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GENERAL GORDON'S LAST STAND!—Stirring Episode in This Year's Aldershot Tattoo



Koko, with the knife firmly gripped between his toes, sawed away at Ken's bonds, whilst Dandy Peter Parsons laughed.

A prisoner on his own ketch, Ken King, boy trader of the South Seas, is bound for a speck of land in the lonely Pacific—an island marked on no chart!

Complete By
CHARLES HAMILTON

MAROON ISLAND

The Cunning Cooky-Boy.

"KEEP her steady!" The voice that rapped out the order on the deck of the ketch Dawn was audible in the cabin below. King of the Islands gritted his teeth as he heard it. His eyes met those of his mate, Kit Hudson.

"How long have we got to stand this, Ken?" muttered Hudson.

Ken King made no reply. He could hear the creak of a Madeira chair on deck as Dandy Peter, the sea-lawyer of Lukwe, sank in it after speaking to the steersman. Dandy Peter was taking his ease on the deck of another man's ship! He gave orders there as though the ketch belonged to him, and he had the Kanaka crew under perfect control.

The rage that swelled up in Ken's breast as he heard the ruffian of Lukwe give orders on his ship was too fierce for words. And he was powerless. It was several days now since Ken King had trod the deck of his own ketch. During those days he had been a prisoner below, and his mate of the Dawn had been a prisoner with him.

Dandy Peter, who had stowed himself away on the Dawn before she sailed out of Lalinge, had gained the upper hand—and kept it! At first it had seemed impossible to the skipper and mate of the Dawn that the reckless rascal of Lukwe could get away with so desperate an enter-

prise. But they had had to admit it since.

Lompo and Lufu, Kolulo and Tomoo, and Danny the cooky-boy, were thoroughly daunted by Dandy Peter—by the revolver that was always ready to his hand and the glint in his wicked eyes. And Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain, who might have taken desperate chances, was locked in the forecabin. Every hour King of the Islands had hoped that the Kanakas might make some move—that the sea-lawyer might be caught off his guard. But it had not happened yet. If Dandy Peter ever slept, it was like a weasel, with one eye open.

Kit Hudson rose from the lockers and strode restlessly about the cabin. King of the Islands, sitting on the edge of the table, watched him in silence. They had the use of their legs, but their hands were secured. Strong tapa cords were knotted on their wrists. They could use their hands for eating, but not for resistance. More times than they could remember, they had strained their strength on the cords—tried their teeth on the knots.

But it had been futile, and at frequent intervals Peter Parsons inspected the bonds, and saw that they were safe. And when Danny was sent down to give them food and drink, the sea-lawyer always came, too, revolver in hand. The rascal who had seized Ken King's ketch

like a pirate on the high seas took no chances.

It was hot in the cabin, and stuffy. The tropical sunlight blazed on the skylight overhead. Through the portholes only a waste of waters was to be seen—no sign of land; no sight of a ship. The sea-lawyer who was sailing a stolen ship was keeping to unfrequented waters.

"How long's this going to last?" muttered Hudson. "If a man had a chance—a ghost of a chance!"

"Will that scoundrel give us a chance?" said Ken bitterly. "He's got our ship—and got us! Koko's locked up safe, and the other Kanakas dare not lift a finger! If I ever get my hands on Dandy Peter—"

"He's coming!" grunted Hudson.

There was a footstep on the companion ladder. Danny the cooky-boy came down, carrying a tray with food. Close on his heels came Peter Parsons, dapper and neat in spotless ducks and pipe-clayed shoes. Kit Hudson made a movement towards him. Helpless as he was—unable to use his hands—it seemed as if he would hurl himself at the dandy of Lukwe.

"Belay it!" grinned Parsons, tapping the butt of Hudson's own revolver, which was sticking in his belt.

"You scum!" hissed the mate of the Dawn.

"Hard words break no bones!"

Maroon Island

said Peter Parsons. "Here's your rations! I'm not letting you starve!"

Danny placed the tray on the table. He grimaced apologetically at his white masters. Danny was the least reliable of the native crew of the Dawn. He was, in fact, a good deal of a rascal, and had innumerable doses of lawyer-cane for lying and thieving. But he was, in his own way, devoted to King of the Islands, and had he dared, he would have helped him, if he could. But Danny cringed with fear at the mere look in Dandy Peter's eyes.

"Me plenty solly, sar!" mumbled Danny. "Me good boy along you, sar, but this feller Danny plenty fright along feller Parsons, sar!"

"You feller Danny go along deck," Dandy Peter said.

"Yes, sar!" said the cooky-boy humbly. "Me speak along King of the Islands, sar, along that feller good master along this boy, sar."

"That's enough from you!" Parsons snapped.

"Yes, sar! Me make nice feller pie along you, sar!" said Danny, addressing his skipper. "Me tinkee you likee that feller pie, sar!"

King of the Islands nodded, with a faint smile, and Parsons chuckled again. The cooky-boy dared not make any attempt to release his master, much as he would have liked to do so. Apparently he was trying to make up for it by providing the prisoners with tasty food. The pie on the tray was undoubtedly a good pie, with a beautiful crust, for Danny was the best native cook in the South Seas. But rations were a matter of small concern to the shipmates of the Dawn now.

"You good feller boy, Danny!" said Ken. He was grateful to the cooky-boy for doing what he could, little as it was. Danny, with his back turned to Dandy Peter, closed one eye at his white master. Ken gazed at him. He realised that this was a sign—though of what he could not guess. The next moment the cooky-boy shuffled away.

KEN'S heart beat quickly. The Hiva-Oa boy had meant something. What? Was it possible that a turn of affairs was coming?

"You can eat!" said Peter Parsons, with a grin. "Your hands are loose enough for that! I'm treating you well, King of the Islands! Barney Hall would have put you over the side, I reckon!"

"You reckon you're getting away with this, Peter Parsons?" asked Hudson between his teeth.

