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2^D

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APRIL 30th, 1938

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VAN DUCK'S VENGEANCE

Prisoner on board his own ship, Ken King makes a mid-night voyage to Kohu, where the mystery of the pearls and the vanished boy Peter is deepening . . .

By CHARLES HAMILTON

The Dutchman's Triumph

KING OF THE ISLANDS' hands clenched as he faced the brawny Dutchman who had clambered on board the Dawn. The boy skipper and owner of the ketch could hardly believe, for a moment or two,

that it was Van Duck, the skipper of the Sunda, who stood before him, grinning savagely through his red beard.

"Ach!" Van Duck chuckled. "I have found you again, Ken King. Where is your mate? Where are your crew? Have I found you alone?" He chuckled again.

Ken drew a deep breath. The Dawn was anchored a quarter of a mile from the beach of Lu'uo. Across the moonlit lagoon came the tinkle of ukuleles from the white sands where the natives were dancing, and where the Hiva-Oa crew of the Dawn were mingled in the throng. His crew were ashore, his mate, Kit Hudson, was ashore, utterly unaware of danger—as Ken himself had been till the shadowy boat glided in from the sea. He was unarmed, for the mercy of his enemy, for behind Van Duck six or seven Solomon Island blacks clambered up the side, and more were in the boat, holding oars.

Van Duck grinned with savage glee. Not till he had run into the Lu'uo lagoon had he dreamed of finding the Dawn there, nor would he have dreamed of finding her almost deserted and at his mercy! A revolver was in his hand, half-raised, as he grinned at the boy trader. But a glance told him that he had only Ken to deal with, and that Ken had no weapon.

"Get off my ship!" said Ken. "I think not!" grinned Van Duck. "Where is my own ship, King of the Islands? You marooned me on the Albatross Rock, and my crew ran the Sunda to sea. Now the Sunda is burned and sunk. You knew that, but you did not guess that my crew found me on the rock where you had left me! Neen? But if I have lost my schooner, a ketch will serve my turn."

He made a gesture to the Solomon Island boys.

"You feller boy! You seize that feller white master, you makee rope stop along hand, along foot, belong that feller!" he rapped.

King of the Islands made a swift leap backward.

His revolver was below. He had no chance of reaching a weapon. The Dutchman alone he would have handled, brawny and bulky as he was; but a struggle with the swarm of blacks was too hopeless. To swim to the beach and to pull back in the whaleboat with his mate and his crew and deal with the freebooter, that was his only hope.

That swift backward leap carried him to the side. Another leap, and his foot was on the low rail. A second more and he would have plunged into the lagoon. But even as he balanced on the rail half a dozen of the brawny blacks hurled themselves on him, and he went down in the midst of them, fighting like a tiger.

Still struggling vainly, Ken felt his hands dragged together and a rope knotted round his wrists. Another was knotted round his legs and he lay helpless on the deck.

The Dutchman stared towards the beach. In the moonlight, he could make out the crowd of dancing natives, the gigantic form of Koko, the boatswain of the Dawn, towering over the rest. He could see the Dawn's whaleboat moored among a dozen canoes, but he could see nothing of Kit Hudson. What had happened on the ketch had passed unnoticed by anyone ashore. But he knew that he had no time to lose. It was near midnight, and the mate and the crew would be returning before long. Fortune had favoured him, but if Kit Hudson and Koko and the five Hiva-Oa boys came back in time, there would be a different tale to tell.

He turned round and stared down at King of the Islands.

"You lost me my ship," he said. "I take yours! You marooned me on a rock—you shall be marooned in your turn, King of the Islands. But first, the pearls of Kohu! You snatched from me the boy Peter who knows the secret—but you cannot save yourself! It was an ill day for you that you meddled in my business, King of the Islands."

"You dog!" said Ken. "I'll see you hang for piracy yet."

