

CHAPTER LXXXV

After Dinner

As in dreams I behold thee again, Willamila! as in dreams, once again
I stroll through thy cool shady groves, oh fairest of the vallies of
Mardi! the thought of that mad merry feasting steals over my soul
till I faint.

Prostrate here and there over the bones of Donjalolo's sires, the
royal bacchanals lay slumbering till noon.

"Which are the deadest?" said Babbalanja, peeping in, "the live
kings, or the dead ones?"

But the former were drooping flowers sought to be revived by
watering. At intervals the sedulous attendants went to and fro,
besprinkling their heads with the scented contents of their vases.

At length, one by one, the five-and-twenty kings lifted their
ambrosial curls; and shaking the dew therefrom, like eagles opened
their right royal eyes, and dilated their aquiline nostrils, full
upon the golden rays of the sun.

But why absented himself, Donjalolo? Had he cavalierly left them to
survive the banquet by themselves? But this apparent incivility was

soon explained by heralds, announcing to their prone majesties, that through the over solicitude of his slaves, their lord the king had been borne to his harem, without being a party to the act. But to make amends, in his sedan, Donjalolo was even now drawing nigh. Not, however, again to make merry; but socially to sleep in company with his guests; for, together they had all got high, and together they must all lie low.

So at it they went: each king to his bones, and slumbered like heroes till evening; when, availing themselves of the cool moonlight approaching, the royal guests bade adieu to their host; and summoning their followers, quitted the glen.

Early next day, having determined to depart for our canoes, we proceeded to the House of the Morning, to take leave of Donjalolo.

An amazing change, one night of solitude had wrought! Pale and languid, we found him reclining: one hand on his throbbing temples.

Near an overturned vessel of wine, the royal girdle lay tossed at his feet. He had waved off his frightened attendants, who crouched out of sight.

We advanced.

"Do ye too leave me? Ready enough are ye to partake of my

banquetings, which, to such as ye, are but mad incidents in one round of more tranquil diversions. But heed me not, Media;--I am mad. Oh, ye gods! am I forever a captive?--Ay, free king of Odo, when you list, condescend to visit the poor slave in Willamilla. I account them but charity, your visits; would fain allure ye by sumptuous fare. Go, leave me; go, and be rovers again throughout blooming Mardi. For, me, I am here for aye.--Bring me wine, slaves! quick! that I may pledge my guests fitly. Alas, Media, at the bottom of this cup are no sparkles as at top. Oh, treacherous, treacherous friend! full of smiles and daggers. Yet for such as me, oh wine, thou art e'en a prop, though it pierce the side; for man must lean. Thou wine art the friend of the friendless, though a foe to all. King Media, let us drink. More cups!--And now, farewell."

Falling back, he averted his face; and silently we quitted the palace.