

An Egyptian Princess — Volume 08 eBook

An Egyptian Princess — Volume 08 by Georg Ebers

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CHAPTER VIII.

The sun was already trying to break a path for his rays through the thick curtains, that closed the window of the sick-room, but Nebenchari had not moved from the Egyptian girl's bedside. Sometimes he felt her pulse, or spread sweet-scented ointments on her forehead or chest, and then he would sit gazing dreamily into vacancy. Nitetis seemed to have sunk into a deep sleep after an attack of convulsions. At the foot of her bed stood six Persian doctors, murmuring incantations under the orders of Nebenchari, whose superior science they acknowledged, and who was seated at the bed's head.

Every time he felt the sick girl's pulse he shrugged his shoulders, and the gesture was immediately imitated by his Persian colleagues. From time to time the curtain was lifted and a lovely head appeared, whose questioning blue eyes fixed at once on the physician, but were always dismissed with the same melancholy shrug. It was Atossa. Twice she had ventured into the room, stepping so lightly as hardly to touch the thick carpet of Milesian wool, had stolen to her friend's bedside and lightly kissed her forehead, on which the pearly dew of death was standing, but each time a severe and reproving glance from Nebenchari had sent her back again into the next room, where her mother Kassandane was lying, awaiting the end.

Cambyses had left the sick-room at sunrise, on seeing that Nitetis had fallen asleep; he flung himself on to his horse, and accompanied by Phanes, Prexaspes, Otanes, Darius, and a number of courtiers, only just aroused from their sleep, took a wild ride through the game-park. He knew by experience, that he could best overcome or forget any violent mental emotion when mounted on an unmanageable horse.

Nebenchari started on hearing the sound of horses' hoofs in the distance. In a waking dream he had seen Cambyses enter his native land at the head of immense hosts; he had seen its cities and temples on fire, and its gigantic pyramids crumbling to pieces under the powerful blows of his mighty hand. Women and children lay in the smouldering ruins, and plaintive cries arose from the tombs in which the very mummies moved like living beings; and all these—priests, warriors, women, and children—the living and the dead—all had uttered his,—Nebenchari's,—name, and had cursed him as a traitor to his country. A cold shiver struck to his heart; it beat more convulsively than the blood in the veins of the dying girl at his side. Again the curtain was raised; Atossa stole in once more and laid her hand on his shoulder. He started and awoke. Nebenchari had been sitting three days and nights with scarcely any intermission by this sick-bed, and such dreams were the natural consequence.

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Atossa slipped back to her mother. Not a sound broke the sultry air of the sick-room, and Nebenchari's thoughts reverted to his dream. He told himself that he was on the point of becoming a traitor and a criminal, the visions he had just beheld passed before him again, but this time it was another, and a different one which gained the foremost place. The forms of Amasis, who had laughed at and exiled him,—of Psamtik and the priests,—who had burnt his works,—stood near him; they were heavily fettered and besought mercy at his hands. His lips moved, but this was not the place in which to utter the cruel words which rose to them. And then the stern man wiped away a tear as he remembered the long nights, in which he had sat with the reed in his hand, by the dull light of the lamp, carefully painting every sign of the fine hieratic character in which he committed his ideas and experience to writing. He had discovered remedies for many diseases of the eye, spoken of in the sacred books of Thoth and the writings of a famous old physician of Byblos as incurable, but, knowing that he should be accused of sacrilege by his colleagues, if he ventured on a correction or improvement of the sacred writings, he had entitled his work, "Additional writings on the treatment of diseases of the eye, by the great god Thoth, newly discovered by the oculist Nebenchari."

He had resolved on bequeathing his works to the library at Thebes, that his experience might be useful to his successors and bring forth fruit for the whole body of sufferers. This was to be his reward for the long nights which he had sacrificed to science—-recognition after death, and fame for the caste to which he belonged. And there stood his old rival Petammon, by the side of the crown-prince in the grove of Neith, and stirred the consuming fire, after having stolen his discovery of the operation of couching. Their malicious faces were tinged by the red glow of the flames, which rose with their spiteful laughter towards heaven, as if demanding vengeance. A little further off he saw in his dream Amasis receiving his father's letters from the hands of the high-priest. Scornful and mocking words were being uttered by the king; Neithotep looked exultant.—In these visions Nebenchari was so lost, that one of the Persian doctors was obliged to point out to him that his patient was awake. He nodded in reply, pointing to his own weary eyes with a smile, felt the sick girl's pulse, and asked her in Egyptian how she had slept.

"I do not know," she answered, in a voice that was hardly audible. "It seemed to me that I was asleep, and yet I saw and heard everything that had happened in the room. I felt so weak that I hardly knew whether I was awake or asleep. Has not Atossa been here several times?"

"Yes."

"And Cambyses stayed with Kassandane until sunrise; then he went out, mounted his horse Reksch, and rode into the game-park."



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“How do you know that?”

“I saw it.”

Nebenchari looked anxiously into the girl’s shining eyes. She went on: “A great many dogs have been brought into the court behind this house.”

“Probably the king has ordered a hunt, in order to deaden the pain which he feels at seeing you suffer.”

“Oh, no. I know better what it means. Oropastes taught me, that whenever a Persian dies dogs’ are brought in, that the Divs may enter into them.”

“But you are living, my mistress, and . . .”

“Oh, I know very well that I shall die. I knew that I had not many hours more to live, even if I had not seen how you and the other physicians shrugged your shoulders whenever you looked at me. That poison is deadly.”

“You are speaking too much, my mistress, it will hurt you.”

“Oh let me speak, Nebenchari! I must ask you to do something for me before I die.”

“I am your servant.”

“No, Nebenchari, you must be my friend and priest. You are not angry with me for having prayed to the Persian gods? Our own Hathor was always my best friend still. Yes, I see by your face that you forgiven me. Then you must promise not to allow my corpse to be torn in pieces by dogs and vultures. The thought is so very dreadful. You will promise to embalm my body and ornament it with amulets?”

“If the king allows.”

“Of course he will. How could Cambyses possibly refuse my last request?”

“Then my skill is at your service.”

“Thank you; but I have still something else to ask.”

“You must be brief. My Persian colleagues are already making signs to me, to enjoy silence on you.”

“Can’t you send them away for a moment?”

“I will try to do so.”



Nebenchari then went up and spoke to the Magi for a few minutes, and they left the room. An important incantation, at which no one but the two concerned might be present, and the application of a new and secret antidotal poison were the pretexts which he had used in order to get rid of them.

When they were alone, Nitetis drew a breath of relief and said: "Give me your priestly blessing on my long journey into the nether world, and prepare me for my pilgrimage to Osiris."

Nebenchari knelt down by her bed and in a low voice repeated hymns, Nitetis making devotional responses.

The physician represented Osiris, the lord of the nether world—Nitetis the soul, justifying itself before him.

When these ceremonies were ended the sick girl breathed more freely. Nebenchari could not but feel moved in looking at this young suicide. He felt confident that he had saved a soul for the gods of his native land, had cheered the last sad and painful hours of one of God's good creatures. During these last moments, compassion and benevolence had excluded every bitter feeling; but when he remembered that this lovely creature owed all her misery to Amasis too, the old black cloud of thought darkened his mind again.—Nitetis, after lying silent for some time, turned to her new friend with a pleasant smile, and said: "I shall find mercy with the judges of the dead now, shall not I?"



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“I hope and believe so.”

“Perhaps I may find Tachot before the throne of Osiris, and my father...”

“Your father and mother are waiting for you there. Now in your last hour bless those who begot you, and curse those who have robbed you of your parents, your crown and your life.”

“I do not understand you.”

“Curse those who robbed you of your parents, crown and life, girl!” cried the physician again, rising to his full height, breathing hard as he said the words, and gazing down on the dying girl. “Curse those wretches, girl! that curse will do more in gaining mercy from the judges of the dead, than thousands of good works!” And as he said this he seized her hand and pressed it violently.

Nitetis looked up uneasily into his indignant face, and stammered in blind obedience, ‘I curse.’”

“Those who robbed my parents of their throne and lives!”

“Those who robbed my parents of their throne and their lives,” she repeated after him, and then crying, “Oh, my heart!” sank back exhausted on the bed.

Nebenchari bent down, and before the royal physicians could return, kissed her forehead gently, murmuring: “She dies my confederate. The gods hearken to the prayers of those who die innocent. By carrying the sword into Egypt, I shall avenge king Hophra’s wrongs as well as my own.”

When Nitetis opened her eyes once more, a few hours later, Kassandane was holding her right hand, Atossa kneeling at her feet, and Croesus standing at the head of her bed, trying, with the failing strength of old age, to support the gigantic frame of the king, who was so completely overpowered by his grief, that he staggered like a drunken man. The dying girl’s eyes lighted up as she looked round on this circle. She was wonderfully beautiful. Cambyses came closer and kissed her lips; they were growing cold in death. It was the first kiss he had ever given her, and the last. Two large tears sprang to her eyes; their light was fast growing dim; she murmured Cambyses’ name softly, fell back in Atossa’s arms, and died.

We shall not give a detailed account of the next few hours: it would be an unpleasant task to describe how, at a signal from the principal Persian doctor, every one, except Nebenchari and Croesus, hastily left the room; how dogs were brought in and their sagacious heads turned towards the corpse in order to scare the demon of death;—how, directly after Nitetis’ death, Kassandane, Atossa and their entire retinue moved into another house in order to avoid defilement;—how fire was extinguished throughout the



dwelling, that the pure element might be removed from the polluting spirits of death;— how spells and exorcisms were muttered, and how every person and thing, which had approached or been brought into contact with the dead body, was subjected to numerous purifications with water and pungent fluids.



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The same evening Cambyses was seized by one of his old epileptic attacks. Two days later he gave Nebenchari permission to embalm Nitetis' body in the Egyptian manner, according to her last wish. The king gave way to the most immoderate grief; he tore the flesh of his arms, rent his clothes and strewed ashes on his head, and on his couch. All the magnates of his court were obliged to follow his example. The troops mounted guard with rent banners and muffled drums. The cymbals and kettle-drums of the "Immortals" were bound round with crape. The horses which Nitetis had used, as well as all which were then in use by the court, were colored blue and deprived of their tails; the entire court appeared in mourning robes of dark brown, rent to the girdle, and the Magi were compelled to pray three days and nights unceasingly for the soul of the dead, which was supposed to be awaiting its sentence for eternity at the bridge Chinvat on the third night.

Neither the king, Kassandane, nor Atossa shrank from submitting to the necessary purifications; they repeated, as if for one of their nearest relations, thirty prayers for the dead, while, in a house outside the city gates Nebenchari began to embalm her body in the most costly manner, and according to the strictest rules of his art.

[Embalming was practised in three different ways. The first cost a talent of silver (L225.); the second 20 Minae (L60.) and the third was very inexpensive. Herod. II. 86-88. Diod. I. 9. The brain was first drawn out through the nose and the skull filled with spices. The intestines were then taken out, and the body filled in like manner with aromatic spices. When all was finished, the corpse was left 70 days in a solution of soda, and then wrapped in bandages of byssus spread over with gum. The microscopical examinations of mummy-bandages made by Dr. Ure and Prof. Czermak have proved that byssus is linen, not cotton. The manner of embalming just described is the most expensive, and the latest chemical researches prove that the description given of it by the Greeks was tolerably correct. L. Penicher maintains that the bodies were first somewhat dried in ovens, and that then resin of the cedar-tree, or asphalte, was poured into every opening. According to Herodotus, female corpses were embalmed by women. Herod. II. 89. The subject is treated in great detail by Pettigrew, History of Egyptian Mummies. London. 1834. Czermak's microscopical examinations of Egyptian mummies show how marvellously the smallest portions of the bodies were preserved, and confirm the statements of Herodotus on many points. The monuments also contain much information in regard to embalming, and we now know the purpose of nearly all the amulets placed with the dead.]

