

THE
CHEERIO

CASTAWAYS!

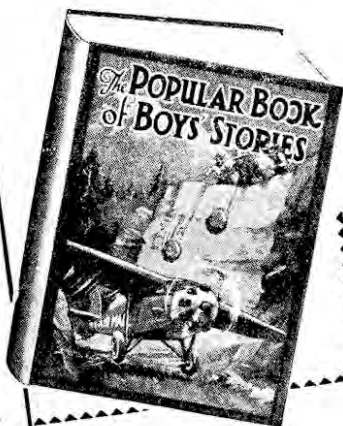
by
FRANK
RICHARDS



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THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS

By FRANK RICHARDS

Shipwrecked on an unknown island in the heart of the mighty Atlantic Ocean! Such is the fate of JIM DAINTY & Co., of Grimslade. And with them on the island is Ezra Sarson, a ruthless scoundrel, whose one desire is to be revenged upon the schoolboy castaways.

CHAPTER I.

Out of the Frying-pan into the Fire!

ROTTEN!" yawned Jim Dainty.
"Beastly!" agreed Dick Dawson.

Ginger and Bacon and Bean nodded assent. For once Ginger & Co. were in complete agreement with their old rivals of Grimslade School.

White's House and Redmayes' House, at Grimslade, seldom agreed about anything. But they agreed that "holiday tasks" were the limit—especially on a hot day south of the Azores.

Fritz Splitz did not offer an opinion. He contributed only a snore. Fritz had fallen asleep in his deckchair. His hat was tilted over his podgy face to shade it from the sun. From under the hat came a regular drumming

sound. The fat German junior was going strong with a nasal solo.

Under the striped awning aft, Dr. Sparshott, headmaster of Grimslade, was sorting out books. The Grimslade fellows were enjoying a holiday cruise with their headmaster, but they rather wished that Sammy had left school-books—and his cane—at home!

Jim Dainty shook Fritz by the shoulder.

"Wake up, old podgy porker!" he said.

Snore!

"I'll wake him!" said Ginger Rawlinson.

He hooked the deckchair out from under the sleeping beauty. There was a heavy concussion as Friedrich von

Splitz landed on deck. It was followed by a terrific roar.

"Ach! Mein gootness! I am proken in bieces! Peast and a prute! Vy for you vake me?"

"Class with Sammy, old Boche bloater!" grinned Ginger.

"Plow Sammy!" gasped Fritz. "Pother Sammy! Tainty, you tell tat peast Sammy tat I vas too dired to vork!"

"Tell him yourself, old barrel!" answered Jim, and he made his way aft with Dawson, followed by Ginger & Co.

"Frutal peast!" groaned Fritz.

The fat German picked himself up. He blinked after the juniors with his saucer-eyes. On board the Spindrift, there was regular "prep" in the morning, and a class in the afternoon. Really, it was good for the holiday cruisers, who would have grown bored with too much leisure in the close confines of a ship at sea. But Fritz did not feel that it was good for him. He hated it.

Instead of following the other fellows aft, where Sammy Sparshott was ready for them, Fritz Splitz rolled away forward, and disappeared into the fore-castle. Fritz was aware that there was a door from the fore-castle into the steamer's hold.

Several times Fritz had thought of performing a vanishing trick in that direction when lessons were on hand. Now he yielded to the temptation. Only one seaman was in the fore-castle, and he stared at Fritz as he rolled down and in. Fritz was equal to the occasion.

"Captain Goote vant you on teck!" he said; and the man, supposing that it was a message from Captain Coote, left the fore-castle.

Fritz grinned, and as soon as the seaman was gone, lost no time. A door opened and shut, and Fritz was safe in the darkness of the hold.

The Spindrift was on a yachting cruise; but business was combined with pleasure. Captain Coote was, in fact,

the skipper of a "tramp" steamer, turning an extra honest penny by taking holiday-cruisers on this trip to South American ports. There was plenty of cargo in the hold, which was rather spacious, but fairly well filled.

The hatches being closed, it was intensely dark, and Fritz groped and felt his way. He gave a sudden howl as he tripped over something unseen, and came down with a bump.

"Ach!" howled Fritz. "Vy—vat —"

The next moment his howl was prolonged into a shriek of terror.

The "something" he had tripped over turned on him and grasped him; and the fat German writhed and squirmed in strong and sinewy hands.

"Ach! Tat you led go!" shrieked Fritz. "Help! Mein gootness! Some-vun has crabbed me in te tark—"

"Silence, you fool!" came a harsh, hissing voice. "I guess I'll wring your neck if you let out another yaup!"

Fritz gurgled into terrified and amazed silence. It was a voice with a strong American accent that spoke in the darkness, and Fritz knew that there were no foreigners in the crew of the Spindrift. Some stranger was on board the steamer in mid-ocean!

"Keep where you are!" snarled the nasal voice. "I've got a knife here, I guess—"

"Mein gootness!" babbled Fritz.

He stood still. A match scratched in the gloom, flickering on his fat, terrified face; and it revealed also the face of the man who seized him. It was a hard, bony, tanned face, with flinty eyes and beetling brows, and a sharp, jutting nose.

The match went out.

"Mein gootness!" murmured Fritz.

"It is vun stowaway!"

"You've guessed that, you fat geck?" came the snarling voice, "Did you come here to look for a stow-away?"

"Himmel! Nein! If I know tat you vas here I would not gum!" roared

Fritz "Nopoddy know that you vas here."

"And I calculate nobody will know!" snarled the harsh voice. "Now you're here, you fat geck, you'll stay."

"Ach! I tink tat I petter go!" groaned Fritz. "I vill tell nopoddy, goot mister stowaway—"

There was a harsh laugh.

"You figure I'd trust you? I guess if Captain Coote found out that Ezra Sarson got aboard his packet at the Azores, I'd sure finish this trip in irons!"

Fritz trembled from head to foot. He knew the man's name now—the name of the ruffian who had trapped Captain Coote in a pit on Grimslade Moor, when the skipper of the Spindrift had visited the school. The police had hunted for the man in vain, and it was certain that he had fled from the country.

Evidently it was for revenge on the skipper who had rope-ended him for theft, that the "Frisco" "tough" had taken the opportunity, when the Spindrift touched at the Azores, of stowing himself away on the steamer. And it was into his savage hands that the fat German junior had fallen—in dodging the "holiday task." Fritz groaned with dismay. Sammy's lessons, and Sammy's cane, would have been better than this!

CHAPTER 2.

Storm Tossed!

SAMMY SPARSHOTT frowned. "Where's Splitz?" he rapped. "Coming, I think, sir!" said Jim Dainty.

"I woke him up, sir," said Ginger Rawlinson. "He's still awake, I'm sure—we can hear the engines now!"

Whereat the Grimslade juniors grinned. Fritz' snore, hefty as it was, had not really drowned the buzz of the engines.

Dr. Sparshott glanced along the desks. Fritz Splitz was not to be seen.

Sammy concluded that he had gone into the cabin.

"Look for him, Dainty," he barked.

"Yes, sir!"

Not unwillingly, Jim Dainty left the holiday class to look for Fritz von Splitz. Dawson and Ginger, Streaky and Sandy, started work. Dr. Sparshott, who was absurdly young for a headmaster, and looked more boyish than ever in yachting outfit, rather belied his looks when it came to work! He had a way of making fellows exert themselves.

Leaving them to it, Jim went rooting after Fritz. He drew a blank in the cabins, hunted up and down and round about, but picked up no sign of the fat German junior. Certainly it never occurred to him that Fritz had found a way into the hold, to hide among the cargo till the class was over.

He returned to Dr. Sparshott at last, alone.

"I can't find him, sir!"

Sammy grunted, and promised Fritz "six" when he got hold of him.

For the next hour, Dr. Sparshott had a class of five instead of the usual six. Meanwhile, the Spindrift was throbbing on her way southward. In the west, the sun was sinking to the sea in a blaze of purple and gold. Several times the juniors noticed that Captain Coote, on the bridge, turned his gaze to the north-east with puckered brows. They wondered whether the skipper was spotting signs of coming bad weather.

Since leaving the Azores, the weather had been perfect, though it was rather too hot for comfort. Days of blazing sunshine had succeeded one another. Glorious as the weather was, the holiday cruisers would not have been sorry to see a little rain for a change, and to see the clouds blotting out the endless glare of the southern sun.

"Dismiss!" said Sammy.

Cheerfully the Grimslade juniors collected their books and went. They noticed that Dr. Sparshott joined Captain Coote on the bridge. Both of them stared hard into the north-east.

and spoke in low tones. There was a pale greyness in the eastern sky, strangely contrasted with the vivid glow in the west.

"Bad weather coming," prophesied Ginger Rawlinson.

Ginger was a true prophet. A few moments later the Spindrift gave a sudden lurch, as if a giant's hand had struck from the sea. The deck was tilted at almost an angle of forty-five degrees.

Captain Coote and Dr. Sparshott held on to the bridge rail, the seamen on deck held on to anything that was at hand. The juniors shot along the deck in a sprawling bunch. Five fellows, clinging together, shot into the companion and went down the saloon stairs at one fell swoop.

Bump! Crash! Bump! Thump!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ow! Wow! Oh, crumbs!"

"Ooooooooooh!"

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger Rawlinson, staggering up. "What the dickens! Is the blessed ship turning upside down?"

The juniors scrambled up, holding on to keep their footing. The steamer was rocking and pitching wildly. They could hear a shriek of wind from above. With breathless suddenness the hurricane had struck the steamer. During class with Sammy, the ocean had seemed as smooth as a millpond. Now it was tossing and roaring.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jim Dainty. "We're getting it now!"

"Looks like a change in the weather, what?" grinned Dawson breathlessly.

Crash! Bang! Crash! came from various directions, as loose articles slid and clattered about. Jim Dainty crawled up the companion to look out on deck. He had to crawl, clamping on with hands and feet. As he put his head out on deck, the wind struck him like a blow from a hammer, and took his breath away. He gasped and gurgled.

The vivid glow of the sunset was blotted out. Rain was falling—not in

drops, but in sheets. The Spindrift shuddered from stem to stern as the heavy seas struck and struck. Through the mist of rain, Sammy Sparshott loomed up before Jim.

"Get below!" he rapped. "Keep below, all of you! Not safe on deck."

"Yes, sir!" panted Jim.

And he crawled down again.

The five juniors collected in the cabin. They heard the companion closed; they heard the heavy seas dashing on the steamer and splashing on the closed portholes. It was impossible to keep on their feet without holding. It seemed to them that sky and sea had gone mad together, and that pandemonium reigned on the roaring Atlantic.

"No danger, you men!" said Ginger, shouting to make his voice heard above the uproar. "It's a good ship, and a good skipper! We're all right!"

"Right as rain!" said Jim Dainty. "My hat! How she creaks and groans!"

"I say, though, where's Fritz?" exclaimed Dick Dawson, suddenly remembering the existence of Friedrich von Splitz. "He was hiding somewhere to keep out of class, but—"

"Goodness knows!" said Jim Dainty, quite puzzled. "He's not hiding in the cabins. This would have brought him out."

It was rather a mystery what had become of Fritz von Splitz. Nothing was to be seen or heard of him. But the juniors had little leisure to wonder about Fritz.

Crash on crash came the heavy seas, thundering on the labouring steamer. The buzz of the engines could be heard as the Spindrift ploughed her way amid the roaring seas. Another sound reached them, which puzzled them a little at first. The steward came into the cabin, and they noticed that his face was pale.

"What's that going on?" called out Jim Dainty. "What's that row now, steward? Sort of clanking."

"The pumps, sir!"

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

Jim caught his breath.

"A leak! Oh, my hat!"

The Grimsdale juniors felt a thrill to their very hearts. Wild and fierce as the hurricane was, they had not doubted, so far, that a well-found ship, well commanded, would ride it out in safety. But if the Spindrift had sprung a leak, there was a different tale to tell!

CHAPTER 3.

Scuttled!

MEIN gootness!" groaned Fritz Splitz.

How long he had been in the hold of the Spindrift, Fritz did not know; but it seemed like days, if not weeks. Deep darkness, and a smell of bilge surrounded him.

The stowaway had dragged him into some obscure corner, where he crouched on the orlop-deck, between the ship's timbers and a great bale of some kind of goods. There, whispering fierce threats, the ruffian had left him, and Fritz had not dared to stir since.

Every now and then, at long intervals, the darkness of the hold had been broken by a gleam of light. Fritz realised that the desperado was striking matches to see his way; though why he was moving about among the stacked cargo, the fat German could not guess.

Again and again, between the scratching of the matches, Fritz heard a dull, grinding sound, like the noise made by a drill on hard metal, and his fat brain grasped the fact that Sarson was at some kind of work in the hold. But what he was doing was a mystery to Fritz.

Fortunately for his peace of mind, he did not guess that the desperate rascal had stowed himself away on the Spindrift with the intention of scuttling the ship at sea, and that his discovery by Fritz had hastened him

in carrying out that fearful intention.

When the hurricane came, Fritz von Splitz collapsed on the orlop-deck and groaned in sheer misery. The roar of the maddened sea filled the hold with deafening noise, and every moment it seemed to Fritz that the Spindrift was about to take the last plunge.

He sat up, shuddering. Rain was beating down on the deck above in torrents. But it did ~~not~~ of course, penetrate through a solid deck and closed hatches into the hold. Yet there was water swimming round him, rising, and swamping over him. Fritz' teeth chattered.

"Mein gootness! Tere is, vun leak!" he gurgled.

A leak in mid-ocean, with a hurricane raging! Where the Spindrift was, Fritz did not know; but he knew that the Azores had been left days behind, and that the steamer must be approaching the continent of South America. But she was still far from land, and the swamping of water in the hold told that she was leaking.

And then suddenly it flashed on Fritz what the ruffian Sarson had been doing; what was meant by that grinding sound of a drill on the ship's timbers. The Spindrift had been scuttled!

Fritz dragged himself to his feet. His fear of the Frisco tough was less than his fear of being drowned like a rat in a trap. He had to get out of that den of darkness and death somehow.

But the blackness was intense. He groped and stumbled, falling and picking himself up again. In his terror he shouted for help, but the din of the storm drowned every sound.

He heard and saw nothing of Ezra Sarson; it seemed as if the desperado was no longer in the hold at all.

Hours, it seemed to the hapless Fritz, elapsed while he was struggling and groping in the hold, with the water washing round his fat knees. Then, to his intense joy, he found himself groping over a door. He had found it at last. He tumbled through into

the fore-castle, and hurriedly closed and fastened the door after him. If Sarson was still there, he could stay there.

There was a short ladder from the fore-castle to the fore-deck. Fritz groped up it—and gave a groan. The fore-castle hatch was battened down, to keep the seas that broke over the Spindrift from swamping below. There was no way out for Fritz. He yelled and shouted, but his voice was drowned in the roar of wind and wave. And a sudden lurch of the steamer sent him tumbling down the ladder.

He went sprawling, and crashed on a figure in the darkness. There was a muttered exclamation. A match gleamed, and he saw the hard, tanned face of Ezra Sarson.

"Ach!" gasped Fritz, squirming away.

Evidently the scuttler had left the hold before Fritz; but, like him, had found himself a prisoner in the fore-castle.

"You again, you fat geck!" he heard the ruffian mutter. "I guess you might as well have stayed in the hold to drown."

"Ach himmel! But I do not vant to trown!" wailed Fritz. "Mein gootness! I vish tat I vas pack in Cher-many!"

"Trapped, by the great horn spoon!" muttered the ruffian fiercely. "Trapped—by my own hand! How'd I know a hurricane was coming on when I started to scuttle the hooker? How'd I know? Calm for days—and then—this! I reckoned on cinching a boat in the dark, and getting clear —"

Fritz did not heed the mutterings of rage and despair from the man who had scuttled the Spindrift. The rascal had calculated on stealing a boat and escaping, leaving the ship to sink. But the sudden outbreak of the hurricane had upset all his plans.

Again and again the savage mutterings came, but Fritz did not heed. Fritz was thinking of himself.

To the men on deck, no doubt it seemed that the Spindrift had sprung a leak; but Fritz had heard the drill at work, and he knew that the ship's plates were bored in several places, and that there was no hope. The pumps would never keep pace with the sea that poured in through half a dozen openings at once.

Fritz crawled up the ladder again. He beat on the hatch with his podgy fists. He yelled and howled.

"Ach! Help! Gum! Gum! Vill you not gum, peasts and prutes? I vill not be trowned, ain't it! Gum! Ach! Gum!"

But only the roar of the hurricane answered Fritz Spitz.

CHAPTER 4.

Left on the Wreck!

"COURAGE, my boys!" said Dr. Sparshot quietly.

Jim Dainty & Co. were on deck now. The whole crew were on deck, working on the pumps in turn, and the Grimslade juniors were lending a hand.

Black night brooded over the labouring ship and the wildly tossing sea. The fiercest force of the hurricane had blown itself out. The rain had ceased; and the wind, though still strong and fierce, had fallen. But round the waterlogged ship the sea ran high. There was water in the engine-room now, and the engineer had had to shut off steam.

The Spindrift was no longer making way. The ship that had "walked the waters like a thing of life" was little more than a helpless log.

"All serene, sir!" said Jim Dainty quietly. "We're not scared!"

"Grimslade never says die, sir!" said Ginger Rawlinson.

Sammy smiled faintly.

"You will need all your courage," he said. "We are to take to the boats. Captain Coote has given up all hope of saving the ship. Something has happened below—no one knows what!"

but it cannot be an ordinary leak. The Spindrift is going down. Get a few things together—there is little time now—and return to the deck. Bring Splitz with you."

"But—where is Fritz?" exclaimed Dainty, as the juniors hurried below. Already there was water washing in the cabins, and it was only too clear that the Spindrift could not be saved. They could only be thankful that the worst of the hurricane had blown out, and that it was possible for boats to live in the sea.

"Fritz!" roared Ginger.

In the strain and stress of the past few hours they had forgotten the missing Fritz. They had to remember him now.

"Fritz! Fritz Splitz!"

They shouted together, and up and down and round about they hunted for the fat German. But they did not find him. Dr. Sparshott's voice was heard shouting:

"On deck, boys!"

Jim Dainty & Co. hurried back to their headmaster. Already one boat had been launched, and was fending off from the rolling, plunging hull of the waterlogged ship.

"Splitz! Where is he?" barked Sammy.

"We can't find him!"

Sammy Sparshott shut his teeth hard. Captain Coote's voice came shouting through the wind:

"Hurry up, there! Get the boys into the boat, Sam Sparshott! The old hooker may go any minute now! Get in, man!"

Sammy drew one long, deep breath.

"Get into the boat, my boys," he said quietly. "I must find Splitz! I cannot leave the ship without him!"

"You're not staying to sink with her, sir?" exclaimed Dawson.

"She may not sink," answered Sammy coolly. "But, sink or swim, the headmaster of Grimslade cannot abandon a boy in his charge! Get into the boat! They cannot wait. She may

go to pieces against the hull this sea!"

Captain Coote roared again. The boat rocked wildly in the rough sea, in imminent danger of crashing on the hull. The skipper held on to a rope from the rail, while the seamen fended with the oars. There was not a moment to waste now.

"Go!" barked Sammy.

Jim Dainty's face set obstinately.

"We're not going and leaving you here, sir," he answered steadily. "If you can stick to Fritz, we can stick to him."

"Yes, rather!" gasped Dick Dawson.

"Grimslade sticks together!"

"Hear, hear!" gasped Ginger.

A great wave rushed down upon the sinking hull. It lifted the boat, and for a moment it seemed that it would be dashed on board, and smashed to fragments by the collision. The seamen fended desperately, and somehow the boat was shoved off. Then, almost in a twinkling, it was torn away from the side of the Spindrift, and disappeared into the darkness of the sea. Sammy Sparshott gritted his teeth.

"Too late!" he breathed.

Jim Dainty strained his eyes in the murk after the boat. For some moments he feared that it had been overwhelmed by the waves, and had gone down. Then he had a glimpse of it on the crest of a wave at a distance. It was driving before the wind, and in a moment more it had vanished.

"Gone!" muttered Sammy Sparshott. "You young fools! By gad! If we live through this, I'll give you six apiece!"

Boats were gone—captain and crew were gone. But for the mysterious disappearance of Fritz Splitz, the Grimslade boys and their headmaster would have been gone also. Now they were left on the sinking wreck. The Spindrift rolled and plunged helplessly in the tossing sea.

Sammy Sparshott was angry; but anger was not his only feeling. Anyhow, it was no time to give way to anger. There was no chance of the

boat approaching the ship again. They could live only by running before the wind.

"Get hold of lifebelts, barked Sammy. "While there's life there's hope. And I'm by no means sure that the Spindrift is going down yet. We've a chance. Now, I've got to find Splitz! You've searched—"

"Everywhere!" said Jim Dainty.

"That means that the stupid boy must have hidden himself in some other part of the ship! In the fore-castle, perhaps."

Leaving the juniors to put on lifebelts, Sammy Sparshott tramped forward on the rocking, reeling deck. If Splitz was in the hold, there was little doubt that he was already drowned; but Sammy hoped to discover him in the fore-castle. Swiftly he unfastened the hatch and dragged it open. From the gloom within a fat face, as white as chalk, loomed like a full moon, and a gasping voice was heard.

"Splitz!" barked Sammy, and he grasped the fat German by the collar and hooked him out on deck.

"Oh grumbs!" gasped Fritz, panting with relief. "Mein gootness! I tink tat I trown mit meinself in tat peastly place, mit tat peast tat scuttle te ship before! Ach! Here he gum!"

Sammy, in utter amazement, stared into the blackness of the fore-castle. It was news to him that anyone was still aboard, except himself and the juniors. Up the steep ladder came a muscular man, with a hard, tanned face and lantern-jaw, a knife in his hand.

"Sarson!" yelled Sammy blankly.

He recognised the American, even in the gloom. Ezra Sarson did not speak. He came like a tiger, knife in hand. But he had no chance to use the knife.

Startled, amazed as he was, Sammy was prompt. Slingsing Fritz Splitz aside, the headmaster of Grimslade met the ruffian with a right-hander that landed like a sledge-hammer blow between his evil eyes. There was a yell from Ezra Sarson, and he went stumbling headlong down the ladder, the knife fly-

ing from his hand. A crash below in the darkness told that he had landed on his back.

"That scoundrel here!" breathed Sammy Sparshott. "I understand now! Stand back, my boys!"

Jim Dainty & Co. had come running forward. Sammy waved them back, and swiftly closed and secured the fore-castle hatch. His face was grim and hard as iron.

"Who—what is it, sir?" gasped Jim Dainty.

"The man who attacked Captain Coote the day he came to Grimslade," answered Sammy. "It seems that he has stowed himself away on board and scuttled the ship! Let him take the consequences!"

"My giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger.

There was a hammering of furious fists from the interior of the fore-castle. Sammy Sparshott turned away, unheeding it. Jim Dainty & Co. exchanged glances, and followed their headmaster. It was for Sammy to decide how to handle the wretch who had scuttled the Spindrift, and not for them to question his decision.

The seas were no longer breaking over the Spindrift. She was awash fore and aft, but she seemed to be settling no deeper in the water. At any minute, as the Grimsladers well knew, the final fatal plunge might come.

Yet, as the long minutes passed and the plunge did not come, they began to hope. It was possible that the shifting cargo had blocked the leaks, and that the steamer, if she shipped no more water, might remain afloat for a considerable time.

Dr. Sparshott scanned the sea with keen eyes. The storm had blown itself out before midnight, but the sea was still running high. From the dark sky stars began to gleam.

"Is there a chance, sir?" asked Jim Dainty at last.

"Quite!" said Dr. Sparshott. "There was one chance in a dozen that the Spindrift might not go straight down, and that chance has favoured us. I

believe now that we shall float till morning, at least."

"Oh, good!" said all the juniors together.

"In the daylight we may be sighted," said Dr. Sparshott, "and if the boat is picked up, our situation will be made known. If not, we may make a raft and float off before the ship goes down. We have plenty of materials at hand—and willing hands to work, I hope."

There were willing hands to work, and all were kept busy, while the long hours wore away. And still, under the feet of the Grimsladers, the Spindrift kept afloat, though she was slowly settling.

Dawn came at last; and with tired but gladdened eyes Jim Dainty watched the sun rise in the east and the light of a new day spreading over the troubled sea. As the sunlight strengthened they scanned the vast Atlantic, north and south, east and west, in the hope of seeing a sail or the smoke of a steamer.

But no glimmering sail, no trail of smoke, broke the blank horizon. Higher rose the sun, streaming down heat and light. But the circle of the horizon was unbroken, and the schoolboys on the rolling, plunging hull of the Spindrift might have fancied themselves the sole inhabitants of a world of water.

CHAPTER 5.

On a Floating Wreck!

CLINK, clink, clink!

Dr. Samuel Sparshott, headmaster of Grimslade School, was wielding a hammer—as handily as he had ever wielded the official cane at Grimslade.

Few would have guessed that Sammy Sparshott was a headmaster, looking at him now. In shirtsleeves, with a stubby chin, and a hat on the back of his untidy head, Sammy did not look like a headmaster. But he looked like a man, every inch of him. And Jim Dainty & Co. were glad that Sammy

was with them in their present perilous predicament.

Water-logged, deep in the sea, the Spindrift rolled and sagged helplessly, under the blazing sunshine of the South Atlantic. The hurricane that had swept the ocean was gone; a light breeze played over the sunny sea, and at dawn the waves had gone down.

On the wide waste of waters there was no sail, no trail of smoke from a steamer. The Grimsladers were alone in a world of water. The nearest land, so far as they knew, was the South American continent, ~~hundreds~~ hundreds of miles away.

Clink, clink! rang the hammer in Sammy's hand. Since the dawn of the new day all hands had been hard at work. How long the wreck would remain afloat was an unknown problem, and the building of a raft was going on rapidly. Planks and beams were nailed and lashed together; empty casks lashed on to float the raft from underneath.

"Nails!" rapped Sammy.

Fritz Splitz was handing nails to the busy Sammy as he hammered. Now, however, Fritz had sat down on the nailbox to take a spot of rest. Sammy glared round at him.

"Ach! I vas dired!" gasped Fritz. "I tink tat mein legs grumple up under me. I vas so dired as neffer vas before!"

Crack!

"Whoop!" roared Fritz as Sammy tapped with the hammer. "Mein gootness! Vy for you crack me te head mit tat peastly hammer? Yarcoop!"

"Nails!" barked Sammy.

"Ach! Ja wohl! Heve vas te nails!" gasped Fritz, in a great hurry. "Ach! I vish tat I vas pack in Chermay!"

"I wish you were," agreed Sammy. "Keep moving!"

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" ejaculated Ginger Rawlinson as the Spindrift gave a heavy plunge. "She's going!"

"Not yet!" said Sammy coolly. "We've time. We're nearly through."

The Spindrift was settling deeper and deeper. The hold was full of water,

and it was washing through the cabins and lapping on the slanting deck. Sammy Sparshott drove in his last nail, rose, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with the back of a grimy hand. Standing erect on the slanting, heaving deck, he swept sea and sky with a keen glance.

The ocean was bare of sail or smoke; the only sign of life was a distant albatross, winging afar in the blue. Sammy gave a slight shrug of the shoulders. He knew that there was no chance of being picked off the wreck.

"Now for the launching!" said Sammy cheerily. "All hands!"

With the sinking steamer so low in the water, it was not difficult to slide the raft over the side into the sea. All hands shoved with a will, and the raft floated beside the Spindrift, almost on a level with the rail that dipped to the water. Ropes held it to the rail—a precaution that Sammy had thoughtfully taken, or the heave into the sea would have sent it floating away out of reach.

"She floats!" said Sandy Bean, as if he had not wholly expected.

"She's made to float, Bean," said Dr. Sparshott. "Now for the loading. Food and clothes first."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Streaky Bacon, like a seaman answering his skipper; and Sammy grinned.

"Buck up, you men!" said Sammy. "We've got time—but none too much. Dainty, Dawson, jump on the raft and stand by to take on cargo!"

Jim Dainty and Dick Dawson jumped lightly on the raft. Sammy swung kegs of water over to them, and they packed them on the raft as directed, every keg secured with a rope in its place. Bags and boxes of provisions followed, and a large roll of sail-cloth, and a number of spars, and a tool-chest; clothes and blankets, and all sorts and conditions of things.

A long shudder ran through the Spindrift, and she gave a heavy lurch. The end was not far off now. It was amazing to the schoolboys that she had remained afloat so long. It could only

have been due to the shifting cargo blocking the leaks below the water-line.

The steamer had seemed on the point of sinking when Captain Coote and the crew had gone in the boats. Yet now, twelve hours later, she was still on the surface. Fritz Splitz gave a squeal of terror as the water-logged craft lurched and a wash of water came right across the deck.

"Ach! I shall be trowned!" squealed Fritz; and he dropped the bag of ship's biscuit he was carrying, and made a wild jump for the raft.

"Steady, there!" barked Sammy.

But the scared Fritz did not heed. He jumped, and landed on the bobbing raft. Fritz stumbled and pitched over, but luckily, for Fritz, he grabbed Jim Dainty with one out-flung arm, and Dawson with the other. The three staggered together across the raft, and sprawled in a heap on the very edge. Fritz' fat legs hung over in the sea; but Dainty and Dawson were still on the raft, with Fritz' fat arms round their necks.

"Ach! Help!" yelled Fritz. "I falls into te sea! I shall trown! Pull me pack, peasts and prutes!"

"You blithering bloater!" gasped Jim Dainty.

He wrenched himself away from Fritz' clinging grasp, and Dawson jerked loose. Fritz grabbed the edge of the raft, and clung, roaring.

"Peasts and prutes! Pull me pack!" he yelled. "I vill not be trowned to blease you! Ach! I have no more te breff!"

"Take his other ear, Dick!" grunted Dainty.

"Ow! Yow! Yurrrgg!" spluttered Fritz, as the chums of the Fourth grasped him by his extensive ears. "Led go! Mein gootness! I have vun colossal bain in mein ears! Peasts and prutes and pounders——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull both together, Dainty and Dawson landed Fritz on the raft. He sat down, clasping his fat ears with his

fat hands, his frantic yelling echoing far across the Atlantic. Leaving him to yell, Dainty and Dawson resumed taking on cargo.

CHAPTER 6.

Taking to the Raft!

ALL aboard!" barked Sammy. Ginger & Co. scrambled on the raft. It was high time to leave the sinking hulk, for there was danger of the raft being dragged down in the suction when the Spindrift plunged for the last time. But Sammy Sparshott, standing by the swaying rail after the schoolboys were all off the wreck, seemed to hesitate.

Jim Dainty & Co. knew of what he was thinking.

Locked in the forecastle was Ezra Sarson, the rascal who had scuttled the Spindrift for revenge on the skipper. He had remained there since Sammy had shut him in, and the shipwrecked schoolboys had given him little or no thought. But now that they were about to quit the wreck they had to think of him.

It was the Frisco "tough" who had caused the disaster, and he richly deserved to be left to go down with the ship he had scuttled. But Jim Dainty & Co. shrank from the thought of abandoning him to drown like a rat in a trap, and they could see that Dr. Sparshott was thinking the same.

"We can't leave the rascal to drown!" said Sammy Sparshott at last in answer to his own thoughts.

"Plenty of us to keep him in order, sir, if we take him on the raft," said Jim Dainty.

Sammy turned away and strode to the forecastle. The schoolboys waited rather anxiously for him to reappear. The man who had scuttled the Spindrift was a desperate and dangerous rascal, as savage as a tiger.

They could not see Sammy now from the raft, and they were anxious so long as he was out of their sight. A long minute passed—and another—and then Jim Dainty made a jump for the sway-

ing rail of the Spindrift and clambered on board again.

"Dr. Sparshott— Oh, my hat!" gasped Jim as he spotted two grappling figures rolling and struggling on the slanting deck by the fore-hatch.

He dashed forward. A lurch of the ship sent him stumbling, and he pitched headlong. He scrambled up close to the two struggling men. It was evident that the desperate rascal had turned on Sammy like a tiger the moment he was out of the fo'c'sle.

Sammy Sparshott could have handled him easily enough; but his foot had caught in a rope, and he had gone down, and the copper-faced Frisco tough had the upper hand. His wiry fingers were on the throat of the Grimslade headmaster, and Sammy was struggling furiously, but in vain, in his desperate grip. Sarson's eyes glittered down at him.

"My turn now, I guess," he snarled. "Doggone you, I reckon the schoolboys won't give me much trouble when I've done you! I guess you've built that raft for me."

Heedless of the fierce blows coming from the man under him, Sarson dragged Sammy's head up, to dash it down on the deck. It was at that moment that Jim Dainty reached him.

He fastened both hands in the ruffian's thick hair and dragged him backwards with all his strength.

Ezra Sarson gave a fierce yell as he was dragged back from his victim. He turned on Jim Dainty like a wild animal. But that moment's relief was enough for Sammy. He heaved up, hurling the ruffian aside, and gained his knees. The next moment his powerful grasp was on Sarson, and the ruffian was down and under him.

"My turn now, I think!" said Sammy coolly. "Thank you, Dainty! But you can leave him with me now."

With an iron grip on the man's brawny neck, Sammy Sparshott marched him away, and Jim Dainty followed. Standing by the dipping rail, over the raft, Dr. Sparshott lifted the

ruffian into the air, almost as easily as he might have lifted an infant, and swung him high.

"Stand clear!" he barked.

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger. And the fellows on the raft jumped clear as the ruffian came whirling.

Crash!

Sarson landed on the raft with a shock that made it dip, and that knocked every remaining ounce of breath out of his body. He lay where he had fallen, gasping and gurgling.

"Now, Dainty!"

Jim jumped down, and the Head of Grimslade followed him. Several spare oars had been found and placed on the raft. Taking one of them the headmaster shoved off, Ginger casting loose the rope. The raft slid away from the dipping, plunging hull of the Spindrift.

Paddling with the oars, the raft's crew drove slowly but steadily away from the wreck. All of them realised that they had to keep clear of the Spindrift when she went down. It was slow work, and hard work in the hot blaze of the tropical sun. The raft showed a tendency to turn round and round instead of progressing, and steering was far from easy. But they gained foot by foot and yard by yard.

Farther and farther they won their way from the ship that had been their home since Grimslade had broken up for the summer holidays and they had steamed out of the Mersey. At a good cable's length from the Spindrift, out of danger from suction, Sammy Sparshott allowed his crew to rest at last.

Ezra Sarson had sat up by that time, still panting, and his eyes glinting savagely. As the schoolboys laid down the oars at last, Dr. Sparshott turned to the ruffian. Sarson gave him a glare of hatred.

"Now, my man!" said Dr. Sparshott quietly. "You deserved to be left to drown on the ship you scuttled—but we've taken you off, and you've got the same chance that we have. On this raft you're going to toe the line, jump to

orders, and behave yourself—till I get a chance of handing you over to the law."

"I reckon not!" hissed Sarson.

"Mutiny," said Sammy calmly, "will be put down with a hard hand! As a beginning, and a warning, I'm going to give you a pretty severe rope's-ending for laying hands on me when I let you out of the forecabin. Get me a rope's-end, Dainty."

"Yes, rather!" grinned Jim.

Sarson staggered to his feet. He glared round as if in search of a weapon, and made a spring at one of the oars. He was quick—but Dr. Sparshott was quicker. Sammy's fist shot out like lightning, caught the ruffian on his stubby jaw, and Sarson went down as if he had been shot.

Sammy took the rope's-end from Dainty and stepped towards him. With his left hand he turned the ruffian over on the raft. With his right he wielded the thick knotted rope.

Swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe!

The ruffian roared and yelled and struggled. Sammy, cool as an iceberg, held him pinned down, and the rope's-end rose and fell. The juniors looked on grinning, and Fritz Splitz gave a fat chuckle. Many a time the juniors had seen Sammy handing out "six" at Grimslade, and he had a rather heavy hand with a cane. But they had never seen him hand out anything like this before.

He paused at last.

"I think, my man, that you will jump to orders now!" remarked Sammy, gently as a cooing dove.

A savage curse was the answer. Sammy gave the man one look.

"Silence!" he barked.

And Sarson was silent.

There was a shout from Ginger, and he pointed towards the distant Spindrift.

"She's going!"

All eyes were fixed on the wreck. With a last sullen plunge what was left of the Spindrift disappeared from sight. The waters closed for the last time over the steamer that had sailed so bravely out

of the Mersey. And silence, and a crushing sense of solitude, fell on the crew of the raft, alone on a wide, wide sea!

CHAPTER 7.

The Ship That Passed!

DR. SPARSHOTT felt, as the schoolboys felt, the sudden, heavy sense of solitude and desolation as the wreck of the Spindrift plunged and vanished beneath the Atlantic. But he was not the man to give way to it—or to allow others to do so. Briskly he rapped out orders to his schoolboy crew.

"Up with the mast!"

A long spar had been brought to serve as a mast, and it was fixed in a space left in the planking. Work was the thing to keep the shipwrecked schoolboys from uneasy thoughts, and Sammy was the man to see to it. Stays had to be rove for the mast, and a spar fitted as a boom, and then a sail shaped from the roll of sailcloth, and fitted and hoisted.

