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The **MODERN BOY** 2^d

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The Return of King of the Islands



"Order your boys to stop, Barney Hall, or—!" Ken King shouted. The canoe came to a stop a short distance from the ketch Dawn.

The Canoe.

"FELLER canoe stop along sea, sar!" said Kaio-lalulalonga—Koko for short—the giant Kanaka bo'sun of the ketch Dawn. Standing by the binnacle, his eyes fixed on the sea-line to the west, young Ken King—King of the Islands—boy skipper of the ketch, paid no heed. And it was from the east that the long bark canoe had come into sight—a black speck on the boundless gleaming sapphire of the Pacific.

A burning sun blazed down. Calm lay on the Pacific, a calm that had lasted since early morning. The ketch scarcely moved.

Time was money to the boy trader of the Pacific. And if there's one thing the skipper of a windjammer hates almost as much as a fog at sea, it's a dead calm. Ken was searching the west for sign of a coming breeze, longing to see once again the wind billowing the canvas that now flapped idly on main-mast and mizzen.

On the forward deck the Hiva-Oa crew—Lompo, Lufu, Tomoo, Kolulu, and Danny the cooky-boy—lollid listlessly. They chewed betel-nut and waited with cheerful indifference for the wind that the boy skipper looked for so anxiously.

Time was not money to the native crew, and idleness was happiness to them. They were not likely to worry about the calm unless it lasted long enough for the water to run out!

Kit Hudson, the young Australian mate, joined his skipper.

"Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you

see a wind coming?" he asked, smiling.

"I reckon so," answered Ken. "If that shadow on the water just below the sky-line doesn't mean catspaws, I'm a Dutchman. We shall get a wind."

"Me no likee that feller canoe, sar," broke in Koko. "Plenty Solomon Island boy he belong that feller canoe."

an immense grass hat. Whether he was white, brown, or black could not be seen under the screen of the great hat. Only his legs, in cotton shorts, were visible, and they were as dark, or looked as dark at the distance, as the limbs of the native paddlers.

King of the Islands looked keenly at the approaching canoe. The Dawn was many hundred miles from the cannibal isles of the Solomons.

"You tinkee that feller black boy belong Solomon Islands, Koko?" he asked.

"Me savvy um plenty, sar," said Kaio-lalulalonga. "That feller boy belong Solomon Islands, sar!"

"It's a trader's canoe, with a Solomon Island crew!" said Ken. "That man aft is white, I reckon. We're too far from the Solomons for it to be anything else. Kit."

The shipmates of the Dawn watched the canoe with interest, especially the man with the great hat who sat aft. A trader's canoe with a native crew was not uncommon among the islands. But King of the Islands reckoned that the white man had an uncommon nerve to put so far out to sea with such a crew as this.

That he was a white man was soon certain. As the canoe came closer he stood up, and pushed back the big grass hat to stare at the ketch.

He was a big, burly fellow, with a thick, rough beard, and a skin tanned so dark by the sun that he might almost have passed for a native. He was dressed in a thin cotton shirt and cotton shorts, and wore nothing more, except the big

(Continued on page 16.)

By
Charles
Hamilton

"What's that?" asked Ken, looking round.

Koko pointed to the east where the long, dark canoe was coming swiftly into clearer sight. A dozen paddles, wielded by as many kneeling blacks, flashed in the sun. The black faces and fuzzy heads of the paddlers could be plainly seen. They were not Polynesians like the crew of the Dawn, but of the black Melanesian race.

In the stern of the canoe sat a man, almost hidden from sight by

King of the Islands

(Continued from page 13.)

hat to keep off the sun, and a belt that supported a heavy revolver and cartridges.

He stood with his eyes fixed on the Dawn, as the swift strokes of the paddles brought his craft nearer and nearer. The dozen blacks sweated at their work in the hot sun.

"Barney Hall!" ejaculated King of the Islands suddenly.

He had recognised the man now. Trader, pearl-poacher, kidnapper, bully, with an evil reputation that extended from Hawaii to Nuka-hiva, he was well known to the clums of the Dawn.

Ken's glance turned westward again. The sign of the catspaw on the sea was yet far away. The wind was coming, but it would not come soon.

"You feller Lompo!" rapped out Ken. "You go down along cabin, bring two feller gun along deck."

"Looking for trouble, Ken?" asked Kit.

"You never can tell, with a fellow like Hall!" replied Ken. "These are lonely waters—the nearest island is fifty miles away, and it's uninhabited, at that. If Barney Hall's short of stores, he's the man to take them where he can find them—without asking leave."

Lompo came back on deck with revolvers for the skipper and the mate. The loafing kanakas had stirred out of their idleness now, and were watching the canoe with keen eyes. The ketch had a crew of six islanders and two white men.

If trouble came, the odds were heavy against them. And Barney Hall was a lawless ruffian when he was out of sight of a white man's port. Many tales were told in the islands of the way Barney supplied his needs when he was on a long trip in his canoe.

