GEORG EBERS

UARDA : A ROMANCE OF ANCIENT EGYPT. COMPLETE

Georg Ebers

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt. Complete

Ebers G.

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt. Complete / G. Ebers — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Georg Ebers
Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt – Complete

CHAPTER I

By the walls of Thebes—the old city of a hundred gates—the Nile spreads to a broad river; the heights, which follow the stream on both sides, here take a more decided outline; solitary, almost cone-shaped peaks stand out sharply from the level background of the many-colored. limestone hills, on which no palm-tree flourishes and in which no humble desert-plant can strike root. Rocky crevasses and gorges cut more or less deeply into the mountain range, and up to its ridge extends the desert, destructive of all life, with sand and stones, with rocky cliffs and reef-like, desert hills.

Behind the eastern range the desert spreads to the Red Sea; behind the western it stretches without limit, into infinity. In the belief of the Egyptians beyond it lay the region of the dead.

Between these two ranges of hills, which serve as walls or ramparts to keep back the desert-sand, flows the fresh and bounteous Nile, bestowing blessing and abundance; at once the father and the cradle of millions of beings. On each shore spreads the wide plain of black and fruitful soil, and in the depths many-shaped creatures, in coats of mail or scales, swarm and find subsistence.

The lotos floats on the mirror of the waters, and among the papyrus reeds by the shore water-fowl innumerable build their nests. Between the river and the mountain-range lie fields, which after the seed-time are of a shining blue-green, and towards the time of harvest glow like gold. Near the brooks and water-wheels here and there stands a shady sycamore; and date-palms, carefully tended, group themselves in groves. The fruitful plain, watered and manured every year by the inundation, lies at the foot of the sandy desert-hills behind it, and stands out like a garden flower-bed from the gravel-path.

In the fourteenth century before Christ—for to so remote a date we must direct the thoughts of the reader—impassable limits had been set by the hand of man, in many places in Thebes, to the inroads of the water; high dykes of stone and embankments protected the streets and squares, the temples and the palaces, from the overflow.

Canals that could be tightly closed up led from the dykes to the land within, and smaller branch-cuttings to the gardens of Thebes.

On the right, the eastern bank of the Nile, rose the buildings of the far-famed residence of the Pharaohs. Close by the river stood the immense and gaudy Temples of the city of Amon; behind these and at a short distance from the Eastern hills—indeed at their very foot and partly even on the soil of the desert—were the palaces of the King and nobles, and the shady streets in which the high narrow houses of the citizens stood in close rows.

Life was gay and busy in the streets of the capital of the Pharaohs.

The western shore of the Nile showed a quite different scene. Here too there was no lack of stately buildings or thronging men; but while on the farther side of the river there was a compact mass of houses, and the citizens went cheerfully and openly about their day's work, on this side there were solitary splendid structures, round which little houses and huts seemed to cling as children cling to the protection of a mother. And these buildings lay in detached groups.

Any one climbing the hill and looking down would form the notion that there lay below him a number of neighboring villages, each with its lordly manor house. Looking from the plain up to the precipice of the western hills, hundreds of closed portals could be seen, some solitary, others closely

ranged in rows; a great number of them towards the foot of the slope, yet more half-way up, and a few at a considerable height.

And even more dissimilar were the slow-moving, solemn groups in the roadways on this side, and the cheerful, confused throng yonder. There, on the eastern shore, all were in eager pursuit of labor or recreation, stirred by pleasure or by grief, active in deed and speech; here, in the west, little was spoken, a spell seemed to check the footstep of the wanderer, a pale hand to sadden the bright glance of every eye, and to banish the smile from every lip.

And yet many a gaily-dressed bark stopped at the shore, there was no lack of minstrel bands, grand processions passed on to the western heights; but the Nile boats bore the dead, the songs sung here were songs of lamentation, and the processions consisted of mourners following the sarcophagus.

We are standing on the soil of the City of the Dead of Thebes.

Nevertheless even here nothing is wanting for return and revival, for to the Egyptian his dead died not. He closed his eyes, he bore him to the Necropolis, to the house of the embalmer, or Kolchytes, and then to the grave; but he knew that the souls of the departed lived on; that the justified absorbed into Osiris floated over the Heavens in the vessel of the Sun; that they appeared on earth in the form they choose to take upon them, and that they might exert influence on the current of the lives of the survivors. So he took care to give a worthy interment to his dead, above all to have the body embalmed so as to endure long: and had fixed times to bring fresh offerings for the dead of flesh and fowl, with drink-offerings and sweet-smelling essences, and vegetables and flowers.

Neither at the obsequies nor at the offerings might the ministers of the gods be absent, and the silent City of the Dead was regarded as a favored sanctuary in which to establish schools and dwellings for the learned.

So it came to pass that in the temples and on the site Of the Necropolis, large communities of priests dwelt together, and close to the extensive embalming houses lived numerous Kolchytes, who handed down the secrets of their art from father to son.

Besides these there were other manufactories and shops. In the former, sarcophagi of stone and of wood, linen bands for enveloping mummies, and amulets for decorating them, were made; in the latter, merchants kept spices and essences, flowers, fruits, vegetables and pastry for sale. Calves, gazelles, goats, geese and other fowl, were fed on enclosed meadow-plats, and the mourners betook themselves thither to select what they needed from among the beasts pronounced by the priests to be clean for sacrifice, and to have them sealed with the sacred seal. Many bought only part of a victim at the shambles—the poor could not even do this. They bought only colored cakes in the shape of beasts, which symbolically took the place of the calves and geese which their means were unable to procure. In the handsomest shops sat servants of the priests, who received forms written on rolls of papyrus which were filled up in the writing room of the temple with those sacred verses which the departed spirit must know and repeat to ward off the evil genius of the deep, to open the gate of the under world, and to be held righteous before Osiris and the forty-two assessors of the subterranean court of justice.

What took place within the temples was concealed from view, for each was surrounded by a high enclosing wall with lofty, carefully-closed portals, which were only opened when a chorus of priests came out to sing a pious hymn, in the morning to Horus the rising god, and in the evening to Tum the descending god.

> [The course of the Sun was compared to that of the life of Man. He rose as the child Horns, grew by midday to the hero Ra, who conquered the Uraeus snake for his diadem, and by evening was an old Man, Tum. Light had been born of darkness, hence Tum was regarded as older than Horns and the other gods of light.]

As soon as the evening hymn of the priests was heard, the Necropolis was deserted, for the mourners and those who were visiting the graves were required by this time to return to their boats

and to quit the City of the Dead. Crowds of men who had marched in the processions of the west bank hastened in disorder to the shore, driven on by the body of watchmen who took it in turns to do this duty and to protect the graves against robbers. The merchants closed their booths, the embalmers and workmen ended their day's work and retired to their houses, the priests returned to the temples, and the inns were filled with guests, who had come hither on long pilgrimages from a distance, and who preferred passing the night in the vicinity of the dead whom they had come to visit, to going across to the bustling noisy city farther shore.

The voices of the singers and of the wailing women were hushed, even the song of the sailors on the numberless ferry boats from the western shore to Thebes died away, its faint echo was now and then borne across on the evening air, and at last all was still.

A cloudless sky spread over the silent City of the Dead, now and then darkened for an instant by the swiftly passing shade of a bat returning to its home in a cave or cleft of the rock after flying the whole evening near the Nile to catch flies, to drink, and so prepare itself for the next day's sleep. From time to time black forms with long shadows glided over the still illuminated plain—the jackals, who at this hour frequented the shore to slake their thirst, and often fearlessly showed themselves in troops in the vicinity of the pens of geese and goats.

It was forbidden to hunt these robbers, as they were accounted sacred to the god Anubis, the tutelary of sepulchres; and indeed they did little mischief, for they found abundant food in the tombs.

> [The jackal-headed god Anubis was the son of Osiris and Nephthys, and the jackal was sacred to him. In the earliest ages even he is prominent in the nether world. He conducts the mummifying process, preserves the corpse, guards the Necropolis, and, as Hermes Psychopompos (Hermanubis), opens the way for the souls. According to Plutarch "He is the watch of the gods as the dog is the watch of men."]

The remnants of the meat offerings from the altars were consumed by them; to the perfect satisfaction of the devotees, who, when they found that by the following day the meat had disappeared, believed that it had been accepted and taken away by the spirits of the underworld.

They also did the duty of trusty watchers, for they were a dangerous foe for any intruder who, under the shadow of the night, might attempt to violate a grave.

Thus—on that summer evening of the year 1352 B.C., when we invite the reader to accompany us to the Necropolis of Thebes—after the priests' hymn had died away, all was still in the City of the Dead.

The soldiers on guard were already returning from their first round when suddenly, on the north side of the Necropolis, a dog barked loudly; soon a second took up the cry, a third, a fourth. The captain of the watch called to his men to halt, and, as the cry of the dogs spread and grew louder every minute, commanded them to march towards the north.

The little troop had reached the high dyke which divided the west bank of the Nile from a branch canal, and looked from thence over the plain as far as the river and to the north of the Necropolis. Once more the word to "halt" was given, and as the guard perceived the glare of torches in the direction where the dogs were barking loudest, they hurried forward and came up with the author of the disturbance near the Pylon of the temple erected by Seti I., the deceased father of the reigning King Rameses II.

> [The two pyramidal towers joined by a gateway which formed the entrance to an Egyptian temple were called the Pylon.]

The moon was up, and her pale light flooded the stately structure, while the walls glowed with the ruddy smoky light of the torches which flared in the hands of black attendants.

A man of sturdy build, in sumptuous dress, was knocking at the brass-covered temple door with the metal handle of a whip, so violently that the blows rang far and loud through the night. Near

him stood a litter, and a chariot, to which were harnessed two fine horses. In the litter sat a young woman, and in the carriage, next to the driver, was the tall figure of a lady. Several men of the upper classes and many servants stood around the litter and the chariot. Few words were exchanged; the whole attention of the strangely lighted groups seemed concentrated on the temple-gate. The darkness concealed the features of individuals, but the mingled light of the moon and the torches was enough to reveal to the gate-keeper, who looked down on the party from a tower of the Pylon, that it was composed of persons of the highest rank; nay, perhaps of the royal family.

He called aloud to the one who knocked, and asked him what was his will.

He looked up, and in a voice so rough and imperious, that the lady in the litter shrank in horror as its tones suddenly violated the place of the dead, he cried out—"How long are we to wait here for you—you dirty hound? Come down and open the door and then ask questions. If the torch-light is not bright enough to show you who is waiting, I will score our name on your shoulders with my whip, and teach you how to receive princely visitors."

While the porter muttered an unintelligible answer and came down the steps within to open the door, the lady in the chariot turned to her impatient companion and said in a pleasant but yet decided voice, "You forget, Paaker, that you are back again in Egypt, and that here you have to deal not with the wild Schasu,—[A Semitic race of robbers in the cast of Egypt.]—but with friendly priests of whom we have to solicit a favor. We have always had to lament your roughness, which seems to me very ill-suited to the unusual circumstances under which we approach this sanctuary."

Although these words were spoken in a tone rather of regret than of blame, they wounded the sensibilities of the person addressed; his wide nostrils began to twitch ominously, he clenched his right hand over the handle of his whip, and, while he seemed to be bowing humbly, he struck such a heavy blow on the bare leg of a slave who was standing near to him, an old Ethiopian, that he shuddered as if from sudden cold, though-knowing his lord only too well—he let no cry of pain escape him. Meanwhile the gate-keeper had opened the door, and with him a tall young priest stepped out into the open air to ask the will of the intruders.

Paaker would have seized the opportunity of speaking, but the lady in the chariot interposed and said:

"I am Bent-Anat, the daughter of the King, and this lady in the litter is Nefert, the wife of the noble Mena, the charioteer of my father. We were going in company with these gentlemen to the north-west valley of the Necropolis to see the new works there. You know the narrow pass in the rocks which leads up the gorge. On the way home I myself held the reins and I had the misfortune to drive over a girl who sat by the road with a basket full of flowers, and to hurt her—to hurt her very badly I am afraid. The wife of Mena with her own hands bound up the child, and then she carried her to her father's house—he is a paraschites—[One who opened the bodies of the dead to prepare them for being embalmed.]—Pinem is his name. I know not whether he is known to you."

"Thou hast been into his house, Princess?"

"Indeed, I was obliged, holy father," she replied, "I know of course that I have defiled myself by crossing the threshold of these people, but—"

"But," cried the wife of Mena, raising herself in her litter, "Bent-Anat can in a day be purified by thee or by her house-priest, while she can hardly—or perhaps never—restore the child whole and sound again to the unhappy father."

"Still, the den of a paraschites is above every thing unclean," said the chamberlain Penbesa, master of the ceremonies to the princess, interrupting the wife of Mena, "and I did not conceal my opinion when Bent-Anat announced her intention of visiting the accursed hole in person. I suggested," he continued, turning to the priest, "that she should let the girl be taken home, and send a royal present to the father."

"And the princess?" asked the priest.

"She acted, as she always does, on her own judgment," replied the master of the ceremonies.

"And that always hits on the right course," cried the wife of Mena.

"Would to God it were so!" said the princess in a subdued voice. Then she continued, addressing the priest, "Thou knowest the will of the Gods and the hearts of men, holy father, and I myself know that I give alms willingly and help the poor even when there is none to plead for them but their poverty. But after what has occurred here, and to these unhappy people, it is I who come as a suppliant."

"Thou?" said the chamberlain.

"I," answered the princess with decision. The priest who up to this moment had remained a silent witness of the scene raised his right hand as in blessing and spoke.

"Thou hast done well. The Hathors fashioned thy heart and the Lady of Truth guides it. Thou hast broken in on our night-prayers to request us to send a doctor to the injured girl?"

> [Hathor was Isis under a substantial form. She is the goddess of the pure, light heaven, and bears the Sun-disk between cow-horns on a cow's head or on a human head with cow's ears. She was named the Fair, and all the pure joys of life are in her gift. Later she was regarded as a Muse who beautifies life with enjoyment, love, song, and the dance. She appears as a good fairy by the cradle of children and decides their lot in life. She bears many names: and several, generally seven, Hathors were represented, who personified the attributes and influence of the goddess.]

"Thou hast said."

"I will ask the high-priest to send the best leech for outward wounds immediately to the child. But where is the house of the paraschites Pinem? I do not know it."

"Northwards from the terrace of Hatasu,—[A great queen of the 18th dynasty and guardian of two Pharaohs]—close to—; but I will charge one of my attendants to conduct the leech. Besides, I want to know early in the morning how the child is doing.—Paaker."

The rough visitor, whom we already know, thus called upon, bowed to the earth, his arms hanging by his sides, and asked:

"What dost thou command?"

"I appoint you guide to the physician," said the princess. "It will be easy to the king's pioneer to find the little half-hidden house again—

> [The title here rendered pioneer was that of an officer whose duties were those at once of a scout and of a Quarter-Master General. In unknown and comparatively savage countries it was an onerous post. —Translator.]

besides, you share my guilt, for," she added, turning to the priest, "I confess that the misfortune happened because I would try with my horses to overtake Paaker's Syrian racers, which he declared to be swifter than the Egyptian horses. It was a mad race."

"And Amon be praised that it ended as it did," exclaimed the master of the ceremonies. "Packer's chariot lies dashed in pieces in the valley, and his best horse is badly hurt."

"He will see to him when he has taken the physician to the house of the paraschites," said the princess. "Dost thou know, Penbesa—thou anxious guardian of a thoughtless girl—that to-day for the first time I am glad that my father is at the war in distant Satiland?"—[Asia].

"He would not have welcomed us kindly!" said the master of the ceremonies, laughing.

"But the leech, the leech!" cried Bent-Anat. "Packer, it is settled then. You will conduct him, and bring us to-morrow morning news of the wounded girl."

Paaker bowed; the princess bowed her head; the priest and his companions, who meanwhile had come out of the temple and joined him, raised their hands in blessing, and the belated procession moved towards the Nile.

Paaker remained alone with his two slaves; the commission with which the princess had charged him greatly displeased him. So long as the moonlight enabled him to distinguish the litter of Mena's

wife, he gazed after it; then he endeavored to recollect the position of the hut of the paraschites. The captain of the watch still stood with the guard at the gate of the temple.

"Do you know the dwelling of Pinem the paraschites?" asked Paaker.

"What do you want with him?"

"That is no concern of yours," retorted Paaker.

"Lout!" exclaimed the captain, "left face and forwards, my men."

"Halt!" cried Paaker in a rage. "I am the king's chief pioneer."

"Then you will all the more easily find the way back by which you came. March."

The words were followed by a peal of many-voiced laughter: the re-echoing insult so confounded Paaker that he dropped his whip on the ground. The slave, whom a short time since he had struck with it, humbly picked it up and then followed his lord into the fore court of the temple. Both attributed the titter, which they still could hear without being able to detect its origin, to wandering spirits. But the mocking tones had been heard too by the old gate-keeper, and the laughers were better known to him than to the king's pioneer; he strode with heavy steps to the door of the temple through the black shadow of the pylon, and striking blindly before him called out—

"Ah! you good-for-nothing brood of Seth."

> [The Typhon of the Greeks. The enemy of Osiris, of truth, good and purity. Discord and strife in nature. Horns who fights against him for his father Osiris, can throw him and stun him, but never annihilate him.]

"You gallows-birds and brood of hell—I am coming."

The giggling ceased; a few youthful figures appeared in the moonlight, the old man pursued them panting, and, after a short chase, a troop of youths fled back through the temple gate.

The door-keeper had succeeded in catching one miscreant, a boy of thirteen, and held him so tight by the ear that his pretty head seemed to have grown in a horizontal direction from his shoulders.

"I will take you before the school-master, you plague-of-locusts, you swarm of bats!" cried the old man out of breath. But the dozen of school-boys, who had availed themselves of the opportunity to break out of bounds, gathered coaxing round him, with words of repentance, though every eye sparkled with delight at the fun they had had, and of which no one could deprive them; and when the biggest of them took the old man's chin, and promised to give him the wine which his mother was to send him next day for the week's use, the porter let go his prisoner—who tried to rub the pain out of his burning ear—and cried out in harsher tones than before:

"You will pay me, will you, to let you off! Do you think I will let your tricks pass? You little know this old man. I will complain to the Gods, not to the school-master; and as for your wine, youngster, I will offer it as a libation, that heaven may forgive you."

CHAPTER II

The temple where, in the fore-court, Paaker was waiting, and where the priest had disappeared to call the leech, was called the “House of Seti”—[It is still standing and known as the temple of Qurnah.]—and was one of the largest in the City of the Dead. Only that magnificent building of the time of the deposed royal race of the reigning king’s grandfather—that temple which had been founded by Thotmes III., and whose gate-way Amenophis III. had adorned with immense colossal statues—[That which stands to the north is the famous musical statue, or Pillar of Memmon]—exceeded it in the extent of its plan; in every other respect it held the pre-eminence among the sanctuaries of the Necropolis. Rameses I. had founded it shortly after he succeeded in seizing the Egyptian throne; and his yet greater son Seti carried on the erection, in which the service of the dead for the Manes of the members of the new royal family was conducted, and the high festivals held in honor of the Gods of the under-world. Great sums had been expended for its establishment, for the maintenance of the priesthood of its sanctuary, and the support of the institutions connected with it. These were intended to be equal to the great original foundations of priestly learning at Heliopolis and Memphis; they were regulated on the same pattern, and with the object of raising the new royal residence of Upper Egypt, namely Thebes, above the capitals of Lower Egypt in regard to philosophical distinction.

One of the most important of these foundations was a very celebrated school of learning.

[Every detail of this description of an Egyptian school is derived from sources dating from the reign of Rameses II. and his successor, Merneptah.]

First there was the high-school, in which priests, physicians, judges, mathematicians, astronomers, grammarians, and other learned men, not only had the benefit of instruction, but, subsequently, when they had won admission to the highest ranks of learning, and attained the dignity of “Scribes,” were maintained at the cost of the king, and enabled to pursue their philosophical speculations and researches, in freedom from all care, and in the society of fellow-workers of equal birth and identical interests.

An extensive library, in which thousands of papyrus-rolls were preserved, and to which a manufactory of papyrus was attached, was at the disposal of the learned; and some of them were intrusted with the education of the younger disciples, who had been prepared in the elementary school, which was also dependent on the House—or university—of Seti. The lower school was open to every son of a free citizen, and was often frequented by several hundred boys, who also found night-quarters there. The parents were of course required either to pay for their maintenance, or to send due supplies of provisions for the keep of their children at school.

In a separate building lived the temple-boarders, a few sons of the noblest families, who were brought up by the priests at a great expense to their parents.

Seti I., the founder of this establishment, had had his own sons, not excepting Rameses, his successor, educated here.

The elementary schools were strictly ruled, and the rod played so large a part in them, that a pedagogue could record this saying: “The scholar’s ears are at his back: when he is flogged then he hears.”

Those youths who wished to pass up from the lower to the high-school had to undergo an examination. The student, when he had passed it, could choose a master from among the learned of the higher grades, who undertook to be his philosophical guide, and to whom he remained attached all his life through, as a client to his patron. He could obtain the degree of “Scribe” and qualify for public office by a second examination.

Near to these schools of learning there stood also a school of art, in which instruction was given to students who desired to devote themselves to architecture, sculpture, or painting; in these also the learner might choose his master.

Every teacher in these institutions belonged to the priesthood of the House of Seti. It consisted of more than eight hundred members, divided into five classes, and conducted by three so-called Prophets.

The first prophet was the high-priest of the House of Seti, and at the same time the superior of all the thousands of upper and under servants of the divinities which belonged to the City of the Dead of Thebes.

The temple of Seti proper was a massive structure of limestone. A row of Sphinxes led from the Nile to the surrounding wall, and to the first vast pro-pylon, which formed the entrance to a broad fore-court, enclosed on the two sides by colonnades, and beyond which stood a second gate-way. When he had passed through this door, which stood between two towers, in shape like truncated pyramids, the stranger came to a second court resembling the first, closed at the farther end by a noble row of pillars, which formed part of the central temple itself.

The innermost and last was dimly lighted by a few lamps.

Behind the temple of Seti stood large square structures of brick of the Nile mud, which however had a handsome and decorative effect, as the humble material of which they were constructed was plastered with lime, and that again was painted with colored pictures and hieroglyphic inscriptions.

The internal arrangement of all these houses was the same. In the midst was an open court, on to which opened the doors of the rooms of the priests and philosophers. On each side of the court was a shady, covered colonnade of wood, and in the midst a tank with ornamental plants. In the upper story were the apartments for the scholars, and instruction was usually given in the paved courtyard strewn with mats.

The most imposing was the house of the chief prophets; it was distinguished by its waving standards and stood about a hundred paces behind the temple of Seti, between a well kept grove and a clear lake—the sacred tank of the temple; but they only occupied it while fulfilling their office, while the splendid houses which they lived in with their wives and children, lay on the other side of the river, in Thebes proper.

The untimely visit to the temple could not remain unobserved by the colony of sages. Just as ants when a hand breaks in on their dwelling, hurry restlessly hither and thither, so an unwonted stir had agitated, not the school-boys only, but the teachers and the priests. They collected in groups near the outer walls, asking questions and hazarding guesses. A messenger from the king had arrived—the princess Bent-Anat had been attacked by the Kolchytes—and a wag among the school-boys who had got out, declared that Paaker, the king's pioneer, had been brought into the temple by force to be made to learn to write better. As the subject of the joke had formerly been a pupil of the House of Seti, and many delectable stories of his errors in penmanship still survived in the memory of the later generation of scholars, this information was received with joyful applause; and it seemed to have a glimmer of probability, in spite of the apparent contradiction that Paaker filled one of the highest offices near the king, when a grave young priest declared that he had seen the pioneer in the forecourt of the temple.

The lively discussion, the laughter and shouting of the boys at such an unwonted hour, was not unobserved by the chief priest.

This remarkable prelate, Ameni the son of Nebket, a scion of an old and noble family, was far more than merely the independent head of the temple-brotherhood, among whom he was prominent for his power and wisdom; for all the priesthood in the length and breadth of the land acknowledged his supremacy, asked his advice in difficult cases, and never resisted the decisions in spiritual matters which emanated from the House of Seti—that is to say, from Ameni. He was the embodiment of the priestly idea; and if at times he made heavy—nay extraordinary—demands on individual fraternities,

they were submitted to, for it was known by experience that the indirect roads which he ordered them to follow all converged on one goal, namely the exaltation of the power and dignity of the hierarchy. The king appreciated this remarkable man, and had long endeavored to attach him to the court, as keeper of the royal seal; but Ameni was not to be induced to give up his apparently modest position; for he contemned all outward show and ostentatious titles; he ventured sometimes to oppose a decided resistance to the measures of the Pharaoh,

[Pharaoh is the Hebrew form of the Egyptian Peraa—or Phrah. “The great house,” “sublime house,” or “high gate” is the literal meaning.]

and was not minded to give up his unlimited control of the priests for the sake of a limited dominion over what seemed to him petty external concerns, in the service of a king who was only too independent and hard to influence.

