

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### Wherein Babbalanja And Yoomy Embrace

"How the isles grow and multiply around us!" cried Babbalanja, as turning the bold promontory of an uninhabited shore, many distant lands bluely loomed into view. "Surely, our brief voyage, may not embrace all Mardi like its reef?"

"No," said Media, "much must be left unseen. Nor every where can Yillah be sought, noble Taji."

Said Yoomy, "We are as birds, with pinions clipped, that in unfathomable and endless woods, but flit from twig to twig of one poor tree."

"More isles! more isles!" cried Babbalanja, erect, and gazing abroad. "And lo! round all is heaving that infinite ocean. Ah! gods! what regions lie beyond?"

"But whither now?" he cried, as in obedience to Media, the paddlers suddenly altered our course.

"To the bold shores of Diranda," said Media.

"Ay; the land of clubs and javelins, where the lord seigniors Hello

and Piko celebrate their famous games," cried Mohi.

"Your clubs and javelins," said Media, "remind me of the great battle-  
chant of Narvi--Yoomy!"--turning to the minstrel, gazing abstractedly  
into the water;--"awake, Yoomy, and give us the lines."

"My lord Media, 'tis but a rude, clanging thing; dissonant as if the  
north wind blew through it. Methinks the company will not fancy lines  
so inharmonious. Better sing you, perhaps, one of my sonnets."

"Better sit and sob in our ears, silly Yoomy that thou art!--no! no!  
none of your sentiment now; my soul is martially inclined; I want  
clarion peals, not lute warblings. So throw out your chest, Yoomy:  
lift high your voice; and blow me the old battle-blast.--Begin, sir  
minstrel."

And warning all, that he himself had not composed the odious chant,  
Yoomy thus:--

Our clubs! our clubs!  
The thousand clubs of Narvi!  
Of the living trunk of the Palm-tree made;  
Skull breakers! Brain spatterers!  
Wielded right, and wielded left;  
Life quenchers! Death dealers!  
Causing live bodies to run headless!

Our bows! our bows!

The thousand bows of Narvi!

Ribs of Tara, god of War!

Fashioned from the light Tola their arrows;

Swift messengers! Heart piercers!

Barbed with sharp pearl shells;

Winged with white tail-plumes;

To wild death-chants, strung with the hair of wild maidens!

Our spears! our spears!

The thousand spears of Narvi!

Of the thunder-riven Moo-tree made

Tall tree, couched on the long mountain Lana!

No staves for gray-beards! no rods for fishermen!

Tempered by fierce sea-winds,

Splintered into lances by lightnings,

Long arrows! Heart seekers!

Toughened by fire their sharp black points!

Our slings! our slings!

The thousand slings of Narvi!

All tasseled, and braided, and gayly bedecked.

In peace, our girdles; in war, our war-nets;

Wherewith catch we heads as fish from the deep!

The pebbles they hurl, have been hurled before,--

Hurled up on the beach by the stormy sea!  
Pebbles, buried erewhile in the head of the shark:  
To be buried erelong in the heads of our foes!  
Home of hard blows, our pouches!  
Nest of death-eggs! How quickly they hatch!

Uplift, and couch we our spears, men!  
Ring hollow on the rocks our war clubs!  
Bend we our bows, feel the points of our arrows:  
Aloft, whirl in eddies our sling-nets;  
To the fight, men of Narvi!  
Sons of battle! Hunters of men!  
Raise high your war-wood!  
Shout Narvi! her groves in the storm!

"By Oro!" cried Media, "but Yoomy has well nigh stirred up all Babbalanja's devils in me. Were I a mortal, I could fight now on a pretense. And did any man say me nay, I would charge upon him like a spear-point. Ah, Yoomy, thou and thy tribe have much to answer for; ye stir up all Mardi with your lays. Your war chants make men fight; your drinking songs, drunkards; your love ditties, fools. Yet there thou sittest, Yoomy, gentle as a dove.--What art thou, minstrel, that thy soft, singing soul should so master all mortals? Yoomy, like me, you sway a scepter."

"Thou honorest my calling overmuch," said Yoomy, we minstrels but sing

our lays carelessly, my lord Media."

"Ay: and the more mischief they make."

"But sometimes we poets are didactic."

"Didactic and dull; many of ye are but too apt to be prosy unless mischievous."

"Yet in our verses, my lord Media, but few of us purpose harm."

"But when all harmless to yourselves, ye may be otherwise to Mardi."

"And are not foul streams often traced to pure fountains, my lord?"  
said Babbalanja. "The essence of all good and all evil is in us, not out of us. Neither poison nor honey lodgeth in the flowers on which, side by side, bees and wasps oft alight. My lord, nature is an immaculate virgin, forever standing unrobed before us. True poets but paint the charms which all eyes behold. The vicious would be vicious without them."

"My lord Media," impetuously resumed Yoomy, "I am sensible of a thousand sweet, merry fancies, limpid with innocence; yet my enemies account them all lewd conceits."

"There be those in Mardi," said Babbalanja, "who would never ascribe

evil to others, did they not find it in their own hearts; believing none can be different from themselves."

"My lord, my lord!" cried Yoomy. "The air that breathes my music from me is a mountain air! Purer than others am I; for though not a woman, I feel in me a woman's soul."

"Ah, have done, silly Yoomy," said Media. "Thou art becoming flighty, even as Babbalanja, when Azzageddi is uppermost."

"Thus ever: ever thus!" sighed Yoomy. "They comprehend us not."

"Nor me," said Babbalanja. "Yoomy: poets both, we differ but in seeming; thy airiest conceits are as the shadows of my deepest ponderings; though Yoomy soars, and Babbalanja dives, both meet at last. Not a song you sing, but I have thought its thought; and where dull Mardi sees but your rose, I unfold its petals, and disclose a pearl. Poets are we, Yoomy, in that we dwell without us; we live in grottoes, palms, and brooks; we ride the sea, we ride the sky; poets are omnipresent."