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KEEPERS of the KING-EMPEROR'S PEACE!
See centre pages

The CHASE of the SEA-CAT

A sick man's gabble of a hoard of pearls, the greed of an unscrupulous Chinaman, the cunning of one of the greatest scoundrels in the South Seas, the efforts of a boy trader to defeat the villains—a magnificent KING OF THE ISLANDS story!

By
Charles Hamilton

On Lukwe Beach.

FELLER PARSONS no stop!" exclaimed Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain of the Dawn—Ken King's ketch, which was running into the lagoon of Lukwe from the Pacific. Lukwe lay drowsing under the blaze of tropic heat.

Two or three white men, in the shady verandas of the bungalows on shore, glanced idly at the incoming ketch. Natives loitering under the tall palms by the beach stared at the graceful little vessel. A beach-comber, sprawling in the shadow of a coral rock, lifted his head for a moment, stared, and went to sleep again.

Except for canoes and whaleboats drawn up on the beach, there was no craft in the lagoon and King of the Islands swept it with a keen glance as the Dawn came gliding in from the reef. He had hoped to see Peter Parsons' cutter, the Sea-Cat, at anchor there. But there was no sign of it. Ken knitted his brows.

"No stop, sar!" said Koko, the Kataka. "S'pose feller Parsons he stop, feller cutter he stop!"

"Our luck's out, Ken," said Kit Hudson, the Australian mate of the Dawn, "Dandy Peter's gone to sea. We'll pick up news of him on the beach, though. If we can get his bearings, we'll run him down, wherever he is!"

Ken King nodded, and called to Lompo:

"You feller Lompo, you bring big feller glass along cabin."

Lompo-lokuno fetched the binoculars, and Ken turned them on the line of bungalows at the back of the dazzling beach. He knew which was the house of Dandy Peter Parsons, the sea-lawyer of Lukwe.

The powerful glasses brought Dandy Peter's bungalow near and clear, but showed no sign of life about the building. Doors and shutters were closed. It was evident that the sea-lawyer was not at home.



Koko, clinging to the rigging of the Dawn, shouted excitedly. King of the Islands lifted the binoculars to his eyes. "It's the Sea-Cat!" he declared.

Ken lowered the glasses, with a frown. He had made all sail to Lukwe, with an account to settle with Dandy Peter. It was a bitter disappointment to find that the dandy had gone to sea.

The ketch came to her anchorage, and the cable ran out. At a word from King of the Islands, the Hiva-Oa crew swung the whaleboat down into the water. Ken and Kit slipped their revolvers into their pockets before they entered the boat.

It was a rough crowd that dwelt on Lukwe, friends and associates of Peter Parsons, and King of the Islands had enemies and no friends there. If, in spite of appearances, Peter Parsons was on the island, it was likely that guns would be wanted before the shipmates had finished with him.

Koko and Kolulo took the oars and pulled for the beach opposite the bungalows. From the deck of the ketch the rest of the Hiva-Oa crew—Lompo and Lufu and Tomoo, and Danny the cooky-boy—watched them, and chewed betel-nut as they watched.

The whaleboat grounded, and the skipper and mate of the Dawn jumped ashore and walked up the beach. Some of the white men in the verandas had got out of hammocks and chairs now, and were staring at them curiously. King of the Islands was a rare visitor to Lukwe, but he was well known there.

A brawny, black-bearded man, who was alternatively sipping at a long glass and pulling at a black Manila cheroot, removed the latter from his bearded mouth and shifted his belt a little, to bring his six-shooter within easy reach. Black Furley had had trouble with the boy trader more than once, and he was ready for more!

KING OF THE ISLANDS gave no heed to the black-bearded pearl-poacher, however. Ken was not there for trouble with Furley. He tramped on up the coral path towards Peter Parsons' bungalow, with Hudson at his side. Black Furley heaved his heavy bulk out of a creaking chair, leaned on the palm-wood rail of his veranda, and shouted to the boy trader.

"Ahoy! King of the Islands!" Ken King stopped, and turned towards him.

"Looking for Peter Parsons?" grinned Furley.

"Ay!" answered Ken. "His cutter's not in the lagoon. Is he at home, Furley?"

"You're a day too late! He sailed yesterday for O'ua." Furley eyed the shipmates curiously. "What's your trouble with Peter?"

"I'm ready to tell all Lukwe that, if they want to hear," answered King of the Islands. "He's kidnapped a white man, and I'm going to break a

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lawyer-cane on his back and get the man away!"

Furley whistled.

"Parsons brought in a castaway, when he got back from his last trip," he said. "He let on that he had picked him up at sea. He had him at his bungalow till he sailed yesterday. I reckon nobody on Lukwe believed that Peter was standing by a seaman in distress!" Furley grinned. "He took the man to sea with him in his cutter."

"The man was a castaway," said Ken, "Keefe by name. I picked him out of a drifting boat at sea, and took him into Lalinge. He was kidnapped out of my ship by Wu Fang, a Chink. And Peter Parsons got him away from the Chink, and sent me on a wild-goose chase hunting for him." "What did he want him for?" asked Furley curiously.

"Keefe's a pearler," answered Ken drily. "I fancy Parsons believes that Keefe can tell him where he found pearls."

"By hokey!" said Furley, knitting his black brows, "so that's the story. I reckon we all wondered when Peter came in with a castaway, and spun a yarn about picking him up at sea! He kept the man close, and never let anybody get a word with him. I reckon I guessed there was something behind it, and I reckon I know what it was now: Pearls!"

HERE was a greedy glitter in the deep-set eyes under the thick, black brows.

"The swab!" said Furley. "If I'd known— By hokey, if Dandy Peter's kidnapped a pearler, I reckon I don't need telling what his game is. If I'd known— It's too late now—and too late for you, too, King of the Islands! You'll never get your hands on the pearls—Peter will see to that."

Ken stared at him for a moment, then laughed.

"I'm not after the pearls," he said, "I'm after the pearler! We saved the man's life at sea, and we're seeing him through. If he's found pearls, they're his—not ours."

"You can tell them that on Lalinge!" said Furley derisively. "It's not good enough for Lukwe."

