

The MAN in the VEIL by Charles Hamilton



Black Hands!

BUNNY HARE had been walking for hours, so keenly interested in the strange sights and sounds of Tunis that he did not heed the heat that made the perspiration drip down his chubby face. The heat, the dust, the discordant noises, the endless babble of tongues in uncounted languages, did not worry Bunny. He enjoyed it all..

He was ashore in Africa, walking the streets of the Orient. His desire to see the world was fully gratified at last. His old day-dreams at Wistaria Villa at Margate were coming true.

Bunny had time on his hands. He was feeling quite a gentleman of leisure. Mr. Earle, before he departed in the steamer at Marseilles, had presented Bunny with five thousand francs as a reward for his services. Which was generous pay for the steward's boy of the Albatross.

Five thousand francs seemed illimitable wealth to Bunny—plenty to see him through until he found a job. Plenty and to spare, Bunny thought. He had found a cheap lodging in a little street near the Avenue de France, and when he was left on his own he “did” Tunis as thoroughly as any Cook's tourist.

In the New Town there were shops where Bunny was able to buy nice clothes, so it was a well-dressed Bunny who roamed through the city, - drinking in sights and sounds that were so new to him—so different from Margate, as the innocent Bunny said to himself.

Bunny did Tunis, and Tunis still more surely “did “ Bunny. Close to Tunis, as he knew, were the ruins of ancient Carthage. And in the Soks Weren't many antiquities for sale, recently dug up—so the native dealers :> told the tourists.

In simple faith Bunny had bought all sorts of shams and swindles, which he duly posted

to his relatives at Margate, to remind them that Bunny had not forgotten them. Walking the sun-splashed streets, Bunny often thought of them—Uncle Hare catching the 9.10 to the City; Cousin Gilbert trotting down the Northdown Road to the office in Cliftonville; Aunt Hare, with a keen edge to her voice, talking to Jane. It was an affectionate Bunny, but he was glad he was in Tunis, seeing the world. And though he had started his travels as a steward's boy, which was not exactly splendid, he still counted on making a fortune to take with him to Margate—some day!

In the meantime Bunny was having the time of his life. Hours and hours he had walked on this particular day, nearly a week since he had been left on his own in Tunis. When he realised that he was tired, in the falling dusk, he was far from his lodging. He was not hungry, for he had lately consumed a large quantity of sweet sherbet and sticky cakes in a dusky little shop in the Sok-el-Berka.

But he was tired—which led him to take a short cut. Strangers who take short cuts in Tunis are liable to find themselves going a long way round, and Bunny made that discovery. He turned from one narrow, dusky street into another and into another, and then into another still more narrow, shut in by high white walls of buildings that seemed to process neither door nor window. And so he arrived at a blank wall that closed the street; found that he had reached the termination of a cul-de-sac, and stopped.

It was very dark in the narrow street, and the hour was growing rather late. Bunny was quite tired now, and he decided to rest before seeking his way out of the labyrinth into which he had plunged. In the wall which closed the narrow street, lighted only by the glittering stars in a dark, azure sky, there was a small door, painted green. Whether it gave admittance to a house or a walled garden Bunny did not know.

He leaned on the wall to rest, as there was no seat in sight, and turned over in his mind the various streets by which he had reached that secluded spot. He came to the conclusion that tracing his way back was a hopeless task.

But Bunny was not alarmed by the discovery that he had lost his way in a strange city after nightfall. When he had had a rest he was good for many miles' walking, and there were plenty of people in Tunis who spoke English, and still more who spoke French, as the place belonged to France. He could ask his way easily enough in either language, though it was perhaps doubtful whether the people who spoke French would understand what Bunny said to them in that language.

Bunny had learned, so far, only one native word, which was "sok," meaning "market." But with even that one word, he considered, he might derive information from a native, for, if he could find his way back to the Sok-el-Berka where he had had his sherbet and cakes, the rest was plain sailing.

And so it occurred to Bunny to tap at the door near which he was leaning, and ask the porter for directions. If the man spoke English, all was well; if he spoke French, Bunny hoped that all was well; while if he spoke only Arabic, the word "sok" would be enough to tell him where Bunny wanted to go.

