

6 COLOURED PICTURE-STAMPS FREE—*Inside!*

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2^d.



THEY WANT NINE LIVES!—See pages 16-17

In the HEAD- HUNTERS' LAIR!

A pressing invitation—one that he cannot turn down—comes to Kit Hudson to visit the local devil-doctor, who smokes human heads in his spare time. . . . KING OF THE ISLANDS and brawny Koko go too—but only in the nick of time!

By
CHARLES HAMILTON

~~~~~ Complete ~~~~~

## Wu Fang Gets the Cane!

**A**N arrow, coming like a flash of light in the sun, whizzed across the lagoon of Aya-ua, dropped half a dozen fathoms short of the ketch Dawn, and plunged into the water. A black face peered from the bush at the back of the glistening coral beach, watching the arrow's flight. The arrow fell short, for the ketch was anchored well out of range of the longest and strongest bow on Aya-ua.

Tame'eto, the chief of Aya-ua, gave a grunt of disappointment. Next second he gave a yell as Kit Hudson, the young Australian mate of the Dawn, fired in his direction. The bullet tore away a coral comb from the chief's fuzzy hair, and Tame'eto bounded back into cover, leaving a shattered comb and a lock of hair where he had stood.

Ken King, the boy trader of the South Seas, known as King of the Islands, sitting on the taffrail of his ketch, had been the cannibal chief's target. He glanced round at the ring of Hudson's rifle.

The yelling of two or three score savage voices rang from the bush. A dozen arrows flew, dropping into the lagoon between the beach and the anchored ketch. But not a man was to be seen on the shore of the lagoon. Tame'eto and his warriors had a wholesome respect for the white men's firearms. But the bush was alive with cannibals, watching the ketch and the schooner anchored alongside her.

On the lagoon, King of the Islands was master. Since a fight in which he had destroyed Tame'eto's war-fleet of canoes, the blacks had not ventured on the water. But in the bush they watched and waited for any white man who should be reckless enough to set foot ashore. Why the white men had come to Aya-ua, Tame'eto did not know, but he realised that they must have some purpose there, and that that purpose



A fuzzy head, decked with coral combs and cockatoo feathers, looked over the edge of the pit, and the Chief of Aya-ua grinned down at the mate of the Dawn.

could only be carried out by landing on the island. And each day, from earliest sunrise to sunset, the savage blacks watched the beach and the ships, eager for victims and for heads to smoke in the house of the devil-doctor.

Many victims had already fallen into the hands of the watchful savages. Dandy Peter of Lukwe, Black Furley and two of his men—Preece and Finn—and Keefe the pearler, were prisoners in the black village beyond the bush, awaiting their fate in the house of O'o'oo, where the devil-doctor smoked the heads of slain enemies over his wood-fire.

Dandy Peter and Black Furley and his men had ventured ashore in search of a bag of pearls, left hidden in a safe place by Keefe when he had had to flee the island during a previous trip in which all his men had been massacred.

Keefe had been taken ashore at night, a bound prisoner, by Wu Fang, the Chinese owner of the schooner Flamingo which now lay alongside the Dawn, and had been made to show the Chink where the pearls were. In fear that Wu Fang would kill him now that he had his hands on the pearls, Keefe had escaped into the dense bush.

But Wu Fang had not been allowed to get away with the pearls. Ken King had met him on his return to the schooner and, failing to find the

pearls on him, had decided to detain him until he knew what had happened to Keefe. And at dawn that morning he had seen Keefe captured by the blacks.

The long, hot day was wearing away. High over the shark-infested lagoon the sun blazed down from a cloudless sky. Hardly a breath of wind stirred, and the lagoon was as smooth as a pond.

**W**U FANG came up from the cabin of his schooner, and his slant eyes turned on the white men on the ketch. On the schooner's deck the black Santa Cruz crew were snoring in what shade they could find. The little Chink, with his expressionless yellow face like an ivory image in the shadow of his big Chinese hat, stood for some minutes looking at the ketch, then came to the side and kow-towed with profound respect as he caught the glance of King of the Islands.

The two vessels were anchored close, and three or four strong ropes secured the schooner to the ketch. Ken was giving the wily Chink no chance of slipping away from Aya-ua.

From the calm and smiling face of the Chinese it would have been difficult to guess the fierce rage and vengeance in his heart. There was no sign in that yellow face that Wu Fang would gladly have seen the ketch sunk to the bottom of the

## In the Head-Hunters' Lair!

lagoon, its captain and crew the prey of the tiger-sharks. But Ken King knew his man.

"Handsome feller captain, born many centuries before me!" began Wu Fang, in his politest tones.

"What do you want?" rapped King of the Islands curtly.

"Estimable and benevolent one, this Chinee likee velly much go along sea. No wantee stop along this island. Plenty too much feller cannibal stop along Aya-ua! This feller no likee!"

"You'll stop!" answered King of the Islands briefly.

"O benevolent one," murmured Wu Fang, "you no feller pilate! You no wantee me tell big feller High Commissioner you takee ship belong me!"

It was a threat, though uttered with a smiling face. Wu Fang was no fighting-man, and though his crew was twice as numerous as the Dawn's, his black Santa Cruz boys would not have backed him up in a desperate struggle with white men. Open warfare was not the Chink's way.

Ken King reddened. Whether he had the right to detain Wu Fang and his ship by force was perhaps a doubtful question. But his determination was fixed. And the threat of being reported to the High Commissioner of the Pacific as a pirate roused his anger.

"You yellow scum!" said the boy trader, his eyes glinting. "Another word like that, and I'll send a Kanaka to give you a dozen with a lawyer-cane!"

