

THE BOYS WHO VISITED THE MOON! AMAZING STORY OF SPACE STARTS TO-DAY!

The

RANGER 2^D

New Series No. 39. Vol. 2.—Every Saturday.

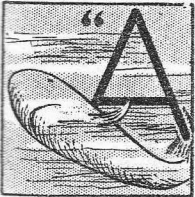
Week Ending May 5th, 1934.



THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!

By FRANK RICHARDS

Saved from the Sea!



“MOI! A moi!”

Jim Dainty wondered whether he was dreaming.

He sat in the stern of the surging boat, his arm flung over the tiller, his hand on the sail. Ginger Rawlinson and Fritz Splitz lay fast asleep, rolled in canvas, amidships;

Friday, the monkey, lay beside his master.

Dawn was just breaking, and the darkness of night was lifting as the sun rose slowly over the horizon to herald a new tropical day. A light breeze ruffled the surface of the sea, filling the boat's sail from moment to moment and then leaving it flapping idly.

In the silence and the vast solitude of the Atlantic Jim found himself nodding from time to time. But it was his “watch on deck,” and he resolutely kept himself awake. Several times, it had seemed to him, he heard a sound from the sea, and now suddenly it came—a human voice that was calling in the French language.

Quite wide awake now, Jim half rose, staring over the waters. Only the endless surges of the Atlantic, reflecting the rising sun, met his eyes. It seemed to him that he must have nodded and dreamed. How could a voice have called in that solitude of waters?

A day and a night had passed since the three juniors had put out in the boat from the sandbank in the attempt to get back to Castaway Island. It was a week since they had been blown away to sea, and they knew that Dr. Sparsbott and their friends on Castaway Island must have given them up as lost.

But the discovery of the stores in the wreck on the sandbank enabled them to make the attempt, and all day they had watched the western horizon in the hope of seeing the hill-top they knew so well. And it had seemed to Jim that in the last glimmer of the sunset he had sighted a blur on the western sea; but the darkness had shut down, and it was lost again.

If it was Castaway Island it was still many a long mile distant, and the wind had fallen to light puffs, the boat making hardly a knot.

Jim had been thinking, as he sat half nodding at the tiller, whether he would see the green, wooded hill and the shore of golden sands when the sun came up. But that strange cry from the sea drove the thought even of the island from his mind.

He listened intently as he stared over the curling waters. Only the wash of the waves came to him—and, closer at hand, the creak of the sail and the snore of Fritz Splitz. Surely he had been dreaming!

He sat down again, and Friday, waking up, blinked at him with his glimmering black eyes. The boat surged on. Then suddenly again came the cry, fainter than before:

“A moi! A moi!”

“My only hat!” ejaculated the Grimslade junior. He was wide enough awake now, and the cry was unmistakable.

Someone from the surging bosom of the sea was calling for help—in French! There was no boat—he would have seen a boat had one been within hail. It must be a swimmer—in that lonely waste of waters—who had sighted the Grimslade craft.

A shipwrecked man, swimming, and crying



for help! Shipwrecked himself, Jim Dainty was not likely to pass such a cry unheeded.

He stretched out his foot and awakened Ginger Rawlinson with a kick in the ribs. There was a howl from the red-headed junior of Grimslade.

“Ow! My giddy goloshes! What—”

“Wake up, old man!” exclaimed Jim breathlessly.

Ginger sat up and glared at him.

**THE ESCAPED CONVICT WHO
NEARLY MADE A SHARK'S
BREAKFAST!**

“You howling ass! Too jolly lazy to take your watch, what? Let a fellow sleep!”

“Fathead! There's a shipwrecked man calling for help—”

“What?”

Ginger was on his feet in a moment. One of his feet, as he scrambled up, landed on the fat figure at his side, and there was a wild gurgle from Friedrich von Splitz.

“Ach! Mein gootness! Vat vas tat?” howled Fritz. “Tere vas someting tat pang me in te pread-pasket! Urrrrh! I have no more te breff! Wurrgrgh! You prute, Chinger, tat you gerroff mein dummy! Vy for you tread on mein dummy pefore?”

