

Cherry
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The MODERN BOY

EVERY SATURDAY.
Week Ending November 5th, 1932.

No. 248.
Vol. 10.

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OFF VALPARAISO—MODERN VERSION!—With acknowledgments to the famous sea-painting by Thomas Somerscales.

The great cooking-fire is burning redly, the white men who are to provide the feast are there. The cannibals of the South Seas are smacking their lips . . . Then KING OF THE ISLANDS arrives!



FEAST NIGHT

on

AYA-UA!

By

Charles Hamilton

COMPLETE

and jabbered, and stared with alarmed eyes at the black bush that circled the lagoon. Of what was passing in the dim interior of Aya-ua they could see nothing, but to their ears it sounded the death-knell of King of the Islands. And Wu Fang, on his schooner, grinned.

Tame'eto brandished his spear and pointed to the slim figure in white ducks on the edge of the bush. And the whole swarm of savages followed him as he led the rush towards Ken.

Kit Hudson and the other prisoners stared after them. They were left almost alone in the straggle of huts that formed Tame'eto's village. But their arms were bound fast with cruel cords. They had no chance of escape, and could only watch while the swarm of cannibals overwhelmed the boy trader and his Kanaka comrade.

In Frantic Flight,

THE echoes of a rifle-shot died away in the bush. An instant of stunned silence followed, as if the sudden shot from the bush had petrified the swarm of cannibals in the village of Tame'eto, chief of Aya-ua.

King of the Islands—Ken King, the boy trader of the South Seas—standing at the end of the runway on the edge of the black and tangled bush, still had his smoking rifle to his shoulder. Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain of Ken's ketch, the Dawn, stood by his side like a statue. Their eyes were fixed on the staring, petrified crowd of blacks, scarce fifty yards distant across the yam fields.

Red against the night, a great fire roared and flamed in the open space before the palm-pole house of O'o'oo, the devil-doctor. It lighted up the whole of the vast clearing in the bush where the savages' village lay.

It shone on the startled faces of the swarming blacks, on the dancing feathered head-dress and coral necklaces of Tame'eto, the chief. It shone on Kit Hudson, the mate of the Dawn, standing with his arms bound, and on the fallen form of O'o'oo, the shark's-tooth knife near his claw-like hand as he lay dead at the feet of the white man.

It shone on the open doorway of the house of death, where the other prisoners were crowded, staring out with haggard faces, a wild hope in their hearts at the sound of a white man's rifle. Dandy Peter of Lukwe, Black Furley and his two men, Preece and Finn, and Keefe the pearler stared from the fatal house of the

devil-doctor, and their eyes, like those of the savages, fastened on King of the Islands and his boatswain.

It was feast-night on Aya-ua, and the white men were doomed to die in that fire unless Ken King could rescue them. Dandy Peter and Black Furley and his men had fallen into Tame'eto's hands whilst trying to find a bag of pearls left on the island by Keefe during a previous visit, during which all his crew had been massacred and he himself had narrowly escaped with his life.

Keefe had been brought ashore, a bound prisoner, by Wu Fang, the Chinese owner of the schooner Flamingo, and forced to reveal the hiding-place of the pearls. He had then escaped from Wu Fang, only to fall prisoner to the cannibals. And Hudson had fallen prisoner in attempting his rescue.

Now Ken King and Koko were making a last desperate effort to rescue Hudson and the other white men, and they had reached Tame'eto's village just as O'o'oo, the witch-doctor, was about to kill Kit.

BRIEF was the silence that followed the ringing shot which had stretched O'o'oo at the feet of his intended victim. It was followed by a fearful outbreak of yells from the cannibals.

Far across the island rang that fearful howling, echoing to the farthest recess of the lone island. It reached the ears of Ken King's crew on the ketch anchored in the lagoon a mile away, and of the crew of Wu Fang's schooner anchored alongside the ketch. And the native seamen started

Feast Night on Aya-ua!

King of the Islands did not retreat a step. He flung aside his rifle, and his hand slid into the tapa bag slung over his shoulder. With perfect coolness, he stepped forward to meet the rush of the savages. He flung a word to Koko over his shoulder.

"You feller Koko! You stop along ground, along face belong you."

Koko knew what was coming. He dropped on his face. Kit Hudson, too, knew what was coming, and breathed hard and deep as he stood in the glare of the fire, watching.

From the tapa bag King of the Islands jerked a bundle of dynamite sticks, tied together with a short fuse. With his left hand he scratched a match, and there was a spluttering spark as he touched the fuse.

Howling, yelling, screaming, brandishing spears, the swarm of cannibals rushed down on him. He waited a second, then his arm rose and swung, and the bundle was tossed into the air, falling in the midst of the howling mob. Instantly the boy trader flung himself on his face.

He had hardly touched the ground when the roar of the explosion followed. It boomed like thunder over Aya-ua, and far over the waters of the Pacific that circled the lone island. It deafened Ken King as he lay, and the shock of it almost stunned him. But lying on his face, pressed to the earth, he escaped its force.

But of the howling savages in whose midst the dynamite exploded, hardly one escaped the shock. The wild yelling was silenced when that fearful roar died echoing away.

King of the Islands lifted his head. Dazed, but knowing that the danger was past, he stared across the yam field. A great gap had been torn in the earth. Here and there a terrified black crawled away, gabbling with fear. A flutter of cockatoo feathers showed where Tame'eto had been. But the chief of Aya-ua was not to be seen, and most of the yelling cannibals had shared his fate. Sudden and terrible destruction had fallen on the ferocious mob, as if a giant's hand had descended on them and blotted them out.

King of the Islands looked once—and did not look again! His face was pale. It had been the only way to save his shipmate—to save the others who were doomed to the cannibal feast. But it was terrible.

"My word, sar!" Koko came forward and gave his white master a hand to rise. "Feller dynamite he talk plenty too much, sar! Black feller no stop!" he grinned.

