

AIR, CAR RACING, SEA, MYSTERY, PIRATE Stories

The MODERN BOY

EVERY SATURDAY.
Week Ending April 4th, 1936.

No. 426.
Vol. 17.

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IF YOU PILOTED THIS SKY CLIPPER!—See Centre Pages

STEALER OF MEN!

The revelation of Dandy Peter's business at Dutchman's Island comes as a stunning blow to scallywag Ray Paget, deserter from KEN KING'S ketch in the South Seas!



Light at Last!

BLACK-BIRDING!" exclaimed Ray Paget. "But slave trading is breaking the law!"

"The what?" asked Dandy Peter, the sea-lawyer of Lukwe. Mention of the law seemed to amuse Peter Parsons.

"The law," repeated the scallywag of Lalinge.

Dandy Peter laughed.

"Keep her steady," he rapped. Standing by Suloo, the boat-steerer, the sea-lawyer of Lukwe was taking his cutter, the Sea-Cat, into the lagoon at Dutchman's Island.

Ray Paget's handsome, boyish face reddened, and then paled. He looked at Dandy Peter, opened his lips, and closed them again. Then, in silence, he looked at the island.

Up the shelving beach stood Van Hook's bungalow. In the veranda he could see the Dutch planter—a large, fat man, burned brown by tropical suns, with little piggy eyes glinting from rolls of fat. Farther in the distance was the plantation, where black and brown men toiled among the sugar canes, watched by two or three brawny Dutch overseers in immense hats.

Paget's eyes fixed on the face in

A lump of coral flew from the Kanaka's hand and crashed on the Dutchman's chin. As the bulky planter crashed over on the sand, King of the Islands leapt at him.

the veranda—a cold and cruel face. This was the kind of man with whom Peter Parsons did business. Paget had wondered what the business was as the cutter ran down to the lonely island. There was no cargo on the Sea-Cat—Parsons had nothing to sell to natives or to white men. Even stores were short—and would have been shorter had not Dandy Peter fallen in with Barney Hall's lugger on the Pacific and robbed the Tonga trader of almost all he had. Paget had wondered, and now he knew—it was black-birding—nigger-stealing! Or, to give it its plain name, slaving!

The scallywag of Lalinge stood silent, in troubled thought, as the cutter ran into the lagoon. Dandy Peter gave him a sidelong, mocking glance.

"Cold feet?" he asked, suddenly.

Paget's eyes gleamed at him. With all his faults—and he had plenty of them—he had no lack of courage. He was not thinking of the risk, as Parsons knew quite well.

"Keep your pecker up," went on Dandy Peter. "There's risk in the game—there's always risk in easy money. If a gunboat ran us down with a swarm of brown boys on board it would mean a long stretch for both of us. But a gunboat's never been seen yet within a hundred miles of Van Hook's island. We're in as lonely waters as any between Fiji and Thursday—none but the albatrosses to see us—and they won't tell tales to the High Commissioner."

"Black-birding!" said Paget. "Stealing niggers for the plantations—the most horrible trade in the world! It was abolished years ago—"

"And goes on in quiet corners, like other things that have been abolished by law," grinned Dandy Peter. "We don't run cargoes of niggers to the

By
**CHARLES
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Stealer of Men!

Queensland plantations these days. But in lonely islands—"

Again Paget opened his lips—and closed them. The cutter slid across the shining lagoon. The fat Dutchman, in the veranda, had taken the cigar from his large, loose mouth, and was waving it in recognition of the Lukwe skipper.

"Don't be a fool, Paget!" went on Parsons. "You're sailing with me now, and I reckon you know that the Sea-Cat wasn't a missionary boat! You're out for easy money, the same as I am. I want a white man to stand by me in a game like this. If there's shooting, you can handle a rifle, though you're no great shakes as a seaman. What did you want when you ran from the Dawn? If you wanted hard work and hard money you had them on Ken King's packet. If you wanted to pick up the South Sea trade, bargaining for copra and pearl-shell, and making a hard living at it, you couldn't have picked a better man than Ken King to sail with. Is that what you wanted?"

