



UARDA

The image shows a dark, textured book cover with intricate gold-tooled decorations. A central square frame contains the word "UARDA" in a serif font, flanked by a symmetrical floral or sunburst motif. This central frame is surrounded by a wide border of small, circular studs. The outermost edge of the cover features a repeating pattern of stylized floral or scrollwork designs.



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U A R D A

A ROMANCE OF ANCIENT EGYPT

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

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U A R D A .

CHAPTER XXIV.

THIS eventful day had brought much that was unexpected to our friends in Thebes, as well as to those who lived in the Necropolis.

The Lady Katuti had risen early after a sleepless night. Nefert had come in late, had excused her delay by shortly explaining to her mother that she had been detained by Bent-Anat, and had then affectionately offered her brow for a kiss of "good-night."

When the widow was about to withdraw to her sleeping-room, and Nemu had lighted her lamp, she remembered the secret which was to deliver Paaker into Ani's hands. She ordered the dwarf to impart to her what he knew, and the little man told her at last, after sincere efforts at resistance—for he feared for his mother's safety—that Paaker had administered half of a love-philter to Nefert, and that the remainder was still in his hands.

A few hours since this information would have filled Katuti with indignation and disgust; now, though she blamed the Mohar, she asked eagerly whether such a drink could be proved to have any actual effect.

"Not a doubt of it," said the dwarf, "if the whole were taken, but Nefert only had half of it."

At a late hour Katuti was still pacing her bedroom,

thinking of Paaker's insane devotion, of Mena's faithlessness, and of Nefert's altered demeanor; and when she went to bed, a thousand conjectures, fears, and anxieties tormented her, while she was distressed at the change which had come over Nefert's love to her mother, a sentiment which of all others should be the most sacred, and the most secure against all shock.

Soon after sunrise she went into the little temple attached to the house, and made an offering to the statue, which, under the form of Osiris, represented her lost husband; then she went to the temple of Amon, where she also prayed a while, and nevertheless, on her return home, found that her daughter had not yet made her appearance in the hall where they usually breakfasted together.

Katuti preferred to be undisturbed during the early morning hours, and therefore did not interfere with her daughter's disposition to sleep far into the day in her carefully-darkened room.

When the widow went to the temple Nefert was accustomed to take a cup of milk in bed, then she would let herself be dressed, and when her mother returned, she would find her in the veranda or hall, which is so well known to the reader.

To-day however Katuti had to breakfast alone; but when she had eaten a few mouthfuls she prepared Nefert's breakfast—a white cake and a little wine in a small silver beaker, carefully guarded from dust and insects by a napkin thrown over it—and went into her daughter's room.

She was startled at finding it empty, but she was informed that Nefert had gone earlier than was her wont to the temple, in her litter.

With a heavy sigh she returned to the veranda, and there received her nephew Paaker, who had come to

enquire after the health of his relatives, followed by a slave, who carried two magnificent bunches of flowers,* and by the great dog which had formerly belonged to his father. One bouquet he said had been cut for Nefert, and the other for her mother.

Katuti had taken quite a new interest in Paaker since she had heard of his procuring the philter.

No other young man of the rank to which they belonged, would have allowed himself to be so mastered by his passion for a woman as this Paaker was, who went straight to his aim with stubborn determination, and shunned no means that might lead to it. The pioneer, who had grown up under her eyes, whose weaknesses she knew, and whom she was accustomed to look down upon, suddenly appeared to her as a different man—almost a stranger—as the deliverer of his friends, and the merciless antagonist of his enemies.

These reflections had passed rapidly through her mind. Now her eyes rested on the sturdy, strongly-knit figure of her nephew, and it struck her that he bore no resemblance to his tall, handsome father. Often had she admired her brother-in-law's slender hand, that nevertheless could so effectually wield a sword, but that of his son was broad and ignoble in form.

While Paaker was telling her that he must shortly leave for Syria, she involuntarily observed the action of this hand, which often went cautiously to his girdle as if he had something concealed there; this was the oval phial with the rest of the philter. Katuti observed it, and her cheeks flushed when it occurred to her to guess what he had there.

* Pictures on the monuments show that in ancient Egypt, as at the present time, bouquets of flowers were bestowed as tokens of friendly feeling.

The pioneer could not but observe Katuti's agitation, and he said in a tone of sympathy:

"I perceive that you are in pain, or in trouble. The master of Mena's stud at Hermonthis has no doubt been with you—No? He came to me yesterday, and asked me to allow him to join my troops. He is very angry with you, because he has been obliged to sell some of Mena's gold-bays. I have bought the finest of them. They are splendid creatures! Now he wants to go to his master 'to open his eyes,' as he says. Lie down a little while, aunt, you are very pale."

Katuti did not follow this prescription; on the contrary she smiled, and said in a voice half of anger and half of pity:

"The old fool firmly believes that the weal or woe of the family depends on the gold-bays. He would like to go with you? To open Mena's eyes? No one has yet tried to bind them!"

Katuti spoke the last words in a low tone, and her glance fell. Paaker also looked down, and was silent; but he soon recovered his presence of mind, and said:

"If Nefert is to be long absent, I will go."

"No—no, stay," cried the widow. "She wished to see you, and must soon come in. There are her cake and her wine waiting for her."

With these words she took the napkin off the breakfast-table, held up the beaker in her hand, and then said, with the cloth still in her hand:

"I will leave you a moment, and see if Nefert is not yet come home."

Hardly had she left the veranda when Paaker, having convinced himself that no one could see him,

snatched the flask from his girdle, and, with a short invocation to his father in Osiris, poured its whole contents into the beaker, which thus was filled to the very brim. A few minutes later Nefert and her mother entered the hall.

Paaker took up the nosegay, which his slave had laid down on a seat, and timidly approached the young woman, who walked in with such an aspect of decision and self-confidence, that her mother looked at her in astonishment, while Paaker felt as if she had never before appeared so beautiful and brilliant. Was it possible that she should love her husband, when his breach of faith troubled her so little? Did her heart still belong to another? Or had the love-philter set him in the place of Mena? Yes! yes! for how warmly she greeted him. She put out her hand to him while he was still quite far off, let it rest in his, thanked him with feeling, and praised his fidelity and generosity.

Then she went up to the table, begged Paaker to sit down with her, broke her cake, and enquired for her aunt Setchem, Paaker's mother.

Katuti and Paaker watched all her movements with beating hearts.

Now she took up the beaker, and lifted it to her lips, but set it down again to answer Paaker's remark that she was breakfasting late.

"I have hitherto been a real lazy-bones," she said with a blush. "But this morning I got up early, to go and pray in the temple in the fresh dawn. You know what has happened to the sacred ram of Amon. It is a frightful occurrence. The priests were all in the greatest agitation, but the venerable Bek el Chunsu

received me himself, and interpreted my dream, and now my spirit is light and contented."

"And you did all this without me?" said Katuti in gentle reproof.

"I would not disturb you," replied Nefert.

"Besides," she added coloring, "you never take me to the city and the temple in the morning."

Again she took up the wine-cup and looked into it, but without drinking any, went on:

"Would you like to hear what I dreamed, Paaker? It was a strange vision."

The pioneer could hardly breathe for expectation, still he begged her to tell her dream.

"Only think," said Nefert, pushing the beaker on the smooth table, which was wet with a few drops which she had spilt, "I dreamed of the Neha-tree,* down there in the great tub, which your father brought me from Punt, when I was a little child, and which since then has grown quite a tall tree. There is no tree in the garden I love so much, for it always reminds me of your father, who was so kind to me, and whom I can never forget!"

Paaker bowed assent.

Nefert looked at him, and interrupted her story when she observed his crimson cheeks.

"It is very hot! Would you like some wine to drink—or some water?"

With these words she raised the wine-cup, and drank about half of the contents; then she shuddered, and while her pretty face took a comical expression,

* The Neha-tree yielded the resinous berries called Anta, which were highly valued for incense. It is probably *Balsamodendron Myrrhœa*, and allied to the tree which produces the balm of Gilead.

she turned to her mother, who was seated behind her and held the beaker towards her.

“The wine is quite sour to-day!” she said. “Taste it, mother.”

Katuti took the little silver-cup in her hand, and gravely put it to her lips, but without wetting them. A smile passed over her face, and her eyes met those of the pioneer, who stared at her in horror. The picture flashed before her mind of herself languishing for the pioneer, and of his terror at her affection for him! Her selfish and intriguing spirit was free from coarseness, and yet she could have laughed with all her heart even while engaged in the most shameful deed of her whole life. She gave the wine back to her daughter, saying good-humoredly—

“I have tasted sweeter, but acid is refreshing in this heat.”

“That is true,” said the wife of Mena; she emptied the cup to the bottom, and then went on, as if refreshed:

“But I will tell you the rest of my dream. I saw the Neha-tree, which your father gave me, quite plainly; nay I could have declared that I smelt its perfume, but the interpreter assured me that we never smell in our dreams. I went up to the beautiful tree in admiration. Then suddenly a hundred axes appeared in the air, wielded by unseen hands, and struck the poor tree with such violence that the branches one by one fell to the ground, and at last the trunk itself was felled. If you think it grieved me you are mistaken. On the contrary, I was delighted with the flashing hatchets and the flying splinters. When at last nothing was left but the roots in the tub of earth, I perceived that the tree was rising to new life. Suddenly my arms be-

came strong, my feet active, and I fetched quantities of water from the tank, poured it over the roots, and when, at last, I could exert myself no longer, a tender green shoot showed itself on the wounded root, a bud appeared, a green leaf unfolded itself, a juicy stem sprouted quickly, it became a firm trunk, sent out branches and twigs, and these became covered with leaves and flowers, white, red and blue; then various birds came and settled on the top of the tree, and sang. Ah! my heart sang louder than the birds at that moment, and I said to myself that without me the tree would have been dead, and that it owed its life to me."

"A beautiful dream," said Katuti; "that reminds me of your girlhood, when you would lie awake half the night inventing all sorts of tales. What interpretation did the priest give you?"

"He promised me many things," said Nefert, "and he gave me the assurance that the happiness to which I am predestined shall revive in fresh beauty after many interruptions."

"And Paaker's father gave you the Neha-tree?" asked Katuti, leaving the veranda as she spoke and walking out into the garden.

"My father brought it to Thebes from the far east," said Paaker, in confirmation of the widow's parting words.

"And that is exactly what makes me so happy," said Nefert. "For your father was as kind, and as dear to me as if he had been my own. Do you remember when we were sailing round the pond, and the boat upset, and you pulled me senseless out of the water? Never shall I forget the expression with

which the great man looked at me when I woke up in his arms; such wise true eyes no one ever had but he."

"He was good, and he loved you very much," said Paaker, recalling, for his part, the moment when he had dared to press a kiss on the lips of the sweet unconscious child.

"And I am so glad," Nefert went on, "that the day has come at last when we can talk of him together again, and when the old grudge that lay so heavy on my heart is all forgotten. How good you are to us, I have already learned; my heart overflows with gratitude to you, when I remember my childhood, and I can never forget that I was indebted to you for all that was bright and happy in it. Only look at the big dog—poor Descher!—how he rubs against me, and shows that he has not forgotten me! Whatever comes from your house fills my mind with pleasant memories."

"We all love you dearly," said Paaker looking at her tenderly.

"And how sweet it was in your garden!" cried Nefert. "The nosegay here that you have brought me shall be placed in water, and preserved a long time, as a greeting from the place in which once I could play so carelessly, and dream so happily."

With these words she pressed the flowers to her lips; Paaker sprang forward, seized her hand, and covered it with burning kisses.

Nefert started and drew away her hand, but he put out his arm to clasp her to him. He had touched her with his trembling hand, when loud voices were heard in the garden, and Nemu hurried in to announce the arrival of the princess Bent-Anat.

At the same moment Katuti appeared, and in a few minutes the princess herself.

Paaker retreated, and quitted the room before Nefert had time to express her indignation. He staggered to his chariot like a drunken man. He supposed himself beloved by Mena's wife, his heart was full of triumph, he proposed rewarding Hekt with gold, and went to the palace without delay to crave of Ani a mission to Syria. There it should be brought to the test—he or Mena.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHILE Nefert, frozen with horror, could not find a word of greeting for her royal friend, Bent-Anat with native dignity laid before the widow her choice of Nefert to fill the place of her lost companion, and desired that Mena's wife should go to the palace that very day.

She had never before spoken thus to Katuti, and Katuti could not overlook the fact that Bent-Anat had intentionally given up her old confidential tone.

“Nefert has complained of me to her,” thought she to herself, “and she considers me no longer worthy of her former friendly kindness.”

She was vexed and hurt, and though she understood the danger which threatened her, now her daughter's eyes were opened, still the thought of losing her child inflicted a painful wound. It was this which filled her eyes with tears, and sincere sorrow trembled in her voice as she replied:

“Thou hast required the better half of my life at my hand; but thou hast but to command, and I to obey.”

Bent-Anat waved her hand proudly, as if to confirm

the widow's statement; but Nefert went up to her mother, threw her arms round her neck, and wept upon her shoulder.

Tears glistened even in the princess's eyes when Katuti at last led her daughter towards her, and pressed yet one more kiss on her forehead.

Bent-Anat took Nefert's hand, and did not release it, while she requested the widow to give her daughter's dresses and ornaments into the charge of the slaves and waiting-women whom she would send for them.

"And do not forget the case with the dried flowers, and my amulets, and the images of the Gods," said Nefert. "And I should like to have the Neha-tree which my uncle gave me."

Her white cat was playing at her feet with Paaker's flowers, which she had dropped on the floor, and when she saw her she took her up and kissed her.

"Bring the little creature with you," said Bent-Anat. "It was your favorite plaything."

"No," replied Nefert coloring.

The princess understood her, pressed her hand, and said while she pointed to Nemu:

"The dwarf is your own too: shall he come with you?"

"I will give him to my mother," said Nefert. She let the little man kiss her robe and her feet, once more embraced Katuti, and quitted the garden with her royal friend.

As soon as Katuti was alone, she hastened into the little chapel in which the figures of her ancestors stood, apart from those of Mena. She threw herself down before the statue of her husband, half weeping, half thankful.

This parting had indeed fallen heavily on her soul, but at the same time it released her from a mountain of anxiety that had oppressed her breast. Since yesterday she had felt like one who walks along the edge of a precipice, and whose enemy is close at his heels; and the sense of freedom from the ever threatening danger, soon got the upperhand of her maternal grief. The abyss in front of her had suddenly closed; the road to the goal of her efforts lay before her smooth and firm beneath her feet.

The widow, usually so dignified, hastily and eagerly walked down the garden path, and for the first time since that luckless letter from the camp had reached her, she could look calmly and clearly at the position of affairs, and reflect on the measures which Ani must take in the immediate future. She told herself that all was well, and that the time for prompt and rapid action was now come.

When the messengers came from the princess she superintended the packing of the various objects which Nefert wished to have, with calm deliberation, and then sent her dwarf to Ani, to beg that he would visit her. But before Nemu had left Mena's grounds he saw the out-runners of the Regent, his chariot, and the troop of guards following him.

Very soon Katuti and her noble friend were walking up and down in the garden, while she related to him how Bent-Anat had taken Nefert from her, and repeated to him all that she had planned and considered during the last hour.

"You have the genius of a man," said Ani; "and this time you do not urge me in vain. Ameni is ready to act, Paaker is to-day collecting his troops, to-morrow

he will assist at the feast of the Valley, and the next day he goes to Syria."

"He has been with you?" Katuti asked.

"He came to the palace on leaving your house," replied Ani, "with glowing cheeks, and resolved to the utmost; though he does not dream that I hold him in my hand."

Thus speaking they entered the veranda, in which Nemu had remained, and he now hid himself as usual behind the ornamental shrubs to overhear them. They sat down near each other, by Nefert's breakfast table, and Ani asked Katuti whether the dwarf had told her his mother's secret. Katuti feigned ignorance, listened to the story of the love-philter, and played the part of the alarmed mother very cleverly. The Regent was of opinion, while he tried to soothe her, that there was no real love-potion in the case; but the widow exclaimed:

"Now I understand, now for the first time I comprehend my daughter. Paaker must have poured the drink into her wine, for she had no sooner drunk it this morning than she was quite altered—her words to Paaker had quite a tender ring in them; and if he placed himself so cheerfully at your disposal it is because he believes himself certainly to be beloved by my daughter. The old witch's potion was effectual."

"There certainly are such drinks—" said Ani thoughtfully. "But will they only win hearts to young men! If that is the case, the old woman's trade is a bad one, for youth is in itself a charm to attract love. If I were only as young as Paaker! You laugh at the sighs of a man—say at once of an old man! Well, yes, I am old, for the prime of life lies behind me. And

yet Katuti, my friend, wisest of women—explain to me one thing. When I was young I was loved by many and admired many women, but not one of them—not even my wife, who died young, was more to me than a toy, a plaything; and now when I stretch out my hand for a girl, whose father I might very well be—not for her own sake, but simply to serve my purpose—and she refuses me, I feel as much disturbed, as much a fool as—as that dealer in love-philters, Paaker.”

“Have you spoken to Bent-Anat?” asked Katuti.

“And heard again from her own lips the refusal she had sent me through you. You see my spirit has suffered!”

“And on what pretext did she reject your suit?” asked the widow.

“Pretext!” cried Ani. “Bent-Anat and pretext! It must be owned that she has kingly pride, and not Ma* herself is more truthful than she. That I should have to confess it! When I think of her, our plots seem to me unutterably pitiful. My veins contain, indeed, many drops of the blood of Thotmes, and though the experience of life has taught me to stoop low, still the stooping hurts me. I have never known the happy feeling of satisfaction with my lot and my work; for I have always had a greater position than I could fill, and constantly done less than I ought to have done. In order not to look always resentful, I always wear a smile. I have nothing left of the face I was born with but the mere skin, and always wear a mask. I serve him whose master I believe I ought to be by birth; I hate Rameses, who, sincerely or no, calls me his brother; and while I stand as if I were the bulwark of

* The Goddess of Truth.

his authority I am diligently undermining it. My whole existence is a lie."

"But it will be truth," cried Katuti, "as soon as the Gods allow you to be—as you are—the real king of this country."

"Strange!" said Ani smiling, "Ameni, this very day, used almost exactly the same words. The wisdom of priests, and that of women, have much in common, and they fight with the same weapons. You use words instead of swords, traps instead of lances, and you cast not our bodies, but our souls, into irons."

"Do you blame or praise us for it?" said the widow. "We are in any case not impotent allies, and therefore, it seems to me, desirable ones."

"Indeed you are," said Ani smiling. "Not a tear is shed in the land, whether it is shed for joy or for sorrow, for which in the first instance a priest or a woman is not responsible. Seriously, Katuti—in nine great events out of ten you women have a hand in the game. You gave the first impulse to all that is plotting here, and I will confess to you that, regardless of all consequences, I should in a few hours have given up my pretensions to the throne, if that woman Bent-Anat had said 'yes' instead of 'no.'"

"You make me believe," said Katuti, "that the weaker sex are gifted with stronger wills than the nobler. In marrying us you style us, 'the mistress of the house,' and if the elders of the citizens grow infirm, in this country it is not the sons but the daughters that must be their mainstay. But we women have our weaknesses, and chief of these is curiosity.—May I ask on what ground Bent-Anat dismissed you?"

"You know so much that you may know all,"

replied Ani. "She admitted me to speak to her alone. It was yet early, and she had come from the temple, where the weak old prophet had absolved her from uncleanness; she met me, bright, beautiful and proud, strong and radiant as a Goddess, and a princess. My heart throbbed as if I were a boy, and while she was showing me her flowers I said to myself: 'You are come to obtain through her another claim to the throne.' And yet I felt that, if she consented to be mine, I would remain the true brother, the faithful Regent of Rameses, and enjoy happiness and peace by her side before it was too late. If she refused me then I resolved that fate must take its way, and, instead of peace and love, it must be war for the crown snatched from my fathers. I tried to woo her, but she cut my words short, said I was a noble man, and a worthy suitor but—"

"There came the but."

"Yes—in the form of a very frank 'no.' I asked her reasons. She begged me to be content with the 'no;' then I pressed her harder, till she interrupted me, and owned with proud decision that she preferred some one else. I wished to learn the name of the happy man—that she refused. Then my blood began to boil, and my desire to win her increased; but I had to leave her, rejected, and with a fresh, burning, poisoned wound in my heart."

"You are jealous!" said Katuti, "and do you know of whom?"

"No," replied Ani. "But I hope to find out through you. What I feel it is impossible for me to express. But one thing I know, and that is this, that I entered the palace a vacillating man—that I left it firmly re-

solved. I now rush straight onwards, never again to turn back. From this time forward you will no longer have to drive me onward, but rather to hold me back; and, as if the Gods had meant to show that they would stand by me, I found the high-priest Ameni, and the chief pioneer Paaker waiting for me in my house. Ameni will act for me in Egypt, Paaker in Syria. My victorious troops from Ethiopia will enter Thebes to-morrow morning, on their return home in triumph, as if the king were at their head, and will then take part in the Feast of the Valley. Later we will send them into the north, and post them in the fortresses which protect Egypt* against enemies coming from the east—Tanis, Daphne, Pelusium, Migdol. Rameses, as you know, requires that we should drill the serfs of the temples, and send them to him as auxiliaries. I will send him half of the body-guard, the other half shall serve my own purposes. The garrison of Memphis, which is devoted to Rameses, shall be sent to Nubia, and shall be relieved by troops that are faithful to me. The people of Thebes are led by the priests, and to-morrow Ameni will point out to them who is their legitimate king, who will put an end to the war and release them from taxes. The children of Rameses will be excluded from the solemnities, for Ameni, in spite of the chief-priest of Amon, still pronounces Bent-Anat unclean. Young Rameri has been doing wrong and Ameni, who has some other great scheme in his mind, has forbidden him the temple of Seti; that will work on the crowd! You know how things are going

* I have treated of the line of fortresses which protected Egypt from the incursions of the Asiatic tribes on the east in "Egypten und die Bücher Mose." Vol. II. p. 78.

on in Syria: Rameses has suffered much at the hands of the Cheta and their allies; whole legions are weary of eternally lying in the field, and if things came to extremities would join us; but, perhaps, especially if Paaker acquits himself well, we may be victorious without fighting. Above all things now we must act rapidly."

"I no longer recognize the timid, cautious lover of delay!" exclaimed Katuti.

"Because now prudent hesitation would be want of prudence," said Ani.

"And if the king should get timely information as to what is happening here?" said Katuti.

"I said so!" exclaimed Ani; "we are exchanging parts."

"You are mistaken," said Katuti. "I also am for pressing forwards; but I would remind you of a necessary precaution. No letters but yours must reach the camp for the next few weeks."

"Once more you and the priests are of one mind," said Ani laughing; "for Ameni gave me the same counsel. Whatever letters are sent across the frontier between Pelusium and the Red Sea will be detained. Only my letters—in which I complain of the piratical sons of the desert who fall upon the messengers—will reach the king."

"That is wise," said the widow; "let the seaports of the Red Sea be watched too, and the public writers. When you are king, you can distinguish those who are affected for or against you."

Ani shook his head and replied—

"That would put me in a difficult position; for it I were to punish those who are now faithful to their

king, and exalt the others, I should have to govern with unfaithful servants, and turn away the faithful ones. You need not color, my kind friend, for we are kin, and my concerns are yours."

Katuti took the hand he offered her and said:

"It is so. And I ask no further reward than to see my father's house once more in the enjoyment of its rights."

"Perhaps we shall achieve it," said Ani; "but in a short time if—if——Reflect, Katuti; try to find out, ask your daughter to help you to the utmost. Who is it that she—you know whom I mean—Who is it that Bent-Anat loves?"

The widow started, for Ani had spoken the last words with a vehemence very foreign to his usual courtliness, but soon she smiled and repeated to the Regent the names of the few young nobles who had not followed the king, and remained in Thebes. "Can it be Chamus?" at last she said, "he is at the camp, it is true, but nevertheless——"

At this instant Nemu, who had not lost a word of the conversation, came in as if straight from the garden and said:

"Pardon me, my lady; but I have heard a strange thing."

"Speak," said Katuti.

"The high and mighty princess Bent-Anat, the daughter of Rameses, is said to have an open love-affair with a young priest of the House of Seti."

"You barefaced scoundrel!" exclaimed Ani, and his eyes sparkled with rage. "Prove what you say, or you lose your tongue."

"I am willing to lose it as a slanderer and traitor

according to the law," said the little man abjectly, and yet with a malicious laugh; "but this time I shall keep it, for I can vouch for what I say. You both know that Bent-Anat was pronounced unclean because she stayed for an hour and more in the house of a paraschites. She had an assignation there with the priest. At a second, in the temple of Hatasu, they were surprised by Septah, the chief of the haruspices of the House of Seti."

"Who is the priest?" asked Ani with apparent calmness.

"A low-born man," replied Nemu, "to whom a free education was given at the House of Seti, and who is well known as a verse-maker and interpreter of dreams. His name is Pentaur, and it certainly must be admitted that he is handsome and dignified. He is line for line the image of the pioneer Paaker's late father—Didst thou ever see him, my lord?"

The Regent looked gloomily at the floor and nodded that he had. But Katuti cried out; "Fool that I am! the dwarf is right! I saw how she blushed when her brother told her how the boys had rebelled on his account against Ameni. It is Pentaur and none other!"

"Good!" said Ani, "we will see."

With these words he took leave of Katuti, who, as he disappeared in the garden, muttered to herself—

"He was wonderfully clear and decided to-day; but jealousy is already blinding him and will soon make him feel that he cannot get on without my sharp eyes."

Nemu had slipped out after the Regent.

He called to him from behind a fig-tree, and hastily whispered, while he bowed with deep respect:

“My mother knows a great deal, most noble highness! The sacred Ibis* wades through the fen when it goes in search of prey, and why shouldst thou not stoop to pick up gold out of the dust? I know how thou couldst speak with the old woman without being seen.”

“Speak,” said Ani.

“Throw her into prison for a day, hear what she has to say, and then release her—with gifts if she is of service to you—if not, with blows. But thou wilt learn something important from her that she obstinately refused to tell me even.”

“We will see!” replied the Regent. He threw a ring of gold to the dwarf and got into his chariot.

So large a crowd had collected in the vicinity of the palace, that Ani apprehended mischief, and ordered his charioteer to check the pace of the horses, and sent a few police-soldiers to the support of the out-runners; but good news seemed to await him, for at the gate of the castle he heard the unmistakable acclamations of the crowd, and in the palace court he found a messenger from the temple of Seti, commissioned by Ameni to communicate to him and to the people, the occurrence of a great miracle, in that the heart of the ram of Amon, that had been torn by wolves, had been found again within the breast of the dead prophet Rui.

* *Ibis religiosa*. It has disappeared from Egypt. There were two varieties of this bird, which was sacred to Toth, and mummies of both have been found in various places. Elian states that an immortal Ibis was shown at Hermopolis. Plutarch says, the Ibis destroys poisonous reptiles, and that priests draw the water for their purifications where the Ibis has drunk, as it will never touch unwholesome water.

Ani at once descended from his chariot, knelt down before all the people, who followed his example, lifted his arms to heaven, and praised the Gods in a loud voice. When, after some minutes, he rose and entered the palace, slaves came out and distributed bread to the crowd in Ameni's name.

"The Regent has an open hand," said a joiner to his neighbor; "only look how white the bread is. I will put it in my pocket and take it to the children."

"Give me a bit!" cried a naked little scamp, snatching the cake of bread from the joiner's hand and running away, slipping between the legs of the people as lithe as a snake.

"You crocodile's brat!" cried his victim. "The insolence of boys gets worse and worse every day."

"They are hungry," said the woman apologetically. "Their fathers are gone to the war, and the mothers have nothing for their children but papyrus-pith and lotus-seeds."

"I hope they enjoy it," laughed the joiner. "Let us push to the left; there is a man with some more bread."

"The Regent must rejoice greatly over the miracle," said a shoemaker. "It is costing him something."

"Nothing like it has happened for a long time," said a basket-maker. "And he is particularly glad it should be precisely Rui's body, which the sacred heart should have blessed. You ask why?—Hatasu is Ani's ancestress, blockhead!"

"And Rui was prophet of the temple of Hatasu," added the joiner.

“The priests over there are all hangers-on of the old royal house, that I know,” asserted a baker.

“That’s no secret!” cried the cobbler. “The old times were better than these too. The war upsets everything, and quite respectable people go barefoot because they cannot pay for shoe-leather. Rameses is a great warrior, and the son of Ra, but what can he do without the Gods; and they don’t seem to like to stay in Thebes any longer; else why should the heart of the sacred ram seek a new dwelling in the Necropolis, and in the breast of an adherent of the old—”

“Hold your tongue,” warned the basket-maker. “Here comes one of the watch.”

“I must go back to work,” said the baker. “I have my hands quite full for the feast to-morrow.”

“And I too,” said the shoemaker with a sigh, “for who would follow the king of the Gods through the Necropolis barefoot.”

“You must earn a good deal,” cried the basket-maker.

“We should do better if we had better workmen,” replied the shoemaker, “but all the good hands are gone to the war. One has to put up with stupid youngsters. And as for the women! My wife must needs have a new gown for the procession, and bought necklets for the children. Of course we must honor the dead, and they repay it often by standing by us when we want it—but what I pay for sacrifices no one can tell. More than half of what I earn goes in them—”

“In the first grief of losing my poor wife,” said the baker, “I promised a small offering every new moon, and a greater one every year. The priests will not release us from our vows, and times get harder and harder. And my dead wife owes me a grudge, and is

as thankless as she was in her lifetime; for when she appears to me in a dream she does not give me a good word, and often torments me."

"She is now a glorified all-seeing spirit," said the basket-maker's wife, "and no doubt you were faithless to her. The glorified souls know all that happens, and that has happened on earth."

The baker cleared his throat, having no answer ready; but the shoemaker exclaimed:

"By Anubis, the lord of the under-world, I hope I may die before my old woman! for if she finds out down there all I have done in this world, and if she may be changed into any shape she pleases, she will come to me every night, and nip me like a crab, and sit on me like a mountain."

"And if you die first," said the woman, "she will follow you afterwards to the under-world, and see through you there."

"That will be less dangerous," said the shoemaker laughing, "for then I shall be glorified too, and shall know all about her past life. That will not all be white paper either, and if she throws a shoe at me I will fling the last at her."

"Come home," said the basket-maker's wife, pulling her husband away. "You are getting no good by hearing this talk."

The bystanders laughed, and the baker exclaimed:

"It is high time I should be in the Necropolis before it gets dark, and see to the tables being laid for to-morrow's festival. My trucks are close to the narrow entrance to the valley. Send your little ones to me, and I will give them something nice. Are you coming over with me?"

"My younger brother is gone over with the goods,"

replied the shoemaker. "We have plenty to do still for the customers in Thebes, and here am I standing gossiping. Will the wonderful heart of the sacred ram be exhibited to-morrow do you know?"

"Of course—no doubt," said the baker, "good-bye, there go iny cases!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

NOTWITHSTANDING the advanced hour, hundreds of people were crossing over to the Necropolis at the same time as the baker. They were permitted to linger late on into the evening, under the inspection of the watch, because it was the eve of the great feast, and they had to set out their counters and awnings, to pitch their tents, and to spread out their wares; for as soon as the sun rose next day all business traffic would be stopped, none but festal barges might cross from Thebes, or such boats as ferried over pilgrims—men, women, and children, whether natives or foreigners, who were to take part in the great procession.

In the halls and work-rooms of the House of Seti there was unusual stir. The great miracle of the wonderful heart had left but a short time for the preparations for the festival. Here a chorus was being practised, there on the sacred lake* a scenic representation was being rehearsed; here the statues of the Gods were being cleaned and dressed,** and the colors of the sacred

* Every temple had its sacred lake or tank, and Herodotus speaks of the representation he saw at night on the sacred lake of Neith at Sais. "They call them mysteries," he says, "and though I know much about them I will be silent out of reverence." The myths of Isis, Osiris, and Seth-Typhon were represented.

** The Stolistes had the duty of dressing the figures of the Gods, and on some of the reliefs there are still little hooks on which the drapery was hung.

emblems were being revived, there the panther-skins and other parts of the ceremonial vestments of the priests were being aired and set out; here sceptres, censers and other metal-vessels were being cleaned, and there the sacred bark* which was to be carried in the procession was being decorated. In the sacred groves of the temple the school-boys, under the direction of the gardeners, wove garlands and wreaths to decorate the landing-places, the sphinxes, the temple, and the statues of the Gods. Flags were hoisted on the brass-tipped masts in front of the pylon, and purple sails were spread to give shadow to the court.

The inspector of sacrifices was already receiving at a side-door the cattle, corn and fruit, offerings which were brought as tribute to the House of Seti, by citizens from all parts of the country, on the occasion of the festival of the Valley, and he was assisted by scribes, who kept an account of all that was brought in by the able-bodied temple-servants and laboring serfs.

Ameni was everywhere: now with the singers, now with the magicians, who were to effect wonderful transformations before the astonished multitude; now with the workmen, who were erecting thrones for the Regent, the emissaries from other collegiate foundations**—even from so far as the Delta—and the prophets from Thebes; now with the priests, who were preparing the incense,

The dressing and undressing of the holy images was conducted in strict accordance with a prescribed ritual. The inscriptions in the seven sanctuaries of Abydos, published by Mariette, are full of instruction as to these ordinances, which were significant in every detail.

* According to the representations still preserved in the House of Seti (the temple of Qurnah) it was called the Sam-bark.

** The inscriptions on the colonnade on the eastern side of the House of Seti (the temple of Qurnah) prove that envoys were sent thither to the festival even from the Delta.

now with the servants, who were trimming the thousand lamps for the illumination at night—in short everywhere; here inciting, there praising. When he had convinced himself that all was going on well he desired one of the priests to call Pentaur.

After the departure of the exiled prince Rameri, the young priest had gone to the work-room of his friend Nebsecht.

The leech went uneasily from his phials to his cages, and from his cages back to his flasks. While he told Pentaur of the state he had found his room in on his return home, he wandered about in feverish excitement, unable to keep still, now kicking over a bundle of plants, now thumping down his fist on the table; his favorite birds were starved to death, his snakes had escaped, and his ape had followed their example, apparently in his fear of them.