It meant hours of work—and it kept the crew of the raft occupied. Ezra Sarson joined in the labour—not willingly; but he had had enough of the rope's-end. Every now and then his deep-sunken eyes glinted at Sammy Sparshott—but he jumped to orders.

When the sail was hoisted at last the raft drifted slowly through the sunny waters. Astern, Sammy rigged a steering-sweep, and though it could not be said that the craft answered handily to her helm, at least she was able to keep to a course. The wind came out of the north-east—a gentle breeze that wafted the raft along in the direction, as the voyagers supposed, of South America.

What the position exactly was, it was impossible to tell, for, in the hurricane, the Spindrift had driven far and wide; but they hoped, at least, that they were in the track of ships going down to Rio. While they worked, and while they ate their meals, they watched for a sail—and Sammy, who had a pair of field-

glasses slung in a leather case over his shoulder, occasionally swept the sea with them. And suddenly, towards sunset, there was a yell from Ginger Rawlinson:

"My giddy goloshes! That's smoke!"

"Smoke!" exclaimed Jim Dainty.

Ginger pointed with a finger trembling with excitement. The sun was deep in the west, the sky a mass of gold and purple. Against the golden glow came a black smudge, which thickened and deepened.  Sparshott jerked out his glasses, opened them once more, and fixed them on that distant smudge. The juniors watched him breathlessly.

"A steamer!" said Dr. Sparshott. "I can make out her funnels. But—" He broke off and stared up at the mast, swaying under the sail. "Which is the lightest weight among you? You, I think. Bean! Get to the masthead and wave this flag."

Sandy Bean glanced up at the slender spar that carried the sail. Quietly he took the Union Jack from his headmaster, tucked it under his jacket, and climbed. Sandy was slim, but the mast swayed under his weight. But he climbed steadily to the summit, and, holding on with one hand and both legs, he waved the flag in the air as a signal. Standing below, the other fellows worked frantically at the oars.

The black smudge of smoke deepened and thickened. The steamer was coming down from the north, crossing the course of the raft, but at a great distance. Obviously the raft could not be seen from the ship, as only the smoke could be seen from the raft. But the shipwrecked schoolboys hoped that they would be near enough to be seen before the steamer passed on her way and left them behind.

Thicker and thicker the smoke-smudge blackened, and the crew of the raft were able to make out the funnels of the steamer. Now it was directly ahead of them, crossing the course. After that, if it went its way, it would

draw farther off—and with beating hearts they watched it.

The smoke began to fade. Unseeing, the steamer was passing on to the south. It had been a chance—a slim chance—but it had not materialised. In spite of their pluck, the Grimsladers felt their hearts heavy as the smoke-smudge faded away into the sunset.

High over the shadowed raft a light gleamed and shone from the masthead, where a hurricane-lamp was burning and swung. The light glimmered on the waters that rolled and washed round the drifting raft.

The night was calm, the raft floated evenly, and the schoolboys tried not to remember how frail were the timbers that were all that separated them from the unplumbed depths of the Atlantic.

Ezra Sarson, half-forgotten by the schoolboys, had thrown himself down, and seemed to sleep. Dr. Sparshott sat at the steering-sweep, apparently tireless. Jim Dainty & Co. talked in low tones—in the hush of night on the sea they unconsciously lowered their voices. Sammy glanced at his watch.

"Half-past nine!" he barked. "Dorm!"

The familiar word in such a situation made the juniors grin.

"What about keeping watch, sir?" asked Ginger Rawlinson. "Ships that pass in the night, you know, sir!"

"Leave that to me," said Sammy. "I'll wake some of you to take a turn later. Now turn in—just as if you were at Grimslade!"

The juniors rolled themselves in blankets, for the night was cold after the heat of the day. They lay down, with the lapping of the water in their ears, and wondered if they would be able to sleep. But they did not wonder long. In a few minutes they were fast asleep.

Dr. Sparshott sat, with his arm over the steering-sweep, and a rather grim expression of thoughtfulness on his clear-cut face. The deadly danger of the position was very clear to Sammy's

mind, though during the day he had kept up an air of the whole thing being rather a lark, for the sake of the boys under his charge.

The raft had been soundly constructed, and floated well; there were ample provisions and water for many days, at least; and, so long as the weather remained fair and the sea calm, there was a good chance of pulling through. But if a blow came on it was the end of all things for the shipwrecked schoolboys, as Sammy well knew.

Darkness enwrapped the world of waters, and silence, save for the eternal wash of the waves round the raft.

There was a soft stirring; the head of Ezra Sarson was lifted a few inches, and his sunken eyes gleamed at the man who sat at the steering-sweep. The 'Frisco tough had not slumbered. Alone of the crew on the raft, Sarson had been glad when the passing steamer passed on into space. He had no desire to be put in irons and handed over to the law.

The thought was in his brutal mind, the hope in his savage heart, of being alone on the raft when a ship picked it up. Now, lying with his head on his arm, affecting slumber, he watched the headmaster of Grimslade.

Dr. Sparshott leaned a little forward, and his chin sank on his breast. Whether his eyes had closed could not be seen under the shadow of his hat. But his whole attitude indicated that a weary man had sunk into slumber. He swayed a little to the motion of the raft, and in silence Sarson could hear his deep and steady breathing.

Cautiously the ruffian crept towards Dr. Sparshott—ferocity blazing in his sunken eyes, his lips drawn back in a snarl from his tobacco-stained teeth. He had no weapon; but one blow would send the slumbering man spinning off the raft—and once he was in the water Ezra would see that he did not get a fooling on the timbers again.

Closer and closer he crept, till he was within reach of Dr. Sparshott—and his sinewy arm was drawn back for the fierce blow that was to hurl him to death.

But that blow was never struck! For even as the ruffian tensed himself to deliver it, Sammy Sparshott's fist suddenly lashed out with lightning swiftness. The apparently sleeping man was transformed into a man very wide awake indeed! Sammy's hard knuckles came like a hammer just above the ruffian's belt, and Ezra Sarson went over backwards as if a cannon-ball had struck him.

Crash!

The raft rocked with the crash of the falling ruffian. There was a startled shout from the Grimslanders as they jumped out of sleep. Jim Dainty found something heavy sprawling across his legs and pinning him down with its weight as he tried to struggle up. The next moment he discovered that it was a spluttering, panting ruffian, gurgling for breath. He rolled Sarson aside and scrambled up, panting.

"What the thump—"

"My giddy goloshes!" yelled Ginger. "What—"

"All serene, my boys!" said Dr. Sparshott quietly. "That scoundrel fancied that I was asleep—and I let him fancy so. Take the helm, Dainty."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Jim.

Dr. Sparshott stepped to the sprawling ruffian. All the wind had been knocked out of that Frisco tough, and he gurgled helplessly at the headmaster's feet.

"You rascal!" said Sammy. "I am more than half-inclined to pitch you into the sea! Lift a finger—and I will do so! I am going to make you safe now, you scoundrel!"

Taking a length of rope, the headmaster of Grimsland proceeded to bind the ruffian's wrists together. He made no resistance—the icy glint in Sammy's eyes told that he meant what he had said. In a few minutes his wrists were

securely bound, and Sammy knotted the end of the rope to the mast.

"I think it is my turn to take a spot of sleep now," he said calmly. "I can trust you and Dainty to keep awake?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Rely on us, sir!"

"Keep her head to the wind, Dainty. Call me in two hours."

And Sammy Sparshott rolled himself in a blanket, closed his eyes, and in less than a minute was fast asleep.

CHAPTER 8.

Land-ho!

"MY giddy goloshes!" Ginger Rawlinson jumped up with a yell.

"What—"

"Look!" roared Ginger. "A ship!" Sammy Sparshott was on his feet with a bound. The juniors leaped up. The ruffian tied to the mast raised his head and stared.

Far to the south a red light winked in the darkness. Sammy Sparshott fixed his eyes on it. It was the red port-light of a ship passing in the night. Higher up a white light gleamed. It seemed to the juniors that they could catch a distant throb of engines through the silence of the sea.

"Shout!" said Sammy tersely.

The hurricane-lamp was burning at the masthead. Swiftly Sammy lighted a second lamp and waved it in the air. He shouted, and all the juniors joined their voices to his in a roar.

The ship was distant; but they hoped against hope that the wind would carry their voices the distance—that some watchful eye would spot the lights of the raft gleaming from the sea.

For some minutes it seemed to them that the thrumming of the engines was sounding louder—and they watched with straining eyes.

Minutes—long minutes—passed, and then the red light faded from the black. Their voices had not reached the ship—the glimmering lights low down on the water had not been seen.

"Rotten luck!" said Ginger.

Groan—from Fritz Splitz.

"Better luck next time!" said Sammy Sparshott cheerily. "Really, it seems to be raining ships in these waters, lonely as they look! That's the second—and third time is lucky!"

Sammy spoke as if ships were as thick as blackberries in the South Atlantic, and somehow he conveyed confidence to his crew.

Sammy Sparshott sat on the steering-sweep, while the schoolboys slept, and watched the sea till the waves silvered in dawn. The raft was surging on at a greater speed now; the wind had freshened in the night.

Only Sammy knew, or at least realised, how slight was the hope of being picked up; and during the silent watches of the night he had debated anxiously in his mind how far they might be from the nearest land. As the sun rose higher the headmaster of Grimsdale stood up and scanned the wide-stretching ocean on all sides.

His eyes fixed on a spot on the western horizon. He stood quite still, and for once the colour wavered in his cheeks. Something blurred the blue in the west.

Sammy Sparshott drew out his field-glasses, opened them, and fixed them on the distant object. Then he drew a deep, deep breath. He shut the glasses at last and returned them to the case; but he still stood with his eyes on that distant speck.

Over the sea-line it loomed, and it was no longer possible to mistake it for a cloud-bank. Sammy knew! But he knew, too, that it could not be the mainland—many a long mile separated the gliding raft from the mainland. An island—inhabited or uninhabited—land at last!

There was a yawn, and Ginger Rawlinson opened his eyes, sat up, and blinked at Sammy. Dr. Sparshott smiled and pointed. Ginger gave him one look and was on his feet with a bound, staring across the sea. And the

next moment Ginger gave a yell that awakened every fellow on the raft.

Jim Dainty & Co. scrambled up. They stared across the glimmering waters. A wooded hill, thick with verdure—a shelving beach, gleaming in the rising sun, a sparkling, cascading stream—a wide blue sky—seemed to smile at them in welcome. And from all the Grimsladers burst a joyous shout:

"Land! Hurrah!"

CHAPTER 9.

Land!

"L AND!"
"Hurrah!"

Jim Dainty & Co. fairly let themselves go. Far and wide the shout rang over the blue waters round the floating raft.

Dr. Samuel Sparshott grinned cheerily. Sammy Sparshott, with his hat on the back of an untidy head, an unshaven chin, and a sun-blister on his nose, did not look much like the headmaster who had walked the quadrangle at Grimsdale School.

Neither did the fellows on the raft look much like Grimsdale juniors—they looked rather like a crew of ragamuffins. But it was a real Grimsdale yell they gave at the sight of the island rising from the sea—land at last after their perilous voyage on the raft from the wrecked Spindrift.

"My giddy goloshes! A jolly old island!" yelled Ginger Rawlinson, clapping Streaky Bacon on the back in his exuberance, and nearly pitching Streaky off the raft.

"Ow! Chuck it, fathead!" gasped Streaky.

He grabbed at Sandy Bean to save himself from falling, and they tumbled over together—on to Fritz von Splitz, who had not got up yet. The yell of Fritz von Splitz as he received them rang louder than the cheering of the Grimsladers.

"Ach! Mein gootness! Vat vas tat?" yelled Fritz. "Vy for you gum down

pang on me, peasts and prutes and pounders?"

"Land!" yelled Jim Dainty, "Land, you old Boche bloater!"

"Ach! I vas tamaged mit meinsel! I have run bain in mein bread-basket!" gasped Fritz. "Vill you peasts get off mein dummy? You gif me a colossal bain in mein dummy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Land!" chuckled Dick Dawson. "And we're running right down to it! Fritz, old bean, I can see the coconuts, all a-growing and a-blowing!"

Fritz sat up and took notice.

"Gokernuts! Tat is goot! Goker-nuts are goot to eat!"

Nearer and clearer the island rose before the gladdened eyes of the shipwrecked schoolboys. The sun, now high in the east, shone brightly on the shelving beach of a wide blue bay, backed by thick green jungle, with wooded hills rising beyond.

With the wind abaft, filling the sail, the raft floated on towards the island, Sammy Sparshott steering with the sweep. Eagerly the schoolboys watched the island shore. There was no sign of life to be seen there—no sign of a building of any kind. So far as they could see, the island was uninhabited. But, inhabited or not, it was land—terra firma at last—and a joyous sight to the shipwrecked Grimsladers.

Indeed, just then Jim Dainty & Co. hardly regretted the wreck of the Spin-drift, on which they had been taking a holiday cruise with their headmaster. Camping on an unknown island in the vast spaces of the South Atlantic rather appealed to them as a first-class way of spending school holidays!

"Vat island is tat, sir?" asked Fritz Spitz, getting on his feet at last, and blinking at the shore with his saucer-eyes.

Dr. Sparshott smiled and shook his head.

"Probably a West Indian island, Spitz!" he answered. "That is the nearest we can guess. All we know for certain is that we are somewhere near

South America. There are innumerable small islands in these seas, many of them uninhabited, or inhabited only by a few blacks."

"Mein gootness! Perhaps ve had better geep on, sir, and gif tat island a miss," suggested Fritz. "Tere may be gannibals tere."

"My giddy goloshes! A cannibal would be jolly glad to see you, Fatty!" grinned Ginger. "You would last him weeks and weeks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peast and a prute!" howled Fritz. "I vill not be eaten by gannibals to blease you!"

"You need not be afraid of cannibals in this part of the world, Spitz," said Dr. Sparshott, smiling. "I do not imagine that we shall meet with any danger on that island. If we do, we shall face it, I hope, with courage."

"It's no end of a lark to land on a desert island, Fatty!" said Jim Dainty.

The raft surged on. All through the night, and since dawn, the wind had been freshening, and there was now a stiff breeze blowing. The juniors were glad of it, as it drove them on all the faster towards their destination. But Dr. Sparshott's face grew graver, as he watched the island intently.

It lay to the west—and the wind came out of the north-east. From a distance, it had looked as if the raft would float before the wind into the blue bay that opened on the shore. But as they drew nearer the schoolboys could see that there was danger of missing the island altogether and floating past the southern extremity.

Sammy Sparshott rapped out orders to his schoolboy crew, and the sail was trimmed. He leaned hard on the steering-sweep. The raft came round a little, but there was no doubt that it answered badly to the improvised helm. It floated well, and sailed well before the wind; but tacking was another proposition with such a craft. And the exuberant glee of the crew died down as they realised that they might never make the island at all.

"Get out the oars!" barked Sammy. There were half a dozen spare oars, brought from the wrecked Spindrift. The juniors seized them, and paddled. The head of the raft swung round a little more to the north.

Once past the island, the Grimslade crew would be lost on the open ocean again. Southward, long, low rocks ran out into the sea from the island, edged with creamy spray. The tide was running into the bay.

"We shall make it!" said Sammy. "The tide will help us! Keep going!"

The six schoolboys paddled with the oars, while Sammy steered with one hand and handled the sheets with the other. There was only one idle pair of hands on the raft, those of Ezra Sarson, who was a prisoner, bound to the mast.

Bump! The raft shivered.

"My giddy goloshes! She's aground!" panted Ginger Rawlinson.

The raft bumped on a rock, and edged off again. The junior shoved with the oars, and shoved clear. Their hearts were beating hard.

"That's saved us!" said Sammy coolly.

He was right, for the rock against which the raft had bumped was the outermost, stretching south from the edge of the bay. Had they missed it they must have gone whirling on past the island.

Now the tide caught the raft, and dashed it along the line of rocks into the bay. Instead of paddling, the juniors fended with the oars, keeping their clumsy craft from going aground. The sail was dropped, and the rising tide carried the raft onward, deeper into the blue bay, with the shelving beach ahead.

"All right now!" said Sammy Sparshott cheerfully.

"Hurrah!"

Bump! This time the bump was on soft sand.

"Take a line ashore, Dainty!"

Jim Dainty grasped the rope, and jumped on the sand, the tide washing round his knees. He ran up the sloping

beach, and made fast the rope to a tree-stump beyond high-water mark. The raft was safely moored at last, and the Grimsladers scrambled gleefully ashore.

CHAPTER 10.

On a Desert Island!

"ANYBODY at home?" roared Ginger Rawlinson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ginger's powerful voice echoed up the sandy beach and thundered back in a thousand echoes from the jungle and the hill. From the trees a swarm of birds rose in startled flight, calling and screaming. But there was no other answer to Ginger's stentorian hail. There was, evidently, "nobody at home" on the desert island.

If there were inhabitants, they were not on the eastern side of the island, where the castaways had landed. What might be on the other side of the wooded hill they could not tell.

"Mein goodness! You vill bring tase gannibals down on us, you Chinger!" moaned Fritz Splitz. "Vat shall ve do if te gannibals gum?"

"We'll give you to them as a peace-offering," suggested Jim Dainty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ach! Peast and a prute!" Fritz blinked at the dark jungle, back of the beach, with uneasy, saucer-eyes. He could not get the idea of natives and cannibals out of his podgy mind.

Dr. Sparshott stood on the soft sand, surveying the beach. Here and there great rocks cropped up from the sand. One huge rock had a side almost as perpendicular as the wall of a house. Sammy walked across to it.

"What about exploring the place, sir?" asked Jim Dainty.

All the juniors were eager to get going and explore their new and strange territory. The unknown lay before them; and the unknown had a great attraction for the schoolboy mind. Dr. Sparshott smiled and shook his head.

"Plenty of time for that, Dainty!" he answered. "We shall not be taken off

this island in a hurry. First of all, we must build a shelter for the night. All hands!"

Fritz Splitz groaned. It was now past noon, and the heat of the tropical day was terrific. Fritz would have preferred to creep into the shadow of a rock and sleep. Working under that blaze of heat had no appeal for Friedrich von Splitz.

"Buck up, Fatty!" said Ginger encouragingly. "We've got to get the things off the raft. Feel as if you can't walk down to the raft?"

"Ach!" groaned Fritz. "It is ferry hot, and I vas ferry dired! I tink tat I gannot vank at all!"

"I guessed that one!" agreed Ginger. "You men, poor old Fritz can't walk down to the raft, though it's only a dozen yards. Let's let him off walking. Lucky there's a slope on the beach, and we can roll him, like a barrel!"

"Hear, hear!"

Ginger grasped the fat Rhinelander and up-ended him on the soft sand. All the fellows lent a hand, and Fritz rolled. He rolled over and over down the beach, letting out a shrill squeal at every roll.

"Ach! Peasts and prutes! I vill vank!" squealed Fritz. "Ach! I have no more to breff! Tat you leaf off! Yaroooooh!"

Fritz rolled and rolled. He reached the water's edge, and rolled in with a mighty splash.

"Urrrggh!"

He sat up in shallow water, the Atlantic Ocean flowing round his fat neck, and spluttered.

"Ach! Peastly pounders! I am ferry vet! Urrrrgh!"

"Like any more help?" asked Ginger.

"Ach! Nein! Nein!"

Hot as it was, the juniors worked cheerily. The other fellows felt the heat, as well as Fritz, but they made light of it. Sammy Sparshott set them a good example, working like three men rolled into one.

Spars, and canvas, and boxes were taken ashore and carried up the beach towards the high rock, which Sammy

had selected as the site of the hut which was to be built. Up and down the hot, glistening beach the juniors tramped, bedewed with perspiration and blistering in the sun.

"I guess you're going to let me loose out of this!" Ezra Sarson spoke at last, breaking the long, sullen silence.

Dr. Sparshott looked thoughtfully at the rascal who had scuttled the Spindrift. It had been impossible to leave the Frisco tough to drown on the sinking wreck; but he was rather a problem on the hands of the castaways.

"I shall let you loose, my man!" said Dr. Sparshott, at last. "You've had a lesson, and if you've learned to toe the line and behave yourself you'll be treated like the rest. If you give trouble, look out for squalls!"

He signed to Jim Dainty, and the juniors untied the ruffian. Sarson staggered up, his limbs cramped by the bonds in which he had lain for many long hours. He plunged through the lapping tide to the beach, where he sat down on the sand, rubbing and chafing his aching limbs.

"Ten to one he will bolt, sir!" said Dick Dawson.

"It will not be a great loss if he does, my boy," said Dr. Sparshott.

The materials for the hut having been landed, the building commenced. Sammy Sparshott wielded the hammer, which rang and echoed merrily up the lonely beach. The framework of the hut was completed as the sun sank westward behind the hill.

"Later, we shall break up the raft and use the materials," said Sammy. "For the present, canvas will suffice. All hands!"

All hands turned to, unrolling sail-cloth and stretching it over the wooden framework for walls and roof. The edges were pegged down securely. Busy and hard at work, the castaways forgot the existence of Ezra Sarson. They were suddenly reminded of him by a howl from Fritz Splitz.

"Ach! Look! Tat prute go avay mit te raft mit himself after!"

"What?" roared Sammy.

He spun round and stared down the beach.

The tide had long since turned, and was flowing out of the bay. The raft, securely moored, had been safe enough. But it was loose now, and floating out to sea. Standing on the raft was Ezra Sarson, with an oar in his hand, paddling and steering. And he was already a hundred yards out when Fritz spotted him.

"My giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger. "He's got the raft!"

The juniors stared in dismay. Little had been landed, so far, except the building materials. Almost all the supplies were still packed on the raft. The desperate rascal had crept on the raft while they were too busily engaged to think of him, and cast off the ropes and floated out on the receding tide. Sammy Sparshott's teeth came hard together.

"My fault!" he muttered. "I should have expected treachery from that villain!"

"Ach! Now we shall have nottings to eat!" wailed Fritz Splitz. "And I was already so hungry as neffer was before!"

"He's done us!" muttered Jim Dainty, his eyes gleaming at the ruffian on the raft.

They ran down to the water's edge. Sarson was working desperately with the oar, and already the raft was some distance from the shore. Dr. Sparshott stood still, watching him and calculating. Then he threw off his coat and boots.

"Stay here!" he barked.

And he plunged into the water and swam.

CHAPTER 11.

Sammy's Fight!

JIM DAINTY & CO. watched breathlessly. With long, powerful strokes Sammy Sparshott cleft the shining waters of the bay. The sun, low now in the west, crimsoned the water, and it rippled away from the swimmer like

ripples of fire. Sammy was a splendid swimmer, as the Grinsladers well knew. But the raft had a long start, and was going on a strong tide.

Sarson, as he watched the swimmer, grinned evilly, showing his brown teeth. Evidently he had no fear of the pursuit. The juniors stood in a breathless group, watching with their hearts almost in their mouths.

"Sammy's gaining on him!" breathed Ginger Rawlinson.

Sarson, standing on the raft, had a hand on the steering-sweep. With the other he grasped an oar, paddling. The wind, fortunately, was unfavourable till he was clear of the almost land-locked bay; and he had not hoisted the sail.

Steadily, swiftly, borne on the outgoing tide, the raft glided towards the sea. But steadily, and more swiftly, Sammy Sparshott was coming on astern with mighty strokes, his face set like iron, his eyes like cold steel, his lips a hard line. He was gaining—slowly, but he was gaining. And the mocking grin died off the Frisco tough's tanned face as, with a sudden spurt, the headmaster of Grinslade reached the raft and managed to grip the edge.

Releasing the sweep, Sarson grasped the oar with both hands. It swept above his head, aimed at the man clinging to the edge of the raft.

Far off as they now were, the juniors on shore could see the whole scene clearly. Their hearts almost stopped beating as the oar swung over Sammy's unprotected head in the desperate hands of the scuttler.

Crash!

They did not hear, but they saw the crash as the oar came down, splintering with the force of the blow, on the timbers. Sammy's head vanished under the waters, and for one terrible second it seemed to the watching schoolboys that that savage blow had crushed in his skull and sent him to the bottom.

But it was only for a second. Sammy's wet head bobbed up again, a yard or two from the raft. He had

ducked under as the blow came, and the oar had only splintered on the timbers, leaving Sammy untouched. He closed in and grasped hold again.

"Bravo, Sammy!" gasped Ginger.

"Oh, good man! Good man!" panted Jim.

But Sarson was quick as a cat. On his knees, he aimed a fierce blow with the broken oar, and Sammy, dodging it, fell back into the sea. He went right under with the fall, the waters closing over him; and Sarson gained his feet and stood panting. Sammy's head was a dozen feet astern when it came up again. The ruffian yelled to him savagely.

"I guess you can come on again, dog-gone you! I guess you'll be food for the fishes when we're through, Sam Sparshott!"

Dr. Sparshott did not waste breath in replying. He swam on after the raft, the ruffian watching him, ready to strike. Down came the broken oar, as Sammy laid hold. Again he dodged and ducked, and went under.

It seemed to the juniors that he slipped under the raft as they watched; and they gazed, almost in agony, to see his head reappear. But this time it did not reappear. The water astern of the raft was smooth, unbroken, gleaming in the sunset, and Sarson burst into a rasping laugh of triumph, which the strong wind from the sea carried to the ears of the juniors far away on the shore.

"Is he—is he gone?" breathed Sandy Bean. "Sammy——"

It looked like it! The faces of the juniors were white. Sammy had slipped beneath the raft when he went under; and if he came up under the timbers, he was hopelessly trapped, to drown like a rat. Sarson evidently believed that he had seen the last of the schoolmaster. Grinning like some savage gorilla, he waved the broken oar at the juniors on the beach in mocking farewell.

"Oh! Look!" breathed Jim Dainty.

Ahead of the floating raft, a dark,

wet mop of hair rose from the water. Sarson, standing at the steering-sweep, and glaring back at the beach, did not see it. But the juniors, looking across and past the raft, saw it, and knew that it was Sammy. And they knew that Sammy had swum under the raft, to get ahead of it; it was by intention that he had gone under the timbers when he ducked. His face gleamed wet in the sun as it came up. His hands grasped at the edge of the raft, behind the back of the man standing on it; and they saw him plant a knee on the timbers, and then another knee, and draw himself from the water.

He was on the raft now, and Sarson was still looking back. But he turned his head and gave a convulsive start at the sight of the man he had believed already drowned, standing dripping with water before him. For a second Sarson stared at the headmaster of Grimslade with almost unbelieving eyes. Then, with a yell of rage, he bounded across the raft towards him, uplifting the broken oar to knock him back into the sea.

But Sammy Sparshott had a safe footing on the raft now. He was breathing in great gulps; his exertions had told even on Sammy's great strength. He made a sudden spring and dodged round the mast as the ruffian rushed on him.

Sarson, gritting his discoloured teeth, bounded after him, and his descending blow missed the schoolmaster by inches. Sammy leaped aside, dodged the panting ruffian, and ran along the raft. He stooped as he ran, and snatched up a loose oar. He whirled round, with the oar in his hands, and lunged at the pursuing ruffian. The oar crashed on Ezra Sarson's chest, and sent him staggering backwards.

Before he could recover himself the oar was lunged again, taking him under his stubby chin. The ruffian went backwards over the edge of the raft, falling into the sea with a resounding splash.

Sammy stood panting. The tousled head of the Frisco tough rose from the

water, and he swam. As he approached, the raft Dr. Sparshott stepped to the edge, with the oar uplifted. He did not speak, but the icy glint in his eyes was enough for the ruffian. Ezra Sarson sheered off in haste. The tables were turned now, and the game was up for the 'Frisco tough.

Dr. Sparshott gave him no further heed. He dropped the oar and grasped the sail. Almost at the mouth of the bay, the raft was in danger of whirling past the outermost rocks and drifting out on the open sea. Sammy had only minutes, but he made the most of them.

He was so far from the juniors now that he seemed toy-like in the distance; but they saw him get the sail up, they saw it fill in the stiff wind that was blowing into the bay, and they saw the seaward course of the raft arrested. The wind was strong, and it beat the drag of the tide; and Dr. Sparshott, standing at the steering-sweep, steered the raft back slowly but surely to the beach.

CHAPTER 12.

Fearful for Fritz!

"BRAVO, Sammy!"

The juniors yelled in chorus as the raft, slowly but surely, came surging back to the shelving sands. Even Fritz gave a fat squeal.

"Pravo! Mein gootness, tat Sammy is almost as prave as a Cherman! Pravo!"

The juniors rushed into the water up to their necks to drag the raft ashore. More than a mile away, on the rugged rocks at the mouth of the bay, Ezra Sarson was dragging himself exhausted from the sea. The ruffian sank down, utterly spent, and lay like a log where he fell. The Grimslade fellows did not see him, and did not know whether he had escaped with his life or not—and little cared! The rascal had been defeated, the raft with its supplies, on which their lives might depend, was recaptured. Ginger Rawlinson came very near thumping his headmaster on the back! They had always admired

Sammy Sparshott at Grimslade School; but on the desert island they admired him more than ever.

"Tank gootness you have gum pack safe, sir!" said Fritz Splitz.

"Thank you, my boy!" said Dr. Sparshott, smiling.

"Pecause if you had not gum pack tere would be no grub," said Fritz, "and I am derribly hungry."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sammy.

He jumped ashore.

"Now, my boys, we're taking no chances," he said. "Get everything ashore from the raft. All hands to work! Nothing to eat yet, Splitz—nothing till we've unloaded."

"Mein gootness!" groaned Fritz.

"Leave it to us, sir!" said Jim Dainty. "You've been through it, and we've had a rest!"

"Rot!" said Sammy tersely. "Get to it—all hands! Here, Splitz, carry this box! Buck up!"

The raft was drawn close in and moored, and the outgoing tide left it stranded. It lay on the sands, and all hands set to work unloading. Up the beach went the schoolboys, one after another, carrying goods of all sorts and descriptions that the careful Sammy had packed on the raft from the wrecked Spindrift. Up the beach and back again—to and fro—incessantly, as the sun dipped behind the hill and the short tropical twilight faded into night. Boxes and bags, kegs and sacks, were stacked inside the hut or round its walls.

When the sun was gone the bright stars that came gleaming out in the deep blue vault of the sky gave them light enough for the work. Tired to the bone, but still cheery, the Grimslade juniors kept at it. As Ginger remarked, there would be plenty of time to rest in the days that were to follow.

That, however, was not good enough for Friedrich von Splitz. Fritz wanted a rest, and he wanted it now! If Fritz took a seat on the sands the next fellow who passed him was sure to stir him into activity with a hefty kick, and the

hapless Rhinclander, for some time, collected more kicks than rests. Then his fat brain evolved an idea. He was carrying a roll of blankets up to the hut when he suddenly staggered and fell and gave a loud squeal.

"Ach! Help! I have sprained me te ankle!"

The juniors ran to him. If Fritz had sprained his ankle they were ready to help and sympathise. But they knew their Fritz, and they doubted. Dr. Sparshott laid down his load, came across to the sprawling German, and looked down at him in the starlight. Fritz' fat face was twisted into an expression of fearful anguish.

"Hurt?" barked Sammy.

"Ach! Ja! Ja wohl!" groaned Fritz. "I suffer derrible bains! I put te foot into vun hole in te sand, and I fall and sprain him! I tink tat I preak me a pone! I gannot move!"

"Very well," said Dr. Sparshott. "We will now knock off for a little supper, my boys, and finish our work afterwards. As Splitz cannot help himself, you must help him, Dainty."

"Oh!" said Jim. "Yes, sir!"

"You will give him a little dry biscuit and some water," said Dr. Sparshott. "In a hot climate like this it is necessary to be very careful with diet when one is ill. Just a small portion of dry biscuit."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" chuckled Jim.

Fritz sat up.

"Ach! I tink tat I am petter now," he gasped. "I tink tat I am ferry mooch petter! I tink——"

"Nonsense! Remain where you are, Splitz! Lie still immediately, sir! You must not put a strain on a sprained ankle!" barked Dr. Sparshott. "If he gets up, knock him down again at once!"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Mein gootness!" groaned Fritz.

Work was suspended for supper. There were plenty of provisions, and hard work had given the castaways excellent appetites. All of them punished that supper—excepting Fritz. They sat

down before the hut and ate—while Fritz, not daring to move from where he lay, watched them from a distance with longing eyes. A dry ship's biscuit and a tin pannikin of pure water did not comfort him very much when Jim Dainty brought them to him.

"Tainty, mein goot Tainty," groaned Fritz, "bring me some of te canned peef—joost a few pounds of peef, mein goot, tear Tainty!"

"Head's orders!" chuckled Jim.

"You're ill, you know!"

"But I vas not ill!" wailed Fritz. "I vas mooch petter! And I vas so hungry as neffer vas before! Tat Sammy is a peast and a prute!"

"There's your rations, old podgy bloater." And Jim went back to the supper party, leaving Patty Fritz groaning over his rations.

Supper over, the castaways resumed carrying the remainder of the raft's cargo up to the hut. Fritz Splitz lay where he was and groaned. He was getting a rest; but he did not want a rest now so much as he wanted supper. Hoping to escape observation in the darkness, he picked himself up at last, and started for the hut—and the provisions. But there was no escape for Fritz. Ginger Rawlinson spotted him, and did not forget to carry out the Head's orders. A punch on his podgy chest laid Fritz on the sand again.

"Ach! Peast and a prute!" he yelled.

"Head's orders!" grinned Ginger.

After that, Fritz remained where he was. The work was over at last, and the raft stripped to the bare timbers. It was rather a late hour for the school-boys, and they were more than ready to turn in. Sammy Sparshott looked down at the dismal Fritz with a grim smile.

"Splitz must be taken up to the hut," he said. "He cannot walk——"

"Ach! I can walk!" wailed Fritz.

"Nonsense! You cannot walk with a sprained ankle! And you are too heavy to be carried! Pull him along!" said Sammy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were tired, but not too tired to pull Fritz up to the hut. They grasped him in many places—his large ears, his hair, his collar, his fat arms—and lugged. Squeals of anguish came from the fat Rhinelander.

"Ach! Peast and prutes! You vas pull out te hair—vill you leaf go mein ears! Ach himmel! I tells you tat I can walk—I vill not be tragged apout like tat! Ach! Whooooop!"

But the injured Fritz was not allowed to walk. He was dragged all the way, and deposited in the hut in a gasping heap.

"And now to bed!" said Sammy.

The juniors rolled themselves in blankets on the floor of soft sand. Sammy fastened the flap of canvas across the doorway. Jim Dainty & Co. were so tired that they dropped off to sleep almost the moment they lay down.

CHAPTER 13.

An Alarm in the Night!

FRITZ SPLITZ could not sleep. Probably it was the first time in his fat life that Fatty Fritz had remained awake while other fellows slept. Now he simply couldn't help it. There was an aching void inside Fritz. It was hours and hours since he had eaten. One hour after a meal Fritz was hungry; two hours after he was famished; in three hours he was ravenous. And now it was more than twice three hours since his last meal!

Suddenly he gave a start. There was a faint sound, a slight movement, outside the canvas wall at his side.

Fritz sat petrified, with terrifying thoughts of hungry cannibals, and wild lions and tigers, racing through his podgy brain. To his amazement, a gleam of starlight came through the canvas wall at his side—and he realised that it had been slit from without; his saucerlike eyes caught the gleam of shining steel in the glimmer that came through the gash.

The sleepers in the hut did not stir; there was no sound to awaken them. Only Fritz was awake—and he stared at the tousled head and stubby face that appeared at the gap in the cut canvas. He could not recognise it, even so close at hand, in the dimness; but he knew that it must be Ezra Sarson's. The ruffian had been disarmed when he was made a prisoner; but evidently he had got possession of a knife while he was on the raft. Knife in hand, the "Frisco tough" stared into the darkness of the interior of the hut. There was a faint sound as he extended the cut in the canvas wall, making the opening large enough for him to creep through.

Fritz' heart almost died within him. A few moments more and the desperado would be within the hut—the knife in his hand—the suddenly awakened sleepers at his mercy! The excess of terror lent the fat German a kind of courage. The stubby face peering in was not three feet from him. Hardly knowing what he did, Fritz Splitz grabbed a can of beef from the stack in the hut and hurled it full at the savage face. The sound he made as he moved caused the ruffian to start, but before he knew what was happening the missile crashed in his stubby face. There was a startled yell from Sarson, and he reeled over backwards under the sudden blow. His yell was echoed by Fritz Splitz, shrieking at the top of his voice.

"Ach! Wake up! Mein gootness! Ve shall all be murtered and dead! Wake up mit you pefore! Ach! Help!" Sammy Sparshott was on his feet in a twinkling.

"What——" he barked.

But he did not need to ask. The gap in the canvas wall was wide, the starlight streaming in, and in the starlight he saw a savage face, and caught the glitter of a knife.

Sammy had grasped a boat-hook that lay by his side as he leaped up. With that weapon in his hand, he plunged across to the gap, heedless of the

sleepers he trampled on, and who gasped and howled as they suddenly awoke. Hardly a moment more and the ruffian would have come plunging in—but the crash of Fritz' missile in his face had given Sammy time to act. The lunging boat-hook met the ruffian as he came, and he backed away with a yell of agony.

Sammy followed him up, plunging through the gap in the canvas and swiping fiercely with the boat-hook. For a moment the ruffian faced him, backing away as he did so—then he turned and ran desperately to escape. After him came Sammy, swift as a deer, and twice the boat-hook crashed on the ruffian, and he yelled before he darted into the jungle and escaped.

