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PACKED WITH GOOD THINGS!

The Phantom Fiddler!



Christmas Eve in the South Seas; young Jim King—king of the Islands and his crew aboard the Dutch Dawn, bound, completely unsuspecting, for the dangerous coast of the South Sea, and early strains of a THUNDER, and the great adventures in well under way!

A Long and Complete Story
BY
CHARLES HAMILTON.

Out of the Fog.

"IT'S like home, anyhow!" said Kit Hudson.
Ken King, owner and skipper of the Dutch Dawn, laughed.
"Home," to the skipper of the Dawn, was the little island in the South Sea, many thousands of miles away.

Like home, perhaps, it was; but there was little comfort in that to the skipper and crew of the Dawn.
Christmas Eve south of the Equator should have been brilliant with sunshine, humming with heat. So it had been till the squall came, and after it the fog.

It was Christmas Eve; and the ship's bell told that it was the hour of sunset, though of the sunset no gleam could be seen. The dark blanket of fog that covered sea and sky had blotted out the sun. Through the fog came gusts of wind and rain.

"Like home?" repeated Ken, known through the length and breadth of the South Seas as King of the Islands. "Ay, ay! We might be in the North Sea instead of the Pacific! When will it clear?"

"Not tonight!" said Hudson.
"Teller for by stop along sea, sleep night, along now day he come!" said Kato-hahiloonga the foreman earnestly.

Kato-hahiloonga, Kato for short, a giant Kanaka stood at the wheel. The lights of the Dawn, red and green, were drowned by the vapour a few yards from the boat. The katihairly rain crashed through the water. On these wild, waste waters there was little danger of collision with another vessel—ships were few and far between. But there were reefs, shoals and uncharted; and there was the chance, at least, of some trading ketch or cutter or of some native canoe speeding under its lug-sail. In the blanket of impenetrable fog a skipper could not be too careful.

Loupo, one of the five Hava-On boys who formed the crew, standing in the bows, blew blasts upon the foghorn at intervals. In the wide South Seas, Board of Trade regulations are often broken. But King of the Islands was a careful skipper. Loupo, blowing the horn with great gusto, was as pleased as a child with a tin trumpet, in the happy, simple way of the Kanaka boy. But even Loupo's powerful blasts on the horn were blurred and drowned in the blanket of fog.

King of the Islands stared into the drifting vapour and frowned. The Dawn was bound for Lallago, and Ken had hoped to make the harbor that night. Never, if he could help it, would the boy trader pass his Christmas Day at sea. At Lallago

there were many friends to welcome him; and Christmas was still Christmas, even under a tropic sun. But the fog had swooped down on the boat and held her enmeshed. Under sail the Dawn would have been much more likely to arrive in Thy Jones' harbor than in the lagoon of Lallago!

Hudson, who looked on the bright side of everything, seemed to derive some satisfaction from the weather reminding him of home. Nevertheless, he peered into the banks of fog as anxiously as the boy skipper.

Kato, standing at the life wheel, stared into the vapour more anxiously than either of the shipmates. Ken and Kit were thinking of possible reefs, but other thoughts were in the mind of Kato-hahiloonga. Ken noticed, at last, the unconscious of the Kanaka.

"What you think, see, eye belong you, Kato?" he asked.

"No see, eye belong me, see!" answered Kato-hahiloonga. "Tioke hear, ear belong me."

"The wind!" said Ken.
Kato shook his dusky head.

At intervals there came, through the banks of vapour, a wall of wind. Ken had given it no heed; but the Kanaka was listening with uneasy intention.

The Phantom Fiddler!

"No feller wind, sar?" he said, at last.
"Feller wind he talker, yousar; other feller voice he come."

"You swah?" said Ken, laughing.
"What feller voice do you think you hear?"

"Feller voice he hear! along sar!" answered Koko.

"Besay that, you lubber?"

Koko was absolutely silent; but he was bending his head to listen, and there was sunny dread in his face. The fog was so thick that even the length of the hatch could not be seen. From the misty deck Ken caught a glimpse of the face of Danny, the cocky-boy, with whitely-ringing eyes, full of fear. Evidently Danny also fancied that he heard the voice of a wanderer crying through the fog.

From the shadowed sea came a prolonged, piercing wail, and King of the Islands started. Hudson uttered an exclamation.

"My hull! Was that the wind, Ken?"

Ken breathed quickly.

"My sainted Sars! It must have been—and yet—"

His backer off. He knew that that piercing wail was not the wind. The bay trader held his head to listen. There was silence on the sea, save for the wash of grey-green water under the rail and the booming of Lampo's horn at regular intervals.

But suddenly, out of the shadowed silence, came that wild wailing again—sharp, piercing, penetrating the thick fog sharply.

"That's not the wind!" breathed Hudson.

Ken shook his head.

Kato - Iahlabanga's teeth were chattering. The Kanaka, brown as a lion in facing mortal foes, was as superstitious as all his race, and fringed with a deadly fear the silence that haunted the fog and the darkness. From the shadowed deck came a whispering howl from the cocky-boy.

"Aitoo he howl along sar!" muttered Koko. "Aitoo he make feller sailman walk about along bottom sea. Ah! Air!"

"Holey it, I tell you!" sniggered Ken.

But his own nerves were tingling. His eyes met Hudson's, startled, questioning. What was the strange wild wailing that came from the heart of the fog, from the wild wastes of the sea?

"Hark!" breathed Hudson.

"A fiddle!" ejaculated Ken.