With a wind, King of the Islands would have shown his stern to the canoe and thus avoided all possibility of trouble. But in the calm, he could only wait for Barney Hall to come up. And that Barney intended to speak the ketch was obvious. The canoe was coming on as fast as the flashing paddles could drive it.

Possibly he only wanted to speak to a white man's ship in those lonely waters, or to borrow a cask of water or a bag of biscuits. But King of the Islands knew his ways and was on the alert.

"Hall's up to some mischief, Kit," he said. "Last time I saw him he had a canoe with three Tonga boys—quite enough crew for his trading. What's he doing with a canoe crammed with fighting bucks from the Solomons?"

Ken's face was grim as he watched. The long canoe was crowded with a crew of the fiercest race in the Pacific. There was little room in it for anything but Hall's men and their rations, very little space for trade goods—and of goods Ken could see no sign.

It was obvious that Barney Hall

was not on a trading trip, though what else could have brought him so far out to sea was rather a mystery.

Over the glassy sea the canoe came on like an arrow. Hall's deep, gruff voice hailed from a distance.

"Ketch ahoy!"

"Ahoy, Barney Hall!" called back Ken, stepping to the rail. "What do you want?"

"That's King of the Islands, I reckon," called Hall, standing up, his eyes under his bushy, shaggy brows fixed on the handsome sunburnt face of the boy trader. "I reckoned I knew that hooker the minute we raised her. You're a long way from Lalinge, Cap'n King!"

"And you!" said Ken. "Tell your boys to stop paddling, Hall!"

"I'm coming aboard, shipmate!"

"Come aboard if you like, and welcome, but your men will keep in the canoe—at a distance!" answered Ken. "Stop the canoe!"

"What are you afraid of, Ken King? D'you fancy I've turned pirate?"

"You're not above that!" retorted King of the Islands. "I'm not letting a Solomon Island crew alongside this packet. Stop!"

Hall made no reply, and the blacks continued to drive at the paddles.

Ken's jaw set grimly. His hand went to his belt, and his revolver gleamed in the sun as he levelled it over the teak rail.

"Order your boys to stop, Barney Hall, or——" he shouted, his eyes flashing over the levelled revolver.

Hall stared at him, laughed gruffly, and rapped out an order to the blacks. The paddles ceased to flash, and the canoe came to a stop a short distance from the Dawn.

"I'm After That Man!"

BARNEY HALL stood in the rocking canoe, staring at King of the Islands under the shadow of his huge grass hat. There was a mocking look on his hard, tanned face.

"Getting nerry, King of the Islands?" he asked jeeringly. "Afraid to trust a trading canoe with a white man in it alongside your packet?"

"Yes, when the white man's named Barney Hall!" answered Ken. "What do you want?"

"I'm short of water. You won't refuse to lend a cask to a white man a hundred miles from land?"

"If that's all you want, you can have it, and welcome. But you're not a hundred miles from land—Loya's only fifty. There's plenty of water there, and no natives."

"The Haunted Island!" said Hall. "I reckon I ain't running into Loya if I can help it. But it ain't only water I want. I'm after news. I'm looking for a man."

"Looking for a man in the Pacific?" ejaculated King of the Islands, staring at the trader.

"Ay, ay! And I reckon you might be able to give me news of him, you nosing about among the islands in that twopenny yawl of yours!"

King of the Islands smiled. Hall's jeer left him quite unmoved. The Dawn was the handsomest ketch in the Pacific, and her mizzen was large even for a deep-sea ketch. But Barney Hall was welcome to call her a yawl if he liked.

"I want to step aboard!" went on Hall.

A paddle dipped softly, and the canoe edged a little nearer to the Dawn while Hall was speaking.

Ken's eyes gleamed, and his finger pressed trigger. Crack! The bullet tore through the high crown of the enormous grass hat on the trader's head, leaving a hole through it fore and aft.

Hall started violently, and there was a jabber of excitement from his black crew.

"You durned swab!" roared the trader.

"Keep clear!" rapped King of the Islands. "That's a warning, Barney Hall! The next shot goes through your thick head if that canoe comes nearer!"

Hall glared at him furiously. It was easy to see that he was tempted to give the word to his blacks to rush down on the ketch. A few rapid sweeps of the paddles would have done it—a matter of moments. And from the canoe up the low side of the ketch was an easy jump for the black crew, once they got alongside.

Ken's face hardened. Whatever Hall's intentions, he wasn't going to risk placing himself at the ruffian's mercy. He was fully determined to open fire if the canoe approached nearer, and that determination showed in his face.

But if Barney Hall intended trouble, he was not prepared for it yet. The angry scowl faded from his face, and he gave a gruff laugh.

"If you're afraid of my niggers, Ken King, I'll leave 'em where they can't hurt you. D'you reckon they're thinking of killin' you and your crew?"

"I'm reckoning on not giving them the chance," answered Ken coolly.

