

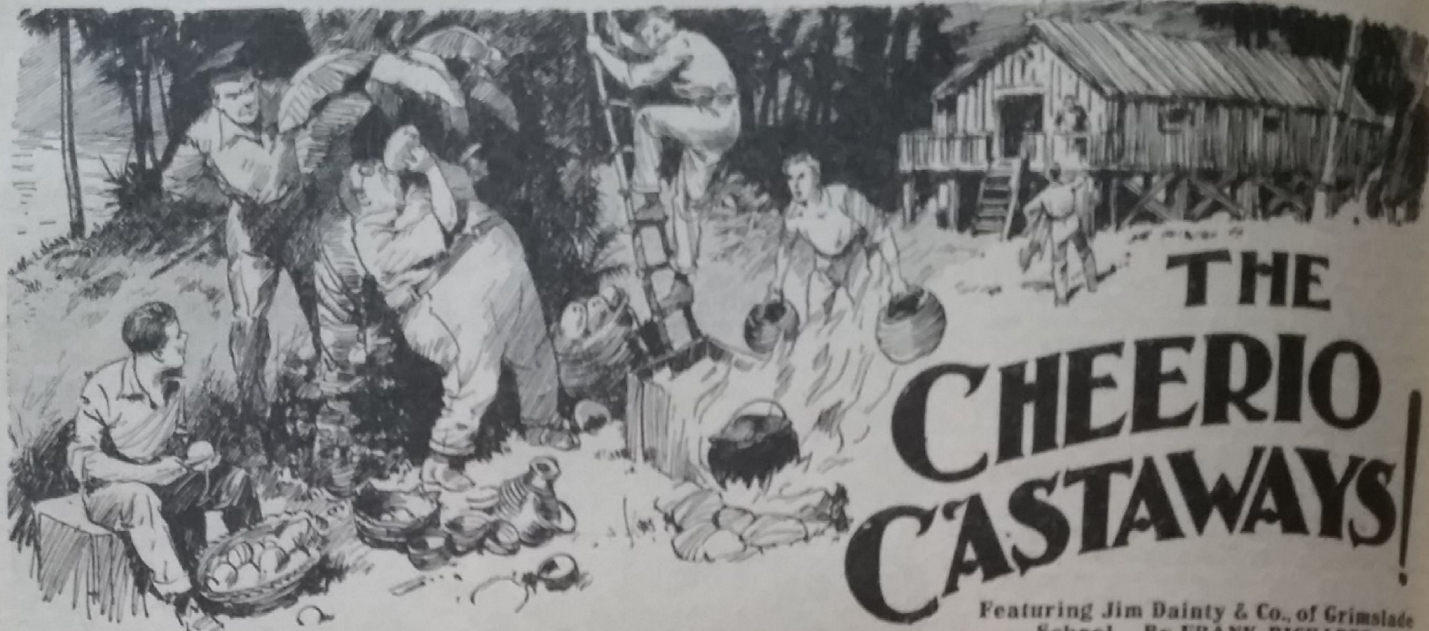
**BIG GORILLA THRILLER INSIDE!** 50 READERS WIN SURPRISE PRIZES!



# The RANGER<sup>2</sup>







# THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!

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

## The Calm Before the Storm!



"VAN me, somepoddly!" moaned Fritz Splitz.

There was a big palm leaf in the podgy paw of Fritz von Splitz, but the fat German was feeling too feeble to fan himself with it.

Plumped in a patch of shade, by a rock, Fritz gasped for breath. Jim Dainty & Co. had

found it warm, all the time, on Castaway Island, that speck of land somewhere in West-Indian seas, not far from the Equator. But this morning the heat was terrific.

The Grimslade juniors, camped on the plateau high up the island mountain, had slept fitfully in the heat of the night, even Fritz failing to put in his usual ten hours of solid slumber. But the morning was hotter. It was unusual, even for that hot corner of the tropics.

The wide Atlantic stretched like a sea of glass far into the distance. Below the rocky plateau where the schoolboy castaways had taken refuge from their enemies, the jungle lay still, unstirred by a single breath of wind. Below the belt of jungle, the beach burned white in the sun-glare, aching to the eyes.

The bay was smooth as a pond; the schooner, riding at anchor, might have been a painted ship on painted sea, so still she lay. Deep indigo in the sea, deep azure in the sky—only to the north-east a shimmer of pale green on the horizon.

