

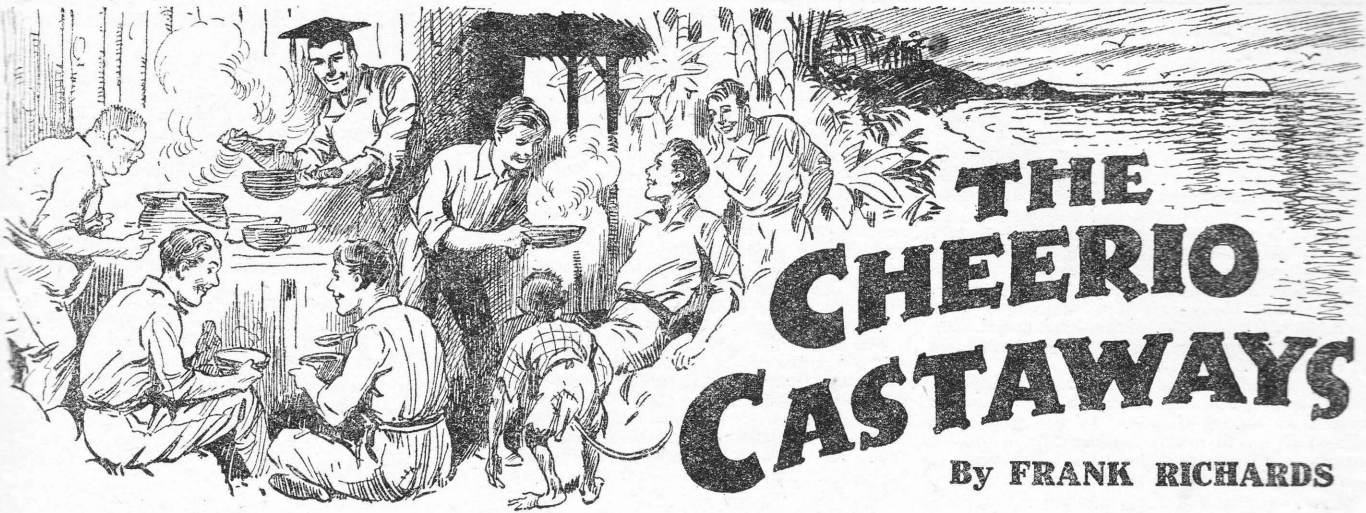
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# The RANGER 2<sup>D</sup>

New Series No. 33. Vol. 2.—Every Saturday.

Week Ending March 24th, 1934.

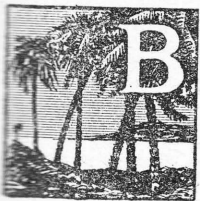




# THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS

By FRANK RICHARDS

**A Hot Chase.**



**B**ANG! Bang! From the wooded hill and the jungle, from the palm groves and the shelving sandy beach, the reports of the revolver rang back in a thousand echoes.

Jim Dainty as he ran, felt the wind of the bullets, and he was splashed from head to

foot by the sand kicked up by the whizzing lead. Only the darkness, faintly broken by the pale glimmer of the stars over Castaway Island, saved him.

Slim Stack, framed in the window of the Grimslade castaways' hut, the candle-light behind him, loosed off shot after shot, till his revolver was empty. He spat out an oath after the last shot, and turned from the window, grabbing cartridges from his pocket to reload.

Dr. Sparshott could have groaned aloud in his bitter anxiety. With his hands bound behind him, the headmaster of Grimslade was helpless. The schoolboy castaways were also helpless prisoners, and their hearts ached with anxiety for Jim, as the gangster's revolver roared in the night. Even Fritz Splitz had awakened at the sudden uproar, and sat blinking in the candle-light, his saucer-eyes wide. Luz, the half-breed, had his knife in his hand.

Jim Dainty had attempted to free his headmaster, to turn the tables on the two ruffians who had taken possession of Castaway Island; and he had come near to success. But Slim Stack slept like a weasel, with one eye and one ear open—and he had awakened in time.

He crammed cartridges into his revolver, strode to the door, and dragged down the bars.

"I guess I'm going after that guy!" he snarled. "You see that the schoolmaster's safe, Luz?"

"Mais—but what—" The half-breed was still heavy with sleep. "But what—"

"It's that young guy we left tied up across the island by the plane!" snarled the gangster.

"He's got loose somehow, and I guess he had his paw through the shutter, cutting the schoolmaster loose. See that he's safe."