"Looks like it!" said Parsons. "I'm raising the reef to-morrow where I'm going to maroon you—far enough out of the track of ships to keep you safe, I reckon. I shall land your boatswain with you, if I don't throw him to the sharks sooner. The rest of the crew jump to my orders. You've seen that."

"I reckon I'd no choice. My cutter's a wreck, and I'm down and out—stony broke and right on the beach! I had to have a ship to hunt for Grant Blake, the millionaire who

was lost when the Mindanao went down. I've borrowed your ship, Ken King—I reckon you can have it back when I'm done with it. But I'm making my fortune first. I'm the only man in the Pacific who knows that the Sydney millionaire is alive and cast away on a reef.

"I've got to find that reef, and I want your ship and crew till I've found it. Count yourself lucky that I'm marooning you instead of dropping you over the side. I reckon you—"

He broke off as a call came from the deck in Danny's voice.

"Feller sail he stop!"

Peter Parsons made one bound for the companion. If there was a sail in sight, the Dawn had to change her course—it was strictly needful for the sea-lawyer to keep clear of other craft.

"That fool Danny—what did he want to sing out for?" growled Hudson. "We might have been run down by a skipper who would have spotted how matters stood and given us a hand!"

They stared from a porthole. But if there was a sail on the sea, they saw nothing of it.

A minute later Dandy Peter's angry voice rang on the deck:

"You plenty too much fool. What place that feller sail he stop? You tinkee feller albatross one feller sail, you black swab!"

"Me solly, sar—me tinkee me see feller sail, eye belong me, sar!" whined Danny. There was a sound of a blow, and a howl. It was a false alarm, and it had irritated the savage temper of the sea-lawyer. The shipmates heard Danny's bare feet patter away in haste.

"Not a sail!" grunted Hudson.

"That fool of a swab—" He swung away from the porthole. "May as well eat."

Ken nodded, and they sat down at the table. With a big complication of knots on each wrist, and only a few inches play between, it was not easy to use their hands. And they had no implements—Dandy Peter was not likely to trust them with knife or fork. They had to use their fingers, like the Kanakas. Kit Hudson broke the crust of the pie, and took a chunk of it in his fingers, and Ken followed his example.

And then, instead of lifting the food to their mouths, the shipmates of the Dawn gave a simultaneous gasp. For through the opening in the broken crust a gleam of sharp steel came—the gleam of a yam-knife hidden in the pie by the cunning cooky-boy.

Dandy Peter's Luck.

KING OF THE ISLANDS jumped to his feet. His eyes glittered. His fingers trembled as he drew the knife from the interior of the pie. It was a short, sharp knife that Danny used for slicing yams in the galley. It had an edge like a razor—and they could guess that Danny had whetted it with care before he concealed it in the pie.

"Danny's no fool!" grinned Hudson, his eyes dancing.

Ken understood now that sign from

Danny—why the cooky-boy had winked at him when he placed the pie on the cabin table. He understood, too, why Danny had given that false alarm of a sail—it was to get Peter Parsons back to the deck before the pie was opened. Danny was as artful as any monkey in his native island of Hiva-Oa, and he was trying to help his white masters out of their scrape. It was not to please their palates that he had made that luscious pie—it was to convey the concealed knife to them, unsuspected by Dandy Peter.

Ken King held the knife in his fingers, his heart throbbing. Hardly more than a minute was needed to saw the keen blade across the tapa cords that held his mate's wrists together—less than a minute more, and he also would be free. Unarmed—for Peter Parsons had rooted through the ketch, securing every weapon—but free to use their hands to make a bid for the recapture of the ketch.

The sea-lawyer's revolver would not stop them, if they had a chance. And the Kanaka crew, cowed as they were, would rush to their aid if they saw them free and assailing the ruffian of Lukwe. If only Dandy Peter stayed on deck for a couple of minutes now—

"Quick!" breathed Ken. He gripped the wooden handle of the yam-knife in both hands. Silently, Hudson held up his bound wrists. Their hearts beat almost to suffocation. It was only a matter of minutes—of moments—if only they were granted sixty seconds!

"Keep her steady!" came the snapping voice of the sea-lawyer on deck.

"Yes, sar!" answered Lompo, at the wheel, obediently.

"You feller Kolulo! You put hand belong you along belaying-pin, you go along shark plenty too quick."

"No touch belaying-pin, sar, hand belong me!" came in trembling tones from the native seaman.

"Take that, you scum!" There was a blow and a fall. The yelling of Kolulo was heard. Whether the Kanaka had thought of handling the sea-lawyer with a belaying-pin or not, Dandy Peter was taking no risks. He ruled the stolen ship with a hand of iron, and was as ready with a blow as with a word.

Ken sawed at the strong rope between Hudson's wrists. The perspiration streamed down his sunburnt face. The tough tapa was parting—in a few moments the mate of the Dawn would be loose—

Crack! The report of a revolver rang through the cabin with a sudden crash that seemed deafening. Ken gave a cry. The knife, smashed from his fingers by the bullet, flew across the cabin, and clanged on the planks. He stood with numbed hands. Hudson gave a roar of rage. Standing in the companion, grinning at them over the smoking revolver, was Dandy Peter of Lukwe!

Hudson wrenched madly at his bonds, partly cut through. But they held. Perhaps it was as well for the young Australian, for Dandy Peter's revolver was aimed, his finger on the

trigger, and he would have fired without compunction had it been needed. But it was not needed—he had descended in time.

Ken stood with numbed hands, aching from the shock. His eyes burned at the grinning sea-lawyer. The disappointment was overwhelming. The chance that had seemed so promising had gone, vanished at the crack of the sea-lawyer's revolver.

Dandy Peter came across the cabin. "A near thing!" he said. "Where did you get that knife?"

