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The MODERN BOY

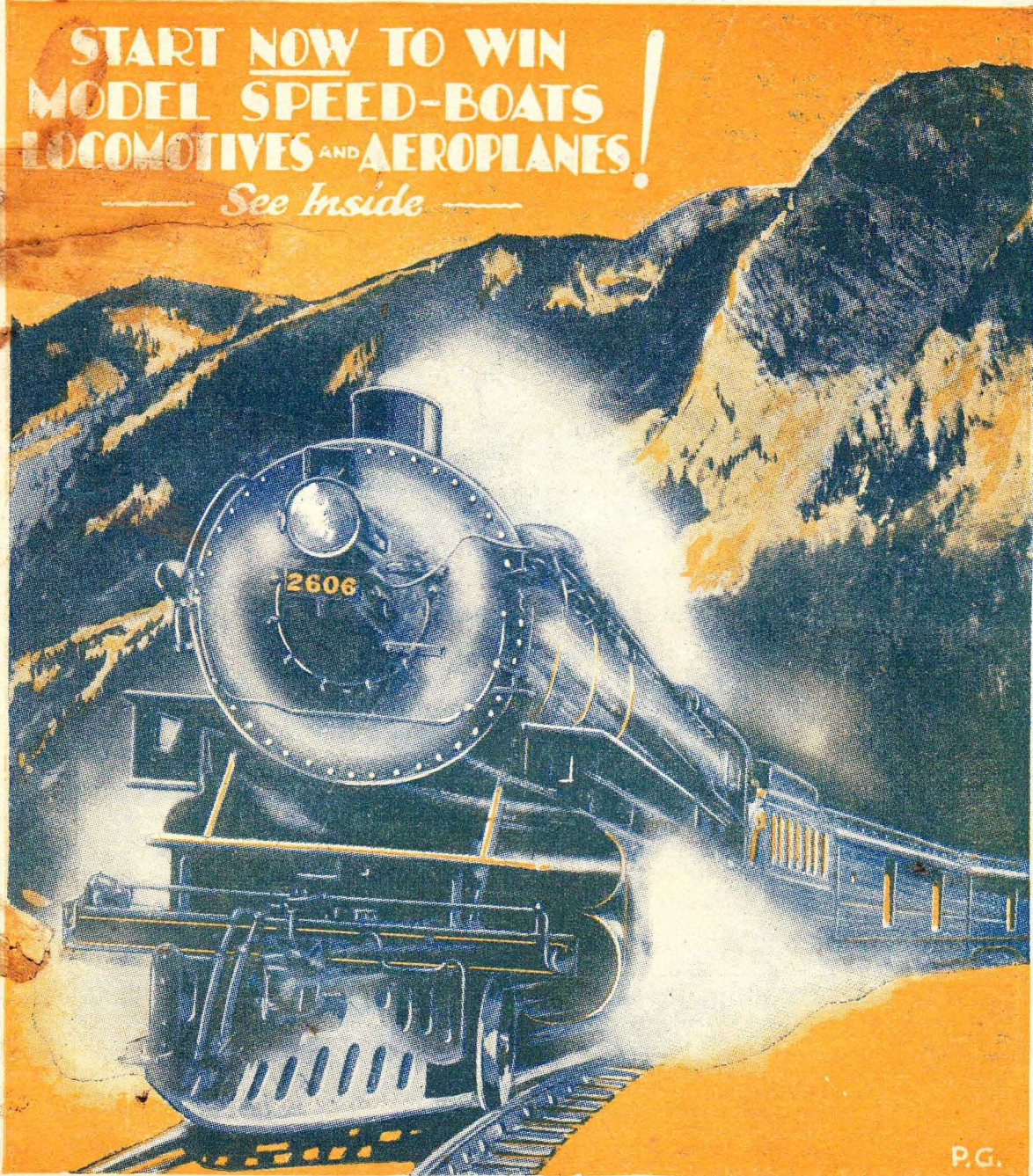
EVERY MONDAY.
Week Ending September 6th, 1930.

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START NOW TO WIN
MODEL SPEED-BOATS
LOCOMOTIVES AND AEROPLANES!

— See Inside —



P.G.

