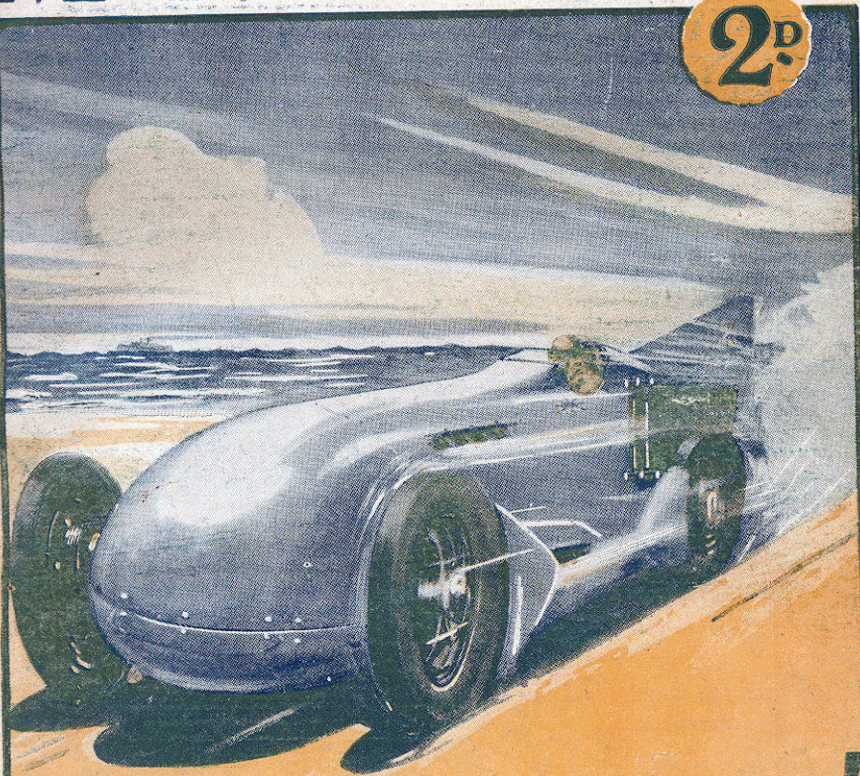


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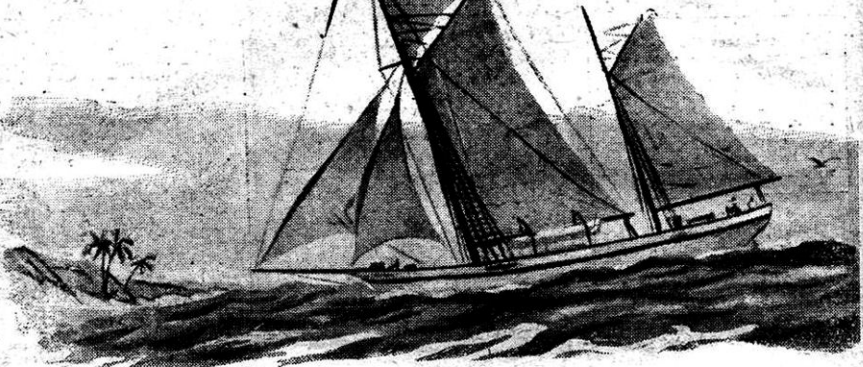


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# King of the



**SIR ALAN COBHAM'S magnificent story  
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## THE BEACHCOMBER FROM FALOO!

**T**HE beachcomber would never have set foot on Lalinge had not King of the Islands chanced to be strolling back to the coral wharf from John Chin's copra warehouse.

For Lalinge, for a South Sea island, was a particular place.

It was not, for instance, like Faloo or Faluenta or Lukwe, where no man cared what he looked like or what anybody else looked like, and where a white man was satisfied with a rag of tapa and a floppy grass hat by way of costume.