Neither of the shipmates answered. Parsons crossed the cabin and picked up the yam-knife. They watched him in savage silence. For some moments the sea-lawyer was puzzled. He had searched too carefully for any weapon to have been left within reach of his prisoners. Yet they had come within an ace of cutting themselves free. But it did not take the Lukwe skipper long to guess how the matter stood. He glanced at the pie on the table, and exclaimed:

"So that was it! A close thing! The cooky-boy—that's why he called me on deck—I fancied there was something—lucky I came down to make sure." He half-raised the revolver he drove the boy trader into King of the Islands!"

Ken did not move. With teeth set, his lips drawn back in a snarl, Parsons advanced on him, and jammed the muzzle of the revolver into his face. His eyes glittered over it.

"Get moving! I'm taking no more chances with you! Get moving, you scum, or I'll shoot you dead where you stand!" With the levelled revolver. "Get into the state-room, the state-room forward. In the doorway he gave him a savage shove with his left hand, and Ken reeled over between the bunks.

Peter Parsons slammed the door, locked it, and slipped the key into his pocket. Then he turned on Hudson. The Australian was wrenching madly at the tapa cords.

"Stop it!" said Parsons, in a low voice. "Get loose, you fool, and you're a dead man! Hold your hands here! If you keep me waiting one second, I'll crack your skull before I tie you up again."

It was clear that the desperate rascal was alarmed as well as enraged by his narrow escape of having the tables turned on him. He reversed the revolver in his grasp, and it seemed for a moment that he would strike the mate of the Dawn senseless with the heavy metal butt. He was in the mood for it, in his alarm and fury. Hudson, choking with rage, held out his hands, and the sea-lawyer bound them close together, with savage tightness.

"You're safe now!" he grated. "You'll stay safe till we raise the reef where you're going to be marooned. I'm taking no more chances. Whistle for your rations, you dog!" Taking the yam-knife, the sea-lawyer returned to the deck. Hudson threw himself on the lockers with a groan of despair. The last chance was gone now.

Dandy Peter stepped out into the

brilliant sunshine on deck to meet the scared eyes of the Kanaka crew and the terrified stare of Danny. The hapless cooky-boy's heart almost died within him at the sight of the yam-knife in the Lukwe skipper's hand. He had failed and the ruthless ruffian of Lukwe knew what he had done. Danny cringed with terror. "You feller Danny!" said Parsons.

"Oh, sar, me plenty solly, sar!" howled Danny. "You no shoot along this poor boy, sar, gun belong you. This feller Danny good boy along you, sar, plenty too much altogether."

The sea-lawyer levelled his revolver. Danny dropped on his bare brown knees on the hot planks of the deck.

"You no shoot along this feller, sar!" he wailed. "This feller Danny plenty too much good boy, sar, along you."

Dandy Peter had no intention of shooting the cooky-boy—he needed all the native crew on the ketch. But for a full minute he kept the wretched Danny quaking in terror under the levelled revolver, while the other Kanakas stared on in trembling silence.

"You takee knife along that feller along cabin he stop!" said Dandy Peter, between his teeth.

"This feller Danny plenty solly, sar!" quavered the cooky-boy.

"You scum!" Parsons lowered the revolver at last. "You feller Tomoo! You takee lawyer-cane, you give that feller Danny five-five along lawyer-cane, plenty too much!"

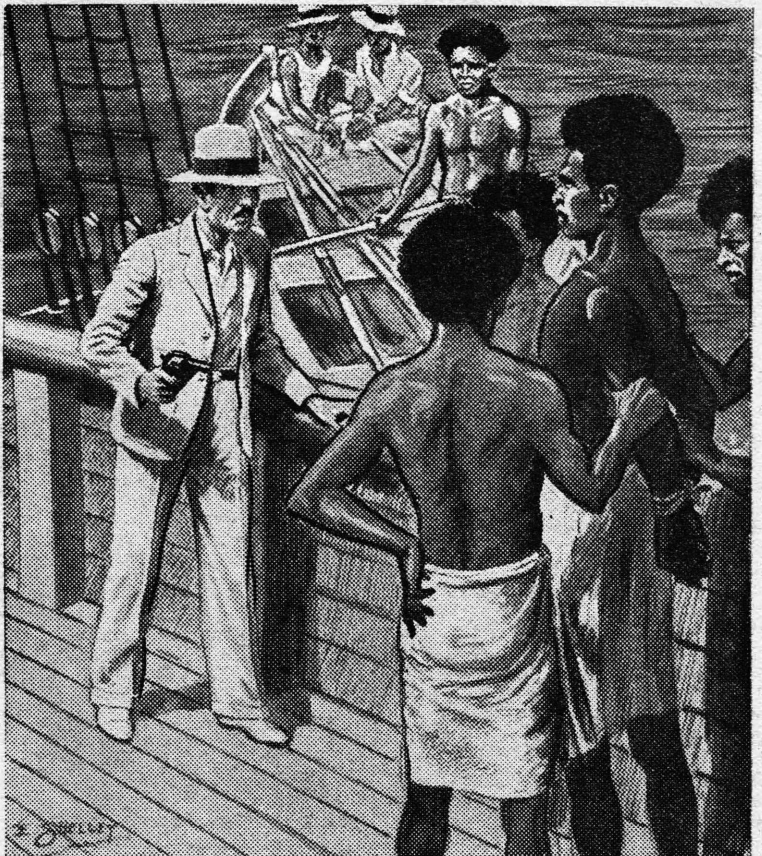
Danny panted with relief. He was used to the lawyer-cane, which had often been laid across his back by Koko. Under the threatening eyes of the sea-lawyer, Tomoo laid it on hard—he dared not do otherwise. Danny's yells rang through the ketch and far over the shining waters of the Pacific.

The cooky-boy crawled away to his galley at last, groaning. Danny was not likely to make another attempt to help King of the Islands. And no other Kanaka on board was allowed below deck. But Dandy Peter's heart was not light as he flung himself into the Madeira chair, scowling savagely at the scared Kanakas.