A COLOSSAL RAILWAY BIRTHDAY PARTY!—See Inside.

The Vanishing Trick

Complete

There is said to be such a thing as Fool's Luck. Bunny Hare is supposed to be a bit of a duffer—but Luck jolly well side-steps him and plumps him in an awful predicament bang in the middle of the Bay of Biscay. . . . A rattling yarn of life afloat

By
Charles Hamilton



Two brawny arms suddenly grasped him as the yacht swung to a heavy sea, and Bunny went hurtling over the side.

A Soda Siphon.

CRACK! Bunny sighed. Smack! Bunny yelled. He was polishing glasses. The crack was caused by glass breaking in Bunny's hand, hence the sigh. The smack was caused by the heavy hand of Gubbins, the steward, which landed on Bunny's ear with a tremendous concussion. Hence the yell.

Bunny here dropped the broken tumbler and jumped away, just in time to dodge a second smack.

The steward of the Albatross glared at him.

"You clumsy young hass!" he snorted.

"I couldn't help it!" pleaded Bunny.

"Come 'ere!" said Gubbins.

Instead of coming, Bunny backed farther away, with a wary eye on Gubbins. His head was singing from one smack, and he did not want another.

The yacht Albatross was running down the Bay of Biscay. Far away the sierras of Spain loomed against the blue sky.

The treacherous bay was bright and smiling. From a sky bluer than Bunny had even seen before blazed a sun brighter than the sun of Bunny's native land.

From a porthole, as he stood polishing glasses, Bunny had a view of the distant Spanish mountains, and Bunny's thoughts ran on sunny Spain—on mountain paths, and ancient cities, and Moorish ruins;

on muleteers and mules with jingling bells, on dark-browed brigands. Bunny had a romantic mind, and he could not help it wandering a little. Perhaps that was why the glass cracked in his hand as he polished it.

Gubbins, the steward, was quite unromantic. Spain, to him, was a land where the mosquitoes bit you, where the smells were offensive, and where they cheated you in wine shops. He was not likely to understand Bunny.

"You clumsy young hass!" said Gubbins. "That's the third glass you've broke! You shove yourself on this hooker without being asked—a blooming stowaway! Instead of chucking you overboard, or giving you three dozen with a rope's end, Mr. Earle tells you you can make yourself useful. And this 'ere is 'ow you do it."

"I'm trying to be useful!" said Bunny, "and I'm not really a stowaway, Mr. Gubbins. I thought the yacht was going back to England, when I got on at Boulogne, and I only wanted a passage home. And—"

"'Old your row," said Gubbins. "If you break another glass, I'll take the strap to you. Oh, there's Mr. Earle calling! Go to him, blow you."

Bunny was rather glad to get away from the steward. Gubbins had a

heavy hand, and Bunny was feeling quite dizzy from that tremendous smack. He hurried to the saloon.

Mr. Herbert Earle, owner and master of the yacht Albatross, was sprawled on the settee—the settee under which Bunny had hidden when he stowed himself away on the yacht.

He was a young man, not more than thirty-five, handsome, elegant, and—to all appearance at least—very wealthy. Fortune had showered on Mr. Earle many gifts, of which he was apparently determined to make the worst possible use.

Bunny had seen him gambling in the Casino at Boulogne, with a desperate earnestness, as if the chances of the green table were the only serious business in life. On board the yacht, he was unable to indulge his ruling passion. But another vice was ready to his hand, and the amount of strong liquors that Mr. Earle disposed of made Bunny open his eyes wide. Yet Bunny rather liked the young man.

He had a hasty temper, and at times a savage tongue, but when he was in a good humour he could be very kind; and certainly he had been kind to Bunny.

Bunny had a grateful heart. He had all a healthy fellow's distaste for gambling and drinking. But he was sorry for Mr. Earle, who

The Vanishing Trick

seemed unable to make a better use than this of his good fortune.

Mr. Earle was unaware of Bunny's grateful compassion. Had he been aware of it, probably he would have kicked Bunny oftener than he did. He was not in a good temper at the present moment. He was making an examination of several legal-looking documents, a task that seemed distasteful to him. He frowned at Bunny.