“Br-r-r-r!” growled Ginger. He stepped off Fritz Splitz, leaving that podgy youth gurgling. Holding on to the mast, Ginger stared across the water. “What do you mean, Dainty? Where's your jolly old shipwrecked man?”

“I haven't seen him—he called—”

Ginger scanned the sea searchingly. The sun was climbing in the sky, and the full light of day burst over the Atlantic.

“I can't see anybody,” said Ginger, his gaze roaming the vast expanse of water which stretched on all sides of the boat as far as eye could see. “Look here, you've been dreaming, fathead—”

“A moi! A moi!”

Ginger jumped as he heard that cry—faint, as though coming from a distance.

“My giddy goloshes!” he gasped. “That's French—it's some Froggy calling for help! How the giddy dickens—”

Once again Ginger's gaze swept the sea, and now, in the distance, he could see a dark object bobbing in the water.

“There he is!” he cried. “Somebody swimming—My hat!?” Ginger put his hands to his mouth, made a trumpet, and roared: “All right! Coming, old bean! Stick it out!”

Jim gave the tiller a twist, and the boat ran down towards the distant man. Faintly from the gleaming waters a wild, white, haggard face showed—the face of a man in the last stage of exhaustion.

But as the boat approached, a cry—or, rather, a husky scream—burst from the swimmer. That cry was echoed by Jim and Ginger, for now they saw something else in the water—something that moved swiftly in the direction of the exhausted man. A fin—the fin of a shark!

Swift as the boat ran before the light breeze, the shark moved faster. Would the castaways be in time to rescue the helpless swimmer from a ghastly fate?

Now the boat was bearing down upon the exhausted man. He was attempting to swim towards the craft, terror written in his eyes. The shark was but a few yards away from him, rising to the surface to grab at its victim.

“Fritz,” yelled Jim, “that tin of beef—throw it at the shark!”

For once Fritz's wits worked with reasonable quickness. He grabbed up a can of tinned beef from the stores in the boat and hurled it overboard—right in the open mouth of the shark with its rows of glittering teeth.

Meanwhile, Ginger leaned over the gunwale, grasped at the swimmer as the boat ran alongside him, grasped at the man, and gripped the tangled, wet hair.

“Got him!” panted Ginger.

He changed his grip to the man's shoulders and heaved him on board, Jim throwing his weight on the other side. Drenched, dripping, gasping feebly, the half-drowned Frenchman lay in a pool of salt water in the bottom of the boat. Fritz Splitz, his saucer-eyes wide open, stared at the shark as it vanished beneath the surface, the tin of beef still in its jaws.

The rescued man lay breathing feebly, his eyes half closed. It was plain that he had been

at the end of his tether when he sighted the boat and cried feebly for help.

Full of compassion as they were, Jim and Ginger could not help noticing that he did not look a pleasant customer. His brows were low and heavy over little piggy eyes set close together—his jaw sharp and jutting under the tangled, unkempt beard. He was dressed in a tattered uniform which somehow seemed familiar to the juniors, but which they could not quite place. Unless he had fallen overboard from a ship, they could not imagine how he had come there at all—yet all through the previous day and since nightfall there had been no sign of a ship.

He panted and panted as he lay in the pool that dripped from him. Jim Dainty sorted out a tin can and filled it with water from a keg and held it to the man's lips. He drank greedily to the last drop. Evidently he had suffered severely from thirst.

"Poor chap!" murmured Ginger. He did not like the rescued man's looks, but he pitied him from the bottom of his heart. "Ask him if he's hungry—put it in French!"

"Avez vous faim?" asked Jim. And the man nodded eagerly.

Almost in a moment Ginger had a tin platter with canned beef, beans, and biscuit before the rescued man. He sat up, leaning on a thwart, and ate greedily, tearing the food like a wild animal.

"De l'eau!" he muttered, and Jim filled the tin can again with fresh water.

The rescued man ate and drank alternately with a desperate greed that showed that it was long since either food or drink had passed his lips.

"Tat is all ferry well," grunted Fritz Splitz, "but subbase tat we find not te island, and tat te food run short—"

"Kick him, Ginger!"

"Peast and a prute!" roared Fritz.

