

The Apotheosis of Captain Kidd

DIFFERENT STORY OF THE FAMOUS PIRATE.

There is no more fascinating theme than the search for buried treasure. Its foundation is laid in the experiences of men from time to time that the more energetic of them began to heap up wealth which might be concealed from avaricious neighbors who envied them in their prosperity.

The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is childhood's rendition of a universal myth. The Arabian Nights are indolent of hidden treasure. The Golden Fleece probably is an allegory of treasure trove done with Greek artistry. The folklores of India and China are replete with legends of concealed wealth, colored by the fantastical imagery of Eastern civilization. The gold and jade buried in the tombs of Chinese emperors has long furnished plots for fiction. Incidentally, it is said, for finance of the Chinese republic.

One might go on for hours reciting the legends of semi-authentic and authentic cases of buried treasure for which men have been led to arduous searches sometimes successful, but more often unavailing and tragic. In fact, tragedy nearly always attends along in the wake of buried treasure hunters. But the subject to be dealt with particularly here is the case of Capt. William Kidd.

There will be presented a new story, backed by very strong evidence of the fate of the treasure, in gold and rare eastern stuffs which were hidden from the Indians.

It is now known that Kidd was made agent by Lord Bellomont, royal governor of New York and Massachusetts, and certain officials of the British ministry to save themselves in a political crisis, and that the trial which resulted in his death by hanging in 1701, was a travesty of justice.

It is not generally known, however, that one of the documents which were used to refute the charge of piracy was discovered quite recently in the British public record office, where it had remained in obscurity for more than two hundred years. In the course of his trial Kidd referred to them frequently, begging for time in which to produce them. He said to the court:

"I have some papers, but my Lord Bellomont keeps them from me, so that I cannot bring them before the court."

Papers "Whitewashed" Kidd. The papers were afterward smuggled into the public record office and discovered until two centuries later. The discovery, coupled with a review of the proceedings of the trial as recorded in the records of this state trials, in which the probability of the malignancy, the determination of his judges to convict, all are exposed, prove beyond question that Captain Kidd was not a pirate and would shatter a standard upon a pirate's reputation. But no amount of explanation can ever remove the stain of piracy from his name, and posterity. In the history of piracy he will always appear as a worthy swashbuckling buccaneer, and the old Kidd ballad, "As I sail'd," will ever remain part of the literature of piracy.

Captain Kidd's buried treasure has been located by legend and sought in every Atlantic seaboard state from Maine to Maine, and on Oak Island, Nova Scotia. Popular belief centres on Gardiner's Island, east of Long Island, and the adjacent Westchester county, New York, but of late years the spot occupied by Greenbough's statue of Washington near the capital in Washington has found admirers.

The Washington site argument is based upon the comparatively recently discovered purported narrative of a voyage to America in 1699 by Louis Greenvill, Duc De Pallisot. Its authenticity has not been established. For his services in Louis XIV's campaign the Duc De Pallisot, he was given a grant of land in Canada. In March, 1704, he sailed from Brest in the brigantine St. Nazaire, bound for Quebec. On the 24th of the coast of southernly France the brigantine was boarded by pirates and the vessel was looted, the pirates were recalled by a signal gun from their ship and hurriedly set off in small cutters, taking De Pallisot and the other passengers as prisoners. The ship, which proved to be the merchant, William Kidd, was taken.

"As we climbed over her side," says Pallisot, "we were met by Kidd, a tall, nervous man, in red coat and lace, in his finery a sharp contrast to the motley crowd of him, composed of upward of a hundred and reckless men of all ages, both male and female." He found De Pallisot with marked respect, and him alone of all the passengers of the St. Nazaire to share his cabin.

Private Against His Will. During an ensuing calm the St. Nazaire was looted and burned. De Pallisot says: "I found him by the abundance and irritability, like a man deep in perplexity, and as he said more than he talked, I was more than before I learned his history and fathomed his trouble. I was amazed and grieved at the strangeness of the man's dilemma. For here was one who had become a pirate against his inclination. To make matters worse, his career had been highly successful, so that the world echoed with his exploits." Kidd turned a pirate after he had been forced by Bellomont to conduct a privateering campaign against French commerce.

