

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE EFFECT OF A GALE UPON THE COLOR OF THE WATER ABOUT THE REEF—THE FLYING CLOUD SAILS FROM KEY WEST—HER CRUISE BETWEEN THE FLORIDA REEF AND KEYS.



WHEN on the following morning, I came on deck, a norther, which had commenced to blow on the preceding night, was still unabated. It blew steadily: neither "lighter nor heavier," a sailor would say. So it continued for three full days. Almost the first thing that struck me was the change that had taken place in the water. It had become a dirty cream-color. On inquiry, I ascertained that the storms on the Reef always produce this effect.

Of course, the sea is always swashing over every part of the Reef, detaching fragments from the massive corals, shattering the more fragile growths, and grinding both together,

and against the bottom, until they crumble to pieces, and even become reduced to powder. This product of the material of the Reef, and the ceaseless labor of the sea, is called disintegrated coral, and forms the only sand known to the region of the Florida Keys. When a violent wind, like a norther, prevails, this sand along the beaches, and in the shallows, and even in the depths, is stirred up; more is added to it by the constant wearing of the sea, and, after a few hours, the whole of the waters about the Reef become turbid and tinged with the cream-like color described, and remain so until some hours after the storm has subsided.

We lay at Key West for three days, when the norther ceased. After shipping a man to supply the place of the Norwegian, we cast loose from our wharf, and set sail up the Reef. On our larboard hand, lay a stretch of innumerable Keys, often so close together, that we could not distinguish any break in the land, until we came abreast of it, and "opened" the inlets through which other Keys were visible, appearing scattered in the waters, back of the well-defined line that we were coasting. All were low, some of them not being more than two or three feet above the level of the sea, and others were partially overflowed. They

all exhibited, in greater or less denseness of foliage, the uniform, universal mangrove trees.

The wind was so fair that we could lay our course along the Reef, and it was now beautiful weather, as is usually the case after a norther, so that I enjoyed the sail exceedingly. I had become so used to my duties, which in themselves were quite light, that I felt them to be only nominal, having plenty of time at my disposal, and luxuriating in the novel scenes by which I was surrounded. At first, there had been two drawbacks to my happiness. In leaving Key West, I realized more than ever that I was indeed cast upon the world, and dependent upon my own resources, and I was ignorant of what were my father's sentiments towards me. I also yearned for companionship. Strictly speaking, I belonged neither forward nor aft, and felt and acted accordingly. These sources of uneasiness marred, but could not altogether destroy, my pleasure. I once more buoyed myself up with the arguments which I had previously used to conquer my dejection, and, at last, came to my former sage conclusion, that if misfortune were destined to come, I ought not to meet it half way, and then if it were not, (and with a father so good and kind, why should I suppose it probable?) I should find that I had been giving my-

self gratuitous pain. As for want of companionship, I reasoned with myself that it was a small matter, and soon threw off the longing, and gradually resumed my late resigned and contented mood. O youth, thy griefs are fleeting, but thy hopes and joys perennial!