

CHAPTER LXIV

Concentric, Inward, With Mardi's Reef, They Leave Their Wake Around
The World

West, West! West, West! Whitherward point Hope and prophet-fingers;
whitherward, at sun-set, kneel all worshipers of fire; whitherward in
mid-ocean, the great whales turn to die; whitherward face all the
Moslem dead in Persia; whitherward lie Heaven and Hell!--West, West!
Whitherward mankind and empires--flocks, caravans, armies, navies;
worlds, suns, and stars all wend!--West, West!--Oh boundless boundary!
Eternal goal! Whitherward rush, in thousand worlds, ten thousand
thousand keels! Beacon, by which the universe is steered!--Like the
north-star, attracting all needles! Unattainable forever; but forever
leading to great things this side thysel!--Hive of all sunsets!--
Gabriel's pinions may not overtake thee!

Over balmy waves, still westward sailing! From dawn till eve, the
bright, bright days sped on, chased by the gloomy nights; and, in
glory dying, lent their luster to the starry skies. So, long the
radiant dolphins fly before the sable sharks but seized, and torn in
flames--die, burning:--their last splendor left, in sparkling scales
that float along the sea.

Cymbals, drums and psalteries! the air beats like a pulse with music!
--High land! high land! and moving lights, and painted lanterns!--What

grand shore is this?

"Reverence we render thee, Old Orienda!" cried Media, with bared brow,
"Original of all empires and emperors!--a crowned king salutes thee!"

"Mardi's father-land!" cried Mohi, "grandsire of the nations,--hail!"

"All hail!" cried Yoomy. "Kings and sages hither coming, should come like palmers,--scrip and staff! Oh Orienda! thou wert our East, where first dawned song and science, with Mardi's primal mornings! But now, how changed! the dawn of light become a darkness, which we kindle with the gleam of spears! On the world's ancestral hearth, we spill our brothers' blood!"

"Herein," said Babbalanja, "have many distant tribes proved parricidal. In times gone by, Luzianna hither sent her prom; Franko, her scores of captains; and the Dykemen, their peddler hosts, with yard-stick spears! But thou, oh Bello! lord of the empire lineage! Noah of the moderns. Sire of the long line of nations yet in germ!-- thou, Bello, and thy locust armies, are the present curse of Orienda. Down ancient streams, from holy plains, in rafts thy murdered float! The pestilence that thins thy armies here, is bred of corpses, made by thee. Maramma's priests, thy pious heralds, loud proclaim that of all pagans, Orienda's most resist the truth!--ay! vain all pious voices, that speak from clouds of war! The march of conquest through wild provinces, may be the march of Mind; but not the march of Love."

"Thou, Bello!" cried Yoomy, "would'st wrest the crook from Alma's hand, and place in it a spear. But vain to make a conqueror of him, who put off the purple when he came to Mardi; and declining gilded miters, entered the nations meekly on an ass."

"Oh curse of commerce!" cried Babbalanja, "that it barter souls for gold. Bello! with opium, thou wouldst drug this land, and murder it in sleep!--And what boot thy conquests here? Seed sown by spears but seldom springs; and harvests reaped thereby, are poisoned by the sickle's edge."

Yet on, and on we coasted; counting not the days.

"Oh, folds and flocks of nations! dusky tribes innumerable!" cried Yoomy, "camped on plains and steppes; on thousand mountains, worshiping the stars; in thousand valleys, offering up first-fruits, till all the forests seem in flames;--where, in fire, the widow's spirit mounts to meet her lord!--Oh, Orienda, in thee 'tis vain to seek our Yillah!"

"How dark as death the night!" said Mohi, shaking the dew from his braids, "the Heavens blaze not here with stars, as over Dominora's land, and broad Vivenza."

One only constellation was beheld; but every star was brilliant as the

one, that promises the morning. That constellation was the Crux-Australis,--the badge, and type of Alma.

And now, southwest we steered, till another island vast, was reached;--Hamora! far trending toward the Antarctic Pole.

Coasting on by barbarous beaches, where painted men, with spears, charged on all attempts to land, at length we rounded a mighty bluff, lit by a beacon; and heard a bugle call:--Bello's! hurrying to their quarters, the World-End's garrison.

Here, the sea rolled high, in mountain surges: mid which, we toiled and strained, as if ascending cliffs of Caucasus.

