

THE POWER CHAIN! — COMPLETE POWER-STATION
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GYMNASTS OF THE AIR! (*Special Topical Chat Inside.*)

The Secret of the Schooner!



For an instant Ken had an uncertain glimpse of a dreadful figure!

Boarding the Derelict!

LOWER the whaleboat!" Dawn, lying becalmed on a glassy sea under the gleam of the stars, no man stirred.

For the first time since Ken King, the boy trader of the South Seas, had sailed in his ketch his voice was unheeded by the Hiva-Oa crew.

Even Kaio-lalulalonga—otherwise Koko—the Kanaka bo'sun, did not stir.

The boy trader glanced round, his brows knitting.

"You feller boy! You hear me, ear belong you?" exclaimed Ken, with a gleam in his eyes. "What name you no jump along boat?"

"This feller plenty flaid, sar!" faltered Lompo, backing away from the angry glance of his skipper.

"Koko!" rapped out Ken.

Kaio-lalulalonga stood hesitating, his eyes fixed on a dim shape that showed up on the sea in the glimmer of the stars—the shadowy outline of the Aloha, the deserted schooner.

Koko the Kanaka was as brave as a lion against human foes. But on board the derelict he feared foes that were not human.

"You plenty flaid, Koko, all same Lompo?" asked Ken scornfully.

"Me plenty flaid along feller ship, sar!" stammered Koko. "Debble belong sea, sar, he stop along that feller ship. All us feller savvy, sar. What name no feller stop along that ship, sar? What name that feller Babalatti run along sea, along night? All feller here plenty flaid, sar!"

"Us feller flaid go along that ship, sar!" mumbled Kolulo.

There was a stealthy, scuttling sound from below decks. Ken felt a contraction at his heart. Something was on board the schooner . . . something that had scared captain and crew into wild flight! What was it? . . . A stirring story of the South Seas,

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

LONG AND COMPLETE.

King of the Islands, as Ken was called, made an impatient gesture.

When first the boy trader had sighted the schooner she had been derelict and deserted, lawful salvage for the first man who stepped aboard and took her into port. Of course, Ken had tried to claim her; but he had been forestalled. Other eyes had

seen the derelict; a Malay named Babalatti had reached her first, and to him had fallen the valuable prize.

And then a mysterious thing had happened. Without warning, and for no apparent reason, Babalatti and his crew of Raiatean natives had deserted the schooner—fled from her by night as swiftly as if there were a hundred demons at their heels!

What was the reason for their sudden flight? And why had the well-appointed schooner been left derelict and deserted—as she was when the crew of the Dawn first sighted her?

For Ken and his Australian mate, Kit Hudson, it was a baffling mystery, but the superstitious minds of the natives had arrived at their own solution at once; to their way of thinking, the Aloha was haunted by a "debble," and

not for a hundred times the value of the salvage would any one of them have willingly set foot on the deck of the schooner.

But King of the Islands was not likely to let superstitious fears stand between him and valuable salvage.

Now that Babalatti and his crew had vanished in the starry night, the

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Aloha was once more derelict, and the prize of the first skipper who sighted her. It would not have been Ken's way to let such a prize slip.

"You feller boy, you talk plenty fool talk, mouth belong you!" said Ken sharply. "S'pose you flaid go along feller schooner, me go along that feller ship, you feller boy stop along boat."

"Not alone, Ken," said Kit Hudson uneasily. "Goodness knows what's happened on that schooner—I can't begin to guess! But you can't go alone, old scout."

"Must!" said Ken. "One of us must remain in charge of the Dawn. The schooner's deserted—what is there to fear?"

"Nothing, I suppose. But something must have happened to frighten away Babalatti and his crew."

Ken's lips set.

"Whatever may happen, it won't frighten me away!" he said. "We're not losing the salvage because a Malay trader and a crew of Raiatean boys have been scared by a shadow."

"Let me go—"

"We can't both go."

Ken turned to the hesitating crew again.

"Lower the whaleboat!" he rapped out. "My word, you feller boy you no jump along that boat, me send you along beach along Lalinge, me take new feller crew along this ship!"

"Little white master!" muttered Kaio-lalulalonga, "no good go along that feller ship! Debble he stop along Aloha. S'pose you go along that schooner, sar, you dead feller!"

