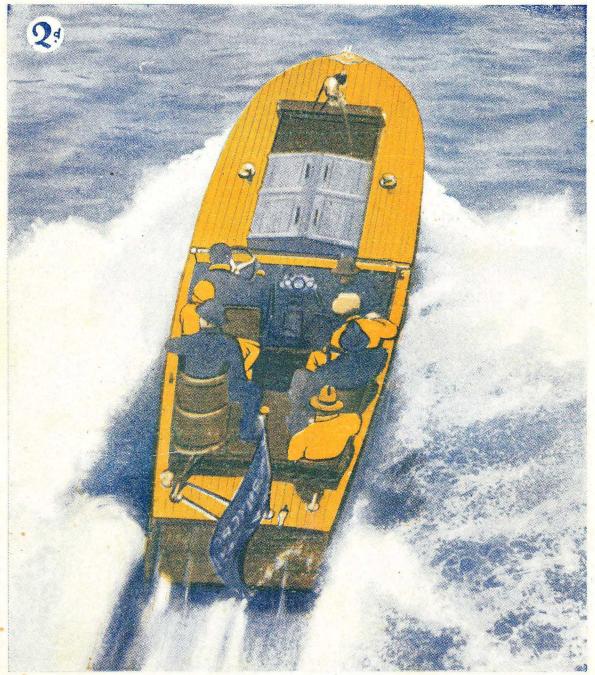
POWER! SOMETHING NEW AND DIFFERENT ALFRED EDGAR.

# EVERY MONDAY. Week Ending June 29th, 1929. No. 73. Yol. 3.



SPEED-THRILLS AT THE SEASIDE! (See page 9.)

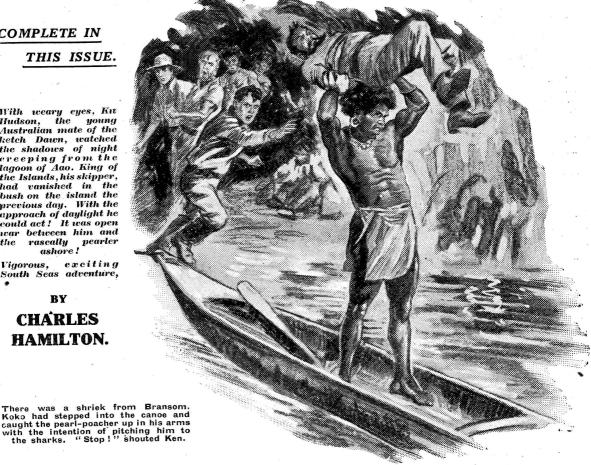
#### COMPLETE IN

#### THIS ISSUE.

With weary eyes, Kit Hudson, the young Australian mate of the ketch Dawn, watched the shadows of night creeping from the lagoon of Aao. King of the Islands, his skipper, had vanished in the bush on the island the previous day. With the approach of daylight he could act! It was open war between him and and pearler ashore! the rascally

Vigorous, exciting South Seas adventure,

BY **CHARLES** HAMILTON.



# GUARDIANS of the CAVE

#### Prisoners!

AINTLY to the ears of Ken King, the boy trader of the Pacific, familiarly known as King of the Islands, came the sound of a paddle dipping into the sharkinfested pool that lay dark and still before the sea-cave on the island of Aao in which he was a prisoner-a cave from which he could not escape, although he was unfettered. Swimming was the only way to freedom, and the sharks were too alert to allow of that.

With him Ken was not alone. were Mr. Poynings, the owner of the island, and the latter's two Nukahiva boys. The boy trader had come to Aao in his ketch, the Dawn, with supplies for the owner, and, suspecting that the white man who had met him was not Poynings, and that something underhand was going on, had determined to remain until he had cleared up the mystery.

Going ashore to investigate, he had fallen into a man-trap. The fall had knocked him unconscious, and he had awakened to find himself in this sea-cave prison, guarded by man-eating sharks.

As the sound of the paddle reached him, the boy trader stepped quickly to the mouth of the cave.

Night was giving place to day. The sea-cave was on the eastern side of Aao. Beyond the pool, blocked in by high rocks, stretched the wide Pacific, and over the rolling waters a glimmer of light was stealing. Faintly, in the shadows, the shape

of a canoe appeared.

Four black boys were kneeling in the canoe paddling. In the stern sat the white man of Aao. In the bottom lay some dark object that Ken King could not make out in the dimness.

The boy trader's heart beat faster. He stepped back from the cave-mouth. Poynings, the pearler, was at his elbow. Back in the cave, in the darkness, were the two Nukahiva boys.

Ken touched Poynings' arm. "He's coming!" he breathed.

"Bransom - the sea-lawyer who

seized my island—"
"Ay, ay! Stand ready!" muttered
King of the Islands. "If he sets

foot in the cave-

Poynings shook his head.

"He won't enter the cave-he dare not. I've been a prisoner here for a week-he has come three times to bring me food; each time he stands off in the pool at a safe distance. And we can't reach him—the sharks —look!" He pointed to the dim pool.