Koko, the brown boatswain of the Dawn, rose from his mat on the deck and picked up a lawyer-cane, which he sometimes used to enforce discipline among the Hiva-Oa crew—Lompo and Lufu, Tomoo and Kolulo, and Danny the cooky-boy. His dark eyes flashed at the Chink on the schooner.

"White master, me go along feller schooner, give feller Chink plenty too much lawyer-cane," he said. "You sing out along me, sar, me go along that feller schooner too quick altogether."

WU FANG's slanting eyes glanced uneasily at the giant Kanaka for a moment. Then he fixed them on Ken King again. Wu Fang was anxious to get the anchor up and get his schooner out of the lagoon. Ashore, in the sand of the beach, was buried the tapa sack containing Keefe's pearls which he had lifted from its hiding-place.

So long as King of the Islands was in the offing, Wu Fang dared not bring his plunder on board the schooner. He was willing to leave it where it was, safely hidden, while he got safely out of reach himself. Later, he could sail back to Aya-ua and recover the pearls after King of the Islands was gone.

But the boy trader suspected what was in the mind of the cunning Chink. Wu Fang was not getting

away till the pearls were safe on board the ketch!

The Chink's eyes glittered as Ken turned his back on him. His yellow hand slipped under his loose-flowing tunic. But he dared not draw the hidden knife to throw. Kit Hudson's rifle would have stretched him on his own deck the next moment.

"O born-before-me," said Wu Fang humbly, "this Chinee wantee velly much go along sea. What name you makee this Chinee stop along Aya-ua?"

"Last night you took Keefe ashore," said Ken, turning back to him. "I believe you lifted his pearls and hid them where you could find them again. The niggers have got Keefe, and I'm going to save him if I can. But you don't get away with the loot. Hand over the pearls, and you can pull out as soon as you like!"

"Me no savvy pearls!"

"Stop where you are, then, till you do savvy!" snapped Ken.

"Me no wantee stop," said Wu Fang. "Me wantee go along sea! Me losee tlade, losee money, along me stop along this place. Big feller High Commissioner he talkee along you, he sendee you stop along plison along Fiji, s'pose you seize this ship all samee pilate!"

WU FANG was well aware that Ken, like all other South Sea skippers, did not want trouble with the High Commissioner at Fiji. Probably he expected his threat to produce some effect on the boy trader. It did—though not the effect Wu Fang hoped for. Ken called to the boatswain:

"You feller Koko! You go along schooner, you give that feller Chink plenty lawyer-cane!"

With a single bound the giant Kanaka landed on the deck of the schooner. The Santa Cruz boys, startled, stared up from their sleeping-mats. Wu Fang, gritting his teeth with rage and fear, made a spring for the companion, but Koko's sinewy grasp closed on him.

"You no goey way!" grinned Koko. "You stop along this feller! You stop along lawyer-cane, my word!" As he spoke the cane rose and fell.

The Santa Cruz boys stared on, grinning. From the Hiva-Oa boys on the Dawn came a cackle of laughter. Wu Fang, yelling, tore himself away from Koko and dodged frantically about the deck and into the rigging to escape the lashes of the cane. Behind him, Koko's mighty arm rose and fell, and lash on lash descended on the yelling Chink.

"You plenty bad feller!" roared Koko. "Me tinkee you talk plenty too much mad feller talk along white master belong me! Me knock seven bells outer you, my word! Me knock a starboard watch outer you! Me kill you too much altogether!"

The yelling Chink scrambled out of reach at last, and clambered like a cat into the cross-trees. There he hung on, panting, grinding his teeth, and spitting with fury. Koko had his brown hands on the ratlines when King of the Islands, laughing, shouted across to him:

"Belay it, Koko!" Unwillingly the brown boatswain returned to the ketch. Not till Koko was back on the Dawn did Wu Fang venture to descend from the cross-trees and wriggle down to his cabin.

### Into the Pit!

THE long, hot day that had seemed endless to King of the Islands and his shipmate was ending at last. Beyond the high bush of Aya-ua the sun sank into the Pacific, and deep shadows stole over the lonely island. It was night at last—the soft, velvety night of the South, with stars that gleamed like points of fire coming out of the dark blue sky. The aching day was over.

Beyond the beach and the bush lay the unseen, unknown village of the cannibal islanders, where five white men lay bound prisoners in the hut of O'o'oo, awaiting the tribal feast-day and a fearful fate.

It was not more than a mile from the lagoon, but it was a mile of trackless, tangled bush, wild, thorny, and almost impenetrable. There were runways in the bush, but they were known only to the natives. No white man knew anything of the interior of Aya-ua, save Keefe, the pearler, who was one of the prisoners of Tame'eto. To the shipmates of the Dawn all was unknown, bristling with mystery and peril. Yet they had to venture into it.

"We've got to save Keefe!" A dozen times Ken King had uttered those words. "We came here to stand by him, Kit, and we can't desert him."

The mate of the Dawn fully agreed. The fall of night was a relief to the shipmates, though it brought nearer the hour of their desperate and perilous venture into the dark and mysterious interior of Aya-ua.

In the daylight nothing could be done. But at night the natives of Aya-ua retired to their huts. Like most South Sea tribes, they did not carry on warfare between sunset and sunrise. Only then was it possible to venture ashore. And at night the difficulties were almost insuperable. The task that King of the Islands had set himself was a terrible one.

Since the battle on the lagoon, the natives had abandoned their huts on the beach and retired into the interior to a village back of the bush. To find that village was a task likely to tax the shipmates to their utmost—even had there been no swarm of cannibals to encounter when it was found.

