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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOTOR MATT'S LAUNCH; OR, A FRIEND IN NEED \*\*\*



## MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING ADVENTURE	MOTOR FICTION
NO. 21 JULY 17, 1909.	FIVE CENTS
MOTOR MATT'S LAUNCH	OR A FRIEND IN NEED
BY THE AUTHOR OF MOTOR MATT	

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<b>MOTOR STORIES</b> <b>THRILLING ADVENTURE MOTOR FICTION</b>
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## Motor Matt's Launch

OR,

### A FRIEND IN NEED.

By the author of "MOTOR MATT."

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## CHARACTERS THAT APPEAR IN THIS STORY.

**Matt King**, otherwise Motor Matt.

**Joe McGlory**, a young cowboy who proves himself a lad of worth and character, and whose eccentricities are all on the humorous side. A good chum to tie to—a point Motor Matt is quick to perceive.

**George Lorry**, a lad who has begun steering a wrong course, and in whom Matt recognizes a victim of circumstances rather than a youth who is innately conceited, domineering and unscrupulous.

**Ping Pong**, a young Chinese who wins a motor launch in a raffle and insists on working for Motor Matt. Full of heathen vagaries, he drops mysteriously out of the story—but is destined to be heard from again.

**"Red-whiskers,"** otherwise "Big John," an unscrupulous person who takes his dishonest toll wherever he can find it; but, in crossing Motor Matt's course, he meets with rather more than he has bargained for.

**Kinky and Ross**, two pals of Big John.

**Landers**, another pal who proves treacherous.

# CHAPTER I.

## NEW FRIENDS AND NEW FORTUNES.

"What next?"

Not often does a boy put that question to himself and receive an answer as quickly as Motor Matt received his.

The king of the motor boys was out among the sand dunes on the Presidio Military Reservation. He had started to walk to the old fort at the Golden Gate, but had dropped down on one of the sand heaps, thinking—a little moodily, it must be admitted—over his present situation, and what lay ahead.

It was a fine morning. The sky was pale blue and without a cloud, and the bay was as blue as indigo. The trade wind blew over him, and tempered the heat, and the salt tang in the air reminded him of the long voyage around the Horn which he and his chums had completed no more than a week before.

Alcatraz was so close that it almost seemed to Matt as though he could take a running jump from the shore and clear the intervening stretch of water, and beyond Alcatraz, like a purple pyramid, arose Tamalpais, looking westward across the Pacific.

Matt was gloomy because, early that morning, he had separated from his two chums, Dick Ferral and Carl Pretzel. Dick had received a telegram from his uncle, in Denver, asking him to come east at once. At his invitation, Carl had gone with him. Both lads urged Matt to accompany them, but he had declined, thinking more seriously than he had ever done of some "prep" school and a course at Leland Stanford. If he was to take that step, seeking new friends and new fortunes, why not take it now?

There was something more in life, Matt told himself, than just knocking around the world, meeting all kinds of trouble and getting the upper hand of it.

But there were the motors, the explosive engines Matt loved so well, and had worked among so long. If he entered some academy, he would have to turn his back on the humming cylinders, the rushing wheels, and the racing propellers.

That thought gave him a pang. The gasoline motor was just coming into its own, and the field that lay before it was so wide as to stagger the imagination. Could Matt tear himself away from the fascination of terminals, commutators and spark plugs, from differential and transmission gear, from spray nozzles and float feeds, from the steady explosion, the perfect mixture of air and gasoline, the humming of the coils, and the beautifully balanced reciprocity of a running motor?

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Well, after a while, perhaps, but not—not right away.

"What next?" he asked himself.

"Huh!" came a sound, half-grunt and half-greeting, from directly in front of him.

During his reflections, Matt's head had bowed forward and his eyes had fixed themselves vacantly on the gray sand. He raised his glance abruptly, and saw within a yard of him a young fellow in dingy sombrero, faded blue flannel shirt, and corduroy trousers.

The lad could not have been more than seventeen. His face was tanned a deep bronze, and his eyes were as black as midnight. His nose was what is termed a "snub," and gave his face a droll, humorous look. As he slouched in front of Matt he had his hands in his pockets.

For a full minute Matt and the stranger surveyed each other.

"Huh!" said the stranger again, pulling a hand out of his pocket to jerk the brim of his hat down over one eye. "Got any sand?" he inquired.

"Sand?" echoed Matt.

"Sure—s-a-n-d, sand. I'm game as a hornet myself, and I reckon I can lay holt of you and wind you up like an eight-day clock. Say, try me a whirl, catch-as-catch-can. If I can't put you on your back in a brace of shakes, I'll eat my spurs. Dare you!"

The stranger backed off, and pushed up his sleeves. A wide grin crossed his face and his black eyes twinkled.

"What have you got against me?" asked Matt. "Why do you want to fight?"

"Shucks! You got to have a reason for every blamed thing? Come at me. Dare you—dare you! I'm hungry to caper—and you ain't going to hold back on a feller when he's *hungry*, are you?"

Matt laughed.

"Well, no," he answered, getting up.

Then, without any ifs, ands, or whyfors, the king of the motor boys and the stranger rushed together.

It was the "double grapevine" that did the business for the stranger. In ten seconds, by the

watch, he went into the air and dropped down on the soft sand with a *chug* that left him dazed and bewildered. Then he sat up and stared.

"Well, well, well!" he sputtered. He was still grinning, and his black eyes traveled over Matt with wonder and admiration. "You the Tur'ble Turk in disguise?" he inquired.

"Hardly," laughed Matt. "You must have learned wrestling in an Agricultural School."

"Mebby," answered the other, picking himself up, "but I ain't diving into my wannegan any, at that. You can't give me another jolt like that, pard. Two out of three, you know. First fall for the gent in the leather cap—but the next one's mine. Whoop-ee!"

The stranger, bareheaded and sleeves rolled to his elbows, rushed at Matt like a hurricane. Matt side-stepped, whirled, caught his antagonist from behind and shouldered him like a bag of meal. The next instant he had dropped him, and squirmed out from under his gripping fingers.

"Gee, man!" gasped the stranger, rubbing his hand over his eyes. "Speak to me about that, oh, *do!* He lifts me up and sets me down, and all my caperin' don't amount to shucks. Ain't it scandalous to be hip-locked with like that?"

"Got enough?" asked Matt.

"Plenty, *amigo.*" The stranger climbed to his feet, picked up his hat and reflectively slapped the sand out of it. "Down where I come from, a feller can 'most always tell when he's got enough. When did you break out on this part of the map?"

"A week ago."

"What label do you tote?"

"King, Matt King."

The strange youth came within one of dropping his hat.

"Speak to me about *that!*" he gasped, his eyes widening. "Why, I might as well have wrestled with a locomotive and tried to stand it on its headlight in the right of way! Say, I've read about *you!* You're the king of the motor boys—the big high boy who brought that submarine around South Americy, and turned her over to Uncle Sam here in 'Frisco. *Gracias!*"

"What are you thanking me for?"

"Because you could have tied me into a bowknot and tossed me into the bay—and you didn't. Next time I hip-lock with a cyclone I hope somebody will put a tag on me and ship me to an asylum for the feeble-minded. My name's McGlory, Joe McGlory, and when I'm to home I hang up my lid in Tucson. Shake, Motor Matt. You sure stack up pretty high with me."

"Glad to know you, McGlory," said Matt, highly edified, giving the youth's hand a cordial pressure. "Is it your custom to take a fall out of every acquaintance you make?"

"Well, it's sort of satisfyin', when you make friends with a galoot, to know which is the best man. It shows you what he's got in him that you can depend on in a pinch, see? I reckon you think I've got everything but the long ears, eh? Don't make a mistake about that, pard. I'm not so foolish as you might think. Tell me something!"

"What?"

"While you've been in 'Frisco have you seen anything of a feller about my heft and height, scar an inch long over his right eyebrow, answerin' to the name of George Lorry?"

Matt shook his head.

"Haven't seen him," he answered. "Are you looking for a fellow answering that description?"

"I am, a heap."

The grin, which seemed almost perpetual on McGlory's face, faded into an earnest expression as he mentioned the lad he was looking for.

"Did you come to this reservation looking for him?" went on Matt.

"Nary, pard." McGlory faced the boy, and waved his hand toward the life-saving station ahead, and to the left of them, on the shore. "I'm mortal fond of boats," he went on. "Kind of queer, that, don't you think, for a galoot that's passed pretty near his whole life in the mines and in the cattle ranges? Anyway, that's me. I can't cross the ferry without gettin' seasick, but, all the same, everything that floats tickles me more than I can tell. I've been down to the life-saving station looking at the surf boat."

"I'm fond of boats myself," said Matt, "especially motor boats. There's something on the ground that must belong to you, McGlory," he added, pointing to the sand near where McGlory had fallen, the first time.

The young cowboy looked at the object, and then recovered it with a whoop. The object was a small, oblong square of pasteboard.

"It's a ticket for the raffle," McGlory explained. "There's two hundred of 'em out, and I've got sixty."

"Raffle?" queried Matt.

"Sure. A little old motor launch is goin' to be raffled off, over at Tiburon, this afternoon. Say, that boat's a streak! She can show her heels to anythin' in San Francisco Bay. Speak to me about that,

will you! I've got sixty chances out of two hundred for baggin' her. Come over with me to the raffle, pard. I've cottoned to you, and you're my style from the ground up. What say?"

"Can you run a motor launch?" asked Matt.

"Don't know the first thing about it."

"What do you want with such a boat, then, if it makes you seasick to ride on the water, and if you don't know how to run a motor?"

"Shucks! Whenever I get a notion I play it up strong, no matter whether there's any reason in it or not. That's Joe McGlory from spurs to headpiece, and everybody in Tucson will tell you the same. Are you with me, Matt? If you are, we'll slide back through the reservation, and jump the cars."

Matt had already conceived a liking for young McGlory. There was something mysterious about him, and a mystery is always attractive.

A few moments later the king of the motor boys was strolling along the old board walk between the big Presidio barracks and the row of officers' houses, side by side with his new friend.

New friends and new fortunes, ran his thoughts. How were they to turn out, and what were they to be?

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE RAFFLE.

"There she is, Matt; and it's apples to ashes she's the fastest thing that floats. Why, she can run like a scared coyote makin' for home and mother. I've seen her perform, pard, and when she goes any place she arrives just before she starts. Speak to me about that, please. Squint at her good and hard, and tell me what you think."

Motor Matt and Joe McGlory had eaten their dinner at a restaurant in Market Street, and had caught the one-o'clock boat across the bay to Tiburon. It was now a quarter to two, and they were standing on a small wharf, not far from the ferry landing, looking down on a trim little boat. There were about a dozen others, men and boys, lounging on the wharf. The raffle was to come off at two, and most of the idlers, presumably, had bought tickets, and were waiting to "put their fortune to the touch."

The boat was an eighteen-footer, some three feet beam, and looked as though she could "git up and git" if enough ginger were thrown into her propeller. She was in charge of a boy who had let her drift out to the end of a ten-foot painter.

"Pull her in," called Matt to the boy. "I'd like to look at her engine."

The boy laid hold of the painter, and drew the boat up alongside the wharf. Matt dropped into her, and lifted one side of the hinged hood that protected the motor.

He found that the engine consisted of two horizontal opposed cylinders, and was as neat, simple, and compact a marine motor as any he had ever seen. The gasoline tank was in the nose of the boat.

"Ten horse power," mused Matt.

"You've struck it," said the boy.

After a five-minute examination the only fault Matt had to find with the machinery lay in the reversing gear. The brake band was not properly adjusted, but was set so that it dragged on the drum, which could hardly fail to result in a reduction of speed.

When Matt climbed up on the wharf again McGlory met him with an eager question as to what he thought of the *Sprite*, which was the name of the little craft.

"She's all right," answered Matt, "and ought to run like a singed cat."

"Worth a couple of hundred plunks?"

"The motor alone is worth a hundred and fifty, and seems to be as good as new."

"Whoop!" exulted McGlory. "Somebody's going to get her for a cartwheel—one single, solitary piece of the denomination of eight bits. Mebby it's me? *Quien sabe?*"

"There were two hundred tickets, you say, and they were sold at a dollar each?"

"Keno, correct, and then some."

"And you have sixty tickets, Joe?"

"Again your bean is on the right number, pard."

"Well, if you get the boat she will have cost you sixty dollars."

"But it's only one ticket out of the sixty that wins her, Matt. Fifty-nine plunks are squandered, and it's one big dollar that pulls her down to me. I'd have bought more, if I'd had the *dinero*."

"I might take a chance myself," observed Matt, "although I haven' any more use for a motor

launch here in 'Frisco than has a stray cowboy by the name of McGlory."

"Nary, you won't, Matt," said McGlory. "Tickets are all gone."

"What in the world are you going to do with the craft if you win her?"

"I can't tell how nervous you make me, wanting a reason for every blooming thing. The notion hit me plumb between the eyes, Matt, and that's all there is to it. But if I can't use the *Sprite* I can sell her, can't I? And if I did want to go cruising, I've got you to run her for me! Oh, speak to me about that. But," and here McGlory's face fell, "I'm not going to get her. Johnny Hardluck has been running neck and neck with me ever since I was knee-high to a clump of cactus. If I'd have bought a hundred and ninety-nine tickets, the pasteboard I failed to corral would be the one that bobbed up when the wheel stopped runnin'. That's me, but I'm so plumb locoed that I keep trying to bust this hard-luck blockade. What's that—a twenty-dollar gold piece?"

Matt had stooped down while McGlory was talking, and picked up a flat object from the ground in front of him.

"A baggage check," answered Matt. "Some of the crowd here must have dropped it. If we could find——"

Just then, a man appeared carrying his derby hat in his hand. The hat was filled with numbered slips. [Pg 4]

"Gents," called the man, "this here drawin' for the *Sprite* is now a-goin' to take place. Somebody's a-goin' to get that little streak o' greased lightnin' for a dollar. She's a good boat, an' wouldn't be sold for twice two hundred if her owner hadn't tumbled into a stretch of hard luck. She's done her mile in four minutes, the *Sprite* has, right here in the bay. This here hat is filled with slips o' paper numbered from one to two hundred, like the tickets. One of 'em's goin' to be drawn by the kid, who'll be blindfolded for the occasion. The lucky number the kid first pulls from the hat takes the boat."

Cheers from the assembled crowd greeted the "kid" as he climbed out of the boat and allowed a handkerchief to be tied over his eyes. Then, with much formality, and while the breathless crowd watched, the youngster's grimy hand went into the hat and pushed around wrist-deep among the slips.

"If the feller that gets the boat lives over in 'Frisco," pursued the man, while the boy dallied provokingly with the slips, "he won't have to wait for the next boat back. All he's got to do is to jump into the *Sprite*, head her where he wants to go, and cut loose. She's full o' oil and gasoline, an' could go from here to Vallejo without takin' on any more."

The boy's hand lifted from the hat and held up a slip.

"Number seventy-three," read the man; "number seventy-three is the lucky ticket, an' gets the *Sprite*. Who's got number seventy-three?"

"Stung again!" said McGlory gloomily, taking a handful of tickets from his pocket and tossing them into the air. "I might just as well say moo and chase myself. Sixty *pesos* gone where the woodbine twineth, and McGlory's got another lesson in the way luck's cut him out of her herd. Mebby it's just as well. I've got about as much use for a motor launch as a yaller dog for the tin can tied to the end of his tail, but the notion that I wanted the thing sure hit me hard."

"You ought to put a curb on those notions of yours, Joe," said Matt. "They seem to be pretty expensive."

"Shucks! Well, I get a couple o' square miles of fun nursing the notions along, anyways. It's hoping for things that makes a feller feel good; he never steps so high, wide, and handsome after he gets 'em. Now——"

Just here there came an excited chirp, followed by a shrill cackle of joy. A Chinese boy, not more than fifteen or sixteen, broke through the disappointed throng of whites, his queue flying, and his blue silk blouse fluttering.

"My gottee! Hoop-a-la! My ticket him seventy-tee! My gottee chug-chug boatee."

"Happy days!" scowled McGlory, his eyes on the young Chinaman. "If that washee-washee yaller mug hasn't pulled down the prize I'm a sick Injun. And here's me with sixty tickets, and him with only *one*! Speak to me about that! What sort of a low-down thing is luck, anyway, to pass up a respectable white, with sixty chances, and dump that boat onto a Chink with only one! Sufferin' sister! Let's go some place, Matt, where we can be away from the crowd and by ourselves. I'm in a mood for reflection—like old Jack Bisbee was when the government mule kicked at him and set off a box of dynamite. I've got it in the neck, as per usual, and I want to say things to myself."

"Wait a minute, Joe," returned Matt. "Let's watch the Chinaman."

The man who had "bossed" the drawing examined the Chinaman's ticket.

"It's seventy-three, all right," he remarked. "Where you gettee, Charley?"

"Melican man no gottee dol pay fo' laundry," the Celestial answered; "him givee China boy ticket."

"It was sure a good play for you. There's your boat. Take her."

The yellow boy ran down to the edge of the wharf, dancing around in his wooden shoes, and crooning ecstatically to himself.

"My gottee boat, my gottee boat! Hoop-a-la! Where row sticks?" he demanded, turning to the man who had been in charge of the raffle.

"That's a motor boat, Charley," grinned the man. "You don't need any row sticks."

The yellow boy, still chattering to himself, slipped from the wharf into the boat. One of the men, alive to the humor of the situation, pulled the painter off the post and threw it into the craft after him.

"How you makee lun?" inquired the new owner of the *Sprite*, taking his seat at the steering wheel.

The bystanders began nudging each other in the ribs. There was a delightful prospect ahead of them, in watching this guileless Celestial, who knew nothing about motors, trying to run a motor boat.

Half a dozen voices called down directions for switching on the spark, starting the flow of gasoline, and getting the engine to going.

"He'll get into trouble," cried Matt, pushing his way through the crowd.

"What's the diff?" guffawed a bleary-eyed individual, with a husky laugh. "It's only a chink, anyhow."

Matt paid no attention to this remark.

"You'd better look out, Charley," he called to the Chinaman.

"My gottee, you no gottee," the yellow boy answered. "You no savvy China boy's pidgin; him savvy plenty fine. Hoop-a-la!"

The motor began to pop, and then to settle down into a steady hum. The China boy was fairly palpitating with excitement. Grabbing at a lever, he threw the power into the propeller and the *Sprite* jumped ahead along the wharf, rubbing her gunwale against the planks. Frantically the Celestial yanked at the steering wheel. The *Sprite* turned her nose into the wharf and tried to climb out of the water.

