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# The RANGER 2

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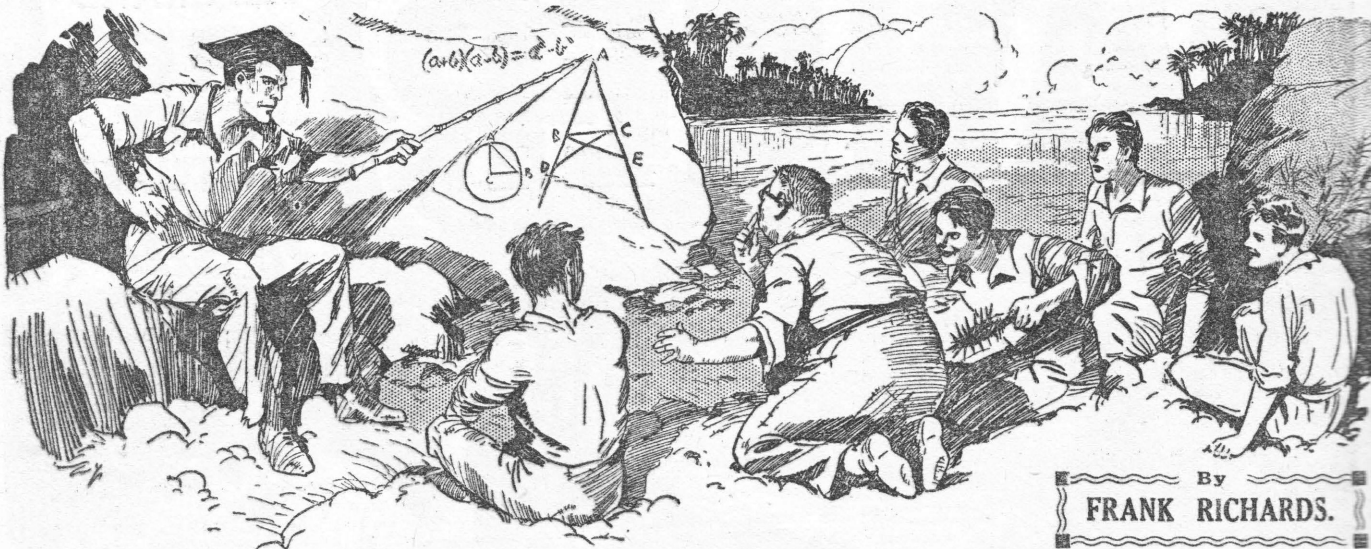
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XMAS DAY ON CASTAWAY ISLAND!



# THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!



By  
**FRANK RICHARDS.**

## The Hidden Hand!



**Y**OU silly ass!" roared Jim Dainty.

"What the——"

"Who's got my hat?"

Jim Dainty & Co. had been gathering coconuts on Castaway Island. Now they had sat down to rest under a thick, shady tree.

They had pierced the shells of some of the

young nuts, to refresh themselves with the milk. Jim was leaning back against the trunk of the tree with a coconut to his mouth, letting the liquid from the interior trickle down his throat. It was very grateful and comforting on a blazing, tropical day.

But suddenly he gave a jump, as his hat was snatched from his head, and the coconut milk, instead of flowing down his throat, flowed down his neck. Which was neither grateful nor comforting. Taken internally, it was nice and refreshing. Taken externally, it was sticky and horrid.

Jim glared round wrathfully.

"What silly chump——" he roared.

"Not guilty!" said Dick Dawson, laughing.

Ginger and Bacon and Bean stared at him. Only Fritz Splitz took no heed. Fritz was guzzling coconut milk, and was too busy to take heed of trifles.

"My giddy goloshes!" ejaculated Ginger Rawlinson. "Where's your hat?"

"Which of you silly chumps snatched it off?" demanded Jim.

"Haven't moved," said Ginger. And Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean shook their heads.

"Fritz, you burbling, bloated Boche——"

"Mein gootness!" said Fritz, putting down an empty coconut. "Tat gokenut milk is ferry goot! Vat you say, Tainty?"

"You've bagged my hat, you Deutsch dummy!"

"I have not pagged nothings but a gokenut," answered Fritz, blinking at him. "Vy for I vant your hat, you dummkopf! I have a hat of mein own on mein kopf."

Jim Dainty rose to his feet. A joke was a joke, but trickling milk down a fellow's neck was more than a joke! Besides, he wanted his hat! A fellow could not go about hatless, under a burning West-Indian sun, without danger of sunstroke.

