

OVER SIX THOUSAND PRIZES TO BE WON! See page 19

# MODERN BOY

EVERY SATURDAY

No. 12. New Series  
MAY 7th, 1938

2<sup>D</sup>

EIGHT STORIES

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By JOHN TEMPLER

—\*—

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FUN + NEWS + TRUE  
ADVENTURE + HOBBIES



# RIVALRY OF PEARL ISLAND

Strange things are happening on Kohu, and Ken King is in the thick of it!

By CHARLES HAMILTON

## The Coral Cave

**K**ING OF THE ISLANDS strained his ears, striving to catch some sound other than that of the wash of the tide on the reef of Kohu. The welling water flowed round the boy trader's neck as he

sat bound to the rock. Only by throwing back his head and uptilting his chin could he keep his mouth clear. But every moment or two a surge washed over his face, and covered his head, blotting out the glitter of the stars.

It was not a matter of minutes now, but of moments, before the deepening tide on the reef flowed over him, choking the last breath of life. He felt that his senses were leaving him when a calling voice came through the sound of the sea. As he strained his ears to hear, it came again: calling, calling!

He could see nothing but the pitiless sea shimmering in the star-gleam, and dim shapes of rocks that jutted from the coral reef. The island of Kohu was a black mass at a distance. The ketch Dawn rode at anchor in the lagoon unseen. Who was it that was calling from the dark and lonely reef?

"Ahoy!" The boy trader shouted desperately. A surge of water choked him the next moment. But the shout rang and echoed over the shadowy reef, loud above the boom of the tide in the coral channels and fissures. He choked and panted for breath. But the surge receded, leaving his face for a moment clear, and he shouted again:

"Ahoy! Help!" "I am coming!" came back the voice, the words distinguishable now. There was a sound of splashing on the reef.

"Where are you?" "Here—here! This way!" shouted Ken King before the surging water choked utterance again.

Trampling steps in the water splashed nearer and nearer. In the darkness, he caught a shadow looming against the stars. Who was it that came? Not Van Duck, the Dutch freebooter who had seized his ketch—he was not likely to repent of his villainy, and return to release the victim he had left to death in the tide. Not Barney Hall—even if the trader of Tonga was on Kohu, he would not have stirred to save his enemy. Then suddenly King of the Islands knew, as he made out the slim figure that barred the starlight. It was the boy Peter whom he had rescued from the Dutchman, and who had returned alone to the pearl island.

The splashing steps came closer. Peter, up to his waist in water, scrambled towards the rock to which the boy trader was bound and reached him. Ken caught the glimmer of the dark eyes in the white face.

"Ken King!" panted the boy. "Ay, ay! Help me!" gasped Ken. "Have you a knife? I am bound—tied hand and foot to the rock—"

He broke off, choking, under a surge of the sea.

The boy groped in the surging water, and Ken felt a keen edge that glided over the knotted ropes. Swiftly the boy sawed through them, and coil after coil fell away from King of the Islands. But a rope was still holding when a deep surge flowed over his head, and bubbles floated to the surface as he choked. In those bitter seconds death was close to King of the Islands. But the last rope parted under the sawing knife, a hand grasped him, and his face was drawn from the water.

He was on his feet at last, standing unsteadily on the rough coral, the arm of the boy supporting him. But for that supporting arm he would have fallen, for his strength was spent, his senses swimming.

Round him the tide eddied and whirled, foaming on over the sunken reef, booming in the reef passage. Black against the sky he saw Kohu, the lagoon hidden by the high bush and the palm groves, beyond which lay his ketch, manned now



The roar of a rifle rang across the silent lagoon. Van Duck staggered, and from the black crew came startled cries.

by Van Duck and his crew of Solomon Islanders. The Dutch freebooter had left him to drown, but the bully of the Sunda was not done with King of the Islands.

Ken felt a grip on his arm. "This way!" breathed the boy. "We have little time, King of the Islands. Follow me."

The water was deepening fast on the reef. Already, had Ken remained bound as the Dutchman had left him, there would have been inches of water over his head. Plunging and splashing the boy led the way, and Ken plunged after him, trusting himself in the dark to Peter's guidance.