Ken's eyes gleamed, but he checked the reply that rose to his lips. He had not come to Lukwe hunting trouble—as Peter Parsons was not there.

He turned away, and went on towards Parsons' bungalow with

Hudson. Black Furley remained leaning on his veranda rail, staring after the shipmates, deep in thought. It was easy enough for the shipmates of the Dawn to guess his thoughts. Now that he knew Dandy Peter's "game," Furley was considering the possibility of getting his own lawless hand into that game.

Under a feathery palm near Dandy Peter's house a black boy lay asleep, his eyes shut and his mouth open, snoring.

"That's Parsons' house-boy!" said Ken, halting. Peter Parsons' house-boy seemed to be taking things easy while his master was away. But he was awakened from happy slumber by the toe of a boot jamming into his bare, black ribs. He started up, staring at the two white masters, and knuckling his sleepy eyes.

"What name you kick this feller Kolo, sar, foot belong you?" he demanded.

"You savvy what place feller Cap'n Parsons he stop?" asked Ken.

"That feller he stop along O'ua, sar, along cutter belong him," answered the Lukwe boy.

"You savvy white feller Keefe, stop along Cap'n Parsons?"

"Yessar, me savvy that feller plenty too much," said Kolo. "Brain belong him no walk about any more."

"You savvy what place he stop!"

"He stop along cutter, sar, along Cap'n Parsons he go along sea."

"What name Cap'n Parsons he go along O'ua, along cutter?"

Kolo stared at the question. "He go along O'ua, along trade, along nigger, sar," he answered. "Plenty too much stick tobacco, feller calico, feller knife, feller trade-box along bell he ring, stop along that cutter, sar."

King of the Islands scanned the boy's black face keenly, and could see that Kolo was telling the truth.

"You see feller cargo stop along cutter, along eye belong you?" he asked.

"Yes, sar. This feller help carry cargo along cutter—plenty feller he help carry cargo, sar! Cap'n Parsons he carry plenty feller cargo along O'ua, along he trade along nigger, sar."

Kit Hudson gave a low whistle. "If Peter Parsons has gone to O'ua to trade, Ken, it shows that he hasn't got anything out of Keefe—yet!" he said. "He wouldn't take a cargo of trade goods if he was after pearls."

"That's what I was thinking. The man may not have recovered yet—and

we may still be in time to save him, before Parsons can screw his secret out of him!" said King of the Islands. "We can beat Parsons to O'ua. It's two days' sail, and the Dawn sails two fathoms to the Sea-Cat's one."

"Up hook, then!" said Kit. "Without losing a minute!"

The shipmates walked back to the whaleboat, and Koko and Kololu pulled back to the Dawn. The cable rattled up, the anchor rose from its coral bed, and the ketch stood for the reef passage. And as the handsome little craft stood to the west before the wind, under full sail, Black Furley watched it across the lagoon and the reef, his black brows still wrinkled in thought.

A Sick Man's Gabble!

A LONG howl echoed the length of the Sea-Cat, and Kiki sprawled on the cutter's little deck. Talito jumped out of Dandy Peter's way; and Jacky, the boat-steerer, eyed the sea-lawyer of Lukwe uneasily from the tiller.

Dandy Peter Parsons was in one of his worst tempers; and when Dandy Peter's temper was bad, the three Lukwe boys who manned the Sea-Cat had the full benefit of it.

Kiki picked himself up, and crawled spluttering away, followed by angry words and a scowl from the dandy of Lukwe. Had he remained within reach, the skipper of the Sea-Cat would have followed up the blow with another.

Peter Parsons was the worst-hated skipper in the Pacific. His crew would have been glad enough to turn on him like tigers, and "kai-kai" him on his own deck. But they feared the dapper little scoundrel more than they hated him. One glance from the cold eyes in his handsome, wicked face was enough for them, without the ready fist, or the equally ready belaying-pin to back it up.

Of all the rough crew on Lukwe, Dandy Peter was the hardest case, though he was the handsomest and the best-dressed. Even at sea, in a little trading cutter, Peter was always spotless in white ducks, with pipe-clayed shoes, while most of the Lukwe skippers were content with a cotton shirt and shorts, or even a loin-cloth like a native, and bare feet. But even the burly, brawny Furley was not feared like Parsons, the dandified sea-lawyer.

Round the gliding cutter rolled the vast Pacific. Lukwe was many a long mile below the sea-line east. With her tall sails leaning to the wind, the cutter swept away westward for O'ua. Dandy Peter lounged about her deck, chewing cheroot after cheroot, scowling and muttering, and sometimes pausing at the steps to listen to the voice that at long intervals was audible from the tiny cabin:

"A cable's length on the beach, and five fathoms in the bush! Twenty on the line, and bags of pearls!"

How many times Parsons had heard that sentence repeated, he could not have said. Hundreds of times, at least.

WHILE YOU ARE ON HOLIDAY—

You MUST make certain you get your weekly copy of MODERN BOY—by ordering it **definitely** from a News-agent. . . . It's the Safe and Certain way!

It meant something—it was the constant burden of the castaway's mutterings. It meant a secret of hidden pearls. The Lukwe skipper was certain of that. Wu Fang had been assured of it—that was why he had stolen the sick pearler out of King of the Islands' ship at Lalinge.

But whatever the secret was, the Chink had not learned it. And Dandy Peter had not learned it yet, though he swore savagely that he would.

Long days he had kept the pearler in his bungalow at Lukwe, caring for the sick man as if he had been a friend or a brother—in the hope of seeing him come to his senses at last. Physically, the man had almost recovered from the effect of his terrible sufferings in an open boat at sea.

course for the pearling-ground. The Lukwe sea-lawyer was savagely determined on that and he was ready to throw aside trade for the chance of a fortune. But until that time came, the man was a useless burden and it was no wonder that Peter Parsons' temper grew more and more savage, and that he was readier with a blow than a word in dealing with his crew.