He stared savagely into the fog, striving to penetrate the heavy masses. Wild and wailing came the notes of a violin, piercing the fog, from the lapas of the ocean. It was as if the bow were being drawn at random across the strings. But suddenly the discordant wailing changed to a tune. It was the tone of the old sea chanty, "Blow the Man Down," known to all seafarers. It rang and wailed and rolled through the fog.

King of the Islands almost gasped with relief. For some moments,

listening to the strange wailing in the eerie darkness, he had almost shared the superstitious convictions of the Kanakas.

"A fiddle," he said, in great relief. "and it's being played as a signal from a boat adrift in the fog. And I reckon I know who's fiddling—Peter Prado, the Portuguese half-caste pearl-buyer—he's never without his fiddle. He's lost in the fog, and signalling with the fiddle."

"That's it!" said Hudson, equally relieved.

Both the shipmates knew the pearl-buyer, Prado, a little old half-caste, who might be seen any day making trips among the islands in his whaleboat. Peter Prado and his fiddle were well known from Tahiti to the Solomon. Prado, in his whaleboat, with a single companion, ventured into the most unlikely places in search of pearls or pearls. King of the Islands had seen him at places as far apart as the Paumotu and the cannibal Solomons.

"He's making Lallaga this trip—most likely, and he's caught in the fog as we are!" said Ken. "He may have heard our foghorn, and he's signalling to be picked up. Koko, you lubber, your noise is old Peter Prado with his fiddle."

Kato - Iahlabanga looked very sheepish.

So long as the violin had wailed unceasingly it had been to the ears of the Kanaka a crying woe-wail in the fog. But even a superstitious Islander could not suppose that a woe-wail was crying the tone of a fiddle.

"No tinkie aitoo, sar?" he mumbled.

"You tinkie plenty fool nonsense, head belong you!" answered King of the Islands. "Lucky we heard the fiddle, Kit. We can pick him out in the fog if he keeps it up. It's clear that he hears Lampo blowing the horn. We'll give a signal that we hear him. You fellow lains, you ring bell plenty too loud altogether."

"Yesar."

Lufa clanged on the ship's bell; and the sound rang muffled through the vapour. Ken had no doubt that the peal of the bell reached as far as the boat in which Peter Prado and his boatsteerer were hidden in the fog, and told them that their signal was heard.

He signed to Lufa to cease, and listened again for the sound of the violin. But no sound came. The wailing instrument was silent. King of the islands shouted into the fog:

"Aho! Peter Prado! Aho!"

No answer, save the muffled echo of his shouting. The blank wall of fog told nothing.

"He can hear—he must hear. Why doesn't he answer?"

To seek in the thick fog for the drifting boat, unguided, was impossible. Unless there came another signal from the pearl-buyer, King of the Islands could not help him. And there came no signal—only the faint wash of sea against the slowly-gliding hull of the hatch. The fiddle that had wailed so long gave no further sound. Only the faint wash, in the

intervals of the booming of Lampo's horn, broke the deadly silence.

That! Something shadowy struck the back timbers of the Dawn for a second, and bumped off again and vanished in fog. But in that second a figure leaped, catching the rail, tumbled over, and rolled on the deck almost at the feet of King of the Islands.

"Poor Old Prado!"

"MY hat!" ejaculated Kit Hudson.

Ken caught his breath. The sudden apparition from the blanket of dense fog started with the shipmates. Kato-Iahlabanga gave a convulsive start, for the moment believing that an "aitoo" had materialized at last. But next moment the Kanaka could see that it was a man who had suddenly appeared from space and darkness.

It was not Peter Prado, the pearl-buyer, however. Ken knew the little wizened Portuguese half-caste well by sight, and this man was nothing like him. He was white, with curly hair and heavy features—a Dutchman, at a glance. He picked himself up cautiously, peering at the captain and mate of the Dawn, peering. His heavy face was wet from the sea. He leaned on the mizen, peering.

Ken, after one quick glance, ran to the side. He knew that Peter Prado's boat must have thudded against the hatch in the fog, and in the moment of contact the boatsteerer had leaped for safety. The pearl-buyer had not followed him, and Ken searched the fog in vain for the boat. It had slipped off at once after the contact, and if it had been only a dozen feet distant, the keenest eyes could not have picked it up in that thick fog. Ken shouted:

"Peter Prado! Aho!"

But there was no answer. Ken turned back to the mate who was kneeling, peering, on the mizen.

"I think I've seen you before! You're Kraits, Peter Prado's boatsteerer!" he asked.

"Ah, myelook!" pointed the mate, and then immediately spoke in English. "Yes, captain."

"Where is Peter Prado?"

"He fell out of the boat. We heard your foghorn," said Kraits. "My master was playing the fiddle, on a signal—you heard it?"

"We heard it," said Ken.

"When you rang your bell, myelook was standing in the boat—trying to look through the fog. He slipped on the boat dipped—Kraits drew a long, shuddering breath. "I could not save him—in the fog I could see nothing—"

He stood shuddering.

"Then you were alone in the boat when you bumped into us?"

"I was alone, myelook."

"Poor old Prado!" muttered Hudson. "No chance for him, in the water—"

"Noss, I'm afraid," said Ken, with clouded brow. "Once in the water, unless he got hold of the boat or a rope, he was done for—he could not see a yard in this fog. Kraits could

hardly have helped him, if the boat was moving—

"I was pulling for the sound of your fingers, my dear," said Krantz. "I saw him fall—" He broke off, shuddering again.

"Pull yourself together, man," said King of the Islands, kindly enough. "You're not to blame. You did not see him after he struck the water?"

"No, captain."

"Did he call out?"