Lalinge had an unusually large white population—nearly a dozen white men, all told. It had been visited by the district commissioner and his lady, and though the district commissioner's official residence was three hundred miles away, and the D.C. had probably forgotten the existence of Lalinge, still, that visit had left behind it an influence of respectability that was unforgotten. On that great occasion the district commissioner had worn not only trousers and a shirt, but socks, shoes, and coat—an accumulation of clothing upon which all Lalinge had gazed in awe and admiration.

From that date, if not from an earlier one, there had been an unwritten law on Lalinge. Black men and brown men could dress, or not, as they liked; between the black men and civilised respectability there

was fixed a great gulf, which no man thought of bridging. But on the beach of Lalinge no white man was permitted to tread unless clad in the garments of civilisation.

The beachcomber was a white man, though burnt nearly as brown as a Polynesian by tropic suns. From his veranda, where he was sipping his seventh cocktail, Manager Belnap spotted the fact, and in the same glance the fact that the newcomer was lightly clad in a hat and a native loincloth. A few words in beche-de-mer English from Mr. Belnap, and two brawny, grinning black servants raced down to the beach, reaching it before the canoe from Faloo nosed into the sand and powdered coral. The beachcomber, about to step ashore, was waved back into the canoe, amid a falsetto cackle of merriment from the Faloo paddlers.

The beachcomber was not a hefty man. But if years of alcohol had robbed him of his strength he still had the pride of a white man left, in dealing with niggers, at least. With a burst of language that was uncommon on so respectable an island as Lalinge, and which was punishable by a fine of £5 if reported to the district commissioner—three hundred miles away—the beachcomber strove to force his way ashore. Whereupon Mr. Belnap's black servants collared him without ceremony and pitched him back into the canoe in a gasping, spluttering heap, and yelled with laughter as he sprawled

among the brown legs of the paddlers.

The beachcomber stood up again in the canoe, red with rage, and talked to the black servants in a voice that was heard over most of Lalinge, and with a selection of language that drew Esau Hunk, the American storekeeper, out of his store, to listen in admiring awe. Esau was a master of language that could make even a Kanaka wince, but he admitted that in that particular line the stranger from Faloo had him beat.

It was at this exciting moment that King of the Islands came sauntering back from John Chin's warehouse, where he had spent a busy hour chaffering over copra with Chin's wily Eurasian clerk.

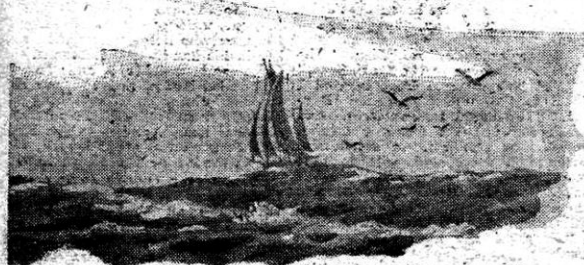
The ketch Dawn lay along the coral wharf, moored, and black men had been busy all day unloading the cargo that Ken King had brought in from the islands.

Kit Hudson was swinging in a hammock aft; Koko, the Kanaka, was singing softly in a crooning voice as he sat on the coaming of the cabin skylight and extracted sweet music from a Hawaiian ukulele. The Hiru-Oa crew—five men with golden-brown skins—their work done, lolled on the wharf and chattered and chewed betel-nut. Three other vessels lay along the coral wharf—Lalinge was a busy place.

Three or four houses with shady verandas stood within easy step of the placid bay, as well as a store, and two or three offices, and a line

# Islands!

SIR ALAN COBHAM and  
C. HAMILTON



his voice, in addressing King of the Islands. "I've come up here from Faloo to see John Chin on business. You tell them niggers to let a man come ashore."

Ken smiled, and shook his head.

"Nothing doing," he explained. "No white man is allowed to land here dressed as a native."

"What?" yelled the beachcomber.

"That goes, on Lalinge," said Ken. "You made a mistake, my friend, in leaving your trousers at home."

