

SPECIAL STORY OF THE DERBY—INSIDE! IT'S A WINNER!

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

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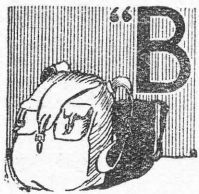
The Derby Winner!



# THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS

By FRANK RICHARDS.

**Danger!**



“BUT, sir—”  
 “Are you arguing with your headmaster, Dainty?” inquired Dr. Samuel Sparshott.  
 “N-no, sir! But—”  
 “That will do!”  
 When Sammy Sparshott said that it would do, it had to do! On Castaway Island, in West Indian seas, the

headmaster of Grimslade was still headmaster, and his word was law.

So Jim Dainty said no more, and the other shipwrecked schoolboys were silent. Though never, since the wreck of the Spindrift, had they felt so powerfully inclined to “argue” with their headmaster. Sammy, generally, was right, and they admitted it. Now they rather thought that Sammy was wrong.

They watched him carefully examining his revolver before he stuck it in his belt. If Sammy was going to take risks, he was not going to take unnecessary risks. Brave as a lion—as he needed to be when he set out to hunt down three desperate convicts lurking in the tropical forest—he was as wary as a wolf. He packed a rucksack with food, filled his water-bottle and hooked it to his belt, and was ready. Then his glance roved over the watching schoolboys, faintly amused.

Jim Dainty and Dick Dawson, Ginger and Bacon and Bean, were anxious, and looked it. Only Fritz Splitz was not worrying. Fritz, in fact, was rather eager for Sammy to be gone. When Sammy was gone Fritz hoped to be able to snaffle a second breakfast. So Fatty Fritz was as indifferent as Friday, the monkey, who sat solemnly scratching himself in the sunshine before the hut.

“I’ve given you your orders!” barked Sammy. “Keep near the hut! Keep watch for the convicts! Get inside and bar the door if you spot them. Fire on them if they come within range. Don’t waste a shot! I trust you to keep careful watch. Your lives depend on it.”

“Yes, sir,” said Jim. “But—”  
 “Good-bye!” barked Sammy. “Back at sunset.”

Sammy Sparshott swung away. The schoolboys stood and watched his tall, athletic form till it disappeared through the palms.

“My giddy goloshes!” said Ginger Rawlinson, with a deep breath. “I’ve a jolly good mind to go after Sammy, orders or no orders. There’s three of those brutes—and one of them, that blighter Lautrec, has a bow and arrows, and he’s a good shot with them. Sammy’s not safe.”

“Lot he cares!” growled Streaky Bacon. “But he would be frightfully wrathful if we went.”

“Better stick it!” grunted Jim Dainty.  
 “I tink tat you tink two times before you disopey Sammy!” said Fritz Splitz warmly.  
 “If you go after Sammy vat is to become of me? I should not be safe mit meinsel alone after.”

“Kick him!” grunted Jim.  
 “Ach! Peast and a prute!” roared Fritz, as Ginger obliged. “Mein gootness, you vill tamage mein trousers! Leaf off to kick me on mein trousers, you peast, Chinger!”

Worried as they were about Sammy, the shipwrecked schoolboys did not waste time. There was work to be done in the garden cultivated by the castaways between the hut and the stream. Sammy had planned a canal from the stream to irrigate the garden, and there was no end of digging to be done—hard work in a tropical climate.

But the Grimsladers were not afraid of hard work—with the exception of Fritz! While four fellows handled pick and spade, Ginger Rawlinson sat on a high branch of a tree to keep watch for the enemy. It was necessary to keep careful watch and ward with the gang of escaped convicts from Devil’s Island loose in the woods.

THE CONVICT INVADERS OF CASTAWAY ISLAND!

Friday, the monkey, wandered away into the woods, in search of nuts or monkey pals. Fatty Fritz remained in the hut.

Fritz was not wanted for digging. It was more trouble to make Fritz work than to do the work oneself. So he was assigned the task of cooking the lunch. Having parked a second breakfast, and then a third, Fritz was more disposed to take a nap than to do the cooking. With Sammy away, and the other fellows occupied, Fritz decided to take that nap and let dinner look after itself. So he sought a comfortable spot in the hut.

