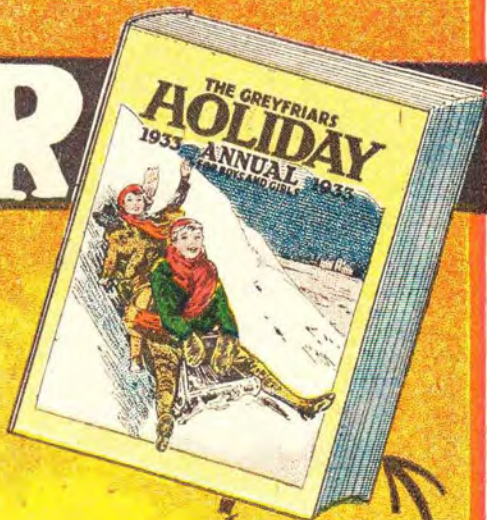


"A Merry Christmas, Everybuddy!"

The

RANGER

2d



Now on
Sale
price 6/-



The Foe from the East!

A THRILL-PACKED CHRISTMAS MYSTERY-ADVENTURE
YARN. FEATURING JIM DAINTY, BETTER KNOWN AS
THE "WORST BOY AT GRIMSLADE."

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the famous Greyfriars Stories
appearing every week in the "Magnet.")



AFTER HIS HECTIC EXPERIENCES AT GRIMSLADE SCHOOL, JIM DAINTY COUNTED ON SPENDING A QUIET TIME AT HOME DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS. BUT HE RECKONED WITHOUT THE MYSTERIOUS "FOE FROM THE EAST," WHOSE ADVENT AT GREY GABLES PROVIDES ONE LONG CHAIN OF THRILLS AND EXCITEMENT!

Unexpected.



DAINTY!

Jim Dainty jumped at the sound of that familiar voice.

Jim was coming out of the gate of Grey Gables, his home in Yorkshire, fifty miles or more from

Grimslade School.

Fritz Splitz, the German junior, was left at the school over the holidays by his affectionate relatives in Deutschland. Jim had not expected—and still less wished—to see the fat and flabby Fritz again till the next term. Now he saw him—the unexpected.

He stared up at him blankly.

"What the thump are you doing here?" he demanded.

Fritz grinned an ingratiating grin.

"Mein tear, goot Tainty," he said, "I gum to see you because I am ferry fond of you. I like not to stay at Grimslade mitout mein beloved Tainty. All trough Christmas I tinks of you, Tainty! And I tink— Vat you going to do mit tat snow, Tainty?"

Jim Dainty had stooped to scoop up a double handful of snow from the road.

"You'll see in a minute," he answered. "Did you walk from the station?"

"Ja! Tat vas vun long walk, and I am derribly dired!" sighed Fritz. "Also, I am hungry!"

"Think you could run back to the station?" asked Jim.

"Ach! Nein! Tat vas not possible!"

"Try," suggested Jim Dainty. "I'm going your way, and I'll follow. I'll help you along."

Fritz Splitz discovered the next moment what Jim was going to do with that double handful of snow. In the form of a snowball, it whizzed at Fritz and spread over his fat features.

"Ach! Peast and a prute!" spluttered Fritz.

"There's some more coming!" grinned Jim Dainty. "Better get going."

"Mein goot Tainty!" gasped Fritz. "I was going to say— Donner und blitzen! Yarcooooop!"

Another snowball cut short Fritz's remarks. As his capacious mouth was open, a considerable quantity of snow went into it; and Fritz spluttered and grunted and gurgled.

Jim Dainty chuckled and gathered up more snow. If Friedrich von Splitz had fancied that the Grimslade junior would be glad to see him in the holidays, Fritz found out his mistake now. Snowball after snowball rained on him, and the fat German dodged and jumped, and at last turned and ran.

"Go it!" chorled Jim Dainty. "I'm after you!"

"Ach! Peast and a prute!" howled Fritz, as a snowball lodged on the back of his head. "Peastly pounder! I will trash you till you pellow like a pull! Mein gootness! Leaf off mit tat snow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A mile's walk had tired Fritz Splitz, but he found that he could run, all the same! Snowballs crashing on the back of his bullet head spurred him on. He puffed and he panted, he gasped and he blew; but he ran fast. Jim Dainty trotted behind him, stooping every now and then to gather up the thick snow from the road and whiz a snowball at the fleeing Fritz.

Jim had been going to walk into the town that afternoon. But he was quite willing to run; and, in fact, he found it quite exhilarating to run behind the panting, puffing Fritz and pelt him with snowballs as he ran.

"Ach! Vill you leaf off?" roared Fritz.

"I'm seeing you to the station," chuckled Jim.

And another snowball spread over Fritz's fat features as he looked back.

"Urrrrgh! Ten I bunches you te nose!" roared Fritz, and he whirled round and came charging back at his pursuer.

Jim Dainty grinned, stepped aside, and put out a foot. The charging Rhinelander stumbled over it and went

headlong into the snowy road. He roared as he landed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jim.

He grasped the sprawling German and rolled him to the side of the road, where the snow was piled thick and deep. Fritz plunged spluttering into the snowbank.