"No!" said Paget, with a deep breath.

"What then?"

Paget did not answer. He hardly knew what he had wanted, what he had expected, when he had thrown in his lot with Dandy Peter. In the old days at Lalinge, when he had made the sea-lawyer's acquaintance, Parsons had told him that it would be easy work and easy money, with a spot of danger—and nothing could have suited the reckless scapegrace better. He had refused to heed the tales he had heard of Dandy Peter, and had rebelled when his uncle sent him on Ken King's ketch to keep him clear of the Lukwe adventurer. He had never rested till he had escaped from the Dawn and carried out his wish of sailing with Dandy Peter.

Now he had his wish, and was coming down to brass tacks. Easy work and easy money—and crime! Not only crime, but a particularly dirty and cowardly and base form of it. Selling men into slavery—that was the easy work and the easy money!

"What did you expect?" sneered Dandy Peter. "Did you think the beaches of the Pacific were thick with pearls, waiting to be picked up? Did you fancy there was a treasure island just below the horizon? Did you ever hear of a man who made money inside the law except by putting his back into it? Ken King was teaching you to put your back into it, and you kicked hard enough. Your uncle, old Belnap at Lalinge, tried to teach you, and you turned on him like a wildcat! You'd gambled away your remittances from home—you were coming down to the beach! You can't have it both ways. Hard work and hard money, or easy work and easy money—Ken King's way, or my way."

Paget choked.

"I've been a fool!" he muttered.

"Chew on it!" grinned Dandy Peter. "I reckon you could see what was looking you in the face! You're for

it now—you've burned your boats behind you! Do you think Ken King will forget having been tied up in the bush on Uvuka, while I got you away from his ketch? I reckon he's hunting you now—with a set of irons ready to clap on you if he overhauls us. You're sailing with me now, shipmate! Chew on it, and get it down."

The cutter dropped her anchor in the lagoon, opposite the Dutchman's bungalow. The dinghy, towed astern of the Sea-Cat, was pulled alongside, and Dandy Peter jumped into it, signing to Paget to follow him.

In bitter silence the scapegrace followed. Kotoo and Nalasu pulled the dinghy ashore, leaving the boat-steerer on the cutter.

Parsons tramped up the coral path to the bungalow, Paget with him. In the veranda Van Hook rose to greet them, heaving his immense bulk out of the creaking Madeira chair. His piggy eyes rested inquiringly on Paget, whom Parsons smilingly presented as his mate. The Dutchman held out a large damp hand to the scapegrace.

"This feller Van Hook plenty glad to see you," he said. Van Hook had no English except the pidgin English spoken in the Islands.

Only a warning look from Dandy Peter drove Paget to touch the flabby paw. The piggy eyes gleamed at him suspiciously. His distaste had not escaped the planter's observation.

Van Hook sat down again and clapped his flabby hands for his house-boy. Long glasses and bottles were brought into the veranda. Paget did not touch the liquor—that, at least, was not one of his weaknesses. He sat plunged into the deepest of black depression. The revelation of Dandy Peter's business at Dutchman's Island was a stunning blow to him.

He listened, hardly heeding, to the talk between his shipmate and the podgy planter. It ran on stores and prices, and niggers—chiefly niggers! It was sheer misery to the wretched scapegrace to sit and hear it, and it lasted a good hour. It was for this that he had treated a kind relative with disrespect and ingratitude—for this that he had mutinied and deserted from the Dawn and sailed on the Sea-Cat! The shock had caused the scales to fall from his eyes, and he was beginning to see his own actions in a truer light—and what he saw sickened him.

When at last they left the bungalow and went back to the beach, Paget cast a glance over the sea beyond the reef—the blue Pacific, rolling to infinity. For the first time he would have been glad to see the tall sails of the Dawn rising from the blue. But there was no sign of a sail on the boundless sea.

Dandy Peter was grinning with satisfaction. It seemed that he had made a good bargain with the Dutchman.

"Twenty pounds a head, for forty boys!" he said. "Work that out, Paget! How long do you reckon it takes Ken King to make that, trading cloaks and calico for copra on the beaches? Van Hook's advancing us stores—we fill up here with food and

water." He gave the silent scapegrace a sharp look.

