

## CHAPTER LXVI

### With A Fair Wind, At Sunrise They Sail

True each to his word, up came the sun, and round to my isle came Media.

How glorious a morning! The new-born clouds all dappled with gold, and streaked with violet; the sun in high spirits; and the pleasant air cooled overnight by the blending circumambient fountains, forever playing all round the reef; the lagoon within, the coral-rimmed basin, into which they poured, subsiding, hereabouts, into green tranquillity.

But what monsters of canoes! Would they devour an innocent voyager? their great black prows curling aloft, and thrown back like trunks of elephants; a dark, snaky length behind, like the sea-serpent's train.

The prow of the foremost terminated in a large, open, shark's mouth, garnished with ten rows of pearly human teeth, curiously inserted into the sculptured wood. The gunwale was ornamented with rows of rich spotted Leopard and Tiger-shells; here and there, varied by others, flat and round, and spirally traced; gay serpents petrified in coils. These were imbedded in a grooved margin, by means of a resinous compound, exhaling such spices, that the canoes were

odoriferous as the Indian chests of the Maldives.

The likeness of the foremost canoe to an elephant, was helped by a sort of canopied Howdah in its stern, of heavy, russet-dyed tappa, tasselled at the corners with long bunches of cocoanut fibres, stained red. These swayed to and fro, like the fox-tails on a Tuscarora robe.

But what is this, in the head of the canoe, just under the shark's mouth? A grinning little imp of an image; a ring in its nose; cowrie shells jingling at its ears; with an abominable leer, like that of Silenus reeling on his ass. It was taking its ease; cosily smoking a pipe; its bowl, a duodecimo edition of the face of the smoker. This image looked sternward; everlastingly mocking us.

Of these canoes, it may be well to state, that although during our stay in Odo, so many barges and shallops had touched there, nothing similar to Media's had been seen. But inquiring whence his sea-equipage came, we were thereupon taught to reverence the same as antiquities and heir-looms; claw-keeled, dragon-prowed crafts of a bygone generation; at present, superseded in general use by the more swan-like canoes, significant of the advanced stage of marine architecture in Mardi. No sooner was this known, than what had seemed almost hideous in my eyes, became merely grotesque. Nor could I help being greatly delighted with the good old family pride of our host.

The upper corners of our sails displayed the family crest of Media; three upright boars' tusks, in an heraldic field argent. A fierce device: Whom rends he?

All things in readiness, we glided away: the multitude waving adieu; and our flotilla disposed in the following order.

First went the royal Elephant, carrying Media, myself, Jarl, and Samoa; Mohi the Teller of Legends, Babbalanja, and Yoomy, and six vivacious paddlers; their broad paddle-blades carved with the royal boars' tusks, the same tattooed on their chests for a livery.

And thus, as Media had promised, we voyaged in state. To crown all, seated sideways in the high, open shark's-mouth of our prow was a little dwarf of a boy, one of Media's pages, a red conch-shell, bugle-wise suspended at his side. Among various other offices, it was the duty of little Vee-Vee to announce the advent of his master, upon drawing near to the islands in our route. Two short bars, projecting from one side of the prow, furnished him the means of ascent to his perch.

As we gained the open lagoon with bellied sails, and paddles playing, a sheaf of foam borne upright at our prow; Yoomy, standing where the spicy spray flew over him, stretched forth his hand and cried--"The dawn of day is passed, and Mardi lies all before us: all her isles, and all her lakes; all her stores of good and evil. Storms may come,

our barks may drown. But blow before us, all ye winds; give us a lively blast, good clarion; rally round us all our wits; and be this voyage full gayly sailed, for Yillah will yet be found."