For nine days Cambyses remained in a condition, which seemed little short of insanity. At times furious, at others dull and stupefied, he did not even allow his relations or the high-priest to approach him. On the morning of the tenth day he sent for the chief of the seven judges and commanded, that as lenient a sentence as possible should be pronounced on Gaumata. Nitetis, on her dying-bed, had begged him to spare the life of this unhappy youth.



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One hour later the sentence was submitted to the king for ratification. It ran thus: "Victory to the king! Inasmuch as Cambyses, the eye of the world and the sun of righteousness, hath, in his great mercy, which is as broad as the heavens and as inexhaustible as the great deep, commanded us to punish the crime of the son of the Magi, Gaumata, with the indulgence of a mother instead of with the severity of a judge, we, the seven judges of the realm, have determined to grant his forfeited life. Inasmuch, however, as by the folly of this youth the lives of the noblest and best in this realm have been imperilled, and it may reasonably be apprehended that he may again abuse the marvellous likeness to Bartja, the noble son of Cyrus, in which the gods have been pleased in their mercy to fashion his form and face, and thereby bring prejudice upon the pure and righteous, we have determined to disfigure him in such wise, that in the time to come it will be a light matter to discern between this, the most worthless subject of the realm, and him who is most worthy. We therefore, by the royal Will and command, pronounce sentence, that both the ears of Gaumata be cut off, for the honor of the righteous and shame of the impure."

Cambyses confirmed this sentence at once, and it was executed the same day.

[With reference to Gaumata's punishment, the same which Herodotus says was inflicted on the pretended Smerdis, we would observe that even Persians of high rank were sometimes deprived of their ears. In the Behistan inscription (Spiegel p. 15 and 21.) the ears, tongue and nose of the man highest in rank among the rebels, were cut off. Similar punishments are quoted by Brisson.]

Oropastes did not dare to intercede for his brother, though this ignominious punishment mortified his ambitious mind more than even a sentence of death could have done. As he was afraid that his own influence and consideration might suffer through this mutilated brother, he ordered him to leave Babylon at once for a country-house of his own on Mount Arakadris.

During the few days which had just passed, a shabbily-dressed and closely-veiled woman had watched day and night at the great gate of the palace; neither the threats of the sentries nor the coarse jests of the palace-servants could drive her from her post. She never allowed one of the less important officials to pass without eagerly questioning him, first as to the state of the Egyptian Princess, and then what had become of Gaumata. When his sentence was told her as a good joke by a chattering lamp-lighter, she went off into the strangest excitement, and astonished the poor man so much by kissing his robe, that he thought she must be crazed, and gave her an alms. She refused the money, but remained at her post, subsisting on the bread which was given her by the compassionate distributors of food. Three days later Gaumata himself, with his head bound up, was driven out in a closed harmamaxa. She rushed to the carriage and ran screaming by the side of it, until the driver stopped his mules and asked what she wanted. She threw back her veil and showed the poor, suffering youth her pretty face covered with deep blushes. Gaumata uttered a low cry as he recognized her,

collected himself, however, in a moment, and said: "What do you want with me, Mandane?"



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The wretched girl raised her hands beseechingly to him, crying: "Oh, do not leave me, Gaumata! Take me with you! I forgive you all the misery you have brought on me and my poor mistress. I love you so much, I will take care of you and nurse you as if I were the lowest servant-girl."

A short struggle passed in Gaumata's mind. He was just going to open the carriage-door and clasp Mandane-his earliest love-in his arms, when the sound of horses' hoofs coming nearer struck on his ear, and looking round he saw, a carriage full of Magi, among whom were several who had been his companions at the school for priests. He felt ashamed and afraid of being seen by the very youths, whom he had often treated proudly and haughtily because he was the brother of the high-priest, threw Mandane a purse of gold, which his brother had given him at parting, and ordered the driver to go on as fast as possible. The mules galloped off. Mandane kicked the purse away, rushed after the carriage and clung to it firmly. One of the wheels caught her dress and dragged her down. With the strength of despair she sprang up, ran after the mules, overtook them on a slight ascent which had lessened their speed, and seized the reins. The driver used his three-lashed whip, or scourge, the creatures reared, pulled the girl down and rushed on. Her last cry of agony pierced the wounds of the mutilated man like a sharp lance-thrust.

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On the twelfth day after Nitetis' death Cambyses went out hunting, in the hope that the danger and excitement of the sport might divert his mind. The magnates and men of high rank at his court received him with thunders of applause, for which he returned cordial thanks. These few days of grief had worked a great change in a man so unaccustomed to suffering as Cambyses. His face was pale, his raven-black hair and beard had grown grey, and the consciousness of victory which usually shone in his eyes was dimmed. Had he not, only too painfully, experienced that there was a stronger will than his own, and that, easily as he could destroy, it did not lie in his power to preserve the life of the meanest creature? Before starting, Cambyses mustered his troop of sportsmen, and calling Gobryas, asked why Phanes was not there.

"My King did not order . . ."

"He is my guest and companion, once for all; call him and follow us."

Gobryas bowed, dashed back to the palace, and in half an hour reappeared among the royal retinue with Phanes.

The Athenian was warmly welcomed by many of the group, a fact which seems strange when we remember that courtiers are of all men the most prone to envy, and a royal

favorite always the most likely object to excite their ill will. But Phanes seemed a rare exception to this rule. He had met the Achaemenidae in so frank and winning a manner, had excited so many hopes by the hints he had thrown out of an expected



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and important war, and had aroused so much merriment by well-told jests, such as the Persians had never heard before, that there were very few who did not welcome his appearance gladly, and when—in company with the king—he separated from the rest in chase of a wild ass, they openly confessed to one another, that they had never before seen so perfect a man. The clever way in which he had brought the innocence of the accused to light, the finesse which he had shown in securing the king's favor, and the ease with which he had learnt the Persian language in so short a time, were all subjects of admiration. Neither was there one even of the Achaemenidae themselves, who exceeded him in beauty of face or symmetry of figure. In the chase he proved himself a perfect horseman, and in a conflict with a bear an exceptionally courageous and skilful sportsman. On the way home, as the courtiers were extolling all the wonderful qualities possessed by the king's favorite, old Araspes exclaimed, "I quite agree with you that this Greek, who by the way has proved himself a better soldier than anything else, is no common man, but I am sure you would not praise him half as much, if he were not a foreigner and a novelty."

Phanes happened to be only separated from the speaker by some thick bushes, and heard these words. When the other had finished, he went up and said, smiling: "I understood what you said and feel obliged to you for your kind opinion. The last sentence, however, gave me even more pleasure than the first, because it confirmed my own idea that the Persians are the most generous people in the world—they praise the virtues of other nations as much, or even more, than their own."

His hearers smiled, well pleased at this flattering remark, and Phanes went on: "How different the Jews are now, for instance! They fancy themselves the exclusive favorites of the gods, and by so doing incur the contempt of all wise men, and the hatred of the whole world. And then the Egyptians! You have no idea of the perversity of that people. Why, if the priests could have their way entirely, (and they have a great deal of power in their hands) not a foreigner would be left alive in Egypt, nor a single stranger allowed to enter the country. A true Egyptian would rather starve, than eat out of the same dish with one of us. There are more strange, astonishing and wonderful things to be seen in that country than anywhere else in the world. And yet, to do it justice, I must say that Egypt has been well spoken of as the richest and most highly cultivated land under the sun. The man who possesses that kingdom need not envy the very gods themselves. It would be mere child's play to conquer that beautiful country. Ten years there gave me a perfect insight into the condition of things, and I know that their entire military caste would not be sufficient to resist one such troop as your Immortals. Well, who knows what the future may bring! Perhaps we may all make a little trip together to the Nile some day. In my opinion, your good swords have been rather long idle." These well-calculated words were received with such shouts of applause, that the king turned his horse to enquire the cause. Phanes answered quickly that the Achaemenidae were rejoicing in the thought that a war might possibly be near at hand.



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“What war?” asked the king, with the first smile that had been seen on his face for many days.

“We were only speaking in general of the possibility of such a thing,” answered Phanes carelessly; then, riding up to the king’s side, his voice took an impressive tone full of feeling, and looking earnestly into his face, he began: “It is true, my Sovereign, that I was not born in this beautiful country as one of your subjects, nor can I boast of a long acquaintance with the most powerful of monarchs, but yet I cannot resist the presumptuous, perhaps criminal thought, that the gods at my birth appointed me to be your real friend. It is not your rich gifts that have drawn me to you. I did not need them, for I belong to the wealthier class of my countrymen, and I have no son,—no heir,—to whom I can bequeath my treasures. Once I had a boy—a beautiful, gentle child;—but I was not going to speak of that,—I . . . Are you offended at my freedom of speech, my Sovereign?”

“What is there to offend me?” answered the king, who had never been spoken to in this manner before, and felt strongly attracted to the original foreigner.

“Till to-day I felt that your grief was too sacred to be disturbed, but now the time has come to rouse you from it and to make your heart glow once more. You will have to hear what must be very painful to you.”

“There is nothing more now, that can grieve me.”

“What I am going to tell you will not give you pain; on the contrary, it will rouse your anger.”

“You make me curious.”

“You have been shamefully deceived; you and that lovely creature, who died such an early death a few days ago.”

Cambyses’ eyes flashed a demand for further information.

“Amasis, the King of Egypt, has dared to make sport of you, the lord of the world. That gentle girl was not his daughter, though she herself believed that she was; she . . .”

“Impossible!”

“It would seem so, and yet I am speaking the simple truth. Amasis spun a web of lies, in which he managed to entrap, not only the whole world, but you too, my Sovereign. Nitetis, the most lovely creature ever born of woman, was the daughter of a king, but not of the usurper Amasis. Hophra, the rightful king of Egypt, was the father of this pearl among women. You may well frown, my Sovereign. It is a cruel thing to be betrayed by one’s friends and allies.”



Cambyes spurred his horse, and after a silence of some moments, kept by Phanes purposely, that his words might make a deeper impression, cried, "Tell me more! I wish to know everything."



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“Hophra had been living twenty years in easy captivity in Sais after his dethronement, when his wife, who had borne him three children and buried them all, felt that she was about to give birth to a fourth. Hophra, in his joy, determined to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving in the temple of Pacht, the Egyptian goddess supposed to confer the blessing of children, when, on his way thither, a former magnate of his court, named Patarbemis, whom, in a fit of unjust anger, he had ignominiously mutilated, fell upon him with a troop of slaves and massacred him. Amasis had the unhappy widow brought to his palace at once, and assigned her an apartment next to the one occupied by his own queen Ladice, who was also expecting soon to give birth to a child. A girl was born to Hophra’s widow, but the mother died in the same hour, and two days later Ladice bore a child also.—But I see we are in the court of the palace. If you allow, I will have the report of the physician, by whom this imposture was effected, read before you. Several of his notes have, by a remarkable conjuncture of circumstances, which I will explain to you later, fallen into my hands. A former high-priest of Heliopolis, Onuphis, is now living in Babylon, and understands all the different styles of writing in use among his countrymen. Nebenchari will, of course, refuse to help in disclosing an imposture, which must inevitably lead to the ruin of his country.”

“In an hour I expect to see you here with the man you have just spoken of. Croesus, Nebenchari, and all the Achaemenidae who were in Egypt, will have to appear also. I must have certainty before I can act, and your testimony alone is not sufficient, because I know from Amasis, that you have cause to feel a grudge against his house.”

At the time appointed all were assembled before the king in obedience to his command.

