

“THE LAW OF THE SIX-GUN!”

THRILL-PACKED STORY OF THE
WILD WEST STARTS TO-DAY.

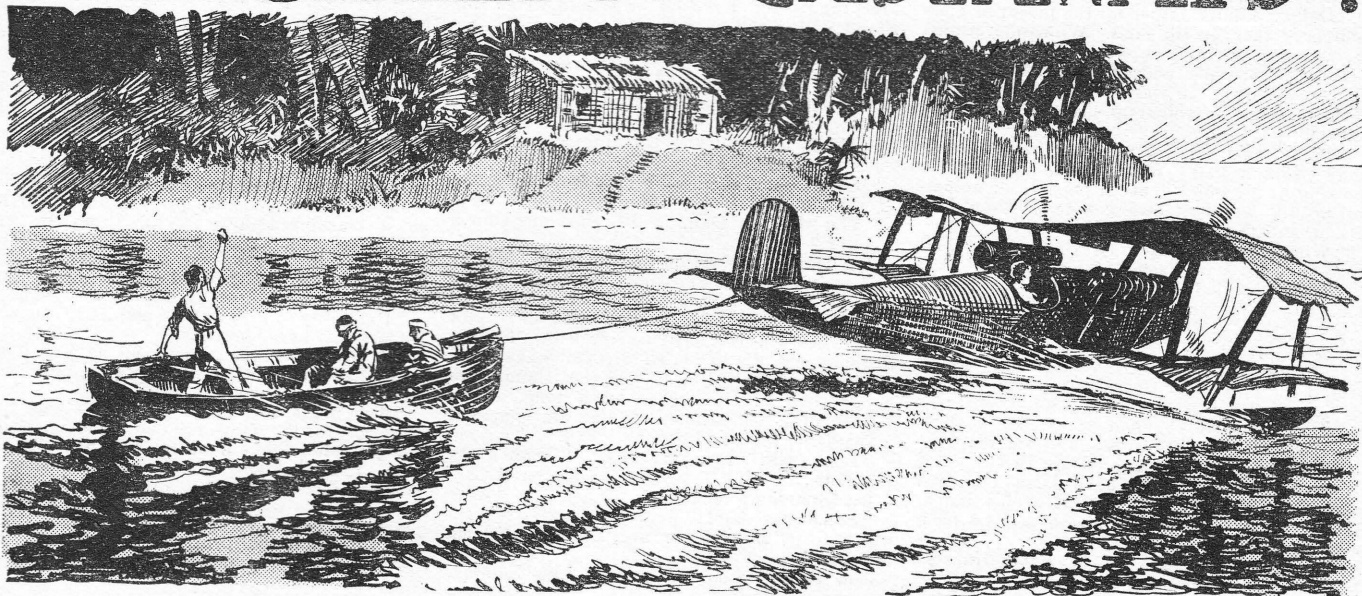
The RANGER 2^D

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The LAW
of the
SIX-GUN!

THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!



A Message from the Sea.



HEV! It's hot!"

"It is!"

"It are!"

Jim Dainty and his chums wiped the perspiration from their brows. Even Dr. Sparshott smiled at the unanimous verdict of his youthful charges. It certainly was hot on Castaway Island as the

hour of noon approached.

For the past few hours the schoolboy Crusoes, under the direction of "Sammy" Sparshott, had been busily engaged in repairing the thatched roof of their hut—with the exception of Fritz Splitz. The fat German junior never liked work, at the best of times, and work in the tropical heat of Castaway Island he was very careful to avoid.

The fat German boy lay in the shade of the palms, mounting guard over the two escaped convicts from Devil's Island who had attempted to seize possession of Castaway Island and the precious stores of the Grimslade party. Yet, even with an automatic in his podgy hands, and with instructions to use it, should the prisoners attempt to make a break for freedom, Fritz Splitz did not feel too happy.

The savage, ferocious look on Lautrec's face unnerved him. The leader of the escaped convicts had not been taken prisoner until after a desperate struggle. Now he writhed and twisted in his bonds in a vain effort to escape and avenge himself upon the schoolmaster who had bested him. The remaining prisoner took his captivity philosophically. He was badly wounded, and on that account was unable to plan further attempts upon the Grimslade Castaways, even if he could have been free of his bonds. But with the black-haired, swarthy Lautrec it was different.

Fritz Splitz had felt inclined to doze. He had awakened with a start to see the swarthy Frenchman rolling over and over towards him. "Stop it mit yourself, you peastly convict!" yelled Fritz, pointing the automatic at the fierce-eyed convict. "One yard more you come and a bullet you will stop, ain't it?"

