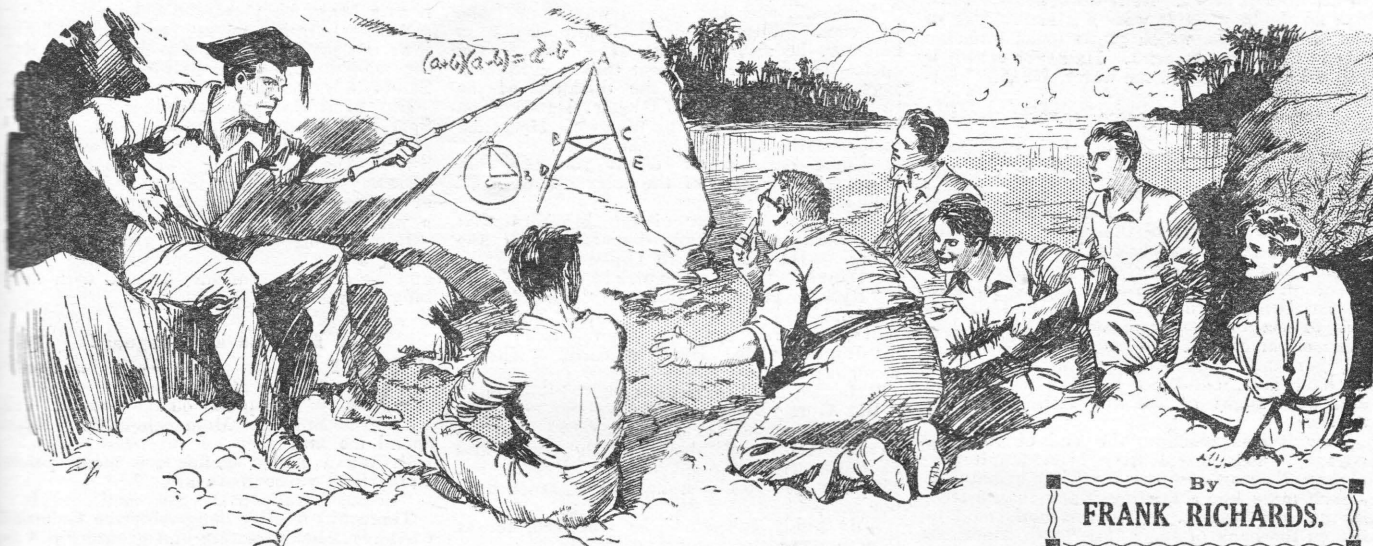


YOU MUST READ "THE MARCHING APES"—BIGGEST THRILL-YARN OF THE YEAR!

# The RANGER 2<sup>D</sup>

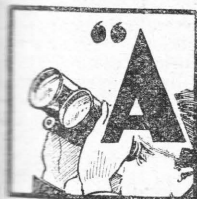


# THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!



By  
**FRANK RICHARDS.**

**Something from the Sea.]**



**BOAT!"**

"A log!"  
"A boat!" roared Ginger Rawlinson.  
"A log!" repeated Jim Dainty.  
"You silly ass!"  
"You frabjous fat-head!"

The argument was growing warm. Even on Castaway Island, lost in a remote nook of wild West Indian seas, the shipwrecked schoolboys did not quite forget that they belonged to rival Houses at Grimsdale School in far-off England. Ginger Rawlinson, of Redmayes' House, and Jim Dainty, of White's House, might really have been arguing in the old quad at Grimsdale, instead of under the coconut-trees that waved their feathery fronds against a blue, tropical sky.