The splashing of the paddles had been enough to disturb the watchful guardians of the pool. From the dim water a black fin rose, and then another. For a moment a hideous snout came into view. The tigersharks were wary.

"We're safe here," muttered Poynings bitterly. "He picked out a safe prison for us. We can't touch him."

Ken was silent, watching. swift dawn of the tropics was already banishing the shadows on the pool. More clearly the canoe came into sight as it glided towards the coral cave.

The pearl-poacher was watching as the canoe advanced, a revolver in his hand. The dawning light glimmered on his tanned, bearded face, with its livid scar.

"Stop along here, you feller boy!" snapped the white man of Aao, and the blacks ceased paddling. canoe came to a stop at two fathoms' distance from the shelf of coral at the mouth of the cave.

The pearl-peacher stood up, scanning the dark interior. A derisive grin came over his face as he discerned the prisoners of the coral cave lurking within.

"You're awake?" he jeered. "Looking for a chance to jump my canoe? You're welcome to all the chance you'll get."

Ken set his lips. There was no chance. The wary rascal did not intend to come within reach. King of the Islands might have reached the canoe with a desperate leap; but only to be struck back into the water. And to enter the water, where the tiger-sharks glided, was death.

"You scum!" said the boy trader, between his teeth. "You've got us; but you're nearly at the end of your My ketch is still in the lagoon—and you have the mate of the Dawn to deal with-

"I'll deal with Kit Hudson fast enough—as I've dealt with you and your boatswain."

Ken started.

"My boatswain? You'll never get

Kaio-lalulalonga-

The pearl-poacher laughed harshly. "Your boatswain fell into the snare I laid for your mate. Hudson's turn will come next. You'd have done better, King of the Islands, to sail when I ordered you away from Aao. I gave you the chance to go. You stayed on and hunted trouble—and now you've got it. Your Ka boatswain is here, in the canoe.' Your Kanaka

"My sainted Sam!" muttered Ken, and his heart sank. He could make out now the dark object that lay in the bottom of the canoe. It was a Kanaka, bound hand and foot with tapa cords.

He knew now that it was Kaiolalulalonga. Koko, as the bo'sun was called, had fallen into the hands

of the pearl-poacher.

Bransom stooped, a knife gleamed, and the cords that bound Koko's feet were cut. He dragged the Kanaka up. Koko's dark eyes turned on him, burning with rage. But his hands were bound behind his back, and he was helpless.

"You plenty too much bad feller," muttered Koko. "S'pose me get feller hand belong me along neck belong

you, you dead feller."

"Silence, you!" snarled the pearlpoacher, and he struck the Kanaka boatswain savagely across the face. "I don't take back-talk from - niggers!"

Koko's white teeth gleamed in a

savage snarl.

"Now jump, you black scum!" snapped the pearl-poacher. "Get into the cave, along with vour master. You were hunting him-well, you've found him now, and you're going to join him."

Koko looked across two fathoms of water to the cave. Dimly below the surface showed the shape of a swim-

ming shark.

"No can jump!" he said. "Feller

shark he get this Kanaka."
"Stop!" shouted King

"Stop!" shouted King Islands, his face tense. "Come nearer, you scoundrel, and give him a chance."

"And you a chance at the same time?" sneered the poacher.

"Go, then-and quick!"

retreated up the coral cave. Not till they were lost in the darkness of the deep interior did Bransom give the word to the Santa Cruz boys to approach the landing-place. Then the canoe glided near enough for Kaiolalulalonga to make the jump.

"Jump, you black scum!" snarled Bransom, and he followed the words with a blow from the barrel of his

Koko leaped into the cave, stag-gered, and fell in the sand on the coral floor. King of the Islands rushed forward. The canoe backed instantly into the distance.

"No chance for you, Ken King!"

jeered the pearl-poacher. Ken's eyes blazed at him.

"My mate will deal with you!" he id. "Kit Hudson will not fall into your hands, you scoundrel.'

"Wait!" said Bransom "I've got you, and I've got your boatswain. I warned you off the island, and you've stayed here to find your death. You'd have gone to the sharks already, but-

"But you dared not while Hudson lives!" cried Ken contemptuously. cried Ken contemptuously. "Your life would not be worth much if he found that you had shed our blood, you villain!"

"You get me!" said Bransom coolly. "If I fail with your mate, said Bransom I'd rather he found you alive than dead. But I shall not fail-don't reckon on that. I've only the mate of the Dawn to deal with now-the Kanaka crew won't trouble me. I'll be glad to get them to help in the pearl fishing-I've plenty of use for niggers on Aao.

'Now I've only Hudson to handle, I reckon I'll get him with a bulletno need any longer for beating about the bush. Man to man, I can handle any man in the Pacific, I reckon."

Ken did not answer. His heart was heavy. Man to man, he could have trusted Kit Hudson to deal with this scoundrel. But it was treachery that the mate of the Dawn had to fear.

Taking no further heed of the pearl-poacher, Ken stooped to release Kaio-lalulalonga from his bonds. Bransom rapped out an order to his black boys, and the canoe shot away, disappearing from sight round the base of a surf-beaten coral cliff.

