I am sure he would give them the best of care for very little recompense."

"Just the thing! Just the place for them!" exclaimed the Captain. "You may take them over there as soon as the gangplank is out. And you two boys go with him. He might have trouble trying to manage all three alone. Here is money to pay for the animals and to buy your own dinners. Tell your Uncle I'll foot the bill before we sail and throw in an extra dollar or two if he turns them over to me in good shape when we call for them."

"Well, this beats all the good luck I ever heard of," said Billy, "for we can get away from that boarding house as easily as a cat jumps cream."

"You are right, we can, and have plenty of time, too, to lay our plans as to what we will do when we escape," agreed Buttons.

"It looks as if we would sleep on feathers and eat fowl," said Stubby.

Meet Sailor's Uncle The three sailors took the three chums over to the chop-house, where they were given a hearty welcome by the sailor's uncle. He was so glad to have his nephew back from the war unhurt that he gladly took in the animals to please him. And I really think that, had his nephew asked him to let the chums sleep in his beds instead of in a shed in the back yard, he would have consented.

He also gave Billy so many vegetables and some much juicy fruit that he had cramps all night. In the morning there was still plenty of food left for their breakfast, but the uncle insisted on giving them a fresh supply of food and water.

"He is a mighty fine old man," said Billy, "and I feel like a villain planning to run away from him, but we must or run the risk of being sent back to our regiments in France, and I for one am sick to death of war."

About 10 o'clock in the morning the uncle and the three sailors came into the yard to see how the animals were faring, and the sailors seemed pleased with the way they looked.

"Now we can tell the Captain when we return to the ship that we saw the animals just before we went to the boat, and that they were safe and sound and in a good home where they will be well cared for until he hears what to do with them."

"I guess I'll leave the door of the shed open," said the uncle. "It will make it more difficult for them. And I think we had better take those ropes off their necks, as they can't get out of the yard without going through the house or jumping the fence, and it is much too high for them to do that."

Little did those sailors and the old man know of the jumping powers of these three animals or how they would have had them untried. When the sailors and the old man had disappeared in the house the three chums walked around the yard looking for a loop-hole to crawl through, or for a weak board Billy might butt down.

But what bothered them now was where they should go when they escaped. The city was very large and it stretched itself out along the banks of the Hudson river for miles and miles. They wanted to go in that direction, as 'way up north lived Nannie, Billy's little wife, whom he was crazy to see after his long absence abroad.

She was away up in Wisconsin on the dear old farm, and it would take weeks and weeks to reach there if they traveled on foot all the way. But they expected to steal rides as they always did when traveling. Stubby and Buttons had not the remotest idea in the world they knew of, but they loved Nannie and all of Billy's family as if they were their very own blood relations.

They had known them for years and years and had always been very kind to them, especially Nannie and Daisy, Billy's son's wife, while the Kids, Billy's twin grandchildren, were their delight.

The three chums were lying perfectly still each engrossed in his own thoughts and plans as how best to get out of the city, when they were aroused by a loud, clear meow over their heads. Looking up on feathers and eat fowl," said Stubby.

The Cat Speaks "Good evening, friends and distinguished travelers!" said the cat. "I hope I am not disturbing you, but the cats and the dogs of the neighborhood—and there is a goodly number of them—appointed me the head of a committee to call upon you and welcome you to our shores."

As the cat had been talking other cats had been appearing on top of the fence, and now a line of them, all sizes, colors and descriptions, sat on the top of the fence winking down at the chums, while through holes under the fence appeared dogs' heads, as evidently they were too large of body to crawl through the small holes.

"The canary you see in the cage hanging out of that upper window, and the parrot in the window of the next house, sang and called out to us this morning that celebrated travelers from the War had just arrived from overseas and were shut in Grandpa Stubbs' back yard. Every one around here calls Mr. Stubbs grandpa because he is so kind of little chubs and to all animals. We are always glad to hear some things of the outside world, and when we heard that you were fresh from the war zone we determined to make your acquaintance and invite you to speak and tell us of some of your adventures on the other side."

[Friday they are invited to a meeting of the Dog and Cat Information Bureau.]

SAME TO A POET A poet was explaining the working of inspiration to a friend who professed not to understand the same. "It is this way," declared the bard. "Here I am sitting in the park under this beautiful maple tree. I am writing a sonnet to a maple tree. It is a better sonnet than I could write at home."

"Merely because you are sitting under this tree?" "Just so." "That's funny," responded the friend. "This tree is a heech."

Every Wednesday Children's Day At Redondo Beach

Every Wednesday during the months of July and August Redondo Beach will stage a special free carnival for children. There will be free dancing in the pavilion, free souvenirs for all boys and girls, and a big free vaudeville show in the music plaza. Special races for the children, and other amusement stunts, will be put on from time to time.

POT LUCK SUPPER The Maccabees will give a pot luck supper at Legion hall Tuesday evening, July 22. All members are invited to come and bring their lunch; also bring your friends. Please have your lunch at hall not later than 5 o'clock, as supper will be served at 6.

Our deputy chief commander, Mrs. Julia C. Ginn, will be with us on that night. Be sure to prepare enough lunch for the friends that you bring.

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