On the beach of Castaway Island, the school-boys stood in a group, staring across blue waters at a dark object, far distant at the moment, which was drifting into the bay. The boys were enjoying "break" during lessons—

for they had lessons even on Castaway Island. Ginger declared that it was a boat. Jim Dainty asserted that it was a log. Fritz Splitz rather fancied that it was a whale, but nobody heeded Fritz Splitz. Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean, as loyal Redmayes men, backed up Ginger, asserting that it was a boat. Dick Dawson, as a loyal White's House man, backed up Jim Dainty, and declared that any fool could have seen that it was a log. In point of fact, nobody, fool or otherwise, could quite see what it was.

"Anybody but a fatheaded, frabjous, squinting, squint-eyed White's tick could see that it was a boat!" said Ginger Rawlinson.

"Anybody but a potty, piffing, pie-faced Redmayes owl could see that it was a log!" retorted Jim Dainty.

"If you want a thick ear—" roared Ginger excitedly.

"Thick ears won't turn a log into a boat!" said Dainty. "Neither will thick heads—or you could do it easily enough!"

That was enough for Ginger. In fact, it was too much! He made a jump at Jim Dainty to get his head into chancery. Jim side-stepped swiftly, grabbed Ginger in his turn—and it was the red head of the Redmayes' junior that went into chancery. And Ginger roared as Jim gently tapped his nose!

Dr. Samuel Sparshott, headmaster of Grimsdale School, looked up. "Sammy" Sparshott was seated on a boulder at a little

distance, cleaning a revolver. It was the revolver he had taken from Captain Luz, when the treasure-seekers had invaded Castaway Island. A single cartridge remained to Sammy—and he treasured it more than gold or silver or precious stones.

That revolver was the only firearm on the island, and that cartridge the only cartridge. If peril came again, as was only too likely, there was still one shot in the locker.

"Boys!" Dr. Sparshott's voice was quiet, but it reached the juniors, and the quietest word from Sammy had more effect on the Grimsdaders than the loudest shout from anyone else.

Jim Dainty released Ginger. Ginger, suddenly released, sat down on the shelving sand of the beach with a bump. He spluttered.

"Pax, old red bean!" grinned Jimmy. "Sammy's got his jolly old eagle eye on us."

"I've a jolly good mind—" Ginger glanced round at Sammy, and did not state what he had a jolly good mind to do. "Anyhow, it's a boat!" he added defiantly.

**IT'S SCHOOL AS USUAL ON CASTAWAY ISLAND—UNTIL A JAGUAR POPS UP. THEN JIM DAINTY & CO. POP OFF!**

"You mean, it's a log!" said Jim.  
"You blithering owl!"  
"You footling fathead!"  
"Ask Sammy!" suggested Dick Dawson, laughing.

"Ach! I tink tat it vas a whale!" said Fritz Splitz, blinking at the distant object with his saucer-eyes. "I tink tat I see his pig tail tat stick up behind him pefore."

"That's branches sticking out of the log!" said Jim Dainty. "It's an old tree-trunk!"

"It's no more a tree-trunk than it's an elephant's trunk!" declared Ginger. "Perhaps that's what you think it is, Dainty."

"Fathead! Let's ask Sammy."

Dr. Sparshott, slipping the revolver into his pocket, rose from the boulder and came towards the juniors on the beach.

"What is it?" asked Sammy.

"A boat, sir!"

"A log, sir!"

"Fetch my field-glasses from the hut, Splitz."

"Ach! I tink tat Tainty fetch tem quicker, sir—or Chinger. I vas so derribly dired—"

"It is precisely because you are lazy, Splitz, that I am sending you," said Dr. Sparshott calmly. "But Dainty and Rawlinson may go with you and help you to move quickly."

There was a chuckle from the juniors. Dr. Sparshott, with his eyes fixed on the floating object at the mouth of the bay, did not look at them, and so, perhaps, he was not aware that Dainty and Rawlinson grasped each a fat ear and ran Fritz up the beach, roaring.

"Mein gootness!" roared Fritz. "Tat you led go pefore! I tink tat you pull out mein ears after! Yaroooooh!"

"Put it on!" grinned Ginger.  
"Peast and a prute!" gasped Fritz. "Prutes and peasts and pounders! Ach! Mein ears!"