"You stand in with me, Paget!" he said. "You're not afraid of a brush with the niggers, I reckon, and you can handle a rifle. I reckon you'll be glad to pack two hundred pounds in your belt, and if you have to pot a nigger or two, niggers are cheap!"

Paget caught his breath.

"I don't quite get you, Paget," said the sea-lawyer of Lukwe, with a dangerous look. "I've picked you to sail with me—I reckoned you were the man I wanted, from what I knew of you back on Lalinge. You don't want to fancy that you can pick and choose on the Sea-Cat. I'm not a man of Ken King's left. A man on the Sea-Cat jumps when I say jump."

"If you're threatening me—" began Paget.

"Cut that out! I'm tipping you, for your own good! You've joined up with me of your own accord, and I'm banking on you! It's too late to back out, for either of us! You're for it now."

"Yes," muttered the scallywag. "I'm for it! I've asked for it, and I've got it! I've no choice but to stand by you—and I'm standing by you. But—"

"Wash out the butts," said Dandy Peter, smiling again. "You'll forget the butts when you make as many sovereigns as Ken King makes six-pences. After a few trips you'll laugh at all this. Now come and lend a hand with the stores."

The scapegrace felt, with an inward shiver, that it was only too true—after a few trips his conscience would be deadened; as dead as Dandy Peter's. He would be a scoundrel like the scoundrel he sailed with! In gloomy silence he went to help Dandy Peter with the stores.

The Scowling Dutchman!

FELLER island stop along sea!" said Koko the Kanaka, the boatswain of the Dawn.

Ken King, the boy trader known as King of the Islands, and Kit Hudson, his Australian mate, fixed their eyes on the blur rising from the Pacific in the west. The Dawn, under full sail, was making six knots before the wind. Dutchman's Island was more than a hundred miles from any other land—a solitary, fertile spot in a boundless waste of ocean. Only twice in the year a steamer came to take off Van Hook's produce. At other times, it was seldom that any craft was seen anywhere near the island, except Van Hook's own whale-boat. And any chance visitor was not welcomed there. The Dutchman owned the whole island and he had secrets to keep.

"That the show, Ken?" asked Hudson. It was new ground to him.

"Ay, ay, that's it!" King of the Islands nodded. "I touched there once long ago, when a gale drove me out of my course, for water. I was glad enough to fill my casks and go—Van Hook wasn't hospitable. A surly brute."

"Not the man to give us news, if he has any?"

"Not if he can help it," admitted

Ken King. "But if the Sea-Cat has touched there, we'll drag it out of him somehow."

"And if she hasn't?" asked Hudson.

"There's still Ululu, a long trip on to the west," said Ken. "We've got to make up our minds to losing time, Kit! I know the trade's going to pot—and we're missing dates. But I've got my promise to Mr. Belnap to remember—he put that fool Paget into my hands. And Dandy Peter handled our crew at Uvuka while we were tied up in the bush." Ken's eyes gleamed. "I'll teach that sea-thief to step on my deck and handle my Kanakas."

"We've got to get him!" agreed Hudson. "And there's a sporting chance of picking up news of him from the Dutchman?"

"More than that, I think," said Ken. "If we hadn't fallen in with Barney Hall, we should be done. We lost time giving that ruffian a tow into Olo—but it's paid us. We got Dandy Peter's course from him. Think it out, old chap! Parsons robbed Hall of his stores—but he never got enough for a long trip from that Tonga lugger. What he got from Hall won't last long. He's got to put in somewhere—and after leaving Hall, he set a course west by north. Dutchman's Island is the first land."

"Parsons must be short of money if he pulled out of Uvuka short of stores," said Kit, "and we know he did! Is Van Hook the man to help a skipper in hard case?"

"The last man in the Islands—unless it paid him," answered Ken. "But I know that Parsons has done business with him—they're birds of a feather. Dandy Peter's five hundred miles from his home port of Lukwe, and he must have some business in these waters. Doesn't it look as if his business is at Dutchman's Island?"