Until the white men were gone from the ketch, his position bristled with perils—and it was yet another day before he could raise the lonely reef where they were to be marooned. Every man on board was eager to turn on him, and a moment's unweariness would have been fatal. Dandy Peter had more nerve than any other desperado in the South Seas, but he needed it all now.

A Surprise for Barney Hall.

BARNEY HALL, the trader of Tonga, stood in his lugger, shading his eyes with the brim of his big grass-hat, staring across the curling waters. A grim figure the burly Barney made as he stood, clad only in a loin-cloth like a native, with a leather belt round it supporting his revolver. His limbs were



"You feller Koko, you likee stop along ketch?" asked Parsons. "Suppose you good boy along me, me makee you rich feller!"

"This feller Koko belong King of the Islands!" retorted the giant boatswain proudly. "S'pose me stop along this hooker, bimeby me killy feller Parsons!"

Maroon Island

burnt by the sun almost as brown as those of the six Tonga boys who formed his crew.

Burly, brown, rough-bearded, with his hard, tanned, lined face, and his brows knitted over sunken eyes, the trader of Tonga looked what he was—as rough and unscrupulous a ruffian as any within the wide limits of the Pacific Ocean. For minutes he stood staring at the ketch, savage and puzzled. He turned at last and spoke to the boat-steerer at the tiller.

"You feller Tokalaloo, you savvy that feller sail?" he snarled.

"Yes, sar," answered the Tongan. "That feller sail Dawn, sar, belong feller King of the Islands."

"I reckon she is!" growled Barney. "But, by hokey, what name that feller ketch stop along these seas?"

"This feller Tokalaloo no savvy," answered the boat-steerer.

"You black swab, you figure that I s'pose you savvy?" snarled Barney Hall. "You shut up mouth belong you!"

Tokalaloo obediently shut his mouth. The other Tonga boys, behind Barney's back, grinned at one another. Barney's temper was not good—it seldom was; but now it seemed worse than ever. The lugger stood on towards the ketch, and the graceful lines of the Dawn grew clearer every moment. Barney Hall grabbed up his binoculars and stared long and hard at the handsome little craft of King of the Islands.

The wind was from the south, and the ketch was tacking eastward, and the Tonga lugger, coming up from the south, drew nearer and nearer with a full lug. Barney's sunken eyes were keen, and the powerful glasses brought the ketch close to the view; but he was savagely puzzled by what he picked up on the deck of the Dawn. Only a week ago he had fallen in with King of the Islands, out from Lalinge, in waters far away from these.

He knew from the talk on the beach that the boy trader was on a round trip among the islands, and now he had sighted the Dawn a good hundred miles from the nearest island on Ken King's beat. And neither Ken nor his mate was to be seen on the ketch, nor Koko, whose gigantic figure would have been unmistakable. He picked up several of the Kanaka crew, but there was no white man to be seen. A Madeira chair stood on the little after-deck near the binnacle, and if a white man sat in it, Barney could not see him.

Lompo was at the wheel, and Barney saw him staring steadily back at the lugger which was, on its present course, a little astern of the Dawn on the starboard quarter. Now that the lugger was in sight from the ketch, the helmsman stared at it, but with stolid indifference. Barney saw Tomoo and Kolulo lift their heads and stare, and he discerned a lurking grin on their faces. There had been some change on the ketch since he had last seen King of the Islands, though he could not make out what it was. If there was a white master in the

Madeira chair on deck, he could not see the lugger coming on before the wind, but it was strange that the crew did not call his attention to it.

Barney Hall's rough hand closed on the butt of the revolver in his belt. He released it again, and glanced round at the Tonga boys. They had been grinning behind his back, but their dark brown faces became grave at once under his savage eyes.

"You feller boy!" said Barney Hall. "You see feller ketch belong King of the Islands, eyes belong you. This feller lugger run aboard that ketch. You no flaid along Hiva-Oa boy belong King of the Islands?"

"Us feller no flaid along Hiva-Oa boy, sar," said one of the Tongans. "Us feller flaid along white master, no flaid along Hiva-Oa boy."

"I reckon you can leave the white masters to me!" growled Barney Hall. "If I lay that ketch aboard, I'll handle King of the Islands and his mate, too!" And his sunken eyes blazed savagely.

The Tongans eyed him curiously. They were accustomed to the lawless ways of the trader, but an attack on a white man's ship on the high seas was something rather out of the common, even for the bully of Tonga. There was a perceptible hesitation in the looks of the Tonga crew. They were accustomed to backing up Barney Hall in many a lawless deed, but piracy on the high seas was a matter that might come under the hands of the High Commissioner!

"You listen along me speak, ear belong you," said Barney Hall. "Feller Parsons belong Lukwe stop along that hooker. I want him! And, by hokey, I'm getting him, if I have to shoot King of the Islands dead on his own deck!"

THE Tonga boys exchanged glances, but did not speak. Their looks showed that they did not relish the idea of shooting a white master dead on his own deck.

"S'pose we get that feller Parsons, us feller plenty rich!" said Barney Hall. "You feller boy savvy name belong Grant Blake, big rich man along Sydney he stop?"

"Us feller savvy, sar."

The name of Grant Blake, the Sydney millionaire, was well enough known to the crew. Before the millionaire had been lost in the Mindanao, a year ago, his trading ships and steamers had been on every sea from the Marquesas to the Sandwich Islands. There were few beaches in the Pacific where it was not known that a reward of five thousand pounds was offered in Sydney for news of the lost millionaire. Not that any man believed that the reward would ever be earned. The Mindanao had gone down with all hands, passengers and crew, and Grant Blake had been lost with the rest.

"Along we stop along Lukwe, me hear, ear belong me, talk along beach," went on Barney Hall. "Me savvy that feller Parsons pick up bottle along sea, along paper he stop along bottle. He savvy along paper along bottle, feller Grant Blake he stop along reef along sea, you savvy.

That feller Parsons ship along King of the Islands, along look-findee feller Grant Blake. Savvy?"

