Bunny Hare, the fellow who butts into trouble as though born to it, is a right handy lad when he’s all worked up—as he is in this exhilarating scrap with tough pirates plundering in the darkness of a wild desert coast.

The Secret of the Sand-Dunes

By Charles Hamilton

Off Morocco.

Bunny shaded his eyes with his hand, and stared through the shimmering heat towards the Moroccan coast. Round the yacht Albatross shone the intense blue of the Mediterranean. Overhead, the sky was azure and cloudless. Heat clung to the ship. The deck was hot to the touch, stanchions and bolts almost burning. Southward, hazy in the heat, loomed the mountains of Morocco; nearer at hand, the arid beach, the grim reeds that are the terror of sailormen, the rolling lines of surf.

But the arid desolation of the shore, the burning heat of the sun, did not matter to Bunny. He was seeing Africa for the first time—except for the glimpse he had had when the yacht came through the Straits of Gibraltar. This, Bunny told himself, was real Africa! Behind those sand-dunes, dusty in the distance, lurked fierce Rifians. Away back in the mountains were savage tribes who disdained to bow their heads to the white man.

He could see no sign of a town, port, or harbour. The Albatross, after running across from Gibraltar, seemed to have picked out the loneliest spot on a lonely coast. Bunny was not surprised at that, knowing the intentions of Mr. Earle, the owner, and Hall, the chief mate.

What was going to happen on board the Albatross required no witnesses!

Bunny had hoped against hope that Mr. Earle would give up his scheme of losing his yacht (or pretending to do so) and claiming the insurance money—that he would shake himself free from the influence of Hall. But it was only too clear that Earle was holding to his purpose, and that lonely spot on the Moroccan coast had been sought to carry out the pretended loss of the yacht.

Bunny ceased to look at Africa at last, and glanced about the deck. The Albatross no longer presented her former spick-and-span appearance. Since leaving Gibraltar there was a great difference.

Seven or eight new men, Spaniards and lascars, lounged lazily about, looking like anything but a yachting crew.

Bunny knew that they had been shipped in place of a number of the hands who had been left behind at Gibraltar. The English yachting crew could not have been drawn into the desperate scheme hatched between the owner and the mate, and they had been got rid of, these lounging lubbers taking their places.

There were few of the original crew on board now, and those few, Bunny guessed, were all in the secret. Even the cook and the steward had been left behind, and Bunny, who had stowed himself away on the yacht, and accidentally learned Earle’s secret, had had to turn to and do their duties as well as he could.

The look of the yacht now was neglected, even dirty. There was hardly a piece of brass that did not need polishing. The new hands were the men for desperate enterprise, not for industrious work.

Hall, the mate, was scanning the reefs through a pair of binoculars.
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Mr. Earle lounged in a deck-chair, smoking a cigar.

Bunny glanced at him, and Earle’s eye wandered over the young man with a keen, all-visionary look. He smiled faintly, and made Bunny a sign to sit down.

“You're for it now, my boy!” said Mr. Earle.

“You're going on with it, sir?” asked Bunny.

“That is why we are here.”

“And when?”

“I can hardly say. I haven’t been told, but I should have left you behind at Gib, continued Mr. Earle. But you need have no fear, Hare. You will come in the lifeboat with me when the Albatross goes down. When she goes down officially, I mean,” he added.

“Hail stands on board?” asked Bunny.

“Yes—with the new crew.”

“Mr. Earle,” said Bunny, with a deep breath, “I know you’re bent on saving that ship. It’s no good arguing that it’s wrong to send money to the insurance company.”

“No good at all,” said Mr. Earle. “I am a ruined man, Hare, and this is my last chance of getting on my feet again.”

“But—but let me point out that it can’t work!” said Bunny. “I suppose even Hail would give up the idea if he knew it was bound to fail!”

“I don’t doubt it,” said Herbert Earle. “I laugh. Say what you like, Earle. I know you will do what I say. I know you are a wise man.”

“Well, sir, I suppose you can make it out that the Albatross has been wrecked, and draw the insurance money,” said Bunny, “but if the ship remains on the sea, she’ll be traced sooner or later. Every ship is registered.”

“The Albatross will change her name,” said Earle. “She is going to be heavily painted—disguised in every way. She will be re-named the Swan.”

“But, whatever you call her, how are you going to account for her?” said Bunny. “How will the Swan go out of register of ships?”

“Where won’t she?” answered Mr. Earle. “The Swan will go into the West African trade, with forged papers. Forged papers?” repeated Bunny. Earle smiled, but no answer to that.

