

# Bunny on the Track!

"Oh, my hat! Oh, my summer parasol!" roared Gilbert. "Isn't that you all over, Bunny! Don't you prance off with the whole giddy bakery! Ha, ha, ha!"



*Bunny's a priceless, likeable sort of chap. He goes like a bull at a gate at most things he tackles, and he really excels himself this week! His intentions are splendid, but his luck—well, he just has to gasp his way through funny misfortunes!*

COMPLETE

By

Charles Hamilton

## "Fool Enough for Anything!"

BUNNY was worried. The atmosphere in the breakfast-room at Wistaria Villa, Margate, was electric. Mr. Hare, Bunny's uncle, sat silent and grim. Bunny's cousin Gilbert was as silent as his father. Bunny, of course, said no word.

Mrs. Hare—Bunny's aunt—was talking enough for four.

"Two hundred pounds!" said Mrs. Hare for the eleventh time.

"My dear!" said Mr. Hare, breaking his silence.

"Two hundred pounds!" repeated Mrs. Hare.

Mr. Hare became silent again. Gilbert looked up from his plate, and surreptitiously closed one eye at Bunny across the table. Bunny nearly choked, having just transferred a spoonful of porridge to his mouth when he caught Gilbert's sudden and unexpected wink.

"Oooooogh!" gurgled Bunny. It was no time to laugh when the atmosphere was charged with electricity. Still less was it time to laugh when one's mouth was charged with porridge. But Gilbert's sudden wink was too much for Bunny.

His uncle's eye turned on him.

"Can you not behave yourself at table?" demanded Mr. Hare.

"Oh! Ooooh! Yes, uncle! Woooh!"

"Disgusting!" exclaimed Mr. Hare.

"Do shut up, Bunny!" said Gilbert. Which was rather mean of Gilbert, as he was the cause of the catastrophe.

Mrs. Hare took no heed of Bunny. Her mind was occupied by more important matters. Mrs. Hare was up against the stupendous problem that bothers so many married ladies: the abysmal stupidity of menfolk when they refuse to be guided by women-folk.

Mr. Hare, it was true, was generally guided. In his office in the City he was considered quite a hard nut to crack. But at home at Wistaria Villa he was usually as clay in the hands of the potter.

"Two hundred pounds!" said Mrs. Hare for the thirteenth time, heedless of Bunny's gurgles. "And the mortgage almost due! And—"

"My dear!" said Mr. Hare. He made a feeble attempt to assume his office manner, though he was well aware, from experience, that it was not successful at Wistaria Villa. "I dislike discussing business matters at breakfast—especially before the boys!"

"Who is the rogue?" asked Mrs. Hare.

"If you are alluding to the old friend whom I helped out of a difficulty with a loan of two hundred pounds—" began Mr. Hare, with a great deal of dignity.

"I am alluding to the man who owes you two hundred pounds and refuses to pay!" said Mrs. Hare.

"I am sure, my dear, that he would pay if he could!"

"A person who cannot pay has no right to borrow," said Mrs. Hare. "Is he, whoever he is, aware that there is a mortgage on the house?"

"N-no."

"Is it your intention to mention it to him?"

"Oh dear!" said Mr. Hare. He looked at his watch. "Dear me! I must go at once! I shall lose my train!"

"It is still ten minutes before your usual time, Mr. Hare. And I should like to know—"

"Yes. But I have to call in at Bobby's about—about my umbrella!" said Mr. Hare hastily. "I have not a moment to lose!" Mr. Hare escaped. Peace descended on his soul when he was safely seated in the 9.10 for Victoria.

But on the household of Wistaria Villa peace did not descend. Trouble brooded over that abode.

Bunny drifted into the garden



with a dismal face. Bunny had a happy disposition, and was always happy so long as he saw happy faces round him. But he had a sensitive nature, and felt other people's troubles as if they were his own.

Gilbert Hare, however, looked quite cheery as he strolled into the garden after Bunny. Gilbert lighted a cigarette. Gilbert was seventeen, and no end of a man of the world. Bunny was fourteen, and not in the least a man of the world, and he shook his head when his cousin kindly offered him a smoke.

"The mater's waxy," Gilbert remarked. "It's a fact that the governor is rather an ass, Bunny. I think it runs in the family. Your pater was an ass and you're an ass, and the governor's an ass. Really, I must have had a jolly narrow escape of being an ass myself!"

Bunny was not sure that Gilbert had escaped. But he did not say so.

"The poor old mater!" said Gilbert. "She's right, of course. Fancy a man lending a chap two hundred pounds when he's as hard-up as the pater! That's the kind of thing your pater used to do, Bunny. That's why he had to vanish all of a sudden without leaving his address behind. If they foreclose on the mortgage, it will be the end of this show. Lucky I've got a good job in Cliftonville!"

"Can't we do something to help?" asked Bunny.

Gilbert stared at him.

"What could we do, fathead? The pater's lent that money to some friend who's let him down. Man must be a rogue not to pay up. Some sneaking blighter who's got round the pater because he's an ass!"

"Must be an awful rotter!" said Bunny.

