

The Fate of Last Island.

Destruction of Galveston Recalls a Former Tragedy by a Tidal Wave in the Gulf of Mexico.

The terrible cyclone that destroyed Galveston Island is not the first calamity of the kind that has occurred in the Mexican Gulf. It vividly recalls an incident that will ever live in memory. Over forty years ago there was a similar calamity in the destruction of Last Island, off the Louisiana coast, by a cyclone, Sept. 12, 1856.

Last Island was a long, low streak of green, bound around the edge with a line of intensely white sand. Seen in those days from the Louisiana mainland (fifteen miles away, the lower end of the Parish of Lafourche,) a part of the Parish of St. Mary's (the garden of Louisiana) it seemed but a slender bit of green floating upon the bosom of the summer sea. As you drew nearer the land displayed its charms. The island proper was about seven miles wide by about twenty-five long. The soil was very rich and highly cultivated. Propinquity brought out as in a delicate photograph all its lines of radiant beauty. Of forest so deep and dense in the far South, there was none. But a few enormous live oak trees had grown upon the island, and in the weird light of the semi-tropic moon covered from crown to lowest bough with a long, gray moss of the latitude, they seem like great giants wrapped in their funeral robes, waving their arms aloft as they fled from a coming dies iræ. Beyond these there were no forest trees, as I have said. The island was but one long sand spit (only a few feet above the highest tide level of the sea,) covered with ever-living green. But it was a very Eden of flowers. The fallen leaves of the live-oak for centuries had created in their decay a bed of rich alluvium, which artificial means had greatly increased. The ever-warm air from the further south seas had given to the shrub growth an extraordinary richness of verdure. The orange and lemon trees, the olive, the oleander (which in Louisiana is a tree thirty feet high), all of the tribe of japonicas, and the scented summer flower, jessamine yellow and cape, and hundreds of others unknown here, made the island corsuant with brilliant colored blooms. It seemed that all that was rich and lovely and beautiful in the vegetation of the semi-tropics here found its most congenial home.

In the evening, when the sun went down and the warm south wind drew in from the sea, the air would be heavy with sweet, but unfamiliar flower odors. You would be enveloped in a very caress of perfume, direct from the heart of the great white Persian jessamine. Ah, the dreary, happy life of that wonderful isle in the days of long ago! True it was a watering place, with a most splendid surf bathing on the side next the open sea. But it had none of the garrishness of seacoast places of later days. It could never have been like Long Branch or Cape May. To gamblers and games of the half-world Last Island was as difficult as Paradise. It was impossible to pass the argus eyes of the doyen who watched the gangway of the boat as the passengers came on board for the enchanted isle, as for Adam to return to Eden when it was guarded by the angel with the flaming sword. The men who gathered there were not strangers to each other, for in Louisiana then everybody who was anybody knew of his social equal, if he was not a personal acquaintance, no matter in what region he lived. So here was a spot not very much known to the outer world, where could gather, when summer days became long and the dog star raged, the great cotton-planting magnates of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, or the rich, courtly Creole sugar growers from the Bayou Lafourche country or the Cote d'Or on the Mississippi River, and there congeners, the American sugar planters from the Felicianas, and wealthy, aristocratic Rapides.

Once a year the very cream of the countryside gentry from the States I have named, with a sprinkling of wealthy 'city men,' merchants and factors from New Orleans, a few bankers, popular clergymen from the rich city parishes—who enjoyed good living and believed St. Paul was right when he exhorted Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake—all these people, with their wives and daughters, would congregate at Last Island and eat of the divinest combinations of the French cuisine, produced by bleus, drink—sparingly generally—of the good red wines of France—for your old-time planter, especially if he was of Creole blood, never abused 'God's good things'—take daily plunges into the warm surf, and thus de-

coiously enjoy a month of dolce far niente. Never were men more courtly. Never were women lovelier. It was the very paradise of gentle, graceful, courteous attention to beautiful women. Here Cupid was enshrined, for who could resist the witchery of the perfumed summer night or the dark-eyed Creole women? Ah, how often was that sweet old story told there—that old story, but ever new—which Adam first whispered amid the roses that bloomed supernal in Eden! And sometimes, but not often, the scene varied. Men were younger then, and the blood of youth ever runs hot. A quick word on the promenade, a jealous look at the ball and early next morning on the sands there would be seen the flash and gleam of the long, slender tri-colored duelling sword on the broad, hard, white beach or a pair of duelling pistols—a part of every gentleman's personal belongings—would be taken from their mabogany case. A few passes with the steel, and a man would lie prone as his blood reddened the sand, run through the body, or the sharp crack of the duelling pistol and a limp, white faced body, forever still, would be silently carried back to the hotel. But this was not often. It was the gentle, kindly, harmless, courteous life of the master of the monks of Thelema, whose sole injunction was Fay qui youldras.

