

CHAPTER LXXIX

The Center Of Many Circumferences

Like Donjalolo himself, we hie to and fro; for back now must we pace to the House of the Morning.

In its rear, there diverged three separate arbors, leading to less public apartments.

Traversing the central arbor, and fancying it will soon lead you to open ground, you suddenly come upon the most private retreat of the prince: a square structure; plain as a pyramid; and without, as inscrutable. Down to the very ground, its walls are thatched; but on the farther side a passage-way opens, which you enter. But not yet are you within. Scarce a yard distant, stands an inner thatched wall, blank as the first. Passing along the intervening corridor, lighted by narrow apertures, you reach the opposite side, and a second opening is revealed. This entering, another corridor; lighted as the first, but more dim, and a third blank wall. And thus, three times three, you worm round and round, the twilight lessening as you proceed; until at last, you enter the citadel itself: the innermost arbor of a nest; whereof, each has its roof, distinct from the rest.

The heart of the place is but small; illuminated by a range of open sky-lights, downward contracting.

Innumerable as the leaves of an endless folio, multitudinous mats cover the floor; whereon reclining by night, like Pharaoh on the top of his patrimonial pile, the inmate looks heavenward, and heavenward only; gazing at the torchlight processions in the skies, when, in state, the suns march to be crowned.

And here, in this impenetrable retreat, centrally slumbered the universe-rounded, zodiac-belted, horizon-zoned, sea-girt, reef-sashed, mountain-locked, arbor-nested, royalty-girdled, arm-clasped, self-hugged, indivisible Donjalolo, absolute monarch of Juam:--the husk-inhusked meat in a nut; the innermost spark in a ruby; the juice-nested seed in a goldenrinded orange; the red royal stone in an effeminate peach; the insphered sphere of spheres.