#### Coming to Grips!

IT HUDSON, with weary eyes, watched the shadows clearing from the lagoon of Aao, from the shelving beach and the clustering palms. A new day had come on the lonely atoll. All through the night the mate of the Dawn had watched with unfailing vigilance while the five Hiva-Oa boys who formed the crew slept on their tapa

With the dawn of day, Lompo and Lufu and the others yawned and stretched themselves, and rose, blinking at the white master who had "And you a chance at the same remained awake while they slumwith the whome?" sneered the poacher.

"We'll go back up the cave—and brought food and steaming hot same resolve.

Guardians of the Cave! you've got your gun, you cowardly coffee from the little galley for the swab."

"White master King of the Islands King of the Islands and Poynings he no comey along ketch, sar?" said the cooky-boy.

Hudson shook his head.

"Kanaka feller Kaio-lalulalonga he no comey, sar?"

" No."

"That feller he plenty dead along bush," said Danny. "Feller Santa Cruz boy belong pearler, sar, he plenty bad feller. He throw knife belong him, along other feller, sar. Kill-dead other feller along bush, sar, plenty too much quick."

Hudson did not reply, but the

cooky-boy's suggestion chimed in

with his own forebodings.

King of the Islands had vanished in the bush on Aao the previous day. Kaio-lalulalonga, following the pearler into the bush in the night, had vanished as completely as the boy trader of Lalinge.

What had happened? The dark and mysterious bush, stretching before his eyes beyond the bungalow and the palm grove, told no tales. Its dim recesses hid the fate of King of the Islands and the faithful Kanaka who had sought him.

Weary as he was from his long watching, the mate of the Dawn did not think of closing his eyes. Now that the daylight had come, he might have trusted the Polynesian crew to keep watch while he slept. But sleep was not in his thoughts.

Now that there was daylight, he could act. He had to solve the mystery of Ken King's disappearance and to rescue him if he yet lived. That he lived Hudson felt certain. He did not believe that the pearl-poacher would dare to take his life so long as his comrade lived to avenge him. But to seek him meant leaving the ketch in the care of the Kanaka crew, exposed to the danger of a treacherous attempt from the pearler. Hudson grimly resolved to

deal with the pearler without delay.

He had no proof of the white man's treachery, but the vanishing of Kaio-lalulalonga, following that of King of the Islands, amounted to a moral certainty. Hudson made up his mind to take no further risks with the mysterious man of Aao.

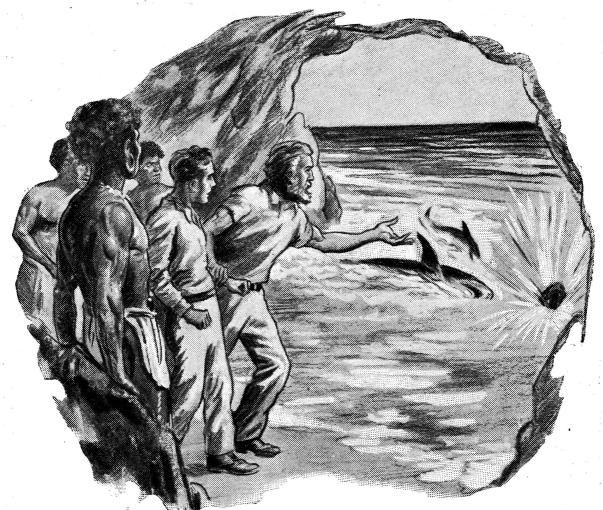
Crack! The ring of a rifle from somewhere along the beach awoke the echoes of the atoll.

The mate of the Dawn started. From his hand, as he was raising it to his lips, the tin pannikin of coffee had been suddenly spun across the deck. It had been struck away

by the whizzing bullet!
"My hat!" ejaculated There was an excited jabber from the Hiva-Oa boys. They dodged down into the shelter of the low rail. Hudson gripped his rifle and stared round him with blazing eyes. Then he dropped on his knees, realising that he was exposed to the fire as he stood on the deck under the rising sunlight.

Crack ! A bullet flew over his head.

Hudson smiled grimly. He had made up his mind to come to grips with the white man of Aao, and evidently the pearler had come to the



Poynings laid a detaining hand on Ken's arm and tossed a fragment of coral into the pool. Instantly the sharks were on the alert, hungry for prey!

He had been lurking on the beach, hidden by some ridge of sand, watching for a chance to take a pot-shot at the white man on the ketch.

Hudson had reason to bless the foresight of King of the Islands in anchoring the ketch out in the lagoon, instead of mooring at the coral quay. The bullet had gone near enough, and at a closer range the pearler would have got his man.

Peering over the teak rail, Hudson watched for a sign of the man who

It was open war now! He understood that. The pearler had rid himself of King of the Islands and Kaio-lalulalonga, and now that he had only one white man to deal with he had come out into the open. That treacherous shot from the beach might have ended the conflict, with luck.

