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THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

The Upper Hand!



“PLITZ!”
 “Ach! I vas so dired—”
 “You will stay here.”
 “Oh! Goot!”
 “And keep watch over the prisoner!” said Dr. Sparshott.
 “I will keep vatch ofer tat peast and a prute, mit colossal bleasure!” beamed Fritz Splitz.

It was a sunny morning on Castaway Island. Seldom had the Grimslade castaways looked so merry and bright as they looked that morning. Dr. Samuel Sparshott had a cheery smile on his bronzed face. Jim Dainty & Co. were in great spirits. Even Fritz Splitz was not grouching, for once. The only gloomy face was that of Ezra Sarson—which wore a black and savage scowl.

A palm pole had been driven deep into the sand near the castaways' hut. Ezra Sarson was bound with his back to it. He had been freed to eat his breakfast, Sammy Sparshott sitting by him with a revolver in his hand—Ezra's own revolver! After that, Sammy had bound him securely again, and he sat in the soft sand, leaning back against the post, scowling like a demon.

But his black looks had no effect on the cheery Grimsladers. They had been through terrible peril at the hands of the 'Frisco tough; but their headmaster had pulled them through; and now they had the upper hand. They were now going to hunt for the boat in which Ezra had come to the lonely island—with great hopes that it might prove possible to sail away in it, and reach some inhabited island in the West-Indian seas.

Dr. Sparshott looked down at the scowling face of the ruffian.

“Where did you hide the boat, Sarson?” he asked.

“Find out!” grunted Ezra.

“That,” said Dr. Sparshott, “is what we are about to do. Rawlinson!”

“Oh! Yes, sir!”

“Please fetch the pincers from the hut.”

“The—pincers! Oh, yes, sir!”

Ginger went into the hut, in which were packed the stores and utensils and tools, which had been saved on the raft from the wreck of the Spindrift. He came out with a pair of pincers in his hand and a surprised expression on his face. What Sammy wanted the pincers for was rather a mystery.

“Now,” said Dr. Sparshott calmly, “take Sarson's nose in the pincers—”

“Wha-a-t?” gasped Ginger.

“His nose!” barked Sammy.

“Oh! Yes! Right!”

Ginger Rawlinson approached the ruffian, and adjusted the pincers on his beaky, bony nose. Then he looked to Sammy for further instructions. The other fellows looked on, grinning. This, apparently, was Sammy's way of persuading the freebooter to give the required information.

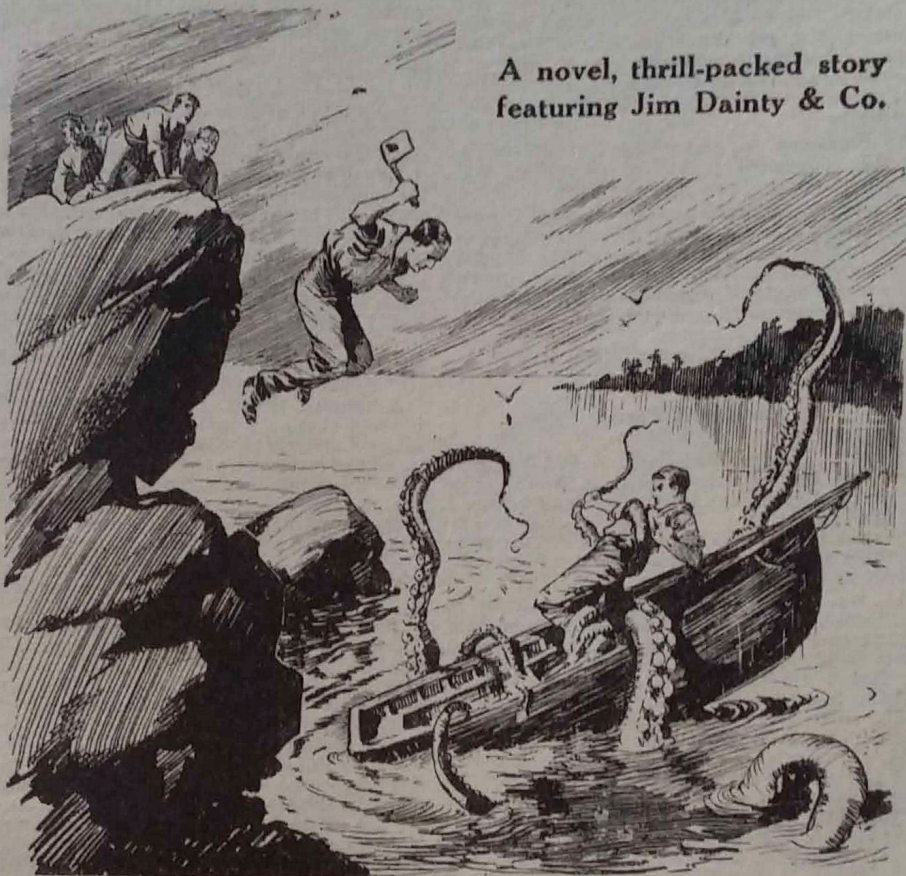
Sammy could be as gentle as a cooing dove, but he could also be as hard as a rock. And it was his rock-like quality that he was displaying in dealing with the ruffian who had brought the castaways within the shadow of death.

