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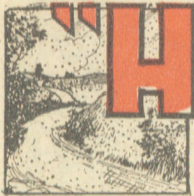
The Fourth Form at GRIMSLADE!



A BREEZY SCHOOL AND ADVENTURE STORY THAT WILL GRIP YOU FROM FIRST LINE TO LAST.
BY FAMOUS FRANK RICHARDS. (Author of the Greyfriars Stories in the "Magnet" Every Week.)

EXCITEMENT IS AT FEVER HEAT WHEN THE GRIMSLADE JUNIORS ARE TOLD THAT AN ESCAPED CONVICT IS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD... AND THAT CONVICT IS THE CAUSE OF AN AMAZING ADVENTURE, IN WHICH JIM DAINTY, THE REBEL, PLAYS A STAR PART!

The Blackmoor Convict.



ALT!"
"Oh, my hat!"
Three Grimslade juniors were coming up the lane from Middlemoor to Grimslade School in the thickening December dusk.

Jim Dainty and Dick Dawson were walking fast; Fritz Splitz was lagging wearily behind.

Fritz was tired. Fritz had walked a mile. He had not wanted to walk that mile. Ten yards was enough for Friedrich von Splitz when he wanted a walk—which was seldom. Frowning in the study was more in Fritz's line.

Fritz had taken that walk because his study-mates thought that it would be good for him. With Jim Dainty hooking one fat arm, and Dick Dawson hooking the other, the fat Fritz had had to walk as far as Middlemoor. Now he had to walk back, and he was feeling that life was scarcely worth living.

It was cold; it was getting dark; snow was falling on the moor, and the juniors had heard in the village that a convict had escaped from Blackmoor Prison. And in every shadow by the wayside Fritz's saucer-eyes spotted that convict lurking. Fritz grunted and groaned at every step.

But as the figure of a horseman loomed up in the gloom ahead, and rapped out a sharp order to halt, Fritz's grunts and groans changed to a squeal

of terror. He had no doubt that it was the escaped convict this time.

"Ach, Himmel! Geep him off!" squealed Fritz. "Tainty! Tawson, geep off tat peast and a prute!"
"You silly ass!" growled Jim. "It's a bobby!"
"Ach! You was sure it vas a bobby?" gasped Fritz.

"Yes, fathead—a mounted constable!" said Dick Dawson.

Which was a great relief to Fritz. Even then, however, he blinked very dubiously at the shadowy figure as the rider pushed his horse closer. But as he came nearer, even Fritz could see that the man was a mounted constable.

"Halt!" repeated the rider. He peered down at the schoolboys through the gloom and the falling flakes. "Oh, schoolboys!"

"That's all," said Jim Dainty, with a grin. "And rather in a hurry to get in for call-over, if you don't mind."

"Well, the sooner you get into your school the better. If you meet Slim Tim, you'll be sorry for it." The constable's eyes searched the faces of the juniors, keenly, sharply, almost suspiciously. "If you've seen anything of Timothy Gage, you're bound to say so. Understand that?"

"Of course," answered Jim. "Why shouldn't we?"

"Well, as he was at Grimslade School once upon a time—"

The horseman broke off, and, after another sharp look at the schoolboys, rode on his way, and disappeared in the dusk towards Middlemoor. Jim Dainty stared after him.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "Is that convict they're looking for an old Grimslader? I don't believe it! Let's get on."

"Ach, I'm derribly dired!" moaned Fritz Splitz. "I tink tat we takes a rest, ain't it?"

"Take all the rest you want," grunted Jim. "Trot, Dick. If we cut call-over it means lines."

The chums of Study No. 10 trotted. There was a howl from Fritz von Splitz.

"Ach, leaf me not pehind, you prutes!"

"Put it on, Fatty!" called back Dawson.

"Peast and a prute!"

Jim Dainty and Dawson trotted on, and Fritz trotted behind them. But trotting was too much for Fatty Fritz, who had as much weight to carry as both the other fellows. He dropped behind. Two trotting figures vanished in the December gloom ahead.

Fritz Splitz halted. Cold as it was his fat face streamed with perspiration. He gasped and gurgled.

The snow was falling more thickly now. A bitter wind howled over the moor. By the side of the lane, through the leafless hedges, loomed up the dark shape of an old army hut. Fritz knew that building—a relic of the old War days.

He plunged through a gap in the hedge, and took shelter in the hut. He was too late for call-over, anyhow, and he wanted a rest out of the wind and the falling snow. Dainty and Dawson, under the impression that Fritz was rolling on behind, vanished in the direction of the school. Fritz, in the shelter of the old hut, gasped for breath, and hugged his thick overcoat about his podgy form.

