

The Plunderers

BY C. J. CUTLIFE HYNE.

He got a return message, it is true, but not before noon on the following day. It said: "Take no steps. Am writing," and seemed to hint at a change of plan.

In another place he might have resented the delay. At least eleven days must pass, and probably more, before a letter could reach him, and all the while he would be condemned to inaction and anxiety. But as it was, he read Mr. Theodore Sheff's reply cablegram with a frown which was quite evanescent and felt a mild satisfaction in the receipt. In the afternoon he took out Miss Kildare to fish for tarpon.

By one of those singular chances which occur every century or so a tarpon they did actually catch on that first day of fishing—a thirty-pound monster, with glittering silver scales on him as big as dollars, who gave three hours' frantic battle before he turned his belly to the skies and submitted to traveling beachward in the boat.

"We got him between us," said Miss Kildare. "That's my first, and I've tried for him times out of number."

"My first also, and I've tarpon fished for weeks."

"We seem to bring one another luck."

"It's an undoubted fact, Elsie, we do."

The deduction seemed to give rise to thoughts in each of them, and they let their eyes rove vaguely over the gulf waters for the next minutes without speaking, while the boat rode gently over the windless swells which slid in through the outlying keys. A porpoise surged past them, coughing as he chased a shoal of mullet, and overhead a string of purple and yellow cranes screamed wearily as they flapped home to the Everglades after a day's hard fishing on a growing reef.

"They've all got to make their livings," said Cambel.

"Who?" asked the girl.

"I was thinking of those animals in the water and in the air and by analogy, the prey of the animal world. We all of us prey on something else, down to the ass who eats grass, or else we die."

That's a very sage remark, Pat. Have you been reading Schopenhauer lately, or is your bank account unhealthily low?

Cambel laughed. "Was it pessimistic? I'm not given that way as a general thing. It's so much pleasanter for oneself and everybody else to look at matters from the cheerful point of view. But I was thinking at the time that if I'd been well off and if other things had not happened as they did my life would have been written very differently."

"You mean you might have been her majesty's ambassador to the court of Timbuktu?"

"Or something in that line. Possibly, yes."

"Mabel," said the girl, "is free now."

Cambel nodded dreamily and once more let his gaze roam out across the waters. The boat rode uncaared for over the gentle oily swells, and the sound of the surf crumbling on the distant keys fell on his ears and drew to him a lingering tale of might have been. Mabel was free. The woman who had once promised to be his wife; the woman whose memory had driven him from pillar to post across the world through all those long wild years, because of his abiding love for her, was too great a torment to be borne when he rested for a breathing place in one and had time for thought; the woman who had been by his side, been made to marry another man, and who, after her wedding day nor at any after time, did she ever love. She was free again. Mabel Duvernay now, and Mabel Kildare no longer, but Mabel still, and free.

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE CYCLONE.

A shining-faced negro waiter came up in answer to the bell and brought tumblers of tinkling ice and brandy. Cambel and Miss Kildare drank thirstily and then lay back in their cane chairs panting. The close heat was something terrible. There was not a breath of either sea breeze or land breeze, and every body else to look at whirled on the table behind them did little more than send a blast of sickly warmth. Down the long line of the glasses were the rest of the people in the hotel, the men cursing and moping and the women in closed, heavy eyes fanning themselves languidly. And overhead the shingles of the roof cracked and rustled in the baking air as though they were alive.

Night came and the bell clanked out its summons to dinner, but no one went to. The wooden sides of the hotel, baked through and through by a month of tropical sun, had made the rooms unendurable. So they staid where they were in the hot glare, breaking in and blinking at the white summer lightning which splashed the violet heavens in front of them. In heavy panting beats the night seemed to close down upon them and pen them in, so that it was a labor to breathe.

"I can't stand this," said Miss Kildare at last.

"You've got to," replied Cambel wearily, "unless you choose to go down the beach and sit in the water with your clothes on."

"That would be some relief, although the water is as hot as tea. But I shan't do that. I shall walk along the pier over the sea. One may faint half way and tumble over and get drowned, but anyway that's better than staying here and being cooked slowly."