"Where's my hat, you blithering Boche?" he demanded.

"Ich weiss nicht! Plow your silly hat!" retorted Fritz. "Pother your hat! Giff me anodder gokenut, and shut up. I tink——"

Ach! Himmel! Led go mein ear, you peast and a prute!"

Jim Dainty gripped a fat ear. Somebody had snatched off his hat while he was busy with the coconut. The other fellows had denied it; and their word was as good as gold. Fritz had denied it, too—but Fritz's word was good for nothing! So there seemed no doubt that it was Fritz!

Jim Dainty gave the fat ear a long, strong pull, and Fritz's roar rang and echoed over Castaway Island and the blue waters of the Atlantic.

"What have you done with it?" demanded Jim, as he pulled.

"Ach! Nottings!" roared Fritz. "I touch him not, peast and a prute! Mein gootness, if you will not led go mein ear I will peat you till you yellow like a pull!"

"Can't see it," said Dick Dawson, staring round. "The fat frump must be sitting on it."

## CHRISTMAS DAY ON CASTAWAY ISLAND—AND THERE'S CHRISTMAS PUDDING!

"I'll jolly soon shift him!" growled Jim Dainty, and another pull on Fritz's fat ear shifted him very quickly. Friedrich von Splitz rolled over, roaring.

But the hat was not revealed. Unless Fritz, after grabbing it, had tossed it away among the trees, it was a mystery what had become of it. And it was odd if nobody had observed such an action.

"Where the thump——" exclaimed Jim.

"Perhaps it was Sammy!" gasped Fritz. "Perhaps tat Sammy gum behind to tree and snatch off your hat after."

"You howling ass!"

It was hardly likely that Dr. Samuel Sparshott, the headmaster of Grimslade, had played such a trick. Besides, Sammy Sparshott was at the hut, on the beach facing the bay.

"If it was not Sammy, who was it?" gasped Fritz. "Tere is nopoddy else on te island, now tat peast Sarsen is gone. I tink——"

"My giddy goloshes!" roared Ginger Rawlinson suddenly. "Look!"

He pointed upward into the thick, low branches overhead. The juniors stared up. It was a ceiba-tree under which they had sought shade; and the branches were thick and massed in foliage.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jim.

Sitting on a branch, a dozen feet over the

heads of the juniors, was a black-faced monkey. On his head was a hat! It was Jim Dainty's hat! The monkey looked down at them, grinning and chattering. The schoolboy castaways stared up at him dumbfounded.

Evidently it was not Fritz who had bagged the hat! That mischievous monkey had reached down and grabbed it, and escaped with it! Now he was sitting high above, sporting his prize on his head. For some moments the juniors stared at him. Then they burst into a laugh. The aspect of the grinning ape, with the hat on his head, was funny.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ginger Rawlinson. "Your relation's got your hat, Dainty. You never told us you had any relations in the West Indies."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Go up after him, Dainty!" suggested Sandy Bean.

"Well, I've got to get the hat!" growled Jim.

He stepped to the thick trunk to clamber up the tree. Immediately, with an excited chatter, the black-faced monkey clambered higher. By the time Jim reached the branch where he had been squatting, the monkey was a dozen feet higher up, swinging by his tail on a long branch, the hat still jammed on his head, and held there by a paw. In a group below the juniors watched with laughing faces.

"Go it, Dainty!" chuckled Ginger. "Go it, Tarzan!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jim clambered higher. Tarzan, as Ginger had named the mischievous simian, swung on the branch, grinning at him, out of reach. That branch was too slim for Dainty to venture his weight on it, and he had to stop at a distance from the monkey, shaking a wrathful fist at the grinning, chattering creature.

"Tarzan wins!" yelled Ginger Rawlinson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear boys!" It was the deep voice of Dr. Sparshott. The headmaster of Grimslade had strolled up unnoticed. "What is the trouble?"

"Tarzan—I mean that monk—has got Dainty's hat, sir!" grinned Ginger. "Look!"

Dr. Sparshott glanced up, and smiled. He stopped, and picked up a coconut. Whiz!

The nut, with a true aim, tapped the black-faced monkey on the hairy chest. There was a squeal from the ape. Had it been a palm-tree, Tarzan would have grabbed a coconut and hurled it back. As it was, he snatched the hat from his head and pitched it at Dr. Sparshott in return for his missile. The Head of Grimslade caught it as it came whirling down.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Jim Dainty. He slithered down the tree.

"My giddy goloshes!" exclaimed Ginger Rawlinson. "I never thought of that dodge, sir."

