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The RANGER 2^o

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Week Ending February 3rd, 1934.



*When the
Atlantic
Disappeared!*

THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Dead or Alive!

“AMMY!”

“What—”

Jim Dainty panted. “Something’s happened to Sammy!”

Jim Dainty was standing on the high rock close by the hut on Castaway Island. Looking eastward across the wide bay that fronted the



Atlantic, his eyes were fixed on a drifting object on the open sea.

The wind came strongly from the east, blowing hard into his face. Before the driving wind a boat was drifting into the bay. The mast was standing, but no sail was set, and nobody was to be seen in the boat.

In the lonely waters that rolled round Castaway Island there was only one boat—the one in which Dr. Samuel Sparshott, headmaster of Grimslade, had sailed out of the bay that morning. Now it was drifting back, at the mercy of wind and wave—and Sammy Sparshott was not in it!

Early in the afternoon Sammy had been expected back, and Jim Dainty had climbed the high rock to look for the returning headmaster. Sammy was late—and it was unusual for Sammy to be late. Jim’s face whitened as he saw the reason—in the drifting, unguided boat. Something had happened to Sammy!

“My giddy goloshes!” exclaimed Ginger Rawlinson. He came scrambling up the rock, followed by Dawson, and Bacon, and Bean, and stood beside Jim, staring seaward.

“What—”

Jim Dainty pointed to the boat.

“It’s empty!” muttered Dick Dawson.

“What’s happened to Sammy?”

“That villain, Sarson!” breathed Ginger. Far away on the sea was a dark speck, the rocky islet where Ezra Sarson, the ruffian who had scuttled the Spindrift, had been marooned. It was to take supplies to the ruffian on the rock that Sammy had gone.

“What had happened to him there?”

“And Fritz?” muttered Sandy Bean.

“Fritz?” repeated Jim Dainty.

“Fritz was in the boat. You remember, the day the boat went to sleep in it, and we covered her up with the stack of bananas that Sammy was taking out to that brute on the rock—”

“Look!” yelled Ginger.

From the apparently empty boat a head came into view. It was the bullet head of Fritz von Splitz. Apparently the fat German junior had been lying in the boat. Now he sat up, blinking round him with his light-blue saucer-eyes.

The five juniors stared at him. Sammy, it was clear, was not in the boat, but the passenger he had unknowingly taken out with him was there—evidently in a state of blue funk.

“What the thump—” exclaimed Streaky Bacon. “That blithering Boche can’t have got off in the boat and left Sammy stranded on the rock with Sarson! But what—”

“Come on!” muttered Jim Dainty.

He scrambled down and raced to the beach, followed by the others. On the margin of the sea they shouted and waved their hands to the fat German in the boat. The wind blew back their voices; but Fritz Splitz saw them. He was kneeling in the boat now, as it drifted and rocked, and staring blankly towards the

“Why doesn’t the fat idiot row?” hissed Ginger. “If he hasn’t sense enough to get the sail up he can row!”

Fritz Splitz blinked dizzily towards the island and the juniors waving on the shore. Since he had been adrift in the boat, Fatty Fritz had been in a state of hopeless funk, huddled in the bottom, hardly daring to look over the gunwale as the boat rocked and heeled and spun before the wind. But now that he saw Castaway Island close at hand and the Grimslade fellows on the beach, the fat Rheinlander seemed to pull himself together a little.

Very slowly and very cautiously he picked himself up and got hold of the oars. Clumsily—for Fatty rowed about as well as he did anything else—he began to pull into the bay, helped by the strong wind that ruffled the sea behind him.

THE CATAPULT THAT FIRED COCONUTS!

The juniors watched him with tense anxiety, tortured by the slowness of his approach. Something must have happened to Sammy! The ruffian marooned on the rock in the Atlantic was as treacherous as a snake. The fact that Sammy had gone to take him supplies would not make any difference to the Frisco tough if he had the chance of getting the upper hand. Had he got the better of Sammy Sparshott?

“Buck up, you fat snail!” shrieked Ginger Rawlinson. “Oh, won’t I punch you, you potty Boche! Won’t I jolly well kick you! Won’t I jolly well knock your fat nose through the back of your silly head!”

Perhaps it was, just as well that the wind from the sea carried Ginger’s voice back, and Fritz did not hear a word. Ginger’s remarks might not have encouraged him to hasten! As it was, the podgy Rheinlander was doing his best.

