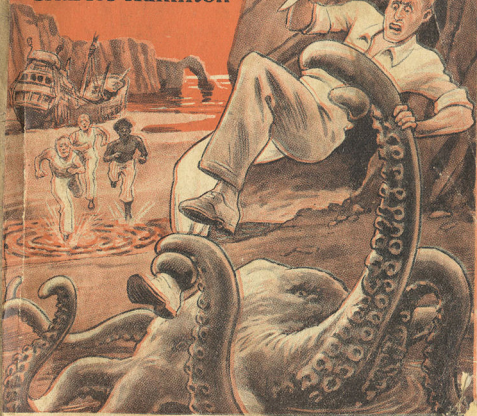


GALLEON'S GOLD

By
Charles Hamilton



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BOYS' FRIEND



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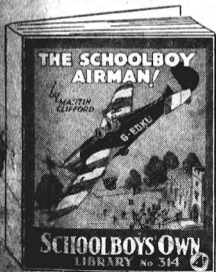
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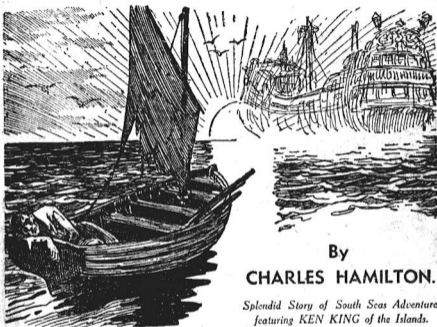
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GALLEON'S GOLD



By

CHARLES HAMILTON.

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featuring KEN KING of the Islands.*

CHAPTER 1.

Danny Asks For It.

CRASH! The lacquer tray tilted in the hands of Danny, the Kanaka cook of the ketch Dawn, and coffee and cups went to the deck together.

There was a smashing of crockery and a splash of hot coffee, and a roar from Kit Hudson, the young Australian mate. The coffee had splashed over his knees, and thin linen trousers were not

much defence against the steaming fluid. Hudson leaped to his feet.

"You clumsy swab!" he roared.

Danny jumped back. Ken King, the boy owner of the ketch, rose from his deck-chair. He, fortunately, had escaped the steaming coffee, but he could understand and sympathise with the feelings of his shipmate.

"You black lubber!" he exclaimed. "What name you spill feller, along feller legs belong white n
Danny backed farther off. A or

"No savvy, sar!" he answered.

King of the Islands—as Ken was known throughout the South Seas, where he sailed in search of trade—eyed him sternly. Such an accident—if it was an accident—would have earned the cooky-boy a stiff ropesending from almost any other skipper in the South Seas. And Danny did not even say that he was "plenty solly." He did not even look sorry. There was a lurking grin on his brown face as Hudson hopped with pain and mopped his streaming trousers.

"You no savvy?" exclaimed Ken sharply.

"No, sar!" And Danny, without waiting for an order, padded back with his bare feet to his tiny galley. And there his voice was heard a minute later raised in singing; and the Hiva-Oa seamen, as they heard his song, exchanged glances and grinned at one another.

Kit Hudson went below to change his trousers. The Australian had been powerfully tempted to pick up his stockwhip and lay it round the bare brown limbs of the cooky-boy. But he took it for granted that the spilling of the coffee was an accident, and he restrained his wrath.

But Ken, as he sat in his deck-chair after his comrade had gone below, and waited for his breakfast—which did not arrive—looked grimly thoughtful.

King of the Islands knew the Kanaka through and through; the strange, irresponsible natures of the children of the South had few secrets for him. The "boys" who sailed with King of the Islands all came from the island of Hiva-Oa, in the Marquesas, and they sailed long with the boy trader, and were devoted to him. Danny, the cooky-boy, had been as devoted as the rest. But since King of the Islands had returned to his ketch, after a long absence, there had been a change in Danny.

For several weeks the ketch Dawn had been moored at the coral wharf of the island. King of the Islands was

away. Ken had returned, and had not been surprised to find that the crew, loyal to him as they were, had spent their days in loafing and chewing betelnut, with a cheerful and childlike neglect of all their duties.

With a Kanaka crew, the "master's eye" was everything. But immediately the "little white master" returned to his deck the Hiva-Oa crew turned to with cheery willingness, and decks were scrubbed and metal polished, and things began to look shipshape again. Ken knew the Kanakas too well to complain of what was naturally to be expected of their infantile natures. As soon as he trod the teak deck of the Dawn discipline was restored, and that was enough for him. But the cooky-boy was an exception.

For several days, while the ketch was getting ready for sea, Danny, the cook, had been on his worst behaviour.

Ken was surprised, for hitherto his crew had been happy and contented. But he knew the signs. A Kanaka who is dissatisfied with his master does not tell him so. He will seldom or never say that he wishes to go. But he will proceed, by a series of exasperating blunders and accidents, to force his master to send him away.

When the eggs were half cooked or doubly cooked, when the yams were burnt, when the biscuit was dripping with water or burning with pepper, Ken recognised the infallible signs that Danny was asking for the sack.

But he had been loth to recognise the signs. It was a point of pride with King of the Islands that no native boy ever wanted to leave his ship. He preferred to think that Danny was still suffering from the effects of his long spell of liberty while his master was away. But the accident with the coffee that morning settled the matter. Trivial offences having failed to produce the desired result, Danny was going further.

King of the Islands was puzzled. A Kanaka boy acting in such a way was

generally under the influence of some white man who wanted to get him away from his master. Had Danny been an efficient seaman, or a good pearl-diver, or an experienced boat-steerer, Ken could have understood it; or even if he had been an extra-specially good cook. But Danny was nothing but a cooky-boy; and not by any means a specially brilliant cooky-boy. A dozen such cooky-boys could have been picked up on the beach at Lalinge any day. No other white skipper was likely to be yearning for Danny's services; no white planter or trader on the island was likely to want him. So it was not the usual cause that produced this effect.

So Ken was quite puzzled. But if Danny was asking for the kick, Ken was quite prepared to give it to him, even if he had to go to sea without a cook. It was an awkward time for engaging a new boy for the galley, as the ketch was to sail that afternoon. But a word passed along the beach would fill the vacancy; the job that Danny appeared to despise would be highly prized by any cooky-boy who happened to be at Lalinge out of a berth.

Ken decided to speak very plainly to Danny when he came up with the breakfast. But he did not come. His voice was heard from the galley, singing; a song on three notes—a sort of interminable chant. The Hiva-Oa boys grinned and nodded to one another as they heard it, and cast covert glances at their white master.

Ken's brows grew grimmer. He knew a good deal of the Hiva-Oa dialect, but not enough to understand the song of the cooky-boy, which was largely in allusive phrases and colloquialisms known only to the islanders. But that the seamen understood it, and knew that Danny was mocking his white master, was clear. Ken knew well the old trick of the natives of insulting a white man by phrases worked into a song, sung under his unconscious nose. And if Ken had doubted, the look that

came over the face of Kaio-lalulalonga, the giant boatswain of the ketch, would have enlightened him. Koko—as the shipmates called the bo'sun—knitted his brows blackly, showed his white teeth in something like a snarl, and picked up a thick bamboo.

"You feller Koko!" called out Ken.

"Yessar!" Kaio-lalulalonga came up. Evidently he had intended to head for the galley when he picked up the bamboo; but he came aft at once at the voice of the white master.

"What name feller Danny he sing out along galley belong him?" asked King of the Islands.

Koko did not reply.

"You savvy plenty?" asked Ken.

"Koko savvy."

"You speakee tongue belong you what feller Danny he sing."

Kaio-lalulalonga wriggled uncomfortably. It was plain that he shrank from translating the song of the discontented cooky-boy.

"You speakee plenty quick!" said Ken sharply.

"Feller Danny he sing little white master he plenty fool. Feller Danny he no bling feller breakfast. Feller Danny he makee big laugh along spill coffee along white master Hudson feller trousers."

"I thought so!" said Ken grimly. "Feller Danny he wantee leavum ship?"

"Me tinkee, sar."

"You savvy what name feller Danny he wantee leavum ship?"

"No savvy, sar! Tinkee feller Danny plenty fool wantee leavee white master King of the Islands!" said Kaio-lalulalonga simply.

"You feller Koko, you takee stick, go along galley, plenty kill feller Danny all time he stop along ship."

Koko, grinning, answered: "Yessar!"

Almost with a bound, he wanted a added Ken.

boatswain reached the galley. The mocking song of the cooky-boy ceased at once.

There was a yell and a crash, and the cooky-boy came sprawling out on the deck, with a saucepan in his hand, which he had vainly grasped as a defensive weapon. After him came Kaio-lalulalonga, wielding the thick bamboo.

Whack, whack, whack! The cooky-boy roared and yelled and squirmed as the bamboo lashed on his bare limbs. He leaped up, yelling, and hurled the saucepan at Koko. Koko caught it by the handle as it spun, swept it aloft, and brought it down with a crash on the thick head of the cooky-boy. A white man would have been stunned by the crashing blow; and even the cooky-boy was staggered. He gave a wild howl and fled madly along the deck; and Koko, grasping the bamboo, again pursued him. The Hiva-Oa crew were roaring with laughter now, as they watched the chase. King of the Islands looked on with a grim eye; and Kit Hudson, as he came up from below, stared at the scene.

Whack, whack, whack!

"You sing, you feller swab!" roared Koko. "You sing plenty bad feller talk along little white master! My word! Me make you sing plenty too much altogether!"

Whack, whack! Danny made a wild leap over the rail, and landed on the coral wharf on his hands and knees. Koko leaped the rail after him, still lashing with the bamboo. The hapless cooky-boy sprang up and raced along the wharf, and after him went Koko, laying on the bamboo with an energetic arm. Followed by roars of laughter from the Hiva-Oa boys and the loungers on the wharf, the fleeing cooky-boy and the Kanaka boatswain appeared along the beach, the wild whack of the bamboo floating back to the account of the resounding whacks.

CHAPTER 2.

The Sea-Cock.

WU-FU-WU stepped on board the Dawn that afternoon as Ken gave orders for the whaleboat to be manned to tow the ketch out of the bay. The little Chinese—he was not more than five feet—appeared on deck with a bag of dunnage under his arm, and an ingratiating grin on his face, and his slanting eyes glimmering under heavy lids. Kit Hudson was the first to spot him, and he called out at once:

"Here, you feller Chink, you beat it sharp!"

"Admisible Mister Captain—" began Wu-Fu-Wu.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Hudson. "Ken, here's a Chink with a message or something for you—from John Chin, I expect."

King of the Islands glanced round. The little Chinese advanced towards him, kow-towing deeply.

"What is it?" asked Ken. "Quick, we're busy here!"

Ken supposed, like Hudson, that the little Chinaman had brought some message from John Chin, the Chinese trader of Lalinge, from whose warehouses the ketch had been shipping cargo for the trip among the islands.

"Admisible captain!" said the newcomer, kow-towing again. "Me Wu-Fu-Wu!"

"Well?" rapped out Ken.

"Me cookee. Wantee sailce along admisible captain," said Wu-Fu-Wu. "Me cookee first chop. Plente captain say Wu-Fu-Wu good cookee. Me sailce along plenty captain. John Chin he like Wu-Fu-Wu cookee velly muchee."

Ken looked at the little Celestial, who stood smiling and bowing, as if worked by a spring. He had been very busy that morning, preparing for sea, and he had not taken, so far, any step towards replacing Danny the cooky-boy.

Indeed, Ken had rather expected

that Danny would return to the ketch with tears of repentance and beg to be taken back, in which case the boy trader would have acceded at once.

But Danny had not returned; and Ken would have been puzzled by that circumstance had he had time that busy morning to give the matter any thought. For Danny had thrown up a good berth, and was not likely to get one so good on any other craft, and certain not to get a better. But Danny had not come; and the ketch would have sailed without a cooky-boy but for the appearance of Wu-Fu-Wu on her deck. Kanaka cookery was not exactly like the art of a French chef; and one of the Hiva-Oa boys could have taken Danny's place temporarily, without much deterioration in the cooking. Still, Ken was glad to ship a cook before he sailed, instead of picking up a cooky-boy at Lao, the next stop.

"Mistel John Chin he send litee lettee!" said Wu-Fu-Wu. "He tinkee Wu-Fu-Wu plenty good cookee."

"If you've got a recommendation from John Chin, that's all O.K.!" said Ken. "Give me the letter."

Wu-Fu-Wu groped among his loose garments and produced a letter. Ken opened it hurriedly and glanced at the contents. Any recommendation from John Chin was good enough for the boy trader.

"I recommend Wu-Fu-Wu as a good cook and an honest man.

"JOHN CHIN."

John Chin, though he talked in pidgin English, like other Chinese, wrote the language like a white man. Ken knew his hand well and was satisfied. He dropped the letter into his pocket.

"You can hop into the galley, Wu-Fu-Wu," he said. "No time to talk now—if you don't like the berth you can hop ashore at Lao."

"Like velly muchee, admilable captain!"

"That goes, then!" replied Ken.

And, giving no more attention to the

little Chinese, King of the Islands turned back to his work. Wu-Fu-Wu glided away and disappeared into the galley.

Ken forgot his existence the next moment. The whaleboat was manned, and four Hiva-Oa men bent to the oars, to tow the ketch out of the passage in the coral reef.

Koko stood at the helm as the graceful ketch glided across the bay.

King of the Islands stood in the bows, with a watchful eye, occasionally calling to the Kanaka. Even in calm weather the reef at Lalinge required careful negotiation.

Outside the reef the whaleboat was swung in and the sails hoisted. In a light breeze the Dawn glided away over the blue Pacific. King of the Islands set a course for the steersman, and dropped at last into his deck-chair by the combing of the cabin hatch. The boy trader had had a long and hard day, and he was glad of a rest, and he was ready for tiffin. His meals that day had been two or three hurried snatches.

He remembered then, with satisfaction, that he had shipped a cook. Chinamen often were good cooks; and it was quite probable that Wu-Fu-Wu would be an improvement on Danny.

"You feller cookey!" yelled out Ken.

Wu-Fu-Wu appeared immediately, as if by magic. His gliding, slippered feet made no sound on the deck. Almost before Ken had finished speaking, the little Chinese stood before him, bowing and smiling.

"Admifable captain he wantee cookee?" said Wu-Fu-Wu softly.

"I haven't had time to speak to you yet, Wu-Fu-Wu," smiled Ken.

And the boy trader proceeded to go into the matter of wages and rations, Wu-Fu-Wu smiling and nodding assent to every word. Evidently the little Chinese was satisfied with his berth on board the ketch.

"But how did you know we wanted a cook on the Dawn?" added Ken.

rather curious on that point now that he had time to think of it. "I hadn't sent word along the beach."

"Me see cooky-boy lun along wharf," explained Wu-Fu-Wu. "Me see big feller whackee cooky-boy. Me tinkee likee sailee along admilable captain."

"I see. Well, I'm glad I've shipped you Wu-Fu-Wu, and I hope you can cook."

"Cookee velly pientee good, sar."

Ken and Kit Hudson took their meal on deck, under the glowing sunset, as the ketch glided eastward towards Lao. That meal was rather a surprise to them. King of the Islands, young and healthy, and with the keen appetite of the salt water, had never given very much attention to matters of cookery, and he had been satisfied with Danny's rather crude performances in that line. But Wu-Fu-Wu's cookery was a revelation of the art.

"My Sam!" said King of the Islands, with a grin, to his shipmate. "We've shipped a chef this trip, Kit!"

"This beats the best hotel in Sydney!" answered Hudson. "Wu-Fu-Wu is a comic little beggar to look at, but he's worth his weight in pearl-shell. Jevver taste yams like these before?"

"Never!" said Ken, laughing.

"And the turtle soup!" said Hudson. "My hat! It makes me feel like an alderman!"

"We've got a prize-packet," said Ken. "But why the dickens does a cook like that ship on a trading ketch? He could get a berth on a first-class liner for the asking."

"Don't tell him so," grinned Hudson. "If Wu-Fu-Wu knew his value, we should lose him at the next beach!"

"If the goods keep up to sample, we'll double his wages," chuckled King of the Islands.

"Yes, rather. Shove the turtle this way again."

The two white masters were not the only ones who were pleased with the sea-cook. The Hiva-Oa boys grinned and smacked their lips over their

rations. Koko, the Kanaka, ate yams that tasted as yams had never tasted to him before, though Koko himself could cook. He devoured banana fritters that made him grin with delight.

Nevertheless, Kalo-lalulalonga eyed the Chinese cook several times, and once or twice dropped into the galley to speak to him, and each time he emerged with a thoughtful expression on his brown face. Ken noted it at last, and questioned him. Koko was, as he often said, no common Kanaka, and King of the Islands knew that he had "plenty savvy."

"You likum along new feller cook, Koko?" asked Ken.

"Likum feller kai-kai heap plenty, sar," answered Koko. "Feller kai-kai along new cooky-boy he plenty good."

"But the cook—you likum along cook?"

Koko was silent.

"You no likum?" asked Ken.

"No, sar!" answered Koko at last. "No likum along feller cook."

"What name you no likum along cook?" asked Ken.

Koko scratched his head in a perplexed way.

"No savvy, sar," he answered. "No savvy what name me no likum—but savvy plenty no likum."

And with that Kalo-lalulalonga went back to his trick at the wheel.

Kit Hudson laughed.

"I do not like thee, Dr. Fell; the reason why I cannot tell!" he quoted. "Why the dickens doesn't old Koko like that ripping cook, Ken?"

"Goodness knows!" But"—Ken frowned thoughtfully—"Koko's got plenty savvy, and I think a lot of his opinion. But the man must be all right: he's recommended by John Chin, the whitest Chinaman in the Pacific."

Ken picked the letter from his pocket and glanced at it again. This time he examined it more attentively. His brow became more thoughtful, and he handed John Chin's letter to Hudson.

"Looks square to me," answered the Australian, after glancing at it. "My hat! You don't think Wu-Fu-Wu has written himself a recommendation, do you?"

"No; but—it's John Chin's writing, or twin brother to it; only John Chin always uses a special sort of rice-paper for his correspondence, and this is ordinary note." Ken puckered his brows. "A man might be able to copy his fist without being able to get at his private supply of paper."

Hudson whistled.

"He might. But why—to get a job as cook on a trading ketch! A cook like Wu-Fu-Wu could have got a berth on the best steamer that ever put into Lalinge."

Ken nodded and dropped the letter into his pocket again. Koko's instinctive distrust of the sea-cook, which the Kanaka himself could not explain, had made Ken for the moment suspiciously alert. But he dismissed the doubt with a laugh.

CHAPTER 3.

Treachery I

FROM Lap the Dawn sailed southward, in the vast spaces of the Pacific between Samoa and the Society Islands. At many an atoll, little known and seldom visited, King of the Islands had connections with native chiefs, and picked up bags of copra and pearl-shell in exchange for glass beads, pocket-knives, trade-boxes and bells and other goods that took the fancy of the simple islanders.

As day followed day on the sunny sea, and island after island was visited and dropped astern, Wu-Fu-Wu settled down in his place as sea-cook, and was no longer regarded as a newcomer. Chinese as he was, he made friends with the Kanaka crew—appealing to them chiefly through their stomachs, for never had the rations on the ketch been so palatable to the Hiva-

Oa boys. Only Koko retained some reserve towards the smiling, bowing ingratiating little Chink, and even Kaio-lalulalonga seemed to forget his instinctive distrust as day followed day and the sea-cook continued as he had been at first—smiling, polite, obliging, deferential—and a wonderful cook.

At every island at which the Dawn touched fresh supplies of some sort were obtained, but canned beef was a staple article of diet, as throughout the South Seas. Wu-Fu-Wu had a magic way of dealing with canned beef, which he prepared in a dozen different ways, all of them excellent. He made coffee like a magician, as Kit Hudson said; he made cooling drinks that were like a dream on a hot day—and most of the days were hot.

The Dawn was more than a week out of Lalinge when, one blazing morning, Wu-Fu-Wu came bowing to the little after-deck with a lacquer tray containing jug and glasses. There was a swell on the sea, and the Dawn was pitching a little to the long rollers of the Pacific, leaning over to the wind; but the little Chink was as active as a cat, hopping and balancing, and never in danger of losing his footing. Hudson was taking a trick at the wheel, and Ken stood speaking to him, and neither observed the sea-cook till he was close at hand with the wonderfully balanced tray.

"Mistel admilable captain!" murmured the Chink.

Ken turned his head and smiled. It was lemonade, cool almost as ice, that the jug contained—delicious on that hot morning. More than delicious as a change from a draught of tepid water.

"Mistel admilable captain likee dlinkee?" murmured Wu-Fu-Wu. "Mistel admilable mate he likee dlinkee allee samee?"

"You're a jewel, Woo!" said Hudson. The name of Wu-Fu-Wu had been cut down to Woo for general use after the first day. "Mister admirable

captain and mister admirable me both likee drinkee no end, and thinkee you admirable cookee."

The Chink grinned and bowed. A word of praise seemed to make Wu-Fu-Wu wriggle with pleasure like a cat that is stroked.

Ken and Hudson drank gladly of the cool lemonade, that had a lingering flavour of aromatic spices. Wu-Fu-Wu was incessantly performing little unasked-for services like this, often for the crew as well as the white masters.

Having received back the glasses from the admirable captain and the admirable mate, as he persisted in calling them, Wu-Fu-Wu did not immediately retire. He stood wriggling and bowing.

"Lofty and admilable captain likee dlinkee Wu-Fu-Wu makee?" he asked.

"Topping," said Ken, with a smile.

"Wu-Fu-Wu he makee plentee; likee givee along Kanaka sposee great and admilable captain he likee."

Ken laughed.

"Serve it out forrard, by all means," he answered. "You're a good little Chink, Woo."

"Spousee admilable captain he likee Woo, Woo he velly happee," murmured the sea-cook.

And he glided away with his tray, and a few minutes afterwards served out his aromatic lemonade to the Hiva-Oa boys.

After serving the drinks he went down the companion into the main cabin—a proceeding that drew no attention, as Woo had many duties to perform in the white masters' quarters.

The ketch glided on before a six-knot breeze, Hudson at the wheel, Ken standing by the binnacle chatting to his comrade, and Koko lolling idly on the hatchway combings and twanging his ukulele and singing in a soft, crooning voice a song of Honolulu.

King of the Islands gave a deep

yawn. He smiled as he noticed Hudson in the act of doing the same thing.

"Hot!" he said.

"And sleepy!" said Hudson. "I shall be glad when Koko takes his trick. I've never felt so thumping sleepy in the daytime before. I'll be glad to roil on my mat on deck."

"I'm feeling just the same, and I had plenty of sleep last night. I suppose it's the heat."

There was no doubt that it was hot. The breeze was dying down, and it looked like a calm coming.

King of the Islands glanced over the sea, blue and shining, with a haze of heat on the horizon.

"Looks like a calm before night," said Hudson, yawning deeply.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "Am I going to sleep at the wheel? Blessed if I understand this, Ken! What's coming over me?"

"What's coming over me, too?" exclaimed Ken, rubbing his eyes again. "I was fairly nodding!"

For a moment sky and sea seemed to shift their position and whirl, to the eyes of King of the Islands. He pulled himself together with an effort. The twang of the ukulele ceased. Koko sat on the combings, knuckling his big black eyes with a drowsy look. Ken glanced at him.

"What's the matter with you, old coffee-bean?" he asked.

"No savvy, sar," Koko answered, blinking, perplexed. "Feller sleep he come along me, me no savvy what name feller sleep he come."

Bump! Lompolokuno, who had been standing by the rail, lurched and fell on the deck. Ken started forward.

"Here, you feller boy, what name you fall on deck?" he exclaimed. His impression was that Lompo had chewed too much betel-nut.

Lompo did not answer. He rolled over, half-consciously pillowed his head

upon his arm and snored. Ken stared at him. He stared at the other three Hiva-Oa men. One of them, going down into the tiny fore-castle of the ketch, stumbled on the step, fell headlong, and lay where he had fallen. The other two had sat down on the deck, heedless of their duties, and lay back against the teak rail, nodding.

Sleep had seized on all the Hiva-Oa boys, and it was seizing upon Ken—strange, uncanny, inexplicable, resistless.

There was a heavy fall. Koko, the giant Kanaka, had rolled helplessly off the hatchway combings and collapsed on the deck. He struggled against the sleep that was overpowering him, and sat up, clutching at the combings for help.

"Koko! What—in heaven's name, what——" Ken's voice died away in a whisper.

"No savvy, master!" groaned Koko, his big black eyes staring wildly at King of the Islands. "Me no savvy what comey along with me. Me tinkee aitoo-debble he comey along ship, sar! Me no wantee sleep—feller sleep he comey along me plenty too much strong altogether."

Koko sank back on the deck. A shudder ran through his frame as he made one more desperate effort to resist sleep; but he failed, and his head sank to the polished teak planks, and he slumbered.

Ken staggered back to the binnacle. The deck was floating under his feet, or so it seemed. He missed his footing, staggered, and fell to his knees. Mists swam before his eyes. It was but a few steps to the binnacle; but in his present state it was to the boy trader a journey of toll and pain and suffering.

Kit Hudson's rugged, bronzed face swam before his eyes. He had been going to speak to Hudson, but when he reached him no words came. He found himself standing helplessly, staring at the Australian, wondering

what he was doing. Yet what Hudson was doing was plain enough, had not Ken's eyes and brain been swimming. The Cornstalk, unable to resist the deadly grip of sleep that was upon him, was lashing the helm.

Slowly, with terrible slowness and still more terrible determination, for his hands felt like lead and his brain was numb, the Cornstalk secured the helm, the wheel dropped from his relaxing grasp—as he knew it must soon drop. With terrible slowness, but iron resolution, he worked—and the helm was lashed—and a second later Hudson reeled and fell at full length at the feet of King of the Islands!

CHAPTER 4.

The Last Struggle!

KING OF THE ISLANDS laid a hand on the binnacle for support, and gazed round him with wild eyes.

He sighted a bucket of water amidships, from which the Kanakas had been drinking, plunged towards it, and dipped his burning face into it. The water was tepid, but it seemed delightfully cool to the boy trader, and the cool liquid revived him a little. His brain seemed to clear as he lifted his face, dripping with water.

What had happened? He must not lose his senses—he must not—he kept telling himself. And yet he knew that it was coming! He alone, of all on board, retained his senses, unless Wu-Fu-Wu, the sea-cook, had escaped the strange sleep that had fallen like a blanket on the ship.

Wu-Fu-Wu! As he remembered the Chink, a glimmer of the truth came into King of the Islands' mind.

Treachery!

He knew it now. That cooling drink—that cool and aromatic lemonade which Wu-Fu-Wu had served out to white masters and crew alike! That drink, of which every man had partaken, was followed by—this! Like a

blinding flash illumination came to the dazed brain of King of the Islands.

White men and brown men on board the gliding ketch, far out in the trackless seas, were drugged—only the yellow man, skulking in some corner, was grinning and chuckling with glee, waiting for the drug to work—waiting for the moment when the ship should be at his mercy.

Ken reeled against the mizzen, clutching his temples.

He knew it now—he did not need proof—proof apart from the fact that his men lay as senseless as logs, and that the powerful drug was creeping over him and overpowering his own senses. Koko had distrusted that yellow demon, and he had not heeded Koko. In a few minutes more he would be as senseless as the rest, struggle as he might, and then—then—

What was the demon's object? To seize the ship, that was certain, and clear—to scuttle her, perhaps, and escape in the boat with what he could lay his hands on—or—or he was in league with some crew of sea-thieves, waiting for a chance to run alongside in a lugger or a canoe. That was more likely. Was this the first time the grinning little fiend had played this treacherous game? Many were the ships that had gone to sea and never returned, their fate unknown.

The rage that possessed King of the Islands, now that he knew how he had been tricked, helped to steady him. A forged letter from John Chin had lulled him into security, and the sea-cook had chosen his moment well, when the ketch was on the point of sailing, so that the cheat could not be discovered in time. But had he, after all, succeeded? King of the Islands fought back the influence of the drug, and dragged the revolver from his hip-pocket and gripped it in his hand.

He was not senseless yet, and he would find the traitor before he fell, find him and kill him; and when the drug passed he would be master of his own ship again.

With the revolver gripped in his hand he started for the galley, but he stopped. His brain was clear for the moment. He remembered that the Chink had gone below into the main cabin; he knew why now. The treacherous rascal was hiding—hiding away below until the potion worked. King of the Islands would not find him in time if the cunning Oriental could prevent it.

Taking a grip on himself, fighting back the creeping drug with savage resolution, King of the Islands lurched to the hatchway and almost fell down the ladder to the cabin. But he landed there on his feet, and his fierce eyes gleamed round for Wu-Fu-Wu. The Chinaman was not to be seen.

He dragged himself into the little state-room amidships where were the two bunks that belonged to him and his mate. Was the skulking demon there? A roar filled the little room with deafening noise. Ken did not know that he had fired till the booming of the report almost stunned him. At what had he fired? The Chink was not there.

He turned and staggered out of the state-room into the main cabin again. At the other end of the cabin, aft, was the lazarette and store-room. It was there that the Chink would hide—it was there that he would find him.

Ken dragged himself the length of the cabin, and suddenly found that he was on his knees. He did not attempt to rise to his feet again; he knew dimly that if he did he would fall, and that that would be the end. On his knees he dragged himself into the dusky lazarette. Trade-boxes and rolls of tobacco-sticks—trade goods and canned goods—but the little empty space amid the stores was vacant. The Chink was not there.

Ken groaned aloud in misery. Where was the yellow devil skulking?

The hold—there was a trapdoor into the hold, where the water-casks were stacked in tiers. That was where he

would find the Chink—lurking in darkness, like the rat he was.

To lift the trapdoor was impossible in his present state; at the first effort Ken sank across it, almost senseless. But he dragged himself up and strove again—and a sudden access of fury and despair seemed to give him strength, for he found the trap open and himself on his knees, staring down into the dusky hold—dark, shadowy, reeking with bilge.

Did he see a yellow face, with slanting, mocking eyes, jeering and gibing at him from the shadows below? He thought he saw it, and fired. He fired, and fired again, and yet again—pressing the trigger now with his eyes closed, a weight as of lead upon the lids, so heavy that he could not lift them. He was pressing the trigger once more when he lurched sideways and fell on the cabin floor, and the revolver dropped from his hand.

One more effort King of the Islands made—once a shudder ran through his sturdy limbs, chained now by the deadly drug. Then he lay still. His eyes closed, his body motionless, King of the Islands lay like a log.

And still there was no sound, no movement; nothing but the creaking of the spars on the ketch that glided before a dying wind. The sea-cook was cautious and cunning; he was giving the potion ample time. For half an hour Ken had lain there senseless, when there was a soft tread on the ladder from the hold, and the watchful face of Wu-Fu-Wu emerged above the level of the cabin floor.

He grinned as he looked at the still form of the boy trader, and stepped out into the cabin, soundless in his slippers. Soft as a cat, he crept up the companion and glanced out into the blazing sunshine of the deck. Then he padded back to the cabin and stood over the boy trader, grinning down at him. Wu-Fu-Wu, the sea-cook, was master of the ketch, and at his feet, senseless and helpless, unconscious of his fate, lay King of the Islands!

CHAPTER 5.

Wu-Fu-Wu Takes Control!

"WU-FU-WU!" King of the Islands stared blankly at the Chinese sea-cook. For the moment he did not understand.

Wu-Fu-Wu was sitting on the edge of the cabin table in the main cabin of the Dawn. One of his legs was crossed over the other, and on the uppermost knee he rested a slim hand with Ken's revolver in it. He looked like a grinning little yellow gnome as he sat there, swaying a little to the motion of the ketch, his slanting eyes fixed on King of the Islands.

King of the Islands was sitting on the floor, facing him. The drug that had robbed him of his senses had passed—its effect seemed to have vanished completely. But for the moment Ken did not remember. A cramped feeling was in his arms. As he strove to move them he discovered that they were bound behind his back.

With that discovery came a rush of recollection!

He was a prisoner on his own ship! He had been drugged—as Kit Hudson and Koko and his Hiva-Oa crew had been drugged by that cunning little yellow demon.

And while he lay unconscious Wu-Fu-Wu had bound his arms with tapa cord—as no doubt he had done with the others. Wu-Fu-Wu, the sea-cook, was master of the Dawn—far out on the rollers of the Pacific, far from any island or port—far from intervention. That little grinning gnome, scarce five feet high, whom King of the Islands could have crushed in the grip of his hand, had seized the ship—single-handed. He held the ship, and the lives of captain and crew, in the hollow of his hand.

The look that came into the eyes of King of the Islands might have scared many a man. But the little Chinese only grinned.

Ken staggered to his feet. His

hands were secured as if in steel manacles, but his feet were free. He lurched as the ketch rolled on the long Pacific rollers, staggered, and brought up against the lockers that ran along the side of the cabin. Wu-Fu-Wu made a significant motion with the heavy Colt revolver resting on his knee. One slim yellow finger was on the trigger.

"You scum! said King of the Islands huskily. "You heathen scum! If my hands were free—" He wrenched savagely at the cords.

"No can bleakee," said Wu-Fu-Wu. "Spouse you bleakee lope, me shootee kill-dead. What you tinkee?"

Heedless of the threat, Ken wrenched furiously at his bonds. King of the Islands was strong and sturdy, and he exerted all his strength. The perspiration started out in beads on his forehead. But the effort was in vain. The tapa cord was strong, and it had been wound about his arms and knotted with skill. It gave hardly a fraction of an inch. Exhausted by the effort, King of the Islands leaned back against the lockers, his eyes gleaming fiercely at the sea-cook.

Wu-Fu-Wu had watched his strenuous effort with cool, smiling eyes. The revolver was ready if King of the Islands succeeded in breaking loose! But the sea-cook knew that he could not break loose. He grinned at the crimson, enraged face of the boy trader.

"No can bleakee lope," he said placidly. "You all light! Kit Hudson he all light. Big Koko he all light. Hiva-Oa boy he all light. Me, Wu-Fu-Wu, mastel all lound. What you tinkee?"

"You heathen scum!" muttered Ken helplessly. "You yellow swab, you've seized my ship!"

Wu-Fu-Wu nodded.

"And do you think you'll get away with it?" exclaimed King of the Islands.

"Me tinkee," answered Wu-Fu-Wu calmly.

"Can you sail the Dawn single-

handed?" said Ken, between his teeth. Even now he was a witness of the success of the Chinaman's cunning scheme he could not see how the little yellow rascal was to "get away" with it. The ketch required few hands to sail her, but one man—and he a cook—could not handle her, especially in a breeze.

But Wu-Fu-Wu seemed to have no doubts. He sat on the edge of the table and grinned at King of the Islands in evident enjoyment of the situation.

"Makee native boy 'bey ordel," he said. "Plentee sail ketch along Sulu'ua. What you tinkee?"

"Sulu'ua?" Ken remembered the name of an uninhabited atoll lying in the great seas between the Fijies and Tahiti. It lay a day's sail off the course of the Dawn.

"You yellow swab! There's nothing but an open beach at Sulu'ua, and not a man on the island, white or black," said Ken. "A ship doesn't touch at Sulu'ua once in five years!"

"Me savee."

"Then what—" But Ken broke off with the question unasked. It was because Sulu'ua was an uninhabited desert island that the sea-cook intended to head the captured ketch there.

"Fliends waitte along Sulu'ua," grinned Wu-Fu-Wu.

King of the Islands had already guessed it. Some gang of Chinese sea-thieves were in league with the sea-cook. Sulu'ua was the rendezvous.

Ken felt a spasm of rage. With cool assurance the sea-cook had waited till the Dawn was as near Sulu'ua as her course was likely to take her before he had struck the treacherous blow that placed the ship at his mercy. Ever since the ketch had towed out of the bay of Lalinge, Ken had been sailing her—closer and closer to Sulu'ua—for the benefit of this Chinese pirate. Only when the Dawn would have glided on past Sulu'ua on her way to Papeete

had Wu-Fu-Wu come out into the open and struck.

Wu-Fu-Wu grinned derisively at the glare in the boy trader's face.

"White man great fool!" he said complacently. "Lil' Chinese twistee white man lound fingel. What you tinkee? Five—six—seven Chinese waittee along Sulu'ua."

"You scum!" muttered Ken hoarsely. "And if you sail the Dawn to Sulu'ua—I'd rather see her sink to the deepest bottom of the Pacific; but if you sail her there, what then?"

"Takee long China Sea," answered Wu-Fu-Wu.

"And—us?"

"Big fishee in sea plentee hungly," said Wu-Fu-Wu. "Big fishee in sea he likee feedee. What you tinkee?" He grinned like a gnome. "Plenty paint ketch along Sulu'ua—makee altogether new shippee, you savvy? Chinese shippee, Chinese clew, Chinese skippec. Allee Chinese! Allee samee shippee shippee before. What you tinkee?"