“Will you kindly tell me where you parked your boat, Sarson?” inquired Dr. Sparshott politely.

“Nope!” hissed Sarson. “I guess you can hunt for it if you want it, and I guess you won't find it soon! And if I get loose, Sam Sparshott, I'll get the cinch on you yet, and I—”

“Rawlinson, kindly compress the fellow's nose with the pincers!” ordered Sammy.

Ginger obeyed at once. He put on a gentle pressure, and there was a gasp from Ezra. The



A novel, thrill-packed story featuring Jim Dainty & Co.

pressure intensified, and there was a howl from the ruffian. Jim Dainty and Dawson, Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean, looked on, feeling no pity whatever for the desperate rascal. They had no doubt that Sarson would soon come to terms.

“Let up!” bellowed the ruffian. “By the great horned toad, I guess I'll put you wise! Let up!”

At a sign from Dr. Sparshott, Ginger released the pincers. Sarson, wriggling in his

shade of a boulder, with a bunch of bananas. In a few minutes the castaways were out of sight.

The south shore of Castaway Island was a wilderness of rocks and reefs, with channels of the sea running among them. Somewhere in a channel among the rocks was hidden the boat that had brought Ezra to the island; but a search for it might have lasted days, without a clue to its hiding-place. Ezra—under the persuasion of the pincers—had provided the clue!

Dr. Sparshott swung on with his long, springy strides—and the juniors, in merry mood, jumped from rock to rock, and raced one another over stretches of sand and seaweed. They were very keen to discover the boat—it was a chance, they hoped, of getting away.

Not that they were dissatisfied with Castaway Island—in spite of many perils, and many hardships, they agreed that it was rather a lark living like Robinson Crusoe on a lonely island in tropical seas. Still, there was England and home, and Grimslade School, to be thought of.

High over the low reefs and scattered broken rocks, one tall rock towered, far out from the shore. Dr. Sparshott headed for it, and smiled as the eager juniors raced ahead. Splashing through salt pools, stumbling over tangled seaweed, slipping over wet rocks, and picking themselves up again, the cheery castaways raced for the high rock, on the under side of which they had no doubt they would find the boat.

“Beat you to it!” yelled Ginger Rawlinson.

“Rats!” retorted Jim Dainty.

Jim was the first to scramble on the high rock. Ginger was only a second behind him. They ran across, Jim a yard ahead, to the farther side, where it dropped sheer to the water. Looking over the edge, Jim spotted a boat, with mast lowered and sail furled, half-hidden under a bulge of the rock, and moored with several ropes.

Disappointment swept over him as he saw it,

THE CASTAWAYS versus A DEMON OF THE DEEP!

bonds, gave the headmaster of Grimslade a glare of deadly hate.