"I called you twice!" he snapped. "Sorry, sir," said Bunny. "I——"
"Hold your tongue! Get me a brandy and soda—not too much soda."

Several times it had been on Bunny's lips to venture a hint to Mr. Earle that reckless consumption of strong liquors was exceedingly bad for him, both morally and physically. Bunny felt that this would be only friendly, after Mr. Earle's kindness to him, and nobody else on the yacht seemed concerned about it.

Mr. Earle glared at him.

"Did you hear me?"

"Oh! Yes!"

"Then why are you standing there blinking at me, idiot?"

"If you please, sir," said Bunny, "my uncle at Margate says that a man shouldn't put an enemy in his mouth to steal away his brains!"

Mr. Earle sat bolt upright and stared at Bunny. He seemed at a loss for words. Bunny, encouraged by his silence, went on:

"You've had two brandy and sodas in the last half hour, sir. It's awfully bad for you. My uncle says——"

Mr. Earle half rose, as if meditating assault and battery. But he checked himself.

"Did your uncle ever tell you to mind your own business, Hare?" he asked.

Bunny opened his eyes in surprise. "Yes, sir! How did you guess that? He told me so lots of times."

Mr. Earle, after another stare at Bunny, gave a short laugh.

"Your uncle appears to be wiser than his nephew," he said. "You will do well to remember your uncle's instructions while you are on board this yacht. Now hold your tongue, and get me a brandy and soda."

"Very well, sir!" said Bunny. There was a tray on a little table beside the settee, with the necessary articles. Bunny poured out the brandy successfully, and took up the soda-siphon. Swizzzz!

"Don't drown it, you fool!" said Mr. Earle.

Mr. Earle liked the brandy to predominate over the soda. Bunny, on the other hand, felt that it would be better for Mr. Earle if the soda predominated over the brandy.

"Do you hear me?" roared Mr. Earle. "Look here——"

Bunny looked. It was unfortunate that the Albatross gave a roll just then on the billows of the Bay of Biscay. Also, Bunny's head was still a little dizzy from the steward's

smack. Certainly Bunny never intended to turn the nozzle of the squirting siphon on the owner and master of the Albatross. That, unfortunately, was what happened.

Squizzzzzz! There was a roar from the yachtsman as the stream of soda caught him between the eyes. "Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunny.

In utter horror at what he had done—and was doing—Bunny stood spellbound, incapable of thought, for which reason the stream of soda continued to play on Mr. Earle. Swizzzz! Swish! Splash!

Mr. Earle leaped from the settee, like a tiger from his lair, at Bunny. There was a crash as the table went over. The brandy bottle crashed, the siphon dropped from Bunny's hand and crashed on the remains of the brandy bottle. Bunny made a wild leap to escape.

Not always quick on the uptake, he realised clearly that the sooner he got to a safe distance from Mr. Earle the better it would be for him. He fled for his life, barely escaping the frantic clutch that the yachtsman made at him.

Mr. Earle rushed after Bunny, letting out with his boot. Bunny yelled. The terrific kick almost lifted him, as he flew on wildly. Crash again! Gubbins was running in to see what the matter was. He met Bunny in full career, and went over like a ninepin.

"Ooooooh!" gasped Gubbins.

Bunny scrambled over him somehow and fled in haste. Mr. Earle, rushing after him, stumbled over Gubbins, and came down with a bump—on the unhappy steward.

"Wooooooh!" came in expiring tones from Gubbins, as Mr. Earle collapsed on his waistcoat.

Bunny did not stay to listen.

A Sneeze!

"Oh crumbs!" mumbled Bunny.

Rawlings, the engineer, stared at him, and demanded: "What are you doing here?"

Rawlings had come rather hastily into his room, and almost fallen over Bunny, who, of course, had no business there: but it was a case of any port in a storm. Bunny had been there for a couple of hours, keeping out of sight. He was anxious not to meet either Mr. Earle or the steward until such a meeting could no longer possibly be avoided.

"Nothing, sir!" answered Bunny. "You see——"

"Taking a rest in my state-room, what?" demanded Rawlings.

"Yes. You see——" stammered Bunny.