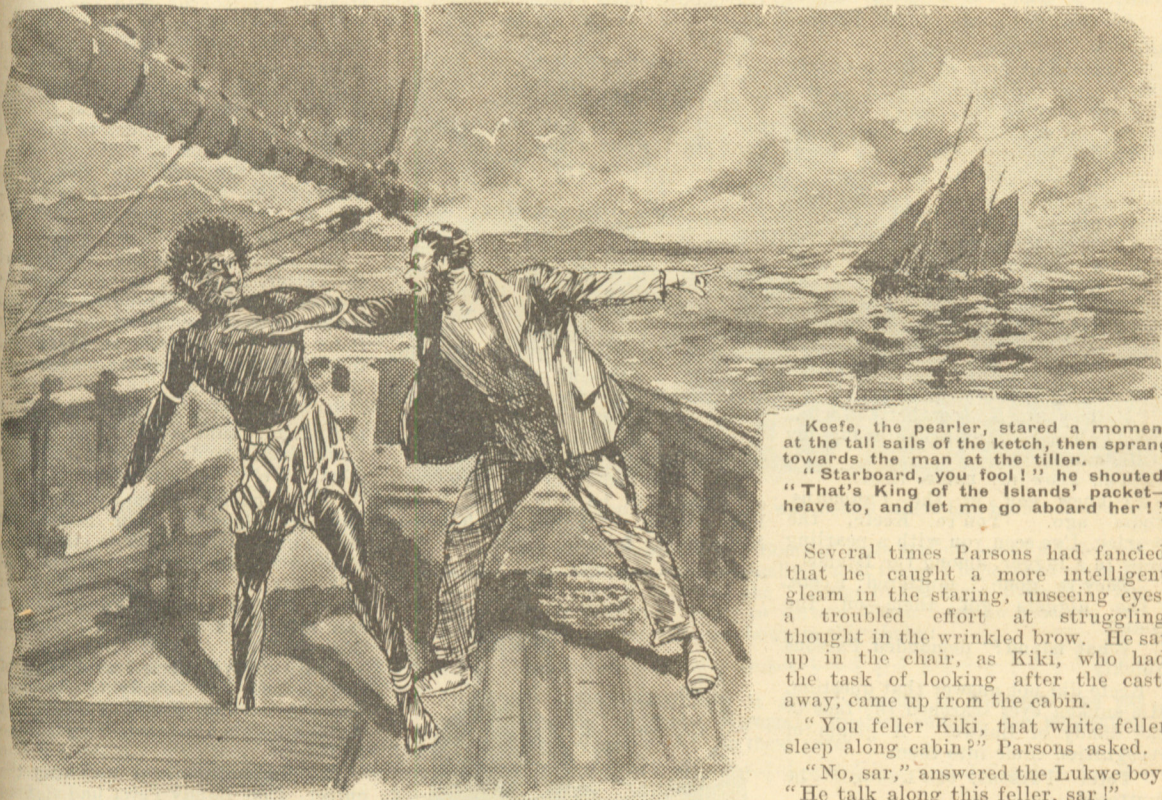
"A cable's length on the beach," came the mutter from below. "Niggers in the bush."

The man had discovered some rich pearl-bed, on some unknown island—one of the thousand unknown islands of the Pacific. Wu Fang had known it, and Dandy Peter knew it! The long hot day wore on. Dandy Peter strode about the deck, and stormed at his crew while the cutter glided

luggers of light draught could run the reef, but Dandy Peter, reckless as he was, did not care to take the Sea-Cat near it.

The sun was sinking, the cutter's prow heading into a blaze of purple and gold. Dandy Peter sprawled in a deck-chair and smoked, every now and then snarling a savage word at his crew, who kept as far from him as they could. There was silence below, and it came into his mind that it was hours now since he had heard the mutter from the castaway in the cabin.

It had seemed to him that since the cutter had been at sea Keefe had shown some change for the better. The salt winds, and the accustomed sounds and sights of the sea, had helped to rouse him from his torpor.



Keefe, the pearler, stared a moment at the tall sails of the ketch, then sprang towards the man at the tiller. "Starboard, you fool!" he shouted. "That's King of the Islands' packet—have to, and let me go aboard her!"

Several times Parsons had fancied that he caught a more intelligent gleam in the staring, unseeing eyes, a troubled effort at struggling thought in the wrinkled brow. He sat up in the chair, as Kiki, who had the task of looking after the castaway, came up from the cabin.

"You feller Kiki, that white feller sleep along cabin?" Parsons asked.

"No, sar," answered the Lukwe boy. "He talk along this feller, sar!"

"What feller thing he talk?" exclaimed Parsons.

"He wantee savvy name belong this feller ship, sar."

Peter Parsons made one bound from the deck-chair. If the castaway had asked Kiki the name of the ship it could only mean one thing—that he was coming, at long last, to his right senses.

A moment more, and Parsons was in the little cabin. There was only one bunk, and it was occupied by the man Ken King had picked up at sea. Dandy Peter's eyes fastened on him, almost wolfishly.

Keefe was a man of powerful frame, his skin burnt almost to copper by tropical suns. He had been little more than skin and bone when King of the Islands had found him in the drifting boat. But weeks had passed since then, the gaunt frame and the

But no secret could be drawn from a man whose brain was numbed, who answered questions only with a blank stare and whose rambling mutterings ceased when he was questioned.

Parsons had had to put to sea at last. He could not afford a longer spell on shore for he lived by his trade among the islands. He had loaded the Sea-Cat with trade goods for O'ua, and sailed out of the Lukwe lagoon with the castaway on board. He could not leave the man on Lukwe. He could not trust his lawless associates there, and he knew, too, that any day King of the Islands might run into the lagoon in search of him.

Dandy Peter was running no risk of losing his prize—the prize that, as yet, was useless to him—a troublesome burden on his hands. If Keefe came to his senses, or rather, when he came to his senses, he should set a

on before the wind for O'ua. Drumming for copra—chaffering with blacks for pearl-shell—while the secret of a pearl island was within his grasp!

The dandy ground his teeth as he thought of it and of the reckless revelry in Sydney that a fortune would mean to him.