The beachcomber stared at him speechlessly for some moments before he burst out again:

"Trousers, is it? What will a man be wanting with them in this climate? Sure there ain't a pair on all Faloo that a man could beg, borrow, or steal!"

"You're from Faloo?" asked Ken, eyeing the beachcomber with interest.

"Name of Donlan, from Faloo," answered the beachcomber, "with business for John Chin, and a bag of golden sovereigns at the end of it. And them black vermin keeping a man afloat, and I dying of thirst, by the howly saints!"

"I can fix it for you," said Ken soothingly. "You see that ketch yonder, along the wharf?"

"Yis, sorr."

"Tell your paddlers to take you to it. It's my ship, and if you'll step aboard I'll fix you with a shirt and calico bags. You can't land in Lalinge without."

"If I was ten years younger, with tin years less dhrink in me, I'd pitch them niggers to the ground sharks!" growled the beachcomber. "They're plenty too much particular on this island, sorr. But I'll take ye're offer and thank you kindly for that same, sorr. Here, you feller boy, you washy-washy um ketch plenty quick, or I knock seven bells outer you."

The grinning Faloo paddlers took the canoe round towards the Dawn. Ken, smiling, walked along to the wharf, and stepped over the low rail of the ketch as Donlan of Faloo reached it on the other side.

## THE TREASURE OF MAFOO!

KIT HUDSON

Keyed the wreck of a man with strong disfavour on the deck of the Dawn. He

had all a "White Australian's" contempt for a white man who had "gone native." Koko the Kanaka grinned a broad grin at the tattered beachcomber, and ducked his dusky head. To the Kanaka a white master was a white master, even in such a guise. The man looked like a native, and squatted on the deck like a native, indifferent to the stares of the crew and Hudson's disfavouring glance. Ken explained the matter to Kit, whose frowning face broke into a grin. He had heard of the

of warehouses. Farther off were the grass houses of the natives of Lalinge. Brown men in tapa kilts, brown girls in the neat and graceful lavava, moved on the shining beach, or under the feathery palm-trees, with bright, careless faces.

The whole scene was peaceful, almost idyllic, save for that one spot where the beachcomber stood in the canoe, a blotch on the bright landscape.

Ken King slackened his already leisurely stroll as he came nearer, and stopped at last on the beach opposite the canoe, looking on.

The flow of language from the beachcomber did not please him.

But the man was a white man, and looked sober at the moment, though his looks showed that his sober hours were few. Even a beachcomber in a tapa rag and a battered hat was a white man, and not to be handled by black men unless for very good reasons indeed.

So King of the Islands looked into the matter as he passed, little dreaming to what it was to lead.

"Belay that!" he called out to the man from Faloo. "That kind of talk won't catch you any fish, you know!"

The man transferred his attention from Mr. Belnap's black servants to King of the Islands, and his mouth opened again for a new volley of profanity addressed to Ken. But something in the boy trader's look checked him, and the volley remained unuttered. Possibly the wretched

loafer of the Pacific beaches realised that one drive from the sturdy young sailor's arm would have lifted him out of the canoe and dropped him into the bay. Ken's keen, cool glance, at all events, quelled the man, and blessed silence descended on the beach of Lalinge.

"Now, you feller boy!" Ken turned to the black servants, Ysabel men with kinky hair and brawny limbs. "You feller boy, what name you lay feller hand on white master?"

"Feller master Belnap, him say no comey-shore feller island," explained one of the Ysabel men, grinning.

**KEN KING, known as King of the Islands, trading in the South Seas in his ketch, the Dawn, rescues a Kanaka called Koko, who tells him that he was bo'sun on board the Shark, a schooner belonging to a Captain Samson, and that Samson has ordered him to be killed for trying to rescue Kit Hudson, a prisoner on board the Shark. Kit is to be eaten by land-crabs unless he discloses the whereabouts of John Chin's secret pearl island. Ken rescues Hudson, and takes him on board the Dawn. They are pursued by Bully Samson, but Ken lures the Shark on to a sunken reef and sinks her. He then makes Samson and his crew prisoners, maroons them on a lonely island, and sails for Lalinge to see John Chin. (Now read on.)**

"White feller um canoe no can—you look eye belong you, sar, you see white feller him no got feller trousers, sar."