Rawlings did not wait for any explanation. He took Bunny by the collar, and with one swing of a sinewy arm sent him spinning out of the room.

"Oh crumbs!" Bunny gasped, picking himself up and departing.

Bunny was not feeling merry or bright as he made his way back to

the steward's quarters. As he had to turn up there sooner or later, he hoped that Gubbins was in a better temper by this time. That hope was ill-founded.

Gubbins was there, and as he caught sight of Bunny, his look showed that his temper was not good—and so did his action. He seized the nearest article to his hand, which happened to be a plate, and hurled it at Bunny—thus proving beyond doubt that his temper was still bad.

Bunny faded out of the picture without waiting for the plate to reach him, and scuttled into the saloon, which was empty. He was in a rather dismayed frame of mind.

There seemed no refuge for the hapless Bunny. He began to wish that he had never set foot on that yacht. Bunny's desire to see the world was keen. But he felt that he was seeing it under disadvantageous circumstances.

He wondered whether Mr. Earle was still as ratty as Gubbins. It was very probable, for the yachtsman could not possibly have liked his drenching with soda-water. He could hear Mr. Earle stirring in his state-room, which opened on the saloon. He might emerge at any moment, and Bunny still had a lingering ache from the one terrific kick Mr. Earle had given him. He fixed his eyes on the yachtsman's door uneasily.

As he saw the door move, without stopping to think, Bunny made a dive for the settee, and vanished underneath it.

That settee had concealed him once before, and Bunny hoped that it would afford him safe cover again. He heard Mr. Earle's footsteps a moment later.

Bunny hoped that he was only going to pass through the saloon on his way to the deck. Mr. Earle commanded his yacht himself, though most of the watches were taken in turn by the two mates, Hall and Wilson. Bunny devoutly hoped that he was going up to take charge, which would keep him busy for a time, and give him an opportunity to forget Bunny.

But Mr. Earle did not leave the saloon. He paced to and fro, and Bunny, under the settee, had recurring views of his shoes, as he passed and repassed.

Several times he muttered to himself, though Bunny did not catch the words. He seemed in an uneasy mood. Bunny heard him call out at last:

"Gubbins!"

"Sir!" answered the steward's voice.

"Ask Mr. Hall to step here."

"Yes, sir."

Earle resumed his pacing to and fro. Bunny suppressed a groan.

Had Mr. Earle seemed in a good temper, Bunny might have taken the risk of showing himself and trusting to luck. But the young man was evidently perturbed, uneasy, irritable. And so Bunny made up his mind to lie doggo.

A couple of minutes later Hall

entered the saloon, and shut the door carefully behind him.

Bunny had seen a good deal of Hall, the first officer, though at the present moment all he could see of him was his feet. He did not like Hall. The man was a capable officer, but there was a look in his sharp, searching eyes that Bunny did not care for at all. Hall had twisted Bunny's arm once, very painfully, when Bunny had blundered into him on deck, and Bunny had not forgotten it. Now that Hall was in the room, Bunny was less inclined than ever to show himself.

"Sit down, Hall," he heard Mr. Earle say. "Help yourself." Bunny heard the swish of soda.

"I've been going over the charts," went on Earle. "I fancy I've selected the spot."

"In the Bay of Biscay?" asked Hall.

"No. In the Mediterranean."

"Safer!" said Hall.

"I think so. We have to touch at Gibraltar, and there we shall have a chance of getting rid of the hands we cannot trust."

Bunny heard Hall make a movement in his chair, as if he were looking over his shoulder.

"There's nobody in hearing!" snapped Earle irritably.

"Can't be too careful, Mr. Earle, in a matter of this kind," said the mate. "Where's that fool of a boy who's always loafing about?"

"Keeping at a safe distance, I think," answered Earle, with a curt laugh. "I'm going to cut the skin off his back when I see him again, and I dare say he knows it."

Bunny was glad that the ample settee afforded him good cover. Obviously it was not a favourable moment for revealing himself to Mr. Earle!

"Well, sir"—Hall's voice was low, but very clear—"there'll be risk in leaving the hands at Gib. They may talk."

"We must leave them somewhere—and Gibraltar's a good way from home. They will ship on other vessels, most likely, and scatter, and never hear what becomes of the Albatross."

