

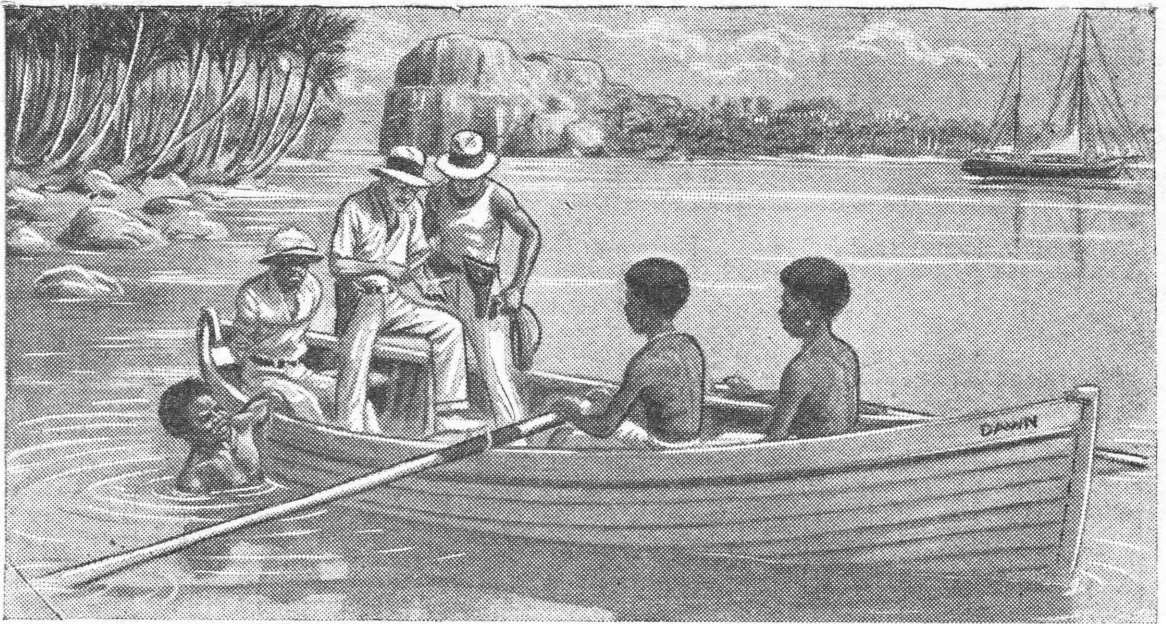
The MODERN BOY

WEEK ENDING 7TH APRIL
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EVERY SATURDAY 2^D



**AROUND
THE WORLD
IN AN HOUR!**



Koko tossed the bag of shells into the Dawn's whaleboat. Knife in hand, Hudson opened one of the shells, and Ken King watched with breathless intentness.

The LAGOON of TUNAVIVA!

COMPLETE—KING OF THE ISLANDS and his Australian chum have struck many strange mysteries in the South Seas, but never one as deep as this which hangs over the danger-filled lagoon! **By Charles Hamilton**

A Roar of Rifle-fire!

STANDING by the teak rail of the ketch Dawn, anchored in the lagoon of Tunaviva, Ken King strained his eyes through the darkness that lay like a black cloak on the lonely island of the Pacific.

It was eight bells—though the bell had not sounded on board the ketch. The lagoon glimmered dimly in the gleam of the midnight stars. The circling island surrounding the lagoon was lost to sight. Only in one spot could anything be seen of the island—where the high basaltic cliff by the reef passage hung dim and spectral in the gloom. Only the murmur of the surf on the outer reef broke the silence.

The Dawn showed no lights—not a glimmer that could guide the enemy in an attack. The wakeful crew moved like shadows in the darkness. Every eye was alert, every ear listening. Danger and death lurked in the shadows, and even the unreflecting Kanakas did not seek their tapa mats or think of closing their eyes.

Ken made a gesture towards the basaltic cliff, looming like a darker shadow against the dark sky.

"They're there!" he said. "That villain Jam, and his man Pinto, and the blacks! We can handle them, Kit, if we get to close quarters! I'd back us two and Koko against the whole gang, face to face. It's risking

the ship to leave it—but we've got to take the chance."

Kit Hudson, his young Australian mate, nodded slowly.

"If they came—in the dark—while we're gone—"

"That's the chance we've got to take!"

"And we're taking it!" agreed the mate of the Dawn.

The whaleboat was already in the water. Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain of the Dawn, stood in it, holding on to the rail with a big brown hand. Lompo and Lufu sat ready at the oars. Koko's dark eyes were gleaming in the dusk. He was keen and anxious to come to close quarters with the secret men of Tunaviva.

Keen, too, were the skipper and mate of the Dawn, but they could not help thinking of the danger to the ketch in their absence. But that, as King of the Islands said, was a chance that had to be taken if they were to come to conclusions with the enemy.

"You've got a good chance, skipper!" Billy the Beachcomber's husky voice came from the shadows. "You ain't got to climb the cliff like you did last time you tackled them and they got you. You'll pull into the sea-cave under the cliff, skipper."

"That's the idea, Kit," said King of the Islands quietly. "I picked up the lie of the land when I was a

prisoner in their hands, before you got me away. There's a cave under the cliff, with a channel in from the lagoon, and a fissure above, which they've cut into a staircase leading into the upper cave, where they've got their den. I reckon they'll be keeping watch there—"

"You can bank on that!" said Hudson, with a faint grin. "But it's neck or nothing, Ken! And a black boy on the watch is as likely to go to sleep on it as not. We're chancing it."

King of the Islands gave a last glance round the deck. The Hiva-Oa crew were all wide awake and the three Easter Island boys. He was reluctant to leave his ship to natives and such a white man as Billy the Beachcomber, the disreputable out-cast of Tahiti. But there was no help for it.

"Keep your weather-eye open while we're gone, Billy!" Ken said.

"You can lay to that!" muttered the beachcomber. His sunken eyes were full of uneasy fear as he stared round into the darkness of the lagoon. "I ain't likely to sleep, burn my timbers! Not while it's night, and that demon Jam is in the offing!"

