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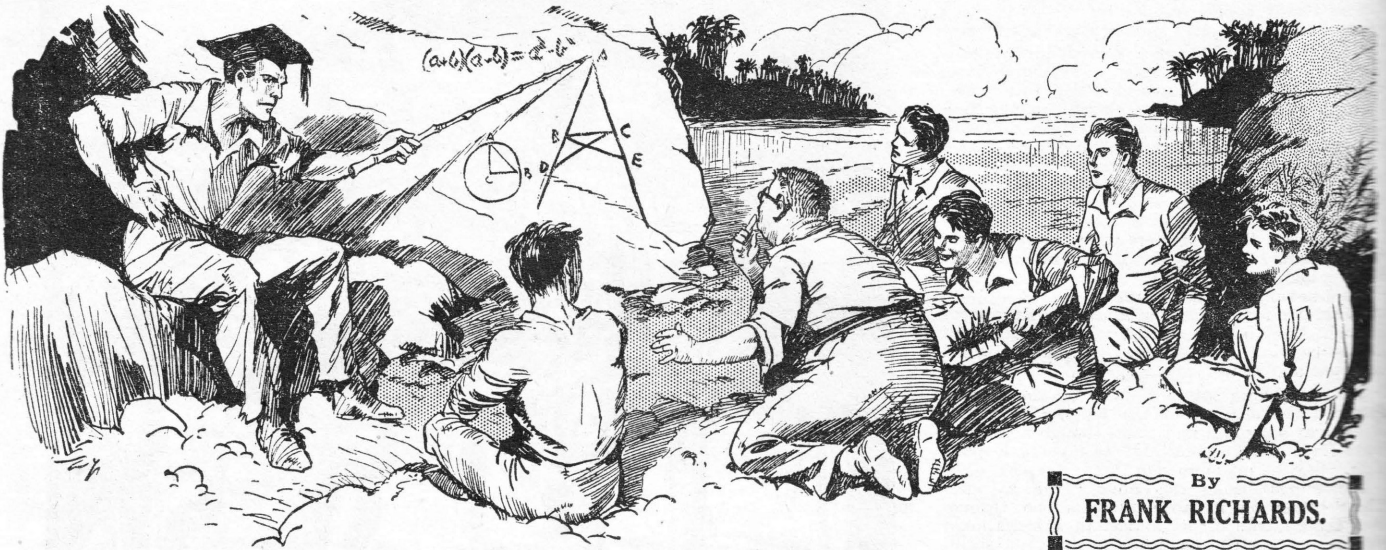
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THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS !



By
FRANK RICHARDS.

A Terrible Enemy !

“**T**HE jaguar !” breathed Jim Dainty. “Look !”

Where the stream from the island mountain cascaded down the rocky ravine, on Castaway Island, Jim Dainty & Co. were gathered on the high rocks over the waterfall. Below them, the water dropped, foaming and splashing, into the lower stream. At a little distance, it flowed away smoothly and calmly, by the palm-tree grove, down to the golden beach and the wide bay that opened on the Atlantic.

It was bright morning on the lonely West Indian island, and for hours the shipwrecked schoolboys had been watching—and now Jim Dainty was the first to see the sinuous, cat-like, beautifully-marked figure that crept through the slanting palms towards the stream.

It was the jaguar that, the previous day, had drifted to Castaway Island, on an up-rooted tree from some South American river. Since the fierce brute had driven them from their hut on the beach, the Grimslade castaways had seen nothing of it, though during the night more than once its fierce howling had reached their ears from a distance.

Lean and hungry, famished from its long voyage on the floating ceiba tree, the jaguar was ravenous for prey, and they knew that during the dark hours it had been hunting for them—but their refuge above the waterfall baffled its keen scent. Now it was seen again, in the bright sunlight, creeping down to the lower stream from the palms.

“It’s scented us at last !” muttered Ginger Rawlinson.

“Better call the Head !” murmured Dick Dawson.

The podgy figure of Fatty Fritz came rolling along the rock shelf above the upper stream. Fritz von Splitz, that morning, was in an almost desperate state—nearly as famished as the jaguar that lurked below. All the stores of the castaways were in the hut—they had nothing to eat in their refuge up the ravine—and though Dr. Samuel Sparshott and five fellows were able to tighten their belts and bear it, it was quite a different matter with Fritz von Splitz.

