

## CHAPTER XXIII

### What Manner Of Men The Tapparians Were

The canoes sailed on. But we leave them awhile. For our visit to Jiji, the last visit we made, suggests some further revelations concerning the dental money of Mardi.

Ere this, it should have been mentioned, that throughout the Archipelago, there was a restriction concerning incisors and molars, as ornaments for the person; none but great chiefs, brave warriors, and men distinguished by rare intellectual endowments, orators, romancers, philosophers, and poets, being permitted to sport them as jewels. Though, as it happened, among the poets there were many who had never a tooth, save those employed at their repasts; which, coming but seldom, their teeth almost corroded in their mouths. Hence, in commerce, poets' teeth were at a discount.

For these reasons, then, many mortals blent with the promiscuous mob of Mardians, who, by any means, accumulated teeth, were fain to assert their dental claims to distinction, by clumsily carrying their treasures in pelican pouches slung over their shoulders; which pouches were a huge burden to carry about, and defend. Though, in good truth, from any of these porters, it was harder to wrench his pouches, than his limbs. It was also a curious circumstance that at the slightest casual touch, these bags seemed to convey a simultaneous thrill to the

owners.

Besides these porters, there were others, who exchanged their teeth for richly stained calabashes, elaborately carved canoes, and more especially, for costly robes, and turbans; in which last, many outshone the noblest-born nobles. Nevertheless, this answered not the end they had in view; some of the crowd only admiring what they wore, and not them; breaking out into laudation of the inimitable handiwork of the artisans of Mardi.

And strange to relate, these artisans themselves often came to be men of teeth and turbans, sporting their bravery with the best. A circumstance, which accounted for the fact, that many of the class above alluded to, were considered capital judges of tappa and tailoring.

Hence, as a general designation, the whole tribe went by the name of Tappararians; otherwise, Men of Tappa.

Now, many moons ago, according to Braid-Beard, the Tappararians of a certain cluster of islands, seeing themselves hopelessly confounded with the plebeian race of mortals; such as artificers, honest men, bread-fruit bakers, and the like; seeing, in short, that nature had denied them every inborn mark of distinction; and furthermore, that their external assumptions were derided by so many in Mardi, these selfsame Tappararians, poor devils, resolved to secede from the rabble; form themselves into a community of their own; and conventionally pay

that homage to each other, which universal Mardi could not be prevailed upon to render to them.

Jointly, they purchased an island, called Pimminee, toward the extreme west of the lagoon; and thither they went; and framing a code of laws--amazingly arbitrary, considering they themselves were the framers--solemnly took the oath of allegiance to the commonwealth thus established. Regarded section by section, this code of laws seemed exceedingly trivial; but taken together, made a somewhat imposing aggregation of particles.

By this code, the minutest things in life were all ordered after a specific fashion. More especially one's dress was legislated upon, to the last warp and woof. All girdles must be so many inches in length, and with such a number of tassels in front. For a violation of this ordinance, before the face of all Mardi, the most dutiful of sons would cut the most affectionate of fathers.

Now, though like all Mardi, kings and slaves included, the people of Pimminee had dead dust for grandsires, they seldom reverted to that fact; for, like all founders of families, they had no family vaults.

Nor were they much encumbered by living connections; connections, some of them appeared to have none. Like poor Logan the last of his tribe, they seemed to have monopolized the blood of their race, having never a cousin to own.

Wherefore it was, that many ignorant Mardians, who had not pushed their investigations into the science of physiology, sagely divined, that the Tapparians must have podded into life like peas, instead of being otherwise indebted for their existence. Certain it is, they had a comical way of backing up their social pretensions. When the respectability of his clan was mooted, Paivai, one of their bucks, disdained all reference to the Dooms-day Book, and the ancients. More reliable evidence was had. He referred the anxious world to a witness, still alive and hearty,--his contemporary tailor; the varlet who cut out his tappa doublets, and rejoiced his soul with good fits.

"Ah!" sighed Babbalanja, "how it quenches in one the thought of immortality, to think that these Tapparians too, will hereafter claim each a niche!"

But we rove. Our visit to Pimminee itself, will best make known the ways of its denizens.