“The brute, the monster!” cried Nebsecht in a rage. “He has thrown over the jars with the beetles in them, opened the chest of meal that I feed the birds and insects upon, and rolled about in it; he has thrown my knives, prickers, and forceps, my pins, compasses, and reed pens all out of window; and when I came in he was sitting on the cupboard up there, looking just like a black slave that works night and day in a corn-mill; he had got hold of the roll which contained all my observations on the structure of animals—the result of years of study—and was looking at it gravely with his head on one side. I wanted to take the book from him, but he fled with the roll, sprang out of window, let himself down to the edge of the well, and tore and rubbed the manuscript to pieces in a rage. I leaped out after him, but he jumped into the bucket, took hold of the

chain, and let himself down, grinning at me in mockery, and when I drew him up again he jumped into the water with the remains of the book."

"And the poor wretch is drowned?" asked Pentaur.

"I fished him up with the bucket, and laid him to dry in the sun; but he had been tasting all sorts of medicines, and he died at noon. My observations are gone! Some of them certainly are still left; however, I must begin again at the beginning. You see apes object as much to my labors as sages; there lies the beast on the shelf."

Pentaur had laughed at his friend's story, and then lamented his loss; but now he said anxiously:

"He is lying there on the shelf? But you forget that he ought to have been kept in the little oratory of Toth near the library. He belongs to the sacred dog-faced apes,* and all the sacred marks were found upon him. The librarian gave him into your charge to have his bad eye cured."

"That was quite well," answered Nebsecht carelessly.

"But they will require the uninjured corpse of you, to embalm it," said Pentaur.

"Will they?" muttered Nebsecht; and he looked at his friend like a boy who is asked for an apple that has long been eaten.

"And you have already been doing something with it," said Pentaur, in a tone of friendly vexation.

* The dog-faced baboon, *Kynokephalos*, was sacred to Toth as the Moon-god. Mummies of these apes have been found at Thebes and Hermopolis, and they are often represented as reading with much gravity. Statues of them have been found in great quantities, and there is a particularly life-like picture of a *Kynokephalos* in relief on the left wall of the library of the temple of Isis at Philæ.

The leech nodded. "I have opened him, and examined his heart."

"You are as much set on hearts as a coquette!" said Pentaur. "What is become of the human heart that the old paraschites was to get for you?"

Nebsecht related without reserve what the old man had done for him, and said that he had investigated the human heart, and had found nothing in it different from what he had discovered in the heart of beasts.

"But I must see it in connection with the other organs of the human body," cried he; "and my decision is made. I shall leave the House of Seti, and ask the kolchytes to take me into their guild. If it is necessary I will first perform the duties of the lowest paraschites."

Pentaur pointed out to the leech what a bad exchange he would be making, and at last exclaimed, when Nebsecht eagerly contradicted him, "This dissecting of the heart does not please me. You say yourself that you learned nothing by it. Do you still think it a right thing, a fine thing—or even useful?"

"I do not trouble myself about it," replied Nebsecht. "Whether my observations seem good or evil, right or heinous, useful or useless, I want to know how things are, nothing more."

"And so for mere curiosity," cried Pentaur, "you would endanger the blissful future of thousands of your fellow-men, take upon yourself the most abject duties, and leave this noble scene of your labors, where we all strive for enlightenment, for inward knowledge and truth."

The naturalist laughed scornfully ; the veins swelled angrily in Pentaur's forehead, and his voice took a threatening tone as he asked :

“ And do you believe that your finger and your eyes have lighted on the truth, when the noblest souls have striven in vain for thousands of years to find it out ? You descend beneath the level of human understanding by madly wallowing in the mire ; and the more clearly you are convinced that you have seized the truth, the more utterly you are involved in the toils of a miserable delusion.”

“ If I believed I knew the truth should I so eagerly seek it ?” asked Nebsecht. “ The more I observe and learn, the more deeply I feel my want of knowledge and power.”

“ That sounds modest enough,” said the poet, “ but I know the arrogance to which your labors are leading you. Everything that you see with your own eyes and touch with your own hand, you think infallible, and everything that escapes your observation you secretly regard as untrue, and pass by with a smile of superiority. But you cannot carry your experiments beyond the external world, and you forget that there are things which lie in a different realm.”

“ I know nothing of those things,” answered Nebsecht quietly.

“ But we—the Initiated,” cried Pentaur, “ turn our attention to them also. Thoughts—traditions—as to their conditions and agency have existed among us for a thousand years ; hundreds of generations of men have examined these traditions, have approved them, and have handed them down to us. All our knowledge, it is true, is defective, and yet prophets have been favored with

the gift of looking into the future, magic powers have been vouchsafed to mortals. All this is contrary to the laws of the external world, which are all that you recognize, and yet it can easily be explained if we accept the idea of a higher order of things. The spirit of the Divinity dwells in each of us, as in nature. The natural man can only attain to such knowledge as is common to all; but it is the divine capacity for serene discernment—which is omniscience—that works in the seer; it is the divine and unlimited power—which is omnipotence—that from time to time enables the magician to produce supernatural effects!”

“Away with prophets and marvels!” cried Nebsecht.

“I should have thought,” said Pentaur, “that even the laws of nature which you recognize presented the greatest marvels daily to your eyes; nay the Supreme One does not disdain sometimes to break through the common order of things, in order to reveal to that portion of Himself which we call our soul, the sublime Whole of which we form part—Himself. Only to-day you have seen how the heart of the sacred ram—”

“Man, man!” Nebsecht interrupted, “the sacred heart is the heart of a hapless sheep that a sot of a soldier sold for a trifle to a haggling grazier, and that was slaughtered in a common herd. A proscribed paraschites put it into the body of Rui, and—and—” he opened the cupboard, threw the carcass of the ape and some clothes on to the floor, and took out an alabaster bowl which he held before the poet—“the muscles you see here in brine, this machine, once beat in the breast of the prophet Rui. My sheep’s heart will be carried to-morrow in the procession! I would have told you

all about it if I had not promised the old man to hold my tongue, and then—But what ails you, man?"

Pentaur had turned away from his friend, and covered his face with his hands, and he groaned as if he were suffering some frightful physical pain.

Nebsecht divined what was passing in the mind of his friend. Like a child that has to ask forgiveness of its mother for some misdeed, he went close up to Pentaur, but stood trembling behind him not daring to speak to him.

Several minutes passed. Suddenly Pentaur raised his head, lifted his hands to heaven, and cried:

"O Thou! the One!—though stars may fall from the heavens in summer nights, still Thy eternal and immutable laws guide the never-resting* planets in their paths. Thou pure and all-prevading Spirit, that dwellest in me, as I know by my horror of a lie, manifest Thyself in me—as light when I think, as mercy when I act, and when I speak, as truth—always as truth!"

The poet spoke these words with absorbed fervor, and Nebsecht heard them as if they were speech from some distant and beautiful world. He went affectionately up to his friend, and eagerly held out his hand. Pentaur grasped it, pressed it warmly, and said:

"That was a fearful moment! You do not know what Ameni has been to me, and now, now!"

He hardly had ceased speaking when steps were heard approaching the physician's room, and a young priest requested the friends to appear at once in the meeting-room of the Initiated. In a few moments

* In the sacred writings the planets are called "the Never-resting."

they both entered the great hall, which was brilliantly lighted.

Not one of the chiefs of the House of Seti was absent.

Ameni sat on a raised seat at a long table; on his right hand was old Gagabu, on his left the third Prophet of the temple. The principals of the different orders of priests had also found places at the table, and among them the chief of the haruspices, while the rest of the priests, all in snow-white linen robes, sat, with much dignity, in a large semicircle, two rows deep. In the midst stood a statue of the Goddess of truth and justice.

Behind Ameni's throne was the many-colored image of the ibis-headed Toth, who presided over the measure and method of things, who counselled the Gods as well as men, and presided over learning and the arts. In a niche at the farther end of the hall were painted the divine Triad of Thebes, with Rameses I. and his son Seti, who approached them with offerings. The priests were placed with strict regard to their rank, and the order of initiation. Pentaur's was the lowest place of all.

No discussion of any importance had as yet taken place, for Ameni was making enquiries, receiving information, and giving orders with reference to the next day's festival. All seemed to be well arranged, and promised a magnificent solemnity; although the scribes complained of the scarce influx of beasts from the peasants, who were so heavily taxed for the war; and although that feature would be wanting in the procession which was wont to give it the greatest splendor—the presence of the king and the royal family.

This circumstance aroused the disapprobation of some of the priests, who were of opinion that it would be hazardous to exclude the two children of Rameses, who remained in Thebes, from any share in the solemnities of the feast.

Ameni then rose.

“We have sent the boy Rameri,” he said, “away from this house. Bent-Anat must be purged of her uncleanness, and if the weak superior of the temple of Amon absolves her, she may pass for purified over there, where they live for this world only, but not here, where it is our duty to prepare the soul for death. The Regent, a descendant of the great deposed race of kings, will appear in the procession with all the splendor of his rank. I see you are surprised, my friends. Only he! Aye! Great things are stirring, and it may happen that soon the mild sun of peace may rise upon our war-ridden people.”

“Miracles are happening,” he continued, “and in a dream I saw a gentle and pious man on the throne of the earthly vicar of Ra. He listened to our counsel, he gave us our due, and led back to our fields our serfs that had been sent to the war; he overthrew the altars of the strange gods, and drove the unclean stranger out from this holy land.”

“The Regent Ani!” exclaimed Septah.

An eager movement stirred the assembly, but Ameni went on:

“Perhaps it was not unlike him, but he certainly was the One; he had the features of the true and legitimate descendants of Ra, to whom Rui was faithful, in whose breast the heart of the sacred ram found a refuge. To-morrow this pledge of the divine grace

shall be shown to the people, and another mercy will also be announced to them. Hear and praise the dispensations of the Most High! An hour ago I received the news that a new Apis, with all the sacred marks upon him, has been found in the herds of Ani at Hermonthis."

Fresh excitement was shown by the listening conclave. Ameni let their astonishment express itself freely, but at last he exclaimed:

"And now to settle the last question. The priest Pentaur, who is now present, has been appointed speaker at the festival to-morrow. He has erred greatly, yet I think we need not judge him till after the holy day, and, in consideration of his former innocence, need not deprive him of the honorable office. Do you share my wishes? Is there no dissentient voice? Then come forward, you, the youngest of us all, who are so highly trusted by this holy assembly."

Pentaur rose and placed himself opposite to Ameni, in order to give, as he was required to do, a broad outline of the speech he proposed to deliver next day to the nobles and the people.

The whole assembly, even his opponents, listened to him with approbation. Ameni, too, praised him, but added:

"I miss only one thing on which you must dwell at greater length, and treat with warmer feeling—I mean the miracle which has stirred our souls to-day. We must show that the Gods brought the sacred heart—"

"Allow me," said Pentaur, interrupting the high-priest, and looking earnestly into those eyes which long since he had sung of—"Allow me to entreat you

not to select me to declare this new marvel to the people."

Astonishment was stamped on the face of every member of the assembly. Each looked at his neighbor, then at Pentaur, and at last enquiringly at Ameni. The superior knew Pentaur, and saw that no mere whimsical fancy, but some serious motive had given rise to this refusal. Horror, almost aversion, had rung in his tone as he said the words 'new marvel.'

He doubted the genuineness of this divine manifestation!

Ameni gazed long and enquiringly into Pentaur's eyes, and then said: "You are right, my friend. Before judgment has been passed on you, before you are reinstated in your old position, your lips are not worthy to announce this divine wonder to the multitude. Look into your own soul, and teach the devout a horror of sin, and show them the way, which you must now tread, of purification of the heart. I myself will announce the miracle."

The white-robed audience hailed this decision of their master with satisfaction. Ameni enjoined this thing on one, on another, that; and on all, perfect silence as to the dream which he had related to them, and then he dissolved the meeting. He begged only Gagabu and Pentaur to remain.

As soon as they were alone Ameni asked the poet: "Why did you refuse to announce to the people the miracle, which has filled all the priests of the Necropolis with joy?"

"Because thou hast taught me," replied Pentaur, "that truth is the highest aim we can have, and that there is nothing higher."

“I tell you so again now,” said Ameni. “And as you recognize this doctrine, I ask you, in the name of the fair daughter of Ra—— Do you doubt the genuineness of the miracle that took place under our very eyes?”

“I doubt it,” replied Pentaur.

“Remain on the high stand-point of veracity,” continued Ameni, “and tell us further, that we may learn, what are the scruples that shake thy faith?”

“I know,” replied the poet with a dark expression, “that the heart which the crowd will approach and bow to, before which even the Initiated prostrate themselves as if it had been the incarnation of Ra, was torn from the bleeding carcass of a common sheep, and smuggled into the kanopus which contained the entrails of Rui.”

Ameni drew back a step, and Gagabu cried out: “Who says so? Who can prove it? As I grow older I hear more and more frightful things!”

“I know it,” said Pentaur decidedly. “But I cannot reveal the name of him from whom I learned it.”

“Then we may believe that you are mistaken, and that some impostor is fooling you. We will enquire who has devised such a trick, and he shall be punished! To scorn the voice of the Divinity is a sin, and he who lends his ear to a lie is far from the truth. Sacred and thrice sacred is the heart, blind fool, that I purpose to-morrow to show to the people, and before which you yourself—if not with good will, then by compulsion—shall fall, prostrate in the dust.

“Go now, and reflect on the words with which you will stir the souls of the people to-morrow morning; but know one thing—Truth has many forms, and her

aspects are as manifold as those of the Godhead. As the sun does not travel over a level plain or by a straight path—as the stars follow a circuitous course, which we compare with the windings of the snake Mehen,*—so the elect, who look out over time and space, and on whom the conduct of human life devolves, are not only permitted, but commanded, to follow indirect ways in order to reach the highest aims, ways that you do not understand, and which you may fancy deviate widely from the path of truth. You look only at to-day, we look forward to the morrow, and what we announce as truth you must needs believe. And mark my words: A lie stains the soul, but doubt eats into it.”

Ameni had spoken with strong excitement; when Pentaur had left the room, and he was alone with Gagabu, he exclaimed:

“What things are these? Who is ruining the innocent child-like spirit of this highly favored youth?”

“He is ruining it himself,” replied Gagabu. “He is putting aside the old law, for he feels a new one growing up in his own breast.”

“But the laws,” exclaimed Ameni, “grow and spread like shadowy woods; they are made by no one. I loved the poet, yet I must restrain him, else he will break down all barriers, like the Nile when it swells too high. And what he says of the miracle—”

“Did you devise it?”

* The snake Mehen (termed in the texts proceeding “from what is in the abyss”) is frequently represented in waves and curves, symbolizing the winding course of the sun during the night, in the under-world. Mythological figures of snakes have quite as often a benevolent as a malevolent significance; snakes were kept in every temple, and mummies of snakes, particularly of *Vipera cerastes*, are found at Thebes. Plutarch says the snake was held sacred because it glides along without limbs, like the stars.

“By the Holy One—no!” cried Ameni.

“And yet Pentaur is sincere, and inclined to faith,” said the old man doubtfully.

“I know it,” returned Ameni. “It happened as he said. But who did it, and who told him of the shameful deed?”

Both the priests stood thoughtfully gazing at the floor.

Ameni first broke the silence.

“Pentaur came in with Nebsecht,” he exclaimed, “and they are intimate friends. Where was the leech while I was staying in Thebes?”

“He was taking care of the child hurt by Bent-Anat—the child of the paraschites Pinem, and he stayed there three days,” replied Gagabu.

“And it was Pinem,” said Ameni, “that opened the body of Rui! Now I know who has dimmed Pentaur’s faith. It was that inquisitive stutterer, and he shall be made to repent of it. For the present let us think of to-morrow’s feast, but the day after I will examine that nice couple, and will act with iron severity.”

“First let us examine the naturalist in private,” said Gagabu. “He is an ornament to the temple, for he has investigated many matters, and his dexterity is wonderful.”

“All that may be considered after the festival,” Ameni said, interrupting the old man. “We have enough to think of at present.”

“And even more to consider later,” retorted Gagabu. “We have entered on a dangerous path. You know very well I am still hot-headed, though I am old in years, and alas! timidity was never my weakness; but Rameses is a powerful man, and duty com-

pels me to ask you: Is it mere hatred for the king that has led you to take these hasty and imprudent steps?"

"I have no hatred for Rameses," answered Ameni gravely. "If he did not wear the crown I could love him; I know him too, as well as if I were his brother, and value all that is great in him; nay I will admit that he is disfigured by no littleness. If I did not know how strong the enemy is, we might try to overthrow him with smaller means. You know as well as I do that he is our enemy. Not yours, nor mine, nor the enemy of the Gods; but the enemy of the old and reverend ordinances by which this people and this country must be governed, and above all of those who are required to protect the wisdom of the fathers, and to point out the right way to the sovereign—I mean the priesthood, whom it is my duty to lead, and for whose rights I will fight with every weapon of the spirit. In this contest, as you know, all that otherwise would be falsehood, treachery, and cunning, puts on the bright aspect of light and truth. As the physician needs the knife and fire to heal the sick, we must do fearful things to save the community when it is in danger. Now you will see me fight with every weapon, for if we remain idle, we shall soon cease to be the leaders of the state, and become the slaves of the king."

Gagabu nodded assent, but Ameni went on with increasing warmth, and in that rhythmical accent in which, when he came out of the holy of holies, he was accustomed to declare the will of the Divinity: "You were my teacher, and I value you, and so you now shall be told everything that stirred my soul, and made me first resolve upon this fearful struggle. I was,

as you know, brought up in this temple with Rameses—and it was very wise of Seti to let his son grow up here with other boys. At work and at play the heir to the throne and I won every prize. He was quite my superior in swift apprehension—in keen perception—but I had greater caution, and deeper purpose. Often he laughed at my laborious efforts, but his brilliant powers appeared to me a vain delusion. I became one of the initiated, he ruled the state in partnership with his father, and, when Seti died, by himself. We both grew older, but the foundation of our characters remained the same. He rushed to splendid victories, overthrew nations, and raised the glory of the Egyptian name to a giddy height, though stained with the blood of his people; I passed my life in industry and labor, in teaching the young, and in guarding the laws which regulate the intercourse of men and bind the people to the Divinity. I compared the present with the past: What were the priests? How had they come to be what they are? What would Egypt be without them? There is not an art, not a science, not a faculty that is not thought out, constructed, and practised by us. We crown the kings, we named the Gods, and taught the people to honor them as divine—for the crowd needs a hand to lead it, and under which it shall tremble as under the mighty hand of Fate. We are the willing ministers of the divine representative of Ra on the throne, so long as he rules in accordance with our institutions—as the One God reigns, subject to eternal laws. He used to choose his counsellors from among us; we told him what would benefit the country, he heard us willingly, and executed our plans. The old

kings were the hands, but we, the priests, were the head. And now, my father, what has become of us? We are made use of to keep the people in the faith, for if they cease to honor the Gods how will they submit to kings? Seti ventured much, his son risks still more, and therefore both have required much succor from the Immortals. Rameses is pious, he sacrifices frequently, and loves prayer: we are necessary to him, to waft incense, to slaughter hecatombs, to offer prayers, and to interpret dreams—but we are no longer his advisers. My father, now in Osiris, a worthier high-priest than I, was charged by the Prophets to entreat his father to give up the guilty project of connecting the north sea by a navigable channel with the unclean waters of the Red Sea.* Such things can only benefit the Asiatics. But Seti would not listen to our counsel. We desired to preserve the old division of the land, but Rameses introduced the new to the disadvantage of the priests; we warned him against fresh wars, and the king again and again has taken the field; we had the ancient sacred documents which exempted our peasantry from military service, and, as you know, he outrageously defies them. From the most ancient times no one has been permitted to raise temples in this land to strange Gods, and Rameses favors the son of the stranger, and, not only in the north country, but in the reverend city of Memphis and here in Thebes, he has raised altars and magnifi-

* The harbors of the Red Sea were in the hands of the Phœnicians, who sailed from thence southwards to enrich themselves with the produce of Arabia and Ophir. Pharaoh Necho also projected a Suez canal, but does not appear to have carried it out, as the oracle declared that the utility of the undertaking would be greatest to foreigners.

cent sanctuaries, in the strangers' quarter, to the sanguinary* false Gods of the East."

"You speak like a Seer," cried old Gagabu, "and what you say is perfectly true. We are still called priests, but alas! our counsel is little asked. 'You have to prepare men for a happy lot in the other world,' Rameses once said; 'I alone can guide their destinies in this.'"

"He did say so," answered Ameni, "and if he had said no more than that he would have been doomed. He and his house are the enemies of our rights and of our noble country. Need I tell you from whom the race of the Pharaoh is descended? Formerly the hosts who came from the east, and fell on our land like swarms of locusts, robbing and destroying it, were spoken of as 'a curse' and a 'pest.' Rameses' father was of that race. When Ani's ancestors expelled the Hyksos, the bold chief, whose children now govern Egypt, obtained the favor of being allowed to remain on the banks of the Nile; they served in the armies, they distinguished themselves, and, at last, the first Rameses succeeded in gaining the troops over to himself, and in pushing the old race of the legitimate sons of Ra, weakened as they were by heresy, from the throne. I must confess, however unwillingly, that some priests of the true faith—among them your grandfather, and mine—supported the daring usurper who clung faithfully to the old traditions. Not less than a hundred generations of my ancestors, and of yours, and of many other priestly families, have lived and died here by the banks of the Nile—of Rameses'

* Human sacrifices, which had been introduced into Egypt by the Phœnicians, were very early abolished.

race we have seen ten, and only know of them that they descend from strangers, from the caste of Amu! He is like all the Semitic race; they love to wander, they call us ploughmen,* and laugh to scorn the sober regularity with which we, tilling the dark soil, live through our lives to a tardy death, in honest labor both of mind and body. They sweep round on foraging excursions, ride the salt waves in ships, and know no loved and fixed home; they settle down wherever they are tempted by rapine, and when there is nothing more to be got they build a house in another spot. Such was Seti, such is Rameses! For a year he will stop in Thebes, then he must set out for wars in strange lands. He does not know how to yield piously, or to take advice of wise counsellors, and he will not learn. And such as the father is, so are the children! Think of the criminal behavior of Bent-Anat!"

"I said the kings liked foreigners. Have you duly considered the importance of that to us? We strive for high and noble aims, and have wrenched off the shackles of the flesh in order to guard our souls. The poorest man lives secure under the shelter of the law, and through us participates in the gifts of the spirit; to the rich are offered the priceless treasures of art and learning. Now look abroad: east and west wandering tribes roam over the desert with wretched tents; in the south a debased populace prays to feathers, and to abject idols, who are beaten if the worshipper is not satisfied. In the north certainly there are well regulated states, but the best part of the arts and sciences which they possess they owe to us, and their altars still reek with the loathsome sacrifice of human blood. Only

* The word Fellaḥ (pl. Fellahin) means ploughman.

backsliding from the right is possible under the stranger, and therefore it is prudent to withdraw from him; therefore he is hateful to our Gods. And Rameses, the king, is a stranger, by blood and by nature, in his affections, and in his appearance; his thoughts are always abroad—this country is too small for him—and he will never perceive what is really best for him, clear as his intellect is. He will listen to no guidance, he does mischief to Egypt, and therefore I say: Down with him from the throne!”

“Down with him!”—Gagabu eagerly echoed the words. Ameni gave the old man his hand, which trembled with excitement, and went on more calmly.

“The Regent Ani is a legitimate child of the soil, by his father and mother both. I know him well, and I am sure that though he is cunning indeed, he is full of true veneration, and will righteously establish us in the rights which we have inherited. The choice is easy: I have chosen, and I always carry through what I have once begun! Now you know all, and you will second me.”

“With body and soul!” cried Gagabu.

“Strengthen the hearts of the brethren,” said Ameni, preparing to go. “The initiated may all guess what is going on, but it must never be spoken of.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE sun was up on the twenty-ninth morning of the second month of the over-flow of the Nile,* and

* The 29th Phaophi. The Egyptians divided the year into three seasons of four months each. Flood-time, Seed-time and Harvest. (*Scha, per* and *schemu.*) The 29th Phaophi corresponds to the 8th November.

citizens and their wives, old men and children, freemen and slaves, led by priests, did homage to the rising day-star before the door of the temple to which the quarter of the town belonged where each one dwelt.

The Thebans stood together like huge families before the pylons, waiting for the processions of priests, which they intended to join in order to march in their train round the great temple of the city, and thence to cross with the festal barks to the Necropolis.

To-day was the Feast of the Valley, and Amon, the great God of Thebes, was carried over in solemn pomp to the City of the Dead, in order that he—as the priests said *—might sacrifice to his fathers in the other world. The train marched westward; for there, where the earthly remains of man also found rest, the millions of suns had disappeared, each of which was succeeded daily by a new one, born of the night. The young luminary, the priests said, did not forget those that had been extinguished, and from whom he was descended; and Amon paid them this mark of respect to warn the devout not to forget those who were passed away, and to whom they owed their existence.

“Bring offerings,” says a pious text, “to thy father and thy mother who rest in the valley of the tombs; for such gifts are pleasing to the Gods, who will receive them as if brought to themselves. Often visit thy dead, so that what thou dost for them, thy son may do for thee.” **

The Feast of the Valley was a feast of the dead;

* Maspero, *Mémoire sur quelques Papyrus du Louvre*, p. 75. Pap. 3. Bulaq, V. 3, lines 22, 23.

** From the Papyrus IV. at Bulaq, which contains moral precepts. It has been published by Mariette, and translated by Brugsch, E. de Rougé, and lastly treated with admirable analysis by Chabas, in *l'Égyptologie*.

but it was not a melancholy solemnity, observed with lamentation and wailing; on the contrary, it was a cheerful festival, devoted to pious and sentimental memories of those whom we cease not to love after death, whom we esteem happy and blest, and of whom we think with affection; to whom too the throng from Thebes brought offerings, forming groups in the chapel-like tombs, or in front of the graves, to eat and drink.

Father, mother and children clung together; the house-slaves followed with provisions, and with torches, which would light up the darkness of the tomb and show the way home at night.

Even the poorest had taken care to secure beforehand a place in one of the large boats which conveyed the people across the stream; the barges of the rich, dressed in the gayest colors, awaited their owners with their households, and the children had dreamed all night of the sacred bark of Amon, whose splendor, as their mothers told them, was hardly less than that of the golden boat in which the Sun-God and his companions make their daily voyage across the ocean of heaven. The broad landing place of the temple of Amon was already crowded with priests, the shore with citizens, and the river with boats; already loud music drowned the din of the crowds, who thronged and pushed, enveloped in clouds of dust, to reach the boats; the houses and hovels of Thebes were all empty, and the advent of the God through the temple-gates was eagerly expected; but still the members of the royal family had not appeared, who were wont on this solemn day to go on foot to the great temple of Amon; and, in the crowd, many a one asked his neighbor why Bent-Anat, the fair daughter of Rameses,

lingered so long, and delayed the starting of the procession.

The priests had begun their chant within the walls, which debarred the outer world from any glimpse into the bright precincts of the temple; the Regent with his brilliant train had entered the sanctuary; the gates were thrown open; the youths in their short-aprons, who threw flowers in the path of the God, had come out; clouds of incense announced the approach of Amon—and still the daughter of Rameses appeared not.

Many rumors were afloat, most of them contradictory; but one was accurate, and confirmed by the temple servants, to the great regret of the crowd—Bent-Anat was excluded from the Feast of the Valley.

She stood on her balcony with her brother Rameri and her friend Nefert, and looked down on the river, and on the approaching God.

Early in the previous morning Bek-en-Chunsu, the old high-priest of the temple of Amon had pronounced her clean, but in the evening he had come to communicate to her the intelligence that Ameni prohibited her entering the Necropolis before she had obtained the forgiveness of the Gods of the West for her offence.

While still under the ban of uncleanness she had visited the temple of Hathor, and had defiled it by her presence; and the stern Superior of the City of the Dead was in the right—that Bek-en-Chunsu himself admitted—in closing the western shore against her. Bent-Anat then had recourse to Ani; but, though he promised to mediate for her, he came late in the evening to tell her that Ameni was inexorable. The Regent at the same time, with every appearance of regret,

advised her to avoid an open quarrel, and not to defy Ameni's lofty severity, but to remain absent from the festival.

Katuti at the same time sent the dwarf to Nefert, to desire her to join her mother, in taking part in the procession, and in sacrificing in her father's tomb; but Nefert replied that she neither could nor would leave her royal friend and mistress.

Bent-Anat had given leave of absence to the highest members of her household, and had prayed them to think of her at the splendid solemnity.

When, from her balcony, she saw the mob of people and the crowd of boats, she went back into her room, called Rameri, who was angrily declaiming at what he called Ameni's insolence, took his hands in hers, and said:

"We have both done wrong, brother; let us patiently submit to the consequences of our faults, and conduct ourselves as if our father were with us."

"He would tear the panther-skin from the haughty priest's shoulders," cried Rameri, "if he dared to humiliate you so in his presence;" and tears of rage ran down his smooth cheeks as he spoke.

"Put anger aside," said Bent-Anat. "You were still quite little the last time my father took part in this festival."

"Oh! I remember that morning well," exclaimed Rameri, "and shall never forget it."

"So I should think," said the princess. "Do not leave us, Nefert—you are now my sister. It was a glorious morning; we children were collected in the great hall of the King, all in festival dresses; he had us called into this room, which had been inhabited by

my mother, who then had been dead only a few months. He took each of us by the hand, and said he forgave us everything we might have done wrong if only we were sincerely penitent, and gave us each a kiss on our forehead. Then he beckoned us all to him, and said, as humbly as if he were one of us instead of the great king, 'Perhaps I may have done one of you some injustice, or have kept you out of some right; I am not conscious of such a thing, but if it has occurred I am very sorry'—we all rushed upon him, and wanted to kiss him, but he put us aside smiling, and said, 'Each of you has enjoyed an equal share of one thing, that you may be sure—I mean your father's love; and I see now that you return what I have given you.' Then he spoke of our mother, and said that even the tenderest father could not fill the place of a mother. He drew a lovely picture of the unselfish devotion of the dead mother, and desired us to pray and to sacrifice with him at her resting-place, and to resolve to be worthy of her; not only in great things but in trifles too, for they make up the sum of life, as hours make the days, and the years. We elder ones clasped each other's hands, and I never felt happier than in that moment, and afterwards by my mother's grave."

Nefert raised her eyes that were wet with tears.

"With such a father it must be easy to be good," she said.

"Did your mother never speak good words that went to your heart on the morning of this festival?" asked Bent-Anat.

Nefert colored, and answered: "We were always late in dressing, and then had to hurry to be at the temple in time."

“Then let me be your mother to-day,” cried the princess, “and yours too, Rameri. Do you not remember how my father offered forgiveness to the officers of the court, and to all the servants, and how he enjoined us to root out every grudge from our hearts on this day? ‘Only stainless garments,’ he said, ‘befit this feast; only hearts without spot.’ So, brother, I will not hear an evil word about Ameni, who is most likely forced to be severe by the law; my father will enquire into it all and decide. My heart is so full, it must overflow. Come, Nefert, give me a kiss, and you too, Rameri. Now I will go into my little temple, in which the images of our ancestors stand, and think of my mother and the blessed spirits of those loved ones to whom I may not sacrifice to-day.”

“I will go with you,” said Rameri.

“You, Nefert—stay here,” said Bent-Anat, “and cut as many flowers as you like; take the best and finest, and make a wreath, and when it is ready we will send a messenger across to lay it, with other gifts, on the grave of your Mena’s mother.”

When, half-an-hour later, the brother and sister returned to the young wife, two graceful garlands hung in Nefert’s hands, one for the grave of the dead queen, and one for Mena’s mother.

“I will carry over the wreaths, and lay them in the tombs,” cried the prince.

“Ani thought it would be better that we should not show ourselves to the people,” said his sister. “They will scarcely notice that you are not among the school-boys, but—”

“But I will not go over as the king’s son, but as a gardener’s boy—” interrupted the prince. “Listen to

the flourish of trumpets! the God has now passed through the gates.”

Rameri stepped out into the balcony, and the two women followed him, and looked down on the scene of the embarkation which they could easily see with their sharp young eyes.

“It will be a thinner and poorer procession* without either my father or us, that is one comfort,” said Rameri. “The chorus is magnificent; here come the plume-bearers and singers; there is the chief prophet at the great temple, old Bek-en-Chunsu. How dignified he looks, but he will not like going. Now the God is coming, for I smell the incense.”

With these words the prince fell on his knees, and the women followed his example—when they saw first a noble bull in whose shining skin the sun was reflected, and who bore between his horns a golden disk, above which stood white ostrich-feathers; and then, divided from the bull only by a few fan-bearers, the God himself, sometimes visible, but more often hidden from sight by great semi-circular screens of black and white ostrich-feathers, which were fixed on long poles, and with which the priests shaded the God.

His mode of progress was as mysterious as his name, for he seemed to float slowly on his gorgeous throne from the temple-gates towards the stream. His seat was placed on a platform, magnificently decorated with bunches and garlands of flowers, and covered with hangings of purple and gold brocade, which concealed the priests who bore it along with a slow and even pace.

* I have been guided in my description of the procession by the representation of the feast of the Steps at Medinet Abu.

As soon as the God had been placed on board his barge, Bent-Anat and her companions rose from their knees.

Then came some priests, who carried a box with the sacred evergreen tree of Amon; and when a fresh outburst of music fell on her ear, and a cloud of incense was wafted up to her, Bent-Anat said: "Now my father should be coming."

"And you," cried Rameri, "and close behind, Nefert's husband, Mena, with the guards. Uncle Ani comes on foot. How strangely he has dressed himself like a sphinx hind-part before!"

"How so?" asked Nefert.

"A sphinx," said Rameri laughing, "has the body of a lion, and the head of a man,* and my uncle has a peaceful priest's robe, and on his head the helmet of a warrior."

"If the king were here, the distributor of life," said Nefert, "you would not be missing from among his supporters."

