

**WALLY HAMMOND'S GREAT SCHOOL AND CRICKET YARN INSIDE!**

# *The* **MODERN BOY**

EVERY MONDAY.  
Week Ending July 6th, 1929.

No. 74.  
Vol. 3.



**THE "MAURETANIA" OF THE SKIES!** (See page 9.)



The Raiatean came bolting up on deck, yelling with terror. "What the thunder!" ejaculated Ken.

# The MYSTERY of the DERELICT!

Ken King, the boy trader of the South Seas, meets with a strange adventure at sea—an adventure that puts panic into the hearts of his native crew! A vivid yarn of Life in the Tropics, long and complete,

BY CHARLES HAMILTON.

## The Deserted Schooner!

"A DRIFT!" said King of the Islands, boy skipper of the ketch Dawn.

"And deserted!" added Kit Hudson, his mate.

Ken King, King of the Islands (as he was called), knitted his brows in perplexity as he stared across the shining sea at the schooner.

A calm—almost a dead calm—lay on the Pacific. Scarcely a breath of wind ruffled the water, and but for the ocean current that drifted her, the Dawn would have lain as idle as a painted ship on a painted ocean.

For some time the schooner at which they were looking had been in sight. Something strange in her aspect had struck King of the Islands. When he scanned her through his binoculars, he could make out no one on deck—not even a man at the wheel. Her foresail and top-sail were set; and when a breath of wind came, she moved through the water and yawed.

"Deserted!" repeated Ken. "But—why?"

There was no sign of damage about

the schooner. She floated on an even keel. She was a small vessel, two-masted; and looked a dirty craft, even at a distance. Ken had no doubt that she was one of the small craft engaged in the Solomon Islands trade, and probably had been manned by natives. But why her crew had deserted her was a mystery. There had been no foul weather. For long days the weather had been fair, till the present calm fell.

"Goodness knows!" said the mate of the Dawn. He was as puzzled as King of the Islands. "The boats are gone! They must have taken to the boats and abandoned her—goodness knows why."

"Plaps—" began Koko, the native bo'sun.

"What you tinkee, head belong you, old coffee-bean?" asked King of the Islands.

"Plaps feller debble he come along feller schooner," suggested Kaiolalualonga, as the bo'sun was called in his own tongue. "S'pose feller debble along sea, he comey along feller schooner, no feller stop."

King of the Islands smiled, and

Hudson chuckled. The shipmates were not likely to believe that the derelict had been abandoned on account of a sea-devil getting on board.

"White feller no believe," said Koko. "Kanaka feller savvy plenty feller debble he stop along sea."

"Anyhow, it's a derelict," said Ken. "Unless there's somebody below hatches, she's deserted, and a fair prize! Salvage for us, Kit!"

"You bet!" agreed Hudson.

"Feller canoe he comey!" said Koko, and his brown finger pointed to a speck on the sea beyond the drifting schooner.

Hudson laughed.

"Where the carcass is, there the vultures will gather," he remarked. "They're after the salvage in that canoe, Ken."

The shipmates, with their attention fixed on the schooner, had not noted the canoe. Now Ken turned his binoculars upon it. It was a good distance beyond the schooner; but he could make out five men in it—four of them native islanders, the fifth a Malay trader, by his looks.

The canoe carried a lug-sail, spread to catch what remained of the dying wind; and the four natives were kneeling to their paddles, driving the canoe at a good rate through the glassy sea.

The Malay, dressed in a scarlet sarong that blazed in the brilliant sunshine, was standing up, his black brows knitted, his dark, gleaming eyes fixed alternately on the drifting schooner and on the ketch.

Occasionally he made fierce gestures to his crew, urging them to greater speed. The four natives laboured and sweated at the paddles.

King of the Islands put down the glasses.

"Lower the whaleboat!" he rapped out.

The bare feet of the Hiva-Oa crew padded on the teak deck of the Dawn as they ran to obey.

"It's a derelict," said Ken. "Salvage for the first man aboard. If we had a wind——" He broke off. "We may beat them in the boat, though those niggers are making that canoe move!"

"Little white master tinkee go along feller schooner?" asked Kaiolalalonga uneasily.

"Ay, ay!"

"No likee feller schooner," said the Kanaka boatswain.

Ken laughed.

Even to the boy trader's practical mind, there was something strange, almost uncanny, in a deserted ship drifting on a calm sea, without apparent cause—unguided, lifeless, under the brilliant sunshine. To Koko's mind it was more than uncanny. In the absence of a natural explanation, a supernatural one occurred at once to the Kanaka.

"S'pose you flaid go along schooner, you stop along ketch, Koko," said King of the Islands.

"Me no flaid go along schooner, s'pose white master he go," he answered. "All samee, me no likee feller schooner."

King of the Islands jumped into the whaleboat. Koko and three other native seamen—Lompo, Lufu, and Kolulo—took the oars, and the boat shot away from the scarcely-moving ketch.

The Hiva-Oa boys pulled manfully, sweating in the blaze of the sun. But such wind as there was in favour of the canoe; and with sail and paddles she came on swiftly. The Australian watched the race with keen interest. If the schooner really was deserted, she was a valuable prize, and the prize went to the first man to step on her deserted deck. Plenty of white skippers in the South Seas would have disregarded any claim made by a half-caste Malay, but King of the Islands was the man to give fair play to any sailorman—white, brown, or black.