"I'll come aboard alone and leave 'em here," snarled Hall. "Swing your boom outboard if you're afraid to let me come alongside."

Before he answered, Ken cast another glance to the west. The wind was coming, but it was still a long way off. There was no escape for the ketch till the wind came, and it rested with Hall whether to force matters or not. Ken was anxious to avoid trouble; and for that reason anxious to gain time till he could get a wind.

"Very well," he answered. "You can come on board—alone! But I warn you if that canoe draws a foot nearer than the end of the boom, we'll shoot your crew to rags—and you first of the lot, Barney Hall! I'm not trusting you an inch!"

"That goes!" snapped Hall. With an activity surprising in a man of such heavy build, he leaped up, caught the boom, and swung himself along it to the ketch. The canoe backed away, the black crew waiting and watching their leader. Hall

dropped on the deck of the Dawn with a heavy thud of his bare feet and gave King of the Islands a mocking grin.

Ken pointed to a deck-chair, and the trader sat down. Danny the cooky-boy, at a sign from Ken, brought him a long drink. Hall's bearded lip curled in a sneer as he took it.

"Temperance ship!" he sneered.

"Just that!" assented Ken.

"You look it!" jeered Hall, and Ken smiled. He was quite aware that he "looked it," if it came to that. His healthy face, clear skin, and steady, keen eyes showed that he kept drink, the curse of white men in the Pacific, at arm's length.

Hall drank the lime-squash, and grunted. He had hoped for something more potent, and there were few trading ketches in the islands where he would not have found it. But Ken King had no use for it on board the Dawn.

Ken sat on the rail, keeping an eye on the waiting canoe. The Solomon Island crew were keeping their distance, but Ken was doubtful what instructions Hall might have left with them. As a precaution, Hudson had served out rifles to the Hiva-Oa boys.

But Hall, for the present, at least, seemed peaceable. The distant signs of a coming wind had not caught his eye. He was not the sailorman that Ken was. But for that ruffle on the sea, far away to the west, the calm looked like lasting, and no doubt the trader reckoned that he had plenty of time on his hands.

He filled a foul pipe, jamming the tobacco in with a horny thumb, and Hudson tossed him a box of matches. The trader was taking his time, and Ken was only too glad to let him do so. Once the wind came, he would be rid of Barney Hall without trouble.

"You heard of the man from Apia?" asked Hall, shooting out the question with bullet-like suddenness, his cunning eyes on Ken's face.

"The man from Apia?" repeated Ken.

"Ay, ay! Looking for him, perhaps, on your own?" asked Hall suspiciously.

Ken stared, then laughed. He had heard of the man from Apia. The man had been the talk of the islands for months back. But certainly he had not given him a thought since the Dawn had sailed out of Lalinge weeks ago.

"You mean Montague Craye?" said Ken. "They were talking about him at Lalinge before we sailed. I haven't given him a thought since. Have they caught him?"

"Not when I left Tonga," said Hall. "You're not nosing about in these waters for the reward?"

"Is there a reward?"

"You didn't know?" Hall was suspicious again.

"No. I heard about the man at Lalinge, but never listened much to the story. From what I heard, Montague Craye bolted from Apia with a bundle of banknotes. He's supposed to have cleared right away

from Samoa, but nobody knows where he went. That's all I know of him."

"Any later news, Hall?" asked Kit Hudson, with some interest. Ken showed interest, too.

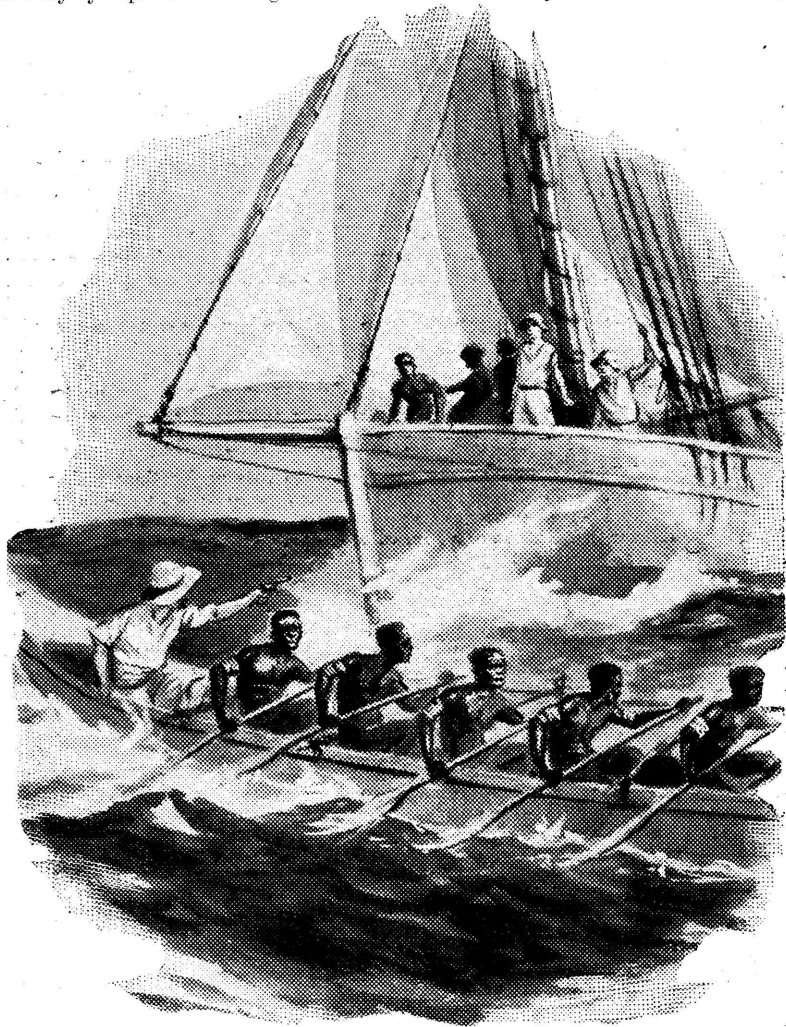
Hardly a man who traded among the islands could have failed to hear something of Montague Craye. He had vanished at the same time that ten thousand pounds in banknotes vanished. Every steamer in the Pacific carried the news, and practically every island between Thursday and the Marquesas had heard about him. Probably half the skippers in the Pacific were keeping a wary eye open for the fugitive.