“You do not know yet all the gifts of my gifted mate,” he said. “Dick Hall has already served a term in prison for forgery. Breaking stones did not rob him of his skill. I assure you that you and I shall have to rely on that. The Swan already has a set of papers that would satisfy anyone—out of the regular run of ports, at least. Hall will run her at night through the Sultana on the west coast, and sell her to a trader there with whom arrangements are already made. She will leave enough wreckage in the Mediterranean to convince the most suspicious underwriter that she has been wrecked. She will leave her survivors in a lifeboat. Then she will vanish into space. Hall and his new crew will join her, and you will be one of the survivors, Hare.”

“Oh crumbs!” said Bunny. Earle waved his cigar towards the rocky, surf-bound coast.

“This is famous for its wrecks,” he said. “The Albatross will be one more—that is all. The survivors will all tell the same story—and no one will doubt that the yacht is off the coast of the Mediterranean. And you, Hare, will tell the same story as the rest.”

“You mean, you'll tell a lot of lies, and I shall have to do the same, sir?”

“Exactly!” said Mr. Earle. “But it would not do for one survivor to tell a story different from the rest.”

“But I can’t, sir!”

“I'm afraid there's no choice left for you, Hare!” said the owner of the Albatross. “You're for it now, as I said. If you tell the truth—" I'm bound to, sir," said Bunny, in dismay.

“If you do, you send me to prison.”

“Oh, I couldn't do that, after you've been so kind to me and risked your life to fish me out of the Bay of Biscay,” he said. “I'm sorry for this, my boy,” said Mr. Earle kindly. “If you had known nothing of the plot I could have left you at Gib, and no harm done. You have to pay for your knowledge. I would have taken the risk of leaving you at the Rock, with my secret in your keeping. But you chose to stick to me.”

“I—I hoped you'd give this up, sir,” mumbled Bunny. “Even now, sir, I can't believe you're going to do anything so wicked and dishonest.”

“You will have to believe it soon,” said Mr. Earle, speaking lightly, though he winced. “We shall be at anchor in a few minutes, and then the painting will begin. To-night we leave her unregistered—and the remainder of the Albatross. The tale will be that the Albatross ran on a reef in a sudden squall, and went down with nearly all hands. We shall have to stick to that, Hare.”

“But if you're not believed, sir?”

“No danger of that. Plenty of wreckage will be left about—a stove-in boat, spars, casks—all sorts of things—to be washed ashore and collected. The story of a wreck will soon spread along the coast, and enough will be identified to prove that it was the Albatross that went down. That will bear out the story of the survivors.”

“Oh!” said Bunny dismayfully.

“You shall not lose by it, my boy. I will see that you touch a fair share of what is going.”

“I couldn't touch such money, sir!” exploded Bunny.

“A Roman emperor said once that the most unclean of all was sweet!” answered Mr. Earle, with a cynical smile. “Perhaps you will change your mind. Go and get something to drink.”

Bunny went below, with aclouded face and a heavy heart.

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The Riffians.

The sun went down behind the Riff Mountains. A glittering star glimmered in the dark blue vault over the whispering sea. The heat was still intense. It felt to Bunny as if a thunderstorm was beginning.

The Albatross was at anchor now, in a bay half hidden by great rocks. The shore was a dim blur. Through thickening dusk came the incessant boom of surf on rocky reefs.

There were none of the deep dark—for the Albatross was not burning a single light—with a troubled, anxious face. With all his keen desire to see the world and to live a life of adventure, Jack Hare was musing now that he was home at Wristaria Villa, at Margate!

Margate might be unromantic, lacking in adventure; his relations might regard him as a duffer of the family; but Bunny, just then, would gladly have exchanged Morocco for Margate.

As Mr. Earle had said, he was "for it." He had not foreseen the details of the plot that morning. But he had foreseen his knowledge. It had not occurred to poor Bunny that, as a survivor of the supposed wreck, he would be called on to back up a false story—the alternative being to betray his benefactor, ruin him, and send him to prison.

He had clung to the hope that Mr. Earle would change his mind; that when the test came he would arise from the crime he contemplated. Now the test had come, and that hope had failed Bunny. He could not regret that he had stuck to Mr. Earle, and tried his hardest to counteract the influence of Hall. But the prospect before him utterly dismayed Bunny.