Fritz would have given all the treasure that was supposed to exist on Castaway Island that morning; for one good, solid German sausage—the beloved sausage of his native land. Fritz could have wept as he thought of the Fatherland and its sausages.

“Mein juns,” squealed Fritz, as he rolled up, “are you sure tat you have nothings to eat in

your bockets ? Even vun leedle gokernut—joost vun leedle gokernut—”

“Never mind coconuts, now, fathead,” said Jim Dainty.

“But I vas so derribly hungry !” groaned Fritz. “I vas so hungry tat I have vun bain in mein pread-pasket ! Tainty, suppose you run down to te hut, while tat Sammy is not looking, and get some grub ! You vas not afraid of tat chaguar, Tainty—you vas almost as prave as a Cherman.”

“I can see myself doing it !” grinned Jim. “Peast and a prute ! Chinger, mein pelofed Chinger, you vas not afraid of tat chaguar like Tainty.”

“My giddy goloshes !” said Ginger. “I’ll tell you what, you men ! That jaguar’s after us, and Fritz is fat enough to last him a week. Let’s chuck Fritz down to him !”

“Good egg !” chorused Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean.

“Mein gootness !” gasped Fritz. He caught sight of the cat-like figure below, creeping from the palms to the water. “Ach ! Tere is tat peastly prute ! Ve shall all be torn to bieees.”

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**ONE MAN-EATING JAGUAR. . .**  
**ONE GUN . . .**  
**ONE BULLET AND . . .**  
**SEVEN LIVES AT STAKE !**

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“Only you, old fat Boche, if we chuck you down,” said Ginger. “Collar him, you fellows—it may save the lot of us !”

“Yaroooh !” roared Fritz, as the juniors gathered round him; and he fled up the ravine, leaving Jim Dainty & Co. chuckling.

Ginger Rawlinson certainly was not in earnest, but a glimpse of the jaguar scared Fritz out of his fat wits. The rock ledge above the stream was rugged and narrow; and Fritz charged along like an insane rhinoceros. It was rather unfortunate for Sammy Sparshott, the headmaster of Grimslade, that he was coming along towards the waterfall at that moment. He had no time to escape Fritz’s charge—it was too sudden for that.

Crash !

“Mein gootness !” gasped Fritz, sitting down suddenly. “Ach ! Mein gootness ! Whooop !”

Dr. Sparshott staggered, stumbled over the edge of the rock-shelf, and splashed into the stream. He went right under, and came up again, drenched and dripping, standing in the stream with the water flowing round his waist. He gasped for breath.

“Splitz !” he roared. “What—”

“Ach gootness !” gurgled Fritz. And as Dr. Sparshott scrambled to the bank, the fat German picked himself up like a feather-weight, and raced up the ravine. He did not want to wait for Sammy. Sammy looked as if he had something in hand for him ! Up the rocky ravine went Fritz at a frantic speed, forgetting even that [he was hungry.

The headmaster of Grimslade dragged himself out of the water. But he did not follow Fritz. He hurried down to the rocks overlooking the waterfall, where Jim Dainty & Co. were watching the jaguar.

“He’s coming, sir !” exclaimed Ginger Rawlinson. “The brute’s scented us at last.”

“I think not.” Dr. Sparshott gazed down at the lower stream. “Keep out of sight—a jaguar is not afraid of water, like most cats—and this climb would be nothing to him. He cannot scent us through the water.”

“But what is he after then, sir ?” asked Streaky Bacon.

“I fancy he is going fishing.”

The Grimslade juniors stared at that answer. But as they watched they saw that Sammy was right.

“If you remembered your natural history,” said Sammy with a touch of severity, “you would remember that the South American jaguar will go into the water for its prey, and will kill fish in the shallows by striking with its paw. The common cat at home has been known to do the same. I have no doubt that the brute would prefer one of us—especially Splitz—but he has lost our scent, and is going after fish.”

With interest the juniors watched the creeping brute. It crept along the bank, where the water shallowed. In the lower stream were a good many fish, as the castaways had reason to know—they had netted a good many since they had been cast away on the island.

Crouching on the shelving bank, the jaguar watched the rippling, shining water, not giving a glance up to the waterfall, and evidently quite unaware that human beings were anywhere near at hand. Suddenly, the great beast sprang, splashing in the shallows, and like a streak of light, the juniors saw a fish dart away from a lashing paw. A howl of enraged disappointment pealed from the hungry jaguar.

