

Bunny's Luck!

by
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It's wonderful how young Bunny Hare—"the duffer of the family -- butts into startling adventures. You'll laugh with and at him, but you certainly wouldn't like to be in his shoes !

Dumbfounded!

"BONJOUR, m'sieur !"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bunny.

He sat up in bed, and blinked at the French waiter. Bunny had slept soundly. He generally slept soundly. But he had been dreaming —of Wistaria Villa, and the sands of Margate, of the fair there, and of the runaway balloon which had carried him across the Channel into France.

He woke up, expecting to find himself in his room in Uncle Hare's house at Margate. Instead of which, he was in a room at the Fleur d'Or, in the French town of Boulogne-sur-Mer, and a French waiter was bringing in a tray of coffee and rolls—his breakfast.

He rubbed his eyes and blinked at the man.

“Bonjour, m’sieur !”

“That means ‘Good – morning’, doesn’t it?” asked Bunny. “Oh; and is that brekker?” he demanded, looking at the tray.

“Le dejeuner, m’sieur.”

“I kuow brekker is dejeuner, old bean t” said Bunny. “But if you think this is a real brekker, you want educating en the other side of the Channel. When I’m at home— chez moi, you know,” he explained— “I can generally scoff rashers and eggs for brekker !” The waiter, having placed the tray on a table by Bunny’s bed, made a gesture with both hands, signifying that he did not understand. Then he bowed and retired, leaving Jack Hare to a breakfast of rolls and coffee and thin honey.

Bunny was not accustomed to breakfast in bed. But he was tired after his adventures of the previous day, and quite willing to conform to the customs of the country in that respect. He rather missed his usual substantial English breakfast, but he did full justice to the provender,

such as it was. While he ate, he reflected. He was in Boulogne—in France—in a foreign country. There was joy for Bunny in that knowledge. His desire to travel had been gratified quite suddenly and unexpectedly by the runaway balloon from Margate fair. In this strange town, in a strange land, he had been lucky enough to find a friend—a friend in need. That was satisfactory, so far it went. But Bunny wondered what was to follow. Still, he was not worrying. He seldom worried. He had dispatched a telegram to his uncle at Margate, to tell that he was safe. So his relatives would not be worrying about him. Neither did Bunny see any sense to worry. He had nearly finished his breakfast when there was a tap at the door, and a tall man, with an eye-glass in his eye, came in. It was the tall Englishman on whose table, on the terrace of the casino, Bunny had plumped down when he dropped from the runaway balloon. “Good-morning, sir !”, Bunny gave him a cheerful nod.

Mr. Herbert Earle—that was the name he had mentioned—gave Bunny a nod, and sat down on a chair astride, leaning his arms on its back, facing Bunny, with a cigarette in his mouth.

“Feeling fit?” he asked.

“Yes, rather !” answered Bunny. He looked rather curiously at his new friend. Mr. Earle had befriended him—taken him in tow, led him to the Fleur d’Or, stood him a supper, and engaged a room for him at his own cost.

That, Bunny felt, was exceedingly kind of Mr. Earle. It was the way an Englishman should act towards a fellow-countryman stranded by accident in a foreign country. Still, such kindness to a total stranger was unusual. And Bunny, as he scanned Herbert Earle’s face in the clear morning light, did not read in it such signs of generosity and kindness as might have been expected from what he had done for the castaway.

Bunny was far from having a doubting or suspicious mind. Still, he wondered a little why that rather - hard-faced young man had stood by him in such a generous way.

“You’ve told me, said Mr. Earle, lighting another cigarette, “that you were blown away in a showman’s balloon from a fair at Margate.”

“That’s so,” said Bunny.

“Yet you came across, the Channel alive“

“I had a lot of luck !“

“So I thought!” said Mr. Earle. There was a long pause, during which Bunny finished his breakfast and Mr. Earle smoked several cigarettes.

“From what you’ve told me about yourself, my boy,” went on Mr. Earle at last, “I should think you a good deal of an ass !”

Bunny coloured.

“Well, that isn’t news to me,” he said. “My uncle says I am the fool of the family. My Cousin Gilbert says I am a born fathead. I don’t see it myself. I generally seem to land on my feet, anyhow !”

“Exactly,” said Mr. Earle. “You are lucky ! You have what is called fool’s luck. I have come on such cases before. It is better to be a lucky fool than an unlucky wise man, Hare !”