"There's risk in it."

"Of course there's risk in it!" exploded Earle. "Ten thousand pounds isn't to be picked up without risk, I suppose. But what else are we to do? We can't have them on board when the yacht disappears, I suppose."

"No!" said Hall, and there was a tone in his voice that made Mr.

Earle start and Bunny, under the settee, shiver.

"What do you mean, Hall?" asked the owner of the Albatross. "What villainy have you got in your mind?"

"In for a penny, in for a pound, Mr. Earle," answered the mate. "What's the place you've selected for the vanishing trick?"

"The Morocco coast. Plenty of lonely spots there."

"Good! Well, then, keep the crew on board until the last scene—and then—look here, Mr. Earle, we're taking a big risk in this. We can't afford to play the fool. The sea keeps a secret for ever."

pieces by the Riffs before he had been an hour on land. Leave it at that."

Bunny began to wonder whether he was dreaming. There was a short silence, and then Earle's voice broke out, in low, passionate tones:

"You confounded villain. I suppose I've asked for this—I've thrown away a fortune playing the goat, and I'm rogue enough to try to set it right by bringing off a swindle. I'm rotter enough to enter into a scheme with a scoundrel who's been in prison, and who ought to be in prison now. I've a mind to throw up the whole game! Better ruin—better the bankruptcy court—better —" He broke off with a groan.

"Stop!" shouted Earle. "If you harm the boy I'll call the men to put you in irons!"



"Do you mean—murder?" Earle's voice was husky, and Bunny, under the settee, trembled.

"That's a nasty word, Mr. Earle," answered Hall. "I mean that with long stretches of penal servitude before us for swindling the insurance company, we've got to take care of our skins. Leaving the hands at Gib means a lot of risk. It would be easy to send a boat's crew ashore on the Riff coast—"

"They'd be as likely to talk there as anywhere else."

"Not in the place I should choose," answered Hall. "I should not pick out the part of Morocco where Cook's tourists go. I know a spot where any white man landing would be cut to

"I've merely thrown out a suggestion, Mr. Earle, for your safety as well as mine!" Hall's voice was perfectly calm.

Earle came to a stop in his uneasy pacing, and stood before the mate, looking at him with gleaming eyes.

"Mark this, Dick Hall," he said, between his teeth, "I'm going on with this game—I'm a ruined man, and I've left myself no other resource. But if you give a single hint again of bloodshed—if you dare to suggest that a life should be destroyed in carrying out this scheme—"

"Leave it at that!" said Hall
(Continued on page 18.)

The Vanishing Trick

(Continued from page 15.)

calmly. "I was speaking more for your sake than my own. Have your own way—I was bound to point out the risk."

"Hang the risk!"

"Hang it, if you like!" assented Hall. "Call it settled, then—we strand the men we can't trust at Gib, steam across to the African side, and—"

"And there the Albatross disappears," said Earle. "Plenty of proof of the wreck—that can be fixed up easily by a cunning rascal like you, Hall—"

"Thanks!"

"With a new name, and a new coat of paint, and a set of forged papers, the Swan clears off, leaving proof of the wreck of the Albatross," said Earle. "I draw the insurance money on this yacht, and you sell the vessel in an American port under her new name. The game's been worked before, and we can work it again."

"It has—and can!" said Hall. "And nobody's likely to suspect the wealthy Mr. Earle of such trickery. A reputation for wealth covers a multitude of sins." There was a sneer in the mate's voice.

"One word more," said Earle. "I—"

He broke off suddenly. From the direction of the settee came a loud, prolonged, echoing sneeze.

A Perilous Secret!

BUNNY had struggled with that sneeze. In the close, confined space under the settee there was dust—and some of the dust was now in Bunny's nose.

In a state of terror at the danger of revealing his presence, Bunny struggled hard to control the sneeze. Long and hard he fought with it, and for some time he kept it in check. Then it broke loose—a tremendous sneeze, pealing thunderously from under the settee.

Mr. Earle stood transfixed with astonishment. Hall leaped to his feet.

"Who's that? What—"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunny.

Hall bent down by the settee.