"You swab, you can stop in the boat!"

"Me flaid along you, sar," said Kaio-lalulalonga. "Me no flaid along this feller."

Ken's angry face broke into a smile.

"You plenty big fool, Koko," he said. "You altogether too much flaid along nothing. Lower the boat, I tell you!"

Unwillingly Koko turned to obey.

The whaleboat dropped from the davits, and Ken jumped into her. Unwillingly, but no longer disobedient, Kaio-lalulalonga, Lompo, and Lufu took the oars.

Kit Hudson looked down from the rail with an anxious frown on his sunburnt face.

He was as keen as his shipmate to handle the salvage of the deserted schooner; not for a moment would he have dreamed of allowing such a prize to escape. But the strange mystery of the Aloha haunted his mind.

"Take care, Ken," he said, as the boy trader sat down in the stern of the whaleboat. "Keep a gun handy!"

Ken looked up and nodded.

"You can rely on it that I shan't be caught napping if anything happens," he said. "But what could happen?"

"I can't guess that," Hudson shook his head. "But we know that

something must have happened already on that hooker. Take care of yourself, old man!"

"Ay, ay!"

"You'll be sending the boat back. If you want me, loose off a shot."

"You bet! Give way, there!" called out Ken. "You feller boy, you washy-washy along Aloha!"

The oars dipped, and Hudson was left watching at the Dawn's rail with an anxious face, though what was at the root of his anxiety for his shipmate he could hardly have said.

The Dawn dropped into the dim shadows astern of the boat as the whaleboat pulled across the starry sea. The Kanakas pulled with much less than their usual vigour. Every stroke of the oars that drew them nearer and nearer to the mysterious derelict seemed to add to their uneasiness. Again and again they glanced fearfully over their shoulders at the shadowy ship.

Almost motionless, only heaving a little to the slight wash of the sea, the schooner lay like a log on the waters. The whaleboat ran alongside at last, and Ken hooked on.

No light burned on the Aloha. In the dead calm, spars and rigging were still; a deathly silence hung over the schooner. The bump of the boat against her hull made a startling thud in the stillness, and caused the Kanakas to catch their breath.

Ken clambered lightly on board.

From the schooner's rail he looked back into the boat, at the fearful, apprehensive faces of the Kanakas.

"You feller boy, you washy-washy along ketch," he said

"Little master," stammered Koko, "s'pose you stop along this feller ship, you dead feller! Debble belong this ship, sar; he makee kai-kai along little white master!"

King of the Islands laughed.

"Plaps me makee kai-kai along feller debble!" he answered. "White man he no flaid along feller debble."

Lompo was pushing off from the schooner. Koko, with a fierce glare, shoved him aside.

Lompo blinked at him.

"White master he say go along ketch!" he expostulated.

"You shut up feller mouth belong you," snapped Koko. He looked up at the face of King of the Islands, visible over the schooner's rail. "Little master, me plenty much glad you no stop along Aloha."

"Get back to the ketch," answered Ken. "Me stop!"

Kaio-lalulalonga drew a deep breath.

"Feller debble he stop," he said. "Me plenty too much flaid along feller debble." He paused. "S'pose little white master he stop, this feller stop."

And Koko swung himself on board the schooner.

Ken smiled.

"You wantee stop along schooner?" he asked.

"Me no wantee stop along schooner, sar!" replied Koko. "Me stop along little white master. Me savvy too much us feller dead feller bimeby."

S'pose little master he dead feller, plenty good this Kanaka be dead feller."

Ken waved his hand to the Kanakas in the whaleboat, and they pulled back to the Dawn, shadowy in the distance.

The boat vanished in the dusk of the sea.

Ken and Koko were left to themselves, on board the mysterious derelict; and though there was no tangible danger, Ken felt his heart beating faster as the splash of the oars died away in the night.

Taking Possession.

"UR prize, Koko!" said King of the Islands.

He spoke lightly; more lightly than he was feeling. In spite of his iron nerve and his unbounded courage, Ken was feeling the eerie effect of the mystery of the schooner, and its silence and desolation.

"New day he come, feller wind he come," went on Ken. "Plenty money along we get this ship along island, Koko. Let's look through the ship, and find out if we can why Babalatti and his crew deserted her."

