

CHAPTER XXIX

They Still Remain Upon The Rock

"Gogle-goggle, fogle-fi, fogle-fogle-orum," so hummed to himself Babbalanja, slowly pacing over the fossils. "Is he crazy again?" whispered Yoomy.

"Are you crazy, Babbalanja?" asked Media.

"From my very birth have I been so, my lord; am I not possessed by a devil?"

"Then I'll e'en interrogate him," cried Media. "--Hark ye, sirrah;-- why rave you thus in this poor mortal?"

"'Tis he, not I. I am the mildest devil that ever entered man; in propria persona, no antlers do I wear; my tail has lost its barb, as at last your Mardian lions lose their caudal horns."

"A very sing-song devil this. But, prithee, who are you, sirrah?"

"The mildest devil that ever entered man; in propria persona, no antlers do I wear; my tail has lost its barb, as at last your Mardian lions lose their caudal horns."

"A very iterating devil this. Sirrah! mock me not. Know you aught yet unrevealed by Babbalanja?"

"Many things I know, not good to tell; whence they call me Azzageddi."

"A very confidential devil, this; that tells no secrets. Azzageddi, can I drive thee out?"

"Only with this mortal's ghost:--together we came in, together we depart."

"A very terse, and ready devil, this. Whence come you, Azzageddi?"

"Whither my catechist must go--a torrid clime, cut by a hot equator."

"A very keen, and witty devil, this. Azzageddi, whom have you there?"

"A right down merry, jolly set, that at a roaring furnace sit and toast their hoofs for aye; so used to flames, they poke the fire with their horns, and light their tails for torches."

"A very funny devil, this. Azzageddi, is not Mardi a place far pleasanter, than that from whence you came?"

"Ah, home! sweet, sweet, home! would, would that I were home again!"

"A very sentimental devil, this. Azzageddi, would you had a hand, I'd shake it."

"Not so with us; who, rear to rear, shake each other's tails, and courteously inquire, 'Pray, worthy sir, how now stands the great thermometer?'"

"The very prince of devils, this."

"How mad our Babbalanja is," cried Mohi. My lord, take heed; he'll bite."

"Alas! alas!" sighed Yoomy.

"Hark ye, Babbalanja," cried Media, "enough of this: doff your devil, and be a man."

"My lord, I can not doff him; but I'll down him for a time: Azzageddi! down, imp; down, down, down! so: now, my lord, I'm only Babbalanja."

"Shall I test his sanity, my lord?" cried Mohi.

"Do, old man."

"Philosopher, our great reef is surrounded by an ocean; what think you lies beyond?"

"Alas!" sighed Yoomy, "the very subject to renew his madness."

"Peace, minstrel!" said Media. "Answer, Babbalanja."

"I will, my lord. Fear not, sweet Yoomy; you see how calm I am. Braid-Beard, those strangers, that came to Mondoldo prove isles afar, as a philosopher of old surmised, but was hooted at for his surmisings. Nor is it at all impossible, Braid-Beard, that beyond their land may exist other regions, of which those strangers know not; peopled with races something like us Mardians; but perhaps with more exalted faculties, and organs that we lack. They may have some better seeing sense than ours; perhaps, have fins or wings for arms."

"This seems not like sanity," muttered Mohi.

"A most crazy hypothesis, truly," said Media.

"And are all inductions vain?" cried Babbalanja. "Have we mortals naught to rest on, but what we see with eyes? Is no faith to be reposed in that inner microcosm, wherein we see the charted universe in little, as the whole horizon is mirrored in the iris of a gnat? Alas! alas! my lord, is there no blest Odonphi? no Astrazzi?"

"His devil's uppermost again, my lord," cried Braid-Beard.

"He's stark, stark mad!" sighed Yoomy.

"Ay, the moon's at full," said Media. "Ho, paddlers! we depart."