The swarthy Lautrec rolled to a halt. He had hoped to catch the fat junior napping. The desperate plan of seizing Fritz and compelling him to cut his bonds had been in the Frenchman's mind, but he gave it up now. Even a funk like Fritz was a dangerous opponent with a gun in his hand.

"Diable!" growled Lautrec. "If only my hands were free—"

Fritz glanced nervously around him. The Grimslade juniors were by the hut, fifty yards or more away from the group of palms. But in the circumstances, fifty yards was exactly forty-nine yards too many for the funky Fritz. He would have been more alarmed still had he known that Dr. Sparshott, in entrusting him with the automatic, had very deliberately unloaded it beforehand. Fritz with a death-dealing weapon in his hands was a dangerous individual. Sammy knew that, and had acted accordingly.

"Mein gootness!" murmured Fritz. "It is a peastly pain I have in mein pread-pasket. I tink I am hungry ain't it?"

His fat face wreathed into smiles as he saw the juniors down tools and stroll towards the palms.

"Time for grub!" exclaimed Jim Dainty.

GOOD - BYE TO CASTAWAY ISLAND!

"How have the prisoners been behaving themselves, Fritz?"

"I have had a treadful time mit tem," groaned Fritz. "Derrible time, in fact!"

"Well, we'll rope them up to the trees while we have a dip before grub," said Ginger Rawlinson. "Lend a hand here, my hearties."

Ginger Rawlinson, Jim Dainty, and Dick Dawson roped the convicts to the trunks of the palms, and then joined Sandy Bean and Streaky Bacon, who were waiting for them by the water's edge.

The schoolboy Crusoes enjoyed that dip after their labours of the morning. The broad Atlantic was calm and placid beneath the heat haze, and the water was delightfully warm.

"Race you out to the point, Streaky!" sang out Jim Dainty.

"Come on, then!" replied Streaky Bacon, and began to strike out with tremendous energy.

Jim Dainty went after him with a rush, what time Dawson & Co. took things easy and were content to watch the keen struggle between Jim and Streaky. Both were first-class swimmers, and as the point of the island came within a dozen yards of them Jim and Streaky put in a final spurt. Their arms flashed in and out of the blue water with the precision of machinery, and Streaky reckoned he would beat his chum by a yard, and nothing

more. What happened next Streaky hardly knew. His head was almost lost to sight in the water, when something struck him between the eyes. It was not a severe blow, but it made Streaky howl.

"Yaroooh!"

"What's wrong, Streaky?" panted Jim Dainty, reaching his chum.

"I biffed my face on something," spluttered Streaky, "and I've swallowed about a pint of sea water!"

He trod water and gazed about him. Jim did likewise. And almost in the same moment they saw what it was that Streaky had encountered. A large wine bottle bobbed up and down a few yards away, and it was that, obviously, which Streaky had fouled.

"It's a bottle!" said Jim Dainty. "Corked, too!"

Both juniors swam towards the bottle, and Jim Dainty was the first to reach it.

"Eureka! It's a message from someone! Look, Streaky!"

Streaky Bacon whooped his excitement. Through the glass of the bottle he could plainly see a rolled-up sheet of paper, with writing on it.

"Let's take it back to Sammy," said Jim Dainty, and, turning, he started back for the beach.

To the Rescue!

THE rest of the Grimsladers were sunning themselves when Jim and Streaky appeared, the former holding the bottle aloft.

"My giddy goloshes!" exclaimed Ginger Rawlinson, the first to catch sight of the paper inside the bottle. "It's a message!"

Fritz Splitz grunted. He was not interested in any message the vast Atlantic had given up. Fritz was thinking of lunch.

"Ach! Vy worry about te peastly pottle? I have a treadful bain in mein pread-pasket before! I vas hungry mit meimself!"

No one, however, paid any attention to Fritz. The excited castaways were examining the wine bottle and holding it up to the light in an effort to read the writing which was visible on the rolled-up paper inside.

"It's in French!" declared Jim Dainty at length. "Better let old Sammy have it."

"Old Sammy" is here, you disrespectful young rascal!" Dr. Sparshott's voice made the juniors jump. "You must remember not to refer to your headmaster as old Sammy, Dainty! Now, what is it you have found?"

Jim explained how Streaky had struck his

head against the bottle while swimming, and handed over the bottle.

Dr. Sparshott examined it, saw the written message inside, and carefully broke off the neck of the bottle against a rock. Even on Castaway Island Dr. Sparshott was thorough.

"Dainty, kindly gather up the pieces of glass and bury them in the sand. We cannot afford to have cut feet in this party."

