

**THE RANGER BOYS
AND THE BORDER
SMUGGLERS**

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The Ranger Boys and the Border Smugglers by Claude A. Labelle

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"This fellow has a chamois money belt on, and unless I'm greatly mistaken, that's where the Jewels are."
(The Ranger Boys And the Border Smugglers) Page 197

THE RANGER BOYS AND THE BORDER SMUGGLERS

By CLAUDE A. LABELLE

AUTHOR OF

*"The Ranger Boys to the Rescue," "The Ranger Boys
Find the Hermit," "The Ranger Boys Outwit
the Timber Thieves," "The Ranger
Boys and Their Reward."*



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THE RANGER BOYS AND THE BORDER SMUGGLERS.

CHAPTER I.

OFF FOR NEW FIELDS.

“Now I believe you boys understand just what is wanted of you, as I explained it yesterday afternoon, but just to make sure, I’ll go over it briefly again while you are waiting for your train,” said the Customs Chief to the three Ranger Boys.

Our three friends were sitting in the office of the chief at the capitol in Maine, preparatory to bidding him goodbye before starting out for the Canadian border to try and run down a band of fur smugglers.

As they sit there, let us describe them and introduce them to those of our readers who have not read “The Ranger Boys to the Rescue,” and “The Ranger Boys Find the Hermit.”

First is Garfield Boone, known to his chums as

Garry. He is the accepted and chosen leader of the trio on all their expeditions. Garry's father, known to the backwoodsmen as "Moose" Boone, is a wealthy lumberman.

Next is Phil Durant, a dark-haired youth of French descent. He is able to talk French fluently, but keeps this knowledge under cover, as the boys once found it useful for him to do. He is the son of a father and mother who are situated in very moderate circumstances.

Last, but by no means least, is Dick Wallace, the ward of Garry's father. Dick is the son of a college professor, who was a chum of Mr. Boone. He fell from a horse and injured his head when Dick was a youngster, and then disappeared. Dick's mother had died when he was a baby, so Mr. Boone took him into his own home to bring up. Dick, by the way, is rather fat; "plump" he calls himself.

These three boys form an extraordinary unit of the Maine Ranger service, that body of men whose duty it is to protect the great forest lands of the state from the danger of fire.

These boys were made Rangers through the influence of Mr. Boone, and had been in the woods about a month, where they had some stirring adventures, meeting an old hermit who has helped them, and making enemies of a half-breed guide, Jean LeBlanc, and a rascally ex-deputy Ranger, Ander-

son by name, who was supplanted by Nate Webster, a warm-hearted old Maine guide and a firm friend of the boys.

Among their adventures was the rescue of little Patty Graham, child of a rich broker who was camping in the woods, from the half-breed LeBlanc. As a reward for their brave deed, Mr. Graham presented them with a specially made wireless telephone outfit, complete with home station and compact carrying 'phones.

Now that we know who our heroes are, let us hear what the Customs Chief has to tell them.

"As I told you boys yesterday, this is our problem. We know that somewhere along the border, there is a regular smugglers' lane, where valuable shipments of seal and other furs have been smuggled into the United States with consequently a great loss of duty to the customs house. Now it is impossible for our men to find anything out, and if I get men from Washington, they don't know anything about the woods, so there you are.

"Now I think you boys can go up there, and by acting as campers, or even in your role of Rangers, you may find out just the things my agents have been unable to unearth. Ordinarily I wouldn't think of sending boys on this job, but you three have proven yourselves to be unusually alert and

reliable, also being boys, you may not be regarded as dangerous by the woods people in that section.

"You had better go back to Bangor and have a conference with this man Webster, and get what supplies you need, then strike off across the state till you come to the border town of Hobart. That, I have reason to believe, is the base of operations of the smugglers.

"That I think is all. Before you go out, you will each be given a little gold customs badge. Secrete this somewhere on your persons and never show it except as an absolute last resort. Also, you will be given one or two signals by means of which you may find out whether anyone is in the service or not. Now good luck go with you."

The Chief shook hands with the three, and they filed into the outer office where an assistant gave them their badges and some simple signals.

"If you should meet a man who gave his collar a tug at the throat as though it were too tight, you would think nothing of it, but if he gave it two little tugs, and then waited while you could count five and gave it three more little tugs, you would be told he was a customs man. Your reply would be two tugs, and in order to check up, he would give two more in answer. That is for meeting in a room, on a train, or in the street. If you should happen to be in a restaurant, the signal would be

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two taps of a cup on a saucer followed by three, or if it is a mug, the same number of taps against the table. Your answering signal would be the same. Don't ever do this just because you are inquisitive about a person. Have some sure grounds for believing that the man you are signalling is part of the service. Now goodbye and good fortune."

The boys left the capitol and made their way down the long hill to the main business part of the town.

As they struck onto the main business street, Garry noticed the familiar blue bell sign of the telephone company.

"Say, boys, I have an idea. Let's stop in here and put in long distance calls and say hello to our folks. How does the idea strike you?" said Garry, almost in one breath.

"Ripping," shouted Phil, while Dick didn't wait to make any remark, but dived in through the door, and in a trice was putting in his call. Phil followed suit, while Garry waited, as he would talk when Dick had finished.

This pleasant duty done, they went to a restaurant for dinner. Here they attracted no little attention, for their khaki clothes looked almost like uniforms. Added to this was the fact that they wore forest shoe-packs, those high laced moccasins with an extra leather sole, and felt campaign hats.