He regularly arranged his mode and habits of life in an exceptional way.

Eight days out of ten he remained in the temple entrusted to his charge; two he devoted to his family, who lived on the other bank of the Nile; but he let no one, not even those nearest to him, know what portion of the ten days he gave up to recreation. He required only four hours of sleep. This he usually took in a dark room which no sound could reach, and in the middle of the day; never at night, when the coolness and quiet seemed to add to his powers of work, and when from time to time he could give himself up to the study of the starry heavens.

All the ceremonials that his position required of him, the cleansing, purification, shaving, and fasting he fulfilled with painful exactitude, and the outer bespoke the inner man.

Ameni was entering on his fiftieth year; his figure was tall, and had escaped altogether the stoutness to which at that age the Oriental is liable. The shape of his smoothly-shaven head was symmetrical and of a long oval; his forehead was neither broad nor high, but his profile was unusually delicate, and his face striking; his lips were thin and dry, and his large and piercing eyes, though neither fiery nor brilliant, and usually cast down to the ground under his thick eyebrows, were raised with a full, clear, dispassionate gaze when it was necessary to see and to examine.

The poet of the House of Seti, the young Pentaur, who knew these eyes, had celebrated them in song, and had likened them to a well-disciplined army which the general allows to rest before and after the battle, so that they may march in full strength to victory in the fight.

The refined deliberateness of his nature had in it much that was royal as well as priestly; it was partly intrinsic and born with him, partly the result of his own mental self-control. He had many enemies, but calumny seldom dared to attack the high character of Amemi.

The high-priest looked up in astonishment, as the disturbance in the court of the temple broke in on his studies.

The room in which he was sitting was spacious and cool; the lower part of the walls was lined with earthenware tiles, the upper half plastered and painted. But little was visible of the masterpieces of the artists of the establishment, for almost everywhere they were concealed by wooden closets and shelves, in which were papyrus-rolls and wax-tablets. A large table, a couch covered with a panther’s skin, a footstool in front of it, and on it a crescent-shaped support for the head, made of ivory,

[A support of crescent form on which the Egyptians rested their heads. Many specimens were found in the catacombs, and similar objects are still used in Nubia]

several seats, a stand with beakers and jugs, and another with flasks of all sizes, saucers, and boxes, composed the furniture of the room, which was lighted by three lamps, shaped like birds and filled with kiki oil.—[Castor oil, which was used in the lamps.]

Ameni wore a fine pleated robe of snow-white linen, which reached to his ankles, round his hips was a scarf adorned with fringes, which in front formed an apron, with broad, stiffened ends which fell to his knees; a wide belt of white and silver brocade confined the drapery of his robe. Round his throat and far down on his bare breast hung a necklace more than a span deep, composed

of pearls and agates, and his upper arm was covered with broad gold bracelets. He rose from the ebony seat with lion's feet, on which he sat, and beckoned to a servant who squatted by one of the walls of the sitting-room. He rose and without any word of command from his master, he silently and carefully placed on the high-priest's bare head a long and thick curled wig,

[Egyptians belonging to the higher classes wore wigs on their shaven heads. Several are preserved in museums.]

and threw a leopard-skin, with its head and claws overlaid with gold-leaf, over his shoulders. A second servant held a metal mirror before Ameni, in which he cast a look as he settled the panther-skin and head-gear.

A third servant was handing him the crosier, the insignia of his dignity as a prelate, when a priest entered and announced the scribe Pentaur.

Ameni nodded, and the young priest who had talked with the princess Bent-Anat at the temple-gate came into the room.

Pentaur knelt and kissed the hand of the prelate, who gave him his blessing, and in a clear sweet voice, and rather formal and unfamiliar language—as if he were reading rather than speaking, said:

"Rise, my son; your visit will save me a walk at this untimely hour, since you can inform me of what disturbs the disciples in our temple. Speak."

"Little of consequence has occurred, holy father," replied Pentaur. "Nor would I have disturbed thee at this hour, but that a quite unnecessary tumult has been raised by the youths; and that the princess Bent-Anat appeared in person to request the aid of a physician. The unusual hour and the retinue that followed her—"

"Is the daughter of Pharaoh sick?" asked the prelate.

"No, father. She is well—even to wantonness, since—wishing to prove the swiftness of her horses—she ran over the daughter of the paraschites Pinem. Noble-hearted as she is, she herself carried the sorely-wounded girl to her house."

"She entered the dwelling of the unclean."

"Thou hast said."

"And she now asks to be purified?"

"I thought I might venture to absolve her, father, for the purest humanity led her to the act, which was no doubt a breach of discipline, but—"

"But," asked the high-priest in a grave voice and he raised his eyes which he had hitherto on the ground.

"But," said the young priest, and now his eyes fell, "which can surely be no crime. When Ra —[The Egyptian Sun-god.]—in his golden bark sails across the heavens, his light falls as freely and as bountifully on the hut of the despised poor as on the Palace of the Pharaohs; and shall the tender human heart withhold its pure light—which is benevolence—from the wretched, only because they are base?"

"It is the poet Pentaur that speaks," said the prelate, "and not the priest to whom the privilege was given to be initiated into the highest grade of the sages, and whom I call my brother and my equal. I have no advantage over you, young man, but perishable learning, which the past has won for you as much as for me—nothing but certain perceptions and experiences that offer nothing new, to the world, but teach us, indeed, that it is our part to maintain all that is ancient in living efficacy and practice. That which you promised a few weeks since, I many years ago vowed to the Gods; to guard knowledge as the exclusive possession of the initiated. Like fire, it serves those who know its uses to the noblest ends, but in the hands of children—and the people, the mob, can never ripen into manhood —it is a destroying brand, raging and unextinguishable, devouring all around it, and destroying all that has been built and beautified by the past. And how can we remain the Sages and continue to develop and absorb all learning within the shelter of our temples, not only without endangering the weak, but

for their benefit? You know and have sworn to act after that knowledge. To bind the crowd to the faith and the institutions of the fathers is your duty—is the duty of every priest. Times have changed, my son; under the old kings the fire, of which I spoke figuratively to you—the poet—was enclosed in brazen walls which the people passed stupidly by. Now I see breaches in the old fortifications; the eyes of the uninitiated have been sharpened, and one tells the other what he fancies he has spied, though half-blinded, through the glowing rifts."

A slight emotion had given energy to the tones of the speaker, and while he held the poet spell-bound with his piercing glance he continued:

"We curse and expel any one of the initiated who enlarges these breaches; we punish even the friend who idly neglects to repair and close them with beaten brass!"

"My father!" cried Pentaur, raising his head in astonishment while the blood mounted to his cheeks. The high-priest went up to him and laid both hands on his shoulders.

They were of equal height and of equally symmetrical build; even the outline of their features was similar. Nevertheless no one would have taken them to be even distantly related; their countenances were so infinitely unlike in expression.

On the face of one were stamped a strong will and the power of firmly guiding his life and commanding himself; on the other, an amiable desire to overlook the faults and defects of the world, and to contemplate life as it painted itself in the transfiguring magic-mirror of his poet's soul. Frankness and enjoyment spoke in his sparkling eye, but the subtle smile on his lips when he was engaged in a discussion, or when his soul was stirred, betrayed that Pentaur, far from childlike carelessness, had fought many a severe mental battle, and had tasted the dark waters of doubt.

At this moment mingled feelings were struggling in his soul. He felt as if he must withstand the speaker; and yet the powerful presence of the other exercised so strong an influence over his mind, long trained to submission, that he was silent, and a pious thrill passed through him when Ameni's hands were laid on his shoulders.

"I blame you," said the high-priest, while he firmly held the young man, "nay, to my sorrow I must chastise you; and yet," he said, stepping back and taking his right hand, "I rejoice in the necessity, for I love you and honor you, as one whom the Unnameable has blessed with high gifts and destined to great things. Man leaves a weed to grow unheeded or roots it up but you are a noble tree, and I am like the gardener who has forgotten to provide it with a prop, and who is now thankful to have detected a bend that reminds him of his neglect. You look at me enquiringly, and I can see in your eyes that I seem to you a severe judge. Of what are you accused? You have suffered an institution of the past to be set aside. It does not matter—so the short-sighted and heedless think; but I say to you, you have doubly transgressed, because the wrong-doer was the king's daughter, whom all look up to, great and small, and whose actions may serve as an example to the people. On whom then must a breach of the ancient institutions lie with the darkest stain if not on the highest in rank? In a few days it will be said the paraschites are men even as we are, and the old law to avoid them as unclean is folly. And will the reflections of the people, think you, end there, when it is so easy for them to say that he who errs in one point may as well fail in all? In questions of faith, my son, nothing is insignificant. If we open one tower to the enemy he is master of the whole fortress. In these unsettled times our sacred lore is like a chariot on the declivity of a precipice, and under the wheels thereof a stone. A child takes away the stone, and the chariot rolls down into the abyss and is dashed to pieces. Imagine the princess to be that child, and the stone a loaf that she would fain give to feed a beggar. Would you then give it to her if your father and your mother and all that is dear and precious to you were in the chariot? Answer not! the princess will visit the paraschites again to-morrow. You must await her in the man's hut, and there inform her that she has transgressed and must crave to be purified by us. For this time you are excused from any further punishment.

"Heaven has bestowed on you a gifted soul. Strive for that which is wanting to you—the strength to subdue, to crush for One—and you know that One—all things else—even the misguiding voice

of your heart, the treacherous voice of your judgment.—But stay! send leeches to the house of the paraschites, and desire them to treat the injured girl as though she were the queen herself. Who knows where the man dwells?"

"The princess," replied Pentaur, "has left Paaker, the king's pioneer, behind in the temple to conduct the leeches to the house of Pinem."

The grave high-priest smiled and said. "Paaker! to attend the daughter of a paraschites."

Pentaur half beseechingly and half in fun raised his eyes which he had kept cast down. "And Pentaur," he murmured, "the gardener's son! who is to refuse absolution to the king's daughter!"

"Pentaur, the minister of the Gods—Pentaur, the priest—has not to do with the daughter of the king, but with the transgressor of the sacred institutions," replied Ameni gravely. "Let Paaker know I wish to speak with him."

The poet bowed low and quitted the room, the high priest muttered to himself: "He is not yet what he should be, and speech is of no effect with him."

For a while he was silent, walking to and fro in meditation; then he said half aloud, "And the boy is destined to great things. What gifts of the Gods doth he lack? He has the faculty of learning—of thinking—of feeling—of winning all hearts, even mine. He keeps himself undefiled and separate —" suddenly the prelate paused and struck his hand on the back of a chair that stood by him. "I have it; he has not yet felt the fire of ambition. We will light it for his profit and our own."

CHAPTER III

Pentauer hastened to execute the commands of the high-priest. He sent a servant to escort Paaker, who was waiting in the forecourt, into the presence of Ameni while he himself repaired to the physicians to impress on them the most watchful care of the unfortunate girl.

Many proficients in the healing arts were brought up in the house of Seti, but few used to remain after passing the examination for the degree of Scribe.

> [What is here stated with regard to the medical schools is principally derived from the medical writings of the Egyptians themselves, among which the "Ebers Papyrus" holds the first place, "Medical Papyrus I." of Berlin the second, and a hieratic MS. in London which, like the first mentioned, has come down to us from the 18th dynasty, takes the third. Also see Herodotus II. 84. Diodorus I. 82.]

The most gifted were sent to Heliopolis, where flourished, in the great "Hall of the Ancients," the most celebrated medical faculty of the whole country, whence they returned to Thebes, endowed with the highest honors in surgery, in ocular treatment, or in any other branch of their profession, and became physicians to the king or made a living by imparting their learning and by being called in to consult on serious cases.

Naturally most of the doctors lived on the east bank of the Nile, in Thebes proper, and even in private houses with their families; but each was attached to a priestly college.

Whoever required a physician sent for him, not to his own house, but to a temple. There a statement was required of the complaint from which the sick was suffering, and it was left to the principal medical staff of the sanctuary to select that of the healing art whose special knowledge appeared to him to be suited for the treatment of the case.

Like all priests, the physicians lived on the income which came to them from their landed property, from the gifts of the king, the contributions of the laity, and the share which was given them of the state-revenues; they expected no honorarium from their patients, but the restored sick seldom neglected making a present to the sanctuary whence a physician had come to them, and it was not unusual for the priestly leech to make the recovery of the sufferer conditional on certain gifts to be offered to the temple.

The medical knowledge of the Egyptians was, according to every indication, very considerable; but it was natural that physicians, who stood by the bed of sickness as "ordained servants of the Divinity," should not be satisfied with a rational treatment of the sufferer, and should rather think that they could not dispense with the mystical effects of prayers and vows.

Among the professors of medicine in the House of Seti there were men of the most different gifts and bent of mind; but Pentaur was not for a moment in doubt as to which should be entrusted with the treatment of the girl who had been run over, and for whom he felt the greatest sympathy.

The one he chose was the grandson of a celebrated leech, long since dead, whose name of Nebsecht he had inherited, and a beloved school-friend and old comrade of Pentaur.

This young man had from his earliest years shown high and hereditary talent for the profession to which he had devoted himself; he had selected surgery

> [Among the six hermetic books of medicine mentioned by Clement of Alexandria, was one devoted to surgical instruments: otherwise the very badly-set fractures found in some of the mummies do little honor to the Egyptian surgeons.]

for his special province at Heliopolis, and would certainly have attained the dignity of teacher there if an impediment in his speech had not debarred him from the viva voce recitation of formulas and prayers.

This circumstance, which was deeply lamented by his parents and tutors, was in fact, in the best opinions, an advantage to him; for it often happens that apparent superiority does us damage, and that from apparent defect springs the saving of our life.

Thus, while the companions of Nebsecht were employed in declaiming or in singing, he, thanks to his fettered tongue, could give himself up to his inherited and almost passionate love of observing organic life; and his teachers indulged up to a certain point his innate spirit of investigation, and derived benefit from his knowledge of the human and animal structures, and from the dexterity of his handling.

His deep aversion for the magical part of his profession would have brought him heavy punishment, nay very likely would have cost him expulsion from the craft, if he had ever given it expression in any form. But Nebsecht's was the silent and reserved nature of the learned man, who free from all desire of external recognition, finds a rich satisfaction in the delights of investigation; and he regarded every demand on him to give proof of his capacity, as a vexatious but unavoidable intrusion on his unassuming but laborious and fruitful investigations.

Nebsecht was dearer and nearer to Pentaur than any other of his associates.

He admired his learning and skill; and when the slightly-built surgeon, who was indefatigable in his wanderings, roved through the thickets by the Nile, the desert, or the mountain range, the young poet-priest accompanied him with pleasure and with great benefit to himself, for his companion observed a thousand things to which without him he would have remained for ever blind; and the objects around him, which were known to him only by their shapes, derived connection and significance from the explanations of the naturalist, whose intractable tongue moved freely when it was required to expound to his friend the peculiarities of organic beings whose development he had been the first to detect.

The poet was dear in the sight of Nebsecht, and he loved Pentaur, who possessed all the gifts he lacked; manly beauty, childlike lightness of heart, the frankest openness, artistic power, and the gift of expressing in word and song every emotion that stirred his soul. The poet was as a novice in the order in which Nebsecht was master, but quite capable of understanding its most difficult points; so it happened that Nebsecht attached greater value to his judgment than to that of his own colleagues, who showed themselves fettered by prejudice, while Pentaur's decision always was free and unbiassed.

The naturalist's room lay on the ground floor, and had no living-rooms above it, being under one of the granaries attached to the temple. It was as large as a public hall, and yet Pentaur, making his way towards the silent owner of the room, found it everywhere strewed with thick bundles of every variety of plant, with cages of palm-twigs piled four or five high, and a number of jars, large and small, covered with perforated paper. Within these prisons moved all sorts of living creatures, from the jerboa, the lizard of the Nile, and a light-colored species of owl, to numerous specimens of frogs, snakes, scorpions and beetles.

On the solitary table in the middle of the room, near to a writing-stand, lay bones of animals, with various sharp flints and bronze knives.

In a corner of this room lay a mat, on which stood a wooden head-prop, indicating that the naturalist was in the habit of sleeping on it.

When Pentaur's step was heard on the threshold of this strange abode, its owner pushed a rather large object under the table, threw a cover over it, and hid a sharp flint scalpel

> [The Egyptians seem to have preferred to use flint instruments for surgical purposes, at any rate for the opening of bodies and for circumcision. Many flint instruments have been found and preserved in museums.]

fixed into a wooden handle, which he had just been using, in the folds of his robe-as a school-boy might hide some forbidden game from his master. Then he crossed his arms, to give himself the aspect of a man who is dreaming in harmless idleness.

The solitary lamp, which was fixed on a high stand near his chair, shed a scanty light, which, however, sufficed to show him his trusted friend Pentaur, who had disturbed Nebsecht in his prohibited occupations. Nebsecht nodded to him as he entered, and, when he had seen who it was, said:

"You need not have frightened me so!" Then he drew out from under the table the object he had hidden—a living rabbit fastened down to a board-and continued his interrupted observations on the body, which he had opened and fastened back with wooden pins while the heart continued to beat.

He took no further notice of Pentaur, who for some time silently watched the investigator; then he laid his hand on his shoulder and said:

"Lock your door more carefully, when you are busy with forbidden things."

"They took—they took away the bar of the door lately," stammered the naturalist, "when they caught me dissecting the hand of the forger Ptahmes."—[The law sentenced forgers to lose a hand.]

"The mummy of the poor man will find its right hand wanting," answered the poet.

"He will not want it out there."

"Did you bury the least bit of an image in his grave?"

> [Small statuettes, placed in graves to help the dead in the work performed in the under-world. They have axes and ploughs in their hands, and seed-bags on their backs. The sixth chapter of the Book of the Dead is inscribed on nearly all.]

"Nonsense."

"You go very far, Nebsecht, and are not foreseeing, 'He who needlessly hurts an innocent animal shall be served in the same way by the spirits of the netherworld,' says the law; but I see what you will say. You hold it lawful to put a beast to pain, when you can thereby increase that knowledge by which you alleviate the sufferings of man, and enrich—"

"And do not you?"

A gentle smile passed over Pentaur's face; leaned over the animal and said:

"How curious! the little beast still lives and breathes; a man would have long been dead under such treatment. His organism is perhaps of a more precious, subtle, and so more fragile nature?"

Nebsecht shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps!" he said.

"I thought you must know."

"I—how should I?" asked the leech. "I have told you—they would not even let me try to find out how the hand of a forger moves."

"Consider, the scripture tells us the passage of the soul depends on the preservation of the body."

Nebsecht looked up with his cunning little eyes and shrugging his shoulders, said:

"Then no doubt it is so: however these things do not concern me. Do what you like with the souls of men; I seek to know something of their bodies, and patch them when they are damaged as well as may be."

"Nay-Toth be praised, at least you need not deny that you are master in that art."

> [Toth is the god of the learned and of physicians. The Ibis was sacred to him, and he was usually represented as Ibis-headed. Ra created him "a beautiful light to show the name of his evil enemy." Originally the Dfoon-god, he became the lord of time and measure. He is the weigher, the philosopher among the gods, the lord of writing, of art and of learning. The Greeks called him Hermes Trismegistus, i.e. threefold or "very great" which was, in fact, in imitation of the Egyptians, whose name Toth or Techud signified twofold, in the same way "very great"]

"Who is master," asked Nebsecht, "excepting God? I can do nothing, nothing at all, and guide my instruments with hardly more certainty than a sculptor condemned to work in the dark."

"Something like the blind Resu then," said Pentaur smiling, "who understood painting better than all the painters who could see."

"In my operations there is a 'better' and a 'worse;'" said Nebsecht, "but there is nothing 'good.'"

"Then we must be satisfied with the 'better,' and I have come to claim it," said Pentaur.

"Are you ill?"

"Isis be praised, I feel so well that I could uproot a palm-tree, but I would ask you to visit a sick girl. The princess Bent-Anat—"

"The royal family has its own physicians."

"Let me speak! the princess Bent-Anat has run over a young girl, and the poor child is seriously hurt."

"Indeed," said the student reflectively. "Is she over there in the city, or here in the Necropolis?"

"Here. She is in fact the daughter of a paraschites."

"Of a paraschites?" exclaimed Nebsecht, once more slipping the rabbit under the table, "then I will go."

"You curious fellow. I believe you expect to find something strange among the unclean folk."

"That is my affair; but I will go. What is the man's name?"

"Pinem."

"There will be nothing to be done with him," muttered the student, "however—who knows?"

With these words he rose, and opening a tightly closed flask he dropped some strychnine on the nose and in the mouth of the rabbit, which immediately ceased to breathe. Then he laid it in a box and said, "I am ready."

"But you cannot go out of doors in this stained dress."

The physician nodded assent, and took from a chest a clean robe, which he was about to throw on over the other! but Pentaur hindered him. "First take off your working dress," he said laughing. "I will help you. But, by Besa, you have as many coats as an onion."

> [Besa, the god of the toilet of the Egyptians. He was represented as a deformed pigmy. He led the women to conquest in love, and the men in war. He was probably of Arab origin.]

Pentaur was known as a mighty laugher among his companions, and his loud voice rung in the quiet room, when he discovered that his friend was about to put a third clean robe over two dirty ones, and wear no less than three dresses at once.

Nebsecht laughed too, and said, "Now I know why my clothes were so heavy, and felt so intolerably hot at noon. While I get rid of my superfluous clothing, will you go and ask the high-priest if I have leave to quit the temple."

"He commissioned me to send a leech to the paraschites, and added that the girl was to be treated like a queen."

"Ameni? and did he know that we have to do with a paraschites?"

"Certainly."

"Then I shall begin to believe that broken limbs may be set with vows-aye, vows! You know I cannot go alone to the sick, because my leather tongue is unable to recite the sentences or to wring rich offerings for the temple from the dying. Go, while I undress, to the prophet Gagabu and beg him to send the pastophorus Teta, who usually accompanies me."

"I would seek a young assistant rather than that blind old man."

"Not at all. I should be glad if he would stay at home, and only let his tongue creep after me like an eel or a slug. Head and heart have nothing to do with his wordy operations, and they go on like an ox treading out corn."

[In Egypt, as in Palestine, beasts trod out the corn, as we learn from many pictures in the catacombs, even in the remotest ages; often with the addition of a weighted sledge, to the runners of which rollers are attached. It is now called noreg.]

"It is true," said Pentaur; "just lately I saw the old man singing out his litanies by a sick-bed, and all the time quietly counting the dates, of which they had given him a whole sack-full."

"He will be unwilling to go to the paraschites, who is poor, and he would sooner seize the whole brood of scorpions yonder than take a piece of bread from the hand of the unclean. Tell him to come and fetch me, and drink some wine. There stands three days' allowance; in this hot weather it dims my sight.

"Does the paraschites live to the north or south of the Necropolis?"

"I think to the north. Paaker, the king's pioneer, will show you the way."

"He!" exclaimed the student, laughing. "What day in the calendar is this, then?

[Calendars have been preserved, the completest is the papyrus Sallier IV., which has been admirably treated by F. Chabas. Many days are noted as lucky, unlucky, etc. In the temples many Calendars of feasts have been found, the most perfect at Medinet Abu, deciphered by Dumich.]

The child of a paraschites is to be tended like a princess, and a leech have a noble to guide him, like the Pharaoh himself! I ought to have kept on my three robes!"

"The night is warm," said Pentaur.

"But Paaker has strange ways with him. Only the day before yesterday I was called to a poor boy whose collar bone he had simply smashed with his stick. If I had been the princess's horse I would rather have trodden him down than a poor little girl."

"So would I," said Pentaur laughing, and left the room to request The second prophet Gagabu, who was also the head of the medical staff of the House of Seti, to send the blind pastophorus

[The Pastophori were an order of priests to which the physicians belonged.]

Teta, with his friend as singer of the litany.

CHAPTER IV

Pentaur knew where to seek Gagabu, for he himself had been invited to the banquet which the prophet had prepared in honor of two sages who had lately come to the House of Seti from the university of Chennu.

> [Chennu was situated on a bend of the Nile, not far from the Nubian frontier; it is now called Gebel Silsilch; it was in very ancient times the seat of a celebrated seminary.]