Even now his life hung on Earle's protection. Hall would have to oversee everything, secure his interests, and had to send him aboard the Bay of Biscay. Any of the ruffians who now formed the crew would have stabbed him at a word from the mate. Only Earle's protection stood between Bunny and death! And how could he turn on the man who saved him? He could not! But how could he become a party to a false story, with a swindle as its object? That he could not do, either. Poor Bunny was in the horns of a dilemma, from which there seemed no escape.

He hung over the rail, staring at the starlit seas. It was very dark, in contrast to the glaring stars. There was a smell of fresh paint in the air. Through long, hot hours the work of disguising the yacht had gone on. Already the "wreckage" had been thrown in. The cabin had articles bearing the name of the Albatross, to furnish proof that she had gone down on the Riffian reefs. Soon—very soon now—the lifeboat would take the "survivors." Jack Hare among them. Bunny thought it over, and groaned.

There would be perhaps a day in the boat; then they would be picked
up. Every survivor would have to
make his statement—Bunny among
the rest. What was he going to do?
What was he going to say?
Hall and Earle were below in the
saloon. Three or four of the new crew
louled about the deck, smoking and
muttering together. The water
washed the hull with a deep murmur,
and the Albatross stirred incessantly
at her cable. Through the deep
gloom came the boom of breakers on
the rocky shore.

In the shadows on the dark sea it
seemed to Bunny that he discerned
darker shadows stirring.

He took little heed. His thoughts
were on the crime that
was about to be effected;
a crime which seemed in-
excusable now that he
would be forced to
become a party. He
liked Mr. Earle, and ad-
mired him, in spite of
the weakness and un-
scrupulousness in his
character. He found all
sorts of excuses for him,
laying the whole blame
on the hardened villain.
Hall. But he wished
that he was anywhere
but on board the
Albatross.

What were those shifting
shadows in the dark-
ness? It seemed to
Bunny that he heard a
sound from the sea—the
cautious plunge of a
muffled oar. He started
and listened.

Surely it could not be a
boat coming off in the
darkness from that
arid, inhospitable shore?
Who could be coming off
from that desert coast?
Bunny strained his eyes
in the darkness. A vague
feeling of alarm was in
his breast. In the gloom
there was a gleam of
bare steel. He jumped
as he caught that gleam.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed
Bunny. Dustily, half-seen in
the gloom, he made out
the shadowy shape of a
long, low boat, crammed
with men—dark faces lost
in the night, but gleam-
ing eyes catching there
and there the sparkle of
the stars.

Bunny’s heart throbbed. A boat
had brought them within the shadow
of death!

"Mr. Earle!" panted Bunny.

"You grab—at it!" Hall roared,
leaping to his feet.

"Get out, Hare! What do you
want, confound you?" exclaimed Mr.
Earle irritably. "I’ve heard enough
of your talk. Get out!"

Hall made a stride towards the boy,
his heavy fist clenched. But Bunny
took no heed of him.

"Mr. Earle, there’s a boat coming
alongside!" panted Bunny. "A boat
crammed with men—armed men!"

Hall stopped dead. He glared at
Bunny.

"What! You young swab, you lie!
There’s not a sound!"

"They’re coming—they’ll be along-
side in a minute!" panted Bunny.

"Mr. Earle, I believe they mean to
attack us—I’m sure!"

Earle dropped his glass, and the
liquor ran over the table.

"We never thought of that, Hall!"
he exploded. "This is a dangerous
coast—ships have been lotted in
these waters before!"

"It’s a lie!" snarled Hall. "There’s
not a soul on the coast! The boy’s
lying!"

Mr. Earle burst into a laugh.

"What an end to our game—to have
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Hare!" said Mr. Earle. "He's firing on them. Listen!"

They heard the followed by a furious outburst of yells that woke every echo. It seemed as if a crew of demons had suddenly given voice. Startled shouts from the men of the Albatross rang through the night. The sailors there was a pattering of hurried feet on deck.

"Sire!" gasped Bunny. "Get your revolver—for goodness' sake!"

This was a boat on the side of the Albatross. Wild yelling rang through the night. Pandemonium had broken loose, where a few moments before all had been so silent.

"You're right, boy!" said Mr. Earle. "With perfect coolness he looked to his revolver. "Antoine! Antoine!" he shouted.

"Monsieur!" gasped the terrified valet, running into the saloon with a pale face.

"Get hold of something, Antoine, and follow me on deck," said Mr. Earle. "If you want to save your neck for the man, you have to fight for it now, mon garcon!"

With revolver in hand Mr. Earle hurried up the steps. Bunny stared round for a weapon, and caught up a heavy stick that belonged to Mr. Earle. With the stick gripped in his hand, he ran up to the deck, and Antoine, with a revolver in shaking hand, followed more slowly.