"You can take a rest there, Fatty!" chuckled Jim. "See you again at Grimslade next term. Don't let me see you before that if you're particular about your health!"

And Jim Dainty trotted on towards Northminster, leaving Fritz von Splitz sitting dazedly in the snow, half buried in it.

"Ach! Peast and a prute!" groaned Fritz, as he sat and gasped. He gouged snow from his fat features and blinked after Dainty's disappearing form with wrathful saucer-eyes. "Now I must go pack; but I cannot go pack when I have no gash to puy a dicket! Now I wish tat I had not spent all mein gash on duck. Ach!"

Fritz groaned.

From the direction of the town, in which Dainty had disappeared, a small car came in sight. It slowed down as the driver caught sight of Fritz, and Fritz blinked at him. He was slight, brown-complexioned, evidently from the East, and thickly wrapped against the winter cold. A pair of glinting black eyes peered from his brown face, sharp and keen as a hawk's.

"Good young person, you tell me a way!" he called out.

Fritz grinned. He found the brown man's English rather amusing—as the Grimslade fellows found Fritz's.

"Ach! Ja, ja!" said Fritz, extricating himself from the snowbank.

"You will know honourable mansion called Grey Gables?" asked the half-caste. "Honourable Mister Dainty dwell therein."

"Ach! Ja! Tat is vere I go," answered Fritz eagerly. "You giff me vun lift and I boints out tat place."

"Enter a car!" said the gentleman from India, and Fritz made haste to do so.

The little car ran on. A few minutes later Fritz Splitz pointed out the house of Jim Dainty's father.

"I gets town here," he said. "I waits for mein friend before I goes in, after!"

"Innumerable thanks, good young person!" said the gentleman from

India, and after Fritz had stepped from the car he drove in at the gates and disappeared up the drive to the house.

The Man from the East!

JIM DAINTY came swinging up the road in the thickening winter dusk. He had been playing football that afternoon with some friends in Northminster, and had completely forgotten the podgy existence of Fatty Fritz. He was reminded of him as a fat figure emerged from the shadows of the wall under the gates of Grey Gables. Two light-blue saucer-eyes blinked at him in the dusk.

"Mein goot Tainty—"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Jim Dainty, staring at the fat German.

"Mean to say you're still around?"

"I have wait for you run long time, tear Tainty!" mumbled Fritz. "I cannot go pack to Grimsdale."

"And why not?" demanded Jim.

"Because I have run away from school!" mumbled Fritz. "Tat Sammy he peat me till I pellow like a pull, and I have run away."

"Great pip!"

Jim stared at Fatty Fritz blankly. Dr. Samuel Sparshott, Head of Grimsdale, had a heavy hand with a cane, as Jim had plenty of reason to know. Likewise, he was aware that very likely Fritz had given Sammy ample reason to handle the cane. But it was a surprise to hear the fat German had run away from school.

"Tat is why I gum to see you, tear Tainty," said Fritz, with a sly gleam in his saucer-eyes. "I write vun letter to mein beoples in Chermany, and tey send to fetch me home to my beloved Fatherland. But for two-tree tays I must stay somewhere. I tare not go pack to Grimsdale—tat Sammy he vallop me so pad as neffer vas before."

Jim Dainty grinned. He could imagine the "whopping" that any Grimsdale fellow would get for running away from school. True, it was holiday-time; but Fritz was left at Grimsdale over the vacation in Dr. Sparshott's charge, and Sammy was responsible for him.

"Well, you silly ass," said Dainty at last, "you'll have to turn up for the new term, and then—"

"Nein, nein!" Fritz shook his head. "I neffer go pack! Mein beoples send for me, and I go to Chermany, vich is effer so much petter tan tis country. But vat can I do for two-tree day while I wait for tat letter from Chermany?"

Jim Dainty grunted. Of all the fellows at Grimsdale School, Fritz Splitz was the last he would have selected to stay with him in the vacation. But if the hapless Fritz had burned his boats behind him by running away from Grimsdale, Jim felt that it was up to him. And there was consolation in the reflection that if Fritz was going home he would not be in Study No. 10 in White's House next term.

"Come along, fathead!" he said. "I'll ask my father if you can be put up for a day or two. Don't say anything about having bolted from school, though. The pater's a bit of a tartar, and he would pack you off and phone to Sammy."

"I says nottings, mein tear Tainty," promised Fritz. "I geeps it tark."

Fritz grinned as he rolled in at the gateway with Jim Dainty. He had pulled it off, and it did not occur to Jim's unsuspicious mind that the sly Fritz had pulled his leg.

A car was standing on the drive as they reached the house, and Fritz blinked at it curiously. It was the car in which the brown-complexioned man had given him a lift two or three hours ago. Apparently the brown man was still at Grey Gables.

"Tat man is still here," remarked Fritz.

"Eh? What man?" asked Jim.

"Tat prown man gum in te car. He giff me vun lift," said Fritz. "He speak ferry funny English, so funny as neffer vas before. I vunder ferry much tat peoples do not learn to speak te English ferry goot, when it is so easy to speak it like vun native of te country."

Jim chuckled.

