

CHAPTER XCVIII

The Tale Of A Traveler

It was Samoa, who told the incredible tale; and he told it as a traveler. But stay-at-homes say travelers lie. Yet a voyage to Ethiopia would cure them of that; for few skeptics are travelers; fewer travelers liars, though the proverb respecting them lies. It is false, as some say, that Bruce was cousin-german to Baron Munchausen; but true, as Bruce said, that the Alysinnians cut live steaks from their cattle. It was, in good part, his villainous transcribers, who made monstrosities of Mandeville's travels. And though all liars go to Gehenna; yet, assuming that Mandeville died before Dante; still, though Dante took the census of Hell, we find not Sir John, under the likeness of a roasted neat's tongue, in that infernalest of infernos, The Inferno.

But let not the truth be postponed. To the stand, Samoa, and through your interpreter, speak.

Once upon a time, during his endless sea-rovings, the Upoluan was called upon to cobble the head of a friend, grievously hurt in a desperate fight of slings.

Upon examination, that part of the brain proving as much injured as the cranium itself, a young pig was obtained; and preliminaries being

over, part of its live brain was placed in the cavity, the trepan accomplished with cocoanut shell, and the scalp drawn over and secured.

This man died not, but lived. But from being a warrior of great sense and spirit, he became a perverse-minded and piggish fellow, showing many of the characteristics of his swinish grafting. He survived the operation more than a year; at the end of that period, however, going mad, and dying in his delirium.

Stoutly backed by the narrator, this anecdote was credited by some present. But Babbalanja held out to the last.

"Yet, if this story be true," said he, "and since it is well settled, that our brains are somehow the organs of sense; then, I see not why human reason could not be put into a pig, by letting into its cranium the contents of a man's. I have long thought, that men, pigs, and plants, are but curious physiological experiments; and that science would at last enable philosophers to produce new species of beings, by somehow mixing, and concocting the essential ingredients of various creatures; and so forming new combinations. My friend Atahalpa, the astrologer and alchemist, has long had a jar, in which he has been endeavoring to hatch a fairy, the ingredients being compounded according to a receipt of his own."

But little they heeded Babbalanja. It was the traveler's tale that most arrested attention.

Tough the thews, and tough the tales of Samoa.