Nobody was likely to fan Fatty Fritz, much as he needed it. The juniors were breathless in the heat. Even Dr. Samuel Sparshott, the iron-limbed headmaster of Grimslade School, was feeling it rather severely. Ginger Rawlinson's face was as red as his head. Sandy Bean asked Streaky Bacon how he would like to feel the sea-wind blowing up the Mersey; and Streaky kicked him, feebly, for reminding him of such a thing at such a time.

Jim Dainty wiped perspiration from his face. Dick Dawson, feeling too slack for even that, let it drip. But nobody groused—except Fritz von Splitz! Fritz, perhaps, felt the heat more than the other fellows. There was more of him to feel it.

"Van me!" mumbled Fritz. "Van me! Oh, I vish tat I vas pack in Chermay!"

And yet it was early. What it was going to be like at noon, the Grimslade castaways dreaded to think. And there, before their eyes, lay the blue bay, in which they would have rejoiced to dip. But they were cut off from the sea; their lives depended on holding that rocky plateau on the hillside against their enemies.

"Wasser!" mumbled Fritz. "Wasser!" Food and water were strictly rationed. How long Captain Luz and his black West-Indian crew might keep them penned up on the rocky hillside, the castaways could not tell.

"Oh, shut up, Fatty!" said Jim Dainty. "Sammy's let you have double your ration. Ring off!"

"Feast and a prute!" moaned Fritz feebly.

"They are moving!" said Dr. Sparshott, standing with his keen grey eyes fixed on the schooner below.

There was motion on the schooner at last. Black figures were seen to move. The boat was lowered, and filled with blacks. Even at the distance, the Grimsladers could recognise Ezra Sarson, the ruffian who had scuttled the Spindrift, among the negroes.

Then a dark-skinned man in dingy white drill, with a bandaged arm, was helped into the boat. It was Captain Luz—evidently still able to get about, in spite of his wound. Of all the crew of the Courlis, only two men were left on board. The enemy were coming in full force this time. With grim faces, the castaways watched the boat pull from the schooner to the beach, and nose into the sand.

The landing-party trampled up the beach, and disappeared from sight in the jungle.

Dr. Sparshott set his lips hard. The revolver he had captured from Captain Luz was in his hand. There remained in it a single cartridge.

## THE FURY OF THE TROPIC STORM SAVES THE ISLAND CASTAWAYS FROM THE FURY OF THEIR DEADLY ENEMIES!

That single shot, and the rocks they could hurl down on their enemies, stood between the castaways and destruction.

Sammy Sparshott looked over the juniors. In their faces he read grim determination. They seemed to have forgotten even the overpowering heat, at the sight of the enemy advancing to the attack. Only Fatty Fritz still lay and mumbled in the shade of the rock. Five fellows were ready for the fray.

Dr. Sparshott's sun-bronzed face told little of his thoughts; but his heart was heavy for the boys in his charge. For his own life he recked little. So far, he had pulled them through: from the wreck of the Spindrift, the voyage on the floating raft, the landing on the lonely island, the savage attacks by the lawless treasure-hunters! But now, as Sammy well knew, the last pinch was coming.

"Keep your pecker up!" said Sammy quietly. "We've beaten them off before, and we'll beat them off again."

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Jim Dainty. "They'll get fed up after another licking, and leave us alone."

"And then they'll clear," said Dick Dawson, and we'll jolly well hunt for the treasure ourselves, what?"

Dr. Sparshott smiled. "Let us hope so!" he said. "According to

the belief of those rascals, King Christophe of Hayti hid a part of his treasure on this island a hundred years ago. They believe that we are their rivals in seeking it—in fact, I fancy they suspect us of having already found it. Sarson could tell them differently, if he chose; but he is our bitter enemy. The treasure, if found, belongs to the finder; and, if we succeed in driving off these scoundrels, we shall certainly have a treasure-hunt on our own."

"My giddy goloshes!" exclaimed Ginger. "Fancy going back to Grimslade with our pockets full of Spanish doubloons and pieces of eight. Think of that, Fatty! Think of the tuck you could buy for a Spanish doubloon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter of the cheery Grimsladers rang pleasantly in Sammy's ears. Evidently they were not losing their pluck. Fritz Splitz answered with a mumbling moan.

