

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 03 eBook

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 03 by Georg Ebers

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Contents

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 03 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	13
Page 6.....	15
Page 7.....	17
Page 8.....	19
Page 9.....	21
Page 10.....	23
Page 11.....	25
Page 12.....	27
Page 13.....	29
Page 14.....	31
Page 15.....	33
Page 16.....	35
Page 17.....	37
Page 18.....	39
Page 19.....	41
Page 20.....	43
Page 21.....	45
Page 22.....	47



Page 23..... 49
Page 24..... 51
Page 25..... 53
Page 26..... 55
Page 27..... 57
Page 28..... 59
Page 29..... 61
Page 30..... 63
Page 31..... 65
Page 32..... 67
Page 33..... 69
Page 34..... 71
Page 35..... 73
Page 36..... 75
Page 37..... 77
Page 38..... 79
Page 39..... 81
Page 40..... 83
Page 41..... 85
Page 42..... 86
Page 43..... 88



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER IX.		1
CHAPTER V.		9
CHAPTER XI.		15
CHAPTER XII.		20
CHAPTER XIII.		26
CHAPTER XIV.		31
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		38
Information about Project Gutenberg		39
(one page)		
(Three Pages)		40



Page 1

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.

Page 2

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.

Page 3

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.



Page 4

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.

Page 5

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.]



Page 6

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.



Page 7

“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.

Page 8

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.

Page 9

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 V.

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—



Page 10

“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.

She had been the wife of her own brother,

[Marriages between brothers and sisters were allowed in ancient Egypt. The Ptolemaic princes adopted this, which was contrary to the Macedonian customs. When Ptolemy II. Philadelphus married his sister Arsinoe, it seems to have been thought necessary to excuse it by the relative positions of Venus and Saturn at that period, and the constraining influences of these planets.]

who had died young, and who had squandered the greatest part of the possessions which had been left to him by the new royal family, in an extravagant love of display.

When she became a widow, she was received as a sister with her children by her brother-in-law, Paaker’s father. She lived in a house of her own, enjoyed the income of an estate assigned to her by the old Mohar, and left to her son-in-law the care of educating her son, a handsome and overbearing lad, with all the claims and pretensions of a youth of distinction.

Such great benefits would have oppressed and disgraced the proud Katuti, if she had been content with them and in every way agreed with the giver. But this was by no means the case; rather, she believed that she might pretend to a more brilliant outward position, felt herself hurt when her heedless son, while he attended school, was warned

to work more seriously, as he would by and by have to rely on his own skill and his own strength. And it had wounded her when occasionally her brother-in-law had suggested economy, and had reminded her, in his straightforward way, of her narrow means, and the uncertain future of her children.



Page 11

At this she was deeply offended, for she ventured to say that her relatives could never, with all their gifts, compensate for the insults they heaped upon her; and thus taught them by experience that we quarrel with no one more readily than with the benefactor whom we can never repay for all the good he bestows on us.

Nevertheless, when her brother-in-law asked the hand of her daughter for his son, she willingly gave her consent.

Nefert and Paaker had grown up together, and by this union she foresaw that she could secure her own future and that of her children.

Shortly after the death of the Mohar, the charioteer Mena had proposed for Nefert's hand, but would have been refused if the king himself had not supported the suit of his favorite officer. After the wedding, she retired with Nefert to Mena's house, and undertook, while he was at the war, to manage his great estates, which however had been greatly burthened with debt by his father.

Fate put the means into her hands of indemnifying herself and her children for many past privations, and she availed herself of them to gratify her innate desire to be esteemed and admired; to obtain admission for her son, splendidly equipped, into a company of chariot-warriors of the highest class; and to surround her daughter with princely magnificence.

When the Regent, who had been a friend of her late husband, removed into the palace of the Pharaohs, he made her advances, and the clever and decided woman knew how to make herself at first agreeable, and finally indispensable, to the vacillating man.

She availed herself of the circumstance that she, as well as he, was descended from the old royal house to pique his ambition, and to open to him a view, which even to think of, he would have considered forbidden as a crime, before he became intimate with her.

Ani's suit for the hand of the princess Bent-Anat was Katuti's work. She hoped that the Pharaoh would refuse, and personally offend the Regent, and so make him more inclined to tread the dangerous road which she was endeavoring to smooth for him. The dwarf Nemu was her pliant tool.

She had not initiated him into her projects by any words; he however gave utterance to every impulse of her mind in free language, which was punished only with blows from a fan, and, only the day before, had been so audacious as to say that if the Pharaoh were called Ani instead of Rameses, Katuti would be not a queen but a goddess for she would then have not to obey, but rather to guide, the Pharaoh, who indeed himself was related to the Immortals.



Katuti did not observe her daughter's blush, for she was looking anxiously out at the garden gate, and said:

"Where can Nemu be! There must be some news arrived for us from the army."

"Mena has not written for so long," Nefert said softly. "Ah! here is the steward!"

Katuti turned to the officer, who had entered the veranda through a side door:



Page 12

“What do you bring,” she asked.

“The dealer Abscha,” was the answer, “presses for payment. The new Syrian chariot and the purple cloth—”

“Sell some corn,” ordered Katuti.

“Impossible, for the tribute to the temples is not yet paid, and already so much has been delivered to the dealers that scarcely enough remains over for the maintenance of the household and for sowing.”

“Then pay with beasts.”

“But, madam,” said the steward sorrowfully, “only yesterday, we again sold a herd to the Mohar; and the water-wheels must be turned, and the corn must be thrashed, and we need beasts for sacrifice, and milk, butter, and cheese, for the use of the house, and dung for firing.”

[In Egypt, where there is so little wood, to this day the dried dung of beasts is the commonest kind of fuel.]

Katuti looked thoughtfully at the ground.

“It must be,” she said presently. “Ride to Hermonthis, and say to the keeper of the stud that he must have ten of Mena’s golden bays driven over here.”

“I have already spoken to him,” said the steward, “but he maintains that Mena strictly forbade him to part with even one of the horses, for he is proud of the stock. Only for the chariot of the lady Nefert ”

“I require obedience,” said Katuti decidedly and cutting short the steward’s words, “and I expect the horses to-morrow.”

“But the stud-master is a daring man, whom Mena looks upon as indispensable, and he —”

“I command here, and not the absent,” cried Katuti enraged, “and I require the horses in spite of the former orders of my son-in-law.”

Nefert, during this conversation, pulled herself up from her indolent attitude. On hearing the last words she rose from her couch, and said, with a decision which surprised even her mother—

“The orders of my husband must be obeyed. The horses that Mena loves shall stay in their stalls. Take this armlet that the king gave me; it is worth more than twenty horses.”



The steward examined the trinket, richly set with precious stones, and looked enquiringly at Katuti. She shrugged her shoulders, nodded consent, and said—

“Abscha shall hold it as a pledge till Mena’s booty arrives. For a year your husband has sent nothing of importance.”

When the steward was gone, Nefert stretched herself again on her couch and said wearily:

“I thought we were rich.”

“We might be,” said Katuti bitterly; but as she perceived that Nefert’s cheeks again were glowing, she said amiably, “Our high rank imposes great duties on us. Princely blood flows in our veins, and the eyes of the people are turned on the wife of the most brilliant hero in the king’s army. They shall not say that she is neglected by her husband. How long Mena remains away!”

“I hear a noise in the court,” said Nefert. “The Regent is coming.”



Page 13

Katuti turned again towards the garden.

A breathless slave rushed in, and announced that Bent-Anat, the daughter of the king, had dismounted at the gate, and was approaching the garden with the prince Rameri.

Nefert left her couch, and went with her mother to meet the exalted visitors.

As the mother and daughter bowed to kiss the robe of the princess, Bent-Anat signed them back from her. "Keep farther from me," she said; "the priests have not yet entirely absolved me from my uncleanness."

"And in spite of them thou art clean in the sight of Ra!" exclaimed the boy who accompanied her, her brother of seventeen, who was brought up at the House of Seti, which however he was to leave in a few weeks—and he kissed her.

"I shall complain to Ameni of this wild boy," said Bent-Anat smiling. "He would positively accompany me. Your husband, Nefert, is his model, and I had no peace in the house, for we came to bring you good news."

"From Mena?" asked the young wife, pressing her hand to her heart.

"As you say," returned Bent-Anat. "My father praises his ability, and writes that he, before all others, will have his choice at the dividing of the spoil."

Nefert threw a triumphant glance at her mother, and Katuti drew a deep breath.

Bent-Anat stroked Nefert's cheeks like those of a child. Then she turned to Katuti, led her into the garden, and begged her to aid her, who had so early lost her mother, with her advice in a weighty matter.

"My father," she continued, after a few introductory words, "informs me that the Regent Ani desires me for his wife, and advises me to reward the fidelity of the worthy man with my hand. He advises it, you understand—he does not command."

"And thou?" asked Katuti.