The Lifeboat

BUNNY stared round him wildly. The scene on deck was one of the wildest confusion. The attack had come suddenly. Every mind on board had been concentrated on the work in hand—the disguising of the yacht, the trickery of the floating wreckage, the preparations for the vendetta. Now it was the vessel at midnight. No man on board had given a thought to what might be hidden behind the dusky sand-dunes on that solitary, savage coast.

How the sand-dunes had revealed their secret!

But for Bunny's warning, the Riffians would have swarmed over the low freeboard of the yacht and swamped the vessel with their numbers. The boat was fired on a hand raised. The crew would have been cut to pieces almost before they knew they were in danger.

Bunny's warning had prevented the Riffians from crossing the man who had fired on a hand raised. The crew would have been cut to pieces almost before they knew they were in danger.

The Riffians, seeing their stealthy approach discovered, gave up stealthy and pulled hard and fast for the yacht. Hall stood at the rail, pitching bullets into them, yelling to the crew. The startled men of the Albatross, roused from complete security, shouted and scurried in the gloom.

At that moment Hall would have been glad of the British seamen he had left behind at Gibraltar. But only the Riffians were there to back him up, and most of them were yelling with panic.

The long, low boat had hooked on. The dark-skinned Riffians swarmed up the gunwale, firing from hand-to-hand in the face of the boat. Mr. Earle had joined Hall, and was shooting with a steady hand, and a cynical grin on his face. It might almost have been hair-raising that this thing had happened—that he welcomed the wild fight and the danger. In an hour more he would have been away in the lifeboat—committed to crime! Now he was fighting for his life, the plotting forgotten.

Two or three of the crew backed up them with knives or belaying-pins. The Riffians were swarming, but for the moment they held in check. Both Hall and Earle fired fast, and with deadly aim. Unheeding the fallen, the savage brown men swarmed on, yelling fiercely. Bunny rushed forward to help in the defence, and his stick crashed across the face of a savage Ruffian clambering over the rail, hurling him back into the boat.

"Well done, boy!" came Mr. Earle's reply. "Keep on going it!"

"Yes, sir!" Bunny gasped.

Rawlings, the engineer, came rushing on the scene, grasping a belaying-pin. Antoine joined up with revolver, though his hand was shaking so that the bullets flew wide and wild.

"Back up, you swabs!" Hall was roaring to his crew. "You hounds, do you want your throats cut? Fight for your life, you swab!"

His revolver was empty. He clubbed it, and crunched the butt into a savage face. Three or four Riffians had gained the deck, and the rascal crew of the Albatross, attacked at close quarters, found them heavy, sweeping scimitars wielded by desperate hands bent knives and belaying-pins in the hands of panicky men. Thre were howls of despair, mingled with the ferocious yelling of the Riffians.

Hall was fighting like a madman, his clubbed revolver in his left hand, a belaying-pin in his right. Earle, his own revolver empty, watched the weapon from Antoine's shaking hand. With a perfect coolness he pitched his bullets, and not one of them hit. Hall was hit,心灵iterated, was lashing out fiercely with his stick. He saw Antoine back away and scuttle out of the lifeboat.

Already provisioned, the lifeboat hung outboard in its davits, all ready to sail. The moon was down, the sky was curving, and if the plot had been carried out. It seemed unlikely now that there would be any survivors to depart. For desperate as the defence was, heavy fire was the work of Riffls. The unequal conflict could only end one way.

Already the dash of oars told that another boat with a piratical crew was coming out from the darkness of the shore to share in the plunder. The oars were heavy, and in a few moments the whole would be overwhelming.

Bunny heard Mr. Earle laugh—a strange sound in the midst of darkness and confusion and death.

"Better the game's up, Hall. Fight it out!"

Antoine, in the lifeboat, was making a frantic attempt to lower it, beat on escape. But to lower both tackles at once required a cooler head than the panic-stricken valet's. He cast off the forward tackle, holding it fast while he jumped to the other davit, seeking to lower both at once. But the rope slipped and flew, and the boat would go under.

Antoine, with a howl, plunged down into the water, and held on to the boat—which now hung down from a single davit—shrieking.

Hall gave a maddened glare round him. Seven or eight Riffians were on the ship now, and the crew of bravoes and lascaras who were to have sailed the stolen ship down the coast with Hall had been captured or were seeking hiding-places below.

The game was up! For a moment the savages held back from the desperate group who defended themselves—Hall, Earle, Rawlings, and Bunny.

