THE FRANKFORT ROUNDABOUT.

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TEXAS LETTER.

Galveston, Texas, Sept. 16, 1900.
Dear Roundabout:

The Associated Press has been diligent in sending out particulars of the great calamity which befell this city a week ago, but it nor any human agency can ever approach the possibility of giving a statement that would convey more than a glimpse of the horrible realities of the situation. Pen pictures may inspire the imagination to its widest compass and lead it on to revel in fields of limitless privilege, and lend it the brush of fancy to color at its will, and yet not reach beyond very low tide in its task! Believing that many of my dear old friends in Kentucky would be interested in something coming from one they know, who was himself a participant and eye witness and survivor, I am moved to send you a few lines anent the subject.

As intimated in the beginning, it would be useless to attempt description of what human language has neglected or failed to provide for. The oft quoted expression "it beggars description" has its fullest interpretation here, and I shall content myself with simple recital of some of the horrors of the scene.

The people residing in Galveston (old citizens) have all along nursed and believed in the theory that such a result could never come to their doors because of its peculiar geographical position with reference to the Gulf Stream and the vast mainland lying back of it over which the gulf water could spread in case of inundation, thus relieving the island and protecting it from an excess of water. The storms that destroyed other coast towns in the past and only slightly damaged this place were referred to as evidences of security here, inducing a degree of confidence which disarmed fear that like calamity could or would ever be theirs.

Alas! they reasoned without remembering that nature takes strange freaks sometimes, and plays with the calculations of men. This time an entirely new order of things developed. The favorite theory is that two storms were abroad at the same time, and that they met and fought their great battle on this devoted isle. Certainly there was a fierce north wind for 48 hours previous to the final catastrophe—which wind, under all previous records, should have blown the water out of Galveston Bay into the Gulf, but instead it had no effect whatever. Meantime there was tremendous agitation in the gulf—tide flowing inland notwithstanding the northern gale combating it, which always heretofore had made low tide on the beach. This, doubtless, was because of the great West Indian clycone, which had been raging several days and reported coming this way.

As time went on the wind increased to a hurricane, though it did not change its course. It came from the north and the tide came in from the east. It commenced to rain in torrents, which was carried in blinding sheets, and the wind was so fierce that one could hardly stand against it. By this time people began to understand that danger was at hand and increasing every instant. Those in more exposed localities (some of them) commenced to move their families to safer quarters. Some succeeded, but many were drowned in this endeavor.

About 4 p. m. the water commenced to flow into the city from the bay. Driven by the north wind its coming was rapid and frightful. The oldest men began to tremble, for this was a new departure, upsetting all their faith and ominous of direst results. Fear gave place to terror, while the wind shrieked and came with added fierceness at each successive blast. Darkness was now spread over all, and the water, already some ten feet deep in the streets, continued to rise. Houses swept by on the current passing our door. Animals were swimming, men and women shouting for help, but none could be given. Chimneys, church steeples, timbers were falling everywhere, while shingles, slates and seemingly everything else filled the air and dashed against the house. Large heavy glass in bay windows crashed in, and floods of water dashed clear across the rooms thus exposed. Shutters were slashing about furiously, and doors blown open till nailed to the frames. Roofs leaked like sieves and furniture was soaked and ruined.

All this time the storm was increasing. The wind had veered a little to the east, getting a different aim at the house, and as each blast increased in fury the house rocked and trembled more and more. The family and many refugees were in the rear part, some praying but all composed, though expecting the end at any moment. Oh, it was a time of supreme anguish, without one encouraging feature. It being dark we could not see the outside scene, else all hope would have vanished. We could hear the crash of falling houses—the snapping of immense telegraph poles, carrying scores of wires, and the jamming of drift against the house, but could only listen and wait.

The wind now was blowing 110 miles an hour (by the Government instrument), but gradually veering east-south-east. This change stopped the water from the bay, carrying it back whence it came, but the gulf on the other side was still busy destroying all that stood on miles of territory, with everything animate and inanimate in and out of the buildings. I did not see this work as it progressed, but I did see the result and can not tell you a tithe of its awfulness.

About 9 o'clock the moon had risen, so that a little light assisted vision, and then came the unspeakably joyous announcement that the storm was abating—the "WATER WAS FALLING!" Each heart bounded to the music of that God-given assurance of safety—some becoming almost hysterical in the sudden transition from terror to deliverance. Now the water went out even faster than it came, and by 12 o'clock the street was empty.