Having decided on that simple course of action, Bunny moved along to the green-painted door and tapped with his knuckles. To his surprise, the door moved under his touch. It was a heavy door of solid wood, clamped with iron, and looked as if it would require a heavy push to move it, even if unlocked. And Bunny had not supposed that it was unlocked.

But evidently it was unsecured, and the hinges were well oiled, for the door swung open

under his tap.

“Oh crumbs !” murmured Bunny, as he stared into the narrow gateway. Beyond was a garden, with nodding Palm-trees black against the sky. In the distance the white walls of a house. It was one of the high-walled gardens common in Tunis and all eastern cities, where the inquisitive eyes of strangers are carefully shut out.

Bunny hesitated. There was no sign of a porter, no sign of life in the garden, brilliant with flowers under the stars. He was new to the Orient; but he knew the risk of a European entering unbidden within the walls of Moor or Arab. He stood looking past the open green door into the garden.

A path led through shrubberies to the house. But Bunny realised that he had better not follow that path. The deep silence seemed to indicate that no one was near the garden door. There was no one of whom he could ask his way.

Bunny looked back along the narrow, dusky street behind him. It was silent and deserted. No footfall broke the stillness.

He looked into the garden again. Bunny’s relations at Margate did not consider him bright, but he was bright enough to know that he had better not enter that walled garden. And he reached to the door to pull it shut, with the intention of closing it and going his way.

There was no handle or knob on the outside of the green door. Bunny had to step into the gateway, cut in the thickness of a thick wall, to grasp the edge of the door to pull it shut. The next moment Bunny gave a startled howl. As his fingers closed on the edge of the half-open door a black hand, strong as steel, flashed out of the dusk and gripped his wrist. Before Bunny knew what was happening, an irresistible tug dragged him headlong into the garden, and the door slammed behind him.

“Oh crumbs !” panted the bewildered Bunny, reeled, stumbled, and fell. The steely grip still on his wrist, he scrambled to his feet, and as he scrambled he had a glimpse of a brawny black Nubian in a red fez, who was grasping him. The next moment a second Nubian loomed from the shadows, and Bunny was lifted up from the ground as if he had been an infant and carried away.

He did not struggle. He was too utterly amazed, for one thing. And for another, either of the brawny Nubians was a match for two or three Bunnies! But as he recovered his breath he expostulated.

“ I say, look here, you know !” gasped Bunny. “Leggo ! I wasn’t doing any harm ! I wasn’t coming in——— I say——”

One of the Nubians spoke in a low, growling voice. Whether he was speaking his own dialect or Arabic was all one to Bunny; he did not understand a word.

“I say——--’ gasped Bunny

“Taisez-vous “

It was French this time, and Bunny understood that it was an order to be silent. But he was not disposed to be silent in the grasp of two black men who were bearing him away like a bundle into the interior of the mysterious walled garden.

“Look here—leggo ! Oh !” gasped Bunny, as he felt a keen point pressed to

his neck. For an instant his blood curdled, and he expected sudden death. But the dagger was withdrawn. It was only a hint to Bunny to keep silent.

“Oh crumbs!” breathed money. And he was silent and unresisting as the two Nubians bore him away in the deep, dusky shadow under the palm trees. It was useless to argue with men who couldn’t understand a word he said, he decided. The only thing to do was to go quietly and see what turned up.

A Fruitless Search.

BUNNY was completely bewildered. The two silent Nubians had stopped under a colonnade. From an open arched doorway that communicated with a large apartment, where Bunny caught a glimpse of a tessellated floor and a marble fountain, and high walls adorned with gilded arabesques, came a glimmer of light.

he was set on his feet, and he staggered against a stone column. One of the Nubians held his shoulder in a grasp of iron. The other passed through the arched doorway and disappeared into the house. Bunny waited. He could do nothing else with a vice-like grip on his shoulder, under which it seemed to crack.

His brain was in a whirl. He had heard, and read, a great deal about the jealous and suspicious dislike of native Moors and Arabs for the intrusion of a white man within their secretive walls. Even under the French rule, a white man who intruded unbidden into a Moorish house was in danger of his life. But poor Bunny had not meant to intrude. He had been dragged in almost by the hair of his head.

