

CHAPTER XIII

Babbalanja Endeavors To Explain The Mystery

This Great Mogul of a personage, then; this woundy Aliasuerus; this man of men; this same Hivohitee, whose name rumbled among the mountains like a peal of thunder, had been seen face to face, and taken for naught, but a bearded old hermit, or at best, some equivocal conjuror.

So great was his wonderment at the time, that Yoomy could not avoid expressing it in words.

Whereupon thus discoursed Babbalanja:

"Gentle Yoomy, be not astounded, that Hivohitee is so far behind your previous conceptions. The shadows of things are greater than themselves; and the more exaggerated the shadow, the more unlike to the substance."

"But knowing now, what manner of person Hivohitee is," said Yoomy, "much do I long to behold him again."

But Mohi assured him it was out of the question; that the Pontiff always acted toward strangers as toward him (Yoomy); and that but one dim blink at the eremite was all that mortal could obtain.

Debarred thus from a second and more satisfactory interview with one, concerning whom his curiosity had been violently aroused, the minstrel again turned to Mohi for enlightenment; especially touching that magnate's Egyptian reception of him in his aerial den.

Whereunto, the chronicler made answer, that the Pontiff affected darkness because he liked it: that he was a ruler of few words, but many deeds; and that, had Yoomy been permitted to tarry longer with him in the pagoda, he would have been privy to many strange attestations of the divinity imputed to him. Voices would have been heard in the air, gossiping with Hivohitee; noises inexplicable proceeding from him; in brief, light would have flashed out of his darkness.

"But who has seen these things, Mohi?" said Babbalanja, "have you?"

"Nay."

"Who then?--Media?--Any one you know?"

"Nay: but the whole Archipelago has."

"Thus," exclaimed Babbalanja, "does Mardi, blind though it be in many things, collectively behold the marvels, which one pair of eyes sees not."