

## CHAPTER XLIII

### They Land At Dominora

As erewhile recounted, not being on the best terms in Mardi with the King of Dominora, Media saw fit to draw nigh unto his dominions in haughty state; he (Media) being upon excellent terms with himself. Our sails were set, our paddles paddling, streamers streaming, and Vee-Vee in the shark's mouth, clamorous with his conch. The din was soon heard; and sweeping into a fine broad bay we beheld its margin seemingly pebbled in the distance with heads; so populous the land.

Winding through a noble valley, we presently came to Bello's palace, couchant and bristling in a grove. The upright canes composing its front projected above the eaves in a long row of spear-heads fluttering with scarlet pennons; while below, from the intervals of the canes, were slantingly thrust three tiers of decorated lances. A warlike aspect! The entire structure looking like the broadside of the Macedonian phalanx, advancing to the charge, helmeted with a roof.

"Ah, Bello," said Media, "thou dwellest among thy quills like the porcupine."

"I feel a prickly heat coming over me," cried Mohi, "my lord Media, let us enter."

"Ay," said Babbalanja, "safer the center of peril, than the circumference."

Passing under an arch, formed by two pikes crossed, we found ourselves targets in prospective, for certain flingers of javelins, with poised weapons, occupying the angles of the palace.

Fronting us, stood a portly old warrior, spear in hand, hump on back, and fire in eye.

"Is it war?" he cried, pointing his pike, "or peace?" reversing it.

"Peace," said Media.

Whereupon advancing, King Bello courteously welcomed us.

He was an arsenal to behold: Upon his head the hereditary crown of Dominora,--a helmet of the sea-porcupine's hide, bristling all over with spikes, in front displaying a river-horse's horn, leveled to the charge; thrust through his ears were barbed arrows; and from his dyed shark-skin girdle, depended a kilt of strung javelins.

The broad chest of Bello was the chart of Mardi. Tattooed in sea-blue were all the groups and clusters of the Archipelago; and every time he breathed, rose and fell the isles, as by a tide: Dominora full upon his heart.

His sturdy thighs were his triumphal arch; whereon in numerous medallions, crests, and shields, were blazoned all his victories by sea and land.

His strong right arm was Dominora's scroll of Fame, where all her heroes saw their names recorded.--An endless roll!

Our chronicler avouched, that on the sole of Bello's dexter foot was stamped the crest of Franko's king, his hereditary foe. "Thus, thus," cried Bello, stamping, "thus I hourly crush him."

In stature, Bello was a mountaineer; but, as over some tall tower impends the hill-side cliff, so Bello's Athos hump hung over him. Could it be, as many of his nobles held, that the old monarch's hump was his sensorium and source of strength; full of nerves, muscles, ganglions and tendons? Yet, year by year it grew, ringed like the bole of his palms. The toils of war increased it. But another skirmish with the isles, said the wiseacres of Porpheero, and Bello's mount will crush him.

Against which calamity to guard, his medicos and Sangredos sought the hump's reduction. But down it would not come. Then by divers mystic rites, his magi tried. Making a deep pit, many teeth they dropped therein. But they could not fill it. Hence, they called it the Sinking Pit, for bottom it had none. Nevertheless, the magi said, when this

pit is filled, Bello's hump you'll see no more. "Then, hurrah for the hump!" cried the nobles, "for he will never hurl it off. Long life to the hump! By the hump we will rally and die! Cheer up, King Bello! Stand up, old king!"

But these were they, who when their sovereign went abroad, with that Athos on his back, followed idly in its shade; while Bello leaned heavily upon his people, staggering as they went.

Ay, sorely did Bello's goodly stature lean; but though many swore he soon must fall; nevertheless, like Pisa's Leaning Tower, he may long lean over, yet never nod.

Visiting Dominora in a friendly way, in good time, we found King Bello very affable; in hospitality, almost exceeding portly Borabolla: October-plenty reigned throughout his palace borders.

Our first reception over, a sumptuous repast was served, at which much lively talk was had.

Of Taji, Bello sought to know, whether his solar Majesty had yet made a province of the moon; whether the Astral hosts were of much account as territories, or mere Motoos, as the little tufts of verdure are denominated, here and there clinging to Mardi's circle reef; whether the people in the sun vilified, him (Bello) as they did in Mardi; and what they thought of an event, so ominous to the liberties of the

universe, as the addition to his navy of three large canoes.

Ere long, so fused in social love we grew, that Bello, filling high  
his can, and clasping Media's palm, drank everlasting amity with Odo.

So over their red cups, the two kings forgot their differences, and  
concerning the disputed islet nothing more was ever heard; especially,  
as it so turned out, that while they Were most hot about it, it had  
suddenly gone out of sight, being of volcanic origin.