“Plow tat peastly sun!” grunted Fritz.  
 The hot tropical sunshine streamed through the roof in many places. In the night attack by the Devil’s Island gang the thatched roof had been set on fire with burning arrows, and the castaways had had an arduous task in putting out the fire after the enemy had been driven off.

The roof was in a parlous condition. The strong beams and joists were still intact, but most of the palm-leaf thatch was gone, and there were many openings.

Fritz Splitz grunted discontentedly as he sought for shade. He was tempted to go out and take his case under a shady tree. But the juniors would have spotted him and wanted to know why he was not in the cookhouse. Also, the convicts might happen!

Making the best of a bad job, Fritz Splitz spread a pile of blankets on the floor in the shadiest spot he could find, and disposed his fat person thereon.

Lying on his podgy back, with his saucer-eyes shut and his extensive mouth open, Fritz snored, and dreamed a happy dream that he was back in Germany, scoffing the succulent sausages of his native land.

“Urrrrrrgh!”  
 Fritz’s snore was suddenly changed for a

horrible gurgle. He came out of slumber with a bound, starting up, coughing and gurgling and guggling. Something had dropped into his wide-open mouth!

“Urrrrgh! Peastly prutes!” gurgled Fritz, under the impression that one of the juniors had come in, seen him asleep, and dropped something into his mouth to rouse him out.

But the next moment he saw that he was alone in the hut. He gurgled and gasped and spat, and cleared his podgy throat and blinked round him in astonishment.

“Mein gootness! Vat vas it tat trop in mein mouth’ mit itself ven tat I vas all alone before?” ejaculated Fritz. “Ach! I tink tat it vas some biece of ruppish from tat roof tat is broken! Plow tat peastly roof!”

And Fatty Fritz shifted his position a little, rolled over, and closed his saucer-eyes again. This time he lay on one side—and he had just succeeded in getting back to the land of dreams when something dropped on his fat ear—and he was startled out of slumber again. He sat up, rubbing his ear.

“Plow and pother!” grunted Fritz. “Plow te ting!” Then, in amazement, Fritz blinked at the object that had fallen on his ear and rolled on the blankets at his side.

It was not a fragment from the burnt and damaged roof. It was a loose stone—a fragment of sandstone from the cliff on to which the hut backed. A gurgle of alarm escaped from Fritz as he jumped to his feet.

“Mein gootness, tat peastly cliff is falling ofer on te hut, and I shall be grushed mit meinsel after!”

At that terrifying thought Fatty Fritz turned his alarmed eyes upward. Through the openings in the slanting roof he had a view of the high rugged cliff behind the building. The cliff rose almost like the wall of a house, and the hut was built against it. Certainly it was not likely to topple over, unless an earthquake occurred on Castaway Island.

Fritz Splitz blinked up at it; gasped with amazement; rubbed his eyes and blinked again. For the first thing he saw, as he blinked up through the broken roof, was a pair of tattered boots, above them a pair of ragged trousers!

Stupified with astonishment, Fritz Splitz wondered whether he was still asleep and dreaming.

Behind the hut the cliff was too steep for climbing or descending. Yet there, clamped against the perpendicular rock, was a human figure!

With his eyes popping from his podgy face, Fritz gazed at it. High above he now glimpsed two dark stubby, fierce faces peering over the edge. And then his starting eyes discerned that a rope, made of plaited wiry lianas, snaked down the face of the cliff, bearing the weight of the man who was descending.

Supported by the rope clamped against the cliff, getting what hold he could, Lautrec, the black-haired convict, was coming down—and it was a loose fragment dislodged in his descent that had dropped through the gap in the roof and awakened the fat Rhinelander.

Fatty Fritz stood motionless in the hut, goggling at the swinging figure, petrified

Then, as his podgy brain realised what it meant, he bounded forward, and hurtled out of the doorway, yelling:  
 "Look out! Tanger! Te convicts! Tey gum! Tey gum!"

