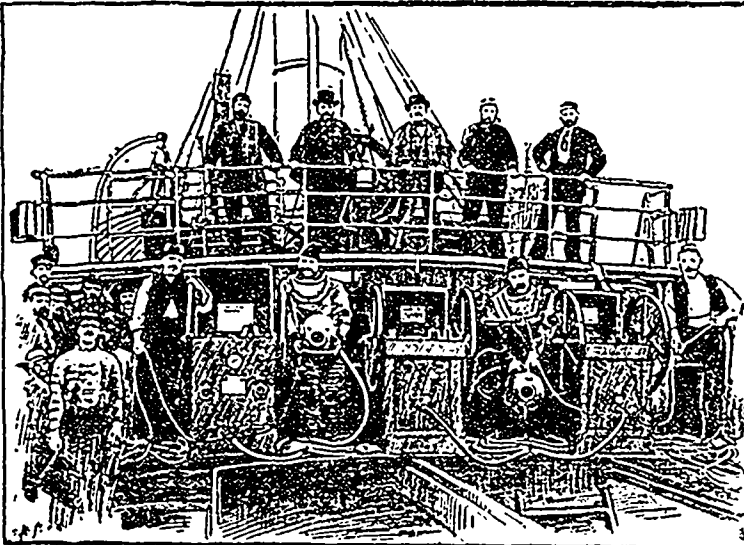


HOW SUNKEN TREASURE WAS RECOVERED.

A STRANGE TRUE STORY OF TO-DAY.

In February, 1884, the Spanish mail steamer, the *Alphonso XII.*, belonging to the Lopez Line, bound from Cadiz to Havanna, sank off Point Gando, Grand Canary, in 25½ fathoms of water, and about a mile from off the shore. She had on board £100,000 worth of Spanish dollars—these being the only five-dollar pieces bearing the year 1884, which were specially coined for the trip. The insurance was effected on the specie at



Lloyd's, and was paid over to the insurers after the vessel foundered. More than a year had elapsed before the underwriters organized a salvage expedition, and in May, 1885, Captain L. T. Stevens, a Lloyd's surveyor of great experience in salvage operations, was intrusted with the expedition, taking with him three well known divers. Special diving apparatus had to be constructed for the work, and in the above month Captain Stevens and his men left Liverpool in the steamship *Viger* for Las Palmas, and arrived at their destination on the 25th of May.

On the morning of the 29th, Captain Stevens proceeded in the steam-launch *Alianza* in search of the wreck, a strong trade wind from the N. E., with a chopping sea, blowing at the time. On arriving at her supposed position he steamed about it, sounding at intervals, endeavouring to strike the wreck, but failed to do so. Captain Stevens then employed a boat's crew of fishermen to assist him in finding her, and after some little time the fishermen gave a signal, and on steaming up he found that they had swept the fore topgallant mast, and on looking down through the water he distinctly saw the shadow of the mast and the fore topgallant sail loose and floating in the water at a depth of six fathoms. He then had the topgallant mast buoyed, and as soon as the weather moderated he intended laying down moorings so as to place the schooner in such a position that the diving was to be done from directly over the wreck.

The money was in the mail room, almost at the bottom of the vessel, and to obtain access to that part of the ship it was found necessary to blow up the decks. The dangers and difficulties which were experienced in these operations were of the most extraordinary nature. Not only bravery but great patience and perseverance had to be exercised, as testified by the fact that Captain Stevens and his plucky divers were about nine months on the island before they had completed their task. The

wreck lay on a ridge of rocks, and one of the fears entertained before the explosion was effected was that the force might precipitate the vessel to almost fathomless depths. But fortunately, through Captain Stevens's great experience in the use of explosives, the fear was not realized. When the explosion took place, one of the masts shot right out of the water, and thousands of dead fish came to the surface. Another difficulty, and probably the greatest the divers had to encounter, was the extreme pressure of the water at so great a depth, but the gallant fellows were most enthusiastic at their work, and, although their commander had been advised to abandon all hope of recovering the treasure, he was sanguine of success directly fine weather set in. His hopes were soon to be realized, for on November 17, after waiting anxiously and patiently, he had the pleasure of wiring to London as follows: "Lambert has got both scuttles open, and succeeded in sending up first box of gold." This was glorious news to all concerned, and especially to Capt. Stevens, who had charge of the tedious undertaking.

The saving of the remaining boxes of gold was now merely a question of opportunity. Dip after dip was made by the divers with varying success, and by the 12th of December they had recovered between them six boxes, the lion share being obtained by Mr. Lambert, thus leaving a balance of four boxes to be raised. In a very short time, considering the unfavourable weather, they succeeded in sending up three more boxes, making in all nine boxes, or £90,000 out of the £100,000. Unfortunately the last box could not be found,

so Captain Stevens and his plucky divers had to come away without it. No praise is too great for the manner in which the divers worked under such an able commander.

The treasure chest and the golden dollars were exhibited at the Naval Exhibition in London, and were the centre of universal admiration and wonder.