"I heard nothing. I think he went down—like a stone," replied Krantz. "He was gone—without before I knew what had happened. I was pulling as hard as I could for your fingers, fearful of losing you. But I stopped when he fell overboard, and shouted to him—there was no answer. Then—then I swam on—I tried to see you in the fog."

"Poor old Frank!"

Krantz searched the sea again with his eyes. There was no hope for a man lost in the tossing waters under the blanket of fog. No sign was to be seen of the drifting boat.

Krantz was still painting conscientiously, and his face was white and drawn, as if with horror at the tragedy he had seen. Lumps, in the haze, was still blowing the haze, the blasts blowing away through the fog.

In intervals of silence Ken and Nix talked intensely, in the faint hope of hearing some sound from the sea. The faintest cry from the perilsayer, if he still floated on the hidden waters, might have guided them to his aid. But there was no cry—no sound but the faint, sulken wash of the Pacific.

"Nothing doing," said King of the Islands at last, with a sigh. "Poor old Frank! He's been all over the South Sea in that whaleboat of his, and risked his life a hundred times—but he has made one trip too many."

He turned to Krantz again.

"But did you come to be lost in the fog?"

"It was bright sunshine when my master started from Kiki-kiki," said the boat-steerer. "Then the squall came suddenly, and our sail was blown away. Then—the fog! We were making for Ladings, I know not where we had decided when we heard your horn. Then my master began to play his fiddle as a signal. When we heard your bell ringing, we knew that the fiddle had been heard. And then—"

Again he broke off, shuddering and trembling.

"Get below, my man?" said Ken. "I'll send down food and drink—and you can turn in on the berth on the ladders."

"Ja, my dear?"

Kobe, at a sign from King of the Islands, helped the boat-steerer down his companion. Danny, the cook-boy, took his food and set coffee from the galley.

King of the Islands took another long look at the sea.

"We'll heave-to, Ed," he said.

(Continued on next page.)

STAMPS OF CHRISTMAS.

By F. J. MELVILLE.

President of the Junior Philatelic Society.

ONE of the most curious and interesting stamps ever issued was Canada's Christmas stamp of 1898. I hope you have it, for it is not an expensive one, so that you can have it before you as we talk about it and note some of its wonders.

At first glance one marvels at anyone showing the whole world in the small space of a postage stamp!

The Christmas stamp was issued to mark the introduction of Imperial Penny Postage in 1898, when most of the British dominions and colonies were brought within a penny postage rate with the Mother Country.

This important reform was decided upon when the Duke of Norfolk was Postmaster-General, and it was at first intended to start it on November 14th—the birthday of the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward. And flourish brings a tale!

The Duke, as Postmaster-General, went to the Palace to inform Queen Victoria that it had been decided to extend penny postage throughout her Kingdom.

"And when does this come into being?" asked the Queen.

"We thought of the Prince's birthday," replied the Duke.

In an instant the Queen, ever jealous of her supreme authority, had drawn herself up.

"And what Prince?" she inquired in her most icy tone.

But the Duke was quite equal to the emergency.

"The Prince of Peace, my dear—on Christmas Day," he replied quickly.

That was how the great reform came as a Christmas gift to the Empire on Christmas Day, 1898, instead of a birthday gift a few weeks earlier!

The idea of the map, which has the British possessions marked in red, was the Canadian Postmaster-General's.

He was Sir William Mackay, and on a visit to this country had formed the impression that we Britons really knew very little about the extent of the Imperial dominions, and especially of the great size of Canada compared with our own tight little isle.

Beneath the map the stamp bears the quotation (from a poem by Sir Lewis Morris): "We find a vast

Empire that has been." This motto was ridiculed at the time as unduly bombastic, and the stamp was nicknamed the "has been" stamp!

Owing to the printing of so elaborate a subject in three colours, and in so small a size, repeated in sheets of 100, some of the colours may be found out of register. If you will examine your copies you may find some in which Canada appears to have assumed a large part of the United States, while England has invaded France and the Cape of Good Hope has gone out to sea!

You can find the map stamp in several different shades of the colour used for indicating the oceans; these colours are lavender, greenish-blue, and blue. There is a very rare variety also from which the whole of the red colour denoting the Empire has been left out!

There are several Christmas Islands dotted about the world, but only one of these has a kind of successful postage stamp. This is an island in the Pacific (lat. 17°57' N., long. 157°27' W.) which has probably the largest of all the Pacific's "Mae Juggernauts." It was discovered by Captain Cook on Christmas Eve, 1777.

It is issued for expedition purposes to the Central Pacific Crossed Plantations, Ltd., and this company runs a motor steamer from the island to Papeete (Tahiti) and to Honolulu (Hawaii). The steamer carries mails, (Hawaii). The steamer carries mails, and letters have to bear the Christmas Island stamp, which is denominated 3 cents (about 3d.).

The stamp is not exactly Christmasy according to our notions, for it shows a sunny view of the place in blue, gold, red and green. It gives us a glimpse of the island, with a very blue ocean, over which a golden-red sun is rising. The motor yacht Yacht May is seen arriving at her anchorage, welcomed by Boats of Mrs. one of which is the rare species *Phaenicia hibernica* with its gorgeous red tail.

For our Christmas collection we can get postmarks from some of the other Christmas Islands, notably from the one in the Indian Ocean which is a dependency of our Straits Settlements Colony. There is another Christmas Island in the neighbourhood of Cape Boston, Canada.



The famous "Has Been" stamp of Canada, issued Christmas Day, 1898.



The stamp of the Pacific Island which Captain Cook discovered on Christmas Eve, 1777.

