

The MODERN BOY

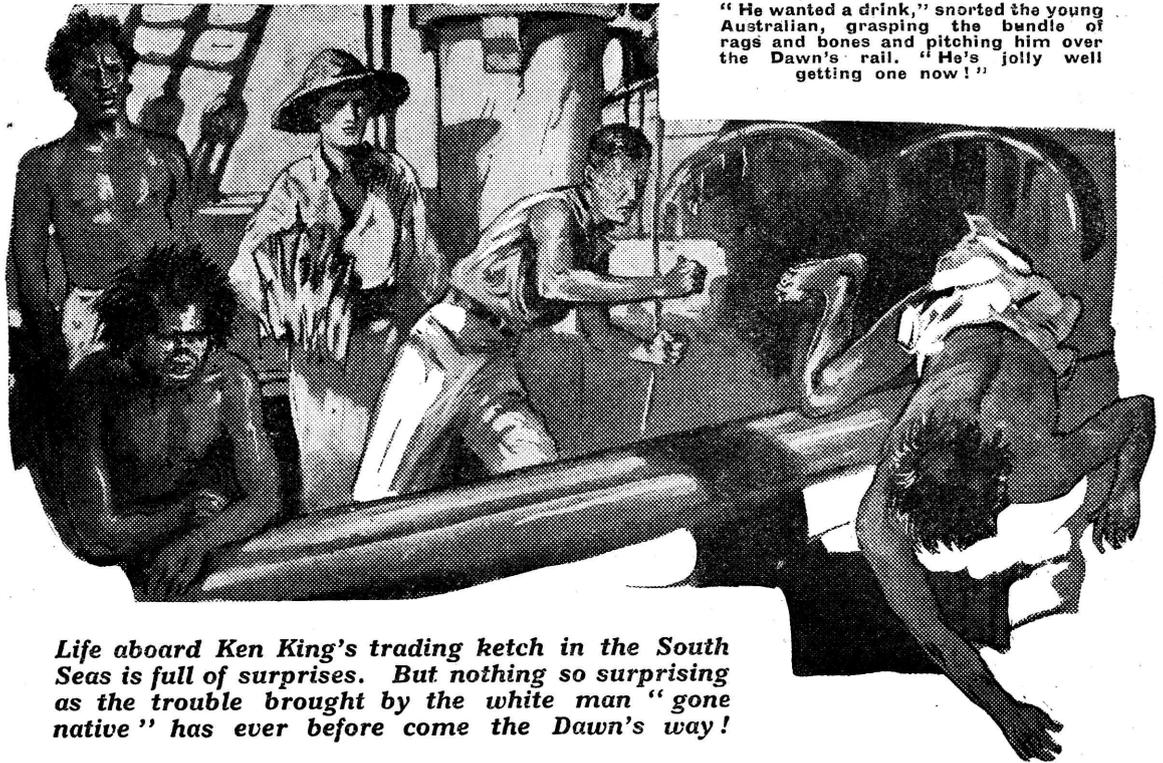
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A TRIP in a FLYING HOTEL!—Cleaving the Skies in the World's Largest and Most Luxurious Air Liner. See inside.



"He wanted a drink," snorted the young Australian, grasping the bundle of rags and bones and pitching him over the Dawn's rail. "He's jolly well getting one now!"

Life aboard Ken King's trading ketch in the South Seas is full of surprises. But nothing so surprising as the trouble brought by the white man "gone native" has ever before come the Dawn's way!

A Bundle of Newspapers.

KEN KING'S South Seas trading ketch, the Dawn, newly arrived from Tova, dropped anchor in the lagoon of Luta. No sooner was the anchor down than a native canoe, paddled by two Luta boys, and with a disreputable-looking white man in the stern, put off from the beach.

King of the Islands, as Ken was known throughout the South Seas, glanced at the white man with something like compassion in his handsome sunburnt face.

Kit Hudson, his young Australian mate, gave the man a stare of contempt and turned away.

The Hiva-Oa boys who formed the crew—Lompo, Lufu, Tomoo, Kolulu, and Danny the cooky-boy—looked over the rail at the man and grinned at one another. Kaio-lalulalonga—Koko, for short—the giant Kanaka bo'sun, curled his lips in scorn.

Ken watched the man as the canoe drew nearer. He judged him to be a beachcomber, one of those cadging wasters to be found on most Pacific beaches. The bundle of newspapers on the man's knees told why he was coming out to the Dawn.

Newspapers were more than welcome to a trading ship drumming among the islands of the Pacific. News of the outer world, beyond the rim of the blue ocean, could only be picked up at ports where the steamers called, and Luta was a steamer port.

Once in three months the steamer from Sydney throbbed in through the reef passage, bringing news of the big world beyond the Islands and weeks old Australian newspapers. It was not steamer day at Luta. The

Sydney steamer had come and gone a month before Ken King sailed his ketch into the lagoon, and the newspapers she had brought, already old, were now a month older. Old as they were, they were the latest news to a new arrival from the remote islands.