For answer, the Dutchman kicked him



The Dutchman's grinning face looked back as the boat pulled away, leaving Ken bound to the rock that would soon be covered by the tide.

in the ribs. Then, taking no further heed of the prisoner, he shouted orders to his crew.

Ken writhed in the knotted ropes in helpless rage. The Dawn was going out to sea in the moonlight, manned by Van Duck and his blacks.

Van Duck did not delay. As soon as the anchor was up, a tow-rope was run from the bows to the Sunda's boat, and the black crew pulled. Van Duck took the wheel and the Dawn glided away from her anchorage, heading for the reef passage. Brawny black arms tugged at the oars, and the ketch towed swiftly.

King of the Islands strove to drag himself to his feet, to look back. He succeeded at last, jamming himself against the mizzen. His eyes turned on the distant beach.

It seemed to him that he saw a figure in white rush down to the water's edge, stand staring for a moment or two, then leap into the whaleboat. Hudson had seen the ketch in motion—he was sure of that. It seemed to him that he heard an echo of distant shouting. But the sound died.

Closer at hand came a roar from Van Duck.

"You feller boy, you washy-washy too quick! You hear me, ear belong you! You washy too quick, or me knock seven bells out of your black hides."

The Dutchman had seen what Ken had seen. He knew that the Dawn's whaleboat was putting off in pursuit. Once outside the reef, he had no fear of a chase—but he was not outside the reef yet!

Hudson's Futile Chase

"SUFFERING cats!" gasped Kit Hudson. He could hardly believe his eyes.

He was sauntering on the moonlit beach of Lu'uo waiting for eight bells, when the shore leave of the crew would be up.

He was not giving any special heed to the Dawn, anchored a quarter of a mile out, and when his glance turned carelessly in her direction, he fancied that it must be an optical illusion when he saw her in motion, gliding over the lagoon towards the outer reef.

King of the Islands was alone on the ketch. It was unimaginable that he had cut the cable and was steering for the reef. For a long moment Hudson stared blankly without understanding. Lu'uo was a peaceful island; there was no danger from the natives; no white man's ship had ever been "cut out" at Lu'uo. But Hudson had to believe the evidence of his eyes, and he knew that the Dawn had been seized.

As soon as he realised it, the mate did not lose a second. He rushed down to the water's edge, shouting to the crew as he ran. He leaped into the whaleboat,

shouting madly, and the boatswain came running out of the crowd on the beach. "What name?" he panted.

Hudson pointed to the gliding ketch in the distance. Koko's dark eyes almost popped from his brown face as he looked. "Feller white master go along sea!" he gasped. "What name feller white master go along sea, along crew belong him no stop?"

"Call the boys!" roared Hudson. Kolu and Tomoo and Lufu came running. Hudson did not wait for Lompo and Danny. He tumbled the astonished Kanakas into the boat and roared to them to pull.

Koko and Kolu, Tomoo and Lufu sat to the oars, and pulled with all their strength. Hudson stood at the steering-oar, his eyes fixed on the ketch.

His right hand groped for the revolver at the back of his belt. Even on a peaceful island like Lu'uo, he did not go ashore unarmed, and he was glad of it now. His revolver was the only weapon in the Dawn's boat, but he did not dream of hesitating in the pursuit. With all his speed, there was only a bare chance of running down the ketch before she ran the reef.

Now he was able to glimpse the boat that was towing the Dawn—a white man's boat, packed with black men. He glimpsed a brawny figure at the wheel of the ketch. It was too far off for recognition, though it seemed familiar to him. "Pull!" roared Hudson. "Pull!"

He was gaining. But the ketch had a long start, and the distance to the reef passage was not great. Kit gritted his teeth as he saw that the ketch was in the reef, slipping out to sea. And once on the open waters, the game was up. With one hand on the steering-oar, he gripped his revolver in the other and roared to the Kanakas to pull.

