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PIERRE'S BLACK CAT

By Florence Goodfellow

Pierre Latroux's mouse-like eyes snapped and sparkled like two jet beads as he listened to the plan Levi Arnold unfolded.

"Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed. "Tis too good a chance to let slip. You are sure," he added cautiously, "that the scheme is all right so far?"

"Come to my place this evening, and I will give you the diamonds, safe and sound. If they reach my client's hands in New York within a month's time, you will get your reward in gold—500 francs."

"Good! I'll manage it somehow. Just trust me."

"Without a doubt you've done smuggling before?"

Pierre looked up sharply.

"There is no trickery in this, monsieur? If I thought there was, rest assured you would not live to see your plans either succeed or fail." And he drew his hands across his throat with an expression so peculiar that his listener shivered.

"No; you have nothing to fear. Jeremy Stotts told me to come to you. You could not do better than to go to him about me."

"Jeremy Stotts is a man to be trusted. If he sent you, then tonight I'll come for the diamonds. How many did you say there were?"

"Enough for a king's ransom. Remember, Pierre, if you fail!"

Pierre shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"I've smuggled before! There's a nice bit of superfine tobacco I intend to get across this trip. Oh, never fear, monsieur; if any one can do it, it is Pierre, second officer of the Ocean Queen. Adieu!" And, placing between his lips the cigarette he had been rolling, the little Frenchman waved his hand and strode away.

It was a simple matter while on board for the smuggler to keep his diamonds and tobacco concealed, but as the Ocean Queen drew nearer the American shores his heart beat wildly between hope and fear, and woven with all his daily duties was the question, "How, how, how?" For to Pierre's ears had come the rumor of fresh vigilance on the part of the American authorities. Smuggling had become altogether too daring and too frequent. Especially had some tremendous deals in diamonds roused the custom officials to action.

Before the ship had scraped her sides against the pier, however, a plan had been evolved by the Frenchman's ready brain. Inspectors came and went about the ship, but the quick little



INSTANTLY A BLACK CAT SPRANG OUT AND DISAPPEARED.

The officer entertained them so wittily that they were more alive to the Frenchman's drollery than to their search.

No smuggled goods of any description were discovered on board the Ocean Queen, and the officers of the government left Pierre with regret and the determination to look up the jolly little Frenchman the very next time his ship came in.

A few days after the visit of the inspectors Pierre, with a huge covered basket on his arm, stepped boldly down the gangplank, across the shipping yard into the street.

He held one hand carefully on the lid of the basket, which was tied down at each side with heavy twine. Certainly his appearance was not calculated to quiet suspicion, and before he had passed the street a policeman touched him on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "but I shall have to look into that basket."

"Look into my basket?" exclaimed Pierre in well feigned astonishment. "And for why?" he added, holding the lid down more firmly.

"Our orders, sir."

"But my cat is in the basket, and she will get away."

"I must see for myself," replied the officer. "I can't take your word for anything like that."

At this the Frenchman became angry. His eyes smoldered like red-hot coals.

"I tell you," he almost screamed, "it's only a cat, and she will run away from me, and I brought her all the way

from la belle France for my mother-in-law."

"I can't help it if you brought her all the way from the moon. I've got to see what's in that basket."

"But, I tell you, it's a cat, and if I open the basket ever so little she will run, and monsieur knows mothers-in-law. Not so?" he asked, with a wry face.

"Come! Untie those cords. I'm bound to inspect that basket."

With a rueful countenance Pierre carefully untied the strings. The officer reached out his hand to lift the lid.

"Careful, careful!" exclaimed Pierre, placing a restraining hand on the policeman's sleeve. "I don't want to chase after my cat again. Le bon Dieu knows I had trouble enough in getting her as it is." And then he suddenly let the lid fall away.

Instantly a black cat sprang out and, darting between the policeman's legs, disappeared. Pierre had placed the basket on the ground in such a way that when the animal sprang out the nearest way of escape would be the shipyard. His calculations were correct, and when the officer of the law turned all he saw was a black tail disappearing through the door in the wall enclosing the yard.

The Frenchman's entire vocabulary was then turned loose, and before he had stopped his cursing in French and English the policeman almost wished he were as far away as the cat. He honestly felt sorry that he had been so insistent. The Frenchman's distress was so very great. He went so far in his remorse as to offer to return with Pierre and help him find his cat again.

At this, however, the clever little fellow calmed down.

"Bon Dieu!" he exclaimed. "Here am I blaming you because you did your duty. If my men did theirs half as well, I'd have the finest ship in the service. Your pardon, monsieur," offering his hand with a winning smile and raising his peaked cap. "I admire you so much now as I blamed you before. I will find my cat again, monsieur, and then you must join me in a toast to America's gendarmes." And placing the lid again on the basket, which had fallen over to the ground, he picked it up and walked quickly back to the ship.

In half an hour he returned with a smile on his face.

"I've got her," he said to the policeman, tapping the basket gently. "and a pretty hunt I had too! I'll warrant she won't get out again if I know it."

"I'm very sorry, sir, I put you to all that trouble," said the officer, eyeing the basket.

"Well, I'll take your word this time."

"That's right, that's right," replied Pierre. "It's never too late to right a wrong. Now for the toast. I do not forget—eh?" he added, leading the way to a nearby saloon.

For some time the two men stood at the bar with the basket at their feet. The Frenchman's ready sallies and stirring anecdotes of the sea kept the crowd around them roaring. Then, when he thought he had remained long enough to avert any suspicion that might linger in the officer's mind, he took the basket on his arm and, accompanied to the corner by the blue coated officer of the law, hailed a passing car and was soon out of sight. In the meanwhile the black cat frisked in the ship's hold, for in the basket a fortune in diamonds was buried beneath some superfine tobacco.

Judge Story Cornered.

Judge Story's lectures at the school carried away his listeners with the pure enthusiasm of the speaker. His extraordinary memory, copious learning and long, practical experience, combined with his ready invention of illustration and wonderful fluency of expression, often caused him to wander widely from the starting topic and sweep with amazing facility over far distant regions of theory or practice or even personal reminiscence. Alas, that a veracious chronicler must set down that in those bygone times the young idea in process of being taught was no more scrupulous in evading that process than are the earnest disciples of the present! "It was easy," says a student of that day, "to draw the old judge from the point under consideration to a lengthy account of Chief Justice Marshall and his fellows, and this was apt to be done every day."

Professor Ashmun apparently tried to restrain and even counteract this tendency of the judge, and there is a tale to the effect that Story once remarked somewhat testily: "Now, Ashmun, don't you contradict what I say. I believe you would try to convert me if I told you that two and two make four."

"Of course I should," retorted Ashmun instantly; "they make twenty-two."—Samuel F. Batchelder in Atlantic.

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Mr. H. B. Claflin, the founder of the New York dry goods house of that name, made a strong effort to maintain personal relations with his customers. He always encouraged buyers to come to him for a friendly talk, and as far as possible he advised them concerning the matters in hand.

One day a customer called, and as he entered the private office Mr. Claflin looked up from his desk and called: "Hello! How are you feeling today?"

"I'm feeling fine, Mr. Claflin. I never was better."

"And how is the business?"

"Oh, that's different, Mr. Claflin. I think I must have a failure."

"What? A failure? How is that? Haven't you made money?"

"I used to, Mr. Claflin, but not now. Business is bad, very bad, Mr. Claflin, and I think I must fail."

"Well, now, I'm sorry. But will it be a bad failure? How much will you pay?"

"Ah, that is what I want to see you about. How much are they paying now, Mr. Claflin?"

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