

[From the St. Louis Dispatch.]

A REMARKABLE STORY,

"THE TOILERS OF THE ISLE"—A CENTURY'S SEARCH FOR CAPTAIN KIDD'S BURIED TREASURE.

CHESTER, MAHONE BAY,

N. S., Aug. 24.

Among the spots I have visited is a small island in Mahone bay, on the south coast of Nova Scotia, known as Oak Island, where for over a century has been centred quite an interest. I give you the story as 'twas told to me:

Many years ago, when this Province was a wild, blooming forest in summer, and a bleak, snow-capped wilderness in winter, with here and there a small clearing, from which arose the smoke of some hardy settler's hut, an old man resided in the then British Colony of New England, whose life had been wrapped in mystery. He had been a sailor in his younger days, and people said he had been a soldier too, for upon his brown face there still remained traces of the cutlass. Often had the curious endeavored to sound him upon his early career, but it was a fruitless task. The old man was as mute as the rock regarding his history. At last, when people began to give up all hope of ever extracting his secret, the old cosmopolite was taken sick, and on his deathbed admitted that he had been one of Captain Kidd's rovers; that many years before he had assisted in burying over four million dollars of gold beneath the soil of a secluded island east of Boston, the proceeds of Kidd's piracies. The death of this mysterious man and the secret he had divulged were borne from lip to lip, until Kidd and his hidden treasure became a household word among the settlers along the New England coast, who for years searched all the islands along the coast for some traces of the subterranean treasure vaults. But all these searches threw no light upon the buried treasure, and years rolled by and people gave up the search.

Nearly a quarter of a century later, three men named Smith, Vaud and McGinnis, emigrated from New England, and settled in Chester, N. S., Smith and McGinnis, taking up land upon Oak Island. As soon as these men had erected their huts they commenced their work of felling the forest that covered the island. McGinnis, while roaming over the island one day, was astonished to discover traces of former civilisation, and upon pushing his explorations further he discovered that the first growth of timber had been cut down, and that a second growth was springing up, while some stumps of oak that had fallen under some white man's axe were visible, adjacent to this clearing stood an old giant oak whose forked branches fell over the small clearing and to the forked part of the oak, by means of a wooden trammel, converting the fork into a small triangle, was attached an old tackle block. "Much he marvelled, much he wondered," at these evidences of prior settlement and away he went to Smith and Vaud and reported his secret. The following day they visited the spot together and on attempting to remove the block it broke to pieces so decayed was it by age and exposure.

While exploring the island they found that the remains of a tolerably well made road from it to the west shore of the island were still discernible, and part of this road is still seen. The first thought that struck them was that this was the island referred to by the dying sailor. The secluded situation of the island, the marks of former habitation, appeared in keeping with all they had heard of Kidd's hidden plunder. They were still more strongly impressed with this belief when they found that the ground over which the block and tackle hung had settled and formed a hollow. At once the three pioneers set to work. Clearing the young timber from the sunken ground and removing the surface soil for about two feet they struck a tier of flag stones, evidently not formed there by nature. Subsequently they ascertained that these stones were not indigenous to the island, but had been conveyed there from Gold river, two miles distant.

DISCOVERY OF AN OLD PIT.

Removing the stones, the treasure seekers entered the mouth of an old pit or shaft that had been filled. The mouth of the pit was seven feet in diameter, the sides of it being of tough, hard clay, but the earth with which it had been filled up was soft and loamy, and easily removed. Still, they descended the shaft, foot by foot, discovering some indication that increased their hopes of at last hitting the long buried treasure. Ten feet from the surface they struck a

floor of solid oak logs, tightly attached to the sides, and below this two feet of vacant space, caused by the filling of the pit having settled down. They pushed their explorations fifteen feet further down without striking the sought for prize, and after driving sticks into the mud, filled the shaft and abandoned the work.

THE SECRET DIVULGED.

Compelled to abandon the search for want of money, Smith and his associates endeavored to enlist the assistance of their neighbors and told their secret; but the people were poor and ignorant, and laughed at them for attempting to find Kidd's money when he invariably "killed a nigger to guard it." Fifteen years passed without any further attempts being made to fathom the mystery of the old pit.

A COMPANY FORMED TO PROSPECT.

At length an old resident named Lynd heard the story of the pit, visited the island, examined the ground, and believing these were the vaults of Kidd, went home and formed a company. Early in the following summer they loaded a small schooner with tools and arriving at Oak Island commenced the search anew under the supervision of the three principal discoverers. Digging down they discovered the sticks planted by Smith and Vaud, and fifteen feet further down they struck a second tier of oak logs. Ten feet further down they struck a tier of charcoal, and ten feet further, or about fifty feet from the surface a tier of putty. Further down was a flag stone one foot by two with some rudely cut letters and figures upon it. They hoped this inscription would assist in solving the mystery, but they were unable to decipher it. At a depth of ninety feet they found indications of water; at ninety-three feet the water increased. Night coming on they sunk a crowbar down five feet and struck a hard impenetrable substance found by the sides of the pit. Some supposed it was wood, others called it a chest. They quit work for the night and returned home, confident that with the morning's sun they would possess the long sought treasure; and they discussed the question of its division. Morning settled the matter, however, for on repairing to work they found sixty feet of water in the shaft.