Onuphis, the former high-priest, was an old man of eighty. A pair of large, clear, intelligent, grey eyes looked out of a head so worn and wasted, as to be more like a mere skull than the head of a living man. He held a large papyrus-roll in his gaunt hand, and was seated in an easy chair, as his paralyzed limbs did not allow of his standing, even in the king’s presence. His dress was snow-white, as beseemed a priest, but there were patches and rents to be seen here and there. His figure might perhaps once have been tall and slender, but it was now so bent and shrunk by age, privation and suffering, as to look unnatural and dwarfish, in comparison with the size of his head.

Nebenchari, who revered Onuphis, not only as a high-priest deeply initiated in the most solemn mysteries, but also on account of his great age, stood by his side and arranged his cushions. At his left stood Phanes, and then Croesus, Darius and Prexaspes.

The king sat upon his throne. His face was dark and stern as he broke the silence with the following words:—“This noble Greek, who, I am inclined to believe, is my friend, has brought me strange tidings. He says that I have been basely deceived by Amasis, that my deceased wife was not his, but his predecessor’s daughter.”



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A murmur of astonishment ran through the assembly. "This old man is here to prove the imposture." Onuphis gave a sign of assent.

"Prexaspes, my first question is to you. When Nitetis was entrusted to your care, was it expressly said that she was the daughter of Amasis?"

"Expressly. Nebenchari had, it is true, praised Tachot to the noble Kassandane as the most beautiful of the twin sisters; but Amasis insisted on sending Nitetis to Persia. I imagined that, by confiding his most precious jewel to your care, he meant to put you under a special obligation; and as it seemed to me that Nitetis surpassed her sister, not only in beauty but in dignity of character, I ceased to sue for the hand of Tachot. In his letter to you too, as you will remember, he spoke of confiding to you his most beautiful, his dearest child."

"Those were his words."

"And Nitetis was, without question, the more beautiful and the nobler of the two sisters," said Croesus in confirmation of the envoy's remark. "But it certainly did strike me that Tachot was her royal parents' favorite."

"Yes," said Darius, "without doubt. Once, at a revel, Amasis joked Bartja in these words: "Don't look too deep into Tachot's eyes, for if you were a god, I could not allow you to take her to Persia! Psamtik was evidently annoyed at this remark and said to the king, 'Father, remember Phanes.'"

"Phanes!"

"Yes, my Sovereign," answered the Athenian. "Once, when he was intoxicated, Amasis let out his secret to me, and Psamtik was warning him not to forget himself a second time."

"Tell the story as it occurred."

"On my return from Cyprus to Sais as a conqueror, a great entertainment was given at court. Amasis distinguished me in every way, as having won a rich province for him, and even, to the dismay of his own countrymen, embraced me. His affection increased with his intoxication, and at last, as Psamtik and I were leading him to his private apartments, he stopped at the door of his daughter's room, and said: 'The girls sleep there. If you will put away your own wife, Athenian, I will give you Nitetis. I should like to have you for a son-in-law. There's a secret about that girl, Phanes; she's not my own child.' Before his drunken father could say more, Psamtik laid his hand before his mouth, and sent me roughly away to my lodging, where I thought the matter over and conjectured what I now, from reliable sources, know to be the truth. I entreat you,

command this old man to translate those parts of the physician Sonnophre's journal, which allude to this story."

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Cambyses nodded his consent, and the old man began to read in a voice far louder than any one could have supposed possible from his infirm appearance "On the fifth day of the month Thoth, I was sent for by the king. I had expected this, as the queen was near her confinement. With my assistance she was easily and safely delivered of a child—a weakly girl. As soon as the nurse had taken charge of this child, Amasis led me behind a curtain which ran across his wife's sleeping-apartment. There lay another infant, which I recognized as the child of Hophra's widow, who herself had died under my hands on the third day of the same month. The king then said, pointing to this strong child, 'This little creature has no parents, but, as it is written in the law that we are to show mercy to the desolate orphans, Ladice and I have determined to bring her up as our own daughter. We do not, however, wish that this deed should be made known, either to the world or to the child herself, and I ask you to keep the secret and spread a report that Ladice has given birth to twins. If you accomplish this according to our wish, you shall receive to-day five thousand rings of gold, and the fifth part of this sum yearly, during your life. I made my obeisance in silence, ordered every one to leave the sick room, and, when I again called them in, announced that Ladice had given birth to a second girl. Amasis' real child received the name of Tachot, the spurious one was called Nitetis."

At these words Cambyses rose from his seat, and strode through the hall; but Onuphis continued, without allowing himself to be disturbed: "Sixth day of the month Thoth. This morning I had just lain down to rest after the fatigues of the night, when a servant appeared with the promised gold and a letter from the king, asking me to procure a dead child, to be buried with great ceremony as the deceased daughter of King Hophra. After a great deal of trouble I succeeded, an hour ago, in obtaining one from a poor girl who had given birth to a child secretly in the house of the old woman, who lives at the entrance to the City of the Dead. The little one had caused her shame and sorrow enough, but she would not be persuaded to give up the body of her darling, until I promised that it should be embalmed and buried in the most splendid manner. We put the little corpse into my large medicine-chest, my son Nebenchari carried it this time instead of my servant Hib, and so it was introduced into the room where Hophra's widow had died. The poor girl's baby will receive a magnificent funeral. I wish I might venture to tell her, what a glorious lot awaits her darling after death. Nebenchari has just been sent for by the king."

At the second mention of this name, Cambyses stopped in his walk, and said: "Is our oculist Nebenchari the man whose name is mentioned in this manuscript?"

"Nebenchari," returned Phanes, "is the son of this very Sonnophre who changed the children."



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The physician did not raise his eyes; his face was gloomy and sullen.

Cambyses took the roll of papyrus out of Onuphis' band, looked at the characters with which it was covered, shook his head, went up to Nebenchari and said:

"Look at these characters and tell me if it is your father's writing."

Nebenchari fell on his knees and raised his hands.

"I ask, did your father paint these signs?"

"I do not know-whether . . . Indeed . . ."

"I will know the truth. Yes or no?"

"Yes, my King; but . . ."

"Rise, and be assured of my favor. Faithfulness to his ruler is the ornament of a subject; but do not forget that I am your king now. Kassandane tells me, that you are going to undertake a delicate operation to-morrow in order to restore her sight. Are you not venturing too much?"

"I can depend on my own skill, my Sovereign."

"One more question. Did you know of this fraud?"

"Yes."

"And you allowed me to remain in error?"

"I had been compelled to swear secrecy and an oath . . ."

"An oath is sacred. Gobryas, see that both these Egyptians receive a portion from my table. Old man, you seem to require better food."

"I need nothing beyond air to breathe, a morsel of bread and a draught of water to preserve me from dying of hunger and thirst, a clean robe, that I may be pleasing in the eyes of the gods and in my own, and a small chamber for myself, that I may be a hindrance to no man. I have never been richer than to-day."

"How so?"

"I am about to give away a kingdom."

"You speak in enigmas."



“By my translation of to-day I have proved, that your deceased consort was the child of Hophra. Now, our law allows the daughter of a king to succeed to the throne, when there is neither son nor brother living; if she should die childless, her husband becomes her legitimate successor. Amasis is a usurper, but the throne of Egypt is the lawful birthright of Hophra and his descendants. Psamtik forfeits every right to the crown the moment that a brother, son, daughter or son-in-law of Hophra appears. I can, therefore, salute my present sovereign as the future monarch of my own beautiful native land.”

Cambyses smiled self-complacently, and Onuphis went on: “I have read in the stars too, that Psamtik’s ruin and your own accession to the throne of Egypt have been fore-ordained.”

“We’ll show that the stars were right,” cried the king, “and as for you, you liberal old fellow, I command you to ask me any wish you like.”

“Give me a conveyance, and let me follow your army to Egypt. I long to close my eyes on the Nile.”

“Your wish is granted. Now, my friends, leave me, and see that all those who usually eat at my table are present at this evening’s revel. We will hold a council of war over the luscious wine. Methinks a campaign in Egypt will pay better than a contest with the Massagetæ.”



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He was answered by a joyful shout of "Victory to the king!" They all then left the hall, and Cambyses, summoning his dressers, proceeded for the first time to exchange his mourning garments for the splendid royal robes.

Croesus and Phanes went into the green and pleasant garden lying on the eastern side of the royal palace, which abounded in groves of trees, shrubberies, fountains and flower-beds. Phanes was radiant with delight; Croesus full of care and thought.

"Have you duly reflected," said the latter, "on the burning brand that you have just flung out into the world?"

"It is only children and fools that act without reflection," was the answer.

"You forget those who are deluded by passion."

"I do not belong to that number."

"And yet revenge is the most fearful of all the passions."

"Only when it is practised in the heat of feeling. My revenge is as cool as this piece of iron; but I know my duty."

"The highest duty of a good man, is to subordinate his own welfare to that of his country."

"That I know."

"You seem to forget, however, that with Egypt you are delivering your own country over to the Persians."

"I do not agree with you there."

"Do you believe, that when all the rest of the Mediterranean coasts belong to Persia, she will leave your beautiful Greece untouched?"

"Certainly not, but I know my own countrymen; I believe them fully capable of a victorious resistance to the hosts of the barbarians, and am confident that their courage and greatness will rise with the nearness of the danger. It will unite our divided tribes into one great nation, and be the ruin of the tyrants."

"I cannot argue with you, for I am no longer acquainted with the state of things in your native country, and besides, I believe you to be a wise man—not one who would plunge a nation into ruin merely for the gratification of his own ambition. It is a fearful thing that entire nations should have to suffer for the guilt of one man, if that man be one who



wears a crown. And now, if my opinion is of any importance to you, tell me what the deed was which has roused your desire of vengeance.”

“Listen then, and never try again to turn me from my purpose. You know the heir to the Egyptian throne, and you know Rhodopis too. The former was, for many reasons, my mortal enemy, the latter the friend of every Greek, but mine especially. When I was obliged to leave Egypt, Psamtik threatened me with his vengeance; your son Gyges saved my life. A few weeks later my two children came to Naukratis, in order to follow me out to Sigeum. Rhodopis took them kindly under her protection, but some wretch had discovered the secret and betrayed it to the prince. The very next night her house was surrounded and searched,—my children found and taken captive. Amasis had meanwhile become blind, and allowed his miserable son to do what he liked; the wretch dared to . . .”



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“Kill your only son?”

“You have said it.”

“And your other child?”

“The girl is still in their hands.”

“They will do her an injury when they hear . . .”

“Let her die. Better go to one’s grave childless, than unrevenged.”

“I understand. I cannot blame you any longer. The boy’s blood must be revenged.”

And so saying, the old man pressed the Athenian’s right hand. The latter dried his tears, mastered his emotion, and cried: “Let us go to the council of war now. No one can be so thankful for Psamtik’s infamous deeds as Cambyses. That man with his hasty passions was never made to be a prince of peace.”

“And yet it seems to me the highest duty of a king is to work for the inner welfare of his kingdom. But human beings are strange creatures; they praise their butchers more than their benefactors. How many poems have been written on Achilles! but did any one ever dream of writing songs on the wise government of Pittakus?”

“More courage is required to shed blood, than to plant trees.”

“But much more kindness and wisdom to heal wounds, than to make them.— I have still one question which I should very much like to ask you, before we go into the hall. Will Bartja be able to stay at Naukratis when Amasis is aware of the king’s intentions?”

“Certainly not. I have prepared him for this, and advised his assuming a disguise and a false name.”

“Did he agree?”

“He seemed willing to follow my advice.”

“But at all events it would be well to send a messenger to put him on his guard.”

“We will ask the king’s permission.”

“Now we must go. I see the wagons containing the viands of the royal household just driving away from the kitchen.”

“How many people are maintained from the king’s table daily?”



“About fifteen thousand.”

“Then the Persians may thank the gods, that their king only takes one meal a day.”

[This immense royal household is said to have cost 400 talents, that is (L90,000.) daily. Athenaus, Deipn. p. 607.]

