

BIGGLES and the **GOLD BANDITS!** This Week

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BLAZING the TRAIL with the MAMMOTH TRACTOR!

CANNIBALS of KUA

The Scallywag of the South Seas laughs at KEN KING'S solemn warning—until the cannibals gather him in for the cooking pots!



The Head-hunters!

"HAUL, there!" rapped Ken King, boy skipper and owner of the trading ketch Dawn, known throughout the South Seas as King of the Islands.

The thick coil of barbed wire clumped on the deck at the feet of Ray Paget, the scapegrace of Lalinge—whom Ken was trying to make a man of at the request of Paget's uncle, the Pacific Company's manager at Lalinge. Paget did not look at it, and did not seem to hear the sharp order of the boy skipper.

Standing by the rail, the scallywag was looking across the sea towards the island that was rising from the Pacific ahead. Far distant as it was, already canoes could be seen putting out. In the sun-blaze of the tropic morning, Paget shaded his eyes with his hand and stared towards Kua, the first land he had seen since Golo dropped astern. To the slacker and waster, who hated the captain and crew, the sight of land brought the thought of escape.

Every hand on the Dawn, except Paget, was busy. What was going on was a mystery to the scallywag, new to the Pacific and its ways. Uprights had been clamped to the teak rail to support strands of barbed wire, and the Hiva-Oa crew

The chief's canoe came alongside the Dawn, and Ka'aama started to climb aboard. Kit Hudson stood at the break in the barbed wire with his rifle under his arm, watchful as a cat, ready for the first sign of treachery.

—Koko, the giant bo'sun, Tomoo and Kolulo, Lompo and Lufu—were hard at work uncoiling wire and knocking in staples. Even Danny, the cooky-boy, had come out of his galley to lend a hand. Kit Hudson, the young Australian mate of the Dawn, worked as hard as any Kanaka in the broiling sun, and Ken had taken the wheel.

What it all meant, Paget did not know, and did not care to know; his thoughts were concentrated on the distant island, and the possibility of escaping ashore on Kpa. He gave no attention to King of the Islands; but he had to give attention when Kit

Hudson grasped him by the shoulder and jerked him back from the rail.

"You lazy lubber!" hooted the mate. "Do you reckon you're shipped on this packet as an ornamental figurehead? Lay hold of that wire, and haul!"

Paget clenched his hand, a blaze of fury in his eyes. But he unclenched them again. His rebellious spirit was still unsubdued, but he was learning discipline on Ken King's ketch. He knew what it was like to be knocked spinning along the deck and held down by one Kanaka while another gave him a dozen from the lawyer-cane. It was not an experience that he was anxious to repeat.

"Haul, you swab—haul!" growled Hudson. "Are you afraid of soiling your iily-white fingers, you lubber?"

Paget, breathing hard, stooped to the coil and helped to unroll it. Koko, the boatswain, mallet in hand, gave him a grin as Hudson turned angrily away.

"You no savvy what name this feller wire stop along rail?" he asked.

"No!" grunted Paget.

The brown boatswain pointed to the distant canoes with the mallet in his hand.

"Black feller belong Kua plenty bad feller!" he said. "S'pose feller King of the Islands no watch out, eye belong him, black feller belong Kua

By
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plenty kill feller belong this ship, my word. Black feller belong Kua likee takee head belong white man, smoke along canoe-house. White feller no stop along Kua—plenty too much bad black feller along that island, my word."

Paget shrugged his shoulders, with a sneer on his face. He was new to the South Seas, and had had experience only of the peaceful island of Lalinge, where his uncle, the Pacific Company's manager, was a magistrate, and there were law and native police—and head-hunting and cannibalism were things of a remote past. That Kua, a lonely "black" island, was in as savage a state as in the days before Captain Cook sailed into the Pacific he did not know, and would not have believed.

He held the wire for Koko to hammer in staples, and yelped as a barb of it scratched his hand.

The other members of the crew were all similarly engaged. Three lines of stout wire, with keen barbs, one above another, were run round the ketch, above the rail, with a break only at the gangway, and that only four feet wide. King of the Islands was bent on taking full precautions before he came to close dealing with the "black feller belong Kua."