"No indeed!" replied the prince, "and the whole thing is altogether different when my father is here. His heroic form is splendid on his golden throne; the statues of Truth and Justice spread their wings behind him as if to protect him; his mighty representative in fight, the lion, lies peacefully before him, and over him spreads the canopy with the Uræus snake at the top. There is hardly any end to the haruspices, the pastophori with the standards, the images of the Gods, and the flocks and herds for sacrifice. Only think, even the North has sent representatives to the feast, as if my

* There were no female sphinxes in Egypt. The sphinx was called Neb, *i. e.*, the lord. The lion-couchant had either a man's or a ram's head.

father were here. I know all the different signs on the standards.* Do you recognize the images of the king's ancestors, Nefert? No? no more do I; but it seemed to me that Ahmes I., who expelled the Hyksos—from whom our grandmother was descended—headed the procession, and not my grandfather Seti, as he should have done. Here come the soldiers; they are the legions which Ani equipped, and who returned victorious from Ethiopia only last night. How the people cheer them! and indeed they have behaved valiantly. Only think, Bent-Anat and Nefert, what it will be when my father comes home, with a hundred captive princes, who will humbly follow his chariot, which your Mena will drive, with our brothers and all the nobles of the land, and the guards in their splendid chariots.”

“They do not think of returning yet!” sighed Nefert.

While more and more troops of the Regent's soldiers, more companies of musicians, and rare animals,** followed in procession, the festal bark of Amon started from the shore.

It was a large and gorgeous barge of wood, polished all over and overlaid with gold, and its edge was decorated with glittering glass-beads,*** which imitated rubies and emeralds; the masts and yards were gilt,

* Every Nomos or province of Egypt had its heraldic badge, which on solemn occasions was carried as a standard. There were complete lists of the forty-four provinces as early as the time of Seti I. Those of Philæ, Edfu and Dendera give many interesting details, particularly as to the religious observances, in each Nomos. See Harris, Brugsch, Dumichen, and J. de Rougé.

** A great number of foreign beasts were introduced in a procession under Ptolemy Philadelphus, which is graphically described by Callixenus, an eyewitness. The Lagides imitated a custom which, as we learn from the pictures in the tomb of Rech ma Ra, 18th dynasty, existed in very early times.

*** These were manufactured by the Egyptians, with great skill, in various forms and colors. In the Minutoli collection and many others, particularly the one at Bulaq, are specimens of mosaic jewelry, which even the best workmen of modern times would find it difficult to imitate.

and purple sails floated from them. The seats for the priests were of ivory, and garlands of lilies and roses hung round the vessel, from its masts and ropes.

The Regent's Nile-boat was not less splendid; the wood-work shone with gilding, the cabin was furnished with gay Babylonian carpets; a lion's-head formed the prow, as formerly in Hatasu's sea-going vessels, and two large rubies shone in it, for eyes. After the priests had embarked, and the sacred barge had reached the opposite shore, the people pressed into the boats, which, filled almost to sinking, soon so covered the whole breadth of the river that there was hardly a spot where the sun was mirrored in the yellow waters.

"Now I will put on the dress of a gardener," cried Rameri, "and cross over with the wreaths."

"You will leave us alone?" asked Bent-Anat.

"Do not make me anxious," said Rameri.

"Go then," said the princess. "If my father were here how willingly I would go too."

"Come with me," cried the boy. "We can easily find a disguise for you too."

"Folly!" said Bent-Anat; but she looked enquiringly at Nefert, who shrugged her shoulders, as much as to say: "Your will is my law."

Rameri was too sharp for the glances of the friends to have escaped him, and he exclaimed eagerly:

"You will come with me, I see you will! Every beggar to-day flings his flower into the common grave, which contains the black mummy of his father—and shall the daughter of Rameses, and the wife of the chief charioteer, be excluded from bringing garlands to their dead?"

“I shall defile the tomb by my presence,” said Bent-Anat coloring.

“You—you!” exclaimed Rameri, throwing his arms round his sister’s neck, and kissing her. “You, a noble generous creature, who live only to ease sorrow and to wipe away tears; you, the very image of my father—unclean! sooner would I believe that the swans down there are as black as crows, and the rose-wreaths on the balcony rank hemlock branches. Bek-en-Chunsu pronounced you clean, and if Ameni—”

“Ameni only exercises his rights,” said Bent-Anat gently, “and you know what we have resolved. I will not hear one hard word about him to-day.”

“Very well! he has graciously and mercifully kept us from the feast,” said Rameri ironically, and he bowed low in the direction of the Necropolis, “and you are unclean. Do not enter the tombs and the temples on my account; let us stay outside among the people. The roads over there are not so very sensitive; paraschites and other unclean folks pass over them every day. Be sensible, Bent-Anat, and come. We will disguise ourselves; I will conduct you; I will lay the garlands in the tombs, we will pray together outside, we will see the sacred procession and the feats of the magicians, and hear the festive discourse. Only think! Pentaur, in spite of all they have said against him, is to deliver it. The temple of Seti wants to do its best to-day, and Ameni knows very well that Pentaur, when he opens his mouth, stirs the hearts of the people more than all the sages together if they were to sing in chorus! Come with me, sister.”

“So be it then,” said Bent-Anat with sudden decision.

Rameri was surprised at this quick resolve, at which however he was delighted; but Nefert looked anxiously at her friend. In a moment her eyes fell; she knew now who it was that her friend loved, and the fearful thought—"How will it end?" flashed through her mind.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN hour later a tall, plainly dressed woman crossed the Nile, with a dark-skinned boy and a slender youth by her side. The wrinkles on her brow and cheeks agreed little with her youthful features; but it would have been difficult to recognize in these three the proud princess, the fair young prince, and the graceful Nefert, who looked as charming as ever in the long white robe of a temple-student.

They were followed by two faithful and sturdy head-servants from among the litter-bearers of the princess, who were however commanded to appear as though they were not in any way connected with their mistress and her companions.

The passage across the Nile had been accomplished but slowly, and thus the royal personages had experienced for the first time some of the many difficulties and delays which ordinary mortals must conquer to attain objects which almost fly to meet their rulers. No one preceded them to clear the river, no other vessel made way for them; on the contrary, all tried to take place ahead of them, and to reach the opposite shore before them.

When at last they reached the landing-place, the procession had already passed on to the temple of Seti;

Ameni had met it with his chorus of singers, and had received the God on the shore of the Nile; the prophets of the Necropolis had with their own hands placed him in the sacred Sam-bark* of the House of Seti, which was artistically constructed of cedar wood and electrum set with jewels; thirty pastophori took the precious burden on their shoulders, and bore it up the avenue of Sphinxes—which led from the river to the temple—into the sanctuary of Seti, where Amon remained while the emissaries from the different provinces deposited their offerings in the forecourt. On his road from the shore kolchytes** had run before him, in accordance with ancient custom, strewing sand in his path.

In the course of an hour the procession once more emerged into the open air, and turning to the south, rested first in the enormous temple of Amenophis III., in front of which the two giant statues stood as sentinels—they still remain, the colossi of the Nile valley. Farther to the south it reached the temple of Thotmes the Great,*** then, turning round, it clung to the eastern face of the Libyan hills†—pierced with tombs and catacombs; it mounted the terraces of the temple of Hatasu, and paused by the tombs of the oldest kings†† which are in the immediate neighborhood; thus by sunset it had reached the scene of the festival itself, at the entrance of the valley in which the tomb of Seti††† had been made,

* The sacred vessel of the God is so called in a picture still extant at Qurnah.

** Peyron, *Papyri Graeci regii Taurinenses*, t. I, p. 41, 42, 85-88.

*** The oldest portion of the temple of Medinet Abu. Lepsius and Rhind (Thebes, and its Temples) both give plans which make the path of procession easy to trace, Lepsius, "*Denkmäler aus Egypten*," is a splendid work in folio.

† The modern Qurnet Murrai and Abd el Qurnah.

†† The modern el Assassif and Drah abu'l Negga.

††† The modern Biban el Muluk.

and in whose westernmost recesses were some of the graves of the Pharaohs of the deposed race.

This part of the Necropolis was usually visited by lamp-light, and under the flare of torches, before the return of the God to his own temple and the mystery-play on the sacred lake, which did not begin till midnight.

Behind the God, in a vase of transparent crystal, and borne high on a pole that all the multitude might see it, was the heart of the sacred ram.

Our friends, after they had laid their wreaths on the magnificent altars of their royal ancestors without being recognized, late in the afternoon joined the throng who followed the procession. They mounted the eastern cliff of the hills close by the tomb of Mena's forefathers, which a prophet of Amon, named Neferhotep—Mena's great-grandfather—had constructed. Its narrow doorway was besieged by a crowd, for within the first of the rock-chambers of which it consisted, a harper was singing a dirge for the long-since buried prophet, his wife and his sister. The song had been composed by the poet attached to his house; it was graven in the stone of the second rock-room of the tomb, and Neferhotep had left a plot of ground in trust to the Necropolis, with the charge of administering its revenues for the payment of a minstrel, who every year at the feast of the dead should sing the monody to the accompaniment of his lute.*

The charioteer well knew this dirge for his ancestor, and had often sung it to Nefert, who had accompanied him on her lute; for in their hours of joy also—nay especially—the Egyptians were wont to remember their dead.

* The tomb of Neferhotep is well preserved, and in it the inscription from which this monody is translated.

Now the three companions listened to the minstrel as he sang:

“Now the great man is at rest,
Gone to practise sweeter duties.
Those that die are the elect
Since the Gods have left the earth.
Old men pass and young men come;
Yea, a new Sun rises daily
When the old sun has found rest
In the bosom of the night.

Hail, O Prophet! on this feast day
Odorous balsams, fragrant resins
Here we bring—and offer garlands,
Throwing flowers down before thee,
And before thy much-loved sister,
Who has found her rest beside thee.

Songs we sing, and strike the lyre
To thy memory, and thine honor.
All our cares are now forgotten,
Joy and hope our breasts are filling;
For the day of our departure
Now draws near, and in the silence
Of the farther shore is rest.”

When the song ceased, several people pressed into the little oratory to express their gratitude to the deceased prophet by laying a few flowers on his altar. Nefert and Rameri also went in, and when Nefert had offered a long and silent prayer to the glorified spirits of her dead, that they might watch over Mena, she laid her garland beside the grave in which her husband's mother rested.

Many members of the court circle passed close to the royal party without recognizing them; they made every effort to reach the scene of the festival, but the crowd was so great that the ladies had several times to get into a tomb to avoid it. In each they found the altar loaded with offerings, and, in most, family-parties, who here remembered their dead, with meat and fruits,

beer and wine, as though they were departed travellers who had found some far off rest, and whom they hoped sooner or later to see again.

The sun was near setting when at last the princess and her companions reached the spot where the feast was being held. Here stood numbers of stalls and booths, with eatables of every sort, particularly sweet cakes for the children, dates, figs, pomegranates, and other fruits. Under light awnings, which kept off the sun, were sold sandals and kerchiefs of every material and hue, ornaments, amulets, fans, and sun-shades, sweet essences of every kind, and other gifts for offerings or for the toilet. The baskets of the gardeners and flower-girls were already empty, but the money-changers were full of business, and the tavern and gambling booths were driving a brisk trade.

Friends and acquaintances greeted each other kindly, while the children showed each other their new sandals, the cakes they had won at the games, or the little copper rings they had had given to them, and which must now be laid out. The largest crowd was gathered to see the magicians from the House of Seti, round which the mob squatted on the ground in a compact circle, and the children were good-naturedly placed in the front row.

When Bent-Anat reached the place all the religious solemnity was ended.

There stood the canopy under which the king and his family were used to listen to the festal discourse, and under its shade sat to-day the Regent Ani. They could see too the seats of the grandees, and the barriers which kept the people at a distance from the Regent, the priests, and the nobles.

Here Ameni himself had announced to the multitude the miracle of the sacred heart, and had proclaimed that a new Apis had been found among the herds of the Regent Ani.

His announcement of these divine tokens had been repeated from mouth to mouth; they were omens of peace and happiness for the country through the means of a favorite of the Gods; and though no one said it, the dullest could not fail to see that this favorite was none other than Ani, the descendant of the great Hatasu, whose prophet had been graced by the transfer to him of the heart of the sacred ram. All eyes were fixed on Ani, who had sacrificed before all the people to the sacred heart, and received the high-priest's blessing.

Pentaur, too, had ended his discourse when Bent-Anat reached the scene of the festival. She heard an old man say to his son:

"Life is hard. It often seems to me like a heavy burden laid on our poor backs by the cruel Gods; but when I heard the young priest from the House of Seti, I felt that, after all, the Immortals are good, and we have much to thank them for."

In another place a priest's wife said to her son:

"Could you see Pentaur well, Hor-Uza? He is of humble birth, but he stands above the greatest in genius and gifts, and will rise to high things."

Two girls were speaking together, and one said to the other:

"The speaker is the handsomest man I ever saw, and his voice sounds like soft music."

"And how his eyes shone when he spoke of truth

as the highest of all virtues!" replied the other. "All the Gods, I believe, must dwell in him."

Bent-Anat colored as these words fell on her ear. It was growing dark, and she wished to return home; but Rameri wished to follow the procession as it marched through the western valley by torch-light, so that the grave of his grandfather Seti should also be visited. The princess unwillingly yielded, but it would in any case have been difficult to reach the river while every one was rushing in the opposite direction; so the two ladies, and Rameri, let themselves be carried along by the crowd, and by the time the daylight was gone, they found themselves in the western valley, where to-night no beasts of prey dared show themselves; jackals and hyænas had fled before the glare of the torches, and the lanterns made of colored papyrus.

The smoke of the torches mingled with the dust stirred by a thousand feet, and the procession moved along, as it were, in a cloud, which also shrouded the multitude that followed.

The three companions had labored on as far as the hovel of the paraschites Pinem, but here they were forced to pause, for guards drove back the crowd to the right and left with long staves, to clear a passage for the procession as it approached.

"See, Rameri," said Bent-Anat, pointing out the little yard of the hut which stood only a few paces from them. "That is where the fair, white girl lives, whom I ran over. But she is much better. Turn round; there, behind the thorn-hedge, by the little fire which shines full in your face—there she sits, with her grandfather."

The prince stood on tip-toe, looked into the humble plot of ground, and then said in a subdued voice:

“What a lovely creature! But what is she doing with the old man? He seems to be praying, and she first holds a handkerchief before his mouth, and then rubs his temples. And how unhappy she looks!”

“The paraschites must be ill,” replied Bent-Anat.

“He must have had too much wine down at the feast,” said Rameri laughing. “No doubt of it! Only look how his lips tremble, and his eyes roll. It is hideous—he looks like one possessed.”*

“He is unclean too!” said Nefert.

“But he is a good, kind man, with a tender heart,” exclaimed the princess eagerly. “I have enquired about him. He is honest and sober, and I am sure he is ill and not drunk.”

“Now she is standing up,” said Rameri, and he dropped the paper-lantern which he had bought at a booth. “Step back, Bent-Anat, she must be expecting some one. Did you ever see any one so very fair, and with such a pretty little head. Even her red hair becomes her wonderfully; but she staggers as she stands—she must be very weak. Now she has sat down again by the old man, and is rubbing his forehead. Poor souls! look how she is sobbing. I will throw my purse over to them.”

“No, no!” exclaimed Bent-Anat. “I gave them plenty of money, and the tears which are shed there

* It was thought that the insane were possessed by demons. A stele admirably treated by E. de Rougé exists at Paris, which relates that the sister-in-law of Rameses XII., who was possessed by devils, had them driven out by the statue of Chunsu, which was sent to her in Asia.

cannot be staunched with gold. I will send old Asnath over to-morrow to ask how we can help them. Look, here comes the procession, Nefert. How rudely the people press! As soon as the God is gone by we will go home."

"Pray do," said Nefert. "I am so frightened!" and she pressed trembling to the side of the princess.

"I wish we were at home, too," replied Bent-Anat.

"Only look!" said Rameri. "There they are. Is it not splendid? And how the heart shines, as if it were a star!"

All the crowd, and with them our three friends, fell on their knees.

The procession paused opposite to them, as it did at every thousand paces; a herald came forward, and glorified, in a loud voice, the great miracle, to which now another was added—the sacred heart since the night had come on had begun to give out light.

Since his return home from the embalming house, the paraschites had taken no nourishment, and had not answered a word to the anxious questions of the two frightened women. He stared blindly, muttered a few unintelligible words, and often clasped his forehead in his hand. A few hours before he had laughed loud and suddenly, and his wife, greatly alarmed, had gone at once to fetch the physician Nebsecht.

During her absence Uarda was to rub her grandfather's temples with the leaves which the witch Hekt had laid on her bruises, for as they had once proved efficacious they might perhaps a second time scare away the demon of sickness.

When the procession, with its thousand lamps and torches, paused before the hovel, which was almost invisible in the dusk, and one citizen said to another: "Here comes the sacred heart!" the old man started, and stood up. His eyes stared fixedly at the gleaming relic in its crystal case; slowly, trembling in every limb, and with outstretched neck he stood up.

The herald began his eulogy of the miracle.

Then, while all the people were prostrate in adoration, listening motionless to the loud voice of the speaker, the paraschites rushed out of his gate, striking his forehead with his fists, and opposite the sacred heart, he broke out into a mad, loud fit of scornful laughter, which re-echoed from the bare cliffs that closed in the valley.

Horror fell on the crowd, who rose timidly from their knees.

Ameni, who was close behind the heart, started too, and looked round on the author of this hideous laugh. He had never seen the paraschites, but he perceived the glimmer of his little fire through the dust and gloom, and he knew that he lived in this place. The whole case struck him at once; he whispered a few significant words to one of the officers who marched with the troops, on each side of the procession; then he gave the signal, and the procession moved on as if nothing had happened.

The old man tried with still more loud and crazy laughter to reach and seize the heart, but the crowd kept him back; and while the last groups passed on after the priests, he contrived to slip back as far as the door of his hovel, though much damaged and hurt.

There he fell, and Uarda rushed out and threw herself over the old man, who lay on the earth, scarcely recognizable in the dust and darkness.

“Crush the scoffer!”

“Tear him in pieces!”

“Burn down the foul den!”

“Throw him and the wench into the fire!” shouted the people who had been disturbed in their devotions, with wild fury.

Two old women snatched the lanterns from the posts, and flung them at the unfortunate creatures, while an Ethiopian soldier seized Uarda by the hair, and tore her away from her grandfather.

At this moment Pinem's wife appeared, and with her Pentaur. She had found not Nebsecht, but Pentaur, who had returned to the temple after his speech. She had told him of the demon who had fallen upon her husband, and implored him to come with her. Pentaur immediately followed her in his working dress, just as he was, without putting on the white priest's robe, which he did not wish to wear on this expedition.

When they drew near to the paraschites' hovel, he perceived the tumult among the people, and, loud above all the noise, heard Uarda's shrill cry of terror. He hurried forward, and in the dull light of the scattered fire-brands and colored lanterns, he saw the black hand of the soldier clutching the hair of the helpless child; quick as thought he gripped the soldier's throat with his iron fingers, seized him round the body, swung him in the air, and flung him like a block of stone right into the little yard of the hut.

The people threw themselves on the champion in a frenzy of rage, but he felt a sudden warlike impulse

surging up in him, which he had never felt before. With one wrench he pulled out the heavy wooden pole, which supported the awning which the old parascites had put up for his sick grandchild; he swung it round his head, as if it were a reed, driving back the crowd, while he called to Uarda to keep close to him.

“He who touches the child is a dead man!” he cried. “Shame on you!—falling on a feeble old man and a helpless child in the middle of a holy festival!”

For a moment the crowd was silent, but immediately after rushed forward with fresh impetus, and wilder than ever rose the shouts of:

“Tear him to pieces! burn his house down!”

A few artisans from Thebes closed round the poet, who was not recognizable as a priest. He, however, wielding his tent-pole, felled them before they could reach him with their fists or cudgels, and down went every man on whom it fell. But the struggle could not last long, for some of his assailants sprang over the fence, and attacked him in the rear. And now Pentaur was distinctly visible against a background of flaring light, for some fire-brands had fallen on the dry palm-thatch of the hovel behind him, and roaring flames rose up to the dark heavens.

The poet heard the threatening blaze behind him. He put his left hand round the head of the trembling girl, who crouched beside him, and feeling that now they both were lost, but that to his latest breath he must protect the innocence and life of this frail creature, with his right hand he once more desperately swung the heavy stake.

But it was for the last time; for two men suc-

ceeded in clutching the weapon, others came to their support, and wrenched it from his hand, while the mob closed upon him, furious but unarmed, and not without great fear of the enormous strength of their opponent.

Uarda clung to her protector with shortened breath, and trembling like a hunted antelope. Pentaur groaned when he felt himself disarmed, but at that instant a youth stood by his side, as if he had sprung from the earth, who put into his hand the sword of the fallen soldier—who lay near his feet—and who then, leaning his back against Pentaur's, faced the foe on the other side. Pentaur pulled himself together, sent out a battle-cry like some fighting hero who is defending his last stronghold, and brandished his new weapon. He stood with flaming eyes, like a lion at bay, and for a moment the enemy gave way, for his young ally, Rameri, had taken a hatchet, and held it up in a threatening manner.

“The cowardly murderers are flinging fire-brands,” cried the prince. “Come here, girl, and I will put out the pitch on your dress.”

He seized Uarda's hand, drew her to him, and hastily put out the flame, while Pentaur protected them with his sword.

The prince and the poet stood thus back to back for a few moments, when a stone struck Pentaur's head; he staggered, and the crowd were rushing upon him, when the little fence was torn away by a determined hand, a tall womanly form appeared on the scene of combat, and cried to the astonished mob:

“Have done with this! I command you! I am Bent-Anat, the daughter of Rameses.”

The angry crowd gave way in sheer astonishment.

Pentaur had recovered from the stunning blow, but he thought he must be under some illusion. He felt as if he must throw himself on his knees before Bent-Anat, but his mind had been trained under Ameni to rapid reflection; he realized, in a flash of thought, the princess's position, and instead of bowing before her he exclaimed:

“Whoever this woman may be, good folks, she is not Bent-Anat the princess, but I, though I have no white robe on, am a priest of Seti, named Pentaur, and the Cherheb of to-day's festival. Leave this spot, woman, I command you, in right of my sacred office.”

And Bent-Anat obeyed.

Pentaur was saved; for just as the people began to recover from their astonishment—just as those whom he had hurt were once more inciting the mob to fight—just as a boy, whose hand he had crushed, was crying out: “He is not a priest, he is a sword's-man. Down with the liar!”—

A voice from the crowd exclaimed:

“Make way for my white robe, and leave the preacher Pentaur alone, he is my friend. You most of you know me.”

“You are Nebsecht the leech, who set my broken leg,” cried a sailor.

“And cured my bad eye,” said a weaver.

“That tall handsome man is Pentaur, I know him well,” cried the girl, whose opinion had been overheard by Bent-Anat.

“Preacher this, preacher that!” shouted the boy, and he would have rushed forward, but the people held him back, and divided respectfully at Nebsecht's

command to make way for him to get at those who had been hurt.

First he stooped over the old paraschites.

“Shame upon you!” he exclaimed. “You have killed the old man.”

“And I,” said Pentaur, “Have dipped my peaceful hand in blood to save his innocent and suffering grandchild from a like fate.”

“Scorpions, vipers, venomous reptiles, scum of men!” shrieked Nebsecht, and he sprang wildly forward, seeking Uarda. When he saw her sitting safe at the feet of old Hekt, who had made her way into the courtyard, he drew a deep breath of relief, and turned his attention to the wounded.

“Did you knock down all that are lying here?” he whispered to his friend.

Pentaur nodded assent and smiled; but not in triumph, rather in shame; like a boy, who has unintentionally squeezed to death in his hand a bird he has caught.

Nebsecht looked round astonished and anxious.

“Why did you not say who you were?” he asked.

“Because the spirit of the God Menth possessed me,” answered Pentaur. “When I saw that accursed villain there with his hand in the girl’s hair, I heard and saw nothing, I—”

“You did right,” interrupted Nebsecht. “But where will all this end?”

At this moment a flourish of trumpets rang through the little valley. The officer sent by Ameni to apprehend the paraschites came up with his soldiers.

Before he entered the court-yard he ordered the crowd to disperse; the refractory were driven away by

force, and in a few minutes the valley was cleared of the howling and shouting mob, and the burning house was surrounded by soldiers. Bent-Anat, Rameri, and Nefert were obliged to quit their places by the fence; Rameri, so soon as he saw that Uarda was safe, had rejoined his sister.

Nefert was almost fainting with fear and excitement. The two servants, who had kept near them, knit their hands together, and thus carried her in advance of the princess. Not one of them spoke a word, not even Rameri, who could not forget Uarda, and the look of gratitude she had sent after him. Once only Bent-Anat said:

“The hovel is burnt down. Where will the poor souls sleep to-night?”

When the valley was clear, the officer entered the yard, and found there, besides Uarda and the witch Hekt, the poet, and Nebsecht, who was engaged in tending the wounded.

Pentaur shortly narrated the affair to the captain, and named himself to him.

The soldier offered him his hand.

“If there were many men in Rameses’ army,” said he, “who could strike such a blow as you, the war with the Cheta would soon be at an end. But you have struck down, not Asiatics, but citizens of Thebes, and, much as I regret it, I must take you as a prisoner to Ameni.”

“You only do your duty,” replied Pentaur, bowing to the captain, who ordered his men to take up the body of the paraschites, and to bear it to the temple of Seti.

"I ought to take the girl in charge too," he added, turning to Pentaur.

"She is ill," replied the poet.

"And if she does not get some rest," added Neb-secht, "she will be dead. Leave her alone; she is under the particular protection of the princess Bent-Anat, who ran over her not long ago."

"I will take her into my house," said Hekt, "and will take care of her. Her grandmother is lying there; she was half choked by the flames, but she will soon come to herself—and I have room for both."

"Till to-morrow," replied the surgeon. "Then I will provide another shelter for her."

The old woman laughed and muttered: "There are plenty of folks to take care of her, it seems."

The soldiers obeyed the command of their leader, took up the wounded, and went away with Pentaur, and the body of Pinem.

Meanwhile, Bent-Anat and her party had with much difficulty reached the river-bank. One of the bearers was sent to find the boat which was waiting for them, and he was enjoined to make haste, for already they could see the approach of the procession, which escorted the God on his return journey. If they could not succeed in finding their boat without delay, they must wait at least an hour, for, at night, not a boat that did not belong to the train of Amon—not even the barge of a noble—might venture from shore till the whole procession was safe across.

They awaited the messenger's signal in the greatest anxiety, for Nefert was perfectly exhausted, and Bent-

Anat, on whom she leaned, felt her trembling in every limb.

At last the bearer gave the signal; the swift, almost invisible bark, which was generally used for wild fowl shooting, shot by—Rameri seized one end of an oar that the rower held out to him, and drew the little boat up to the landing-place.

The captain of the watch passed at the same moment, and shouting out, "This is the last boat that can put off before the passage of the God!"

Bent-Anat descended the steps as quickly as Nefert's exhausted state permitted. The landing-place was now only dimly lighted by dull lanterns, though, when the God embarked, it would be as light as day with cressets and torches. Before she could reach the bottom step, with Nefert still clinging heavily to her arm, a hard hand was laid on her shoulder, and the rough voice of Paaker exclaimed:

"Stand back, you rabble! We are going first."

The captain of the watch did not stop him, for he knew the chief pioneer and his overbearing ways. Paaker put his finger to his lips, and gave a shrill whistle that sounded like a yell in the silence.

The stroke of oars responded to the call, and Paaker called out to his boatmen:

"Bring the boat up here! these people can wait!"

The pioneer's boat was larger and better manned than that of the princess.

"Jump into the boat!" cried Rameri.

Bent-Anat went forward without speaking, for she did not wish to make herself known again for the sake of the people, and for Nefert's; but Paaker put himself in her way.

“Did I not tell you that you common people must wait till we are gone. Push these people’s boat out into the stream, you men.”

Bent-Anat felt her blood chill, for a loud squabble at once began on the landing-steps.

Rameri’s voice sounded louder than all the rest; but the pioneer exclaimed:

“The low brutes dare to resist? I will teach them manners! Here, Descher, look after the woman and these boys!”

At his call his great red hound barked and sprang forward, which, as it had belonged to his father, always accompanied him when he went with his mother to visit the ancestral tomb. Nefert shrieked with fright, but the dog at once knew her, and crouched against her with whines of recognition.

Paaker, who had gone down to his boat, turned round in astonishment, and saw his dog fawning at the feet of a boy whom he could not possibly recognize as Nefert; he sprang back, and cried out:

“I will teach you, you young scoundrel, to spoil my dog with spells—or poison!”

He raised his whip, and struck it across the shoulders of Nefert, who, with one scream of terror and anguish, fell to the ground.

The lash of the whip only whistled close by the cheek of the poor fainting woman, for Bent-Anat had seized Paaker’s arm with all her might.

Rage, disgust, and scorn stopped her utterance; but Rameri had heard Nefert’s shriek, and in two steps stood by the women.

“Cowardly scoundrel!” he cried, and lifted the oar

in his hand. Paaker evaded the blow, and called to the dog with a peculiar hiss:

“Pull him down, Descher.”

The hound flew at the prince; but Rameri, who from his childhood, had been his father's companion in many hunts and field sports, gave the furious brute such a mighty blow on the muzzle that he rolled over with a snort.

Paaker believed that he possessed in the whole world no more faithful friend than this dog, his companion on all his marches across desert tracts or through the enemy's country, and when he saw him lie writhing on the ground his rage knew no bounds, and he flew at the youngster with his whip; but Rameri—madly excited by all the events of the night, full of the warlike spirit of his fathers, worked up to the highest pitch by the insults to the two ladies, and seeing that he was their only protector—suddenly felt himself endowed with the strength of a man; he dealt the pioneer such a heavy blow on the left hand, that he dropped his whip, and now seized the dagger in his girdle with his right.

Bent-Anat threw herself between the man and the stripling, who was hardly more than a boy, once more declared her name, and this time her brother's also, and commanded Paaker to make peace among the boatmen. Then she led Nefert, who remained unrecognized, into the boat, entered it herself with her companions, and shortly after landed at the palace, while Paaker's mother, for whom he had called his boat, had yet a long time to wait before it could start. Setchem had seen the struggle from her litter at the top of the

landing steps, but without understanding its origin, and without recognizing the chief actors.

The dog was dead. Paaker's hand was very painful, and fresh rage was seething in his soul.

"That brood of Rameses!" he muttered. "Adventurers! They shall learn to know me. Mena and Rameses are closely connected—I will sacrifice them both."

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT last the pioneer's boat got off with his mother and the body of the dog, which he intended to send to be embalmed at Kynopolis,* the city in which the dog was held sacred above all animals; Paaker himself returned to the House of Seti, where, in the night which closed the feast day, there was always a grand banquet for the superior priests of the Necropolis and of the temples of eastern Thebes, for the representatives of other foundations, and for select dignitaries of the state.

His father had never failed to attend this entertainment when he was in Thebes, but he himself had to-day for the first time received the much-coveted honor of an invitation, which—Ameni told him when he gave it—he entirely owed to the Regent.

His mother had tied up his hand, which Rameri

* Kynopolis, or in old Egyptian Saka, is now Samalut; Anubis was the chief divinity worshipped there. Plutarch relates a quarrel between the inhabitants of this city, and the neighboring one of Oxyrynchos, where the fish called Oxyrynchos was worshipped. It began because the Kynopolitans eat the fish, and in revenge the Oxyrynchites caught and killed dogs, and consumed them in sacrifices. Juvenal relates a similar story of the Ombites—perhaps Koptites—and Tentyrites in the 15th Satire.

had severely hurt; it was extremely painful, but he would not have missed the banquet at any cost, although he felt some alarm of the solemn ceremony. His family was as old as any in Egypt, his blood purer than the king's, and nevertheless he never felt thoroughly at home in the company of superior people. He was no priest, although a scribe; he was a warrior, and yet he did not rank with royal heroes.

He had been brought up to a strict fulfilment of his duty, and he devoted himself zealously to his calling; but his habits of life were widely different from those of the society in which he had been brought up—a society of which his handsome, brave, and magnanimous father had been a chief ornament. He did not cling covetously to his inherited wealth, and the noble attribute of liberality was not strange to him, but the coarseness of his nature showed itself most when he was most lavish, for he was never tired of exacting gratitude from those whom he had attached to him by his gifts, and he thought he had earned the right by his liberality to meet the recipient with roughness or arrogance, according to his humor. Thus it happened that his best actions procured him not friends but enemies.

Paaker's was, in fact, an ignoble, that is to say, a selfish nature; to shorten his road he trod down flowers as readily as he marched over the sand of the desert. This characteristic marked him in all things, even in his outward demeanor; in the sound of his voice, in his broad features, in the swaggering gait of his stumpy figure.

In camp he could conduct himself as he pleased, but this was not permissible in the society of his equals

in rank; for this reason, and because those faculties of quick remark and repartee, which distinguished them, had been denied to him, he felt uneasy and out of his element when he mixed with them, and he would hardly have accepted Ameni's invitation, if it had not so greatly flattered his vanity.

It was already late; but the banquet did not begin till midnight, for the guests, before it began, assisted at the play which was performed by lamp and torch-light on the sacred lake in the south of the Necropolis, and which represented the history of Isis and Osiris.

When he entered the decorated hall in which the tables were prepared, he found all the guests assembled. The Regent Ani was present, and sat on Ameni's right at the top of the centre high-table at which several places were unoccupied; for the prophets and the initiated of the temple of Amon had excused themselves from being present. They were faithful to Rameses and his house; their grey-haired Superior disapproved of Ameni's severity towards the prince and princess, and they regarded the miracle of the sacred heart as a malicious trick of the chiefs of the Necropolis against the great temple of the capital* for which Rameses had always shown a preference.

The pioneer went up to the table, where sat the general of the troops that had just returned victorious from Ethiopia, and several other officers of high rank, There was a place vacant next to the general. Paaker fixed

* Almost all the kings of the new empire provided for the temple of Karnak with lavish generosity. The oldest name preserved in it is that of Usertesens I. 12th dynasty. During the reigns of the Hyksos work on it ceased, but the monarchs of the 18th and 19th dynasties enlarged it to vast dimensions. The vast hall, whose foundations were laid by Rameses I, was built by Seti I, and adorned by Rameses II. It contained 134 columns and was 102:51 metres large. The temple of Luxor, connected with that of Karnak, and whose foundations had been laid during the 18th dynasty, Rameses also completed. He added new portions to the eastern side of Karnak, and vast were the royal gifts that flowed into the treasuries of this sanctuary. Admirable ground plans of all parts of the temple of Karnak have been recently published by Mariette in his *Karnak*.

his eyes upon this, but when he observed that the officer signed to the one next to him to come a little nearer, the pioneer imagined that each would endeavor to avoid having him for his neighbor, and with an angry glance he turned his back on the table where the warriors sat.