He slipped from the table and glided across to the companion ladder. Ken caught his breath hard. He knew the whole game now!

The ketch, beached at Sulu'ua, was to be repainted, altered in every possible way, beyond recognition; and this Chinese pirate would sail her as a Chinese ship, with a Chinese crew and Chinese papers—or forged papers from Hong-Kong. The deep Pacific would hide the captain and crew he had replaced. Dead men tell no tales! But not till the ketch was safe at Sulu'ua would the sea-cook venture upon a greater crime than he had already committed. On the open sea there was always a possibility of sighting a British or French gunboat, or of some trading skipper running alongside for a friendly "gam."

Wu-Fu-Wu, cunning as a serpent, merciless as a shark, was running no unnecessary risks. If disaster fell upon him before he reached Sulu'ua, he had no lives to answer for—prison would

be his lot—and no doubt he had seen the inside of a prison before now; nor was a prison likely to hold long the cunning Chinese. But once Sulu'ua was reached, the lives of the white men and Kanakas on board the Dawn were not worth a fathom of shell-money.

Ken understood it all, and his eyes were in a blaze. It was useless to wrench at the strong tapa cords that bound his arms behind him. But though his hands were fast, his feet were free. One hefty kick would hurl the little Chinese across the cabin. King of the Islands would not have had the slightest hesitation in trampling the life out of the little demon who had seized his ship.

But Wu-Fu-Wu was not to be caught napping. As the boy trader swung towards him, he whirled round from the companion, and the revolver in his hand flashed up to a level, looking King of the Islands full in the face.

"No can!" grinned Wu-Fu-Wu.

His slanting eyes glittered over the weapon.

"You swab!" muttered Ken thickly.

"You great fool!" said Wu-Fu-Wu.

"Sposse you wantee live, you speekee plenty soft along me."

And he skipped up the companion to the blazing sunshine on the deck.

CHAPTER 6.

In Merciless Hands!

KING OF THE ISLANDS stumbled up the companion to the deck.

He came out into the glare of sunshine and stared round him.

"Ken!"

It was Kit Hudson's voice. The Australian lay on the little after-deck, his arms bound with tapa cords like Ken's. He was as helpless as the boy trader, and even more enraged, to judge by the expression on his rugged, bronzed face.

Ken stumbled across to him, feeling strangely clumsy with his arms bound.

"He's got us, Kit!" said the boy trader grimly.

"That blinking little yellow dwarf!" said the Cornstalk, with deep disgust and rage.

"Little feller Chinee plenty bad feller!" said Koko.

The big Kanaka boatswain lay by the hatchway combings, bound even more thoroughly than the white men. Wu-Fu-Wu had had ample time, while the opiate held his victims in thrall, and he had done his work with patience and skill. The mighty limbs of Kaio-lalulalonga—that could have killed the Chinee in an instant—were helpless.

Ken glanced at the Kanaka.

"Me go sleepee!" said Koko. "No savvy what name me go sleepee. Savvy me go sleepee!"

"We were drugged, of course," said Hudson.

Ken nodded, and looked along the deck. Forward, the four Hiva-Oa seamen sat on the deck. All of them had recovered consciousness, and their brown faces expressed utter bewilderment. Every man had his arms tied behind his back with tapa cord.

Wu-Fu-Wu had gone to the wheel. He had edged the ketch to port, so far as he could without trimming the sails. But the breeze, which had been dying down all the morning, was almost gone now. The ketch moved slowly through a sapphire sea.

Wu-Fu-Wu scoured the wheel, stood for some moments staring at the sky, and fixed his slanting eyes on a faint blur of cloud to the south.

The two white men watched him in silence. Wind was what the Chinaman wanted to drive the ketch to Sulu'ua. In a breeze, the desert atoll was only a day's sail out of the course the Dawn had been making for Tahiti. But in this light and fitful wind, even if it lasted, progress was slow. And if there came a calm, the Chinese pirate was baffled—so far as the white men could see.

So far, there was only one hitch to

his plans. The dying wind delayed the run down to Sulu'ua. Instead of a day's sail, it might be three or four, or more than that. That circumstance gave a gleam of hope to King of the Islands. Every hour was precious to the boy trader, whose days were numbered by the length of the run to Sulu'ua.

Wu-Fu-Wu padded forward on his slippered feet. He stood and looked down at the Hiva-Oa boys, who regarded him with uneasiness and fear. Their brown faces blanched as he drew the cook's knife from his belt.

Ken caught his breath as he looked on. Had the sea-cook changed his plans? Desperate rascal as he was, he surely could not intend to leave himself alone on board the ketch. To the Hiva-Oa boys there was no doubt of his intention, and their white teeth chattered. They had no doubt that the Chinee was a cannibal, and that he was thinking of kai-kai.

Their black eyes swam with terror as they looked at him and the long, keen blade in his hand.

"You feller Lompo!" said Wu-Fu-Wu.

"Yes, sar!" stammered Lompolokuno. "You please no killy, sar! Hiva-Oa boy he makee plenty bad kai-kai. Nuka-hiva boy he good kai-kai—Hiva-Oa boy he, too, plenty bad kai-kai altogether."

Wu-Fu-Wu stared at him, and chuckled his noiseless chuckle.

"You Kanaka boy plenty fool!" he said. "Chinee no makee kai-kai along Kanaka feller. Chinee civilised feller. You plenty great fool!"

Lompo eyed him with relief, mingled with doubt. He was glad to hear that the Chinese were not cannibals; but he did not like the look of the razor-edged cook's knife.

"Me wantee boy takee helm!" said Wu-Fu-Wu. "You 'bey ordel 'long of me or me cuttee you along small piecee. You savvy?"

Wu-Fu-Wu slid the knife-edge over

the tapa cord, and Lompo-lokuno was free. He rose to his feet. The Hiva-Oa boy towered over the little Chinaman; his brawny arms could have crushed him till the bones cracked. And for a yellow man the Kanaka had no such awed respect as he had for a white man. The thoughts of the Kanaka were easy to read in his face; and the smiling placidity of Wu-Fu-Wu's look changed to a stare of cold and steely ferocity.

He came closer to the Hiva-Oa boy, the long knife poised in his hand. Lompo backed away from it. With the soft tread of a cat, Wu-Fu-Wu followed him up.

Twice or thrice was Lompo tempted to leap upon him, risking the knife. But each time he backed away instead. The strength of his powerful arms would have been useless against the swift stab of the razor-like blade, and he knew it.

He backed and backed, the Chinaman following him up, his slanting eyes gleaming ferocity over the poised knife, till the teak rail of the ketch stopped the retreating Kanaka, and he could go no farther. He backed against the rail, the point of the knife almost at his breast. It seemed to be the Chinaman's intention to drive him overboard; and Lompo knew, without looking, that the fin of a shark glided over the water. His brown face became almost grey with fear.

The other seamen looked on breathlessly; from aft, Ken and Kit and Koko watched in tense silence. Lompo did not speak; but his look was beseeching. There was the cruelty of a tiger in the slanting eyes of the Chinaman.

"You great fool!" he said at last, in a hissing voice. "You tinkee you no 'bey li'l Chinnee. You takee helm!"

Lompo-lokuno, perspiring with mingled relief and dread, padded away on his bare feet to the wheel. He looked at King of the Islands as he passed him. The white man stood

bound and helpless, unable to help him. Ken gave him a curt nod. It was useless for the Kanaka to disobey the sea-cook, even if he had had the nerve to face death for disobedience, which he certainly had not. But the hapless Hiva-Oa boy was glad to receive his master's permission to carry out the orders of the sea-cook.

He took the helm, standing there like a bronze statue. There was no hope of help from him for the white masters; the fear of the little fiend of a Chinese was too fearfully strong upon him.

Wu-Fu-Wu bent over Lufu. He cut the tapa cords that bound the seaman, and motioned him to rise.

"You takee lope along me," he said.

What he had seen had been lesson enough for Lufu. He was prompt in his obedience.

The sea-cook looked at the other two Kanakas, and seemed to consider. But he shook his head. He was taking the risk of letting loose two of the crew to handle the ketch; but he could dispense with the others if the weather remained calm, as to all appearance it would. He pointed to the forecabin.

"You goey down!" he said.

The two seamen went obediently into the hot little forecabin of the Dawn. Wu-Fu-Wu closed the door on them and secured it. Then, with the help of Lufu, he trimmed the sails. With the dying wind on her quarter, the Dawn glided north-east towards distant Sulu'ua, but with every puff the wind grew fainter. King of the Islands gave his shipmate a grim smile.

"We're lucky to be on a wind-jammer, Kit! If we had that engine you've always wanted, how long would it take that little yellow demon to run down to Sulu'ua?"

And Hudson, for once, was glad that "Lizzie" had never been installed on board the ketch. Every hour that the sea-cook was delayed was life to them. And while there was life there was hope!

CHAPTER 7.
In the Night.

KAIO-LALULALONGA sat on the hatch combings and swept the sea with his keen eyes as the sun sank to the west. Afar on the southern sea-line was a blur that might have been a cloud, but which Koko knew to be a sail—some brig or schooner coming up from the Cook Islands.

But it was too far off to bring hope; the little ketch was unseen from her deck, or, if seen, was unheeded. The speck of dim canvas faded into the blue again, and Koko heaved a sigh. His arms, bound with tapa cord, were aching; but the Kanaka did not heed that. His thoughts were for his little white master, a prisoner in the hands of a Chinese pirate, and whom he was unable to help.

Willingly Kaio-lalulalonga would have given his life to see King of the Islands standing free on the deck, master of his own ship again. A soft chuckle made him turn his head. Wu-Fu-Wu was watching him. The sea-cook had also seen the dim sail that had appeared for a few minutes and then sunk under the sea-line again.

"No comey!" grinned Wu-Fu-Wu. "Allee light."

He bent over Koko and examined his bonds, and then padded away softly in his slippers feet to the binnacle.

"Feller night he come," Koko whispered to King of the Islands. "Plaps feller Chinee he sleepce along night. S'pose he sleepce, Koko makee loose rope along feller teef."

King of the Islands nodded, without speaking. It was a chance if the Chinaman slept. While he was awake it was impossible. Koko's strong, white teeth could have gnawed and torn the tapa rope that bound his master, but it would have been a long task. And the first movement would have caught the sea-cook's watchful eyes while he was awake.

The sun sank lower to the rim of the horizon. Save for a few feeble puffs,

the wind had died away, and the canvas flapped idly. Lompo was still at the helm. Lufu stood implicitly obedient to the slightest sign from the Chinaman. But after dark there might be a change in the two Kanakas—they only wanted a chance to deal with the sea-cook. He was not a white man. Apart from the weapons he carried, the yellow man had no terrors for them.

But ere the sun dipped below the sea, Wu-Fu-Wu showed that he was well on his guard. Hitherto he had taken little or no notice of his prisoners—outwardly, at least—though they had known that they were watched all the time from a corner of a slanting eye. But he was well aware of the danger of the dark. He came to the three who sat by the combings of the hatchway, and the cook's knife glittered in his hand.

"You Koko, you goey along cabin!" he snapped.

Koko did not move; and the cook's knife approached his brawny chest.

"Go along cabin, Koko!" said King of the Islands hastily.

Kaio-lalulalonga went down the companion into the cabin. His heart was heavy as he went. Evidently he was to have no opportunity of gnawing loose his master's bonds after dark.

"You, cap'n, you stoppee along starboard," said Wu-Fu-Wu, grinning. "You, mate, you stoppee along port. What you tinkee?"

The shipmates of the Dawn exchanged a look. It came hard to them to obey the orders of the sea-cook. The slanting eyes glittered at them.

"No wantee killee," said Wu-Fu-Wu. "But s'posee you givee trouble, killee allee samee pig. You savvy?"

The shipmates knew that their lives hung on a thread. For the sake of his own neck, Wu-Fu-Wu was anxious not to shed blood till he had reached the safety of Sulu'ua. But it was certain that he would not hesitate one moment if his safety was threatened.

King of the Islands stepped across to the starboard side, and Hudson, with

fury in his heart, tramped across to port. The width of the ship was between the shipmates—and was to remain between them.

The sun dipped below the sea, and a glittering host of stars rushed out in a sky of dark blue velvet. The Dawn glided on slowly, the water lapping on the scarcely moving hull.

Ken sat with his back to the rail, watching. He had no desire for sleep.

If the Chinaman slept!

He showed no sign of it. Wu-Fu-Wu padded along the deck in his soft slippers, almost soundless. He examined the forecabin, where two of the crew were still imprisoned in stuffy heat. He looked once more to the bonds of Kit Hudson and King of the Islands. He sat on the combings and chewed betel-nut. He looked again and again at the binnacle, and spoke to the helmsman in a voice that was low and calm, but which had a ring in it that made Lompo tremble. Hour after hour of the starry night wore away, and not an eye on board the Dawn was visited by sleep—least of all the restless, almond eyes of the Chinese pirate.

Lufu had lain down to sleep on a tapa mat on deck at the foot of the mainmast. The Dawn burned no lights. When at midnight the little sea-cook went to the binnacle, Ken's heart beat as he saw a movement on the part of the Hiva-Oa boy, whom he had believed to be fast asleep. Lufu raised his head and looked about him, his black eyes following the diminutive figure of Wu-Fu-Wu in the shadows.

As if some uncanny instinct warned the Chinese, he came padding swiftly along the deck, and the cold glimmer of the stars shone on the bare blade of the cook's knife.

Lufu instantly resumed his attitude of immobility. The sea-cook bent over him.

Wu-Fu-Wu looped a tapa cord over the Kanaka's wrists and knotted it with his nimble left hand. Lufu laid down on his mat again, and this time he slept. With his hands bound he

could sleep, but he was powerless to attempt to turn the tables on the sea-cook.

King of the Islands felt his heart sink.

He had hoped for a moment. Some intention of attacking the sea-cook had passed through Lufu's mind. But it was over now. The little yellow demon was too wary. Only Lompo remained with his hands free, and Lompo was still at the helm. Ken's head dropped on his chest and he closed his eyes and tried to sleep. A chance might come on the morrow.

With a suddenness that was stunning, in the stillness of the starry night there came a sudden crash and a yell of rage and the crack of a revolver.

CHAPTER 8.

Lompo Tries His Luck.

L O M P O, standing like a bronze statue at the helm, had been watching.

Wu-Fu-Wu had sat down again on the hatchway combings and was chewing betel-nut. The sea-cook seemed to have no need of sleep. Lompo, from the corner of his eye, watched and watched.

There was a coconut under the Hiva-Oa boy's arm, from which he had been sucking the juice. And suddenly, with a swift suddenness that took even the watchful sea-cook off his guard, Lompo slid the coconut into his hand and hurled it with unerring aim.

Crash! It struck the sea-cook on the side of the head and flung him from the hatchway combings, sprawling on the deck.

Lompo, leaving the wheel, rushed down on him.

"Oh, good man!" panted Kit Hudson.

The Kanaka needed only a few seconds, and the Chinaman, once in his brawny grip, would have been as helpless as an infant. Only a few seconds and the sea-cook would have gone spin-

ning over the rail into the starry Pacific.

But Wu-Fu-Wu was on his feet again instantly, with the nimbleness of a cat. A swift backward leap saved him from the rush of the steersman, and he dodged round the hatchway.

There was a trickle of crimson down the yellow cheek. The blow on his head had been a violent one. It dazed the sea-cook, but it did not disable him. As he dodged round the hatchway he dragged Ken's revolver from his belt. Lompo pursued him desperately, and the sea-cook fired at him as he came, and the bullet grazed the Hiva-Oa boy's brown cheek.

King of the Islands bounded to his feet. In the excitement of the moment he forgot that his arms were bound, and the sudden movement brought a rush of pain through his cramped limbs, and he reeled against the rail. But his eyes lost nothing of what was passing.

The revolver in the sea-cook's hand was lifted for a second shot, which would not have missed. Lompo barely escaped by plunging headlong into the companion-way, the bullet missing his head by an inch as he went tumbling below.

The sea-cook, his yellow face twisted with rage, fired down the companion after the fleeing Kanaka.

A howl of terror answered from Lompo-lokuno. Again the sea-cook fired, and then he thrust the revolver into his belt, snatched out the cook's knife, and went slithering down the companion in pursuit. He had not a moment to lose, and he knew it. Koko lay bound below, and if Lompo had time to release him or to get hold of some weapon, the chances of the sea-cook were slim.

All was deeply dusky below. No lamp was burning, and the sea-cook, as he desperately pursued Lompo, was taking his chance of a blow or a missile in the dark.

But the gleam of the long knife in the sea-cook's hands was too much for

Lompo. He had no weapon, and the sea-cook gave him no time to seek one, no time to make an attempt to release Kaio-lalulalonga. Lompo, panting and stumbling in the dusk of the cabin, heard the little yellow demon slither down the companion after him, and caught the glitter of the knife as the Chinaman came.

He fled along the cabin, stumbling over Koko's legs as the big Kanaka sat against the lockers with legs outstretched. As he sprawled, his hands were on the trapdoor that led down into the hold from the main cabin.

The hatch was closed, but Lompo, his fuzzy brain stirred to unusual activity by the fear of death behind him, instantly tore up the flap and threw himself into the hold, careless how and where he fell so long as he escaped the lunge of the Chinaman's knife.

There was a heavy bump below in the dense darkness of the hold, a gasping howl from Lompo. The sea-cook's knife had lunged as he fell, and missed him by inches. Over the opening the Chinaman knelt, his slanting eyes staring down the ladder down which Lompo had rolled in a heap. The distance was not great, or the Kanaka would have broken bones. Wu-Fu-Wu listened and heard the terrified Lompo scrambling away among the water-casks, seeking a hiding-place in the blackness of the hold.

"You Kanaka pig, me comey, me killee!" yelled Wu-Fu-Wu.

But he did not descend into the hold. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, to hunt down the Kanaka in the thick darkness among the tiers of water-casks. And Wu-Fu-Wu did not dare to leave his prisoners on deck unwatched. He slammed down the trapdoor, and shot home the bolt that secured it above.

Lompo-lokuno was a prisoner in the hold now, and the sea-cook had nothing to fear from him. He had escaped the sea-cook's vengeance, but

he had shut himself up in a prison from which there was no escape.

Wu-Fu-Wu, panting, hurried up the companion to the deck again. He was only just in time.

King of the Islands had not lost a second. Lompo had made his desperate attempt on the sea-cook, and failed; and as he fled below, with the Chinaman in pursuit, Ken scrambled across the deck to Hudson.

"Quick!" he panted.

His strong teeth fastened in the tapa cord that bound the Australian's arms behind him. He tore desperately at the cord. If the sturdy Australian got even one hand free, while the sea-cook was occupied below, he could seize a belaying-pin from the rail, and there was a chance—a chance that was worth the risk of life.

Had Wu-Fu-Wu pursued Lompo into the hold, and hunted him among the water-casks, there would have been time. But the sea-cook was too cunning to give his enemies such a chance. Ken was tearing savagely at the tapa cord with his teeth, when Wu-Fu-Wu came scrambling up the companion again and leaped out on the deck.

His slanting eyes swept round fiercely, and he sprang towards King of the Islands with a snarl like a wild beast. The cook's knife gleamed over the boy trader. For a moment it seemed that the enraged sea-cook would drive it home. But he saw that Hudson's bonds had hardly begun to give; the Australian was still a helpless prisoner.

With his left hand he grasped King of the Islands and tore him away from his shipmate. Then, with a strength that was surprising in one of so slight build, he hurled the boy trader away to starboard. King of the Islands went rolling across the deck, and brought up against the rail with a crash.

"You yellow scum!" hissed Hudson, almost mad with rage and disappointment; and he kicked fiercely at the sea-cook.

The nimble Chinaman dodged the kick easily.

Hudson stumbled after him; but he stopped at the glittering point of the cook's knife touched his breast.

"No tinkee!" said Wu-Fu-Wu mockingly. "You waitee comee along Sulu'ua!" said the sea-cook venomously. "No killee now—p'laps white man's ship he comee. You waitee comee along Sulu'ua. You sinkee along sea, eatee up along big fishee. You waitee piecee time!"

He stuck the knife in his belt and went to the helm. His slanting eyes swept the Pacific in the starlight. The ketch was scarcely moving. The swell had died away on the sea, and the glistening water was almost as smooth as glass. Far off, in the silence of the sea, sounded a faint throbbing. It was a Tahiti steamer, far away, on its course from Fiji to Papeete. The sea-cook listened anxiously to the faint sound as it throbbled afar in the night and died at last into silence.

King of the Islands heard the sound of the distant engine, and strained his ears to listen. But silence followed.

"No comee!" said Wu-Fu-Wu derisively. He knew what thoughts were passing in the minds of his prisoners.

Ken closed his eyes wearily. There was no hope.

CHAPTER 9.

Under Way.

KING OF THE ISLANDS started into wakefulness. He had slept. The sun of the tropic morning was blazing down on the deck of the ketch.

Ken blinked in the blaze of the sunlight, and stared round him. Across the deck, Hudson sat against the rail, and he was sleeping. Weariness had overcome him. Lufu lay on his tapa mat by the mainmast, fast asleep. But the sea-cook was not sleeping. Whether the slanting eyes had closed during the night Ken could not guess. The

impassive Oriental face showed no sign of weariness.

Wu-Fu-Wu was scanning the sea through Ken's binoculars, but there was no sign of a sail or native canoe. There were few sails in those wide waters at any time, though the chance of one was all that saved the shipmates from the knife of the sea-cook.

The calm still held, and looked like holding. That day, at least, there would be no wind to stir the sails of the ketch.

Wu-Fu-Wu ate his breakfast on the deck. To the prisoners he gave nothing. If they grew weak with hunger there was less chance of their giving him trouble. After he had finished the Chinaman sat and chewed betel-nut for some minutes, and his look showed that he was thinking deeply. Ken watched him in bitter silence.

Wu-Fu-Wu rose at last, and went forward and opened the forecabin. Two of the Hiva-Oa boys had lain in the hot, stuffy forecabin during the night.

"You Kanaka boy, you tumble up!" called out the sea-cook.

The two Kanakas, their arms bound, stumbled out on the deck. They were streaming with perspiration, aching with thirst. Wu-Fu-Wu cut the cords that bound them. He had his revolver in his hand now. He watched the seamen like a cat. Ken wondered why he was taking the risk of releasing the seamen, and wondered still more when he released Lufu also. But he soon understood.

"You boy, you eatee, dlinkee!" said Wu-Fu-Wu. "S'posee you give trouble, you goey along sea, shootee plentee quick. You savvee?"

Wu-Fu-Wu picked up the binoculars again, and scanned the sea. Then he watched the Hiva-Oa boys while they ate. There was no sign of a sail; no sign of the calm breaking.

"You Kanaka boy, you lowee whaleboat along sea!" rapped out Wu-Fu-Wu.

Then King of the Islands under-

stood. The sea-cook had given up hope of a wind, and the Dawn was to be towed by the Kanakas in the whaleboat.

"You lig lope along boat, you towee ketch!" said Wu-Fu-Wu. "You savvee me watee; s'posee you no pullee plentee, you savvee me shootee!"

He made a gesture with the revolver, with a cold gleam in his slanting eyes, and the Hiva-Oa boys ran to obey.

The whaleboat dropped into the placid water. A stout rope was rigged from her to the stem of the ketch. Wu-Fu-Wu stood by the rail, revolver in hand, watching the seamen. The three brawny brown men bent to the oars, and the Dawn moved through the water.

"You Kanaka boy!" Wu-Fu-Wu shouted to the boat's crew. "You washee-washee plentee!"

The three Hiva-Oa boys were pulling hard, but they were not pulling their hardest. Wu-Fu-Wu lifted his revolver and fired a shot over the whaleboat, so close that it cut a lock of black hair from the head of Lufu. There was a startled yell from the Kanaka, and three frightened faces stared at the sea-cook. He waved the smoking revolver.

"You washee-washee debblish quick, you black boy!" he shouted. "You washee-washee plentee, s'posee you no wantee goey along sea, eatee up along big fishee."

"Yessar!" stammered the scared Kanakas.

The three seamen bent to the oars, putting all their beef into it; and the Dawn glided through the placid water after the towing boat, slowly, but more swiftly than before.

Ken's eyes met Hudson's. The Australian gritted his teeth. Wu-Fu-Wu glanced at the white men, and showed his teeth in a snarling grin.

"Plentee long towee!" he said. "Plentee long—comey along Sulu'ua bimeby. What you tinkee? You waitce little piecee!"

Then the slanting eye turned on the whaleboat again, and Wu-Fu-Wu shouted threats to the straining oarsmen to keep them up to the mark.

Ken set his teeth. Slowly—slowly, but surely—the ketch was moving through the glassy water, every sweep of the oars drawing her nearer and nearer to distant Sulu'ua—and death! Hope had almost died now in the breast of King of the Islands!

A blur of purple on an azure sea, far distant from the slowly-gliding ketch, the desert atoll of Sulu'ua showed over the sea-line.

Ken King, leaning heavily on the teak rail, aching from the strong tapan cord that bound his wrists together behind his back, stared at the distant blur, and knew that it was Sulu'ua.

With the wind the Dawn would have run down to the coral atoll in an hour. But there was no wind—not the faintest puff stirred the glassy surface of the Pacific. In the dead calm the ketch moved sluggishly in the wake of the towing boat.

The Hiva-Oa boys in the whaleboat were strong and muscular. But they had tugged at the oars for long hours in the blaze of the sun, and they were worn down with toil. Again and again the towrope slacked into the sea, and the ketch scarcely moved.

Wu-Fu-Wu, standing in the bows, waved a revolver at the almost fainting boys and shouted threats.

"You Kanaka boy, you washee-washee plenty fast. You lazy lubbel, you wantee go along sea, eatee up along big fishce!" he shouted.

Crack! The weary Kanakas stirred into activity and tugged at the oars again as the sea-cook sent a shot over the boat. But it was only for a few minutes. They were worn out, and dropped over the oars again.

The sea-cook's slanting eyes glistened with rage. His threats and the menacing revolver were losing their terrors for the exhausted Kanakas.

King of the Islands and Kit Hudson watched the sea-cook grimly. Both the shipmates hoped that Wu-Fu-Wu, realising that the Hiva-Oa boys could never tow the ketch within sight of Sulu'ua, would take the chance of putting the white men to the oars. Once their hands were free the sea-cook's revolver would not stop them from making a desperate attempt to recover possession of the Dawn.

Wu-Fu-Wu's slanting eyes turned several times on Ken and his shipmate, and they could guess that he was thinking of it. But he shook his head at last—he dared not take the risk. Well the sea-cook knew that they were waiting eagerly for any chance, however desperate.

The sea-cook went below. In the main cabin of the Dawn, Kalo-lalulalonga lay bound. The mighty Koko was worth any two of the Hiva-Oa boys, sturdy as they were. But Wu-Fu-Wu feared the giant Kanaka almost as much as he feared the white men, and he was loath to take the risk of loosening him. But the sea-cook was growing desperate now, as the calm showed no sign of breaking and it became clear that the exhausted Hiva-Oa boys could never tow the ketch within signal of Sulu'ua. Wu-Fu-Wu was master of the Dawn, and of the lives of all on board. But if the ketch should be sighted by one of the tramp steamers that plied to Tahiti, it was more than likely that his game was up.

All through the blazing morning Ken and Kit had hungrily scanned the sea, longing for the sight of a steamer's smoke. With equal keenness, the sea-cook had incessantly watched the Pacific, dreading the sight of a vessel that might run down the becalmed ketch to offer a tow.

As Wu-Fu-Wu went down into the companion, Ken drew himself from the rail on which he had been wearily leaning. Kit Hudson's eyes met his shipmate's eagerly. But the Chinese had not gone down into the cabin; he

stopped in the companion, and they heard his voice calling to the Kanaka, who lay bound below.

"You Koko—you comee along deck." There was no answer from Kaio-lalulalonga.

The sound that Ken made in moving, slight as it was, caught the keen ears of the Chinese, and his head reappeared over the level of the deck. His slanting eyes glittered at King of the Islands.

"You no playee tlick!" he snapped. "You keepee along lall; you no playee tlick along Wu-Fu-Wu! What you tinkee?"

Ken made no answer. He had hoped for a second that there might be a chance of trying his teeth on the tapa cord that bound his shipmate. But the sea-cook was too wary.

Wu-Fu-Wu gave the boy trader a threatening glare and stepped into the companion again.

"You Koko!" he shouted. "You comee along deck."

"No comee along deck," came the answer of Kaio-lalulalonga from the cabin below.

"S'psee you no comee, killee along knife."

"Me no comee!" answered Kaio-lalulalonga stubbornly. "You feller Chinese plenty bad feller altogether, me no savvy takee order along you."

"Good man, Koko!" breathed Hudson.

Both the shipmates could guess that Kaio-lalulalonga was seeking to make the sea-cook leave the deck, hoping that it might mean a chance for the white masters.

Wu-Fu-Wu raised his head from the hatchway once more, with a threatening growl, and then ran down into the cabin.

He had gone to force the Kanaka to come on deck. Koko's mighty arms were needed at the oars. The only other Kanaka on board, Lompo, hiding among the water-casks in the hold, was not likely to emerge under any persuasion or threat. And Wu-

Fu-Wu dared not leave the deck unguarded long enough to hunt him out.

As the Chinaman's slippers feet pattered down the companion, Hudson made a stride across the deck to King of the Islands.

"No time," whispered Ken, answering the Australian's unspoken thought. "He will be back before we can get a single knot loose—"

"Call to the whaleboat!" breathed Hudson. "If they get back in time to loose us—"

"No time."

Hudson gritted his teeth. He realised as well as his comrade that there was no time. But he could see that some plan was working in the mind of King of the Islands now that the sea-cook was, for the moment, out of sight.

The ketch was almost motionless now, the Hiva-Oa boys resting on their oars the moment the sea-cook ceased to threaten them with the revolver. Ken scudded along to the bows. The eyes of the weary oarsmen were upon him from the whaleboat.

"You feller boy!" shouted Ken.

"Yessar!" came back from Lufu.

"You cast loose feller boat, plenty too quick altogether!"

Lufu's black eyes flashed. In an instant he had dropped his oar, and was tearing at the tow-rope, secured at the stern of the whaleboat. The rope fell loose, the other two Hiva-Oa boys drove at their oars with frantic speed, and the whaleboat shot away over the glassy water, leaving the tow-rope to sink into the sea under the ketch's cutwater, just as Wu-Fu-Wu came racing back to the deck—too late!

CHAPTER 10.

The Wind!

WU-FU-WU leaped into the bows of the Dawn, revolver in hand, his slanting eyes blazing with rage. For the moment he did not heed King of the Islands. His eyes were on

the whaleboat, his only hope of reaching Sulu'ua, unless the calm should break. For the moment the Kanakas had forgotten their weariness, and were tugging madly at the oars, seeking to drive the whaleboat out of range of the sea-cook's revolver.

Crack! Crack!

Wu-Fu-Wu fired twice, and the shots went close. But, enraged as he was, the sea-cook was not aiming at the Hiva-Oa boys; he was seeking to scare them into returning with the boat.

"You Kanaka boy," he yelled, brandishing the smoking revolver, "you comee plentee quick! You no wantee killee along me shootee!"

But the Hiva-Oa boys did not heed. They strained at the oars, and the whaleboat shot away like an arrow.

Wu-Fu-Wu took aim now, his slanting eyes gleaming over the revolver. As he pulled the trigger, King of the Islands stumbled against him, and the shot flew wide.

With a snarl like a wild beast, the sea-cook turned on Ken. A fierce blow from the barrel of the revolver sent the boy trader sprawling along the deck.

Wu-Fu-Wu turned to the boat again. The frantic efforts of the Hiva-Oa boys had taken it almost out of effective range. The sea-cook dwelt on his aim and fired. There was a howl from Lufu as the bullet grazed his brown, bare shoulder. But the whaleboat sped on, and the next shot flew wide of the mark.

The sea-cook stood on the little fore-castle of the Dawn, almost dancing with rage.

Out of reach of the revolver, the Hiva-Oa boys rested on their oars, grinning back at the ketch. Lufu stood up and waved a brown hand mockingly at the enraged sea-cook.

The Chinaman fired again in his rage, but the bullet did not pass within a couple of yards of the Polynesian.

King of the Islands had staggered to his feet. There was a black bruise forming under his thick hair where the

barrel of the revolver had struck him, and his head was spinning. The Chinaman turned on him with a rage in his face that was almost demoniac.

He thrust the revolver back into the holster at his belt, and drew his long cook's knife. King of the Islands felt a sickness at his heart as the sea-cook stepped towards him, the long, razor-like blade gleaming in his hand. It seemed that his last hour had come—that the sea-cook, in his rage, would wreak his savage vengeance upon the boy trader who had baffled him.

"You makee losee boatee!" Wu-Fu-Wu's voice was thick with fury. "You makee losee boatee!"

Ken's eyes gleamed at him.

"Aye, aye, you heathen swab! The boys won't come near the ketch again, and you're stranded, you dog! Whistle for a wind, you piratical lubber, and then you'll have no hands to work the ketch. If there's a wind, we'll all go to Davy Jones' locker together!"

The knife glittered before his eyes. But the sea-cook did not strike. Now that the whaleboat was gone, his position was bristling with danger. There was no cloud on the burning horizon, no sign of a rising wind from any quarter. For the remainder of that day, at least, the Dawn would lie idly on the glassy sea, unable to stir. And the calm might last for days. Infuriated as he was, the sea-cook dared not glut his vengeance—not till he was safe at Sulu'ua. And then—

"You waitee!" he said, in a voice choked with rage. "You waitee little piecee! You waitee comee along Sulu'ua."

"You'll never get to Sulu'ua, you dog!" retorted King of the Islands. "Wait yourself, you scum, till we're sighted by a steamer!"

He knew that it was only that possibility that saved him from the knife of the sea-cook. But Wu-Fu-Wu was calm again now, and he thrust the cook's knife into his belt.

"Waitee!" he said. "Waitee little piecee! Bleeze he comee to-morrow

plaps—me tinkee bleeze comee to-morrow! Waitee little piecee!" And he padded away softly on his slippered feet.

King of the Islands leaned wearily against the mainmast, seeking what shade he could from the burning sun. Little hope remained in his heart. But he had defeated the sea-cook's designs for the present, at least. There was a grim satisfaction in that. Had Koko's powerful arms helped the weary Hiva-Oa boys, sooner or later the whaleboat would have towed the becalmed ketch within signalling distance of that purple blur on the sea-line.

Only too well King of the Islands knew what would happen if the ketch was sighted from Sulu'ua. A canoe crowded with Chinese pirates would paddle swiftly out to join the sea-cook, and the Dawn would be towed rapidly into the lagoon. There she would be repainted and disguised for the run to the China Sea. The fate of King of the Islands and his crew would be a secret from all but the sharks of Sulu'ua.

But the whaleboat was gone beyond the reach of recovery. In the distance, King of the Islands could see it, a speck afloat on the glassy waters. The Hiva-Oa boys lay idle in the boat, only stirring occasionally to fill tin pannikins from the water-keg.

Ken cared little what became of the boat. Lufu and his companions could pull, if they liked, for one of the atolls below the sealine, where they would find coconuts and water. He had rather expected them to do so now that they were free of the sea-cook.

But loyalty held the faithful Hiva-Oa boys within sight of the ketch and their white master. Probably they expected that King of the Islands would yet turn the tables on the Chinese pirate who had seized his ship. To their simple minds, it would seem impossible that the yellow man should keep the upper hand of the white man.

Ken smiled faintly at the thought. He was helpless; the tapa cord bound

his arms cruelly, and his limbs were so numbed now by the bondage that he could scarcely have used them had his hands been freed.

He had little hope, save in the sighting of a steamer. There was a good chance of that—but it was only a chance.

At all events, he had beaten the sea-cook. The ketch would not reach Sulu'ua that day. Never before in his sailing life had King of the Islands been glad of a calm. But now he was thankful from the bottom of his heart for the dead calm that stilled the Pacific and turned the water into glistening glass.

The long, hot hours wore away. Neither food nor drink passed the lips of the shipmates of the Dawn. If a hope lingered in their breasts that the sea-cook might grow weary and sleep, it was faint. The Chinaman showed no sign of it.

Incessantly his slanting eyes scanned the sea, watching for a steamer, which might mean defeat and prison at Fiji for him; watching for a sign of wind, which meant success and safety.

Ken, sitting on the hot deck, leaning back wearily on the mast, watched the seas also with aching eyes. Sometimes he closed his eyes from sheer weariness, but always they opened again to watch. The heat was overpowering. The sun, sloping now to the west, burned down fiercely from a sky of cloudless blue.