In an open court, surrounded by gaily-painted wooden pillars, and lighted by many lamps, sat the feasting priests in two long rows on comfortable armchairs. Before each stood a little table, and servants were occupied in supplying them with the dishes and drinks, which were laid out on a splendid table in the middle of the court. Joints of gazelle,

> [Gazelles were tamed for domestic animals: we find them in the representations of the herds of the wealthy Egyptians and as slaughtered for food. The banquet is described from the pictures of feasts which have been found in the tombs.]

roast geese and ducks, meat pasties, artichokes, asparagus and other vegetables, and various cakes and sweetmeats were carried to the guests, and their beakers well-filled with the choice wines of which there was never any lack in the lofts of the House of Seti.

> [Cellars maintain the mean temperature of the climate, and in Egypt are hot Wine was best preserved in shady and airy lofts.]

In the spaces between the guests stood servants with metal bowls, in which they might wash their hands, and towels of fine linen.

When their hunger was appeased, the wine flowed more freely, and each guest was decked with sweetly-smelling flowers, whose odor was supposed to add to the vivacity of the conversation.

Many of the sharers in this feast wore long, snowwhite garments, and were of the class of the Initiated into the mysteries of the faith, as well as chiefs of the different orders of priests of the House of Seti.

The second prophet, Gagabu, who was to-day charged with the conduct of the feast by Ameni —who on such occasions only showed himself for a few minutes—was a short, stout man with a bald and almost spherical head. His features were those of a man of advancing years, but well-formed, and his smoothly-shaven, plump cheeks were well-rounded. His grey eyes looked out cheerfully and observantly, but had a vivid sparkle when he was excited and began to twitch his thick, sensual mouth.

Close by him stood the vacant, highly-ornamented chair of the high-priest, and next to him sat the priests arrived from Chennu, two tall, dark-colored old men. The remainder of the company was arranged in the order of precedency, which they held in the priests' colleges, and which bore no relation to their respective ages.

But strictly as the guests were divided with reference to their rank, they mixed without distinction in the conversation.

"We know how to value our call to Thebes," said the elder of the strangers from Chennu, Tuauf, whose essays were frequently used in the schools,—[Some of them are still in existence]—"for while, on one hand, it brings us into the neighborhood of the Pharaoh, where life, happiness, and safety flourish, on the other it procures us the honor of counting ourselves among your number; for, though the university of Chennu in former times was so happy as to bring up many great men, whom she could call her own, she can no longer compare with the House of Seti. Even Heliopolis and Memphis are behind you; and if I, my humble self, nevertheless venture boldly among you, it is because I ascribe

your success as much to the active influence of the Divinity in your temple, which may promote my acquirements and achievements, as to your great gifts and your industry, in which I will not be behind you. I have already seen your high-priest Ameni—what a man! And who does not know thy name, Gagabu, or thine, Meriapu?"

"And which of you," asked the other new-comer, "may we greet as the author of the most beautiful hymn to Amon, which was ever sung in the land of the Sycamore? Which of you is Pentaur?"

"The empty chair yonder," answered Gagabu, pointing to a seat at the lower end of the table, "is his. He is the youngest of us all, but a great future awaits him."

"And his songs," added the elder of the strangers. "Without doubt," replied the chief of the haruspices,—[One of the orders of priests in the Egyptian hierarchy]—an old man with a large grey curly head, that seemed too heavy for his thin neck, which stretched forward—perhaps from the habit of constantly watching for signs—while his prominent eyes glowed with a fanatical gleam. "Without doubt the Gods have granted great gifts to our young friend, but it remains to be proved how he will use them. I perceive a certain freedom of thought in the youth, which pains me deeply. Although in his poems his flexible style certainly follows the prescribed forms, his ideas transcend all tradition; and even in the hymns intended for the ears of the people I find turns of thought, which might well be called treason to the mysteries which only a few months ago he swore to keep secret. For instance he says—and we sing—and the laity hear—

"One only art Thou, Thou Creator of beings;
And Thou only makest all that is created.

And again—

He is one only, Alone, without equal;
Dwelling alone in the holiest of holies."

[Hymn to Amon preserved in a papyrus roll at Bulaq, and deciphered by Grehaut and L. Stern.]

Such passages as these ought not to be sung in public, at least in times like ours, when new ideas come in upon us from abroad, like the swarms of locusts from the East."

"Spoken to my very soul!" cried the treasurer of the temple, "Ameni initiated this boy too early into the mysteries."

"In my opinion, and I am his teacher," said Gagabu, "our brotherhood may be proud of a member who adds so brilliantly to the fame of our temple. The people hear the hymns without looking closely at the meaning of the words. I never saw the congregation more devout, than when the beautiful and deeply-felt song of praise was sung at the feast of the stairs."

[A particularly solemn festival in honor of Amon-Chem, held in the temple of Medinet-Abu.]

"Pentaur was always thy favorite," said the former speaker. "Thou wouldst not permit in any one else many things that are allowed to him. His hymns are nevertheless to me and to many others a dangerous performance; and canst thou dispute the fact that we have grounds for grave anxiety, and that things happen and circumstances grow up around us which hinder us, and at last may perhaps crush us, if we do not, while there is yet time, inflexibly oppose them?"

"Thou bringest sand to the desert, and sugar to sprinkle over honey," exclaimed Gagabu, and his lips began to twitch. "Nothing is now as it ought to be, and there will be a hard battle to fight; not with the sword, but with this—and this." And the impatient man touched his forehead and his lips. "And who is there more competent than my disciple? There is the champion of our cause, a second cap of

Hor, that overthrew the evil one with winged sunbeams, and you come and would clip his wings and blunt his claws! Alas, alas, my lords! will you never understand that a lion roars louder than a cat, and the sun shines brighter than an oil-lamp? Let Pentuar alone, I say; or you will do as the man did, who, for fear of the toothache, had his sound teeth drawn. Alas, alas, in the years to come we shall have to bite deep into the flesh, till the blood flows, if we wish to escape being eaten up ourselves!"

"The enemy is not unknown to us also," said the elder priest from Chennu, "although we, on the remote southern frontier of the kingdom, have escaped many evils that in the north have eaten into our body like a cancer. Here foreigners are now hardly looked upon at all as unclean and devilish."—["Typhonisch," belonging to Typhon or Seth.—Translator.]

"Hardly?" exclaimed the chief of the haruspices; "they are invited, caressed, and honored. Like dust, when the simoon blows through the chinks of a wooden house, they crowd into the houses and temples, taint our manners and language;

[At no period Egyptian writers use more Semitic words than during the reigns of Rameses II. and his son Mernephtah.]

nay, on the throne of the successors of Ra sits a descendant—"

"Presumptuous man!" cried the voice of the high-priest, who at this instant entered the hall, "Hold your tongue, and be not so bold as to wag it against him who is our king, and wields the sceptre in this kingdom as the Vicar of Ra."

The speaker bowed and was silent, then he and all the company rose to greet Ameni, who bowed to them all with polite dignity, took his seat, and turning to Gagabu asked him carelessly:

"I find you all in most unpriestly excitement; what has disturbed your equanimity?"

"We were discussing the overwhelming influx of foreigners into Egypt, and the necessity of opposing some resistance to them."

"You will find me one of the foremost in the attempt," replied Ameni. "We have endured much already, and news has arrived from the north, which grieves me deeply."

"Have our troops sustained a defeat?"

"They continue to be victorious, but thousands of our countrymen have fallen victims in the fight or on the march. Rameses demands fresh reinforcements. The pioneer, Paaker, has brought me a letter from our brethren who accompany the king, and delivered a document from him to the Regent, which contains the order to send to him fifty thousand fighting men: and as the whole of the soldier-caste and all the auxiliaries are already under arms, the bondmen of the temple, who till our acres, are to be levied, and sent into Asia."

A murmur of disapproval arose at these words. The chief of the haruspices stamped his foot, and Gagabu asked:

"What do you mean to do?"

"To prepare to obey the commands of the king," answered Ameni, "and to call the heads of the temples of the city of Anion here without delay to hold a council. Each must first in his holy of holies seek good counsel of the Celestials. When we have come to a conclusion, we must next win the Viceroy over to our side. Who yesterday assisted at his prayers?"

"It was my turn," said the chief of the haruspices.

"Follow me to my abode, when the meal is over." commanded Ameni. "But why is our poet missing from our circle?"

At this moment Pentaur came into the hall, and while he bowed easily and with dignity to the company and low before Ameni, he prayed him to grant that the pastophorus Teta should accompany the leech Nebsecht to visit the daughter of the paraschites.

Ameni nodded consent and exclaimed: "They must make haste. Paaker waits for them at the great gate, and will accompany them in my chariot."

As soon as Pentaur had left the party of feasters, the old priest from Chennu exclaimed, as he turned to Ameni:

"Indeed, holy father, just such a one and no other had I pictured your poet. He is like the Sun-god, and his demeanor is that of a prince. He is no doubt of noble birth."

"His father is a homely gardener," said the highpriest, "who indeed tills the land apportioned to him with industry and prudence, but is of humble birth and rough exterior. He sent Pentaur to the school at an early age, and we have brought up the wonderfully gifted boy to be what he now is."

"What office does he fill here in the temple?"

"He instructs the elder pupils of the high-school in grammar and eloquence; he is also an excellent observer of the starry heavens, and a most skilled interpreter of dreams," replied Gagabu. "But here he is again. To whom is Paaker conducting our stammering physician and his assistant?"

"To the daughter of the paraschites, who has been run over," answered Pentaur. "But what a rough fellow this pioneer is. His voice hurts my ears, and he spoke to our leeches as if they had been his slaves."

"He was vexed with the commission the princess had devolved on him," said the high-priest benevolently, "and his unamiable disposition is hardly mitigated by his real piety."

"And yet," said an old priest, "his brother, who left us some years ago, and who had chosen me for his guide and teacher, was a particularly loveable and docile youth."

"And his father," said Ameni, "was one of the most superior energetic, and withal subtle-minded of men."

"Then he has derived his bad peculiarities from his mother?"

"By no means. She is a timid, amiable, soft-hearted woman."

"But must the child always resemble its parents?" asked Pentaur. "Among the sons of the sacred bull, sometimes not one bears the distinguishing mark of his father."

"And if Paaker's father were indeed an Apis," Gagabu laughing, "according to your view the pioneer himself belongs, alas! to the peasant's stable."

Pentaur did not contradict him, but said with a smile:

"Since he left the school bench, where his school-fellows called him the wild ass on account of his unruliness, he has remained always the same. He was stronger than most of them, and yet they knew no greater pleasure than putting him in a rage."

"Children are so cruel!" said Ameni. "They judge only by appearances, and never enquire into the causes of them. The deficient are as guilty in their eyes as the idle, and Paaker could put forward small claims to their indulgence. I encourage freedom and merriment," he continued turning to the priests from Cheraw, "among our disciples, for in fettering the fresh enjoyment of youth we lame our best assistant. The excrescences on the natural growth of boys cannot be more surely or painlessly extirpated than in their wild games. The school-boy is the school-boy's best tutor."

"But Paaker," said the priest Meriapu, "was not improved by the provocations of his companions. Constant contests with them increased that roughness which now makes him the terror of his subordinates and alienates all affection."

"He is the most unhappy of all the many youths, who were intrusted to my care," said Ameni, "and I believe I know why,—he never had a childlike disposition, even when in years he was still a child, and the Gods had denied him the heavenly gift of good humor. Youth should be modest, and he was assertive from his childhood. He took the sport of his companions for earnest, and his father, who was unwise only as a tutor, encouraged him to resistance instead of to forbearance, in the idea that he thus would be steeled to the hard life of a Mohar."

[The severe duties of the Mohar are well known from the papyrus of Anastasi I. in the Brit. Mus., which has been ably treated by F. Chabas, Voyage d'un Egyptien.]

"I have often heard the deeds of the Mohar spoken of," said the old priest from Chennu, "yet I do not exactly know what his office requires of him."

"He has to wander among the ignorant and insolent people of hostile provinces, and to inform himself of the kind and number of the population, to investigate the direction of the mountains, valleys, and rivers, to set forth his observations, and to deliver them to the house of war,

[Corresponding to our minister of war. A person of the highest importance even in the earliest times.]

so that the march of the troops may be guided by them."

"The Mohar then must be equally skilled as a warrior and as a Scribe."

"As thou sayest; and Paaker's father was not a hero only, but at the same time a writer, whose close and clear information depicted the country through which he had travelled as plainly as if it were seen from a mountain height. He was the first who took the title of Mohar. The king held him in such high esteem, that he was inferior to no one but the king himself, and the minister of the house of war."

"Was he of noble race?"

"Of one of the oldest and noblest in the country. His father was the noble warrior Assa," answered the haruspex, "and he therefore, after he himself had attained the highest consideration and vast wealth, escorted home the niece of the King Hor-em-lieb, who would have had a claim to the throne, as well as the Regent, if the grandfather of the present Rameses had not seized it from the old family by violence."

"Be careful of your words," said Ameni, interrupting the rash old man. "Rameses I. was and is the grandfather of our sovereign, and in the king's veins, from his mother's side, flows the blood of the legitimate descendants of the Sun-god."

"But fuller and purer in those of the Regent the haruspex ventured to retort.

"But Rameses wears the crown," cried Ameni, "and will continue to wear it so long as it pleases the Gods. Reflect—your hairs are grey, and seditious words are like sparks, which are borne by the wind, but which, if they fall, may set our home in a blaze. Continue your feasting, my lords; but I would request you to speak no more this evening of the king and his new decree. You, Pentaur, fulfil my orders to-morrow morning with energy and prudence."

The high-priest bowed and left the feast.

As soon as the door was shut behind him, the old priest from Chennu spoke.

"What we have learned concerning the pioneer of the king, a man who holds so high an office, surprises me. Does he distinguish himself by a special acuteness?"

"He was a steady learner, but of moderate ability."

"Is the rank of Mohar then as high as that of a prince of the empire?"

"By no means."

"How then is it—?"

"It is, as it is," interrupted Gagabu. "The son of the vine-dresser has his mouth full of grapes, and the child of the door-keeper opens the lock with words."

"Never mind," said an old priest who had hitherto kept silence. "Paaker earned for himself the post of Mohar, and possesses many praiseworthy qualities. He is indefatigable and faithful, quails before no danger, and has always been earnestly devout from his boyhood. When the other scholars carried their pocket-money to the fruit-sellers and confectioners at the temple-gates, he would buy geese, and, when his mother sent him a handsome sum, young gazelles, to offer to the Gods on the altars. No noble in the land owns a greater treasure of charms and images of the Gods than he. To the present time he is the most pious of men, and the offerings for the dead, which he brings in the name of his late father, may be said to be positively kingly."

"We owe him gratitude for these gifts," said the treasurer, "and the high honor he pays his father, even after his death, is exceptional and far-famed."

"He emulates him in every respect," sneered Gagabu; "and though he does not resemble him in any feature, grows more and more like him. But unfortunately, it is as the goose resembles the swan, or the owl resembles the eagle. For his father's noble pride he has overbearing haughtiness; for kindly severity, rude harshness; for dignity, conceit; for perseverance, obstinacy. Devout he is, and we profit by his gifts. The treasurer may rejoice over them, and the dates off a crooked tree taste as well as those off a straight one. But if I were the Divinity I should prize them no higher than a hoopoe's crest; for He, who sees into the heart of the giver-alas! what does he see! Storms and darkness are of the dominion of Seth, and in there—in there—" and the old man struck his broad breast "all is wrath and tumult, and there is not a gleam of the calm blue heaven of Ra, that shines soft and pure in the soul of the pious; no, not a spot as large as this wheaten-cake."

"Hast thou then sounded to the depths of his soul?" asked the haruspex.

"As this beaker!" exclaimed Gagabu, and he touched the rim of an empty drinking-vessel. "For fifteen years without ceasing. The man has been of service to us, is so still, and will continue to be. Our leeches extract salves from bitter gall and deadly poisons; and folks like these—"

"Hatred speaks in thee," said the haruspex, interrupting the indignant old man.

"Hatred!" he retorted, and his lips quivered. "Hatred?" and he struck his breast with his clenched hand. "It is true, it is no stranger to this old heart. But open thine ears, O haruspex, and all you others too shall hear. I recognize two sorts of hatred. The one is between man and man; that I have gagged, smothered, killed, annihilated—with what efforts, the Gods know. In past years I have certainly tasted its bitterness, and served it like a wasp, which, though it knows that in stinging it must die, yet uses its sting. But now I am old in years, that is in knowledge, and I know that of all the powerful impulses which stir our hearts, one only comes solely from Seth, one only belongs wholly to the Evil one and that is hatred between man and man. Covetousness may lead to industry, sensual appetites may beget noble fruit, but hatred is a devastator, and in the soul that it occupies all that is noble grows not upwards and towards the light, but downwards to the earth and to darkness. Everything may be forgiven by the Gods, save only hatred between man and man. But there is another sort of hatred that is pleasing to the Gods, and which you must cherish if you would not miss their presence in your souls; that is, hatred for all that hinders the growth of light and goodness and purity —the hatred of Horus for Seth. The Gods would punish me if I hated Paaker whose father was dear to me; but the spirits of darkness would possess the old heart in my breast if it were devoid of horror for the covetous and sordid devotee, who would fain buy earthly joys of the Gods with gifts of beasts and wine, as men exchange an ass for a robe, in whose soul seethe dark promptings. Paaker's gifts can no more be pleasing to the Celestials than a cask of attar of roses would please thee, haruspex, in which scorpions, centipedes, and venomous snakes were swimming. I have long led this man's prayers, and never have I heard him crave for noble gifts, but a thousand times for the injury of the men he hates."

"In the holiest prayers that come down to us from the past," said the haruspex, "the Gods are entreated to throw our enemies under our feet; and, besides, I have often heard Paaker pray fervently for the bliss of his parents."

"You are a priest and one of the initiated," cried Gagabu, "and you know not—or will not seem to know—that by the enemies for whose overthrow we pray, are meant only the demons of darkness and the outlandish peoples by whom Egypt is endangered! Paaker prayed for his parents? Ay, and so will he for his children, for they will be his future as his fore fathers are his past. If he had a wife, his offerings would be for her too, for she would be the half of his own present."

"In spite of all this," said the haruspex Septah, "you are too hard in your judgment of Paaker, for although he was born under a lucky sign, the Hathors denied him all that makes youth happy. The enemy for whose destruction he prays is Mena, the king's charioteer, and, indeed, he must have been of superhuman magnanimity or of unmanly feebleness, if he could have wished well to the man who robbed him of the beautiful wife who was destined for him."

"How could that happen?" asked the priest from Chennu. "A betrothal is sacred."

[In the demotic papyrus preserved at Bulaq (novel by Setnau) first treated by H. Brugsch, the following words occur: “Is it not the law, which unites one to another?” Betrothed brides are mentioned, for instance on the sarcophagus of Unnefer at Bulaq.]

“Paaker,” replied Septah, “was attached with all the strength of his ungoverned but passionate and faithful heart to his cousin Nefert, the sweetest maid in Thebes, the daughter of Katuti, his mother’s sister; and she was promised to him to wife. Then his father, whom he accompanied on his marches, was mortally wounded in Syria. The king stood by his death-bed, and granting his last request, invested his son with his rank and office: Paaker brought the mummy of his father home to Thebes, gave him princely interment, and then before the time of mourning was over, hastened back to Syria, where, while the king returned to Egypt, it was his duty to reconnoitre the new possessions. At last he could quit the scene of war with the hope of marrying Nefert. He rode his horse to death the sooner to reach the goal of his desires; but when he reached Tanis, the city of Rameses, the news met him that his affianced cousin had been given to another, the handsomest and bravest man in Thebes —the noble Mena. The more precious a thing is that we hope to possess, the more we are justified in complaining of him who contests our claim, and can win it from us. Paaker’s blood must have been as cold as a frog’s if he could have forgiven Mena instead of hating him, and the cattle he has offered to the Gods to bring down their wrath on the head of the traitor may be counted by hundreds.”

“And if you accept them, knowing why they are offered, you do unwisely and wrongly,” exclaimed Gagabu. “If I were a layman, I would take good care not to worship a Divinity who condescends to serve the foulest human fiends for a reward. But the omniscient Spirit, that rules the world in accordance with eternal laws, knows nothing of these sacrifices, which only tickle the nostrils of the evil one. The treasurer rejoices when a beautiful spotless heifer is driven in among our herds. But Seth rubs his red hands

[Red was the color of Seth and Typhon. The evil one is named the Red, as for instance in the papyrus of fibers. Red-haired men were typhonic.]

with delight that he accepts it. My friends, I have heard the vows which Paaker has poured out over our pure altars, like hogwash that men set before swine. Pestilence and boils has he called down on Mena, and barrenness and heartache on the poor sweet woman; and I really cannot blame her for preferring a battle-horse to a hippopotamus—a Mena to a Paaker.”

“Yet the Immortals must have thought his remonstrances less unjustifiable, and have stricter views as to the inviolable nature of a betrothal than you,” said the treasurer, “for Nefert, during four years of married life, has passed only a few weeks with her wandering husband, and remains childless. It is hard to me to understand how you, Gagabu, who so often absolve where we condemn, can so relentlessly judge so great a benefactor to our temple.”

“And I fail to comprehend,” exclaimed the old man, “how you—you who so willingly condemn, can so weakly excuse this—this—call him what you will.”

“He is indispensable to us at this time,” said the haruspex.

“Granted,” said Gagabu, lowering his tone. “And I think still to make use of him, as the high-priest has done in past years with the best effect when dangers have threatened us; and a dirty road serves when it makes for the goal. The Gods themselves often permit safety to come from what is evil, but shall we therefore call evil good—or say the hideous is beautiful? Make use of the king’s pioneer as you will, but do not, because you are indebted to him for gifts, neglect to judge him according to his imaginings and deeds if you would deserve your title of the Initiated and the Enlightened. Let him bring his cattle into our temple and pour his gold into our treasury, but do not defile your souls with the thought that the offerings of such a heart and such a hand are pleasing to the Divinity. Above all,” and the voice of the old man had a heart-felt impressiveness, “Above all, do not flatter the erring

man—and this is what you do, with the idea that he is walking in the right way; for your, for our first duty, O my friends, is always this—to guide the souls of those who trust in us to goodness and truth."

"Oh, my master!" cried Pentaur, "how tender is thy severity."

"I have shown the hideous sores of this man's soul," said the old man, as he rose to quit the hall. "Your praise will aggravate them, your blame will tend to heal them. Nay, if you are not content to do your duty, old Gagabu will come some day with his knife, and will throw the sick man down and cut out the canker."

During this speech the haruspex had frequently shrugged his shoulders. Now he said, turning to the priests from Chennu—

"Gagabu is a foolish, hot-headed old man, and you have heard from his lips just such a sermon as the young scribes keep by them when they enter on the duties of the care of souls. His sentiments are excellent, but he easily overlooks small things for the sake of great ones. Ameni would tell you that ten souls, no, nor a hundred, do not matter when the safety of the whole is in question."

CHAPTER V

The night during which the Princess Bent-Anat and her followers had knocked at the gate of the House of Seti was past.

The fruitful freshness of the dawn gave way to the heat, which began to pour down from the deep blue cloudless vault of heaven. The eye could no longer gaze at the mighty globe of light whose rays pierced the fine white dust which hung over the declivity of the hills that enclosed the city of the dead on the west. The limestone rocks showed with blinding clearness, the atmosphere quivered as if heated over a flame; each minute the shadows grew shorter and their outlines sharper.

All the beasts which we saw peopling the Necropolis in the evening had now withdrawn into their lurking places; only man defied the heat of the summer day. Undisturbed he accomplished his daily work, and only laid his tools aside for a moment, with a sigh, when a cooling breath blew across the overflowing stream and fanned his brow.

The harbor or clock where those landed who crossed from eastern Thebes was crowded with barks and boats waiting to return.

The crews of rowers and steersmen who were attached to priestly brotherhoods or noble houses, were enjoying a rest till the parties they had brought across the Nile drew towards them again in long processions.

Under a wide-spreading sycamore a vendor of eatables, spirituous drinks, and acids for cooling the water, had set up his stall, and close to him, a crowd of boatmen, and drivers shouted and disputed as they passed the time in eager games at morra.

> [In Latin “micare digitis.” A game still constantly played in the south of Europe, and frequently represented by the Egyptians. The games depicted in the monuments are collected by Minutoli, in the Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung, 1852.]

Many sailors lay on the decks of the vessels, others on the shore; here in the thin shade of a palm tree, there in the full blaze of the sun, from those burning rays they protected themselves by spreading the cotton cloths, which served them for cloaks, over their faces.