Far ahead, a purple blur on the sea, showed where O'ua lay. It was the second day out from Lukwe, and Peter Parsons expected to run into O'ua in the sunset. Southward from O'ua stretched a long line of sunken reefs for many a mile, the creaming foam on the surface telling of the peril that lay hidden under the waters. Here and there, jutting teeth of coral showed over the sea.

Dandy Peter snapped a word to the steersman, and the cutter fell away a couple of points, to give the O'ua reef a wide berth. Native canoes and

The Chase of the Sea-Cat

sunken face had filled out, and there was colour in the bearded cheeks.

The recovery of the mind had been slower than that of the body, but Dandy Peter's keen eyes could see that there was a change now. The stupefied torpor was gone. It was a worn, troubled, but intelligent face that looked at him from the bunk.

Dandy Peter breathed hard and deep. It had come, at last!

During the days he had been ashore at Lukwe the eastaway had taken no heed of Parsons, had seemed unaware of his existence. Now that intelligence had returned he looked on him as a stranger. He was as a man awakening from a long sleep, and the immediate past was a blank to him.

"So you've come to!" Parsons gloated.

"You the skipper of this hooker?" asked the pearler. Had Peter Parsons been the man's dearest friend, he could not have been more overjoyed to hear him speak intelligently. He nodded.

"You picked me up?" asked Keefe, passing a hand over his brow. "I was in a boat—I got away from the Chink's schooner in a boat, at night. Then—the sun and the sea—the sun and the sea—" He shuddered as the terrible recollection came into his mind, and for the moment Parsons feared that he was about to relapse into his former state.

"Pull yourself together, Keefe," said Peter. "You're safe on my craft now."

"You know my name, then?"

"I knew you in the Paumotus, years ago. You're Keefe, the pearler. I've seen you with a pearling crew in a lugger, among the Islands."

"They're gone!" muttered Keefe. "The niggers got them—on the island."

"What island?" demanded Parsons quickly.

Keefe did not answer that question. His sunken eyes searched the face of the dandy of Lukwe. A gleam of recognition came into them.

"Peter Parsons, of Lukwe?" he muttered.

"You savvy this feller!" grinned Parsons. "I had you in my bungalow at Lukwe for weeks, and you never knew me."

The pearler watched his face intently. Now that he knew Peter Parsons it was easy to see that the man was on his guard. No man could know Dandy Peter without knowing his reputation also.

"I don't remember anything—after the boat!" muttered Keefe. "Mebbe I've been delirious—mebbe I've been talking." He shot a suspicious glance at Parsons.

"Shall I tell you what you've been saying?" grinned Dandy Peter. "A cable's length on the beach, and five fathoms in the bush—twenty on the line, and bags of pearls!"

The pearler gave a violent start.

"I reckon a sick man talks wild, Cap'n Parsons," he said unsteadily.

"You don't want to take any notice of a sick man's gabble."

"What did Wu Fang want you for, on his schooner?" Parsons asked.

Keefe made no reply.

"The Chink wasn't wasting his time, I reckon," said Parsons, "and he wasn't taking the risk of kidnapping a white man for nothing! He got you away from King of the Islands at Lalinge—"

"King of the Islands!" repeated Keefe. "I reckon I've heard of him, but I've never seen him."

"You were out of your wits for weeks, you fool! King of the Islands picked you out of the boat, and took you into Lalinge. Wu Fang got you away from his ketch—"

"The Chink!" Keefe's face paled.

"I got you away from Wu Fang. I reckoned that what was worth his while was worth my while! You savvy?"

The pearler was silent. "We're going into this together, Keefe!" said Dandy Peter. "You can set a course, but you can't find your pearl island without a ship. I've got the ship, savvy? We're in this together."

"Where's King of the Islands now?" asked the pearler.

"You'd like to meet him!" grinned Parsons. "You reckon you'd rather sail with Ken King than Peter Parsons? Forget it! King of the Islands is somewhere two or three hundred miles east of this—hunting for Wu Fang—and you! Savvy? More likely he's given it up by this time, and gone back to his trade! You won't see the Dawn in these seas—"

A voice called from the deck:

"Feller sail he stop, sar!" It was Kiki's voice. "Feller ketch belong King of the Islands, sar!"



EACH boy in the Form at a certain school was told to say an English proverb. All succeeded, with the exception of one boy. He was paying very little attention, and when his turn came he could not think of one at all. Then the master said to him:

"Look at me! Although I have no hair on top, I can—"

"Ah, I know, sir!" came the reply, quick as lightning. "Empty barns need no thatch!"

A prize of 5s. for the above has been awarded to R. C. Hingott, Clonlea, Winchester Road, Basingstoke, Hants.

"What?" roared Parsons. A spark came into the pearler's eyes, a flush of hope into his face. Peter Parsons did not heed him. He made one furious bound to the deck and stood there, staring at the tall sail coming swiftly out of the east before the wind.

"Let Him Have It!"

KOKO stood in the rigging above the teak rail of the Dawn, holding on to a shroud with one brown hand, the other pointing across the rolling Pacific.

"Feller cutter he stop, sar!" he shouted excitedly.

"Parsons' cutter!" said Kit Hudson. King of the Islands lifted the binoculars to his eyes. Long and steadily he looked into the sunset. Far in the distance a speck glanced against the purple and gold of the western sky. To the naked eye it might have seemed a winging albatross. But the powerful glasses brought it near and clear to the eyes of the boy trader.

"It's the Sea-Cat," said Ken, as he lowered the glasses. "I reckoned that we should pick her up before she made O'ua!"

Far away, a purple blur far beyond the cutter, lay O'ua, on the Sea-Cat's starboard bow. The cutter was not heading direct for the island. Dandy Peter had to round the southern reef to make the entrance to the lagoon, on the western side.

"We shall pick her up this side of the island," said Ken. "Not that it would help Dandy Peter to run into O'ua. We've got him now."

"He's made it easier for us," Hudson laughed. "On Lukwe we might have had a crowd on our hands. Parsons was keeping his prize to himself, but he would have called on Black Furley and his gang if we'd run him down in Lukwe. But on O'ua—"

"Only natives there," said King of the Islands. "Nobody to interfere between us and Dandy Peter. But we shall get him this side of the reef!"