Wu-Fu-Wu padded restlessly about the deck, or sat on the hatchway combings and chewed betel-nut. Calm and self-contained, impassive as the Chinaman was, he was growing more and more restless. His slanting eyes burned when they turned on the whaleboat, idly afloat in the blue distance.

The hot hours seemed endless to King of the Islands. How was this to end? In death for him, death for his comrade and his crew, as seemed almost certain?

He almost longed for a hurricane, to send the ketch to the bottom of the Pacific with all on board. Better that

than the triumph of the cunning sea-thief who had seized the ship.

As the sun sank lower, a faint breath of wind fanned the burning face of the boy trader. It came with delicious coolness, and he panted with relief.

For a few minutes he was conscious only of relief and pleasure as the breath of a breeze came through the blinding heat. Then he remembered. It was the wind—the rising wind at last! He heard a soft, sibilant chuckle, and looked up at the mocking, gloating face of Wu-Fu-Wu. The sea-cook grinned down at him, and waved his hand towards the south.

"Bleeze he comee!" chuckled Wu-Fu-Wu. "Bleeze he comee! What you tinkee? We goey along Sulu'ua! Bleeze he comee! You waittee little piecee!"

Ken groaned aloud in despair. So long as the calm had lasted, there had been a chance. So long as it lasted, at least, the sea-cook could not carry out his plans. But the long calm was breaking now. With the sunset came the breeze.

If it would blow a squall! The wild-est hurricane that ever lashed the ocean to fury would have been welcome to Ken. Better to founder at sea, better to be tossed in wreck on a coral reef, than to be taken to Sulu'ua.

But it was a light breeze that came from the south—a light breeze that stirred and rustled the sails of the Dawn. At long last the ketch began to move through the water. Wu-Fu-Wu padded aft to the helm.

Had it been a squall, Wu-Fu-Wu would have had the choice between releasing the white men and Koko or going to the bottom. But the light breeze that came out of the south was exactly what he wanted. With a light and favourable breeze, one man could handle the ketch, and the sea-cook had already shown that he was a good and experienced seaman.

It was the last blow to Ken's hopes. Kit Hudson's voice reached him, husky with rage.

"The game's up! That yellow scum wins!"

King of the Islands made no reply. His heart was too heavy for speech!

CHAPTER 11.

Free!

KAIO-LALULALONGA sat against the lockers, and his dark eyes were fixed on the dimming skylight above the cabin of the Dawn. Throughout the hot day the sun had blazed down on the uncovered skylight. The cabin ached with heat. Every now and then a shadow would fall across the glass skylight—the shadow of the sea-cook.

Kaio-lalulalonga was bound with tapa cords that were wound and wound round his powerful limbs and his sinewy body, the knots cunningly placed out of reach of his strong teeth, and he had long ago given up hope of freeing himself. The sea-cook had done his work too well for that. Separated from the white men, who were kept on deck, Koko had no chance of helping them or of receiving help. Every possible chance was guarded against by the cunning of the Chinese.

Safely as he was bound, the sea-cook spied on him at times, to make assurance doubly sure. Never for a moment was he safe from a sudden glance of the watchful slanting eyes.

Koko knew there was little hope; he knew, as the white men knew, that only the calm saved the Dawn's crew from Sulu'ua and death. And at sunset the lurching of the ketch told him that the calm was breaking, and that the wind had come at last.

The skylight above him was darkening. With the rising wind came the night, and before another day should dawn on the Pacific he knew that the ketch would raise Sulu'ua. A canoe would bring a swarm of Chinese cut-throats on board, and that would be the end.

Koko's heart was heavy, not for himself, but for his little white master. It was of King of the Islands that he thought as he sat with aching limbs and panted in the heat.

Koko was, as he often said, no common Kanaka. Koko had an unusual amount of "savvy" for a man of his race. He was thinking, as he sat in the baking cabin, sprawled against the lockers. The two white men, constantly under the eyes of the sea-cook, could do nothing; from the Hiva-Oa boys nothing was to be expected. Save for the frequent spying glances of the sea-cook, Koko was unwatched.

All through the hot day he had cudgelled his brains to take advantage of that fact. He had wrestled with his bonds till his wrists and arms were sore and aching, and he knew that it was in vain. He had twisted almost like a snake in his efforts to get at them with his teeth, and he had failed. He would have submitted to his fate, with the stolid resignation of the South Sea Islander, but for the thought of his little white master.

King of the Islands was doomed if the ketch reached Sulu'ua, and that thought spurred on the Kanaka's mind to endless efforts to think of a way out.

If he could have got a knife in his teeth— But the sea-cook had thought of that, as of everything else. There were arms stored in the state-room amidships, but the door was locked and the key taken. From the cabin, carefully searched by the Chinaman, anything that could have been used as a weapon was gone. But there came, at last, into Koko's memory the trade goods that were stored in the lazarette.

Among the bags and boxes of trade goods, intended for the natives of the islands where Ken drummed for copra, were mirrors, trade boxes, bells, and rings, and beads—and pocket-knives! Koko remembered a box of knives that had been opened for a dozen or so to be taken out at the last stop. That was what the Kanaka was thinking of

now as he lay against the lockers and watched the skylight grow dimmer and dimmer in the sinking sun.

The lazarette, at the after end of the main cabin, occupied the stern of the ketch. There was no door to it—only a doorway. It would have been easy enough to crawl into that room.

But at any moment the spying eye of the Chinaman might fall on him, and Koko, long hours after he had remembered the box of trade knives, did not venture to crawl near the lazarette. He waited for darkness.

In the dark there was at least a chance. The sea-cook would not be able to see him from the deck, at least, and there was time—ample time. Since the whaleboat had ceased to tow the ketch, the little craft had lain like a log on the sea, scarcely stirring. As the shadows fell, Koko's heart was lighter with hope.

And then came the rising wind, and he felt the ketch gliding through the water, and he groaned aloud.

The ketch was heading for Sulu'ua. In that gentle breeze the sea-cook could handle her; he had only to keep her before the wind. Every moment now King of the Islands and his crew were drawing nearer and nearer to the atoll where Wu-Fu-Wu's gang of cut-throats waited.

Darkness came, and the last gleam on the skyline was blotted out. Night reigned on the Pacific, and Koko stirred at last.

Silently the big Kanaka crept along the cabin floor. The movement brought bitter pains shooting through his cramped limbs. But he did not heed them. His sinewy arms were numb, almost dead, from the grip of the tapa cord. But he crept softly and silently aft to the lazarette, and into it.

The interior of the lazarette was black as pitch. But it was Koko's duty to sort out the trade goods when they were wanted, and he knew his way about blindfold. He knew where the box of trade knives lay, and he groped for it with his feet. Like most

Kanakas, Koko could use his toes as fingers.

Thud! Something fell in the darkness. The sound was not loud, but to the startled ears of the Kanaka it sounded like thunder.

He lay and listened, with thumping heart. If the sea-cook heard—if he came below—

But in the rising wind blocks and cordage rattled and creaked, and the Pacific washed against the hull of the ketch. If the sea-cook heard the sound below him, he did not heed it.

Kaio-lalulalonga breathed again.

Cautiously, with infinite caution, he groped with his toes for the trade box, stacked among a score of other boxes and bags, and he knew when he had found it.

Lying on the floor of the lazarette on his back, he lifted the box out from among the other packages with his toes. To lift the lid with a toe was easy. His nimble, prehensile toes rummaged in the box among the knives. All sorts of knives were there—pearl-handled penknives, heavy clasp-knives, yam knives, with short, sharp blades that did not close—and it was a yam knife that Koko was seeking.

To a white man, picking a knife out of a box with his toes would have been a strange and difficult task. From the habit of wearing boots, the white man's toes have lost the nimble power they once possessed. But the Kanaka's feet are always naked, and he uses his toes often to save the trouble of stooping to pick up a thing. A Kanaka who drops his cigarette is as likely to pick it up with his toes as with his fingers.

Koko, without even thinking about it, picked up a yam knife with his toes and drew it from the box.

In a minute more the handle of the knife was firmly gripped between his teeth.

Sitting on the planks, the Kanaka bent down and, with the knife in his teeth, sawed at the tapa cords that were wound round and round him and knotted behind his back. Strand

after strand parted, and in a few minutes the circling cords dropped away from him.

Koko lay for a few moments to rest and breathe and listen. He was not free yet. His wrists were tied together behind him, and with all his sinuous liteness he could not reach them with the knife in his teeth. He dreaded to hear the step of the sea-cook in the companion—not because he feared Wu-Fu-Wu, but because it meant failure.

But there was no step. The sea-cook had looked in upon him just before sunset and seen that he was safe, and he was satisfied. And with the ketch running now before the wind, it was difficult for the Chinaman to leave the deck.

The knife was transferred to Koko's slender, nimble toes again. Holding it with the handle resting on the floor, the blade upright, and kneeling, he lowered his bound wrists till the tapa cords sawed against the knife-edge, and at last fell asunder.

Kaio-lalulalonga gave a gasp. He was free—free, but so numbed and cramped that he could scarcely stir the arms from which the bonds had fallen.

He sat on the lazarette floor, moving his arms slowly to restore the circulation, and as the stiffness grew less and less, he massaged his bruised and swollen wrists with his hands.

All the while he was listening intently. Had the sea-cook come now, Koko would have taken his chance against Wu-Fu-Wu's revolver with the yam knife in his hand.

But the sea-cook did not come. Under the bright stars Wu-Fu-Wu stood at the helm, running the ketch before the wind for Sulu'ua. The purple blue that was Sulu'ua had vanished from sight at nightfall, but against the stars a black mass of palms showed in the far distance.

It would not be long now before he made it. The grin of triumph on the yellow face of Wu-Fu-Wu told of his satisfaction, and he was thinking of anything but the Kanaka boatswain,

whom he believed to lie helpless below, as he had lain all through the long, hot day.

Koko picked himself up at last. His limbs were still stiff, but capable of action now. He sorted among the trade boxes, and picked out a short, heavy axe—the trade "tomahawk" of the South Seas. Then he crept out of the lazarette.

He stopped at the trap-door that led down from the main cabin into the hold. Somewhere below, in the darkness and the smell of bilge, Lompo was in hiding among the water-casks. The trap was secured by a slotted bolt, which Koko was able to open now that his hands were free. He unbolted the trap, lifted it silently, and peered down into the blackness below.

Leaning down in the opening, he whispered cautiously:

"You feller Lompo!"

There was no answer. It was likely that the Hiva-Oa boy was hiding as far from the trap-door as he could crawl, in his deadly fear of the sea-cook and his knife.

"You feller Lompo!" repeated Koko, raising his voice a little, but still speaking cautiously, lest the sea-cook on deck should hear a sound and take the alarm.

He heard a gasp in the darkness.

"Feller Koko, he speakee along me?" came back Lompo's voice from the hold.

"Feller Koko, he speakee. You no talk mouth belong you; feller sea-cook, he hear ear belong him. He comee plenty quick."

There was a sound of crawling in the hold. In the darkness, a darker shadow appeared on the ladder. Koko caught the glimmer of Lompo's startled, rolling eyes. He whispered a few words, and the Hiva-Oa boy understood.

Lompo crawled out into the cabin, Kaio-lalulalonga handed him the yam knife, and Lompo gripped it in a brown hand. The trade tomahawk gleamed in Koko's own strong hand.

"Feller sea-cook, he no savvy!" breathed Kaio-lalulalonga. "Feller sea-cook, he takee ketch along Sulu'ua.

Plenty Chinee along Sulu'ua, killy Hiva-Oa boy s'pooce no killy sea-cook. You savvy?"

"Savvy plenty!"

"You comey along Koko," Kaio-lalulalonga showed his white teeth in a fierce grin. "Feller Chinee, he no savvy—he savvy plenty soon!"

And, with the Hiva-Oa boy at his heels, Kaio-lalulalonga crept silently up the companion.

CHAPTER 12.

Bravo, Koko!

"SULU'UA!" breathed Kit Hudson. From the black mass against the stars, which told where the atoll lay on the bosom of the Pacific, a light gleamed.

The ketch, gliding through the starry shadows, burned a single light—evidently lighted by the sea-cook as a signal to his confederates on the atoll.

The answering gleam from the night showed that the light had been seen from Sulu'ua, and that the sea-thieves on the atoll were replying to it.

"Sulu'ua!" repeated Hudson, between his teeth. "The game's up! That scum is getting away with it, Ken!"

King of the Islands stared towards the distant winking light.

Until that moment Ken had not abandoned hope. While there was life there was hope. The calm had saved the shipmates of the Dawn for the time, and the casting-off of the whale-boat had saved them again. But fortune had favoured the sea-cook; the rising breeze had wafted the ketch down to Sulu'ua. Wu-Fu-Wu, at the helm, was grinning like an exultant demon now. In the star-shine his slanting eyes turned often on the shipmates, and his look told of what was in his mind. Before long now the splashing of paddles would be heard, and his confederates would be clambering on board the stolen ketch. And then—

"The sharks!" was Ken's unspoken thought.

Hitherto, it had been for the sea-cook's own safety that he had spared the lives of captain and crew. But when the ketch sailed for the China Sea, disguised and with false papers, and with a Chinese crew, it would be for the sea-cook's safety to leave no one behind him alive to tell tales. The shipmates knew what to expect the moment that Wu-Fu-Wu's gang of sea-thieves set foot on the ketch. And there was no hope! Death was bitter, but more bitter still was the triumph of the treacherous, wily sea-cook.

Ken's eyes turned desperately on the Chinaman. To rush upon him, to make an attempt to knock him out, was the fierce thought born of despair. The same thought was in Hudson's mind; Ken heard him breathing hard. As well to fall before the sea-cook's revolver as to be tossed, with hands bound, to the sea and the sharks. Wu-Fu-Wu's voice came to their ears.

"You waitee little piecee, all samee me tellee! Chinee comee plenty quick! You waitee little piecee."

He tapped the revolver in his belt and chuckled. It was as if he had read the desperate thoughts of the white men.

From the blackness of Sulu'ua winked and twinkled the solitary light. It was still distant; but the ketch glided on steadily towards it. Many a long mile behind, the whaleboat and the Hiva-Oa boys had vanished into the shadows of the sea.

There was no hope! But the darkest hour is ever just before the dawn. King of the Islands was suddenly conscious of a shadow that leaped from the companion, and there was a whizzing sound, and the gleam of an axe-blade as it whirled through the air. From Wu-Fu-Wu came a fearful yell as he staggered at the wheel.

"Koko!" shrieked Hudson.

The Kanaka had leaped out and hurled the axe with the same movement.

But, swift as he was, the wily, wary Chinese had seen him as he leaped, and made a movement. Instead of the blade of the axe crashing upon the pig-tailed head, as Kaio-lalulalonga had intended, the sea-cook's swift movement saved him, and it was the handle of the axe that struck him on the jaw. But the blow was a violent one, and it sent the sea-cook sprawling.

"Koko!" panted King of the Islands.

Kaio-lalulalonga leaped like a tiger on the sprawling sea-cook.

He had no weapon now, and a couple of seconds would have been enough for the sea-cook, dazed as he was, to draw his revolver and fire. But not one second was granted him.

The brawny arms of the Kanaka grasped him as he clutched at the revolver.

Fighting like a wildcat, the sea-cook struggled in the sinewy grip of the Kanaka.

Koko's mighty grasp was round him like a band of steel, and his arms were pinned to his sides. His fingers were on the butt of the revolver, but he could not draw it. Lompo leaped out on the deck. King of the Islands stared at the Kanakas, amazed. At the eleventh hour, with death hovering over him, the scales had been turned, and it was the faithful Kaio-lalulalonga who had turned them. Like a dream it seemed to King of the Islands and his shipmate, as the sea-cook struggled furiously in the grasp of Kaio-lalulalonga, and Lompo ran to help.

But Lompo was not needed.

In Koko's powerful grasp, the sea-cook was swept from the deck, his diminutive figure whirling above the head of the Kanaka, his voice screaming inarticulately as he whirled in the air. His loose garments fluttered in the wind as Kaio-lalulalonga flung him over the rail.

Splash! The sea-cook struck the sea like a stone, and the dark waters closed over him.

For a moment the mirrored stars in the sea were broken to a thousand frag-

ments, and then the water rolled on where the sea-cook had sunk, reflecting once more the peaceful heavens.

Lompo grasped the wheel, and Koko turned to the shipmates of the Dawn, showing every white tooth in his head in a joyous grin.

"Feller sea-cook he makee kai-kai along shark!" chuckled Kaio-lalulalonga. "Feller sea-cook he no stop any more altogether!"

He got a knife and cut through the bonds of the skipper and mate.

"Koko!" panted King of the Islands. "Koko, old bean, you've saved all our lives!"

Koko grinned.

"Me savvy!" Koko he no common Kanaka!"

CHAPTER 13.

Saved!

KING OF THE ISLANDS sat on the hatchway combings, chafing his swollen wrists. Kit Hudson emptied his fifth pannikin of cool, clear water and chuckled. There were light hearts on board the ketch now. The light that burned on Sulu'ua was astern and sinking to the sea.

The ketch was tacking to the south, to seek the whaleboat and pick up the Hiva-Oa boys. King of the Islands looked back through the starry night, and watched the island signal-light fade into darkness. Sulu'ua, and the gang of sea-thieves who waited there for the sea-cook and his prize, vanished into the night.

"The scum!" said Ken. "Let them wait there—till we get word to Fiji and a gunboat is sent to pick them up. It was touch and go for all of us, Kit!"

"Ay, ay; and Koko did the trick! Koko he no common Kanaka!" said the Australian, with a chuckle.

"Yessar! Feller Koko he all samee white feller!" said Kaio-lalulalonga, grinning over his ukulele. The ukulele was twanging once more in Koko's

fingers, and he was chanting a song of triumph in his own strange tongue.

Hudson glanced over the taffrail. Sulu'ua and its light had disappeared from view.

"Let them wait! They'll wait long enough before they see the sea-cook!" he said grimly.

"Makee kai-kai along feller shark!" said Kaio-lalulalonga, interrupting his interminable chant in the Kanaka tongue to make that remark, with a joyous chuckle. "Plenty shark along sea! Feller Wu-Fu-Wu he no stop!"

Ken wondered. He knew that the sea-cook could swim like a fish, and there was a possibility that he had escaped the jaws of the sharks and reached the atoll. But he remembered how the dark waters had closed over the pigtailed head, leaving no sign to be seen again of Wu-Fu-Wu, and he realised that it was not likely. In the hour of triumph the sea-cook had gone to his account, and the tenderest heart could find no pity for him.

With light hearts on board, the ketch tacked southward under the shining stars. Dawn was breaking in a rosy flush from the east when the whaleboat was sighted.

"Feller boat he stop!" announced Koko.

And the ketch ran down to the drifting whaleboat, stared at in wonder by Lufu and his companions. They could see Koko at the helm, and King of the Islands standing by the binnacle, and knew that it was not Wu-Fu-Wu returning for them. The three Hiva-Oa boys stood up in the whaleboat, waving their hands and shouting, and as the Dawn came gliding down they seized their oars and pulled alongside.

"Feller Wu-Fu-Wu, what place he stop?" asked Lufu, as the Kanakas came on board.

Koko chuckled.

"Feller Wu-Fu-Wu he stop along inside feller shark!" he answered. "Eye belong you no see feller Wu-Fu-Wu any more altogether."

"Plenty good!" said Lufu, in great relief.

King of the Islands, captain of his own ship again, set the course back to Lalinge. For the remainder of the run down to Lalinge the ketch sailed without a cook.

At last they raised Lalinge. The smudge that was the island gradually grew more distinct.

"Lalinge ahoy!" said Kit Hudson to King of the Islands, as the two shipmates stood on deck watching the approaching land.

"Yes," said Ken. "Lalinge, all right. We might find the commissioner there. It's about the time he usually calls on Lalinge. If he's there it will save sending a canoe over to Fiji."

Kit nodded.

"We're not going to let that scum on Sulu'ua escape," said King of the Islands grimly. "They're going to take what's coming to 'em!"

Kit turned his gaze to Lalinge. The island was much nearer now. As the graceful ketch cut through the water, the beach of Lalinge came into clear sight. Moored against the quay was a rakish motor-launch which the two chums recognised at once.

"The commissioner's!" muttered King of the Islands, shading his eyes with his hand. "That's his packet. I could pick that out miles away."

As the Dawn swept through the coral reef, Ken took the wheel over from Koko. With masterly seamanship, King of the Islands brought the ketch in to the quay. Kit threw out the rope, and Koko jumped on to the quay and made the ketch fast.

Then Kit and Ken made their way to Manager Belnap's bungalow.

CHAPTER 14.

The Luck of the Lugger.

AS the two chums knocked on the door of the bungalow and entered, a tall, lean man rose from a chair. Ken knew him at once as the commissioner.

Manager Belnap also rose and introduced the two shipmates, though King of the Islands needed no introduction.

After a few brief formalities, Ken told of the crew at Sulu'ua. The commissioner listened with a grim frown.

"Well," he said, when King of the Islands had finished, "Sulu'ua is out of my district, but I'll get on to the Fiji station, and have them send out a gun-boat. That won't take long, either. I've just had my boat fitted up with a wireless, and I'll send a message over to Fiji. Though we may not be able to pin much in the way of piracy on these men, it's more than probable that they've got several crimes to answer for. There's certain to be some pretext for roping them in."

And shortly after King of the Islands and Kit Hudson took their departure.

They strolled down the beach to the quay, and as they came in sight of the Dawn they saw Koko engaged in an argument with another Kanaka. King of the Islands recognised the native.

"Danny!" he ejaculated. "What the thump—"

"Wants to be taken back, I guess," said Kit Hudson, grinning. "Koko doesn't seem so keen, though."

When the two shipmates came on board, Koko stopped his arguing, and Danny turned to face the white men.

"What name you come along feller ship?" rapped Ken.

Danny cringed before King of the Islands' stern look. Kit did his best to hide a smile.

"Danny want to stop along feller ketch, stop along cooky-boy," piped Danny. "Feller white marster not angry with cooky-boy?"

Koko looked on with disfavour. It was in his mind to heave Danny off the boat neck and crop, but he would not interfere while King of the Islands was talking.

"All right," snapped Ken, manfully suppressing a smile. "You can be cooky-boy along feller Dawn. If you spill coffee again, I'll kill you plenty!"

The threat was not likely to be

carried out, for Danny seemed overcome with joy. He went off in a torrent of Polynesian gratitude, but King of the Islands cut him short.

The midday meal was cooked extremely well—for Danny. It did not come up to the standard that Wu-Fu-Wu had set, but it was a change from Danny's usual fare.

The two chums went on deck. Koko was idly coiling a length of rope, singing one of the interminable South Sea airs.

Ken looked out to sea, and he suddenly started.

A lugger was making straight for the coral reef that hemmed in Lalinge. It looked as if the man in the boat was heading for destruction. Now he was already in the reef. Ken called to Kit.

"Look at that fellow!" Ken said. "He'll be sunk in a minute!"

Kit whistled in surprise, and Koko looked idly on, without any of the shipmates' anxiety. If the man in the lugger sank it was no concern of his.

"Good sailorman," said King of the Islands, "or—"

He paused. Whether the man who was coming through the reef was a first-class sailorman or a lunatic, it was rather difficult to say off-hand.

If the former, he was the best hand with a lug-sail that the boy trader had ever seen. If the latter, he was having uncommon luck.

The reef passage from the open sea into the lagoon at Lalinge was a difficult and tortuous one. Ken, as good a seaman as any in the South Seas, always negotiated that passage with care. On the open sea, Ken had handled a dipping lug himself—a useful sail on wide waters. In a narrow channel winding among reefs with razor edges it was about the last rig that he would have handled willingly.

At every moment it seemed certain that the newcomer must go crashing on the teeth of the coral. But either the boat or the man in it bore a charmed life.

"My 'at!" exclaimed Kit Hudson.

"If that fellow isn't the handiest sailorman in the Pacific, he's the luckiest!"

King of the Islands watched eagerly. At every rise and fall of the lug-sail King of the Islands expected to see the crash.

"Fool's luck!" said Hudson. "Feller brain belong him no walk about any more," remarked Kaiolalulalonga. By which Koko meant that, in his opinion, the man in the boat was a lunatic.

"He's as mad as a hatter, and no mistake!" said Hudson. "And what's his hurry, anyhow? He could drop that sail and pull in with the oars without risking his boat and his life."

Koko pointed a brown finger to the open sea, rolling beyond the low-lying coral reefs.

"Feller cutter he wantee catchy, plaps," he remarked.

"That's it," said Ken.

Beyond the reef, sweeping down towards it, was a cutter that the shipmates knew by sight. It was the Sea-Cat, owned by Dandy Peter Parsons, of the island of Lukwe.

That the Lukwe cutter was in pursuit of the lugger looked very probable. It was the only way of accounting for the frantic haste of the man who was making the reef passage with such recklessness.

It was perplexing. Dandy Peter, ruffian and sea-lawyer as he was, was scarcely a pirate. And had he been one, he would not have ventured upon piracy within sight of a crowd of white men at Lalinge. It was hard to guess why he was seeking to run down the lugger.

But whether the Sea-Cat was in pursuit or not, there was no doubt about the frantic haste of the man in the lugger. He was taking chances that made King of the Islands catch his breath.

Ken watched him. Even at the distance he could make out the man clearly enough—a white man, burnt brown by the sun, dressed in tattered

cotton singlet and pants, with a great hat of plaited grass. There was a mark across his tanned cheek that looked like a recent wound, as if a bullet had grazed there. He looked like a beachcomber in hard luck, but he handled the boat like a born seaman.

The boat was a shabby old whaler's boat, cracking at the seams for want of paint; the lug-sail was torn and patched. Boat and boat-steerer looked as if they had seen the hardest of times. There was nothing there to tempt the sea-lawyer of Lukwe, if Dandy Peter had a fancy to turn pirate. But that the Sea-Cat was in pursuit was very soon proved.

"Feller gun he talkee," said Koko.

From the cutter came a puff of white smoke. The report followed, echoing faintly from the sea. The bullet dashed up a spout of spray within a few yards of the racing lugger.

"The swab!" growled King of the Islands. "He's firing on him!"

The man in the lugger did not look back. He paid no heed whatever to the rifle-shot from the pursuing cutter. A second's inattention would have piled up the lugger on the reefs.

"I hope he comes safe through!" muttered King of the Islands.

The lug dipped and dipped. There was keen admiration in Ken's face now. The man was no lunatic. He was taking deadly chances to escape from a pursuer, but he was taking them with a cool head and an iron nerve, and a seamanlike skill that made Ken's heart warm towards him. The man who could run the reef in a stiff breeze under a dipping lug, single-handed, was a man after Ken's own heart.

There were many eyes on the lugger now. Every beachcomber on the Lalinge beach was staring at it; a crowd of natives had their startled eyes on it; Mr. Belnap, the Pacific Company's agent, had come out into his veranda with his binoculars to watch; Esau Hank stood in the doorway of his store, gazing. Half Lalinge had their eyes fixed on the lugger and the set,

resolute face of the man who handled it.

"Thank Heaven he's through!" gasped King of the Islands, and he wiped the perspiration from his brow.

The lugger was out of the reef at last. It had been a matter only of minutes, but it had seemed like hours to the anxious watchers. The tiny lugger came skimming like a sea-bird across the lagoon.

King of the Islands jumped on the teak rail, holding to a guy with one hand, waving the other to the man in the lugger. He knew Dandy Peter, and knew his ways, and was more than ready to help any man in flight from him.

"Ahoj, the lugger!" roared King of the Islands. "Ahoj! This way, shipmate! Friends here!"

The man had been heading for the beach, towards the Pacific Company's quay. But he heard the shout, and the lug dipped again, and the boat shot towards the wharf and the moored ketch.

It was alongside almost in a twinkling, and the sail dropped. Standing in the rocking boat, holding a line from the ketch, the seaman turned his wild eyes on the boy trader.

"This the Dawn?"

"Ay, ay!"

"King of the Islands?"

"Yes."

"You'll help me?"

"That's why I hailed. Jump aboard."

With a spring the man came over the low rail, leaving the lugger to rock. He reeled as his feet landed on the deck. King of the Islands caught him in his strong arms as he fell senseless.

CHAPTER 15.

Dandy Peter Asks For It.

"MY sainted Sam!" murmured King of the Islands.

The man lay a dead weight in his arms. It was plain that he was

all in; that that desperate race through the reef had taken the last ounce out of him. His haggard face told of long suffering, of hunger and thirst. In the lugger was no sign of food or water; yet he had come from the open sea. That he had been through a terrible experience the shipmates did not need telling.

"Get the lugger, Koko," ordered the boy trader. "Lend me a hand with this chap, Kit."

Kaio-lalulalonga made the lugger fast, while Ken and Kit carried the insensible man below and placed him on a mattress on the cabin lockers.

He lay there like a log, breathing faintly.

"My hat!" said Kit Hudson. "The man's been through something, Ken! Hunger—and thirst—and other things."

"And that scoundrel Peter Parsons after him!" said Ken. He wetted the lips of the insensible man with water. They were dry and parched.

"I don't catch on," said Hudson. "What can Parsons want with him? He's got nothing—nothing but his rags. The lugger's worth an old song." The Australian's face broke into a grin. "If he's some beachcomber who's stolen that lugger from Lukwe, Ken—"

"He's no beachcomber," replied Ken, "to handle the boat as he did. He knows my ship, and knows me by name. He wouldn't expect help here if he were a thief."

"That's so," agreed Hudson.

"There's always some devilment on at Lukwe, among the rough crew that hang out there," said Ken. "Goodness knows what he ran from. He will tell us when he comes to. In the meantime, Dandy Peter won't get his hands on him."

"No fear!" agreed Hudson.

"It's plain that he ran into Lalinge for refuge. Dandy Peter's the man to follow him anywhere, and demand him at the muzzle of a gun. Belnap is a magistrate, but Parsons wouldn't care a hang about that if he's set on getting the man. I fancy he's safest on the

Dawn—and he seemed to think so himself. Look after him, Kit, while I keep an eye on the cutter."

"Leave him to me," said Hudson.

Ken buckled on his revolver before he returned to the deck. It was more likely than not that he might need it in dealing with the dandy of Lukwe. He hurried back to the deck, leaving the unconscious man in his mate's charge.

"Feller cutter he come along lagoon, sir," said Koko, as Ken came out of the companion.

The Sea-Cat had reached the reef. But Dandy Peter, reckless sailor as he was known to be, was not running the reef as the man in the lugger had done. The Sea-Cat was creeping in cautiously, and taking her time about it.

Ken watched the cutter grimly. What the trouble might be between the sea-lawyer of Lukwe and the man of the lugger he could not guess; but he had little doubt that the lawless Lukwe skipper was the man on the wrong side.

In any case, he did not mean to allow Dandy Peter to get near the fugitive until he knew clearly how the matter stood. The Sea-Cat emerged from the reef at last, and stood across the lagoon for the wharf.

Dandy Peter, dapper, spotless in white ducks and well-fitting white shoes, his handsome, wicked face hidden under the shade of a Panama hat, stood on the little deck with his crew of three Lukwe boys.

If he had not seen the fugitive board the Dawn, the sight of the lugger tied up enlightened him. The cutter stood across to the ketch, and swung alongside, only a few feet separating the two vessels.

"What do you want, Peter Parsons?" Ken rapped out.

"Only a friendly word," said Dandy Peter, showing his white teeth in a smile. "I see you've got the lugger."

"Well?"

"You've got the man, too."

"He's below."

"And spun you a yarn by this time, I've no doubt?"

"He's said nothing so far. He was all in when he got here, and he's unconscious now."

Dandy Peter's eyes glinted. King of the Islands could guess that it was welcome news to him that the man had not yet spoken.

"I've followed him from Lukwe," said Parsons casually. "I dare say you guessed that I was after him."

"I saw you fire on him, you swab!" growled Ken.

Parsons shrugged his shoulders.

"Only a warning to him to stop," he explained. "I could have put the ball through his head if I'd liked."

Ken knew that that was probably true. He knew the deadly marksmanship of the Lukwe sea-lawyer.

"Well, what do you want with him?" demanded Ken. "I suppose you understand that he's under my protection now."

"Are you setting up as protector of all the thieving beachcombers in the Pacific?" sneered Parsons.

"He doesn't strike me as a thieving beachcomber. But I'm ready to hear what you've got to say."

"Have they appointed you Deputy High Commissioner, by any chance?" inquired Dandy Peter politely.

"I've appointed myself protector of a man running from a fellow I know to be a lawless rascal," answered Ken coolly. "You'll get plain English here, Peter Parsons."

"So it seems," smiled Dandy Peter. "The long and the short of it is that that beachcomber Daunt has stolen that lugger from Lukwe. It belongs to Dixon—you know Dixon, the planter—and I've followed him to take it back. Is that good enough for you, Mr. Meddling King of the Islands?"

"Not quite," answered Ken. "You'd see Dixon, or anybody else, in Davy Jones' locker before you'd take so much trouble for him."

Dandy Peter's eyes flashed with anger.

"I've told you how the matter stands!" he rapped.

"I'll hear what the man says when he comes to," retorted Ken.

"I'm afraid I can't wait," said Dandy Peter. "My time's of value, if yours doesn't seem to be."

"You say you're after the lugger," Ken replied grimly. "You'll be satisfied to take the lugger and leave the man on my ship?"

"No. The thief's wanted as well as the lugger—I've undertaken to take him back to Lukwe."

"There are enough thieves at Lukwe," answered Ken coolly. "You and your friends among the number; you don't want any more."

"You mean that you refuse to hand the man over?" asked Dandy Peter, setting his teeth.

"I mean just that," said King of the Islands. "I don't believe a single word you've said. That man handles a dipping lug too well to have picked the boat up by chance a day or two ago. I should say that he's made long trips in that boat. Anyhow, I'm going to hear his story before I even think of handing him over. Make your story good, and you can have him fast enough. You'll have to bring proof. I wouldn't take your word against a Lulu cannibal."

Dandy Peter's hand glided to his belt. But he checked it. He was in sight of all Lalinge, and it was no time for Lukwe methods. King of the Islands gave a scornful laugh.

"You'd better leave that gun alone, Parsons. I'm ready to play you at that game if you like."

"You meddling swab!" said Dandy Peter, between his teeth. "I'm after Jim Daunt, and I'll have him if I have to sink your hooker and shoot every man on board!"

"All that for a lugger worth ten pounds?" asked King of the Islands. "You don't bear out your own story."

He laughed.

Dandy Peter eyed him savagely. The wicked gleam in his eyes showed how

strongly tempted he was to leap on board the ketch, pistol in hand. He was reckless and audacious enough for that or anything else when his black temper was roused.

King of the Islands dropped his hand on his revolver-butt. He was quite as good a shot as Dandy Peter, and the Lukwe sea-lawyer had no terrors for him. For a long minute they stood silent, watching one another. Again the Lukwe skipper reached to his belt, and again he checked the motion. His eyes glinted with rage.

"This isn't the first time you've meddled in my business, King of the Islands," he said at last. "You'll repent it!"

"Threatened men live long," answered the boy trader cheerfully. "You haven't exactly got the best of our little troubles so far, Parsons!"

"The man's as mad as a hatter!" snarled Parsons. "He's been in an open boat at sea, driven mad by sun and thirst. He will spin you a fanciful yarn of an island of gold if you're fool enough to listen to it."

"Is that why you want him?" asked Ken, laughing. "You can hear such tales from half the beachcombers in the Pacific if you want to listen to them. Usually it's pearls—gold is rather a change. There are men on the beach here at Lalinge who will tell you of pearl islands where you can fill your hat, if that's what you want."

"Will you hand him over?" snarled Parsons.

"No."

With a blaze of rage in his eyes, forgetting all prudence as his savage temper mastered him, Peter Parsons sprang over the rail of the ketch, his revolver in his hand. It was a nimble leap, and it landed him on the deck of the Dawn, within a few feet of King of the Islands. Ken jerked out his revolver, nothing doubting that a desperate fight was on hand. But before Parsons could lift his weapon Koko's powerful arms closed round him and he was swept off his feet. His

revolver went flying into the lagoon, and the dapper little dandy of Lukwe, with spinning brain, was tossed high into the air in the grasp of the powerful Kanaka and sent flying after it.

Splash! Heels over head Dandy Peter shot over the rail and plunged into the lagoon.

"Feller Parsons—he plenty bad feller!" Koko chuckled. "He stop along lagoon, sar."

Peter Parsons' dark head rose from the water. His face was convulsed with rage as he struck out. Ken ran to the rail, anxious. There were sharks in the lagoon of Lalinge.