Paget glanced at the canoes again. There were three of them, tall-prowed war-canoes, with long outriggers, and packed in each were more than twenty brawny blacks. With their jetty faces, fuzzy hair, thick noses, they were very different in aspect from the brown-skinned Polynesians he had seen at Golo. For they were Melanésians at Kua—a savage and primitive race, with black skins hardly as black as their manners and customs.

There was no sign of weapons in the canoes, and Paget concluded that the Kua crews were coming out unarmed to trade with the white man's ship—not knowing, as Ken and Kit knew by experience, that under the mats in the canoes were hidden spears, knives, and tomahawks, ready to treacherous hands if a chance of treachery came.

For Ka'aama, king or chief of Kua, ready to trade with the white man if there was nothing better doing, was still more ready to attack his ship and take the head of every man on board if he caught the white man napping. Ken King had traded at Kua before, and every time he left Kua astern he was disposed to feel his head to make sure it was still on his shoulders.

MORE than a sea-mile out from the island, the Dawn ho-to, waiting for the canoes. The barbed wire was up now, and rifles for the Kanaka crew loaded and standing against mast or hatchway ready for use. Ken and Kit had revolvers in their belts, and Koko had slung on a two-foot Malaita bush-knife—a terrible weapon in the boat-swain's powerful hand. Ken called to the scallywag.

"Here, Paget!"

The new hand of the Dawn turned to him sullenly.

"Can I trust you with a gun?"

rapped King of the Islands. "If there's trouble with the blacks every man will be needed."

"You can trust me to fight my way off your craft if you put a gun in my hand!" answered the scallywag bitterly.

"Belay that!" snapped Ken. He gave the scapegrace of Lalinge a grim look. "We're not going near enough to Kua for you to try swimming off—but if you did you'd find yourself on a cannibal island and booked for the cooking-ovens."

"I'm not afraid of a crew of blacks, as you seem to be!" Paget sneered.

Ken's eyes gleamed at him.

"That's enough! Stand back, and hold your tongue!"

King of the Islands turned his back on the scallywag.

He stood at the break of the wire, watching the canoes as they paddled up. The Pacific was almost as calm as a pond, hardly ruffled by the light breeze, and the ketch lay like a painted ship on a painted ocean. Steadily, with sweeping paddles, the Kua canoes approached—the central one, in which stood the chief Ka'aama, a little ahead.

A big and brawny savage was Ka'aama, but to Paget his aspect was more comic than terrible. He clinked and rattled with necklaces and arm-lets of coral beads and cartridge-clips, and his ears and nose were pierced for large brass rings, which flashed in the sun. Besides the loin-cloth around his middle, he wore a pair of light duck trousers, but these were worn draped over his brawny black shoulders like a cloak.

Paget grinned at the sight of him as the canoes drew nearer. But Ken and Kit did not grin. Ka'aama might be a figure of fun to look at—but there were heads, white and black, smoking in the wood-fires in his canoe-house on Kua; and if he had half a chance every head on the Dawn would be added to the collection.

As the canoes surged within easy hail, King of the Islands held up his hand and called out in the pidgin-English of the South Seas:

"You feller along canoe, you stop along sea! Canoe no stop along this ship!"

Ka'aama waved a black hand in friendly gesture.

"This feller Ka'aama plenty good friend along you, sar! Comey along ship along trade!"

The canoes came on. Ken's face hardened, and he dropped his hand on the butt of the revolver in his belt. The barrel glimmered in the sun as he lifted it.

"You stop along sea or me shoot along gun belong me!" he snapped.

But Ka'aama only grinned with a flash of white teeth.

"Black feller plenty good along white feller!" he answered. "Comey along ship, trade along white feller, my word." On came the canoes.

Bang! The sudden roar of Ken King's revolver roused the echoes. Ka'aama gave a startled yell as the bullet ploughed through his thick, fuzzy hair, knocking away a coral comb in fragments. He staggered back, lost his balance, and crashed

among the bare black legs of the paddlers.

Under the Mats!