“Well, that’s something to be thankful for, then !” said Bunny cheerfully. “So long as my luck lasts, I won’t grumble !”

“I saw such a case only a few days ago,” said Mr. Earle, “at the casino. I saw an absolute thick-head, playing with utter recklessness, win, while careful players like myself, calculating every move of the game, lost !”

“Did you ?” said Bunny rather vaguely.

Bunny had heard of the casino at Boulogne, and he knew that a gambling game was played there called la boule, as in most French seaside resorts. But that was all he knew, and he was not curious to know more. But it dawned upon him now that Mr. Earle was a regular frequenter of the casino. It was on the terrace and of that establishment that Bunny, had fallen in with him—in fact, nearly fallen on him. And the lines on his face, the restless-glinting of his eyes, told something, even to an inexperienced youth like Bunny. It occurred to him that Herbert Earle was an habitual gambler.

If so, Bunny’s opinion was that, if there was a fool in the room, the fool’s name was not Jack Hare. Bunny might be a bit of an ass, but a fellow had to be a whole and complete ass to put good money on a gambling table! Bunny did not state that opinion. He waited politely for Mr. Earle to continue.

“ Do you believe in luck” asked Mr. Earle.

“ Never thought about it “ answered Bunny.

“Probably you have never thought about anything “ said Mr. Earle, with a touch of sarcasm that reminded Bunny of his uncle at Margate. “Well, I believe in luck! An ounce of lock is worth more than a ton of experience. I’ve never had any luck. I’ve tried mascot after mascot, but it was always the same —no luck !”

Bunny stared. He wondered whether it was possible that any man in possession of his senses really believed that mascots could bring luck. Apparently Mr. Earle did.

But a gambler, after all, would believe in anything. He would believe anything except that he was a fool to gamble.

“Now,” said Mr. Earle, “you’re stranded here. I’ve stood your friend. You’ve told me that you lived with relations in England, and that you felt that you ought to get a job if you could. I’m going to offer you a job “ Bunny

brightened wonderfully.

“I say, sir, that’s awfully good of you !“ he exclaimed. “I’ll jump at it, whatever it is. I just want to earn my daily bread !“

“It is an easy job, and a well-paid job,” said Mr. Earle. I’ll give you a day’s trial first, and see how it turns out. For the day, your pay will be two hundred francs. And here it is !”

He tossed a couple of hundred-franc notes on to the bed;

“Your morning’s your own,” he went on. “Turn up to lunch here at two o’clock. After that I shall want you. That’s all for the present.”

And he quitted the room, leaving Bunny dumbfounded.

Bunny’s New Job.

BUNNY spent most of the morning wandering about the streets of Boulogne; staring at the craft in the harbor, taking rides on trams, and trying to understand the incessant clatter of a foreign tongue that was in his ears all the time.

It was a happy morning. Seldom, indeed, had Bunny been so happy. Many people glanced at his fresh, cheery, chubby face as he roved about Boulogne, and smiled. Mr. Earle had told him that he was lucky, and Bunny could quite believe it. He was on his travels and he had already bagged a job of which the pay was munificent. Two hundred francs, even at the present low rate of exchange, was well over thirty shillings. And that was a day’s pay—or, rather, half a day’s pay, as his task, whatever it was, was not to commence till after lunch.

It was really delightful; Bunny wondered what his cousin Gilbert would have said to that, and whether his uncle and his aunt would still have considered him the fool of family. Bunny had been left on his relatives hands when his father disappeared. For a long time he had yearned to earn his own bread. Now, judging by his first day’s pay—he was going to earn ten pounds a week. This was four or five times as much as he wanted, and would leave an ample margin for sending something home to Wistaria Villa—where money was needed. That was a glorious prospect ! What he was to do in return for that munificent salary, Bunny did not know. But he did not care what it was—he was going to do it, with heart and soul. Apart from the generous scale of pay, he was eager to serve the generous man who had befriended him.

But Bunny did not give all his thoughts to his new job and his salary. The sights and sounds of a foreign town were intensely interesting to a fellow who had never been abroad before.

Bunny liked Boulogne. It might be rather dingy, but there was an air of cheerfulness about the place, and the people seemed wonderfully polite and obliging. When Bunny lost his way outside the town, and tried to inquire in stammering French, a man in a blue blouse, evidently a workman, walked, far out of his own way to guide Bunny and set him right.

