

CHAPTER V - The Circus Boys on the Mississippi

In Chapter V of "The Circus Boys On the Mississippi," Mr. Sparling, the circus owner, invites Phil and Teddy for a mysterious walk after instructing all performers to pack up, sparking curiosity and gossip among the show people due to the unusual command to prepare to leave the train. As they meander through the town and approach the river, the boys' wonder grows until they spot three yellow boats with "The Sparling Combined Shows" painted on the side, revealing Mr. Sparling's surprise plan to take the circus down the Mississippi River on steamboats.

Phil and Teddy are astonished and excited by this novel mode of travel. Sparling explains his innovative strategy, aimed at giving the circus a unique edge by performing on both sides of the river throughout the season, thus extending their engagement possibilities. The boats, the "River Queen," "Mary Jane," and "Nemah," are prepared to house the performers and equipment, with alterations made to accommodate the circus's needs. Sparling's inventive approach is met with enthusiasm by the boys, despite Teddy's initial skepticism about traveling on a paddle-wheel boat.

The idea of a traveling circus on the Mississippi is both a logistical challenge and a promising adventure. The "River Queen" and "Mary Jane" are humorously renamed "Yellow Peril" and "Fat Marie" by the boys, while "Nemah" is dubbed "Little Nemo," reflecting their excitement and playful engagement with this new venture. Sparling's detailed planning assures that every aspect of the circus—from lodging performers to transporting elephants and equipment—is considered, ensuring a smooth transition from train to riverboat.

As the circus community buzzes with anticipation over this unprecedented move, Phil and Teddy return to the lot, energized and eager to share the news. Their enthusiasm is infectious, and the circus performances that follow are executed with exceptional zeal, captivating the town with their daring acts. This chapter sets the stage for the adventures ahead as the Sparling Circus embarks on a unique journey down the Mississippi, blending the traditional allure of the circus with the novelty of riverboat travel.