“No tiffin for him !” grinned Ginger. “I fancy the fish will give him a wide berth now.”

Ginger was right; after a few minutes the jaguar crept back to the bank. They watched the strangely-spotted body glide away among the palms, and disappear. After it had disappeared, its voice was heard—the hungry howl of a savage beast ravenous for prey,

Man versus Beast!

"SAMMY'S up to something!" Ginger Rawlinson spoke below his breath, rather uneasily. And Jim Dainty felt uneasy as he looked at Dr. Sparshott.

It was past noon. Sammy, with a deeply thoughtful expression on his sunburned face, was closely examining his revolver—the only firearm on Castaway Island, and for which there was only one cartridge. Having examined it, Sammy slipped it into his pocket, and picked up his axe.

"We're going after the jaguar, sir?" Jim Dainty ventured to ask.

Dr. Sparshott shook his head. "I cannot allow you boys to run the risk," he said quietly.

"But you, sir—"

"I am going!" said Sammy, in the same quiet tone. "The present state of affairs cannot last. We are imprisoned here, with that brute master of the island. We have no food."

"We could go up the ravine, sir, and gather bananas higher up on the hill," said Ginger.

"Quite so—and the jaguar may be roaming on the very spot where you go to gather them," said Dr. Sparshott. "Sooner or later, he will cover the whole island in his hunt for prey. My boys, that fearful enemy must be dealt with—and I shall do my best to deal with him. You will remain here."

"But, sir!" objected all the juniors at once, with the solitary exception of Friedrich von Splitz. Fritz was not keen to join in the hunt for the jaguar. Wild horses would not have dragged Fritz Splitz anywhere near that dangerous beast.

"I order you," said Sammy, "to remain here. I will not allow you to risk your lives uselessly. You may depend on it that I shall take every care—and if I get a chance at a vital spot, at close range, my single cartridge may relieve us of our enemy."

"But—" began Ginger.

"You will obey me on this island, Rawlinson, just as if we were still at Grimsdale School!" said the Head.

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

There was no question of the juniors' obedience to Sammy's orders. But it was with heavy heart that they watched him make his preparations for the jaguar hunt. They knew how unequal the contest was.

Brave and determined as Sammy Sparshott was, what chance had he against the savage beast from the South American forests? A single revolver-shot—only by fortunate chance, almost by a miracle, could it dispose of such an enemy! They thought of the cruel jaws, the tearing talons, and shuddered.

Yet they knew that it was the only way. They could not remain cooped up in the ravine without food, while the hungry brute roamed the island seeking them—sooner or later to find them.

"Keep your peckers up!" said Sammy, with his cheery grin. "I hope that we shall soon be making a ripping rug for our hut with the jaguar's skin!"

And having wrapped up the revolver carefully against the wet, Dr. Sparshott swung himself down the rocks of the waterfall and disappeared from their sight.

"I wish he'd let us go with him!" grumbled Ginger. "But I daresay old Sammy's right."

"Right—but it's rotten!" growled Jim Dainty.

"Ach! I vas so hungry!" moaned Fritz Splitz.

"Oh, shut up, you Boche bloater!" hooted Sreaky. All the fellows were hungry, but they were thinking of Sammy. Fritz had his own spacious interior to think of, and his podgy thoughts were concentrated on it.

"Listen!" exclaimed Dick Dawson.

A snarling yell sounded from the distance. It came from the palm grove where the stream flowed down to the bay. The juniors felt their hearts throb. They knew what that yell meant—the jaguar had sighted Sammy.

"Look!" shrieked Sandy Bean.

Near the lower stream was a tall, slanting palm, nearly sixty feet high. Sammy Sparshott came suddenly into sight, leaping towards the tall palm, grasping its trunk and swinging himself up with the activity of an agile schoolboy. The juniors watched breathlessly from above the waterfall. They saw the sinuous body of the jaguar leap into sight, springing up the tree after the headmaster of Grimsdale. But Sammy was

swift, and the jaguar fell short in his leap, crashing back on the earth with a yell of fury.

Up went Sammy, clinging to the slanting trunk with hands and feet, his axe swinging by a thong over his shoulder. The jaguar crouched at the foot of the palm, glaring upward with burning eyes; and then, clutching the trunk with its claws, began to climb. Jim Dainty groaned aloud. The great brute climbed like a cat, its fierce eyes fixed on its prey above. With their hearts in their mouths, the petrified juniors watched.