He hoped that there was somebody who understood English to whom he could explain—but he had a shuddering anticipation that his head might be cut off before he had a chance at explanation. If he had to deal with some savage and suspicious Moors he was in dire danger.

He waited anxiously. Apparently the Nubian had gone into the house to tell of his capture. Bunny, trying to think it out realised that someone must have been expected to enter by the green door; that the two Nubians had been lying in wait there in ambush for the man who was expected to enter. That much seemed clear. And it was clear, also, that Bunny, butting in by sheer chance, had been taken for the expected comer, and seized in mistake for him.

Who were the denizens of this mysterious house? For what unwary visitor had that ambush been laid at the green door, intentionally left unfastened to admit him into the hands that waited to grasp him?

All he could fall for was that someone had been expected and watched for, and that he—Bunny— had most unfortunately taken his place. He had a way of falling into scrapes, though, as a rule, he tumbled out of them again right end uppermost. But he wondered dismally whether this was the last scrape he was destined to fall into

The minutes while he waited passed on leaden wings. The Nubian holding him stood like an ebony statue. In the dusk of the colonnade his face was a black shadow; only the gleam of his eyes was visible to Bunny.

The other Nubian emerged at last. It was only a matter of a few minutes but to the anxious Bunny it had seemed an age. The two blacks took Bunny by either “Ha, ha, ha!” and walked him forward. They entered by the arched doorway into the apartment beyond.

Bunny stared round him. The light came from a swinging silver lamp, hung on silver chains. The scene was like one from the “Arabian Nights“ to Bunny’s eyes—the tessellated floor, the tinkling Fenton, the walls traced with golden arabesques, the gorgeous rugs, the rich divan, covered with brightly coloured stuffs, on which a man was seated.

After one dizzy glance round, Bunny’s eyes fixed on the man on the divan. He was dressed in European clothes, which was a relief to Bunny. It was not some savage and suspicious Moor he had to face. But what struck Bunny strangely was the fact that the man’s face was concealed by a gauzy veil, such as the native women wore.

Dimly through the gauze the face was discernible, but not clearly enough for Bunny to make out the features. What reason the unknown man could have for hiding his face

Bunny could not guess. But it was evident that he desired to keep his identity a secret. ‘The veiled man reclining on the divan was smoking a hookah. But as Bunny was left before him he dropped the mouthpiece of the pipe and sat bolt upright, staring.

Bunny was conscious of a penetrating stare from a pair of very keen eyes behind the gauze. If Bunny was in a state of astonishment himself, he realised that the man on the divan was also surprised. Evidently it was not Bunny’s chubby face that the veiled man had expected to see, He stared hard at Bunny for a long moment. And it was Bunny who spoke first.

“I say, sir—” .

“Oh, you are English?” exclaimed a voice from behind the gauze.

“Yes, rather, sir !.” answered Bunny.

“Who are you ?“

“My name’s Jack Hare, sir,” answered Bunny. “I’m usually called Bunny,”

he added, with cheerful simplicity. "You see, sir, my name being Jack Hare fellows at school turned it into Jack Rabbit, and from that it into an Bunny." The veiled man made him a sign to be silent, and turned to one of the Nubians, whom he addressed as Yussuf. Bunny caught the name but he did not understand what was said in some native tongue. But he could see that the veiled man was questioning Yussuf sharply. The Nubian replied in the same tongue, and, the veiled man turned to Bunny again.

"Why did not Latour come himself?"

"Eh?" a Jack elected and Bunny.

"Is he ill?"

' Ill? repeated Bunny blankly.

"Why has he sent you?"

Bunny could only stare.

"If you have the sheepskin, well and good. I am aware that Aboo Marish was expecting him this evening as usual. If something has prevented him from coming, no doubt he has sent the sheepskin."

The man rapped out the words in a sharp, metallic voice that sounded and very unpleasantly in Bunny's ears.

"Oh crumbs !" murmured Bonny.

"I—I say, sir, you'd better let me explain! I—I got in here quite by accident—"

"Have you the sheepskin?"