Slowly, clumsily, catching crabs galore, panting and spluttering, Fatty Fritz pulled and pulled, with the perspiration streaming down his fat face in the hot, tropical sunshine. But

the juniors were too wildly impatient and anxious to wait till he reached the beach, and he was still a good distance off when Jim Dainty plunged into the water, to swim out to him. The other fellows plunged in after Dainty.

Jim was the first to reach the boat. He grasped the gunwale and clambered in. Fatty Fritz gave a squeal of alarm as the boat rocked.

“Ach! Take gare mit you!” howled Fritz. “Mein gootness, you vill trown me pefore, if you upset tat poat after!”

“Where’s Sammy?” panted Jim.

“Ich weiss nicht—I know not vat pecome of Sammy!” groaned Fritz Splitz. “I tink tat peast and a prute, Sarson, get him pefore. Mein gootness, I tink—”

Ginger Rawlinson clambered in.

“What’s happened to Sammy?” he yelled. “You bloated Boche, tell us what’s happened before I punch your silly face through the back of your head!”

Fatty Fritz gasped for breath.

“I know not!” he spluttered. “I go to sleep mit meinsel in tat poat pefore, and I vake up unter a pig heap of bananas and gokernuts after, at tat rock, but I see not Sammy! I tink tat he fire his revolver mit himself, but I see him not. I see tat peast and a prute, Sarson, gumming to te poat, and I get away as fast as I can after.”

“That villain’s got Sammy!” panted Jim Dainty. “And you cleared and left him to it—”

“Ach! Vat could I do after?” howled Fritz Splitz. “I vas ferry prave, like all Chermans, but—”

“Oh, shut up! Thank goodness we’ve got the boat!” said Jim Dainty. “We’re going to Sammy.”

“What-ho! agreed Ginger.

“We’re going over to that rock, now, and we’ll rescue Sammy,” went on Jim.

Fritz Splitz gave a yell of terror.

“Ach! I vill not go pack in tat blace mit meinsel after!” he yelled. “I vill not—yarocoh! Kick me not on mein trousers, you peast Chinger! Ach! I have vun pig bain!”

“You rotten funk, you’ll be chucked out before we start,” growled Jim Dainty. “Get the boat in, you men, and I’ll get the revolver from the hut. Buck up!”

The boat shot in to the beach. Fritz Splitz

was the first ashore—helped by a drive from Ginger's boot that sent him rolling on the sand. Fatty Fritz rolled and roared.

Jim Dainty & Co., unheeding him further, made their preparations in hot haste.

Jim eyed the weird-looking catapult, which had been mounted on a tripod and erected in the stern of the boat. Originally this outsize in catapults had been designed for the purpose of spearing fish, but Jim foresaw the likelihood of this crude but effective weapon proving useful should Sarson attempt to storm their boat.

"Get a move on, you fellows!" he urged. "Every second counts!"

A terrible fear of Sammy's fate was in the hearts of the schoolboy castaways, but they drove it from their minds. At least, if he lived, they were going to save him.

In the Trap!

DR. SAMUEL SPARSHOTT called himself every sort of an ass as he stood at the bottom of the pit on the lonely islet. There was no doubt that the headmaster of Grimslade had been caught napping, and taken off his guard. Yet who could have foreseen such a trick?

Half a dozen times before Sammy Sparshott had run across in the boat from Castaway Island to the rock where the desperado was marooned. And Ezra, though he had snarled like a wolf, had been as meek as a lamb. And Sammy, keen as he was, wary as he was, had never suspected the existence of the pit dug in the path from the beach to the ruffian's hovel. It had been too cunningly concealed with branches and palm-leaves covered with sand, for a sign of it to meet his eyes until he crashed through. Then it was too late.

Fairly, he could not blame himself for having fallen into such a cunning trap; but he did slang himself bitterly as he stood there, revolver in hand, his heart like lead with anxiety for the boys in his charge—the boys he had left, all unsuspecting, on Castaway Island, while he made the trip to Sarson's rock.

Like a caged tiger Sammy Sparshott moved round the deep pit seeking escape. But there was no escape. Far above his head was the opening, still tangled with broken branches and leaves, where he had crashed through, still dripping with particles of the sand that had hidden it. The steep sides of hard, stony earth gave no hold for hand or foot—a monkey could not have climbed there.

A muttering, nasal voice, a tramping of footsteps, came suddenly through the silence.

Dr. Sparshott gave a violent start. It was more than an hour since Ezra Sarson had left him in the trap. His thoughts had followed the ruffian to the boat. Already the wind from the east should have wafted him across to Castaway Island. Sammy's tortured thoughts had been with the boys—attacked, taken by surprise by the sudden arrival of the desperate ruffian.