“I am waiting, my good fellow!” said Sammy gently.

“I guess you'll find the boat on the south shore,” yelled Sarson. “It's hidden under a rock, the highest rock on the shore—you'll raise it easy enough!”

“Thank you!” said Dr. Sparshott. Ginger, grinning, took the pincers back into the hut, and Dr. Sparshott turned to Fritz. “Splitz, I shall allow you to indulge your laziness this morning, as you have lately been through such exhausting experiences. You may remain here and rest—but you will keep a sharp eye on Sarson. He is securely bound—but if he should make any attempt to free himself you will thrash him with that bamboo until he desists. Do you understand?”

“Ja! Ja wohl!” grinned Fritz. “I tink I like to trash tat peast and a prute! Leaf him to me, sir!”

“Very good! Now follow on, my boys!” said Dr. Sparshott; and he tramped away along the sand, with the juniors at his heels.

Ezra Sarson stared after them, with bitter rage in his face. Fritz Splitz sat down, in the

however. The boat was a small one, and at a glance Jim saw that the castaways would never be able to sail from Castaway Island in that craft.

He was about to jump down into it, when Ginger caught him by his back hair.

"Ow!" yelled Jim, as he staggered back under that sudden grasp.

Bump! He sat down on the rock, and Ginger, grinning, passed him.

"Beat you!" roared Ginger.
"You silly ass!" gasped Jim Dainty. "I'll jolly well—"

He scrambled up, and grasped after Ginger, but the red-headed junior of Grimslade was already jumping down into the boat.

It rocked as he landed in it, and Ginger rolled over. As he rolled, he grinned up at Jim's wrathful face. But the next moment the grin was washed from Ginger's countenance, and every vestige of colour went with it. Jim, about to jump down, stopped.

"What—" he stuttered.
"Help!" shrieked Ginger. "Oh, help!"

In Direst Peril!

"HELP!"
Ginger Rawlinson shrieked wildly. Dr. Sparshott, still at a distance, heard that fearful cry, and bounded on like an arrow. The juniors, only a few moments behind Jim, joined him on the edge of the rock, staring down in amazement and alarm at Rawlinson.

He was rolling and struggling frantically in the bottom of the boat, and for some seconds they could not see the cause. It seemed to them as if Rawlinson had suddenly gone mad.

"Help! Oh, help!" shrieked Ginger.

"Oh, look!" panted Jim.

He saw it now—a whip-like thing that was curled round Ginger's leg. It came over the boat's gunwale from the sea. It looked like the thong of a whip. But as Jim spotted it he knew what it was, and his heart almost died within him as he realised Ginger's peril. It was the tentacle of an octopus! Jim remembered the fearful creature in the sea pool under the cavern to which Sammy Sparshott had so nearly fallen a victim.

For a second Jim stood spellbound with horror. Evidently the octopus, below the surface of the water channel in which the boat was moored, had found it there, and was groping over it with a long tentacle, in search of prey. And Ginger, jumping down recklessly into the boat, had landed on the groping tentacle, which had instantly gripped him.

Under the horrified eyes of his friends, Ginger was being dragged from the boat with a force that no human strength could have resisted. And as Jim realised it, he leaped down into the boat, dragging the knife from his belt as he did so.

"Hold on, Ginger!" he panted.
The tentacle came from the sea over the port gunwale. Ginger had got a grip on the starboard gunwale and was holding on with all his strength. But the draw of the octopus was dragging him across the boat—to be dragged over the side into the water. Jim flung himself on the hideous thing, hacking madly with his knife.

"Jim—look out!" shrieked Dawson from the rock above. But, even as he called, another tentacle whipped round Jim's waist, and he was dragged over.

A terrible cry left Jim Dainty's lips. Wildly he clutched at a thwart, and saved himself from being torn overboard. But the tentacle dragged and dragged with fearful force. And now another and another shot up from the sea, winding, groping, feeling for prey!