Ken stared for a moment, and then grinned.

He had forgotten, but now he remembered that particular law on Lalinge, of which the beachcomber from Faloo seemed unaware.

"Me see plenty," agreed Ken.

"What the thunder is the row about?" roared the beachcomber, moderating his language, though not

# King of the Islands!

(Continued from previous page.)

particularity as to costume that obtained on Lalinge and distinguished that island from other Pacific islands that were not so particular.

"A man's thirsty, sorr," said Donlan, with the accent of an island far from the Pacific.

"Lime or lemon?" asked Ken. "Nothing stronger on this craft!"

The beachcomber made a grimace.

His thirst was not, apparently, of the kind that could be quenched by limejuice or lemonade, and he let the subject drop. Koko, at a word from King of the Islands, fetched up the calico shorts and shirt without which the man from Faloo could not land. Donlan was in no hurry to encase his limbs in them, however.

For many a long year he had clad himself like a native, and garments irked him as they irked an islander.

"You came along to Lalinge to see John Chin, the Chink?" asked Ken. "Yis, sorr!"

"He's away down at Papete; I've just been doing business with his man; you'll have to wait some days."

Donlan opened his mouth for a curse, which seemed to come to him more naturally than breathing. But he checked it under Ken's quiet glance.

"It's hard luck, sorr, and so it is," he said, "and I down to my last bit of shell money, which I gave them niggers to paddle me along from Faloo. And a bag of golden sovereigns waiting to be picked up."

And the beachcomber sighed a deep, long sigh, inspired by the thought of the amount of strong drink that could be obtained for a bag of golden sovereigns.

King of the Islands eyed him curiously.

"Golden sovereigns?" he repeated. "That same, sorr!"

"You've been dreaming on the beach of Faloo," said Ken, laughing. "Golden sovereigns haven't been seen in the islands for a long time. It's paper money now."

"Don't I know it, sorr!" grunted the beachcomber. "But it was golden sovereigns before the War, and many's the chief in the islands who has bags of them stored away in secret places. The Government can say what it likes, but th' niggers'll never bring out their golden sovereigns to change for paper. Oodles and oodles of 'em packed away in tapa mats in these islands, sorr."

King of the Islands nodded.

He was aware of that; in the way of trade, he had found, like other traders, the difficulty of inducing the natives to take paper money in payment for copra and pearl-shell.

To the native mind, a golden coin was a golden coin; and a paper pound was a piece of paper which they regarded with uneasiness and suspicion. They could buy the white men's goods at the white men's store with the paper money, but the uneasiness and suspicion remained. Chiefs who stored up treasure wrapped

in tapa mats, in secret places, preferred the solid coin, which had a fixed value that they understood. No doubt they were wise, in a way; for, although the paper pound bore the same face value as a sovereign, the rise in prices which always accompanies the issue of paper money gave it a different buying value.

"And you've got on to some chief's stack of sovereigns?" asked Kit Hudson.

"That's telling, sorr," said the beachcomber. "I'm telling that to the man who'll hear the story and find a ship to lift the sovereigns and go shares with Patrick Donlan fair and square. I've heard that John Chin's a square man, though he's a Chink."

"Square as a die," said Ken. "The whitest Chinaman in the South Seas."

"But he's gone to Papete, and I down to the beach!" groaned Donlan. "It's hard luck intirely. And the moment I set me foot ashore, and a man stands me a drink, and sure some kind soul will do that same, the whole story will come out as fast as the drink goes in, and there'll be a crowd after old Mafoo's quids, and where'll I be then?"