Koko did not answer. He had no doubt why the Malay trader and his crew of Raiatean boys had fled into the night. They had seen the "debble" that haunted the schooner. Ken knew what was in the Kanaka's mind, and it made him smile. Yet there was no other explanation at which he could even begin to guess.

He had searched the schooner the previous day, in company with the Malay, and found no clue to the cause of her desertion. Now the Malay had fled with his men, in panic terror; and it was only reasonable to suppose that it was from the same reason. But what was that reason?

On the deck lay one of the paddles belonging to Babalatti's canoe; the Malay and his men had fled in so great a hurry that they had overlooked it. Close by the rail lay a bare, gleaming kris. It was the weapon Ken had seen in the hand of the Malay, and he had dropped it in the haste of departure. From what danger, real or imaginary, had the Malay and the Raiateans fled in such frantic haste?

Ken approached the companion-way. He heard Koko give a gasp; but the Kanaka did not speak. He had given up seeking to dissuade his little white master from plunging into unknown dangers.

Below, there was no light; the interior of the schooner was as black as pitch.

King of the Islands paused in the companion and listened. If some strange and terrible foe lurked in the darkness—

But there was no sound.

With his grip hard on his revolver, King of the Islands descended into the cabin. Close behind him came the pattering of Koko's naked feet.

Ken remembered the cabin well enough from his visit of the day before, when he had searched the schooner with the Malay, after losing

the race to the derelict. He recalled that there was a swinging lamp over the table, and he groped his way in that direction, to get a light.

There was a panting breath from Koko.

"You listen, sar, ear belong you!" breathed the Kanaka in the dense darkness. Ken felt the trembling of Koko's mighty frame.

He started, and listened, his heart thumping.

In the thick darkness, he could see nothing save the gleam, of Koko's rolling, terrified eyes.

But he could hear a sound—a stealthy sound. What it was, Ken could not have said—he only knew that there was a soft, stealthy sound in the stillness.

It lasted only for a second. Then all was still again.

Ken's heart was thumping. For some seconds he was feeling like the Ancient Mariner after the sight of the phantom ship: "Fear at his heart, as at a cup, the life-blood seemed to sip."

He pulled himself together instantly, jerked a matchbox from his pocket, and struck a light.

The flame flickered up; and Ken held up the match and looked round him, his revolver ready in the other hand.

But there was nothing to be seen, save the usual appointments of an ill-kept cabin on a trading schooner.

"Get the lamp down, Koko!"

Slowly Kaio-lalulalonga stirred. His eyes were almost bulging from his head, as he stared round in the shadows. But there was nothing to be seen—nothing to account for the faint sound that they had heard.

In a few moments the lamp was lighted and swung back in its place, filling the cabin with a dim, yellowish gleam.

Ken searched the cabin and the trade-room adjoining, and then stepped into the lazarette, which opened from the cabin aft with a doorless aperture.

The lazarette was stacked with goods, in bales and cases and boxes and sacks. But it was silent and deserted. The trapdoor that gave access to the hold below was closed. In the hold, as Ken knew from his previous investigation, were sacks of copra and pearl-shell, the usual cargo of an island trader.

And he remembered that there were rats—and he smiled. No doubt that stealthy sound he had heard in the darkness of the cabin had been made by a rat scuttling away from the footsteps of the intruders.

"No findee nothing, sar?" whispered Koko, when Ken rejoined him in the cabin.

"No findee feller debble," said Ken, with a faint smile.

"Feller debble he findee us feller bimeby," murmured Koko. "Me hear him, ear belong me."

"It was a rat we heard," said Ken. Koko shook his head.

On the table were the remains of a meal, and a fragment of paper lay among the plates.



Koko took a flying leap overboard as a hideous black something emerged from the companion-way. Ken fell back against the rail in startled amazement.

It was the fragment, torn from a page of the ship's log, which had been found when the derelict schooner was first boarded. Ken King had seen it before and had handed it to Babalatti, who had left it lying there, as a thing of no consequence. Ken picked it up and read it through again.

"This night, the 22nd, ran down a native Papuan boat in the dark. No lives saved. Must—"

That was all—all that remained to tell of the voyage of the Aloha before the unknown had happened, and captain and crew had fled.