"Ach! I vas so peastly hot, I tink tat I tie! Mein gootness! I tink two times before I go on a holiday gruisse vunce more after! Neffer, neffer shall I see mein pelofed Chermay any more mit meinsel!"

"Here they come!"

Black figures crept out of the jungle, among the rocks and boulders that strewed the steep hillside below the plateau. Captain Luz was seen, his dark face pale from his wound, his black eyes scintillating like a serpent's. Rifles began to crack, and bullets to whizz over the plateau, spattering against the cliff at the back.

"Keep in cover!" barked Sammy.

Each with a jagged rock in his hand, the juniors waited and watched. They were ready for the rush, if it came. But it did not come. The sniping from below did them no damage; there was little danger, save from a ricocheting ball. Perhaps the lesson of the previous day had not been lost on the enemy; for they remained at a safe distance, sniping. Yet if they had not come there to attack, it was difficult to see why they had clambered up the steep hillside in the burning heat. Dr. Samuel Sparshott wrinkled his brows, puzzled, as the long minutes wore by.

"They've got the wind up!" pronounced Ginger Rawlinson, confidently. "They jolly well know that they can't get away with it."

"If they have the wind up, they could have stayed on the schooner," remarked Jim Dainty.

"They're up to something."

Crash! A bullet, not from below, but from above, struck a rock within a foot of Sammy Sparshott's head. It was immediately followed by another, and the headmaster of Grimslade, with a sharp cry, reeled and fell on the rocks, where he lay motionless.

## At the Last Moment!

"SAMMY!" yelled Jim Dainty, in consternation.

Headless of the firing, the juniors rushed to their headmaster. Their hearts almost died within them at the



...sight of Sammy Sparshott lying crumpled on the rocks, with the blood streaming down his face. Sammy, their headmaster, their protector, the man who had pulled them through a hundred perils, was down—struck down by a treacherous shot!

Crash! came another bullet on the plateau, splattering chips of rock over the juniors as they surrounded the fallen headmaster. Jim Dainty stared round him in rage and amazement. The firing from below passed harmlessly over them, but this shooting came from above.

Now it flashed into his mind what the intention of the enemy had meant. Captain Luz and his men were guarding against the escape of the castaways, while a sniper had clambered to some high point on the mountain, from which he could overlook the camp. There was no such point near at hand, and evidently it must be a good marksman who was getting the range so well from a great distance.

As Jim stared over the rugged mountain-side a puff of white smoke came from a high mass of volcanic rock nearly a thousand yards away. And as he saw it he glimpsed the evil face of Ezra Sarson looking over the barrel of a rifle. He felt the wind of the bullet as it passed, stirring the hair on his head.

“Oh, my giddy goloshes!” gasped Ginger. “Get Sammy into cover somehow! Lend a hand, you men!”

Sammy Sparshott lay like a log. Whether he was living or dead the juniors hardly knew. They grasped him and dragged him by sheer strength back to the cliff at the back of the plateau. The face of the high cliff that rose behind the plateau was rough and irregular, rived with deep fissures. Into the widest of them the juniors dragged their headmaster, sheltered there from the fire of Ezra Sarson.

Headless for the moment of the enemy, Jim Dainty took Sammy's head on his knee, and Ginger splashed his face with water.

Dr. Sparshott's eyes opened dizzily. “What—” he murmured faintly. “You're hit, sir,” muttered Ginger.

Dr. Sparshott's hand went to his head. It came away with the fingers crimsoned. Under the thick, dark hair was a cut where the bullet had gone close—close enough to stun the headmaster of Grimslade. Quietly, carefully, Sammy felt over the cut. The bullet had passed on after cutting a strip of skin from his head. It was amazing how swiftly Sammy pulled himself together.

“A miss,” said Dr. Sparshott calmly, “is as good as a mile. Only a scratch, fortunately.” He rose to his feet and stared round him. “Did you boys get me here?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jim. “That villain Sarson is shooting from above. We should have been riddled by this time.”

Dr. Sparshott stepped to the opening of the fissure. It was hardly three feet wide, and extended only six or seven feet into the hill. The castaways were packed in the narrow space almost like sardines in a tin. Sammy put out his head and glanced round.

