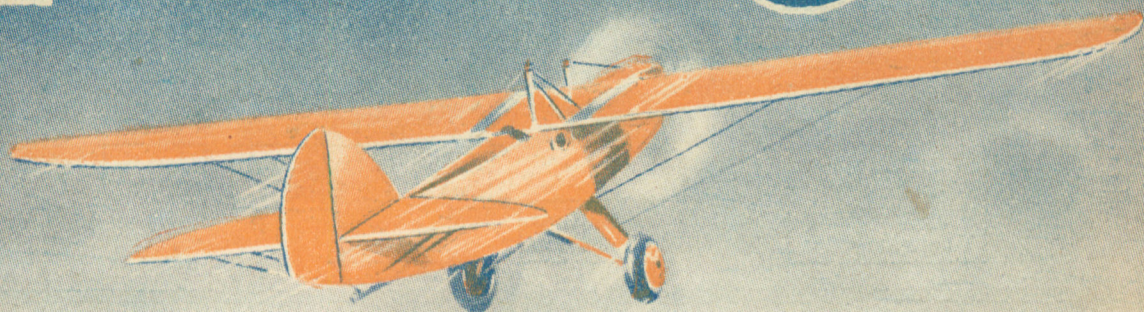


EVERY SATURDAY
WEEK ENDING MARCH 17TH 1934
NO 319 VOL 13

The **MODERN BOY** 2^D



The
SPECK
that
CONQUERED
SPACE

SOUTH SEAS TREASURE

Great lumps of precious Pink Coral on a South Seas Island—and Trouble with a very big "T"—and KEN KING, the Boy Trader, in the thick of it all!

By

Charles Hamilton

"Belay Your Jawing-Tackle!"

"ADMIRER and estimable sir, I—"

Mr. Jam, the half-caste trader in false pearls, spoke unheeded. Bound to the mizzen-mast of the Dawn, he slumped against the polished cedar, his fat face streaming perspiration, his eyes, peering from rolls of fat, fixed on King of the Islands.

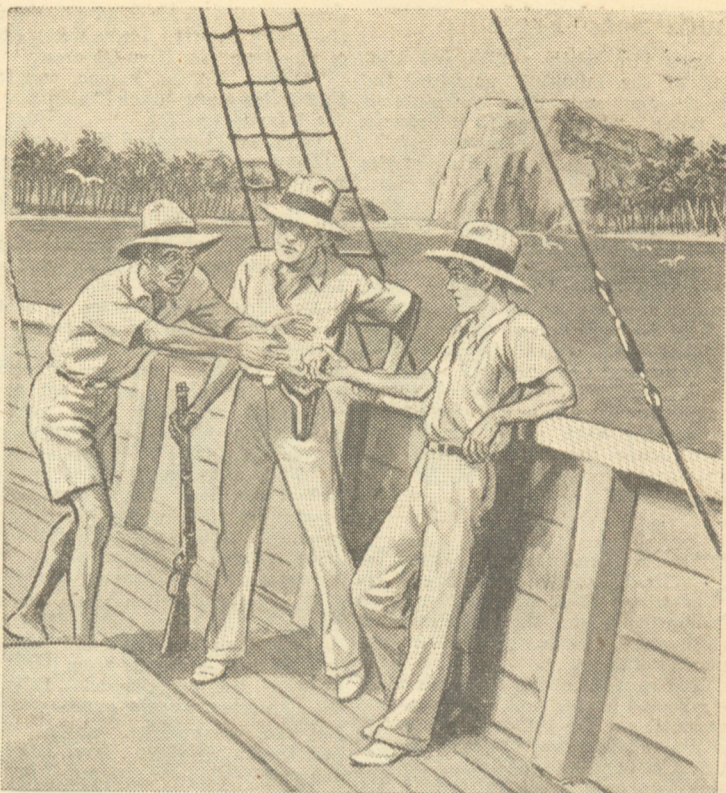
Ken King, the boy trader of the Pacific, did not heed him—did not hear him! In the sunlight that shone down on the lagoon of Tunaviva Ken's face was bright, his eyes dancing. He leaped from the whale-boat to the deck of the ketch—and it seemed like a dream to him—a happy dream—to be treading once more the deck of his own ship.

Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain, grinned with delight, till he showed every magnificent tooth in his head. The Hiva-Oa crew were grinning, too—Danny the cooky-boy dancing with glee.

Kit Hudson, the Australian mate of the Dawn, gripped his shipmate's hand as he came aboard—a grip that told more than words. Every face on board the Dawn was bright—save the olive face of Mr. Jam, bound to the mizzen. Bitter enmity, rage, and terror mingled in that fat, olive face.

"My sainted Sam!" said King of the Islands. "It's good to be on board again, Kit—it's good! It's good to see you, old man! Those swabs—" He made a gesture towards the high basaltic cliff by the reef passage. On the rock-terrace, high up the cliff, a number of figures could be seen, among them Pinto, the white man on Tunaviva, gazing at the Dawn. "Those swabs told me you were food for fishes."

"They believed so," said Hudson, with a cheery grin, "and I came as near to it as a man could, and live! When they got you, they pitched me from the cliff and the tide carried me out to sea—"



Hudson waved his hand towards the lugger, moored alongside the Dawn.

"That's Mr. Jam's lugger," he said. "It was lucky for me that the scoundrel was coming back to Tunaviva, Ken! I was at the last gasp when I struck the tow-rope of his dinghy and got into it—and I had an argument with Mr. Jam afterwards and took command of his lugger for him."

Ken laughed.

"Estimable and most admirable sir!" squealed Mr. Jam.

But the Eurasian squealed unheeded by the shipmates of the Dawn.

"You shut up mouth belong you, you plenty bad feller!" said Koko. "You no sing out along white master belong me talkee along feller Hudson."

"And you ran into the lagoon in the lugger?" asked Ken.

"They towed me in," grinned Hudson. "I lay doggo in the cuddy, with a gun in my hand, and Mr. Jam was as meek as a lamb. And now I've traded the rascal for you, Ken—he's the man who gives orders to the gang on Tunaviva, and he gave Pinto his orders to send you back to the Dawn, otherwise—Hudson's jaw set grimly—"I was going to drop him to the sharks in the lagoon."

"Plenty good that feller makee kai-kai along shark stop along lagoon, sar!" said Koko. "This feller Koko put that bad feller along lagoon plenty quick, sar."

Koko stepped towards the bound pearl-trader. A yell of terror from Mr. Jam rang over the ketch.

"Honourable captain," he yelled, "please to intervene with considerable promptness."

"Belay it, Koko!" said King of the

"Look!" said Ken. The outcast of Tahiti came towards him at a bound, and snatched the lump of precious coral from Ken's hand.

Islands. "That swab has been traded for us, and he's going free."

"Certitude was ample that estimable captain would keep compact!" gasped Mr. Jam, though his trembling terror belied his words. "Now that admirable skipper is free as bird on wing, let this Mr. Jam execute prompt departure."

"The sooner the better!" snapped King of the Islands.

"We've got to keep faith with the swab!" said Kit Hudson. "I've used him to get you out of the clutches of his gang, and he's got to go!"

Koko gave a grunt! But the word of the white masters was law, and he said no more. At a sign from King of the Islands, Lompo started to unfasten the knots of the rope that secured the fat trader to the mizzen. Billy the Beachcomber, the outcast of Tahiti, came forward with a dark scowl on his face. Keeping faith with a man whom he feared in the very marrow of his bones did not appeal to him.

"You're mad, King of the Islands!" exclaimed the beachcomber. "You're mad if you let him go! I tell you, that man's a demon—shivering coward as he is, he's more dangerous than all his gang put together! You may be able to handle Pinto and his crew, now you're free again—but I tell you you'll never handle that half-caste! He'll get the upper hand of you if you let him run."

"A promise is a promise!" rapped Kit Hudson "Belay your jawing-tackle, my man!"

South Seas Treasure

"Keep him while you've got him, King of the Islands!" persisted the beachcomber, unheeding the mate of the Dawn. "Fling him to the sharks while you've got the chance."

"That's enough!" said King of the Islands curtly.

"You're a fool!" snarled the outcast of Tahiti. "Do you fancy that he would keep faith with you? Let the sharks have him—"

"Admirable sir," gasped Mr. Jam, his eyes almost starting through their rolls of fat with terror, "breaking of pledged faith would be iniquitous and deplorable proceedings."

