

CHAPTER LXIV

Yillah A Phantom

For a time we were happy in Odo: Yillah and I in our islet. Nor did the pearl on her bosom glow more rosily than the roses in her cheeks; though at intervals they waned and departed; and deadly pale was her glance, when she murmured of the whirlpool and mosses. As pale my soul, bethinking me of Aleema the priest.

But day by day, did her spell weave round me its magic, and all the hidden things of her being grew more lovely and strange. Did I commune with a spirit? Often I thought that Paradise had overtaken me on earth, and that Yillah was verily an angel, and hence the mysteries that hallowed her.

But how fleeting our joys. Storms follow bright dawnings.--Long memories of short-lived scenes, sad thoughts of joyous hours--how common are ye to all mankind. When happy, do we pause and say--"Lo, thy felicity, my soul?" No: happiness seldom seems happiness, except when looked back upon from woes. A flowery landscape, you must come out of, to behold.

Sped the hours, the days, the one brief moment of our joys. Fairy bower in the fair lagoon, scene of sylvan ease and heart's repose,-- Oh, Yillah, Yillah! All the woods repeat the sound, the wild, wild

woods of my wild soul. Yillah! Yillah! cry the small strange voices in me, and evermore, and far and deep, they echo on.

Days passed. When one morning I found the arbor vacant. Gone! A dream. I closed my eyes, and would have dreamed her back. In vain. Starting, I called upon her name; but none replied. Fleeing from the islet, I gained the neighboring shore, and searched among the woods; and my comrades meeting, besought their aid. But idle all. No glimpse of aught, save trees and flowers. Then Media was sought out; the event made known; and quickly, bands were summoned to range the isle.

Noon came; but no Yillah. When Media averred she was no longer in Odo. Whither she was gone, or how, he knew not; nor could any imagine.

At this juncture, there chanced to arrive certain messengers from abroad; who, presuming that all was well with Taji, came with renewed invitations to visit various pleasant places round about. Among these, came Queen Hautia's heralds, with their Iris flag, once more bringing flowers. But they came and went unheeded.

Setting out to return, these envoys were accompanied by numerous followers of Media, dispatched to the neighboring islands, to seek out the missing Yillah. But three days passed; and, one by one, they all returned; and stood before me silently.

For a time I raved. Then, falling into outer repose, lived for a space in moods and reveries, with eyes that knew no closing, one glance forever fixed.

They strove to rouse me. Girls danced and sang; and tales of fairy times were told; of monstrous imps, and youths enchanted; of groves and gardens in the sea. Yet still I moved not, hearing all, yet noting naught. Media cried, "For shame, oh Taji; thou, a god?" and placed a spear in my nerveless hand. And Jarl loud called upon me to awake. Samoa marveled.

Still sped the days. And at length, my memory was restored. The thoughts of things broke over me like returning billows on a beach long bared. A rush, a foam of recollections!--Sweet Yillah gone, and I bereaved.

Another interval, and that mood was past. Misery became a memory. The keen pang a deep vibration. The remembrance seemed the thing remembered; though bowed with sadness. There are thoughts that lie and glitter deep: tearful pearls beneath life's sea, that surges still, and rolls sunlit, whatever it may hide. Common woes, like fluids, mix all round. Not so with that other grief. Some mourners load the air with lamentations; but the loudest notes are struck from hollows. Their tears flow fast: but the deep spring only wells.

At last I turned to Media, saying I must hie from Odo, and rove
throughout all Mardi; for Yillah might yet be found.

But hereafter, in words, little more of the maiden, till perchance
her fate be learned.