It was impossible to leave the ketch unguarded, and the crew would have been useless in an attack on the native village—the odds would have been overwhelming against Ken's small force.

In a tapa bag in the cabin lay a bundle of sticks of dynamite in readiness. It was with that terrible weapon in his hand that King of the Islands intended to enter the den of the cannibals once he had found his way there. But as he stood looking at the black mass of the high bush ashore his face was dark and doubtful.

"There's only one way," said Kit Hudson quietly. "Leave it to me, Ken! You're a sailorman, old bean. I was born in the bush in the Big Island. If the way can be picked up, I can pick it up. I'm as much at home in the bush as any nigger on Aya-ua."

Ken nodded. He knew that his shipmate was right, but he hated the idea of Hudson landing alone to scout in the bush.

"If I get lost in the bush, you'll still be here to carry on, old fellow," said Hudson. "We've got to save Keefe if we can; you've got to think of your ship and your crew. But I reckon I shall pull through, and come back with the bearings of Tame'eto's den."

"I hate the idea, Kit!" said Ken. And there was a long silence.

King of the Islands gave orders at last, and the whaleboat was dropped into the water. Lompo and Lufu and Kolulo manned it, and Kit Hudson gave his shipmate a last grasp of the hand before he followed them.

"Take care, old chap!" said Ken. His voice was husky. "If you hit trouble, signal with your rifle."

"You bet!"

Hudson stepped into the boat, and the Hiva-Oa boys pulled for the beach. Ken, with a grim face and a heavy heart, watched the boat glide away in the starshine and disappear in the dusk of the lagoon.

The whaleboat pulled on steadily, and there was a thud as it grounded

"Me knock seven bells outer you, my word!" yelled Koko, as he chased the Chinaman up the rigging. "Me knock a starboard watch outer you!"

on the sand. The mate of the Dawn stepped ashore.

"You feller boy, you stop along lagoon along me comey back along this place!" he said.

"Yessar!" answered Lompo. And the boat pushed off again, to wait for the Australian at a safe distance from the shore.

**H**UDSON stood alone on the shadowed beach of Aya-ua.

Well he knew that he was taking his life in his hands, but his sunburnt face was calm and resolute as he turned his back on the glimmering lagoon. Dark and silent lay the high bush. Once within the bush, the lagoon and the starshine disappeared from his sight. Over his head the interlaced branches shut out the stars, save for a faint, pale gleam that filtered through here and there.

In a few minutes he stood by the great baobab-tree where Black Furley and his men had fought their last fight against the cannibals. From that point he had to pick up the way the natives had gone, with their prisoners.

The previous night, Keefe, the pearler, had been hopelessly lost in the bush, hardly more than a cable's length from the open beach. But the pearler from the Paumotus did not possess the almost uncanny sense of direction, the instinct of the bush,

that Kit Hudson had learned in the back country of Australia, where many years of his boyhood had been spent.

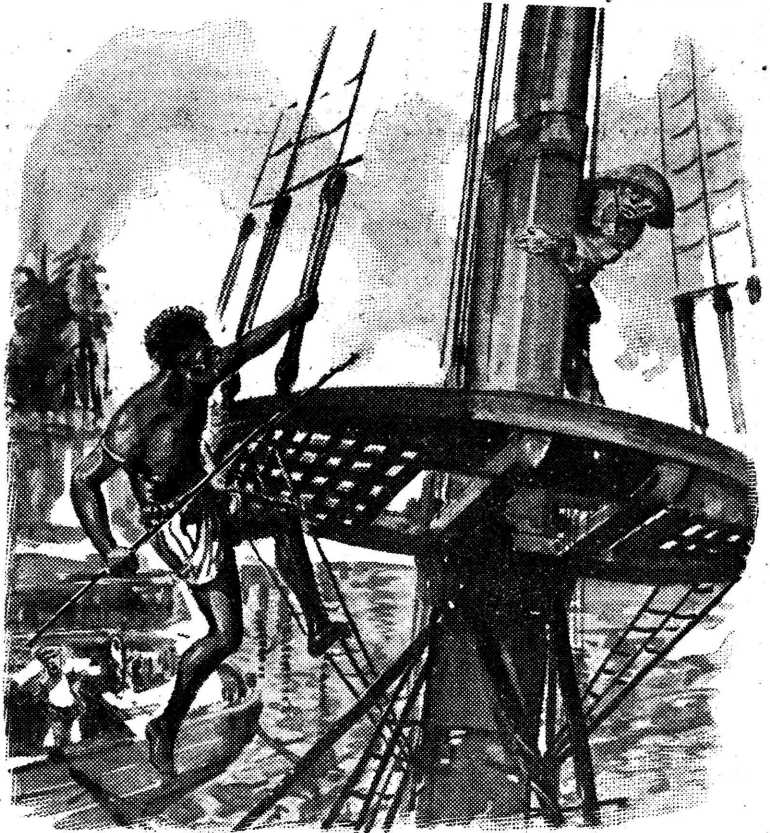
It seemed that he could see like a cat in the dark. Knowing all the signs of the bush, he could pick up direction even from the slant of a tree-trunk. Slowly, steadily, he threaded his way through tangled thickets, trailing vines, and tree-ferns that stood as high as his head. Sometimes he scratched a match, and the glimmer showed him a trampled fern, or a broken branch, or some faint depression in the earth which he knew had been made by a bare foot, or a rag of tapa caught on a thorn.

Sometimes he came to a dead halt, at a loss, but always to try again, and at last to pick up some sign. It was midnight when he emerged into

fatigued, wet with perspiration, torn with thorns. But he felt that he had found the way to Tame'eto's village at last. He had only to follow the runway till he sighted the native village. But he had to make sure.