As they were, they were daunted.

But the respite was only a brief one. Forward and aft the Riffians were coming up. The second boat had hooked on now. There were sixty or seventy of the villains, and as soon as they gathered for the rush all was over.

Hall made a rush for the lifeboat, but by its attitude, the valet, Mr. Earle's arm. "Save yourself, Bunny!" Early laughed. He was watching the crowd of brown faces and rolling black eyes, taking advantage of the pause to cram fresh cartridges into his revolver. "Cut for it, kid!"

"Not without you, sir!" said Bunny.

"You young ass—hook it!"

"You, sir!" said Bunny. "Come, sir!" he panted. "They're getting the boat away! For goodness' sake, sir—"

"I'll come! I'll follow you, kid! They'll return us if I turn my back. Get away!"

Hall was sawing at the tackle desperately with a knife. It parted, and the boat slid down into the water. But for Hall it was as likely as not that the hanging lifeboat would plunge bawls under as it went. Fortunately, though it shipped a sea, the boat floated. The next second Hall leaped down into the boat. Rawlings at his heels. The boat landed in the boat. The engineer missed it, and plunged into the water, vanishing from sight. Hall

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did not give him a look or a thought. He grabbed an oar and fended off. "Mr. Earle!" yelled Bunny. He fairly dragged the yachtman to the side. Earle turned and shot more shots into the Riffians, now crowded on the deck of the yacht, held at bay like wolves.


"Fool—"

They're on us! Jump while I keep them off! I'll follow! Jump, fool!" roared Earle.

And Bunny obediently jumped, while Earle turned on the Riffians again with blazing revolver.

Bunny landed in the boat, and sprawled headlong there. Hall, apparently taking him for Earle in the darkness, fended off with his oar.

Bunny scrambled up and yelled: "Stop for Mr. Earle! Stop!"

"You, is it?" Hall ejaculated. In his rage he struck at Bunny with the oar, and the boy narrowly dodged the fierce blow. "You—you always you!"

"You beast!" yelled Bunny. "Stop for Mr. Earle!"

"It's too late!" The mate drove the oar against the hull of the yacht. Bunny leaped at him, grabbed his arm, and tore down the oar.

"You shall stop, you beast!" panted Bunny. A shadowy figure tumbled in the gloom. Herbert Earle leaped down. Bunny heard a splash in the sea.

"Mr. Earle!" he shouted. The boat was burning away from the yacht, and Earle had dropped in the water between. But his hand grasped the gunwale of the boat.

"Here!" he said coolly. Bunny panted with relief as he grasped him and helped him into the boat. Antoine had already dragged himself in. Of Rawlings nothing was to be seen. The engineer had gone down like a stone.

Hall fended off, while the sail above was lined with savage faces, and a dash of oars told that a Riffian boat was grooping along to cut off the escape.

"Get hold of an oar, Bunny."

"Yes, sir—I've got one!" said Bunny. He ran the oar into the water. Hall, on the other side, did the same. They pulled hard, and the lifeboat shot away from the doomed Albatross.

Mr. Earle took the lines. Antoine was crouching and shivering in the bows. From the deck of the yacht came a hoarse yelling of the Riffians. But the dash of oars in pursuit, which they had dreaded to hear, was not to be heard. The escape of a few survivors mattered less to the Riffians than a share in the plunder. The Riffians were swarming over the yacht, and the lifeboat pulled away to sea unheeded.

Down came, red and rosy, on the blue Mediterranean. All through the night the four survivors of the Albatross had pulled in turn by pairs, seeking to place a greater distance between the lifeboat and the Riffian shore. When dawn flushed over the sea, they rested.

As the light strengthened, Bunny looked back. But only the blue expanse of sea met his gaze. Far off, a dim blur on the sky marked the mountains of Morocco. But the shore was still ahead, and on the sea there was no sail.

Hall sat scowling, but Bunny saw a smile on the face of Mr. Earle. Antoine sorted out food from a locker for breakfast. Bunny rubbed his tired eyes.

"Safe now, boy?" said Mr. Earle, smiling.

"Yes, sir," said Bunny. "I wonder what they've done to the Albatross?"

"I doubt whether two of their planks are holding together by this time," answered Mr. Earle. "The Riffians are old hands at this game. They won't have anything for a gunboat to pick up. What they cannot carry off they will sink."

"Then—the yacht's gone?"

"Quite."

"You won't seem to mind, sir," said Bunny, in wonder. "Why should I mind?" said Mr. Earle coolly. "The Albatross was fully insured."