They saw the brown man when they entered. He was seated by the fire in the hall, still wrapped in his thick coat, but huddling near the blazing log fire. Evidently the man from India felt keenly the cold of the Yorkshire moors in winter. The firelight played on his brown face and glinting, black eyes.

He rose to his feet as the two school-boys came in, and gave them a quick glance. Then he bowed politely and sat down again. Jim returned his salute with a rather curious glance and passed on with Fritz.

Jim's father was manager of a mine in Burma, home in England on leave, and Jim concluded that the brown man was some business acquaintance from the East. It was ten-time, and Mrs. Dainty was at the tea-table when Jim presented Fritz.

"Any friend of yours from school is more than welcome, my dear boy," said Mrs. Dainty; and Fritz grinned, with one saucer-eye on the well-spread table. Fritz had fancied that he would find himself in clover if he could land himself at Grey Gables for the holidays, and now he was sure of it.

"Mein tear Mrs. Tainty," said Fritz. "at Grimsdale I am te pest friend of Chim. Ve are like brudders, isn't it, Chim?"

Jim grunted. As he had asked his mother to put Fritz up for a few days, he could not very well explain that, personally, he had not the slightest interest in the German junior. Mrs.

Dainty, at all events, was hospitable, and if Jim was lacking in enthusiasm, Fritz did not mind.

Grimsdale fellows thought that Jim was spoiled at home, and the delightful things on the tea-table seemed to prove that it was so. Fritz fairly gloated over them. For the next half-hour Fritz, much as he loved the music of his own voice, had little to say. His fat jaws were too busy for speech.

"Isn't the pater in?" Jim asked.

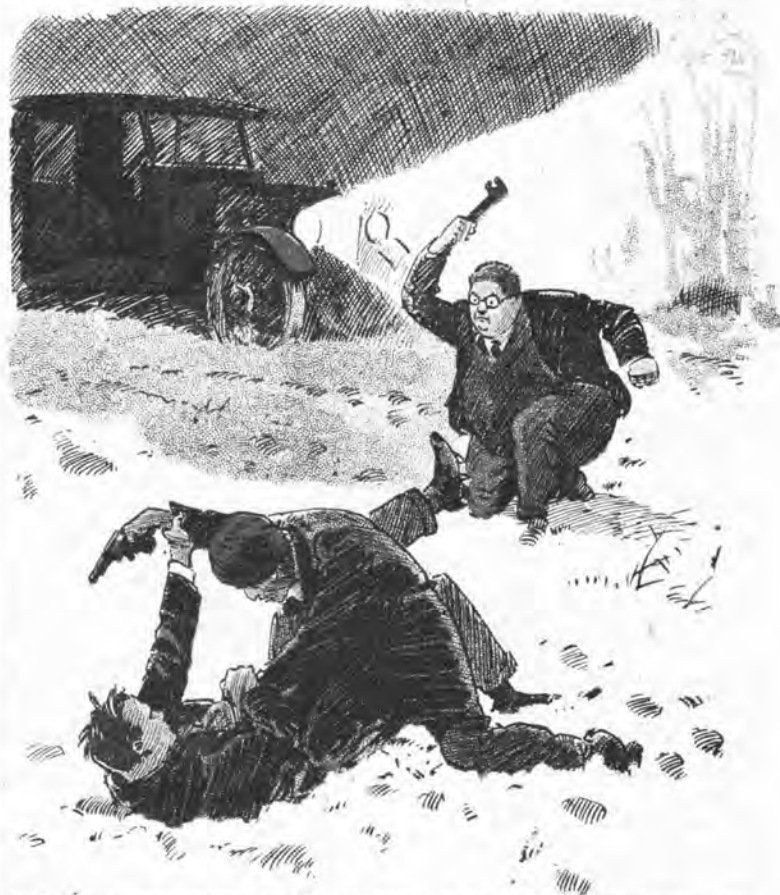
"He has not yet come back from Grimsdale," said Mrs. Dainty, "but I expect him every moment."

Jim suppressed a whistle. His father had visited Dr. Sparshott, his old friend, that afternoon. If Sammy happened to mention to him that the German junior had run away from school—in that case Fritz's stay at Grey Gables was likely to last until Mr. Dainty arrived, and no longer. Jim tried not to hope that Sammy had mentioned it.

"A gentleman has called to see your father," went on Mrs. Dainty. "You must have seen him in the hall. A gentleman from India. His name is Puri Din. Although I told him that Mr. Dainty would not be home for some hours, he persisted in waiting. He has refused to take any refreshment, and sat there all this time without speaking a word."

Mrs. Dainty was evidently a little worried about the taciturn brown man. Jim, however, gave him little thought. He had come in hungry after football. Fatty Fritz's whole attention was concentrated on the foodstuffs, which were disappearing under his attack at a rate that made little Mrs. Dainty open her eyes.

"Here is your father," said Mrs. Dainty at last, as the front door was heard to open.



With the heavy spanner in his fat hand, Fritz Splitz crawled from the car. On hands and knees he crept silently through the thick snow. Nearer and nearer; now he was only a few feet away from the struggling figures of Sammy Sparshott and his Indian attacker. Slowly, cautiously, Fritz raised the spanner above his head.