They got up together and strolled wearily over the loose white sand and then more bravely into grotesque shapes as they went down the pier. Between the lightning flashes the darkness above them was the darkness of a cave, but faint phosphorescent fringes showed out among the piles beneath, and these guided them from walking over the edge over the planks.

"You shouldn't stay down there this weather," Cambel said as they paused down the narrow pathway with fingers strained and feet numb. "You'll lose your color and your beauty, you'll get thin and scrawny like Mrs. Van Liew."

No reply came, and Cambel said nothing more, but walked on, thinking.

They've been here now nine whole days. Pat's the girl said, breaking in once for the second time, when they were half a mile from the shore.

"In for something different. We had better turn back, Elsie."

"In view of this heat, a wetting would be a real luxury, but I think, as you say, there is something else coming besides. Oh, Pat, here it is. Run, or we shall be caught!"

The storm gave but one weird moan, a rustle and a shriek from over the trees topped then was upon them, and a minute it was blowing with a hurricane force which no human being could stand against.

The wind plucked the feet from under them, and they fell to the decks of the pier, gripping with their fingers the gaps between the planks. A storm of sand and leaves and twigs beat against their heads. The crazy trestle-work of the pier buckled and swung beneath their bodies.

"Right-o!" came back the response cheerily enough, and together they began to warp the wreckage toward the beach and into the plank at a time. The girl was strong and accustomed to using her muscles, but skirts are a poor rig to play caterpillar in, and her progress was slow even with Cambel's help. When they had gained a score of yards, she bade him leave her to make the best of his own way. "I shall get along all right," she cried. "Go and tell them I'm coming."

"Naturally I should," he shouted back, with a laugh. "Here, let me link my arms into your fingers. That's right. Now we'll ferry along at twice the pace."

But they did not get much farther. A minute afterward, to the kick of a hard squall, the gray old pier tottered and then crumpled and crunched and the wind was filled with flying boards, and Cambel found himself with one arm clutching the weed clad stump of a pile and the other wrapped round Elsie Kildare.

"Hurt?" he shouted anxiously.

"Not a bit. Sound as a bell. You?"

"All right."

"But where's the water? There should be six feet here, and I can feel none."

"Blow away to sea. We may thank God the wind is not on shore or we have been drowned, as hundreds of other poor wretches are this moment. Ah! That's a shave."

A lightning flash showed them a huge tree plucked from its roots and crushed about like a live mad thing. Then a heavy squared roof beam hit their jagged pile and missed Cambel's arm by a nail's breadth.

"The hotel's going down!" he shouted, "and I'm being full of this stuff in a minute, and I'll try to make the best of it. Crouch down, dear, at the bottom of the post."

"You, too."

"No, there isn't room."

She dragged at his sleeve and pulled him to her side. "Stay by me, here, Pat. You might get swept away, and I could bear that."

"Of course I'll stay by you, dear. I'll never go till you turn me away." He took a grip with his arms, pinning her between his breast and the ragged leg of the pile. "Elsie! I want to tell you something. You know I've always liked you as a friend, but now it has come to more than that. Much more—love, darling. Once my mind was made up, I was ready to go, and I thought I could never care for anyone else as I cared for her, but that was years since, thousands of years, it seems now, and Elsie, I've—I've forgotten her. She is only a name to me and your sister, and I want to get away from this. Do you think you could like me, too, a little more than an ordinary friend?"

She put her lips to his ear. "Do you think we shall come out of it alive, Pat? Tell me honestly."

"Honestly, Pat, it's a poor chance."

Her soft, wet cheeks nestled against him, and strands of her hair intertwined themselves with his. "Pat," she said, "you never knew, but I loved you all along from the first."

Then for the first time during many years Patrick Cambel knew what it was to fear death. Beforetime life had held many torments for him, and if him the great secret he did not know much care. Now it was all different. He listened to live with a fierceness which almost drove him mad.

"You are trembling," the girl said anxiously.

"I know I am. You have made me a rank coward, dear."