Slim Stack threw open the door and stared out into the dim tropical night. He had a moment's glimpse of a shadow that vanished under the palms in the distance, and started at a run.

Dr. Sparshott, wrenching helplessly at the cords on his strong wrists, watched him go—helpless to intervene. He could only hope and pray that Jim Dainty would make good his escape. And the same prayer was in the hearts of Ginger & Co. as they stared from the open doorway into the night.

Jim Dainty, panting, gasping for breath, ran into the dark shadow of the palm grove. There was a scuttling sound, and Friday, the monkey, came out of the shadows, a queer figure in his hat and trousers.

"Hook it, Friday!" panted Jim. He ran on

among the palms, the sound of heavy footsteps coming to his ears behind. Friday, the monkey, was safe enough; he had only to take to the trees if the ruffian behind took any notice of him at all.

Jim ran on—running for his life!

He had done his best to rescue the castaways at the hut—and he had failed. Now he had to save himself, to help them again, if he could. But Slim Stack was close behind, and as he glimpsed the fugitive in the opening of the palms, he fired again. Dim as the light was the bullet went very close; Jim felt the grass hat spin on his head as it was touched.

"Say, young 'un!" came Slim's savage shout from behind. "I guess you better stop—I'll sure get you!"

Jim panted on. Once in the jungle, he had no doubt of being able to dodge his pursuer. The revolver roared again behind him, and he felt a stunning shock. He pitched headlong forward, and fell on the earth.

In a few moments he was struggling dizzily to rise—but the pattering footsteps of the gangster came swiftly up, and he was seized. Slim dragged him to his feet, a grin on his hard face. A thin streak of red ran down Jim's cheek.

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**THE EIGHT-ARMED GUARDIAN OF THE TREASURE PIT!**  
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The bullet had grazed his head, cutting off a strip of skin, and half-stunning him. He was dazed and dizzy, and sagged in the gangster's grasp; but he realised that it was only a scratch—he was not badly hurt. He tried to pull himself together—to struggle.

The fate of all the castaways depended on him, and on his keeping his freedom. But the grip of the gangster was like iron.

"Let up, you young gink!" growled Slim. He thrust the revolver into his belt, and laid both sinewy hands on the boy. "I guess I got you! You won't get away this time, dog-gone you!"

Jim panted desperately.

The gangster was marching him back towards the hut; half-dragging, half-carrying him. The Grimslade junior turned on the ruffian, grasping him, and hooking his leg, exerting all his strength. Slim stumbled, and came down heavily; but Jim came down with him, the sinewy grip unrelaxed.

Slim spat out an oath. His arms, almost as powerful as a gorilla's, twisted the schoolboy over, and slammed him down on the earth. Jim still struggled wildly as a knuckly fist was lifted over him.

"I guess you will have it!" snarled Slim.

The next moment, the clenched fist would have crashed on Jim Dainty, with a blow that would have knocked him senseless. But even as Slim aimed the blow, he was suddenly clawed from behind. So sudden and so surprising was the attack, that the gangster was dragged backwards, and pitched off the pant-

ing schoolboy, hardly knowing what was happening to him.

Jim sat up dizzily.

The gangster, spluttering with rage, was struggling with a queer figure in cotton trousers, that gibbered and clawed and squealed. It was Friday, the monkey, that had come to his master's aid. Slim Stack grabbed at it, grasped it, and hurled it away from him. But the respite was enough for Jim Dainty.

He scrambled to his feet and darted away among the palms, heading for the stream. He heard Slim's furious voice behind him.

"A goldarned monk!" The roar of the revolver followed; the ruffian was firing at the monkey.

But the gangster stayed only for one shot; then he tramped fiercely after Jim again. The Grimslade junior reached the stream and scrambled up towards the waterfall in the ravine. Twice he heard the roar of the revolver, and the crashing of lead on the rocks. But he plunged into the falling water, scrambled up desperately, and reached the ravine above.

Below him, he heard the splashing of his pursuer following him up. On the rocky ledge above the waterfall, Jim groped for a loose stone. With a jagged rock in his hand he turned, crouching on the ledge, and waiting for the gangster to appear in sight. Slim's head emerged from the spray of the cascade—and as it emerged, Jim Dainty hurled the rock with deadly aim.

There was a fearful howl from the gangster as the jagged missile struck him on the forehead. He went backwards as if struck by a bullet, and crashed on his back at the bottom of the fall.