Between the sleepers passed bondmen and slaves, brown and black, in long files one behind the other, bending under the weight of heavy burdens, which had to be conveyed to their destination at the temples for sacrifice, or to the dealers in various wares. Builders dragged blocks of stone, which had come from the quarries of Chennu and Suan,

> [The Syene of the Greeks, non, called Assouan at the first cataract.]

on sledges to the site of a new temple; laborers poured water under the runners, that the heavily loaded and dried wood should not take fire.

All these working men were driven with sticks by their overseers, and sang at their labor; but the voices of the leaders sounded muffled and hoarse, though, when after their frugal meal they enjoyed an hour of repose, they might be heard loud enough. Their parched throats refused to sing in the noontide of their labor.

Thick clouds of gnats followed these tormented gangs, who with dull and spirit-broken endurance suffered alike the stings of the insects and the blows of their driver. The gnats pursued them to the very heart of the City of the dead, where they joined themselves to the flies and wasps, which swarmed in countless crowds around the slaughter houses, cooks’ shops, stalls of fried fish, and booths of meat, vegetable, honey, cakes and drinks, which were doing a brisk business in spite of the noontide heat and the oppressive atmosphere heated and filled with a mixture of odors.

The nearer one got to the Libyan frontier, the quieter it became, and the silence of death reigned in the broad north-west valley, where in the southern slope the father of the reigning king had caused his tomb to be hewn, and where the stone-mason of the Pharaoh had prepared a rock tomb for him.

A newly made road led into this rocky gorge, whose steep yellow and brown walls seemed scorched by the sun in many blackened spots, and looked like a ghostly array of shades that had risen from the tombs in the night and remained there.

At the entrance of this valley some blocks of stone formed a sort of doorway, and through this, indifferent to the heat of day, a small but brilliant troop of the men was passing.

Four slender youths as staff bearers led the procession, each clothed only with an apron and a flowing head-cloth of gold brocade; the mid-day sun played on their smooth, moist, red-brown skins, and their supple naked feet hardly stirred the stones on the road.

Behind them followed an elegant, two-wheeled chariot, with two prancing brown horses bearing tufts of red and blue feathers on their noble heads, and seeming by the bearing of their arched necks and flowing tails to express their pride in the gorgeous housings, richly embroidered in silver, purple, and blue and golden ornaments, which they wore—and even more in their beautiful, royal charioteer, Bent-Anat, the daughter of Rameses, at whose lightest word they pricked their ears, and whose little hand guided them with a scarcely perceptible touch.

Two young men dressed like the other runners followed the chariot, and kept the rays of the sun off the face of their mistress with large fans of snow-white ostrich feathers fastened to long wands.

By the side of Bent-Anat, so long as the road was wide enough to allow of it, was carried Nefert, the wife of Mena, in her gilt litter, borne by eight tawny bearers, who, running with a swift and equally measured step, did not remain far behind the trotting horses of the princess and her fan-bearers.

Both the women, whom we now see for the first time in daylight, were of remarkable but altogether different beauty.

The wife of Mena had preserved the appearance of a maiden; her large almond-shaped eyes had a dreamy surprised look out from under her long eyelashes, and her figure of hardly the middle-height had acquired a little stoutness without losing its youthful grace. No drop of foreign blood flowed in her veins, as could be seen in the color of her skin, which was of that fresh and equal line which holds a medium between golden yellow and bronze brown—and which to this day is so charming in the maidens of Abyssinia—in her straight nose, her well-formed brow, in her smooth but thick black hair, and in the fineness of her hands and feet, which were ornamented with circles of gold.

The maiden princess next to her had hardly reached her nineteenth year, and yet something of a womanly self-consciousness betrayed itself in her demeanor. Her stature was by almost a head taller than that of her friend, her skin was fairer, her blue eyes kind and frank, without tricks of glance, but clear and honest, her profile was noble but sharply cut, and resembled that of her father, as a landscape in the mild and softening light of the moon resembles the same landscape in the broad clear light of day. The scarcely perceptible aquiline of her nose, she inherited from her Semitic ancestors,

> [Many portraits have come down to us of Rameses: the finest is the noble statue preserved at Turin. A likeness has been detected between its profile, with its slightly aquiline nose, and that of Napoleon I.]

as well as the slightly waving abundance of her brown hair, over which she wore a blue and white striped silk kerchief; its carefully-pleated folds were held in place by a gold ring, from which in front a horned urarus

> [A venomous Egyptian serpent which was adopted as the symbol of sovereign power, in consequence of its swift effects for life or death. It is never wanting to the diadem of the Pharaohs.]

raised its head crowned with a disk of rubies. From her left temple a large tress, plaited with gold thread, hung down to her waist, the sign of her royal birth. She wore a purple dress of fine,

almost transparent stuff, that was confined with a gold belt and straps. Round her throat was fastened a necklace like a collar, made of pearls and costly stones, and hanging low down on her well-formed bosom.

Behind the princess stood her charioteer, an old officer of noble birth.

Three litters followed the chariot of the princess, and in each sat two officers of the court; then came a dozen of slaves ready for any service, and lastly a crowd of wand-bearers to drive off the idle populace, and of lightly-armed soldiers, who—dressed only in the apron and head-cloth—each bore a dagger-shaped sword in his girdle, an axe in his right hand, and in his left; in token of his peaceful service, a palm-branch.

Like dolphins round a ship, little girls in long shirt-shaped garments swarmed round the whole length of the advancing procession, bearing water-jars on their steady heads, and at a sign from any one who was thirsty were ready to give him a drink. With steps as light as the gazelle they often outran the horses, and nothing could be more graceful than the action with which the taller ones bent over with the water-jars held in both arms to the drinker.

The courtiers, cooled and shaded by waving fans, and hardly perceiving the noontide heat, conversed at their ease about indifferent matters, and the princess pitied the poor horses, who were tormented as they ran, by annoying gadflies; while the runners and soldiers, the litter-bearers and fan-bearers, the girls with their jars and the panting slaves, were compelled to exert themselves under the rays of the mid-day sun in the service of their masters, till their sinews threatened to crack and their lungs to burst their bodies.

At a spot where the road widened, and where, to the right, lay the steep cross-valley where the last kings of the dethroned race were interred, the procession stopped at a sign from Paaker, who preceded the princess, and who drove his fiery black Syrian horses with so heavy a hand that the bloody foam fell from their bits.

When the Mohar had given the reins into the hand of a servant, he sprang from his chariot, and after the usual form of obeisance said to the princess:

“In this valley lies the loathsome den of the people, to whom thou, O princess, dost deign to do such high honor. Permit me to go forward as guide to thy party.”

“We will go on foot,” said the princess, “and leave our followers behind here.”

Paaker bowed, Bent-Anat threw the reins to her charioteer and sprang to the ground, the wife of Mena and the courtiers left their litters, and the fan-bearers and chamberlains were about to accompany their mistress on foot into the little valley, when she turned round and ordered, “Remain behind, all of you. Only Paaker and Nefert need go with me.”

The princess hastened forward into the gorge, which was oppressive with the noon-tide heat; but she moderated her steps as soon as she observed that the frailer Nefert found it difficult to follow her.

At a bend in the road Paaker stood still, and with him Bent-Anat and Nefert. Neither of them had spoken a word during their walk. The valley was perfectly still and deserted; on the highest pinnacles of the cliff, which rose perpendicularly to the right, sat a long row of vultures, as motionless as if the mid-day heat had taken all strength out of their wings.

Paaker bowed before them as being the sacred animals of the Great Goddess of Thebes,

> [She formed a triad with Anion and Chunsu under the name of Muth. The great “Sanctuary of the kingdom”—the temple of Karnak—was dedicated to them.]

and the two women silently followed his example.

“There,” said the Mohar, pointing to two huts close to the left cliff of the valley, built of bricks made of dried Nile-mud, “there, the neatest, next the cave in the rock.”

Bent-Anat went towards the solitary hovel with a beating heart; Paaker let the ladies go first. A few steps brought them to an ill-constructed fence of canestalks, palm-branches, briars and straw, roughly thrown together. A heart-rending cry of pain from within the hut trembled in the air and

arrested the steps of the two women. Nefert staggered and clung to her stronger companion, whose beating heart she seemed to hear. Both stood a few minutes as if spellbound, then the princess called Paaker, and said:

"You go first into the house."

Paaker bowed to the ground.

"I will call the man out," he said, "but how dare we step over his threshold. Thou knowest such a proceeding will defile us."

Nefert looked pleadingly at Bent-Anat, but the princess repeated her command.

"Go before me; I have no fear of defilement." The Mohar still hesitated.

"Wilt thou provoke the Gods?—and defile thyself?" But the princess let him say no more; she signed to Nefert, who raised her hands in horror and aversion; so, with a shrug of her shoulders, she left her companion behind with the Mohar, and stepped through an opening in the hedge into a little court, where lay two brown goats; a donkey with his forelegs tied together stood by, and a few hens were scattering the dust about in a vain search for food.

Soon she stood, alone, before the door of the paraschites' hovel. No one perceived her, but she could not take her eyes-accustomed only to scenes of order and splendor—from the gloomy but wonderfully strange picture, which riveted her attention and her sympathy. At last she went up to the doorway, which was too low for her tall figure. Her heart shrunk painfully within her, and she would have wished to grow smaller, and, instead of shining in splendor, to have found herself wrapped in a beggar's robe.

Could she step into this hovel decked with gold and jewels as if in mockery?—like a tyrant who should feast at a groaning table and compel the starving to look on at the banquet. Her delicate perception made her feel what trenchant discord her appearance offered to all that surrounded her, and the discord pained her; for she could not conceal from herself that misery and external meanness were here entitled to give the key-note and that her magnificence derived no especial grandeur from contrast with all these modest accessories, amid dust, gloom, and suffering, but rather became disproportionate and hideous, like a giant among pigmies.

She had already gone too far to turn back, or she would willingly have done so. The longer she gazed into the but, the more deeply she felt the impotence of her princely power, the nothingness of the splendid gifts with which she approached it, and that she might not tread the dusty floor of this wretched hovel but in all humility, and to crave a pardon.

The room into which she looked was low but not very small, and obtained from two cross lights a strange and unequal illumination; on one side the light came through the door, and on the other through an opening in the time-worn ceiling of the room, which had never before harbored so many and such different guests.

All attention was concentrated on a group, which was clearly lighted up from the doorway.

On the dusty floor of the room cowered an old woman, with dark weather-beaten features and tangled hair that had long been grey. Her black-blue cotton shirt was open over her withered bosom, and showed a blue star tattooed upon it.

In her lap she supported with her hands the head of a girl, whose slender body lay motionless on a narrow, ragged mat. The little white feet of the sick girl almost touched the threshold. Near to them squatted a benevolent-looking old man, who wore only a coarse apron, and sitting all in a heap, bent forward now and then, rubbing the child's feet with his lean hands and muttering a few words to himself.

The sufferer wore nothing but a short petticoat of coarse light-blue stuff. Her face, half resting on the lap of the old woman, was graceful and regular in form, her eyes were half shut-like those of a child, whose soul is wrapped in some sweet dream-but from her finely chiselled lips there escaped from time to time a painful, almost convulsive sob.

An abundance of soft, but disordered reddish fair hair, in which clung a few withered flowers, fell over the lap of the old woman and on to the mat where she lay. Her cheeks were white and rosy-red, and when the young surgeon Nebsecht—who sat by her side, near his blind, stupid companion, the litany-singer—lifted the ragged cloth that had been thrown over her bosom, which had been crushed by the chariot wheel, or when she lifted her slender arm, it was seen that she had the shining fairness of those daughters of the north who not unfrequently came to Thebes among the king's prisoners of war.

The two physicians sent hither from the House of Seti sat on the left side of the maiden on a little carpet. From time to time one or the other laid his hand over the heart of the sufferer, or listened to her breathing, or opened his case of medicaments, and moistened the compress on her wounded breast with a white ointment.

In a wide circle close to the wall of the room crouched several women, young and old, friends of the paraschites, who from time to time gave expression to their deep sympathy by a piercing cry of lamentation. One of them rose at regular intervals to fill the earthen bowl by the side of the physician with fresh water. As often as the sudden coolness of a fresh compress on her hot bosom startled the sick girl, she opened her eyes, but always soon to close them again for longer interval, and turned them at first in surprise, and then with gentle reverence, towards a particular spot.

These glances had hitherto been unobserved by him to whom they were directed.

Leaning against the wall on the right hand side of the room, dressed in his long, snow-white priest's robe, Pentaur stood awaiting the princess. His head-dress touched the ceiling, and the narrow streak of light, which fell through the opening in the roof, streamed on his handsome head and his breast, while all around him was veiled in twilight gloom.

Once more the suffering girl looked up, and her glance this time met the eye of the young priest, who immediately raised his hand, and half-mechanically, in a low voice, uttered the words of blessing; and then once more fixed his gaze on the dingy floor, and pursued his own reflections.

Some hours since he had come hither, obedient to the orders of Ameni, to impress on the princess that she had defiled herself by touching a paraschites, and could only be cleansed again by the hand of the priests.

He had crossed the threshold of the paraschites most reluctantly, and the thought that he, of all men, had been selected to censure a deed of the noblest humanity, and to bring her who had done it to judgment, weighed upon him as a calamity.

In his intercourse with his friend Nebsecht, Pentaur had thrown off many fetters, and given place to many thoughts that his master would have held sinful and presumptuous; but at the same time he acknowledged the sanctity of the old institutions, which were upheld by those whom he had learned to regard as the divinely-appointed guardians of the spiritual possessions of God's people; nor was he wholly free from the pride of caste and the haughtiness which, with prudent intent, were inculcated in the priests. He held the common man, who put forth his strength to win a maintenance for his belongings by honest bodily labor—the merchant—the artizan—the peasant, nay even the warrior, as far beneath the godly brotherhood who strove for only spiritual ends; and most of all he scorned the idler, given up to sensual enjoyments.

He held him unclean who had been branded by the law; and how should it have been otherwise? These people, who at the embalming of the dead opened the body of the deceased, had become despised for their office of mutilating the sacred temple of the soul; but no paraschites chose his calling of his own free will.—[Diodorus I, 91]—It was handed down from father to son, and he who was born a paraschites—so he was taught—had to expiate an old guilt with which his soul had long ago burdened itself in a former existence, within another body, and which had deprived it of absolution in the nether world. It had passed through various animal forms, and now began a new human course in the body of a paraschites, once more to stand after death in the presence of the judges of the under-world.

Pentaur had crossed the threshold of the man he despised with aversion; the man himself, sitting at the feet of the suffering girl, had exclaimed as he saw the priest approaching the hovel:

"Yet another white robe! Does misfortune cleanse the unclean?"

Pentaur had not answered the old man, who on his part took no further notice of him, while he rubbed the girl's feet by order of the leech; and his hands impelled by tender anxiety untiringly continued the same movement, as the water-wheel in the Nile keeps up without intermission its steady motion in the stream.

"Does misfortune cleanse the unclean?" Pentaur asked himself. "Does it indeed possess a purifying efficacy, and is it possible that the Gods, who gave to fire the power of refining metals and to the winds power to sweep the clouds from the sky, should desire that a man—made in their own image—that a man should be tainted from his birth to his death with an indelible stain?"

He looked at the face of the paraschites, and it seemed to him to resemble that of his father.

This startled him!

And when he noticed how the woman, in whose lap the girl's head was resting, bent over the injured bosom of the child to catch her breathing, which she feared had come to a stand-still—with the anguish of a dove that is struck down by a hawk—he remembered a moment in his own childhood, when he had lain trembling with fever on his little bed. What then had happened to him, or had gone on around him, he had long forgotten, but one image was deeply imprinted on his soul, that of the face of his mother bending over him in deadly anguish, but who had gazed on her sick boy not more tenderly, or more anxiously, than this despised woman on her suffering child.

"There is only one utterly unselfish, utterly pure and utterly divine love," said he to himself, "and that is the love of Isis for Horus—the love of a mother for her child. If these people were indeed so foul as to defile every thing they touch, how would this pure, this tender, holy impulse show itself even in them in all its beauty and perfection?"

"Still," he continued, "the Celestials have implanted maternal love in the breast of the lioness, of the typhonic river-horse of the Nile."

He looked compassionately at the wife of the paraschites.

He saw her dark face as she turned it away from the sick girl. She had felt her breathe, and a smile of happiness lighted up her old features; she nodded first to the surgeon, and then with a deep sigh of relief to her husband, who, while he did not cease the movement of his left hand, held up his right hand in prayer to heaven, and his wife did the same.

It seemed to Pentaur that he could see the souls of these two, floating above the youthful creature in holy union as they joined their hands; and again he thought of his parents' house, of the hour when his sweet, only sister died. His mother had thrown herself weeping on the pale form, but his father had stamped his foot and had thrown back his head, sobbing and striking his forehead with his fist.

"How piously submissive and thankful are these unclean ones!" thought Pentaur; and repugnance for the old laws began to take root in his heart. "Maternal love may exist in the hyaena, but to seek and find God pertains only to man, who has a noble aim. Up to the limits of eternity—and God is eternal!—thought is denied to animals; they cannot even smile. Even men cannot smile at first, for only physical life—an animal soul—dwells in them; but soon a share of the world's soul—beaming intelligence—works within them, and first shows itself in the smile of a child, which is as pure as the light and the truth from which it comes. The child of the paraschites smiles like any other creature born of woman, but how few aged men there are, even among the initiated, who can smile as innocently and brightly as this woman who has grown grey under open ill-treatment."

Deep sympathy began to fill his heart, and he knelt down by the side of the poor child, raised her arm, and prayed fervently to that One who had created the heavens and who rules the world—to that One, whom the mysteries of faith forbade him to name; and not to the innumerable gods, whom the people worshipped, and who to him were nothing but incarnations of the attributes of

the One and only God of the initiated—of whom he was one—who was thus brought down to the comprehension of the laity.

He raised his soul to God in passionate emotion; but he prayed, not for the child before him and for her recovery, but rather for the whole despised race, and for its release from the old ban, for the enlightenment of his own soul, imprisoned in doubts, and for strength to fulfil his hard task with discretion.

The gaze of the sufferer followed him as he took up his former position.

The prayer had refreshed his soul and restored him to cheerfulness of spirit. He began to reflect what conduct he must observe towards the princess.

He had not met Bent-Anat for the first time yesterday; on the contrary, he had frequently seen her in holiday processions, and at the high festivals in the Necropolis, and like all his young companions had admired her proud beauty—admired it as the distant light of the stars, or the evening-glow on the horizon.

Now he must approach this lady with words of reproof.

He pictured to himself the moment when he must advance to meet her, and could not help thinking of his little tutor Chufu, above whom he towered by two heads while he was still a boy, and who used to call up his admonitions to him from below. It was true, he himself was tall and slim, but he felt as if to-day he were to play the part towards Bent-Anat of the much-laughed-at little tutor.

His sense of the comic was touched, and asserted itself at this serious moment, and with such melancholy surroundings. Life is rich in contrasts, and a susceptible and highly-strung human soul would break down like a bridge under the measured tread of soldiers, if it were allowed to let the burden of the heaviest thoughts and strongest feelings work upon it in undisturbed monotony; but just as in music every key-note has its harmonies, so when we cause one chord of our heart to vibrate for long, all sorts of strange notes respond and clang, often those which we least expect.

Pentaur's glance flew round the one low, over-filled room of the paraschites' hut, and like a lightning flash the thought, "How will the princess and her train find room here?" flew through his mind.

His fancy was lively, and vividly brought before him how the daughter of the Pharaoh with a crown on her proud head would bustle into the silent chamber, how the chattering courtiers would follow her, and how the women by the walls, the physicians by the side of the sick girl, the sleek white cat from the chest where she sat, would rise and throng round her. There must be frightful confusion. Then he imagined how the smart lords and ladies would keep themselves far from the unclean, hold their slender hands over their mouths and noses, and suggest to the old folks how they ought to behave to the princess who condescended to bless them with her presence. The old woman must lay down the head that rested in her bosom, the paraschites must drop the feet he so anxiously rubbed, on the floor, to rise and kiss the dust before Bent-Anat. Whereupon—the "mind's eye" of the young priest seemed to see it all—the courtiers fled before him, pushing each other, and all crowded together into a corner, and at last the princess threw a few silver or gold rings into the laps of the father and mother, and perhaps to the girl too, and he seemed to hear the courtiers all cry out: "Hail to the gracious daughter of the Sun!"—to hear the joyful exclamations of the crowd of women—to see the gorgeous apparition leave the hut of the despised people, and then to see, instead of the lovely sick child who still breathed audibly, a silent corpse on the crumpled mat, and in the place of the two tender nurses at her head and feet, two heart-broken, loud-lamenting wretches.

Pentaur's hot spirit was full of wrath. As soon as the noisy cortege appeared actually in sight he would place himself in the doorway, forbid the princess to enter, and receive her with strong words.

She could hardly come hither out of human kindness.

"She wants variety," said he to himself, "something new at Court; for there is little going on there now the king tarries with the troops in a distant country; it tickles the vanity of the great to find themselves once in a while in contact with the small, and it is well to have your goodness of heart

spoken of by the people. If a little misfortune opportunely happens, it is not worth the trouble to inquire whether the form of our benevolence does more good or mischief to such wretched people."

He ground his teeth angrily, and thought no more of the defilement which might threaten Bent-Anat from the paraschites, but exclusively, on the contrary, of the impending desecration by the princess of the holy feelings astir in this silent room.

Excited as he was to fanaticism, his condemning lips could not fail to find vigorous and impressive words.

He stood drawn to his full height and drawing his breath deeply, like a spirit of light who holds his weapon raised to annihilate a demon of darkness, and he looked out into the valley to perceive from afar the cry of the runners and the rattle of the wheels of the gay train he expected.

And he saw the doorway darkened by a lowly, bending figure, who, with folded arms, glided into the room and sank down silently by the side of the sick girl. The physicians and the old people moved as if to rise; but she signed to them without opening her lips, and with moist, expressive eyes, to keep their places; she looked long and lovingly in the face of the wounded girl, stroked her white arm, and turning to the old woman softly whispered to her

"How pretty she is!"

The paraschites' wife nodded assent, and the girl smiled and moved her lips as though she had caught the words and wished to speak.

Bent-Anat took a rose from her hair and laid it on her bosom.

The paraschites, who had not taken his hands from the feet of the sick child, but who had followed every movement of the princess, now whispered, "May Hathor requite thee, who gave thee thy beauty."

The princess turned to him and said, "Forgive the sorrow, I have caused you."

The old man stood up, letting the feet of the sick girl fall, and asked in a clear loud voice:

"Art thou Bent-Anat?"

"Yes, I am," replied the princess, bowing her head low, and in so gentle a voice, that it seemed as though she were ashamed of her proud name.

The eyes of the old man flashed. Then he said softly but decisively:

"Leave my hut then, it will defile thee."

"Not till you have forgiven me for that which I did unintentionally."

"Unintentionally! I believe thee," replied the paraschites. "The hoofs of thy horse became unclean when they trod on this white breast. Look here—" and he lifted the cloth from the girl's bosom, and showed her the deep red wound, "Look here—here is the first rose you laid on my grandchild's bosom, and the second—there it goes."

The paraschites raised his arm to fling the flower through the door of his hut. But Pentaur had approached him, and with a grasp of iron held the old man's hand.

"Stay," he cried in an eager tone, moderated however for the sake of the sick girl. "The third rose, which this noble hand has offered you, your sick heart and silly head have not even perceived. And yet you must know it if only from your need, your longing for it. The fair blossom of pure benevolence is laid on your child's heart, and at your very feet, by this proud princess. Not with gold, but with humility. And whoever the daughter of Rameses approaches as her equal, bows before her, even if he were the first prince in the Land of Egypt. Indeed, the Gods shall not forget this deed of Bent-Anat. And you—forgive, if you desire to be forgiven that guilt, which you bear as an inheritance from your fathers, and for your own sins."

The paraschites bowed his head at these words, and when he raised it the anger had vanished from his well-cut features. He rubbed his wrist, which had been squeezed by Pentaur's iron fingers, and said in a tone which betrayed all the bitterness of his feelings:

"Thy hand is hard, Priest, and thy words hit like the strokes of a hammer. This fair lady is good and loving, and I know; that she did not drive her horse intentionally over this poor girl, who is my

grandchild and not my daughter. If she were thy wife or the wife of the leech there, or the child of the poor woman yonder, who supports life by collecting the feet and feathers of the fowls that are slaughtered for sacrifice, I would not only forgive her, but console her for having made herself like to me; fate would have made her a murderess without any fault of her own, just as it stamped me as unclean while I was still at my mother's breast. Aye—I would comfort her; and yet I am not very sensitive. Ye holy three of Thebes!—[The triad of Thebes: Anion, Muth and Chunsu.]—how should I be? Great and small get out of my way that I may not touch them, and every day when I have done what it is my business to do they throw stones at me.