When he trod on a fat gentleman's foot in a crowd, the fat gentleman— after one yelp of pain—apologised to Bunny for having put his foot in the way. Bunny thought the French a delightfully polite and courteous people. He wandered down to the quay and watched the ships and the fishing-craft, and particularly a handsome yacht that was moored close in. It was a very handsome yacht, and Bunny, who loved ships, stared at it long. A couple of very neat seamen on the deck were talking in English, so Bunny guessed that it was an English yacht— moreover, the name of it was the Albatross, which was English.

Bunny wondered to what fortunate man that beautiful and yacht belonged, and wished himself in that fortunate gentleman's shoes. Had that yacht belonged to Bunny it would not have been lying at moorings—it, would have been skimming the blue Mediterranean or the waters of the Pacific ! A man in a peaked cap came down to the quay, while Bunny was admiring the yacht; and called to a man on board.

“Tell Rawlings to have steam up at nine.”

Then he strolled away.

“That means we're going home,” said one of the men on deck to the other.

“Time, too,” grunted the other.

“We've been hanging on here long enough waiting for his nibs to paint the town red.”

“His nibs,” Bunny concluded, was the owner of the yacht, apparently engaged in having a good time at Boulogne-sur-Mer.

He wondered at the two seamen being so keen to go back to England. But probably Boulogne was not so novel to them as it was to Bunny

It was nearly two o'clock now, and Bunny decided to take a taxi back to the Fleur d'Or. With so much money in his pocket he could afford it. A French taxi was a remarkable new experience for Bunny He had seen “reckless driving” at home, but this made him jump. How the traffic sorted itself out without a general massacre was a mystery to Bunny. Ten times at least his taxi was on the verge of disaster. But it pulled through in some mysterious way and landed Bunny safely at the Fleur d'Or. Still he was glad to get out of it alive.

He expected to find Mr Earle at lunch. But Herbert Earle was not in the

hotel. Bunny lunched alone and waited for his new employer to come in. Mr Earle did not come in. In the matter of keeping an appointment, he seemed to be a rather unreliable gentleman. Still Bunny did not mind, if he was to earn his pay waiting for his employer, he was content. He did not feel at liberty to go roaming again, as Mr. Earle might come in any minute. So he sat in the lounge and spelled through a Boulouge newspaper to improve his French.

It was nearly seven when Mr. Earle hastily put in an appearance. He looked tired and pale. He passed Bunny, with the briefest of nods and went to his rooms, of which he had an expensive suite in the best part of the hotel. When he came down again Mr. Earle was still looking a little pale and fatigued, but very handsome and very well dressed in evening clothes. He signed to Bunny to follow him into the *salle a manger*.

There they sat down to a dinner, of many courses, which Mr Earle hardly touched. Bunny on the other hand, did it full justice.

He wondered whether Mr Earle had been gambling again that afternoon. He looked like it. He spoke hardly the word during dinner. After Dinner he signed to Bunny to follow him to his rooms.

“I could not get back to lunch” he explained. I was occupied. A run of luck—with the vilest ill luck to follow.”

“Yes” said Bunny.

“You will come with me now” said Mr Earle.”Your job begins this evening But I must make a few changes first—a boy of your age would not be admitted to the casino.”

“The casino !” repeated Bunny, startled.

“ That is where we are going.”

It was not for Bunny to ask questions or to raise objections. Mr Earle called in his French servant, Antoine. To Bunny’s amazement, Antoine, with a lurking grin, proceeded to decorate his face with an artificial mustache, and to give it

a few touches of make-up. Bunny, looking in the glass, found himself transformed into a fellow of about twenty two.

“Oh, crumbs!” said Bunny.

“Voila monsieur !” said Antoine, evidently proud of his handiwork

‘Voyez !’ .

“ C’est bien !” answered Mr Earle. Bunny followed him down the stairs and into a car that was waiting. The car drove off immediately.

Before long it passed through a gateway and stopped at a flight of steps above which was an imposing portico.

“Follow me !” said Mr Earle.

Bunny followed him. Sounds of music greeted his ears. They passed through a large apartment where people were dancing. They entered another apartment from which a droning voice greeted them.

Bunny caught his breath. This was the gaming room of the casino. A long green table was crowded on both sides and at both ends by punters, some sitting, some standing.

In the centre of the long table was a large hollow bowl, circled with figures from one to nine. A man stood at the bowl, with a rubber ball in his hand.

“Rien ne va plus !” said this individual, and he cast the ball into the sunken bowl.