They had been read and read again all over Luta, except perhaps by the beachcomber himself. News of the outer world had lost its interest for him.

He sat in the canoe, a haggard figure, clad in a native loin-cloth. His skin, burned coffee-brown by the

down and out, as the beachcomber of Luta.

"Poor wretch!" muttered the boy trader. "Down to that!"

"That a white man!" Kit Hudson snapped. "Pah!"

"He's still alive!" said King of the Islands. "I should have thought that drink would have blotted him out by this time."

"You've seen him before?"

"Last time I touched at Luta—more than a year ago. He's pretty well known in the islands in this part of the Pacific, and is supposed to have had a decent position once back in your big island, Kit."

"I hope he's not an Australian!" growled the mate of the Dawn.

"He does his country no credit, wherever he comes from," smiled Ken. "But nobody knows, or cares. He's called Billy Bottle here—you can guess how he got that name—and if he ever had any other, he's most likely forgotten it. He seems to have 'gone native' completely."

The canoe, paddled by the two Luta boys, ranged alongside the anchored ketch. The beachcomber rose, with the bundle of newspapers in one hand. The freeboard of the ketch was low, and he jumped on board.

Kit Hudson moved away. But King of the Islands gave the beachcomber a civil nod as he touched his rag of a hat. Contempt the boy trader could not help feeling for a man who had sunk so low through his own miserable vices. But he did not allow it to show in his looks as he nodded to the man from the beach.

Complete

BILLY BOTTLE —BEACHCOMBER

By Charles Hamilton

sun, looked like a native's. A thick and tangled beard half-covered his face, and a rag of a hat sheltered his matted head from the blazing tropical sun.

His features were blurred, his lips loose, his eyes bleared and bloodshot. Even at a distance his hands could be seen shaking. It was the wreck of one who had once been a white man.

King of the Islands had seen many a man combing the beaches of the Pacific. But he had never seen one so utterly deplorable, so completely

Billy Bottle— Beachcomber

"I reckon I knew your ketch, Captain King, the minute I raised her from the beach," said Billy Bottle. "You was at Luta a year ago. I never forget a ship."

Ken smiled. He had tipped the beachcomber a sovereign for a bundle of old newspapers the last time he had touched at Luta, which was no doubt the reason why Billy Bottle remembered the ketch. Plenty of trading skippers would have greeted him with a boot had he ventured on board their craft.

"The latest news?" asked Ken, with a nod towards the bundle of well-thumbed papers under the beachcomber's arm.

"Left by the steamer last month," said Billy Bottle. "I reckoned you'd like 'em, sir."

"Ay, ay," answered Ken. "Thank you, Billy!"

"It's a hot day, Captain King," said the beachcomber. "It's a thirsty day. Believe me or believe me not, sir, I've not had a drink since dawn."

"You feller Danny," called out the boy trader. "You bring feller lime-squash along this place?"

Billy Bottle made a grimace of disgust. No doubt he had a powerful thirst. But it was not a thirst that could be quenched by a "soft" drink.

"I reckoned you'd have something stronger on board, skipper," he said.

"Then you were out in your reckoning," answered the boy trader. "This is a temperance ship."

"I forgot that," said the beachcomber, his lips curving in a sneer. "I might have remembered it. The Dawn's the only ship in the Pacific, I reckon, that's run on Mission lines."

"That's enough from you, Billy!" answered Ken. "Chuck down your papers, if you want to leave them, and get back to your canoe. Catch!" Ken spun a bright yellow Australian sovereign to the beachcomber.

Billy Bottle caught it, and stowed it away in some recess of his dingy loin-cloth. He scowled round the deck. "A temperance ship!" he muttered. "A Mission ship, by gum! I reckon—"

"That's enough, I tell you!" snapped King of the Islands. "Get back to your canoe, and clear!"

The beachcomber gave him a lowering look and slouched to the side. Danny came up with the lime-squash.

"Feller lime-squash, sar," said the cooky-boy.

Then he gave a startled yell as the beachcomber knocked the glass and tray from his hands and they smashed on the teak deck.

"You cheeky swab!" roared King of the Islands. He made a stride towards the man, but checked himself. And Billy Bottle hastily put a bare brown leg over the side.

But if King of the Islands could exercise the gift of patience in pity for the wretched wreck of a man, the mate of the Dawn did not share his views. Kit Hudson came across the deck in two strides, and his powerful

grasp closed on the beachcomber. Like a bundle of rags and bones, Billy Bottle was lifted in the sinewy grasp of the Australian and tossed over the side.

Came a gurgling yell from the beachcomber as he plunged into the lagoon. It was followed by a cackle of laughter from the Kanakas, echoed by the Luta boys in the canoe.