"It's set me!" returned Hall grimly.

"So that's your game?" said Ken, comprehending now. "I reckoned you weren't on a trading trip with that crew."

"Trading be dashed!" growled Barney. "That thief Craye is worth ten times what I'd make in trading for years—if a man could get his hands on the swab. Five hundred pounds reward for the man himself—and he's got the plunder on him." Hall's eyes glistened greedily under his shaggy brows.

Ken and his shipmate exchanged a smile. They wondered how much



Just when the crash seemed inevitable and the exhausted blacks were almost sinking down to their paddles, Ken signed to Koko to put down the helm.

What had become of the man was a mystery—one of the thousand mysteries of the islands. He had vanished into the boundless Pacific after his flight from Apia in a motor-boat. And months had passed since then. No human eye, as far as was known, had fallen on Craye or his motor-boat since.

"There's a reward!" grunted Hall. "They offer a big sum—five hundred pounds—for Montague Craye!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Hudson. "That's enough to set half the skippers in the South Seas hunting him!"

the Pacific Company would ever see of that bundle of banknotes if it ever fell into Barney Hall's clutches. Not much more than if it remained in Craye's, the shipmates thought.

"You ain't seen or heard anything of the man, Cap'n King?" asked the Tonga trader suspiciously. "You ain't looking for him?"

"I'm not a policeman," answered King of the Islands. "I'm a trading skipper, looking for trade. I heard at Lalinge that this man Craye was the manager for the Pacific Company at Apia, and that he bolted with a big sum of money. I don't know

King of the Islands

that I should meddle with him, even if I came across him, which isn't likely. I don't know that he's a guilty man—he disappeared at the same time as the money, but that isn't proof. I should want to know more than that before I meddled with him."

"I reckon that's good enough for me—and good enough for the Pacific Company!" grunted Hall. "They wouldn't be offering a reward of five hundred pounds for Craye if they didn't feel sure about it."

"I'm after the swab, I can tell you. An' I ain't the only man after him. It's a fortune for whoever finds him, and I reckon there's a crowd watching out for him. Ten thousand pounds ain't picked up on every coral reef, Ken King."

"To be delivered to the Pacific Company at Apia, if you pick it up," remarked Hudson.

"Meaning to be funny?" asked Hall, staring at him. "If the Pacific Company get hold of him, that's all they'll ever get hold of, I reckon. Them banknotes ain't likely

to be seen in Apia again. There's more men in the Pacific looking for that bundle of money than's looking for Craye himself."

Hall's eyes, keen and suspicious under his shaggy brows, searched the boy trader's face. He was evidently suspicious of Ken—as he would have been suspicious of any other skipper he had met while he was cruising in search of the man from Apia.

"Trading, you say?" he grunted. "Not a lot of trade in these waters—not a ton of copra to be picked up within a hundred miles, I should say. You're off your course if you're drumming for copra, King of the Islands."

"That's easily explained, if you're curious," answered Ken. "I'm short of water, and I'm running down to Loya to fill the casks. I should have been there by now if the wind hadn't failed at dawn."

But Hall was not satisfied. Suspicion was part of his nature, and in his quest of a fortune he was ready to suspect every other white man in the Pacific of being his rival.

He knocked out his pipe, thrust

it into his belt, and rose from the deck-chair.

"If you know anything, I reckon you don't mean to let on," he growled. "I savvy that plenty."

"I know nothing; but if I did, most likely I shouldn't let on," answered King of the Islands, with a smile. "I shouldn't bank on the Pacific Company's money being safe in your hands, Barney Hall."