And Sarson had not gone. He was still on the rock. Why, Sammy could not imagine. But there was no mistaking the savage voice that growled out oaths as the ruffian tramped up from the sea.

Sammy watched the opening over his head. He twisted and dodged as a rugged boulder came hurtling over the edge and crashed down.

"Try again!" called out Sammy; and he laughed.

He could laugh now. His heart was suddenly light with the knowledge that the villain was still there; that peril threatened only himself, and not the schoolboys on the island.

"Doggone you, schoolmaster!" came the husky, savage voice of the ruffian. "I'll sure get you yet! And if I don't get you with a rock, I guess you'll die of hunger there. I reckon I'm fixed here for keeps, unless they come across in the boat, doggone them! But I got you fixed."

Dr. Sparshott listened in wonder. Somehow, he could not guess how, the ruffian had failed to seize the boat in which he had crossed. That was clear from his words, and from his continued presence on the rock. It was unexpected good fortune.

"You've not got the boat, you scoundrel?"

"Don't you know it, doggone you?" snarled Ezra. "I guess if I'd known that fat boob was in the boat, I'd have got him with a rock afore he saw me. Doggone you! You hid him out of sight when you ran across to this hyer shebang! I was watching you all the time, and I never saw him! If I'd known, I—" He broke off with a string of oaths.

"Are you mad?" ejaculated the amazed Sammy. "I was alone in the boat—"

"Aw, can it! You had that fat gink hidden under the stack of fruits, I guess, or I'd sure have got wise to him. If I'd guessed— But how'd a galoot guess? But I got you all the same, doggone you!"

Another rock came hurtling down, and Sammy dodged it.

"My only hat!" murmured Sammy Sparshott.

The "fat boob" could only be Fritz von Splitz; but if he had been hidden under the

cargo in the boat, Sammy Sparshott had never dreamed of it.

Sammy laughed aloud. How it had chanced, how Fritz had managed to get away in the boat, he could not tell; but nothing could have been luckier. Without the boat Sarson could not reach Castaway Island—the juniors were safe. It hardly occurred to Sammy to bother about himself.

His light laugh seemed to drive the disappointed ruffian to fury. There was a volley of fierce imprecations, followed by another hurtling rock. It missed the man in the pit by inches.

"Doggone you! I'll get you!" yelled Sarson.

"Keep it up!" called back Sammy. "The more the merrier! If you fill up the pit, I'll climb out!"

Watching for a falling rock, he also watched for Ezra, revolver in hand. But the villain was too wary to show as much as an eyebrow over the edge of the pit.

Panting with the exertion in the hot sunshine, Ezra rolled the rock up from the beach, and hurled them over the edge. All Sammy's wariness was needed to elude them as they crashed down. Wary as he was he was grazed several times; but the ruffian, keeping back out of range of Sammy's revolver, could only hurl them in at random.

He tired at last, and the rocks ceased to fall. Dr. Sparshott heard him tramping away, snarling as he went, and then there was silence.

Except that he had trapped the schoolmaster, whom he hated and feared, the ruffian had gained nothing by his treachery. Indeed, he was the worse off, for the supplies Sammy had brought to the rock were lost to him—the boat had not been unloaded when Fritz Splitz fled in it. Probably by that time the boat, running before tide and wind, was back at Castaway Island.

Sammy wondered whether Jim Dainty & Co. had learned of what had happened at the rock. If so, he had little, or rather no doubt, that they would take off in the boat—to learn his fate, to save him if they could. He hardly knew whether he hoped or feared that they would come.

There were five of them, and they had pluck and determination. And one of them, at least, would be armed with the revolver he had left in the hut—they would not forget that.

The long, long minutes seemed like hours to Sammy—like weary days! Had Fritz Splitz reached the island in the boat? Had the juniors started for the rock in the Atlantic? He could not tell; he could only wait and wonder and listen.

From the bottom of the pit he could see nothing—nothing but a patch of blue sky, reddened now as the sun sank westward. In the silence, the terrible monotony of suspense, another attack from the 'Frisco ruffian would have come almost as a relief.

If Sarson sighted the boat bearing down on the rock, he would make another attack. Sammy's revolver, if he could get hold of it, would make him master of the situation. Sammy's heart beat faster when at last he heard the tramping footsteps approaching the pit again.

Crash! came a hurtling rock. But Sammy saw it coming, and it crashed a foot from him. He had no sight of the ruffian above; but he loosed off a shot from his revolver, the bullet whizzing skywards.

