

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WRECK DRIVEN HIGHER ON THE REEF—WRECKERS HEAVE IN SIGHT—TWO ARE RETAINED BY CAPTAIN BOWERS—THEY TAKE A LOAD FROM THE SHIP AND SAIL FOR KEY WEST—BRADY'S QUARREL ON SHORE WITH THE "BIG INGIN," AND HOW IT ENDED.



MORNING arrived at last, and showed us the ship in a higher position on the Reef than the one which she had occupied during the previous day. The storm had gradually subsided, until the wind had become a gentle breeze, and nothing remained but the effects of the gale, in the still agitated sea and the stranded ship.

Then, towards the north and south, appeared the distant and approaching sails of the wreckers, which, before long, arrived, came to, and boarded us to know what was to be done. Our captain had his plans matured, but the sea was still too boisterous to put them into execution.

The services of two of the wreckers, that were of greater tonnage than the others, were secured, and the rest made sail again for their stations.

In the afternoon, the two quarter-boats and the dingy went ashore, carrying all hands except a crew left on board of the schooner. George and I went in one of the boats, which were provided with axes, and switchel in a keg for the men, and with water in a monkey* for the officers. Parts of the crews of the two other wreckers, equipped in the same manner, went ashore in their own boats.

We landed on one of the Keys, not far to the southward of Key Biscayne, and found, on its southern point, a place on which there was a good sandy soil, covered with a sparse and stunted growth of bushes. The men, who numbered about thirty, went to work with their axes and hatchets, and by nightfall they had managed to cut down the growth and heap it around the edge of the clearing. When this was done, the crews pulled off in their boats to their respective vessels.

Throughout the whole day and night of the 22d, the same gentle breeze prevailed, so that, by the following morning, the sea was quite

* The monkey is a jug of porous earthenware.

placid. In two or three hours after daylight, it was almost calm on the Reef, but still remained deeper there than usual, owing to the violence of the gale which had been blowing towards the coast.

Captain Bowers and the captains of the two wreckers had concerted measures in advance; so that, the moment the sea became tranquil, the vessels, which had been lying with loosened sails and anchors apeak, got under way and steered for the ship. The *Flying Cloud* arrived first, and the water was so tranquil that Captain Bowers was enabled to make her fast along-side of the ship, merely getting his fenders out to avoid chafing the schooner's bulwarks. During the latter part of the blow, the ship had been forced further on the Reef, and had settled in a hollow, in which, by working, she had gradually embedded. With the increased depth of water on the Reef, she had then righted so much that she now lay almost on an even keel.

Our crew soon forced a convenient entrance into the hull of the ship, by going to work with their axes in a place on the side where she had been so violently pounded that the planking was broken and beaten into a fibrous pulp. The other wreckers followed our example; and, soon, almost every man belonging to

the three vessels was engaged in unloading the ship. The cargo was from Boston, and consisted of common furniture for one or two of the ports in the Gulf. Soon the decks, holds, and cabins of the three schooners were crammed with cabinet-ware. All three then cast off from the ship, and Captain Bowers ordered the two, which he had employed, to sail immediately for Key West, and return as soon as they could unload their cargoes. The *Flying Cloud* sailed in close to the Key where we had made the clearing, and the whole afternoon was consumed in transferring her cargo to the beach, and in spreading sails over it to protect it from the weather. At sundown Ruggles was left ashore with an armed party, consisting of Linden, Deal, Brady, and a couple of the crew from the ship. The captain took this precaution on account of having observed an Indian canoe paddling from the main-land, in the direction of the Key. We left the men a little coffee, salt pork, and hard tack, with which to prepare their breakfast for the next morning.

In the morning, at daylight, all hands aboard of the schooner had their coffee, and without visiting the party on shore, proceeded at once to the wreck, and recommenced to unload her. By twelve o'clock, we had our cargo completed, and sailed for the beach, to which, as on the day be-

fore, we transferred every thing. From curiosity to know what was going on there, George and I, accompanied by Jack, went ashore with the captain in the first boat that left the schooner. As we neared the shore, we saw three or four Indians standing near our men, and, on landing, distinguished by the tone of Brady's voice that he was angry. As George and I approached the group, I caught sight of Brady shaking his fist under an Indian's nose, and heard him exclaim :

"Ye dud! ye dud! I see the graise around yer chaps now, ye botherin' old parrot-toes. Go 'lang wid ye; do ye think I come to Ameriky to be cook to an Ingin, bedad?" Here Brady flourished his fist within an inch of the Indian's nose.

