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TREASURE OF VIGO BAY.

An Attempt to be Made to Raise the Spanish Galleons, with All Their Riches Sunk at Cadiz in 1702.

Philadelphia Press.

Col. John E. Gowen, an engineer who has devoted most of his busy life to the accomplishment of works that other men have pronounced impossible, has been on a visit to this city for a few days past, and is to sail for Europe on the Scotia to-morrow. A history of Col. Gowen's engineering feats would fill a volume, but one of his greatest exploits was the clearing of the harbor of Sevastopol in the Crimea, just after the war between England and Russia. Just prior to this time the harbor acquired considerable reputation by blowing up the wreck of the United States man-of-war Missouri, which went down in the channel of the fort at Gibraltar, and his fame brought him to the knowledge of the Russian authorities. The history of the damming up of the harbor of Sevastopol is sufficiently well known to be passed over in a few words. Toward the close of the war in 1866, or just after the battle of Alma, the allied fleet threatened the harbor, and the Russians saw that their capture was inevitable unless they could in some way render it inaccessible to the enemy. Accordingly, orders were issued to sink a line of vessels between Forts Constantine and Alexandra, which are on opposite sides of the mouth of the harbor, and about half a mile apart. Fourteen men-of-war, denuded of their masts and spars, were first sunk on the line, but as this did not disturb them, two other lines of sunken vessels were made, and the harbor was rendered thoroughly impracticable. In addition to this, there were too booms, one of heavy masts and spars, and the other of twenty-eight inch cable, thrown across the harbor, but the weight of the iron on the former sunk it to the bottom, and the latter would not have been of any use unless it had been made of steel. The Russians made several ineffectual attempts to clear the harbor after the war, and it was inspected by numbers of engineers who shook their heads and declined to undertake the work. Finally the Russian minister at Washington requested Colonel Gowen to examine the harbor and give his opinion as to the practicability of clearing it. Arriving at Petersburg Col. Gowen had an interview with the Grand Duke Constantine, and was sent on board a frigate of the Russian navy to Sevastopol. He decided that it was possible, and was asked whether he would undertake to work on contract, or superintend it on the part of the government. He chose to make a contract, and immediately returned to this country and ordered the machinery and other material needed. He sent out four caissons, each 65 feet long, 50 feet wide and 15 feet deep, several 50-horse power engines and other machinery, and was ready to begin work in the harbor early in 1867. This preparation nearly exhausted his capital, and his case was a bad one indeed, to him when he tried the practical working of his machinery that he had only one-half of the power he had calculated upon. He raised the money after a struggle, and then set men to work in Poland to cut the timber needed for more caissons. The magnitude of this work may be imagined when it was explained that the timber had to be rafted over 2,000 miles. Of this material he made caissons 150 feet wide and twenty-five feet deep. Obstructions in the river down which the logs were rafted caused frequent delays, and fully two years were consumed in work that ought to have been done in less than one. Eventually, however, everything was ready. He had previously ascertained the locations of the sunken vessels, and had passed heavy chains beneath them. Then he raised the caissons on each side of each of the vessels, attached the chains, which ran over drums, to the powerful engines they carried, and the vessel was slowly drawn out of the depths. Most of vessels were deeply imbedded in the soft sand, some of them having penetrated twenty-three feet into that yielding substance, and the passing of the chains beneath them was one of his most difficult achievements. The harbor has an almost uniform depth of sixty feet, and hence, as he could raise a vessel only fifteen at a time, he had to "hook on" to it, as he says, three or four times. His equipment cost \$1,600,000, but as the vessels were his prizes the undertaking proved a profitable one. In all he raised seventy-eight vessels of war, including the frigate Three Apostles, of 133 guns, at that time the largest vessel in the world. Some of the other vessels raised were the frigate Marie, 130 guns; the frigate Three Saints, 120 guns; the frigate Thebes, 120 guns, and the war ship Rostoff and Szevalay, of 84 guns each. When the task had been accomplished Col. Gowen was knighted by the emperor, and received several of the orders of the court. The enterprise cost him nearly six years of labor; but, despite the liberal inducements held out to him by the Russian government, among which was the management of an immense railway system, at a salary equal to that of the president of the United States, he returned to his native land.