"Eh? No !" gasped Bunny.

"Bah! You are lying! If Latour has sent a messenger instead of coming, he would send the sheepskin. Give it to me !"

An eager hand was held out. Bunny blinked at it.

"Do you He P. are me, boy? Do you understand that either of these Nubians would slice off your head at a sign from me? Give me the sheep- skin!"

"But—but I haven't—" he stammered and shuddered. "I—I think you're taking me for somebody else, sir !"

The veiled man rapped out a word or two in the native tongue, and the two Nubians seized Bunny and threw him to the floor. Bunny yelled. He supposed that his last moment had come. But he discovered a moment later that the object was to search him. Bending over him, the two Nubians searched him with the greatest thoroughness.

"Oh crumbs !" murmured Bunny.

"There go my francs !"

But he was mistaken. All the articles, including his money, taken from his pockets were replaced. The Nubians were searching for the sheepskin of which the veiled man had spoken. Bunny's pockets having been drawn

blank they proceeded further, searching every garment down to the skin. Not so much as a pin could have remained hidden on Bunny after they had finished. They turned from him at last and showed empty hands to their master.

Die Then!”

Bunny staggered to his feet. The sharp, penetrating eyes behind the veil watched him, glittering with rage. The failure to find the mysterious heepskin was evidently a bitter disappointment to the veiled man. He made a sign to Yussuf, who, leaving his comrade holding Bunny, crossed to the wall and took down a Turkish scimitar that hung there. He came back to the divan with the bare blade in his hand, the subdued light of the silver lamp glimmering on the bright Damascus steel and showing a keen edge like a razor.

Bunny shuddered.

“I—I say !“ he stammered. “For goodness sake—“

“Silence ! Listen !”

“If you’d let me explain—” gasped Bunny.

“Silence! Yussuf has told me that you seemed to hesitate before entering at the green door. Had you any reason to suspect that there was an ambush within? Did you throw away the sheepskin?”

.“ No—no !“ stuttered Bunny. “You see—”

“Latour must have sent it! If he did not come himself, he must have sent it ! That is certain. Aboo Marish expected him and the sheepskin. You dog !“ the metallic voice snarled through the gauze. “Tell the truth, or die under Yussuf’s hand !“

“You haven’t given me a chance to tell you !“ gasped Bunny. “I’m trying to explain. I—I don’t know anything about a sheepskin—I don’t know anybody named Latour— I’ve never heard of Aboo Marish—I don’t even know what house this is, or who you are——”

“Cease your lying” !“ came the metallic voice. “Fool! Do you think you can deceive me so easily as that ?“

“I give you my word, sir—”

“ Listen to me, boy! You must be in Gaston Latour’s confidence, or he would not have sent you in his place.

“Tell me the truth ! Is the sheepskin still with Latour at the Hotel les Courlis?”

Bonny had seen the Hotel les Courlis, in the Avenue de France, in the modern quarter of Tunis. Evidently the unknown Latour was staying

there. But for the rest, all was bewilderment to poor Bunny. He had fallen into some extraordinary intrigue that was a hopeless mystery to him.

“Answer me, boy !”

“I—I don’t know. I—”

The veiled man made a sign, and Yussuf whirled the scimitar over Bunny’s head. Bunny wriggled in the grasp of the other Nubian. But it was futile. He was held in the grasp of a vice.

“Speak, on your life !” came the menacing voice from behind the gauze.

“Fool! Do you think I will let your life stand in my way? Speak the truth—the truth !”

“Oh crumbs !” ‘

“ Do you think I am ignorant of the whole thing that you fancy you can deceive me?” snarled the veiled man. “Listen ! Latour, your master, has been under surveillance for weeks— ever since he set foot in Tunis, in fact. He has been watched—shadowed —his words listened to. I knew as much about the sheepskin as he knows himself, except that I have not seen it. All his habits are known to me— his constant visits to Aboo Marish— a score of times he has been seen to enter by the green door in the garden, which is always left unlocked for him at the same hour. Every evening for many days he has come, and that Aboo Marish expected him this evening I know.