But it was not towards the island that Peter led him. A vast mass of coral, heaved up from the ocean-bed by some ancient volcanic convulsion, loomed against the sky, and it was for that that the boy was heading. Ken caught his breath when, still waist-deep in water, he found an arch of rock over his head, shutting out the stars.

"Follow!" came Peter's voice from the blackness.

Ken tramped on after him. The coral was rising under his feet—the water growing shallower. On either side, as he stretched out his hand, he could feel walls of rugged rock. He could see nothing, but he could hear the boy ahead of him. The walls of rock receded—he was in a wider space, and the water was no longer lapping over his feet. The interior of the cavern in the coral was above high-water mark.

"Stop!" came the voice from the darkness.

King of the Islands halted. He heard the scratch of a match. There was a glimmer that revealed the face of the boy bent over a ship's lantern. Then the lantern was lighted, and a dim illumination spread over the cave.

Ken looked round him in the light.

Narrow as the opening of the cave was, the interior was spacious. The top he could not see—but the twinkle of a star showed him that there was an opening far above, somewhere in the high arched rock. The walls, of rugged coral, were rived and split in innumerable crevices and smaller caves. Cooking utensils lay beside the embers of a fire; bags and packages lay about. The lantern, hung on a peg in the coral wall, shed a dim light over the strange scene.

The boy looked at Ken, a faint smile on his face.

"This is my hiding-place," he said. "This is where I have hidden from Barney Hall since he has been on the island—it is a place not easy to find. It was from the mouth of this cave that I saw Van Duck and his crew, and you in their hands. I dared not show myself till they had pulled back to the lagoon. And then I feared that I might be too late."

"You've saved my life!" said Ken. "Thank Heaven they never saw you. Van Duck does not know that you are on the island. The villain seized my ketch

at Lu'uo, when my mate and crew were ashore. He brought me here a prisoner, and left me to death on the reef, as you saw." The boy trader clenched his hands. "Kit Hudson will guess that Van Duck was making Kohu. A couple of days, perhaps, and Hudson will be here with my crew—and then for a reckoning with Van Duck!"

## The First Shot

**B**ARNEY HALL gripped his rifle, staring through the palms with amazed and enraged eyes at the boat pulling on the lagoon. Behind him, on the deck of his dingy lugger, the three Tonga boys

were muttering with fear.

"Solomon Island boy stop along that boat!" muttered Soo, the boat-steerer. "Feller along that boat belong Malaita, along Solomon Islands. Close-up, head belong this feller no stop."

Barney glared round savagely at his crew.

"Belay it!" he snarled. "You shut up mouth belong you, you feller boy."

The Tonga lugger was hidden from sight in the creek on the southern side of the Kohu lagoon. The creek was narrow and shallow, overshadowed by nodding palms, banked with thick hibiscus, and masses of branches, cut from the bush, had been piled on the deck for more effectual concealment.

At the sight of the Dawn sailing into the lagoon the previous day, Barney had gone to cover. For a week or more, he had been hunting the boy of Kohu in vain. Now he feared to be hunted himself. He did not doubt when he saw the tall sails of the Dawn that King of the Islands had returned. Now, as he stared out of cover at the boat on the lagoon, he could hardly believe his eyes.

He had expected to see King of the Islands, or his mate Kit Hudson, with the Hiva-Oa boys at the oars. His eyes started as he scanned the burly red-bearded Dutchman who sat in the stern, and the black Solomon Islanders rowing. It was Ken King's ship that rode at anchor—but the boat that had pulled away from it was manned by Van Duck and four of his black crew.

"Van Duck, by hokey!" breathed Barney Hall.

The boat was pulling along the beach, Van Duck's little piggy eyes scanning the shore watchfully as the black boys pulled. He could see nothing of the lugger. It was too well screened from view. But the look on his harsh, savage face told its own tale. He knew that there were others on the island, and he was searching. Barney Hall had left plenty of traces, and a single print of his boots in the sand would have been enough.