"Kit!" exclaimed King of the Islands.

"He wanted a drink!" snorted Hudson. "He's jolly well getting one now!"

"Plenty feller drink along that feller!" chuckled Kaio-lalulalonga. And there was another cackle from the crew.

The beachcomber came up, spluttering wildly. He gasped and floundered in the water, and gurgled spasmodically as the grinning Luta boys grasped him and dragged him in.

He sank down in a pool of water in the canoe, spitting out lagoon water.

His bloodshot eyes glared at the grinning faces over the rail of the Dawn, and from his lips came a torrent of invective. Ken leaned over the rail, and called to the Luta boys.

"You feller boy, you washy-washy along beach plenty quick. Hold your tongue, Billy, or it will be the worse for you!" But Billy kept up his shouting.

"You feller Koko, you go along that canoe, takee feller lawyer-cane along that feller!" rapped out King of the Islands.

"Yes, sar!" grinned Kaio-lalulalonga. But before he could get busy with the lawyer-cane, Billy Bottle yelled to the Luta boys to washy-washy along beach. The canoe shot away from the Dawn.

"And that's a white man!" growled Kit Hudson, staring after the canoe. "Suffering cats! Well, he's had a wash now—the first for years, from the look of him!"

The canoe beached, and Billy Bottle scrambled ashore, and shook his fist at the ketch before he disappeared up the beach.

An hour later, when King of the Islands landed from the whaleboat, rowed by Koko and Lompo, and walked up the beach, he sighted a tattered figure stretched in uneasy slumber in the shade of a coral rock. Beside it lay an empty bottle. The beachcomber of Luta had not been long in expending the sovereign.

Something Like Luck!

"SUFFERING cats!" Kit Hudson gave a yell, and the Hiva-Oa boys stared round at him. He was sitting in a chair aboard the Dawn, looking over the bundle of old newspapers that Billy Bottle had left on the ketch, waiting for Ken to return from his trip ashore.

He stared blankly at a paragraph that had caught his eyes, and uttered that startled exclamation which echoed over the deck of the Dawn.

Kolulu, Tomoo, and Lufu, the three Hiva-Oa seamen left on board, had

been lolling idly, chewing betel-nut. Now they stared in astonishment at the white master, and Danny the cooky-boy popped his head out of his little galley.

"Suffering cats!" repeated Hudson, jumping out of the chair. There was amazement in his face—amazement that mingled with satisfaction. Standing on the deck, the old Sydney newspaper clutched in his hands, he stared at it, his eyes glued to it.

Newspapers were a deep mystery to the Kanaka crew. They knew that there was magic in them—magic far beyond the powers of the native devil-doctors. They knew that a white man, simply by looking at the marks on the paper, could become aware of happenings in distant places. It was white man's magic that no Kanaka could understand, and never had the crew of the Dawn seen those magical marks produce such a startling effect on a white master before.

Kolulu ventured to speak.

"Plenty feller magic stop along that feller paper, sar!" he said.

"Eh—what?" ejaculated Hudson. He seemed to come out of a trance, and laughed. "Yes, by gum! And I chucked the beachcomber into the lagoon! I never knew he'd brought me this! Twenty thousand pounds! My hat!" He paced the deck, watched curiously by the Kanakas.

"Twenty thousand pounds! And I never knew! Great Scott! Drumming round the Islands for copra with twenty thousand pounds waiting for me in Sydney! Phew! I've got to tell Ken this. He'll jump!"

Hudson stared through the blinding sunlight towards the beach. He was anxious to see King of the Islands and tell him the glorious news. Then his face changed a little.

Did this amazing stroke of good fortune mean that he was going to part with his shipmate? Never! Ken should share it just as they had always shared alike since they had sailed together as shipmates. They had shared peril and trouble, good fortune and bad, now they were going to share this amazing windfall.

Hudson saw the whaleboat putting off from the beach, and he watched the boat eagerly, waving the folded newspaper in the air as the boat drew nearer to the Dawn. King of the Islands, sitting in the stern, stared at his shipmate in surprise.

"Buck up!" roared Hudson.

Ken stared harder. Something, apparently, had happened on the ketch during his absence ashore. He could not begin to guess what it was, but he could not fail to see the excitement in Hudson's face. He rapped an order to Koko and Lompo at the oars, and the whaleboat shot towards the Dawn.

"What the thump, old man—" exclaimed Ken, as he jumped aboard and Hudson waved the old Sydney newspaper at him.

"Something in the paper?" asked the boy trader, mystified.

"Just a few!" chuckled Hudson. "Did I ever tell you that I had an uncle at Sydney—man I've never seen, as a matter of fact, and never

knew from Adam—man named Charters?"

"Never," answered Ken.

