

## CHAPTER XXXV

### They Visit The Lords Piko And Hello

In good time, we landed at Diranda. And that landing was like landing at Greenwich among the Waterloo pensioners. The people were docked right and left; some without arms; some without legs; not one with a tail; but to a man, all had heads, though rather the worse for wear; covered with lumps and contusions.

Now, those very magnificent and illustrious lord seigniors, the lord seigniors Hello and Piko, lived in a palace, round which was a fence of the cane called Malacca, each picket helmed with a skull, of which there were fifty, one to each cane. Over the door was the blended arms of the high and mighty houses of Hello and Piko: a Clavicle crossed over an Ulna.

Escorted to the sign of the Skull-and-Cross-Bones, we received the very best entertainment which that royal inn could afford. We found our hosts Hello and Piko seated together on a dais or throne, and now and then drinking some claret-red wine from an ivory bowl, too large to have been wrought from an elephant's tusk. They were in glorious good spirits, shaking ivory coins in a skull.

"What says your majesty?" said Piko. "Heads or tails?"

"Oh, heads, your majesty," said Hello.

"And heads say I," said Piko.

And heads it was. But it was heads on both sides, so both were sure to win.

And thus they were used to play merrily all day long; beheading the gourds of claret by one slicing blow with their sickle-shaped scepters. Wide round them lay empty calabashes, all feathered, red dyed, and betasseled, trickling red wine from their necks, like the decapitated pullets in the old baronial barn yard at Kenilworth, the night before Queen Bess dined with my lord Leicester.

The first compliments over; and Media and Taji having met with a reception suitable to their rank, the kings inquired, whether there were any good javelin-flingers among us: for if that were the case, they could furnish them plenty of sport. Informed, however, that none of the party were professional warriors, their majesties looked rather glum, and by way of chasing away the blues, called for some good old stuff, that was red.

It seems, this soliciting guests, to keep their spears from decaying, by cut and thrust play with their subjects, was a very common thing with their illustrious majesties.

But if their visitors could not be prevailed upon to spear a subject or so, our hospitable hosts resolved to have a few speared, and otherwise served up for our special entertainment. In a word, our arrival furnished a fine pretext for renewing their games; though, we learned, that only ten days previous, upward of fifty combatants had been slain at one of these festivals.

Be that as it might, their joint majesties determined upon another one; and also upon our tarrying to behold it. We objected, saying we must depart.

But we were kindly assured, that our canoes had been dragged out of the water, and buried in a wood; there to remain till the games were over.

The day fixed upon, was the third subsequent to our arrival; the interval being devoted to preparations; summoning from their villages and valleys the warriors of the land; and publishing the royal proclamations, whereby the unbounded hospitality of the kings' household was freely offered to all heroes whatsoever, who for the love of arms, and the honor of broken heads, desired to cross battle-clubs, hurl spears, or die game in the royal valley of Deddo.

Meantime, the whole island was in a state of uproarious commotion, and strangers were daily arriving.

The spot set apart for the festival, was a spacious down, mantled with white asters; which, waving in windrows, lay upon the land, like the cream-surf surging the milk of young heifers. But that whiteness, here and there, was spotted with strawberries; tracking the plain, as if wounded creatures had been dragging themselves bleeding from some deadly encounter. All round the down, waved scarlet thickets of sumach, moaning in the wind, like the gory ghosts environing Pharsalia the night after the battle; scaring away the peasants, who with bushel-baskets came to the jewel-harvest of the rings of Pompey's knights.

Beneath the heaped turf of this down, lay thousands of glorious corpses of anonymous heroes, who here had died glorious deaths.

Whence, in the florid language of Diranda, they called this field "The Field of Glory."