"Stand back!"
It was Dr. Sparshott's voice. He reached the spot, and one glance was enough for him. With a backward sweep of his arm, he pushed back the horrified juniors, who would have leaped into the boat to the help of their comrades.

"Stand back! Leave this to me! Keep back, I tell you!" roared Sammy.

And the schoolboys obeyed as the headmaster of Grimslade leaped down into the rocking boat.

Sammy's axe was in his hand. His face was

white and tense. As he swung the axe, Ginger, with a shriek of despair, let go his hold, his strength failing under the terrible pull. Another moment, and the red-headed junior would have gone over the side. But in that moment Sammy's axe came down in a terrible stroke, and the keen edge drove through the tentacle, cutting it clear. Ginger fell in the bottom of the boat with the severed tentacle writhing round him, vitality still strong in the hideous thing.

"Sammy!" shrieked Jim Dainty.
He did not even know that he called in the wild horror of the moment. The tentacle was round his body, thickening under the pull till it was like a cable. Frantically, desperately, he clung and resisted; but the strength of ten men could not have resisted the pull. He knew that he was going, and in utter horror he shrieked to Sammy.

But Sammy was there! The glistening axe was whirling aloft in both Sammy's strong hands, and it came crashing down, and the second tentacle parted like a taut rope. Jim Dainty, released, sank down, with the tentacle still wriggling round him.

A hideous, almost shapeless thing was floating just under the surface beside the boat; the octopus was rising. Sammy had a glimpse of it, and of two saucer-like eyes, as two tentacles thrashed at him, one gripping his leg, the other his left arm. Even as that fearful hold fastened on him, and death looked him in the face, Sammy shouted hoarsely to Dainty and Rawlinson.

"Get out of the boat! Dainty—Rawlinson—go!"

He struck with the axe! The grip on his leg loosened as the whip-like thing parted. But that on his arm intensified in force, and he was dragged over. He had to drop the axe to catch hold, barely in time to save himself from going over the side.

Jim Dainty struggled up, casting aside the horrible thing that writhed round him. Ginger lay face down, panting with exhaustion. Sammy, holding on fiercely, resisted the pull of the octopus—and Jim Dainty stumbled to the fallen axe and grasped it with shaking hands.

Another tentacle was groping over the side, and it touched him, but he did not heed it. Grasping the axe with both hands, and exerting all his failing strength, he struck at the tentacle that held Sammy where it was taut over the gunwale! Once, twice, he struck with all his strength, and Sammy rolled free.

"Out of the boat!" yelled Sammy.

This time Jim obeyed. He leaped for the rocks and scrambled up. Sammy caught up Ginger Rawlinson in his strong arms and scrambled after him. Another and another tentacle thrashed behind blindly. Jim sprawled on the high rock, and Dawson and Streaky seized him and dragged him farther. Sammy staggered after him with Ginger in his arms.

"All right, sir!" gasped Ginger. Sammy set him on his feet. "I'm all right! Oh, my giddy goloshes!"

Dr. Sparshott stood breathing in great gulps. Even Sammy's iron nerve seemed shaken. In a silent group the castaways stood watching the tentacles that whirled and thrashed in the air. Four tentacles had been chopped from the monster of the deep; but the others were still lashing and winding for an enemy. But they failed to reach, and at last they dropped back.

Then Dr. Sparshott stepped to the edge of the high rock again. He looked down at the hideous shape floating on the water beside the boat. Taking the revolver from his belt, he aimed at one of the great, glaring, saucer-like eyes and pumped out bullet after bullet. Six shots cracked off in as many seconds, and Sammy leaped back.

"I think," said Dr. Sparshott calmly, "that that will finish our friend."

For a few moments the tentacles lashed wildly, and then disappeared under the water as the octopus sank. Whether it was dead, or whether its tenacious vitality could survive such injuries, the castaways could not tell; but, at all events, it was gone. The rippling, bubbling water calmed, and when Dr. Sparshott looked down again there was no sign of the demon of the deep.

Fooled Fritz!

"POSH!" said Fritz Splitz, shaking his bullet head.