### The Man in Possession!

GINGER RAWLINSON stared round.  
 "Tey gum!" howled Fritz.  
 "Is that Boche bloater batty?"  
 Ginger inquired of space.

"Ach! Tey gum!"  
 Jim Dainty and Dick, Streaky and Sandy, were hard at work in the field, out of sight of the face of the cliff. Ginger, perched on the branch of a tree at a little distance, was keeping vigilant watch.

From his perch he could watch the beach, the bay, and the Atlantic beyond, the juniors at work by the stream, and the palm grove and the jungle. Every approach to the hut was under his survey, and Ginger was not a fellow to fail in vigilance. But it had not occurred to him to watch the hut itself. Backing on a fifty-foot cliff, it was impregnable to attack from behind.

So when Fritz came hurtling out, yelling with alarm, Ginger shot a rapid glance round, assured himself that no enemy was in sight, and concluded that it was sheer funk on Fritz's part.

But he slid down from the tree, and grabbed the revolver from his belt. Fritz came panting up, frantic with terror. He caught Ginger by the arm, and hung on to him, gabbling.

"Tey gum!" gurgled Fritz. "Ach, mein gootness! Tey gum—tose peastly convicts—and Sammy away! Ach himmel! Ve vas all tead mit ourselves after! Safe me! Ach! Safe me!"

"You blithering, blethering Boche bloater!" roared Ginger. "Who come? What are you burbling about, you pie-faced porker?"

His voice reached the juniors in the field, and they stopped work and looked round. Jim Dainty dropped his spade, and plucked the revolver from his belt. All four castaways came running towards Ginger.

"What's up?" shouted Jim.  
 "Nothing!" hooted Ginger. "That potty porpoise thinks that the convicts are dropping out of the sky, or something!"

"That is so—tey trop out of te sky mit themselves!" howled Fritz. "Tey gum! Tey gum! Gum and look! Tey gum town te cliff on a rope mit themselves on te roof!"

"What?" roared Ginger.  
 He ran towards the hut, the other fellows at his heels. But Fatty Fritz did not follow them. One glimpse of the convicts was enough for Fatty Fritz. He ran on in the other direction, to hunt cover among the palms. In the hour of danger, hunting cover was the first thought that occurred to Fritz's podgy brain. Fortunately, the other castaways were made of sterner stuff.

"My giddy goloshes!" yelled Ginger Rawlinson. "Look!"

"Great pip!" gasped Jim.  
 They stared blankly at the sight that had so astonished Fritz. The black-haired convict, by this time, had almost reached the broken, dismantled roof that slanted away from the cliff. Holding the rope of wiry creepers with one hand, clawing at the rugged rock with the other, Lautrec was feeling with his feet for the roof below, only a yard from his ragged boots now.

But as the excited juniors came running up to the hut, unseen by Lautrec, for his face was to the rock, they were spotted by the two men above, and there was a shout of alarm from the top of the cliff.

"Voila les garçons! En garde, Lautrec!"  
 The man on the rope swung round from the rock, glaring across the hut at the juniors. His dark face, framed in wild, black hair, was like the face of a demon, in his rage. But for the fact that Fritz Splitz had been in the hut, and had been awakened by the falling fragments of sandstone, that cunning attack must have placed the convicts in possession of the building. Evidently they knew that Sammy was away—no doubt they had been watching from cover, and had seen him go.

Swinging against the rock, Lautrec had his bamboo bow slung on his back, his goatskin quiver of arrows hanging at his side. How

deadly his aim was with that weapon the Grimsladers knew.

Ginger and Jim threw up their sixshooters to take aim. Unwilling as they were to fire on even a desperate villain like the black-haired convict from Devil's Island, they had no choice, and they had Sammy's orders.

Crack, crack!  
 The two shots rang out together, the bullets splintering on the face of the cliff. But, even as the firearms were lifted, the black-haired ruffian let go the rope and dropped.