> [The paraschites, with an Ethiopian knife, cuts the flesh of the corpse as deeply as the law requires: but instantly takes to flight, while the relatives of the deceased pursue him with stones, and curses, as if they wished to throw the blame on him.]

"The fulfilment of duty—which brings a living to other men, which makes their happiness, and at the same time earns them honor, brings me every day fresh disgrace and painful sores. But I complain to no man, and must forgive—forgive—forgive, till at last all that men do to me seems quite natural and unavoidable, and I take it all like the scorching of the sun in summer, and the dust that the west wind blows into my face. It does not make me happy, but what can I do? I forgive all—"

The voice of the paraschites had softened, and Bent-Anat, who looked down on him with emotion, interrupted him, exclaiming with deep feeling:

"And so you will forgive me?—poor man!"

The old man looked steadily, not at her, but at Pentaur, while he replied: "Poor man! aye, truly, poor man. You have driven me out of the world in which you live, and so I made a world for myself in this hut. I do not belong to you, and if I forget it, you drive me out as an intruder—nay as a wolf, who breaks into your fold; but you belong just as little to me, only when you play the wolf and fall upon me, I must bear it!"

"The princess came to your hut as a suppliant, and with the wish of doing you some good," said Pentaur.

"May the avenging Gods reckon it to her, when they visit on her the crimes of her father against me! Perhaps it may bring me to prison, but it must come out. Seven sons were mine, and Rameses took them all from me and sent them to death; the child of the youngest, this girl, the light of my eyes, his daughter has brought to her death. Three of my boys the king left to die of thirst by the Tenat,

> [Literally the "cutting" which, under Seti I., the father of Rameses, was the first Suez Canal; a representation of it is found on the northern outer wall of the temple of Karnak. It followed nearly the same direction as the Fresh-water canal of Lesseps, and fertilized the land of Goshen.]

which is to join the Nile to the Red Sea, three were killed by the Ethiopians, and the last, the star of my hopes, by this time is eaten by the hyaenas of the north."

At these words the old woman, in whose lap the head of the girl rested, broke out into a loud cry, in which she was joined by all the other women.

The sufferer started up frightened, and opened her eyes.

"For whom are you wailing?" she asked feebly. "For your poor father," said the old woman.

The girl smiled like a child who detects some well-meant deceit, and said:

"Was not my father here, with you? He is here, in Thebes, and looked at me, and kissed me, and said that he is bringing home plunder, and that a good time is coming for you. The gold ring that he gave me I was fastening into my dress, when the chariot passed over me. I was just pulling the knots, when all grew black before my eyes, and I saw and heard nothing more. Undo it, grandmother, the ring is for you; I meant to bring it to you. You must buy a beast for sacrifice with it, and wine for grandfather, and eye salve

[The Egyptian mestem, that is stibium or antimony, which was introduced into Egypt by the Asiatics at a very early period and universally used.]

for yourself, and sticks of mastic,

[At the present day the Egyptian women are fond of chewing them, on account of their pleasant taste. The ancient Egyptians used various pills. Receipts for such things are found in the Ebers Papyrus.]

which you have so long lead to do without."

The paraschites seemed to drink these words from the mouth of his grandchild. Again he lifted his hand in prayer, again Pentaur observed that his glance met that of his wife, and a large, warm tear fell from his old eyes on to his callous hand. Then he sank down, for he thought the sick child was deluded by a dream. But there were the knots in her dress.

With a trembling hand he untied them, and a gold ring rolled out on the floor.

Bent-Anat picked it up, and gave it to the paraschites. "I came here in a lucky hour," she said, "for you have recovered your son and your child will live."

"She will live," repeated the surgeon, who had remained a silent witness of all that had occurred.

"She will stay with us," murmured the old man, and then said, as he approached the princess on his knees, and looked up at her beseechingly with tearful eyes:

"Pardon me as I pardon thee; and if a pious wish may not turn to a curse from the lips of the unclean, let me bless thee."

"I thank you," said Bent-Anat, towards whom the old man raised his hand in blessing.

Then she turned to Nebsecht, and ordered him to take anxious care of the sick girl; she bent over her, kissed her forehead, laid her gold bracelet by her side, and signing to Pentaur left the hut with him.

CHAPTER VI

During the occurrence we have described, the king's pioneer and the young wife of Mena were obliged to wait for the princess.

The sun stood in the meridian, when Bent-Anat had gone into the hovel of the paraschites.

The bare limestone rocks on each side of the valley and the sandy soil between, shone with a vivid whiteness that hurt the eyes; not a hand's breadth of shade was anywhere to be seen, and the fan-beaters of the two, who were waiting there, had, by command of the princess, staid behind with the chariot and litters.

For a time they stood silently near each other, then the fair Nefert said, wearily closing her almond-shaped eyes:

"How long Bent-Anat stays in the but of the unclean! I am perishing here. What shall we do?"

"Stay!" said Paaker, turning his back on the lady; and mounting a block of stone by the side of the gorge, he cast a practised glance all round, and returned to Nefert: "I have found a shady spot," he said, "out there."

Mena's wife followed with her eyes the indication of his hand, and shook her head. The gold ornaments on her head-dress rattled gently as she did so, and a cold shiver passed over her slim body in spite of the midday heat.

"Sechet is raging in the sky," said Paaker.

> [A goddess with the head of a lioness or a cat, over which the Sundisk is usually found. She was the daughter of Ra, and in the form of the Uraeus on her father's crown personified the murderous heat of the star of day. She incites man to the hot and wild passion of love, and as a cat or lioness tears burning wounds in the limbs of the guilty in the nether world; drunkenness and pleasure are her gifts She was also named Bast and Astarte after her sister-divinity among the Phoenicians.]

"Let us avail ourselves of the shady spot, small though it be. At this hour of the day many are struck with sickness."

"I know it," said Nefert, covering her neck with her hand. Then she went towards two blocks of stone which leaned against each other, and between them afforded the spot of shade, not many feet wide, which Paaker had pointed out as a shelter from the sun. Paaker preceded her, and rolled a flat piece of limestone, inlaid by nature with nodules of flint, under the stone pavilion, crushed a few scorpions which had taken refuge there, spread his head-cloth over the hard seat, and said, "Here you are sheltered."

Nefert sank down on the stone and watched the Mohar, who slowly and silently paced backwards and forward in front of her. This incessant to and fro of her companion at last became unendurable to her sensitive and irritated nerves, and suddenly raising her head from her hand, on which she had rested it, she exclaimed

"Pray stand still."

The pioneer obeyed instantly, and looked, as he stood with his back to her, towards the hovel of the paraschites.

After a short time Nefert said, "Say something to me!"

The Mohar turned his full face towards her, and she was frightened at the wild fire that glowed in the glance with which he gazed at her.

Nefert's eyes fell, and Paaker, saying:

"I would rather remain silent," recommenced his walk, till Nefert called to him again and said,

"I know you are angry with me; but I was but a child when I was betrothed to you. I liked you too, and when in our games your mother called me your little wife, I was really glad, and used to

think how fine it would be when I might call all your possessions mine, the house you would have so splendidly restored for me after your father's death, the noble gardens, the fine horses in their stables, and all the male and female slaves!"

Paaker laughed, but the laugh sounded so forced and scornful that it cut Nefert to the heart, and she went on, as if begging for indulgence:

"It was said that you were angry with us; and now you will take my words as if I had cared only for your wealth; but I said, I liked you. Do you no longer remember how I cried with you over your tales of the bad boys in the school; and over your father's severity? Then my uncle died;—then you went to Asia."

"And you," interrupted Paaker, hardly and drily, "you broke your bethrothal vows, and became the wife of the charioteer Mena. I know it all; of what use is talking?"

"Because it grieves me that you should be angry, and your good mother avoid our house. If only you could know what it is when love seizes one, and one can no longer even think alone, but only near, and with, and in the very arms of another; when one's beating heart throbs in one's very temples, and even in one's dreams one sees nothing—but one only."

"And do I not know it?" cried Paaker, placing himself close before her with his arms crossed. "Do I not know it? and you it was who taught me to know it. When I thought of you, not blood, but burning fire, coursed in my veins, and now you have filled them with poison; and here in this breast, in which your image dwelt, as lovely as that of Hathor in her holy of holies, all is like that sea in Syria which is called the Dead Sea, in which every thing that tries to live presently dies and perishes."

Paaker's eyes rolled as he spoke, and his voice sounded hoarsely as he went on.

"But Mena was near to the king—nearer than I, and your mother—"

"My mother!"—Nefert interrupted the angry Mohar. "My mother did not choose my husband. I saw him driving the chariot, and to me he resembled the Sun God, and he observed me, and looked at me, and his glance pierced deep into my heart like a spear; and when, at the festival of the king's birthday, he spoke to me, it was just as if Hathor had thrown round me a web of sweet, sounding sunbeams. And it was the same with Mena; he himself has told me so since I have been his wife. For your sake my mother rejected his suit, but I grew pale and dull with longing for him, and he lost his bright spirit, and was so melancholy that the king remarked it, and asked what weighed on his heart—for Rameses loves him as his own son. Then Mena confessed to the Pharaoh that it was love that dimmed his eye and weakened his strong hand; and then the king himself courted me for his faithful servant, and my mother gave way, and we were made man and wife, and all the joys of the justified in the fields of Aalu

> [The fields of the blest, which were opened to glorified souls. In the Book of the Dead it is shown that in them men linger, and sow and reap by cool waters.]

are shallow and feeble by the side of the bliss which we two have known—not like mortal men, but like the celestial gods."

Up to this point Nefert had fixed her large eyes on the sky, like a glorified soul; but now her gaze fell, and she said softly—

"But the Cheta

> [An Aramaean race, according to Schrader's excellent judgment. At the time of our story the peoples of western Asia had allied themselves to them.]

disturbed our happiness, for the king took Mena with him to the war. Fifteen times did the moon, rise upon our happiness, and then—"

"And then the Gods heard my prayer, and accepted my offerings," said Paaker, with a trembling voice, "and tore the robber of my joys from you, and scorched your heart and his with desire. Do you think you can tell me anything I do not know? Once again for fifteen days was Mena yours, and now he has not returned again from the war which is raging hotly in Asia."

"But he will return," cried the young wife.

"Or possibly not," laughed Paaker. "The Cheta, carry sharp weapons, and there are many vultures in Lebanon, who perhaps at this hour are tearing his flesh as he tore my heart."

Nefert rose at these words, her sensitive spirit bruised as with stones thrown by a brutal hand, and attempted to leave her shady refuge to follow the princess into the house of the parascllites; but her feet refused to bear her, and she sank back trembling on her stone seat. She tried to find words, but her tongue was powerless. Her powers of resistance forsook her in her unutterable and soul-felt distress—heart-wrung, forsaken and provoked.

A variety of painful sensations raised a hot vehement storm in her bosom, which checked her breath, and at last found relief in a passionate and convulsive weeping that shook her whole body. She saw nothing more, she heard nothing more, she only shed tears and felt herself miserable.

Paaker stood over her in silence.

There are trees in the tropics, on which white blossoms hang close by the withered fruit, there are days when the pale moon shows itself near the clear bright sun;—and it is given to the soul of man to feel love and hatred, both at the same time, and to direct both to the same end.

Nefert's tears fell as dew, her sobs as manna on the soul of Paaker, which hungered and thirsted for revenge. Her pain was joy to him, and yet the sight of her beauty filled him with passion, his gaze lingered spell-bound on her graceful form; he would have given all the bliss of heaven once, only once, to hold her in his arms—once, only once, to hear a word of love from her lips.

After some minutes Nefert's tears grew less violent. With a weary, almost indifferent gaze she looked at the Mohar, still standing before her, and said in a soft tone of entreaty:

'My tongue is parched, fetch me a little water."

"The princess may come out at any moment," replied Paaker.

"But I am fainting," said Nefert, and began again to cry gently.

Paaker shrugged his shoulders, and went farther into the valley, which he knew as well as his father's house; for in it was the tomb of his mother's ancestors, in which, as a boy, he had put up prayers at every full and new moon, and laid gifts on the altar.

The hut of the paraschites was prohibited to him, but he knew that scarcely a hundred paces from the spot where Nefert was sitting, lived an old woman of evil repute, in whose hole in the rock he could not fail to find a drink of water.

He hastened forward, half intoxicated with had seen and felt within the last few minutes.

The door, which at night closed the cave against the intrusions of the plunder-seeking jackals, was wide open, and the old woman sat outside under a ragged piece of brown sail-cloth, fastened at one end to the rock and at the other to two posts of rough wood. She was sorting a heap of dark and light-colored roots, which lay in her lap. Near her was a wheel, which turned in a high wooden fork. A wryneck made fast to it by a little chain, and by springing from spoke to spoke kept it in continual motion.—[From Theocritus' idyl: The Sorceress.]—A large black cat crouched beside her, and smelt at some ravens' and owls' heads, from which the eyes had not long since been extracted.

Two sparrow-hawks sat huddled up over the door of the cave, out of which came the sharp odor of burning juniper-berries; this was intended to render the various emanations rising from the different strange substances, which were collected and preserved there, innocuous.

As Paaker approached the cavern the old woman called out to some one within:

"Is the wax cooking?"

An unintelligible murmur was heard in answer.

Then throw in the ape's eyes,

> [The sentences and mediums employed by the witches, according to papyrus-rolls which remain. I have availed myself of the Magic papyrus of Harris, and of two in the Berlin collection, one of which is in Greek.]

and the ibis feathers, and the scraps of linen with the black signs on them. Stir it all a little; now put out the fire,

"Take the jug and fetch some water—make haste, here comes a stranger."

A sooty-black negro woman, with a piece of torn colorless stuff hanging round her hips, set a large clay-jar on her grey woolly matted hair, and without looking at him, went past Paaker, who was now close to the cave.

The old woman, a tall figure bent with years, with a sharply-cut and wrinkled face, that might once have been handsome, made her preparations for receiving the visitor by tying a gaudy kerchief over her head, fastening her blue cotton garment round her throat, and flinging a fibre mat over the birds' heads.

Paaker called out to her, but she feigned to be deaf and not to hear his voice. Only when he stood quite close to her, did she raise her shrewd, twinkling eyes, and cry out:

"A lucky day! a white day that brings a noble guest and high honor."

"Get up," commanded Paaker, not giving her any greeting, but throwing a silver ring among the roots that lay in her lap,

[The Egyptians had no coins before Alexander and the Ptolemies, but used metals for exchange, usually in the form of rings.]

"and give me in exchange for good money some water in a clean vessel."

"Fine pure silver," said the old woman, while she held the ring, which she had quickly picked out from the roots, close to her eyes; "it is too much for mere water, and too little for my good liquors."

"Don't chatter, hussy, but make haste," cried Paaker, taking another ring from his money-bag and throwing it into her lap.

"Thou hast an open hand," said the old woman, speaking in the dialect of the upper classes; "many doors must be open to thee, for money is a pass-key that turns any lock. Would'st thou have water for thy good money? Shall it protect thee against noxious beasts?—shall it help thee to reach down a star? Shall it guide thee to secret paths?—It is thy duty to lead the way. Shall it make heat cold, or cold warm? Shall it give thee the power of reading hearts, or shall it beget beautiful dreams? Wilt thou drink of the water of knowledge and see whether thy friend or thine enemy—ha! if thine enemy shall die? Would'st thou a drink to strengthen thy memory? Shall the water make thee invisible? or remove the 6th toe from thy left foot?"

"You know me?" asked Paaker.

"How should I?" said the old woman, "but my eyes are sharp, and I can prepare good waters for great and small."

"Mere babble!" exclaimed Paaker, impatiently clutching at the whip in his girdle; "make haste, for the lady for whom—"

"Dost thou want the water for a lady?" interrupted the old woman. "Who would have thought it?—old men certainly ask for my philters much oftener than young ones—but I can serve thee."

With these words the old woman went into the cave, and soon returned with a thin cylindrical flask of alabaster in her hand.

"This is the drink," she said, giving the phial to Paaker. "Pour half into water, and offer it to the lady. If it does not succeed at first, it is certain the second time. A child may drink the water and it will not hurt him, or if an old man takes it, it makes him gay. Ah, I know the taste of it!" and she moistened her lips with the white fluid. "It can hurt no one, but I will take no more of it, or old Hekt will be tormented with love and longing for thee; and that would ill please the rich young lord, ha! ha! If the drink is in vain I am paid enough, if it takes effect thou shalt bring me three more gold rings; and thou wilt return, I know it well."

Paaker had listened motionless to the old woman, and siezed the flask eagerly, as if bidding defiance to some adversary; he put it in his money bag, threw a few more rings at the feet of the witch, and once more hastily demanded a bowl of Nile-water.

"Is my lord in such a hurry?" muttered the old woman, once more going into the cave. "He asks if I know him? him certainly I do? but the darling? who can it be hereabouts? perhaps little Uarda at the paraschites yonder. She is pretty enough; but she is lying on a mat, run over and dying. We must see what my lord means. He would have pleased me well enough, if I were young; but he will reach the goal, for he is resolute and spares no one."

While she muttered these and similar words, she filled a graceful cup of glazed earthenware with filtered Nile-water, which she poured out of a large porous clay jar, and laid a laurel leaf, on which was scratched two hearts linked together by seven strokes, on the surface of the limpid fluid. Then she stepped out into the air again.

As Paaker took the vessel from her looked at the laurel leaf, she said:

"This indeed binds hearts; three is the husband, four is the wife, seven is the chachach, charcharachacha."—[This jargon is fund in a magic-papyrus at Berlin.]

The old woman sang this spell not without skill; but the Mohar appeared not to listen to her jargon. He descended carefully into the valley, and directed his steps to the resting place of the wife of Mena.

By the side of a rock, which hill him from Nefert, he paused, set the cup on a flat block of stone, and drew the flask with the philter out of his girdle.

His fingers trembled, but a thousand voices seemed to surge up and cry:

"Take it!—do it!—put in the drink!—now or never." He felt like a solitary traveller, who finds on his road the last will of a relation whose possessions he had hoped for, but which disinherits him. Shall he surrender it to the judge, or shall he destroy it.

Paaker was not merely outwardly devout; hitherto he had in everything intended to act according to the prescriptions of the religion of his fathers. Adultery was a heavy sin; but had not he an older right to Nefert than the king's charioteer?

He who followed the black arts of magic, should, according to the law, be punished by death, and the old woman had a bad name for her evil arts; but he had not sought her for the sake of the philter. Was it not possible that the Manes of his forefathers, that the Gods themselves, moved by his prayers and offerings, had put him in possession by an accident—which was almost a miracle—of the magic potion efficacy he never for an instant doubted?

Paaker's associates held him to be a man of quick decision, and, in fact, in difficult cases he could act with unusual rapidity, but what guided him in these cases, was not the swift-winged judgment of a prepared and well-schooled brain, but usually only resulted from the outcome of a play of question and answer.

Amulets of the most various kinds hung round his neck, and from his girdle, all consecrated by priests, and of special sanctity or the highest efficacy.

There was the lapis lazuli eye, which hung to his girdle by a gold chain; When he threw it on the ground, so as to lie on the earth, if its engraved side turned to heaven, and its smooth side lay on the ground, he said "yes;" in the other case, on the contrary, "no." In his purse lay always a statuette of the god Apheru, who opened roads; this he threw down at cross-roads, and followed the direction which the pointed snout of the image indicated. He frequently called into council the seal-ring of his deceased father, an old family possession, which the chief priests of Abydos had laid upon the holiest of the fourteen graves of Osiris, and endowed with miraculous power. It consisted of a gold ring with a broad signet, on which could be read the name of Thotmes III., who had long since been deified, and from whom Paaker's ancestors had derived it. If it were desirable to consult the ring, the Mohar touched with the point of his bronze dagger the engraved sign of the name, below which were represented three objects sacred to the Gods, and three that were, on the contrary, profane. If he hit

one of the former, he concluded that his father—who was gone to Osiris—concurred in his design; in the contrary case he was careful to postpone it. Often he pressed the ring to his heart, and awaited the first living creature that he might meet, regarding it as a messenger from his father;—if it came to him from the right hand as an encouragement, if from the left as a warning.

By degrees he had reduced these questionings to a system. All that he found in nature he referred to himself and the current of his life. It was at once touching, and pitiful, to see how closely he lived with the Manes of his dead. His lively, but not exalted fancy, wherever he gave it play, presented to the eye of his soul the image of his father and of an elder brother who had died early, always in the same spot, and almost tangibly distinct.

But he never conjured up the remembrance of the beloved dead in order to think of them in silent melancholy—that sweet blossom of the thorny wreath of sorrow; only for selfish ends. The appeal to the Manes of his father he had found especially efficacious in certain desires and difficulties; calling on the Manes of his brother was potent in certain others; and so he turned from one to the other with the precision of a carpenter, who rarely doubts whether he should give the preference to a hatchet or a saw.

These doings he held to be well pleasing to the Gods, and as he was convinced that the spirits of his dead had, after their justification, passed into Osiris that is to say, as atoms forming part of the great world-soul, at this time had a share in the direction of the universe—he sacrificed to them not only in the family catacomb, but also in the temples of the Necropolis dedicated to the worship of ancestors, and with special preference in the House of Seti.

He accepted advice, nay even blame, from Ameni and the other priests under his direction; and so lived full of a virtuous pride in being one of the most zealous devotees in the land, and one of the most pleasing to the Gods, a belief on which his pastors never threw any doubt.

Attended and guided at every step by supernatural powers, he wanted no friend and no confidant. In the fleld, as in Thebes, he stood apart, and passed among his comrades for a reserved man, rough and proud, but with a strong will.

He had the power of calling up the image of his lost love with as much vividness as the forms of the dead, and indulged in this magic, not only through a hundred still nights, but in long rides and drives through silent wastes.

Such visions were commonly followed by a vehement and boiling overflow of his hatred against the charioteer, and a whole series of fervent prayers for his destruction.

When Paaker set the cup of water for Nefert on the flat stone and felt for the philter, his soul was so full of desire that there was no room for hatred; still he could not altogether exclude the idea that he would commit a great crime by making use of a magic drink. Before pouring the fateful drops into the water, he would consult the oracle of the ring. The dagger touched none of the holy symbols of the inscription on the signet, and in other circumstances he would, without going any farther, have given up his project.

But this time he unwillingly returned it to its sheath, pressed the gold ring to his heart, muttered the name of his brother in Osiris, and awaited the first living creature that might come towards him.

He had not long to wait, from the mountain slope opposite to him rose, with heavy, slow wing-strokes, two light-colored vultures.

In anxious suspense he followed their flight, as they rose, higher and higher. For a moment they poised motionless, borne up by the air, circled round each other, then wheeled to the left and vanished behind the mountains, denying him the fulfilment of his desire.

He hastily grasped the phial to fling it from him, but the surging passion in his veins had deprived him of his self-control. Nefert's image stood before him as if beckoning him; a mysterious power clenched his fingers close and yet closer round the phial, and with the same defiance which he showed to his associates, he poured half of the philter into the cup and approached his victim.

Nefert had meanwhile left her shady retreat and come towards him.

She silently accepted the water he offered her, and drank it with delight, to the very dregs.

"'Thank you," she said, when she had recovered breath after her eager draught.

"That has done me good! How fresh and acid the water tastes; but your hand shakes, and you are heated by your quick run for me—poor man."

With these words she looked at him with a peculiar expressive glance of her large eyes, and gave him her right hand, which he pressed wildly to his lips.

"That will do," she said smiling; "here comes the princess with a priest, out of the hovel of the unclean. With what frightful words you terrified me just now. It is true I gave you just cause to be angry with me; but now you are kind again—do you hear?—and will bring your mother again to see mine. Not a word. I shall see, whether cousin Paaker refuses me obedience."

She threatened him playfully with her finger, and then growing grave she added, with a look that pierced Paaker's heart with pain, and yet with ecstasy, "Let us leave off quarrelling. It is so much better when people are kind to each other."

After these words she walked towards the house of the paraschites, while Paaker pressed his hands to his breast, and murmured:

"The drink is working, and she will be mine. I thank ye—ye Immortals!"

