

**THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB
AT NANTUCKET;
OR, THE MYSTERY
OF THE DUNSTAN HEIR**

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The motor boat club at Nantucket; or, The mystery of the Dunstan heir by H. Irving Hancock

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“Help! I Drown!” Came in a Muffled Voice.

Frontispiece.

The Motor Boat Club at Nantucket

CHAPTER I

THE PAIR IN THE SEAT AHEAD

“**I**S the ‘Meteor’ a fast boat?”

“Very fast, indeed.”

“But can she beat anything along this coast? That’s what I want to know.”

“Judge for yourself. On her trial trip she made within a small fraction of twenty-eight miles an hour.”

“Whew! That’s tremendous speed, even for a fast and costly boat such as the rich build to-day. But how long has she been in the water?”

“Since last March.”

“She may have fouled a good deal since then, or her machinery may be a good deal below the mark by this time.”

“Humph! For that matter, something could be made to happen to the boat, I suppose.”

Of the two men carrying on this conversation in a day-coach seat on a railway train, one was

five-foot-seven, florid and somewhat stout, with a bull neck and keen, twinkling eyes. His whole appearance hinted that he had spent most of his forty years of life on the open sea. The other man, who was short, slim and swarthy, with narrow, piercing black eyes, might have been a few years older. His every motion betokened great activity. One might have guessed him to be a Spaniard. His general attire, though it was somewhat careless, would place him in the business-man class.

At the first mention of the name "Meteor" two American boys, seated immediately behind the men, started slightly and immediately were all attention. Each boy was about sixteen years of age. Tom Halstead was fair, brown-haired and blue-eyed, with a naturally merry look. Joe Dawson was darker, somewhat more reserved in manner and was Tom's fast chum and great admirer.

Yes; readers of the preceding volume in this series will recognize Tom and Joe at once as the young Americans who became the original members of the Motor Boat Club of the Kennebec. It was they who put Broker Prescott's fast motor boat, the "Sunbeam," once more in commission; they who went through some most lively adventures along the coast near the mouth of the Kennebec and who rendered tremendously

important services to Revenue Officer Evans, a cousin of the broker, in penetrating the secret of Smugglers' Island.

Now these same two members of the Motor Boat Club were traveling on business that they believed to be wholly commonplace. They were headed for the island of Nantucket, south of Cape Cod. The experiences ahead of them, they imagined, were to be of the most ordinary kind. They had no glimpse, as yet, of the new excitements that Fate had in store for them. They had no hint of the startling adventures into which they were soon to be plunged.

But that mention of the name "Meteor" had aroused their instant attention. That was the name of the motor boat that they were to join and take charge of at Wood's Hole. The craft was the property of Mr. Horace Dunstan, one of the wealthy residents of the island of Nantucket.

An ordinary boy might not have heard the low-toned conversation of the pair in the seat ahead. But Tom and Joe, attuned to the life of the sea and with ears trained to note the slightest irregularity of the sound of machinery, possessed acute hearing indeed.

At the first words of that conversation between the unknown pair Tom gave Joe a slight nudge in the side. Dawson's eyes promptly

closed, his lips parting, his head sinking slightly forward. He appeared to be sound asleep. Halstead seemed to be wholly interested in the newspaper at which he was glancing. Not even when the possibility of foul play to the "Meteor" was mentioned did either youngster betray any further sign. Indeed, the men in the seat ahead were evidently confident that the boys could not hear their low-pitched talk. None of the other seats near by was occupied.

The accommodation train from Boston, rolling slowly along late in this July afternoon, had just left Falmouth for its run of a few miles to Wood's Hole, the last stop, as this would be the end of the mainland route. Across the meadows the hot breath of July came through the open car windows. The brightness of the sunshine inclined one to close his eyes, so that Joe Dawson's slumber seemed the most natural thing in the world. Indeed, Tom Halstead's eyes were narrowing; he seemed the next candidate for a doze. Yet, depend upon it, neither boy had been more awake in his life. The slightest hint of possible mischief to the boat that was soon to be intrusted to their care was enough to set their nerves a-tingle.

"That was a queer rumpus on Boston Common the other day," began the florid-faced man. The subject had been changed. No further

mention was made of the "Meteor." Tom Halstead felt tremendously disappointed. He had hoped to hear more that would be of interest to himself. But the pair in the seat ahead did not again refer to the "Meteor." So Tom, after stealthily making a few pin pricks in his newspaper, settled far down in his seat, holding the paper before his face as though reading. In reality he was studying what he could see of the faces of the men who had so suddenly aroused his interest. With the paper close enough to his face the pin holes were almost as good as windows.

Over those last few miles droned the train. Tom felt cheated in not hearing more, but to all appearances the strangers had forgotten the existence of the "Meteor." When the train was yet a mile out from Wood's Hole the two men arose, going to the forward end of the car. The train slackened in speed, the two men dropping off on the further side of the car from where the boys sat. By the time that Halstead deemed it prudent to slip across to a window opposite, the two men were out of sight.

"Now what on earth can be the reason for those two fellows desiring any injury to a gentleman's private yacht?" muttered Tom, rejoicing his chum.

"At all events, it's handy to be well warned in advance," returned Joe with a quiet grin.

"Yes, if we run across that pair within twenty cable lengths of the boat we'll know 'em and be on our watch," answered Halstead with a meaning flash in his eyes.

They had little more time for puzzling their heads, for the train was now rolling in at the little station at Wood's Hole. There were less than a dozen people to disembark. Out of such a small crowd anyone looking for two young motor boat experts would have little difficulty in selecting the two boys with weather-tinted faces, who wore suits of strong, serviceable navy blue, soft brown canvas shoes and straw hats. So a tall, slender man of forty-five, dressed in outing gray and wearing an expensive fine-straw hat, came at once toward them.

"Captain Tom Halstead?" he inquired, looking from one boy to the other.

"That's my name, sir," Tom answered. "You are Mr. Horace Dunstan?"

"Yes. And heartily glad that you did not disappoint me."

"There was no good reason why we should, sir," Halstead rejoined, then presented his chum. Mr. Dunstan shook hands with both very cordially, although he was not able to conceal entirely his astonishment at their youthfulness.