

GOOD STORIES FOR CHILDREN—By WALT McDougall

A SEARCH FOR PIRATE TREASURE WHICH ENDED HAPPILY FOR A SMALL BOY WHO KEPT HIS THOUGHTS ABOUT HIM

AFTER A LONG AND PATIENT INVESTIGATION HE DISCOVERED AN ANCIENT HIDING PLACE AND WAS FULLY REWARDED

ON A winter day, when the snow was falling and the noise of the surf beating on the shore of the Sound and the whistling of the wind made the big bare garret echo with peculiar noises all its own, two children were playing among the broken furniture, old chests and other rubbish stored there.

This was one hundred and fifty years ago, and children had no such toys as they have now. A rag-baby, home-made, was the best doll any girl had; and as for the boys, I cannot discover that they had anything beyond a stick to play horse with or a wooden gun whittled out by an obliging brother.

These two children were making believe very hard, indeed, and were playing Indians and settlers, a game still a favorite all over our land. The boy in hiding behind a decayed old sea-chest, iron-bound and black even then with age, felt something protruding from a crack at the bottom of the chest. He drew it forth, and taking it to the light saw that it was a folded piece of parchment upon which was written these words:

Ten paces north of ye landing place of Ye Barking Dogge under a oak tree at ye edge of ye highe tide mark 'tis planted.
THOS. LAWRENCE,
JULIO GONDOMAR.

Although both of the children could read written characters easily, neither of them attached any importance to this writing; in fact, their mother, who was a woman of little education, considered that it was a riddle of some sort. She placed the parchment in the family Bible, intending to show it to her husband on his return from sea. He never returned, and the two children grew up, were married and had children of their own.

And all this time the parchment reposed in the Bible, forgotten by all. Then, one day, it was rediscovered and it excited a great discussion. Tales of hidden treasure were common along the Atlantic coast in the last century, and the mysterious writing seemed to point directly to some such matter, but so vague was the wording of the parchment it was considered impossible to decipher its meaning, if, indeed, it would have any meaning. So after it had been talked over for several weeks by many people, none of whom were very clever at puzzles, it was finally placed among the old letters, jewels and other family treasures and almost forgotten.

Occasionally, as at Thanksgiving time or Christmas, when all the branches of the Lawrence family, for that was their name, were gathered together, the memory of the mystic parchment was revived. Some few facts had thus been committed to tradition. Thus it was brought out that Thomas Lawrence—very likely the very first of the name—had been a sea captain, and what more probable than that he had been a pirate in those dark days when fairly good men followed that calling without fear of reproach?

It is known that commissions were often given by kings and queens of unblemished character to certain captains to prey upon the Spaniard or the Frenchman whenever and wherever they met them. And when in the collection of the Connecticut Historical Society there was found another paper signed by Thomas Lawrence, the name being a well-drawn map of the Spanish Main, interest was revived in the time-stained document in a sandal-wood box in Grandma Lawrence's bedroom.

"The Barking Dogge" was fondly supposed by the family to have been the name of the old mariner's ship, and many were the wishes breathed that her "landing place" might be learned.

More than a century passed, and then Mr. Amos Lawrence, who was a college graduate, put his intellect to the task of collecting and publishing all the facts regarding the traditional captain. But even he found little that could be regarded as certain.

Although for many years he diligently searched ancient records to learn from what port sailed "The Barking Dogge" and who her owners were, he never found her name in any shipping list. He traced every other ship with which his ancestor had ever been connected, and unearthed many a strange bit of history regarding that ancient mariner, and his voyages in Holland, Madagascar, Ceylon, Cadiz and Brazil, but no sign of a Dogge, either silent or barking, did he ever encounter.

At last he died, leaving all his papers, including the mysterious parchment, to his son Elias, who never thought again about the matter, but went into the whaling business. The family wealth had been pretty nearly exhausted by his father's researches in so many lands, and it was necessary to earn some money instead of dreaming about a problematical pirate's hidden store of gold.

Elias claimed that the writing was merely a memorandum of his ancestor, and thought it probably referred to the setting out of some new or foreign tree or plant, a common performance with our thrifty forefathers, who, unlike the people of the present day, planted or builded for their successors' enjoyment or profit.

Alas for the hopes and plans of Elias! The whaling business, as perhaps all children know, was knocked sky-high by the discovery of kerosene oil, and thereafter the poor innocent whalers were allowed to swim the silent seas almost unmolested, and Elias became very poor indeed.