But this thanksgiving, which hitherto he had never failed to utter when any good fortune had befallen him, to-day died on his lips. Close before him he saw the goal of his desires; there, under his eyes, lay the magic spring longed for for years. A few steps farther, and he might slake at its copious stream his thirst both for love and for revenge.

While he followed the wife of Mena, and replaced the phial carefully in his girdle, so as to lose no drop of the precious fluid which, according to the prescription of the old woman, he needed to use again, warning voices spoke in his breast, to which he usually listened as to a fatherly admonition; but at this moment he mocked at them, and even gave outward expression to the mood that ruled him —for he flung up his right hand like a drunken man, who turns away from the preacher of morality on his way to the wine-cask; and yet passion held him so closely ensnared, that the thought that he should live through the swift moments which would change him from an honest man into a criminal, hardly dawned, darkly on his soul. He had hitherto dared to indulge his desire for love and revenge in thought only, and had left it to the Gods to act for themselves; now he had taken his cause out of the hand of the Celestials, and gone into action without them, and in spite of them.

The sorceress Hekt passed him; she wanted to see the woman for whom she had given him the philter. He perceived her and shuddered, but soon the old woman vanished among the rocks muttering.

"Look at the fellow with six toes. He makes himself comfortable with the heritage of Assa."

In the middle of the valley walked Nefert and the pioneer, with the princess Bent-Anat and Pentaur who accompanied her.

When these two had come out of the hut of the paraschites, they stood opposite each other in silence. The royal maiden pressed her hand to her heart, and, like one who is thirsty, drank in the pure air of the mountain valley with deeply drawn breath; she felt as if released from some overwhelming burden, as if delivered from some frightful danger.

At last she turned to her companion, who gazed earnestly at the ground.

"What an hour!" she said.

Pentaur's tall figure did not move, but he bowed his head in assent, as if he were in a dream. Bent-Anat now saw him for the first time in fall daylight; her large eyes rested on him with admiration, and she asked:

"Art thou the priest, who yesterday, after my first visit to this house, so readily restored me to cleanness?"

"I am he," replied Pentaur.

"I recognized thy voice, and I am grateful to thee, for it was thou that didst strengthen my courage to follow the impulse of my heart, in spite of my spiritual guides, and to come here again. Thou wilt defend me if others blame me."

"I came here to pronounce thee unclean."

"Then thou hast changed thy mind?" asked Bent-Anat, and a smile of contempt curled her lips.

"I follow a high injunction, that commands us to keep the old institutions sacred. If touching a paraschites, it is said, does not defile a princess, whom then can it defile? for whose garment is more spotless than hers?"

"But this is a good man with all his meanness," interrupted Bent-Anat, "and in spite of the disgrace, which is the bread of life to him as honor is to us. May the nine great Gods forgive me! but he who is in there is loving, pious and brave, and pleases me—and thou, thou, who didst think yesterday to purge away the taint of his touch with a word—what prompts thee today to cast him with the lepers?"

"The admonition of an enlightened man, never to give up any link of the old institutions; because thereby the already weakened chain may be broken, and fall rattling to the ground."

"Then thou condemnest me to uncleanness for the sake of all old superstition, and of the populace, but not for my actions? Thou art silent? Answer me now, if thou art such a one as I took the for, freely and sincerely; for it concerns the peace of my soul." Pentaur breathed hard; and then from the depths of his soul, tormented by doubts, these deeply-felt words forced themselves as if wrung from him; at first softly, but louder as he went on.

"Thou dost compel me to say what I had better not even think; but rather will I sin against obedience than against truth, the pure daughter of the Sun, whose aspect, Bent-Anat, thou dost wear. Whether the paraschites is unclean by birth or not, who am I that I should decide? But to me this man appeared—as to thee—as one moved by the same pure and holy emotions as stir and bless me and mine, and thee and every soul born of woman; and I believe that the impressions of this hour have touched thy soul as well as mine, not to taint, but to purify. If I am wrong, may the many-named Gods forgive me, Whose breath lives and works in the paraschites as well as in thee and me, in Whom I believe, and to Whom I will ever address my humble songs, louder and more joyfully, as I learn that all that lives and breathes, that weeps and rejoices, is the image of their sublime nature, and born to equal joy and equal sorrow."

Pentaur had raised his eyes to heaven; now they met the proud and joyful radiance of the princess' glance, while she frankly offered him her hand. He humbly kissed her robe, but she said:

"Nay—not so. Lay thy hand in blessing on mine. Thou art a man and a true priest. Now I can be satisfied to be regarded as unclean, for my father also desires that, by us especially, the institutions of the past that have so long continued should be respected, for the sake of the people. Let us pray in common to the Gods, that these poor people may be released from the old ban. How beautiful the world might be, if men would but let man remain what the Celestials have made him. But Paaker and poor Nefert are waiting in the scorching sun-come, follow me."

She went forward, but after a few steps she turned round to him, and asked:

"What is thy name?"

"Pentaur."

"Thou then art the poet of the House of Seti?"

"They call me so."

Bent-Anat stood still a moment, gazing full at him as at a kinsman whom we meet for the first time face to face, and said:

"The Gods have given thee great gifts, for thy glance reaches farther and pierces deeper than that of other men; and thou canst say in words what we can only feel—I follow thee willingly!"

Pentaur blushed like a boy, and said, while Paaker and Nefert came nearer to them:

“Till to-day life lay before me as if in twilight; but this moment shows it me in another light. I have seen its deepest shadows; and,” he added in a low tone “how glorious its light can be.”

CHAPTER VII

An hour later, Bent-Anat and her train of followers stood before the gate of the House of Seti.

Swift as a ball thrown from a man's hand, a runner had sprung forward and hurried on to announce the approach of the princess to the chief priest. She stood alone in her chariot, in advance of all her companions, for Pentaur had found a place with Paaker. At the gate of the temple they were met by the head of the haruspices.

The great doors of the pylon were wide open, and afforded a view into the forecourt of the sanctuary, paved with polished squares of stone, and surrounded on three sides with colonnades. The walls and architraves, the pillars and the fluted cornice, which slightly curved in over the court, were gorgeous with many colored figures and painted decorations. In the middle stood a great sacrificial altar, on which burned logs of cedar wood, whilst fragrant balls of Kyphi

> [Kyphi was a celebrated Egyptian incense. Recipes for its preparation have been preserved in the papyrus of Ebers, in the laboratories of the temples, and elsewhere. Parthey had three different varieties prepared by the chemist, L. Voigt, in Berlin. Kyphi after the formula of Dioskorides was the best. It consisted of rosin, wine, rad, galangae, juniper berries, the root of the aromatic rush, asphalte, mastic, myrrh, Burgundy grapes, and honey.]

were consumed by the flames, filling the wide space with their heavy perfume. Around, in semi-circular array, stood more than a hundred white-robed priests, who all turned to face the approaching princess, and sang heart-rending songs of lamentation.

Many of the inhabitants of the Necropolis had collected on either side of the lines of sphinxes, between which the princess drove up to the Sanctuary. But none asked what these songs of lamentation might signify, for about this sacred place lamentation and mystery for ever lingered. "Hail to the child of Rameses!"—"All hail to the daughter of the Sun!" rang from a thousand throats; and the assembled multitude bowed almost to the earth at the approach of the royal maiden.

At the pylon, the princess descended from her chariot, and preceded by the chief of the haruspices, who had gravely and silently greeted her, passed on to the door of the temple. But as she prepared to cross the forecourt, suddenly, without warning, the priests' chant swelled to a terrible, almost thundering loudness, the clear, shrill voice of the Temple scholars rising in passionate lament, supported by the deep and threatening roll of the basses.

Bent-Anat started and checked her steps. Then she walked on again.

But on the threshold of the door, Ameni, in full pontifical robes, stood before her in the way, his crozier extended as though to forbid her entrance.

"The advent of the daughter of Rameses in her purity," he cried in loud and passionate tones, "augurs blessing to this sanctuary; but this abode of the Gods closes its portals on the unclean, be they slaves or princes. In the name of the Immortals, from whom thou art descended, I ask thee, Bent-Anat, art thou clean, or hast thou, through the touch of the unclean, defiled thyself and contaminated thy royal hand?"

Deep scarlet flushed the maiden's cheeks, there was a rushing sound in her ears as of a stormy sea surging close beside her, and her bosom rose and fell in passionate emotion. The kingly blood in her veins boiled wildly; she felt that an unworthy part had been assigned to her in a carefully-premeditated scene; she forgot her resolution to accuse herself of uncleanness, and already her lips were parted in vehement protest against the priestly assumption that so deeply stirred her to rebellion, when Ameni, who placed himself directly in front of the Princess, raised his eyes, and turned them full upon her with all the depths of their indwelling earnestness.

The words died away, and Bent-Anat stood silent, but she endured the gaze, and returned it proudly and defiantly.

The blue veins started in Ameni's forehead; yet he repressed the resentment which was gathering like thunder clouds in his soul, and said, with a voice that gradually deviated more and more from its usual moderation:

"For the second time the Gods demand through me, their representative: Hast thou entered this holy place in order that the Celestials may purge thee of the defilement that stains thy body and soul?"

"My father will communicate the answer to thee," replied Bent-Anat shortly and proudly.

"Not to me," returned Ameni, "but to the Gods, in whose name I now command thee to quit this sanctuary, which is defiled by thy presence."

Bent-Anat's whole form quivered. "I will go," she said with sullen dignity.

She turned to recross the gateway of the Pylon. At the first step her glance met the eye of the poet. As one to whom it is vouchsafed to stand and gaze at some great prodigy, so Pentaur had stood opposite the royal maiden, uneasy and yet fascinated, agitated, yet with secretly uplifted soul. Her deed seemed to him of boundless audacity, and yet one suited to her true and noble nature. By her side, Ameni, his revered and admired master, sank into insignificance; and when she turned to leave the temple, his hand was raised indeed to hold her back, but as his glance met hers, his hand refused its office, and sought instead to still the throbbing of his overflowing heart.

The experienced priest, meanwhile, read the features of these two guileless beings like an open book. A quickly-formed tie, he felt, linked their souls, and the look which he saw them exchange startled him. The rebellious princess had glanced at the poet as though claiming approbation for her triumph, and Pentaur's eyes had responded to the appeal.

One instant Ameni paused. Then he cried: "Bent-Anat!"

The princess turned to the priest, and looked at him gravely and enquiringly.

Ameni took a step forward, and stood between her and the poet.

"Thou wouldst challenge the Gods to combat," he said sternly. "That is bold; but such daring it seems to me has grown up in thee because thou canst count on an ally, who stands scarcely farther from the Immortals than I myself. Hear this:—to thee, the misguided child, much may be forgiven. But a servant of the Divinity," and with these words he turned a threatening glance on Pentaur—"a priest, who in the war of free-will against law becomes a deserter, who forgets his duty and his oath —he will not long stand beside thee to support thee, for he—even though every God had blessed him with the richest gifts—he is damned. We drive him from among us, we curse him, we—"

At these words Bent-Anat looked now at Ameni, trembling with excitement, now at Pentaur standing opposite to her. Her face was red and white by turns, as light and shade chase each other on the ground when at noon-day a palm-grove is stirred by a storm.

The poet took a step towards her.

She felt that if he spoke it would be to defend all that she had done, and to ruin himself. A deep sympathy, a nameless anguish seized her soul, and before Pentaur could open his lips, she had sunk slowly down before Ameni, saying in low tones:

"I have sinned and defiled myself; thou hast said it—as Pentaur said it by the hut of the paraschites. Restore me to cleanness, Ameni, for I am unclean."

Like a flame that is crushed out by a hand, so the fire in the high-priest's eye was extinguished. Graciously, almost lovingly, he looked down on the princess, blessed her and conducted her before the holy of holies, there had clouds of incense wafted round her, anointed her with the nine holy oils, and commanded her to return to the royal castle.

Yet, said he, her guilt was not expiated; she should shortly learn by what prayers and exercises she might attain once more to perfect purity before the Gods, of whom he purposed to enquire in the holy place.

During all these ceremonies the priests stationed in the forecourt continued their lamentations.

The people standing before the temple listened to the priest's chant, and interrupted it from time to time with ringing cries of wailing, for already a dark rumor of what was going on within had spread among the multitude.

The sun was going down. The visitors to the Necropolis must soon be leaving it, and Bent-Anat, for whose appearance the people impatiently waited, would not show herself. One and another said the princess had been cursed, because she had taken remedies to the fair and injured Uarda, who was known to many of them.

Among the curious who had flocked together were many embalmers, laborers, and humble folk, who lived in the Necropolis. The mutinous and refractory temper of the Egyptians, which brought such heavy suffering on them under their later foreign rulers, was aroused, and rising with every minute. They reviled the pride of the priests, and their senseless, worthless, institutions. A drunken soldier, who soon reeled back into the tavern which he had but just left, distinguished himself as ringleader, and was the first to pick up a heavy stone to fling at the huge brass-plated temple gates. A few boys followed his example with shouts, and law-abiding men even, urged by the clamor of fanatical women, let themselves be led away to stone-flinging and words of abuse.

Within the House of Seti the priests' chant went on uninterruptedly; but at last, when the noise of the crowd grew louder, the great gate was thrown open, and with a solemn step Ameni, in full robes, and followed by twenty pastophori—[An order of priests]—who bore images of the Gods and holy symbols on their shoulders—Ameni walked into the midst of the crowd.

All were silent.

"Wherefore do you disturb our worship?" he asked loudly and calmly.

A roar of confused cries answered him, in which the frequently repeated name of Bent-Anat could alone be distinguished.

Ameni preserved his immoveable composure, and, raising his crozier, he cried—

"Make way for the daughter of Rameses, who sought and has found purification from the Gods, who behold the guilt of the highest as of the lowest among you. They reward the pious, but they punish the offender. Kneel down and let us pray that they may forgive you, and bless both you and your children."

Ameni took the holy Sistrum

> [A rattling metal instrument used by the Egyptians in the service of the Gods. Many specimens are extant in Museums. Plutarch describes it correctly, thus: "The Sistrum is rounded above, and the loop holds the four bars which are shaken." On the bend of the Sistrum they often set the head of a cat with a human face.]

from one of the attendant pastophori, and held it on high; the priests behind him raised a solemn hymn, and the crowd sank on their knees; nor did they move till the chant ceased and the high-priest again cried out:

"The Immortals bless you by me their servant. Leave this spot and make way for the daughter of Rameses."

With these words he withdrew into the temple, and the patrol, without meeting with any opposition, cleared the road guarded by Sphinxes which led to the Nile.

As Bent-Anat mounted her chariot Ameni said "Thou art the child of kings. The house of thy father rests on the shoulders of the people. Loosen the old laws which hold them subject, and the people will conduct themselves like these fools."

Ameni retired. Bent-Anat slowly arranged the reins in her hand, her eyes resting the while on the poet, who, leaning against a door-post, gazed at her in beatitude. She let her whip fall to the ground, that he might pick it up and restore it to her, but he did not observe it. A runner sprang forward and handed it to the princess, whose horses started off, tossing themselves and neighing.

Pentaur remained as if spell-bound, standing by the pillar, till the rattle of the departing wheels on the flag-way of the Avenue of Sphinxes had altogether died away, and the reflection of the glowing sunset painted the eastern hills with soft and rosy hues.

The far-sounding clang of a brass gong roused the poet from his ecstasy. It was the tomtom calling him to duty, to the lecture on rhetoric which at this hour he had to deliver to the young priests. He laid his left hand to his heart, and pressed his right hand to his forehead, as if to collect in its grasp his wandering thoughts; then silently and mechanically he went towards the open court in which his disciples awaited him. But instead of, as usual, considering on the way the subject he was to treat, his spirit and heart were occupied with the occurrences of the last few hours. One image reigned supreme in his imagination, filling it with delight—it was that of the fairest woman, who, radiant in her royal dignity and trembling with pride, had thrown herself in the dust for his sake. He felt as if her action had invested her whole being with a new and princely worth, as if her glance had brought light to his inmost soul, he seemed to breathe a freer air, to be borne onward on winged feet.

In such a mood he appeared before his hearers. When he found himself confronting all the the well-known faces, he remembered what it was he was called upon to do. He supported himself against the wall of the court, and opened the papyrus-roll handed to him by his favorite pupil, the young Anana. It was the book which twenty-four hours ago he had promised to begin upon. He looked now upon the characters that covered it, and felt that he was unable to read a word.

With a powerful effort he collected himself, and looking upwards tried to find the thread he had cut at the end of yesterday's lecture, and intended to resume to-day; but between yesterday and to-day, as it seemed to him, lay a vast sea whose roaring surges stunned his memory and powers of thought.

His scholars, squatting cross-legged on reed mats before him, gazed in astonishment on their silent master who was usually so ready of speech, and looked enquiringly at each other. A young priest whispered to his neighbor, "He is praying—" and Anana noticed with silent anxiety the strong hand of his teacher clutching the manuscript so tightly that the slight material of which it consisted threatened to split.

At last Pentaur looked down; he had found a subject. While he was looking upwards his gaze fell on the opposite wall, and the painted name of the king with the accompanying title "the good God" met his eye. Starting from these words he put this question to his hearers, "How do we apprehend the Goodness of the Divinity?"

He challenged one priest after another to treat this subject as if he were standing before his future congregation.

Several disciples rose, and spoke with more or less truth and feeling. At last it came to Anana's turn, who, in well-chosen words, praised the purpose-full beauty of animate and inanimate creation, in which the goodness of Amon

> [Amon, that is to say, "the hidden one." He was the God of Thebes, which was under his aegis, and after the Hykssos were expelled from the Nile-valley, he was united with Ra of Heliopolis and endowed with the attributes of all the remaining Gods. His nature was more and more spiritualized, till in the esoteric philosophy of the time of the Rameses he is compared to the All filling and All guiding intelligence. He is "the husband of his mother, his own father, and his own son," As the living Osiris, he is the soul and spirit of all creation.]

of Ra,

> [Ra, originally the Sun-God; later his name was introduced into the pantheistic mystic philosophy for that of the God who is the Universe.]

and Ptah,

> [Ptah is the Greek Henhaistas, the oldest of the Gods, the great maker of the material for the creation, the "first beginner," by whose side the seven Chnemu stand, as architects, to help him, and who was named "the lord of truth," because the laws and conditions of being proceeded from him. He created also the germ of light, he stood therefore at the head of the solar Gods, and was called the creator of ice, from which, when he had cleft it, the sun and the moan came forth. Hence his name "the opener."]

as well as of the other Gods, finds expression.

Pentaur listened to the youth with folded arms, now looking at him enquiringly, now adding approbation. Then taking up the thread of the discourse when it was ended, he began himself to speak.

Like obedient falcons at the call of the falconer, thoughts rushed down into his mind, and the divine passion awakened in his breast glowed and shone through his inspired language that soared every moment on freer and stronger wings. Melting into pathos, exulting in rapture, he praised the splendor of nature; and the words flowed from his lips like a limpid crystal-clear stream as he glorified the eternal order of things, and the incomprehensible wisdom and care of the Creator—the One, who is one alone, and great and without equal.

"So incomparable," he said in conclusion, "is the home which God has given us. All that He—the One—has created is penetrated with His own essence, and bears witness to His Goodness. He who knows how to find Him sees Him everywhere, and lives at every instant in the enjoyment of His glory. Seek Him, and when ye have found Him fall down and sing praises before Him. But praise the Highest, not only in gratitude for the splendor of that which he has created, but for having given us the capacity for delight in his work. Ascend the mountain peaks and look on the distant country, worship when the sunset glows with rubies, and the dawn with roses, go out in the nighttime, and look at the stars as they travel in eternal, unerring, immeasurable, and endless circles on silver barks through the blue vault of heaven, stand by the cradle of the child, by the buds of the flowers, and see how the mother bends over the one, and the bright dew-drops fall on the other. But would you know where the stream of divine goodness is most freely poured out, where the grace of the Creator bestows the richest gifts, and where His holiest altars are prepared? In your own heart; so long as it is pure and full of love. In such a heart, nature is reflected as in a magic mirror, on whose surface the Beautiful shines in three-fold beauty. There the eye can reach far away over stream, and meadow, and hill, and take in the whole circle of the earth; there the morning and evening-red shine, not like roses and rubies, but like the very cheeks of the Goddess of Beauty; there the stars circle on, not in silence, but with the mighty voices of the pure eternal harmonies of heaven; there the child smiles like an infant-god, and the bud unfolds to magic flowers; finally, there thankfulness grows broader and devotion grows deeper, and we throw ourselves into the arms of a God, who—as I imagine his glory—is a God to whom the sublime nine great Gods pray as miserable and helpless suppliants."

The tomtom which announced the end of the hour interrupted him.

Pentaur ceased speaking with a deep sigh, and for a minute not a scholar moved.

At last the poet laid the papyrus roll out of his hand, wiped the sweat from his hot brow, and walked slowly towards the gate of the court, which led into the sacred grove of the temple. He had hardly crossed the threshold when he felt a hand laid upon his shoulder.

He looked round. Behind him stood Ameni. "You fascinated your hearers, my friend," said the high-priest, coldly; "it is a pity that only the Harp was wanting."

Ameni's words fell on the agitated spirit of the poet like ice on the breast of a man in fever. He knew this tone in his master's voice, for thus he was accustomed to reprove bad scholars and erring priests; but to him he had never yet so spoken.

"It certainly would seem," continued the high-priest, bitterly, "as if in your intoxication you had forgotten what it becomes the teacher to utter in the lecture-hall. Only a few weeks since you swore

on my hands to guard the mysteries, and this day you have offered the great secret of the Unnameable one, the most sacred possession of the initiated, like some cheap ware in the open market."

"Thou cuttest with knives," said Pentaur.

"May they prove sharp, and extirpate the undeveloped canker, the rank weed from your soul," cried the high-priest. "You are young, too young; not like the tender fruit-tree that lets itself be trained aright, and brought to perfection, but like the green fruit on the ground, which will turn to poison for the children who pick it up—yea even though it fall from a sacred tree. Gagabu and I received you among us, against the opinion of the majority of the initiated. We gainsaid all those who doubted your ripeness because of your youth; and you swore to me, gratefully and enthusiastically, to guard the mysteries and the law. To-day for the first time I set you on the battle-field of life beyond the peaceful shelter of the schools. And how have you defended the standard that it was incumbent on you to uphold and maintain?"

"I did that which seemed to me to be right and true," answered Pentaur deeply moved.

"Right is the same for you as for us—what the law prescribes; and what is truth?"

"None has lifted her veil," said Pentaur, "but my soul is the offspring of the soul-filled body of the All; a portion of the infallible spirit of the Divinity stirs in my breast, and if it shows itself potent in me—"

"How easily we may mistake the flattering voice of self-love for that of the Divinity!"

"Cannot the Divinity which works and speaks in me—as in thee—as in each of us—recognize himself and his own voice?"

"If the crowd were to hear you," Ameni interrupted him, "each would set himself on his little throne, would proclaim the voice of the god within him as his guide, tear the law to shreds, and let the fragments fly to the desert on the east wind."

"I am one of the elect whom thou thyself hast taught to seek and to find the One. The light which I gaze on and am blest, would strike the crowd—I do not deny it—with blindness—"

"And nevertheless you blind our disciples with the dangerous glare-"

"I am educating them for future sages."

"And that with the hot overflow of a heart intoxicated with love!"

"Ameni!"

"I stand before you, uninvited, as your teacher, who reproves you out of the law, which always and everywhere is wiser than the individual, whose defender the king—among his highest titles—boasts of being, and to which the sage bows as much as the common man whom we bring up to blind belief—I stand before you as your father, who has loved you from a child, and expected from none of his disciples more than from you; and who will therefore neither lose you nor abandon the hope he has set upon you—

"Make ready to leave our quiet house early tomorrow morning. You have forfeited your office of teacher. You shall now go into the school of life, and make yourself fit for the honored rank of the initiated which, by my error, was bestowed on you too soon. You must leave your scholars without any leave-taking, however hard it may appear to you. After the star of Sothis

> [The holy star of Isis, Sirius or the dog star, whose course in the time of the Pharaohs coincided with the exact Solar year, and served at a very early date as a foundation for the reckoning of time among the Egyptians.]

has risen come for your instructions. You must in these next months try to lead the priesthood in the temple of Hatasu, and in that post to win back my confidence which you have thrown away. No remonstrance; to-night you will receive my blessing, and our authority—you must greet the rising sun from the terrace of the new scene of your labors. May the Unnameable stamp the law upon your soul!"

Ameni returned to his room.

He walked restlessly to and fro.

On a little table lay a mirror; he looked into the clear metal pane, and laid it back in its place again, as if he had seen some strange and displeasing countenance.