KIT HUDSON sprang to Ken's side, his rifle leaping to his shoulder. There was a cackle of excitement from the Hiva-Oa crew. Koko gripped his bush-knife; every hand but Paget's grasped a weapon.

The scallywag of Lalinge stared on blankly. He fancied that King of the Islands had shot the Kua chief. But in a moment or two, Ka'aama was staggering up in the canoe, with a ludicrous expression of bewilderment on his face that made Paget burst into a laugh.

But nobody else on the ketch laughed. That warning shot was intended as a strong hint to the blacks to keep their distance. And if they did not take the hint, if the canoes came on, a few moments more would see desperate work. There were at least seventy of the blacks, and their weapons, though unseen, were within their reach, and only the strands of barbed wire would prevent the savage mob from swarming over the low free-board of the ketch.

But from behind that defence, the Dawn's crew would have shot the cannibals of Kua down like rabbits, and it was the knowledge of that that decided Ka'aama in favour of peace instead of war. For some moments the matter hung in doubt, and Paget was the only man on board the Dawn who did not know that danger and death were in the air.

But Ka'aama shouted an order, in his own Melanesian dialect, and the blacks ceased to paddle. Ten fathoms' length from the Dawn's rail, the three canoes stopped. Ka'aama, on his feet, waved his black hand in friendly signs to the boy trader.

"Feller canoe stop along sea, all same you likee," he called. "You no shoot along Kua feller, gun belong you!"

Ken smiled and nodded and returned the revolver to his belt. An instant before, conflict and slaughter had trembled in the balance. But Ka'aama, having found that he could not board the Dawn by treachery, and aware that he could not rush the barbed wire, was now all smiles and friendliness, thinking only of trade. There were sacks of copra stacked in the canoes, and Ka'aama was anxious for trade, if he could get nothing better. Few traders came to an island with so dangerous a reputation as Kua's, and not twice in a year did Ka'aama have a chance of exchanging his island produce for trade goods.

Paget looked on and listened with a sarcastic sneer, while King of the Islands parleyed with the native chief.

To his inexperienced mind, the grinning, good-humoured-looking blacks in the Kua canoes were no more dangerous than the golden-skinned Polynesians of Lalinge. That that grinning good humour might have changed at a moment's notice into bloodthirsty ferocity he did not understand. To his view, the barbed wire, the loaded firearms, and the

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warning shot were all symptoms of "cold feet." He did not take the trouble to conceal the contemptuous derision in his looks.

Time is cheap to a South Seas Islander, and no transactions can be carried on without oceans of talk. The Kua canoes lay by the Dawn for a good half-hour before the arrangements were made for trade.

With a lingering hope of getting a strong force on board the ketch and turning on the traders, Ka'aama disputed every point with a smiling treachery that was childishly transparent. But he yielded every point in turn, for he was keen to trade if there was no chance of massacre and slaughter. Eventually, the chief himself was allowed to step on board the ketch, after transferring all his crew but four paddlers to the other canoes, which kept their distance.

Then the chief's canoe with its four paddlers made trip after trip, bringing the island produce from the other canoes to the ketch, to be handed up the side. Kit Hudson stood at the gangway with his rifle under his arm, watchful as a cat, ready to let loose a stream of bullets at the first sign of treachery.

Koko presided over the scales on the deck. Ka'aama examined the trade goods he was to receive in exchange. His black face beamed over a musical-box. Keen as he was on a bargain, Ka'aama almost forgot that he was there for trade in his delight at that novel toy. He sat on the deck with the box on his bare black knees, the duck trousers hanging down his back, and set the music going, chuckling over it with childish glee.

"Feller box he sing!" exclaimed the chief of Kua over and over again. "My word, feller box he sing!"

Paget grinned as he looked at him. This black man, chuckling and grinning over a musical-box playing a waltz tune, was the cause of the barbed wire and the loaded firearms on board the ketch!

The scallywag shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. Ken King and his mate could be afraid of the natives of Kua if they liked—the newcomer to the Pacific was not afraid. Somehow, anyhow, he was going to get off the ketch and escape on Kua. A bribe to the blacks would work the oracle if he had a chance.