Fritz put it on. He fairly raced. With Jim and Ginger going fast, holding his ears, Fritz ran his hardest. He did not want to part with his ears.

They reached the hut in record time. Fritz plunged in, breathlessly, and unhooked the leather case containing the field-glasses from the wall. He held them out of the doorway to the two juniors.

"Take tem to Sammy!" he gasped.  
"You heard what Sammy said!" chuckled Jim. "Come on! Get hold of his flaps, Ginger!"

"Peast and a prute!" howled Fritz, and he dodged the clutching hands, and raced down to the beach. After him went Ginger and Jim Dainty, laughing. Again the fat German did the distance in record time.

Dr. Sparshott smiled as he took the glasses.

"Thank you, Splitz. You have been very quick!" Sammy opened the glasses and clamped them to his keen grey eyes, focusing them on the drifting object in the sea. Fritz von Splitz, gurgling for breath, sat down in the sand and mopped his streaming brow.

The other fellows watched Dr. Sparshott eagerly. He lowered the glasses, which had brought the distant object quite near.

"It is the floating trunk of a tree," he said. "It is drifting in on the tide, and you will soon see it for yourselves. It is much larger than it appears to the naked eye—there is a great mass of branches."

Dr. Sparshott walked up the beach. Ginger suppressed a grunt.

"I suppose it's a tree, if Sammy says so," he said. "But it really does seem to look more like a boat!"

The soft answer turneth away wrath! Ginger grinned. Heads in chancery were forgotten, and the juniors gathered on the water's edge to watch the driftwood floating in on the tide.

### The Jaguar!

"SOME tree!" remarked Streaky Bacon. It was "some" tree, indeed! There were big trees on Castaway Island, but they were hopelessly dwarfed by the huge mass that came floating in on the tide to the golden beach. As it drew nearer, there was no doubt what it was—a gigantic tree of the ceiba species, which grows to an immense size in Southern America. Half-submerged, it rolled and plunged on the water, the tide bearing it steadily on.

Closer and closer it came, eagerly watched by the schoolboys, who had never seen so immense a tree before. The diameter of the great trunk was not less than twenty feet, and great masses of roots projected from it, still with earth clinging to them here and there, in spite of the washing of the waves. From the other end, great branches, thick with foliage, seemed almost like a forest in themselves.

Torn from some river-bank of the Amazon or the Orinoco, that great mass had drifted out to sea on the river current, and then some ocean current had caught it and spun it on, here and there, hither and thither, till at long last it floated by Castaway Island and was caught by the tide setting into the bay.

Now it was reaching the end of its long voyage, which might have been hundreds—perhaps thousands—of miles. Close at hand, it looked more like a floating island than a tree, so immense was it. When it had stood in life on the bank of some vast South American river, pythons had perhaps wound their coils in the branches, and jaguars lurked in the deep foliage, watching for their prey. Now it drifted down to the beach of Castaway Island like a helpless log.

"Jevver see such a whacker?" exclaimed Ginger. "Beats the jolly old oaks at Grimslade—what?"

"Just a few!" said Jim Dainty, laughing. "My giddy goloshes! I'm going to be the first man on it!" declared Ginger, and he tucked up his trousers and waded out.

"Not in your lifetime!" answered Jim Dainty, and he waded out, too. The other fellows followed their example, all keen to be the first to clamber on the floating giant and float ashore with it.

"Come on, Fritz!" shouted Dick Dawson. Snort, from Friedrich von Splitz.

"Ach! I tink two dimes before I dakes tat drouble," he answered. "Vy for you vant to giml on tat tree, plockheads?"

And Fritz Splitz sat in the sand and watched.

Sweeping in on the tide from the Atlantic came the great mass. Jim Dainty, careless of a wetting—drying was very rapid in the scorching sunshine of Castaway Island—swam out to meet it. He was touching the tip of a vast branch, forty feet long, when Ginger overtook him and jerked him by an ear.