She understood him and kissed his mouth, but no other words passed between them.

The cyclone blew on, howling and tearing, and the fender fingers of the wind did mischief beyond all reckoning. Timber which had stood hundreds of years, cedars and cypresses, live oaks and pines, sprawled down among the splintered matchwood. The mangrove thickets were clogged with stones, with grasses, with granular tangles of Spanish moss. Lakes were lashed from their beds and spirited far over the burning waters of the gulf. The land birds were driven like helpless spume flakes far away to sea and choked with the gale before they were flung breathless from its clutches. The palm-trees of the humbler dwellers were vanishing in dust. The frame houses of the better to do burst at all their angles and spread like platforms upon the ground.

And meanwhile the great straggling wooden hotel on Point Sebastian dissolved away like a sand bank in a flooded estuary. First the heat twisted shingles had been stripped off, flying away into the wind like some strange dark fowl sent as avant couriers of more fearsome things to come. Then weatherboards followed, singly and in coveys, then gable ends and eaves and rafters, all floating and pitching in the air as though the wind had the density of a tossing ocean stream. Chairs and wooden bedsteads, clothes blown into grotesque shapes as though the freakish spirits of the storm had donned them, the scantling of the long piazza, and still more boards whirled into the night and vanished forever down the track of the cyclone. And in the thick of this devil's bombardment crouched men and women, and other things, shapeless and horrible, which had been men and women once. The tale of the dead that lay about was a tale that night.

Once there was a slight lull in the blast of the gale, and driven out waters of the shore began to return and swirled knee high about the two who were taking refuge at the foot of the pile.

"Come," said Cambel, taking the girl by the hand, "we must run for it." And he led the way beachward, blundering through piled up pounds of wreckage, while the stinging spindrift whirled around their heads and bit them—

the face like whips. But a flying missile from out of the inky blackness struck him on the curve of the temple before he had gone 20 yards, and the grip of his fingers loosened, and he swayed and fell without a word. The girl threw herself on his body, wailing like a woman in pain, and that she would stay there and die, but a wild howl seized her that he might be only stunned, and she took his body in her arms, and half dragging, half carrying, began to go of his body toward the beach.

Then the cyclone burst out afresh with all the torrent of its fury, and to move or even stand against the wind was a thing impossible. The girl and her burden were flung heavily to the ground, and a mass of driving wreckage slid above them and pressed them down. "Oh, Pat, Pat," she cried. "I did so want to live with you and now we must both die here!"

Three terrible hours more they spent there, the girl expecting violent death to fall on her every second, the man in her arms gradually returning to consciousness. And then, like organ whose wind chamber has emptied itself, the cyclone suddenly dropped its voice. It had arisen in a minute to the full of its strength, and in a minute it lulled to a breathless calm, leaving the air scoured and sweet and the land a tangled desert. The sea alone remembered its lashing activity and fumed in a swell of sullen majesty in its deeper parts and sent its angry waters back in rippling surf on to those shallow western beaches from which it had been so ruthlessly evicted.

It was from the last returning tidal wave that the final danger came, but the two under that pile of wreckage managed to slip from beneath the wood when the waters loosened it and ran in the breaking dawn to the higher ground beyond. The girl was bruised, both of them, and Cambel was bleeding from a jagged cut on the head; but, after all, their hurts were trifling compared with what they might have been. Three thousand people died in that night's work, and the southern seas, and the air was torn with the moan of those who were left, lamenting as they sought their dead.

That day all who could lift a pair of hands had work to do, and the next and the next, but on the fourth day from the time that the fallen had been buried and the quick housed, Cambel managed for the first time to get a word on tete-a-tete with this woman who had said she loved him and had promised to be his wife. He had counted on this over in the southern seas, and after heavy argument had decided not to hold any of his affairs secret from her, this, of course, leaving particular reference to the one affair by which he hoped to make a competence. He had visions of debtors' halls over his head, but he began his confidence artfully.

"Elsie," he said, "I came here to Florida on business."

"Then," replied Miss Kildare, "I'd like to give business a knob of sugar to eat and flowers to wear on his headstall. What color was business?"