The Mohar was not, in fact, a welcome boon-companion. "The wine turns sour when that churl looks at it," said the general.

The eyes of all the guests turned on Paaker, who looked round for a seat, and when no one beckoned him to one he felt his blood begin to boil. He would have liked to leave the banqueting hall at once with a swingeing curse. He had indeed turned towards the door, when the Regent, who had exchanged a few whispered words with Ameni, called to him, requested him to take the place that had been reserved for him, and pointed to the seat by his side, which had in fact been intended for the high-priest of the temple of Amon.

Paaker bowed low, and took the place of honor, hardly daring to look round the table, lest he should encounter looks of surprise or of mockery. And yet he had pictured to himself his grandfather Assa, and his father, as somewhere near this place of honor, which had actually often enough been given up to them. And was he not their descendant and heir? Was not his mother Setchem of royal race? Was not the temple of Seti more indebted to him than to any one?

A servant laid a garland of flowers round his shoulders, and another handed him wine and food. Then he raised his eyes, and met the bright and sparkling glance of Gagabu; he looked quickly down again at the table.

Then the Regent spoke to him, and turning to the other guests mentioned that Paaker was on the point of

starting next day for Syria, and resuming his arduous labors as Mohar. It seemed to Paaker that the Regent was excusing himself for having given him so high a place of honor.

Presently Ani raised his wine-cup, and drank to the happy issue of his reconnoitring-expedition, and a victorious conclusion to every struggle in which the Mohar might engage. The high-priest then pledged him, and thanked him emphatically in the name of the brethren of the temple, for the noble tract of arable land which he had that morning given them as a votive offering.* A murmur of approbation ran round the tables, and Paaker's timidity began to diminish.

He had kept the wrappings that his mother had applied round his still aching hand.

"Are you wounded?" asked the Regent.

"Nothing of importance," answered the pioneer. "I was helping my mother into the boat, and it happened—"

"It happened," interrupted an old school-fellow of the Mohar's, who himself held a high appointment as officer of the city-watch of Thebes—"It happened that an oar or a stake fell on his fingers."

"Is it possible!" cried the Regent.

"And quite a youngster laid hands on him," continued the officer. "My people told me every detail. First the boy killed his dog—"

"That noble Descher?" asked the master of the hunt in a tone of regret. "Your father was often by my side with that dog at a boar-hunt."

Paaker bowed his head; but the officer of the watch,

* Gifts of arable land to the temples by the kings were very customary, thousands of monuments have preserved the records of such occurrences; but wealthy private individuals not only bestowed tracts of land upon the sanctuaries, but gave money for their aggrandizement.

secure in his position and dignity, and taking no notice of the glow of anger which flushed Paaker's face, began again:

"When the hound lay on the ground, the foolhardy boy struck your dagger out of your hand."

"And did this squabble lead to any disturbance?" asked Ameni earnestly.

"No," replied the officer. "The feast has passed off to-day with unusual quiet. If the unlucky interruption to the procession by that crazy paraschites had not occurred, we should have nothing but praise for the populace. Besides the fighting priest, whom we have handed over to you, only a few thieves have been apprehended, and they belong exclusively to the caste,* so we simply take their booty from them, and let them go. But say, Paaker, what devil of amiability took possession of you down by the river, that you let the rascal escape unpunished."

"Did you do that?" exclaimed Gagabu. "Revenge is usually your——"

Ameni threw so warning a glance at the old man, that he suddenly broke off, and then asked the pioneer:

"How did the struggle begin, and who was the fellow?"

"Some insolent people," said Paaker, "wanted to push in front of the boat that was waiting for my mother, and I asserted my rights. The rascal fell upon me, and

* According to Diodorous (I. 80) there was a cast of thieves in Thebes. All citizens were obliged to enter their names in a register, and state where they lived, and the thieves did the same. The names were enrolled by the "chief of the thieves," and all stolen goods had to be given up to him. The person robbed had to give a written description of the object he had lost, and a declaration as to when and where he had lost it. The stolen property was then easily recovered, and restored to the owner on the payment of one fourth of its value, which was given to the thief. A similar state of things existed at Cairo within a comparatively short time.

killed my dog and—by my Osirian father!—the crocodiles would long since have eaten him if a woman had not come between us, and made herself known to me as Bent-Anat, the daughter of Rameses. It was she herself, and the rascal was the young prince Rameri, who was yesterday forbidden this temple.”

“Oho!” cried the old master of the hunt. “Oho! my lord! Is this the way to speak of the children of the king?”

Others of the company who were attached to Pharaoh’s family expressed their indignation; but Ameni whispered to Paakar—“Say no more!” then he continued aloud:

“You never were careful in weighing your words, my friend, and now, as it seems to me, you are speaking in the heat of fever. Come here, Gagabu, and examine Paaker’s wound, which is no disgrace to him—for it was inflicted by a prince.”

The old man loosened the bandage from the pioneer’s swollen hand.

“That was a bad blow,” he exclaimed; “three fingers are broken, and—do you see?—the emerald too in your signet ring.”

Paaker looked down at his aching fingers, and uttered a sigh of relief, for it was not the oracular ring with the name of Thotmes III, but the valuable one given to his father by the reigning king that had been crushed. Only a few solitary fragments of the splintered stone remained in the setting; the king’s name had fallen to pieces, and disappeared. Paaker’s bloodless lips moved silently, and an inner voice cried out to him: “The Gods point out the way! The name is gone, the bearer of the name must follow.”

“It is a pity about the ring,” said Gagabu. “And if the hand is not to follow it—luckily it is your left hand—leave off drinking, let yourself be taken to Neb-secht the surgeon, and get him to set the joints neatly, and bind them up.”

Paaker rose, and went away after Ameni had appointed to meet him on the following day at the Temple of Seti, and the Regent at the palace.

When the door had closed behind him, the treasurer of the temple said:

“This has been a bad day for the Mohar, and perhaps it will teach him that here in Thebes he cannot swagger as he does in the field. Another adventure occurred to him to-day; would you like to hear it?”

“Yes; tell it!” cried the guests.

“You all knew old Seni,” began the treasurer. “He was a rich man, but he gave away all his goods to the poor, after his seven blooming sons, one after another, had died in the war, or of illness. He only kept a small house with a little garden, and said that as the Gods had taken his children to themselves in the other world he would take pity on the forlorn in this. ‘Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked’ says the law; and now that Seni has nothing more to give away, he goes through the city, as you know, hungry and thirsty himself, and scarcely clothed, and begging for his adopted children, the poor. We have all given to him, for we all know for whom he humbles himself, and holds out his hand. To-day he went round with his little bag, and begged, with his kind good eyes, for alms. Paaker has given us a good piece of arable land, and thinks, perhaps with reason, that he has done his part. When Seni addressed him, he told him to go; but the old man did not

give up asking him, he followed him persistently to the grave of his father, and a great many people with him. Then the pioneer pushed him angrily back, and when at last the beggar clutched his garment, he raised his whip, and struck him two or three times, crying out: 'There—that is your portion!' The good old man bore it quite patiently, while he untied the bag, and said with tears in his eyes: 'My portion—yes—but not the portion of the poor!'

"I was standing near, and I saw how Paaker hastily withdrew into the tomb, and how his mother Setchem threw her full purse to Seni. Others followed her example, and the old man never had a richer harvest. The poor may thank the Mohar! A crowd of people collected in front of the tomb, and he would have fared badly if it had not been for the police guard who drove them away."

During this narrative, which was heard with much approval—for no one is more secure of his result than he who can tell of the downfall of a man who is disliked for his arrogance—the Regent and the high-priest had been eagerly whispering to each other.

"There can be no doubt," said Ameni, "that Bent-Anat did actually come to the festival."

"And had also dealings with the priest whom you so warmly defend," whispered the other.

"Pentaur shall be questioned this very night," returned the high-priest. "The dishes will soon be taken away, and the drinking will begin. Let us go and hear what the poet says."

"But there are now no witnesses," replied Ani.

"We do not need them," said Ameni. "He is incapable of a lie."

“Let us go then,” said the Regent smiling, “for I am really curious about this white negro, and how he will come to terms with the truth. You have forgotten that there is a woman in the case.”

“That there always is!” answered Ameni; he called Gagabu to him, gave him his seat, begged him to keep up the flow of cheerful conversation, to encourage the guests to drink, and to interrupt all talk of the king, the state, or the war.

“You know,” he concluded, “that we are not by ourselves this evening. Wine has, before this, betrayed everything! Remember this—the mother of foresight looks backwards!”

Ani clapped his hand on the old man’s shoulder.

“There will be a space cleared to-night in your wine-lofts. It is said of you that you cannot bear to see either a full glass or an empty one; to-night give your aversion to both free play. And when you think it is the right moment, give a sign to my steward, who is sitting there in the corner. He has a few jars of the best liquor from Byblos,* that he brought over with him, and he will bring it to you. I will come in again and bid you good-night.”

Ameni was accustomed to leave the hall at the beginning of the drinking.

When the door was closed behind him and his companion, when fresh rose-garlands had been brought for the necks of the company, when lotos-blossoms decorated their heads, and the beakers were refilled, a choir of musicians came in, who played on harps, lutes, flutes, and small drums. The conductor beat the time by clapping his hands, and when the music had raised the spir-

* Gebal-Byblos in Phœnicia. A very famous wine was grown there, much appreciated by the Greeks.

its of the drinkers, they seconded his efforts by rhythmical clappings. The jolly old Gagabu kept up his character as a stout drinker, and leader of the feast.

The most priestly countenances soon beamed with cheerfulness, and the officers and courtiers outdid each other in audacious jokes. Then the old man signed to a young temple-servant, who wore a costly wreath; he came forward with a small gilt image of a mummy, carried it round the circle and cried:

“Look at this; be merry and drink so long as you are on earth, for soon you must be like this.”*

Gagabu gave another signal, and the Regent’s steward brought in the wine from Byblos. Ani was much lauded for the wonderful choiceness of the liquor.

“Such wine,” exclaimed the usually grave chief of the pastophori, “is like soap.”**

“What a simile!” cried Gagabu. “You must explain it.”

“It cleanses the soul of sorrow,” answered the other.

“Good, friend!” they all exclaimed. “Now every

* A custom mentioned by Herodotus. Lucian saw such an image brought in at a feast. The Greeks adopted the idea, but beautified it, using a winged Genius of death instead of a mummy. The Romans also had their “larva.”

** This comparison is genuinely Eastern. Kisrâ called wine “the soap of sorrow.” The Mohammedans, to whom wine is forbidden, have praised it like the guests of the House of Seti. Thus Abdelmâlik ibn Sâlih Haschimi says: “The best thing the world enjoys is wine.” Gâhiz says: “When wine enters thy bones and flows through thy limbs it bestows truth of feeling, and perfects the soul; it removes sorrow, elevates the mood, etc., etc.” When Ibn ‘Aischah was told that some one drank no wine, he said: “He has thrice disowned the world.” Ibn el Mu‘tazz sang:

“Heed not time, how it may linger, or how swiftly take its flight,
Wail thy sorrows only to the wine before thee gleaming bright.
But when thrice thou’st drained the beaker watch and ward keep o’er thy heart.
Lest the foam of joy should vanish, and thy soul with anguish smart,
This for every earthly trouble is a sovereign remedy,
Therefore listen to my counsel, knowing what will profit thee,
Heed not time, for ah, how many a man has longed in pain
Tale of evil days to lighten—and found all his longing vain”*

* Translated by Mary J. Safford.

one in turn shall praise the noble juice in some worthy saying."

"You begin—the chief prophet of the temple of Amenophis."

"Sorrow is a poison," said the priest, "and wine is the antidote."

"Well said!—go on; it is your turn, my lord privy councillor."

"Every thing has its secret spring," said the official, "and wine is the secret of joy."

"Now you, my lord keeper of the seal."

"Wine seals the door on discontent, and locks the gates on sorrow."

"That it does, that it certainly does!—Now the governor of Hermothis, the oldest of all the company."

"Wine ripens especially for us old folks, and not for you young people."

"That you must explain," cried a voice from the table of the military officers.

"It makes young men of the old," laughed the octogenarian, "and children of the young."

"He has you there, you youngsters," cried Gagabu. "What have you to say, Septah?"

"Wine is a poison," said the morose haruspex, "for it makes fools of wise men."

"Then you have little to fear from it, alas!" said Gagabu laughing. "Proceed, my lord of the chase."

"The rim of the beaker," was the answer, "is like the lip of the woman you love. Touch it, and taste it, and it is as good as the kiss of a bride."

"General—the turn is yours."

"I wish the Nile ran with such wine instead of with water," cried the soldier, "and that I were as big

as the colossus of Amenophis, and that the biggest obelisk of Hatasu* were my drinking vessel, and that I might drink as much as I would! But now—what have you to say of this noble liquor, excellent Gagabu?"

The second prophet raised his beaker, and gazed lovingly at the golden fluid; he tasted it slowly, and then said with his eyes turned to heaven:

"I only fear that I am unworthy to thank the Gods for such a divine blessing."

"Well said!" exclaimed the Regent Ani, who had re-entered the room unobserved. "If my wine could speak, it would thank you for such a speech."

"Hail to the Regent Ani!" shouted the guests, and they all rose with their cups filled with his noble present.

He pledged them and then rose.

"Those," said he, "who have appreciated this wine, I now invite to dine with me to-morrow. You will then meet with it again, and if you still find it to your liking, you will be heartily welcome any evening. Now, good night, friends."

A thunder of applause followed him, as he quitted the room.

The morning was already grey, when the carousing-party broke up; few of the guests could find their way unassisted through the courtyard; most of them had already been carried away by the slaves, who had waited for them—and who took them on their heads, like bales of goods—and had been borne home in their litters; but for those who remained to the end, couches

* This obelisk is still standing at Karnak, and is 33 metres high. That which was taken to Paris from Luqsor, and which stands on the Place de la Concorde, is 11 metres less.

were prepared in the House of Seti, for a terrific storm was now raging.

While the company were filling and refilling the beakers, which raised their spirits to so wild a pitch, the prisoner Pentaur had been examined in the presence of the Regent. Ameni's messenger had found the poet on his knees, so absorbed in meditation that he did not perceive his approach. All his peace of mind had deserted him, his soul was in a tumult, and he could not succeed in obtaining any calm and clear control over the new life-pulses which were throbbing in his heart.

He had hitherto never gone to rest at night without requiring of himself an account of the past day, and he had always been able to detect the most subtle line that divided right from wrong in his actions. But to-night he looked back on a perplexing confusion of ideas and events, and when he endeavored to sort them and arrange them, he could see nothing clearly but the image of Bent-Anat, which enthralled his heart and intellect.

He had raised his hand against his fellow-men, and dipped it in blood; he desired to convince himself of his sin, and to repent—but he could not; for each time he recalled it, to blame and condemn himself, he saw the soldier's hand twisted in Uarda's hair, and the princess's eyes beaming with approbation, nay with admiration, and he said to himself that he had acted rightly, and in the same position would do the same again to-morrow. Still he felt that he had broken through all the conditions with which fate had sur-

rounded his existence, and it seemed to him that he could never succeed in recovering the still, narrow, but peaceful life of the past.

His soul went up in prayer to the Almighty One, and to the spirit of the sweet humble woman whom he had called his mother, imploring for peace of mind and modest content; but in vain—for the longer he remained prostrate, flinging up his arms in passionate entreaty, the keener grew his longings, the less he felt able to repent or to recognize his guilt. Ameni's order to appear before him came almost as a deliverance, and he followed the messenger prepared for a severe punishment; but not afraid—almost joyful.

In obedience to the command of the grave high-priest, Pentaur related the whole occurrence—how, as there was no leech in the house, he had gone with the old wife of the paraschites to visit her possessed husband; how, to save the unhappy girl from ill-usage by the mob, he had raised his hand in fight, and dealt indeed some heavy blows.

“You have killed four men,” said Ameni, “and severely wounded twice as many. Why did you not reveal yourself as a priest, as the speaker of the morning's discourse? Why did you not endeavor to persuade the people with words of warning, rather than with brute force?”

“I had no priest's garment,” replied Pentaur.

“There again you did wrong,” said Ameni, “for you know that the law requires of each of us never to leave this house without our white robes. But you cannot pretend not to know your own powers of speech, nor to contradict me when I assert that, even in the

plainest working-dress, you were perfectly able to produce as much effect with words as by deadly blows!"

"I might very likely have succeeded," answered Pentaur, "but the most savage temper ruled the crowd; there was no time for reflection, and when I struck down the villain, like some reptile, who had seized the innocent girl, the lust of fighting took possession of me. I cared no more for my own life, and to save the child I would have slain thousands."

"Your eyes sparkle," said Ameni, "as if you had performed some heroic feat; and yet the men you killed were only unarmed and pious citizens, who were roused to indignation by a gross and shameless outrage. I cannot conceive whence the warrior-spirit should have fallen on a gardener's son—and a minister of the Gods."

"It is true," answered Pentaur, "when the crowd rushed upon me, and I drove them back, putting out all my strength, I felt something of the warlike rage of the soldier, who repulses the pressing foe from the standard committed to his charge. It was sinful in a priest, no doubt, and I will repent of it—but I felt it."

"You felt it—and you will repent of it, well and good," replied Ameni. "But you have not given a true account of all that happened. Why have you concealed that Bent-Anat—Rameses' daughter—was mixed up in the fray, and that she saved you by announcing her name to the people, and commanding them to leave you alone? When you gave her the lie before all the people, was it because you did not believe that it was Bent-Anat? Now, you who stand so firmly on so high a platform—now you standard-bearer of the truth—answer me."

Pentaur had turned pale at his master's words, and said, as he looked at the Regent:

"We are not alone."

"Truth is one!" said Ameni coolly. "What you can reveal to me, can also be heard by this noble lord, the Regent of the king himself. Did you recognize Bent-Anat, or not?"

"The lady who rescued me was like her, and yet unlike," answered the poet, whose blood was roused by the subtle irony of his Superior's words. "And if I had been as sure that she was the princess, as I am that you are the man who once held me in honor, and who are now trying to humiliate me, I would all the more have acted as I did to spare a lady who is more like a goddess than a woman, and who, to save an unworthy wretch like me, stooped from a throne to the dust."

"Still the poet—the preacher!" said Ameni. Then he added severely. "I beg for a short and clear answer. We know for certain that the princess took part in the festival in the disguise of a woman of low rank, for she again declared herself to Paaker; and we know that it was she who saved you. But did you know that she meant to come across the Nile?"

"How should I?" asked Pentaur.

"Well, did you believe that it was Bent-Anat whom you saw before you when she ventured on to the scene of conflict?"

"I did believe it," replied Pentaur; he shuddered and cast down his eyes.

"Then it was most audacious to drive away the king's daughter as an impostor."

"It was," said Pentaur. "But for my sake she had

risked the honor of her name, and that of her royal father, and I—I should not have risked my life and freedom for—”

“We have heard enough,” interrupted Ameni.

“Not so,” the Regent interposed. “What became of the girl you had saved?”

“An old witch, Hekt by name, a neighbor of Pinem’s, took her and her grandmother into her cave,” answered the poet; who was then, by the high-priest’s order, taken back to the temple-prison.

Scarcely had he disappeared when the Regent exclaimed:

“A dangerous man! an enthusiast! an ardent worshipper of Rameses!”

“And of his daughter,” laughed Ameni, “but only a worshipper. Thou hast nothing to fear from him—I will answer for the purity of his motives.”

“But he is handsome and of powerful speech,” replied Ani. “I claim him as my prisoner, for he has killed one of my soldiers.”

Ameni’s countenance darkened, and he answered very sternly:

“It is the exclusive right of our conclave, as established by our charter, to judge any member of this fraternity. You, the future king, have freely promised to secure our privileges to us, the champions of your own ancient and sacred rights.”

“And you shall have them,” answered the Regent with a persuasive smile. “But this man is dangerous, and you would not have him go unpunished.”

“He shall be severely judged,” said Ameni, “but by us and in this house.”

“He has committed murder!” cried Ani. “More than one murder. He is worthy of death.”

“He acted under pressure of necessity,” replied Ameni. “And a man so favored by the Gods as he, is not to be lightly given up because an untimely impulse of generosity prompted him to rash conduct. I know—I can see that you wish him ill. Promise me, as you value me as an ally, that you will not attempt his life.”

“Oh, willingly!” smiled the Regent, giving the high-priest his hand.

“Accept my sincere thanks,” said Ameni. “Pentaur was the most promising of my disciples, and in spite of many aberrations I still esteem him highly. When he was telling us of what had occurred to-day, did he not remind you of the great Assa, or of his gallant son, the Osirian father of the pioneer Paaker?”

“The likeness is extraordinary,” answered Ani, “and yet he is of quite humble birth. Who was his mother?”

“Our gate-keeper’s daughter, a plain, pious, simple creature.”

“Now I will return to the banqueting hall,” said Ani, after a few moments of reflection. “But I must ask you one thing more. I spoke to you of a secret that will put Paaker into our power. The old sorceress Hekt, who has taken charge of the paraschites’ wife and grandchild, knows all about it. Send some police-guards over there, and let her be brought over here as a prisoner; I will examine her myself, and so can question her without exciting observation.”

Ameni at once sent off a party of soldiers, and then quietly ordered a faithful attendant to light up the so

called audience-chamber, and to put a seat for him in an adjoining room.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHILE the banquet was going forward at the temple, and Ameni's messengers were on their way to the valley of the kings' tombs, to waken up old Hekt, a furious storm of hot wind came up from the south-west, sweeping black clouds across the sky, and brown clouds of dust across the earth. It bowed the slender palm-trees as an archer bends his bow, tore the tent-pegs up on the scene of the festival, whirled the light tent-cloths up in the air, drove them like white witches through the dark night, and thrashed the still surface of the Nile till its yellow waters swirled and tossed in waves like a restless sea.

Paaker had compelled his trembling slaves to row him across the stream; several times the boat was near being swamped, but he had seized the helm himself with his uninjured hand, and guided it firmly and surely, though the rocking of the boat kept his broken hand in great and constant pain. After a few ineffectual attempts he succeeded in landing. The storm had blown out the lanterns at the masts—the signal lights for which his people looked—and he found neither servants nor torch-bearers on the bank, so he struggled through the scorching wind as far as the gate of his house. His big dog had always been wont to announce his return home to the door-keeper with joyful barking; but to-night the boatmen long knocked in vain at the heavy door. When at last he

entered the court-yard, he found all dark, for the wind had extinguished the lanterns and torches, and there were no lights but in the windows of his mother's rooms.

The dogs in their open kennels now began to make themselves heard, but their tones were plaintive and whining, for the storm had frightened the beasts; their howling cut the pioneer to the heart, for it reminded him of the poor slain Descher, whose deep voice he sadly missed; and when he went into his own room he was met by a wild cry of lamentation from the Ethiopian slave, for the dog which he had trained for Paaker's father, and which he had loved.

The pioneer threw himself on a seat, and ordered some water to be brought, that he might cool his aching hand in it, according to the prescription of Nebsecht.

As soon as the old man saw the broken fingers, he gave another yell of woe, and when Paaker ordered him to cease he asked:

“And is the man still alive who did that, and who killed Descher?”

Paaker nodded, and while he held his hand in the cooling water he looked sullenly at the ground. He felt miserable, and he asked himself why the storm had not swamped the boat, and the Nile had not swallowed him. Bitterness and rage filled his breast, and he wished he were a child, and might cry. But his mood soon changed, his breath came quickly, his breast heaved, and an ominous light glowed in his eyes. He was not thinking of his love, but of the revenge that was even dearer to him.

“That brood of Rameses!” he muttered. “I will sweep them all away together—the king, and Mena,

and those haughty princes, and many more—I know how. Only wait, only wait!” and he flung up his right fist with a threatening gesture.

The door opened at this instant, and his mother entered the room; the raging of the storm had drowned the sound of her steps, and as she approached her revengeful son, she called his name in horror at the mad wrath which was depicted in his countenance. Paaker started, and then said with apparent composure:

“Is it you, mother? It is near morning, and it is better to be asleep than awake in such an hour.”

“I could not rest in my rooms,” answered Setchem. “The storm howled so wildly, and I am so anxious, so frightfully unhappy—as I was before your father died.”

“Then stay with me,” said Paaker affectionately, “and lie down on my couch.”

“I did not come here to sleep,” replied Setchem. “I am too unhappy at all that happened to you on the landing-steps, it is frightful! No, no, my son, it is not about your smashed hand, though it grieves me to see you in pain; it is about the king, and his anger when he hears of the quarrel. He favors you less than he did your lost father, I know it well. But how wildly you smile, how wild you looked when I came in! It went through my bones and marrow.”

Both were silent for a time, and listened to the furious raging of the storm. At last Setchem spoke.

“There is something else,” she said, “which disturbs my mind. I cannot forget the poet who spoke at the festival to-day, young Pentaur. His figure, his face, his movements, nay his very voice, are exactly like those of your father at the time when he was young, and courted me. It is as if the Gods were fain to see the best man

that they ever took to themselves, walk before them a second time upon earth."

"Yes, my lady," said the black slave; "no mortal eye ever saw such a likeness. I saw him fighting in front of the paraschites' cottage, and he was more like my dead master than ever. He swung the tent-post over his head, as my lord used to swing his battle-axe."

"Be silent," cried Paaker, "and get out—idiot! The priest is like my father; I grant it, mother; but he is an insolent fellow, who offended me grossly, and with whom I have to reckon—as with many others."

"How violent you are!" interrupted his mother, "and how full of bitterness and hatred. Your father was so sweet-tempered, and kind to everybody."

"Perhaps they are kind to me?" retorted Paaker with a short laugh. "Even the Immortals spite me, and throw thorns in my path. But I will push them aside with my own hand, and will attain what I desire without the help of the Gods and overthrow all that oppose me."

"We cannot blow away a feather without the help of the Immortals," answered Setchem. "So your father used to say, who was a very different man both in body and mind from you! I tremble before you this evening, and at the curses you have uttered against the children of your lord and sovereign, your father's best friend."

"But my enemy," shouted Paaker. "You will get nothing from me but curses. And the brood of Rameses shall learn whether your husband's son will let himself be ill-used and scorned without revenging himself. I will fling them into an abyss, and I will laugh when I see them writhing in the sand at my feet!"

"Fool!" cried Setchem, beside herself. "I am but a woman, and have often blamed myself for being soft

and weak; but as sure as I am faithful to your dead father—whom you are no more like than a bramble is like a palm-tree—so surely will I tear my love for you out of my heart if you—if you— Now I see! now I know! Answer me—murderer! Where are the seven arrows with the wicked words which used to hang here? Where are the arrows on which you had scrawled ‘Death to Mena?’”

With these words Setchem breathlessly started forward, but the pioneer drew back as she confronted him, as in his youthful days when she threatened to punish him for some misdemeanor. She followed him up, caught him by the girdle, and in a hoarse voice repeated her question. He stood still, snatched her hand angrily from his belt, and said defiantly:

“I have put them in my quiver—and not for mere play. Now you know.”

Incapable of words, the maddened woman once more raised her hand against her degenerate son, but he put back her arm.

“I am no longer a child,” he said, “and I am master of this house. I will do what I will, if a hundred women hindered me!” and with these words he pointed to the door. Setchem broke into loud sobs, and turned her back upon him; but at the door once more she turned to look at him. He had seated himself, and was resting his forehead on the table on which the bowl of cold water stood.

Setchem fought a hard battle. At last once more through her choking tears she called his name, opened her arms wide and exclaimed:

“Here I am—here I am! Come to my heart, only give up these hideous thoughts of revenge.”

But Paaker did not move, he did not look up at her, he did not speak, he only shook his head in negation. Setchem's hands fell, and she said softly:

"What did your father teach you out of the scriptures? 'Your highest praise consists in this, to reward your mother for what she has done for you, in bringing you up, so that she may not raise her hands to God, nor He hear her lamentation.'"*

At these words, Paaker sobbed aloud, but he did not look at his mother. She called him tenderly by his name; then her eyes fell on his quiver, which lay on a bench with other arms. Her heart shrunk within her, and with a trembling voice she exclaimed:

"I forbid this mad vengeance—do you hear? Will you give it up? You do not move? No! you will not! Ye Gods, what can I do?"

She wrung her hands in despair; then she hastily crossed the room, snatched out one of the arrows, and strove to break it. Paaker sprang from his seat, and wrenched the weapon from her hand; the sharp point slightly scratched the skin, and dark drops of blood flowed from it, and dropped upon the floor.

The Mohar would have taken the wounded hand, for Setchem, who had the weakness of never being able to see blood flow—neither her own nor anybody's else—had turned as pale as death; but she pushed him from her, and as she spoke her gentle voice had a dull estranged tone.

"This hand," she said—"a mother's hand wounded by her son—shall never again grasp yours till you have sworn a solemn oath to put away from you all thoughts

* From Papyrus IV. containing moral precepts, preserved at Bulaq, Mariette edition.

of revenge and murder, and not to disgrace your father's name. I have said it, and may his glorified spirit be my witness, and give me strength to keep my word!"

Paaker had fallen on his knees, and was engaged in a terrible mental struggle, while his mother slowly went towards the door. There again she stood still for a moment; she did not speak, but her eyes appealed to him once more.

In vain. At last she left the room, and the wind slammed the door violently behind her. Paaker groaned, and pressed his hand over his eyes.

"Mother, mother!" he cried. "I cannot go back—I cannot."

A fearful gust of wind howled round the house, and drowned his voice, and then he heard two tremendous claps, as if rocks had been hurled from heaven. He started up and went to the window, where the melancholy grey dawn was showing, in order to call the slaves. Soon they came trooping out, and the steward called out as soon as he saw him:

"The storm has blown down the masts at the great gate!"

"Impossible!" cried Paaker.

"Yes, indeed!" answered the servant. "They have been sawn through close to the ground. The mat-maker no doubt did it, whose collar-bone was broken. He has escaped in this fearful night."

"Let out the dogs," cried the Mohar. "All who have legs run after the blackguard! Freedom, and five handfuls of gold for the man who brings him back."

The guests at the House of Seti had already gone to rest, when Ameni was informed of the arrival of the sorceress, and he at once went into the hall, where Ani was waiting to see her; the Regent roused himself from a deep reverie when he heard the high-priest's steps.

"Is she come?" he asked hastily; when Ameni answered in the affirmative Ani went on—meanwhile carefully disentangling the disordered curls of his wig, and arranging his broad, collar-shaped necklace:

"The witch may exercise some influence over me; will you not give me your blessing to preserve me from her spells? It is true, I have on me this Horus'-eye, and this Isis-charm,* but one never knows—"

"My presence will be your safe-guard," said Ameni. "But—no, of course you wish to speak with her alone. You shall be conducted to a room, which is protected against all witchcraft by sacred texts. My brother," he continued to one of the serving-priests, "let the witch be taken into one of the consecrated rooms, and then, when you have sprinkled the threshold, lead my lord Ani thither."

The high-priest went away, and into a small room which adjoined the hall where the interview between the Regent and the old woman was about to take place, and where the softest whisper spoken in the larger room could be heard by means of an ingeniously contrived and invisible tube.

When Ani saw the old woman, he started back in horror; her appearance at this moment was, in fact,

* Amulet in the shape of a knot, usually made of a blood-jasper on which was inscribed Chapter 75 or Chapter 76 of the Ritual of the Dead. It is called "Blood of Isis," "Charm of Isis" or "Wisdom (chu) of Isis."

frightful. The storm had tossed and torn her garments and tumbled all her thick, white hair, so that locks of it fell over her face. She leaned on a staff, and bending far forward looked steadily at the Regent; and her eyes, red and smarting from the sand which the wind had flung in her face, seemed to glow as she fixed them on his. She looked as a hyæna might when creeping to seize its prey, and Ani felt a cold shiver as he heard her hoarse voice addressing him to greet him, and to represent that he had chosen a strange hour for requiring her to speak with him.

When she had thanked him for his promise of renewing her letter of freedom, and had confirmed the statement that Paaker had had a love-philter from her, she parted her hair from off her face—it occurred to her that she was a woman.

The Regent sat in an arm-chair, she stood before him; but the struggle with the storm had tired her old limbs, and she begged Ani to permit her to be seated, as she had a long story to tell, which would put Paaker into his power, so that he would find him as yielding as wax. The Regent signed her to a corner of the room, and she squatted down on the pavement.

When he desired her to proceed with her story, she looked at the floor for some time in silence, and then began, as if half to herself:

“I will tell thee, that I may find peace—I do not want, when I die, to be buried unembalmed. Who knows but perhaps strange things may happen in the other world, and I would not wish to miss them. I want to see him again down there, even if it were in the seventh limbo of the damned. Listen to me! But, before I speak, promise me that whatever I tell thee, thou wilt

leave me in peace, and will see that I am embalmed when I am dead. Else I will not speak."

Ani bowed consent.

"No—no," she said. "I will tell thee what to swear: 'If I do not keep my word to Hekt—who gives the Mohar into my power—may the Spirits whom she rules, annihilate me before I mount the throne.' Do not be vexed, my lord—and say only 'Yes.' What I can tell, is worth more than a mere word."

"Well then—yes!" cried the Regent, eager for the mighty revelation.

The old woman muttered a few unintelligible words; then she collected herself, stretched out her lean neck, and asked, as she fixed her sparkling eyes on the man before her:

"Did'st thou ever, when thou wert young, hear of the singer Beki? Well, look at me, I am she."

She laughed loud and hoarsely, and drew her tattered robe across her bosom, as if half ashamed of her unpleasing person.