From the taffrail of the Dawn, a rugged, red-bearded face glared back; a revolver was brandished at the pursuing boat, and a hoarse voice roared defiance. Then Hudson knew.

"Van Duck!" he breathed.

How and why the Dutchman was there, with the crew of the burned-out Sunda, he could not know—but he knew that the red-bearded ruffian glared back over the taffrail was Van Duck. He lifted his revolver and fired.

Crack! came in answer over the taffrail of the Dawn as Van Duck fired back. Both bullets flew wide. But the whaleboat rushed on, and was less than half a cable's length astern as the ketch slid out from the reef passage into the Pacific.

"Pull!" shrieked Hudson.

He saw the Solomon Islanders clambering from the Sunda's boat on board the ketch, heard the hoarse roar of Van

Duck's voice as he yelled to them to shake out sail, and glimpsed a set face staring back from a bound man who was jammed against the mizzen—King of the Islands, a bound prisoner on his own deck.

The whaleboat surged onwards. Van Duck was not to be seen now, but Hudson fired, and fired again, at glimpsed black figures. A yell that floated back told that one of the shots had hit.

"Pull! Pull!" panted Hudson desperately.

But the Kanakas were already straining their hardest. They panted and sweated as they slaved at the oars. For a minute more, there seemed a chance. The whaleboat drew closer, closer, and Hudson hoped against hope to run the Dawn aboard. A red-bearded face glared at him over the rail, and he fired. A roar of rage came back from Van Duck as the bullet grazed his rugged face, tearing his red beard.

But almost at the same moment the canvas picked up the wind and the Dawn shot away like a sea-bird. Another bullet from Hudson glanced on her hull, but his last shot fell short.

Like a white bird, glimmering in the moonlight, the Dawn fled away on the shimmering sea. Further pursuit was impossible, and reluctantly Hudson signed to the panting Kanakas to cease to row. Standing in the whaleboat, he watched the last glimpse of the Dawn vanish into the dusk of the Pacific.

Visitors at Kohu

BARNEY HALL tramped into the pearler's hut on the beach of Kohu with a black and scowling brow.

From his lugger, anchored in the lagoon, his crew of three Tonga boys

watched him, grinning at one another when his burly back was turned.

They were content to loaf and laze in the sunshine, for the Tonga trader had driven them hard of late. Kohu was not a large island, but searching it from side to side and end to end was a long and weary task—and during the hot days, for a week or more, Barney Hall had hardly rested, or allowed his crew to rest.

Somewhere on the lonely atoll was the boy Peter, and Barney and his crew had hunted for him in vain. He had to realise that the boy had some secret hiding-place where he was not to be found, and the futile search was abandoned at last, much to the relief of the Tonga boys.

But while they loafed and chewed betel-nut on the lugger, Barney could not

rest. He was on Kohu for pearls, and savagely resolved not to pull out to sea until he had found them. Peter knew the secret, but he had given up hope of capturing the boy, so he had to rely on himself and luck.

Every day he dreaded to see a sail on the lonely waters that encircled the atoll—Van Duck's schooner or Ken King's ketch. Both of them he regarded as his rivals for Black Tom Daly's pearls, and if either came, either was too strong for him in a contest. Neither, so far, had appeared in the offing, to his perplexity as much as his relief. But that they would come he had no doubt. And after that, his chance of success would be exceedingly slim.

He tramped into the hut, staring round with gleaming eyes. A dozen times, at least, he had searched it for the cache of pearls, now he was searching it again.

It was a small building, of palm poles and pandanus leaf, with only two rooms, both of which opened on to a small veranda in the front. At one end was a lean-to kitchen, in which a stove and cooking utensils were rusting. Tom Daly and the boy had lived in there, diving for oysters in the lagoon, rotting them out for the pearls. Near at hand was the pile of shells, so extensive that it was plain that the pearlers had been at work for a long time before Black Tom pulled out for Lukwe—whence he had never returned. In what part of the lagoon the hidden pearl-bed lay, Barney had no knowledge—any more than he had of the hiding-place of Tom Daly's store of pearls. He had little doubt that the pearler, sailing back from Lukwe, had gone down in the hurricane, or he would have been back at Kohu before this. If so, his secret had perished with him—known now only to the boy Peter, if Barney could but have laid hands on him!