“When the Nubians brought you in, it was Gaston Latour that I expected to see. For some reason he has sent you in his place; but he must have sent the sheepskin, for Aboo Marish expected to see it. I tell you, fool, that he has confessed it. Now do you understand that you cannot deceive me?”

‘Oh crumbs !’ groaned Bunny.

Bunny kept one eye on the veiled man, the other on the gleaming scimitar in Yussuf’s lifted hand. This was Bunny’s worst experience since he had been blown away in the balloon from the fair at Margate. His worst times on board the Albatross, even his plunge in the Bay of Biscay and the fight with the Riffians, were nothing to this. The razor-hike blade circling over his head made Bunny’s flesh creep.

“You understand?” came the metallic voice. “You know that Aboo Marish is in my hands.”

“I—I don’t—” gasped Bunny.

“Fool ! How do you imagine that I am here, in possession of his house, if I have not secured him and his servant? Cannot you understand yet that I am not to be played with ?”

The man spoke savagely, between his teeth. “I have formed a hundred plans for getting the sheepskin from Latour. But he is too watchful—he is always

on his guard! 'Finally I hit on this—and I shall not fail

"I tell you that I and my Nubians entered by that green door that was left unlocked for Latour— that we secured Aboo Marish and his servant—that they lie in this house bound hand and foot—and that I have waited here for Latour to come, with the Nubians hidden just within the door to seize him as he entered the garden. You came instead— and they seized you! Now is it clear to you, brain of a pig?"

It was clear enough to Bunny that a cunning scheme had been laid to trap Monsieur Latour, of the Courlis Hotel, and that he, Bunny, had most unfortunately fallen into the trap instead.

"Do let me explain !" he gasped. "I came here quite by accident. I never meant—"

"Do you think me a fool? You came to this secluded street, unknown to any who are not well acquainted with Tunis, and opened a door which no one would have guessed to be unsecured unless instructed beforehand —you ask me to believe that it was by chance ?"

"But it was chance," persisted Bunny. "You see—"

"Enough! Where is the sheepskin P"

"I don't know anything about any old sheepskin," groaned Bunny. "But if you're so keen on sheepskin, there's plenty for sale in the Sok-el-Berka when it opens to-morrow."

The veiled man stared at him blankly. He seemed to control his rage by a great effort.

"Then you do not know the value of the sheepskin, though Latour entrusted you with it to bring to Aboo Marish !" he exclaimed. "Listen, boy! That sheepskin is worth hundreds of thousands of francs, and if you place it in my hands I swear I will give you a share of the Carthaginian treasure."

"The Carthaginian treasure?" Bunny faltered.

"I tell you that sheepskin contains the clue to the state treasure of Carthage, buried and hidden before the Romans took the city, two thousand years ago."

"Oh crumbs !"

"Then you did not know?"

"No !" gasped Bunny "You see, I —"

"Now you know ! I tell you I will make you rich! Whatever Latour may have promised you, I will double it. Now speak!" The veiled man leaned forward eagerly.

"But I can't tell you anything !" gasped money. "You see, I don't know anything about it."

For the moment the veiled man was evidently about to make a sign to

Yussuf to strike with the scimitar. Bunny's blood ran cold. But the sign was not made.

"You persist in lying," said the veiled man between his teeth. "But I will have the truth from you, if I have to tear it from your lips by torture. Speak, you dog. I tell you, every night Gaston Latour has come here to talk with Aboo Marish, who was born among the ruins of Carthage and knows every inch of the ground. But he had not yet shown him the sheepskin—he clings close to his secret.

"But this night he was to place it in his hands—I tell you they were heard speaking together, and Latour has consented to let the Moor see the sheepskin and take his judgment upon it. If he has not come himself he has sent it—for he knows that Aboo was to leave Tunis to-morrow for Tripoli, not to return for months. You dog, what have you done with the sheepskin that Latour sent by your hands?"

The man leaned forward on the divan, his eyes burning at Bunny through the gauze veil.

"Oh dear !" mumbled Bunny.

"Speak !" almost yelled the disguised man. "By heavens, your blood will be upon your own head if you dally with me longer !"