At last he found that of all his wealth nothing remained but a small farm on the shore of the Sound. Upon this land stood the same old farmhouse in the garret of which had been found, so long before, the ancient parchment.

It was a ramshackle, mossy, leaky house that shook with every gale, but its timbers were still sound and firm, while the rooms were as large as most modern houses.

Here Elias moved with his family and endeavored to earn a scanty living by raising vegetables, catching fish and gathering "soft clams" for the market. He had a son named Perry, who was as bright and clever a lad as the Lawrence family ever had in it, although his father said he was a dreamer like his grandfather, Amos Lawrence.

When he found that his school days had ended ere they had really begun, Perry was not disheartened. He kept right on studying just as if he was certain of going to college when the time arrived, although when one is steering a clam boat or clearing fish it is difficult to acquire knowledge. Perry's especial fondness for history, chemistry and geology had been noted by his teachers, and one of them, himself a poor man, devoted much of his spare time in sailing with Perry and instructing him. The two were boon companions, although Mr. Smeed seemed many years older than the boy. In fact, he was but twenty-four and was a good deal of a boy still.

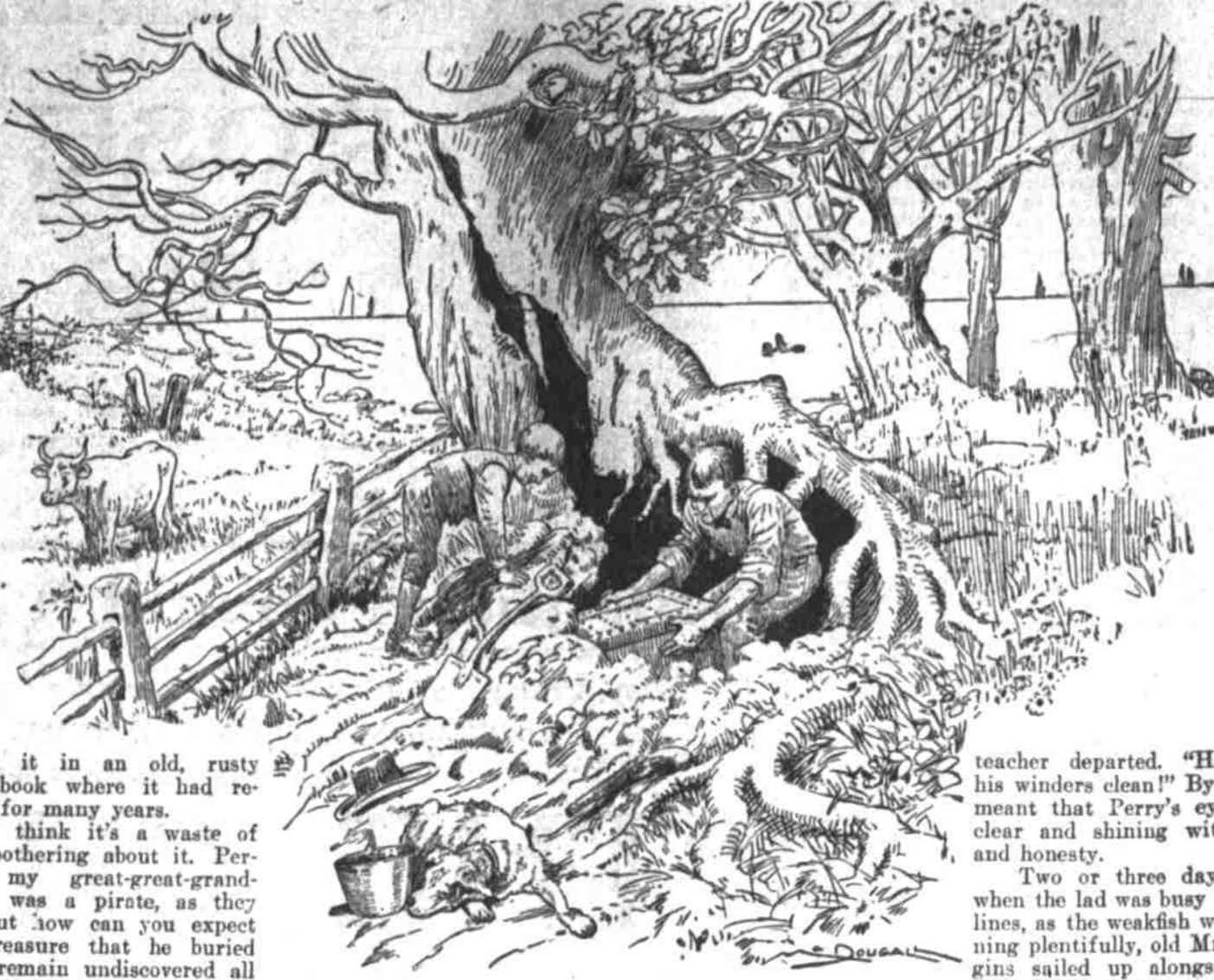
One day while anchored off Charles Island, a grassy gem that adorns the Connecticut coast, Perry happened to mention the family tradition, and Mr. Smeed's curiosity was so aroused that nothing but a sight of the ancient parchment would satisfy him. Nothing so romantic had ever come his way, and when they returned home that night Perry asked his father if he remembered where the document had been placed.