The Kanakas pulled hard, and the whaleboat fairly flew. But she was still a cable's length from the drifting schooner when the canoe ran under the quarter, and the man in the scarlet sarong, with a lithe and active spring, leaped aboard.

The whaleboat shot on, but as she floated alongside the schooner the dark face and two fierce black eyes of

the Malay looked down on her, and there was the gleam of a kris in his bronze hand.

"You no comey along feller schooner," he said, speaking in the pidgin English that is the common tongue of all races in the Pacific. "Feller schooner belong me—belong Babalatti—me Babalatti! You savvy? You feller stop along boat belong you!"

### "Debble He Stop!"

**K**ING OF THE ISLANDS stood up, holding on with a boat-hook. On the other side of the schooner the canoe crew had made fast. Ken looked up coolly at the dark, threatening face above. He had lost the race to the derelict, and he was disappointed; but he had no intention of disputing the claim of Babalatti. But the Malay's fear and suspicion were not without reason; he knew the ways of some South Seas skippers.

"You win, Babalatti," said King of the Islands good-humouredly. "Keep your wool on."

## COLLECT YOUR GIFT!

Your Editor is giving surprise presents to readers at Seaside Resorts during the summer holidays season. Turn to page 28 and read all about it, and

## CLAIM YOURS!

"You stop along boat belong you," repeated the Malay. "You go along feller ship belong you. This feller schooner he belong me, belong Babalatti."

"Ay, ay, if she's deserted, the salvage is yours," answered Ken. "But I'm coming on board, Babalatti."

The Malay made a gesture with the shining kris. The long, bright blade flashed in the sun.

"You stop along boat belong you. No comey along schooner belong me."

"You bad feller!" exclaimed Kaiolalalonga indignantly. "You talk good feller talk along King of the Islands."

The Malay's eyes fixed on the boy trader less fiercely. Evidently that name, so well known throughout the Pacific, was not new to him.

"You feller King of the Islands?" he asked.

"Ay, ay!" answered Ken.

"You good feller skipper," said Babalatti, more amicably. "You no feller sea-lawyer all same Bully Samson, all same Dandy Peter. Me savvy you plenty good feller. Me no flaid along you, sar."

He lowered the gleaming kris, but he still hesitated to allow Ken to come on board the derelict.

"Me no flaid along you, sar," he said again. "You good feller, me savvy plenty. You go along ship belong you."

Ken shook his head.

"You've nothing to fear from me, Babalatti," he said. "But I'm coming aboard."

Babalatti glared suspiciously. "What name you wantee comey along schooner, all same you savvy feller schooner he belong me?" he demanded.

"Feller schooner belong you, s'pose no man he stop," answered Ken. "Plaps feller sailorman he stop."

Babalatti waved a bronze hand to the deserted deck.

"No feller stop!" he replied. "You see, eye belong you."

"Somebody may be below."

A cunning gleam came into the Malay's eyes.

"You tinkee plaps sick man he stop?" he asked.

"It's possible."

"S'pose sick man he stop, me take plenty care along that sick feller," said the Malay.

The abandonment of an injured ship, in fair weather, was strange and mysterious; and possibly it was explained by sickness on board. If a sick man lingered below, he could guess that that sick man was not likely to stand long between a Malay and his salvage.

"I'm coming aboard," said King of the Islands tersely. And without further argument he swung himself up the side of the schooner.

Babalatti's black eyes glittered at him, and for a moment he gripped the kris again. Then he bowed his head in assent.

Ken dropped lightly to the deck.

Kaio-lalalonga followed him very quickly. He did not trust the Malay, and it was quite probable that there might be trouble if it turned out that the schooner was not, after all, an abandoned derelict.

One of the Raiatean paddlers from the canoe had gone down the companion-way already, to examine the interior of the schooner. He could be heard rummaging about in the cabin aft.

Ken glanced round the deck.

There was every sign that the schooner had been abandoned in haste. Articles lay on the deck, which obviously had been intended for the boats, and had been dropped and left in the hurry of departure.

The boy trader was deeply puzzled, and his perplexity was reflected in Babalatti's bronze visage.

Sickness—even plague—on board could hardly have accounted for that hurried desertion of the schooner. The crew seemed to have fled without a second to spare. And the desertion had been quite recent. In the cook's galley there were still live cinders in the stove.

To King of the Islands and the Malay it was a complete puzzle, perhaps to be solved by a search of the schooner. But Koko shook his dusky head with deep misgiving. He clung to his theory that some sea-devil was the cause of the strange state of affairs.

"Me no likee this feller ship, sar," muttered Koko.

# The Mystery of the Derelict!

"Stay in the boat, old coffee-bean," said Ken, with a smile.

There was a yell from below. It was uttered by the Raiatean islander who had gone down the companion into the cabin.

There was a hurried pattering of naked feet on the steps, and the Raiatean came bolting on deck, yelling with terror.

His dusky face was as white as a native's face could be; his black eyes rolled with fear.

"What the thunder—" ejaculated Ken.

The Raiatean raced by. He ran the length of the schooner and clambered out on the bowsprit. The other paddlers stared at him; Babalatti glared with rage and astonishment, and shouted after him.