"A sneaking, miserable worm!" said Gilbert. "If I know who he was, I'd jolly well tell him what I think of him. But the pater keeps that dark. He won't mention the johnny's name. I dare say the man could pay him if he liked. But he knows the pater's soft. I'd like to punch his beastly head!"

"So would I!" said Bunny. "But—look here, Gilbert! Can't we do something? The man ought to be made to pay!" He wrinkled his chubby brow in thought. "Uncle's worried, and auntie's worried; and

it's all the fault of that brute who owes uncle money and won't pay up. We ought to make him, somehow. And from what auntie says, the house may be sold up if uncle can't meet the mortgage!"

"Looks like it!" agreed Gilbert. "Business is bad in the city, and the pater's up against it. It will be a cropper for you. I suppose that's what's bothering you, isn't it?"

"I wasn't thinking about myself!" Bunny exclaimed indignantly. "I never thought of that for a moment."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Gilbert. "You're fool enough for anything, Bunny! But if we come to a smash here, you'll be fairly landed. You haven't sense enough to bag a job of any sort, and you'll never be worth your keep to anybody. You couldn't push a truck without pushing it into a tram. You couldn't take round papers without delivering the wrong papers at the wrong houses. Frightful handicap to a fellow to have a brain like yours, Bunny!"

"I don't care what happens to me," said Bunny warmly. "But I do wish I could make that rotter pay up! Look here! I'm going to try—"

"You, old bean!" laughed Gilbert. "You're worth your oats to make a fellow laugh, Bunny. Well, I must be off!"

And Gilbert threw away the stump of his cigarette and departed. Bunny was left alone in the garden.

He stared away over the garden wall towards the sea, his eyes following a ketch that had come out from

Ramsgate. But for once Bunny was not thinking of distant seas and foreign lands and strange adventures in strange climes. He was thinking of the trouble that brooded over Wistaria Villa, which clouded the brow of the uncle who had taken charge of him when his father disappeared, and which was turning his kind-hearted aunt into a peevish and nagging woman. If only he could have done something to help—

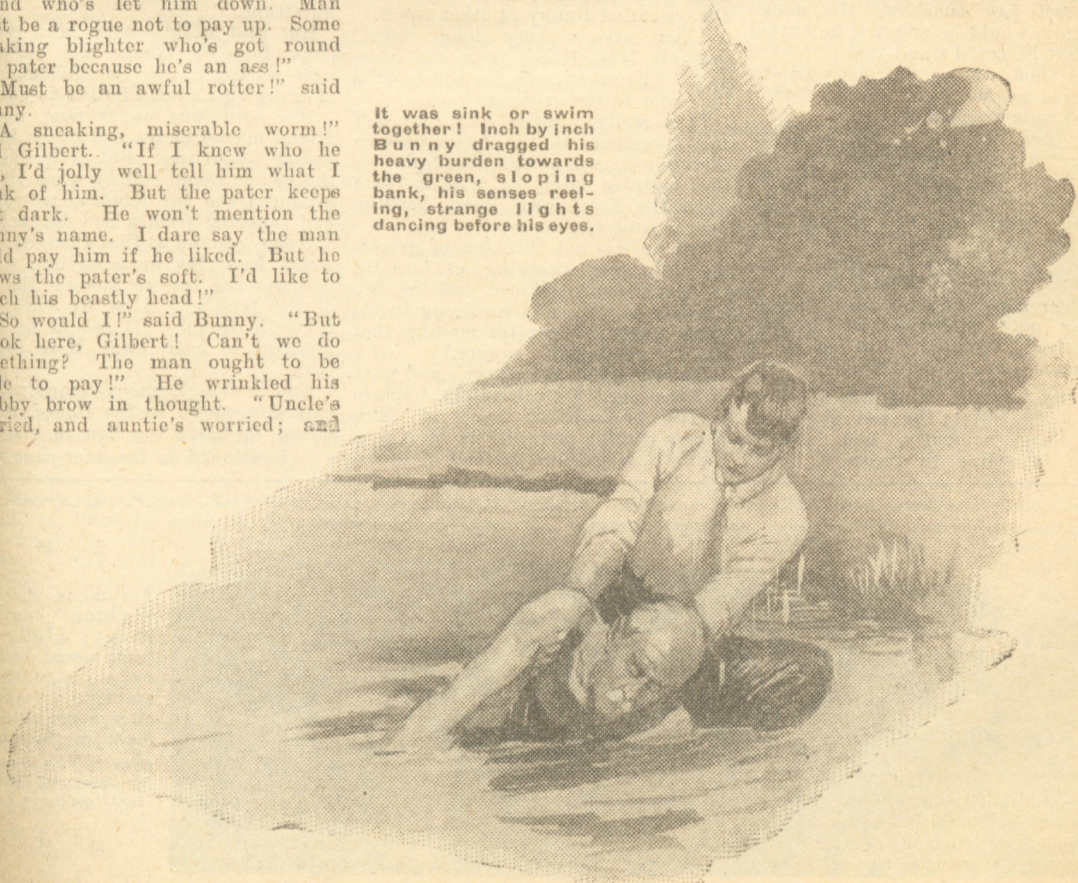
"Bunny!" It was his aunt's voice, calling with a very acid note. Bunny hurried at once into the house.