"Black feller no stop!" repeated Koko, with cool satisfaction. "Black feller no makee kai-kai along feller Hudson, sar. Two-three black feller stop, run along bush, plenty too quick altogether."

Ken glanced round, his eyes avoiding the terrible scene of the explosion. The few survivors of the cannibal swarm had fled into the bush, and

other blacks were scuttling from the village in frantic flight. Panic terror had fallen on the cannibals who were left. There was not a hand to be raised against the white man who had come to the rescue of the prisoners of Tame'eto.

"Come!" muttered Ken. He made a circuit to avoid the scene on which he did not care to let his eyes fall, and reached the village. He drew his knife as he ran towards Hudson, and sliced the tapa cords that bound his comrade.

"Thanks, Ken!" breathed Hudson, as he grasped his shipmate's hand. "It was a close thing! That old demon's knife was at my neck when you shot him down."

Keefe the pearler came from the devil-doctor's house as Koko cut through his bonds with his knife.

"King of the Islands—you've saved me—saved all of us!" said the pearler. "I reckoned you'd try—but I never dreamed you'd pull through. If we get the pearls, Ken King, they belong to you!"

The Buried Sack.

STANDING at the rail of the Flamingo, Wu Fang stared towards the beach, listening. Silence had followed the roar of the distant explosion which had rung and echoed over Aya-ua from beyond the bush, and the Santa Cruz blacks, the crew of the schooner, had settled down on their sleeping-mats again. But Wu Fang stood and listened, his slanting eyes gleaming in the starlight.

What had happened in the darkness beyond the bush? The little Chink grinned as he asked himself that question. He had little doubt that King of the Islands had gone to his death in seeking to rescue his shipmate. He would not be the first white man who, in the grip of savage cannibals, had exploded dynamite and blown himself and his assailants into fragments. That seemed to Wu Fang certain what had happened.

Dead or alive, the boy trader was far away in the bush. And to the cunning Chink, who had waited so long and so patiently for his chance to get hold of the pearls which he had secreted ashore and escape from Aya-ua, it seemed that his opportunity had come.

His slanting eyes gleamed at the ketch, anchored alongside the schooner with two or three strong cables securing the vessels together. On the deck of the Dawn, Harris, the last of Black Furley's crew, stood with a rifle under his arm. He was staring towards the dark beach, but he no more than Wu Fang expected to see King of the Islands alive again. The three members of the Hiva-Oa crew left aboard the ketch, Lompo and Lufu and Danny, had stretched themselves on their mats again, and were dozing or sleeping. The other two, Tomoo and Kolulo, were in the whaleboat, waiting off the beach for the white master whom they did not expect to return.

Wu Fang's hand slid into his tunic

and grasped a hidden knife. Harris was the only man he had to fear now. And the thought was in his ruthless mind of "getting" him with a thrown knife. But at the distance, and in the dim glimmer of the stars, he could not be sure; and the Lukwe man had his rifle ready. The Chink dared not risk it. Still less dared he risk cutting the cables that held his schooner to the ketch. The first blow of an axe would have brought a shot from the white man on the Dawn. Wu Fang released the hidden knife.

He moved away among the sleeping crew, and silently roused Pipiteto, the black mate, and four of the native seamen. Hardly a sound was made on the schooner as the natives stirred at the whispered order of the Chinese trader, and his orders were promptly obeyed. Not for all the pearls in the Pacific would the native crew have followed him in an attack on an armed white man, even had Wu Fang ventured to lead them.

But that was not the Chink's intention. Cunning was the way of the wily Oriental. In silence, stores were broken out and packed in the longboat. It was not till the falls were released that Harris, on the ketch, became aware that something was going on aboard the Flamingo.

He came quickly to the ketch's rail, staring across the strip of water that separated the two vessels, his rifle lifted. King of the Islands had left him orders to shoot down the Chink at the first sign of treachery—orders that the Lukwe man was only too willing to carry out. He heard the thud of the boat dropping to the water, but the schooner was between and the boat and its crew were hidden by the bulk of the vessel. The splash of oars followed.

"Aho!" shouted Harris. "Bring back that boat!"

Wu Fang grinned. Keeping the schooner between him and the ketch, he steered across the lagoon, the boat's crew pulling hard at the oars.

Bang! Harris fired at the first glimpse of the boat beyond the schooner. The bullet knocked up a spray of water over the rowing blacks.

THERE was a jabber of native voices on the ketch and the schooner. Harris fired again, but in the distance and the dimness, his shot went wider than before. The boat pulled on rapidly, and vanished into the dimness of the lagoon.

The Lukwe man stared after it. The Chink was gone, but it did not occur to him that Wu Fang was gone for good. That Wu Fang knew where to lay his hands on the pearls of Aya-ua there was no doubt, and the Lukwe man did not doubt that the Chink was gone to seek them. But if he returned to his schooner with the pearls, he was not likely to be able to keep them from the Lukwe man's grasp.

Wu Fang knew that as well as Harris, and though the Lukwe man did not guess it, it was not his intention to return to the schooner at all. Once the pearls were in his hands

the Chink intended to run out to sea. Harris did not know that he had provisioned the boat for a long cruise, and he was far from reading the mind of the wily Chink.

Once safe from the white man's rifle, Wu Fang changed his course, and the boat pulled for the beach. The Chink was abandoning his schooner. But he cared little for that, if he could sail away from Aya-ua with the tapa sack of pearls in his possession. Ben Keefe's pearls were worth a hundred schooners like the Flamingo.

The little Chink grinned and chuckled as the Santa Cruz boys pulled. The pearls of Aya-ua had been in his yellow hands once, when he had taken the tapa sack from its hiding-place in the baobab-tree. But he had not dared to bring it to the schooner while King of the Islands was in the offing. He had hidden it in the sand, and now he was free to lift it once more, and sail away from Aya-ua.