The shipmates stood watching the cutter. That Dandy Peter had sighted them and recognised the ketch they soon had proof, for every rag of sail was shaken out on the Sea-Cat, and she ran before the wind with all the speed that her skipper could get out of her. Dandy Peter was in full flight.

The cutter was going all out under a load of canvas. But the ketch rapidly overhauled her. The Sea-Cat was swift, but she had no chance in a stern chase with the larger vessel, with the larger spread of sail. King of the Islands reckoned that the Dawn could sail two fathoms to the Sea-Cat's one, and it looked like it, as the cutter came every moment into nearer and clearer view in spite of all the Lukwe skipper's efforts.

Closer and closer swept the pursuing ketch, till the naked eye could pick up every detail on board the cutter.

Leaning to the wind, the cutter raced on, Dandy Peter standing on

the slanting deck, staring back. They could see him now, black against the sunset, and the three Lukwe boys at tiller and sheets. They saw the sea-lawyer lift a clenched hand and shake it savagely at his pursuer.

"He knows we're after him!" grinned the mate of the Dawn.

"My word! That feller Parsons he plenty mad along us!" chuckled Koko. Closer and closer swept the ketch. The shipmates could see the Lukwe skipper's face clearly and read the rage and fury in it. The cutter had swerved starboard, perilously near the foam that marked the long sunken reef, perhaps in the hope that King of the Islands would not venture so near the coral. But the ketch hung on her trail like a bloodhound.

"Parsons can't mean to run the reef, Ken, surely!" muttered Hudson.

King of the Islands shrugged his shoulders.

"He will pile up his cutter if he does," he answered. "I've heard that Jim Furley ran that reef in his lugger once, but it must have been touch and go. The Sea-Cat doesn't draw deep, but she draws too much water for the O'ua reef."

"Feller Parsons no stop!" said said Koko.

DANDY PETER had disappeared from the Sea-Cat's deck. He came back again in a few moments, and the sun glinted on the barrel of a rifle in his hands.

"That feller Parsons shoot along gun, sar, along ketch belong us feller," said the boatswain of the Dawn.

"I can't see anything of the pearler, Kit!" said King of the Islands. "Keep her steady, Lompo." "Yessar," said Lompo-lokuno, at the wheel.

Dandy Peter was leaning on the taffrail of the Sea-Cat, the rifle pushed out before him, his eyes gleaming over it. With both vessels in rapid motion, and the bellying canvas thundering in the wind, it was not easy shooting. But the dandy of Lukwe was a crack shot. King of the Islands stared steadily towards the cutter.

"If that swab opens fire, Kit——" he muttered.

"I reckon we'll give him as good as he hands out," Hudson answered, and picked a rifle from the rack at the mizzen. He went forward. King of the Islands stood steady by the binnacle, Koko at his side. Lompo, at the wheel, rolled his eyes uneasily towards the fleeing cutter.

If it was Dandy Peter's thought to pick off the steersman, Lompo-lokuno was "plenty too much soily" that he was taking his trick at the wheel! The other Hiva-Oa boys watched Dandy Peter breathlessly. Not a movement on the cutter now escaped the watching eyes on the ketch. The Dawn was overhauling the Sea-Cat hand-over-fist.

Ken's eyes were glinting. Either Parsons was hesitating to open the deadly game or he was dwelling on his difficult aim. But the shot soon

A Junior Air Fleet

Our Model Plane Expert will answer FREE, through the Post, any Air Queries that any reader cares to send to the Editor

THE Model Aeroplane enthusiasts of St. Michael's School, Palmer's Green, London, have previously figured in MODERN BOY. Here they are again—snapped in the act of making a mass launch with Rigby-Swallow planes, the very successful model which was based on the splendid model plane given free to readers of MODERN BOY some time ago. Notice the different styles of launching, and the different degrees of speed with which the fellows acted on the word "Go!" As you see, some of the



models were well on their skyward-way before others had been released by their launchers.

And look at the expressions! Some of them remind me of a faded old print on my workshop wall (originally placed there, I believe, to cover up an unsightly crack!) depicting the "Charge of the Light Brigade." The faces of those troops "going to certain death" are no less grim and determined than some of these shown in this photo!

The Editor of MODERN BOY is always pleased to welcome—and pay for—photographs of Model Aeroplane interest suitable for publication in these pages

came. It was not the reckless sea-lawyer's way to hesitate. In a stern chase the Sea-Cat had no chance, and if shooting could save him from being overhauled, Peter Parsons was the man to pull trigger, regardless of consequences.

Crack! The bullet came before the report which followed from the fleeing cutter. Lompo gave a jump, and almost let go the spokes. Difficult as the shot was, the steersman had felt the wind of the bullet.

"My word!" gasped Lompo. "That feller plenty too much shoot along gun along this Hiva-Oa boy, sar!"

Koko leaped to the wheel as the Hiva-Oa boy ducked. His sinewy brown hands grasped the spokes, and he gave Lompo a glare of angry scorn.

"You plenty bad Hiva-Oa boy!" growled Koko. "You stop along deck, s'pose you too much plenty fright along gun belong feller Parsons. This feller Koko stop along wheel."

Lompo-lokuno was only too glad to "stop along deck," ducking in the cover of the rail. It was more than likely that Dandy Peter's next shot would get the steersman. Heedless of that possibility, the giant Kanaka stood like a bronze statue at the wheel. King of the Islands shouted to his mate:

"Let him have it, Kit!"

Hudson was at the fo'c'sle-head, lying on the fo'c'sle, his rifle pushed out before him. The rifle cracked as Ken's voice rang along the deck.

Dandy Peter was about to pull the trigger for his second shot when the mate of the Dawn fired. Ken, watching, saw the panama hat spin on Peter Parsons' head. The sea-lawyer, with a yell, ducked under the rail.

"Feller white master Hudson plenty kill that feller Parsons, sar!" Koko chuckled. "Bullet stop along head belong him."