With much difficulty Elias Lawrence managed to recall its hiding-place and unearth it, spreading it out on the kitchen table for the school teacher's inspection.

Mr. Smeed read it carefully, closely studying the handwriting and staring at it as if he expected to wrench its hidden meaning by boring holes into it with his brown eyes. At last he said with a sort of sigh:

"It's beyond me! I wonder where 'The Barking Dogge' landed? If that were ascertained, perhaps the rest would be easy enough."

"Oh, pshaw! That's what my father thought, and he spent all his time, as well as his money, trying to discover that very thing," growled Perry's father, as he folded the parchment and



A Rust-Eaten, Iron-Bound Chest—the Pirates' Treasure—Was Revealed

pocketed it in an old, rusty pocketbook where it had reposed for many years.

"I think it's a waste of time bothering about it. Perhaps my great-great-grandfather was a pirate, as they say, but how can you expect any treasure that he buried could remain undiscovered all these years? Like as not, 'twas buried, somebody's dug it up and spent it a hundred years since. The best way is to forget all about it."

But the school teacher, who was very romantic and very fond of all sorts of puzzles as well, did bother about it a great deal. Yet there was so little tangible to work upon that he made no progress toward solving the problem. Little by little he procured all of the documents that Amos Lawrence had gathered, and Perry was compelled to listen to Mr. Smeed's speculations day after day until the boy at last knew every fact that his grandfather had gathered, as well as all of his adventures while seeking for records of the lost ship, "The Barking Dogge."

Perry had no wild ideas regarding hidden treasure; all he wished was to obtain an education so that he might in time become State Geologist or State Chemist. But the poor school teacher had a motive in his search.

Mr. Smeed was in love, poor man! Miss Ennis, who was assistant to the village milliner, had long ago bewitched him, and yet his salary was so pitifully small that he dared not ask her to share it with him. She would willingly have given up all her future, and, as Mrs. Samuel G. Smeed, cheerfully assisted him in spending this salary, but Mr. Smeed was not aware of that fact.

Up to date his nearest approach to a confession of love had been a daily walk past the milliner's after school and a shy glance within, where sat the trim figure of Miss Ennis, her golden head leaning over as she deftly converted sixty cents' worth of straw, feathers and wire into a twenty-five dollar hat from Paris.

Mr. Smeed yearned for wealth with a hunger that was entirely unselfish, for he wished to bestow it upon Miss Adelaide Ennis, but school teaching has never yet made any man wealthy unless he has invented some new method of making it more unpleasant for children, and he could not do that. So he did hanker after the pirate's hidden gold, and even as ardently as had Amos Lawrence, pondered over the problem of where the ship "Barking Dogge" had made her landing.

He grew pale and thin from loss of sleep, and often while Perry sailed the Alice, their humble clammng ship, across the rippling waters of the Sound, the teacher sat in a brown study with his eyes roving along the distant shore as if seeking some sign of the ancient landing.

At such times he occasionally related some tale of the Spanish Main, and Perry was thrilled with the narration of the awful deeds of Morgan, Blackbeard, "Montbars the Exterminator," De Lussan, who became a pirate to pay his bills, Dieppe, Mansfelt and the infamous Olnnois, who behaded ninety men all in one day.

The fact that an ancestor of his could have been a member of such a bloody and inhuman profession was not a very cheerful thought, and Perry refused to admit it for a moment, but the teacher had gone pirate-mad.

The boys told Perry that at school he had introduced a course of reading of the "Lives of the Buccaneers," much to their delight, and the quick result of which was the prompt appearance off shore on the next Saturday afternoon of several long, low, rickish craft of various ages, all flying home-made black flags bearing the awful skull and cross-bones in white.