A lantern was gleaming in the hut, shining on the startled faces of the juniors as Sammy came striding back. Sammy's face was grim.

"Who—What—" panted Jim Dainty.

"Sarson!" said Sammy laconically.

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger. "Did you wake up?"

"Splitz seems to have been awake!"

"First time on record!" grinned Jim Dainty. "And jolly lucky! How on earth did you come to be awake, Fritz?"

"Ach! I was so derrribly hungry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not for te laugh!" groaned Fritz. "I was so hungry as neffer was before! Also I tink tat I safe you te life, when I trow tat can of beef at tat peast and a prute!"

"We must keep watch!" said Dr. Sparshott quietly. "It seems that we are not done with that scoundrel yet."

"Fritz is a good watch-dog—if he's kept hungry!" grinned Ginger.

Sammy smiled.

"Fritz shall feed, as a reward," he said. "Help yourself, Splitz! Turn in, my boys; I shall keep watch."

Fritz Splitz did not need a second bidding. While Dr. Sparshott kept watch, and the juniors slept, there was a steady and incessant sound of champ-

ing jaws in the hut. It lasted for a good hour—during which Friedrich von Splitz enjoyed life! And when he had finished—which was not till his extensive inside could not hold any more—Fritz rolled himself in a blanket.

The rest of the night passed without alarm. Ezra Sarson did not return, but if he had Fritz Splitz would not have heard him. But if he was anywhere within a cable's-length of the hut he must have heard Fritz—whose deep snore rumbled on till long after the sun had risen on the desert island.

CHAPTER 14.

On Castaway Island!

"GOKERNUTS!" said Fritz Splitz. It was morning on the unknown isle, which Jim Dainty & Co. had already named Castaway Island.

A blue sea—a blue sea never seen in northern waters—stretched away from the sandy shore, far as the eye could reach. The beach, white with powdered seashells, shone in the tropical sun. From the beach the jungle was thick to the woods that clothed the inland hill. Coconut palms nodded, tall and graceful, against the blue of the sky.

The morning was bright and fresh—the blazing heat of the day was not due yet. The shipwrecked schoolboys had bathed in the blue, shining bay, Fritz Splitz sitting ashore and watching them.

Fritz was not keen on bathing, or on washing in any shape or form. And in Fritz' opinion there was, at least, one good thing in being wrecked on an unknown island during a holiday cruise—a fellow did not have to wash. In that respect, at least, Castaway Island was an improvement on Grimsdale School.

But Fritz, who had been inactive during the bathe, showed signs of activity when the schoolboys rambled up the beach among the coconut palms. Coconuts were good to eat.

Dr. Sparshott had clambered to the

summit of a high rock, in the shade of which the castaways' hut was built. With his field-glasses to his eyes, Sammy Sparshott was scanning the sea in the clear morning air.

They had been several days on the island now, and every morning Sammy climbed that high rock and scanned the sea for a sail. The six juniors of Grimslade were left to their own devices for the moment, though with strict orders from Sammy not to wander far from the camp.

Somewhere on Castaway Island lurked Ezra Sarson, the rascal who had scuttled the Spindrift, and he would have been a dangerous man to meet.

Standing with his bullet head thrown back, Fritz von Splitz blinked up at the coconuts with his saucer-eyes. Quite a lot remained as yet of the provisions landed from the raft; but Sammy Sparshott was a careful man, and the castaways were on rations. They had enough, but no more. Enough was not much use to Fritz Splitz. And the salt-sea air made him extra hungry. He gazed longingly at the coconuts.

"Tainty, old pean, vil you glimb tat tree, and trow down some gokernuts?" asked Fritz. "I vill catch tem."

"I'll give you a bunk up," suggested Jim Dainty.

"But I do not vant a punk up. Chinger, old jap, vill you glimb tat tree?"

Ginger Rawlinson chuckled.

"I'll give you a bunk," he answered.

"Pacon, Pean, Tawson—vill you glimb tat tree?"

Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean and Dick Dawson answered with one voice:

"I'll give you a bunk!"

Fritz Splitz snorted.

"Peasts and prutes!" he grunted. "I tink tat you are afraid to glimb tat tree. You vas not so prave as a Cherman. But if you vill not glimb tat tree, look round, mit you, and see if tere are any fallen gokernuts!"

"Must have been plenty blown down in the storm last week," said Jim Dainty. "We've found more than a few. Here you are!"

He kicked a coconut that lay among the herbage under the trees. Fritz Splitz pounced on it. He grabbed it up in his fat hands.

"Goot!" he ejaculated. "Vere is mein bocket-knife? Te milk of te gokernut is ferry goot to trink. First I vill trink te milk, and ten I vill preak te gokernut and eat him."

And Fritz opened his pocket-knife, and jabbed the blade through the soft spots at the end of the shell, to make a passage for the milk within.

Fritz' fat face beamed. Food had a strong appeal for him. So had drink. Food and drink combined had a double appeal. He leaned back his head, and placed the pierced end of the coconut to his capacious mouth and let the juice within run. The next moment the happy satisfaction faded out of Fritz' face, and a perfectly ghastly expression replaced it. There was a spluttering howl from the fat German.

"Urrrgh! Mein gootness! Oooocoh!"

Crash! went the coconut. Fritz Splitz staggered, gurgling wildly. The juniors stared at him.

"My giddy goloshes!" ejaculated Ginger. "What on earth——"

"Gurrgrgh! Wurrgrgh! Gug-gug-ug! Oooocoh!" Fritz Splitz spluttered and spat, "Oooo-er! Ooo-er! Wooooh!"

He pressed both hands to his fat waistcoat and doubled up, his face green and ghastly. Horrid sounds came from Fritz, such as may be heard on a Channel steamer on a rough day.

"Something wrong with that jolly old nut," grinned Streaky Bacon.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrrgrgh! Wurrgrgh! Yurrgrgh!"

Jim Dainty picked up the coconut, and cracked the shell with a crash on a stone. The interior was revealed—not a beautiful white, as it should have been, but black as a hat. Evidently that coconut had lain on the ground longer than a week. Possibly it had lain there for months. Its interior was not merely ripe. It was over-ripe—awfully over-ripe!

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Dainty; and he hurled the nut away.

"Urrggh!" moaned the unhappy Fritz. "Wurrgh! Vat vas te madder mit tat peastly nut pefore? Wurrgh! Now I lose mein preakfast, and I shall be derribly hungry pefore tinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peasts and prutes! It is not for to laff!" howled Fritz. "I have vun derrible sickness in mein pread-pasket! Urrrrggh!"

"Poor old Boche bloater!" said Jim Dainty. "I'll get you some good nuts."

And he stepped towards the palm tree.

CHAPTER 15. Well Bowled!

SAMMY SPARSHOTT, standing on the summit of the high rock, about sixty feet distant from the palms, was still as a statue, with the glasses clamped to his eyes.

Far away to the east, across the deep indigo of the sea, something showed over the waters, whether a sail or a rising gull, Sammy could not for the moment determine. He was watching like a hawk, and gave no attention to the juniors in the group of palms. In front of him, as he faced the sea, the rock dropped precipitously. Behind him it sloped gently away to the jungle.

And Sammy did not know that from a screen of tree-ferns down that slope a pair of sharp, glittering eyes were watching him. He did not know that Ezra Sarson, the scuttler of the Spindrift, was calculating the chances of a rush to hurl him over the precipice, on the verge of which he was standing as he scanned the sea.

The summit of the rock was almost on a level with the bunch of fronds topping the tall palm that Jim Dainty was climbing. By the time he reached the clusters of coconuts Jim would be rather above the level where Sammy was standing, nearly sixty feet away from him. But Dainty was not looking towards his headmaster. All his attention was needed for the climb.

Like all palms, it slanted a little. Jim had read of the native way of climbing

a palm, with hands as well as feet—"walking" up the slant. He had kicked off his shoes, which made it easier. Still, it was far from easy. He went up and up, clamping on the trunk with fingers and toes.

Thirty feet—forty feet—fifty feet! Jim was still going up. A fall now meant broken limbs, if not a broken neck. And all the Grinslade fellows were silent, watching him anxiously. Jim was breathing hard, and his face was set. He was determined to get through. Higher and higher, till he was at the clustering nuts, and, holding on with legs and one hand, he grabbed coconuts with the other.

Plop, plop! Plop, plop! Nuts began to fall into the ferns below. Fritz Splitz ceased to gasp and gurgle, and made a jump for the nuts. Fresh from the tree, they were very different from the ancient nut that had caused Fritz so much internal trouble. Fritz grabbed a nut, cracked it open on the trunk of the palm, and gloated over the rich, white interior.

"Mein gootness! Tat is goot!" he ejaculated.

And Fritz sat down to gnaw. The other fellows watched Dainty uneasily. They wished that he was safe down.

"My giddy goloshes! What's up now?" muttered Ginger.

Jim Dainty had given a sudden jump that almost made him lose his hold. He clutched again, and saved himself from falling. His eyes were turned on the tall rock where Dr. Sparshott stood. Sammy, the glasses glued to his eyes, was watching the distant speck on the sea, blind to his near surroundings. From the high palm, Jim could see over the top of the rock, hidden from the fellows below. And what he saw made the blood rush to his heart.

Behind Dr. Sparshott a tattered, savage figure had emerged from the tree-ferns, and was creeping up the slope towards Sammy.

Ezra Sarson did not glance towards the palms. His savage, sunken eyes were fixed on the headmaster's back. Silently, but swiftly, he crept towards

the unsuspecting Sammy, a thick bamboo, loaded at the end with a lump of jagged rock, grasped in his hand. Jim Dainty's eyes fixed on him in horror. The man was only a few yards from the headmaster of Grimslade, and his murderous intention was apparent.

To shout and warn Sammy was Jim's instant thought, but he realised the same instant that it was useless. The rush and the blow would come too quickly, if Sammy turned. But another thought flashed instantly into his mind. He grabbed a coconut from the cluster and took aim.

The distance was less than the length of a cricket-pitch, and at Grimslade School Jim Dainty was the best junior bowler. But the conditions were very different from bowling at cricket—clinging to a tall, swaying palm with his legs and one hand, while he took aim with the other.

But it was the only way, and he took the chance. His free arm swung, and the coconut whizzed through the air like a cricket-ball.

And the aim was true. All the strength of Jim's sturdy arm went into that effort, and the nut crashed on the side of the tousled head of the man who crept behind Sammy.

The ruffian went sprawling over on the slope, the cudgel flying from his hand. He rolled over and yelled with pain.

"Great gad! What——"

Sammy Sparshott lowered the glasses and spun round where he stood.

"Look out, sir!" shrieked Dainty.

Dr. Sparshott spotted the desperado at once. Had Sarson been on his feet, and coming on, Sammy would have turned too late to save himself. But Sarson was sprawling, dazed and dizzy, on the rock, his hand clasped to his bruised head. Dr. Sparshott gave him one look, and then leaped towards him as the man sprang to his feet.

"You villain!" breathed Sammy.

He came at the ruffian with a rush, and his right hand, clenched and as hard as iron, shot out and caught Ezra fairly between the eyes. There was a

gurgling howl from Sarson, and he went stumbling and rolling and crashing down the slope, back to the jungle from which he had crept. He crashed through the tall tree-ferns and disappeared from sight.

After him went the Head of Grimslade, with a rush. But there was thick cover in the jungle at the foot of the rocky slope. He heard the brushing and rustling as the ruffian fled; but pursuit in the tangled jungle was hopeless.

Dr. Sparshott walked back up the rock. He glanced across at Jim, still hanging on the tall palm. The nut that had knocked Ezra over lay at his feet. Sammy smiled.

"Did you throw that nut, Dainty?" he called out.

"Yes, sir; I saw him behind you!" panted Jim.

"Good man!" said Sammy. "Well bowled!"

And he lifted his glasses again to scan that distant speck on the sea as composedly as if nothing had happened. Jim Dainty slid down the palm, and he was panting when he landed on the ground. His nerve was good, but it was not of tempered steel like Sammy's.

CHAPTER 15.

Facing the Foe!

"LET'S all go!" said Ginger. Dr. Sparshott shook his head. "We must explore the island," he said. "It is quite possible that from the other side we may be able to see some other island—perhaps an inhabited one. There may even be inhabitants on this island, for all we can tell at present. But we cannot all go. That scoundrel Sarson is watching, and if we leave the camp unguarded we shall find little here when we return."

The headmaster of Grimslade was thoughtful and a little perturbed. He was unwilling to leave any of the juniors out of his sight while the desper-

ate Frisco tough lurked on Castaway Island. He could almost have repented that he had taken the rascal from the sinking wreck of the Spindrift.

"I shall take Dainty and Dawson with me," he said at last. "I leave you in command, Rawlinson. You, Bacon, Bean and Splitz will remain; you must all keep together, and on the watch, in the hut. You have cudgels and axes, and I can rely on you to keep that villain off if he should venture here!"

"Mein gootness! I vant not to stay here!" exclaimed Fritz in alarm. "I vill gum mit you, sir! I am not afraid of fat peast and a prute, but—"

"You are too fat and lazy for the journey," said Dr. Sparshott. "It will be terribly hard going. You would crouch up after the first mile, Splitz."

"Ach himmel!" groaned Fritz.

The prospect of labouring through tangled thickets and hot swamps, under a tropical sun, did not appeal to Fritz. Neither did the prospect of remaining at the camp without the protection of his headmaster! He groaned.

Sammy Sparshott was far from easy in his mind. But it was a case of necessity; and he did not waste time. It was needful to start in the cool of the morning; even the energetic Sammy had to rest in the midday heat in a climate only a few days from the Equator.

Dainty and Dawson were keen on the expedition. They had longed, like the other fellows, to explore their new domain ever since they had landed from the raft.

Sammy gave Ginger a few brief directions, which the red-headed junior of Redmayes House at Grimslade promised faithfully to obey; and then the headmaster started, followed by Dainty and Dawson.

They followed the beach towards the northern side of the island for some distance, till the great rocks barred further progress, and they had to turn inland. Then the jungle swallowed them from sight.

Fritz followed them with his saucer-eyes till they vanished, and then

groaned once more as he blinked round, fearing to see the tattered figure of Sarson now that Sammy was out of sight.

"Buck up, old bloater!" grinned Ginger. "If that sportsman hops in we'll put paid to him! Keep your peepers open, you men."

"What-ho!" said Streaky.

Fritz rolled into the hut. The canvas shelter had been replaced by a strong wooden hut, built of the timbers of the raft—many days' labour for the castaways, cheerfully undertaken. Ginger & Co. had no doubt that they could hold the fort if Sarson came; but Fritz was smitten with many doubts.

The Redmayes trio kept a keen lookout from the doorway; while Fritz sat within and disposed of a gigantic bunch of bananas.

Ginger winked at his comrades. Ginger & Co. had plenty of nerve, and they were not afraid of the Frisco tough, and they were more than fed-up with Fritz' terrors.

"My giddy goloshes!" exclaimed Ginger suddenly. "What's that? Is that something moving in the palm trees, you men?"

Bacon and Bean grinned. Something was moving among the palm trees; but it was only a many-coloured cockatoo! But Ginger's words were enough for Fritz Splitz. He gave a howl of terror and dropped the bunch of bananas.

"Mein gootness! Ve are all tead!" he gasped. "Chinger, goot Chinger, tear old Pacon, tear old Pean, do not tell tat peast tat I was here before mit meinsel!"

Fritz already had his eye on a hiding-place in case of danger. There was a pile of folded blankets in a corner of the hut. Fritz dragged over the pile, and disappeared under it.

Ginger & Co. stared at him. The fat German completely disappeared from sight under the pile of blankets. The pile wriggled a little as Fritz gasped for breath in that exceedingly warm corner.

"My giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger,

"I fancy that fat funk will find it a bit warm under all those blankets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grinning, Ginger & Co. sat in the doorway, keeping watch. Fritz Splitz was welcome to stay under the blankets as long as he liked. It was getting towards noon now, and it was fearfully hot, even with the breeze from the sea playing on their faces. Under the blankets it must have been frightfully hot!

It was not surprising that, about ten minutes later, the pile stirred, and a fat, red face looked out, and two eyes like boiled gooseberries blinked round.

"Mein gootness! Is he gone?" gasped Fritz.

"No! He's pecking at a nut."

"Vat!" gasped Fritz. "Tat peast Sarson beck at vun nut like a pird?"

"Who said it was Sarson?" asked Ginger. "'Tain't Sarson, old fat bean—it's a cockatoo!"

"Vat!" shrieked Fritz. He scrambled out from under the blankets, streaming with perspiration. "Vat!" He blinked from the doorway. "Mein gootness! Is it tat you pull me to leg, peast and a prute? I vas so varm as neffer vas before, and I have no more to breff! Ach! I tink tat I melt away mit meinselt! Peastly pounder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Fritz sat and mopped perspiration. Ginger & Co. chortled. But they ceased to chortle as a tattered, shaggy figure suddenly appeared on the edge of the jungle by the stream. Ginger's eyes glinted; suddenly he grasped the handle of his axe, and leaped to his feet.

"Cave, you men!" he snapped. "There's Sarson!"

"Get hold of an axe, Fritz!" said Sandy Bean.

"Ach! Do you tink tat you pull me to leg two times?" snarled Fritz. "Go and eat goko!"

Ginger breathed hard and deep. He was not afraid; but his heart was beating fast. Ezra Sarson came slowly up towards the hut. His tanned, bony face, stubbly with beard, his sunken, savage

eyes, glared from under the shade of a plaited grass hat. A knife was in his hand.

It was evident that he had watched Sammy's departure, and waited till the Head of Grimslade was too far to render aid to the boys left behind in the camp. Many miles of jungle and swamp separated Sammy now from Ginger & Co., and they had only themselves to rely on. But they stood firm, weapon in hand, and faced the desperate ruffian as he came.

To retreat into the hut and bar the door was only to postpone the inevitable struggle. Ginger & Co. did not think of that. It had to come, and they were ready.

Sarson's sunken eyes glinted at them as he came on, and he halted hardly six feet away. They eyed him steadily. Fritz, in the hut, was gobbling bananas again.

"Ach! I tink tat you do not pull me to leg two times!" he grunted. "Also, I am not afraid of tat peast and a prute! You would not be afraid if you vas so prave as a Cherman! I tink —" Fritz broke off suddenly as Sarson's shadow fell across the doorway, and bounded to his feet. "Mein gootness! Safe me! Safe me! Goot Chinger, prave Pacon, dear old Pean, safe me!"

Ginger, keeping his eyes on the man in front of him, kicked backwards at Fritz. Fritz' wail changed to a howl of anguish.

Sarson came a step closer. His teeth showed in a savage grin.

"I guess you're for it!" he snarled. "You calculate I don't know that Sam Sparshott is gone? I guess I'll get him later, dog-gone him! You first!"

"Come on, you pie-faced scum!" said Ginger coolly. "Look out, you men! Hit hard and hit often!"

"You bet!" said Sandy Bean, gripping his cudgel.

For several minutes the ruffian remained where he was, watching them like a cat. If he hoped to shake the Grimsladers' nerve he was disappointed. They stood steady as rocks, ready for

the attack. When it came it came suddenly. Knife in hand, snarling, the Frisco tough leaped at them, slashing.

Ginger drove his axe at him. Streaky Bacon's axe crashed on the slashing knife, knocking it away. And Sandy Bean's uplifted cudgel came with a crash on Sarson's shoulder, sending him to his knees.

"At him!" yelled Ginger.

They bounded at the ruffian. He sprawled after the knife, clutching it up. Sandy's heavy cudgel crashed again, this time on his head; and at the same moment two heavy blows landed from the backs of the axes. Only to save their lives would the Grimsladers have used the edge—and it was not needed. The three crashing blows, landing at once, knocked the ruffian over, and he sprawled, yelling and panting.

"Smash him!" roared Sandy Bean, and his cudgel came down again, landing twice with terrific force.

Sarson yelled and squirmed away. Half-stunned, with an ache in nearly every bone in his rascally body, he squirmed away like a wounded snake. The three juniors followed him up, still hitting, and hitting hard.

Blow after blow rained on the squirming wretch, who was thinking now only of escape.

He gained his feet at last, and scrambled away into the jungle. He tottered as he went, panting and gasping.

"Give him a few more!" yelled Ginger.

But Sandy Bean grabbed Ginger's arm as he was rushing after him.

"Keep back, fathead!" he panted.

And Ginger nodded and stopped. In the thick jungle it was too dangerous to pursue a desperate man with a knife in his hand.

The Grimslade trio walked back to the hut, breathless but gleeful. The enemy had come—and gone—and had been glad to go!

When they reached the hut Fritz Splitz was not to be seen, but there was a wobble from the pile of blankets.

CHAPTER 17.

Lost in the Swamp!

JIM DAINTY smacked his perspiring face and slaughtered a dozen mosquitoes with one smack. Dick Dawson mopped his damp brow. Sammy Sparshott, striding ahead, axe on shoulder, did not seem to feel the heat, or to notice the mosquitoes. The two juniors noticed both, only too keenly.

On the northern side of Castaway Island there was a belt of swamp, where miry mangroves grew into the water, and a thousand tiny, muddy creeks bubbled and gave out horrible odours among the wiry, miry stems, and myriads of insects buzzed and buzzed.

The explorers had undoubtedly struck a bad patch; but they had to get through, if they were to reach the other side of the isle.

Dr. Sparshott stopped presently, and stood scanning the dismal swamp.

"Let's sit down a bit!" gasped Dawson. "Sammy's legs seem made of iron—mine aren't! Squat on this log, Jim!"

The half-submerged mass, crusted with mud, reeking with slime, did not look inviting, but it was a seat. Dick Dawson plumped down on it with a gasp of relief. Jim was about to follow his example when Dawson gave a howl of alarm.

"It's moving—sinking— Oh, my hat!"

The "log" was lifting itself from the ooze. A gigantic head, with enormous jaws, reared in the fetid air. A cavernous mouth opened, revealing fearful teeth. What Dawson had taken for a half-submerged log was the mud-encrusted back of an alligator, sleeping in the slime.

The two juniors scrambled away madly, panting. There was a shout from Dr. Sparshott, and he came dashing back, axe in hand.

With a bound, Sammy Sparshott reached the brute.

Down came the axe, with such terrific force that it pierced the scaly head.

There was a wild, whirring flurry, and the alligator plunged away, making for deeper water. A splash came back as it went headlong into one of the innumerable creeks.

"I—I—I thought it was a log!" gasped Dawson, white as a sheet. "Oh, crumbs!"

Sammy gave him a muddy grin.

"Pick your log more carefully next time, my boy!" he said. "I've blunted my axe on him; but thank goodness he's gone! Come on—I think I see my way now."

It was the first hint the juniors had that Sammy had had any doubts. But as they followed him on they wondered that he was able to find a way at all. So long as the sea was in sight, it was a guide—they had only to leave the blue waters on their right. But the tangled mangroves and muddy creeks drove them from the vicinity of the sea, and thick, close vegetation surrounded them, shutting off the view, rotting trees, with rotting branches, dipping to the ooze.

"I say, I've lost my axe!" exclaimed Dawson suddenly. "I—I dropped it when I fell!"

Sammy glanced back at him.

"Leave it," he said curtly. "We can't go back! We've got to get through this!"

The fetid air was oppressive; the heat, already great, was growing overpowering. Sammy's face was hard set. The swamp could not be extensive; but it was like walking in a maze. For more than an hour after the encounter with the alligator they tramped and squelched on. Then Jim Dainty gave a sudden shout.

"Look! Oh, look! We're not alone here!"

"What?" barked Sammy.

Jim pointed to a footprint in the mud. Dr. Sparshott stared at it blankly. At a little distance was another footprint. It was clear that someone had walked ahead of them, though the soft slime had blotted out most of the trail. But here and there

the footprints were left clear and distinct.

Dr. Sparshott knitted his brows. His thoughts ran at once to Ezra Sarson. Yet it seemed unlikely that the ruffian, if he had followed them into the swamp, could have passed them and got ahead. And a few minutes later Dawson gave a shout and pointed to two sets of footprints, side by side.

"Two of them!" exclaimed Dr. Sparshott. "It cannot be Sarson—he is alone! We are not, then, alone on the island. Others are here—two, at least!"

"Natives?" asked Dawson.

"Natives would not have booted feet," said Dr. Sparshott. "White men—at least, civilised men—have trodden here before us."

"What luck!" exclaimed Jim Dainty. "My hat! We may find a ship on the other side, when we get through."

They tramped on hopefully, and a shout from Jim Dainty announced another discovery. Three separate sets of tracks were visible in one spot.

"Three of them!" said Jim. "Hurrah!"

"Must be from some ship!" said Dawson.

Dr. Sparshott did not speak. His brows were knitted as he tramped on.

"Hallo! They must have stopped here!" exclaimed Dawson suddenly. "Here's an axe—look!"

He picked up an axe that lay half-buried in mud. Dr. Sparshott looked at it, and his brow grew darker.

"My boys," he said, "you will need all your courage now! I can trust you to keep a stiff upper lip—Grimslade never says die!"

"But — but what—" stammered Dawson. "They—"

"We are the 'they'!" said Dr. Sparshott quietly. "I suspected it some time back. Look more carefully at that axe, my boy—it is your own."

"Wha-a-at?" Dawson fairly stuttered. He stared blankly at the axe. He could recognise it now as the one he had dropped and left behind.

"We are now," said Dr. Sparshott

quietly, "standing on the spot where we scrapped with the alligator!"

"But—but the footprints we followed?" stammered Jim Dainty.

"Our own!" said Sammy in the same quiet tone. "We are lost in the swamp, and we have wandered in a circle!"

For a moment blank dismay fell on the juniors. The disappointment was bitter. Then they set their lips. They were not going to falter under Sammy's calm, steadfast eye.

"We're game, sir!" said Jim.

"Game as pie!" said Dawson.

"Grimslade," said Sammy, "never says die! Keep moving!"

High over the lonely island the tropical sun blazed down, searching the swamp with heat. It blazed on the three as they tramped and squelched on, with failing strength but unflinching courage.

CHAPTER 13.

After Dark!

GINGER RAWLINSON came out of the hut on the beach of Castaway Island, shaded his eyes with his hand, and stared along the shore. Westward, the sun was sinking behind the wooded hill, and dusk was creeping over the Atlantic from the east.

Ginger was looking north, where the island shore curved away in tangled wildernesses of mangrove swamps. The red-headed junior of Grimslade was anxious and uneasy. Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean joined him. From the hut they were followed by the unmelodious snore of Fritz Splitz. Fritz was taking one of his many naps.

"Can't see them?" asked Streaky.

Ginger shook his head.

"Not a sign of them! They're not coming!"

"Sammy said they would be back by dark!" said Sandy Bean.

"It will be dark jolly soon, and they're not back!" said Ginger. "I—I wonder whether they've hit trouble."

It was a disturbing thought to the shipwrecked schoolboys. Their con-

fidence in Sammy Sparshott was unbounded. But night was falling now, and there was no sign of the explorers returning.

The sun dipped behind the hill. Shadows closed over the wide Atlantic, and crept over the bay and the beach. The chattering of the birds ceased in the jungle. Ginger drew a deep breath.

"They're not coming," he said. "Something's kept them. May be farther round the island than we thought. Anyhow, they're all right. I'd put my money on Sammy."

Ginger spoke with a confidence he did not wholly feel. He glanced at the shadowy jungle, at the tall palm trees black against the darkening sky. The brief twilight of the tropics was going fast. He was thinking of Ezra Sarson, lurking somewhere on Castaway Island. Ginger & Co. had beaten off his attack on the hut that morning. But they were wondering what the hours of darkness might bring.

"Better get in and bar the door," said Ginger at last. "That sweep may come barging in after dark—" He broke off with a startled yell as Sandy Bean suddenly grabbed him by the arm and dragged him over. "My giddy goloshes! What the thump—"

Crash! A jagged lump of rock, whizzing from the dusk under the palm trees, struck the beach where Ginger had been standing a second before.

"Cover!" panted Sandy. "I spotted him just in time! Get into the hut—quick!"

Ginger glared towards the dusky jungle.

"The rotter! I've a jolly good mind —"

"Get into cover!" snapped Streaky, and he caught Ginger Rawlinson by the arm, and dragged him into the hut.

Sandy Bean followed, and the door was shut and barred within. As Sandy jammed the bars in place, another rock crashed on the outside of the door. It had been closed only just in time.

Inside the hut it was almost as black as a hat. There was a squeal as Ginger tread on something soft.

"Ach! Mein gootness!" Fritz Splitz woke up quite suddenly. "Peast and a prute! Vy for you chump on mein dummy? You gif me a colossal bain in mein pread-basket! Oooooooo!"

"You silly ass!" growled Ginger. "Park your bread-basket somewhere else! Roll away, you Boche bloater!"

"Prutal pounder!" gasped Fritz, scrambling out of the way. "Vy for you vake me up, plow you? I was tream tat I was pack in Chermany, and eating lovely Cherman sausages. Ach! It is all tark!" Fritz blinked round in the darkness with his saucer eyes. "Vere is Sammy? Has Sammy gum pack?"

"No, ass! Shut up!"

"Mein gootness! Ve neffer see tat Sammy any more——"

Crash! The impact of a heavy rock on the door of the hut made the little building shake. The enemy was without.

"Ach! Is tat Sammy gum back?" exclaimed Fritz. "Open te door and let Sammy in. Tank cootness he gum pack?"

"You blithering bloater, it's not Sammy—it's that sweep Sarson!" howled Ginger. "Shut up!"

"Ach himmel!" howled Fritz. "Geep him off! Geep him away! Mein goot Chinger, mein pelofed Pacon and Pean, geep tat peast away from me!"

Crash, crash! came on the barred door. The scuttler of the Spindrift was standing outside, wielding a heavy rock in both sinewy hands. Leaving Fritz to howl, Ginger & Co. gathered inside the door, with their cudgels in their hands.

It seemed as if the savage attack must break in the door. But the hut was strong, built of the timbers from the sinking Spindrift. And the walls were strengthened by the kegs and boxes and cases packed round inside. Pierce as was the attack, the rock crashed on the stout timbers in vain.

Again and again it came, the juniors listened within, with beating hearts. But it ceased at last, and they heard

the ruffian fling down the rock. His voice came to their ears.

"You'll let me in, dog-gone you! I guess I'll let you run, if you hand over the hut and the stores. That's what I want! You hear me, you gecks?"

"Rats!" replied Ginger Rawlinson. "Come in and take them, if you want them, you unwashed rotter!"

"I guess you'll unbar this door!" roared Sarson. "I'm sure going to fire the hut if you don't!"

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger.

"Ve shall all pe purned to teath!" wailed Fritz.

"Gammon!" whispered Sandy Bean. "He won't burn the stores—he wants them as much as we do. He must have been living on coconuts and bananas for the past week. Trying to put the wind up us, that's all."

"Right on the wicket!" assented Ginger.

The canny Scot had guessed correctly. Ezra Sarson was not likely to destroy the stores in the hut, so long as the remotest chance remained of getting his thievish hands on them. They heard him prowling round the hut, groping over the walls, like a wild animal seeking admittance; but there was no sign of starting a fire. It had been an empty threat.

For an hour or more they heard him prowling. Then there was silence, and they wondered if he had given it up and gone. But there was no sleep for Ginger & Co. through the long hours of darkness. Even Fritz von Splitz did not close his saucer eyes, and for once his snore did not wake the echoes of the beach of Castaway Island.

CHAPTER 19.

Night in the Swamp!

"T**I**RED?" asked Dr. Samuel Sparshott genially.

Jim Dainty and Dick Dawson looked at him in the pale glimmer of starlight that stole through the heavy

branches. Tired was not the word for what they were feeling like. They were so weary that they could scarcely drag one foot after another. Even the iron-limbed Sammy was feeling the strain.

"Just—just a bit, sir!" gasped Jim Dainty.

Dawson did not answer. He leaned on a foul slimy trunk, and breathed hard. The swamp seemed endless, although actually it was not extensive. Had daylight lasted, they might have emerged from the fetid wilderness, but the fall of night had almost banished hope, and they were hopelessly lost. Still they struggled on; weary to the bone.

"Keep your pecker up, my boys!" said Sammy Sparshott quietly. "Grimslade never says die, you know."

"We're sticking it, sir!" answered Jim.

"We shall get out of this in the daylight," said Dr. Sparshott. "You boys cannot keep on much longer, I know. I'm looking now for a spot where we can stop and wait for dawn—without sinking up to our necks. Keep going."

He tramped and squelched on again. Dainty and Dawson followed him. Sammy's tall, athletic figure loomed dimly ahead of the two juniors. They went in single file, Jim next to Sammy, Dawson bringing up the rear.

"Look out!" came a sudden shout from the headmaster of Grimslade.

Something stirred in the swamp. What looked like a mud-encrusted log heaved among the slimy roots, and two little cruel eyes twinkled. Sammy Sparshott came tramping back to the juniors.

"An alligator!" panted Jim.

Half-seen in the dimness, the great snout was reaching for him. He bounded away, crashing through brittle bush and tangled roots. Dawson, a few feet from him, leaped away, caught his foot, and fell. He strove to rise; a strong hand grasped him and lifted him, and he was carried on, slung like a sack over the stalwart shoulder of the headmaster of Grimslade.

They could hear the giant alligator splashing in the mire behind them. Dawson felt his flesh creep at the sound. There was not a run left in his aching legs—but for the help of Sammy, he would have fallen a helpless victim to the demon of the swamp. But Sammy seemed tireless; he trampled on with the junior on his shoulder, and the splashing and crashing of the great beast died away.

Dr. Sparshott halted. He listened for a moment or two, and then set Dawson on his feet.

"Safe now!" he said. "Dainty! Keep together, Dainty!"

"Jim!" called Dawson.

There was no answer from Jim Dainty. Dr. Sparshott set his lips. He had supposed that Jim was behind him; but it was evident that Dainty had leaped another way in escaping from the alligator.

"Dainty!" roared Sammy. His voice rang far and wide through the swamp, booming back in a thousand echoes. "Dainty! Where are you? Answer!"

He bent his head to listen, as the echoing died away. Faintly, from afar, it seemed to him that he had caught an answering cry. He shouted again, and listened. But this time there came no answer.

"We—we've lost him!" breathed Dawson.

"We've got to find him!" said Sammy, between his teeth. He peered at the exhausted junior, almost sinking with fatigue. "Come!"

"I—I can keep on, sir!" mumbled Dawson. But Sammy, unheeding, picked him up, and swung him over his shoulder again. The headmaster of Grimslade seemed made of iron. Burdened with the exhausted school-boy, he strode on, shouting again and again, but without receiving any answer save the booming echoes.

Suddenly, Sammy felt a draught of purer air on his face. Through the darkness of slimy trunks and branches came a glimpse of the open. He

tramped on, and felt firmer ground under his feet. It was the boundary of the dismal swamp, and he emerged, at last, into open starlight, where graceful palms nodded against the deep blue of the heavens.

He set Dick Dawson down at the foot of a palm tree, and stared round him. They were through the swamp at last, on the western side of Castaway Island. Then he looked back. Somewhere in the shadows of the swamp behind him was Jim Dainty. He looked at the sky, and the position of the stars told him that it was midnight. Dawson, worn out, lay like a log at the foot of the palm.

"Sleep, my boy!" said Dr. Sparshott gently. "I'm going back for Dainty!"

"I—I'll come!" panted Dawson.

Sammy smiled faintly.

"I should have to carry you!" he said. "Remain here, and sleep! Probably I shall not be long."

Dawson made an effort to rise, and sank back from sheer weariness. He watched the tall figure of the headmaster of Grimsdale as it disappeared into the swamp. Then his heavy eyelids closed, and he slept.

CHAPTER 20.

Hand to Hand!

DAWN on Castaway Island.

Up from the glimmering sea came the golden ball of the sun, and it was day. Through chinks in the timber walls of the hut the light glimmered on the tired faces of Ginger & Co., and the nodding head and blinking saucer-eyes of Fritz von Splitz.

All through the night the Grimsladers had kept watch, and several times they had heard sounds of prowling outside. Through the long hours, they had hoped to hear the sound of Dr. Sparshott and his companions returning; certain that Ezra Sarson would scuttle away, like a frightened rat, if the headmaster of Grimsdale appeared.

But the night wore away without sign of Sammy. It was some hours, now, since they had heard any sound from outside. But they had no doubt that Ezra was watching, and until the light of day strengthened, they did not think of opening the door of the hut.

Ginger rose to his feet at last, and rubbed his eyes. He put his eye to a chink close by the door, and looked out into the rising sunlight. At a short distance, he saw a figure lying in the soft sand—the tattered figure of the 'Frisco tough. The man seemed to be sleeping. Ginger's face set hard.

"See him?" whispered Streaky.

"Yes—asleep, not a dozen feet away!" answered Ginger. "And now it's light, we're not going to stay bottled up here, you men. We're going to handle him; and this time he's not getting away."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Sandy.

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz Splitz. "You will not be so mat as to open te door, while tat peast and a prute is tere! Ve shall all be tead!"

"Shut up!" growled Ginger. "Quiet, you men! The brute looks as if he's asleep; and we may catch him napping. Get hold of a rope. If we get our hands on the rotter, we'll tie him up, and keep him till Sammy comes back."