It was now the night of the 24th; two days had elapsed since the Aloha had run down the Papuan boat and driven her and her mop-headed crew under the sea.

The skipper had duly recorded the incident, adding that no lives had been saved. It might have been a fishing-boat that had been run down—or it might have been a war canoe with armed warriors on board—though Ken wondered what had brought a canoe so far from the

coasts of New Guinea. He remembered that there had been a gale from the west a few days ago, and it might have driven the Papuans far out to sea.

"No lives saved," ran the skipper's brief entry; and Ken pictured the smashed boat, the yelling blacks struggling in the water, the schooner gliding on and leaving them to their fate. The late skipper of the Aloha had not been a captain after Ken's pattern. Possibly, in the darkness of the night, he had been unable to save any of the New Guinea blacks—more likely, he feared to take the savages on his ship.

He must, at least, have heard their voices, to know that they were Papuans at all, as he had entered in the log.

It was strange enough that only that fragment of the ship's log survived. It had been picked up on deck, and the skipper must have had the book with him, to take into the boat. From what cause had the fragment been torn out and left?

An enemy grasping at the skipper—the clutch missing, and catching the book—perhaps held up in defence? But if an enemy had been on

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board the schooner; where was he now? The ship was deserted.

King of the Islands returned to the deck at last, much to Koko's relief. Koko's fear of the unseen "debble" had not abated; but he felt less uneasy on the open deck, under the glitter of the stars.

Ken looked across the starry waters towards the ketch. It was a dim shadow on the distant sea, picked out by the riding-lights. Never had Ken desired so much to have his shipmate by his side. There were long hours of darkness yet till the dawn came. But he turned his thoughts to the morrow. On the morrow there would be a wind, and the Dawn, with the derelict in tow, would sail for the nearest port—a rich prize for the shipmates.

A gasping breath drew his eyes to Koko. The Kanaka was trembling.

"Me hear, ear belong me, sar!" whispered Koko.

"What feller ting you tinkee hear, ear belong you?" asked Ken, with a creepy feeling in his spine.

"Feller debble, sar!"

Ken listened intently, but he heard nothing. He turned away with an impatient gesture.

In the Night.

KING OF THE ISLANDS stretched himself on a tapa mat and closed his eyes. Kaio-lalulalonga did not think of sleeping. So far as Ken could see, it was unnecessary to keep watch on the derelict schooner; but not for all the pearls in the Pacific would Koko have closed his eyes, and he marvelled to see that his white master could sleep.

But in the tropical heat, and with the strange mystery of the schooner haunting his mind, sleep did not come easily to the boy trader. He lay for a long time dozing, between sleeping and waking, while the Kanaka prowled restlessly about the deck, his eyes alert, his ears strained for the faintest sound.

Ken dropped into slumber at last, a slumber haunted by dreams. The "debble" of the Aloha took definite shape in the mists and shadows of sleep. One of Babalatti's Raiatean sailors had seen that "debble," according to his own frightened story—a "devil" with fiery eyes, long hair, and a tail.

In his waking moments Ken had vainly tried to picture what it was that the Raiatean boy had fancied he had seen lurking in the cabin. Now that he slept, the horrid vision danced through his brain, black and threatening, fierce-eyed, with whisking tail. He murmured and moved in his sleep, visioning a creeping figure, a clutching claw, and burning eyes fixed on him.

Suddenly he awakened. It was the darkest hour of the night—the hour before dawn. King of the Islands lay half-conscious, still partly in the

land of dreams, hardly aware of the difference between dream and reality.

Something was stirring close by him.

"Koko!"

He supposed that it was the Kanaka.

Then suddenly he sighted Koko, forward, standing by the bowsprit, gazing out across the sea.

A sudden shiver ran through him.

Koko was almost the ship's length away; yet something was stirring near him in the darkness.

With a throb at his heart, in sudden alarm, King of the Islands bounded to his feet.

He grasped his revolver and stared round him. Something—he could hardly see what in the baffling shadows—leaped away.

For an instant Ken had an uncertain glimpse of a dreadful figure—a black form with a mass of tangled hair, and a tail that whisked like that of a large monkey.

The next instant it was gone.

Bang! The roar of the revolver was like thunder in the stillness. He fired in haste, with an unnamed terror gripping at his heart.

