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No. 9. New Series
APRIL 16th, 1938

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2^D

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KEN KING HITS BACK

The Boy Trader of the South Seas hands out rough justice to the Bully of the Sunda

By CHARLES HAMILTON

The Upper Hand

STANDING on the after-deck of the Dawn, Captain van Duck of the Sunda brandished his brawny fist in the faces of Ken King and Kit Hudson. His rugged face was red with fury.

King of the Islands did not stir. The burly Dutchman's knuckles were hardly a foot from his handsome, sunburnt face. But Ken heeded the brandished fist no more than he might have heeded a buzzing mosquito.

It was a strange scene on the deck of Ken King's ketch, in the red sunset that glowed on the lagoon of Ululo. Not a dozen fathoms from the ketch the Dutch schooner was anchored, and along her side appeared more than a score of fuzzy heads—black faces of Solomon Island boys, watching their skipper on Ken King's deck. On the ketch, Ken's crew were watching him, too—the five Hiva-Oa boys grinning at his spluttering rage. But Koko, the boatswain, was not grinning. He was frowning darkly. A fist shaken in the face of his white master was more than enough to rouse his ire. His brows knitted, and his dark eyes gleamed at the bully of the Sunda.

Kit Hudson's eyes were gleaming, too, but he said nothing. It was for King of the Islands to deal with the freebooter who was bearing down on his own deck. Ken's face was cool and contemptuous.

"Keep your paws to yourself, Captain van Duck," said the boy trader quietly.

"And keep a civil tongue in your head, or it will be the worse for you."

"Ach! Where is the boy?" roared Van Duck. "I have asked you, where is the boy? What do you say? The boy Peter was on your ketch. He is the son of Black Tom Daly, the pearler—he knows the secret of the pearls of Kohu. Have you flung him overboard?"

"What?" exclaimed King of the Islands.

"You think I do not know why you took him aboard your ship when he escaped me at Kohu?" bawled Van Duck.

"You were there for the pearls. Have you found out the boy's secret and thrown him into the sea?"

Kit Hudson burst into a laugh. Ken's angry face relaxed into a smile. Evidently Van Duck, pearl-poacher and freebooter, judged others by his own measure. Koko made a step towards the Dutch skipper.

"You had feller too much!" exclaimed Koko angrily. "You shut up mouth belong you, along you no talk good-feller talk along white master belong me. You sing out, sar, me makee that bad feller Dussman stop along lagoon, close-up."

Ken signed to the angry boatswain to stand back.

"Listen to me, Van Duck," he said quietly. "I took the boy Peter on my hands to keep him out of your rascally Kohu. I know nothing of pearls on Kohu, and want to know nothing! If pearls are there, they are Tom Daly's—not mine, or yours. The boy left my ketch in a canoe, as I have told you. I've put up with your insolence and allowed you to search my ketch to save trouble with you. But that's the limit! You're finished here."

"If it is true that the boy left your ketch in a canoe, where did he go?" snarled the Dutch freebooter. "What course did he steer? Where shall I find him?"

"Do you think that I should tell you?" asked Ken. "I have allowed you to search my ketch because the boy is not on board. Had he been here, you would tell me nothing."

The brawny fist was brandished again. The bully of the Sunda looked like springing at King of the Islands.

"You will not tell me?" he roared.

"Not a word!" answered Ken coolly. "You will have no help from me in laying hands on the boy, whether he is in possession of Tom Daly or not."

The Dutchman's bulky form trembled with rage.

"Look!" he snarled. He pointed to the crowd of Solomon Islanders watching from the schooner. "At a word from me my crew will be on your deck and against them?" He made another gesture towards the beach of Ululo, where a crowd of brown natives were watching the two vessels with curious eyes. "You and Mulligan, the Pacific Commodore's trader, was staring from the one on that island to help you? You are my mercy—and I'll sink this hooker with every man on board if you do not give up the boy. I mean every word,

King of the Islands—give up the boy, or your ketch goes to the bottom of this lagoon!"