But Parsons, with the help of the Lukwe boys, scrambled back quickly enough on the cutter. There, drenched and dripping, his white ducks limp and clinging to his limbs, he shook his clenched fist at the ketch, raving out threats. Ken laughed, picked up his Panama hat, which had fallen to the deck, and tossed it back on the Sea-Cat.

"Sheer off!" he cried.

The cutter moved along the wharf and moored a score of yards from the Dawn. Evidently Peter Parsons was not thinking of returning to Lukwe!

CHAPTER 16.

Golden Ingots!

"GOLDEN ingots! Golden ingots!"

Ken started as the husky mumbling voice fell on his ears. He was going down the companion to the ketch's cabin to see how the man of the lugger was proceeding when he heard that croaking voice uttering strange words.

"Golden ingots! Bars of gold!" came the croak. "Bars of gold! Bars of gold!"

Ken hurried into the cabin. On the mattress spread on the lockers the man lay on his elbow, conscious now, but only with the consciousness of delirium.

His dark, tanned face was lighted up as though a fire burned within, his eyes ablaze. He glared at Hudson, who stood by his side taking care that he did not pitch to the floor in his wild and restless stirrings, but without seeing him. The unhappy man was lost to his surroundings; his endurance had reached breaking-point, and he tossed and moaned in delirium.

Hudson looked round at Ken.

"We've got something on our hands," he said. "He's woke up—raving! He's been through it, poor chap."

"Bars of gold!" babbled the hapless man. "Bars and bars and bars! You dog, hands off! Hands off! It's mine—mine and Hennessey's! Hennessey's dead! Bars of gold! Water—water!"

The last word came in a shriek.

Hudson placed water to his lips, and he drank greedily, then sank back on the mattress, a little calmer. Hudson placed the pillow under the burning head. From the lips, cracked with long thirst and salt spray, came muttered, incoherent words.

"The shipmates looked at one another.

"Poor fellow," said Ken. "I fancy he's been adrift in that lugger, dying of thirst—goodness knows how long. And that dog from Lukwe might have helped him and saved him from this. He kept up long enough to get clear of Dandy Peter, and then—"

"And then cracked up," said Hudson. "I don't get it clear. He must have been to Lukwe, or Parsons wouldn't have got on his track. He's been babbling about bars of gold and golden ingots, and an island with a cave and a sea-devil in a cave, and all sorts of rot. He never got his head stuffed with that at Lukwe. Where can he have been?"

"We shall find out if he recovers," replied Ken. "Parsons has a reason for wanting to get hold of him—he may take stock of the man's talk about an island of gold. More fool he!"

"Dandy Peter's no fool," said Hudson, with assurance. "Every sort of a rascal, but no fool. If Dandy Peter thinks there's something in it, there's something in it, Ken."

"An island of gold—in these waters!" said Ken, with a smile. "Pearls is the usual tall story."

"There's tons of gold in New Guinea—"

"We're six hundred miles from Papua; he never came from Papua in that lugger, cleverly as he handles it. But we shall know later; now we've got to take care of him."

"And no doctor within two hundred miles," said Hudson.

"We've got to care for him ourselves."

"Of course. We may be able to get him taken care of in a bungalow ashore, when we're ready to sail. I'll pawn my ticker with Esau Hunk to see him through," said Hudson, with a grin.

"Only we've got to see him safe from that hound Parsons," said Ken. "Belnap or Richards or Lennox would take him in, and welcome, but—Parsons has moored his cutter, and that means that he's still after the man. We've got to protect him."

"Anyhow, another day or two won't bankrupt us," answered the Cornstalk cheerfully. "One thing's certain—we're going to keep this poor chap out of Dandy Peter's clutches. I heard all that the rascal said to you—he's after this Jim Daunt like a shark."

The restless man made a movement, evidently having caught his name on Hudson's lips.

"Jim Daunt, that's me—there was me and Hennessey," he muttered. "The sea-devil got him—Hennessey's dead. The sea-devil got him in the Black Cave. Hennessey's dead. But he's left a widow in Sydney, and she's got to have his share—Hennessey's share! Bars and bars and bars of gold! Spanish ingots! I tell you I've seen

it with these eyes. Hennessey's seen it, and he's dead!"

He sat up, with his wild eyes.

"The sea-devil in the cave!" he said hoarsely. "Dead men's bones in the sand! The sea-devil's got him! Hennessey's dead!"

He would have struggled off his bed, but the shipmates held him. They were feeling a thrill of horror. Through what scenes had the hapless man passed, to bring such fearful fancies into his delirious mind?

He settled back on the pillow, still babbling.

"Jim Daunt—that's me—me and Hennessey—nor'west, and we'll make Lukwe, and if we miss Lukwe we'll make Lalinge on the same tack! Two hundred miles, and not a drop of water! Follow me if you like, you brute—follow and follow and follow, but you'll never get me! I'll make Lukwe with this wind, and leave you gnashing your teeth! One—two—three—four of them, watching and watching! I'll never be food for sharks! I'll make Lukwe in this wind! Nor'-west, and if we miss Lukwe, there's Lalinge on the same tack!"

His voice sank to a whisper, and he was almost silent. His eyes, wide open and staring, fixed unseeingly on the pitying faces of the shipmates.

Ken wiped the perspiration from the man's brow. From those wild, babbled words he had formed an idea of what had happened. He touched Hudson's arm.

"Do you understand?" he said, in a low voice. "He must have come from the south-east in that lugger—making Lukwe as the nearest land. From the south-east, Lukwe came first, Lalinge farther on, on the same tack. He made Lukwe, and fell into the hands of Dandy Peter there. The hound did not help a shipwrecked man—he must have tried to make him a prisoner—and the man got back to his lugger and escaped here."

"Looks like it," said Kit.

Ken set his teeth hard.

From somewhere in the desolate seas to the south-east the man in the lugger had come, famished, dying of thirst, to run into Lukwe for help. And there he had met foes instead of friends—one foe, at least, the sea-lawyer of Lukwe. Haggard with want, worn out with suffering, he had fled to sea again, to make Lalinge for safety—and Dandy Peter had pursued him in his cutter. That was clear to King of the Islands now; and in his anger and indignation he was tempted to go aboard the cutter and call Peter Parsons to account.

But Dandy Peter could wait. For the present, the delirious man claimed the care of the boy trader.

"He's a square man," said Hudson. "Parsons was lying—this chap is square. He fancies he knows of a treasure—and he seems to have been after it with a man named Hennessey—and he means Hennessey's widow to have the dead man's share. He's square as a die, though, of course, his treasure island is only a Pacific yarn."

"Bars of gold, bars and bars of gold!" came the feverish muttering. "Mine and Hennessey's! Hennessey's dead! Water! Water! Hands off, you thief—you grinning little thief! Shoot if you like! I'll not say a word!" His hand went to the graze of a bullet on his cheek. "Shoot if you like! Not a word! Not a word!"

"We can guess what he went through at Lukwe, Ken," said Kit Hudson, in a tense voice. "That was how that villain treated a wrecked sailor! I'll take my stock-whip and go on the cutter—"

"Hold on!" said Ken. "Dandy Peter will keep. We shall hear the rights of the story when Daunt comes to his senses."

"If he does," said Hudson, with a glance at the haggard, worn face, the sunken cheeks and staring eyes.

"We've got to pull him round between us!" said Ken.

CHAPTER 17

Tricked!

NIGHT had fallen on Lalinge. A myriad of glittering stars were reflected on the shining surface of the lagoon.

King of the Islands, on the deck of the ketch, leaned on the mizzen, his forehead wrinkled in thought.

Daunt had fallen into a deep sleep in the cabin below, his babbling silenced at last. Kit Hudson had gone ashore for a walk under the palm-trees, tired from his watch over the sick man. The Hiva-Oa crew were on shore, Kaio-lalulalonga with them. In the distance Ken could see a native dance going on in the starlight on the beach, Koko and the Hiva-Oa men among the throng of Lalinge natives. Only Danny, the cooky-boy, had been posted in the cabin to keep watch over Daunt, in case he should awaken in delirium again.

King of the Islands was alone on deck. He would gladly have gone ashore with his shipmate, but he did not care to leave the ketch unguarded, with Daunt aboard, and Dandy Peter's cutter moored so near at hand. That the Lukwe skipper would make any attempt on the man so long as he was aboard the Dawn did not seem likely; but Ken knew the desperate nature of the dandy of Lukwe, and he was taking no chances.

Ken had ample food for thought as he stood there leaning on the mizzen, idly watching the native dance in the distance. It was a scene of beauty that lay before his eyes; the white beach glistening in brilliant starlight, the waters of the lagoon lapping softly on the sand; the graceful dancing figures in snowy lava-lavas, with scarlet blossoms twined in their hair; beyond, the tall, nodding palms, backed by the forest-clad hills of Lalinge.

But it was not of the beauty of the scene that Ken was thinking, though it was not lost on him.

He had a sick man on his hands.

A dozen white men on Lalinge would have opened their doors gladly to a sick and shipwrecked sailorman. But with an enemy like Peter Parsons watching for a chance to get him, he would not have been safe there. The man was safe on Ken's ketch; he was likely to be safe nowhere else. And this new burden, when he had already too much on his hands, was due only to the reckless wickedness of the sea-lawyer of Lukwe. It was no wonder that Ken's thoughts grew black and bitter when he glanced towards the cutter moored along the coral wharf.

To sail with a sick man aboard was scarcely practicable—there was no time for nursing at sea. To leave him ashore was to leave him at the mercy of the Lukwe skipper, so long as Peter Parsons remained at Lalinge. And plainly he did not mean to go. He had no business at Lalinge—apart from his determination to get hold of the man who talked of bars of gold and Spanish ingots. That was why he was waiting. Ken's face grew grim.

More than once he had had trouble with the sea-lawyer of Lukwe. The man lived and thrived on trouble. But how to deal with him now was a puzzle.

Along the deserted wharf came a Kanaka, looking round him. He came opposite the ketch and called out:

"Feller King of the Islands stop along ship?"

"Here!" called out Ken. He crossed to the rail.

The man was one of the natives who worked on the wharf. Apparently he had come with a message.

"Feller white master Hudson he send Popo along ketch," said the Kanaka. "Feller white master Hudson he say, feller Captain Ken he comey along beach, along feller Hudson shootee along gun belong Cap'n Parsons."

"My sainted Sam!" ejaculated Ken. "Where is he?"

"He stop along beach along house belong John Chin," answered Popo.

"He no kill-dead. Leg belong him no walk about any more."

Ken clenched his teeth. He had stayed to watch on the ketch, lest the sea-lawyer should make some attempt. And while he was idly waiting there, Dandy Peter had picked a quarrel with the Cornstalk ashore, and Hudson was wounded! Or more likely the sea-lawyer had fired on him from ambush. Ken put his hands on the rail to leap to the wharf. But he stopped a second to shout down the companion.

"You feller Danny!"

"Yessir!" came the sleepy voice.

"S'pose feller belong cutter he comey along ketch, you shoot along gun!"

"Yessar!"

Ken leaped to the wharf, and dashed away in the direction of John Chin's warehouse, at a considerable distance along the circling beach. Popo looked after him, showed his white teeth in a grin, and vanished into the night. With breathless haste, King of the Islands ran on the shelving sand, his face white, his heart thumping with mingled anxiety and rage. His comrade lay wounded—wounded by the hand of Dandy Peter.

He wished now that he had shot down the dapper little scoundrel on the deck of the Dawn. If Kit Hudson was badly hurt, that should come yet—the sea-lawyer should not live to escape. John Chin's warehouses lay beyond the Pacific Company's quay. Ken reached the buildings, panting; but they were closed for the night—not a light gleamed in warehouse or office. He stopped, panting for breath.

"Hallo, old bean!"

Ken spun round, almost falling down in his amazement.

Kit Hudson came sauntering from the shadow of the palms. He stared at Ken.

"You've left the ketch?" he asked. "You—"

"You're not wounded?" Ken gasped hoarsely.

"Wounded?" Hudson stared blankly.

"No! I've had a stroll to the end of

the beach here. I was turning back—"

King of the Islands gave a yell of rage.

"Tricked!"

"What the thunder—" exclaimed Hudson.

"Tricked!" hissed King of the Islands. "If I hadn't run into you here I might have searched an hour for you before I found out! I got a message that you'd been wounded by Dandy Peter here—a trick to get me away from the kitch! And that hound is at work while I'm gone—"

Ken's relief at finding his shipmate safe and sound was keen enough; but his thoughts immediately turned to what must be happening on the ketch. He had not doubted the message—but even had he doubted it he could not have passed it unheeded. That false message could only have been sent by the Lukwe sea-lawyer—no one else at Lalinge could have had any object in tricking him away from his ship. Only Danny was on the ketch now with the sick sailorman—and what was happening there?

"Come on!" said Ken, between his teeth.

He turned and raced back along the beach, Hudson at his heels. The coral sand flew up like spray under their racing tread.

CHAPTER 18.

The Secret.

DANDY PETER grimmed—an evil grin—as King of the Islands vanished from the coral wharf. The sea-lawyer was watching from the cutter. As Ken disappeared, Peter Parsons leaped lightly ashore, and hurried along the wharf to the Dawn. He clambered quickly but quietly on board.

There was no one on the deck; and the sea-lawyer crept softly to the open companion. With the stealthy tread of a panther, making scarce a sound,

he crept down the companion and looked into the cabin.

Silent, sleeping, the man of the lugger lay on his bed on the lockers. In a chair close at hand sat Danny, his eyes half-closed. By the lockers stood a rifle, which the cooky-boy had orders to fire if any of the cutter's crew came on board. But the cooky-boy was nodding to sleep, and neither saw nor heard the dandy of Lukwe.

Peter Parsons crept softly into the cabin, his revolver in his hand. It was not till he was within three paces of the drowsy cooky-boy that Danny became aware of his presence.

Then Danny started to his feet in alarm. He was hardly out of his chair when the pistol-butt crashed on his head, and the Hiva-Oa boy fell prone, stunned by the crashing blow.

Dandy Peter stooped over him for a second, to ascertain that he was unconscious. He was ready to deliver another savage blow, had it been needed. But it was not needed. Danny lay like a log.

Peter Parsons stood listening intently for a few moments. The fall of the cooky-boy had not awakened the sleeper. There was no sound on the ketch save the washing of the waters of the lagoon against her hull. Dandy Peter made a stride to the state-room amidships and glanced in, to make sure. It was empty. He crossed back to the companion, mounted softly to the deck, and peered out.

He was sure that the ketch was deserted; but he could not be too sure. The deck was untenanted; there was no one to be seen on the starlit wharf. Quite reassured now, Parsons descended to the cabin again, and stood beside the bunk on the lockers, staring down with gloating eyes at the sleeping sailorman.

He had succeeded as thoroughly as he had hoped. King of the Islands had been fricked away—and the sailorman lay at his mercy. At Lukwe he had escaped the sea-lawyer, though

the gash on his cheek showed how narrow his escape had been. Dandy Peter had not been prepared for the desperate flight of the man, who was exhausted, famished, worn down, yet desperately ready to take his chances on the sea again to escape with his secret. He would not escape again—he was at the sea-lawyer's mercy now.

Dandy Peter shook the sailorman by the shoulder, and the sleeping eyes opened, staring at him wildly. The muzzle of the pistol was pressed to the burning forehead.

"I've got you this time, Jim Daunt!" said Dandy Peter, in a low, steady voice. You dodged me at Lukwe—you beat me at Lalinge. You won't dodge me again! I'm here to learn the bearings of the gold island—you savvy?"

The wild eyes stared at him.

"You get me?" snarled Dandy Peter. "I know you came from the south-east when you ran your lugger into the lagoon at Lukwe. Where did you come from? Give me the bearings of the island." He paused to listen again. "I've no time to waste on you. Give me the bearings of the gold island or I'll blow your brains out where you lie, and take my chance of finding the island by steering south-east."

"Bars of gold—bars of gold!" muttered the sick man, still staring at him with wild, unmeaning eyes. "Spanish gold—bars and bars and bars! There it lies, in the island of black rock—bars and bars and bars! Stacks of gold in the old galleon—bars and bars of gold! Hennessey's dead!"

Dandy Peter stared at him blankly. For a moment he suspected trickery; but the next moment he saw how true it was. The man was in delirium.

The rage that consumed the baffled sea-lawyer shook him from head to foot. He bent over the delirious man, his eyes blazing.

"You fool! You mad fool! Where's the island!"

"Nor'-west and by north, nor'-west and by north!" babbled the sick man. "If we miss Lukwe in the night, we'll

make Lalinge on the same tack. Follow and follow and follow—you'll never get me. I'll never be shark's bait. Follow and follow and follow!"

Dandy Peter, white with rage, crammed his revolver back into his belt. The babblings of a fevered brain told him nothing.

The man was useless to him now. No threat could draw his secret from him in his present condition. To get him to the cutter—to make the open sea with him before King of the Islands could intervene—that was all that remained to Dandy Peter. But it was obvious that Daunt would collapse if taken from the bunk; and the dapper little scoundrel was quite unable to carry the big man. The Lukwe boys had to be called from the cutter—if there was time! If there was time!

Dandy Peter ran up the companion, leaving the sailorman babbling, Danny still senseless on the floor. He leaped to the wharf—a quick glance showing him that no one was yet in sight—and ran along to the moored cutter. He shouted to the sleepy Lukwe boys:

"You feller boy! You feller Kiki, Talito, you cast loose feller cutter—you feller Jacky, you come along ketch along me."

"Yessar!" gasped the Lukwe boys.

Jacky, the most powerful "boy" of the three, jumped to the wharf. The other two began to cast loose the moorings. There was no time to waste—Dandy Peter knew that. At any moment King of the Islands might discover that he had been tricked, and come racing back to the ketch. And, haste as he might, time was required to carry the sick man on board the cutter and get the Sea-Cat out to sea. Dandy Peter ran back along the coral wharf with Jacky at his heels.

"You feller boy, you go along cabin belong ketch, bring sick feller along back belong you—you savvy!"

The Lukwe boy leaped on the ketch. There was a sound of running feet in

the distance, and two figures showed up in the starlight at the end of the wharf. Dandy Peter spat out a furious word. King of the Islands was returning, and with him Kit Hudson. The sea-lawyer desperately dragged the revolver from his belt. But there was a revolver in the hand of King of the Islands as he came racing up the wharf.

Bang! A yell of rage and pain broke from Dandy Peter as the revolver flew from his hand, shot away from his grasp. A stream of blood spurted from his hand, and he yelled again with the pain.

The shipmates came panting up.

"You dog!" shouted King of the Islands, his eyes blazing; and he struck Dandy Peter full in the face.

The Lukwe skipper crashed down on the coral.

Ken leaped on board the ketch. Jacky spun round in alarm and fled from the white man's furious face, leaping to the wharf and fleeing for the cutter like a frightened rabbit. Dandy Peter staggered to his feet, panting with fury. Kit Hudson drove his clenched fist into the Lukwe's skipper's face, and he went crashing down again, and Hudson followed his comrade on the ketch.

They hurried below. On the floor of the cabin, Danny was stirring and groaning. On the bed on the lockers the sick man tossed and turned, babbling of bars of gold, of Spanish ingots.

"We were in time!" panted Hudson.

It was long before the delirious man could be soothed to slumber. But he slept again at last, a deep sleep that gave promise for the morrow. On board the cutter, Dandy Peter bandaged his wounded hand with a fury in his face that drove the Lukwe boys from him in fear and trembling. But his fury was impotent so far as the shipmates of the Dawn were concerned.

The night passed without another sign from Dandy Peter, but Ken knew

that so long as Jim Daunt remained on the ketch he would have to be on the alert for further trouble from Parsons.

CHAPTER 19.

Ordered Off!

KING OF THE ISLANDS came on deck as the first rays of the sun glimmered on the Pacific and the lagoon of Lalinge. At that early hour little was astir.

There was no sign of life in the bungalows along the circling beach. Offices and warehouses were silent and still. A beachcomber sat up in his bed, scooped in the sand, yawned, and lay down again. One or two fishing-canoes glided on the lagoon. A sleepy coolie yawned on the coral wharf.

On the fore-deck of the Dawn the Hiva-Oa boys were sleeping on their tapa-mats. Kit was in his bunk below. Koko sat on the taffrail, plucking occasionally at the strings of his ukulele, and yawning. He jumped up with his usual cheery grin as the boy trader came out of the companion. Ken gave the Kanaka a nod, and turned his eyes upon the little cutter that was moored to the wharf a short distance away. His brows knitted.

"The Sea-Cat's still here," he said.

"Feller Cap'n Parsons he stop along Lalinge, sar," said Koko. "Me talkee along Lukwe boy belong cutter. Lukwe boy he say feller Cap'n Parsons plenty mad, sar."

"Very likely," said Ken. King of the Islands had no doubt that Peter Parsons was "plenty mad." He had rather expected to find that the Lukwe cutter had left her moorings during the night. But Dandy Peter was still there.

King of the Islands stood looking thoughtfully at the cutter. He could see the three Lukwe boys who composed the crew sleeping on her deck. Peter Parsons was not to be seen;

doubtless he was in the cutter's little cabin.

Danny came along from the galley with a steaming pannikin of coffee. Ken, as he sat on the rail and sipped his coffee continued to look at the cutter. The expression on his face was grim. After what had happened in the night, it had seemed probable that Dandy Peter would get out of Lalinge without losing time. But there was no limit to the nerve, or the impudence, of the sea-lawyer of Lukwe. He was still there, and apparently intended to remain.

Ken set down the pannikin, stood up, and looked to the revolver in his belt. Then he swung lightly over the rail to the wharf.

"Little white master go along cutter?" asked Koko.

"Ay, ay!"

"Feller Koko he comey along little white master," said the Kanaka. "Feller Cap'n Parsons he plenty bad feller."

"No need," said Ken, with a smile. "I can look after Peter Parsons if he gives trouble."

"Lukwe feller no good feller," answered Koko. "S'pose Cap'n Parsons he sing out, Lukwe boy stickee feller knife along feller white master."

"Come if you like," said Ken, and Kaio-lalulalonga tucked a capstan bar under his brawny arm and followed the boy trader along the wharf.

Ken stopped on the edge of the coral wharf, looking down into the cutter that floated below. The Lukwe boys were up now, blinking at him and rubbing their eyes. Ken hailed them.

"Feller Cap'n Parsons he stop along cutter?"

"Yes, sar," answered Jacky, the boat-steerer. "Feller cap'n he stop along cabin along sleep."

"Call him!"

"No can, sar," answered Jacky, in alarm. "Feller cap'n he plenty mad. S'pose Jacky call um, he mad along Jacky, plenty kill Jacky long rope."

"I'll call him myself, then."

King of the Islands leaped lightly down to the deck of the Sea-Cat. Koko followed him, landing a second later. The mosquito door of the little cabin was closed. King of the Islands kicked it open without ceremony.

"Parsons!" he shouted.

There was a savage growl from the dark interior. That growl indicated that Peter Parsons was in one of his most savage tempers, all the more savage for being awakened at such an early hour. But the Lukwe skipper's savage temper had no terrors for King of the Islands.

"Show a leg, Parsons!" rapped out Ken.

"Get out of my ship, hang you!" came Parsons' snarling voice.

"Are you going to show a leg, or do you want me to come in and root you out?" answered Ken.

There was a sound of movement, and Dandy Peter stepped into view. He was dressed, but his usually natty clothes were rumpled and disordered, showing that he had slept in them. His right hand was thickly bandaged. His handsome, reckless face was pale, his eyes sunken; Dandy Peter had evidently slept ill.

"Hang you!" he snarled. "What do you want, Ken King? If you've come for trouble, I can handle a gun with my left hand."

"I've come to tell you to clear," Ken answered. "You're at Lalinge now, Parsons, not at Lukwe. Last night you made an attack on my ketch—at least, on the sick man I've taken aboard. I got back in time to stop you—and you've got my trade mark on your paw now. You deserved to get the bullet through your head." Ken's eyes gleamed. "You can't play that sort of game here. I give you an hour to get out of the lagoon and leave Lalinge."

"You haven't bought this island?" sneered Dandy Peter.

Ken pointed across the lagoon to the bungalow of Mr. Belnap, the agent of the Pacific Company.

"Belnap will be about in an hour's time," he said. "He's the island magistrate, as you know. If you're still here in an hour, Peter Parsons, you will be placed under arrest—"

"Arrest!" snarled Dandy Peter.

"Just that! There's law on Lalinge, if there's none on Lukwe. Yesterday you chased Jim Daunt into the lagoon in his lugger. Last night you made an attempt to kidnap him off my ship. That's the limit. Nobody wants trouble among white men—it's bad for the natives, and bad all round. That's why I'm giving you a chance to up hook and go. Take it while it's offered. Belnap has the power to arrest you, and he will do it fast enough."

"Not while I can pull a trigger," said Dandy Peter, between his teeth.

"You tried that game last night and it doesn't seem to have prospered," said Ken, with a glance at the bandaged hand. "You'd better get it into your head that you're not at Lukwe now. That's all. I give you one hour to go."

A rage that was almost demoniac blazed in the eyes of the Lukwe seelawyer. But he controlled it.

"You've still got Daunt on your ketch?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Has he told you—"

"He's told me nothing," said Ken. "Yesterday he was delirious, and now he's sleeping. Anyhow, that doesn't concern you."

"Listen to me," said Dandy Peter. "That sailorman, Daunt, has a secret that may be worth thousands—tens of thousands. He went pearling in a lugger, and struck an unknown island—"

"Rot!" interrupted Ken. "The beach is thick with such yarns. If you believe in it, you're a bigger fool than rogue."

"I tell you I got it from the man," said Parsons. "I got it at Lukwe, where he put in after he got back. I tell you it's square—he may be delirious now, but he was all right

when he got to Lukwe. He and the man with him found the wreck of a Spanish galleon—

"A Spanish galleon—in these seas!" scoffed Ken. "He went off his head with thirst, and fancied it. He's a square man—he believes what he says. But it's all dreaming."

"Then—you're not after the treasure?" exclaimed Dandy Peter, staring at the boy trader.

"Scarcely," answered Ken, laughing.

"Then what's your game?" demanded Parsons. "Why have you taken the man on your ship? Why are you sticking to him?"

"Because he's a sick man that needs help, and to save him from falling into your clutches."

"I suppose you're fool enough!" said Dandy Peter, after a moment's pause. "It's like you—a meddling fool! But I tell you I got enough of the story at Lukwe to know that it's square."

"All the more reason to keep him out of your hands," said Ken. "Not that I believe a word of it. But if you believe it, I can guess what your methods would be like to get at his secret."

"Come into it with me," said Dandy Peter. "You've got the man. He slipped through my fingers, but you've got him. I'm willing to go equal shares; and the Dawn and the Sea-Cat can sail in company—safer in unknown seas. The place seems to be stacked with danger, from what I heard from the man. Together"—he lowered his voice, and his eyes gleamed with greed—"together we can get hold of the Spanish treasure. It may make both of us rich for life."

Ken stared at him, amazed.

"There's no treasure!" he replied. "It's the dream of a sick man. But if the fellow had a secret worth thousands, do you think I would join you in robbing him of it? Are you mad?"

"I tell you—" began Parsons.

Ken interrupted him.

"One hour to get out of Lalinge," he said curtly. "I warn you that if you

don't go while the going's good, you'll repent it. That's all!"

Ken turned back to the wharf.

Dandy Peter stood staring at him, the rage he had barely controlled boiling up in his breast. He made a movement to his belt with his right hand, forgetting that it was wounded and bandaged, and uttered a cry of pain. The next moment his left hand dragged out a knife, and the weapon was raised to throw.

Crash! The capstan bar under Koko's arm leaped into his hands as if by magic. It crashed across the Lukwe skipper's shoulders as he was hurling the knife. The weapon clattered to the deck, and Peter Parsons sprawled over, yelling.

Koko, with a blaze in his eyes, swung up the bar for a second blow. Dandy Peter stared up at him dizzily, helpless to escape the blow that in another moment would have cracked his skull like an egg-shell. In the nick of time King of the Islands grasped the Kanaka's arm and dragged it aside.

"Belay that, Koko!" he said coolly.

"He plenty bad feller!" roared Koko. "Plenty good altogether killy head belong him."

"Get back to the ketch!"

King of the Islands jerked away the capstan bar. He gave the sprawling, groaning Lukwe skipper a contemptuous glance.

"One hour!" he said tersely.

With that he went back to the wharf, signing to Koko to precede him. King of the Islands and the Kanaka returned to the ketch.

The hour of grace was more than enough for Peter Parsons. Within fifteen minutes the Lukwe boys were in the boat, towing the cutter across the lagoon towards the passage in the reef.

Dandy Peter, standing on the deck, shook his sound fist at the ketch as he went.

"I'm going, King of the Islands!" His voice rang furiously across the widening space of water. "I'm going.

you dog! But you haven't seen the last of me!"

Ken shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. The cutter glided away through the reef, and was swallowed up in the vast spaces of the Pacific.

CHAPTER 20.

The Treasure!

THE man lay in the berth on the cabin lockers, propped on pillows, his tanned face haggard and drawn. But there was no sign of delirium now. Jim Daunt had awakened from a long, deep, refreshing sleep; and he had awakened in his right senses.

He was strong and hardy, with muscles of steel; but he had been all in when he got aboard the ketch. What he had been through the shipmates of the Dawn vaguely knew or guessed from his delirious ravings, and they knew that it would have killed a man less virile. It was no wonder that he was weak now. But he was much recovered, and it was a relief to Ken to see him in the clear possession of his senses.

King of the Islands had been busy ashore that day, but when he came back towards sundown he received word that the sick man had been asking for him. He went down to the cabin. Daunt's eyes turned on him as he came. And Ken stood at his side and looked down at him with a smile.

"Better, I'm glad to see," he said.

"I reckon I've been bad, sir," replied the sailorman. "I don't seem to rightly remember anything after I got on this ship. I dessay I've been off my head."

"A little," said Ken.

"Talking wild, I dessay, sir," said Daunt. "It was like that sometimes in the lugger, when the thirst was bad on me. You got my lugger, sir?"

"Tied up alongside."

"You're King of the Islands?" asked

Daunt. And, as Ken nodded, he went on: "I dessay you ain't seen me, but I've seen you sometimes—down at Lalaio, and once at Thursday Island. I knowed you was the squarest skipper in the Pacific, from what they say along the beaches, sir. That's why I was glad to see your ketch here when I got into the lagoon, with that born shark, Peter Parsons, arter me in his cutter. I knowed I'd be safe with King of the Islands. I was just about spent, sir, when I got in. I'd had more than a week of it on the sea afore I run into Lukwe. And I had to run from Lukwe to get away from that sea-lawyer, and you can swear I wasn't in a state to put to sea agin. That sea-lawyer in the offing now?"

His face grew anxious.

"He's gone," said Ken. "He's been warned off, and he towed out of the lagoon first thing this morning."

Daunt rose from the bunk. It was still an effort to move, and Ken tried to restrain him.

"I'm all right," the sailorman muttered. "Mind if we get out on the beach? I feel like some air——"

"Sure," said Ken, and he helped Daunt up the cabin steps.

"We're going along the beach for a breather," said King of the Islands to Kit Hudson. "Won't be long."

Kit Hudson gazed after them curiously as they went along the quayside.

Some way up the beach they stopped and sat down, their backs against a rock. The red rays of the sun shone on the schooner and the island of Lagine. Daunt turned his head and looked into a clearing in the dense growth behind them.

"It's just like that, sir," said Daunt, his eyes gleaming. "The galleon lies in a hollow surrounded by rocks; she lies half-buried in sand with a cargo of gold!"

Ken thrilled. He could imagine the rotted galleon lying in the clearing before his eyes. What treasure, what

secrets did it contain? Was it true, or just a sailorman's yarn?

Daunt flung out a hand and pointed.

"There she lies, with a fortune for the getting!" His voice was hoarse with excitement. Then the gleam faded from his eyes, and he lay back, breathing heavily. Ken awoke to realities with a start, the vision of the wrecked galleon wiped away.

"About Dandy Peter?" began King of the Islands.

"That swab's a pirate, sir!" said Daunt. "I reckon if I'd took him to the island, it's little I'd have seen of the gold arter Peter Parsons clapped his deadlights on to it. A bullet through my figurehead or a walk on a plank would have been my whack!" He fixed his haggard eyes on Ken. "You're different, sir. You're square. I've heard sailormen say you're the whitest man in the Pacific."

"A white man, at least, I hope," replied Ken, smiling.

"I been thinkin', sir," said Daunt. "I got to get back to the Black Rock Island. I got to lift that treasure. You're a square man, and you'd give a sailorman fair play. We found it, sir—me and Hennessey, in the lugger. Hennessey's dead."

Ken's face clouded. He feared for the moment that the man's delirium was returning. But Daunt's look was quite calm and collected.

"You don't want to think it's jest a sailior's yarn, sir," he said earnestly. "We found it—me and Tom Hennessey. We went in the lugger for pearls. We was blown out of our course in a squall, and that's how we sighted the island. The sea-devil in the cave got Hennessey; but that was arter we'd seen the treasure. I got away in the lugger."

"The sea-devil?" repeated Ken.

"I reckon it was an octopus," said Daunt, shuddering at the recollection. "That's what it would be, but big, so big as you'd never believe it, sir. The eyes of it—the awful eyes of it—as big

as dinner-plates!—and the look in them—" His voice trembled away.

"Don't think of it now," said Ken gently. "Don't think of it! Spin me the yarn when you're fit!"

"I've got to speak, sir," replied Daunt feverishly. "That pirate—Parsons—he knows. He'll be hunting my island, and he knows I came from the south-east in the lugger. S'pose he hit on it by luck, same as me and Hennessey did—though goodness knows it was no luck for poor Tom at the finish. There's bars of gold, sir—Spanish ingots by the sack in that wreck, and dead men sitting around like they did when they slipped their cable hundreds of years back. A Spanish galleon, sir—what's left of her."

"My dear chap—" murmured Ken. He hardly knew what to say. The man was in deep earnest, and believed that he had seen what he stated. But that an old-time Spanish galleon could have drifted so far east in ancient days and found a last resting-place in the Polynesian seas was too improbable for belief to Ken's mind. The whole thing was, more likely, a fantasy inspired by suffering and sunstroke.

Daunt, reading the expression on the boy trader's face, smiled faintly.

"I know what I'm talking about, sir. I'm only a common sailorman, but I've read books. I've seen pictures of them old Spanish ships that used to carry the gold from Peru to Spain. There ain't a ship afloat these days that's anything like it—anything like the wreck that lies in the middle of that island. I reckon there's been a shifting of the island since them days—or of the rocks, at least—the basalt bars her off from the sea now, and you get into the island through the great cave. It's all rocks. Sheer down to the sea—not a landing-place all round the island, and no beach; but at high water a vessel of light draught can sail into the big cave, where the sea-devil lives.

"We went pearling, me and Hennessey," went on Daunt. "We had

the lugger and plenty of food and water, and we reckoned we'd try Momotu, but never got to Momotu. A squall struck us, and we drove before it, and I'd never say for certain how long we was driving. It left us, after days and nights, out of sight of any land, and all our instruments washed away and most of the grub—nothing left but a little biscuit and water. We reckoned we was done—we hadn't a notion where we was, and not even a sextant left. But we knew we was somewhere south-east of these islands, sir, though how many hundreds of miles we couldn't guess. We stood for the nor-west as soon as we could get way on the lugger, and chanced it."

He paused.

"Three days arter that it was, sir, we sighted the island—looking like a big black mountain standing up out of the sea, and the Pacific howling round it, dashing on the rocks like thunder, though it wasn't a rough day. We edged in to see if there was any landing, for the water was short; we wasn't thinking of pearling any more—we'd lost the whole outfit in the squall—but of saving our precious lives.

"There was not an inch of landing to be seen, but when we got closer we sighted the big cave, with the water runnin' in. Hennessey said there'd be rain pools in the rocks.

"Well, sir, we ran into the cave," went on Daunt, "as big-a cave as ever you'd dream of—more like a split in the side of the island. The lugger slipped in, and farther up the cave was a beach of sand, and we made fast to a jag of rock and jumped out, and glad we was to stretch our legs agin. Then Hennessey—poor Tom!—he pointed up the cave, and swore he could see daylight ahead. And when we went on, sure enough, it was! That cave was a good bit like a big tunnel leading through the rock, and it was open at the other end. And the sight at the other end, sir, when we got there, struck us with wonder.

