

FLY THE TRAIL WITH SKY-DETECTIVE JAGGERS

MODERN BOY

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2^D

EIGHT STORIES

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RODEO**

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Thriller*

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Mystery Of The Grampus

The three dagoes had beaten Ken King in the race for the schooner, won the salvage. But the boy skipper was suspicious. And then from the supposed derelict shots rang out!

By CHARLES HAMILTON

Defiance of the Dagoes

THAT feller dago no like us feller stop, sar," grinned Koko, the Kanaka bo'sun of the Dawn. He jerked a brown thumb towards the dismantled, drifting schooner, drifting on the swell of the Pacific under the red sunset.

"And I reckon I know why!" growled Kit Hudson, the mate.

Ken King, the boy skipper known as King of the Islands, stood silent, gazing towards the drifting Grampus. The Lukwe schooner, battered and broken in the fierce hurricane that had blown itself out that morning, rolled like a log on the sea, little more than a wreck—yet she still floated and seemed in no danger of sinking. The native crew had believed that she was going down when they fled in the boats, but the Grampus had lived through the storm—a drifting derelict, salvage for the first comer.

From the cluttered deck three swarthy faces stared towards the Dawn, hove-to in the offing. Giuseppe Giro, the first man to set foot on the deserted deck, and his two comrades, Felipe and Beppo, had been watching Ken King's ketch for an hour with puzzled, angry faces. Giuseppe had won the race to the derelict and the dago crew had expected to see Ken go. But he had not gone, and it was easy to read in the dusky faces perplexity, anger, and anxiety. It was quite plain that Giuseppe was anxious to see the last of the Dawn. Ken could see that—but he could not feel sure why.

The schooner had been deserted, to all appearance, before the three dagoes had scrambled on board. If she was as deserted as she looked, Giuseppe's right to the salvage was indisputable—but there were a good many hard-fisted skippers in the South Seas who would have given little heed to the claims of three outcast dagoes, who had been marooned on Lololo. Was that what the dagoes feared? Ken wondered.

If Ken wondered, Kit Hudson did not. The mate had little or no doubt. "I tell you, Ken," he said, "there's a living man on that schooner—and ten to one it's Jim Furley himself. Furley's a brute and a bully, but he's not the man to leave his ship while he had a chance left to keep her going."

"But we've seen nothing of a man on board, Kit!" said the boy trader. "If a man's left on that hooker, why hasn't he shown up?"

"No good asking me that!" grunted Hudson. "I don't know—unless he's below hurt. Might be that." He made a gesture towards the three swarthy, staring faces on the derelict. "You can see they're keen to see us pull out! Look at them."

Ken smiled. "They've got the salvage, and it was a close race," he said. "They tricked us into lending them our boat, and beat us in it—a cunning dago trick. We could collar the salvage if we liked and pitch them back on Lololo. That may be what they're afraid of."

Hudson gave a grunt. "They've shut down the companion," he said. "Why?"

Ken nodded slowly. He did not, like Hudson, feel sure; but he knew that there was a chance, at least, that Giuseppe and his crew had found a living man on the schooner—in which case, it was not a derelict, and there was no salvage. He knew, too, that if that was the case, the man's life would not be worth much when it was all that stood between that outcast crew and a rich prize. He had resolved to stand by the schooner till the doubt was cleared up, at all events. Black Furley of Lukwe was no friend to the shipmates of the Dawn, but they would have stood by friend or foe in such an extremity.

"Get on board, and see with our own eyes," suggested Hudson.

"We've no right to set foot on that hooker without the consent of the crew that have taken possession," answered Ken.

"I know! But if they refuse, we shall know why!" grunted Hudson.

"I'm not so sure!" said Ken. "You can bet they're afraid of having their salvage collared, especially after the trick they played on us. Whether you're right or wrong, Kit, they're certain to resist an attempt to go on board—and if they handle their knives, it means shooting."