But the Thing—whatever it was—was gone. It had vanished round the companion hatch and doubtless scuttled below—if it was a reality, and not a trick of the half-wakened imagination.

Ken caught his breath.

There was a patter of bare feet as Koko came racing aft, his eyes dilated, his dusky face almost grey with terror.

He reached King of the Islands, who stood staring into the shadows, the smoking revolver in his hand.

Ken's face was white as chalk. He stood almost dazed, staring about him.

Koko touched his arm, with a hand that trembled like an aspen.

"Little master!" he gasped.

"I—I saw it!" breathed King of the Islands.

"You see feller debble, eye belong you?" panted Kaio-lalulalonga.

"Heaven knows! I saw something." Ken tried to pull himself together, but horror was strong upon him, and he felt his teeth chattering. "Is the ship haunted? What can it mean?"

"Us feller dead feller!" muttered the Kanaka. "Feller debble he stop along this schooner, sar; he makee kai-kai along us feller."

"Listen!"

There was a sound below. It was a stealthy, scuttling sound, and it seemed too loud to be made by a rat.

Ken felt a contraction at his heart.

Something—something was on board the schooner! Something that had scared captain and crew away—something that had frightened Babalatti and the Raiateans into wild flight in their canoe. What was it? What could it be?

Ken pulled himself together and his teeth set hard.

"Koko, there's a man aboard this hooker," he said quietly. "There's

been some man hidden on board all the time—hidden among the cargo in the hold, or in some corner of the lazarette—"

"No feller man, sar," said Koko, through his chattering teeth. "Feller debble, sar!"

"Man or devil, I'm going to root him out."

Ken strode towards the companion.

Kaio-lalulalonga caught his arm.

"Little white master, you stop along deck, you no go along cabin along feller aitoo—"

Ken shook off the Kanaka's hand.

"Stay on deck if you choose, Koko—I'm going below." He tramped down the companion stairs.

Koko gave a groan, and he stopped at the top of the steps. Even his devotion to his little white master seemed unable to drag his feet farther.

Ken's teeth were set, and his eyes gleaming, as he tramped below. He was angry now—more angry than alarmed. It was a human presence on board the derelict—it could be nothing else. Some man of the original crew must have stayed behind in hiding—easy enough in the dark hold cluttered with cargo.

There seemed no other explanation. But whatever the explanation might be, King of the Islands was determined to root it out. He was ashamed and angry at the spasm of fear and horror that the glimpse of the half-seen, hideous figure had given him—ashamed of the trick of the imagination which had made him fancy that he had seen a devil with a tail, as described by the Raiatean, and as pictured in his dream. He tramped into the cabin with gleaming eyes, finger on trigger.

The swinging lamp had been left burning, but it was not burning now. All was darkness.

Ken knew that the lamp had been well filled; it could not have burnt out. It had been extinguished.

That could only have been done by the lurking Thing that had crept out of its unknown hiding-place when all was quiet. With what intentions had that unknown crept on the boy trader as he lay sleeping on the tapa mat on deck?

Ken could guess, and he knew that he had had a narrow escape. And he knew, too, that whatever it was that he had seen was now lurking in the darkness of the cabin, ready to pounce upon him. He stood still and listened. All was deathly silent.

Quietly he took out a matchbox and extracted a match. He struck the match on the bulkhead, keeping his revolver in his right hand ready for use.

The match flickered up.

The next instant it was dashed from Ken's hand, and he was firing wildly at something that had leaped on him from the blackness. But the spattering revolver was knocked away, and claw-like hands dragged King of the Islands to the floor, a savage snarl like that of a wild beast sounding in his ears.

In black darkness, grappling with an unseen foe, grasped in a terrible

clutch that seemed like the grip of steel, King of the Islands struggled and fought for his life.

The Devil of the Aloha!

"AIE! Aie!" moaned Kaio-lalulalonga.

He stood shaking like an aspen leaf, listening to the sounds from below—the sounds of scuffling, of panting breath, sounds of a man fighting desperately for his life in the grasp of a ruthless enemy.

Terror lay on the Kanaka like paralysis.

He had no doubt—he knew that King of the Islands was in the clutches of the mysterious "debble" that haunted the schooner, and he groaned aloud in fear.

