

**The Motor Boys on the  
Pacific**

or

The Young Derelict Hunters

by Clarence Young

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# PREFACE

DEAR BOYS:

I believe it is not necessary to introduce the Motor Boys to most of my readers, as they have made their acquaintance in the previous books of this series. To those, however, who take up this volume without having previously read the ones that go before, I take pleasure in presenting my friends, Jerry, Ned and Bob.

They are booked for quite a long trip, this time; across the continent to the Pacific coast, where they are destined to have some stirring adventures, searching for a mysterious derelict.

Those of you who know the Motor Boys from their past performances know that they will meet emergencies in the right spirit, and that they will do their level best to accomplish what they set out to do. Whether they did so in this case I leave it for you to determine by reading the book.

Though their own motor boat, the *Dartaway*, was destroyed in a train wreck, they managed to get the use of a powerful craft, in which they made a cruise on the Pacific ocean. Their old friend, Professor Snodgrass was with them, and, if you care to learn of his search for a horned toad, you will find the details set down here.

Yours very truly,

CLARENCE YOUNG.

# CHAPTER I.

## SOME BAD NEWS

“Well, she is smashed this time, sure!” exclaimed Jerry Hopkins, to his chums, Ned Slade and Bob Baker.

“What’s smashed?” asked Ned. “Who’s the letter from?” for Jerry had a slip of paper in his hand.

“It isn’t a letter. It’s a telegram.”

“A telegram!” exclaimed Bob. “What’s up, Jerry?”

“She’s smashed, I tell you. Busted, wrecked, demolished, destroyed, slivered to pieces, all gone!”

“Who?”

“Our motor boat, the *Dartaway!*”

“Not the *Dartaway!*” and Ned and Bob crowded closer to Jerry.

“That’s what she is. There’s no mistake about it this time, I’m afraid. You know we thought once before she had gone to flinders, but it wasn’t so. This time it is.”

“How did it happen?” asked Ned.

“Yes, tell us, can’t you?” cried Bob. “What are you so slow about?”

“Say, Chunky,” remarked Jerry, looking at his fat chum, “if you’ll give me a chance I’ll tell you all I know. I just got this telegram from the Florida Coast Railway Company. It says:

“Jerry Hopkins. Motor boat *Dartaway*, shipped by you from St. Augustine in freight wreck just outside Jacksonville. Boat total loss, buried under several freight cars. Will write further particulars. J. H. Maxon, General Freight Agent.”

“That’s all there is to it,” added Jerry, folding up the telegram.

“All there is to it! I guess not much!” exclaimed Bob. “Aren’t you going to sue ’em for damages, Jerry?”

“Well, there’s no use being in such a rush,” observed Jerry. “Maybe they’ll pay the claim without a suit. I’ll have to make some inquiries.”

“Let’s go down to the freight once here and see Mr. Hitter,” suggested Ned. “He can tell us what to do. The poor *Dartaway!* Smashed!”

“And in a land wreck, too!” put in Jerry. “It wouldn’t be so bad if she had gone down on the Atlantic, chasing after a whale, or in pursuit of a shark—”

“Or with the flag flying, out in a storm, with Salt Water Sam,” interrupted Ned. “But to think of her being buried under a lot of freight cars! It’s tough, that’s what it is!”

“That’s right,” agreed Bob. “Just think of it! No more rides in her! Say, we ought to get heavy damages! She was a fine boat!”

“Come on then,” cried Ned. “Don’t let’s stand here chinning all day. Let’s go see Mr. Hitter. He has charge of all the freight that comes to Cresville, and he can tell us how to proceed to collect damages.”

“Yes, I guess that’s all that’s left for us to do,” decided Jerry, and the three lads started for the railroad depot.

They lived in the town of Cresville, Mass., a thriving community, and had been chums and inseparable companions ever since they could remember. Bob Baker was the son of a wealthy banker, while Jerry Hopkins’s mother was a widow, who had been left considerable property, and Ned Slade’s father owned a large department store.

You boys who have read the previous volumes of this “Motor Boys Series” do not need to be reminded of the adventures the three chums had together. To those of you who read this book first, I will say that, in the first volume, called “The Motor Boys,” there was related a series of happenings that followed the winning of a certain bicycle race in Cresville. After their victory in this contest the boys got motorcycles, and, by winning a race on them, won a touring car.