"I—I can't tell you anything !" gasped Bunny. "I'd lost my way, and—and—"

"Silence t" roared the veiled man. It was clear that he did not believe a word of that statement. "How long have you known Latour? He has been well watched, but you have not been seen with him."

"I don't know him at all," faltered Bunny. "You see—"

"One more lie and I will order the Nubian to strike off your head " said the veiled man in a concentrated voice.

Bunny was silent. He was telling the truth. But it was natural, in the strange circumstances, that a suspicious man should not believe him. The two Nubians stood like black statues. The burning eyes under the guise devoured Bunny's dismayed face.

"It is certain," the veiled man spoke at last, though he seemed rather to be speaking to himself than to Bunny, "Latour had made up his mind to trust the Moor with a sight of the sheepskin, unwilling as he was to let any eye but his own read the secret. The Moor's knowledge of the ruins of Carthage was necessary to him. He was to come with it to-night —they were overheard—and if he has not come he has sent it, for after to-night it will be too late. The boy has it—or had it !"

He half-rose from the divan.

"For the last time," he said. "I know that you feared or suspected something

when you entered the garden, for Yussuf has said that you hesitated at the door. Did you hide it before you entered—did you throw it into the garden when you were seized—tell me, what have you done with it ?“

“Nothing!” gasped Bunny. “I— I’ve never seen it—I tell you, I don’t know anything about it—”

The veiled man spoke to Yussuf in the Tunisian dialect. The Nubian’s black eyes glittered, and his hand closed hard on the scimitar. The bright blade circled over Bunny’s head.

“For the last time !“ said the veiled man, in a tone of deadly menace. ‘ I - have told the Nubian to strike off your head when I lift my hand as a signal!”

“Oh crumbs!”

“Where is the sheepskin ?“ It was useless for Bunny to answer, as he had nothing to tell. He made a sudden and desperate effort to break loose from the man who was holding him. If he could have torn himself free and darted through the open arched doorway of the colonnade into the garden — But he could not break free.

“Die, then !“ hissed the man on the divine, and lifted his hand as a signal to the Nubian .

Crack! Sharp and clear, with an effect almost of thunder in the stillness of the African night, a pistol-shot rang out from the dark colonnade outside the arched away. The scimitar crashed clanging on the marble floor, and the Nubian gave a scream of pain as his arm dropped to his side, smashed at the elbow by a bullet !

— —

“What a Night!”

BUNNY stood dizzily, his limbs sided under him. Yussuf, blood streaming from his smashed arm, fell groaning to the floor, a crimson pool forming on the marble pavement. The other Nubian in his startled: amazement released Bunny and spun around towards the arched doorway. The veiled man leaped to his feet, staring in the same direction and groping at his hip for a weapon. In the arched doorway, his back to the dark colonnade, the light of the spring lamp on his face, stood a short, sallow young man, with bright snapping black eyes that gleamed over a revolver, still smoking. The revolver was at a level and a finger was on the trigger. Trying to pull his dazed thoughts together and of a Bunny blinked at him. The thick-set young man was French - he saw that at a glance. And it flashed into his mind who he was. No doubt Gaston Latour had arrived, entered by the green door in the garden, and followed the path to the house—not dreaming of anything amiss

till he saw what was going on in the tessellated hall, from the colonnade when he reached it.

His prompt intervention had saved Bunny's life, and it showed that he was a man of action and quick decision. His black snapping eyes, gleaming, from his sallow face, watched like a cat's, as he stepped in from the colonnade, From the veiled man came a battered word, and the Nubian who had released Bunny leaped towards, the newcomer, drawing a dagger from his girdle as he did so. So swift was the leap that he had almost reached the Frenchman when the latter fired, as coolly as if he were shooting at a jackal in the desert, and the brawny Nubian rolled at his feet.

"Sapristi !" the Jackie lighted the newcomer.