Villain as he was, the man had courage and quick decision. He dropped on the shattered roof, and went crashing through. The revolver-shots splattered on the rock above him, where he had been a second before.

Crash! went the black-haired convict through the roof. There was a heavy bump inside the hut. Fritz's pile of blankets served the convict's turn, and it was lucky for him that he landed on them. Scratched and torn by the plunge through the broken roof, bleeding from a dozen cuts and scratches, the agile rascal was on his feet again in a flash, and leaping to the door of the hut.

"Quick!" yelled Jim Dainty.  
 He raced up to the hut. Whether Lautrec had been hit or not the Grimsladers did not know for the moment. But he was inside the hut, and they rushed forward to get in before he could close the door on them.

Slam! The door banged in their faces.  
 Jim Dainty reached it, and hurled his weight on it. But even as he struck the hard wood with his shoulder a bar within was jamming into the sockets. The door quivered, creaked, and groaned, but it held fast. Another second and another bar was in place, and the door was impregnable. Jim staggered back from it, panting.

Ginger shoved him aside. The spy-hole in the door of the hut was open. The red-headed junior of Grimslade thrust the muzzle of his revolver in, and pulled trigger at random. The bullet whizzed across the hut and crashed on the farther wall; but a yell of mockery from the black-haired convict told that it had not hit him. The next moment the sliding panel over the spy-hole was closed.

"Look out!" yelled Dick Dawson, as a whizzing stone from above struck him on the shoulder.

Jim stared up. The two convicts on the summit of the cliff were glaring down, and flinging loose stones. But for the alarm given by Fritz, they would have followed Lautrec down the rope of lianas, and joined him in the hut. That they dared not attempt now, exposed to the fire of the revolvers. Ginger and Jim could have picked them off like partridges as they descended.

Clutching up loose fragments of stone, they hurled them down at the juniors, to make what diversion they could in favour of their associate. A jagged lump of sandstone barely missed Jim Dainty's upturned face, grazed his shoulder, and crashed to his feet. He threw up his revolver and fired back.

There was a yell from the cliff-top. One of the ruffians clapped a hand to his swarthy, bearded cheek, where a bullet had cut away a strip of skin. Instantly the two dark faces vanished. Neither of them was seen looking over the precipice again. The two convicts, for the present, at least, kept back out of fire.

Streaky ran round to the window at the side of the hut. But the thick wooden shutter was already closed, and Lautrec was barring it within. The black-haired convict was in possession of the castaways' home.

But his possession was not likely to remain undisputed. Ginger's eyes gleamed, his face as red as his hair with rage and excitement.

"The ladder!" he snapped. "Come on, Streaky!"

They ran for the ladder, which Sammy had made long ago, and which now stood leaning against a tree, where it had last been used in gathering bananas. Ginger and Streaky grasped it, and rushed it back towards the hut. The walls were strong and sound; they had been built for defence. But the broken roof, rived with great gaps, gave access to the interior—only a ladder was needed.

It was slammed against the front of the building, and Ginger led the way up, his revolver in his hand. To lean over the broken roof, and to fire down on the convict within, was

Ginger's idea—unless he surrendered, when Ginger was ready to jump in and secure him.

Ginger's red head was bent over the slanting roof, and he stared in at a jagged gap between two thick joists. A fierce, dark face in a mane of tossing black hair glared up at him. Lautrec's bow was in his hands, his arrow drawn back to the head, and he was watching. Evidently he had heard the ladder slam, and knew what to expect.

Only a swift jerk backwards saved Ginger's life. He had no time to bring his firearm to bear before the arrow flew. Swift as he was, the barbed point tore through his mop of red hair, grazing his skull, as he jerked back.

He lost his footing on the ladder, stumbled back, and rolled helplessly down, carrying away Jim Dainty, who was following him up. The two of them sprawled over Dick and Sandy and Streaky. For a few moments there was a wild mix-up on the ground in front of the hut.

"My giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger, as he scrambled up, panting. A feather of the arrow was sticking in his hair, and he grabbed it out. "That was a close thing! Keep off that ladder! He's ready with that dashed bow! Oh, my giddy goloshes! We'll never be able to get into the hut now. That brute holds the whip-hand!"