"Peasts and prutes!" mumbled Fritz. "I tink two times before I takes vun walk mit tem peasty pounders vun more time! Ach!"

A faint sound in the darkness of the interior of the hut made the fat Rhineland jumper. He had, for the moment, forgotten the convict. But a faint sound was enough to remind him. He stared round, his fat heart thumping, his saucer-eyes gorgling in the dark.

"Ach, Himmel!"
Fritz made a bound for the open doorway of the hut, heedless now of wind and snow, and the ache in his fat legs. From the darkness a hand reached, grasped him by the collar, and hooked him back.

"Silence!" muttered a deep voice.

Fritz Splitz reeled in the grasp of the shadowy figure. His terrors had not been unfounded, after all. A dozen times in the dark lane he had fancied that he had seen the desperate man lurking. Now he realised, with a shudder of horror, that he had run into him—the fugitive had been hidden in the old Army hut in which the fat German had taken refuge.

(Continued on page 322.)

THE FOURTH FORM AT GRIMSLADE!

(Continued from page 320.)

Fritz would have shrieked for help, but he dared not. Dainty and Dawson were still within sound of a yell. But Fritz dared not utter a yell. All he uttered was a frightened squeak.

His goggling eyes made out the dim figure in the hut. He could glimpse the drab uniform of the convict. There was no mistake about it. It was Timothy Gage, alias Slim Tim, once a Grimslade fellow—now Convict 39 of Blackmoor Prison. And Fritz was in his grasp.

He trembled like a leaf. The convict was a small man—small and slight, hardly bigger than the schoolboy, certainly not so wide. A fellow like Jim Dainty might have been able to give a good account of him. But Fatty Fritz was not thinking of resistance. He was not thinking of anything. He shook and gurgled with fear.

"Who are you?" breathed a voice, in his fat ear.

"Ach, Himmel! I vas vun schoolboy of Grimslade," groaned Fritz. "Blease let me go, good mister convict! I vill say nottings."

"A Grimslade boy!" Two fierce, sunken eyes gleamed at Fritz. "I was once a Grimslade boy myself." He gave a savage laugh. "Don't be scared, you fat fool! I shall not hurt you! Give me your coat!"

"Ach! But I vant mein goat! It is ferry gold—"

A savage shake interrupted Fritz. He gasped, and peeled off his overcoat. The convict was shivering. Fritz's coat was an out-size in coats, and the slim convict was able to get it on. He grabbed the fat German's cap and scarf. Then his thievish hands ran through the pockets. But little in the shape of cash rewarded him.

One penny was the total sum of Fritz's wealth, and that was a French one. Fritz heard him mutter an imprecation. But he found a stick of toffee, which was instantly transferred to his mouth. Even Fritz himself could not have gobbled toffee so greedily. Evidently the fugitive of the moors was hungry.

For the moment he released Fritz. The second the convict's grasp was off him Fritz Spltz made a desperate jump. What the ruffian was going to do after robbing him, he did not know. But he was not disposed to wait and see. He went through the doorway with a sudden and desperate bound, and ran for his life.

The shadowy figure leaped from the hut in fierce pursuit. Luckily for Fritz, the convict's foot slipped in the snow, and he went down heavily. Fritz Spltz heard the fall, and the oath that followed, but he did not stay to hear more. He fairly flew.

He barged through the hedge into the lane, headed for Grimslade, and raced on, his feet scarcely touching the ground. Whether the convict pursued him farther or not, Fritz never knew. Gasping for breath, streaming with perspiration, panting and puffing, Fritz von Spltz tore on, his heart pounding against his fat ribs, heedless of wind and snow, spurred on by the terror of a clutching hand behind.

Sammy Puts His Foot Down!

"OUT of bounds!" exclaimed Ginger Rawlinson indignantly. "What utter rot!" said Jim Dainty.

"Sammy may know best!" said Sandy Bean.

"Kick him!" said Ginger.

There was a howl as Sandy was duly kicked for venturing to suggest that Dr. Samuel Sparshott, headmaster of Grimslade, might possibly know best!

Generally, the Grimslade fellows admitted that Sammy was a downy bird, and knew a thing or two! Both Houses, which agreed on little else, agreed on that. Now, however, both Houses—at least, the junior portion thereof—agreed that Sammy was an ass, a fathead, a benighted bandersnatch, and a footling fooler.