"By hokey!" muttered Barney suddenly, as he stared round the hut.

There was a bunk in each of the two rooms, untouched since the day when Van Duck had swooped down and seized the boy whom Black Tom had left on the island, except by Barney in his searching. Now, however, he observed that the hut had been entered since his last search. The blankets were gone from both bunks. Barney did not need telling why and how. Evidently Peter had crept back to his former home, under cover of night, to take what he needed for his lonely and hidden camp.

Barney tramped out on to the little creaking veranda, and scanned the sand

and powdered coral that stretched from the steps down to the lagoon's edge.

Deep in the soft sand were the tracks of his own heavy feet, coming up from the shore. But his eyes glittered as he detected the prints of a much smaller and lighter foot.

Barney tramped down the steps to the sand, bent to scan the traces more closely. The track led away from the hut, along the shore of the lagoon. Barney straightened up and glared round at the anchored lugger, and the three dusky faces that watched him with idle curiosity.

"You feller Soo!" roared Barney. "You comey along this place, plenty too quick."

The Tonga boy jumped off the lugger and waded through the shallows to the beach. He joined his master in a couple of minutes. Barney pointed to the faint traces of footprints in the sand.

"You see feller mark along foot, eye belong you!" he snapped.

"Me see, sar, eye belong me!" assented Soo.

"You follow feller mark belong foot," said Barney. "You findee place along that feller stop."

It was easy work to the keen-eyed Kanaka. With his eyes fixed on the shelving sand, Soo started at a rapid lope, and Barney tramped after him, hopeful once more of laying hands on Peter. For a cable's length the Tonga boy trotted on without a pause, then he stopped and pointed to the thick bush that grew back of the beach.

"That feller go along bush, sar," he said.

"Get to it!" snapped Barney. It was "high bush" on Kohu, thick and tangled, haunted by myriads of noxious insects, and as hot as an oven. Once off the sand, the footprints were lost.

But Soo did not stop. He was following a path, and from the ease with which he picked his way, Barney knew that it was often trodden, though few signs told of it.

A quarter of a mile had been covered. Ahead the bush was thinning out. They were approaching the outer rim of the island, the centre of which was the lagoon.

Barney cursed savagely. There was no sign that the boy he was tracking had stopped. Unless he had turned off, without leaving a sign that even the Kanaka could pick up, he had kept on to the outer reef—a wild and vast mass of rugged coral that stretched far into the sea, here and there piled up in high ridges by ancient volcanic action. Among those endless irregular

masses there were innumerable caves, and Barney had already suspected that one of them might be the hidden den where the boy lurked in hiding.

Soo, who had so far proceeded with an assured step, paused and hesitated on the open reef. He was at a loss now. On the hard coral, washed by the tides, there was no trace to be picked up.

"No see any more, sar," he said.

"Tinkee feller cave he stop!" snarled Barney. "You look, eye belong you, see you findee feller cave."

A sudden sharp exclamation from Soo made the Tonga trader start and stride towards him. But Soo's eyes were turned not on the reef, but on the circling blue sea beyond its limit.

"Feller ketch he stop, sar," said Soo.

"Far away across the blue, a sail loomed from the sea."

Barney Hall stared at it, and roared out an oath that woke the echoes of the reef.

"King of the Islands!" he growled, as he stared at the Dawn, bearing down on Kohu. "The swab said he was not after the pearls—and here comes back to Kohu!"

The Dawn was coming on swiftly, evidently heading for the passage in the reef, hardly a cable's length from the spot where Barney stood. It was in Barney's mind to stand his ground and greet the newcomers with his revolver. But he very quickly dismissed that savage thought. The odds were hopeless. So far from attacking his rivals, it was Barney who was in danger of attack if he was found on the pearl island.

