

CHAPTER LXXXIV

Babbalanja Relates To Them A Vision

Leaving Babbalanja in the old man's bower, deep in meditation; thoughtfully we strolled along the beach, inspiring the musky, midnight air; the tropical stars glistening in heaven, like drops of dew among violets.

The waves were phosphorescent, and laved the beach with a fire that cooled it.

Returning, we espied Babbalanja advancing in his snow-white mantle. The fiery tide was ebbing; and in the soft, moist sand, at every step, he left a lustrous foot-print.

"Sweet friends! this isle is full of mysteries," he said. "I have dreamed of wondrous things. After I had laid me down, thought pressed hard upon me. By my eyes passed pageant visions. I started at a low, strange melody, deep in my inmost soul. At last, methought my eyes were fixed on heaven; and there, I saw a shining spot, unlike a star. Thwarting the sky, it grew, and grew, descending; till bright wings were visible: between them, a pensive face angelic, downward beaming; and, for one golden moment, gauze-veiled in spangled Berenice's Locks.

"Then, as white flame from yellow, out from that starry cluster it

emerged; and brushed the astral Crosses, Crowns, and Cups. And as in violet, tropic seas, ships leave a radiant-white, and fire-fly wake; so, in long extension tapering, behind the vision, gleamed another Milky-Way.

"Strange throbbings seized me; my soul tossed on its own tides. But soon the inward harmony bounded in exulting choral strains. I heard a feathery rush; and straight beheld a form, traced all over with veins of vivid light. The vision undulated round me.

"Oh! Spirit!! angel! god! whate'er thou art,'--I cried, 'leave me; I am but man.'

"Then, I heard a low, sad sound, no voice. It said, or breathed upon me,--'Thou hast proved the grace of Alma: tell me what thou'st learned.'

"Silent replied my soul, for voice was gone,--'This have I learned, oh! spirit!--In things mysterious, to seek no more; but rest content, with knowing naught but Love.'

"Blessed art thou for that: thrice blessed,' then I heard, and since humility is thine, thou art one apt to learn. That which thy own wisdom could not find, thy ignorance confessed shall gain. Come, and see new things.'

"Once more it undulated round me; its lightning wings grew dim; nearer, nearer; till I felt a shock electric,--and nested 'neath its wing.

"We clove the air; passed systems, suns, and moons: what seem from Mardi's isles, the glow-worm stars.

"By distant fleets of worlds we sped, as voyagers pass far sails at sea, and hail them not. Foam played before them as they darted on; wild music was their wake; and many tracks of sound we crossed, where worlds had sailed before.

"Soon, we gained a point, where a new heaven was seen; whence all our firmament seemed one nebula. Its glories burned like thousand steadfast-flaming lights.

"Here hived the worlds in swarms: and gave forth sweets ineffable.

"We lighted on a ring, circling a space, where mornings seemed forever dawning over worlds unlike.

"'Here,' I heard, 'thou viewest thy Mardi's Heaven. Herein each world is portioned.'

"As he who climbs to mountain tops pants hard for breath; so panted I for Mardi's grosser air. But that which caused my flesh to faint, was new vitality to my soul. My eyes swept over all before me. The spheres

were plain as villages that dot a landscape. I saw most beautiful forms, yet like our own. Strange sounds I heard of gladness that seemed mixed with sadness:--a low, sweet harmony of both. Else, I know not how to phrase what never man but me e'er heard.

"In these blest souls are blent,' my guide discoursed, 'far higher thoughts, and sweeter plaints than thine. Rude joy were discord here. And as a sudden shout in thy hushed mountain-passes brings down the awful avalanche; so one note of laughter here, might start some white and silent world.'

"Then low I murmured:--'Is their's, oh guide! no happiness supreme? their state still mixed? Sigh these yet to know? Can these sin?'

"Then I heard:--'No mind but Oro's can know all; no mind that knows not all can be content; content alone approximates to happiness. Holiness comes by wisdom; and it is because great Oro is supremely wise, that He's supremely holy. But as perfect wisdom can be only Oro's; so, perfect holiness is his alone. And whoso is otherwise than perfect in his holiness, is liable to sin.

"And though death gave these beings knowledge, it also opened other mysteries, which they pant to know, and yet may learn. And still they fear the thing of evil; though for them, 'tis hard to fall. Thus hoping and thus fearing, then, their's is no state complete. And since Oro is past finding out, and mysteries ever open into mysteries

beyond; so, though these beings will for aye progress in wisdom and in good; yet, will they never gain a fixed beatitude. Know, then, oh mortal Mardian! that when translated hither, thou wilt but put off lowly temporal pinings, for angel and eternal aspirations. Start not: thy human joy hath here no place: no name.

"Still, I mournful mused; then said:--'Many Mardians live, who have no aptitude for Mardian lives of thought: how then endure more earnest, everlasting, meditations?'

"Such have their place,' I heard.

"Then low I moaned, 'And what, oh! guide! of those who, living thoughtless lives of sin, die unregenerate; no service done to Oro or to Mardian?'

