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The RANGER^{2D}



THE NEVER-SAY-DIE SCHOOLBOYS ON CASTAWAY ISLAND! NON-STOP THRILLS!



THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!

Featuring Jim Dainty & Co., of Grimslade School. By FRANK RICHARDS.

On Castaway Island.



"GOKERNUTS!" said Fritz Splitz.

It was morning on the unknown isle, which Jim Dainty & Co. had already named Castaway Island.

Blue sea—a blue sea never seen in northern waters—stretched away from the sandy shore, far as the eye could reach. The beach, white with powdered seashells, shone in the tropical sun. From the beach the jungle was thick to the woods that clothed the inland hill. Coconut-palms nodded, tall and graceful, against the blue of the sky.

The morning was bright and fresh—the blazing heat of the day was not due yet. The shipwrecked schoolboys had bathed in the blue, shining bay, Fritz Splitz sitting ashore and watching them.

Fritz was not keen on bathing, or on washing in any shape or form. And in Fritz's opinion there was, at least, one good thing in being wrecked on an unknown island during a holiday cruise—a fellow did not have to wash. In that respect, at least, Castaway Island was an improvement on Grimslade School.

But Fritz, who had been inactive during the bathe, showed signs of activity when the schoolboys rambled up the beach among the coconut palms. Coconuts were good to eat.

Dr. Sparshott, headmaster of Grimslade, had clambered to the summit of a high rock, in the shade of which the castaways' hut was built. With his field glasses to his eyes, Sammy Sparshott was scanning the sea in the clear morning air.

They had been several days on the island now, and every morning Sammy climbed that high rock and scanned the sea for a sail. The six juniors of Grimslade were left to their own devices for the moment, though with strict orders from Sammy not to wander far from the camp.

Somewhere on Castaway Island lurked Ezra Sarson, the rascal who had scuttled the Spindrift, and he would have been a dangerous man to meet.

Standing with his bullet head thrown back, Fritz von Splitz blinked up at the coconuts with his saucer-eyes. Quite a lot remained as yet of the provisions landed from the raft; but Sammy Sparshott was a careful man, and the castaways were on rations. They had enough, but no more. Enough was not much use to Fritz Splitz. And the salt-sea air made him extra hungry. He gazed longingly at the coconuts.

"Tainty, old pean, vill you glimb tat tree,

and trow down some gokernuts?" asked Fritz. "I vill gatch tem."

"I'll give you a bunk up," suggested Jim Dainty.

"But I do not vant a punk up. Chinger, old jap, vill you glimb tat tree?"

Ginger Rawlinson chuckled.

"I'll give you a bunk," he answered.

"Pacon, Pean, Tawson—vill you glimb tat tree?"

Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean and Dick Dawson answered with one voice:

"I'll give you a bunk!"

Fritz Splitz snorted.

"Peasts and prutes!" he grunted. "I tink tat you are afraid to glimb tat tree. You vas not so prave as a Cherman. But if you vill not glimb tat tree, look round, mit you, and see if tere are any fallen gokernuts!"

"Must have been plenty blown down in the storm last week," said Jim Dainty. "We've found more than a few. Here you are!"

He kicked a coconut that lay among the herbage under the trees. Fritz Splitz pounced on it. He grabbed it up in his fat hands.

"Goot!" he ejaculated. "Vere is mein bocket-knife? Te milk of te gokernut is ferry

THE WICKET WAS THE HEAD
OF A VILLAIN, THE BALL WAS
A HEFTY COCONUT. AND JIM
DAINTY GOT A WICKET FIRST
BALL!

goot to trink. First I vill trink te milk, and ten I vill preak te gokernut and eat him."

And Fritz opened his pocket-knife, and jabbed the blade through the soft spots at the end of the shell, to make a passage for the milk within.

Fritz's fat face beamed. Food had a strong appeal for him. So had drink. Food and drink combined had a double appeal. He leaned back his head, and placed the pierced end of the coconut to his capacious mouth, and let the juice within run. The next moment the happy satisfaction faded out of Fritz's face, and a perfectly ghastly expression replaced it. There was a spluttering howl from the fat German.