All of the delighted children took as rosy a view of a pirate's career as did Mr. Smeed, so long as the pirate was of the distant past, yet when they began to board each other's craft in mimic fray and bloody fights resulted Mr. Smeed saw his error.

The result of a more than usually savage encounter between the Bloody Pelican, commanded by Bill Jones, whose real name was Orlando Girms, and the Flame of Fury, under Captain Blackbeard, once called Herman Wirz, brought the teacher's peculiar views to the attention of the village School Board, and after he had been talked to by a committee he was notified that his services would not be needed next year.

So the mysterious parchment had brought woe to another innocent man, just as if a legacy of disaster followed whoever became interested in deciphering its meaning.

Mr. Smeed told of his disastrous finish as Perry took him across to the house where he was to board that week, and he confessed to the boy why he had so yearned to find the treasure.

"Well," remarked Perry, "as vacation will begin pretty soon and you would have had to get a job of some sort to keep you going through the summer, I guess it's not so awful bad as it looks."

"I'd like to procure some kind of employment about here," resumed Mr. Smeed, "even if there is no prospect of getting the school again next fall."

"There is only one man anywhere about that hires help," Perry broke in, "and that's old man Quoggins, on the Point. He employs men in the summer time to sail cat-boats for the summer boards. I did think I'd go into that myself this summer," he added. "It beats clamming and fishing."

Mr. Smeed asked Perry to sail over to the Point, and they interviewed Mr. Quoggins, with the result that he promised to engage Mr. Smeed in July. Perry was much interested in this gruff-looking old man, whose shaggy brows concealed a pair of kindly eyes, for he had always been terribly afraid of him. When Mr. Smeed told the old man what had caused the School Board to dispense with his services he roared:

"Why, zar bling them! O' course they don't want them children to learn any kind o' piracy 'cept takin' summer boarders an' being hackmen an' the like along shore! Serves you right fer puttin' other notions inter their heads! Ho, ho! He, he!"

Perry asked Mr. Quoggins for some information regarding the business of pleasure-boating, and to his surprise the old boatman gave him much valuable advice, telling him that if he wished he could use his wharf to land passengers. Perry was so grateful that he gave the gruff old man such a glance of thanks that Mr. Quoggins looked aft: him with a smile.

"That's a nice boy," he said to his wife, as Perry and the

teacher departed. "He keeps his widders clean!" By that he meant that Perry's eyes were clear and shining with truth and honesty.

Two or three days after, when the lad was busy with his lines, as the weakfish were running plentifully, old Mr. Quoggins sailed up alongside and drew his cat-boat up into the wind, holding her there like a horse hitched to a post, although the tide ran like a mill-race.

"Thought perhaps ye might sell a few fish to me," he said, smiling. He merely wished to catch another glance from the lad's clear eyes, as a matter of fact. "I never asked your name," he added.

When Perry told him his name, Mr. Quoggins was surprised. "Why, you must be a sort o' relation o' mine, for my granther married a Miss Lawrence. Are you 'Lias' son? Well, well! No wonder I was kinder drawn toward ye. We are cousins! Ain't never heard of it before, eh? Well, bless your heart; didn't you never hear o' how Becky Lawrence ran away, or rather sailed away, with my grandpop, and how 'Squire Lawrence chased them with a sloop armed with a brass gun clean to Bermuda? He wasn't going ter have his gal marry no such name as Quoggins! Ho! ho! ho! I want you ter come over to my house and read some o' the letters that your grandpop wrote about that matter. Oh, I have a mighty lot of old papers! Some o' them going back to the very first settlers 'round here. Like to see them?"

Perry assured him that he would be pleased to examine them, but really he was merely being polite, for he had heard so much about old documents that he hated the sight of them. Yet his politeness was the means of his restoring the fortunes of the Lawrences, for when he went, a few days afterward, to look at Mr. Quoggins' old letters, he found among them a paper that aroused in him the fever, even as Mr. Smeed's had been aroused.

There, among a mass of old, stained, creased and tattered pieces of paper and parchment lying back for two centuries and more, reposed the key to the whole problem! It was an especially stained and ragged sheet of paper, yellow as saffron with age, and the writing upon it was scarcely legible, yet as Perry rather carelessly turned them all over the date upon this one was plain enough to catch his eye.

It read: "October Tenth, 1669," and as it was perhaps the very oldest piece of paper he had ever seen, it arrested his attention, and with some difficulty he managed to decipher the faint writing. It read thus:

October Tenth, 1669.
Tom Lawrence, Dr., to Jacob Quoggins:
To four sides venison..... 3 shillings
To two ducks..... 6 pence
To painting sign of Ye Barking Dogge and repairing two tables at ye Tavern..... 13 shillings 8 pence
Received Payt.
JACOB QUOGGINS."