The headmaster of Grimsdale gripped the slender trunk with his sinewy legs and swung over, steadying himself with his left hand against the trunk. In his right he grasped the axe. Steady as steel, Sammy Sparshott watched the climbing jaguar.

Up and up came the brute, till the foam-flecked, snarling muzzle was within the swing of the axe. Then Dr. Sparshott struck and struck again. Screaming howls came from the jaguar, as the blood spurted under the slashes of the axe, but still it clambered, and a clawing paw lashed at the man above.

Swiftly swung the axe, meeting the grasping paw, dashing it aside. Spitting with fury, the great cat clung to the trunk with three paws—the forepaw that Sammy had struck sagging, injured and useless. For breathless moments the jaguar hung there, screaming—then he slithered down the trunk and dropped to the ground.

Loping on three legs, the wounded brute disappeared into the jungle. Jim Dainty wiped the sweat from his brow.

"Good old Sammy!" breathed Ginger Rawlinson huskily.

They saw the headmaster of Grimsdale, in his turn, slither down the trunk. Apparently he knew that the schoolboys were watching, for he gave a wave of the hand in their direction before he swung away. Undeterred by his fearfully

narrow escape, Sammy Sparshott was following the blood-stained track of the jaguar, and they saw him no more.

Fatty Fritz Asks for It!

"MEIN gootness! How I vas hungry." "Shut up, Fatty!"

"Ach! I tink two times before I go on vun holiday gruisse again vunce after!" groaned Fritz Splitz. "I vas so hungry, as neffer vas. Neffer, neffer have I peen so colossally hungry! Tainty, mein tear Tainty, vill you not go and get some gokernuts?"

"Sammy's orders!" growled Jim.

"Plow Sammy!" roared Fritz Splitz. "Pless Sammy! Pother Sammy! Sammy can go and eat goke mit himself! I vas hungry! Chinger, vill you go and gather some gokernuts?"

"Kick him!" said Ginger.

"Yaroop! Peast and a prute!"

It was hours since Sammy had gone. There had been no sign of him, or sound of the jaguar. The juniors guessed that the fierce brute had taken to the jungle that clothed the slopes of the island mountain. Sammy was after him—hunting him as fiercely as the jaguar hunted the east-aways. If the terrible beast turned on him in the thickness of the jungle—the schoolboys shuddered at the thought!

Danger or no danger, useless or useful, they wanted to be at Sammy's side. But orders were orders—and the headmaster of Grimsdale was not a man to be disobeyed. They could only wait.

Fritz, of course, was not thinking of Sammy. Fritz was hungry—frightfully hungry—ravenously hungry. He could have eaten that jaguar, almost as willingly as the jaguar could have eaten Fritz.

The other fellows were hungry enough, and



Up went Sammy, clinging to the slanting trunk with hands and feet. Then Jim Dainty & Co. groaned aloud as the jaguar, clutching the palm with its claws, climbed like a cat, its fierce eyes fixed on its prey above!

on their own account they would have taken the risk of clambering out at the upper end of the ravine to gather coconuts and bananas. But Sammy had commanded them to stay, and that was that.

Orders mattered little to Fritz, when he was hungry. And as the other fellows refused to stir, the fat German at last made up his fat mind to try it on himself. The jaguar had last been seen by the lower stream and it seemed unlikely to Fritz that it would be found on the hillside a mile up the jungly slopes.

But coconuts and bananas were there in plenty—ripe fruit waiting to be plucked—and Fritz's hungry mouth watered at the thought of them. He picked himself up from the bank at last, his podgy mind made up.

"Where are you going, you Boche bloater?" growled Ginger Rawlinson.

"Peast and a prute, if you will not go to get some grub, I will go mit meinsel!" hooted Fritz. "You gan stay here, you peasty pounder, if you are not so prave as a Cherman."

"Sammy's orders!" roared Ginger.

"Plow and pother Sammy!" snorted Fritz Splitz, and he tramped away up the ravine and disappeared round bulging rocks.

"What about fetching the fat fozzler back?" asked Dick Dawson. "Sammy will be waxy."

Snort, from Ginger Rawlinson.

"Let him rip! He will come back fast enough when he gets funky—and that won't be long."