"Urrrh!" gurgled Jim as he let go the branch and ducked under.

Ginger chortled. "Redmayes House first!" he said, and caught the big branch and clambered on. He clambered actively along it to the trunk, stood there, and waved his hat. "Who's first?" he roared.

"Urrrh! I'll jolly well come and tip you off!" spluttered Jim Dainty.

"Bow-wow!"

Jim Dainty climbed on. Dawson and Streaky and Sandy were close behind; but a swirl of the tide caught the driftwood, and it swerved and was carried from their reach. The great mass rolled and pitched, and Jim plunged into the vast mass of branches and dying foliage.

He grabbed and clutched for a hold, disappearing from the sight of the other fellows. His hand slid along something smooth and silky in the midst of the dripping foliage, and a sudden, startling, nerve-racking snarl sounded in his ears. His heart almost leaped into his throat, as he realised that it was the skin of an animal that his hand had touched. There was something living hidden in the foliage of the great tree.

In his sudden, startled surprise, he lost his hold and went plunging headlong down through the branches and leaves to the sea below. It was fortunate for him, for even as he fell he had a glimpse of a sinuous, cat-

like, strangely-marked form, of two hungry, glaring eyes, of a cavernous mouth, opened and showing fearful teeth.

A claw lashed after him missing him by a foot as he plunged downwards. The lashing claw tore leaves and tendrils, cutting like a razor-edge. The snarl was savagely repeated.

A second, and Jim was in water under the branches. With his heart thumping like a hammer, he swam below the surface to the open. The jaguar—he knew that it must be a jaguar—was hidden in the thickness of the foliage; but there was Ginger, standing on the massive trunk, waving his arm. He yelled to Jim as he saw him in the water.

"Come on, tip me off if you can, old bean! Who's king of the jolly old castle?" yelled Ginger.

Jim, keeping clear of the branches that held the jaguar, swam desperately for the trunk. He shrieked to Ginger.

"Danger! Jump off—quick!"

"Rats!" grinned Ginger. "Where's the jolly old danger, I'd like to know? You can't pull my leg like that, you White's tick!"

"Jump!" yelled Jim frantically. "There's a jaguar in the tree—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ginger. "Pile it on!"

But Ginger's merry laughter was cut short the next moment. From the mass of branches a sinuous form clambered on the trunk, and at the terrifying sight Ginger slipped, but just managed to clutch hold of a branch with one hand.

"My giddy goloshes!" he stuttered, for at that moment the jaguar sprang.

"Jump!" shrieked Jim.

Just in time, Ginger dropped into the water, and the screaming brute landed right on the branch.

Loud, fierce, nerve-thrilling rang the disappointed scream of the jaguar. Clawing the trunk, it stared with blazing eyes at the boys

**THEY'RE COMING . . . .**  
**WONDERFUL**  
**FREE GIFTS!!!!**

in the sea. In hot haste they swam for the beach. The great tree, drifting in, was almost touching the sand now.

Giving it a wide berth, Jim Dainty & Co. plunged and scrambled ashore. They knew—from lessons in natural history at Grimslade—that the jaguar, almost alone of the cat tribe, will take to the water in pursuit of its prey. In frantic haste, they scrambled up the beach.

"Look out!" shrieked Ginger.

"Sammy!" yelled Jim Dainty.

Like a flash the sinuous body was launched through the air, landing on the beach. Screaming, the jaguar clawed the sand.

"Run!" panted Dick Dawson.

"Ach himmel!" yelled Fritz Splitz. His saucer-eyes bulged from his head at sight of the jaguar. Nobody could have imagined that Fatty Fritz was capable of moving so swiftly as he moved now. He was up like a stone from a catapult, and bolting for the hut.