"Black, distinctly black, but valuable. In figures slightly more than a quarter of a million in English money ought to come to me for my share out of him, or rather, as it now is, our share, yours and mine, dear."

"Oh, you duck, Pat! You don't mean to say you're a rich man? Wherever did you steal the money from? Speculation?"

"Speculation of sorts, though steel describes it better. It's there, and that's the main thing."

"Oh, for the pocket is better than ten planks to get it there, any day. Pat, we'll have a big steam yacht, and when we get sick of London we'll go and see all the rest of the world. And you of all people to become a successful speculator. And what's your corner in making your corner in? Nothing in clean, I hope, like short ribs of pork?"

"Gold, if that will suit your ladyship."

"Oh, this is delightful! You've been trading on American necessities. Tell me all about it, and I'll see how I can follow. One hears so much about the silver question that one can't help understanding it a little."

So with a pardonable couleur de rose, wherever hinting was available, Cambel told the story of his finding the charnel into the Everglades, his compact with Sheff, the hazardous voyage of the steamship Port Edes and the subsequent disposal of the specie. The girl listened to the tale with close attention and a certain amount of interest. The mutiny and the grewsome encounter between Nutt and his friend failed to call up comment, because in domestic Florida a little dashing homicide is such a very common occurrence. But when Patrick Cambel finished his story and looked to her for approval, he only got a grave and decisive shake of the Auburn head.

"Well, dear," he asked at last, made very anxious at her silence.

"No, Pat, I saw nothing. I can't share in a fortune which has been laid up that way. Heaven knows I'm not squeamish. Hearing what I do out here about trusts and corners and syndicates, and seeing what I can't help seeing of the way the people round make their living and still evade the law and retain respect, my notions of morality are very easy and slack. But—"

"But I have gone too far?"

She bowed her face gravely.

(Continued Next Week.)

Do You Wear a Soup Strainer?

The pretty girl frowned.

"The water had spilled that plate of soup over your head. Would you have scooped the remnants off with your hand and eaten them?"

"No, certainly not," he answered, "and with an air of disgust he looked from the window out at the bathers, the white sand and the sunlit sea."

"Then, for goodness' sake," she cried, "stop sucking them off your mustache. If you would eat soup and slowly and complacently, as if you were doing something laudable, you take your mustache between your lips and suck the soup remnants from off the hair of your head."

"The neighbor laughed—a harsh, bitter laugh."

"Oh, he said, 'I'm just replying some of my nasturtium seeds, that's all.' 'Nasturtium seeds' shouted the first man angrily. 'It looks more like one of my Buff Leghorn hens.' 'Oh, that's all right,' the other retorted. 'The seeds are inside.'"

A Horrible Error.

Governor Hughes, of New York, at a dinner at Delmonico's referred good humoredly to an article wherein he had been misquoted.

"The error," he said, "was purely accidental, but it put me, till it was corrected, in rather a bad position. It made me feel like the young bridegroom of Schenectady. 'This young man was poor but honest. He was suspected of being a fortune hunter, but it was not true. However, he married a rich merchant's daughter, and leased at Schenectady's outskirts a house called the Old Manse.'"

"The wedding was celebrated duly, and the newspapers gave full accounts of it; but one of them, through a horrible typographical error, concluded with the statement: 'The happy couple, after a short tour, will live at the old manse.'"

THE SOCIAL HOUR.

Good Bail.

A resident of Hudson, Wis., was deploring the resignation of Senator Spooner.

"The senate can't afford to lose a mind like that," he said. "I know the man well. He practiced law in this town for fifteen years or thereabouts. He won every case he set his hand to."

"It was no surprise to us Hudsonites to find that John C. Spooner was the finest legal mind in the senate. We knew him long ago, and we know the man case on we used to go in droves to hear him plead."

"I remember to this day a story that he once told in court in a case where he was showing how, with a good motive, one might still do a lot of harm."

"He said that two aged Scotch ministers sat talking one day over their churchwarden pipes."