Dainty hurriedly obeyed, but, like the rest of the castaways, he was all eagerness to know what message the rolled-up sheet of paper contained.

"Boys," said Dr. Sparshott at length, "this may prove a lucky find indeed. If what is passing in my mind is at all possible of accomplishment, we shall owe a vote of thanks to Bacon and Dainty."

"What's the message say, sir?" asked Jim Dainty. "It's in French, isn't it, sir?"

"It is," smiled Dr. Sparshott; "so I will translate it for you. Listen!"

In English the strange message read as follows:

"My companion and I are stranded on an island"—here Dr. Sparshott broke off to explain that a compass bearing of the island's position followed—"upon which we crashed. Both of us are badly injured, and our seaplane is damaged. We have supplies for twenty days. When those twenty days have passed we shall starve or die of thirst. In Heaven's name, the finder of this message please save us from such a fate."

Dr. Sparshott broke off, a thoughtful expression on his bronzed features.

"That's about the gist of it, my boys," he said. "We must try to get to these unfortunate men."

"Who are they, sir?" asked Jim Dainty.

"According to this message, they are two French airmen who were sent out to locate the convicts who escaped from Devil's Island," explained Sammy. "And, what is more important, my boys, they are within a few hours' sail of this island. After we have eaten, Dainty, you and I will take out the boat in an effort to locate these injured airmen and their plane. Come!"

He stowed the message inside his shirt and strode back to the hut. After a hasty meal, Dr. Sparshott loaded the castaways' boat with a supply of stores, and drew Ginger Rawlinson on one side.

"Rawlinson, I'm going to leave you in charge of the party."

"Yes, sir."

"You will stand no nonsense from the prisoners, you understand," added Dr. Sparshott. "If they should give any trouble, stop their rations. If they should break free, don't hesitate to shoot. They are dangerous men."

"Leave it to me, sir," replied Ginger.

Dr. Sparshott handed him the two revolvers.

"I am taking Dainty with me on this trip to sea, and I don't suppose we shall be back until to-morrow. I can depend upon you, Rawlinson?"

"Absolutely, sir! Then you think you'll find this island the airmen speak of?"

"If their compass bearing is a correct one, I cannot miss it, my boy. In any case, it is our duty to try to succour these unfortunate men. Come, Dainty!"

Jim Dainty took a grip of the gunwale of the boat and began to run it down the beach into the water. Watched by his envious chums, he stepped the mast and hoisted the sail. Dr. Sparshott took the tiller. The boat began to glide out of the bay as the slight breeze filled the sail, and soon the Grimslade juniors were but specks in the distance.

Ginger Rawlinson & Co. waved their farewells until the boat was lost to sight, whilst Dr. Sparshott, setting a compass course, headed the boat across the rolling expanse of the vast Atlantic and hoped for the best.

The Stranded Airmen.

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Worried thoughts were passing through his mind now. Supposing they lost their way? Supposing their supply of food ran

out, or, worse still, their water? Supposing a tropical storm overtook them?

Dr. Sparshott noticed the unusual gravity on Jim Dainty's face, and smiled reassuringly.

"Don't worry, my boy," he said cheerfully. "Grimslade will win through. At the rate we are progressing, I reckon we should strike this island within the next hour."

It seemed an interminable hour to Jim Dainty, but his heart leapt high when, through the mist blanketing the distant view of the rolling Atlantic, he caught a sight of land.

"Land-ho, sir!" he exclaimed, standing upright in the boat and pointing to starboard.

"It's an island, sir!"

Dr. Sparshott shaded his eyes from the glare of the sun and looked intently.

"You're right, Dainty. I'll shift our course a point."

Jim Dainty was all excitement now. Nearer and nearer to the view came the island, rising out of the sea like a ghost, but no sign of life greeted the boat as it forged on. Not even when Jim reckoned he was within hailing distance did the stranded airmen make their presence known. But it was the island, sure enough. To the right, on a long, sandy stretch of beach, Jim made out the shape of a seaplane, high and dry.

"Look, sir!" he exclaimed. "There's the seaplane!"

Dr. Sparshott looked.

"Somewhat badly damaged, too," he observed. "But where are the two French airmen?"

Jim Dainty shook his head. Like Sammy, he was wondering whether the two men had succumbed to their injuries.

The boat ran into a tiny cove and Jim jumped out, painter in hand. Dr. Sammy Sparshott helped him to run the boat up on to the beach, clear of the water, saw that the painter was made secure, and then strode up the shelving beach, hands cupped to his mouth.