"Have no fear, you rascal!" said King of the Islands scornfully. "You are dealing with white men! You feller Lompo, you let that feller Jam loose plenty too quick."

"Yes, sar!"

THE rope fell from Mr. Jam's fat limbs, and he stood free. He wiped thick perspiration from his brow, while the beachcomber, gritting his teeth, glared at him almost wolfishly.

"You're mad, King of the Islands!" he repeated hoarsely. "I tell you that fiend will get the better of you yet."

"We're taking our chance of that!" said Ken contemptuously. "Do you think we could break faith with the swab?"

"You're a prisoner still, so far as leaving the island goes. You can't sail out of the lagoon with riflemen on the cliff riddling you with bullets. Keep the swab as hostage, at least."

"Silence!" snapped Ken. "Stand back!"

The beachcomber, snarling an imprecation, stood back. King of the Islands, fixing his eyes on Mr. Jam, pointed to the whaleboat.

"Get into the boat!" he rapped. "The sooner we're shut of you the better we shall like it!"

"Honourable captain will not lawlessly appropriate lugger belonging exclusively to this Mr. Jam!" said the pearl-trader. "I will take immediate and prompt departure in lugger."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," answered King of the Islands coolly. "Get into the boat, you scum, and be thankful that you're dealing with men more honourable than yourself! Get going!"

"Lawless detention of lugger and crew is act of piracy!" protested Mr. Jam.

"Put him in the boat, Koko!"

Koko grinned, and laid his powerful brown hands on the fat trader. Mr. Jam was a heavy-weight, but he swung easily in the grasp of the giant Kanaka. He gave a howl as his feet swept off the deck.

"Honourable mister!" he howled.

"You go along boat, you too much bad feller altogether!" grinned Koko. "White master belong me no wantee you stop along this hooker! You go along boat plenty quick."

Crash! The big Kanaka tossed Mr. Jam into the whaleboat like a sack of yams. He landed there with a crashing concussion that knocked most of the wind out of his fat

carcass. The boat rocked wildly under the heavy impact. There was a cackle of glee from the Hiva-Oa crew.

"Lompo, Kolulo, Tomoo, you take that feller along beach!" said King of the Islands.

"Yes, sar!" grinned the Kanakas.

They pulled the whaleboat away from the Dawn. Ken pointed to the beach on the side of the lagoon opposite from the reef passage. He had no idea of allowing his men to row under the fire of the islanders on the cliff.

Mr. Jam struggled to a seat in the stern of the boat, gasping and gurgling for breath. His black eyes blazed back at the ketch, and in his rage he shook a fat fist at the shipmates, watching him over the rail. His voice came back in a screech of fury.

"Wait a temporary short period!" yelled Mr. Jam. "You have not yet completed transaction with this person! Terrible vengeance for iniquitous injuries will approximate within measurable distance!"

The weird English made the shipmates of the Dawn smile. But there was nothing comic in the fury and hatred that gleamed from the black eyes of the pearl-trader. Billy the Beachcomber gave a grunt.

"You hear him, skipper!" he muttered. "Burn my timbers! There's still time to get him with a rifle!"

"Belay it!" snapped Ken.

The whaleboat pulled to the distant beach. It bumped in the sand, and Mr. Jam scrambled ashore through the shallows. Lompo gave him a lunge with an oar to hasten his movements, and the fat trader tripped, and sprawled in the sand. Cackling loudly, the Kanakas pushed off, and pulled back to the ketch.

Mr. Jam slowly and laboriously lifted himself to his feet. He stood for some moments panting, and shaking a fat fist at the anchored ketch. Then he started on the long tramp round the circling shore of the lagoon to join his associates at the cliff on the other side.

For a long, long time the fat figure was in sight, panting along in the tropical sunshine, till at last Mr. Jam reached the basaltic cliff and disappeared from view among the rocks.

The Light on the Lagoon!

"PINK coral!" King of the Islands smiled. The lump of coral he held in his hand glimmered pale rose in the bright sunshine. Kit Hudson stared at it in amazement. Billy the Beachcomber, leaning on the teak rail and staring gloomily towards the beach, turned his head sharply as he heard the mate's startled exclamation.

"Pink coral!" he repeated.

"Look!" said Ken.

The outcast of Tahiti came towards him at a bound. He snatched the lump of coral from Ken's hand and stared at it, glared at it, feasted his sunken eyes on it. His dark, tanned, stubbly face was lighted up.