In this automobile they had many adventures, and several narrow escapes. They incurred the enmity of Noddy Nixon, a town bully, and his crony, Bill Berry. The three chums then took a long trip overland in their automobile, as related in the second book of this series and, incidentally, managed to locate a rich mine belonging to a prospector, who, to reward them, gave them a number of shares. While out west the boys met a very learned gentleman, Professor Uriah Snodgrass, who was traveling in the interests of science. He

persuaded the boys to go with him in their automobile to search for a certain ancient, buried city, and this they found in Mexico, where they had a number of surprising adventures.

Returning from that journey, they made a trip across the plains, on which they discovered the hermit of Lost Lake. Arriving home they decided, some time later, to get a motor boat, and, in the fifth volume of the series, entitled, "The Motor Boys Afloat," there was set down what happened to them on their first cruise on the river, during which they solved a robbery mystery. Finding they were well able to manage the boat they took a trip on the Atlantic ocean, and, after weathering some heavy storms they reached home, only to start out again on a longer voyage, this time to strange waters amid the everglades of Florida.

They had recently returned from that queer region, and, as they had done on their journey to that locality, they shipped their boat by rail from St. Augustine to Cresville. Or, rather, they saw it safely boxed at the freight station in St. Augustine, and came on up north, trusting that the *Dartaway* would arrive in due season, and in good condition.

They had been home a week now, and as there was no news of their boat, Jerry had become rather anxious and had written to the railroad officials in St. Augustine. In response he got the telegram which brought consternation to the hearts of the motor boys.

"It doesn't seem possible," remarked Bob, as the three lads hurried on toward the freight office.

"I guess it's good-bye to the *Dartaway* this trip," said Jerry. "Too bad! she was a fine boat."

“Well, we’ll make the railroad pay for it, and we’ll get a better boat,” spoke up Bob.

“We couldn’t get any better boat than the *Dartaway*, Chunky,” said Ned. “We might get a larger one, and a more powerful one, but never a better one, She served us well. To think of her being crushed under a lot of freight cars! It makes me mad!”

“No use feeling that way,” suggested Jerry. “Just think of the good times we had in her, not only on this last trip, but on the previous cruises.”

“This last was the best,” remarked Bob, with something like a sigh. “It was lovely down there in Florida.”

“I guess he’s thinking of the Seabury girls,” put in Ned, with a wink at Jerry.

“No more than you are!” exclaimed Bob. “I guess you were rather sweet on Olivia, yourself.”

“Or was it Rose or Nellie?” asked Jerry with a laugh. “They were all three nice—very nice.”

“That’s right,” said Ned, fervently.

The three young ladies the boys referred to were daughters of a Mr. Nathan Seabury, whom the boys met while cruising about the everglades and adjacent rivers and lakes. He was in his houseboat *Wanderer*, traveling for his health. Mr. Seabury owned a large hotel in Florida and his meeting with the boys, especially with Jerry, was a source of profit to Mrs. Hopkins.

She owned some land in Florida; but did not consider it of any value. It developed that it adjoined Mr. Seabury’s hotel property

and, as he wished it to enlarge his building, he purchased the lot for a goodly sum.

The three boys, after the return of the *Dartaway* and *Wanderer* from the strange waters, had stopped for a week at Mr. Seabury's hotel, before journeying north.

"I'd like to see them again," said Bob, after a pause, during which the boys turned into the street leading to the depot.

"Who?" asked Ned.

"The Seabury family."

"Mr. Seabury—or—er—the girls?" asked Jerry.

"All of 'em," replied Bob quickly.

"I had a letter the other day," remarked Jerry quietly.

"You did!" exclaimed Ned.

"From them?" asked Bob eagerly.

"Well, it wasn't exactly a family letter," answered Jerry, with just the suspicion of a blush. "It was from Nellie, and she said she, her sisters and father were going to lower California."

"To California?" exclaimed Bob and Ned.

"Yes; for Mr. Seabury's health. You know they said they expected to when we parted from them. The climate of Florida did not do him any good, and they are going to try what California will do. She asked us to call and see them, if we were ever in that neighborhood."