The Chase of the Sea-Cat

Ken watched. Dandy Peter was staring across the taffrail again, but he did not lift the rifle to fire. There was a bullet-hole through his hat, and a trickle of crimson ran down his cheek. The bullet from the Dawn had gone close!

"You swab!" roared Hudson. "Lift that rifle again and I'll drop you on your deck!"

Parsons shook a furious fist in answer. Pot-shooting was a game two could play at, and from the ketch's fo'c'sle Hudson could have picked off every man on the cutter. Jacky, at the tiller, rolled terrified eyes at him, in the full expectation of Dandy Peter's tactics being imitated by the pursuers.

But the shipmates of the Dawn were not likely to shed blood if they could help it. Jacky, expecting the next bullet to crash into his bare black ribs, was only kept at his post by his fear of the savage-eyed sea-lawyer at his side.

Kit Hudson watched with a grim face, ready to pump bullets into the cutter if Dandy Peter put finger to trigger. But the sea-lawyer threw his rifle aside, and with clenched hands, his white teeth set, he stood staring furiously at the Dawn. Then his desperate eyes turned on the lines of foam that creamed over the O'ua reef.

Running the Reef!

"HARD-A-PORT!"

Dandy Peter snarled the order to the boat-steerer. The Lukwe boy's eyes almost started from his head. From Kiki and Talito came a howl of fear.

"You hear me, ear belong you?" roared Parsons.

The boat-steerer heard, but for once the voice of Dandy Peter was not immediately obeyed on board the Sea-Cat. Jacky's terrified eyes turned on the creaming surf of the O'ua reef.

He released one brown hand from the tiller and pointed to the reef. Already the Sea-Cat was cutting it close, and the boom of the surf on the sunken rocks could be heard on board.

"Oh, sar!" gasped Jacky. "Feller reef he stop—this feller cutter go walk about along bottom sea, sar! Us feller no stop any more altogether!"

The crash of the sea-lawyer's knuckles in his face was his answer, and the boat-steerer spun over with a yell. Dandy Peter's hands grasped the tiller and swung it over, while he yelled to the Lukwe boys to stand by the sheets. Jabbering with terror, the black boys obeyed.

With a roar of the boom and a thunder of canvas the Sea-Cat spun to starboard and ran for the reef. With one hand on the tiller, Dandy Peter shook the other, clenched, at the pursuing ketch.

"I'll beat you yet, King of the Islands!" he roared. The wind flung his words back. But his action was unmistakable to the startled eyes on

the ketch. Down the wind came the answering shout of the boy trader:

"Parsons, you madman, leave to! Do you want to pile up on the reef?"

A fiercely shaken fist was the only answer from Dandy Peter. He glared round at the jabbering Lukwe boys, his fierce glare silencing them in spite of their terror. And though the reckless face of the sea-lawyer was pale as the cutter raced down on the O'ua reef, his hand was like iron on the tiller.

And it was his only chance of escape—if it was a chance! The ketch was overhauling him fast, and it was only a matter of minutes now before she ran alongside if he kept on his former course. If it came to a struggle, the odds were overwhelming.

There was no fight in the Lukwe boys. It was Dandy Peter, single-handed, against King of the Islands and his crew. Dandy Peter was the man for such a desperate fight, if it came to that, but he knew that he could not save his prisoner if his pursuers once boarded him. It was running the reef or defeat—neck or nothing!

"We'll make it!" snarled the sea-lawyer. "Black Furley's run that reef in his lugger, and we draw only a foot more than Furley's packet! We'll make it!"

Southward from O'ua the reef ran for miles. If the Sea-Cat ran it successfully, the pursuit was at an end, for the larger vessel, with her deeper draught, had no chance. The Dawn would have piled up on the coral under the creaming surf.

King of the Islands had to round the reef to follow, and long before he could have picked up the lost miles the Sea-Cat would have vanished. But it was yet to be seen whether the cutter could run the reef. Dandy Peter was taking the most desperate of chances, and he knew it. The sea-lawyer was a gambler to the finger-tips, and fear had been left out of his composition. With set teeth, he steered for the reef.

"My hat!" breathed King of the Islands, watching tensely from the Dawn.

"That feller Parsons go along bottom sea, sar," said Koko cheerfully. "He walk about along inside belong shark plenty too quick!"

Ken made no answer. Even at the last moment he hoped that the reckless ruffian of Lukwe would change his desperate purpose. The ketch still hung in the wake of the cutter, but if Dandy Peter was favoured by fortune, Ken knew that he had lost his quarry. The chances were a hundred to one against Dandy Peter. Every moment now King of the Islands expected to see the cutter crumple up on the teeth of the coral.

Dandy Peter handed the tiller to Jacky, and watched the white surf creaming under the cut-water of the Sea-Cat, and a wall of terror broke from the Lukwe boys.

"We'll make it!" Parsons snarled at them savagely. He heard, without heeding, a sound below, of the perlear crawling from the bunk. The

coppery face and sunken eyes of the castaway looked out on deck in the red glare of the sunset. Peter Parsons did not heed him.

Keefe stared back at the tall sails of the Dawn, then his startled eyes turned on the gleaming foam that creamed under the bows of the cutter. He sprang towards the man at the tiller.

"Starboard, you fool!" he shouted. "Another minute and we'll pile up!"

"Stand back!" roared Parsons. "That's the Dawn—King of the Islands' packet, astern! Heave to, and let me go aboard her!" shouted Keefe.

"Heave to, you madman!" Down the wind came the voice of King of the Islands.

The sea-lawyer flung back a reckless laugh. Keefe gave another look at the surf, then grasped at the tiller.

Dandy Peter sprang at him, and struck with all his strength. The perlear staggered under the blow, reeled along the deck, and fell with a crash.

"Lie there, you scum!" snarled the sea-lawyer.

The perlear staggered to his feet. At the same moment, the cutter gave a lurch and hurled him into the scuppers. There was a jarring shock. Parsons took over the tiller, the keel scraped clear, and the Sea-Cat stood on!

For a moment the sea-lawyer's heart throbbed. But he steered the cutter like a man of iron. It was touch and go, and he knew it. Escape from his pursuer or piling up the Sea-Cat on the coral. Black Furley's lugger had run the O'ua reef, and he drew only a foot more water than the lugger.