Barney could not understand. Of the burning of the Sunda, of Van Duck's raid on the ketch at Lu'uo, he knew nothing. It was utterly amazing to him to find that it was Van Duck and his crew who had sailed into the lagoon in Ken King's ketch.

The boat was pulling by half a cable's length from the beach. Barney raised the rifle, then lowered it again. His savage voice had silenced the muttering of his crew, but they were watching in deep fear, which Barney himself shared. Whatever he might have had to expect from King of the Islands, he knew only too well what to look for from the brutal and lawless Dutchman, his rival in the quest for the pearls of Kohu. His crew knew, too, and they were ready to leap from the lugger and flee into the bush at a sign of the boat pulling in. Not for a moment would they have faced the knives of Van Duck's cannibal crew.

Barney muttered an oath as he saw the burly Dutchman rise to his feet, his eyes fixed on the shore. He had noted the opening of the tiny creek and was watching it as the boat pulled slowly by. Again Barney raised his rifle. There were four blacks in the boat, more on the anchored ketch. The odds were too heavy for him to provoke a conflict, if he could avoid it. He knew that his crew would run like rabbits at the first onset of the Solomon Islanders. But he knew, too, that all depended on their white leader, and his eyes glinted over his rifle at Van Duck. If the boat pulled in, discovery was certain, and his Winchester was ready to stream bullets at the Dutch freebooter.

The Dutchman, standing in the boat, scanned the shore with searching eyes. If he believed that there was another craft at Kohu, if he was searching for it, he would not leave the creek unexplored. Barney saw the Dutchman make a gesture to his crew.

The boat's bows swung towards the creek. The bare black backs of the rowers were turned towards Barney Hall; but the Dutchman, standing, was facing him, scanning the foliage that hid him, and his crew, and his lugger.

Barney heard the mutter of the terrified Tonga boys behind him.

"Solomon Island boy comey."

"Head belong this feller no stop, plenty too soon."

"This feller run along bush."

Another moment, and the Tonga crew would have been scuttling off the lugger. In that moment Barney Hall fired.

The roar of the rifle rang across the silent lagoon almost like a clap of thunder. The burly figure in the boat staggered and fell, and Barney had no doubt that his shot had told.

From the black crew in the boat came a startled yell. Every black face was turned round towards the beach, and the boat lost way. As it rocked on the

lagoon, the burly Dutchman struggled up, spluttering curses in mingled English and Dutch, his hand to a gash in his tanned cheek where the bullet had torn away a strip of skin and a patch of red beard. Blood was running down the Dutchman's cheek, and down his neck, as he glared in rage and fury at the screen of foliage whence the shot had come.

Even as Hall pulled trigger again, the Dutchman threw himself down in the boat, and the black boys grasped their oars again, the boat swinging away from the beach.

Barney gritted his teeth savagely, and pumped bullets from the Winchester at the fleeing boat. Spattering revolver-shots came back from the Dutchman, tearing the foliage. But the black boys were rowing for their lives, and the boat shot out of range from the beach.

With an oath, Barney dropped the butt of his rifle to the lugger's deck. He had failed to get the Dutchman, and knew what must follow. He could only wait, like a cornered wolf, for what was coming to him.

### News For Peter

**K**ING OF THE ISLANDS awoke with a glint of sunlight on his face. He sat up in his bed of pandanus leaves and moss on the rocky floor of the coral cave and rubbed his eyes.

He had slept unusually long, and awoke as fresh as the sunny morning. He sat, for some moments, looking about him. Rugged walls of coral surrounded him, broken here and there by crevices and caves. He looked up, dazzled by the bright sunlight that fell from above. Overhead, the rock was arched—but there were wide open spaces at the top of the cliff, and he saw patches of blue sky, and a gull winging across the blue.

He threw aside his blanket and rose to his feet. He had slept by the side of a fire in the cave, but only dead embers were left of it. Of Peter he could see nothing.

The boy had left him, after giving him supper, and he had not seen him since. Apparently he had his quarters in some recess of the branching caves in the heart of the honeycombed cliff. Whether he was still sleeping, or whether he had left the cavern, Ken did not know.

