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## LOST—TEN MILLION POUNDS!

ROMANTIC STORIES OF TREASURE-SEEKING.

It has been said that for every pound's worth of gold dust dug from the earth's bosom, at least two sovereigns' worth of human labor and energy have been expended. The same, and more, is true of the search for buried treasure. The almost limitless toil, the bitter hardships, the cruel disappointments endured in the long hunts and expeditions in search of pirates' hoards would need a library to recount them, and are sufficient to beggar the wildest imagination of the novelist.

The practical reader smiles. "Does such a thing exist outside the realms of romance as buried treasure?" he cynically asks. Indeed it does. Millions in ingots, coin, and jewels lie buried in out-of-the-way corners of the earth's surface, and though ninety-nine treasure seekers go empty away the hundredth finds a rich reward. It is the records of the hundredth—the successful one—that, like a fluttering golden butterfly, lure the others on; and so long as human nature remains unchanged so long will time and lives and money be squandered in the search for Blackbeard's buried spoils or the golden secrets of the vanished Incas.

Out in the Pacific, some five hundred miles west of Panama, lie certain little scraps of land known as the Cocos Islands. Lying as they do exactly opposite to the great treasure centres of the New World, they have been the repository of the stolen gold of many a buccaneer, and there is no human doubt but that wealth almost untold lies buried deep in their sandy and rocky recesses. Of the early treasures buried in the Cocos only legend tells; but within the past century several great hoards have been hidden there, and of some of these there is fairly accurate record. In 1821 a British ship's crew, who had risen against their officers and turned pirates, buried sums amounting to over a million in a rock tunnel on the main island. Official records exist proving the capture and execution of several of the pirates. The survivors were taken back to Cocos aboard a British warship, H.M.S. Imperieuse. But they had no written records or plans. Vegetation covered the marks of the spade and mattock. They failed entirely to relocate the spot.

In 1835, when the rich Peruvian city of Lima was threatened by revolutionists, many of its leading merchants shipped their treasure aboard the Nova Scotia barque the Mary Dyer, and sent it to Cocos. There the crew buried eleven loads of valuables. Returning, an insurgent warship met them, and all but three were killed.

There is a third treasure in Cocos, known as the Benita, which consists, according to written records, of three tons of silver, 733 bars of gold, besides other valuables, which was buried by pirates in 1820. Captain Benita and his crew of cut-throats are said to have buried the cargo of another Spanish galleon on the island and a few months later, among which one's mouth waters to read of "thirteen large kettles full of gold coin." They sailed a third time. But there was no luck for them in odd numbers. The British frigate Magician sighted them, and ran them down, and a row of pirates dangled at her yard-arm. Then the Magician visited Cocos, and did actually recover part of Benita's buried hoards.

Later a man named Keaton, who had information from a survivor of the Mary Dyer's crew, together with a Captain Bogue, visited the island, located the Lima treasure, and took away all they could carry—about £6,000 apiece, it is said. On the way back they quarrelled. Bogue was thrown into the water and sank like a stone, but Keaton got safe to the mainland with his store. Keaton died before he could visit the island again, but he bequeathed his secret to a Captain George Hackett, and so, it is said, it has come down to the present day.

Expedition after expedition has sailed for Cocos. Once the British North Pacific fleet, under Admiral Palliser, visited the place, and the relics of the pits and trenches which they dug in every direction are still visible. Ships have gone from England, from Australia, from California, and British Columbia, but if any of them have ever found anything they have said nothing about it. Still, they may have done so. Men don't talk when their pockets are loaded with treasure trove. Least said soonest mended is their motto in such a case, and for all that anyone knows the caches may have been rifled long ago.

Cocos Island is one of the world's two chief treasure islands. Trinidad is the other. Not the big fruit-growing island in the West Indies, but another of the same name far to the southward, lying twenty degrees below the equator, and 700 miles off the coast of Brazil. It is a mass of weirdly and desolate beyond words. Truly a fit resort for those black-hearted ruffians who preyed upon the shipping of the eighteenth century.