A yell of defiance and triumph came from within the hut.

The juniors exchanged furious looks. There was no getting in at the gaps in the roof. Lautrec, watching within, was ready to drive an arrow into the first face that appeared in his sight. Neither was he disposed to wait to be attacked.

As the juniors stood in dismayed and exasperated consultation, the spyhole in the door opened and an arrow whizzed out, missing Streaky Bacon by hardly more than an inch.

"Cover!" panted Jim.  
 Before another arrow could whiz the juniors hunted cover. And a yell of ferocious mockery followed them from the hut.

### At Grips with the Convicts!

"IF Sammy were here—" breathed Jim Dainty.

"Sammy will hear the shooting!" said Dick. "He won't be long getting back after hearing the shots."

"Unless he's too far off to hear," said Ginger. "Might be right across the jolly old island by this time."

The five juniors were in cover, lying or kneeling behind rocks at a little distance from the hut. More than an hour had passed, and the man in possession held them at bay.

But for Lautrec's cunning in providing himself with bow and arrows, they would have rushed the hut fast enough. But all the advantage was on the side of the man who could shoot from cover, and they were not going to throw away their lives.

Though they could not see the black-haired desperado they knew that he was watching, for when Jim showed his hat over the rock an arrow tore it from his hand instantly. He looked rather grimly at the hole through the hat, through which the arrow had torn. If his head had been in it—

Somewhere on Castaway Island Sammy Sparshott was hunting for the gang from Devil's Island. If he heard the shooting he was sure to hurry home. But did he hear it? An hour had passed and there was no sign of Sammy returning. He might be on the western beach of the lonely island, out of sound of a shot, or deep in the tropical forest, where the passage of sound was deadened by the heavy foliage and curtain-like creepers.

"Where's Fritz?" asked Sandy Bean suddenly.

They had forgotten Fatty Fritz, who had not been seen since he had bolted out of the hut and given the alarm.

"Skulking somewhere!" growled Ginger. "Never mind Fritz! Blow Fritz! I wish Sammy would come!"

"Well, we've got that brute cornered, anyhow!" said Jim. "He's got hold of the hut—but he can't get away. Any more than we can get at him! Sammy will put paid to him when he gets back!"

The Grimsladers had no doubt about that. Their faith in their headmaster was unlimited.

Sammy would handle the situation somehow once he was on the spot.

"Look!" muttered Dick, pointing upward. A swarthy face was peering cautiously over the cliff-edge, far above the hut. Evidently, the two other convicts were still there.

"Leave him to me!" breathed Jim.

He lifted his revolver and took aim at the swarthy face high above. But the glint of the sunlight on the barrel caught the wary eyes of the convict, and he backed instantly out of view. Jim did not pull trigger. Sammy's orders were strict to save every possible cartridge.

They were near enough to hear sounds of Lautrec moving in the hut. They could guess that he was rooting through the stores there, in search of firearms. But the only firearms on Castaway Island were the three revolvers, safely in possession of the castaways. If he found the box of cartridges they would be of no use to him. But there were other weapons—axes and knives.

The juniors gritted their teeth as they listened. But they could hardly blame themselves—even Sammy had not foreseen that cunning attack by a rope down the cliff. If Sammy would only come—

But Sammy did not come. If he had not heard the firing he would not be back till sunset. The food was in the little cookhouse close to the hut, under fire of Lautrec if they approached it. But the juniors cared little for that; they made a meal of bananas and coconuts as they lay in cover of the rocks. Fritz Splitz was not there to grumble at the short commons. Where Fritz was they neither knew nor cared—he was welcome to skulk in hiding if he liked.

"Listen!" muttered Streaky.

Lautrec's voice was heard shouting from the hut. Evidently he was calling to his comrades on the cliff above. The juniors listened, but it was not easy to make out the rapid French, part of it argot—the slang of the Paris apache. But they caught words here and there. Answering yells from the top of the cliff told that the two ruffians there heard the call of their leader. But they did not show themselves.

