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No. 1 OF THE NEW RANGER: BIGGER, BRIGHTER, BETTER!



RANGER

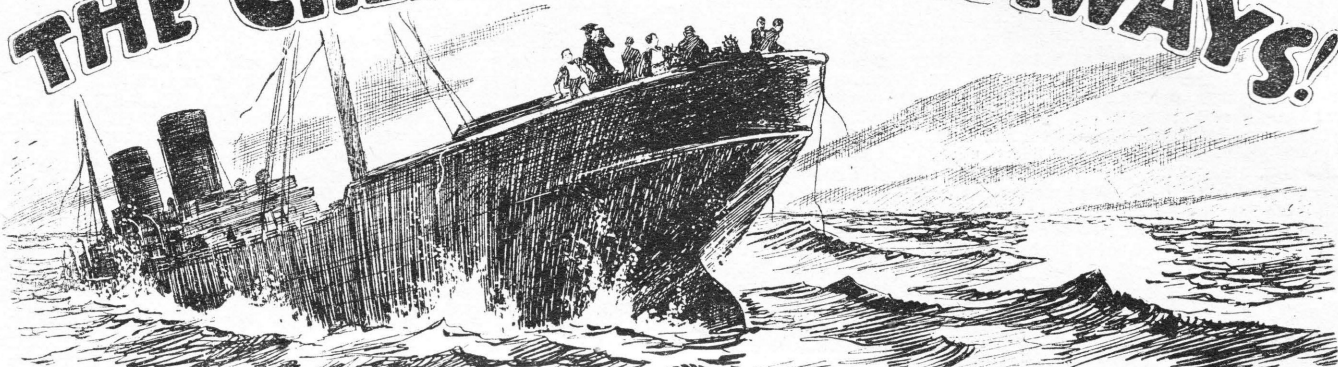
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7
SUPER
STORIES
INSIDE!

ADRIFT IN THE MIGHTY ATLANTIC! SUPER STORY OF BREATHLESS ADVENTURE!

THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!



Starring the Chums of Grimslade and Dr. "Sammy" Sparschott—the Head.



By Famous **FRANK RICHARDS.**

Out of the Frying-pan into the Fire!



"OTTEN!" yawned Jim Dainty.

"Beastly!" agreed Dick Dawson.

Ginger and Bacon and Be a n 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. Sparschott, headmaster of Grimslade, was sorting out books. The Grimslade fellows were enjoying their 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 biees! 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 direed to verk!"

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

"Prutal 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 Sparschott was ready for them, Fritz Splitz rolled away forward, and disappeared into the forecabin. Fritz was aware

that there was a door from the forecabin 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 forecabin, and he stared at Fritz as he rolled down and in. Fritz was equal to the occasion.

"Captain Gootte vant you on teck!" he said; and the man, supposing that it was a message from Captain Gootte, left the forecabin.

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 Gootte was, in fact, the skipper of a "tramp" steamer, turning an extra honest penny by taking holiday-cruisers on this trip to South

IT STARTED AS A NOVEL HOLIDAY CRUISE FOR THE CHEERY CHUMS OF GRIMSLADE SCHOOL — AND DEVELOPED INTO THE MOST PERILOUS AND AMAZING ADVENTURE OF THEIR LIVES! BUT WERE JIM DAINTY AND CO. DOWNHEARTED? NO!

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! Somevun 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 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 geek?" came the snarling voice. "Did you come here to look for a stowaway?"

"Himmel! Nein! If I know tat you vas here I vould not gum!" roared Fritz. "Nopoddy know tat you vas here."

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

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

There was a harsh laugh. "You figure I'd trust you? I guess if Captain Gootte 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 Gootte 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!

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's snore, "hefty" as it was, had not really drowned the buzz of the engines.

Dr. Sparschott glanced along the deck. Fritz Splitz was not to be seen. Sammy concluded that he had gone into the cabins.

"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, except that 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!"

"Ooooooooh!"

"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 Grimslade 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!