Loud and sharp the crack of the pistol rang, and as it died away in echoes, Sammy listened with intent ears. If the boat was coming the juniors would hear, and surely they would signal with an answering shot.

Crack!
Faintly, but clearly from afar, came the answering shot. And then Sammy knew.

Jim Dainty & Co. to the Rescue.

"**T**HAT'S Sammy!" yelled Ginger Rawlinson, in delight.

"Hurrah!"
And Jim Dainty loosed off the revolver in his hand in answer to the shot from the rock. His eyes were dancing. Sammy was alive. The chums of Grimslade were relieved of their worst fears.



Gussy comes a Cropper!

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is not the only one to come a cropper in this week's great yarn of the cheery chums of St. Jim's, entitled "THE WORST BOY AT ST. JIM'S!" A new-comer arrives at the school, and when he proves to be a bully and a cad, Tom Merry & Co. show him just where he gets off! Ask your newsagent for this ripping yarn, on sale now in

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Four juniors were sweating at the oars under the blaze of tropical sunshine. Jim Dainty steered, while Ginger and Bacon and Bean and Dawson pulled. The wind was dead against them, and the sail was useless. But the Grimsladers were sturdy and strong, and they put their beef into the rowing.

Castaway Island was a dark mass on the sea far astern. They were close on the solitary rock now. It was so small that they could see almost the whole of it as they approached—the sandy beach, the rough rocks, the few stunted trees, the hovel that the maroon had built of branches and leaves.

They could see Ezra Sarson appearing and disappearing among the trees and rocks—they saw him leap on a high boulder, shade his eyes with his hand and stare towards them. But they could not see Sammy—there was no sign of the tall figure of the headmaster of Grimslade.

The fear in their hearts had grown sharper and keener—till that shot ringing from the islet told them that he was living. For it was not Sarson who fired, and the shot could only have come from Sammy. He was out of sight—where, they could not guess—but he lived, and they were going to save him!

"Pull on!" panted Jim Dainty. Four pairs of arms pulled hard and fast, and the boat shot onward. Jim Dainty, revolver in hand, watched the islet.

Ezra Sarson was staring towards the boat, with haggard desperation in his face. The ruffian had courage in his own ferocious way. The watching juniors saw him drag out a sheath-knife and open it. Knife in hand, he tramped down to the tiny beach, evidently with the intention of disputing the landing.

Dainty's eyes gleamed, and his grip tightened on the butt of the revolver. With Sammy's life in peril, he was not likely to hesitate to use it.

The boat bumped on the sand. Crash!

Jim Dainty fired over the heads of his comrades as the tattered, savage-faced ruffian rushed down the beach, the knife flashing in the sun. The boy's hand was as steady as a rock. There was a yell from Ezra as the bullet tore along his brawny shoulder, and a spurt of crimson stained his ragged shirt.

Jim could have sent the bullet through his broad chest; but only in the last extremity would he have shot the man down. Ezra came to a halt, claspng the gash in his shoulder with his hand, spitting with fury like a wild-cat. Four Grimsladers swarmed from the boat, the oars in their hands, leaving Streaky on guard.

"Give him beans!" yelled Ginger Rawlinson. He led the rush towards Sarson, brandishing his oar. The ruffian backed away, his eyes glittering, grasping his knife convulsively. Jim Dainty lifted the revolver to a level.

"Drop that knife, Sarson!" he rapped. "I give you one second before I shoot!"

The ruffian read the determination in the clear, cool eyes looking over the levelled revolver. With a fierce oath, he dropped the knife to the sand. He stood panting with rage.

"By the great horned toad—" he hissed between his teeth.

"That's enough from you!" grinned Ginger. "You're a jolly old prisoner, old man! We've got you. Stop him!" added Ginger, in a roar, as the ruffian spun round and bounded away.

"Leave him to me!" called out Streaky.

With great deliberation he caught up a coconut and fitted it into the catapult. Then, aiming just ahead of the runaway, he let fly. The shock absorber twanged under the strain, and the coconut shot forward straight and true to the mark.

Crash! It landed on Ezra's head as he ran, and the ruffian, with a yell, pitched forward on his face, half-stunned.

"Well, hit, Streaky!" chuckled Ginger. He leaped on the sprawling ruffian's back and pinned him down, with a knee planted between his shoulders. "Got the beauty!"

Dick Dawson ran to the boat for a rope. Ezra, panting with rage in the grasp of the Grimsladers, was bound hand and foot. Ginger Rawlinson knotted the rope with great care. The ruffian was left lying on the sand as helpless as a trussed turkey.

"And now—where's Sammy?" "Sammy!" roared Ginger at the top of his powerful voice. "Sammy!"