"What-ho!"

Ginger Rawlinson took another look through the chink. The tattered, sprawling figure in the sand had not stirred. Softly, silently, he removed the bars from the door. In the open daylight, when they could see their enemy, the Grimsladers were not afraid of Ezra. They had beaten him once, and had no doubt that they could beat him again. They were going to try, anyhow.

Fritz Splitz quaked with terror as the door was softly opened. It did not seem to occur to the fat Fritz to lend a hand in the enterprise. He sat and blinked with scared eyes.

Ginger & Co. trod on tip-toe out of

the hut. Each of them had a thick and heavy cudgel in his hand, and Ginger had a rope looped over his arm.

The prone figure in the sand did not stir as they neared it. Ezra Sarson lay extended, his head resting on his left arm, his right hand on the knife in his belt, his tanned bony face shaded by the plaited grass hat.

Breathing hard, they drew closer and closer to him. Ginger put his cudgel under his arm, and made a loop in the rope. In another second or two, Streaky and Sandy would have flung themselves on the ruffian to pin him down. His stillness and silence convinced them that he was sleeping. But a moment more and they knew that it was a trick.

The still figure suddenly woke to life. With the swiftness of a springing tiger, Ezra was on his feet, his knife drawn, and lunging at Ginger. The red-headed junior of Grimsdale started back, the cudgel slipping from under his arm, barely eluding the murderous lunge. Sarson was following it up with another, which must have taken effect, had not Sandy Bean lashed out with his cudgel in time.

The heavy stick came with a crash on the ruffian's arm, numbing it. Sarson gave a yell, his arm dropped to his side, and hung useless. He made no effort to lift the knife again, but his arm hung as if broken, and he gave a howl of pain.

"At him!" panted Streaky.

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" panted Ginger. "Spoofing us, the rotter! Give him jip! Give him beans!"

He grabbed up his fallen cudgel, and joined his comrades in the attack. Ezra Sarson bounded desperately back and made a wild run for the jungle. But Ginger passed him, and, swinging round his cudgel caught the ruffian across the chest, sending him spinning backwards. He was not getting to the cover of the jungle this time.

"Collar him!" panted Sandy Bean.

Streaky and Sandy leaped on Sarson as he staggered. The knife was still in his hand, but he could not lift his arm. He twisted and eluded them and dashed along the beach, with the Grimsladers in fully cry after him. The desperado raced along the sand towards the northern side of the bay, the way Dr. Sparshott had gone the previous day.

"Get him!" panted Ginger, between his teeth. "He's not getting away, you men! We've got to get him!"

"You bet!" breathed Streaky.

They raced after the ruffian, who was making towards the mangrove swamp. That was his only refuge now from capture, and if he reached it he would escape. The three juniors strained every nerve in pursuit.

"Oh, if we could only see Sammy coming back!" gasped Streaky.

But there was no sign of Sammy. Nothing stirred in the dismal swamp but the foul vapours rising in the sunshine. Desperately the ruffian panted on. Once among the mangroves, it was easy to dodge pursuit, but he had not reached them yet. The juniors were almost upon him, and Sandy's cudgel crashed on his back.

"Stop, you rotter!" roared Ginger. "We've got you!"

But the blow seemed only to spur the desperate man on. He made a fierce leap and ran on. Swampy ooze was squashing round his feet now, and a last bound landed him among the mangroves. Like a hunted animal, he twisted among the roots and stems and vanished from sight.

Ginger & Co. halted, panting for breath. Sarson, lost to sight, could be heard splashing in the ooze, and the sound died farther and farther away. They looked at one another. But it was futile to penetrate among the tangled mangroves, the muddy creeks and pools, in search of him. Ginger shook his head. And the splashing and trampling of the desperate man died away in the depths of the dusky swamp.

CHAPTER 21.

A Fearful Fate!

O H! Good luck!" gasped Jim Dainty. The sound of a footstep in the desolate swamp came like music to his ears.

It was yet early, but the sun was already hot, the swamp simmering with heat and hazy vapours. For hours—it seemed to him years—Jim had struggled on after he had lost his companions in that miry wilderness. Again and again he had shouted, till he was too exhausted to shout again; but no answer came. Dr. Sparshott and Dawson were out of hearing—he had missed them in the sudden flight from the alligator, and he was hopelessly lost.

It was not till he was utterly spent that he sank down on a patch of firm soil in the slimy waste and slept. It was a sleep of exhaustion, and the sun was high in the sky when he awakened. He had food in his rucksack, and he ate; but his water-bottle was empty, and his throat was dry with thirst.

Water bubbled round him, salt from the sea, slimy and foul; he could not touch that. But the light of day renewed his courage, and he started once more to struggle on, in the hope of finding his companions or finding his way out of the swamp.

And then, crackling among the brittle undergrowths, he heard a footstep, and his heart leaped. He knew that Sammy would be searching for him, and he had no doubt that it was Sammy.

"Here!" he shouted. "This way! This way!"

From the foul thickets came a startled, panting exclamation. The rotten vegetation swayed and crackled, and a tattered figure came into sight.

Jim Dainty started back. It was not Dr. Sparshott. The tanned face and savage, sunken eyes of Ezra Sarson glared at him in the shadows of the swamp. The ruffian's lips were drawn back in a snarling grin from the discoloured teeth. He shot a hurried glance to right and left, and understood

that Jim was alone. He came closer, grinning.

From a shallow pool the huge head of an alligator was lifted, and the little eyes blinked under the flickering eyelids. Sarson did not heed it; and Jim did not even see it as he stood with set teeth, his eyes on the ruffian.

"You!" said Ezra. "You—you scum! Where's Sam Sparshott?"

"Find out!" retorted Jim.

His heart was beating in great jumps, but he kept cool, his hand gripping hard on his cudgel. He had little chance in single fight with the ruffian, but his pluck did not fail him. Flight was impossible—the ruffian was too close. He faced his enemy, ready to defend himself to the last.

"I guess I'll find him!" Ezra rubbed a bruise on his head. "I guess I'll put paid to that dog-goned schoolmaster before he gets out of this swamp! You're lost! I reckon you wouldn't have shouted if Sam Sparshott had been anywhere near! I've got you, I guess."

Jim could see that the ruffian had been through trouble; bruises showed on his head, on his shoulders through his torn and ragged shirt, and there was dried blood on his tanned, unshaven face. His right arm hung stiffly. But he was more than a match for the schoolboy—and both of them knew it.

With a sudden spring, he leaped. Jim struck fiercely, and Ezra hissed with rage as the blow struck him; but Jim had no time for another. Savage hands were on him, and he went down on his back, the cudgel flying from his hand. Ezra had fled like a hare from Ginger & Co.; but, single-handed, this boy was at his mercy. And there was no more mercy in his savage heart than in an alligator of the swamp.

Jim struggled fiercely. But a sinewy knee was planted on him, pinning him down on his back. Ezra dragged his wrists together, and bound them hard and fast. Then he rose to his feet, grinning, the junior panting on the ground.

The ruffian's next proceedings puzzled

him. Taking his knife with his left hand, Sarson began cutting lengths of the wiry creepers that grew in tangled masses on all sides. Then he returned to Jim, dragged him to his feet, and jammed him against the trunk of a slimy tree that grew half in a shallow pool of muddy water.

The junior sank to his knees as he was placed there. Round him, and round the trunk the ruffian wound the stems he had cut, stems of creepers as strong as rope, almost as hard as wire. He knotted them hard. Then Jim Dainty understood that he was to be left bound to the tree in the swamp, and he felt a gleam of hope.

Sammy was searching for him; Sammy would find him. His trust in his headmaster was unshaken. He could only wonder that the ferocious ruffian, at whose mercy he was, was sparing his life.

But he did not know all yet. Having secured him till he could not stir a limb and hardly a finger, Sarson stepped back. He picked up a lump of rotten wood and hurled it into the shallow water at a little distance. Jim's eyes followed the whizzing missile, and his heart almost died within him as he saw the snout of an alligator lifted from the slime.

The missile struck the long snout, and the great brute stirred, scrambling up on its clumsy legs in the shallows. The ruffian picked up another log and hurled it, striking the huge reptile again on the snout. The alligator began to move towards him, swamping heavily in the slimy water.

Ezra turned to the bound schoolboy, showing his blackened teeth in a grin.

"I guess I'm going!" he said hoarsely. "I guess you're paying for what I've got from your friends, dog-gone you! And I'll sure serve Sam Sparshott the same when I get a cinch on him!"

He turned and disappeared into the swamp, taking Jim's rucksack on his back.

Jim did not speak. His voice died in his throat. He hardly heeded the

ruffian's going. His eyes, almost starting from their sockets, were fixed on the huge beast only a dozen yards from where he stood, bound and helpless.

Ezra had deliberately irritated the reptile, and left the schoolboy at his mercy. The sound of the great brute squashing through the shallows brought the chill of death to Jim's heart. This was the revenge of the merciless ruffian who had scuttled the Spindrift.

Through muddy water and oozing slime the alligator waddled. Jim, white as chalk, watched him, his heart hardly beating. He strained at the knotted cords that held him to the tree, though he knew that it was in vain. He could not stir a limb, and the frantic effort left him exhausted and breathless.

With staring eyes he watched the hideous reptile. He saw the snout headed in his direction, caught the gleam of the half-hidden eyes.

A cry burst from Jim Dainty, ringing far through the dismal solitude of the swamp. If Sammy could only hear, Sammy would save him!

With the bitterness of death in his heart, he cried out again and again, while the hideous jaws of the alligator crept nearer and nearer.

CHAPTER 22.

Sammy to the Rescue!

DR. SAMUEL SPARSHOTT stopped and gripped the handle of his axe. Reeking with mud, bitten by innumerable insects, aching from head to foot with fatigue, the headmaster of Grimslade was still seeking the lost schoolboy in the mazes of the swamp.

He stopped, and stared through the dusky openings of the tangled growths of the swamp at the sight of a figure he knew, and his grip closed hard on the handle of his axe as he recognised Ezra Sarson.

There was an evil grin lurking on the tanned, savage face of the ruffian, and a deadly fear came into Sammy's heart that the wretch might have chanced on the lost boy in the swamp.

Ezra stared round, and his eyes blazed at the sight of Dr. Sparshott. He was seeking the headmaster of Grimslade, but he was seeking to surprise him, to attack him by treachery; an open meeting was not what the ruffian wanted. He spun round, and started to run as Sammy rushed towards him.

"Stop!" roared Dr. Sparshott.

The ruffian tore on. Up went Sammy's hand, with the axe in it. A few seconds and the fleeing rascal would have vanished in the swamp. But the axe flew from Sammy's hand with deadly accuracy. It struck the running man behind the knees, and he pitched forward and crashed on his face. As he sprawled, Sammy was upon him with a bound.

The headmaster of Grimslade caught up the axe again. And as Sarson twisted over and glared up, he lifted it in the air.

"Lie there, you dog!" said Sammy, between his teeth; and the ruffian crouched back, gritting his teeth with rage.

Sammy bent over him. The icy glint in his eyes was more terrifying than the weapon in his hand.

"What are you doing here?" said Sammy quietly. "Have you met Dainty in the swamp? Answer me, you dog!"

"I guess not. I——"

"You lying rascal!", Sammy's keen eyes were on Jim's rucksack, which the ruffian had strapped over his shoulder. "That is Dainty's. You've met him. If you've harmed him, may Heaven have mercy on you, for I will have none! Speak!"

The axe was over Ezra's head, and the eyes above him glinted like cold steel.

"I guess I left him alive!" panted Ezra. "I swear——"

"Better for you if you did!" said Dr. Sparshott, between his shut teeth. "Take me to him! Get on your feet, you cur! Lead the way. You have never been nearer to death than you are at this moment!"

Ezra staggered up. Sammy's grip

was on his arm, biting like a vice. They tramped on together, and Sammy's grasp never relaxed for a second—till suddenly, ringing through the dusky swamp, there came a wild, shrill, terrible cry.

Dr. Sparshott started. The cry was repeated again and again, in accents of horror and despair, echoing and ringing through the swamp. And then, following the wild cries, came words that went straight to Dr. Sparshott's heart.

"Save me! Sammy! Sammy! Save me!"

Dr. Sparshott released the ruffian's arm and dashed away through the swamp.

Trampling, splashing, stumbling, Sammy Sparshott tore through the swamp in the direction of the cry. It came again and again:

"Sammy! Sammy! Save me!"

"I am coming!" shouted Dr. Sparshott hoarsely.

He had a glimpse of the boy now. He saw him, bound to the trunk of the tree, knee-deep in water, his face white, his eyes wide open and staring. And he saw the slimy monster that was swamping towards him, the cruel jaws, with their terrible teeth, hardly a couple of yards from the bound and helpless boy.

With desperate bounds, the headmaster of Grimslade rushed on. It seemed as if the snapping jaws must seize the helpless schoolboy before he could reach him.

But with a last desperate bound Sammy was on the spot, and his feet landed fairly on the huge head of the alligator. His weight, as he crashed there, drove the reptile's head under the shallow water.

Sammy slid off, knee-deep in water and mud. The great head lifted again, the little flickering eyes glared round at him, the vast jaws opened.

Jim Dainty cried out in horror. Sammy had come; Sammy was there—but only to fall a victim to the fearful monster of the swamps!

But Sammy, plunging backwards, escaped the snap of the terrible jaws,

and his axe was flung up, grasped in both hands, and came down with terrific force on the scaly head.

So terrible was the blow that the stout ash handle of the axe split and broke like a lath, leaving the stump in Sammy's hands. But the sharp steel was buried in the scaly head of the alligator, and the great beast swamped down heavily in the slime.

Water and mud stirred wildly as it struggled beneath the surface. Whether it was mortally wounded or not, Sammy did not know. He did not waste a second. He threw aside the broken handle of the axe, whipped the knife from his belt, and sprang to Jim Dainty.

With fierce haste, he freed the boy. Jim Dainty reeled from the slimy trunk, free, and was caught up in Sammy's powerful arms.

Jim Dainty knew that he was saved; but he knew no more. His senses swam, and it was an insensible burden that Sammy Sparshott bore away through the swamp.

"Jim, old man!"

Jim Dainty's eyes opened.

He sat up dizzily. Dick Dawson's arm supported him; it was Dawson's anxious face that was peering at him. And Dr. Sparshott's hand held a young drinking-nut to his lips.

"Drink, my boy!" said Sammy.

Jim drank deeply. The rich juice of the coconut revived him, and he sat up, leaning against the trunk of a palm and looked round him.

He realised that he was out of the swamp—that Sammy must have carried him out. Sammy had saved him from a fate that he shuddered to remember.

"Better, old chap?" asked Dawson.

Jim grinned faintly.

"I'm all right, old bean! Right as rain! You saved me, sir!" He looked at Sammy.

Dr. Sparshott, caked with dried mud, tattered by thorns, bitten by insects, sat chewing coconut. He nodded and smiled.

"It was Sarson!" muttered Jim.

"I know! I came on him in the swamp! He's lying here now; the scoundrel's bound hand and foot. We shan't have any more trouble with him."

Sammy finished his coconut.

"We're on the western side of the island now," he said. "No sign of other land; no sign of inhabitants, so far. We seem to have the island to ourselves. We shall have to get back to the southern shore. We're not risking the swamp again! Rest now, my boys—rest and sleep. We must get going as soon as the heat of the day is past."

Dr. Sparshott stretched himself in the herbage under the nodding palms. Jim Dainty was glad to close his eyes. In a few minutes Dawson was as sound asleep as his chum. But Dr. Sparshott was not sleeping. He kept watch.

CHAPTER 23.

"Ship Aho!"

A SHIP!" yelled Ginger Rawlinson.

It was a hot afternoon on Castaway Island. Ginger & Co. were gathering coconuts under the palm-trees near the hut. There was a high wind from the sea, ruffling the blue waters of the bay on the east side of the lonely island and shaking the fronds of the tall, slanting palms. Nuts were falling in the wind, and Ginger, Bacon, and Bean were improving the shining hour by collecting them. At the same time they kept a sharp eye open for Dr. Sparshott, who had left them the day before to explore the western side of the island, taking Jim Dainty and Dick Dawson with him. There was no sign of Sammy Sparshott returning yet; but Ginger, looking round, suddenly spotted the sail far out at sea. He dropped an armful of coconuts and yelled in great excitement.

"Sandy! Streaky! Look!" yelled Ginger. "My giddy goloshes! It's a ship—a jolly old ship! Hurrah!"

Sandy Bean and Streaky Bacon fairly spun round. Far out at sea, just

appearing round the high rocks at the southern end of the island, came a small two-masted vessel, running before the wind. She came suddenly in sight from beyond South Point, as the castaways had named it. The three Grimslade juniors stared eagerly at the vessel. The Grimsladers rather liked Crusoe life on Castaway Island; but the sight of a ship made their hearts bound. Crusoe life was jolly in its way, but they realised that they wanted to see England and Grimslade School again.

Ginger waved his hat wildly.

"Hurrah!" he roared.

"A schooner," said Sandy Bean.

"How do you know it's a jolly old schooner?" demanded Streaky. "Might be a jolly old brig, or a jolly old barque."

"Fathead!" answered Sandy, with the grin of superior wisdom. "Can't you see it's got two masts, both fore and aft rigged?"

"What's fore and aft rigged, ass?"

"Booms, fathead, like a cutter, instead of yards, ass! If it was a brig it would have a yard on the mizzen."

"That's the back mast," said Streaky.

"Would it have a back yard on it?"

"They're coming here!" said Ginger.

"They're making the island!" said Sandy.

Sandy's people were seafaring people, and Sandy knew how to talk nautically.

"Eh? This island was made a long time ago," objected Streaky Bacon. "It was a finished job before we got here."

"Fathead!"

"Fritz!" roared Ginger. "Fatty! Frump! Fathead! Show a leg! Roll out! A sail, old podgy porker!"

There was a snore from the hut. Fritz von Splitz was sleeping in the heat of the day. The siesta, or midday sleep, necessary in tropical climates, suited Fatty Fritz. He liked it, and he started it early and ended it late. He did not hear Ginger's excited yell, snoring on regardless.

Ginger rushed into the hut. Fatty Fritz lay on his back on a bed of palm-

leaves, his eyes shut and his mouth open. He snored happily. Beside him lay bananas and coconuts, remnants of his last feed. Perhaps he was dreaming of Grimslade School. More likely he was dreaming of the sausages of his native land, for a happy smile irradiated his podgy face as he slumbered.

"Fritz!" roared Ginger. "Wake up, fathead!"

Snore!

Ginger picked up a young nut and jabbed his penknife through the soft spots at the end of the shell. The "milk" within began to trickle out. Ginger tilted it over Fritz' open mouth. He fancied that that would awaken Fritz von Splitz!

It did!

As the stream of coconut juice flowed into his wide-open, capacious mouth, there came a horrible gurgle from Fritz, and his saucer-eyes opened at once.

"Gurrirggh! Mein Gott! Urrrrggh!" Fritz sat up, spluttering. "Urrrgh! I joke in mein neck! Himmel! I was joking in mein throat! Grrrruggh!"

"I thought it would make you up!" grinned Ginger.

"Ach! Urrrph! Feast and a prute!" spluttered Fritz. "Vy for you vake me, ven I tream of Chermany and lofely Cherman sausages? Mein gootness! I tink tat I peat you till you pellow like a pull!"

"A ship, fathead! A sail, ass! Come and look!" yelled Ginger, and he grabbed the fat Rhinelander by a fat neck and jerked him to his feet.

"Led go!" roared Fritz. "I tell you tat I joke in mein throat. I have no more te breff! I tink tat I tie—"

Ginger Rawlinson, chuckling, ran the fat German out of the hut, gurgling and spluttering. He pointed to the schooner in the offing.

"Look, fathead!"

"Mein gootness! It vas vun ship!" exclaimed Fritz, realising at last the glorious news.

"Rotten luck Sammy not being here," said Streaky Bacon. "What on

earth can have kept him away all night? He was to be back at dark yesterday. But they'll wait for him to turn up. They're going to put in at this island, you can see."

"Let's show 'em we're here," said Sandy, the practical man. "They may be passing the island. Can't see what any ship wants to come to a lonely spot like this for."

"Good egg!" said Ginger. "Get a fire going! They're sure to see the smoke."

The schooner was still distant. It seemed to be making for the bay—East Bay, as it was named by the Grimslade castaways. But the bare possibility of the sail passing on and leaving them on the island was enough to make the boys get busy. There was plenty of wood at hand, dry as tinder in the hot tropical sun. They gathered it fast and piled it up, and set the fire going. In a very few minutes a column of smoke was rising from the beach between the margin of the bay and the hut. Black and thick, it rolled against the bright blue sky, and could have been seen for miles at sea.

"Keep it going!" said Ginger. "Lend a hand, Fritz, you fat slacker! Pile it up!"

"Tat is all right! You keep te fire going while I vatch for Sammy to gum pack!" suggested Fritz, sitting down on a rock.

He sat on that rock, in ease and comfort, for about the tenth part of a second. Then three pairs of hands rolled him off it, and he bumped on the broken sea-shells of the beach with a crash and a roar.

"Like to lend a hand now?" asked Ginger.

"Ach! Peast and a prute, you preak me te pack!" yelled Fritz. "Leaf off to Kick me on mein trousers! I have a bain in mein trousers! Whoop!"

Fatty Fritz lent a hand in fetching firewood. Ginger & Co.'s persuasion was too strong to be resisted.

The fire was piled higher and higher, the heat of it driving the juniors back.

But they still threw on fuel. An immense column of smoke rolled against the sky. The wind carried it inland, rolling away across the verdant hill that filled the centre of Castaway Island. It was likely enough that Sammy Sparshott might see it from beyond the hill, and guess that something was on. At all events, it was certain to be seen from the schooner. In the intervals of piling on fuel the juniors watched the vessel with anxious eyes. It was so near now that they could make out figures on the deck—men with dark faces, negroes or mulattoes, like many of the crews in West Indian waters. The dark faces were turned, staring, towards the beach of Castaway Island, and the men were speaking and gesticulating with obvious excitement. No doubt they were surprised to see the signal fire and the figures round it on a solitary and uninhabited island in lonely seas.

"That chap's the skipper, I fancy," said Ginger, pointing, as a figure in white drill appeared and stared at the beach. "He's a white man, anyhow, and he's seen us."

"Hurrah!"

It was plain now that the schooner was making the island. She headed direct into East Bay, and came swooping down under sail towards the beach like a great seagull. The juniors left the fire now—glad to get away from its heat. Fritz Splitz rolled away to the group of palms, at a little distance, in search of a drinking-nut. Fritz was thirsty. So were the other fellows, but they forgot it in the excitement of watching the schooner put into the bay. It was rescue from the solitary island, and glorious news for Sammy when he came back from exploring. The schooner came in so swiftly before the wind that it seemed to Ginger & Co. that she must rush on the beach. But at a cable's length from the shelving shore the sails dropped, and the schooner was hove-to. A boat swung from the davits, and a white man sat

In the sternsheets, while four brawny mulattoes sat to the oars. And Ginger & Co. waved their hands in wild excitement as the boat pulled to the beach.

CHAPTER 24.

Down the Ravine:

DR. SAMUEL SPARSHOTT stopped, shaded his eyes with his hand, and stared at the blue sky over the wooded hill.

"Smoke!" he said.

Jim Dainty and Dick Dawson looked. Floating up from behind the hill, clothed to its summit with verdure, came a rolling volume of smoke. It spread fan-like against the deep blue of the heavens. Dr. Sparshott's brows contracted as he looked. Unwillingly he had remained away from the camp on East Bay for the night. Evidently the smoke was a signal, and he wondered whether Ginger & Co. were trying to signal to him across the island. Yet they could be in no danger—for Ezra Sarson, the ruffian who had scuttled the Spindrift, their only enemy on Castaway Island, was now a prisoner—following the three explorers with his hands bound behind his back.

"Ginger must have lighted a pretty big fire to send up smoke to that extent, sir," said Jim Dainty.

"Can't want a fire on a day like this!" grinned Dick Dawson, wiping a stream of perspiration from his brow and smacking mosquitoes with a damp hand. "Must be a signal."

"To us!" said Dr. Sparshott. "Or they may have seen a sail. In either case, push on."

"A sail!" repeated the two juniors. And willingly enough they pushed on after their headmaster. Behind them the sullen-faced Ezra tramped and stumbled. The Grimslanders gave him little heed. He was free to cut and run if he liked, with his hands bound; but as he had no chance of getting his hands loose he was not likely to run. He muttered savage words as he fol-

lowed, but below his breath, and his mutterings died away in silence if Dr. Sparshott's eyes turned on him.

It was hard going. The three explorers had gone round the island on the northern side, struggling through the swamp, but they did not care to attempt returning through the fetid marshes. On the south side the island was a wilderness of broken rocks and rugged reefs, with inlets running far in. Dr. Sparshott had decided to strike across the hill, and the thick woods and tangled jungle made the going very hard. The heat was overpowering, and the buzzing insects innumerable. Here and there volcanic rocks cropped out of the rugged hillside, but the greater part was jungle, thick and tangled. But it was better than the fetid swamp, at all events, and Jim Dainty and his chum tramped on cheerily in the wake of their headmaster. That stalwart young man seemed to be made of iron, with muscles of tempered steel, and almost tireless.

Thicker and blacker the smoke rolled against the sky over the hill. Through the trees the murmur of falling water came to the ears of the three, and they were glad to hear it. Their water-bottles were empty now, and their throats dry with thirst. The gleam of water flashing in the sun came to their eyes, and they hurried on. They had worked their way round the southern slope of the hill to the eastern side, and, but for the jungle, could have looked down on the beach where the camp lay, and the open Atlantic beyond. But the trees shut off the view. From the higher slopes of the hill water came tumbling in a glittering cascade in a deep ravine worn by its own action.

"Oh, good luck!" exclaimed Jim Dainty, and he plunged into the rocky ravine and held his burning face under the falling water, his example immediately followed by Dawson. The coolness was delicious. Sammy Sparshott, with a cheery grin, followed the two juniors. The water fell on them and

flowed down past them in a series of shallow cascades. They stood knee-deep in it.

Dr. Sparshott turned his back on the cascade, and stood looking down the winding, rugged ravine, where the water flowed on and down. Nowhere was it more than a couple of feet deep, in places only a few inches—here a few feet wide, there a few yards.

"We're in luck, my boys," said the headmaster of Grimslade. "We've found a short cut."

"A short cut, sir!" repeated Jim.

"This," said Sammy, "is undoubtedly the stream that flows down into East Bay, and its last cascade is not fifty yards from our hut. If we follow the stream we get a short cut home—what?"

"Jolly good idea!" said Jim. "We shall get pretty wet, but we've been too jolly dry! Let's!"

"Take care!" said Dr. Sparshott. "The rocks are slippery and a fall might be serious!"

"I guess I can't make it with my hands tied!" growled Ezra Sarson.

Dr. Sparshott looked at him. He nodded. Rascal and ruffian as the man was, he did not want him to break his neck in clambering down the watercourse with his hands bound. But he had no intention of releasing him. The scuttler of the Spindrift was too dangerous for that. He untied the man's hands so that Sarson could use them, but he tied the cord to his arm, and the other end to his own belt. Ezra's eyes glittered. Now that his hands were loose it was easy to guess that he hoped for a chance of making his escape, if not of turning the tables on his captors.

"Come!" said Dr. Sparshott tersely. He led the way, clambering down the watercourse, and the juniors followed. Here and there the stream levelled out, only to fall farther on in another low cascade. Scrambling down the rocks in the shallow, falling water was rather a lark to the juniors, and Sammy did not seem to mind it. The coolness of

the water was refreshing in the blazing heat of the tropic sun. It was easier going than pushing and struggling through tough jungle, and infinitely more rapid. At this rate it looked as if they might be back at the camp in another hour or so, instead of tramping on wearily till nightfall or later.

"Halt!" said Dr. Sparshott suddenly.

They stopped at a level where the water gathered in a wide pool, the ravine broadening out between the walls of rock. Here there was room to land on one side of the stream, broad, shelving rock jutting between the water and the high walls of the ravine. Sammy's keen grey eyes had turned on a dark opening in the rock—a natural cave. He waded out of the water on to the wide, rocky shelf beside the stream, the cord forcing Sarson to follow him. He peered into the dusky opening of the cave.

"Later," said Dr. Sparshott, "we will come up here again and explore this. At present I am anxious to get back to the camp. We have not far to go now. We can already see the sea between the trees. I—"

He broke off with a gasp. For the moment, as he looked into the deep, dusky opening of the river cave, the headmaster of Grimslade was off his guard. With the spring of a tiger Ezra Sarson leaped on him from behind, and Dr. Sparshott went down with a crash, the ruffian over him. The two juniors were standing in the stream. They rushed and scrambled ashore as the ruffian made his sudden attack. But a lump of loose rock was clutched up in Sarson's hand, lifted to dash out the brains of the headmaster of Grimslade.

The juniors could not have reached him in time. But Sammy Sparshott, though he had for once been caught napping, was not an easy man to handle. He twisted over like an eel, hitting as he twisted, and the descending rock crashed to the ground a foot from his head.

The next moment he was grappling with Sarson.

The ruffian fought like a tiger. They rolled over and over on the level shelf of rock between the cave and the stream. Jim Dainty and Dawson scrambled out of the water and hurled themselves on Sarson. Jim got an arm round his neck, Dawson laid hold of his tousled head with both hands, and they dragged him away from the headmaster by main force.

Dr. Sparshott scrambled up, panting. As Sarson turned savagely on the schoolboys, the headmaster of Grimslade leaped on him and crushed him down to the rock, with a knee on his chest. The savage eyes, under the beetling brows, glared up at him like a tiger's. But Sammy had the man where he wanted him now.

In a grasp of iron he seized the ruffian's wrists and dragged them together. At a word from him Jim Dainty wound the cord round the wrists and knotted it. It was knotted hard and fast, and Ezra was a prisoner again.

"You've asked for it once too often, my man," said Dr. Sparshott grimly. "I shall leave you here—to wait till I may return for you."

He pitched the ruffian into the opening of the cave and left him. His savage yell of rage died away behind as the headmaster and the two schoolboys resumed the descent of the ravine.

"The sea!" exclaimed Jim Dainty suddenly.

The jungle thinned away lower down the ravine, and the wide Atlantic, rolling blue in the sunshine, burst on their view. The next moment Dawson gave a yell.

"A ship!"

Anchored in the bay below was a schooner, with five or six black men on her deck, staring shoreward.

"Oh, what ripping luck!" exclaimed Jim, his eyes dancing. "That's why Ginger lighted the fire—a signal to the ship!"

"Come on!" said Dr. Sparshott briefly.

They scrambled onward and down-

ward in hot haste. They went headlong through the last waterfall and dropped into the stream that flowed through the palm grove to the beach. Scrambling ashore, they dashed the water from their faces, and looked in the direction of the hut, visible now through the trunks of the palms. They had a glimpse of moving figures, and were about to start towards the hut, when a sudden, sharp sound ringing out on the air brought them to a standstill in alarm and astonishment. It was the ringing report of a revolver!

CHAPTER 25.

In Hostile Hands!

GINGER & Co. almost danced with joy as they watched the boat pulling from the schooner in the bay.

The white man sitting in the stern-sheets eyed them, evidently astonished to see them there; and—if Ginger & Co. had not been too excited to notice it—looking anything but pleased. In a calmer moment they might have noted that the schooner's skipper was far from a pleasant-looking man. His face was dark, telling of a dash of negro blood, though he was a white man; his features were of a Gallic cast, his eyes black and glittering. There was a revolver stuck in his belt, and once or twice his dusky hand strayed to it as he stared at the Grimslade juniors.

The boat bumped on the soft sand of the beach. The black boatmen jumped out and dragged it up the sand, Ginger & Co. gaily lending a hand. Then the schooner's skipper stepped out dry-shod.

"Jolly glad to see you, sir!" chirruped Ginger.

"Allons! Vous etes Anglais! You are English?" said the dark-skinned man, changing into that language.

"Yes, rather, sir! Is that a French ship?" asked Ginger. A slight feeling of uneasiness came over him, and

Sandy and Streaky felt their joyful enthusiasm diminish. The cold, hard, steady glare of those black eyes was discouraging.

"That is my schooner, the Courlis, et je suis le capitaine Luz—I am Captain Luz. What do you here?"

"We're shipwrecked," explained Ginger, his heart sinking as he read the cold hostility in the hard face of the skipper.

"Mon Dieu! I find you here!" exclaimed Captain Luz savagely. "It might have been better for you if you had gone with your ship!"

"Look here——" exclaimed Streaky Bacon.

"Taisez-vous—silence!" Captain Luz turned to the four blacks, who had moved to surround the Grimslade juniors, and barked out an order in French. Immediately the black hands were laid on Ginger & Co.

They were taken too much by surprise to attempt resistance. Not that it would have saved them, for in the grasp of the powerful Martinique negroes they were powerless.

"My giddy goloshes! What's this game?" yelled Ginger fiercely. "What are you up to? Are you mad?"

One of the negroes brought a rope from the boat. They proceeded to bind the hands of the astounded schoolboys. Ginger & Co. looked at one another in stupefaction. All their high hopes were dashed now. They had taken it for granted that a ship putting in at Castaway Island meant that they were saved. But the dark-skinned skipper of the Courlis was evidently a foe, not a friend, though for what reason they could not begin to guess.

"I have business here!" said Captain Luz, with a sardonic curl of the lip. "I did not expect to find castaways on the island, which has never been inhabited since the days of the pirates. But, morbleu, finding you here, I shall see that you do not give trouble."

He turned towards Fatty Fritz, who was staring at the scene from a distance, with his eyes and mouth wide

open with astonishment. He beckoned to the fat German.

"Venez! Come here!" he shouted.

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz. He understood no more than Ginger & Co. why the strange visitors to the island were foes. But he did understand it, and he had no idea of falling into their hands like the unlucky three. He bolted through the palms like a frightened rabbit.

Captain Luz tore the revolver from his belt.

"Come!" he roared. "Come back, or I shoot!" The revolver glinted in the sun as he aimed.

Fritz Splitz, with a gurgle of terror, dashed on. In utter horror the Grimsladers saw the skipper take aim and pull trigger.

Crack! The report of the revolver rang far and wide over Castaway Island. Ginger & Co., their hearts thumping, watched, hardly breathing. Whether the swarthy scoundrel intended to shoot down the running Fritz, or only to frighten him into returning, they couldn't tell. The bullet glanced on a palm trunk a yard away from Fatty Fritz, and knocked up earth a dozen yards farther on. A yell of terror rang from the fat German, and he ran on frantically, disappearing among the palms.

"Yap! Allez—follow him!" snapped the captain, and one of the mulattoes dashed in pursuit of the fleeing fat German.

"My giddy goloshes!" groaned Ginger. "We're out of the jolly old frying-pan into the fire! What the thump does it all mean?"

Captain Luz gave no more heed to the fleeing Fritz, evidently satisfied that Yap, the mulatto, would run him down. He turned to the trio again.

"Four of you!" he snapped. "Are there others?"

Ginger & Co. were silent. For some reason beyond their understanding captain and crew of the schooner were enemies to the castaways. Evidently the Courlis was no peaceful West

Indian trader, and her skipper had some special purpose in visiting the lonely island, though what it was was a mystery.

"Morbleu! I ask you a question!" snarled Luz. "Answer, then!"

"Find out!" roared Ginger. "And go and eat coke, and be blowed to you!"

Captain Luz gave him a dark look. For a moment Ginger expected a savage blow; but the captain controlled his anger and turned away. Leaving the three juniors, bound hand and foot, lying on the sand, he strode up the beach to the hut by the tall rock, followed by the blacks.

Sitting up with some difficulty, Ginger & Co. looked in the direction of Fritz's flight. They had little hope that the fat German would succeed in getting clear. Every minute they expected to see the big mulatto Yap come tramping back through the palm grove, dragging the podgy Rhineland after him. But minute followed minute, and he did not appear. If Fritz escaped—if by any chance he found Sammy and warned him—as the long minutes passed Ginger & Co. hoped more and more. And they would have chattered with glee if they could have seen what was happening beyond the screen of palms by the stream.

Fatty Fritz, in a state of panic terror, ran as he had never run before. Fritz was no sprinter; but danger behind him made him put on a burst of speed that was really wonderful. Panting, gasping, gurgling, the fat Rhineland bolted on, spurred to greater efforts by the sound of padding feet in pursuit.

He blinked back, with terrified saucer-eyes, and gave a squeal of terror at the sight of the brawny mulatto only a few yards behind him.

"Ach!" squealed Fritz. "Geep off, peast and a prute! Mein gootness, I have no more to breff, and I tink tat I tie!"

He barged on wildly, winding among

the trunks of the palms, along the bank of the stream. Closer and closer came the padding of the black's naked feet, and Fritz could hear his deep breathing as he ran. Closer and closer, till the outstretched fingers of a black hand touched the fat shoulder of the German.

The touch brought out a squeal of fear from Fatty Fritz, and he bounded on as if electrified.

But it was in vain! The grinning black rushed after him, and his grasp fastened on Friedrich von Splitz. In utter terror the fat German collapsed at his feet, gurgling wildly.