There was no doubt that the beachcomber would be wakeful and watchful. But what sort of a defence the worthless outcast was likely to put up if the enemy came was another

The Lagoon of Tunaviva!

question. There was a loaded rifle in his horny hand, but that hand trembled as he spoke of Mr. Jam. The fat half-caste trader in false pearls had put the fear of death into the beachcomber's very bones. But the die was cast, and King of the Islands stepped down into the whaleboat, followed by his mate.

The giant Koko silently pushed off. "Washy-washy along cliff, you feller boy!" said Ken, in a low voice. "You makee plenty sure no feller noise he stop."

"Yes, sar!" murmured the Kanakas. They pulled softly, with muffled oars. The whaleboat glided away from the ketch with hardly a sound, followed by the anxious stare of Billy the Beachcomber and the rest of the crew. Softly, silently, the Kanakas pulled over the shimmering lagoon. King of the Islands and his mate sat in the stern, silent, watchful, their hands near the butts of the revolvers in their belts.

Ken glanced back; the darkness had already swallowed the ketch from sight. The softly gliding boat seemed alone in an uninhabited world of gloom.

The loom of the high cliff against the stars was a guide. It loomed nearer and darker, more clearly defined against the shadowy sky. The shipmates could hear at last the wash of the water gurgling in the sea-channel under the cliff.

Crash!

The sudden sound had an effect of thunder in the silence of the night. The whaleboat rocked wildly.

For a split second, King of the Islands fancied that the boat had bumped on a coral rock at the opening of the channel under the cliff. Then he realised that he had crashed into something that gave way under the shock—it was another and lighter craft than the Dawn's whaleboat. A startled voice panted in the darkness.

"Caramba!" It was the voice of Pinto, the Filipino, speaking in his own language in his sudden surprise and alarm, instead of the "beche-demmer" he was accustomed to use with his black crew.

"Hook on!" yelled King of the Islands. He understood at once. It had seemed only too likely that while the shipmates were planning an attack on the enemy's fastness, the enemy were planning another attempt on the ketch. And that was the case! The Filipino, in a canoe, was slipping out of the sea-channel under the cliff as the Dawn's whaleboat reached it, and the two craft had collided in the darkness.

Koko did not need bidding. His sinewy brown hand was already grasping the canoe as it rocked from the crash. There was a flash and the roar of a firearm and a bullet whizzed, but the Filipino's shot went wild. The crash had stove in the flimsy canoe and it was sinking, and the water was already up to Pinto's knees as he pulled trigger.

Two startled black faces, two pairs

of scared, rolling eyes gleamed for a second, and then a sound of splashing told that the black paddlers had leaped overboard and were swimming for it. Pinto, stumbling over in the lurching, sinking canoe, was grasped by a sinewy hand.

The canoe disappeared under his feet as he was whirled helplessly in Koko's giant grasp and pitched headlong into the whaleboat.

He crashed down, spluttering. Before he could make even an attempt to recover himself, a bare brown knee was planted on him, pinning him down, and a two-foot Malaita bush-knife flashed over him.

"Caramba!" panted the Filipino, struggling wildly.

"You hold that feller, Koko, hand belong you!" rapped King of the Islands. "No killy along feller knife."

Koko suppressed a grunt, and grasped the Filipino. Pinto, muscular as he was, crumpled up like an infant in the giant Kanaka's brawny grasp. He ceased to struggle, panting and gurgling for breath. A shrill, enraged voice was screaming from the shadows of the sea-channel under the cliff—the voice of Mr. Jam, the master of Tunaviva, the trader in false pearls.

"Unlimited and obnoxious fool, why do you let revolver go off with unnecessary and alarming bang?" yelled Mr. Jam, in his strange English. From the sea-cave the fat trader could see nothing in the darkness, and evidently did not know that the enemy were at hand. Apparently he supposed that the revolver had exploded by accident in the canoe.

Pinto, panting in Koko's powerful grip, could not answer. But from one of the black swimmers came a gasping howl.

"White feller comey, sar! White feller belong ship, belong King of the Islands, comey along this place, sar!"

There was a howl of rage from the fat trader. It was followed by the crack of a rifle, and a bullet whizzed by the whaleboat in the darkness. Mr. Jam's yelling voice was heard again:

"You feller boy! You shoot along rifle! Plenty too much gun he shoot, altogether too quick! Fire with preposterous velocity upon extraneous and obnoxious inimical persons!"

Crack, crack, crack, crack! A roar of rifle-fire thundered in the sea-cave, and hot lead rained in the lagoon.

The Secret of the Island!

KING OF THE ISLANDS set his teeth. Flash after flash came from the dark opening under the towering basaltic cliff. Lompo and Lufu grasped their oars, with quick looks at their white master. Kit Hudson gave a low whistle. Koko, bending over Pinto in the boat, knotted a tapa cord round his dusky wrists, heedless of a crackle of rifle-fire. The Filipino was a prisoner, and Koko, forbidden to handle the bush-knife, was making sure of him. Crack, crack, crack, crack! came from the sea-cave. The black crew were there with Mr. Jam, and they

were all firing now. It was a rain of lead at short range, and only the darkness saved the boat's crew from being riddled. Mr. Jam certainly could not have known whether his confederate had gone down in the canoe, or was a prisoner, or was swimming for his life—and evidently he did not care. Utterly regardless of the Filipino, he rained bullets from the sea-cave.

"Suffering cats!" breathed Hudson. "It's too thick, Ken—back water, old man!" A bullet grazed his shoulder as he spoke.

For a moment Ken hesitated. But it was only for a moment. Under that rain of lead no man in the whaleboat could have lived had he pushed on into the narrow channel into the cave under the cliff. It was necessary to retreat, and to retreat swiftly, now that the enemy were on their guard and a dozen rifles were blazing.

Lead was splashing all round the whaleboat in the darkness and ping-pong on the timbers. Lompo gave a squeal as a bullet carried away a coral comb from his hair. The game was up for the present, and King of the Islands had to make up his mind to it.