Which seemed probable enough to the Grimsladers. But Ginger did not make full allowance for Fritz's state of famine, which rendered him unusually reckless. Certainly, the hungry Fritz would not have ventured up the hillside alone, had he fancied that the jaguar was there. But he did not fancy so—and he yearned for food!

So off went Fritz, clambering over rocks and boulders, grunting and gasping for breath, out of the sight of the chums of Grimslade, who waited by the cave.

Higher up the ravine, the rocky sides were less steep, and it was easy to clamber out on the open hillside. There, clothing the slopes, were groves of palms and banana trees, intermingled with tracts of jungle and bush.

Fritz von Splitz clambered away and reached a bunch of palms, under which lay plenty of fallen nuts. Three or four black-faced monkeys scampered away as Fritz approached, and scuttled into trees or into thickets. Fritz did not heed them. Even Fatty Fritz was not afraid of monkeys.

He grabbed up coconuts, cracked the shells against the tree-trunks, and started to eat. Sitting at the foot of a tree, leaning back on it to rest, with a dozen fat nuts round him cracked ready to devour, Fritz von Splitz felt better—much better! Life seemed to smile on him again! Life, even on Castaway Island, far from Germany and its sausages, was once more worth living.

"Goot!" murmured Fritz, munching. "Sehr gut! I tink tat tose peasts and prutes was plock-heads, tat tey do not gum and get some of tese peautiful gokernuts! But tey was not so prave as a Cherman."

But suddenly the happy grin died off his face; and he ceased to munch succulent coconut. There was a stirring in the jungle a score of feet away from him. He blinked in that direction, and his saucer-like eyes almost started from his head.

From the thickets, a cat-like head had emerged, and two fierce, glittering eyes looked to and fro. A coconut dropped from Fatty Fritz's hand. Twenty feet away from him, the jaguar was peering furtively, savagely, out of the jungle.

Fritz uttered no sound. He could not! Dumb and frozen with fear, he sat where he was, his bulging eyes fixed on that cat-like head and sinuous neck. His podgy heart almost ceased to beat. Every vestige of colour drained from his fat face. It seemed as if terror had turned Friedrich von Splitz to stone.

Slowly, from side to side, swayed the jaguar's head. He had not seen the fat German yet. Had Fritz made a movement, or a sound, the fierce eyes would have been upon him at once. But he made neither—he was as still as if he was part of the trunk he leaned against.

His staring eyes watched the jaguar. The

beast looked round watchfully, warily, and then the head turned, and the jaguar looked back into the jungle. Then, with a sudden movement, it came out into the open—limping on three legs. One forepaw was disabled by the slash of Sammy's axe, and hung useless.

Still motionless, frozen with fear, the fat German sat and gazed. Only a low, faint moan of utter terror came from him, as he saw the fierce eyes turn, at last, on him, and fix in their glare. The jaguar had seen him.

The brute crouched—but did not spring. For a long minute, it remained with its fierce eyes fixed on Fritz von Splitz, probably perplexed by his stillness. Then it slowly limped towards the fat German, watching and sniffing as it approached.

Fritz's eyes were glazed with fear. It was useless for him to move—there was no escape for him—but he could not have moved to save his life if a single movement would have saved him. As if petrified, he sat motionless, and in the extremity of terror the hapless fat German

moment. The crouching brute rose on three legs, the paw was withdrawn from Fritz, and the jaguar stared round at Sammy Sparshott, hardly thirty feet away. And the headmaster of Grimslade stopped, and stared back, gripping his axe hard.

For a long moment they looked at one another. Then the cat-like head turned towards Fritz again, and a low, growling snarl came from the deep throat. Leaving Sammy unheeded, the jaguar was about to sink his terrible teeth into the prey that lay helplessly before him.

The axe dropped from Sammy's hand. It was useless. He whipped the revolver from his pocket, dropped on one knee, and aimed. He had one shot—and if that shot failed, Fritz Splitz was doomed to fearful death.

Crack!

The whip-like crack of the revolver rang through the jungle. For life or death, Sammy's last shot had been fired!

For a split second, he had a sickening sense of failure. The great beast still loomed over the fainting Fritz, the fierce jaws open. But the burning light of one of the glaring eyes had gone out like an extinguished candle—and the bullet was in the savage brain behind. Slowly, as it seemed to Sammy, the powerful body collapsed, the great jaws sagged, and the jaguar fell forward, crushing Fritz with his weight.