THE schooner and the ketch became dim blurs in the distance as the boat pulled on, the Chink steering steadily, setting his course by the baobab-tree that rose over the bush, black against the stars. At last the boat grounded on the shelving sand.

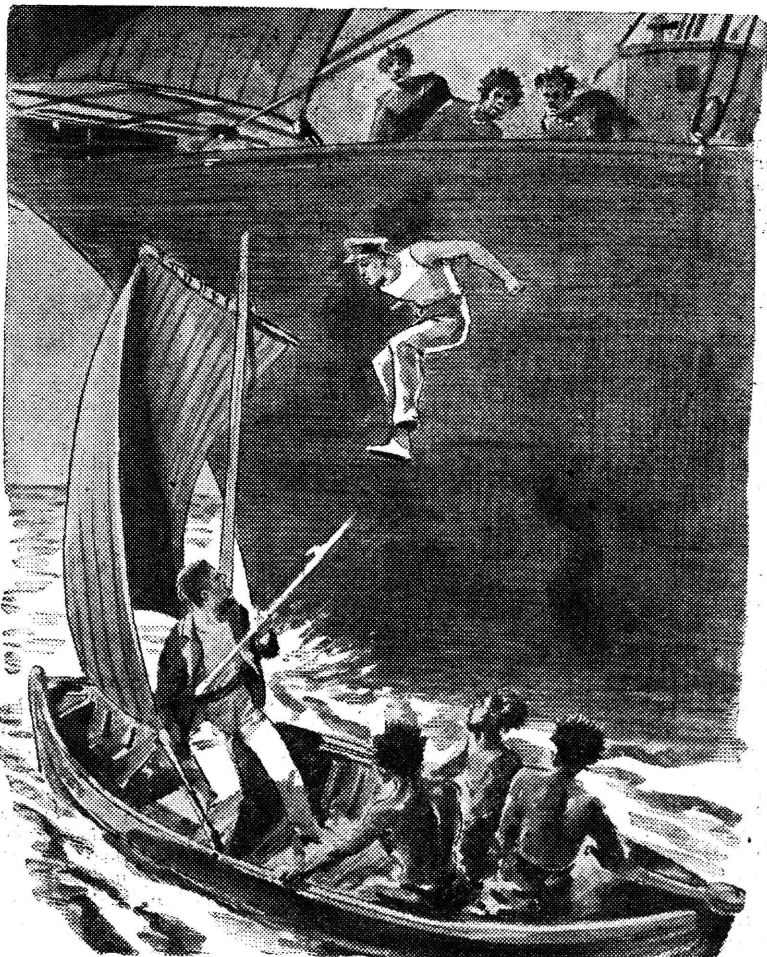
Somewhere in the dimness was the Dawn's boat waiting for King of the Islands. But it was out of sight of the Chink, and he gave it no thought. His black rowers trampled ashore in the wet sand, and the Chink stepped on the beach. Pipiteto and the seamen waited with the boat, their eyes following the Chink curiously as he disappeared up the shadowy beach.

At a little distance from the lagoon Wu Fang stopped, and watched and listened. He did not fear the natives—the blacks of Aya-ua did not engage in warfare by night. And he knew, too, that that night the feast was toward in the native village beyond the bush. But he stopped and listened, his slanting eyes searching the shadows, his ears strained for a sound. Aya-ua was an island of danger and terror, and the Chink was not at ease in the darkness and solitude of the beach, with the brooding blackness of the high bush so close at hand. It seemed to him that his straining ears picked up a sound on the silent beach.

But his slanting eyes, staring through the shadows, saw nothing. He moved on again, making his way to the spot where he had hidden the stolen sack of pearls. Slowly, carefully, the Chinaman traced his way, and stopped where a pointed coral rock rose from the sand.

He dropped on his knees, and scraped the soft sand away at the foot of the rock. Scarce a foot deep, but with no sign left to reveal where it lay, he had buried the sack of pearls he had taken from the hollow trunk of the baobab, and in a few minutes he scraped away the covering sand.

He gave a low chuckle of glee as he lifted the tapa sack from the sand, and rose to his feet. He opened the



As the ketch swept by, Ken King sprang from the teak rail into the boat. Parsons' grasp closed convulsively on the upraised boat-hook.

neck of the sack, and ran his fingers among the pearls, pouring a score of them into his yellow palm, to watch them glisten in the glimmer of the stars. There were more than a hundred in the tapa sack. It was a king's ransom that the Chinaman held in his greedy fingers.

"Tinkee feller pearl belong this Chinee," murmured Wu Fang.

And he tied the neck of the sack again, and slipped it out of sight under his loose tunic.

Softly, swiftly, he crept down the beach towards the spot where the Santa Cruz boys had been left with the boat. Suddenly he started violently, and a blaze of fury came into his slanting eyes.

Between him and the boat a shadowy figure moved. It was not a native. He could not see who it was, but he could see that it was a white man.

A white man in torn and tattered rags of clothes, moving in the same direction as Wu Fang, but ahead of him, heading towards the boat that lay a dim shadow on the water's edge.

Wu Fang drew a hissing breath. A white man between him and the boat! But the white man, whoever he was, had not seen him—did not know that he was there. The Chink's hand went under his tunic, and came out with something that gleamed in

the starshine. Softly as a cat, swiftly as a tiger, he raced down the shelving sand, and leaped. And he struck as he leaped.

"Tumble In!"

KING OF THE ISLANDS!" Voices called to the boy trader from the doorway of the devil-doctor's house. Black Furley, Preece, Dick Finn, and Dandy Peter Parsons stared out at him in the flare of the firelight, and their haggard eyes had never been so glad to see a friend as they now were to see a foe! Hope had been dead in their hearts as they lay bound in the den of O'o'oo, but they knew now that they were saved. Friend or foe, King of the Islands was not the man to leave them there.