The next moment the deep voice of Jim's father was heard.

"Puri Din! You scoundrel, what are you doing here?"

"Dear me!" murmured Mrs. Dainty, in surprise and alarm.

Jim Dainty jumped up and ran to the door, which opened on the hall. His father, a tall, powerfully built man, with a deeply bronzed face, stood facing the brown man, who had risen to his feet. Puri Din was smiling, but his black eyes glittered at the mine manager like a snake's.

"Sahib, do not be angry with your servant," said Puri Din in a low, calm voice. "I have come to an honourable mansion as a friend. When you leave Burma you take in your estimable hands the great ruby."

"That is no concern of yours!" rapped Mr. Dainty. "Twice you tried to steal the ruby—once at the mines, and once at Rangoon. Have you come here to try again?"

"I have come over the black water for the ruby," said the half-caste, his eyes glittering. "After many days and many questions I find out where you reside in a mansion. But let us speak in private places."

"I have nothing to say to you, Puri Din, and I will not see you in private," answered Mr. Dainty. He threw the door wide open. "Get out!"

"I beg the noble sahib to see me in private places if but for few minutes!" urged the half-caste.

"I've told you to go!"

Jim Dainty looked on breathlessly. The brown man from India was half crouching, like a tiger about to spring. Jim had heard of the big ruby that his father had brought home from Burma, a stone that was worth a fortune.

That was what had brought the brown man from far-off India to the house on the Yorkshire moor. And as he looked at the tigerish face it flashed into Jim's mind that had his father consented to see the brown man in private, it was Puri Din's intention to make a desperate attempt to possess himself of the ruby.

Even as that thought was passing through Jim's mind Mr. Dainty made a stride towards the man from the East. His heavy hand dropped on the half-caste's shoulder.

"Get out!" he rapped.

The next instant the brown man had sprung on him. His dusky hand was under his coat, and it flashed out. There was something in it that gleamed and glittered in the electric light. Jim made a desperate spring forward, grasped the half-caste's arm, and dragged it aside. The knife clanged on the floor.

"You scoundrel!" roared the mine manager.

He grasped the slim half-caste with both hands and wrenched him off his feet. Puri Din gave a yell of fury as he was swung through the air in the Englishman's powerful arms. The next moment he was whizzing through the doorway and crashing down the steps. With a howl of pain and fury, he rolled in the snow on the drive.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jim.

The half-caste scrambled up. For a moment his brown face was turned towards the lighted hall, distorted with rage and hate, his white teeth gleaming in a savage snarl. Then he scrambled into his car, started up, and drove away into the darkness.

Mr. Dainty shrugged his broad shoulders contemptuously.

In the Dead of Night!

"URRRRGH!"

"Shut up!"

Fritz Splitz did not shut up.

Fritz was in trouble!

Jim Dainty sat up in bed and glared across the room at the fat German. The hour was late—very late—and Jim

wanted to sleep. So did Friedrich von Splitz, for that matter. But there was, so to speak, a lion in the path. Fritz's supper stood in the way. At supper that night Friedrich von Splitz had done not wisely but too well.

Fritz had been four or five days at the Grey Gables now. In that space of time he had not made himself popular. Jim was more than fed-up. Mrs. Dainty was kind, but she could not help being surprised that her son had picked out this particular specimen to bring home from Grimslade. Mr. Dainty took little notice of Fritz, who felt uncomfortable under his rather grim and stern eye.

The letter from Germany had not arrived. That letter, according to Fritz, was to contain funds and instructions for his journey home to his dear Fatherland. Until it came Fritz was a fixture at Grey Gables. And it did not yet occur to Jim Dainty that that letter was not coming at all.

There had been a party of young people that evening, and naturally there had been a supper. Fritz had not distinguished himself at the party by his manners or his attractions—but he had distinguished himself at the supper! Often and often Fritz approached the danger-line when the tuck was unlimited. Now he had passed it.

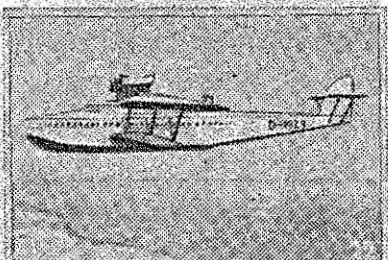
He had a bed in Jim's room, and they went to bed rather late—not to sleep! Strange pains and pangs were troubling the interior of the podgy German, and every time Jim dropped off into slumber he was awakened by groans or wails from the unhappy Fritz.

"It was not te pudding!" groaned Fritz. "Many dimes I have eat vun whole Christmas pudding! It was not te turkey—tat turkey was ferry goot! It was not te mince bies—I have eat only twenty—or dirty at te most! It was not te gake—I liked tat gake! Vat do you tink it was, mein tear Tainty, tat gif me tis fearful bain in mein pread-pasket?"

"If you wake me up again I'll give you a fearful pain with my slipper!" growled Jim Dainty.

"Peast and a prute!" groaned Fritz.

Jim closed his eyes again. But it was in vain. Fritz was sitting up in bed with his fat hands clasped over his extensive middle, where the pain was, and he rocked himself and moaned and groaned.



Hallo! Hallo!! Hallo!!!