Jim Dainty did not lose another moment.

He turned his back on the waterfall, and raced away up the rugged ravine, leaping from rock to rock. Whether the gangster pursued him further, he did not know; he saw nothing more of Slim Stack, and heard nothing more of him.

At last he stopped, panting and breathless, on the upper slopes of the island hill, and threw himself down to rest. A soft nose nuzzled under his arm, and he looked round to see Man Friday grinning at his side.

**Seeking the Treasure!**

"**A**CH, himmel!" yelled Fritz Splitz. Fritz was the only one of the castaways who was asleep when morning dawned on the lonely island. And Fritz was suddenly awakened by a kick in his fat ribs. He yelled and sat up.

"Peast and a prute!" howled Fritz. "Vy for you kick me pefore? I tink—" Fritz broke off as the scowling face of Slim Stack reminded him where he was. "Ach! I pegs you to pardon!" added Fritz, in a great hurry. "Thank you for vaking me up—"

"Turn out, you fat Dutchman!" snarled Slim. "Cut his fins loose, Luz!"

As soon as his hands were loose, Fritz rubbed his sleepy eyes. Then another kick

reminded him that he was expected to make himself useful. The fat slacker of Grimslade developed energy at once. Anyone who had observed Fritz Splitz cooking breakfast for the two invaders of Castaway Island, might have supposed that he was an extremely industrious fellow, and fond of work.

Dr. Samuel Sparshott, Ginger, and Bacon, and Bean, and Dick Dawson, were left tied up. Fritz, exhibiting none of his usual clumsiness and laziness, built a fire outside the hut, cooked the breakfast, and waited hand and foot on his masters—rewarding himself with an occasional snack as he did so.

Slim was in a savage temper that morning. There was a blood-stained bandage tied over his forehead, and probably his head ached. He was tough as hickory, but the crash of the rock on his head had hurt him.

As he sat on a log by the fire, eating, his eyes turned every now and then on the hut, and glinted at Dr. Sparshott. In the gangster's present frame of mind, Sammy had no tender treatment to expect from him. But Sammy was feeling pleased, all the same.

Slim had returned from his pursuit of Jim Dainty with a lump on his forehead and fierce oaths on his lips—but Sammy knew that the boy had escaped.

Slim Stack rose from the log at last, jammed a black cheroot into his mouth, lighted it, and signed to Luz. The half-breed led the headmaster of Grimslade out of the hut.

"Now," said Slim. "I reckon you know why we made this here island in the plane, schoolmaster. We're after the treasure. You beat off Luz and his crew when they came in the schooner; but I guess I got you, and I'll say I'm a bigger proposition than a darned 'breed and a whole crew of niggers. You've raised the treasure that the black king of Hayti cached on this island a hundred years ago. You'll tell me where you've put it, and you'll tell me quick."

"I have already told you that we have raised no treasure here," answered Dr. Sparshott. "We should have allowed Captain Luz and his crew to search for it in peace, if they had left us alone. We beat them off to defend our lives."

"Morbleu! A lie!" snarled the half-breed. "I tell you, Stack—"

"Aw! Can it!" snapped the gangster. "I'm running this here show, Luz! I'll give you a chance, schoolmaster! If you ain't raised the treasure, you know where to lay hands on it. You ain't stayed on this here island, knowing it was there, without looking for it, I guess."

"That is true," assented Dr. Sparshott, "and I am prepared to tell you all I know. There is a cavern up the ravine, as Luz knows. Skeletons have been found in it—no doubt those of the men who came here a hundred years ago with the treasure from Hayti."

"I guess I've heard that much from Luz!" grunted Slim.

"We found a walled-up fissure in the cave-wall," went on Dr. Sparshott. "It led to a deep pit, at the bottom of which was water, connected by some subterranean inlet with the sea. My belief is that the treasure was sunk there—but it is only an opinion. I have seen nothing of it."

Slim Stack watched his face with glinting eyes.

"And you ain't been down after it?" he sneered.

"I have—and had a narrow escape of my life!" answered Dr. Sparshott quietly. "There is an octopus—the largest and most fearful sea-devil I have ever seen—in the salt pool at the bottom of the pit. No man can descend there—and live."

Slim Stack grinned, and the half-breed burst into a laugh.

"Morbleu! Are we to be frightened away by a story of an octopus?" he exclaimed. "If it is as you say, guide us to the spot."