The Phantom Fiddler!

"We're making no headway at this rate, and if there's a chance that Peter Prado is still afloat—"

"Little chance, I'm afraid."

"Little enough; but I remember that he could swim like a fish," said Ken. "We'll lie by, and keep the horns going—if there's a chance in a thousand that Prado's afloat. It's worth while standing by. Anyhow, we can't make Lahanga till the fog lifts—we're looked for Christmas at sea."

"Ay, ay!" assented Hudson.

There was no sleep for the comrades of the Dawn that black night. The Dutch looked lily on the wash of the Pacific. Leds relieved Loras on the forehorn, and hoisting blasts still sang at regular intervals through the dinmace. A little later steps were heard in the companion, and the Dutch boat-stewer came on deck.

Blackness surrounded the rocking hutch. Eerily the foghorn boomed. Krantz peered about. It was barely possible to see across the Dawn from starboard to port rail, though several lanterns swung lighted in the rigging. A startled look came over Krantz's face, and he stepped aft to where King of the Islands stood with his shipmate.

"You have here-to, nyalah?" he exclaimed.

Ken glanced at him. "Ay, ay!" he answered.

"But why, nyalah?" asked Krantz. "So good a skipper as King of the Islands can steer a course even in a sea-fog?"

"I reckon there's some chance that Peter Prado may still be afloat," replied Ken. "I know he swam like a fish."

"But he is dead, nyalah! I tell you that I saw him sink—the sea closed over him—he is dead!" the Dutchman exclaimed.

"More likely than not," said Ken. "But we're staying till the fog lifts. You'd better go below and turn in."

Krantz cast a dark and uneasy glance into the fog.

"Nyalah, you wait here—for a dead man?" he said thickly.

"A dead man, I tell you—a dead man." Ken made an impatient gesture.

"That will do, Krantz. I am skipper of this ship."

"Ja, nyalah," muttered the boat-stewer. He backed away, but did not go below. He remained on deck, his eyes searching the fog.

Ken gave him no further heed. He paced the deck, still listening in the intervals of the hoisting horns, with faint hope still remaining of hearing some cry from the sea. He gave a sudden, convulsive start at a strange, wild, wailing sound came through the blanket of fog.

"Eit!" he gasped.

"Good heavens!" gasped Hudson, and his face blanched.

It was the wail of a violin that came wildly, eerily, through the darkness from the hidden sea.

A cry broke from the boat-stewer. "It is his ghost!" he shrieked. As

if that wild, ghostly wail had struck him like a blow, the boat-stewer fell senseless on the deck.

Haunted!

KING OF THE ISLANDS, his heart throbbing, face suddenly white, listened. In the muffling blanket of fog, it was impossible to tell from what direction came that eerie wailing—like the screeching voice of a demon, ringing and echoing. Then silence again—oppressive and deadly—through which boomed the muffled, blurred notes of the foghorn.

Ken wiped the perspiration from his brow. His eyes met Hudson's, and read in them the startled horror that he knew was in his own.

"Eit!" His voice was husky.

"What—"

"Heaven knows!"

"It was the fiddle—"

"Or its ghost," said Hudson, trying to smile. He stared into the blackness. "Ken, I'd give something to have my feet on dry land this minute!"

King of the Islands made no reply. He dropped on his knees beside the inert figure of the boat-stewer.

"Koko, you bring feller water along here."

"Yessah," answered Koko-lah-longa, in trembling tones. The Kanaka was shaking from head to foot. All his superstitious terrors had returned, intensified by the sound of the ghostly fiddle from the blackness of the sea.

Ken dashed water into the unconscious face of Krantz. It was some minutes before the boat-stewer's eyes opened with a wild stare, then a shudder shook him from head to foot.

"His ghost!" he breathed.

"Pull yourself together," Ken said roughly. "Be a man, Krantz!"

He would have helped the man to rise, but Krantz remained crouching on the deck. His eyes roved round with terrified glances.

"Listen to me, man!" exclaimed Ken impatiently. "That was Peter Prado's fiddle—you heard it—"

"He is dead!"

"You say he fell from the boat. The fiddle—did that remain in the boat when Prado fell overboard?" asked Ken.

The boat-stewer looked at him vacantly, dully. Then, making an effort, he answered:

"Ja, ja! When he fell—the fiddle dropped in the boat." He crouched and listened in terror.

"The boat's still afloat," said Ken. "It drifted off after striking the hutch. If Prado was swimming, he may have found the boat again in the fog, and climbed into it."

The Dutchman looked at him, and a low laugh fell from his lips. He made no other reply.

Ken stared at him hard. A vague suspicion was forming in his mind. He shook the Dutchman again by the shoulder roughly.

"Speak, you lubber! Is he swimming—"

"He was not swimming!" said the Dutchman, in a hollow voice.

"How do you know?"

"He was dead!"

"How do you know he was dead?" Ken's steady stare into the livid face of the boat-stewer was an accusation.

Krantz made no reply. Crouching on the deck, he bent his ears to listen—his attitude like that of a listening beast in the jungle.

"Will you speak?" snapped Ken.

"He was dead!" The words dropped in a trembling mutter from Krantz's lips. "He was dead! It is his ghost!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Hudson.

Wild and wailing, again came the screech of the ghostly fiddle from the fog. It rose and fell, and rose again, and died away. Itcocked the ears of the shipmates as they listened, striving to place its direction. At one moment it seemed near, on the gusty wind; then died to a faint wail, then ceased altogether.

If the man was dead—if, as Ken now suspected, the boat-stewer had the best of reasons to believe that he was dead—what hand was touching the fiddle-strings, drawing those discordant screeches from the strings?

