

THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND THE RACING MOTOR-BOAT



Chapter 12: A Battle with Arms and Legs

The Go Ahead boys enjoyed a bath in the lake before they reported at the club-house in response to the invitation of Mr. Stevens. Even Fred had now thoroughly recovered from his experience and was more than positive that he had not been seasick. His strong words greatly delighted his friends, who aware now that he was sensitive concerning the matter, lost no opportunity to describe his sufferings which began soon after they set sail from Oswego.

At first the boys had insisted that as soon as the difficulty with the Black Growler had been remedied they must proceed at once on their way. When it was found, however, that there was no mechanic at the club-house they were easily persuaded to abandon their project and accept the hospitality of Mr. Stevens for the night.

Early the following morning a man skilled in all the uncertain ways of motor-boats arrived in response to the summons of the officials and in a brief time he discovered that there was nothing seriously wrong with the Black Growler. Indeed, within a few minutes he was racing the swift little motor-boat over the waters of Lake Ontario, which now was calm once more.

The club-house was located on an island at the entrance of a marvelously beautiful harbor. Three miles inland and about an equal number in length the waters appeared like a great bowl. High wooded shores were seen on one shore and on another a row of attractive cottages behind which the road was visible winding in and out in the direction of Sacket's Harbor.

Soon after breakfast, when Fred declared that it was time for the Go Ahead boys to start; Mr. Stevens said, "I think you young gentlemen will do well to take Sam Hodge along with you. He's an excellent mechanic and if anything goes wrong he will know what to do."

"How about Fred?" demanded George, whose eyes twinkled as he spoke. "Can he fix him up if he is seasick again?"

"I'm not going to be seasick," retorted Fred. "I wasn't seasick yesterday. I have told you so ten times."

Ignoring the protest, George said, "It seems to me it ought to be as easy to adjust the internal workings of Peewee as those of the Black Growler. Perhaps a dose of a similar kind might be good for both. "George's face was expressionless and his voice did not betray his purpose of bantering his diminutive friend.

Fred's face flushed an angry red, for Miss Susie Stevens and other members of the club

were standing on the dock when the conversation occurred. Her black eyes twinkled with mischief and it was manifest that she was enjoying the visit of the boys.

“I think,” said Grant positively, “that we had better take Sam Hodge with us. We ought to arrive at your grandfather’s place by night, Fred, and he can come back by train.”

“That’s right. That’s right,” spoke up John quickly. “I had to steer the Black Growler most of the time yesterday and my arms are lame.”

“All the length of them?” asked George. “Why, think when John has a pain how long he must have it.”

John turned quickly upon his tormentor as he said, “That’s the thirteenth time I have heard you get off that old joke. You mustn’t take him too seriously, Miss Susie,” he added, turning to the girl, who was laughing at George’s suggestion. “You know what his nickname is, don’t you?”

“No, I cannot say that I do,” replied Miss Susie.

“Well, we call him Pop.”

“Why?” she inquired.

“Because he’s the papa of his country. He is named for George Washington, who is the Father of his Country, but the name doesn’t go very far.”

“That’s all right,” spoke up George. “Up yonder where your topknot is there’s an aching void. I read the other day that Sydney Smith said ‘Nature never built a man more than seven stories high without leaving the top loft empty.’”

“On the contrary,” spoke up John, “all the great men have been those who could look down on the rest of the world.”

“Huh!” broke in Grant, “it will do you good to find out how much of your statement is really true. What do you think of Caesar, Napoleon, William of Orange, General Grant, Alexander Stephens, Alexander Hamilton—”

“That will do, my son. That will do,” said John, patting Grant upon the head. “That is a sufficiency of information this morning. Pray desist. In other words, shut up. If we don’t stop you pretty soon you’ll start in on the matter of canals again. All the way up from New York,” he added, turning to Miss Susie as he spoke, “he has been giving us undigested and undesirable information about the canals. He even said that the Amsterdam Canal connected the Zuider Zee with the North Sea.”

“So it does,” said Grant quickly. “If you’ll tell me how long that canal is I’ll buy the dinner, when we stop at Cape Vincent.”

“One hundred and sixty-five miles,” declared John promptly. As he spoke, however, he glanced at his cuff on which the fact was plainly written.

“That doesn’t count,” declared Grant. “No ponying in this game. Look up into the sky,

John, which isn't very far from you, and if you'll tell me how long the Panama Canal is I'll call it square and buy the dinner."

"The—Panama—Canal—is—is—quite long."

"So I have heard," laughed Grant. "I guess you buy the dinner."

"How long is it?" inquired John. "I knew, but I have forgotten."

"It's fifty and one-half miles long. Here comes Sam Hodge," Grant added as the boatman came alongside the dock. "Are you going with us?" he inquired as he quickly approached the dock.

"Where's that?" inquired Sam.

"Down the St. Lawrence River."

"How far?"

"Oh, down among the Thousand Islands, that's all."

"First I have heard of it," said Sam.

"I think it will be a good thing if you can go with the boys, Sam," spoke up Mr. Stevens. "They had a mishap yesterday and didn't quite know what to do."