"They, too, have their place,' I heard; 'but 'tis not here. And Mardian! know, that as your Mardian lives are long preserved through strict obedience to the organic law, so are your spiritual lives prolonged by fast keeping of the law of mind. Sin is death.'

"Ah, then,' yet lower moan made I; 'and why create the germs that sin and suffer, but to perish?'

"That,' breathed my guide; 'is the last mystery which underlieth all the rest. Archangel may not fathom it; that makes of Oro the

everlasting mystery he is; that to divulge, were to make equal to himself in knowledge all the souls that are; that mystery Oro guards; and none but him may know.'

"Alas! were it recalled, no words have I to tell of all that now my guide discoursed, concerning things unsearchable to us. My sixth sense which he opened, sleeps again, with all the wisdom that it gained.

"Time passed; it seemed a moment, might have been an age; when from high in the golden haze that canopied this heaven, another angel came; its vans like East and West; a sunrise one, sunset the other. As silver-fish in vases, so, in his azure eyes swam tears unshed.

"Quick my guide close nested me; through its veins the waning light throbbed hard.

"Oh, spirit! archangel! god! whate'er thou art,' it breathed; 'leave me: I am but blessed, not glorified.'

"So saying, as down from doves, from its wings dropped sounds. Still nesting me, it crouched its plumes.

"Then, in a snow of softest syllables, thus breathed the greater and more beautiful:--'From far away, in fields beyond thy ken, I heard thy fond discourse with this lone Mardian. It pleased me well; for thy humility was manifest; no arrogance of knowing. Come thou and learn

new things.'

"And straight it overarched us with its plumes; which, then, down-sweeping, bore us up to regions where my first guide had sunk, but for the power that buoyed us, trembling, both.

"My eyes did wane, like moons eclipsed in overwhelming dawns: such radiance was around; such vermeil light, born of no sun, but pervading all the scene. Transparent, fleck-less, calm, all glowed one flame.

"Then said the greater guide This is the night of all ye here behold-- its day ye could not bide. Your utmost heaven is far below.'

"Abashed, smote down, I, quaking, upward gazed; where, to and fro, the spirits sailed, like broad-winged crimson-dyed flamingos, spiraling in sunset-clouds. But a sadness glorified, deep-fringed their mystic temples, crowned with weeping halos, bird-like, floating o'er them, whereso'er they roamed.

"Sights and odors blended. As when new-morning winds, in summer's prime, blow down from hanging gardens, wafting sweets that never pall; so, from those flowery pinions, at every motion, came a flood of fragrance.

"And now the spirits twain discoursed of things, whose very terms, to me, were dark. But my first guide grew wise. For me, I could but

blankly list; yet comprehended naught; and, like the fish that's
mocked with wings, and vainly seeks to fly;--again I sought my lower
element.

"As poised, we hung in this rapt ether, a sudden trembling seized the
four wings now folding me. And afar of, in zones still upward
reaching, suns' orbits off, I, tranced, beheld an awful glory. Sphere
in sphere, it burned:--the one Shekinah! The air was flaked with
fire;--deep in which, fell showers of silvery globes, tears magnified
--braiding the flame with rainbows. I heard a sound; but not for me,
nor my first guide, was that unutterable utterance. Then, my second
guide was swept aloft, as rises a cloud of red-dyed leaves in autumn
whirlwinds.

"Fast clasping me, the other drooped, and, instant, sank, as in a
vacuum; myriad suns' diameters in a breath;--my five senses merged in
one, of falling; till we gained the nether sky, descending still.

"Then strange things--soft, sad, and faint, I saw or heard; as, when,
in sunny, summer seas, down, down, you dive, starting at pensive
phantoms, that you can not fix.

"These,' breathed my guide, 'are spirits in their essences; sad, even
in undevelopment. With these, all space is peopled;--all the air is
vital with intelligence, which seeks embodiment. This it is, that
unbeknown to Mardians, causes them to strangely start in solitudes of

night, and in the fixed flood of their enchanted noons. From hence, are formed your mortal souls; and all those sad and shadowy dreams, and boundless thoughts man hath, are vague remembrances of the time when the soul's sad germ, wide wandered through these realms. And hence it is, that when ye Mardians feel most sad, then ye feel most immortal.

"Like a spark new-struck from flint, soon Mardi showed afar. It glowed within a sphere, which seemed, in space, a bubble, rising from vast depths to the sea's surface. Piercing it, my Mardian strength returned; but the angel's veins once more grew dim.

"Nearing the isles, thus breathed my guide:--'Loved one, love on! But know, that heaven hath no roof. To know all is to be all. Beatitude there is none. And your only Mardian happiness is but exemption from great woes--no more. Great Love is sad; and heaven is Love. Sadness makes the silence throughout the realms of space; sadness is universal and eternal; but sadness is tranquillity; tranquillity the uttermost that souls may hope for.'

"Then, with its wings it fanned adieu; and disappeared where the sun flames highest."

We heard the dream and, silent, sought repose, to dream away our wonder.