From one of the fissures in the side of the cavern came a glimmer of light and a sound of the sea. That was the entrance of the cavern—the way the boy had led him in the previous night.

Ken stepped into it, groped along the dim passage, and reached the mouth, hardly more than two feet wide, and looked out. The tide was out and most of the wide reef showing above the water. On his right, hardly more than a cable's length distant, rose the dark mass of the island. On his left, the reef stretched away to the blue Pacific.

Ken fixed his eyes on Kohu. Tall palms nodded against the sky. Below their feathery tops, there was thick bush. Over the bush, between the palm fronds, he picked out a graceful spar. It told where his ketch lay at anchor in the lagoon.

Suddenly he caught sight of Peter. Sixty feet above the boy trader's head, Peter stood on a pinnacle of rock, his eyes shaded with his hand, staring eastward across the sea.

Ken stared up at him, wondering for a moment or two. Then he understood. Peter was watching the sea for the return of Black Tom Daly's lugger from Lukwe; the Palm Leaf, which, Ken knew, though Peter did not, was a wreck many a long mile away.

Ken smiled faintly.

Van Duck and Barney Hall had both declared that Peter was the son of Black Tom Daly, the pearler, and they believed that he knew the secret of the hidden cache of pearls on the lonely island. The boy had declared that he was not the pearler's son. But that he had been on the pearl island with Black Tom was certain, and the anxiety with which he was now scanning the sea told its own tale. If the boy was not Black Tom's son, it was clear, at least, that he was deeply and intensely concerned in the fate of the missing pearler.

"Ahoy the mast-head!" called out King of the Islands.

Peter gave a start and looked down. Then he smiled, waved his hand, and came clambering down the rugged rock. In a few moments he stood beside the boy trader on the reef. From a crevice in the coral he picked a fibre net, heavy with fish. Evidently he had not been idle while King of the Islands was still sleeping.

"You were watching for the Palm Leaf?" asked Ken.

The boy nodded.

"Yes. I cannot understand why he does not come!" He flushed a little under Ken's eyes. "I left your ketch on the way to Ululo, and came back here to wait

for him. He was to be only three days gone, at Lukwe, but—"

"I can tell you what you want to know," said King of the Islands. "After you had left my ketch, in the canoe, we sighted a wreck."

Peter's face became suddenly pale.

"You need have no fear," said Ken. "We picked up Black Tom Daly from the wreck of the Palm Leaf. He was wrecked in the hurricane. He was insensible, and still insensible when we made Ululo. We left him there in charge of Mulligan, the Pacific Company's trader. He'll have every care, and he'll recover."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure," said Ken. "As likely as not he is on the way to recovery now, and will be looking for a craft to get back to Kohu."

"I feared that the Palm Leaf might have gone down in the hurricane!" muttered Peter. "Every day I have watched the sea for him—and he never came! Once when I was watching from the top of a palm, Barney Hall sighted me and fired on me."

"The swab!" muttered Ken.

"But if he is safe at Ululo—"

"He is safe at Ululo," said King of the Islands. "If you had stayed on my ketch you would have seen him."

"I could not know. I had to get back to Kohu, to wait for him here. What would he have thought if he had returned and found that I was gone?" muttered the boy. "He must have talked of the pearls at Lukwe—that must be how Van Duck and Barney Hall knew. He went to Lukwe for stores, and took with him a few pearls to pay for them; he intended to say nothing, but—" He broke off.

Ken was silent. He had known Black Tom Daly as a drunken, drifting beach-comber. He had no doubt that it had been easy for the rough gang at Lukwe to fill him with "square-face," and loosen his tongue. The boy knew it, too—that was plain from his flushed, troubled face.

"But if he is safe, I care for nothing else!" said Peter abruptly. "He is safer at Ululo while Van Duck and Barney Hall are here."

He cast a quick, scared glance towards the nodding palms of Kohu as there came a sudden thunderous burst of rifle-fire. Shot after shot rang and echoed across the lagoon.

Ken's eyes gleamed.

"Van Duck and Barney Hall have fallen foul of one another!" he said.

He listened intently. But there was no further sound of firing. It had died away as suddenly as it had come.