If that grinning, simple, child-like savage would give him a passage in his canoe, unseen by Ken or Kit, he would be a free man. The idea grew in Paget's mind, and he watched for a chance to speak to Ka'aama unnoticed. And the chance came easily enough.

The musical-box ran down. Ka'aama stared at it, shook it, put it to his ear, and listened to it anxiously, an expression of surprise on his black face.

"Feller box he no sing any more altogether!" ejaculated the chief.

"Keep it going for him, Paget!" called out King of the Islands.

For the first time since he had stepped on the ketch, Paget was eager to carry out an order from the boy trader. He sat down on the deck

beside the black chief, took the musical-box, and wound it up. Ka'aama grinned with delight as the music started again.

"My word, he sing plenty too much!" grinned Ka'aama. "You white feller, you savvy makee that feller box sing too much."

Paget, under cover of the music, whispered in a black ear adorned by a huge, gleaming brass ring:

"You big feller chief, you likee two pieces gold money?"

Ka'aama stared at him. "Me likee too much!" he admitted.

"This feller no wantee stop along ketch belong King of the Islands," muttered Paget. "Wantee stop along shore, along Kua. Savvy?"

A strange expression came over the black face. Ka'aama understood at once that the white man wanted to desert his ship and wanted his help to do so.

"Me savvy!" he murmured.

"You no sing out!" muttered Paget hurriedly. "Feller captain, feller mate makee this feller stop along ship, s'posee can."

"Savvy too much!" grinned Ka'aama.

"You takee this feller along canoe, land this feller along Kua, this feller givee two pieces gold money, along beach," whispered Paget.

If Paget could have read the thoughts behind the grinning black face, a cold shudder would have gone down his spine. But the grinning face gave no clue to the treacherous thoughts of the chief.

The box ran down again and Paget wound it up.

"You takee this feller along Kua?" he whispered anxiously.

Ka'aama was only too keen, for reasons of his own, to help the deserter to get away. If a white man was mad enough to land alone on Kua, Ka'aama was not likely to stop him. The cooking-ovens and the wood-fires were ready!

"Me likee piecee gold money!" breathed Ka'aama. "Me sing out along feller stop along canoe belong me! You go along canoe, stop along mat along canoe, cap'n 'n mate no savvy!"

Paget's eyes gleamed with satisfaction. It was his chance, at last, if he could smuggle himself unseen into the chief's canoe and hide under the mats.

HAVING shown Ka'aama how to wind up the musical-box, he moved away. Ka'aama rose from the deck, moved to the side, and handed the musical-box down to the blacks in his canoe, at the same time speaking to them in his Melanesian dialect—a tongue unknown to all ears on board the Dawn.

The blacks looked up at him, grinning. Paget knew that he was telling them to be ready to help a deserter get away from the ketch.

Kit Hudson was still standing by the break in the wire, his rifle under his arm. The last sack of copra was handed up the side, and Ka'aama turned his attention to the weighing, entering into an argument with Koko

on the subject of weights and scales. The copra, of course, had been damped to make it weigh more heavily, a circumstance allowed for by the wary Koko in weighing—a fruitful source of argument and dispute on every beach in the Pacific.

Argument waxed warm, and no one had any attention to give the scallywag. Kit Hudson had turned away as soon as the last bag of copra had been passed up the side. Paget's heart beat quickly. For the moment no eye was turned in his direction. If he was to take his chance he had to take it now. With swift suddenness he slipped down the low side of the ketch into the canoe below.

Instantly the blacks threw the tapa mats over him, and he lay hidden from sight, hardly breathing, his heart thumping hard.

Had he been seen? If an eye had fallen on him he knew that he would be dragged out of his hiding-place promptly enough. He lay sweating under the tapa mats, in terror of hearing Ken King's voice calling an order. But he heard nothing. Would he be missed before the canoes made Kua? He could have groaned with anxiety as the long, slow minutes passed. Would the chaffering and gabbling and trading never finish?

It seemed an age before he heard the trade goods being passed down into the canoe. Then the craft rocked as the heavy weight of Ka'aama dropped into it.