"Ay!" she continued. "Men find pleasure in grapes by treading them down, and when the must is drunk the skins are thrown on the dung-hill. Grape-skins, that is what I am—but you need not look at me so pitifully; I was grapes once, and poor and despised as I am now, no one can take from me what I have had and have been. Mine has been a life out of a thousand, a complete life, full to overflowing of joy and suffering, of love and hate, of delight, despair, and revenge. Only to talk of it raises me to a seat by thy throne there.—No, let me be, I am used now to squatting on the ground; but I knew thou wouldst hear me to the end, for once I too was one of you. Extremes meet in all

things—I know it by experience. The greatest men will hold out a hand to a beautiful woman, and time was when I could lead you all as with a rope. Shall I begin at the beginning? Well—I seldom am in the mood for it now-a-days. Fifty years ago I sang a song with this voice of mine; an old crow like me? sing! But so it was. My father was a man of rank, the governor of Abydos; when the first Rameses took possession of the throne my father was faithful to the house of thy fathers, so the new king sent us all to the gold mines, and there they all died—my parents, brothers, and sisters. I only survived by some miracle. As I was handsome and sang well, a music master took me into his band, brought me to Thebes, and wherever there was a feast given in any great house, Beki was in request. Of flowers and money and tender looks I had a plentiful harvest; but I was proud and cold, and the misery of my people had made me bitter at an age when usually even bad liquor tastes of honey. Not one of all the gay young fellows, princes' sons, and nobles, dared to touch my hand. But my hour was to come; the handsomest and noblest man of them all, and grave and dignified too—was Assa, the old Mohar's father, and grandfather of Pentaur—no, I should say of Paaker, the pioneer; thou hast known him. Well, wherever I sang, he sat opposite me, and gazed at me, and I could not take my eyes off him, and—thou canst tell the rest!—no! Well, no woman before or after me can ever love a man as I loved Assa. Why—dost thou not laugh? It must seem odd, too, to hear such a thing from the toothless mouth of an old witch. He is dead, long since dead. I hate him! and yet—wild as it sounds—I believe I love him yet. And he loved me—for two years;

then he went to the war with Seti, and remained a long time away, and when I saw him again he had courted the daughter of some rich and noble house. I was handsome enough still, but he never looked at me at the banquets. I came across him at least twenty times, but he avoided me as if I were tainted with leprosy, and I began to fret, and fell ill of a fever. The doctors said it was all over with me, so I sent him a letter in which there was nothing but these words: 'Beki is dying, and would like to see Assa once more,' and in the papyrus I put his first present—a plain ring. And what was the answer? a handful of gold! Gold—gold! Thou may'st believe me, when I say that the sight of it was more torturing to my eyes than the iron with which they put out the eyes of criminals. Even now, when I think of it—But what do you men, you lords of rank and wealth, know of a breaking heart? When two or three of you happen to meet, and if thou should'st tell the story, the most respectable will say in a pompous voice: 'The man acted nobly indeed; he was married, and his wife would have complained with justice if he had gone to see the singer.' Am I right or wrong? I know; not one will remember that the other was a woman, a feeling human being; it will occur to no one that his deed on the one hand saved an hour of discomfort, and on the other wrought half a century of despair. Assa escaped his wife's scolding, but a thousand curses have fallen on him and on his house. How virtuous he felt himself when he had crushed and poisoned a passionate heart that had never ceased to love him! Ay, and he would have come if he had not still felt some love for me, if he had not misdoubted himself, and feared that the dying woman might once more light up the fire he

had so carefully smothered and crushed out. I would have grieved for him—but that he should send me money, money!—that I have never forgiven; that he shall atone for in his grandchild.” The old woman spoke the last words as if in a dream, and without seeming to remember her hearer. Ani shuddered, as if he were in the presence of a mad woman, and he involuntarily drew his chair back a little way.

The witch observed this; she took breath and went on: “You lords, who walk in high places, do not know how things go on in the depths beneath you;—you do not choose to know.

“But I will shorten my story. I got well, but I got out of my bed thin and voiceless. I had plenty of money, and I spent it in buying of everyone who professed magic in Thebes, potions to recover Assa’s love for me, or in paying for spells to be cast on him, or for magic drinks to destroy him. I tried too to recover my voice, but the medicines I took for it made it rougher not sweeter. Then an excommunicated priest, who was famous among the magicians, took me into his house, and there I learned many things; his old companions afterwards turned upon him, he came over here into the Necropolis, and I came with him. When at last he was taken and hanged, I remained in his cave, and myself took to witchcraft. Children point their fingers at me, honest men and women avoid me, I am an abomination to all men, nay to myself. And one only is guilty of all this ruin—the noblest gentleman in Thebes—the pious Assa.

“I had practised magic for several years, and had become learned in many arts, when one day the gardener Sent, from whom I was accustomed to buy plants

for my mixtures—he rents a plot of ground from the temple of Seti—Sent brought me a new-born child that had been born with six toes; I was to remove the supernumerary toe by my art. The pious mother of the child was lying ill of fever, or she never would have allowed it; I took the screaming little wretch—for such things are sometimes curable. The next morning, a few hours after sunrise, there was a bustle in front of my cave; a maid, evidently belonging to a noble house, was calling me. Her mistress, she said, had come with her to visit the tomb of her fathers, and there had been taken ill, and had given birth to a child. Her mistress was lying senseless—I must go at once, and help her. I took the little six-toed brat in my cloak, told my slave-girl to follow me with water, and soon found myself—as thou canst guess—at the tomb of Assa’s ancestors. The poor woman, who lay there in convulsions, was his daughter-in-law Setchem. The baby, a boy, was as sound as a nut, but she was evidently in great danger. I sent the maid with the litter, which was waiting outside, to the temple here for help; the girl said that her master, the father of the child, was at the war, but that the grandfather, the noble Assa, had promised to meet the lady Setchem at the tomb, and would shortly be coming; then she disappeared with the litter. I washed the child, and kissed it as if it were my own. Then I heard distant steps in the valley, and the recollection of the moment when I, lying at the point of death, had received that gift of money from Assa came over me, and then—I do not know myself how it happened—I gave the new-born grandchild of Assa to my slave-girl, and told her to carry it quickly to the cave, and I wrapped the little six-toed baby in my rags

and held it in my lap. There I sat—and the minutes seemed hours, till Assa came up; and when he stood before me, grown grey, it is true, but still handsome and upright—I put the gardener's boy, the six-toed brat, into his very arms, and a thousand demons seemed to laugh hoarsely within me. He thanked me, he did not know me, and once more he offered me a handful of gold. I took it, and I listened as the priest, who had come from the temple, prophesied all sorts of fine things for the little one, who was born in so fortunate an hour; and then I went back into my cave, and there I laughed till I cried, though I do not know that the tears sprang from the laughter.

“A few days after I gave Assa's grandchild to the gardener, and told him the sixth toe had come off; I had made a little wound on his foot to take in the bumpkin. So Assa's grandchild, the son of the Mohar, grew up as the gardener's child, and received the name of Pentaur, and he was brought up in the temple here, and is wonderfully like Assa; but the gardener's monstrous brat is the pioneer Paaker. That is the whole secret.”

Ani had listened in silence to the terrible old woman.

We are involuntarily committed to any one who can inform us of some absorbing fact, and who knows how to make the information valuable. It did not occur to the Regent to punish the witch for her crimes; he thought rather of his older friends' rapture when they talked of the singer Beki's songs and beauty. He looked at the woman, and a cold shiver ran through all his limbs.

“You may live in peace,” he said at last; “and

when you die I will see to your being embalmed; but give up your black arts. You must be rich, and, if you are not, say what you need. Indeed, I scarcely dare offer you gold—it excites your hatred, as I understand.”

“I could take thine—but now let me go!”

She got up, and went towards the door, but the Regent called to her to stop, and asked:

“Is Assa the father of your son, the little Nemu, the dwarf of the lady Katuti?”

The witch laughed loudly. “Is the little wretch like Assa or like Beki? I picked him up like many other children.”

“But he is clever!” said Ani.

“Ay—that he is. He has planned many a shrewd stroke, and is devoted to his mistress. He will help thee to thy purpose, for he himself has one too.”

“And that is—?”

“Katuti will rise to greatness with thee, and to riches through Paaker, who sets out to-morrow to make the woman he loves a widow.”

“You know a great deal,” said Ani meditatively, “and I would ask you one thing more; though indeed your story has supplied the answer—but perhaps you know more now than you did in your youth. Is there in truth any effectual love-philter?”

“I will not deceive thee, for I desire that thou should'st keep thy word to me,” replied Hekt. “A love potion rarely has any effect, and never but on women who have never before loved. If it is given to a woman whose heart is filled with the image of another man her passion for him only will grow the stronger.”

“Yet another,” said Ani. “Is there any way of destroying an enemy at a distance?”

“Certainly,” said the witch. “Little people may do mean things, and great people can let others do things that they cannot do themselves. My story has stirred thy gall, and it seems to me that thou dost not love the poet Pentaur. A smile! Well then—I have not lost sight of him, and I know he is grown up as proud and as handsome as Assa. He is wonderfully like him, and I could have loved him—have loved as this foolish heart had better never have loved. It is strange! In many women, who come to me, I see how their hearts cling to the children of men who have abandoned them, and we women are all alike, in most things. But I will not let myself love Assa’s grandchild—I must not. I will injure him, and help everyone that persecutes him; for though Assa is dead, the wrongs he did me live in me so long as I live myself. Pentaur’s destiny must go on its course. If thou wilt have his life, consult with Nemu, for he hates him too, and he will serve thee more effectually than I can with my vain spells and silly harmless brews. Now let me go home!”

A few hours later Ameni sent to invite the Regent to breakfast.

“Do you know who the witch Hekt is?” asked Ani.

“Certainly—how should I not know? She is the singer Beki—the former enchantress of Thebes. May I ask what her communications were?”

Ani thought it best not to confide the secret of Pentaur’s birth to the high-priest, and answered evasively. Then Ameni begged to be allowed to give him

some information about the old woman, and how she had had a hand in the game; and he related to his hearer, with some omissions and variations—as if it were a fact he had long known—the very story which a few hours since he had overheard, and learned for the first time. Ani feigned great astonishment, and agreed with the high-priest that Paaker should not for the present be informed of his true origin.

“He is a strangely constituted man,” said Ameni, “and he is not incapable of playing us some unforeseen trick before he has done his part, if he is told who he is.”

The storm had exhausted itself, and the sky, though covered still with torn and flying clouds, cleared by degrees, as the morning went on; a sharp coolness succeeded the hot blast, but the sun as it mounted higher and higher soon heated the air. On the roads and in the gardens lay uprooted trees and many slightly-built houses which had been blown down, while the tents in the strangers' quarter, and hundreds of light palm-thatched roofs, had been swept away.

The Regent was returning to Thebes, and with him went Ameni, who desired to ascertain by his own eyes what mischief the whirlwind had done to his garden in the city. On the Nile they met Paaker's boat, and Ani caused it and his own to be stopped, while he requested Paaker to visit him shortly at the palace.

The high-priest's garden was in no respect inferior in beauty and extent to that of the Mohar. The ground had belonged to his family from the remotest generations, and his house was large and magnificent. He seated himself in a shady arbor, to take a repast

with his still handsome wife and his young and pretty daughters.

He consoled his wife for the various damage done by the hurricane, promised the girls to build a new and handsomer dove-cot in the place of the one which had been blown down, and laughed and joked with them all; for here the severe head of the House of Seti, the grave Superior of the Necropolis, became a simple man, an affectionate husband, a tender father, a judicious friend, among his children, his flowers, and his birds. His youngest daughter clung to his right arm, and an older one to his left, when he rose from table to go with them to the poultry-yard.

On the way thither a servant announced to him that the Lady Setchem wished to see him.

“Take her to your mistress,” he said.

But the slave—who held in his hand a handsome gift in money—explained that the widow wished to speak with him alone.

“Can I never enjoy an hour’s peace like other men?” exclaimed Ameni annoyed. “Your mistress can receive her, and she can wait with her till I come. It is true, girls—is it not?—that I belong to you just now, and to the fowls, and ducks, and pigeons?”

His youngest daughter kissed him, the second patted him affectionately, and they all three went gaily forward. An hour later he requested the Lady Setchem to accompany him into the garden.

The poor, anxious, and frightened woman had resolved on this step with much difficulty; tears filled her kind eyes, as she communicated her troubles to the high-priest.

“Thou art a wise counsellor,” she said, “and thou

knowest well how my son honors the Gods of the temple of Seti with gifts and offerings. He will not listen to his mother, but thou hast influence with him. He meditates frightful things, and if he cannot be terrified by threats of punishment from the Immortals, he will raise his hand against Mena, and perhaps—”

“Against the king,” interrupted Ameni gravely. “I know it, and I will speak to him.”

“Thanks, oh a thousand thanks!” cried the widow, and she seized the high-priests robe to kiss it. “It was thou who soon after his birth didst tell my husband that he was born under a lucky star, and would grow to be an honor and an ornament to his house and to his country. And now—now he will ruin himself in this world, and the next.”

“What I foretold of your son,” said Ameni, “shall assuredly be fulfilled, for the ways of the Gods are not as the ways of men.”

“Thy words do me good!” cried Setchem. “None can tell what fearful terror weighed upon my heart, when I made up my mind to come here. But thou dost not yet know all. The great masts of cedar, which Paaker sent from Lebanon to Thebes to bear our banners, and ornament our gateway, were thrown to the ground at sunrise by the frightful wind.”

“Thus shall your son’s defiant spirit be broken,” said Ameni; “But for you, if you have patience, new joys shall arise.”

“I thank thee again,” said Setchem. “But something yet remains to be said. I know that I am wasting the time that thou dost devote to thy family, and I remember thy saying once that here in Thebes thou wert like a pack-horse with his load taken off, and free

to wander over a green meadow. I will not disturb thee much longer—but the Gods sent me such a wonderful vision. Paaker would not listen to me, and I went back into my room full of sorrow; and when at last, after the sun had risen, I fell asleep for a few minutes, I dreamed I saw before me the poet Pentaur, who is wonderfully like my dead husband in appearance and in voice. Paaker went up to him, and abused him violently, and threatened him with his fist; the priest raised his arms in prayer, just as I saw him yesterday at the festival—but not in devotion, but to seize Paaker, and wrestle with him. The struggle did not last long, for Paaker seemed to shrink up, and lost his human form, and fell at the poet's feet—not my son, but a shapeless lump of clay such as the potter uses to make jars of.”

“A strange dream!” exclaimed Ameni, not without agitation. “A very strange dream, but it bodes you good. Clay, Setchem, is yielding, and clearly indicates that which the Gods prepare for you. The Immortals will give you a new and a better son instead of the old one, but it is not revealed to me by what means. Go now, and sacrifice to the Gods, and trust to the wisdom of those who guide the life of the universe, and of all mortal creatures. Yet—I would give you one more word of advice. If Paaker comes to you repentant, receive him kindly, and let me know; but if he will not yield, close your rooms against him, and let him depart without taking leave of you.”

When Setchem, much encouraged, was gone away, Ameni said to himself:

“She will find splendid compensation for this coarse scoundrel, and she shall not spoil the tool we need to

strike our blow . I have often doubted how far dreams do, indeed, foretell the future, but to-day my faith in them is increased. Certainly a mother's heart sees farther than that of any other human being."

At the door of her house Setchem came up with her son's chariot. They saw each other, but both looked away, for they could not meet affectionately, and would not meet coldly. As the horses outran the litter-bearers, the mother and son looked round at each other, their eyes met, and each felt a stab in the heart.

In the evening the pioneer, after he had had an interview with the Regent, went to the temple of Seti to receive Ameni's blessing on all his undertakings. Then, after sacrificing in the tomb of his ancestors, he set out for Syria.

Just as he was getting into his chariot, news was brought him that the mat-maker, who had sawn through the masts at the gate, had been caught.

"Put out his eyes!" he cried; and these were the last words he spoke as he quitted his home.

Setchem looked after him for a long time; she had refused to bid him farewell, and now she implored the Gods to turn his heart, and to preserve him from malice and crime.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THREE days had passed since the pioneer's departure, and although it was still early, busy occupation was astir in Bent-Anat's work-rooms.

The ladies had passed the stormy night, which had

succeeded the exciting evening of the festival, without sleep.

Nefert felt tired and sleepy the next morning, and begged the princess to introduce her to her new duties for the first time next day; but the princess spoke to her encouragingly, told her that no man should put off doing right till the morrow, and urged her to follow her into her workshop.

“We must both come to different minds,” said she. “I often shudder involuntarily, and feel as if I bore a brand—as if I had a stain here on my shoulder where it was touched by Paaker’s rough hand.”

The first day of labor gave Nefert a good many difficulties to overcome; on the second day the work she had begun already had a charm for her, and by the third she rejoiced in the little results of her care.

Bent-Anat had put her in the right place, for she had the direction of a large number of young girls and women, the daughters, wives, and widows of those Thebans who were at the war, or who had fallen in the field, who sorted and arranged the healing herbs.

Her helpers sat in little circles on the ground; in the midst of each lay a great heap of fresh and dry plants, and in front of each work-woman a number of parcels of the selected roots, leaves, and flowers.

An old physician presided over the whole, and had shown Nefert the first day the particular plants which he needed.

The wife of Mena, who was fond of flowers, had soon learnt them all, and she taught willingly, for she loved children.

She soon had favorites among the children, and

knew some as being industrious and careful, others as idle and heedless

“Ay! ay!” she exclaimed, bending over a little half-naked maiden with great almond-shaped eyes. “You are mixing them all together. Your father, as you tell me, is at the war. Suppose, now, an arrow were to strike him, and this plant, which would hurt him, were laid on the burning wound instead of this other, which would do him good—that would be very sad.”

The child nodded her head, and looked her work through again. Nefert turned to a little idler, and said: “You are chattering again, and doing nothing, and yet your father is in the field. If he were ill now, and has no medicine, and if at night when he is asleep he dreams of you, and sees you sitting idle, he may say to himself: ‘Now I might get well, but my little girl at home does not love me, for she would rather sit with her hands in her lap than sort herbs for her sick father.’”

Then Nefert turned to a large group of the girls, who were sorting plants, and said: “Do you, children, know the origin of all these wholesome, healing herbs? The good Horus went out to fight against Seth, the murderer of his father, and the horrible enemy wounded Horus in the eye* in the struggle; but the son of Osiris conquered, for good always conquers evil. But when Isis saw the bad wound, she pressed her son’s head to her bosom, and her heart was as sad as that of any poor human mother that holds her suffering child in her arms. And she thought: ‘How easy it is to give wounds, and how hard it is to heal them!’ and so she wept; one tear after another fell on the earth,

* According to the “Book of the Dead,” and Isis also heals the eye of Horus.

and wherever they wetted the ground there sprang up a kindly healing plant."*

"Isis is good!" cried a little girl opposite to her. "Mother says Isis loves children when they are good."

"Your mother is right," replied Nefert. "Isis herself has her dear little son Horus; and every human being that dies, and that was good, becomes a child again, and the Goddess makes it her own, and takes it to her breast, and nurses it with her sister Nephthys** till he grows up and can fight for his father."

Nefert observed that while she spoke one of the women was crying. She went up to her, and learned that her husband and her son were both dead, the former in Syria, and the latter after his return to Egypt.

"Poor soul!" said Nefert. "Now you will be very careful, that the wounds of others may be healed. I will tell you something more about Isis. She loved her husband Osiris dearly, as you did your dead husband, and I my husband Mena, but he fell a victim to the cunning of Seth, and she could not tell where to find the body that had been carried away, while you can visit your husband in his grave. Then Isis went through the land lamenting, and ah! what was to become of Egypt, which received all its fruitfulness from Osiris. The sacred Nile was dried up, and not a blade

* The Egyptians attributed creative power to the blood and the tears of the Gods. Lefébure has treated the subject in "Le Mythe Osirien." In "the praises of Ra," edited by Naville, the God is addressed as "Remi," *i. e.*, the weeper; and in the sentences found with the pictures of the four races of men in the tomb of Seti I., at Biban el Muluk, there is a passage from which it appears that man also sprang from the tears of the God, since he thus addresses the people: "Ye are a tear from mine eyes, Ye who are called Men!"

** As Isis is the mother, so Nephthys is represented as the nurse and teacher of Horus. On the island of Philæ, we see one of the Ptolemies represented as a young God, receiving instruction from Nephthys in the art of playing on the harp. Osiris loved both goddesses, and both are represented mourning by his bier, one at the head and the other at the foot. Their song of lamentation has been preserved on a papyrus in the Berlin Museum, treated by de Horrak.

of verdure was green on its banks. The Goddess grieved over this beyond words, and one of her tears fell in the bed of the river, and immediately it began to rise. You know, of course, that each inundation arises from a tear of Isis.* Thus a widow's sorrow may bring blessing to millions of human beings."

The woman had listened to her attentively, and when Nefert ceased speaking she said:

"But I have still three little brats of my son's to feed, for his wife, who was a washerwoman, was eaten by a crocodile while she was at work. Poor folks must work for themselves, and not for others. If the princess did not pay us, I could not think of the wounds of the soldiers, who do not belong to me. I am no longer strong, and four mouths to fill—"

Nefert was shocked—as she often was in the course of her new duties—and begged Bent-Anat to raise the wages of the woman.

"Willingly," said the princess. "How could I beat down such an assistant. Come now with me into the kitchen. I am having some fruit packed for my father and brothers; there must be a box for Mena too."

Nefert followed her royal friend, found them packing in one case the golden dates of the oasis of Amon,** and in another the dark dates of Nubia, the king's favorite sort.

"Let me pack them!" cried Nefert; she made the servants empty the box again, and re-arranged the various-colored dates in graceful patterns, with other fruits preserved in sugar.

* The old belief that the Nile rises from a divine tear falling into the stream is still cherished among the Arabs. Even at the present time the night of the 11th Baûneh, when the Nile slowly begins to rise, is called the "Night of the Drop."

** Now called the oasis of Siwah. Its date palms are still famous for their fruit.

Bent-Anat looked on, and when she had finished she took her hand. "Whatever your fingers have touched," she exclaimed, "takes some pretty aspect. Give me that scrap of papyrus; I shall put it in the case, and write upon it—

"These were packed for king Rameses by his daughter's clever helpmate, the wife of Mena."

After the mid-day rest the princess was called away, and Nefert remained for some hours alone with the work-women.

When the sun went down, and the busy crowd were about to leave, Nefert detained them, and said: "The Sun-bark is sinking behind the western hills; come, let us pray together for the king and for those we love in the field. Each of you think of her own: you children of your fathers, you women of your sons, and we wives of our distant husbands, and let us entreat Amon that they may return to us as certainly as the sun, which now leaves us, will rise again to-morrow morning."

Nefert knelt down, and with her the women and the children.

When they rose, a little girl went up to Nefert, and said, pulling her dress: "Thou madest us kneel here yesterday, and already my mother is better, because I prayed for her."

"No doubt," said Nefert, stroking the child's black hair.

She found Bent-Anat on the terrace meditatively gazing across to the Necropolis, which was fading into darkness before her eyes. She started when she heard the light footsteps of her friend.

"I am disturbing thee," said Nefert, about to retire.

"No, stay," said Bent-Anat. "I thank the Gods that I have you, for my heart is sad—pitifully sad."

"I know where your thoughts were," said Nefert softly.

"Well?" asked the princess.

"With Pentaur."

"I think of him—always of him," replied the princess, "and nothing else occupies my heart. I am no longer myself. What I think I ought not to think, what I feel I ought not to feel, and yet, I cannot command it, and I think my heart would bleed to death if I tried to cut out those thoughts and feelings. I have behaved strangely, nay unbecomingly, and now that which is hard to endure is hanging over me, something strange—which will perhaps drive you from me back to your mother."

"I will share everything with you," cried Nefert. "What is going to happen? Are you then no longer the daughter of Rameses?"

"I showed myself to the people as a woman of the people," answered Bent-Anat, "and I must take the consequences. Bek en Chunsu, the high-priest of Amon, has been with me, and I have had a long conversation with him. The worthy man is good to me, I know, and my father ordered me to follow his advice before any one's. He showed me that I have erred deeply. In a state of uncleanness I went into one of the temples of the Necropolis, and after I had once been into the paraschites' house and incurred Ameni's displeasure, I did it a second time. They know over there all that took place at the festival. Now I must undergo purification, either with great solemnity at the hands of Ameni himself, before all the priests and nobles in the House of Seti, or by performing a pilgrim-

age to the Emerald-Hathor,* under whose influence the precious stones are hewn from the rocks, metals dug out, and purified by fire. The Goddess shall purge me from my uncleanness as metal is purged from the dross. At a day's journey and more from the mines, an abundant stream** flows from the holy mountain—Sinai,*** as it is called by the Mentu†—and near it stands the sanctuary of the Goddess, in which priests grant purification. The journey is a long one, through the desert, and over the sea; But Bek en Chunsu advises me to venture it. Ameni, he says, is not amiably disposed towards me, because I infringed the ordinance which he values above all others. I must submit to double severity, he says, because the people look first to those of the highest rank; and if I went unpunished for contempt of the sacred institutions there might be imitators among the crowd. He speaks in the name of the Gods, and they measure hearts with an equal measure. The ell-measure is the symbol of the Goddess of Truth.†† I feel that it is all not unjust; and yet I find it hard to submit to the priest's decree, for I am the daughter of Rameses!"

* "Hathor of the Mafkat" was especially revered in the peninsula of Sinai. According to Lepsius' searching investigation as to the metals of the ancient Egyptians, it is proved that Mafkat is neither copper nor turquoise, but a green stone. When the Mafkat is termed "true" or "genuine," emerald is meant; in other cases Malachite, Chrysoprase, and green glass, which are frequently found in the tombs. Ornaments of malachite are rare. We may here mention an exquisite figure of the God Ptah made of this stone which is preserved in the Japanese palace at Dresden. Monuments which remain at both the mining establishments of Sinai, Wadi Maghara, and Sarbut el Chadem, indicate that Hathor was worshipped there in preference to all other divinities.

** In the modern oasis of Feiran.

*** I believe the gigantic peak now called Serbal, not the Sinai of the monks, is the Sinai mentioned in the Bible, and have given my reasons for this opinion in detail in "Durch Gosen zum Sinai, aus dem Wanderbuche und der Bibliothek"

† The mountain tribes of the Sinai peninsula.

†† The name of the Goddess of truth, Ma, was written with the hieroglyphic which represented the ell-measure. Several specimens of the old sacred ell-measure have been preserved. Lepsius has fully treated the subject. *Die altegyptische Elle und ihre Eintheilung. Aus den Abhandlungen der k. Akademie der Wissenschaften.* Berlin, 1865, page 33.

“Aye, indeed!” exclaimed Nefert, “and he is himself a God!”

“But he taught me to respect the laws!” interrupted the princess. “I discussed another thing with Bek en Chunsu. You know I rejected the suit of the Regent. He must secretly be much vexed with me. That indeed would not alarm me, but he is the guardian and protector appointed over me by my father, and yet can I turn to him in confidence for counsel, and help? No! I am still a woman, and Rameses’ daughter! Sooner will I travel through a thousand deserts than humiliate my father through his child. By to-morrow I shall have decided; but, indeed, I have already decided to make the journey, hard as it is to leave much that is here. Do not fear, dear! but you are too tender for such a journey, and to such a distance; I might—”

“No, no,” cried Nefert. “I am going, too, if you were going to the four pillars of heaven,* at the limits of the earth. You have given me a new life, and the little sprout that is green within me would wither again if I had to return to my mother. Only she or I can be in our house, and I will re-enter it only with Mena.”

“It is settled—I must go,” said the princess. “Oh! if only my father were not so far off, and that I could consult him!”

“Yes! the war, and always the war!” sighed Nefert. “Why do not men rest content with what they have,

* The pillars of heaven are alluded to in various circumstances. On the beautiful Stele of Victory of Thotmes III. at Bulaq it is written, “I, Amon have spread the fear of thee to the four pillars of heaven.” They were supposed to stand at the uttermost points of the north, south, east and west, and the phrase is often used for the four quarters of the heavens.

and prefer the quiet peace, which makes life lovely, to idle fame?"

"Would they be men? should we love them?" cried Bent-Anat eagerly. "Is not the mind of the Gods, too, bent on war? Did you ever see a more sublime sight than Pentaur, on that evening when he brandished the stake he had pulled up, and exposed his life to protect an innocent girl who was in danger?"

"I dared not once look down into the court," said Nefert. "I was in such an agony of mind. But his loud cry still rings in my ears."

"So rings the war cry of heroes before whom the enemy quails!" exclaimed Bent-Anat.

"Aye, truly so rings the war cry!" said prince Rameri, who had entered his sister's half-dark room unperceived by the two women.

The princess turned to the boy. "How you frightened me!" she said.

"You!" said Rameri astonished.

"Yes, me. I used to have a stout heart, but since that evening I frequently tremble, and an agony of terror comes over me, I do not know why. I believe some demon commands me."

"You command, wherever you go; and no one commands you," cried Rameri. "The excitement and tumult in the valley, and on the quay, still agitate you. I grind my teeth myself when I remember how they turned me out of the school, and how Paaker set the dog at us. I have gone through a great deal to-day too."

"Where were you so long?" asked Bent-Anat. "My uncle Ani commanded that you should not leave the palace."

"I shall be eighteen years old next month," said the prince, "and need no tutor."

"But your father—" said Bent-Anat.

"My father—interrupted the boy, "he little knows the Regent. But I shall write to him what I have to-day heard said by different people. They were to have sworn allegiance to Ani at that very feast in the valley, and it is quite openly said that Ani is aiming at the throne, and intends to depose the king. You are right, it is madness—but there must be something behind it all."

Nefert turned pale, and Bent-Anat asked for particulars. The prince repeated all he had gathered, and added laughing: "Ani depose my father! It is as if I tried to snatch the star of Isis from the sky to light the lamps—which are much wanted here."

"It is more comfortable in the dark," said Nefert.

"No, let us have lights," said Bent-Anat. "It is better to talk when we can see each other face to face. I have no belief in the foolish talk of the people; but you are right—we must bring it to my father's knowledge."

"I heard the wildest gossip in the City of the Dead," said Rameri.

"You ventured over there? How very wrong!"

"I disguised myself a little, and I have good news for you. Pretty Uarda is much better. She received your present, and they have a house of their own again. Close to the one that was burnt down, there was a tumbled-down hovel, which her father soon put together again; he is a bearded soldier, who is as much like her as a hedgehog is like a white dove. I offered her to work in the palace for you with the

other girls, for good wages, but she would not; for she has to wait on her sick grandmother, and she is proud, and will not serve any one."

"It seems you were a long time with the paraschites' people," said Bent-Anat reprovingly. "I should have thought that what has happened to me might have served you as a warning."

"I will not be better than you!" cried the boy. "Besides, the paraschites is dead, and Uarda's father is a respectable soldier, who can defile no one. I kept a long way from the old woman. To-morrow I am going again. I promised her."

"Promised who?" asked his sister.

"Who but Uarda? She loves flowers, and since the rose which you gave her she has not seen one. I have ordered the gardener to cut me a basket full of roses to-morrow morning, and shall take them to her myself."

"That you will not!" cried Bent-Anat. "You are still but half a child—and, for the girl's sake too, you must give it up."

"We only gossip together," said the prince coloring, "and no one shall recognize me. But certainly, if you mean that, I will leave the basket of roses, and go to her alone. No—sister, I will not be forbidden this; she is so charming, so white, so gentle, and her voice is so soft and sweet! And she has little feet, as small as—what shall I say?—as small and graceful as Nefert's hand. We talked most about Pentaur. She knows his father, who is a gardener, and knows a great deal about him. Only think! she says the poet cannot be the son of his parents, but a good spirit that has come down on earth—perhaps a God. At first she

was very timid, but when I spoke of Pentaur she grew eager; her reverence for him is almost idolatry—and that vexed me.”

“You would rather she should reverence you so,” said Nefert smiling.

“Not at all,” cried Rameri. “But I helped to save her, and I am so happy when I am sitting with her, that to-morrow, I am resolved, I will put a flower in her hair. It is red certainly, but as thick as yours, Bent-Anat, and it must be delightful to unfasten it and stroke it.”

The ladies exchanged a glance of intelligence, and the princess said decidedly:

“You will not go to the City of the Dead to-morrow, my little son!”

“That we will see, my little mother!” He answered laughing; then he turned grave.

“I saw my school-friend Anana too,” he said. “Injustice reigns in the House of Seti! Pentaur is in prison, and yesterday evening they sat in judgment upon him. My uncle was present, and would have pounced upon the poet, but Ameni took him under his protection. What was finally decided, the pupils could not learn, but it must have been something bad, for the son of the Treasurer heard Ameni saying, after the sitting, to old Gagabu: ‘Punishment he deserves, but I will not let him be overwhelmed;’ and he can have meant no one but Pentaur. To-morrow I will go over, and learn more; something frightful, I am afraid—several years of imprisonment is the least that will happen to him.”

Bent-Anat had turned very pale.

“And whatever they do to him,” she cried, “he

will suffer for my sake! Oh, ye omnipotent Gods, help him—help me, be merciful to us both!”

She covered her face with her hands, and left the room. Rameri asked Nefert:

“What can have come to my sister? she seems quite strange to me; and you too are not the same as you used to be.”

“We both have to find our way in new circumstances.”

“What are they?”

“That I cannot explain to you!—but it appears to me that you soon may experience something of the same kind. Rameri, do not go again to the paraschites.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

EARLY on the following day the dwarf Nemu went past the restored hut of Uarda's father—in which he had formerly lived with his wife—with a man in a long coarse robe, the steward of some noble family. They went towards old Hekt's cave-dwelling.

“I would beg thee to wait down here a moment, noble lord,” said the dwarf, “while I announce thee to my mother.”

“That sounds very grand,” said the other. “However, so be it. But stay! The old woman is not to call me by my name or by my title. She is to call me ‘steward’—that no one may know. But, indeed, no one would recognize me in this dress.”

Nemu hastened to the cave, but before he reached his mother she called out: “Do not keep my lord waiting—I know him well.”

Nemu laid his finger to his lips.

"You are to call him steward," said he.

"Good," muttered the old woman. "The ostrich puts his head under his feathers when he does not want to be seen."

"Was the young prince long with Uarda yesterday?"

"No, you fool," laughed the witch, "the children play together. Rameri is a kid without horns, but who fancies he knows where they ought to grow. Pentaur is a more dangerous rival with the red-headed girl. Make haste, now; these stewards must not be kept waiting!"