The rogues had fallen out, but whether the conflict was over, and how it had resulted, he could not tell. But he resolved that he was going to know, as he followed Peter into the coral cavern.

While they built the fire and broiled the fish for a meal, Ken's thoughts were busy. He was thinking out his plans—plans that he had to carry out alone, for the timid boy was useless in the desperate work that was coming.

### Fleeing In Terror

**B**ARNEY HALL dashed a stream of perspiration from his tanned brow and cursed, and cursed again. It was like an oven in the shallow creek banked with thick vegetation. In the heat of the tropic day the Tonga boys sprawled on their mats on the dingy deck, but Barney dared not close his eyes. Neither, in fact, were the Tonga boys sleeping. They appeared to be asleep, but if Barney turned his back, watchful eyes opened and gleamed.

Barney sat by the tiller, his rifle across his knees, a bitter scowl on his face. Every now and then he rose to peer through the foliage that hid the lugger, and to listen.

Far away across the lagoon the tall main-mast of the Dawn jutted to the sky. The ketch had not moved from her anchorage. Barney was still puzzled to know how Ken King's craft had come into the hands of Van Duck, but he was not thinking of that now. He was thinking of his own desperate situation.

Hours had passed since the boat had retreated from his fire. He had seen and heard nothing of the Dutch free-booter and his crew since, but that an attack would come, he had not the slightest doubt.

Neither did the Tonga boys doubt it, and only their fear of their scowling master kept them from bolting into the bush. If the struggle came, Barney knew that they would never face the ferocious Malaita blacks.

If it came from the lagoon, he had a chance. But if the enemy landed at some point on the circling beach and came through the bush—that was what he feared. And every stirring of the light

(Continued on page 18).

# THE ADVENTURES of HARRY and his HERCULES CYCLE



## Episode 3.

## FILM FAME

### The Story so far.

Harry, out for a ride on his new Hercules, comes across a film company 'on location.' After running an errand on his cycle, he gets into one of the 'shots' by accident. The director later sees the 'rushes' of the film, and realises that Harry has the makings of a boy actor. Nobody knows where Harry lives, but by publishing his photo in the local paper, the Publicity Manager tracks him down and...



### THAT NIGHT IN BED...

THIS IS A REAL THRILLER - I SHALL NEED MY HERCULES ALL THE TIME



THAT looks like the end of Harry's Hercules. But is it? Look out for the next thrilling instalment and you'll see. Meantime, imagine all the thrills you'd get from a Hercules of your very own! 5,000,000 cyclists agree there's no bikelike a Hercules. It's the sweetest running cycle in the world, yet it costs less than others. Gents' models from £4.7.6 or about 2/- a week. Ask your local dealer for full particulars.

(Prices do not apply in Eire.)

# By Hercules

## IT'S THE BIKE TO BUY!

The Hercules Cycle & Motor Co. Ltd., Aston, Birmingham - the Largest Cycle Manufacturers in the World.

## THE CHALLENGE OF STEAM

(Continued)

were doing their work just as George Stephenson had predicted, presenting a tremendously increased heating surface to the water.

Again and again Billy walked round the boiler looking for leaks, with a vivid memory of the former failure still in his mind. But again the genius of George Stephenson had surmounted a difficulty in a simple yet efficient fashion. The boiler was without the slightest sign of a leak anywhere.

And the steam pressure was steadily rising—forty, fifty, sixty pounds. Then higher still to seventy and on to a hundred.

The temperature in the shed was terrific, but nothing mattered so long as the test was carried through successfully.

To comply with the terms of the competition the Rocket's boiler was fitted with two safety valves. One was free—that is, it worked automatically with no interference from the man at the controls. The other could be opened or closed according to the needs of the driver. At the moment it was closed, so that a feather of steam only showed at the port of the free valve.

As the pressure rose to a hundred and twenty-five pounds to the square inch a man came in for Billy.

"Mr. Stephenson wants you in the office," he said.

Billy wasn't too pleased, but he had to obey orders. In the office Stephenson was obviously anxious over the test.

"How's it going?" he asked.