"The brute's giving them their orders!" breathed Ginger. "I caught the word 'nuit'—that means night! Was he telling them to join him there after dark?"

"They may try it after dark. When they get hold of weapons again they'll risk coming to close quarters," said Jim Dainty grimly. "But Sammy will be back before dark."

It was weary waiting while the long, hot hours passed. But they could do nothing but wait, while the sun sank lower over the hill of Castaway Island, and the sunset turned the Atlantic into a sheet of glowing crimson.

Lower yet sank the burning sun, dipping behind the woods on the island hill. Shadows lengthened among the palms, and still Sammy did not come. Darkness was stealing over the sea.

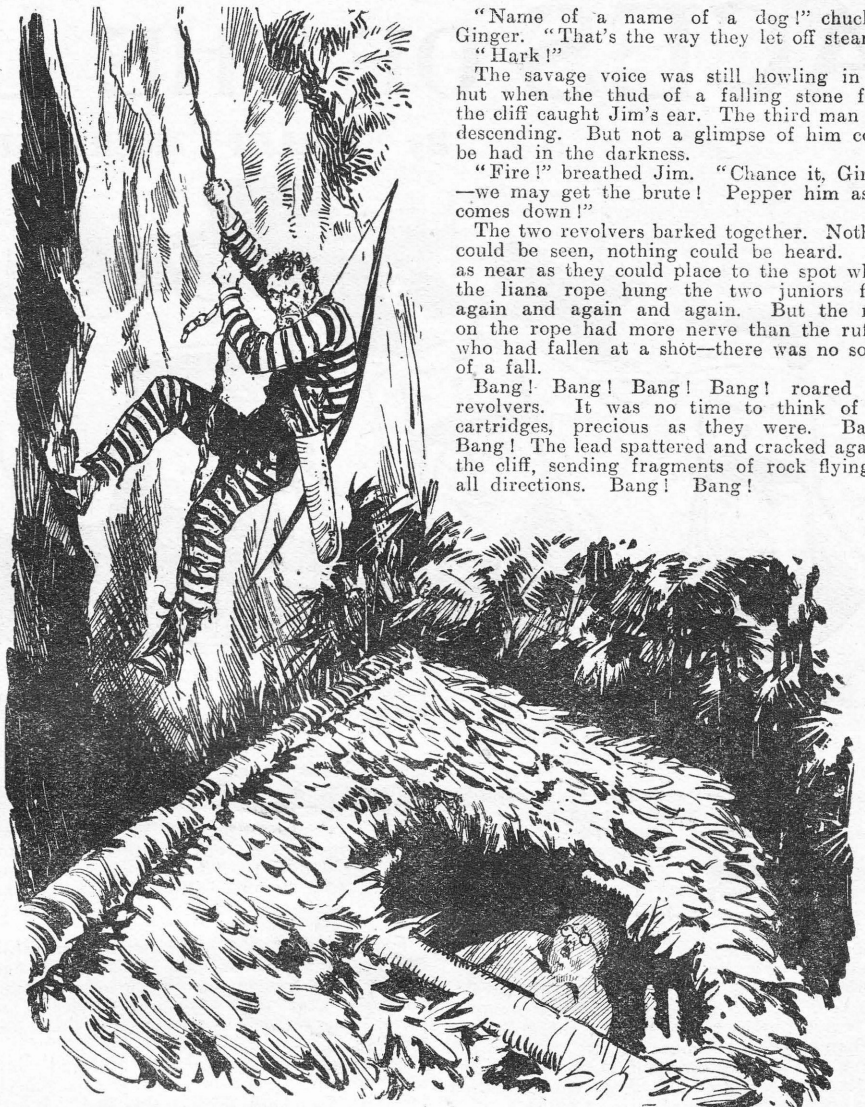
Anxiously the Grimslade juniors watched for Dr. Sparshott to return, and probably Lautrec, in the hut, was watching as anxiously. But it seemed that fortune was to favour the desperado from Devil's Island, and not the castaways.