"Hallo, there!" he bellowed. "Hallo, there!"

Still came no answering shout. With Jim Dainty at his heels, the Grimslade headmaster entered the cluster of palms which lay beyond the beach and gazed about him keenly. Jim's sharp eyes detected the natural cave which probably served as a shelter for the two stranded airmen, and excitedly he pointed it out.

"That looks likely, my boy!" conceded Dr. Sparshott.

He stood at the mouth of the cave, noting with a certain amount of satisfaction the trampled-down creepers.

"Hallo, there!" His voice awoke the echoes of the cave and rolled back at him mockingly. When the echoes died away, a faint moan filtered out of the cave.

"Come on, my boy!" said Dr. Sparshott. "They are in there, and they must be in a bad way, or else they would have come out to meet us."

He entered the cave with Jim at his heels, carrying a first-aid emergency outfit. And when their eyes were accustomed to the dimness of the cave, both Jim and Sammy saw the men for whom they had searched.

"Heaven be praised!" A bearded, wan-faced man about Sammy's age raised himself on his elbow and croaked the words. "Our prayers have been answered. Water—water, monsieur!"

Dr. Sparshott sank on one knee and allowed the injured man to drink sparingly from his water-bottle. His companion lay dreadfully still—so motionless that Jim Dainty, peering at him, thought that he no longer lived. But the boy saw the stricken man's eyelids flicker for a moment, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

"He's alive, sir."

Dr. Sparshott crossed over to the second airman and forced the neck of the water-bottle between his tightly clenched jaws. The precious fluid began to revive him almost immediately. His eyes opened wide, his hands clutched at the bottle greedily in an attempt to drain it. Gently but firmly Dr. Sparshott withdrew the bottle.

"Take it easy, my friend," he said, with a smile. "You shall have more in a moment. It would be fatal to drink more just now."

Another hour went by before the stricken airmen made any attempt to answer questions or ask any. Then Dr. Sparshott and Jim Dainty learned that the two Frenchmen had been stranded on the tropical island for nineteen days, as far as they could gauge it, and that their supplies of food and water had given out.

"Well, messieurs," said Dr. Sparshott, "we at least have plenty of stores on our own island, and the best thing for us to do is to get you there as quickly as possible. Dainty, help me carry them out. Careful, they appear to be badly crooked."

In the full light of day Dr. Sparshott was able to make a better examination of the injured men. Both had broken legs and head wounds, whilst one—the pilot of the seaplane, so it transpired—had fractured a rib and broken an arm. With rough-and-ready splints Dr. Sparshott bound up their wounds, after having bathed and treated them with an antiseptic. Then he drew Dainty on one side.

"I'm going to look at that seaplane," he said. "Just wait here, my boy."

Dr. Sparshott was gone about half an hour, and when he returned his face was alight with excitement.

"The plane as a plane is useless," he told Dainty, "for the wings are badly damaged, and the propeller looks none too reliable. In any case, I don't know how to pilot a machine. But the floats of the machine are sound, and, what is more important to us, there is ample petrol in the tanks. Dainty, I have an idea that this plane will prove our salvation."

"You mean we shall be able to leave Castaway Island, sir?"

Dr. Sparshott grinned.

"A sporting chance, anyway, my boy. Now we'll make these poor fellows comfortable for the night, and at dawn to-morrow we will set off for Castaway Island."

Promptly at dawn the injured men were carried, one by one, to the boat. That done, Dr. Sparshott left Jim Dainty to make them as comfortable as possible whilst he ran across to where the seaplane had crashed on the soft sands. The floats of the plane were a trifle buckled, but they were still seaworthy, and Dr. Sparshott's one concern now was to shift the plane down to the water's edge. The water lapped the beach ten yards away, but those ten yards, even with Jim Dainty to help him drag the seaplane across the sands, drew the perspiration in great beads from Dr. Sparshott's brow. But at last the floats of the plane touched the water, and the damaged machine drifted out on the tide.

Dr. Sparshott climbed into the cockpit.

"You've got your instructions, Dainty. When you've picked up the rope and fixed it take charge of the tiller of the boat." He glanced anxiously at the sky. "I'm going to try to make Castaway Island at once. Later the weather might change."

Jim Dainty's reply was drowned in the roar of the seaplane's engine as Dr. Sparshott handled the self-starter. Previously he had "primed" the cylinders so that the engine fired first time. As he opened the throttle of the engine the plane began to move forward, a long rope trailing through the water behind it.

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Castaway Island lay bathed in the splendour of a tropic morn when its familiar outline hove

into sight, and Jim, waving frantically, wondered why the noise of the seaplane's engine, let alone the sight of the taxiing craft and its tow, did not bring the Grimslade juniors rushing to the beach.