"You feller Tu'u! What name you do this thing?" he roared. "You comey along me plenty quick."

But Tu'u clung to the bowsprit, babbling with fear. Evidently his object was to get as far away from the cabin as possible.

"You hear me, ear belong you?" shouted Babalatti.

"Me plenty flaid, sar!" panted Tu'u, between his chattering teeth.

"What name you flaid, you plenty fool?"

"Debble he stop along ship, sar."

"My sainted Sam!" murmured Ken. He stared at the native. Tu'u had seen something in the cabin of the deserted schooner—what, Ken could not imagine.

Babalatti cast an uneasy glance down the companion. He was more impressed than King of the Islands by the fear of the Raiatean.

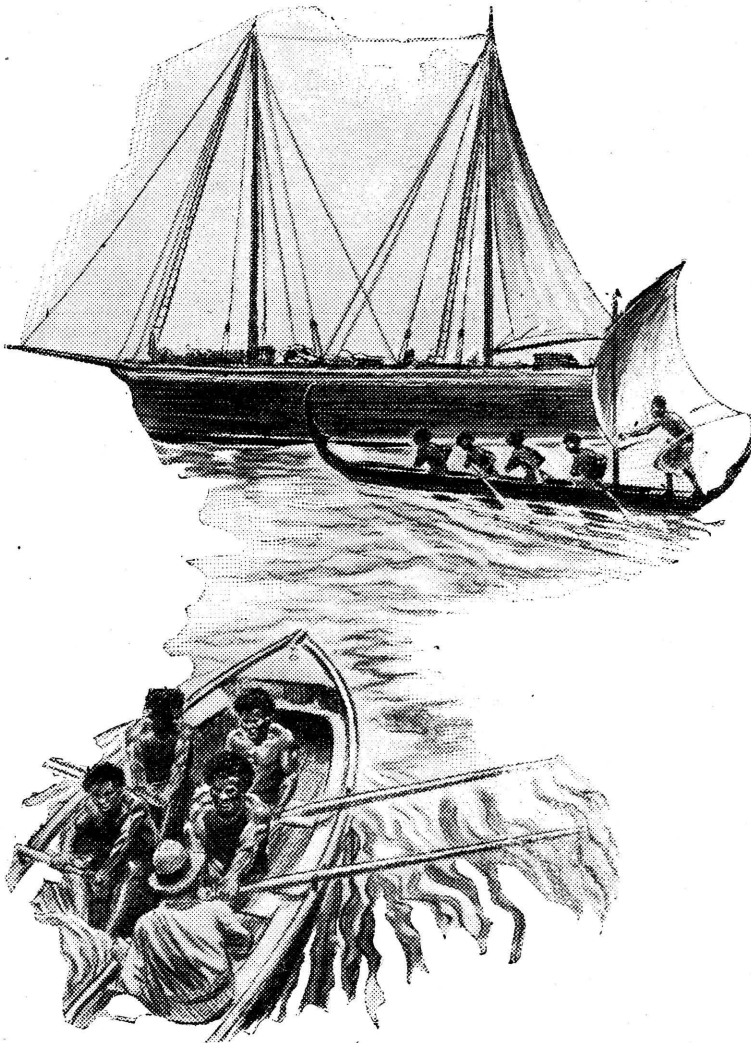
"You seen feller debble, eye belong you?" he demanded.

"Me see um, sar! Feller debble he stop!" gasped Tu'u. "Feller debble along plenty big head, sar, plenty hair belong him, feller tail belong him, sar."

There was a murmur from the other Raiateans, and all eyes turned in dread to look at the companion. Tu'u plainly expected the "debble"

to emerge on deck; and, at the sound of a footstep, the natives would have bolted into the canoe. Babalatti grasped his kris; King of the Islands gripped his revolver. For some moments there was deep silence, while every eye remained glued to the companion, and every heart beat fast.

But nothing appeared—there was no sound. Deep stillness hung over the deserted schooner, a silence broken only by the faint wash of the sea.



Ken's Kanakas pulled hard, but the whaleboat was still a cable's length away when the canoe shot under the derelict's quarter. Ken had lost the race!

## A Mystery of the Sea.

**K**ING OF THE ISLANDS was the first to stir.

With his revolver gripped in his hand, his finger on the trigger, he made a stride towards the companion entrance.

"Little white master!"

Kaio-lalulalonga grasped his arm in consternation.

"You no go along feller debble, sar! Eye belong you see feller debble, you dead feller, sar."

"Belay that, you lubber!" snapped King of the Islands.

He shook off the Kanaka's detaining hand and strode towards the

companion. With eyes alert and revolver ready, he descended into the cabin.

Koko stood for some seconds as if rooted to the deck. All his superstitious fears were aroused now, and every nerve in his mighty frame shrank from the mystery of the cabin below. But the loyalty of the faithful Koko overcame every dread. With terror on his face, he tramped down the companion after his little white master.

Babalatti followed, kris in hand.

The Malay was plainly uneasy; and glad, after all, that the white man had come on board the derelict. He was glad of Ken's company in exploring the mysterious vessel.

King of the Islands looked quickly round the cabin.

Nothing unusual met his eyes.

