

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

In A Calm, Hautia's Heralds Approach

"How still!" cried Babbalanja. "This calm is like unto Oro's everlasting serenity, and like unto man's last despair."

But now the silence was broken by a strange, distant, intermitted melody in the water.

Gazing over the side, we saw naught but a far-darting ray in its depths.

Then Yoomy, before buried in a reverie, burst forth with a verse, sudden as a jet from a Geyser.

Like the fish of the bright and twittering fin,
Bright fish! diving deep as high soars the lark,
So, far, far, far, doth the maiden swim,
Wild song, wild light, in still ocean's dark.

"What maiden, minstrel?" cried Media.

"None of these," answered Yoomy, pointing out a shallop gliding near.

"The damsels three:--Taji, they pursue you yet." That still canoe

drew nigh, the Iris in its prow.

Gliding slowly by, one damsel flung a Venus-car, the leaves yet fresh.

Said Yoomy--"Fly to love."

The second maiden flung a pallid blossom, buried in hemlock leaves.

Said Yoomy, starting--"I have wrought a death."

Then came showering Venus-cars, and glorious moss-roses numberless,
and odorous handfuls of Verbena.

Said Yoomy--"Yet fly, oh fly to me: all rosy joys and sweets are mine."

Then the damsels floated on.

"Was ever queen more enigmatical?" cried Media--"Love,--death,--joy,
--fly to me? But what says Taji?"

"That I turn not back for Hautia; whoe'er she be, that wild witch I
contemn."

"Then spread our pinions wide! a breeze! up sails! ply paddles all!
Come, Flora's flute, float forth a song."

To pieces picking the thorny roses culled from Hautia's gifts, and
holding up their blighted cores, thus plumed and turbaned Yoomy sang,
leaning against the mast:--

Oh! royal is the rose,
But barbed with many a dart;
Beware, beware the rose,
'Tis cankered at the heart.

Sweet, sweet the sunny down,
Oh! lily, lily, lily down!
Sweet, sweet, Verbena's bloom!
Oh! pleasant, gentle, musky bloom!

Dread, dread the sunny down;
Lo! lily-hooded asp;
Blooms, blooms no more Verbena;
White-withered in your clasp.