A human foe, a hundred human foes, would not have scared the Kanaka. Had King of the Islands been in the hands of the fiercest cannibals of the South Seas, had he been in the jaws of a tiger-shark, Kaio-lalulalonga would have flown to his aid without a second's hesitation. But the dreadful presence on board the Aloha daunted Koko's stout heart, and he stood trembling and listening, rooted where he stood.

"Koko!"

Faintly came the cry from below.

A cry for help from one in the very grasp of death.

It stirred the Kanaka. Even the horror of the sea-devil in the darkness could not make Kaio-lalulalonga pass that cry unheeded. Shaking with fear, Koko plunged down into the darkness of the companion and staggered into the cabin.

Something brushed against him unseen—two struggling figures locked together that rolled and struggled and tore on the floor of the cabin.

"Little master!"

"Help!"

The Kanaka's groping hands found the struggling figures. His hands glided over oily bare skin and fastened on a mop of wild hair. It was Ken's assailant that he was grasping, and if it was a sea-devil, it felt very like a savage islander to the touch. Savage or devil, Koko did not care now, now that his white master's life was at stake. He dragged and tore at the mop of hair he had grasped and by sheer strength wrenched the boy trader's assailant away from him. And then the unseen assailant turned on Kaio-lalulalonga like a tiger. A fierce, savage grasp sought his brawny throat.

Ken, sprawling breathless on the floor, gasped and gasped. Strong and sturdy as the boy trader was, he had been in the grasp of a foe twice as strong as himself, and only Koko's coming saved him from terrible death.

For long minutes he lay gasping,

utterly exhausted by that fearful struggle, while Koko fought with the unseen enemy.

"Koko!" he panted.

"Little master, you run along deck!" Koko's voice came in choking tones. "Feller debble he get this Kanaka! You run along deck. This Kanaka he dead feller."

King of the Islands was not likely to heed that. He groped towards the struggle; his grasp came in contact with Koko, and then with a bare, oily skin, and closed on a thick throat.

A scream of fury rang and echoed through the schooner. There was a fierce wrench, and the unseen enemy tore himself loose and scrambled away.

There was a patter of feet in the gloom—the sea-devil, or whatever it was, was running. The direction of the sound told that the enemy had fled into the lazarette aft of the cabin.

But Ken was not thinking of pur-

had an oar-stroke been so welcome to the ears of the boy trader.

From the gloom of the sea, the shape of a boat loomed up. Kit Hudson was standing up in the boat. "Aloha, ahoy!" he shouted. "King of the Islands—Ken!"

Ken ran to the side.

"Here!" he called back.

"I heard your shooting," said Hudson. "I reckoned I'd better come in the boat, Ken. Was it a signal?"

"No. But, my sainted Sam, I'm glad you've come," panted King of the Islands.

The boat glided alongside. The Kanaka oarsmen stared up, their faces full of fear. Hudson had his revolver in his hand, and Ken guessed that he had needed it to drive the Hiva-Oa men to pull the whaleboat across to the haunted derelict.

"What's happened, Ken?" Hudson looked up at the white face, streaked with blood, that looked down from the rail of the schooner.

Before Ken could answer there was a scream from Kaio-lalulalonga.

"Feller debble he comey along deck!"

With a single bound the Kanaka boatswain was in the boat. It rocked and shipped water under the sudden impact.

Ken stared round.

From the companion-way a figure emerged, dimly seen in the darkness, a figure that made him shudder. A hideous black figure, with a head of wild hair like a mop, burning, ferocious eyes, and a tail that whisked behind like the tail of a monkey. It looked like some savage gorilla in the dim glitter of the stars.

Ken swung himself over the rail and dropped into the whaleboat.

"Shove off!" he panted.

The boat's crew were only too glad to obey. Every oar in the boat jammed on the side of the Aloha, and the boat rocked away. A yell of rage and ferocity rang out on the Aloha, and the dreadful figure, jabbering with savage fury, roamed like a wild beast up and down the deck as if seeking an enemy.

The Kanakas pulled desperately at the oars.

"Stop!" rapped out Ken at a dozen fathoms from the schooner. "You feller boy, you no washy-washy any more altogether."

"Feller debble he follow us feller, sar!" gasped Lompo.