CHAPTER IX.

Six weeks after these events a little troop of horsemen might have been seen riding towards the gates of Sardis. The horses and their riders were covered with sweat and dust. The former knew that they were drawing near a town, where there would be stables and mangers, and exerted all their remaining powers; but yet their pace did not seem nearly fast enough to satisfy the impatience of two men, dressed in Persian costume, who rode at the head of the troop.



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The well-kept royal road ran through fields of good black, arable land, planted with trees of many different kinds. It crossed the outlying spurs of the Tmolus range of mountains. At their foot stretched rows of olive, citron and plane-trees, plantations of mulberries and vines; at a higher level grew firs, cypresses and nut-tree copses. Fig-trees and date-palms, covered with fruit, stood sprinkled over the fields; and the woods and meadows were carpeted with brightly-colored and sweetly-scented flowers. The road led over ravines and brooks, now half dried up by the heat of summer, and here and there the traveller came upon a well at the side of the road, carefully enclosed, with seats for the weary, and sheltering shrubs. Oleanders bloomed in the more damp and shady places; slender palms waved wherever the sun was hottest. Over this rich landscape hung a deep blue, perfectly cloudless sky, bounded on its southern horizon by the snowy peaks of the Tmolus mountains, and on the west by the Sipylus range of hills, which gave a bluish shimmer in the distance.

The road went down into the valley, passing through a little wood of birches, the stems of which, up to the very tree-top, were twined with vines covered with bunches of grapes.

The horsemen stopped at a bend in the road, for there, before them, in the celebrated valley of the Hermus, lay the golden Sardis, formerly the capital of the Lydian kingdom and residence of its king, Croesus.

Above the reed-thatched roofs of its numerous houses rose a black, steep rock; the white marble buildings on its summit could be seen from a great distance. These buildings formed the citadel, round the threefold walls of which, many centuries before, King Meles had carried a lion in order to render them impregnable. On its southern side the citadel-rock was not so steep, and houses had been built upon it. Croesus' former palace lay to the north, on the golden-sanded Pactolus. This reddish-colored river flowed above the market-place, (which, to our admiring travellers, looked like a barren spot in the midst of a blooming meadow), ran on in a westerly direction, and then entered a narrow mountain valley, where it washed the walls of the temple of Cybele.

Large gardens stretched away towards the east, and in the midst of them lay the lake Gygaeus, covered with gay boats and snowy swans, and sparkling like a mirror.

A short distance from the lake were a great number of artificial mounds, three of which were especially noticeable from their size and height.

[See also Hamilton's *Asia Minor*, I. P. 145. Herodotus (I. 93.) calls the tombs of the Lydian kings the largest works of human hands, next to the Egyptian and Babylonian. These cone-shaped hills can be seen to this day, standing near the ruins of Sardis, not far from the lake of Gygaea. Hamilton (*Asia Minor*, I. p. i) counted some sixty of them, and could not ride round the hill of Alayattes in less



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than ten minutes. Prokesch saw 100 such tumuli. The largest, tomb of Alyattes, still measures 3400 feet in circumference, and the length of its slope is 650 feet. According to Prokesch, gigantic Phallus columns lie on some of these graves.]

“What can those strange-looking earth-heaps mean?” said Darius, the leader of the troop, to Prexaspes, Cambyses’ envoy, who rode at his side.

“They are the graves of former Lydian kings,” was the answer. “The middle one is in memory of the princely pair Panthea and Abradatas, and the largest, that one to the left, was erected to the father of Croesus, Alyattes. It was raised by the tradesmen, mechanics, and girls, to their late king, and on the five columns, which stand on its summit, you can read how much each of these classes contributed to the work. The girls were the most industrious. Gyges’ grandfather is said to have been their especial friend.”

“Then the grandson must have degenerated very much from the old stock.”

“Yes, and that seems the more remarkable, because Croesus himself in his youth was by no means averse to women, and the Lydians generally are devoted to such pleasures. You see the white walls of that temple yonder in the midst of its sacred grove. That is the temple of the goddess of Sardis, Cybele or Ma, as they call her. In that grove there is many a sheltered spot where the young people of Sardis meet, as they say, in honor of their goddess.”

“Just as in Babylon, at the festival of Mylitta.”

“There is the same custom too on the coast of Cyprus. When I landed there on the way back from Egypt, I was met by a troop of lovely girls, who, with songs, dances, and the clang of cymbals, conducted me to the sacred grove of their goddess.”

“Well, Zopyrus will not grumble at Bartja’s illness.”

“He will spend more of his time in the grove of Cybele, than at his patient’s bedside. How glad I shall be to see that jolly fellow again!”

“Yes, he’ll keep you from falling into those melancholy fits that you have been so subject to lately.” “You are quite right to blame me for those fits, and I must not yield to them, but they are not without ground. Croesus says we only get low-spirited, when we are either too lazy or too weak to struggle against annoyances, and I believe he is right. But no one shall dare to accuse Darius of weakness or idleness. If I can’t rule the world, at least I will be my own master.” And as he said these words, the handsome youth drew himself up, and sat erect in his saddle. His companion gazed in wonder at him.



“Really, you son of Hystaspes,” he said, “I believe you must be meant for something great. It was not by chance that, when you were still a mere child, the gods sent their favorite Cyrus that dream which induced him to order you into safe keeping.”

“And yet my wings have never appeared.”

“No bodily ones, certainly; but mental ones, likely enough. Young man, young man, you’re on a dangerous road.”



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“Have winged creatures any need to be afraid of precipices?”

“Certainly; when their strength fails them.”

“But I am strong.”

“Stronger creatures than you will try to break your pinions.”

“Let them. I want nothing but what is right, and shall trust to my star.”

“Do you know its name?”

“It ruled in the hour of my birth, and its name is Anahita.”

“I think I know better. A burning ambition is the sun, whose rays guide all your actions. Take care; I tried that way myself once; it leads to fame or to disgrace, but very seldom to happiness. Fame to the ambitious is like salt water to the thirsty; the more he gets, the more he wants. I was once only a poor soldier, and am now Cambyses’ ambassador. But you, what can you have to strive for? There is no man in the kingdom greater than yourself, after the sons of Cyrus . . . Do my eyes deceive me? Surely those two men riding to meet us with a troop of horsemen must be Gyges and Zopyrus. The Angare, who left the inn before us, must have told them of our coming.”

“To be sure. Look at that fellow Zopyrus, how he’s waving and beckoning with that palm-leaf.”

“Here, you fellows, cut us a few twigs from those bushes-quick. We’ll answer his green palm-leaf with a purple pomegranate-branch.”

In a few minutes the friends had embraced one another, and the two bands were riding together into the populous town, through the gardens surrounding the lake Gygaeus, the Sardians’ place of recreation. It was now near sunset, a cooler breeze was beginning to blow, and the citizens were pouring through the gates to enjoy themselves in the open air. Lydian and Persian warriors, the former wearing richly-ornamented helmets, the latter tiaras in the form of a cylinder, were following girls who were painted and wreathed. Children were being led to the lake by their nurses, to see the swans fed. An old blind man was seated under a plane-tree, singing sad ditties to a listening crowd and accompanying them on the Magadis, the twenty-stringed Lydian lute. Youths were enjoying themselves at games of ball, ninepins, and dice, and half-grown girls screaming with fright, when the ball hit one of their group or nearly fell into the water.

The travellers scarcely noticed this gay scene, though at another time it would have delighted them. They were too much interested in enquiring particulars of Bartja’s illness and recovery.



At the brazen gates of the palace which had formerly belonged to Croesus, they were met by Oroetes, the satrap of Sardis, in a magnificent court-dress overloaded with ornaments. He was a stately man, whose small penetrating black eyes looked sharply out from beneath a bushy mass of eyebrow. His satrapy was one of the most important and profitable in the entire kingdom, and his household could bear a comparison with that of Cambyses in richness and splendor. Though he possessed fewer wives and attendants than the king, it was no inconsiderable troop of guards, slaves, eunuchs and gorgeously-dressed officials, which appeared at the palace-gates to receive the travellers.



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The vice-regal palace, which was still kept up with great magnificence, had been, in the days when Croesus occupied it, the most splendid of royal residences; after the taking of Sardis, however, the greater part of the dethroned king's treasures and works of art had been sent to Cyrus's treasure-house in Pasargadae. When that time of terror had passed, the Lydians brought many a hidden treasure into the light of day once more, and, by their industry and skill in art during the peaceful years which they enjoyed under Cyrus and Cambyses, recovered their old position so far, that Sardis was again looked upon as one of the wealthiest cities of Asia Minor, and therefore, of the world.

Accustomed as Darius and Prexaspes were to royal splendor, they were still astonished at the beauty and brilliancy of the satrap's palace. The marble work, especially, made a great impression on them, as nothing of the kind was to be found in Babylon, Susa or Ecbatane, where burnt brick and cedar-wood supply the place of the polished marble.

[The palace of Persepolis did not exist at the date of our story. It was built partly of black stone from Mount Rachmed, and partly of white marble; it was probably begun by Darius. The palace of Susa was built of brick, (Strabo p. 728) that of Ecbatana of wood overlaid with plates of gold of immense value, and roofed with tiles made of the precious metals.]

They found Bartja lying on a couch in the great hall; he looked very pale, and stretched out his arms towards them.

The friends supped together at the satrap's table and then retired to Bartja's private room, in order to enjoy an undisturbed conversation.

"Well, Bartja, how did you come by this dangerous illness?" was Darius' first question after they were seated.

"I was thoroughly well, as you know," said Bartja, "when we left Babylon, and we reached Germa, a little town on the Sangarius, without the slightest hindrance. The ride was long and we were very tired, burnt too by the scorching May sun, and covered with dust; the river flows by the station, and its waves looked so clear and bright—so inviting for a bathe—that in a minute Zopyrus and I were off our horses, undressed, and in the water. Gyges told us we were very imprudent, but we felt confident that we were too much inured to such things to get any harm, and very much enjoyed our swim in the cool, green water. Gyges, perfectly calm as usual, let us have our own way, waited till our bath was over, and then plunged in himself.

"In two hours we were in our saddles again, pushing on as if for our very lives, changing horses at every station, and turning night into day.

"We were near Ipsus, when I began to feel violent pains in the head and limbs. I was ashamed to say anything about it and kept upright on my saddle, until we had to take

fresh horses at Bagis. Just as I was in the very act of mounting, I lost my senses and strength, and fell down on the ground in a dead faint.”



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“Yes, a pretty fright you gave us,” interrupted Zopyrus, “by dropping down in that fashion. It was fortunate that Gyges was there, for I lost my wits entirely; he, of course, kept his presence of mind, and after relieving his feelings in words not exactly flattering to us two, he behaved like a circumspect general.—A fool of a doctor came running up and protested that it was all over with poor Bart, for which I gave him a good thrashing.”

“Which he didn’t particularly object to,” said the satrap, laughing, “seeing that you told them to lay a gold stater on every stripe.”

“Yes, yes, my pugnacity costs me very dear sometimes. But to our story. As soon as Bartja had opened his eyes, Gyges sent me off to Sardis to fetch a good physician and an easy travelling-carriage. That ride won’t so soon be imitated. An hour before I reached the gates my third horse knocked up under me, so I had to trust to my own legs, and began running as fast as I could. The people must all have thought me mad. At last I saw a man on horseback—a merchant from Kelaenze—dragged him from his horse, jumped into the saddle, and, before the next morning dawned, I was back again with our invalid, bringing the best physician in Sardis, and Oroetes’ most commodious travelling-carriage. We brought him to this house at a slow footpace, and here a violent fever came on, he became delirious, talked all the nonsense that could possibly come into a human brain, and made us so awfully anxious, that the mere remembrance of that time brings the big drops of perspiration to my forehead.”

