

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WATER SUBSIDES ALONG THE REEF—THE FLYING CLOUD CONTINUES THE WRECKING—THE IRREPRESSIBLE BRADY DESCRIBES THE APPEARANCE OF THE IRISH INDIANS—THE RETURN OF THE TWO WRECKERS—ALL THE WRECKERS WEIGH ANCHOR—FRED RANSOM MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF THE FAMILY OF CAPTAIN BOWERS.



BY the following morning, the water along the coast had subsided to its usual level, and the depth on the Reef had so decreased that the *Flying Cloud* was no longer able to approach the side of the ship.

This was of little consequence, for the principal part of the furniture that had escaped damage sufficiently to render it worth removal had been saved in the four cargoes which had been taken from the ship. The two quarter-boats were now employed in transporting all that remained undamaged, and even the little dingy did her share in the work.

The water was now sufficiently low to enable us to get at the kits of the sailors, and they were immediately removed to the schooner, whose rigging was soon dressed with garments hung out to dry. The clothes of the captain of the ship, and of his chief mate, had been saved upon the first occasion upon which the three schooners had lain along-side of the wreck. The level of the cabin being much higher than that of the forecastle, they were out of reach of the water after the waves ceased to break over the ship.

By night-time, we had collected quite a number of other things that were worth saving, and had stowed them aboard of the schooner. On the following morning, the *Flying Cloud* sailed as near to the Reef as she could approach without danger of grounding, and the boats went to and from the wreck, until almost every thing above water, and portable, had been removed.

The next day, the 26th, as the weather after the storm was becoming quite hot again, and the addition of the ship's crew to the small accommodations forward rendered the place so close as to be almost intolerable, some men were sent on shore and rigged up awnings made of spare sails that had belonged to the ship. Under the protection of these, a portion of the

ship's crew spent that night, in company with the party on guard. While the men were engaged on shore, with the party of Ruggles, in constructing these makeshifts for tents, Captain Bowers got the *Flying Cloud* under way, and ran through the channel which crossed the Reef. On reaching the Gulf edge of the Reef, he laid up along it, until opposite to the wreck, and let go his anchor in about seventeen fathoms of water. He then lowered the remaining quarter-boat (the party on shore had been allowed to retain one), and sent it aboard the ship to get the chain-cable. Meanwhile, we passed out of one of the schooner's hawse-holes the end of the cable of the anchor that was hanging at her bow. In a short time, the men who had been despatched to the ship had made a line fast to the end of her cable, and lowered it into the stern-sheets of the boat. They then hauled into the boat a little of the slack, and with much difficulty rowed to the schooner; for, although the cable was quite slack, for the reason that the ship had changed position after having struck on the Reef, yet, be it remembered that any chain-cable is a very heavy thing, and that of a ship particularly massive. With some trouble, we managed to pass the end of the cable through the hawse-hole from which we had removed our cable. The men then

have away at the windlass. As our own chain came home through one hawse-hole, a large gang of men hauled in the ship's cable through the other; and just as our anchor broke ground, the ship's cable was passed around the bitts, and the men continuing to heave at the windlass, we at once swung at the ship's anchor. As it was lying outside of the place for which the schooner had headed, in weighing her own anchor, her stern fell off, and she headed towards the Gulf. We took in over a hundred fathoms of chain before we got the ship's anchor apeak. For the ship to have dragged ashore with over a hundred fathoms of scope out shows what must have been the violence of the gale in which she was wrecked.

When we got the anchor to the cathead, we found that it was too heavy to be carried there, for it put the schooner entirely out of trim; so we hoisted it aboard, and placed it about amidships, just forward of the main hatchway.

There was little hope of getting the other anchor. It had been cast in about twenty fathoms of water. When the chain had parted, it was at a point so far from the Reef, that it would have been difficult to find the end of the cable, unless upon such an occasion as one already described, when the water was so limpid that it resembled molten glass. The short piece

of cable, which still hung through the hawse-hole in the ship's bow, was secured by our quarter-boat; and we then ran down the edge of the Reef, sailed through the channel across it, and came to anchor in the Reef-Channel.