But a strange silence settled on Castaway Island. Something was amiss—both Sammy and Jim Dainty were aware of that when the former instinctively let the engine fade into silence. Like Jim, Dr. Sparshott looked hard towards the palms where the two prisoners should have been. But there was only one of them. Lautree, the swarthy, savage leader, was missing!

Good-bye to Castaway Island!

"TELL you it will work!" Ginger Rawlinson gazed proudly at his handiwork, whilst Streaky & Co. and Fritz Splitz eyed it dubiously.

On the table in the hut was a bully beef tin—at least, it had been a bully beef tin once. Now it contained a very peculiar mixture of live revolver bullets, three or four dozen nails, broken glass, and sharp pieces of rock.

"And you call that a depth charge?" asked Dick Dawson rather sarcastically.

"Just that!" admitted Ginger proudly. "It's strong enough to put paid to the octopus of the treasure pit, anyway."

Still Dick Dawson was not convinced. Like the rest of the castaways, he had seen the giant octopus which guarded the grim pit which was known to contain the treasure of the black King of Hayti; but in his opinion that treasure would never be recovered from its hundred-years-old hiding-place by such rough-and-ready methods as Ginger now contemplated.

"If that's a home-made depth charge, Ginger," he began, "how on earth do you intend to fire it? Why—"

Ginger Rawlinson grinned broadly and winked.

"Another brain-wave of mine, old son," he explained. "You see, secured on the inner side of the lid of this tin I have grouped about a dozen live cartridges. All I've got to do is to lower this tin into the treasure pit on the end of a rope, wait for the octopus to show up, and then fire a shot into the tin where the live cartridges are placed."

Still the Grimsladers were not convinced.

"Once this little lot goes off I reckon, it will put paid to the biggest octopus. Anyway, I'm going to try. Think of the surprise old Sammy will get when he returns and finds that we've unearthed the giddy treasure. Come on!"

He picked up his home-made depth charge, which had been carefully sealed and made watertight by spreading clay over the seams of the tin, and, with a coil of rope over his arm, led the way to the ravine. The path lay through the palm-grove to the stream and to the gurgling waterfall. It was a severe climb to the rocky ledge which lay at the top of the waterfall, but the juniors, even Fritz, had made the journey before. In a breathless, excited group the castaways entered the gloomy cavern, Dawson holding aloft a hurricane lamp, which shed an eerie glow over the basaltic rock.

The juniors advanced, and, familiar now as was the sight of the grisly skeleton which marked the route to the treasure pit, they could scarcely repress a shudder as they passed the whitened bones and the grinning skull.

Dick Dawson led the way to the fissure where a wall of rock had been displaced, revealing the opening beyond. In single file the castaways went along to the end of the fissure, halting on the narrow ledge and staring down into the deep, gloomy chasm.

"Now let's get busy!" said Ginger excitedly. "Fasten one of the lanterns to the rope, Dick. Good man! Now!"

Lowering the depth charge on the end of the rope, Streaky heard the faint splash as it met the water below. Then, with staring eyes, the juniors waited for the monster of the pit to emerge from his subterranean hiding-place.

It seemed ages before the waters stirred. Something long and sinuous flashed into the rays of the lantern bobbing on the rope just clear of the water—the tentacle of an octopus.

"Now, Ginger!" breathed Dick Dawson.

But Ginger was in no hurry. He wanted to catch a better glimpse of the monster before he fired at the depth charge. The waters thrashed into a foam as further tentacles appeared. Then Ginger drew his revolver, and, leaning over the rocky ledge, took careful aim at the bully beef tin. He had marked in a rough circle where the live cartridges had been placed, detonators uppermost, and he knew that one shot, striking the detonator caps fairly, would be sufficient to loose off the full charge.

The Grimsladers could hardly control themselves. Then—

Bang!

The crack of the revolver as Ginger pulled the trigger was at once magnified a thousand times into an earsplitting roar as the depth charge was fired off. Ginger's bullet had hit the target fair and square. Echo after echo boomed forth from the bottom of the pit, followed by the furious thrashing of the tentacles of the monster, then an unearthly silence.

The lantern which had been fastened to the rope had been blown to smithereens, and the juniors on the ledge could not see the ring of water. But Dawson was quick to lower his lantern on another rope, and as it reached the water's edge a cheer went up from the castaways, for Ginger Rawlinson's depth charge had done the trick.

The giant octopus was dead!