The white man of Aac, as if he had read Hudson's thoughts, had known that with the new day the fight must come, and he had given up all pretences and started it, with the advantage on his side.

"Feller smoke he stop along beach, sar!" called out Lompo. "Along big reck he stop, sar."

Hudson's eye picked up the little faint curl of smoke that rose from the rock on the sandy beach, marking the spot where the pearler lurked in cover, watching for a chance for another shot.

Hudson fired, and his bullet spattered chips of coral from the rock that hid the white man of Aao. For an instant a grass-plaited hat showed by the rock as the hidden man moved. Hudson fired on sight, and saw the hat spin. But the man kept carefully in cover, and silence settled down again over the lagoon and the atoll.

Hudson felt something like elation. It was open war at last, and his course was clear. There was no course was clear. There was no further doubt—no need for hesita-It was a fight now to the tion. death between himself and the white man of Aao-and the Australian did not fear the cutcome.

"You feller Lompo!" he called out.
"Yes, sar."

Lompo crawled aft, taking care not to expose himself to fire from the beach.

"You go below, break out feller rifle, feller cartridge, bring feller gun along deck along crew.

Lompo went down the companion, and returned with rifles and cartridges for the crew. Hudson had decided on his plan of action. He Hudson opened fire on the coral rock had to get ashore. To pull to the that sheltered the man on the beach.

coral quay was to expose himself to the fire of the man on the beach, but it was easy enough to land at some other point of the shelving beach that circled the lagoon and work his way round.

"You listen along me, you feller boy," said the mate of the Dawn. "Me go along island, you stop along ketch. S'pose white feller he comey, you shoot along gun, kill-dead white feller.

"Yes, sar."

"S'pose you shut eye belong you, white feller he comey, Santa Cruz feller he comey, makee kai-kai along you feller," said Hudson.

"No shut eye belong us feller, sar," said Lompo. And Hudson hoped, at least, that the danger of being "kai-kai-ed" by the Santa being "kai-kai-ed" by the Santa Cruz blacks would keep the crew watchful and alert.

"You lower feller boat along lagoon," said Hudson.

Lompo blinked.

"Feller pearler he kill-dead us feller along gun, sar," he muttered. "He watchee us feller plenty, eye belong him."

"Lower the boat!" snapped Hud-

Crack, crack! The bullets spattered and crashed on the coral, sending chips flying in the air. Behind the rock the pearler lay

So long as the bullets were spattering round him, he was not likely to expose himself to return the fire from the ketch.

Hudson judged correctly. No shot came from the white man of Aao, while the Hiva-Oa crew hurriedly lowered the whaleboat and pulled it round to the seaward side of the ketch.

Hudson ceased to fire and jumped into the boat, taking Lufu and Kolulo with him. Lompo, with a Win-chester in his hand, blazed away bullets at the beach, the simple Polynesian as pleased as an infant with a toy as he loosed off rapid shots. His bullets flew wide off the mark, spattering up sand in little spouts all round the coral rock that hid the pearler.

Lufu and Kolulo pulled across the shining lagoon, the ketch lying between the boat and the man on the beach.

The whaleboat bumped on the beach on the opposite side of the lagoon. Hudson jumped out.

"You feller boy, you washy-washy along ketch, you stop along ketch, he said. "You keep eye open belong you feller, s'pose you no likee Santa Cruz boy makee kai-kai along you." "Yes, sar!"

The whaleboat pulled back to the ketch. Hudson moved along the beach, following the circling margin of the lagoon.

He had no choice now but to leave the ketch in charge of the native crew; but in the daylight, and with the fear of the cannibals on their minds, the Hiva-Oa boys were likely to be watchful. As for the white man of Aao, Hudson intended to keep him too busy to think of an attempt on the Dawn.

He circled the shining lagoon, and drew near to the white man's bungalow and the coral quay; wary, watchful, finger on trigger. But no shot greeted him. The firing was from the ketch, where Lompo was still keeping up a rapid fire.

Hudson circled round the coral rock, where the white man of Aao had lain in cover; but, as he had half-expected, he found the place empty. The pearler was gone. Evidently the man had not cared to remain for a hand-to-hand conflict with the mate of the Dawn.

With infinite caution, taking advantage of every rock and tree, Hudson approached the bungalow. Still there was silence. Doors and windows were open, but no shot came. He reached the building, and with fierce eyes hunted from room to room. But the house was vacant.

The pearler and his Santa Cruz boys were gone. And Hudson did not need telling that they had taken to the bush. And, knowing that he was taking his life in his hands, with all the chances against him,

Guardians of the Cave! the mate of the Dawn plunged into coral cave, while his comrade was, the shadows of the bush!

#### In Suspense!

"HIS feller he plenty big fool!" growled Kaiolalulalonga.

King of the Islands smiled faintly. "Not your fault, old coffee-bean. And Hudson will get us out of this sooner or later."

Kaio-lalulalonga looked dubious. "Feller pearler he too plenty clever along me," he said. "He too plenty clever along little white master. Plaps he too plenty clever along feller Hudson."