Crash! came a bullet hardly a foot from him. The keen, grey eyes spotted the sniper on the high lava rock, and for a moment Sammy grasped his revolver. But it was useless; it could not carry the distance. It was futile to waste the last shot. He backed into the rugged fissure, his face set hard. It was the finish—and he knew it.

Packed in that pocket of the hillside, the castaways could not step out without being shot down like rabbits. It was only the distance that had saved Dr. Sparshott's life. But now the sniper had got the range accurately, and he could pick off anyone on the open plateau like a partridge. Which meant that there was now no defence against a rush from below.

Sammy gritted his teeth. Ezra Sarson—the villain who had scuttled the Spindrift, the man he had spared and saved—had got the upper hand at last, with the help of the treasure-seekers. The game was up—and the Frisco desperado had won it!

Crash, crash, crash! came the splattering bullets on the plateau as the sniper kept up his fire. He could not reach them in the fissure with the whizzing lead, but he could keep them penned up, and leave the way open to his confederates.

“They're coming!” breathed Jim Dainty. Sounds could be heard of Captain Luz and his black crew creeping to the plateau. Heads came into view—grinning, black faces and the dark, savage face and bandaged arm of Captain Luz. Man after man clambered up the steep rocks to the plateau and gathered there—nearly twenty men in a bunch.

It was only a matter of moments now before the attack came. A faint sound, like the growl of a distant mighty beast, reached the ears of the castaways, but they did not heed it in the intense excitement of the moment. But Dr. Sparshott heeded it, and he bent his head to listen. Again came the strange sound, and with it the first breath of wind that they had felt that day.

“The hurricane!” breathed Sammy Sparshott.

As he muttered the words there was a shout from Captain Luz. With his uninjured arm he pointed to the fissure in the cliff in which the castaways were packed. His black eyes blazed with savage triumph.

“En avant!” he yelled. “Now for it!” yelled Jim Dainty, setting his teeth.

Dr. Sparshott lifted his revolver. But he did not fire.

For even as Captain Luz and his crew advanced at a run there came a deep roll of thunder, so deep and terrible that it seemed to shake the island to its foundations.

Captain Luz stopped as if he had been struck by a bullet. He spun round, staring at the sky and the sea. Then he raved and shrieked to his men and started running. He was over the verge of the rocky plateau and scrambling down the steep hillside in the twinkling of an eye. After him, with a wild howl, went the blacks. In the distance Ezra Sarson could be glimpsed, also in frantic retreat.

Jim Dainty rubbed his eyes. It seemed like some strange dream.

A minute ago utter destruction had threatened the castaways, and they had braced themselves for the last desperate fight. Now their enemies were fleeing frantically for the boat—fleeing like men pursued by some fearful foe. They vanished from sight and sound, and the

castaways were left wondering whether they were dreaming.

The Hurricane!

“MY giddy goloshes!” murmured Ginger Rawlinson, rubbing his eyes, as if he doubted them.

“Look!” roared Streaky.

The castaways, no longer in danger of attack, crowded out of the fissure. They stood on the verge of the plateau, staring after their fleeing enemies. Dr. Sparshott had a grim smile on his tanned face. He knew, if the juniors did not, the cause of the sudden terror that had stricken the freebooters.

From the jungle far below the crew of the schooner were seen to emerge, running, on to the beach. Without a pause they ran desperately for the boat, dragging it out into the water, and piled in headlong.

Ezra Sarson shipped the tiller, savagely knocking a stumbling negro out of his way. Captain Luz, wounded as he was, scrambled in unaided, as if forgotten by his own men. The blacks, jabbering, grabbed the oars; one of them, left behind in the haste, swam desperately after the boat as it was pushed away and clambered in.

Oars rattled into the rowlocks, and the blacks pulled with frantic speed for the schooner. But the bay across which they pulled was no longer the smooth, glassy expanse of a few minutes ago. It was ruffled and rolling, agitated by a mighty swell from the ocean.

The sky, which had been deepest azure, had changed to a steely grey—save in the north-east, where it was dark, deepening to black, though it was barely midday. Roll on roll of thunder came, seeming to shake the heavens and the vast Atlantic as it rolled. Wind came out of the north-east with a rush, fanning the burning faces of the castaways, with infinite relief.