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 wood, 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's 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 'Frisko' 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 foredeck. 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 want to drown!" wailed Fritz. "Mein gootness! I wish tat I vas pack in Chermanny!"

"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 booker? 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 timbers 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! Gum! Will you not gum, peasts and prutes! I vill not be trowed, ain't it! Gum! Ach! Gum!"

But only the roar of the hurricane answered Fritz Splitz.

Left on the Wreck!

"COURAGE, my boys!" said Dr. Sparshott 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 in 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



For a moment it seemed that the boat would be dashed against the sinking hull and smashed to fragments by the collision. The seamen fended desperately and somehow the boat was shoved off—leaving Dr. Sparshott and the Grimslade chums stranded on the sinking steamer.

of the boats 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 fo'c'sle. 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 grubs!" gasped Fritz, panting with relief. "Mein gootness! I tink tat I trown mit meinsel in tat peastly blace, mit tat peast tat scuttle te ship pefore! 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. Slinging Fritz Splitz aside, the headmaster of Grimslade met the ruffian with a right-hander that landed like a sledgehammer blow between his evil eyes. There was a yell from Ezra Sarson, and he went stumbling headlong down the ladder, the knife flying 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 fo'c'sle. 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 boats are 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—only one

(Continued on page 23.)

"PUPS" OF THE BULLDOG BREED!

(Continued from page 14.)

Under Arrest!

RATATATATATAT! Ratatata! The music of the machine-guns clattered across the searchlight-ridden sky. Like an angry wasp, Harry sent his Nieuport darting in and out, now aiming at the wing-spread of the Gotha, underneath three hundred and sixty pound bombs.

Ratatata! Then— The whole world seemed to go black and yellow, and green and red—all in one never-to-be-forgotten deafening sound. The Nieuport was tossed heavenwards and pitched haphazardly, willy-nilly, regardless of the human hand at the controls.

Across the heavens came another mighty explosion, for a chance bullet had penetrated the first bomb and fired it, thus automatically exploding the second.

The ghastly sight of the burning plane, drifting like a myriad torches in a hundred different directions as the plane fell apart like matchwood, was a spectacle Harry never forgot.

Five minutes later he was standing on the aerodrome, frantically gripping the hands of Tubby and Chris. By providence, the pair of them had emerged from "crash" landings none the worse save for a severe shaking. Their Nieuports, grizzly wrecks on the spacious aerodrome, would never soar aloft again.

The French officer danced delightedly around the three re-united chums.

"It was magnificent. It was wonderful. Such bravery! La belle France is proud and grateful, messieurs! Oh, but here comes the general!"

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than he pounced forward, seized each of the chums in turn, and kissed him on each cheek.

"Here, I say, stow it!" growled Harry, unaccustomed to the French method of salutation. "Think we're a set of bloomin' girls?"

But he had to go through with it, as did Tubby and Chris. Then the general took part in the wild excitement, and he, too, embraced the heroes of the hour.

"This is too thick! Quick, fellows, follow me. I'm off!" gasped Harry.

He was as good as his word; for when the general bent to kiss him again, he kissed nothing but empty air. Harry was streaking for the roadway just as fast as his legs would carry him. After him galloped Tubby and Chris. Unfortunately, Harry led them right in the path of a group of angry "red caps" who had spent fruitless hours looking for them.

The angry-faced first lieutenant in charge was the first to recognise them.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he roared. "Here are the very chaps we want! Gentlemen—gentlemen, I must ask you to stop!"

The breathless trio more or less had to stop, for the lieutenant and his grim looking "policemen" barred the way.

"Mr. Bellamy, Mr. Wren, and Mr. Angel," growled the lieutenant. "I must ask you to accompany me to the A.P.M.'s office. In other words, gentlemen, you must consider yourselves under arrest."

And with the lieutenant leading the way, and hemmed in at the rear by the red-capped policemen, Harry, Chris and Tubby were soon standing before a stern-faced, weary A.P.M.

