

**BILLY WHISKERS
IN FRANCE**

**BY
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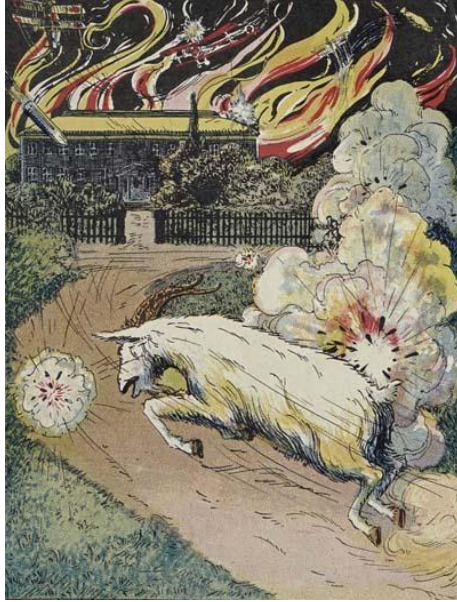
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**“I ran straight on, regardless of bombs dropping
all around me.”**

CHAPTER I

BILLY WHISKERS GROWS HOMESICK

AS Billy Whiskers lay in an American camp somewhere over in France, he became very restless and soon had the blues from thinking of his dear Nannie so far away—away over in America, with that deep, deep, wide, blue ocean between them, infested not only with huge sea monsters belonging to the finny tribe, but also with death-dealing, quickly moving submarines and torpedo boats belonging to the German Kaiser.

“I want dreadfully to go home! Still I hate to risk my life on any ship that sails the seas these days, for it may be blown sky high at any moment, or sunk to the nethermost depths of the ocean. There is no way to walk around, and I don’t suppose I could get any one to let me go with them in an airship. So here I must remain, or trust my life to some troop ship returning to America for more soldiers. I just believe I will do it! I have lost all interest in the War over here since my master was wounded and was invalided home. Home! The very word makes me so homesick I can’t see for tears. Well, I’ll just fix this homesickness, so I will! I start for there this very minute. It is a good dark night and I think I can slip out of camp easily as they have not been watching me so closely since my master was sent away.”

Suiting the action to the words, Billy jumped up, shook himself, took a long breath and said to himself, “Here’s luck to you, old fellow, on your long, long, perilous journey! And may you reach

the other side and once more see your loving little wife Nannie and all your children and grandchildren!”

Then he gave a flick of his tail and started on a brisk run for the least guarded entrance to the camp, to try to sneak through.

“My, but it is lonesome traveling by myself!” he thought. “I do wish Stubby and Button were here to accompany me on this journey.”

Billy was so busy thinking of his old friends Stubby, the little yellow dog with a stubby tail, and Button, the big black cat with blazing eyes like buttons, that he reached the entrance to the camp before he knew it, and he managed to slip out without being stopped, for there was a jam at the gate caused by many big ambulances going out and army trucks coming in.

“Humph!” said Billy to himself. “If I get over all my difficulties as easily as I got through that gate and past the guards, my journey will be a smooth and pleasant one.”

He had been traveling some time when he heard some one say, “Hi, there, Billy Whiskers! What are you doing outside of camp? Looks to me as if you were trying to run away.” This from a driver of an ambulance who knew Billy was not to be allowed to escape from the camp. “Come here and I will give you a nice red apple.”

“See anything green in my eye?” winked back Billy. “I know you! You would give me an apple with one hand and slip a rope around my neck with the other. Anyway, where’s your apple? *I* don’t see any!”

“Here, Billy! Stop, I tell you, and come here! If you don’t like apples, here is a handful of salt,” and the soldier held his hand out as if he had it full of salt.

But Billy was too keen for him. He had seen him close his hand over nothing before offering it to him. So he kept right on walking as if he had not heard the soldier.