The veiled man had made cunning and use of the second during which the Frenchman was occupied with the Nubian. A revolver was in his hand now, and aimed at the newcomer. Bunny jumped at him. There was no time to think, Bunny acted without flinching. His head butted the man on the divan as he was pulling the trigger and pitched him over, and his bullet flew in the air. The man sprawled and rolled off the low divan, the revolver falling from his hand. The Frenchman stepped forward, over the body of the Nubian who lay at his feet. The veiled man leaped up, gave one fierce, wild glare round him; and darted through a low doorway hidden by Curtains. The French Man fired after him, the shot missing by a fraction of an inch as the man disappeared.

"Corbleu !" exclaimed the newcomer. He gave the Nubians a look, and then came quickly to Bunny. "You are English?" he asked. "See you! I come here visit my friend Aboo Marish, I find this!. I should—yes—I save you the life! But where is Aboo? My friend, is he safe, with these coquins in the house—they are thieves—murderers—what? Aboo —is lie kill?"

"That brute said he was bound hand and foot in the house, with his servant," Bunny answered .

The Frenchman made a sign to Bunny to stay with the Nubians and watch them and then rushed through the curtained doorway by which the veiled man had disappeared.

Bunny picked up the scimitar. He was ready to look after the blacks, and to deal with them if needed. But neither of the Nubians was dangerous now. Yussuf lay groaning with his broken arm. The other was unconscious, sorely wounded. Bunny waited for the Frenchman to return.

A few minutes later he came back through the curtained doorway, leading an old white-bearded Moor who leaned, heavily on his 'arm. A trembling Arab servant followed them in.

"Did you find that rotter, sir?" exclaimed Bunny.'

“Sapristi! ‘He was gone—fled—what you call ‘le bunker,’” said the Frenchman. “If he bunk not I would have shoot him like one jackal. Voila; mon ami!” he went on, as he assisted the aged Moor to the divan, where he sank down on the cushions.

He handed Aboo Marish the amber mouthpiece of the hookah. The old man nodded and sat silent. The Frenchman turned to Bunny.

“Explain ! Make clear all this ! How do I find you here—who are you—what shall it all mean ?”

“Oh,” said Bunny. “I—I suppose you’re Monsieur Gaston Latour, the chap who’s got the sheepskin”

The Frenchman started.

“I am Gaston Latour But what know you of the sheepskin?”

Bunny jerked out his explanation. Latour listened to him , staring in amazement. To Bunny’s surprise he laughed when all was told.

“ Head of pudding !” he said. ‘One other time you think twice before you knock on a door once when you are in a city like Tunis Are you not what they call in your language a head of pudding?’”

“I think it’s jolly lucky for you !” said Bunny warmly. “If they hadn’t bagged me at the door they’d have been waiting there for you still, and what would have happened to you when you came in?”

“Sapristi! It is the true truth !’ said Latour, smiliag. “It is the mouse that saves the lion, as they tell us in the fable. Mon Dieu ! I suspected nothing—even now I know not what is that man who knows so much of my affairs. I knew not that he watch me , that he know of the Carthaginian treasure. He know too much, sapristi. You save me the life, mon garcon, with your head of pudding. Regardez ! You have a mouth—you know how to keep it shut?”

“Oh ! Certainly !” said Bunny.

“Shut up the mouth verree tight, then,” said Latour. “Say nothing of all this. It is not good to talk of treasure in Tunis. Selim shall take you to the Avenue de France, where you shall find your way to your lodging. For you there is nothing more to do here. But to-morrow you come to the Hotel les Courlis and ask for me, Gaston Latour ! It is understood?”

Ycs, certainly !’ said Bunny.

Latour spoke to the Arab servant in Arabic, and Selim made a sign to Bunny to follow him. Bunny glanced back as he went and saw Latour deep in talk with Aboo Marish, gesticulating with both hands as he talked, and apparently already forgetful of Bunny’s existence.

“Oh crumbs !” mnrured Bunny, when he found himself in a palm-shaded street, under the stars.“Oh crumbs! What a night !”

He followed the silent Arab till they reached the broad Avenue 1e France,

from which Bunny knew his way easily. There Selim salaamed and left him, and Bunny pursued his way alone.

In his dreams that night Bunny scrambled among the ruins of Carthage, seeking golden treasure, pursued by a veiled man and brawny black Nubians brandishing Scimitars. He was glad when the new day came and the bright sunlight filtered in at his window !