"Well, I'd almost forgotten him myself," said Hudson. "I never knew the man, and he never wanted to know me. I've always understood that he rather disliked my side of the family, and I certainly never dreamed of touching him for help when I was on the rocks. All I knew of him was that he did well in the Island trade, shipping out stuff from Sydney."

"He died last year. I'm sorry, of course. But as I never knew the man—you understand—"

"Quite," put in Ken impatiently.

"But—"

"He's left twenty thousand pounds!"

"Oh!" said Ken. He began to understand.

"He's left no relations except me; unless my Cousin William Charters is still living, which he isn't."

"And so you get the loot?" said Ken.

"That's it, old bean!"

"Good luck!" said the skipper of the Dawn. "I'm jolly glad! Twenty thousand pounds! It would take a long time to find twenty thousand pounds drumming round the Islands for copra!"

"Halves!" replied the mate of the Dawn.

Ken stared at him.

"Halves! What do you mean?"

"We share and share alike in this, as in other things—that's what I mean!"

"Don't be an ass, Kit!" laughed Ken. "It's like you. But—How could I touch a penny of it? Of course I couldn't!"

"I suppose it would be mutiny to punch your head, Captain King, on your own deck?" said the mate of the Dawn thoughtfully.

"Fathead!" King of the Islands chuckled. "I'm jolly glad to hear of your good luck, of course, Kit. It makes me wish I had an uncle in Sydney. I suppose there's no doubt about it—newspaper reports are not always—"

"Look!" Hudson handed the newspaper to his shipmate.

There was a thoughtful expression on Ken's face as he read. He was glad of his shipmate's good fortune—sincerely glad. But already it was in his mind that he was going to lose his mate.

With twenty thousand pounds in the bank, no man would keep on drumming round the Islands as mate of a trading ketch. If Hudson kept to the sea, he would keep to it in his own ship—a bigger ship than the Dawn. That was inevitable.

And in spite of himself, a cloud gathered on the brow of King of the Islands.

"Bother Your Buts!"

KIT HUDSON watched him as he read. Kit's eyes were still dancing. It was glorious good fortune—glorious! It lifted him, and his shipmate, above the uncertainties of the Island trade. Ken should

share—he would make him share. They would put the money into a ship—a real ship—a steamer. No more windjamming!

No more hanging about in a calm and whistling for a wind. No more chaffering for a bag of copra here, a sack of pearl-shell there. A bigger ship and bigger trade—a bigger outlook in every way—but shipmates just the same. Nothing should change that!

Ken read quietly. The statement in the Sydney newspaper was clear enough. Mr. William Charters, the shipper, had died without making a will. He had left twenty thousand pounds, besides other property in ships and houses, and his solicitors were advertising for two persons—his son, William Charters, and his nephew, Christopher Hudson.

William Charters had been reported lost at sea ten years ago, and never heard of since. But as a matter of form, the legal gentlemen were advertising for him, a necessary preliminary before his decease could be presumed.

It was Christopher Hudson they wanted. And Christopher Hudson, nephew of the Sydney shipper, was Kit Hudson, mate of the Dawn!

"Looks a good thing," said Ken at last, handing the paper back to Hudson. "Unless this man Charters turns up—"

"Unless the skies fall!" scoffed

King of the Island's home port at Lalinge. But Hudson was evidently forgetting the trade. It was a small thing to him now. But it was not a small thing to King of the Islands—it was his daily round!

It was, of course, impossible for the boy trader to let Hudson force on him a share of his fortune. In all other things they shared and shared alike like true shipmates. But in such a big matter as this it was impossible, though the mate of the Dawn did not yet realise it.

"Anything doing ashore, Ken?" Hudson asked.

"Three tons of copra. And I'm after some pearl-shell."

"Suffering cats!" Hudson said, and laughed.



"You look a pretty object!" said Hudson. "But you've done me a good turn though you never knew it and never meant it. . . . I'll help you to get out of the Islands and make a new man of yourself!"

Hudson. "Charters vanished ten years ago. He was a bad egg, Ken. I never knew much of him, but I do know that he had to clear out of Sydney in haste, and the old man never mentioned him again.

"The fellow disgraced him, and if he'd made a will, I believe he would have cut Charters out of it. But he left no will, it seems. There's no chance that Charters is still living. You can see that the legal swabs want me, from what they say.

"I shall have to get to Sydney, Ken," he went on. "What about heading direct for Lalinge when we lift the hook here? That would get me there in time for the Sydney steamer."

Ken smiled. The Dawn had more than a dozen Island calls to make before she turned her prow towards

Ken's face was grave. It was natural that Hudson should disregard the Island trade now. A few tons of copra, a few sacks of pearl-shell meant nothing to him now that he had come into a fortune. But they meant as much as usual to the boy trader of Lalinge.

"When can we get the hook up, Ken?" asked Hudson.

"To-morrow's the soonest."

"Make it to-day, old man! With a fortune waiting for us at Sydney, we don't want to hang about Luta waiting for copra and pearl-shell."