"A hundred and twenty-five when you dragged me away from it," replied Billy.

There was a hint of a smile on Stephenson's face.

"You needn't be away from it long," he said. "I only want you to run across to the blacksmith's shop and fetch Tom Gooch. I'll want him close handy for the final test."

Billy went in search of Gooch, but that individual had left the blacksmith's shop and had to be sought elsewhere. Twenty minutes went by before Billy returned to the office with him. And as he entered the place he stiffened with distrust, for standing by Robert Stephenson's desk was Mr. Ewart, the director.

"Hallo, Billy!" he said. "You didn't expect to see me up here, did you?"

"Yes, I did," retorted Billy coldly. "You stayed the night at the same inn as I did when I left Liverpool that day with Mr. Stephenson's drawings."

Mr. Ewart's eyebrows went up.

"You were staying there? Good heavens! If I had known I'd have had a rare fright. Do you know what happened to me there? I was recognised by some labouring men as being a railroad director, and they threatened to throw me out. Only the landlord's blunderbuss kept them at bay, and I went to my room and stayed there till they left by the morning coach."

Billy was amazed. Had he misjudged Mr. Ewart, after all?

"And you were coming here?" he asked.

"No," said Mr. Ewart. "I was on my way to Stockton. I have interests in the mines there. But being in this part of the world, I thought I'd call to see how things were going and—" He broke off, staring through the window to the

yard beyond. "Why! Hang it! There's one of the men who molested me in the inn!"

Billy was at the window in a flash. Sure enough, a man was running, half-crouching, from the boiler-shed.

"It's trouble!" cried Billy. "Come on! After him!"

He darted from the office and sped away across the yard. The man saw him coming and redoubled his speed, racing away out of sight through the gates to the road.

Billy pulled up sharply. What was the sense in chasing the man before he knew what had been done in the boiler-shed?

He spun round, and ran madly into the shed. It was terribly hot. The furnace was roaring. But there was no feather of steam at the port of the free valve.

Billy halted for an instant, gazing around him. Where was the fireman?

Then he saw him lying senseless on the platform before the furnace, a trickle of blood flowing from a wound in his head.

Billy went over to him, but, before attending to him he shot a glance at the steam pressure gauge. It read a hundred and eighty!

But the free valve wasn't gushing steam! Billy's eyes travelled to it, and he gasped with horror.

Not for a second did he think of his own terrible danger. He leapt to the tool bench and seized a pair of pliers. When Robert Stephenson and the others came running in he was on top of the hot boiler wrenching at the safety valve.

They had been wired down securely!

Billy got a hold with his pliers. A tug, and a wire snapped. In an instant the steam gushed up into the air, scalding and hissing.

Another wrench and the second valve

was free. The burst of steam knocked Billy from his hold, and he tumbled backwards to the floor, dazed and bewildered.

"One more minute—" he stammered.

"And the boiler would have burst," said Robert Stephenson grimly. "Thanks, Billy. You've saved the Rocket."

"Like he's saved a lot of things," added Tom Gooch. "I'm beginning to think the line wouldn't have got built at all if it hadn't been for Billy. Are you scalded much, lad?"

"No, no." Billy was too eager over other things to worry about his hurts. "Is the test successful?"

"Wait a bit," put in Robert Stephenson. "Fetch the first-aid men to see to the poor fellow over there. The Rocket is important, but so is a human life."

Not until the fireman had been attended to did the test go on, and then it was proved a tremendous success. The tubular boiler had come into its own.

Billy could not help with the assembling of the Rocket for his hands were bandaged.

"So long as they get right for the journey back to Liverpool, I shan't mind," he said.

"We're getting the wagons and horses ready now," Robert Stephenson told him.

"I promise that you shall travel with the engine. We'll all go with it. If no one else believes that someone is trying to ruin our chances, I do. There may be trouble on the road, and it would be foolhardy to leave you behind, Billy. You're our mascot."