Sammy smiled.

"A pelted monkey will generally pelt back, Rawlinson," he said. He held out the recovered headgear to Jim. "Your hat, Dainty."

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Jim.

From the high branches the black-faced monkey squealed and chattered, evidently in a state of great annoyance. The juniors walked back to the hut with Sammy, carrying the collected coconuts.

One or two of the nuts were left in the grass, and, glancing back from a little distance, they beheld Tarzan slither down the tree, grab one of the nuts, and scamper up the ceiba with it again. They chuckled as they watched him. Evidently Tarzan fancied that he was stealing something—and was happy. This time, however, he was left in peaceable possession of his prize.

### Who but Fritz ?

"PEEF!" said Fritz Splitz.

"Rats!" said Jim Dainty.

"I was so hungry, as neffer vas pefore," said Fritz. "I tink that I tie if I do not have sometings to eat. Neffer—neffer shall I see mein pelofed Chermany vunce more after!"

"Shut up and get on with the cooking!" said Jim.

"Prute!"

It was hard lines on Fritz. Had there been no food on Castaway Island, except the natural products, it would have been easier to bear. But there was other food—quite a lot of it, and Fritz's fat heart yearned over it.

On the raft that had carried them from the wrecked Spindrift, the shipwrecked Grimsladers had packed plenty of provisions. Quite a lot remained stacked in the hut. But Dr. Sparshott kept a very careful eye on it. There were some dozens of cans of beef, but it was very rarely that one was opened and disposed of.

For the hope of getting away from the solitary island never left the castaways, and if they contrived to make a voyage, it would be necessary to carry provender. So the canned beef was very scrupulously rationed, and the usual food of the castaways was what the island produced.

Really there was plenty of that. Bananas and coconuts grew at their very door, and rich, juicy plantains. They had discovered a species of sweet potato that grew wild in great quantities. The bay swarmed with fish, and there were fish in the stream.

Every day they did some fishing from the boat that had been captured from Ezra Sarsen. Even Fritz von Splitz had enough to eat. But the fat German yearned for solid meat, and of meat there was little or none.

Often and often he eyed the canned beef with longing eyes. On one occasion he had ventured to bag one of the tins—without leave. "Six" from a thick bamboo in Sammy's hefty hand had rewarded him, since when Fritz had left the provisions alone.

Fritz got on with the cooking for supper. Fritz did most of the cooking. He seldom did anything else; and he ate the lion's share of what was cooked, so that was only fair. And cooking was the form of labour that Fatty Fritz disliked least.

Boiled fish and potatoes made an excellent supper, to which the shipwrecked schoolboys and their headmaster sat down on the beach in the sunset.

Following the fish came a special treat for Jim Dainty & Co. Dr. Sparshott's "calendar," which was simply a large rock on which he scratched the date with a penknife, showed it to be December 25th—Christmas Day!

Stranded on a tropical island the castaways had not given much thought to Christmas, but Sammy Sparshott intended that it should be celebrated as far as was possible in the circumstances.

There was no roast turkey, but there was a luscious plum pudding, Sammy having managed to find the ingredients from the cast-

aways' limited supplies. What a cheer went up from the boys when Fritz von Splitz, dressed in a tattered, white apron, and wearing a chef's hat, appeared with the steaming Christmas pudding.

"A toast, boys!" smiled Dr. Sparshott, when the pudding had disappeared in record time. "A merry Christmas, even though we're stranded on Castaway Island!"

"A merry Christmas, Sammy!" responded Jim Dainty & Co.; and the toast was drunk in coconut milk.

After supper Dr. Sparshott and the juniors went down to the boat, which was upturned on the beach to be scraped and cleaned. The cool of the evening was the best time for work. Fritz stretched himself on the sand near the hut, to enjoy a nap after supper before he went to bed. Fritz could do with any amount of sleep—and sleep, at least, he could have as much of as he liked.

When the sun dipped behind the hill, Jim Dainty & Co. came up to the hut to go to bed. Dr. Sparshott was taking a stroll along the beach chewing an empty pipe. There was no tobacco on Castaway Island, and perhaps Sammy missed it a little. Still, he took the cheerful view that, as smoking was bad for the health, an empty pipe was really better than a full one. Sammy always looked on the bright side of things.

Snore! That rumbling sound greeted the juniors as they came up to the hut. They grinned at the sight of Fritz Splitz sprawling with his eyes shut and his mouth open. Ginger kindly awakened him with a lunge in the ribs, and the fat German ceased to snore, and gurgled instead. His saucer-eyes opened, and he blinked wrathfully.