Hudson wiped the dazed perspiration from his brow.

"If this goes on our crews will be in rage soon, Ken," he muttered. "Look at the Kanakas."

Ken set his lips. The Ewa-On crew had drawn in a little group by the mainmast, silent, trembling, terrified eyes searching the fog. Koko-lah-longa was with them, and the cocky-boy had crept out of the galley. They clustered together, shivering with superstitious fear.

The Dutchman dragged himself to his feet. He caught the boy trader by the arm.

"Make sail!" he panted. "Go-go! I tell you he is dead, and his ghost is haunting us. Make sail!"

Ken shook off his hand roughly.

"Little white master," muttered Koko. "Feller dead man his eye on along fiddle belong him. No good stop along dead feller."

"Make sail!" panted the Dutchman.

"Not a cable's length," said Ken between his teeth. "Not a fathom! No dead man ever drew a bow across a fiddle. Peter Prado is alive!"

"He is dead—dead—dead!" yelled the boat-stewer, and in his terror and feverish excitement seized Ken's arm again, and shook the boy trader.

"He is dead—it is his ghost! Make sail! Make sail!"

King of the Islands struck his hand aside.

"If he is dead, you scoundrel, you killed him!" he said angrily. "He did not fall from the boat."

The boat-stewer uttered no denial, but gave a convulsive start at the screech of the fiddle rang out again wildly. There was a host of terror from the Kanakas.

Krantz clung to the wire-rope. But for its support he would have fallen to the deck. His knees sagged under him.

"Make sail!" he muttered. "It is

his ghost! Make sail! He comes—he comes!"

Later, sharper, borne on a gust of wind, the scream of the ghostly fiddle came whirling wildly across the deck of the hulk, as if the ghostly fiddler were under the very mill.

"It's the pearl-bayer," muttered Hudson, through white lips. "He is alive!"

"He is dead!" shrieked Krantz, leaping at the lips. "I tell you he is dead! I struck him with the axe—the fell like a stone into the sea. He is dead! And he comes—he comes!"

The scream of the fiddle rang above the shrieking voice. With foam on his mouth the wretch fell writhing on the deck, streams after streams pouring from his lips.

"Silence, you dog!" shrieked King of the Islands.

Headed at the foot of the mizen the boat-steward moaned in unceasing tears. The last scream of the fiddle rolled earth and died away. Silence came more lay on the sea—silence, and the blackness of the night and the fog.

Nerves!

"CHRISTMAS!" muttered King of the Islands, wiping his damp brow. "What a Christmas!"

Midnight—eight bells. Though the ship's bell did not sound, Kiki-kiki-lalongo, whose duty it was to strike the bell, was huddled amidships with the Kanakas, grey with fear. Midnight had passed, and the long minutes creased by slowly.

It was the morning of Christmas Day, and soon it would be the dawn; though the sunrise would never pierce through the blinding blanket of fog. Like a solid wall it heaved round the drifting hulk, choking, blinding, impenetrable—the blanket that King of the Islands had ever seen in all his days on the Pacific.

The foghorn had dropped from Lupa's shaking hands, Kiki Hudson picked it up and blew loud blasts. If the fiddler was a living man, and no phantom haunting his senses, he must hear the boom of the horn, and signal back. But as yet no answering signal came. The fiddle that had screamed so wildly was silent.

From the wretched man huddled at the foot of the mizen came halting words, disjointed, incoherent, but telling a hideous tale.

"He is dead, I tell you—I struck him with the axe! He had said the

words at Kiki-kiki—he had many thousands of dollars in the belt. I had planned it many times before, but never struck the blow! He fell into the sea!"

Then strode across to the wretch and stood looking down at him with halting brows.

"You killed him, and he fell into the sea?"

"Ja, ja! I killed him!" gasped the boat-steward. "Many times I had planned it, but never dared. Then in the fog it was safe! I heard the bell and knew I should be picked up!"

(Continued on next page.)



Xmas Crackers!

More than 20,000,000 Crackers will be cracked this Christmas, and every one of them ready by hand!

A MAN once spent years and a fortune in inventing a machine which would turn out Christmas crackers. But the only ones it could make were those of the "bread and cheese" variety, as the trade calls crackers of the most ordinary kind.

More than this the machine could not do. Varieties in crackers were beyond it, nor could it manage the insertings of different kinds of gifts. Thus the skill of human hands remained supreme. The inventor retired, broken and disappointed.

Altogether there are about three hundred and fifty different kinds of crackers made every year, and they range from three inches to six feet in length. The latter, however, are made only to order.

In the making of these of the more ordinary kind, the first stage in the process takes place in the machinery room. Here the labels are cut from sheets on which they have been printed, and the coloured labels are clipped with star-shaped edges. The biggest machine among them need turn out paper stockings and hats.

For these a metal pattern is placed on top of a cream of paper which is then carefully manipulated against a quickly moving up-and-down knife. In a few seconds the bulk of paper has been cut through, and hundreds of stockings or hats are ready—except for ginning at the sides.

Hundreds of varieties are employed making the actual crackers, some of them turning out between seven and eight hundred crackers a day. On the bench before them they first lay the coloured wrapper, then lightly pass inside it the strip known as the "snap." Next follows a plain piece of paper for the lining, and sometimes another as a stiffener, and then the motto.

The whole is now rolled round two metal tubes placed side by side, and the tube to the right of the worker is then slightly withdrawn. The cracker at this point is "plashed" by means of a waxed string, which is quickly and lightly wound round it and then unwound. The withdrawn and the eye to the left of the cracker is now tilted up and the small present or paper cap is dropped in through the other tube, which is then withdrawn.