“Say, Bill, this is no joke! It is the General’s orders that you are not to escape, but to be made to stay in camp until we go home. You are too valuable a goat to allow the Germans to make you up into chops and roasts. Besides, when we get home we want to show the goat that stole Von Luxemburg’s maps and plans from under his very nose, and also butted or hooked all his staff into a heap in the corner of his own little room. If you won’t come back for apples or salt or coaxing, very well! I’ll have to lasso you, or shoot you in one of your legs so you cannot run away,” and the soldier turned his back to look for a rope in the ambulance, as he preferred to lasso Billy rather than shoot him. He was an expert with the lasso, as he had come from a ranch away out in Montana to join the army, and was considered the best hand with the rope in all Montana.



“Huh!” grunted Billy. “I must have run into Lasso Jake. If this is so, I better be getting a move on me and pushing my leg.”

As luck would have it, right before Billy was a creek, with a temporary bridge across it. Down the bank beside the bridge plunged Billy, for he knew the bank was so high that the cowboy soldier could not throw his lasso so as to catch him. Instead of trying to climb out the other side of the creek, Billy kept on in the middle of the swift-flowing stream, swimming against the current, though he could not make much progress against it. Presently he heard voices and turning his head he saw two soldiers standing on the bridge and one was swinging a lasso over his head. Billy waited to see no more, but ducked. And just as his head disappeared under the water, he heard the splash of the rope as it hit the surface of the water just where his head had been.

“Good thing I ducked! If I hadn’t, they would now be pulling me to shore with a lasso around my neck. Gee, but that was a close call, and that cowboy soldier is some lasso thrower! I never saw his

equal, even in a circus. I think he better get a flying machine and fly over the German line and watch his chance to rope the Kaiser or the Crown Prince, some of the Generals and other high monkey-monks.” And Billy laughed to himself at the spectacle of the Kaiser being made to walk into an American camp with a lasso around his neck. Billy forgot he could not open his mouth to laugh under water, and he began to choke so he had to stop swimming under water and come to the surface.

Just as he did so, his eye caught sight of a soldier standing on the bank of the stream with a lasso hanging from his hand ready to throw the moment Billy’s head appeared above the surface of the water. He was about to dive again when he heard a cry for help from the bridge. The soldier turned and ran to rescue a man who had fallen into the water, calling as he went down, “Save me! I can’t swim!”

Billy crawled out of the stream and stood watching the soldier with the lasso trying to save his comrade. He was having a hard time for as the man went down he struck his head on a stone, which stunned him, and now he was being carried downstream by the swift current and knocked against the bowlders over which the water frothed. Try as he would, the cowboy soldier was put to it to catch up to him as the swift current bore his chum’s body ever and still ever ahead of him. But at last his comrade’s body caught between two rocks and was held there until the cowboy soldier overtook it. The cold water had revived the man, so that by the time his soldier chum reached him he was coming to his senses. Billy only waited to see that the man was alive and then he left them sitting in midstream, each on a big rock that raised its head above the water. He thought it wise to cut sticks for safety and ran into a thick woods he saw, which would serve to hide him from the soldiers

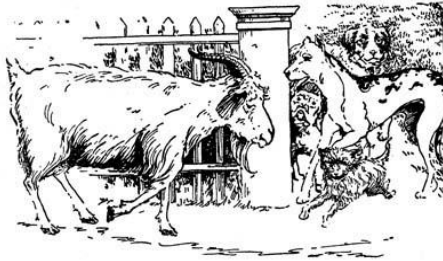
should they cross the bridge and try to follow him. This, however, they did not do, knowing it would be useless to try to catch Billy when he had such a start.