"And I," replied Bent-Anat decidedly, "must refuse him."

"Thou must!"

Bent-Anat made a sign of assent and went on:

"It is quite clear to me. I can do nothing else."



“Then thou dost not need my counsel, since even thy father, I well know, will not be able to alter thy decision.”

“Not God even,” said Anat firmly. “But you are Ani’s friend, and as I esteem him, I would save him from this humiliation. Endeavor to persuade him to give up his suit. I will meet him as though I knew nothing of his letter to my father.”

Katuti looked down reflectively. Then she said—“The Regent certainly likes very well to pass his hours of leisure with me gossiping or playing draughts, but I do not know that I should dare to speak to him of so grave a matter.”

“Marriage-projects are women’s affairs,” said Bent-Anat, smiling.

“But the marriage of a princess is a state event,” replied the widow. “In this case it is true the uncle

[Among the Orientals—and even the Spaniards—it was and is common to give the name of uncle to a parent’s cousin.]



Page 14

only courts his niece, who is dear to him, and who he hopes will make the second half of his life the brightest. Ani is kind and without severity. Thou would'st win in him a husband, who would wait on thy looks, and bow willingly to thy strong will."

Bent-Anat's eyes flashed, and she hastily exclaimed: "That is exactly what forces the decisive irrevocable 'No' to my lips. Do you think that because I am as proud as my mother, and resolute like my father, that I wish for a husband whom I could govern and lead as I would? How little you know me! I will be obeyed by my dogs, my servants, my officers, if the Gods so will it, by my children. Abject beings, who will kiss my feet, I meet on every road, and can buy by the hundred, if I wish it, in the slave market. I may be courted twenty times, and reject twenty suitors, but not because I fear that they might bend my pride and my will; on the contrary, because I feel them increased. The man to whom I could wish to offer my hand must be of a loftier stamp, must be greater, firmer, and better than I, and I will flutter after the mighty wing-strokes of his spirit, and smile at my own weakness, and glory in admiring his superiority."

Katuti listened to the maiden with the smile by which the experienced love to signify their superiority over the visionary.

"Ancient times may have produced such men," she said. "But if in these days thou thinkest to find one, thou wilt wear the lock of youth,

[The lock of youth was a curl of hair which all the younger members of princely families wore at the side of the head. The young Horus is represented with it.]

till thou art grey. Our thinkers are no heroes, and our heroes are no sages. Here come thy brother and Nefert."

"Will you persuade Ani to give up his suit!" said the princess urgently.

"I will endeavor to do so, for thy sake," replied Katuti. Then, turning half to the young Rameri and half to his sister, she said:

"The chief of the House of Seti, Ameni, was in his youth such a man as thou paintest, Bent-Anat. Tell us, thou son of Rameses, that art growing up under the young sycamores, which shall some day over-shadow the land-whom dost thou esteem the highest among thy companions? Is there one among them, who is conspicuous above them all for a lofty spirit and strength of intellect?"

The young Rameri looked gaily at the speaker, and said laughing: "We are all much alike, and do more or less willingly what we are compelled, and by preference every thing that we ought not."



“A mighty soul—a youth, who promises to be a second Snefru, a Thotmes, or even an Amem? Dost thou know none such in the House of Seti?” asked the widow. “Oh yes!” cried Rameri with eager certainty.

“And he is—?” asked Katuti.

“Pentaur, the poet,” exclaimed the youth. Bent-Anat’s face glowed with scarlet color, while her, brother went on to explain.



Page 15

“He is noble and of a lofty soul, and all the Gods dwell in him when he speaks. Formerly we used to go to sleep in the lecture-hall; but his words carry us away, and if we do not take in the full meaning of his thoughts, yet we feel that they are genuine and noble.”

Bent-Anat breathed quicker at these words, and her eyes hung on the boy’s lips.

“You know him, Bent-Anat,” continued Rameri. “He was with you at the paraschites’ house, and in the temple-court when Ameni pronounced you unclean. He is as tall and handsome as the God Mentli, and I feel that he is one of those whom we can never forget when once we have seen them. Yesterday, after you had left the temple, he spoke as he never spoke before; he poured fire into our souls. Do not laugh, Katuti, I feel it burning still. This morning we were informed that he had been sent from the temple, who knows where—and had left us a message of farewell. It was not thought at all necessary to communicate the reason to us; but we know more than the masters think. He did not reprove you strongly enough, Bent-Anat, and therefore he is driven out of the House of Seti. We have agreed to combine to ask for him to be recalled; Anana is drawing up a letter to the chief priest, which we shall all subscribe. It would turn out badly for one alone, but they cannot be at all of us at once. Very likely they will have the sense to recall him. If not, we shall all complain to our fathers, and they are not the meanest in the land.”

“It is a complete rebellion,” cried Katuti. “Take care, you lordlings; Ameni and the other prophets are not to be trifled with.”

“Nor we either,” said Rameri laughing, “If Pentaur is kept in banishment, I shall appeal to my father to place me at the school at Heliopolis or Chennu, and the others will follow me. Come, Bent-Anat, I must be back in the trap before sunset. Excuse me, Katuti, so we call the school. Here comes your little Nemu.”

The brother and sister left the garden.

As soon as the ladies, who accompanied them, had turned their backs, Bent-Anat grasped her brother’s hand with unaccustomed warmth, and said:

“Avoid all imprudence; but your demand is just, and I will help you with all my heart.”

CHAPTER XI.

As soon as Bent-Anat had quitted Mena’s domain, the dwarf Nemu entered the garden with a letter, and briefly related his adventures; but in such a comical fashion that both the ladies laughed, and Katuti, with a lively gaiety, which was usually foreign to her, while she warned him, at the same time praised his acuteness. She looked at the seal of the letter and said:

“This is a lucky day; it has brought us great things, and the promise of greater things in the future.” Nefert came close up to her and said imploringly: “Open the letter, and see if there is nothing in it from him.”



Page 16

Katuti unfastened the wax, looked through the letter with a hasty glance, stroked the cheek of her child, and said:

“Perhaps your brother has written for him; I see no line in his handwriting.”

Nefert on her side glanced at the letter, but not to read it, only to seek some trace of the well-known handwriting of her husband.

Like all the Egyptian women of good family she could read, and during the first two years of her married life she had often—very often—had the opportunity of puzzling, and yet rejoicing, over the feeble signs which the iron hand of the charioteer had scrawled on the papyrus for her whose slender fingers could guide the reed pen with firmness and decision.

She examined the letter, and at last said, with tears in her eyes:

“Nothing! I will go to my room, mother.”

Katuti kissed her and said, “Hear first what your brother writes.”

But Nefert shook her head, turned away in silence, and disappeared into the house.

Katuti was not very friendly to her son-in-law, but her heart clung to her handsome, reckless son, the very image of her lost husband, the favorite of women, and the gayest youth among the young nobles who composed the chariot-guard of the king.

How fully he had written to-day—he who wielded the reed-pen so laboriously.

This really was a letter; while, usually, he only asked in the fewest words for fresh funds for the gratification of his extravagant tastes.

This time she might look for thanks, for not long since he must have received a considerable supply, which she had abstracted from the income of the possessions entrusted to her by her son-in-law.

She began to read.

The cheerfulness, with which she had met the dwarf, was insincere, and had resembled the brilliant colors of the rainbow, which gleam over the stagnant waters of a bog. A stone falls into the pool, the colors vanish, dim mists rise up, and it becomes foul and clouded.

The news which her son’s letter contained fell, indeed, like a block of stone on Katuti’s soul.



Our deepest sorrows always flow from the same source as might have filled us with joy, and those wounds burn the fiercest which are inflicted by a hand we love.

The farther Katuti went in the lamentably incorrect epistle—which she could only decipher with difficulty—which her darling had written to her, the paler grew her face, which she several times covered with her trembling hands, from which the letter dropped.

Nemu squatted on the earth near her, and followed all her movements.

When she sprang forward with a heart-piercing scream, and pressed her forehead to a rough palmtrunk, he crept up to her, kissed her feet, and exclaimed with a depth of feeling that overcame even Katuti, who was accustomed to hear only gay or bitter speeches from the lips of her jester—



Page 17

“Mistress! lady! what has happened?”

Katuti collected herself, turned to him, and tried to speak; but her pale lips remained closed, and her eyes gazed dimly into vacancy as though a catalepsy had seized her.

“Mistress! Mistress!” cried the dwarf again, with growing agitation. “What is the matter? shall I call thy daughter?”

Katuti made a sign with her hand, and cried feebly: “The wretches! the reprobates!”

Her breath began to come quickly, the blood mounted to her cheeks and her flashing eyes; she trod upon the letter, and wept so loud and passionately, that the dwarf, who had never before seen tears in her eyes, raised himself timidly, and said in mild reproach: “Katuti!”