"The boy!" he said, in a tone that made poor Bunny's blood almost curdle in his veins. "You young hound! Get out of that!"

Bunny, in dismay and terror, rolled out into view. Hall grasped him by the shoulder and jerked him to his feet. So savage was his grasp that Bunny felt as if his bones were cracking under it, and he gave a gasp of pain. The mate's hard face was convulsed with rage.

"Good heavens!" breathed Herbert Earle. "He's heard everything—the fool!"

"I—I—I—" stammered Bunny helplessly.

"He will not repeat what he has heard!" said Hall in a low voice, between set teeth. "Stand back, Mr. Earle!" His left hand gripped

Bunny, his right groped at his hip-pocket.

Bunny felt his brain swim.

"Mr. Earle!" he panted.

Earle started forward.

"Let the boy go, Hall! Are you mad? A shot—here—"

"Fool! The young scoundrel chose to listen—let him pay for it!" hissed Hall. "Fool! Stand back! Can't you understand? You were showing me the revolver—it went off by accident—that is all—an accident—"

His grip shifted to Bunny's throat, choking back the cry he would have uttered. His eyes burned at Bunny and the revolver was in his hand now. There was murder in the wicked, enraged face that looked like a demon's to Bunny's starting eyes.

"Stop! Hall, you scoundrel, if you harm the boy, I'll call the men to put you in irons—I'll denounce you as a murderer. I'll see you hanged for it—mind, I mean every word I say! Release him!"

Hall gave one glance at the white face of the yacht-owner. Slowly he thrust the revolver back into his hip-pocket. Slowly he released the almost suffocated Bunny.

"The game's up, then," he said thickly. "Have it your own way—the game's up! By all the powers that—"

"The boy will hold his tongue," said Earle. "Leave him to me. Get back to the deck, and leave him to me!"

Hall gave the boy one look, a look that Bunny long remembered, so full of savage hatred and rage was it. Then he left the saloon and went back to the deck.

Bunny was left alone with his employer. He stood gasping for breath, leaning one hand on the table for support, his throat bruised and aching from the mate's savage grip.

Earle walked up and down the room with rapid, irregular steps. Bunny stood gasping, waiting for him to speak. Only too well he realised how terribly narrow an escape he had had. He knew that the mate would have shot him like a rat, to preserve the guilty secret that had been discussed in his hearing. He owed his life to Earle's intervention.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunny.

Earle turned to him at last.

"You young rascal! I've been kind to you—I've allowed you to live in comfort on this yacht where you stowed yourself away—and you repay me like this—by eavesdropping—"

"I didn't!" gasped Bunny. "I—I never—"

"You heard what was said?"

"I—I couldn't help that!" gasped Bunny. "But I never meant to!"

"Why were you hiding in this room, then?"

"I—I got out of sight when you came in, sir—"

"To listen?"

"Nunno! Because you were waxy!" gasped Bunny.

Earle stared at him.

"I've already seen that you're the biggest fool that was ever born, Jack Hare. And now—I take your word, boy—I dare say it was as you say. You're a born fool, but I don't think you are a rascal. Still, whether you intended to listen or not, you heard what was said a few minutes ago in this room."

"Yes," said Bunny.

"You heard it all?" asked Earle, scanning him closely.

"Every word!" answered Bunny simply.

Earle, troubled and agitated and angry as he was, smiled. It had not even occurred to poor Bunny to tell a lie about it or to pretend that he had not heard all, though that way lay safety.

"And you understood?" said Earle. "Yes."

The young man paced the saloon for some minutes before he spoke again. Bunny was still gasping, with a choking sensation in his throat. There was not only anger in Earle's face but something like shame, too. Bunny thought he could understand the man's feelings.

Earle turned to him again at last.

"Can I trust you to hold your tongue?" he asked. "You know how Hall would have secured your silence?"

"Yes," gasped Bunny.

"No doubt you have supposed me to be a wealthy man—a very wealthy man," said Earle quietly. "I was so once—and not long ago. I have thrown away a fortune—and now I am making a bid for another—in league with a man whose name is a byword for every kind of villainy in every part of the world, but who is known on this yacht as Richard Hall, first officer.

