

## CHAPTER XXIV

### Their Adventures Upon Landing At Pimminee

A long sail over, the island of Pimminee came in sight; one dead fiat, wreathed in a thin, insipid vapor.

"My lord, why land?" said Babbalanja; "no Yillah is here."

"'Tis my humor, Babbalanja."

Said Yoomy, "Taji would leave no isle unexplored."

As we neared the beach, the atmosphere became still closer and more languid. Much did we miss the refreshing balm which breathed in the fine breezy air of the open lagoon. Of a slender and sickly growth seemed the trees; in the meadows, the grass grew small and mincing.

Said Media, "Taji, from the accounts which Braid-Beard gives, there must be much to amuse, in the ways of these Tapparrians."

"Yes," said Babbalanja, "their lives are a continual farce, gratuitously performed for the diversion of Mardi. My lord, perhaps we had best doff our dignity, and land among them as persons of lowly condition; for then, we shall receive more diversion, though less hospitality."

"A good proposition," said Media.

And so saying, he put off his robe for one less pretentious.

All followed suit; Yoomy doffing turban and sash; and, at last, completely metamorphosed, we looked like Hungarian gipsies.

Voyaging on, we entered a bay, where numbers of menials were standing in the water, engaged in washing the carved work of certain fantastic canoes, belonging to the Tapparrians, their masters.

Landing at some distance, we followed a path that soon conducted us to a betwisted dwelling of bamboos, where, gently, we knocked for admittance. So doing, we were accosted by a servitor, his portliness all in his calves. Marking our appearance, he monopolized the threshold, and gruffly demanded what was wanted.

"Strangers, kind sir, fatigued with travel, and in need of refreshment and repose."

"Then hence with ye, vagabonds!" and with an emphasis, he closed the portal in our face.

Said Babbalanja, turning, "You perceive, my lord Media, that these varlets take after their masters; who feed none but the well-fed, and

house none but the well-housed."

"Faith! but they furnish most rare entertainment, nevertheless," cried Media. "Ha! ha! Taji, we had missed much, had we missed Pimminee."

As this was said, we observed, at a distance, three menials running from seaward, as if conveying important intelligence.

Halting here and there, vainly seeking admittance at other habitations, and receiving nothing but taunts for our pains, we still wandered on; and at last came upon a village, toward which, those from the sea-side had been running.

And now, to our surprise, we were accosted by an eager and servile throng.

"Obsequious varlets," said Media, "where tarry your masters?"

"Right royal, and thrice worshipful Lord of Odo, do you take us for our domestics? We are Tapparrians, may it please your illustrious Highness; your most humble and obedient servants. We beseech you, supereminent Sir, condescend to visit our habitations, and partake of our cheer."

Then turning upon their attendants, "Away with ye, hounds! and set our dwellings in order."

"How know ye me to be king?" asked Media.

"Is it not in your serene Highness's regal port, and eye?"

"'Twas their menials," muttered Mohi, "who from the paddlers in charge of our canoes must have learned who my lord was, and published the tidings."

After some further speech, Media made a social surrender of himself to the foremost of the Tapparrians, one Nimni; who, conducting us to his abode, with much deference introduced us to a portly old Begum, and three slender damsels; his wife and daughters.

Soon, refreshments appeared:--green and yellow compounds, and divers enigmatical dainties; besides vegetable liqueurs of a strange and alarming flavor served in fragile little leaves, folded into cups, and very troublesome to handle.

Excessively thirsty, Babbalanja made bold to inquire for water; which called forth a burst of horror from the old Begum, and minor shrieks from her daughters; who declared, that the beverage to which remote reference had been made, was far too widely diffused in Mardi, to be at all esteemed in Pimminee.

"But though we seldom imbibe it," said the old Begum, ceremoniously

adjusting her necklace of cowrie-shells, "we occasionally employ it for medicinal purposes."

"Ah, indeed?" said Babbalanja.

"But oh! believe me; even then, we imbibe not the ordinary fluid of the springs and streams; but that which in afternoon showers softly drains from our palm-trees into the little hollow or miniature reservoir beneath its compacted roots."

A goblet of this beverage was now handed Babbalanja; but having a curious, gummy flavor, it proved any thing but palatable.

Presently, in came a company of young men, relatives of Nimni. They were slender as sky-sail-poles; standing in a row, resembled a picket-fence; and were surmounted by enormous heads of hair, combed out all round, variously dyed, and evened by being singed with a lighted wisp of straw. Like milliners' parcels, they were very neatly done up; wearing redolent robes.

"How like the woodlands they smell," whispered Yoomy. "Ay, marvelously like sap," said Mohi.

One part of their garniture consisted of numerous tasseled cords, like those of an aigulette, depending from the neck, and attached here and there about the person. A separate one, at a distance, united their

ankles. These served to measure and graduate their movements; keeping their gestures, paces, and attitudes, within the prescribed standard of Tapparian gentility. When they went abroad, they were preceded by certain footmen; who placed before them small, carved boards, whereon their masters stepped; thus avoiding contact with the earth. The simple device of a shoe, as a fixture for the foot, was unknown in Pimminee.

Being told, that Taji was lately from the sun, they manifested not the slightest surprise; one of them incidentally observing, however, that the eclipses there, must be a sad bore to endure.