In the meantime Kidd's backers in England and New York, fearing to be come involved in his disgrace, had induced the government to issue warrants against him. De Pallisot wrote:

"Now, with a public order for his arrest staring him in the face, he was of two minds—whether to give himself up and endeavor to prove his innocence or to continue his ignoble but profitable venture as a buccaneer. Such advice as I felt at liberty to give was strongly on the side of law and decency, and I believe that it was the weight of my counsel that led him to his final determination to surrender himself to Lord Bellomont and demand an inquiry into his conduct and motives."

Captain Kidd sailed direct for America, stopping first at Hispaniola, the Spanish half of the island of Santo Domingo. On the way he made a rough inventory, according to De

Pallisot, who had grown to be quite chummy with him, of the loot acquired since leaving Madagascar. De Pallisot reproduces the inventory, which included damasks and silks of Indian quilts of gold and "shawls," carpets, tapestries and Persian mats, ambergris, civet and aloes, slaves, frankincense and cinnamon, tea, ivory, chamol, hides, spirits and wines. This he designated as "Lot No. 1," to be left aboard the Quedah Merchant in Hispaniola, Santo Domingo, the value being roughly estimated at \$400,000.

In Lot No. 2 were diamonds, pearls and other jewels, in number more than nine hundred; watches, rings and brooches, carved and embossed ornaments, unset bracelets and buckles, gold ingots and current gold, of a total estimated value of 1½ million dollars. This lot was to be taken to New York in the San Antonio, a sloop he had captured at St. Kitts. The government never succeeded in tracing more than \$75,000 of Kidd's treasure. Bellomont said: "If I may believe the report of men lately come from Madagascar, the Quedah Merchant has taken above 2 million pounds sterling," nearly 10 million dollars.

San Antonio sailed with a crew of forty men, "picked for their manners to be a show before Bellomont." The Quedah Merchant remained hidden in one of the many bays of the Dry Tortugas. It was afterward looted and burned by the men. Off the coast of the Carolinas a severe storm was encountered, the mainmast was lost and the sloop put into what the pilot believed to be the Delaware River, but which was in fact the Potomac. A new mast was put in and then Kidd decided to bury the loot on the neighboring shore, "having long since reconsidered his determination to turn it over to Lord Bellomont."

De Pallisot narrates, "we moved into the eastern branch of the river and spent the next four days in putting the treasure under ground. Pulling and hauling the chests through the thick brush was exhausting work, and one man died from the heat and the strain." His body was placed in the pit, and the San Antonio departed for New York, Kidd having previously dealt out two hundred pieces of gold to each of the crew. The latitude and longitude of the hiding place was carefully taken and verified by the pilot on every day of their stay and, as recorded by De Pallisot, mark the spot now occupied by the Greenbough statue.

The incident of the interment of the dead sailor received singular verification in 1842. The workmen engaged in excavation for the base of the statue of Washington came upon a human skeleton at a depth of six feet. The conclusion that it was the skeleton of an Indian was readily accepted and no further inquiry made.

The seizure of the St. Nazaire, a ship belonging to a nation then at war with Great Britain, was a strictly legal proceeding. Each nation charged the privateers of the others with being pirates. A privateer was a man operating under letters patent from some competent authority, which authorized him to prey upon the commerce of an enemy nation.

Captain Kidd was a native of Scotland and the son of a minister. He became a resident of New York City prior to 1689. He was a sailing master out of New York, owned his own vessel, prospered in trade, dabbled in local politics and was recognized by merchants and people of all classes as an eminently respectable citizen. His habits and attire were those of a high class gentleman. His house was luxuriously furnished, the parlor floor being covered with the first Turkish carpet seen in New York. As his wife he chose Sarah Oort, born Bradley, a wealthy and charming widow. They were married May 16, 1691, and two daughters were born to them.



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