"The Barking Dogge!" exclaimed Perry. "A signboard! Was there a tavern called 'The Barking Dogge'?" he asked aloud, and Mr. Quoggins replied:

"I reckon if it's writ down there that there was, my boy!" "Did you ever hear of such a tavern anywhere around here?" asked the boy.

"No, I never did; but that ain't saying there wasn't any. If my great-great-grandpop signed a receipt for money an' mentioned such a tavern it surely was somewhere not far from here. I never heard tell of his painting signs, and never knew that we had an artist in the family before. I'll bet that's where my little Liza gets her taste fer painting from!"

"I wonder how I could find out about it?" said Perry. "Well, I can't see what use 'twould be to know about a tavern that's been gone for two centuries, more'n likely. But if you're set 'pon knowing, there's Sammy Spelter, up at the Court House—he's a cousin o' mine and yours, too—and what he don't know about antiquities o' this country ain't worth gatherin' up. You jest go to Cousin Sammy and tell him I sent you, and tell him whose son you be and I guess he'll tell you all he knows."

Perry immediately, and without saying anything to Mr. Smeed, repaired to the Court House and soon found Mr. Spelter, who, when he learned Perry's errand, was interested at once.

"There's an old book of records of the very first settlement that is kept in the safe as a curiosity, more than anything else," said he. "We will examine that first."

He produced the ancient volume, its wooden covers bound in calfskin worn thin with centuries of handling, its pages yellow and time-stained, but the writing still legible. Together the man and boy turned over the flimsy pages, upon which were recorded, by long-forgotten clerks, the sales of land and other matters put on record by the government of each place.

Here were shown who were taxed and who bought land from the Indian owners, and pasted in the book were many priceless papers signed with historic names, many of them those of Indian chiefs who drew little animals, or totems, opposite their written names.

Perry found it extremely difficult to read the ancient form of handwriting with its extravagant flourishes, and he wrestled bravely with the spelling; also, for our forefathers spelled pretty much as they pleased. Suddenly, just as he was becoming discouraged, Mr. Spelter said:

"Aha! Here it is!" then he read aloud:
"June 8 1662.
"this day was granted to Enoch Lawrence by ye Honbl. Council ye Land lying south of his tavern of Ye Barking Dogge wh. stands on ye shore where ye river falls into ye Sound; the same Land being Publick Domaing. Said E. Lawrence to maintain for fifty years a ferry across said stream for alle comers except ye savages."

"There's our tavern!" ejaculated Mr. Spelter, "and it's funny I never noticed that entry before. It is quite evident that the Lawrences began life as innkeepers, my lad, although they became mighty men in these parts."

"I guess it would be pretty hard to find out where the tavern stood, would it not?" said Perry.

"Well, that depends," replied the clerk. "Perhaps there may be some reliance of it, although I know almost every old building hereabouts. You know, all that part of this village reposed into almost its original condition of wild land many years ago. Even old ruins crumble away pretty fast in our climate. I imagine that the changes have been so great that only a geologist could ascertain just where the river entered the Sound so long ago as 1662."

"I have studied geology for two years," said Perry. "Then you would enjoy the task of tracing the ancient shoreline. I confess that I wouldn't know how to set about it."

"I know very well," replied Perry, confidently; and thanking Mr. Spelter for his kindness, he repaired at once to the shore. Here in a very short time he found that the little stream that now would scarcely float a good sized cat-boat once was deep and broad, the marks of its swift current showing on rocks far from the present shore.

He found, too, that for ages past it had been carrying down earth and stones, spreading soil all along the meadows until the river bed had been raised and its mouth pushed far back inland.

It was impossible to estimate exactly how far the river had receded each century, but he soon discovered, far distant from the present shore-line, some ancient logs that showed they once were the piles of either a bridge or a wharf. It was truly astonishing to think that water had once flowed here, but it was certain that these logs had been immersed in water, as they were worm-eaten.

Next, quite by accident, just where he had made sure was an old beach, he came upon the foundation of a vanished building, the rough-hewn stones revealing where an ancient cellar had been, and it was right on the old-time water's edge.

Other big stones extended out toward the water, and Perry made sure that this was an ancient landing, perhaps the landing of the tavern.