"Washy-washy along ketch!" he rapped.

Gladly the Kanakas obeyed. The hornets' nest they were in was rather too hot for their taste. Lompo and Lufu dove at the oars, and the whaleboat shot away into the darkness. Splash, splash, splash! came the rain of bullets all round them.

"Shoot—shoot!" sounded the yell of the fat trader in the cave. "Fire with considerable rapidity! Shoot!"

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

Koko rowed with Lompo and Lufu. The whaleboat sped like an arrow over the dark waters. King of the Islands stared back at the cliff with gleaming eyes. Owing to the unexpected collision with Pinto's canoe, the attempt had failed. It was a bitter pill to swallow, but there was no help for it. The whaleboat shot out of the range of the wild firing.

"Rotten luck!" muttered King of the Islands savagely.

"We've got this beauty!" said Hudson, with a grin at the savage, sullen, scowling Pinto. "You've made him safe, Koko?"

"Plenty rope stop along hand belong him, sar!" answered the boat-swain.

"We've had luck, Ken! If that scum had missed us in the dark, and got to the ketch—"

"True! And, anyhow, we've got him." King of the Islands bent over the bound man. "You scum! You were coming out to my ketch when we ran down your canoe in the dark?"

Pinto shrugged his shoulders. "Si, senior!" he answered. "You know it! This time, perhaps, your ketch would not have escaped the dynamite—but you have had the luck!" He gave another shrug. "But, to-day to you—to-morrow to me!"

"Don't bank on that, you swab!" said Ken. "You're in my hands now, and you won't get loose in a hurry."

"I am your prisoner, senior," sneered the Filipino, "but you are still a prisoner in the lagoon with

your ketch! You dare not attempt to make the reef passage. The Senor Jam will get you yet!"

"The Senor Jam doesn't seem keen on close quarters!" grinned Hudson. "He wasn't coming with you in the canoe."

"He is a coward," said the Filipino coolly. "But you will find him all the more dangerous for that! You came to your death when you sailed into the lagoon of Tunaviva. It is ruin for him, and a French convict prison, if you tell at Papeete what you have found here. But you will never leave Tunaviva alive to tell!"

"You can bank on one thing, you scum!" snapped King of the Islands. "If my ketch goes down in this lagoon, you will go down in her!"

"Quien sabe?" said Pinto, with another shrug of the shoulders.

The whaleboat thudded on the hull of the ketch. Billy the Beachcomber peered over the ténak rail with anxious, puckered eyes. From the distant cliff rifle-fire was still crackling.

"You've failed, skipper!" grunted the outcast of Tahiti. "I reckoned that demon Jam would be too wary for you. You've failed."

Ken did not trouble to answer. He stepped on board with Hudson, and the prisoner was handed up the side, and the Kanakas followed. Billy stared at Pinto.

"Burn my timbers—you've got that scum!" he exclaimed. "I reckon the bottom of the lagoon would be the safest place for him."

"Belay your jawing tackle, my man!" snapped King of the Islands. "Koko, you put that white feller along cabin, along plenty rope stop along him."

The boatswain swung Pinto down the companion. Ken followed, and lighted the hurricane-lamp. Ko'oo,

the wounded Santa Cruz boy, who was a prisoner on the Dawn, lay on the lockers, bandaged, mumbling in his sleep. His eyes opened, and he blinked in the light. Pinto gave him a quick look, and his eyes flashed. Perhaps the desperado entertained for a moment a hope of help from the black boy when he was left below.

But King of the Islands was taking care of that! Pinto was led along to the state-room forward of the cabin. There, his feet as well as his hands were securely bound by the boatswain, and he was left, Ken locking the state-room door on him.

The boy trader returned to the deck.

THE firing at the sea-cave had stopped now; all was silent on the lonely island. Ken, with a thoughtful shade on his brow, stood staring towards the tall cliff that loomed darkly against the stars.

"No chance again to-night, Ken," said Kit Hudson. "They'll be as watchful as cats till dawn."

"Ay, ay! I was not thinking of that—we've got to wait, Kit. But you heard what that swab said in the boat. We knew already, of course, that whatever Jam's game is on Tunaviva, it's a crime of some sort. Nothing else could account for his actions."

"Nothing else that I can figure," agreed Hudson. "But what it is has got me beat. All the while we've been here we've discovered—just nothing! Not a sign of anything going on on the island—and yet—"

"They're not here for nothing."

"Hardly." The Australian smiled. "It's got me beat, Ken! Unless it's pearls—a secret bed of pearls— But we've spotted no sign of a pearl fishery—not a sniff of rotting shell; not a sign—"

"They'd ample time to clear away

any traces, after spotting us in the offing, before we raised the island."

"That's true, and we know that their game was to lie hidden and wait for us to sail. They did not start the rough stuff till they found that we had come to stay. And they never knew we were after the pink coral—they never knew there was pink coral on the island. If pearls is their game, that might account for the whole thing," said Hudson, wrinkling his brows.

"This island belongs to the Society Group—that is, to the French, though it is never visited. But a discovery of pearls here, if it is noised abroad, would bring half the skippers from Papeete crowding down to Tunaviva—and most likely a French gunboat, which might not suit Mr. Jam. But—"

Hudson shook his head. He did not believe that there were pearls on Tunaviva. The secret of the strange island was a hopeless mystery to him, as to his shipmate.

"It's not pearls, Kit!" said King of the Islands. "We've figured that out before. That scoundrel Jam is a trader in false pearls—he nearly got away with a swindle on us the first time we met the swab—and a man who had the run of a pearl fishery would not trade in false pearls. It's not sense."

"No!" said Hudson. "I suppose we shall find out what the game is, if we come out with the upper hand at the finish of this tussle! But it beats me to the wide. I've struck strange mysteries in the Pacific before—but never anything so deep as this!"

"We're going to know!" said Ken quietly.

"When we get hold of Mister Jam we—"

"We've got hold of Pinto!" "Will he talk?" said Hudson, with a grin. "He's a tough nut!"