The season of 1856 at Last Island was one of the most charming ever known since the famous watering place has been established. Never did brave men and charming women congregate at this charming rendezvous in greater numbers or in a fuller, finer spirit of happiness and hopeful expectation. The season was at its height. Not only was the hotel proper filled, but the dozen or so of cottages—generally known as 'the bachelors' quarters'—were all occupied by as high bred, as gallant and gay a company of gentlemen as the entire South could show. It was agreed that a greater number of representative Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi men and women had never been gathered together at any Southern watering place before. The season had been fortunate in other respects. Thus far none of those morning rendezvous upon the sands, which have been mentioned before had occurred. The cool, white beach had not known the flash of the colichemarde or the crack of the deadly duelling pistol that season. The Southern women particularly hated these things, but what could they do? Thus far they had escaped any of these horrors, and, for that, gentle hearts full of kindly happiness and good will to all the world, thank God.

The morning of Sept. 10, 1856, was one of almost unearthly loveliness. The sea was sometimes as smooth as translucent glass, now as green as an emerald, then sapphire-hued. Its surface was covered with a faint, misty haze. Its loveliness was supernal. The fishing boats in sight seemed like great white sea birds trailing their wings as they basked in the morning sunbeams. They were soitten in the semi-mist delicately vaporized to an ethereal beauty. Toward the mainland the forest visible seemed gray and veiled in diaphanous nebulous vapor. But it was early then, and the sun had scarcely had time to drive away the ghostly gray fog (blended with that of the sea) from the great Lafourche marshes lying along the nearest shore. As the sun rose higher the sea mist vanished. But such a day as it was! The thermometric measurement of September in Louisiana is not greatly different in its altitude of heat from that of New York or Washington. This day, however, there was such a downpour of solar warmth that the island was almost burning. Gentle puffs of wind blew and rippled the sea water and turned it into opalescent green. But the cooling sea breezes, reviving and refreshing all living things, did not come. The day was uncomfortable. Men wandered about listlessly. Politics—it was the great Know Nothing year, yet talked of in Louisiana political annals—even ceased to charm. In the air there was a stillness as though Nature was watching and waiting in silence baleful, mysterious, ominous. The sunset that evening affrighted the timid souls. It went down in the west, and the sky red as vermell, an angry sun, and left the Occident blazing across the waves as though a world was in flames. All that night the Dago fishermen (a curious, superstitious class, half Spanish Italian and half Creole taking to the waves like sea gulls) heard out at sea strange sounds, moans as through some supernatural being was in

agony. The morning of the 11th was like that of the previous day. Toward night there came up a terrible storm. The thunder was as unlike that of the northern dash of storm as a fire cracker is to the roar and crack of a 6 inch gun. The dweller on the mainland and the Teche and Lafourche planters had never before seen such lightning. It flashed from the zenith to the eastern and western horizon in great broad green, purple and flamed colored bands of electric blaze a degree in width. And after each awful crash, that almost rent the ear drums, there would be a distinctly sulphurous tinge perceptible in the air. Toward the morning of the 12th the thunder and lightning ceased, but the rain continued, and the wind grew stronger from the southwest. The sail boats of the frightened fishermen could be seen in the early morning light flying before the wind for secure landings in the safe streams and waters of cheniere caminada.

