

# THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND THE RACING MOTOR-BOAT



## Chapter 5: The Missing Bag

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Early the following morning the Go Ahead boys were moving swiftly over the waters of the Erie Canal. Most of the country through which they were passing was new to them, and, rested as they were from the voyage of the preceding day, they were deeply interested in the various scenes through which they were moving.

The speedy Growler still aroused the interest of the people who saw the graceful little boat. The speed at which Fred was driving was not as great as when they had been on the Hudson. The stream was narrower and frequently there were long canal-boats to be passed.

The experiences when they arrived at the locks were alike novel and filled with interest. After they had watched the slowly rising waters and several times had been lifted to a different level the novelty, however, wore off and by the middle of the forenoon the Go Ahead boys were beginning to tease one another.

“There’s one thing,” said John, “that’s as fixed as the sun.”

Nobody made any response to his startling suggestion and after he had glanced quizzically at his companions John continued, “No crowd ever left a fellow at Poughkeepsie and went on without him without having to pay the price. I’m telling you, fellows, that just as sure as the sun shines there’s something coming to every one of you, and most of all to Grant.”

“Why am I selected for this special favor?” demanded Grant quickly.

“If you don’t know there isn’t any one who can tell you,” retorted John. “All I’m saying is that action and reaction are equal, even if the Panama Canal is fifty and one-half miles long.”

“Speaking of canals,” said Grant. “I want to know if anybody knows how long the Suez Canal is.”

“Speak up, Professor,” said George dejectedly. “We have got to hear it, so we might as well have it now as any time. How long is it?”

“It’s exactly one hundred miles. Now if there’s any Go Ahead boy who can tell what the Suez Canal connects, it will be my turn to pay for the dinner.”

There was a silence following Grant’s words while the Go Ahead boys looked foolishly at one another. Not one of them was able to answer the simple question.

“The Suez Canal,” began Grant, “connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea.”

“How do you know?” demanded Fred. “You have never seen it.”

“I don’t have to see it to know. I have never seen London, but I am quite confident there is a city by that name. By the way, fellows, if you’ll wait a minute I’ll show you something I

put in my bag. I saved it for a day just like this.”

Rising from his seat Grant hastily sought his bag and in a brief time rejoined his companions.

“What’s the matter?” demanded John, as he saw an expression of consternation on the face of his friend.

“Matter!” retorted Grant. “Matter enough. Somebody brought the wrong bag.”

“Let me see,” said John, rising and examining the bag, which Grant had placed on the seat near him. “That’s not mine.”

“It surely isn’t mine,” said George.

“I won’t claim it either,” added Fred as he glanced behind him.

“Well, it isn’t mine,” said Grant. “Somebody made a mistake at the hotel this morning and instead of giving me what belonged to me they have sent my bag off in some other direction and given me a bag that belongs to some one else.”

“Try your keys,” suggested John. “Maybe it isn’t as bad as you think.”

“The keys don’t fit,” declared Grant after he had tested them all.

“Maybe there’s a catch or a trick of some kind. Look again, Soc, and see if there isn’t some way to find out what there is inside that bag. That’s about the only way you can tell whose it is.”

“I have been trying,” retorted Grant sharply. “It’s locked and I haven’t any key that will fit it.”

“It feels pretty heavy,” said John as he lifted the bag in question.

“Yes, it’s heavier than mine,” acknowledged Grant. “I don’t see how that porter could have made any such mistake.”

“I don’t see any way out of it, Soc, but for you to take your bag back to Albany,” said Fred.

“I’m not going back,” declared Grant. “I’ll send the bag back by express and telegraph the hotel to send my bag in the same way to Utica. If they get busy right away it ought to be there by the time we are.”

“No use, my dear friend,” said John, shaking his head. “Your bag by this time is on its way to Timbuctoo or San Francisco. Some other fellow has it and if he has and isn’t making remarks that sound like echoes of yours, it is only because he hasn’t yet found out his mistake.”

The perplexity in which Grant found himself was increasing. Many of his necessary articles and much of his clothing that he would require on the trip were contained in the missing bag. He was unable to see the sly wink which John gave Fred when the latter looked questioningly at him.

So insistent was Grant that the Black Growler was stopped at Schenectady to enable him to send a telegram to the hotel at which the Go Ahead boys had stopped the preceding night at Albany.

No one had offered to assist him in his task and the boy alone carried the bag which he believed had been given him in place of his own to the express office. There, in accordance with the word which he had already sent the hotel, he shipped the bag to Albany.

When he returned to the motor-boat so engrossed was he with his own troubles that he failed to discover the grin which appeared on the faces of two of the Go Ahead boys.

“You might have offered to go back to get my bag,” suggested Grant sharply when he resumed his seat on board.

“Yes, we might,” said Fred. “We might have offered to buy a new one for you and fit it out with all the things you need, but we thought we wouldn’t. You need the lesson, Soc. You have been telling all the world how to do it so long that it is time for you to begin to find out some things for yourself.”

Grant made no reply and indeed he had little to say until the boat stopped at an attractive village where the boys obtained their luncheon.

When the voyage was resumed, Grant’s confidence that his own missing bag would be found when they arrived at Utica in a measure served to restore his good nature and throughout the afternoon he took an active part in the bantering in which the boys engaged.

Occasionally Fred relinquished his task at the wheel and permitted his friends to take turns in steering the boat. The banks of the canal were free from rocks and even if the swift little motor-boat was turned from her course no great amount of damage could follow.

There were other boats they were informed that had preceded them and among them the references to the swift Varmint II were frequent.

On such occasions Fred’s passengers at once resumed their task of informing their captain how small his chances of winning the race were becoming. Apparently the Varmint had everything her own way.

Fred did his utmost to appear indifferent to the words of his companions, but in spite of it all it became plain to the other boys that he was seriously disturbed by the comments they made.

There were times when, the course being clear, the speed of the Black Growler was increased almost to her maximum. At such times the farmers in the fields stopped in their labors and stared at the motor-boat, which almost seemed to be shooting through the country.

At other times when they were passing through villages or met a heavily laden canal-boat the Black Growler moved slowly and seemed to share in the need of caution.

It was late in the afternoon when at last the little party arrived at Utica.

“We’ll go up to the hotel and have our dinner,” said Grant. “I do not know that I owe the rest of you anything, but I’m going to take pity on you and do what I at first thought I wouldn’t. I’m going to give you a dinner.”

“That’s very kind,” said John, winking at Fred as he spoke. “Meanwhile who’s going to look after our bags?”

“I’m going to find out first if mine is here to be looked after,” said Grant. “Come on with me, Jack, and I’ll go to the express offices and see if it is there.”

John followed his friend, but their labors were not crowned with success when after an absence of an hour they returned to the place where the Black Growler was awaiting them. Not a word had been received from Albany nor had Grant succeeded in finding any trace of his missing baggage.

“Never mind,” he said quickly. “I’ll have to make the best of it. I’m not going to spoil all the fun of the trip crying over spilled milk.”

Again John winked at Fred, but no words were spoken after the boat and its belongings had been left in charge of a man and the boys together had started for their hotel.

It was still light when they returned to the dock and Fred said, “I wonder how it would do for us to go on a bit farther. There are hotels all along the way and I think it would be good fun to stop at some one of those country taverns.”

“We’re with you,” said George. “We want to get all the experiences we can on this trip.”

“I guess it will be something you will remember,” said Grant.