"It does!" admitted Hudson.

"We're taking a chance, of course," said Ken. "If we're on a false scent, we're throwing away days. But we may pick up news of him—perhaps find him in the lagoon."

"If not, we keep on to Ululu. That's a native island, with no white men there—right off the map. I don't suppose they see a white man once in five years. They'll remember Parsons if he put in—and he will have to put in somewhere for water. If we draw Ululu blank—" Ken paused.

"We'll try another tack," said the mate of the Dawn. "We're getting Dandy Peter!"

"Ay, ay!" said King of the Islands. The Dawn rushed on, under the wind. Higher rose the palm-trees, and the bush came into sight, then the reef, and the lagoon. With the binoculars, Ken picked out the bungalow on the beach, and the plantation buildings farther back. Over the low reef, he was able to scan the lagoon. There was no craft to be seen at anchor there. If the Sea-Cat had touched at Dutchman's Island, she had pulled out again.

Ken had had a faint hope of sighting the cutter. He still hoped for news of her. What information the shipmates had been able to pick up

of Dandy Peter's movements was vague and uncertain. But all that they knew pointed to Dutchman's Island as his probable destination, and if they drew it blank they were at a loss. If Dandy Peter had come and gone, the Dutch planter could tell them—and he should tell them, or take the consequences.

"Feller Dussman comey along beach!" said Koko suddenly, as the ketch ran down to the reef passage.

A large fat figure, in dingy ducks, under an enormous shady hat, appeared in sight. Van Hook, apparently, had been on the plantation when the sails of the Dawn were sighted. The fat, unwieldy man came waddling back to the beach as quickly as he could move his heavy limbs.

He reached the beach as the ketch entered the lagoon. Standing on the sand and powdered coral, he watched the vessel as she came to anchor, a surly scowl on his podgy face. Van Hook did not want white men at his island—least of all the boy traders of Lalinge. The scowl intensified on his face as the whaleboat dropped and pulled ashore.

Made to Talk!

"If that swab's glad to see us, he doesn't look it!" Kit Hudson remarked, with a grin.

The boat grounded, and Ken and Kit jumped ashore. The Dutchman came waddling to meet them.

"What name you comey along feller island belong me?" he grunted. "You savvy plenty this feller no like."

The Dutchman, evidently, had not forgotten Ken's last call, long ago as it was. He knew the boy trader at once.

"We're looking for Peter Parsons, of Lukwe," answered Ken, coming straight to the point. "If the Sea-Cat's been here, give us the bearings of her course, Mr. Van Hook, and we'll pull out of your lagoon as fast as you can possibly want us to."

The piggy eyes of the Dutchman narrowed. Likely enough, if Dandy Peter had been there, he had told Van Hook that King of the Islands was hunting him. He could not have known that Ken was coming, for of the Dawn's meeting with Barney Hall's lugger he could have known nothing. But Dandy Peter was the man to guard against all chances.

Van Hook shook his head.

"No savvy Sea-Cat!" he answered. "No see Peter Parsons, eye belong me. That feller no comey along this feller island."

It was a point-blank denial, and Ken stood silent. Either he was on a false scent, and Peter Parsons had never raised the island, or else the planter did not choose to tell him. It was impossible to say which.

"No wantee feller ship along this island," went on Van Hook, with blunt incivility. "Plenty good you pull out along sea, King of the Islands."

The shipmates exchanged glances.

"We're not leaving it at that!" said Kit. "If Van Hook's seen nothing of the Sea-Cat, some of his men may have. We can ask—"

"You no talk along boys belong me," interrupted the Dutchman harshly. "No wantee white feller talk along boys belong me. You go along ship belong you, altogether too quick."

"And why?" demanded Hudson hotly. "Why can't we have a word with your black boys, or with one of your overseers?"

"This feller island belong me! You makee go along ship belong you!" snapped the Dutchman.

Ken set his lips. It might be merely the surly incivility he expected from a brutal character like Van Hook. But he had a strong suspicion that the planter had another reason for wishing to prevent communication between the shipmates and the man on the island.