Having satisfied at last both hunger and thirst, the rescued man leaned back, breathing heavily. His eyes, black and sharp, watched the schoolboys keenly.

"Vous etes Francais?" he asked suddenly.

"No fear!" answered Ginger. "We sommes Anglais—I mean, nous sommes English—"

A faint grin came over the haggard face for a moment. Ginger's French seemed to have an enlivening effect on the Frenchman. Then he leaned back heavily and closed his eyes. The juniors had an impression that he was glad, or relieved, to learn that they were not French. Why, they could not imagine.

But they could see that he was exhausted, and they arranged the roll of canvas to make him as comfortable a bed as possible. Fritz Splitz eyed that proceeding with disapproving wrath.

"Vat ped is tere for me?" he demanded. A lunge from Ginger's boat was the only answer to that question, and Fatty Fritz had to make up his mind to manage without his bed. Fortunately, Fritz could sleep anywhere and anyhow, and he was soon snoring again, curled up in the bows.

Fritz slept soundly enough. But the rescued man muttered and mumbled wildly in his sleep. Such words as "soif" and "faim" continually recurred, telling how he had suffered from thirst and hunger. Once, half-awakening, he screamed out: "Les soldats! Voyez! Les soldats!"

Jim and Ginger exchanged startled looks as they heard it. Who were the "soldiers" of whom the man saved from the sea had been in fear? More and more, they wondered who and what he was.

A Peculiar Passenger!

JIM DAINTY stood up in the bows, and stared into the western horizon. The sun was rising higher over the ocean, gilding the wide, rolling waters. Sea and sky—sky and sea—encircled the boat.

Jim's eyes searched for a trace of the blur in the west that they had picked up the previous day. Was it a cloud that blurred the horizon, far away on the sealine, or was it the summit of the hill on Castaway Island, where their friends mourned them as lost?

It lay west by north, which, so far as the juniors could calculate, was the direction of the island which had been their Crusoe home. Whether it was Castaway Island or not, it was,

he was almost certain, land of some sort, and the boat headed for it.

"Ten to one it's our jolly old island!" said Ginger confidently. Ginger always hoped for the best. "If it is, we shall make it before sundown, even in this wind. My giddy goloshes, shan't I be glad to see Streaky and Sandy again—and jolly old Sammy! What?"

"And Dick!" said Jim Dainty. "They must have given us up for lost. Some surprise for them when we come sailing merrily home, Ginger."

The Frenchman was still sleeping. The juniors ate their breakfast—with the usual grumble from Fritz. Plenty of provisions had been packed in the boat from the wreck on the sandbank; but the three were on rations, for it was impossible to tell how long the voyage might last. Rations did not agree with Fritz von Splitz. There was now another mouth to be fed, and that made it still more urgent not to exceed the regular rations. Which added to Fatty Fritz's indignation.

"You giff goot piscuits to tat peastly monkey, and goot peef to tat peast tat you bick up out of te vater," he grunted, "and I have vun colossal hunger—I feel as if tere vas notting in mein preadpasket! I tink tat you vas two prutes and two pounders."

What Fatty Fritz thought, however, did not worry the Grimsladers. Fritz could grouse as much as he liked, but when he reached out for a surreptitious helping, Ginger Rawlinson introduced the boathook into the argument, and Fritz Splitz fled into the bows, yelling.

"Qu'est-ce que cela?" Fritz's howl awakened the sleeping Frenchman, and he sat up and stared dizzily round him. He stared at the juniors, and his hand flew to his belt, as if for a weapon. A sheathed knife was buckled to his belt, and his fingers closed over the handle, and half-drew the blade.

"Hold on, old bean!" gasped Ginger. "Keep your wool on! We're friends here, old tulip, you won't want your toothpick."

The man stared, or, rather, glared at him. But he seemed to remember, and thrust back the knife into its sheath. His haggard, bearded, swarthy face looked less prepossessing than ever. For the first time it occurred to the juniors that they might have to be on their guard against the man they had saved from death in the sea.

"Do you speak English?" asked Jim Dainty quietly. He rather wished now that he had removed the man's knife while he slept; but that thought, naturally, had not occurred to him.

