

**BILLY WHISKERS
AT THE FAIR**

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER I THE AUTOMOBILE ARRIVES

CHAPTER II FAIR DAY DAWNS

CHAPTER III IN THE NEEDLEWORK EXHIBIT

CHAPTER IV THE BABY SHOW

CHAPTER V THE BALLOON MAN

CHAPTER VI THE FORTUNE TELLER

CHAPTER VII THE LAUGHING GALLERY

CHAPTER VIII BILLY HAS AN ENCOUNTER

CHAPTER IX A NIGHT WITH THE DUKE

CHAPTER X TOPPY TO THE FORE

CHAPTER XI THREATENED WITH LOCKJAW

CHAPTER XII THE PUMPKIN MAN

CHAPTER XIII A TRIUMPHANT HOME-COMING

CHAPTER XIV THE REWARD



**“HELLO, PUMPKIN MAN,”
WAS BILLY’S CORDIAL GREETING.**



BILLY WHISKERS AT THE FAIR.

CHAPTER I

THE AUTOMOBILE ARRIVES

ÁFFAIRS at Cloverleaf Farm had been running very smoothly for a month or more. School had begun, the boys were occupied with studies and so well out of mischief's way for five hours each day. Summer crops had been harvested, the barn was bursting with the sweet-scented hay, the well-filled silo promised many a juicy meal for the farmyard inhabitants during the approaching winter months, and in the fields the pumpkins lay like huge nuggets of pure gold, with the shocks of corn standing guard over their richness.

Billy Whiskers, as you will remember, had returned from his long travels with the Circus, the troupe of monkeys had come and gone, and the Farm was left in comparative quiet.



Yet under the outward calm there was a vague uneasiness, and a strange restlessness was apparent among the boys, which at times infected even the older members of the Treat household. All this was proven conclusively because Billy Whiskers and his gaily-painted cart were neglected, and catalogs had held much more interest than outdoor sports for the last week or more.

But such a condition of things could not last very long. One fine afternoon when the sun was casting long, slanting rays across the fields, and there was the soft haziness of first October days in the air, Tom, Dick and Harry were passing the Corners on their way home from school when the postmaster, a genial old fellow, hailed them from his seat on a cracker barrel in front of the store.

“Here, boys, wait a minute. There’s a postal for your father, and the new automobile is a-comin’, all right, all right!”

“Hooray!” shouted Tom, as he leaped up the steps.

“Hur-rah!” exulted Harry, a close second.

“Hur-rah,” echoed Dick, as he was dragged along, for the smallest of the Treat boys tugged at Harry’s hand, determined to be on the scene with his older brothers.

Three pairs of eager hands reached through the narrow little window of the board partition which served to divide the post-office from the general store, but agile Tom secured the coveted prize and was away, out of the store and off up the dusty road like a flash.

“Father, father, look here!” breathlessly shouted the trio, as they turned into the yard and drew up at the front porch steps.

Father and Mother Treat hurried to the veranda to learn the cause of all this wild commotion, and their faces wreathed in smiles at the welcome news that the auto was on its way.

“When do you think it’ll get here?”

“Will you let me drive her?”

“I may, mayn’t I, papa?”

The beleaguered father shook off the eager questioners with:

“Now, boys, the card says that the machinist who is to deliver the automobile will probably arrive to-morrow afternoon. I think we’ll have to make it a holiday, so you will be on hand when it comes.”

“Now, father,” remonstrated Mrs. Treat quickly, “that is unwise. They’d much better be in school.”

“Tut, tut, mother! Boys must have some good times, I think.”

“Oh, father, do let us!” petitioned the boys, and a cheery nod satisfied them that the victory was theirs.

Very little indeed was accomplished by the Treat boys the next morning, and kind Miss Clinton, their teacher, was at a loss for an explanation of the wriggling, twisting and manifest uneasiness possessing them.



Tom was detected in the act of attempting to communicate with Harry, the note was confiscated by Miss Clinton, and Tom himself straightway sent to the platform, where he whiled away the dreary, lagging moments by driving an imaginary automobile over the hills at a terrific speed, much to the envy of his schoolmates.

“I’ll ask everyone of ’em to ride, except Miss Clinton,” he pondered, planning revenge for his present predicament. “And *then* I guess she’ll wish she hadn’t punished me.”

Noon came at last, as all noons do, and then the note was presented to Miss Clinton by little Dick, though by this time it was very much the worse for frequent fingering. The little fellow had not been able to keep his hands off the precious thing for longer than five minutes at a time. First he had to make sure that it really was in his pocket. Then again he took just one peep inside to reassure himself that it asked that he and his brothers be excused from the afternoon session. Each time he took it out, he patted it

lovingly, and therefore it now bore many a print of chubby and very smudgy finger tips.