“I guess our chances of going to California are pretty slim,” remarked Bob. “Our motor boat’s gone now, and we can’t make any more cruises.”

“I don’t see what that’s got to do with it,” declared Ned. “We couldn’t very well cross the continent in her, even if we had the *Dartaway*, and she was rather too small to make the trip by water, even if the Panama Canal was finished.”

“Oh, well, you know what I mean,” retorted Bob, who did not exactly know himself. “We can’t go anywhere right away. School opens soon, and it’s buckle down and study all winter I suppose. But—”

Bob’s remarks were interrupted by the arrival of the Boston Express, which rumbled into the Cresville station, where the boys now were and, after a momentary stop, steamed on again. A man leaped from the steps of a parlor car and ran into the freight office, first, however, looking up and down the length of the train to see if any other passengers got off.

“He seems in a hurry,” observed Ned.

“Yes, and he must have some pull with the railroad, for the Boston Express never stops here,” said Jerry. “Maybe he’s the president of the road.”

The boys kept on to the freight office. When they reached it they found the stranger in conversation with Mr. Hitter, the agent. The chums could not help overhearing the talk.

“Have you several packages here, addressed to X. Y. Z., to be held until called for?” the stranger asked.

“There they be,” replied the agent, pointing to several small boxes, piled near the door.

“That’s good,” and the man seemed much relieved. “Now I want them shipped by fast freight to San Francisco, and I want to prepay them so there will be no delay. How much is it?” and he pulled out a pocketbook, disclosing a roll of bills. As he did so he hurried to the door and looked up and down the depot platform, as if afraid of being observed. He saw the three boys, and, for a moment, seemed as if he was about to hurry away. Then, with an obvious effort, he remained, but turned into the freight office and shut the door.

“He acts as if he was afraid we would steal something from him,” said Bob.

“Or as if he didn’t want us to hear any more about those boxes,” supplemented Jerry. “He’s a queer customer, he is.”

“Well, it’s none of our affair,” remarked Ned, but neither he nor his chums realized how, a little later, they were to take part in an adventure in which the mysterious man and the queer boxes were to figure importantly.

In a short time the man came out of the freight office. He did not look at the boys, but hurried off down the street, putting some papers into his pocket book, which, the boys could not help noticing as he passed them, was not so full of money as it had been.

“Let’s go in and ask Mr. Hitter what to do about our boat,” suggested Ned.

They found the agent counting over a roll of bills.

“Been robbing a bank?” asked Bob cheerfully. “Guess I’d better tell dad to look out for his money.”

“That was paid by the man who was just in in here,” replied the agent. “Queer chap. Seemed as if he didn’t want to be found out. First he was going to ship his stuff by fast freight, and then he concluded it would be better by express, though it cost a lot more. But he had plenty of money.”

“Who was he?” asked Jerry.

“That’s another funny part of it. He didn’t tell me his name, though I hinted I’d have to have it to give him a receipt. He said to make it out X. Y. Z., and I done it. That’s the way them boxes come, several days ago, from Boston. They arrived by express, consigned to X. Y. Z., and was to be called for. I thought of everybody in town, but there ain’t nobody with them initials. I was just wondering what to do with ’em when in he comes an’ claims ’em.”

“What’s in ’em?” asked Jerry.

“Blessed if I know,” responded Mr. Hitter. “I couldn’t git that out of him, either, though I hinted that I ought to know if it was dynamite, or anything dangerous.”

“What did he say?” inquired Ned.

“He said it wasn’t dynamite, but that’s all he would say, an’ I didn’t have no right to open ’em. He paid me the expressage, and seemed quite anxious to know just when I could ship the boxes, and when they’d arrive in San Francisco. I could tell him the first, but not the last, for there’s no tellin’ what delays there’ll be on the road.

“He was a queer man—a very queer man. I couldn’t make him out. An’ he went off in a hurry, as if he was afraid some one would see him. An’ he shut the door, jest as if you boys would bother him,— Well, it takes all sorts of people to make a world. I don’t s’pose you or I will ever meet him again.”

Mr. Hitter was not destined to, but the boys had not seen the last of the strangely acting man, who soon afterward played a strange part in their lives.