"We can't stand by that bulk for ever," said Kit. "And when they get a jury-mast rigged they may give us the slip after dark. We've got to know, Ken."

"Av, ay!" agreed Ken. "We've got to know. But—"

It was a difficult position for the boy skipper of the Dawn. But he made up his mind at last. If there was, by some chance, a survivor of the crew on the derelict, he could not and would not leave him at the mercy of that desperate gang. He had to know.

"Lower the whaleboat!" said Ken at last.

There was a sudden stirring on the cluttered deck of the derelict as the Dawn's boat dropped to the water. The schooner was hardly a cable's length from the ketch, and in the bright sunlight the swarthy faces were clearly seen. The three Italians burst into a sudden excited gabble of words and came to the side, over which dragged a tangle of torn rigging and canvas and shattered spars. It was clear that they intended to resist a boarding from the ketch. Giuseppe's white teeth showed through his stubby beard in a snarl like a wild animal's, and he gripped a boathook. The other two drew knives.

Ken and Kit buckled on their revolvers—but using them, unless they were assured how affairs stood, was another matter. Koko steered, and Lompo and Tomoo sat to the oars. From the ketch, Lufu and Kolulo and Danny watched the boat as it pulled for the schooner.

There was still a swell on the Pacific from the storm. The whaleboat surged and dipped as it drew nearer to the drifting schooner. Three pairs of fierce black eyes glinted at it as Lompo held on to the cluttered wreckage under the schooner's side, and Ken stood up.

"What you want, signor?" came Giuseppe's voice. "This is my salvage—what you want on my ship?" Ken scanned the excited face. For the life of him he could not guess whether the dago feared the discovery of a guilty secret, or whether he was merely alarmed for his salvage.

"We're not after the salvage, Giuseppe," Ken answered. "If you found that packet deserted, the salvage is yours."

"What you want here, then?"

"We want to make sure that the ship was deserted!" answered Ken. "Let us come on board and search. When we are satisfied, we will go back to our own craft and leave you in possession. I give

you my word on that—you've heard of me, and you know my word is good."

Giuseppe gave a savage laugh. "You think I trust any man's word, when it is a small fortune?" he snapped. "You do not set a foot on this ship! I will knock you back into the sea." "Si, si, si!" exclaimed the other two, and the knives were brandished. "You fancy there is someone?" went on Giuseppe. "I have searched the ship—there is no one! You see that the boats are gone—all went in the boats, as you can see. It is a trick to rob me of my salvage!"

Hudson's hand went to the butt of his revolver. But King of the Islands touched his arm.

"Hold on, Kit! We can't shoot a man on bare suspicion! Give the schooner a haul—if there's a man on board besides those three he will hear and answer! Give him a hail!"

Ken's words were heard on the schooner as well as in the whaleboat. They had a startling effect on the dagoes. If looks could tell anything, the looks of the three told that they dreaded a hail from the boat, which must be heard by any man on the Grampus who had ears to hear. Giuseppe clutched his knife, with desperation in his face.

"It is enough!" he panted. "You go, signor! You have no business here—You go!"

Unheeding him, the shipmates shouted together:

"Aho, the Grampus! Aho!" The shout rang loud and sharp. It must have been audible in every corner and recess of the schooner. Ken and Kit listened—and it was palpable that the three dagoes were listening, too, with anxious intenses.

But there came no answer. The shipmates waited, then Ken King shouted again, loud and clear.

"Aho! King of the Islands hailing! If there's a man on board that hooker, answer up!"

The shout died away—with no answer save its echo. No voice called from the drifting Grampus.

Ken looked at Hudson. The mate of the Dawn was puzzled and dubious. From Giuseppe came a mocking laugh.

"You call, and there is none to answer," he jeered. "Are you satisfied now, signor?"

Ken drew a deep breath, and signed

to Lompo. The Kanaka let go his hold, and the whaleboat slid back from the schooner.