It was a dingy, ill-kept cabin, such as he expected to see in a small trading schooner. The skipper, if he had been a white man, had not been one of particular tastes. The cabin was dirty, and cockroaches crawled in the heat and dirt. Apart from the crawling cockroaches, there was no sign of life—no sign of the "debble" that had frightened Tu'u almost out of his wits.

Babalatti's black eyes swept uneasy glances round him.

"No feller stop!" he muttered.

Ken shook his head.

"The ship's deserted," he said. "We'll go through from end to end; but I reckon there's no living man on board, Babalatti, and the

salvage is yours. But—it's queer."

"Me no likee this feller ship!" muttered Koko. "Me plenty glad he belong Babalatti, no belong little white master. Plenty good us feller go along boat, go along ketch."

"We're going to search the schooner first."

"What you tinkee that feller Tu'u he see, eye belong him, sar?" asked Babalatti uneasily.

"I can't make it out—a shadow, perhaps," answered Ken. "Might have been frightened by a rat!"

Babalatti's eyes gleamed.

"S'pose we no find any feller, me

makee that feller Tu'u plenty sing out along rope!" he said venomously.

"Let's search, anyhow."

"Me plenty glad you come along me, sar," said Babalatti amicably. Now that it seemed certain that the schooner was utterly deserted, and his undisputed prize, the Malay was all friendliness.

There was little to be discovered from the search, except that everywhere were traces of the hurry in which the schooner had been abandoned. But why remained a secret.

It appeared that six natives had berthed forward. There had been a white man aft. The trade-room was well stocked with goods, and there was a cargo of copra below hatches. Food and water were in abundance. Of any mysterious intruder that might have been taken by the terrified Raiatean for a "debble," there was no sign. But when Ken came back to the cabin, after going through the ship, he picked up a revolver at the foot of the companion ladder. He examined it, and found that one cartridge had been discharged.

One shot, apparently, had been fired by the skipper of the trading schooner, and then he had dropped

the weapon, and it had remained where it had fallen.

At whom, or what, had the man who held the revolver fired? Ken searched the cabin once more to ascertain in what direction the bullet had gone.

Aft of the cabin, on the same level, and filling the space between it and the stern, was a lazarette, with a trapdoor into the hold below. The lazarette was stacked with trade goods and provisions. There was a doorway, but no door, leading from the cabin into the lazarette. Beside the doorway Ken found the gash made by the bullet which had struck the bulkhead and torn away splinters from the wood.

He pictured the scene in his mind—the skipper, turning at the foot of the companion, firing across the cabin at the doorway of the lazarette. Why? And at whom, or what? He could not guess that.

Why had the man dropped the revolver? Had it been torn from his hand by the enemy he had missed with a hasty shot?

But, if so, a human foe surely would have secured the revolver as a weapon, and would not have left

it lying there, still loaded with five live cartridges.

Why had a skipper and six natives fled from the enemy—whoever and whatever he was? Had there been more than one? But if there had been even one, where was he now? The crew had obviously gone in the boats—the enemy must have remained—yet the ship was deserted. Had he followed them into the boats—thrown them, perhaps, into the sea and taken the boats? There had been two boats, and both were gone. But why? A sea-thief would have been only too glad to let the crew get away and leave him in possession—and certainly would not have deserted the prize and left it derelict.

Ken's brain almost ached with the strange problem.

Everything pointed to some presence on board the drifting schooner that was non-human—had that been possible. Kaio-lalulalonga not only believed that it was possible, but that it was certain; and Babalatti's uneasiness could be read in his puckered face and wandering glances.

"It beats me!" said King of the  
(Continued on next page.)

### This Week's Anniversary.

## THE 100th BIRTHDAY OF THE LONDON OMNIBUS.

IT rather startled the people of London when they saw the first omnibus on the roads. And if you saw the same clumsy-looking vehicle to-day you would probably be startled, too—but for a different reason.

When the first bus appeared, everyone stared and thought how marvellous it was. That was a hundred years ago, so what would they think of one of our modern luxurious pneumatic-tyred six-wheelers?

Omnibus No. 1 ran between the Yorkshire Stingo, a Paddington hotel, and the Bank of England. The fare was a shilling each way—about three times as much as it costs nowadays on the same route for a far more comfortable and swifter journey. You sat on hard wooden seats, while three horses drew the vehicle slowly along.

