

## CHAPTER XVII

### They Regale Themselves With Their Pipes

"Ho! mortals! mortals!" cried Media. "Go we to bury our dead? Awake, sons of men! Cheer up, heirs of immortality! Ho, Vee-Vee! bring forth our pipes: we'll smoke off this cloud."

Nothing so beguiling as the fumes of tobacco, whether inhaled through hookah, narghil, chibouque, Dutch porcelain, pure Principe, or Regalia. And a great oversight had it been in King Media, to have omitted pipes among the appliances of this voyage that we went. Tobacco in rouleaus we had none; cigar nor cigarret; which little the company esteemed. Pipes were preferred; and pipes we often smoked; testify, oh! Vee-Vee, to that. But not of the vile clay, of which mankind and Etruscan vases were made, were these jolly fine pipes of ours. But all in good time.

Now, the leaf called tobacco is of divers species and sorts. Not to dwell upon vile Shag, Pig-tail, Plug, Nail-rod, Negro-head, Cavendish, and misnamed Lady's-twist, there are the following varieties:--Gold-leaf, Oronoco, Cimarozza, Smyrna, Bird's-eye, James-river, Sweet-scented, Honey-dew, Kentucky, Cnaster, Scarfalati, and famed Shiraz, or Persian. Of all of which, perhaps the last is the best.

But smoked by itself, to a fastidious wight, even Shiraz is not gentle

enough. It needs mitigation. And the cunning craft of so mitigating even the mildest tobacco was well understood in the dominions of Media. There, in plantations ever covered with a brooding, blue haze, they raised its fine leaf in the utmost luxuriance; almost as broad as the broad fans of the broad-bladed banana. The stalks of the leaf withdrawn, the remainder they cut up, and mixed with soft willow-bark, and the aromatic leaves of the Betel.

"Ho! Vee-Vee, bring forth the pipes," cried Media. And forth they came, followed by a quaint, carved cocoa-nut, agate-lidded, containing ammunition sufficient for many stout charges and primings.

Soon we were all smoking so hard, that the canopied howdah, under which we reclined, sent up purple wreaths like a Michigan wigwam. There we sat in a ring, all smoking in council--every pipe a halcyon pipe of peace.

And among those calumets, my lord Media's showed like the turbaned Grand Turk among his Bashaws. It was an extraordinary pipe, be sure; of right royal dimensions. Its mouth-piece an eagle's beak; its long stem, a bright, red-barked cherry-tree branch, partly covered with a close network of purple dyed porcupine quills; and toward the upper end, streaming with pennons, like a Versailles flag-staff of a coronation day. These pennons were managed by halyards; and after lighting his prince's pipe, it was little Vee-Vee's part to run them up toward the mast-head, or mouthpiece, in token that his lord was

fairly under weigh.

But Babbalanja's was of a different sort; an immense, black, serpentine stem of ebony, coiling this way and that, in endless convolutions, like an anaconda round a traveler in Brazil. Smoking this hydra, Babbalanja looked as if playing upon the trombone.

Next, gentle Yoomy's. Its stem, a slender golden reed, like musical Pan's; its bowl very merry with tassels.

Lastly, old Mohi the chronicler's. Its Death's-head bowl forming its latter end, continually reminding him of his own. Its shank was an ostrich's leg, some feathers still waving nigh the mouth-piece.

"Here, Vee-Vee! fill me up again," cried Media, through the blue vapors sweeping round his great gonfalon, like plumed Marshal Ney, waving his baton in the smoke of Waterloo; or thrice gallant Anglesea, crossing his wooden eg mid the reek and rack of the Apsley House banquet.

Vee-Vee obeyed; and quickly, like a howitzer, the pipe-owl was reloaded to the muzzle, and King Media smoked on.

"Ah! this is pleasant indeed," he cried. "Look, it's a calm on the waters, and a calm in our hearts, as we inhale these sedative odors."

"So calm," said Babbalanja; "the very gods must be smoking now."

"And thus," said Media, "we demi-gods hereafter shall cross-legged sit, and smoke out our eternities. Ah, what a glorious puff! Mortals, methinks these pipe-bowls of ours must be petrifications of roses, so scented they seem. But, old Mohi, you have smoked this many a long year; doubtless, you know something about their material--the Froth-of-the-Sea they call it, I think--ere my handicraft subjects obtain it, to work into bowls. Tell us the tale."

"Delighted to do so, my lord," replied Mohi, slowly disentangling his mouth-piece from the braids of his beard. "I have devoted much time and attention to the study of pipe-bowls, and groped among many learned authorities, to reconcile the clashing opinions concerning the origin of the so-called Farnoo, or Froth-of-the-Sea."