Battering Down the Door

GIUSEPPE stood staring after the Dawn's boat as it receded. Beppo and Felipe grinned at his side, in satisfaction and relief. The three desperadoes had been prepared to fight like wildcats to prevent the boarding of the schooner. But such a struggle would have been a desperate one, and its result more than doubtful. They were glad and relieved to see the whaleboat recede.

For a minute Giuseppe watched. Then he muttered to his comrades, and stepped away to the companion. The companion, as Hudson had seen from the ketch, had been shut—and he suspected why. Quietly, Giuseppe opened it and stepped down the narrow ladder within. The boathook was still in his hand, and he gripped it to use as a weapon.

Giuseppe knew what Hudson only suspected, that the skipper of the Grampus was still on board, and when King of the Islands hailed, he had dreaded to hear a shout from below in answer.

But he guessed at once why Jim Furley was silent. There could be only one reason: the burly skipper of the Grampus had sunk back into unconsciousness, from which he had been roused when the dagoes boarded the schooner.

Giuseppe, like King of the Islands, had believed the schooner to be a deserted derelict—till he had stepped down into the cabin and found Jim Furley there. Left stunned and senseless by his crew when they fled in the boats, Black Furley had come to his senses barely in time to save himself from the knife of the desperate dago. But he had beaten off Giuseppe's attack, and with the dago's knife in his hand, had defied the three to deal with him.

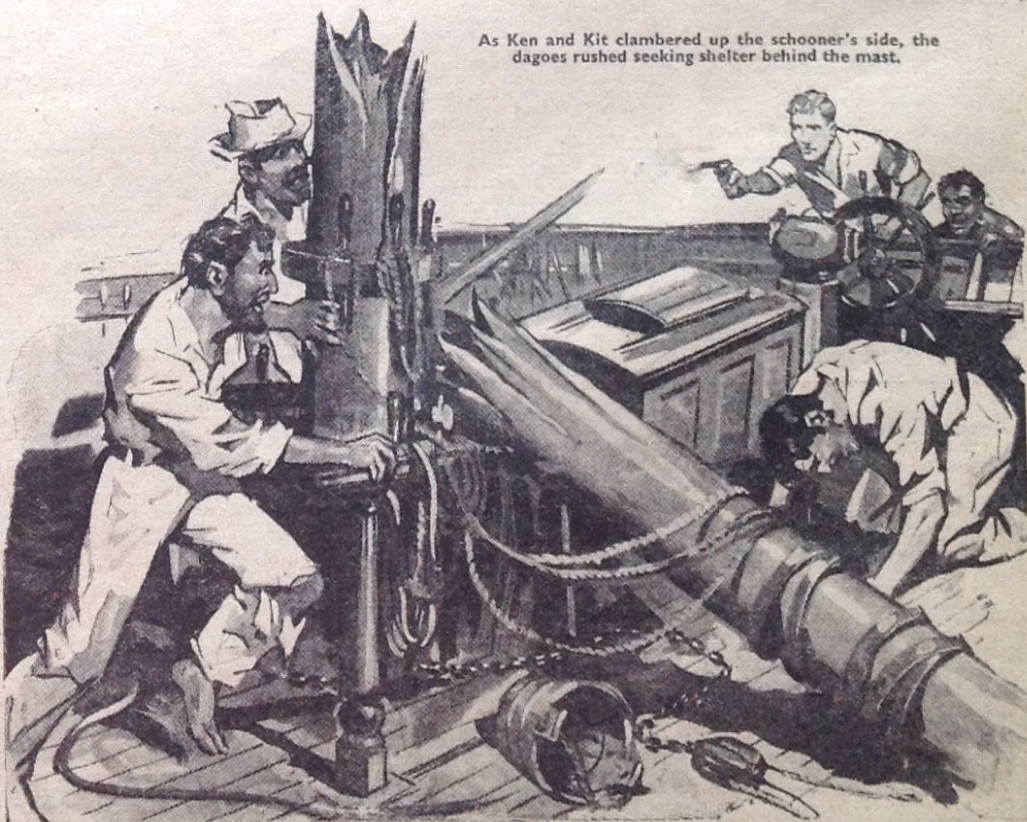
The dagoes had shut down the companion on him, leaving the task of dealing with him till the Dawn was gone. But had Jim Furley retained his senses, one call from him would have brought King of the Islands to the rescue.

