

ENORMOUS AMERICAN TREASURE IS MYTH

Legends of Hidden Fortunes Spread Among People.

EXCITEMENT RUNS HIGH

Gigantic Hoax Perpetrated Upon Gullible Public by Schemer Leads to Big Fiasco.

MONTEREY, Mex., Feb. 15.—(Special.)—Many millions of dollars in gold and silver money and bullion, church jewels and precious ornaments, were buried in Mexico during the long revolutionary period. Stories already are being told of the search for stores of this hidden wealth in out-of-the-way places.

It is expected that many strange legends will grow out of the hiding away of the treasure, and that many falling into the hands of revolutionists and bandits, and that these stories will be added to the many of a similar kind that have long been current in Mexico.

Of the many legends of buried treasure in Mexico none is more remarkable than that of the treasure of the late Don Juan de Oñate, which is said to be hidden in the mountains of the state of Chihuahua.

Pelletier had resided in the town of Orizaba for many years and was well known in that locality. Up to the time the treasure trove inspiration struck him he had lived a quiet and law-abiding life of a simple citizen.

How long he had had his startling plan in mind is not known. But when he decided to let the public know of the vast treasure which, according to his announcement, was buried in a certain spot on Mount Orizaba, he conducted the campaign with a thoroughness and foresight which bespoke a magnanimity not hitherto suspected by the people of his community.

He proclaimed far and wide that he had come into possession of plans, documents and papers which located, without doubt, the place where a vast treasure in silver, gold and precious gems had been hidden by robbers who had taken it from one of the convoys which, in the Spanish days, made their way from the coast to the capital. This treasure, he asserted, was hidden on Mount Orizaba, in the barranca of Tezcuicpac.

Story is Believed Hurdly. So earnest was the man in his assertions and so upright and honorable had his past life been, that the story was believed readily. It spread from one end of the country to the other. Pelletier soon found himself famous.

He then announced that he would organize a joint stock company. The immediate and enthusiastic response to his appeal for subscribers showed the intense interest that had been aroused in the reported treasure. He had no difficulty in floating the issue; in fact he could have sold many more. People in the city, rich and poor, conservative business men and adventurers, vied with each other for the opportunity to share the supposed great wealth.

After the shares had been disposed of an expedition was organized to go in search of the treasure. Five hundred workmen, in the Spanish days, had excavated the site. To protect the laborers and to maintain order the curules of that district were sent to the scene of the proposed excavations.

Message Tells of Discovery. Expectation and enthusiasm ran high among the stockholders and others, but the excitement of the people knew no bounds. One night some time after the fortunate expedition set out for the barranca, an Indian runner dashed breathless into town with a message which read:

"Treasure discovered. Workmen have mutilated and turned upon their faces the treasure. Send help at once."

News of the reported discovery of the treasure and the massacre soon spread to the neighboring towns and from thence it was rapidly disseminated to the capital, and to the villages throughout the state of Mexico, causing consternation among almost the entire citizenship of the country.

Upon receiving the urgent message delivered by the Indian, the commander of the garrison at Orizaba hurriedly assembled his troops for immediate and rapid departure to the scene of the reported tragedy, a distance of about 12 miles. There was much excitement and many conjectures among the soldiers on this extraordinary journey, as well as a natural desire to obtain a share of the booty themselves. For the most part the road was up the side of a great mountain peak, and the men were almost exhausted by the time they reached their destination.

Reported Tragedy Proves Fake. On hearing the place, their fears as to the fate of the men who had been reported murdered apparently were confirmed. No sound was heard, no warning of the presence of a sentry on duty, and no movement of any kind observed. Daylight was just beginning to dawn when the soldiers approached the barranca, expecting to find the bodies of the slain men. But to their surprise there was no indication that a struggle had taken place. It was then thought that the mutinous peons had buried the bodies of their victims to hide their crime. This theory was dispelled, however, on further search, when the relief party found every one asleep and no one injured.

Meanwhile the people of Orizaba awaited anxiously the return of a messenger bringing news of the extent of the treasure found and the number of men who had fallen victims to the cupidities of the peons. The wildest excitement prevailed. Between hope of the amount of wealth they were about to realize from their investment and fear that the peon laborers had escaped with it, all the investors were not a little worried.

When the soldiers returned and

reported that the story of the mutiny and massacre was a hoax, and that no trace of any treasure had been found, great relief was felt as to the safety of the men and disappointment over the fact that the vast store of wealth was not yet within their grasp. No one doubted, however, the existence of the treasure and that it would be ultimately located.

Treasure Never Recovered. Excavations went on steadily, the workmen making an immense hole in the side of the mountain. Pelletier had said that his chart indicated that a huge hole had been carved upon the face of a rock, pointing with outstretched index finger in the exact measurements and distance from the budget bureau estimates that the rock by the robbers so that they could without difficulty find their treasure again.

The measurements had been taken and on the spot were found a pile of loose stones as though they had been thrown there to mark the place. The reported treasure was never recovered, though excavations continued to be made from time to time for many years.

ECONOMY IS PROMISED SECRETARY WEEKS ASKS FOR LUMP APPROPRIATION. Ruthless Slacking of Allowances Might Hamper Administration, Says Secretary.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 20.—Assurance that the war department, if granted lump sum appropriations, would make a record for economy during the coming fiscal year was given today by Secretary Weeks to the house sub-committee that is framing the army appropriation bill.

Discussing before the sub-committee in executive session the financial needs of the army as represented by the budget estimates submitted to congress, the war secretary was understood to have expressed the belief that the expenditures of certain bureaus could be decreased considerably.

Ruthless slashing by congress for various activities with stipulations attaching in some cases to the use of specified purposes, the secretary was said to have told the committee, might prove so restrictive as to hamper economical administration of the army.

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