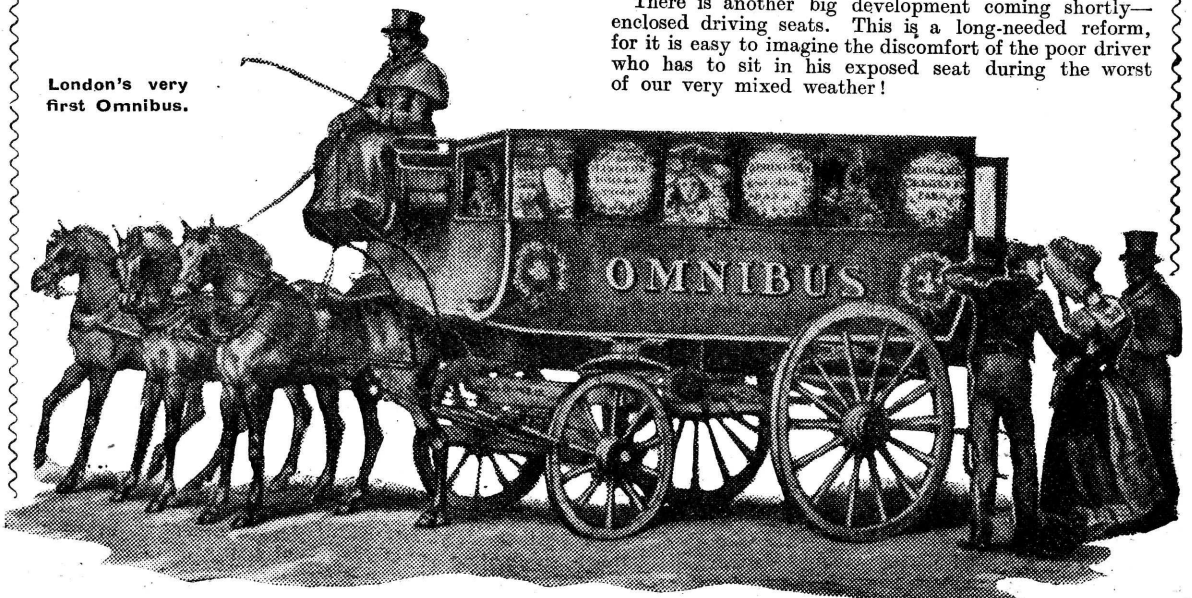
However, the omnibus caught on very well, for it

saved people walking, and there were soon several of the lumbering vehicles on various routes throughout the city. Then, in 1855, the London General Omnibus Company was formed in Paris under the name of the Compagnie Generale des Omnibus des Londres. It started with twenty-seven vehicles, which in ten years' time increased to about 800.

To-day, this company owns over 4,000 omnibuses, ranging from old-fashioned, solid-tyred four-wheelers to the latest covered-top, six-wheeled leviathans of the road. The change from horse-bus to motor-bus was started in 1897, and the bell-punch tickets were introduced four years earlier. At the present time the weight of the year's supply of tickets issued to the bus conductors totals 500 tons, and the company are making arrangements for an even bigger demand.

There is another big development coming shortly—enclosed driving seats. This is a long-needed reform, for it is easy to imagine the discomfort of the poor driver who has to sit in his exposed seat during the worst of our very mixed weather!

London's very first Omnibus.



## The Mystery of the Derelict!

Islands at last. "You've got a prize here, Babalatti, but you've got a puzzle along with it!"

"Feller schooner he belong me," said Babalatti. "Feller wind he comey, me takee feller schooner along island all right."

"They must have taken the ship's log in the boat," said Ken; "I can't find any papers. Her name's the Aloha—that's all we know of her. Might have been something in the log if they'd left it."

They returned to the deck at last, much to the relief of Kaio-lalulalonga. Tu'u had come off the bowsprit now, and the four Raiateans were gathered in a jabbering group amidships. One of them held in his hand a torn sheet of paper, on which Ken's eyes fell at once.

He called to the man.

"What's that feller paper, boy?"

"He stop along deck, sar," answered the Raiatean. "Me pickee him up along deck, sar. Me no savvy him."

Ken took the torn sheet from the native. It was written upon, and at a glance he saw that it was part of a page torn from a book—undoubtedly the log of the schooner Aloha.

His eyes gleamed. The paper was crumpled and torn, as if a hand had snatched at the book and caught only the leaf and jerked it away. There was little to be gathered from what was written on it in a very shaky hand:

"This night, the twenty-second, ran down a native Papuan boat in the dark. No lives saved. Must —"

That was all. It was a mere slip of paper, apparently torn by finger and thumb from the leaf to which it had belonged.

"That feller paper, sar, what he say?" asked Babalatti, his dark eyes gleaming at it.

Ken read it to him, and handed it over.

"It's the twenty-fourth now," he said. "If that entry refers to this month, it was two days ago that they ran down the boat."

Babalatti shrugged his shoulders.

The fact that the schooner Aloha had run down some Papuan lakatoi, as the native boats are called, in the dark night, and that no lives had been saved, did not disturb him. That fragment of the Aloha's log let in no more light on the desertion of the schooner.

There was nothing more to be done, and Ken and Kaio-lalulalonga returned to the waiting whaleboat.

Koko gave a grunt of relief as he dropped into the boat.

"Me plenty glad no stop any more along that feller ship, sar!" he said. "Feller debble he stop along that ship. All them feller dead feller bimeby."

There was a howl from the schooner, and Ken glanced back as his boat's crew, pulled for the Dawn.

Tu'u was howling under a rope wielded by Babalatti.

The Malay, convinced by the search that there was no "debble" on board the derelict, was punishing the Raiatean for giving a needless alarm.

He was laying on the rope with a vigorous hand.

Ken frowned; but it was not for him to intervene, and the whaleboat pulled on its way, followed across the sea, by the dismal howls of Tu'u.

### Becalmed.

**K**IT HUDSON looked inquiringly at his shipmate as Ken stepped up the low side of the Dawn. He had seen the canoe crew win the race to the derelict, and wondered what kept King of the Islands on the schooner. Not that time was of any value just then, for until the wind came the Dawn would lay idle.

Ken's brow was still knitted in puzzled thought as he came back to the ketch. The mystery of the derelict perplexed and baffled him.

"No salvage for us!" remarked Hudson, with a rueful smile.

"No," said Ken, "and I'm not sure I envy that Malay, Babalatti, who's bagged it. He's got a puzzle, as well as a prize-pocket."

"How's that?" asked the mate of the Dawn.

Ken sat down in the Madeira chair, under the green-striped awning aft. It was breathlessly hot—the metalwork on the ship burned to the touch. The sea was almost like glass; the sky a dome of cloudless blue. Not a cloud, not a breath of wind; the last few faint puffs that had come up behind Babalatti's canoe had died away into dead calm. Ken called to Danny, the cooky-boy, for a lime-squash, before he told the tale of what he had seen on the derelict.

Hudson listened with deep interest. That strange mystery of the sea intrigued him as deeply as the skipper of the Dawn.

"My hat!" said Hudson, when Ken had told him. "We've hit on something a little out of the common—though many strange things happen in the Pacific. A schooner deserted by captain and crew—and nothing wrong—"

"Not so far as one could see," cut in Ken. "But there must have been something very wrong—if a fellow could guess what it was."

"Koko savvy!" said the boat-swain.

"What do you savvy, old coffee-bean, head belong you?" asked the mate of the Dawn, with a grin.

"Feller debble he stop along Aloha."

"Dashed if it doesn't almost look like it," said King of the Islands. "I'd give a good deal to know what it means. Still, it's Babalatti's puzzle, not ours, as he's got the salvage. I hardly envy him, I think."

"S'pose that feller he stop along schooner, he dead feller bimeby!" said Kaio-lalulalonga sententiously.

Neither Ken nor his shipmate was likely to share the superstitions of the Kanaka. But it was in vain

that they sought any natural explanation of the mystery.

Had there been a wind, the Dawn would have glided on her way, and speedily lost sight of the derelict; and the matter would have been dismissed as an unsolved puzzle, which did not after all concern the shipmates.

But there was no wind, and no sign of one coming.

The Dawn lay almost motionless on the shining sea, with the drifting derelict in full sight in the hot sunshine.

No wind was likely to come yet, King of the Islands judged; and he was booked for one of those periods so irritating to the skipper of a wind-jammer, when long hours follow one another in idleness.

The mysterious derelict remaining in view and in mind, floating idly on the blue Pacific, attracted many curious glances from the ketch.

The Hiva-Oa crew looked at the schooner with unconcealed uneasiness and aversion, evidently sharing the opinion of Kaio-lalulalonga on the subject. No man on the Dawn envied the canoe crew who had taken possession of the deserted Aloha.

Indeed, anxious as King of the Islands was for a wind, so that he could get about his business, he was probably not so anxious as his crew, who longed to get away from the vicinity of the schooner and the "debble" that haunted her.

In the clear atmosphere across the shining water, the schooner's deck could be plainly seen. The glare of Babalatti's scarlet sarong caught the eye continually, in the blaze of the sun, as the Malay trader moved about the ship. Several times, when Ken's eyes were on him, he saw the Malay go below, and each time Babalatti had his bared kris in his hand, which seemed to hint that he was not easy in his mind when he was below decks.

The Raiateans kept forward. Only when Babalatti was on deck, and yelled to them in savage tones, did they venture aft; and immediately his back was turned they would scuttle forward again. The fear of what Tu'u fancied he had seen in the cabin was strong upon the islanders.

King of the Islands guessed, accurately, that it was only their fear of their savage master, and his razor-edged kris, that kept the Raiateans from fleeing in the canoe. He knew that he would have had trouble even with his own faithful crew of Hiva-Oa boys had he taken possession of the mysterious Aloha.

"Whistle for a wind, Kit!" said Ken at last, fanning himself with a palm-leaf.

Hudson grinned.

"What price Lizzie now?" he inquired.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Ken.

And Hudson mercifully forbore to enlarge on his favourite topic, the installation of a petrol engine on the ketch. Certainly the present state of affairs was rather an argument in favour of Lizzie.

But apart from the waste of time  
(Continued on page 24.)

# The Mystery of the Derelict!

(Continued from page 22.)

involved, King of the Islands was not wholly sorry to remain in sight of the Aloha.

Many are the strange mysteries of the sea; but this mystery seemed quite uncanny to the boy trader, and he would have given a great deal to solve it. Moreover, he was interested to see what might happen to the new crew on the schooner. The same thought was in Hudson's mind as he stood under the awning, staring towards the becalmed schooner.

Koko was convinced that if the canoe crew remained on the Aloha, they would be "dead fellers." And it was not impossible that what had happened once might happen a second time. Something—it was unimaginable what—had driven captain and crew from the Aloha in sudden, panic-stricken flight. If that "something" was still an active force, what might not happen to the bronze-faced man in the scarlet sarong and his Raiatean crew? There was, it seemed to King of the Islands, a scent of tragedy in the air—a shadow of dread and doom

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**FRANKS, BRIGHTON.**



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upon the becalmed schooner that lay blistering under the tropic sun.

"If anything should happen—"  
said Ken, breaking a long silence.

Hudson turned his head.

"What could happen, Ken?"

"I don't know, but something has happened already. I'm not sorry, on the whole, to be standing by, in case those fellows yonder should want help."

"Help? Against what?"  
"Oh, ask me another!" growled Ken. "Against whatever it was that drove the skipper and crew to the boats when they deserted the Aloha. No good trying to guess what it was."

Hudson smiled.  
"I fancy something's going to happen now," he remarked. "I've been watching those black boys for some time, and the Malay is below. I reckon they're planning to bolt in the canoe."

"My sainted Sam!"  
King of the Islands jumped up from the Madeira chair and fixed his eyes on the schooner. The scarlet sarong of Babalatti was not to be seen. The Malay had been below some time.

The four Raiatean sailors had gathered at the side, where the canoe was tied on. They were casting anxious, furtive glances towards the companion, obviously in fear of seeing their master emerge on deck. At the same time one of them was lowering a keg of water into the canoe with a rope, and another was dropping in something which Ken guessed to be food. One glance was enough to tell him that the Raiateans were seeking to desert the haunted schooner while their master's eye was withdrawn.

Ken knitted his brows.  
It was, perhaps, no concern of his, but he had a natural fellow-feeling for a skipper whose crew were about to desert and leave him helpless. The derelict would not be of much value to Babalatti if, when the wind came, it found him without a crew to sail the schooner.

Still, it was impossible at the distance to shout a warning to the Malay, if Ken had thought of doing so.

But Babalatti did not need any warning. The Malay was as watchful as a cat.

Suddenly there was a blaze of red in the opening of the companion—the Malay's sarong in the rays of the sun—and Babalatti came on deck with the sudden bound of a tiger, kris in hand.

He crossed the deck towards the group of Raiateans in a flash, the bared kris gleaming and flashing as it circled in the sunlight.

Ken caught his breath. Babalatti was more than half a savage, and his dark face was purple with passion as he brandished the kris. It was likely enough that blood had stained that shining blade many a time, and Ken and Hudson watched tensely, in fearful expectation of seeing the mutinous Raiateans cut down on the deck of the schooner.

With howls and screams of terror, the natives fled before their enraged master, taking refuge at last in the masts of the Aloha, staring down with dilated eyes from the cross-trees at the Malay.

Babalatti stood staring up at them, pouring out a torrent of abuse in his own tongue, and brandishing the kris, while the terrified Raiateans held on to the rigging, in fear of seeing him climb the shrouds after them. But that the Malay did not do. After a stream of abuse and threats he stepped down into the canoe and pitched overboard the keg of water and the food the natives had placed in it ready for flight. He came back on deck, pitching the paddles aft. Flight by means of the canoe was cut off now, as there was no wind to stir the lug-sail.

Hudson grinned.  
"They're booked now to stay on the schooner," he remarked. "They won't go unless the Malay goes, at any rate."

It was not till near sundown that the Raiateans ventured to descend to the deck. By that time Babalatti's fury seemed to have passed, for he gave them no heed, doubtless content with having taken measures to prevent their desertion.

Under the red sunset, a little later, Babalatti could be seen carrying bedding from below and spreading it on the deck. Evidently the Malay trader did not intend to pass the night in the cabin below. He laid the canoe paddles close beside his mattress aft. There was no escape for the Raiatean sailors from the ship that filled them with dread, unless Babalatti went with them, and it was clear that the Malay had no intention of leaving his prize.

With the suddenness of the tropics the night fell on the sea, and the mysterious schooner and its uneasy crew disappeared from the sight of the men on board the Dawn.

## In the Night!

**S**TARRY night on the Pacific. There was still no breath of wind, and the heat seemed hardly to have abated with nightfall. In a sky of dark blue velvet myriad stars gleamed and glistened, reflected in the motionless waters below.

Like a dim shadow afar, the outline of the becalmed schooner could be seen in the glint of the stars.

Dark and silent lay the Aloha.  
Ken, as he idly paced the deck of the ketch, wondered whether Babalatti and his Raiateans were sleeping. A Kanaka can sleep under almost any circumstances, but Ken doubted whether any eyes were closing on board the mysterious Aloha. He could imagine the fear that had fallen on the superstitious islanders with the fall of night, the haunting dread with which they would peer into the shadows. Even the Malay himself had not cared to spend the night below decks, and it was likely that the fear which haunted his crew was strong upon him also, though with obstinate tenacity he clung to his prize in spite of fear.

Kit Hudson had stretched himself on a sleeping-mat on deck. At eight bells he rose and joined King of the Islands.

"Your watch below, Ken!"  
King of the Islands shook his head. "It's too hot to sleep," he said.

"And you're wondering what's  
(Continued on page 26.)

# The Mystery of the Derelict!

(Continued from page 24.)

going to happen yonder?" said Hudson, with a smile and a nod towards the shadowy outline of the schooner.

"Well, yes," admitted Ken. "I don't feel easy in my mind, somehow."

Forward, the Hiva-Oa crew slept on their tapa mats. But Kaio-lalulalonga had not taken his watch below. The boatswain of the Dawn was wide awake, and his dark eyes turned constantly on the dim, shadowy blur in the starlight that showed where the Aloha lay.

"Hark!" exclaimed King of the Islands suddenly.

In the breathless stillness of the night slight sounds travelled far over the sea. From the direction of the half-hidden schooner came a sudden outbreak of sound.

"My hat!" exclaimed Hudson. "Listen!"

A vague sound of terrified cries floated through the darkness. Koko's teeth chattered. From their sleeping-mats the Hiva-Oa boys leaped up in alarm, frightened eyes searching the darkness towards the schooner.

"Feller debble!" gasped Kaio-lalulalonga. "Feller debble he stop!"

The outburst of terror died away as suddenly as it had arisen. Silence followed, deathly and still.

What had happened?

It was in Ken's mind to order the whaleboat to be lowered. Something had happened on the schooner, something terrible, strange, uncanny, and it was in the boy trader's mind to pull across in the whaleboat to give help. But before he could give the order there was another sound from the sea—the sound of paddles driven with frantic speed.

"They've deserted her!" gasped Hudson.

"Look!" King of the Islands raised his hand and pointed. "Look! The canoe! They're running!"

In the bright starlight, at a short distance from the becalmed ketch, the canoe shot into sight.

It was speeding away from the schooner, driven by the four Raiateans, who were kneeling to the paddles, working with feverish energy, harder and faster than in the race to the derelict that morning. The canoe fairly fled over the calm water. The scarlet sarong of the Malay showed up brightly in the starshine. Babalatti, too, had a paddle and was working as frantically as his crew.

King of the Islands stared at the fleeting canoe, almost in stupefaction. His first thought had been that the

native crew had fled, deserting the Malay. But that was not so. Babalatti was with them in the canoe, paddling as hard as the rest, evidently as terrified as the Raiateans. The paddles flashed too swiftly for the eye to follow their motion as the canoe drove on.

At last the beat of the paddles died away into silence. The canoe crew were gone.

Ken drew a deep breath.

His eyes turned to the dark shadow of the deserted schooner—deserted once more; again a derelict, the prize of the first comer. There was no light, no movement, no sound, nothing to account for the panic-stricken flight of the salvage crew. Ken felt a shiver run through him. Hudson touched him on the shoulder.

"Salvage!" said Hudson. "If all the devils in the South Seas are on board that schooner, Ken, it's a derelict and our salvage!"

Ken nodded slowly.

"Little white master!" It was almost a wail from Kaio-lalulalonga. "Debble he stop along that feller ship! You no go along that feller schooner, sar!"

Ken's reply was brief:

"Lower the whaleboat!"

(There is more exciting adventure coming Ken King's way! Read about it in the long complete yarn in next week's MODERN BOY.)



## HOW the RAILWAYS TALK!

York Signal Box—typical of many other very busy ones watching over our British railway lines.

*A most wonderful system of communication is adopted on our railway lines, distinct altogether from the use of the ordinary signals past which you flash when taking a trip by train. A railwayman tells you about this little-known method of saving time—and lives—in use to-day.*

A chartered special train which has to be rushed away at short notice is given a clear run by the transmission of the single word "Cicero."

Fog and fogmen, snowstorms, coal supplies, relief, calls to duty, medical examination, restrictions and repairs are only a few of the varied calls made by telegraph code.

When bullion is in transit, when invalid chairs are needed, when exhibitions or shows are arranged, as well as in expediting the movement of the many different kinds of carriages and wagons available on the lines, the wires are made to sing with strange words.

From elephant vans to fish trucks, from gunpowder vans to bell and banana wagons, from hopped bottom door wagons to refrigerator vans, salt wagons, sleeper wagons, yeast wagons, pigeon vans, saloons, sleeping cars, and restaurant cars—all

are requisitioned by the magic code, in these cases one or two letters, or initials, only being needed.

All this is apart, of course, from the ordinary system of railway signals, which is an equally fascinating subject. There are a colossal number of signals on the British railways—you pass no fewer than 673 of them on the journey from Paddington, London, to Penzance!

The signal boxes are not placed anywhere, just haphazard. They are so distributed that the line is divided up as far as possible into equal distances. These are known as block sections, each being provided with the necessary number of signals.

They are operated by levers in the signal boxes, and what most fellows do not know is that the normal position of every signal is at "Danger." In addition there are the "Caution," "Home," and "Starting" signals. The "Distant" signal—which is a "Caution" one only—is the first reached by a train nearing a signal box, and you can tell it from all others because its arm is fish-tailed.

Additional again are signals used for such purposes as backing, shunting, and so on, all with their own peculiar distinguishing marks.

**D**ID you know that in addition to extensive private telephone systems and bell signals which are passed from signal box to signal box along the lineside wires, hundreds of thousands of railway telegrams are flashing all over the country—and most of them in code?

This code helps to keep the messages short, a complete phrase or sentence being represented by a single word. For ready identification, also, the code words are kept on separate lines when the messages are written and re-written from point to point.

For example, whenever a mishap or accident occurs, delay notices are exhibited immediately within the area affected. Without the help of the present scheme this would be a very long job, perhaps, but it is all easily arranged by the telegraphing of a single word, "Warnpass."

When the trains are again normal, the code word "Resump" is circulated.

Reserving bed-rooms for travellers at railway hotels, arranging for refreshments or luncheon baskets to be handed in on the trains, and even setting several station staffs searching for a passenger's lost umbrella or luggage are included in this comprehensive code.