Dr. Sparshott was in the doorway of the hut. He started, and stared with almost unbelieving eyes at the jaguar. There were no wild animals on Castaway Island, and it was from hundreds of miles away in a drifting, up-rooted tree, that this terrible enemy had come.

But, startled as he was, Sammy Sparshott was prompt and swift. That one of the running schoolboys would have been seized and dragged down by the famished beast had not their headmaster been there was almost certain. In the twinkling of an eye Sammy caught up an axe and bounded forward.

He had no time to reach the jaguar. It was springing again, while he was still twenty feet away. He hurled the axe with all his strength, and with unerring aim, and it struck the great beast fairly in its foaming jaws. The jaguar yelled as it dropped short in its leap, blood streaming down its muzzle.

"Into the hut!" roared Sammy.

The juniors hardly needed telling. Fatty Fritz, fairly flying, got in first, headlong, and rolled over. Five juniors bolted in after him, like rabbits into a burrow with a terrier behind them. Dr. Sparshott followed them in and slammed the door and braced himself against it as a heavy body crashed outside.

With burning eyes and blood-flecked jaws the jaguar leaped, crashing on the door, the weight forcing it half-open, in spite of Sammy's great strength.

But as it dropped, growling horribly, Dr. Sparshott crammed the door shut, and Jim Dainty jammed a bar into the sockets. Swiftly the second bar was added, and the castaways were glad at that moment that want of materials had made it impossible to put a window into the hut.

Round and round the hut, growling, screaming, clawing, scratching, prowled the jaguar, and the castaways, inside, listened with throbbing hearts.

### Besieged by a Jaguar!

"MY giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger Rawlinson.

"Geep it off!" moaned Fritz Splitz. "Mein pelofed jums, stand round me and geep off tat peast! Ach! I tink tat I neffer, neffer see mein pelofed Fatherland vunce more after."

"Silence!" rapped Dr. Sparshott sharply.

There was terrible danger for the Grimslade castaways, but growling and grousing did not improve matters.

Scratch, scratch, scratch! came at the door—fortunately strong and solid. It was strangely like a cat scratching for admittance; and, indeed, the South American jaguar was nothing but a huge, ferocious cat.

"I bet that brute's jolly hungry!" murmured Jim Dainty. "May have been days—perhaps weeks—on that floating tree. He can't get at us here."

"He's jolly well going to try!" said Dawson. "Lucky we had the timbers of the raft to build this hut. He would have got through a palm-leaf wall fast enough. Hark!"

Scratch, scratch, scratch! The sound thrilled to the hearts of the juniors imprisoned in the hut.

Accompanying the scratching came a low, ferocious growling—the growl of a powerful and savage beast, famished with hunger and within scent of food!

Sammy Sparshott had the revolver in his hand. He had a single shot at his disposal. More than once he peered from a chink at the slinking, prowling figure without, catching glimpses of it as it crept and stalked round the hut. But he shook his head, and slipped the firearm back into his pocket. The last cartridge was a last resource—he could not afford the barest possibility of wasting it.

He took a heavy axe in his hand and waited and listened. On the door, on the walls, the scratching was heard, as if the fierce, hungry beast sought to tear away the building and get at its victims. Then it was heard on the shutter that covered the narrow aperture left in place of a window. The aperture was not more than two feet by one, and covered by a thick, strong shutter, clamped into place with wooden bars.

Scratch, scratch, scratch, came on the wood. Had there been a window, glass and sashes would have crashed in under the heavy paw. But the wooden shutter held.

"Ach! Geep him out!" moaned Friedrich von Splitz. "Ach! Oh grumbs! Tat peast make to flesh greep on mein ponies. I tink he is gumming in!"

"Kick Splitz, Dainty, please!" barked Dr. Sparshott.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Fritz, forgetting even the prowling jaguar for a moment. "Peastly prute, kick me not on mein trousers."

"Shut up, you Boche bloater!" growled Ginger.

Fritz von Splitz shut up at last. He crouched in a corner, farthest from where the jaguar was scratching, and shivered in every fat limb. The other fellows, every one with a weapon of some kind in hand, waited and watched with bated breath.

The hungry brute evidently realised that it

had found a weaker spot, for it remained lunched against the shutter, scratching and tearing. The wood creaked under the lashing claws. Dr. Sparshott, with a grim brow, stood just within, the axe gripped in both hands. Great splinters were torn from the shutter by the sharp claws. But it was thick, and the claws were not likely to tear it away in fragments.

"My boys," said Dr. Sparshott quietly, "keep up your courage! We've got to get rid of this brute—if we are to live on Castaway Island! I do not think so large an animal can squeeze through a space a foot wide—but we are going to take the chance! I am going to open the shutter!"

"Open the shutter, sir!" gasped Streaky, while the other fellows stared in amazement. There was a frantic howl from Fritz.

"Ach! You vas mat!" he yelled. "Open tat shutter not! Tat peast and a prute vill tear us all to lettle pieces before. You vas mat!"

Jim Dainty—without waiting for orders this time—kicked Fritz, and the fat German shut up again.

"I am going to open the shutter, my boys," said Dr. Sparshott, in the same quiet tone, "to get at the jaguar. If I get one good stroke at its head with this axe, I think we shall be relieved of our enemy. Stand back—and keep up your courage."

"We're game, sir!" said Ginger stoutly.

"Game as pic!" declared Streaky.

But it was with throbbing hearts that the juniors watched Sammy remove a bar from the shutter. Fritz Splitz, moaning with terror, put his fat hands over his saucer-eyes to shut out the awful sight. The second bar was taken away, and then, as a fierce paw clawed over the shutter, it swung open on its hinges, and the head of the jaguar, with its glaring eyeballs, appeared in the narrow aperture.

A low, hideous growl came from the deep throat. The catlike head came in at the opening, a clawing paw with it, and the jaguar strove to force its body in. Whether it could have passed its sinuous body through the juniors hardly knew; but they knew that, once inside the hut, they would be torn to pieces. Steady as steel, Sammy Sparshott faced the brute, and swung up the heavy axe.

Crash it came, direct at the savage head of the beast. Had it struck the jaguar's head fair and square, the skull would have been split like a coconut. But the brute was watchful and wary. As the axe shot downward the catlike head was withdrawn in a flash, and the keen edge of the axe sank into the sill, driven deep by the force of the blow, barely grazing the jaguar's skin. Dr. Sparshott dragged fiercely at the axe; but it was deeply embedded in the wood, and stuck there.

As he dragged the jaguar's head was thrust in again, and two paws came in with it this time; and with a sinuous wriggling the great cat strove to squeeze in. Its panting, steaming breath reached the horror-stricken castaways.

Jim Dainty leaped forward and drove a heavy cudgel fairly into the gleaming jaws. The teeth snapped at it, tearing it from his hand. A second later, Ginger Rawlinson drove with a long boathook, and the jaguar screamed horribly as the barbed point sank into its neck. Sammy, with a desperate wrench, tore his axe loose and whirled it up and struck again.

But the yelling animal dropped back, screaming with the pain of the wound in its neck, and scuttled round the hut. For the time, at least, the jaguar had had enough of the castaways!

#### At Close Quarters!

**D**ARKNESS fell on Castaway Island.

Even Fritz von Splitz was not thinking of supper.

For two hours or more nothing had been seen or heard of the jaguar, but the castaways did not venture to leave the hut. It was likely that the hungry brute had taken to the jungle in search of prey; but it was equally likely that it was waiting and watching with the patience that was a part of its catlike nature, close at hand; and that the opening of the door would be the signal for a deadly spring.

Imprisoned in the hut, the Grimsladers would have been glad for the brute to resume

the attack, to give them a chance at it. But it was not till the brief tropical twilight had faded into darkness that they heard it again, and then it did not approach the window aperture.