"I'm going down!" exclaimed Ginger. "We know where the treasure chests are. I'm going to rope one of them. When I yell, stand by to pull it up."

Before his chums could dissuade him, Ginger began to shin down the rope. They watched him disappear and heard the soft splash of his body striking the water. Next they heard his voice muffled, but triumphant.

"The octopus has taken the count. I'm going to dive!"

Ginger surface dived, and his widely staring eyes beheld several iron-bound chests below the surface. With trembling hands he secured the rope to one of them, and then broke surface again.

"Pull, my hearties!" he roared. "Here's the giddy treasure!"

The juniors pulled with a will. Up came a heavy chest, festooned with weeds and barnacles. Accompanying it came the triumphant Ginger.

Panting, he clambered on to the ledge.

"There are several chests down there!" he exclaimed. "But let's get this one out into the light and have a squint at it."

The castaways dragged the chest through the cavern and out into the daylight. Sandy Bean, who had thoughtfully brought along a crowbar, began to force the lid. The juniors clustered round him. But not one of them even in his wildest fit of imagination had reckoned to see such a collection of glittering gems as was revealed when the heavy, iron-bound lid was thrown back. Diamonds lay haphazardly side by side with blood-red rubies. Pearls, gleaming dully, nestled against the deep glow of emeralds and topaz. It was a sight the Grimsladers would never forget.

"A king's ransom!" breathed Ginger. "My giddy goloshes! My giddy—" He broke off, and his jaw dropped, for surveying them with a gloating, triumphant expression on his black, swarthy face was Lautree!

"Look out!" Even as Ginger yelled the warning and dived for his revolver, Lautree sprang.

He saw at a glance that, with the exception of Ginger, the party was unarmed. With the spring of a tiger, Lautree landed on Ginger, sending him crashing back. His fingers sought for and found the two revolvers, and in a second they were in his grasp.

Then, snarling like a wild animal, Lautree got to his feet, the revolvers levelled at the astonished party.

"It is my turn now, my clever children!" he rasped. "You did not think that Lautree would escape? Ciel, if only I had the schoolmaster here now!"

"The schoolmaster is here!"

Lautree and the Grimsladers wheeled sharply as that familiar voice awoke the echoes. Something sprang at the swarthy Frenchman from the shadows. Something smote him full on the chin. Like a poleaxed ox, the Frenchman went down, the revolvers clattering to the rocky floor.

Over the prostrate convict stood Dr. Sparshott. Just behind Sammy was Jim Dainty.

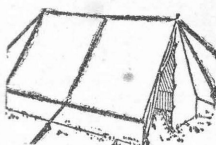
"My boys, I was just in time," said Sammy simply. "Thank heavens! That ruffian would have killed the lot of you! Secure him!"

Long before Lautree's dazed senses returned he was securely trussed up. Then, in a procession, the castaways filed out of the ravine, carrying between them the precious treasure chest and their cursing prisoner.

It was the following day. In the ship's boat, loaded with provisions and water for a long journey, sat the Grimslade Castaways. The treasure chests—for three of them had been recovered from the treasure pit—were snugly stowed away aft. In the well of the boat lay the two injured airmen, now showing signs of recovery.

A little distance out in the bay, floating on the placid waters, lay the seaplane, with Sammy at the controls. The engine was running smoothly, and after a consultation with the French airmen, Sammy had decided to take a chance. There was sufficient petrol, they reckoned, to enable the plane to taxi across the Atlantic, pulling its human load in the ship's boat, a distance of something like

(Continued in col. 2, page 624.)



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WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS : : PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER. : :

THAT TOUGH GUY HOBBS!

(Continued from page 605.)

arrived to watch the game, was stroking his chin, a sure sign that he was irritable and impatient.

So Hobbs was put in, and as he walked out to the wicket in his ungainly fashion, a dead silence fell over the Croft boys. Not that Hobbs cared. His face was set and determined. He'd show 'em.

Hobbs played himself in for the first over, and during the second saw his partner clean bowled. Six wickets had gone. Now Langdale came out, looking grim. He nicked the first ball for 1, so that Hobbs faced the bowling, and if anyone knew what he had to do at the critical time, it was Hobbs. It was up to him to score, and he did it. He became the hero of the match, slogging the bowlers all round the wicket.

Hobbs, hitting delightfully, never gave St. Tony's a chance. Langdale, however, was caught in the slips. Three more partners Hobbs saw come and go, but the score began to mount up. When the last wicket went down the Croft score stood at 141, of which Hobbs had made 75.