Was his luck holding good? If they missed him from the deck they would only think he had gone below, if they thought of him at all. But would the canoe never put off?

His heart leaped as he heard the splash of paddles. He felt the canoe in motion, moving away from the ketch. Ka'aama, standing and looking back, making farewell gestures to the white traders, had his bare, black feet on the mats that hid the scallywag. He grinned as he waved farewell.

Paget heard the splashing of the paddles, the creak of blocks and tackle from the ketch. The Dawn was under way. His heart gave a great leap. The long paddles swept the water. He heard a gabble of voices as the chief's canoe rejoined the others at a distance from the ketch.

The corner of the tapa mat was lifted. The black face of Ka'aama grinned at him—a strange grin. Paget lifted his head and looked. The Dawn, under mainsail and foresail, was already before the wind, a dozen cables' length away, and the canoes were making for Kua. The deserter panted with relief!

Fleeing Canoes!

KIT HUDSON ran his finger round his sunburnt neck, and grinned. He was making the motion of feeling that his head was still on his shoulders. King of the Islands laughed.

"I'm glad to be through with Kua," he remarked. "But trade's trade, and at the present price of copra we can't afford to turn up our noses at a cheap

lot. After all, there's little risk, with the barbed wire up and a gun handy. Keep her steady, Koko."

The boatswain of the Dawn, as his brown hands grasped the wheel, was staring back at Kua, a curious expression on his face. Ken followed his glance. Far in the distance the three canoes were dropping from sight on the sea, heading for the island at great speed. Ken looked at them and then at the brown boatswain again.

"What name you look along canoe, Koko?" he asked. He could see that there was something in the boatswain's mind.

"That feller Ka'aama go along sea plenty quick, sar," said Koko. "No savvy what name that feller go along altogether too quick."

"They're going all out," remarked the mate of the Dawn, with a curious glance at the distant canoes, which were racing for the island. "Has his nibs pinched something?"

There was no reason, so far as the shipmates could see, why the natives should speed back to their island at racing pace, under the broiling sun. If Ka'aama had "pinched" some article from the ship, and was afraid of pursuit, it would account for it.

"I don't think he had a chance," Ken smiled. "Too late to get after him now, if he has—we don't want to lose this wind."

"It's dashed odd!" said Hudson, staying at the canoes. "They're racing as if for their lives. No sign of a blow coming on!" He glanced at the blue, unclouded sky. "You no tinkee feller storm comey, Koko?"

"No, sar. Good feller weather he stop!"

Hudson shrugged his shoulders and dismissed the matter. He gave his attention to getting the bags of copra stacked away in the trade-room.

"You feller Lompo, Kolulo, you look alive, along that copra!" rapped Hudson. "Where's that scallywag Paget? Shirking again! Paget!" Hudson went to the hatchway and roared. As the scallywag was not to be seen above deck, he had no doubt that he had gone below to shirk work if he could. "Paget, you lazy lubber! Tumble up! Show a leg, you swab!"

There was no answer, and Hudson, a gleam of anger in his eyes, grabbed a lawyer-cane and went below to root out the shirker.

He came back to the deck in a few minutes, a startled expression on his face.

"Where's that scallywag, Ken?" he asked.

King of the Islands stared.

"Isn't he below?"

"No!"

Ken's glance shot along the deck. Hudson ran forward and glanced into the fore-castle. He came back looking grim.

"He's not on board, Ken!"

Ken's eyes turned towards distant Kua, sinking into the sea.

"He tried swimming ashore at Golo—he can't have tried that here, at the distance," he said.

"The canoes!" said Hudson quietly. "That's why they were racing, Ken! That mad fool has hidden himself in a canoe to get a lift ashore! You can bet they were glad enough to give him a lift and keep it dark."

Ken's face whitened under its tan. "Is he mad enough?" he muttered. "I warned him they were cannibals on Kua! He saw us all armed, and on our guard! Can he have been mad enough?"

"He must have slipped into a canoe when nobody had an eye on him." Hudson set his lips. "He's asked for it, and he will get what he's asked for. Nothing can save him now!"

