

## CHAPTER XLIV

### Away

Though clothed in language of my own, the maiden's story is in substance the same as she related. Yet were not these things narrated as past events; she merely recounted them as impressions of her childhood, and of her destiny yet unaccomplished. And mystical as the tale most assuredly was, my knowledge of the strange arts of the island priesthood, and the rapt fancies indulged in by many of their victims, deprived it in good part of the effect it otherwise would have produced.

For ulterior purposes connected with their sacerdotal supremacy, the priests of these climes oftentimes secrete mere infants in their temples; and jealously secluding them from all intercourse with the world, craftily delude them, as they grow up, into the wildest conceits.

Thus wrought upon, their pupils almost lose their humanity in the constant indulgence of seraphic imaginings. In many cases becoming inspired as oracles; and as such, they are sometimes resorted to by devotees; always screened from view, however, in the recesses of the temples. But in every instance, their end is certain. Beguiled with some fairy tale about revisiting the islands of Paradise, they are led to the secret sacrifice, and perish unknown to their kindred.

But, would that all this had been hidden from me at the time. For Yillah was lovely enough to be really divine; and so I might have been tranced into a belief of her mystical legends.

But with what passionate exultation did I find myself the deliverer of this beautiful maiden; who, thinking no harm, and rapt in a dream, was being borne to her fate on the coast of Tedaidee. Nor now, for a moment, did the death of Aleema her guardian seem to hang heavy upon my heart. I rejoiced that I had sent him to his gods; that in place of the sea moss growing over sweet Yillah drowned in the sea, the vile priest himself had sunk to the bottom.

But though he had sunk in the deep, his ghost sunk not in the deep waters of my soul. However in exultations its surface foamed up, at bottom guilt brooded. Sifted out, my motives to this enterprise justified not the mad deed, which, in a moment of rage, I had done: though, those motives had been covered with a gracious pretense; concealing myself from myself. But I beat down the thought.

In relating her story, the maiden frequently interrupted it with questions concerning myself:--Whence I came: being white, from Oroolia? Whither I was going: to Amma? And what had happened to Aleema? For she had been dismayed at the fray, though knowing not what it could mean; and she had heard the priest's name called upon in lamentations. These questions for the time I endeavored to evade; only inducing her to fancy me some gentle demigod, that had come over

the sea from her own fabulous Oroolia. And all this she must verily have believed. For whom, like me, ere this could she have beheld? Still fixed she her eyes upon me strangely, and hung upon the accents of my voice.

While this scene was passing, the strangers began to show signs of impatience, and a voice from the Chamois repeatedly hailed us to accelerate our movements.

My course was quickly decided. The only obstacle to be encountered was the possibility of Yillah's alarm at being suddenly borne into my prow. For this event I now sought to prepare her. I informed the damsel that Aleema had been dispatched on a long errand to Oroolia; leaving to my care, for the present, the guardianship of the lovely Yillah; and that therefore, it was necessary to carry her tent into my own canoe, then waiting to receive it.

This intelligence she received with the utmost concern; and not knowing to what her perplexity might lead, I thought fit to transport her into the Chamois, while yet overwhelmed by the announcement of my intention.

Quitting her retreat, I apprised Jarl of my design; and then, no more delay!

At bottom, the tent was attached to a light framework of bamboos; and

from its upper corners, four cords, like those of a marquee, confined it to the dais. These, Samoa's knife soon parted; when lifting the light tent, we speedily transferred it to the Chamois; a wild yell going up from the Islanders, which drowned the faint cries of the maiden. But we heeded not the din. Toss in the fruit, hanging from the altar-prow! It was done; and then running up our sail, we glided away;--Chamois, tent, hostages, and all. Rushing to the now vacant stern of their canoe, the Islanders once more lifted up their hands and their voices in curses.

A suitable distance gained, we paused to fling overboard the arms we had taken; and Jarl proceeded to liberate the hostages.

Meanwhile, I entered the tent, and by many tokens, sought to allay the maiden's alarm. Thus engaged, violent plunges were heard: our prisoners taking to the sea to regain their canoe. All dripping, they were received by their brethren with wild caresses.

From something now said by the captives, the rest seemed suddenly inspirited with hopes of revenge; again wildly shaking their spears, just before picked up from the sea. With great clamor and confusion they soon set their mat-sail; and instead of sailing southward for Tedaidee, or northward for Amma their home, they steered straight after us, in our wake.

Foremost in the prow stood three; javelins poised for a dart; at

intervals, raising a yell.

Did they mean to pursue me? Full in my rear they came on, baying like hounds on their game. Yillah trembled at their cries. My own heart beat hard with undefinable dread. The corpse of Aleema seemed floating before: its avengers were raging behind.

But soon these phantoms departed. For very soon it appeared that in vain the pagans pursued. Their craft, our fleet Chamois outleaped. And farther and farther astern dropped the evil-boding canoe, till at last but a speck; when a great swell of the sea surged up before it, and it was seen no more. Samoa swore that it must have swamped, and gone down. But however it was, my heart lightened apace. I saw none but ourselves on the sea: I remembered that our keel left no track as it sailed.

Let the Oregon Indian through brush, bramble, and brier, hunt his enemy's trail, far over the mountains and down in the vales; comes he to the water, he snuffs idly in air.