But the St. Tony's men were keen. The first pair knocked up 50, and looked like staying in all day, until Langdale put Hobbs on to bowl. The "Outsiders" ungainly run and delivery caused laughter, but when he got two wickets in his first over the laughter changed to cheers, and the St. Tony's men began to respect him.

All the same, the visitors gave a good account of themselves, and the figures climbed higher and higher, until, with only one wicket to fall, St. Tony's were only 3 runs behind Croft.

At that time Hobbs was at long field, wishing Langdale would put him on to bowl again.

But just then a roar of laughter amongst the batsmen behind him made him turn his head, and what he saw made him go pale with anger. Sugden was wheeling a barrow laden with oranges and apples, while the roughly dressed fruit seller who owned it followed behind, grinning sheepishly.

In front of the piled-up fruit was perched a large card bearing the words: "A. 'Obbs. All 'Earty'!"

Hobbs flushed and turned away. That cheap gibe couldn't put him off his game. Langdale was bowling and sent down a sizzler. The batsman, however, had his eye on the ball and swiped it viciously.

It sailed high in the air, and Hobbs ran along a little way, waiting for the catch. He never got it, for at that moment an overripe orange struck him on the face, and the stinging juice splashed into his eyes.

Something seemed to snap in his brain. Cricket didn't matter. With a roar of rage he spun round and flung himself at Sugden, who saw the glint in his eyes, and immediately fled from the vengeance he saw there.

There was a terrific outcry from the cricket field, for the golden chance of winning the game had been thrown away, but Hobbs heard nothing. Sugden was running, and he was close behind, itching to get his hands on the bully of Croft. Sugden headed for the big gates, and raced out on to the road—slap into the midst of a group of Grammarians, who were hanging about there, ripe for mischief.

"Here's a Lunatic!" went up a yell. "Down him!"

Sugden was seized by a dozen pairs of hands. His blazer was ripped off him, his cap vanished. Mud was smeared on his face, and fists crashed against his nose and eyes.

Then Hobbs arrived, pulling up suddenly when he surveyed the scene. For a second he hesitated, then he plunged into the Clods.

"Rescue, Croft!" he yelled. He was alone, but that didn't matter. He belonged to Croft, and the Grammarians were therefore his foes. His own personal quarrel with Sugden could wait.

He scattered the Clods, but they attacked again. He stood over the prostrate Sugden, fighting madly until he drove them off again. Then he stooped and helped Sugden to his feet, and they fought there side by side against the Clods until a party of Croft boys charged through the gates, and sent the Clods running for their lives.

For a moment Sugden scowled at Hobbs, who grinned back through a damaged eye.

"Lucky I was at 'and, mate!" said Hobbs. "They'd 'ave scragged you if I 'adn't come. An' we fought together. Look 'ere! I ain't bearing no malice. What about shaking 'an—"

But Sugden, with a curl of the lip, spun round on his heel and left him. In a daze, Hobbs went back through the gates, hearing the angry talk all round him.

"Yah! Who sold the game?"

"He could have caught that one!"

"They won the match because Hobbs ran after Sugden!"

"Hobbs lost the game for us!"

Hobbs, with crimson cheeks, but with a defiant glare in his eyes, strode through the scoffers. He had let his side down! Yet it had not been altogether his fault. He had at least fought for his bitterest enemy. Did that count for nothing?

At the big doors of the school house Mr. Norman waited for Hobbs, a dark frown on his brow. Mr. Bielby was there also. There was going to be trouble now, but Hobbs did not shirk it. He squared his shoulders, held his head up, and advanced to meet it.

Look out for dramatic developments in next week's chapters of this human interest story, buddies.

THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!

(Continued from page 623.)

five hundred miles. Providing no bad weather was encountered, there was a sporting chance that the seaplane would strike the regular shipping routes.

Dr. Sparshott, after much consideration, had decided to take the chance. Up on the beach, struggling frantically with their bonds, were the two escaped convicts from Devil's Island. But Sammy had purposely fixed their bonds to keep them busy only until the castaways were well clear of the island.

"All ready?" sang out Sammy. "Then take your farewell of Castaway Island, my boys!"

Suddenly there was an excited chatter from the palm grove. Scampering down from a tree and racing across the sands came Friday, the monk, still clad in his cotton shorts.

"Friday!" gasped Dainty. "Come on, old bean! Room for you!"

The monkey scrambled into the boat, perched itself next to Jim Dainty, and chattered excitedly. Then the seaplane's engine broke into full song. The floats began to move across the waters of the bay, the rope towing the ship's boat tautened, and the journey started to the accompaniment of a combined cheer from Jim Dainty & Co.