ONE GUINEA has been awarded to JOHN KNOWLES, 58, Theodocia Street, Timaru, South Canterbury, NEW ZEALAND, for this snap of the Timaru "St. Mary's" Scouts. John is standing on the extreme left of the back row

FIVE SHILLINGS will be sent to the OWNER of the RINGED HEAD if he will send his full name and address, vouched for by J. Knowles, in envelope marked "Claim," to the Editor, MODERN BOY



The Lagoon of Tunaviva!

Ken's face set.

"I'm not standing on ceremony with the scoundrel. He's attempted our lives—again and again we've only escaped by the skin of our teeth! Only this night he was coming out in the canoe with a dynamite bomb! He's going to talk—if there's any virtue in a lawyer-cane, with Koko handling it, Kit! He's going to talk—if he wants an inch of skin left on his rascally back!"

"Good egg!" said Hudson.

"Look Out for Squalls!"

UNDER the morning sunlight, Mr. Jam, the trader in false pearls, was watching the anchored ketch across the lagoon. Every now and then the fuzzy head of a Santa Cruz boy showed on the cliff. Once or twice a rifle cracked, and a bullet skimmed over the shining lagoon. But the Dawn was anchored out of effective range; the master of Tunaviva was impotent.

King of the Islands gave no heed to the bitter enemy who was watching from the distant cliff. There was no danger of an attack in the daylight. Indeed, he doubted whether there would be another attack at all. The black boys could not be given such a desperate task, and Mr. Jam was assuredly not the man to lead them. The offensive had passed from the men of Tunaviva to the crew of the ketch shut up in the lagoon.

Only one trump card was still in the fat trader's hand. His den in the basaltic cliff overlooked the reef passage, and no ship could pass below. There was but the one way out of the lagoon, and that was commanded by rifle-fire from the cliff. But if Mr. Jam watched in the fear, or the hope, of seeing the ketch attempt to run the passage, he watched for nothing. King of the Islands had no idea of sailing yet from Tunaviva.

Koko, with a grin on his brown face, had gone below. He came back with the Filipino. Pinto's legs had been freed, to allow him to walk, but his hands were bound down to his sides. His dusky face was savage and sullen. There was a gash on his swarthy cheek where one of the random bullets from the sea-cave had grazed in the night. His black eyes glittered at King of the Islands, who stood by the binnacle with a set and grim expression on his face.

"You feller Danny!" called out Koko. "You bring feller lawyer-cane along this feller Koko!"

Danny the cooky-boy brought the stout lawyer-cane, which was sometimes used on his own brown back. Koko grasped it in a muscular hand, grinning cheerfully.

"You sing out, sar," said Koko. "This feller lay lawyer-cane along back belong that plenty bad feller, altogether too much."

Pinto's eyes blazed at him. The Hiva-Oa crew and the Easter Islanders looked on with grinning faces.

"You wait along me sing out, Koko!" said King of the Islands. The boy trader fixed his eyes on the sullen, scowling face of the desperado from the Philippines. "Now, my man, I'm not going to waste many words on you! If I were in your hands you'd throw me to the sharks, and you know it! I'm not going to do that, but I'm going to ask you what Mr. Jam's game is on Tunaviva, and you're going to tell me. I reckon it may help us against that scoundrel when we know what we're up against."

Pinto shrugged his shoulders.

Ken's eyes gleamed. As he had said, he was not standing on ceremony with a desperado of Pinto's stamp.

"Koko! Put that feller along deck, givum lash along lawyer-cane, plenty too stiff."

"Yes, sar!" grinned Koko.

There was a yell from Pinto. Perhaps he had not believed that the boy trader was in deadly earnest. He had to believe it now.

"Para! No toque! Tenga cuidado!" yelled the Filipino. "Caramba!" He spluttered into English. "Stop! Call your nigger off, senor! I will speak!"

"You will speak, or your back will be like that of a black boy after a dose of the sting-ray tail!" said King of the Islands grimly. "Put him on his feet, Koko!"

The ruffian was jerked to his feet. He stood spitting out Spanish oaths. But he was cowed.

"I am waiting!" rapped out King of the Islands. "Speak—and tell the truth. If I catch you in a lie, you shall have twenty lashes as a warning. Get on with it! What is that scoundrel Jam's game on Tunaviva?"

"Pearls!" muttered the Filipino.

King of the Islands knitted his brows, and Hudson shrugged his shoulders.

"Pearls!" repeated Ken. "Take care! If you are lying—"

"Caramba! What else?" snarled Pinto. "I tell you that it is pearls—as you might have guessed."

"It's a lie!" growled Billy. "I tell you, skipper, that they're here after the pink coral. Burn my timbers! I've said all along that it was the pink coral they was after, and you can lay to that!"

"Fool!" snarled Pinto. "There is no pink coral on Tunaviva—or if there is, I know nothing of it, and neither does the Senor Jam."

"Look at that, you swab!" The beachcomber drew from his pocket the lump of pink coral that King of the Islands had discovered in the sea-cave under the cliff. "Look at that, you scum!"

Pinto stared blankly at the rose-pink chunk of precious coral. There was greed mingled with astonishment in his face. He knew, at a glance, the value of that precious chunk. But it was plain, from his look, that it was news to him—that he had never seen pink coral on Tunaviva, or dreamed of its existence there.

"Caramba! If I had known!" muttered Pinto, his eyes fastened on the glimmering coral, as if it fascinated

him. "If I had known! Senor captain, is it true that that pink coral was found on Tunaviva?"

"It was found here, by me," answered Ken, "and I reckon that there's more where I found it."

"Caramba! And I never knew! Years and years on this lonely island, carrying out the orders of the Senor Jam—and all the time there was a fortune on Tunaviva—if I had looked for it! Yet I know the whole island, from the lagoon beach to the outer reef—every foot of it—and I have never seen pink coral!"