"Nuff talk!" said Hall gruffly. "I'll get back to my packet, King of the Islands. I'm short of stores, and I'm asking you to help me out."

"You want to trade?"

"I don't want to trade," answered Hall coolly. "I'll give you a list of what I want, and I reckon you'll hand them over and save trouble. We're far enough from the High Commissioner at Fiji here, Captain King—and we're in a dead calm. You can't get away, and my crew yonder will kai'kai your niggers—and you, too—and be glad of the chance, if I give them the word. What about it?"

Ken glanced at the sea. On the glassy blue waters came the ruffle of the catspaw that told of the approaching wind, almost reaching the Dawn.

The New Stamp Collecting

The Puzzle of Perforations

By DOUGLAS ARMSTRONG

MOST fellows who collect stamps are apt to vote perforations rather a bore. But it is just as well to know how to detect varieties of perforation when you come across them, for sometimes they make a big difference in the value of a particular stamp.

When the first stamps of King George's reign were issued, in June, 1911, a new form of perforation was adopted, measuring 15 along the top and bottom and 14 at the sides, instead of 14 all the way round as formerly. By mistake a few sheets of the new 1/4d. and 1d. stamps were run through the discarded 14 perforator, and, to the lucky finder, specimens gauging exactly 14 on all sides are worth £5 apiece, whereas the ordinary kinds, perforated 15 by 14, are practically valueless.

Measuring perforations is really quite a simple matter, once you understand the principle. The holes that separate the stamps are made by rows of steel punches, the size and arrangement of which vary according to the grade of paper to be punctured. The average width of a postage stamp is 22 millimetres (just under seven-eighths of an inch). Count the number of complete holes in this space and you have the correct perforation. Easy, isn't it?

Accurate gauges for measurement of perforations are supplied by stamp dealers at a nominal price, and with a little practice anyone can soon become expert in their use. Standard gauges of perforation range from 7 to 17 holes, with intermediate stages. Anything less than half a hole is usually ignored.

To find the perforation, place the stamp flat upon the perforation gauge and run the top or bottom edge along the scale until the black spots exactly fill up the punched holes. You can then read the measurement at the side. When the number of holes along the sides varies from that at the top and bottom you have what is known as a compound perforation such as is found on our current British stamps, register 15 by 14. That's all there is to it!

After a time you will be able to recognise the different perforations almost at a glance. Certain stamps it is quite unnecessary to measure at all, as they are of a standard gauge. For instance, most modern British Colonial stamps are perforated 14, whilst those of the French colonies invariably measure 14 by 13 1/2, or the other way round. Large numbers of South American stamps produced by the American Bank Note Company of New York have a uniform perforation of 12, and so on.



Bulgarian stamp, perforation 11 1/2. Most modern British Colonial stamps are perforated 14.

The Fight.

BARNEY HALL stood towering before the boy trader, his chin stuck aggressively out, his brows knitted, his whole attitude and look a bullying threat. Force was on his side, and he had no doubt of getting what he wanted—it was not the first time, by many a one, that he had helped himself to a ship's stores in lonely waters.

Ken smiled at the hulking ruffian. That Hall was prepared to resort to violence to obtain what he wanted was certain. And it was equally certain that if the savage ferocity of the Solomon Island crew was once let loose there would be bloodshed.

To the boy trader, desiring only to go on his peaceful way without a conflict, every minute was precious now—with the wind coming! Once the breeze was in the canvas of the Dawn, a fleet of canoes crammed with Solomon Island fighting men would have had no terrors for the young skipper.

"I can let you have that cask of water, Hall," he said, after a pause. "I'm short of water, but I reckon I can spare you a cask, as I'm going to fill up at Loya."

"You'll fill every keg in my canoe," answered Barney Hall coolly, "and you'll hand over all the rations I want. Bags of biscuit and canned meat—"

"I can't spare any stores," Ken said calmly. "I could let you have a bag of biscuit to see you through while you make a port—"

"I'm making no port till I've combed every island in these waters for the man from Apia," snarled Hall. "I've picked up my stores at sea for weeks past. And I've found it easy, Captain King. More'n one skipper has been glad to hand over whatever I liked to ask for, after one look at my crew under his quarter."

"Likely enough," assented Ken.

"But you've struck a different sort of skipper on board this packet, Barney Hall."

"Look at my crew!" Hall's bearded chin stuck out more aggressively. "If trouble begins, you can figure for yourself where it's likely to end. I've got that crew feeding from my hand at present; but I wouldn't answer for what they do when they see red."

"You're here to bully me on my own deck, with a crew of cannibals to back up your threats—is that it?" asked Ken contemptuously.

"That's the size of it, and you ain't the first, either," replied Hall. "You won't get rid of me for a barrel of water and a bag of biscuits, Cap'n King. I'll go through your stores and pick out what I want."

"I've left word with my boys," he went on. "If I lift my hand, they'll be aboard you before you can say 'Davy Jones.' And if that crew get loose on your deck, I pity you, King of the Islands!"