"That won't wash, Van Hook!" he said decisively. "We're after Peter Parsons. He's got a deserter from my ketch on his packet, and I'm going to question every man on this island. And you're not going to stop me, Van Hook. I believe you're lying. If I were sure of it, I'd take you by your fat neck and shake the truth out of you. Stand out of my way!"

The Dutchman's heavy face crimsoned with rage. He planted his bulky form directly in the path of the shipmates, and his fat hand whipped to the back of his belt. A big revolver glimmered in the sunshine as he threw it up to a level.

"You get back along ship belong you, King of the Islands," he snarled. "You no stop—"

He broke off with a yell as a jagged lump of coral whizzed from the direction of the whaleboat. Koko was watching him. The missile flew from the Kanaka's unerring hand, and crashed on the Dutchman's podgy chin. He yelled, and went over backwards, the revolver sagging down in his fat hand.

As the bulky planter crashed on the sand, King of the Islands leaped at him. A swift kick sent the revolver whirling from his fat fingers. The Dutchman yelled again, with pain and rage. He scrambled furiously to his feet, still yelling. His yells, in furious Dutch, rang over the island.

From the direction of the plantation, two white men came running—each of them with a rifle in his grasp. Van Hook's overseers always went armed. Ken set his teeth.

"Koko! You hold that feller Dussman, hand belong you!" he rapped.

"Yessar!" grinned Koko.

He jumped ashore, ran at the planter and gripped him; and Van Hook struggled savagely, but in vain, in the grasp of the mighty Koko. There was a buzz of excitement from the Hiva-Oa boys at the boat. Ken flashed out his revolver, and levelled it as the two overseers came panting along the beach.

"Stand back!" he shouted. "Another step, and I'll shoot!"

The Dutchmen halted. Kit's revolver was out in another moment.

"Drop those rifles and get back!" rapped Ken. "Get out of it, or I'll drop you on the beach!"

They eyed him sullenly. They were

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used to bullying and driving the black boys on the plantation, but a desperate affray with armed white men was quite another matter. The rifles clumped down on the sand, and the two overseers turned and slouched away.

"Keep an eye open for them, Kit, while I deal with this swab!" said King of the Islands.

He turned to the fat Dutchman, struggling and spluttering in the Kanaka's grip.

"Now, you swab, talk! Your nigger-drivers won't help you! You're in my hands! You've been lying—and you're going to tell me the truth! I'll cut it out of your fat hide with a lawyer-cane if you won't talk! Dandy Peter's been here! Where is he now?"

The Dutchman gurgled.

"Where is Peter Parsons?" Ken's voice rose. "Lompo! You fetch feller lawyer-cane along this place."

"Yessar!" grinned the Hiva-Oa boy. He cut into the bush and came back in a few minutes with a thick, flexible lawyer-cane. Ken signed to him to hand it to Koko.

"Now, Van Hook," he said, "give me Dandy Peter's bearings—the truth, mind, for if I miss him I'll come back to your island and cut every inch of skin off your fat carcase! Talk, you swab, talk!"

Only a torrent of abuse in guttural Dutch answered. At a sign from Ken, the lawyer-cane whistled, and came down across the planter's fat shoulders with a terrific swipe. Van Hook's yell rang across the island and the lagoon.

From the sugar-cane plantation, black boys stared with startled faces. Kit Hudson, revolver in hand, watched for the Dutch overseers. But they did not come. Van Hook, yelling, writhed on the beach, at the feet of the boatswain. The lawyer-cane came down again, and again the Dutchman's frantic yell rang far and wide.

"Is that enough, you scum? Will you speak now?" demanded King of the Islands. "Where is Dandy Peter?"

"That feller stop along Ululu!" spluttered Van Hook. Two hefty swipes of the lawyer-cane, with Koko's sinewy strength in them, were enough for the planter.

"Ululu!" repeated Ken. "What is he doing at Ululu? There's nothing at Ululu for Dandy Peter—unless it's nigger-stealing! Is that it, you scum? Is that the truth?"

"Ja, ja!" panted the Dutchman.

"If you've lied, look for me again!" said Ken grimly. "I'll come back, Van Hook, and you'll be sorry to see me."