"What's all this row about?" said the captain, brushing past the outskirts of the group, and elbowing his way up to Brady and his opponent, just as the latter was making a low guttural response, of which I could understand nothing. "What's the matter, I say? Speak, Brady!"

"Spake, is it? an' sure, an' it's little spakin' I fale like doin' this minute, yer honor, the captain. I want ye to see him git fair play wid fist or shillelah; and if he won't fight, wid yer

honor's permission, I'll give him a taste of me fut."

"But the matter, the matter?" said the captain, impatiently.

"Ah! it's the mather, the mather, you'd be afther knowin'? Well, there's enough the mather! I'll till ye ivery worrud. This blessed minute, the min had all done their dinner, and was gone to worruk ayont, and I was frying me bit porruk; and, thinks I, the fire's not hot enough, I want some of thim dry brush-wood I see over there, and I goes to get it. And as I was a-coming back, I see this coppery thafe wid his chakes stuck out, and chawing very speedy, an' not a bit of me porruk in the pan. I says to him, 'ye're a thafe;' and I put me fist till his nose, and I says again, 'ye're a thafe;' and the chewin' he kep' up was awful to behold, and all to wunst he give a swaller, and stared at me as if he was a-chokin'. 'Ye're a thafe,' says I again, for the thirrud time; 'won't ye be afther answerin' me?— Ye stole me porruk.' And he says to me:

"'Ingin no stale. Big Ingin, great chief Mickewakestamekakekyme.'

"Chafe, indade, ye spalpeen, says I, ye staled me porruk,—and do'n't I see the graise rinnin' down yer chaps? Go 'lang, wid yer chafe. And, yer honor, the min came rinnin' around

uz, and I was jest going to lay the heft of an Irishman's vingince on him, when yer honor came up."

While listening to this recital, and looking at the excited and pugnacious Brady, contrasted with the stolid Indian,—who despite his denial, was glistening around the mouth from the effects of his hasty repast,—the captain was seized with several convulsive twitches of countenance; and as Brady concluded with an attempt at the name of the chief, and his own reply upon its dignified announcement by the owner, the captain burst out laughing, and went into such convulsions of merriment, that he had to cast himself on the ground. The contagion spread to the whole party, who roared in concert with the captain, until the puzzled Brady broke forth into a succession of broad grins, alternated by eclipses of serious expression; and even the greasy mouth of the much-injured Indian, who, despite his tell-tale appearance, had maintained an air of dignified composure, melted into something like a smile.

At last the captain arose, almost exhausted, and after having taken Brady aside, rejoined the group, and addressing the Indian, said:

"Friend, he much sorry. He no see buzzard takee."

"Yah, yah," replied the Indian. "Buzzard much plenty here, much takee pork."

"And, by the way," said the captain, Indian man want eatee, here plenty."

"Yah, yah, yah," replied the Indian, "chief tankee much."

The Indian was evidently pleased at this intimation of the captain, and he, with the three companions who had accompanied him to the Key, walked quietly away to the place where they had left their canoe.

The captain then turned to Brady, and said:

"Now, Brady, I'm not surprised that you were provoked, but you and all the men—do you all hear?—must keep on the right side of these fellows, or they'll give us trouble. I don't want you to let them steal the furniture, sails, or any thing valuable; but don't have any difficulty with them for the matter of a piece of pork. Let them have what they want to eat, and I'll furnish you with a larger allowance. All you have to do is to keep a bright lookout for the property on shore." Saying this, the captain returned to the boat with us, and pulled off for the vessel. Jack sat in the stern-sheets, and kept up the growling and suppressed bark with which he had been affected ever since he caught sight of the

Indians, around whose calves he had walked and snuffed until he almost disconcerted the chief of the greasy chin and unpronounceable name.