"Burn my timbers!" said Billy

hoarsely. "What did I tell you? Didn't I tip you that there was pink coral on Tunaviva? I got it from that Kanaka at Apia—and I reckoned it was the goods! What did I tell you, skipper?"

Ken nodded. Neither of the shipmates had believed in the tale of "precious pink coral" on Tunaviva. They had run down to the loneliest island in the Society Group to give Billy the Beachcomber a chance to look for the precious coral he believed to be there—and quite unexpectedly had run into a hornets' nest. And the tale was true!

The outcast of Tahiti had searched and searched for a trace of it in vain before the trouble had started with the secret men of Tunaviva. But it was King of the Islands who, by chance, had unexpectedly found it. The beachcomber fondled the lump in his horny hands, almost crooning over it in his delight.

"But how—where—" exclaimed Hudson.

Ken pointed to the basaltic cliff, where the black faces of Santa Cruz boys could be seen watching the Dawn.

"There's a sea-cave under the cliff where those rascals keep their boats and tackle," he said. "A fissure that they've turned into a rock stairway leads down from the upper cave. I picked this lump up in the pit in the sea-cave. Whether there's more, I can't say."

"You didn't look?" snarled the beachcomber.

Ken laughed.

"I had other things to think of, my man, with my life hanging on a thread! But I reckoned I'd bring a specimen away. That's it! There may be more—bags of it, for all I know. According to the yarn you spun us, that Kanaka at Apia had picked up a lump on the beach here. That must have been before Jam and his crew hit Tunaviva, or he'd never have got away with it!"

"Years ago—fifteen or sixteen!" grunted the beachcomber. "But he found it—I knew he'd found it! Didn't I see it at Apia? And there's more—there must be more!" His horny clutch closed on the lump. "This is worth forty or fifty pounds at Sydney, King of the Islands, if we ever get out of this rat-trap alive!"

"Keep it!" said Ken indifferently.

"There's a fortune on Tunaviva—I told you, at Tahiti, that there was a fortune on Tunaviva!" muttered Billy. "You never believed me—you believe it now, I reckon! That's why those swabs are on the island!"

Ken shook his head.

"I don't know Jam's game here," he said. "I can't begin to guess what they're on Tunaviva for. I've been through their den, and there was nothing that I saw to give a clue to it. They've got some secret game on on this island—something against the law, that's certain! But it's nothing to do with your precious pink coral, my man! They know nothing of that!"

"Nothing of it—when you picked

up this lump in the sea-cave where they keep their boats—"

"I picked it up at the bottom of a deep pit that I fell into in the dark. I should never have seen it if one of the niggers hadn't dropped his torch in when Koko got him with a rock. They've never seen it, and never dreamed that it was there—or it wouldn't have stayed there till I found it!"

"That's a cert!" agreed Hudson. And Billy the Beachcomber nodded slowly. It was obvious that Jam and his crew could know nothing of the precious pink coral that lay under their very feet. The pearl-trader, if he had seen it, would have known its great value at once, and not a fragment would have remained ungathered.

"They know nothing of it!" repeated Ken. "There's a fortune under their noses if there's more of the pink coral in that pit—and they've never even dreamed of it!"

"Then—what are they doing on Tunaviva?"

Ken shrugged his shoulders. "I've puzzled over that till my head aches! We shall find out before we're through with them!"

"We've got to beat that gang!" muttered Billy. "If the pink coral's in their cave, we've got to beat them to get it. If you'd chucked that villain Jam to the sharks in the lagoon—"

"Belay it!" The outcast of Tahiti grunted and moved away, still with the lump of precious coral clutched in his horny hand. He seemed unable to take his greedy eyes off it.

Kit Hudson whistled. "The yarn was true, then," he said. "The stuff's here—though the men on Tunaviva don't know it! We shall be able to pay the expenses of this trip after all, Ken. As it's turned out, it's lucky you fell into their claws—the pink coral would never have been discovered otherwise. Suffering cats!" Hudson's eyes gleamed. "If we picked up a cargo of it, Ken, our fortunes are made—as well as that swab's!"

"We've got to deal with Mr. Jam yet!" said Ken soberly.

"We'll handle the lubber all right!" said the mate of the Dawn confidently. "They got the better of us at the start; but we've pulled through. Next win to us!"