**SIX MORE
WONDERFUL
PICTURE STAMPS
FREE**
with next week's
"Ranger"

Add them to your collection, and don't forget that our companion papers, "Modern Boy" and "Magnet," are each giving away six of these super stamps every week!

The Christmas pudding seemed to be on the worst of terms with the turkey and the mince pies and the cake.

Jim Dainty turned out of bed at last, slipped on a dressing-gown and slippers, and stirred together the embers of the fire. Fritz watched him with lack-lustre saucer-eyes.

Bright, silvery moonlight streamed in at the window. Outside, the thick snow was like a white mantle, the tall trees casting bars of black shadow. Jim Dainty looked from the window on the still, frozen scene, and thought of skating on the morrow. He sat at the window looking out at the fairy-like scene, while Fritz groaned and moaned and rocked.

"Are you ever going to shut up?" demanded Jim at last.

"Ach! I have vun colossal bain in mein pread-pasket!" groaned Fritz. "Tink you tat it was te turkey. Tainty?"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Prutal peast!" moaned Fritz.

Jim Dainty gave a sudden start. Among the black bars of shadow cast by the trees on the white snow a shadow moved. Jim stared at it—a black shadow that moved, glided in the snow towards the house. In the window of the library, which was under Jim's room, there was still a light. Mr. Dainty had not yet gone to bed.

Jim pushed up the sash and leaned out to watch the gliding shadow. As he looked down he saw the glow of light from the windows below. The french windows were open, and he could glimpse his father standing there looking out into the moonlight. In the still silence he heard his father turn back into the room below. Then with startled eyes he saw the black shadow dart from the trees and cross the snow towards the open french windows.

Jim's heart thumped.

He turned from the window and ran across to the door. Fritz stared after him.

"Mein goot Tainty, vere you go? Vat—"

Jim did not answer or listen. He tore open the door, ran out, and raced down the dark staircase. A light burned in the hall, and Jim stopped there for a second to grasp a golf club from his father's bag, then he ran to the door of the library.

Except for Mr. Dainty, the whole household was in slumber. The mine manager had stayed up late to go through a file of technical documents. As Jim reached the door of the library he heard a voice within, and he swiftly turned the door-handle.

"The ruby!" He heard a low, hissing voice. "Sahib, for many nights I have watched with an eye, and now chance is come! There is death in a pistol that points to the head of a sahib! The ruby—or termination of existence occurs with a prompt dispatch!"

The ridiculous English contrasted strangely, almost horribly, with the savage, hissing voice and the glare of ferocity in the black eyes of the man from the East. His eyes glinted over a levelled automatic.

There was no fear in the hard, bronzed face of the mine manager, but he stood very still.

"The ruby—or death with extreme suddenness!" hissed Puri Din.

The library door swung open silently under Jim Dainty's hand. Neither his father nor the man from India looked in his direction; their eyes were fixed on one another—the mine manager breathing hard and deep, but steady as a rock; the brown man snarling over the levelled automatic.

"Never!" said the cool, steady voice of Jim's father. "You scoundrel!"

Whiz!

Jim knew that he could not reach them in time to interfere. There was murder in the black eyes glinting over the automatic. He swung the golf club

and hurled it with all his strength and with deadly accurate aim.

The iron head of the cleek crashed on the brown face, and Puri Din, with a startled scream, staggered and almost fell.

Instantly Mr. Dainty leaped forward and struck the automatic from his sagging hand.

In another moment his powerful grasp would have fastened on the half-caste; but Puri Din, with tigerish swiftness, leaped away. The iron head of the club had cut his face, and blood streaked his brown skin. But with swift agility he eluded the mine manager and sprang through the open french window. Almost in the twinkling of an eye he had vanished into the night.

"Father!" gasped Jim.

Mr. Dainty gave him a glance, picked up the automatic, and stepped to the open window. Slowly and carefully he closed the french windows and locked them; then he turned to his son, with a smile on his bronzed face.

"Thank you, Jim! But what are you doing out of bed at this hour?"

"I saw him from my window. That ass Fritz is ill and kept me awake. So I came down," panted Jim.

"Thank Heaven you did!" said Mr. Dainty quietly. "Puri Din meant business. I shall put the police on his track at once; he is too dangerous to leave loose. He would have shot me down and taken the great ruby."

"Father, is it safe to keep it in the house?" said Jim.

"It will not remain here another twenty-four hours," Mr. Dainty smiled again. "You shall see it, Jim. It is a stone worth seeing."

He unlocked a cabinet and took out a little morocco case. The lid shot up as he pressed a spring, and Jim Dainty started at the sight of the blood-red blaze within. He stared, fascinated, at the magnificent jewel.

"Dad, that must be worth a fortune!" he breathed.

"Fifteen thousand pounds, at least," said Mr. Dainty quietly. "And I found it almost by chance in the mountains in Burma. I came near losing it again—and my life also—as I have done to-night. But it leaves this house to-morrow night. Dr. Sparshott will take it with him in his car. He is going to dispose of it for me."

"Sammy!" exclaimed Jim, starting. "Is Sammy coming here?"