"The interior of the island, sir, was jest one big basin. At one time I reckon it had been a lagoon, but it must ha' dried up. It was a deep, round basin, with high cliffs circling round it, shutting it in from the sea; and the tide at the cave never got high enough to flow in. But there was water there—pools of water. At sight of the water shining in the sun, we scrambled down into the hollow and got to it. Wherever there was water there was soil and something growing—palms and paw-paws, and hibiscus, and a lot of things I hardly know the names of. Little patches of green, with the drifting sands and stones all about. After we'd drunk all we wanted, and soaked ourselves in the water, we reckoned we'd gather all the fruit we could and take it back to the lugger and fetch the keg. Well, sir, then it was that Tom Hennessey saw the ship."

"The ship?" repeated Ken.

"Such a ship as our eyes had never clapped on afore, sir, except in pictures. Her masts was gone by the board, and the old hull was half sunk in sand and rotted; but she stood there, slanting on her side, jest as I reckon she'd lain hundreds of years. We was wild with astonishment at the sight of her—the rotten planks cracking under our feet as we moved. There was drifted sand over part of her, and dead men's bones in the sand, and in a grand cabin aft there was a skeleton sitting at the table with a rusty sword in his hand; and in a big chest in the cabin, sir, there was bars of gold—bars and bars and bars of yellow gold."

Daunt's eyes were gleaming with excitement now.

"Bars and bars of gold, sir," he said. "Bars of it! The gold they used to carry from Mexico and Peru in the old days to the King of Spain. We jest stood and stared at it, like we was 'mazed, and 'mazed we was, that's the truth. It was a terrible thing, standing there among those dead men's bones, looking at that wonderful treasure. It seemed like a dream to us,

and for a time I wondered if it wasn't sunstroke."

King of the Islands had little doubt of it, but he made no remark.

"We got off the ship at last," went on Daunt. "We agreed we'd get the lugger loaded with coconuts and water, and fetch as many of the gold bars as we could carry to take away with us, and come back in a bigger ship to lift the rest when we could, keeping the secret, sir, for it's a secret that would set men wild to hear it.

"We was laughing and singing as we went back through the dark cave, never dreaming of danger; and then suddenly something whipped out of the dark, and I heard Hennessey dropping his coconuts and a golden ingot he was carrying, and he yelled out in a voice I'd never have believed was human. I stood dumbfounded, sir, scared so that the sweat was running down me—and Hennessey yelled to me again to run."

Daunt's voice grew husky, and the perspiration streamed down his face.

"I saw him, sir, for a second, there in the dark—and the eyes of that sea-devil—jest for a second, while he was shouting to me to run, and then he vanished from my sight, dragged away into the dark by that monster. I had no weapon—I was scared stiff. I remember grabbing up a rock and rushing after him; but he was gone, and the fearful beast was gone with him—sunk under a tidal pool in the cave. The thing might have had me, too, sir, if it had wanted, for I stood there a long time, quite off my head, shouting to Hennessey, though I knowed that he was dead.

"When I come to myself a little I ran down the cave, jumped into the lugger, and shoved out to sea. Like a madman I was, sick with what I'd seen, and not for all the gold in the galleon jest then would I have stayed another minute on that island. I got the lugger before the wind, and jest lay down in the bottom of the boat and tried not to think."

He broke off, shuddering.

"He was a good messmate, was Tom, sir. His last words was to shout to me to run. He left a widow in Sydney, and she's going to have his share if so be I ever have the luck to lift that treasure. I don't know how long I drifted in the lugger afore I pulled myself together, but it was night when I first looked round me, and the island wasn't to be seen. After that, reckoning I was south-east of these islands, I steered a course north-west by the stars. I reckoned I'd hit Lukwe, and if I missed Lukwe I'd be sure to bring up at Lalinge on the same tack. Days and nights—days and nights—hunger and thirst. But I made Lukwe."

He sank back.

"Come on," said Ken, "we'll get back to the ship now."

In silence they made their way back. Daunt went below to the cabin while Ken went forward to speak to Kit Hudson. Then he told Kit of everything that Daunt had said. On the deck the shipmates looked at one another.

"What do you think of the yarn, Kit?" asked King of the Islands.

"Sunstroke," answered Hudson.

"I reckon so."

"Only," added the Australian, "Peter Parsons believes in it—he's proved that. That beats me."

Ken nodded. He, too, was perplexed by the evident belief of the cool, hard-headed sea-lawyer in that strange, wild tale of the Pacific.

CHAPTER 21.

The Clutch of Dandy Peter!

KAIO-LALULALONGA glanced across the stretch of the lagoon from the coral wharf to the Pacific Company's quay. Night lay on land and sea, and clusters of brilliant stars in the deep blue sky were reflected in the shining surface of the lagoon as in a mirror.

Back of the Pacific Company's quay

stood the bungalow of Mr. Belnap, the Pacific Company's agent, and that building was brilliant with lights. Every window gleamed into the night; the gardens were lighted with fairy lamps; across the beach and the lagoon came the strains of merry music. There was a dance that night in the Pacific Company's headquarters, and all white Lalinge was there, and among the guests were King of the Islands and Kit Hudson.

Koko had remained in charge of the sick man on the ketch, the Hiva-Oa crew having shore leave. He had left the sick sailorman fast asleep in his berth below and come on deck to enjoy the fresh air and the brilliant starlight and listen to the strains of the violins from Mr. Belnap's bungalow in the distance.

On the beach there was a native dance, and among the gliding figures of the brown-skinned Lalinge folk were the Hiva-Oa boys of the Dawn. They were enjoying themselves that starry evening as well as their white masters.

Moored to the wharf, in a law-abiding place like Lalinge, there was no special need for a watchman to remain on the ketch now that Peter Parsons had sailed away. But as soon as Daunt was sleeping soundly Koko had escaped to the deck, disliking the close confinement of small spaces, like all his race.

From the deck he watched the dancing natives on the beach and listened to the music from the Pacific Company bungalow until he yawned and rubbed his eyes. At last he laid a tapa mat on the deck close by the companion-hatch and stretched his brawny limbs to rest upon it. There he would hear if Daunt awakened and called; there he would not fail to start up if any unauthorised foot trod the deck. There was no need to keep awake.

A minute after he had laid down Kaiolalulalonga was fast asleep.

A native loafed along the wharf in the starlight, making no sound with his

bare feet on the coral. He stopped by one of the bollards to which the ketch was moored and stood staring upon the vessel. The tide was in, and the ketch floated with her deck almost level with the wharf. For long minutes the brown man stood there watching, and then he glided away as silently as he had come and stopped again in the shadow of a stack of packing-cases.

"Well?" snarled a soft, silky voice.

Dandy Peter, of Lukwe, fixed his eyes questioningly on the brown face. He was completely hidden in the shadow of the cases.

"You feller Jacky, what you see, eye belong you?"

"Feller Koko he stop along ketch, sar," the Lukwe boy grinned.

"Alone?"

"Eye belong me no see other feller," answered the Lukwe boy.

Parsons stood some moments in thought. Under the edge of the wharf, deep in thought, lay a boat with two Lukwe boys in it—the boat that had brought Peter Parsons back under cover of night. The sea-lawyer had sailed that morning at Ken's order; but though he dared not let his cutter be seen in the lagoon again, he had returned.

Fortune seemed to be smiling on Dandy Peter save in one respect. Had one of the Hiva-Oa boys been left in charge of the ketch all would have been plain sailing; but he feared Koko—his watchfulness, his mighty strength, his devotion to King of the Islands.

At last he muttered a few words to the Kanaka and crossed the wharf swiftly to the boat where the two men waited. He stepped in and the boat pushed softly and silently along to the ketch. Jacky, still on the wharf, moved in the same direction.

The boat stopped under the bow of the ketch. Kiki held on to the ketch, while the sea-lawyer stepped on the gunwale and Taiito helped him up. Peter Parsons grasped the rail, drew himself higher and looked over.

He could not see Koko, who was

aft; but all was silent and still, and he had no doubt of the correctness of Jacky's report. Like a cat he climbed silently over the rail.

Tallio handed him the end of a coil of strong rope. The sea-lawyer proceeded to make it fast. He made no sound, or hardly a sound, as he moved, and all the time he shot wary glances aft lest Koko should stir from the mat stretched by the companion hatch. But there was nothing to disturb Koko and he slept on.

Parsons, breathing hard, stepped to the rail again and swung himself down to the boat. Without a sound it pushed away from the ketch, the rope uncoiling in Kiki's hands as it went.

Peter Parsons stood up, straining his eyes through the dimness of the starlight towards the wharf.

Like a shadow in the moonlight Jacky was there sawing with a knife that had an edge like a razor at the mooring-rope of the Dawn.

A flash in the starlight. It was Jacky waving the knife as a signal that his work was done.

The boat glided in to the wharf, and the Lukwe boy stepped in.

Unmoored now, the ketch shifted the merest trifle as the tide lapped softly against her sides.

Dandy Peter, cool as he was, with a nerve of iron, felt his heart beating fast as he climbed over the stern of the ketch again.

All had gone well so far. But if Koko awakened, only a rapid shot would save the situation then. And a shot would ring across Lalinge in the still night. Even if the shot laid Koko dead on the ketch it might mean discovery, and if he was only wounded—if the shot missed—that was failure—and the penalty of failure. Well he knew that Kaio-lalulalonga would fight like a tiger in defence of his master's ship. But the slight motion of the ketch had not awakened Koko.

The boat glided out into the lagoon. The rope stretched from the boat to the bows of the ketch tautened, and the

bows swung slowly away from the wharf.

In the boat the three Lukwe boys strained at the oars. Towing the ketch was a heavy task for three men, brawny as they were.

But the Dawn moved through the water, and Dandy Peter, standing at her helm, with his damaged hand on the wheel, had the other close to the revolver in his belt.

From where he stood now he could see the mighty form of Koko, stretched in slumber on the mat by the companion. The Kanaka still slept. The easy, gliding motion of the ketch was not likely to awaken him, nor the accustomed sound of oars on the lagoon.

The lights on shore grew dimmer in the distance, and the strains of music died away into silence as the ketch glided on, farther and farther across the lagoon towards the reef.

It was close to the reef now, the lights of Lalinge but a glimmer in the distance across the wide stretch of the lagoon.

From the cabin below came a sound—the sound of a sick man awakening and turning uneasily in his berth. In the stillness there was a muttering voice:

"Bars of gold! Bars of gold!"

Then silence. Jim Daunt slept again.

Dandy Peter grinned. But the grin died off his face as he saw that Koko was stirring. The sound, slight as it was, had reached the Kanaka in his sleep. Kaio-lalulalonga stirred, moved, stretched his brawny limbs, and sat up on the tapa mat. The sea-lawyer of Lukwe threw a loop over the wheel and grasped his revolver.

CHAPTER 22.

Koko's Big Fight.

"FELLER dream he stop along me!" gasped Koko. For the moment Kaio-lalulalonga could not believe his eyes as he opened them.

and glanced round in the light of the stars.

The ketch was no longer at the wharf; the houses and lights of Lalinge were not to be seen. The ketch was out in the lagoon, gliding down to the reef passage at the end of a tow-rope, and at the wheel stood Dandy Peter, a revolver in his hand.

But that was only for a moment. Then he knew that it was not a "feller dream" that "stopped along" him. He sprang to his feet, wonder changing to rage in his face.

Bang! Dandy Peter's revolver roared out at the same moment.

The bullet ploughed through Koko's thick dark hair, cutting a strip of skin from his scalp inches from where the ruthless sea-lawyer had intended to plant it. Dandy Peter could use a pistol with his left hand, but it lacked the deadly accuracy of his right.

Before the Lukwe skipper could pull trigger again Koko was on him with the leap of a tiger.

The revolver went flying in the air and crashed down on the deck a dozen feet away. The dapper little dandy of Lukwe was swept off the deck in the Kanaka's grasp, his brain whirling as he swept. But Dandy Peter, though in size and strength he was an infant to the powerful Kanaka, was wiry and active as a cat, and he gave grasp for grasp.

The Kanaka's powerful hand gripped Dandy Peter's throat, and the sea-lawyer screamed to the Lukwe boys.

"You feller Jacky—Kiki—Talito—you come along ketch—you—" His choked voice broke off in an agonised gasp.

The three Lukwe boys came scrambling on board. Three pairs of hands grasped Kaio-lalulalonga, and he was torn by main force from the gasping, throttled sea-lawyer.

"You feller Lukwe swab!" roared Kaio-lalulalonga, and he turned on the boat's crew like an enraged lion. Locked in a struggling bundle, they reeled and

rolled and lurched, with panting cries and ejaculations.

The struggling mass of brown humanity rolled into the scuppers. Koko, outnumbered and overmatched, was putting up a furious resistance. The three Lukwe boys were making desperate efforts to fling him over the low rail into the lagoon. For long their efforts failed; but the heavy odds told at last, and Koko, panting, spent, went over the rail, and there was a heavy splash in the water.

Dandy Peter staggered to his feet.

"Feller gun!" he gasped.

Kiki snatched up the fallen revolver and handed it to Parsons. Gripping it in his left hand, the ruffian staggered to the rail, and held on to it with his bandaged hand to steady himself.

A dozen yards from the ketch the dark head of Koko showed over the shining water. Peter Parsons lifted the revolver in his shaking hand and fired again and again. The bullets splashed on the shining lagoon, knocking up spouts of spray.

The Kanaka's head disappeared.

Peter Parsons jammed the empty revolver into his belt. He had little doubt that the Kanaka was dead—that if he escaped that shower of bullets the sharks in the lagoon would account for him.

He gave Koko no further thought, but stood holding on to the rail, weak and sick from his desperate struggle, and staring away towards the lights of Lalinge. If the firing had given the alarm— But the whole width of the lagoon lay between him and those distant glimmering lights. He was safe, though his escape had been narrow enough.

"You feller boy go along boat!" he rapped out harshly. "You washy washy along reef, plenty too much debblish quick!"

"Yes, sarl!"

The panting Lukwe boys jumped down into the boat and sat to the oars. The tow-rope tautened again

and the ketch moved through the starlit water.

The ketch glided slowly but surely through the tortuous passage of the reef and drew into the placid Pacific. Dandy Peter shouted to the boat's crew, and the Lukwe boys came alongside and clambered on board. The mainsail was rushed up, the night breeze off shore filled it, and the ketch glided away.

Dandy Peter shook his fist at the lights of Lalinge, sinking into the sea.

"King of the Islands, I've beaten you!" he snarled. "Search the lagoon for your Kanaka—search the Pacific for me, if you like! I've beaten you at last, King of the Islands!"

CHAPTER 23.

Lost!

KING OF THE ISLANDS stared, rubbed his eyes, and stared again. For a moment or two the boy trader could not believe what his eyes told him.

The Pacific Company's bungalow blazed with lights. From every door and window, wide open in the hot night, strains of music floated out over the lagoon. Every man and woman on Lalinge was dancing at Mr. Belnap's bungalow that night.

Kit Hudson was still dancing, enjoying himself in the thoroughgoing manner of a sailorman ashore, when Ken strolled out into the veranda to breathe the cool night breeze from the hills.

He leaned on the veranda rail and looked out over the starlit lagoon and the glimmering beach. His glance turned along the circling beach towards the coral wharf where he had left the Dawn moored. It was then that he started and stared unbelievably. The Dawn had been the only vessel moored at the wharf that night. Now the wharf was bare. There was no sign of the Dawn at its mooring-place!

Ken stared in blank amazement. Under the palm-trees by the beach a native dance was in progress, and among the islanders were his five Hiva-Oa boys.

"My sainted Sam!" ejaculated King of the Islands.

The coral wharf was at a little distance from the Pacific Company's building. But Ken could see it clearly enough in the brilliant tropic starlight. The ketch was not there; and when his eyes swept the wide open spaces of the lagoon he could pick up no sign of it. The ketch was gone—and Koko. Where was Koko?

That the vessel could have gone adrift was impossible. It had been securely moored to the bollards on the wharf, and Koko had been there. The night was calm, only a light breeze stirring from the hills. It was gone from the lagoon, and could only have gone by the passage through the reefs to the open sea.

Ken's teeth shut together hard.

The ketch had been seized. Some daring sea-thief had seized it while the shipmates, suspecting no danger, had been at the dance at the Pacific Company's bungalow. Ken made a stride towards the veranda steps, and then turned back and hurried into the house.

His ship was gone, and his heart was heavy with fear for Koko. That the faithful Kaio-lalulalonga would not have tamely allowed the ketch to be stolen was quite certain. It was only too likely that the faithful Kanaka had been thrown into the lagoon.

A dance had just ended, and Kit Hudson was leading his partner to a seat in the veranda. Ken met him in the doorway. Hudson glanced up at him, surprised by the look on his shipmate's face.

"Anything up, Ken?"

"The ketch is gone!" muttered King of the Islands.

"What?"

Hudson stared at him.

"It's gone! It's been taken from the

wharf. It's no longer in the lagoon. And—and Koko—"

Ken broke off and hurried away to the veranda steps. There was no time to be lost.

Hudson hurriedly excused himself to his companion, and followed. Ken was running swiftly along the beach towards the wharf, the sand flying up like spray under his hurrying footsteps. His face was set, his eyes gleaming like steel. He was bending by one of the bollards on the wharf when Hudson joined him, panting and breathless.

Ken looked up.

"The rope's been cut," he said. "Sawn through with a knife!"

"She's not been gone long," panted Hudson. "It's not an hour since I saw her from Belnap's veranda."

Ken stood on the wharf, staring across the shining lagoon towards the reef. Far away, beyond the coral reef, rolled the wide Pacific, glimmering infinite in the starlight. In the shimmer of stars and sea it seemed to him that he could pick out a glancing sail out on the open sea. But whether it was the ketch he could not tell. He could not be certain that it was a sail at all.

"Who—" he muttered between his teeth.

Hudson broke in savagely:

"No need to ask that. Dandy Peter, of Lukwe."

"He left Lalinge this morning," muttered Ken. "His cutter never came back into the lagoon."

"But Peter Parsons came back," said Hudson. "Who else would have done this? He was after the sailorman, Jim Daunt, and he's taken the ketch, too. And—he's got away!"

"I never dreamed—"

"If we had it wouldn't have happened," said Hudson. "We've got to get after him. No time to lose!" He pointed to a boat that lay tied up to the wharf, with mast and lug-sail lying in it. "Jim Daunt's lugger. Daunt came hundreds of miles in that boat, and we can follow Peter Parsons in it. There may be a chance yet."

"Quick!" said Ken. "We may pick up the ketch just outside the reef. There's a ghost of a chance!"

The shipmates lost no time. They jumped into the boat, cast off the mooring-rope and shoved out into the lagoon. Swiftly the mast was stepped and the lug hoisted. The wind off the hills of Lalinge filled the lug-sail, and the boat fairly skimmed across the lagoon.

Hudson steered, while Ken handled the dipping lug with skilled hands. The boat shot like an arrow for the reef passage.

The faces of the shipmates were set and tense. There was a chance—a remote chance—of picking up the ketch outside the reef. But if the thief had already made sail, there was but little chance of running it down in the lugger, swiftly as the boat flew under Ken's skilful handling.

The reef, with the Pacific creaming over it, white in the starlight, was close at hand, when a cry from the lagoon came to the ears of the shipmates.

Ken started and listened. It was a piercing cry from a swimmer in distress. Faintly but clearly it rang across the glimmering waters. If a chance remained of picking up the ketch outside the reef it depended on haste, on not losing a second. But no sailorman could have passed unheeded that faint, wailing cry from a swimmer almost at the end of his strength.

The lug-sail dropped. King of the Islands stared round over the shining water. Again came the cry. And he picked out a dark head on the water at a distance.

"Ahoy!" shouted King of the Islands.

The lugger almost spun in the direction of the floating dark head. A few yards from the head a fin showed over the water. Ken knew what that meant.

"This way!" he shouted.

He was losing the last chance of seeing his ketch again, and he knew it. But a swimmer in danger from a shark counted first. There was a gleam of

white as the shark rushed down on its prey and turned over to bite. But at the same moment the lugger glided by the swimmer, and Ken reached over and grasped a hand that was flung up, and by main strength dragged the man into the boat.

The boat rocked wildly, and it rocked again as the nose of the shark crashed on it, the gleaming teeth closing with a snap that missed the swimmer by inches as he was dragged in.

But the man was safe now, sprawling panting in the bottom of the boat, dripping with water, gasping for breath.

"Little white master!" he panted.

"Koko!" shouted Ken in surprise.

It was the bo'sun whom he had saved from the shark.

CHAPTER 24.

The Only Chance.

DANDY PETER, the sea-lawyer of Lukwe, grinned with glee. The lights of Lalinge had faded into the sea behind the stolen ketch. Of Lalinge, only the black mass of the hills against the starlit heavens remained in sight astern, sinking into shadow. He had succeeded beyond even his hopes.

The ketch, running before the wind, was leaving Lalinge fast astern. A twinge of pain from his bandaged right hand brought a cry to Dandy Peter's lips. But he grinned again with exultation. He had beaten King of the Islands.

The sailorman who knew the secret of the island of gold was in his power at last! King of the Islands could not protect him now. King of the Islands was stranded at Lalinge without a ship. Let him pursue, if he liked, in a canoe or a boat; his own ketch would show him a clean pair of heels. Dandy Peter chuckled at the thought.

The three Lukwe boys handled the sheets, under Dandy Peter's orders. It was a small crew for the ketch, but

the sea was calm, the wind fair, and by morning Dandy Peter would be on his own cutter again. The Sea-Cat had been left anchored at Kufa, while the sea-lawyer returned to Lalinge in his boat. By morning the Lukwe skipper would make Kufa, if the wind held; and he would be safe.

Reckless rascal as he was, Dandy Peter had no idea of keeping possession of the ship he had stolen—the Dawn was too well known among the Islands for that. He had no intention of being taken down to Fiji to be hanged as a pirate. Once he reached the cutter the ketch would be scuttled, sunk to the bottom of the deep Pacific, with nothing remaining to tell of her fate.

King of the Islands might guess who had taken her from Lalinge, but he could never prove it. Koko, the only one who knew, had been flung into the lagoon, and long ago the sharks had accounted for him. The Lukwe boys would tell nothing—this was not the first desperate deed in which they had helped their lawless master.

With the ketch running before the kind, his own boat trailing at the end of a tow-rope behind, Dandy Peter left Jacky at the wheel and descended the companion into the cabin. In the light of the swinging lamp he looked at the man who lay on the berth on the lockers.

Jim Daunt was awake now. He lay on his elbow, listening, aware that something was wrong on board, but not knowing what it was. But he knew when the dapper figure of the dandy of Lukwe stepped into the light. Every vestige of colour left his haggard face as he stared at Peter Parsons.

"You!" he breathed.

Dandy Peter grinned mockingly.

"Where's King of the Islands?" asked Daunt faintly.

"Oh, you're in your senses now!" grinned Dandy Peter. "You were delirious last time I saw you. King of the Islands? He's ashore at Lalinge—having a good time at a hop, I believe. This packet's in my hands, Daunt! Da

you hear? I'm skipper of the Dawn now—and shall be until she goes under the water to-morrow. Savvy?

"King of the Islands laughs at your story of an island with the wreck of a Spanish galleon sunk in the sands. I reckon you wanted him to help you lift the treasure. He won't help you now. I reckon he's left with what he stands up in, and nothing more."

Dandy Peter showed his white teeth in a smile.

"I reckon he'll be looking for a job before the mast now—pulling and hauling for his rations."

The prospect of Ken working before the mast seemed to entertain the ruffian, for he laughed loudly.

Daunt watched him, alarm on his haggard face.

"You—you've got me!" he muttered faintly.

"I've got you!" grinned Dandy Peter. "You'll be on board my cutter to-morrow, and this hooker will be at the bottom of the Pacific. You'll be setting a course for the island of gold. You've got the bearings?"

The sailorman made no reply.

"You'll talk freely enough to-morrow!" said Dandy Peter. "When you're on my cutter, we steer for the island—and you'll set a course."

Daunt shook his head.

"You'll change your mind!" grinned the Lukwe skipper. "A chain twisted round your neck will make you talk fast enough, I fancy. You're not dealing with a man like King of the Islands now."

Daunt groaned and sank down on his pillows. His face was white as chalk in the lamplight.

Dandy Peter laughed, and left him, returning to the deck. The sailorman looked like a dying man; but there was no compassion in the heart of the sea-lawyer. If Daunt lived long enough to tell his secret, that was all that mattered to Dandy Peter.

On the deck of the ketch Parsons looked back. The hills of Lalinge were a dim blur on the Pacific. No sign of

a sail in pursuit was to be seen on the glimmering sea. Thoughts of riches beyond the dreams of avarice were in Dandy Peter's mind; of the treasure that lay on the unknown island—unknown to all but the sick sailorman who lay on the lockers below—and the thoughts brought a smile to his lips, a glitter to his eyes.

But his dreams of treasure did not make him any less cautious and clear-headed, and he gave all his attention to the sailing of the ketch, and to snarling at the Lukwe boys who, worn out by a long night of exertion, would gladly have crept into the shadows to sleep—and would have slept, regardless of the safety of the ship, had their master's eye left them for more than a few moments.

Below, in the cabin, Jim Daunt lay long as Parsons had left him, his face white and despairing, sleep banished now. When he made an effort to move, he sank back on the pillows, white and gasping. But he made another effort, and another; and crawled from the berth on the lockers.

The terrible hardships through which he had passed, and the fever that had followed, had reduced the sailorman's great strength, and he was but a shadow of the man he had been. But a determined will was working in the enfeebled body.

Above him he heard the padding of bare feet on the deck. The Lukwe boys were busy, and Dandy Peter was not likely to leave the deck for a time, at least. Daunt, weak as water, but moved by an iron determination, crawled across the cabin floor to the doorway of the little state-room amidships that belonged to Kit Hudson and King of the Islands.

So slow and painful were his movements that ten minutes were occupied in crawling across ten feet of space. But he reached the door of the state-room, pushed it open, and crawled in. His limbs were sinking under him; his brain reeling. For long, long minutes he lay in the state-room, unable to

move farther. But he stirred again at last.

The state-room was partly illumined by the light from the cabin lamp. Daunt crawled to the bunks, grasped hold, and raised himself from the floor—slowly, with infinite effort. No one who had looked at the sick man would have believed him capable of that effort. But it was to save his life and his treasure; and he drove himself hard.

He was standing by the bunks at last, holding on with convulsive hands, feeling every moment that he must fall from sheer weakness, yet holding on. Presently his hand groped in the shadow over the shelf at the head of Ken's bunk.

Somewhere in the state-room, he knew, would be the boy trader's revolver—and that was what he was seeking. He knew that King of the Islands had gone to the dance at the Belnap bungalow, and he could not have taken his gun with him. If it was there—

It was there! The feeble, feverish fingers closed on the butt.

For long minutes Daunt stood leaning on the bunk, breathing hard. He lowered himself to the floor at last—slowly and carefully, lest he should collapse in a fainting heap.

Keeping the revolver in his hand, he crawled back to the doorway to the cabin. Again he had to stop and rest; again he would have been at Dandy Peter's mercy had the sea-lawyer descended. But the Lukwe skipper was busy on deck, and the padding of feet overhead continued to the accompaniment of the creaking blocks and the swing of the boom. The sailorman crawled back slowly towards his berth on the lockers, the precious revolver in his hand.

Suddenly darkness fell upon him, and, he lay inert, scarcely breathing. He had overtaxed his feeble strength, and for a long time he lay still, unconscious of his surroundings. When his eyes opened at last, he gave a wild look

round the cabin, and it was some minutes before he remembered and understood.

He reached up to the lockers and made a feeble effort to raise himself. But it was beyond his power, and with a groan he sank back again.

His intention had been to let Dandy Peter find him as he had left him in the berth on the lockers, the revolver hidden by a pillow—till the sea-lawyer came within close reach.

But he could not get back to his berth, and lay helpless on the cabin floor—helpless, but with strength enough to pull trigger when the time came for a last desperate effort to save himself from his enemy.

How long he lay he could not tell. Once consciousness left him, and he awakened with a feverish light in his sunken eyes. But he was keeping his senses. There was a glimmer of a stronger light than that of the stars on the skylight. Dawn was at hand. A footstep sounded in the companion, and Daunt drew a quick, hissing breath. The hand that held the revolver slid under him as he lay.

Dandy Peter stepped down into the cabin. Dawn was flushing up over the Pacific; Kufa was in sight. The dawning light showed no sign of pursuit from Lalinge. In an hour more Dandy Peter would have reached his cutter, and the ketch would be scuttled. Now he had spared a moment to come down to look at the sick man—not from motives of humanity; that had no part in Dandy Peter's nature. But Daunt's life was precious until the island of gold had been raised.

The sea-lawyer uttered a cry as he saw the sick sailorman lying on the floor by the lockers. He had no doubt that Daunt had pitched out of his berth in some roll of the ketch.

He ran to him hurriedly.

Daunt did not stir, and his eyes closed. For a second Dandy Peter feared that the man was dead. His eyes blazed with fury. He

hand on the sailorman's heart, and was relieved to find it still throbbing.

"You swab!" muttered Parsons. "If you'd slipped your cable——"

Bang! The hand that was hidden beneath the recumbent figure slipped out, the revolver in it.

Dandy Peter, for once in his wary life, was taken utterly by surprise.

With a last exertion, Daunt lifted the revolver. The muzzle almost touched Dandy Peter as he fired.

He would have fired again, but the revolver sagged from his nerveless hand—and it was not needed!

One cry burst from the sea-lawyer, and he rolled away on the cabin floor and lay there still. And the sailorman, utterly exhausted by his effort, sank back on the floor, senseless, and lay as still as the man he had shot.

CHAPTER 25.

Adrift!

KAIO-LALULALONGA lay back in the boat, the water running down his brown limbs, streaks of crimson from under his dark hair oozing upon his face. King of the Islands, heedless even of the fate of his ketch in his anxiety for his faithful follower, bent over him.

From the bottom of his heart he was thankful that, even with the fate of his ship at stake, he had listened to that cry of a swimmer in peril. Had the lugger passed on, his eyes would never again have fallen on Kaio-lalulalonga.

"You're wounded, Koko?" he muttered.

Kaio-lalulalonga tried to grin his cheery grin.

"Little feller scratch," he said faintly. "Feller Parsons no shoot good along left hand. No kill-dead Koko, sar."

"Parsons!" said Hudson. "I knew it!"

"Feller ketch he stop along Cap'n Parsons, sar," murmured Koko

anxiously. "Me makee plenty fight along feller Parsons and Lukwe boy

"I'm sure of that, Koko," said Ken; but he signed to the Kanaka to say no more till he recovered a little, and examined the gash on Koko's head. He was deeply relieved to find that it was only a graze on the scalp. The gash was still bleeding, and it was the blood, no doubt, that had drawn the shark, from whose jaws Koko had so narrowly escaped, to the spot.

Ken, with gentle hands, bound up the cut with strips torn from his own jacket, the only material at hand. Koko submitted to the ministrations of his white master, but there was impatience in his brown face. He was thinking not of the "little feller scratch," but of his master's ship.

"Little white master," broke out the Kanaka at last. "Feller Parsons he take ketch along sea. We follow along feller Parsons."

"Tell me what happened at the wharf."

Koko briefly explained how he had awakened to find the ketch being towed across the lagoon; how Peter Parsons had fired at him as he jumped from his sleeping-mat; and how, after a fierce struggle with the Lukwe boys, he had been flung over the rail.

Ken's face hardened as he listened. He could guess that it was because Dandy Peter's right hand was crippled that the bullet had not been planted in the faithful Kanaka's brain.

"He shootee along me, along lagoon, along left hand belong him," went on Koko. "Me swim along deep water, he no see, eye belong him. He tinkee me plenty kill-dead. He takee ketch along reef, along sea; me tinkee swim along lagoon back along Lalinge. Feller shark he comey."

Koko was sitting up now. Severe as his struggle had been, the powerful Kanaka was almost himself again.

"Feller shark he tinkee makee kai-kai along me," said Koko, grinning. "Me no tinkee allee same feller shark.

Me walk about along water, feller shark he walk about along me, long time."

Ken understood. He could picture the shark circling round the swimming Kanaka. Koko dodging the rushes of the savage brute when it closed in on him, dodging and diving, saving himself again and again from the clashes of the terrible teeth by watchfulness, swiftness, unflinching weariness.

But that fearful contest could only have ended one way had not the lugger come on the scene. Koko had been almost at the end of his resources when he had seen the gliding sail and shrieked for help, unknowing that it was upon the ears of his white master that the cry would fall.

"S'pose feller knife belong me, me kill-dead feller shark plenty quick," said Koko. "Me no fiald feller shark, s'pose feller knife belong hand belong me. Me no savvy little white master along boat—me tinkee black feller go along reef along fish. Feller King of the Islands he see ketch no stop, eye belong him, he follow findee ketch?"

"That's it," said Ken. He had put the lugger before the wind again as he listened to Koko's story, and the boat was already entering the passage of the reefs.

"You got fella gun along you, sar?" asked Koko.

Ken started a little, and shook his head. Hudson whistled. In their haste to pursue the ketch, the shipmates had stopped for nothing, and in the excitement of the moment they had hardly realised that they were unarmed.

"Suffering snakes!" murmured Hudson. "If we overhaul Dandy Peter, Ken, we shall want a gun!"

"I've no doubt of that," said Ken. But he kept the lugger on its course.

"If we'd stopped, Kit, we might as well have given up the idea of getting sight of the ketch at all. As the matter stands, there's little enough chance. If we sight her, we can use our own judg-

ment about tackling Peter Parsons. The first thing is to sight her."

"That's so," agreed Hudson. "We should have done no good by stopping ashore, that's certain. I wish I had a gun, though!"

The boat slackened speed in the reef passage. A dipping lug was the last rig that Ken would have chosen for running the reef, but there had been no choice in the matter. Fortunately he could handle it well. The boat wound and glided through the coral reefs, and clear of them at last, shot out into the open Pacific.

The vast ocean, peaceful and calm, scarce rippling under the land breeze, lay glimmering in the starlight, silent, immense, before Ken's anxious eyes, as he scanned the sea for a sign of the Dawn.

But there was no sail. The vast ocean lay deserted before his eyes, reflecting the spangled heavens like an immense mirror. Keeping the lugger before the wind, Ken rapped out a question to Koko.

"How many feller boy along Cap'n Parsons?"

"Flee fellow boy, sar."

"Three!" said Ken. "That's the whole crew of Parsons' cutter, Kit. He had his boat and the whole crew of his cutter. He never went to Lukwe when he left Lalinge. He couldn't have got back here in a boat to-night, if he had. Where did he leave the cutter without a man in her?"

"Kufa," said Hudson at once. "That's the only anchorage near enough. He couldn't have left the cutter adrift at sea."

"That's it," said Ken, the same thought in his mind. "He's got the ketch, and he's got Jim Daunt. He will head for where he left the cutter. He would never dare run the ketch to Lukwe. What he's done to-night is piracy on the high seas; and even that crew at Lukwe would never stand by him in that. He will never dare keep possession of the ketch."

"Hardly," agreed Hudson.

"Put yourself in his place," said Ken, thinking hard. "He dare not keep a stolen ship. He cannot take her to Lukwe. What would he do? Run across to Kufa, if he's left his cutter there, take Daunt on the cutter, and sink the ketch to cover up his piracy. What?"

"I reckon so."

It was not difficult to follow the plan of the sea-lawyer, for there was little else that Dandy Peter could possibly have done in the circumstances. Only at Kufa could he have left his cutter, and it was practically certain that he did not intend to sail the seas in a stolen ship, a ship known to every trader in the Pacific as King of the Islands.

"The wind is fair for Kufa," said Ken.

The lugger was fairly racing over the water now.

"Fair for him, too," said Hudson. "And I reckon the ketch sails three fathoms to our one, fast as this boat moves."

"There's a chance still. He may lose time at Kufa. He has to get the cutter out of her anchorage and transfer his prisoner. We may pick him up in sight of Kufa; perhaps overhaul him there."

It was the slimmest of chances, and the comrades both knew it. But it was all there was. The slimmest of chances was better than nothing. Through the remainder of the night the lugger raced on, three pairs of eyes watching the sea. The dawn flushed up at last over the Pacific, the swift dawn of the tropics, and the night vanished like a curtain that is drawn.

Over the eastern horizon the golden ball of the sun leaped into sight, and it was day. The lugger raced on under brightening sunshine.

There was a yell from Koko.

"Feller ketch he stop along sea," he cried, pointing far in the distance to the east to something glimmering on the billowing sea in the sunlight.

"Feller ketch," said Kaio-lalulalonga again, positively.

The Kanaka's eyes were keen as those of an albatross.

"My sainted Sam! I think——"

The lug-sail dipped, and the boat changed her course to head for the distant patch that glimmered on the blue waters.

Very soon it was plainly seen that it was a sail. Very soon afterwards King of the Islands knew his ketch. It was the graceful Dawn that floated there in the light of the morning sun. The lugger drove towards her through rippling water, leaving a long white wake behind.