"My dear chap, I've been fixing it with the traders," said Ken. "I can't let them down."

"My dear chap," retorted Hudson, "they can easily find another ship to take their twopennyworth of copra."

Ken shook his head, and some of

Billy Bottle— Beachcomber

the brightness faded out of Kit Hudson's face. The gravity in his shipmate's looks seemed to have a damping effect on him.

"Look here, Ken!" he said. "Don't play the goat! We've got a fortune waiting for us at Sydney."

"You have, old fellow, and I'm jolly glad for your sake!" said King of the Islands. "But I've got to keep on drumming the Islands—for two-pennyworth of copra!" he added, with a smile.

"I've told you that we're going to share this!" said the mate of the Dawn, a note of sharpness in his voice.

"And I've told you we can't, old chap," said Ken. "Think it over, old fellow, and you'll see that we can't. Anything in the way of trade or treasure, yes. But this is different. I can't touch a penny of it!"

"That's rot, and you know it!"

"It isn't rot, Kit, and I don't know it. But don't let's argue," said Ken cheerfully. "This is a tremendous stroke of luck for you, old fellow; don't let's spoil it!"

"Looks to me as if you want to spoil it!" snapped Hudson. "You took me on board this packet when I hadn't a bean, and stood me pay in advance when you hardly knew me. Since then we've sailed together and shared alike. You seem to want the obligations to be all on one side."

"Rubbish, old fellow! Look here!" King of the Islands wrinkled his brows in thought. "I'll get ashore again and fix up about the cargo. I'll make the niggers rush, and we'll manage somehow to get the hook up at dawn. Depend on it that I won't lose a minute that can be helped."

"And then straight for Lalinge and the steamer?"

"That's not possible, old fellow! I've got to make my calls at the islands, and—"

"What does the trade matter now?" cut in Hudson.

"It's not only the trade, Kit. I'd cut that out, loss or no loss, to get you as quickly as possible on the track of that twenty thousand. But I can't let the traders down. I've got to keep arrangements and work to schedule."

"That means weeks—"

"Not at all. Give a man a minute or two to think!" protested Ken, smiling. "We shall be able to hit a steamer somewhere; it only wants thinking out. With a good wind we can get in at Fushima in time for the steamer there. Or you could hire a motor-launch here to run, you across to Fushima. That would give you time to catch the steamer straight for Sydney. She runs direct back from Fushima."

"That's a great idea!" said Hudson. "Now, look here, Ken! We're in this together. I want you to come to Sydney with me."

"Sydney and back—three months or so! My dear old chap, what on earth's to become of my trade—and my ketch?" exclaimed King of the Islands.

"Hang the trade, and hang the ketch!" growled Hudson. "Let's have this clear. You can lay up the ketch here at Luta. The trade can go hang—we don't want it now! As for your engagements, you can pass them on to another skipper. Any skipper in the South Seas will jump at the chance of bagging new trade in these times."

"We take a motor-launch together and hit Fushima in time for the Sydney steamer. We'll take Koko. The old coffee-bean has never seen a white man's city, and he will open his eyes at Sydney!" Hudson's brow, which had been frowning, cleared as he was speaking, and enthusiasm lighted in his eyes again. He turned to Kaio-lalulalonga.

"Koko, you old brown image, you likee see big feller city belong white man, eye belong you?"

"Me likee plenty, sar!" Kaio-lalulalonga grinned.

"It's a go!" said Hudson. "Leave the ketch here, Ken. We can pick it up another time, or we can sell it. It's a good ketch—the best ketch in the Pacific—and plenty of skippers would jump at it! We shan't want it. We can get a ship at Sydney when I've once got hold of this loot."

Ken looked at his comrade, still smiling, but with a shadow in his eyes. It was an amazing stroke of good fortune, that twenty thousand pounds. But it was going to come between them, that was clear. Wealth was a great thing, but it had its drawbacks sometimes.

"A ship—a steamer!" went on Hudson his eyes shining. "You're one of the old brigade, Ken, and you're keen on windjamming. But give me engines! What about a first-class Sydney packet, and twenty knots in a dead calm? What about a thousand tons cargo? You'll have to let me have my way in this, Ken. Big trade, old man, big trade!"

"Don't mistake me, Ken!" he added. "You're going to be captain, and I'm going to be mate."

"Dear old fellow," said Ken, "I couldn't captain your ship, with the owner as mate—"

"Your ship, too," broke in Hudson. "We're to be joint owners, you skipper and I chief mate. The same old game, but on a bigger scale. Windjamming among the Islands is played out, Ken. But a big steamer with lots of room for trade on a big scale. This is going to make both of us immensely rich. Koko's going to be a real bo'sun, with twenty men under his orders!"

"The firm of King & Hudson is going to be the biggest in the Islands—what?"