Giuseppe stepped from the companion into the cluttered cabin and stared round him. Jim Furley was not to be seen.

"Gospetto!" muttered Giuseppe, in surprise and rage.

He had fully expected to see the black

As Ken and Kit clambered up the schooner's side, the dagoes rushed seeking shelter behind the mast.



MYSTERY OF THE GRAMPUS

bearded skipper of Lukwe stretched senseless on the cabin floor. But he guessed at once what had happened. Black Furley, feeling his senses going, knowing that the dagos might descend at any moment and find him defenceless, had dragged himself into some place of concealment. Giuseppe grinned savagely as he realized that. It would not take him long to find the Lukwe skipper.

Forward of the schooner's cabin was a lazarette, the door shut. A swift glance showed Giuseppe that that was the way Furley had gone.

There were spots of blood on the cabin floor, where he had dragged himself along—the struggle with the dago had caused the cut on his head to break out afresh. Giuseppe followed that ghastly trail, stopped at the door of the lazarette, and groped over it with his swarthy hands.

It was fast! The door was of thick, strong teak, and there was a stout lock on it. Generally, no doubt, it was locked on the outside, to keep the stores safe from the thievish hands of a native crew. Now it was locked on the inside.

Giuseppe breathed curses in Italian. Putting his burly shoulder to the door, he drove at it savagely. But it did not stir.

On the other side of that door, Black Furley lay senseless. He was silent now—he had to remain silent, if the salvagers were not to lose their prize. The Dawn was still in the offing. Whether King of the Islands was satisfied that there was no survivor on the schooner, Giuseppe could not be sure—but if he was not, if the boat returned, the game was up if Jim Furley gave one call! In savage rage, the dago beat on the door and kicked at it. But it was in vain; the thick teak and the strong lock held fast.

There came a call from the deck. Beppo and Felipe had heard the noise from below.

Giuseppe stepped to the foot of the companion and explained, and Beppo descended with an axe in his hand.

Giuseppe snatched it from him and leaped back to the lazarette. Swinging the axe in both hands, he crashed it on the door.

Splinters flew from the hard wood. The dago was strong and muscular, and he wielded the axe with all his energy. The crashing blows might have been heard as far as the Dawn, but that could not be helped. Again and again the axe crashed.

But the lock was strong; the teak hard almost as iron. Giuseppe handed the axe to his comrade, and Beppo hacked at the door.

From within came the sound of a groan! It reached the two dagos. They knew what it meant. The skipper of the Grampus was coming to his senses again.

Giuseppe stepped to a porthole. The Dawn was still in the offing. He could see King of the Islands and Kit Hudson watching, and he guessed that the crashing of the axe had reached them. If they suspected—if they came now—

Giuseppe spat a curse and snatched the axe from his comrade. With desperate and savage strength he beat on the lazarette door, and at long last it began to yield.

Black Furley groaned and dragged himself into a sitting posture, leaning against a bulkhead, and with dizzy eyes stared at the gleaming edge of an axe that came through the wood.

The sight roused him. Grasping at the bulkhead for support, he dragged himself to his feet. Crash! crash! came

the axe, widening the split in the hard wood, letting in a gleam of light from the cabin.

"Presto! Presto!" he heard a hissing voice from the other side of the door.

Crash! Crash! The door was yielding fast now. Great splinters were torn from the teak by the gashing of the axe. Through the widening gap, Furley had a glimpse of a sweating, swarthy face. It was the face of the dago who had found him in the cabin and attacked him. Who the dagos were, how they had come on board his ship, he did not know; but he could guess that they were a salvage-hunting crew, and that they did not mean to let the life of a survivor stand in their way.

