The Romance Of Buried Treasure

By CLIFFORD COLLINSON

It has become the habit to think of buried treasure in terms of pirates and Spanish galleons, but just think for a moment of all the vast riches belonging to vanished kings and famous generals who, from the beginings of history, have plundered the races of men. Where is the loot of ancient Rome, and where the glittering treasure of Samarand? Where is the vast wealth of Antioch and what has become of the great jewel which Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba? Considering the thousands of years of warfare which have ravaged the world, it takes but little imagination to realize that every time the battling hordes swept back and forth much treasure was hurriedly buried to preserve it until the wave had passed. In many cases those who buried it were slain and so the treasure still awaits the seeker. From my own experience I can assure you that precisely the same sort of thing, but on a much smaller scale, of course, has happened in the British Solomon Islands. It is a fact that there are thousands of golden sovereigns buried away in various places in the interior of the cannibal island of Malaita—plantation wages which have been hidden in the ground and the location of which is now lost because of the sudden and violent death in tribal warfare of the owners.

But there is buried treasure much nearer home than that. From time immemorial tradition had it that a great treasure was buried near the Ribble in Lancashire. A saying had been handed down that anyone standing on the hill at Walton-le-Dale and looking up the valley would gaze over the greatest treasure that England had ever known. Search was carried on at intervals during several centuries and at last, in 1841—ninety years ago—[illegible]

[illegible]

When Lord [illegible] in 1708 [illegible] hold on [illegible] her days [illegible] very well in [illegible] perhaps [illegible] Peru [illegible] treasure, that [illegible]

In Peru [illegible] romantic [illegible] Pizarro [illegible] Cuzco, which [illegible] gold and silver, of [illegible] years. That [illegible] up and down [illegible] from end to end [illegible] through a hundred years ago a party of [illegible] gold and silver [illegible] and [illegible] treasure [illegible] Some cows [illegible] by [illegible] Some [illegible] gold [illegible] and [illegible] famous [illegible] of Gordon.

But, however [illegible] treasure may [illegible] to pirate [illegible] question of sheer excitement [illegible] must not be [illegible] however, that all pirates buried their ill-gotten booty. The records of buccaneering show a very different condition of affairs. For example there was Jean Lafitte. This gentleman of the Skull and Crossbones operated in the Gulf of Mexico, and founded a large colony of sea-rovers. From time to time at their headquarters he used to hold public auctions of his loot, and barbain-hunters from all parts of Louisiana flocked to attend them.

Captain Edward Teach, or Blackbeard as he was known, lived in great style and spent his money as fast as he acquired it. Now he was a proper pirate and he gloried in deliberate wickedness.

One night, drinking in the cabin with his mate and the pilot, Blackbeard suddenly whipped out two pistols, blew out the candle, and fired under the table at his companions. One shot missed, but the other wounded the mate in the knee. When they asked him why he had done such a thing, he replied with an oath that he did not now and then kill one of them, they would forget who he was! With his enormous black beard bristling with challenge, he swaggered and roystered through the streets of Charleston and terrorized the seas. With grim playfulness he would part his great beard into tresses, tie them with dainty ribons and then drape these grisly lovelocks over his ears. When going into action he carried six pistols and three cutlasses, and fastened lighted matches under his hat. A proper pirate was Blackbeard. He was slain 260 years ago by Lieut. Maynard after a long and desperate sea-fight, and the gallant Lieutenant cut off his head, black beard and all, and returned home in triumph with it hanging from his bowsprit for all to see.

The famous Captain Morgan buried none of his treasure, nor did he waste it in riotous living. From the looting of Panama alone he took booty to the value of two million dollars. He had no need to hide it for King Charles the Second knighted him, and he spent his remaining years in Jamaica as a rich and influential personage in high favor with the ruling powers, and a terror to the luckless, beggared comrades who had helped him to win his fortune. And so the list might be indefinitely continued. But in spite of all the clear evidence to the contrary fertile imagination and incurable optimism have ebuilt up false legends, and even to the present day treasure-seekers are digging for the supposed hidden wealth of Lafitte and Morgan and others of the Skull and Crossbones fraternity.

It seems a pity to waste time on false trails like these when there is so much that we know for certain is only waiting to be found—the Spanish Armada galleon in Tobermory Bay, with thirty million pieces in her holds, the Cocos Island treasure, the £500,000 hoard of the "Lutine" that lies in treasure-filled ship sunk 133 years ago off the coast of Holland, twenty-eight million pounds sterling worth of gold ingots and silver bars, [illegible] and Game [illegible] sent to [illegible] years [illegible] Rooke [illegible] the fleet [illegible] indeed [illegible] treasure of [illegible] apital [illegible] the [illegible] Mr. [illegible] Mr. [illegible] Mr.