She laughed bitterly, and said with a trembling voice:

“Why do you call my name so loud! it is disgraced and degraded. How the nobles and the ladies will rejoice! Now envy can point at us with spiteful joy—and a minute ago I was praising this day! They say one should exhibit one’s happiness in the streets, and conceal one’s misery; on the contrary, on the contrary! Even the Gods should not know of one’s hopes and joys, for they too are envious and spiteful!”

Again she leaned her head against the palm-tree. “Thou speakest of shame, and not of death,” said Nemu, “and I learned from thee that one should give nothing up for lost excepting the dead.”

These words had a powerful effect on the agitated woman. Quickly and vehemently she turned upon the dwarf saying.

“You are clever, and faithful too, so listen! but if you were Amon himself there is nothing to be done—”

“We must try,” said Nemu, and his sharp eyes met those of his mistress.

“Speak,” he said, “and trust me. Perhaps I can be of no use; but that I can be silent thou knowest.”

“Before long the children in the streets will talk of what this tells me,” said Katuti, laughing with bitterness, “only Nefert must know nothing of what has happened—nothing, mind; what is that? the Regent coming! quick, fly; tell him I am suddenly taken ill, very ill; I cannot see him, not now! No one is to be admitted—no one, do you hear?”

The dwarf went.



When he came back after he had fulfilled his errand, he found his mistress still in a fever of excitement.

“Listen,” she said; “first the smaller matter, then the frightful, the unspeakable. Rameses loads Mena with marks of his favor. It came to a division of the spoils of war for the year; a great heap of treasure lay ready for each of his followers, and the charioteer had to choose before all the others.”

“Well?” said the dwarf.

“Well!” echoed Katuti. “Well! how did the worthy householder care for his belongings at home, how did he seek to relieve his indebted estate? It is disgraceful, hideous! He passed by the silver, the gold, the jewels, with a laugh; and took the captive daughter of the Danaid princes, and led her into his tent.”



Page 18

“Shameful!” muttered the dwarf.

“Poor, poor Nefert!” cried Katuti, covering her face with her hands.

“And what more?” asked Nemu hastily.

“That,” said Katuti, “that is—but I will keep calm—quite calm and quiet. You know my son. He is heedless, but he loves me and his sister more than anything in the world. I, fool as I was, to persuade him to economy, had vividly described our evil plight, and after that disgraceful conduct of Mena he thought of us and of our anxieties. His share of the booty was small, and could not help us. His comrades threw dice for the shares they had obtained—he staked his to win more for us. He lost—all—all—and at last against an enormous sum, still thinking of us, and only of us, he staked the mummy of his dead father.

[It was a king of the fourth dynasty, named Asychis by Herodotus, who it is admitted was the first to pledge the mummies of his ancestors. “He who stakes this pledge and fails to redeem the debt shall, after his death, rest neither in his father’s tomb nor in any other, and sepulture shall be denied to his descendants.” Herod. 11. 136.]

He lost. If he does not redeem the pledge before the expiration of the third month, he will fall into infamy, the mummy will belong to the winner, and disgrace and ignominy will be my lot and his.”

Katuti pressed her hands on her face, the dwarf muttered to himself, “The gambler and hypocrite!” When his mistress had grown calmer, he said:

“It is horrible, yet all is not lost. How much is the debt?”

It sounded like a heavy curse, when Katuti replied, “Thirty Babylonian talents.”—[L7000 sterling in 1881.]

The dwarf cried out, as if an asp had stung him. “Who dared to bid against such a mad stake?”

“The Lady Hathor’s son, Antef,” answered Katuti, “who has already gambled away the inheritance of his fathers, in Thebes.”

“He will not remit one grain of wheat of his claim,” cried the dwarf. “And Mena?”

“How could my son turn to him after what had happened? The poor child implores me to ask the assistance of the Regent.”

“Of the Regent?” said the dwarf, shaking his big head. “Impossible!”



“I know, as matters now stand; but his place, his name.”

“Mistress,” said the dwarf, and deep purpose rang in the words, “do not spoil the future for the sake of the present. If thy son loses his honor under King Rameses, the future King, Ani, may restore it to him. If the Regent now renders you all an important service, he will regard you as amply paid when our efforts have succeeded, and he sits on the throne. He lets himself be led by thee now because thou hast no need of his help, and dost seem to work only for his sake, and for his elevation. As soon as thou hast appealed to him, and he has assisted thee, all thy confidence and freedom will be gone, and the more difficult he finds it to raise so large a sum of money at once, the angrier he will be to think that thou art making use of him. Thou knowest his circumstances.”



Page 19

“He is in debt,” said Katuti. “I know that.”

“Thou should’st know it,” cried the dwarf, “for thou thyself hast forced him to enormous expenses. He has won the people of Thebes with dazzling festive displays; as guardian of Apis

[When Apis (the sacred bull) died under Ptolemy I. Soter, his keepers spent not only the money which they had received for his maintenance, in his obsequies but borrowed 50 talents of silver from the king. In the time of Diodorus 100 talents were spent for the same purpose.]

he gave a large donation to Memphis; he bestowed thousands on the leaders of the troops sent into Ethiopia, which were equipped by him; what his spies cost him at, the camp of the king, thou knowest. He has borrowed sums of money from most of the rich men in the country, and that is well, for so many creditors are so many allies. The Regent is a bad debtor; but the king Ani, they reckon, will be a grateful payer.”

Katuti looked at the dwarf in astonishment. “You know men!” she said.

“To my sorrow!” replied Nemu. “Do not apply to the Regent, and before thou dost sacrifice the labor of years, and thy future greatness, and that of those near to thee, sacrifice thy son’s honor.”

“And my husband’s, and my own?” exclaimed Katuti. “How can you know what that is! Honor is a word that the slave may utter, but whose meaning he can never comprehend; you rub the weals that are raised on you by blows; to me every finger pointed at me in scorn makes a wound like an ashwood lance with a poisoned tip of brass. Oh ye holy Gods! who can help us?”

The miserable woman pressed her hands over her eyes, as if to shut out the sight of her own disgrace. The dwarf looked at her compassionately, and said in a changed tone:

“Dost thou remember the diamond which fell out of Nefert’s handsomest ring? We hunted for it, and could not find it. Next day, as I was going through the room, I trod on something hard; I stooped down and found the stone. What the noble organ of sight, the eye, overlooked, the callous despised sole of the foot found; and perhaps the small slave, Nemu, who knows nothing of honor, may succeed in finding a mode of escape which is not revealed to the lofty soul of his mistress!”

“What are you thinking of?” asked Katuti.

“Escape,” answered the dwarf. “Is it true that thy sister Setchem has visited thee, and that you are reconciled?”

“She offered me her hand, and I took it?”



“Then go to her. Men are never more helpful than after a reconciliation. The enmity they have driven out, seems to leave as it were a freshly-healed wound which must be touched with caution; and Setchem is of thy own blood, and kind-hearted.”

“She is not rich,” replied Katuti. “Every palm in her garden comes from her husband, and belongs to her children.”

“Paaker, too, was with you?”



Page 20

“Certainly only by the entreaty of his mother—he hates my son-in-law.”

“I know it,” muttered the dwarf, “but if Nefert would ask him?”

The widow drew herself up indignantly. She felt that she had allowed the dwarf too much freedom, and ordered him to leave her alone.

Nemu kissed her robe and asked timidly:

“Shall I forget that thou hast trusted me, or am I permitted to consider further as to thy son’s safety?” Katuti stood for a moment undecided, then she said:

“You were clever enough to find what I carelessly dropped; perhaps some God may show you what I ought to do. Now leave me.”

“Wilt thou want me early to-morrow?”

“No.”

“Then I will go to the Necropolis, and offer a sacrifice.”

“Go!” said Katuti, and went towards the house with the fatal letter in her hand.

Nemu stayed behind alone; he looked thoughtfully at the ground, murmuring to himself.

“She must not lose her honor; not at present, or indeed all will be lost. What is this honor? We all come into the world without it, and most of us go to the grave without knowing it, and very good folks notwithstanding. Only a few who are rich and idle weave it in with the homely stuff of their souls, as the Kuschites do their hair with grease and oils, till it forms a cap of which, though it disfigures them, they are so proud that they would rather have their ears cut off than the monstrous thing. I see, I see—but before I open my mouth I will go to my mother. She knows more than twenty prophets.”

CHAPTER XII.

Before the sun had risen the next morning, Nemu got himself ferried over the Nile, with the small white ass which Mena’s deceased father had given him many years before. He availed himself of the cool hour which precedes the rising of the sun for his ride through the Necropolis.

Well acquainted as he was with every stock and stone, he avoided the high roads which led to the goal of his expedition, and trotted towards the hill which divides the valley of the royal tombs from the plain of the Nile.



Before him opened a noble amphitheatre of lofty lime-stone peaks, the background of the stately terrace-temple which the proud ancestress of two kings of the fallen family, the great Hatasu, had erected to their memory, and to the Goddess Hathor.