Fritz addressed the stubbly, scowling ruffian who sat bound against the palm-pole before the hut. He did not mean that Ezra was "posh"—the dingy, unshaven 'Frisko' tough looked anything but posh! It was Fritz's way of saying "Boosh!"

"Just a drink of water!" muttered Ezra.
"Posh!" repeated Fritz. "It is not because I was too comfortable to move mit meinsell, but because you was a peast and a prute! Go and eat goke!"

Fritz had had a happy morning! He had been eating most of the time. Part of the time he had been napping. He had hardly starved for hours, save to supply the inner Fritz with provender.

It was warm on Castaway Island; too warm for Fatty Fritz to move, if he could help it; though had the temperature been down to zero probably the fat German would not have moved if he could have helped it.

With a pile of tropical fruits on one side of him, and a stack of drinking-nuts and a can of cool water on the other, Fritz saw no occasion to move. And most decidedly he was not disposed to shift on the prisoner's account.

"Just a drink!"
Ezra's eyes glittered at the fat German under his besting brows.

Fritz grinned.
"Vat did you giff me to eat when I was brisoner?" he demanded. "Nottings! You leaf me to starve mit meinsell! I vill not stir vun stump for such a prutal peast! Vait till Sammy gum pack!"

Sarson's eyes wandered over the beach and the bay. He expected that Dr. Sparshott would sail the boat home when he found it. But, so far, there was no sign of a sail on the wide blue bay that opened on the Atlantic.

He was bound fast—Sammy had taken care of that. He had not the slightest chance of getting loose, and Fritz was watching to see that he did not make the attempt. Yet a desperate scheme was working in the ruffian's mind. If he could induce the fat, obtuse German to come within reach—

"Say, bo," he muttered at last, "you give me a drink of water, and I'll sure make it worth your while. You won't be always on this island, and I guess a hundred dollars would be useful to you when you get away."

Fritz sat up and took notice at that.
"I've got a hundred-dollar note in my pocket," muttered Sarson. "I ain't asking you to let my hands loose. You can take it out."

Any of the other Grimslade fellows would have taken the trouble to give the ruffian a drink of water, brutal as he had been when they were in his hands; but certainly the offer of a bribe would not have tempted them. But it was not like that with Friedrich von Splitz. His round eyes gleamed with greed.

"A huntret tollars!" he repeated. "Mind, I vill not let you loose—I know van trick vorth two of tat! But I vill giff you vun trink of vasser."

It was worth the trouble, for a hundred-dollar note. Fritz heaved himself to his feet, took a tin pannikin, and filled it and approached the ruffian. He had no fear of him; his arms were bound down to his sides by the rope that wound round him again and again, knotted behind.

Ezra was certainly thirsty, after sitting for hours in the tropical heat, and he leaned back his head as Fritz held the pannikin to his dry lips, and drank the water to the last drop.

"Now, where was tat huntret tollars?" asked Fritz, laying down the pannikin.

"Inside pocket," said Ezra, his eyes gleaming.

Fritz Splitz thrust a fat hand into the dingy shirt. As he did so the ruffian bent his head and seized the fat wrist with his teeth.

"Yarooooh!" roared Fritz.

He dragged frantically at his hand. But the strong jaws were closed on his wrist, holding him fast.

With his free hand the fat German struck frantically at the stubbly face. The grip of the teeth tightened. Ezra, tightly as his jaws

were fastened on the fat wrist, contrived to speak, in a hissing mumble, through the closed teeth.

"Get me loose, or I'll bite to the bone! Get me loose!"

Fritz ceased to hammer at the savage face. The pain in his wrist was more than he could endure.

Too late he understood why Ezra had wanted to get him within reach—this had been in the villain's mind all the time. And Fritz was caught—like a fat rabbit in a trap.

"Get me loose!" hissed Ezra, through the gripping teeth. "Get me loose, you gunk!"

"Mein gootness!" groaned Fritz.

He knew that the ruffian would carry out his threat if he refused. Fritz was not of the stuff of which heroes are made!