"This way!" came back a well-known voice; and for a moment the amazed juniors could not tell whence it came. Then they knew—and they raced towards the pit in front of the maroon's hovel. Five astonished faces stared down at the headmaster below. He looked up with a smile.

"Sammy!" gasped Ginger. "That," said Dr. Sparshott, "is not the way to address your headmaster, Rawlinson! You will take fifty lines!"

Saved!

JIM DAINTY & Co. chuckled. That was just like Sammy! Ginger did not care if Sammy gave him fifty lines, or five hundred. He chortled.

"We'll soon get you out of that, sir!" he said gleefully. "We've got that brute Sarson—got him safe and sound! I'll cut down to the boat for a rope!"

"Thank you, Rawlinson!" Ginger dashed away.

"You're not hurt, sir?" called out Jim Dainty anxiously.

"Only a few bruises, Dainty—less than I deserve, for my carelessness in falling into such a trap!" answered Dr. Sparshott.

Ginger came back breathlessly with the rope from the boat. It slithered down into the pit, and Dr. Sparshott grasped it. The five juniors, all holding on, braced themselves to pull; and the headmaster of Grimslade was dragged up. He grasped the edge of the pit and clambered out.

"Thank you, my boys!" said Dr. Sparshott quietly. That was all that Sammy said; but it was enough for Jim Dainty & Co. He glanced across at the ruffian lying bound on the sand, and walked over to him, the juniors following.

For a long minute Sammy stood looking down steadily at the desperado. Sammy spoke at last.

"You deserve," he said, "to be thrown into the pit from which my boys have rescued me, and left there to your fate." The ruffian's tanned face blanched. "But I shall not deal with you as you deserve! You will be left on this rock as before—but do not expect another visit from me! From now on you shift for yourself the best way you can."

He signed to the juniors to release the ruffian. Ezra staggered to his feet and stood watching

them, with bitter rage and hate, as they pushed off the boat and went aboard. Up went the sail, filling in the strong breeze from the Atlantic; and the boat shot away from the rock.

"Where's Fritz?"

"Asleep somewhere."

"Can't hear him snoring!"

It was a joyous party that landed on the beach of Castaway Island. Sammy was as merry and bright as any of the schoolboys and, indeed, seemed rather like a schoolboy himself!

Fritz Splitz was not to be seen. The castaways walked up to the hut, expecting to find him there—probably asleep! But Fritz was not asleep! As they approached the hut they heard his voice.

"Mein gootness! I vas derribly hungry! Vat is te use of pananas and gokernuts to me? Ach! Vat would I not gif for vun Cherman sausage—vun real, goot, fat Cherman-sausage! Tat Sammy is a peast and a prute tat he vill not let me touch te peef! Trec tozzen cans of goot peef—and tat peastly Sammy geep tem in reserve—te dummkopf! Ach himmel! And I vas so hungry before! But if I takes te peef, tat peast peat me till I pellow like a pull!"

And there was a long, deep sigh from the interior of the hut. The castaways, grinning, looked in at the doorway.

Fritz Splitz, munching a banana, was standing before the stack of canned beef in the corner, regarding it with longing, yearning eyes. Evidently, he was not wasting much thought on Dr. Sparshott, or the juniors who had gone to his rescue! When Fritz was hungry, lesser things vanished from his fat mind.

Deep in his contemplation of the provender he dared not snaffle, Fritz did not see the grinning faces looking in. He gazed at the cans of beef, munched the banana, and sighed a deep, deep sigh.

"Ach! And I vas so hungry! I wish tat I vas pack in Chermany, vere te sausages are so goot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Fritz jumped and spun round.

"Ach! You gum pack mit you!" he exclaimed. "I was tinkng of you all te time—I have tunk of you ebery minute! And I have not touch te peef—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This evening," said Dr. Sparshott, with a chuckle, "we are entitled to a little celebration. Splitz, you may even open one of the cans of beef!"

"Ach!" gasped Fritz, his saucer-eyes dancing. "Goot! I am so glad tat you are safed, sir—I am ferry glad inteeat tat you are safed! Tat peef is goot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no doubt that Fritz Splitz was glad—though whether his gladness was due to the safe return of Sammy, or to the beef for supper, was a question. Anyhow, he was glad, and the other fellows were merry and bright; and it was a happy party that sat down to supper on Castaway Island.

(Jim Dainty the rebel! Refusing to obey his headmaster! Next week's dramatic story of the Grimslade castaways must not be missed—order your copy of RANGER now, buddies!)

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