

# THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND THE RACING MOTOR-BOAT



## Chapter 19: The Lost Fish

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“You come with me, Freddie,” said Mr. Button. Fred’s face flushed at the term applied to him by his grandfather and still deeper color appeared in his cheeks when he saw a mischievous expression appear in the eyes of the girls. To be called by the name by which he was called when he was a little fellow, or at least very much smaller than he was at the present time, was the last thing that could be applied him in the way of teasing. Mr. Button, however, had no thought of annoying his grandson and used the term simply because it had been familiar to him from the time when Fred was born.

“Good-by, Freddie, good-by,” called the three Go Ahead boys together, as their comrade obediently followed the call and at once joined his grandfather and the man who had demanded the bond and turned into the street.

“That fellow was waiting for us,” exclaimed George in surprise. “I believe that Mr. Button knew all the time that he was to be here.”

“Well, what do you make of it?” inquired Grant.

“I don’t know what to make of it. That man and a lot of his friends from the canal-boats force their way on board the Black Growler and leave only when they are scared by the coming of the Caledonia. Then the first thing we know he shows up here at Cape Vincent and orders us to give up a bond which he says we have.”

“And the worst of it is that we have it,” said George ruefully.

“HAD it, you mean,” suggested Grant soberly.

“That’s right,” joined in John. “We gave it up and had it recorded in Fred’s name. Now I suspect that those two men somehow have put up a job on Fred and that we’ll lose our bond.”

“‘Our’ bond is good,” scoffed George.

“Well, whose is it?” demanded John.

“That’s what we don’t know, but that doesn’t mean that everything we see, which may be the property of somebody we don’t know, belongs to us.”

“Well, if this Mr. Somebody owns that bond why doesn’t he come and claim it?” retorted John.

“It’s my opinion that Mr. Somebody has come,” said Grant dryly.

“What do you mean?” inquired George.

“I don’t know that I mean anything. I’m thinking though that the man who owns that bond, if it is good for anything, isn’t going to rest easily until he finds out where it is.”

“Do you think that boatman owns it?” asked John.

“It’s plain that he knows something about it,” answered Grant.

Meanwhile the two girls in the party were becoming somewhat impatient.

“My, nobody knows how thirsty I am!” said Miss Susie, who had been an interested listener and for some strange reason had not joined in the conversation.

“Plenty of water around here,” suggested John.

“I don’t mean that,” said the girl quickly. “I mean something cold.”

“And frozen?” asked John.

“My, how quick witted you are!” laughed the girl. “That’s exactly what we want.”

“I suppose we might as well give in first as last,” said George in mock despair. “If anybody knows where we can get any ice cream we’ll start.”

“We’ll start anyway,” spoke up Miss Susie. “If we start we shall find it.”

Evidently success attended the efforts to locate the ice cream parlors for long before the return of the boys and girls to the Black Growler, Fred and his grandfather had come back, the latter becoming more impatient with the failure of the young people to appear.

Sam Hodge meanwhile had been busily engaged in his inspection of the machinery of the Black Growler. When his task was completed he did not make any remarks, but his face apparently beamed with satisfaction.

“Sam,” said Fred, “what do you think our chances are against that Varmint II?”

“‘Gainst the which?” demanded Sam.

“That motor-boat that we were racing.”

“I think it will depend somewhat on how fast we go,” said Sam.

“What a wise man you are,” laughed Fred. “I might have thought of that myself if I had tried hard. Do you think we can beat that boat? That’s what I want to know.”

“I think we can if we go faster than she does,” replied Sam.

“Well, can we make her go faster?”

“You can if the speed is in her.”

“Well, do you think the speed is in her?”

“I can’t say just yet,” said Sam, who was not to be moved from his cautious position. “Here come your friends,” he added as the boys and girls were seen approaching the dock.

Mr. Button grumbled over the delay which had been caused by the failure of the young people to return, but as no one except Fred understood just what he was saying slight attention was paid him.

Meanwhile at Sam’s command the engine was started, and the Black Growler, free from the dock once more, soon was noisily and speedily making her way down the mighty river.

“Why didn’t you beat that other boat?” demanded Miss Susie of Fred.

“That wasn’t what we were trying to do.”

“Well, what were you trying to do?” demanded the girl.

“Testing our boat and at the same time trying to find out what time they could make in the Varmint II.”

“Well, did you find out?”

“We found that she can go,” answered Fred somewhat dolefully. “Sam here says that we can beat her if we can go faster than she does.”

“That’s exactly what I say,” spoke up Sam.