Looking to the north he saw a gnarled and twisted oak, a tree so venerable that its boughs were torn and bent and its great trunk hollowed to a mere shell. It was exactly ten paces north of the line of water-worn stones that lay stretched toward the present water line. He paced the distance several times, and then became so excited that he felt he had better sit down.

Just then Perry's father came along with his nets on a wheelbarrow, and when he had told him of his discovery he said with very little show of interest:

"Well, if you've found the landing-place and can manage to find the pirate's treasure you'll have one comfort. It's on our own land, for this here piece belongs to me. It is part of the farm, although it ain't worth ten cents for farming."

Perry set away to find Mr. Smeed and to give his wonderful news. To say that the teacher grew excited would be a mild statement, for he ran all the way back to the old oak. He confided all of Perry's theories and was sure that he had found the long lost landing-place. They hastened for shovels and then Perry said:

"Where'll we begin to dig?"

"Well, the paper said it was buried under the oak, and as that must mean near its trunk or thereabouts, it would now perhaps be completely enfolded among its wide spreading roots. I think, as we have the axe, we might as well explore directly beneath the trunk of the tree."

Perry set to work and said:

"It's about as rotten as punk. I think it will be easy." But it was more difficult than he had anticipated, for old as was the tree, its wood was firm and tough, and they cut and twisted and dug and pulled for hours without uncovering a hint of treasure. Then, just as Perry was beginning to weaken in his faith, the teacher's shovel struck something.

He reached down and held it up. It was an ancient flint-lock pistol, crumbling and rusted, but it was proof. They dug eagerly again. In a few minutes the corner of an iron-bound chest showed.

I think that never did two shovels work faster than did theirs for ten minutes, when before them lay fully revealed a pirate's chest if ever there was one!

One bang upon its rusty lock and hinges and off flew the heavy oaken lid, revealing its contents. The chest seemed filled with reddish clay, but a few swift movements of the teacher's hand uncovered the earth that three centuries had sifted in upon the treasure. And there, gleaming dully, was gold that filled the chest to the brim.

They took up coin after coin and read their dates with amazement. There were coins of 1423, 1546, 1613, 1492; in fact, coins so old that the teacher was astounded, for he well knew that this treasure was not only precious because the coins were gold, but because they were such rare and perhaps simply unique specimens that collectors would pay many times the worth of the metal for them.

So it proved. In fact, when it became known that at last the famous "Barking Dogge" treasure had been unearthed, and what a wonderful find it had proved to be, every numismatist or coin collector in the world was eager to procure specimens, and they flocked to the Lawrence home filled with anxiety lest others had gotten ahead of them, for coin-collectors are greedy folk and extremely jealous of each other.

They found that even the teacher had not dreamed of the value of the treasure Perry had had exhumed, for there were coins in the chest that existed nowhere else in the world, for old coins are melted again and again as the centuries pass. You may have a gold dollar in your pocket or on a chain that once lay in the palm of a Phoenician or a Roman storekeeper of the days of Numa Pompilius.

Here the ardent collectors found coins of the Caesars, of forgotten Spanish kings, of Greek tyrants, of Byzantine emperors, doubloons, moldores, pieces-of-eight of Queen Elizabeth, Macedonian, Bactrian, Hebrew, Hungarian and Russian coins, with dates ranging from two centuries before the Christian Era to that of King Charles the Second!

The treasures set the collectors crazy and they quarreled like wolves. When at last Perry had sold all that he desired to part with, he had two million, four hundred thousand and ninety-seven dollars in the bank.

Down at the bottom of the chest was a leather bag filled with diamonds and in it a paper containing this writing:

"I gained this treasure in lawful combat with ye bloody sailors of Spain, and from Arthur Flynn, surnamed ye Scourge of ye Main, by ye skillful casting of ye dice. If by mischance I miscarry and recover it not I hereby state that an interest of a thirde is in ye same to Julio Gondomar, my Captain and to be my son-in-law if he survives the present expedition.
THOMAS LAWRENCE.

Accompanying this paper was a piece of shriveled parchment on which was written these names and figures:

"Santo Espirato, 1102 pounds silver.
"Diago Gonzales, 900.
"Nina Speranza, 11,998 marks.
"Conquistadore, 3000 in gold.
"Santa Cruz del Maria, 8000.
"Theresa, 1800—mostly gold."

Perhaps these were the names of ships which the old buccaneer had captured, but that remains to be learned. Mr. Smeed received from Perry the position of private tutor at a large salary, so that he saw his way clear to proposing to Miss Ennis, and they were married that summer in order that the teacher might have everything off his mind while Perry was preparing for college.

WALT McDougall