Billy eyed him with surly suspicion. But even the outcast of Tahiti could see that the ruffian's surprise and disappointed greed were genuine. Whatever was the "game" of the secret men of Tunaviva, it had nothing to do with the pink coral that had brought Ken King and his ship to the mysterious island. King of the Islands signed impatiently to the beachcomber to stand back, and fixed his eyes on the Filipino.

"You've said that it's pearls on this island!" he snapped. "We found no trace here of pearl fishing—"

"Was it likely?" sneered Pinto. "We had our orders from the Senor Jam. Sometimes a craft has put in for wood or water. Always watch was kept from the cliff summit. If a sail was seen out at sea, all was hidden—the shells thrown into the lagoon—boats and canoes hidden in the sea-cave—even traces of footprints wiped out in the sand! Once or twice in a year a ketch or a lugger has sailed in—and sailed out again in the belief that the island was uninhabited—as we expected you to sail, senor, when you came. But when you did not sail—" He shrugged his shoulders.

"You fancied we had spotted your game?" asked Hudson.

"What else? You remained at anchor in the lagoon—you searched the island—day after day. You did not go! In such a case, the Senor Jam had given his orders! If you had put in for wood and water, and sailed again, you could have sailed in peace—and we should have been glad to see your backs! But you stayed, and—"

"Has it happened before that a craft has come into the lagoon—and stayed?" asked Ken quietly.

The ruffian did not answer that question, save by one of his expressive shrugs of the shoulders. Ken's face set harder. From his own experience of the secret men of Tunaviva, he knew how ruthlessly they would have dealt with any craft that had roused their suspicions or fears. What secrets of massacre and crime might be hidden by the shining waters of the lagoon?

"The scum!" breathed Hudson. "We've pulled through—but others before us— Oh, the scum! A rope at the end of the boom!"

Pinto shrank from the Australian's black look.

"I have answered your questions, senor!" he said. "There is a pearl-*bed* on Tunaviva—that is the Senor Jam's game, as you call it! When there are no strange eyes here to see,

the black boys dive for pearls! I can tell you nothing more."

"You shall prove it!" said King of the Islands grimly. "I do not believe a word of it—but you shall have your chance! If the pearl-bed is here, if you have been working it for years with the black boys, you can give me its bearings—and when I see the pearls I will believe you."

"I am at your orders, senior."

Ken gazed at him. He did not believe that there were pearls on Tunaviva. Yet he was staggered now.

"Where, then, is the pearl bed?" he asked, at last.

Pinto gave a nod towards the island beach, on the opposite side from the cliff. Ken followed his gaze. On the shelving beach of golden sand and powdered sea-shells there was no sign of pearl-fishing having been going on. He looked at the Filipino again. There was for a moment a mocking glimmer in the rascal's black eyes.

"I'll give you a chance!" said King of the Islands. "If you're pulling my leg, my man, look out for the lawyer-cane! You shall come in the boat with me—and look out for squalls if you've been lying."

And he rapped out an order to the Kanakas:

"Lower the whaleboat!"

A Startling Discovery!

"**A** QUI!" said the Filipino. "Here!" The Kanakas ceased to row.

Broken rocks of coral jutted from the edge of the lagoon. Almost the whole circle of the Tunaviva beach was of shelving sand that dipped gently to the water. But here and there were tracts of rock—and it was at such a spot that Pinto signed to King of the Islands to stop the boat. On the rugged coral, broken into a thousand strange shapes by the action of the water, there were festoons of seaweed left by the tide, and crabs crawled in the wet hollows. Standing up in the stern of the boat, King of the Islands scanned the shore.

More than once his feet had trodden close by that spot, when he had been ashore. That very spot, he knew, had been searched over by Billy the Beachcomber in his hunt for the pink coral the first day at the island. No sign of a human being had been picked up there—no sign of human activity. If the secret men of Tunaviva had indeed worked at a pearl-fishery, they had wiped out all traces of their occupation, leaving nothing to meet the most searching eye when a stranger came.

But it was, at least, possible; and Ken was giving Pinto a chance to prove his words. In spite of his doubts, in spite of himself as it were, he was beginning to believe the Filipino. From the rock-terrace across the wide lagoon, on the face of the tall cliff, Mr. Jam was watching the progress of the boat with a pair of binoculars clamped to his eyes.

It looked as if the fat trader guessed that Pinto had betrayed his secret, and was anxious. The whaleboat floated close into the shore,

A King who Collected Stamps

By **DOUGLAS ARMSTRONG**, who will answer **FREE** any Stamp Queries which any reader may care to send to the Editor. If you can, enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for reply by Post

THE tragic death of the King of the Belgians means a new issue of postage stamps for the country over which he ruled. Not immediately, perhaps, for these things take time—there are the designs to be prepared, the dies to be cut by a skilled engraver, and from them plates constructed for printing stamps in sheets, as we see them in the post offices.

And then a portrait of Belgium's new sovereign will appear on her national stamps.

Meanwhile, stamp collectors will profit by the occasion to fill up the gaps in their sets of King Albert stamps, especially those of recent issue, in anticipation of their early disappearance from circulation.

THE late King of the Belgians was an enthusiastic collector of stamps, a hobby which he shared with Queen Elizabeth and the other members of the Belgian royal family. Whenever he visited foreign countries he always made a point of calling at stamp dealers' shops, without revealing his identity, and of picking up varieties that were missing either from his own or his children's collections.

There are about a hundred Belgian postage stamps that bear likenesses of Albert I. He is first seen upon the series of 1912, issued more than two years after his accession to the throne, and next on the stamps from the exiled Belgian colony at Le Havre, after his government had been driven out of their own country in the early days of the Great War.

The gallant part that he played in the fight for freedom is recalled by the famous "Tin Hat" portrait found on the Belgian stamps of 1919-20, which was actually taken in a barn near the Front Line on active service.



Above: The late King Albert of Belgium posed for this photograph when leading his army against the Germans in the Great War.

Left: He's a stamp collector, too—Belgium's new king, Leopold III, portrayed (as the Duke of Brabant) on a special stamp sold in aid of disabled soldiers.