He stirred again at last, and trod along the shadowed runway. His rifle was ready if an enemy appeared, his finger on the trigger. But there was no sound, no movement, in the bush. He might have fancied himself the only living being in an illimitable wilderness.

Like a dark tunnel the runway stretched before him. His eyes caught a glimmer of light far ahead—the light of the stars in a clearing. He knew that he was approaching the opening of the runway, and if he had made no mistake he would soon be looking on the huts of the cannibals. Cautiously, he trod on.



a cut runway—a path driven through the bush for the use of the natives.

He had no doubt that the runway led to the village of the cannibals. It was scarcely three feet wide, and over it the bush met in a tangled roof. But here the roof of vegetation was thinner, and gleams of the stars came through. The earth was trampled hard by the tread of many feet, showing that the runway was much used by the blacks in the daytime. Probably it led to the lagoon beach, at some spot distant from the point where he had landed, in one direction, and to the native village in the other.

Hudson stopped and leaned on a trunk to rest. Hours had passed since he had landed, though the distance he had covered, almost at a snail's pace, was little. He was

Suddenly, without warning, the earth gave under his feet, and he gave a gasping cry. He had been feeling every step as he advanced, yet he had been caught by the cunning trick of the savages.

He made a fierce, desperate effort to spring clear. But it was in vain. Across the path a pit had been dug, carefully covered with branches, and screened by earth and roots. It was one of the bush-pits with which the savages of the South Seas guard the approaches to their villages. The covering of the pit had felt firm to the tread, till his full weight was upon it. Then it gave, and he shot through into the pit below, dropping like a stone.

His rifle flew from his hands. Wildly he clutched for a hold, only to grasp twigs and roots that gave



## In the Head- Hunters' Lair!

him no support as he shot down into the darkness.

Crash! He rolled breathless, dizzy, at the bottom of the pit. Half-stunned, he lay there, staring upward. Twelve feet above him was the gap through which he had crashed, dimly seen in the faint glimmer of starlight that penetrated the bush.

Hudson groaned. King of the Islands, with an anxious heart, was waiting for him to return to the ketch. He was likely to wait long!

### The Shadow of Death!

**A** BLACK fuzzy head decked with coral combs and cockatoo feathers, looked over the edge of the pit, and Tame'eto, chief of Aya-ua, grinned down at Hudson. Day had dawned on Aya-ua, and the excited cackle of native voices

reached the mate of the Dawn in the death-trap into which he had fallen, warning him that the natives had discovered him.

High over the bush soared the sun, blazing down on the lonely island, turning the darkness of the shadowed runway to twilight.

The night had seemed long to Kit Hudson, yet he had dreaded the dawn, knowing what it would bring. Again and again, almost madly, he had striven to climb out of the deep bush-pit. But the crumbling earth gave no hold to his hands, and every time he fell back, exhausted and despairing.

Even while he strove, hoping against hope, he knew that it was in vain. The bush-pit was planned to hold a prisoner once he had fallen into it, and the cunning savages were not likely to leave him a chance.

His rifle was out of reach, caught on the tangled branches and roots through which he had crashed. He had his revolver, but it was doubtful whether a pistol-shot would be heard

on the ketch. And a signal-shot would have been futile. It would have brought a swarm of savages to the spot.

In his fearful situation he had only one comfort—the knowledge that his comrade was still safe on board the ketch in the lagoon. And, though it meant his own hopeless doom, he hoped that Ken would realise that the desperate venture was a failure and would not rush upon certain death.

With the light of day came the savages. Unseen hands dragged away what was left of the covering of the bush pit, and left the great gap yawning open. Hudson waited and watched, his revolver in his hand. He was trapped, and doomed beyond hope, but he was ready to sell his life as dearly as he could. Better death in a last desperate struggle than the fate which awaited the prisoners of Tame'eto.

With grinning face, but watchful eyes, the chief of Aya-ua peered over the edge of the bush-pit. Crack! Hudson fired upwards at the first glimpse of his fuzzy head. But Tame'eto jerked back instantly. Quick as he was, he narrowly escaped the shot, and two or three cockatoo feathers fluttered down into the pit, torn away by the bullet.

There was shrill laughter from Tame'eto. He had glimpsed the mate of the Dawn as he fired, and knew that one of the white men of the ketch had fallen into his hands.

"My word!" Hudson heard his chuckling voice. "You white feller belong ship, you comey along house belong me, you stop along pit along bush. You stop along cooking-oven, along feast-day he come! Head belong you smoke along fire, along house belong O'o'oo, along this feller makee kai-kai along you, my word."

**F**INGER on trigger, Hudson waited for another fuzzy head to show over the edge of the pit. He heard Tame'eto's voice issuing commands in the native tongue, and a burly black figure in a dingy loin-cloth leaped over the edge of the pit and came hurtling down. Hudson fired on the instant, and the bullet crashed through the bare black body.

But the next moment he was falling over, crushed down by the falling savage to the bottom of the pit. It was a dead man that sprawled over him, and as Hudson fiercely shoved the body aside another and another savage leaped down.

Savage hands grasped at him, fierce animal-like faces gibbered at him. He fired again, the muzzle of the revolver touching black skin, and a man slumped down. And then he was fighting hand-to-hand with the other. Other savages leaped in. Overpowered by many hands, his revolver torn away, Hudson was a prisoner.

