

THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND THE RACING MOTOR-BOAT



Chapter 9: A Friend in Need

In response to the signal of distress which Fred waved from the deck of the Black Growler as the Caledonia approached, the speed of the big yacht was checked and she stopped not far from the motor-boat. It was still early in the morning and the owners or guests on board the Caledonia were not seen on deck.

“What’s wrong? What’s the trouble?” called the captain, leaning over the rail and speaking to Fred.

“We have had trouble,” replied Fred. “A gang of tramps or canal men forced themselves on board and we have just gotten rid of them. When they saw the Caledonia coming they all ran.”

“Well, if you have got rid of them,” said the captain gruffly, “what more do you want? If you go ahead they won’t catch up with you.”

“But we can’t go ahead.”

“Why not?”

“Our gasoline is out.”

“We don’t run by gasoline,” said the captain, “and I’m afraid steam wouldn’t do you any good.”

“Perhaps you might give us a tow as far as Rome.”

“Perhaps we might and then—”

“What’s the trouble?” Fred looked up quickly as he saw a man about fifty years of age approaching the rail and standing near the captain of the yacht. He wore a yachting cap and it was plain to the perplexed boy that he either was the owner of the beautiful boat or one whose word counted for much.

“We have had our troubles,” explained Fred once more. “A gang of tramps forced their way on board our boat and they have just left us. Our gasoline is out and I was asking the captain if he would be willing to give us a tow as far as Rome.”

“Of course he will,” said the man heartily. “Have you got a painter long enough?”

“I’m afraid not,” replied Fred.

“Then we’ll toss you a rope.”

The captain at once responded to the word of the man who had been speaking to Fred and in a brief time a rope was thrown on board the little motor-boat.

“Are you all ready?” called the man from the deck.

“Yes, sir,” replied Fred heartily, for by this time he and his friends had made the rope fast and were prepared to start.

“All right then, captain, go ahead.”

The Caledonia at once resumed her way and the Black Growler obediently followed about twenty-five feet behind the larger boat.

Before they arrived at Rome other people, in addition to the man who assisted the boys, were seen on the deck of the Caledonia. It was evident that the party had not followed the example of the Go Ahead boys in spending any nights at hotels. They slept on board and the port-holes of what undoubtedly were beautiful little cabins were plainly seen along the sides of the yacht.

It was manifest too that the story of the misfortunes of the Go Ahead boys was speedily told, for a party of five young people in addition to the older ones assembled in the stern of the Caledonia and laughingly greeted the boys in the boat that was being towed.

A short time afterward the boats entered the little city of Rome. When they arrived at a place where a landing safely could be made Fred shouted to the people on the Caledonia, “We’ll cast off now. Thank you for all you have done. You have helped us out of a bad fix.”

“You’re very welcome, I’m sure,” replied the man who had arranged for their relief from their predicament.

“Are you going down the St. Lawrence?” he added.

“Yes, sir,” replied Fred, “as far as Alexandria Bay.”

“Then we may see you again,” called the man. “We expect to be on an island near there. My name is Stevens. If you expect to be in Alexandria Bay very long don’t fail to look us up.”

“Thank you, sir,” replied Fred, and his companions were as interested as he in his word. “We certainly shall do so. Thank you again for all that you have done to help us.”

The Caledonia quickly resumed her voyage, while the boys waving their handkerchiefs in response to the tokens of good will that came from the strangers who had helped them, speedily made their boat fast and went ashore.

In response to their inquiries they were directed to a place where they could obtain a breakfast and not many minutes had elapsed before the four Go Ahead boys were seated about a table busily engaged in their repast.

“I tell you I’m hungry,” said John as he called for a second piece of beefsteak.

“That’s the way you would be all the time,” said George, “if you would only get up early in the morning.”

“That doesn’t go. I was up all night long,” spoke up Fred. “I didn’t sleep any last night.”

“I noticed that,” said Grant. “The sound that came from your room showed very plainly

that you were not sleeping and yet I cannot understand why a fellow should make all those noises if he is wide awake.”

“It was John you heard,” retorted Fred.

“Yes, I heard John too,” said Grant. “It was a duet most of the time. Now aren’t you glad,” he added, “that I told you how wide the Erie Canal is? You see there was plenty of room for the Caledonia to pass us and take us in tow.”

“How wide is the Erie Canal?” spoke up George. “I don’t believe you can remember it now yourself. You haven’t your notes with you. None of that,” he added quickly as Grant felt in his pocket for a paper. “Tell me on your word of honor how wide the Erie Canal is.”

“Seventy feet wide on the surface and fifty-six feet wide at the bottom,” said Grant promptly.

“I suppose we’ll have to take your word for it,” said George as his friends laughed at his discomfiture. “We can’t dispute you and even if you don’t know anything about it you tell it as if you believed it to be the most solemn truth in the world.”

“It’s true, just as I’m telling you,” said Grant.

“How about the new canal that New York State is building now?”

“I have told you about that too,” said Grant, “but then you have to have a good many review lessons with some people.”

“That’s all right, but just the same tell me about the new canal. How wide is it?”

“That’s one hundred and twenty-three to one hundred and seventy-one feet wide on the surface, and seventy-five feet wide at the bottom. Of course there are some places,” Grant added, “when it runs into a lake or a pond where it is a good deal wider than that. But as far as the digging is concerned that’s the width.”

“Is it deeper than the Erie Canal?”

“Yes, sir. The Erie Canal is about seven feet deep and the new one is about twelve feet deep. It’s going to be deep enough to take in boats of three thousand tons.”

As soon as their breakfast had been eaten, and a fresh supply of gasoline had been obtained, once more in high spirits the boys started in their swift motor-boat.

Their experience with the canal-men now was only a memory and they could well afford to laugh at what had been said and done.

“That’s what you get for having us stop in a place such as you picked out, Peewee,” said George. “There’s no accounting for the tastes of some people. Now, I never should have selected that place.”

“You can believe me, I’ll never select it again,” answered Fred, so soberly that his friends all laughed. “Once is enough and forever. I didn’t believe there could be such a place in the

whole of New York State.”

“Well, you know now there is,” said John, “and so do the rest of us. We don’t stop again without knowing something of the hotel in which we are to stay.”

“Where shall we stay to-night, fellows?” inquired Fred. “We ought to get to Syracuse early this afternoon and we can go right on to Oswego if you want to or we can stay there until to-morrow morning and start then.”

“Wait and see what time it is when we strike Syracuse,” said Grant. “Probably the gasoline you bought back there at Rome won’t last until we get there.”

“I have got enough gasoline to take us to the St. Lawrence River,” declared Fred. “I’m not going to be caught again as I was this morning.”

Meanwhile the Black Growler was noisily speeding on her way. To three of the boys the country through which they were moving was all new and therefore abounded in interest. Prosperous villages and fertile farms were passed. As the sun climbed higher into the heavens the day became so much warmer that the boys were glad to seek the shelter behind the awnings which they now had made use of, as a protection from the heat and glare.

It was early in the afternoon when the Go Ahead boys arrived at the thriving city of Syracuse. They speedily decided to rest an hour after they had stopped for luncheon and then through the Oswego Canal to go on to the shore of Lake Ontario. There they would be ready to start on the following morning and were hopeful that if no mishaps occurred they would arrive at their destination the following afternoon. The clear air, the quiet that rested over the region through which they were passing, the tranquil attitude of even the cattle in the fields gave slight indication that the peacefulness of the scene was soon to be broken and the Go Ahead boys were to enter upon one of their most stirring experiences.