Ken made no reply to that. His faith in Hudson was strong; but he knew that the issue of this strange conflict was very doubtful. Only the mate of the Dawn now stood between the pearl-poacher and success. If Hudson failed, all was And the advantage was on lost. the side of the scarred man, now

### MODERN BOY "CRICKETPICS."

#### REMEMBER!

to post your "Cricketpics" Competition Entries to:

MODERN BOY "Cricketpics," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.),

so as to reach that address NOT LATER than this Thursday, June 27th.

See last week's MODERN BOY, which contained the Rules governing this contest and full instructions for sending in your entries.

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*** that he had only one foe to deal

"Feller gun he speak!" said one of the Nuka-hiva boys.

Faintly from afar came the ring of a rifle.

On the little atoll a shot fired in any spot could be heard over the whole extent. Faintly the distant shot echoed among the coral rocks and in the cave under the beetling

"Plenty feller gun," said the Nuka-hiva boy.

Shot after shot echoed from the distance.

King of the Islands went to the mouth of the sea-cave and stared out. Only the channel through the cliffs and the open sea beyond met his eyes. The cave looked seaward, and he could see nothing of the island. He looked down at the pool below the shelf of rock on which he stood.

The firing was continuing intermittently; it might mean an attack on the ketch in the lagoon; it might mean that the mate of the Dawn was ashore, beset by foes, bitterly in need of help from his shipmate. Ken looked at the shark-haunted pool, desperate thoughts in his mind.

To stay there idle, penned in the

perhaps, fighting for his life against heavy odds-

There was a touch on his arm, and he looked round. Poynings shook his head grimly.

"No use!" he said. "You would not swim three yards before the sharks would get you. Look!"

He tossed a fragment of coral rock

into the pool. Instantly three or four hideous shapes could be seen swimming below the surface, and a black fin rose for a moment into the sunlight.

Ken breathed hard.

"No use, as you say!" he mut-red. "It is death to enter the tered. water. But to wait here-" He gritted his teeth.

"It will not help your mate if the

sharks get you!"
"I know."

King of the Islands stood in silence, listening. Shot after shot echoed from the distance. The firing ceased at last. Whatever the outbreak had been, it was over. Did it mean that the pearl-poacher had triumphed—that Hudson had fallen? Bitter anxiety tugged at the boy trader's heart.

"You'll know soon." Poynings guessed Ken's thoughts. "If that guessed Ken's thoughts. "It that scoundrel's got the upper hand, we shall see him here. If he's killed your mate, and got hold of your ketch, he will not leave you alive on Aao!"

Ken nodded. He felt the truth of that. Only the pearl-poacher's fear of vengeance had saved the boy trader so far. If Hudson had fallen, the prisoners of the coral cave would not be long left in doubt. From his canoe the ruffian could sweep every corner of the seacave with bullets if he chose. There was little doubt that he would choose!

But the long sunny hours crawled by, and there was no sound of an approaching canoe. The white man of Aao was not coming. And Ken knew that the conflict could not yet be decided.

Kaio-lalulalonga was roaming the sea-cave like a caged animal, hunting—in vain—for some avenue of escape. There was no escape save There was no escape save by the pool and the jaws of the sharks. Ken sat on a mass of coral and stared gloomily at the sea. Inaction was always irksome to the boy trader; and never had it been so bitterly irksome as now.

Poynings moved about restlessly.. Only the two Nuka-hiva boys stretched themselves in the sand and slept or chattered in their own dialect, taking matters with the usual philosophy of the Kanaka nature.

"The dog has left us no rations," said Poynings, breaking a long silence. "This is going to be a lean day."

Ken nodded. He was hungry, but he gave that little thought. It was not likely that the pearl-poacher would think of feeding his prisoners while his hands were full with Hudson.

(Continued on page 24.)

(Continued from page 22.)

"The dog!" repeated Poynings.
"If I'd known—if I'd only put a
bullet through him when he first landed on Aao-

Ken glanced at him. He had wondered a good deal what had happened on Aao before he arrived

"How did he get you in this fix?"

he asked.

"He came in a whaleboat with his black crew. He told me a tale of being driven out of his course, and being in want of food and water. I did not trust him, and I kept a gun handy; but one of the blacks got me from behind with a lump of coral-and the next thing I knew was, I was tied up hand and foot in my bungalow, and that villain was master of Aao!"

The pearler gritted his teeth.
"If he had found my pearls I should have been thrown to the sharks in the lagoon, I reckon. But I'd got them safely stowed away; not even the Nuka-hiva boys knew where, and he will never know. I've taken a fortune from the lagoon in the last five years. He found a handful of 66 seed pearls in the house; that was all. He knew there must be more, and he offered to give me a share, and his whaleboat to get away in. I was not likely to take his word!

"He kept me a prisoner, and set his black crew to the pearl-fishing, my boys along with them. One day a sail was sighted. It never came near the island, but it was enough to alarm him, and he had us carried to this cave for safety. I reckon it was his idea to pass himself off as me, if a skipper looked in.