"My word! You stop along house belong O'o'oo, plenty close-up!" Tame'eto grinned down into the pit. A tapa rope slithered over the side, and was knotted about Hudson. Many hands dragged from above, and he was drawn out of the pit. In the midst of a howling mob of savages,

## Model Plane Chat



*The Expert who conducts this regular feature will keep you up to date in all Model Aeroplane matters, and will answer Free, through the Post, any Air queries that any reader cares to send to the Editor*

**M**ANY mysterious troubles that occur to model planes can be blamed on to the propeller, which might not suit the model or might not suit the power which it is given. Any model should fly its best on a skein of elastic one and a half times the length of the body and weighing a quarter of the weight of the whole model.

**T**HIS power should be sufficient to turn a propeller fast enough to fly the model and with blades wide enough and of the correct pitch to be able to haul the model through the air. Such a propeller should be about one-third of the wing-span in length, and the blades should be about one-tenth of the diameter—the length of propeller—in width.

**B**EFORE experimenting with different propellers, be sure that the propeller shaft, nose-piece, and nose of the model are all true and central and straight with the desired line of flight. Otherwise you will be troubled with banking in either direction, power dives, and all sorts of queer flights.

**T**HE propeller of a model aeroplane has two jobs to do, and if it fails in either the plane won't fly properly. The first job is that the propeller must pull to a certain extent. With models, as with full-size planes, this pull must be equal to one-third of the weight of the machine.

**T**HAT is, the average pull exerted by the propeller must, in the case of a six-ounce model, be at least two ounces. If it is less, instead of screwing forward through the air it will merely churn round and act more or less as a fan.

**T**HE other job that the propeller has to fulfil is that it has not only to haul the machine through the air, but it has to travel through the air at a certain speed. This is known as the "flying speed" of the model. Here again, if the propeller fails the model will simply come down from a hand-launch in a long glide.

**F**LYING speed is governed by what is known as "loading per square foot." The heavier the model the higher is the loading, and so it has to travel faster for the wing or wings to be able to lift it upwards. The loading is arrived at by dividing the number or fraction of square feet of wing surface into the number of ounces that the complete model weighs.

**T**HEREFORE if the model has a wing span of three feet and a width of six inches, it is carrying one and a half square feet of surface. Divide this into the number of ounces that the model weighs. In the case of a six-ounce model the loading will be four ounces to the square foot of surface.



he was hurried along the runway to the village not fifty yards from the bush-pit. Dragged and hustled along, Hudson came out into the clearing, bright sunshine dazzling him after the dim shadows of the bush.

Round the village were fields of yams and taro, circled by the black bush, broken here and there by the openings of cut runways. There was a straggle of grass huts, and prominent among them one building of palm-poles thatched with pandanus—the house of O'o'oo, where the devil-doctor dwelt in the shadow and the smell of death, and smoked the heads of slain enemies over the smouldering wood-fire.

It was to this house that Hudson was marched, in the midst of the grinning, triumphant savages. They drove him to the low, narrow doorway and thrust him in.

Wood-smoke that blurred the vision and brought a smart to the eyes curled and floated in the dim interior. The ancient, wizened devil-doctor, squatted by the fire and turning a suspended head in the smoke, squinted over his bare bony shoulder, and grinned and cackled at the sight of another prisoner in his den.

The mere view of the hideous wretch as he squatted there in the dimness caused a shudder to pass through Kit Hudson. He looked away from him, in horror. His eyes fell on haggard faces that loomed in the smoky dimness—the black-bearded, rugged face of Jim Furley; the once handsome face of Dandy Peter of Lukwe, now a mask of misery and despair. Preece and Finn lay with their eyes shut, and hardly troubled to open them to peer at Hudson. But from Keefe, the pearler, came a cry.

"You! Ken King's mate! They've got you!" he cried. "Then the game's up! I reckoned that King of the Islands would get me out of this, somehow, but now—" He broke off.

Dandy Peter lifted his chin from his breast, looking at Hudson. Something like hope gleamed in his eyes for a moment.

"Where's King of the Islands?" he muttered

"On his ketch!" answered Hudson.

"He won't leave you to it—you're his shipmate! All the cannibals in the Pacific will not keep him away when he knows you're here. He will come!" said Dandy Peter.

"That's what I fear!" said Hudson quietly. "I'd stop him landing if I could. He can do nothing here but share my fate! I'd give all the pearls in the Pacific to know that he'd pulled up the anchor and sailed out of Aya-ua!" muttered Hudson. "But

He broke off. He knew that King of the Islands would seek to save him and he knew how it must end. The shadow of death was over all who had sought the perilous pearls of Aya-ua!

### The Droning Drum!

In the bright tropic sunlight that streamed down on the lagoon, Ken King's face was pale and worn, and looked strangely old. The night,

that had seemed as endless as the day before it, was gone. And of his shipmate there had been no sign.

Was Kit Hudson lost in the bush? If it was only that—Likely enough, the keen Australian, although accustomed to the bush, was lost and astray in that trackless wilderness. But deep in Ken's heart was the fear that it was worse than that.

Soon after dawn he had heard, or fancied he had heard, a faint, distant sound that might have been the crack of a revolver. Later, there came whizzing arrows from the bush, telling that the savages were watching the ketch, though not daring to show themselves. With anxiety that made him sick at heart, Ken had watched and waited. Till the new day came, he had hoped that Hudson would return. Now that hope had died.

Koko's brown face was grim as he glanced in silence at his white master. It was not difficult to read the faithful Kanaka's thoughts in his face.

of the cannibals! The boat had waited for Hudson till dawn. But at daylight, when arrows began to whiz from the bush, Lompo and Lufu and Kolulo had pulled back to the ketch. With his binoculars, Ken swept the beach and the bush. No sign of life stirred in the hot sunshine, save the land-crabs crawling on the sand and at intervals an arrow winging from the bow of some lurking savage.