He tramped back to the whaleboat. The Dutchman was left sprawling on the sand, panting and gasping, as the boat pulled back to the ketch. He staggered to his feet, and shook a fat fist, spitting out abuse, as the Dawn pulled out of the lagoon.

Ken's face was dark as the sharp grow of the Dawn cut the Pacific rollers again.

"Black-birding!" he said. "That's Dandy Peter's game in these waters—that's what that fool and blackguard, Paget, is coming down to, sailing with Dandy Peter! By gum, they shall both have a lesson when we overhaul them at Ululu!"

On the Brink!

CANOEES surrounded the Sea-Cat, in the lagoon at Ululu. Brilliant sunshine streamed on the coral beach, the grass-houses of the natives, and the shining lagoon. A merry cackle of voices and laughter rose round the cutter and on the deck, crowded with brown-skinned "boys" of all ages.

Ray Paget watched the scene, sick at heart. He knew what was coming, though the unsuspecting Ululuans had no suspicion of it. Yet, though he knew it, and expected every moment the signal of treachery from the hard-faced, reckless adventurer of Lukwe, Paget could hardly believe it. It seemed too vile to believe.

Ululu was a remote island, far off the track of ships. White men were seldom seen there—and the coming of a white man's ship was a tremendous event at the island. They were a peaceful tribe of the sunny, laughter-loving Polynesian race. They had little to offer in the way of trade, but what they had they brought off in the canoes—a little copra, a little pearl-shell, sacks of yams, and coconuts.

They spread over the cutter, crowding it fore and aft, welcomed by Dandy Peter; as unsuspecting of the iron-hearted sea-lawyer of Lukwe as they would have been of King of the Islands. If they had ever heard of black-birding they had forgotten it long ago. British gunboats had put down the trade in human flesh and blood in the Pacific—it was only a memory of the bad old days, if the memory still lingered.

That peaceful, happy scene was to undergo a tragic change as soon as Dandy Peter was ready. Paget knew that he must back up his shipmate—that his rifle would be needed when the trouble started. Peaceful, unarmed as the natives were, there would be wild excitement and attempted resistance when they learned they had been enticed on board the cutter to be kidnapped and taken away from their island, far across the sea. There would—there must—be shooting before resistance was quelled and the rest terrified into submission! And Paget was for it. He was as deep in the mud as Dandy Peter—had left himself no escape!

He had read of such things. He knew how Easter Island, and many another island, had been almost depopulated by hard-hearted traffickers in human beings in the black history of the South Seas. Now he was to take part in such a deed—and there was no escape!

He was sailing with Dandy Peter, and had to play up to him. As he had made his bed, so he had to lie on it. He stood by the tiller, against which his rifle leaned. Soon that rifle would be wanted. Yet he could

hardly believe that at any moment the cackle of laughter would be changed into yells of affright, and blood would be shed on the sunny deck.

Dandy Peter lounged over to him, his eternal cigarette between his lips. He nodded and smiled to the scallywag. He was in great spirits. Twenty pounds a head for forty boys—easy money! It meant a spell ashore, of riotous revelry at Lukwe, after the trip, for him and for the scapegrace of Lalinge—he was taking it for granted that Paget was heart and soul with him now. It was so long since Peter Parsons had had the luxury of a conscience that he did not make much allowance for it in others.

"Keep your weather-eye open, Paget!" drawled the dandy of Lukwe. "The tide's on the turn, and we go out with the tide. I've tipped Kotoo to cut the cable. We shall have to get out quick—there's enough niggers on Ululu to handle us, if they had a chance, after the alarm's given."

Paget nodded, without replying.

"The canoes will sheer off when the firing begins," went on the sea-lawyer. "Knock down every man that tries to jump overboard—they swim like fishes! Use your butt—I reckon Van Hook will patch them up, on his island. The black boys are ready! Keep your weather-eye open!"

Dandy Peter's hand slid to his hip-pocket.

Paget glanced at Kotoo. The black boy had an axe in his hand, ready to cut the cable. Before the natives knew what was happening the cutter would be sliding out to sea.