"Sure, I'll go," said Sam.

Fred made no protests and the terms with the mechanic were speedily arranged.

A half-hour later the Black Growler set forth on her voyage.

The Caledonia was to follow some time that day and plans already had been made by which the boys were to spend some time on Hecla Island, on which was located the summer home of the Stevens.

Fortunately for Fred, at least, the lake continued to be calm. In the eagerness of the boy to prove to his friends that he merely had a "headache" the preceding day and had not been seasick, he was unusually busy.

Sam called the attention of the Go Ahead boys to the post at Sacket's Harbor. On a bluff above the lake the barracks and other buildings of the place were plainly visible. Even the soldiers stationed there could be plainly seen as they moved about the quarters.

"That's a great place to have an army post," said George. "I can't think of any place better unless it's in the middle of the Sahara Desert. Why did the government establish a post here?"

"Because there was a fort here, 'way back in the War of 1812," answered Grant promptly. "Sacket's Harbor was the headquarters of the army of the North and so the place has been kept up ever since."

"Do any of you want to stop?" inquired Fred, glancing at his companions as he spoke.

"Not I," replied John quickly. "When we have a good sea like this and Fred can be safe from the misery he suffered yesterday I'm not for taking any chances of the wind coming

up later.”

“That’s mighty kind of you,” growled Fred. “I never knew you to be so thoughtful of any one,—except yourself.”

“Don’t say that,” said John. “You don’t mean it. What you mean is that this is the first time you ever have appreciated how good I am.”

“Huh,” began Fred in response. His reply, however, was interrupted by Sam Hodge as he said, “This is a mighty good boat. She must have cost a pile of money.”

“She did,” said George quickly. “Fred had to save up his spending money for several days before he bought her. You don’t talk like a native around here, Sam. Where did you come from?”

“I come from New York,” answered Sam.

“What were you doing there?”

“Oh, I worked in a factory where we made legs and feet and arms for dummies and models.”

“Fine job,” laughed George. “Did you like it?”

“I liked the job all right,” replied Sam, “but I didn’t like our foreman. I quit on account of him.”

“What was wrong with him?”

“Everything,” said Sam quietly.

“So that was why you left and came up here to work on motor-boats was it?”

“Yes,” answered Sam. “That foreman was the hardest man to get along with I ever saw. I put up with it for months, but finally there came a day when I decided I wouldn’t stand any more of it.”

“What happened?”

“Why, I had a sore hand and I asked him to cut one of my feet off and he cut it off for me and then he got mad at something I said and threw one of his legs at me. Then not satisfied with that he took one of the girl’s feet and threw that at me, too. Of course I got mad. I picked up one of my legs in my hand and I tried to defend myself and then he hit me in the eye with one of his hands and knocked me over among a lot of legs and arms. He almost broke my foot and—”

“Did you say he cut one of your feet off?” asked Grant, soberly looking down at the pedal extremities of the mechanic, as he did so.

“That’s just what he did,” answered Sam.

“But it seems to be all right now,” protested Fred.

“You don’t quite see,” said Sam. “I’m talking about the foreman of the factory where I worked over on Broome Street. We manufactured legs and feet and arms for dummies and

models like I was telling you.”

“Like those that we see in the show windows?”

“That’s it exactly,” said Sam. “Those dummies and models that they put in the store windows to display gowns on. I was working on one of the artificial feet and I mean he broke it. Oh, no, he didn’t cut one of my REAL feet off. But he did hit me in the eye with one of his hands.”

“I see,” said George seriously. “It was an artificial eye of yours that he hit.”

“No, it wasn’t,” retorted Sam. “It was my real eye.”

“But he hit it with one of his artificial hands. Is that it, or did he hit it with one of the hands he manufactured?”

“No. No,” said Sam. “He hit me in my real eye with his real hand.”

“And that was why you picked up one of your legs and he took one of the girl’s feet and he hit you in the real eye, no, I mean the artificial eye with his real hand,—that’s not quite it. I mean he hit you in the hand with his artificial eye. No, that isn’t it either. Hold on. He threw one of his legs at you and then he took his eye and threw it at one of the girl’s feet. Hold on, I’m getting all mixed up. I can’t tell just where I am at. Say it again, Sam.”

“I think it’s better for a man to have a wooden leg than it is to have a wooden head,” spoke up Fred.

“Splendid, Peewee! Fine!” laughed George. “That’s immense! Great! Sam,” he added soberly as he turned to the mechanic who was now steering the Black Growler, “did you say you made artificial legs and arms and feet?”

“That’s what I said,” acknowledged Sam.

“Did you ever manufacture artificial heads?”

“Lots of ‘em. Lots of ‘em.”

“Have you got any with you?”

“No, I haven’t.”

“I’m sorry,” said George. “There are several reasons why I should like to buy one.”

Meanwhile the Black Growler swiftly and greatly to the delight of Sam was speeding over the smooth waters. Scarcely a ripple was to be seen. The reflection of the sunlight increased the discomfort of the Go Ahead boys and all four were rejoiced when at last Cape Vincent was sighted in the distance.