"Along feller findee Grant Blake, that feller plenty too much rich!" went on Barney Hall. "S'pose we get feller Parsons, get paper belong him, we findee Grant Blake, every feller belong this lugger plenty rich. Me give every feller whaleboat."

There was a cackle from the Tonga crew, and every eye gleamed. To possess a whaleboat was the dream of every islander's life. Barney Hall had touched the right chord. From the mats at the bottom of the lugger the Tonga boys sorted out axes and knives. There was no doubt now that they would back up the bully of Tonga to the limit!

The trader turned his eyes on the ketch again. Two or three of the Hiva-Oa crew were staring at him, close at hand now. But if there was a white man in the Madeira chair, he had not risen, and knew nothing of the lugger coming on swiftly before the wind. The Tonga trader watched intently. He was puzzled, but he was savagely determined. At their meeting a week ago, King of the Islands had denied that Peter Parsons was on board the Dawn, unaware then that the sea-lawyer was stowed away in the hold. Hall, assured that the Lukwe adventurer was there, had not believed him.

But after the Dawn had left him astern, Barney Hall had given up the hope of having a share in the search for the lost millionaire, and had gone back to his trading. Now he had sighted the Dawn again, unexpectedly, in waters where King of the Islands had no trading business. What did that mean, except that Dandy Peter was setting him a course for the unknown reef where the Sydney millionaire was a castaway? It seemed certain enough to the Tonga trader. And Barney Hall was ready for any desperate deed to snatch the prize from the grasp of his rivals.

But the unwariness of King of the Islands perplexed him. Their last meeting had been hostile—Barney had been flung into the sea from the deck of the Dawn. Now he was coming down on the ketch before the wind hand-over-hand, and if Ken or Kit Hudson saw him, neither could doubt that he was coming as an enemy. And if they did not see him, why did not the Kanakas report the sail? Any sail, in those solitary waters, would have been heeded—and the Hiva-Oa crew remembered Barney as their master's enemy. Yet they stared at the lugger in silence, without a sign.

It was a strange mystery to Hall. But it gave him the chance he wanted of laying the ketch aboard. On her present tack, the Dawn was simply asking for it. But if she had chosen to run, the wheel hard-a-starboard would have sent her spinning away from the lugger, and with her superior sailing powers she would have left the lugger standing. King of the Islands was not the man to run—yet any peaceful trader might well have avoided the meeting when it was so easily to be avoided. But

the Dawn swept on the north-eastern tack, and the lugger ran at her like a shark on its prey. Unless at the last minute they jammed over the wheel—

But Lompo, at the wheel, stood like a statue. His last order had been to keep her steady, and he was keeping her steady. Barney Hall breathed hard and deep. It was a matter of minutes now if King of the Islands did not wake to his danger. Was he below—were both the shipmates below—leaving the deck to unthinking natives—or what? It was a puzzle—it beat Barney Hall. But it was what he wanted, and his eyes gleamed under his shaggy brows as the lugger glided swiftly on.

He glanced round at his crew. Their dark faces were set and fierce, and every dusky hand had a weapon. They were good to deal with the Hiva-Oa boys if there was resistance, He fixed his eyes on the ketch again. A matter of minutes and he would hook on and leap aboard over the low rail; and if King of the Islands was there, if he showed fight, it would be hand-to-hand. Luck could not have stood by him better. In brilliant sunlight, on a wide sea, he was taking his enemy by surprise; it was such luck as he had never dreamed of—such luck that it seemed unreal.

Hardly half a cable's length separated the two vessels when a figure in white ducks rose from the Madeira chair on the deck of the Dawn. Barney Hall caught his breath. The back of the figure was to him, but he knew Dandy Peter Parsons. His teeth shut hard; his hand grasped his revolver. Even then the dandy of Lukwe did not look round—and of Ken King and Kit Hudson there was no sign. A minute more— The lugger rushed on!

"Heave-to, You Lubber!"

DANDY PETER rose from the chair and stretched himself and yawned. In the blazing heat of the tropic day he had almost slept. Dozing in the Madeira chair, he had not quite fallen into slumber—he dared not. Indeed, it could hardly be said that the sea-lawyer had slept at all in the days and nights since he had stolen Ken's ship and taken command of her. If he had slept, it was in cat-naps, with one eye open.

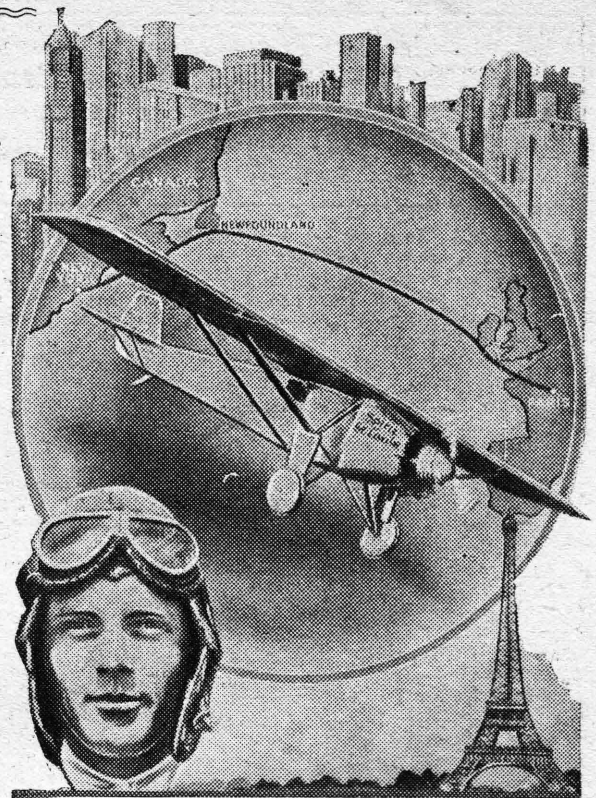
Never had there been a chance of taking him off his guard. There had been watchful eyes and ready hands, and had he been caught napping a crashing belaying-pin or a whizzing knife would have ended his command of the ketch. Only too well the desperado knew it. Incessant vigilance was the price of his safety, and so far he had not failed.