Nemu left the sanctuary to his left, and rode up the steep hill-path which was the nearest way from the plain to the valley of the tombs.

Below him lay a bird's eye view of the terrace-building of Hatasu, and before him, still slumbering in cool dawn, was the Necropolis with its houses and temples and colossal statues, the broad Nile glistening with white sails under the morning mist; and, in the distant east, rosy with the coming sun, stood Thebes and her gigantic temples.

But the dwarf saw nothing of the glorious panorama that lay at his feet; absorbed in thought, and stooping over the neck of his ass, he let the panting beast climb and rest at its pleasure.



Page 21

When he had reached half the height of the hill, he perceived the sound of footsteps coming nearer and nearer to him.

The vigorous walker had soon reached him, and bid him good morning, which he civilly returned.

The hill-path was narrow, and when Nemu observed that the man who followed him was a priest, he drew up his donkey on a level spot, and said reverently:

“Pass on, holy father; for thy two feet carry thee quicker than my four.”

“A sufferer needs my help,” replied the leech Nebsecht, Pentaur’s friend, whom we have already seen in the House of Seti, and by the bed of the paraschites’ daughter; and he hastened on so as to gain on the slow pace of the rider.

Then rose the glowing disk of the sun above the eastern horizon, and from the sanctuaries below the travellers rose up the pious many-voiced chant of praise.

Nemu slipped off his ass, and assumed an attitude of prayer; the priest did the same; but while the dwarf devoutly fixed his eyes on the new birth of the Sun-God from the eastern range, the priest’s eyes wandered to the earth, and his raised hand fell to pick up a rare fossil shell which lay on the path.

In a few minutes Nebsecht rose, and Nemu followed him.

“It is a fine morning,” said the dwarf; “the holy fathers down there seem more cheerful to-day than usual.”

The surgeon laughed assent. “Do you belong to the Necropolis?” he said. “Who here keeps dwarfs?”

“No one,” answered the little man. “But I will ask thee a question. Who that lives here behind the hill is of so much importance, that a leech from the House of Seti sacrifices his night’s rest for him?”

“The one I visit is mean, but the suffering is great,” answered Nebsecht.

Nemu looked at him with admiration, and muttered, “That is noble, that is ——” but he did not finish his speech; he struck his brow and exclaimed, “You are going, by the desire of the Princess Bent-Anat, to the child of the paraschites that was run over. I guessed as much. The food must have an excellent after-taste, if a gentleman rises so early to eat it. How is the poor child doing?”

There was so much warmth in these last words that Nebsecht, who had thought the dwarf’s reproach uncalled for, answered in a friendly tone:



“Not so badly; she may be saved.”

“The Gods be praised!” exclaimed Nemu, while the priest passed on.

Nebsecht went up and down the hillside at a redoubled pace, and had long taken his place by the couch of the wounded Uarda in the hovel of the paraschites, when Nemu drew near to the abode of his Mother Hekt, from whom Paaker had received the philter.

The old woman sat before the door of her cave. Near her lay a board, fitted with cross pieces, between which a little boy was stretched in such a way that they touched his head and his feet.

Hekt understood the art of making dwarfs; playthings in human form were well paid for, and the child on the rack, with his pretty little face, promised to be a valuable article.



Page 22

As soon as the sorceress saw some one approaching, she stooped over the child, took him up board and all in her arms, and carried him into the cave. Then she said sternly:

“If you move, little one, I will flog you. Now let me tie you.”

“Don’t tie me,” said the child, “I will be good and lie still.”

“Stretch yourself out,” ordered the old woman, and tied the child with a rope to the board. “If you are quiet, I’ll give you a honey-cake by-and-bye, and let you play with the young chickens.”

The child was quiet, and a soft smile of delight and hope sparkled in his pretty eyes. His little hand caught the dress of the old woman, and with the sweetest coaxing tone, which God bestows on the innocent voices of children, he said:

“I will be as still as a mouse, and no one shall know that I am here; but if you give me the honeycake you will untie me for a little, and let me go to Uarda.”

“She is ill!—what do you want there?”

“I would take her the cake,” said the child, and his eyes glistened with tears.

The old woman touched the child’s chin with her finger, and some mysterious power prompted her to bend over him to kiss him. But before her lips had touched his face she turned away, and said, in a hard tone:

“Lie still! by and bye we will see.” Then she stooped, and threw a brown sack over the child. She went back into the open air, greeted Nemu, entertained him with milk, bread and honey, gave him news of the girl who had been run over, for he seemed to take her misfortune very much to heart, and finally asked:

“What brings you here? The Nile was still narrow when you last found your way to me, and now it has been falling some time.

[This is the beginning of November. The Nile begins slowly to rise early in June; between the 15th and 20th of July it suddenly swells rapidly, and in the first half of October, not, as was formerly supposed, at the end of September, the inundation reaches its highest level. Heinrich Barth established these data beyond dispute. After the water has begun to sink it rises once more in October and to a higher level than before. Then it soon falls, at first slowly, but by degrees quicker and quicker.]

Are you sent by your mistress, or do you want my help? All the world is alike. No one goes to see any one else unless he wants to make use of him. What shall I give you?”

“I want nothing,” said the dwarf, “but—”



“You are commissioned by a third person,” said the witch, laughing. “It is the same thing. Whoever wants a thing for some one else only thinks of his own interest.”

“May be,” said Nemu. “At any rate your words show that you have not grown less wise since I saw you last—and I am glad of it, for I want your advice.”

“Advice is cheap. What is going on out there?” Nemu related to his mother shortly, clearly, and without reserve, what was plotting in his mistress’s house, and the frightful disgrace with which she was threatened through her son.



Page 23

The old woman shook her grey head thoughtfully several times: but she let the little man go on to the end of his story without interrupting him. Then she asked, and her eyes flashed as she spoke:

“And you really believe that you will succeed in putting the sparrow on the eagle’s perch—Ani on the throne of Rameses?”

“The troops fighting in Ethiopia are for us,” cried Nemu. “The priests declare themselves against the king, and recognize in Ani the genuine blood of Ra.”

“That is much,” said the old woman.

“And many dogs are the death of the gazelle,” said Nemu laughing.

“But Rameses is not a gazelle to run, but a lion,” said the old woman gravely. “You are playing a high game.”

“We know it,” answered Nemu. But it is for high stakes—there is much to win.”

“And all to lose,” muttered the old woman, passing her fingers round her scraggy neck. “Well, do as you please—it is all the same to me who it is sends the young to be killed, and drives the old folks’ cattle from the field. What do they want with me?”

“No one has sent me,” answered the dwarf. I come of my own free fancy to ask you what Katuti must do to save her son and her house from dishonor.”

“Hm!” hummed the witch, looking at Nemu while she raised herself on her stick. “What has come to you that you take the fate of these great people to heart as if it were your own?”

The dwarf reddened, and answered hesitatingly, “Katuti is a good mistress, and, if things go well with her, there may be windfalls for you and me.”

Hekt shook her head doubtfully.

“A loaf for you perhaps, and a crumb for me!” she said. “There is more than that in your mind, and I can read your heart as if you were a ripped up raven. You are one of those who can never keep their fingers at rest, and must knead everybody’s dough; must push, and drive and stir something. Every jacket is too tight for you. If you were three feet taller, and the son of a priest, you might have gone far. High you will go, and high you will end; as the friend of a king—or on the gallows.”

The old woman laughed; but Nemu bit his lips, and said:



“If you had sent me to school, and if I were not the son of a witch, and a dwarf, I would play with men as they have played with me; for I am cleverer than all of them, and none of their plans are hidden from me. A hundred roads lie before me, when they don’t know whether to go out or in; and where they rush heedlessly forwards I see the abyss that they are running to.”

“And nevertheless you come to me?” said the old woman sarcastically.

“I want your advice,” said Nemu seriously. “Four eyes see more than one, and the impartial looker-on sees clearer than the player; besides you are bound to help me.”

The old woman laughed loud in astonishment. “Bound!” she said, “I? and to what if you please?”

Page 24

“To help me,” replied the dwarf, half in entreaty, and half in reproach. “You deprived me of my growth, and reduced me to a cripple.”

“Because no one is better off than you dwarfs,” interrupted the witch.

Nemu shook his head, and answered sadly—

“You have often said so—and perhaps for many others, who are born in misery like me—perhaps-you are right; but for me—you have spoilt my life; you have crippled not my body only but my soul, and have condemned me to sufferings that are nameless and unutterable.”

The dwarf’s big head sank on his breast, and with his left hand he pressed his heart.

The old woman went up to him kindly.

“What ails you?” she asked, “I thought it was well with you in Mena’s house.”