Sammy leaped up, grasped his axe again, and rushed forward. But no blow was needed. The demon of the South American forests was dead—and the headmaster of Grimslade grasped it and dragged it away from Fritz. He lifted the fat German from the ground, carried him to the stream, and bathed his face in the cool water. Fritz's eyes opened. He blinked at Sammy.

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz. "Vat—?" Then he remembered, and gave a frightened yell. "Ach! Geep him away! Geep him off!"

"Calm yourself, Splitz," said Dr. Sparshott. "The jaguar is dead!"

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz.

"Come!" barked Sammy Sparshott. He strode away down the ravine, and the fat German followed him, still trembling from his narrow escape.

"Here's Sammy!" roared Ginger Rawlinson, in great delight, as the headmaster of Grimslade came in sight. The juniors at the cave had heard the shot ringing over the hill, and they knew that Sammy had fired his last cartridge. Their hearts leaped at the sight of him, safe and sound.

Sammy gave them a smile.

"O.K.," he said. "We can return to the hut now—I fancy you may be ready for a meal by this time."

"The jaguar!" exclaimed Jim Dainty.

"A lucky shot!" said Sammy. "The jaguar will trouble us no more—and when we have skinned him we shall have a handsome rug for the hut. But there is a little matter to be settled before we go home. Dainty, you have a skin there—please hand it to me."

Jim Dainty handed over a bamboo.

"Splitz! I found you in the jaguar's claws—you might have been torn in pieces—it is almost a miracle that you were not. I gave you some orders to remain here during my absence. You have disobeyed those orders, and imperilled your life." I have mentioned before that Castaway Island, though unlike Grimslade School in most respects, is exactly like Grimslade in this—that your headmaster's orders have to be obeyed. Bend over!"

Whack, whack, whack! Whack, whack, whack! "Yooop-hoop—whooop! Yaroooh!" roared Fritz, as the final whack made him fairly squirm.

Dr. Sparshott tossed the bamboo back to Dainty.

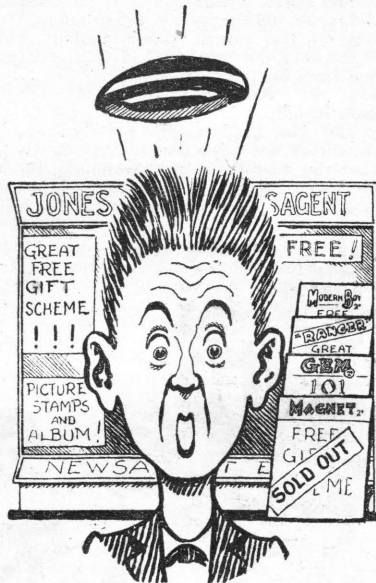
"Now," said Sammy, genially, "we will go down to the hut—supper is the next item on the programme."

That item was a very welcome one to all the hungry castaways. Jim Dainty & Co. sat down to it with excellent appetites. Fritz's appetite was still more excellent; but he did not sit down to it. After that six from Sammy, Fritz had no desire to sit down for a very long time; and he ate his supper standing!

(Jim Dainty & Co. meet with many more lively adventures on Castaway Island in next week's thrilling story. Don't forget next Saturday's RANGER will contain Free Gifts for every reader.)

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mercifully lost his senses. He sat leaning back on the tree-trunk in a dead faint, unconscious now of the fearful fate that was upon him.

It was that stony stillness that saved him from the slash of a tearing claw. The jaguar was puzzled and perplexed. He sniffed at Fritz, like a cat sniffing at a dead mouse; he limped round him, sniffing on all sides. One movement would have brought sudden death to Fritz—but he was like a figure of stone, unconscious of the hot breath that fanned his cheek.

Sammy's Last Shot!

SAMMY SPARSHOTT stopped dead. Iron-nerved as the headmaster of Grimslade was, his heart seemed to miss a beat at what he saw as he looked from the jungle.

For long, hot hours Dr. Sparshott had tracked the jaguar through the wood and jungle, the dripping of blood from the wounded paw guiding him. Twice or thrice he had glimpsed the spotted beast; but it had avoided him, skulking away through the undergrowth.

Aching with heat, wet with perspiration, stung by mosquitoes, Sammy kept on the track—till at last he sighted the brute again—under the palm tree, his paw on Fritz Splitz—his cavernous jaws opening over the unconscious fat German.

Only the crackle of the canes, drawing the brute's attention to Sammy, saved Fritz at that