"Keep off the liquor," suggested Hudson.

The beachcomber gave a contemptuous snort. Evidently he regarded the Cornstalk as having suggested an impossibility.

He sat disconsolate, blinking about him in the strong sunlight. He gave a sudden start as his eyes fell on the whaleboat, and he read the name Dawn painted in white letters. His glance came back eagerly to the boy trader.

"Is it the Dawn, this ketch?" he exclaimed.

Ken nodded.

"Howly Moses! Then one of you will be King of the Islands!" exclaimed the beachcomber.

"You've heard of me?"

"Is there a man between the Paumotu and Hawaii that hasn't? You're King of the Islands, and a square man." The gaunt, bearded face of the man from Faloo was eager and tense. "You'll serve my turn as well as John Chin, and better. You're a white man, and he's after all only a Chink. You'll go half shares in Mafoo's bag of sovereigns?"

"You can spin the yarn if you like," answered King of the Islands. "We're weighing anchor in the morning for the Marquesas, but we can take in Faloo on the way, if there's anything doing."

The tale came out with sputtering eagerness.

Mafoo, chief of one of the tribes that lived on Faloo, was dead. He was well-known, according to Donlan, to have accumulated a treasure from his trade in copra and pearl-shell with the white skippers. In his own tribe Mafoo used the shell-money of the natives, and no man on Faloo knew what became of the gold money he drew from the traders, year after year. Tribesmen and inquisitive relatives, who had been too curious on the subject, had gone to the cooking-pot; and the same fate had, at long last, overtaken the ancient chief, and he had furnished "kal-

kai" in his own turn. But on the island of Faloo, though many sought, none had found the secret hoard of the old chief; and Donlan had, or believed that he had, a clue.

In his years of beachcombing on Faloo, Donlan had kept his eyes, as well as his mouth, open. Many times, he declared, while sleeping off a "soak" in the shade, he had seen old Mafoo stealing away in the high bush, towards a certain spot which was called in the native dialect the Place of Skulls—taboo to the islanders. There, he was assured, Mafoo had hidden his store of golden coin; there, now that Mafoo had gone to the cooking-pot, it still lay hidden, waiting to be lifted. But the man who lifted it would take his life in his hand. The tribesmen were fierce and watchful; and he who had killed Mafoo, and was now chief in his place, was searching for Mafoo's hoard; and Faloo was a cannibal island, and—

The beachcomber ran on at great length, while the comrades of the Dawn listened.

It was easy enough to guess why the wreck of a man had not undertaken the quest himself. Strong drink had sapped his nerve, and he dared not face the peril of the cannibals, he dared not penetrate into the depths of the high bush where head-hunters lurked watchful for prey. He had combed the beach at Faloo, but he had always been careful to keep out of trouble with the natives. And the mere suspicion in the native mind that a man was hunting Mafoo's treasure would have meant the worst of trouble—sudden death in the high bush, or the cooking-ovens in the native village.

"You'll try it on, sorr," urged the beachcomber. "King of the Islands is the man for the job. I'll be waiting here on Lalinge till ye come back, and I'll trust ye entirely on your word. Ye'll stop at Faloo in the way of trade, as I've no doubt ye've done before—"

Ken nodded.

"And ye'll go into the high bush unbeknownst to the maygurs," said Donlan, "and ye'll—"

"And we'll leave our heads to be smoked in the canoe-houses of Faloo!" said Kit Hudson grimly.

"It's a risk, sorr, but ye won't pick up oodles and oodles of golden sovereigns without a risk anywhere in the South Seas."

"That's true," said Ken, with a laugh. "If you've got it right, Donlan, the treasure belongs to the man who lifts it. The chief who murdered old Mafoo can't be entitled to take it as a reward for killing him."

Donlan stared at him. The moral aspect of the matter, which King of the Islands desired to settle first, did not appeal to the beachcomber. But the human wreck realised that he was dealing with a man very different from himself, and he nodded.