Bartja took his friend’s hand: “I owe my life to him and Gyges,” said he, turning to Darius. “Till to-day, when they set out to meet you, they have never left me for a minute; a mother could not have nursed her sick child more carefully. And Oroetes, I am much obliged to you too; doubly so because your kindness subjected you to annoyance.”

“How could that be?” asked Darius.

“That Polykrates of Samos, whose name we heard so often in Egypt, has the best physician that Greece has ever produced. While I was lying here ill, Oroetes wrote to this Democedes, making him immense promises, if he would only come to Sardis directly. The Sainian pirates, who infest the whole Ionian coast, took the messenger captive and brought Oroetes’ letter to their master Polykrates. He opened it, and sent the messenger back with the answer, that Democedes was in his pay, and that if Oroetes needed his advice he must apply to Polykrates himself. Our generous friend submitted for my sake, and asked the Samian to send his physician to Sardis.”

“Well,” said Prexaspes, “and what followed?” The proud island-prince sent him at once. He cured me, as you see, and left us a few days ago loaded with presents.”

“Well,” interrupted Zopyrus, “I can quite understand, that Polykrates likes to keep his physician near him. I assure you, Darius, it would not be easy to find his equal. He’s as handsome as Minutscher, as clever as Piran Wisa, as strong as Rustem, and as



benevolent and helpful as the god Soma. I wish you could have seen how well he threw those round metal plates he calls discs. I am no weakling, but when we wrestled he soon threw me. And then he could tell such famous stories—stories that made a man's heart dance within him.”



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[This very Oroetes afterwards succeeded in enticing Polykrates to Sardis and there crucified him. Herod. III. 120-125. Valerius Maximus VI. 9. 5.]

“We know just such a fellow too,” said Darius, smiling at his friend’s enthusiasm. “That Athenian Phanes, who came to prove our innocence.”

“The physician Democedes is from Crotona, a place which must be somewhere very near the setting sun.”

“But is inhabited by Greeks, like Athens,” added Oroetes. “Ah, my young friends, you must beware of those fellows; they’re as cunning, deceitful, and selfish, as they are strong, clever, and handsome.”

“Democedes is generous and sincere,” cried Zopyrus.

“And Croesus himself thinks Phanes not only an able, but a virtuous man,” added Darius.

“Sappho too has always, and only spoken well of the Athenian,” said Bartja, in confirmation of Darius’s remark. “But don’t let us talk any more about these Greeks,” he went on. “They give Oroetes so much trouble by their refractory and stubborn conduct, that he is not very fond of them.”

“The gods know that,” sighed the satrap. “It’s more difficult to keep one Greek town in order, than all the countries between the Euphrates and the Tigris.”

While Oroetes was speaking, Zopyrus had gone to the window. “The stars are already high in the heavens,” he said, “and Bartja is tired; so make haste, Darius, and tell us something about home.”

The son of Hystaspes agreed at once, and began by relating the events which we have heard already. Bartja, especially, was distressed at hearing of Nitetis’ sad end, and the discovery of Amasis’ fraud filled them all with astonishment. After a short pause, Darius went on:

“When once Nitetis’ descent had been fully proved, Cambyses was like a changed man. He called a council of war, and appeared at table in the royal robes instead of his mourning garments. You can fancy what universal joy the idea of a war with Egypt excited. Even Croesus, who you know is one of Amasis’ well-wishers, and advises peace whenever it is possible, had not a word to say against it. The next morning, as usual, what had been resolved on in intoxication was reconsidered by sober heads; after several opinions had been given, Phanes asked permission to speak, and spoke I should think for an hour. But how well! It was as if every word he said came direct from the gods. He has learnt our language in a wonderfully short time, but it flowed from his



lips like honey. Sometimes he drew tears from every eye, at others excited stormy shouts of joy, and then wild bursts of rage. His gestures were as graceful as those of a dancing-girl, but at the same time manly and dignified. I can't repeat his speech; my poor words, by the side of his, would sound like the rattle of a drum after a peal of thunder. But when at last, inspired and carried away by his eloquence, we had unanimously decided on war, he began to speak once more on the best ways and means of prosecuting it successfully."



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Here Darius was obliged to stop, as Zopyrus had fallen on his neck in an ecstasy of delight. Bartja, Gyges and Oroetes were not less delighted, and they all begged him to go on with his tale.

“Our army,” began Darius afresh, “ought to be at the boundaries of Egypt by the month Farwardin, (March) as the inundation of the Nile, which would hinder the march of our infantry, begins in Murdad (July). Phanes is now on his way to the Arabians to secure their assistance; in hopes that these sons of the desert may furnish our army with water and guides through their dry and thirsty land. He will also endeavor to win the rich island of Cyprus, which he once conquered for Amasis, over to our side. As it was through his mediation that the kings of the island were allowed to retain their crowns, they will be willing to listen to his advice. In short the Athenian leaves nothing uncared for, and knows every road and path as if he were the sun himself He showed us a picture of the world on a plate of copper.”

Oroetes nodded and said, “I have such a picture of the world too. A Milesian named Hekataeus, who spends his life in travelling, drew it, and gave it me in exchange for a free-pass.”

[Hekataeus of Miletus maybe called “the father of geography,” as Herodotus was “the father of history.” He improved the map made by Anaximander, and his great work, “the journey round the world,” was much prized by the ancients; but unfortunately, with the exception of some very small fragments, has now perished. Herodotus assures us, (V. 36.) that Hekataeus was intimately acquainted with every part of the Persian empire, and had also travelled over Egypt. he lived at the date of our narrative, having been born at Miletus 550 B. C. He lived to see the fall of his native city in 496 B. C. His map has been restored by Klausen and can be seen also in Mure’s Lan. and Lit. of Ancient Greece. Vol. IV. Maps existed, however, much earlier, the earliest known being one of the gold-mines, drawn very cleverly by an Egyptian priest, and so well sketched as to give a pretty clear idea of the part of the country intended. It is preserved in the Egyptian Museum at Turin.]

“What notions these Greeks have in their heads!” exclaimed Zopyrus, who could not explain to himself what a picture of the world could look like.

“To-morrow I will show you my copper tablet, said Oroetes, but now we must allow Darius to go on.”

“So Phanes has gone to Arabia,” continued Darius, “and Prexaspes was sent hither not only to command you, Oroetes, to raise as many forces as possible, especially Ionians and Carians, of whom Phanes has offered to undertake the command, but also to propose terms of alliance to Polykrates.”

“To that pirate!” asked Oroetes, and his face darkened.



“The very same,” answered Prexaspes, not appearing to notice the change in Oroetes’ face. “Phanes has already received assurances from this important naval power, which sound as if we might expect a favorable answer to my proposal.”



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“The Phoenician, Syrian and Ionian ships of war would be quite sufficient to cope with the Egyptian fleet.”

“There you are right; but if Polykrates were to declare against us, we should not be able to hold our own at sea; you say yourself that he is all-powerful in the AEGean.”

“Still I decidedly disapprove of entering into treaty with such a robber.”

“We want powerful allies, and Polykrates is very powerful at sea. It will be time to humble him, when we have used him to help us in conquering Egypt. For the present I entreat you to suppress all personal feeling, and keep the success of our great plan alone in view. I am empowered to say this in the king’s name, and to show his ring in token thereof.”

Oroetes made a brief obeisance before this symbol of despotism, and asked: “What does Cambyses wish me to do?”

“He commands you to use every means in your power to secure an alliance with the Samian; and also to send your troops to join the main army on the plains of Babylon as soon as possible.”

The satrap bowed and left the room with a look betraying irritation and defiance.

When the echo of his footsteps had died away among the colonnades of the inner court, Zopyrus exclaimed: “Poor fellow, it’s really very hard for him to have to meet that proud man, who has so often behaved insolently to him, on friendly terms. Think of that story about the physician for instance.”

“You are too lenient,” interrupted Darius. “I don’t like this Oroetes. He has no right to receive the king’s commands in that way. Didn’t you see him bite his lips till they bled, when Prexaspes showed him the king’s ring?”

“Yes,” cried the envoy, “he’s a defiant, perverse man. He left the room so quickly, only because he could not keep down his anger any longer.”

“Still,” said Bartja, “I hope you will keep his conduct a secret from my brother, for he has been very good to me.”

Prexaspes bowed, but Darius said: “We must keep an eye on the fellow. Just here, so far from the king’s gate and in the midst of nations hostile to Persia, we want governors who are more ready to obey their king than this Oroetes seems to be. Why, he seems to fancy he is King of Lydia!”

“Do you dislike the satrap?” said Zopyrus.



“Well, I think I do,” was the answer. “I always take an aversion or a fancy to people at first sight, and very seldom find reason to change my mind afterwards. I disliked Oroetes before I heard him speak a word, and I remember having the same feeling towards Psamtik, though Amasis took my fancy.”

“There’s no doubt that you’re very different from the rest of us,” said Zopyrus laughing, “but now, to please me, let this poor Oroetes alone. I’m glad he’s gone though, because we can talk more freely about home. How is Kassandane? and your worshipped Atossa? Croesus too, how is he? and what are my wives about? They’ll soon have a new companion. To-morrow I intend to sue for the hand of Oroetes’ pretty daughter. We’ve talked a good deal of love with our eyes already. I don’t know whether we spoke Persian or Syrian, but we said the most charming things to one another.”



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The friends laughed, and Darius, joining in their merriment, said: "Now you shall hear a piece of very good news. I have kept it to the last, because it is the best I have. Now, Bartja, prick up your ears. Your mother, the noble Kassandane, has been cured of her blindness! Yes, yes, it is quite true.—Who cured her? Why who should it be, but that crabbed old Nebenchari, who has become, if possible, moodier than ever. Come, now, calm yourselves, and let me go on with my story; or it will be morning before Bartja gets to sleep. Indeed. I think we had better separate now: you've heard the best, and have something to dream about What, you will not? Then, in the name of Mithras, I must go on, though it should make my heart bleed.

"I'll begin with the king. As long as Phanes was in Babylon, he seemed to forget his grief for Nitetis.

"The Athenian was never allowed to leave him. They were as inseparable as Reksch and Rustem. Cambyses had no time to think of his sorrow, for Phanes had always some new idea or other, and entertained us all, as well as the king, marvellously. And we all liked him too; perhaps, because no one could really envy him. Whenever he was alone, the tears came into his eyes at the thought of his boy, and this made his great cheerfulness—a cheerfulness which he always managed to impart to the king, Bartja,—the more admirable. Every morning he went down to the Euphrates with Cambyses and the rest of us, and enjoyed watching the sons of the Achaemenidae at their exercises. When he saw them riding at full speed past the sand-hills and shooting the pots placed on them into fragments with their arrows, or throwing blocks of wood at one another and cleverly evading the blows, he confessed that he could not imitate them in these exercises, but at the same time he offered to accept a challenge from any of us in throwing the spear and in wrestling. In his quick way he sprang from his horse, stripped off his clothes—it was really a shame—and, to the delight of the boys, threw their wrestling-master as if he had been a feather.