“You thought so?” cried the dwarf. “You who show me as in a mirror what I am, and how mysterious powers throng and stir in me? You made me what I am by your arts; you sold me to the treasurer of Rameses, and he gave me to the father of Mena, his brother-in-law. Fifteen years ago! I was a young man then, a youth like any other, only more passionate, more restless, and fiery than they. I was given as a plaything to the young Mena, and he harnessed me to his little chariot, and dressed me out with ribbons and feathers, and flogged me when I did not go fast enough. How the girl—for whom I would have given my life—the porter’s daughter, laughed when I, dressed up in motley, hopped panting in front of the chariot and the young lord’s whip whistled in my ears wringing the sweat from my brow, and the blood from my broken heart. Then Mena’s father died, the boy, went to school, and I waited on the wife of his steward, whom Katuti banished to Hermonthis. That was a time! The little daughter of the house made a doll of me,

[Dolls belonging to the time of the Pharaohs are preserved in the museums, for instance, the jointed ones at Leyden.]

laid me in the cradle, and made me shut my eyes and pretend to sleep, while love and hatred, and great projects were strong within me. If I tried to resist they beat me with rods; and when once, in a rage, I forgot myself, and hit little Mertitefs hard, Mena, who came in, hung me up in the store-room to a nail by my girdle, and left me to swing there; he said he had forgotten to take me down again. The rats fell upon me; here are the scars, these little white spots here—look! They perhaps will some day wear out, but the wounds that my spirit received in those hours have not yet ceased to bleed. Then Mena married Nefert, and, with her, his mother-in-law, Katuti, came into the house. She took me from the steward, I became indispensable to her; she treats me like a man, she



values my intelligence and listens to my advice,—therefore I will make her great, and with her, and through her, I will wax mighty. If Ani mounts the throne, we wilt guide him—you, and I, and she! Rameses must fall, and with him Mena, the boy who degraded my body and poisoned my soul!”



Page 25

During this speech the old woman had stood in silence opposite the dwarf. Now she sat down on her rough wooden seat, and said, while she proceeded to pluck a lapwing:

“Now I understand you; you wish to be revenged. You hope to rise high, and I am to whet your knife, and hold the ladder for you. Poor little man! there, sit down—drink a gulp of milk to cool you, and listen to my advice. Katuti wants a great deal of money to escape dishonor. She need only pick it up—it lies at her door.” The dwarf looked at the witch in astonishment.

“The Mohar Paaker is her sister Setchem’s son. Is he not?”

“As you say.”

“Katuti’s daughter Nefert is the wife of your master Mena, and another would like to tempt the neglected little hen into his yard.”

“You mean Paaker, to whom Nefert was promised before she went after Mena.”

“Paaker was with me the day before yesterday.”

“With you?”

“Yes, with me, with old Hekt—to buy a love philter. I gave him one, and as I was curious I went after him, saw him give the water to the little lady, and found out her name.”

“And Nefert drank the magic drink?” asked the dwarf horrified. “Vinegar and turnip juice,” laughed the old witch. “A lord who comes to me to win a wife is ripe for any thing. Let Nefert ask Paaker for the money, and the young scapegrace’s debts are paid.”

“Katuti is proud, and repulsed me severely when I proposed this.”

“Then she must sue to Paaker herself for the money. Go back to him, make him hope that Nefert is inclined to him, tell him what distresses the ladies, and if he refuses, but only if he refuses, let him see that you know something of the little dose.”

The dwarf looked meditatively on the ground, and then said, looking admiringly at the old woman: “That is the right thing.”

“You will find out the lie without my telling you,” mumbled the witch; “your business is not perhaps such a bad one as it seemed to me at first. Katuti may thank the ne’er-do-well who staked his father’s corpse. You don’t understand me? Well, if you are really the sharpest of them all over there, what must the others be?”



“You mean that people will speak well of my mistress for sacrificing so large a sum for the sake—?”

“Whose sake? why speak well of her?” cried the old woman impatiently. “Here we deal with other things, with actual facts. There stands Paaker —there the wife of Mena. If the Mohar sacrifices a fortune for Nefert, he will be her master, and Katuti will not stand in his way; she knows well enough why her nephew pays for her. But some one else stops the way, and that is Mena. It is worth while to get him out of the way. The charioteer stands close to the Pharaoh, and the noose that is flung at one may easily fall round the neck of the other too. Make the Mohar your ally, and it may easily happen that your rat-bites may be paid for with mortal wounds, and Rameses who, if you marched against him openly, might blow you to the ground, may be hit by a lance thrown from an ambush. When the throne is clear, the weak legs of the Regent may succeed in clambering up to it with the help of the priests. Here you sit-open-mouthed; and I have told you nothing that you might not have found out for yourself.”



Page 26

"You are a perfect cask of wisdom!" exclaimed the dwarf.

"And now you will go away," said Hekt, "and reveal your schemes to your mistress and the Regent, and they will be astonished at your cleverness. To-day you still know that I have shown you what you have to do; to-morrow you will have forgotten it; and the day after to-morrow you will believe yourself possessed by the inspiration of the nine great Gods. I know that; but I cannot give anything for nothing. You live by your smallness, another makes his living with his hard hands, I earn my scanty bread by the thoughts of my brain. Listen! when you have half won Paaker, and Ani shows himself inclined to make use of him, then say to him that I may know a secret—and I do know one, I alone—which may make the Mohar the sport of his wishes, and that I may be disposed to sell it."

"That shall be done! certainly, mother," cried the dwarf. "What do you wish for?"

"Very little," said the old woman. "Only a permit that makes me free to do and to practise whatever I please, unmolested even by the priests, and to receive an honorable burial after my death."

"The Regent will hardly agree to that; for he must avoid everything that may offend the servants of the Gods."

"And do everything," retorted the old woman, "that can degrade Rameses in their sight. Ani, do you hear, need not write me a new license, but only renew the old one granted to me by Rameses when I cured his favorite horse. They burnt it with my other possessions, when they plundered my house, and denounced me and my belongings for sorcery. The permit of Rameses is what I want, nothing more."

"You shall have it," said the dwarf. "Good-by; I am charged to look into the tomb of our house, and see whether the offerings for the dead are regularly set out; to pour out fresh essences and have various things renewed. When Sechet has ceased to rage, and it is cooler, I shall come by here again, for I should like to call on the paraschites, and see how the poor child is."

CHAPTER XIII.

During this conversation two men had been busily occupied, in front of the paraschites' hut, in driving piles into the earth, and stretching a torn linen cloth upon them.

One of them, old Pinem, whom we have seen tending his grandchild, requested the other from time to time to consider the sick girl and to work less noisily.



After they had finished their simple task, and spread a couch of fresh straw under the awning, they too sat down on the earth, and looked at the hut before which the surgeon Nebsecht was sitting waiting till the sleeping girl should wake.

“Who is that?” asked the leech of the old man, pointing to his young companion, a tall sunburnt soldier with a bushy red beard.

“My son,” replied the paraschites, “who is just returned from Syria.”



Page 27

“Uarda’s father?” asked Nebsecht.

The soldier nodded assent, and said with a rough voice, but not without cordiality.

“No one could guess it by looking at us—she is so white and rosy. Her mother was a foreigner, and she has turned out as delicate as she was. I am afraid to touch her with my little finger—and there comes a chariot over the brittle doll, and does not quite crush her, for she is still alive.”

“Without the help of this holy father,” said the paraschites, approaching the surgeon, and kissing his robe, “you would never have seen her alive again. May the Gods reward thee for what thou hast done for its poor folks!”

“And we can pay too,” cried the soldier, slapping a full purse that hung at his girdle. “We have taken plunder in Syria, and I will buy a calf, and give it to thy temple.”

“Offer a beast of dough, rather.”

[Hogs were sacrificed at the feasts of Selene (the Egyptian Nechebt). The poor offer pigs made of dough. Herodotus II., 47. Various kinds of cakes baked in the form of animals are represented on the monuments.]

replied Nebsecht, “and if you wish to show yourself grateful to me, give the money to your father, so that he may feed and nurse your child in accordance with my instructions.”

“Hm,” murmured the soldier; he took the purse from his girdle, flourished it in his hand, and said, as he handed it to the paraschites:

“I should have liked to drink it! but take it, father, for the child and my mother.”

While the old man hesitatingly put out his hand for the rich gift, the soldier recollected himself and said, opening the purse:

“Let me take out a few rings, for to-day I cannot go dry. I have two or three comrades lodging in the red Tavern. That is right. There,—take the rest of the rubbish.”

Nebsecht nodded approvingly at the soldier, and he, as his father gratefully kissed the surgeon’s hand, exclaimed:

“Make the little one sound, holy father! It, is all over with gifts and offerings, for I have nothing left; but there are two iron fists and a breast like the wall of a fortress. If at any time thou dost want help, call me, and I will protect thee against twenty enemies. Thou hast saved my child—good! Life for life. I sign myself thy blood-ally—there.”



With these words he drew his poniard out of his girdle. He scratched his arm, and let a few drops of his blood run down on a stone at the feet of Nebsecht—"Look," he said. "There is my bond, Kaschta has signed himself thine, and thou canst dispose of my life as of thine own. What I have said, I have said."