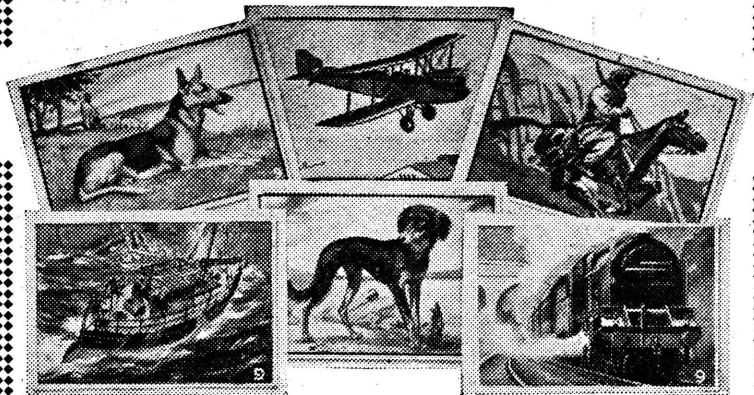
"Pull out while the going's good!" muttered Harris.

"Belay it!" snapped Ken. He was not likely to pull out of the lagoon and leave his shipmate to his doom.

From the schooner, Wu Fang watched him curiously. Since Koko had beaten him with the lawyer-cane, there had been no word from the Chink. With the passive patience of the Oriental, Wu Fang was watching and waiting for his chance. And it seemed to the little Chink that matters were shaping better for him now.

Ken did not heed him—he had almost

## GIVEN FREE NEXT WEEK!



These SIX SUPER-STAMPS will be GIVEN FREE with Next Saturday's MODERN BOY. Another Six will also be given free with the RANGER and the MAGNET

"What you tinkee, head belong you, Koko, along feller Hudson?" asked the boy trader.

Koko hesitated to answer. Harris, the Lukwe man, whom Ken had rescued from Wu Fang, broke in.

"They've got him, Captain King," he said. "It was madness to land on this island of devils. They got Dandy Peter, and Black Furley, and Preece and Finn, and Keefe—now they've got your mate! It's madness to put a foot ashore. Get the anchor up and sail, before it's too late."

"What you tinkee, Koko?" repeated Ken, taking no notice of the man.

"Me tinkee feller Hudson stop along black feller, sar!" answered Koko reluctantly.

"You no tinkee he lost along bush?"

"No, sar! Tinkee feller Hudson no comey back along lagoon, he stop along black feller"

Ken knew it in his heart. His shipmate had gone to death at the hands

forgotten his existence. He stared at the bush of Aya-ua, the temptation strong upon him to pull to the beach, land, and take all chances in an attempt to rescue his shipmate—to throw away his life if he could do nothing more. Koko had an uneasy eye on him.

"No good go along beach, sar!" said the boatswain at last. "Plenty black feller stop along bush, sar Kill-dead white master, along arrow, along spear."

Ken knew that the Kanaka was right. He could not help Hudson by throwing away his life. In the daylight it was death to land on Aya-ua. A single flight of arrows from the bush would have wiped out the boy trader and his whole crew before they could have come to close quarters, if Tame'eto chose. More likely, the savages would have allowed them to enter the bush, and overpowered them, for it was prisoners they wanted—

(Continued on page 18)



## In the Head- Hunters' Lair!

(Continued from page 15)

prisoners for the cooking-ovens on the day of the feast. In either case the attempt was hopeless, and King of the Islands knew it.

Only under cover of night could he land. But what hope then? If Hudson, an old hand in the Australian bush, had fallen into the clutches of the cannibals, what chance had a sailorman like Ken King? He could take with him Koko, who was as much at home in the bush as Hudson. But where the Australian had failed, was a Kanaka likely to succeed?

IT was a thousand to one that if he landed after dark with Koko, they would never succeed even in locating the village back of the bush—that a new dawn would find them lost in the tangled wilderness, to fall into the hands of Tame'eto. But if King of the Islands could not save his shipmate he could die in striving, and that was all that remained to him. Not for all the treasures of the world would he have sailed from the lagoon of Aya-ua.

It seemed to Ken that sunset would never come. He longed to see the sun dip beyond the bush, though he knew how little likely he was to live to see it rise again. It dipped at last.

"Koko!" Ken's voice was low. "As soon as it's dark, I'm going. I've no right to order you to certain death, you'll come if you choose."

"You tinkee this feller Koko stop along ketch, along white master he goey along bush!" snapped the bo'sun angrily. "This feller Koko no common Kanaka, sar! You no savvy this feller Koko!"

"It's death, Koko!" warned Ken.

"Me savvy, sar! S'pose white master he go finish, this feller Koko go finish close-up," said Koko simply. "Me savvy plenty us feller go along cooking-oven. Me savvy head belong us go along house belong Tame'eto. This feller Koko no flaid! This feller go finish all samee white master."

"That's settled!" said Ken. He had known what the faithful Koko's answer would be. And with the Kanaka there was a chance of threading the maze of the tangled wilderness ashore. Alone, there was no ghost of a chance.

As the darkness deepened, Ken brought on deck the tapa bag from the cabin. With great care he slung it to a strap over his shoulder. There was enough dynamite in the bag to blow the ketch to fragments. If enemy hands closed on King of the Islands that night, it was death for him and for all near him. And he thought of that terrible possibility with a steady heart.

Through the dusk, the eyes of the Hiva-Oa crew gleamed, watching their white master. They knew his intention, and never doubted that they were looking on him for the last time. Ken could read that belief in their looks, and knew how likely it was that they were right.

