

CHAPTER XCI

Of King Uhia And His Subjects

As beseemed him, Uhia was royally lodged. Ample his roof. Beneath it a hundred attendants nightly laying their heads. But long since, he had disbanded his damsels.

Springing from syren embrace--"They shall sap and mine me no more" he cried "my destiny commands me. I will don my manhood. By Keevi! no more will I clasp a waist."

"From that time forth," said Braid-Beard, "young Uhia spread like the tufted top of the Palm; his thigh grew brawny as the limb of the Banian; his arm waxed strong as the back bone of the shark; yea, his voice grew sonorous as a conch."

"And now he bent his whole soul to the accomplishment of the destiny believed to be his. Nothing less than bodily to remove Ohonoo to the center of the lagoon, in fulfillment of an old prophecy running thus--
When a certain island shall stir from its foundations and stand in the middle of the still water, then shall the ruler of that island be ruler of all Mardi."

The task was hard, but how glorious the reward! So at it he went, and all Ohonoo helped him. Not by hands, but by calling in the magicians.

Thus far, nevertheless, in vain. But Uhia had hopes.

Now, informed of all this, said Babbalanja to Media, "My lord, if the continual looking-forward to something greater, be better than an acquiescence in things present; then, wild as it is, this belief of Uhia's he should hug to his heart, as erewhile his wives. But my lord, this faith it is, that robs his days of peace; his nights of sweet unconsciousness. For holding himself foreordained to the dominion of the entire Archipelago, he upbraids the gods for laggards, and curses himself as deprived of his rights; nay, as having had wrested from him, what he never possessed. Discontent dwarfs his horizon till he spans it with his hand. 'Most miserable of demi-gods,' he cries, 'here am I cooped up in this insignificant islet, only one hundred leagues by fifty, when scores of broad empires own me not for their lord.' Yet Uhia himself is envied. 'Ah!' cries Karrolono, one of his chieftains, master of a snug little glen, 'Here am I cabined in this paltry cell among the mountains, when that great King Uhia is lord of the whole island, and every cubic mile of matter therein.' But this same Karrolono is envied. 'Hard, oh beggarly lot is mine,' cries Donno, one of his retainers. 'Here am I fixed and screwed down to this paltry plantation, when my lord Karrolono owns the whole glen, ten long parasangs from cliff to sea.' But Donno too is envied. 'Alas, cursed fate!' cries his servitor Flavona. 'Here am I made to trudge, sweat, and labor all day, when Donno my master does nothing but command.' But others envy Flavona; and those who envy him are envied in turn; even down to poor bed-

ridden Manta, who dying of want, groans forth, 'Abandoned wretch that I am! here I miserably perish, while so many beggars gad about and live!' But surely; none envy Manta! Yes; great Uhia himself. 'Ah!' cries the king. 'Here am I vexed and tormented by ambition; no peace night nor day; my temples chafed sore by this cursed crown that I wear; while that ignoble wight Manta, gives up the ghost with none to molest him.'"

In vain we wandered up and down in this isle, and peered into its innermost recesses: no Yillah was there.