Ken King walked across to the hut, leaving Keefe with Hudson. Koko followed him, his long bush-knife in his hand. The four prisoners emerged from the hut. Their legs were free, though their arms were tightly bound behind them. Preece and Finn looked glad and relieved, but Black Furley scowled, and Dandy Peter Parsons eyed the boy trader with little enough good will in his look.

At a sign from Ken, Koko cut the bonds of Preece and Finn, and they chafed their stiffened and aching

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arms. Ken fixed his eyes on the other two. He was there to save them from the cannibals, as he had saved his shipmate and the pearler, but he was doubtful how to deal with the burly, bullying freebooter and the treacherous dandy of Lukwe.

"By hokey!" growled Furley. "You're setting us loose, Ken King, I reckon. You ain't leaving a white man here."

"No." Ken shook his head. "But we'd better have this clear, Furley. You're here after Ben Keefe's pearls—you and your crew. I'm standing by Keefe, as I've told you. Not a single pearl in the sack is going to Lukwe, if we lift them—and I think we shall. You've got that? Your man Harris is on board my ketch now. I've left him in charge, but he is a prisoner all the same. You're prisoners, too—till I get shut of you."

"Do you reckon I'm the man to turn on you after you've got me out of this nest of demons?" replied Furley. "The game's up for us, and I know it! You've got Keefe—and you'll get the pearls! Give me a chance to get off this island of demons, and that's all I want. And you can depend on that."

"Cut him loose, Koko!"

The burly Lukwe skipper was released. Ruffian and freebooter as Jim Furley was, Ken felt that he could be trusted not to turn on the man who had saved him from the cannibals. But he was not taking too many chances on Black Furley's good faith, and he intended to take good care that the Lukwe crew remained unarmed, until he could see the last of them.

Peter Parsons looked at the boy trader, a sneer on his handsome, rascally face. Whatever faith Ken might have had in a man like Furley, he had none in Parsons. He knew Dandy Peter too well for that.

"I've got to get you out of this, Peter Parsons," said Ken slowly. "But I can't trust you—I'd as soon trust a tiger-shark. I warn you—a single sign of trickery and I'll shoot you dead."

"You're afraid of an unarmed man?" jeered Parsons.

"White master," said Koko, with a grim glare at the dandy. "this Kanaka tinkee plenty too much better leave feller Parsons stop along house belong black feller."

"Ay, ay," said Ken, with a smile. "Much better—only we can't do it, Koko. I've warned you, Parsons. Take care how you steer your course when you're loose. Cut him loose, Koko!"

The boatswain hesitated, then proceeded to slice through the tapa cords with his bush-knife, and the dandy of Lukwe was free.

Like the other prisoners, he proceeded to rub his arms, numbed and aching from the cords. He did not trouble to utter a word of thanks, neither would Ken have cared to hear it.

The boy trader was well aware that Peter Parsons was insensible to gratitude. He knew that Parsons, if he found an opportunity, would make another attempt on the pearls of Aya-ua, and that no risk, and no crime, would stop him. He was as treacherous as Wu Fang, but he had an undaunted courage that the Chink did not possess, and was ten times as dangerous a man.

To leave this man prisoner in the

den of the cannibals was impossible, but to trust him an inch was impossible, also. Ken King meant every word of the warning he had uttered.

Not a black man was to be seen in the village or near it. The explosion that had wiped out Tame'eto and his bucks had terrified the remnant of the cannibal crew into panic. What were left of them had scuttled frantically into the bush in various directions. But Ken knew that sooner or later they would rally, probably with reinforcements from other quarters, and he was anxious to be gone.

Leaving the deserted den of the cannibals behind them, the great fire still flaring against the night, they started across the yam fields to the bush. Koko had passed his rifle to Hudson, and Ken had handed his revolver to Keefe.

THE three of them were armed, and Koko had his long bush-knife. The rescued freebooters were unarmed, and Ken intended to keep them so. With Koko in the lead, they entered the bush, Ken and Kit and the pearler close behind Koko, Black Furley and his men following, and Dandy Peter Parsons in the rear.

It had been by a weary and difficult way in the bush that King of the Islands and Koko had reached the cannibal village. But the way back to the lagoon was easier, for several cut runways led in various directions from the clearing round the village, and Koko had no trouble in picking out one that led down to the lagoon.

It was likely to land them on the beach at a distance from the spot where they had entered the bush—but then it would be only necessary to follow the water's edge to arrive at the spot where the Dawn's boat was waiting off-shore.

Koko, leading the way, felt every step with a long lawyer-cane, and more than once called out a warning as he discovered one of the hidden death-pits with which the savages guarded the approaches to their village.

But the runway was traversed at last, and the gleam of the starlight was seen at the end of the long tunnel-like path, and the glimmer of the lagoon in the stars.

From the direction of the lagoon there came the sudden crack of a rifle, followed immediately by another shot.

"That's Harris, on the ketch!" exclaimed Ken.

"Wu Fang must be giving trouble," said Hudson.

"I left orders to shoot him dead if he gave trouble," replied Ken. "If he's asked for it, it's his own look-out."

They hurried on, and in a few minutes they were out of the bush and treading the sand and powdered coral of the beach.

Far in the distance across the waters of the lagoon a dim blur showed where the ketch and the schooner rode at anchor. King of the Islands clambered lightly to the top of a tall rock to take his bearings,

THIS WEEK'S PICTURE-STAMPS!

HE doesn't look as if he's built for speed, but the Persian Saluki, shown at the head of this week's splendid strip of super picture-stamps, can move as fast as a greyhound. In fact, saluki racing has taken the place of greyhound racing in Germany, the salukis racing against one another after an electric hare.

THE Alsatian, shown in another picture-stamp, is one of the most intelligent and useful of all dogs. As well as distinguishing themselves as film actors in America, they are used as police dogs in Germany and for pulling milk-carts in France. In their native Alsace, these dogs are used for minding the sheep.