"You insured? repeated Bunny.

"But—the insurance covers loss at sea, even in such an unusual way," said the yachtman, smiling.

"Oh!" gasped Bunny. "And your tender conscience, so carefully trained by your estimable uncle at Margate, may be perfectly at rest now," added Mr. Earle ironically. "The Albatross has been lost—and really and truly lost—and I am entitled to draw the money."

"Of course you are, sir, as she's really lost by accident," said Bunny. "I hadn't thought of that!"

"No need to tell any lies about it," said Mr. Earle. "A plain statement of the facts is enough."

"Oh, good!" said Bunny.

"I lose nothing. Only Dick Hall here loses on the deal," said Mr. Earle. "It's a real loss of the yacht, indeed, a prettier one. The ten thousand pounds insurance money will be paid, but the five thousand that the yacht was to be sold for is gone for good."

He turned mockingly to Hall: "That deal's off, Hall. You lose your credit and keep your conscience, man!"

"The company mayn't be in a hurry to pay up if they learn why we were hanging about the Moroccan coast at night!" Hall snarled.

"And the crew followers of the yacht's lost, and the company have to pay. We lose the extra five thousand we were going to make by a swindle. But don't look so glum, added Mr. Earle. "At least you've not lost all. You've lost the game, and had a lot of trouble and expense for nothing. And—I'm glad of it!"

"You were always half-hearted," snarled Hall. He stared back.

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savage towards the vanished coast of Morocco and grunted his teeth. "To be beaten like that at the very finish—at the very finish!" And by such a chance! Who'd have thought that?"

"We're lucky not to have lost our lives as well as our game! But for the boy warning us—"

"Hang the boy!"

Mr. Earle laughed.

Bunny was smiling now. The loss of the Albatross, tragic as it had been, had put an end to the plot. Chance had intervened at the last moment."

"we'd chosen some other spot—" muttered Hall.

"We chose the safest place—we never bargained for the Riffians," said Mr. Earle. "It's no good crying over spilt milk. The Albatross is gone, and the five thousand she would have sold for is gone, too. I lose as much as you do—except that the insurance money may be a little beyond her value," he added, with a grin. "Cheer up, man! I'll see that you get a couple of hundred out of it."

Hall grunted.

"How long do you think we shall be in this boat, sir?" asked Bunny.

"Not long, I hope. We shall be picked up before night," answered Mr. Earle. "We're in the track of plenty of steamer."

The sun rose higher, blazing down on the floating boat. Four pairs of eyes watched the sea anxiously. It was towards noon that the smoke of a steamer was sighted. Mr. Earle watched—through a pair of binoculars."

"It's a steamer coming—easily enough from Gibraltar to Algiers or Tunis, he said. "They're bound to say something."

Hall made no movement. He seemed plunged into deep gloom by the failure of the plot. But Bunny was glad to see that failure had come rather too late for Mr. Earle. Certainly his handsome face looked more free from care than Bunny had seen it for many a long day. Antoine wildly waved a signal to the distant steamer, and she was seen to alter course and bear down on the boat. Half an hour later the lifeboat was picked up, and the survivors of the Albatross were treading the deck of the steamer, bound for Tunis.

Bunny was feeling happy and elated. But a thought came into his mind that rather dashed his satisfaction."

"You'll be going back to England now, sir, I suppose?" he asked Mr. Earle.

"Only the first steamer for Marcellis, when we get to Tunis," answered Mr. Earle. "And will you get another yacht, sir?"

"It won't run to yacht again for me, Bunny," Mr. Earle laughed. "When I touch the insurance money on the Albatross I shall either pay my debts—which will wipe out most of it—or—"

"Or what, sir?"

"Or try my luck at Monte Carlo," said Mr. Earle. And the well-remembered glimmer came into his eyes as if Bunny had seen in the casino at Boulogne.

"Oh, sir," said Bunny, "I hope you'll decide to pay your debts!"

"I hope so," said Mr. Earle, laughing."

"But—but you won't want a steward's boy any more, sir," said Bunny.

"Do you want to stick to me, you young ass!"

"Yes, sir, if—"

"I'll take you back to England with me, at all events, and see you safe home," said Mr. Earle.

Bunny shook his head."

"Perhaps I can get a job at Tunis," he said. "My uncle at Margate says you can always find a job if you look for it."

And though he was sorry at the parting, with Mr. Earle and Bunny looked forward with considerable anticipation as the steamer ran down to the one-time pirate city of the Mediterranean.