

## CHAPTER LXXVIII

### They Embark

Next morning, King Abrazza sent frigid word to Media that the day was very fine for yachting; but he much regretted that indisposition would prevent his making one of the party, who that morning doubtless would depart his isle.

"My compliments to your king," said Media to the chamberlains, "and say the royal notice to quit was duly received."

"Take Azzageddi's also," said Babbalanja; "and say, I hope his Highness will not fail in his appointment with me:--the first midnight after he dies; at the grave-yard corner;--there I'll be, and grin again!"

Sailing on, the next land we saw was thickly wooded: hedged round about by mangrove trees; which growing in the water, yet lifted high their boughs. Here and there were shady nooks, half verdure and half water. Fishes rippled, and canaries sung.

"Let us break through, my lord," said Yoomy, "and seek the shore. Its solitudes must prove reviving." "Solitudes they are," cried Mohi.

"Peopled but not enlivened," said Babbalanja. "Hard landing here, minstrel! see you not the isle is hedged?"

"Why, break through, then," said Media. "Yillah is not here."

"I mistrusted it," sighed Yoomy; "an imprisoned island! full of uncomplaining woes: like many others we must have glided by, unheedingly. Yet of them have I heard. This isle many pass, marking its outward brightness, but dreaming not of the sad secrets here embowered. Haunt of the hopeless! In those inland woods brood Mardians who have tasted Mardi, and found it bitter--the draught so sweet to others!--maidens whose unimpacted bloom has cankered in the bud; and children, with eyes averted from life's dawn--like those new-opened morning blossoms which, foreseeing storms, turn and close."

"Yoomy's rendering of the truth," said Mohi.

"Why land, then?" said Media. "No merry man of sense--no demi-god like me, will do it. Let's away; let's see all that's pleasant, or that seems so, in our circuit, and, if possible, shun the sad."

"Then we have circled not the round reef wholly," said Babbalanja, "but made of it a segment. For this is far from being the first sad land, my lord, that we have slighted at your instance."

"No more. I will have no gloom. A chorus! there, ye paddlers! spread all your sails; ply paddles; breeze up, merry winds!"

And so, in the saffron sunset, we neared another shore.

A gloomy-looking land! black, beetling crags, rent by volcanic clefts; ploughed up with water-courses, and dusky with charred woods. The beach was strewn with scoria and cinders; in dolorous soughs, a chill wind blew; wails issued from the caves; and yellow, spooming surges, lashed the moaning strand.

"Shall we land?" said Babbalanja.

"Not here," cried Yoomy; "no Yillah here."

"No," said Media. "This is another of those lands far better to avoid."

"Know ye not," said Mohi, "that here are the mines of King Klanko, whose scourged slaves, toiling in their pits, so nigh approach the volcano's bowels, they hear its rumblings? 'Yet they must work on,' cries Klanko, 'the mines still yield!' And daily his slaves' bones are brought above ground, mixed with the metal masses."

"Set all sail there, men! away!"

"My lord," said Babbalanja; "still must we shim the unmitigated evil; and only view the good; or evil so mixed therewith, the mixture's both?"

Half veiled in misty clouds, the harvest-moon now rose; and in that  
pale and haggard light, all sat silent; each man in his own secret  
mood: best knowing his own thoughts.