The events of the last few hours had moved him deeply, and shaken his confidence in his unerring judgment of men and things.

The priests on the other bank of the Nile were Bent-Anat's counsellors, and he had heard the princess spoken of as a devout and gifted maiden. Her incautious breach of the sacred institutions had seemed to him to offer a welcome opportunity for humiliating—a member of the royal family.

Now he told himself that he had undervalued this young creature that he had behaved clumsily, perhaps foolishly, to her; for he did not for a moment conceal from himself that her sudden change of demeanor resulted much more from the warm flow of her sympathy, or perhaps of her, affection, than from any recognition of her guilt, and he could not utilize her transgression with safety to himself, unless she felt herself guilty.

Nor was he of so great a nature as to be wholly free from vanity, and his vanity had been deeply wounded by the haughty resistance of the princess.

When he commanded Pentaur to meet the princess with words of reproof, he had hoped to awaken his ambition through the proud sense of power over the mighty ones of the earth.

And now?

How had his gifted admirer, the most hopeful of all his disciples, stood the test.

The one ideal of his life, the unlimited dominion of the priestly idea over the minds of men, and of the priesthood over the king himself, had hitherto remained unintelligible to this singular young man.

He must learn to understand it.

"Here, as the least among a hundred who are his superiors, all the powers of resistance of his soaring soul have been roused," said Ameni to himself. "In the temple of Hatasu he will have to rule over the inferior orders of slaughterers of victims and incense-burners; and, by requiring obedience, will learn to estimate the necessity of it. The rebel, to whom a throne devolves, becomes a tyrant!"

"Pentuar's poet soul," so he continued to reflect "has quickly yielded itself a prisoner to the charm of Bent-Anat; and what woman could resist this highly favored being, who is radiant in beauty as Ra-Harmachis, and from whose lips flows speech as sweet as Techuti's. They ought never to meet again, for no tie must bind him to the house of Rameses."

Again he paced to and fro, and murmured:

"How is this? Two of my disciples have towered above their fellows, in genius and gifts, like palm trees above their undergrowth. I brought them up to succeed me, to inherit my labors and my hopes.

"Mesu fell away;

> [Mesu is the Egyptian name of Moses, whom we may consider as a contemporary of Rameses, under whose successor the exodus of the Jews from Egypt took place.]

and Pentaur may follow him. Must my aim be an unworthy one because it does not attract the noblest? Not so. Each feels himself made of better stuff than his companions in destiny, constitutes his own law, and fears to see the great expended in trifles; but I think otherwise; like a brook of ferruginous water from Lebanon, I mix with the great stream, and tinge it with my color."

Thinking thus Ameni stood still.

Then he called to one of the so-called "holy fathers," his private secretary, and said:

"Draw up at once a document, to be sent to all the priests'-colleges in the land. Inform them that the daughter of Rameses has lapsed seriously from the law, and defiled herself, and direct that public—you hear me public—prayers shall be put up for her purification in every temple. Lay the

letter before me to be signed within in hour. But no! Give me your reed and palette; I will myself draw up the instructions."

The "holy father" gave him writing materials, and retired into the background. Ameni muttered: "The King will do us some unheard-of violence! Well, this writing may be the first arrow in opposition to his lance."

CHAPTER VIII

The moon was risen over the city of the living that lay opposite the Necropolis of Thebes.

The evening song had died away in the temples, that stood about a mile from the Nile, connected with each other by avenues of sphinxes and pylons; but in the streets of the city life seemed only just really awake.

The coolness, which had succeeded the heat of the summer day, tempted the citizens out into the air, in front of their doors or on the roofs and turrets of their houses; or at the tavern-tables, where they listened to the tales of the story-tellers while they refreshed them selves with beer, wine, and the sweet juice of fruits. Many simple folks squatted in circular groups on the ground, and joined in the burden of songs which were led by an appointed singer, to the sound of a tabor and flute.

To the south of the temple of Amon stood the king's palace, and near it, in more or less extensive gardens, rose the houses of the magnates of the kingdom, among which, one was distinguished by it splendor and extent.

Paaker, the king's pioneer, had caused it to be erected after the death of his father, in the place of the more homely dwelling of his ancestors, when he hoped to bring home his cousin, and install her as its mistress. A few yards further to the east was another stately though older and less splendid house, which Mena, the king's charioteer, had inherited from his father, and which was inhabited by his wife Nefert and her mother Isatuti, while he himself, in the distant Syrian land, shared the tent of the king, as being his body-guard. Before the door of each house stood servants bearing torches, and awaiting the long deferred return home of their masters.

The gate, which gave admission to Paaker's plot of ground through the wall which surrounded it, was disproportionately, almost ostentatiously, high and decorated with various paintings. On the right hand and on the left, two cedar-trunks were erected as masts to carry standards; he had had them felled for the purpose on Lebanon, and forwarded by ship to Pelusium on the north-east coast of Egypt. Thence they were conveyed by the Nile to Thebes.

On passing through the gate one entered a wide, paved court-yard, at the sides of which walks extended, closed in at the back, and with roofs supported on slender painted wooden columns. Here stood the pioneer's horses and chariots, here dwelt his slaves, and here the necessary store of produce for the month's requirements was kept.

In the farther wall of this store-court was a very high doorway, that led into a large garden with rows of well-tended trees and trellised vines, clumps of shrubs, flowers, and beds of vegetables. Palms, sycamores, and acacia-trees, figs, pomegranates, and jasmine throve here particularly well—for Paaker's mother, Setchem, superintended the labors of the gardeners; and in the large tank in the midst there was never any lack of water for watering the beds and the roots of the trees, as it was always supplied by two canals, into which wheels turned by oxen poured water day and night from the Nile-stream.

On the right side of this plot of ground rose the one-storied dwelling house, its length stretching into distant perspective, as it consisted of a single row of living and bedrooms. Almost every room had its own door, that opened into a veranda supported by colored wooden columns, and which extended the whole length of the garden side of the house. This building was joined at a right angle by a row of store-rooms, in which the garden-produce in fruits and vegetables, the wine-jars, and the possessions of the house in woven stuffs, skins, leather, and other property were kept.

In a chamber of strong masonry lay safely locked up the vast riches accumulated by Paaker's father and by himself, in gold and silver rings, vessels and figures of beasts. Nor was there lack of bars of copper and of precious stones, particularly of lapis-lazuli and malachite.

In the middle of the garden stood a handsomely decorated kiosk, and a chapel with images of the Gods; in the background stood the statues of Paaker's ancestors in the form of Osiris wrapped in mummy-cloths.

> [The justified dead became Osiris; that is to say, attained to the fullest union (Henosis) with the divinity.]

The faces, which were likenesses, alone distinguished these statues from each other.

The left side of the store-yard was veiled in gloom, yet the moonlight revealed numerous dark figures clothed only with aprons, the slaves of the king's pioneer, who squatted on the ground in groups of five or six, or lay near each other on thin mats of palm-bast, their hard beds.

Not far from the gate, on the right side of the court, a few lamps lighted up a group of dusky men, the officers of Paaker's household, who wore short, shirt-shaped, white garments, and who sat on a carpet round a table hardly two feet high. They were eating their evening-meal, consisting of a roasted antelope, and large flat cakes of bread. Slaves waited on them, and filled their earthen beakers with yellow beer. The steward cut up the great roast on the table, offered the intendant of the gardens a piece of antelope-leg, and said:

> [The Greeks and Romans report that the Egyptians were so addicted to satire and pungent witticisms that they would hazard property and life to gratify their love of mockery. The scandalous pictures in the so-called kiosk of Medinet Habu, the caricatures in an indescribable papyrus at Turin, confirm these statements. There is a noteworthy passage in Flavius Vopiscus, that compares the Egyptians to the French.]

"My arms ache; the mob of slaves get more and more dirty and refractory."

"I notice it in the palm-trees," said the gardener, "you want so many cudgels that their crowns will soon be as bare as a moulting bird."

"We should do as the master does," said the head-groom, "and get sticks of ebony—they last a hundred years."

"At any rate longer than men's bones," laughed the chief neat-herd, who had come in to town from the pioneer's country estate, bringing with him animals for sacrifices, butter and cheese. "If we were all to follow the master's example, we should soon have none but cripples in the servant's house."

"Out there lies the lad whose collar-bone he broke yesterday," said the steward, "it is a pity, for he was a clever mat-platter. The old lord hit softer."

"You ought to know!" cried a small voice, that sounded mockingly behind the feasters.

They looked and laughed when they recognized the strange guest, who had approached them unobserved.

The new comer was a deformed little man about as big as a five-year-old boy, with a big head and oldish but uncommonly sharply-cut features.

The noblest Egyptians kept house-dwarfs for sport, and this little wight served the wife of Mena in this capacity. He was called Nemu, or "the dwarf," and his sharp tongue made him much feared, though he was a favorite, for he passed for a very clever fellow and was a good tale-teller.

"Make room for me, my lords," said the little man. "I take very little room, and your beer and roast is in little danger from me, for my maw is no bigger than a fly's head."

"But your gall is as big as that of a Nile-horse," cried the cook.

"It grows," said the dwarf laughing, "when a turn-spit and spoon-wielder like you turns up. There—I will sit here."

"You are welcome," said the steward, "what do you bring?"

"Myself."

"Then you bring nothing great."

"Else I should not suit you either!" retorted the dwarf. "But seriously, my lady mother, the noble Katuti, and the Regent, who just now is visiting us, sent me here to ask you whether Paaker is not yet returned. He accompanied the princess and Nefert to the City of the Dead, and the ladies are not yet come in. We begin to be anxious, for it is already late."

The steward looked up at the starry sky and said: "The moon is already tolerably high, and my lord meant to be home before sun-down."

"The meal was ready," sighed the cook. "I shall have to go to work again if he does not remain all night."

"How should he?" asked the steward. "He is with the princess Bent-Anat."

"And my mistress," added the dwarf.

"What will they say to each other," laughed gardener; "your chief litter-bearer declared that yesterday on the way to the City of the Dead they did not speak a word to each other."

"Can you blame the lord if he is angry with the lady who was betrothed to him, and then was wed to another? When I think of the moment when he learnt Nefert's breach of faith I turn hot and cold."

"Care the less for that," sneered the dwarf, "since you must be hot in summer and cold in winter."

"It is not evening all day," cried the head groom. "Paaker never forgets an injury, and we shall live to see him pay Mena—high as he is—for the affront he has offered him.

"My lady Katuti," interrupted Nemu, "stores up the arrears of her son-in-law."

"Besides, she has long wished to renew the old friendship with your house, and the Regent too preaches peace. Give me a piece of bread, steward. I am hungry!"

"The sacks, into which Mena's arrears flow seem to be empty," laughed the cook.

"Empty! empty! much like your wit!" answered the dwarf. "Give me a bit of roast meat, steward; and you slaves bring me a drink of beer."

"You just now said your maw was no bigger than a fly's head," cried the cook, "and now you devour meat like the crocodiles in the sacred tank of Seeland. You must come from a world of upside-down, where the men are as small as flies, and the flies as big as the giants of the past."

"Yet, I might be much bigger," mumbled the dwarf while he munched on unconcernedly, "perhaps as big as your spite which grudges me the third bit of meat, which the steward—may Zefa bless him with great possessions—is cutting out of the back of the antelope."

"There, take it, you glutton, but let out your girdle," said the steward laughing, "I had cut the slice for myself, and admire your sharp nose."

"All noses," said the dwarf, "they teach the knowing better than any haruspex what is inside a man."

"How is that?" cried the gardener.

"Only try to display your wisdom," laughed the steward; "for, if you want to talk, you must at last leave off eating."

"The two may be combined," said the dwarf. "Listen then! A hooked nose, which I compare to a vulture's beak, is never found together with a submissive spirit. Think of the Pharaoh and all his haughty race. The Regent, on the contrary, has a straight, well-shaped, medium-sized nose, like the statue of Amon in the temple, and he is an upright soul, and as good as the Gods. He is neither overbearing nor submissive beyond just what is right; he holds neither with the great nor yet with the mean, but with men of our stamp. There's the king for us!"

"A king of noses!" exclaimed the cook, "I prefer the eagle Rameses. But what do you say to the nose of your mistress Nefert?"

"It is delicate and slender and moves with every thought like the leaves of flowers in a breath of wind, and her heart is exactly like it."

"And Paaker?" asked the head groom.

"He has a large short nose with wide open nostrils. When Seth whirls up the sand, and a grain of it flies up his nose, he waxes angry—so it is Paaker's nose, and that only, which is answerable for all your blue bruises. His mother Setchem, the sister of my lady Katuti, has a little roundish soft—"

"You pigmy," cried the steward interrupting the speaker, "we have fed you and let you abuse people to your heart's content, but if you wag your sharp tongue against our mistress, I will take you by the girdle and fling you to the sky, so that the stars may remain sticking to your crooked hump."

At these words the dwarf rose, turned to go, and said indifferently: "I would pick the stars carefully off my back, and send you the finest of the planets in return for your juicy bit of roast. But here come the chariots. Farewell! my lords, when the vulture's beak seizes one of you and carries you off to the war in Syria, remember the words of the little Nemu who knows men and noses."

The pioneer's chariot rattled through the high gates into the court of his house, the dogs in their leashes howled joyfully, the head groom hastened towards Paaker and took the reins in his charge, the steward accompanied him, and the head cook retired into the kitchen to make ready a fresh meal for his master.

Before Paaker had reached the garden-gate, from the pylon of the enormous temple of Amon, was heard first the far-sounding clang of hard-struck plates of brass, and then the many-voiced chant of a solemn hymn.

The Mohar stood still, looked up to heaven, called to his servants—"The divine star Sothis is risen!" threw himself on the earth, and lifted his wards the star in prayer.

The slaves and officers immediately followed his example.

No circumstance in nature remained unobserved by the priestly guides of the Egyptian people. Every phenomenon on earth or in the starry heavens was greeted by them as the manifestation of a divinity, and they surrounded the life of the inhabitants of the Nile-valley—from morning to evening —from the beginning of the inundation to the days of drought—with a web of chants and sacrifices, of processions and festivals, which inseparably knit the human individual to the Divinity and its earthly representatives the priesthood.

For many minutes the lord and his servants remained on their knees in silence, their eyes fixed on the sacred star, and listening to the pious chant of the priests.

As it died away Paaker rose. All around him still lay on the earth; only one naked figure, strongly lighted by the clear moonlight, stood motionless by a pillar near the slaves' quarters.

The pioneer gave a sign, the attendants rose; but Paaker went with hasty steps to the man who had disdained the act of devotion, which he had so earnestly performed, and cried:

"Steward, a hundred strokes on the soles of the feet of this scoffer."

The officer thus addressed bowed and said: "My lord, the surgeon commanded the mat-weaver not to move and he cannot lift his arm. He is suffering great pain. Thou didst break his collar-bone yesterday.

"It served him right!" said Paaker, raising his voice so much that the injured man could not fail to hear it. Then he turned his back upon him, and entered the garden; here he called the chief butler, and said: "Give the slaves beer for their night draught—to all of them, and plenty."

A few minutes later he stood before his mother, whom he found on the roof of the house, which was decorated with leafy plants, just as she gave her two-years'-old grand daughter, the child of her youngest son, into the arms of her nurse, that she might take her to bed.

Paaker greeted the worthy matron with reverence. She was a woman of a friendly, homely aspect; several little dogs were fawning at her feet. Her son put aside the leaping favorites of the widow, whom they amused through many long hours of loneliness, and turned to take the child in his arms from those of the attendant. But the little one struggled with such loud cries, and could not be pacified, that Paaker set it down on the ground, and involuntarily exclaimed:

"The naughty little thing!"

"She has been sweet and good the whole afternoon," said his mother Setchem. "She sees you so seldom."

"May be," replied Paaker; "still I know this—the dogs love me, but no child will come to me."

"You have such hard hands."

"Take the squalling brat away," said Paaker to the nurse. "Mother, I want to speak to you."

Setchem quieted the child, gave it many kisses, and sent it to bed; then she went up to her son, stroked his cheeks, and said:

"If the little one were your own, she would go to you at once, and teach you that a child is the greatest blessing which the Gods bestow on us mortals." Paaker smiled and said: "I know what you are aiming at—but leave it for the present, for I have something important to communicate to you."

"Well?" asked Setchem.

"To-day for the first time since—you know when, I have spoken to Nefert. The past may be forgotten. You long for your sister; go to her, I have nothing more to say against it."

Setchem looked at her son with undisguised astonishment; her eyes which easily filled with tears, now overflowed, and she hesitatingly asked: "Can I believe my ears; child, have you?—"

"I have a wish," said Paaker firmly, "that you should knit once more the old ties of affection with your relations; the estrangement has lasted long enough."

"Much too long!" cried Setchem.

The pioneer looked in silence at the ground, and obeyed his mother's sign to sit down beside her.

"I knew," she said, taking his hand, "that this day would bring us joy; for I dreamt of your father in Osiris, and when I was being carried to the temple, I was met, first by a white cow, and then by a wedding procession. The white ram of Anion, too, touched the wheat-cakes that I offered him."—[It boded death to Germanicus when the Apis refused to eat out of his hand.]

"Those are lucky presages," said Paaker in a tone of conviction.

"And let us hasten to seize with gratitude that which the Gods set before us," cried Setchem with joyful emotion. "I will go to-morrow to my sister and tell her that we shall live together in our old affection, and share both good and evil; we are both of the same race, and I know that, as order and cleanliness preserve a house from ruin and rejoice the stranger, so nothing but unity can keep up the happiness of the family and its appearance before people. What is bygone is bygone, and let it be forgotten. There are many women in Thebes besides Nefert, and a hundred nobles in the land would esteem themselves happy to win you for a son-in-law."

Paaker rose, and began thoughtfully pacing the broad space, while Setchem went on speaking.

"I know," she said, "that I have touched a wound in thy heart; but it is already closing, and it will heal when you are happier even than the charioteer Mena, and need no longer hate him. Nefert is good, but she is delicate and not clever, and scarcely equal to the management of so large a household as ours. Ere long I too shall be wrapped in mummy-cloths, and then if duty calls you into Syria some prudent housewife must take my place. It is no small matter. Your grandfather Assa often would say that a house well-conducted in every detail was a mark of a family owning an unspotted name, and living with wise liberality and secure solidity, in which each had his assigned place, his allotted duty to fulfil, and his fixed rights to demand. How often have I prayed to the Hathors that they may send you a wife after my own heart."

"A Setchem I shall never find!" said Paaker kissing his mother's forehead, "women of your sort are dying out."

"Flatterer!" laughed Setchem, shaking her finger at her son. But it is true. Those who are now growing up dress and smarten themselves with stuffs from Kaft,—[Phoenicia]—mix their language with Syrian words, and leave the steward and housekeeper free when they themselves ought to command. Even my sister Katuti, and Nefert—

"Nefert is different from other women," interrupted Paaker, "and if you had brought her up she would know how to manage a house as well as how to ornament it."

Setchem looked at her son in surprise; then she said, half to herself: “Yes, yes, she is a sweet child; it is impossible for any one to be angry with her who looks into her eyes. And yet I was cruel to her because you were hurt by her, and because—but you know. But now you have forgiven, I forgive her, willingly, her and her husband.”

Paaker’s brow clouded, and while he paused in front of his mother he said with all the peculiar harshness of his voice:

“He shall pine away in the desert, and the hyaenas of the North shall tear his unburied corpse.”

At these words Setchem covered her face with her veil, and clasped her hands tightly over the amulets hanging round her neck. Then she said softly:

“How terrible you can be! I know well that you hate the charioteer, for I have seen the seven arrows over your couch over which is written ‘Death to Mena.’

“That is a Syrian charm which a man turns against any one whom he desires to destroy. How black you look! Yes, it is a charm that is hateful to the Gods, and that gives the evil one power over him that uses it. Leave it to them to punish the criminal, for Osiris withdraws his favor from those who choose the fiend for their ally.”

“My sacrifices,” replied Paaker, “secure me the favor of the Gods; but Mena behaved to me like a vile robber, and I only return to him the evil that belongs to him. Enough of this! and if you love me, never again utter the name of my enemy before me. I have forgiven Nefert and her mother—that may satisfy you.”

Setchem shook her head, and said: “What will it lead to! The war cannot last for ever, and if Mena returns the reconciliation of to-day will turn to all the more bitter enmity. I see only one remedy. Follow my advice, and let me find you a wife worthy of you.”

“Not now!” exclaimed Paaker impatiently. “In a few days I must go again into the enemy’s country, and do not wish to leave my wife, like Mena, to lead the life of a widow during my existence. Why urge it? my brother’s wife and children are with you—that might satisfy you.”

“The Gods know how I love them,” answered Setchem; “but your brother Horns is the younger, and you the elder, to whom the inheritance belongs. Your little niece is a delightful plaything, but in your son I should see at once the future stay of our race, the future head of the family; brought up to my mind and your father’s; for all is sacred to me that my dead husband wished. He rejoiced in your early betrothal to Nefert, and hoped that a son of his eldest son should continue the race of Assa.”

“It shall be by no fault of mine that any wish of his remains unfulfilled. The stars are high, mother; sleep well, and if to-morrow you visit Nefert and your sister, say to them that the doors of my house are open to them. But stay! Katuti’s steward has offered to sell a herd of cattle to ours, although the stock on Mena’s land can be but small. What does this mean?”

“You know my sister,” replied Setchem. “She manages Mena’s possessions, has many requirements, tries to vie with the greatest in splendor, sees the governor often in her house, her son is no doubt extravagant—and so the most necessary things may often be wanting.”

Paaker shrugged his shoulders, once more embraced his mother and left her.

Soon after, he was standing in the spacious room in which he was accustomed to sit and to sleep when he was in Thebes. The walls of this room were whitewashed and decorated with pious glyphic writing, which framed in the door and the windows opening into the garden.

In the middle of the farther wall was a couch in the form of a lion. The upper end of it imitated a lion’s head, and the foot, its curling tail; a finely dressed lion’s skin was spread over the bell, and a headrest of ebony, decorated with pious texts, stood on a high foot-step, ready for the sleeper.

Above the bed various costly weapons and whips were elegantly displayed, and below them the seven arrows over which Setchem had read the words “Death to Mena.” They were written across a sentence which enjoined feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and clothing the naked; with loving-kindness, alike to the great and the humble.

A niche by the side of the bed-head was closed with a curtain of purple stuff.

In each corner of the room stood a statue; three of them symbolized the triad of Thebes-Anion, Muth, and Chunsu—and the fourth the dead father of the pioneer. In front of each was a small altar for offerings, with a hollow in it, in which was an odoriferous essence. On a wooden stand were little images of the Gods and amulets in great number, and in several painted chests lay the clothes, the ornaments and the papers of the master. In the midst of the chamber stood a table and several stool-shaped seats.

When Paaker entered the room he found it lighted with lamps, and a large dog sprang joyfully to meet him. He let him spring upon him, threw him to the ground, let him once more rush upon him, and then kissed his clever head.

Before his bed an old negro of powerful build lay in deep sleep. Paaker shoved him with his foot and called to him as he awoke—

"I am hungry."

The grey-headed black man rose slowly, and left the room.

As soon as he was alone Paaker drew the philter from his girdle, looked at it tenderly, and put it in a box, in which there were several flasks of holy oils for sacrifice. He was accustomed every evening to fill the hollows in the altars with fresh essences, and to prostrate himself in prayer before the images of the Gods. To-day he stood before the statue of his father, kissed its feet, and murmured: "Thy will shall be done.—The woman whom thou didst intend for me shall indeed be mine—thy eldest son's."

Then he walked to and fro and thought over the events of the day.

At last he stood still, with his arms crossed, and looked defiantly at the holy images; like a traveller who drives away a false guide, and thinks to find the road by himself.

His eye fell on the arrows over his bed; he smiled, and striking his broad breast with his fist, he exclaimed, "I—I—I—"

His hound, who thought his master meant to call him, rushed up to him. He pushed him off and said—"If you meet a hyaena in the desert, you fall upon it without waiting till it is touched by my lance—and if the Gods, my masters, delay, I myself will defend my right; but thou," he continued turning to the image of his father, "thou wilt support me."

This soliloquy was interrupted by the slaves who brought in his meal.

Paaker glanced at the various dishes which the cook had prepared for him, and asked: "How often shall I command that not a variety, but only one large dish shall be dressed for me? And the wine?"

"Thou art used never to touch it?" answered the old negro.

"But to-day I wish for some," said the pioneer. "Bring one of the old jars of red wine of Kakem."