After futile attempts to bail the water out, pumps were put in; but these, too, failed. As they pumped out the water, still stood at the same level. The next was to sink a new shaft beside the old one, and tunnel from it under the old shaft. When within ten or fifteen feet of the pit, the earth between the tunnel and pit gave way, and the water rushed in so rapidly that the men had barely time to retreat with their lives before sixty-five feet of water filled the tunnel and shaft. This placed a damper upon the energetic seekers after hidden treasure; and the work was given up after several thousand pounds had been squandered in what some of the shareholders now begin to think an *ignis fatuus*.

ANOTHER ASSOCIATION FORMED.

Fifty years glided into eternity before the work was renewed, yet the shafts had still remained full of water, which rose and fell with the ebbing and flowing of the tide in the bay, showing clearly that the island had been pierced by subterranean passages. This brings us down to the period of fifteen years ago. A number of young men in the summer of 1848 proceeded to the island and renewed the work. They followed down the shafts of their predecessors, when they encountered the same difficulty—water coming upon them. After bailing it out they pierced the bottom of the pit with a chisel and sledge-ball auger at a distance of ninety-eight feet from the surface, when they struck a hard, wooden obstruction, which they confidently believed to be the money chest. The machinery brought up a bunch of something which subsequently proved to be grass peculiar to the Spanish Main. This gave the toilers new courage, and they followed up the discovery with renewed energy. The chisel having been attached to the auger they cut through a spruce log about six inches thick, when it dropped and struck a piece of oak timber four and a half inches thick. They soon found something harder than wood, and continued boring, until the auger settled down about twenty inches. While passing through this substance a sharp metallic sound greeted the ears of those employed. It resembled the noise a bar of iron would make on being wormed through a keg of nails, and the laborers were in ecstasies. There they were within a few feet of Kidd's gold! Twenty inches further down more wood was found, and below it the same mineral

substance. Then came the wood again and afterwards mud. The only thing taken out was part of the head of an oak cask; one end had been cut off and the other exhibited the marks of the cooper's knife. Other bores were sunk near this one, but with the same result. Among other articles taken out was more Spanish grass and part of a hoop of a barrel with the bark in a good state of preservation.

THE TOILERS IN DESPAIR.

After making several bores with like results, finding it impossible to keep down the water, without an ample exchequer, they thought of a Dutchman and his anchor, and then looking upon themselves and the treasure that lay hidden beneath them, many of the company withdrew from the work. The few who still persevered, from the fact that the water in the shafts fell and rose with the tide, became convinced that there were subterranean channels connecting the bay with the pit. Acting on the belief they searched the shore, when upon the east side of the cove they found fine well made drains entering the island at low water mark. Removing the covering, to their surprise they found that the stones forming the arch of the drains were coated with a cover of Spanish grass. Further investigations showed that the drains had been run in the direction of the old pit, and considerable cocoanut fibre and Spanish grass was found as they progressed. They endeavored to follow the direction of the drain, but failed to find its connection with a perpendicular shaft. The water soon rushed into the drain upon them. The next attempt was to sink a shaft and endeavor to strike this drain or channel on the line between the old pit and the entrance at the water. At a depth of seventy-four feet water filled the shaft. Several other shafts were sunk with the same result, and winter coming on the work was abandoned until spring. Spring came, but the disappointed shareholders, some of whom had sunk their last dollar in the numerous pits, were disheartened, and the work was not renewed for nine years. In the meantime the charter expired, and the seekers after Kidd's treasure returned to more profitable employment, still, however, convinced that the treasure was there and accessible if they could only stop the flow of water so as to follow the old pit to its original bottom.

The story of the excavations on Oak Island had in the meantime spread over the whole province, and there were hundreds who were disposed to make one more attempt to fathom the mystery. Accordingly in 1861 meetings were held at various points in the province, full particulars of the enterprise laid before them, and stock to the amount of \$2,000 subscribed. Several new pits were sunk and tunnels run from them in the direction of the "money pit" with the view of finding the subterranean channel that floods the pits, but after an expenditure of \$1,200 the results were not satisfactory. The company, which now comprises some of the most influential gentlemen of Halifax, have increased their capital stock and as a dernier resort, are now building a dam round the base of the island for the purpose of cutting off the bay water from the subterranean channels, when they propose to pump the water out of the excavations already made, and follow the channels to their termini. It is expected that the dam will be completed the present week, and the company now feel sanguine that Kidd's four millions of gold are almost within their grasp. It is estimated that fully \$100,000 have been expended already upon the search, and the present company, who are men of means, are determined to solve the mystery of Oak Island, if it costs as much more.