Next Week :

THE WALKING LOCO

## CLUE OF THE DESERT CRASH

(Continued)

Before the sentence was out of his mouth the stick had gone forward and the Corsair fell away beneath them. Straight as an arrow the bow cockpit hurled itself towards the sand. With an oath El Djibbah sprang forward and wrenched at the stick; and the shrill whine of the dive echoed in their ears as the Corsair missed the sand by a margin that to inexperienced eyes seemed perilously narrow. Half-way up the zoom that carried them clear El Djibbah whipped out a knife.

"Do that again, you dog, and I'll slit your throat from ear to ear," he roared.

"Which will amount to the same thing," came the imperturbable reply.

"We can play at this all day," he went on, jerking the machine into a sickening sideslip. "It's a matter of whose nerves will get jumpy first. At any moment I may go a fraction too far or one of the controls may snap. But who cares?"

El Djibbah's eyes were blazing; his beard quivered, and for a terrible moment it seemed as if he would really carry out his threat. As once again the machine swooped madly, he controlled himself with a superhuman effort.

"Find me the remains of Tesson and his camels, and you shall go free," he hissed. "That's my last word. Take it or leave it. Not another inch will I go!"

For the first time Jagers was conscious of the cold sweat that had been trickling down his spine. When he nodded, the Winkle swallowed hard to hide his relief.

"That's all I wanted," said Jagers. "Give me your word that when I find the missing camels you'll let us take off unharmed in our machine within two minutes of putting you down among your fellows."

The growl of angry assent that issued from the sheik showed that the power he wielded in his own domains had not accustomed him to opposition. But Jagers knew instinctively that once he had given his word he would keep it, and straightaway brought the Corsair round in a right-angle turn.

"Then we'll waste no more time," he said. "I've a strong hunch we'll find the remains not far from where we took off."

Climbing steeply, they soon had an extensive view of the interminable hillocks and valleys of sand for miles round. To El Djibbah's astonishment Jagers proved to be right. Lying in a hollow less than half a mile from the outcrop was all that was left of the unfortunate prospector and his transport. Although visible from the air, it was obvious that one might hunt for a year and never find it from the ground, and the discovery banished some of the venom from the sheik's eyes.

"Put us down and you can go," he said.

The landing accomplished, the two friends sat motionless until three successive vibrations told them that their

enemies had quitted the machine. Instantly the port engine roared, round came the tail, and the faithful Corsair swept past the mob of plunging camels into safety. Not until they were a thousand feet up did Jagers relax.

"Phew!" he breathed, wiping his brow. "That's quite enough excitement for one morning. Now reach for the notebook and pencil we keep in the locker, and write as I dictate," he went on.

"To Sheik El Djibbah, Lord of the Desert, Scourge of Allah, etc., etc., Greeting.

"When you came across Joubert, the gold was already in the rear tank of his machine which in due course your men very kindly handed over to me. Accept the piece of wood that you carried right across the Sahara as a fitting souvenir of the occasion.

"Got that? Good! Now sign it; tie it on to the prop boss, and we'll heave it overboard."

But the Winkle was staring blankly at what he had written.

"Do you mean to tell me—" he began.

"I do. The unfortunate, fever-stricken Joubert—I feel terribly sorry for him—was right out of luck. It's clear that he found the remains of Tesson and his camels, and after coming down at the nearest point where a landing was possible, set to work to transfer the gold dust, hiding it for safety in the rear tank. Those relays of journeys to and fro must have been gruelling hard work, and then at the end of it all to crash on

## ARMAMENTS RACE

(See opposite)

Overseas Readers too!

You fellows who are far away—you're in this great scheme also, and special awards will be given for the best collections from overseas readers. There will be a special closing date for you as well!

his take-off, smash his prop, and be taken prisoner to die in the hands of those villains—a tragic affair, you must admit."

"But how did you spot that the gold was inside the tank?"

Jagers grinned.

"D'you happen to know of any make of machine that can finish a long flight with full tanks?" he asked. "If so, let me know and we'll buy a couple. I felt sure something else was there besides petrol, and when we were fixing the new prop I seized the opportunity to find out. Go and take a look if you don't believe me."

The Arabs scattered as the Corsair roared down at them from the sky, and what El Djibbah said when he picked up the prop boss cannot be repeated here—not even in Arabic.