The old woman gave the dwarf a push, and he hurried back to Ani, while she carried the child, tied to his board, into the cave, and threw the sack over him.

A few minutes later the Regent stood before her.

She bowed before him with a demeanor that was more like the singer Beki than the sorceress Hekt, and begged him to take the only seat she possessed.

When, with a wave of his hand, he declined to sit down, she said:

"Yes—yes—be seated! then thou wilt not be seen from the valley, but be screened by the rocks close by. Why hast thou chosen this hour for thy visit?"

"Because the matter presses of which I wish to speak," answered Ani; "and in the evening I might easily be challenged by the watch. My disguise is good. Under this robe I wear my usual dress. From this I shall go to the tomb of my father, where I shall take off this coarse thing, and these other disfigurements, and shall wait for my chariot, which is already

ordered. I shall tell people I had made a vow to visit the grave humbly, and on foot, which I have now fulfilled."

"Well planned," muttered the old woman.

Ani pointed to the dwarf, and said politely: "Your pupil."

Since her narrative the sorceress was no longer a mere witch in his eyes. The old woman understood this, and saluted him with a curtsey of such courtly formality, that a tame raven at her feet opened his black beak wide, and uttered a loud scream. She threw a bit of cheese within the cave, and the bird hopped after it, flapping his clipped wings, and was silent.

"I have to speak to you about Pentaur," said Ani.

The old woman's eyes flashed, and she eagerly asked, "What of him?"

"I have reasons," answered the Regent, "for regarding him as dangerous to me. He stands in my way. He has committed many crimes, even murder; but he is in favor at the House of Seti, and they would willingly let him go unpunished. They have the right of sitting in judgment on each other, and I cannot interfere with their decisions; the day before yesterday they pronounced their sentence. They would send him to the quarries of Chennu.* All my ob-

* Chennu is now Gebel Silsileh: the quarries there are of enormous extent, and almost all the sandstone used for building the temples of Upper Egypt was brought from thence. The Nile is narrower there than above, and large stelæ were erected there by Rameses II. and his successor Mernephtah, on which were inscribed beautiful hymns to the Nile, and lists of the sacrifices to be offered at the Nile-festivals. These inscriptions can be restored by comparison, and my friend Stern and I had the satisfaction of doing this on the spot (*Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache*, 1873, p. 129.). Rameses the Great instituted two Nile-festivals, which Stern identifies with "the night of the drop," or "of the tear," and with "the cutting of the dykes." Among the Arabs the belief still prevails that the rising of the Nile proceeds from a divine tear. The night of the tear is the 11th Bauneh (in 1873 the 17th June) when the Nile

jections were disregarded, and now——Nemu, go over to the grave of Amenophis, and wait there for me—I wish to speak to your mother alone.”

Nemu bowed, and then went down the slope, disappointed, it is true, but sure of learning later what the two had discussed together.

When the little man had disappeared, Ani asked :

“Have you still a heart true to the old royal house, to which your parents were so faithfully attached?”

The old woman nodded.

“Then you will not refuse your help towards its restoration. You understand how necessary the priesthood is to me, and I have sworn not to make any attempt on Pentaur’s life; but, I repeat it, he stands in my way. I have my spies in the House of Seti, and I know through them what the sending of the poet to Chennu really means. For a time they will let him hew sandstone, and that will only improve his health, for he is as sturdy as a tree. In Chennu, as you know, besides the quarries there is the great college of priests, which is in close alliance with the temple of Seti. When the flood begins to rise, and they hold the great Nile-festival in Chennu, the priests there have the right of taking three of the criminals who are working in the quarries into their house as servants. Naturally they will, next year, choose Pentaur, set him at liberty—and I shall be laughed at.”

“Well considered!” said Hekt.

“I have taken counsel with myself, with Katuti, and even with Nemu,” continued Ani, “but all that

is at its lowest, and the second festival is fixed according to the level to which the waters have risen. The two Nile-feasts were solemnized at an interval of two months, as also are their modern successors.

they have suggested, though certainly practicable, was unadvisable, and at any rate must have led to conjectures which I must now avoid. What is your opinion?"

"Assa's race must be exterminated!" muttered the old woman hoarsely.

She gazed at the ground, reflecting.

"Let the boat be scuttled," she said at last, "and sink with the chained prisoners before it reaches Chennu."

"No—no; I thought of that myself, and Nemu too advised it," cried Ani. "That has been done a hundred times, and Ameni will regard me as a perjurer, for I have sworn not to attempt Pentaur's life."

"To be sure, thou hast sworn that, and men keep their word—to each other. Wait a moment, how would this do? Let the ship reach Chennu with the prisoners, but, by a secret order to the captain, pass the quarries in the night, and hasten on as fast as possible as far as Ethiopia. From Suan,* the prisoners may be conducted through the desert to the gold workings.** Four weeks or even eight may pass before it is known here what has happened. If Ameni attacks thee about it, thou wilt be very angry at this oversight, and canst swear by all the Gods of the heavens and of the abyss, that thou hast not attempted Pentaur's life. More weeks will pass in enquiries. Meanwhile do thy best, and Paaker do his, and thou art king. An oath is easily broken by a sceptre, and if thou wilt

* The modern Assuan at the first cataract.

** The frightful fate of Egyptian miners is vividly presented in a famous passage of Agatharchides of Knidos, in Diodorus 111, 12, 13 and 14. The Ethiopian gold-mines were re-discovered in 1832-3 by Bonomi and Linant Pasha, but they are now completely exhausted.

positively keep thy word leave Pentaur at the gold mines. None have yet returned from thence. My father's and my brother's bones have bleached there."

"But Ameni will never believe in the mistake," cried Ani, anxiously interrupting the witch.

"Then admit that thou gavest the order," exclaimed Hekt. "Explain that thou hadst learned what they proposed doing with Pentaur at Chennu, and that thy word indeed was kept, but that a criminal could not be left unpunished. They will make further enquiries, and if Assa's grandson is found still living thou wilt be justified. Follow my advice, if thou wilt prove thyself a good steward of thy house, and master of its inheritance."

"It will not do," said the Regent. "I need Ameni's support—not for to-day and to-morrow only. I will not become his blind tool; but he must believe that I am."

The old woman shrugged her shoulders, rose, went into her cave, and brought out a phial.

"Take this," she said. "Four drops of it in his wine infallibly destroys the drinker's senses; try the drink on a slave, and thou wilt see how effectual it is."

"What shall I do with it?" asked Ani.

"Justify thyself to Ameni," said the witch laughing. "Order the ship's captain to come to thee as soon as he returns; entertain him with wine—and when Ameni sees the distracted wretch, why should he not believe that in a fit of craziness he sailed past Chennu?"

"That is clever! that is splendid!" exclaimed Ani. "What is once remarkable never becomes common.

You were the greatest of singers—you are now the wisest of women—my lady Beki.”

“I am no longer Beki, I am Hekt,” said the old woman shortly.

“As you will! In truth, if I had ever heard Beki’s singing, I should be bound to still greater gratitude to her than I now am to Hekt,” said Ani smiling. “Still, I cannot quit the wisest woman in Thebes without asking her one serious question. Is it given to you to read the future? Have you means at your command whereby you can see whether the great stake—you know which I mean—shall be won or lost?”

Hekt looked at the ground, and said after reflecting a short time:

“I cannot decide with certainty, but thy affair stands well. Look at these two hawks with the chain on their feet. They take their food from no one but me. The one that is moulting, with closed, grey eyelids, is Rameses; the smart, smooth one, with shining eyes, is thyself. It comes to this—which of you lives the longest. So far, thou hast the advantage.”

Ani cast an evil glance at the king’s sick hawk; but Hekt said: “Both must be treated exactly alike. Fate will not be done violence to.”

“Feed them well,” exclaimed the Regent; he threw a purse into Hekt’s lap, and added, as he prepared to leave her: “If anything happens to either of the birds let me know at once by Nemu.”

Ani went down the hill, and walked towards the neighboring tomb of his father; but Hekt laughed as she looked after him, and muttered to herself:

“Now the fool will take care of me for the sake of his bird! That smiling, spiritless, indolent-minded

man would rule Egypt! Am I then so much wiser than other folks, or do none but fools come to consult Hekt? But Rameses chose Ani to represent him! perhaps because he thinks that those who are not particularly clever are not particularly dangerous. If that is what he thought, he was not wise, for no one usually is so self-confident and insolent as just such an idiot."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN hour later, Ani, in rich attire, left his father's tomb, and drove his brilliant chariot past the witch's cave, and the little cottage of Uarda's father.

Nemu squatted on the step, the dwarf's usual place. The little man looked down at the lately rebuilt hut, and ground his teeth, when, through an opening in the hedge, he saw the white robe of a man, who was sitting by Uarda.

The pretty child's visitor was prince Rameri, who had crossed the Nilé in the early morning, dressed as a young scribe of the treasury, to obtain news of Pentaur—and to stick a rose into Uarda's hair.

This purpose was, indeed, the more important of the two, for the other must, in point of time at any rate, be the second.

He found it necessary to excuse himself to his own conscience with a variety of cogent reasons. In the first place the rose, which lay carefully secured in a fold of his robe, ran great danger of fading if he first waited for his companions near the temple of Seti; next, a hasty return from thence to Thebes might prove necessary; and finally, it seemed to him not im-

possible that Bent-Anat might send a master of the ceremonies after him, and if that happened any delay might frustrate his purpose.

His heart beat loud and violently, not for love of the maiden, but because he felt he was doing wrong.

The spot that he must tread was unclean, and he had, for the first time, told a lie. He had given himself out to Uarda to be a noble youth of Bent-Anat's train, and, as one falsehood usually entails another, in answer to her questions he had given her false information as to his parents and his life.

Had evil more power over him in this unclean spot than in the House of Seti, and at his father's? It might very well be so, for all disturbance in nature and men was the work of Seth, and how wild was the storm in his breast! And yet! He wished nothing but good to come of it to Uarda. She was so fair and sweet—like some child of the Gods: and certainly the white maiden must have been stolen from some one, and could not possibly belong to the unclean people.

When the prince entered the court of the hut, Uarda was not to be seen, but he soon heard her voice singing out through the open door. She came out into the air, for the dog barked furiously at Rameri. When she saw the prince, she started, and said:

“You are here already again, and yet I warned you. My grandmother in there is the wife of a paraschites.”

“I am not come to visit her,” retorted the prince, “but you only; and you do not belong to them, of that I am convinced. No roses grow in the desert.”

“And yet I am my father's child,” said Uarda de-

cidedly, "and my poor dead grandfather's grandchild. Certainly I belong to them, and those that do not think me good enough for them may keep away."

With these words she turned to re-enter the house; but Rameri seized her hand, and held her back, saying—

"How cruel you are! I tried to save you, and came to see you before I thought that you might—and, indeed, you are quite unlike the people whom you call your relations. You must not misunderstand me; but it would be horrible to me to believe that you, who are so beautiful, and as white as a lily, have any part in the hideous curse. You charm every one, even my mistress, Bent-Anat, and it seems to me impossible—"

"That I should belong to the unclean!—say it out," said Uarda softly, and casting down her eyes.

Then she continued more excitedly: "But I tell you, the curse is unjust, for a better man never lived than my grandfather was."

Tears sprang from her eyes, and Rameri said: "I fully believe it; and it must be very difficult to continue good when every one despises and scorns one; I at least can be brought to no good by blame, though I can by praise. Certainly people are obliged to meet me and mine with respect."

"And us with contempt!" exclaimed Uarda. "But I will tell you something. If a man is sure that he is good, it is all the same to him whether he be despised or honored by other people. Nay—we may be prouder than you; for you great folks must often say to yourselves that you are worth less than men value you at, and we know that we are worth more."

"I have often thought that of you," exclaimed Ra-

meri, "and there is one who recognizes your worth, and that is I. Even if it were otherwise, I must always—always think of you."

"I have thought of you too," said Uarda. "Just now, when I was sitting with my sick grandmother, it passed through my mind how nice it would be if I had a brother just like you. Do you know what I should do if you were my brother?"

"Well?"

"I should buy you a chariot and horse, and you should go away to the king's war."

"Are you so rich?" asked Rameri smiling.

"Oh yes!" answered Uarda. "To be sure, I have not been rich for more than an hour. Can you read?"

"Yes."

"Only think, when I was ill they sent a doctor to me from the House of Seti. He was very clever, but a strange man. He often looked into my eyes like a drunken man, and he stammered when he spoke."

"Is his name Nebsecht?" asked the prince.

"Yes, Nebsecht. He planned strange things with grandfather, and after Pentaur and you had saved us in the frightful attack upon us he interceded for us. Since then he has not come again, for I was already much better. Now to-day, about two hours ago, the dog barked, and an old man, a stranger, came up to me, and said he was Nebsecht's brother, and had a great deal of money in his charge for me. He gave me a ring too, and said that he would pay the money to him, who took the ring to him from me. Then he read this letter to me."

Rameri took the letter and read.

"Nebsecht to the fair Uarda."

“Nebsecht greets Uarda, and informs her that he owed her grandfather in Osiris, Pinem—whose body the kolchytes are embalming like that of a noble—a sum of a thousand gold rings. These he has entrusted to his brother Teta to hold ready for her at any moment. She may trust Teta entirely, for he is honest, and ask him for money whenever she needs it. It would be best that she should ask Teta to take care of the money for her, and to buy her a house and field; then she could remove into it, and live in it free from care with her grandmother. She may wait a year, and then she may choose a husband. Nebsecht loves Uarda much. If at the end of thirteen months he has not been to see her, she had better marry whom she will; but not before she has shown the jewel left her by her mother to the king’s interpreter.”

“How strange!” exclaimed Rameri. “Who would have given the singular physician, who always wore such dirty clothes, credit for such generosity? But what is this jewel that you have?”

Uarda opened her shirt, and showed the prince the sparkling ornament.

“Those are diamonds—it is very valuable!” cried the prince; “and there in the middle on the onyx there are sharply engraved signs. I cannot read them, but I will show them to the interpreter. Did your mother wear that?”

“My father found it on her when she died,” said Uarda. “She came to Egypt as a prisoner of war, and was as white as I am, but dumb, so she could not tell us the name of her home.”

“She belonged to some great house among the foreigners, and the children inherit from the mother,”

cried the prince joyfully. "You are a princess, Uarda! Oh! how glad I am, and how much I love you!"

The girl smiled and said, "Now you will not be afraid to touch the daughter of the unclean."

"You are cruel," replied the prince. "Shall I tell you what I determined on yesterday,—what would not let me sleep last night,—and for what I came here to-day?"

"Well?"

Rameri took a most beautiful white rose out of his robe and said—

"It is very childish, but I thought how it would be if I might put this flower with my own hands into your shining hair. May I?"

"It is a splendid rose! I never saw such a fine one."

"It is for my haughty princess. Do pray let me dress your hair! It is like silk from Tyre, like a swan's breast, like golden star-beams—there, it is fixed safely! Nay, leave it so. If the seven Hathors could see you, they would be jealous, for you are fairer than all of them."

"How you flatter!" said Uarda, shyly blushing, and looking into his sparkling eyes.

"Uarda," said the prince, pressing her hand to his heart. "I have now but one wish. Feel how my heart hammers and beats. I believe it will never rest again till you—yes, Uarda—till you let me give you one, only one, kiss."

The girl drew back.

"Now," she said seriously. "Now I see what you want. Old Hekt knows men, and she warned me."

"Who is Hekt, and what can she know of me?"

“She told me that the time would come when a man would try to make friends with me. He would look into my eyes, and if mine met his, then he would ask to kiss me. But I must refuse him, because if I liked him to kiss me he would seize my soul, and take it from me, and I must wander, like the restless ghosts, which the abyss rejects, and the storm whirls before it, and the sea will not cover, and the sky will not receive, soulless to the end of my days. Go away—for I cannot refuse you the kiss, and yet I would not wander restless, and without a soul!”

“Is the old woman who told you that a good woman?” asked Rameri.

Uarda shook her head.

“She cannot be good,” cried the prince. “For she has spoken a falsehood. I will not seize your soul; I will give you mine to be yours, and you shall give me yours to be mine, and so we shall neither of us be poorer—but both richer!”

“I should like to believe it,” said Uarda thoughtfully, “and I have thought the same kind of thing. When I was strong, I often had to go late in the evening to fetch water from the landing-place where the great water-wheel stands. Thousands of drops fall from the earthenware pails as it turns, and in each you can see the reflection of a moon, yet there is only one in the sky. Then I thought to myself, so it must be with the love in our hearts. We have but one heart, and yet we pour it out into other hearts without its losing in strength or in warmth. I thought of my grandmother, of my father, of little Scherau, of the Gods, and of Pentaur. Now I should like to give you a part of it too.”

“Only a part?” asked Rameri.

“Well, the whole will be reflected in you, you know,” said Uarda, “as the whole moon is reflected in each drop.”

“It shall!” cried the prince, clasping the trembling girl in his arms, and the two young souls were united in their first kiss.

“Now do go!” Uarda entreated.

“Let me stay a little while,” said Rameri. “Sit down here by me on the bench in front of the house. The hedge shelters us, and besides this valley is now deserted, and there are no passers by.”

“We are doing what is not right,” said Uarda. “If it were right we should not want to hide ourselves.”

“Do you call that wrong which the priests perform in the Holy of Holies?” asked the prince. “And yet it is concealed from all eyes.”

“How you can argue!” laughed Uarda. “That shows you can write, and are one of his disciples.”

“His, his!” exclaimed Rameri. “You mean Pentaur. He was always the dearest to me of all my teachers, but it vexes me when you speak of him as if he were more to you than I and every one else. The poet, you said, was one of the drops in which the moon of your soul finds a reflection—and I will not divide it with many.”

“How you are talking!” said Uarda. “Do you not honor your father, and the Gods? I love no one else as I do you—and what I felt when you kissed me—that was not like moon-light, but like this hot mid-day sun. When I thought of you I had no peace. I will confess to you now, that twenty times I looked out of

the door, and asked whether my preserver—the kind, curly-headed boy—would really come again, or whether he despised a poor girl like me? You came, and I am so happy, and I could enjoy myself with you to my heart's content. Be kind again—or I will pull your hair!”

“You!” cried Rameri. “You cannot hurt with your little hands, though you can with your tongue. Pentaur is much wiser and better than I, you owe much to him, and nevertheless I—”

“Let that rest,” interrupted the girl, growing grave. “He is not a man like other men. If he asked to kiss me, I should crumble into dust, as ashes dried in the sun crumble if you touch them with a finger, and I should be as much afraid of his lips as of a lion's. Though you may laugh at it, I shall always believe that he is one of the Immortals. His own father told me that a great wonder was shown to him the very day after his birth. Old Hekt has often sent me to the gardener with a message to enquire after his son, and though the man is rough he is kind. At first he was not friendly, but when he saw how much I liked his flowers he grew fond of me, and set me to work to tie wreaths and bunches, and to carry them to his customers. As we sat together, laying the flowers side by side, he constantly told me something about his son, and his beauty and goodness and wisdom. When he was quite a little boy he could write poems, and he learned to read before any one had shown him how. The high-priest Ameni heard of it and took him to the House of Seti, and there he improved, to the astonishment of the gardener; not long ago I went through the garden with the old man. He talked of Pentaur as usual, and then stood

still before a noble shrub with broad leaves, and said, 'My son is like this plant, which has grown up close to me, and I know not how. I laid the seed in the soil, with others that I bought over there in Thebes; no one knows where it came from, and yet it is my own. It certainly is not a native of Egypt; and is not Pentaur as high above me and his mother and his brothers, as this shrub is above the other flowers? We are all small and bony, and he is tall and slim; our skin is dark and his is rosy; our speech is hoarse, his as sweet as a song. I believe he is a child of the Gods that the Immortals have laid in my homely house. Who knows their decrees?' And then I often saw Pentaur at the festivals, and asked myself which of the other priests of the temple came near him in height and dignity? I took him for a God, and when I saw him who saved my life overcome a whole mob with superhuman strength must I not regard him as a superior Being? I look up to him as to one of them; but I could never look in his eyes as I do in yours. It would not make my blood flow faster, it would freeze it in my veins. How can I say what I mean! my soul looks straight out, and it finds you; but to find him it must look up to the heavens. You are a fresh rose-garland with which I crown myself—he is a sacred perseae-tree* before which I bow."

Rameri listened to her in silence, and then said, "I am still young, and have done nothing yet, but the time shall come in which you shall look up to me too as to a tree, not perhaps a sacred tree, but as to a sycamore under whose shade we love to rest. I am no longer gay; I will leave you for I have a serious duty

* Persea, probably *Balanites Ægyptiaca*.

to fulfil. Pentaur is a complete man, and I will be one too. But you shall be the rose-garland to grace me. Men who can be compared to flowers disgust me!"

The prince rose, and offered Uarda his hand.

"You have a strong hand," said the girl. "You will be a noble man, and work for good and great ends; only look, my fingers are quite red with being held so tightly. But they too are not quite useless. They have never done anything very hard certainly, but what they tend flourishes, and grandmother says they are 'lucky.' Look at the lovely lilies and the pomegranate bush in that corner. Grandfather brought the earth here from the Nile, Pentaur's father gave me the seeds, and each little plant that ventured to show a green shoot through the soil I sheltered and nursed and watered, though I had to fetch the water in my little pitcher, till it was vigorous, and thanked me with flowers. Take this pomegranate flower. It is the first my tree has borne; and it is very strange, when the bud first began to lengthen and swell my grandmother said, 'Now your heart will soon begin to bud and love.' I know now what she meant, and both the first flowers belong to you—the red one here off the tree, and the other, which you cannot see, but which glows as brightly as this does."

Rameri pressed the scarlet blossom to his lips, and stretched out his hand toward Uarda; but she shrank back, for a little figure slipped through an opening in the hedge.

It was Scherau.

His pretty little face glowed with his quick run, and his breath was gone. For a few minutes he tried in vain for words, and looked anxiously at the prince.

Uarda saw that something unusual agitated him; she spoke to him kindly, saying that if he wished to speak to her alone he need not be afraid of Rameri, for he was her best friend.

“But it does not concern you and me,” replied the child, “but the good, holy father Pentaur, who was so kind to me, and who saved your life.”

“I am a great friend of Pentaur,” said the prince. “Is it not true, Uarda? He may speak with confidence before me.”

“I may?” said Scherau, “that is well. I have slipped away; Hekt may come back at any moment, and if she sees that I have taken myself off I shall get a beating and nothing to eat.”

“Who is this horrible Hekt?” asked Rameri indignantly.

“That Uarda can tell you by and by,” said the little one hurriedly. “Now only listen. She laid me on my board in the cave, and threw a sack over me, and first came Nemu, and then another man, whom she spoke to as ‘Steward.’ She talked to him a long time. At first I did not listen, but then I caught the name of Pentaur, and I got my head out, and now I understand it all. The steward declared that the good Pentaur was wicked, and stood in his way, and he said that Ameni was going to send him to the quarries at Chennu, but that that was much too small a punishment. Then Hekt advised him to give a secret commission to the captain of the ship to go beyond Chennu, to the frightful mountain-mines, of which she has often told me, for her father and her brother were tormented to death there.”

“None ever return from thence,” said the prince.
“But go on.”

“What came next, I only half understood, but they spoke of some drink that makes people mad. Oh! what I see and hear!—I would lie contentedly on my board all my life long, but all else is too horrible—I wish that I were dead.”

And the child began to cry bitterly.

Uarda, whose cheeks had turned pale, patted him affectionately; but Rameri exclaimed:

“It is frightful! unheard of! But who was the steward? did you not hear his name? Collect yourself, little man, and stop crying. It is a case of life and death. Who was the scoundrel? Did she not name him? Try to remember.”

Scherau bit his red lips, and tried for composure. His tears ceased, and suddenly he exclaimed, as he put his hand into the breast of his ragged little garment: “Stay, perhaps you will know him again—I made him!”

“You did what?” asked the prince.

“I made him,” repeated the little artist, and he carefully brought out an object wrapped up in a scrap of rag.

“I could just see his head quite clearly from one side all the time he was speaking, and my clay lay by me. I always must model something when my mind is excited, and this time I quickly made his face, and as the image was successful, I kept it about me to show to the master* when Hekt was out.”

While he spoke he had carefully unwrapped the figure with trembling fingers, and had given it to Uarda.

* The portraits on the monuments, especially the profiles in bas-relief, are modelled with remarkable exactness. The sketches in an unfinished hall in the tomb of Seti I., at Biban el Muluk arouse the warmest admiration of our modern artists. A beautiful collection of the busts of the Pharaohs may be found in Lepsius' “Denkmälern aus Ägypten und Äthiopien.”

“Ani!” cried the prince. “He, and no other! Who could have thought it! What spite has he against Pentaur? What is the priest to him?”

For a moment he reflected, then he struck his hand against his forehead.

“Fool that I am!” he exclaimed vehemently. “Child that I am! of course, of course; I see it all. Ani asked for Bent-Anat’s hand, and she—now that I love you, Uarda, I understand what ails her. Away with deceit! I will tell you no more lies, Uarda. I am no page of honor to Bent-Anat; I am her brother, and king Rameses’ own son. Do not cover your face with your hands, Uarda, for if I had not seen your mother’s jewel, and if I were not only a prince, but Horus himself, the son of Isis, I must have loved you, and would not have given you up. But now other things have to be done besides lingering with you; now I will show you that I am a man, now that Pentaur is to be saved. Farewell, Uarda, and think of me!”

He would have hurried off, but Scherau held him by the robe, and said timidly: Thou sayst thou art Rameses’ son. Hekt spoke of him too. She compared him to our moulting hawk.”

“She shall soon feel the talons of the royal eagle,” cried Rameri. “Once more, farewell!”

He gave Uarda his hand, she pressed it passionately to her lips, but he drew it away, kissed her forehead, and was gone.

> The maiden looked after him pale and speechless.

She saw another man hastening towards her, and recognizing him as her father, she went quickly to meet him. The soldier had come to take leave of her, he had to escort some prisoners.

“To Chennu?” asked Uarda.

“No, to the north,” replied the man.

His daughter now related what she had heard, and asked whether he could help the priest, who had saved her.

“If I had money, if I had money!” muttered the soldier to himself.

“We have some,” cried Uarda; she told him of Nebsecht’s gift,* and said: “Take me over the Nile, and in two hours you will have enough to make a man rich. But no; I cannot leave my sick grandmother. You yourself take the ring, and remember that Pentaur is being punished for having dared to protect us.”

“I remember it,” said the soldier. “I have but one life, but I will willingly give it to save his. I cannot devise schemes, but I know something, and if it succeeds he need not go to the gold-mines. I will put the wine-flask aside; give me a drink of water, for the next few hours I must keep a sober head.”

“There is the water, and I will pour in a mouthful of wine. Will you come back and bring me news?”

“That will not do, for we set sail at midnight, but if some one returns to you with the ring you will know that what I propose has succeeded.”

Uarda went into the hut, her father followed her; he took leave of his sick mother and of his daughter. When they went out of doors again, he said: “You have to live on the princess’s gift till I return, and I

* It may be observed that among the Egyptians women were qualified to own and dispose of property. For example a papyrus (vii) in the Louvre contains an agreement between Asklepias (called Senimuthis), the daughter or maid-servant of a corpse-dresser of Thebes, who is the debtor, and Arsiesis, the creditor, the son of a kolchytes; both therefore are of the same rank as Uarda.

do not want half of the physician's present. But where is your pomegranate blossom?"

"I have picked it and preserved it in a safe place."

"Strange things are women!" muttered the bearded man; he tenderly kissed his child's forehead, and returned to the Nile down the road by which he had come.

The prince meanwhile had hurried on, and enquired in the harbor of the Necropolis where the vessel destined for Chennu was lying—for the ships loaded with prisoners were accustomed to sail from this side of the river, starting at night. Then he was ferried over the river, and hastened to Bent-Anat. He found her and Nefert in unusual excitement, for the faithful chamberlain had learned—through some friends of the king in Ani's suite—that the Regent had kept back all the letters intended for Syria, and among them those of the royal family.

A lord in waiting, who was devoted to the king, had been encouraged by the chamberlain to communicate to Bent-Anat other things, which hardly allowed any doubts as to the ambitious projects of her uncle; she was also exhorted to be on her guard with Nefert, whose mother was the confidential adviser of the Regent.

Bent-Anat smiled at this warning, and sent at once a message to Ani to inform him that she was ready to undertake the pilgrimage to the "Emerald-Hathor," and to be purified in the sanctuary of that Goddess.

She purposed sending a message to her father from thence, and if he permitted it, joining him at the camp.

She imparted this plan to her friend, and Nefert thought any road the best that would take her to her husband.

Rameri was soon initiated into all this, and in return he told them all he had learned, and let Bent-Anat guess that he had read her secret.

So dignified, so grave, were the conduct and the speech of the boy who had so lately been an overbearing mad-cap, that Bent-Anat thought to herself that the danger of their house had suddenly ripened a boy into a man.

She had in fact no objection to raise to his arrangements. He proposed to travel after sunset, with a few faithful servants on swift horses as far as Keft,* and from thence ride fast across the desert to the Red Sea, where they could take a Phœnician ship, and sail to Aila.** From thence they would cross the peninsula of Sinai, and strive to reach the Egyptian army by forced marches, and make the king acquainted with Ani's criminal attempts.

To Bent-Anat was given the task of rescuing Pentaur, with the help of the faithful chamberlain.

Money was fortunately not wanting, as the high treasurer was on their side. All depended on their inducing the captain to stop at Chennu; the poet's fate would there, at the worst, be endurable. At the same time, a trustworthy messenger was to be sent to the governor of Chennu, commanding him in the name of the king to detain every ship that might pass the narrows of Chennu by night, and to prevent any of the

* Koptos, now Qeft on the Nile.

** Now Aqaba.

prisoners that had been condemned to the quarries from being smuggled on to Ethiopia.

Rameri took leave of the two women, and he succeeded in leaving Thebes unobserved.

Bent-Anat knelt in prayer before the images of her mother in Osiris, of Hathor, and of the guardian Gods of her house, till the chamberlain returned, and told her that he had persuaded the captain of the ship to stop at Chennu, and to conceal from Ani that he had betrayed his charge.

The princess breathed more freely, for she had come to a resolution that if the chamberlain had failed in his mission, she would cross over to the Necropolis, forbid the departure of the vessel, and in the last extremity rouse the people, who were devoted to her, against Ani.

The following morning the Lady Katuti craved permission of the princess to see her daughter. Bent-Anat did not show herself to the widow, whose efforts failed to keep her daughter from accompanying the princess on her journey, or to induce her to return home. Angry and uneasy, the indignant mother hastened to Ani, and implored him to keep Nefert at home by force; but the Regent wished to avoid attracting attention, and to let Bent-Anat set out with a feeling of complete security.

“Do not be uneasy,” he said. “I will give the ladies a trustworthy escort, who will keep them at the Sanctuary of the ‘Emerald-Hathor’ till all is settled. There you can deliver Nefert to Paaker, if you still like to have him for a son-in-law after hearing several things that I have learned. As for me, in the end I may in-

duce my haughty niece to look up instead of down ; I may be her second love, though for that matter she certainly is not my first."

On the following day the princess set out.

Ani took leave of her with kindly formality, which she returned with coolness. The priesthood of the temple of Amon, with old Bek en Chunsu at their head, escorted her to the harbor. The people on the banks shouted Bent-Anat's name with a thousand blessings, but many insulting words were to be heard also.

The pilgrim's Nile-boat was followed by two others, full of soldiers, who accompanied the ladies "to protect them."

The south-wind filled the sails, and carried the little procession swiftly down the stream. The princess looked now towards the palace of her fathers, now towards the tombs and temples of the Necropolis. At last even the colossus of Amenophis disappeared, and the last houses of Thebes. The brave maiden sighed deeply, and tears rolled down her cheeks. She felt as if she were flying after a lost battle, and yet not wholly discouraged, but hoping for future victory. As she turned to go to the cabin, a veiled girl stepped up to her, took the veil from her face, and said :

"Pardon me, princess ; I am Uarda, whom thou didst run over, and to whom thou hast since been so good. My grandmother is dead, and I am quite alone. I slipped in among thy maid-servants, for I wish to follow thee, and to obey all thy commands. Only do not send me away."

"Stay, dear child," said the princess, laying her hand on her hair.

Then, struck by its wonderful beauty, she remembered her brother, and his wish to place a rose in Uarda's shining tresses.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Two months had past since Bent-Anat's departure from Thebes, and the imprisonment of Pentaur.

Ant-Baba is the name of the valley, in the western half of the peninsula of Sinai,* through which a long procession of human beings, and of beasts of burden, wended their way.

It was winter, and yet the mid-day sun sent down glowing rays, which were reflected from the naked rocks. In front of the caravan marched a company of Libyan soldiers, and another brought up the rear. Each man was armed with a dagger and battle-axe, a shield and a lance, and was ready to use his weapons; for those whom they were escorting were prisoners from the emerald-mines, who had been convoyed to the shores of the Red Sea** to carry thither the produce of the mines, and had received, as a return-load, provisions which had arrived from Egypt, and which were to be carried to the storehouses of the mountain-mines. Bent and panting, they made their way along. Each prisoner had a copper chain riveted round his ankles, and torn rags hanging round their loins, were the only clothing of these unhappy beings, who, gasping under the weight of the sacks they had to carry,

* I have described in detail the peninsula of Sinai, its history, and the sacred places on it, in my book "Durch Gosen zum Sinai," published in 1872. In depicting this scenery in the present romance, I have endeavored to reproduce the reality as closely as possible. He who has wandered through this wonderful mountain wilderness can never forget it. The valley now called "Baba," bore the same name in the time of the Pharaohs.

** The old road leading from the mines to the sea seems to have ended at the bay, now called Abu Zetimeh, near the cape of the same name.

kept their staring eyes fixed on the ground. If one of them threatened to sink altogether under his burden, he was refreshed by the whip of one of the horsemen, who accompanied the caravan. Many a one found it hard to choose whether he could best endure the suffering of mere endurance, or the torture of the lash.