"Peastly prute!" grunted Fritz. "Vy for you vake me, ven I tream of Chermany, and lofely Cherman sausages?"

In the hut Jim Dainty lighted the hurricane lamp that swung from a beam in the roof. There was still light outside, but within the hut it was dark. He stumbled over something on the floor, and when the lamp was alight he looked to see what it was. It was a can of beef.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Jim.

Four or five of the cans of beef were scattered from the pile stacked against the wall.

"Hallo! Has Fritz been at the grub?" exclaimed Dawson.

"Looks like it. I'll count them," said Jim. "There were three dozen left—Sammy keeps the tally." He rapidly counted the tins.

"Thirty-five!"

"One gone!" said Dick.

"That bloated Boche!" exclaimed Jim Dainty. "He was pretending to be asleep, of course. He's snaffled one of the cans." He ran out of the hut. "Fritz, you fat villain!"

"Vat? Vy for you call me tat?" demanded Fritz. "Vat is te madder? Mein gootness, kick me not on mein trousers, peast and a prute!"

"Where's that can of beef you've snooped?" roared Jim.

"Peastly pounder!" yelled Fritz. "Vat do you mean pefore? I have had noddings to eat since supper pefore."

"There's a can of beef gone!"

"Posh! Ruppish! I know notting of it! Mein prain is a perfect plank!"

"Snaffling the grub again!" said Ginger Rawlinson. "Sammy will be wild. Look out for the whopping of your life, Fatty!"

"I tells you two times tat I snaffle him not! I vas ferry hungry, but I touch not te peef. Geep off, peastly pounders!" gasped Fritz, in alarm, as the juniors gathered round him with grim looks.

"He's scoffed the beef, and hidden the can!" said Streaky. "Let's make an example of him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Leaf me in beaces!" yelled Fritz, jumping away. "Oh, peasts and prutes and pounders! Leaf off to kick me on mein trousers! Yaroooh!"

Fatty Fritz ran for his life! After him ran Jim Dainty & Co. "Snaffling" the slender store of provisions was a serious matter for the castaways. Fatty Fritz had sinned before, and now, it seemed, he had sinned again. This time he was going to have a lesson.

"Dribble him!" yelled Ginger.



Fritz von Splitz swung up the frying-pan, and there was a yell from Jim Dainty as a spurt of hot grease from the pan splashed on him, and another from Streaky, as a fish shot out and landed on his face!



"Ach! Mein gootness! Stop tat!" shrieked Fritz, as he ran with the juniors running behind, dribbling Fritz like a fat football. "Ach! I have vun colossal bain! I have several colossal bains! Yoop!"

The juniors took it in turn, keeping pace with the fleeing Fritz, landing kick after kick on his fat person. With a wild howl at every step the fat German fled down the beach in the thickening darkness. There was a sudden crash as Fritz hurtled into a tall figure coming up the beach in the gloom.

Crash! Bump!  
"What the dooce!" gasped Sammy Sparshott, as he went over headlong under Fatty Fritz's charge.

"Mein gootness!" spluttered Fritz, as he sprawled over Sammy.

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger Rawlinson.

The pursuing juniors came to a sudden halt. Dr. Sparshott pitched the gasping fat German off, and rose to his feet. He was panting a little, and his face was stern.

"What does this mean?" he barked. "What are you chasing Spltz for?"

Jim Dainty & Co. were silent. Wrathful as they were, they did not want to tell Sammy that the fat Rhinelander had been raiding the provisions. To their astonishment Fritz gave answer.

"Ach! Geep tem off! I have not snaffed te peef! I touch not te peef! It is veeks and veeks since tat I hat eaten peef! Geep tem off!"

Dr. Sparshott's brow grew very grim. "Spltz, have you been taking the reserve of provisions?"

"Nein!" yelled Fritz. "Nein! Neffer! Nottings!"

"Is anything missing, Dainty?"

"One of the cans of beef, sir," answered Jim.

"I dakes him not!" gurgled Fritz. "I tink tat vun of te odders dakes him mit himself before."

"The others can be trusted, Spltz," said Dr. Sparshott quietly. "You, I am sorry to say, cannot be. You have purloined from the stores before."

"Ja, ja wohl!" groaned Fritz. "I dakes vun before, but I dakes not vun after. Mein prain is a perfect plank."

"Nonsense!" barked Dr. Sparshott. "If a can of beef is gone, there can be no doubt of the guilty party. I shall make sure."