"It's madness!" muttered Harris huskily.

"Madness or not, I'm going," said King of the Islands. "Keep your weather eye on the schooner, Harris. Shoot the Clink if he offers to give trouble."

"Leave that to me. But—" The Lukwe man broke off. From the brooding silence came a low, distant sound, swelling more loudly. Harris caught his breath. He knew the meaning of the dull, heavy sound that droned over Aya-ua.

Koko started, and bent his head to listen. His eyes gleamed as he looked at his white master.

"Big feller drum stop along black feller!" he whispered. "Kai-kai, big feller kai-kai, stop along black feller! Feast he come!"

Ken felt a contraction at his heart. He, too, knew the meaning of the drone of the devil-doctor's drum. And he knew that the prisoners of Tame'eto were to live till the day of the feast! The day of the feast had come! Already the death-fire would be burning in the savage village back of the bush. Soon the black demons would be dancing the dance that was to be followed by the cannibal feast. The lives of all the white men in the house of O'o'oo were to be counted in hours—perhaps in minutes.

"Lower the whale boat!" ordered Ken. And in the glimmer of the stars, the whaleboat pulled to the beach. Where Hudson had landed the night before, King of the Islands and the faithful Koko trod the sandy beach. The boat's crew pushed off to wait, and the black bush swallowed Ken and Koko.

### The Shark's-tooth Knife.

KING OF THE ISLANDS gritted his teeth. The blackness of the bush baffled and maddened him. Booming dully through the thick vegetation came the drone of the drum of death in the distant cannibal village. It seemed to Ken's ears that the heavy sound came from all sides at once. At intervals it died down, only to swell again to a roar.

The blackness and the tangled wilderness baffled and defeated him. But a sinewy brown hand reached in the darkness, grasped his arm, and led him on. And Ken realized that Koko was threading the bush as surely as if he trod a runway. He heard a low chuckle from the Kanaka.

"This feller savvy, sar! This feller savvy plenty too much. Eye belong me no see anything, ear belong me hear plenty too much altogether."

"Ear belong you savvy what place feller drum he stop?" Ken asked.

"Savvy plenty too much, sar!" But there was no guidance to Ken's ears in the dull, echoing drone that boomed in the bush. A thousand echoes repeated the sound from all sides. But evidently the unflinching ear of Koko picked up the direction. Ken's heart beat faster with hope.

Whether Koko could have traced a way through the black, impenetrable

bush as Hudson had done might have been doubtful, but with the beating drum to guide him, Koko did not fail.

Slowly, for it was necessary to force a way through the thick bush, to elude drooping branches, to disentangle trailing vines and creepers, to clamber over rotting logs, the Kanaka pushed on—slowly, but never halting, and behind him tramped King of the Islands.

THE blackness was dazing. He could scarcely discern the glimmer of Koko's white cotton shirt, though he was almost touching him as he followed. Alone, King of the Islands would have been hopelessly lost in the bush, and if silence had fallen perhaps Koko would have been as lost as his white master. But silence did not fall. Sinking and swelling, but never ceasing, the devil-doctor's drum droned on.

"Feller runway he stop, sar!" breathed Koko. They were out of the clinging bush at last. Ken King felt open space about him, though by reaching out his hands he could touch the bush on either side.

It was a runway used by the savages—the same that Kit Hudson had struck, though Ken and Koko struck it at a different spot. The blackness was almost as intense as ever, though here and there a glimmer of a star came through some interstice in the leafy roof.

"You follow this feller Koko, sar!" breathed the brown boatswain. "Close-up, we comey along house belong Tame'eto."

"Hurry!" breathed Ken.

"No can, sar! Plenty bush-pit stop along path belong black feller!" And Koko trod on slowly and warily, feeling the way before him with a lawyer-cane, only too well aware of the traps and pitfalls to be looked for in the bush of a cannibal island.

Ken could have groaned aloud with impatience, but he knew that the Kanaka was right. More haste meant less speed. It was necessary, for their very lives' sake, to feel every step of the way. To the savages who used the path, the death-pits were known. But there was no sign to reveal them to stranger eyes, especially in the blackness of night.

Ken wondered if it was into some such trap that Hudson had fallen, for the mate of the Dawn had been taken without a chance to use his rifle. The same thought was in Koko's mind, and it rendered him trebly cautious.

Far in the distance a red flare danced in the blackness. It came from a fire burning in the clearing, beyond the end of the tunnel-like runway. The brawny black figure that trod before King of the Islands came to a stop.

"Feller he stop along this place, sar!" Koko muttered. The lawyer-cane in the Kanaka's hand drove through the covering of branches and roots and earth over the hidden pit. There was a faint sound of fragments falling into the depths below



"No catchee this Kanaka, sar!" said Koko cheerfully. "Eye belong this Kanaka plenty too much open."

"Get on!" muttered Ken. They threaded through the bush, avoiding the pit. Again they followed the runway, and the flare of dancing flames was nearer and clearer now. Other sounds mingled with the drone of the devil-doctor's drum, shouting and howling of excited savages, discordant and ear-splitting.

It showed that the madness of excitement had seized upon the blacks of Aya-ua. It showed, too, that the fearful feast of "long-pig" had not yet commenced. Some ceremony of barbarous superstition was proceeding, presided over by the devil-doctor, before the cannibal feast.

From the blackness of the runway, Ken and Koko reached the end of the path, and stood on the edge of the great clearing in the bush. The whole scene was unrolled before their eyes.

The savage village was still at a little distance across the fields of yam and taro. The blaze of a huge fire lighted it almost as brightly as by day. The only large building—the palm-pole house of the devil-doctor—stood apart from the rest, with a wide clear space before it.