"Not one skipper in a hundred would be likely to know me by sight. He knew nothing of the regular supply ship that came from Lalinge, and that was my only hope, and it failed. You've come, King of the Islands, and here you are, as deep in the mud as I am in the mire."

"While there's life there's hope," said Ken. "He won't find it easy to get the upper hand of my mate.

Poynings shrugged his shoulders.

"Anyhow, he won't get the pearls,"
e said savagely. "I'll keep the he said savagely. "I'll keep the secret, if I die in this cave keeping it. He has brought us rations in the canoe several times. The last time he came was by night, and I reckoned

he came was by night, and I reckoned from that there might be a ship in the offing."

"My ship!" said Ken, with a sigh.

"It was decent of you, King of the Islands, to stand by and try to find out what had become of me," said Poynings.

"I'm sorry I've landed you in this mess. Hark!"

Through the hot tropic afternoon stillness came a sudden report of a rifle. Faint and distant as it was, it made the listening white men start with a catch of the breath.

"That's nearer," said Poynings.
"The firing before was at the lagoon.

This comes from the bush."

"Feller Hudson he stop bush!" muttered Kaio-lalulalonga.

Guardians of the Cave! died away, and silence, deep and still, settled on the atoll.

"My sainted Sam!" muttered King of the Islands. He passed his hand across his brow to wipe away the perspiration. Again his glance sought the pool where the sharks lurked.
"No use," said Poynings grimly.
"We've got to wait."

They waited in tense silence. suspense was intolerable. That single shot, echoing from the bush. could it mean? Who had fired, and who had fallen? Ken pictured his shipmate tramping the shadowy run-ways of the bush, fired on from the thickets, falling to the treacherous shot, and the thought was anguish to him. He could not keep still. He rose and approached once more the edge of the cave-mouth, where the sharks lurked in the still waters. "No go along sea, sar," said Kaio-lalulalonga anxiously. "Feller shark

he stop, sar!"

"No use," repeated Poynings. "If he's got the upper hand of your mate

he will come-

He broke off as the splash of a paddle sounded in the silence of the tropic day.

#### Outwitted!

A T last!" breathed the pearlpoacher.

Bransom's eyes He stopped, silent in the blazing. grassy, shadowy runway, his grasp almostconvulsive on his Through the long, hot, tropical day, in the dim, simmering heat of the bush, that strange hunt had gone on, and now, it seemed, success smiled at last on the white man of Aao.

That Kit Hudson would follow him into the bush the pearl-poacher had had no doubt. And it had not taken him long to learn that Hudson was

in the bush, hunting him.

At the deadly game of bush tag Bransom counted all the advantages on his side. He had been long enough on Ano to have learned his way in the intricate paths, while Hudson was a stranger on the island. And he had with him six or seven Santa Cruz blacks. Not the men to stand up to an armed white man in a struggle-especially to the mate of the Dawn in his present mood—but expert in bush-fighting, in throwing the knife, in all the tricks of savage island warfare.

Before the white man's rifle they were certain to run, but in the tangled depths of the bush a knife thrown from a thicket was likely to be as deadly as any firearm. And Bransom had posted his blacks among the runways, with the promise of a great reward to the one who should get the mate of the Dawn with his knife.

It seemed to him almost a certainty that before an hour had passed Kit Hudson would be stretched in death, with a knife in his back.

He knew nothing of Hudson but that he was the mate of the Dawn, a man of the sea. Almost any sailorman wandering in the intricate bush where the savage blacks lurked would have fallen a victim. He did not Ken's heart beat painfully. He know that the mate of the Dawn was listened intently, but there was no an Australian, that he had lived in further shot. The single report had the bush of the great Island Conti-

nent, and that there was no trick of the bush that he did not have at his finger-tips.

Lurking in the dusky runways, listening for the death-cry of the mate of the Dawn, Bransom had heard a cry; but it came from one of the blacks—the howl of Tuto as he went down under a crashing rifle-butt.

The savage, as he crouched in cover, knife in hand, had heard a step behind him and turned in time to meet the crashing butt. Hudson went grimly on his way, watchful as a cat, and the black man rolled senseless in the bush path. When he came to himself and crawled away, his groans reached Bransom's ears and the ears of the other black boys.

And the white man of Aao, as he picked his way in the bush-paths, suspected that Tuto's fate had been a warning to the rest and that they had scuttled for safer quarters. He saw and heard nothing more of his Santa Cruz crew, and realised that he was left, after all, to deal singlehanded with the Australian.

That was not what he had intended, but the desperate man did not shrink

from the contest.

Man to man, he counted himself a match for Hudson. He had captured King of the Islands by trickery, and Kaie lalulalonga had fallen into his hands in seeking his master. Now that there was but one foe left for him to deal with, the pearl-poacher was prepared to make a fight for it if treachery would not serve his turn.

So the strange contest went on, two desperate and determined men seeking one another in the intricacies of the bush, sometimes hearing one the bush, sometimes hearing one another's movements, but never, for a long time, coming in sight.