"That is what folly has led me to—and it may be a lesson and a warning to you, Hare, if you have sense enough to profit by it."

"Yes, sir," mumbled Bunny.

"I am a ruined man," went on Earle in the same quiet tone. "But this coup will set me on my feet again. I have been kind to you, boy. Can I trust you to hold your tongue, and not betray me? What you have heard by accident, you have no right to know, and no right to remember. Blot it all from your mind—forget it absolutely. I have saved your life—at a terrible risk to myself, for if you betray me I am a lost man. Can I trust you?"

Bunny did not speak. His brain was almost in a whirl.

"Answer me!" snarled Earle.

"I—I hardly know what to say, sir!" stuttered Bunny. "I'd rather cut my tongue out than say anything that would harm you—"

"Keep to that and all is well."

"But—but—" stammered Bunny.

"But what, fool?" asked Earle harshly.

"You're going into an awful swindle, sir—with that brute Hall," said Bunny. "From what I made out, you're going to pretend that the yacht has been wrecked, and swindle the insurance company of ten thousand pounds. It's good enough

for Hall, sir. But it's not good enough for you. My uncle at Margate, sir, says that good can never come of doing wrong," said Bunny, shaking his head, "and I'm sure he's right, sir."

Herbert Earle gave Bunny a very peculiar look.

"At the present stage of my affairs, Hare, I am afraid I cannot be ruled by the opinion of your uncle at—at Ramsgate—"

"Margate, sir."

"At Margate—though no doubt he is a very excellent man," said Mr. Earle. The sarcasm in his look and voice was quite lost on Bunny, however. "Now, Hare, let us have this plain. Will you keep secret what you have heard, or will you not?"

"You see, sir, I can't keep it secret and let a swindle go on," argued Bunny. "That wouldn't be cricket! The fact is, sir, it's jolly lucky for you that this happened. It gives you a chance to back out, before that brute Hall turns you into a thief and villain like himself."

Earle drew a deep breath.

"I am not asking for your advice, Hare," he said. "I am asking you whether I can trust you to keep this secret unconditionally."

"Not unless you chuck it up, sir! You see—"

"That will do!" said Mr. Earle, and the look in his eyes was very strange as they dwelt on Bunny. "From what you have heard, you know that nothing will be attempted till after we have touched Gibraltar. Will you hold your tongue till we reach Gibraltar, and say nothing on the yacht?"

"Certainly, sir!" answered Bunny at once. "Not a syllable, sir! I'm not a chatterbox! And by the time

we get there, sir, I feel sure you'll have thought better of it—"

"That will do!"

Earle strode out of the saloon, and Bunny was left alone.

Man Overboard!

WITH nightfall, the smiling calmness of the Bay of Biscay departed. Black clouds had been gathering over the summits of the distant mountains of Spain; and the sun set on the Atlantic in a red and angry glow.

With darkness came the wind, and the treacherous waters of the bay rolled and swelled and roared, in striking contrast to the smiling peace of the afternoon. Through the gloom of night and the swelling waters, the yacht throbbed on her way, the booming of the billows almost drowning the pulsations of the engine.

Mr. Earle dined at his usual hour, unmoved by the roughness of the sea. Hall dined with him, and Bunny waited on them, assisting the steward. Bunny was hard put to it to keep his footing, and was in incessant dread of dropping plates or spilling soup or shooting headlong with a tray.

To his relief, Hall took no notice of him whatever. To all appearance, the mate had forgotten the scene of the afternoon.

Mr. Earle was very silent, and paid no heed whatever to Bunny. Bunny noticed that he drank a good deal more than usual. Wilson, the second mate, was in charge of the ship.

Bunny had got on his sea-legs to some extent, but hitherto the Albatross had had fair weather in her

run down the Channel and out into the bay. His sea-legs rather failed him now.

He was handing a decanter to Mr. Earle, when a sudden lurch of the yacht fairly spun him over.

The decanter flew from his hand and landed on Mr. Earle's white shirt-front. Bunny bumped into Mr. Earle, and threw him arms involuntarily round that gentleman's neck to save himself.