"So I've got you at last!" he thundered. "A nice dance you blamed kids have led me and my men to-night. Your papers, please. Which of you," he grunted wrathfully, "is Jonathan Percival Edmond James Wallace Angel?"

"Little me," spoke up Tubby, with a faint grin.

"It seems that you're under age, too. The headmaster of Rugglesbridge College has complained to the authorities. You are to be sent back to England. And that applies to you others. In the meantime, gentlemen, you will consider yourselves under open arrest, and report here to me without fail at nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

"If it's all the same to you, sir," said Harry wearily, "we would much sooner stay in the cells here to-night."

The A.P.M. shrugged his shoulders.

"Please yourselves about that, gentlemen," he remarked. "There is an empty cell—you may consider it yours, if you wish."

It was three o'clock in the morning when a red-faced and very apologetic Assistant Provost Marshal personally visited the three chums in their scantily furnished cell. By that time headquarters' telephones had been busily whirring, and the three unknown heroes of the night had been traced to the A.P.M.'s charge.

"Gentlemen," said the A.P.M., who, apart from his onerous job was a sportsman at heart, "I owe you an apology."

"That's all right," grunted Harry sleepily, speaking for himself and his pals.

"And, gentlemen," continued the A.P.M., "I have good news for you. The objections raised by your guardians have, under pressure, been withdrawn. You are now, of course, free to leave here when you like!"

"Hurrah!" Three sleepy-faced heroes cheered lustily.

"Furthermore," said the A.P.M., "you will be pleased to know that the French Military authorities are strongly urging that you should be decorated with the French Legion of Honour. Even now, gentlemen, the French general is waiting to congratulate you afresh and—"

"That settles it!" said three youthful voices in effect. "We're staying here. We've had enough of that French saluting nonsense. Tell 'em to keep their mouldy medals."

And the three tousled, sleepy heads clumped down on the hard plank beds—and three heavy artificial snores rocked the silence.

(The "Pups" may be lacking in age—but they're not lacking in pluck, as they again prove in next week's thrilling War-flying story. Don't miss it!)

THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!

(Continued from page 11.)

pair of unwilling paws! They, of course, belonged to Friedrich von Splitz. Comforted by Dr. Sparshott's belief that the Spindrift would remain afloat till daylight, Fritz remembered two important things—that he was hungry, and that he was tired.

The other fellows were hungry, too, and they sorted out a hasty supper; then they set to work, under Dr. Sparshott's direction, sorting out the materials and tools to make a raft, and the necessary things to pack on to it when made. Leaving them to it, Fritz von Splitz crept silently away to an obscure corner, rolled himself in a coat, and settled down to the sleep he considered that he sorely needed.

"Where is Splitz?" barked Sammy suddenly.

"Missing again!" grinned Ginger Rawlinson. "Catch him turning up when work's going on!"

"Find him!" said Sammy briefly.

It was not easy to find Fritz in the faint glimmer of starlight, if the Grimsladers had had to depend on sight to spot him. But Fritz, when he settled down to slumber, had forgotten that it would be possible to track him by ear, once he was asleep. From the obscure corner where the fat German had settled down there came a rumbling sound, that guided the grinning juniors to his resting place.

Snore!

Jim Dainty chuckled.

"Here he is!"

Fritz von Splitz, in happy slumber, was dreaming that he was safe on land again, and eating endless tuck. From that delightful vision he was suddenly dragged, as five pairs of hands grasped him and jerked him from the deck. He landed on the deck again with a terrific bump!

"Ach!" yelled Fritz. "Himmel! Who—vat—vish—yarooooop!"

Bump!

"You'll have a lot more if you don't look alive and lend a hand!" said Jim Dainty.

"Come on!"

"Peast and a prute!" groaned Fritz.

But there was no help for Fritz, and he was kept as busy as the rest, 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 sunrise 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 school-boys on the rolling, plunging hull of the Spindrift might have fancied themselves the sole inhabitants of a world of water.

(Stranded on a sinking steamer! Is there any hope of rescue for the shipwrecked schoolboys? Don't fail to read next week's thrill-packed story.)

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