He shook a brawny fist at the approaching ketch, signed savagely to Soo to follow him, and tramped back into the bush.

Search for Peter, search for the pearls, had to be abandoned now. Barney, if he was found on Kohu, was likely to be hunted himself! Breathing rage at every step, he tramped back to the lagoon, and swung himself on the lugger. He lost no time. Before the Dawn arrived at the outer reef, the Tonga lugger had fled across the lagoon to the farthest extremity and slid into a tiny cove in the shore, screened by tall palms. And there Hall sat on the gunwale, a rifle across his knees, ready to bite like a cornered shark if he was hunted to his retreat.

Little did Barney Hall guess how King of the Islands was returning. The boy trader stood on his own deck, his arms bound behind him, unable to lift a finger in his own defence.

From Lu'uo, the ketch had run swiftly before a favourable wind. The cedar

masts groaned under the load of canvas that the Dutchman spread to the wind. In a night and a day Van Duck made Kohu, and under the red sunset the ketch ran down to the passage in the reef. It was there that Peter, fleeing from the bully of the Sunda, had found refuge on the Dawn.

Ken, scanning the wide, lonely reef, wondered whether Peter was now on Kohu. He had left the Dawn, and there was little doubt that he had landed again on the pearl island. But of that Van Duck knew nothing, and Ken could only hope that if the boy was there he would escape the eyes of the Dutch freebooter. He wondered, too, whether the trader of Tonga was at Kohu. But if there were living beings on the solitary atoll, no sign of them was to be seen.

The Dutchman gave no heed to his prisoner while the ketch made the reef passage and slipped into the lagoon. He scanned the reef, the inner circling beach, the palm grove and shadowy bush, with keen eyes, doubtful whether he might not raise some other craft in the lagoon, rivals in the hunt for the pearls.

But Barney Hall's lugger, the only craft there, was three miles distant, hidden in the cove under screening palms. The Dawn came to anchor opposite the pearler's hut, almost in the spot where, little more than an hour earlier, Barney's lugger had lain, only farther out from the beach on account of her deeper draught.

Van Duck rapped an order to the Solomon Islanders to lower the boat, pulled ashore, and tramped into the pearler's hut.

Ken's eyes followed the Dutchman on the beach. The red-bearded face had an angry and puzzled expression as the Dutchman tramped in and round the pearler's hut.

The boat pulled back to the ketch at last. Then Van Duck gave his attention to his prisoner. His little piggy eyes scanned Ken's cool, contemptuous face.

"No one is on the island," said Van Duck. "Black Tom Daly has not returned from Lukwe!"

Ken did not speak. He knew that Black Tom, picked up from the wreck of his lugger, had been left with the Pacific Company's trader at Ululo.

"Alive or dead, he is not here!" said the Dutchman. "But his cache of pearls is here. It was known to the boy Peter, and I think it is known to you. Black Tom found pearls here—I have seen the shells that he rotted out for pearls! You had the boy on this ketch, (Continued on page 19)