The boat pulling frantically across the bay rocked and plunged. The schooner, which had seemed like a painted ship on painted water, was heaving and swaying, dragging at her cable. Grimmer grew the smile on the face of Sammy Sparshott as he watched.



Only for a few seconds did the Grimslade castaways see the schooner, fighting for her life in the rage of the elements. Then she vanished, blotted out in the darkness. “Captain Luz left it too late, after all,” said Dr. Sparshott.



"Mein gootness!" Fritz Splitz crawled after the castaways, now that he knew that the enemy were gone. "Tank gootness toy vas gone! But vy for toy run like tat?"

"May have caught sight of your face suddenly, old Boche bean!" suggested Ginger Rawlinson.

"Blessed if I catch on," said Jim Dainty. He gave a shout. "Great pip! They've lost their boat."

The boat crashed on the rocking schooner. Desperate figures were seen clambering on board. The boat slid away and whisked out to sea, vanishing from sight. In their desperate haste, the crew evidently did not care what became of it. The gleam of an axe was discerned, as a sinewy black man hacked at the cable. Captain Luz was not even spending the necessary time to get his anchor up. It was cut loose, and left at the bottom of the bay.

"They've lost their heads, too, I should think," said Dick Dawson, in wonder. "What's the matter with that mob, sir?"

"They are trying to save their ship!" answered Dr. Sparshott quietly. "And I imagine that they have left it too late."

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!"

"They were so keen on getting at us that they failed to keep an eye on the weather," said the headmaster of Grimslade. "The first roll of thunder warned Captain Luz—and, as you have seen, he lost no time after that."

"Couldn't see his heels for dust!" said Sandy Bean.

"They are on a lee-shore here," said Dr. Sparshott. "If Captain Luz gets his schooner out of the bay in time, he may weather the storm. If not, he is a lost man. In two or three minutes the wind will be striking like a blacksmith's hammer."

"But the anchor—"

"The cable would have parted like a pack-thread. The schooner would have driven ashore. Captain Luz and his crew would have been stranded like ourselves—with no more chance than we have of rescue from this solitary island. The scoundrel is trying to save his ship—and if he saves it, he will return. But—"

Dr. Sparshott broke off, and watched in silence. Toy-like as the figures were in the distance, the juniors could see the wild excitement and confusion on the schooner. Captain Luz was yelling and gesticulating fiercely, and the blacks scurrying to carry out his orders. They saw him knock one man spinning with the butt of his revolver. Ezra Sarson was jammed at the wheel, the spokes in his sinewy, bony hands.

Not a glance was cast towards the island. In the wild stress of the moment, Captain Luz

and his crew had forgotten the castaways—forgotten even the treasure of King Christophe that had brought them to the island. All their thoughts were concentrated on the task of saving their ship—the only link between them and the outside world. They were bending sail—and the schooner, already in motion, was rocketing seaward. But out of the black north-east came the roar and bellow of the hurricane.

The juniors, with beating hearts, watched the schooner heel over, as if a giant's hand had struck her. She rolled scuppers under, and they heard the crack as the fore-topmast went by the board. But she righted again, and fled seaward, dragging wreckage that pounded on her hull.

"Lie down," said Dr. Sparshott, setting the example; and the juniors huddled down among the rocks on the plateau. Over them swept the wind—with a force that was almost beyond belief. It was more like the grasp of a mighty beast.

"Mein gootness! How tat vind plow!" gurgled Fritz Splitz. "Tat vind he pellow like a pull! I tink tat I shall be plown away before!"

But nobody heard Fritz—a gunshot would hardly have been heard in the roar of the wind. It seemed to the juniors that the solid mountain beneath them was shaking under its force. Vast billows rolled in from the Atlantic, rolling up the shore of the bay.

Darkness thickened—though beyond the rolling blackness of the clouds the sun was shining with midday brightness. But its rays were shut off now. A deep twilight reigned over Castaway Island and the roaring ocean that surrounded it.

Through the gloom came flashes of lightning and roll on roll of earth-shaking thunder. And then the rain came, drenching, splashing, swamping, soaking the castaways to the skin at once. But in the oppressive heat the drenching was more than welcome.

They still watched the sea, but they had lost sight of the schooner now. Fleeing like a frightened sea-bird, the Courlis vanished from their sight. Although it must mean that their enemies would return to attack them again, the juniors found themselves hoping that she would weather the storm.