"That I am willing to do," answered Dr. Sparshott.

It went sorely against the grain with Sammy to make any terms with the two rascals. But he was thinking of the boys; and for their sakes the headmaster of Grimslade put his pride in his pocket.

For the sake of the boys, he would have been glad to see the two ruffians raise the treasure of King Christophe, stack it in the aeroplane they had left on the western side of the island,

and fly away; he would have rejoiced to see the last of them and of the treasure, too.

"Rope them together, Luz!" grunted the gangster. "I guess we're taking the whole bunch, or that kid will be moseying along and letting them loose while our backs are turned."

Luz tapped the knife in his belt. "There is an easier and quicker way of keeping them safe—" he muttered.

"You doggoned scum of Martinique, can it!" snarled Slim, with a savage glare at his swarthy confederate. "I guess you're too handy with that stick of yours. Don't I know you'd put it in my back, soon's we've raised the treasure, if you knew how to handle the plane and get off the island? You're here to jump to orders, you scum! Rope 'em up!"

The half-breed gave him a look of hate, and sullenly and silently did as he was bid. The headmaster and the five juniors were roped in a line, Luz knotting the cords savagely. Brute and ruffian as the American gangster was, the castaways could not help feeling glad that they were in his hands and not in the dusky hands of Captain Luz. In the latter case, their lives would have been worth little.

"Now get on with it!" growled Slim, and the party started.

They passed through the palm grove to the stream, and Dr. Sparshott led the way, wading knee-deep in the water, the juniors behind him. Slim and Luz followed them, each with a ten-fathom coil of rope, taken from the hut, over his arm. Dr. Sparshott stopped when he reached the waterfall.

"We cannot climb this with our hands bound," he said quietly.

Slim grinned.

"I guess you ain't getting your hands loose so easy as all that, schoolmaster!" he jeered. "I guess we'll pull you through somehow."

He uncoiled his rope and knotted an end round the headmaster of Grimslade. Then the two ruffians clambered up through the falling water. On the ledge above they dragged on the rope.

"My giddy goloshes!" gasped Ginger Rawlinson. "Urrrrgh!" He spluttered as he was dragged into the cascade.

"Ach himmel! Ve vas all trounced after!" gurgled Fritz Splitz.

Somehow the Grimsladers scrambled and clambered up the rocks, helped by the drag on the rope above. Half-drowned by the falling water, drenched and dripping, they got through the cascade and sprawled gasping and panting on the rocky ledge above. But they were allowed no time to rest. A savage kick from the half-breed helped Dr. Sparshott to his feet. Sammy's eyes were burning as he scrambled up. But he said nothing.

In a dripping, draggled line, the Grimsladers tramped up the rocky ravine to the cavern.

"My giddy goloshes! Dainty!" breathed Ginger Rawlinson.

He jerked his head towards a tall rock, high up the ravine. On its summit, watching the party, stood Jim Dainty, with a queer hairy figure in trousers and hat by his side. All eyes turned on him, and the half-breed clutched at the knife in his belt, Slim at a revolver.

"Dainty! Take care!" shouted Dr. Sparshott.

Dainty waved his hand. He disappeared behind the rock, with his monkey pal, as Slim's revolver roared. Sammy Sparshott staggered as Luz struck him across the mouth with the back of his dusky hand.

"Silence, you!" snarled Luz.

Sammy's eyes were like fire for a second. But he shut his teeth hard.

"Get on!" snapped Slim Stack.

The headmaster of Grimslade tramped on and led the way into the gloomy opening of the cave.

### The Grip of the Sea-Devil.

THE light of a hurricane lamp in Slim Stack's hand gleamed and glimmered on walls of basaltic rock.

The American gangster stared about him curiously as he advanced into the cavern. More than once, in past days as a rum-runner, he had landed on the solitary island; but he had never penetrated into the ravine above the waterfall, and knew nothing of the cavern in the hill save what he had heard from Captain Luz. But it was not new ground to Luz, who, long weeks ago, had pursued the Grim-

sladers through that cavern at the head of his black crew.

The half-breed uttered a sudden exclamation as there was a glimmer of white in the lantern-light from the dark floor of the cavern. It was the skeleton for which he had been looking—that of one of the hapless Haytian blacks who had sailed with the Marquis of Marmalade a century ago, from Port-au-Prince, with King Christophe's treasure to hide. It still lay where it had been discovered by the Grimsladers.

