

**Mardi and A Voyage Thither, Vol. II (of 2)**

**By**

**Herman Melville**

MARDI

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MARDI.

## CHAPTER I

Maramma

We were now voyaging straight for Maramma; where lived and reigned, in mystery, the High Pontiff of the adjoining isles: prince, priest, and god, in his own proper person: great lord paramount over many kings in Mardi; his hands full of scepters and crosiers.

Soon, rounding a lofty and insulated shore, the great central peak of the island came in sight; domineering over the neighboring hills; the same aspiring pinnacle, descried in drawing near the archipelago in the Chamois.

"Tall Peak of Ofo!" cried Babbalanja, "how comes it that thy shadow so broods over Mardi; flinging new shades upon spots already shaded by the hill-sides; shade upon shade!"

"Yet, so it is," said Yoomy, sadly, "that where that shadow falls, gay flowers refuse to spring; and men long dwelling therein become shady of face and of soul. 'Hast thou come from out the shadows of Ofo?' inquires the stranger, of one with a clouded brow."

"It was by this same peak," said Mohi, "that the nimble god Roo, a great sinner above, came down from the skies, a very long time ago. Three skips and a jump, and he landed on the plain. But alas, poor Roo! though easy the descent, there was no climbing back."

"No wonder, then," said Babbalanja, "that the peak is inaccessible to man. Though, with a strange infatuation, many still make pilgrimages thereto; and wearily climb and climb, till slipping from the rocks, they fall headlong backward, and oftentimes perish at its base."

"Ay," said Mohi, "in vain, on all sides of the Peak, various paths are tried; in vain new ones are cut through the cliffs and the brambles:-- Ofo yet remains inaccessible."

"Nevertheless," said Babbalanja, "by some it is believed, that those, who by dint of hard struggling climb so high as to become invisible from the plain; that these have attained the summit; though others much doubt, whether their be-coming invisible is not because of their having fallen, and perished by the way."

"And wherefore," said Media, "do you mortals undertake the ascent at all? why not be content on the plain? and even if attainable, what would you do upon that lofty, clouded summit? Or how can you hope to breathe that rarefied air, unfitted for your human lungs?"

"True, my lord," said Babbalanja; "and Bardianna asserts that the



plain alone was intended for man; who should be content to dwell under the shade of its groves, though the roots thereof descend into the darkness of the earth. But, my lord, you well know, that there are those in Mardi, who secretly regard all stories connected with this peak, as inventions of the people of Maramma. They deny that any thing is to be gained by making a pilgrimage thereto. And for warranty, they appeal to the sayings of the great prophet Alma."

Cried Mohi, "But Alma is also quoted by others, in vindication of the pilgrimages to Ofo. They declare that the prophet himself was the first pilgrim that thitherward journeyed: that from thence he departed to the skies."

Now, excepting this same peak, Maramma is all rolling hill and dale, like the sea after a storm; which then seems not to roll, but to stand still, poising its mountains. Yet the landscape of Maramma has not the merriness of meadows; partly because of the shadow of Ofo, and partly because of the solemn groves in which the Morais and temples are buried.

According to Mohi, not one solitary tree bearing fruit, not one esculent root, grows in all the isle; the population wholly depending upon the large tribute remitted from the neighboring shores.

"It is not that the soil is unproductive," said Mohi, "that these things are so. It is extremely fertile; but the inhabitants say that

it would be wrong to make a Bread-fruit orchard of the holy island."

"And hence, my lord," said Babbalanja, "while others are charged with the business of their temporal welfare, these Islanders take no thought of the morrow; and broad Maramma lies one fertile waste in the lagoon."