"She ain't no bubble wagon, chink!" roared the delighted crowd; "don't bring her ashore!"

"Turn the wheel the other way!" shouted some one else. "If we can head the rat-eater right, he'll go plumb through the Golden Gate to China."

In the confusion of yells, the yellow boy caught the suggestion and whirled the wheel the other way. In answer to this sudden twist of the helm, the boat made a hair-raising turn, going over so far that she almost showed her garboard strake, then she flung away like a race horse.

A group of three piles arose out of the water, half a cable's length from the wharf. The *Sprite* caught them a glancing blow. There was a terrific jolt, and those on the landing had a glimpse of a Chinaman in the air, his hat and sandals flying in three different directions. He came down headfirst in fifteen feet of water, while the *Sprite* sheered away from the piles and struck a bee line for Sausalito.

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Matt, seeing that disaster was sure to happen, had jumped into a rowboat, and was bending to the oars. There might be fun in baiting a Chinaman in that way, but he could not see it.

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## CHAPTER III.

### PING PONG OBJECTS.

Motor Matt's first intention was to fish the China boy out of the water. He had barely started in the lad's direction, however, when he saw McGlory teetering on the edge of the wharf and throwing a rope.

"Whoosh!" gulped the China boy, as he bobbed to the surface and laid hold of the rope. "No likee boatee! My gottee, no wantee. Whoosh!"

Seeing that the lad was as good as rescued, Matt turned his attention to the runaway launch. By some freak of the steering gear the boat was cutting away in a straight line.

The rowboat Matt had secured for the occasion had been tied well to the south of the piles into which the Chinese had run the *Sprite*. The launch, describing a turn before she struck into a straightaway course, would have to pass a point directly abreast of Matt.

By quick work with the oars he could reach the point in time to lay hold of the launch.

Under his strong arms the rowboat leaped out across the water, and then, with a quick push on one oar and an equally quick pull on the other, the boat was laid broadside on to the course the runaway *Sprite* was taking.

Not a second too soon was this accomplished. Hardly had Matt dropped the oars when the *Sprite* came plunging up beside him.

Leaning out over the side of the rowboat, he grabbed the gunwale of the *Sprite*. Both boats were hauled together, and the rowboat was towed along at a fierce clip—but only for a moment.

Out of one boat and into the other Matt scrambled, deftly avoiding the swamping of either craft.

A minute later he was at the steering wheel and the levers, and had slowed down and turned the *Sprite* back.

Yells and cheers greeted his successful manœuvre; and when he regained the wharf, towing the rowboat, a dozen willing hands reached down to catch and secure the painters.

"A dandy piece of work, you hear *me!*" bellowed one of the crowd.

"You didn't expect Motor Matt to play lame duck while pullin' off a trick like that, did you?" came the voice of McGlory. "Shucks! that was as easy for him as sitting in at grub pile."

"Say," cried the bleary-eyed person, "is he the young thunderbolt as brought that submarine around from the Atlantic?"

"He's the chap."

This piece of information caused the crowd to develop a tremendous amount of interest in the king of the motor boys—more interest than he cared to claim.

"Where's the Chinaman, Joe?" he asked, with difficulty extricating himself from the crowd, and making his way to McGlory's side.

"Right here, Matt," answered the cowboy, leading the way to a pile of old timber on which the dejected Celestial was sitting. "He ain't feelin' quite as chipper as he was a spell ago. 'Melican man's boatee didn't set well, and he's got a bad attack of the blues."

"Hello, Charley!" exclaimed Matt, leaning forward and slapping the yellow boy on his wet shoulder. "Where do you want that boat? I'll take it across the bay for you if that's where you want it to go."

"No wantee," was the doleful reply. "Him debble boat; go sizz-sizz-sizzle, mebbly so sendee China boy topside."

"But you've won it, and it's yours."

"No wantee," was the decided response. "My givee you fi' dol you takee."

McGlory exploded a laugh and fell down the timbers.

"Speak to me about that, will you?" he gasped. "He's willing to give you five dollars, Matt, to take the boat off his hands."

The bleary-eyed man pushed closer.

"See here, chink," said he, "don't you be a fool jest because you got a chanst. What's the use of givin' a feller money to take the boat? I'll give you a ten-dollar bill for it, if that's the way you feel."

McGlory pulled himself off the pile of timber and stepped in front of the man.

"I wonder if you wouldn't?" he scoffed.

"What's it to you, anyhow?" growled the man. "Who give you any right to butt in? If the chink wants to sell the boat I got a right to buy it."

"You ain't got a right to rob him, howsumever, and I'm not going to loaf around with my hands in my pockets and see you do it."

"Blather! What's a chink, anyhow?"

"A chap's got to be treated square," spoke up Matt, "no matter whether his skin's white, black, or yellow."

"Look here, Charley," persisted the man, "I'll give you fifty cold dollars for that boat."

"I'll give him seventy-five," put in another man. "If the launch is going at a bargain I might as well hand over a bid. What do you say, Charley?"

The China boy's little eyes began to snap and sparkle as the idea of profit drifted through his head.

"Let them bid, Charley," said Matt. "I'll give you ten dollars more than the highest bid they make."

This headed off any further attempt to get the better of the Chinaman. After lingering in the vicinity for a few minutes, the last of the crowd departed in the direction of the ferry house.

"You takee boat," said the Chinaman to Matt. "You ketchee, you takee. Huh?"

"For how much?" queried Matt. "I haven't any use for the craft, Charley, and I was merely bidding to keep those other fellows from robbing you."

"Wisht I had some money," muttered McGlory. "I'll get a letter from Tucson in a day or two, and I reckon it'll have a wad of *dinero* in it for me. Lend me enough to buy that boat, Matt, and I'll fork over as soon as I make the raise."

"I'd be glad to lend you money, Joe, for anything but that," answered Matt. "You don't need the *Sprite* any more than I do, so, if I don't lend you any funds you can't buy the boat."

"That's just like a hired man, Matt, and not like a real pard," mumbled McGlory. "But you're doing the right thing, at that."

"Me allee same Ping Pong," piped up the Celestial, picking up the slack of his kimono and [Pg 6]



wringing the water out of it. "Ah Choo makee lun launly, fire Ping Pong, you savvy? Whoosh! My no gottee job allee mo'."

"That's rough," commiserated the cowboy, with a wink in Matt's direction. "Little Ping Pong here worked for Ah Choo, and the old sneeze pulled the pin on him. What was that for, Ping?"

"My takee ticket flom 'Melican man fol washee-washee," explained the China boy. "Ah Choo no likee; him tellee Ping Pong makee skip, nevel come back allee mo'."

"Listen to that!" went on McGlory. "A flat-faced swatty owin' Ah Choo a dollar for the week's wash, blows into the laundry emporium and trades a ticket on the raffle with Ping Pong here for the amount of his debt. When Ah Choo hears the particulars, he ditches Ping. Ping comes over to Tiburon, wins the boat, and tries to make it do a handspring over a clump of piles. Between you and me, Matt, we pull him out of the briny and save the boat, and here he is, worryin' because he's out of a job and never thinking about the eighty-five *pesos* that are bound to drop into his yellow palms!"

"China boy workee fo' you," chirped Ping Pong, reaching out to grab Matt's hand. "You takee boat, givvee Ping Pong job."

"There's your chance," grinned McGlory. "Take on the chink, Matt, and you corral the boat. It's no rhinecaboo he's running in, either. He means every word of it."

Matt's eyes wandered in the direction of the ferry house.

"The next boat is about to leave," said he hurriedly. "You take Ping and go on the boat, Joe, and I'll follow you with the *Sprite*. You'll find me on the water front near the foot of Clay Street. When we get back there we'll find some way out of this difficulty. I haven't any more use for the Chinaman than I have for the boat, but I should think we could sell the boat for somewhere near what she's worth and then turn the proceeds over to Ping. That ought to keep him going until he finds a job that suits him."

"Keno!" agreed McGlory, grabbing the Celestial by the arm. "Come on, Ping, and we'll strike a bee line for the ferry."

As they hurried off, Motor Matt returned to the landing and to the *Sprite*. He was only a few moments casting off and starting across the bay.

Destiny was lying in wait for him. Fate knows her business, and never juggles events into such a state as they were then without having a well-defined object in view.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### ANOTHER RESCUE.

Matt fell in behind the big ferryboat as she moved out of the slip and churned up the water in the direction of San Francisco. Drawing back far enough to be clear of the steamer's troubled wake, he jogged along, and tried out the *Sprite* with various manœuvres calculated to test her motor and her rough-weather qualities.

A keen delight ran tingling through every nerve as he handled the steering wheel and manipulated the levers. The engine worked perfectly; and, by flinging the little craft ahead into the rough water thrown up by the steamer, he was surprised and delighted at the easy work she made of the big waves.

For a while, McGlory and Ping grouped themselves aft and watched him. Every now and then the cowboy would wave his hat and shout something which the distance between the boats rendered indistinguishable to Matt.

A tug came towing a two-masted ship in from the Gate. Matt allowed the *Sprite* to fall off, so that the tug and its tow would pass between him and the ferryboat. As he headed westward in order to round the stern of the sailing ship, Matt became suddenly aware that sailors were running about the deck of the towed vessel, shouting back and forth, and some of them hurrying to pick up coils of rope. Abruptly the excitement ceased. The sailors dropped their ropes, and two or three of them ran up on the poop deck, waved their hands to Matt, and pointed southward, along the track of the ferryboat.

Matt could not hear what the sailors shouted to him, but from their gestures he knew there was something demanding his attention on the other side of their vessel. As the schooner gurgled and lurched past, Matt saw a human form bobbing about in the water, and he also saw that the ferryboat was in the act of putting about.

Waving a reassuring hand to the captain of the boat, Matt forced the *Sprite* to her best speed, and laid a direct course toward the struggling form. The captain of the ferryboat, no doubt assuming that the launch would easily effect a rescue, signaled his wheelman to keep on across the bay.

As Matt steadily diminished the distance that separated him from the form in the water, the form suddenly vanished. With his eyes on the spot where it had gone down, the young motorist was just making ready to shut off the power and dive overboard when the form once more shot to the surface.

"Keep afloat!" shouted Matt encouragingly, "I'm almost alongside."

It was a young fellow, Matt could see that, and there was despair in his face as he turned his head in response to the call.

He tried to say something, but the words were lost in a watery gurgle. His arms were working feebly, and it was evident that he was nearly at the last gasp.

Coaxing the last ounce of speed out of the *Sprite*, Matt laid her bow within a foot of the youth, then swiftly shifted the wheel in order to bring the side of the launch as close as possible.

Hanging to the wheel with one hand, Matt leaned outward and downward, grabbing the collar of the youth's sweater with his disengaged hand.

"Steady!" cried Motor Matt; "you'll be all right in a minute."

Then, with a heave that caused the little boat to dip at a dangerous angle, he hoisted the young fellow aboard and dropped him splashing against the stern thwarts.

There was plenty of life in him, and Matt felt, just then, that the boat required more attention than he did. After getting the *Sprite* back on her proper course, Matt slowed her speed and looked around.

The young fellow was sitting up in the bottom of the boat, leaning back against the rear thwarts. He was about Matt's own age, his hands were slender and white, and his sweater, trousers, and shoes were of the most expensive material. [Pg 7]

"Did you ship much water?" asked Matt.

"Not much," was the answer.

"Fall off the boat?"

"Yes."

The youth did not seem inclined to go into particulars. When he answered Matt's question, he leaned over the gunwale to peer around Matt and get a look at the ferryboat.

"She's going right on," he said, as though to himself; "she won't stop to take me aboard."

"It won't be necessary for the ferryboat to stop," spoke up Matt. "I've got you aboard, and that's enough."

The youth started, stared, and lifted one hand tremblingly to his head.

"How did you happen to drop overboard?" inquired Matt.

"I—I don't know," was the indefinite rejoinder. "I just happened to, that's all. Where are you going?"

"To San Francisco—where you must have been going."

"Can't you put about and take me to Sausalito?"

The request surprised Motor Matt.

"Changed your mind about going to 'Frisco?"

"I don't want to go there. I want to go to Sausalito. It don't make any difference to you where you land me, does it?"

There was an arrogant, domineering air about the youth, even in his present half-demoralized condition, that struck the wrong kind of note in Matt's ears.

"It just happens," returned Matt, "that I'm to meet a friend at the foot of Clay Street, and he'll probably be waiting for me when I get there. I don't see how it makes very much difference to you, when it's certain you must have been going to the city when you dropped off the ferryboat."

"Well," was the ungracious response, "it does make a difference to me—a whole lot of difference. Will you take me to Sausalito after you meet your friend?"

"I guess the ferryboat can do that for you," answered Matt stiffly.

The strange youth had not had a word of thanks to say to his rescuer, on the contrary, he was acting as churlish as possible in the circumstances.

"I'm in a nice fix to ride on a ferryboat," grumbled the young fellow, looking down at his soggy clothing and his water-logged shoes.

"What's your name?" asked Matt.

"What do you want to know that for?"

"Curiosity," was the cool response. "I'd like to chalk it up in my memory as belonging to a young chap who couldn't even be civil to the fellow who saved him from drowning."

A tinge of color ran through the youth's pale face.

"The captain of the ferryboat would have saved me, if you hadn't," said he.

"He couldn't have got there in time. You were about to sink as I grabbed you."

There was a silence, broken at last by the youth.

"My name's Thompson," said he, "and I live in Sausalito."

"You got on the boat at Tiburon?"

Thompson was recovering his normal condition by swift degrees. He flashed a strange look of suspicion at Matt.

"Well, yes," he answered. "I've been staying there for a while; but I live in Sausalito. Give me a cigarette."

"You've come to the wrong shop for cigarettes, Thompson. I'm beginning to understand why you couldn't keep yourself afloat in the water better than you did—too many paper pipes. They play hob with a fellow's endurance."

The *Sprite*, by that time, was abreast of the docks, and off the unsavory quarter known as the "Barbary Coast."

Thompson paid little attention to Matt's remarks, but fixed his eyes gloomily on the shipping as they glided past.

There was something at the bottom of Thompson's mind, and Matt wondered what it could be.

"I suppose," Thompson continued, tiring of looking at the ships and the sweating stevedores, "that it's a lucky thing for me you happened to be around to pick me up."

"You might call it that," returned Matt dryly.

He had his back to his passenger, so that he might pick a berth for the *Sprite* somewhere in the vicinity of the foot of Clay Street. When he spoke he did not look around.

"Well, I'm obliged to you," proceeded Thompson. "I guess you needn't take me to Sausalito, after all. I'll get out and go to a hotel. There's a lot of hotels on the 'Front.'"

"Stay away from the hotels on the 'Front,' Thompson; that's my advice to you. They're not the right sort of place for a fellow like you to stop, even for a short time."

"I guess I can take care of myself," was the haughty rejoinder.

"I guess you think you can, Thompson. You seem to have a pretty large opinion of yourself."

"Are you trying to insult me?"

"Great spark plugs, no! Why should I want to do that?"

"I don't like the way you talk, that's all. You act as though you didn't believe what I said."

"That's where your imagination is working overtime. What is it to me, one way or the other, whether you're telling the truth or not?"

Matt saw the berth he was looking for, and turned the *Sprite* into the slip. Two minutes later he was alongside the dock, and had his painter fastened to a post. As he faced about, after making the painter secure, he saw that Thompson had gained the dock, and was starting off toward the street, his feet sluicing around in his wet shoes, and his trousers slapping about his legs as he walked.

He was intending to leave without any further talk with Matt, and the latter leaned against a post and watched him with half-humorous, half-wondering eyes.

Before he reached the street, however, McGlory and Ping Pong dodged around the end of a loaded dray and came face to face with him.

McGlory stopped short, and stared. So did Thompson. Then McGlory jumped forward with a whoop, countered the half-hearted blow Thompson aimed at him, and grabbed him around the waist.

"Sufferin' Joseph!" cried McGlory, "if it ain't Cousin George! Speak to me about that, will you? Cousin George Lorry, that I've been bushwhackin' all over 'Frisco to find! Easy, George! You couldn't get away from me in a thousand years, and you know it. Whoop-ee, Matt! Come this way, and come a-running!"

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## CHAPTER V.

[Pg 8]

### AN ODD TANGLE.

In a flash Matt recalled what McGlory had told him among the sand dunes beyond the Presidio barracks. He had described a fellow, about his own heft and height, whom he named as George Lorry. Could it be that Matt had picked up the very chap McGlory was looking for? And McGlory had referred to him as his cousin!

Matt hurried forward to where the so-called Thompson was struggling to get away from the cowboy.

"Hands off of me, McGlory!" panted the bedraggled youth. "You haven't any right to lay a finger on me, and you know it!"

"I haven't, eh?" growled McGlory. "Well, you just try to bolt, and I'll give you a run for your alley. You're a pretty specimen, ain't you? Oh, shucks! I'm plumb disgusted with you, and so's everybody else. What do you suppose the folks think, back in Madison?"

There was an exasperated rattle in the other's throat, but words and strength failed him, all at once, and he drooped limply in McGlory's arms.

"He's played out, Joe," said Matt. "Let him sit down for a minute and rest."

"What a mess he's made of this business," muttered McGlory angrily, as he allowed the flabby form he was holding to slip down on the rough cobblestones. "He hasn't as much sense as the law allows, and you can spread your blankets and go to sleep on that."

"You're positive he's the fellow you were looking for, Joe?" inquired Matt.

"Positive? Why, pard, I know him as well as I know my own picture in the looking-glass. See that scar?" and he indicated a thin red line over his cousin's right eyebrow. "I don't need even that to prove who he is," McGlory added.

"He told me his name was Thompson, and that he lived in Sausalito."

"He's liable to talk anything but straight—*now*. Let's get him somewhere to a hotel. Sufferin' sand hills! his folks would throw a fit if they could see him like this. His name's George Lorry, and he lives in Madison, Wisconsin. What's more, he's a cousin of mine, although that's nothing to congratulate myself about." McGlory bent down. "Able to walk, George?"

"Yes," was the sullen rejoinder.

"Any particular place you'd like to be taken?"

"Bixler House, around in Kearney Street. Get a cab."

"Got any money, George?"

Lorry's hands went slowly into his pockets.

"All I had with me is in the bottom of the bay," he answered sulkily.

"I don't think I can dig up enough to pay for a cab, but I reckon it's just as well for us to ride."

"I'll foot the bill," chimed in Matt. "Here, Ping!"