For five hours the seaplane nosed out across the Atlantic, Dr. Sparshott keeping to a course the injured airmen had advised, and the hour of noon was fast approaching when the Grimslade juniors caught sight of a steamer's smokestack on the horizon. In half an hour's time the seaplane was taxi-ing across the bows of the steamer. In an hour the castaways and their precious cargo had been pulled up and were safely aboard.

The steamer resumed her course, the Grimslade juniors clustered at the rail and gazed across the vast Atlantic. Somewhere astern lay Castaway Island, which they had never expected to leave. And on Castaway Island were two baffled convicts, fully aware that in time a French warship would come to pick them up and return them to Devil's Island.

The steamer ploughed on. The sun went down, and the soft mantle of night spread over the vast deep. But Jim Dainty & Co. and Sammy Sparshott did not seek the shelter of the cabins which had been placed at their disposal. They lined the rail, too excited even to sleep.

They were homeward bound—and that meant Grimslade. Sleep in the circumstances was next to impossible.

THE END.

"The Red Lord of the Incas!"—this is the title of a grand new adventure story which starts in next week's issue of RANGER. Amazing—novel—thrilling! Make sure you read it, buddies!

THE LAW OF THE SIX-GUN!

(Continued from page 614.)

There was a gasp as the rancher opened his eyes. Tony backed a pace and brought the gun up until it was within an inch of Conway's nose.

"Not a sound out of you or you'll die, Conway!" snapped the boy. "Guess you didn't expect to see me again—so soon, did you?"

Jeff Conway opened his mouth as if to shout—but the slowly rising hammer of Tony's gun as the boy pressed the trigger made him shut it again.

"What the devil do you want?" he snarled.

"Payment for what you've done!" snapped Tony. "Get up—and remember that I'll kill you just as surely as you killed my dad if you make one false move! Now back towards the door. That's right! You and I are going to do a little job of work, Conway—at least, I'm going to do the work and you're going to look on!"

Down to the silent ranch-house kitchen Tony forced the ranch-owner, and so out into the garden at the back of the building.

Conway burned with inward rage. That this little whipper-snapper of a youth should treat him thus! But he did not forget that the whipper-snapper held a deadly looking six-gun pressed hard against his spine.

With a sudden movement Tony looped a lariat about the rancher's body. Then he dragged him back and secured him to the wheel of a wagon that stood near the feed-sheds.

A piece of rag stuffed into Conway's mouth stopped the rancher from making any sound as Tony pushed his six-gun into its holster.

"What does it feel like—being helpless, Conway?" sneered the boy. "Oh, don't try to threaten me with your eyes, you dirty killer! I'm not through with you yet! Keep your eyes on me, Conway! I'll tell you what I'm going to do, shall I? I'm going to set light to your barn and your winter feed! You're fond of fires, aren't you? But this'll be a real fire, Conway—a much better blaze than the miserable little bit of smoke and flame a covered wagon makes! Watch!"

From a neighbouring shed Tony rolled a drum of paraffin and tipped it up so that its contents ran under the door of the feed-barn.

Then he touched the oil with a match and a yellow blaze sprang up. For a moment or two the boy watched whilst the flames seized the barn and spread rapidly. The yellow glare lit up his pale face as he came hurrying back to his helpless prisoner.

"There's a fire for you, Conway!" he hissed. "Watch it burn, man—and think of the money you'll be losing over that winter feed! And remember this, you low-down coyote—you haven't seen the last of me by a long chalk! That's just a beginning, Conway! Just a beginning! Look! Here's my six-gun—it belonged to my dad; the man you killed. I could kill you easily now, couldn't I? Couldn't I, Conway? Oh, you needn't flinch—I'm not going to hurt you—not that way! I'm going to ruin you, Conway—piece by piece. I'm going to make you wish you'd never been born. Killing's far too good, far too easy a punishment for a dirty rat like you! There goes your barn, Conway—that pays for our covered wagon that you burned. So long—but don't forget that I'll be right back—when you least expect me!"

And turning on his heel, Tony Maclain ran swiftly across the flame-lit clearing towards the little lane where Blackie waited. The flames roared upwards. Conway was forced to watch until the roaring and the crackling brought his men rushing to his aid.

But by that time Tony and Blackie were high in the foothills again, the boy staring down at the distant yellow glare with a cynical smile upon his young face.

"That's just a beginning, Blackie, old son," he said. "Just a beginning! To-morrow we'll stab him in another place!"

Read how young Tony Maclain, the boy who has been driven into becoming an outlaw, strikes another blow against the rascally rancher who killed his father. Next week's grand story of the Wild West is packed with quick-action thrills!