Ken's face grew more and more puzzled as he ran down towards the ketch. Swift as the lugger was, the ketch could have outsailed her with ease. But she was not seeking to do so.

Had Dandy Peter sighted the pursuit, and was he waiting for the lugger to overhaul him? Out on the open sea, out of sight of land save for Kufa showing like a purple blur to the east, did the sea-lawyer seek to draw his enemies under his fire and finish the struggle there and then, revolver in hand?

It seemed unlikely enough. Dandy Peter could not know that the shipmates were unarmed; and armed they would have been much more than a match for him, once within range. With his right hand crippled, his pistol of uncertain use in his left, Dandy Peter could not be seeking a fight against odds. Yet the ketch was not running!

Ken, with a seaman's eye, could see that there was something wrong with the ketch. Dandy Peter, scoundrel as he was, was a good seaman, and no ship under the command of a good seaman ever behaved as the ketch was behaving now. She yawed and veered, as if left to her own devices. And as he drew nearer, Ken could discern that there was no man at the wheel.

The ketch wallowed in the sea, and then, as the mainsail filled with the breeze, she shot away like an arrow, only to yaw again, the boom thundering back across the deck, and the ketch losing way and wallowing.

It was useless to puzzle. The mystery of it beat him. Dandy Peter had run the ketch out to sea and left her to drift. For a moment Ken fancied that the sea-lawyer had taken the prisoner in the boat and deserted the ketch, leaving her to drift whither she would, though he could not understand Dandy Peter leaving her afloat. But as he scanned her he could see that the whaleboat was still at the davits, and the sea-lawyer's own boat towing astern. Parsons was still aboard.

Whatever might be the explanation of the strange mystery, one thing was certain—the ketch was drifting at the mercy of wind and wave, and to run her down in the lugger was the easiest of tasks.

Hudson wrinkled his brows as he gazed at the drifting ketch. Kaiolalulalonga stared at her open-mouthed with astonishment.

"No savvy this feller thing," said Koko.

"Something's happened," said King of the Islands. His eyes were gleaming. "She's ours, Kit!"

"Can it be a trick to draw us within range?" said Hudson. "If it isn't that it beats me hollow."

"If it is we're taking the chance," said Ken grimly. "The three of us will handle Dandy Peter, gun and all. But it's not that. He can't know we're unarmed. Something's happened. Goodness knows what."

The ketch's sails filled again, and she glided through the water, swift and graceful, for a few minutes, only to fall away again with chattering boom. It was clear that she was under no control, amazing as it was. The lugger drew closer and closer, every eye wary and watchful for a shot from the ketch. But no shot came.

Something, it was clear, had hap-

pened to Dandy Peter, something that had caused him to abandon command of the stolen ketch, leaving her to drift. But for that she would have been at Kufa before this, for it was evident that Dandy Peter had steered for Kufa.

The lugger was close to her, when the canvas filled again, and the ketch shot away. But in a few minutes the sails were flapping idly, and King of the Islands ran deftly alongside, dipped the lug, and caught the low teak rail. The next moment he had swung himself on board.

CHAPTER 26.

Ken's Gratitude.

KING OF THE ISLANDS landed on the deck of the ketch and stared about him. He grasped a boathook in his hand, the only weapon the lugger afforded. But no weapon seemed to be needed. Not a hand was raised as he leaped on board his ship.

Hudson followed him fast, and Koko stayed only to tie the lugger's painter to the rail. Then he ran aft to the wheel.

"What——" began King of the Islands.

He sighted the Lukwe crew now. Jacky, Kiki, and Talito were stretched on their sleeping-mats on the deck fast asleep. They did not stir as the boy trader and his comrades boarded the ketch. King of the Islands stared at them blankly.

No doubt the Lukwe boys, who had been pulling and hauling all night, were sorely fatigued and glad to sleep, and, with the usual happy-go-lucky nature of the Kanaka, they had cheerfully left the ketch to its own devices while they slept. They alone proved that they were no longer under a white man's control.

But where was Peter Parsons?

"Have they chucked him over-

board?" muttered the perplexed Hudson.

"Looks like it! Daunt may be able to tell us——"

Ken descended the companion. He went warily, lest it should, after all, be some kind of trickery—lest there should be a desperate man, revolver in hand, waiting for him in the cabin. But there was no movement below. The cabin lamp was still burning, though it had long been broad daylight.

King of the Islands, as he stepped into the main cabin, uttered a sharp exclamation. Two still figures lay extended on the floor. One of them stirred and opened wild eyes as the boy trader appeared; the other—Peter Parsons—lay, without motion, in a pool of crimson on the planks. Ken stopped dead, his startled eyes riveted upon them. The revolver still grasped in Jim Daunt's feeble hand told him what must have happened.

"Stand back, you lubber!" came in a muttering croak from the sick man. "You feller boy, you stop along deck!" He made a feeble effort to lift the revolver, and failed.

"Daunt!" exclaimed Ken. "Don't you know me? It's King of the Islands, shipmate!"

The half-conscious sailorman had evidently taken him for one of the Lukwe crew. Ken stepped to him and picked up the revolver. The sailorman knew him now.

"King of the Islands," he muttered, "I—I reckon I got that swab! He won't lift the gold of the Spanish galleon now. He was going to scuttle this packet——" His voice died away, and his eyes closed as his senses left him.

"Lend a hand here, Kit!"

Unheeding the sea-lawyer for the moment, King of the Islands and Hudson lifted the sailorman to his berth.

"What on earth has happened here?" muttered Hudson.

"He must have crawled into the state-room and got hold of the gun," said Ken, in a low voice. "I'd never

have dreamed he could have done it, in his state. But he did, and——"

"And saved the ship for us," said Hudson. "So that's why the ketch was adrift." He looked down at Dandy Peter. "We hadn't a chance in a thousand of running her down this side of Kufa, Ken. But for Daunt, she would have been scuttled before this, and Dandy Peter away in his cutter."

There was little doubt of it, and Ken realised how much he owed to the sailorman. He had saved Jim Daunt from the Lukwe sea-lawyer, and the sailorman had more than repaid the debt. But for him, there could be scarcely a doubt, the waves of the Pacific would already have closed over the Dawn. That thought robbed the boy trader of any compassion he might have felt for the sea-lawyer.

Ken bent over Dandy Peter, and felt some relief to find that the man was not dead. He had been shot through the chest, and the wound was a terrible one. Had not help come, he must have bled to death where he lay. Whether recovery was possible, Ken could not tell; and, kind-hearted as he was, he could care little. But what he could do for the wretch he did; and Dandy Peter, swathed in bandages, was lifted into one of the bunks in the state-room. Still unconscious, he was left there, and the shipmates returned to the deck.

The Lukwe boys were awake now. They sat on their mats, staring at Kalo-lalulalonga at the wheel, bemused with amazement. Obviously they could not begin to guess how he had got there. Koko had a capstan bar at hand; but the Lukwe boys were not thinking of attacking him.

Under Dandy Peter's orders, they had thrown him into the lagoon the night before; but without a white man's orders, they had no desire for trouble. They sat on their mats and blinked in stupefied amazement, till King of the Islands came on deck.

"Feller King of the Islands!" stam-

mered Jacky blankly, scrambling to his feet.

Kiki and Talito scrambled up.

"You feller boy, you belong me now!" rapped out Ken, touching the revolver in his belt.

"Yes, sar!" answered Jacky obediently. If he had been disinclined to argue with Koko's capstan bar, he was still less inclined to argue with a white man's revolver.

"What name you go sleep along deck, leavee ketch walk about along sea?" demanded King of the Islands.

Jacky made a grimace.

"Feller white man shootee Cap'n Parsons along gun," he replied. "Cap'n Parsons he no talk any more mouth belong him. He deader along cabin. Lukwe feller he plenty wantee sleep."

"Lukwe feller sleepee, along wantee sleep," explained Kiki.

Ken smiled faintly. Dandy Peter had driven his crew hard; but the moment the master's hand and eye were withdrawn, their allegiance had died away on the spot. Whether their master was dead, or only seriously wounded, they did not know, and did not care; they knew they were tired and wanted sleep, and they had stretched themselves on their mats and slept. That was the way of the Kanaka.

"You belong me now," said Ken. "S'pose me sing out, you jump along rope plenty quick, or me knock seven bells outer you. You savvy?"

"Yes, sar!"

"We likee belong feller King of the Islands," said Talito. "Feller Cap'n Parsons he plenty bad feller. We jump plenty quick along you sing out, sar."

King of the Islands rapped out orders, and the Lukwe boys jumped promptly to obey. Whether they "liked" to belong to King of the Islands might be doubtful; but there was no doubt that they did not want to provoke his wrath. In a very short time the ketch was tacking about to Lalinge.

Leaving Hudson on deck—with a gun in his hand to enforce obedience—King of the Islands went below. His heart was light now. The ketch was heading for Lalinge, in his own hands once more; but only too well he knew what a narrow escape he had had of losing his ship for ever.

Only that desperate effort of the sick sailorman—an effort of which Ken would never have dreamed him capable, in the state he was—had saved the ketch from being scuttled. Ken's heart was full of gratitude, and there was little that Ken would not have done in return.

The sailorman's eyes were open now, and they fixed on Ken as he came into the cabin.

"You saved my ship, Daunt," said King of the Islands.

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered the seaman. "That swab was going to scuttle her, and get after the treasure in his cutter—with me to steer a course. I'd never have set him a course—but a man can't say what he might do under torture, and that was what he threatened me with. You've dropped him over the side?"

Ken shook his head.

"He is desperately wounded," he said. "But I'm taking him back to Lalinge to let him have what chance there may be."

"Davy Jones' locker would be safer for a shark like that!" muttered the seaman.

Ken made no reply to that.

"That swab's a shark all through," growled the seaman. "But have your own way, sir, on your own ship."

"The ship that you've saved for me," said Ken, with a smile. "You've made a friend for life, Daunt. If there's anything that I can do for you, you've only got to give it a name."

The man's look became eager.

"You mean that, sir?"

"Every word," said King of the Islands quietly.

"I know you're a man of your word, sir, the whitest man in the Pacific,

so they say," muttered Daunt. "I'll take you at your word. You've got your ship back—you're free to sail and lift the treasure of the Spanish galleon."

"The treasure?" repeated Ken.

"I know you believe it's only a dream—sunstroke, or the fancy of a man driven wild by thirst," said Daunt; "but I tell you, sir, there's the island, with the wreck of that old galleon sunk in the sand, and bars of gold—bars and bars of Spanish gold—waiting to be lifted. I can't give you the right bearings of the island, but I reckon we can find it—we can find it if you'll sail."

Ken was silent.

"There's plenty for all," went on the sailorman eagerly. "Four shares—you and your shipmate and me, and one share for Hennessey's widow. That's fair play. You'll sail?"

His eyes were fixed eagerly, almost feverishly, on the boy trader. As Ken hesitated to reply, his face fell.

"You don't believe in the treasure?"

"Believe it or not," said Ken. "I'll sail. I owe you too much to refuse. I'll sail, and if the treasure's there, we'll lift it."

"It's there, sir," said the sailorman earnestly. "I saw it with my own eyes—and Tom Hennessey saw it. It's there, sir—and it will make you rich!"

"If it's there, we'll lift it," said King of the Islands.

When he returned to the deck the hills of Lalinge were rising from the sea. The ketch ran on towards the coral reef, creaming with foam in the sunlight.

"We're for it, Kit," said King of the Islands, a little grimly.

Hudson glanced at him.

"Daunt saved the ketch for us. I've promised to sail for his treasure island. You're with me?"

"It's up to us," Hudson grinned.

"One good turn deserves another," said Ken. "The treasure island is all

bunkum, I'm afraid. A man may fancy anything when he's in an open boat at sea, mad with thirst, and believe afterwards it was all true. The man believes every word of it, but——" King of the Islands shrugged his shoulders.

"And yet——" said Hudson slowly.

"And yet—what?"

"Dandy Peter believed it. He's no fool. We haven't heard the whole story yet. Peter Parsons is the biggest rascal in the Pacific, but he's no fool, Ken. He know—or thinks he knows."

Ken stared at his shipmate.

"Then you think——"

"I think there may be something in it," said Hudson. "We've had rotten luck for a long time, Ken, and it's time that luck changed. Perhaps this is where it changes."

"Perhaps," said Ken, smiling faintly.

The ketch ran into the lagoon of Lalinge. Whether Jim Daunt's story was a fevered dream, or whether the sailorman had seen the wreck of a Spanish galleon of olden time on an unknown island, the matter was settled now for the shipmates of the Dawn.

When the ketch sailed from Lalinge again she was to sail in quest of the island of gold—with what result only the future could tell!

CHAPTER 27.

Dandy Peter's Farewell!

"YOU feller nigger!" Danny, plying his broom in the cabin, grinned as he heard the angry voice from the state-room, and took no other heed. Danny was busy, and not disposed to waste his time upon Dandy Peter Parsons.

"You swab of a nigger! You show a leg, or me knock seven bells outer your black hide!"

Danny chuckled. Peter Parsons, lying swathed in bandages in Ken's bunk in the state-room, made an effort to rise, and sank back with a groan.

He was in no state to knock "seven bells" out of the cooky-boy, or anybody else.

On board the Sea-Cat his Lukwe crew jumped to obedience at the sound of his voice. On board the ketch the matter was quite different. Sorely wounded and helpless, the sea-lawyer of Lukwe lay in the bunk.

The Dawn was preparing for sea, and Peter Parsons, in the state-room, seemed to have been forgotten.

He could hear Danny moving in the adjoining cabin; but Danny did not choose to attend at his call. Danny, like the other four Hiva-Oa boys on the ketch, could not understand why King of the Islands did not drop Dandy Peter over the side into the lagoon. Willingly Danny would have lend a hand in doing so.

"You black lubber! You tell King of the Islands me wantee speak along him!" gasped Dandy Peter.

Danny took the trouble at last to put his head in at the door of the little state-room. He grinned at the furious face of the man in the bunk.

"You shut up mouth belong you, sar!" said the cooky-boy.

Parsons glared at him.

"You sing out plenty tbo much," said Danny. "You velly bad feller, you feller Parsons. You plenty white trash! You no knock seven bells outer me. S'pose white master he sing out, me knock seven bells outer you plenty too quick altogether! You savvy, sar?"

"Call your skipper, you black pig!" hissed Dandy Peter.

"Feller King of the Islands he plenty busy, sar," said Danny. "S'pose he wantee talk along you, he come along you. You nobody, sar! Hiva-Oa boy he no 'flaid along you; Lukwe boy he no 'flaid along you; Hiva-Oa boy he no 'flaid. You shut up feller mouth belong you!"

And Danny went back to his sweeping, leaving the sea-lawyer of Lukwe gritting his teeth. Talk like that from

a Kanaka was a new experience for Peter Parsons.

The tramping overhead continued. Several times Dandy Peter heard the voice of King of the Islands or Kit Hudson calling out an order. The ship-mates of the Dawn seemed too busy to remember him.

But King of the Islands came below at last, and lookgd into the state-room. Peter Parsons fixed burning eyes upon him.

"You're going to sea?" he snapped.

"Ay, ay!" answered Ken.

"You're not keeping me on this ketch?"

"Not likely! I'd sooner sail with a shark on board!" answered King of the Islands. "I've spoken to Coote, the missionary, and he's willing to take you into his house ashore."

"Then I'm not a prisoner?" said Parsons, staring at him.

"I've no time to bother with you—and no inclination, either," said Ken, shrugging his shoulders. "If you were a sound man I'd have you sent down to Fiji to answer for seizing my ship. But you're on your beam-ends. Coote thinks you will pull through—and there's no reason why you shouldn't if you're careful. But it will be a long time before you can give anybody any more trouble. I'm leaving you at Lalinge when I sail."

"Don't give me any of your sermons!" snarled Dandy Peter. "I'm not asking any favours from you, King of the Islands! You've got your ship back—but you've not got to the treasure island, and I'll beat you to it yet!"

"You don't look like it," replied King of the Islands, smiling contemptuously. "You'll be on your beam-ends for a long time to come, Peter Parsons; and you can be thankful that you've not gone to Davy Jones. You're going to be taken ashore now."

"A prisoner?"

"No. You'll be free to go as soon as you can stand. That won't be for a good many weeks, I expect."

"You were always a fool, King of the Islands!" snarled Dandy Peter. "It's not in you to put a bullet through my head."

"I hope not!" laughed Ken. "Not in the condition you're in. If you come hunting for trouble when you're on your feet again you'll find me ready."

"If I'm not a prisoner, let me go in my boat," said Dandy Peter, more calmly. "You've got my boat?"

Ken nodded.

"And the Lukwe boys?"

"They're along the beach somewhere."

"Put me in my boat, then, and let them take me away," said Dandy Peter. "What do you care where I'm left?"

"Nothing," answered Ken. "But if you want to recover——"

"That's my business!" snarled Dandy Peter. "If I slip my cable, all the better for you! My cutter's waiting for me at Kufa, without a man on board. Put me in the boat, and you'll be rid of me."

King of the Islands hesitated a few moments, but he nodded at last.

"You're your own master," he said. "The missionary would look after——"

"Hang the missionary!"

"But he's not keen on it," went on Ken, ignoring the interruption. "If you like to save him the trouble, you're free to do as you like."

"Done, then—and enough jaw!" snapped Parsons.

"I'll see to it."

Ken left the state-room.

Half an hour later Dandy Peter's boat rocked alongside, with the three Lukwe boys in it, and Parsons was carried up and lowered into the boat on a pile of mats. His once handsome face was as white as chalk, drawn with pain. But his eyes lighted when he was once off the ketch. So long as he was on the ketch or at Lalinge, Dandy Peter could not feel sure that he would not be called to account for his crimes. Once back at Lukwe,

among the rough crew there, he was safe from the law, at least.

His sunken eyes glinted up at King of the Islands and Kit Hudson, looking down over the rail, as the Lukwe boys shoved off.

"You've not done with me yet, King of the Islands!" he called out faintly.

And the boat pulled away towards the reef, and King of the Islands, with a shrug of the shoulders, turned away.

CHAPTER 28.

Where's that Treasure?

THERE was a thoughtful shade on the brow of King of the Islands as the Dawn glided across the lagoon and threaded the reef passage to the open sea.

He was bound upon a strange voyage—a stranger voyage than any he had ever sailed on before.

Jim Daunt, the sailorman whom Ken had saved from the Lukwe sea-lawyer, was on deck. Though he still looked pale, the hardy seaman was fast recovering. The few days the Dawn had remained at Lalinge had made a great difference. But it was likely to be long before the traces of the terrible hardships he had passed through were effaced. His eyes were on King of the Islands, but he did not speak to the boy trader till the ketch was clear of the reef and plunging her bows into the wide Pacific.

"You've set the course south-east and by east, sir?" he asked, as Ken turned away from the steersman.

"That's it," said Ken, his face breaking into a smile. "We shall sight Lukwe to-morrow on that tack, and then——"

Daunt's face clouded.

"You ain't believing in the island of gold, sir?"

"Well, I'm believing all I can," said Ken. "I know you're square, Daunt, and you will believe every word you say. But——"

"I know it's steep, sir. If any man had spun me such a yarn on the beach I'd have told him to stow it," said Daunt. "But it's true, every word of it. I've seen the wreck of the Spanish galleon with my own eyes. And my mate Hennessey saw it, too, before the sea-devil in the cave got him. Bars of gold—bars and bars of Spanish gold in that old wreck, hundreds of years old!"

His voice was deep and earnest.

"I know it won't be easy to find the island, sir. I can't give you the right bearings. But you head south-east from Lukwe, and we'll raise it sooner or later. Hennessey and me, in the lugger, was blown east of Momotu in the squall, and though I can't give you the right bearings, there's many a sign I can pick up. There's a shoaling coral reef I'd know again if I clapped my deadlights on it. I'd swear to that, and I'd swear it lies not more than fifty knots from the island. And the island itself—I'd know that after a score of years, sir."

"I'm beginning to believe in it," said Kit Hudson, with a grin. "Anyhow, it's time that our luck turned, Ken."

"No doubt about that," agreed the boy trader.

"I wouldn't have held you to your word to said, sir, only, you see, I know the island's there," said Daunt. "It will make you rich, captain—all of us rich. That swab Peter Parsons believed in it. Do you reckon he's a fool?"

"Anything but that," replied King of the Islands. "The greatest rascal in the Pacific, but no fool."

"He's got laid on his beam-ends trying to get hold of me to steer a course for him to the island," said the seaman. "I tell you, sir, Dandy Peter knows it's there, and we ain't seed the last of him yet. When I got to Lukwe, after days and nights in the lugger, nearly dead with hunger and thirst, that sea-lawyer was the first man I met on the beach.

"I reckon I was more'n half off my

head, or I'd have seed the kind of shark he was and kept mum. But I was mighty glad to see a white man, and he gave me water, and I was dying for a drink of water. Just at that time I'd have given the Spanish galleon and all the gold in it for a drink of water. I reckon I was babbling about bars of gold and Spanish ingots, and he was laughing, not believing it any more'n you did, sir. But I'd picked up a coin on the ship, and when he saw that he changed his tune.

"It was a doubloon, he called it—an old gold coin with a Spanish king's head on it," went on Daunt. "He pounced on it like a gull on a fish. The look on his face was enough for me. I knowed then the kind of shark I'd run into, and I remembered, too, what I'd heard of that crew on Lukwe. I got back to my lugger, and he was after me with his gun in his hand, and he fired on me when I shoved off." Daunt passed his hand over his scarred cheek. "But I got the lugger out to sea. And there he was, yelling to his niggers to man his cutter to get after me. Near dancing with rage as he was, there on the beach.

"But they couldn't get the cutter to sea fast enough to fire on me when I was running the reef into the lagoon, as you saw. You don't reckon, sir, that Dandy Peter would have played that game if he hadn't had good reason to believe in that treasure?"

"Looks like it," said Ken. "You're sure the coin was a Spanish doubloon?"

"That's what Peter Parsons called it, sir, and he'd know."

Ken nodded.

"If I'd known what was going to happen, sir, I'd have filled my pockets while I was on that galleon," said Daunt. "But we—Hennessey and me—was going to load the stuff on the lugger, after putting in water and food. And then, as we came back through the cave, the sea-devil got Hennessey, and I sheered off from the island like a madman. I'd not have gone back into that cave for all the gold that ever was

taken from Mexico to Spain." The seaman shivered. "But when we get there, sir, we'll handle that brute somehow, and then the coast will be clear for lifting the treasure."

"I'm betting on that treasure," said Hudson cheerfully. "Ken, old man, you're a Doubting Thomas. This island of gold is going to set us on our feet again."

King of the Islands smiled.

"We'll give it a chance, anyhow," he said.

"You'll believe it, sir, when you see it," said Daunt. "I know you think I'm leading you on a wild-goose hunt. I know you've been hard hit, sir, and it wasn't easy for you to fit up for this trip. But the Spanish gold will see you through."

After the seaman had gone below, King of the Islands stood by the binnacle as the sun sank below the Pacific, watching the stars come out in a sky of deepest blue. Hudson touched his arm and smiled as Ken glanced round at him.

"Still doubting?" he asked.

"I don't know what to think," confessed Ken. "If there's anything in it, and we have luck, it will set us going again. But——"

"I believe in it," said Hudson seriously. "I couldn't help doubting; it was too steep. But, after all, it's possible. It beat me all along that Dandy Peter was banking on it. Ken, if the man dreamed dreams while he was half-delirious in the boat, he couldn't have dreamed what happened at Lukwe; and if he had a Spanish doubloon——"

"But had he?" smiled Ken.

"Dandy Peter isn't the common run of South Sea skipper. He's a man of education and knows what's what. If he took it for a Spanish doubloon, a Spanish doubloon it was."

"It might have come from anywhere. You can pick them up in the curio shops at Singapore and a dozen places. Daunt's square. But after all

he went through, he may have fancied anything."

"You won't believe in the bars of gold until you're standing knee-deep in them," grinned Hudson.

"I'll believe in them then, anyhow." King of the Islands promised. "At any rate, we're booked for the trip, and I'll believe as hard as I can."

The following day the shipmates sighted Lukwe—a blur on the horizon; the last land they were to sight till they came to the island of gold—if ever they came to it!

CHAPTER 29.

Landmarks.

"FELLER sail he comey along sea!"

Lukwe had dropped below the sealine astern, and the ketch, with a fair wind, drove through the Pacific rollers to the south-east. King of the Islands' face had lost its grave cast, and he was looking his usual cheery self. It was good to be at sea again, to feel the wind on his cheeks, to see the tall cedar masts bending under their load of canvas; to watch the white wake rippling away astern; to hear the cheery sing-song voices of the Polynesian crew at the ropes.

Ken was taking a brighter view of the voyage now. It is human to believe what one wishes to believe, and certainly Ken wished very hard to believe in the treasure, which would more than compensate for his long run of bad luck. In spite of sober common sense, he found himself dreaming of Spanish gold, of bars and ingots, of the golden treasures that in ancient days the great galleons had carried from New Spain to Old Spain.

After all, it was not impossible. Spanish galleons had sailed these seas in ancient times, and a great ship from Peru or Acapulco might have been driven far from her course by stress of weather, and come to grief on a

remote isle of the Pacific. Jim Daunt's deep earnestness was not without its effect on Ken, also Hudson's optimistic belief in the treasure. Even if it were too good to be true, it was pleasant to dwell upon the possibility; and more and more it seemed to him that this voyage might not be, after all, a waste of time and a waste of his last resources.

He was thinking of the wrecked galleon when Koko's voice announced a sail. Far away, on the shining blue sea, a white sail danced on the waters, far astern, but on the same tack as the ketch.

Distant as it was, there seemed something familiar about the sail to Ken, and he called to Lompo for his glasses.

"My sainted Sam!" he ejaculated, as he fixed the binoculars on the distant sail.

"Me savvy, sar!" said Koko complacently. "Eye belong me no wantee feller glass. Me savvy cutter belong Cap'n Parsons."

It was the Sea-Cat that was following the ketch.

"My hat!" said Kit Hudson. "Dandy Peter is a sticker! The fellow must be made of iron to put to sea in his state."

"No can catchee feller ketch along cutter!" said Kalo-lalulalonga disdainfully. "Us feller we walkee away sposee likee."

"If we can't sail two fathoms to Dandy Peter's one I'll sell the ketch and buy a cutter," Ken said. "We can walk away from her whenever we like. But we'll give Dandy Peter a look-in first."

Sail was shortened on the ketch to allow the cutter to come up. The Sea-Cat loomed larger and larger over the blue water, her great spread of canvas leaning over to the wind. Dandy Peter, the most reckless skipper in the Pacific, was carrying all sail, and the cutter looked every moment as if she would heel over on the rollers.

But as the ketch slowed down, the

cutter slacked off at a distance. King of the Islands laughed.

"Dandy Peter doesn't want to come too close!" he remarked. "But that's in our hands—not his. I dare say he expects a bullet at sight."

Ken called an order, and the Hiva-Oa boys ran with the sheets, and the ketch bore down on the cutter. King of the Islands could sail his ketch as near the wind as any craft in the Pacific, and, with a smile on his face, he proceeded to circle completely round the cutter before running in close.

Every face on the Dawn wore a grin as they watched the Sea-Cat. As the ketch ran within hail, Dandy Peter was sighted, lying on a heap of mats on the cutter's deck, pale as death, bandaged, evidently a very sick man. A revolver lay close to his hand, but he did not touch it. He was well aware that he was at the mercy of the rifles on board the ketch if King of the Islands chose to put such an end to his pursuit.

"Cutter ahoy!" sang out Ken, standing on the rail and holding to a halyard. "Taking a voyage for your health, Captain Parsons?"

Dandy Peter's sunken eyes glittered at him, but he made no answer.

"If you had the sense of a cockroach you'd be in your bed, in your bungalow on Lukwe, now!" said Ken. "You're heading for Davy Jones' locker at this rate, Peter Parsons."

Dandy Peter's hand groped towards his revolver. But he did not touch it. Kalo-lalulalonga had picked up a rifle, and the look on his brown face showed how keen he was for a pretext to use it.

"Wait till my turn comes, King of the Islands!" said Dandy Peter, but his voice was too faint to reach the Dawn.

Ken waved his hand in ironical farewell, and stepped down from the rail. The ketch was put before the wind again, with all canvas drawing, and fairly leaped through the blue waters. King of the Islands watched the

cutter's tall sail sink lower and lower to the sealine.

"He's a sticker!" grinned Hudson. "He's got pluck, too. But he can't hope to keep us in sight in that cutter."

"If he does, he will soon learn better!" said King of the Islands, with a laugh.

The cutter disappeared below the horizon. Whether Dandy Peter was still in pursuit or not could not be told, though it was likely enough. The thought of the treasure drew the greedy sea-lawyer as the Pole draws the needle. Ken was quite indifferent on the point. The cutter had been dropped hopelessly astern, and in the boundless waste of the Pacific it was not likely to run within sight of the ketch again.

There was no sign of the Lukwe cutter on the sea when the sun went down, and the dawn came on an ocean bare of craft. Solitary, like a sea-bird winging its way across the boundless blue, the ketch flew before the wind.

Day followed day, of fair winds and blazing sea; of sea and sky, and sky and sea. Of the cutter nothing was seen; even if the Sea-Cat was following on, it was now days behind the ketch, and hopelessly out of the race. The shipmates forgot, or almost forgot, Dandy Peter of Lukwe.

Land was lost, and illimitable ocean stretched round the ketch, north and south, east and west. Jim Daunt's look was confident; it seemed to grow more confident with each passing day.

Kit Hudson, now a thorough convert to the idea of the treasure, talked cheerily of Spanish ingots and bags of doubloons, and of various devices for dealing with the giant octopus Daunt had described that lurked in the great cave that gave the only ingress to the island.

Ken found himself joining in the discussion with his shipmates, talking as if the wrecked galleon was an established fact.

But day followed day without a glimpse of land on the wide, lonely seas. Few sails were sighted in those

solitary waters, and none came near the Dawn.

The confidence in Daunt's bronzed face seemed to give way to doubt, and every day he scanned the sea with anxious, troubled eyes. He was by this time quite restored to health and strength, and he proved a useful man on the ship, worth any two Kanakas as a sailorman. Every day he would swing himself to the masthead and scan the Pacific with Ken's binoculars, only to descend disappointed.

And there came a day at last when even Daunt had to admit that the ketch must have overshot the mark; and that it was idle to keep on the same track.

How far the squall had driven his lugger east of Momotu, how far it had drifted afterwards, he could not say; his recollections of those fearful days were dim and hazy. A great distance, that was all he knew. Only the vaguest idea was in his mind of the latitude and longitude of the island of basaltic rock. He did not know how many days the lugger had taken in its run to Lukwe, after leaving the mysterious island; he only knew there had been many days of suffering.

He repeated that the tall basaltic cliffs of the island were a landmark to be seen far across the sea. Apparently the sailorman had hoped that by standing south-east by east the Dawn would sail within sight of those tall cliffs. But Ken knew that if the island even had a real existence, and was not a fevered dream, it was not likely to be raised so easily as all that. It was only by long patience and by quartering the ground that so tiny a speck in the illimitable blue was likely to be raised.

But when King of the Islands drew a circle on the chart, enclosing the possible space in which the island existed, Hudson whistled. The task of quartering so enormous a space in a ketch was formidable.

"Some job, old bean!" commented Hudson,

"We're for it now!" Ken smiled ruefully. "If we kept on our former tack, we should run into Christmas Island; and we know it can be nowhere near that, or it would be charted—or, at least, heard of. We can circle back on a more northerly track and take our chance."

"All we can do!" agreed Hudson.

Days of watching the sea followed. When the ketch had been three weeks out of Lalinge, Hudson remarked one day:

"Plenty of time for Dandy Peter to overhaul us if he knew where to look."

Ken laughed.

"If!" he said. "He might as well look for a needle in a haystack. He would have about as much chance of sighting us as, I fear, we have of sighting Daunt's Island."

There was a sudden yell from the masthead.

Daunt came scrambling down to the deck, his face lighted up with excitement, his eyes ablaze.

"The shoal!" he panted. "The coral reef I told you of, sir! And it's under fifty knots to the island of gold."

King of the Islands scanned the shoal as the ketch, under shortened sail, ran down to it. It was a shoal marked on no chart—like some scores of others that the ketch had raised in those wide waste seas. Jim Daunt was breathing fast with excitement; he had no doubt that this was the shoal he had marked at a certain distance from the island of the quest. But Ken could not help thinking that perhaps the wish was father to the thought.

Under the billowing surface of the ocean, masses of coral reefs lay, their position marked by the creamy lines of foam. It was a terribly dangerous spot for any vessel, especially at night or in rough weather. But it was now sunny morning and a calm day.

The ketch edged in cautiously to the reef to take a closer view. To Ken's eyes there was little to distinguish the reef where the water shoaled from a

score of others; but the sailorman, at least, had no doubt.

"You'll see, sir!" he exclaimed. "You'll see—we nearly ran the lugger on that reef, Hennessey and me, before we made the gold island. It was touch and go with us, but we cleared it. I tell you, sir, I'd know that reef agin after twenty years. You wait till you get closer and you'll see it's the shape of a palm tree, with the head towards the north." His eyes danced with excitement.

"We shall soon see that, anyhow," said King of the Islands.

Closer and closer crept the ketch, King of the Islands, with his binoculars to his eyes, scanning the sunken reef. Slowly it took more definite shape.

A long, narrow line of foam ran north and south, and at the northern end it bunched out into a widespread mass, where the reefs clustered thickly, oddly reminiscent of the shape of a palm tree.

"That's it!" said Ken. "We're on the right track."

"You can swear to that, sir," said the seaman. "Forty or fifty knots northwest and we shall raise the island of black rock."

CHAPTER 30.

Land-hoi

A DAY had passed, and the Dawn had logged fifty knots northwest from the palm-tree shoal, and still the bare and illimitable ocean was all that met the eye at sunrise.

But Daunt, at the masthead, gave a shout an hour after dawn.

"Land!"

Ken felt his heart beat faster. Faintly from the sea, faintly afar on the starboard bow, appeared a purple speck.

Swiftly the course was changed, to head directly for the faint blur on the horizon. Daunt set the course for Koko at the helm. Ken, his binoculars to his eyes, watched the speck grow larger,

taller, deeper in hue. Black cliffs that rose almost like a wall from the sea—it was the sailorman's description of the island where the wrecked galleon lay, and where the sea-devil lurked in the cave.

The ketch ran down steadily to the island. It was plain to all eyes on board now—masses of basalt rising like a mountain from the sea, with no trace of a beach, not a hint of an anchorage. Over the high summit of the island, a myriad sea-birds could be seen.

From the sea it looked like a solid mass of rock, but as the ketch drew in on the southern side a great gap was to be seen splitting the face of the cliffs from the sea almost to the summit.

"The cave, sir—the cave where the sea-devil is!"

Daunt pointed with a finger shaking with excitement.

From the wide mouth of the cavern came a booming sound—the echo of the waves that washed into the vast hollow of the cliff. The ketch crept closer, with most of her canvas taken in. Ken turned his glasses on the cavern mouth, but only blackness met his view. According to the sailorman the cavern was a tunnel into the interior of the island; but no gleam of farther daylight could be seen in the blackness.

"Heave to!" ordered Ken at last. "We'll make the cave in the whaleboat. You want to be in the boat's crew, Daunt?"

The sailorman shook his head.

"I never want to set foot in that cave where the sea-devil is, sir," he said. "I ain't afeared, but I can't help thinking of it!"

He shivered and broke off. He was thinking of his comrade who had perished in the cave, and Ken understood.

"Then I'll leave you in charge of the ketch, Daunt," he said. "You can handle her as well as I can. You're for the boat, Kit?"

"What-ho!" Hudson answered.

The whaleboat swung down. Food

and water were placed in the boat, and rifles and an axe, and Ken himself placed dynamite carefully in the locker. Kaio-lalulalonga dropped in, Ken and Kit following after King of the Islands had given Daunt his instructions.

The whaleboat pulled under the rocky arch. Within the great cave all was dusky, a blinding twilight after the blaze of the sun on the sea. But the eyes very soon became used to the dusk. Only for a few fathoms' length the sea extended into the cave. It lapped on a shelving floor of sand.

The whaleboat bumped on the sand, and Kit Hudson leaped ashore. Ken followed him, and made the boat fast to a jutting rock. Kaio-lalulalonga stood up, his dark eyes searching the depths of the cavern. From the interior came low murmurs of wind in the hollows of the rock.

"Now for the treasure!" cried Hudson. "Come on, and keep your eyes open for that sea-devil."

There was no need for that warning. All three of the adventurers kept their eyes very wide open as they advanced slowly and cautiously up the vast cavern. Hudson carried a hurricane lamp, held high to light the way. His revolver was in his other hand.