"You think they'll resist?" Paget's voice came thickly.

"Ay, ay, there's always a shindy!" said Dandy Peter. "Shoot any nigger that lifts a hand. If they got the upper hand, our lives wouldn't be worth much, but knocking over three or four will cow the rest. Forty's the limit we can carry on the Sea-Cat—and there's sixty or seventy packed on board now—a few won't be missed." He laughed, and blew out a cloud of smoke. "Look lively—I'll give the signal with my gun."

He lounged away again.

The scallywag waited. He was for it now—there was no help! If he failed to back up Dandy Peter the struggle might go against the Sea-Cat's crew, with massacre to follow. It was easy money when all went well—but the black-birders were playing with life and death. More than once a crew of nigger-stealers had been massacred by exasperated natives, and history might repeat itself at Ululu if he failed Dandy Peter.

His mind was made up—he had to go through with it. His hand rested on the barrel of the rifle. He stood ready—on the brink of crime.

There was a cackle of glee from a crowd of brown men gathered round a musical-box, from which a jazz tune rattled—a wonderful thing to the simple natives of Ululu. Paget watched them, sickened to think of what was coming.

He saw Kotoo make a movement. There was a flash in the sun as the black boy swung the axe.

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At one hefty stroke the coir rope, tautened by the pull of the tide, parted with a twang—and the cutter was in motion. It swung through the surrounding crowd of canoes, swamping them right and left, amid a sudden alarmed babel of voices.

Crack, crack, crack! rang Dandy Peter's revolver, pitching bullets recklessly among the swarm of bare brown legs on deck; answered by yells and screams of startled terror.

Suloo, at the tiller, kept the cutter steady as she went on the rush of the tide. There were rapid splashes alongside, as startled, frightened natives leaped overboard to escape. Others remained staring, as if petrified with surprise and fear. Three or four were shrieking from wounds inflicted by the sea-lawyer's reckless shooting.

Amazement and terror and wild confusion reigned. Dandy Peter's voice rang out:

"You stop along deck, you feller Ululu boy! You stop along ship belong me."

His gleaming eyes and levelled revolver threatened the terrified natives. But as they realised what was happening there was a general scramble to the rail, to leap into the sea. Some, quicker on the uptake, had jumped at once. Now there was a rush.

Dandy Peter, clubbing his revolver, dashed among the howling brown boys, knocking them down right and left.

PAGET stood, rifle in hand, his heart beating thickly. From where he stood, beside the tiller, he could sweep the length of the deck with a stream of bullets—if it was needed.

And it was needed!

A brawny brown man, reeling under the clubbed revolver, clutched at the sea-lawyer. Dandy Peter fired, his muzzle almost touching the brown

skin. But the bullet passed between the arm and the body, and the native, unhurt, gripped the Lukwe skipper and rolled over on the deck with him.

The dapper sea-lawyer struggled madly in the native's powerful grip. The example of resistance was instantly followed. Another brown hand tore away Dandy Peter's revolver, and another clutched at his throat. Natives, crowding to the rail, turned back—and from the swarming canoes rose yells of rage and vengeance.

"Shoot!" screamed Dandy Peter, struggling for his life. "Shoot!"

Paget's rifle was at his shoulder—his finger on the trigger! It was needed now—and the need was desperate.

"Shoot!" came the sea-lawyer's frantic yell.

Paget did not fire. He could have swept the deck with hot lead, and he did not fire! His finger seemed numbed on the trigger. Yet life was at stake now, his own life as well as Dandy Peter's.

"You shoot along gun, sar!" gasped Suloo, yammering with fear at the tiller. Nalasu and Kotoo were dodging into the cabin. Paget stood motionless. There was still time—but he did not fire!

Dandy Peter, down under half a dozen enraged natives, struggled madly, and screamed to Paget to shoot. Three or four of them were running at Paget.

"Shoot!" shrieked Dandy Peter.

He was at his last gasp.