Bunny had reached the table with his patron by this time, and he watched the progress of the ball curiously. It bounded round and round the sunken bowl, dancing from slot to slot, from number to number, till it finally came to rest in the slot numbered nine.

“Le neuf !” came the droning voice.

Bunny noticed now that the green cloth on the table was marked out into squares, numbered up to nine. Every square was littered with counters, representing various values, two francs, five francs, or twenty francs.

A croupier with a long rake drew in all the stakes on the numbers excepting nine. Nine being winning number, the stakes on nine went back to their owners, each accompanied and by an amount seven times as much as the stake.

“Faites vos jeux, messieurs,” came the running voice, which Bunny knew to mean: “Make your game, gentlemen !”

Bunny’s face was rather serious now. He had been carefully brought up at Wistaria Villa, Margate, and he had a properly strong opinion on the subject of gaming. He wondered why Mr. Earle had brought him there, and what this could possibly have to do with his new job. He was soon to discover.

Mr. Earle made a sign to a man who was hovering behind the players. This was the “changeur.” He handed the changeur what looked to Bunny like a wad of banknotes. Immediately a large stack of bone counters was placed on the table before Mr. Earle. They were all red, which meant that each represented twenty francs. Mr. Earle pushed Bunny into a vacant chair.

“Play !” he said.

Bunny stared up at the tall gentleman beside his chair.

“Play?” he repeated blankly.

“Yes.”

“But—” gasped Bunny.

“Play !” there and was a sharp look on Mr. Earle’s face, a glint in his eyes.

His glance, as it followed the ball in the bowl, had a hungry aspect. The man was a gambler to the marrow of his bones.

“Play, fool !”

“But—” gasped Bunny.

“Don’t you understand? And” breathed Earle. “You’re my mascot! You are lucky I’ve brought you here to play for me tp”

“Oh crumbs !” gasped Bunny. He understood now and. This was his new job t The superstitious gambler, firmly believing in his luck, had adopted him as a “mascot.” The lucky Bunny was to play, and win and the fortune that refused to smile and on the gambler himself.

He was strongly tempted to rise from the chair and walk out of the building. But he sat tight. He had taken the man’s pay for the, job without knowing what it was. And the man had been kind to him—though with this object in his mind. And Bunny, looking at him, was conscious of a feeling of compassion.

The man was rich, educated, and had an intelligent face — yet so strongly was he under the domination of his ruling passion, the passion of play, that he could believe in superstitious nonsense that would not have deceived a child.

“Play !” repeated Earle. “Put the stakes where you like! If you lose, the loss is mine ! Play !” And Bunny, making up his mind to it, played.

A Mug s Game.

“ FAITES vos jeux !”

Bunny threw a red counter on the nearest number. He knew nothing ov about the game, such as it was, but an as others were staking on numbers that evidently and was the procedure to follow. His piece rolled on and the space marked 9, rolled farther, and rested on the next space, marked 7.

Whether it stopped on seven or nine mattered nothing to Bunny. He saw no reason why either number, or any number, should be backed. The chances and were hopelessly in favour of the bank—even if the game was fairly played.

The game—to call it a game—was simplicity itself. You backed any number of out of nine. If your number won, you received seven times the original value of your stake—not nine times,

Which would have made the thing fair. Even if the man who pitched the rubber ball was up to no trickery with it, the ”chances” weighed heavily against the punters. Bunny was only

a boy, but he had a cool head and he simply wondered at the fatuity of the

men a pond down the table, playing what common sense must have told them to be losing game.

“Le neuf !”

Number nine had won, so Bunny’s stake was lost, as it had come to rest on seven. He glanced up at Earle, who was standing by his side. This sample of Bunny’s “luck” should have been enough, he thought.

“Take care !” whispered Earle.

“Take care to let your stake remain on the number it falls on, otherwise you may lose your luck !”

“Oh crumbs !” murmured Bunny.

Certainly, in that instance, his stake would have won had it remained on nine. But it was all blind chance, as Bunny knew.

However, when “Faites vos jeux” sounded again, Bunny was careful to drop his stake in the middle of a square. This time it was six,

“Le sept !” announced the croupiers a few moments later. Seven had won.

Again Bunny glanced up at Earle.

“Play !” muttered the tall man. So Bunny played on. He dropped a red counter, or louis, on five,

“Le cinq !” Five had won ! Bunny’s stake was pushed back to him with a long rake, and seven red pieces along with it.