It will interest you to know that some of the little novelties contained in crackers bearing the name of a big firm, such as Tom Smith, come from all parts of the world—America, China, Japan, and other countries, in addition to those of British make.

One word about the "snap." This contains a secret and harmless ingredient for making the crack, and was first introduced into Christmas crackers about sixty years ago.



There's a mighty crack—and a splendid gift for everyone—inside this outside in Christmas Crackers! (Photo by courtesy of the "Sunday Pictorial.")

The Phantom Fiddler!

He is haunting you because I killed him! He will follow me! Make well—make well! (His master goes.)

Dutch and English came mixed from his painted lips.

"You scoundrel!" said Ken. "You scabbed him!"

The boat-steward shuddered. As if reminded by Ken's words, he thrust a hand under his shirt, drew out a leather bag, and threw it across the deck. Hudson stooped and picked it up. It was crammed with paper money.

"And for that, you murderous dog, you killed him?" exclaimed King of the Islands, in horror.

"Ja, ja! I killed him! And still he follows me! Make well!"

Ken turned his back on the cowering, huddled wretch. The half-delirious voice continued to waver wildly.

Ken came softly to King of the Islands, silent as bare feet. He touched the boy trader's arm.

"Little master, no good stop along dead feller," whispered the Kanaka. He seemed to fear to speak aloud, and his scoured eyes rolled as if watching for some guilty shape to leap into sight from the fog. " Plenty no good stop along dead feller, not."

"Feller sing out, sing fiddle, no dead feller, you fool!" Ken snapped angrily. "Himself we find was feller, he plenty much alive."

"Dusman he kill me—he plenty dead altogether," pleaded Koko. "No good stop along dead feller."

"Belay it!" "Spoke we stop along dead feller, we all dead feller, walk about along bottom sea!" muttered Koko-lalala-lala.

"You fool feller talk, mouth belong you?" snapped Ken.

His nerves were getting on edge.

"Little master"—Koko-lalala-lala made a gesture towards the cowering boat-steward—"dead feller he feller along ketch, wretch Dusman. Spoke we make drop feller Dusman along sea, plays dead feller he no well about any more altogether."

King of the Islands smiled faintly and shook his head. Evidently Koko presumed that the spirit of the murdered pearl-hayer would be satisfied

if justice was done upon the assassin. To his simple mind it was plain that Peter Prado was haunting the ketch because the murderer was on board her.

"You talk fool feller talk, Koko," answered Ken. "Peter Prado he no dead feller. Dead feller he no sing out along fiddle."

"Dusman kill me—he plenty dead."

King of the Islands made an impatient gesture and turned away. He joined Hudson, who was striving hard to bring the boat into the wall of fog.

"A merry Christmas!" muttered Hudson mutely, lowering the helm and breathing hard.

get away from this, whatever it is—"

"We can't abandon him if he's living—"

"No," said Hudson, with a deep breath. "I'm far standing by while there's a chance that a living man wants our help. But that dead yonder struck him down and believes that he killed him. It's certain that he fell from the boat; only Koko was in it when it came alongside for a moment. If we had not heard the fiddle again—"

"A dead man's hand never pulled a fiddle-bow! It's a signal from a living man, Kit."

"Then why doesn't he signal again—our path for the ketch? He must have the boat."

"He is lost! He way he badly hurt — Hoozer know! But it's no phantom, and if he's living we've got to save him."

King of the Islands set his lips and peered into the blackness. To make sail and circle in the fog, seeking the pearl-hayer, was hopeless without a signal to guide him. It was impossible to see two yards from the ketch. To seek him in the whalloon was out of the question—was a cable's length from the ketch there would have been no hope of finding the Dawn again in that black blanket of fog.

There was nothing to be done but to wait—wait and listen. If the screech of the fiddle came again, then—

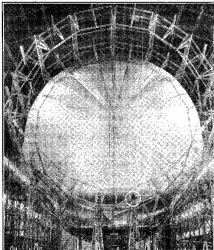
Why did it not come? Was it a man terribly hurt who had seen out that last despairing signal,

desperately drawing the line across the strings till his strength failed him? Or was it— In spite of his old King of the Islands was now to yielding to the suggestions lower that mustered his crew and the wretch huddled at the foot of the winch.

From the huddled boat-steward, cowering and trembling, still came the halloo of disconnected words, in mingled Dutch and English.

"I killed him! Thousands of dollars he wog! Go wog! Make well. I tell you—it is his ghost! Listen wj on gam! Make well!"

"Silence!" shouted King of the Islands angrily.



This photograph gives you an idea of the amazing framework of the gigantic structure H. 101, now under construction. You can judge of its tremendous width by comparison with the man on the ladder—marked with a circle. See article on opposite page.

"What do you make of it, Kit? The man can't be dead—a dead man couldn't handle a fiddle-bow! That scoundrel yonder must have faded. Not—"

He stared savagely into the fog. "If we get under way we've soon likely then not to raise her. Could he have got back into the boat? He must have—and yet—"

"I don't know what to think. Sailorman say that a murdered man's ghost will follow the ship that has the murderer on board—"

"Kit! You can't—"

"No! But—it's too necessary, Kit! I'd be glad to be rescued in the lagoon at Lalage." Hudson shuddered. "We could make sail and

And for some moments the babbling died away, only to recommence. Finally, through the heavy drifting vapour, came a glimmer, telling that the sun was rising beyond the fog-barrier. It was the dawn of Christmas Day—such a Christmable as King of the Islands had never known, and hoped never to know again. Far above the masses of fog the sun was shining, but only the point of glimmers reached the craft that drifted in an abyss of shrouding mist. Still, strain his eyes as he might, King of the Islands could see less than a father's length beyond the rail.