"I am a man of peace," Nebsecht stammered, "And my white robe protects me. But I believe our patient is awake."

The physician rose, and entered the hut.

Uarda's pretty head lay on her grandmother's lap, and her large blue eyes turned contentedly on the priest.



Page 28

“She might get up and go out into the air,” said the old woman. “She has slept long and soundly.” The surgeon examined her pulse, and her wound, on which green leaves were laid.

“Excellent,” he said; “who gave you this healing herb?”

The old woman shuddered, and hesitated; but Uarda said fearlessly; “Old Hekt, who lives over there in the black cave.”

“The witch!” muttered Nebsecht. “But we will let the leaves remain; if they do good, it is no matter where they came from.”

“Hekt tasted the drops thou didst give her,” said the old woman, “and agreed that they were good.”

“Then we are satisfied with each other,” answered Nebsecht, with a smile of amusement. “We will carry you now into the open air, little maid; for the air in here is as heavy as lead, and your damaged lung requires lighter nourishment.”

“Yes, let me go out,” said the girl. “It is well that thou hast not brought back the other with thee, who tormented me with his vows.”

“You mean blind Teta,” said Nebsecht, “he will not come again; but the young priest who soothed your father, when he repulsed the princess, will visit you. He is kindly disposed, and you should—you should—”

“Pentaur will come?” said the girl eagerly.

“Before midday. But how do you know his name?”

“I know him,” said Uarda decidedly.

The surgeon looked at her surprised.

“You must not talk any more,” he said, “for your cheeks are glowing, and the fever may return. We have arranged a tent for you, and now we will carry you into the open air.”

“Not yet,” said the girl. “Grandmother, do my hair for me, it is so heavy.”

With these words she endeavored to part her mass of long reddish-brown hair with her slender hands, and to free it from the straws that had got entangled in it.

“Lie still,” said the surgeon, in a warning voice.



“But it is so heavy,” said the sick girl, smiling and showing Nebsecht her abundant wealth of golden hair as if it were a fatiguing burden. “Come, grandmother, and help me.”

The old woman leaned over the child, and combed her long locks carefully with a coarse comb made of grey horn, gently disengaged the straws from the golden tangle, and at last laid two thick long plaits on her granddaughter’s shoulders.

Nebsecht knew that every movement of the wounded girl might do mischief, and his impulse was to stop the old woman’s proceedings, but his tongue seemed spell-bound. Surprised, motionless, and with crimson cheeks, he stood opposite the girl, and his eyes followed every movement of her hands with anxious observation.

She did not notice him.

When the old woman laid down the comb Uarda drew a long breath.

“Grandmother,” she said, “give me the mirror.” The old woman brought a shard of dimly glazed, baked clay. The girl turned to the light, contemplated the undefined reflection for a moment, and said:



Page 29

“I have not seen a flower for so long, grandmother.”

“Wait, child,” she replied; she took from a jug the rose, which the princess had laid on the bosom of her grandchild, and offered it to her. Before Uarda could take it, the withered petals fell, and dropped upon her. The surgeon stooped, gathered them up, and put them into the child’s hand.

“How good you are!” she said; “I am called Uarda—like this flower—and I love roses and the fresh air. Will you carry me out now?”

Nebsecht called the paraschites, who came into the hut with his son, and they carried the girl out into the air, and laid her under the humble tent they had contrived for her. The soldier’s knees trembled while he held the light burden of his daughter’s weight in his strong hands, and he sighed when he laid her down on the mat.

“How blue the sky is!” cried Uarda. “Ah! grandfather has watered my pomegranate, I thought so! and there come my doves! give me some corn in my hand, grandmother. How pleased they are.”

The graceful birds, with black rings round their reddish-grey necks, flew confidently to her, and took the corn that she playfully laid between her lips.

Nebsecht looked on with astonishment at this pretty play. He felt as if a new world had opened to him, and some new sense, hitherto unknown to him, had been revealed to him within his breast. He silently sat down in front of the but, and drew the picture of a rose on the sand with a reed-stem that he picked up.

Perfect stillness was around him; the doves even had flown up, and settled on the roof. Presently the dog barked, steps approached; Uarda lifted herself up and said:

“Grandmother, it is the priest Pentaur.”

“Who told you?” asked the old woman.

“I know it,” answered the girl decidedly, and in a few moments a sonorous voice cried: “Good day to you. How is your invalid?”

Pentaur was soon standing by Uarda; pleased to hear Nebsecht’s good report, and with the sweet face of the girl. He had some flowers in his hand, that a happy maiden had laid on the altar of the Goddess Hathor, which he had served since the previous day, and he gave them to the sick girl, who took them with a blush, and held them between her clasped hands.

“The great Goddess whom I serve sends you these,” said Pentaur, “and they will bring you healing. Continue to resemble them. You are pure and fair like them, and your



course henceforth may be like theirs. As the sun gives life to the grey horizon, so you bring joy to this dark but. Preserve your innocence, and wherever you go you will bring love, as flowers spring in every spot that is trodden by the golden foot of Hathor.

[Hathor is frequently called “the golden,” particularly at Dendera
She has much in common with the “golden Aphrodite.”]

May her blessing rest upon you!”

He had spoken the last words half to the old couple and half to Uarda, and was already turning to depart when, behind a heap of dried reeds that lay close to the awning over the girl, the bitter cry of a child was heard, and a little boy came forward who held, as high as he could reach, a little cake, of which the dog, who seemed to know him well, had snatched half.



Page 30

“How do you come here, Scherau?” the paraschites asked the weeping boy; the unfortunate child that Hekt was bringing up as a dwarf.

“I wanted,” sobbed the little one, “to bring the cake to Uarda. She is ill—I had so much —”

“Poor child,” said the paraschites, stroking the boy’s hair; “there-give it to Uarda.”

Scherau went up to the sick girl, knelt down by her, and whispered with streaming eyes:

“Take it! It is good, and very sweet, and if I get another cake, and Hekt will let me out, I will bring it to you.

“Thank you, good little Scherau,” said Uarda, kissing the child. Then she turned to Pentaur and said:

“For weeks he has had nothing but papyrus-pith, and lotus-bread, and now he brings me the cake which grandmother gave old Hekt yesterday.”

The child blushed all over, and stammered:

“It is only half—but I did not touch it. Your dog bit out this piece, and this.”

He touched the honey with the tip of his finger, and put it to his lips. “I was a long time behind the reeds there, for I did not like to come out because of the strangers there.” He pointed to Nebsecht and Pentaur. “But now I must go home,” he cried.

The child was going, but Pentaur stopped him, seized him, lifted him up in his arms and kissed him; saying, as he turned to Nebsecht:

“They were wise, who represented Horus—the symbol of the triumph of good over evil and of purity over the impure—in the form of a child. Bless you, my little friend; be good, and always give away what you have to make others happy. It will not make your house rich—but it will your heart!”

Scherau clung to the priest, and involuntarily raised his little hand to stroke Pentaur’s cheek. An unknown tenderness had filled his little heart, and he felt as if he must throw his arms round the poet’s neck and cry upon his breast.

But Pentaur set him down on the ground, and he trotted down into the valley. There he paused. The sun was high in the heavens, and he must return to the witch’s cave and his board, but he would so much like to go a little farther—only as far as to the king’s tomb, which was quite near.



Close by the door of this tomb was a thatch of palm-branches, and under this the sculptor Batau, a very aged man, was accustomed to rest. The old man was deaf, but he passed for the best artist of his time, and with justice; he had designed the beautiful pictures and hieroglyphic inscriptions in Seti's splendid buildings at Abydos and Thebes, as well as in the tomb of that prince, and he was now working at the decoration of the walls in the grave of Rameses.

Scherau had often crept close up to him, and thoughtfully watched him at work, and then tried himself to make animal and human figures out of a bit of clay.

One day the old man had observed him.

The sculptor had silently taken his humble attempt out of his hand, and had returned it to him with a smile of encouragement.



Page 31

From that time a peculiar tie had sprung up between the two. Scherau would venture to sit down by the sculptor, and try to imitate his finished images. Not a word was exchanged between them, but often the deaf old man would destroy the boy's works, often on the contrary improve them with a touch of his own hand, and not seldom nod at him to encourage him.

When he staid away the old man missed his pupil, and Scherau's happiest hours were those which he passed at his side.

He was not forbidden to take some clay home with him. There, when the old woman's back was turned, he moulded a variety of images which he destroyed as soon as they were finished.

While he lay on his rack his hands were left free, and he tried to reproduce the various forms which lived in his imagination, he forgot the present in his artistic attempts, and his bitter lot acquired a flavor of the sweetest enjoyment.

But to-day it was too late; he must give up his visit to the tomb of Rameses.

Once more he looked back at the hut, and then hurried into the dark cave.

CHAPTER XIV.

Pentauer also soon quitted the but of the paraschites.