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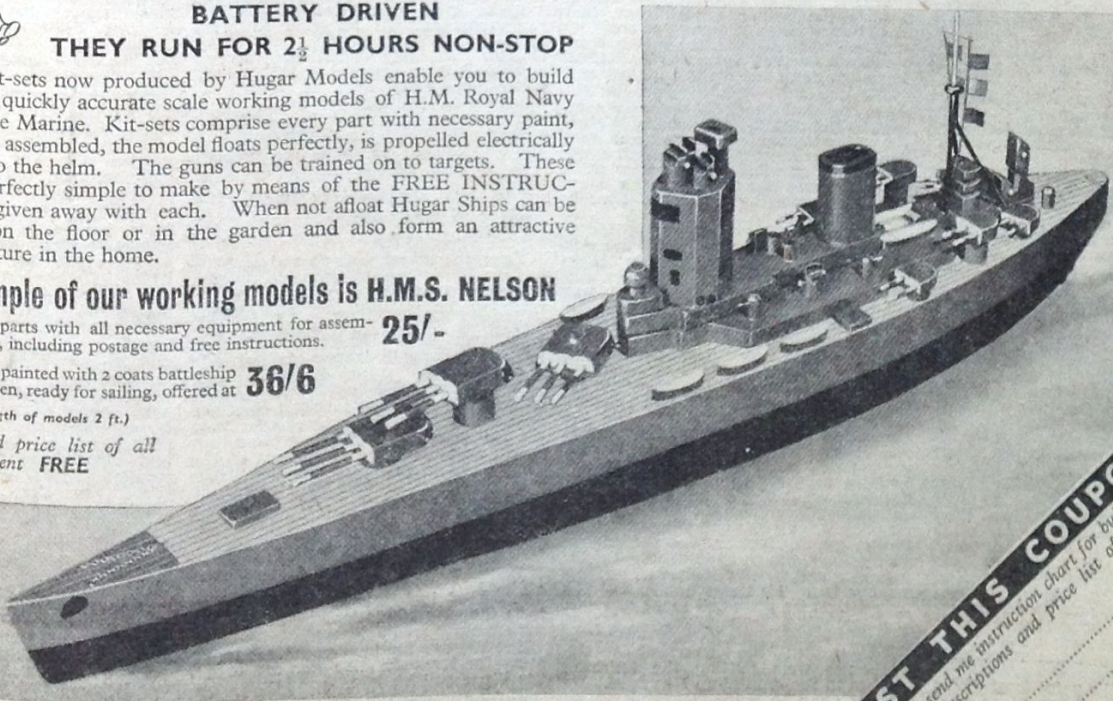
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Modern Boy

VAN DUCK'S VENGEANCE

(Continued)

after he escaped from me. Did he tell you what he knew?"

"The boy told me nothing!" answered Ken. "I asked him nothing—and when he wished to go, I hailed a canoe and let him run. That is all I know of the boy."

The Dutchman gave a jeering laugh. "That is all you choose to tell!" he sneered. "I've asked you where the boy steered his course, when he left the ketch. You did not tell me—will you tell me now?"

"I shall tell you nothing!"

"Nen?" Van Duck grinned savagely. "You are in my hands, King of the Islands. Give me help to lay hands on the pearls of Kohu, and when I pull out of this lagoon I will make the Albatross and maroon you where you left me. For one good turn another! Speak, if you know enough to save your life."

Ken stood silent. He could have told the Dutchman that Peter was on Kohu—probably at that very moment watching the Dawn from some nook in the high bush. But not to save his life or a thousand lives would King of the Islands have betrayed the boy.

"You know something that you will not tell!" muttered the Dutchman. "Speak and you shall live to be marooned on the Albatross. But if you are useless to me, King of the Islands, I shall maroon you here!"

He rapped an order to the black boys, and two or three of them grasped the boy trader and dropped him into the boat. Van Duck followed the boat's crew, and they pulled away from the ketch into the reef channel.

Ken slumped in the stern seat with his hands bound behind him, turned his eyes on the savage face at his side. What the Dutchman intended he did not yet know, but he could read in that brutal face that it was the end.

Van Duck signed to the rowers to stop at a low shelf of coral at the foot of a rugged mass of rock.

The tide was out, and most of the reef of Kohu was uncovered; but it was on

the turn, and bubbling in the crevices. Ken was lifted from the boat and flung on the shelf of coral.

One of the black boys stepped from the boat with a coil of rope in his hand, and at a signal from Van Duck the boy trader was placed in a sitting position against a jutting spur of rock facing the sea. The rope was run round him and round the jut of rock and knotted fast. When the black boys had finished Ken could move only his head. He looked up at Van Duck, towering over him, his eyes steady on the brutal red-bearded face. He knew now the ruffian's intention. Already the tide was lapping over the coral. The water washed over his legs as he sat. And it was rising!