The Dutchman's little piggy eyes gleamed sheer evil under his knitted brows. It was plain that he meant every word he uttered. He had, or he believed he had, the power to carry out his threat. On Ululo there was only one white man, Mulligan the trader—it was a native island ruled by a native chief. The ruffian had no interference to look for from Ululo. And his crew of fierce blacks outnumbered the crew of the Dawn by four to one. The outcome of a struggle could hardly be doubtful.

"You hear me?" roared Van Duck.

"I hear you!" said King of the Islands.

"And now hear me! I've let you search my ship, Van Duck, to save trouble. If that had satisfied you, you could have gone back to your schooner and I should have been glad to see the last of you. Now you're in my hands—and you're staying in them! Koko, seize that man!"

As the boatswain made a stride, Van Duck wrenched the revolver from the back of his belt. But he did not raise it.

For even as he grasped it, King of the Islands sprang at him, and his fist crashed in the red-bearded face like a lump of iron.

The brawny Dutchman went over backwards as if a shot had struck him down. The boy trader kicked the revolver from his hand.

"Seize that man, Koko!" repeated Ken.

"Yessar!" grinned Koko, and as Van Duck staggered to his feet, his hands were twisted behind him.

From the schooner came a yell of excitement from the black boys. Van Duck opened his mouth to shriek an order to them. But Ken's revolver was in his hand now, and he jammed the muzzle fairly into the Dutchman's mouth.

"Belay your jawing tackle, you swab!" he said, between his teeth. "If that schooner comes a fathom nearer—if a single shot is fired—I'll blow your brains out! Order your cannibal crew to stand off! If they attack, you'll die!"

"Ach!" spluttered the Dutchman.

"I—I—I will—"

"You'll do as you're ordered, or take the consequences," said King of the Islands.

Islands. He drew back the revolver a few inches from the red-bearded face. His eyes gleamed over it with grim determination. "Give your crew the order—or die!"

For a long moment the Dutchman was silent, struggling with his rage. But there was death in the revolver that looked him in the face, death in the clear, steady eyes that looked over the levelled barrel. The boy trader was in deadly earnest. If that desperate fight with overwhelming odds was to come, Van Duck would not live to take part in it.

It was death to give way to his fury, yet for a moment the order to his crew to fall on trembled on the freebooter's lips. But he held it back. Instead, he shouted:

"You feller boy along Sunda, you stop along schooner! You no shoot along gun belong you! You stop along Sunda!"

The order came only just in time. The Dutchman had served out arms to his savage crew, and every one of the Solomon Island boys had a rifle in his black hands. A hasty shot might have rung out any moment, beginning a conflict that might well have ended in the massacre of the Dawn's crew, but which Van Duck would not have lived to see. But rifles that had been raised, or half-raised, were lowered.

"Now let me loose!" hissed the Dutchman. "I go back to my ship."

"Do you think I would trust you an inch?" snapped Ken. "You boarded this ketch of your own accord, Van Duck—and you stay. You've forced this trouble and you can take what's coming to you. Koko, makee feller rope stop along hand belong that feller Dussman."

The Dutchman wrenched and struggled. But the boatswain of the Dawn held him in an iron grip while Danny, the cooky-boy, brought a rope and knotted it round his hairy wrists behind him. At a sign from King of the Islands, the end of the rope was run round the mizzen mast, and knotted there. Van Duck had boarded the Dawn to bully her skipper and ride roughshod over her crew—now it dawned upon him that he had put his head into a trap.

"Koko!" rapped King of the Islands.

"You makee knife stop along hand belong you. S'pose Solomon Island feller

shoot along gun, you cut off head belong Dussman, all same Solomon Island boy."

"Me likee plenty too much cut off head belong Dussman, sar!" said the boatswain, and his long Malaita knife gittered in his hand.

If Van Duck had thought of yelling to his crew, he gave up the idea now. Tied and helpless, with his dilated eyes on the knife in Koko's brown hand, he leaned on the mast and swore.