### To Beard the Lion.

**B**UNNY sorted out the papers on his uncle's desk and set them in their places in a very orderly way. Mr. Hare was a rather untidy gentleman, and his study at Wistaria Villa always needed tidying. That was one of Bunny's duties. Bunny had many duties to perform, and he performed them all cheerfully. He was aware that his uncle was scarcely in a position to take charge of an orphan, and place him in the world; but Mr. Hare had undertaken that duty, and Bunny had a grateful heart.

When he dreamed of a life of adventure in foreign lands, Bunny always dreamed of coming home some day with a fortune and making things easy for the relatives who had been kind to him when he needed kindness. Life was not always smooth at

It was sink or swim together! Inch by inch Bunny dragged his heavy burden towards the green, sloping bank, his senses reeling, strange lights dancing before his eyes.





## Bunny on the Track!

Wistaria Villa, but his uncle certainly was a generous man, his aunt kind when she was not worried about money, and Gilbert, though ineffably patronising, was a good fellow.

Bunny was fond of them all, and there was nothing he would not have done to help the family out of its present trouble.

The domestic service at Wistaria Villa was limited to one maid, who came in daily, so there was plenty to be done by a fellow who desired to make himself useful. Bunny attended to the garden and to his uncle's study, and did many, many other things. He would gladly have done more.

Now, while he tidied his uncle's study, his thoughts were running on that blighter, that miserable worm, as Gilbert called him, who owed Mr. Austin Hare two hundred pounds, and refused to pay him. Mr. Hare spoke of him as a friend. But Bunny could not help feeling that Gilbert was right in calling him a worm, and Mrs. Hare right in calling him a rogue.

If the man couldn't pay he couldn't. But both Gilbert and Mrs. Hare evidently believed that he was some unscrupulous person who could pay and wouldn't—taking advantage of Mr. Hare's weak and easy-going nature. And such conduct as that appeared unspeakable to Bunny.

If only he knew who the man was, Bunny told himself, he would make the beast pay somehow. His uncle, certainly, would be angry if he butted in. But he could stand that.

And then, among the many papers scattered on Mr. Hare's desk, Bunny picked up a torn sheet.

He looked at it, to ascertain whether it was a paper to be put carefully in a pigeon-hole or a useless fragment to be dropped into the wastepaper-basket. And he read on it:

*"Loftus House,  
Cliftonville.*

*Dear Hare,—I have just received your note referring to the two hundred pounds. I'm sorry I cannot—"*

Bunny jumped. That was all there was of the letter; the rest was gone. Mr. Hare, evidently, had torn it across intending to throw it away,

and with his usual carelessness had left that half of the sheet lying about his desk.

But little as there was of the letter, there was enough for Bunny. Somebody owed Mr. Hare two hundred pounds. This letter showed that Mr. Hare had written to Loftus House, referring to two hundred pounds. Obviously, what he had written was a request for the payment of the debt.

It was clear enough to Bunny. His face flushed with indignation. He knew all about old Captain Loftus, of Loftus House, Cliftonville. He was rich—two hundred pounds was nothing to him. That he had ever borrowed such a sum from Mr. Hare was rather surprising; but there was no doubt that he could have paid had he liked. Why, his car alone must have cost eight hundred pounds at least.

Bunny breathed indignation. Old Captain Loftus was said to be rather miserly. Perhaps that was the reason he did not pay. A precious reason.

Bunny stood with the fragment in his hand, buried in thought. It was rotten—it was really disgusting. Bunny felt an intense desire to punch Captain Loftus' Roman nose. Rolling in money, and refusing to pay a small sum—small to him—which would save Wistaria Villa from ruin.

"John!" It was his aunt's voice.

Bunny crushed the fragment of paper in his hand and looked round guiltily. When his aunt called him "John," it meant that the good lady was very cross. Jack Hare was always called Bunny at other times.

"You are a very long time," snapped Mrs. Hare, from the doorway. "I am waiting for you to take the order to the grocer's."

"I'm ready, auntie." Bunny put the fragment of the letter into a pigeon-hole and closed the desk. A few minutes later he was walking down the Northdown Road, heading for the grocer's.

But he was not thinking of groceries. He was thinking of Captain Loftus, of Loftus House, and the two hundred pounds, and revolving in his brain many schemes for making that miserly gentleman "square."

He arrived at the grocer's and gave in the order. Unfortunately, Captain Loftus had driven most of Mrs. Hare's careful instructions from poor Bunny's mind, and instead of order-

ing one pound of tea and five pounds of boiling bacon, he ordered five pounds of tea and one pound of boiling bacon. Little mistakes like this often happened to Bunny.

Having finished with the grocer, Bunny did not immediately return home. He walked down to the sands to think out his problem. His mind was quite made up. It was all very well for his uncle and aunt to consider him the fool of the family. It was all very well for Gilbert, who had learned the American language at the pictures, to declare that he was the world's prize boob. Bunny was going to set the matter right.

How was that brute, old Loftus, to be forced to pay the debt, which he could so easily pay if he liked?

He had got to pay. Bunny was going to make him—somehow.

With such a problem on his mind, time passed swiftly. Bunny was late home to lunch. Something like a storm greeted him at Wistaria Villa.