Leaning on the bulkhead, his shaking hand groped in his hip-pocket, closed on the butt of his revolver and dragged it out. His head was spinning—his hand shaking—but he pulled himself together and, feeling his way along the bulkhead with his left hand, groped to the door and pulled the trigger.

Bang! The report roared through the schooner like thunder. There was a fierce yell from Giuseppe as the bullet scoured along his arm, tearing away a patch of skin.

Beppo jumped away. Bang! roared the revolver again. Had not Furley's hand been shaking, Giuseppe would have been stretched a dead man on the cabin floor. As it was, the bullet gashed his cheek.

Giuseppe swung up the axe to strike at the ghastly face that glared from the gap in the door. Furley pulled trigger a third time, and the dago leaped aside. "You scum!" panted the Lukwe skipper. "You dago scum!"

His arm was thrust through the split door, and his haggard eyes glared over the revolver as he took aim. Giuseppe darted into the companion and fled for the deck after his comrade—the bullet crashing behind him as he went.

There was a crash above as the companion door shut. Once more Black Furley was shut below. He reeled against a bulkhead, his brain spinning, but he found strength enough to drag boxes and kegs to the shattered door and block the opening. And behind that barricade he watched like a cornered wolf, ready to fight to the end.

Furley Finds a Crew

KIT HUDSON, his brows knitted in a frown, stared across the water at the drifting derelict. The sun was dipping behind Lololo, level red rays turning the Pacific into a sheet of crimson and gold. Faintly but clearly the sound of heavy knocking came across the intervening sea.

"I'd risk it, old man!" said Hudson at last.

Ken shook his head. "It's the dago's salvage, Kit. We're keeping that packet company, and we can do no more than that."

"They'll rig a jury-mast, and give us the slip after dark," replied Hudson. "Ken, I feel in my bones that there's dirty work going on on that schooner."

Not to the extent of putting a bullet through Giuseppe Giro, and boarding over his body, Kit?

No," said Hudson, after a pause. "We can't go to that length on suspicion. But— He broke off, as sharp and clear, ringing from the drifting schooner, came the report of a firearm.

Hudson's eyes blazed. "Ken! That was a shot, and the dagos had no firearms. There's a white man on that packet!"

"Hark!" Again a shot rang, sharp and clear. It was followed by another. And then, after a moment or two, another shot!

There was a buzz from the crew of the Dawn. The Kanakas stared across at the schooner, cackling with excitement.

"Feller shootee along gun, along that feller schooner, sar!" exclaimed Koko. "Tinkee white feller stop, sar, along that packet."

"Look at them!" hissed Hudson. Two of the dagos had been below on the schooner. First one, and then another, had bolted on deck. In the glare of the red sunset, Giuseppe could be seen binding a rag round his arm.

There had been firing below, and the dago had been hit. The matter was settled now for King of the Islands. There was a man on the Grampus, as well as the dago crew—and it was he who must have fired. It could not be doubted now.

Ken King rapped an order, and once more the whaleboat dropped to the water. Ken's face was grim, and he had his revolver in his hand, as the boat pulled for the schooner.

The three dagos lined up at the schooner's rail, two of them knife in hand, Giuseppe with an axe. With savage eyes they watched the whaleboat pull under the rail. Lufu caught hold with a boathook, and Giuseppe unhooked it and hurled it back.

"Go back to your ship, King of the Islands!" shouted Giuseppe. "No man shall come aboard here."

"Stand back from that rail! We're coming aboard—resist, and we shall fire! There's a man on that ship—"

"There is no one! Keep to your boat, meddling fool!" yelled Giuseppe.

"You feller Lufu, hold on along that packet!" snapped King of the Islands, and the Kanaka hooked on again. Giuseppe slashed with the axe, and cut the boathook in two.