A brushing sound without told them that it was creeping near, and a low, blood-curdling growl reached their ears from the darkness without—echoed by a frightened squeak from Fritz Splitz.

"He's coming!" breathed Ginger.

The shutter had been closed, Dr. Sparshott stood ready to open it again, but the jaguar did not approach the wall. Its feline cunning told it that it had no chance there. What it was going to do was a mystery to the besieged castaways till there came a sudden heavy crash on the roof over their heads. The jaguar had leaped on top of the hut.

"My giddy goloshes!" panted Ginger.

"Ach! Mein gootness! He gum! He gum!" squealed Fritz. "Safe me! Pelofed jums, safe me!"



*A sinuous form clambered out on the trunk: and at the terrifying sight Ginger slipped, but just managed to clutch hold of a branch with one hand. "My giddy goloshes!" he stuttered, for at that moment the jaguar sprang. "Jump!" shrieked Jim Dainty.*

"Silence!" came Dr. Sparshott's deep voice in the dusk.

Hearts were beating hard now. The roof of the hut was strong, but it was not built to sustain such a weight. It creaked and sagged as the fierce animal clawed for an entrance.

"Will it stand, sir?" breathed Jim Dainty.

"I think not!" answered Dr. Sparshott quietly.

"My giddy goloshes!"

"Safe me—ach, safe me!" wailed Fritz Splitz.

"Silence, Splitz!" The roof of the hut sagged under the great beast above. "My boys, in a few minutes the jaguar will drop into the hut! We must be gone before then! I will open the door quietly—you will get out as quietly as you can and run your hardest. Give a hand to Splitz, Dainty. Splitz, pull yourself together!"

"Ach! Mein gootness!" groaned Fritz.

"Make for the stream and clamber up the waterfall!" said Dr. Sparshott. "The jaguar will not scent you there. I shall follow!"

Dr. Sparshott took the long boathook from Ginger's hand. Then he quietly removed the bars from the door and swung it open. Overhead, the jaguar was clawing and tearing and

rending, and a sudden glimmer of starlight came through a chink in the yielding roof.

Jim Dainty grasped Fritz's fat arm and led him out, and the other fellows followed on tiptoe.

Standing under the sagging roof that might have collapsed on his head any second, Sammy Sparshott jabbed again and again, keeping the attention of the jaguar, while the juniors ran for the stream.

They ran hard and fast, Fritz Splitz panting along as fast as the others. Three minutes were enough for them to reach safety—if the jaguar did not spring after them. And Sammy Sparshott was keeping the jaguar busy.

Three minutes—four minutes—and the sagging roof still held, and the headmaster of Grimslade, below, was still lunging at the maddened, infuriated brute above, driving it to frenzy. Then, with a fearful rending and crashing, the roof caved in, and amid the wreckage the jaguar crashed into the hut.

Yelling and screaming, the jaguar scrambled

up amid the wreckage of the fallen roof, its fierce eyeballs blazing in the dusk. And Sammy Sparshott stepped backwards out of the doorway, slamming the door shut as he went. Even as the door slammed a terrible claw slashed down it, tearing away splinters. Dr. Sparshott's face was white and set as he fastened the latch.

He leaped away!

Shut in the hut, the jaguar yelled and scrambled, and raced round the interior, seeking an outlet like a trapped cat. Dr. Sparshott, as he retreated, heard a crash and knew that the brute had leaped for the gap in the roof, and fallen back again with broken timbers in its claws.

Whether it leaped again, whether it was rushing through the darkness in pursuit of him he did not know as he ran at a desperate speed for the stream. But reaching the stream he clambered swiftly up the rocks of the waterfall, and the fierce yell of the jaguar died away behind him.

*(The Castaways haven't seen the last of this fierce man-eater—not by a long chalk! Don't miss next week's amazing story of Jim Dainty & Co.)*