"Mais oui, un peu!" muttered the Frenchman. "Yes. Who are you? How comes it that you, who are boys, are in this boat?"

"We were blown out to sea from an island where we had been shipwrecked," answered Jim Dainty. "We're trying to get back now." He pointed to the west, where the dark blur was now unmistakably land of some sort. "We think that's the island. Our friends are there. But who are you?"

Without replying to the question the Frenchman rose to his feet. It seemed that food and sleep had restored his strength, for he moved nimbly and actively enough. Holding on to the mast, he stared at the western blur. Then his sharp, rat-like eyes scanned the sea in all directions. Finally, he came back to the juniors, and sat down to eat.

His hunger had revived, that was clear, for he ate almost like a wolf. Fritz Splitz groaned aloud as he saw the provisions going. But neither Jim nor Ginger was disposed to say nay to the famished man. He would have to go on rations, like the schoolboys; but they were willing to let him make up leeway first.

At the same time his manner was dominating, in a way that was far from pleasing, as if he fancied that he could do as he chose in a boat manned by schoolboys. He ate, and ate, in a way that Fatty Fritz himself could hardly have beaten. Then he rapped out sharply:

"Donnez-moi—give me to drink!"

Quietly Jim Dainty handed him a tin can of water. He drank it, and tossed aside the can.

"We've picked up a nice, polite passenger!" murmured Ginger.

Jim shrugged his shoulders. The man's manners did not matter very much, but if he fancied that he was cock of the walk in the Grimslade boat, he was going to learn that that was a mistake.

"Will you tell me your name, monsieur?" asked Jim. The sharp, black eyes flashed round at him.

"Mon nom?" He paused a second. "Lebon—Gaston Lebon!" Both the juniors knew that the answer was false. They did not care two straws whether his name was Lebon or not, but they were growing very uneasy. It was fairly clear that the man was neither a seaman nor a passenger from a ship. Who and what was he?

"Les autres—you have seen the others?" he asked sharply.

"There were others with you?" asked Jim.

"Mais oui—yes, yes! Un bateau—a boat—cing hommes—five men in a boat. You have seen?"

"No! We saw nobody but you when we picked you up," answered Jim. "Did you fall overboard from a boat, then?"

Instead of answering, Lebon began to ask questions quickly and eagerly. He was anxious to learn whether the English boys had seen anything of a boat with five men in it, and whether they had seen a ship—a gunboat.

Satisfied at last that they had seen nothing, he asked about themselves, and they told him of the wreck of the Spindrift, and of their life on Castaway Island. He listened with the keenest attention, and at last, making them a sign to be silent, he sat plunged into deep thought. Jim and Ginger exchanged rather grim looks.

The wind was freshening a little as the morning advanced, and coming more from the south. They noticed that it was towards the south that Lebon's restless eyes constantly turned, and it was already growing into a suspicion in their minds that he was in fear of pursuit, and from that direction. His looks, his manners, everything about him, hinted that it was some breaker of the law who had so strangely come to them from the sea.

They were more anxious than ever to make Castaway Island, and it was a great comfort to them to see the dark blur in the west taking form and substance. It was a hill rising from the sea in the far distance, and its outline grew more and more familiar. Fortune had favoured them, and they were almost certain now that they were in sight of Castaway Island.

The Frenchman came suddenly aft, where Jim Dainty was steering, and took the tiller from him. The boat swung away from her course, coming full before the wind.

"What the thump!" exclaimed Jim in angry astonishment.

"Taisez-vous!" snapped Lebon.

"You cheeky ass!" roared Ginger Rawlinson. "Who told you to steer? Can't you see you're steering away from the island?"

Jim Dainty laid his hand on the tiller again. The man from the sea gripped it hard, and his black eyes glittered at the Grimslade junior.

"Ecoutez!" he said, between his teeth. "Listen, you! I go not to an island—it is useless to me! Je cherche Amerique—the mainland—it is a chance, and I take it."

The juniors stared at him blankly. The insolence of the man in thus coolly taking possession of their boat almost took their breath away. And his idea of making for the continent of America, in an open boat over hundreds of miles of sea, was wild and desperate. Certainly the juniors had no idea of making any such desperate attempt. Castaway Island was their destination, if they could reach it.