Crack! Kit Hudson fired, sending the bullet near enough to cut a lock of greasy black hair from the dago's head. The desperate ruffian swung up the axe in both hands and hurled it at the mate of the Dawn.

But Hudson saw it coming, and a swift movement saved him. The axe crashed into a thwart, missing him by bare inches.

"Suffering cats!" panted Hudson. The next second he fired at the dago point-blank. Giuseppe gave a wild yell and staggered back, reeling and staggering across the deck, and falling, with a heavy crash, by the companion door. Yell after yell came from him as he sprawled there, with a bullet in his body.

Crack—crack—crack! King of the Islands loosed off rapid shots—driving the other two dagos back from the rail. Lufu caught hold, and the shipmates clambered up the side. Then there was a rush from the deck; but Ken, with a leg over the rail, fired again, and Beppo and Felipe dodged back round the stump of the mizzen mast. A moment more, and the shipmates of the Dawn were on the schooner's deck, and Koko leaped on board after them.

Giuseppe strove to drag himself to his feet, but he sank back again and lay still. Beppo and Felipe, knife in hand, eyed the shipmates like tigers; but the fall of their leader had daunted them. Ken made a gesture with his revolver. "Drop your knives, you scum!" he snapped.

"And sharp!" rapped Hudson. The knives clattered on the deck. Ken called to the boatswain:

"Koko, you make feller rope stop along hand belong that dago feller."

"Yessar!" grinned Koko. The dagos snarled like savage cats; but under the menace of the revolvers they made no resistance. Giuseppe lay sorely wounded, senseless from loss of blood, on the deck, and his associates had no desire to share his fate. In a few minutes Koko had bound the hands of the two scowling, cursing ruffians behind their backs.

King of the Islands stepped to the companion. "Below there!" he shouted. And he tramped down, Kit Hudson followed him down to the cabin. A hoarse, panting voice reached their ears. They stared round at the shattered door of the lazarette.

"You dago scum!" It was a husky yell of defiance from the barricaded lazarette at the sound of their footsteps.

King of the Islands laughed. "Aho, Jim Furley!" he shouted.

"Don't you know friends from toes? King of the Islands come aboard!"

"King of the Islands! By hokey!"

It was the following morning. The ketch and the dismantled schooner lay at anchor in the lagoon of Lololo. The Dawn had towed the Grampus in through the reef passage in the last glimmer of the sunset. Three prisoners were on board the Dawn—Beppo and Felipe with their hands bound; Giuseppe too sorely wounded to need securing. Jim Furley had not left his ship.

Ken and Kit went across from the ketch, and found Furley on his deck, his head bandaged, his stubby face haggard, but otherwise very much his old self—grim, truculent, hard-fisted Black Furley of Lukwe. But, for once, Jim Furley was civil—he was only too well aware how much he owed to King of the Islands and his mate. But for their intervention, the struggle on the schooner could only have ended one way.

"No!" said Jim Furley, shaking his bandaged head. "I don't want a tow, King of the Islands. I reckon I've lost enough on this trip without paying for a tow of two hundred miles. No."

"Just as you like!" answered Ken. "We'd cut it down to the lowest figure for a skipper in distress, Furley."

"You're a white man!" said Furley. "But I reckon I can pull through and make Pita on my own."

The shipmates stared at him. You don't bank on seeing your crew again?" asked Hudson.

"Not whether they get ashore or went down in the boats, I reckon I've seen the last of those black lubbers!"

"But you're not going to try to sail a dismantled ship single-handed?" asked King of the Islands.

"I'm going to get a jury-mast rigged, and sail her to Pita!" answered Furley. "She's sound as a bell. I know she'd float when those niggers got out of hand and ran for the boats. And she did float,

by hokey! I've saved ship and crew thanks to you, King of the Islands, and I reckon I can make Pita. What d'you think of doing with them dagos?" he added.