EQUIPPED with a roomy cabin and wireless, the latest type of motor-lifeboat is a tremendous advance on the old one. One of the newest of them, stationed at Dover ready to dash to the rescue of any air-liner forced down in the Channel, can carry 200 people and only needs seven men to manage it. Its two 375 h.p. engines drive it at 17½ knots.

WITH a cruising speed of 90 m.p.h., which can be increased to 103 for short bursts, and a range of 300 miles, the Spartan three-seater is an ideal light aeroplane for use either as a land plane, as our artist has shown it, or, with floats, as a seaplane. It can climb to 5,000 feet in twelve minutes.

LIVING in a rockbound, barren country, the horsemen of Baluchistan have an unrivalled claim to the title of rough-riders. Their famous horses can take them where only the mountain goats can follow. Horses and ponies, sent from Persia and Afghanistan, form the Baluchis' greatest import.

DID you know that there are two Royal Scot trains? One of them steams southward from Glasgow and Edinburgh, while the other rushes northward from Euston, London. During the seventy years that the Royal Scots have been running, the two trains have always passed each other in Preston Station. Nowadays they pass at full speed, but before restaurant cars were introduced they used to stop for twenty minutes to enable the passengers to get out and have lunch.

Six Super-Stamps Also with This Week's RANGER and the MAGNET.

6 MORE PICTURE-STAMPS NEXT WEEK!

So far as he could calculate, the runway had led them out on the circling beach over a mile from the spot where the Dawn's boat was waiting. But it was easy going on the beach.

Ken jumped down from the rock. "I reckon we've got to foot it for a mile along the beach," he said. "The boat's waiting half a cable's length off-shore, opposite a big baobab-tree—"

"Where the pearls were hidden!" muttered Keefe.

"Feller Parsons no stop!" said Koko.

"What?"

King of the Islands stared round in the dim starlight. There had been eight in the party, but now he counted only seven shadowy figures. Black Furley, Preece, and Finn were there. It was Dandy Peter Parsons who had slipped away in the darkness, unseen, silent. How long he had been gone, Ken did not know. It was only at this moment that Koko detected that one man was missing.

"The scoundrel!" muttered Ken. "What trickery is he up to? If he's not on board when we lift anchor, the Dawn will sail without him, and he can stay marooned on Aya-ua."

"What can he do—alone, unarmed?" asked Hudson. "Let him rip, and be hanged to him!"

"He's after the pearls," said Keefe. "But he's too late—the Chink's got 'em! He got them out of the hollow in the baobab-tree when I was in his hands. It's from Wu Fang we've got to get the pearls. Ken King!"

"I guessed that much," said Ken, "and I've kept Wu Fang and his schooner in the lagoon. I reckoned he'd cached them somewhere on the beach, and was waiting for a chance to get hold of them again in safety. Dandy Peter is welcome to look for them."

There was little doubt Parsons had fled to make one more attempt on the lost pearls of Aya-ua. But where he had gone, and what his plans were, King of the Islands cared little. Dandy Peter had chosen to take his chance alone ashore, and the boy trader left him to it.

If Dandy Peter came aboard the Dawn before she sailed, he would give him a passage. If not—well, the man must look out for himself.

The party tramped along the sandy beach circling the lagoon till King of the Islands sighted a dark blur lying out on the starry waters. He gave a whistle, and there was a sound of pulling oars. A couple of minutes later Tomoo and Kolulo were staring in amazement at the white master they had never expected to see again, and the mate of the Dawn, whom still less had they expected to see.

"My word!" stammered Tomoo. "White master he stop!"

Ken laughed.

"White master he stop plenty too much altogether!" chuckled Koko.

"Tumble in!" said Ken.

The seven tumbled into the whale-boat, and pulled for the Dawn. Somewhere on the dark shore was Dandy Peter, of Lukwe, but how he

was occupied, King of the Islands little dreamed.

"I've Beaten You!"

BEATEN!" Peter Parsons ground the word between his teeth. "Beaten!" He was standing in the blackness of the bush by the trunk of the great baobab. Once before he had stood there, the pearls of Aya-ua almost in his grasp, when the savages had seized him. Now he was safe from the blacks of Aya-ua. But the pearls were gone.

With cool, desperate hardihood, Parsons had resolved on this last attempt to seize the treasure of Aya-ua. With the pearls in his possession, he would be left on the island—he would not dare to show himself again till King of the Islands had sailed. And terrible as was the disaster that had fallen on the natives, Aya-ua was still an island

He snarled with rage as he turned back to the beach. He was beaten, and all that remained to him was to rejoin the party from which he had fled in the darkness—to humble himself and beg King of the Islands to take him off Aya-ua. And perhaps he was already too late for that. Ken King was not likely to linger on the beach, and probably he had already hailed his boat and got back to the ketch.

Parsons' haggard face was white with fury as he tramped down the beach. He did not know where the Dawn's boat had waited, though he could guess that it was not far away. He scanned the open beach in the glimmer of the stars. At first he could see nothing, and he could hardly doubt that Ken King and his companions had already reached their boat and put off for the Dawn.

But as he stared, he discerned a dark object on the water's edge at a

<p>GIVEN</p>  	 <p>NEXT WEEK'S SUPER- STAMPS for your ALBUM!</p> 	<p>FREE</p>  
<p>NEXT</p>		<p>WEEK!</p>

Another SIX SUPER-STAMPS also with NEXT WEEK'S issues of the RANGER and the MAGNET!

of terror and peril, haunted by fierce cannibals.

But for that Parsons cared little. He would hide and lurk in the bush, steal a fishing-canoe sooner or later, and escape, once the pearls were in his hands. But the pearls were no longer in their hiding-place. The last desperate chance had failed him—he was beaten.

He stood trembling with rage and disappointment. Who had lifted the pearls? Not Keefe. The pearler had fallen into the hands of the savages, and had been a prisoner with him in the house of O'oo. Like a flash it came to Dandy Peter—Wu Fang!