And now at last Fortune seemed to smile on the man who had seized Aao. A rustling had warned him that his enemy was near, and he crept by a winding track in the bush on tip-toe, rifle in hand, eyes eager and wary, teeth set in a savage snarl. Once behind his enemy and in sight

of him——
"At last!" he breathed.

He was aware, before this, that Hudson had not kept to the runways. He had penetrated the almost impenetrable tropical thickets like one born to the bush. Before him, behind him, on either side of him, the desperate man had to watch, and a fear had come upon him that he would be beaten at this deadly game. But now-

Now he sighted his enemy. by the dusky runway he was treading, through a narrow opening of the thick bush, he sighted the silk shirt worn by the mate of the Dawn.

Hudson was there, watching another runway or resting for a few minutes in the sickening heat, his back to his foe. Bransom's blazing eyes gloated at the sight. He dropped silently on one knee and aimed his rifle with care. He knew that he would have time only for one shot.

If he missed he would have no other chance, and the desperate game would begin again. But he was not going to miss!

He dwelt on his aim, though the shirt that glimmered through the opening of the bush was less than fifteen feet away. He fired.

The bullet smashed through the shirt, tearing part away; the report with a of the rifle reverberating thousand echoes in the bush.

What happened next Bransom hardly knew. He felt a crash, and a myriad lights danced before his eyes as he rolled on the ground. In that instant, as he went down under a crashing rifle-barrel, he knew that he had been tricked—but he knew no more, for his senses fled.

He came to himself at last, with throbbing brain, groaning. His eyes opened wildly and stared about him in the dusk of the bush. He tried to move, and realised that his arms were bound behind his back with

fibre cord.

A grim face looked down on him. The pearl-poacher's eyes turned on Kit Hudson wildly, gleaming with hate and fear.

"So you've come to!" said the mate of the Dawn.

Bransom sat up in the bush-path, his brain reeling. He could see the bullet-hole torn through the silk shirt that Hudson was wearing. Yet the mate of the Dawn was evidently unwounded.

"You tricked me!" breathed the pearl-poacher thickly. "You-

Hudson smiled grimly.
"You swab! You put a bullet through my shirt—it was stuck on thorns for you to see and fire at. I was six feet behind you when you fired. Get on your feet!"

And as the pearl-poacher did not

heed, Hudson grasped him by the shoulder and dragged him roughly to

his feet.

"I've waited for you to come to," he said. "You're going to lead me to my shipmate, King of the Islands. And you're not going to waste time about it, you swab !"

"You reckon he's still alive?" snarled Bransom.

"I reckon so," answered Hudson quietly. "For your own sake, it would be better so. If I do not find my shipmate alive, you dog, I am going to hang you from the boom of the Dawn. Lead me to where you have hidden him—and save your

There was no mistaking the grim earnestness of the Australian. that moment the pearl-poacher had reason to be thankful that King of the Islands was alive in the seacave. There was no room for doubt that the mate of the Dawn would have carried out his threat.

"Find him, then. You'll get no help from me!" snarled Bransom; but as he spoke he shrank from the

Australian's gleaming eyes.

"I'm going to find him with your alp!" said Hudson. He took hold of a loose end of the cord that bound the pearl-poacher's arms. "Now lead the way. Your life is safe if I find my shipmate alive. I've no time to waste—lead the way!"
"Not a step!" snapped Bransom.

Hudson took the bush-knife from his belt. The expression on his face made the pearl-poacher start back.

"Hang you! I'll go!" he muttered.

better!" "You'd said Hudson grimly. "Get going, you dog!"

Bransom savagely led the way. They followed the runway that led towards the outer reef and the coral caves on the east side of Aao. At the end of the tunnel-like path the sight of sea and sky burst on Hudson's eyes. Bransom stopped suddenly.

"Get on!" snapped the mate of the Dawn.

"There's a bush-pit-" snarled the pearl-poacher.

Hudson understood. With his rifle he caved in the flimsy covering of the hidden pit that guarded the path to the coral caves.

"Was that how you caught King of the Islands?"

Bransom nodded sullenly.

They trod cautiously round the narrow edge of the bush-pit and tramped on towards the reef. Hudson looked at the stretches of coral rock beaten by the surf and glanced at his prisoner.

"Where is King of the Islands?" "In a cave—out on the reef," mut-tered Bransom. "There's a canoe— you'll find it hidden under that rock."

Hudson quickly found the canoe and dragged it from its hiding-place.

"Get in !"

The bound man sullenly obeyed. Hudson followed him in and took up a paddle.

Now give me the course, you

swab!"

And following the sullen directions of the pearl-poacher, the mate of the Dawn plied the paddle, and the canoe glided round the base of a high cliff and approached the coral cave.

#### Up Hook!

E'S coming!" muttered Poynings.

King of the Islands did not speak. His face was tense.

"Feller Bransom he comey along cave!" muttered Kaio-lalulalonga. "He kill-dead feller Hudson along bush, comey along cave kill-dead us feller, my word!"