"Yes, he will come to dinner to-morrow, Jim. I believe you like your headmaster better than you did when you first went to Grimsdale?"

"Oh, yes!" answered Jim. "I'm glad he's coming, but—" He was thinking of Fritz Splitz. But that was not a matter he could explain to Mr. Dainty, and he broke off. "Is Sammy taking away the ruby, then, father?"

"Yes; that was arranged when I saw him at Grimsdale a few days ago. It will be safe then. Puri Din, if he is still loose, will not be likely to guess that Dr. Sparshott has it in his possession," said Mr. Dainty, with a smile. He replaced the Burmese ruby and closed the cabinet. "Now, good-night, Jim!"

"Good-night, dad!" returned Jim. "But, I say," he added anxiously, "will it be all right—"

"Don't you worry about me, boy," replied Mr. Dainty.

Jim went back to his room. Mr. Dainty resumed his work on his technical papers as coolly as if there had been no interruption. Outside the french windows a brown-faced man showed his white teeth in a gloating grin.

Puri Din was not gone yet! He had seen where the great ruby was hidden, and he had heard every word that was spoken within.

Softly Puri Din trod away through the snow and disappeared. The great Burmese ruby, when it left Grey Gables in the care of Sammy Sparshott, was not to be so safe as its owner believed.

The Order of the Boot!

"TAT is all right, Tainty!"

That was the answer of Friedrich von Splitz the following day, when Jim told him that Sammy Sparshott was coming.

The letter from Germany had not arrived. Fritz was still a fixture at Grey Gables. Jim expected him to be wildly alarmed at the news that the headmaster of Grimsdale was coming. Instead of which, Fritz did not seem perturbed in the very least.

He breakfasted with his usual excellent appetite; he lunched with the same; and in the afternoon he inquired whether Jim was to be allowed to dine with the Head.

"Yes, fathead!" answered Jim. "But you—"

"Tat is all right! If you time, I time also!" said Fritz. "I tink tat it will be a good tinner, so tat is all right."

"You howling ass!" exclaimed Jim. "As soon as Sammy sees you, you will be bagged and bundled back to Grimsdale!"

A Prize for this Laugh.



THE OPTIMIST.

Pat: "What are you putting all those patches on your inner tube for, Mike?"

Mike: "Well, you see, if I get a puncture now, it will be already mended."

(A Pocket Wallet has been awarded to R. Vincent, 135, Wellington Street, Riverside, Cardiff.)

"I will risk tat!" said Fritz. "It is all right, Tainty! I am not afraid of tat Sammy! Being a Cherman, I am ferry brave."

"Haven't you any sense?" hooted Jim. "You've run away from school, and Sammy will be in a bait when he finds that I'm a party to it. I shall get into a row with my pater when he knows. You've got to be miles away before Sammy comes, and I only hope the pater won't happen to mention to him that you've been here at all. When are you starting?"

"Tat is all right!" protested Fritz. "I am not going, my tear Tainty!"

"You've got nothing to pack," said Jim. "It's dusk now, and Sammy is expected soon. Here's your coat and hat. I'll walk with you to the station."

Fritz Splitz unwillingly put on his coat and hat. Still more unwillingly, he went out with Jim, having no choice in the matter, as Jim had fastened an irresistible grip on his podgy arm. With more and more unwillingness, he walked down the drive.

"Buck up!" snapped Jim. "If Sammy finds you here, when you've run away from the school—"

"But—but I did not run away from school!" gasped Fritz, coming to a halt. "I confess, my goot Chim—my dear Tainty! I pull you to leg!"

Jim Dainty jumped.

"What?" he roared.

"Because you are my beloved chum," explained Fritz. "I like not to bart mit you! Ven I gum, you gut up rusty; so I tell you tat I run away from school, and ten you take me in, nicht war? It was vun choke! So it is all right if tat Sammy see me here. He gif me leaf to gum here and stay mit you. I tells him tat you ask me to gum, ain't it?"

Jim was speechless—but speech was not needed. It was a time for actions, not for words. He made a jump at

Fritz von Splitz, grasped him by the collar, and up-ended him in the snow. Wild howls and gurgles came from Fritz as his fat features were ground into the snow, and into the gravel under it.

"Oooh! Mein tear Tainty! Peast and a prute! Whoop!"

Fritz tore himself away and ran. After him came Jim Dainty—not snow-balling this time, but letting out his feet. Kick after kick crashed on Fritz Splitz, and the fat Rhinelander put on a remarkable speed. He vanished in the dusk on the road towards Northminster, yelling.

Jim Dainty, breathing hard, walked back to the house. He fancied that he had seen the last of Fritz Splitz till the new term. But he was prepared to give him plenty more of the same if he turned up at Grey Gables again.

Fritz was not likely to do that. Even Fritz realised that he had outworn his welcome. The hapless Fritz stopped in the winter dusk on the snowy road, and gasped and gurgled and groaned. Grey Gables was closed to him; Fritz did not want to be kicked out again. But how he was to get back to Grimsdale without a railway ticket or the wherewithal to purchase one was a deep problem for Fritz.

A car flashed by him in the gloom. It was Dr. Sparshott's saloon car, and he recognised Sammy at the wheel. Dr. Sparshott was gone in a moment, and Fritz blinked after the car.