It was the Chink who had lifted the pearls, and the Chink was at the mercy of King of the Islands. The pearls would go where they belonged. The game was up, and he had marooned himself on the cannibal island for nothing.

distance. It was too far away to be picked up clearly, but he was sure that it was a boat. He was not too late, after all.

As he hurried down the beach he saw that it was a boat, grounded on the sand. The starshine showed him five figures lounging in or near it, all blacks. There was no sign of white men, and he realised that this could not be the Dawn's boat. Even in the dimness he could see that the blacks were not Ken King's men. The Hiva-Oa crew of the Dawn were golden-skinned Polynesians, and these men were blacks. Then he realised that they were some of the Santa Cruz crew of the schooner—Wu Fang's men. It was a boat from the Flamingo.

What it meant, why it was there, he could not begin to guess. Wu Fang was not there—the five men he could see were all Santa Cruz

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(Continued from page 15)

blacks. One of them he recognised as Pipiteto, the mate.

He was alone, unarmed, but he did not hesitate a second. It was a boat, and a boat's crew, and that was what he wanted. Had there been a dozen of the blacks, the desperate dandy of Lukwe would not have hesitated.

Danger from behind was not even in his thoughts as he went towards the boat, and he was taken utterly by surprise when something unseen leaped at his back. He had heard no sound behind him—Wu Fang had been too wary for that.

Wu Fang did not know that it was Dandy Peter, or care. All he knew was that it was a white man cutting him off from his boat. Like a tiger he leaped on Parsons from behind, and slashed with the knife at the same moment. It seemed that a miracle could hardly have saved the dandy of Lukwe from that swift and treacherous stroke from behind.

But Dandy Peter's luck did not fail him. He was taken by surprise, and the stroke was swift and sure. Yet even as the keen point touched him, he twisted with the instant presence of mind taught him by a life of desperate peril, and the knife gashed along his back instead of driving home to the heart as the murderous Chink intended.

In a fraction of a second, Dandy Peter leaped clear, another slash of the knife gashing his shoulder as he went. He faced round to see the yellow-skinned little demon springing at him with lifted knife. A swift backward spring saved him from the stroke.

"Wu Fang!" he panted.

The Chink followed him up, his slanting eyes glittering like a snake's. At a glance he saw that Parsons was unarmed, and drove in at him with slashing knife. The dandy of Lukwe dodged and twisted, barely escaping the keen point, and bounded towards the boat.

Pipiteto and the other blacks were staring, grinning, at the scene. Dandy Peter raced madly for the boat, and behind him raced the Chink, knife in hand, panting. Barely a foot ahead of the lunging knife, Peter Parsons leaped into the boat. Some vague thought was at the back of his mind of getting hold of a stretcher, or a thole-pin, and facing the murderous knife with some kind of weapon in his hand.

But the impetus of his desperate leap as he landed in the boat drove it off the beach, and it floated. That was all that saved the life of Peter Parsons, for the Chink was springing after him, close behind. The movement of the boat caused Wu Fang to fall short in his leap. Instead of dropping into the boat at Parsons' back, he dropped three feet behind him and stumbled forward.

Before Wu Fang could recover from that stumble, Dandy Peter had turned on him, and as the Chink straightened up, the dandy's grasp

was on him. The murderous right hand was stayed by a grip on the wrist, and the knife forced back.

Peter Parsons tightened his grasp on the little Chinaman, and Wu Fang, struggling in vain to use the knife, crumpled up in that grip of steel.

The boat rocked wildly as they struggled, and from under the Chink's loose tunic a tapa sack slipped, to burst open as it thudded in the bottom of the boat. From the burst sack a stream of pearls rolled out, glistening in the starshine.

"The pearls!" Dandy Peter yelled.

The pearls of Aya-ua rolled and tumbled about the rocking boat in glistening cascades.

"You feller boy!" screamed Wu Fang.

PIPITETO and the blacks were already scrambling after the boat. Their black hands grasped it and they tumbled in. A moment more and they would have seized Parsons, and the Chink would have been free to strike. But in that moment Parsons wrenched the little Chinaman from his feet, swung him bodily into the air, and hurled him from the boat. There was a splash in the lagoon, and Wu Fang disappeared under the surface.

Dandy Peter turned on the Santa Cruz boys like a tiger, and his crashing fist sent Pipiteto sprawling full length in the boat. The fury in his face was more than enough for the others. They crowded back from the enraged white man.

Dandy Peter picked up an oar, and the blacks crowded away from him in terror. With a shove of the oar against a coral rock he sent the boat spinning farther out in the lagoon.

A big Chinese hat floated away, and a yellow, furious face showed over the glimmering water. The knife was still in Wu Fang's hand, and murder in his slanting eyes. He swam at the boat, and Dandy Peter swung up the oar.

A black fin showed in the glistening lagoon. There was a gleam of a white throat, and one long, terrible cry from Wu Fang. The next instant the Chink had vanished.

Dandy Peter, the oar in his hands, stared almost stupidly at the widening circles on the water where the shark had disappeared with its prey. Wu Fang was gone.

A hideous snout showed beside the boat; another and another. The sharks were gathering. Parsons shuddered. But almost in a moment the hardy ruffian recovered his nerve.

"You feller boy!" he snarled at the scared blacks. "You takee feller oar—you washy-washy plenty quick!"

"Yessar!" stammered the Santa Cruz boys.

Pipiteto, rubbing his aching jaw, sat at the tiller, and the four black boys took the oars and pulled. Their eyes lingered on the glistening pearls scattered in the boat.

Dandy Peter picked up the tapa sack, and gathered up the pearls one by one. Ben Keefe's treasure—the pearls of Aya-ua—in his hands at

last! Wu Fang had gone to the sharks, and he had beaten King of the Islands!