Now, in the drowsy heat, he had almost yielded to sleep. Yet Lompo, close at hand as he stood at the wheel, was aware that if he made a hostile movement the seemingly dozing white man would leap into instant activity. And Kolulo, and Lufu, and Tomoo, and Danny had the same certainty. For a long time Dandy Peter had sprawled there at ease, his face shaded by his Panama hat, and the Kanaka crew had not ventured to take risks.

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Great Adventures.—No. 9.

LINDBERGH'S LONE FLIGHT ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

He rose at last to his feet, stretching and yawning, perhaps some sixth sense warning him of danger, though not from the crew. He became instantly aware of the Kanakas watching him intently—not with hostile or threatening looks, but with an intense curiosity and alertness. Danny's fat face peered out of the galley, with the same intent expression on it. Dandy Peter drew a quick, sharp breath, and by instinct his hand went to his revolver.

His swift, suspicious glance shot along the deck. There was nothing to alarm him. The fo'c'sle was safely locked, holding Koko a prisoner in its dusky interior. Ken and Hudson were safe below. The crew were all under his eyes. Yet there was danger, and he knew it. On board the Dawn, none; and there was only one other possible source of peril—a sail or steamer on the sea.

And with that thought flashing in his alarmed and suspicious mind, Dandy Peter swept a quick, fierce glance round at the shining, blue Pacific—and a yell of rage left his lips at the sight of the lugger rushing down on the starboard quarter. Now he knew the cause of the crew's silent intentness; now he understood their air of suppressed expectation. They had seen the lugger afar, and not a word, not a sign, had warned him of it.

Whether Barney Hall came as a friend or a foe to King of the Islands mattered little to the Hiva-Oa boys, as matters stood; that he came as a

foe to the man who had seized Ken's ship was enough for them. The coming of any white man spelled danger to the adventurer who was sailing another man's ship—and to that danger they had left him, unwarned. A few minutes more and Hall would have been aboard, and no native's hand would have been raised to stop him.

Dandy Peter's eyes blazed with fury as he realised it. He glared at the brown, tanned face of Barney Hall in the lugger, and Hall's eyes glittered back at him. The lugger spun on. Hall, standing on the gunwale with his hand on a guy-rope, was ready to leap. A minute more—

"Hard-a-starboard!" yelled Dandy Peter. Without waiting for Lompo to obey the order, he leaped at the wheel and wrenched it over. Lompo shrank, scared, from the fiendish rage in his face. The ketch's nose swung away, and there was a roar of rage from Barney Hall.

"Stand by, you swabs!" roared Dandy Peter. "Stand by, you feller boy! You stop along rope, you black scum!"

He fired a shot over the Kanakas' heads, and they rushed to obey him. Then he leaped to the taffrail and stared at the lugger. The Dawn, swinging away before the wind, had eluded Barney Hall, but only just in time. The swift change of position brought the lugger astern, but she was so close that Parsons could read

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Maroon Island

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every line in the furious, disappointed face of the Tonga trader. Hall's brown fist came up with his revolver.

"Heave-to, Peter, Parsons!" His bellow came down the wind. "Heave-to, you Lukwe lubber!"

Dandy Peter laughed savagely. His escape had been narrow, but he had escaped! The Dawn, if he liked, could sail two fathoms to Barney Hall's one. His slim hand came over the taffrail with a revolver in it.

"Barney Hall, you nigger-stealing, pearl-poaching swab, what are you doing in these waters?"

"Heave-to!" roared Hall.

"Likely!" grinned Dandy Peter.

"What have you done with King of the Islands, you swab? Have you put him and his mate over the side?" roared Hall. It was easy for the bully of Tonga to see that Dandy Peter was in command of the ketch.

Parsons did not answer. He lifted his revolver and glanced along the barrel. There was a howl from Tokalaloo as a bullet tore a strip of skin from his brown arm. He jumped and released the tiller, and the Tonga boys ducked for cover. As the lugger yawed, Barney Hall threw up his revolver and fired at the grinning face over the taffrail of the Dawn.

THE sea-lawyer ducked. The next moment he was pumping bullets at the lugger. Hall, with a roar of rage, drove the boat-steerer back to the tiller, and the lugger held on. A bullet from the ketch spun the gras-hat on his head, another grazed his arm, another tore through his rough beard. The Tonga boys, with howls of alarm, hunted cover from the raining lead.

Barney Hall, frantic with rage, opened fire again—but the gun went crashing from his hand as a bullet tore along his arm, taking off a strip of skin from elbow to shoulder. The blood ran down his dingy loincloth, and he clapped his left hand to his right arm, yelling with fury.

The wind carried back Dandy Peter's mocking laugh, and he could see the sea-lawyer's grinning face and the flash of his white teeth. Mad with rage, the Tonga trader shook his left fist at the grinning face over the receding taffrail of the Dawn. Dandy Peter fired a last shot that ripped a patch of skin from his tanned cheek.

Down the wind from the lugger came the hoarse voice of the bully of Tonga, roaring with rage. But Parsons gave him no further heed now. With the wind abaft, the Dawn was walking away from the Tonga lugger, and the sea-lawyer had nothing to fear from him. In a few minutes the lugger was low on the sea astern.

Dandy Peter reloaded his revolver coolly. The Kanakas were watching him with eyes of fear. Lompo's brown limbs trembled as the sea-lawyer's eyes turned on him, glinting.

"You see feller lugger, eye belong you," said Parsons. "What name you no sing out, along you see feller lugger he comey?"

"Me no savvy, sar!" stammered Lompo.