Here and there in the floor of the cave were great hollows, filled with seawater, forming wide, dark pools, on which the light of the lantern glistened as the three picked their way along. Seaweed lay about in clusters and festoons, and their feet crunched strange seashells in the sand.

Present in every mind was Daunt's description of the giant octopus that lurked in the shadows of the cave, but no sign was seen of the hideous brute. If he was there, doubtless he was sunk deep in one of the tidal pools.

There was something eerie, grisly, in the deep cave, with its black shadows on either hand, its dark pools that glimmered in the lantern light, and the thought of the lurking octopus. Ken's heart leaped as he caught a glimmer of light far ahead.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Hudson suddenly.

He had trodden on something that lay stretched across the sand. He stumbled and recovered himself, and flashed the light down.

"What's that? A spar? A rope? Great heavens!" shrieked Hudson, and every vestige of colour fled from his face.

What he had trodden on had twisted like an eel, a glimmering, grey eel, and curled round his ankle. For an instant Hudson's heart missed a beat. He dragged his leg away, but the clinging, eel-like thing went with it, still holding on, and swelling fatter as it closed tighter. The cry that broke from Kit Hudson awoke a thousand echoes in the hollow of the cavern.

Koko, who was following behind him, stopped dead, shuddering in every limb, his mind full of thoughts of ghosts. King of the Islands, a few steps in advance, turned back.

"What——" he panted.

The lantern was falling from Hudson's hand as he clutched madly at the thing that had caught his leg. King of the Islands caught the lantern as it fell.

"Kit——"

"The sea-devil! Help!" shouted Hudson.

The tentacle was thicker round his leg now, and it was pulling, pulling, pulling, with a force that no man's strength could have resisted. Ken flashed the light down and saw the grey, slimy, winding, twisting thing that had clutched his comrade. It came from a deep pool in the cavern floor that the shipmates had been skirting. Even as he looked a second tentacle emerged from the pool and writhed on the sand, feeling, feeling, feeling as if blindly for a grip to add its clutch to the clutch of the tentacle that had already gripped Hudson.

It was Koko who acted as he saw the tentacles of the octopus in the light of the hurricane lamp. He leaped forward, and the heavy axe rose and fell with a flash, and Hudson found himself free.

A fragment of the hideous tentacle

writhed at his feet, stricken off by the slash of the axe. In an instant the tentacles flashed back into the water, which was wildly agitated.

"You feller run!" panted Koko.

Hudson sprang away. Every nerve in his body was tingling from the horrible contact of the sea-devil.

"Come!" he gasped.

He ran on towards the daylight at the end of the cave, panting for breath, his heart throbbing. Ken and Koko followed him fast.

The cavern narrowed to a mere aperture at the extremity. Hudson panted out into the open and sank down on a rock, still panting, his face like chalk. He rubbed his ankle where the slimy tentacle had gripped it.

"Good man, Koko!" he said, with a faint grin. "You feller you plenty quick along axe belong you. Ken, old man, we've got to deal with that sea-devil and clear the cave of him. When I felt his grip on me——"

He broke off with a shudder.

Ken's face was white, too.

"Thank Heaven you got clear, old chap! Koko, old coffee-bean, you're worth your weight in shell-money!"

"Me no common Kanaka, sar," said Koko complacently.

"All serene now," said Hudson. He pulled himself together and rose to his feet. "We'll root that beast out of his den soon. Now——"

He shaded his eyes from the sun that blazed down on the interior of the island.

Before the shipmates lay a vast hollow basin, enclosed by the circling cliffs that formed the exterior of the island. They were standing on a shelving ledge of rock, from which the slope led down steeply to the bottom of the hollow. Sand piled the whole space—sand and sea-shells; but here and there pools of rain-water glistened in the sun, and where the water lay vegetation had sprung up—little patches of palm-trees and paw-paw, like oases in a desert.

Once, long, long ago, the sandy basin had evidently been the bed of a lagoon.

but some convulsion of Nature had forced up the whole structure of the island higher from the sea and cut off the lagoon from the ocean, and it had dried up in the course of time. Where once deep salt water had rolled all was dry and barren, save for the rain pools that had gathered in hollows here and there.

Such strange convulsions were not rare in the tropic seas. Ken knew of islands that had appeared in a night, rising to view where waste waters had rolled a day before.

But the sight was strange enough to the eyes of the shipmates. They stood on the rocks, gazing into the wide, sandy basin, almost circular in form, and more than half a mile in extent from side to side.

Hudson grasped his comrade suddenly by the arm. He raised his hand, and it trembled with excitement as he pointed.

"Look!" he breathed.

The sea-devil and the peril of the cave was forgotten now. Deep in the sandy hollow, half buried in the sand, was the hull of a great ship. Her masts and yards, sails and cordage were gone, crumpled to dust in the centuries or buried in the sand; but the great hull lay slanting, surrounded by myriads of sea-birds.

"The galleon!" Ken exclaimed.

They scrambled down the rocky slope into the sandy basin, ten or twelve feet below the level of the cave. At the bottom the sand was deep and loose, sand and powdered coral and glistening sea-shells, and they sank to their knees in it as they tramped towards the wrecked hull of what had once been a proud ship of Spain, a queen of the waters.

From the high poop the remains of a wooden ladder still hung; but as Hudson grasped it it came away in powdery fragments in his hand and crumbled at his feet. But there was ample foothold and hand-hold for nimble sailormen, and Hudson clambered breathlessly up the sloping side, Ken following fast,

Koko, less excited, bringing up the rear.

From the interior of the galleon came a wild croaking and shrieking and calling as a cloud of startled sea-birds rose in the air.

With a throbbing heart, King of the Islands stood on the deck of the once proud Spanish ship, beneath his feet, as he knew now, the treasures of old Spain!

CHAPTER 31.

The Treasure!

"PLENTEY dead feller he stop!" muttered Koko. The Kanaka's voice was hushed and awed.

King of the Islands stood silent. Even Kit Hudson's exuberant spirits were subdued by the strange surroundings.

For some moments at least King of the Islands forgot the treasure of which he had come in quest to that island of death and mystery.

Hundreds of years had passed since that proud ship, laden with the spoils of Peru, had run upon some unknown rock in the heart of the lonely Pacific. For four centuries she had lain there, known only to the sea-birds, her treasure untouched beneath her rotting decks.

King of the Islands drew a deep breath.

Jim Daunt had not been romancing—his story had been proved now. The shipmates of the Dawn had found the lost galleon he had told them about. The Spanish treasure was theirs for the taking.

Hudson broke the silence.

"Let's look round her, Ken."

"Ay, ay."

They trod carefully on the rotten deck. Here and there whole planks were gone. All were cracking and decaying. Lizards crawled round them as they moved, and crabs scuttled from decaying crevices.

The bows of the galleon were deep under sand, her stern high. The round-

house aft was high in the air. Picking their way, with the rotten timbers cracking and creaking under their feet, the shipmates reached the roundhouse. Rusty hinges hung where the door had been and the house was open to sun and wind.

"My sainted Sam!" muttered Ken, as he stared in at the opening.

In the centre of the roundhouse was a large mahogany table. Seated at it was what had been an officer—perhaps the captain—of the galleon four hundred years ago. The skeleton leaned forward on the table, the arms outstretched, the skull resting on the dark wood. Rings of dull gold and dimmed gems were on the bony fingers, and a rusty sword, the hilt richly encrusted with jewels, was by his side. A silver-mounted pistol, blue with age, lay on the table. Fragments of the gold embroidery of rich clothing hung upon the skeleton.

"The captain, likely enough," said Hudson.

"Too much dead feller he stop along ship," muttered Kaio-lalulalonga, and the Kanaka stayed outside as the shipmates entered the roundhouse.

"Look!" breathed Hudson.

In the sunlight that glinted through a dozen openings of the roundhouse there was a yellow gleam. It was the gleam of gold.

"Bars of gold!" said Hudson, with a deep breath, repeating the words of Jim Daunt. "Bars of gold! Spanish gold!" "Bars of gold!" repeated Ken.

The shipmates were treading in the footsteps of Jim Daunt and his dead comrade. They were beholding what only Daunt and Hennessy had beheld for long centuries—since the last of the Spanish crew had perished on that lonely island.

A great chest lay open under their eyes. The lid, once strong and massive, had rotted with the years, and it had been broken away by Daunt and his companion. Heaped within the chest, were bars of dull yellow gold.

The shipmates gazed at them,

fascinated. It was the treasure they had come to seek; the treasure of which Daunt had told them at Lalinge; the treasure for which Dandy Peter of Lukwe was following them through the trackless spaces of the Pacific.

"Gold!" breathed Hudson.

He picked up one of the bars. It weighed several pounds, and in the great chest were dozens of them.

Hudson's eyes glinted.

"Ken, old man, we're made men! I told you it was time our luck turned!" he cried. "There's a fortune here for all of us—once we get this safe on the Dawn!"

"Plenty of time for that," broke in Ken. "Let's look farther."

Hudson dropped the bar and followed him from the roundhouse.

Overhead, the sea-birds were still wheeling and screaming! Some of them had returned to the galleon and perched, blinking at the shipmates.

The forepart of the wreck it was impossible to examine; it was buried in sand. But the shipmates picked a way down the companion, into the cabin aft. Drifted sand was thick on the rotting floor, and in the sand lay white bones. Hudson picked up a dulled old coin from the sand, and as he rubbed it, it gleamed yellow. It was a Spanish doubloon.

Death and decay surrounded them, and they were glad to return to the fresh air and sunshine of the deck.

"Not a sign of a boat," remarked Hudson. "The boats are gone—there'd be some fragment of them otherwise. I fancy most of the crew got away in the boats after the wreck. I wonder what became of them."

"I wonder!" said Ken. "Three or four hundred years—I suppose Queen Elizabeth was on the throne when this ship was wrecked. Henry the Eighth, perhaps. And ever since it has lain here—"

"For us!" said Hudson.

"To be found, by chance, by a couple of pearl-divers blown away in a squall," said Ken. "But for that, it might have

stayed here untouched till the end of time. And now we've found it. Let's get back to the ketch, old man. The sooner we get the gold on board and get away the better. We're on the deadliest lee-shore in the Pacific if the weather should change."

They clambered down from the galleon, and, tramping through the deep sand, reached the steep acclivity that led up to a tunnel-like cave piercing the basaltic cliffs. At the opening of the cave they paused. From the deep dark hollows they could hear booming echoes, the sound of the sea beyond. But there was no gleam of daylight from the farther side, where they had left the whaleboat.

Deep in that black cavern lurked the giant octopus. Hudson lighted the hurricane lamp.

"Keep your weather eye open for the sea-devil, Ken," he said. "We know where the brute is now—in that pool half-way through the cave. A stick of dynamite dropped into the pool will do his business, and you've got the stuff in the boat. We'll deal with him before we get back to the ketch."

"Ay, ay!" assented Ken.

Hudson led the way into the cavern, holding up the lamp. King of the Islands followed him, and Koko brought up the rear, axe in hand. But when they passed the deep tidal pool in the depths of the cave, there was no sign of the giant octopus. The hideous brute had withdrawn to the depths of the pool, and the dark surface, glistening in the lantern-light, was calm and untroubled.

They trod cautiously past the margin of the pool. Behind them the narrow orifice of the cave disappeared in darkness, and as yet there was no glimmer of daylight ahead. The cave, which extended from the outer rocky shore to the dried-up sandy basin which formed the interior of the island, was more than a hundred yards in length, and in places it narrowed almost to a tunnel. Midway, the daylight was lost at either end.

Past the pool where the giant octopus dwelt the cavern narrowed again. But the fresh wind from the sea was in their faces and they heard the lapping of the water. A gleam of blue sky came to their eyes, a glimpse of the white foam that splashed incessantly at the mouth of the rocky cavern.

Crash! The hurricane lamp, smashed by a bullet, was hurled from Hudson's hand, and the report of a rifle followed, filling the hollows of the cavern with thundering sound.

King of the Islands and his comrades stood in black darkness, deafened by the roar that rang and echoed from every hollow of the rock.

CHAPTER 32.

Dandy Peter's Chance!

DANDY PETER PARSONS lifted himself from the deck-chair, his eyes gleaming as he stared across the sea.

"It's the Dawn!" he muttered. "It's the Dawn! We've run her down—it's King of the Islands' ketch!"

The sea-lawyer of Lukwe could scarcely believe in his good luck. There is a proverb that Satan helps his own, and really it seemed to be true in the case of Dandy Peter Parsons.

Far across the blue Pacific the ketch Dawn stood out against the black rock of the basaltic island. Most of her canvas was furled, and she lay almost motionless on the calm waters.

Dandy Peters stared at her, and at the island beyond.

Towering cliffs rose abruptly from the sea, split in one spot by the great cave that rived the basalt almost from sea to summit.

"The island!" grinned Dandy Peter. "Jim Daunt's island! The island of the Spanish galleon and the treasure!"

The sea-lawyer's luck had been phenomenal. Weeks had elapsed since the Dawn had sailed for treasure from

Lalinge, and Parsons had followed on her course in his cutter.

He had had no chance of keeping sight of the Dawn, and had known that he was taking a desperate and almost hopeless venture. All he knew for certain was that the treasure island was far to the south-east of Lalinge.

But he had hoped to fall in with the Dawn again. Daunt did not possess the exact bearings of the island, and the ketch would, as Parsons knew, have to search the boundless seas for it, losing days, perhaps weeks. And day after day the Sea-Cat searched the lonely seas for a sign of the ketch, and at last had found her.

"Feller ketch belong King of the Islands, sar," said Jacky, his boat-steerer, and Parsons grinned and nodded.

Distant as the little vessel was, he knew every line of her, and he was sure.

With all sail set and drawing, the cutter bore down on the distant ketch, approaching her rapidly.

The Dawn was standing off the island, about a mile from the tall cliffs, and Parsons could guess that some of her company had already landed. His binoculars showed him that the Dawn's boat was gone. Moreover, the Dawn would not be waiting idly there except for a landing party. As the cutter drew nearer, Parsons could see the stalwart figure of Jim Daunt on the ketch with the Hiva-Oa crew. All were watching the Sea-Cat, and he could see that every man had a rifle in hand, evidently prepared for war. Jim Daunt was apparently in charge of the ketch. He could see no sign of Hudson or King of the Islands on board her.

Parsons breathed deep and hard. During the weeks that the search had taken, he had almost recovered from the wound he had received when he attempted to steal the Dawn with Daunt aboard, and he was ready for any desperate deed.

Though fortune had favoured him in finding the Dawn, the struggle before

him was one that might have dismayed anyone but a reckless and desperate adventurer. His crew of three Lukwe boys were no match for the Hiva-Oa crew of the Dawn, and he could hardly believe himself a match for three white men. The odds were heavy on the side of the boy trader if it came to open fight.

But if trickery or treachery could serve the sea-lawyer, it would not come to that, though he was ready, in the last resort, for a desperate fight against heavy odds. At any cost, he was determined to lay his hands on the treasure of the Spanish galleon, and prepared to set his life upon the chance.

Jim Daunt, from the ketch, watched the Sea-Cat. Her appearance in that solitary sea did not surprise the sailorman. He had felt all along that Dandy Peter Parsons was not done with.

At the first sight of her he was on his guard. The Hiva-Oa men stood ready, rifle in hand, and Daunt waited grimly, his Winchester under his arm. If Parsons intended an attack on the ketch while her skipper and mate were ashore, Daunt was ready, and he had no doubt of the outcome.

As the cutter swept close, it seemed to be the intention of Dandy Peter to run alongside. But the Sea-Cat was still half a mile distant, when she fell away and raced on towards the island, avoiding the ketch.

Daunt stared after her.

Under all sail, sweeping along like a sea-bird, the cutter rushed towards the mass of basalt, on which the waters of the Pacific broke with an endless booming.

"Feller cutter he run along shore!" said Lompo in wonder; and, indeed, for the moment it seemed as if the Sea-Cat was rushing to destruction.

But Dandy Peter knew what he was about. The little cutter was of much lighter draught than the Dawn, and could go where King of the Islands' ketch could not go.

To attack the ketch was hopeless. And Parsons knew well that if he hove-

to and manned his boat to go ashore, a volley from the ketch would be poured into the boat. He had to take desperate chances, and the sea-lawyer was the man to take them.

The Sea-Cat swept on to the island and steered for the opening of the great cave. Dandy Peter intended to run the cutter into it, taking the chance of finding safety there for his ship.

It was a terrible chance to take, and there was a jabber of alarm from the Lukwe boys as they comprehended their skipper's intention. Jacky, at the helm, turned scared eyes on the Lukwe skipper.

"We all go dead along rock, sar!" he gasped.

"You shut up mouth belong you!" Dandy Peter snarled at him.

Like a great sea-bird, the cutter rushed on towards the towering cliff.

Dandy Peter's face was a little pale, but it was set like iron. He rapped out orders in staccato tones, and the Lukwe boys, scared as they were, obeyed him promptly.

From what he had learned of Daunt's story, Dandy Peter knew that the sea flowed into the great cave, and that Daunt's lugger had floated there. If there was water to float the Sea-Cat, all was well. If not, only a miracle could save him from piling up the Sea-Cat.

It was a desperate chance, but it was the only one left to Dandy Peter, for the ketch was already closing in on him from the seaward. The sea-lawyer was a gambler to the finger-tips; he was gambling now with life and death.

He took the helm himself and steered for the cave. The Lukwe boys jumped to the ropes at his snarling orders.

There was ample room under the great arch of the cavern for the cutter's topmast, and Parsons did not think of striking it. Both gaff and jib topsails were taken in, but the great mainsail continued to draw till the Lukwe boys were trembling with affright, and they threw themselves

upon it eagerly when Parsons gave the order at last. Under only her jib, the cutter raced on into the vast opening of the cavern.

The ketch was following now, Daunt staring at the cutter with wide-open eyes. Dandy Peter had no time to take soundings, unless he was to allow the ketch to come within effective shot, and Daunt could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw the Sea-Cat rushing, as it seemed, to her doom. But the cutter seemed to bear a charmed life as she threaded through foaming water and bristling rocks and glided in under the great span of the cavern roof.

Once more Dandy Peter's luck had held good.

But the sweat was streaming down his face as the cutter floated in the shadowed water under the arch of the cavern. The cable roared out, and the Sea-Cat anchored in the cavern, scarce a couple of fathoms from the edge of the rocky floor.

Dandy Peter wiped his brow. He had taken chances which only an utterly desperate man would have dreamed of taking, but he had made good.

He was safe from the ketch now. Twice the cutter had jarred and trembled over hard rock as she glided into the cave. The ketch, with her deeper draught, had no chance of getting near her. And she had no boat to send—the boat was already ashore. Dandy Peter, for the present, could snap his fingers at Daunt and the Hiva-Oa boys.

For the present, at least, he was in no danger from the sea. His danger, if any, was from the white men already ashore.

He wiped his steaming brow and stared into the dimness of the cave. At a little distance the Dawn's whaleboat was moored to a point of rock. In the sand of the cavern floor footprints were clearly visible leading away up the cave.

Beyond lay blackness, and the blackness hid everything from the sea-

lawyer's eyes. But he grinned as he saw the boat.

The Sea-Cat, like many cutters, towed her boat; there was no room to carry it aboard. Dandy Peter rapped out an order to the Lukwe boys, and the boat was drawn alongside. He jumped into it, and Kiki handed him his rifle and followed him in. From the boat Parsons stepped into the Dawn's whaleboat, grinning. With the whaleboat in his possession, King of the Islands was cut off from the ketch, and he had succeeded in dividing his enemies into two parties, out of communication with one another.

"Feller light he comey!" said Kiki.

Parsons stared and stared up the black cavern.

It was the light of a lamp that was approaching from the blackness.

The sea-lawyer had only just been in time. King of the Islands was returning—the approaching light told as much. He lifted his rifle and took steady aim at the glimmering light far off in the blackness.

Crack! The light was instantly extinguished and deafening echoes filled the cavern with noise.

"You feller boy, cast loose feller boat!" snapped Parsons.

The whaleboat was unmoored and dragged away. Both boats were secured on the seaward side of the cutter, Dandy Peter, on the Sea-Cat's deck, rifle in hand, waited, ready for his foes when they came on out of the darkness of the cave.

CHAPTER 33.

Face to Face.

KING OF THE ISLANDS stood rooted to the sandy floor of the cavern. Round him rolled the deafening echoes of the shot.

The shot had taken the shipmates utterly by surprise. The hurricane-lamp lay smashed on the cavern floor, and they stood in total darkness, save

for the tiny distant glimmer of light at the mouth of the cave. In the far distance was that glimmer of sunlight and blue; but where they stood the darkness was so intense that they could not see one another.

"What—" breathed Hudson.

"My sainted Sam! Who fired?" muttered King of the Islands, utterly amazed. Not for an instant had he dreamed that there were foes on the island, except for the giant octopus that lurked deep in the pool.

Hudson groped for the smashed lantern and picked it up. As the booming echoes died away and silence succeeded, the shipmates listened. Only the distant lapping of the sea came to their ears.

"Feller Parsons he comey along island, sar," said Koko.

"Dandy Peter!" breathed Hudson.

"But he could never—" King of the Islands broke off. Amazing as it was, it was impossible to doubt that Dandy Peter had tracked the treasure-seekers to the lonely island. No one else could have fired on them.

"But what was Daunt doing to let them get a boat to the cave?" exclaimed Hudson. "Is he mad—or has he gone to sleep on the ketch?"

"I can't understand it," said Ken.

"Daunt was on the watch—he would never let them get a boat ashore—"

"But they're there—that shot was fired inside the cave."

"I can't understand it."

"We've got to get on!" gritted Hudson. "If it's Dandy Peter, or somebody else, we've got to deal with him. Come on!"

"Feller light he no stop," said Kaio-lalualonga.

"We don't want a light—to show us up for that scoundrel's rifle! Keep your weather eye open and come on!"

"Ay, ay; but steady does it!" said Ken quietly. "Follow me!"

Treading cautiously, feeling every inch of the way, King of the Islands moved on slowly towards the distant glimmer of daylight. Hudson, con-

trolling his impatience, followed with Koko. Only that blue glimmer far ahead guided them—once beyond the narrow way the cavern broadened out, its distant sides wrapped in darkness.

The thought of the sea-devil was in their minds as they picked their way slowly onward.

Again and again Ken stopped, and groped at the edge of some crevice or of a tidal pool. But the opening ahead grew wider and clearer; in the distance they saw the foam, the blue sea beyond, the sunlight glinting on the waters, and glimpse of the distant ketch.

"My sainted Sam?" breathed Ken.

He stared in amazement at the sight of the mast and spars of a cutter outlined against the blue.

"Dandy Peter's Sea-Cat!" ejaculated Hudson.

"The mad fool must have run into the cave," said Ken. "That's why Daunt could not stop him. No one could have been prepared for that. It was a thousand to one that he would pile up the cutter."

"He has Satan's own luck!" growled Hudson.

"Keep close. You can depend upon it that he's watching and that his rifle's ready!" said Ken.

There was no doubt now as to the identity of the enemy. The Sea-Cat was anchored in the cave, her light and graceful lines clear against the blue. Ken and his comrades dropped on hands and knees, keeping in cover of rocks and boulders as they crept on.

They were in twilight now, and could see their surroundings. It did not take Ken long to ascertain that the whale-boat was gone. The floor of the cavern ended abruptly a dozen feet from the anchored cutter—that width of water separated them from Dandy Peter, if they made an attack. To swim off to the cutter, under Dandy Peter's rifle, was impossible, and the comrades came to a halt at a little distance from the water.

No man was to be seen on the cutter. Dandy Peter and his Lukwe crew were lying down in cover of the low rail, but it was certain that they were watching.

"Satan's own luck!" repeated Hudson savagely. "Twenty chances to one against the scoundrel getting here at all—a hundred to one against his getting the cutter into the cave without piling her up. But he's done it—and he's got us cornered!"

"He can't touch the ketch," said Ken. "There's six men aboard—on their guard. The Dawn's safe!"

"Thank goodness for that, at least! But he's got our boat, and we're marooned on the island. We've got the treasure," added Hudson grimly, "and Dandy Peter's got us!"

The murmur of their voices in the deep silence seemed to reach to the cutter, for a hail came from Peter Parsons.

"Aho, King of the Islands!"

"Aho, you swab!" called back Ken. A light laugh from Dandy Peter floated on the wind from the sea.

"I've got you fixed, King of the Islands! You're not done with Peter Parsons yet!"

Bang!

Kit Hudson fired on the cutter, and the bullet smashed splinters from her polished deck.

"You can burn all the powder you like!" jeered Parsons. "Come out into the light and I'll burn powder, too!"

"You durned pirate!" grated King of the Islands.

From the cover of the rocks he watched along the barrel of his rifle for a chance to get in a shot. But the cutter's crew were in careful cover.

"Oh, belay it!" retorted Parsons. "I'm here, King of the Islands, and you've got me to reckon with. Your ketch can't get near the cave, and she's got no boat. Your crew might as well be at home in the Marquesas for any harm they can do me. You dare not come out into the light—I'll fill you full of holes the instant you show your-

self! I'm ready to make terms if you are."

"What terms, you scoundrel?"

"You've got the treasure?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Honest?"

Dandy Peter's voice had a husky note of eagerness. Perhaps, in spite of his belief in the treasure of the wrecked galleon, some doubt had lingered in his mind.

"Ay, ay! Bars of gold that would sink your boat!" answered King of the Islands.

"Then you've found the galleon?"

"Yes."

"I'm willing to share with you," said Dandy Peter. "I've got you marooned, and can keep you off your ship as long as I choose. You've got me barred off from the island—I'm not fool enough to walk on your rifle. Let us make terms, and share."

"The treasure's not mine to share. Half of it belongs to Daunt and his shipmate's widow in Sydney."

"Oh, cut that out!" jeered Dandy Peter. "The treasure belongs to the men who can get their hands to it."

"And if it were mine to share, do you think I would trust a sea-wolf like you?" said King of the Islands contemptuously. "I should expect a knife in my back soon afterwards."

"You'll never get the treasure lifted!" snapped out Dandy Peter. "I can afford to wait as long as I choose, but your ketch is on a lee-shore if the weather breaks, and Daunt will have to run for it or go ashore if there's a squall. You can't afford to wait, and I can!"

"Wait!" answered King of the Islands coolly. "Wait, but you'll never get the treasure. By to-morrow it will be buried deep, and if you can find it again, you'll be welcome to it!"

"Then you'll die on this island!" said Dandy Peter hoarsely. "Your life or the Spanish gold, King of the Island!"

"If you want either, come and take them!"

Crack! rang the sea-lawyer's rifle. In his rage he raised himself and took a shot in the direction of the boy trader's voice. The bullet glanced on the rock and flew away into the cavern. Like an echo Hudson's rifle answered the shot, and there was a yell from Dandy Peter as he dropped back into cover, a fragment of skin torn from his tanned cheek by Hudson's bullet.

"Try again!" called out Hudson mockingly.

A stream of furious words answered him as the sea-lawyer dabbed the blood from his torn cheek.

Silence followed.

CHAPTER 24.

Back to the Wreck!

"LITTLE white master!"

There was a shake in the twilight whispering voice of Kaio-lalulalonga. The Kanaka was staring into the dark depths of the cave, his big black eyes dilated.

King of the Islands glanced around at him. The twilight in the cavern was deepening. Six or seven yards of sandy rock and a dozen feet of water separated the shipmates from the cutter where Dandy Peter and his men lay.

Lying in cover, watchful for a chance to shoot, they had turned over the matter in their minds and discussed it in whispers. But they could come to no decision, except that the state of affairs was "checkmate" to both parties.

They could not attack the cutter with any hope of success; still less could Dandy Peter attack them; and neither party was likely to give the other much chance of sniping. The ketch, riding the sea a mile out, was helpless to intervene—she could not approach near the mouth of the cave, and her boat was in Dandy Peter's possession.

Matters had come to an impasse, so

it seemed. To wait and watch, hoping that the sea-lawyer's impatience and cupidity would drive him to taking a false step, seemed all that King of the Islands could do. The reckless adventurer of Lukwe was not the man to allow long hours to pass in inaction, with the treasure of the galleon almost in his hands. The man who had run his cutter into the cave with almost mad recklessness was the man to make some desperate move when he found that his enemies were content to wait.

Beyond the cavern the sun was almost touching the rim of the ocean. The cutter, anchored under the high rocky arch, was growing invisible against the darkening sky.

Behind the shipmates was impenetrable darkness. Through the darkness came the lapping of the water. They could hear the sound of the cutter dragging on her cable as the tide washed in at the mouth of the cave, floating her in ever deeper and deeper water, lifting her topmast higher and higher towards the arch of the cavern. The sea crept inch by inch up the sandy floor of the cave, closer and closer to where the shipmates lay, filling the fissures and crevices in the floor about them, flooding the hollows. But the rocks where they lay were well above the highest level of the tide.

But every fissure in the floor was now a running stream, every hollow a pool; and more than half the cavern floor was flooded for a great distance from the mouth of the cave.

King of the Islands, his thoughts on the problem before him, had given little heed to the incoming tide. He knew that it could only cover the cavern for a short distance, beyond which the rocky floor rose too steeply to be reached by the tide. The streams and deepening pools round them meant no danger to the shipmates. If it became necessary to retreat, they could wade back the way

they had come, the water hardly to their knees.

And then, in the deepening darkness, came the Kanaka's tremulous whisper, and the shake in his voice told of alarm.

King of the Islands peered at him.

"Me hear something, ear belong me, sar!" whispered Kaio-lalulalonga, staring into the blackness of the interior.

"What you tinkee hear, ear belong you?" asked Ken. "No feller he stop along island, only us feller."

"Me savvy, sar! Sea-devil he stop!" answered Koko.

Ken listened. The cavern was full of the swishing noise of the water, echoing in the hollows. No other sound came to his ears.

But it came into his mind that the tidal pool, where the giant octopus lay hid, would be connected with the sea at high-water. The higher portions of the irregular broken floor were above the tide, but round them the water flowed and swirled, at any depth from a few inches to two or three feet where there were deep depressions.

"My hat!" muttered Kit Hudson, catching his breath. "If that fearful beast came out of his pool—"

King of the Islands shuddered. That thought was in his own mind now, and he could read it in the rolling eyes of the Kanaka.

He stared into the darkness, but could see nothing save here and there a gleam of water. But the mental picture of the giant octopus rising from the tidal pool back in the cave, its seven huge tentacles, thirty feet long, feeling and groping through the shallow water for its prey, made his blood run cold.

He strained his ears to listen, and heard only the low swishing of the water. Then suddenly came a soft splash. A loose pebble, on the edge of some crevice filled by the tide, had been displaced and had fallen into the water—displaced by something that crawled in the darkness. Ken felt the blood thrill to his heart.

"Feller sea-devil!" Koko's teeth were chattering and his words came in a gasping whisper.

Hudson gripped his shipmate's arm. "It's coming, Ken," he breathed. "Either it's making for the sea, now the tide's in—or—or it knows we're here——" He broke off with a shudder.

Ken shut his teeth hard. He knew that at any moment an eel-like tentacle, with its powerful suckers, might come whipping out of the darkness. Once it closed on body or limb, in the enshrouding darkness, life and hope were lost.

The cutter was swallowed up in darkness now. There was little danger from Dandy Peter and his crew. Firing, if it came, would be at random. In any case, danger from the Lukwe cutter was as nothing compared with the fearful peril that was creeping on the shipmates in the darkness of the cave.

Something touched Ken's foot and glist away. It was only an instant's contact, but it sent a shudder of horror through his whole body. For he knew what had touched him—the extremity of a groping tentacle.

He leaped back, hardly repressing a cry.

He could hear the swish on the rock of the tentacle groping back for what it had touched. The sea-devil knew!

"This way!" panted Ken. "Quick!"

He grasped Hudson's arm and drew him towards the side of the cave.

"This way, Koko!"

"Yessar!" breathed the Kanaka.

They trampled through the flowing tide to the side of the cavern. The last glimmer of twilight was gone now and all was dark. At the side of the cave the rocky floor rose higher, and they all scrambled, in the dark, well above the water.

Bang!

A flash lit the gloom for an instant from the direction of the cutter.

Dandy Peter could have seen nothing, but he must have heard the

trampling and splashing, and fired at random into the cave.

Bang, bang, bang! came the shots from the rifles of the Lukwe boys, filling the cavern with deafening echoes.

Bullets crashed on the rocky walls where the cavern narrowed farther back.

King of the Islands did not heed them. The firing died away again and there was silence.

"We've got to get out of this!" Hudson's voice was a husky whisper. "That fiend knows we're in the cave. He's missed us now, but he will be feeling about for us. We've got to chance it and get back into the island."

It was the only thing to be done. That the giant octopus was seeking them in the darkness they could not doubt, and, once he found them, it was death!

"Come!" muttered King of the Islands.

They groped their way along the rough, rocky side of the cave. There was a splash as Hudson slipped from the rock into the water.

"Kit!" panted King of the Islands.

"All serene! It's 3 foot deep here," replied Hudson.

He was on his feet again in a moment.

Wading, groping, slipping, hurrying, blinded by the darkness, with the horror of the feeling tentacles in their minds, they pushed through the cavern. Once Hudson felt a touch, but if it was a tentacle that touched him he was beyond its reach the next moment.

They tramped out of the water at last, beyond the pool where the octopus had lain and which was now connected with the water by the flooding tide. They felt the ground rising under their feet. But they groped and tramped on till at last the stars shone in their eyes at the opening on the inner side of the great cliff.

They came out in cool, clear starlight. Overhead was a sky of deepest

blue, spangled with stars. At a distance, down in the sandy hollow, the star-shine gleamed on the wreck of the Spanish galleon.

King of the Islands wiped his forehead. It was streaming with perspiration. He looked at Hudson, and saw his face white as chalk under the stars, and knew that his own was as white.

"Safe enough here," said Ken. "The brute won't leave the water. But—I never want to go through that again, Kit!"

"We've been lucky!" muttered Hudson. "If that devil had got us——" He broke off. "No good thinking of that. I'd rather face a hundred Lukwe sea-lawyers!"

"Me tinkee, sar——" began Koko.

Ken smiled faintly.

"What you tinkee, head belong you, old coffee-bean?" he asked.

Now that the fearful peril was past Koko had dismissed it from his mind more easily than the white masters could.

"Me tinkee plenty coconut stop along here, sar," said Koko. "Inside belong me, he plenty want kal-kai!"

"Koko's right!" laughed Hudson. "Dandy Peter's got our boat and grub, but now I think of it, I'm more than hungry!"

"So am I," laughed Ken. "You feller Koko, you go get plenty coconut," he ordered, and the Kanaka scrambled down into the sandy basin to a group of coco palms that grew by the spring near the wrecked galleon.

Sitting by the rocks by the opening in the cliff the shipmates ate their supper of coconut meat, washed down by the milk of young drinking-nuts. Kaio-lalulalonga gathered leaves and twigs to pile on heaped sand for a bed, and lay down and slept. But sleep did not come so easily to Ken and Kit. All their plans had been deranged by the sudden appearance of the Lukwe cutter at the treasure island.

They sat long discussing the situation and the problem that lay before

them, but without being able to reach any solution. They were barred from the ketch, as Dandy Peter was barred from the treasure, unless the reckless impatience of the sea-lawyer led him to take one chance too many. And in that, which was likely enough, lay their hope.

CHAPTER 35.

The Octopus Grips!

DANDY PETER, staring from the anchored cutter into the blackness of the cavern, muttered beneath his breath.

Luck had befriended him more than he could have hoped. He was anchored in the mouth of the cave, the only access to the treasure island, and King of the Islands was separated from his ship and crew. So far, he was master of the situation. But there his advantage ended. He was within a few hundred yards of the Spanish treasure, but it was far from his clutches as if it had lain still in the mines of Peru.

The thought of it, of the bars of gold, of shining ingots packed in chests, burned in the greedy brain of the sea-lawyer. But three men—two white men and a Kanaka—were between him and the treasure.

For some hours he had hoped that King of the Islands would make an attempt on the cutter. That would have placed the game in his hands—the boy trader and his shipmate would have been shot down without mercy, with little chance of setting foot on the Sea-Cat. But King of the Islands knew that as clearly as Dandy Peter, and no attempt had been made.

After darkness had fallen, Parsons still hoped that the attempt would be made in the dark, but as the hours glided away to midnight, he knew that it would not come. He had little doubt that King of the Islands and his companions had returned to the interior of the island; there was no

sound from the cave, no answer to the sniping shots he occasionally sent into the darkness.

