

## CHAPTER LVII

### They Hearken Unto A Voice From The Gods

Next day we retraced our voyage northward, to visit that section of Vivenza.

In due time we landed.

To look round was refreshing. Of all the lands we had seen, none looked more promising. The groves stood tall and green; the fields spread flush and broad; the dew of the first morning seemed hardly vanished from the grass. On all sides was heard the fall of waters, the swarming of bees, and the rejoicing hum of a thriving population.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Yoomy, "Labor laughs in this land; and claps his hands in the jubilee groves! methinks that Yillah will yet be found."

Generously entertained, we tarried in this land; till at length, from over the Lagoon, came full tidings of the eruption we had witnessed in Franko, with many details. The conflagration had spread through Porpheero and the kings were to and fro hunted, like malefactors by blood-hounds; all that part of Mardi was heaving with throes.

With the utmost delight, these tidings were welcomed by many; yet others heard them with boding concern.

Those, too, there were, who rejoiced that the kings were cast down; but mourned that the people themselves stood not firmer. A victory, turned to no wise and enduring account, said they, is no victory at all. Some victories revert to the vanquished.

But day by day great crowds ran down to the beach, in wait for canoes periodically bringing further intelligence.

Every hour new cries startled the air. "Hurrah! another, kingdom is burnt down to the earth's edge; another demigod is unhelmed; another republic is dawning. Shake hands, freemen, shake hands! Soon will we hear of Dominora down in the dust; of hapless Verdanna free as ourselves; all Porpheero's volcanoes are bursting! Who may withstand the people? The times tell terrible tales to tyrants! Ere we die, freemen, all Mardi will be free."

Overhearing these shouts, Babbalanja thus addressed Media:--"My lord, I can not but believe, that these men, are far more excited than those with whom they so ardently sympathize. But no wonder. The single discharges which are heard in Porpheero; here come condensed in one tremendous report. Every arrival is a firing off of events by platoons."

Now, during this tumultuous interval, King Media very prudently kept himself exceedingly quiet. He doffed his regalia; and in all things carried himself with a dignified discretion. And many hours he

absented himself; none knowing whither he went, or what his employment.

So also with Babbalanja. But still pursuing our search, at last we all journeyed into a great valley, whose inhabitants were more than commonly inflated with the ardor of the times.

Rambling on, we espied a clamorous crowd gathered about a conspicuous palm, against which, a scroll was fixed.

The people were violently agitated; storming out maledictions against the insolent knave, who, over night must have fixed there, that scandalous document. But whoever he may have been, certain it was, he had contrived to hood himself effectually.

After much vehement discussion, during which sundry inflammatory harangues were made from the stump's of trees near by, it was proposed, that the scroll should be read aloud, so that all might give ear.

Seizing it, a fiery youth mounted upon the bowed shoulders of an old man, his sire; and with a shrill voice, ever and anon interrupted by outcries, read as follows:--

"Sovereign-kings of Vivenza! it is fit you should hearken to wisdom. But well aware, that you give ear to little wisdom except of your own; and that as freemen, you are free to hunt down him who dissents from

your majesties; I deem it proper to address you anonymously.

"And if it please you, you may ascribe this voice to the gods: for never will you trace it to man.

"It is not unknown, sovereign-kings! that in these boisterous days, the lessons of history are almost discarded, as superseded by present experiences. And that while all Mardi's Present has grown out of its Past, it is becoming obsolete to refer to what has been. Yet, peradventure, the Past is an apostle.

"The grand error of this age, sovereign-kings! is the general supposition, that the very special Diabolus is abroad; whereas, the very special Diabolus has been abroad ever since Mardi began.

"And the grand error of your nation, sovereign-kings! seems this:--The conceit that Mardi is now in the last scene of the last act of her drama; and that all preceding events were ordained, to bring about the catastrophe you believe to be at hand,--a universal and permanent Republic.