"Well, then, my old centenarian, give us the result of your investigations. But smoke away: a word and a puff go on."

"May it please you, then, my right worshipful lord, this Farnoo is an unctuous, argillaceous substance; in its natural state, soft, malleable, and easily worked as the cornelian-red clay from the famous pipe-quarries of the wild tribes to the North. But though mostly found buried in terra-firma, especially in the isles toward the East, this Farnoo, my lord, is sometimes thrown up by the ocean; in seasons of high sea, being plentifully found on the reefs. But, my lord, like

amber, the precise nature and origin of this Farnoo are points widely mooted."

"Stop there!" cried Media; "our mouth-pieces are of amber; so, not a word more of the Froth-of-the-Sea, until something be said to clear up the mystery of amber. What is amber, old man?"

"A still more obscure thing to trace than the other, my worshipful lord. Ancient Plinnee maintained, that originally it must be a juice, exuding from balsam firs and pines; Borhavo, that, like camphor, it is the crystalized oil of aromatic ferns; Berzilli, that it is the concreted scum of the lake Cephioris; and Vondendo, against scores of antagonists, stoutly held it a sort of bituminous gold, trickling from antediluvian smugglers' caves, nigh the sea."

"Why, old Braid-Beard," cried Media, placing his pipe in rest, "you are almost as erudite as our philosopher here."

"Much more so, my lord," said Babbalanja; "for Mohi has somehow picked up all my worthless forgettings, which are more than my valuable rememberings."

"What say you, wise one?" cried Mohi, shaking his braids, like an enraged elephant with many trunks.

Said Yoomy: "My lord, I have heard that amber is nothing less than the

congealed tears of broken-hearted mermaids."

"Absurd, minstrel," cried Mohi. "Hark ye; I know what it is. All other authorities to the contrary, amber is nothing more than gold-fishes' brains, made waxy, then firm, by the action of the sea."

"Nonsense!" cried Yoomy.

"My lord," said Braid-Beard, waving his pipe, this thing is just as I say. Imbedded in amber, do we not find little fishes' fins, porpoise-teeth, sea-gulls' beaks and claws; nay, butterflies' wings, and sometimes a topaz? And how could that be, unless the substance was first soft? Amber is gold-fishes' brains, I say."

"For one," said Babbalanja, "I'll not believe that, till you prove to me, Braid-Beard, that ideas themselves are found imbedded therein."

"Another of your crazy conceits, philosopher," replied Mohi, disdainfully; "yet, sometimes plenty of strange black-letter characters have been discovered in amber." And throwing back his hoary old head, he jetted forth his vapors like a whale.

"Indeed?" cried Babbalanja. "Then, my lord Media, it may be earnestly inquired, whether the gentle laws of the tribes before the flood, were not sought to be embalmed and perpetuated between transparent and sweet scented tablets of amber."

"That, now, is not so unlikely," said Mohi; "for old King Rondo the Round once set about getting him a coffin-lid of amber; much desiring a famous mass of it owned by the ancestors of Donjalolo of Juam. But no navies could buy it. So Rondo had himself urned in a crystal."

"And that immortalized Rondo, no doubt," said Babbalanja. "Ha! ha! pity he fared not like the fat porpoise frozen and tombed in an iceberg; its icy shroud drifting south, soon melted away, and down, out of sight, sunk the dead."

"Well, so much for amber," cried Media. "Now, Mohi, go on about Farnoo."

"Know, then, my lord, that Farnoo is more like ambergris than amber."

"Is it? then, pray, tell us something on that head. You know all about ambergris, too, I suppose."

"Every thing about all things, my lord. Ambergris is found both on land and at sea. But especially, are lumps of it picked up on the spicy coasts of Jovanna; indeed, all over the atolls and reefs in the eastern quarter of Mardi."

"But what is this ambergris? Braid-Beard," said Babbalanja.

"Aquovi, the chymist, pronounced it the fragments of mushrooms growing at the bottom of the sea; Voluto held, that like naptha, it springs from fountains down there. But it is neither."

"I have heard," said Yoomy, "that it is the honey-comb of bees, fallen from flowery cliffs into the brine."

"Nothing of the kind," said Mohi. "Do I not know all about it, minstrel? Ambergris is the petrified gall-stones of crocodiles."

"What!" cried Babbalanja, "comes sweet scented ambergris from those musky and chain-plated river cavalry? No wonder, then, their flesh is so fragrant; their upper jaws as the visors of vinaigrettes."