If but a signal would come from the eerie silence! Phantom or living man, Ken longed passionately to hear the signal from the unseen fiddler wrapped in the fog.

And his wish was suddenly granted. Following a blast on the horn, there came a dissonant screech from the darkness; so suddenly, so wildly, that it made Ken start convulsively, and brought a scream of terror from the Kanakas, a shriek of despair from the huddled figure at the cabin.

Scowls an screech, really disconcerting, wailing through the fog! It was clear now—clear, louder, shriller, louder to and fro in the blurred misting! Living man or phantom, the fiddler was close at hand. Then suddenly the screech something changed to the tone of "Blue the Man Down!" The huddled figure at the cabin staggered up.

"He comes!" shrieked the boat-steerer. "He comes! Go west! Go west! Save me!"

"Silence!" shouted Ken. He sprang to the rail. From the shrouding shadows came a moving shadow. Dead or alive, the phantom of the mist had come!

King of the Islands stared down across the rail, eyes starting, heart throbbing. The dim shape of a boat loomed from the fog. A man was standing in the boat.

A man ghastly to the sight—bleared with mist, drenched and dripping with sea-water, his face pale as the face of the dead, and circled with blood.

Harsh and the boy trader spell-bound for the moment. Hudson, at his side, gripped the rail. There was a dragging footstep behind the ship-mates, and the boat-steerer stood staring at the figure in the boat. His eyes were starting from his head, and his features worked in convulsion.

"It is he! He comes for me!" shrieked Kruata.

He threw himself across the rail, to plunge to death in the grey water that lapped below.

King of the Islands grasped him, barely in time, and with a swing at his powerful arm heeled him across the deck.

"Lie there, you dog!" grated Ken. "Koko, a rope!"

But for once Kain-i-lah-lahanga was deaf to the voice of his master. With the other Kanakas, he fled across the deck, backing against the further rail, so far as possible from the fearful figure that had emerged from the darkness.

Ken, gritting his teeth, caught up a rope and flung it to the boat.

"Catch!" After the first moment of unscrupulous horror, King of the Islands was himself again.

A hand caught the rope; the ghastly figure in the boat stooped and made it fast. Reared to the rail of the Dawn, the boat floated alongside.

"Stand by, Kit!"

King of the Islands leaped down into the boat. His strong arm supported the feeble, tottering figure of

the boat-steerer. It was no phantom, but a form of flesh and blood that his grasp closed upon; a man cruelly bent, and in the last extremity of weakness, but a living man. At his feet, in the bottom of the boat, lay the fiddle and the fiddle-bow that had saved him.

"Safe now, Peter Frank!" said King of the Islands.

"Si, seker!" hiccoughed the boat-steerer.

The strong arms of King of the

(Continued on next page.)



THIS HERE:
HER SHAPE, AND SECRETS OF THE FRAMEWORK.

LAST week we saw how the R.101 was different in shape from any previous airship, being much shorter and fatter. The way this unusual shape was arrived at was this:

As you can imagine, the huge bulk of the gasbag offers a tremendous resistance to the air at seventy miles per hour, and this needs a great deal of power to drive it. So the first thing the designers did was to find the shape in which to fit the 5,000,000 cubic feet of gas so that it would offer the least resistance.

To do this they used what is called a wind tunnel—a tunnel down which a propeller would be draught at high speed. A wooden model is suspended in this in a delicate balance, and then the resistance of the model can be measured and compared with other models.

You would think that the sort of shape that would be best would be one like a pencil, which would slip through the air almost without parting it. Unfortunately, part of the air's resistance is caused by the air dragging along the outside—"skin friction," as it is called—and here the long pencil shape would be at a disadvantage, as the air would have to run right down the length of it, dragging at it all the way.

In the end it was found that the best shape was one like the R.101, but even fatter. Unfortunately, the shorter an object in proportion to its length the less easy it is to control. Handling-cars and motor-boats are long and narrow, and any sail or material will tell you that short cars or boats are apt to pitch up and down. But by careful design of the controls the designers of the R.101 at length arrived at the present shape—a little narrower than the "best possible," but as easy to control as the Zeppelins.

A factor that adds very much to the head resistance of an airship is the passengers' cabin. If you can imagine the air currents flowing smoothly over the curves of the R.101 and then suddenly meeting a bulge, so that they are swiftly diverted, you will realize why the passengers' cabin would add to the resistance in a way out of all proportion to its actual size. In the R.101, therefore, the actual passengers' accommodation is inside the great airship.

The gas in the R.101, when the containers are full, has a total lifting power of 125 tons. About half of this must be available for passengers, crew, and cargo, and of the rest the seven engines of over 4,000 lbs. each, the engine-cases, the passenger accommodation, the envelope, and gasbags will take up a considerable amount. So you will see that there is not much weight left for the metal framework!

Yet when you realize that this metal framework has to stand all the strains of seventy miles per hour speed, the tug of the engines, the upward pull of the giant gasbags, and the force of the wind blowing on it when it is moved by a mast, you will understand why such careful thought has to be given to its planning.

If you could go to Cardington, where the giant airship is being built (see photograph on opposite page), you would notice girders no feet long which you would think it impossible to lift. Yet they are so light you could throw them about!

Next week we will see how the light construction is combined with sufficient strength to make the R.101 a safe commercial craft.