Five pounds of tea and a pound of bacon had arrived there during Bunny's absence, completely upsetting Mrs. Hare's arrangements for the morning.

Bunny was glad to bolt a hasty lunch and get away. When Mrs. Hare was cross, her tongue was like unto the sword of sharpness in the fairy tale.

Bunny, of course, was sorry for the mistake, and he could not explain to his aunt that it was really due to his desire to benefit the family. It was more judicious to steer clear of the hurricane.

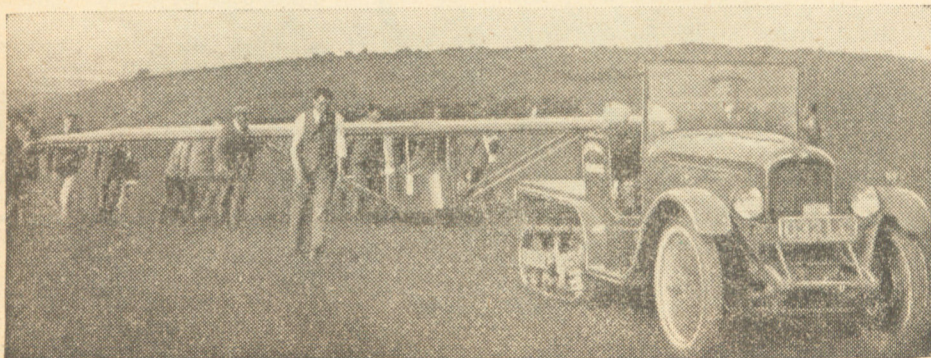
But that little matter soon passed from Bunny's mind. His thoughts were occupied with the difficult task of bringing Captain Loftus to book.

His aunt was angry now, over a trivial matter of tea and bacon in the wrong quantities. But how quickly the clouds would roll by when Bunny produced the two hundred pounds he had collected from a bad debtor!

Bunny glowed at that thought. He could hear his aunt saying, "And this was the boy we thought the fool of the family! How we were mistaken in him!" It would be very pleasant to hear Aunt Hare saying that.

And in the afternoon Bunny walked valiantly up to Loftus House, determined to beard the lion in his den.

*(Continued on the next page.)*



A Prufing glider—*which costs about £100—being towed back by a car to the starting place after a successful flight in Sussex. (See "The Real Masters of the Air!" on page 3.)*



Bunny's mind was made up. And something was going to happen!

### Sink or Swim!

"**B**OTHER!" said Bunny. It was disconcerting. Bunny arrived at Loftus House with the fixed determination of seeing Captain Loftus and screwing out of him, by hook or by crook, the two hundred pounds he owed to Mr. Austin Hare.

But he was informed at the door that Captain Loftus was not within, having gone down to the bathing-pool in the grounds for his afternoon swim.

Loftus House stood in extensive grounds on the outskirts of Margate, and the bathing-pool was at a distance from the house, surrounded by old trees and flowery shrubberies.

Bunny turned away in disgust. But he did not depart. He slipped away from the drive and went through the shrubberies towards the lake.

He had pictured an interview with the old gentleman in his library, and had fancied the captain shrinking under his accusing eye; blustering, perhaps, but finally coming round and paying up. Having taken on the job of debt collector, Bunny was not going to budge without the money. He was going to be as difficult to get rid of as an unpaid rate collector or tax gatherer.

But interviewing Captain Loftus in his library and interviewing him in his bathing-pool were two rather different matters. Still, Bunny, though not one of those fellows of brilliant intellect, was a sticker.

He scuttled through the shrubberies and came in sight of the bathing-pool, secluded amid the leafy trees and shining in the bright sun of Thanet.

It was a large pool—really a lake—and far out on its shining surface Bunny spotted a swimmer. He paused near the dressing-hut on the bank and watched. In the little, thin gentleman in a bathing-suit who was swimming he recognised Captain Loftus.

But he felt rather at a loss. Certainly he could not shout to the man across the water that he had called to collect a debt, even if the captain had two hundred pounds about him, which was improbable.

He had to wait. While he waited and watched the man in the lake, Bunny wondered at the antics of the swimmer.

Bunny was a good swimmer himself, as much at home in the water as an otter. Every day Bunny went down to the shore for his swim, and Gilbert had often expressed his astonishment that Bunny could keep afloat. Bunny, in point of fact, could not only keep afloat, but could swim two lengths to Gilbert's one. Bunny knew all about swimming, and he grinned as he watched Captain Loftus, wondering why a man who could afford an expensive bathing-pool did not take the trouble to learn a few decent strokes.

Then suddenly it flashed on Bunny's mind that the swimmer was in difficulties. His head would come up and go down again. One hand would be tossed in the air, and then

## French Varieties Worth Looking For

By Douglas Armstrong



Missing backgrounds are scarce!

**E**VERY stamp collector is familiar with the French stamps showing classical figures of Peace and Commerce, which were in daily use from the year 1876 down to the end of the nineteenth century. Of these there are two quite distinct types, the one very common the other comparatively scarce. The reason for this is that, after only a small supply of stamps had been printed, the steel die employed in casting the plates cracked right across, so that a fresh one had to be made.

If you look closely at the bottom left-hand corner of these stamps, you will see that the name of the designer, "J. A. SAGE, INV." is engraved there in minute characters. In the original type the letter "N" fell immediately beneath the "B" of "Republique" inscribed above it, whilst in the re-engraved, and commoner, type it is in line with the preceding letter, viz., "U."



Watch for misplaced figures.

The later stamps of France, including those now current, are also capable of yielding abnormal varieties which add to their interest and their value. For instance, in the earliest printings of the so-called "Droits de l'Homme" issue of 1900, the figures of value were originally inserted in the white frame occupying the top right-hand corner of the stamp, at a separate operation, with the result that they often appear "off-centre," and

break into the surrounding design either at the top, bottom, or sides. When such misplacement is particularly pronounced the variety becomes of some importance, and stands at a premium in the leading French stamp catalogue. Again, these same stamps may sometimes be found with distinct double printing of the figures, and this, too, adds considerably to their value.

French stamps of the current series in the large, oblong design reserved for the higher values are printed in two operations—one for the body of the stamp and the other for the background in a second colour.

Now and again the printer has forgotten to put in the tinted ground, so that varieties may occasionally be found by observant collectors having a plain white background; or, alternatively, with the part in the second colour printed upside-down, in which case the arm supporting the head of Liberty appears coloured.

Some curious misprints also occur on some of the "Sower" stamps of France, where the figure is apparently France, whereon the figure looks as though it were carrying a candle, a ball, or a letter.

Moral—never swap or throw away any stamp that is apparently a duplicate without first examining it thoroughly. It may turn out to be a scarce variety!



Look closely at the bottom left-hand corner of stamps like this—you may discover a rarity.

(All stamps enlarged.)

the other. A foot appeared and disappeared. Strange sounds were coming from the swimmer—inarticulate ejaculations.

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Bunny. Bunny was not, perhaps, quick on the uptake. But as soon as he realised that Captain Loftus was in difficulties and in danger of being drowned in his own expensive bathing-pool, Bunny acted promptly. He threw off cap and jacket and shoes and plunged into the water.

Bunny had always found swimming easy. But swimming with his clothes on he found far from easy. But he swam rapidly and steadily for the centre of the lake, where the hapless captain was almost at his last gasp.

He reached Captain Loftus and grasped him.

"Hold on to me!" gasped Bunny.

The old gentleman did not need telling. He grasped Bunny, and clung to him like a limpet to a rock. Bunny gave a choking gurgle as he was dragged under.

He fought up to the surface again, dragging Captain Loftus with him. An arm was round Bunny's neck, almost choking him. Every movement was incommoded, and, good swimmer as he was, Bunny found it hard to keep his head above water.

It was useless to gasp and shout at the old gentleman, who was only half-conscious now and quite irresponsible. He had something to cling to in deep water, and he clung to it frantically. Bunny went under again, gurgling, and came up again, spluttering.

(Continued on page 16.)



## Bunny on the Track!

(Continued from page 13.)

It was fortunate for Jack Hare that he was strong and sturdy, that he was a good swimmer, and that he had plenty of pluck. For he had to fight for his own life now, as well as that of the man he was trying to rescue.

He fought his way towards the bank, with the heavy weight of the helpless man dragging him down. But it seemed to Bunny, in those terrible moments, that he would never reach it alive.

There was no help. The house was out of sight beyond the trees. No one was at hand. Two lives hung on Bunny's strength and determination. His wet clothes dragged him down, as well as the weight of the man who clung to him. And how Bunny escaped being drowned he never knew.

Inch by inch he won his way towards the green, sloping bank, and again his head went under, and he felt his strength going.

But it did not occur to Bunny to shake off his burden and save himself. The thought did not even cross his mind. It was sink or swim together.

His senses were reeling, strange lights dancing before his eyes, and still the green bank seemed as far off as ever. And then suddenly Bunny felt something under his feet. His despairing hand clutched a tuft of grass.

He dragged himself painfully out of the water, dragging the half-drowned man with him, and sank down in the grass. And then the universe seemed to spin round Bunny, and he did not know what happened next.

### "Pay Up!"

"MY brave lad!" Bunny's eyes opened. "Groogh!" was his first remark. An arm supported him, and he sat up.

He blinked round him in the bright sunshine. He was sitting in the grass, in a pool of water that had dripped from him, a few yards from the margin of the lake. Captain Loftus was bending over him and supporting him. The old gentleman's rather leathery face was full of emotion.

"Brave lad!" he repeated. "Gallant lad! How do you feel now?"

"Groogh! I'm all right, sir!" gasped Bunny, and rubbed the water from his eyes.

"Feeling fit again, what?" asked Captain Loftus.

"Oh, yes, quite!" Bunny agreed, with another gasp. As a matter of fact, he was feeling quite dazed and dizzy, and not quite sure whether he was still in the land of the living.

"You have saved my life!" said the old gentleman.

"Have I?" gasped Bunny.

"Yes. I had a sudden cramp. I had given myself up. I should have gone down like a stone if you hadn't pulled me out! I owe you my life!"

"Oh!" murmured Bunny. "I—I'm glad I helped you, sir."

"I don't know what you were doing in my grounds," said Captain Loftus,

"but I'm glad you were on the spot, by gad! What's your name?"