Sammy Sparshott strode away to the hut, followed by the juniors. Fritz, still gasping from the collision, tottered after them. By the light of the swinging lamp Dr. Sparshott counted the cans. He turned a grim frown on the trembling Fritz.

"Where is that can of beef, Spltz?"

"Tat I know not!" groaned Fritz. "I snaffe him not, I know tat."

Dr. Sparshott looked at him long and hard. There was a ring of almost tearful earnestness in Fritz Spltz's voice; but it was impossible to believe him. Fritz's disregard for the truth was as well known as his deep, deep regard for the beef!

"Very well," said Dr. Sparshott. "As you seem to have been pretty thoroughly kicked, Spltz, I shall not give you the thrashing you deserve. I will give you this warning. If you touch the reserve of food once more I shall turn you out of the place, and you may shift for yourself the best you can."

"Mein gootness! But I tells you two times, tree times—"

"Enough!"

The castaways turned in for the night, but it was a good deal later than usual before Fritz Spltz's deep snore was heard. Sammy's dire threat seemed to worry the fat Rhinelander.

### Get out, Fritz!

"RACE you to the sea!" shouted Ginger Rawlinson.

Bright morning sunshine streamed down on Castaway Island. Dr. Sparshott, the earliest riser on the island, was already up and out when the juniors awakened. He had had his dip in the bay and gone out in the boat to fish, when the schoolboys turned out, though the hour was still early. Jim Dainty gave Fatty Fritz a shake.

"Coming, Fatty?" he asked.

"Urgh! Leaf me alone, vill you!" grunted Fritz. "Go and eat goke mit you!"

And, leaving the fat German in his bunk, Jim followed the other fellows from the hut. They raced down to the sea for their morning dip, scampering with cheery shouts over the knolls and ridges of golden sand, and plunged merrily into the blue waters of the bay.

Early as it was, the sun was already bright and warm, and they sported in the water like so many dolphins. Cast away as they were on an unknown island, there was no doubt that the cheery Grimslanders kept up their spirits.

When they came back to the hut, glowing from the swim, Fritz Spltz was up and broiling fish on the stove, helping himself to tasty morsels while he cooked. He was shiny and greasy, but he did not look merry and bright, as he generally did when he was handling food-stuffs. He gave the cheery juniors a dark look.

"Peasts and prutes!" said Fritz sourly. "I like to know vich of you dakes tat peef and pretends tat I dakes it before."

"You burbling, blithering Boche!" said Ginger Rawlinson. "What's the good of that gammon, when we all know that you bagged it?"

"Tat is vun lie!" snorted Fritz.

"What?" roared Ginger.

"It is vun ferry pig lie!" said Fritz. "I dakes him not! I tink tat you dakes him mit yourself! Geep off, you peast!"

Ginger, his face as red as his hair with wrath, advanced on the fat German, and Fritz swung up the frying-pan to bar him off. There was a yell from Jim Dainty as a spurt of hot grease from the pan splashed on him, and another from Streaky, as a fish shot out and landed on his face. Heedless of fish and grease, Fritz brandished the frying-pan at Ginger.

"Geep off!" he yelled. "Geep off, you peasty pounder, or I prains you mit tat frying-ban after!"

"My giddy goloshes! I'll scrag him!" gasped Ginger, and he rushed into close quarters, heedless of the frying-pan.

Crack! Fritz was desperate, and he landed a loud crack from the frying-pan on Ginger's red head.

"Take tat, you prute, and— Yarooop!" roared Fritz, as Ginger grasped him and up-ended him. "Ach! Mein gootness! Leaf me in beaces, you prutal pounder!"

"You burbling Boche!" roared Ginger, catching up the frying-pan with one hand and rolling Fatty Fritz over with the other. "Take that!"

Whack, whack, whack! Ginger laid on the frying-pan with a heavy hand, and Fatty Fritz's frantic yells rang far and wide. They reached Dr. Sparshott, sitting in the boat out in the bay, and caused him to cast a glance shoreward.

"There!" gasped Ginger, at last. "That'll teach you to call a fellow a liar, you bloated Boche! Now own up that you bagged the beef!"

"Peastly prute, I pag him not!" howled Fritz. "I tink tat you pag him yourself after, and make out tat it was me."

"Oh, my giddy goloshes! You want some more!" roared Ginger, deeply incensed by that accusation. And the frying-pan rose and fell again.