Ken still smiled, but his heart was heavy. Hudson, in his enthusiasm, was sketching out a programme that could never be fulfilled. The boy trader hated to damp that enthusiasm. But there was no choice in the matter.

"Now, don't jaw, old chap!" said Hudson. "Let's get ashore and fix it up, about that motor-launch for Fushima. You and Koko are coming to Sydney with me, and we're going halves in all that's coming to me."

"And we'll stand that rat of a beachcomber something for handing us the good news, though he never knew it. Might take the miserable wretch in hand and make something of him, though he's pretty far gone."

"Good idea!" assented Ken. "But I—"

"Oh, bother your butts! The sooner we hit Fushima, the better. Let's get ashore and fix it up."

But Ken shook his head, and made no move.

Turned Down!

KAIO-LALULALONGA looked from one white master to the other, and his cheery brown face clouded. There was a tense pause, during which the brightness died out of Hudson's face again and his lips set. And Ken was very grave.

Koko, reading the two faces, read trouble. He did not fully understand what it was, but he realised that there was a rift in the lute. For once the shipmates of the Dawn did not see eye to eye.

"Well?" broke out Hudson at last.

"It can't be done, Kit!" said King of the Islands. "I can't share a fortune that comes to you from a relative. Sooner or later you'd see that for yourself. I'll be glad to see you commanding your own ship, old man—the steamer that you've always wanted—but I stick to windjamming!"

"That means that we part?" asked Hudson, drawing a deep breath.

"It can't mean anything else, Kit, unless you're satisfied to go on as mate of a trading ketch now you're a rich man."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Hudson irritably. "This is the chance of a lifetime for both of us! Joint owners of a big ship—"

"But we shouldn't be joint owners, Kit. I should be a hanger-on of a rich man, whatever we called it, and that wouldn't do!"

"You think I'd look at it like that?"

"No. But that's what it would be. We're shipmates, Kit, and good chums, but a fellow's got to keep his independence! With all that money at Sydney, and ships and houses, too, you can hardly keep on as mate of the Dawn."

Hudson gave a grunt.

"Well, then," said Ken quietly, "that leaves no choice. The Dawn's nothing to you now, and that's natural enough. But it's still everything to me, Kit, all I have. Let's part the best of friends!"

"Then you want to part?"

"I don't, and you know it, Kit. But unless we go on the same as before, we've got to part. And that—"

"That's rot!" interjected Hudson.

"Quite," agreed Ken.

Hudson stood silent, and Ken felt an ache in his heart. It hit him hard to part with his shipmate. But it was inevitable. Unless he shared Hudson's fortune, they had to part. And he could not share it. Hudson

himself would realise that in the long run.

He did not realise it now—that was the trouble. His brow grew dark, and there was an angry glint in his eyes.

"I've never had a stroke of luck before!" he said, his voice unsteady. "I've been a rolling stone, gathering no moss. Now luck's come my way, you're going to spoil it all. I come on this ketch without a bean, and let you do me a good turn. Now the boot's on the other foot you'll take nothing at my hands!"

"It's different, old man—"

"I don't see it."

"Well, you'll see it some time," said Ken. "I'm glad for your sake that you've got all this money, but for my own sake I could wish that your Cousin Charters had lived to get it! But there it is. You're a rich man now, and I'm still skipper of a trading ketch, drumming the Islands for trade. Let's make the best of it!"

"Then you refuse to come to Sydney with me and take your share of what's going?"

"I can't!"

"That settles it, then!" And Kit Hudson walked to the side and waved his hand to one of the native canoes on the lagoon.

The canoe shot towards the Dawn at once.

Ken followed his comrade, a troubled look on his face. He was right, and he knew that he was right. He knew, too, that Hudson would see it sooner or later. But at the moment the disappointment was too much for the mate of the Dawn. Anger and resentment were in his heart and reflected only too plainly in his face.

"Kit, old man," said Ken, laying his hand on Hudson's shoulder.

"It's no good talking!" jerked Hudson, throwing off Ken's hand with a twist of his shoulders. "I never thought we should part, and there's no reason why we should, if only you'd sink your silly, stiff-necked pride. There's nothing more to be said."

"If you want to go ashore—" began Ken.

"I forgot!" said Hudson bitterly, turning on him. "I'm still mate of the Dawn, and under your orders, Captain King. I can't clear off at a moment's notice without your permission—"

"Don't be an ass!" cut in Ken sharply. "You're free to do exactly as you like, and you know it as well as I do. But if you're going ashore, there's the whaleboat."

"I won't trouble you for your boat, sir!" said Hudson, with a sarcastic accent on the "sir."

Ken stepped back, cut to the quick. The canoe ranged alongside, and the mate of the Dawn jumped into it. He snapped a word to the native boys, and they paddled shoreward.