Miss Clinton's consent was readily given, for rules in the country districts are not so iron-clad as in the more crowded city schools, and away hastened the boys for the noonday meal at home.

It proved to be rather a tempestuous one, and Mrs. Treat was glad indeed when chairs were pushed back from the board and the restive group betook themselves to the wide, shady veranda. It commanded a splendid view of the road toward Springfield, for it mounted a gradual ascent of a mile or more before it scurried over and down again in its eagerness to reach the city.

"I wonder what Billy will do when he sees the machine," piped up little Dick, as they settled themselves comfortably in hammock and in spacious, comfortable porch chairs.

"Well, he has seen plenty of autos go by here, and after all his experiences with the Circus this summer, he ought to behave, I'm sure," said Mrs. Treat uneasily, for she was never quite sure that she understood Billy and all his varying moods.

Now Billy overheard this remark, for he was just around the corner of the house, on the outside cellar door, this being his favorite spot on warm afternoons.

In fact, he was very fond of luxury, and always took a siesta after a hearty meal and during the heated portion of the day.

“Don’t be too sure of that, Mrs. Treat,” soliloquized mischievous Billy. “I am not so old yet that I shall rest content without occasional adventures. I really believe I am beginning to be a trifle bored, now that I think of it. Nothing interesting has happened in this countryside for a whole month, and it is high time that I stir up the community a bit. It really seems too ba—”

“He’s coming! He’s coming!” shouted Tom. “Just over the hill! Don’t you see him?”

And the three boys, unable to control their delight, pranced around, threw their caps high into the air, and then raced down to the gate.

“Look at her go! Bet she can make thirty miles an hour,” predicted Harry.

“She is surely plowing through the sand in great style,” said Tom, as the automobile reached the flats and struck the heavy sand of the bottoms.

“I’m a-goin’ to sit on the front seat,” announced Dick confidently, hanging over the gate and swinging back and forth.

“Oh, no, you’re not, sonny! I am, you know,” declared patronizing Harry, but Tom, the deliberate, silenced them both.

“You’ll neither of you sit on the front seat. Babies belong back in the tonneau with their mother, and that’s just where you’ll be, youngsters. Father and I will sit in front, you’ll see.”

“Huh!” grunted Harry, with fine contempt. “Think because you’re an inch taller’n me you own the farm, don’t you?”

They were still arguing this all-important question when with toot of horn and a fine flourish the automobile drew up at the gate, and the chauffeur bent over the wheel to inquire:

“This Cloverleaf Farm?”

“Well, I just guess, and that is our automobile!” was the satisfactory, if rather inelegant response.

“Glad to see you, very glad to see you!” was Mr. Treat’s cordial welcome as he hastened to shake hands with the driver.

“Glad to meet you too, sir, and to deliver the car safe and sound. She’s in finest trim. Suppose we might as well proceed right to business. I must get back to Springfield to-night to catch the eight-forty westbound. Shall I teach you to drive her now?”

“Well, to-morrow is Fair day, and we’ll want to use her, of course. But come in, and have a drink of sweet cider and a doughnut first. You must be thirsty,” urged Mr. Treat, not forgetful of hospitality. “Boys, run and tell mother to put on her bonnet and to come out for a little spin.”

During this time Billy Whiskers had not been idle. He had observed the approach of the car, and leisurely ambled around to the front of the farmhouse, nibbling grass and occasionally taking a sample of Mrs. Treat’s special pride,

a gaudy bed of scarlet geraniums bordered with sweet elyssum.

At last he took up his station on the front steps, in order to view the automobile to best possible advantage. With one long look, he said to himself:

“That is a mighty fine contraption. Glad I was able to earn it for the boys. ’Twas well worth a summer of toil, hardship and privation to give my Dick a bit of pleasure. What fine times we’ll have in it! But why, w-h-y, how is this?” questioned surprised Billy from the porch steps, for Mrs. Treat had needed no second bidding to take her first ride in the automobile, and had brushed past him, unheeding.

In fact, she had laid her hat on the bed of the spare room downstairs early that morning, all ready to be donned for this very occasion, and even now the family was being stowed away in the rear seat of the auto, doors were being securely fastened, last cautions and warnings given, and the driver was cranking the machine preparatory to starting.

“Why, w-h-y,” repeated Billy in astonishment, “They’ve forgotten *me*. I’ll just remind them,” and he ran down to the gate, bleating his displeasure.

“Good-bye, old Billy!”

“Race along behind! There’s a good fellow!” Harry called.

And with these words of scant consolation, the machine glided off, leaving Billy a very much disconcerted and crestfallen goat.

Then jealousy crept into his heart, and filled it near to bursting.