No one spoke a word, neither the prisoners nor their guards; and even those who were flogged did not cry out, for their powers were exhausted, and in the souls of their drivers there was no more impulse of pity than there was a green herb on the rocks by the way. This melancholy procession moved silently onwards, like a procession of phantoms, and the ear was only made aware of it when now and then a low groan broke from one of the victims.

The sandy path, trodden by their naked feet, gave no sound, the mountains seemed to withhold their shade, the light of day was a torment—every thing far and near seemed inimical to the living. Not a plant, not a creeping thing, showed itself against the weird forms of the barren grey and brown rocks, and no soaring bird tempted the oppressed wretches to raise their eyes to heaven.

In the noontide heat of the previous day they had started with their loads from the harbor-creek. For two hours they had followed the shore of the glistening, blue-green sea,* then they had climbed a rocky shoulder and crossed a small plateau. They had paused for their night's rest in the gorge which led to the mines; the guides and soldiers lighted fires, grouped themselves round them, and lay down to sleep under the shelter of

* The Red Sea—in Hebrew and Coptic the reedy sea—is of a lovely blue-green color. According to the Ancients it was named red either from its red banks or from the Erythræans, who were called the red people. On an early inscription it is called "the water of the Red country." See "Durch Gosen zum Sinai."

a cleft in the rocks; the prisoners stretched themselves on the earth in the middle of the valley without any shelter, and shivering with the cold which suddenly succeeded the glowing heat of the day. The benumbed wretches now looked forward to the crushing misery of the morning's labor as eagerly as, a few hours since, they had longed for the night, and for rest.

Lentil-broth and hard bread in abundance, but a very small quantity of water was given to them before they started; then they set out through the gorge, which grew hotter and hotter, and through ravines where they could pass only one by one. Every now and then it seemed as if the path came to an end, but each time it found an outlet, and went on—as endless as the torment of the wayfarers.

Mighty walls of rock composed the view, looking as if they were formed of angular masses of hewn stone piled up in rows; and of all the miners one, and one only, had eyes for these curious structures of the ever-various hand of Nature.

This one had broader shoulders than his companions, and his burden weighed on him comparatively lightly.

“In this solitude,” thought he, “which repels man, and forbids his passing his life here, the Chnemu,* the laborers who form the world, have spared themselves the trouble of filling up the seams, and rounding off the corners. How is it that Man should have dedicated this hideous land—in which even the human heart seems to be hardened against all pity—to the merciful Hathor?*** Perhaps because it so sorely stands in need

* See note 3, page 113—Vol. I.

** The monuments at the mines Wadi Maghara and Sarbut el Chadem, on the peninsula of Sinai, show that Hathor was held in greater reverence than any of the other Gods.

of the joy and peace which the loving goddess alone can bestow."

"Keep the line, Huni!" shouted a driver.

The man thus addressed, closed up to the next man, the panting leech Nebsecht. We know the other stronger prisoner. It is Pentaur, who had been entered as Huni on the lists of mine-laborers, and was called by that name. The file moved on; at every step the ascent grew more rugged. Red and black fragments of stone, broken as small as if by the hand of man, lay in great heaps, or strewed the path which led up the almost perpendicular cliff by imperceptible degrees. Here another gorge opened before them, and this time there seemed to be no outlet.

"Load the asses less!" cried the captain of the escort to the prisoners. Then he turned to the soldiers, and ordered them, when the beasts were eased, to put the extra burthens on the men. Putting forth their utmost strength, the overloaded men labored up the steep and hardly distinguishable mountain path.*

The man in front of Pentaur, a lean old man, when half way up the hill-side, fell in a heap under his load, and a driver, who in a narrow defile could not reach the bearers, threw a stone at him to urge him to a renewed effort.

The old man cried out at the blow, and at the cry—the paraschites stricken down with stones—his own struggle with the mob—and the appearance of Bent-Anat flashed into Pentaur's memory. Pity and a sense of his own healthy vigor prompted him to energy; he hastily snatched the sack from the shoulders of the old man, threw it over his own, helped up the fallen

* Now called Naqb el Buddrah. Major Macdonald, the Englishman, who reopened the old turquoise mines, restored the ancient bath.

wretch, and finally men and beasts succeeded in mounting the rocky wall.

The pulses throbbed in Pentaur's temples, and he shuddered with horror, as he looked down from the height of the pass into the abyss below, and round upon the countless pinnacles and peaks, cliffs and precipices, in many-colored rocks — white and grey, sulphurous yellow, blood-red and ominous black. He recalled the sacred lake of Muth in Thebes,* round which sat a hundred statues of the lion-headed Goddess in black basalt, each on a pedestal; and the rocky peaks, which surrounded the valley at his feet, seemed to put on a semblance of life and to move and open their yawning jaws; through the wild rush of blood in his ears he fancied he heard them roar, and the load beyond his strength which he carried gave him a sensation as though their clutch was on his breast.

Nevertheless he reached the goal.

The other prisoners flung their loads from their shoulders, and threw themselves down to rest. Mechanically he did the same: his pulses beat more calmly, by degrees the visions faded from his senses, he saw and heard once more, and his brain recovered its balance. The old man and Nebsecht were lying beside him.

His grey-haired companion rubbed the swollen veins in his neck, and called down all the blessings of the Gods upon his head; but the captain of the caravan cut him short, exclaiming:

“You have strength for three, Huni; farther on, we will load you more heavily.”

“How much the kindly Gods care for our prayers

* An admirable representation of it by Carl Werner, may be found among his Nile pictures, published by Seitz.

for the blessing of others!" exclaimed Nebsecht. "How well they know how to reward a good action!"

"I am rewarded enough," said Pentaur, looking kindly at the old man. "But you, you everlasting scoffer—you look pale. How do you feel?"

"As if I were one of those donkeys there," replied the naturalist. "My knees shake like theirs, and I think and I wish neither more nor less than they do; that is to say—I would we were in our stalls."

"If you can think," said Pentaur smiling, "you are not so very bad."

"I had a good thought just now, when you were staring up into the sky. The intellect, say the priestly sages, is a vivifying breath of the eternal spirit, and our soul is the mould or core for the mass of matter which we call a human being. I sought the spirit at first in the heart, then in the brain; but now I know that it resides in the arms and legs, for when I have strained them I find thought is impossible. I am too tired to enter on further evidence, but for the future I shall treat my legs with the utmost consideration."

"Quarrelling again you two? On again, men!" cried the driver.

The weary wretches rose slowly, the beasts were loaded, and on went the pitiable procession, so as to reach the mines before sunset.

The destination of the travellers was a wide valley, closed in by two high and rocky mountain-slopes; it was called Ta Mafka by the Egyptians, Dophka by the Hebrews. The southern cliff-wall consisted of dark granite, the northern of red sandstone; in a distant branch of the valley* lay the mines in which copper was found. In

* Discovered by Palmer and Wilson, in Wadi Umm Themaim. I gladly call attention to the interesting book "The Desert of the Exodus etc.," by A. M. Palmer. Cambridge, 1871.

the midst of the valley rose a hill,* surrounded by a wall, and crowned with small stone houses, for the guard, the officers, and the overseers.** According to the old regulations, they were without roofs, but as many deaths and much sickness had occurred among the workmen in consequence of the cold nights, they had been slightly sheltered with palm-branches brought from the oasis of the Amalekites, at no great distance.

On the uttermost peak of the hill, where it was most exposed to the wind, were the smelting furnaces, and a manufactory where a peculiar green glass was prepared, which was brought into the market under the name of Mafkat, that is to say, emerald. The genuine precious stone was found farther to the south, on the western shore of the Red Sea, and was highly prized in Egypt.

Our friends had already for more than a month belonged to the mining-community of the Mafkat valley, and Pentaur had never learned how it was that he had been brought hither with his companion Nebsecht, instead of going to the sandstone quarries of Chennu.

That Uarda's father had effected this change was beyond a doubt, and the poet trusted the rough but honest soldier who still kept near him, and gave him credit for the best intentions, although he had only spoken to him once since their departure from Thebes.

That was the first night, when he had come up to Pentaur, and whispered: "I am looking after you. You will find the physician Nebsecht here; but treat each other as enemies rather than as friends, if you do not wish to be parted."

Pentaur had communicated the soldier's advice to Nebsecht, and he had followed it in his own way.

* Now called Wadi Maghara.

** Ruins of these houses still remain.

It afforded him a secret pleasure to see how Pentaur's life contradicted the belief in a just and beneficent ordering of the destinies of men ; and the more he and the poet were oppressed, the more bitter was the irony, often amounting to extravagance, with which the mocking sceptic attacked him.

He loved Pentaur, for the poet had in his keeping the key which alone could give admission to the beautiful world which lay locked up in his own soul ; but yet it was easy to him, if he thought they were observed, to play his part, and to overwhelm Pentaur with words which, to the drivers, were devoid of meaning, and which made them laugh by the strange blundering fashion in which he stammered them out.

“ A belabored husk of the divine self-consciousness.”
“ An advocate of righteousness hit on the mouth.”
“ A juggler who makes as much of this worst of all possible worlds as if it were the best.” “ An admirer of the lovely color of his blue bruises.” These and other terms of invective, intelligible only to himself and his butt, he could always pour out in new combinations, exciting Pentaur to sharp and often witty rejoinders, equally unintelligible to the uninitiated.

Frequently their sparring took the form of a serious discussion, which served a double purpose ; first their minds, accustomed to serious thought, found exercise in spite of the murderous pressure of the burden of forced labor ; and secondly, they were supposed really to be enemies. They slept in the same court-yard, and contrived, now and then, to exchange a few words in secret ; but by day Nebsecht worked in the turquoise-diggings, and Pentaur in the mines, for the careful chipping out of the precious stones from their stony matrix was the work

best suited to the slight physician, while Pentaur's giant-strength was fitted for hewing the ore out of the hard rock. The drivers often looked in surprise at his powerful strokes, as he flung his pick against the stone.

The stupendous images that in such moments of wild energy rose before the poet's soul, the fearful or enchanting tones that rang in his spirit's ear—none could guess at.

Usually his excited fancy showed him the form of Bent-Anat, surrounded by a host of men—and these he seemed to fell to the earth, one by one, as he hewed the rock. Often in the middle of his work he would stop, throw down his pick-axe, and spread out his arms—but only to drop them with a deep groan, and wipe the sweat from his brow:

The overseers did not know what to think of this powerful youth, who often was as gentle as a child, and then seemed possessed of that demon to which so many of the convicts fell victims.* He had indeed become a riddle to himself; for how was it that he—the gardener's son, brought up in the peaceful temple of Seti—ever since that night by the house of the paraschites had had such a perpetual craving for conflict and struggle?

The weary gangs were gone to rest; a bright fire still blazed in front of the house of the superintendent of the mines, and round it squatted in a circle the overseers and the subalterns of the troops.

“Put the wine-jar round again,” said the captain, “for we must hold grave council. Yesterday I had orders from the Regent to send half the guard to Pelusium. He requires soldiers, but we are so few in number that if the

* The terrible fate of the Egyptian miners is described in detail in a famous passage of Agatharchides of Knidos, which is found in Diodorus III. 12, 13 and 14. True, the passage does not refer to the mines here mentioned but the Ethiopian gold mines, rediscovered by Linant-Pacha and Bonomi in 1832 and 1833, between the Nile and the Red Sea. The gold strata in the quartz rocks of the Bischari district are now completely exhausted.

convicts knew it they might make short work of us, even without arms. There are stones enough hereabouts, and by day they have their hammer and chisel.* Things are worst among the Hebrews in the copper-mines; they are a refractory crew that must be held tight. You know me well, fear is unknown to me—but I feel great anxiety. The last fuel is now burning in this fire, and the smelting furnaces and the glass-foundry must not stand idle. Tomorrow we must send men to Raphidim** to obtain charcoal from the Amalekites. They owe us a hundred loads still.*** Load the prisoners with some copper, to make them tired and the natives civil. What can we do to procure what we want, and yet not to weaken the forces here too much?"

Various opinions were given, and at last it was settled that a small division, guarded by a few soldiers, should be sent out every day to supply only the daily need for charcoal.

It was suggested that the most dangerous of the convicts should be fettered together in pairs to perform their duties.

The superintendent was of opinion that two strong men fettered together would be more to be feared if only they acted in concert.

'Then chain a strong one to a weak one,' said the chief accountant of the mines, whom the Egyptians called the 'scribe of the metals.' "And fetter those together who are enemies."

* The chisels were in the shape of swallow-tails.

** The oasis at the foot of Horeb, where the Jews under Joshua's command conquered the Amalekites, while Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms. Exodus 17, 8.

*** The Bedouins on the peninsula of Sinai at the present day make charcoal from the wood of the Sejal tree (*Acacia tortilis* Hayne) and bring it to the Cairo market.

“The colossal Huni, for instance, to that puny sparrow, the stuttering Nebsecht,” said a subaltern.

“I was thinking of that very couple,” said the accountant laughing.

Three other couples were selected, at first with some laughter, but finally with serious consideration, and Uarda's father was sent with the drivers as an escort.

On the following morning Pentaur and Nebsecht were fettered together with a copper chain, and when the sun was at its height four pairs of prisoners, heavily loaded with copper, set out for the Oasis of the Amalekites, accompanied by six soldiers and the son of the paraschites, to fetch fuel for the smelting furnaces.

They rested near the town of Alus, and then went forward again between bare walls of greyish-green and red porphyry. These cliffs rose higher and higher, but from time to time, above the lower range, they could see the rugged summit of some giant of the range, though, bowed under their heavy loads, they paid small heed to it.

The sun was near setting when they reached the little sanctuary of the ‘Emerald-Hathor.’

A few grey and black birds here flew towards them, and Pentaur gazed at them with delight.

How long he had missed the sight of a bird, and the sound of their chirp and song! Nebsecht said: “There are some birds—we must be near water.”

And there stood the first palm-tree!

Now the murmur of the brook was perceptible, and its tiny sound touched the thirsty souls of the travellers as rain falls on dry grass.

On the left bank of the stream an encampment of Egyptian soldiers formed a large semicircle, enclosing three large tents made of costly material striped with

blue and white, and woven with gold thread. Nothing was to be seen of the inhabitants of these tents, but when the prisoners had passed them, and the drivers were exchanging greetings with the out-posts, a girl, in the long robe of an Egyptian, came towards them, and looked at them.

Pentaur started as if he had seen a ghost; but Nebsecht gave expression to his astonishment in a loud cry.

At the same instant a driver laid his whip across their shoulders, and cried laughing:

“You may hit each other as hard as you like with words, but not with your hands.”

Then he turned to his companions, and said: “Did you see the pretty girl there, in front of the tent?”

“It is nothing to us!” answered the man he addressed. “She belongs to the princess’s train. She has been three weeks here on a visit to the holy shrine of Hathor.”

“She must have committed some heavy sin,” replied the other. “If she were one of us, she would have been set to sift sand in the diggings, or grind colors, and not be living here in a gilt tent. Where is our red-beard?”

Uarda’s father had lingered a little behind the party, for the girl had signed to him, and exchanged a few words with him.

“Have you still an eye for the fair ones?” asked the youngest of the drivers when he rejoined the gang.

“She is a waiting maid of the princess,” replied the soldier not without embarrassment. “To-morrow

morning we are to carry a letter from her to the scribe of the mines, and if we encamp in the neighborhood she will send us some wine for carrying it."

"The old red-beard scents wine as a fox scents a goose. Let us encamp here; one never knows what may be picked up among the Mentu, and the superintendent said we were to encamp outside the oasis. Put down your sacks, men! Here there is fresh water, and perhaps a few dates and sweet Manna* for you to eat with it. But keep the peace, you two quarrelsome fellows—Huni and Nebsecht."

> Bent-Anat's journey to the Emerald-Hathor was long since ended. As far as Keft** she had sailed down the Nile with her escort, from thence she had crossed the desert by easy marches, and she had been obliged to wait a full week in the port on the Red Sea,*** which was chiefly inhabited by Phœnicians, for a ship which had finally brought her to the little seaport of Pharan. From Pharan she had crossed the mountains to the oasis, where the sanctuary she was to visit stood on the northern side.

The old priests, who conducted the service of the Goddess, had received the daughter of Rameses with respect, and undertook to restore her to cleanness by degrees with the help of the water from the mountain-stream which watered the palm-grove of the Amalekites, of incense-burning, of pious sentences, and of a hundred other ceremonies. At last the Goddess declared herself satisfied, and Bent-Anat wished to start for the north and join her father, but the commander of the

* "Man" is the name still given by the Bedouins of Sinai to the sweet gum which exudes from the *Tamarix mannifera*. It is the result of the puncture of an insect, and occurs chiefly in May. By many it is supposed to be the Manna of the Bible.

** See note page 153.

*** Afterwards called Berenice.

escort, a grey-headed Ethiopian field officer—who had been promoted to a high grade by Ani—explained to the Chamberlain that he had orders to detain the princess in the oasis until her departure was authorized by the Regent himself.

Bent-Anat now hoped for the support of her father, for her brother Rameri, if no accident had occurred to him, might arrive any day. But in vain.

The position of the ladies was particularly unpleasant, for they felt that they had been caught in a trap, and were in fact prisoners. In addition to this their Ethiopian escort had quarrelled with the natives of the oasis, and every day skirmishes took place under their eyes—indeed lately one of these fights had ended in bloodshed.

Bent-Anat was sick at heart. The two strong pinions of her soul, which had always borne her so high above other women—her princely pride and her bright frankness—seemed quite broken; she felt that she had loved once, never to love again, and that she, who had sought none of her happiness in dreams, but all in work, had bestowed the best half of her identity on a vision. Pentaur's image took a more and more vivid, and at the same time nobler and loftier, aspect in her mind; but he himself had died for her, for only once had a letter reached them from Egypt, and that was from Katuti to Nefert. After telling her that late intelligence established the statement that her husband had taken a prince's daughter, who had been made prisoner, to his tent as his share of the booty, she added the information that the poet Pentaur, who had been condemned to forced labor, had not reached the mountain mines, but, as was supposed, had perished on the road.

Nefert still held to her immovable belief that her husband was faithful to his love for her, and the magic charm of a nature made beautiful by its perfect mastery over a deep and pure passion made itself felt in these sad and heavy days.

It seemed as though she had changed parts with Bent-Anat. Always hopeful, every day she foretold help from the king for the next; in truth she was ready to believe that, when Mena learned from Rameri that she was with the princess, he himself would come to fetch them if his duties allowed it. In her hours of most lively expectation she could go so far as to picture how the party in the tents would be divided, and who would bear Bent-Anat company if Mena took her with him to his camp, on what spot of the oasis it would be best to pitch it, and much more in the same vein.

Uarda could very well take her place with Bent-Anat, for the child had developed and improved on the journey. The rich clothes which the princess had given her became her as if she had never worn any others; she could obey discreetly, disappear at the right moment, and, when she was invited, chatter delightfully. Her laugh was silvery, and nothing consoled Bent-Anat so much as to hear it.

Her songs too pleased the two friends, though the few that she knew were grave and sorrowful. She had learned them by listening to old Hekt, who often used to play on a lute in the dusk, and who, when she perceived that Uarda caught the melodies, had pointed out her faults, and given her advice.

“She may some day come into my hands,” thought the witch, “and the better she sings, the better she will be paid.”

Bent-Anat too tried to teach Uarda, but learning to read was not easy to the girl, however much pains she might take. Nevertheless, the princess would not give up the spelling, for here, at the foot of the immense sacred mountain at whose summit she gazed with mixed horror and longing, she was condemned to inactivity, which weighed the more heavily on her in proportion as those feelings had to be kept to herself which she longed to escape from in work. Uarda knew the origin of her mistress's deep grief, and revered her for it, as if it were something sacred. Often she would speak of Pentaur and of his father, and always in such a manner that the princess could not guess that she knew of their love.

When the prisoners were passing Bent Anat's tent, she was sitting within with Nefert, and talking, as had become habitual in the hours of dusk, of her father, of Mena, Rameri, and Pentaur.

"He is still alive," asserted Nefert. "My mother, you see, says that no one knows with certainty what became of him. If he escaped, he beyond a doubt tried to reach the king's camp, and when we get there you will find him with your father."

The princess looked sadly at the ground.

Nefert looked affectionately at her, and asked:

"Are you thinking of the difference in rank which parts you from the man you have chosen?"

"The man to whom I offer my hand, I put in the rank of a prince," said Bent-Anat. "But if I could set Pentaur on a throne, as master of the world, he would still be greater and better than I."

"But your father?" asked Nefert doubtfully.

"He is my friend, he will listen to me and under-

stand me. He shall know everything when I see him; I know his noble and loving heart."

Both were silent for some time; then Bent-Anat spoke:

"Pray have lights brought, I want to finish my weaving."

Nefert rose, went to the door of the tent, and there met Uarda; she seized Nefert's hand, and silently drew her out into the air.

"What is the matter, child? you are trembling," Nefert exclaimed.

"My father is here," answered Uarda hastily. "He is escorting some prisoners from the mines of Mafkat. Among them there are two chained together, and one of them—do not be startled—one of them is the poet Pentaur. Stop, for God's sake, stop, and hear me. Twice before I have seen my father when he has been here with convicts. To-day we must rescue Pentaur; but the princess must know nothing of it, for if my plan fails—"

"Child! girl!" interrupted Nefert eagerly. "How can I help you?"

"Order the steward to give the drivers of the gang a skin of wine in the name of the princess, and out of Bent-Anat's case of medicines take the phial which contains the sleeping draught, which, in spite of your wish, she will not take. I will wait here, and I know how to use it."

Nefert immediately found the steward, and ordered him to follow Uarda with a skin of wine. Then she went back to the princess's tent, and opened the medicine case.*

"What do you want?" asked Bent-Anat.

* A medicine case, belonging to a more ancient period than the reign of Rameses, is preserved in the Berlin Museum.

“A remedy for palpitation,” replied Nefert; she quietly took the flask she needed, and in a few minutes put it into Uarda’s hand.

The girl asked the steward to open the wine-skin, and let her taste the liquor. While she pretended to drink it, she poured the whole contents of the phial into the wine, and then let Bent-Anat’s bountiful present be carried to the thirsty drivers.

She herself went towards the kitchen tent, and found a young Amalekite sitting on the ground with the princess’s servants. He sprang up as soon as he saw the damsel.

“I have brought four fine partridges,”* he said, “which I snared myself, and I have brought this turquoise for you—my brother found it in a rock. This stone brings good luck, and is good for the eyes; it gives victory over our enemies, and keeps away bad dreams.”**

“Thank you!” said Uarda, and taking the boy’s hand, as he gave her the sky-blue stone, she led him forward into the dusk.

“Listen, Salich—” she said softly, as soon as she thought they were far enough from the others. “You are a good boy, and the maids told me that you said I was a star that had come down from the sky to become a woman. No one says such a thing as that of any one they do not like very much; and I know you like me, for you show me that you do every day by

* A brook springs on the peak called by the Sinaitic monks Mt. St. Katharine, which is called the partridge’s spring, and of which many legends are told. For instance, God created it for the partridges which accompanied the angels who carried St. Katharine of Alexandria to her tomb on Sinai.

** The turquoises of Serbal are finer and bluer than those of Wadi Maghara. The Arabs to this day believe in the happy influences of the turquoise.

bringing me flowers, when you carry the game that your father gets to the steward. Tell me, will you do me and the princess too a very great service? Yes?—and willingly? Yes? I knew you would! Now listen. A friend of the great lady Bent-Anat, who will come here to-night, must be hidden for a day, perhaps several days, from his pursuers. Can he, or rather can they, for there will probably be two, find shelter and protection in your father's house, which lies high up there on the sacred mountain?"

"Whoever I take to my father," said the boy, "will be made welcome; and we defend our guests first, and then ourselves. Where are the strangers?"

"They will arrive in a few hours. Will you wait here till the moon is well up?"

"Till the last of all the thousand moons that vanish behind the hills is set."

"Well then, wait on the other side of the stream, and conduct the man to your house, who repeats my name three times. You know my name?"

"I call you Silver-star, but the others call you Uarda."

"Lead the strangers to your hut, and, if they are received there by your father, come back and tell me. I will watch for you here at the door of the tent. I am poor, alas! and cannot reward you, but the princess will thank your father as a princess should. Be watchful, Salich!"

The girl vanished, and went to the drivers of the gang of prisoners, wished them a merry and pleasant evening, and then hastened back to Bent-Anat, who anxiously stroked her abundant hair, and asked her why she was so pale.

“Lie down,” said the princess kindly, “you are feverish. Only look, Nefert, I can see the blood coursing through the blue veins in her forehead.”

Meanwhile the drivers drank, praised the royal wine, and the lucky day on which they drank it; and when Uarda’s father suggested that the prisoners too should have a mouthful one of his fellow soldiers cried: “Aye, let the poor beasts be jolly too for once.”

The red-beard filled a large beaker, and offered it first to a forger and his fettered companion, then he approached Pentaur, and whispered—

“Do not drink any—keep awake!”

As he was going to warn the physician too, one of his companions came between them, and offering his tankard to Nebsecht said:

“Here mumbler, drink; see him pull! His stuttering mouth is spry enough for drinking!”

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE hours passed gaily with the drinkers, then they grew more and more sleepy.

Ere the moon was high in the heavens, while they were all sleeping, with the exception of Kaschta and Pentaur, the soldier rose softly. He listened to the breathing of his companions, then he approached the poet, unfastened the ring which fettered his ankle to that of Nebsecht, and endeavored to wake the physician, but in vain.

“Follow me!” cried he to the poet; he took Nebsecht on his shoulders, and went towards the spot near the stream which Uarda had indicated. Three times he called his daughter’s name, the young Amalekite appeared, and the soldier said decidedly: “Follow this man, I will take care of Nebsecht.”

“I will not leave him,” said Pentaur. “Perhaps water will wake him.”

They plunged him in the brook, which half woke him, and by the help of his companions, who now pushed and now dragged him, he staggered and stumbled up the rugged mountain path, and before midnight they reached their destination, the hut of the Amalekite.

The old hunter was asleep, but his son aroused him, and told him what Uarda had ordered and promised.

But no promises were needed to incite the worthy mountaineer to hospitality. He received the poet with genuine friendliness, laid the sleeping leech on a mat, prepared a couch for Pentaur of leaves and skins, called his daughter to wash his feet, and offered him his own holiday garment in the place of the rags that covered his body.

Pentaur stretched himself out on the humble couch, which to him seemed softer than the silken bed of a queen, but on which nevertheless he could not sleep, for the thoughts and fancies that filled his heart were too overpowering and bewildering.

The stars still sparkled in the heavens when he sprang from his bed of skins, lifted Nebsecht on to it, and rushed out into the open air. A fresh mountain spring flowed close to the hunter's hut. He went to it, and bathed his face in the ice-cold water, and let it flow over his body and limbs. He felt as if he must cleanse himself to his very soul, not only from the dust of many weeks, but from the rebellion and despondency, the ignominy and bitterness, and the contact with vice and degradation.

When at last he left the spring, and returned to the little house, he felt clean and fresh as on the morning of a feast-day at the temple of Seti, when he had bathed and dressed himself in robes of snow-white linen. He took the hunter's holiday dress, put it on, and went out of doors again.

The enormous masses of rock lay dimly before

him, like storm-clouds, and over his head spread the blue heavens with their thousand stars.

The soothing sense of freedom and purity raised his soul, and the air that he breathed was so fresh and light, that he sprang up the path to the summit of the peak as if he were borne on wings or carried by invisible hands.

A mountain goat which met him, turned from him, and fled bleating, with his mate, to a steep peak of rock, but Pentaur said to the frightened beasts:

“I shall do nothing to you—not I.”

He paused on a little plateau at the foot of the jagged granite peak of the mountain. Here again he heard the murmur of a spring, the grass under his feet was damp, and covered with a film of ice, in which were mirrored the stars, now gradually fading. He looked up at the lights in the sky, those never-tarrying, and yet motionless wanderers—away, to the mountain heights around him—down, into the gorge below—and far off, into the distance.

The dusk slowly grew into light, the mysterious forms of the mountain-chain took shape and stood up with their shining points, the light clouds were swept away like smoke. Thin vapors rose from the oasis and the other valleys at his feet, at first in heavy masses, then they parted and were wafted, as if in sport, above and beyond him to the sky. Far below him soared a large eagle, the only living creature far or near.

A solemn and utter silence surrounded him, and when the eagle swooped down and vanished from his sight, and the mist rolled lower into the valley, he felt

that here, alone, he was high above all other living beings, and standing nearer to the Divinity.

He drew his breath fully and deeply, he felt as he had felt in the first hours after his initiation, when for the first time he was admitted to the holy of holies—and yet quite different.

Instead of the atmosphere loaded with incense, he breathed a light pure air; and the deep stillness of the mountain solitude possessed his soul more strongly than the chant of the priests.

Here, it seemed to him, that the Divine being would hear the lightest murmur of his lips, though indeed his heart was so full of gratitude and devotion that his impulse was to give expression to his mighty flow of feelings in jubilant song. But his tongue seemed tied; he knelt down in silence, to pray and to praise.

Then he looked at the panorama round him.

Where was the east which in Egypt was clearly defined by the long Nile range? Down there where it was beginning to be light over the oasis. To his right hand lay the south, the sacred birth-place of the Nile, the home of the Gods of the Cataracts; but here flowed no mighty stream, and where was there a shrine for the visible manifestation of Osiris and Isis; of Horus, born of a lotus flower in a thicket of papyrus; of Rennut, the Goddess of blessings, and of Zefa? To which of them could he here lift his hands in prayer?

A faint breeze swept by, the mist vanished like a restless shade at the word of the exorcist, the many-pointed crown of Sinai stood out in sharp relief, and below them the winding valleys, and the dark colored rippling surface of the lake, became distinctly visible.

All was silent, all untouched by the hand of man yet harmonized to one great and glorious whole, subject to all the laws of the universe, pervaded and filled by the Divinity.

He would fain have raised his hand in thanksgiving to Apheru, "the Guide on the way;" but he dared not; and how infinitely small did the Gods now seem to him, the Gods he had so often glorified to the multitude in inspired words, the Gods that had no meaning, no dwelling-place, no dominion but by the Nile.

"To ye," he murmured, "I cannot pray! Here where my eye can pierce the distance, as if I myself were a god—here I feel the presence of the One, here He is near me and with me—I will call upon Him and praise him!"

And throwing up his arms he cried aloud: "Thou only One! Thou only One! Thou only One!" He said no more; but a tide of song welled up in his breast as he spoke—a flood of thankfulness and praise.

When he rose from his knees, a man was standing by him; his eyes were piercing and his tall figure had the dignity of a king, in spite of his herdsman's dress.

"It is well for you!" said the stranger in deep slow accents. "You seek the true God."

Pentaur looked steadily into the face of the bearded man before him.

"I know you now," he said. "You are Mesu.* I was but a boy when you left the temple of Seti, but your features are stamped on my soul. Ameni initiated me, as well as you, into the knowledge of the One God."

* Moses.

“He knows Him not,” answered the other, looking thoughtfully to the eastern horizon, which every moment grew brighter.

The heavens glowed with purple, and the granite peaks, each sheathed in a film of ice, sparkled and shone like dark diamonds that had been dipped in light.

The day-star rose, and Pentaur turned to it, and prostrated himself as his custom was. When he rose, Mesu also was kneeling on the earth, but his back was turned to the sun.

When he had ended his prayer, Pentaur said: “Why do you turn your back on the manifestation of the Sun-god? We were taught to look towards him when he approaches.”

“Because I,” said his grave companion, “pray to another God than yours. The sun and stars are but as toys in his hand, the earth is his foot-stool, the storm is his breath, and the sea is in his sight as the drops on the grass.”

“Teach me to know the Mighty One whom you worship!” exclaimed Pentaur.

“Seek him,” said Mesu, “and you will find him; for you have passed through misery and suffering, and on this spot on such a morning as this was He revealed to me.”

The stranger turned away, and disappeared behind a rock from the enquiring gaze of Pentaur, who fixed his eyes on the distance.

Then he thoughtfully descended the valley, and went towards the hut of the hunter. He stayed his steps when he heard men’s voices, but the rocks hid the speakers from his sight.

Presently he saw the party approaching; the son of his host, a man in Egyptian dress, a lady of tall stature, near whom a girl tripped lightly, and another carried in a litter by slaves.

Pentaur's heart beat wildly, for he recognized Bent-Anat and her companions. They disappeared by the hunter's cottage, but he stood still, breathing painfully, spell-bound to the cliff by which he stood—a long, long time—and did not stir.

He did not hear a light step, that came near to him, and died away again, he did not feel that the sun began to cast fierce beams on him, and on the porphyry cliff behind him, he did not see a woman now coming quickly towards him; but, like a deaf man who has suddenly acquired the sense of hearing, he started when he heard his name spoken—by whose lips?

“Pentaur!” she said again; the poet opened his arms, and Bent-Anat fell upon his breast; and he held her to him, clasped, as though he must hold her there and never part from her all his life long.

Meanwhile the princess's companions were resting by the hunter's little house.

“She flew into his arms—I saw it,” said Uarda. “Never shall I forget it. It was as if the bright lake there had risen up to embrace the mountain.”

“Where do you find such fancies, child?” cried Nefert.

“In my heart, deep in my heart!” cried Uarda. “I am so unspeakably happy.”

“You saved him and rewarded him for his goodness; you may well be happy.”

“It is not only that,” said Uarda. “I was in despair, and now I see that the Gods are righteous and loving.”

Mena’s wife nodded to her, and said with a sigh :

“They are both happy !”

“And they deserve to be !” exclaimed Uarda. “I fancy the Goddess of Truth is like Bent-Anat, and there is not another man in Egypt like Pentaur.”

Nefert was silent for awhile ; then she asked softly :
“Did you ever see Mena ?”

“How should I ?” replied the girl. “Wait a little while, and your turn will come. I believe that to-day I can read the future like a prophetess. But let us see if Nebsecht lies there, and is still asleep. The draught I put into the wine must have been strong.”

“It was,” answered Nefert, following her into the hut.

The physician was still lying on the bed, and sleeping with his mouth wide open. Uarda knelt down by his side, looked in his face, and said :

“He is clever and knows everything, but how silly he looks now ! I will wake him.”

She pulled a blade of grass out of the heap on which he was lying, and saucily tickled his nose.

Nebsecht raised himself, sneezed, but fell back asleep again ; Uarda laughed out with her clear silvery tones. Then she blushed—“That is not right,” she said, “for he is good and generous.”