On the anniversary stamps of 1925 he is seen in company with the former kings of Belgium, Leopold I and II, whilst the latest series, current at the time of his death, shows a likeness in military uniform.

His son, Leopold III, who succeeds him, is also a stamp collector. His features are already familiar through the portrait that appears on a special stamp which was sold at a premium on face value in aid of the fund for disabled soldiers, at the time of the Brussels Stamp Exhibition, three years ago.

where the rock dropped steeply to the bottom of the lagoon, sixty feet down.

"Naked diving?" asked King of the Islands.

"Si, senior! The Santa Cruz boys are good at that! If you have a nigger that can go down—"

"My boatswain can do anything that a Santa Cruz boy can do! And the pearl-oysters are there?"

"You will see, senior, if you send down your nigger."

"Koko, you go along bottom lagoon, takee bag along you, look-see findee feller pearl-oyster he stop!"

"Yes, sar!" said Koko.

The giant Kanaka slipped from the boat's gunwale with a rope under his shoulders. Almost like an arrow he cleft the clear depths of the lagoon, shooting to the coral bed. King of the Islands watched him from above till he was a dim shadow in the depths.

He waited. Pinto sat, his dusky face almost expressionless, but with a

faint gleam of ironic mockery in his black eyes.

King of the Islands swept the lagoon and the shore with keen eyes. There was no sign of an attack from Mr. Jam and his men while the boat was away from the ketch. Billy the Beachcomber was on watch on the Dawn, and the whaleboat could have pulled back as soon as Mr. Jam could have reached the ketch from his side of the lagoon. Neither was there any sign of an enemy on the beach.

Mr. Jam's red cummerbund could be spotted on the cliff far away, and some of the black boys were with him. Ken's mind was full of suspicion of the Filipino, but it was clear that, if there was treachery, an attack was not its object. He was driven to believe that it was the truth that Pinto had told, yet at the back of his mind lingered a doubt that could not be dispelled.

But a few minutes would resolve the matter. Koko, deep down, was groping over the coral, and if there

The Lagoon of Tunaviva!

were pearl-oysters there he could not fail to find them. But the minutes seemed long to the shipmates of the Dawn. Again and again they had discussed the mystery of Tunaviva; again and again they had decided that whatever the "game" was, it was not pearls. If it proved that Pinto had told the truth, they had been utterly wrong.

The rope quivered, and a shadow shot up from the depths. Koko's dripping head came above the surface. Breathing hard and deep, for he had been three minutes under water, the Kanaka boatswain held on to the gunwale with a brown hand. His dark eyes gleamed, and he showed his magnificent set of teeth in a grin as he met the eager, inquiring looks of the white masters.

"Feller oyster he stop?" asked Hudson.

"Yes, sar, that feller stop!" said Koko. "That feller stop plenty too much along bottom rock, sar! Big feller, little feller, plenty too much he stop. You see, sar, eye belong you."

Koko tossed his bag into the whale-boat. King of the Islands caught it up. It contained a dozen oysters that the boatswain had gathered in the depths below. So far, the Filipino's words were borne out. But it remained to be seen whether they were pearl-oysters.

There might or might not be a fortune in precious pink coral on Tunaviva—that could not be ascertained until the sea-cave could be

searched. But if there was a pearl-bed in the lagoon, there was a fortune beyond doubt—and the pearls belonged to the man who found them and lifted them! Was that, after all, the secret of Tunaviva?

Knife in hand, Kit Hudson opened one of the shells, and King of the Islands watched him with breathless intentness. The shipmates were far too keen to learn the truth to think of "rotting" out the oysters in the usual way.

"My sainted Sam!" breathed Ken. He could hardly believe it—yet he had to believe his eyes! Kit Hudson stared almost blankly at the little round object that had dropped into the palm of his hand!

"Feller pearl he stop!" said Koko. "My word! Big feller pearl he stop!"

There was a cackle of excitement from the boat's crew. All eyes were fixed on the shining object in Hudson's palm. It was a large pearl, perfectly round, with a blue-white glow in it. King of the Islands still gazed at it, speechless. The Filipino watched him with mocking eyes. Kit Hudson spoke.

"Ken! At Lalinge, at Papeete, at Sydney, on Thursday Island, any trader would give a hundred pounds for that!"

Ken did not speak. He nodded. He was too astonished to speak. Koko gave a little chuckle.

"My word! Little white master belong me, he plenty rich feller close-up! Plenty pearl he stop, all feller pearl belong King of the Islands!"

No belong feller Sam, no belong feller Pinto, all feller pearl belong white master belong me!"

Hudson chuckled. "Pearlers' law, Ken! If there are more like this, we've struck it rich. But—"

"Seeing is believing!" said King of the Islands at last. "We were on a wrong tack after all, Kit—it was pearls! But—"

He gave an impatient shake. He was still sorely puzzled and perplexed. There was a pearl-bed in the lagoon—that was discovered now! But that discovery did not account for all that had happened on Tunaviva. In lonely seas, it was natural for a pearler to desire to keep his discovery to himself—times without number blood had been shed on Pacific beaches for that reason. And yet—and yet it seemed to Ken that there was still something behind it, something hidden, that baffled him.

There was something in it that was beyond Ken's grasp. And yet, as he had said, seeing was believing, and there lay the blue-white pearl, glowing in the sunshine in the palm of Hudson's hand.

The mate of the Dawn opened shell after shell. It was clear that the bed was a rich one, for every shell contained a pearl. There was not a single one without. Some were small, some large, but every shell in turn gave up its treasure. Such a find was the dream of a pearler's life. Hudson, with a grinning face, held up the little heap in the sunlight, and ran them through his fingers in a dazzling cascade.

"Five hundred pounds at Sydney, Ken!" he said. "Suffering cats! We came to Tunaviva to give that swab Billy a chance to find a fortune, and we've found one for ourselves! Plenty more shell he stop, Koko?"

"Too much plenty he stop, sar!" answered Koko.