Grinning, the black man dragged him up. Another moment, and Fatty Fritz would have been dragged away to the beach, to join the other prisoners there. But, as the mulatto dragged him, a stalwart figure came springing through the palms, and a fist that was like a lump of iron crashed on the side of the black man's head. It was a blow with all the strength of Sammy Sparshott's strong right arm behind it, and it might have cracked the skull of a white man. It stretched the black man senseless on the earth. He fell like a log, and lay inert where he had fallen.

Dr. Sparshott stopped and jerked Fritz to his feet.

"Geep off!" shrieked Fritz. "Peast and prute, tat you geep off—"

"Come!" barked Dr. Sparshott.

"Mein gootness! It is Sammy!" gasped the bewildered Fritz. "Ach, I was so pleased to see you as neffer was before."

Dr. Sparshott made no answer. He dragged the gasping Fritz away among the trees, leaving the senseless mulatto where he lay. Dainty and Dawson were there, panting with excitement. Sammy made them a sign to follow him, and scrambled back up the ravine, his face set and grim. Ten minutes later Captain Luz stood under the palms, staring down in amazement at the senseless mulatto.



The alligator was moving towards Jim Dainty its cruel jaws, with their terrible teeth, hardly a couple of yards from the bound and helpless boy, when Dr. Sparshott rushed upon the scene. "Sammy!" gasped Dainty. "Save me, Sammy!" The Head of Grimslade raised his axe ready to strike!

CHAPTER 25.

Sammy to the Rescue!

NIGHT on Castaway Island.

On the beach, between the palm-grove and the bay, a camp-fire blazed, casting ruddy light along the sands, gleaming on the calm waters. In the bay, the schooner *Courlis* lay at anchor, but most of the crew had landed, and were gathered round the camp-fire. After the blazing heat of the tropic day, the night was chilly.

Ginger Rawlinson, and his chums Bacon and Bean, would have been glad to be nearer the fire. They lay on the sand at a little distance, feeling the chill of the night wind from the Atlantic. They lay there because they could not help it, bound hand and foot.

They watched the half-clad figures of the black West Indian crew of the schooner moving in the circle of fire-light, and almost wondered whether what was happening was some ghastly dream.

Captain Luz and his wild crew were evidently not traders, whatever they were. What they wanted at the lonely island, why they had come, Ginger & Co. could not guess. But there they were—and the three juniors of Grimsdale School were prisoners, and the rascally crew had taken possession of the hut and the stores.

Their only comfort was that Dr. Sparshott, with Dainty and Dawson, was away, exploring the island, and that Fritz Splitz had bolted and got clear.

Captain Luz, seated on a rock by the fire, was smoking a black cheroot and talking to the mate of the schooner, a half-breed like himself. The firelight gleamed on his hard, dark face. The blacks squatted round the fire were eating and drinking, chattering in their own dialect.

Captain Luz rose at last, and walked across to where the three Grimsdalers lay, on the edge of the radius of light from the fire. He stood looking down at them, with glinting black eyes, hold-

ing the cheroot between a dusky thumb and forefinger. Ginger & Co. stared up at him grimly.

"Ecoutez! Listen!" said the man from Martinique quietly. "You are not alone on this island. My mulatto, Yap, followed the fat boy when he fled, and was struck senseless. He did not see who struck him down, but it could not have been the fat one. Non! Who else is on the island?"

"Find out!" suggested Ginger.

The black eyes glittered at him.

"You have told me that you are shipwrecked here. Is it true? I see no signs of a wreck."

"We came on a raft from the wreck of the *Spindriff*, a jolly long way—hundreds of miles, very likely. I don't know."

"Not you boys alone? Who else?"

Ginger Rawlinson did not answer. The half-breed stooped, and placed the burning end of the cheroot to his forehead—so near that the red-headed junior of Grimsdale felt the glow of its heat.

"Will you speak before I press it to the skin?" asked Captain Luz. "I have my own ways with those who are obstinate—not gentle ways."

Ginger breathed hard.

"Two other boys and our schoolmaster," he said.

"Where are they?"

"I don't know! They went round the island yesterday, and have not come back."

The keen black eyes searched Ginger's face.

"Un maitre d'ecole, a schoolmaster, could not have struck my mulatto senseless with a blow! No one else—personne?"

"There's a man named Sarson—a villain who scuttled the ship we were on—we gave him a passage on the raft," said Ginger. "He's on the island somewhere. I don't know anything about him. He is our enemy."

The captain started a little.

"Sarson! I know the name! Ezra

Sarson, a man from San Francisco in Les Etats Unis—the United States?"

"That's the man!"

"Ma foi! An old comrade! But it would not be he who struck down the mulatto. If he had seen us he would have joined us! No other?"

"Not another soul on the island that I know of."

Captain Luz took another long, searching look at Ginger. No doubt he could see that the boy was telling the truth. He gave a puzzled shrug of the shoulders, and walked back to his seat by the fire, where he resumed smoking and muttering to the mate.

"My giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger. "We fancied that a sail meant rescue—and we've dropped into a jolly old hornets' nest instead! Thank goodness Sammy Sparshott is clear of them!" Ginger chuckled. "I told him a schoolmaster—but he jolly well doesn't guess what sort of a schoolmaster Sammy is! If his dashed nigger was knocked out, you men, it was Sammy knocked him out—you can bet that! Fritz has got away, and he couldn't have got away without help. My beloved 'carers, jolly old Sammy is somewhere in the offing!"

It was a hopeful thought to the three prisoners. But the discovery that Captain Luz was an old comrade of the ruffian Sarson was dismaying.

Lying on the sand, chilly in the night wind, Ginger & Co. watched the half-savage figures round the fire, and wondered where Sammy was, and whether he could help them out of this scrape. It did not seem likely, for the crew of the schooner was numerous, and both the skipper and the mate were armed. But their faith was great in their headmaster. If anything was to be done, Dr. Samuel Sparshott was the man to do it; they had no doubt whatever about that.

"Rawlinson!"

Ginger gave a violent start as his name was whispered. Sandy Bean and Streaky Bacon caught their breath.

"My giddy goloshes!" breathed Ginger. "That's Sammy."

The three juniors stared round in the darkness. They could see no sign of their headmaster; yet they knew that it was Sammy who had whispered Ginger's name.

"Yes, sir!" whispered Ginger. "I hear you."

"Keep quiet!" came the whisper again. "I am only a few yards from you."

The three juniors spotted now where the whispering came from. A rock jutted from the sand at a short distance. Its height was not more than two feet, but it was evident that it hid the headmaster of Grimsdale.

Sammy Sparshott had crawled so far on hands and knees; but he could come no farther without revealing himself to the men round the fire.

The juniors' hearts beat hard and fast. Sammy was there to help them, to rescue them, if he could. But any sound above a whisper might have reached the many ears at the camp at a little distance. And they had no doubt that an alarm would draw fire from the revolver of Captain Luz. They had already seen him fire after Fritz Splitz when the fat German was fleeing.

"Keep out of sight, sir, for goodness' sake!" whispered Ginger. "That scoundrel will shoot—"

"I know it! Roll along the sand slowly until you are in reach of this rock," came the headmaster's whisper.

"Good egg!" murmured Sandy Bean.

Ginger & Co. obeyed at once. Already they had been shifting and wriggling incessantly in the discomfort of their bonds. Further wriggling was not likely to attract any special attention—unless they disappeared from sight, in which case the ruffianly crew were pretty certain to rush after them and drag them back.

But that was not the game. Wriggling on the sand, still in full view of the crew round the fire, they came in contact with the low rock behind which

the headmaster of Grimslade lay. They sat up, leaning on the rock facing the camp, looking as if they had shifted their position for ease. They saw Captain Luz glance at them; but he gave them no special heed, and his face was turned away again.

He did not see—no one at the campfire could have seen—the arm that reached round the rock. Ginger felt a touch of fingers that groped. Then the hand was withdrawn—to return with a knife in it, and the keen edge of the knife sawed through the rope that bound Ginger's arms. The knotted rope fell apart, and Ginger's hands were free.

He did not need the whisper that came from the hidden headmaster; he knew what was wanted, and he took the knife from Sammy's hand, which was immediately withdrawn.

"My hat!" breathed Streaky, his eyes dancing.

"Careful, old man!" muttered Sandy Bean.

"Teach your grandmother!" retorted Ginger.

Ginger was careful—very careful. He curled himself on the sand, a little nearer to the fire, to disarm suspicion. As he curled he sawed with the knife at the rope round his ankles, and it parted. Slowly, very slowly, eager as he was, he wriggled nearer to Sandy Bean and sawed through his bonds. His heart was beating almost to suffocation with excitement. But he knew that he had to keep cool—that a suspicious movement would have spoiled all. His movements were of almost agonising slowness. But at long last the knife sawed through Streaky's bonds, and all three of the Grimslade juniors were free of the ropes.

"We're loose, sir!" breathed Ginger.

"Good!" came back Sammy's whisper. "When you move, move quickly. Run for the stream, and clamber up the rocks through the waterfall. You will get wet, but that will not hurt you. Above you, you will find Dainty and Dawson and Splätz.

Drop the knife as you pass; I may need it to cover your retreat."

"But you, sir—"

"Are you arguing with your headmaster, Rawlinson?"

Ginger grinned. Dr. Samuel Sparshott was headmaster, to be obeyed without question on Castaway Island, just as if he were in his study at old Grimslade.

"Very well, sir!" murmured Ginger.

"Now!" said Sammy.

And Ginger & Co., as if moved all at once by the same spring, leaped to their feet and ran.

CHAPTER 27.

A Wild Night!

"VOYEZ!" Captain Luz leaped to his feet, with a shout. "They run!"

He flung the stump of his cheroot into the fire, and grasped the revolver from his belt.

Crack! The bullet whizzed over the low rock behind which the headmaster of Grimslade lay in the sand. It was followed by a rush of the crew round the fire. Captain Luz' dark-skinned face worked with rage as he ran, revolver in hand, and the blacks almost gaped with amazement at the sight of the three prisoners, who had been bound fast, hand and foot, leaping up and darting away into the night.

Ginger & Co. did not lose a second. Swiftly as Captain Luz and his crew had spotted their escape and rushed after them, the three Grimsladers had a start. If they needed spurring on, the crack of the revolver behind them would have done it. They raced away across the sand towards the palm-grove, where the stream, from the high hill in the centre of Castaway Island, glistened through the shadows. They heard the tramping of feet, and fierce voices in chase, and ran on desperately, winding through the trunks of the palms. The lawless crew, rushing after them, had evidently passed Sammy

Sparshott unseen, as he lay in the darkness behind the rock. They were speeding fiercely on the track of the running juniors.

"This way!" panted Ginger Rawlinson.

He remembered Dr. Sparshott's directions, and followed them implicitly. The stream was shallow, hardly more than a couple of feet in the deepest place. Ginger plunged into it, followed by Bacon and Bean. They tramped up the stream against the current till the waterfall was falling on their heads. But for Sammy's directions they certainly would not have thought of such a way of escape; now they did not hesitate for a second. Desperately they clambered up the rocks over which the stream cascaded. They had no doubt that Sammy had gone over it before, and knew that the way was practicable. So they found it; for, in spite of the falling water that drenched them in a minute to the skin, they found that they could clamber up the rugged, jutting rocks.

Drenched, soaked, half-drowned by the falling water, but desperately determined, Ginger & Co. clambered on and up. Here and there the water ran heavily in channels of the rock; but it was mostly spray that they had to clamber through, and it was not likely to stop them. Swiftly up the rocky slope they clambered, and plunged into the level stream above, not a foot deep above the cascade.

"Oooooogh!" gurgled Ginger, resting on his knees and dashing the water from his eyes. "Grooogh! We're through."

Above the fall the stream flowed down a deep, dark ravine, shut in by high walls of rock. On one side was a broad shelf of rock, where it was possible to land. Ginger and Bacon and Bean crawled out of the water, gasping and spluttering. To their surprise, hands reached out of the gloom and helped them from the water. But they guessed at once whose hands they were.

"Dainty!" gasped Sandy Bean.

"Dawson!"

"Here we are!" grinned Jim Dainty. "Jolly glad to see your fiery old mop, Ginger! I knew it was you; it's like a jolly old beacon in the dark."

"You wait till I get my breath!" gasped Ginger. "I'll jolly well—"

"Isn't Sammy with you?" asked Dick Dawson.

"No; he told us to cut, and we cut."

"Mein gootness!" came a groaning voice from the darkness. "Ve was all lost and tead before! I tink tat I neffer see my pelofed Chermanny again!"

The fat face and saucer-eyes of Friedrich von Splitz glimmered in the gloom of the ravine.

"Shut up, you babbling bloater!" growled Ginger. "Hark! They're after us!"

"They won't get up here in a hurry," said Jim Dainty. "But by gum, I wish Sammy was here with us!"

Jim Dainty crawled along to the extreme end of the rocky shelf, which overlooked the waterfall. The fall was not more than ten or twelve feet; and in the shallow stream below, dim in the gloom, he made out a group of figures standing in the water. Five or six scantily clad black men stood round a white, or half-white, man in drenched drill. The voice of Captain Luz reached him.

"Morbleu! They ran this way! They climbed through the cascade! Follow them—you! Yap, follow!"

The brawny mulatto left the group and plunged into the falling water and spray, clambering up the rugged rocks through the drenching water as Ginger & Co. had done a few minutes before.

Jim Dainty's hand closed hard on his cudgel. He watched for the mulatto's head to come within reach. But his intervention was not needed. From somewhere in the darkness a jagged lump of rock came whizzing from down the stream. It struck the mulatto on the back of the head as he clambered, and Yap fell backwards as if he had been shot.

He plunged heavily into the pool of

water under the wall, struggling feebly. One of his comrades dragged him up. Captain Luz rapped out an oath and stared round into the darkness behind him, whence the missile had come.

"Morbieu! There is another here!" he yelled.

He threw up his revolver and pulled the trigger. But the firearm missed fire, and there was only a click. The next moment the man from Martinique gave a yell as a rock from the darkness struck him on the forehead, and he reeled and fell headlong into the stream.

With a babble of alarm and excitement, the blacks grasped him and dragged him out on the lower bank. The whole crew disappeared from sight.

"Sammy, by gun!" breathed Jim Dainty.

Evidently it was Sammy Sparshott who was in the darkness behind the ruffians, and who had thus effectually covered the retreat of Ginger & Co.

"Mein gootness! Are tey gone?" came Fritz Splitz' quavering voice.

"They're jolly well gone!" chuckled Jim Dainty. "Sammy heaved rocks at them, and I fancy two of them will have a bit of a headache. We're safe as houses here. We can hold this show against the whole gang of them!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Ginger. "We could roll Fritz down on them——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peast and a prute!" yelled Fritz. "Mein gootness! I vish tat I vas pack in Chermamy! I vish tat I neffer gum on tat peastly guise! I vish tat—— Ach! Leaf off to kick me on mein trousers, you peastly pounder!"

"We're all right here," said Dick Dawson. "We've found a cave, farther up the ravine. We've got the villain Sarson there, a prisoner, tied up like a turkey! But my hat! I wish Sammy was here. If those scoundrels get hold of him——"

"They won't get their paws on old

Sammy in a hurry!" said Ginger. "Sammy's too good for them."

"Listen!" murmured Jim Dainty.

The juniors listened. Captain Luz and his crew had cleared off from the lower stream, doubtless in search of the unseen enemy who had hurled the rocks from the darkness. Voices could be heard shouting in the distance, and sharp reports rang out, echoing and booming up the rocky ravine. Likely enough, the ruffians were firing at shadows as they hunted for the man they could not find. But the sound of firing made the juniors' hearts beat painfully.

"Here they come again!" breathed Ginger, as there was a sound of a splash in the stream below. "Look out!"

A dark figure showed in the glimmer of the falling water. Jim Dainty, crouching at the end of the ledge by the waterfall, gripped his cudgel. But a familiar voice hailed from the dark.

"Hallo! Grimslade!"

"Sammy!" exclaimed Jim.

The athletic figure of the headmaster of Grimslade clambered up the rocks through the spray. Jim Dainty gave him a helping hand from the water. Dr. Sparshott landed on the ledge, breathing hard. There was a large rucksack on his back, crammed almost to bursting. He slung it down with a gasp of relief. The juniors gathered round their headmaster, deeply thankful to see Sammy again safe and sound.

"They never got you, sir!" chuckled Ginger.

"No; they did not get me, Rawlinson!" said Dr. Sparshott. "They are, I believe, hunting me at a distance—I led them a chase across the sands, and cut back, leaving them to it. While they were at a safe distance I dropped into our hut, and I have brought enough rations to last us for a few days, at least. Probably some of you are hungry—Splitz, I am sure, is a trifle peckish——"

"Ach! I vas so hungry tat I tink I tie!" gasped Fritz. "Vere vas tat grub? Giff me some grub! I tink tat

I tie if I do not have some grub ferry quick after."

Dr. Sparshott, with a cheery chuckle, passed a can of corned beef to the fat German. And Fritz Splitz could hardly wait to get the can open before he buried his teeth in its contents.

CHAPTER 28.

A Fight Against Odds!

FROM the far Atlantic the golden sun leaped, and it was day on Castaway Island. In the thick woods the twitter of wild birds, the screaming of parrots, woke the echoes. The rays of the sun glimmered on the stream that cascaded down the rocky ravine, and on the tired but indomitable face of Dr. Samuel Sparshott.

Seated on a boulder at the end of the ledge overlooking the waterfall, Sammy Sparshott was keeping watch and ward. The juniors had retired to the cave, farther up the ravine, where they had lighted a fire to dry their clothes, and sleep. They were still sleeping when dawn shone over the lonely island; but there was no sleep for Sammy. He had piled up a stack of loose rocks, to use as missiles, if the enemy attempted to force their way up the ravine; and he waited and watched for them. He had little doubt that he would see something of Captain Luz and his crew soon after dawn; and he was right. As the sunlight strengthened, there was a tramping and splashing lower down the narrow ravine, and a broad-brimmed hat appeared. Under its brim Sammy Sparshott had a glimpse of a dark, hard face, and glinting black eyes, watchful as a puma's. It was Captain Luz, and he was alone. If his men were following him, they were keeping out of sight so far. As he spotted the headmaster of Grimslade looking down from the rocky ledge above, the dusky hand of the man from Martinique went to the butt of the revolver in his belt. But he relinquished the weapon imme-

diately; and, holding out his hands to show that they were empty, he looked up at the man above.

"Allons! Now I see you, monsieur!" said the captain. "It is to you I owe the lump on my forehead—n'est-ce pas!—and the boy would have me believe that you are a *maître d'école*—a schoolmaster, *morbleu*."

Sammy Sparshott chuckled.

"The boy told you the truth," he answered. "I am a schoolmaster, and the boys with me are my pupils. We were on a summer holiday cruise when our ship was wrecked and we got away on a raft. Why you have treated us as enemies I cannot understand—keep your distance, and leave us in peace, and that is all we ask."

The captain's lip curved in a sneer.

"I find you here," he said. "Here on this island, a hundred miles from the track of ships! You tell a tale of a wreck and a raft—bah! But I will deal fairly with you. I will give you fair play and a share, since you are here on the same quest."

Dr. Sparshott looked at him keenly and curiously. There was treachery in every line of the dark face, every glint of the black, suspicious eyes. The headmaster of Grimslade answered quietly.

"I caught some words among your men last night, Captain Luz! I learned that you have visited this lonely island in the belief that there is some treasure here. I know nothing of it. Search for it, if you will—I shall not interfere. I shall be only too glad to see the last of you! If I could trust you I would gladly pay for a passage from the island. I cannot—so keep your distance."

"*Morbleu!*" The man from Martinique gritted his teeth. "I am not an infant to be deceived by words! You are here—where no human foot ever treads—where no foot has trodden since the Black Marquis landed. This is the island to which he sailed from Hayti, a hundred years ago—that much

I know! You know it also, or you would not be here."

"I have never even heard of your Black Marquis——"

"Assez! Enough, then! Together, adding what you know to what I know, we may raise what the Black Marquis buried here by the order of King Christophe. Will you join with me, then?"

"I repeat that I know nothing about what you speak of," said Dr. Sparshott. "I am here by chance and shipwreck——"

"Lies! Lies! Will you join with me and seek——"

"I will not trust myself, or my charges, into your rascally hands," said Dr. Sparshott sternly; "and if you attempt an attack, the consequences will be on your own head."

"On your own, monsieur le maitre d'ecole, as you will see!" snarled the man from Martinique; and with a sudden movement, he flashed out the revolver and fired. But, swift as he was, Sammy Sparshott was swifter. His head was drawn back beyond the jutting ledge of rock, and the bullet whistled away harmlessly along the wall of the ravine. With an imprecation, Captain Luz swung round and splashed away down the lower stream.

"My giddy goloshes!" came a yell from the cave. "They're at it!"

The shot had awakened the Grims-lade juniors. Ginger was first out of the cave. Jim Dainty after him, and then the others—excepting Fritz Splitz. That fat youth scuttled farther up the deep cave in search of safety. The five juniors came running along the shelf of rock to join Dr. Sparshott.

"Keep back!" barked Sammy. "They are desperate rascals, and they will shoot. Don't show your heads."

"We can stone them off here, sir!" said Jim Dainty.

"I think so!" said Dr. Sparshott coolly. "Once in the water they cannot use their firearms; and they cannot reach us without clambering through the fall! Pick up the heaviest rocks you can throw, and keep watch—you

can fancy, if you like, that you are at Middlemoor Fair, playing at coconut-shies."

The Grims-laders waited and watched for heads to appear among the jutting rocks over which the stream cascaded. Every right hand grasped a missile. It was to be a rather deadly game of "coconut-shies"—and the Grims-laders were keen and ready for it.

The sharp, shrill, savage voice of Captain Luz was heard, ordering the blacks to the attack. From the buzz of voices and the heavy splashing, the Grims-laders could guess that almost the whole crew of the schooner had gathered there. Strong as the position was, only a determined defence could hold it against fifteen or twenty brawny enemies.

Up from the rocks jutting in the falling water came a fuzzy head, and a pair of fierce eyes rolled and gleamed. Dr. Sparshott's hand shot forward, a crash, and the black man went over backwards, falling into the water. Wild yelling and scrambling and splashing below told that he had swept away two or three others in his fall.

But head after head rose to view, the blacks clambering through the falling water as active as monkeys.

"Go it!" yelled Ginger Rawlinson.

Crash! Bang! Crash! Whiz! Crash! Crowded on the ledge high above the water, the Grims-laders pelted the clambering enemy with jagged rocks. Head after head disappeared as the blacks went tumbling backwards. Only one dodged the rapid missiles and plunged into the pool above the fall and turned on the Grims-laders, knife in hand, snarling like a savage beast. Dr. Sparshott reached over, cudgel in his grip, and struck, and the black man fell under the crashing blow, stunned. He fell into the waterfall, and was swept over and down. Yells and howls came from below, and the crack-crack of a revolver, as Captain Luz fired at the rock wall over the ledge, in the hope that a ricocheting bullet might strike the de-

fenders. Glancing lead grazed Jim Dainty's cheek, drawing a streak of crimson.

Dr. Sparshott grasped the big boulder on which he had been sitting that morning. It weighed a good hundredweight. He lifted it in his powerful arms and hurled it into the falling water. The juniors caught their breath.

"My giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger. "If they get that on their nappers —"

There was a terrible crash below as the huge boulder landed. Yells and screams of terror followed, and the sound of splashing feet in rapid retreat. The yelling voice of Captain Luz died away amid the yelling of the blacks, and the enemy were gone.

"Grimslade," drawled Dr. Sparshott, "wins the first round!"

CHAPTER 29.

The Cornered Castaways!

ANOTHER bullet whizzed up over the dashing spray of the waterfall, spattered on the high, rocky wall of the ravine, and dropped into the stream above the fall. The report of the rifle followed, thundering back in a thousand echoes from the woods of Castaway Island with startling clearness.

Fritz Splitz, the fat German junior of Grimslade School, gave a squeal of terror, and the other fellows chuckled. Through the long, hot hours of the tropical day the rifle had rung at intervals, sending lead whizzing up into the ravine that split the hillside. And every time a bullet spattered, there was a squeal from Fatty Fritz.

For the first time since the Grimsladers had been cast away Fatty Fritz had not gone to sleep in the heat of the day. The crack of the rifle had kept him awake.

It was hot in the ravine, the sun streaming down from a cloudless sky. But Jim Dainty & Co. were not worry-

ing about that. They had held their own, so far, against the enemies who had landed on Castaway Island, and they were full of confidence. Only on the clear-cut face of Dr. Samuel Sparshott, headmaster of Grimslade, was there a shadow of grim thought. Standing at the mouth of the cavern on the rocky shelf beside the rippling stream, Sammy Sparshott looked up the steep, winding ravine towards the higher slopes of the hill. From below the enemy could not come—the waterfall and the rocks hurled from above had driven them back.

But it was in Sammy's mind that Captain Luz and his black crew might find their way over the wooded, rugged slopes of the great hill, and descend the ravine from above. In which case the position of the Grimsladers was hopeless. And he suspected that the sniping from below the waterfall was designed to draw the attention of the castaways from an attack from another direction.

Dr. Sparshott stepped into the cave-mouth at last, leaving the juniors on the watch. The cavern was narrow at the opening, hardly three or four feet wide, but it widened farther on. Its depth could not be calculated. It seemed to extend deep into the solid hill, lost in blackness.

Squatted on the rugged floor, leaning against the rock, was Ezra Sarson, the desperate rascal who had scuttled the Spindrift. Bound hand and foot, the ruffian was a prisoner in the hands of the Grimsladers. He scowled blackly at the tall, athletic young man who was headmaster of Grimslade, in far-off England, little as he looked like a schoolmaster now. Sammy stood looking down on him thoughtfully.

"I guess you ain't going to let me starve, dog-gone you!" muttered Ezra.

"Rations are short," said Dr. Sparshott. "Most of our stores have been taken by the rascals who landed from the schooner in the bay. I have six schoolboys in my charge, and I have to

think of them first. There is nothing for you, my man."

Ezra Sarson wriggled in his bonds.

"But I shall not let you starve," went on Dr. Sparshott. "Neither can I knock you on the head, as you deserve. The alternative is to set you free."

The 'Frisco ruffian's eyes glittered. The bitter hatred in his look showed what use he was likely to make of his freedom.

"You are aware," said Sammy, "that a schooner has put in at this island, and that her captain and crew have treated us as enemies. From talk I have heard among them, it seems that you, Sarson, are an old acquaintance of the leader, Captain Luz, a half-white man from, I think, Martinique."

"I guess he's an old shipmate," said Ezra. "We was in the rum-running together once."

"Yes, he looks like a rum-runner," agreed Sammy. "But it seems that he has visited this lonely island in the hope of unearthing a treasure here. Probably you have heard of Christophe, who was king of Hayti a hundred years ago, and whose fabulous treasures have never been found. Captain Luz fancies that that treasure, or part of it, was hidden on this lonely island by a man whom he called the Black Marquis, at the order of King Christophe."

"I reckon it's like enough, too," Ezra muttered. "Everybody in the West Indies knows that the gol-darned nigger, Christophe, was always afraid that the French would take Hayti back from him. He sent a million pounds to London to keep it safe from the French. He had ten times as much, I reckon, though where he hid it no man knows. Here, as like as not. It's no secret that the Black Marquis sailed from Hayti with a ship stacked with gold." The scuttler's eyes were gleaming with greed. "By hokey! If Cap'n Luz has a clue to where the Marquis of Marmalade landed that cargo—"

"Who?" ejaculated Sammy.

"That was his title in Hayti—the Black Marquis," grinned Ezra. "The

Marquis of Marmalade. They got dog-goned queer titles in that black island. I'll tell a man! I guess I've heard of a Duke of Lemonade there when I was at Port-au-Prince. Yep!"

Dr. Sparshott grinned. But his face became serious again at once.

"Well, whether the Marquis of Marmalade landed treasure on this island or not, does not concern me," he said. "I have no desire to touch it. Finding us here, Captain Luz believed that we were rival treasure-seekers, and that is why he is seeking our lives. As he turns out to be a friend of yours, you can go to him in safety—"

"You bet!"

"You, at least, know perfectly well that we are here because we were shipwrecked," said Dr. Sparshott. "You can tell him that we know nothing of King Christophe's treasure, and want to know nothing. All we want is to be left alone, and Captain Luz can search for his treasure as long as he likes without interference from me. You will tell him so."

"I guess I'll tell him if you let me loose," said Ezra.

Dr. Sparshott stooped over the ruffian and released him from his bonds. Sarson rose and stretched his cramped limbs. Taking him by the arm, Dr. Sparshott led him from the cave on to the narrow rocky bank of the stream. Fritz Splitz jumped up and backed away in a great hurry at the sight of Ezra Sarson a free man. The other juniors stared at him curiously.

"Letting him go, sir?" asked Jim Dainty.

"We have no food for him, and he can tell those scoundrels yonder the truth about our presence on this island," said Sammy Sparshott briefly. "You had better go up the ravine, Sarson. Probably you will meet your friends in that direction."

"I guess it's easier going down to the beach," growled Sarson.

"No doubt, but there is a sniper down below, who may take you for one of us."

"I reckon I'll chance it," sneered the ruffian.

Sammy shrugged his shoulders.

Sarson tramped along the rocky ledge towards the waterfall. It was the last fall of the tumbling mountain stream, and a plunge down the falling water was a short cut to the beach of Castaway Island.

"My giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger Rawlinson. "He's asking for it!"

Sarson reached the end of the rocky shelf over the cascade. He stared over into the lower stream.

Crack! The rifle below rang sharply.

The ruffian sprang back with a yell as the hat spun on his head, struck by a bullet from the sniper below. A thin stream of red ran down his coppery cheek, where the bullet had grazed. Ezra clapped his hand to the cut with a roar of rage. He came tramping back up the ravine.

"Try the other way—what?" smiled Dr. Sparshott.

With only a savage scowl for reply, Ezra tramped on up the steep ravine. At a little distance above the cave he had to step into the water, which filled the ravine above from side to side. He tramped and splashed his way upward through shallow water. He reached a turn of the ravine, which, in another moment would have hidden him from sight. There he turned round and glared back at the Grimsladers before the cave. His brawny fist was shaken savagely at the group.

"You wait a piece!" he roared. "I'm going to find friends, I reckon, and I won't be long in comin' back for you! I guess you can say your prayers, Sam Sparshott. You won't see another sunset!"

"That is the gratitude I expected," remarked Dr. Sparshott. "But we could not take his life; and one more rascal among so many will make little difference. And Captain Luz will at least learn the truth from him, and may leave us in peace."

"Look out!" yelled Dick Dawson.

The ruffian, high up in the ravine, was stooping, evidently to catch up one of the loose rocks in the stream.

"Ach! Tat peast and a prute vill preak us te head!" yelled Fritz Splitz. And the fat German darted into the shelter of the cave.

Jim Dainty's eyes gleamed. He grabbed up a jagged lump of rock and took aim. Ezra groped in the running water, found at last what he sought, and rose with a heavy stone in his hand. As he rose, Jim Dainty pitched his rock, as surely and unerringly as he had ever bowled a cricket ball on Little Side at Grimslade.

Crash! The missile landed on the ruffian's chest, even as his arm rose to throw, and he pitched over backwards into the stream.

"Weil bowled!" grinned Sammy Sparshott.

With a wild splashing and spluttering, Ezra Sarson scrambled out of the water, and disappeared beyond the winding curve of the ravine. "Heaving rocks" was a game that two could play at, and the ruffian was anxious to get out of range. He disappeared from sight, a whizzing rock from Ginger Rawlinson crashing just behind him as he vanished.

CHAPTER 30.

The Skeleton in the Cave!

"MEIN gootness! I vas hungry!" "Shut up, you Boche bloater!"

"Peastly prute!" moaned Fritz Splitz. "I vas so hungry as neffer vas before! I tink tat I die!"

"The sooner the quicker!" said Streaky Bacon heartlessly.

"I wish tat I vas pack in Chermany."

"Same here!" said Sandy Bean. "Germany's more than welcome to you. Now shut up!"

"Peast and a prute! I tink—" Dr. Sparshott glanced round.

"Is that Splitz grouching?" he asked. "Dainty, I have instructed you to kick

Splitz whenever he grouses. Kindly understand that I expect my orders to be obeyed here, just as if we were at Grimslade School."

"Sorry, sir—here goes!"

Thud!

"Ach! Whoop!" roared Fritz Splitz, as Jim Dainty obeyed his headmaster's instructions. "Mein gootness! Vy for you pang me on mein trousers, peast and prutal pounder? I would peat you till you pellow like a pull, only I was so weak mit hunger—"

Thud!—came Ginger Rawlinson's boot. And the hungry Fritz, yelling, retreated up the cave.

There was no doubt that Fritz was hungry. He was always hungry, even when there was plenty of provender. Now there was far from plenty.

The other fellows were hungry, too. But there was little use in grouching; besides, Grimslade never grouched!

The hut on the beach, built with so much labour by the Grimslade castaways, was in the hands of the schooner's crew. Most of the stores in it had been captured. Sammy Sparshott had succeeded in getting away with one rucksack crammed with provisions. But that was all, and there were seven mouths to feed.

The juniors had been able to gather bunches of bananas and eatable plants, and a few coconuts, to eke out the supplies. Sammy had placed the party on the strictest rations. When the present supply was exhausted, there was no guessing where the next was to come from.

Now that they knew that their headmaster looked for an attack from the upper end of the ravine, the juniors watched in that direction rather anxiously. More than an hour had elapsed since Ezra Sarson had gone, and there was no sign of the enemy yet. But the attack, if it came, could not be stopped, that was certain, with no weapons but sticks and stones, against a crew of armed ruffians. Jim Dainty & Co. wondered what Sammy was going to do. Somehow, they felt

that their headmaster would pull them through.

"Dainty!" barked Sammy suddenly.

"Yes, sir!"

Jim ran up.

"Stand here, in the cave—looking up the cave. Now, do you feel a wind?"

"Yes, sir," said Jim, after a moment or two. "It's very faint, but I can feel it. On my face."

"I thought I was not mistaken," said Dr. Sparshott. "This cave has another outlet. The mountain was volcanic in former days, and no doubt has a hundred such fissures. Fill your bottles, cans, everything you have that will contain water! We are going up the cave."

Every possible receptacle of water was filled at the stream. Then the Grimsladers took a last, deep drink of the cool, pure water that rippled by at their feet. Dr. Sparshott lighted the lantern. He cast a long look up the ravine. If the enemy were coming, they had not yet appeared. But in Sammy's mind, at least, there was no doubt that they would come. He signed to the juniors to enter the cave, and followed them.

For a short distance a twilight reigned in the cavern; beyond that, all was blackness. Sammy flashed the lantern-light on the walls of rough rock—a dark basalt, mingled here and there with iron-hard lava, which proved that in the long-ago the mountain had been the sport of volcanic outbreaks. There was no sign of activity about it now, however, for which Jim Dainty & Co. were duly thankful.

Fritz Splitz blinked back with his saucer-eyes uneasily at the narrowing patch of daylight at the cavern-mouth. It narrowed and narrowed, and was lost at last as the adventurers penetrated farther into the mountain.

"Ach! Mein gootness, Tainty!" murmured Fritz, holding on to Jim's arm. "Suppose tat tere is anudder eruption while tat ve are here?"

"Shut up, ass!" snapped Jim.

"Suppose we dumble into some pot-temless bit?" murmured Fritz. "Sup-

pose te mountain fall in on our heads and crush us as flat as neffer vas! Suppose— Mein goodness! Vat vas tat?"

A deep and hollow roar echoed along the depths of the cavern. The juniors came to an involuntary halt, looking about them with startled eyes.

"It is vun earthquake!" howled Fritz. "Safe me! Ach! Safe me!"

"Silence!" barked Dr. Sparshott.

The hollow roar came again, awakening a thousand echoes. The juniors, looking at Sammy in the glimmer of the lantern, detected a faint smile on his sun-bronzed face.

"What is it, sir?" asked Jim.

"Merely a shout?" drawled Dr. Sparshott. "Our enemies, as I expected, have descended the ravine and are now at the mouth of the cave. Probably they are disappointed to find us gone."

Again and again came the echoing boom behind the castaways. The enemy were shouting to one another as they searched the cave; or perhaps shouting threats after the fugitives. The hollow cave repeated the noise with an effect of thunder.

The Grimsladers marched on, picking their way over the rough and broken rocks of the cavern floor. Here and there fissures opened at their feet, and had to be stepped or jumped over. It seemed to them that the air grew fresher as they advanced. But there was no glimmer of daylight. Suddenly Fritz Splitz stumbled and gave a howl, and the party halted again.

"Ach! I fall mit meinself ofer somethings!" gasped Fritz. "Mein goodness! It is something white tat I see. Vat is tat?"

Sammy Sparshott flashed the light at the fat German. Fritz was sprawling over a startling object that lay on the cavern floor. As the light gleamed on it, Fritz gave a yell of terror, and leapt away from a grinning skull. Jim Dahny felt his heart leap.

"A skeleton!" he wanted.

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger, under his breath. "We're not the first to come this way!"

With pale and startled faces, the schoolboys looked at the grisly object stretched on the cavern floor. It was a complete skeleton, glistening white in the rays of the lantern. Dr. Sparshott's brow was grim. Save for the light from the lantern, all round them was pitchy black, and in that patch of light the skeleton glistened, and the skull grinned hideously.