Peter Swims for it

BARNEY HALL, the trader of Tonga, started under the rim of his shady grass hat, rubbed his eyes, and stared again. It was not easy for Barney to believe what his eyes saw—he had never

thought, never dreamed, of luck like this! He stared, and stared again, in almost bewildered astonishment, but with satisfaction dawning in his hard, bronzed face.

The burly trader stood on the beach of Kohu, in a channel of the wide, circling reef, hidden by high coral rocks, his lugger lay, with his crew of three Tonga boys on board. Why Barney had sailed to that lonely, uninhabited island, the Tonga boys did not know—neither did they care. They were more than content to loaf in idleness, instead of handling cargo and hauling sheels on the heavy old lugger.

Barney Hall was ashore, on the inner beach that circled the lagoon. And he stared across a corner of the lagoon at another spot on the beach where a boyish figure stood—stared as if he could not believe his eyes.

"By hokey!" murmured Barney. "It's the boy Peter I saw on Ken King's ketch! It's the son of Black Tom—it's the pearler's boy!"

Hail had seen the boy on the Dawn—the boy whom he, like Van Duck, believed to be the son of Tom Daly the pearler. He would have seized him there and then had it been possible—but he had been pitched into the sea and had been glad to get back to his lugger. Then he had made Kohu, and the boy had run into the lagoon in a canoe manned by Ululo natives, landed, and the canoe had run out to sea again, leaving him at the mercy of the Tonga trader. It was almost too much good luck for Barney to believe.

The boy was standing on the beach, looking after the Ululo canoe as it threaded the reef and set its mat-sail to stand out to sea. For several minutes



Cackling with excitement, the crew of the Sunda crowded to the rail. One shout from Van Duck, bound to the Dawn's mast, and they would open fire.

KEN KING HITS BACK

Barney stood staring at him, then he started tramping round the shore of the lagoon to the spot where the boy stood. The Tonga trader had not been long on Kohu, but he had already searched for traces of the pearling, and found them. He had found the hut where Tom Daly had camped with the boy, the heaps of oyster shells roiled out on the beach—but he had not found the spot whence the pearl oysters had been taken. That was the pearler's secret—and the boy's! Neither had Hall found pearls. If there was, as he suspected, a store of them on Kohu, it was securely hidden. But the boy knew, Barney told himself, as he tramped rapidly round the curving beach. The boy knew—and should tell—if there was persuasive power in a sting-ray tail!

Having watched the Ululo canoe till it bobbed away far in the sunset, the boy turned to the lagoon and waded in its shallow margin round the end of a high rock that jutted into the water.

That action puzzled the Tonga trader. He hurried his footsteps, rapidly approaching the spot. But in a few minutes he understood it. The boy emerged from the shadow of the rock, knee-deep in water, pulling after him a small bark canoe in which lay a double-bladed paddle. Evidently there was some small cave under the rock, used as a canoe-house.

As the boy got the little canoe afloat, Barney broke into a run.

"Belay, there!" he roared. For a long moment the boy stood staring at him. Then he scrambled into the canoe in such haste that it rocked wildly and almost capsized. As it rocked and splashed, he seized the double paddle and dashed it to the water.

Barney Hall reached the edge of the lapping water to see the canoe half a cable's length out of his reach. He dragged the revolver from his belt and raised it.

"Stand by!" he roared. "Stand by, or I'll fire!"

The boy, slim and delicate as he looked, was handling the paddle swiftly and strongly. The two blades dashed the water alternately, and the canoe moved fast. He did not heed the Tonga trader's shout—and Barney fired, his bullet knocking up a water-spout a yard from the canoe. The paddle ceased to ply.

"Come back, you young swab," roared Barney. "or I'll riddle you and your canoe!"

The boy, kneeling in the canoe, looked at him steadily. That he was scared by the burly ruffian was plain enough; but he did not obey Barney's order.

"What do you want with me?" he called back.

"You're Tom Daly's boy that he left here when he sailed to Lukwe in his lugger with a bag of pearls! That's why I want you to come back to the beach, or I'll riddle you!" He pulled trigger again, sending a bullet within a foot of the boy's head as a warning. "Come back to the beach!"