The slaves looked at each other in astonishment; the wine was brought, and Paaker emptied beaker after beaker. When the servants had left him, the boldest among them said: "Usually the master eats like a lion, and drinks like a midge, but to-day—"

"Hold your tongue!" cried his companion, "and come into the court, for Paaker has sent us out beer. The Hathors must have met him."

The occurrences of the day must indeed have taken deep hold on the inmost soul of the pioneer; for he, the most sober of all the warriors of Rameses, to whom intoxication was unknown, and who avoided the banquets of his associates—now sat at the midnight hours, alone at his table, and toped till his weary head grew heavy.

He collected himself, went towards his couch and drew the curtain which concealed the niche at the head of the bed. A female figure, with the head-dress and attributes of the Goddess Hathor, made of painted limestone, revealed itself.

Her countenance had the features of the wife of Mena.

The king, four years since, had ordered a sculptor to execute a sacred image with the lovely features of the newly-married bride of his charioteer, and Paaker had succeeded in having a duplicate made.

He now knelt down on the couch, gazed on the image with moist eyes, looked cautiously around to see if he was alone, leaned forward, pressed a kiss to the delicate, cold stone lips; laid down and went to sleep without undressing himself, and leaving the lamps to burn themselves out.

Restless dreams disturbed his spirit, and when the dawn grew grey, he screamed out, tormented by a hideous vision, so pitifully, that the old negro, who had laid himself near the dog at the foot of his bed, sprang up alarmed, and while the dog howled, called him by his name to wake him.

Paaker awoke with a dull head-ache. The vision which had tormented him stood vividly before his mind, and he endeavored to retain it that he might summon a haruspex to interpret it. After the morbid fancies of the preceding evening he felt sad and depressed.

The morning-hymn rang into his room with a warning voice from the temple of Amon; he cast off evil thoughts, and resolved once more to resign the conduct of his fate to the Gods, and to renounce all the arts of magic.

As he was accustomed, he got into the bath that was ready for him. While splashing in the tepid water he thought with ever increasing eagerness of Nefert and of the philter which at first he had meant not to offer to her, but which actually was given to her by his hand, and which might by this time have begun to exercise its charm.

Love placed rosy pictures—hatred set blood-red images before his eyes. He strove to free himself from the temptations, which more and more tightly closed in upon him, but it was with him as with a man who has fallen into a bog, who, the more vehemently he tries to escape from the mire, sinks the deeper.

As the sun rose, so rose his vital energy and his self-confidence, and when he prepared to quit his dwelling, in his most costly clothing, he had arrived once more at the decision of the night before, and had again resolved to fight for his purpose, without—and if need were—against the Gods.

The Mohar had chosen his road, and he never turned back when once he had begun a journey.

CHAPTER IX

It was noon: the rays of the sun found no way into the narrow shady streets of the city of Thebes, but they blazed with scorching heat on the broad dyke-road which led to the king's castle, and which at this hour was usually almost deserted.

To-day it was thronged with foot-passengers and chariots, with riders and litter-bearers.

Here and there negroes poured water on the road out of skins, but the dust was so deep, that, in spite of this, it shrouded the streets and the passengers in a dry cloud, which extended not only over the city, but down to the harbor where the boats of the inhabitants of the Necropolis landed their freight.

The city of the Pharaohs was in unwonted agitation, for the storm-swift breath of rumor had spread some news which excited both alarm and hope in the huts of the poor as well as in the palaces of the great.

In the early morning three mounted messengers had arrived from the king's camp with heavy letter-bags, and had dismounted at the Regent's palace.

> [The Egyptians were great letter-writers, and many of their letters have come down to us, they also had established postmen, and had a word for them in their language "fai chat."]

As after a long drought the inhabitants of a village gaze up at the black thunder-cloud that gathers above their heads promising the refreshing rain—but that may also send the kindling lightning-flash or the destroying hail-storm—so the hopes and the fears of the citizens were centred on the news which came but rarely and at irregular intervals from the scene of war; for there was scarcely a house in the huge city which had not sent a father, a son, or a relative to the fighting hosts of the king in the distant northeast.

And though the couriers from the camp were much oftener the heralds of tears than of joy; though the written rolls which they brought told more often of death and wounds than of promotion, royal favors, and conquered spoil, yet they were expected with soul-felt longing and received with shouts of joy.

Great and small hurried after their arrival to the Regent's palace, and the scribes—who distributed the letters and read the news which was intended for public communication, and the lists of those who had fallen or perished—were closely besieged with enquirers.

Man has nothing harder to endure than uncertainty, and generally, when in suspense, looks forward to bad rather than to good news. And the bearers of ill ride faster than the messengers of weal.

The Regent Ani resided in a building adjoining the king's palace. His business-quarters surrounded an immensely wide court, and consisted of a great number of rooms opening on to this court, in which numerous scribes worked with their chief. On the farther side was a large, veranda-like hall open at the front, with a roof supported by pillars.

Here Ani was accustomed to hold courts of justice, and to receive officers, messengers, and petitioners. To-day he sat, visible to all comers, on a costly throne in this hall, surrounded by his numerous followers, and overlooking the crowd of people whom the guardians of the peace guided with long staves, admitting them in troops into the court of the "High Gate," and then again conducting them out.

What he saw and heard was nothing joyful, for from each group surrounding a scribe arose a cry of woe. Few and far between were those who had to tell of the rich booty that had fallen to their friends.

An invisible web woven of wailing and tears seemed to envelope the assembly.

Here men were lamenting and casting dust upon their heads, there women were rending their clothes, shrieking loudly, and crying as they waved their veils “oh, my husband! oh, my father! oh, my brother!”

Parents who had received the news of the death of their son fell on each other’s neck weeping; old men plucked out their grey hair and beard; young women beat their forehead and breast, or implored the scribes who read out the lists to let them see for themselves the name of the beloved one who was for ever torn from them.

The passionate stirring of a soul, whether it be the result of joy or of sorrow, among us moderns covers its features with a veil, which it had no need of among the ancients.

Where the loudest laments sounded, a restless little being might be seen hurrying from group to group; it was Nemu, Katuti’s dwarf, whom we know.

Now he stood near a woman of the better class, dissolved in tears because her husband had fallen in the last battle.

“Can you read?” he asked her; “up there on the architrave is the name of Rameses, with all his titles. Dispenser of life,’ he is called. Aye indeed; he can create—widows; for he has all the husbands killed.”

Before the astonished woman could reply, he stood by a man sunk in woe, and pulling his robe, said “Finer fellows than your son have never been seen in Thebes. Let your youngest starve, or beat him to a cripple, else he also will be dragged off to Syria; for Rameses needs much good Egyptian meat for the Syrian vultures.”

The old man, who had hitherto stood there in silent despair, clenched his fist. The dwarf pointed to the Regent, and said: “If he there wielded the sceptre, there would be fewer orphans and beggars by the Nile. To-day its sacred waters are still sweet, but soon it will taste as salt as the north sea with all the tears that have been shed on its banks.”

It almost seemed as if the Regent had heard these words, for he rose from his seat and lifted his hands like a man who is lamenting.

Many of the bystanders observed this action; and loud cries of anguish filled the wide courtyard, which was soon cleared by soldiers to make room for other troops of people who were thronging in.

While these gathered round the scribes, the Regent Ani sat with quiet dignity on the throne, surrounded by his suite and his secretaries, and held audiences.

He was a man at the close of his fortieth year and the favorite cousin of the king.

Rameses I., the grandfather of the reigning monarch, had deposed the legitimate royal family, and usurped the sceptre of the Pharaohs. He descended from a Semitic race who had remained in Egypt at the time of the expulsion of the Hyksos,

> [These were an eastern race who migrated from Asia into Egypt, conquered the lower Nile-valley, and ruled over it for nearly 500 years, till they were driven out by the successors of the old legitimate Pharaohs, whose dominion had been confined to upper Egypt.]

and had distinguished itself by warlike talents under Thotmes and Amenophis. After his death he was succeeded by his son Seti, who sought to earn a legitimate claim to the throne by marrying Tuaa, the grand-daughter of Amenophis III. She presented him with an only son, whom he named after his father Rameses. This prince might lay claim to perfect legitimacy through his mother, who descended directly from the old house of sovereigns; for in Egypt a noble family—even that of the Pharaohs—might be perpetuated through women.

Seti proclaimed Rameses partner of his throne, so as to remove all doubt as to the validity of his position. The young nephew of his wife Tuaa, the Regent Ani, who was a few years younger than Rameses, he caused to be brought up in the House of Seti, and treated him like his own son, while the other members of the dethroned royal family were robbed of their possessions or removed altogether.

Ani proved himself a faithful servant to Seti, and to his son, and was trusted as a brother by the warlike and magnanimous Rameses, who however never disguised from himself the fact that the blood in his own veins was less purely royal than that which flowed in his cousin's.

It was required of the race of the Pharaohs of Egypt that it should be descended from the Sun-god Ra, and the Pharaoh could boast of this high descent only through his mother—Ani through both parents.

But Rameses sat on the throne, held the sceptre with a strong hand, and thirteen young sons promised to his house the lordship over Egypt to all eternity.

When, after the death of his warlike father, he went to fresh conquests in the north, he appointed Ani, who had proved himself worthy as governor of the province of Kush, to the regency of the kingdom.

A vehement character often over estimates the man who is endowed with a quieter temperament, into whose nature he cannot throw himself, and whose excellences he is unable to imitate; so it happened that the deliberate and passionless nature of his cousin impressed the fiery and warlike Rameses.

Ani appeared to be devoid of ambition, or the spirit of enterprise; he accepted the dignity that was laid upon him with apparent reluctance, and seemed a particularly safe person, because he had lost both wife and child, and could boast of no heir.

He was a man of more than middle height; his features were remarkably regular—even beautifully, cut, but smooth and with little expression. His clear blue eyes and thin lips gave no evidence of the emotions that filled his heart; on the contrary, his countenance wore a soft smile that could adapt itself to haughtiness, to humility, and to a variety of shades of feeling, but which could never be entirely banished from his face.

He had listened with affable condescension to the complaint of a landed proprietor, whose cattle had been driven off for the king's army, and had promised that his case should be enquired into. The plundered man was leaving full of hope; but when the scribe who sat at the feet of the Regent enquired to whom the investigation of this encroachment of the troops should be entrusted, Ani said: "Each one must bring a victim to the war; it must remain among the things that are done, and cannot be undone."

The Nomarch—[Chief of a Nome or district.]—of Suan, in the southern part of the country, asked for funds for a necessary, new embankment. The Regent listened to his eager representation with benevolence, nay with expressions of sympathy; but assured him that the war absorbed all the funds of the state, that the chests were empty; still he felt inclined—even if they had not failed—to sacrifice a part of his own income to preserve the endangered arable land of his faithful province of Suan, to which he desired greeting.

As soon as the Nomarch had left him, he commanded that a considerable sum should be taken out of the Treasury, and sent after the petitioner.

From time to time in the middle of conversation, he arose, and made a gesture of lamentation, to show to the assembled mourners in the court that he sympathized in the losses which had fallen on them.

The sun had already passed the meridian, when a disturbance, accompanied by loud cries, took possession of the masses of people, who stood round the scribes in the palace court.

Many men and women were streaming together towards one spot, and even the most impassive of the Thebans present turned their attention to an incident so unusual in this place.

A detachment of constabulary made a way through the crushing and yelling mob, and another division of Lybian police led a prisoner towards a side gate of the court. Before they could reach it, a messenger came up with them, from the Regent, who desired to be informed as to what happened.

The head of the officers of public safety followed him, and with eager excitement informed Ani, who was waiting for him, that a tiny man, the dwarf of the Lady Katuti, had for several hours been going about in the court, and endeavoring to poison the minds of the citizens with seditious speeches.

Ani ordered that the misguided man should be thrown into the dungeon; but so soon as the chief officer had left him, he commanded his secretary to have the dwarf brought into his presence before sundown.

While he was giving this order an excitement of another kind seized the assembled multitude.

As the sea parted and stood on the right hand and on the left of the Hebrews, so that no wave wetted the foot of the pursued fugitives, so the crowd of people of their own free will, but as if in reverent submission to some high command, parted and formed a broad way, through which walked the high-priest of the House of Seti, as, full robed and accompanied by some of the "holy fathers," he now entered the court.

The Regent went to meet him, bowed before him, and then withdrew to the back of the hall with him alone. "It is nevertheless incredible," said Ameni, "that our serfs are to follow the militia!"

"Rameses requires soldiers—to conquer," replied the Regent.

"And we bread—to live," exclaimed the priest.

"Nevertheless I am commanded, at once, before the seed-time, to levy the temple-serfs. I regret the order, but the king is the will, and I am only the hand."

"The hand, which he makes use of to sequester ancient rights, and to open a way to the desert over the fruitful land."

["With good management," said the first Napoleon, "the Nile encroaches upon the desert, with bad management the desert encroaches upon the Nile."]

"Your acres will not long remain unprovided for. Rameses will win new victories with the increased army, and the help of the Gods."

"The Gods! whom he insults!"

"After the conclusion of peace he will reconcile the Gods by doubly rich gifts. He hopes confidently for an early end to the war, and writes to me that after the next battle he wins he intends to offer terms to the Cheta. A plan of the king's is also spoken of—to marry again, and, indeed, the daughter of the Cheta King Chetasar."

Up to this moment the Regent had kept his eyes cast down. Now he raised them, smiling, as if he would fain enjoy Ameni's satisfaction, and asked:

"What dost thou say to this project?"

"I say," returned Ameni, and his voice, usually so stern, took a tone of amusement, "I say that Rameses seems to think that the blood of thy cousin and of his mother, which gives him his right to the throne, is incapable of pollution."

"It is the blood of the Sun-god!"

"Which runs but half pure in his veins, but wholly pure in thine."

The Regent made a deprecatory gesture, and said softly, with a smile which resembled that of a dead man:

"We are not alone."

"No one is here," said Ameni, "who can hear us; and what I say is known to every child."

"But if it came to the king's ears—" whispered Ani, "he—"

"He would perceive how unwise it is to derogate from the ancient rights of those on whom it is incumbent to prove the purity of blood of the sovereign of this land. However, Rameses sits on the throne; may life bloom for him, with health and strength!"—[A formula which even in private letters constantly follows the name of the Pharaoh.]

The Regent bowed, and then asked:

"Do you propose to obey the demand of the Pharaoh without delay?"

"He is the king. Our council, which will meet in a few days, can only determine how, and not whether we shall fulfil his command."

"You will retard the departure of the serfs, and Rameses requires them at once. The bloody labor of the war demands new tools."

"And the peace will perhaps demand a new master, who understands how to employ the sons of the land to its greatest advantage—a genuine son of Ra."

The Regent stood opposite the high-priest, motionless as an image cast in bronze, and remained silent; but Ameni lowered his staff before him as before a god, and then went into the fore part of the hall.

When Ani followed him, a soft smile played as usual upon his countenance, and full of dignity he took his seat on the throne.

"Art thou at an end of thy communications?" he asked the high-priest.

"It remains for me to inform you all," replied Ameni with a louder voice, to be heard by all the assembled dignitaries, "that the princess Bent-Anat yesterday morning committed a heavy sin, and that in all the temples in the land the Gods shall be entreated with offerings to take her uncleanness from her."

Again a shadow passed over the smile on the Regent's countenance. He looked meditatively on the ground, and then said:

"To-morrow I will visit the House of Seti; till then I beg that this affair may be left to rest."

Ameni bowed, and the Regent left the hall to withdraw to a wing of the king's palace, in which he dwelt.

On his writing-table lay sealed papers. He knew that they contained important news for him; but he loved to do violence to his curiosity, to test his resolution, and like an epicure to reserve the best dish till the last.

He now glanced first at some unimportant letters. A dumb negro, who squatted at his feet, burned the papyrus rolls which his master gave him in a brazier. A secretary made notes of the short facts which Ani called out to him, and the ground work was laid of the answers to the different letters.

At a sign from his master this functionary quitted the room, and Ani then slowly opened a letter from the king, whose address: "To my brother Ani," showed that it contained, not public, but private information.

On these lines, as he well knew, hung his future life, and the road it should follow.

With a smile, that was meant to conceal even from himself his deep inward agitation, he broke the wax which sealed the short manuscript in the royal hand.

"What relates to Egypt, and my concern for my country, and the happy issue of the war," wrote the Pharaoh, "I have written to you by the hand of my secretary; but these words are for the brother, who desires to be my son, and I write to him myself. The lordly essence of the Divinity which dwells in me, readily brings a quick 'Yes' or 'No' to my lips, and it decides for the best. Now you demand my daughter Bent-Anat to wife, and I should not be Rameses if I did not freely confess that before I had read the last words of your letter, a vehement 'No' rushed to my lips. I caused the stars to be consulted, and the entrails of the victims to be examined, and they were adverse to your request; and yet I could not refuse you, for you are dear to me, and your blood is royal as my own. Even more royal, an old friend said, and warned me against your ambition and your exaltation. Then my heart changed, for I were not Seti's son if I allow myself to injure a friend through idle apprehensions; and he who stands so high that men fear that he may try to rise above Rameses, seems to me to be worthy of Bent-Anat. Woo her, and, should she consent freely, the marriage may be celebrated on the day when I return home. You are young enough to make a wife happy, and your mature wisdom will guard my child from misfortune. Bent-Anat shall know that her father, and king, encourages your suit; but pray too to the Hathors, that they may influence Bent-Anat's heart in your favor, for to her decision we must both submit."

The Regent had changed color several times while reading this letter. Now he laid it on the table with a shrug of his shoulders, stood up, clasped his hand behind him, and, with his eyes cast meditatively on the floor, leaned against one of the pillars which supported the beams of the roof.

The longer he thought, the less amiable his expression became. “A pill sweetened with honey,

[Two recipes for pills are found in the papyri, one with honey for women, and one without for men.]

such as they give to women,” he muttered to himself. Then he went back to the table, read the king’s letter through once more, and said: “One may learn from it how to deny by granting, and at the same time not to forget to give it a brilliant show of magnanimity. Rameses knows his daughter. She is a girl like any other, and will take good care not to choose a man twice as old as herself, and who might be her father. Rameses will ‘submit’—I am to I submit!’ And to what? to the judgment and the choice of a wilful child!”

With these words he threw the letter so vehemently on to the table, that it slipped off on to the floor.

The mute slave picked it up, and laid it carefully on the table again, while his master threw a ball into a silver bason.

Several attendants rushed into the room, and Ani ordered them to bring to him the captive dwarf of the Lady Katuti. His soul rose in indignation against the king, who in his remote camp-tent could fancy he had made him happy by a proof of his highest favor. When we are plotting against a man we are inclined to regard him as an enemy, and if he offers us a rose we believe it to be for the sake, not of the perfume, but of the thorns.

The dwarf Nemu was brought before the Regent and threw himself on the ground at his feet.

Ani ordered the attendants to leave him, and said to the little man

“You compelled me to put you in prison. Stand up!” The dwarf rose and said, “Be thanked—for my arrest too.”

The Regent looked at him in astonishment; but Nemu went on half humbly, half in fun, “I feared for my life, but thou hast not only not shortened it, but hast prolonged it; for in the solitude of the dungeon time seemed long, and the minutes grown to hours.”

“Keep your wit for the ladies,” replied the Regent. “Did I not know that you meant well, and acted in accordance with the Lady Katuti’s fancy, I would send you to the quarries.”

“My hands,” mumbled the dwarf, “could only break stones for a game of draughts; but my tongue is like the water, which makes one peasant rich, and carries away the fields of another.”

“We shall know how to dam it up.”

“For my lady and for thee it will always flow the right way,” said the dwarf. “I showed the complaining citizens who it is that slaughters their flesh and blood, and from whom to look for peace and content. I poured caustic into their wounds, and praised the physician.”

“But unasked and recklessly,” interrupted Ani; “otherwise you have shown yourself capable, and I am willing to spare you for a future time. But overbusy friends are more damaging than intelligent enemies. When I need your services I will call for you. Till then avoid speech. Now go to your mistress, and carry to Katuti this letter which has arrived for her.”

“Hail to Ani, the son of the Sun!” cried the dwarf kissing the Regent’s foot. “Have I no letter to carry to my mistress Nefert?”

“Greet her from me,” replied the Regent. “Tell Katuti I will visit her after the next meal. The king’s charioteer has not written, yet I hear that he is well. Go now, and be silent and discreet.”

The dwarf quitted the room, and Ani went into an airy hall, in which his luxurious meal was laid out, consisting of many dishes prepared with special care. His appetite was gone, but he tasted of every dish, and gave the steward, who attended on him, his opinion of each.

Meanwhile he thought of the king's letter, of Bent-Anat, and whether it would be advisable to expose himself to a rejection on her part.

After the meal he gave himself up to his body-servant, who carefully shaved, painted, dressed, and decorated him, and then held the mirror before him.

He considered the reflection with anxious observation, and when he seated himself in his litter to be borne to the house of his friend Katuti, he said to himself that he still might claim to be called a handsome man.

If he paid his court to Bent-Anat—if she listened to his suit—what then?

He would refer it to Katuti, who always knew how to say a decisive word when he, entangled in a hundred pros and cons, feared to venture on a final step.

By her advice he had sought to wed the princess, as a fresh mark of honor—as an addition to his revenues—as a pledge for his personal safety. His heart had never been more or less attached to her than to any other beautiful woman in Egypt. Now her proud and noble personality stood before his inward eye, and he felt as if he must look up to it as to a vision high out of his reach. It vexed him that he had followed Katuti's advice, and he began to wish his suit had been repulsed. Marriage with Bent-Anat seemed to him beset with difficulties. His mood was that of a man who craves some brilliant position, though he knows that its requirements are beyond his powers—that of an ambitious soul to whom kingly honors are offered on condition that he will never remove a heavy crown from his head. If indeed another plan should succeed, if—and his eyes flashed eagerly—if fate set him on the seat of Rameses, then the alliance with Bent-Anat would lose its terrors; there would he be her absolute King and Lord and Master, and no one could require him to account for what he might be to her, or vouchsafe to her.

CHAPTER X

During the events we have described the house of the charioteer Mena had not remained free from visitors.

It resembled the neighboring estate of Paaker, though the buildings were less new, the gay paint on the pillars and walls was faded, and the large garden lacked careful attention. In the vicinity of the house only, a few well-kept beds blazed with splendid flowers, and the open colonnade, which was occupied by Katuti and her daughter, was furnished with royal magnificence.

The elegantly carved seats were made of ivory, the tables of ebony, and they, as well as the couches, had gilt feet. The artistically worked Syrian drinking vessels on the sideboard, tables, and consoles were of many forms; beautiful vases full of flowers stood everywhere; rare perfumes rose from alabaster cups, and the foot sank in the thick pile of the carpets which covered the floor.

And over the apparently careless arrangement of these various objects there reigned a peculiar charm, an indescribably fascinating something.

Stretched at full-length on a couch, and playing with a silky-haired white cat, lay the fair Nefert —fanned to coolness by a negro-girl—while her mother Katuti nodded a last farewell to her sister Setchem and to Paaker.

Both had crossed this threshold for the first time for four years, that is since the marriage of Mena with Nefert, and the old enmity seemed now to have given way to heartfelt reconciliation and mutual understanding.

After the pioneer and his mother had disappeared behind the pomegranate shrubs at the entrance of the garden, Katuti turned to her daughter and said:

“Who would have thought it yesterday? I believe Paaker loves you still.”

Nefert colored, and exclaimed softly, while she hit the kitten gently with her fan—

“Mother!”

Katuti smiled.

She was a tall woman of noble demeanor, whose sharp but delicately-cut features and sparkling eyes could still assert some pretensions to feminine beauty. She wore a long robe, which reached below her ankles; it was of costly material, but dark in color, and of a studied simplicity. Instead of the ornaments in bracelets, anklets, ear and finger-rings, in necklaces and clasps, which most of the Egyptian ladies—and indeed her own sister and daughter—were accustomed to wear, she had only fresh flowers, which were never wanting in the garden of her son-in-law. Only a plain gold diadem, the badge of her royal descent, always rested, from early morning till late at night, on her high brow —for a woman too high, though nobly formed—and confined the long blue-black hair, which fell unbraided down her back, as if its owner contemned the vain labor of arranging it artistically. But nothing in her exterior was unpremeditated, and the unbejewelled wearer of the diadem, in her plain dress, and with her royal figure, was everywhere sure of being observed, and of finding imitators of her dress, and indeed of her demeanor.

And yet Katuti had long lived in need; aye at the very hour when we first make her acquaintance, she had little of her own, but lived on the estate of her son-in-law as his guest, and as the administrator of his possessions; and before the marriage of her daughter she had lived with her children in a house belonging to her sister Setchem.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.