There was to be at the principal hotel that evening the grand ball of the season for it was to be the last. The band of the French opera house was there from New Orleans, then unequalled for its music in America. There were no wind instrument except the cornet. There were flutes and similar sweet sound producers, the others were strings. The ball room was distant from the main hotel perhaps twenty yards and was reached by a covered way, elevated to the level of both buildings. It was built very near the sea and set upon brick pillars six feet above the surface of the earth. The hotel was constructed in the same fashion so that the breezes could blow under both edifices and produce better ventilation. Broad, wide piazzas surrounded the ball room on three sides, upon which doors opened so that after each dance one might take a turn in promenading on the gallery and enjoy the coolness of the fresh night breezes from the sea. The piazzas were about 100 feet long by 80 wide. Around the ball room were two rows of chairs, and the usual dressing rooms were in the rear. The musicians occupied a high dias that extended across the end of the ball room. The buildings were lighted with gas. So much in the way of description. Towards noon of the 12th the sun shone out for an hour, but it was a dull, orange-hued orb, surrounded by a yellow misty haze that changed constantly. As night came on the sky was covered with a cloud of the deepest blackness. There was a renewal of the vivid sheet lightning, but no thunder. The sea was in such agitation as the oldest present had never before seen. Great, brilliant lights burst from the waves as they were rolled in by the tremendous southwest wind. Deep phosphorescent fires, incandescent in serpentine forms, were seen rising from the waves like shadowy monsters. And most terrible of all, there was distinctly audible at intervals in the blackness and gloom an unearthly moan from the depths of the sea. The women became seriously frightened, and the men realized that nature was in one of her most unusual and most marvellous moods. Still, no one anticipated any real danger. There had been great storms before. This was but the beginning of the equinoctial blow. The ball-room was lighted. There was nothing else to do but go to the dance. Women clothed themselves for the evening's ball, aided by deft handed maids, but with hearts ill at ease. Other thoughts than those of conquests were filling their souls with dread of what might come. But they would go, perhaps the gay dresses the brilliant lights the soft, sweet dance music might drive away the vague fears that oppressed their souls.

At 10 o'clock the dance was at its height. Outside the storm was raging. The intense blackness of darkness was broken by the constant broad flashes of lightning and phosphorescent blaze of the sea. A terrible wind blew, with torrents of slanting rain that was as warm as newly drawn blood. The band was playing one of Gottschalk's sweetest dreamy waltzes (he was a Louisianian, you know.) "Creole Eyes," when a girl screamed. Her white satin bottine had been wetted by water coming up through the floor! Terror then beset all. A rush was made for the hotel, but the covered way was gone. It had been carried off by a tremendous wave of the raging sea! Mothers had left their little children asleep in the other house. How should they get to them? It was utterly impossible, unless one had wings, to pass through the tossing, boiling flood of maddened sea that rolled between. Of the horrors that followed no living tongue could ever tell. But about midnight a strange sea moan that became a roar grew nearer and louder, until it was like 10,000 thundering Niagaras. It was a tidal wave 1,000 miles long, 10 miles wide and 60 feet high! And as it rolled resistless, hotel, ball room, all—all was swallowed

up in the maw of the pitiless sea. Men, women and little ones were parted never again to meet until that final day, 'when the sea shall give up its dead!'

Such a tragedy had never been known before in the nation's history. Nothing was left of the lovely isle but a few broken brick pillars to mark where life and beauty had died so awful a death. For weeks patrol boats along the mainland shore found nothing but dead bodies. In one instance the corpse of a lady in the last putrescent stages was identified by nearly \$50,000 worth of diamonds she had worn that fateful night. Think of the ghastliness of it! The only two survivors were a strong powerful negress, who blindly caught on to a door that was floating by and was carried in to the mainland, and the other was a tiny girl baby, not more than 18 months old. She had been placed upon a billiard table, which floated, and there she was found on the Lafourche shore forty-eight hours after the storm. Nearly every household in southern Louisiana was in mourning, for 460 adults were lost. How helpless we are when Old Nature looses her awful mystic force and turns upon man!

BELGIAN HERO IN THE CONGO.

A Monument to Young De Bruyne, Who Perished Rather Than Desert His Friend

A monument was dedicated on Sunday, Sept. 9, to the memory of a brave young sergeant in the Belgian Army who perished seven years ago on the Lomami River in the upper part of the Congo Basin. It was no common act of heroism to which the people of Belgium thus paid tribute. Contributions had flowed in from all parts of the kingdom for the erection of the memorial. It was reared near the sea in the little coast town of Blankenberghe, West Flanders, the birthplace of Sergeant De Bruyne, who was scarcely known outside his native town until the story of his self-abnegation was told all over the world.

The heroism and the pathos of the act that sealed his fate appealed to all who heard of it, and it is not surprising that a very large assemblage gathered at the little coast town last month to honor the memory of De Bruyne. It will be interesting here to recall the tragedy of Kassongo, when De Bruyne went back to certain death rather than desert his fellow prisoner.