“How many legs have you got, Sam?” asked George abruptly.

“Six,” answered Sam.

Both girls looked up in surprise. Miss Susie said, “He’s a regular centipede. What does he mean?”

“What do you mean, Sam?” said Fred. “Miss Susie doesn’t understand you. How many legs really have you got?”

“I have told you once,” retorted Sam. “I have got six here and about fifty in New York.”

The girls stared blankly at each other and then as the boys laughed, Miss Susie said, “What’s the joke?”

“No joke,” said Fred. “It’s just a fact.”

The attention of the party, however, was speedily attracted by the sight of a little boat that was approaching, flying a white flag at the stern.

“Oh, I know what that is,” said Miss Susie confidently. “That means that somebody is sick on board and that they are signaling us to help them.”

“Huh!” grunted Mr. Button.

“That’s not it,” responded George.

“Well, what is it then?” demanded the girl.

“It means that somebody on board has caught a muscallonge and they are bringing it in. If any boat catches one it usually puts straight for home and it isn’t backward in letting the world know what has happened.”

“Have they got the fish with them?”

“Why don’t you ask them?” laughed George, handing the girl a megaphone as he spoke.

Quickly taking her place on the deck, Miss Susie shouted, “Have you got a muscallonge?”

“Yes,” replied somebody on board.

“Hold it up and let us see it.”

In response a man on the other boat held forth to view a huge fish which weighed at

least twenty-five pounds.”

“Good for you! Good for you!” shouted the Go Ahead boys together.

“Hold it up higher,” called Miss Susie. “Is that a real fish? Did you really catch it or did you buy it somewhere?”

A reply was not given the questions, for suddenly the great fish slipped from the hands of the man who was holding it and with a splash it fell into the water.

“That’s right,” grunted Mr. Button. “I told you what was going to happen.”

“Why, Mr. Button,” exclaimed Miss Susie, “did you know beforehand that he was going to drop that fish?”

“I told the boys before we started that they would surely have trouble to-day. Now, stop this boat, Sam Hodge,” he added. “We have got to help those people get that fish in.”

“I guess they won’t need any help,” said Sam, who was watching the efforts of the men on the other boat. Its speed had been checked as soon as the accident had occurred and the two men on board quickly began to pull in the two skiffs, which they had in tow.

In a brief time they took their places on board one of the little boats and with long strokes started swiftly back in their search for their lost prize.

Fortunately the men soon found the floating muscallonge which now had been dead two hours. Eagerly they drew the fish into their skiff and when they returned to their motor-boat they were aware for the first time that the Go Ahead boys were there to help.

Few remarks, however, were made and as soon as the muscallonge had been restored to its place both boats continued on their way.

“I’m afraid,” muttered Mr. Button, “that isn’t the last thing that is going to happen to-day.”

“I hope not,” said Miss Susie lightly.

Apparently all the efforts of Fred’s grandfather to subdue the light-hearted girl were doomed to failure. Why his prejudice against her had become so strong it was difficult even for Fred to understand, although he was familiar with the peculiar ways of Mr. Button.

“Look yonder!” suddenly exclaimed John, “That’s the Varmint II again.”

Coming around the end of a nearby island the swift little motor-boat was seen approaching.

Taking his megaphone Fred shouted, “Come on, we’ll try it again! We couldn’t do much this morning.”

“All right,” came back the answering hail from the Varmint II and in a brief time both boats were swiftly moving down the river.

Again the spray dashed over each party, the water through which they were passing again seemed to be moved as if by some intense heat beneath it. The noise of the motor

and the sound of the rushing water made it difficult for the Go Ahead boys to hear one another.

There was slight disposition however, to talk, for all on board the little boat were eagerly watching their rival. Although there were no sure grounds for their belief, the Go Ahead boys were confident that the strongest rival they would face in the coming race was the boat which now was only a few yards distant.

And what a beautiful little structure she was. Her lines were all graceful and as she slipped through the water she seemed almost to share in the prevailing excitement.

Steadily the two boats continued on their way, neither apparently being able to gain much upon its rival. Occasionally the Varmint II led by a few feet, only to lose the advantage as the Black Growler slowly drew ahead. Evidently they were evenly matched. This fact, however, served only to increase the interest of the Go Ahead boys.

When at last the Varmint II again turned from the course and with a wide sweep started across the river there had been no sure test of the comparative speed of the two boats.

“What do you think, Sam?” inquired Fred anxiously. “Can we beat her?”

“We can if we go faster than she does,” replied Sam briefly.