

The TREASURE of COCOS ISLAND

The Romantic History of a
Pirate Hoard on an Island
in the Pacific

By WALTER NOBLE BURNS

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HE good bark *Hesperus* will spread her white wings and sail away across the blue Pacific into the heart of the most fascinating romance of all pirate story.

Capt. Frederick Hackett, in command of the

vessel, claims to be the only man in all the world who knows the secret of the buried treasure of Cocos Island. He plans on this expedition to hit the vast wealth plundered by sea rovers in the early part of the last century and hidden on the island in a cave, the exact location of which has been lost and for which adventurers have sought in vain for many years.

He is equipped with hydraulic mining machinery and has sufficient provisions to remain for a year if necessary on the island, which lies 300 miles off the western coast of Central America. That a score of former expeditions have proved failures does not discourage him. The treasure hunters who have gone before have depended upon pick and shovel. He will be the first, probably, to use hydraulic mining methods. Earthquakes, he says, have shaken down land slides upon the treasure cave and changed the topography of the island. He will wash the earth away with streams of water powerful enough to uproot trees and burst rocks asunder. He is confident of success.

"When I return to the United States," says Capt. Hackett, "I shall have the entire Cocos Island treasure hidden down beneath the batches of the *Hesperus*."

The story of Cocos Island makes Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island" seem true in comparison, so much stranger are the facts of this real romance of buried treasure than the dream-adventures, highly colored as they are, wrought by the imagination of the novelist. The tale has its beginning in the days when sea-buccaneers, flying skull-and-crossbones at their mast-heads, harried the Spanish main and plundered tall galleons on the high seas. It fairly glitters from beginning to end with a fairy wealth of doubloons, pieces-of-eight, bout d'ors, moidores, sequins and double guineas. In its crowded episodes, blindfolded victims walk the plank, broken and maimed cut-throats swarm the bulwarks of captured ships and lie about them with cutlass and dragon pistol, sun-sequins are strung up at yard-arms, towns are sacked and looted, vessels are left to wter in their ruin in flame and smoke. It centers about a lonely island, palm-shaded, triple seas, wherein lies buried a treasure beyond the dreams of Monte Cristo. It rings with the clash of battle on the island, the music of the sea, the roar of the tempest, and the sighs of the lost.

The landslides that now lie on top of the treacherous, precipitously secured in the middle of this last century due to the violent earthquakes that shook the western coast of South and Central America. Forest trees have grown upon it, and the appearance of that part of the island is vastly changed since the days of Bonito, Thompson and Keating. But with my bearings and chart and the instructions given me by Keating, I can locate within a radius of 40 feet the spot beneath which the treasure is buried."

"I knew Keating from yester-ud,"

said Captain Hackett, "and he was a rough, ignorant man who had been a fisherman and a sailor all his life. He was because, my brother and I befriended him when most everybody else looked askance at him in that neighborhood. He was not, we were certain, to be trusted again, so he decided to dispose of his secret to us. My brother and I owned the cellar, Lord Dufferin, which was kept busy cruising up and down the coasts of Newfoundland and New Brunswick. On one of our voyages we took Keating with us. One night as we lay at anchor in the harbor of Callao when the government authorities removed the churches of the plate and ornaments dating back to the golden days of the conquest, and sent them safe to anything sailing the Spanish main, Bonito had a busy and prosperous career as a pirate. From Rio to the Bahamas, he became a master of the Spanish government's ships, and he was a favorite of the king. He had a strange taste with an antecedent of his first visit to Cocos with Captain Bogue."

Capt. Hackett's fourth, in what may be christened the royal line of the holders of the golden secret of Cocos Island. This secret has been handed down in a sort of lineal descent from Thompson. "The great ocean freebooter for years charted about a chart of Cocos Island, which upon a plegue of his shipwrecked crew showed the exact location of the cave in which his own and Bonito's treasure was hidden. He gave this chart to a haberman of St. John's,

with Thompson's

chart to guide them.

"The cave, Keating

said, was 15 feet

long by 12 feet

broad, with a ceiling

high enough to

permit a man to

stand upright. It

was full of gold,

silver and sacks of

money. Many of the

sacks bore the stamp

of the Bank of

Lima. There were

many golden crucifixes, chalices and

church ornaments.

"A statue of the

Madonna of gold lay upon the

donor. It was so heavy that Keating

and Bogue together could not

lift it, but could only pile it along.

The glitter of the piles of gold,

Keating said, fairly made him reel

and seemed to fill the cave with a

glorious radiance that at first

struck him with awe.

"Bogue and Keating led a few

coins in a handkerchief and vowed

back to their ship. They told the

others that they had

found a spring of

fresh water, but they were so excited

with what they had seen that they act

ed unmercifully and the crew, may

be had suspicions of the truth, anyway.

One word led to another, and Bogue

and Keating told as little as possible,

but it was enough for the crew, who

made them promise to go share.

"Right here Keating and Bogue be

gan to play their game and breed.

"They served out ungreased gro-

cery to the crew to make them

forget the whole outfit was glor-

ious drunk Keating and Bogue,

who took care to remain strictly sober.

All hands turned in early to sleep of

their potations and be ready to bring

the treasure aboard next morning. As

soon as they were asleep, Keating and

Bogue slipped off to shore in a whale

boat. They beached their boat again and made their way to shore.

They were armed with double

barrels and pieces-of-eight and loud

noises. Not satisfied with the money,

Bogue, stuffed, bar gold into his sea-

boots so that he could hardly walk

for the weight. In launching the boat,

Keating saw Bogue went under and was drowned.

"Keating," Captain Hackett went on, "escaped to sea with his plunder, leaving the ship to its fate, and the men never seen or heard of afterwards. Four days later he was picked up by a Spanish vessel, which landed him safely near Punta Arenas. He slowly worked his way back to Newfound land and deposited much money in the St. John's bank."

"Keating made a second voyage to

Cocos Island four years later. He

told us of this adventure too, I wrote

the tale out afterwards. In Keating's

own language as nearly as I could re-

member it:

"I have stood over millions," said

Captain Hackett "recently as he sat

by the skylight on the quarter-deck of

the *Hesperus* and watched his sailors

busy with final preparations for

the expedition.

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