

TREASURE ISLAND.

Has the six million sterling worth of buried treasure, which for many years has attracted fortune seekers to Cocos Island, finally been found? A despatch from San Francisco states that August Whidden had returned on the steamer City of Sydney, with the secret in his possession. Whidden sailed away five years ago in the sloop Hayseed, in search of the hidden treasure. On reaching San Francisco he stated that he had found the treasure and immediately left the city.

Now when this Treasure Island has been forgotten by the world at large for years, the old and ever fascinating story—buccaneers, gold, charts, cascades and tropical beauties—is given new life by despatches from Vancouver, B.C., telling of the arrival there of the British man-of-war Imperieuse.

Cocos Island is a gem of a place in the Pacific Ocean, six hundred miles southwest of Panama.

A word of the war ship's mission before we go together to the island itself. On the Imperieuse two men went to Vancouver on November 3—Harford and Harris—both men of queer histories.

The war ship went to the island, the despatches say, to search for the £6,000,000 worth of treasure reported to have been buried there early in this century, when Chili was in the throes of revolution. The hiding place, so the tale runs, was discovered by Harford two years ago.

The mere fact that the Imperieuse's officers had talked of the affair so seriously may have given rise to the report that she now has on board gold and jewels worth £3,000,000; but at all events such a report is now current in Vancouver, and it is said the balance of the treasure will be removed in a few weeks, in accordance with plans known only to the captain and his officers.

Now for some of the history of this gold, which has led so many men on wild goose voyages, and which is to lead their sons over the same stretch of water. A swarthy buccaneer-like person landed in San Francisco from nowhere in particular in July, 1871, and talked of untold gold hidden in Cocos Island.

He looked the pirate, but he was sane and sober, and had mysterious resources, and his story, repeated along the water front, spread over the coast soon, and before the summer was ended expeditions were fitted out to seek the vast fortune, which, by the way, the swarthy gentleman said darkly no one would ever bring to civilisation.

These expeditions failed, as others had failed before them, and then some sage person suggested that the man of mystery had told a lie—oh, not a simple dream of gold, just for the sake of lying—worse, far worse.

It was suggested, in fact, that this sailor-man, wishing to pay old scores against a world with which he was greatly displeased, had deliberately set afloat a story of treasure so alluring that thousands who heard it could not rest any more, but would be dragged over the weary waste of waters by their greed, to reap only disappointment and die still thinking of that vine-clad rock spouting back the rolling water like a sea nymph at play and guarding its secret still.

The island of Cocos is rarely beautiful—truly 'a gem of the ocean.' It is of volcanic origin, and is clothed by a rich growth of cedars. In many places so thick a crop of mighty vines springs up as to render the interior impossible of penetration unless the adventurer carries an axe and hews a road for himself. There is much rain at most times, so that the island is always surprisingly green and beautiful.

But it is the play of the ocean which contributes most to its picturesqueness. It is like a mighty fountain, voyagers say who have seen it, for when the great waves thunder against its rocky sides the wave crests roar back to the ocean, spouting from channels worn in the volcanic stone, dancing and foaming under the rainbows which sun and spume hang above them.

And what sort of inhabitants are there, think you, to enjoy this ever fascinating splendour? A race of wild hogs, squealing a shrill defiance.

It was in 1880 that Captain Tom Hackett, of North Sydney, Cape Breton, came to time with a yarn of

Cocos Island, and one can follow its effects even up to now, when the Imperieuse sets the flame glowing brightly again.

Captain Tom told of an old man who had been on Cocos twice and had come away on both occasions laden to the guards with gold. The old man, it appears, had come into possession of a chart telling him just where to dig, and his only complaint was that he couldn't carry off enough of the treasure to satisfy him. The old gentleman was seventy, but he pined for millions just the same.

Finally, he interested a company of speculators in his discovery, and an expedition was fitted out in St. John's, N.F., with two captains, one representing the company and one commanding the ship. The old man declined to give up his secret until he reached the island, and when the ship finally arrived there the two captains quarrelled, and the expedition failed.

And now we get back to Harris and Harford, who have strange histories, and who landed lately from the Imperieuse, of Her Majesty's navy. The story is that when the treasure was carried to Cocos from South America only two maps of the burial place were prepared. Some years ago a document said to be one of these two originals fell into the hands of a woman in Maine. She organised a party, bought a schooner on the Pacific coast, and went to the island about a year ago. Harris was one of the men who went on that schooner.

When Cocos Island was reached there was a Mr Harford. He was in a starving condition, his supplies having given out. But he said he had found the treasure, and that there was more of it than anyone could imagine.

Schooner full? Why, the man said the Great Eastern wouldn't carry it off. He told them their map was no good, that he had the secret under his hat, that they might search for eleven thousand years, but would never find a dollar until they came to a satisfactory arrangement with him, whom they had found disputing for possession with the wild hogs.

They thought they could find it without him, but they searched long and vainly, and while they toiled Harford ate their good food and smoked their tobacco until they were ready to talk business. They surrendered and asked for terms.

After days of vain talk the party sailed back to Victoria, taking obstinate Mr Harford along. He at once attempted to organise another expedition, but failed, and finally, with Harris, went south on the Imperieuse, with the result now known.

VALETS INSTEAD OF MAIDS.

An up-to-date fashionable New York woman has lately even succeeded in astonishing her set, that as a rule is surprised at no eccentricity on the part of any one of its members. She has dismissed her maid and engaged a valet.

"I have never been so well taken care of in my life," she told a writer. "My clothes are most beautifully kept; my boots, shoes, and slippers are like new, and I have never had my hair so well dressed; in travelling he is invaluable; he forgets nothing, and his packing is perfect.

"No, he does nothing for my husband. Jim has his own man; mine simply valets me. I took him up with me to my sister's last week. She had a house party at her country place. Mollie said it was so queer to have a man unpack my traps and lay out my dinner gown, but I don't see why. If men are better dressmakers and better milliners, I do not see why they should not be better personal attendants. Adolph can trim a hat or change the character of a gown far better than any maid I ever had. Mind having him about? Why, of course I don't. I would not be so vulgar as to think of such a thing. The individual means nothing in such a case; it is the service you want. It is like Pauline Bonaparte, when one of her friends wondered that she should let her lackey come into her bedroom. "Mais me chere," she said; "appelle tu ca un homme?" My valet is a "ca"; voila tout."

"Is it true, George, that there is a tariff on elephants?" "Yes, dear. Those custom-house fellows don't intend to let any kind of trunks escape them."

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