"Stop, I tell you!"

Unwillingly the Kanakas ceased to row. The whaleboat lay idle on the glassy sea, and Ken and Kit stood and stared back at the schooner and at the fearful figure that roamed her deserted deck.

Kit was all for boarding the schooner and capturing the Thing—whichever it was—by sheer force of numbers. Ken was game enough, despite his terrible mauling, but all

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suit or further conflict. He was only too glad of the respite.

"Koko! You get along deck!" he panted.

A moment more, and they had dashed up the companion and were on the open deck, under the glimmer of the stars. Koko staggered along the deck as far as the forecastle, and King of the Islands followed him. He caught up a belaying-pin as he went. His revolver lay somewhere in the darkness below, and he was now unarmed. If the devil of the Aloha, strong and ferocious, followed them on deck, it would be a fight to the death. But as yet there was no sign of him.

Koko leaned on the rail, panting and shaking. King of the Islands wiped the blood from his face, where a claw-like hand had torn the skin. There was a gash in his shoulder where savage teeth had torn.

"My sainted Sam!" breathed the boy trader.

Splash!

It was the sound of an oar. Never

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the while the boat's crew were getting more and more uneasy.

As wild cries came from the figure pacing the schooner's deck, Kaio-lalulalonga and his companions crouched lower and lower in the boat and moaned with terror.

"Come, Ken, let's chance it before these silly niggers go crazy with fear," urged Kit. "Once aboard, we can rush the Thing and overpower him—or it—in next to no time."

"We can't do it, Kit!" replied Ken. "For one thing, we should never get the crew to row up to the schooner. Even if you threatened them with your revolver, I doubt if they would stir. No. The best thing for us to do is to lay off here till daybreak, and go aboard again when we can see what we are up against. I can assure you I don't want that brute's fingers round my neck again in the dark. He's too jolly strong for my liking!"

"Right-ho, Ken, old scout! We'll hang on till daylight. Then for the salvage—debble or no debble!"

Solving the Mystery.

THE sun leaped above the horizon, and it was day. The level rays lighted the glassy sea, turning the Pacific into molten gold. There was no wind, the calm still held. Motionless on the still waters lay the schooner and the ketch, and between them, motionless also, the whaleboat and its crew.

From the boat all eyes were turned to the schooner, watching the wild figure that roamed on her deck. The fear of the supernatural was still strong upon the Kanakas, but to the white men there was little left of mystery.

The savage figure on the deck of the schooner was human, though low down in the scale of humanity. Now that it was to be seen in clear daylight, King of the Islands was not left in doubt. And Kaio-lalulalonga, as he watched the fearful creature in the bright light of the sun, forgot his fears of a sea-devil, now that it was growing clear that the "debble" of the Aloha was nothing but a South Sea savage, though of a race of which the crew of the Dawn knew little or nothing.

"We might have guessed, Ken," said Hudson, with a faint grin. "That fragment of the Aloha's log gave the clue, if we had only known."

King of the Islands nodded. "Little white master savvy that feller debble?" asked Kaio-lalulalonga hesitatingly.

"Savvy that feller debble plenty," said Ken. "That feller he no debble, Koko. All same me tell you plenty time before. He feller belong Papua."

"A nigger from New Guinea," said Hudson.

"Me savvy plenty feller nigger," said Koko. "Me no savvy feller nigger tail stop along him."

"Along New Guinea, tail he stop along nigger," said Ken.

"No tinkee," said Koko incredulously. "No feller boy along tail he stop."

Ken smiled.

"The Papuan niggers fix on plaited tails, you swab. They plait them out of fibre and hang them on. It's the Papuan idea of ornament."

"Me no savvy," said Kaio-lalulalonga. "Me tinkee feller tail belong him all same feller leg, feller head belong him."

"Feller tail belong him, all same feller ear-ring, feller lava-lava belong you," said Ken.

And at that simple explanation, though it was new and strange to them, the Hiva-Oa boys lost their fear, and they grinned as they stared at the wild, uncouth figure ranging the deck of the Aloha. With the quick-changing mood of these children of the sun, they passed from terror to mockery.

"Me laugh plenty along that black feller, along tail belong him," said Lompo, with a chuckle.