The boy had dropped the paddle into the bottom of the canoe. With a sudden swiftness, he slipped over the gunwale into the water. For a second his dark head was visible on the shining surface of the lagoon; then it disappeared.

It looked for the moment as if the boy, in despair, had flung himself into the lagoon and gone down. Barney stood staring blankly, the revolver sagging in his hand. Then he discerned that the tiny canoe was in motion, drawing farther away from him.

Keeping the canoe between him and the ruffian on the beach, the boy was swimming out, and drawing the canoe after him. Only his head was above water, and it was hidden from Barney's sight by the moving canoe.

"Belay there!" roared the enraged trader. "I'll riddle you! By hokey, I'll send you to the bottom!"

Bang! bang! roared the heavy revolver. Barney Hall was savagely reckless now. Four bullets, one after another, struck the little craft, glancing or cutting through. But the canoe still floated on. The trader spat out an oath as he pulled trigger again, and was answered only by a click. The revolver was empty. He crammed in fresh cartridges.

The canoe glided on, drawn by the hidden swimmer. The range, already long, was longer when Barney had reloaded his revolver. In savage rage, he blazed away at the canoe, knocking up spouts of water all round it. But the little craft and the unseen swimmer were out of effective range now, and he emptied his revolver in vain. He stood sputtering with rage, watching the canoe dwindle across the lagoon. He saw it rock as a dripping figure clambered back into it.

The boy did not even look back at Barney. Kneeling to the paddle, he plied it fast, and shot away towards the

opposite shore—fading from Barney Hall's sight in the sunset that was deepening to dark.

"WHAT'S next?" asked Kit Hudson, with a grin. "Up hook!" answered King of the Islands. "And that swab?" Hudson made a gesture towards the cursing, infuriated Dutchman.

Ken shrugged his shoulders. "He's going to get what he's asked for—and get it hard!" he replied. "We can't let him go back to his schooner, Kit—that means fighting his crew. But there are safe spots in the Pacific where he can be put out of mischief—and Van Duck is going to be given a passage to such a spot."

"His crew will make pretty free with his schooner within twenty-four hours if he doesn't go on board, Ken."

"That's his lookout! He threatened to sink the Dawn with all hands—he would carry out that threat if he could! Why should I worry about what may happen to his schooner?"

King of the Islands said no more. The Dawn was ready for sea, and he rapped out orders to the crew to get the hook up. From the schooner some of the black crew were still watching, and they stared when they saw the Hiva-Oa crew making sail. Captain van Duck, wrenching at his bonds, twisted his head to glare at the shipmates.

"What's this game, King of the Islands?" he shouted, his voice hoarse with rage. "Do you reckon you're running me out to sea on this ketch? Put me back on my schooner, or I'll shout to my crew—"

"Keep that swab quiet, Koko!"

"Me keepe that swab plenty too quiet, sar, s'pose he sing out, mouth belong him!" said the bo'sun. The keen edge of his Malaita knife touched the Dutchman's thick neck. "You sing out, you feller Dussman, s'pose you no want feller head stop along shoulder belong you."

Van Duck uttered no further word.

There was a cackle of excitement from the Sunda as the ketch got under way. Once more the whole crew lined the side. Some were still armed and it was a critical moment. Kit Hudson, revolver in hand, stood ready to fire if a rifle was raised on the schooner. But at the terribly short range an exchange of fire must have done deadly execution. One shout from Van Duck would have been enough—but the Dutchman uttered no word. One syllable would have been his last, and he knew it.

But the shipmates breathed more freely when the Dawn picked up the wind and glided away.

"We're well out of that, Ken!" said Kit, holstering his revolver as the ketch entered the passage in the reef.

King of the Islands nodded.

"It was touch and go!" he answered. "If that bound were back on his schooner, we should be fighting for our lives this minute, Kit! My sainted Sam! It'll be a long time before that scoundrel lays an honest ship aboard again!"