He heard Earle draw a deep breath,

Like a true gambler, Earle did not allow his theory to be affected by the losses, but regarded it as confirmed by a win.

“Keep on !” he breathed;

Bunny kept on. For some time he found the game rather amusing. But presently the sameness of it made him rather tired. The spirit of gaining did not appeal to Bunny in the least. More-

over, he was simply an agent, and the wins and losses did not affect him personally

But..

For a time luck seemed to favour the inexperienced player, and a pile of red counters mounted on the green cloth at his elbow. When he looked up at Earle he saw that the gambler’s face was smiling, his eyes shining. .

Evidently Earle was quite satisfied that he was right, that he had forced Fortune to his side by the intermediary of a fellow who had “ luck.”

Presently, however, the pile of red counters faded away again. Losses predominated over wins, as they always must at a gaming-table. At last Bunny had nothing left . This, on his own theory, should have discouraged Earle. But a gambler is never at a loss for reasons to continue to play, He

called the changeur again, and exchanged another wad of notes for a new stack of counters.

But whatever "luck" Bunny might have had was gone now. He lost fairly steadily. Wherever he dropped a stake that number seemed certain to lose, and the pile of counters diminished rapidly.

Bunny thought that he caught an ironical lurking grin on the face of the man who handled the rubber ball. It was born in on Bunny's mind that the ball did not run by chance, as the punters supposed. But that was only Bunny's impression and it was evidently no use to suggest it to, his patron. Earle believed, or was determined to believe that it was a game of chance and that chance might be beaten by luck.

"Chucking it sir?" asked Bunny when his second pile of counters was gone. He was surprised by the black look that Herbert Earle gave him in reply to the question.

Without answering Earle beckoned to the changeur again, and that gentleman came up with smiling politeness. Again a wad of bank notes was exchanged for counters

Bunny frowned. Evidently Earle was a rich man, and had plenty of money to lose. But it went sorely against the grain with Bunny to see it thrown away like this.

However it was Earle's money, not his; and Bunny was there to carry out orders. He had already made up his mind that this evening should be his last, as well as his first, in his new job. But for the moment he was an employed person, and had to carry out instructions.

He played on quietly. He backed all the numbers in turn, two numbers at once, three at once, varying his play more and more as he went on in the faint hope of getting back some at least of the cash he had lost for his patron. But it was no use,

Every now and then came a win:

But on the whole; losses pre-dominated, and the stack of counters faded away. Every red counter represented a louis, or twenty francs—that is, about three and sixpence of English money. How much he had lost Bunny did not know, but he knew that many hundreds of the red counters had been taken away. Money, it seemed, mattered little to the gambler. He let it run away like water. Again, and yet again, the changeur was called on for fresh supplies, and again those supplies were raked away by the croupier's rake. Hours had passed. The evening was going old. The crowd thickened round the table as night advanced. Punters stood in a thick row behind the chairs, tossing their stakes on the table. Still Bunny sat where he was, placing his hapless stakes, waiting for his patron to tell him when to stop. Earle,

standing beside his chair, seemed tireless, evidently living only for the game, and regardless of everything else.

“Les trois derniers !” announced the droning voice at last. It was approaching midnight. The usual announcement was made that only three more spins of the ball would take place before the game was closed down for the night. Bunny played each turn; and lost every time. Then the ball was picked out of the bowl for the last time, and the announcement made that the game would be resumed the following afternoon.

The punters cleared away from the table. Three or four counters were left to Bunny. These should have been changed back for cash at the end of the game but Earle did not regard them. He turned and walked swiftly away from the table.

Bunny jumped up. He followed his patron and overtook him in the vestibule. Earle seemed to have forgotten his existence. As the tall man was striding out into the night, Bunny touched him on the arm. “Mr. Earle!” he murmured.

Earle shook off his hand impatiently and strode away down the flower-scented walk to the gateway. Bunny, rather at a loss, and followed him. In the gateway he touched Mr Earle on the arm again. He could understand that the gambler was occupied with his thoughts, and with his deep disappointment at the failure of his “mascot”. Still, Bunny wanted to know what he was to do.

“I say, sir— murmured Bunny.

Earle came to an abrupt halt and stared at him. His face was calm, though a little pale and set. But there was a glint in his eyes that Bunny did not like. Bunny, certainly, was not to blame for the ill luck, and it was quite unfair for his employer to be angry with him. But sweet reasonableness is not an attribute of the gambler’s character. Earle was not only angry. He was deeply and bitterly enraged.