"That feller he plenty low-down nigger," said Lufu. "Me no flaid along him. Me tinkee brain belong him no walk about any more, along feller tail belong him."

Kaio-lalulalonga sat in the boat, silent and downcast. His terrors had been evoked by a black savage got up in the grotesque outfit of a Papuan warrior. Yet as the black man roved the schooner's deck, the long tail whisking and curling behind, it was hard to realise that it was only an adornment; hard to understand that even the mind of a low-caste savage could fancy that such a hideous thing was an adornment.

The fragment of the Aloha's log, as Hudson had said, gave the clue to the strange mystery. The Aloha had run down a Papuan boat in dense darkness, and the skipper had recorded that no lives had been saved. Obviously, one of the New Guinea savages had jumped aboard the schooner that crashed into the boat and sank it.

What had followed, the shipmates could only conjecture.

That single survivor of the Papuan crew had hidden on board the schooner in the darkness, leaving behind the rest of the savages to sink into the depths of the Pacific.

Ferocious as he was, ferocious as a wild beast, the Papuan cannibal had probably been terrified at finding himself alone on the ship—alone amid foes. Undoubtedly he had expected to be thrown after his companions if he was caught.

Ken could conjecture the outcome. Perhaps the savage had ventured out in quest of food. Perhaps his natural ferocity had driven him to kill. Perhaps the skipper had seen that dreadful form creeping upon him, and had been scared out of his wits. Perhaps he had been seized and flung overboard by the savage. As for the native crew, Ken knew how they would have acted from his experience with his own men. Either the captain had fled with the crew or had been tossed into the sea.

Then had come the salvage crew—Babalatti and his Raiateans. Why the Malay and his boat's crew had fled in the night was plain enough now. The Papuan had hidden himself with a savage's cunning when they came, in some deep recess of the hold among the cargo, and lain

hidden and silent there while King of the Islands and Babalatti were searching the schooner. But in the night he had come forth—doubtless by way of the lazarette hatch—and the sight of him had been enough to scare Babalatti into flight in the canoe.

Ken did not wonder at it when he remembered his own fear and horror.

The savage was not thinking of hiding now. A gash on his grim face showed that one of Ken's hurried shots had wounded him, and no doubt the wound had excited him to mad ferocity. Perhaps, too, in the depths of his dense, savage mind he regarded himself as the victor. Again and again he came to the side of the schooner and made savage, threatening gestures at the boat's crew and howled defiance.

"It won't be easy to handle him," said King of the Islands, "but we've got to secure the brute. Don't use your gun if you can help it, Kit."

"We'll get him," said the Australian.

"You feller boy, you washy-washy along schooner," said Ken. "You feller Koko, you no flaid any more along that nigger?"

"Me no flaid, sar," mumbled Koko. "Me flaid along me tinkee him feller debble, sar. Me no flaid along feller nigger."

"Me plenty fright night before, sar," said Lompo. "New day he come, me no fright."

"Washy-washy, plenty quick."

The whaleboat shot towards the schooner.

With wild and savage gestures the Papuan defied the boat's crew; but as they scrambled on board doubt seemed to assail his obtuse mind, and he retreated howling along the deck and darted down the companion. King of the Islands followed, with Hudson and Koko and the Kanakas, in time to see the savage man plunge down the trap in the lazarette and disappear into the hold. Evidently the Papuan was seeking his old hiding-place, no doubt with the intention of repeating his former tactics and creeping forth when darkness covered his movements. Ken bent down and shot the bolts that secured the trapdoor.

"We're not following him into the hold," he said. "We don't want to kill him, and without killing him he would kill one or two of us down there in the dark. Let him stay there till we get into port. He'll find plenty of food down below."

Two days later the Dawn glided into a harbour in the Solomons, with the schooner in tow.

The Papuan was still hidden in the hold. But once at anchor the hatches were thrown open and the savage driven out of his hiding-place. Much to his astonishment, he was neither flung into the sea nor killed and eaten. It was a far cry to New Guinea, but King of the Islands made arrangements for the hapless savage to be taken back to his own country—an expensive trip, which the shipmates of the Dawn could well afford out of the salvage of the Aloha.

(There is another ripping, complete yarn of adventure in the South Seas in next Monday's MODERN BOY. Don't miss it—order your copy TO-DAY!)