Ken stood at the rail, looking after his departing shipmate. Hudson had gone in anger—but there was no



BOYS IN BLUE—but they look far from "blue"! The snap was taken aboard the training ship *Ezmouth*, off Grays, Essex, and **E. BRAZILL**—an enthusiastic **MODERN BOY** reader—gets a prize of **ONE GUINEA** for submitting it. He is fourth from the right, second row from the back.

A prize of **FIVE SHILLINGS** is waiting to be claimed by the owner of the **RINGED HEAD**. He is invited to send his full name and address—to be vouched for by **E. Brazill**—in an envelope marked "Claim," to the Editor, **MODERN BOY**. The present will then be sent on to him.

anger in Ken's heart. He watched the canoe with a clouded brow.

He hoped that his comrade would look back, and at least wave a hand in parting. But Hudson did not look back.

The canoe grounded on the beach, and the mate of the Dawn stepped out. Without turning his head, he strode up the beach towards the line of buildings by the palm-trees.

A jutting rock of coral hid him from Ken's sight, and the boy trader turned away with a sigh. He had lost his shipmate.

"Me no likee this feller thing!" murmured *Kaio-lalulalonga*, looking on, and his brown face was clouded.

A Shock for Kit!

THE sun was setting over Luta. In the west the Pacific was a mass of glowing purple and gold. Against the gorgeous sky the trim masts and spars of the ketch Dawn stood out as she lay at anchor in the shining lagoon.

Kit Hudson had fixed up about the motor-launch. At dawn of day he was to leave Luta and head direct for Fushima, there to catch the Sydney steamer. A new life was opening before him, and he was planning his future as he paced the beach.

If his heart was heavy with the loss of his shipmate and the old, careless, happy life on the ketch, his thoughts dwelt on the new prospects ahead.

He had been willing—more than

willing—to sail as mate in the new ship he had intended buying, under the command of King of the Islands, and as of old. But still there was delight in contemplating taking command of his own ship.

He would have agreed to anything to keep his comrade, but the thought of commanding his own ship appealed to him as it would have appealed to any sailorman.

His own ship! He could hear the engines throbbing already. He could see the neat, orderly crew—a white, not a Kanaka crew—white Australians every man of them. His face brightened.

Then a muttering voice fell on his ears, and he glanced round to see the tattered figure of the beach-comber stretched at the foot of a palm-tree.

Billy Bottle looked even more forlorn and wretched than when Hudson had seen him on the deck of Dawn and tossed him into the lagoon. Ken's sovereign had been spent on the only thing that mattered to the debased wreck of a man, and he was awakening from a heavy sleep.

He dashed a shaking hand at the flies that settled on his bloated, discoloured face, muttering the while.

His bleared eyes fell on Hudson, and their look expressed savage hatred. The man was a bundle of raw nerves, as his outbreak on the deck of the ketch had shown. Sick and wretched, hating himself and all men, the miserable man was a blot on creation. Life was a burden to him.

He was sunk too low to care for

Billy Bottle— Beachcomber

the contempt with which the white men on Luta turned away from him, or for the scorn of the natives.

Hudson stopped, and stood looking at the man. He owed his good fortune to this miserable reptile. Had not Billy Bottle brought that bundle of old newspapers on board the ketch, he might not have seen a newspaper till months later, when the ketch would have raised Lalinge.

By that time the Sydney lawyers might have ceased to advertise for the heir, or heirs, of the late William Charters, of Sydney. It might have been concluded that Christopher Hudson, like the younger William Charters, had been lost at sea, and some distant relative might have stepped into the loot.

It was this wretch, coming to the Dawn in search of a tip and a drink, that had made all the difference to Kit Hudson.

The beachcomber raised himself to a sitting posture, leaning back against the slanting trunk of the palm. He recognised Hudson, and scowled at him.

Hudson regarded him thoughtfully. Something might be done for the wretch to make him remember that he had once been a white man. Hudson could afford now to help a lame dog over a stile.

"You look a pretty object!" said Hudson at last.

"Any business of yours?" snarled Billy Bottle, his bleared eyes glinting.

"Well, yes," said Hudson. "You never knew it, and never meant it, but you've done me a good turn. There was something in one of the papers you brought on the ketch that concerned me. Had you read the papers?"

"What would I want reading Sydney papers?" grunted the beachcomber. "I was a Sydney man once, and held up my head with the best of them, though you wouldn't guess it to look at me. D'you reckon I want to be reminded of it? I reckoned the papers was worth a drink from any skipper fresh in from the Islands—that's all!"

"They were worth more than that to me," replied Hudson. "If you'd looked into one of them, you'd have seen that Sydney lawyers are advertising for a man that's come into a fortune. And I'm the man."

"That's worth another drink!" said the beachcomber, his face brightening. He held out a shaking hand.