Ping was almost as hard a sight as was Lorry, but he came blandly forward in his bare feet.

"Yasso, Missul Matt," said he.

"Go and get a cab for us, Ping."

"Allee light. My workee fo' you," and he darted away along the street.

"I thought there was something queer about Lorry," remarked Matt.

"It's queerer than you think. Matt," replied McGlory. "The whole yarn, when you go over it from end to end and crossways, is enough to make a feller's hair stand like the fur on a buffalo robe."

Lorry looked up with a scowl.

"How did you know where I was?" he demanded.

"Didn't you buy a ticket to San Francisco?"

"I bought a ticket to Chicago."

"And from there, George, you bought one for here. Think you could fool the wise boys your father had scramblin' around Chicago lookin' you up? I got a telegram at Tucson asking me to hustle for 'Frisco, and do what I could to locate you. I've been in this burg for a week, and had just about made up my mind you'd taken a boat for somewhere on t'other side of the Pacific. And to think you were riding from Tiburon on the same craft that was carrying me!"

"I saw you on the boat, and I jumped overboard to get away from you."

McGlory went up into the air and came down with an astounded look at Matt.

"Say something about that!" he gasped. "Sufferin' Hottentots, Matt, did you hear him? He jumped overboard to get away from his cousin, Joe McGlory! Don't tell me, George!" he growled to Lorry. "You're not such a fool as that comes to. We're out of the same family, mind, and I'd hate to think it."

"You—you don't know everything," faltered Lorry.

"Keno, I don't; but I'm goin' to know everything, George Lorry, before we part company."

All this, of course, was more or less Greek to Motor Matt. It was clear enough that George Lorry had come of good stock, and equally clear that he had been pampered and spoiled. As for the rest of it, Matt was completely in the dark.

Just at that moment the cab arrived. As it drew up, Ping Pong threw open the door and jumped out.

"My gottee, Missul Matt!" he chirruped. "My workee fo' you, huh?"

"For a while, yes, Ping," Matt answered, unable just then to think of any other satisfactory method for dealing with the Chinaman. "Stay here and watch the boat till I come back. Savvy?"

"Can do," crowed Ping Pong, "you bettee. My workee fo' Motol Matt. Hoop-a-la!"

The Chinese boy seemed as delighted as he had been over in Tiburon, when ticket number 73 won the boat. He had insisted on working for Matt, and the pleasant feeling that comes with a job brought a grin to his face and satisfaction to his soul.

Matt, McGlory, and Lorry loaded themselves into the cab, and were driven away in the direction of Kearney Street.

"Let's get right down to cases, George," said the cowboy when they were well on their way. "First off, just understand that I'm your friend, that I'm representin' the folks back in Madison, and that I haven't trailed you to get back those ten thousand plunks."

With an effort, Lorry braced back in his seat and pushed the straggling hair out of his eyes.

"I didn't know what you were after, McGlory," he answered; "but I wasn't going to be bagged by *you*. When I'm ready to go home I'm ready, and not before."

"Oh, you ain't?" grunted the cowboy sarcastically.

"That's flat. The folks haven't treated me right, and they know it. They——"

"Oh, cut that out," growled McGlory wearily. "Haven't you got any sense, or are you just half fake and half false alarm? The trouble with Uncle Dan and Aunt Mollie is that they've done a heap too much for you. If you'd had to knock about the mines and cattle ranges, same as me, earnin' your grub by hard knocks, I reckon you'd see things a lot different."

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"I know my own business," snapped Lorry. "You haven't been in Madison for a year, Joe McGlory, and you don't know how the old man has been rubbing my fur the wrong way. I told him I wouldn't stand for it—and I didn't."

"You're a pill!" snorted McGlory, in a temper.

"What's more," pursued Lorry, in a temper that matched his cousin's, "I'm not going to take any insolence from you. You're nothing but a rowdy, anyhow. Your father was a rowdy——"

McGlory leaned over and dropped a hard hand on Lorry's knee.

"That'll do you, my buck," said he, his low voice ringing like steel. "While my father was alive he had my respect, and I did what he told me to. What's more, he steered me plumb right. He didn't have the money your father had, but that wasn't his fault. As for the rest, just remember that my mother was your mother's sister. Whenever I go to that hill, just out of Tucson, where those two mounds are heaped up, side by side, I can stand between 'em and say, with a clear conscience, that I'm livin' square. In my place, George Lorry, you couldn't do that, and you know it."

McGlory's eyes flashed, and, on the instant, the liking Matt had already conceived for the cowboy intensified into a fast and enduring friendship. Joe McGlory had character, and the right kind of an outlook upon life.

At that moment the cab came to a halt.

"Here's the place," announced McGlory, pushing open the door, "and a fine old honkatonk it is. I've been to this place huntin' for you. Wonder why I didn't find you?"

"Probably," was the sarcastic comment of Lorry, "you didn't ask for Thompson."

Matt paid the driver of the cab, and then followed McGlory and his cousin into the dilapidated building. A frowsy-looking clerk bestirred himself and leaned over the counter, his curious gaze centring on Lorry.

"Gee Christopher!" he exclaimed, "is that you, Mr. Thompson?"

"Give me the key to my room," snarled Lorry.

The key was handed over, and Lorry led the way out of the room and up a flight of narrow stairs. A hall was traversed, and near the end of it Lorry unlocked a door, and bolted across the threshold. McGlory rushed after him, and when Matt stepped into the bare little room, the cowboy was jerking a revolver out of his cousin's hand. The drawer of a bureau, at one side of the room, was open.

"Now what do you think!" cried McGlory, whirling away and pushing the revolver into his pocket. "He yanked this pepper box out of that drawer, Matt, and turned it on himself. With all his highfalutin' airs, that cousin o' mine hasn't got the backbone of a jellyfish. Look at him! Did you ever see any one of his age and size with less manliness in his make-up?"

Matt turned and looked at Lorry. The next moment Lorry stumbled to the bed and fell on it at full length, burying his face in the pillow.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE RICH MAN'S SON.

"Blubbering!" muttered McGlory, with a look of profound disgust. "I might overlook his attempt to shake a cartridge into himself, but this baby act is too much for me."

George Lorry was a puzzle to Motor Matt. And all Matt had overheard between McGlory and Lorry had only made the puzzle more perplexing.

"Don't be too hard on him, Joe," said Matt. "There must be something pretty serious at the bottom of this or Lorry wouldn't have tried to shoot himself."

"*Did* he try," asked McGlory darkly, "or was it only a bluff?"

"According to his story, he jumped off the ferryboat to get away from you. That alone proves he was desperate."

"Maybe he was talking with two tongues when he said that."

Matt stepped over to the side of the room.

"Why did he leave Madison, Joe?" he asked in a low voice, as soon as McGlory had joined him.

"He got to be more than Uncle Dan could handle. You see, pard, Uncle Dan's money runs up into seven figures, and George corralled the notion that whenever he wanted anything all he had to do was to order it sent up to the house. He joined a yacht club, and wanted to put a motor boat in a race, so what does he do but order a five-thousand-dollar racer, and drew on dad. Dad lands on the proposition with both feet, and little George over there is so mad he sulks in his room for a week, then he chases himself out of the house, and trots a heat with a swift bunch of thoroughbreds, who spend their time gamblin' and drinkin'. George does that, you know, just to show how mad he is; but dad's dander is up good and plenty, and he vows he'll send George to a military academy, where they'll straighten the kinks out of him or else break him in two. George was more worked up over the military school than he was over the racing boat, so he opens dad's safe one night, takes out ten thousand in cold cash, and slips away from Madison between two days.

"Uncle Dan is a pretty good sort of fellow, although he never did anything for the McGlorys—not so you could notice it. He writes me all this that I've been tellin' you, Matt, and says that, if I see anything of George, will I please rope down, and tie him, and wire. The day after I get the letter, along comes a telegram saying George went to Chicago and bought a ticket for 'Frisco, and asking me to hit only the high places between Tucson and the Golden Gate. I went, and I've been here a week, walkin' my boot soles off, and askin' questions till I was blue in the face—but nothing doing. I got the notion that George had used his ten thousand for a trip to furrin parts, and so I was just beginning to cut loose on my own account and enjoy the boats when you and I came together, and this business of the *Sprite* was pushed into the grooves. If it hadn't been for you and the *Sprite*, pard, I'd never have found George. Now that I have found him, what am I going to do with him? Speak to me about that. I'd like to unload a little of the responsibility onto you."

"He's spoiled," observed Matt, after a little reflection; "and that's a cinch."

"Oh, no, he ain't spoiled!" scoffed McGlory. "He's just mildewed with conceit and cobwebbed with ideas of his own importance. Back of all that, he's got about as much s-a-n-d as a gopher. He's over there now leaking great big briny tears like a Piute squaw who's been caught stealin' a string of glass beads. Wonder if he thinks he can melt *me*?"

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McGlory's black eyes glittered as they wandered to the heaving form on the bed.

"You'd think he was seven instead of seventeen," he grunted.

"There may be something in him, Joe," suggested Matt, "for all that."

"There ain't anything in him worth while—you couldn't find it with a mikerscope."

"Let's give him a chance, anyhow."

"Chance? I'm willing. But what's the number? And how you going to play it?"

"Your first move is to get hold of that ten thousand. He doesn't seem to have it with him, and it may be that he's feeling cut up because he gambled with the money, and lost it. If you can't get the money, then find out where it is. Don't go at him hammer and tongs, but use a little tact."

McGlory grinned.

"Smooth him down with a piece of velvet, eh?" he queried. "Dust him off with a few sweet words, and gently lift him back on the pedestal where he's already stood for more years than have been good for him. Not me, pard. Anyhow, I'm short on tact. You do it."

Matt laughed a little as he looked at the cowboy and listened to him. It was plain that Matt's sympathy for George wasn't appreciated, and that if any diplomacy was used it was Matt who would have to use it.

Without further words Matt walked over to the bed and pulled up a chair.

"George," said he, "we're friends of yours, and we want to help you. Everybody makes a mistake now and then, and you've made a big one, but there's no use fretting about it. That ten thousand is the principal thing. If we can get hold of that, you'll be able to work out of this thing in good shape, and perhaps we can fix it so you can return to Madison and cut a better figure there than when you left the town."

"I don't want to go back to Madison," came the muffled reply from the pillow. "The governor has treated me like a dog, and I've washed my hands of him."

"Suppose we could arrange matters so the governor would treat you better?"

"You can't," snuffled George; "nobody can. The governor's a brute."

"I think we can make your father see things in a different light," went on Matt; "but the first thing to do is to send back that money."

George jammed his head deeper into the pillow.

"I haven't got it," he whispered.

"You must have done a lot of gambling to——"

"No, I didn't. It was stolen from me. The red-whiskered man with a mole on his face took it."

"How was that? Turn over here, George, so we can hear you."

"That's all there is to it," declared George, lifting his face a little so his words were more distinct. "I met him, and Kinky, and Ross on the train. I thought they were nice, sociable fellows; but that's where I made a mistake. They got on the train at Salt Lake City, and when we reached 'Frisco they got me to come to this hotel. The red-whiskered man had business over in Tiburon—I don't know what it was—and he went over there the next day after we reached 'Frisco, and lost his trunk check. They wouldn't let him have the trunk without the check, and he was awfully worked up. Kinky told Red-whiskers that maybe I had swiped the check, and they all seemed to believe it. Anyhow, Red-whiskers said the trunk was worth more'n ten thousand and they made me turn over that money I'd brought from home. Red-whiskers said that when I found the check, or when he proved his property and made the railroad company give up his trunk, he'd give me back the money. I went over to Tiburon, the next day, myself, and when I got back here, Kinky, Ross, and the other fellow had left. I've been going over to Tiburon every day since, but I couldn't find the check or hear anything about it. And I haven't heard anything about Red-whiskers, either. He and his two pals have stolen the money, that's what they've done. I was an easy mark, and—and—what's the good of living, anyhow?"

George jammed his head down into the pillow again.

This strange recital left Matt and McGlory gasping. It was clear that George had fallen into the hands of sharpers, and had been robbed, but there was that baggage check Matt had picked up near the little Tiburon wharf. That looked as though there might be something in the yarn Red-whiskers had told about losing the check.

"Well, speak to me about this!" breathed McGlory. "That check you found, pard, may be the very one this chap with the auburn wind teasers lost! Wouldn't that knock you slabsided? Sufferin' jew's-harps! Why, I never heard anythin' to match it. Fate is workin' you into this game for fair."

Lorry hoisted himself up suddenly on the bed.

"Did you find a trunk check over in Tiburon?" he demanded.

"Yes," replied Matt, and took the flat piece of brass from his pocket.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Lorry. "It would be a big load off my mind if that check could be used for getting back the money. Light the gas, McGlory."

It was falling dark outside, and the cowboy scratched a match and touched the flame to a jet. As soon as the light was going, Lorry took the check in his own hands and looked it over exultantly. Then, abruptly, he jumped for the bed and rushed toward a suit case that lay on a chair.

"What are you going to do, George?" inquired McGlory.

"Get into some dry clothes and then hunt for Red-whiskers. This means a whole lot to me. I'm going to Honolulu, and I need that ten thousand."

"Don't be in a rush, Lorry," said Matt. "Was there just ten thousand in the roll? Didn't you use any of it?"

"Not a cent! I had enough to get me to 'Frisco, and pay a few other expenses, aside from that. And it wasn't a roll; it was a packet with a band around the middle stamped with the name of the Merchants' and Traders' Bank, of Madison. Jupiter, but this is a good clue, and——"

Some one rapped on the door. McGlory answered the summons and found the frowsy-looking clerk and a boy of about nine in the hall. The clerk pushed the boy forward and pointed to Motor Matt.

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"That's him," said the clerk, "an' I'll bet money."

"You Motor Matt?" queried the boy, rushing into the room.

"Yes," answered Matt.

"Den dis here's fer you. Dere's an answer, an' I'll wait fer it."

The boy handed over an envelope. Matt opened the envelope and read the inclosure. A strange light leaped into his gray eyes.

"Who gave you this, my lad?" he asked of the boy.

"Dunno de cove, but he had red lilocks an' a face like er ape."

"Well, I'm not giving him anything till he proves his property, see? You tell him that. Also tell him that I won't meet him in Turk Bremer's Place, but will be at the foot of Clay Street in half an hour. Understand?"

"Sure thing," grinned the boy.

Matt snapped a quarter into the air and the boy grabbed it and made off.

"What's it all about, pard?" asked McGlory.

"Did you tell anybody in Tiburon about my finding that trunk check, Joe?" asked Matt.

"I told the galoot that bossed the raffle."

"Then that explains it," muttered Matt. "Listen."

Thereupon he read the note aloud.

"MOTOR MATT: Several days ago I lost a baggage check somewhere in Tiburon, and a couple of hours ago I was told that you had found one there. It's a cinch it's mine. Give it to the boy; or, if my bare word that it belongs to me isn't enough, then come to Turk Bremer's Place on the "Front" in half an hour and I'll prove property.

JOHN SMITH."

McGlory fell back in his chair. Lorry, with a startled exclamation, grabbed the note out of Matt's hand to look at it for himself.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### A PLAN THAT FAILED.

Motor Matt was as profoundly surprised at the way matters were falling out as were McGlory and Lorry. As McGlory had said, fate seemed to have selected Matt for the particular work of recovering Lorry's money.

"This is luck!" whispered Lorry. "If you can get back that money for me, Motor Matt, I'll give you five dollars."

"Don't strain yourself, George," grinned McGlory.

"I will," declared Lorry. "But you've got to get it back to-night. There's a boat for the Sandwich Islands to-morrow, and that's the one I was planning to take."

"You're not going to emigrate, George," asserted McGlory. "We need you right here in the United States for a spell yet."

Matt gave the cowboy a swift and expressive look.

"I think, Joe," said he, "that Lorry has been dictated to too much. Leave him alone and let him make his plans."

McGlory stared incredulously.

"That's the talk," expanded Lorry, puffing up like an angry tomtit. "I'd been bossed altogether more than was right or necessary. From this on I'm my own master. You've got a little sense, Motor Matt. I give you credit for that, anyhow."

"Thanks," answered Matt, with an irony so slight Lorry let it get past him. "Will you stay right here in this hotel while Joe and I are getting the money for you?"

"Sure, I will! But I want it to-night."

"We'll get it as quick as we can. Red-whiskers, otherwise John Smith, may not have it about him, so it may be some time before we can lay hands on it."

Lorry's face fell at this.

"You'll get it, though, won't you? You've got to get it. Do that for me and I'll give you five dollars apiece."

"Fine!" rumbled McGlory, with a wink at Matt. "If George's generosity ever strikes in it'll bother him worse than the measles. How did Red-whiskers know we were here, pard?"

"Probably he traced us through the *Sprite*," answered Matt. "He found the launch at the foot of Clay Street, and Ping must have heard us tell the cab driver to drive us to the Bixler House. Ping, of course, told the fellow."

"And he sent the boy with a note, knowing it wasn't healthy to come himself!" crowed McGlory, slapping his hands. "The old rooster didn't know how we had tangled up with George—Ping didn't tell him that."

"We haven't much time to work our plan, Joe," said Matt, starting for the door. "You'll stay right here Lorry, until you hear from us?"

"Of course," answered Lorry. "All I want is that money. Get it so I can sail for Honolulu to-morrow."

"We'll do the best we can," replied Matt, as he and McGlory left the room and the hotel.

"You've got me guessing good and plenty, pard," said the cowboy, while he and Matt hurried toward the water front and the foot of Clay Street. "It wouldn't be right to let George pull out for furrin parts."

"Of course not!" answered Matt.

"But you told him——"

"That he had been dictated to too much. You see, Joe, I wanted to reassure him, as much as I could, so he'd be sure and stay at the hotel. After we recover the money we can do with that cousin of yours whatever we think best."

"That's you! Shucks! Now, I reckon, you understand how much tact I've got. But George—say,



ain't he the limit? But he'll not be absent a whole lot at the wind-up, I can promise you that. I'm in this to help Uncle Dan and Aunt Mollie, and you can bet your moccasins that what George wants or don't want won't cut much of a figure in the final scramble. But, tell me: Do things always come your way, like this? As this business opens up more and more, the strangeness of it makes my skin get up and walk over me with cold feet."

"Well," laughed Matt, "just so you don't get 'cold feet' yourself."

McGlory chuckled.

"I come from a country," said he, "where it's too hot for chilblains. But what's the plan?"