"You must be mad!" gasped Jim at last. "Why, the food in the boat would not last us half the distance, even if there was a chance—"

"So much the worse for you, alors," said Lebon, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Why, you dashed rascal!" roared Ginger. "Let go that tiller!"

The man laughed. But he ceased to laugh the next moment as Ginger Rawlinson hurled himself at him, grasped him with both hands, and dragged him away from the helm. There was a bump and a crash as they rolled over in the bottom of the boat together.

"Mein goodness!" gasped Fritz Splitz, his saucer-eyes almost popping out of his fat face; and there was a startled squeal from Friday, the monkey. The boat rocked wildly.

"Look out, Ginger!" shrieked Jim Dainty, as there was a flash of steel in the sunshine.

Leaving the helm to take care of itself, Jim flung himself on the Frenchman, grasped his arm in time, and dragged it back as he struck with the knife.

The Fight in the Boat.

"MY giddy goloshes!" panted Ginger. "You scoundrel!" roared Jim Dainty.

He dragged back the arm till the bone almost cracked. There was a howl of pain and rage from Lebon.

Amazing, almost unbelievable as it was to the Grimslade juniors, the desperate rascal was striving to use his knife. Only a few hours since they had saved him from death in the deep sea. And this was his gratitude!

But it was clear to them already that the man they had saved was some lawless ruffian, and that it was fear of pursuit and recapture that put into his desperate mind the wild scheme of attempting to reach the mainland of America by seizing the schoolboys' boat.

Jim Dainty twisted over the sinewy arm, striving to make the ruffian drop the knife. But though he howled with pain, the man from the sea kept his sinewy fingers laced round the handle of the weapon and would not let it go. With his left hand he clawed savagely at Ginger.

"Lend a hand, Fritz!" yelled Jim Dainty. But Fatty Fritz, stuttering with terror, squatted in the bows, watching the wild scene with popping eyes, unable to move.

With a desperate wrench, the Frenchman tore himself away and leaped aft, free of the juniors. The knife was still in his hand. It flashed in the sun as they leaped after him, and they jumped back. There was a squeal from Friday as the panting man trampled on him, and Friday jumped back and lodged himself on the rudder. With the tiller swinging loose, the boat yawed wildly, and a sea washed over the gunwale.

Standing facing the two gasping juniors, the knife upraised, the ruffian panted and panted for breath. Ginger grabbed up the boathook, and Jim Dainty an oar. There was no help from Fatty Fritz; he crouched in the bows, gabbling with terror. But Jim and Ginger were made of sterner stuff. They faced the desperado with flashing eyes.

"Ecoutez!" Lebon panted out his words. "I am master here! Pensez-vous—think you that to save your lives I will go back to the Ile du Diable?"

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger. "Is that it? An escaped convict—my only hat!"

"A convict from the Devil's Island!" muttered Jim Dainty.

They understood now! They had heard of the Ile du Diable—the Devil's Island—the French penal settlement off the coast of Guiana, where the convicts, the scum of the French criminal classes, were guarded night and day by armed men. They knew now why their passenger was wearing that tattered uniform; why, in his sleep, he had muttered "Les soldats."

There had been an escape from the Devil's Island—a gang of desperate men had got away and seized a boat and put to sea. Hundreds of miles lay between them and the coast of Guiana, in South America. The wretched convicts must have been days, more likely weeks, at sea, before they came into West Indian waters; where Lebon had fallen overboard, or more probably had been pitched overboard by his savage companions.

No wonder he had been famished with hunger, parched with thirst. No wonder, perhaps, that he had resolved to seize the boat that had saved him and carry on with his desperate attempt at escape!

The two Grimslade juniors stared at him almost open-mouthed. A savage grin came over the bearded, swarthy face as Lebon noted the effect of his words upon them. He made a threatening gesture with the knife.

"Vous comprenez!" he snarled. "You understand, yes? Ile du Diable—what you call the Devil's Island! Do you think to trifle with a man from the Devil's Island? Ecoutez! I will spare your lives so long as there is food for all. You shall sail the boat under my orders! But to reach Amerique the voyage will be long and hard. Food shall not be

wasted, and the fat one goes overboard toute de suite!"