[In the East, nudity was, even in those days, held to be disgraceful, while the Greeks thought nothing so beautiful as the naked human body. The Hetaira Phryne was summoned before the judges for an offence against religion. Her defender, seeing that sentence was about to be pronounced against his client, suddenly tore away the garment which covered her bosom. The artifice was successful. The judges pronounced her not guilty, being convinced that such wondrous grace and beauty could only belong to a favorite of Aphrodite. Athen. XIII. p. 590]

"Then he knocked over a number of bragging fellows, and would have thrown me too if he had not been too fatigued. I assure you, I am really stronger than he is, for I can lift greater weights, but he is as nimble as an eel, and has wonderful tricks by which he gets hold of his adversary. His being



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naked too is a great help. If it were not so indecent, we ought always to wrestle stripped, and anoint our skins, as the Greeks do, with the olive-oil. He beat us too in throwing the spear, but the king, who you know is proud of being the best archer in Persia, sent his arrow farther. Phanes was especially pleased with our rule, that in a wrestling-match the one who is thrown must kiss the hand of his victor. At last he showed us a new exercise:—boxing. He refused, however, to try his skill on any one but a slave, so Cambyses sent for the biggest and strongest man among the servants—my groom, Bessus—a giant who can bring the hind legs of a horse together and hold them so firmly that the creature trembles all over and cannot stir. This big fellow, taller by a head than Phanes, shrugged his shoulders contemptuously on hearing that he was to box with the little foreign gentleman. He felt quite sure of victory, placed himself opposite his adversary, and dealt him a blow heavy enough to kill an elephant. Phanes avoided it cleverly, in the same moment hitting the giant with his naked fist so powerfully under the eyes, that the blood streamed from his nose and mouth, and the huge, uncouth fellow fell on the ground with a yell. When they picked him up his face looked like a pumpkin of a greenish-blue color. The boys shouted with delight at his discomfiture; but we admired the dexterity of this Greek, and were especially glad to see the king in such good spirits; we noticed this most when Phanes was singing Greek songs and dance-melodies to him accompanied by the lute.

“Meanwhile Kassandane’s blindness had been cured, and this of course tended not a little to disperse the king’s melancholy.

“In short it was a very pleasant time, and I was just going to ask for Atossa’s hand in marriage, when Phanes went off to Arabia, and everything was changed.

“No sooner had he turned his back on the gates of Babylon than all the evil Divs seemed to have entered into the king. He went about, a moody, silent man, speaking to no one; and to drown his melancholy would begin drinking, even at an early hour in the morning, quantities of the strongest Syrian wine. By the evening he was generally so intoxicated that he had to be carried out of the hall, and would wake up the next morning with headache and spasms. In the day-time he would wander about as if looking for something, and in the night they often heard him calling Nitetis. The physicians became very anxious about his health, but when they sent him medicine he threw it away. It was quite right of Croesus to say, as he did once ‘Ye Magi and Chaldaeans! before trying to cure a sick man we must discover the seat of his disease. Do you know it in this case? No? Then I will tell you what ails the king. He has an internal complaint and a wound. The former is called ennui, and the latter is in his heart. The Athenian is a good remedy for the first, but for the second I know of none; such wounds either scar over of themselves, or the patient bleeds to death inwardly.’”



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“I know of a remedy for the king though,” exclaimed Otanes when he heard these words. “We must persuade him to send for the women, or at least for my daughter Phaedime, back from Susa. Love is good for dispersing melancholy, and makes the blood flow faster.” We acknowledged that he was right, and advised him to remind the king of his banished wives. He ventured to make the proposal while we were at supper, but got such a harsh rebuff for his pains, that we all pitied him. Soon after this, Cambyses sent one morning for all the Mobeds and Chaldaeans, and commanded them to interpret a strange dream which he had had. In his dream he had been standing in the midst of a dry and barren plain: barren as a threshing-floor, it did not produce a single blade of grass. Displeased at the desert aspect of the place, he was just going to seek other and more fruitful regions, when Atossa appeared, and, without seeing him, ran towards a spring which welled up through the arid soil as if by enchantment. While he was gazing in wonder at this scene, he noticed that wherever the foot of his sister touched the parched soil, graceful terebinths sprang up, changing, as they grew, into cypresses whose tops reached unto heaven. As he was going to speak to Atossa, he awoke.

The Mobeds and Chaldaeans consulted together and interpreted the dream thus? ‘Atossa would be successful in all she undertook.’

“Cambyses seemed satisfied with this answer, but, as the next night the vision appeared again, he threatened the wise men with death, unless they could give him another and a different interpretation. They pondered long, and at last answered, ‘that Atossa would become a queen and the mother of mighty princes.’

“This answer really contented the king, and he smiled strangely to himself as he told us his dream. “The same day Kassandane sent for me and told me to give up all thoughts of her daughter, as I valued my life.

“Just as I was leaving the queen’s garden I saw Atossa behind a pomegranate-bush. She beckoned. I went to her; and in that hour we forgot danger and sorrow, but said farewell to each other for ever. Now you know all; and now that I have given her up—now that I know it would be madness even to think of her again—I am obliged to be very stern with myself, lest, like the king, I should fall into deep melancholy for the sake of a woman. And this is the end of the story, the close of which we were all expecting, when Atossa, as I lay under sentence of death, sent me a rose, and made me the happiest of mortals. If I had not betrayed my secret then, when we thought our last hour was near, it would have gone with me to my grave. But what am I talking about? I know I can trust to your secrecy, but pray don’t look at me so deplorably. I think I am still to be envied, for I have had one hour of enjoyment that would outweigh a century of misery. Thank you,—thank you: now let me finish my story as quickly as I can.



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“Three days after I had taken leave of Atossa I had to marry Artystone, the daughter of Gobryas. She is beautiful, and would make any other man happy. The day after the wedding the Angare reached Babylon with the news of your illness. My mind was made up at once; I begged the king to let me go to you, nurse you, and warn you of the danger which threatens your life in Egypt—took leave of my bride, in spite of all my father-in-law’s protestations, and went off at full speed with Prexaspes, never resting till I reached your side, my dear Bartja. Now I shall go with you and Zopyrus to Egypt, for Gyges must accompany the ambassador to Samos, as interpreter. This is the king’s command; he has been in better spirits the last few days; the inspection of the masses of troops coming up to Babylon diverts him, besides which, the Chaldaeans have assured him that the planet Adar, which belongs to their wargod Chanon, promises a great victory to the Persian arms. When do you think you shall be able to travel, Bartja?”

“To-morrow, if you like,” was the answer. “The doctors say the sea-voyage will do me good, and the journey by land to Smyrna is very short.”

“And I can assure you,” added Zopyrus, “that Sappho will cure you sooner than all the doctors in the world.”

“Then we will start in three days;” said Darius after some consideration, “we have plenty to do before starting. Remember we are going into what may almost be called an enemy’s country. I have been thinking the matter over, and it seems to me that Bartja must pass for a Babylonian carpet-merchant, I for his brother, and Zopyrus for a dealer in Sardinian red.”

“Couldn’t we be soldiers?” asked Zopyrus. “It’s such an ignominious thing to be taken for cheating pedlers. How would it be, for instance, if we passed ourselves off for Lydian soldiers, escaped from punishment, and seeking service in the Egyptian army?”

“That’s not a bad idea,” said Bartja, “and I think too that we look more like soldiers than traders.”

“Looks and manner are no guide,” said Gyges. “Those great Greek merchants and ship-owners go about as proudly as if the world belonged to them. But I don’t find Zopyrus’ proposal a bad one.”

“Then so let it be,” said Darius, yielding. “In that case Oroetes must provide us with the uniform of Lydian Taxiarchs.”

“You’d better take the splendid dress of the Chiliarchs” at once, I think,” cried Gyges.

“Why, on such young men, that would excite suspicion directly.”

“But we can’t appear as common soldiers.”



“No, but as Hekatontarchs.”

“All right,” said Zopyrus laughing. “Anything you like except a shop-keeper.—So in three days we are off. I am glad I shall just have time to make sure of the satrap’s little daughter, and to visit the grove of Cybele at last. Now, goodnight, Bartja; don’t get up too early. What will Sappho say, if you come to her with pale cheeks?”



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CHAPTER X.

The sun of a hot midsummer-day had risen on Naukratis. The Nile had already begun to overflow its banks, and the fields and gardens of the Egyptians were covered with water.

The harbor was crowded with craft of all kinds. Egyptian vessels were there, manned by Phoenician colonists from the coasts of the Delta, and bringing fine woven goods from Malta, metals and precious stones from Sardinia, wine and copper from Cyprus. Greek triremes laden with oil, wine and mastic-wood; metal-work and woollen wares from Chalcis, Phoenician and Syrian craft with gaily-colored sails, and freighted with cargoes of purple stuffs, gems, spices, glass-work, carpets and cedar-trees,—used in Egypt, where wood was very scarce, for building purposes, and taking back gold, ivory, ebony, brightly-plumaged tropical birds, precious stones and black slaves,—the treasures of Ethiopia; but more especially the far-famed Egyptian corn, Memphian chariots, lace from Sais, and the finer sorts of papyrus. The time when commerce was carried on merely by barter was now, however, long past, and the merchants of Naukratis not seldom paid for their goods in gold coin and carefully-weighed silver.

Large warehouses stood round the harbor of this Greek colony, and slightly-built dwelling-houses, into which the idle mariners were lured by the sounds of music and laughter, and the glances and voices of painted and rouged damsels. Slaves, both white and colored, rowers and steersmen, in various costumes, were hurrying hither and thither, while the ships' captains, either dressed in the Greek fashion or in Phoenician garments of the most glaring colors, were shouting orders to their crews and delivering up their cargoes to the merchants. Whenever a dispute arose, the Egyptian police with their long staves, and the Greek warders of the harbor were quickly at hand. The latter were appointed by the elders of the merchant-body in this Milesian colony.

The port was getting empty now, for the hour at which the market opened was near, and none of the free Greeks cared to be absent from the market-place then. This time, however, not a few remained behind, curiously watching a beautifully-built Samian ship, the Okeia, with a long prow like a swan's neck, on the front of which a likeness of the goddess Hera was conspicuous. It was discharging its cargo, but the public attention was more particularly attracted by three handsome youths, in the dress of Lydian officers, who left the ship, followed by a number of slaves carrying chests and packages.

The handsomest of the three travellers, in whom of course our readers recognize their three young friends, Darius, Bartja and Zopyrus, spoke to one of the harbor police and asked for the house of Theopompus the Milesian, to whom they were bound on a visit.



Polite and ready to do a service, like all the Greeks, the police functionary at once led the way across the market-place,—where the opening of business had just been announced by the sound of a bell,—to a handsome house, the property of the Milesian, Theopompus, one of the most important and respected men in Naukratis.



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The party, however, did not succeed in crossing the market-place without hindrance. They found it easy enough to evade the importunities of impudent fishsellers, and the friendly invitations of butchers, bakers, sausage and vegetable-sellers, and potters. But when they reached the part allotted to the flower-girls, Zopyrus was so enchanted with the scene, that he clapped his hands for joy.

[Separate portions of the market were set apart for the sale of different goods. The part appointed for the flower-sellers, who passed in general for no better than they should be, was called the "myrtle-market." Aristoph. Thesmoph. 448.]

Three wonderfully-lovely girls, in white dresses of some half-transparent material, with colored borders, were seated together on low stools, binding roses, violets and orange-blossoms into one long wreath. Their charming heads were wreathed with flowers too, and looked very like the lovely rosebuds which one of them, on seeing the young men come up, held out to their notice.

"Buy my roses, my handsome gentlemen," she said in a clear, melodious voice, "to put in your sweethearts' hair."

Zopyrus took the flowers, and holding the girl's hand fast in his own, answered, "I come from a far country, my lovely child, and have no sweetheart in Naukratis yet; so let me put the roses in your own golden hair, and this piece of gold in your white little hand."

The girl burst into a merry laugh, showed her sister the handsome present, and answered: "By Eros, such gentlemen as you cannot want for sweethearts. Are you brothers?"

"No."

"That's a pity, for we are sisters."

"And you thought we should make three pretty couples?"

"I may have thought it, but I did not say so."

"And your sisters?"

[This passage was suggested by the following epigram of Dionysius "Roses are blooming on thy cheek, with roses thy basket is laden, Which dost thou sell? The flowers? Thyself? Or both, my pretty maiden?"]

The girls laughed, as if they were but little averse to such a connection, and offered Bartja and Darius rosebuds too.