"The good belongs to nobody," he said. "Old Mafoo's family—that that he hadn't killed himself—forgot him to the cooking-oven Ta'a'ava, the new chief, is not of his blood. The good's nobody's till it's lifted, and it belongs to the man that

lifts it. You'll lift it, King of the Islands—you're the man for the job."

"I'll think it over," said Ken. "And you'll find me tin pounds, maybe, to see me through till you come sailing home with the golden sovereigns?"

"If I take it on—yes."  
And with that the beachcomber of Faloo had to be content.

### THE ISLAND OF TERROR.

**N**IGHT on the Pacific. Under the clustering stars the Dawn glided out of the bay of Lalinge.

King of the Islands had thought it over and consulted with his comrade, and they had decided.

It was possible that the tale of Mafoo's treasure, hidden in the "taboo" spot in the high bush of Faloo, was a figment of the drunken beachcomber's imagination. But Ken had questioned the man closely, and he did not think so.

In his trading through the islands he had heard many a time of Mafoo and his supposed treasure; it was the talk of the island men. For half a century Mafoo had reigned and traded in Faloo, and it was well known that of all the gold he had received for his copra, none had left the island again. Somewhere on Faloo there was a stack of Australian sovereigns—that was as sure as anything could be.

The question was, whether Donlan was right in his belief that he had spotted the hidden place. That question could only be answered on the spot by searching.

The treasure, as the beachcomber had said, belonged to the man who could lift it. Mafoo, had he been able to express any further wish, certainly would not have wished his hoard to go to Ta'a'ava, the chief who had sent him to the cooking-oven.

Having made up his mind, King of the Islands lost no time; he knew that there was no time to lose.

Ashore in Lalinge the beachcomber—provided with the indispensable garments which the social code of Lalinge exacted—was provided also with cash to see him through while the Dawn sailed to Faloo. The beachcomber's refreshments were likely to be more liquid than solid; which meant that by the next day all Lalinge would be in possession of the story. It was a case, as Ken told his comrade, with a grin, of going early to avoid the crush. More than one craft, white and native, would be heading for Faloo when the tale of treasure had been told along the beach.

And ten minutes after Donlan had gone ashore the ketch was unmoored, the sails shaken out, and King of the Islands headed for the open sea. Long before the sun rose on the Pacific the ketch was many a long mile from Lalinge. With the trade wind filling mainsail, topsail, and foresail, the graceful little craft sped across the blue waters of the Pacific.

"How many quids, Ken?" asked Kit Hudson, with a laugh, as King of the Islands stood watching the sea for the tall palm-trees of Faloo, in the blazing sun of the southern morning.

"Who knows? Old Mafoo must have handed thousands in his time," said Ken. "They say he never parted with one, but that may be gammon. But somewhere on Faloo there must be a stack of them; and if we lift a thousand pounds to share with Donlan that will pay better than drumming round the islands for copra."  
"And if the blacks catch us drumming round after Mafoo's treasure we—"

Ken's face was grave.  
"We're taking the chance," he said. "There's a big risk. I'm not denying that we're taking a big chance of leaving our heads to be smoked by the devil-doctors of Faloo."

"Life's full of chances like that in the Pacific," said Hudson carelessly. "We'll pull it off."  
Koko's voice rang out.  
"Him feller land!"

The island of Faloo was rising from the Pacific ahead. First the cone of a volcanic hill, the sides crusted with lava that glistened in the sun; then the palm-trees at a lower level; then the dazzling beach, the lagoon, and the coral reef on which the surf broke

in clouds of spray. It was an island of the Pacific similar to hundreds of others, and familiar to the eyes of Ken King. By the lagoon could be seen the trader's house—there was only one trader on Faloo—only one white man now that Donlan, the beachcomber, had gone to Lalinge. But King of the Islands did not head for the lagoon and the house of the trader, as he would have done had he been drumming for copra, as when he had last visited Mafoo's Kingdom. The Dawn swerved to the northward, and a jutting headland shut out the lagoon and the trader's house from view, and the grass houses of the islanders that clustered along the shining water.