"Urrrgh! Mein gootness! Ooooch!"

Crash! went the coconut. Fritz Splitz staggered, gurgling wildly. The juniors stared at him.

"My giddy goloshes!" ejaculated Ginger.

"What on earth—"

"Gurrgrgh! Wurrgrgh! Gug-gug-ug!

Ooooch!" Fritz Splitz spluttered and spat.

"Oooo-er! Ooo-er! Wooooh!"

He pressed both hands to his fat waistcoat

and doubled up, his face green and ghastly. Horrid sounds came from Fritz, such as may be heard on a Channel steamer on a rough day.

"Something wrong with that jolly old nut," grinned Streaky Bacon.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrrgh! Wurrgrgh! Yurrgrgh!"

Jim Dainty picked up the coconut, and cracked the shell with a crash on a stone. The interior was revealed—not a beautiful white, as it should have been, but black as a hat. Evidently that coconut had lain on the ground longer than a week. Possibly it had lain there for months. Its interior was not merely ripe. It was over-ripe—awfully over-ripe!

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Dainty; and he hurled the nut away.

"Urrrgh!" moaned the unhappy Fritz. "Wurrgrgh! Vat vas te madder mit tat peasty nut before? Wurrgrgh! Now I lose mein preakfast, and I shall be derribly hungry before tinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peasts and prutes! It is not for to laff!" howled Fritz. "I have vun derribble sickness in mein pread-pasket! Urrrgrgh!"

"Poor old Boche bloater!" said Jim Dainty. "I'll get you some good nuts."

And he stepped towards the palm-tree.

Well Bowled!

SAMMY SPARSHOTT, standing on the summit of the high rock, about sixty feet distant from the palms, was still as a statue, with the glasses clamped to his eyes.

Far away to the east, across the deep indigo of the sea, something showed over the waters, whether a sail or a rising gull, Sammy could not for the moment determine. He was watching like a hawk, and gave no attention to the juniors, in the group of palms. In front of him, as he faced the sea, the rock dropped precipitously. Behind him it sloped gently away to the jungle.

And Sammy did not know that, from a screen of tree-ferns down that slope, a pair of sharp, glittering eyes were watching him. He did not know that Ezra Sarson, the scuttler of the Spindrift, was calculating the chances of a rush to hurl him over the precipice, on the verge of which he was standing as he scanned the sea.

The summit of the rock was almost on a level with the bunch of fronds topping the tall palm that Jim Dainty was climbing. By the time he reached the clusters of coconuts Jim would be rather above the level where Sammy was standing, nearly sixty feet away from him. But Dainty was not looking towards his headmaster. All his attention was needed for the climb.

Like all palms, it slanted a little. Jim had read of the native way of climbing a palm, with hands as well as feet—"walking" up the slant. He had kicked off his shoes, which made it easier. Still, it was far from easy. He went up and up, clamping on the trunk with fingers and toes.

Thirty feet—forty feet—fifty feet! Jim was still going up. A fall now meant broken limbs, if not a broken neck. And all the Grimslade fellows were silent, watching him anxiously. Jim was breathing hard, and his face was set. He was determined to get through. Higher and higher, till he was at the clustering nuts, and, holding on with legs and one hand, he grabbed coconuts with the other.

Plop, plop! Plop, plop! Nuts began to fall into the ferns below. Fritz Spitz ceased to gasp and gurgle, and made a jump for the nuts. Fresh from the tree, they were very different from the ancient nut that had caused Fritz so much internal trouble. Fritz grabbed a nut, cracked it open on the trunk of the palm, and gloated over the rich, white interior.

"Mein gootness! Tat is goot!" he ejaculated. And Fritz sat down to gnaw. The other fellows watched Dainty uneasily. They wished that he was safe down.

"My giddy goloshes! What's up now?" muttered Ginger.

Jim Dainty had given a sudden jump that almost made him lose his hold. He clutched again, and saved himself from falling. His eyes were turned on the tall rock where Dr. Sparshott stood. Sammy, the glasses glued to his eyes, was watching the distant speck on the sea, blind to his near surroundings. From the high palm, Jim could see over the top of the rock, hidden from the fellows below. And what he saw made the blood rush to his heart.