"They're not loose on my deck yet," said Ken quietly, "and there'll be some shooting before they are, you scoundrel. Here's my answer—you won't get a biscuit or a drop of water from this hooker. You'll get back to your canoe before something happens to you. Another word, and I'll order my Kanakas to throw you into the sea!"

"By jingo!" stuttered Hall, his savage face growing purple with rage. "You've brought it on yourself, Captain King! By hokey, you'll be sorry for it!"

He threw up his hand as a signal to the black crew watching from the canoe. His voice roared across the intervening space of water.

"You black feller, you washy-washy debbilish quick! You bring that canoe along this hooker."

The paddles flashed into the water, and like an arrow the long canoe shot towards the ketch.

Barney Hall dragged the revolver from his belt. Even yet he counted on gaining his purpose by threats. With his heavy revolver drawn, and his savage crew alongside ready to scramble aboard, knife and hatchet in hand, he did not doubt that the boy trader would be daunted into submission to his demands.

But he did not know King of the Islands yet.

"Shoot!" shouted Ken. "Fire on the canoe!"

At the same moment Kaiolalulalonga leaped at the Tonga trader as he was swinging up his revolver, sending him staggering back. His revolver went flying through the air, to land in the scuppers.

Hall struggled furiously in the grasp of the bo'sun. But, powerful as the burly ruffian was, Koko was stronger. There was a terrific crash as he went to the deck, Kaiolalulalonga sprawling over him.

Eyes blazing fury, Hall struggled like a madman with the Kanaka, and

What Plane was That?

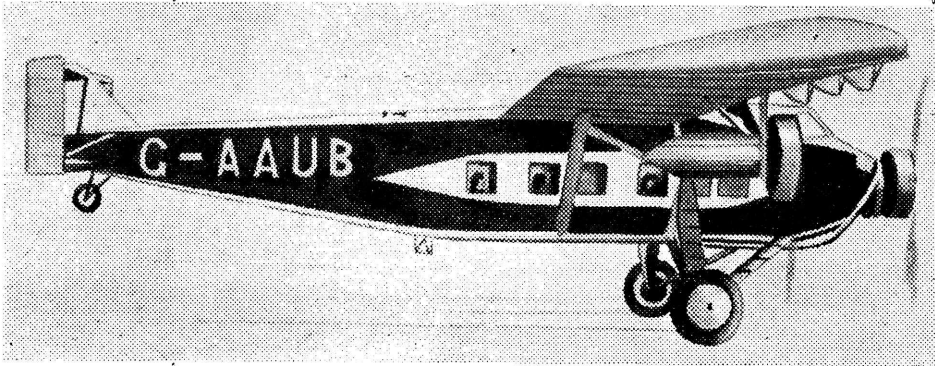
Flying-Officer W. E. JOHNS shows and tells you how to recognise at a glance the VICKERS "VIASTRA" Monoplane. Next week's item in this topping series will be the great 10-seater "Hannibal."

YOU can recognise a Vickers "Viastra" chiefly by the fact that it is a large high-wing three-engined monoplane with three rudders and a wheel tail skid. Also, the shape of the fuselage is distinctive. Apart from these things the rather attractive black-and-white colour scheme in which the machine is finished is outstanding.

This machine is a very large one—a twelve-seater—and is fitted with three Armstrong Siddeley Lynx engines, although you should bear in mind that "Viastras" are being built with twin Jupiter engines and one with only a single Jupiter. The number of engines will depend upon the work for which each particular machine is specially designed and what load it is to carry.

It is built entirely of metal—duralumin and steel—even to the wing coverings. The "Viastra" has also been designed for quantity production, and as it is being marketed at a comparatively cheap figure we shall no doubt soon be seeing a lot of them about.

Australian readers will be interested to know that three have just been



The 12-seater Vickers "Viastra," whose tail unit is unique—a central fin with a rudder hinged on to it.

sold to West Australian Airways Limited, for commercial work on that Continent.

The tail unit is unique—a central fin with a rudder hinged on it. Notice the two elevator planes. The lower one can be adjusted in the air to "trim" the machine. Wheel brakes are fitted, worked in conjunction with the rudder bar.

You will notice that the pilot's cockpit is well forward of the wings, with an excellent view forward. This cockpit is entirely enclosed, but it has a sliding roof and sidelights so that the pilot can look right back over the tail. Behind the cockpit are sliding doors from which one can pass down four steps into the cabin.

This cabin is over twenty feet long, five feet wide, and six feet high. Another very interesting feature is the cabin windows, which actually form emergency exits. A sharp blow of the fist knocks the whole window and panel right out from the spring clips which hold it. Each passenger has his own electric light and ventilator. A very useful aircraft indeed!

THIS WEEK'S DEFINITION:

GAP.—The distance between the top and bottom planes of an aircraft.

they rolled over and over on the deck. But all the time the boatswain had the upper hand.