"You no sing out, along you likee feller Hall kill this feller plenty too much!" snarled Parsons. "My word! Me knock a dog-watch outer your black hide." His clenched fist crashed into the helmsman's brown face, sending Lompo spinning on his back. There was a yell from Lompo as he went crashing down. Dandy Peter grasped the wheel. "You feller Lompo!" With his free hand, he aimed the revolver at the sprawling Kanaka.

"Get up, you swab! You stop along deck, my word, me shoot along gun plenty too quick!"

Lompo staggered to his feet.

"Takee wheel, you scum!" snarled Parsons, and the Hiiva-Oa boy, panting, frightened to the marrow of his bones, obeyed. Dandy Peter turned to the crew. They backed away in fear from his evil eyes.

"You likee this feller go finish!" he snarled. "You tinkee this feller go finish along feller Hall, you likee plenty too much. You scum!" With his clubbed revolver in his grasp, he rushed at the crew. The burly Kanakas scattered with howls of terror from the scoundrel of Lukwe. But they scattered in vain. With the heavy pistol-butt Dandy Peter struck crashing blow after blow, knocking them right and left. He glared at them like some savage demon, as they sprawled groaning on the deck.

"My word! Me teach you feller 'bey order along me!" he snarled. "S'pose you see feller sail, eye belong you, you sing out plenty quick!"

"Yes, sar!" groaned Kolulo, rubbing his bruised head. "Us feller sing out plenty too quick, sar, s'pose see sail eye belong us feller, sar!"

Parsons thrust the revolver back into his belt. He stood at the taffrail and stared back across the sea, red in the shining sun. Only a faint speck in the distance told that Barney Hall's lugger was still keeping on her course in the wake of the swift ketch. Parsons laughed mockingly. Barney Hall was welcome to keep his mast-head in sight till the fall of night hid it from his eyes, if he liked.

Till the sun was gone the ketch fled on before the wind. Not till then did Dandy Peter tack eastward and resume his former course, making for the lonely reef where King of the Islands was to be flung ashore from his stolen ship.

On a Speck of Land!

KING OF THE ISLANDS dragged himself wearily from the bunk, and stood at the porthole staring out at the sea. A night and most of a long day had passed since the sea-lawyer had locked him in the state-room. From the porthole a shaft of bright sunlight fell across the little room. During those weary hours neither food nor drink had been brought to him. The heat in the state-room was stifling, and thirst dried his throat. His arms ached from the tapa cords.

Sometimes he heard Kit Hudson stirring in the adjoining cabin. Once or twice they called to one another through the locked door. Since his narrow escape, the rascal of Lukwe had been merciless—he was not taking a chance with his captives again. The teak door between the shipmates remained shut and locked—they could not hope to help one another, and there was no help from the cowed crew.

They could only wait till the ketch raised the lonely speck in the boundless Pacific where they were to be cast ashore. Hope of turning the tables on their enemy was dead in their breasts now. The long minutes seemed like hours—the hours like days—but the weary time passed, and now it was near the finish. The sounds of activity on the deck above told King of the Islands that Dandy Peter was in sight of his destination.

From the porthole he could see only the waste of waters. Exactly what course Dandy Peter had steered he did not know, but he knew that it lay east and by north. The ketch was somewhere in the watery wilderness east of the Marshalls and the Gilberts. He knew that much. Dandy Peter was taking little risk of the maroons being picked up when once he had landed them.

The ketch was running down to some lonely uninhabited islet, some speck on the boundless Pacific. There the shipmates were to be marooned—while the sea-lawyer sailed away in the stolen ship, to seek for the lost millionaire—to hold him to ruthless ransom if he found him!

And desperate as the Lukwe ruffian's game was, he was succeeding in it—he had the ship and the crew he needed, and King of the Islands could not lift a finger to stop him. Ken ground his teeth as he thought of it. A day should yet come when he would reckon with Dandy Peter of Lukwe.

"Ken!" came Hudson's voice.

"Ahoy!" called back Ken.

"They're making the landfall! The game's up, old man! If ever I get my hands on Peter Parsons again—" The Australian's voice was husky with rage.

Ken laughed wearily. "Same here! But we're getting no chance! Who would ever have dreamed that a sea-thief could get away with a game like this? But I reckon that sea-lawyer wins, and we're for it, Kit."

Ken moved back to the porthole. He could see nothing of the island ahead, so far. But he had not long to wait now. He could hear the creaking of blocks and tackle. The ketch ceased to move through the water. Then, as the Dawn was hove-to, the island came within his range of vision.

"Maroon Island!" The words dropped from his lips, and there was something like despair in his heart. The sunlight glimmered on a tiny lagoon, with a shelving beach of sand and powdered coral, backed by tall

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Maroon Island

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palms, with black, impenetrable bush rising on the slopes of a hill beyond. Surf broke on the sharp coral reefs that showed over the blue waters, creaming white in the sun, with a dull boom that was incessant.

There was no entrance to the lagoon for a ship, even for so small a craft as a ketch. That mattered nothing to Dandy Peter, who was there only to land his prisoners and have done with them. The Dawn had' have to hardly more than a cable's length from the creaming surf on the reef. The weather was calm, and the wind light—on a rough day it would have been perilous to approach the lonely island. Coral reefs, above and below the curling blue water, ran far into the Pacific, spelling deadly danger to any craft.

Ken's eyes were fixed on the dark jungle-clad hill beyond the glimmering little lagoon. Its bare lava-rock summit rose conically, almost like a spire, against the deep blue of the sky. Once before King of the Islands had seen that spire-like lava summit, the remains of a volcano extinct centuries ago, when he had been driven far out of his course in the grip of a typhoon.

Only when a ship was driven far out of her course did any seaman's eye fall on that high lava rock; or, on still rarer occasions, when some hapless maroon was landed there. The island was marked on no chart, but its existence was known, and tales were told on the beaches of crews marooned there by South Sea pirates in old days—tales, true or false, from which the lonely speck of land derived its name.