Lost in meditation, he went along the hill-path which led to the temple which Ameni had put under his direction.

[This temple is well proportioned, and remains in good preservation. Copies of the interesting pictures discovered in it are to be found in the "Fleet of an Egyptian queen" by Dutnichen. Other details may be found in Lepsius' Monuments of Egypt, and a plan of the place has recently been published by Mariette.]

He foresaw many disturbed and anxious hours in the immediate future.

The sanctuary of which he was the superior, had been dedicated to her own memory, and to the goddess Hathor, by Hatasu,

[The daughter of Thotmes I., wife of her brother Thotmes II., and predecessor of her second brother Thotmes III. An energetic woman who executed great works, and caused herself to be represented with the helmet and beard-case of a man.]

a great queen of the dethroned dynasty.



The priests who served it were endowed with peculiar chartered privileges, which hitherto had been strictly respected. Their dignity was hereditary, going down from father to son, and they had the right of choosing their director from among themselves.

Now their chief priest Rui was ill and dying, and Ameni, under whose jurisdiction they came, had, without consulting them, sent the young poet Pentaur to fill his place.

They had received the intruder most unwillingly, and combined strongly against him when it became evident that he was disposed to establish a severe rule and to abolish many abuses which had become established customs.

They had devolved the greeting of the rising sun on the temple-servants; Pentaur required that the younger ones at least should take part in chanting the morning hymn, and himself led the choir. They had trafficked with the offerings laid on the altar of the Goddess; the new master repressed this abuse, as well as the extortions of which they were guilty towards women in sorrow, who visited the temple of Hathor in greater number than any other sanctuary.



Page 32

The poet-brought up in the temple of Seti to self-control, order, exactitude, and decent customs, deeply penetrated with a sense of the dignity of his position, and accustomed to struggle with special zeal against indolence of body and spirit—was disgusted with the slothful life and fraudulent dealings of his subordinates; and the deeper insight which yesterday's experience had given him into the poverty and sorrow of human existence, made him resolve with increased warmth that he would awake them to a new life.

The conviction that the lazy herd whom he commanded was called upon to pour consolation into a thousand sorrowing hearts, to dry innumerable tears, and to clothe the dry sticks of despair with the fresh verdure of hope, urged him to strong measures.

Yesterday he had seen how, with calm indifference, they had listened to the deserted wife, the betrayed maiden, to the woman, who implored the withheld blessing of children, to the anxious mother, the forlorn widow, —and sought only to take advantage of sorrow, to extort gifts for the Goddess, or better still for their own pockets or belly.

Now he was nearing the scene of his new labors.

There stood the reverend building, rising stately from the valley on four terraces handsomely and singularly divided, and resting on the western side against the high amphitheatre of yellow cliffs.

On the closely-joined foundation stones gigantic hawks were carved in relief, each with the emblem of life, and symbolized Horus, the son of the Goddess, who brings all that fades to fresh bloom, and all that dies to resurrection.

On each terrace stood a hall open to the east, and supported on two and twenty archaic pillars.

[Polygonal pillars, which were used first in tomb-building under the 12th dynasty, and after the expulsion of the Hyksos under the kings of the 17th and 18th, in public buildings; but under the subsequent races of kings they ceased to be employed.]

On their inner walls elegant pictures and inscriptions in the finest sculptured work recorded, for the benefit of posterity, the great things that Hatasu had done with the help of the Gods of Thebes.

There were the ships which she had to send to Punt

[Arabia; apparently also the coast of east Africa south of Egypt as far as Somali. The latest of the lists published by Mariette, of the southern nations conquered by Thotmes III., mentions it. This list was found on the pylon of the temple of Karnak.]



to enrich Egypt with the treasures of the east; there the wonders brought to Thebes from Arabia might be seen; there were delineated the houses of the inhabitants of the land of frankincense, and all the fishes of the Red Sea, in distinct and characteristic outline.

On the third and fourth terraces were the small adjoining rooms of Hatasu and her brothers Thotmes II. and III., which were built against the rock, and entered by granite doorways. In them purifications were accomplished, the images of the Goddess worshipped, and the more distinguished worshippers admitted to confess. The sacred cows of the Goddess were kept in a side-building.



Page 33

As Pentaur approached the great gate of the terrace-temple, he became the witness of a scene which filled him with resentment.

A woman implored to be admitted into the forecourt, to pray at the altar of the Goddess for her husband, who was very ill, but the sleek gate-keeper drove her back with rough words.

"It is written up," said he, pointing to the inscription over the gate, "only the purified may set their foot across this threshold, and you cannot be purified but by the smoke of incense."

"Then swing the censer for me," said the woman, and take this silver ring—it is all I have."

"A silver ring!" cried the porter, indignantly. "Shall the goddess be impoverished for your sake! The grains of Anta, that would be used in purifying you, would cost ten times as much."

"But I have no more," replied the woman, "my husband, for whom I come to pray, is ill; he cannot work, and my children—"

"You fatten them up and deprive the goddess of her due," cried the gate-keeper. "Three rings down, or I shut the gate."

"Be merciful," said the woman, weeping. "What will become of us if Hathor does not help my husband?"

"Will our goddess fetch the doctor?" asked the porter. "She has something to do besides curing sick starvelings. Besides, that is not her office. Go to Imhotep or to Chunsu the counsellor, or to the great Techuti herself, who helps the sick. There is no quack medicine to be got here."

"I only want comfort in my trouble," said the woman.

"Comfort!" laughed the gate-keeper, measuring the comely young woman with his eye. "That you may have cheaper."

The woman turned pale, and drew back from the hand the man stretched out towards her.

At this moment Pentaur, full of wrath, stepped between them.

He raised his hand in blessing over the woman, who bent low before him, and said, "Whoever calls fervently on the Divinity is near to him. You are pure. Enter."



As soon as she had disappeared within the temple, the priest turned to the gate-keeper and exclaimed: "Is this how you serve the goddess, is this how you take advantage of a heart-wrung woman? Give me the keys of this gate. Your office is taken from you, and early to-morrow you go out in the fields, and keep the geese of Hathor."

The porter threw himself on his knees with loud outcries; but Pentaur turned his back upon him, entered the sanctuary, and mounted the steps which led to his dwelling on the third terrace.

A few priests whom he passed turned their backs upon him, others looked down at their dinners, eating noisily, and making as if they did not see him. They had combined strongly, and were determined to expel the inconvenient intruder at any price.

Having reached his room, which had been splendidly decorated for his predecessor, Pentaur laid aside his new insignia, comparing sorrowfully the past and the present.



Page 34

To what an exchange Ameni had condemned him! Here, wherever he looked, he met with sulkiness and aversion; while, when he walked through the courts of the House of Seti, a hundred boys would hurry towards him, and cling affectionately to his robe. Honored there by great and small, his every word had had its value; and when each day he gave utterance to his thoughts, what he bestowed came back to him refined by earnest discourse with his associates and superiors, and he gained new treasures for his inner life.

“What is rare,” thought he, “is full of charm; and yet how hard it is to do without what is habitual!” The occurrences of the last few days passed before his mental sight. Bent-Anat’s image appeared before him, and took a more and more distinct and captivating form. His heart began to beat wildly, the blood rushed faster through his veins; he hid his face in his hands, and recalled every glance, every word from her lips.

“I follow thee willingly,” she had said to him before the hut of the paraschites. Now he asked himself whether he were worthy of such a follower.

He had indeed broken through the old bonds, but not to disgrace the house that was dear to him, only to let new light into its dim chambers.

“To do what we have earnestly felt to be right,” said he to himself, “may seem worthy of punishment to men, but cannot before God.”

He sighed and walked out into the terrace in a mood of lofty excitement, and fully resolved to do here nothing but what was right, to lay the foundation of all that was good.

“We men,” thought he, “prepare sorrow when we come into the world, and lamentation when we leave it; and so it is our duty in the intermediate time to fight with suffering, and to sow the seeds of joy. There are many tears here to be wiped away. To work then!” The poet found none of his subordinates on the upper terrace. They had all met in the forecourt of the temple, and were listening to the gate-keeper’s tale, and seemed to sympathize with his angry complaint—against whom Pentaur well knew.

With a firm step he went towards them and said:

“I have expelled this man from among us, for he is a disgrace to us. To-morrow he quits the temple.”

“I will go at once,” replied the gate-keeper defiantly, “and in behalf of the holy fathers (here he cast a significant glance at the priests), ask the high-priest Ameni if the unclean are henceforth to be permitted to enter this sanctuary.”

He was already approaching the gate, but Pentaur stepped before him, saying resolutely:



“You will remain here and keep the geese to-morrow, day after to-morrow, and until I choose to pardon you.” The gate-keeper looked enquiringly at the priests. Not one moved.

“Go back into your house,” said Pentaur, going closer to him.

The porter obeyed.