"We've got to try!" said King of the Islands, quietly. "But he may be on board, hiding in some corner. Have him searched for while I—"

He broke off and shouted orders to the crew.

The ketch went about at once. It was barely possible that the sulky scallywag was hiding somewhere on the ship; but if he was in the canoes not a second was to be lost if there was to be a chance of saving him. Time was money to a trader,

and Ken was losing a favourable wind. But that could not be allowed to count against saving the reckless scapegrace from the fearful fate he had so lightly rushed upon. For on Kua it was death for a white man—death and the cooking-oven. There was little chance of saving him. But Ken King was the fellow to do his utmost.

The Hiva-Oa crew rushed to obey the orders of the boy skipper. The Dawn swept in pursuit of the fleeing canoes. It was only too clear now why they were fleeing at such a speed. Ka'aama knew the deserter might be missed at any moment, and he was anxious to get ashore before he could be pursued and run down. The wind was on the quarter when the ketch came about. But King of the Islands was the fellow to get every ounce of speed out of his ship.

Hudson ran below to make sure the scallywag was not still on board, skulking in some corner. But he soon came back to the deck. Paget was gone. He was in one of the canoes—that was certain now—fleeing, as he supposed, from enemies. If he saw the Dawn in



As Paget fingered the gold in his pocket, realisation of what he had landed himself into came over him with a rush. The blacks were grinning at him—but there was ferocity in their grins.

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pursuit he would be as anxious to escape as the blacks themselves—never dreaming of the fearful fate that awaited him on Kua.

The canoes had dropped almost from sight. But they rose larger and larger as the Dawn tore in pursuit.

Kit Hudson gripped his rifle, and stood at the rail, watching. Far in the distance he caught the shining gleam of the brass rings in the ears and nose of Ka'aama, standing in his canoe, looking back. The chief of Kua was aware now that he was pursued, and he was urging the paddlers on to greater efforts. And, tiny in the distance, Hudson had a glimpse of a figure near the chief, staring back—a white face—the face of Ray Paget. He saw the scallywag lift a clenched fist and shake it at the pursuing ketch. To Paget's mind, the pursuit only meant that King of the Islands was anxious to recapture the deserter.

The Dawn swept on. But the canoes were almost at the reef passage of Kua now. Once they gained the lagoon pursuit was impossible, for the passage in the reef did not admit ships. No craft larger than a canoe or a whaleboat could enter the lagoon. The blacks were going all out—paddling as if for their lives.

"Shoot!" King of the Islands' voice came sharp and curt. "They've beaten us to it! Shoot, Kit, and stop the chief's canoe if you can!"

Swift as the Dawn was running, two fathoms to the canoes' one, there was no chance of overtaking. Ka'aama's start was too great for that. With another half-mile to go, the canoes would have been run down. But they were almost on the reef, and there was no chance—unless the flight could be checked. Hudson watched over the levelled rifle clamped to his shoulder.

Bang! The yell in the chief's canoe was heard on the ketch as the bullet was pitched into the thick of the paddlers.

A black man sprawled, howling. A paddle shot into the sea, and the canoe lost way. The other two canoes, shooting ahead, shot into the reef passage and vanished into the lagoon.

But the shipmates of the Dawn had no eyes for them. It was the chief's canoe with which they were concerned—the canoe in which the scallywag, mad with rage at the pursuit, was shaking a fist at the comrades who were trying to save him. For several moments confusion reigned in the canoe of Ka'aama; and the Dawn swept closer.

The black chief was shouting, gesticulating, shrieking to his crew; and the paddles flashed faster. The canoe raced on to the opening in the reef.

Bang! Hudson's rifle roared again. The range was close now, and the bullet struck a black paddler, stretching him in the bottom of the canoe. Ka'aama, gnashing his gleaming white teeth with rage, brandished a spear at the pursuers. The black crew paddled madly. Paget stared blankly—even yet he did not understand—and he was amazed to see fire

opened on the canoe and groaning blacks falling under the bullets.

Another shot rang from the rushing ketch, and a third paddler rolled over, howling. Then the canoe shot into the narrow passage of the reef and the coral rocks covered it from further fire. Bang! Bang! came again from the ketch, but the spattering lead was wasted on splintering coral.