"May it please you, those who hold to these things are fools, and not wise.

"Time is made up of various ages; and each thinks its own a novelty. But imbedded in the walls of the pyramids, which outrun all

chronologies, sculptured stones are found, belonging to yet older fabrics. And as in the mound-building period of yore, so every age thinks its erections will forever endure. But as your forests grow apace, sovereign-kings! overrunning the tumuli in your western vales; so, while deriving their substance from the past, succeeding generations overgrow it; but in time, themselves decay.

"Oro decrees these vicissitudes.

"In chronicles of old, you read, sovereign kings! that an eagle from the clouds presaged royalty to the fugitive Taquinoo; and a king, Taquinoo reigned; No end to my dynasty, thought he.

"But another omen descended, foreshadowing the fall of Zooperbi, his son; and Zooperbi returning from his camp, found his country a fortress against him. No more kings would she have. And for five hundred twelve-moons the Regifugium or King's-flight, was annually celebrated like your own jubilee day. And rampant young orators stormed out detestation of kings; and augurs swore that their birds presaged immortality to freedom.

"Then, Romara's free eagles flew over all Mardi, and perched on the topmost diadems of the east.

"Ever thus must it be.

"For, mostly, monarchs are as gemmed bridles upon the world, checking the plungings of a steed from the Pampas. And republics are as vast reservoirs, draining down all streams to one level; and so, breeding a fullness which can not remain full, without overflowing. And thus, Romara flooded all Mardi, till scarce an Ararat was left of the lofty kingdoms which had been.

"Thus, also, did Franko, fifty twelve-moons ago. Thus may she do again. And though not yet, have you, sovereign-kings! in any large degree done likewise, it is because you overflow your redundancies within your own mighty borders; having a wild western waste, which many shepherds with their flocks could not overrun in a day. Yet overrun at last it will be; and then, the recoil must come.

"And, may it please you, that thus far your chronicles had narrated a very different story, had your population been pressed and packed, like that of your old sire-land Dominora. Then, your great experiment might have proved an explosion; like the chemist's who, stirring his mixture, was blown by it into the air.

"For though crossed, and recrossed by many brave quarterings, and boasting the great Bull in your pedigree; yet, sovereign-kings! you are not meditative philosophers like the people of a small republic of old; nor enduring stoics, like their neighbors. Pent up, like them, may it please you, your thirteen original tribes had proved more turbulent, than so many mutinous legions. Free horses need wide

prairies; and fortunate for you, sovereign-kings! that you have room enough, wherein to be free.

"And, may it please you, you are free, partly, because you are young. Your nation is like a fine, florid youth, full of fiery impulses, and hard to restrain; his strong hand nobly championing his heart. On all sides, freely he gives, and still seeks to acquire. The breath of his nostrils is like smoke in spring air; every tendon is electric with generous resolves. The oppressor he defies to his beard; the high walls of old opinions he scales with a bound. In the future he sees all the domes of the East.

"But years elapse, and this bold boy is transformed. His eyes open not as of yore; his heart is shut up as a vice. He yields not a groat; and seeking no more acquisitions, is only bent on preserving his hoard. The maxims once trampled under foot, are now printed on his front; and he who hated oppressors, is become an oppressor himself.

"Thus, often, with men; thus, often, with nations. Then marvel not, sovereign-kings! that old states are different from yours; and think not, your own must forever remain liberal as now.

"Each age thinks its own is eternal. But though for five hundred twelve-moons, all Romara, by courtesy of history, was republican; yet, at last, her terrible king-tigers came, and spotted themselves with gore.

"And time was, when Dominora was republican, down to her sturdy backbone. The son of an absolute monarch became the man Karolus; and his crown and head, both rolled in the dust. And Dominora had her patriots by thousands; and lusty Defenses, and glorious Areopagiticus were written, not since surpassed; and no turban was doffed save in homage of Oro.