Mr. Earle swayed under his weight and the decanter rolled to the floor, leaving streams of red wine over Mr. Earle's shirt and waistcoat. The yachtman sprang to his feet with a yell. Bunny staggered away, and sat down as the yacht lurched again.

For an instant Earle glared at him like a tiger. But the savage look faded from his face quickly, as if some recollection drove it away.

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir!" spluttered Bunny. "I—I couldn't help it—"

"Never mind, my boy," said Mr. Earle, in so gentle a voice that Gubbins, the steward, stared at him in astonishment. He mopped wine off his clothes with a napkin, and sat down again.

Bunny staggered to his feet, full of contrition.

Hall glanced at his master with a sneer. He did not speak, but Earle caught his look. He answered it with another look which Bunny did not understand, but which Hall evidently did, for he nodded. Afterwards, Bunny knew why Mr. Earle had been so patient—afterwards, when he knew more. Bunny was glad when that dinner was over.

Hall went immediately on deck, and a few minutes later Wilson, the second mate, went off duty. Mr.

(Continued on the next page.)

The Vanishing Trick

Earle, standing in the saloon, felt in his pockets.

"I've left my cigarette case somewhere, Hare!" he said. "Find it and bring it to me on deck."

"Yes, sir!" answered Bunny. He looked anxiously at Mr. Earle. "I say, sir, you're looking very pale!" said Bunny, with concern. "I—I hope you're not feeling ill, sir."

Earle made no reply. He turned away and went up the saloon stairs. Bunny's glance followed him anxiously. He really liked Mr. Earle, and there was no doubt that the owner of the Albatross was looking strangely pale.

"Cheeky young sweep!" said Gubbins. "My eye! I thought the boss was going to flay you! Spilling wine over him like that—"

"I couldn't help it," said Bunny. "There's too many things you can't 'elp, you young idiot!" responded Gubbins. "A jolly sight too many, if you ask me."

But Bunny did not ask him. He was searching for Mr. Earle's cigarette case, which did not seem easy to find. Bunny found it at last, in the state-room, and picking it up went on deck with it.

A dark sky, with black clouds roll-

ing before a high wind, hung over the gliding yacht. The wind struck Bunny almost like a blow as he emerged on deck.

But he kept his footing, and blinked round for Mr. Earle. He sighted the tall figure standing by the rail, unmoved by the pitching of the vessel. By his side was the shorter, stumpier figure of Hall.

Bunny, as he made his way towards them, with the wind in his face, heard Earle's muttering voice on the wind.

"If he'd given his word—if he'd only have given his word, I'd have taken it, and trusted him—"

"And you'd have been a fool for your pains!" came the deeper, growling voice of the mate.

"Perhaps!" muttered Earle. "But I'd have taken the chance—I'd have been glad to take the chance and the risk, rather—rather than—"

"Belay it!" said Hall hastily.

Bunny came up.

"Here's your cigarette case, sir!" said Bunny cheerfully.

Mr. Earle took it, with a trembling hand. Bunny could see how ghastly white the yachtsman's face was. The cigarette case dropped from Earle's fingers. It seemed as if his hand was utterly nerveless.

Bunny stooped to pick it up. Hall made a movement, and Bunny, as he groped for the fallen case, heard Earle's husky voice:

"No—no! Not yet— No!"

"Get away!" muttered Hall.

"Leave it to me!"

Something in the mate's tone struck Bunny with sudden, terrible suspicion. Like a flash the truth came to him. He leaped up.

But it was too late.

Even as he sprang up, two brawny arms grasped him, and as the yacht swung to a heavy sea, he went whirling over the side. It was done in an instant, and before a cry could leave Bunny's lips, he was plunging headlong into the water. He had, or thought he had, an instant's glimpse of a white face that stared down after him from the rail.

Then the surging waters of the Bay of Biscay were over his head, and thundering in his ears. The yacht fled on her way through the night and left Bunny struggling alone, in the darkness, in the wild waters!

(No, this is not the end of all things for Bunny. Next week he hops cheerfully out of the frying-pan into the fire—or rather out of the Bay of Biscay into more trouble, with a capital "T"!)

Dirt-Track Experiences

In the Land of the Pharaohs

By

Les Blakeborough