There was a squeal of horror from Fatty Fritz. His fate, at least, was sealed if the man from the Devil's Island had the upper hand.

"Ach! Himmel! Safe me!" squealed Fritz. "I will not go overboard mit meinsel before! Chinger—Chim—safe me!"

"You vile, dastardly rascal!" said Jim Dainty, between his teeth. "Put down that knife, you villain!"

"Sharp's the word!" rapped Ginger.

The ruffian stared at them, as if not understanding. As it dawned on him that the schoolboys did not intend to give in, but were, in fact, ready to attack him, he burst into a harsh, savage laugh. With the knife gripped in his hand, and his eyes glittering like those of a wild beast, he made a crouching step towards them.

"Back up, Ginger!" breathed Jim Dainty, his heart thumping hard. Two crouching steps the ruffian made, then he came on with a sudden tiger-like spring. But the Grimsladers were watching and ready. Jim Dainty drove the oar at him, catching him on the chest, and he staggered; Ginger lashed out with the boathook, landing a fierce blow on the tangled head. Lebon went sprawling over in the rocking boat, and they jumped at him to secure him.

But the convict was as nimble as a cat. He was up again in the twinkling of an eye, and a desperate leap carried him back to the after end of the boat. There he turned, and his arm shot up, the knife in his hand. His black eyes blazed with ferocity.

"Look out!" yelled Ginger.

The convict was about to hurl the knife; in another second it would have shot through the air, and either Jim or Ginger would have fallen, transfixed by the flashing steel. But even as the lifted arm was shooting forward for the throw, it was grasped from behind.

"Friday!" yelled Jim.

The convict had not heeded the monkey clinging to the stern. He gave a yell of blank amazement and rage as his arm was dragged back in the monkey's clawing paws. Squealing with wild excitement, Friday clawed and tore at him, and the convict, taken utterly by surprise by that unexpected attack from behind, stumbled over the tiller and fell.

The next moment he was up and aiming a furious slash of the knife at Friday. But the two Grimsladers were on him, and Jim Dainty's oar drove into his ribs, rolling him over, and the boathook in Ginger's hand came down on his tousled head with a stunning crash. As he sprawled helplessly, Ginger leaped on him.

"His knife—quick!" panted Ginger. But Jim Dainty already had the convict's wrist in his grasp, and was twisting it savagely, till the knife dropped. He seized it and flung it into the sea. Panting, snarling, spitting oaths, the ruffian struggled furiously in the grasp of the two juniors.

But he was down, and they kept him down! Ginger's clenched fist rained crashing blows into the brutal face. Jim yelled to Fritz.

"Fritz! You fool! A rope—quick!"

"Ach! I gum, I gum!" gasped Fritz. He grabbed up a rope and lurched along the rocking boat. Lebon was still struggling with desperate fury, and the two juniors had hard work to hold him down. But they held him, and Jim dragged his wrists together, and the shivering Fritz passed a loop of the rope round them and knotted it fast. Then Jim and Ginger staggered up, breathless and panting. The convict was safe now.

"My giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger. "We've got him, Dainty!"

Jim Dainty, gasping, sat to the tiller again. With the man from the Devil's Island lying bound in the bottom of the boat, the Grimsladers headed once more for Castaway Island, now rising nearer and clearer from the sea.

"Look! A boat!" exclaimed Jim Dainty.

From behind a sandbank the boat appeared, and in it were five villainous-looking convicts.

"My comrades!" cried Gaston Lebon triumphantly. "And they will kill you!"

Three Grimslade boys attacked by six desperate convicts! Read how Jim Dainty & Co. battle for their lives in next week's thrilling story.



HE'S the man of the moment, the most popular fellow in school. And why? Monster Id. Bars of Fry's delicious Chocolate Cream—that's the secret of his success: They're *wizards*, these new big bars of the nicest chocolate cream you ever tasted. Try a penny-worth when you want something *really* good.

FRY'S
CHOCOLATE
CREAM
NEW
MONSTER 1st BAR

S. FRY & SONS LTD., SOMERDALE, SOMERSET.
C.R.141. 26.3.34.