"Jack Hare."

"Hare! Hare!" repeated the old gentleman. "Have I heard that name before somewhere?"

Bunny almost glared at him. Had the man forgotten the name of the man to whom he owed two hundred pounds? It looked like it. Bunny pulled himself together.

"I'm all right now," he said.

"Wait for me," said the captain; and he disappeared into the dressing-hut.

Bunny squeezed the water out of his clothes while he waited, and donned his shoes and jacket and cap. He did not need bidding to wait for Captain Loftus. He meant to wait! In the excitement of saving him from the water, Bunny had forgotten what he had come to Loftus House for. But he remembered now. He had serious business with Captain Loftus before he left!

The old military gentleman was some time dressing. But he emerged from the hut at last.

"You'd better come up to the house and dry your clothes, lad," he said graciously.

Captain Loftus had the reputation of being an extremely tart old gentleman, but his manner was graciousness itself to Bunny.

"That's all right, sir," said Bunny. "I'm not far from home."

"If you'd rather run home, very well," said Captain Loftus. "But let me see you again, my boy. You are a plucky lad. I'm not likely to forget that you saved my life. Mark this. If I can do anything for you at any time, you have only to ask. I'm not a man to make rash promises. I say what I mean, and I mean what I say."

Bunny drew a quick breath.

This was his opportunity! For himself, Bunny would never have dreamed of asking anything. But he was entitled to ask for what was due to his uncle. There could surely be no doubt about that! He made the plunge at once.

"I'm glad to hear you say that, sir!" he exclaimed. "I came here to ask you for something—"

The old gentleman looked at him.

"You came here to ask me for something?" he repeated, and the graciousness of his manner faded a little. "What was it, pray?"

"Two hundred pounds, sir!" said Bunny.

Captain Loftus jumped.

"Are you sane, boy?"

"Eh? Yes," said Bunny.

"You—you came here to ask me, a perfect stranger, for two hundred pounds?" bawled the captain.

"Yes. You see—"

"Preposterous!"

"You see, I am Mr. Austin Hare's nephew," Bunny hastened to explain, "and my uncle's hard up—"

"What is that to me?" snorted the captain.

"Well, I think it ought to be a good deal to you, in the circumstances," said Bunny indignantly. "Two hundred pounds isn't a lot to you, but to him it means—"

"Rubbish!" snorted the old gentleman.

Bunny breathed hard.

"I'm only asking what's fair and right, as you jolly well know," he said determinedly, "and you've just said that if you could do anything for me I'd only to ask it. Well, I'm asking for that two hundred pounds—"

"Pah!" All the old gentleman's graciousness had vanished now. "You have saved my life. I admit it. I would be glad to help you in any way I could. But to ask me for money—and such a sum—"

"It's not for myself, is it?" exclaimed Bunny indignantly. "My uncle never was in a position to lend the money—"

"If your uncle has lent money without being in a position to do so, he is a fool!"

"Well, I like that!" gasped Bunny. "Look here—"

"Silence! You have saved my life. I have offered to reward you—and you ask me for two hundred pounds! I am a man of my word. I will give it to you—and never let me see your face again!"

"I don't want to!" said Bunny. "All I want is the two hundred pounds, and you can't deny—"

"Silence!" roared Captain Loftus. "Come with me!"

He stalked away towards the house, evidently in a very bad temper.

Bunny followed him. He did not care for the man's bad temper, so long as the man paid up. That was the important point. He was feeling angry and indignant, too. Captain Loftus spoke just as if Bunny had asked for a large monetary reward for himself, instead of the payment of a just debt. It was irritating and unpleasant. Still, Bunny was there to collect the debt. That was the main point, and he saw success ahead at last.

Captain Loftus stalked into the house, with Bunny at his heels. Bunny followed him into the library.

Without a word, the old gentleman unlocked an escritoire and took out a bundle of banknotes. From these he extracted two for a hundred pounds each, and Bunny's eyes danced as he saw them.

The captain's eyes gleamed at him.

"Mercenary young rascal!" he said, as he handed Bunny the two banknotes.

"Look here, sir—"

"Not a word!" snorted the old gentleman. "By gad, I am ashamed to have had my life saved by such a mercenary young rascal! But I am a man of my word. You have named your price. Take it and go!"

"I think—"

"Go!" roared the old military gentleman, and Bunny jumped up and went.

"Cheek!" murmured Bunny indignantly, as the door of Loftus House closed behind him. "Nerve! Anybody would think that it was wrong to ask a man to settle a debt. Doesn't the old donkey expect to have to pay his debts? Cheek!"

But Bunny's frowning brow smoothed out as he took his homeward way. He had set out on his mission with great determination, but with doubtful hope.



He had succeeded! His uncle might be displeased at his having butted into such a personal matter, but he was bound to be pleased at the sight of the two hundred pounds—the much-needed money that he had looked on as a bad debt and lost for ever.

Gilbert could hardly call him a fathead after this! Nothing succeeds like success—and Bunny had succeeded!

Chance and luck had favoured him, it was true. Still, he had succeeded—there was the cash to prove it! Bunny felt as if he was walking on air as he trotted home to Wistaria Villa.

“Oh Crumbs!”