"'Last Sabbath,' said the younger of the two old men, 'only three folk came to my kirk and since it was an awful day, saw, stormy mornin', I just took them over to read a chapter of the scriptures, and then, to ward off the rheumatics, a guld stit glass of the best whisky.'"

"The other minister smiled.

"'Aweel,' he said, 'ye will have a fine congregation, my brither, the next stormy day.'"

Don't Take Away Their Pins.

"E. H. Harriman," said a New York broker, "talked luminously the other day of the decline in the value of securities. He said we must be careful not to legislate too harshly against the country's vested interests, or the prosperity of these interests, and the country's prosperity would be impaired."

"He illustrated his meaning with a story. 'There was a school teacher,' he said, 'who exclaimed impatiently one afternoon: 'Johnny Jones, what are you fumbling with there?'"

"Johnny hung his head and was silent. But the tell-tale of the class spoke up: 'It's a pin he's got, ma'am.'"

"'Well, take it from him,' said the teacher, 'and bring it here to me.'"

"This was done, and, in a mollified voice, the teacher said: 'Now, Johnny Jones, get up and recite your history lesson.'"

"But Johnny Jones did not obey. He blushed, hung his head and sat still."

"'Johnny,' said the teacher, 'rise, I tell you.'"

"Then the little fellow blurted out distressfully: 'I can't, ma'am. That there pin you took is what holds my trousers up.'"

Moral Nature and the Appendix.

Cling to your appendix with both hands, says the cleric of the day in the Boston Transcript. Rev. Samuel Van Vranken Holmes, who preached at Harvard, has furnished the clerk with documentary evidence regarding the inestimable value of appendices. In Buffalo, where he ministers to a large and influential church, he has been reproved for moving with unpleasantness with the Tories; he chanced that his course of addresses on the modern view of scripture synchronized with the Torrey meetings and drew down upon him the rebuke of that mighty evangelist, whereupon his mails grew heavy with letters of protest. One of a burst of confidence, "I've been thinking over a little remark Alford made last night."

"Oh, perhaps you misunderstood," the friend suggested, encouragingly.

"I hope so," was the reply. "You see, we were talking of things would be, you know, and Alford said: 'And won't it be just too sweet; you will come home all tired out from your hard day's work and hold me on your lap for hours, and read to me, and drive all my cares away, and dry my tears and rub my head, and it will be just like a novel.'"

Misunderstood.

At a meeting of the famous Bill club of Jefferson City—he whose name is not William may not join this club—ex-Congressman Cowherd told a Decoration day story.

"Decoration day," he said, "always makes me think of a peddler who came to my cousin's house in Jackson county when the war was at its height."

"This peddler, a strong, tall young man, was peddling ferns, and my pretty cousin said to me, 'Why, that fellow looks like a young man like you selling ferns at this crisis. Why are you not with the army?'"

"The peddler looked surprised.

"'Why, they don't want ferns in the army, do they, lady?'" he said.

In the Planting Season.

S. F. Hood of the department of agriculture with good prospects of success is trying to beat the Japanese camphor trust by raising camphor groves in Florida.

At a dinner in Huntington that celebrated an unusually fine distillation of camphor leaves, Mr. Hood, the guest of honor, told a seasonable agricultural story that should appeal to all suburbanites.

PETTUS'S IMPOSING DIGNITY.

The Alabama Handled the Senate as a Schoolmaster His School.

Willis J. Abbot in August Munsie's. Senator Pettus was always a champion of the dignity of the senate. When the chamber was in disorder—that is, when conversation among the senators had reached a point that interrupted business—the mere suggestion on the part of the presiding officer that the junior senator from Alabama should be called to the chair was sufficient to bring order. When he handled the senate as a schoolmaster conducts his school.

It is to be said that this regard for legislative dignity is much more characteristic of the southern members than of those from the north and west. The southerners seem to feel that the high tradition of the senate are worth preserving. Looking upon a seat in it as a great honor they strive so to act as to indicate that the honor was merited. I wish I could say the same for all their colleagues from other sections; but they seem, too often, to regard the senate as more or less of a private asset, which can be utilized for personal advantage.