"Yet, may it please you, to the sound of pipe and tabor, the second King Karolus returned in good time; and was hailed gracious majesty by high and low.

"Throughout all eternity, the parts of the past are but parts of the future reversed. In the old foot-prints, up and down, you mortals go, eternally traveling your Sierras. And not more infallible the ponderings of the Calculating Machine than the deductions from the decimals of history.

"In nations, sovereign-kings! there is a transmigration of souls; in you, is a marvelous destiny. The eagle of Romara revives in your own mountain bird, and once more is plumed for her flight. Her screams are answered by the vauntful cries of a hawk; his red comb yet reeking with slaughter. And one East, one West, those bold birds may fly, till they lock pinions in the midmost beyond.

"But, soaring in the sky over the nations that shall gather their



broods under their wings, that bloody hawk may hereafter be taken for the eagle.

"And though crimson republics may rise in constellations, like fiery Aldebarans, speeding to their culminations; yet, down must they sink at last, and leave the old sultan-sun in the sky; in time, again to be deposed.

"For little longer, may it please you, can republics subsist now, than in days gone by. For, assuming that Mardi is wiser than of old; nevertheless, though all men approached sages in intelligence, some would yet be more wise than others; and so, the old degrees be preserved. And no exemption would an equality of knowledge furnish, from the inbred servility of mortal to mortal; from all the organic causes, which inevitably divide mankind into brigades and battalions, with captains at their head.

"Civilization has not ever been the brother of equality. Freedom was born among the wild eyries in the mountains; and barbarous tribes have sheltered under her wings, when the enlightened people of the plain have nestled under different pinions.

"Though, thus far, for you, sovereign-kings! your republic has been fruitful of blessings; yet, in themselves, monarchies are not utterly evil. For many nations, they are better than republics; for many, they will ever so remain. And better, on all hands, that peace should rule

with a scepter, than than the tribunes of the people should brandish their broadswords. Better be the subject of a king, upright and just; than a freeman in Franko, with the executioner's ax at every corner.

"It is not the prime end, and chief blessing, to be politically free. And freedom is only good as a means; is no end in itself Nor, did man fight it out against his masters to the haft, not then, would he uncollar his neck from the yoke. A born thrall to the last, yelping out his liberty, he still remains a slave unto Oro; and well is it for the universe, that Oro's scepter is absolute.

"World-old the saying, that it is easier to govern others, than oneself. And that all men should govern themselves as nations, needs that all men be better, and wiser, than the wisest of one-man rulers. But in no stable democracy do all men govern themselves. Though an army be all volunteers, martial law must prevail. Delegate your power, you leagued mortals must. The hazard you must stand. And though unlike King Bello of Dominora, your great chieftain, sovereign-kings! may not declare war of himself; nevertheless, has he done a still more imperial thing:--gone to war without declaring intentions. You yourselves were precipitated upon a neighboring nation, ere you knew your spears were in your hands.

"But, as in stars you have written it on the welkin, sovereign-kings! you are a great and glorious people. And verily, yours is the best and happiest land under the sun. But not wholly, because you, in your

wisdom, decreed it: your origin and geography necessitated it. Nor, in their germ, are all your blessings to be ascribed to the noble sires, who of yore fought in your behalf, sovereign-kings! Your nation enjoyed no little independence before your Declaration declared it. Your ancient pilgrims fathered your liberty; and your wild woods harbored the nursling. For the state that to-day is made up of slaves, can not to-morrow transmute her bond into free; though lawlessness may transform them into brutes. Freedom is the name for a thing that is not freedom; this, a lesson never learned in an hour or an age. By some tribes it will never be learned.

"Yet, if it please you, there may be such a thing as being free under Caesar. Ages ago, there were as many vital freemen, as breathe vital air to-day.

"Names make not distinctions; some despots rule without swaying scepters. Though King Bello's palace was not put together by yoked men; your federal temple of freedom, sovereign-kings! was the handiwork of slaves.