"Maroon Island!" repeated Ken. Not a lonelier speck of land, probably, in all the wide stretches of the Pacific. The sea-lawyer of Lukwe knew the Pacific like a book, and he had chosen well. Many a long year might elapse before the maroons on that lonely island sighted a sail rising from the sea.

The key grated in the lock and Ken turned to the door. It was flung open, and Peter Parsons stood there, grinning at him. "Land at last, King of the Islands! Step on deck." Ken followed him in silence. With his hands bound, he stumbled up the companion to the deck.

Hudson was already there, his face pale with rage in the brilliant sunlight. The whaleboat had been lowered, and Kolulo and Lufu were in it. Lompo and Tomoo and Danny, on deck, looked sadly at their white master. They could not help him, and they had to look on while he was taken ashore and abandoned on that desolate isle. The faithful Koko was still locked in the forecabin.

A few things for the use of the maroons had been thrown into the boat. Dandy Peter was ruthless where his own safety was concerned, but he was not inhuman. But there was no weapon of any kind, not even a knife.

Ken looked at the lonely island, and at the surrounding sea—vast,

limitless, stretching as far as the eye could reach, without a sign of other land, or of a sail, or of a native canoe.

"You're marooning us there, Parsons?" he asked.

"I reckon you'll be safe on that spot of land, King of the Islands," Parsons laughed. "When I've found Grant Blake, I reckon I'll send your ketch back to Lalinge, and give your friends your bearings—they can look for you if they like. The South Seas will be done with me when I've handled Grant Blake's fortune." He broke off, and turned to the watching Kanakas.

"You feller boy, you put white feller along boat!" he rapped.

Lompo and Tomoo, with clouded brown faces, lifted their bound skipper down the low side of the ketch into the waiting whaleboat. Hudson was dropped after him. Lufu and Kolulo placed them in the stern.

Then Koko was brought out of the forecabin. The giant boatswain of the Dawn blinked in the sunlight, and then his eyes fastened on Dandy Peter, glittering with rage and vengeance. Koko's sinewy arms were bound behind his back, and he was powerless. And the revolver was in Dandy Peter's hand.

PARSONS paused, regarding the Kanaka boatswain keenly. He would have been glad to keep Koko on board—the best man in the crew. But Koko, as he often said, was no common Kanaka, and he was not likely to jump to orders like the Hiva-Oa boys. He had been kept a prisoner, like his white masters till now, and his look showed how little his spirit was subdued.

"You feller Koko, you likee stop along ketch?" asked Parsons. "S'pose you good boy along me, me makee you rich feller."

"This feller Koko belong King of the Islands," answered the boatswain. "S'pose rope no stop along hand belong me, me killy feller Parsons plenty too quick altogether!"

Parsons laughed. "You wantee stop along island, along no ship he comey, along you never see face belong any other feller boy any more altogether?"

"Me wantee stop along King of the Islands, white master belong me," said Koko. "S'pose me stop along this hooker, bimeby me killy feller Parsons."

"Throw that feller Koko along boat!" snapped Parsons.

The boatswain was dropped into the whaleboat. At a sign from Parsons, Lompo and Tomoo followed, and then the scoundrel of Lukwe jumped lightly down. Only the cooky-boy was left on the ketch while the boat made the trip to the shore. Dandy Peter was taking no risks of the Kanakas making sail and leaving him in the lurch.

The oars splashed into the water, and the Hiva-Oa boys pulled for the reef. Parsons steered into a channel in the coral aryl brought the boat alongside a flat shelf of rock, hardly a foot above the water.

The Kanakas held the boat fast, and

Parsons signed to the shipmates to step out. For a moment King of the Islands hesitated. The dark, handsome, wicked face of the sea-lawyer hardened, and his grip closed on his revolver-butt. With a deep breath, the boy trader stepped out on the rock. Kit Hudson followed him, in silence, and then Koko. At a word from Parsons, the Kanakas tossed ashore the few supplies that had been brought for the maroons.

Parsons tossed a sheath-knife on the rock.

"I reckon you can cut yourselves loose," he said. "You'll have plenty of time to get loose and scramble across the reefs before the tide rises."

Koko pounced on the knife. He gripped the handle with his flexible toes, which Koko, like a true Kanaka, could use as a white man used his fingers, and jerked the blade from the sheath. A moment more, and Koko, with the knife firmly gripped in his toes, was sawing at Ken's bonds.

Parsons burst into a laugh. He could read the Kanaka's thoughts, but he was not likely to give the maroons a chance of making a desperate attempt to seize on the boat.

"You feller boy, you push off, oar belong you!" he rapped.

The four Kanakas in the boat did not stir. At the last moment it seemed that the Hiva-Oa crew were making up their minds to resist, to give their white master a chance. But it was only for a moment. The sea-lawyer of Lukwe was not a man to be trifled with.

"You hear me, ear belong you?" he roared, and with the butt of his revolver he struck the nearest Kanaka a savage blow, sending Kolulo crashing into the bottom of the whaleboat. "Yessar!" panted Lompo, and he seized his oar and drove at the rock, and the whaleboat spun away.

The other Kanakas put out the oars. The whaleboat glided down the coral channel and slid into the open sea. Dandy Peter, as he cleared the reef, looked back with a mocking grin.

Koko had freed King of the Islands, and Ken, taking the knife, cut loose the mate and the boatswain. The boat had almost reached the ketch. Standing on the rock, with the water lapping at their feet, the three maroons gazed after the boat.

Dandy Peter waved a hand in ironical farewell. The whaleboat bumped on the Dawn, and he jumped lightly on board. The Kanakas followed him, and the boat was swung up to the davits.

King of the Islands, in bitter silence, watched as the sails were shaken out and picked up the wind. The shipmates of the Dawn were marooned, lost on a speck of land in the boundless Pacific, while the sea-lawyer of Lukwe sailed away in quest of a fortune in a stolen ship!

Phew! That IS tough luck, isn't it? But they're tough chums, and Next Saturday's story will tell how Ken King and his companions make the best of a very bad job on this awful island!