CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FLYING CLOUD SAILS FROM INDIAN KEY—SHE ARRIVES AT HER OLD ANCHORAGE—THE CAPTAIN VISITS THE WRECK—THE CREW SET TO WORK TO SAVE THE IRON ABOUT IT.

AT daylight we were again under way. Whenever we anchored at night, we always weighed anchor at the first faint streaks of light in the eastern horizon. The wind was ahead, and the schooner was obliged to beat all day. Towards night, the wind freshened and shifted, enabling us to lay nearer to our course. Before morning, it hauled again, so that we were obliged to recommence tacking. The captain therefore cast anchor for three or four hours, and, just before day, got under way again. Late in the afternoon of the second day of our departure from Indian Key, we came to at our old anchorage and station off Key Biscayne.

There, on the Reef, a few miles away, lay

the hull of the wreck. I could hardly refrain from apostrophizing the thing as something from which life had departed. More to the ship, than to any thing made by man, does it seem as if he had imparted a ray of his intelligence. The ship is so beautiful in its symmetry; its career is so adventurous and checkered; it so promptly and unerringly obeys the slightest impulse from the will of its master,—that it seems more life-like than a mere mass of timber, iron, and cordage. And when fate decrees that it shall lie stranded on the shore, it seems like some huge departed leviathan that cumbers the spot with its colossal skeleton.

On the following day, we made our usual cruise up and down the Reef; and after we came to anchor, the captain took one of the boats, and went on a visit of inspection to the ship. George and I accompanied him, and were very glad to revisit the scene of our first wrecking exploit. Since we had been at the place, the sea had made sad havoc with the timbers of the great structure, which, for many a year, had sailed from continent to continent, and defied the elements. The merciless waves had vengefully battered in the sides, and rent and scarred the bottom, by grinding it against the sharp-pointed coral. Masses of bulwarks that

had once been timber and plank, so securely jointed and battened, that nature itself could scarcely have wedded them more closely, hung at the ship's sides, and swayed helplessly to and fro. The rudder was gone; the figure-head, the crew's *beau ideal* of female loveliness, was washed away. Nothing was left of all the beauty with which, on that fatal afternoon, the graceful object had careered to its tomb upon the Reef.

And we, insatiate mortals, were not to be satisfied until we had secured the last vestige. Money was again to produce something else; perhaps help to produce something identical; to go, perhaps, through the same ordeal, and to encounter, perhaps, the same fate. What of that? Should we object to imitate a law of the universe—the economy of Nature? Nothing is absolutely lost. "Imperious Cæsar dead, and turned to clay, might stop a hole to keep the wind away."

The captain said to us, as we rowed slowly around the wreck:

"Well, boys, there 's a good deal of stuff about her yet, that 's worth saving. We 'll commence to-morrow. I reckon, too, we 'll be able to get the other cable, by grappling for it."

The result of the captain's inspection of the wreck was that instead of coming to anchor after our next morning's cruise, we ran out

through the channel across the Reef. The captain sent one boat's crew aboard the ship, for the purpose of detaching all the planking that was loose, while, with another boat's crew, he commenced grappling for the cable which we had not saved. We had so good an idea of the direction from which the ship drifted on the Reef, from our knowledge of the direction of the wind at the time, that although the water was not clear, and we were obliged to rely entirely upon the grappling-irons, we managed, in the course of several hours' persistent dragging, to get hold of the cable. As upon the previous occasion, the end of one of our cables was removed from its hawse-hole, and we hove the ship's anchor to the cathead, hoisted it aboard, and stowed it just abaft the foremast.

Meanwhile, the boat's crew at the ship had, by using axes, managed to detach great pieces of the bulwarks, which they lowered into favorable positions for drifting ashore. These would not have been cut away and set afloat, had not the wind been blowing towards shore. On the following morning, the boats visited the beaches along the Keys, made lines fast to these rafts of timber and plank, and took them in tow to the Key where the clearing had been made. Then, with the aid of purchases

rigged to trees, they were hauled ashore and fired. When they were reduced to ashes, the iron with which they had been fastened was carefully collected and deposited in rough lockers on board of the schooner. We found the ship's masts, and a good many stray bits of cordage which would serve as old junk. All these things were carefully preserved, for every thing of the sort is valuable.

By sending axemen to complete the work which the sea from time to time partially executed for us, we made so thorough work with the wreck, that, in the course of a few weeks, nothing of it was left but the great mouldering ribs, in which the worms were making extensive ravages.