Next Week :

S. O. S.

## RIVALS OF PEARL ISLAND

(Continued)

wind in the palms, every fall of a cracking coconut, made him start and stare round with savage apprehension.

There was a sudden howl from Soo, and he pointed with a trembling finger. From an opening in a mass of trailing vines, a black face looked out—fierce, dark eyes, a nose pierced with fishbone ornaments, a fuzzy head adorned with coral combs. A black hand was raised, a black thumb to the haft of a knife for hurling.

Barney, warned in time, fired on the instant.

The Solomon Islander thudded into the mud of the creek, and lay there half-submerged, never stirring again. A yell came from his comrades, still unseen in the bush, and Barney fired again, sending a bullet tearing through the tangled greenery.

A knife flew from the thicket and missed Barney by an inch. Another flashed by and tore a strip from the sleeve of his cotton shirt. He fired and fired again. A black figure leaped on the deck of the lugger, knife in hand, and Barney shot him.

He did not even notice, in the wild excitement of the moment, that his three Tonga boys were scrambling in frantic flight through the bush. They vanished almost in the twinkling of an eye, leaving the trader to face the attack alone.

Five or six wild figures leaped on the deck of the lugger. Barney Hall clubbed his empty rifle. The heavy butt cracked a black skull like an eggshell. Another

of the blacks rolled over under the sweep of the butt, and the others dodged back, daunted by the desperate white man.

Suddenly came the cracking of a revolver. Van Duck was firing on the Tonga trader. A bullet clipped by Barney's ear, another tore a strip of skin from his shoulder.

With a yell, Barney hurled the empty rifle in the faces of the yelling blacks, turned, and leaped from the lugger, fleeing for his life in the tangled bush, with a mob of yelling cannibals behind him.

Panting, desperate, Barney Hall tore on, winding through the trackless bush, hunted like a wild beast by a mob of howling savages.

From the cover of the bush, Ken King looked out over the lagoon, red in the sunset, and watched the Dawn riding at anchor. Three blacks were loafing idly on the deck, their backs to him, staring across the lagoon as if interested in what was going on in the distance.

Of Van Duck he could see nothing. The Dutchman was absent from the ketch with most of his crew, and Ken could hardly doubt why they had gone. In the hot afternoon he had heard the sound of firing again, and knew that the rival pearl-poachers were in conflict.

From the direction of the firing he had heard, he knew that Barney Hall's lugger must be on the other side of the lagoon and that Van Duck and his crew had attacked it there. Ten to one, a hundred to one, they would get the upper hand, but the fate of the trader of Tonga mattered little to him. Three blacks were left on the ketch, Van Duck never dreaming of danger to the vessel from

the boy skipper whom he reckoned long ago to be food for the fishes.

With a gun in his hand, Ken would not have hesitated for a moment to swim out to the anchored ketch and attempt to climb aboard unseen by the blacks. There were firearms on board. Once he had a loaded Winchester in his hands he would defy Van Duck and all his crew to retake the ketch. But it was a desperate chance to take single-handed against the three brawny Solomon Islanders.

Suddenly he gave a start and turned to stare into the shadows of the bush behind him. A rustle reached his ears—a hurried movement of someone unseen who forced a way through the tangled bush, coming almost directly towards the spot where he stood.

Ken's hand closed on the long bush-knife in his belt as a tattered, ghastly figure staggered from a thicket hardly a dozen paces from him, panting for breath, reeling with fatigue.

It was Barney Hall. His clothing torn and tattered by the thorns, his skin bleeding in a dozen places from scratches and gashes, his tanned face caked with sweat. The Tonga trader staggered against a tree, staring back the way he had come with starting eyes. He dragged a revolver from his belt, but it sagged in his shaking hand.

King of the Islands watched him grimly. The quest of another man's pearls had profited Barney little. He was at the end of his tether.

The sound of a pursuer could be heard.

A few moments later King of the Islands saw the black, fuzzy head, the gleaming eyes, and heard the howl of savage satisfaction from the Solomon Islander as he sighted the trader.

Next Week :

SURPRISE ATTACK