All these names, and more, were bestowed on Sammy by the indignant fellows who stood reading the latest notice, in the Head's clear "fist," on the big notice-board in Big School.

For the notice stated that, owing to the fact that an escaped convict from Blackmoor Prison was lurking in the neighbourhood, school bounds were drawn in. School bounds, until further notice, were identical with the walls of Grimslade itself. Which meant that no fellow could go out of the school precincts. Every man was "gated."

As if Grimslade men couldn't take care of themselves, as Streaky Bacon remarked. As if the Fourth Form at Grimslade couldn't handle all the convicts at Blackmoor, with all the warders and the governor thrown in, as Ginger declared.

Ginger & Co., of Redmayes House, seldom agreed with Jim Dainty and his chums of White's. Now they agreed heartily. Reds and Whites were at one! Sammy was an ass, a duffer, a dummy,

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buddy!

and a dunderhead. For two pins—perhaps!—they would have told him so.

"After all, the man's a tough bird," said Sandy. "Look how he handled Fritz Spltz yesterday. Bagged his coat—"

Snort from Ginger!

"That frowsy Boche is the only funk at Grimslade," he said. "I jolly well wish we'd dropped on him instead of Fritz! Besides, he wouldn't want to bag our coats! Our coats aren't double-width, like Fritz's. I tell you Sammy's a silly ass, and if you say he isn't, I'll bang your head on the board!"

"I'm jolly well going out, all the same!" exclaimed Jim Dainty.

"I shouldn't do that, kid!" said a quiet voice behind the crowd of indignant juniors.

"Oh, my hat!"

They spun round and stared at Sammy. Jim's face crimsoned. As a matter of fact, he meant what he said. But he did not want Sammy to know. Dr. Sparshott gave the crimson junior a cheery smile.

"Talking out of your hat, what?" he said genially. "I hope so, at least! We toe the line at Grimslade, Dainty—even when we know better than our headmaster, as it seems most of the Lower School do."

This was sarcasm. Sammy Sparshott was sometimes sarcastic, but he was very genial about it.

"So you think your headmaster an ass, Rawlinson?" went on Sammy.

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" groaned Ginger.

"And you think him a footling frump, Dawson?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Dick Dawson.

"And your opinion is that he is a doddering dunderhead, Bacon?"

Streaky could only gasp. Many voices, all speaking at once, had made too much noise for the fellows to hear Sammy coming out of his study. Now they eyed him in crimson confusion.

Dr. Sparshott laughed.

"Perhaps you are right," he said unexpectedly. "Who knows? I may be mistaken in managing Grimslade my own way, instead of taking advice from the Fourth! I admit the possibility! All the same"—Dr. Sparshott's smile vanished, and his face grew grim and stern—"all the same, that notice stands!"

"There is danger outside the gates of Grimslade, so long as Timothy Gage is loose. I am responsible for my boys. In this matter I exact the most implicit obedience. Any boy breaking school bounds while this notice is in force will be detained over the Christmas holidays."

"Oh crikey!"

Dr. Sparshott walked away, leaving the juniors gasping.

Break-up for the Christmas vacation was close at hand. The bare thought of detention over Christmas was unnerving. Such a punishment was unheard of. It showed what a deep importance Sammy attached to strict obedience to his latest order. And—unheard-of as it was—there was no doubt that Sammy was in earnest. Sammy was well known to be a slave of his word.

"My giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger, when Sammy was gone. "It's not good enough, my beloved 'earers! No breaking bounds for me!"

"Same here!" said Streaky Bacon.

"The fact is, Sammy's right!" said Sandy Bean. "That man Gage is a dangerous ruffian, and Sammy knows—Whoooop! Yaroooh!"

Ginger and Streaky had quite abandoned the idea of disregarding Sammy's order. The prospect of spending the Christmas holidays in a deserted school was not good enough. But they were feeling sore, and Sandy's defence of Sammy was the last straw.

Both of them kicked Sandy Bean together, as if moved by the same spring. It was a case of two soles with but a single thought; two heels that beat as one, as the poet nearly said. Sandy Bean roared and dodged. He fled across the quad, with his faithful chums in hot pursuit, dribbling him as far as Redmayes.

Jim Dainty walked away to White's House with Dawson, his brow clouded. He had said—and meant—that he was going out, all the same. There was a strain of obstinacy in Jim's nature which had not been subdued yet, though he was learning to toe the line at Grimslade. Several more days remained to run of the term. With a foot of snow on the ground football was off. Jim had no fear of the convict, and he did not see why he should be gated.

At dinner, in White's House, Dawson glanced at his chum several times rather uneasily. When they came out after dinner, he tapped Jim on the arm.

"Chuck it, Dainty," he said quietly. "You don't want Christmas at Grimslade, with nobody but the House-dame and old Sykes for company. Sammy meant every word of it."

"I know that! But it's a half-holiday to-day, and we were going up Grimslade Water!" growled Jim.

"No jolly fear!" said Dawson emphatically.

"Well, perhaps you're right. But if—"

"Never mind the buts! There's Fenwick of the Fifth—give him a snow-ball!"

Dainty grinned.

"What-ho!" he agreed.

Fenwick of the Fifth was walking in the quad, his hands in his pockets, a frown on his face. Possibly he was thinking of his latest gee-gee that hadn't won. Passing Perkins of the Third Form, Fenwick kicked him—perhaps because Perkins was a Redmayes fag, and perhaps because he was feeling inclined to kick somebody. Kicking little fags was one of Fenwick's amusements. Perkins fled, with a yell. The next moment Fenwick of the Fifth gave a yell as a snowball landed in his left ear.

He staggered to the right. A moment later another snowball caught him in the right ear, and he heeled to port.

The bully of the Fifth glared round him furiously. Dainty and Dawson let fly again, and two snowballs crunched together on Fenwick's features.

"Goal!" chuckled Jim Dainty.

"You cheeky little rotters!" roared the Fifth Form man, and he charged at the two juniors.

They scudded away through the snow, with the Fifth-Former in pursuit. They headed for the House at a racing speed. Jim Dainty stopped suddenly, and turned, snowball in hand. Fenwick was coming on fast. Whiz! The snowball flew with deadly aim, and crashed on the Fifth Form man's nose. The bully of the Fifth went over backwards like a skittle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two juniors dodged up the House steps, and vanished into the House as the infuriated senior scrambled to his feet.

"Mein goot Tainty—mein goot Tawson"—Fritz Splitz met the two as they came breathlessly in—"I vas look for you! Tat you stop ven I speaks mit you, peast and prute!"

But Dainty and Dawson did not stop. They scudded on to the safety of the junior passage. Fritz stood and blinked after them with his saucer-like eyes.

"Mein gootness! Vat for tuse two tuffers run away mit themselves like tat?" ejaculated Fritz. "I tink— Ach! Himmel! Mein gootness!"

He knew the next moment why the juniors were scudding—as Fenwick of the Fifth came charging in. Fenwick did not see Fritz till he crashed.

Fritz sprawled and roared.

"Ach! Mein gootness! Vy for you pump me ofer, peast and a prute!" he yelled.

Fenwick staggered. He glared down at Fritz.

"You fat dummy!" he gasped. "Take that!"

"Ach! Mein gootness!"

"And that!"

"Yaroooooop!"

"Fenwick!" Mr. White looked out of his study. "Fenwick! Cease that this instant! Go to your study and write out a Georgio!"

And the bully of the Fifth was too busy that afternoon to bestow any more attention on Jim Dainty.

Out of Bounds!

FRITZ SPLITZ had been thinking. The thoughts that passed through the podgy intellect of the fat schoolboy from Deutschland were generally on the subject of eatables. But Fritz's fat brain could deal with other matters.

In Form and out of Form, Fritz was regarded by all Grimsdale as an ass. He was no good in class, he was no good at games; he was, so far as any fellow could see, no good at anything, except packing away tuck, at which he was, undoubtedly, a very hefty man.

But, like many stupid persons, Fritz had a vein of slyness in him. There was a streak of cunning in his obtuseness. And since he had read Dr. Sparshott's notice on the board in Big School, Fritz had been thinking—to some purpose!

The threat of detention over the Christmas holidays did not worry Fritz. He was not going back to Germany for Christmas, in any case. According to Fatty Fritz, the Von Splitzes had immense estates and unlimited cash in that happy land; but it was clear that they were not going to spend any of the unlimited cash on Fritz's fare home at the end of the term.

Fritz was staying at the school during the vac, boarding in White's House, while all the other fellows were away. Fritz did not like the prospect.

Now he was thinking that, after all, he might have a Man Friday while he played Robinson Crusoe, as it were. If any fellow was ass enough to disregard Sammy's warning, and was found out, he was booked for the vac at Grimsdale.

Fritz could not help hoping that some fellow might be ass enough. And, aware of that strain of rebellious obstinacy in Jim Dainty, Fritz fancied that Jim was the man he wanted.