He snarled an order to Pipiteto at the tiller, and the boat was steered for the reef passage. The ruffian sat with a boathook in his hand—the only weapon he could find. But a weapon was hardly needed. The blacks were scared into submission by the mere look on his desperate face.

The sack of pearls bound to his belt, Parsons grinned with glee as the boat pulled for the reef passage. The night was growing old; sunrise was not far off, and he had no time to waste. Had there not been a single bit of food or drop of water in the boat, Dandy Peter would still have put to sea to escape with his prize before King of the Islands could discover what had chanced. But it had not taken him long to learn that the boat was packed with stores for a long cruise, and he could guess what the Chink's plan had been. That plan he now intended to carry out himself.

From the reef passage the boat glided into the open Pacific. Then the mast was stepped and the sail shaken out. The wind caught the sail and the boat danced away on the sea. And Dandy Peter, standing by the mast and staring back at the black mass of Aya-ua, shook his clenched fist and laughed.

"I've beaten you, King of the Islands!" he yelled, taunting the boy trader, who was far out of hearing. "I've beaten you, Ken King!" And he laughed again, loud and long, as the boat ran before the wind into the wide Pacific.

"Share Alike, Ken King!"

THERE was deep thankfulness in Ken King's heart as he stepped once more on the deck of the Dawn. From the terrible perils of the bush, from the clutches of the cannibals, he had returned safe to his ship, his comrade safe with him. It was more than he had dared to expect or hope. Kit Hudson gave a joyous chuckle as he trod the deck by his shipmate's side.

"It feels good to be on the Dawn again, Ken, old man!" he said.

"Ay, ay!" said Ken, smiling. "We've had luck, Kit!"

"Plenty good stop along this feller hooker, sar!" grinned Koko. "Me likee plenty too much stop along this ship, my word! Me tinkee head belong me go smoke along house belong black feller! Head belong me no smoke along house belong black feller!" added Koko, with cheerful satisfaction. "Head belong me stop along shoulder belong me, and me likee plenty too much!"

Harris stared at the boy trader and his companions almost like a man in a dream.

"You back?" he said. "I never reckoned I'd see you alive again! You, too, Furley—and Preece and Finn! Cap'n King's pulled you out of it!"

"We're out of it," Black Furley grunted, "but the game's up, Harris!"

We've got away from the cooking-ovens, but we ain't lifting the pearls. I reckon King of the Islands is looking after that!"

"You can bet on it, Furley!" said Ken, with a laugh. "Drop that rifle, Harris. I'm not distrusting you, but I've no use for armed men in this packet."

Harris handed over the rifle. If the Lukwe crew had thought of giving trouble, they had no chance. But Black Furley and his gang, to do them justice, had no such intention. King of the Islands had saved them from a fearful fate, and the horrors of the house of death in the den of the cannibals were still fresh in their minds. Furley was sullen and discontented, but he would not have lifted his hand against the man who had saved him from the cooking-ovens.

"We heard you fring," said Ken. "You've had trouble with the Chink. What's happened to Wu Fang?"

"Gone," answered Harris.

KEN glanced quickly at the schooner. It was still at anchor and roped to the Dawn, and some of the Santa Cruz boys were staring across.

"He got away in his boat, with two or three black boys," said Harris. "I reckon he's gone after the pearls. I fired after him twice, but never hit him. You'll get him easy when he pulls back to the schooner."

"He figures that we finished in the bush, Ken," Kit Hudson laughed. "He's after the pearls—has his hands on them by now, most likely. He won't keep them long when he comes back."

"When he comes back!" repeated Ken. "Will he come back, Kit? Even if we had finished in the bush, Harris was here. And Harris would have handled him easily enough, with the pearls in the offing, and Wu Fang knew it. If he's got hold of the pearls, he's not coming back to his ship."

"By hokey!" Black Furley burst into a gruff laugh. "The Chink's got the pearls, and run to sea with them! You're beaten after all, King of the Islands! The Chink's beaten you!"

Ken did not heed the freebooter. Had the wily Chink won the long and desperate game? It was a bitter thought to the boy trader. He had given little enough thought to the pearls of Aya-ua while his shipmate was a prisoner in the hands of the cannibals. But he thought of them now.

He stepped back into the whaleboat, and the Kanakas pulled across to the schooner. From the Santa Cruz boys left on the Flamingo he learned that the schooner's boat had been provisioned for a long cruise before Wu Fang went. That was proof enough that Wu Fang intended to abandon his ship—and further proof that the pearls of Aya-ua were in his grasp. He returned to the ketch.

"The Chink's gone, and doesn't mean to come back, Kit," he said. "He's got the pearls, and run out to sea in his boat! There can't be any doubt about that! But—"

"But we haven't finished in the

bush, as he supposed," said the mate of the Dawn. "We're after him, Ken."

"Ay, ay—and without losing a minute," said King of the Islands. "It's up-anchor now, and away with all sail set! We'll put Furley and his men on the schooner, as the Chink's chosen to desert his ship. I'll be glad to get shut of them from the Dawn."

"There's a chance yet!" muttered Keefe. "If the boat's got out to sea, we shall raise her at sunrise—"

"There's more than a chance, Keefe," answered the boy trader. "We'll comb the Pacific for Wu Fang if he's got away. Keep your pecker up—you'll lay your hands on your pearls yet!"

"You and your mate share if we lift them at last!" said the pearler. "Share and share alike!"

was certain, for there was no sign of it on the lagoon. Neither was there a sign of Dandy Peter on the beach.

Little did Ken guess that the dandy of Lukwe had run out to sea in the boat he was pursuing.

Outside the reef the whaleboat was swung up to the davits, and sail shaken out. And as the sun rose higher, every eye on the Dawn watched the Pacific for a sign of a boat.