"We'll get a policeman," answered Matt, "and have him keep in the background while we're talking with Red-whiskers. As soon as we're sure he's the man we want, we'll signal for the officer to come forward and take him in tow."

"Keno! We'll let the law juggle with Red-whiskers. But wouldn't it have been better to let the law get in its work at Turk Bremer's? There'd be plenty of light there so we could see what's doing." [Pg 12]

"Those dives on the 'Front' are dangerous places, Joe, and it's well for us to leave them alone. As it is, we'd better walk in the middle of the road when we get to Clay Street."

"Surely, surely. I reckon your head's as level as they make 'em. How am I for a pard, anyhow?"

"A One," said Matt heartily.

"Shake!" cried McGlory, and they stopped to seal their friendship with a cordial grip.

When close to the "Front" they encountered a policeman and told him as much as necessary in order to get him to lend a helping hand.

"If we're going to make an arrest," demurred the officer, "we ought to have a warrant."

"There's no time for that, officer," said Matt.

"Well, let me see that note this chap you call Red-whiskers sent by the boy."

Matt passed it over, and the policemen withdrew into the glare of a street lamp to read it.

"This here is pretty good evidence that you're handin' me a straight story," said the officer, returning the note, "but I'm a gopher if I'd help you on such a showing if it wasn't that you're Motor Matt. Your picture was in the papers"—here he gave Matt a swift sizing—"and there's no doubt but you're the fellow. Heave ahead, and don't pay any attention to me. When I'm needed just yell 'Come on!' and I'll be in the game before you can say scat."

Matt and McGlory continued on, taking the middle of the street until they reached the "Front." Here, as they passed along the docks with their masses of shipping, they kept a sharp watch for the man they were seeking. For some distance they followed the docks without success, passing the dozing form of Ping Pong curled up at the foot of the post to which the *Sprite* was moored. Ping did not see them, and they did not let him know they were passing.

"The Chink stacks up pretty well for a heathen," commented McGlory; "and he's bound to go on your pay roll, Matt, whether you want him or not. If he was any——"

"Hist!" warned Matt, his quick eye observing a dark figure emerging from the shadows on the right.

The form came close and halted in front of the two boys, not far from a flickering light. It was the form of a tall man, in a slouch hat and dark, respectable clothes. He had a beaklike nose and red whiskers, but it was too dark for the boys to see the mole mentioned by Lorry. However, there was no doubt about his being the man.

"Motor Matt?" inquired the stranger briefly.

"Yes," replied Matt.

"Well, I'm the man that wants the trunk check. The railroad people won't let me have the trunk unless I pass over that brass tag. Mighty accommodatin' set, I must say."

"Is your name John Smith?"

"Didn't I put that to the note?" demanded the other. "What's that got to do with it, anyhow?"

"Not much, but I'd like to have you tell me where Ross and Kinky are, and——"

The fellow muttered an oath and jumped back. His hand, at the same instant, darted toward his hip pocket.

Matt had mentioned "Ross" and "Kinky" merely to make assurance doubly sure. The man's actions proved that he was one of the three thieves, and that he had come prepared for anything that might develop to his disadvantage.

McGlory, watching Red-whiskers like a hawk, jumped for him and grabbed the hand that was reaching for his hip. Matt likewise jumped forward.

"Come on!" he cried to the officer.

A tramp of running feet was heard—but the sounds came from two directions, from behind the red-whiskered man and also back of Matt and McGlory.

Another moment and Matt saw two figures leaping out of the heavy shadow. One of them came on toward the place where the boys were struggling with Red-whiskers and the other turned

aside and set upon the policeman. Matt heard a scuffle, a sound of angry voices, and then a *thump* as of a savage blow.

Before he could draw a full breath, a heavy fist had struck him in the shoulder and thrown him reeling backward.

"It's a fall!" panted a husky voice. "Cut for it, on the double quick. The launch—it's the only thing for us."

Three figures leaped away along the docks. They were the three men, Red-whiskers, Kinky, and Ross—for, in Matt's mind, it was clear that the two latter had been in hiding, waiting to help their pal if he needed it.

The suggestion about the launch aroused Matt's fears for the *Sprite*. He started toward the place where the launch was moored, but halted when he saw the three men vanishing in another direction.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### A CHASE ACROSS THE BAY.

The suddenness with which the red-whiskered man's accomplices had interfered with Motor Matt's plan, and caused it to fail, was as startling as it was unexpected. Matt, standing back toward the edge of the dock with a thumping pain in his shoulder, felt a spasm of chagrin and disappointment.

McGlory picked himself up, assisted the policeman to his feet, and both came toward Matt. The policeman was rubbing his head, and seemed dazed.

"Sufferin' snakes!" exclaimed McGlory. "I'm trying to figure out what happened. Who were the other two that blew in on us, pard, just as we had everything our own way?"

"They must have been Kinky and Ross," replied Matt.

"Who are they?" demanded the officer.

"Two pals of this red-whiskered man. He probably had them waiting in the background, just as we had you waiting to help us, officer."

"This ain't the last of this!" cried the officer hotly. "Which way did they go?"

Matt indicated the direction. The officer started off at a run, tugging at his pocket.

"Why don't you come along?" he demanded over his shoulder.

"One of them said something about getting away in a launch," returned Matt. "I didn't know but it was a boat that I have here, and I think it's well to stand around and see if they come back."

"I'll see where the scoundrels go, anyhow," said the officer, and vanished at a rapid pace.

[Pg 13]

"Are you hurt, Joe?" inquired Matt.

"My feelin's are badly injured," answered the cowboy. "The rap I got on the block don't count for much, although it was enough to drop me, right where I stood. They're a fine lot, those galoots. I reckon, it's a cinch that they're the chaps we want—and the ones we won't get. George will weep some more when he hears about it."

"Listen!" said Matt.

The exhaust of an engine struck on his ears, faintly but distinctly. It came from somewhere to the south of the place where he and McGlory were standing.

"What is it, pard?" queried the cowboy.

"A boat! Didn't you hear Red-whiskers speak about a launch?"

"Yes, but I reckoned it was the *Sprite* he meant, and that he changed his mind when he saw you hustling to get between him and the boat."

"It wasn't the *Sprite*, but another launch, and— Ah, see that!"

Matt pointed into the darkness to the southward. A light could be seen moving around the end of a slip, gliding across the dark water like a star.

"There they go!" cried McGlory excitedly.

"This way, Joe," called Matt, whirling and running toward the *Sprite*. "Hurry!"

The Chinese boy was still dozing by the post, the noise caused by the recent scrimmage not having been sufficiently loud to disturb him. He was on his feet, however, the instant Matt dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"You Motor Matt?" palpitated Ping. "You wantee—"

"Cast off the rope, Ping," cut in Matt, sliding from the edge of the dock into the boat. "Quick! Get in behind, Joe," he added to McGlory. "We haven't an instant to lose."

"Well, hardly," answered the cowboy, scrambling aboard while Matt started the engine. "Time's plenty scarce for us if we're to overhaul that other boat."

The painter fell into the boat and Ping fell along with it.

"I didn't intend to take you, Ping," said Matt, switching the power into the propeller and turning the nose of the *Sprite* toward the open bay.

"By Klismus," said Ping, with unexpected firmness, "my workee fo' you! Where you makee go, my makee go, allee same. Me plenty fine China boy."

"Got any sand, Ping?" asked McGlory.

"Have got. Fightee allee same like Sam Hill. Whoosh! Plenty big high China boy, allee same Boxer. You watchee, Motol Matt watchee. My workee heap fine fo' Motol Matt. Workee, fightee—him allee same."

While this brief cross-fire was going on between McGlory and Ping, Matt was driving the *Sprite* down the slip for all she was worth. The water slithered up along her sharp bow and flung itself in spray over the crouching forms of the cowboy and the Chinese. The launch, because of the weight aft, was very much down by the stern; but this, by throwing the bow high, helped the boat to slip over the water.

After dropping from the dock into the launch Matt had not seen the moving light until, when he was halfway out of the slip, the little gleam danced across the open space between the outer ends of the two piers.

"Great spark plugs!" muttered Matt, "that's the other boat."

"She's going north!" exclaimed McGlory.

"Which makes it easy for us to pick up her trail and follow. If she had gone south, she might have got away from us."

"She's rippin' along like an express train," murmured the cowboy, watching the light vanish around the end of the pier.

"She's not speedy enough to leave the *Sprite* behind," exulted Matt, his nerves quivering in unison with the little tremors the humming cylinders sent through the boat.

"If those tin horns see us, pard—"

"They won't. We're not carrying any lights, and I'm surprised to see them with one."

"Mebby they can hear us if they can't see us."

"We'll have to drop behind far enough so they won't hear us. Their own boat makes twice as much noise as the *Sprite*, and that will drown the throb of our exhaust and the whir of the cylinders."

Just then the *Sprite* dashed out of the black maw of the slip, wheeled in a foamy arc and turned her nose northward. There were many lights in the bay—red and green side lamps and white masthead lights, and others, but Matt was not confused. The white gleam straight to northward was the one he knew he should follow.

A lightish streak surged in the wake of the other launch. Matt could not make out much about the craft except that she was considerably larger than the *Sprite* and had a canvas or wooden canopy over the cockpit.

But the *Sprite* was the faster boat. Matt, studying the distance that separated the *Sprite* from the launch ahead, found it necessary to choke down the motor in order to keep from overhauling the three thieves.

"I thought you wanted to catch them," complained McGlory, conscious of the lessening speed.

"What good would it do for us to overhaul them out in the bay?" queried Matt, humping over the wheel and speaking without turning his head. "There are three of the scoundrels, and they're armed and would probably be only too glad to have us tackle them. If Red-whiskers could lay me by the heels, you know, he'd get his trunk check."

"Correct, pard. It wouldn't do to run alongside of them in the bay. But what're you thinking of?"

"We're just shadowing them to find out where they go. When we discover that, we'll hold a council and decide what's to be done next."

"Waugh!" sputtered McGlory. "Queerest ever that I can't ride on the water without getting a gone feeling in the pit of my stomach."

"Have you got it now, Joe?"

"Awful. If I had any supper aboard, I reckon I'd unload. And I can go through all kinds of rough weather on a buckin' bronk! No matter how much a bronk pitches, or bucks, it never makes me squeamish—but boats! Well, the minute I get into one I begin to have cramps. Funny, ain't it? They got a fake boat in a picture gallery in Tucson, and if a galoot wants a tin type of himself, at sea, he gets into the fake boat and lets the camera snap. Honest to Mack, every time I go to that place for a tin type I get seasick."

Matt laughed.

"And yet you like boats!" he exclaimed.

"Achin' for 'em all the time. It's human nature to be contrary with yourself, I— Sufferin' centipedes! I'm an Injun if that other boat isn't making for Tiburon."

"I don't think so, Joe," said Matt. "There's a place around the point that's called Belvedere Cove. The other boat is either going to put in there or else go farther up the bay. We can tell in a minute."

A little later Matt announced that the other launch had doubled the point and put into the Cove. For a brief space the point of land hid the larger launch from the eyes of those in the *Sprite*; but, as the *Sprite* pushed around the point, a multitude of lights burst suddenly on the gaze of her passengers—stationary lights they were, with the exception of one that was gliding among them like a shooting star.

"Tell me about that!" muttered McGlory, standing up for a better look. "The surface of the cove looks like a town. Where are all those lamps?"

"On houseboats, Joe," replied Matt. "The tide-water inlets, in and about San Francisco Bay, are full of house boats at this season of the year. That's the other launch—that moving light, over there."

McGlory continued to stand up, bracing himself with a hold on Ping's pigtail, which happened to be the most convenient thing handy.

The *Sprite*, keeping to the trail of the moving white gleam, darted in and out among the house boats. From many of the anchored boats came sounds of mirth, music, and gay talk. Some one, on an ungainly craft which the *Sprite* passed within a short fathom, shouted a warning for Matt to put out a light. This warning, of course, could not be heeded, and the little launch foamed onward out of earshot.

Suddenly Matt shut off the power and brought the boat to a halt.

"The other launch has tied up alongside a house boat, Joe," he announced, "and we're at the end of our trail. What shall we do? Go to Tiburon after a policeman or two or go on with the work ourselves?"

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LION'S MOUTH.

McGlory made a survey of the surface of the water directly in front of the *Sprite*. A hundred feet away was a large house boat, with the launch snugged up close to its side. The house boat was of the ordinary two-deck variety, the upper deck covered with an awning. A short staff extended upward from the highest point of the boat and supported the riding light. While the cowboy was looking, a light flashed in the windows of the house boat's cabin and then settled into a steady gleam.

"I'm not one of those ducks who wear a sixteen collar and a number five hat, pard," observed McGlory, as he dropped back on the thwart, "but, at the same time, what you've thrown up to me takes more sense than I've got to decide. If we leave here and chase over to Tiburon after a few policemen, these birds we're after may fly the coop while we're gone. Then, taking it t'other way around, if we go ahead on our own hook we may make another bobble like that we got tangled up with at the foot of Clay Street. Those tinhorns are heeled, and you can chalk that up good and big; so, if us longhorns go prancing in there and begin pawing for trouble, the result looks like a cinch—for Brick-whiskers and the trunk check. You say what we're to do."

"I don't think we could accomplish much by coming company-front with those fellows and demanding Lorry's ten thousand dollars," said Matt. "As a matter of fact, we don't know whether they have the money with them, or whether they've spent it, or whether they've left it somewhere ashore."

"They've got it in their clothes, Matt, I'll gamble on that. When these tinhorns freeze to a roll of that size, they keep it handy and quiet."

Matt flashed a look at the house boat.

"They seem to be the only ones aboard the house boat," said he, "and they're evidently having a talk in the cabin. I believe we'll run alongside the other launch and then I'll leave you and Ping to watch the *Sprite* while I do a little reconnoitring."

"Meaning," added McGlory, "to get right in among 'em, big as life, and run the risk of having them put the kibosh on you?"

"It's not much risk, Joe, if I'm at all careful."

"Mebby not, but what's the good?"

"Perhaps I can find out something of importance about the money."

"You're putting your head in the lion's mouth. If the mouth should happen to close——" McGlory finished with a shrug and a gurgle. "Speak to me about that!"

"If that should happen," said Matt, "I'll have you and Ping to fall back on."

"Don't fall too hard, that's all."

Matt started up the motor again, proceeding slowly and as noiselessly as he could. McGlory went

forward over the hood of the motor and prepared to make the *Sprite's* painter fast to the larger launch.

The noise of the motor did not arouse any one in the cabin—at least, no doors were opened and no one showed himself on the house boat.

Shutting off the power as soon as the *Sprite* had gathered headway enough to carry her to the other launch, Matt lay over the wheel and watched while McGlory leaned out and gripped the upright supporting the canopy over the cockpit of the larger boat. Then, pulling the *Sprite* along hand over hand, the cowboy came to the bow and made the painter fast to an iron ring.

A mumble of voices could be heard coming from the cabin of the house boat. When all was fast, McGlory came back and got down off the hood.

"How'd it be if I went with you, Matt?" he whispered.

"A good deal worse, Joe, than for me to go it alone," was Matt's equally guarded reply. "One can crawl around, and be more quiet about it, than two."

"Keno."

"Mebby so my makee go with Motol Matt," murmured Ping, who, for the most part of that trip across the bay, had been content to use his eyes and ears and let his tongue rest.

Every move Matt made about the machinery had been watched by the Chinese, and so intently that he had not complained when McGlory used his queue for a support while standing up in the boat.

"That *would* fix things," muttered the cowboy. "Why, you little rat-eater, you'd get Matt into more trouble than he could take care of. You'll stay right here with me, and that shot goes as it lays." [Pg 15]

"Awri," whispered Ping meekly.

Matt went forward on hands and knees. In getting up to step from one boat to the other, the name of the larger boat stood out clearly under the falling rays of the lamp. She was the *San Bruno*. The young motorist made mental note of the name, for it might be of value in catching Red-whiskers and his pals in case the work of the night proved useless.

Crossing the forward deck of the *San Bruno*, Matt stepped easily to the passage that ran along the side of the house boat's cabin. Then, on all fours, he crawled to the window through which came the glow of light.

Rising up cautiously, he peered into the cabin. The three men were there, seated on the cushioned benches that ran along the sides of the little room. All were smoking cigars, and the air was thick with the vapor. The rascals had thrown off their hats and removed their coats, so Matt had a good chance to study their evil faces.

Red-whiskers' mole was in plain evidence, but it could hardly be called a disfigurement, as the face itself was brutal and mercenary in every line.

The other two men were of like calibre, if their features could be relied upon. They were talking, but it was impossible for Matt to overhear what they were saying. From their earnestness, however, it seemed plain that an important topic was being discussed.

Presently, as Matt continued to look, Red-whiskers bent down and pulled a satchel out from under the bench on which he sat. The other two craned their necks toward him as he took the satchel on his knees and opened it.

Shoving one hand into the bag, the red-whiskered man removed a thick packet of banknotes and held it up. The packet was encircled by a paper band, and Matt's heart thumped sharply against his ribs as he realized that this was certainly the money stolen from Lorry.

While the red-whiskered man held the packet in his hand, the other two talked to him. They appeared to be pleading or arguing, Matt could not decide which.

Abruptly the money was dropped back into the bag and the bag shoved under the bench once more, the red-whiskered man shaking his head as he straightened up on his seat.

"They wanted him to divide it, and he refused," was the thought that ran through Matt's head.

This was followed by another idea, whose audacity caused Matt to catch his breath.

Wouldn't it be possible to take the satchel out of the cabin? If Matt could get the money, he would be perfectly satisfied to let the thieves keep their liberty.

For the king of the motor boys and his two companions to attempt to capture the three men would have been foolish, and no doubt have ended in disaster; but to secure the satchel by stealth, or through some ruse, seemed feasible and worth trying.

Dropping to the deck again, Matt crawled to the end of the house boat. At each end there was a wider strip of deck than at the sides, so that the young motorist had ample room to manoeuvre without making any noise.

A door opened out of the end of the cabin upon the rear deck, and beside the door was a flight of steep stairs leading to the cabin roof.

There was nothing to be gained by going to the upper deck, and to open the door and get inside the cabin promised more danger than Matt deemed it wise to face. The strip of deck on the starboard side of the cabin might repay investigation, and Matt started around the corner.

But he did not turn the corner. He had no more than reached a point where he could get a view of the starboard alley than his startled eyes rested on a figure tilted back in a chair against the cabin wall.