The sight of the car had put a new idea into Fritz's mind. Dr. Sparshott would be driving back to Grimsdale that night. He could hardly refuse Fritz a lift. The fat German thought the matter out, and at last he turned his footsteps back to Grey Gables.

He could not venture to show up at the house, but he crept round to the garage. He blinked cautiously round with his saucer-eyes, but there was no one at hand. Dr. Sparshott's car stood in the garage.

Fritz crept in, opened the door of the car, and got into it. There were a couple of heavy rugs on the back seat. With a grunt of satisfaction, the fat German wrapped himself in the rugs—and went to sleep.

The Hold-up!

JIM DAINTY and his father came out to the car with Dr. Sparshott when the time came for the headmaster of Grimsdale to depart.

Jim had quite enjoyed "Sammy's" company that evening. Sammy was so genial that Jim forgot the innumerable "sixes" his headmaster had given him at Grimsdale. In Sammy's breast pocket was the little morocco case containing the great Burmese ruby.

He shook hands with Mr. Dainty and with Jim, started up the car, and drove down the dusky drive. He had not even glanced at the piled rugs on the seat, and had not the faintest suspicion that there was a passenger in his car.

Neither had that unseen passenger the faintest idea that the car was going. Fritz Splitz was still sleeping like a fat dormouse.

It was the jolting of the car on the high road that first disturbed the slumbers of Friedrich von Splitz. He stirred uneasily in his sleep, and at last awakened, poked his bullet head like a tortoise from the rugs, and blinked round him drowsily.

A red light flashed on the road ahead; the car jolted and jarred to a halt. Dr. Sparshott leaned over, and peered at a dim figure that loomed through the gloom.

"What is it—road up, or what?" he asked. "By gad, what—"

An automatic glimmered in the glare of the headlights, and then the muzzle was pressed to Dr. Sparshott's overcoat.

"A hold-up," said Sammy quietly.

Fritz lay in the rugs, almost dazed!

(Continued on page 381.)

The Foe from the East!

(Continued from page 371.)

It was a hold-up on the highway—the red light was a trick to stop the car. Fritz made no sound or movement. He saw Sammy's right hand release itself from the wheel, and grope, and grasp a heavy spanner. But Dr. Sparshott did not lift the spanner. The muzzle of the automatic was pressed into his ribs, and a pair of black, glinting eyes watched him like a cat's.

"You will have great kindness to descend into a road!" said a low voice. "Otherwise sudden death will approximate."

Fritz knew the voice of the half-caste, and his weird English. Dr. Sparshott quietly stepped into the road, leaving the spanner on the seat. With the automatic at his breast, Puri Din backed him to the roadside, against a tree.

"You will give me the ruby!" said Puri Din, in his hissing voice. "Give me the ruby and live, or I will detach the same from lifeless body of your estimable self!"

Dr. Sparshott breathed hard. "You've got me, my dusky friend!" he said calmly. And his hand slid into his pocket.

Puri Din's black eyes snapped. Sammy's hand came out of his pocket, with the morocco case in it.

The man from the East snatched at it greedily, with his left hand. For a second the automatic wavered. That was what Sammy Sparshott was watching for. The half-caste grasped the morocco case, and at the same instant Dr. Sparshott leaped forward.

Crack! rang the automatic. But Sammy's grasp was on the brown man's arm, and he forced it upward as he fired. The bullet flew away among the leafless trees.

The next instant Sammy Sparshott had closed with the man from India. For a few moments they struggled, and then slipped in the snow and went down.

In the powdering snow they struggled, fiercely and silently, both unconscious of the staring, terrified face watching from the car. Fritz Splitz's eyes fell on the spanner in the seat. He grasped it with a shaking fat hand.

The fat German screwed up his courage, such as it was, to the sticking-point. With the heavy spanner in his fat hand, he crawled from the car. On hands and knees he waded silently through the thick snow. Nearer and nearer; now he was only a few feet away from the struggling figures. Slowly, cautiously, Fritz raised the spanner above his head. Then—

Crash!

Puri Din never knew what hit him. The blow on the back of his head stretched him stunned in the snow. Dr. Sparshott, amazed to find himself released, scrambled up. He tore the automatic from the relaxing hand of the half-caste.

"Who—what—" panted Dr. Sparshott.

"Mein gootness! Ach himmel!" groaned Fritz.

"Splitz!" gasped the Head of Grimslade.

Fritz von Splitz gave him one dizzy blink, and fainted.

"Sammy!" gasped Jim Dainty.

"Dr. Sparshott!" exclaimed his father.

It was less than half an hour since the Head of Grimslade had gone, when there was a grinding of a car on the drive, and a loud knock at the door of Grey Gables. Jim and his father came into the hall as the door was opened.

They stared blankly at Dr. Sparshott; and at the fat figure that he was supporting with a strong arm.

"Fritz!" gasped Jim.

"Ach! Geep off!" gasped Fritz. "It is Tootor Sparshott tat bring me pack."