He howled with pain. Fritz Splitz never could bear pain, and the pain was terrible; and the thought of his bones crunching under the gripping teeth made him sick with terror. He reached behind Sarson with his free hand, and began to fumble at the knots.

Slowly and clumsily, in spite of the urge of the pain in his wrist, the fat German loosened the knots. Not for a second did the grip of the teeth relax.

Squealing with the pain, Fritz worked as hard and fast as he could, and Ezra felt the rope loosening at last. A fierce, savage wrench, and it came loose, and Ezra rolled away from the palm-pole, releasing the grip of his jaws on Fritz's wrist.

Fritz bounded away from him like an indiarubber ball the instant that grip was gone. He raced away as fast as his podgy little legs would carry him, only anxious to get out of reach of the desperado now that he was free. But Ezra was not quite free yet. His ankles were tied together. He sat in the sand, tearing at the knitted cord round his ankles, while Fritz ran for his fat life.

Free at last! The ruffian leaped to his feet! His savage glance swept the bay. It was high noon—surely time that Dr. Sparshott came back with the boat. The escaping freebooter had no time to lose. But he was relieved to see that the wide bay was still bare of a sail.

He dashed into the castaways' hut. Food, and what weapons he could find, he needed, if he was to keep the freedom he had gained. And as yet he had time, though every moment, he knew, the sail might come dancing round South Point.

Hurriedly he seized a rucksack from a nail in the wall, and dragged out the stores. Cans of beef, cans of biscuit, remaining from the stores saved from the Spindrift, a few cooking utensils, were hastily packed in the bag. He picked up an axe and a knife, and thrust them into his belt. But a firearm was what he most desperately wanted.

Sammy Sparshott had gone, with a revolver in his belt; but there was a second one, which he must have left in the hut. If it was loaded—

In fierce haste the ruffian rooted through the hut, throwing stores, utensils, blankets, boxes, right and left in wild disorder in his desperate search. But if Sammy had left the revolver there he had not left it where it could easily be found.

The interior of the castaways' hut looked as if a hurricane had struck it; but still Ezra had not found what he sought. And suddenly through the open gateway he glimpsed a brown-patched sail that danced before the wind on the bay.

Sammy Sparshott was coming!

He leaped to the doorway and fixed his eyes with bitter rage on the boat.

It was his own boat, and it was packed with Grimslade juniors, Dr. Sparshott at the tiller. The wind from the Atlantic was almost directly astern, and the patched sail bellied out before it, the boat shooting into the bay like an arrow.

He heard a shout from the sea, borne on the wind. He was seen; every eye in the boat was on the gaunt figure that ran from the hut on the open beach. He caught Jim Dainty's voice:

"It's Sarson! He's loose!"

Dr. Sparshott's tall figure stood up in the stern of the boat. There was a revolver in his hand. He stood erect in the boat, and threw up his arm. His voice came clearly on the wind:

"Stop, or I'll shoot!"

Ezra bounded away desperately.

Crack! came ringing from the sea. Crack, crack, crack! came again and again. The headmaster was shooting, and the lead knocked up the sand at the feet of the ruffian as he ran for the jungle.

Even from the distance, and from the dancing boat, the shooting was good. Spouting sand splashed over the running desperado from the shots as they struck round him. And then suddenly he gave a yell as he was hit.

But it was only a graze; the bullet tore a strip of skin from his shoulder. One last desperate bound, and he was in the cover of the jungle, running with his head low.

The boat bumped on the sand. Fritz Splitz, squealing with excitement and terror, ran to meet it. Jim Dainty & Co. leaped ashore, but Sammy Sparshott was first, splashing through the shallows, and running up the sand, the smoking revolver in his hand.

But Ezra Sarson was gone, swallowed by the thick jungle. Once more the bitter foe of the castaways was loose on Castaway Island!

(You can bet your last button that Ezra Sarson will cause plenty more trouble for the Grimslade castaways. But Dr. Sparshott's motto is "Be Prepared"—and he is! Don't miss next week's thrilling story.)



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