"It's worth more!" said Hudson. "Look here, Billy Bottle, I'm heading for Sydney to claim a fortune! I get to sea in a motor-launch at dawn. You've combed the beaches in the Islands long enough. It's not too late to pull yourself together, and remember that you were a white man once."

"I'll give you a chance. Get out of the Islands and make a new man of yourself!"

"It's too late!" growled the beachcomber.

"It's never too late! I tell you I'll give you a chance!" urged Hudson. "I owe you that! I'll take you to Fushima in the launch, fix you up for civilisation, and give you a lift back to Sydney."

The man stared at him. For a moment or two something seemed to brighten in the bleared face.

"I had to get out of Sydney once!" he muttered. "But that's ten years ago! It's forgotten now, I reckon! But—" He shrugged his shoulders, and slumped back against the palm trunk. "Too late! If I've done you a good turn, as you say, give me a few pounds to help me on the way I'm going. That's all you or any man can do for me—now!"

"I'll give you nothing to buy poison with!" said Hudson.

"Let me alone, then, and be hanged to you!" The beachcomber scowled blackly.

Kit Hudson made a movement to pass on, the beachcomber watching him intently.

"Think it over," urged Kit. "Through you I've got my chance, and I'll give you your chance to make good. I'm borrowing Macpherson's motor-launch. Turn up at Macpherson's bungalow any time between now and morning and ask for me. My name's Hudson."

"Hudson!" repeated the beachcomber. The name seemed familiar to him.

"Yes—Kit Hudson!"

"I've relations of that name!" said Billy Bottle, staring at him curiously.

"Cut that out!" snapped the mate of the Dawn, making a gesture of repugnance. "You're not likely to be a relation of mine!"

"I don't know. I had a kid cousin of that name who'd be about your size by this time!" said the beachcomber, with a grin. "I've never seen him. He was a little kid when I had to run from Sydney. But his name was Kit, same as yours. The world ain't full of Christopher Hudsons!"

The mate of the Dawn stared at him. The look in his face seemed to entertain the wretch sprawling under the palm. He chuckled huskily.

A strange cold chill rose in Kit Hudson's heart. He stared harder at the bloated face before him, and said:

"I never had but one cousin, and he was lost at sea ten years ago. His name was not the same as mine."

"I was lost at sea ten years ago!" chuckled the beachcomber. "Leastways, it was safer to let 'em think so. I was looked for then, though I reckon they've forgotten about me now!"

"What's your name—your real name?"

"Billy Bottle!" grinned the beachcomber. "I've been called Billy Bottle as long as I want to remember. Billy Bottle's good enough for Luta!"

"Give me your real name!" repeated Hudson fiercely.

"Find out!" jeered the beachcomber, and slumped back on the palm trunk again.

The next moment the grip of Kit Hudson was on him. He was dragged to his feet and shaken like a rat. The mate's eyes glittered at him as the wreck of a man struggled and spluttered in his grasp.

"Your name, you dog, before I shake the life out of you!" snarled Hudson. "Your name!"

"Hang you!" panted the beachcomber. "Hang you! Let me go!" He struggled savagely, his teeth chattering as the mate of the Dawn shook him fiercely.

"Your name, you dog!"

"Charters!" gasped the beachcomber. "William Charters, hang you! Now let me go!"

Hudson flung him to the earth, and the beachcomber sprawled there breathless, glaring up at him with eyes of hate.

"William Charters!" Kit Hudson's voice came hard through set teeth. "Son of old William Charters, the shipper of Sydney?" He did not wait for an answer. He knew the truth now.

Turning his back on the sprawling wretch, Hudson strode back to the beach.

The rim of the red sun dipped in the far Pacific, and darkness, with the suddenness of the tropics, rushed down on Luta. The Dawn, riding at anchor in the lagoon, disappeared from sight, and lights began to twinkle in the bungalows along the shore.

Natives, landing from fishing-canoes, passed a white man who tramped to and fro on the sand, and gave him a wide berth. They could see that the feller white master was plenty too much angry.

One native's curious eyes noted that the white master drew a folded newspaper from an inner pocket, tore it into fragments, and scattered the fragments far on the waters of the lagoon.

Kit Hudson was fighting a terrible temptation. His brain was in a whirl. Fate was mocking him, making a plaything of him. A fortune was his for the taking. He had only to hold his tongue, sail from Luta in Macpherson's launch at dawn, and the worthless brute sprawling under the palms would never know.

He drove the thought from him, but it returned again and again. His face was white, his brow wet with perspiration, as he tramped the shelving sands.

Aboard the Dawn, King of the Islands was thinking of his lost shipmate. He did not dream that, long after the last light had ceased to twinkle on Luta, Hudson was still tramping the beach, wrestling with temptation!

(A terrible blow, this, for Kit Hudson! How does the temptation end? Read the follow-on adventures of Ken King and his old shipmate in another topping South Seas yarn in next week's MODERN BOY!)