Behind Dr. Sparshott a tattered, savage figure had emerged from the tree-ferns, and was creeping up the slope towards Sammy.

Ezra Sarson did not glance towards the palms. His savage, sunken eyes were fixed on the headmaster's back. Silently, but swiftly, he crept towards the unsuspecting Sammy, a thick bamboo, loaded at the end with a lump of jagged rock, grasped in his hand. Jim Dainty's eyes fixed on him in horror. The man was only a few yards from the headmaster of Grimslade, and his murderous intention was apparent.

To shout and warn Sammy was Jim's instant thought, but he realised the same instant that

it was useless. The rush and the blow would come too quickly, if Sammy turned. But another thought flashed instantly into his mind. He grabbed a coconut from the cluster and took aim.

The distance was less than the length of a cricket-pitch, and at Grimslade School Jim Dainty was the best junior bowler. But the conditions were very different from bowling at cricket—clinging to a tall, swaying palm with his legs and one hand, while he took aim with the other.

But it was the only way, and he took the chance. His free arm swung, and the coconut whizzed through the air like a cricket-ball.

And the aim was true. All the strength of Jim's sturdy arm went into that effort, and the nut crashed on the side of the tousled head of the man who crept behind Sammy.

The ruffian went sprawling over on the slope, the cudgel flying from his hand. He rolled over and yelled with pain.

"Great gad! What—"

Sammy Sparshott lowered the glasses and spun round where he stood.

"Look out, sir!" shrieked Dainty.

Dr. Sparshott spotted the desperado at once. Had Sarson been on his feet, and coming on, Sammy would have turned too late to save himself. But Sarson was sprawling, dazed and dizzy, on the rock, his hand clasped to his bruised head. Dr. Sparshott gave him one look and then leaped towards him as the man sprang to his feet.

"You villain!" breathed Sammy.

He came at the ruffian with a rush, and his right hand, clenched and as hard as iron, shot out and caught Ezra fairly between the eyes. There was a gurgling howl from Sarson, and he went stumbling, and rolling, and crashing down the slope, back to the jungle from which he had crept. He crashed through the tall tree-ferns and disappeared from sight.

After him went the Head of Grimslade, with a rush. But there was thick cover in the jungle, at the foot of the rocky slope. He heard the brushing and rustling as the ruffian fled; but pursuit in the tangled jungle was hopeless.

Dr. Sparshott walked back up the rock. He glanced across at Jim, still hanging on the tall palm. The nut that had knocked over Ezra lay at his feet. Sammy smiled.

"Did you throw that nut, Dainty?" he called out.

"Yes, sir; I saw him behind you!" panted Jim.

"Good man!" said Sammy. "Well bowled!"

And he lifted his glasses again to scan that distant speck on the sea as composedly as if nothing had happened. Jim Dainty slid down the palm, and he was panting when he landed on the ground. His nerve was good, but it was not of tempered steel, like Sammy's.

Facing the Foe!

"LET'S all go!" said Ginger.

Dr. Sparshott shook his head. "We must explore the island," he said. "It is quite possible that from the other side we may be able to see some other island—perhaps an inhabited one. There may even be inhabitants on this island, for all we can tell at present. But we cannot all go. That scoundrel Sarson is watching, and if we

leave the camp unguarded we shall find little here when we return."

The headmaster of Grimslade was thoughtful and a little perturbed. He was unwilling to leave any of the juniors out of his sight while the desperate 'Frisco tough lurked on Cast-away Island. He could almost have repented that he had taken the rascal from the sinking wreck of the Spindrift.

"I shall take Dainty and Dawson with me," he said at last. "I leave you in command, Rawlinson. You, Bacon, Bean, and Spitz will remain; you must all keep together, and on the watch, in the hut. You have cudgels and axes, and I can rely on you to keep that villain off if he should venture here!"

"Mein gootness! I vant not to stay here!" exclaimed Fritz, in alarm. "I vill gum mit you, sir! I am not afraid of tat peast and a prute, but—"

"You are too fat and lazy for the journey," said Dr. Sparshott. "It will be terribly hard going. You would crock up after the first mile, Spitz."