Ken stood silent, the suspense almost too great to be borne. Less of himself than of his loyal shipmate the boy trader was thinking; for what could the coming of the canoe mean but that the pearl-poacher had gained the upper hand of the mate of the Dawn?

The canoe shot into sight, in the sunlight that streamed down between There was a yell the high cliffs. from Koko.

"Feller Hudson along cance!"

Ken caught his breath. sudden relief and joy almost overcame him. Kit Hudson was paddling. Bransom, the pearl-poacher, sat with his arms bound behind his back.
"Kit!" shouted Ken. "Kit,

"Kit, old man!" His eyes were shining.

Hudson paused for a moment, waved the paddle, and then paddled The canoe shot on again swiftly. to the cave.

It thudded against the shelf of coral, and Kaio-lalulalonga rushed to make it fast. Ken grasped his shipmate's hand as he leaped from the canoe.

(Continued on the next page.)

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#### **ONLY!** for a Guardians of the Cave!

(Continued from previous page.)

"Kit, old man!"

"Ken!

"This feller plenty glad!" chuckled aio-lalulalonga. "This Kanaka Kaio-lalulalonga. feller he plenty too much glad altogether, my word!"

"I reckon I'm glad to see you here, Mister Mate," said Poynings, shaking

hands with Hudson.

"It's Poynings, Kit," said King of the Islands. "That swab in the the Islands. canoe is a pearl-poacher—he robbed Poynings of the island, as we suspected."

There was a shriek from Bransom. Kaio-lalulalonga had stepped into the canoe, and he was lifting the pearl-peacher in his strong arms. His intention was only too plainly to be read in his face, and the white man of Aao shrieked in fear.

"Stop!" shouted King of the Islands.

"Plenty shark stop along this place, sar—this Kanaka tinkee plenty good this feller he makee kai-kai along feller shark !"

A black fin glided by the canoe. Bransom shrieked again.

"Stop!" repeated Ken, and he jumped into the canoe and dragged the pearl-poacher from the grasp of the Kanaka.

Kaio-lalulalonga grunted.

"Much better that feller makee kai-kai along feller shark, sar. He plenty too much bad feller."

King of the Islands smiled and shook his head. Bransom lay panting in the bottom of the canoe, his face white as chalk. Hudson and Poynings stepped in, followed by the two Nuka-hiva boys.

Koko and the Nuka-hiva boys paddled away; and King of the Islands looked his last upon the coral sea-cave that had been his prison, and but for the devotion of his shipmate might have been his tomb.

By the time the Dawn sailed Poynings and his Nuka-hiva boys were at work on the pearl-fishing again, and the familiar smell of rotting shell hung over the lagoon and the atoll.

Of the lone pearler's hoarded store the shipmates saw nothing, but to each of them Poynings insisted upon handing a handsome pearl before they sailed; and from those speci-mens they could guess that the hidden store was worth a fortune.

The white man of Aao, who had made a desperate bid for that fortune, sailed in the Dawn—a prisoner under hatches, with irons on his limbs. He was going back to Lalinge on the ketch-with the prospect before him of being kept out of mischief for many years to come!

(Charles Hamilton another of these famous yarns to next Monday's MODERN BOY. He makes you see the sun-splashed waters of the romantic South Seas and feel the thrill of adventure that comes to young Ken King and his Australian chum!)

# Cloyne of Claverhouse!

(Continued from page 16.)

From the box on the table he took a plain muffler, peaked cap, and long rope ladder of the finest manila. Donning muffler and cap, he turned to Buller.

'Now the table," he said.

"You're determined to go?" ques-"I tell tioned Buller protestingly. you it's dangerous, man, now that you've quarrelled with D'Aubrey!

Scaife's only reply was an impatient gesture, and without further protest Buller helped him to carry the table to the window. Scaife slipped a loop at one end of the ladder round a table-leg and tested it with a vicious tug.

Satisfied, he crossed the floor and turned down the gas-jet until the

room was almost in complete darkness. "I'll be back in about two hours," he said, gently raising the bottom sash of the window. "I can rely on you, I suppose?"
"Yes!" grunte

grunted Buller.

There was no moon, and the shrubbery below the window was scarce visible in the darkness. Nothing disturbed the stillness, and carefully

Scaife sent the light ladder dropping down into the night.

He stood a moment listening intently, then slithered one leg over the sill.

"Right-ho! I'm going!" he whispered. "It's all clear!"

Standing by the open window in the darkness, Buller heard the creak of straining rope as Scaife descended. There came to his ears, also, the faint rustle of disturbed ivy, and he knew by that that Scaife was halfway down. He waited until the faint sounds had ceased, then groped for the top of the ladder which lay across the sill and gave it a tentative tug.

It came up slackly in his hand. Scaife had safely accomplished the descent and had gone. Buller commenced to haul in the ladder. Suddenly he started and froze into tense immobility.

Someone had knocked sharply and imperatively on the door of the study!

(Mr. Hammond keeps things moving briskly in next week's instalment full of dramatic surprises. Are your friends reading this fine yarn? If not, put them on to it without delay! They'll thank you!)

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