It was to this island that Mr. G. F. Knight, the well-known war correspondent, led an expedition to seek for a buried hoard of over a million sterling. Of the existence of this treasure there is testimony which can hardly be doubted. Alas, as is so often the case, the marks are not sufficiently good to locate it! Mr. Knight's expedition was a very plucky one. He and his crew sailed in the yawl Alerte a tiny craft of only thirty-three registered tonnage. The story of the adventure is told in Mr. Knight's book "The Cruise of the Alerte." At least half a dozen different expeditions or parties of searches have visited Trinidad, but apparently none have met with success.

When Pizarro entered the valley of Cajamarca, and the Peruvian army fled before him, leaving their ransom in his hands, the Inca offered as ransom to fill with gold the room in which he was held prisoner. The Spaniards shared between them gold of a value of at least four millions. But where such profusion of the precious metal existed close at hand there was naturally much more in other parts of the country, and there is no earthly doubt but that an immense quantity was hidden by the terrified priests. More than this, the Spaniards never found out the fountain head of all this wealth of gold. They did their best to do so, but failed, and so has everyone else who has since made the attempt. We know for certain that not even Potosi itself could have supplied a tenth of the enormous gold wealth of the Incas.

In March, two years ago, a New York paper contained a paragraph to the effect that a syndicate of British and American engineers and capitalists had discovered an Inca hoard at Chayaltaya, in Bolivia. The value was set at £2,200,000. Try as he might, the writer has failed to find any further reference to this alleged find, and he is inclined to consider the report a hoax. But that the Inca treasure exists no reasonable person can doubt. The country, however, is so vast, so unsettled, so dangerous from savage beasts and still more savage men, that centuries may elapse before it comes to light. Age-long rumor places the site of the great hoard somewhere in Golden Valley in the Eastern Cordillera. Here the wild hillsides are covered with old scars of prehistoric gold workings, vast dumps of soil and rocks, remains of great aqueducts. But no one knows anything for certain.

In 1806 Christophe, a black Napoleon, proclaimed himself emperor of the negro republic of Haiti. For years he extorted every dollar he could lay hands upon from his terrified subjects, and never a penny of that money ever went into circulation again. All was hidden in rock-hewn vaults under the castle of La Perriere, a huge fortress perched upon a mountain top, the building of which is said to have cost the lives of 30,000 of the tyrant's subjects. At last the oppressed Haitians revolted, and Christophe committed suicide. But no one has ever yet found those millions. They lie hidden in some rock-sealed cell deep in the heart of the mountain.

One of the strangest of all stories of buried treasure is that of the Oak Island hoard. This islet lies in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. Years ago three men, armed with plans given them by a dying pirate, began digging in a certain spot. They found themselves in an old shaft, which they could trace by the softness of the soil and the remains of the timbers. After long toil they found, at a depth of ninety feet, a great flat stone, and on these words: "Ten feet below £2,000,000 are buried." It was too late in the evening to continue work. They went to bed, but not to sleep. Next morning's dawn found them at the pit. It was full of salt water. The sea had broken in! Oak Island's million's still lie where they were hidden.

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## MIXED WIVES

In the early part of the last century there lived in an old New England town a Mr. Church, who in the course of his earthly life was bereft of four wives, all of whom were buried in the same lot. In his old age it became necessary to remove the remains to a new cemetery. This he undertook himself, but in the process the bones became hopelessly mixed. His "New England conscience" would not allow him under the painful circumstances to use the original headstones, so he procured new ones, one of which bore the following inscription:

"Here lies Hannah Church and probably a portion of Emily."

Another:

"Sacred to the memory of Emily Church, who seems to be mixed with Matilda."

Then followed these lines:

"Stranger, pause and drop a tear. For Emily Church lies buried here, Mixed in some perplexing manner With Mary, Matilda and probably Hannah."



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