The young men accepted them, gave each a gold piece in return, and were not allowed to leave these beauties until their helmets had been crowned with laurel.

Meanwhile the news of the strangers' remarkable liberality had spread among the many girls, who were selling ribbons, wreaths and flowers close by. They all brought roses too and invited the strangers with looks and words to stay with them and buy their flowers.

Zopyrus, like many a young gentleman in Naukratis, would gladly have accepted their invitations, for most of these girls were beautiful, and their hearts were not difficult to win; but Darius urged him to come away, and begged Bartja to forbid the thoughtless fellow's staying any longer. After passing the tables of the money-changers, and the stone seats on which the citizens sat in the open air and held their consultations, they arrived at the house of Theopompus.



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The stroke given by their Greek guide with the metal knocker on the house-door was answered at once by a slave. As the master was at the market, the strangers were led by the steward, an old servant grown grey in the service of Theopompus, into the Andronitis, and begged to wait there until he returned.

They were still engaged in admiring the paintings on the walls, and the artistic carving of the stone floor, when Theopompus, the merchant whom we first learnt to know at the house of Rhodopis, came back from the market, followed by a great number of slaves bearing his purchases.

[Men of high rank among the Greeks did not disdain to make purchases at market, accompanied by their slaves, but respectable women could not appear there. Female slaves were generally sent to buy what was needed.]

He received the strangers with charming politeness and asked in what way he could be of use to them, on which Bartja, having first convinced himself that no unwished—for listeners were present, gave him the roll he had received from Phanes at parting.

Theopompus had scarcely read its contents, when he made a low bow to the prince, exclaiming: “By Zeus, the father of hospitality, this is the greatest honor that could have been conferred upon my house! All I possess is yours, and I beg you to ask your companions to accept with kindness what I can offer. Pardon my not having recognized you at once in your Lydian dress. It seems to me that your hair is shorter and your beard thicker, than when you left Egypt. Am I right in imagining that you do not wish to be recognized? It shall be exactly as you wish. He is the best host, who allows his guests the most freedom. All, now I recognize your friends; but they have disguised themselves and cut their curls also. Indeed, I could almost say that you, my friend, whose name—”

“My name is Darius.”

“That you, Darius, have dyed your hair black. Yes? Then you see my memory does not deceive me. But that is nothing to boast of, for I saw you several times at Sais, and here too, on your arrival and departure. You ask, my prince, whether you would be generally recognized? Certainly not. The foreign dress, the change in your hair and the coloring of your eyebrows have altered you wonderfully. But excuse me a moment, my old steward seems to have some important message to give.”

In a few minutes Theopompus came back, exclaiming: “No, no, my honored friends, you have certainly not taken the wisest way of entering Naukratis incognito. You have been joking with the flower-girls and paying them for a few roses, not like runaway Lydian Hekatontarchs, but like the great lords you are. All Naukratis knows the pretty, frivolous sisters, Stephanion, Chloris and Irene, whose garlands have caught many a

heart, and whose sweet glances have lured many a bright obolus out of the pockets of our gay young men. They're



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very fond of visiting the flower-girls at market-time, and agreements are entered into then for which more than one gold piece must be paid later; but for a few roses and good words they are not accustomed to be so liberal as you have been. The girls have been boasting about you and your gifts, and showing your good red gold to their stingier suitors. As rumor is a goddess who is very apt to exaggerate and to make a crocodile out of a lizard, it happened that news reached the Egyptian captain on guard at the market, that some newly-arrived Lydian warriors had been scattering gold broadcast among the flower-girls. This excited suspicion, and induced the Toparch to send an officer here to enquire from whence you come, and what is the object of your journey hither. I was obliged to use a little stratagem to impose upon him, and told him, as I believe you wish, that you were rich young men from Sardis, who had fled on account of having incurred the satrap's ill-will. But I see the government officer coming, and with him the secretary who is to make out passports which will enable you to remain on the Nile unmolested. I have promised him a handsome reward, if he can help you in getting admitted into the king's mercenaries. He was caught and believed my story. You are so young, that nobody would imagine you were entrusted with a secret mission."

The talkative Greek had scarcely finished speaking when the clerk, a lean, dry-looking man, dressed in white, came in, placed himself opposite the strangers and asked them from whence they came and what was the object of their journey.

The youths held to their first assertion, that they were Lydian Hekatontarchs, and begged the functionary to provide them with passes and tell them in what way they might most easily obtain admittance into the king's troop of auxiliaries.

The man did not hesitate long, after Theopompus had undertaken to be their surety, and the desired documents were made out.

Bartja's pass ran thus:

"Smerdis, the son of Sandon of Sardis, about 22 years of age—figure, tall and slender-face, well-formed:—nose, straight:—forehead, high with a small scar in the middle:—is hereby permitted to remain in those parts of Egypt in which the law allows foreigners to reside, as surety has been given for him.

"In the King's name.

"Sachons, Clerk."

Darius and Zopyrus received passports similarly worded.

When the government official had left the houses, Theopompus rubbed his hands and said: "Now if you will follow my advice on all points you can stay in Egypt safely enough. Keep these little rolls as if they were the apple of your eye, and never part



from them. Now, however, I must beg you to follow me to breakfast and to tell me, if agreeable to you, whether a report which has just been making the round of the market is not, as usual, entirely false. A trireme from Kolophon, namely, has brought the news that your powerful brother, noble Bartja, is preparing to make war with Amasis.”



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On the evening of the same day, Bartja and Sappho saw each other again. In that first hour surprise and joy together made Sappho's happiness too great for words. When they were once more seated in the acanthus-grove whose blossoming branches had so often seen and sheltered their young love, she embraced him tenderly, but for a long time they did not speak one word. They saw neither moon nor stars moving silently above them, in the warm summer night; they did not even hear the nightingales who were still repeating their favorite, flute-like, Itys-call to one another; nor did they feel the dew which fell as heavily on their fair heads as on the flowers in the grass around them.

At last Bartja, taking both Sappho's hands in his own, looked long and silently into her face, as if to stamp her likeness for ever on his memory. When he spoke at last, she cast down her eyes, for he said: "In my dreams, Sappho, you have always been the most lovely creature that Auramazda ever created, but now I see you again, you are more lovely even than my dreams."

And when a bright, happy glance from her had thanked him for these words, he drew her closer to him, asking: "Did you often think of me?"

"I thought only of you."

"And did you hope to see me soon?"

"Yes; hour after hour I thought, 'now he must be coming.' Sometimes I went into the garden in the morning and looked towards your home in the East, and a bird flew towards me from thence and I felt a twitching in my right eyelid; or when I was putting my box to rights and found the laurel crown which I put by as a remembrance, because you looked so well in it, —Melitta says such wreaths are good for keeping true love— then I used to clap my hands with joy and think, 'to-day he must come;' and I would run down to the Nile and wave my handkerchief to every passing boat, for every boat I thought must be bringing you to me."

[A bird flying from the right side, and a twitching of the right eye were considered fortunate omens. Theokritos, III. 37]

"But you did not come, and then I went sadly home, and would sit down by the fire on the hearth in the women's room, and sing, and gaze into the fire till grandmother would wake me out of my dream by saying: 'Listen to me, girl; whoever dreams by daylight is in danger of lying awake at night, and getting up in the morning with a sad heart, a tired brain and weary limbs. The day was not given us for sleep, and we must live in it with open eyes, that not a single hour may be idly spent. The past belongs to the dead; only



fools count upon the future; but wise men hold fast by the ever young present; by work they foster all the various gifts which Zeus, Apollo, Pallas, Cypris lend; by work they raise, and perfect and ennoble them, until their feelings, actions, words and thoughts become harmonious like a well-tuned lute. You cannot serve the man



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to whom you have given your whole heart,—to whom in your great love you look up as so much higher than yourself—you cannot prove the steadfastness and faithfulness of that love better, than by raising and improving your mind to the utmost of your power. Every good and beautiful truth that you learn is an offering to him you love best, for in giving your whole self, you give your virtues too. But no one gains this victory in dreams. The dew by which such blossoms are nourished is called the sweat of man's brow.' So she would speak to me, and then I started up ashamed and left the hearth, and either took my lyre to learn new songs, or listened to my loving teacher's words—she is wiser than most men—attentively and still. And so the time passed on; a rapid stream, just like our river Nile, which flows unceasingly, and brings such changing scenes upon its waves, sometimes a golden boat with streamers gay,—sometimes a fearful, ravenous crocodile.”

“But now we are sitting in the golden boat. Oh, if time's waves would only cease to flow! If this one moment could but last for aye. You lovely girl, how perfectly you speak, how well you understand and remember all this beautiful teaching and make it even more beautiful by your way of repeating it. Yes, Sappho, I am very proud of you. In you I have a treasure which makes me richer than my brother, though half the world belongs to him.”

“You proud of me? you, a king's son, the best and handsomest of your family?”

“The greatest worth that I can find in myself is, that you think me worthy of your love.”

“Tell me, ye gods, how can this little heart hold so much joy without breaking? 'Tis like a vase that's overfilled with purest, heaviest gold?”

“Another heart will help you to bear it; and that is my own, for mine is again supported by yours, and with that help I can laugh at every evil that the world or night may bring.”

“Oh, don't excite the envy of the gods; human happiness often vexes them. Since you left us we have passed some very, very sad days. The two poor children of our kind Phanes—a boy as beautiful as Eros, and a little girl as fair and rosy as a summer morning's cloud just lit up by the sun,—came for some happy days to stay with us. Grandmother grew quite glad and young again while looking on these little ones, and as for me I gave them all my heart, though really it is your's and your's alone. But hearts, you know, are wonderfully made; they're like the sun who sends his rays everywhere, and loses neither warmth nor light by giving much, but gives to all their due. I loved those little ones so very much. One evening we were sitting quite alone with Theopompus in the women's room, when suddenly we heard aloud, wild noise. The good old Knakias, our faithful slave, just reached the door as all the bolts gave way, and, rushing through the entrance-hall into the peristyle, the andronitis,



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and so on to us, crashing the door between, came a troop of soldiers. Grandmother showed them the letter by which Amasis secured our house from all attack and made it a sure refuge, but they laughed the writing to scorn and showed us on their side a document with the crown-prince's seal, in which we were sternly commanded to deliver up Phanes' children at once to this rough troop of men. Theopompus reproved the soldiers for their roughness, telling them that the children came from Corinth and had no connection with Phanes; but the captain of the troop defied and sneered at him, pushed my grandmother rudely away, forced his way into her own apartment, where among her most precious treasures, at the head of her own bed, the two children lay sleeping peacefully, dragged them out of their little beds and took them in an open boat through the cold night-air to the royal city. In a few days we heard the boy was dead. They say he has been killed by Psamtik's orders; and the little girl, so sweet and dear, is lying in a dismal dungeon, and pining for her father and for us. Oh, dearest, isn't it a painful thing that sorrows such as these should come to mar our perfect happiness? My eyes weep joy and sorrow in the same moment, and my lips, which have just been laughing with you, have now to tell you this sad story."

"I feel your pain with you, my child, but it makes my hand clench with rage instead of filling my eyes with tears. That gentle boy whom you loved, that little girl who now sits weeping in the dark dungeon, shall both be revenged. "Trust me; before the Nile has risen again, a powerful army will have entered Egypt, to demand satisfaction for this murder."

"Oh, dearest, how your eyes are glowing! I never saw you look so beautiful before. Yes, yes, the boy must be avenged, and none but you must be his avenger."

"My gentle Sappho is becoming warlike too."

"Yes, women must feel warlike when wickedness is so triumphant; women rejoice too when such crimes are punished. Tell me has war been declared already?"

"Not yet; but hosts on hosts are marching to the valley of the Euphrates to join our main army."