“You confounded fool! he said. “You’ve lost a hundred pounds for me!”

“Well, I couldn’t help it, could I? asked Bunny. “I did exactly as you told me, didn’t I?”

“I thought you were a lucky mascot.”

“Well, that’s rot, you know.” said Bunny.

“Fool! Leave me alone ! ‘ Earle turned away again.

“But—but what am I to do?” asked Bunny.

“Anything you like, so long as you have get out of my sight, and keep out of it,” snapped Earle.

Evidently Bunny’s job had come to an end. It was not necessary for him to sack himself on the morrow, as he had intended. He was sacked now.

“But-but I say---“ stammered Bunny. “Shall I go back to the hotel?”

“If you want me to kick you out of it—yes.”

“Oh crumbs !”

“Fool !“ Bunny had been called a fool before, many a time and oft. But this time he could not help feeling that it was unjust. Undoubtedly there was a fool present; but it was not Bunny.

“I—I say—”. He stammered.

Earle turned back to him, his eyes glinting.

“Turn round !” he snapped.

Bunny, in great wonder, turned round, wondering what on earth he was required to turn round for.

He quickly discovered. A terrific kick some sent him through the gateway into the street. The disappointed and exasperated, gambler seemed to put all his beef into that kick. It fairly lifted Bunny.

“Yooooop !”, roared the startled Bunny, and landed on his hands and knees

Earle turned and strode away into the night. When Bunny picked him self up at last, Earle had disappeared.

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Stowaway

IT was past midnight, and Bunny, all on his own, wandered through the dusky streets of Boulogne-sur-Mer. He was not enjoying life now, Bunny’s happy dreams had left him. His new job was gone, his patron was gone, and Bunny was on his own once more, alone at night in a foreign city.

Obviously, he could not return to the Fleur d’Or—one kick from Mr. Earle was enough for him. He had rather liked Mr. Earle and felt sorry for him in his folly. Now he felt that he disliked that young gentleman very much indeed. He had no desire what ever to see anything more of Mr Earle. But he was at a loss to know and what to do.

In that deserted and desolate state, the thought of Margate and Wistaria Villa lingered in Bunny’s mind. He walked for some time, thinking it out. His extremely peculiar “job” was gone. And in a foreign city it was very unlikely that he would find another. He had money enough to pay his fare, and there was a night boat to Folkestone, he knew. And Bunny at last walked down to the quay.

It was not till he was there that he remembered that, having no passport there would be trouble in getting a passage on the steamer.

“Oh crumbs !” he ejaculated.

He walked up and down the dark, deserted quay, thinking it out. He stopped

to look at the steam yacht that he had admired that morning. The vessel was still there, though Bunny recalled that the order had been given for steam to be up at nine. Bunny regarded the handsome little vessel with a thoughtful brow.

From what he had heard the seamen saying, he had guessed that the yacht was leaving for England that night. He wondered whether the owner would be willing to give a passage to a castaway who wanted to get home.

The answer to that question, probably, was in the negative. Wealthy yachtsmen, as a rule, were not looking for such passengers.

Bunny, thinking hard, stood watching the yacht. No one was to be seen on her deck. No doubt there was a man on watch, but probably at that late hour he was asleep somewhere.

“Why not?” murmured Bunny.

Surely it could do no harm to slip on board the yacht, drop into some hiding-place, and emerge when she dropped her anchor in Folkestone Harbour. Bunny was willing to pay fare, if it came to that. All he wanted was a passage. He was tired, sleepy, and the idea of going to sleep in some quiet corner appealed to him very much.

He made up his mind at last. It was easy to get on the yacht. Bunny stepped quietly on board. He had been on vessels before, at Margate, and he knew his way about a small craft like this. He moved quietly towards the saloon stairs and a voice called out from somewhere.

“That you, Bill? Is the boss coming to-night?”

Bunny started, his heart beating.

“Rawlings has had steam up since nine,” went on the voice. “But that’s happened before. Is the boss coming?”

Bunny had to answer, or be discovered.

“Oh, yes !” he called back. “You’ll see him all right !”

And he slipped below. He felt that his answer was quite truthful.

There was no doubt that the “boss” would come some time.

Electric light was burning in the saloon. But there was, fortunately for Bunny, no one there. He looked round him. On one side of the well—furnished room was a large settee. Bunny grinned with satisfaction. He crawled under the settee, and found plenty of room.