As soon as he could, Billy found his way out of the woods to the road he had left. After following it for some time he found it led out to the main highway to Paris. This road Billy knew he must follow or he could never find his way back to the seacoast. Once in Paris, he knew he must pass through it and then keep straight on in a westerly direction until he came to the English Channel. Once there, he would follow the coast until he came to a port from which boats were sailing for America. Then he would watch his chance to steal aboard and sail for home. Billy was very good at directions and from the moment he had landed in France he had taken special pains to keep the points of the compass straight in his head, so that if he ever wanted to return home alone he would find his way. Now it proved what a wise old goat he was, for all he had to do was to travel by the sun and North Star in a northeasterly direction until he came to Paris and from there in a westerly until he reached the English Channel, from one of whose ports he had disembarked when he came to France. But it was discouraging to think how very far it was and what privations and hardships he would have to endure and overcome before he reached his destination. But Billy Whiskers was a regular old soldier by this time and well used to hardships and hard knocks of all kinds. So he only heaved a long sigh and then ran all the faster, knowing that every step he took brought him just that much nearer home and Nannie.

“If I tried to count the steps I shall have to take before reaching home, it would be like counting the sands of the sea. I shan’t try, but just push on and I know I shall get there some day.”

“Bow-wow-wow!” barked a big Dane in his deep voice.

“Bow! Wow! Wow!” came the short, sharp, snappy barks from a short-legged Scotch terrier as they bounded out of a gate beside the road, ready to pounce on Billy. They were followed by poodles, collies, St. Bernards, and all manner of dogs, both great and small. Billy thought he had never seen so many dogs of different breeds in one place in all his life. You see he had run into a dog hospital, and these were the convalescent dogs which were allowed to play together in the yard.



Not one of these dogs tried to bite Billy, and after they had given up trying to frighten him by barking in their fiercest way as if about to eat him alive, they quieted down and became as docile as lambs.

CHAPTER II

BILLY UNEXPECTEDLY MEETS A FRIEND

GOOD-MORNING, friends!” baaed Billy. “Would you allow a tired traveler to rest under the shade of your trees, and give him a drink of water? For I am a stranger in a strange land, and have traveled far. I am an American.”

“You an *American*?” exclaimed the dogs in chorus.

“Now we surely are glad to meet you!” barked the big Dane. “For if there is any place on earth we dogs have longed to see, it is America. Probably you will tell us about it?”

“Yes,” said another dog. “We have heard that every dog has his day over there and many of them two or three.”

“We have also heard,” added a French poodle, “that all dogs are free over there, and can go and come as they like, and that they are never tied up, shut in a house or muzzled. Is that true?”



“Yes and no,” replied Billy. “It depends on where you live and who your master or mistress is.”

“Why, we have heard,” piped up a little black and tan, “that any dog can choose his own master or mistress, and that all he has to do if he doesn’t like them or isn’t pleased with the way they treat him is to walk off and follow the first person he sees that he thinks he would like to live with, and that they will take him home with them and feed and house him.”

“Again you are partly right and partly wrong,” replied Billy. “It depends on whom you run away from and whom you pick out to be your new master or mistress. You might happen to belong to some one who was very fond of you, though you might not be fond of them. In that case if you ran away they would advertise and try to get you back, but if you had proved yourself to be a good-for-

nothing dog, they would let you go and say ‘Good riddance to bad rubbish!’ and never bother their heads about you.

“Then again you might show poor judgment in selecting a new master and choose one who did not care for dogs, and when he found you following him he might throw sticks and stones at you. So you see you can’t always be sure of changing masters successfully.”

“Did you just come from America?” asked a fourth.

“Oh, no! I have been over here nearly a year now, with the army.”

“You don’t mean to tell us that you have really and truly been with the army?”

“Surely not at the front!” added another in amazement.

“But I have!” Billy assured them. “I have crossed No-Man’s-Land many times, and been shot at and blown up once besides. See where a piece of my tail is gone? Well, I lost it at Verdun. A bomb exploded and threw me up in the air and also blew off part of my tail. I consider myself very lucky that it decided to blow a piece off that end of my body instead of the other, for if it had been my head in place of my tail, it would have killed me. I can’t get along without a head, but I can without a tail.”

“Haw! Haw! Haw!” laughed the dogs.