He knew the difference a foot might make or even a few inches. It was a desperate chance. But—a fortune—or disaster and death! With savage hardihood, he took the chance.

The creaming surf was all round the cutter now. Again, there was a jar, and a howl from the Lukwe crew. Again the keel scraped clear. Dandy Peter dared not look back, but he knew that the ketch had shortened sail. Where the cutter ran now, the Dawn could not follow.

BOOMING surf roared in his ears. Again came a jarring shiver, and even the reckless Lukwe skipper believed for one fearful moment that the chance had gone against him, as the cutter heeled over under her load of canvas. For one fearful instant, he expected to see the mast go by the board, and to hear the sea roaring into the Sea-Cat below deck.

But it was only for an instant. The cutter shook herself free from the waves, and tore on. Again the adventurer's wild and reckless laugh rang down the wind.

"We'll make it! I'll beat you yet, King of the Islands!" he yelled.

The cutter raced on. Again a scrape—and again—then the keel rode free in deeper water. Dandy Peter released one hand, and wiped the perspiration from his brow. He looked back at last. The Dawn, under

shortened sail, was standing off the reef and already growing smaller in the distance. The Lukwe skipper panted with breathless exultation.

King of the Islands, if he was keeping up the pursuit, had to sail round the reef, and on the western side he would never pick up the cutter again, if Dandy Peter had not forgotten his cunning. Already the sunset was deepening to dark. The wide ocean and the night lay before Dandy Peter now and the O'ua reef was astern.

Dandy Peter, grinning with glee, shook his fist at the distant ketch.

"I've beaten you!" he roared. And with her tall sails booming in the wind, the Sea-Cat rushed on and vanished from the eyes of King of the Islands.

Keefe's Revenge!

LIKE a mass of jewels, the Southern Cross blazed from a sky of dark velvet. Through the long Pacific rollers, silvery in the starshine, the Lukwe cutter ran on her way—far to the west of O'ua now, in wide waters where there was no land save scattered atolls, few and far between.

Peter Parsons, sitting in his chair, a long glass at his elbow, a cheroot between his teeth, looked back at the glittering wake of the Sea-Cat, and grinned. Where was King of the Islands now? Beating round the long O'ua reef—or perhaps at anchor in the O'ua lagoon—thrown hopelessly off the sea-lawyer's track, wherever he was!

Trade with the brown natives of O'ua had been dismissed from Parsons' mind. He gave hardly a thought to the cargo of trade goods he had brought out from Lukwe. Chaffering for copra and pearl-shell was not in his mind now—he was thinking of pearls—pearls!

He had escaped King of the Islands, and unless he was a magician the boy trader of Lalinge would never find him now. While the Dawn was beating round the O'ua reef, the cutter had vanished into trackless seas, leaving no clue behind.

The pearler of the Pantomus and his secret were at Peter Parsons' mercy—and Dandy Peters had as much mercy as a tiger-shark swooping on its prey.

Kiki stood at the tiller. Jacky and Talito lay stretched on their tapa sleeping-mats, snoring. Keefe, the pearler, stood leaning on the low rail, his eyes on the sea. It was late, but neither the pearler nor the sea-lawyer thought of sleep.

For the time, Parsons was bent on putting a safe distance between the Sea-Cat and her pursuer. But before a new day dawned on the Pacific, he had resolved that Keefe should set a course for the unknown island where he had made the find of pearls. And if the man was obstinate, Dandy Peter had his own way of dealing with him.

The man was in his right senses now. He could set a course if he liked. And King of the Islands could not help him!

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER!

A NUMBER of Service men in a London club were discussing feats of courage, when a grizzled old general quietly asked:

"What is courage?"

That is a poser which might rank with Pilate's famous question: "What is truth?"

"Brave" deeds may result from other causes than physical or moral courage.

Desperation, pride, fury, and even fear—one of the strongest emotions in human beings and animals—may produce a spectacular action which is attributed to bravery. A cornered rat, in deadly fear of its own life, will give fight to a pack of dogs.

When a great Atlantic liner sank after a collision with ice, in the darkness, scores of hapless seamen and passengers were left struggling in the sea. An almost exhausted woman approached a small wooden grating. A man who had clambered on it slipped into the sea again, and helped her to his place.

The grating was not big enough to support two, and there was no other means of succour near.

"Good luck!" the man said. He turned, and slowly swam away, sinking lower as intense cold and fatigue overcame him.

The name of the man who gave his life in those circumstances that tragic night is unknown. But his deed lives on, an example of the truest courage born of duty and self-sacrifice.

The Admiral

The sea-lawyer grinned as he saw Keefe's eyes turn on the cutter's boat. The Sea-Cat, like many small vessels in the Islands, towed her boat, having no room for the dinghy on board. Bobbing on the sea at the end of the tow-rope, it was out of reach of any desperate attempt on the part of the Paumotus pearler, if he thought of making one.

He had escaped from Wu Fang's schooner by casting loose a boat at night, and taking his chance on the sea. But he could not play the same game on Dandy Peter's cutter.

There was a haggard, desperate look on the pearler's coppery face. Many times his glance turned on Peter Parsons, his eyes glinting, and Dandy Peter, grinning, tapped the butt of the revolver in his belt. He would have pulled trigger on the man without the slightest compunction and Keefe was well aware of it.

But there were desperate thoughts in his mind. He had been one of a rough pearling crew, accustomed to taking his life in his hands.

"Sit down, man!" Dandy Peter called to him, and pointed to a deck-chair. "It's time to talk, Keefe!"

The pearler dropped into the chair. Under his haggard brows his eyes glinted at the dapper sea-lawyer.

"We're going into this together," said Parsons. "I've got the ship, and you know where to lay your hands on the pearls. We share!"

"Cut it out, Peter Parsons," muttered the man from the Paumotus.



"Don't I know what they say of you on every beach in the Islands? Once you get your claws on the pearls, my share will be a lump of coral tied to my feet, and a dip in the Pacific. Cut it out!"

"You won't trust me?"