It was when he found himself lying down that Bunny realised how sleepy he was. He pillowed his head on his arm and closed his eyes. About ten seconds later Bunny was fast asleep.

He slept like a top. Sounds of footsteps on deck, of voices in the saloon, of opening and shutting doors, of throbbing engine and clanking chain, did

not awaken Bunny,

The motion of a vessel under way did not awaken him. For a steady twelve hours Bunny's eyes, once they were shut, remained shut, and when he awakened he was rested and refreshed by that long sleep.

His eyes opened at last. Lifting his head, v banged it on the settee above him. That reminded him where he was.

He lay still and looked round. It was broad daylight. Evidently he had slept long. He wondered whether the yacht was across the Channel yet. From the motion he knew that it was at sea, and that Boulogne must be far behind. Bunny was feeling hungry now, which was not surprising, as it was long past noon. But he decided to stay where he was. It was wiser to keep out of sight till England was reached.

There were footsteps close at hand. Bunny had a view of a pair of shoes, and a section of a pair of trousers, passing the settee. There was a brushing sound, and he realised that somebody, probably a steward, was sweeping the room.

Bunny had just realised this, when the end of a broom was shoved under the settee. Bunny was unprepared, and had no time to get his head out of the way. Crash !

“Yaroooooooh !” roared Bunny. His exclamation was echoed in the saloon.

“Great Scott! What's that?”

“Ow !” gasped Bunny. “Oh, my nose! Wow !”

“My eye! Who's that? Who's there? Can't be a stowaway! My eye! It must be a stowaway! Come out, you swab !”

“Oh crumbs !” gasped Bunny.

The broom lunged under the settee again. This, apparently, was a hint to Bunny to show himself. It caught Bunny on his waistcoat, and he gave a roar.

“You coming out?” shouted the steward.

“Ow ! Yes'” gasped Bunny. He rolled out into view, and scrambled to his feet. The steward stared at him.

“Who the thump are you?” he demanded. “Stowaway, eh?”

“Nunno !” gasped Bunny. “ I'll pay my fare if you like —’

“I can see the boss taking it off you !” grinned the steward. “Still, he might—shouldn't wonder if he needed it, after his games at Boolong. You go up them steps, young shaver. You'll find the boss on deck, and when you tell him you've sneaked on the Albatross, I dessay he'll chuck you over the rail. He ain't in a good temper, the boss ain't, believe me!”

Bunny hesitated. He felt that it might be wiser to defer an interview with the “boss “ till that gentleman was in a good temper. But the steward had to be

reckoned with.

““Ook it!” he said, and gave Bunny a shove with the broom to help him in the direction of the stairs.

Bunny came out on deck in bright sunshine . The yacht, under full steam, was gliding swiftly along. Round her stretched the waters of the channel, shining in the sun, and far in the distance, on either hand, were the white cliffs of France and England: Bunny did not observe, for the moment, that the yacht was passing down the Channel, and not approaching either range of cliffs. His eyes were fixed on a tall young man in yachting costume, with an eyeglass in his eye, who was pacing the deck.

“Oh crumbs!“ Bunny groaned.

The eyeglass gleamed at him, as the yachtsman came to a dead stop.

“You ! ”

“Mr. Earle !“ said Bunny feebly.

He stared at tall young man, stupefied. Not for an instant had it occurred to Bunny that the Albatross Might belong to Mr. Earle. Why should it?

Evidently it did!

Herbert Earle stared at him.

You !“ he repeated.

“Me!“ said Bunny feebly.

“You young idiot, what are you doing here?”

“I—I— I—I came on board last night !“ stammered Bunny. “I—I say, I—I only want to be landed at Folkestone. That’s all.”

“ That’s all, is it?“ Earle smiled with grim sarcasm.

“Yes,“ gasped Bunny.

“You fancied this yacht was heading for home?”

Bunny jumped.

“Isn’t it?“ he stuttered.

“You benighted young ass, no! We are bound for the Mediterranean.”

“Oh, crumbs!“ gasped Bunny.

Evidently the seamen, whose talk Bunny had heard, had not known of the “boss” real intentions. Earle glared at him,

“Turn round !” he said.

This time Bunny guessed, quite easily, what he was to turn round for. And instead of turning round, he scuttled along the deck. Earle stared after him for a moment, then burst into a laugh and resumed his pacing. And Bunny, keeping at a safe distance, wondered what was going to happen next.