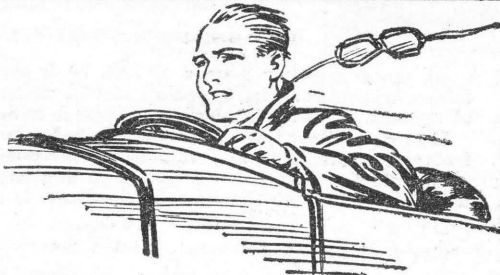
Hudson chuckled gleefully. "We're clearing out that pearl-bed, Ken—and Mister Jam can watch us doing it from his eyrie over the way! What? I don't quite get his game, yet; but there's pearls on Tunaviva—and we've got the pearls! We're in no hurry to quit—now! We raised Tunaviva to do that swab Billy a good turn—and we're standing by till we sail with the best cargo the Dawn ever carried in her trade-room!"

Hudson, laughing, looked across the lagoon. A spot of red was visible on the rock-terrace of the cliff. Mr. Jam was there, still watching through his binoculars. He knew now—he could not fail to know—what the shipmates had discovered, and they wondered what his feelings were like. The secret of Tunaviva was a secret no longer, and yet at the back of Ken's mind lingered a doubting thought that he did not know all.

Death in the Dark!

"TRUST me, senior!"
"As I would a tiger-shark or a sand-spider!" snapped King of the Islands contemptuously. Pinto shrugged his shoulders. It was night again on Tunaviva.

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The Dawn rode at anchor under the glimmering stars. Far in the distance the basaltic cliff hung spectral against the sky. The Filipino, his hands securely bound, stood before the shipmates, his black eyes gleaming strangely in the gloom.

"Caramba! But you may trust me!" he said. "I am in your hands, and the Senor Jam can never save me. The coward will hide in his lair, like a hermit crab in a shell, only watching that you do not escape from the lagoon—there he has the whiphand! Give me my liberty, and a boat and crew to quit Tunaviva, and I will give you the upper hand of my master. Why not?"

"And how?" asked Ken, watching the dusky, treacherous face keenly in the star glimmer.

"They keep watch at night like cats in the dark," said the Filipino. "Now that the Senor Jam is here, the black boys dare not sleep on the watch! Caramba! It is the sting-ray tail for their backs if they did! The Senor Jam has a heavy hand with niggers! But—"

"But what?" snapped Ken impatiently.

"But with me in your boat, senor, you will run safely into the sea-cave," said the Filipino coolly. "The blacks know my voice, and when I come they will believe that I have escaped in a boat—why not? I shall answer them when they call, and then—the rest is easy!"

Ken's lip curled with scorn. That the ruffian was ready to betray his

master, to save himself, he did not doubt. At the same time, he was well aware that, more likely than not, there was trickery behind the rascal's offer. It was not easy to plumb the depths of the dusky scoundrel's treachery.

"It's a chance, Ken!" muttered Kit Hudson. "We can make use of the swab to get at that villain Jam. Once in the cave—"

"That's true," said Ken.

He was silent, thinking it out. The shipmates of the Dawn were keen and eager to come to a finish with Mr. Jam and the long struggle for the mastery of Tunaviva. They had resolved to make another attempt on the sea-cave. But if the blacks were watchful, they well knew that they would be taking their lives in their hands. King of the Islands nodded at last.

"I'll take you at your word, Pinto!" he said. "But chew on this—at the first sign of trickery you go to the sharks! You'll be under my revolver—and I'll shoot you, like the treacherous dog you are if you fail us."

"Si, senor!" said Pinto, with another of his shrugs.

King of the Islands gave his orders. The whaleboat slid silently into the lagoon; Tomoo and Kolulo took the oars. Koko swung the Filipino into the boat, and Ken and his comrade followed.

The previous night Ken had been deeply uneasy at leaving his ship, but there was little danger to the Dawn

now that Pinto was in his hands. Mr. Jam was as ferocious as a tiger-shark, as treacherous as a Solomon Island cannibal, but he was not the man for leading an attack. Silently, with muffled oars, the boat pulled across the lagoon towards the cliff.

Pinto sat silent in the stern, by the side of Ken King. Ken's revolver was in his hand, and his face was grimly set. He meant every word he had uttered, and a cry from Pinto to draw the enemy's fire would have been followed by the crack of the boy trader's revolver. He did not believe that the rascal would risk it. His hands were bound fast, and he was at the mercy of the boy trader.

Silently the whaleboat drew under the shadow of the high cliff. The surge of the water in the channel in the sea-cave could be heard. Slowly, feeling the way in the darkness, the boat crept on, every eye and ear on the alert. Pinto, listening intently, whispered:

"Now I give the signal, senor! You will see that they will let you pass in peace, when they hear me!"

Ken pressed the revolver-muzzle to Pinto's ribs.

"Get on with it!" he ordered. A long low whistle left the lips of the Filipino. It was immediately followed by a startled voice in the darkness under the cliff.

"Feller Pinto come along lagoon." It was the voice of Tokoloo, one of the Santa Cruz crew. "Feller Pinto no

(Continued on next page)

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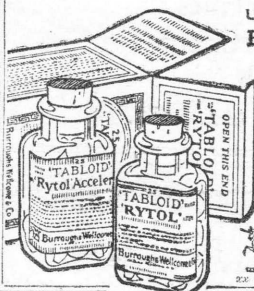
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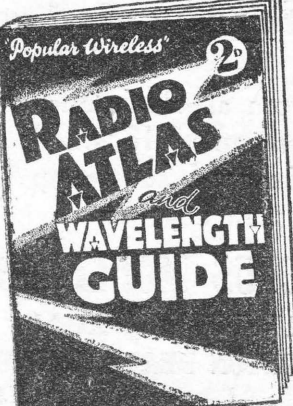
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The Lagoon of Tunaviva!

stop along ship belong King of the Islands! Me savvy him sing out."

Evidently Tokoloo knew the signal whistle, and had no doubts. Another voice was heard, calling from the dark.

"You feller Pinto, sar, you comey along cave along boat, sar?"

There were two of the blacks on the watch, unseen in the darkness. And it was clear that in their fear of the ferocious half-caste, Mr. Jam, they were wakeful and on the watch!