The binoculars hardly left Ken's eyes for a moment. Far and wide he swept the ocean for the sight of a boat's sail. He knew that it could not be far ahead of him, and there was little doubt that it had run before the wind. But the swift ketch, under full sail, could cover a dozen fathoms to the boat's one, and the boy trader had little doubt of

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No time was lost. Already the stars were paling towards the early dawn. Black Furley and Finn, Preece and Harris were quickly transferred to the schooner, to sail back to Lukwe if they chose.

The ketch's anchor swung up to the bows, and the whaleboat was manned to tow her out of the lagoon. Standing by Koko at the helm, King of the Islands cast a glance towards the dark circling bush of Aya-ua and the coral beach shelving to the water. He was thinking of Dandy Peter. But Parsons had taken his fate into his own hands.

The Kanakas pulled hard at the oars, and the ketch glided into the reef passage as the first glimmer of the sun came up over Aya-ua. Ken King swept the lagoon and the beach with his binoculars. That the schooner's boat had run out to sea

running it down. And suddenly he gave a shout.

"The boat!"

Far in the distance, glancing against the sun on the sea, was a dancing sail. In those lonely waters it could only be the sail that Ken was watching for.

"Good luck!" grinned Hudson.

"We've got him!"

"And the pearls!" muttered Keefe.

Swiftly the ketch overhauled the boat. Ere long, the naked eye could pick it up, and the figures of its crew could be discerned. There was no sign of Wu Fang. But Ken rubbed his eyes and stared, and stared again, at the sight of a tattered figure among the black Santa Cruz boys.

"My sainted Sam!" he exclaimed at last. "Dandy Peter, or his ghost!"

Feast Night on Aya-ua!

"It's Peter Parsons all right!" said Hudson. "I do know the cut of his jib at twice the distance!"

"And it's the schooner's boat!" muttered Keefe. "Parsons has beaten the Chink somehow—he's got the pearls!"

"And we've got him," said Ken grimly.

Standing in the boat, Dandy Peter stared back at the pursuing ketch with rage in his eyes. The sight of the Dawn's tall sails spelled defeat for him. Not for a moment had he expected prompt pursuit—it had not even crossed his mind that King of the Islands knew that Wu Fang had the pearls and intended to run out to sea with them. In the belief that he was pursuing the Chink, the boy trader had run the dandy of Lukwe down, and the sight of his sails was a nasty surprise to Peter Parsons.

Parsons jammed the tapa sack of pearls out of sight under his tattered ducks, and stood watching the ketch as it ran the boat down. He told himself desperately that Ken King could not know that the pearls were on board the boat. How could he know? There was a chance yet, or Dandy Peter hoped that there was.

"Ahoy, the boat!" Ken's voice came ringing to him. "Stand by, Peter Parsons!"

The ketch swept by, and with a light leap King of the Islands sprang from the teak rail and landed in the boat. Parsons' grasp closed convulsively on the boathook, and a revolver glimmered in the hand of the boy trader.

"Drop it!" he rapped.

Koko joined his white master a moment later. The ketch hove-to, to wait, every face on board staring over the side. Dandy Peter dropped

the boathook, and the Santa Cruz boys, at a word from Ken, took in the boat's sail.

"What do you want here, Ken King?" demanded Parsons hoarsely. "You're done with me, and I'm done with you. Leave me to steer my own course!"

"Where's the Chink?"

"Concerned about the Chink, are you?" sneered Parsons. "Ask the sharks in the lagoon at Aya-ua where he is!"

"You've got his boat," said Ken quietly. "If Wu Fang's gone to the sharks, where are the pearls?"

"Pearls? What pearls?" asked Dandy Peter.

"Search that man, Koko!"

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Instantly the grasp of the brawny boatswain was on Dandy Peter. With a yell of rage, the dandy of Lukwe struck at him, only to crumple up helplessly in the mighty grasp of Koko. Struggling, foaming with rage, Peter Parsons crashed down in the boat, and a brawny brown knee pinned him there. A moment more, and the grinning Kanaka held up a tapa sack.

"Feller pearl he stop!" chuckled Koko.

Ken took the sack and opened it. It was crammed with pearls. It was the treasure of Aya-ua at last, for which the shipmates of the Dawn had faced so many fearful perils.

Without a word to the dandy of Lukwe—without a glance at him—Ken King swung on board the Dawn, and Koko followed him. Dandy Peter got on his feet, white with fury. With eyes of despair, he watched the canvas shaken out again on the Dawn, and saw the swift ketch glide away on the sea, carrying the pearls of Aya-ua for ever from his sight.

On the deck of the Dawn, Ben Keefe held the tapa sack and poured out the stream of glistening pearls into his palm. The pearler had come into his own at last. He raised his eyes from the glistening cascade of pearls.

"Share alike, King of the Islands!" he said.

"The pearls are yours, shipmate!" answered Ken. "We came into this game to see you through, and we've pulled it off, Keefe!"

"You've lost time and trade—" "A dozen of the pearls will see us clear for that if you choose. But you've found your fortune—and it's yours!"

"They say on the beaches that you're the whitest man in the Islands, Ken King, and I reckon it's so!" said Keefe. "But if you and your shipmate will take only a dozen pearls, I reckon I'm going to pick them out for you!"

"Leave it at that!" Ken laughed. And Kit Hudson smiled and nodded. And when the pearls that Ben Keefe picked out for the shipmates were sold to John Chin at Lalinge, they realised a sum that made the cruise to Aya-ua a profitable trip after all for the shipmates of the Dawn.

NEXT SATURDAY!—YOU MUST NOT MISS NEXT WEEK'S THRILLER - OF - ALL - THRILLERS — By the WORLD'S GREATEST WILD-ANIMAL TRAPPER!—See page 19.

ONE GUINEA

has been awarded to **RAYMOND W. MOORE**, of Glendown, Middleton Road, Waterloo, LIVERPOOL, for this photo of the **MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL, CROSBY, BANTAM XV**. He is on the extreme right of the back row

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