"Nay, you are all wrong," cried King Media.

Then, laughing to himself:--"It's pleasant to sit by, a demi-god, and hear the surmisings of mortals, upon things they know nothing about; theology, or amber, or ambergris, it's all the same. But then, did I always out with every thing I know, there would be no conversing with these comical creatures.

"Listen, old Mohi; ambergris is a morbid secretion of the Spermaceti whale; for like you mortals, the whale is at times a sort of hypochondriac and dyspeptic. You must know, subjects, that in antediluvian times, the Spermaceti whale was much hunted by sportsmen,



that being accounted better pastime, than pursuing the Behemoths on shore. Besides, it was a lucrative diversion. Now, sometimes upon striking the monster, it would start off in a dastardly fright, leaving certain fragments in its wake. These fragments the hunters picked up, giving over the chase for a while. For in those days, as now, a quarter-quintal of ambergris was more valuable than a whole ton of spermaceti."

"Nor, my lord," said Babbalanja, "would it have been wise to kill the fish that dropped such treasures: no more than to murder the noddy that laid the golden eggs."

"Beshrew me! a noddy it must have been," gurgled Mohi through his pipe-stem, "to lay golden eggs for others to hatch."

"Come, no more of that now," cried Media. "Mohi, how long think you, may one of these pipe-bowls last?"

"My lord, like one's cranium, it will endure till broken. I have smoked this one of mine more than half a century."

"But unlike our craniums, stocked full of concretions," said Babbalanja, "our pipe-bowls never need clearing out."

"True," said Mohi, "they absorb the oil of the smoke, instead of allowing it offensively to incrust."

"Ay, the older the better," said Media, "and the more delicious the flavor imparted to the fumes inhaled."

"Farnoos forever! my lord," cried Yoomy. "By much smoking, the bowl waxes russet and mellow, like the berry-brown cheek of a sunburnt brunette."

"And as like smoked hams," cried Braid-Beard, "we veteran old smokers grow browner and browner; hugely do we admire to see our jolly noses and pipe-bowls mellowing together."

"Well said, old man," cried Babbalanja; "for, like a good wife, a pipe is a friend and companion for life. And whoso weds with a pipe, is no longer a bachelor. After many vexations, he may go home to that faithful counselor, and ever find it full of kind consolations and suggestions. But not thus with cigars or cigarrets: the acquaintances of a moment, chatted with in by-places, whenever they come handy; their existence so fugitive, uncertain, unsatisfactory. Once ignited, nothing like longevity pertains to them. They never grow old. Why, my lord, the stump of a cigarret is an abomination; and two of them crossed are more of a memento-mori, than a brace of thigh-bones at right angles."

"So they are, so they are," cried King Media. "Then, mortals, puff we away at our pipes. Puff, puff, I say. Ah! how we puff! But thus we

demi-gods ever puff at our ease."

"Puff; puff, how we puff," cried Babbalanja. "but life itself is a puff and a wheeze. Our lungs are two pipes which we constantly smoke."

"Puff, puff! how we puff," cried old Mohi. "All thought is a puff."

"Ay," said Babbalanja, "not more smoke in that skull-bowl of yours than in the skull on your shoulders: both ends alike."

"Puff! puff! how we puff," cried Yoomy. "But in every puff, there hangs a wreath. In every puff, off flies a care."

"Ay, there they go," cried Mohi, "there goes another--and, there, and there;--this is the way to get rid of them my worshipful lord; puff them aside."

"Yoomy," said Media, "give us that pipe song of thine. Sing it, my sweet and pleasant poet. We'll keep time with the flageolets of ours."

"So with pipes and puffs for a chorus, thus Yoomy sang:--

Care is all stuff:--

Puff! Puff:

To puff is enough:--

Puff! Puff!

More musky than snuff,  
And warm is a puff:--  
Puff! Puff!  
Here we sit mid our puffs,  
Like old lords in their ruffs,  
Snug as bears in their muffs:--  
Puff! Puff!  
Then puff, puff, puff;  
For care is all stuff,  
Puffed off in a puff:--  
Puff! Puff!

"Ay, puff away," cried Babbalanja, "puff; puff, so we are born, and so die. Puff, puff, my volcanos: the great sun itself will yet go out in a snuff, and all Mardi smoke out its last wick."

"Puffs enough," said King Media, "Vee-Vee! haul down my flag. There, lie down before me, oh Gonfalon! and, subjects, hear,--when I die, lay this spear on my right, and this pipe on my left, its colors at half mast; so shall I be ambidexter, and sleep between eloquent symbols."