“What you chaps after, anyhow?” went on the freight agent, when he had put the money in the safe.

“Our motor boat’s smashed!” exclaimed Bob. “We want damages for her! How are we going to get ’em?”

“Not guilty, boys!” exclaimed the agent holding up his hands, as if he thought wild-west robbers were confronting him. “You can search me. Nary a boat have I got, an’ you can turn my pockets inside out!” and he turned slowly around, like an exhibition figure in a store show window.

## CHAPTER II.

### A DESPERATE RACE

“Well,” remarked Mr. Hitter, after a pause, during which the boys, rather surprised at his conduct, stood staring at him, “well, why don’t you look in my hip pocket. Maybe I’ve got a boat concealed there.”

“I didn’t mean to go at you with such a rush,” apologized Jerry. “But you see—”

“That’s all right,” interrupted the freight agent. “Can I put my hands down now? The blood’s all runnin’ out of ’em, an’ they feel as if they was goin’ to sleep. That’ll never do, as I’ve got a lot of way-bills to make out,” and he lowered his arms.

“Do you know anything about this?” asked Jerry, handing Mr. Hitter the telegram.

“What’s that? The *Dartaway* smashed!” the agent exclaimed, reading the message. “Come now, that’s too bad! How did it happen?”

The boys explained how they had shipped the craft north.

“Of course the accident didn’t happen on the line of railroad I am agent for,” said Mr. Hitter, after reading the telegram again. “If it had, we’d be responsible.”

“What can we do?” asked Bob. “We want to get damages.”

“An’ I guess you’re entitled to ’em,” replied the agent. “Come on inside, and I’ll tell you what to do. You’ll have to make a claim, submit affidavits, go before a notary public and a whole lot of rig-ma-role, but I guess, in the end you’ll get damages. They can’t blame you because the boat was smashed. It’s too bad! I feel like I’d lost an old friend.”

Mr. Hitter had had several rides in the *Dartaway* for he had done the boys many favors and they wished to return them, so he was given a chance to get intimately acquainted with the speedy craft.

Taking the boys into his office, Mr. Hitter instructed them how to write a letter to the claim department of the Florida Coast Railway, demanding damages for the smashing of the boat.

“Be respectful, but put it good and strong,” he said. “I’ll write on my own account to the general freight agent. He’s a friend of mine, and we have business dealings together—that is his road and my road,” and Mr. Hitter spoke as though he owned the line of which he was the Cresville agent.

“That’ll be good,” said Bob. “Maybe it will hurry matters up. We’re much obliged to you, Mr. Hitter.”

“That’s what we are,” chimed in Jerry and Ned.

The boys lost no time in sending in their claim. Then there was nothing to do but to wait. They knew it would take some days, and they did not expect an answer in less than a week, while Mr. Hitter told them that if they got money in payment for the destroyed boat within three months they would be lucky.

“Well, since the *Dartaway*’s gone, I guess we’ll have to go back to the automobile for a change,” suggested Jerry one afternoon, early

in September, about a week before school was to open. “Let’s take a little jaunt out in the country, stay a couple of days, and come back, all ready to pitch in and study.”

“Fine!” cried Bob. “We’ll stay at a hotel where they have good dinners—”

“Of course!” retorted Ned. “That’s Chunky’s first idea—something to eat. I’ve been waiting for him to say something like that.”

The boys were at Jerry’s house, talking over various matters. The auto was kept in an unused barn back of his home, but, since the advent of the motor boat, had not seen much service, though occasionally the boys went out in it. Now, it was likely to come into active use again.

“Let’s look the machine over,” proposed Jerry. “It may need some repairs. It got pretty hard usage, especially in our trips to Mexico and across the plains.”

The boys soon found that, beyond two tires which needed repairs, and some minor adjustments to the engine, the car was in good shape. It was in running order and, at Bob’s suggestion, they got in it and made a trip to the town garage, where they intended to leave it to be overhauled.

As they were turning a corner, near the automobile shop, they heard a sudden “Honk-honk!” that startled them. Jerry, who was at the steering wheel, shut off the power and applied the emergency brake.

And it was only just in time for, a moment later, from a cross street, there shot out a big green touring car, very powerful, as they could tell by the throbbing of the engine. It almost grazed the mudguards

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