Having recovered his breath after the collision with Fenwick of the Fifth, Fritz Splitz rolled away to No. 10, in the Fourth, where he found Dainty and Dawson. Jim was standing at the window, looking out at the quad, mantled in white, and at Redmayes House, opposite, ridged with gleaming snow

The two juniors stared round at Fritz Splitz.

"You burbling, babbling, benighted barrel—" began Dawson hotly.

Fritz waved a fat, scornful hand.

"Tainty say tat he go, all te same!" he said. "Now he have gold feet! I laugh at him! If he vas as prave as a Cherman—"

"You footing funk!" roared Jim Dainty. "You wouldn't dare to take a step outside the gates."

Fritz sniffed contemptuously.

"Ach! Vat do I gare for tat Sammy?" he said. "I gare nottings! Being a Cherman, I am ferry prave and pold! Tis afternohn I goes out to hunt for tat convict tat take away mein goat. Tat convict get mein goat!"

Jim stared at him. For a moment he



Jim's heart thumped. The Head was coming towards him—in another minute, he and Fritz Splitz would be discovered. Jim gathered up snow, and rapidly kneaded a snowball. As the tall figure loomed over the bracken, he hurled the missile with sudden, deadly aim. Crash! The snowball smashed full in the face of Sammy Sparshott, hurling him backwards.

in the wintry sunshine. It was bitterly cold, but a glorious winter's afternoon, and Jim simply yearned to be roaming the wide moor.

"I suppose you're right, Dick!" said Dainty, discontentedly. "But it's all rot. Wherever that fatheaded convict is, he won't be on the moor—too jolly parky."

"Well, as he was a Grimsdale man once, the police have an idea that he may be hanging about the school," said Dawson. "There's a lot of old nooks and crannies where a man might hide, and a Grimsdaler would know them. The fact is, old man, Sammy's right."

Jim grunted.

"Ach! I tink tat you are vun funk, Tawson," said Fritz, in the doorway. "And you also vas vun funk, Tainty! I feel gontempt for you."

fancied that the fat German was speaking in the American language. But Fritz did not mean that the convict had "got his goat." He meant that Slim Tim had got his coat!

"If you have some leedle bluck," went on Fritz, "you gum mit me, isn't it?"

Jim Dainty laughed impatiently.

"You fat, frowsy Boche! You don't dare to go out, and you know it. You'd be afraid of the convict, if you weren't afraid of Sammy."

"A Cherman is afraid of nottings!" declared Fritz. "Efery Cherman is ferry prave and pold! Tat gonvict he vill not be on te moor—I mean to say, I vill look for tat convict on te moor."

"Oh, can it!" growled Dawson.

Fritz curled a fat lip.

"Gum mit me," he said, "and you will see me preak pounds. And if you are as prave as a Cherman you vill gum also, too, Tainty!"

Jim's eyes glinted.

"I'll come," he said, "and when you funk it I'll kick you all the way back to the House. Mind, I mean that!"

And Jim picked up his coat and cap, and followed Fritz. Dawson shrugged his shoulders and remained in the study. He had not the slightest doubt that Friedrich von Splitz was merely "gassing." Fritz's secret motive did not occur to his mind for a moment.

Jim Dainty equally had no doubt that it was "gas," and he followed the fat German out of the House, with the fixed intention of kicking him all the way back when he failed to make his words good.

Certainly, he seemed to be in earnest. He did not approach the gates, where old Sykes would have stopped any junior going out at once. He made his way to a lonely spot, where a low wall bordered the School Field. That field was out of bounds now, the wall being the limit, and Jim Dainty fully expected the fat Rhinelander to discover some sudden excuse for going no farther. Instead of which, Fritz blinked at him with his saucer-eyes and said:

"Punk me up, old pean!"

"You silly ass, what's the good of keeping this up?" snapped Jim Dainty. "Own up that you're gassing and take your kicking."

"Vill you punk me up?" demanded Fritz.

He grasped the snowy top of the wall. Jim stared at him, then, in silence, he bunked up the podgy Rhinelander. Fritz scrambled on top of the wall, sending down a shower of snow.

To Jim's amazement, he slid over the opposite side and dropped into the snow in the field.

Fritz was out of bounds.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Dainty.

"Mein goot Tainty!" Fritz's fat voice came over the wall. "Vill you gum mit me, or vill you be a peastly goward?"

Jim's eyes blazed. Already he was more than half inclined to take the risk. That taunt, from a fellow like Fritz, was irresistible. To be "dared" by the podgy Boche was unthinkable. If the howlingest funk at Grimslade had the nerve to defy Sammy Sparshott, Jim Dainty was not the man to back out. In a moment he had scrambled over the wall and joined Fritz in the field.

