

## CHAPTER LXII

### Taji Retires From The World

After a while, when the strangers came not in shoals as before, I proposed to our host, a stroll over his dominions; desirous of beholding the same, and secretly induced by the hope of selecting an abode, more agreeable to my fastidious taste, than the one already assigned me.

The ramble over--a pleasant one it was--it resulted in a determination on my part to quit Odo. Yet not to go very far; only ten or twelve yards, to a little green tuft of an islet; one of many, which here and there, all round the island, nestled like birds' nests in the branching boughs of the coral grove, whose roots laid hold of the foundations of the deep. Between these islets and the shore, extended shelving ledges, with shallows above, just sufficient to float a canoe. One of these islets was wooded and wined; an arbor in the sea. And here, Media permitting, I decided to dwell.

Not long was Media in complying; nor long, ere my retreat was in readiness. Laced together, the twisting boughs were closely thatched. And thatched were the sides also, with deep crimson pandannus leaves; whose long, forked spears, lifted by the breeze, caused the whole place to blaze, as with flames. Canes, laid on palm trunks, formed

the floor. How elastic! In vogue all over Odo, among the chiefs, it imparted such a buoyancy to the person, that to this special cause may be imputed in good part the famous fine spirits of the nobles.

Hypochondriac! essay the elastic flooring! It shall so pleasantly and gently jolt thee, as to shake up, and pack off the stagnant humors mantling thy pool-like soul.

Such was my dwelling. But I make no mention of sundry little appurtenances of tropical housekeeping: calabashes, cocoanut shells, and rolls of fine tappa; till with Yillah seated at last in my arbor, I looked round, and wanted for naught.

But what of Jarl and Samoa? Why Jarl must needs be fanciful, as well as myself. Like a bachelor in chambers, he settled down right opposite to me, on the main land, in a little wigwam in the grove.

But Samoa, following not his comrade's example, still tarried in the camp of the Hittites and Jebusites of Odo. Beguiling men of their leisure by his marvelous stories: and maidens of their hearts by his marvelous wiles.

When I chose, I was completely undisturbed in my arbor; an ukase of Media's forbidding indiscriminate intrusion. But thrice in the day came a garrulous old man with my viands.

Thus sequestered, however, I could not entirely elude the prying of the people of the neighboring islands; who often passed by, slowly paddling, and earnestly regarding my retreat. But gliding along at a distance, and never essaying a landing, their occasional vicinity troubled me but little. But now and then of an evening, when thick and fleet the shadows were falling, dim glimpses of a canoe would be spied; hovering about the place like a ghost. And once, in the stillness of the night, hearing the near ripple of a prow, I sallied forth, but the phantom quickly departed.

That night, Yillah shuddered as she slept. "The whirl-pool," she murmured, "sweet mosses." Next day she was lost in reveries, plucking pensive hyacinths, or gazing intently into the lagoon.