"It is not gildings, and gold maces, and crown jewels alone, that make a people servile. There is much bowing and cringing among you yourselves, sovereign-kings! Poverty is abased before riches, all Mardi over; any where, it is hard to be a debtor; any where, the wise will lord it over fools; every where, suffering is found.

"Thus, freedom is more social than political. And its real felicity is not to be shared. That is of a man's own individual getting and holding. It is not, who rules the state, but who rules me. Better be secure under one king, than exposed to violence from twenty millions of monarchs, though oneself be of the number.

"But superstitious notions you harbor, sovereign kings! Did you visit Dominora, you would not be marched straight into a dungeon. And though you would behold sundry sights displeasing, you would start to inhale such liberal breezes; and hear crowds boasting of their privileges; as you, of yours. Nor has the wine of Dominora, a monarchical flavor.

"Now, though far and wide, to keep equal pace with the times, great reforms, of a verity, be needed; nowhere are bloody revolutions required. Though it be the most certain of remedies, no prudent invalid opens his veins, to let out his disease with his life. And though all evils may be assuaged; all evils can not be done away. For evil is the chronic malady of the universe; and checked in one place, breaks forth in another.

"Of late, on this head, some wild dreams have departed.

"There are many, who erewhile believed that the age of pikes and javelins was passed; that after a heady and blustering youth, old Mardi was at last settling down into a serene old age; and that the Indian summer, first discovered in your land, sovereign kings! was the

hazy vapor emitted from its tranquil pipe. But it has not so proved.  
Mardi's peaces are but truces. Long absent, at last the red comets  
have returned. And return they must, though their periods be ages. And  
should Mardi endure till mountain melt into mountain, and all the isles  
form one table-land; yet, would it but expand the old battle-plain.

"Students of history are horror-struck at the massacres of old; but in  
the shambles, men are being murdered to-day. Could time be reversed,  
and the future change places with the past, the past would cry out  
against us, and our future, full as loudly, as we against the ages  
foregone. All the Ages are his children, calling each other names.

"Hark ye, sovereign-kings! cheer not on the yelping pack too  
furiously: Hunters have been torn by their hounds. Be advised; wash  
your hands. Hold aloof. Oro has poured out an ocean for an everlasting  
barrier between you and the worst folly which other republics have  
perpetrated. That barrier hold sacred. And swear never to cross over  
to Porpheero, by manifesto or army, unless you traverse dry land.

"And be not too grasping, nearer home. It is not freedom to filch.  
Expand not your area too widely, now. Seek you proselytes?  
Neighboring nations may be free, without coming under your banner. And  
if you can not lay your ambition, know this: that it is best served,  
by waiting events.

"Time, but Time only, may enable you to cross the equator; and give

you the Arctic Circles for your boundaries."

So read the anonymous scroll; which straightway, was torn into shreds.

"Old tory, and monarchist!" they shouted, "Preaching over his benighted sermons in these enlightened times! Fool! does he not know that all the Past and its graves are being dug over?"

They were furious; so wildly rolling their eyes after victims, that well was it for King Media, he wore not his crown; and in silence, we moved unnoted from out the crowd.

"My lord, I am amazed at the indiscretion of a demigod," said Babbalanja, as we passed on our way; "I recognized your sultanic style the very first sentence. This, then, is the result of your hours of seclusion."

"Philosopher! I am astounded at your effrontery. I detected your philosophy the very first maxim. Who posted that parchment for you?"

So, each charged the other with its authorship: and there was no finding out, whether, indeed, either knew aught of its origin.

Now, could it have been Babbalanja? Hardly. For, philosophic as the document was, it seemed too dogmatic and conservative for him. King

Media? But though imperially absolute in his political sentiments, Media delivered not himself so boldly, when actually beholding the eruption in Franko.

Indeed, the settlement of this question must be left to the commentators on Mardi, some four or five hundred centuries hence.