Sunday morning dawned dull and angry looking on a scene of desolation impossible to describe with justice. Every house damaged more or less; windows, doors, blinds, chimneys, fences — everything wrecked. The great St. Patrick's Church steeple, 230 feet high, just in our front, gone down, and with it the building it had ornamented. All streets blockaded with broken houses, furniture and every conceivable thing to be found in a city. Dead animals of all descriptions packed in the drifts, or lying about everywhere. But the soul-sickening feature was the numberless human forms of all ages, nationalities, sexes and conditions! Not one or two here and there, but thousands of them! All day Sunday people were passing with broken heats, saying "I am all that's left—wife and five children—wife and two children—father, mother, brothers and sisters, all gone—I'm all that's left!" These, perhaps, were exceptions, for in hundreds of cases none were left!

Notwithstanding these dreadful conditions there was a complete absence of excitement. Everybody seemed dazed. Men and women would stand and tell of their utter desolation in tones and manner as calm and self-possessed as though relating an ordinary circumstance. Not a sob nor a tear betokened the grief that gnawed their souls.

Now I come to the grewsome, face-to-face realities of this awful thing. Two days I was along with gangs of men burying and cremating the bodies of the dead. Scores of parties were engaged in the same service, and are yet, and no one can tell when the end will be reached. The dead are everywhere on island and mainland. They are bloated beyond conception, and turned black as ink. Whites and negroes can only be identified by their hair. Decomposition is so far advanced that bodies can be handled only with ropes, hooks and boards. When the ground is dry enough they are buried in shallow trenches, two to twenty or more in a place. Where it is too wet to dig they are drawn to some dryer point, piled up like logs of wood and burned with coal oil and wood from the wreckage. One can not conceive of the appearance of these poor creatures. Some—many—are without a thread of clothing. Some have money and valuables—rings, etc., etc.—but all look alike in death. Identification, except by some trinket, dress or something of the sort, is out of the question. Some 700 were carried out to sea, but that was too slow, and the other process adopted.

Square miles of territory are barren as a floor where one week ago thousands of happy homes were located. Some of the people were fortunate to be saved, but not 25 per cent. escaped on the south or gulf side of the city. About four tiers of blocks are entirely gone from east to west end; the ground is as bare as in the primeval state. Inside this margin every house is damaged. Most of them are moved, turned around, twisted, unroofed, windows and doors broken, or other conditions denoting their acquaintance with the demon. More to the north and business part the scenes are not so terrible, and loss of life much lighter, but not a single house that is not marked. The island, from western city limits on to the end, 30 miles, is stripped of everything; only very few people live to tell stories of their miraculous escapes. Some went out in the gulf on house tops, or something else, for miles, then when the wind changed floated back over the island ten to twenty-five miles across the mainland, which was overflowed to that distance.

No one can make even a tolerably good estimate of the number killed and drowned. Thousands can not be remembered, for they represent every nationality under the sun, and every condition in life. The work of searching the wreckage, which is piled in every street, is developing hundreds of bodies every day. Smoke from funeral pyres is seen in all directions in the city as well as outside. Supplies are abundant for feeding and clothing and nursing, but gaunt poverty stalks abroad, gazing from sad, lustreless eyes, sunk deep in hopeless faces. Every minute you meet some one who has lost all or several of his or her family. Tears are dried in the agony of despair. Sentiment lives deep down in broken hearts, sheltering its tender instincts in the shadow of grief too sacred, too stunning for outward expression. Personally I am blessed beyond degree. All my people, far and near, escaped without loss of life or serious damage to property. During the crucial hours of the storm my heart continually thanked God that my baby girls were safe in the country, far away from the shade of death that hovered and howled so remorselessly about the dear ones around me, and my soul was bouyed almost to resignation that my sainted wife was spared the passage through horrors the living were called upon to endure.

I might extend this indefinitely, for the subject has no boundary, but I've told enough. Excuse the hurried manner of cosntruction and all inacuracies.

L. J. COX.

HOME AGAIN.

Mr. Clarence McDaniel, son of Mr. N. I. McDaniel, of the West Side, who has been a member of the 39th U. S. V. Infantry, under Capt. Noel Gaines, in the Phillipines, returned home on Wednesday morning. He has been very sick, and still looks the worse for wear. He says he has been in several brushes with the insurgents. Generally he had a grand time. Of course, though, part of it was rough and hard.