"Hold on!" gasped Jim Dainty, and he grasped Ginger and dragged him away from Fritz. "Enough's as good as a feast! You'll wear out his bags at this rate, and there aren't any tailors on Castaway Island."

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Ach gootness! Oooooop!" yelled Fritz.

Ginger Rawlinson panted.

"Well, perhaps he's had enough," he said. "Let's have brekker. Keep your cheeky mouth shut, you fat Boche, if you don't want any more."

The juniors ate their breakfast, Fritz giving them sour and savage looks. Fritz seemed to be labouring under a sense of injury, though why was a mystery to the other fellows, who were not likely to believe that one of themselves had "snaffed" the missing can of beef, and left the fat German to bear the blame. They had finished breakfast by the time Sammy Sparshott came in. The Head of Grimsland glanced at them rather sharply.

"More trouble, what?" he barked.

"That blithering Boche!" growled Ginger. "Peastly prute!" hooted Fritz. "I tells te Head vat I tells you. Tat peast Chinger, sir, I tink tat he pag tat peef vile tat I vas asleep."

Ginger Rawlinson jumped up, his face aflame and his fists clenched. Dr. Sparshott waved him back.

"Keep your temper, Rawlinson! Spltz, how dare you make such an accusation! Nobody here will believe a word of it."

"Rather not!" said Jim Dainty hotly.

"If it was not Chinger, perhaps it was Tainty," said Fritz. "I tell you two-tree times tat I dakes him not! I vas asleep ven tat he vas daken! I giff you te vord of a Cherman!"

"That is hardly good enough, Spltz!" said Sammy drily, and he went into the hut, leaving Fritz snorting, and Ginger Rawlinson looking at the fat German as if he could have eaten him.

A few moments later the juniors heard a sharp exclamation in the hut. Dr. Sparshott reappeared in the doorway, with a face grimmer and sterner than they had ever seen it before since they had been on the island.

"Another can of beef has gone!" barked Sammy.

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!"

"Spltz—"

"I know nottings! I dakes him not! Mein gootness, mein prain he is a perfect plank!"

"Has Spltz been alone in the hut?" asked Dr. Sparshott grimly.

"We left him there asleep when we went down to swim, sir," answered Jim Dainty. "He was cooking brekker when we came back."

"I touches him not!" shrieked Fritz. "I tink tat vun of tem gum pack ferry quietly and take him vile tat I vas asleep mit meinself, te same as yesterday before."

"Very well," said Dr. Sparshott grimly. "we shall see! Did any of you boys leave the others?"

"No, sir!" answered all the juniors at once.

"We all came up from the beach together, sir," said Streaky. "Not one of us has been out of sight of the rest."

"I think," said Dr. Sparshott, "that it is a clear case! Have you anything to say, Spltz?"

Fritz von Spltz goggled at him with saucer-eyes.

"I know nottings!" he wailed. "If it was not vun of tose peasts, perhaps tere is some-poddy else on te island after I vas fast asleep mit meinself till I get up for prekker. I touch not te peef!"

"My hat!" murmured Dawson. "How the dickens can a fellow tell such barefaced whoppers? Nobody but Fritz can have bagged it. Nobody else was here!"

Dr. Sparshott stepped from the doorway of the hut. Fritz von Spltz backed away from him in terror. The Grimsland headmaster's face was set and stern.

"The matter is quite clear, Spltz!" said Dr. Sparshott. "You were alone in the hut—"

"I vas asleep mit meinself—"

"And the others were all at a distance. A can of beef has disappeared. All our lives may depend some day on a reserve of provisions. I warned you yesterday what to expect!" Dr. Sparshott raised his hand and pointed to the open beach. "Go!"

Fritz stood goggling at him.

"Mein gootness! But vere I go?" he groaned.

"Anywhere you choose!" said Dr. Sparshott icily. "I warned you, and I am a man of my word. You cannot be trusted here, and you must go. Boys, if Spltz comes within a hundred yards of the hut again, I order you to kick him—hard! The harder the better. Begin now, unless he starts at once."

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz Spltz.

He started at once. He started quite rapidly. But at a dozen paces he slowed down, and looked back over a fat shoulder. His saucer-eyes blinked appealingly at the castaways. But he saw only the grim, stern face of Dr. Sparshott and the averted faces of the juniors.

A deep, dismal groan came from Fritz Spltz, and he tramped miserably on and disappeared from sight.

*(There's a war on in next week's stirring story of the Castaways—a war between Fritz von Spltz and Tarzan the monkey! Don't miss next Saturday's Free Gift issue of RANGER.)*