"A negro's skull," said Dr. Sparshott quietly. "The formation places that beyond doubt."

"But who—what—" stammered Jim.

"Ach! Ve vas all tead!" moaned Fritz.

"You need have no fear of a skeleton, Splitz—dead for more than a century probably," said Dr. Sparshott. "I think, my boys, that this discovery makes it probable that Captain Luz is on the right track in looking for King Christophe's lost treasure on this lonely island."

"Oh!" gasped Jim. "This poor chap was one of the black men who brought it from Hayti."

"It seems probable!" said Dr. Sparshott. "A man would hardly penetrate so far into this desolate cavern without a reason. And—he perished here!"

"But why?"

"Perhaps to keep the secret of the treasure! Probably the Black Marquis had his orders to take every care!" said Sammy grimly.

"But the treasure may be here, then!" exclaimed Sandy Bean, glancing round into the blackness. "My hat! If we could get hold of it——"

"Our present business, Bean, is to see that the treasure-seekers do not get hold of us!" said Dr. Sparshott. "Let us go on!"

Smash! A bullet from the darkness behind crashed on the lantern in Dr. Sparshott's hand. The report of the rifle followed, rolling in thundering echoes through the hollows of the mountains. The light was instantly extinguished, and the Grimsladers stood in utter darkness.

CHAPTER 31.

A Fight in the Dark!

DR. SPARSHOTT gritted his teeth. The schoolboys caught their breath, and Fritz Splitz gave a startled squeal. Sammy's voice rang sharply:

"Keep together! Do not move! If we separate, all is lost!"

"Yes, sir!" breathed Jim.

"You will take hold of my rucksack, Dainty! Each of you take hold of another's belt. Do not let go for one moment. Now, I will call the roll, and each of you will answer in turn."

There was a shuffling sound in the darkness, as the juniors formed in Indian file, Jim taking hold of the headmaster's rucksack, the other fellows holding on, each to the belt of the fellow in front of him.

As calmly as if he were calling the school roll in Big Hall at Grimslade, Dr. Sparshott rapped out the names, and each of the juniors answered in turn "Adsum," as if they had been standing in the old school hall. Voice after voice answered from the dense darkness—five of them, clear and steady, Fritz' in a gurgling wail.

"Keep hold, and follow!" said Sammy Sparshott, and he marched on again, groping along the rugged wall of the cavern for a guide, with one hand, and feeling his way with a stick in the other, wary of pitfalls.

Another shot and another rang from the darkness, thundering with echoes. But now that the light was gone, the enemy had no mark, and the lead spattered harmlessly. Looking back, the juniors saw a fluttering, dancing glare of ruddy light far behind. It came from a torch. The enemy had not come provided with lanterns. But the light did not reach anywhere near the fugitives. There was no doubt, however, that the pursuit would gain ground, as the Grimsladers, groping in blackness, had to feel every step of the way.

Shouting voices woke the echoes, and again and again a random shot rang.

Among the voices, as they drew nearer, Dr. Sparshott fancied that he could recognise the deep, savage voice of Ezra Sarson, and the shrill tones of Captain Luz.

Suddenly the torch came to a standstill, and there was an excited buzz of voices. The pursuit had halted.

"They've stopped!" breathed Dick Dawson.

"They have found the skeleton!" said Dr. Sparshott quietly. "It may delay them a few minutes, and every minute is precious. Keep on."

The headmaster of Grimslade tramped on, tapping as he went with the stick. Behind him the juniors marched in silence, only Fritz' gasping heard in the darkness.

For several long minutes the pursuit remained at a standstill, while the schooner's crew gathered, jabbering with excitement, round the skeleton of the man who had sailed from Hayti long ago with the emissary of King Christophe. But it was resumed, and the torchlight gleamed closer and closer behind the schoolboys.

Dr. Sparshott looked back grimly.

"There is only one torch!" he murmured. "Captain Luz did not waste time before following us. Dainty, take the lead and keep on, keeping in touch with the right hand wall of the cavern. Do not miss it."

"Yes, sir!" said Jim quietly. He asked no questions; the Head of Grimslade was not a man to be questioned. Evidently some desperate scheme was working in Sammy's mind to cover the retreat of the boys in his charge.

With Dainty in the lead, the file groped on. Dr. Sparshott vanished from sound as well as sight. With anxious hearts, but obedient to their headmaster's command, the juniors marched on. When they glanced back they saw the ruddy light of the torch advancing up the tunnel-like cave, nearer, and nearer, but they saw nothing of Dr. Sparshott between them and the light. It seemed as if the headmaster of Grim-

slade had disappeared into the solid rock.

As a matter of fact, he had! Sammy's athletic figure was packed into a deep cleft in the cavern wall, screening him from the sight of the enemy as they came on. Showing hardly an eyelid round the edge of the rough rock, he watched them coming.

Yap, the brawny mulatto, tramped ahead, holding up the glowing torch. Following him came Captain Luz, in his dingy white drill, and Ezra Sarson, gaunt and haggard and savage, each with a weapon in his hand. Behind were more than a dozen of the black crew of the schooner. Closer and closer they came to the cleft which hid the headmaster of Grimslade, and their voice fell clearly on his ears.

"Shoot at sight!" he heard the 'Frisco ruffian mutter. "I'm telling you, that guy Sparshott is a demon, and if he gets a chance at you with a rock—"

"Morbleu! Do I not know it?" snapped Captain Luz. "Twice already he has defeated me, and he is but a *maitre d'ecole*—a schoolmaster, *par-dieu!* I begin to believe that he told me the truth—that he came not for the treasure. But, *morbleu*, he knows of it now, and he has seen the *squelette*—the skeleton that we have seen! He knows too much, *mon ami!*"

"I'll say that if he lives, you'll never get the treasure lifted off this island," said Ezra.

"Content yourself, *mon ami*. He will not live long!" said Captain Luz. "We gain on them, and as soon as the light falls on Monsieur Sparshott, he is a dead man!"

Sammy Sparshott's jaw set hard. He had hoped that the man from Martinique would leave the castaways in peace when he learned that they were not his rivals for the treasure of King Christophe. Such as it was, that hope was gone now. Sammy Sparshott's grip closed hard on his heavy cudgel. The mulatto carrying the torch, six or seven feet ahead of the whites, was

almost abreast of the cleft in the cavern-wall. Dr. Sparshott waited.

The mulatto came on. His burly black figure passed before the eyes of the headmaster of Grimslade. He was looking straight before him, up the tunnel-like cavern, but with the tail of his eye, as it were, he spotted the crouching figure in the cleft. Even as he spotted it, Dr. Sparshott was upon him. The heavy cudgel crashed on the mulatto's thick skull, stretching him senseless.

The torch went to the floor spluttering, and Sammy Sparshott trampled on it fiercely. There was a yell from Captain Luz and his crew as they realised that one, at least, of the fugitives had stayed to meet the pursuit.

Crack, crack! rang two revolvers at once, but the lead sang over Sammy Sparshott as he threw himself down, crushing out the last glimmer of the torch with his broad chest. Black darkness engulfed the whole party; darkness so thick that it could almost be felt.

Sammy Sparshott was on his feet in a twinkling. With uplifted cudgel, he rushed at the halted crowd of enraged ruffians.

Crash! Crash! Crash! rang the blows of the cudgel, right and left, and fearful yells answered.

Dr. Sparshott heard the panting yell of Sarson as he went over under one of the crashing blows, a shriek from Captain Luz as he caught another, and fell. The next moment Dr. Sparshott was among the startled negroes, slashing right and left with all his beef in every blow.

Crack! Crack! came from Captain Luz' revolver, as the man from Martinique raised himself on an elbow, and fired recklessly in the darkness. A fearful cry followed the firing; but it did not come from Dr. Sparshott. One of the blacks had gone down under the random bullets.

The flash of the revolver guided Dr. Sparshott. His cudgel struck again, and the captain of the *Courlis* rolled over with a groan. The negroes were yelling and howling, some of them run-

ning, some striking at one another in the dark, in the belief that they were striking at an enemy.

It was a scene of the wildest confusion, dominated by the headmaster of Grimslade, who at least knew that when he landed a blow, he landed it on an enemy. He heard the hoarse voice of Ezra Sarson.

"A light! Dog-gone you, a light! Who's got matches? A light!"

A match scratched and flickered. It went out again as a crashing blow stretched the man who held it on the cavern floor. But the momentary glimmer brought a shot from Sarson; a hurried shot which, however, went near enough for Sammy Sparshott to feel the wind of it.

The headmaster of Grimslade groped for the torch, found it, and ran up the cavern.

The hoarse voice of Ezra Sarson shouted again and again for a light. Matches scratched, but Sammy Sparshott was beyond the reach of their glimmer. Ezra Sarson hunted savagely for the torch, to re-light it; but the torch was in Dr. Sparshott's hand as he groped away up the cavern. The ruffian's yell of fury boomed behind him as he went.

The uproar died in the darkness behind Dr. Sparshott. If the enemy were still pursuing, they had to pursue at a snail's pace, by the glimmer of matches. Sammy groped on along the cavern wall, till he heard the sound of footsteps in advance of him, and called.

"Here we are, sir!" called back Jim Dainty.

"My giddy goloshes! You've stopped them, sir?" asked Ginger.

"I think so," said Sammy cheerfully. "At all events, they will not gain on us now! March!"

Taking the lead once more, Dr. Sparshott led on. Winding along the rugged wall of the cavern, the Grimsladers penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of the island mountain. There was silence behind them now; it was plain that the pursuit, for the

present at least, had ceased. There was a sudden yell from Fritz Splitz.

"Vat is tat? I see somethings——"

"That," said Dr. Sparshott calmly, "is daylight!" Ahead of the Grimsladers was a glimmer in the gloom. "Keep on, my boys; we are close to the outlet now."

"Hurrah!"

And the Grimsladers marched cheerily on, the patch of daylight far ahead growing larger and broader, lighter and brighter; till at last the darkness of the cavern was left behind, and they stood once more in tropical sunshine.

CHAPTER 32.

Sammy Knows How!

"DAYLIGHT at last!" exclaimed Jim Dainty.

"Mein gootness! Tat is goot! But I was derribly dired!" gasped Fritz Splitz.

"Take care!" barked Dr. Samuel Sparshott.

Brilliant sunshine streamed down on Castaway Island. The Grimslade castaways blinked in the bright sunlight as they emerged from the deep darkness of the cavern in the island hill.

Before their eyes stretched the wide Atlantic, rolling blue in the sunshine; the beach where their hut was built, and the wide bay where the schooner Courlis rode at anchor. Glad enough were Jim Dainty & Co. to get out of the gloom of the cavern into the bright daylight again.

Dainty and Dawson, Ginger and Bacon and Bean, stood looking down at the schooner in the bay. Fritz von Splitz dropped on a lava rock and rested his podgy limbs, mopping the perspiration from his fat brow and grunting. Dr. Samuel Sparshott stood by the outlet of the cave, looking back into the gloomy depths and listening.

From the hollow of the inland mountain came faint, echoing sounds, which told that Captain Luz and his crew were coming, groping through the

tunnel-like cave after the Grimsladers. Sammy Sparshott's face was set and grim. The headmaster of Grimslade had saved the six schoolboys in his charge so far. But the enemy were at hand.

"My giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger Rawlinson. "That's the schooner those fellows came in, you fellows. They've spotted us—look!"

Three or four blacks had been left on the schooner. Far off, toy-like in the distance, the juniors could see them crowding to the rail and staring up at the mountainside. They could make out the excited gesticulations of the blacks as they pointed to the hill and jabbered to one another.

"They've spotted us from the ship, sir!" said Streaky Bacon.

Dr. Sparshott glanced round for a moment.

"Oh! Quite!" He nodded. "Our immediate concern, however, is with the crew who are following us through the cavern."

"Ach! Ve vas all tead!" groaned Fritz Splitz. "Neffter more shall I go pack to mein pelofed Chermamy!"

"Germany will be in luck, then!" remarked Ginger.

"Peastly prute!" moaned Fritz. "I vish tat I neffer gum on tat peastly holiday guise! I vish— Ach! Leaf off to pang mein head, you peast and a prutal pounder!" roared the fat Rhineland.

"Grimslade never grouses!" said Ginger. "Every time you grouse you get it in the neck."

Fritz rubbed his bullet head and shut up.

"Lend a hand here," said Dr. Sparshott, after a careful survey of the outlet of the cave. "All hands! We're in luck!"

The outlet of the cave was hardly three feet wide, hardly five feet high; the castaways had had to stoop their heads to emerge. Close at hand was a great rugged mass of lava, weighing a good many hundredweight.

Dr. Sparshott grasped it with his

strong, sinewy hands, but even his strength was not equal to shifting it. The juniors backed him up with willing hands. The great rock stirred on its base, and heaved towards the dark outlet of the cave. Panting and perspiring with the exertion, the Grimsladers put all their beef into it.

Crack! came from the cavern. It was the report of a revolver. The pursuers, evidently, had seen daylight ahead, and either Captain Luz or Ezra Sarson had loosed off a shot.

The report boomed like thunder in the hollows of the mountain, and the whizzing bullet chipped the rock as the Grimsladers rolled it. Glancing from the rock, it twirled the hat on Sammy Sparshott's head, cutting the brim. The headmaster of Grimslade did not even seem to notice it. He heaved at the great rock with all his strength.

"Splitz!" His eye glittered round at the fat German. "Line up here! You slacking young rascal—"

"Ach! I vas so derribly dired!"

"Kick him, Dainty!"

"Yaroooooop!"

Fritz found that he was not too tired to lend a hand. He rolled up and put his weight into the pushing. That little added weight worked the oracle, and the great rock rolled over and crashed at the entrance of the cave. The opening was closed, save for a space of about six inches at the top. The panting juniors chuckled breathlessly.

"I jolly well knew that Sammy would put paid to them!" murmured Dick Dawson.

"Pile up some more rocks," said Dr. Sparshott. "We cannot make too sure."

"Yes, rather, sir!"

Footsteps and voices could now clearly be heard within the narrow cave. With willing hands the juniors piled up the loose boulders round the great lava rock that closed the outlet. In a very few minutes a couple of tons of rock barred the way of the desperadoes in the cave.

It was only in time; for they were at the outlet now.

"Morbleu!" It was the voice of Cap-

tain Luz, the treasure-hunter from Martinique. "Voilà! C'est ferme! Name of a name, they are gone, but there is not room for a ship's rat to pass."

"I guess they've shifted a rock to stop us!" came the hoarse voice of Ezra Sarson. "Get your niggers to shove it clear."

Dr. Sparshott smiled grimly. All the black crew of the Courlis could never have shifted the obstruction at the outlet of the mountain cave. The Grimsladers heard Captain Luz' shrill voice snarling orders, and the panting of the negroes as they shoved and heaved at the mass of rock within the cave. But it did not stir! It did not even shake.

"My giddy goloshes! We've jolly well stopped that badger's hole!" chuckled Ginger.

Crack! came a pistol shot from the cave. The bullet whizzed out through the narrow space that remained open. But the castaways were standing well back from the line of fire, and the lead whizzed away seaward, to drop harmlessly into the Atlantic. Following the shot came the hoarse shout of Sarson.

"Sam Sparshott, you deg-goned schoolmaster, you're there, I guess."

"Here!" answered Dr. Sparshott coolly.

Jim Dainty picked up a lump of lava, stepped towards the little opening, and slung it in, jumping back quickly. There was a yell from within the cave. Evidently the missile had found Ezra.

"Good shot!" said Sammy Sparshott. "But keep back—"

"Allons!" It was the shrill voice of Captain Luz. "Nom d'un nom! Laissez moi passer, vous Sarson! Give me room!"

From the little space left above the lava rock a hand emerged, with a revolver in it. By stretching his arm to its fullest extent, the captain of the Courlis was able to get his hand out into the open air. He could see nothing of the castaways, and could only shoot at the wildest random; but he pulled the trigger, and a bullet sang away in the sunshine.

Dr. Sparshott stepped quietly up,

reached out, and suddenly grasped the revolver by the barrel, jerking it sharply away. There was a startled howl from the man from Martinique.

"Thanks!" said Dr. Sparshott cheerfully, as he stepped back with the revolver in his grasp.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Grimsladers; and even Fritz Splitz gave a fat chuckle.

"Name of a name!" came a yell of fury from the man in the cave. The empty hand disappeared.

Dr. Sparshott coolly examined his prize.

"Five chambers are still loaded," he remarked. "I have five shots here, you rascals. I give you one minute to run, before I begin firing into the cave!"

"Morbieu!"

"I guess we gotter beat it!" gasped Ezra Sarson.

There was a scampering of feet within. Packed in the narrow cave, the enemy were at the mercy of firing from the opening. They realised it promptly, and retreated. Running, stumbling, falling over one another in the darkness, Captain Luz and his crew beat a prompt retreat.

"Interval for tea!" said Dr. Sparshott calmly. "We're ahead on the first innings."

CHAPTER 33.

Holding the Fort!

"WE can jolly well stall them off!" said Ginger Rawlinson confidently.

"Now Sammy's got a gun!" remarked Jim Dainty.

"What-ho!" chuckled Ginger. "Member old Sammy popping on the range at Grimslade? All bulls! No end of luck, bagging that gun!"

Dr. Samuel Sparshott himself was undoubtedly bucked by the possession of the "gun." It was a big Navy revolver, with five cartridges unspent—which meant five lives in Sammy's hand, if it came to the pinch. All Grimslade School knew that Sammy was a crack shot.

The Head of Grimslade examined it carefully, almost lovingly, and rubbed clean the butt, which bore the marks of Captain Luz' unwashed, grubby fingers. With the revolver sticking in his belt, Sammy felt a new man, and the cast-away schoolboys certainly felt a good deal more secure.

Hours had passed since the pursuers had scampered away through the cavern. They were not likely to attempt to come that way again; but that they would come another way was a certainty.

In Dr. Sparshott, Captain Luz saw a rival seeker of the treasure which the "Marquis of Marmalade" had buried on the lonely island a hundred years and more ago, at the order of the black king of Hayti. And if he had thought of giving the Grimsladers a rest, their bitter enemy, Ezra Sarson, was there to urge him on.

The castaways had taken a meal—Fritz Splitz groaning dismally over the short rations—but Dr. Sparshott had given only a few minutes to it. He was losing no time in preparing for the next attack.

With a keen eye, the Head of Grimslade picked out a strong position for defence. High up on the rocky hillside, above the belt of jungle, was a small plateau, approached by steep and rugged slopes. There the hunted castaways pitched their camp. It was a difficult spot for the enemy to reach, with the castaways above pitching down rocks, and Sammy with a revolver in his hand.

That a desperate and determined attack, with all the force from the schooner, would carry it, was only too likely; but the enemy would have to pay high for victory—higher than they were likely to feel inclined to pay. During the hot hours of the afternoon the juniors piled up boulders to roll down on the enemy, after which they rested in what shade they could find, and waited.

From the high plateau they had a full view of the jungle below, the beach

beyond, the schooner riding in the bay, and the limitless ocean. More than once Dr. Sparshott scanned the wide blue Atlantic through his field-glasses, in the faint hope of picking up a sail or the smoke of a steamer.

But the hope was very faint. The castaways had already been long enough on the solitary island to realise that it was far out of the track of ships. Only some fancied clue to the lost treasure of King Christophe had brought the Courlis there.

Many times faces stared up from the beach, as well as from the schooner, and once Dr. Sparshott detected a telescope turned on the plateau. Captain Luz knew where to lay his hands on the castaways; they were in view against the rocky background of the hillside.

Many times a rifle-shot had hummed up from the beach, whizzing over the green, thick jungle, and clattering on the rocks, but the range was too long for good shooting. If the struggle was to be decided, it had to be decided at close quarters.

It was weary waiting, and the chums of Grimslade School found themselves wishing that the enemy would get on with it.

"If we give them a jolly good whoping, they might get fed-up, and clear off in the schooner!" Streaky Bacon remarked hopefully. "I'd be jolly glad to see the last of them, and get back to our hut. My word it's hot!"

It was hot—uncommonly hot even for a tropical island. Never, since they had landed on that lonely shore, had the Grimslader's found the heat so intense, so oppressive, and breathless. Not a whisper of wind came, and the sea was like a glassy pond, rolling heavily with an oily swell. The sun, sloping to the west, burned like a ball of fire.

Ocean and island seemed strangely still, as if Nature was hushed. The juniors saw their headmaster look at the southern sky several times, with a puckered brow.

"Weather breaking, sir?" asked Jim at last.

"I fancy so, my boy," answered Dr. Sparshott. "From what I know of these seas, I think that a storm may not be far off."

"Jolly glad if it breaks, if it brings the wind with it!" groaned Sandy Bean, mopping a stream of perspiration from a burning brow.

Dr. Sparshott smiled faintly.

"A West Indian hurricane is no light matter," he said. "You remember the storm in which the Spindrift was wrecked? However, it may pass without touching this island—we must hope so."

"Ach! I should like to vind to plow!" gasped Fritz. "I vas burning mit heat, and I tink tat I tie!"

"On guard!" rapped Dr. Sparshott suddenly.

Jim Dainty & Co. jumped up, ready and active, in spite of the overpowering heat. Fritz did not jump. There was hardly a jump left in Fatty Fritz. He hugged the shade of a rock, mopped his fat brow and moaned. The other fellows left him to it. Fritz was not much use in a scrap, anyhow.

A swaying in the jungle below told that the enemy were advancing. Captain Luz had left it till late in the afternoon, till the fiercest heat of the tropical day should be over. It was still fearfully hot; but the enemy were waiting no longer.

From the shadows of the jungle figure after figure emerged on the open, rocky hillside—Captain Luz and Ezra Sarson, and black man after black man. They scattered among the rocks and the patches of bush, taking advantage of all the cover afforded by the rugged, broken hillside. Evidently Captain Luz had not forgotten that one of the castaways now had a firearm.

"Keep in cover!" barked Sammy, as a rifle rang out, and a bullet sang over the little plateau. The lead crashed on the high rocks behind the camp, and dropped, spent. There was a fearful yell:

"Ach! Gootness! I vas lead! Yarooooop!"

"Splitz!" exclaimed Sammy. Kneeling by a rock, his eyes on the enemy, the revolver in his hand, Sammy did not turn his head. "Look to him, Dainty—see if he is hurt!"

"Yaroooooh! I vas killed!" yelled Fritz. "Mein head is plown off all in pieces, and I vas shot all ofer! I tink tat I die!"

Jim Dainty rushed to the boulder that sheltered Fritz from the sun. Fatty Fritz was clasping his little, fat pimple of a nose with both hands, and yelling frantically. Beside him lay a flattened bullet.

"Where are you hurt?" exclaimed Jim.

"I am killed! Mein poko is proken off! I vas have vun pullet in te prain!" gasped Fritz. "Ach! Now I tie, far from mein pelofed Chermany!"

"You—you—you fat, funky, frowsy, footling freak!" roared Jim. "You're not hurt! You flabby, funky fathead!"

"Is he all right?" barked Sammy.

"Yes, sir! It was only the spent ball dropped from the cliff and tapped his silly nose."

"Is his nose hurt?"

"No!"

"Hurt it, then!"

"Oh! Yes, rather!"

"Yaroooo!" roared Fritz, as Jim Dainty promptly punched his nose. "Peast and a prute! Bunch me not te poko, tat is alretty proken pefore! Whoop!"

Leaving Fritz roaring—with some real damage to his nose this time—Jim Dainty rejoined the others. Creeping from rock to rock and from bush to bush, the enemy were coming up the hillside in a scattered line.

Every fellow on the plateau had a rock in his hand now, ready to hurl; but they waited for the word of command from their headmaster. Silent and grim, Sammy watched like a hawk.

When the nearest of the enemy was within fifty feet, Dr. Sparshott's voice rang out like a trumpet.

"Halt! Another step this way, and I shall fire! I warn you that I am not likely to miss!"

"Allez!" came a sharp, shrill yell from Captain Luz. "En avant!"

Black figures leaped from cover, and rushed and scrambled up the hillside. Dr. Sparshott's eye gleamed like cold steel over the revolver, as he took aim.

Crack, crack!

Twice the headmaster of Grimslade fired, and two of the blacks rolled over like rabbits, and went tumbling down the slope. And with a yell of panic, the rest dropped into cover again.

CHAPTER 34.

Fighting For Life!

"E N avant!" came the fierce yell of Captain Luz.

But the schooner's crew did not heed it. That sample of Dr. Sparshott's shooting was enough for them, for the moment, at least. Neither did Ezra Sarson show himself from cover.

From rock and bush, rifles and revolvers cracked out, loosing off a shower of lead, which hummed and buzzed like angry bees over the plateau. Bullets, flattening on the cliff behind the camp, dropped spent, almost like hail, to an accompaniment of terrified yelps from Friedrich von Splitz. Fritz was jumping about like a scared rabbit—the dropping lead had apparently imbued him with new energy.

But the rest of the Grimsladers kept steady. They were in little danger from the shooting, so long as it came from a lower level, and they kept in cover. Amid the crackling of the fire-arms, came the sound of groans of the two wounded blacks, as they crawled away. Even in those desperate moments, the headmaster of Grimslade had not aimed to kill, the blacks had been shot in the leg, disabling them.

Grimly the Head of Grimslade waited and watched. He had three shots left in the revolver, and there were at least

fifteen of the enemy. The lives of the castaways hung on a thread. The groaning died away as the wounded men crawled back to the beach. But the popping of fire-arms went on incessantly.

"My giddy goloshes! The white flag!" ejaculated Ginger Rawlinson suddenly.

A white strip of linen, on the muzzle of a rifle, was lifted from behind a rock. Captain Luz, in his dingy drill, rose into view, his black eyes glinting up at the defenders. He was not twenty feet from the steep edge of the plateau.

"Allons! Show yourself, monsieur le maitre d'ecole!" he shouted. "You will respect the white flag."

"So long as you do not advance, you rascal!" called back Sammy Sparshott. "What do you want?"

"A word with you, schoolmaster!" snarled the man from Martinique. "Ecoutez! Already I have offered you terms to join with me in the search for the treasure of King Christophe, and take a share."

"I know nothing of treasure on this island, as I have told you, and care nothing."

"Bah! You do not trust me! Listen! I know that the treasure is on this island—I have a man in my crew whose grandfather sailed with the Black Marquis from Port-au-Prince. I have seen the skeleton in the cave—it is that of one of the men who buried the gold. You found it before I did! If you have found also the treasure—"

"Nonsense!" barked Dr. Sparshott.

"Your lives are in my hand! Tell me what you know of the treasure, and when I have unearthed it, I will sail in my schooner, and leave you in peace."

"I know nothing of it!" snapped the headmaster of Grimslade. "Sarson, who was wrecked with us, can tell you as much, if he chooses."

"I hold a white flag, and stand here under your fire! Do you not dare to

show yourself and speak?" sneered the man from Martinique.

Dr. Sparshott put his hat on the end of his stick, and pushed it beyond the edge of the boulder that covered him.

Instantly, from another direction, came the crack of a rifle, as Ezra Sarson fired from cover, and the hat spun along the plateau with a bullet-hole through it.

There was a yell of triumph from the half-breed. He had no doubt, for the moment, that Dr. Sparshott's head had been in the hat!

"En avant!" he yelled, and rushed up the slope, tossing aside the treacherous white flag, and drawing his revolver. At the same moment, Sarson leaped up and rushed on, and the whole crew of blacks came clambering and howling to the attack.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Dick Dawson. "Look out!"

Had Dr. Sparshott fallen to that treacherous shot, as the enemy believed, that rush would have carried the plateau; the juniors could never have stopped it. But Sammy Sparshott was not lying dead with a bullet in his brain, as the treacherous rascals believed; he was very much alive, and he proceeded at once to demonstrate that fact.

Crack!

The bark of his revolver was followed by a fearful yell from Captain Luz. With a bullet in his shoulder the man from Martinique went spinning backwards, to crash on the rocks.

Crack! again. Ezra Sarson only dodged down in time, the bullet tearing a strip of skin from the back of his neck as he ducked into cover. At the same moment, a shower of hurling rocks smashed on the rushing blacks, knocking three or four of them right and left.

Back they went again, followed by whizzing rocks, that crashed on them as they dodged. The rush, which had seemed like sweeping all before it, had not lasted a minute. Howls and yells

came from the blacks as they dodged into cover, and only Captain Luz, groaning with the pain of his wound, lay in sight. Dr. Sparshott snapped his teeth.

"One shot wasted!" he growled. "I did not get that scoundrel Sarson! He was too quick for me! But I have one shot left for him."

"That sportsman Luz has got his, in the neck!" said Ginger Rawlinson. "He won't be asking for any more trouble for some time to come, I fancy."

Captain Luz lay groaning, and snarling to his men to come to his help. But no man emerged from cover. The half-breed raised himself at last, and began to crawl away. For a long time he was in sight of the castaways above as he crawled, slowly and painfully, with many groans, but he disappeared at last. In the still air, a sound of rustling floated up from the jungle—a sound of retreat.

"They're going!" said Ginger Rawlinson jubilantly.

"Going — going — gone!" chortled Jim Dainty. "It was ripping luck bagging that gun. We shouldn't have kept them off without it, sir."

The Grimsladers watched and listened. The captain had settled the matter for the blacks; they were carrying him down through the jungle. A little later, the defenders of the plateau saw them emerge, in the distance, on the beach, and place the wounded skipper on the schooner's boat, which then pulled away to the vessel in the bay.

"They're fed up!" said Jim Dai. "Let's hope they'll sail."

Dr. Sparshott made no rejoinder to that. He was watching the schooner's boat through his field-glasses. All the blacks had gone in it, with the wounded skipper, and Ezra Sarson could be seen among them. The whole crew had gone off to the schooner. Did it mean that they were abandoning the island? The Head of Grimslade did not think so.

And he was right! Under the setting sun, the schooner remained at anchor

in the bay. Figures, tiny in the distance, could be discerned moving on her deck, till the fall of darkness blotted them out.

"They are not going, my boys!" said the Head of Grimsdale quietly. "The fight is not over yet."

"Then we shall see something of them again to-morrow," said Jim Dainty.

"Or before," said Sammy.

Under the stars, in a night of breathless heat, the castaways ate their supper, and laid down to sleep. Dr. Sparshott did not close his eyes. The schooner was not gone, and the Head of Grimsdale was not deceived by the enemy's move in going off shore.

He had little doubt that that move was intended to lull him into a false security; and that he would see or hear something of the enemy again in the hours of darkness. Willingly the juniors would have shared his watch, but it was not needed. He bade them turn in and sleep, and they slept. Fritz Splitz did not need bidding.

Sleepless, watchful, Dr. Sparshott sat on a rock, listening for a sound in the night. In the deep stillness, he could catch the wash of the surf on the distant reef. Closer at hand, the snore of Friedrich von Splitz rumbled and grumbled in the shadows. The Head's face was grim as he watched. There was one cartridge left in the revolver.

Midnight was past, and he had heard no sound of a boat coming ashore. But from the blackness of the hillside below him, his keen ears detected faint sounds of stealthy feet. In the deep darkness, the black crew of the schooner were creeping to the attack.

Dr. Sparshott rose to his feet, with a jagged rock in either hand. He waited and watched and listened in the glimmer of the star-shine, he picked out a black figure, and then another.

Whiz, whiz! Crash, crash!

Two black figures rolled over like skittles under the crashing rocks. Wild yells rang and echoed from the darkness.

"My giddy goloshes! They're coming!" yelled Ginger Rawlinson. "Up guards and at 'em!"

The juniors were awake and on their feet in an instant, grasping rocks from the pile to hurl. Rock after rock went whizzing into the gloom, crashing and clattering down the steep. Yells and howls and shrieks came thundering back, and the sound of running feet, of men falling and stumbling.

"A jolly old surprise attack!" grinned Ginger. "But they didn't catch Sammy napping! Catch a wensel asleep!"

Sammy grinned.

The night attack had failed. The Grimsdale castaways were still holding their own. But it was with anxious hearts that Jim Dainty & Co. watched for dawn, wondering what the morrow would bring.

CHAPTER 35.

The Calm Before the Storm!

"VAN me, somepoddly!" moaned Fritz Splitz.

There was a big palm leaf in the podgy paw of Fritz von Splitz, but the fat German was feeling too feeble to fan himself with it.

Plumped in a patch of shade, by a rock, Fritz gasped for breath.

Jim Dainty & Co. had found it warm, all the time, on Castaway Island, that speck of land somewhere in West-Indian seas, not far from the Equator. But this morning the heat was terrific.

The juniors, camped on the plateau high up the island mountain, had slept fitfully in the heat of the night, even Fritz failing to put in his usual ten hours of solid slumber. But the morning was hotter. It was unusual, even for that hot corner of the tropics.

The wide Atlantic stretched like a sea of glass far into the distance. Below the rocky plateau where the schoolboy castaways had taken refuge from their enemies, the jungle lay still, unstirred by a single breath of wind. Below the belt of jungle, the beach

burned white in the sun-glare, aching to the eyes.

The bay was smooth as a pond; the schooner, riding at anchor, might have been a painted ship on painted sea, so still she lay. Deep indigo in the sea, deep azure in the sky—only to the north-east a shimmer of pale green on the horizon.

Nobody was likely to fan Fatty Fritz, much as he needed it. The juniors were breathless in the heat. Even Dr. Samuel Sparshott, the iron-limbed headmaster of Grimslade School, was feeling it, rather severely. Ginger Rawlinson's face was as red as his head. Sandy Bean asked Streaky Bacon how he would like to feel the sea-wind blowing up the Mersey; and Streaky kicked him, feebly, for reminding him of such a thing at such a time.

Jim Dainty wiped perspiration from his face. Dick Dawson, feeling too slack for even that, let it drip. But nobody groused—except Fritz von Splitz! Fritz, perhaps, felt the heat more than the other fellows. There was more of him to feel it.

"Van me!" mumbled Fritz. "Van me! Oh, I vish tat I vas pack in Chermanny!"

And yet it was early. What it was going to be like at noon, the Grimslade castaways dreaded to think. And there, before their eyes, lay the blue bay, in which they would have rejoiced to dip. But they were cut off from the sea; their lives depended on holding that rocky plateau on the hillside against their enemies.

"Wasser!" mumbled Fritz. "Wasser!"

Food and water were strictly rationed. How long Captain Luz and his black West-Indian crew might keep them penned up on the rocky hillside, the castaways could not tell.

"Oh, shut up, Fatty!" said Jim Dainty. "Sammy's let you have double your ration. Ring off!"

"Peast and a prute!" moaned Fritz feebly.

"They are moving!" said Dr. Spar-

shott, standing with his keen grey eyes fixed on the schooner below.

There was motion on the schooner at last. Black figures were seen to move. The boat was lowered, and filled with blacks. Even at the distance, the Grimsladers could recognise Ezra Sarson among the negroes.

Then a dark-skinned man in dingy white drill, with a bandaged arm, was helped into the boat. It was Captain Luz—evidently still able to get about, in spite of his wound. Of all the crew of the Courlis, only two men were left on board. The enemy were coming in full force this time. With grim faces, the castaways watched the boat pull from the schooner to the beach, and nose into the sand.

The landing-party tramped up the beach, and disappeared from sight in the jungle.

Dr. Sparshott set his lips hard. The revolver he had captured from Captain Luz was in his hand. There remained in it a single cartridge. That single shot, and the rocks they could hurl down on their enemies, stood between the castaways and destruction.

Sammy Sparshott looked over the juniors. In their faces he read grim determination. They seemed to have forgotten even the overpowering heat, at the sight of the enemy advancing to the attack. Only Fatty Fritz lay still and mumbled in the shade of the rock. Five fellows were ready for the fray.

Dr. Sparshott's sun-bronzed face told little of his thoughts; but his heart was heavy for the boys in his charge. For his own life he recked little. So far, he had pulled them through; from the wreck of the Spindrift, the voyage on the floating raft, the landing on the lonely island, the savage attacks by the lawless treasure-hunters! But now, as Sammy well knew, the last pinch was coming.

"Keep your pecker up!" said Sammy quietly. "We've beaten them off before, and we'll beat them off again."

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Jim Dainty.

"They'll get fed up after another licking, and leave us alone."

"And then they'll clear," said Dick Dawson, "and we'll jolly well hunt for the treasure ourselves, what?"

Dr. Sparshott smiled.

"Let us hope so!" he said. "The treasure, if found, belongs to the finder; and, if we succeed in driving off these scoundrels, we shall certainly have a treasure-hunt on our own."

"My giddy goloshes!" exclaimed Ginger. "Fancy going back to Grimslade with our pockets full of Spanish doubloons and pieces of eight. Think of that, Fatty! Think of the tuck you could buy for a Spanish doubloon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter of the cheery Grimsladers rang pleasantly in Sammy's ears. Evidently they were not losing their pluck. Fritz Splitz answered with a mumbling moan.

"Ach! I vas so peastly hot, I tink tat I tie! Mein gootness! I tink two times before I go on a holiday gruisse vunce more after! Neffer, neffer shall I see mein beloved Chermany any more mit meinselt!"

"Here they come!"

