

CHAPTER LXXXVI

They Meet The Phantoms

That starless midnight, there stole from out the darkness, the Iris flag of Hautia.

Again the sirens came. They bore a large and stately urn-like flower, white as alabaster, and glowing, as if lit up within. From its calyx, flame-like, trembled forked and crimson stamens, burning with intensest odors.

The phantoms nearer came; their flower, as an urn of burning niter. Then it changed, and glowed like Persian dawns; or passive, was shot over by palest lightnings;--so variable its tints.

"The night-blowing Cereus!" said Yoomy, shuddering, "that never blows in sun-light; that blows but once; and blows but for an hour.--For the last time I come; now, in your midnight of despair, and promise you this glory. Take heed! short time hast thou to pause; through me, perhaps, thy Yillah may be found."

"Away! away! tempt me not by that, enchantress! Hautia! I know thee not; I fear thee not; but instinct makes me hate thee. Away! my eyes are frozen shut; I will not be tempted more."

"How glorious it burns!" cried Media. I reel with incense:--can such sweets be evil?"

"Look! look!" cried Yoomy, "its petals wane, and creep; one moment more, and the night-flower shuts up forever the last, last hope of Yillah!"

"Yillah! Yillah! Yillah!" bayed three vengeful voices far behind.

"Yillah! Yillah!--dash the urn! I follow, Hautia! though thy lure be death."

The Cereus closed; and in a mist the siren prow went on before; we, following.

When day dawned, three radiant pilot-fish swam in advance: three ravenous sharks astern.

And, full before us, rose the isle of Hautia.