IN that space the savages were dancing in the light of the fire. Only men were to be seen. It was a ceremony in which women had no part. Some of the blacks had the crimson bloom of the hibiscus twined in their fuzzy hair. All were decorated with necklaces of beads, coral combs, strings of cartridge-clips, strings of teeth, and other barbaric ornaments—every savage "buck" dressed in his best for the strange ceremony, though of clothing none had more than a scanty loin-cloth.

Some of them blew on shells, producing strange booming notes, while others howled and shouted. There were more than a hundred of the dancing blacks, and prominent among them was Tame'eto, with his head-dress of cockatoo feathers, innumerable necklaces, and jingling bells fastened to his large black ears.

Outside the devil-doctor's house stood a wizened, wrinkled, withered old savage, whose parchment face looked like a demon's in the flare of the firelight. It was O'o'oo—and in his claw-like hand was a shark's-tooth knife, the blade keen as a razor; in his other hand, the stick with which he beat the great palm-wood drum. It was a strange, wild scene at which King of the Islands gazed from the edge of the circling bush.

Nothing was to be seen of the prisoners—they had not yet been brought from the house of death. Their time had not yet come. Ken breathed hard and deep, and his hand, for a moment, groped in the tapa bag among the bundles of dynamite sticks. He was in time—to save his comrade or die with him. With staring eyes, he stood watching the orgy of savage frenzy.

"Along dance go finish, black feller devil-doctor kill-dead white

feller along knife!" murmured Koko. "Takee head belong white feller, smoke along house belong him, black feller makee kai-kai along white feller!"

Ken shuddered. He was in time—in time! His comrade would be in his sight when he was brought from the house of the devil-doctor. For life or death he was on the spot, led there by the din of the barbarous orgy. Not a glance from the maddened blacks was cast towards the two dim figures on the edge of the bush. They were not seen—their presence not suspected.

King of the Islands was in time—but only just in time. For even as he stood and gazed at the wild scene, the drum of the devil-doctor suddenly ceased to drone. And on the instant the blowing of shells, the yelling, and the shouting died away—to the din succeeded a sudden silence.

Each capering savage stopped where he was and stood as if turned to stone. From the house of death emerged two brawny blacks, dragging between them a white man whose arms were bound behind his back.

"Feller Hudson!" breathed Koko.

threatened him, but in him was born the desire to implant just one hearty kick on the devilish old witch-doctor before his life was blotted out.

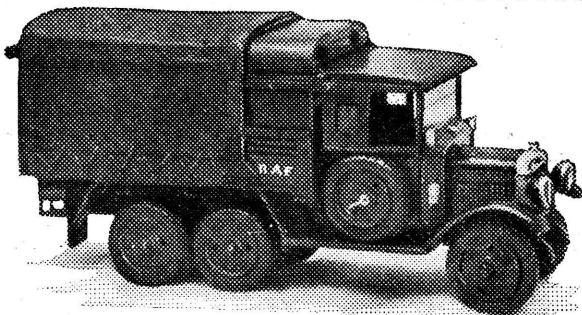
And as he kicked and struggled, mad with rage, it seemed for one moment that he would succeed in tearing himself free from his captors. The hands bending his head forward lost their hold as Kit struggled, and before the natives could get a fresh grip the young Australian's head came up, catching one of the men a hefty blow on the jaw.

For an instant the man went limp, temporarily stunned. But before Kit could take advantage of the blow the other man had secured a fresh grip. And his fellow-captor, recovering, took hold again of the struggling Australian. Despite his struggles, the two natives forced the mate of the Dawn's head down and down.

And slowly O'o'oo crept nearer and nearer, knife raised to strike the final blow at that unprotected neck.

Ken's eyes were burning. His rifle leaped to his shoulder.

Slowly, like a creeping beast, designing to torture his helpless victim with terror and suspense and apprehension, O'o'oo advanced on the mate



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It was Kit Hudson, mate of the Dawn. In the flare of firelight Ken saw his face clearly—white, set hard as iron. It was the day of doom to all the white men who lay bound in the house of death, but it had fallen to the mate of the Dawn to feel first the shark's-tooth knife in the claw of O'o'oo.

Between the two brawny blacks he stood, facing the little wizened old demon, while Tame'eto and his bucks, still as stone images, stood and gazed on, with greedy ferocity in their savage faces. The devil-doctor, grinning and showing his toothless gums, advanced upon Hudson, knife in hand, and the Australian's head was forced forward by the blacks who held him, bent to receive the stroke.

Sight of that wizened figure creeping towards him roused a very demon of fury in the mate of the Dawn. Kicking, plunging, struggling, he sought to tear himself from the hands that held him.

Well he knew that there was no escape from the death which

of the Dawn, the shark's-tooth knife glimmering in his wrinkled claw. And King of the Islands, watching him from the edge of the bush, dwelt on his aim with a strange coolness in that fearful moment.

The claw-like hand was lifted. And then, even as he lifted his hand, there burst from O'o'oo a gasping shriek, and he spun round and crashed to the earth. For a fraction of a second the savages stared at the fallen, writhing wretch, thunder-struck. Then, as the report of the rifle rolled from the bush, they knew what had struck him down.

**T**HROUGH the dead silence came the crack of the rifle. Kit Hudson gave a convulsive start and stared wildly round. At his feet, his heart stilled for ever, lay O'o'oo, the devil-doctor of Aya-ua, with a bullet in his brain!

*This magnificent series of Ken King's adventures comes to an end Next Saturday. You must NOT miss that Big Thriller!*