The reef was dropped, and the ketch, shaking out more sail, stood out to sea. At a sign from Ken, Koko quitted his watch on the Dutchman. The bully of the Sunda twisted his head to look back at the masts of the schooner, visible for a time over the reef, but rapidly sinking from sight.

His schooner was left at the mercy of his black crew, and only too well he knew what was likely to happen. For a time they would carry on as usual, expecting their white master to return, and dreading his rage if they gave offence. But as soon as they realised that he was not returning, they would loot the schooner and desert in a body.

"Lower the whale-boat!" The bully of the Sunda raised a weary head and stared about him as he heard Ken King's order. Bright sunrise was on the Pacific, and the Dawn was hove-to.

Van Duck had slept, in fits and starts, through the weary night, squatting at the foot of the mizzen, leaning on the mast.

From the speed the ketch had been making he knew that he must be at least forty or fifty miles from Ululo. He supposed, for the moment, that the Dawn had reached its next port of call, and that the boy traders intended to put him ashore. But as he stared about him the ruffian was surprised to see no sign of an island—no sign of a port or a lagoon.

The Dawn was hove-to on the open sea. Of land—to call it land—there was only a speck in sight, little more than a rock jutting from the boundless sea. The Dutchman saw it; a mass of reefs round which the ocean creamed in never-ceasing surf, a patch of white beach, a patch of palm-trees, a straggle of bush.

That was all, and, for the moment, he did not understand.

"Cast that man loose!" Koko, grinning, came towards the Dutchman, knife in hand. He cut through the rope, and the ruffian tumbled away from the mast.

Ken gave him a glance, and pointed to the whale-boat, rocking by the rail, with Lompo standing up in it and holding aloft.

"Get into that boat, Van Duck!" said the boy trader tersely.

The Dutchman glared at him. He stared round at the solitary islet—then he glared at the boy trader again. He understood at last. He was not going to be landed at any island where he could have carried out the schemes of deadly vengeance on which his savage mind had been brooding. He was going to be marooned on that solitary rock.

"You reckon that you will maroon me?" he hissed. "Is that it, King of the Islands? Is that your game?"

"Ay, ay!" answered Ken. "You've left me only one way of dealing with you, Van Duck—unless I throw you into the sea. That rock's the Albatross—you've heard of it? Get into the boat!"

Lufu and Tomoo were passing down stairs into the boat—blankets, canned food, a few implements, such as it was the custom to leave with a marooned man. The Dutchman stood as if rooted to the deck, breathing fury. He made no step towards the boat.

"You'll find food on the rock—eggs, coconuts, fish, and water. I've landed there in my time," said King of the Islands. "I'm leaving you some stores and blankets. If you're lucky, some banana-boat from Ululo may pick you up in a few weeks—you must take your chance of that, Van Duck. Your hunt for the pearls of Kohu ends here—the boy is safe from you! Are you waiting to be thrown into that boat?"

The Dutchman hurried himself at King of the Islands. For a moment, it seemed that the burly ruffian would sweep the boy trader away before him. Then his huge hammering fists were swept aside, and Ken's right crashed in the red-bearded face, and Van Duck staggered back and back, till he was brought up against the mizzen.

"Come on, you sea-thief!" said the boy trader. "You've bully-ragged me on my own deck and I'm glad you've given me a chance to make you answer for it! Come on, you hulking swab!"

The Dutchman came at him like a tiger. In weight and reach he had all the advantage. He did not care what might follow if he could beat and batter the boy trader with his horny fists. But the crew of the Dawn had seen their boy skipper use his hands before and they did not doubt what the outcome would be. They grinned as they watched the fight.

That feller Dussman plenty too much kill, along hand belong white master belong me, ciece-up!" chuckled Koko. "This feller tinkee that Dussman kill altogether too much."

Thud, thud, thud! went Ken's fists. At last the Dutchman went down, almost lifted from his feet by the crashing knuckles on his red beard.

For long minutes, the Dutchman lay sprawling and panting. He staggered to his feet at last, shaking with rage, but he did not come on again.