**M**R. HARE had returned from the City. Bunny saw him at the window of his study as he came up the garden path. His uncle's face was clouded, and Bunny smiled at the thought of how soon those clouds would vanish.

The smile was still on his chubby face when he presented himself in the study. Mr. Hare glanced at him.

“What is it, Bunny? I am rather occupied now.”

“I—I've got some good news for you, uncle,” said Bunny diffidently.

“Indeed!”

“I—I couldn't help knowing about that—that two hundred pounds, uncle,” said Bunny, colouring, “and, knowing how much you needed it—”

“Eh?”

“I—I asked the man to pay up,” said Bunny.

“What!” Mr Hare jumped.

“I hope you don't think it was cheek, uncle,” said Bunny anxiously. “I—I asked him, and—and he paid—”

“What!”

Bunny laid two hundred-pound notes on the table.

Mr. Hare stared at them, his eyes almost bulging from his head.

“Goodness gracious!” he ejaculated.

He stared at the money and stared at his nephew. He seemed bereft of the power of speech. Bunny waited in some trepidation. He had been so anxious to help his uncle out of this scrape that he had not realised that it was, in point of fact, a colossal cheek to butt in like this. Still, surely his uncle must be pleased at the outcome!

“You—you asked for this money to be paid?” exploded Mr. Hare.

“Yes, uncle. I don't see why a rich man shouldn't pay his debts.”

“But he is not a rich man,” said Mr. Hare in perplexity. “He was very hard pressed when he borrowed the money of me, and he has never been in a position to repay me. I cannot understand this. Only two days ago I sent him a note, when he was staying on a visit in this neighbourhood, and he replied that it was impossible to pay at present.”

“He was pulling your leg, uncle!” exclaimed Bunny indignantly. “He's got tons of money.”

(Continued on the next page.)

## Dirt-Track Thrills

# My Narrowest Escape!

Told to **MODERN BOY** Special Dirt-Track Representative by . . .

**RON JOHNSON**

*the Flying Aussie attached to Crystal Palace*

**S**PEEDWAY stars can be divided into two types—those who will talk and those who can but won't. Ron Johnson is definitely in the latter class.

Ron is a slim-looking young fellow in his twenty-third year, with brown hair, grey eyes and a most retiring disposition when off the track. On the track he is a tearing whirlwind. He knows no fear!

I caught him in the “pits” at his home track just after he had beaten the great Vic Huxley in a match race.

“My narrowest escape?” Ron rubbed his nose thoughtfully. “Why,” he grinned, “you can tell all my boy friends that I had a real narrow squeak in the first year of my life—and that was when I was nearly born an Australian! You see, I'm a Scot, not an Aussie.

“I was born at Kircaldy, Dumbartonshire, about a month before my parents sailed for Perth, Western Australia, where they've lived ever since.

“When speedway racing started over there”—Ron waved an arm vaguely—“a track was built at Claremont, a few miles from my home. I knew next to nothing about broadsiding, but I was pretty useful on an old 7-9 Harley Davidson, so I entered for both handicap and scratch events—and that brings me to another narrow escape.”

“You crashed, and broke a leg or something?” I hazarded.

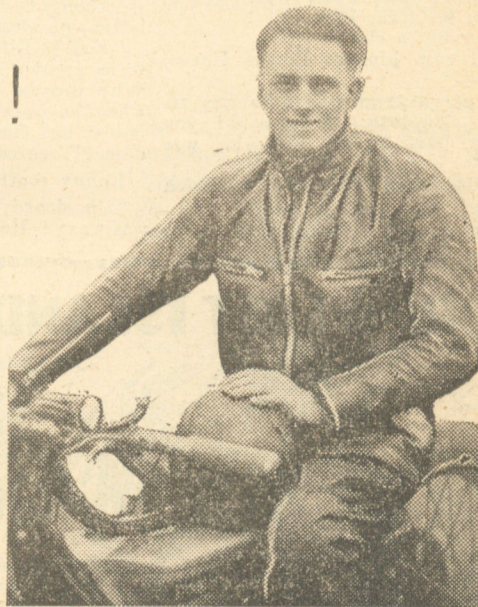
“Wrong first time!” he retorted. “The escape I am alluding to was from getting not a broken limb, but a swollen head. You see, I won every race for which I started!”

Whilst I was digesting this, Ron told me of a very narrow squeak he had at this same Claremont track.

### DOWN WITH A WALLOP!

“I was lying second to Sig Schlam, whose fame is known here, in a scratch race—so close a second, in fact, that before I knew it I had touched Sig's back wheel. Before you could say ‘knife’ I flew up in the air, turned three somersaults, and came down with a wallop right on top of the safety fence!

“And there I lay, out to the wide, until the ambulance men carted me off. Sure, that was some squeak. If I'd come down on my head it would have been shutters up for Ron Johnson!



“I came to England two years back, and after a short spell with Middlesbrough I joined up with Crystal Palace, where I'm likely to stay as long as I'm able to ride a bike.

“You can say, if you like, that I hold track records at places so far apart as Adelaide, Melbourne, and Claremont, in Australia; and Perry Bar, Birmingham and Crystal Palace, in England; and you can say, too, that I'm the only speedway rider who wears football boots!”