Well for motor Matt was it that the man was asleep. Had he been awake, the lad would surely have been discovered, and every hope of securing the satchel and its contents would have gone glimmering.

Drawing back, Matt crouched on the deck and turned the situation over in his mind.

What could he do to secure that satchel?

His plans, whatever they were to be, would have to be laid quickly, for there was no telling how long the sleeping man would remain asleep, nor how long it would be before Red-whiskers, Kinky, and Ross finished their discussion and came out of the cabin.

One move after another passed through Matt's mind, only to be rejected and cast aside.

There was a window in the starboard wall directly back of the place where the red-whiskered man was sitting. In seeking to gain the starboard alley, Matt had had that window prominently in mind. But what he could do when he reached that window had not yet occurred to him. Any move on that part of the deck was out of the question, so long as the man occupied the chair.

The king of the motor boys, usually so resourceful in expedients, could think of nothing, at that moment, that pointed the way to possible success in the matter of the satchel. The only ruse that suggested itself was to have McGlory and Ping start some sort of a row that would draw the three men out of the cabin, thus affording Matt a chance to run in through a door, or climb in at a window, and secure the grip. But this plan had many disadvantages—for what would it avail Matt, or Lorry, if he was to secure the satchel and then be left on the house boat with it, at the mercy of the red-whiskered man and his two pals?

A talk with McGlory was advisable, in the circumstances, and Matt began crawling across the after deck of the house boat toward the *San Bruno*. [Pg 16]

Before he had covered half the distance that separated him from the edge of the house boat's deck his knee rested heavily on some hard object attached to the boards. It proved to be an iron ring, made fast in a hatch cover.

Instantly the young motorist's plans underwent a change. He would not leave the house boat just yet, but would open the hatch, drop below and explore the lower part of the boat. If there was another hatch leading up under the part of the cabin where the three men were holding their secret session, then fortune might point a way for something worth while.

The hatch cover was hinged. Softly Matt lifted the trap and threw it back; then, letting himself down into the scowl-like hulk, he lifted the hatch again and cautiously lowered it.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE MOUTH CLOSSES.

When the hatch was closed, and Matt had shut himself into the hull of the boat, he found that he was in cramped quarters.

The air was stifling, and the smell of bilge water was extremely unpleasant. He could not sit up without knocking his head against the deck beams, and he was entangled in a scattered pile of firewood. But if he got where he wanted to go he must contrive to move forward.

Taking a match from his pocket, he struck it on his trousers, and looked about him in the feeble gleam.

The firewood was not all he had to contend with. In addition to that, the hold was half full of boxes and casks.

Making mental note of a course that would take him forward with least trouble from the fuel and food supplies, he pinched out the match and crawled carefully.

He realized, presently, that the voices from the cabin were coming to his ears in increased volume; in fact, he was hearing them much more distinctly than when he had been at the window outside the cabin. Their distinctness became much more apparent the farther he advanced; not only that, but they served to help him locate himself. When the voices were directly over his head he paused.

The floor boards of the deck had spread slightly, and the cracks were lined with threads of lamplight. This explained the distinctness with which the voices reached his ears. Sitting up, he stifled his breathing while he listened.

"You fellers might just as well understand this from the start off—that money stays together, all in a wad, until we get safe out o' 'Frisco. Then there'll be a divvy, and not before."

Red-whiskers was the speaker. Matt had no difficulty in recognizing his raucous voice.

"Is that square, John?" demanded one of the others. "Ain't Ross an' me entitled to our share, here an' now, if we want it?"

"You're entitled to your share, Kinky, and you're going to get it, but not until we're out of the woods. I'd have whacked up to-night, but for that raw deal we had worked on us at the foot of Clay Street. This Motor Matt, it's as plain as a pikestaff, is trying to help Lorry. Lorry himself wouldn't have the nerve to play a game like that. Why, he stole the money himself, see, and he ain't goin' to ask the law to step in and help him get the stuff back. But this Motor Matt—well, from all I can read about him, he's all nerve and is given to meddling. We've got to quit this house boat and sail on that Jap steamer to-morrow. I'll pay our passage to Honolulu out of the funds, and when we get to where we're going we'll go snucks, share and share alike."

"I want mine now," struck in a third voice.

"That's you, Ross," growled Red-whiskers. "You want to do some gamblin' and drinkin', which is the worst things you could possibly do, not only for yourself, but for Kinky and me. I'll not have it that way. When we get in a safe place, we'll split the loot into three parts, and you can take what's coming to you and go to ballyhack, if you want to. But you can't tune up around 'Frisco while I'm in the town."

"What's to be done with the *San Bruno*?" asked a voice which Matt identified as belonging to Kinky.

"We'll use her to take us to 'Frisco, in the morning, just before the steamer leaves. Then we can turn her over to her owner, pay him what's coming, and hustle for the dock where we load ourselves for the Sandwich Islands. I'm calculating we'll be safe enough there."

"O' course," spoke up the voice of Ross, "all I want's to do the right thing by everybody an' have the right thing done by me. I ain't putting up no holler, an' don't think that for a minute; but I'm just about strapped. I haven't got more'n two bits in my jeans."

"Well, you'll have three thousand of your own before you're a week older, Ross, and I'd advise you to do the same as I intend to do—invest it in a pineapple plantation in the islands."

"Oh, splash! I'm going to invest my money in a distillery," and Ross finished with a reckless laugh, only he used a harsher expletive.

"It wouldn't be like you if you didn't," grunted Red-whiskers.

"Speaking along this line," spoke up Kinky, "reminds me that I'm dryer'n the desert of Sahary. Suppose we open a bottle?"

"That hits me," agreed Ross promptly.

"I'll go you—for just one bottle," came from the red-whiskered leader of the trio.

Ross chuckled.

"John likes his nip jest as well as anybody," said he.

"What of it?" demanded the leader. "If I've got the sense to take no more than is good for me, what's the odds? The trouble with you, Ross, is that you never stop until you make a fool of yourself. Let me tell you something: Whisky is the worst enemy a man ever had. It'll give him a little 'Dutch courage' for a piece of crooked work, I grant you, but if a crook hangs onto the drink it will ruin him in the end. That's right."

This was refreshing doctrine to come from such a man as Red-whiskers. Matt listened to his talk with a half smile.

"Get the stuff, Kinky," said the impatient Ross.

There was a sound of moving feet across the floor. The next moment a match was lifted directly over Matt's head and a flood of lamplight revealed him to Kinky. The scoundrel flung back with a wild yell.

Matt waited for no more. With a pounding heart he scrambled over boxes and casks and stove wood on his way toward the other hatch.

A confused babel of voices reached him from the cabin; feet could be heard running over the floor, and some one raised a great clatter dropping into the hold.

"Come out here!" shouted a fierce voice. "Come out, I say, or I'll shoot!"

Matt was willing to run the risk of stopping a bullet, there in the darkness, and he was in altogether too big a hurry to throw up a barricade between him and the man with the gun.

Rising on his knees, he lifted his hands to the hatch. No shot was heard, and Matt reflected that the scoundrels would not dare fire a revolver for fear of attracting attention from the other house boats in the cove.

To throw back the hatch took only an instant, but, as the young motorist scrambled through the opening, he was seized by the shoulders and hurled roughly to the deck.

He was up again almost as soon as he was down.

"Landers!" bellowed a gruff voice; "where the deuce is Landers? Take him, Kinky. I guess the two of us are enough without Landers. I'll head him off on this side."

Matt felt a pair of arms go around him from behind. With a fierce effort, however, he twisted clear of the clutching hands, whirled and struck out with his fist.

An exclamation, more forcible than polite, was jolted out of Kinky.

"Hang it!" the scoundrel added, "he's got a fist like a pile driver. Lay for him, Ross! I'm

wabbling."

Before Motor Matt could turn and defend himself against Ross, Red-whiskers bolted through the open cabin door.

"Don't make so much noise, you fellows!" he called angrily. "Every house boat in the cove will be \_\_\_"

Then he saw Matt. The latter had sprung to the edge of the deck with the plain intention of diving overboard.

Before he could carry out his plan Ross and the leader of the three men had him by each arm and had jerked him roughly back.

Matt struggled with all his power, but there were three against him, and he was thrown to the deck and dragged into the cabin, one of the men holding a hand over his mouth to prevent outcry.

The cabin was divided into two rooms, and Matt was half dragged and half carried through the darkness of the first room into the glaring lamplight of the one beyond.

"Put him in that chair over there," ordered the red-whiskered man. "You needn't be afraid he'll yell, Kinky," he added, with savage menace, "so take your hands from his mouth. If he lets out a whoop, or tries to bolt, I'll fire, even if the noise brings a tender from every house boat in the bay."

One look into the gleaming eyes of Red-whiskers was enough to warn Matt that discretion demanded passive compliance with the wishes of his captors.

Kinky removed his hands from Matt's lips, and Ross released his arms. Both men stepped to one side, glaring at him curiously and vindictively.

Red-whiskers, a revolver lying on his knees, was sitting on the cushioned bench, directly facing Matt. With a steady hand he was lighting a fresh cigar.

"Pull the window shades, Kinky," said he calmly. "Ross, lock both doors and put the keys in your pocket. We'll have a little heart-to-heart talk with Motor Matt, and I don't want Landers to see what we do, or hear what we're talking about."

Motor Matt, blaming himself for what had happened, sat quietly and wondered what was to come.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### SURPRISING EVENTS.

"You're a daring youngster," remarked Red-whiskers, leering at the prisoner through the smoke of his cigar. "I suppose you think you're pretty smart, eh? Well, there are others. How did you find out we were here?"

"I found out," said Matt. "I don't think it would help me any if I told you how."

"Don't get gay," admonished Red-whiskers, his eyes dropping significantly to the weapon on his knee. "Remember where you are, Motor Matt. You're interfering with a game that doesn't concern you in the least. Poor policy, boy, poor policy. You ought to have sense enough to know that without being told. Where did you meet young Lorry?"

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"I'm not talking about Lorry or any one else," returned Matt. "You might as well let me go."

"All in due time, my lad, and after you satisfy our curiosity. You rowed over from Tiburon?"

Matt was silent.

"That's what he must have done," spoke up Ross. "How could he have got here if he hadn't rowed over? He didn't swim, that's sure, for he's got on all his clothes an' they're dry as a bone. I'll go out and see if I can discover his boat."

Ross turned to the door, but Red-whiskers lifted a restraining hand.

"We'll look after the boat in due time, Ross," said he. "Just now we'll give all our attention to Motor Matt. I'll trouble you for that trunk check, my lad," he finished, facing the prisoner once more.

Matt, knowing it would be worse than useless to resist, drew the check from his pocket and tossed it to Red-whiskers.

"Much obliged," said the leader grimly, examining the tag. "This is the one, sure enough," he added to Kinky and Ross.

"How did you know I had it?" asked Matt.

"The gent that raffled off that boat put me next. How much pleasanter it would have been," Red-whiskers pursued, slipping the check into his pocket, "if you'd been nice and sociable, over there at the foot of Clay Street, and let me have that brass tag without trying to make trouble. What have you gained, Motor Matt, by roughing things up like you did? And what have you gained by sneaking in here? Are you any better off?"



"Cut it out, John," growled Kinky. "What's the good o' readin' him a lecture?"

Red-whiskers scowled at Kinky.

"Be so good as to dry up," he requested. "You never was able to see anything an inch or two beyond your nose, so you can't guess what I'm driving at. Motor Matt," he went on, to the prisoner, "what did you lug that cop along with you for, when you came to the foot of Clay Street? What was your object? Was you afraid of that part o' town, and was he just a sort of bodyguard?"

Matt laughed at that.

"Hardly that," said he. "You've got ten thousand dollars that belongs to young Lorry, and the policeman was there to get it."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the red-whiskered man, with a humorous glance at Ross and Kinky, "he thinks we've got ten thousand dollars! But," he continued, "assuming that we *have* got that much money, how do you figure that it belongs to Lorry? Did Lorry steal it from his old man? If he did, does that make it his? If it does, Motor Matt, then if we stole the money from young Lorry it ought to belong to us."

"That's foolish," said Matt, trying to guess what Red-whiskers was driving at.

"Possibly it is. Now, you're a pretty good sort of fellow, only a trifle headstrong, and I don't mind saying that we *did* take that ten thousand from young Lorry. And why? Let me tell you it was all perfectly legitimate." He leaned over confidentially and tapped Matt on the knee with the muzzle of the revolver. "We're detectives, Motor Matt, Chicago detectives, and old Mr. Lorry, that lives in Madison, Wisconsin, commissioned us to recover that money. We've recovered it; and you"—Red-whiskers leaned back and laughed softly—"thought we was thieves and tried to have us pinched! What do you think of that for a joke?"

"Then," said Matt, "it's all a joke about you and your pals sailing for Honolulu to-morrow and dividing the money between you when you get there?"

Enjoyment immediately faded out of the situation for the red-whiskered man. He straightened up, pulled at his fiery beard and glared at Motor Matt.

Matt realized that he had made a mistake. By speaking as he had done, he had virtually admitted that he knew more about the plans of the three rascals than they had thought possible.

"Ah," and a crafty smile crossed Red-whiskers' face "I thought you'd let out something, if I prodded you a little, but I'll be hanged if I expected that. This is beginning to look mighty serious for you, Motor Matt. Where did you learn all that?"

"I was under the floor," replied Matt.

"Exactly—under the floor listening to a conversation that didn't concern you. Because of that, you're going to stay two weeks on this boat, and Landers is going to keep you. By then we'll be where we're going and out of harm's way, and it won't be possible for what you know to have any effect. You've only yourself to blame for this. Who's that chink that won the boat in the raffle?"

"I don't know much about him," replied Matt.

"You took his boat across the bay for him, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, he knew where you had gone, because he told me. That's how I was able to send that note to the Bixler House. The chink said you had a couple of fellows with you—one, in particular, who had fallen off a ferryboat and whom you had picked up. Was that young Lorry?"

"I'm not saying a word," said Matt, "about Lorry. You say you're going to keep me on this house boat for two weeks. If that's your plan, all right, go ahead with it."

For several minutes Matt, from where he sat, had been trying to locate the satchel under the bench. It was impossible for him to see it, and he supposed that it had either been moved by Red-whiskers, or taken away.

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"We're going to leave for parts unknown," continued the leader of the three rogues, "and we're going to take young Lorry with us. I guess if we give him a thousand of his father's money he'll be satisfied."

"You're a scoundrel, on your own showing," cried Matt angrily, "but I don't think you'd be such a contemptible scoundrel as to take that boy away and make him a thief, like you and your pals!"

"Softly, Motor Matt," warned Red-whiskers. "What is the boy now but a thief, and on his own showing, at that? I don't think we can hurt him any, and by taking him away we'll be doing a good thing for him—and for us."

"You'll ruin him, that's what you'll do," proceeded Matt indignantly. "Haven't you a thought for his people, back there in Wisconsin?"

"What are his people to us? I had intended all along to compromise with the cub and give him a thousand, but you got to him before we did. He doesn't dare appeal to the law——"

"There are others who will act for him," broke in Matt. "There's the making of a man in young Lorry, and if you do as you say you intend to, you will end by making him no better than you are."

"You're not very complimentary, it strikes me," said Red-whiskers easily, bending down and groping under the bench with one hand. "We might just as well take our boodle and get away

from here. I had planned to stay on the house boat all night, and run over to 'Frisco in the launch in time to catch that steamer to-morrow, but you've compelled us to change our plans. We'll take a night train, and—— Where in blazes is that satchel?"

Failing to find the satchel with one hand, Red-whiskers had used both hands. Even then the treasure grip eluded him, and in a sudden flurry he dropped to the floor on his knees and looked under the bench. The next instant he had leaped up, maddened and furious.

"It's gone!" he shouted.

Kinky and Ross jumped as though they had been touched by a live wire.

"Gone?" they echoed blankly.

"You know something about this!" cried Red-whiskers, facing Ross furiously.

"What're you givin' us?" retorted Ross menacingly. "If you think you can throw any such bluff as that, John, and make it stick, you've got another guess coming. You've taken the satchel yourself! You never intended to whack up with Kinky and me, and this is a move to corral all the money."

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Red-whiskers, studying Ross' face for a moment, and then swerving his eyes to Kinky.

The affair had a dark look, for a space, as both Kinky and Ross had reached their hands under their coats. If the three scoundrels had a quarrel among themselves, Matt felt that he would have a chance of escape. His eager eyes traveled to the doors, and then to the window.

"Look here, you two," went on Red-whiskers, his eyes glittering fiendishly, "the satchel's gone. I'll take back what I said about you two having had anything to do with trying to lift it. Certainly I didn't—you ought to know that. We've all been in this room——"

"Except when we ran aft to ketch that fellow," fumed Ross, indicating Matt with a jerk of the head. "You was in here alone with the satchel then, John. How do we know you didn't hide it on us?"

"Mebby it was him!" stormed Kinky, stepping toward Matt.

"How could it have been him?" objected Ross. "He was under the floor, and we kept him busy every minute until he bobbed up through the after hatch."

"Then it was Landers!" cried Kinky. "I never did like that feller's looks. I'll bet it was Landers! If ——"

Just at that moment the *chug-chug* of a motor was heard outside.

"He's turning over the engine!" cried Red-whiskers, jumping for one of the doors. "Landers has got the satchel and he's getting away with it in the boat."

Red-whiskers threw himself against the door, trying to break it down.

"Wait, confound it!" yelled Ross; "here's the key, John. I'll unlock the door if you'll gi' me a chance."

The three men paid no attention whatever to Matt. As soon as Ross could unlock and throw open the door they all rushed out.

The *San Bruno* was still lying where she had been moored, but the wheeze of a boat could be heard, and a craft, a cable's length away, could be seen vanishing wraithlike into the shadows across the cove.

"Landers has got another boat, somewhere, and he's running away in it!" declared Kinky.

"We'll overhaul him with the *San Bruno*," cried Red-whiskers, throwing himself into the launch. "One of you stay behind and look after the prisoner——"

"Hang the prisoner!" answered Kinky. "The money means more to us than he does."

Ross cast off the rope that held the launch alongside the house boat, and both he and Kinky sprang aboard the *San Bruno*.

Matt, bewildered by the surprising events that had followed each other so swiftly, stood on the forward deck of the houseboat and watched while the *San Bruno* got under way and started on the track of the other boat.

That other boat, of course, Matt knew to be the *Sprite*. But why was she tearing off across the cove like that? Why were McGlory and Ping leaving Matt when they must have known he was in difficulties? Had they started for Tiburon to get a few policemen and bring them back to help their comrade out of his trouble?