For Sammy Sparshott did not come. He had told the schoolboys that he would be back at sunset, and now the last glimmer of daylight was going, and the stars coming out over the ocean. Where was Sammy?

Jim Dainty was watching the cliff over the hut. It was a black mass against the dark sky, now that the sun was gone. The rope of lianas hanging against it could not be seen. He could see nothing but that black mass, and he listened intently for a sound of the convicts descending.

He could have little doubt that that was their game, and if they succeeded in joining Lautrec in the hut the juniors would have three armed and desperate men to deal with. The convicts would risk coming to close quarters then, with axes and knives in their savage hands—and in the darkness shooting would be uncertain.

"Where can Sammy be?" breathed Dick



*With his eyes popping from his podgy face, Fritz stared upwards through the roof of the hut. In petrified terror he saw Lautrec, the black-haired convict, descending the sheer rock on a rope, his bamboo bow slung on his back, his goatskin quiver of arrows hanging at his side.*

Dawson. "Has something happened to Sammy?"

"For goodness' sake don't think of that!" muttered Ginger. "Jim, those brutes will be coming to join that scoundrel! We've got to get them, dark or no dark!"

"Listen!" whispered Jim. "We can see nothing. But listen!"

With straining ears and tense nerves the juniors listened. There was a sound in the silence, of a scraping against the face of the cliff. Faint but clear it came to them. There was a man on the rope of plaited lianas descending to join the black-haired ruffian in the hut. The faintest glimmer of a tattered cotton shirt caught Jim's straining eyes.

Bang!

The sudden roar of the revolver made all the juniors start as it rolled with a thousand echoes over the silent island. A cry and a crashing fall followed—crash on crash—as the falling man drove through the shattered roof below him.

"My giddy goloshes! Was he hit?" breathed Ginger.

"Goodness knows! He fell, anyway."

"Nom d'un nom d'un nom!" came a voice, yelling with rage from the hut. It was not Lautrec's voice. "Nom d'un nom d'un chien!"

The man who had fallen had not been hit by the bullet; the shot had startled him into letting go the rope. But he was evidently hurt by his fall, and for long minutes he was heard yelling imprecations in his own tongue.

"Name of a name of a dog!" chuckled Ginger. "That's the way they let off steam!"

"Hark!"

The savage voice was still howling in the hut when the thud of a falling stone from the cliff caught Jim's ear. The third man was descending. But not a glimpse of him could be had in the darkness.

"Fire!" breathed Jim. "Chance it, Ginger—we may get the brute! Pepper him as he comes down!"

The two revolvers barked together. Nothing could be seen, nothing could be heard. But as near as they could place to the spot where the liana rope hung the two juniors fired again and again and again. But the man on the rope had more nerve than the ruffian who had fallen at a shot—there was no sound of a fall.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! roared the revolvers. It was no time to think of the cartridges, precious as they were. Bang! Bang! The lead spattered and cracked against the cliff, sending fragments of rock flying in all directions. Bang! Bang!

There was a scrambling sound, a thud of boots on the floor of the hut. Jim, about to pull trigger again, checked himself as he heard it. The man on the rope had landed in the hut. The random fire in the darkness had failed to get him.

"That's that!" muttered Jim, gritting his teeth. "They're together now, and—"

He breathed hard. The tug-o-war was coming!

They could hear the muttering voices of the three desperadoes in the hut. There was a sound of bars being removed from the door. In the darkness nothing could be seen. But the juniors knew what to look for—the rush of three brawny and desperate men, armed with axe and knife!

If Sammy would only come!

Where was Sammy?

"They're coming, Ginger! Stand ready, you chaps!"

Jim Dainty whispered the words to his chums. They could see nothing in the darkness; but they had heard the door of the hut open, and knew that in a few seconds now the convicts would make a rush. Three desperate convicts, armed with hatchet and knives, against the schoolboy castaways!

And still Sammy had not come!

*There are thrills galore in next week's exciting story featuring Jim Dainty & Co., the Grimslade crusoes. Make sure you read it, buddies!*