Black figures crept out of the jungle, among the rocks and boulders that strewed the steep hillside below the plateau. Captain Luz was seen, his dark face pale from his wound, his black eyes scintillating like a serpent's. Rifles began to crack, and bullets to whiz over the plateau, spattering against the cliff at the back.

"Keep in cover!" barked Sammy.

Each with a jagged rock in his hand, the juniors waited and watched. They were ready for the rush, if it came. But it did not come. The sniping from below did them no damage; there was little danger, save from a ricochetting ball. Perhaps the lesson of the previous day had not been lost on the enemy; for they remained at a safe distance, sniping. Yet if they had not come there to attack, it was difficult to see why they had clambered up the steep hillside in the burning heat. Dr.

Samuel Sparshott wrinkled his brows, puzzled, as the long minutes wore by.

"They've got the wind up!" pronounced Ginger Rawlinson confidently. "They jolly well know that they can't get away with it."

"If they have the wind up, they could have stayed on the schooner," remarked Jim Dainty.

Crash! A bullet, not from below, but from above, struck a rock within a foot of Sammy Sparshott's head. It was immediately followed by another, and the headmaster of Grimslade, with a sharp cry, reeled and fell on the rocks, where he lay motionless.

CHAPTER 36.

At the Last Moment!

"SAMMY!" yelled Jim Dainty, in consternation.

Headless of the firing, the juniors rushed to their headmaster.

Their hearts almost died within them at the sight of Sammy Sparshott lying crumpled on the rocks, with the blood streaming down his face. Sammy, their headmaster, their protector, the man who had pulled them through a hundred perils, was down—struck down by a treacherous shot!

Crash! came another bullet on the plateau, spattering chips of rock over the juniors as they surrounded the fallen headmaster.

Jim Dainty stared round him in rage and amazement. The firing from below passed harmlessly over them, but this shooting came from above.

Now it flashed into his mind what the inaction of the enemy had meant. Captain Luz and his men were guarding against the escape of the castaways, while a sniper had clambered to some high point on the mountain, from which he could overlook the camp. There was no such point near at hand, and evidently it must be a good marksman who was getting the range so well from a great distance.

As Jim stared over the rugged mountainside a puff of white smoke came

from a high mass of volcanic rock nearly a thousand yards away. And as he saw it, he glimpsed the evil face of Ezra Sarson looking over the barrel of a rifle. He felt the wind of the bullet as it passed, stirring the hair on his head.

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger. "Get Sammy into cover somehow! Lend a hand, you men!"

Sammy Sparshott lay like a log. Whether he was living or dead the juniors hardly knew. They grasped him and dragged him by sheer strength back to the cliff at the back of the plateau. The face of the high cliff that rose behind the plateau was rough and irregular, rived with deep fissures. Into the widest of them the juniors dragged their headmaster, sheltered there from the fire of Ezra Sarson.

Heedless for the moment of the enemy, Jim Dainty took Sammy's head on his knee, and Ginger splashed his face with water.

Dr. Sparshott's eyes opened dizzily.

"What—" he murmured faintly.

"You're hit, sir," muttered Ginger.

Dr. Sparshott's hand went to his head. It came away with the fingers crimsoned. Under the thick, dark hair was a cut where the bullet had gone close—close enough to stun the headmaster of Grimslade. Quietly, carefully, Sammy felt over the cut. The bullet had passed on after cutting a strip of skin from his head. It was amazing how swiftly Sammy pulled himself together.

"A miss," said Dr. Sparshott calmly. "is as good as a mile. Only a scratch, fortunately." He rose to his feet and stared round him. "Did you boys get me here?"

"Yes, sir," said Jim. "That villain Sarson is shooting from above. We should have been riddled by this time."

Dr. Sparshott stepped to the opening of the fissure. It was hardly three feet wide, and extended only six or seven feet into the hill. The castaways were packed in the narrow space almost like sardines in a tin. Sammy put out his head and glanced round.

Crash! came a bullet, hardly a foot from him. The keen grey eyes spotted the sniper on the high lava rock, and for a moment Sammy grasped his revolver. But it was useless; it could not carry the distance. It was futile to waste the last shot. He backed into the rugged fissure, his face set hard. It was the finish—and he knew it.

Packed in that pocket of the hillside, the castaways could not step out without being shot down like rabbits. It was only the distance that had saved Dr. Sparshott's life. But now the sniper had got the range accurately, and he could pick off anyone on the open plateau like a partridge. Which meant that there was now no defence against a rush from below.

Sammy gritted his teeth. Ezra Sarson—the villain who had scuttled the Spin-drift, the man he had spared and saved—had got the upper hand at last, with the help of the treasure-seekers. The game was up—and the Frisco desperado had won it!

Crash, crash, crash! came the spattering bullets on the plateau as the sniper kept up his fire. He could not reach them in the fissure with the whizzing lead, but he could keep them penned up, and leave the way open to his confederates.

"They're coming!" breathed Jim Dainty.

Sounds could be heard of Captain Luz and his black crew creeping to the plateau. Heads came into view—grinning, black faces and the dark, savage face and bandaged arm of Captain Luz. Man after man clambered up the steep rocks to the plateau and gathered there—nearly twenty men in a bunch.

It was only a matter of moments now before the attack came. A faint sound, like the growl of a distant mighty beast, reached the ears of the castaways, but they did not heed it in the intense excitement of the moment. But Dr. Sparshott heeded it, and he bent his head to listen. Again came the strange sound, and with it the first breath of wind that they had felt that day.

"The hurricane!" breathed Sammy Sparshott.

As he muttered the words there was a shout from Captain Luz. With his uninjured arm he pointed to the fissure in the cliff in which the castaways were packed. His black eyes blazed with savage triumph.

"En avant!" he yelled.

"Now for it!" breathed Jim Dainty, setting his teeth.

Dr. Sparshott lifted his revolver.

But he did not fire.

For even as Captain Luz and his crew advanced at a run there came a deep roll of thunder, so deep and terrible that it seemed to shake the island to its foundations.

Captain Luz stopped as if he had been struck by a bullet. He spun round, staring at the sky and the sea. Then he raved and shrieked to his men and started running. He was over the verge of the rocky plateau and scrambling down the steep hillside in the twinkling of an eye. After him, with a wild howl, went the blacks. In the distance Ezra Sarson could be glimpsed, also in frantic retreat.

Jim Dainty rubbed his eyes.

It seemed like some strange dream.

A minute ago utter destruction had threatened the castaways, and they had braced themselves for the last desperate fight. Now their enemies were fleeing frantically for the boat—fleeing like men pursued by some fearful foe. They vanished from sight and sound, and the castaways were left wondering whether they were dreaming.

CHAPTER 37. The Hurricane!

"MY giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger Rawlinson, rubbing his eyes, as if he doubted what he was seeing.

"Look!" roared Streaky.

The castaways, no longer in danger of attack, crowded out of the fissure. They stood on the verge of the plateau,

staring after their fleeing enemies. Dr. Sparshott had a grim smile on his tanned face. He knew, if the juniors did not, the cause of the sudden terror that had stricken the freebooters.

From the jungle far below the crew of the schooner were seen to emerge, running, on to the beach. Without a pause, they ran desperately for the boat, dragging it out into the water, and piled in headlong.

Ezra Sarson shipped the tiller, savagely knocking a stumbling negro out of his way. Captain Luz, wounded as he was, scrambled in unaided, as if forgotten by his own men. The blacks, jabbering, grabbed the oars; one of them, left behind in the haste, swam desperately after the boat as it was pushed away, and clambered in.

Oars rattled into the rowlocks, and the blacks pulled with frantic speed for the schooner. But the bay across which they pulled was no longer the smooth, glassy expanse of a few minutes ago. It was ruffled and rolling, agitated by a mighty swell from the ocean.

The sky, which had been deepest azure, had changed to a steely grey—save in the north-east, where it was dark, deepening to black, though it was barely midday. Roll on roll of thunder came, seeming to shake the heavens and the vast Atlantic as it rolled. Wind came out of the north-east with a rush, fanning the burning faces of the castaways, with infinite relief.

The boat pulling frantically across the bay rocked and plunged. The schooner, which had seemed like a painted ship on painted water, was heaving and swaying, dragging at her cable. Grimmer grew the smile on the face of Sammy Sparshott as he watched.

"Mein gootness!" Fritz Splitz crawled after the castaways, now that he knew that the enemy were gone. "Tank gootness tey vas gone! But vy for tey run like tat?"

"May have caught sight of your face suddenly, old Boche bean!" suggested Ginger Rawlinson.

"Blessed if I catch on," said Jim

Dainty. He gave a shout. "Great pip! They've lost their boat."

The boat crashed on the rocking schooner. Desperate figures were seen clambering on board. The boat slid away and whisked out to sea, vanishing from sight. In their desperate haste, the crew evidently did not care what became of it. The gleam of an axe was discerned, as a sinewy black man hacked at the cable. Captain Luz was not even spending the necessary time to get his anchor up. It was cut loose, and left at the bottom of the bay.

"They've lost their heads, too, I should think," said Dick Dawson, in wonder. "What's the matter with that mob, sir?"

"They are trying to save their ship," answered Dr. Sparshott quietly; "and I imagine that they have left it too late!"

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!"

"They were so keen on getting at us that they failed to keep an eye on the weather," said the headmaster of Grimslade. "The first roll of thunder warned Captain Luz—and, as you have seen, he lost no time after that."

"Couldn't see his heels for dust!" said Sandy Bean.

"They are on a lee-shore here," said Dr. Sparshott. "If Captain Luz gets his schooner out in the bay in time, he may weather the storm. If not, he is a lost man. In two or three minutes the wind will be striking like a blacksmith's hammer."

"But the anchor——"

"The cable would have parted like a pack-thread. The schooner would have driven ashore. Captain Luz and his crew would have been stranded like ourselves—with no more chance than we have of rescue from this solitary island. The scoundrel is trying to save his ship—and if he saves it he will return. But——"

Dr. Sparshott broke off, and watched in silence. Toy-like as the figures were in the distance, the juniors could see the wild excitement and confusion on the schooner.

They were bending sail—and the

schooner, already in motion, was rocketing seaward. But out of the black north-east came the roar and bellow of the hurricane.

The juniors, with beating hearts, watched the schooner heel over, as if a giant's hand had struck her. She rolled scuppers under, and they heard the crack as the fore-topmast went by the board. But she righted again, and fled seaward, dragging wreckage that pounded on her hull.

"Lie down!" ordered Dr. Sparshott, setting the example; and the juniors huddled down among the rocks on the plateau. Over them swept the wind—with a force that was almost beyond belief. It was more like the grasp of a mighty beast.

Vast billows rolled in from the Atlantic, rolling up the shore of the bay.

Darkness thickened—though beyond the rolling blackness of the clouds the sun was shining with midday brightness. But its rays were shut off now. A deep twilight reigned over Castaway Island and the roaring ocean that surrounded it.

Through the gloom came flashes of lightning and roll on roll of earth-shaking thunder. And then the rain came, drenching, splashing, swamping, soaking the castaways to the skin at once. But in the oppressive heat the drenching was more than welcome.

They still watched the sea, but they had lost sight of the schooner now. Fleeing like a frightened sea-bird, the Courlis vanished from their sight. Although it must mean that their enemies would return to attack them again, the castaways found themselves hoping that she would weather the storm.

"There she is!" cried Jim Dainty suddenly.

Far out at sea, leaping into view as a flash of lightning dazzled the sky, appeared the Courlis. Like a black wall, the Atlantic seemed to be rushing down on her. It was only for seconds that she was seen, fighting for sea room, fighting for her life in the rage of

the elements. The castaways saw that her masts were gone, only the stump of the mainmast remaining—that she was cluttered fore and aft with tangled wreckage of rigging and spars. Then she vanished, blotted in the darkness.

Sammy's voice was heard in an instant's lull of the wind.

"Captain Luz left it too late, after all!"

One more glimpse they had of the Courlis in the flashing lightning—a glimpse of a dismantled hulk rolling and pitching, swept away by the sea like a helpless log upon the wild waters.

It was the last! Flash after flash rived the blackness, but showed them only the roaring sea. Whether the schooner had gone down, or whether she was still driving, a helpless wreck, before the hurricane, they could not tell. She was gone, at all events, from Castaway Island—the hurricane, which had brought destruction to her, had saved the Grimslade castaways.

"Himmel! But I was hungry!" groaned Fritz von Splitz.

"Plenty of coconuts and bananas down!" grinned Ginger.

The hurricane was over. The sea still rolled and roared round the rocks of Castaway Island, and broke in thunder on the beach. But the wind had dropped, and the sun shone again from a blue sky. Gladly the castaways left their refuge on the mountain and descended to the beach. Gladly they tramped back to their hut under the cliff, to see what of their possessions had been left to them by the lawless crew that were now gone.

Bananas and coconuts were scattered on the ground, ripped from the trees by the wind. Fritz Splitz did not follow the other fellows to the hut. He halted as soon as he reached the coconut grove and started on the nuts. Coconut after coconut Fritz cracked, guzzling the milk and gnawing the rich, ripe fruit. Then he turned his attention to the bananas.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sparshott and the juniors examined the hut. It had been searched and left in a state of confusion

by the crew of the schooner; but most of their belongings were still there, lying about where they had been carelessly thrown by the ruffians. Some of the stores were gone, and no doubt the rest would have followed had Captain Luz remained on the island. As it was, the castaways were glad to find so much left.

"We have our island to ourselves again, my boys!" said Dr. Sparshott. "And whatever may have become of the schooner, Ezra Sarson went in her, and we are relieved of his presence on the island. We have very much to be thankful for. Now to work, and get things shipshape again."

CHAPTER 38.

Tricked!

Fritz Splitz grinned. Bright morning shone on Castaway Island. After the hurricane of the previous day, all was fair and smiling. It was going to be a busy morning for the shipwrecked Grimslades.

Dr. Samuel Sparshott, with his field-glasses slung over his shoulder, had already started to ascend to the highest point of the island hill, to scan the sea for a sign of the schooner that had been swept away in the hurricane. Jim Dainty & Co. had another—and to them a more attractive—occupation. They were going treasure-hunting.

And Fritz Splitz, as he heard the five juniors laying their plans and making their preparations, grinned—a wide grin, that extended across his fat face from one extensive ear to the other.

"You see," Jim Dainty was saying, "that crew came in the schooner to hunt for the treasure, buried here long ago by order of a jolly old black King of Hayti. Sammy's given us leave to hunt for it—and we're going to find it—if it's here."

"If!" murmured Sandy Bean. Sandy was sceptical.

"No 'if' about it," said Dick Dawson stoutly. "I jolly well believe it's here:

and that skeleton we found in the cave up the ravine is a clue to it."

"Might be tons of money!" said Streaky Bacon. "Pieces of eight—whatever pieces of eight are—and jolly old doubloons."

"My giddy goloshes!" chuckled Ginger Rawlinson. "Fancy going back to Grimslade stacked with Spanish doubloons."

"Share and share alike, if we find it!" said Jim Dainty. "You coming, Fritz?"

Fritz Splitz, still grinning, shook his head.

"Nein! I vas not guming!" he answered. "Perhaps I gum anodder dime! But I tink two dimes before I share and share alike after! If I vind me tat treasure, I tells you tat tat treasure belong to me, nicht war!"

"You footling, frowzy, flabby Boche!" roared Ginger Rawlinson. "Sit down!"

"Ach! Whoop!" roared Fritz, as the red-headed junior of Redmayes House at Grimslade School up-ended him, and he sat—hard; on the sandy beach of Castaway Island. "Peast and a prute! Ach!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jim Dainty & Co. started for the ravine, leaving Friedrich von Splitz sitting on the sand, glaring after them with his saucer-eyes.

"Prutal pounders!" roared Fritz. "If I vind tat treasure, I gif you not vun touploon—not vun!"

The Grimslade juniors clambered up the steep ravine on the hillside, heedless of the spray of the falling water. When they had disappeared from sight, Fritz Splitz picked himself up, and rolled slowly after them. The podgy grin reappeared on Fritz' face. Deep thoughts were working in the depths of the fat Rhinelander's podgy brain.

Tramping up the shelf of rock beside the tumbling stream, the castaway schoolboys reached the opening of the cave. All was quiet and peaceful there now; very different from the day when they had been attacked there by Captain Luz and the black crew of the schooner. They were going to make a

day of it; and Jim Dainty carried a bag of provisions, Dick Dawson a lantern, and the other fellows cans for water, which they filled at the stream.

Deep in the dark cave lay the skeleton they had discovered, that of one of the blacks who had buried the treasure—as they believed, at least.

More than a hundred years had passed since then. But it seemed likely that the buried treasure was still there, the island being so lonely and unknown, far from the track of ships and trade.

"Here we are!" said Dick Dawson, lighting the lantern, and flashing the light into the dark opening of the cave.

"Fill the cans, you men," said Ginger Rawlinson. "We shall want all the water we can carry, before we come out of that jolly old cavern."

"Hallo, Fritz has changed his mind!" exclaimed Jim, as the juniors were about to enter the cave. Fatty Fritz, red with exertion, came clambering up the ravine, panting for breath.

"Ach! Tat you stop! Tat you gum pack!" Fritz squealed from a distance.

"Buck up, old bloated Boche, if you're coming!" shouted Ginger.

"Ach! Vait!" yelled Fritz, and he came panting breathlessly up. "Tat poor Sammy—poor old Sammy—ach!"

"Sammy?" exclaimed Jim. "Nothing's happened to Sammy!"

"He fall from vun cliff——"

"What?" yelled the juniors in dismay.

"I tink tat he break him te neck!"

"My giddy goloshes! Where?" yelled Ginger. "Come on, you fellows—we know the way he went!"

Treasure-hunting was instantly forgotten. Lantern and provision-bag, cans of water, were dropped where the juniors stood, and they raced away down the ravine. Plunging recklessly through the falling water, scrambling and tumbling over stones and boulders, they went in breathless haste, thinking only of the brave, true-hearted headmaster who had saved them from so many perils.

They emerged from the lower end of the ravine, and started for the route

Dr. Samuel Sparshott had taken up the hill, at some distance from the stream. He was not to be seen on the hillside; but a thousand jutting rocks and trees might have hidden him.

"Better shout!" exclaimed Ginger. "Poor old Sammy! He might be lying among any of these dashed rocks!"

"Go it!" said Jim.

And the five juniors, lifting up their voices together, roared;

"Dr. Sparshott! Sammy! Sammy!"

"Hallo, Grimslade!" came a distant shout from among the rocks. To their intense relief, it was an answering hail from their headmaster, and his tall, athletic figure leaped into view on a high rock.

"He's not hurt!" gasped Dick Dawson.

"What the thump!" exclaimed Jim Dainty.

The juniors hurried on. Dr. Sparshott surveyed them with a smile as they came panting up.

"Tired of treasure-hunting, or what?" he asked.

"Aren't you hurt, sir?" gasped Ginger.

Sammy raised his eyebrows.

"That fat idiot Fritz came after us, yelling that he'd seen you fall!" exclaimed Dick Dawson.

"The young rascal!" exclaimed Sammy, his brows darkening. His face softened as he looked at the juniors, breathless, panting, scratched and bruised by their hurried clamber up the hill. "My dear boys, so that's why you came! Splitz was deceiving you—I suppose that was his idea of a joke!"

"Spoofed!" gasped Ginger.

"When I see Fritz again!" said Dr. Sparshott quietly, "I will give him a lesson that will warn him not to play such tricks. I am very sorry you have been needlessly alarmed, my boys."

With a kindly nod to the juniors, the Head of Grimslade resumed his way. Jim Dainty & Co. looked at one another.

"That Boche bioater!" hissed Ginger. "My giddy goloshes, we'll scrag him bald-headed! We'll mop him

up! We'll—oh, come on, and let's get hold of him!"

And the juniors tramped back down the hill, and reached the ravine once more—with intentions towards Friedrich von Splitz that were absolutely ferocious.

CHAPTER 39.

Fritz in a Funk!

"PLOCKHEADS!" chuckled Fritz Splitz.

Fritz had not followed Jim Dainty & Co. from the ravine. Having spoofed the Grimslade juniors into hurrying off on a fool's errand, Fritz von Splitz slung the provision-bag over a podgy shoulder, picked up one of the water-cans, and the lantern, which was still burning. Then, chuckling over the success of his stratagem, the fat Rhinelander marched into the cavern.

"Plockheads and dummkopfs!" chuckled Fatty Fritz.

Like the other fellows, he firmly believed that the skeleton in the cave was a clue to the buried treasure of King Christophe of Hayti. And Fatty Fritz was going to unearth that treasure before the other fellows had a chance, and if he found it he was going to claim the lot by right of discovery.

The fat German advanced deeper and deeper into the cavern. The spot of daylight at the entrance disappeared behind him. But the hurricane-lamp showed a bright light round him, and Fritz marched on and on till a glimmering of something white on the floor caught his eyes.

He shivered a little as he halted and stared down at the skeleton. If this was one of the men who had landed with the "Marquis of Marmalade," the bones had lain in the gloomy cavern for more than a century. Had the Black Marquis slain the man who had helped him hide the treasure? It looked like it; and it was possible enough, for King Christophe of Hayti, in his day, had not placed a high value on human life.

Fritz shuddered and glanced round

him uneasily, rather wishing that he had not come alone. Still, he had to come alone if he was to forestall the other fellows and bag the whole of the treasure! Encouraged by the thought of Spanish doubloons, the fat Rhinelanders blinked round for other signs of that ancient visit of the Black Marquis to the island cavern.

"Ach!" he ejaculated.

In the light of the lantern he discerned a narrow fissure that split the wall of the cavern from rugged floor to a point higher than his eye could reach. It was not more than three feet wide, a "fault" left in the rock by some volcanic convulsion of former times. Fritz rolled into it and flashed the light round. And on the floor, almost at his feet, lay another grisly object—a skeleton, whose ghastly skull seemed to grin at him in the light.

Fritz' teeth chattered at the sight. But he pulled himself together. It was a clue—he felt that it must be a clue! And, taking his courage—such as it was—in both hands, Fritz Splitz marched on, blinking to and fro nervously in the shadows.

Suddenly he came to a stop. Before him the fissure ended in a wall of rock!

"Mein gootness!" exclaimed Fritz in dismay.

He seemed to have followed a blind alley to its end. Yet if the men from Hayti had not passed that way, how came the skeleton lying in the fissure? Fritz' fat brain was spurred to unusual exertion by the thought of treasure. After a long, dismayed blink at the wall before him, he approached it more closely and shone the light upon it, scanning it carefully. Then he grinned.

"Himmel! I was on te drack!" he gasped.

Close examination showed that the rock before him was not a solid wall, like the sides of the fissure. It was formed of rocks stacked up, one on another, crammed between the walls of the passage; and it was clear that they had been piled up by human hands.

Fritz' saucer-eyes gleamed.

He placed the hurricane-lamp on the ground, his bag and can beside it, and groped over the rocky obstruction with his hands. Solid as it looked, the irregular shape of the blocks enabled him to grasp them and drag them loose.

Rock after rock he dragged away, and then there was a crashing and a rumbling and a shower of rocks tumbled down.

Fritz jumped back with a gasp. Something that had been hidden in that stack of rocks, freed by their fall, fell forward towards him. It came falling forward, and Fritz uttered a yell of horror as the bony arms touched him and the glimmering skull came into icy contact with his fat face.

"Ach! Himmel! Yarcocoo!" roared Fritz in utter terror, as he bounded backwards.

The skeleton fell at his feet with a clatter of dry, old bones. And Fritz, catching his foot in a fallen rock, stumbled backwards, and fell with a bump—on the hurricane-lamp!

The light instantly went out! Blackness rushed on Fritz Splitz.

"Ach! Help! Gum to me!" he roared. "Chim, Chinger, mein goot friends, vere vas you? Ach, mein gootness! Mein gootness! Whoop!"

Fritz blinked round him in the blackness. He could not see an inch from his fat little pimple of a nose. He groped for the lantern and gave a shriek as his fat little fingers came in contact with a skull.

He scrambled wildly away, bumping wildly on the rocks, stumbling and falling, picking himself up again, panting and gasping. Somehow he got back to the main cavern. Then he remembered that he had matches in his pocket, and he grabbed out the box. Even the slight, flickering illumination of a match was a comfort to the terrified Fritz.

It went out, and he struck another. He blinked round him, trying to screw up his courage. In his panic terror he would hardly have been surprised if the skeleton which he had disturbed in its

century-old resting-place, walled-up in the rocks, had followed him from the fissure. But gradually his panic subsided a little.

"Ach! It was only a peastly skeleton gasped Fritz. "Vy for be afraid of vun skeleton tat is tead? I vill go pack!"

And Fritz struck another match, to light his way back to the fissure. A sudden draught of air blew it out, and Fritz jumped. The cavern was windless; the air was fresh, as if it had two outlets, but there was not a breath of wind. Yet the match in his fat fingers had been blown out from behind him!

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz.

He struck another match. Instantly it was blown out over his shoulder.

This time there could be no mistake. The match had been blown out! By whom? How? A panic-stricken howl pealed from Fatty Fritz. He dropped on his fat knees, yelling.

"Ach! Mercy! Go away, goot Mister Skeleton—go away mit you before! Ach! Mein gootness! Mercy!"

CHAPTER 40.

Gold!

AFTER him!" growled Ginger Rawlinson.

"After the Boche bloater!" said Jim Dainty savagely.

Breathless, and boiling with wrath, Jim Dainty & Co. arrived at the mouth of the cave. If they had wondered why Fritz Splitz had played that scurvy trick on them, they would have known as soon as they saw that the lantern, the provision bag, and the can of water were missing. Fritz had spoofed them into going after Sammy while he helped himself to their supplies, and forestalled them in the hunt for the treasure.

Without hesitation the juniors plunged into the dark cavern. Fritz had calculated that they would have to go back to the hut for another lantern; but they did not wait for that. They were too anxious to get after Friedrich von Splitz!

"Keep to the wall!" called out Jim Dainty, and, keeping to the right-hand wall of the cavern, the five juniors tramped away into the darkness.

They expected soon to sight the glimmer of the hurricane-lamp carried by the fat German. That would be a guide to them. But no glimmer of a lamp reached their eyes. They were unaware that Fritz had discovered the fissure in the wall and disappeared into it. But from the cavern ahead of them they heard a sound like falling rocks. It boomed in a thousand echoes through the hollows of the island mountain. Soon afterwards the unmistakable sound of Fritz' squealing, terrified voice reached their ears.

"My giddy goloshes! That's Fatty Fritz!" chuckled Ginger.

"But what is the fat ass doing in the dark?" asked Streaky. "No wonder he's in a funk if he's let the lamp go out!"

"Look!" breathed Jim Dainty.

The flickering of a match in the darkness caught their eyes. In its glimmer they had a glimpse of Fatty, not a dozen yards from them.

"Quiet!" whispered Jim Dainty. "Stand still, you men! Not a sound!"

Leaving the other fellows close by the cavern wall, Jim stepped towards the fat German as the match went out. When Fritz struck another, Jim Dainty circled behind him. When the second match went out Jim was within a few feet of Fatty Fritz.

He heard the fat Rhinelander's muttering voice, and grinned. And when Fritz struck another match Jim leaned towards him and blew it out over his shoulder. And when he blew out the next one in the same manner it was enough for Fatty Fritz.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from the unseen Grimslade juniors as Fritz von Splitz, in the full belief that the skeleton was after him, howled and yelled for mercy.

Quite unaware that the juniors were in the cave, that yell of laughter gave the finishing touch to Fritz' terror. To his scared ears it was the howling

laughter of demons and phantoms of the darkness.

"Ach! Mercy! Go away!" shrieked Fritz. "I will not gum after your dreasure after, goot Mister Skeleton! Ach! Herr Skeleton, go away mit you! Mein gootness!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was too much for Fatty Fritz. He scrambled up from his fat knees and ran! Where he ran in the dark he did not know, till he bumped into the cavern wall.

"Yaroooh!" roared Fritz.

He scrambled frantically away, feeling along the wall in the dark, afraid to leave it. And it was with a gurgle of relief that he saw daylight at the mouth of the cave again, and staggered out on the bank of the stream in the ravine, bedewed with perspiration. He sank down, gasping for breath.

Left behind him in the cave, Jim Dainty & Co. chuckled loud and long. Fritz had had what he deserved for his trickery.

"Jevver see such a howling funk!" chuckled Ginger. "But where has the frabjous freak dropped the lantern? Can't be far off—look for it!"

Matches were struck, and the juniors found the fissure where Fritz had left the lantern.

"Another jolly old skeleton here," said Ginger coolly. "That old sportsman, the Marquis of Plum-Jam, seems to have left plenty of souvenirs behind him. Hallo, here's the lantern—and another skeleton, by gum!"

The hurricane-lamp, fortunately, was not much damaged. Ginger relighted it and held it up, and the juniors gazed round them with keen interest. The wall of rocky blocks that Fritz had pulled away was more than half demolished, and beyond it the fissure extended deeper into the mountain.

"Come on!" said Ginger.

He pushed his way through the opening, and one by one the others followed him. They tramped on by a narrow, rocky passage, hardly more than three feet wide. Ginger halted suddenly.

"My giddy goloshes!" he ejaculated. "Look!"

Crowding forward and peering past Ginger, the juniors saw that the fissure ended in a yawning gulf that extended to an unknown depth. Below all was darkness. Ginger flashed the light into it without seeing the bottom of the rift.

"Oh, my hat! What's this?" exclaimed Jim. He pounced on a small object that lay near the edge of the precipice.

It was metal, black with age; but evidently a coin. Stepping back from the perilous edge of the abyss the juniors examined it eagerly. Jim rubbed it hard, and a gleam of yellow came through the black.

"Gold!" he breathed.

"Gold!" repeated the juniors in awed tones.

It was a proof—that single coin, dropped carelessly a hundred years ago in that remote nook of the mountain—that they were on the track of the treasure!

CHAPTER 41.

Treasure for Fritz!

BUT it was the end of the treasure hunt. If the Marquis of Marmalade, in those old days, had lowered the treasure into that abyss in the heart of the mountain, the Grimsladers had no means of reaching it. All they could do was to report what they had discovered to Sammy. Jim slipped the coin—which was a Spanish doubloon—into his pocket, and they retraced their steps to the cavern.

There, in the light of the hurricane-lamp, they sat down to deal with the contents of the provision bag and discuss the discovery they had made. And when, after the meal, Ginger picked up the empty bag, he gave a chortle. A bright idea had come into Ginger's active brain.

He gathered up stones from the cavern floor and crammed the bag to the brim, the other fellows watching

him in wonder. Having filled the bag with stones, Ginger tied the neck of it carefully with a cord, twisting it tight, and knotting it hard.

"What the thump's that for?" asked Jim.

"Treasure for Fritz!" said Ginger coolly. "Let him see that doubloon—and his jolly old imagination will do the rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

They tramped back to the mouth of the cavern, their treasure-quest having ended sooner than they had expected. The afternoon sun was burning down on Castaway Island when they emerged into the ravine. There they found Fritz Splitz.

Fritz was waiting for them to return from their pursuit of Sammy, never dreaming that they had returned long ago and followed him up the cave. Fritz supposed that the treasure-hunt was yet to begin—having no idea that it was over. His saucer-eyes almost started from his head at the sight of the juniors coming out of the cave.

"Mein gootness!" exclaimed Fritz. "Vas tat you? You have been in tat gave mit yourselves, while I tink tat you vas gone after Sammy! Peasts and prutes, I tink tat you pull me te leg."

"Just a few!" grinned Ginger.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Prutes!" roared Fritz, the truth dawning on his fat mind. "It vas you tat plow out te match in te gave—"

"Got it at last!" grinned Jim Dainty.

Jim took the doubloon carelessly from his pocket, and the sun shone on the gold. Fritz gave a yell.

"Himinel! You have found tat treasure?" He grabbed at the doubloon with a fat hand, but Jim slipped it into his pocket again. "Mein gootness! Vat you got in tat pag, Chinger?"

"Guess!" chuckled Ginger Rawlinson. He heaved down the bag. "My giddy goloshes, treasure's all right, but it's jolly heavy!"

"Dreasure!" yelled Fritz. "Mein gootness! All tat is dreasure! And you vas leaf me out! Chinger, Chim, mein

goot and pelofed jums, you vill share tat dreasure mit your old goot friend Fritz!"

"No jolly fear! You refused to share with us."

"That was vun choke!" gasped Fritz. "If I vind me tat dreasure, I share mit mein pelofed jums! Jo! Ja wohl! You vill not be vun greedy peast, mein goot Chinger—you vill not all be greedy peasts—you vill giff me vun share of vat is in tat pag?"

Ginger Rawlinson looked round.

"What about it, you men?" he asked. "That bloated Boche wouldn't have shared with us—but we're not Boche bloaters! Shall we let him in?"

"Let's!" said Jim Dainty.

"Share and share alike!" said Streaky Bacon.

"Tat is right—tat is as chenerous as a Cherman!" beamed Fritz Splitz. "Tat is vat I eggspsect of mein pelofed jums."

"Well, look here," said Ginger gravely, "you carry the bag down to the hut, and we'll share in what's in it—and you shall whack it out."

"Ja wohl!" exclaimed Fritz eagerly.

And he heaved the bag on a fat shoulder. Fritz did not like work—but when the work was carrying treasure which he was to share, even Fritz could make an effort. But the bag was large, and it had been a good weight for Ginger to carry. It was a staggering load to Fatty Fritz.

"Mein gootness! Tat gold is heavy!" gasped Fritz. "I tink tat you help me carry tat pag, isn't it?"

"No fear!" said Jim Dainty. "You've done nothing so far, except tell lies and spoof us. You'll carry the bag all the way to the camp, or you won't get a whack in what's in it."

"Hear, hear!"

"I vill garry it!" gasped Fritz.

And he did!

Staggering under his load, the fat Rhinelander started. The juniors followed him, grinning. Fritz tumbled down the waterfall, dropping the bag; but below, he heaved it up again, and they left the stream, the fat German

bent almost double under his burden, gasping and grunting with exertion.

Jim Dainty & Co. strolled easily back to camp; but it was not an easy stroll for Fatty Fritz! He could almost have wished that less treasure had been found, so terrific was the weight of that bag! But he staggered on.

The hut was reached at last, and Fatty Fritz slid the bag to the ground. He plumped down beside it, streaming with perspiration.

"Open tat pag, mein goot Chinger!" he said feebly.

"You open it, if you want a whack in it!" answered Ginger.

"Prute!"

Eager as he was to see the gleam of gold, it was some minutes before Fatty Fritz recovered from his exertions sufficiently to get on with opening the bag of "treasure." But he got on with it at last. His podgy fingers fumbled with the knots, and he got them undone, loosened the cord, and opened the neck of the bag. Up-ending it, he poured out the contents on the sand.

The juniors watched him with keen interest.

From the opened bag a cascade of stones poured out.

Fritz von Splitz gazed at them.

"Vat—vat—vat is tat? Vere is te dresure?" he gurgled.

"That's the treasure, old podgy bean," answered Ginger genially. "All we've got, except Jim's doubloon. Whack it out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but—but it was only stones!" howled Fritz. "Tere is no gold—tere is no diamonds! Mein gootness! You pull me te leg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Fritz gazed at them. He had staggered under the weight of that hefty bag, believing that it contained treasure. And it contained stones, of which he could have picked up any number on the beach—if so disposed!

"Peasts and prutes!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aren't you going to whack it out?"

inquired Ginger. "Fritz doesn't seem satisfied, you fellows! Well, look here, Fritz, I'll tell you what—you shall have the lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors walked away, leaving Fatty Fritz with the lot! But, to judge by his looks, he did not derive much satisfaction from it!

CHAPTER 42.

Hard Lines for Fritz Splitz!

DR. SAMUEL SPARSHOTT grinned. A less humorous man than Sammy might have grinned.

It was "school" on Castaway Island. Under the shade of the palm fronds, five juniors sat in the sand—Jim Dainty, Dick Dawson, Ginger, Bacon, and Bear. But Fritz von Splitz was not present. And Dr. Sparshott had gone to look for Fritz Splitz.

From behind a bush quite close at hand, there came a deep, resonant, prolonged snore—whereat Dr. Sparshott grinned. Jim Dainty & Co., who heard it from a farther distance, grinned also. Fritz Splitz was out of sight, not discoverable to the eye. But his presence was revealed to the ear!

Snore!

"My giddy goloshes!" murmured Ginger Rawlinson. "Watch Sammy!"

The grinning juniors watched Sammy. With a stick in his hand, the headmaster of Grimsdale was stepping round the bush, from behind which came the snore of Fritz Splitz. Evidently Friedrich von Splitz was going to have a sudden awakening!

Since the Grimsdale schoolboys had been cast away, with their headmaster, on that lonely island in West Indian seas, there had not been much in the way of lessons. There had been plenty of work on hand—building the hut, exploring the island, and all sorts of useful and interesting occupations.

Then had come the visit of the schooner Courlis, bringing Captain Luz and his villainous crew to Castaway

Island; and plenty of excitement, till the schooner was driven away in the hurricane. But at Grimslade School, far away on the northern moors in England, the new term was going on; and Sammy was not the man to let his boys slack.

Every morning, therefore, Sammy had instituted a class lasting one hour, which he considered long enough, in the peculiar circumstances of the case, and which the juniors agreed in considering too long by exactly sixty minutes.