But Ken's sunburnt face was very thoughtful as the sun sank lower to the Pacific. The beachcomber's dread of the cunning, unscrupulous pearl-trader was well founded, and he knew it. The shipmates had had a terribly narrow escape at the hands of Pinto and his crew. But Mr. Jam, coward as he was, was a much more dangerous enemy. Open attack on the ketch was hardly to be feared—the secret men of Tunaviva had tried that, and failed. But cunning and treachery were to be feared.

What Mr. Jam's next move would be, Ken could not foresee; but he knew that the move would be made. And he knew that now that the wily half-caste was in command of the

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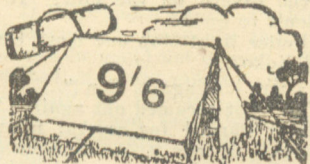
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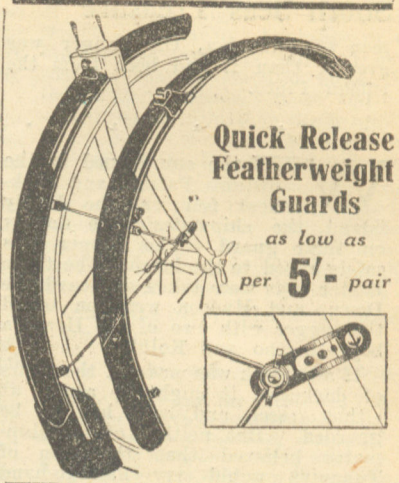
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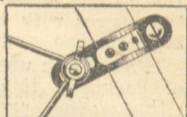
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South Seas Treasure

men of Tunaviva, the danger was greater than it had been from the ruffian Pinto.

WHEN the sun dipped in the distant Pacific, and darkness fell on the lonely island, the shipmates were doubly on their guard. The lugger was safely roped to the ketch. The three Easter boys were taken on board the Dawn, and Hudson went on board the lugger with two of the Hiva-Oa boys—Lompo and Kolulo.

If an attack was made in the hours of darkness, it might be aimed at either vessel, and both had to be guarded. But neither of the shipmates believed that the men of Tunaviva would try hand-to-hand fighting again. Yet they felt assured that the dark hours would not pass without some move from Mr. Jam.

The basaltic cliff, the shore of the lagoon, disappeared under the cloud of velvety darkness. Stars came out in the sky, glimmering on the smooth surface of the lagoon. King of the Islands, on the Dawn, and his mate on the lugger did not dream of closing their eyes. The Kanakas slept on their mats on deck—with the exception of Koko, who shared the vigil of his white masters.

The tropic night was soft and silent. Only from the distance came the gurgle of the tide in the reef passage and the boom of the surf on the outer rocky rim of the island.

The ketch swung gently to her cable as the wind from the south ruffled the lagoon. For days the wind had come out of the south—the wind that Ken King wanted to bear him back to his regular beat among the islands to trade and business. But it was useless to think of that. Escape from the lagoon was impossible so long as the enemy held command of the reef passage, the only communication with the sea.

Neither were the shipmates ready to sail till they had solved the mystery of that mysterious island. And Ken's thoughts ran, too, on the discovery of the pink coral in the sea-cave under the cliff. He had counted the trip to Tunaviva as a dead loss, but if the precious coral was found in any quantity, it might prove one of his most profitable trips. That was a comforting thought to the boy trader. The voice of Koko broke in on his reflections as he sat on the taffrail, watching the lagoon under the stars.

"Feller light stop along lagoon, sar!" said the brown-skinned boat-swain of the Dawn.

Ken slipped from the taffrail. If there was a light on the lagoon, it meant some move from the enemy.

"What place that feller light stop, Koko?" he asked.

Koko pointed with a brown finger. Directly south of the Dawn's anchorage, a light twinkled through the night. Whether it burned on the beach or in a boat could hardly be discerned. Ken fixed his eyes on it as it glimmered and winked. It was

a sign of the enemy, whatever it might portend. Hudson's voice came from the lugger alongside.

"Ken! You've spotted that glim?"

"Ay, ay!" answered King of the Islands.

"Suffering cats—it's gone!"

The light had been put out.

King of the Islands gazed into the darkness. There were men on the beach on the south side of the lagoon—the direction from which the wind came. What were they doing on the beach a mile or more from their den in the cavern on the cliff? It was difficult to guess.

"Feller light stop one more time!" said Koko.

"There it is again, Ken!"

The light gleamed out again. This time it burned for several minutes, but not in one spot—it seemed to come from a lantern or a hurricane-lamp carried in an unseen hand. Then it disappeared once more.

All was dark—and the darkness was not broken again. Ken stood in silence, staring into the night. The husky voice of Billy the Beachcomber muttered in his ear:

"They're up to something, the swabs! That demon of a half-caste is getting something ready for us! What did I tell you? If you'd chucked him to the sharks when you had a chance to—"

King of the Islands was not listening. He stepped to the side and called to Hudson on the lugger.

"They're on the beach, Kit. They've got the wind, if they mean to come down on us under sail. Is that it?"

"I'd be glad to see them, if they come!" answered the Australian grimly. His rifle was in his hands. "But they've tried that game before, and we put paid to it! It's not that!"

"Then what?"

"I reckon we shall see before the night's much older! That half-caste is as cunning as a snake!"

"Watch out, old man!"

"You bet!"

The shipmates could only wait and watch. That twinkling light on the lagoon portended a move from the enemy—but what? If it was an attack, the shipmates were ready for it—they would have welcomed it as a chance of getting the upper hand of the enemy who held them penned in the lagoon. They waited and watched, but the light was seen no more. But suddenly, softly, came the whisper of Koko:

"Feller boat come along lagoon, Tunaviva feller come along this ship, sar!"

A Very Strange Craft!

KING OF THE ISLANDS bent his ear to listen. From the silence of the lagoon came faint sounds.

Faint as they were, they told their own tale to the ear of a sailorman. A creak of a spar—a rattle of a rope—a wash of water against timber. A boat was coming—some craft at all events—and it was coming under sail. That was why the enemy had selected the southern beach as the point of departure—it gave them the wind.

Ken's straining eyes caught a shifting shadow in the dusk of the stars. He knew that it was a sail and that it was bearing down on the anchored ketch and the lugger moored alongside. He grasped his rifle, hoping and yet doubting that the men of Tunaviva were staking all on an attack. The ruffian Pinto might have tried that game again, in spite of his defeats; but it was not what Ken expected of the cunning, wily half-caste who was now in command of the men of Tunaviva. For the chances were all in favour of the shipmates. The starlight was dim, but it was good enough for shooting at close quarters, and the Santa Cruz blacks were not likely to stand under the white men's rifles. But if it was not a night attack, what did it mean?

All the crew were awake now. Danny the cooky-boy came out of his galley, rubbing his sleepy eyes. All the Hiva-Oa crew had weapons in their hands. The three Easter Islanders were awake and watching, muttering to one another in their dialect.

Koko had taken up his heavy bush-knife—a terrible weapon in his powerful hand, which had already taken toll of the men of Tunaviva. Koko was grinning, showing his gleaming white teeth. He was anxious to get to close quarters with the bush-knife in his hand.

"My word, that feller go finish plenty quick, suppose he come along this hooker!" he murmured. "This feller plenty glad that Tunaviva feller come along this hooker, sar!"

Ken did not answer. He strained his eyes in the darkness. Now he could dimly make out the shape of the approaching craft.

It was not a boat! At the first dim view it looked like a raft. But he discerned what it was. Three canoes, with long outriggers, had been lashed together side by side. Across the canoes and outriggers palm poles had been laid, forming a level platform. Only the middle canoe carried mast and sail. The platform was stacked with wood poles and branches in a huge heap.

Ken's first impression was that it was intended as a rampart against shooting from the ketch. But if that was the intention, the defence was flimsy enough—bullets would search through and through the pile.

"My sainted Sam!" muttered the boy trader. He was puzzled.

CLOSER and closer the strange craft came, the single sail full of wind. It was close enough for every eye to scan it in the glimmer of the stars. Not a human figure was to be seen on board. But it was likely enough that men were hidden in the stacks of wood.

"Say the word, Ken!" came Hudson's call from the lugger. "We can riddle them with lead at this range."

"Fire!" answered Ken.

The Australian's rifle cracked at once. The report rolled with a thousand echoes across the lagoon, flung back from the basaltic cliff. The