The Phantom Fiddler!

Islands passed him up to the low rail, where Kit Hudson received him. A few moments more, and King of the Islands had followed him to the deck.

Peter Prado lay a helpless burden in the sturdy arms of the Australian. Now that the strain was over, his senses had forsaken him, and he lay inert, with a face of death.

"Carry him below, Kit!"

Hudson nodded, and bear the little half-caste to the companion. Krantz, handed by the coamings, slunk away in terror. But even on the deck, terrified heads of the boat-steerer it was glancing now that his victim was not dead—that the blow had failed of its object. It was clear to the scared Kanakas; and Koko came hurrying aft.

"No dead feller!" he exclaimed. "He no dead feller, sar?"

"No, you wank!" growled Ken. He pointed to the shivering wretch on the deck. "Put that louse in irons!"

"Yes, sar!"

Hudson carried the pearl-bugger below as easily as an infant. King of the Islands followed him down. There was a clinking of metal as the manacles were fastened on the boat-steerer. Rough hands dragged him below and lodged him in the hold among the water-cocks. There he was left, relieved at last of his shuddering terror of the dead, to wait, in irons, for the justice of the living.

Peter Prado was placed in Ken's bunk in the state-room, still unconscious. Hudson returned to the deck; while King of the Islands did all that could be done for the rescued man. There was a deep cut in the head of the half-caste pearl-bugger, from which blood had flowed freely. In his hands, and the darkness, the manacled had struck wildly, and the blow had not fallen as intended. Ken washed the wound and bound it up. Peter Prado lay like a dead man in the bunk. But the little half-caste was as hard as nails, and Ken had

no doubt that he would pull through. Through that grim Christmas morning, while the Dawn crept slowly through the sea-fog, with boozing here, Ken watched by the side of the man who had been saved. The dark, amber eyes of the Portuguese half-caste opened at last and fixed on the boy trader.

"He spoke in his own tongue, and Ken smiled and shook his head.

"Better not talk!" he said. "You've been through it, hard, Prado—but you'll mend. You're safe on the Dawn now!"

"It was the best stroke—the Dutchman!" Peter Prado spoke faintly, in English. "We were adrift in the fog—and we heard your horn, and the bell. I played the fiddle as a signal—"

"We heard it!" said Ken.

"He struck me with the axe—I fell into the sea!" Prado shivered. "The bag of money—"

"Safe here!" said Ken.

The pearl-bugger lay back, and was silent for a few minutes. But he spoke again, in a low voice.

"I fell in the sea—but a rope was trailing. The sail and mast had been blown away in the squall, the broken ropes drifting. I caught a rope and held on. I was drenched—almost frozen—I could not speak; but I should not have dared to speak; he would have struck again. He thought I was dead, sinking in the sea."

Peter Prado shivered.

"I held on, though my senses were almost gone. When I came to a little I found that the boat was empty—he was gone."

"He got aboard us!" said Ken. "He is in irons now!"

"Rem!" I crawled into the bunk—I was alone—I could see nothing! I sank down—how long, I know not! But when I could move, I seized the fiddle. I heard the horn sounding through the fog. I drew the bow across the strings to signal you—till I fainted again."

"We heard you," said Ken. "We stood by—to wait—"

"And then—and then I found myself in the boat again, lying help-

less by the fiddle. I found I could move, and again I played the fiddle to signal. I could hear the fog-horn—I knew there was a ship! It was the mercy of Heaven that I had not drifted away in the fog. I must have drifted clear."

"Sailor-men say that two vessels adrift will always drift together," Ken said. "It is true!"

"Then I—I saw your light through the fog—the fog. You have saved me, another, from death in the sea and the fog?"

"Your fiddle saved you!" said Ken, with a smile.

Kit Hudson's voice shouted down the companion:

"Night bells; and the fog's lifting!"

"Sleep now!" said Ken, rising from his seat beside the bunk. "The fog's clearing. In a few hours we shall be dropping the hook to the harbor; before Christmas Day is over you will be safe ashore at Lalings."

The rescued man smiled faintly and his weary eyes closed.

Through the lifting sea-fog the Dawn glided on her way. By noon, the vapour had cleared under the burning rays of the sun. A late-icy shower over the ketch as she glided swiftly over blue waters, through swaying steps of mist.

In the distance rose the purple hills of Lalings; at their foot nodding palm groves and the gliding bank, with gulls crying and on the reef. The night of horror had passed away like an evil dream.

"Feller had his werry, war!" said Koko-laliblonga. "This feller be plenty glad see land, eye looking him."

"This feller be plenty glad too, old coffee-house!" grinned Kit Hudson.

"Christmas ashore, after all, Ken!"

"And a Merry Christmas, too?" said King of the Islands.

(Another Christmas, long, complete South Seas gone to meet Honolulu's MURKIN BOY, with young Ben King and his shipmate Kit Hudson crew to the fore.)

CHRISTMAS WISHES

BY AIR!

In order to reach you, certain that the Christmas greetings should reach the fiddler in ample time, a MURKIN BOY reader living in New York was taken by the Great Murgella Air Mail across the Atlantic! They arrived in the evening, shown here.

This is the first time an airmail has ever crossed the vast ocean, the Atlantic from America to Europe, though on other routes the air mail is quite common.

Next year, however, MURKIN BOY reader in America should be able to send their letters regularly across the ocean at a stilling air course. Commander Harvey, of the airmail S-100, hopes to run a regular transatlantic mail service. Thus the reader of MURKIN BOY who addresses the envelope illustration will be able to get his copy of the paper only two days after publication.