"Get into the boat!" rapped Ken.

"Neen—neen!" panted Van Duck hoarsely.

King of the Islands strode at him, and grasped him.

"Stand from under!" called out Kit Hudson.

Lompo, in the boat, dodged out of the way as the bulky figure crashed into the whale-boat, making it rock wildly. Gasping, stunned by the fall, the bully lay sprawling. King of the Islands jumped lightly down after him, followed by Koko and Kolulo. Koko steered, while Lompo and Kolulo sat at the oars, and the whale-boat pulled for the Albatross Rock.

King of the Islands sat in the stern, his eyes on the Dutchman. Not till the whale-boat was bumping on the tiny beach did Van Duck totter up. The boy trader made a gesture towards the shore. Van Duck gave him one long, deadly look, then, in savage silence, stepped out of the whale-boat.

The stores were landed, piled on the little beach out of reach of the tide. The Dutchman did not heed. He stood with his burning eyes fixed on the boy trader. Ken gave him no further heed. This was done with the bully of the Sunda now—and this time, he hoped, for good. "You feller boy, you washy-washy along ketch," said Ken, and the Kanakas pulled back to the Dawn.

Van Duck stood by the pile of stores, watching as the whale-boat was swung up to the davits and sail shaken out, and the Dawn got under way again.

He watched till she vanished far beyond the sea rim. But he still stood staring at the shining waste of waters that was all that was likely to meet his desperate eyes for many a long day.

Next Week: FIRE SHIP



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BEFORE telling you about the contents of next week's MODERN BOY, just a word about publication day. Owing to the Easter holidays, the issue will be on sale next Thursday instead of Saturday. Don't forget!

It's a fine collection of stories that we have for your Easter reading, too. You may not be able to go to Brooklands, but you can get plenty of motor-racing thrills out of WHIZZING WHEELS, the second story in our fine Clifford Cameron series. Driving the Kestrel to victory in a gruelling race, young Nick Forest hardly has time to get his breath back before he's off on a non-stop race across England.

Rail pioneering goes ahead with George Stephenson tackling Edgchill Tunnel, important link in Britain's first railway. Gangs of men toil and sweat in the heart of a hill, wondering if the jagged roof over their heads is going to crash down; blasting their way with gunpowder through solid rock. It isn't only Nature they're up against, but sworn enemies of the railway. Young Billy James, Stephenson's pupil, is convinced that some attempt will be made by the wreckers, and in TROUBLE TUNNEL you'll read how he jumps into swift action when danger threatens.

From the past to the present and the thrilling realms of science... Professor Flaznaget has discovered the secret of Steimach's sound-ray weapon, prepared his answer... and once more Captain Justice challenges the Flying Globes, risks all with an untried invention.

Steve Chivers' next adventure is called HE HAD THEM SCARED! He

certainly did, speeding through Western towns with a cargo of explosive on board so dangerous that no railroad would carry it! But there's fun as well as thrills in this fine story.

It's a hot spot that Kit Connaught gets into in next week's instalment of Wings Over the Pacific—THROUGH THE BARRAGE. He is flying a Japanese plane; the guns of the Fleet are blazing away at him. But Kit has got to get through the barrage, deliver an important message that for America means victory or defeat in the war with Japan.

Ken King thinks he has put Van Duck well out of the way on the lonely Albatross Rock. But an amazing chance brings the Dutchman back when he's least expected, in the story, FIRE SHIP.

The Film Story is BAD MAN OF BRIMSTONE, a rip-roaring yarn of Arizona with Wallace Beery as the man whom everybody fears.

The final True Tale of Treasure is called WHERE IS THE LUTINE GOLD? You've heard of the Lutine Bell being rung at Lloyd's in London—here is the story of the ship to which the bell belonged; now a broken hulk laden with gold somewhere under the sands in the North Sea.

Next week's issue, of course, will contain plenty of Special Features in addition to these eight star stories.

Don't forget, it's on sale next Thursday.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR