

The MOTOR BOYS

by Clarence Young.

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CHAPTER IX

The Queer Bank Bill

It was the afternoon of the day the robbery of the mill was discovered. Ned, after his conference with his two chums, had gone down to his father's store. He wanted to talk to Mr. Slade about the prospects of getting a motorcycle. For, now that Jerry was about to get one, the desire on Ned's part was all the stronger.

While standing in the front of the big department establishment his father owned Ned was surprised to see, passing on the other side of the street, Noddy Nixon and Paul Banner.

"That's queer," commented Ned. "I didn't know Noddy and Paul were as chummy as that. They didn't use to have much use for each other."

Then the idea suddenly came to him that here was the very opportunity he desired. He could follow Noddy and Paul and see if he might learn anything.

The bully and the dude, as Ned could observe from time to time, did not seem to be exactly in accord. At times they would almost come to a halt, and dispute over something. Noddy seemed to be objecting to some course of action proposed by Paul.

"They must be going to the old windmill," commented Ned, as he saw Noddy and Paul turn down a street that led to an old fashioned and deserted flourmill, that, in bygone days, had been operated by wind power. The mill was a good distance from the edge of the town, in the center of a big field.

Sure enough that was the destination of the two young men. Ned was as close after them as he dared to go. There was little risk of his being noticed while he was on the streets, but, after leaving them there was greater danger of detection for the trailer.

"However," argued Ned, "as long as I know where they are going, I don't need to keep so close after them. I can wait until they get to the mill, and then I can go there, too. By coming up from the back, where there are no windows, which I can do by going through Hedges lane, they can't see me."

He approached the mill rapidly from the rear. As he came within hearing distance he could distinguish voices. And they seemed to be disputing. The ancient establishment was full of cracks and broken places, and the noise from inside passed out freely. Nearer and nearer hurried Ned. At last he reached the broad platform that ran all around the base of the mill. He proceeded cautiously, taking care not to step in the big holes that yawned here and there. He crept around to a place near the front entrance to the old structure. Fortunately, here he found where a board had come loose, so that it afforded a good listening place.

"I don't see what in the world you wanted to bring me all the way out to this lonely place for, my dear chap," Paul was saying.

"It's this way," Noddy was explaining. "I told you I was short of cash and had to ask you to wait until today to pay the bet I made with you."

"But, my dear fellow," Polly expostulated, "why couldn't you pay me up there in town, just as well?"

"To tell you the truth," said Noddy, in a tone that would indicate to any one who knew him that he was going to do just the opposite, "I didn't want any one to see me paying you."

"And why not, pray, my dear chap?"

"Because I owe quite a few bets," replied Noddy. "I am going to square them all up in a day or so, but if those I owe saw me paying you they would all come down on me at once and I would be financially embarrassed. I suppose you're ready to take the money now?"

"Ready, nay, anxious, my dear chap."

"Well, I had a little trouble in getting it," went on Noddy, not going into particulars, however. "And here it is. Just one hundred dollars, isn't it?"

"Correct, my dear boy."

"Ten fives are fifty," said Noddy, counting out some bills, "and twenty is seventy. Twenty more is ninety, and that ten makes just the hundred."

"Hold on here!" explained Paul, when Noddy had come to the end of his counting. "This bill doesn't look just right."

"Which bill?"

"This last ten dollar one. I never saw one like it."

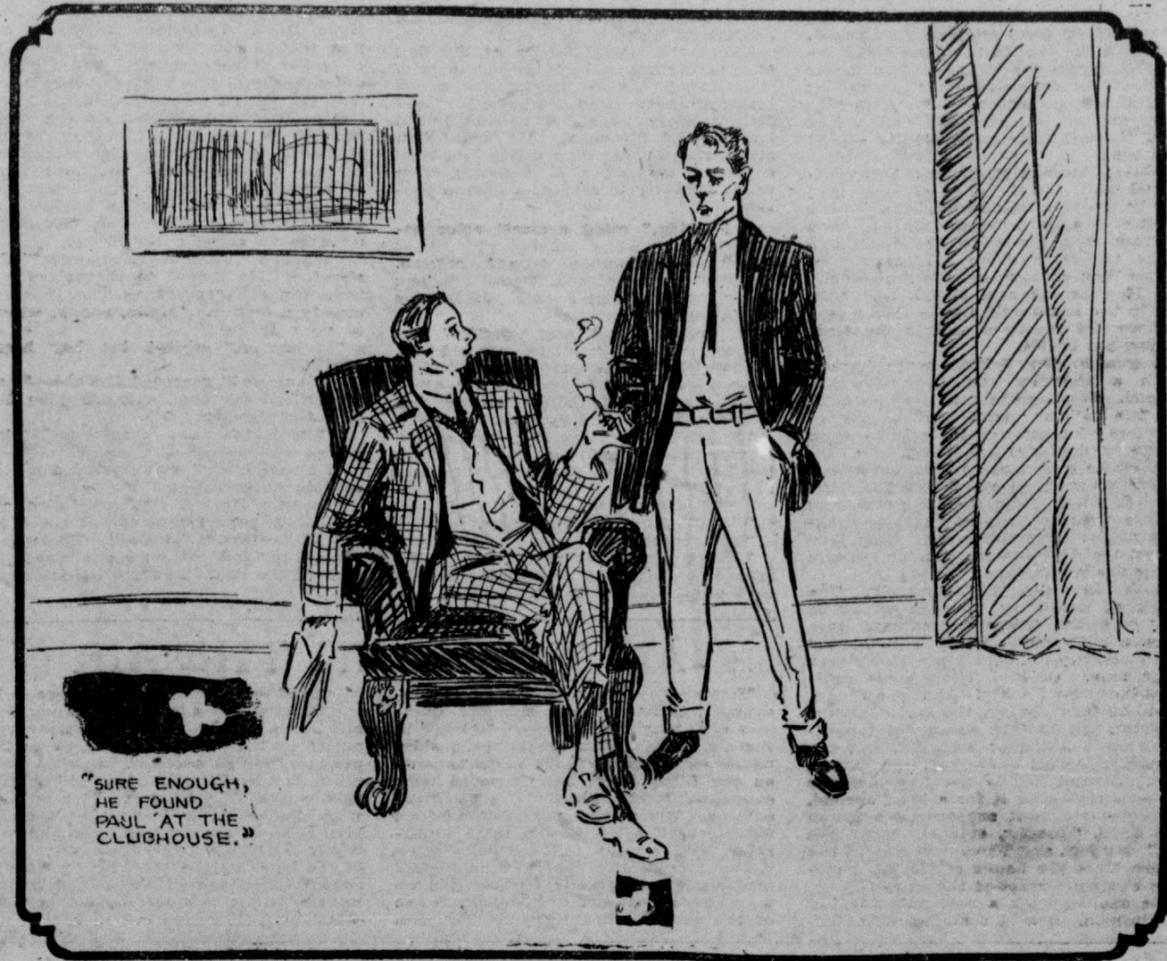
"Nonsense, that's all right," responded Noddy. "Let's see it."

Paul passed it back.

"Why, certainly it's good," Noddy said. "It's a state bank bill, instead of a national one, that's all. Issued by the Merchants' bank of Boston."

"But what's that queer red mark on it?"

Noddy examined it more closely. Then he laughed.



"Some one has gone to the trouble of marking his initials on it in red ink," he said. "Probably for identification, or to serve as a mark. Maybe it was once used as a marked bill," and Noddy gave a short laugh. "See, there are the letters H. R. C."

"I guess you're right," agreed Paul. "Well, hand it over. I must be going. Sorry you lost the bet, but losers must pay, you know."

"Oh, I'm not squealing," retorted Noddy.

"Guess I'll be going," went on Paul. "Beastly long walk back to town."

Ned was glad to hear the sound of departing footsteps. He kept in hiding for five minutes, however, fearing Noddy might return. At the end of that time he ventured out. He saw Noddy and Paul almost across the field and he knew he was safe.

Ned hurried back to town, going the same roundabout path he had taken in coming. He hastened to Jerry's house and told him what had taken place, and the two hunted up Bob and related the events to him.

"Things are getting warm," commented Bob.

"They are that," replied Jerry.

"I wonder if one of us couldn't get a talk with 'Polly' Banner?" suggested Jerry. "We might manage to get talking about queer bills, and 'Polly' would show us the one he had."

"Suppose you try that," Bob said.

"I'm willing," Jerry responded. "I'll take a walk downtown now, and maybe I'll meet him. You wait until I come back."

Jerry resolved to first visit the clubhouse of the athletic organization, as he knew Paul spent a good deal of his time there. Sure enough, he found Paul sitting at ease in a comfortable chair, smoking a perfumed cigarette and reading a book.

"I say, Paul," said Jerry, "you're not interested in old coins, are you?"

"Old coins? No, my dear chap. Why should I be interested in old coins?"

"Oh, I don't know. I was just wondering. Some people collect old coins, and some stamps. I favor stamps myself."

"Now that you speak of it," said Paul, "I remember I have an old bill about me. It's rather odd. Maybe you'd be interested in it."

"Let's see," replied Jerry, thanking his stars that he was about to accomplish his purpose so easily.

Paul drew out the odd \$10 note Noddy had given him. Just as Ned had reported, it was an old style banknote. And in one of the blank spaces on the reverse side some one had made a very elaborate monogram of the initials H. R. C.