Meanwhile, the canoe came on with a rush, and from the side of the Dawn the Hiva-Oa boys blazed away with their rifles, lead spattering the sea round the canoe.

Leaving Koko to deal with the ruffianly trader, Ken and Kit ran to the side, revolver in hand.

The shooting of the Hiva-Oa boys was too wild to have stopped the rush of the fierce crew. But the revolvers in the hands of the white men pitched lead into the canoe with deadly aim.

Two of the brawny blacks went sprawling in the bottom of the canoe,

throwing the paddlers into confusion. But the impetus of the canoe was enough to carry it on. It rushed down on the Dawn, a yell of rage breaking from the blacks.

A moment more and the tall prow would have crashed on the Dawn's hull, the blacks would have been clambering aboard, and the fight would have been hand to hand—a desperate fight, of which the issue would have been doubtful. But in that moment there was a shiver in the sails, a rustle of canvas stirred by the coming wind, and the Dawn moved in the water.

"The wind!" shouted Hudson, leaping to the wheel.

King of the Islands

Ken, about to pull trigger again, held his hand. The space between the ketch and the canoe, instead of narrowing, had widened. With a rattle of ropes and spars, a roar of bellying canvas, the Dawn glided through the blue water.

The Hiva-Oa boys were still blazing away excitedly, sending bullets flying over and round the canoe, splashing up the water on all sides. Ken, watching, revolver in hand, stood ready to fire with deadly aim if the canoe drew too close. But the danger was over now.

With every second the Dawn gathered speed as Hudson put her before the wind. The men in the canoe laboured savagely with the flashing paddles. But the space between the ketch and the enemy widened and widened.

Thrusting his revolver back into his belt, Ken looked round. Barney Hall, on his back on the deck, was still resisting, but Koko's powerful knee was planted on his chest, pinning him down. The trader was a beaten man.

Ken rapped out an order to the crew to cease fire. Then he picked up Hall's revolver from the deck and tossed it into the sea.

"Me got this bad feller, sar," chuckled Kaio-lalulalonga breathlessly. "This feller he plenty no good along this Kanaka, sar."

King of the Islands stepped towards him. He looked down grimly at the upturned, savage face of the ruffian the Kanaka's muscular knee was pinning to the deck.

"You dirty sea-lawyer!" said the boy trader. "It would serve you right if I ran you up to my boom at the end of a rope, you piratical swab!"

Hall, gritting his teeth, made a last desperate effort to throw off the Kanaka. He sank back again, exhausted, the perspiration pouring down his bearded face in streams. He panted out breathless threats.

"Drop that white feller over along sea, Koko!" ordered King of the Islands. "You can swim back to your canoe, Barney Hall. Throw him over, Koko!"

"I'll get another chance at you, King of the Islands!" panted Hall, as the bo'sun dragged him to his feet and hustled him to the rail. "I'll follow—"

"You talk plenty too much mouth belong you!" grinned Koko. "You go along sea plenty too quick altogether!"

Barney Hall made a feeble attempt at resistance, but with a wrench of his powerful arms Kaio-lalulalonga dragged him to the rail. Another wrench and the ruffian was hurled over into the sea. There was a heavy splash as he struck the water.

"Good-bye to Barney Hall!" said Eit Hudson, with a laugh.

Ken looked back over the taffrail. Hall had risen to the surface and was swimming towards the canoe, which was following the Dawn as fast as the savage paddlers could drive it through the sea. In a couple of minutes it reached the trader, and

black hands grasped him and dragged him on board

Cat and Mouse.

BARNEY HALL shook himself like a huge dog as he stood in the canoe, scattering water in a shower. His face was convulsed with rage as he stared after the ketch. The jabbering Solomon Island boys shrank away from him.

Fierce savages as they were, cannibals every man of them, they were afraid of the desperate ruffian who had picked them out for his crew. Hall's glaring eyes turned on them savagely.

"Washy-washy!" he panted, hoarse with rage. "Washy-washy along that feller ship! You hear me ear belong you? Washy-washy plenty too quick, or me knock seven bells outer your black hides!"

The Solomon Island boys grasped the paddles again, and the canoe shot



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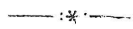
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through the glassy waters towards the gliding ketch. The wind had come, but it was light and fitful.

Barney Hall was not beaten yet. He plunged towards a locker in the stern of the canoe, and dragged out a revolver. The moment the weapon was in his hand he fired at the ketch, and the bullet tore through the mainsail. King of the Islands was not yet out of range.

"My sainted Sam!" exclaimed the boy trader, as the report of the heavy revolver rolled across the water. "Barney Hall isn't satisfied yet!"

He stood at the taffrail, looking back at the pursuing canoe. Barney Hall, standing up, towering over the sweating paddlers, brandished his revolver in the air and shouted. Though the words did not reach the ketch, Ken did not need telling that he was raving threats.