Paget clubbed the rifle. Dandy Peter was down and out—there was no help from the Lukwe crew—and it was for life or death now! The scallywag leaped among the natives, whirling the butt and dealing crashing blows right and left. In the midst of a howling swarm of enraged natives, he fought for his life. The brown boys backed and dodged from the smashing rifle-butt.

Dandy Peter, sprawling, exhausted, saw Paget standing over him, fight-

ing like a demon, his teeth gritting, his eyes glittering—and the brown men backed from the white man's fierce face and crashing blows. One after another they leaped overboard. Paget hardly knew how he came alive through that desperate struggle—but they were crowding away from him, leaping into the sea—splashing all round the gliding cutter. Panting, sweating, he was left unassailed, with the sea-lawyer sprawling at his feet.

Dandy Peter staggered up as the last brown man leaped over the rail. Paget had saved him from the penalty of his own wickedness. But he had failed him at the pinch—and the sea-lawyer was spitting with fury.

Of the swarm of brown men he had planned to kidnap, not one remained on the Sea-Cat. Not a single "black-bird" would sail on the cutter for Dutchman's Island. But there was no time to wreak his rage on the man who had failed him. He had no time to lose if he was to escape from Ululu with his ship and his life. From the swarming canoes came yells of rage and fury, and more canoes were putting off from the beach, with armed natives in them. Arrows were already falling on the deck.

Choking back his rage, the sea-lawyer panted orders to the Lukwe boys, and sail was shaken out on the cutter—none too soon. Canoes were swarming astern as she picked up the wind.

Paget stood panting as the cutter ran out into the Pacific, leaving Ululu and the canoes astern. He hardly knew whether he was glad or sorry that he had failed Dandy Peter and balked on the brink of crime. But he knew one thing—that there was a deadly reckoning to come. And he knew, too, that he was not afraid to face it when it came!

Next Saturday, Charles Hamilton is at his very best in "DANDY PETER'S VENGEANCE!"—the most vivid tale of the Adventurous South Seas that has ever come your way!

Duel of the Titans

(Continued from page 12)

Later, when the experts examined the stretch of red salt, they found that it was peculiarly hard, with a surface like a rasp. It was this, they said, which had caused the tyre bursts on the record-breaking cars.

"Maybe it was, or maybe it was the three-star curse," said Perky afterwards. "But I'm wondering what would have happened to the Challenger if that other Indian woman hadn't been there. Dick helped to save her kid's life—maybe she helped to save his!"

And Dick agreed with Perky. Ever after he treasured his red moccasins, keeping them as a reminder of a good deed which had helped him attain the greatest of all his speed-won honours!

IN the little township on the side of the mighty salt desert there were celebrations that night. Dick, holder of the world's land-speed

record, at over 360 m.p.h., sat at the head of the table, between his father and Rodd Burne. Near them were Bryan and Ben Mack, Fred Allen—the No. 3 Century driver—and Perky, Red Kelly, and the Toledo racing drivers, and every Toledo and Century mechanic.

They toasted the boy who, trained to speed by Bryan, had made his way by natural and gifted driving ability to pacemaker for the Century team, and on to holder of the greatest speed record in the world. Then Rodd Burne made an announcement.

He had, as they all knew, set up a Toledo factory in England. The Century Specials had whipped his Toledo Eights all along the line—and he was ready to admit his defeat! He said that his Toledo factory in England was to be amalgamated with the Century firm, and there would be no more rivalry.

"Next season," he said, "there'll be a racing team. We'll be at the start of every Grand Prix in the calendar.

The cars will be known as Century Toledo Specials, and the pacemaker for the team will be Dick Warren!"

If he had anything else to say no one heard it. There was a roar of applause, and that applause was echoed all across America when the Century men left the salt flats and started the journey home. It was echoed, too, when the next racing season began and cars in clean green took the starting-line—Century Toledo Specials, led by Dick Warren, with Ben Mack and Red Kelly to support him in the fight for more speed-won honours where racing-cars roar!

More splendid Motor-Racing Stories coming!!! Meanwhile—a very big new attraction next Saturday—Number One of an Exciting New Series—featuring the deposed Boy King of Bubatti, keeper of the secret of the Greatest Treasure Hoard in the World!