"You footing frump!" growled Jim. "You know jolly well that you're getting back before you're seen."

"Gum mit me!" was Fritz's answer.

And he rolled away across the field. Jim Dainty followed him, more and more amazed. It was borne in on his mind now that Friedrich von Splitz was in earnest. The funk of Grimslade was daring a risk that no other fellow in the school thought of taking. Nobody was afraid of the lurking convict, but every fellow was afraid of detention over Christmas. Fritz, for the first time in his frowsy career, was fearless.

Had Jim Dainty been aware that Fritz was booked to stay at Grimslade over Christmas anyhow, he would have understood. But he was not aware of that, and he was utterly perplexed. But one thing was certain: Where the fat German dared to lead, a Yorkshire lad dared to follow!

Fritz squeezed through a fence, and Jim followed him into the lane. With a fat grin on his face, Fritz started for the moor. He trudged away through the snow and Jim tramped by his side with a bright face. The keen wind on

the moor was like wine to him, and he was enjoying his freedom.

"Buck up, Fritz!" he said. "The sooner we're out of sight of the school the better. We shall have to be jolly careful to get back without being seen, too. We shan't be missed if we turn up in time for tea."

Fritz grinned.

He trudged on at a snail's pace. Fritz had no intention, if he could help it, of getting back into bounds undiscovered. Unless that expedition was discovered by the beaks Fritz had had all his trouble for nothing!

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Jim suddenly.

Across a frosty hedge, at a little distance, he sighted an athletic figure. It was that of Dr. Samuel Sparshott.

"Cover!" breathed Jim.

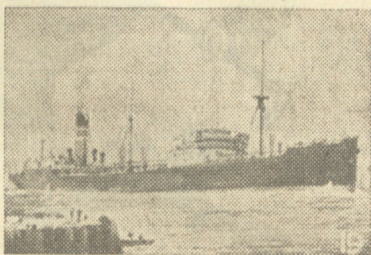
He grabbed the fat German by the shoulder and dragged him down into frosty bracken. Fortunately, Dr. Sparshott was not looking in their direction. They vanished from sight.

"Ach!" Fritz gurgled. "Ach! Pang me not about like tat, you peast and a prute!"

Jim Dainty grasped his companion by the back of the neck and drove his fat face into thick snow. If Fritz had not sense enough to keep quiet, with the Head only a dozen feet away, drastic measures were needed. Fritz gave a faint, agonised gurgle as his podgy features disappeared in snow.

Jim's heart thumped. The Head was now coming towards him. In another minute he would be discovered. Christmas at Grimslade—detention over the holidays! He was desperate. He released Fritz's fat neck, gathered up snow, rapidly kneaded a snowball. As a tall figure loomed over the bracken, he hurled the missile with sudden deadly aim.

Crash!



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The snowball smashed full in the face of Sammy Sparshott. It hurled him backwards, and Jim heard him crashing through the bracken on the slope. He sprang up, and dragged Fritz after him.

"Quick!" he panted.

"Ach! Peast and a prute!"

"Quick, you fool!"

Dragging the fat German after him, and keeping his head low, Jim Dainty dodged away through the snow-laden bushes. Fritz spluttered and stuttered, gasped and gurgled. But he had to go. Twice he fell, and Jim dragged him up and on with savage force. It was Fritz who had dragged him into this—Fritz who had endangered him by drawing Sammy's attention. And Jim had no mercy on the podgy, panting, puffing Rhinelander. From a distance came Sammy Sparshott's powerful voice ringing over the moor.

"Who is that? Stop! Stop, you scoundrel!"

It flashed into Jim's mind why Sammy Sparshott was there. He was joining in the hunt for the escaped convict. No doubt he fancied that it was Convict No. 39 who had hurled that snowball, and who was escaping in the snowy bracken. Following the shout came rapid tramping and rustling.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Jim.

He plunged into a mass of frosty bracken and stopped. Fritz Splitz collapsed, gurgling.

"Quiet!" breathed Jim. "He won't spot us here if you're quiet. For goodness sake, quiet!"

"Ach! Peast—ugggggh!" gasped Fritz, as a fist banged on his podgy nose. "Urrrh! Ooogh! Peast and a prute!"

"Another sound, and I'll smash your face through the back of your head!" hissed Jim Dainty.

Fritz gurgled into silence. Jim's eyes blazed at him, and his knuckles were only an inch from the podgy nose. The fat German did not dare to make a sound—much as he longed to do so.