"There she is!" cried Jim Dainty suddenly. Fat out at sea, leaping into view as a flash of lightning dazzled the sky, appeared the Courlis. Like a black wall, the Atlantic seemed to be rushing down on her. It was only for seconds that she was seen, fighting for sea room, fighting for her life in the rage of the elements. The castaways saw that her masts were gone, only the stump of the main-

mast remaining—that she was cluttered fore and aft with tangled wreckage of rigging and spars. Then she vanished, blotted in the darkness.

Sammy's voice was heard in an instant's fall of the wind.

"Captain Luz left it too late, after all!" One more glimpse they had of the Courlis in the flashing lightning—a glimpse of a dimly mantled hulk rolling and pitching, swept away by the sea like a helpless log upon the wild waters.

It was the last! Flash after flash rivaled the blackness, but showed them only the roaring sea. Whether the schooner had gone down, or whether she was still driving, a helpless wreck, before the hurricane, they could not tell. She was gone, at all events, from Castaway Island—the hurricane, which had brought destruction to her, had saved the Grimslade castaways!

### All Serene!

"HIMMEL! But I vas hungry!" groaned Fritz von Splitz. "Plenty of coconuts and bananas down!" grinned Ginger.

The hurricane was over. The sea still rolled and roared round the rocks of Castaway Island, and broke in thunder on the beach. But the wind had dropped, and the sun shone again from a blue sky. Gladly the castaways left their refuge on the mountain and descended to the beach. Gladly they tramped back to their hut under the cliff, to see what of their possessions had been left to them by the lawless crew that were now gone.

Bananas and coconuts were scattered on the ground, ripped from the trees by the wind. Fritz Splitz did not follow the other fellows to the hut. He halted as soon as he reached the coconut grove and started on the nuts. Coconut after coconut Fritz cracked, guzzling the milk and gnawing the rich, ripe fruit. Then he turned his attention to the bananas.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sparshott and the juniors examined the hut. It had been searched and left in a state of confusion by the crew of the schooner; but most of their belongings were still there, lying about where they had been carelessly thrown by the ruffians. Some of the stores were gone, and no doubt the rest would have followed had Captain Luz remained on the island. As it was, the castaways were glad to find so much left.

"We have our island to ourselves again, my boys!" said Dr. Sparshott. "And whatever may have become of the schooner, Ezra Sarson went in her, and we are relieved of his presence on the island. We have very much to be thankful for. Now to work, and get things ship-shape again."

Fritz Splitz was not seen while the work was going on. It was some little time later that Fritz rolled into view. His approach was heralded by a deep groan.

He came waddling up, with both fat hands pressed to his extensive equator.

"Ach!" groaned Fritz. "Himmel! I have a bain—a colossal bain—in mein peasts pread-pasket! Ow!"

"Too many coconuts?" grinned Jim Dainty. "Ach! I tink not tat it vas to gokat nuts."

"Too many bananas?" chuckled Ginger. "Ach! I tink not tat it vas te pananas."

"Both together, perhaps!" suggested Dr. Sparshott.

Groan!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

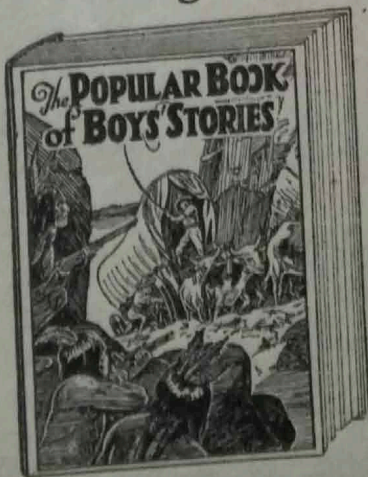
"Ach! Peasts and prutes!" groaned Fritz. "I have so derrick a bain in mein pread-pasket that I tink tat I tie! Urrrrrrgh!"

Either the coconuts, or the bananas, or both together, were taking vengeance on Fritz! When the castaways sat down to supper, Fritz von Splitz, for once, did not join in a meal! And the cheery conversation was punctuated by deep groans from Fritz, still suffering from a colossal pain in the region he described as his bread-basket!

(Their enemies have gone—and now the Grimslade castaways turn their attentions to treasure-seeking! Watch out for thrills and surprises in next week's grand story.)

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