"Voila! The skeleton!" exclaimed Luz.

"I guess that looks like the goods!" said Slim, staring at the grisly bones. "I'll say that this is a likely spot, old-timer."

"The treasure is here—or was here!" snarled Luz. "The schoolmaster has found it, whether he has raised it or not! That I know."

"I guess he's talking turkey!" answered Slim. "He knows where it lies, I reckon, but he ain't got the sand to go after it. Or mebber he's leaving it safe there till he got a chance of getting it off the island. I'll say we're going to save him that trouble."

Dr. Sparshott led the way to the fissure where a wall of rock had been displaced, revealing the opening beyond. The fissure was narrow, and Slim Stack marched ahead with the hurricane lamp, Dr. Sparshott and the string of prisoners following him, and Luz bringing up the rear. The interior was black as midnight, shadowy and eerie in the gleam of the lamp.

The juniors walked in silence, save for Fritz Splitz, who grunted and groaned at every step. They reached the end of the fissure, where the deep chasm yawned, and the space was wider on the edge. There the prisoners stood in a group.

Luz caught up a stone and dropped it into the gulf. Faintly from below came the sound of a splash.

"Water there, I reckon," said Slim. "I guess there's an inlet from the sea, as the schoolmaster allowed. It'll be sea-level." He looked round at Dr. Sparshott. "What's the depth here, schoolmaster? You allow that you've been down."

"The water is about sixty-six feet below," answered Dr. Sparshott.

"I guess we got to splice ropes for that, Luz."

The half-breed nodded, and started at once to fasten the two long ropes together. Having secured them, he carefully knotted one end round a jutting rock on the edge of the chasm. The other end he dropped into the gulf. There was again a splash as it struck the water far below.

Luz's black eyes were glittering under his dark brows. It was evident that he believed that he was close to the treasure. That, indeed, the Grimsladers fully believed. They had no doubt that the Marquis of Marmalade, in those days so long ago, had hidden King Christophe's chests of gold in that exceedingly safe hiding-place.

But they knew—that the two greedy adventurers refused to believe—that since the days of the Black Marquis a terrible guardian kept watch and ward over the treasure pool.

More than once, when Slim's eyes were not on the half-breed, they saw Luz's glance glitter at him, and thought they could read what was in his treacherous mind. Ruined by the loss of his schooner, the dusky rascal had told his tale to the rum-runner, and enlisted his aid in searching for the treasure; but, once the gold was lifted, he did not mean to share it if he could help it.

Slim Stack threw himself down, lowered the hurricane-lamp the length of his arm into the pit, and stared below. As if by instinct, the half-breed made a movement towards him, his hand on the haft of his knife.

"My giddy goloshes!" Ginger Rawlinson gasped. "Look out, Mr. Stack—for goodness' sake, look round!"

The gangster, cool as ice, looked round, but without taking the trouble to rise. His ice-cold eyes fixed on the half-breed, and he grinned.

"Wash it out, Luz!" he said. "You couldn't handle the plane, bo! Wash it out till we're off the island."

And he resumed staring into the black gulf, regardless of the half-breed. Luz's dusky hand released the knife. He stood staring at the

sprawling American with glinting eyes, till Slim rose from his inspection. Little as they had reason to like the man, the Grimsladers were glad to see him out of that perilous position.

They knew, as evidently Slim himself knew, that only the fact that Luz could not pilot the plane, saved him from a treacherous knife-thrust.

"I guess we've hit the spot," said Slim coolly. "I guess the schoolmaster spotted the right place." He knitted his brows. "I reckon this job wants a swimmer! I'll sail a ram-running tramp, or pilot a plane, with any man between Noo Yawk and Frisco, but I'm sure no swimmer!"

"I will go!" grunted the half-breed. "Morbleu! I swim like a fish."

Slim's icy eyes fixed on him. "I guess you better tell me the frozen truth when you come up, Luz!" he said. "If the plane quits this here island without the treasure, it quits without you, so chew on that!"

Luz gave a sullen nod, and took a grasp on the rope overhanging the pit. Slim fastened the hurricane-lamp to the end of a long cord to lower it after him and light the way down.

Dr. Sparshott made a step forward. Only too well the headmaster of Grimslade remembered his fearfully narrow escape from the sea-devil of the pit. Savage and pitiless enemy as the half-breed was, Sammy could not see him go into such terrible peril without another word of warning.

