

**THE RIVER MOTOR BOAT  
BOYS ON THE  
MISSISSIPPI OR ON  
THE TRAIL TO THE GULF**

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The river motor boat boys on the Mississippi or On the trail to the gulf by Harry Gordon

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On the top of the ridge-boards, the lads saw a half-dressed negro boy. Page 23.

*River Motor Boys on the Mississippi.*

# The River Motor Boat Boys On the Mississippi

OR

On the Trail to the Gulf.

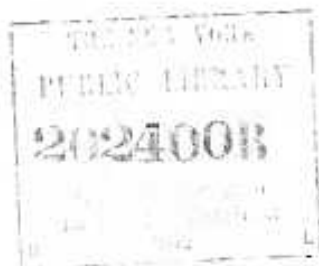
By HARRY GORDON

AUTHOR OF

- "The River Motor Boat Boys on the Colorado."
- "The River Motor Boat Boys on the St. Lawrence,"
- "The River Motor Boat Boys on the Amazon,"
- "The River Motor Boat Boys on the Columbia,"
- "The River Motor Boat Boys on the Ohio,"



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**THE SIX RIVER MOTOR BOYS ON THE MISSISSIPPI**

# THE SIX RIVER MOTOR BOYS ON THE MISSISSIPPI

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## CHAPTER I.

### A RAMBLER RECEPTION DAY.

A WHITE bulldog of ferocious aspect lay sound asleep under a small table. Lying across the dog's neck, with his soft muzzle hidden between capable paws, was a quarter-grown grizzly bear. Now and then Captain Joe, as the dog was named, stirred uneasily in his sleep, as if in remonstrance at the liberties which Teddy, the cub, was taking with his person. The bulldog and the cub snored in unison!

The table under which the animals slept stood in the middle of the small cabin of the motor boat *Rambler*, and the *Rambler* was pulling at her anchor chain in the muddy water of the Mississippi river—pulling and jerking for all the world like a fat pig with a ring in his nose trying to get rid of the line which held him in captivity.

Although early in November, there were wander-



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ing flakes of snow in the air, and a chill wind from the northwest was sweeping over the Mississippi valley. There had been several days of continuous rain, and, at Cairo, where the motor boat lay, both the Mississippi and the Ohio rivers were out of their banks.

In spite of the wind and snow, however, the cabin of the *Rambler* was cozy and warm. In front of the table where the bulldog and the young bear lay stood a coal stove, on the top of which two boys of sixteen, Clayton Emmett and Alexander Smithwick, were cooking ham and eggs, the appetizing flavor of which filled the little room. A dish of sliced potatoes stood not far away, and over the cherry-red coils of an electric stove at the rear of the cabin a great pot of coffee was sizzling and adding its fragrance to rich contributions of the frying pan.

While the boys, growing hungrier every second, stirred the fire and laid the table, footsteps were heard on the forward deck of the motor boat, and then, without even announcing his presence by a knock, a roughly-dressed man of perhaps forty years stepped into the cabin and stood for a moment staring at the bulldog and the bear, stood with a hand on the knob of the door, as if ready for retreat, his lips open, as if the view of the interior had checked words half spoken. Alex. Smithwick regarded the man for a moment with a flash of anger in his eyes,

then he caught the humor of the situation and resolved to punish the intruder for his impudence in walking into the cabin without a bit of ceremony.

"Look out for the bulldog and the bear! he warned. "They consumed two rivermen last week! The bulldog tears 'em down, an' the bear eats 'em!"

"What kind of a menagerie is this?" began the visitor, but Alex. gave the bulldog a touch with his foot, and the dog and the bear were in the middle of the space between the table and the stove, snarling fiercely, before the startled intruder could open the door. "Call the brutes off!" he added as Teddy began boxing the empty air.

"Don't stand in the doorway!" Alex. warned, while Clay Emmett turned his face away so as not to betray his enjoyment of the situation. "It makes 'em mad to keep the door open! What do you want?"

The visitor stepped outside and beckoned to the boys through the glass panel. Alex. went out on the deck and stood waiting. The visitor was evidently a riverman, tall, muscular, heavy of hand and sullen of face. He wore rough clothing, neither clean nor whole, and his face was well covered by a bushy beard, light in color except around the mouth, where it was stained with tobacco. Alex. noted that he looked away whenever their eyes met for an instant.

"I'm Gid Brent, the riverman," he said, in a mo-

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ment, "and I've come to warn you boys against starting out alone, on the river in this boat."

"That's kind of you," Alex. replied. "What's the matter with the boat?"

"It is the river there's something the matter with," replied the other. "The water is high, and is pouring into all the old channels and ditches from Cairo to the Gulf. If you start out without a pilot, you'll run into some bayou and end in a swamp, a couple of hundred miles from the main channel."

"You're a pilot, eh?" asked Alex., with a provoking grin.

"Yes; and I'm called the best on the river," was the boasting reply.

"And you're looking for a job?" Alex. continued, insinuatingly.

"I might accept the right kind of a job," Brent replied, "but I shouldn't want any menagerie on board with me. Where are you boys going?"

"Oh, well," Alex. said, gravely, though there was fun in his eyes, "if you object to our pets, that settles it! We brought Captain Joe, the bulldog, from the Amazon, and Teddy Bear, the cub, from British Columbia."

"Oh, if they're tame!" the other exclaimed. "I might——"

"I'll call 'em out an' see what they say to you!" Alex. replied, mischief in his eyes, opening the cabin