Colonel Gowen's present mission to Europe relates to the Spanish galleons, whereby hangs a story. During the war of the Spanish succession, when England and Holland—then the strongest naval nations of the world—were allied against Spain and France, the tributes from the American dominions of Spain accumulated for several years, for fear of Anglo-Dutch cruizers, and it was not until 1702 that arrangements were made for transporting it to Spain. France furnished a fleet of vessels of war to convey the treasure galleons from the Antilles to Cadiz. There were twenty-three of these galleons, which were fitted up expressly for the carriage of 700 tons each. The galleon Almoranz carried forty-four guns, La Bufonia fifty-four, La Capitana d'Assa-gan fifty-four, and the Nuestra Señora de las Animas forty-four guns. The others had armaments of from ten to thirty-six guns, and were regarded as strong war vessels. The French fleet sent to guard the treasure ships consisted of twenty-three ships of the line. Knowing that the treasure was on its way to Cadiz—a treasure worth, according to the best

authorities, over \$100,000,000—the English and Dutch governments fitted out a naval expedition such as never had been heard of up to that time, and sent it to the Spanish coast. The galleons were to enter Cadiz, but while they were on their way they were met by a vessel from Cadiz and warned to take refuge in the bay of Vigo, which opens out on the bay of Biscay. They put in there Sept. 23, 1702, and took up positions in the inner bay, while the French fleet formed line in the outer for their protection. For nearly a month they lay there, and it might reasonably be supposed that in that time they would have unloaded their treasure and sent them to a place of safety, but this it appears they did not do. Cadiz claimed the exclusive privilege, under a grant from the king, to handle all royal treasures from abroad, and the assertion of this right prevented the landing, with the exception of about \$7,000,000, which was landed and taken away on the backs of 2,500 horses. By this time the English and Dutch, with their immense fleet and a shore army of twenty thousand men, were upon them, and on the 21st of October the attack was made. When the soldiers were landed the Spaniards began to burn the galleons to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy. In the meantime the Anglo-Dutch fleet had forced their way into the inner bay, and had won what is known in history as the "Victory of Vigo." They captured nine of the galleons, four of which went to the English and five to the Dutch. Of the latter two were lost through fire. Thus sixteen of the treasure-laden galleons were sunk in Vigo bay, where their grim skeletons probably exist to-day.

Col. Gowen says that he has thoroughly explored the Bay of Vigo, and has located fourteen of these vessels. He is convinced that nothing has been done to disturb the treasure, although numerous attempts have been made, and that countless millions of specie lie at the bottom of the bay awaiting the coming of their liberator. The raising of these wrecks, he thinks, will not be half so difficult a work as that he accomplished in Sevastopol, and the expenses will be materially lighter. According to Stanhope, then the English ambassador at Cadiz, the galleons contained 30,000,000 pieces of eight, beside almost an equal amount of merchandise and private ventures in American gold. In 1825 Dixon, an enterprising Englishman, tried to raise the treasure by means of the diving-bell but failed. In 1856 another Englishman located two of the galleons, but ran out of funds, and ceased his explorations. In 1869 this gentleman applied to Col. Gowen to aid him in recovering the treasure, and the latter made the examination heretofore referred to. Subsequently an English company was formed and the necessary capital subscribed. But when it was found that there was trouble about the concession from the Spanish government the money was returned to the subscribers.

Col. Gowen, it is believed, has now smoothed over the question of concession, and is resolved to undertake the rescue of the long sunken treasure. If pluck, persistency and readiness in expedients will do it, he is the man to succeed. But there are other treasure seekers who say the Vigo hoard is exhausted half a century ago. Col. Gowen is confident, however, that the treasure is still there, and is ready to embark in the effort to obtain it.

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Some thirty years ago there lived in Montgomery, Ala., a young man who was terribly afflicted with Scrofula. After being treated for a long time by the medical profession of this town with no benefit, he commenced taking S. S. S. After persistently taking it two months he was cured. Being acquainted with him for 20 years thereafter, I can testify that the disease never returned. J. W. BISHOP, J. P., Hot Springs, Ark.

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