Within a mile of a sandy beach, backed by palm-trees, without a sign of an inhabitant, the Dawn coasted along.

More than one tribe inhabited Faloo, and warfare was frequent, especially near the dates of the native feasts, when victims were wanted for the cooking-ovens. Between the native settlements, therefore, were wide,

(Continued on page 16)



Shining from the blackness was what looked like a human face, a dozen feet from the earth. "Him aitooi! Him debble!" babbled the Kanaka.

# King of the Islands!

(Continued from page 13.)

uninhabited tracts given over to high bush, where black bushmen lurked seeking the heads of victims, caring little to what tribe they belonged.

King of the Islands drew the little ketch, at last, inshore, and glided into a narrow inlet sheltered by great rocks that almost hid the masts from the land side.

At a word the Hiva-Oa men swarmed aloft, the sails were taken in, and the Dawn rode at anchor a dozen yards from a shore that dropped steeply to a bottom sixty feet below.

The sun was sinking now behind the tall lava-crustured hill of Faloo. Ken stared thoughtfully towards the shore. There was no sign of human life; but of other life there was plenty—lizards crawling on the rocks, hideous crabs limping on the sand, sea-birds calling among the cliffs. Beyond the rocks that shut in the narrow inlet lay the high bush—already deepening in shadow as the sun sank lower into the bosom of the ocean.

"We've not been seen," said Ken in a low voice. "Every ship that comes to Faloo, whether for trade or recruits, anchors in the lagoon. Nobody will be looking for a craft hereabouts. But we shall have to strike across the island to get to the Place of Skulls—"

"You know the place?"  
"Yes; a grove a mile back from the lagoon—two miles or more from this side—where human sacrifices have taken place for centuries. White men are never allowed to see the place—it's taboo even to the natives, except the chiefs and the devil-doctors—but I met a man at Nuka-Ihiva who claimed to have seen it, all the same; a place piled high with the bones of dead men, with smoked heads hanging from the trees—"

Hudson shuddered.  
"Not a pleasant spot," said Ken. "But just the spot that old Mafoo would be likely to choose to hide his hoard. I fancy that the beachcomber was right there, though he never had the nerve to follow Mafoo to the place. I can steer a straight course through the bush. It will be dark in a few minutes now—"

"I'm coming with you, Ken."  
King of the Islands shook his head. "Must leave a white man on the ketch, Kit. This ship would be pie to the natives if they spotted it here—and they may. You've got to keep an eye wide open and a Winchester handy."

"Trust me for that. The Dawn will be safe while you're away. But hate you going into the bush alone."

"I'm taking Koko with me."  
Kaio-lalulalonga plenty glad come along little white master," said the Kanaka.

"Hark!" muttered Hudson.  
From the darkening island, ringing strangely, eerily from the black shadows of the high bush, came an echoing, lingering cry.

So strange and wild, from the

silence of the deepening darkness, that even King of the Islands started and caught his breath.

"My sainted Sam!" he muttered.

"What—"

Hudson breathed hard.

"It's like—like—"

"Aitoo!" muttered Koko, with chattering teeth. "Him aitoo-debble howl along bush, sar!"

"Rubbish!" snapped Ken.

"There it is again!"

For a second time the long, piercing cry rang from the high bush, echoing and lingering among the rocks of the inlet for long, long moments before it died away into silence.

It was not heard again. Silence, deep and deathly, settled on the island as the last rays of the sun vanished and blackness wrapped Faloo from sight.

## FOES OF THE DARK.

**K**IT HUDSON was the first to break the silence.

"A night bird, perhaps—"  
He did not finish. He knew that it was a death-cry that had echoed from the depths of the high bush on Faloo.

Ken gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders.