"I'd sooner trust a Solomon Island cannibal," retorted the pearler.

"I reckon you've got no choice!" Parsons laughed. "You talked pretty freely when you were out of your wits, and I know you raised a pearl island in your lugger. Where does it lie?"

"Where you will never find it!"

"I reckon you had a rough time with Wu Fang on his schooner," said Peter Parsons. "Keep that up, and you'll wish you were back with the Chink!"

The pearler breathed hard, then muttered:

"Look here, Peter Parsons! You've got me—we'll make terms. Put me on King of the Islands' packet—"

"You'd trust him?" grinned Parsons.

"There's few skippers in the Pacific I'd trust with such a secret," Keefe replied, "but I'd trust King of the Islands. They say he's the whitest man in the Pacific. And you—"

"The blackest!" grinned Dandy Peter. "But I reckon you've got to trust me, Keefe. You'll set me a course for your island!"

"You'd never make it if I did! I tell you the island is thick with

The Chase of the Sea-Cat

niggers—black cannibals. They got every man that was with me—and they'd get you!"

"All the cannibals in the Pacific won't stop me from lifting the pearls," Parsons answered. "You can wash that out, Keefe. I'll take my chance with the cannibals. You've got the bearings of the island, and you'll put your finger on it on the chart."

"It's not marked on any chart. No white man ever set foot on it, I reckon, until we got there in the lugger—and we'd never have made it if we hadn't been driven out of our course by a hurricane. You can hunt for it till you're as old as the Flying Dutchman, without finding it."

"You won't get any help from me. Put me on King of the Islands' packet, and I'll make it worth your while when I've lifted the pearls. That ought to be good enough for a white man."

"I reckon we forget, sometimes, that we're white men, in the Islands," said Dandy Peter coolly. "You've got the bearings of the island, and if it's not marked on my chart you'll mark it there. If you want a sample of Solomon Island tortures first, it's your look-out. If I set my black boys to work on you, you'll sing out fast enough."

The Lukwe skipper's face hardened, and his eyes gleamed like cold steel.

"You've heard what they say of me on the beaches, Keefe, and you know I'm not a man to be played with. You feller Talito!" He called to one of the sleeping Lukwe boys.

Talito sat up, rubbing his eyes.

"You fetch feller chart along cabin!" snapped Parsons.

Talito brought the chart. Dandy Peter pushed aside bottle and glasses on the little skylight at his side, and spread out the chart in the brilliant light of the stars. It was a chart of

the Pacific from the Gilberts to 105 east, from fifteen north to fifteen south.

As the pearler looked at it, his brows setting doggedly, it was plain enough to Parsons that the pearl island, wherever it was, lay within the limits of the chart. That knowledge, however, was of little use to Dandy Peter. Within so vast an area there were probably a thousand unknown islands or more.

"You'll put your finger on the spot—and the right spot!" said Dandy Peter, in a low tone of menace. "You won't waste my time sending me on a wild-goose chase, as I did that swab King of the Islands. You'll wish you were back with Wu Fang, or in the hands of Solomon Island bucks, if you play tricks with me. I'm waiting!"

But Keefe did not stir.

"Do you know what the Lu'u bucks do with their prisoners?" said Dandy Peter, in the same tone. "They break them joint by joint. I've seen it, in the Solomons! Do you want me to see it on this hooker?"

Keefe dragged himself from the chair.

"You've got me!" he muttered.

He stepped to the sea-lawyer's side, and his hand moved over the chart. Dandy Peter's eyes glittered, and his breath came fast. In that moment of tense excitement and greed, the sea-lawyer was off his guard.

With the sudden swiftness of a swooping sea-hawk, the pearler turned on him, grasped him, and bore him backwards to the deck.

Dandy Peter went down heavily, the desperate pearler sprawling over him. A yell of rage broke from the Lukwe skipper and he tore the revolver from his belt.

But even as he pulled trigger the pearler struck it from his hand, and the bullet whizzed towards the stars

as the revolver flew from the sea-lawyer's grasp to the deck.

Locked in a desperate grip they struggled, and Dandy Peter yelled breathlessly to his crew.

"You feller boy, you bear a hand!" he screamed. The sea-lawyer of Lukwe was strong and wiry, but no match for the burly pearler now that his weapon was gone.

Kiki, at the tiller, stared on blankly. Talito and Jacky jumped up from the tapa mats, blinking.

The two struggling men rolled to the side, as the cutter heeled over to the wind. Keefe gained his feet, the sea-lawyer struggling and wrenching in his powerful grasp. His face was set and desperate.

He had only a few moments before the Lukwe boys would have been upon him. But those few moments were enough. With all his strength Keefe hurled the Lukwe skipper over the low rail!

There was a splash in the sea. Keefe panted. As the cutter tore on, the waters of the Pacific closed over the head of Dandy Peter. A second more, and the pearler leaped to the revolver, caught it up from the deck, and its lifted barrel threatened the Lukwe boys. But he had no trouble to expect from the Lukwe crew now that Dandy Peter was gone.

"You feller boy belong me now, all same this feller cutter," he said. "Cap'n Parsons no stop! This feller stop plenty too much. You savvy?"

"Savvy plenty, sar!"

The pearler stared back over the Sea-Cat's quarter. In the distance a white face showed above the water, in the shine of the stars, then vanished in the foaming wake of the cutter!

And NOW what happens to Dandy Peter Parsons? It's told in Next Week's swift story of further adventures in the South Seas—another King of the Islands yarn that you'll long remember!



ONE GUINEA

has been awarded to JEAN FERNAND-LAURENT, Douraine des Chartrains, Canapville par Touques, Calvades, FRANCE, for this photo of the Second Form, Third Class, of the LYCEE JAN-SOUBE-SAILLY. With over 3,000 pupils, this is the largest school in France. The guinea-winner, who is seated in the front row, the third on the left of the master, asks me to remind you that in France the First Form is the highest!

FIVE SHILLINGS will be awarded to the OWNER of the RINGED HEAD, if he will send his full name and address, vouched for by Jean Fernand-Laurent, in envelope marked "Claim," to the Editor, MODERN BOY