“You surely are a funny fellow!” said one. “Come on in and we will find something for you to eat and drink and also a place to rest. Then after you have rested, I hope you will tell us more of your experiences at the front. If you will do that, we will tell you our experiences in Paris before we left there, and we will introduce you

to some of our celebrated police and Red Cross dogs who have been in the war and been wounded or gassed. They will relate some thrilling adventures and hairbreadth escapes. To-night will be a good time, after our keepers have gone to bed. Then we can sneak out under the trees in the little patch of woods behind the big stables and while you brave soldiers swap tales of the war we who have never been near the war can listen.

“There goes one of our heroes now. See that dog crossing the lawn, wearing a Red Cross bandage on his chest?”

Billy turned and took one long look at the dog. Then without a word of warning he put down his head and bounded toward him, taking ten or twelve feet at a single bound.

The dogs stood spellbound. What was the big goat going to do? Butt their wounded hero? If so, why should he wish to butt a perfectly harmless dog he had never seen before? But had he never seen him before? Perhaps they had met and fought on the battlefield and were enemies. If so, they must all run and protect their hero from the long horns of the strange goat.

But when the dogs arrived within speaking distance they were overjoyed to hear the goat baa out, “Hello, old chum! How in all that is wonderful did you get here? I heard you were dead; that you had been seen with a Red Cross ambulance which had first been gassed and then blown up by a shell. One of your friends said he saw you with his own eyes sitting in the back of the ambulance when the shell struck it, and the next thing he saw was the whole ambulance flying up in the air and then coming down in small pieces.”



“What he saw all happened. I was there and sitting in the back of the ambulance with my gas mask on, for the signal had been given for all to put on their masks, and one of the doctors with the ambulance corps had just stopped and strapped mine in place when a shell hit us, and I found myself going up in the air at the rate of about a hundred miles a minute. When I came down, my mask had been blown off my face. How it ever was done without killing me or blowing my head off I don’t know, but it was. I thought I was all right until I began to see red, and I had a queer sensation in my head as if my brain were going round and round like a cat runs after its tail. Then I could not get my breath and I fell over, giving myself up for dead. But if you will believe it, the next thing I knew I opened my eyes and found myself in a long room with two rows of beds in it, all just like baby cribs. And bending over me was a sweet-faced lady nurse. I found myself all bound up in splints and cotton batting. You see an interne to another Red Cross ambulance who had come to look for the wounded, if any had possibly survived the blow-up, had found me senseless on the ground. So he

picked me up and brought me here as this hospital for dogs was on the way to the hospital where he was stationed. This is now my fourth week here, and I want to tell you that only angels in human form live here. They are so good to one! They have nursed me back to life. I was only slightly gassed and so my lungs are all healed and I am also over my shell shock. I shall likely go back to the front in another week.”

“You don’t mean that you are going back to the fighting line, do you?” asked a long white-haired collie that had fallen very much in love with the brave Red Cross dog. “Oh, why do you risk your life again?”

“Why do I risk my life?” in astonishment. “To try to save some brave soldier, whose life is a thousand times more valuable than any dog’s ever will be. Yes, I am going back and back and back as long as I have eyes, teeth or claws to go back with, until this cruel war is over.”

“Bully for you!” exclaimed Billy. “You make me feel like a slacker, getting homesick and running away from the army.”

“Well, it is not too late yet to go back. I propose that you stay here and rest until next week and then go back with me.”

“I’ll do it!” said Billy, and they rubbed noses together to seal the bargain. “I hear a bugle. What is that call for?”

“Oh, that is our supper call,” said the Red Cross dog. “When they blow the bugle all the dogs that are running loose are supposed to go to the back kitchen door. There are long troughs there in which they put our suppers. Come ahead with us, and we will give you some food. There will be plenty for all of us and for you too, for

they serve very bountifully here,” and all the dogs and Billy too moved off in the direction of the kitchen.

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