There was a trampling and rustling, and several times it approached close to the hidden breakers of bounds. Jim hardly breathed, and Fritz was silent. The sounds died away farther and farther at last. Sammy Sparshott had missed them—to Jim's intense relief, though not to Fritz's. There was silence at length; Sammy was gone.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Jim.

He rose to his feet.

"Come on, you fat freak!" he growled. "Blessed if I don't half believe that you wanted Sammy to spot us! Get a move on!"

And Jim Dainty resumed his way across the moor to Grimslade Water, with Fritz von Splitz puffing and panting at his heels, and wondering dimly whether, after all, his trickery was going to be a success.

The Chopper Comes Down!

"Oh, what rotten luck!" groaned Jim Dainty.

Grimslade Water was frozen.

The torrent that came sweeping down from the high slopes of Grimslade Pike in the summer was now silent and still. Deep in the rugged moor the torrent had cut its path and the icy stream lay thirty feet below the level of the moor. The sides were rugged and precipitous, strewn with rocks and boulders and loose stones.

Jim Dainty had clambered up the bank of the torrent for a good distance, with Fatty Fritz groaning and gasping after him. By this time Fritz was rather repenting him of his cunning scheme. He still hoped that the breakers of bounds would be spotted before they got back into the school. But his fat limbs were aching with fatigue, and he was terribly hungry.

Jim came to a halt at a high point up the steep channel of the torrent, and Fatty Fritz sank down at the foot of a rock, groaning. And then, from below, came the sound of a clinking, falling stone, showing that someone else was ascending the torrent. Jim Dainty jumped into cover at once.

"What rotten luck! Sammy again!" he whispered.

Fritz's fat face brightened. "You tink tat Sammy he gum after us?" he gasped.

"Somebody's coming, anyhow. Keep close!"

Fritz's sly eyes gleamed. This time, if he could help it, he was not going to be passed undiscovered—nor Dainty either. And it looked as if the fat Rhinelander was in luck. There was plenty of cover among the rocks and boulders strewn up the rugged bank, and the two juniors were crouching out of sight. But if the newcomer came up as far as the spot where they crouched, it was more than likely that he would see them as he passed. Fritz, at least, was determined that he should see one of them.

"Ach! I tink——"

Jim thrust a threatening fist into the podgy face.

"You fat rotter! I don't know your game, but you're trying to get me spotted. Quick, or I'll smash you!"

Fritz was very quiet after that.

Jim listened to the sounds from below. A man was coming up the steep bank, unseen as yet, drawing nearer and nearer. Was it Sammy Sparshott? It was impossible to tell. But it seemed likely enough. Jim hugged cover and listened breathlessly.

The clambering footsteps came nearer and nearer. Then they suddenly stopped.

The man, whoever he was, had not appeared in sight. Jim heard a rustling sound, as if bushes were stirring. Then there was silence.

He listened. Minute followed minute. But there was no fresh sound—only the wail of the winter wind on the moor. The man was not coming up—he was not going down. What was he up to?

Ten minutes passed—and still there was no sound. Jim ventured to lift his head from behind the big boulder at last and looked round. No one was in sight. A dozen yards from him the side of the gorge rose precipitous like the wall of a house, and it was clothed thick in wild ivy, powdered with snow. It was the ivy, he fancied, that he had heard stirring.

But thick as it was, it was not thick enough to hide a man—even if it was imaginable that a man should have wanted to hide in it. What had become of the man who had been ascending the ravine? It seemed to Jim Dainty that he had vanished into thin air!

He clambered at last on a high rock and scanned the ravine. From that high point he had a birdseye view among the wild boulders. No one was to be seen.

"My only hat!" muttered Jim, utterly mystified.

Obviously, it could not have been Dr. Sparshott whose footsteps he had heard. But whoever it was had vanished inexplicably. Jim almost wondered whether he had heard footsteps at all, or whether he had been deceived by some strange echo of the ravine.

Clink, clink, clink! Footsteps again—unmistakable this time. A voice shouted something afar. On the high bank of the ravine the figure of a horseman appeared, looking down from the moor into the bed of the torrent. It was a mounted constable. Men on foot were coming up the ravine—three or four of them at least. Jim caught a glimpse of a uniform in the distance below.

"Ach! Vat——" gasped Fritz.

"It's the police from Blackmoor!" grunted Jim. "After the jolly old convict, I suppose. Oh crumbs! If Sammy's with them——"

"Ach! Tat is goot!"