As these questions sped through Matt's bewildered mind a laugh echoed behind him—and he turned to face the most surprising of all the events that had happened that night.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### M'GLORY'S RUN OF LUCK.

Joe McGlory, judging from the way fortune had turned her back on him during his whole life, was

positive that he had not been born "under a lucky star." It was more likely, he thought, that he had been born under the Dipper, and that the Dipper was upside down at the time. Yet, be that as it might, luck had never had much to do with McGlory. Whatever he got came to him always by hard knocks and persistent grubbing. But there was a bright lining to the cloud, and this lining was making ready to show itself.

He sat impatiently on the stern thwarts of the *Sprite*, while Matt was doing his reconnoitring on the house boat, waiting impatiently for him to return and report. Ping was forward at the steering wheel of the launch, feeling casually and with a certain amount of awe of every lever that manipulated the motor and the gear.

The little *Sprite* was completely dwarfed by the larger boat alongside of which she cuddled, like a young duck under the lee of its mother, and the gloom of the higher bulwarks overshadowed McGlory and Ping.

From time to time, the cowboy stood up and looked across the cockpit of the *San Bruno* toward the house boat. He saw Matt's head silhouetted in the light from the cabin window, and finally he saw him move away and vanish from sight behind the raised forward deck of the larger motor boat.

After that, McGlory champed the bit, and waited. As is usual in such cases, the seconds dragged like minutes, and the minutes were like hours. The cowboy finally made up his mind that something had gone wrong, and that he ought to investigate.

This feeling grew upon him until he could stand it no longer. Creeping forward to where Ping was caressing the steering wheel, he paused beside him for a moment.

"Motor Matt's been gone so long, Ping," said he, in a low tone, "that I'm afraid he has struck on a snag. If that's so, it's up to me to flock over to the house boat and do my little best to get him out of trouble. Savvy?"

"Heap savvy," replied Ping. "By Klismus, China boy go 'long. Mebbysy you makee fall in touble, China boy savee you, savee Matt, savee evelbody. Huh?"

"Never you mind about Matt and me, Ping," returned McGlory. "You stay right here—and stop fooling with that machinery, too. First thing you know you'll have the *Sprite* turning a summerset, and that would be about the worst thing that could happen to us. Stay right here, mind, and wait until you hear from Matt or me before you budge."

"Awri'," said Ping meekly.

McGlory crawled over the hood, got aboard the *San Bruno*, and then stepped softly to the deck of the house boat.

A quick look around revealed the fact that Motor Matt was not in evidence. Slipping forward along the port alley, the cowboy took a hasty look through the lighted window. The three men were smoking, and in close converse, but McGlory was more interested in locating Motor Matt, just then, than in anything else.

Instead of returning toward the after end of the house boat, he passed on to the patch of deck at the forward end—and was thus out of the whirl of excitement that was turned on at the rear of the craft.

The yell given by Kinky when he lifted the trap in the floor of the cabin and caught a glimpse of Matt reached McGlory's ears almost as soon as he had gained the wider deck at the end of the boat. Almost immediately he heard the scramble inside the cabin, and then the rush of feet aft.

He hesitated for a few seconds, not knowing what to do. Matt had got into trouble, all right, but had he gotten out of it?

Stepping quickly to a door which led directly into the lighted front room of the cabin, McGlory softly turned the knob and pushed the door open. The room was empty. A trap in the floor was open, and also a door leading into a dark room beyond. From somewhere farther aft came angry voices and more sounds of scuffling.

"That means me, I reckon," thought the cowboy, rushing across the lighted room and into the darker chamber farther on. It was his intention to keep going and find out just what the struggle he had been hearing might mean, and to do what he could for Motor Matt; but he heard a sound behind him, just as he gained the darkness of the rear room, which caused him to halt, turn cautiously, and peer backward.

A tall, gangle-legged individual, with a mustache the color of dried buffalo grass, a nose like a wart and eyes that looked like a couple of wilted cactus blossoms, had entered the door which McGlory had left open.

The manner of this person aroused the cowboy's interest and curiosity. If he was one of the gang, what was he doing there? And why was he acting in such a stealthy manner, as though in a hurry and fearing to be apprehended?

McGlory, for a moment, curbed his desire to hurry on to the rear of the house boat and stood and watched the stranger from the safe screen of darkness.

The man was looking for something, that was plain. Dropping to his knees, he reached under a bench at one side of the room. What he wanted wasn't there. He turned to the bench on the other side and gave an exultant grunt as he pulled a satchel from under it.

After flashing a wary look around him, he opened the satchel with trembling fingers and drew

forth a package of banknotes that made McGlory stagger.

Money! George Lorry's money!

That is what the cowboy thought on the instant. With another jubilant grunt, the stranger snapped the satchel shut and faded through the front door. McGlory was about two seconds making up his mind, and then faded after him.

The man was out of sight when the cowboy reached the deck at the forward end of the boat. Heavy feet were coming through the dark room of the cabin, and McGlory knew it was hardly safe for him to stand in the exposed position where he had placed himself.

Wondering where the man had gone with the satchel and the money, he stepped around the corner of the cabin into the starboard passage—and saw the man just dodging around the opposite corner, on the after deck.

"That's where I nail him!" thought McGlory, moving softly and swiftly along the alley.

As he passed the lighted window on that side of the cabin a curtain was jerked down, and a door was slammed. Following this, a key grated in a lock. Then another door was slammed and another key grated.

The cowboy hesitated, trying to guess whether all that had anything to do with the man who was making off with the satchel. Unable to reach any conclusion, and convinced that his duty lay in following the man, McGlory moved noiselessly onward.

The light on the upright staff of the houseboat cast a faint glow on the after deck, and here McGlory saw the man he was following again on his knees and examining the packet of bills.

In two jumps the cowboy was on the man's back.

"Steady!" he hissed in the man's ear.

The fellow began to struggle; and then, in a flash, the cowboy remembered the revolver he had snatched out of his cousin's hand and slipped into his pocket. In a twinkling he had the weapon out of the pocket—and commanded the situation.

"Don't shoot!" whined the man. "Great guns, I ain't done anythin' to *you*."

"Put that bunch of green goods back into the grip," ordered McGlory.

"Thar she goes," said the man, letting the packet fall into the satchel.

"Now give the grip a shove," continued McGlory, "so it'll be closer to where I'm standing. That's the idea," he added, as the bag came sliding toward him. "Now, pardner, I've got the money and you've got the experience, and things are looking real fine. Who are you, anyhow?"

"Landers," said the man. "I'm in charge o' this boat for Big John."

"Big John, eh? I wonder if that's my friend, Mr. Smith, otherwise Red-whiskers?"

"That's him," answered Landers, "but you ain't no friend o' his, I'll gamble."

"Ain't I?" queried McGlory humorously.

"You're a detective, an' you've come here to bag Big John an' them other coves. But you don't need to bag me. I was only gettin' the money to turn it over to the police."

"Oh, speak to me about that!" chuckled McGlory.

"Look out behind ye!" whispered Landers hoarsely. "Big John is——"

McGlory turned. As he did so, Landers fell off the house boat and into the cockpit of the *San Bruno*.

"Ain't I easy?" grumbled McGlory, marking a half run across the deck in the direction of the launch. "No," he muttered, "I won't do that, either. I've got the ten thousand plunks belongin' to Uncle Dan, and I guess I'll freeze onto 'em. Matt needs me, I reckon. With the grip in one hand and George's pepper box in the other, I'll walk through the cabin and see what I can do for this new pard of mine."

The rear door of the cabin was unlocked. McGlory passed through it and groped his way in the dark to the other door.

He had barely reached the door when another commotion assailed his ears, accompanied by loud voices. The voices were so loud, in fact, that the cowboy could hear distinctly all that was said.

Big John had just discovered the loss of the satchel, and a violent scene was threatening. Then came the popping of the motor, and the rush to get out of the cabin and pursue Landers.

McGlory, beginning to understand what had happened and how the thieves had been fooled, leaned against the wall of the cabin and sputtered with merriment.

"Speak to me about luck, will you?" he gasped. "This is once, anyhow, that I've got the winning number. I reckon it's because I'm hooked up with Motor Matt."

He tried the bulkhead door, but found it locked. With a sudden thought, he returned to the other door, took the key he found there from the lock and tried it in the lock of the bulkhead door. It worked like a charm, and McGlory, satchel in one hand and revolver in the other, pushed into the lighted room.

At the very least, he was expecting to find Motor Matt on the floor, tied hand and foot. McGlory's

It was Matt, there was no doubt about it. Thoughts of the way events had shaped themselves to befool the thieves rushed over the cowboy again, and once more he dropped against the side of the cabin. He exploded a laugh that brought Matt into the room at a double quick, and held him, just inside the door, staring as though at a ghost.

"McGlory!" muttered Matt, rubbing his eyes.

"Keno, correct—and more, much more. It's McGlory, Matt, and McGlory's got the *dinero*. Come to me, put your little hand in mine for a good shake, and let's felicitate. This will be happy news for Cousin George!"

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### WAITING AND WORRYING.

"In the name of all that's good, Joe," cried Matt, as he and the cowboy shook hands, "where did you come from?"

"From the *Sprite*, pard," grinned McGlory. "But that was some sort of a while ago. I've been on the house boat for quite a spell."

"Where did you get that satchel?"

"It's got the bundle of money in it, Matt—Uncle Dan's money *sabe*?"

"Yes, yes, I know! I saw the red-whiskered man take the money out of the satchel, then put it back again and push the satchel under that bench. But how did *you* get hold of it? That's what I want to know."

McGlory dropped the satchel and collapsed on the bench.

"Oh, that's the best ever," he laughed. "Those old hardshells were fooled at their own game. Queer about that money of Uncle Dan's. It's been in a good deal of a taking ever since it left Madison. George takes it from Uncle Dan, Red-whiskers takes it from George, Landers takes it from Red-whiskers, and now here's me taking it from Landers."

"Landers?" queried Mitt. "Did he take the money?"

"Took it the length of the boat. By then I was close enough to get hold of it myself. But you cut loose and tell me what went crossways with you—I've been worried a heap about that—and then I'll even up by tellin' how I jumped into the game."

Matt made short work of his end of the explanation, and McGlory consumed but little more time. While McGlory was talking, Matt was not only listening but also putting two and two together in his own mind.

The cowboy finished with another jubilant laugh, but Matt suddenly became grave and got up from the bench.

"Let's go outside, Joe," said he, "where we can keep an eye on our surroundings."

"What's there in our surroundings to worry us? We've got the money, haven't we?"

"Yes, but the 'taking' you mentioned a few minutes ago may keep up—unless we're on the alert. Suppose Big John, Kinky, and Ross come back here in the *San Bruno*? What would happen then? We haven't any *Sprite* to take us off, remember."

"That's a fact," and McGlory went suddenly grave himself. "What ever came over that chink to run off? Say, I'll bet he got to tinkering with the motor, and that it started on him and he couldn't stop it. Consarn these chinks, anyhow!"

"Don't be too quick to blame Ping, Joe," remonstrated Matt. "I don't think that's what happened."

"What then?"

"Landers thought you were a detective, didn't he?"

"That's what he said."

"Well, he was afraid of being arrested and jailed for helping Big John and the other two. That's the reason he played a trick and tumbled off the boat."

"Well? Go on, pard, and give me the rest of it."

"Don't you think it's likely that he climbed aboard the *Sprite*, took her away from Ping, and then rushed her across the cove to the nearest landing?"

"Oh, tell me!" muttered McGlory. "And I never, no, I never once let that drift into my head! And yet, why not? Wasn't it the natural thing for Landers to do? Any day you can find in the almanac, pard, I'm shy something when it comes to headwork. But here's the point: Can Landers run the *Sprite* fast enough to keep her away from the *San Bruno*? If he can't, I can see what will happen to Ping and Landers when that outfit of fire-eaters come up with them. Oh, shucks! This ain't turnin' out so pleasant as I thought. Suppose we hike for the deck and keep our eyes peeled. It

may save us something, although I'm a heathen if I see what we could do if the *San Bruno* came back."

"If we have to," said Matt, "we'll take the money and swim to the nearest house boat."

"It will be a damp roll of bills we take ashore with us if we have to do that."

"Better a lot of wet money, Joe, than no money at all."

"Right, exactly right, as per usual. I've got this pop-gun of Cousin George's. It looks like one of those toy Fourth of July things that make a noise and let it go at that. Still, maybe the sight of the thing would scare somebody."

Together they left the cabin, and, in order that their view might be more extensive, climbed the steep stairs to the house boat's upper deck. Here there were comfortable chairs, and the boys sat down and allowed their eyes to wander about them over the shadowy surface of the cove.

The lights of the house-boat settlement were still gleaming in every direction, but every sound had died away and a dead silence reigned. [Pg 23]

"If a launch was coming," said McGlory, "we could hear her a mile off—which is three times as far as we could see her."

"That's right," said Matt, "and I'm hearing one now. Listen! Unless I'm away off in my reckoning a boat is bearing this way from the direction of Tiburon."

McGlory bent his head.

"You've made a bull's-eye, Matt," said he. "A boat's coming, but is it the *Sprite* or the *San Bruno*?"

"It's the *San Bruno*," averred Matt.

"How do you make that out?" queried the wondering cowboy.

"Why, a bigger volume of sound, distance considered, than the *Sprite* makes. I noticed that particularly when we were chasing the *San Bruno* across the bay."

"Well, you've got me beat, plumb. We've got to swim, I reckon, going off one side of the house boat as the launch ties up at the other?"

"We'll not take to the water until we have to, Joe. Wait until we can get a good look at the boat."

Standing on the upper deck, the two boys faced in the direction of the approaching launch, and waited and worried.

Slowly, and after a period of time that seemed interminable, a blot of shadow came gliding toward them from among the clustered lights of the house boats.

Matt whirled to grip McGlory's arm.

"What's to pay now, pard?" asked the startled cowboy.

"Why," answered Matt, "two boats are coming!"

"Two?" echoed McGlory, squinting in the direction of the moving blot. "I can't make out more than one, and it's plenty hard to see that."

"One is chasing the other—I can tell by the sounds, alone."

"Good ear—remarkable. Put a lot of bronks on a hard trail and I can shut my eyes and tell you how many there are, up to five, by listening. But a boat's a different proposition. How do you know one is chasing the other, though? That's what gets me."

"Because," answered Matt, "the boat ahead is the *Sprite* and the one behind is the *San Bruno*!"

"Sufferin' whirligigs!" exclaimed McGlory. "How far ahead is the *Sprite*?"

"We can tell in a minute. Both boats are close—and the *San Bruno* has put out her light. Ah, look!"

Matt leaned over the rail and pointed. By that time the boats could be easily distinguished. The *Sprite* was pounding along in a distressing way that proved there was something wrong with her sparking apparatus or her fuel supply, but, in spite of that, she was doing nobly.

"It can't be that Ping is doing the work on the *Sprite*," muttered McGlory.

"It sounds as though it might be Ping," said Matt.

"But he can't run the boat! Didn't we see him try, at the Tiburon landing?"

"He's been watching me, and I think he's learned what to pull and push and turn in order to keep the boat moving. A Chinaman is a good imitator, Joe. The *San Bruno* is giving our launch a close race, and we'd better go down and stand ready to leap aboard the moment Ping stops for us."

Hurrying down the steps, the two boys placed themselves at the edge of the house boat's after deck, ready to jump the moment the *Sprite* came close enough.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

PING STARS HIMSELF.

Ping was not impatient, while waiting for Matt and McGlory to come back from the house boat, and he was not worrying. His callow mind was engaged with the wheels and levers of the *Sprite's* machinery, and he might be said to be enjoying himself, in his artless, heathen way.

His first acquaintance with the *Sprite* had not been of a pleasant nature, but Ping had overcome his awe and fear, to a large extent, by watching how readily the boat obeyed the touch of Motor Matt's hands.

The Chinese boy had observed all the details of starting, steering, and stopping. Sitting alone in the launch, he touched the various levers in proper order, again and again—touched them lightly, for he had no desire to make the boat turn a "summerset," as McGlory had said she would do if he got too free with his attentions.

The uproar and commotion that started abruptly on the house boat and continued at intervals for some time, naturally drew the Chinaman's eyes across the *San Bruno*. But the attraction of the motor was too much for Ping to withstand, and he jumped at a conclusion to assure himself that everything was well with Matt and McGlory, and returned to his childlike interest in the machinery.

Some one scrambled off the *San Bruno* into the *Sprite*. The rough boarding of the little launch caused her to sway and shiver and dance at the end of her painter.

"You makee plenty fuss, McGloly!" complained Ping, grabbing at the sides of the boat to hold himself upright.

Before he could look around a rough hand had caught his queue and jerked him over backward.

"Not a bloomin' word out o' you, chink!" hissed a menacing voice in Ping's ear. "Ahead with ye, now, and unloose the painter. If you don't hustle, I'll kick yer inter next week. This is a hurry-up call, and don't you fergit that!"

Ping didn't wait to argue the question. Rolling over the top of the hood, he knelt in the bow and tore the painter loose from the iron ring. The engine was chugging by the time he had finished, and when the *Sprite* started, under the impulsive hands of the strange white man, she leaped away with a jolt that rolled Ping back into the arms of the boat's captor.

With an oath, the man hurled Ping into the bottom of the boat. He would as soon have tumbled the Chinese boy into the water, and it was luck, rather than design, that kept Ping out of the wet.

Crawling back on the stern thwarts, Ping leaned on his elbows, blinking his little eyes and trying to guess what had happened.

Behind, over the swiftly growing stretch of water, he heard an uproar on the house boat, then the pant and throb of another engine.

The strange white man looked around and swore.

"They're chasin' me, but they won't get me!" he muttered. "If this boat can put me ashore ahead of 'em, I'll save my bacon dry-shod; an' if it can't, by thunder, I'll take to the water and swim!"

Ping heard this, and dwelt upon the words for some time. The strange white man was running away from the other devil-boat. What had the strange white man done? Were Matt and McGlory on the other devil-boat trying to catch him? Or was it the three bad 'Melican men who were doing the chasing?

Ping couldn't figure it out. About all he realized was that there was a race between the *Sprite* and the *San Bruno*. Inasmuch as the *San Bruno* belonged to the enemy, Ping hoped in his heart that the *Sprite* would leave her behind.

They were making for the shore of the cove, but the strange white man was handling the boat badly. He didn't push or pull the way Motor Matt did, and the imprisoned devil under the hood—the power that made the propeller whirl—coughed and spluttered with rage and pounded on the machinery with iron hammers.