Such is the history of the "toilers of the isle." All the members of the first two companies have passed away, and it remains to the third generation to follow up the work of their ancestors. Should their expectations be realized, and I must admit that the indications are good, that a remarkable mystery will be cleared up, and a sensation produced. That a stupendous work of art has been constructed by unknown hands at Oak Island is a certainty. That most of the material used is indigenous to this country is also certain. What these works were constructed for, and by whom, and what they contain, alone remain mysteries, which let us hope will soon be cleared up.

—The way to cure our prejudices is this:—That every man should let alone those that he complains of in others, and examine his own.

HYDRAULIC RAILWAYS.

M. Girard, a French engineer, has constructed an experimental railway at the village of La Fouchere, between Paris and St Germain, in order to make a practical test of water as a motive power instead of steam. This invention is a curious application of the principle that water lessens the friction between two metal surfaces. In his system, the wheels of railway carriages are replaced by iron skates, which differ only in shape and size from those used by skaters, and the mode of propulsion is thus described: Each carriage, instead of having four wheels, has four skates. The skates have a ledge on either side so as to fit on the rail, but not too closely.

The upper part of the skate next the surface of the rail, is hollowed at its center by a small groove; the groove is pierced with holes communicating with tubes leading to a reservoir in the carriage, in which a mass of water is subjected by means of compressed air to a pressure of from seven to eight atmospheres. The turning of a faucet establishes the communication between the reservoir and the skates; the water then rushes as from a hydraulic press through the holes in the grooves of the skates, and a layer of water is interposed between them and the rails, on which they are thus enabled to move as on the smoothest ice. The friction being thus reduced to a minimum, the tractive or propelling force can be greatly reduced.

The method of supplying the carriage reservoir is as follows:

Between the rails is a longitudinal tube, receiving water at high pressure, from a reservoir, established at a high level; the tube is provided at every fifty yards with a kink or stop cock, which enables a powerful jet of water to be directed horizontally in the direction the train moves in. The first carriage is provided with a sort of needle which opens the stop-cocks, the water rushes forth against paddles placed under each carriage, and communicates to the train such an impetus as to enable it to ascend very steep gradients without any diminution of speed. By an ingenious contrivance a portion of this water is conveyed by the turn of the paddles into the reservoir of the motive-carriage, and is utilized to neutralize the friction between the skates and the rails.

M. Girard's model railway consists of two lines—one, horizontal, is forty metres in length; the second, fifty metres long has an incline of five centimetres per metre. The trains ascend the gradient with a rapidity fully equal to that of ordinary trains propelled by steam. Nothing, it is said, can exceed the ease of the motion; and the facility with which trains can be brought up, by the mere cutting off of the water supply, is urged as a powerful argument for the adoption of these skates instead of wheels on ordinary railways.

The invention has attracted the attention of scientific men in Europe.

ARMIES OF EUROPE.—From tables lately published by the Statistical Society of Paris, it appears that in a time of peace, from 1860 to 1863, the various countries supported armies amounting to 3,815,847 men, at an annual cost of \$645,000,000. This was an average of about one soldier to seventy-six inhabitants, and the annual cost of each soldier \$170. Of this vast army, Russia maintained 1,200,000, or one to every sixty-four persons, at an annual expense of \$106 per soldier; France maintained 514,000, Austria 466; Turkey 430; Italy 315,000; Great Britain 300,000, and Prussia 215,000. In France there was one soldier to every seventy-three inhabitants; in Austria, one to seventy-five; Turkey, one to ninety-one; Italy, one to seventy; Great Britain, one to ninety-seven, and in Prussia, one to eighty-six. In France the annual cost of each soldier was \$268; in Austria, \$144; in Turkey, \$66; in Italy, \$210; in Great Britain, \$446; and in Prussia, \$148. The army of Great Britain, in proportion to its numbers, is twice as costly as that of France, and nearly three times that of Austria or Prussia. In Russia the cost of supporting the military was 42 per cent. of the entire expense of the country. In France the cost was 33 per cent.; in Austria, 57 per cent.; in Italy, 27 per cent.; in Great Britain, 39 per cent.; and in Prussia, 30 per cent. It appears that the annual cost for the armies of Europe is 32 per cent. of the annual disbursements of all the European Governments. And this heavy burden is borne in time of peace, merely that they may watch each other. During the rebellion, the United States expended yearly more than the whole of Europe does for its armies.