"A hold-up on the road, Mr. Dainty," said Sammy quietly. "Puri Din knew somehow that I had the ruby. I have left him at the Northminster police station—out of harm's way now. Splitz was in the car—how, I cannot imagine—and he weighed in with a spanner."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Jim Dainty. "Fritz did! Great pip!"

"I understand that Splitz has been staying here," said Dr. Sparshott. "You told me he had gone back to Grimslade, Dainty, but it seems that he must have given himself a lift in my car, and I was not aware of it. It was very fortunate, as it turns out. He fainted, so I thought I had better bring him in." He smiled in answer to Mr. Dainty's anxious look. "The ruby is quite safe—thanks partly to Splitz! Are you feeling better now, Splitz?"

"Ach! I am ferry hungry!"

Jim Dainty slipped his arm through the fat Rhinelander's.

"This way to supper, Fritz!" he said.

When Dr. Sparshott drove to Grimslade a little later, he went alone in the car. Friedrich von Splitz was no longer in need of a lift. Fritz, for once in a way, had played up like a little man, and Fritz had his reward.

Fritz was booked to stay as an honoured guest till the end of the holidays.

(Jim Dainty back at Grimslade—
fun, adventure, and thrills in next
week's topping school yarn of the
Chums of Grimslade. Order your
RANGER now, buddies—there will be
six more Free Gifts next Saturday.)

A Merry Christmas to You All.

THE CHIEF RANGER CHATS.

HALLO, BUDDIES!—Once again a right royal Merry Christmas to you all. This fine number of The RANGER celebrates the last week of 1932 in tip-top, smashing style—but just you wait for next Saturday's number: it's great! It's wonderful! To give a special "kick-off" to the New Year I am introducing a new character who goes by the name of "Sahara Sandes"—the mystery man of the East. You'll like him first time of asking, whilst his amazing adventures will thrill you as you've never been thrilled before. He'll be with you NEXT WEEK. Another tit-bit of news: I have now in hand a further batch of stories dealing with the amazing War exploits of John Henry Dent and Co. In a fortnight's time you will be able to read the first of these grand new stories in your copy of The RANGER, and for thrills, daredevil antics up aloft in the War clouds of the Western Front, you will find nothing to beat it, no matter where you look. Don't forget, this new series starts in a fortnight's time. Tell your pals the glorious news, but always order your own copy first!

The Chief Ranger

ALL ABOUT THIS WEEK'S FREE GIFTS.

SPEEDSTERS!

Fury by name, fury by nature! That's the Hawker Fury single-seater interceptor fighting plane, which is depicted among this week's series of Picture-stamps. One of the really swift war-birds of the Royal Air Force, it can do 212 miles an hour at a height of 6,500 ft., and when it is in a big hurry to get specially high up, it can climb 20,000 ft. in 9 minutes 40 seconds. Its "stings" are vicious ones—two Vickers guns, which fire through the airscrew. It would take some dodging, this winged Fury!

The Arrow Active—the other plane included in this week's Picture-Stamps—is equally well named. You see it in the picture about to swoop around a towering pylon, or turning-point, in a big air race.

For this isn't a fighting machine, but a sports type plane with a seat for one. It has a 140 horse-power engine, top speed of 140 miles an hour, and can climb as high as 20,000 ft. Its length is 18 ft. 7 in., height just short of 7 ft., and the span of the top wing is 24 ft.—4 ft. more than the lower wing-span.

THEY DON'T NEED NURSEMAIDS!

Who don't? The fellow shown in this week's Rough Rider picture and the clever boxer in the Self-Defence picture. To deal with the latter first, the boxer on the left will be needing a nursemaid for a bit if his more accomplished opponent puts plenty of beef—and suddenness of delivery—behind his left-handed punch to the chin. This particular punch is

delivered immediately you slip, or dodge, your attacker's left fist, as it shoots out for your head. Having dodged the blow, you brace up your legs and then—bang goes your own left glove smartly upwards, making a jarring contact with the other fellow's chin.

The Rough Rider is a man who has proved his horsemanship and valour and marksmanship in deadly battle—against the Zulus, and also during the Boer War. This Boer sharpshooter is an Afrikaner, a descendant of the early Dutch colonists in South Africa. The Boers are mostly farmers, who made their settlement in the Transvaal only after bitter struggles with the Zulus through whose territory they had to pass. They learn to ride and to shoot almost as soon as they can walk, and at one time it was customary for a Boer youngster to be sent out in the morning with a rifle and only one cartridge and told not to come home again until he had shot enough food for the day! The youngster jolly soon learned to shoot straight then!

THE BIG AND THE LITTLE.

You see that whacking great Australian express? It is famous the whole Empire over for its regular run between Melbourne and Adelaide—over 400 miles as the crow flies—and back again. The loco itself weighs well over 218 tons, and it pulls a load of 400 tons. You can imagine this monster, with glowing headlamp, roaring through the night, its massive cowcatcher ready to clear the line instantly of any obstacle.

The remaining Picture-Stamp shows a jolly, chummy little Cocker Spaniel. There's no more affectionate or intelligent dog in the wide world. He got his name of Cocker because of his skill in picking up woodcock during a "shoot" of those birds. He's awfully clever at that. And he's always one of the foremost dogs on a Show bench, getting his full share of prizes.