It got on Ping's nerves, and he hoisted himself to a sitting posture.

"By Klismus," he cried frantically, "you lettee Ping lun engine! Him makee go chop-chop, keepee *Splite* away flom othel boat!"

The strange white man looked around with a snarl.

"Shut up!" he roared, "or I'll toss ye into the drink, so help me!"

Ping shut up. Lying back on the thwart he watched the other boat draw nearer and nearer. The shore was yet a good way off, and it was plain the *San Bruno* would overhaul the *Sprite* before the land could be reached. And how the good devil under the hood was fighting to do better! How hard it was begging the strange white man to treat it right, and let it work easier and take the *Sprite* away from the other boat.

Ping gave a deep groan. Oh, if he was only at the wheel, and the pull-things and the push-things!

He looked around for something to throw at the strange white man. If a monkey wrench, or a hatchet, had been convenient, then one Landers would probably never have known what struck him.

But, fortunately for Landers—and for Ping, too—no weapon was available, and the race went on. The shore was near now, but the *San Bruno* was nearer.

Ping, straining his eyes through the dark, could see the men on the *San Bruno*. There were three

of them, and their boat was less than three lengths away!

Suddenly the *Sprite* slewed around, crosswise of the *San Bruno's* course. Ping started up with a frightened yell, a splash echoing in his ears.

There was no one at the wheel or the levers! Ping's almond eyes turned swiftly shoreward, and there they saw a form in the water, swimming strongly toward the land.

But Ping was not thinking of the strange white man, but of the *Sprite*. Hurling himself forward across the midship thwart, he seized the steering wheel and turned the launch in a wide circle.

A shout went up from the *San Bruno*.

"Halt, Landers! You can't get away with that money! Stop and drop alongside or we'll cut you down to the water's edge!"

Ping, naturally, couldn't understand this. The voice that had called out was not the voice of Motor Matt or McGlory. Since they were not on the *San Bruno*, then, of course, they must still be on the house boat.

The Chinese boy started back over the watery trail which the *Sprite* had recently traversed under the guidance of the white man. Carefully he doctored the motor, pulling and pushing as he had seen Matt push and pull, all the while breathing choice prayers in his native tongue to placate the demon in the engine.

The devil must have been placated, at least a little, for he did not clamor quite so loud, but at intervals he hammered in a way that was very distressing to Ping. However, Ping couldn't help it, so he settled himself down to his steering, occasionally throwing a look over his shoulder at the other boat.

The *Sprite* was gaining on her slowly. Ping continued to breathe his heathen prayers, and to beg the honorable demon to stop pounding in the machine and to put its extra power into the little wheel under the boat.

As the *Sprite* came closer and closer to the house boat Ping was able to see two figures on the upper deck.

Were they Motor Matt and McGlory? He guessed they were not, while hoping that they were. Anyhow, he would have to stop. His nerves fluttered as he wondered if he would be able to stop.

He had watched Matt as he brought the *Sprite* alongside the *San Bruno*. As he remembered it, Matt had begun to play with the levers before the launch was very near the larger craft.

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Matt, it will be recalled, had done this in order to let the *Sprite* glide noiselessly to her berth. Ping repeated the manoeuvre, and McGlory danced around on the house boat's deck, fuming at the delay caused by the halted motor.

The *San Bruno* was almost bunting into the stern of *Sprite* as the two boys made flying leaps to get aboard. The impact of their bodies came within one of swamping the little craft, and Matt stumbled to the steering wheel and got busy without losing an instant.

Ping slid backward over the midship thwart, yielding his place meekly and gladly; and then, with McGlory, he watched while Motor Matt plucked the *Sprite* out of harm's way.

It was so neatly done that Ping's heart swelled within him, and he slapped his hands and said glad things in Chinese. One touch of Motor Matt's hand, and the demon stopped pounding. A hum as of an industrious hive of bees came from under the hood, and the launch gathered itself together and flung onward with a fresh burst of speed.

The *San Bruno*, those aboard her still under the impression that Landers was on the *Sprite*—perhaps, in the darkness, mistaking Ping for their renegade comrade—continued to give pursuit.

It was a hopeless chase, however, and when the *Sprite* gained her old berth at the Tiburon wharf the *San Bruno* had given up and turned back into the night.

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## CHAPTER XV.

A NEW TWIST—BY GEORGE.

"Speak to me about that!" gulped McGlory, as he, and Matt and Ping climbed out of the *Sprite* to the top of the wharf. "Little Slant-eyes has starred himself. But how he ever did it stumps me."

"How did you do it, Ping?" asked Matt, leaning against the post to which he had secured the launch and peering across the water to see if there was any sign of the *San Bruno* in the gloom.

"By jee-clickets," bubbled Ping, "me allee same big high China boy. Fightee like Sam Hill, workee allee same. Whoosh!"

"And that's the way he did it," commented McGlory.

"My no savvy," admitted Ping. "Plenty quick 'Melican man takee boat, plenty quick him dlop ovelbo'd, plenty quick my come back to othel boatee. No savvy ally mo."

"You did well, anyhow," said Matt.

"Awri'. My workee fo' Motol Matt allee time."



"What now, pard?" asked McGlory. "We got out of that bunch of excitement with ground to spare, but why do we tie up here? Why don't we keep right on to 'Frisco? George is going to hand us five apiece, you know," he added, with a laugh, "providing we fork over this ten thousand before the steamer sails for Honolulu."

"George will have to wait while we send some officers out to that house boat," said Matt.

"You haven't an idea those three tin horns will have the nerve to go back to the house boat, have you?"

"They may, to pick up their traps. That makes it necessary for us to act quickly, if we are to accomplish anything. Come on, and we'll hunt up police headquarters."

Ping hesitated.

"What's the matter with you, chink?" asked McGlory. "Ain't you coming with us?"

"No can do," replied Ping. "My no leavee boat. Mebbysy my makee sleep in boat, huh? Plenty fine place. My no lettee 'Melican man lun away with him some mo'."

"Stay here if you want to, Ping," answered Matt.

"That's the heathen of it," grunted McGlory. "He'd rather bunk in the bottom of the *Sprite*, with his legs doubled over the thwarts, than to rest on a good mattress like a Christian."

"Here's one Christian that's ready to rest," said Matt.

"And here's another," added McGlory. "Listen. Do you recollect that we haven't had a feed since we took that quick-order lunch at noon?"

"Yes."

"Well, no wonder we're hungry and fagged. Let's make rush work of this police business, and then tumble into our blankets."

It was an hour before they got a detail of officers started in a launch for the house boat, and incidentally looking for the *San Bruno*; and half an hour longer before they dropped into bed and went to sleep.

They awoke late next morning, which was to be expected, considering the hour at which they retired, and their exhausted condition; and they would not have got up when they did had a smart summons not been pounded on their door.

"Speak to me about this," snorted McGlory, sitting up and yawning. "Who's got the nerve to hammer on that door before we've done anything but go to bed and turn over?"

"It's been several hours since we went to bed, Joe," laughed Matt, pointing to the sunlight streaming through the window. "The sun looks to be nearly noon-high. Who's there?" he called, as the knocking at the door went on.

"Officer from headquarters," came the response from the hall.

"Sufferin' horn toads!" exclaimed McGlory, leaping out of bed and hurrying to the door. "Mebby he's come to tell us Big John, Kinky, and Ross have been bagged." [Pg 26]

But the officer had no such report to make.

"We found the house boat deserted, when we went out to her last night," he said, coming into the room. "Two men were left aboard of her and the rest of the detail went nosing around the bay looking for the *San Bruno*."

"Did you find the launch?" asked Matt.

"Yes—tied up at Sausalito. No sign of the three men whom you described; but three passengers took a train from Sausalito, in the small hours of the morning, and it may be that they are the fellows we were after. If they were, then they have made good their escape."

"A nice handful of cold fish you're giving us, officer," said McGlory.

"Can't help it," returned the officer. "We did the best we could."

"Who owns that house boat?" asked Matt.

"A gentleman who lives in Oakland. He rents the *Griselda* for part of the season when he's not using her himself."

"He rented her to that precious outfit of crooks and tin horns, did he?" struck in McGlory, scrambling into his clothes. "What sort of a gent is that Oakland man, anyway?"

"He's all right," declared the officer. "We talked with him over the phone, a while ago, and told him to send some one to look after the boat. He said he rented the *Griselda* to a stranger named Higgins, who paid him eighty dollars in advance for a month's rent."

"Higgins!" muttered McGlory. "That's another label for Big John. Wonder how many names Red-whiskers has got?"

"Well," said Matt, "it's too bad, officer, but, as you say, it can't be helped."

"We've placed your description of the rascals on file," finished the officer, as he turned to leave, "and if they ever show up here, or in 'Frisco, again, they'll be run in."

"Mebby," qualified McGlory. "Tie a string to that remark, officer."

"We'll do the best we can to keep watch for them, anyhow," averred the officer.

Motor Matt and McGlory had a late—a very late—breakfast; then, after Matt had had a good meal put in a paper bag for Ping, the two boys started for the *Sprite*.

To their surprise, neither Ping nor the *Sprite* were where they had been left; nor could any inquiries develop their whereabouts.

"It's good-by, Ping," laughed McGlory. "I reckon he made up his mind that he didn't want to work for you any longer, Matt."

"I'm glad of it, Joe, if that's really the case," answered Matt. "I haven't the least notion in the world what I could have found for the Chinaman to do. But I can't think that he's pulled out for good. He seemed too anxious to tie to me to break away so suddenly as that."

"Well, wherever he went he went in the *Sprite*. We can feel sure that Big John and his pals haven't had anything to do with the chink's disappearance. They're too busy getting themselves out of sight, pard, to bother with any one else."

Matt and McGlory went to the ferry house and caught the next boat for 'Frisco. On the way across the bay Matt gave Ping's breakfast to a little chap who looked as though he needed it.

McGlory carried the satchel with the ten thousand dollars. It had been glued to him ever since he got hands on it aboard the house boat.

By one o'clock the boys were at the hotel inquiring of the frowsy-looking clerk as to whether "Mr. Thompson" was in his room. Both boys thought the inquiry rather needless, but concluded to put it as a mere formality. They were a good deal taken aback, therefore, when the clerk informed them that Mr. Thompson had gone out about nine o'clock and hadn't returned.

"Now what?" muttered McGlory, taking Matt's arm and leading him off into a corner. "We've got George's money, but no George. Do you think, pard, that he raised enough money on something to pay his passage to Honolulu?"

"Certainly not, Joe," answered Matt. "He wouldn't leave town until he had learned more about that ten thousand dollars."

"But he promised to stay here! Still, as for that, he always was a fine hand at making promises. If George isn't here, I don't reckon we're obliged to hang out in this honkatonk. The more I see of it, the more I'm sorry the earthquake didn't give it a few extra shakes and put it out of business. We'll go to some other hotel, and on our way there we'll just step into a telegraph office and shoot a few reassuring words to Uncle Dan."

"We could make them more reassuring, Joe," suggested Matt, "if we waited to find George before sending the telegram."

"I wouldn't bet a whole lot, Matt, that we're going to find him."

"Oh, yes, we are, and perhaps quicker than you think."

As a matter of fact, they found George a good deal sooner than even Matt had any idea they would, for he was on the sidewalk, making for the hotel door, as Matt and McGlory passed out.

Young Lorry was quite a swell-looking boy, togged out in another suit, but there was an air about him that suggested conceit, carelessness of others' feelings, and a haughty confidence in himself that was too plain for a favorable impression.

Lorry was surprised at seeing Matt and McGlory, and, quite naturally, Matt and McGlory were not only surprised, but delighted to come upon the missing youth so soon.

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"Howdy, George?" called McGlory. "We've just been asking for you."

"You have—not," retorted Lorry. "You didn't want to see me, and you know it." He turned to a policeman who was standing behind him, and who, up to that moment, had escaped the notice of Matt and the cowboy. "There they are, officer," went on Lorry. "Arrest them."

Matt and McGlory were stunned.

"Arrest us?" queried Matt. "For what?"

"For trying to run away with ten thousand dollars belonging to me," asserted Lorry. "You were to bring it back last night, and you didn't. Arrest them, why don't you, officer? What are you standing there like that for?"

"There are always two sides to a story," said the policeman. "We've heard your side, young man, and now we'll hear the other."

Matt's amazement remained with him, but McGlory's rapidly dispelled.

"A new twist—by George," remarked McGlory dryly. "When you've known him as long as I have, Matt, you'll not be surprised at anything he does. Come back into this hotel with us, officer," the cowboy went on to the policeman, "and we'll tell you all you want to know, and perhaps more. But hang on to that false alarm who was towing you this way. He may try to bolt before we get through."

"I don't like your attitude," said Lorry haughtily, to the officer when they were all in the office.

"Naturally," grinned the policeman, "I'm not responsible for that."

"Well," ordered George, "search them, take the money and give it to me. That's all I want. They've got it, I know they have."

"You bet we've got it, George," said McGlory, opening the satchel and fishing out the bunch of bills. "How does that look to you? Everything's all shipshape, too, even to the name of the bank on the wrapper."

George gave a cry of delight and started forward.

"See him!" cried McGlory, calmly pushing his cousin back with one hand and thrusting the money into his breast pocket with the other.

"I want that, McGlory," snapped George.

"I know you do, but you don't get it."

"Come, come," put in the officer. "There's a whole lot of money in that roll——"

"Ten thousand, officer."

"Does it belong to this young fellow?"

"Not that anybody knows. He stole it, and we've just got it back from a bunch of crooks who lifted it from him."

The officer frowned.

"Ah," he muttered, "this is beginning to look serious. He says you two boys are thieves, and now you're accusing him of being a thief."

"There's a difference, officer," said McGlory.

"Difference?"

"Sure. We can prove our case, and he can't prove his."

"How'll you prove it?"

"Why, by sending a telegram to this young chap's father, in Madison, Wisconsin. Police headquarters will keep the money until an answer is received to that message."

Lorry went pale and began to tremble.

"I won't have it that way," he declared hotly.

"I guess you will," said the officer grimly. "That's a fair way to settle this business, and you ought to abide by your father's orders if these other young fellows are willing to."

"They've got some game they're trying to play," scowled George, "and I won't stand for it. I'll make you all sorry for this," he threatened, turning away.

The officer grabbed him before he had taken two steps.

"Where you going, Lorry?" he asked.

"Take your hands off of me!" ordered Lorry, striking feebly at the big fist that had collared him. "I'm going where I please, and you've no right to interfere with me."

"You're going to headquarters," asserted the policeman, "and it's there you'll stay until an answer is returned to that telegram."

"You gave the game a twist, George," grinned McGlory, "and now here's another twist, by Motor Matt and me."

"What made you think of such a foolish move, George?" asked Matt. "You didn't really think we were trying to steal that money, did you?"

"How'd I know?" snarled Lorry sullenly. "I haven't a very good opinion of McGlory, and if you travel around with him I can't have a much better opinion of you."

Motor Matt was disgusted.

"McGlory and I will go to headquarters with you, officer," said he, "and explain this to the chief. The quicker that telegram is sent, the better."

The straightforward story which Matt and the cowboy told the chief of police aroused nothing but pity and contempt for young Lorry.

A telegram was forwarded to George's father, at Madison, and all three of the boys were treated as guests, rather than as prisoners, by the chief while they awaited an answer to the message.

This interval Matt put in to good advantage. In his memorandum book he had the number of the baggage check which had been turned over to Big John, and also the name of the railroad by which it had been issued.

At Matt's suggestion, the chief sent a couple of officers to the depot to examine the trunk, and also to warn the railroad officials to call a policeman at once in case any man presented the baggage check and tried to claim the trunk.

In two hours the two officers were back, highly elated. They had opened the trunk and had found

it to contain, securely packed in a lot of clothing, a very complete burglar's kit.

"We can understand now," remarked the chief, "why those rascals were so anxious to secure the trunk check. In order to claim the trunk without the check, they would have had to identify the property. They would have looked nice describing that set of burglar's tools, wouldn't they? My word for it, no one will ever show up at the station and try to claim that trunk. After what has happened, it would be altogether too dangerous."

The trunk and the burglar's kit were confiscated by the police.

It was evening before McGlory received a telegram from his Uncle Dan. The message was a long one, and entirely satisfactory to the authorities, even if not so pleasing to Lorry.

The message ran as follows:

"Thank you for what you have done. My desire is to have you take charge of money and to bring George back home. This Motor Matt, who has already been of so much aid, might be willing to come with you and help still further. Use as much of the money as needed for your expenses. Prefer to have George brought home by you than to send officers for him. Bring him whether he wants to come or not. We will take care of him when he gets here."

"I'll not go," declared Lorry, when the telegram was read to him.

"I guess you will, old chap," said McGlory. "There'll be two of us, and if we have to, you know, we can carry you to the train."

If Lorry's looks reflected his feelings, his frame of mind was anything but enviable. As a precaution, he was to be left at police headquarters until train time.

"You're going along, eh, pard?" asked McGlory, as soon as he had got Matt where he could talk to him privately.

"It's a sudden turn for me," answered Matt. "Yesterday, at this time, I hadn't any more idea of going to Wisconsin than I had of going to China."

"What difference does it make to you where you are, Matt, so long as you're making a little good money?"

"Money isn't everything, Joe."

"No more it ain't, but in this case, Matt, you're helping a couple of mighty good people—and by that, I mean Uncle Dan and Aunt Mollie."

"If I go, McGlory, it will be to help somebody else."

"Who?"

"Why, George, himself. I think there's good stuff in him if it could be brought out."

"Hear him! Matt, George is as near a false alarm as you'll find anywhere. He's not more than half baked; if he wasn't all of that, do you think he'd have tried to have us arrested for stealing that money?"

"He's all worked up, now, and has been for quite a while," explained Matt. "When a fellow's in that condition, Joe, he's not wholly responsible for what he does."

"Talk about making a man of George is all a summer breeze, Matt. He hasn't a thing to build on, if you count out the cigarette habit."

Matt mused for a little while.

"He likes motor boats, I believe you said, Joe?" he queried at last.

"Well, yes," laughed McGlory, "a liking for boats seems to run in the family. It was a motor boat, you *sabe*, that started George on his last dash for the Pacific Slope and freedom. But what of that?"

"I was thinking that a course of motor boats might develop George into a different person."

McGlory whistled. Then he laughed.

"You're over my head, Matt," said he, "but that's nothing. The point is, will you go? I don't care what sort of a fool notion takes you, just so you see me through to the end of the trip."