He pictured them camped on the island—perhaps in the wrecked galleon; perhaps burying the gold in some remote spot where it would defy a search if the fortune of war went against them. At that thought the Lukwe skipper ground his teeth with rage. The treasure was in Ken King's hands, to do (with as he chose, and it was only too likely that he would place it for ever out of the reach of his rival, if he was given time.

It was that consideration, added to the natural reckless daring of his character, that decided Dandy Peter. To wait for an attack that would never come would serve no purpose. If he was to touch the Spanish gold, he had to make up his mind to fight for it. The shipmates might be sleeping in their camp on the island. If so, there was a chance of taking them by surprise in the dark, and if even one of them fell to his rifle it would reduce the odds against him. Only desperate measures could serve him, and Dandy Peter was prepared to take them.

Calling the Lukwe boys from their sleeping-mats, where he had allowed them to sleep since sunset, to render them more wakeful when he wanted them, he gave his orders.

"You feller boy," he shot at them, "me go along island. You feller no sleep along cutter, you savvy? You watch plenty good, eye belong you."

"Yes, sar!"

"S'pose you sleep, me cut skin along back belong you, along sting-ray tail," said Dandy Peter, with a snarl that showed his white teeth. "You watch along night. S'pose any feller he come, you shoot, gun belong you—kill-dead altogether! You savvy?"

"Yes, sar!"

"Me comey back plenty quick," said Dandy Peter. "S'pose me find ee you sleep along cutter, my word me kill you too much."

"Us feller no sleep along cutter,

sar," said Jacky. "No shut feller eye belong us feller."

Dandy Peter looked to his revolver and rifle, and placed a knife in his belt. Then he stepped into the boat, and Jacky pulled ashore, taking the boat back to the cutter after the sea-lawyer had landed in the cave.

For a few minutes Dandy Peter stood listening and watching.

Save for the lap of the water, there was dead silence in the vast tunnel-like cavern.

He was assured that the shipmates of the Dawn were no longer there; but he did not venture to show a light. Forward through shallow water and up the shelving floor of the cave he tramped. For some distance he was guided by backward glances at the starlit opening of the cavern, but soon the dim light faded from his sight and he stood in blackness. There was no sound, no movement. His foes were not there. Still he dare not strike a light, for it was only too likely that the shipmates might be prepared for his desperate attempt, and be watching the cave from the inner extremity. He groped along the rough rocky wall of the cavern, feeling and groping his way onward.

It was slow work, but he knew that so long as he kept to the side of the cavern it must lead him aright, however long it might take. Sooner or later he must see the stars shining at the farther end.

But he was still in deep darkness when something touched him in the shallow water. Some fish or floating crab—he shook his leg and tramped on. But the thing that had touched him had curled round his calf and was holding.

With a cry, Dandy Peter tensed as his leg to drag it free. But it was held, and the sinuous thing that held it was creeping higher, gripping tighter as it crept! Suddenly something unseen whipped round his waist, and as his hands flew to it to tear it

off, they came in contact with a slimy surface, horrible to the touch. And then Dandy Peter knew, and a cry broke from him.

Back into his mind came the story of Daunt's shipmate—dragged to death by the sea-devil that lurked in the black cavern—a story he had disregarded or forgotten. For an instant his brain reeled, as he knew that he was in the grip of an octopus—that the slimy, sinuous thing that had twined round him was the tentacle of a devil-fish! The next moment he was fighting madly for his freedom.

He dragged the knife from his belt and slashed and slashed and cut and hacked like a madman. The hold on his leg dragged him back—and a whip-like tentacle flashed round his right arm, gripping it, holding it, and his knife was useless. In mad desperation he changed it to his left hand, but another sinuous gripping thing was twining round him, and his left arm was pinned to his side. He knew then that he was doomed, that he was being dragged to death, and in horror and despair he shrieked and shrieked again, till the black cavern echoed with his frantic cries!

CHAPTER 36.

Saving an Enemy!

KEN KING sat leaning against a rock under glinting stars set in a sky of deep velvety blue. It was midnight on the lone island, but the boy trader was not inclined to sleep. Kit Hudson and Koko lay sleeping on their beds of leaves close at hand.

In the gleam of the brilliant stars, the great sandy basin that formed the interior of the island was almost as light as by day. Dark and forbidding rose the circle of high basaltic cliffs round it. Beyond the circling cliffs rolled the Pacific, invisible to Ken's eyes, though he could hear the thunder

of the surf on the outward face of the cliffs.

From where he sat he could see the wrecked Spanish galleon, half-sunk in sand. Ken was thinking as he sat there by his sleeping comrades of what the island must have been like in ancient days before some convulsion of Nature had driven the masses of basalt high out of the sea—when the sandy basin had been a flowing lagoon, and the great Spanish ship had come to grief on a sunken reef.

Centuries had passed, and grinning skulls and whitened bones in the rotting wreck were all that remained of the captain and crew of the galleon. Dry sand and sea-shells were heaped where the great ship once had floated, and the circling cliffs shut it off from all human knowledge—since the days when Philip reigned in Spain and Elizabeth in England.

But the gold remained—the yellow gold for which Indian slaves had toiled in the mines under the whips of cruel task-masters—gold intended for the coffers of a monarch long since dust, and now in the hands of the boy trader of the Pacific. Fortune had tired of persecuting the boy trader, and when he sailed from the lone island, with the Spanish gold on board his ketch, he would be a rich man.

At that thought Ken turned his head to glance into the dark opening of the cliffs that led into the great tunnel-like cavern. The Spanish gold was not on board the ketch yet!

His rifle across his knees, Ken was waiting, watching—hoping that the sea-lawyer's eagerness to grasp the treasure would lead him to attempt an attack. It was more than likely that Dandy Peter, in his greedy impatience, would make some attempt under cover of the night. But midnight had passed, and there was no sound from the cavern.

Kit Hudson awakened, and sat up on his bed of palm-leaves and rubbed his eyes. He rose to his feet and picked up his rifle.

"My watch, Ken!" he said. "No sign of Dandy Peter yet?"

"None. But—unless I'm mistaken in him—we shall hear from him before dawn," answered King of the Islands.

"I hope so!" exclaimed Hudson. "If he comes, he won't catch us napping—though he will hope to. Once I get a sight of his figurehead—" Hudson did not finish the sentence, but his look was grim.

Ken stretched himself on the bed of leaves, though he was little disposed to sleep. The problem of dealing with the Lukwe sea-lawyer occupied his mind.

"Hark!" exclaimed Hudson suddenly. From the opening of the dark cave came a piercing cry. King of the Islands sprang to his feet. Kaio-lalulalonga, awakened by that fearful cry from the cavern, opened wide startled, dark eyes. Another cry followed, and another. Then scream on scream, ringing and echoing from the cavern like voices of pandemonium.

"Feller aitoo!" gasped Koko. "Feller aitoo debble he howl along cavern, sar!"

"It's Dandy Peter," breathed Kit Hudson—"Dandy Peter—and—"

"The octopus!"

The scared expression on the brown face of Kaio-lalulalonga changed to a grin. He realised that it was not the howling of "aitoos" that rang from the cavern.

"Feller sea-devil he catchy feller Parsons!" chuckled Koko. "Feller Parsons he come along cavern, feller sea-devil he catchy. Plenty good!"

Ken's face was white as chalk as he listened to the fearful cries pealing from the blackness of the hollow cliff. He knew what must have happened. The Lukwe skipper, creeping silently through the dark cavern—stealing, as he thought and hoped, towards a sleeping camp—had fallen in with the "sea-devil," which the shipmates had narrowly escaped.

The tentacles of the giant octopus were round Dandy Peter, and in hideous fear and horror, he was shrieking

the shrieks of a man doomed beyond hope. For an instant or two Ken stood rooted, almost unnerved by the horror of it. Then he snatched up an axe.

"We can't leave him to it, Kit! If we can't help him, we must try—we must—"

The boy trader was already hurrying towards the opening of the cavern as he spoke. It was with murder in his heart that the Lukwe sea-lawyer had been creeping through the dark cavern, but Ken did not think of that now. The thought of the hapless wretch struggling, in vain, in the gripping tentacles of the devil-fish banished all other thoughts.

"Wait!" shouted Hudson. "We must have a light!"

"Quick, then!"

Hudson hurriedly lighted the hurricane lamp and followed. The glass had been smashed, but in the still air it burned steadily. Koko stared after them in strong disapproval. But he did not linger. Where his white master went, the faithful Kanaka followed. With a heavy bush-knife in his hand, Koko hurried after the white men.

Cry on cry filled the cavern with hideous sound. Hudson held up the lamp, and almost heedless of crevices and pitfalls, the comrades hurried on. King of the Islands splashed into shallow water on the flooded seaward side of the cave. The terrific shrieking was close to him now. In the glare of the lamp wild lights and shadows flickered and danced on the rocky walls of the cave.

In the shallow water a terrifying thing writhed and twined—a thing that seemed all slimy tentacles, with hideous, saucer-like eyes that reflected the glare of the lamp. Three or four of the immense tentacles were twined round a struggling form—the form of a man who fought, and wrestled, and screamed, with a face of fear and horror and despair!

Dandy Peter struggled and shrieked in the grasp of the twining devil-fish. His resistance was desperate, but hope-

less. He knew that it was hopeless even while he struggled madly.

Slimy tentacles, gripping, with their hideous suckers, were round him, round his waist, round his arms and legs, tightening, clutching, dragging.

Somehow he had kept his footing, dragging back against the drag of the octopus. He knew what would happen when he went down.

The long feelers were dragging him into deeper water, dragging him to the tide-pool where the giant octopus dwelt, and from which the hideous creature crept forth at high tide in search of prey.

He was in deeper water now; it splashed high round his waist. Somehow he kept his footing on the slippery rocks, with the strength of desperation. But four or five of the feelers were grasping him, thickening like great cables as they tightened; and each of them had a pull that the strongest man could not have resisted for long.

He was going—he knew that he was going—even the strength of madness could not hold him back against that resistless drag. Scream after scream peeled from his white lips. He did not know that he was screaming. There was no help—no help! Not for the treasure of the galleon would the three Lukwe boys have ventured into the black flooded cavern, from which they heard that fearful screaming. They quaked with terror on the anchored cutter as they listened to it. There was no help! On the landward side was King of the Islands; but Peter Parsons did not even think of him.

But it was from King of the Islands that help was coming—from the foe whose life he had sought.

A flashing of sudden light came to his dizzy eyes, and in his dazed ears rang a shout.

"Hold on! Hold on! We're coming!" He hardly heeded, only screaming and screaming, as he was dragged deeper by the gripping tentacles.

The shallow water in the flooded

cave, agitated by the movements of the octopus, glimmered in the light of the hurricane lamp, held high by the Australian. King of the Islands plunged shoulder high in water, axe in hand.

His face was as white as Dandy Peter's, in the glare of the lamp. Well he knew that he was risking his life, sharing the fearful danger of the Lukwe sea-lawyer. Seven tentacles, strong as steel cables, were writhing in the water, and any one of them might drag him to death. But without hesitation the boy trader plunged towards the struggling man, and the axe rose and fell with a mighty sweep.

Dandy Peter, at the end of his strength, was falling when the tentacle that gripped him round the body fell loose. That mighty stroke had cut it in halves. A knife would have been almost useless, but the heavy axe, with all Ken's strength behind it, cut through.

"Hold on!" panted Ken.

The sea-lawyer was still screaming incoherently.

Ken struck again and again. Another tentacle hung crippled; another writhed away like an eel. The water was agitated wildly, as if by a submarine volcano. Waves, thrown up by the struggles of the wounded sea-devil, washed over Parsons and King of the Islands. Deep in the water, something slimy and gripping closed round Ken's leg and dragged him over as he struck with the axe. He was in the grasp of the octopus!

The axe struck the water, futile, as the boy trader went reeling over in the sudden drag. There was a yell from Kaio-lalulalonga. The Kanaka plunged into the water, the heavy bush-knife in his hand.

Ken had gone under the surface, but he struggled up, against the drag on his ankle. Koko grasped him.

"It's got me—by the leg!" panted Ken.

The Kanaka disappeared under the water. The heavy bush-knife slashed

and slashed, and King of the Islands suddenly found himself free.

Koko came above the surface, panting. Kit Hudson, up to the waist in the water, was still holding up the hurricane lamp. Once in the darkness, all would have been lost. But in his left hand was his revolver, and he was blazing shot after shot into the shapeless mass that writhed in the tide. The cavern echoed and roared with thunderous sound.

Ken was still gripping the axe. Again he slashed at the feelers round Dandy Peter. The sea-lawyer had an arm free now, and he was hacking at the tentacles with a clasp-knife, uselessly. Another of the feelers, however, dropped away under the stroke of the axe. Hudson's revolver was empty now, but one of the bullets had smashed into a hideous saucer-like eye. The wounded monster was wriggling away in the shallow water—the long sinuous tentacles thrashed and writhed, but no longer grasped. Dandy Peter was free!

He was still screaming, without knowing what he did. For the time, he was insane with the horror of it. But King of the Islands realised that the sea-devil was retreating. He grasped the helpless sea-lawyer.

"Quick!" he panted.

Any instant the hideous tentacles might come winding back. The monster was hurt, but not by any means disabled. King of the Islands dragged Dandy Peter away by main force.

"You feller Parsons, you run, foot belong you!" shouted Koko.

But the sea-lawyer was a helpless burden in the arms of the boy trader. Ken hooked the axe to his belt, grasped Parsons with both arms, and hoisted him bodily on his shoulder.

The dapper dandy of Lukwe was no great weight, and the boy trader was strong and sturdy. He tramped through the water, with the still screaming wretch on his shoulder, Hudson lighting the way, and Koko bringing up the rear, his eyes watchful for the sea-devil.

The bright starlight, the fresh air outside the cave, seemed like paradise to Ken as he staggered out upon the landward side. He could hardly believe that he was clear at last of that den of horror and darkness and death. But he was clear; and he laid his burden on the rocks and sank down breathless on a boulder.

Hudson doused the hurricane lamp. In the starlight his face was like chalk. Peter Parsons lay senseless on the ground, his wild screaming stilled at last.

"My sainted Sam!" breathed Ken.

Hudson shivered.

"I don't want to go through that again!" he muttered.

"I thought I was gone—for a minute!" breathed King of the Islands. "Koko, old bean, you saved me. S'pose you no come, me no stop any more altogether."

"Koko no common Kanaka, sar!" said Kaio-lalulalonga complacently.

There was a shuddering moan from Dandy Peter. His eyes opened, staring wildly in the brilliant light of the stars. He stared uncomprehendingly at the shipmates of the Dawn.

"You!" he muttered. "But what—what—"

A long, trembling shudder ran through his limbs. He sat up, supporting himself against a rock.

"The octopus—he got me!" he muttered.

Kaio-lalulalonga stooped over the sea-lawyer and searched him for weapons. Dandy Peter did not attempt resistance.

"You got me out?" he asked, his eyes on King of the Islands.

"We did!"

The sea-lawyer passed his hand over his brow, and sat silent for some minutes, trying to collect his thoughts. In the starlight, his eyes fell on the bulk of the Spanish galleon, half buried in the sand of the island basin. He started convulsively, and a blaze came into his eyes.

"The galleon!"

"The galleon!" assented Ken, with a curl of the lip. It was easy to read the sea-lawyer's thoughts in his face.

"And the treasure!" said Ken, with a nod.

"And—and I——"

"And you are a prisoner," said King of the Islands, "and you can thank your lucky stars that you are a prisoner and not at the bottom of the water with the octopus."

The Lukwe skipper made no answer. He sat against the rock, his eyes fixed on the shadowy hulk of the great galleon in the glint of the stars, as if the sight of it fascinated him. The Spanish treasure was under his eyes, but there was little chance of Dandy Peter laying his greedy hands upon it.

CHAPTER 37.

The Upper Hand!

MORNING dawned on the island. The sun climbed over the circling barrier of cliffs and poured down burning rays into the sandy basin of the island. The shipmates were bright and cheery. The horror of the night's adventure had passed away. King of the Islands was only waiting for the tide to be fully ebbd. At low tide, as the shipmates knew, the giant octopus retreated to his den at the bottom of the tide-pool; it was only when the cave was flooded that he emerged from his lair.

There was always the danger of a twining feeler reaching out from the pool, but that danger had to be risked. Dandy Peter was a prisoner now, and the next step was to deal with the Lukwe crew of his cutter. That did not present a difficult task. Without their leader, the three Lukwe boys were not likely to give much trouble.

Dandy Peter eyed the shipmates sourly as they prepared to start. Kaio-lalulalonga had watched the Lukwe skipper keenly, and if he had thought of attempting to escape through the

cave, back to his cutter, he had had no opportunity. It was doubtful, however, whether even the iron-nerved sea-lawyer would have taken that risk after his frightful experience with the giant octopus.

"Feller Parsons he no stop loose along island?" asked Kaio-lalulalonga; and he stepped towards the sea-lawyer with a rope of coconut fibre.

"Make him safe, Koko," ordered Ken.

"You're afraid of an unarmed man!" sneered Dandy Peter.

Ken made no reply to that. He had no intention of leaving the sea-lawyer at liberty on the treasure island, unarmed as he was. Saving Dandy Peter's life had not made him anything but an enemy, and he was as watchful as a cat for a chance of turning the tables on the shipmates of the Dawn.

Kaio-lalulalonga bound his arms behind his back, knotting the rope carefully. Parsons was left the use of his legs to move about as freely as he liked. Leaving Dandy Peter scowling after them, King of the Islands and his comrades entered the cave. Hudson carried the lamp, and it was with wary eyes that they advanced into the gloom of the hollow cliff.

There was no signs of the octopus. The monster had evidently retired to his lair, and no crawling tentacle appeared above the murky surface of the tidal pool as the shipmates trod cautiously by. But they were glad when they were past the pool and in the glimmer of daylight from the mouth of the cave.

Beyond the vast arched opening of the cavern the Pacific rolled wide and blue. Under the soaring arch lay the Sea-Cat at anchor. Ken scanned the waters beyond, hoping to pick up the ketch in the distance. The Dawn was not to be seen, but he had no doubt that the ketch was safe and sound somewhere out of sight beyond the cliffs.

On board the anchored cutter three

dark faces stared at the shipmates as they advanced to the water-edge. The Lukwe boys had rifles standing ready on the little deck, and with Dandy Peter in command they would doubtless have used them. But the matter was different now that the master's eye was withdrawn.

Jacky, the boat-steerer, stood staring at the comrades, the other two Lukwe boys at his side. Not one of them was touching a weapon.

"You feller boy!" called out Ken.

"Yes, sar!" called back Jacky.

"You bring boat belong me, plenty quick."

King of the Islands' whaleboat was tied up to the cutter, far out of reach. But the shipmates were quite prepared to swim out to it if the Lukwe boys proved obstinate.

"No can, sar," answered Jacky.

"Feller Cap'n Parsons he no like!"

"Feller Cap'n Parsons doesn't count now!" grinned Kit Hudson. "Feller Cap'n Parsons he prisoner along us feller."

Jacky rolled his eyes.

"Me no savvy what name Cap'n Parsons he no comey back along cutter," he said. "Feller Cap'n Parsons he sing out, us feller shoot s'pose you comey along cutter. You stop along shore, sar."

King of the Islands raised his rifle.

"Bring that boat!" he rapped out.

Jacky hesitated. The other two Lukwe boys looked to him for guidance. The hapless Jacky was in sore doubt.

To fire on white men, except at a white man's order, was not easy for the Kanakas. And at that game the Lukwe boys had little chance against Ken and Hudson.

"Cap'n Parsons he say----" stammered Jacky.

"Bring that boat along!"

"Sar, you talk good feller talk, Cap'n Parsons he prisoner along you?" asked Jacky anxiously.

"Me talk good feller talk," said Ken.

"Plenty true talk me talk along you."

"S'pose Cap'n Parsons he prisoner,

feller King of the Islands he master," said Jacky. And he cast loose the whaleboat.

Ken was relieved. He was quite prepared to shoot if it was necessary, but certainly he did not want to fire on the Lukwe crew. But as soon as Jacky believed that Parsons was a prisoner, the matter was settled. The Lukwe boys were not likely to continue a struggle that their white leader had lost.

With a powerful shove, Jacky sent the whaleboat rocking across the intervening stretch of water. It thudded on the rocky floor of the cave, and Koko grasped it at once. King of the Islands and his comrades stepped into the boat and pushed it out to the cutter.

The Lukwe boys offered no opposition as they stepped aboard the Sea-Cat. Now that Captain Parsons was defeated and captured, the man who had mastered him was their master, too; that was the simple philosophy of the black crew of the cutter.

At a word from Ken, Kaio-lalulalonga collected the rifles and tossed them into the sea. Then he searched the tiny cabin for firearms, and such as he found followed the rifles into the water.

The Lukwe boys watched stolidly.

"No wantee feller rope along me," said Jacky, as Koko picked up a coil of cord.

Ken made a motion with his rifle.

"You wantee feller bullet along you?"

"No, sar!" answered Jacky, in great haste.

"You no wantee feller bullet, you shut up mouth belong you," said King of the Islands.

The arms of the three Lukwe boys were bound behind them. They sat in a row on the deck, leaning against the rail.

"And now—for the treasure!" said Kit Hudson. "The coast's clear now, Ken!"

King of the Islands made a gesture towards the cavern,

"The sea-devil first!" he answered. "We've got to finish with that brute before we begin shifting the gold!"

And leaving the Lukwe boys bound on the cutter, the shipmates stepped into the whaleboat and pushed back to the rocky margin of the cave.

From the boat's locker Ken took a package of dynamite. Then, with Hudson carrying the hurricane lamp again, they returned up the cave, and stopped by the murky waters of the tidal pool.

CHAPTER 38.

Exit the Sea-Devil!

KING OF THE ISLANDS cut the fuse, testing a portion of it with a match to make sure that it was in good condition. Dynamite needs careful handling, and Ken had seen too many one-armed men in the Pacific to take unnecessary chances. The section of fuse burned well, and, satisfied, he trod it out under foot. Then he fixed the fuse, of carefully calculated length, to the package of dynamite.

He stood with the powerful explosive in his hand, within a few feet of the edge of the deep pool where the sea-devil lurked.

Well he knew the danger in which he stood—of the thrashing tentacles that might flash out, covering the ground for thirty feet distance, when the monster was in its death struggle. And there was danger, too, of falling rocks when the explosion took place.

But it was the only way of dealing with the sea-devil. To remove the Spanish treasure necessitated continual coming and going through the cave, and every step was fraught with peril so long as the gloomy recesses were haunted by the giant octopus.

"All ready!" said King of the Islands. "Put the lamp down, Kit, and get back to the cutter with Koko."

"Thanks. I'm staying here!" smiled Hudson.

"Little white master he talk big fool talk!" exclaimed Kalo-lalulalonga indignantly. "Me stop along feller white master."

"There's some risk," replied Ken, "and there's no sense in taking risks for nothing. Get going."

"Give me the dynamite, then, and clear, old bean," answered Hudson.

Ken shook his head again.

"We're wasting time," he said. "Clear off, both of you! Get back to the cutter and wait for me there. There may be rocks falling from the roof when the charge explodes."

"My head's no softer than yours," drawled the Cornstalk. "We'll take the chance together."

"Don't be an ass, old chap," said Ken tersely. "Get back a dozen yards, then, and let it go at that."

"Me stop along white master," said Kalo-lalulalonga obstinately. "Me tinkee plenty good Cap'n Ken give feller dynamite along me, me throw along feller sea-devil."

Ken laughed. He was not likely to trust dynamite in the hands of a Kanaka, if he could help it. He had seen plenty of Kanakas handling dynamite as if it were yams or coconuts.

"You talk fool feller talk, Koko," he said. "Now get out of it! If you won't go as a pal, Kit, you've got to go as mate of the Dawn, at your captain's order. Look lively."

"If you mean that, confound you —"

"Every word! Belay your jawing tackle, Mr. Hudson, and obey your skipper!" said King of the Islands.

Hudson shrugged his shoulders, and tramped back a dozen yards towards the mouth of the cave, leaving the hurricane lamp on a rock. Kalo-lalulalonga did not stir.

"You hear me, Koko, ear belong you?" snapped Ken. "You feller Kanaka, you no 'bey order along me?"

"No, sar," answered Koko coolly. "Me no 'bey order along leave little white master. Me stop along you, sar."

Ken's eyes flashed.

"You go along feller Hudson, or me put you ashore along Lallage, no stop along me any more altogether."

And Kalo-lalulalonga unwillingly, with a frowning brow, moved away up the cave, and stood beside the Corn-stalk at a distance.

King of the Islands turned back to the pool. His hand rose with the package of dynamite in it, and there was a gleam of the lighted fuse. The deadly explosive circled over the murky pool and dropped in. At the same moment Ken leaped back and ran towards his comrades.

Crash! Like a thousand thunder-claps rolled into one came the terrific roar of the explosion. It roared and boomed through every hollow of the great cave, with a deafening din. Crash on crash followed, as loose fragments of rock hurtled down from walls and roof.

The water of the tide-pool was wildly shaken and agitated. From the black depths hideous tentacles flashed, writhing and whirling in the air madly. Something struck Ken as he ran and curled round his leg, and he fell on his face as his feet were plucked from under him. In an instant he was dragged back towards the pool, where the giant was struggling and thrashing, wriggling and writhing and twining.

He tore the axe from his belt and slashed. The tentacle parted like a rope that is cut, and King of the Islands, sick with horror, jumped to his feet and tore away to join his friends, who were running towards him.

"Keep on!" panted Ken. "Keep on!"

And they ran on towards the mouth of the cave. The hurricane lamp had been left; but a falling fragment of rock, dislodged by the explosion, struck it, extinguishing it and plunging the cave into darkness. From the blackness behind the shipmates came the

sound of the octopus, thrashing and splashing in the tossing pool.

On the very edge of the cavern floor, in the blessed daylight, the shipmates stood and waited, staring back into the darkness of the cave with straining eyes. The octopus was still. But the echoes of the explosion were still booming round the hollows, and fragments of rock still falling, clattering on the cavern floor.

Silence came at last, but for a long time the shipmates did not move.

"Get another lamp from the cutter, Koko," said King of the Islands at length.

"Yes, sar."

Koko stepped into the whaleboat and fetched a hurricane lamp from the Sea-Cat. He lighted it, and Ken took it and led the way up the cave.

They halted by the margin of the pool, finding that the edges of the rock had been broken away by the explosion. The pool was still tossing, and on its surface floated a hideous, shapeless, smashed thing, some of the tentacles still wriggling feebly, though the monster was dead.

The hideous thing began slowly to sink into the murky depths of the pool. Ken and Kit watched it with a kind of fascinated horror. Koko made a step towards the pool, the practical mind of the islander remembering that the octopus was good food, while the white men were only conscious of the horror of the hideous thing.

"Feller rope me catchy," said Kalo-lalulalonga anxiously. "Feller sea-devil he make plenty good kai-kai."

But there was no rope at hand, and the two white men, at least, were glad of it; they were anxious to see the last of the fearful thing. But it was with regret that Kalo-lalulalonga watched the slain octopus sink into the murky depths of the pool.

"Plenty good kai-kai he walked about along bottom feller water," sighed Koko.

Good "kai-kai" as it was, the car-

case of the octopus disappeared from sight, and King of the Islands breathed more freely when it had sunk.

"Thank goodness!" said Ken. "We're done with him now!"

The waters closed over the sea-devil, and the surface settled down to calmness. Not a sign remained of the sea-devil that had barred the way to the galleon's gold.

"Let's get out of this!" said Kit, drawing a deep breath. "The treasure—now—"

"The treasure now!" agreed Ken. And they tramped through the cave to the opening on the landward side, and emerged into the brilliant sunshine. Dandy Peter, standing there with his arms bound, eyed them as they emerged from the cave.

"You used dynamite on the devil-fish?" he asked.

"Aye, aye! He's finished with!"

"And my cutter?" asked Dandy Peter, breathing hard.

"Your cutter's in my hands, and your men are now my prisoners!" answered King of the Islands coldly.

Heedless further of the sea-lawyer and the string of bitter threats that spat from his lips, the shipmates of the Dawn tramped away through the sand to the wrecked galleon.

Dandy Peter stared after them with hatred in his eyes.

Not one spark of gratitude did he feel for the three who had answered his panic-stricken screams for help in the night without a thought for their own lives; gratitude had never been more than a word to the sea-lawyer of Lukwe.

If only he had stayed aboard the cutter and played the strong hand that fortune had given him—the waiting game that sooner or later must have won! He felt certain now that he could have forced King of the Islands and his companions into surrender, or at least into dividing the spoils.

But that mad attempt to take his rivals by surprise had failed and ruined everything, and now Dandy Peter Par-

sons could only look on in helpless rage while the chums of the Dawn lifted the treasure that would have given him wealth and power for the rest of his life.

That he was getting no more than his deserts brought no consolation whatever to the sea-lawyer of Lukwe. He was beaten, and the blazing fury within him brought more lurid curses to his lips as he stared at the Spanish galleon and the never-say-die shipmates who had won her treasure.

CHAPTER 33.

A Golden Cargo

JIM DAUNT, on the deck of the Dawn, grasped his rifle and shouted to the Hiva-Oa crew:

"You feller boy, you ready along rifle?"

"Yes, sar!" answered Tompo, and the five Polynesians grasped their weapons.

From the towering arch of the great sea-cave a boat was emerging into the sunlight. Daunt, in the ketch, was standing off a half-mile from the island, and from the earliest peep of day he had been watching the cave.

Since Dandy Peter had run his cutter into the cavern the sailorman had been able to do nothing to get into communication with King of the Islands. The ketch drew too much water to approach near the cavern's mouth as the little Sea-Cat had done, and her only boat was in the cave. Dandy Peter and his crew were between Ken and his ship, and every hour had been fraught with the keenest anxiety to the sailorman.

Now, as the boat shot out from under the arch of the cave, he had no doubt that it was Dandy Peter and his crew venturing at last to attack the ketch. And the fear was in his heart that the sea-lawyer had already accounted for King of the Islands and his comrades.

But as the boat pulled out beyond the

overhanging cliff there was a sudden shout from Lompo:

"Feller King of the Islands he comey!"

Daunt started.

"What——"

"No Cap'n Parsons," said Lompo, grinning and pointing to the advancing boat. "Feller King of the Islands he comey along boat along ketch, sar."

"By hokey!" muttered Daunt. He caught up the binoculars, and they told him what the Kanaka's keener eyes had already discovered. It was the Dawn's whaleboat that was approaching, pulled by King of the Islands and Kaio-lalulalonga. The sailorman's bronzed face lighted up as he lowered the glasses. "Oh, good luck! They've downed that sea-lawyer!"

He rapped out an order, and the rifles were laid aside, and the ketch edged in towards the island to pick up the boat.

The whaleboat ran alongside; and Ken's face was bright, and he seemed to be walking on air as he trod his own deck again.

"You've downed Peter Parsons, sir?" exclaimed the sailorman eagerly.

"Dandy Peter's a bound prisoner, and his men, too—and Hudson's in charge of the cutter," answered Ken, smiling. "The treasure's safe and sound, Daunt—and all we've got to do is to carry it aboard."

"And—and the sea devil?" faltered Daunt.

"Blown to bits!" answered Ken. "We're going to borrow the Sea-Cat to get the treasure aboard the Dawn to save pulling to and fro in the whaleboat. We shall manage it in one trip. I'll leave you one man and take the rest to carry the bars of gold down to the cutter."

The remainder of the day was busy and toilsome. While Dandy Peter, with bitter rage on his face and rancour in his heart, looked impotently on, the treasure of the galleon was carried

through the cavern and loaded on the cutter.

Every bar of gold that the galleon held was handed down the side of the great ship and carried away by the Kanakas. It was enough—more than enough—to richly reward the treasure seekers, and the sun was sinking when the last of the treasure was removed.

Fortune had persecuted King of the Islands, and the boy trader had come near to ruin; but the fickle goddess had favoured him at last. From the lone isle he was to sail a rich man—fortune's favourite once more!

And when the last of the treasure had been stowed on the cutter, Dandy Peter was taken on the Sea-Cat, still securely bound.

The Dawn's whaleboat, manned by the Hiva-Oa boys, towed the cutter out of the cavern under the setting rays of the sun. Outside, the boat was tied on, the canvas spread, and the cutter ran out to sea to join the ketch.

The treasure was transhipped to the Dawn. Then King of the Islands returned to his own ship. As the sun sank to the rim of the Pacific, sail was shaken out on board the ketch. The Lukwe boys released Dandy Peter from his bonds, and the first use he made of his freedom was to shake a furious fist at the ketch as she moved away from the Sea-Cat under full sail.

"Feller Parsons he plenty mad," remarked Kaio-lalulalonga.

King of the Islands, with a smile, waved his hand to the enraged sea-lawyer.

"And now for Lalinge," said Kit Hudson. "Our luck's turned, Ken! Didn't I tell you it was time fortune smiled upon us?"

"You did," said Ken, with a smile. "And she has with a vengeance!"

And now, before the booming trade wind, the graceful ketch ran swiftly for distant Lalinge, with a joyous crew on board, and the treasure of the Spanish galleon stowed safely below!

OUR MAGAZINE CORNER

HOLDING THE FORT

IN these days, when every part of an army is closely linked up by means of the modern inventions of wireless and aeroplanes, it hardly seems possible that the old type of siege will still survive. Even in the Great War the only real siege was that of Kut—miles away from civilisation. But previous to the Great War sieges had been of more or less frequent occurrence.

One of the most famous—it even introduced a new word into our language—was that of Mafeking.

The siege occurred in the Boer War and started in October—just thirty-eight years ago. On the 12th of the month the war started, and by the next day Mafeking found itself surrounded by a hostile force of Dutchmen amounting to about 10,000.

Mafeking was just a small, unimportant town on the Matopo river. The white population was under a couple of thousand, and actually there was no real reason why the Boers should want to take it. Still they started to surround the place, and Kronje, the chief enemy commander, showed that he meant business. Luckily, as it ultimately turned out, the slow Boer mind could not deal quickly with the situation. Ten thousand against two thousand—with a little risk they might have taken the town at almost any moment.

But there was an English officer who had no intention of letting the Boers have it all their own way—however strong numerically they might be. This man was Colonel Baden-Powell—whose fame is known to all to-day as the leader of the great Boy Scout movement—and who recently was honoured by the King with a peerage.

Well, this scarcely-known colonel found himself faced with the defence of the little garrison. He had for assistants some twenty English officers and a few hundred soldiers. Still, he was able to organise an amateur force of about a thousand from the police and the male residents.

There was nothing for it but to sit down and wait for relief. So the colonel threw up a ring of small forts round Mafeking and manned them with a handful of rifles.

From the veld which surrounded the town there was gradually pushed nearer by the enemy a heavy field gun. This gun started firing a large projectile into the little garrison. Every day there came a number of shells. But

by Baden-Powell's organisation very few casualties occurred and damage to buildings was negligible.

Things were going on like this when Christmas came.

There was no sign of any relief force in the offing and food was getting short. But over the holidays the garrison were able to do a bit of merry-making. It was summer, of course, at the time, and games of polo and cricket took place. There were also fancy dress dances and amateur theatricals.

From then on several requests were made for surrender by the Boer commanders, and all were refused.

But things were getting desperate. Food was now running short. The horses were bags of skin and bone. The overworked men were weary, and every week saw a few more casualties. The women were all engaged in nursing the wounded and even manning the forts. But with the usual pluck of English people, they all kept a stiff upper lip.

And so it went on. Sometimes a message would come from the outside world. One came from Queen Victoria. Another, saying that help was coming, arrived from Lord Roberts.

But the months went on and no rescue was in sight. Food had now reached the minimum. And then on May 12th a strong attack was launched on an outpost and the Boer leader captured it.

This looked like the beginning of the end. But Baden-Powell was still not finished. With a handful of half-starving men, with little ammunition, but with heroic courage, he counter-attacked—and was able to surround the besiegers.

They surrendered and allowed themselves to be taken prisoners.

Six days later, when all hope had gone, General Plumer arrived, and the little garrison rode out to greet him. Mafeking was relieved at last.

From October to May the little stronghold had held out. For two hundred and seventeen days the besieged garrison had defied the Boers!

And the night that the great news was received in London caused such scenes of excitement that the word "maffeking" to express tremendous exuberance of spirits, survives till this day.



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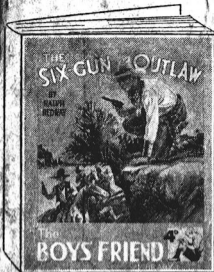
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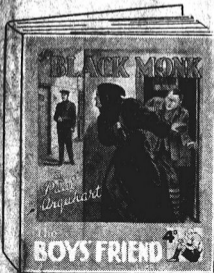
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