A grim smile came over the boy trader's sunburnt face. Light as the breeze was, it was sufficient to enable

the swift ketch to walk away from the canoe had he chosen. The black paddlers were labouring like demons, and the speed with which the canoe cut through the water was amazing. But canvas would beat muscle every time.

Barney Hall was too enraged to realise, or care, that he was exhausting his crew for nothing—that Ken had only to shake out more sail to leave him standing. No doubt, too, he was in sore need of the stores he had thought to take by violence from the ketch to enable him to continue his cruise among the islands for the lost man from Apia.

King of the Islands could have shaken off the canoe by letting out more canvas. And he could have picked off Barney Hall with a rifle over the taffrail as the ruffian stood shouting threats in the canoe. But neither was his intention.

"Starboard, Koko!" he said to the bo'sun, who had taken the wheel, and called out an order to the Hiva-Oa boys.

Barney Hall, glaring after the ketch, could hardly believe his eyes. It seemed to him for the moment that King of the Islands was playing into his hands. By driving his black crew to superhuman exertions, he had fancied that he had a chance of running the ketch down even before the wind, unless it freshened.

Now the ketch was no longer running before the wind, but sweeping back on a long tack.

Hudson gave his shipmate a quick look.

"Ken, you wouldn't—" He broke off, guessing that it was the boy trader's intention to run down the canoe. His face grew grim at the thought of the crashing timbers under the Dawn's sharp prow—of the Tonga trader and the wretched blacks struggling in the water.

"We're not having that crew following us, Kit!" answered Ken. "We've got to run down to Loya for water, and we don't want to see Barney Hall at Loya. When we get the wind of him, I'm going to teach him a lesson that will make him tired of the Dawn!"

Handed by King of the Islands, the ketch could sail as close to the wind as any craft in the Pacific. She seemed to be running almost in the wind's eye as she swept back towards the canoe.

Bang, bang! came the reports of Barney Hall's revolver; but the lead whistled harmlessly by the ketch. Hall had not yet guessed Ken's intention. It seemed to him that the boy trader was willing to come to close quarters, and if he could throw himself and his savage crew on board the Dawn, he had no doubt of the result.

But the ketch passed a cable's length from the canoe, and Hall, yelling to his blacks, changed his course in pursuit. The Solomon Islanders sweated and panted at the paddles.

The Dawn was tacking again. The graceful little vessel moved like a thing of life, as if captain and crew and ship were one. With the wind astern, she came rushing down on the

canoe. Then at last Barney Hall saw his danger, and screamed out orders to the blacks.

Desperately the Solomon Islanders laboured, dodging the rush of the ketch. But every movement of the canoe was followed by the Dawn. No effort on the part of the black crew could save them from being run down, and boarding the ketch when her sharp prow struck was a hopeless thought. The rage died out of Barney Hall's face, to be replaced by terror. He was at the mercy of King of the Islands, and only too well he knew what he would have done in the boy trader's place.

Just when the crash seemed inevitable, and the exhausted blacks were almost sinking down on their paddles, Ken signed to Koko to put down the helm. The ketch shot past the canoe on the wings of the wind, leaving the light craft rocking and dancing in her wash.

Barney Hall panted with relief. He had looked for sudden destruction, and he knew that King of the Islands had spared him. Nothing could have saved the canoe had not the boy trader chosen to give her sea room.

Whether he intended to spare him, or whether he was playing with his victim like a cat with a mouse, intending to sink him at the next rush, Hall did not know. But he was not taking the chance. He screamed to the Solomon Islanders to paddle, and the canoe shot through the water—but this time with her stern to the ketch.

Barney Hall was running—running for his life! He forgot the revolver in his hand as he stared back with apprehensive eyes at his enemy. The Dawn had glided on for more than half a mile, but she was tacking again now, and Hall felt a cold chill run down his spine.

The next rush would do it! He yelled and raved and shrieked at the black crew, lashing at their bare backs with a lawyer-cane, driving them to frantic efforts. But the wretched blacks, jabbering with terror, were almost at the end of their strength.

Staring back, wild-eyed and desperate, Hall panted with relief as he saw the Dawn change her course again. Once more the graceful ketch was put before the wind, and stood away from the canoe.

King of the Islands, looking back over the taffrail, waved his hand in ironical farewell to the baffled and badly frightened ruffian.

Hall groaned with rage at the sight, but his rage was not so deep as his relief. He threw himself down in the canoe, wiping the sweat from his brow.

"That's good-bye to Barney Hall!" chuckled Ken King. "He'll give us a wide berth in future!"

And the Dawn, swift and graceful as a swan, went speeding on her way to Loya.

(Charles Hamilton has written another of these tip-top tales of Ken King for next week's MODERN BOY. If you want more real breaths of the South Seas make sure of getting them by ordering YOUR copy of next Monday's MODERN BOY To-Day!)

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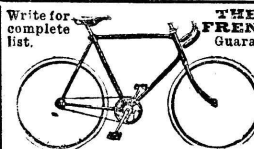
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