"I'll go," replied Matt.

McGlory reached out his hand.

THE END.

THE NEXT NUMBER (22) WILL CONTAIN

**Motor Matt's Enemies;**

OR,

**A STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT.**

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On the Road to Waunakee—Into a Noose, and Out of It Again—George's Sister—The "Jump Spark"—By Express, Charges Collect—"Pickerel Pete"—George and McGlory Missing—Setting a Snare—Enemies to be Feared—Between Fire and Water—Chums to the Rescue—How Fate Threw the Dice—Under the Overturned Boat—A Dash for the Open—The Power Boat, Minus the Power—A Reconciliation.

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## MOTOR STORIES

### THRILLING ADVENTURE MOTOR FICTION

NEW YORK, July 17, 1909.

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## THE MAN-EATER.

I was traveling on duty from KolicAAD on the coast to an inland station, by a road, crossing the Western Ghauts, which was entirely new to me. Two bullock carts carried my kit; my half a dozen servants marched alongside, while I headed the procession on horseback. Before leaving KolicAAD I had ascertained that the route was furnished throughout with travelers' rest houses; that after the first three marches the country became wild; that a few coffee plantations—managed by Europeans—lay scattered about the loftier hills, and that from the third stage—Cerrianaad—right away to the further foot of the Ghauts, I would traverse heavy jungle, said to be swarming with wild animals. This last piece of information would have gladdened a seasoned shikarrie—or sportsman—but to me it was immaterial, as I was not much given that way. I was only nineteen years of age, owned nothing in the shape of firearms, and had yet to acquire that love of big game shooting which took such strong hold of me in after years.

After we passed Cerrianaad the country became more hilly, the track zigzagged and curved, the dense jungle shut in the road, hamlets grew fewer and further between, and the only natives to be seen abroad were wayfarers—all in large bodies—who told us that they purposely made up parties for the sake of security. I could see that my followers were fast becoming uneasy; they huddled together, while the bullock drivers frantically urged their sluggish cattle into keeping pace with me on horseback. We reached the next stage—Wuddagherry—without adventure; but here we learned something that well-nigh drove my servants into a panic, and made me ardently wish that I had a gun of any description in my hands. Soon after our arrival the head man of Wuddagherry hamlet came to me and asked if I intended going on to Malanaad the following day. I understood him, for I had already picked up the local language.

"Yes," I replied.

"You must take care to reach it as early as possible, sir; for it is a long stage, fifteen miles; the road is difficult, and very dangerous."

"How is it more dangerous than from Cerrianaad to this?" I inquired with surprise; for no one at KolicAAD had said anything about the stage in question being particularly perilous.

"Almost opposite to Malanaad hamlet, sir, about a quarter of a mile off the road to the right, an English gentleman has lately commenced clearing the jungle to make a coffee plantation. He has built an iron house and iron lines for his coolies."

"That's good news, head man: I shall certainly go and stay the night with the gentleman rather than at the Malanaad bungalow—all by myself."

"But, sir," continued the villager, now speaking in an awed whisper, "a man-eating tiger that is supposed to have wandered up from the low country on the other side is haunting the plantation! The Malanaad hamlet is walled in; the people do not stir out after dark, so the tiger is preying on the gentleman's coolies, who are not so protected."

Danger, indeed! I had heard and read of man eaters, but had never encountered one. What if the demon happened to be lurking by the roadside as we passed? What if he should pop out on to us? What could I do? Nothing!

"Is the gentleman by himself?"

"No, sir; he has a son of about thirteen years, and a little daughter, much younger. I saw them all when they rested here on their way up."

"No lady?"

"No, sir; but there was an old ayah who attended on the little girl."

I felt sorry for the isolated Englishman, especially when I thought of his two children, leading a lonely life in a jungle, cut off from the society of those of their own color. Knowing how gladly they would welcome me, I should certainly have claimed the planter's hospitality for one night at least had not the villager's news about the tiger put me off the idea. No, I was not going to run any risk: I would go straight to the Malanaad bungalow.

After dismissing the head man, I summoned my trembling followers, heartened them as best I could, and added that we would start sufficiently early in the morning to insure our reaching Malanaad well before sundown.

Accordingly, we set out soon after dawn, and proceeded in close order, keeping a bright lookout on all sides. The road wound, dipped, and climbed; the thick jungle lined it on both flanks, and frequently formed a canopy over our heads. We heard occasional weird cries in the forest, but saw nothing; and we met no one till the afternoon, when, all at once, as we cleared a bend, I saw a narrow road branching off to the right, and three figures standing under a tree just where the two tracks joined. One was a European lad of some thirteen years, the other a flaxen-haired little girl of eight or so—both wearing sun hats—and the third an old ayah, or maid; the planter's children, no doubt, with the maid in attendance. But why there—a quarter of a mile from their home? Why with only a solitary old native woman, while a man-eating tiger, not to say other dangerous animals, perhaps crouched in the very thicket behind them? My blood curdled as I thought it. No sooner did they behold me than all three ran forward.

"Halloa! Who are you?" I asked, dismounting and signing my carts to halt.

"Oh, we are so glad to see you!" answered the boy, eagerly and breathlessly. "My name is Jimmy Simpson: this is my sister Maud, and the old woman is her nurse. We are Mr. Simpson's children: we live up at the plantation, and—and we are in great trouble."

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"What trouble?" I demanded.

"A man-eating tiger commenced coming here a few nights ago, and has killed several of our coolies. My father has not been able to shoot it. Many of the coolies ran away; and, as father could not make the plantation without men, he and Pote have gone down the other side of the hills to get some."

"Who's Pote?"

"Father's assistant. They went the day before yesterday, leaving us in the care of the servants and the few coolies who still stayed. That night the tiger came about eight o'clock, the same time as before, and killed a man who had gone out of doors. The next morning every coolie and all our house servants ran away: they said they were too frightened to stop any longer. But the ayah wouldn't leave Maud. We are afraid of spending another night by ourselves, so, as the tiger does not show himself till about eight o'clock, we came out here, and have been waiting all the afternoon in hopes of meeting some one who would stay at the bungalow with us. Father won't be back for a week. Oh, sir, do come and stay with us!" he concluded pleadingly.

I thought that if I did halt here—even for a week—and I explained the reason to my superiors, they would not blame me. It was against human nature to leave these poor children alone in their fix. I did not see how I could suggest their abandoning the house, with all their father's property in it, and accompanying me to the comparative safety of the Malanaad bungalow—the very fact of Jimmy Simpson's expressing no such wish barred the idea. I therefore decided to give them my companionship—little though it might afford in the shape of protection. So, telling my people to go on to the travelers' bungalow, I turned up the side road with the children.

In the centre of a clearing stood a corrugated iron house, with a high-pitched roof, and a veranda running all round, above which opened some ventilating windows. Several trees had been allowed to stand close to the house—evidently to give shade—while at the back was a range of out-houses for servants, and two long rows of "lines" for the coolies—all built of the same material as the main house. Excepting the high ventilators, every door and window was closed, and not a sound save that of our footsteps broke the reigning stillness. Young Simpson unlocked a door, and we entered the bungalow. The ayah brought me some refreshing drink, which was very welcome after my journey, and I chatted for some time with the children, with whom I soon became fast friends.

"Well," said I at length, "I must leave you for an hour or so. I have got to see my things safely stowed away at the travelers' bungalow. Then I'll trot back here for the night with some of my

men."

"Please don't be longer than you can help, Mr. Geoffrey!" begged the lad.

"I'll be as quick as I can," I replied. "Be ready to open the door when you see us approaching."

And I hurried away.

My followers, however, were obdurate, and no amount of threats or coaxing would induce them to budge from the travelers' bungalow. During my absence the man in charge, and the villagers, had been telling them all about the tiger, and they flatly refused to accompany me to the plantation house. I had no alternative, therefore, but to go alone.

I must confess to a strong sensation of nervousness as, with lantern in hand, I set out on my return journey to the Simpsons'. But I had picked up an idea somewhere that a man-eating tiger was peculiarly regular as regarded the time of his visits to the locality he preyed on. Jimmy had said that this brute appeared at eight o'clock or thereabouts; so, it now being only a little past seven, I imagined that I had forestalled the tiger. I reached the clearing, saw the light shining through the upper ventilator windows, reconnoitred as well as the darkness would allow, listened intently, and then pushed boldly across.

I had hardly got halfway ere I heard Jimmy's voice, muffled and indistinct, from within the building.

"All right, Jimmy!" I answered, dashing on. "Here I am! Open the door!"

"Climb! Climb!" I now plainly heard him cry. "The tiger's close by somewhere!"

The words temporarily paralyzed me. I looked to see the monster shoot into the rays of my lantern; I already felt his fangs at my throat! He must have observed my approach, and concealed himself—to pounce on me! Jimmy must have marked the manoeuvre, and had shouted a warning in his childish way! With the beast at the door, so to speak, of course I did not expect the boy to open it: before I could slip in the tiger would probably be up, and either grab me or enter the house. No; the boy was quite right in keeping the door shut.

These thoughts flashed through my mind in a moment: the next, nerved by despair, and roused to action by Jimmy's reiterated cry of "Climb! Climb!" I glanced wildly about me and found myself close to one of the shady trees already alluded to. It was a moderately sized tree, with a smooth, straight stem, and much foliage at the top. Dropping my lantern—fortunately, without upsetting it—I threw myself on that trunk, and frantically shinned up. I was just in time: I had barely got out of harm's way ere, with a hideous roar, a long, lanky, mangy-looking tiger squirmed round the corner of the house, came in a series of bounds to the tree, and then, rearing on end, tried to hook me down! I could hear his claws tearing the bark; I expected the cruel talons to pierce my flesh; but luckily he could not reach me, and I hauled myself up among the branches into comparative safety. It now remained to be seen whether the beast could and would follow me. At the time I knew nothing of the tiger's climbing powers; so I watched my enemy in an agony of doubt—to be inexpressibly relieved when I realized that he could not do it! He was old—as most man-eaters are: he hung on to the base of the stem, but, after many ineffectual attempts, he desisted: the task was beyond him: he was unable to draw himself up!

For the present I was safe, then, and had time to look about me. Taking my position in the centre of the tree, I topped the veranda roof, and I could almost see in through one of the ventilator windows; but a good six feet yawned between the inmost tree twig and the veranda eave; a gap that I could not cover even had I good foothold to spring from. Nothing remained, therefore, but to make the best of it, and trust to the feline sneaking off at daylight. Accordingly, I was about seeking a comfortable branch to spend the night on when Jimmy called, "Mr. Geoffrey!"

"Halloa!" I shouted in reply; "I'm safe up the tree, Jimmy, thanks to your warning."

"But you are not safe!" he wailed hysterically.

"Why, where's the danger? The brute has tried to climb the tree, but failed: he can't get at me."

"Yes, he can, if he thinks of the wood stack!"

"What wood stack?"

"There, at the end of the veranda, just round the corner! If he climbs by it on to the veranda roof, he can jump from there into the tree! I've only just thought of it!"

My lantern rays did not penetrate so far. I peered through the gloom in the direction indicated, and could dimly make out a number of log ends projecting beyond the side wall, and heaped to the full height of the veranda itself. Clearly, then, if the tiger thought of that stack he would certainly climb it, come along the veranda roof to the tree, spring across the gap, seize and carry me with him to the ground! As I contemplated these probabilities I nigh yielded to despair: I broke into a cold perspiration, and I murmured a prayer for aid. That my prayer was answered is proved by my now living to tell this story. But I had yet to get out of my fix. I was given little leisure to reflect, for the tiger—as if Jimmy's words had given him the hint—walked off and disappeared round the corner; a scrambling, scratching sound followed, and before I could well believe my eyes, there came the brute, sneaking along the inclined plane of the veranda roof!

Could I—after warning Jimmy to unfasten the door—slip down the tree and dash into the house? No; though the varmint could not climb I felt sure he could drop, and that almost before I touched ground he would be upon me. The ugly cat crawled along the sloped iron sheeting, halted abreast of the tree, and set up a hoarse purr on spotting me—cowering amid the branches.

He crept closer and closer to the eave till he could come no further—then gathered himself up for a spring! He strained and strained; I expected to see him shoot across and dig both teeth and claws into me; yet he came not! I stared at the beast in a wild fascination of terror. I remember—at that awful moment—being struck by his aged and unkempt appearance; I remember hearing the purr gradually give place to a growl of anger, and then all at once the truth broke on me: that outward and upward spring was beyond the man-eater; he would not attempt the feat; I was safe!

My courage revived, and with it came a fierce longing to destroy my tormentor, whose foul breath reached and sickened me even at that distance. Now, another thought suddenly struck me: was there possibly a gun of some kind in the house? Hardly; for if so I should probably have seen it, or Jimmy would have offered me the weapon when I left that afternoon. Anyhow, I would find out.

"Jimmy!" I bawled, causing the tiger to start angrily.

"Yes, Mr. Geoffrey?"

"The tiger has come on to the veranda roof—as you said; but he can't manage to spring into the tree, so I'm safe!"

"Oh, I'm so glad! I was——"

"I say, have you a gun?"

"Father took one rifle with him; the other is in the case, locked up, to keep us from meddling with it."

"Are there cartridges?"

"Yes; a beltful in the case."

"Where's the key?"

"Father has it."

"Jimmy," I rejoined imploringly, "break open the case, load the rifle, open the door a wee bit, and fire at the beast through the veranda roof. The bullet will penetrate—I'm sure. He is crouching in a line with the ventilator, just short of the eave, so you'll know where to aim. I'll make it right with your father."

"What's the good?" half whimpered the boy. "I don't know how to use a rifle."

Here was a facer! What more was left? But my brain was busy, and I determined to die hard. Green as I was, shaken as I was, I resolved to try and shoot the tiger myself!

"Jimmy, do you think you could manage to pass me the rifle?"

"I will if I can; but how?"

"No use attempting the door—even while the brute is on the veranda roof; he'd hear you like a shot, and pounce down on you before you could wink. But could you reach the ventilator window from the inside? Don't be afraid; it is too small for him to get his head and shoulders through, so he can't touch you."

"But how am I to do it?"

"Can't you go hand-over-hand up the swing rope, with the rifle and belt slung on you?"

"Yes, I can," he answered readily.

"Then you could work along the tie beam and reach the window, couldn't you?"

"I think so; but even if the window is large enough for me, how about the tiger outside?"

"Tell you what: get the rifle and cartridge belt, climb the swing rope, making as little noise as possible, and straddle along the tie beam to the window. Directly I see you there, I'll pretend to descend the tree; the brute will either drop to the earth from where he now is, or go round by the wood heap; in either case you could scramble out, chuck me the rifle and belt, and get through the window again before the tiger is able to remount the veranda by the wood heap; that is, if he notices you. Leave the rest to me."

The boy was plucky to the backbone, and immediately agreed to carry out my instructions. Presently I heard a rending, as of a box being broken open; then succeeded a silence of several minutes, and finally—to my joy—I saw the lad cautiously peeping over the window sill. Promptly I made a show of climbing down, energetically shaking the foliage as I felt my way to the lower branches. My movement had the desired effect; the tiger raised himself, growled, and, evidently believing that he had me, down he dropped with a "thud" to the ground. The coast was clear for Jimmy!

"Now, Jimmy!" I shouted, frantically reclimbing upward and inward, "out you get! He's down below!"

Quick as thought Jimmy slipped out the rifle and belt and proceeded to follow them. With my attention divided between him and the man-eater, I waited in desperate expectancy, but try as he would, the boy could not pass through! He essayed head first, then legs first, then this way, then that way; no, he failed! In my anxiety I had momentarily taken my eyes off the animal to watch Jimmy. On recollecting myself, and looking down again, the brute was nowhere to be seen! Merciful heaven! where had he gone? I peered on all sides, striving to probe the gloom beyond the rays of my still burning lantern, but I could not see him; the monster had vanished! While a



sensation of superstitious terror threatened to overwhelm me, a smothered ejaculation of triumph came from Jimmy; I glanced eagerly in his direction, to find that he had at last succeeded in getting out! He was in the act of dropping to the veranda roof, when the scrambling, scratching sound which I had once before heard that night smote on my ear; the disappearance of the tiger was no longer a mystery: he was climbing the wood heap!

"Jimmy!" I shrieked, "get back! For your life get back! The tiger's climbing the stack!"

Whether the boy heard me, understood me, or not, or had taken leave of his senses, I could not tell, for, instead of obeying me, he clutched both rifle and belt, and floundered down the slope toward the tree! At the same moment I saw that the tiger had gained the roof, and was approaching as fast as he could!

"Back! For mercy's sake, back!" I yelled despairingly; but the next instant the lad—after giving a hasty glance at the tiger—put forth all his young strength and hurled the rifle in my direction. Mechanically I managed to seize the piece as it crashed into the branches; the belt followed; I secured it, and then the plucky boy, scurrying up the inclined roof, hauled himself to the window and wriggled through the aperture not half a second before the man-eater got up to it! Intensely relieved at Jimmy's miraculous escape, and burning with fury against the accursed animal—the cause of all our trouble—I simply sat there and sent bullet after bullet into his vile carcass, continuing the fusillade till he lay limp and lifeless on the veranda roof!

No more need be said. I loved that boy, who had shown a courage and nerve beyond the wildest dreams of fancy. I love him now as a man, with a reputation for cool pluck and presence of mind, the promise of which he so signally exhibited on the occasion of my story. When Mr. Simpson returned, and I told him all, the satisfaction I derived by seeing the tears of admiration that dimmed his eyes as I described his son's gallantry more than compensated me for my own somewhat unpleasant share in that ever memorable adventure.

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**Transcriber's Notes:**

Added table of contents.

Cover images may be clicked to view larger versions.

Retained inconsistent spacing of "houseboat" vs. "house boat."

Page 9, removed unnecessary comma from "rope down." Corrected "You're" to "Your" in "Your father was a rowdy."

Page 12, added missing quote after "see if they come back."

Page 15, added missing "ing" to "catching Red-whiskers."

Page 18, corrected double comma after "a humorous glance at Ross and Kinky." Corrected typo "bame" in "only yourself to blame."

Page 19, added missing open quote to "Don't be a fool!"

Page 23, capitalized "Wait" in "Wait until we can get."

Page 25, corrected "yawninig" to "yawning."

Page 30, corrected typo "ventilater" in "upper ventilator windows."

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOTOR MATT'S LAUNCH; OR, A FRIEND IN  
NEED \*\*\*

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