Here, after every thing was made snug, we again lowered our quarter-boat, and sent the rest of the ship's crew ashore, with directions to remain there with their shipmates, and to relieve Ruggles and the schooner's men who were stationed there. They were told to keep one of the quarter-boats, but were cautioned to haul it up on the beach, beyond the reach of the sea. In the course of half an hour, Ruggles and the rest of the party, detailed for the first guard on shore, came aboard. Very glad they were to be relieved from their duty. Brady, in great glee, climbed up the side of the schooner. When he got on deck, I asked him how he liked it ashore.

"Musha! musha!" said he, working his shoulders around inside of his shirt, "the muskatees and sand-flies is enough to ate a man up be night."

"And the Indians by day," said I, jokingly.

"It was the porruk he ate," retorted Brady.

"Bad luck till him!"

"In Ireland," said I, "you are not bothered

with Indians. You've got the advantage of us there."

"We're not," answered Brady, "that's thrue for ye, Mither Fred; but if ye mane to say there's no Ingins there, ye're meestakin'. In Ireland they're dacent drissed and behaved—that's the difference."

"Do they look at all like the Indians here," said I, choking down premonitory symptoms of a laugh.

"Wid graisy clothes on, and leather poorses on their fate? Indade they do n't! I wunst see a tribe of thim, and ivery mither's son of 'em a chafe, and had a complete shoot of black, wid a satin waistcoat to match."

This picture of a tribe of Indians was too much for me. I burst out laughing, much to the affected surprise of Brady, who kept saying,

"An' what's so quare about their drissing that way? It's jew to the riches of the counthry."

"But, Brady," suggested I,—thinking that I could nonplus him once,—"how could each man be chief?"

"Och! how should I know the arrangements they has?" replied the immovable Brady. "In Ameriky aint ivery win of uz a sovereign?"

With this unanswerable argument, Brady

joined the gang of men, who, by this time, had hooked the falls to the boat, and were engaged in hoisting her to the davits.

On the morning of the 27th, the boat from the schooner, and that from the shore, again visited the wreck to get the few things which still remained above the level of the water in the hold. About ten o'clock, they had collected a number of small articles, and put them aboard of the *Flying Cloud*. The *Flying Cloud* then got under way, and sailed across to the Key; and there she commenced to take in a cargo. About two o'clock in the afternoon, the two wreckers, which had been despatched to Key West, hove in sight, and by four o'clock they came to anchor near us. Then, for the rest of the afternoon, the place presented a lively scene, as the men busily loaded the boats, and rowed them to and fro between the schooners and the shore.

Early on the 28th, the loading was resumed, and, by evening, every thing had been removed from the beach to the schooners. That is, every thing except some small articles which our Indian friends had chosen to pilfer. As they were of very small value, both Captain Bowers and the captain of the ship judged it expedient to wink at the theft, rather than, for the sake of obtaining their restitution, run the risk of a

disturbance which might make enemies of the neighboring Indians, and perhaps result in a collision between them and the wreckers.

On the following morning, the three schooners got under way about the same time, and ran down the Reef. The *Flying Cloud* was the last to get under way, but she soon overhauled and passed her consorts.

We did not anchor at night. Having a fair wind, we kept on our course down the Reef-Channel, and early the next morning, after a pleasant voyage, came in sight of Key West. Here, the three schooners hauled along-side of the wharves in front of the warehouses belonging to our owners, and the unloading and stowing of the goods commenced.

The captain and George took me up to their house, where I was introduced to the family, which consisted of Mrs. Bowers, a son, and a daughter. George and I continued to sleep aboard of the schooner, but when we were not obliged by duty to remain aboard, we went up to the house; where Mrs. Bowers always greeted me so kindly, and appeared to take so lively an interest in me, that I knew there was no danger of wearing out my welcome.