I knew that Johnson preferred footer boots to the heavy, steel-shod article in general use on the speedway, and by the twinkle in his eye I knew there was a story behind those boots.

“Now, this was really a narrow squeak,” said Ron. “In fact, you can call it a fatality if you like. I was riding the fence, as I usually do, at an Exeter meeting last season, when my right boot scraped along the safety fence.

“I thought no more of it until, returning to the pits, my mechanic asked me what I had done with my boot.

“I looked down and found that the boot had been practically torn off my foot. And then I had the shock of my life. I couldn't find my little toe! My mechanic and I counted those toes again and again. Four were there right enough, but no fifth.

“And where do you think we found that missing toe? At the very spot where I had scraped against the safety fence!”



## Bunny on the Track!

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Hare. "Yet certainly he must have come into possession of funds, if he has handed you two hundred pounds to bring to me. I cannot understand this at all. In the first place, how did you become aware of his name?"

Bunny smiled.

"Look!" he said. And from the pigeon-hole in the desk he took the fragment of a letter that had enlightened him that morning. "I came across this when I was tidying your desk."

Mr. Hare glanced at it.

"Dear me!" he said. "I thought I had destroyed that letter. But I fail to see how you learned the name from this, Bunny. Half the letter is gone, and the signature with it."

"But the address is there, uncle," said Bunny, smiling.

"The address? Yes, he was staying at Loftus House when I wrote to him and he replied," said Mr. Hare. "But his name is not here. Neither was I aware that he was in Margate at the present time. Where did you see him, Bunny?"

Bunny felt a chill.

"I—I saw him at Loftus House, uncle—"

"I was not aware that he was revisiting Margate. How could you possibly have known that he was there?"

"But—but he lives there!" babbled Bunny.

"Eh?"

"Captain Loftus—"

"What!"

Mr. Hare leaped to his feet. He fixed his eyes on his nephew, with an absolutely terrifying expression on his face.

"Boy! Idiot! Imbecile! Whom did you ask for this money?"

"Captain Loftus, of course!" gasped Bunny.

"You—you—you asked Captain Loftus for two hundred pounds?" articulated Mr. Hare.

"Yes. Why shouldn't I, when he owed—"

"You—you—you incredible fool, he owed me nothing! It was not Captain Loftus to whom I lent two hundred pounds."

Bunny staggered.

"You—you—you born fool!" roared Mr. Hare. "You—you—you—what could possibly have put it into your thick head that Captain Loftus owed me money? What could possibly have made him hand it to a boy who was obviously out of his senses? Is he as mad as you are?"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunny. "I—I thought—from the address on the letter—oh dear—oh scissors—"

"Fool! Idiot! But the man must be as great a fool as you, or greater! Why did he hand you this money when he owes me nothing, and probably has hardly heard even my name?" roared Mr. Hare.

Bunny stuttered.

"Oh dear! I—no—no wonder he was waxy! He—he must have thought

I—I was sticking him for money for saving his life! Oh dear!"

"What? What? Tell me at once what imbecility you have committed!" roared Mr. Hare.

The hapless Bunny babbled out the story. His uncle listened with a face that seemed to Bunny like that of a Gorgon. When Bunny had finished Mr. Hare grabbed up the banknotes and strode out of the room. He grabbed his hat and strode out of the house.

Bunny groaned. Mr. Hare, he guessed, had gone to restore those banknotes to their owner. Bunny was glad of that. He wanted them to be restored, and he did not want to see Captain Loftus again personally. But, for the rest, Bunny was feeling horrid.

He drifted dismally into the garden.

"Hallo, what's the trouble with our prize boob?" Gilbert came in at the gate, and grinned at the sight of Bunny's tragic face. "What sort of idiocy have you been up to now, Bunny?"

"I—I meant to help uncle!" groaned Bunny. "I—I thought I'd found the man who owed him the money, and—and asked him for it, and—and it was the wrong man—oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gilbert.

"I say, it ain't a laughing matter!" moaned Bunny.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Gilbert. "Oh, my hat! Oh, my summer parasol! Isn't that you all over, Bunny? Don't you take the cake? Don't you prance off with the whole bakery? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, this is too rich!" gasped Gilbert, and he staggered away wiping his eyes. And Bunny was left to groan alone.

What his uncle would think, and say, and do, constituted a dismal problem for poor Bunny. It was nearly bed-time before he ventured back into Wistaria Villa, and he entered in fear and trembling. As he crept into the hall he heard his uncle's voice, addressing Mrs. Hare:

"The boy is a born fool! Yet, in a sense, I must regard the occurrence as fortunate. I hardly know Captain Loftus, but he has insisted upon making me a loan of two hundred pounds; it appears to be a fact that Bunny saved his life when he was seized by cramp in his swimming-pool.

"The captain had the impression that Bunny was demanding money from him for his service, and when I explained to him how the matter really stood I was really afraid, my dear, that he would have a fit—he laughed so much. But, having become aware of my difficult position, he insisted upon making me this loan—"

Bunny crept away to bed feeling comforted!

(Bunny's in for it again in next week's MODERN BOY—in a complete yarn that will help you enjoy life! It's a real good one, a Charles Hamilton top-notch!)

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