

**THE RIVER MOTOR BOAT  
BOYS ON THE  
COLORADO; OR, THE  
CLUE IN THE ROCKS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649203833

The river motor boat boys on the Colorado; or, The clue in the rocks by Harry Gordon

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**HARRY GORDON**

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# The River Motor Boat Boys On the Colorado

OR

The Clue in the Rocks.

By HARRY GORDON

AUTHOR OF

"The River Motor Boat Boys on the Mississippi,"  
"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,"



A. L. BURT COMPANY  
NEW YORK



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THE SIX RIVER MOTOR BOYS ON THE COLORADO

# THE SIX RIVER MOTOR BOYS ON THE COLORADO

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## CHAPTER I.

### MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES.

THE motor boat *Rambler* lay pulling at her anchor-chain in the muddy waters of the Gulf of California. To the North opened the wide, shallow mouth of the Colorado river, with its many shifting currents and treacherous sandbars.

Eastward stretched a Mexican desert, where flourished cacti and forms of animal life unknown to other parts of the world. Beyond this waste of sand, which had, in times long gone by, formed the bed of a lake, rose the peaks and ridges of the Sierra del Pinacates mountains.

To the South the Montague islands shut out the body of the Gulf, and Westward a patch of desert led out to a mountain range. There are two volcanic elevations running down the peninsula, and

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beyond them lies the tumbling Pacific ocean, a hundred miles away.

The sun was lifting out of the desert to the East, rising round and red and hot, like the bottom of a great brass kettle, and the chill of the dark hours was changing to the stifling, long-scorching heat which is a thing of the desert the world over.

Those who have followed the adventures of the *Rambler* and her crew, will remember her last on the Columbia. After a journey through the wild canyons and forest-lined reaches of the great river of the Northwest Territories, the motor boat had been shipped to Guaymas, where she had taken to the water again in the Gulf of California.

The *Rambler* carried a crew of three this morning, Clayton Emmett, Cornelius Witters and Alexander Smithwick, boys of seventeen, who had explored the Amazon as well as the Columbia in the staunch little boat. There had been others on the previous trips, but now only these three were ready for the voyage up the wonderful stream which finds its waters in the frozen snows of the Rocky Mountains and plays hide-and-seek with them thousands of feet below the lips of the desert, in the most mysterious and wildly beautiful canyons known to the world.

Others might join them at up-river points, but the lads were content to make the journey just as they were. Now, as the sun rose higher and the air above



the sands began to shimmer in the heat, they tumbled out of their bunks in the little cabin of the motor boat and, after invigorating baths in the Gulf, began preparations for breakfast.

"If we wait much longer," Alex. suggested, as he busied himself in making coffee, "we won't want anything for breakfast but snowballs, it will be so hot, and we're not likely to get them in this oven of a land. Who's going to fry the cakes this morning? Oh, you would, would you!"

This last sentence was addressed to a grizzly bear cub which shambled into the cabin and placed two paws and a soft muzzle of a mouth on the table where the boy stood. This was "Teddy," the cub Alex. had captured during the trip down the Columbia river.

"I know what you want, Teddy Bear!" the boy added, as the cub winked a small eye at him. "You want to wait until I get the sugar out, then you want to empty one bowl into one bear! Now, you move on!"

The boy addressed the cub just as he would have spoken to one of his chums, and the bear appeared to understand what was said to him, for he grabbed angrily at an egg which Alex. had brought to "settle" the coffee and made off with it, walking upright to the door, with the broken yolk marking his muzzle, paws and breast with cabalistic inscriptions in yellow.

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Once on deck the cub was promptly chased over the rail into the Gulf, where he wallowed clumsily, with three boys laughing at his antics and penitent looks. When permitted to come, dripping and sullen, on board he sulked off to a corner and scolded every one who approached until Captain Joe sat down in front of him and grinned sarcastically at his plastered fur and stuck-up eyes.

Captain Joe was a white bulldog the boys had acquired on the Amazon trip. The bear and the dog were great chums. Captain Joe now sat making wrinkled faces at the disconsolate cub.

"Eat him up, Captain Joe!" Cornelius Witters, known to his friends as "Case," shouted. "He stole an egg!"

The dog cocked one short ear and looked reproachfully at the cub.

"The price of that egg would have bought you a bone, Captain Joe," Clayton Emmett, better known as "Clay," put in. "Take a bit out of him, just to teach him better manners!"

Captain Joe winked his red eyes at Teddy and walked away in a dignified manner, as if not relishing being made the executioner of the crew! The lads laughed at the animal's attitude of offended innocence and went on with their preparations for breakfast.

The most of the cooking was done on the top of a coal stove, but the coffee was bubbling on an elec-

tric coil which stood on a table at the back of the cabin. After a dozen pancakes had been cooked Alex. placed them close to the electric coil to keep warm, though, as he said, "The air was fit to keep them red hot anywhere."

There was a small, square window over the electric stove, at the back of the cabin, a window which opened on about a yard's width of deck at the stern of the boat. This small space concealed gasoline tanks, and was not in sight from either the deck or the cabin of the motor boat.

Indeed, it was rarely visited, except by Captain Joe and Teddy, who often took long siestas there when the bulk of the cabin cast shadows on the bare planks.

Case cooked heap after heap of brown buckwheat cakes and passed them on to Alex. to be placed in the warming closet, as the boys called the ledge of the electric stove, "until they had enough to get a good eating start on," as Witters observed. Finally he ceased his efforts and glanced at the place where the tempting heap of cakes had been placed.

There was not even a crumb of a pancake in sight! Alex. was busy getting out plates and cups, his back to the electric stove and the window. The coffee was bubbling over the cherry-red coils.

Case advanced to the stove and looked over it, under it, around it, and even under the table it stood on. There wasn't a pancake, or a part of pancake,