Hudson dropped the butt of his rifle to the deck. His face was pale.

"Nothing doing, Ken!" he said.

King of the Islands did not answer. His face was white and set. He had done his best—and failed! The scallywag of Lalinge had escaped from the Dawn—out of the frying-pan into the fire. He had asked for it—and now what he had asked for was coming to him. King of the Islands could not save him now!

Paget Learns His Fate!

PAGET grinned as the canoe shot across the lagoon to the beach.

His heart was light. He had escaped from the ketch, beaten King of the Islands and his mate—he was free, his own man at last! They had done their best to recapture him—even to the extent of shooting down the black paddlers who were helping the deserter to escape! But they had failed!

He was safe on Kua—to wait there till he was taken off in another ship; to go his own way! No more pulling and hauling with a Kanaka crew—no more lawyer-cane when he shirked—he was free at last. He little dreamed of what was awaiting him as the chief's canoe ran on to the beach.

The blacks had taken no notice of him during that desperate flight from the white trader. But Ka'aama's eyes turned on him now, and the other blacks glanced at him, grinning. Paget heard their muttered words to one another, without understanding the dialect in which they spoke; but there was something in the tone of their voices, and in their looks, that made him vaguely uneasy. And he was startled, too, by the broad-bladed spear in the chief's hand. He had fancied that the blacks had come out to the ship unarmed; but he had made the discovery since that spears, hatchets, and knives were hidden under the tapa mats.

The canoe grounded in the shallows, and Ka'aama grinned at him.

"You white feller, you comey along beach, along this big feller chief!" said Ka'aama.

Paget nodded, and rose to his feet. He walked up the beach, in the midst of a grinning crowd of blacks.

Across the low reef, in the distance, the sails of the Dawn could be seen, far out. The pursuit had been given up; the ketch was standing out to sea again. That sight should have been a satisfaction to the escaped scallywag. It showed that King of the Islands was done with him—that there was to be no attempt to follow him as far as the beach of Kua. But a strange uneasiness was rising in his breast. The black faces round him were grinning, but there was ferocity in the grins. And the blacks crowded round him

closely. Somehow, the sight of the Dawn's tall sails fading into the blue struck him with a chill.

He drew a deep breath.

He looked at Ka'aama. The chief was grinning in open mockery and derision of the unsuspecting white man who had placed himself helpless in his hands. There was no need for trickery now, with the white man ashore in the midst of the swarming blacks, and Ka'aama threw off all disguise now that there was no further use for it. The look on the chief's savage, hideously grinning face struck cold to Paget's heart. With his rattling necklaces, his gleaming brass rings in nose and ears, the duck trousers hanging round his brawny black neck, Ka'aama did not now seem a figure of fun—he was more horrible than ludicrous.

Paget pulled himself together. It was dawning on his mind what he had done, but he would not believe it—it was too horrible to believe! He fumbled in his pocket.

"Two piecee gold money!" he stammered.

The black man chuckled.

"Piecee gold money plenty good!" he said. "Long-pig plenty good—head belong white feller smokee along fire along canoe-house, plenty too good altogether."

He snapped a word to his followers in his own tongue, and black hands grasped at Paget. A gabble of ferocious glee rang in his ears. With the colour drained from his face, Paget stared round in horror at the ruthless black faces.

HE knew now! He knew now what it was from which King of the Islands had tried to save him! And his heart was like ice.

One of the savages uncoiled a cord of tapa to bind him. Ka'aama stood leaning on his spear, looking on and grinning. Paget felt his hands drawn together for the binding cord.

Then, as the full horror of his situation rushed on him, he woke to sudden desperation. With an almost mad strength, he tore his arms free of the grasping black hands, and struck, and struck again, crashing his clenched fists into black, savage faces. The blacks staggered back, howling.

For the moment he was free. He made a desperate spring at the chief, and tore the spear from his hand. He whirled it round his head, and Ka'aama yelled as he leaped clear of the razor-edged blade. There was a roar from the savage crowd as they piled on the white man on all sides. Paget struck, and a black savage rolled dead at his feet, transfixed by the broad blade.