"You have nothing to tell me that is worth your life?" grinned the Dutchman. "Nothing—but that Kit Hudson will find you and that your life will pay for mine!" answered King of the Islands. The Dutchman shrugged his broad shoulders.

"If that is all, I will leave you," he said. "When the sea is at your throat you will repent that you made me your enemy." He stepped back into the boat. "Good-night, King of the Islands!"

He laughed as the oars dipped. The boat pulled away, back to the lagoon—the Dutchman's grinning face looking back over a brawny shoulder as it went! It disappeared into the lagoon and, with the going of the boat, the last gleam of the sunset disappeared.

Again and again, desperately, madly, Ken wrenched at the cords that held him—wrenched and wrenched, till he ached in every bone and muscle, and his strength was spent. But it was in vain. He could not stir an arm or a hand. And while he struggled hopelessly the tide crept in and in.

The water was over his legs, surging round his waist, rising to his armpits. He shuddered as something touched him—some cold gliding fish in the water.

Slowly, yet swiftly as it seemed to him, the water rose round him; lapping now over his shoulders circling his neck. He tilted his head back—it was useless, futile; but the instinct of life was strong.

It was a matter of minutes now. The gleaming stars in the deep blue dome seemed to swim before his eyes. Mur-

News For Stamp Collectors

ADD WHALES TO YOUR ALBUM

LOOKING for a little "sideline" speciality collection? Try whaling. Three new stamps from the Falkland Islands round off those already issued on the subject, so that the whole collection would go on half an album page.

First let's see what has previously appeared. All our items are drawn from the Falklands. On the series current between 1929 and 1932 you'll recall a whale was depicted "in action"—"blowing," the whalers call it, for all he's worth. The only snag here, according to the zoo "fans," however, is the fact that the great beast is shown "blowing" while floating on the surface of the sea. This, apparently, he never does in real life. He fills his lungs with air when on the surface, dives to feed, and while just below blows the air from his mighty lungs. The result is a fountain of warm water.

It seems that the artist who designed this stamp whale knew his error. But he took Leibnitz with Nature.

No one can criticize our next picture of a whale on the 6d. value of 1933. This is a truly magnificent specimen of the world's largest animal. The 1d. specimen of this same series introduces us to our own side of the whaling business by way of a small "hunting" vessel. Note the harpoon in the bows.

And now to our new trio in the misty climes of the Atlantic-girt Falklands, whaling is a mighty im-



portant industry, and to help the whalers, the Government has fitted out two special "tec" ships to follow the movements of the monsters of the deep. These ships are the Royal Research Ships William Scoresby and the Discovery II. William Scoresby is a glorified whaler and her business is to mark the whales. Instead of firing a harpoon line, she fires numbered discs into any whales she encounters. The discs are quite harmless to the whales, and when eventually the beasts are killed by professional whalers or captured by Discovery II, the discs provide valuable information.

The William Scoresby we see on the new 6d. stamp, the Discovery II on the new 6d. If you get the latter stamp, try to find an interesting error in the drawing of the ship. We won't tell you exactly what the error is, except that it concerns the flags. See if you can spot it yourself.

The third new stamp dealing with whaling is the 1d.—illustrated here. This depicts a monument in Port Stanley, the Falkland Islands capital, commemorating the beginning of British rule, way back in 1833. Since whales and whaling were mainly responsible for our interest in the islands in the first place—but more suitable or more durable subject than a couple of mighty whales' jaw-bones?

muring, whispering the merciless sea came on.

The sea was drumming in his ears, the water surging over his face. Was it a trick of his fleeting senses, or did he hear, through the wash of the rising

water, the sound of a voice calling from the darkness?

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