"Ach himmel!" groaned Fritz.

The prospect of labouring through tangled thickets and hot swamps, under a tropical sun, did not appeal to Fritz. Neither did the prospect of remaining at the camp without the protection of his headmaster! He groaned.

Sammy Sparshott was far from easy in his mind. But it was a case of necessity; and he did not waste time. It was needful to start in the cool of the morning; even the energetic Sammy had to rest in the midday heat in a climate only a few days from the Equator.

Dainty and Dawson were keen on the expedition. They had longed, like the other fellows, to explore their new domain ever since they had landed from the raft.

Sammy gave Ginger a few brief directions, which the red-headed junior of Redmayes House at Grimslade promised faithfully to obey; and then the headmaster started, followed by Dainty and Dawson.

They followed the beach towards the northern side of the island for some distance, till the great rocks barred further progress, and they had to turn inland. Then the jungle swallowed them from sight.

Fritz followed them with his saucer-eyes till they vanished, and then groaned once more as he blinked round, fearing to see the tattered figure of Sarson now that Sammy was out of sight.

"Buck up, old bloater!" grinned Ginger.



Unaware of the scoundrel creeping up behind him, Dr. Sparshott stared out to sea. But Jim Dainty, climbing up a coconut palm, saw his headmaster's peril. Jim's free arm swung, and a coconut whizzed through the air like a cricket-ball—straight for the rascal's head!

"If that sportsman hops in we'll put paid to him! Keep your peepers open, you men."

"What-ho!" said Streaky. Fritz rolled into the hut. The canvas shelter had been replaced by a strong wooden hut, built of the timbers of the raft—many days' labour for the castaways, cheerfully undertaken. Ginger & Co. had no doubt that they could hold the fort if Sarson came; but Fritz was smitten with many doubts.

The Redmayes trio kept a keen look-out from the doorway; while Fritz sat within and disposed of a gigantic bunch of bananas.

Ginger winked at his comrades. Ginger & Co. had plenty of nerve, and they were not afraid of the 'Frisco tough, and they were more than fed-up with Fritz's terrors.

"My giddy goloshes!" exclaimed Ginger suddenly. "What's that? Is that something moving in the palm-trees, you men?"

Bacon and Bean grinned. Something was moving among the palm-trees; but it was only a many-coloured cockatoo! But Ginger's words were enough for Fritz Splitz. He gave a howl of terror and dropped the bunch of bananas.

"Mein gootness! Ve are all tead!" he gasped. "Chinger, goot Chinger, tear old Pacon, tear old Pean, do not tell tat peast tat I was here before mit meinsel!"

Fritz already had his eye on a hiding-place in case of danger. There was a pile of folded blankets in a corner of the hut. Fritz dragged over the pile, and disappeared under it.

Ginger & Co. stared at him. The fat German completely disappeared from sight under the pile of blankets. The pile wriggled a little as Fritz gasped for breath in that exceedingly warm corner.

"My giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger. "I fancy that fat funk will find it a bit warm under all those blankets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grinning, Ginger & Co. sat in the doorway, keeping watch. Fritz Splitz was welcome to stay under the blankets as long as he liked. It was getting towards noon now, and it was fearfully hot, even with the breeze from the sea playing on their faces. Under the blankets it must have been frightfully hot!

It was not surprising that, about ten minutes later, the pile stirred, and a fat, red face looked out, and two eyes like boiled gooseberries blinked round.

"Mein gootness! Is he gone?" gasped Fritz.

"No! He's pecking at a nut."

"Vat!" gasped Fritz. "Tat peast Sarson beck at vun nut like a pird?"

"Who said it was Sarson?" asked Ginger. "Tain't Sarson, old fat bean—it's a cockatoo!"

"Vat!" shrieked Fritz. He scrambled out from under the blankets, streaming with perspiration. "Vat!" He blinked from the doorway. "Mein gootness! Is it tat you pull me to leg, peast and a prute? I vas so varm as neffer vas before, and I have no more te breff! Ach! I tink tat I melt away mit meinsel! Peastly pounder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Fritz sat and mopped perspiration. Ginger & Co. chortled. But they ceased to chortle as a tattered, shaggy figure suddenly appeared on the edge of the jungle by the stream. Ginger's eyes glinted; suddenly he grasped the handle of his axe, and leaped to his feet.

"Cave, you men!" he snapped. "There's Sarson!"

"Get hold of an axe, Fritz!" said Sandy Bean.

"Ach! Do you tink tat you pull me te leg two times?" snarled Fritz. "Go and eat goke!"

Ginger breathed hard and deep. He was not afraid; but his heart was beating fast. Ezra Sarson came slowly up towards the hut. His tanned, bony face, stubbly with beard, his sunken, savage eyes, glared from under the shade of a plaited grass hat. A knife was in his hand.

It was evident that he had watched Sammy's departure, and waited till the Head of Grimslade was too far to render aid to the boys left behind in the camp. Many miles of jungle and swamp separated Sammy now from Ginger & Co., and they had only themselves to rely on. But they stood firm, weapon in hand, and faced the desperate ruffian as he came.

To retreat into the hut and bar the door

was only to postpone the inevitable struggle. Ginger & Co. did not think of that. It had to come, and they were ready.

Sarson's sunken eyes glinted at them as he came on, and he halted hardly six feet away. They eyed him steadily. Fritz, in the hut, was gobbling bananas again.

"Ach! I tink tat you do not pull me te leg two times!" he grunted. "Also, I am not afraid of tat peast and a prute! You would not be afraid if you vas so prave as a Cherman! I tink—" Fritz broke off suddenly as Sarson's shadow fell across the doorway, and bounded to his feet. "Mein gootness! Safe me! Safe me! Goot Chinger, prave Pacon, dear old Pean, safe me!"

Ginger, keeping his eyes on the man in front of him, kicked backwards at Fritz. Fritz's wail changed to a howl of anguish.

Sarson came a step closer. His teeth showed in a savage grin.

"I guess you're for it!" he snarled. "You calculate I don't know that Sam Sparshott is gone? I guess I'll get him later, dog-gone him! You first!"

"Come on, you pie-faced scum!" said Ginger coolly. "Look out, you men! Hit hard and hit often!"

"You bet!" said Sandy Bean, gripping his cudgel.

For several minutes the ruffian remained where he was, watching them like a cat. If he hoped to shake the Grimsladers' nerve he was disappointed. They stood steady as rocks, ready for the attack. When it came it came suddenly. Knife in hand, snarling, the 'Frisco tough leaped at them, slashing.

Ginger drove his axe at him. Streaky Bacon's axe crashed on the slashing knife, knocking it away. And Sandy Bean's uplifted cudgel came with a crash on Sarson's shoulder, sending him to his knees.

"At him!" yelled Ginger.

They bounded at the ruffian. He sprawled after the knife, clutching it up. Sandy's heavy cudgel crashed again, this time on his head; and at the same moment two heavy blows landed from the backs of the axes. Only to save their lives would the Grimsladers have used the edge—and it was not needed. The three crashing blows, landing at once, knocked the ruffian over, and he sprawled, yelling and panting.

"Smash him!" roared Sandy Bean, and his cudgel came down again, landing twice with terrific force.

Sarson yelled and squirmed away. Half stunned, with an ache in nearly every bone in his rascally body, he squirmed away like a wounded snake. The three juniors followed him up, still hitting, and hitting hard.

Blow after blow rained on the squirming wretch, who were thinking now only of escape.

He gained his feet at last, and scrambled away into the jungle. He tottered as he went, panting and gasping.

"Give him a few more!" yelled Ginger.

But Sandy Bean grabbed Ginger's arm as he was rushing after him.

"Keep back, fathead!" he panted.

And Ginger nodded and stopped. In the thick jungle it was too dangerous to pursue a desperate man with a knife in his hand.

The Grimslade trio walked back to the hut, breathless but gleeful. The enemy had come—and gone—and had been glad to go! Grimslade had beaten him to the wide!

When they reached the hut Fritz Splitz was not to be seen, but there was a wobble from the pile of blankets.

Lost in the Swamp!

JIM DAINTY smacked his perspiring face and slaughtered a dozen mosquitoes with one smack. Dick Dawson mopped his damp brow. Sammy Sparshott, striding ahead, axe on shoulder, did not seem to feel the heat, or to notice the mosquitoes. The two juniors noticed both, only too keenly.

On the northern side of Castaway Island there was a belt of swamp, where miry mangroves grew into the water, and a thousand tiny, muddy creeks bubbled and gave out horrible odours among the wiry, miry stems, and myriads of insects buzzed and buzzed.

The explorers had undoubtedly struck a bad patch; but they had to get through, if they were to reach the other side of the isle.

Dr. Sparshott stopped presently, and stood scanning the dismal swamp.

"Let's sit down a bit!" gasped Dawson. "Sammy's legs seem made of iron—mine aren't! Squat on this log, Jim!"

The half-submerged mass, crusted with mud, reeking with slime, did not look inviting, but it was a seat. Dick Dawson plumped down on it with a gasp of relief. Jim was about to follow his example when Dawson gave a howl of alarm.

"It's moving—sinking— Oh, my hat!"

The "log" was lifting itself from the ooze. A gigantic head, with enormous jaws, reared in the fetid air. A cavernous mouth opened, revealing fearful teeth. What Dawson had taken for a half-submerged log was the mud-encrusted back of an alligator, sleeping in the slime.

The two juniors scrambled away madly, panting. There was a shout from Dr. Sparshott, and he came dashing back, axe in hand. With a bound, Sammy Sparshott reached the brute.

Down came the axe, with such terrific force that it pierced the scaly head. There was a wild, whirring flurry, and the alligator plunged away, making for deeper water. A splash came back as it went headlong into one of the innumerable creeks.

"I—I—I thought it was a log!" gasped Dawson, white as a sheet. "Oh crumbs!"

Sammy gave him a muddy grin.

"Pick your log more carefully next time, my boy!" he said. "I've blunted my axe on him; but thank goodness he's gone! Come on—I think I see my way now."

It was the first hint the juniors had that Sammy had had any doubts. But as they followed him on they wondered that he was able to find a way at all. So long as the sea was in sight, it was a guide—they had only to leave the blue waters on their right. But the tangled mangroves and muddy creeks drove them from the vicinity of the sea, and thick, close vegetation surrounded them, shutting off the view—rotting trees, with rotting branches, dipping to the ooze.

"I say, I've lost my axe!" exclaimed Dawson suddenly. "I—I dropped it when I fell!"

Sammy glanced back at him.

"Leave it," he said curtly. "We can't go back! We've got to get through this!"

The fetid air was oppressive; the heat, already great, was growing overpowering. Sammy's face was hard set. The swamp could not be extensive; but it was like walking in a maze. For more than an hour after the encounter with the alligator, they tramped and squelched on. Then Jim Dainty gave a sudden shout.

"Look! Oh, look! We're not alone here!"

"What?" barked Sammy.

Jim pointed to a footprint in the mud. Dr. Sparshott stared at it blankly. At a little distance was another footprint. It was clear that someone had walked ahead of them, though the soft slime had blotted out most of the trail. But here and there the footprints were left clear and distinct.

Dr. Sparshott knitted his brows. His thoughts ran at once to Ezra Sarson. Yet it seemed unlikely that the ruffian, if he had followed them into the swamp, could have passed them and got ahead. And a few minutes later Dawson gave a shout and pointed to two sets of footprints, side by side.

"Two of them!" exclaimed Dr. Sparshott. "It cannot be Sarson—he is alone! We are not, then, alone on the island. Others are here—two, at least!"

"Natives?" asked Dawson.

"Natives would not have booted feet," said Dr. Sparshott. "White men—at least, civilised men—have trodden here before us."

"What luck!" exclaimed Jim Dainty. "My hat! We may find a ship on the other side, when we get through."

They tramped on hopefully, and a shout from Jim Dainty announced another discovery. Three separate sets of tracks were visible in one spot.

"Three of them!" said Jim. "Hurrah!"

"Must be from some ship!" said Dawson.

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falter. But again the torture and his own terrific will-power drove him on. Nearer—nearer! Two more steps—one! A final grand, heroic effort sent him tottering on to victory.

In a kind of stupor, he felt the grilling heat suddenly abate a little; heard himself muttering "I'm through! I'm through!" Then all at once he found himself leaning against a rock on which two chiefs' bonnets lay, and he blinked at them stupidly, swaying like a tall, breeze-shaken reed.

He had won through! He had walked the very path! Though every movement cost him a stifled groan, White Indian gravely donned a feathered headdress, then the proud sable plumes of the fighting Black Eagle tribe.

As he did so Proud Falcon uttered one spitting curse and fled.

Heedless of throbbing burns, the disgraced braggart flung himself to horse and rode like the madman he was. One more schemer had matched his wits against White Indian's, and heavy and swift had been his downfall.

A rousing cry went up from the Black Eagles.

"Ho, White Indian, Black Eagle—Black Eagle! Wah, all that we heard of thee is truth, Great Medicine Man! Wah, the Black Eagles are your men! Lead us against the foe! We follow!"

White Indian yet managed to raise his arm in acknowledgment.

"I will lead you—you and my brave Suns!" he answered; and then, with a queer gulp, half-laugh, half-sob, called for his horse and mounted unaided.

Suns and Black Eagles, mingling into a mob, followed the conqueror back to his cave.

Inside, old Panther Man smiled proudly, lovingly, as the boy staggered in, collapsed, and made a frantic grab at the can of carron-ol, to soothe the burns that covered him from ankle to thigh.

"Great chief—our brave young Star!" crooned the veteran softly. "Tell me—how then have you performed this wondrous magic?"

"Smears my feet—alum-paste and carron-ol!" gasped White Indian, only to utter that hoarse, cracked laugh again as he flung the can aside. "But there was only enough for the soles of my feet; and now, oh, my gosh, there's no more left at all!"

He rolled over on his face, quivering all over with pain. While reverently old Panther Man picked up the empty can, and reverently he touched it to his forehead.

To him White Indian's words were as Greek.

But: "Truly this must be paleface magic; and very, very strong! For to-day it has wrought a miracle and gained us many brave men!" he muttered solemnly, as he passed on the can, which henceforth and for ever was to be a powerful fetish among the Suns.

Then, with a low cry of alarm, the crippled warrior dragged himself across the floor.

In the hour of victory, on the threshold of the rich Cimarron Land, White Indian, chief of the Suns and Black Eagles, had fainted for the first time in his life!

(White Indian risks a terrible fate in next week's stirring chapters telling of the Sun tribe's battle with Butcher Bragin and his gang of desperadoes, but he wins through. Don't miss this all-thrilling yarn—it's the best yet!)

WAR BIRDS A-WING!

(Continued from page 83.)

gun-flashes spat into the air directly above the head of each duellist, for neither of the two old enemies had aimed at his adversary. Each had offered his life as a target to the other without attempting to retaliate.

"Gosh sakes!" snarled Skid. "I thought you said you could shoot, son?"

"An' I thought you said you could!" came the trembling response from Dreggle. "Skid—Skid; I just couldn't do it! I couldn't—"

His last words were drowned by another thunderous report which split the silence with terrifying effect. From a moving object quite a hundred yards away came the crackle of machine-gun fire; and from that moving object snaked out the yellow finger of a miniature searchlight.

Ratatatatatatatat!

With a soft moan Horatio Dreggle collapsed in his tracks—a bullet piercing his lung. The moan was engulfed in a war-like snarl which leapt from Skid Galloway's lips as he bounded forward. Hastily he snatched the fallen figure of his old enemy, slung it across his broad shoulders, and bounded for cover. Feverishly he sought the switch on the fuse-box in Dreggle's old hide-out. Clumsily his fingers snapped over the switch, then his ears seemed to be blotted out in a tumultuous cascade of noise.

Away in the distance, what had once been a perfectly good and useful railway junction was now nothing more than a smouldering, dusty ruin. The accompanying triple-arched bridge had disappeared in the river it spanned as to be almost invisible save for great chunks of tangled steelwork and masonry which protruded from the depths at odd intervals.

Again the searchlight snaked out; again the deadly rattle of machine-gun fire. Skid knew now that an armoured car was bearing down on them. Possibly it had been patrolling the vicinity of the station when the two duellists had fired their useless shots into the air.

"Skunks!" roared Skid, bounding from cover and, with the inanimate form of Dreggle across his shoulders, twisting and turning like an eel. "Skunks! We'll beat 'em to it yet!"

With great leaps he gained the Bristol. Ratatatatat! Ratatatatat!

The machine-gun on the armoured car was hissing a stream of hot lead straight at the shadowy outline of the plane. A split second later the yellow searchlight focused it point-blank, but in that fraction of time Skid had pitched his unconscious companion into the back seat and scrambled up into the cockpit.

The plane started to move forward as Skid gave the engine full throttle; it sagged under the regular fusillade of lead which the armoured car smashed at it, wobbled uncertainly, and continued to forge ahead. Another moment and the doubly laden Bristol was thrumming into the night air, with half its controls severed, but still manageable.

Shell after shell spanged up into the murky blackness from the ground batteries, seeking to destroy the daring raider, but Skid kept to his course for home. At last No. 257 squadron aerodrome came within landing distance, and Skid side-slipped in for a landing and hoped for the best.

It was the first crash Skid had ever made in his long life as a pilot, for the Bristol clumped into a small hummock, bounced on

one wing, and finally came to earth a wreck. Willing hands dragged out the unconscious occupants and took them to the dressing-station; but it was three hours before Horatio Dreggle came to. He awoke to find Skid Galloway peering at him from an adjacent bed, and smoking a cigarette.

"How you feelin', son?"

"Not too rusty, Skid!" said Dreggle faintly. "Say, I'm real sorry about—"

"Aw shucks! That's all right, son. Take it easy. I'm takin' forty winks meself. We'll have a chat in the mornin'."

Morning came, but along with the departure of the night had gone the soul of Horatio Dreggle. But he went on the long journey to his Maker with the name of Skid Galloway on his lips, a smile on his face, and Skid Galloway's hand in his.

The feud was ended.

(A general comes to 257 squadron in next week's thrill-packed flying story with the idea of making a "big splash." But he's the one who gets wet when the big splash comes off!)

THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!

(Continued from page 86.)

Dr. Sparshott did not speak. His brows were knitted as he tramped on.

"Hallo! They must have stopped here!" exclaimed Dawson suddenly. "Here's an axe—look!"

He picked up an axe that lay half-buried in mud. Dr. Sparshott looked at it, and his brow grew darker.

"My boys," he said, "you will need all your courage now! I can trust you to keep a stiff upper lip—Grimslade never says die!"

"But—but what—" stammered Dawson. "They—"

"We are the 'they'!" said Dr. Sparshott quietly. "I suspected it some time back. Look more carefully at that axe, my boy—it is your own."

"Wha-a-at?" Dawson fairly stuttered. He stared blankly at the axe. He could recognise it now as the one he had dropped and left behind.

"We are now," said Dr. Sparshott quietly, "standing on the spot where we scrapped with the alligator!"

"But—but the footprints we followed?" stammered Jim Dainty.

"Our own!" said Sammy, in the same quiet tone. "We are lost in the swamp, and we have wandered in a circle!"

For a moment blank dismay fell on the juniors. The disappointment was bitter. Then they set their lips. They were not going to falter under Sammy's calm, steadfast eye.

"We're game, sir!" said Jim.

"Game as pie!" said Dawson.

"Grimslade," said Sammy, "never says die! Keep moving!"

High over the lonely island the tropical sun blazed down, searching the swamp with heat. It blazed on the three as they tramped and squelched on, with failing strength but unflinching courage.

(You simply must not miss next week's grand story in this amazing series. Jim Dainty looks like being a crocodile's breakfast—thanks to the rascally Sarson! There's a big run on The RANGER, so take a tip and order your copy in good time.)

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