But he had no time to strike again.

The spear was wrenched away, twenty fierce hands fastened on him, and, struggling and resisting wildly, he was borne to the beach. He crashed down, with the blacks sprawling over him.

His hands were dragged together; tapa cords passed round his wrists and knotted hard and fast. His ankles were bound with cruel tightness. Then the blacks released him, and he lay panting, staring up wildly at the

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plexus, sending him reeling backwards across the ring, gasping, his face convulsed with fury.

Jimmy gave him not an instant's respite. There had been every atom of his strength behind those three terrific blows, and he followed up madly, furiously, his right covering body and chin, his left smashing in and out with the force of a battering-ram.

Slade was against the opposite ropes now. The crowd were on their feet, screaming and yelling in frenzy. Slade covered and drove forward for the clinch which would give him an instant's respite from this hurricane attack. Jimmy side-stepped and brought his left across in a smashing hook which sent Slade staggering.

With a snarl, the Yank turned, but Jimmy was on him, rocking him with that terrible, smashing left which drove in and out with the swiftness of a piston.

Slade was against the ropes again, covering up, shoulders hunched and legs wide-spread. Jimmy slid back, tensed in every nerve and muscle. Slade drove forward, Jimmy's left flicked out, stopped him. Then, with every atom of his strength and the whole weight of his body behind the blow, Jimmy brought his right smashing up in a terrific upper-cut full to the point of Slade's jaw.

Slade staggered, swaying on his feet; then, as the referee pulled Jimmy back, the American crashed face down to the floor of the ring and lay there with arms outsprawled.

Jimmy reeled back to the ropes, leant against them, gripping the top

rope with his left glove. As through a red haze he saw the referee's arm rising and falling, counting the seconds.

The count seemed maddeningly slow to Jimmy. He could feel his senses slipping away from him; he clenched his teeth, fighting to ward off the faintness that was overpowering him.

Through haze-dimmed eyes he saw the referee suddenly cross to him and jerk his arm aloft. Then, knowing that he had won, Jimmy fainted!

A few minutes later, after a hasty consultation with the doctor who came to Jimmy's aid, the M.C. entered the ring and held up his hand for silence, and presently the deliriously excited crowd quietened to hear what he had to say.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" announced the M.C. "Although Jimmy Dawes knocked out Rube Slade, of America, in the first round of the contest we have just witnessed, I think it is only fair to Dawes to tell you that he entered the ring to-night with a broken right wrist, sustained in the match this afternoon against Manchester City!"

The pandemonium which broke out then was heard half a mile away as all—except Chittenden and party—cheered Jimmy Dawes to the echo again and again!

Jimmy's fighting again next Saturday in "Champion of England." But he trips over lots of trouble before climbing into the roped square!

Cannibals of Kua

(Continued from page 24)

cloudless blue sky that smiled over Kua and the Pacific. At a word from the chief the blacks picked him up and carried him away. They followed a path through the palm-trees to a distance from the lagoon. Paget, swaying in the grasp of the blacks carrying him, had a glimpse of grass houses and innumerable staring black faces.

Then, as if in mockery of his despair, through an opening of the palms he glimpsed the Pacific again—and the white sails of the Dawn, far away. It was his last glimpse. He was tossed into the opening of a hut and rolled on the earthen floor.

The savage face of Ka'aama grinned in at him as he lay in half-darkness. The sunlight, outside the hut, gleamed on the brass rings in the ears and nose of the Kua chief.

"You stop along Kua, you white feller!" grinned Ka'aama. "You make kai-kai along black feller belong Kua, my word!"

The grinning black face disappeared. Paget was left alone in the hut—bound, helpless, a prisoner of the cannibals, groaning aloud in his misery and despair!

Ken King is not the fellow to leave Paget to the terrible fate that threatens him, and next Saturday there's a very real chance of Ken himself joining his runaway deck-hand in the Head-Hunters' Lair!



"Take it round to the tin-smith! said Pa.

"I'll do nothing so foolish! said Ma;

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