"My courage sinks as quickly as it rose. I tremble at the word, the mere word, war. How many childless mothers Ares makes, how many young fair heads must wear the widow's veil, how many pillows are wet through with tears when Pallas takes her shield."

"But a man develops in war; his heart expands, his arm grows strong. And none rejoice more than you when he returns a conqueror from the field. The wife of a



Persian, especially, ought to rejoice in the thought of battle, for her husband's honor and fame are dearer to her than his life."

"Go to the war. I shall pray for you there."

"And victory will be with the right. First we will conquer Pharaoh's host, then release Phanes' little daughter . . ."



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“And then Aristomachus, the brave old man who succeeded Phanes when he fled. He has vanished, no one knows whither, but people say that the crown-prince has either imprisoned him in a dismal dungeon on account of his having uttered threats of retaliating the cruelty shown to Phanes’ children, or—what would be worse—has had him dragged off to some distant quarry. The poor old man was exiled from his home, not for his own fault, but by the malice of his enemies, and the very day on which we lost sight of him an embassy arrived here from the Spartan people recalling Aristomachus to the Eurotas with all the honors Greece could bestow, because his sons had brought great glory to their country. A ship wreathed with flowers was sent to fetch the honored old man, and at the head of the deputation was his own brave, strong son, now crowned with glory and fame.”

“I know him. He’s a man of iron. Once he mutilated himself cruelly to avoid disgrace. By the Anahita star, which is setting so beautifully in the east, he shall be revenged!”

“Oh, can it be so late? To me the time has gone by like a sweet breeze, which kissed my forehead and passed away. Did not you hear some one call? They will be waiting for us, and you must be at your friend’s house in the town before dawn. Good-bye, my brave hero.”

“Good-bye, my dearest one. In five days we shall hear our marriage-hymn. But you tremble as if we were going to battle instead of to our wedding.”

“I’m trembling at the greatness of our joy; one always trembles in expectation of anything unusually great.”

“Hark, Rhodopis is calling again; let us go. I have asked Theopompus to arrange everything about our wedding with her according to the usual custom; and I shall remain in his house incognito until I can carry you off as my own dear wife.”

“And I will go with you.”

The next morning, as the three friends were walking with their host in his garden, Zopyrus exclaimed: “Wily, Bartja, I’ve been dreaming all night of your Sappho. What a lucky fellow you are! Why I fancied my new wife in Sardis was no end of a beauty until I saw Sappho, and now when I think of her she seems like an owl. If Araspes could see Sappho he would be obliged to confess that even Panthea had been outdone at last. Such a creature was never made before. Auramazda is an awful spendthrift; he might have made three beauties out of Sappho. And how charmingly it sounded when she said ‘good-night’ to us in Persian.”

“While I was away,” said Bartja, “she has been taking a great deal of trouble to learn Persian from the wife of a Babylonian carpet-merchant, a native of Susa, who is living at Naukratis, in order to surprise me.



“Yes, she is a glorious girl,” said Theopompus. “My late wife loved the little one as if she had been her own child. She would have liked to have had her as a wife for our son who manages the affairs of my house at Miletus, but the gods have ordained otherwise! Ah, how glad she would have been to see the wedding garland at Rhodopis’ door!”



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“Is it the custom here to ornament a bride’s house with flowers?” said Zopyrus.

“Certainly,” answered Theopompus. “When you see a door hung with flowers you may always know that house contains a bride; an olive-branch is a sign that a boy has just come into the world, and a strip of woollen cloth hanging over the gate that a girl has been born; but a vessel of water before the door is the token of death. But business-hour at the market is very near, my friends, and I must leave you, as I have affairs of great importance to transact.”

“I will accompany you,” said Zopyrus, “I want to order some garlands for Rhodopis’ house.”

“Aha,” laughed the Milesian. “I see, you want to talk to the flower-girls again. Come, it’s of no use to deny. Well, if you like you can come with me, but don’t be so generous as you were yesterday, and don’t forget that if certain news of war should arrive, your disguise may prove dangerous.”

The Greek then had his sandals fastened on by his slaves and started for the market, accompanied by Zopyrus. In a few hours he returned with such a serious expression on his usually cheerful face, that it was easy to see something very important had happened.

“I found the whole town in great agitation,” he said to the two friends who had remained at home; “there is a report that Amasis is at the point of death. We had all met on the place of exchange in order to settle our business, and I was on the point of selling all my stored goods at such high prices as to secure me a first-rate profit, with which, when the prospect of an important war had lowered prices again, I could have bought in fresh goods—you see it stands me in good stead to know your royal brother’s intentions so early—when suddenly the Toparch appeared among us, and announced that Amasis was not only seriously ill, but that the physicians had given up all hope, and he himself felt he was very near death. We must hold ourselves in readiness for this at any moment, and for a very serious change in the face of affairs. The death of Amasis is the severest loss that could happen to us Greeks; he was always our friend, and favored us whenever he could, while his son is our avowed enemy and will do his utmost to expel us from the country. If his father had allowed, and he himself had not felt so strongly the importance and value of our mercenary troops, he would have turned us hateful foreigners out long ago. Naukratis and its temples are odious to him. When Amasis is dead our town will hail Cambyses’ army with delight, for I have had experience already, in my native town Miletus, that you are accustomed to show respect to those who are not Persians and to protect their rights.”

“Yes,” said Bartja, “I will take care that all your ancient liberties shall be confirmed by my brother and new ones granted you.”



“Well, I only hope he will soon be here,” exclaimed the Greek, “for we know that Psamtik, as soon as he possibly can, will order our temples, which are an abomination to him, to be demolished. The building of a place of sacrifice for the Greeks at Memphis has long been put a stop to.”



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“But here,” said Darius, “we saw a number of splendid temples as we came up from the harbor.”

“Oh, yes, we have several.—Ah, there comes Zopyrus; the slaves are carrying a perfect grove of garlands behind him. He’s laughing so heartily, he must have amused himself famously with the flower-girls. Good-morning, my friend. The sad news which fills all Naukratis does not seem to disturb you much.”

“Oh, for anything I care, Amasis may go on living a hundred years yet. But if he dies now, people will have something else to do beside looking after us. When do you set off for Rhodopis’ house, friends?”

“At dusk.”

“Then please, ask her to accept these flowers from me. I never thought I could have been so taken by an old woman before. Every word she says sounds like music, and though she speaks so gravely and wisely it’s as pleasant to the ear as a merry joke. But I shan’t go with you this time, Bartja; I should only be in the way. Darius, what have you made up your mind to do?”

“I don’t want to lose one chance of a conversation with Rhodopis.”

“Well, I don’t blame you. You’re all for learning and knowing everything, and I’m for enjoying. Friends, what do you say to letting me off this evening? You see...”

“I know all about it,” interrupted Bartja laughing: “You’ve only seen the flower-girls by daylight as yet, and you would like to know how they look by lamplight.”

“Yes, that’s it,” said Zopyrus, putting on a grave face. “On that point I am quite as eager after knowledge as Darius.”

“Well, we wish you much pleasure with your three sisters.”

“No, no, not all three, if you please; Stephanion, the youngest, is my favorite.”

Morning had already dawned when Bartja, Darius and Theopompus left Rhodopis’ house. Syloson, a Greek noble who had been banished from his native land by his own brother, Polykrates the tyrant, had been spending the evening with them, and was now returning in their company to Naukratis, where he had been living many years.

This man, though an exile, was liberally supplied with money by his brother, kept the most brilliant establishment in Naukratis, and was as famous for his extravagant hospitality as for his strength and cleverness. Syloson was a very handsome man too, and so remarkable for the good taste and splendor of his dress, that the youth of Naukratis prided themselves on imitating the cut and hang of his robes. Being



unmarried, he spent many of his evenings at Rhodopis' house, and had been told the secret of her granddaughter's betrothal.

On that evening it had been settled, that in four days the marriage should be celebrated with the greatest privacy. Bartja had formally betrothed himself to Sappho by eating a quince with her, on the same day on which she had offered sacrifices to Zeus, Hera, and the other deities who protected marriage. The wedding-banquet was to be given at the house of Theopompus, which was looked upon as the bridegroom's. The prince's costly bridal presents had been entrusted to Rhodopis' care, and Bartja had insisted on renouncing the paternal inheritance which belonged to his bride and on transferring it to Rhodopis, notwithstanding her determined resistance.



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Syloson accompanied the friends to Rhodopis' house, and was just about to leave them, when a loud noise in the streets broke the quiet stillness of the night, and soon after, a troop of the watch passed by, taking a man to prison. The prisoner seemed highly indignant, and the less his broken Greek oaths and his utterances in some other totally unintelligible language were understood by the Egyptian guards, the more violent he became.

Directly Bartja and Darius heard the voice they ran up, and recognized Zopyrus at once.

Syloson and Theopompus stopped the guards, and asked what their captive had done. The officer on duty recognized them directly; indeed every child in Naukratis knew the Milesian merchant and the brother of the tyrant Polykrates by sight; and he answered at once, with a respectful salutation, that the foreign youth they were leading away had been guilty of murder.

Theopompus then took him on one side and endeavored, by liberal promises, to obtain the freedom of the prisoner. The man, however, would concede nothing but a permission to speak with his captive. Meanwhile his friends begged Zopyrus to tell them at once what had happened, and heard the following story: The thoughtless fellow had visited the flower-girls at dusk and remained till dawn. He had scarcely closed their hosedoor on his way home, when he found himself surrounded by a number of young men, who had probably been lying in wait for him, as he had already had a quarrel with one of them, who called himself the betrothed lover of Stephanion, on that very morning. The girl had told her troublesome admirer to leave her flowers alone, and had thanked Zopyrus for threatening to use personal violence to the intruder. When the young Achaemenidae found himself surrounded, he drew his sword and easily dispersed his adversaries, as they were only armed with sticks, but chanced to wound the jealous lover, who was more violent than the rest, so seriously, that he fell to the ground. Meanwhile the watch had come up, and as Zopyrus' victim howled "thieves" and "murder" incessantly, they proceeded to arrest the offender. This was not so easy. His blood was up, and rushing on them with his drawn sword, he had already cut his way through the first troop when a second came up. He was not to be daunted, attacked them too, split the skull of one, wounded another in the arm and was taking aim for a third blow, when he felt a cord round his neck. It was drawn tighter and tighter till at last he could not breathe and fell down insensible. By the time he came to his senses he was bound, and notwithstanding all his appeals to his pass and the name of Theopompus, was forced to follow his captors.

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When the tale was finished the Milesian did not attempt to conceal his strong disapprobation, and told Zopyrus that his most unseasonable love of fighting might be followed by the saddest consequences. After saying this, he turned to the officer and begged him to accept his own personal security for the prisoner. The other, however, refused gravely, saying he might forfeit his own life by doing so, as a law existed in Egypt by which the concealer of a murder was condemned to death. He must, he assured them, take the culprit to Sais and deliver him over to the Nomarch for punishment. "He has murdered an Egyptian," were his last words, "and must therefore be tried by an Egyptian supreme court. In any other case I should be delighted to render you any service in my power."

During this conversation Zopyrus had been begging his friends not to take any trouble about him. "By Mithras," he cried, when Bartja offered to declare himself to the Egyptians as a means of procuring his freedom, "I vow I'll stab myself without a second thought, if you give yourselves up to those dogs of Egyptians. Why the whole town is talking about the war already, and do you think that if Psamtik knew he'd got such splendid game in his net, he would let you loose? He would keep you as hostages, of course. No, no, my friends. Good-bye; may Auramazda send you his best blessings! and don't quite forget the jovial Zopyrus, who lived and died for love and war."

The captain of the band placed himself at the head of his men, gave the order to march, and in a few minutes Zopyrus was out of sight.

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He is the best host, who allows his guests the most freedom
The past belongs to the dead; only fools count upon the future
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Wise men hold fast by the ever young present

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