"Some devil's work of the black devil-doctors," he said. "It's over now, at any rate. You feller boy lower him whaleboat."

The Hiva-Oa men stood in a cluster, listening with bent heads and scared faces for a repetition of the terrible cry. But they stirred at Ken's voice, and the boat dipped to the calm water of the inlet.

Kaio-lalulalonga ventured to lay a brown hand on Ken's sleeve.

"Little white master, him debble howl along bush, you no go shore."

"You talk foolish mouth belong you—I get plenty angry," said Ken sharply. "Get your knife and an axe, Koko!"

"Him debble along bush—"

"You plenty fraid, you stay along ship," said Ken contemptuously.

"Feller King of the Islands go alone!"

Koko shook his head.

"Me plenty fraid debble along bush, but me go along little white master," he said. "Me no common Kanaka."

"Get a move on, then!" said Ken, with a grin.

And the big Kanaka, his terrors of the aitoo in the bush subdued by his devotion to King of the Islands, dropped into the whaleboat.

"Keep a sharp look-out, Kit!"

"You bet!"

Lompo and Eufa pulled the whaleboat to the narrow strip of beach at the foot of the great cliffs. The greater part of Faloo was of volcanic rock, pushed up from the sea long ages since. On the beach, with powdered coral and sand, Ken's feet trod the dust of ancient eruptions.

The whaleboat slipped back to the ketch, leaving Ken and Koko on the shadowy beach. Ken heard the deep-drawn breath of the big Kanaka close by his side. To the superstitious mind of the islander the blackness was peopled by aitooes of unknown and terrible powers. But

Kaio-lalulalonga, as he truly said, no common Kanaka. In spite of the imaginary eyes of aitooes that looked at him from the shadows he was prepared to follow the boy trader to life or death. Only his dilated eyes rolled gleaming, and he breathed hard and fast.

"You feller Koko follow on," said Ken.

"Yessar."

Ken plunged into the shadow of the rocks, and trod past the cliffs to where the bush stretched inland—a wide, natural barrier between the tribes that dwell on the lagoon and the hostile tribes on the more northern side of Faloo. Koko followed in his footsteps, suppressing his hurried breathing, lest the aitooes of the bush should hear him. The bush rose high above their heads, shutting off the sky, in which the glittering stars were coming out.

Since he had heard that cry, which warned him that human demons, if not aitooes, were abroad in the bush, Ken did not venture to show a light for even a second. Yet he was at little loss to find his way through the bush. He had taken his bearings carefully before starting, and here and there, when he was able to see the sky, the position of the stars gave him his course.

Suddenly his arm was grasped, and Koko panted in his ear:

"Little master! You look eye belong you, you see aitoo."

"My sainted Sam!" breathed Ken.

Ahead, shining from the blackness, was what looked like a human face, a dozen feet above the earth. Eyes and nose and mouth were marked by green, fluctuating phosphorescent light, and the sudden vision, staring from the blackness of the bush, was terrifying.

King of the Islands snapped his teeth.

"You fool! It's a trick—some trick of the witch-doctors!"

"Him aitoo! Him debble!" babbled the Kanaka.

Grasping his rifle in readiness for use, Ken strode on by the dark bush path towards the floating, grisly face. But Koko was no longer treading in his wako; he stood where he was, shaking from head to heel.

King of the Islands strode on, his face set and his eyes glinting, closer and closer to the hideous face that grinned from the blackness. There was a rustle in the bush, and he spun towards it, his nerves taut. But even as he turned invisible hands grasped him in the darkness, and the rifle was wrenched from his grip-hands, and more hands, innumerable as it seemed, grasped and clutched, amid a muttering of strange, animal-like voices—and King of the Islands, struggling desperately, furiously, was swept from his feet and carried bodily onward—onward through the blackness to the Place of Skulls, to the hidden den of darkness and death.

(What will be Ken's fate in the terrible Place of Skulls? On account what next week's stirring chapters! Order your copy to-day!)