It was during the war which the Arab slave raiders began on the Belgians, which finally resulted in the expulsion of slavers from the Congo Free State. Before the news of the Arab revolt had spread through the Congo country De Bruyne and Lippins, who were in charge of the remote station of Kassongo and were still ignorant of the outbreak of hostilities, were taken prisoners by the Arabs.

After these white men had been in the hands of their enemies for nearly six months it occurred to the Arab leader, Sefu, that he might be able to use De Bruyne to get a lot of the whites into his power. So he sent De Bruyne in charge of a strong escort down to the Lomami River, the opposite shore of which was held by the Belgians and their native allies; then Sefu's subordinates made it known to the whites that their friend De Bruyne, had come to see them and, though he would not be permitted to cross the river, he might talk to them from the opposite bank. The prisoner made his way through the tall grass to the bank and saw scores of his army friends on the opposite shore.

'I'm here,' he shouted, 'because Sefu imagines that he can use me to carry out his purposes. He says he wants to talk with you about peace and he asks you to send some officers with an escort of fifty men down the river one mile where he will let you cross and he will meet you with a similar escort. He told me to tell you that he felt sure that peace could be arranged. Not a man here but myself can understand French and I tell you plainly that you must not do anything of the sort. I know what Sefu is up to and he is only trying to lay a trap for you.'

'We'll take good care not to fall into it,' replied the Englishman, Dr. Hinde, who was in charge of the party on the other shore.

Hinde kept talking to the prisoner while cudgelling his brain for some means of rescuing the young Belgian who was almost within stone's throw. De Bruyne stood at the top of the bank while behind him were two chiefs, gun in hand, who were his immediate guards. Two or three rods further back were a crowd of armed Arabs and natives.

Hinde quietly gave some orders to his men and kept on talking with the prisoner. In a few minutes twenty of the best shots in the white camp had made a detour and approached the river some way down stream. Then they quietly made their way through the tall rushes to a point directly in front of the Arab party.

Orders were given them to cover with their guns as many of the Arabs as possible and two men in plain view were told to

give particular attention to the chiefs and shoot them if they put their guns to their shoulders. Meanwhile De Bruyne had stepped to the edge of the water and began to bathe his feet.

'I suppose you can swim,' shouted the white man to him from the opposite shore.

'Yes,' answered the prisoner.

'Well now, you jump into the water and swim for us. We can save you beyond a doubt. We have the Arabs well covered with our rifles and we'll shoot the first man who raises a gun. Spring into the river.'

The European spectators of this scene say that about a minute of terrible silence followed. There sat the poor fellow who for a half year had been in the hands of his enemies. The white men said they could save him and a few swift and strong strokes would almost certainly land him among his friends. He bent his head and thought it over a little. Then he rose to his feet.

'No boys,' he said, 'I'd like to do it but I can't. They'd kill Lippins in an hour if I went over to you. We've been together in this pickle and I couldn't think that I'd saved myself and he'd got to die for it. Thank you all the same. I'm going back.'

De Bruyne clambered up the bank and disappeared over the ridge with his guards. A few days later the whites moved over the river and the Arabs fled. Reaching a native village, a mile or so away, the heads of eleven Europeans were found impaled upon the palisades that surrounded the town and among them were those of De Bruyne and Lippins. Their mutilated bodies, found lying together, were tenderly wrapped in the flag of the Congo Free State and placed side by side in a common grave; and a humble mausoleum now marks the place where rest the mortal remains of these two noble victims of the African slave trade.

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A Grease-Spot Suit

A man whose wife found much fault with him—probably with justice—on account of his untidiness, went to a tailor to order a suit of clothes.

'What kind of goods do you want?' asked the tailor.

'All wool and exactly of this color,' replied the customer, presenting a sample.

'It is hard to tell just what color this is,' rejoined the other inspecting it. 'Where did you get it?'

'I cut it from my last suit.'

'It doesn't seem to have any figure.'

'No, this is where some grease got on it. I cut out the entire spot. I want something a grease-spot won't show on. See?'

After a lengthy explanation the tailor succeeded in convincing him that there was no cloth of that kind in the market.

If your dealer has ever tried them himself he will certainly recommend Magnetic Dyes for home use.