"Quite a curiosity," observed Jerry, passing the bill back.

"I think so," said Paul, puffing out thick clouds of smoke from his Egypt-

ian cigarette. "But I suppose there is no premium on it."

"There might be," replied Jerry in as careless a tone as he could assume. "If I were you I'd save it and see."

"I will," said Paul. "I'll place it in the very back part of my wallet, and I won't spend it until I see a coin catalogue. That's an easy way to make money."

"Where did you get the bill?" asked Jerry. "Perhaps you can get more."

"Noddy Nixon gave it to me," responded Paul. "I wasn't going to take it at first, but he told me it was good."

"Oh, I reckon it's good enough," answered Jerry. "Well, I guess I'll be traveling. Goodby, Paul."

"Good afternoon, my dear chap," answered Paul, lighting another cigarette.

"I'll not forget how that bill looks," said Jerry to himself as he sought his two chums and told them what had taken place between Paul and himself.

CHAPTER X

The Motorcycle

It was about a week after the foregoing events when Jerry received a letter, bearing in the upper left hand corner of the envelope the mark of the C., H. and D. railroad.

He read the missive, which was short and to the point. Briefly it informed Jerry that there awaited him at the freight office of the road one motorcycle, which he could have by calling and presenting the inclosed waybill.

"Hurrah!" shouted the boy. "Three cheers for the Cresville athletic club and Mr. Wakefield! Hurrah!"

Jerry lost no time in calling for his two chums, and the three boys hurried together to the freight depot.

"What can I do for you boys?" asked Mr. Hitter, the agent in charge.

"I've come to get what that calls for," replied Jerry, handing over the waybill.

"Oh, yes; one of them new fangled bicycles that take a steam engine to run 'em. Well, you'll find it down at the end of the platform," said Mr. Hitter. "Now, be careful, and don't blow yourself up. Boys is dreadful careless like," he muttered as he went on with his work.

Boxed in a big crate at the end of the freight platform the boys found the motorcycle. It was addressed in big letters to "Jerry Hopkins, Esq." and marked "With care."

"Shall I unpack it here or get it taken up to the house, crate and all?" asked Jerry of his chums.

"Oh, unpack it here. Then you can ride it home," said Bob.

"I know about as much how to ride one as I would how to run a locomotive," objected Jerry. "I've studied the-

catalogues, of course, but I think I'd better start it up at home first."

"Oh, go ahead and ride it home," put in Ned. "We can manage to find out how it works, and we can get some

gasoline over to the drug store."

So, rather against his own calmer judgment, Jerry decided to do as his friends wished. He borrowed a hammer from Mr. Hitter, and soon the crate was broken apart and the motorcycle, in all its mechanical beauty, was revealed.

It certainly was a fine machine and had all the latest improvements. There were two cylinders instead of one, insuring great speed, the tires were large and there was a large reservoir for gasoline. It was of the latest make and not generally on the market as yet.

"Here's a book that tells all about how to run it," said Bob, catching sight of a pamphlet of directions.

The boys read the directions over carefully. It seemed simple enough. All there was to do was to put some gasoline in the tank, see that the batteries gave a proper current, start the machine off, turn on the gasoline, switch on the spark and ride off.

"I'll get the gasoline," volunteered Ned. He ran over to the drug store and came back with a can full.

"Now try and see if there's a good spark," Jerry suggested.

Satisfied that the batteries were in working order, Jerry prepared to take his first ride. The street leading from the railroad depot was a long, straight, wide one.

"It's a good thing," commented Jerry, referring to the highway. "There's plenty of chance to be run away with and not damage anything. I can ride clear to New York if I go far enough."

"I wouldn't this time, though," said Bob.

Jerry smiled. It was a rather dubious sort of a grin, to be sure. Much as he wanted a motorcycle, he knew there was a little risk in riding one when he was not thoroughly familiar with it. However, he wasn't going to back out. He got on the ponderous machine, which Bob and Ned steadied for him.

"Give me a little shove."

Bob and Ned did so.

"Work the pedals and get a good start," advised Bob.

Jerry did so. Soon he was moving off at a fair speed, though, of course, just as if he were on an ordinary bicycle.

"Turn on the gasoline!" shouted Ned. "And throw in the spark!" called Bob. "Here she goes," Jerry yelled back.

There was a series of sharp explosions, like a machine gun being fired at top speed, and the motorcycle, with Jerry aboard, started off.

"Hurrah!" shouted Ned and Bob.

Bang! Bang! Bang! the machine went, and soon Jerry was a quarter of a mile down the road.

"He ought to shut off the exhaust," commented Bob. "He can do that on this machine. On some you can't."

(To Be Continued Next Week)