"What?" exclaimed Jim.

"Himmel! I mean to say, tat is pad!" gasped Fritz.

Jim gave him a suspicious look. He could not help realising by this time that Fritz Splitz wanted to be discovered out of bounds, though why was a mystery to him.

Further concealment was useless. The Blackmoor police were searching the ravine as they advanced. Jim waited grimly for them to come up. If Dr. Sparshott was with them the game was up and he had to pay the penalty of his recklessness.

There was a sudden shout, and a man in an inspector's uniform came scrambling over the rugged stones towards him. It was Inspector Rawson, of Blackmoor. He stared at Jim.

"A schoolboy!" he exclaimed. "A Grimslade boy! I warned Dr. Sparshott to keep his boys within bounds! You are in danger here——" He broke off suddenly. "Have you seen him?"

"Him? Whom?"

"The convict!" rapped the inspector impatiently. "He was seen on the moor, and we followed him into the ravine. He cannot have got out. There are mounted men riding along both sides on the moor. He must have passed you here."

"Nobody has passed us, sir," answered Jim.

Inspector Rawson gave him a dark look.

"You young fool! Are you thinking of helping the man because he was a Grimslade boy once? He is a desperate criminal now! I tell you that he must have passed you here. Answer me at once!"

"Oh, my hat!" panted Jim. He realised now whose footsteps he had heard coming up the ravine. It was the convict!

Inspector Rawson turned, and called to one of the constables behind.

"Call Dr. Sparshott here!"

Jim breathed hard. The Head of Grimslade was with the searching-party, and the game was up. A minute later Sammy Sparshott came tramping up. He started at the sight of Dainty and Fritz. His face set like iron.

"Dainty, you are out of bounds. You know the penalty!"

Jim made no answer.

"Slim Tim must have passed these boys, Dr. Sparshott," said the inspector. "They can give us information if they choose."

"Dainty, if you have seen the man——"

"I've seen nobody, sir," Jim answered. "I heard someone coming up the path, and kept out of sight."

"Ach! Tat is so!" gasped Fritz. "I see nopody, sir."

"The wretch must have seen the boys here and crept past them unseen," said Dr. Sparshott. "We shall find him farther on, Mr. Rawson."

The inspector grunted.

"I don't see how he could have passed them unseen. Still, if they say they never saw him, I suppose he must have. Forward, men!"

The inspector and

the constable pressed on, searching every nook and cranny as they went. Dr. Sparshott lingered a moment.

"Go back to the school at once, Dainty! Write home and state that you will not be returning for the Christmas holidays, owing to an act of reckless and wilful disobedience. You, Splitz, as you were staying over the holidays in any case, will be flogged."

"Ach himmel!" gasped Fritz.

Dr. Sparshott tramped on after the constables. Jim Dainty stood staring at Friedrich von Splitz.

"You—you—you——" gasped Jim. He understood now. "You were booked for the vac at Grimslade, and you've landed me in it, too. Why, I—I'll——"

"Ach! Geep your temper!" howled Fritz. "I did not do tis chust to geep you along mit me for te holidays. Nein, nein! I neffer tought of tat! I did not tink tat your beoples would send you buddings and tings. Neffer, neffer! I vant you to stay mit me because you are so nice and you are my beloved shum. Ach! Pang me not in te preadbasket! Woo-hooh! Kick me not on mein trousers! Yaroooh!"

Fritz Splitz fled, yelling. After him came Jim Dainty. How many kicks Fritz captured before he reached Grimslade he never knew; but he felt as if the number ran into millions.

It was a weary, worn, and weobegone Fritz that tottered into White's House at last. And that evening, when Sammy returned, there was more trouble for Fritz. Fritz's voice was heard all over Grimslade as Sammy laid it on.

But there was balm in Gilead, so to speak, for Fatty Fritz. A few days later, when Grimslade broke up for the Christmas holidays, Fritz von Splitz was not left, as usual, on his lonesome own. Jim Dainty, with a grim face, watched the crowd of fellows depart, leaving him alone with the fat Rhinelander. Sammy was as good as his word. Jim had asked for it, and he had got it.

"Cheer up, old pean!" said Fritz brightly. "After all before, you will have my company."

Jim Dainty stayed only to roll Fritz in the snow, and walked back to the deserted House. He little dreamed at the moment that the following days were to be packed with the wildest excitement he had known since he had come to Grimslade School!

(Look out for another thrilling story of Jim Dainty at Grimslade in next week's special Christmas Number of THE RANGER, which will also contain six more Free Picture Stamps!)

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