There had been lessons on the holiday cruise, but it was, as Ginger Rawlinson remarked, a sheer stroke of luck that all the school-books had gone down in the wreck of the Spindrift. Much more useful things had been stacked on the raft on which the castaways had escaped from the wreck. Space had been limited, and on a desert island, a box of matches was worth more than all the educated works in existence.

Only one book, in point of fact, remained; and that was Sammy's own pocket edition of Virgil's *Aeneid*—now used as a school-book. And all the juniors agreed that they wished Sammy had let it go down with the rest.

"Ach! Himmell! Yarooooop! Whooop!" came a sudden roar from behind the bush.

Fritz had awakened!

Extended on his podgy back, with his saucer-eyes shut, and his wide mouth open, Fritz had been enjoying a nap; dreaming that he was back in his happy Fatherland scoffing German sausages. From that vision of bliss, he was startled by a sharp "whop" from Sammy's stick. Fritz bounded out of slumber with a roar.

"Ach! Peast and a prute!" roared Fritz. "Tat you pang me not mit tat stick prefore! Tainty, you peast—"

"Splitz!" barked Sammy. "Go into class at once!"

"Mein gootness!" Fritz blinked at his headmaster. "Ach! I did not know tat it vas you, sir, I tink tat it vas some odder peast!"

"Go!" barked Sammy, and he added a lick from the stick which made Fritz Splitz start in a hurry.

The fat German rolled along to the group under the palms, followed by the headmaster. He groaned as he sat down.

"Tat Sammy is a peast!" he mumbled. "Vat is te use of lessons on tis peastly island, tat perhaps ve neffer leaf? Also, I vas dired, and I want to go to sleep mit meinself after!"

For once, the Grimsladers rather agreed with Fritz. They would rather have been exploring the tropical island, or hunting for the treasure of King Christophe of Hayti, which the rascally Captain Luz believed to be hidden there.

But there was no arguing with Sammy. Sammy's word was law. Without their headmaster, it was very doubtful whether the schoolboys would have pulled through so many deadly perils. They would not have been without Sammy for worlds. Still, they rather wished that Sammy would forget that he was a schoolmaster.

"You are ten minutes late for class, Splitz!" said Dr. Sparshott. "You will take twenty lines."

"Lines!" murmured Jim Dainty. And the juniors stared.

A small quantity of writing materials had been preserved. But to waste them in writing lines was unthinkable. The juniors wondered, for a moment, whether Sammy had forgotten that he was a castaway on a desert island, and fancied that he was back at Grimslade School.

"Mein gootness!" ejaculated Fritz. "How vas I to write tem lines prefore?"

"I will tell you later, Splitz! We shall now proceed!" said Dr. Sparshott, opening the volume of Virgil.

And they proceeded. Sitting under the palms, with the glistening beach stretching before them down to the bay, and the blue Atlantic rolling beyond to the horizon, it was not easy for the juniors to fix their attention on Latin. Easy or hard, it had to be done, however; and they did it. For

a blackboard, the ingenious Sammy used a big sandstone boulder.

Class was over at last.

"Dismiss!" barked Sammy.

Fritz would have sidled away as the others went. But the eagle eye of Dr. Samuel Sparshott was on him.

"Splitz!"

"Ach himmel! Ja, mein Herr!" groaned Fritz.

"You have twenty lines to write! Neither ink nor paper can be wasted. Fortunately, there are other means. Take this stick, and sharpen it to a point."

Fritz obeyed wonderingly, while Jim Dainty & Co. looked on, also wondering.

"Now," said Dr. Sparshott. "Here is a level stretch of sand, smooth as a billiard board! Here is Virgil! You will trace the lines in the sand, Splitz!"

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz. "But I gannot, sir! Neffer gan I do tat ting after."

"I will show you," said Dr. Sparshott, and taking the stick from Fritz, he traced in the smooth sand, with swift strokes:

"Arma virumque cano, Trojæ qui prima ab oris."

It was slow work, even in Sammy's capable hands. It was likely to be much slower in Fritz'.

"I shall expect the lines to be done before dinner," said Dr. Sparshott.

"But it vas not possible after——"

"Otherwise you will have no dinner!"

"Mein gootness!"

Dr. Sparshott walked away, leaving Fritz to his task.

CHAPTER 43.

The Demon of the Dark!

DR. SPARSHOTT clambered actively up the rocky waterfall in the ravine, and reached the rock shelf above, which led to the mouth of the cave. At a distance he could hear the merry voices of the juniors. They were gathering coconuts, and a roar from Ginger Rawlinson hinted

that one of the nuts—perhaps by accident—had dropped on Ginger's own nut. Sammy Sparshott smiled, and stepped into the cave. He did not want any of the schoolboys with him in his present undertaking; and they were all busily employed at a distance.

Inside the cavern Sammy lighted a lantern. Over his arm hung a coil of stout, strong cord, brought on the raft from the wrecked Spindrift. Sammy was going to explore. Holding up the lantern, he tramped along the rugged floor of the cavern, and reached the fissure in the rocky wall which the juniors had discovered in their treasure hunt.

Following the narrow fissure, he reached the abyss which opened at the end of it—a sheer precipitous drop of unknown depth. He flashed the lantern light into the space below. It was a perilous spot, and after the juniors had reported their discovery, Dr. Sparshott had strictly prohibited them from visiting it again. He was only too thankful that none of them had tumbled into that fearful gulf during their exploration of the mountain cave.

Standing on the dizzy verge with perfect calmness, Sammy looked down into the blackness below. Far as the light fell there was no sign of the bottom. The other side of the gulf could not be seen—it seemed to stretch away endlessly into the mountain, arched over by solid rock.

Sammy's brow was thoughtful. On the edge of the abyss Jim Dainty had picked up a Spanish doubloon—surely an undoubted clue to the treasure. The skeletons found in the cave were obviously those of men who had helped the "Black Marquis" to bring the treasure there from Hayti. And Sammy could not doubt that the gold of King Christophe had been lowered into that deep chasm—the safest hiding-place that the "Marquis of Marmalade" could have found for it.

After surveying the abyss for long minutes with a thoughtful brow, Dr. Sparshott set down the lantern and

fastened one end of the long rope securely to a jutting spur of rock. He tested it several times—Sammy was a careful man. He had the courage of a lion, but he was not the man to take careless risks. Then he fastened the hurricane-lamp to his belt. Taking the rope with both strong, sinewy hands he lowered himself over the precipice.

Hand under hand the active Sammy went down the rope. He had ten fathoms of rope—surely long enough for the purpose? Swinging easily against the rugged, rocky wall, he descended, the lantern-light gleaming on dark rock and dark space.

Lower and lower—till a faint gurgling sound came to him from below. It was the sound of water. He wondered whether the bottom of the chasm was in communication with the sea. It was probable enough. The cavern in the ravine was not a hundred feet above sea-level—probably only seventy or eighty. But if it was flowing water from the sea that gurgled below Sammy, his rope was not long enough to reach it.

Swinging at the end of the sixty-foot rope he stared downward. A gleam came up from the water that washed about his feet as he hung. Five feet below the extreme end of the rope it glimmered, and Sammy hung on to the knotted end and scanned it in the lantern light. The water was in motion; it was no stagnant pool, and it was clear that there was some subterranean inlet from the sea.

"Rotten!" said Sammy.

Another fathom of rope would have done it! He could at least have tested the depth of the water if his rope had reached. As it was he could do nothing. Once he let go the rope there was no possibility of getting hold of it again. He would make another attempt later on: he knew now what was wanted. Strong as his arms were, the strain on them was great, and he prepared to climb up.

As he did so, there came a sudden grasp at his ankle.

Iron-nerved as Sammy was, he started, shuddered, and almost let go the rope in his sudden surprise and horror.

What had seized him in that black depth of the earth? Holding on convulsively he stared down. Something huge, dark, shapeless, loomed on the face of the water, and round his ankle was a whip-like thong. It amazed him, and he dragged wildly to release his foot. But the thin, whip-like thong held fast and thickened as it gripped. With a rush of horror Dr. Sparshott realised what it was—the tentacle of an octopus!

"Oh, heaven!" breathed Sammy Sparshott.

Gripping the rope, he dragged frantically. Not for an instant had he dreamed of an enemy at the bottom of the mountain chasm—and such an enemy!

As he dragged, another hideous tentacle came whipping out of the water, groping blindly for what the first tentacle held. Once that second grip was on him he knew that all was lost. Madly he struggled to release his foot. But he could not release it—and the tentacle thickened and thickened, and dragged and dragged, with a power that no human strength could resist. Sammy, strong as he was, desperate as he was, felt himself being dragged from his hold on the rope.

"The boys!" groaned Sammy. It was like him to think of the boys, who needed his care and protection, at that fearful moment.

One more wild effort he made—in vain! The knotted end of the rope slipped from his aching fingers. For a second he hung with his left hand, while he tore the knife from his belt with his right. The knife was grasped in his hand as he dropped.

The lantern was instantly extinguished. All was blackness. In the blackness, struggling in the water,

Sammy slashed like a madman, and to his joy the grip of the tentacle relaxed. The knife had slashed home, and he was free.

Close to him, round him, under him he felt and heard the horrible tentacles thrashing, winding, seeking—and desperately he swam, he cared not whither, to get beyond their reach. And he could have cried aloud with joy as the thrashing and rippling grew fainter, and he knew that he was for the moment at least out of reach of the groping tentacles of the octopus.

CHAPTER 44.

A Surprise for Fritz!

JIM DAINTY chuckled. "Not finished yet, old Boche bloater?" he asked.

Fritz Splitz gave a groan.

"Nein! I tink tat I neffer finish before! Tat Sammy is a peast and a prute!"

"Buck up and come for a swim, Fritz!"

"Ach! It is too hot to puck up!" groaned Fritz.

The juniors ran down the sand to bathe in the bay. Fritz Splitz was left once more to his unfinished task. It was nearly noon now, and certainly it was hot—it was always hot on Castaway Island.

Fritz sat and glared at the volume of Virgil which Sammy had left him to write his lines from. If that beastly book hadn't been saved from the wreck lines could not have been given out. And a cunning gleam came into Fritz' fish-like saucer-eyes. Suppose that volume disappeared? It would be an end of lines, at any rate.

Fritz blinked round him cautiously and picked up the volume. Throwing it into the sea was his first idea; but the juniors were swimming there, and certainly they would have seen him. Besides, the volume might be washed back by the returning tide. Fritz had to find a safer place than that!

Deeply reflecting on this important matter, Fritz gave a sudden chuckle. He had thought of a safe place—a very safe place indeed. And, taking Virgil under his arm, Fritz Splitz rolled away to the hut for a lantern and then clambered up the ravine.

Fritz did not like clambering—he had a lot of weight to lift. But it was worth while to get rid of P. Vergilius Maro in a spot from which the only Latin book on Castaway Island could not possibly be recovered!

Where Dr. Sparshott was he did not know, or care, so long as he did not meet him. He lighted the lantern and rolled into the cavern. Grinning, he turned into the fissure that led into the cavern. Holding up the light before him, Fritz trod on very cautiously, peering uneasily to and fro in the shadows.

The loneliness and silence of the deep cavern banished the fat grin from his face. He remembered the skeletons, and did not like the thought of them. But he kept on till he reached the end of the fissure, flashing his light over the verge and keeping well back from it.

In his other hand he lifted the hated volume.

"Peastly pook!" growled Fritz. "I tink tat vunce you go town tere you neffer gum up again after! I tink tat tat peastly prute Sammy giff me no more lines from tat prute of a pook!"

A moment more, and the volume would have been hurled into the deep chasm.

But at that moment there came a sound from below. Fritz was so startled that he dropped the book and almost dropped the lantern.

It was the booming echo of a shout far below.

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz "Vat vas tat?"

Terror rooted him where he stood. His fat knees knocked together, and his saucer-eyes almost bulged from his podgy face. Thoughts of skeletons and

ghosts icy shivers down his back.

The booming roar echoed and thundered again. It was repeated in countless echoes in the hollows of the mountain, and it was hard to make out clearly. But Fritz realised that it was a human voice that shouted, and at length he made out words:

"Help! Hallo, Grimslade! He'p!"

"Oh, grunbs!" gasped Fritz. "Oh, grikey! Tat is Sammy! Ach, mein gootness!"

"Help!" boomed up again.

Fritz gazed at the black pit in horror. None of the juniors knew where Sammy had gone that morning. But Fritz knew—now! He was at the bottom of that fearful gulf, and unable to get out! Fritz dared not lean over the verge; he dared not step within three feet of it. But he collected his wits at last and shouted back:

"I hear you! I will go for help meinself after!"

His fat, squealing voice did not carry half the distance down the chasm. Forgetful of the book lying at his feet, Fritz turned and made his way hurriedly back along the fissure into the cavern. There he broke into a breathless run, making for the mouth of the cave.

He was streaming with perspiration when he emerged into the daylight at last. Leaving the lantern there, he scrambled and clambered down the ravine, gurgling for breath, tottered through the palm grove and staggered down the beach.

The chums of Grimslade had come out after their swim and were dressing on the sandy beach when they sighted Fritz. They stared at him in wonder. Crimson with exertion, bedewed with perspiration, Fritz came rolling towards them, waving his fat hands in wild excitement.

"My giddy goloshes!" exclaimed Ginger. "Has the Boche bleater gone potty?"

The juniors wonderingly ran up the

beach to meet the breathless Fritz. He tottered against a boulder, gurgling.

"Gum!" he spluttered. "Gum quick! Mein gootness! Sammy—"

"Anything happened to Sammy?" exclaimed Dick Dawson.

"He fall in te pig hole in te gavel!" gasped Fritz. "Mein gootness! I tink it vas vun ghost ven he shout! Ach!"

"If you're pulling our legs, Fritz—" began Ginger suspiciously.

"Come on!" rapped Jim Dainty. The terror and excitement in Fritz' fat face told that he was speaking the truth. Jim Dainty started at a run for the ravine and the other fellows rushed after him.

In hot haste they clambered up the ravine and raced along the rock-ledge over the stream. At the cavern's mouth they found Fritz' lantern, which he had left burning. Catching it up, Jim Dainty ran into the cave, the other fellows at his heels.

They reached the fissure at top speed, and then proceeded more cautiously. At the end of it, on the dizzy verge of the abyss, they crawled on hands and knees. Ginger gave a shout as he spotted the rope Sammy had tied to the spur of rock, which Fritz had not gone near enough to the chasm to observe. Jim Dainty, leaning over the dizzy edge, shouted:

"Sammy!"

"Help!" came back an answering shout from the black depths.

Jim Dainty fastened the lantern to his belt, grasped the rope and swung himself down into the darkness.

CHAPTER 45.

For Life or Death!

SAMMY SPARSHOTT had given up hope. In the black darkness at the bottom of the chasm he had swum out of reach of the thrashing octopus, and the sound of the fearful brute had died away at last. Prob-

ably, missing its victim, the brute had sunk again to the bottom of the sea-pool—perhaps had left it by the deep channel that communicated with the sea. Sammy could not know!

There was no gleam of light in the dense darkness. Swimming cautiously, in dread of attracting again the attention of the terrible creature, the headmaster of Grimslade made the circuit of the sea-pool. On every side he touched cold, wet rock, and groped over it in the faint hope of finding some projection by which he could climb. But he found nothing but smooth, clammy rock. It was impossible to climb even as far as the end of the hanging rope, even if he could have discovered where the rope was—which he could not.

All he could do was to keep afloat till his strength failed—or till the octopus found him once more. He had not told the boys where he was going—there was no help. Even if they missed him while he yet lived they would never guess where he was. And he had forbidden them to enter the cave without his presence.

In that terrible hour the courage of the Head of Grimslade was put to a severe test. But he was cool, calm, steadfast as ever. He had looked on death many times, and he was not afraid of it. His chief thought was for the boys in his charge, who needed him.

Then suddenly the blackness was broken by a glimmer of light far above, and Sammy shouted desperately. He did not hear the answering call of Fritz Splitz; the light vanished, and all was dark and silent again. And Sammy Sparshott wondered whether it had been a fancy, whether his eyes had deceived him.

It was more than half an hour later—but it seemed to him hours, long hours, if not days—that a light flashed again from the darkness above, and this time it stayed. Faintly from the great height came a voice calling his name.

"That is Dainty!" breathed Sammy. And he shouted back for help.

The position of the light, winking and twinkling over the edge high above, showed him the position of the juniors. Guided by it, he swam back to the spot where the rope hung. He moved with caution, fearful of the octopus. But, to his intense thankfulness, there was no sign for the moment of the terrible beast.

He heard a rustling and brushing above his head in the dark. It was made by Jim Dainty as he swung himself down the rope. Sammy shouted:

"Go back, go back!"

"I'm coming, sir!" called Jim Dainty.

"Go back!" roared Sammy. "There is danger here—fearful danger!"

Jim's voice came back coolly:

"I know. That's why I'm coming!"

Heedless for once of his headmaster's orders, Jim swung himself down and down, the light of the lantern as it neared the swimmer, marking his descent. He reached the end of the rope at last, and, hanging on with both hands to the big knot, stared below. In the lantern-light the white, drawn face of Sammy Sparshott looked up from below.

On the glimmering surface of the pool there came a stirring and rippling, and Sammy Sparshott's flesh crept on his bones as he knew that it was the sea-devil stirring in the depths. The light perhaps had reached its plate-like eyes in its lair. Hoarsely Sammy cried to the boy above:

"Dainty! Go back—go back! I command you! Get two of the longest ropes in the hut. Join them and lower it. But go back! There is an octopus here—it may reach for you at any moment. Go back!"

Jim Dainty set his teeth hard. Something that looked like the thong of a whip lashed from the water—seeking its prey. It was long before the boy forgot the fearful horror of that moment. But he did not flinch.

"Get hold of me, sir!" His voice

came staccato. "You can climb over me while I hold the rope! Quick!"

Sammy groaned.

"You could never stand the strain! Go back—I will not drag you to death!"

"I won't go back! Quick!" yelled Jim as the tentacle dashed the water only a yard from the swimming headmaster. "Oh, quick, Sammy—quick!"

A hideous, clammy thing in the water touched Sammy. He shuddered at the contact.

"Dainty—go back!"

"Not without you, sir!" said Jim between his teeth.

"Then hold on, and Heaven help both of us!"

Jim Dainty clamped his hands to the knotted end of the rope. Sammy's grasp was on him now, and as he hung Jim had to bear the whole weight of the headmaster of Grinslade. With teeth set he bore it, though every second it seemed that he must be torn from his hold.

A tentacle began to wind round Sammy's waist, but Jim kicked it away. He held on desperately, and Sammy's grasp passed him and fastened on the rope above him. The boy panted as he was relieved of the weight.

"Go up!" breathed Sammy. "You first, boy! Go!"

This time Jim obeyed him. He clambered quickly and actively up the rope hand-over-hand, and as soon as he was clear above, Dr. Sparshott climbed after him. As he climbed, he felt the gliding tentacle of the octopus touch his leg and curl round it. But a quick jerk freed him before the hold could close, and, with a desperate effort, Sammy swarmed up the rope.

"Jim!" panted Dick Dawson, as his chum's face appeared dimly at the rock-edge above. He reached out, grasped Dainty and dragged him to safety. A minute later Sammy Sparshott—drenched, exhausted, white but cool—stood with the juniors.

Deep down in the abyss the sea-devil settled in the dark waters—grim guar-

dian of the treasure that had been sunk there long ago.

"Splitz!"

"Ach!"

"Your lines!"

"Tat pook is lost!" gasped Fritz Splitz. "I know not vat become of him—I tink perhaps some monkey gum and snap him up! Mitout tat pook I gan-not do tose lines, mein gootness!"

Dr. Samuel Sparshott looked grimly at the fat German. Fritz hastened to enlarge his statement.

"I see tat monkey!" he said. "I see him run from te trees, and he grab tat pook and run off mit it."

"And he left it in the cavern—what?" asked Dr. Sparshott.

Sammy drew from his pocket the volume of Virgil which he had picked up before leaving the fissure with the juniors—nothing escaped Sammy's eyes. Fritz jumped.

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"Mein gootness!" he gasped.

"Why did you take the book there, Splitz?" asked Sammy quietly.

"It—it—it was not to trow it into te pig hole," groaned Fritz. "I tink not of tat at all! I—I—I——"

The juniors grinned. They had wondered how Fritz had discovered Sammy's peril. Now they knew!

"You young rascal!" said Sammy. "Play such a trick again, and I will give you the whopping of your life! I shall forgive you this time, as it was very fortunate you came into the cavern. And you need not do the lines."

Whereat Fritz beamed. And when Sammy went into the hut to change his drenched clothing Fritz chuckled.

"Tat is all right before, ain't it? How ferry lucky it vas tat Sammy trop into tat pig hole, vat? But for tat I should have to do tose peastly lines after. So I tink—varoooooooooh!"

Fritz roared as all the juniors kicked him.

CHAPTER 48.

Something from the Sea!

BOAT!"

A

"A log!"

"A boat!" roared Ginger Rawlinson.

"A log!" repeated Jim Dainty.

"You silly ass!"

"You frabjous fathead!"

On the beach of Castaway Island the schoolboys stood in a group, staring across the blue waters at a dark object, far distant at the moment, which was drifting into the bay. The boys were enjoying "break" during lessons—for they had lessons even on Castaway Island.

Ginger declared that it was a boat. Jim Dainty asserted that it was a log. Fritz Splitz rather fancied that it was a whale, but nobody heeded Fritz Splitz. Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean, as loyal Redmayes men, backed up Ginger, asserting that it was a boat. Dick Dawson, as a loyal White's House man, backed up Jim Dainty, and

declared that any fool could have seen that it was a log. In point of fact, nobody, fool or otherwise, could quite see what it was.

"Anybody but a fatheaded, frabjous, fozzling, squint-eyed White's tick could see that it was a boat!" said Ginger Rawlinson.

"Anybody but a potty, piffing, pie-faced Redmayes owl could see that it was a log!" retorted Jim Dainty.

"If you want a thick ear——" roared Ginger excitedly.

Dr. Samuel Sparshott, headmaster of Grimsdale School, looked up. Sammy Sparshott was seated on a boulder at a little distance, cleaning a revolver. It was the revolver he had taken from Captain Luz when the treasure-seekers had invaded Castaway Island. A single cartridge remained to Sammy—and he treasured it more than gold or silver or precious stones.

That revolver was the only firearm on the island, and that cartridge the only cartridge. If peril came again, as was only too likely, there was still one shot in the locker.

"Boys!" Dr. Sparshott's voice was quiet, but it reached the juniors, and the quietest word from Sammy had more effect on the Grimsladers than the loudest shout from anyone else.

Dr. Sparshott, slipping the revolver into his pocket, rose from the boulder and came towards the juniors on the beach.

"What is it?" asked Sammy.

"A boat, sir!"

"A log, sir!"

"Fetch my field-glasses from the hut, Splitz."

"Ach! I tink tat Tainty fetch tem quicker, sir—or Chinger. I vas so der-ribly dired——"

"It is precisely because you are lazy, Splitz, that I am sending you," said Dr. Sparshott calmly. "But Dainty and Rawlinson may go with you and help you to move quickly."

There was a chuckle from the juniors. Dr. Sparshott, with his eyes fixed on the floating object at the mouth of the

bay, did not look at them, and so, perhaps, he was not aware that Dainty and Rawlinson grasped each a fat ear and ran Fritz up the beach, roaring.

"Mein gootness!" roared Fritz. "Tat you led go before! I tink tat you pull out mein ears after! Yaroooooh!"

"Put it on!" grinned Ginger.

"Peast and a prute!" gasped Fritz. "Prutes and peasts and pounders! Ach! Mein ears!"

Fritz put it on. He fairly raced. With Jim and Ginger going fast, holding his ears, Fritz ran his hardest. He did not want to part with his ears.

They reached the hut in record time. Fritz plunged in breathlessly and unhooked the leather case containing the field-glasses from the wall. He held them out of the doorway to the two juniors.

"Take tem to Sammy!" he gasped.

"You heard what Sammy said!" chuckled Jim. "Come on! Get hold of his flaps, Ginger!"

"Peast and a prute!" howled Fritz, and he dodged the clutching hands and raced down to the beach.

After him went Ginger and Jim Dainty, laughing. Again the fat German did the distance in record time.

Dr. Sparshott smiled as he took the glasses.

"Thank you, Splitz. You have been very quick!"

Sammy opened the glasses and clamped them to his keen grey eyes, focusing them on the drifting object in the sea. Fritz von Splitz, gurgling for breath, sat down in the sand and mopped his steaming brow.

The other fellows watched Dr. Sparshott eagerly. He lowered the glasses, which had brought the distant object quite near.

"It is the floating trunk of a tree," he said. "It is drifting in on the tide, and you will soon see it for yourselves. It is much larger than it appears to the naked eye. There is a great mass of branches."

Dr. Sparshott walked up the beach. Ginger suppressed a grunt.

"I suppose it's a tree, if Sammy

says so," he said. "But it really does seem to look more like a boat!"

The soft answer turneth away wrath! Ginger grinned. Heads in chancery were forgotten, and the juniors gathered on the water's edge to watch the driftwood floating in on the tide.

CHAPTER 47.

The Jaguar!

SOME tree!" remarked Streaky Bacon.

It was "some" tree, indeed! There were big trees on Castaway Island, but they were hopelessly dwarfed by the huge mass that came floating in on the tide to the golden beach. As it drew nearer, there was no doubt what it was—a gigantic tree of the ceiba species, which grows to an immense size in Southern America. Half-submerged, it rolled and plunged on the water, the tide bearing it steadily on.

"Jever see such a whacker?" exclaimed Ginger. "Beats the jolly old oaks at Grimslade—what?"

"Just a few!" said Jim Dainty, laughing.

"My giddy goloshes! I'm going to be the first man on it!" declared Ginger, and he tucked up his trousers and waded out.

"Not in your lifetime!" answered Jim Dainty, and he waded out, too.

The other fellows followed their example, all keen to be the first to clamber on the floating giant and float ashore with it.

"Come on, Fritz!" shouted Dick Dawson.

Snort from Friedrich von Splitz.

"Ach! I tink two dimes before I dakes tat drouble," he answered. "Vy for you vant to glimb on tat tree, plockheads?"

And Fritz Splitz sat in the sand and watched.

Sweeping in on the tide from the Atlantic came the great mass. Jim Dainty, careless of a wetting—drying was very rapid in the scorching sun-

shine of Castaway Island—swam out to meet it. He was touching the tip of a vast branch, forty feet long, when Ginger overtook him and jerked him by an ear.

"Urrrrh!" gurgled Jim, as he let go the branch and ducked under.

Ginger chortled.

"Redmayes House first!" he said, and caught the big branch and clambered on. He clambered actively along it to the trunk, stood there, and waved his hat. "Who's first?" he roared.

"Urrrrh! I'll jolly well come and tip you off!" spluttered Jim Dainty.

"Bow-wow!"

Jim Dainty climbed on. Dawson and Streaky and Sandy were close behind, but a swirl of the tide caught the driftwood, and it swerved and was carried from their reach. The great mass rolled and pitched, and Jim plunged into the vast mass of branches and dying foliage.

He grabbed and clutched for a hold, disappearing from the sight of the other fellows. His hand slid along something smooth and silky in the midst of the dripping foliage, and a sudden, startling, nerve-racking snarl sounded in his ears. His heart almost leaped into his throat as he realised that it was the skin of an animal that his hand had touched. There was something living hidden in the foliage of the great tree.

In his sudden, startled surprise, he lost his hold and went plunging headlong down through the branches and leaves to the sea below. It was fortunate for him, for even as he fell, he had a glimpse of a sinuous, cat-like, strangely marked form, of two hungry, glaring eyes, of a cavernous mouth, opened and showing fearful teeth.

A claw lashed after him, missing him by a foot as he plunged downwards. The lashing claw tore leaves and tendrils, cutting like a razor-edge. The snarl was savagely repeated.

A second, and Jim was in water under the branches. With his heart thumping like a hammer, he swam below the surface to the open. The

jaguar—he knew that it must be a jaguar—was hidden in the thickness of the foliage; but there was Ginger, standing on the massive trunk, waving his arm. He yelled to Jim as he saw him in the water.

"Come on, tip me off, if you can, old bean! Who's king of the jolly old castle?" yelled Ginger.

Jim, keeping clear of the branches that held the jaguar, swam desperately for the trunk. He shrieked to Ginger:

"Danger! Jump off—quick!"

"Rats!" grinned Ginger. "Where's the jolly old danger, I'd like to know? You can't pull my leg like that, you White's tick!"

"Jump!" yelled Jim frantically. "There's a jaguar in the tree!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ginger. "Pile it on!"

But Ginger's merry laughter was cut short the next moment. From the mass of branches a sinuous form clambered on the trunk, and at the terrifying sight Ginger slipped, but just managed to clutch hold of a branch with one hand.

"My giddy goloshes!" he spluttered, for at that moment the jaguar sprang.

"Jump!" shrieked Jim.

Just in time, Ginger dropped into the water, and the screaming brute landed right on the branch.

Loud, fierce, nerve-thrilling rang the disappointed scream of the jaguar. Clawing the trunk, it stared with blazing eyes at the boys in the sea. In hot haste they swam for the beach. The great tree, drifting in, was almost touching the sand now.

Giving it a wide berth, Jim Dainty & Co. plunged and scrambled ashore. They knew—from lessons in Natural History at Grimslade—that the jaguar, almost alone of the cat tribe, will take to the water in pursuit of its prey. In frantic haste, they scrambled up the beach.

"Look out!" shrieked Ginger.

"Sammy!" yelled Jim Dainty.

Like a flash the sinuous body was launched through the air, landing on

the beach. Screaming, the jaguar clawed the sand.

"Run!" panted Dick Dawson.

"Ach himmel!" yelled Fritz Splitz. His saucer-eyes bulged from his head at sight of the jaguar.

Nobody could have imagined that Fatty Fritz was capable of moving so swiftly as he moved now. He was up like a stone from a catapult, and bolting for the hut.

Dr. Sparshott was in the doorway of the hut. He started, and stared with almost unbelieving eyes at the jaguar. There were no wild animals on Castaway Island, and it was from hundreds of miles away in a drifting, uprooted tree that this terrible enemy had come.

But, startled as he was, Sammy Sparshott was prompt and swift. That one of the running schoolboys would have been seized and dragged down by the famished beast had not their headmaster been there was almost certain. In the twinkling of an eye, Sammy caught up the axe and bounded forward.

He had no time to reach the jaguar. It was springing again, while he was still twenty feet away. He hurled the axe with all his strength and with unerring aim, and it struck the great beast fairly in its foaming jaws. The jaguar yelled as it dropped short in its leap, blood streaming down its muzzle.

"Into the hut!" roared Sammy.

The juniors hardly needed telling. Fatty Fritz, fairly flying, got in first, headlong, and rolled over. Five juniors bolted in after him, like rabbits into a burrow with a terrier behind them. Dr. Sparshott followed them in and slammed the door and braced himself against it as a heavy body crashed outside.

With burning eyes and blood-flecked jaws the jaguar leaped, crashing on the door, the weight forcing it half-open, in spite of Sammy's great strength.

The huge beast strove to squeeze in. Its panting, steaming breath reached the horror-stricken castaways.

Jim Dainty leaped forward and drove a heavy cudgel fairly into the gleaming jaws. The teeth snapped at it, tearing it from his hand. A second later Ginger Rawlinson drove with a long boathook, and the jaguar screamed horribly as the barbed point sank into its neck.

There was a shout from Sammy. He had snatched up his revolver, and had jammed into it the one cartridge which was all he had.

"Stand back!" yelled Sammy.

He thrust the muzzle of the revolver full in the glaring eyes of the maddened jaguar and pulled the trigger.

Crash!

There was a heavy report in the confined space of the hut, and a terrible scream from the jaguar. For a moment Sammy's heart almost stood still. Had he fired his last shot and failed to kill the fearful animal?

But that terrible cry was the jaguar's last.

The heavy bullet had penetrated the brain, and the great head drooped and those fearful claws relaxed at last.

The jaguar was dead!

Relieved from the terrible tension, the juniors gave a cheer.

"Hurrah! Good old Sammy!"

And Dr. Sparshott smiled a grim smile.

"My giddy goloshes!" grinned Ginger.

"Lucky for us that we had that one shot left in the locker! That brute meant getting in to us!"

"Lucky indeed! And now," said Sammy Sparshott genially, "when we have skinned him, we shall have a handsome fur rug for the hut!"

Many and perilous were the further adventures that were to befall the schoolboy castaways before they saw the walls of Grimslade School in far-off Yorkshire again. But through them all, inspired by the undefeatable Sammy, they kept up their spirits in true Grimslade style, as the "Cheerio Castaways."

THE END

OUR MAGAZINE CORNER.

THE GETTING OF GOLD!

ALMOST every day there is some act of heroism in the gold mines of Africa that is seldom heard of by the rest of the world. Danger is ever present deep down in the bowels of the earth, and it is due to the courage of the miners that the loss of life is so small. Floods, winds and many other dangers have to be faced in the mining of the precious metal.

Trapped for Ten Days!

For instance, a few years ago heavy rains flooded the Witwatersrand Mine of the Eastern Rand, and underground torrents were gathering. At a low level there was a white overseer at work with his black gang, when suddenly one man dropped his drill and gave a terrified scream.

Almost immediately there was a black wall of water rushing along the working, carrying everything with it. The overseer was swept off his feet and carried along the tunnel at an alarming speed. He strove desperately to grasp the stone roof which his head kept bumping, but in vain. Eventually, however, he succeeded in getting a grip on a ledge. He then hauled his bruised and battered body on to it, where, twelve hours later, a rescue party found him. But what of the others?

For ten days the pumps were working at full pressure, and then a rescue party descended the mine again. As they waded through the workings, with water up to their waist, they heard a tapping against one of the rock walls. It seemed impossible that anybody could still be alive down there, after ten days' flooding. But, as the water slowly filtered away, an opening appeared in the wall, and one of the rescuers swam inside with a lantern. He was met with an amazing sight, for

a dozen exhausted survivors of the flood were trapped in a working.

Dynamite—that is another danger of the gold mines.

Under the supervision of white men, natives drill holes in the quartz and insert charges of gelignite. Then a native, using what is known as a "cheesa" stick, walks up to each fuse and ignites it. The workers then have to get clear within three minutes.

But on one occasion a native was lighting fuses when one exploded before he had time to retreat to a safe distance. A white miner heard the shot explode, suspected that something was amiss, and went along the working, where he found the native lying unconscious, a few feet away from the rock face. He had been struck by a piece of rock that was blasted away when the charge exploded.

The miner immediately picked up the native and staggered to safety with his burden. He had just cleared the danger zone, exhausted—for the place was full of fumes—when the remaining nine charges exploded, and tons of rock fell on the spot where he was a few moments previously!

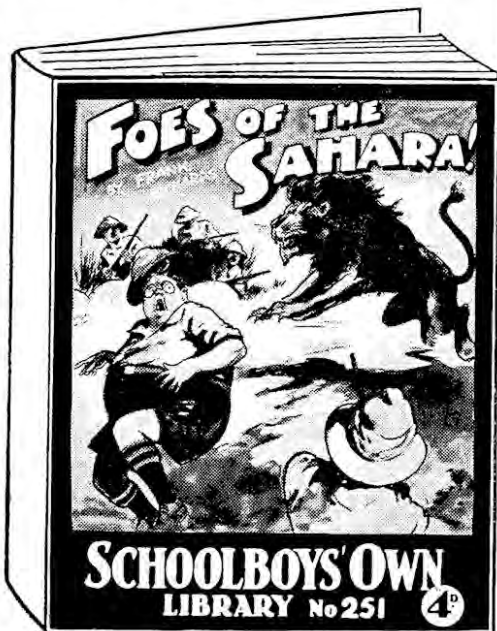
Yet another danger in gold mines is the wind that sweeps through the workings like a typhoon. These winds are so fierce that they sweep men away as easily as floods. It was one of these that rushed through the workings of the Langlaagte Estate Mine in 1920, and tipped five natives into an ore-pass one hundred and fifty feet below the level of the working. The senior mine captain was brought by a telephone message, and he decided to go down right away. Knowing full well the risk he ran from falling rocks, he lowered himself, and landed in slime and mud up to his waist.

He found that the natives were nearly buried; three of them could only just be seen. It was only due to his plucky efforts that two of those natives saw the light of day again.

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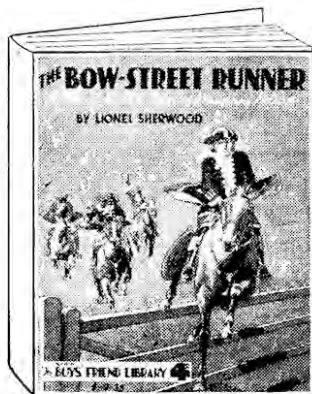


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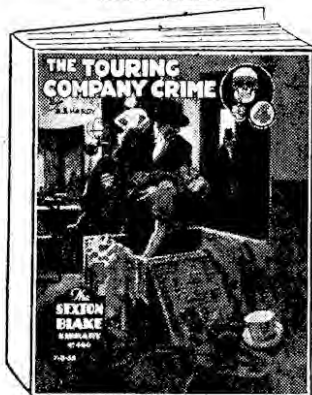
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