

was patient only as long as it took for him to secure a leave of absence. Then he set out from England with a party of gentlemen adventurers in the *Lytton*. This was in 1903.

Hervey de Montmorency, of this expedition, has described their fruitless search for treasure. After ten days of useless effort "Captain Shrapnel at last called a council of war and declared his opinion that the search was hopeless. Landslides, previous excavations and the torrential rains of this tropical region had so entirely altered the island that clowns were of little avail".

The party visited Gessler, who "at once waded out in the surf to greet the visitors—a tall, bronzed man, with a long, gray beard reaching below his waist, and deep-set eyes which gazed with obvious suspicion.

"Reassured by Captain Shrapnel's party that he had nothing to fear from them, he invited them to his house and clearing and told them of his long and lonely hunt for the pirates' treasure. When he first went to live on Cocos he found many traces of the freebooters. There were traces of their old camps, with thirty-two stone steps leading to a cave, old fireplaces, rusty pots and arms and empty bottles to mark the scene of their carousing. He had found only one gold coin, a doubloon bearing the date 1788".

For more than twenty-five years Gessler stood off invaders of his rights as sole concessionary. In 1901 a stock company was formed in Vancouver to outfit for Cocos Island, and was deterred from its search only through Gessler's energetic representations to Costa Rica. After the departure of Captain Shrapnel and the *Lytton's* party in 1903, another English expedition, headed by Claude Robert Guinness, arrived at Cocos with permission from Costa Rica to explore the island for two years.

The intrepid Gessler sailed in a small boat for the mainland—300 miles distant—to protest. He had the good fortune to encounter Lord Fitzwilliam, a wealthy British naval officer, then in a Costa Rican port en route in his own steam yacht for Cocos Island, accompanied by Admiral Palliser, British navy, retired, and equipped with all the best and most improved machinery for digging up gold moldores and pieces of eight. Lord Fitzwilliam heard his wrongs and took up his cause with official Costa Rica.

With this impressive coadjutor Gessler had no difficulty in getting a renewal of his

documentary rights to the overlordship of Cocos, and sailed back to his principality as his lordship's guest.

"Besides the treasure buried by Captain Thompson," Gessler told Lord Fitzwilliam, "there was vast wealth left on Cocos by Benito Bonito himself.... On Cocos he buried 300,000 pounds' weight of silver and silver dollars in a sandstone cave on the side of the mountain. Then he laid kegs of powder on top of the cave and blew away the face of the cliff. In another excavation he placed gold bricks, 733 of them, four by three inches thick, and 273 gold-hilted swords inlaid with jewels".

The Fitzwilliam expedition got to work with zeal. But they were no sooner under way than a third English expedition arrived. Unluckily, this last group wanted to dynamite exactly the same place that Lord Fitzwilliam was dynamiting. Neither would yield, and with the landscape being blown around in chunks everybody's clews got disarranged, a furious quarrel arose and finally a pitched battle and bloodshed ensued.

From 1911 to 1913 no less than four expeditions tunnelled and blasted on Cocos Island and gave it up. One of them was organized by two adventurous Englishwomen, another by an old sea captain, who spent the savings of a lifetime in the search. Equally fruitless was the expedition of Lieutenant F. W. Kealy, which set out from England only three years ago.

But August Gessler stuck. Year by year, while stock companies have been floted and individual expeditions organized to recover the treasure of Cocos Islands, Gessler has pursued his steady search as untiringly as old prospectors plod through the hills with gold always over the next ridge. He has never found the loot, but he is sure that it is there.

So is Mr. George Williams, late of the British navy, head of the latest expedition.

The search for Cocos Island's treasure seems to be, after all, a traditional lure for the retired list of the British navy. The mantle of Lord Fitzwilliam, Admiral Palliser and Captain Shrapnel falls appropriately upon a former lieutenant of the senior service.

From President Chiari of Panama Mr. Williams holds a special concession for treasure hunting in that republic. There two years ago he organized a search for the treasure said to be buried beneath the ruins of the