But not long thus. As when from howling Rhoetian heights, the traveler spies green Lombardy below, and downward rushes toward that pleasant plain; so, sloping from long rolling swells, at last we launched upon the calm lagoon.

But as we northward sailed, once more the storm-trump blew, and charger-like, the seas ran mustering to the call; and in battalions crouched before a towering rock, far distant from the main. No moon, eclipsed in Egypt's skies, looked half so lone. But from out that darkness, on the loftiest peak, Bello's standard waved.

"Oh rifled tomb!" cried Babbalanja. "Wherein lay the Mars and

Moloch of our times, whose constellated crown, was gemmed with diadems. Thou god of war! who didst seem the devouring Beast of the Apocalypse; casting so vast a shadow over Mardi, that yet it lingers in old Franko's vale; where still they start at thy tremendous ghost; and, late, have hailed a phantom, King! Almighty hero-spell! that after the lapse of half a century, can so bewitch all hearts! But one drop of hero-blood will deify a fool.

"Franko! thou wouldst be free; yet thy free homage is to the buried ashes of a King; thy first choice, the exaltation of his race. In furious fires, thou burn'st Ludwig's throne; and over thy new-made chieftain's portal, in golden letters print'st--'The Palace of our Lord!' In thy New Dispensation, thou cleavest to the exploded Law. And on Freedom's altar--ah, I fear--still, may slay thy hecatombs. But Freedom turns away; she is sick with burnt blood of offerings. Other rituals she loves; and like Oro, unseen herself, would be worshiped only by invisibles. Of long drawn cavalcades, pompous processions, frenzied banners, mystic music, marching nations, she will none. Oh, may thy peaceful Future, Franko, sanctify thy bloody Past. Let not history say; 'To her old gods, she turned again.'"

This rocky islet passed, the sea went down; once more we neared Hamora's western shore. In the deep darkness, here and there, its margin was lit up by foam-white, breaking billows rolled over from Vivenza's strand, and down from northward Dominora; marking places where light was breaking in, upon the interior's jungle-gloom.

In heavy sighs, the night-winds from shore came over us.

"Ah, vain to seek sweet Yillah here," cried Yoomy.--"Poor land! curst of man, not Oro! how thou faintest for thy children, torn from thy soil, to till a stranger's. Vivenza! did these winds not spend their plaints, ere reaching thee, thy every vale would echo them. Oh, tribe of Hamo! thy cup of woe so brims, that soon it must overflow upon the land which holds ye thralls. No misery born of crime, but spreads and poisons wide. Suffering hunteth sin, as the gaunt hound the hare, and tears it in the greenest brakes."

Still on we sailed: and after many tranquil days and nights, a storm came down, and burst its thousand bombs. The lightnings forked and flashed; the waters boiled; our three prows lifted themselves in supplication; but the billows smote them as they reared.

Said Babbalanja, bowing to the blast: "Thus, oh Vivenza! retribution works! Though long delayed, it comes at last--Judgment, with all her bolts."

Now, a current seized us, and like three darts, our keels sped eastward, through a narrow strait, far in, upon a smooth expanse, an inland ocean, without a throb.

On our left, Porpheero's southwest point, a mighty rock, long tiers of

galleries within, deck on deck; and flag-staffs, like an admiral's masts: a line-of-battle-ship, all purple stone, and anchored in the sea. Here Bello's lion crouched; and, through a thousand port-holes, eyed the world.

On our right, Hamora's northern shore gleamed thick with crescents; numerous as the crosses along the opposing strand.

"How vain to say, that progress is the test of truth, my lord," said Babbalanja, "when, after many centuries, those crescents yet unwaning shine, and count a devotee for every worshiper of yonder crosses. Truth and Merit have other symbols than success; and in this mortal race, all competitors may enter; and the field is clear for all. Side by side, Lies run with Truths, and fools with wise; but, like geometric lines, though they pierce infinity, never may they join."

Over that tideless sea we sailed; and landed right, and landed left; but the maiden never found; till, at last, we gained the water's limit; and inland saw great pointed masses, crowned with halos.

"Granite continents," cried Babbalanja, "that seem created like the planets, not built with human hands. Lo, Landmarks! upon whose flanks Time leaves its traces, like old tide-rips of diluvian seas."

As, after wandering round and round some purple dell, deep in a boundless prairie's heart, the baffled hunter plunges in; then,

despairing, turns once more to gain the open plain; even so we seekers
now curved round our keels; and from that inland sea emerged. The
universe again before us; our quest, as wide.