

## CHAPTER XXX

### Behind And Before

It was yet moonlight when we pushed from the islet. But soon, the sky grew dun; the moon went into a cavern among the clouds; and by that secret sympathy between our hearts and the elements, the thoughts of all but Media became overcast.

Again discourse was had of that dark intelligence from Mondoldo,--the fell murder of Taji's follower.

Said Mohi, "Those specter sons of Aleema must have been the assassins."

"They harbored deadly malice," said Babbalanja.

"Which poor Jarl's death must now have sated," sighed Yoomy.

"Then all the happier for Taji," said Media. "But away with gloom! because the sky is clouded, why cloud your brows? Babbalanja, I grieve the moon is gone. Yet start some paradox, that we may laugh. Say a woman is a man, or you yourself a stork."

At this they smiled. When hurtling came an arrow, which struck our stern, and quivered. Another! and another! Grazing the canopy, they darted by, and hissing, dived like red-hot bars beneath the waves.

Starting, we beheld a corruscating wake, tracking the course of a low canoe, far flying for a neighboring mountain. The next moment it was lost within the mountain's shadow and pursuit was useless.

"Let us fly!" cried Yoomy

"Peace! What murderers these?" said Media, calmly; "whom can they seek?--you, Taji?"

"The three avengers fly three bolts," said Babbalanja. "See if the arrow yet remain astern," cried Media.

They brought it to him.

"By Oro! Taji on the barb!"

"Then it missed its aim. But I will not mine. And whatever arrows follow, still will I hunt on. Nor does the ghost, that these pale specters would avenge, at all disquiet me. The priest I slew, but to gain her, now lost; and I would slay again, to bring her back. Ah, Yillah! Yillah."

All started.

Then said Babbalanja, "Aleema's sons raved not; 'tis true, then, Taji,

that an evil deed gained you your Yillah: no wonder she is lost."

Said Media, unconcernedly, "Perhaps better, Taji, to have kept your secret; but tell no more; I care not to be your foe."

"Ah, Taji! I had shrank from you," cried Yoomy, "but for the mark upon your brow. That undoes the tenor of your words. But look, the stars come forth, and who are these? A waving Iris! ay, again they come:-- Hautia's heralds!"

They brought a black thorn, buried in withered rose-balm blossoms, red and blue.

Said Yoomy, "For that which stings, there is no cure,"

"Who, who is Hautia, that she stabs me thus?"

"And this wild sardony mocks your misery."

"Away! ye fiends."

"Again a Venus car; and lo! a wreath of strawberries!--Yet fly to me, and be garlanded with joys."

"Let the wild witch laugh. She moves me not. Neither hurtling arrows nor Circe flowers appall."

Said Yoomy, "They wait reply."

"Tell your Hautia, that I know her not; nor care to know. I defy her incantations; she lures in vain. Yillah! Yillah! still I hope!"

Slowly they departed; heeding not my cries no more to follow.

Silence, and darkness fell.