

CHAPTER LXIII

They Seek Through The Isles Of Palms; And Pass The Isles Of Myrrh

Now, our prows we turned due west, across the blue lagoon.

Soon, no land appeared. Far as the eye could sweep, one azure plain;
all over flaked with foamy fleeces:--a boundless flock upon a
boundless mead!

Again, all changed. Like stars in multitude, bright islets multiplied
around. Emerald-green, they dotted shapes fantastic: circles, arcs,
and crescents;--atolls all, or coral carcanets, begemmed and flashing
in the sun.

By these we glided, group after group; and through the foliage, spied
sweet forms of maidens, like Eves in Edens ere the Fall, or
Proserpines in Ennas. Artless airs came from the shore; and from the
censer-swinging roses, a bloom, as if from Hebe's cheek.

"Here, at last, we find sweet Yillah!" murmured Yoomy. "Here must she
lurk in innocence! Quick! Let us land and search."

"If here," said Babbalanja, "Yillah will not stay our coming, but fly
before us through the groves. Wherever a canoe is beached, see you not
the palm-trees pine? Not so, where never keel yet smote the strand. In

mercy, let us fly from hence. I know not why, but our breath here,
must prove a blight."

These regions passed, we came to savage islands, where the glittering
coral seemed bones imbedded, bleaching in the sun. Savage men stood
naked on the strand, and brandished uncouth clubs, and gnashed their
teeth like boars.

The full red moon was rising; and, in long review there passed before
it, phantom shapes of victims, led bound to altars through the groves.
Death-rattles filled the air. But a cloud descended, and all was gloom.

Again blank water spread before us; and after many days, there came a
gentle breeze, fraught with all spicy breathings; cinnamon aromas; and
in the rose-flushed evening air, like glow worms, glowed the islets,
where this incense burned.

"Sweet isles of myrh! oh crimson groves," cried Yoomy. "Woe, woe's
your fate! your brightness and your bloom, like musky fire-flies,
double-lure to death! On ye, the nations prey like bears that gorge
themselves with honey."

Swan-like, our prows sailed in among these isles; and oft we landed;
but in vain; and leaving them, we still pursued the setting sun.