

## CHAPTER XLII

### Dominora And Vivenza

The three canoes still gliding on, some further particulars were narrated concerning Dominora; and incidentally, of other isles.

It seems that his love of wide dominion sometimes led the otherwise sagacious Bello into the most extravagant actions. If the chance accumulation of soil and drift-wood about any detached shelf of coral in the lagoon held forth the remotest possibility of the eventual existence of an islet there, with all haste he dispatched canoes to the spot, to take prospective possession of the as yet nearly submarine territory; and if possible, eject the zoophytes.

During an unusually low tide, here and there baring the outer reef of the Archipelago, Bello caused his royal spear to be planted upon every place thus exposed, in token of his supreme claim thereto.

Another anecdote was this: that to Dominora there came a rumor, that in a distant island dwelt a man with an uncommonly large nose; of most portentous dimensions, indeed; by the soothsayers supposed to foreshadow some dreadful calamity. But disregarding these superstitious conceits, Bello forthwith dispatched an agent, to discover whether this huge promontory of a nose was geographically available; if so, to secure the same, by bringing the proprietor back.

Now, by sapient old Mohi, it was esteemed a very happy thing for Mardi at large, that the subjects whom Bello sent to populate his foreign acquisitions, were but too apt to throw off their vassalage, so soon as they deemed themselves able to cope with him.

Indeed, a fine country in the western part of Mardi, in this very manner, became a sovereign--nay, a republican state. It was the nation to which Mohi had previously alluded--Vivenza. But in the flush and pride of having recently attained their national majority, the men of Vivenza were perhaps too much inclined to carry a vauntful crest. And because intrenched in their fastnesses, after much protracted fighting, they had eventually succeeded in repelling the warriors dispatched by Bello to crush their insurrection, they were unanimous in the opinion, that the hump-backed king had never before been so signally chastised. Whereas, they had not so much vanquished Bello, as defended their shores; even as a young lion will protect its den against legions of unicorns, though, away from home, he might be torn to pieces. In truth, Braid-Beard declared, that at the time of this war, Dominora couched ten long spears for every short javelin Vivenza could dart; though the javelins were stoutly hurled as the spears.

But, superior in men and arms, why, at last, gave over King Bello the hope of reducing those truculent men of Vivenza? One reason was, as Mohi said, that many of his fighting men were abundantly occupied in other quarters of Mardi; nor was he long in discovering that fight he

never so valiantly, Vivenza--not yet its inhabitants--was wholly unconquerable. Thought Bello, Mountains are sturdy foes; fate hard to dam.

Yet, the men of Vivenza were no dastards; not to lie, coming from lion-like loins, they were a lion-loined race. Did not their bards pronounce them a fresh start in the Mardian species; requiring a new world for their full development? For be it known, that the great land of Kolumbo, no inconsiderable part of which was embraced by Vivenza, was the last island discovered in the Archipelago.

In good round truth, and as if an impartialist from Arcturus spoke it, Vivenza was a noble land. Like a young tropic tree she stood, laden down with greenness, myriad blossoms, and the ripened fruit thick-hanging from one bough. She was promising as the morning.

Or Vivenza might be likened to St. John, feeding on locusts and wild honey, and with prophetic voice, crying to the nations from the wilderness. Or, child-like, standing among the old robed kings and emperors of the Archipelago, Vivenza seemed a young Messiah, to whose discourse the bearded Rabbis bowed.

So seemed Vivenza in its better aspect. Nevertheless, Vivenza was a braggadocio in Mardi; the only brave one ever known. As an army of spurred and crested roosters, her people chanted at the resplendent rising of their sun. For shame, Vivenza! Whence thy

undoubted valor? Did ye not bring it with ye from the bold old shores of Dominora, where there is a fullness of it left? What isle but Dominora could have supplied thee with that stiff spine of thine?-- That heart of boldest beat? Oh, Vivenza! know that true grandeur is too big for a boast; and nations, as well as men, may be too clever to be great.

But what more of King Bello? Notwithstanding his territorial acquisitiveness, and aversion to relinquishing stolen nations, he was yet a glorious old king; rather choleric--a word and a blow--but of a right royal heart. Rail at him as they might, at bottom, all the isles were proud of him. And almost in spite of his rapacity, upon the whole, perhaps, they were the better for his deeds. For if sometimes he did evil with no very virtuous intentions, he had fifty ways of accomplishing good with the best; and a thousand ways of doing good without meaning it. According to an ancient oracle, the hump-backed monarch was but one of the most conspicuous pieces on a board, where the gods played for their own entertainment.

But here it must not be omitted, that of late, King Bello had somewhat abated his efforts to extend his dominions. Various causes were assigned. Some thought it arose from the fact that already he found his territories too extensive for one scepter to rule; that his more remote colonies largely contributed to his tribulations, without correspondingly contributing to his revenues. Others affirmed that his hump was getting too mighty for him to carry; others still, that the

nations were waving too strong for him. With prophetic solemnity, head-shaking sages averred that he was growing older and older had passed his grand climacteric; and though it was a hale old age with him, yet it was not his lusty youth; that though he was daily getting rounder, and rounder in girth, and more florid of face, that these, howbeit, were rather the symptoms of a morbid obesity, than of a healthful robustness. These wise ones predicted that very soon poor Bello would go off in an apoplexy.

But in Vivenza there were certain blusterers, who often thus prated: "The Hump-back's hour is come; at last the old teamster will be gored by the nations he's yoked; his game is done,--let him show his hand and throw up his scepter; he cumpers Mardi,--let him be cut down and burned; he stands in the way of his betters,--let him sheer to one side; he has shut up many eyes, and now himself grows blind; he hath committed horrible atrocities during his long career, the old sinner! --now, let him quickly say his prayers and be beheaded."

Howbeit, Bello lived on; enjoying his dinners, and taking his jorums as of yore. Ah, I have yet a jolly long lease of life, thought he over his wine; and like unto some obstinate old uncle, he persisted in flourishing, in spite of the prognostications of the nephew nations, which at his demise, perhaps hoped to fall heir to odd parts of his possessions: Three streaks of fat valleys to one of lean mountains!