It has been said in recent years of Morgan and Pettus that they almost constituted a third party in the senate. At the same time, they were far from acting as a unit on every issue that came before them. Two old-line democrats as they were, residents of the same town, and friends for sixty years, they were by no means identical in their political opinions. It must be remembered that in the south the antagonism between individual democrats is sometimes as great as that in the north between the democrat and the republican. When Mr. Pettus said of Senator Morgan, "I have been his associate and adversary over sixty years," he said something which would be almost inexplicable to the average northern man, but it is the polite expression of a positive fact. The two senators differed so often that a fit newspaper article not long ago suggested that their one bond of union was a common fondness for chewing tobacco.

But of neither man has it ever been said that he was anything but absolutely honest and high minded. Against neither has it been charged that he represented anything in the senate except the people of his state and the people of the United States. Their strongest political adversary in the senate regarded Morgan and Pettus with sincere respect and warm personal affection—a fitting tribute to statesmen of so admirable a type.

The College Girl's Rescue.

"I believe in a college education for girls," said Admiral Erbin, at a dinner at Jamestown, "but the girl who comes out of college thinking that she knows a great deal has not profited by her four years' course. For, after all, it is but a smattering that a college education gives us."

"Most girls know this. Many do not. The latter sort carry themselves superciliously, use big words, correct ignorant persons' grammar, and fall to make a good marriage. In fact, they create a bad impression everywhere."

"Thus there was a girl, a Vassar girl, who got caught by the incoming tide out on a rock. The tide rose higher and higher, and the girl shrieked and screamed madly for help."

"Help came at last in the shape of a grizzled old shellback in a flat-bottomed boat. The girl, as soon as she saw the shellback, recovered her poise, and said in her most affected manner: 'Ah, I knew some succor would come if I continued calling indefatigably.'"

"The shellback scowled.

"'Wall, miss,' he said, 'if that's how ye express yer gratitude, the sucker'll be durned if he don't row back without ye.'"

Head and Feet.

From the Philadelphia Press.

"Miss Gidday," remarked Mr. Walz, "is a splendid dancer; so light on her feet."

"Think so?" said Mr. Grouch.

"Oh, yes; light in the extreme."

"Huh; unfortunately she's just as light in the other extreme."

Wife.

"Do you know," she said, softly to the young man who sat in the hammock with her, "I dreamt last night that we were engaged."

"Isn't it strange," said the young man, quickly, "how still the lake is today?"

Had been caught on that game once before and was dead wise.

Playing Animal.

The children were playing a game in which each chose to represent some animal, and acted as much like it as they could. One boy kept very quiet, and the teacher said to him: "Why don't you take part in the game, too?"

"Sh-h-h!" answered the boy; "I'm a cat watching a mouse-hole; don't scare the mouse."

When a fellow tells a girl she is matchless it means that he doesn't want her to remain so.

For every man who has his bust in the Hall of Fame there are a million busted outside.

COMMON SENSE

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BIG WINNINGS ON THE DERBY.

Cashing In to the Tune of Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars.

The \$50,000 which John W. Gates is said to have won on Nealon the other day look modest after all compared with some winnings which have been gathered in by betters on the English Derby.

Sir Joseph Hawley on three occasions won from \$50,000 to £60,000, viz.: On Teddington in 1851, Musjid in 1859 and Beadman in 1861. He would have won as much on Blue Gown in 1869 had he not hedged.

The largest sum ever taken by one man on the Derby is said by Baily's Magazine to have gone to Mr. Naylor on Macaroni in 1863, but the amount is not stated. Mr. Chaplin won a larger amount on Hermit in 1867, but did not get half of it.

Mr. Merry was said to have won £100,000 on Thornaby, but the real amount was £70,000.

The half length by which the Irish colt Barbarian was beaten by Daniel O'Rourke in 1852 made a difference of £90,000 to Bookmaker Davies. He lost £70,000 on the Epsom week when West Australian won the Derby.

The largest amount that was ever stood on one horse was by Mr. Jacques and his confederate. This was on Milledew, who was