"I'm going to leave them on Lololo-marooned, as they were before. One of them is pretty hard hit, but he will pull round if the others look after him."

"Hand them over to me!" said Furley. "I want a crew. I can sail this schooner with two men, and I reckon the other will pull round enough to land a hand before I raise Pita."

Ken and Kit stared. Jim Furley was one of the toughest skippers in the South Seas, but the idea of sailing with such a crew was rather startling to the shipmates.

"You reckon that I can't handle 'em?" growled Furley. "I'll see that there's no stickers for them to get hold of, and I shall keep my gun handy. I've sailed with a crew of Solomon Island cannibals before now. Will you hand them over?"

Ken laughed. "You're more than welcome to them," he said. "And I'll hang on here till sunset and let my Kanakas help get you shipshape."

"You're a white man, King of the Islands—and I won't forget that!" said the Lukwe skipper. "Crack those dagos on board, and I reckon I'll break 'em in under ten minutes."

The shipmates pulled back to the Dawn with smiling faces. Ken had intended to leave the dagos on Lololo, but the rascals deserved punishment. And sailing with Black Furley was likely to be a fairly severe punishment. There was no reason why the ruffians should not make themselves useful; and their own probable objections did not count.

That Jim Furley was himself again was made clear as soon as the dagos were transferred to the schooner. Giuseppe was put into a bunk in the forecabin—even Furley admitting, after a look at him, that he was not likely to be able to turn to for some days at least. Beppo and Felipe, their heads aching, stood on deck with sullen, apprehensive faces, casting long looks at the beach. But they were given no chance of attempting a swim ashore. Jim Furley gave them a few words—emphatic words.

"You're my crew now, you lubbers, unwashed scum!" he said, glaring at them with threatening eyes under the bandages. "Get that! You're going to jump to orders, and you're going to work till you drop—and when you drop, I'm going to kick you going again! Sarree!"

"Never!" snarled Beppo. "We go ashore—"

"We do not sail with you!" hissed Felipe. "We—"

They spoke together, and were simultaneously interrupted. Jim Furley's brawny fists clenched. His right came smashing into Beppo's dusky face, his left into Felipe's. The two dagos, yelling, rolled over on the deck and crashed in the scuppers.

There was a cackle from the Hira-Oa boys. Beppo and Felipe poked themselves up dizzily. Jim Furley gave them a roar.

"Any more backchat from you, you dago swabs?"

But there was no more backchat from the dagos. With sullen, seething faces they turned to, without another word.

It was a busy day on the Grampus. Ken King's crew lent helping hands—and Beppo and Felipe worked hard too, probably, they had ever worked before in their rascally lives. Long before sunset the schooner was shipshape, with a jury-mast rigged and canvas bent. Late in the same afternoon Ken gave the schooner a tow out of the reef passage.

Outside the reef, the tow-rope was cast off. Black Furley was left to sail the Grampus with his dago crew. He was short-handed, but he was the skipper to short-handed, and he was the man to get out of two. Neither was he the man to let Giuseppe linger in his bunk longer than was necessary. It was probable that, by that time, the dago gang wished that they had never sighted the Grampus and got salvage-hunting. Black Furley, who had narrowly escaped being thrown to the sharks by them, was not likely to give them an easy time! The shipmates of the Dawn did not envy him his crew, but still less did they envy the dagoes their skipper!

Furley, a haggard figure with his bearded face and bandaged head, when farewells to the two ships parted, Koko Ken and Kit, smiling, waved back. Koko gave a chuckle as he watched two scowling, swarthy faces.

"Dago feller no like!" he remarked. "No like plenty too much!" grinned Hudson.

The Dawn, picking up the wind, glided swiftly on her way.

The two vessels rapidly separated. Looking back the last the shipmates of Jim Furley, he was bounding on a thick lawyer-cane—and the word, "No yelling come down the word. And the yelling came down the word. And the word exchanged a smile at the Dawn that was over the blue Pacific.

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