Pentaur locked the door of the little room, gave the key to one of the temple-servants, and said: “Perform his duty, watch the man, and if he escapes you will go after the geese to-morrow too. See, my friends, how many worshippers kneel there before our altars—go and fulfil your office. I will wait in the confessional to receive complaints, and to administer comfort.”



Page 35

The priests separated and went to the votaries. Pentaur once more mounted the steps, and sat down in the narrow confessional which was closed by a curtain; on its wall the picture of Hatasu was to be seen, drawing the milk of eternal life from the udders of the cow Hathor.

He had hardly taken his place when a temple-servant announced the arrival of a veiled lady. The bearers of her litter were thickly veiled, and she had requested to be conducted to the confession chamber. The servant handed Pentaur a token by which the high-priest of the great temple of Anion, on the other bank of the Nile, granted her the privilege of entering the inner rooms of the temple with the Rechiu, and to communicate with all priests, even with the highest of the initiated.

The poet withdrew behind a curtain, and awaited the stranger with a disquiet that seemed to him all the more singular that he had frequently found himself in a similar position. Even the noblest dignitaries had often been transferred to him by Ameni when they had come to the temple to have their visions interpreted.

A tall female figure entered the still, sultry stone room, sank on her knees, and put up a long and absorbed prayer before the figure of Hathor. Pentaur also, seen by no one, lifted his hands, and fervently addressed himself to the omnipresent spirit with a prayer for strength and purity.

Just as his arms fell the lady raised her head. It was as though the prayers of the two souls had united to mount upwards together.

The veiled lady rose and dropped her veil.

It was Bent-Anat.

In the agitation of her soul she had sought the goddess Hathor, who guides the beating heart of woman and spins the threads which bind man and wife.

“High mistress of heaven! many-named and beautiful!” she began to pray aloud, “golden Hathor! who knowest grief and ecstasy—the present and the future—draw near to thy child, and guide the spirit of thy servant, that he may advise me well. I am the daughter of a father who is great and noble and truthful as one of the Gods. He advises me—he will never compel me—to yield to a man whom I can never love. Nay, another has met me, humble in birth but noble in spirit and in gifts—”

Thus far, Pentaur, incapable of speech, had overheard the princess.

Ought he to remain concealed and hear all her secret, or should he step forth and show himself to her? His pride called loudly to him: “Now she will speak your name; you are the chosen one of the fairest and noblest.” But another voice to which he had



accustomed himself to listen in severe self-discipline made itself heard, and said—“Let her say nothing in ignorance, that she need be ashamed of if she knew.”

He blushed for her;—he opened the curtain and went forward into the presence of Bent-Anat.

The Princess drew back startled.

“Art thou Pentaur,” she asked, “or one of the Immortals?”



Page 36

"I am Pentaur," he answered firmly, "a man with all the weakness of his race, but with a desire for what is good. Linger here and pour out thy soul to our Goddess; my whole life shall be a prayer for thee."

The poet looked full at her; then he turned quickly, as if to avoid a danger, towards the door of the confessional.

Bent-Anat called his name, and he stayed his steps:

"The daughter of Rameses," she said, "need offer no justification of her appearance here, but the maiden Bent-Anat," and she colored as she spoke, "expected to find, not thee, but the old priest Rui, and she desired his advice. Now leave me to pray."

Bent-Anat sank on her knees, and Pentaur went out into the open air.

When the princess too had left the confessional, loud voices were heard on the south side of the terrace on which they stood.

She hastened towards the parapet.

"Hail to Pentaur!" was shouted up from below. The poet rushed forward, and placed himself near the princess. Both looked down into the valley, and could be seen by all.

"Hail, hail! Pentaur," was called doubly loud, "Hail to our teacher! come back to the House of Seti. Down with the persecutors of Pentaur— down with our oppressors!"

At the head of the youths, who, so soon as they had found out whither the poet had been exiled, had escaped to tell him that they were faithful to him, stood the prince Rameri, who nodded triumphantly to his sister, and Anana stepped forward to inform the honored teacher in a solemn and well-studied speech, that, in the event of Ameni refusing to recall him, they had decided requesting their fathers to place them at another school.

The young sage spoke well, and Bent-Anat followed his words, not without approbation; but Pentaur's face grew darker, and before his favorite disciple had ended his speech he interrupted him sternly.

His voice was at first reproachful, and then complaining, and loud as he spoke, only sorrow rang in his tones, and not anger.

"In truth," he concluded, "every word that I have spoken to you I could but find it in me to regret, if it has contributed to encourage you to this mad act. You were born in palaces; learn to obey, that later you may know how to command. Back to your school! You hesitate? Then I will come out against you with the watchman, and drive you back, for



you do me and yourselves small honor by such a proof of affection. Go back to the school you belong to.”

The school-boys dared make no answer, but surprised and disenchanted turned to go home.

Bent-Anat cast down her eyes as she met those of her brother, who shrugged his shoulders, and then she looked half shyly, half respectfully, at the poet; but soon again her eyes turned to the plain below, for thick dust-clouds whirled across it, the sound of hoofs and the rattle of wheels became audible, and at the same moment the chariot of Septah, the chief haruspex, and a vehicle with the heavily-armed guard of the House of Seti, stopped near the terrace.



Page 37

The angry old man sprang quickly to the ground, called the host of escaped pupils to him in a stern voice, ordered the guard to drive them back to the school, and hurried up to the temple gates like a vigorous youth. The priests received him with the deepest reverence, and at once laid their complaints before him.

He heard them willingly, but did not let them discuss the matter; then, though with some difficulty, he quickly mounted the steps, down which Bent-Anat came towards him.

The princess felt that she would divert all the blame and misunderstanding to herself, if Septah recognized her; her hand involuntarily reached for her veil, but she drew it back quickly, looked with quiet dignity into the old man's eyes, which flashed with anger, and proudly passed by him. The haruspex bowed, but without giving her his blessing, and when he met Pentaur on the second terrace, ordered that the temple should be cleared of worshippers.

This was done in a few minutes, and the priests were witnesses of the most painful, scene which had occurred for years in their quiet sanctuary.

The head of the haruspices of the House of Seti was the most determined adversary of the poet who had so early been initiated into the mysteries, and whose keen intellect often shook those very ramparts which the zealous old man had, from conviction, labored to strengthen from his youth up. The vexatious occurrences, of which he had been a witness at the House of Seti, and here also but a few minutes since, he regarded as the consequence of the unbridled license of an ill-regulated imagination, and in stern language he called Pentaur to account for the "revolt" of the school-boys.

"And besides our boys," he exclaimed, "you have led the daughter of Rameses astray. She was not yet purged of her uncleanness, and yet you tempt her to an assignation, not even in the stranger's quarters—but in the holy house of this pure Divinity."

Undeserved praise is dangerous to the weak; unjust blame may turn even the strong from the right way. Pentaur indignantly repelled the accusations of the old man, called them unworthy of his age, his position, and his name, and for fear that his anger might carry him too far, turned his back upon him; but the haruspex ordered him to remain, and in his presence questioned the priests, who unanimously accused the poet of having admitted to the temple another unpurified woman besides Bent-Anat, and of having expelled the gate-keeper and thrown him into prison for opposing the crime.

The haruspex ordered that the "ill-used man" should be set at liberty.

Pentaur resisted this command, asserted his right to govern in this temple, and with a trembling voice requested Septah to quit the place.

The haruspex showed him Ameni's ring, by which, during his residence in Thebes, he made him his plenipotentiary, degraded Pentaur from his dignity, but ordered him not to quit the sanctuary till further notice, and then finally departed from the temple of Hatasu.

Page 38

Pentaur had yielded in silence to the signet of his chief, and returned to the confessional in which he had met Bent-Anat. He felt his soul shaken to its very foundations, his thoughts were confused, his feelings struggling with each other; he shivered, and when he heard the laughter of the priests and the gatekeeper, who were triumphing in their easy victory, he started and shuddered like a man who in passing a mirror should see a brand of disgrace on his brow.

But by degrees he recovered himself, his spirit grew clearer, and when he left the little room to look towards the east—where, on the farther shore, rose the palace where Bent-Anat must be—a deep contempt for his enemies filled his soul, and a proud feeling of renewed manly energy. He did not conceal from himself that he had enemies; that a time of struggle was beginning for him; but he looked forward to it like a young hero to the morning of his first battle.

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Bearers of ill ride faster than the messengers of weal
Do not spoil the future for the sake of the present
Exhibit one's happiness in the streets, and conceal one's misery
Impartial looker-on sees clearer than the player
Learn to obey, that later you may know how to command
Man has nothing harder to endure than uncertainty
Many creditors are so many allies
One should give nothing up for lost excepting the dead
Our thinkers are no heroes, and our heroes are no sages
Overbusy friends are more damaging than intelligent enemies
Prepare sorrow when we come into the world
The experienced love to signify their superiority
We quarrel with no one more readily than with the benefactor

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Page 40

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