“They surely remember that it is my automobile. I am the one who really earned it, I’d have them to know! I am the one who should have had the honor of the very first ride. It is my money they are spending, and yet here I stand, alone and forsaken, while they go whizzing off in such fine style!”

Now as everyone knows, boys and girls especially, jealousy is a very naughty thing to cherish, and revenge is even worse, but, his anger mounting higher and higher, Billy proceeded to plan vengeance.

“I don’t like the smell of the thing, anyhow, and if they don’t let me ride in it, perhaps my horns can take some of the shine off its sides. I’ll bite a piece out of the tires, too, and then maybe they’ll have time to remember a little of what Billy Whiskers has done for this family. I might even drink the gasolene, but you see that might explode after it’s inside of me and not prove altogether a safe undertaking,” and he sadly returned to the cellar door for his usual afternoon nap.

The Treats did not return for two hours or more, and then all were so loud in their praises of the automobile that poor Billy was quite forgotten.

A bountiful supper was spread, and the machinist entertained in true country style. After the meal, all repaired to the porch for a final chat before the driver should be taken to Springfield by Mr. Treat.

“I’ll remind them of my existence,” thought Billy, and he stalked slowly across the front lawn with majestic tread, in full view of the group, on his way to the barn and his quarters for the night.

“What a very fine goat you have there,” complimented the chauffeur.

“Oh, yes,” agreed Mr. Treat, “but a great nuisance, I sometimes think.”

“Why,” interrupted Mrs. Treat, “what do you think? A few weeks ago he came back home with a whole pack of trained monkeys he had led in a Circus performance this last summer, and glad enough I was when we were finally rid of them. He’s a scapegoat, I’m sure of that.”

“A goat is all right, but an auto is lots better,” decided unloyal Tom. “I wish we could sell him now.”

“You do, eh?” thought Billy, as he disappeared around the house. “If I ever have a chance at some of the people who are always so ready to discard their old friends, they will wish I had never come back from the Circus with enough money to buy their automobile,” and as a balm for his wounded vanity, Billy wandered down to the barn to spread discontent and rebellion among his animal friends.

“Well, Brownny,” he began, as he entered that faithful horse’s box stall, “the new auto has come, and all the farmyard animals will have to look to their laurels now. They may even be entirely forgotten and perhaps left to starve.” You can see from this remark that Billy was

possessed of a remarkably vivid imagination.—“I’ve gone supperless to-night, which may be but the beginning of the new order of things.”

“Now, Billy Whiskers, that is sheer nonsense. Why, I’ve been with the Treats ever since they were bride and groom, and I have carried each of the boys around on my back as soon as they were able to hold on to my mane. They’ll never forget the services of old Brownny.” And he proudly tossed his noble head.

“Oh, don’t be too sure of that,” returned Billy. “Just remember what I did for them this summer. And now Mrs. Treat is calling me a nuisance and a scapegoat, whatever that is. This minute they are planning long trips, but never a word of thanks to Billy.”

Brownny gave a hoarse laugh of mingled contempt and ridicule.

“Why, William Whiskers,” he said in a tone of sharp rebuke, “you are carrying on like a half-grown kid instead of a full-grown, bewhiskered goat!”

“Never mind, we’ll see how you behave when your time to be cast aside comes. You’ll not even get to the Fair this year.”

“You’re wrong there, Billy. I’ll go the same as I have for the past fifteen years. Be up bright and early to-morrow morning and you’ll see me on the way.”

“Perhaps, and again perhaps not.”

“Well, at any rate I’m not worrying. Why, this morning you saw our farmyard beauty, the Duke of Windham, along with Dick’s Plymouth Rock, Topsy, as they started for the exhibit. They’ll be prize winners, or I miss my guess. The Treat farm is always well represented. By the way, Billy, are you going? Lots of fun—such fun as you’ve never seen. Better come along,” cordially.

“Oh, I’ll be there. But be sure you are among those present, that is all,” retorted the goat, with a knowing wink.

“Going to walk, same as you did to get to the Circus?” prodded droll Brownny.

“Not if I know it,” was Billy’s quick reply. Ambling up closer, he reached up and whispered confidentially:

“I’m going in the automobile, with the rest of the family. A goat of my experience and breeding goes with the best,” and with that Billy stalked off, head held high, well satisfied at having filled Brownny as full of uncomfortable forebodings as he himself had been a short time before.



WHACK! RESOUNDED A BROOMSTICK ON BILLY'S BROAD BACK.

“I surely smell doughnuts,” thought Billy as he sniffed the keen outside air, and he quickened his steps toward the kitchen, which had been the scene of unusual activity that day.

Peering cautiously in, he found the field clear, much to his satisfaction.

“Deserted! I’ll now eat the supper I didn’t have a while ago.”

And into the pantry walked the naughty Billy, to pilfer the results of Mrs. Treat’s day spent at baking and brewing.

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