"Stop!" barked Sammy. "I have told you—"

Luz released one hand from the rope, and struck him fiercely in the face. Sammy Sparshott staggered back.

"That for your lies!" snarled the half-breed. "Do you fancy you will frighten me away from the treasure with your lying tales?"

He lifted his clenched hand again, but Slim interposed.

"I guess that's the lot, bo!" he snapped. "Get on with it!"

The half-breed swung down the rope. Sammy Sparshott leaned back against the rugged rock, his face white, his lip bleeding from the ruffian's brutal blow. He did not utter another word, and the dusky head of the half-breed disappeared over the rock edge.

Slim, his brawny chest on the edge of the rock, paid out his cord, lowering the lantern as the half-breed descended the rope. Lower and lower went the active, dusky man from Martinique, the lowered hurricane-lamp keeping pace with his descent. Slim watched him keenly, apparently forgetful of the prisoners behind him.

Dr. Sparshott moved forward, dropped on his knees, and then lay down beside Slim, staring over the edge as the gangster was doing. But, at a gesture from him, the juniors kept back. Sammy did not want them to see what he feared to see himself.

As the hurricane-lamp went lower and lower, those above were wrapped in darkness—they had no other light. In the thickening blackness the Grimslade juniors stood with beating hearts.

Lower and lower Luz swung himself with a sailor's activity on the rope. His feet touched the surface of the black pool below at last, into which the rope dipped. Coolly he let go the rope, and started swimming about the pool. Slim paid out his cord till the hurricane-lamp was only a few feet above the water, glimmering there like a spot of light in the darkness from above.

The dark head of the man from Martinique was seen moving in the radius of light, but passed beyond it into the blackness of the sea-pool. It came back into the light again, and the dusky face stared up. Sounding strangely hollow from the deep chasm, the voice of the half-breed boomed.

"C'est ici! It is here! I have dived, and touched a chest under the water! There are others—many others!"

Dr. Sparshott's nerve was of iron, but he felt a shudder run along his spine. The man from Martinique had dived—into the deep den where the sea-devil lay. Was the giant octopus no longer there? Had it gone by the passage to the sea?

Sammy's lip was bleeding from the half-breed's brutal blow: but from the bottom of

his heart he hoped that it was so—that the desperado was not to feel the grip of the sea-devil's tentacles as he had felt them. But if the octopus was there the half-breed's diving had probably disturbed it.

Captain Luz's shrill voice came echoing up again.

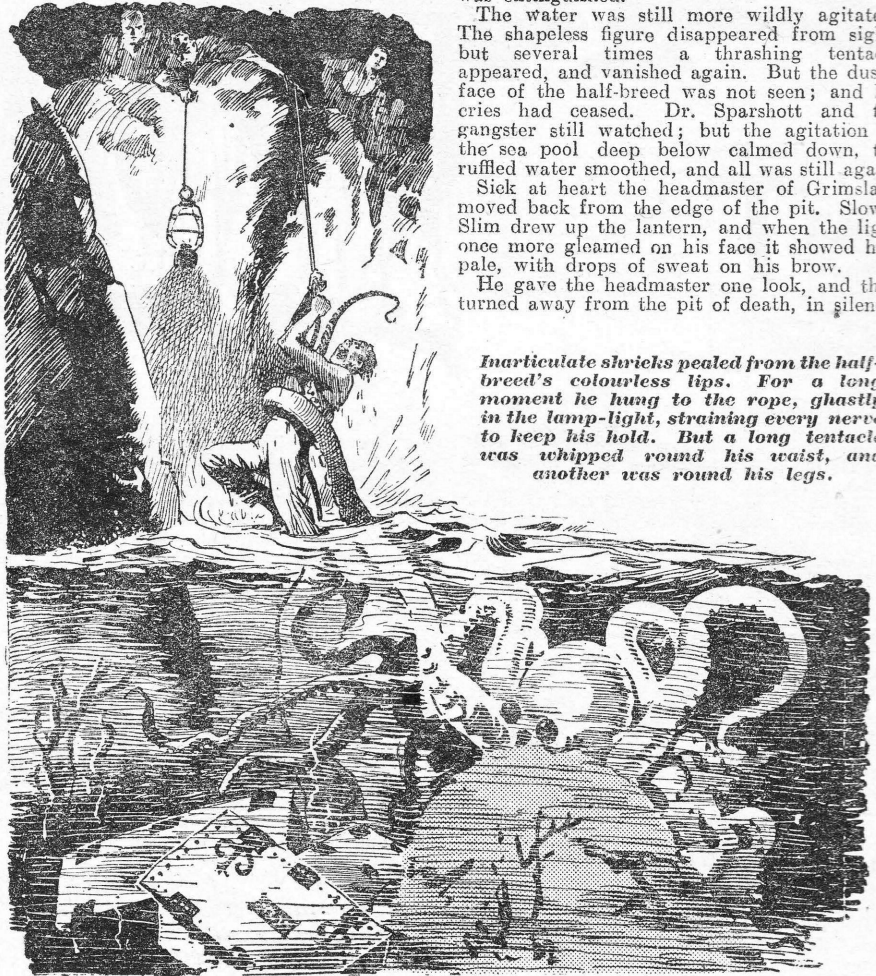
"Stand by to pull, mon vieux! I shall dive again, and fasten the rope—" His voice broke off suddenly as something touched him in the water, and he stared round.