"This feller Pinto comey along boat!" called back the Filipino coolly. "You no shoot, gun belong you—feller white master Pinto comey."

"Yes, sar, us feller savvy plenty!"

THE whaleboat glided on, nosing into the narrow channel that led into the darkness of the sea-cave. It bumped on basaltic rock, and bumped again. Faintly, blacker shadows in the darkness, two dim figures loomed, high up the rough rocks beside the channel. Ken's heart beat fast, and his revolver was jammed hard to the Filipino's side. From the rocks over the boat, rifle-fire would have riddled the boat's crew through and through, at such close range, had the watchers known that it was the enemy that came.

But if Pinto had hoped to find a chance of treachery the muzzle jamming in his ribs deterred him. Bumping again and yet again, the whaleboat slid on into the sea-cave. On either side of the channel was a watchful black man, but all that they could see of the boat was a gliding shadow. The Santa Cruz boys had no suspicion—the voice of the man they were accustomed to obey was enough for them. They could only suppose that Pinto had escaped in a boat from the hands of King of the Islands.

But every heart was beating hard as the whaleboat glided on, and the watchers at the mouth of the cave were left astern. Blackness as of the pit reigned in the interior cavern. The muttering voices of the two blacks at the cave-mouth died behind.

"Suffering cats!" breathed Hudson. "We're through! Are there any more on guard, you swab?"

"None, till you reach the upper cave," said Pinto coolly. "I can guide you to the rock staircase in the dark! Hold my arms if you do not trust me, senores."

"I'll trust you with a grip on your arm and my gun in my other hand!" grunted the mate of the Dawn.

"Aqui—here is the landing-place!"

The whaleboat slid close to the rugged bank. Tomoo and Kolulo held on to the rock, and Koko scrambled ashore. Ken and Kit followed him, holding each an arm of the Filipino. In the darkness they could see nothing but dim shadows, but the Filipino knew every inch of the sea-cave, and was accustomed to traverse it in the dark.

With the shipmates gripping his bound arms, Pinto moved away, and

(Continued on opposite page)

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Koko followed them, bush-knife in hand, Tomoo and Kolulo remaining with the boat. Not a sound came from the watchers at the cave-mouth; their suspicions had not been awakened. So far the Filipino had kept faith.

But the shipmates held his arms fast, prepared for any attempt at trickery. Stepping cautiously, they wound their way among the rugged rocks and broken rifts of the cave-floor, led without a pause by Pinto till they reached the foot of the slant-fissure in the heart of the cliff, which the men of Tunaviva had hewn into a rock staircase.

"Here is the stair, senores!" came the mutter of the Filipino. "Take care, it is steep. If you will release my hands—"

"I'll watch it!" growled King of the Islands. "Keep hold of the swab, Kit! If this is the rock stair, we can do without him now—we'll leave him tied up in the cave. I'll make sure."

Leaving the Filipino in Hudson's grasp, Ken groped over the rock before him. It was the rugged stairway that led to the upper cave, down which he had fled in his desperate escape from the men of Tunaviva. From above came the faintest glimmer, a reflection of the fire burning in the upper cave.

"I reckon we're on the right course. Now—"

Ken was interrupted. A sudden yell came from Hudson, as the Filipino kicked in the dark. Treacherous as a snake, wary as a tiger, the ruffian had

been watching and waiting for a chance—and now it had come. Only the mate of the Dawn, for the moment, was holding him, and his sudden backward kick caught Hudson on the shin.

Hudson staggered, with a gasping yell of pain, and involuntarily relaxed his hold. With a wrench, the ruffian tore loose and bounded away.

The rock steps were rough and rugged, the darkness deep, and his hands were bound; but he scrambled up like a cat, vanishing in darkness. King of the Islands gave a shout of rage. In the blackness he could see nothing; but Hudson's cry, and the sound of scrambling above, told him what had happened.

"Kit! You're hurt?"

"Only a kick!" Hudson bit off a gasp of pain. "He's tricked us, at the finish! Fire after him—fire! No chance of taking Jam by surprise now!"

King of the Islands threw up his revolver, and fired up the rock staircase, once, twice, thrice. The bullets crashed and splinters of rock flew. But in the darkness the shots missed.

A voice was heard yelling above—the startled voice of the half-caste trader in false pearls.

"You feller boy!" screamed Mr. Jam. "Instantly fire with astonishing velocity. Inimical persons approximate to cave! Fire—fire!"

"Senor Jam!" screamed the Filipino in the darkness of the rock stair. But his voice was drowned by a burst of rifle-fire from above. A rain of bullets swept down the rock stairway.

A wild cry rang through the roar of firearms. Something came rolling and thudding down the rugged steps, and crashed almost at the feet of the shipmates. It was the body of the Filipino, riddled with bullets!

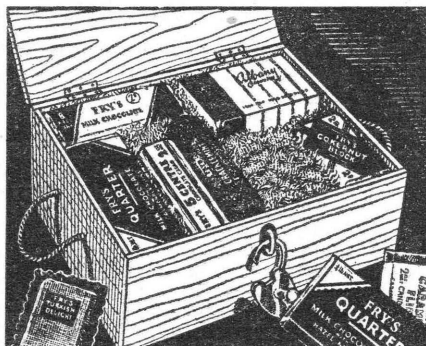
"Get back!" muttered King of the Islands.

The shipmates and Koko scrambled away in the darkness. A heavy boulder, rolled from above by the blacks, came thudding down from rocky step to step, and the bullets rained. The Filipino's treachery, dearly as he had paid for it, had defeated the attack. It was impossible to attempt to reach the upper cave now.

Startled cries came from the two blacks at the cave-mouth, and there was a patter of running feet on the rocks beside the channel. Kit Hudson loosed off a couple of shots, and Tokoloo and his companion promptly fled for the lagoon. From the upper cave the rifle-fire still roared.

King of the Islands gritted his teeth. He was defeated, for the moment. But he was not thinking of retreat. For life or death, it was a fight now to the finish!

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