A wild yell followed, and Luz suddenly disappeared from the radius of the lantern light.

"What's got the guy?" breathed Slim.

"What in thunder—"

"The octopus!" breathed Dr. Sparshott.



Give me a knife, and let me go down the rope! I will try—"

"I guess it's too late!" The gangster's voice was cracked and husky. "I guess nobody can help him now. If a guy had a chance of a shot—"

He had changed the cord to his left hand; his six-shooter was in his right. In the circle of lamplight far down the water was churned into foam by the throes of a fearful struggle. Suddenly in the light appeared a shapeless form with two huge eyes that glimmered like plates; and Slim's revolver roared with a sound like thunder in the narrow space.

The shot told, for Sammy could see that one of the great eyes vanished like a candle that was extinguished.

The water was still more wildly agitated. The shapeless figure disappeared from sight, but several times a thrashing tentacle appeared, and vanished again. But the dusky face of the half-breed was not seen; and his cries had ceased. Dr. Sparshott and the gangster still watched; but the agitation in the sea pool deep below calmed down, the ruffled water smoothed, and all was still again.

Sick at heart the headmaster of Grimslade moved back from the edge of the pit. Slowly Slim drew up the lantern, and when the light once more gleamed on his face it showed him pale, with drops of sweat on his brow.

He gave the headmaster one look, and then turned away from the pit of death, in silence.

*Inarticulate shrieks pealed from the half-breed's colourless lips. For a long moment he hung to the rope, ghastly in the lamp-light, straining every nerve to keep his hold. But a long tentacle was whipped round his waist, and another was round his legs.*

"Aw! Can it! I guess—"

Slim Stack ceased to speak as something long and sinuous flashed into the lantern light from the water. He stared down, dumb. It was the tentacle of an octopus!

A wild sound of splashing, of hoarse screaming, rolled up from the pool. Suddenly the dusky face of the half-breed came into the light again. It was drained of colour, distorted with terror, the black eyes almost bulging from their sockets.

Two dusky hands clutched at the hanging rope, and grasped it; head and shoulders of the half-breed came out of the water as he strove madly to climb. Inarticulate shrieks pealed from his colourless lips. For a long moment he hung to the rope, ghastly in the lamplight, straining every nerve to keep his hold.

But a long tentacle was whipped round his waist, thickening as it tightened. Another was round his legs. The pull was one that an elephant could hardly have resisted. Yet for a long, long moment the half-breed clung on desperately, frantically, shrieking. Then he was torn from his grip, and splashed back into the water. Slim, staring down, seemed frozen.

"Release me!" Dr. Sparshott panted in his ear. "Release me, and I will try to help him!

The rope by which Luz had descended to his doom was left hanging.

In silence the gangster tramped away by the fissure, and in the shuddering silence the Grimsladers followed him. Not a word was spoken as they went. In the same silence of horror they tramped back through the cave to the ravine.

Even from the hard, ruthless mind of the gangster all thought of the treasure seemed to have been obliterated by the terrible tragedy he had witnessed. And the Grimsladers panted with relief when they emerged at last into the open air, and felt the sunshine on their faces again.

*(For the moment, all thought of gaining the treasure of Castaway Island is driven from Slim Stack's mind. But when once he has overcome the horror of his partner's ghastly fate, then does he become again the ruthless, avaricious gangster. Many perils are in store for Dr. Sparshott and the Grimslade castaways, so make sure you read next week's exciting chapters of this thrilling adventure story!)*