She took the sleeper’s hand, pressed it to her lips, and wiped the drops from his brow. Then he awoke, opened his eyes, and muttered half in a dream still :

“Uarda—sweet Uarda.”

The girl started up and fled, and Nefert followed her.

When Nebsecht at last got upon his feet and looked round him, he found himself alone in a strange house. He went out of doors, where he found Bent-Anat's little train anxiously discussing things past and to come.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE inhabitants of the oasis had for centuries been subject to the Pharaohs, and paid them tribute; and among the rights granted to them in return, no Egyptian soldier might cross their border and territory without their permission.

The Ethiopians had therefore pitched Bent-Anat's tents and their own camp outside these limits; but various transactions soon took place between the idle warriors and the Amalekites, which now and then led to quarrels, and which one evening threatened serious consequences, when some drunken soldiers had annoyed the Amalekite women while they were drawing water.

This morning early one of the drivers on awaking had missed Pentaur and Nebsecht, and he roused his comrades, who had been rejoined by Uarda's father. The enraged guard of the gang of prisoners hastened to the commandant of the Ethiopians, and informed him that two of his prisoners had escaped, and were no doubt being kept in concealment by the Amalekites.

The Amalekites met the requisition to surrender the fugitives, of whom they knew nothing, with words of mockery, which so enraged the officer that he deter-

mined to search the oasis throughout by force, and when he found his emissaries treated with scorn he advanced with the larger part of his troops on to the free territory of the Amalekites.

∨ The sons of the desert flew to arms; they retired before the close order of the Egyptian troops, who followed them, confident of victory, to a point where the valley widens and divides on each side of a rocky hill.* Behind this the larger part of the Amalekite forces were lying in ambush, and as soon as the unsuspecting Ethiopians had marched past the hill, they threw themselves on the rear of the astonished invaders, while those in front turned upon them, and flung lances and arrows at the soldiers, of whom very few escaped.

Among them, however, was the commanding officer, who, foaming with rage and only slightly wounded, put himself at the head of the remainder of Bent-Anat's body-guard, ordered the escort of the prisoners also to follow him, and once more advanced into the oasis.

That the princess might escape him had never for an instant occurred to him, but as soon as the last of her keepers had disappeared, Bent-Anat explained to her chamberlain and her companions that now or never was the moment to fly.

All her people were devoted to her; they loaded themselves with the most necessary things for daily use, took the litters and beasts of burden with them, and while the battle was raging in the valley, Salich guided them up the heights of Sinai to his father's house.

It was on the way thither that Uarda had prepared the princess for the meeting she might expect at the

* The modern hill of Meharret with the ruins of the church of the Sec of Pharan.

hunter's cottage, and we have seen how and where the princess found the poet.

Hand in hand they wandered together along the mountain path till they came to a spot shaded by a projection of the rock; Pentaur pulled some moss to make a seat, they reclined on it side by side, and there opened their hearts, and told each other of their love and of their sufferings, their wanderings and escapes.

At noonday the hunter's daughter came to offer them a pitcher full of goat's milk, and Bent-Anat filled the gourd again and again for the man she loved; and waiting upon him thus, her heart overflowed with pride, and his with the humble desire to be permitted to sacrifice his blood and life for her.

Hitherto they had been so absorbed in the present and the past, that they had not given a thought to the future, and while they repeated a hundred times what each had long since known, and yet could never tire of hearing, they forgot the immediate danger which was hanging over them.

After their humble meal, the surging flood of feeling which, ever since his morning devotions, had overwhelmed the poet's soul, grew calmer; he had felt as if borne through the air, but now he set foot, so to speak, on the earth again, and seriously considered with Bent-Anat what steps they must take in the immediate future.

The light of joy, which beamed in their eyes, was little in accordance with the grave consultation they held, as, hand in hand, they descended to the hut of their humble host.

The hunter, guided by his daughter, met them half way, and with him a tall and dignified man in the full armor of a chief of the Amalekites.

Both bowed and kissed the earth before Bent-Anat and Pentaur. They had heard that the princess was detained in the oasis by force by the Ethiopian troops, and the desert-prince, Abocharabos,* now informed them, not without pride, that the Ethiopian soldiers, all but a few who were his prisoners, had been exterminated by his people; at the same time he assured Pentaur, whom he supposed to be a son of the king, and Bent-Anat, that he and his were entirely devoted to the Pharaoh Rameses, who had always respected their rights.

“They are accustomed,” he added, “to fight against the cowardly dogs of Kush; but we are men, and we can fight like the lions of our wilds. If we are outnumbered we hide like the goats in clefts of the rocks.”

Bent-Anat, who was pleased with the daring man, his flashing eyes, his aquiline nose, and his brown face which bore the mark of a bloody sword-cut, promised him to commend him and his people to her father's favor, and told him of her desire to proceed as soon as possible to the king's camp under the protection of Pentaur, her future husband.

The mountain chief had gazed attentively at Pentaur and at Bent-Anat while she spoke; then he said:

“Thou, princess, art like the moon, and thy companion is like the Sun-god Dusare. Besides Abocharabos,” and he struck his breast, “and his wife, I know no pair that are like you two. I myself will conduct you to Hebron with some of my best men of war.

* This name is genuine, for according to Procopius the Saracen chief Abocharabos gave the palm-grove on the Sinai peninsular to Justinian. In the manuscripts it is Abocharagos; but Tuch has changed this, undoubtedly with good reason to Abocharabos. The inhabitants of this country, called Mentu by the Egyptians, were in early times Sabeans, that is, worshippers of the heavenly bodies. We learn this with certainty from the inscriptions deciphered by Beer, where the authors of the records call themselves “servants,” “fearers,” or “priests” of the Sun, of Baal, etc. The Sun-god was called Dusare: The earliest of these inscriptions dates from the 2d century B. C.

But haste will be necessary, for I must be back before the traitor who now rules over Mizraim,* and who persecutes you, can send fresh forces against us. Now you can go down again to the tents, not a hen is missing. To-morrow before daybreak we will be off."

At the door of the hut Pentaur was greeted by the princess's companions.

The chamberlain looked at him not without anxious misgiving.

The king, when he departed, had, it is true, given him orders to obey Bent-Anat in every particular, as if she were the queen herself; but her choice of such a husband was a thing unheard of, and how would the king take it?

Nefert rejoiced in the splendid person of the poet, and frequently repeated that he was as like her dead uncle—the father of Paaker, the chief-pioneer—as if he were his younger brother.

Uarda never wearied of contemplating him and her beloved princess. She no longer looked upon him as a being of a higher order; but the happiness of the noble pair seemed to her an embodied omen of happiness for Nefert's love—perhaps too for her own.

Nebsecht kept modestly in the background. The headache, from which he had long been suffering, had disappeared in the fresh mountain air. When Pentaur offered him his hand he exclaimed:

"Here is an end to all my jokes and abuse! A strange thing is this fate of men. Henceforth I shall always have the worst of it in any dispute with you, for all the discords of your life have been very prettily resolved by the great master of harmony, to whom you pray."

* The Semitic name for Egypt..

“You speak almost as if you were sorry; but every thing will turn out happily for you too.”

“Hardly!” replied the surgeon, “for now I see it clearly. Every man is a separate instrument, formed even before his birth, in an occult workshop, of good or bad wood, skilfully or unskilfully made, of this shape or the other; every thing in his life, no matter what we call it, plays upon him, and the instrument sounds for good or evil, as it is well or ill made. You are an Æolian harp—the sound is delightful, whatever breath of fate may touch it; I am a weather-cock—I turn whichever way the wind blows, and try to point right, but at the same time I creak, so that it hurts my own ears and those of other people. I am content if now and then a steersman may set his sails rightly by my indication; though after all, it is all the same to me. I will turn round and round, whether others look at me or no—What does it signify?”

When Pentaur and the princess took leave of the hunter with many gifts, the sun was sinking, and the toothed peaks of Sinai glowed like rubies, through which shone the glow of half a world on fire.

The journey to the royal camp was begun the next morning. Abocharabos, the Amalekite chief, accompanied the caravan, to which Uarda's father also attached himself; he had been taken prisoner in the struggle with the natives, but at Bent-Anat's request was set at liberty.

At their first halting place he was commanded to explain how he had succeeded in having Pentaur taken to the mines, instead of to the quarries of Chennu.

“I knew,” said the soldier in his homely way, “from

Uarda where this man, who had risked his life for us poor folks, was to be taken, and I said to myself—I must save him. But thinking is not my trade, and I never can lay a plot. It would very likely have come to some violent act, that would have ended badly, if I had not had a hint from another person, even before Uarda told me of what threatened Pentaur. This is how it was.

“I was to convoy the prisoners, who were condemned to work in the Mafkat mines, across the river to the place they start from. In the harbor of Thebes, on the other side, the poor wretches were to take leave of their friends; I have seen it a hundred times, and I never can get used to it, and yet one can get hardened to most things! Their loud cries, and wild howls are not the worst—those that scream the most I have always found are the first to get used to their fate; but the pale ones, whose lips turn white, and whose teeth chatter as if they were freezing, and whose eyes stare out into vacancy without any tears—those go to my heart. There was all the usual misery, both noisy and silent. But the man I was most sorry for was one I had known for a long time; his name was Huni, and he belonged to the temple of Amon, where he held the place of overseer of the attendants on the sacred goat. I had often met him when I was on duty to watch the laborers who were completing the great pillared hall, and he was respected by every one, and never failed in his duty. Once, however, he had neglected it; it was that very night which you all will remember when the wolves broke into the temple, and tore the rams, and the sacred heart was laid in the breast of the prophet Rui. Some one, of course, must be punished, and it

fell on poor Huni, who for his carelessness was condemned to forced labor in the mines of Mafkat. His successor will keep a sharp look out! No one came to see him off, though I know he had a wife and several children. He was as pale as this cloth, and was one of the sort whose grief eats into their heart. I went up to him, and asked him why no one came with him. He had taken leave of them at home, he answered, that his children might not see him mixed up with forgers and murderers. Eight poor little brats were left unprovided for with their mother, and a little while before a fire had destroyed everything they possessed. There was not a crumb to stop their little squalling mouths. He did not tell me all this straight out; a word fell from him now and then, like dates from a torn sack. I picked it up bit by bit, and when he saw I felt for him he grew fierce and said: 'They may send me to the gold mines or cut me to pieces, as far as I am concerned, but that the little ones should starve *that—that,*' and he struck his forehead. Then I left him to say good bye to Uarda, and on the way I kept repeating to myself '*that—that,*' and saw before me the man and his eight brats. If I were rich, thought I, there is a man I would help. When I got to the little one there, she told me how much money the leech Nebsecht had given her, and offered to give it me to save Pentaur; then it passed through my mind—that may go to Huni's children, and in return he will let himself be shipped off to Ethiopia. I ran to the harbor, spoke to the man, found him ready and willing, gave the money to his wife, and at night when the prisoners were shipped I contrived the exchange. Pentaur came with me on my boat under

the name of the other, and Huni went to the south, and was called Pentaur. I had not deceived the man into thinking he would stop at Chennu. I told him he would be taken on to Ethiopia, for it is always impossible to play a man false when you know it is quite easy to do it. It is very strange! It is a real pleasure to cheat a cunning fellow or a sturdy man, but who would take in a child or a sick person? Huni certainly would have gone into the fire-pots of hell without complaining, and he left me quite cheerfully. The rest, and how we got here, you yourselves know. In Syria at this time of year you will suffer a good deal from rain. I know the country, for I have escorted many prisoners of war into Egypt, and I was there five years with the troops of the great Mohar, father of the chief pioneer Paaker."

Bent-Anat thanked the brave fellow, and Pentaur and Nebsecht continued the narrative.

"During the voyage," said Nebsecht, "I was uneasy about Pentaur, for I saw how he was pining, but in the desert he seemed to rouse himself, and often whispered sweet little songs that he had composed while we marched."

"That is strange," said Bent-Anat, "for I also got better in the desert."

"Repeat the verses on the Beytharân plant,"* said Nebsecht.

"Do you know the plant?" asked the poet. "It grows here in many places; here it is. Only smell how sweet it is if you bruise the fleshy stem and leaves. My little verse is simple enough; it occurred

* *Santolina fragrantissima*.

to me like many other songs of which you know all the best."

"They all praise the same Goddess," said Nebsecht laughing.

"But let us have the verses," said Bent-Anat. The poet repeated in a low voice—

"How often in the desert I have seen
The small herb, Beytharän, in modest green!
In every tiny leaf and gland and hair
Sweet perfume is distilled, and scents the air.
How is it that in barren sandy ground
This little plant so sweet a gift has found?
And that in me, in this vast desert plain,
The sleeping gift of song awakes again?"

"Do you not ascribe to the desert what is due to love?" said Nefert.

"I owe it to both; but I must acknowledge that the desert is a wonderful physician for a sick soul. We take refuge from the monotony that surrounds us in our own reflections; the senses are at rest; and here, undisturbed and uninfluenced from without, it is given to the mind to think out every train of thought to the end, to examine and exhaust every feeling to its finest shades. In the city, one is always a mere particle in a great whole, on which one is dependent, to which one must contribute, and from which one must accept something. The solitary wanderer in the desert stands quite alone; he is in a manner freed from the ties which bind him to any great human community; he must fill up the void by his own identity, and seek in it that which may give his existence significance and consistency. Here, where the present retires into the background, the thoughtful spirit finds no limits however remote."

"Yes; one can think well in the desert," said

Nebsecht. "Much has become clear to me here that in Egypt I only guessed at."

"What may that be?" asked Pentaur.

"In the first place," replied Nebsecht, "that we none of us really know anything rightly; secondly that the ass may love the rose, but the rose will not love the ass; and the third thing I will keep to myself, because it is my secret, and though it concerns all the world no one would trouble himself about it. My lord chamberlain, how is this? You know exactly how low people must bow before the princess in proportion to their rank, and have no idea how a back-bone is made."

"Why should I?" asked the chamberlain. "I have to attend to outward things, while you are contemplating inward things; else your hair might be smoother, and your dress less stained."

The travellers reached the old Cheta city of Hebron without accident; there they took leave of Abocharabos, and under the safe escort of Egyptian troops started again for the north. At Hebron Pentaur parted from the princess, and Bent-Anat bid him farewell without complaining.

Uarda's father, who had learned every path and bridge in Syria, accompanied the poet, while the physician Nebsecht remained with the ladies, whose good star seemed to have deserted them with Pentaur's departure, for the violent winter rains which fell in the mountains of Samaria destroyed the roads, soaked through the tents, and condemned them frequently to undesirable delays. At Megiddo they were received with high honors by the commandant of the Egyptian garrison, and they were compelled to linger here some

days, for Nefert, who had been particularly eager to hurry forward, was taken ill, and Nebsecht was obliged to forbid her proceeding at this season.

Uarda grew pale and thoughtful, and Bent-Anat saw with anxiety that the tender roses were fading from the cheeks of her pretty favorite; but when she questioned her as to what ailed her she gave an evasive answer. She had never either mentioned Rameri's name before the princess, nor shown her her mother's jewel, for she felt as if all that had passed between her and the prince was a secret which did not belong to her alone. Yet another reason sealed her lips. She was passionately devoted to Bent-Anat, and she told herself that if the princess heard it all, she would either blame her brother or laugh at his affection as at a child's play, and she felt as if in that case she could not love Rameri's sister any more.

A messenger had been sent on from the first frontier station to the king's camp to enquire by which road the princess, and her party should leave Megiddo.* But the emissary returned with a short and decided though affectionate letter written by the king's own hand, to his daughter, desiring her not to quit Megiddo, which was a safe magazine and arsenal for the army, strongly fortified and garrisoned, as it commanded the roads from the sea into North and Central Palestine. Decisive encounters, he said, were impending, and she knew that the Egyptians always excluded their wives and daughters from their war train, and regarded them as the best reward of victory when peace was obtained.

While the ladies were waiting in Megiddo, Pentaur

* The Egyptian Maketha. A city of Palestine frequently mentioned on the monuments and which long before its restoration by Salomo I (Kings 9, 15,) possessed great strategic importance. The great conquerors of the 18th dynasty (16 centuries B. C.) were obliged to besiege and capture it.

and his red-bearded guide proceeded northwards with a small mounted escort, with which they were supplied by the commandant of Hebron.

He himself rode with dignity, though this journey was the first occasion on which he had sat on horseback. He seemed to have come into the world with the art of riding born with him. As soon as he had learned from his companions how to grasp the bridle, and had made himself familiar with the nature of the horse, it gave him the greatest delight to tame and subdue a fiery steed.

He had left his priest's robes in Egypt. Here he wore a coat of mail, a sword, and battle-axe like a warrior, and his long beard, which had grown during his captivity, now flowed down over his breast. Uarda's father often looked at him with admiration, and said :

“ One might think the Mohar, with whom I often travelled these roads, had risen from the dead. He looked like you, he spoke like you, he called the men as you do, nay he sat as you do when the road was too bad for his chariot,* and he got on horseback, and held the reins.”

None of Pentaur's men, except his red-bearded friend, was more to him than a mere hired servant, and he usually preferred to ride alone, apart from the little troop, musing on the past—seldom on the future—and generally observing all that lay on his way with a keen eye.

They soon reached Lebanon; between it and anti-Lebanon a road led through the great Syrian valley. It rejoiced him to see with his own eyes the distant shimmer of the white snow-capped peaks, of which he had often heard warriors talk.

* The Mohars used chariots in their journeys. This is positively known from the papyrus Anastasi I. which vividly describes the hardships experienced by a Mohar while travelling through Syria.

The country between the two mountain ranges was rich and fruitful, and from the heights waterfalls and torrents rushed into the valley. Many villages and towns lay on his road, but most of them had been damaged in the war. The peasants had been robbed of their teams of cattle, the flocks had been driven off from the shepherds, and when a vine-dresser, who was training his vine saw the little troop approaching, he fled to the ravines and forests.

The traces of the plough and the spade were everywhere visible, but the fields were for the most part not sown; the young peasants were under arms, the gardens and meadows were trodden down by soldiers, the houses and cottages plundered and destroyed, or burnt. Everything bore the trace of the devastation of the war, only the oak and cedar forests lorded it proudly over the mountain-slopes, planes and locust-trees grew in groves, and the gorges and rifts of the thinly-wooded limestone hills, which bordered the fertile low-land, were filled with evergreen brushwood.

At this time of year everything was moist and well-watered, and Pentaur compared the country with Egypt, and observed how the same results were attained here as there, but by different agencies. He remembered that morning on Sinai, and said to himself again: "Another God than ours rules here, and the old masters were not wrong who reviled godless strangers, and warned the uninitiated, to whom the secret of the One must remain unrevealed, to quit their home,"

The nearer he approached the king's camp, the more vividly he thought of Bent-Anat, and the faster

his heart beat from time to time when he thought of his meeting with the king. On the whole he was full of cheerful confidence, which he felt to be folly, and which nevertheless he could not repress.

Ameni had often blamed him for his too great diffidence and his want of ambition, when he had willingly let others pass him by. He remembered this now, and smiled and understood himself less than ever, for though he resolutely repeated to himself a hundred times that he was a low-born, poor, and excommunicated priest, the feeling would not be smothered that he had a right to claim Bent-Anat for his own.

And if the king refused him his daughter—if he made him pay for his audacity with his life?

Not an eyelash, he well knew, would tremble under the blow of the axe, and he would die content; for that which she had granted him was his, and no God could take it from him!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ONCE or twice Pentaur and his companions had had to defend themselves against hostile mountaineers, who rushed suddenly upon them out of the woods. When they were about two days' journey still from the end of their march, they had a bloody skirmish with a roving band of men that seemed to belong to a larger detachment of troops.

The nearer they got to Kadesh, the more familiar Kashta showed himself with every stock and stone, and he went forward to obtain information; he returned somewhat anxious, for he had perceived the

main body of the Cheta army on the road which they must cross. How came the enemy here in the rear of the Egyptian army? Could Rameses have sustained a defeat?

Only the day before they had met some Egyptian soldiers, who had told them that the king was staying in the camp, and a great battle was impending. This however could not have by this time been decided, and they had met no flying Egyptians.

“If we can only get two miles farther without having to fight,” said Uarda’s father. “I know what to do. Down below, there lies a ravine, and from it a path leads over hill and vale to the plain of Kadesh. No one ever knew it but the Mohar and his most confidential servants. About half-way there is a hidden cave, in which we have often stayed the whole day long. The Cheta used to believe that the Mohar possessed magic powers, and could make himself invisible, for when they lay in wait for us on the way we used suddenly to vanish; but certainly not into the clouds, only into the cave, which the Mohar used to call his Tuat.* If you are not afraid of a climb, and will lead your horse behind you for a mile or two, I can show you the way, and to-morrow evening we will be at the camp.”

Pentaur let his guide lead the way; they came, without having occasion to fight, as far as the gorge between the hills, through which a full and foaming mountain torrent rushed to the valley. Kaschta dropped from his horse, and the others did the same. After the horses had passed through the water, he carefully effaced their tracks as far as the road, then for about

* Tuat—the nether-world, the abyss.

half a mile he ascended the valley against the stream. At last he stopped in front of a thick oleander-bush, looked carefully about, and lightly pushed it aside; when he had found an entrance, his companions and their weary scrambling beasts followed him without difficulty, and they presently found themselves in a grove of lofty cedars. Now they had to squeeze themselves between masses of rock, now they labored up and down over smooth pebbles, which offered scarcely any footing to the horses' hoofs; now they had to push their way through thick brushwood, and now to cross little brooks swelled by the winter-rains.

The road became more difficult at every step, then it began to grow dark, and heavy drops of rain fell from the clouded sky.

"Make haste, and keep close to me," cried Kaschta. "Half an hour more, and we shall be under shelter, if I do not lose my way."

Then a horse broke down, and with great difficulty was got up again; the rain fell with increased violence, the night grew darker, and the soldier often found himself brought to a stand-still, feeling for the path with his hands; twice he thought he had lost it, but he would not give in till he had recovered the track. At last he stood still, and called Pentaur to come to him.

"Hereabouts," said he, "the cave must be; keep close to me—it is possible that we may come upon some of the pioneer's people. Provisions and fuel were always kept here in his father's time. Can you see me? Hold on to my girdle, and bend your head low till I tell you you may stand upright again. Keep your

axe ready, we may find some of the Cheta or bandits roosting there. You people must wait, we will soon call you to come under shelter."

Pentaur closely followed his guide, pushing his way through the dripping brushwood, crawling through a low passage in the rock, and at last emerging on a small rocky plateau.

"Take care where you are going!" cried Kaschta. "Keep to the left, to the right there is a deep abyss. I smell smoke! Keep your hand on your axe, there must be some one in the cave. Wait! I will fetch the men as far as this."

The soldier went back, and Pentaur listened for any sounds that might come from the same direction as the smoke. He fancied he could perceive a small gleam of light, and he certainly heard quite plainly, first a tone of complaint, then an angry voice; he went towards the light, feeling his way by the wall on his left; the light shone broader and brighter, and seemed to issue from a crack in a door.

By this time the soldier had rejoined Pentaur, and both listened for a few minutes; then the poet whispered to his guide:

"They are speaking Egyptian, I caught a few words."

"All the better," said Kaschta. "Paaker or some of his people are in there; the door is there still, and shut. If we give four hard and three gentle knocks, it will be opened. Can you understand what they are saying?"

"Some one is begging to be set free," replied Pentaur, "and speaks of some traitor. The other has a rough voice, and says he must follow his master's

orders. Now the one who spoke before is crying; do you hear? He is entreating him by the soul of his father to take his fetters off. How despairing his voice is! Knock, Kaschta—it strikes me we are come at the right moment—knock, I say.”

The soldier knocked first four times, then three times. A shriek rang through the cave, and they could hear a heavy, rusty bolt drawn back, the roughly hewn door was opened, and a hoarse voice asked:

“Is that Paaker?”

“No,” answered the soldier, “I am Kaschta. Do not you know me again, Nubi?”

The man thus addressed, who was Paaker’s Ethiopian slave, drew back in surprise.

“Are you still alive?” he exclaimed. “What brings you here?”

“My lord here will tell you,” answered Kaschta as he made way for Pentaur to enter the cave. The poet went up to the black man, and the light of the fire which burned in the cave fell full on his face.

The old slave stared at him, and drew back in astonishment and terror. He threw himself on the earth, howled like a dog that fawns at the feet of his angry master, and cried out:

“He ordered it—Spirit of my master! he ordered it.”

Pentaur stood still, astounded and incapable of speech, till he perceived a young man, who crept up to him on his hands and feet, which were bound with thongs, and who cried to him in a tone, in which terror was mingled with a tenderness which touched Pentaur’s very soul:

“Save me—Spirit of the Mohar! save me, father!”
Then the poet spoke.

“I am no spirit of the dead,” said he. “I am the priest Pentaur; and I know you, boy; you are Horus, Paaker’s brother, who was brought up with me in the temple of Seti.”

The prisoner approached him trembling, looked at him enquiringly and exclaimed:

“Be you who you may, you are exactly like my father in person and in voice. Loosen my bonds, and listen to me, for the most hideous, atrocious, and accursed treachery threatens us—the king and all.”

Pentaur drew his sword, and cut the leather thongs which bound the young man’s hands and feet. He stretched his released limbs, uttering thanks to the Gods, then he cried:

“If you love Egypt and the king follow me; perhaps there is yet time to hinder the hideous deed, and to frustrate this treachery.”

“The night is dark,” said Kaschta, “and the road to the valley is dangerous.”

“You must follow me if it is to your death!” cried the youth, and, seizing Pentaur’s hand, he dragged him with him out of the cave.

As soon as the black slave had satisfied himself that Pentaur was the priest whom he had seen fighting in front of the paraschites’ hovel, and not the ghost of his dead master, he endeavored to slip past Paaker’s brother, but Horus observed the manœuvre, and seized him by his woolly hair. The slave cried out loudly, and whimpered out:

“If thou dost escape, Paaker will kill me; he swore he would.”

“Wait!” said the youth. He dragged the slave back,

flung him into the cave, and blocked up the door with a huge log which lay near it for that purpose.

When the three men had crept back through the low passage in the rocks, and found themselves once more in the open air, they found a high wind was blowing.

“The storm will soon be over,” said Horus. “See how the clouds are driving! Let us have horses, Pentaur, for there is not a minute to be lost.”

The poet ordered Kaschta to summons the people to start but the soldier advised differently.

“Men and horses are exhausted,” he said, “and we shall get on very slowly in the dark. Let the beasts feed for an hour, and the men get rested and warm; by that time the moon will be up, and we shall make up for the delay by having fresh horses, and light enough to see the road.”

“The man is right,” said Horus; and he led Kaschta to a cave in the rocks, where barley and dates for the horses, and a few jars of wine, had been preserved. They soon had lighted a fire, and while some of the men took care of the horses, and others cooked a warm mess of victuals, Horus and Pentaur walked up and down impatiently.

“Had you been long bound in those thongs when we came?” asked Pentaur.

“Yesterday my brother fell upon me,” replied Horus. “He is by this time a long way ahead of us, and if he joins the Cheta, and we do not reach the Egyptian camp before daybreak, all is lost.”

“Paaker, then, is plotting treason?”

“Treason, the foulest, blackest treason!” exclaimed the young man. “Oh, my lost father!—”

“Confide in me,” said Pentaur going up to the unhappy youth who had hidden his face in his hands. “What is Paaker plotting? How is it that your brother is your enemy?”

“He is the elder of us two,” said Horus with a trembling voice. “When my father died I had only a short time before left the school of Seti, and with his last words my father enjoined me to respect Paaker as the head of our family. He is domineering and violent, and will allow no one’s will to cross his; but I bore everything, and always obeyed him, often against my better judgment. I remained with him two years, then I went to Thebes, and there I married, and my wife and child are now living there with my mother. About sixteen months afterwards I came back to Syria, and we travelled through the country together; but by this time I did not choose to be the mere tool of my brother’s will, for I had grown prouder, and it seemed to me that the father of my child ought not to be subservient, even to his own brother. We often quarrelled, and had a bad time together, and life became quite unendurable, when—about eight weeks since—Paaker came back from Thebes, and the king gave him to understand that he approved more of my reports than of his. From my childhood I have always been soft-hearted and patient; every one says I am like my mother; but what Paaker made me suffer by words and deeds, that is—I could not—” His voice broke, and Pentaur felt how cruelly he had suffered; then he went on again:

“What happened to my brother in Egypt, I do not know, for he is very reserved, and asks for no sympathy, either in joy or in sorrow; but from words he has

dropped now and then I gather that he not only bitterly hates Mena, the charioteer—who certainly did him an injury—but has some grudge against the king too. I spoke to him of it at once, but only once, for his rage is unbounded when he is provoked, and after all he is my elder brother.

“For some days they have been preparing in the camp for a decisive battle, and it was our duty to ascertain the position and strength of the enemy; the king gave me, and not Paaker, the commission to prepare the report. Early yesterday morning I drew it out and wrote it; then my brother said he would carry it to the camp, and I was to wait here. I positively refused, as Rameses had required the report at my hands, and not at his. Well, he raved like a madman, declared that I had taken advantage of his absence to insinuate myself into the king’s favor, and commanded me to obey him as the head of the house, in the name of my father.

“I was sitting irresolute, when he went out of the cavern to call his horses; then my eyes fell on the things which the old black slave was tying together to load on a pack-horse—among them was a roll of writing. I fancied it was my own, and took it up to look at it, when—what should I find? At the risk of my life I had gone among the Cheta, and had found that the main body of their army is collected in a cross-valley of the Orontes, quite hidden in the mountains to the north-east of Kadesh; and in the roll it was stated, in Paaker’s own hand-writing, that that valley is clear, and the way through it open, and well suited for the passage of the Egyptian war-chariots; various other false details were given, and when I

looked further among his things, I found between the arrows in his quiver, on which he had written 'death to Mena,' another little roll of writing. I tore it open, and my blood ran cold when I saw to whom it was addressed."

"To the king of the Cheta?" cried Pentaur in excitement.

"To his chief officer, Titure,"* continued Horus. "I was holding both the rolls in my hand, when Paaker came back into the cave. 'Traitor!' I cried out to him; but he flung the lasso, with which he had been catching the stray horses, threw it round my neck, and as I fell choking on the ground, he and the black man, who obeys him like a dog, bound me hand and foot; he left the old negro to keep guard over me, took the rolls and rode away. Look, there are the stars, and the moon will soon be up."

"Make haste, men!" cried Pentaur. "The three best horses for me, Horus, and Kaschta; the rest remain here."

As the red-bearded soldier led the horses forward, the moon shone forth, and within an hour the travellers had reached the plain; they sprang on to the beasts and rode madly on towards the lake, which, when the sun rose, gleamed before them in silvery green. As they drew near to it they could discern, on its treeless western shore, black masses moving hither and thither; clouds of dust rose up from the plain, pierced by flashes of light, like the rays of the sun reflected from a moving mirror.

* This name occurs among the Cheta on the triumphal Monuments of the Ramesseum.

“The battle is begun!” cried Horus; and he fell sobbing on his horse’s neck.

“But all is not lost yet!” exclaimed the poet, spurring his horse to a final effort of strength. His companions did the same, but first Kaschta’s horse fell under him, then Horus’s broke down.

“Help may be given by the left wing!” cried Horus. “I will run as fast as I can on foot, I know where to find them. You will easily find the king if you follow the stream to the stone bridge. In the cross-valley about a thousand paces farther north—to the north-west of our stronghold—the surprise is to be effected. Try to get through, and warn Rameses; the Egyptian pass-word is ‘Bent-Anat,’ the name of the king’s favorite daughter. But even if you had wings, and could fly straight to him, they would overpower him if I cannot succeed in turning the left wing on the rear of the enemy.”

Pentaur galloped onwards; but it was not long before his horse too gave way, and he ran forward like a man who runs a race, and shouted the pass-word “Bent-Anat”—for the ring of her name seemed to give him vigor. Presently he came upon a mounted messenger of the enemy; he struck him down from his horse, flung himself into the saddle, and rushed on towards the camp, as if he were riding to his wedding.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DURING the night which had proved so eventful to our friends, much had occurred in the king’s camp, for the troops were to advance to the long-anticipated battle before sunrise.

Paaker had given his false report of the enemy's movements to the Pharaoh with his own hand; a council of war had been held, and each division had received instructions as to where it was to take up its position. The corps, which bore the name of the Sun-god Ra, advanced from the south towards Schabatun,* so as to surround the lake on the east, and fall on the enemy's flank; the corps of Seth, composed of men from lower Egypt, was sent on to Arnam to form the centre; the king himself, with the flower of the chariot-guard, proposed to follow the road through the valley, which Paakar's report represented as a safe and open passage to the plain of the Orontes. Thus, while the other divisions occupied the enemy, he could cross the Orontes by a ford, and fall on the rear of the fortress of Kadesh from the north-west. The corps of Amon, with the Ethiopian mercenaries, were to support him, joining him by another route, which the pioneer's false indications represented as connecting the line of operations. The corps of Ptah remained as a reserve behind the left wing.

* Kadesh was the chief city of the Cheta, *i. e.* Aramæans, round which the united forces of all the peoples of western Asia had collected. There were several cities called Kadesh. That which frequently checked the forces of Thotmes III. may have been situated farther to the south; but the Cheta city of Kadesh, where Rameses II. fought so hard a battle, was undoubtedly on the Orontes, for the river which is depicted on the pylon of the Ramesseum as parting into two streams which wash the walls of the fortress, is called Aruntha, and in the Epos of Pentaur it is stated that this battle took place at Kadesh by the Orontes. The name of the city survives, at a spot just three miles north of the lake of Riblah. The battle itself I have described from the epos of Pentaur, the national epic of Egypt. It ends with these words: "This was written and made by the scribe Pentaur." It was so highly esteemed that it is engraved in stone twice at Luqsor, and once at Karnak. Copies of it on papyrus are frequent; for instance, papyrus Sallier III. and papyrus Raifet—unfortunately much injured—in the Louvre. The principal incident, the rescue of the king from the enemy, is repeated at the Ramesseum at Thebes, and at Abu Simbel. It was translated into French by Vicomte E. de Rougé. The camp of Rameses is depicted on the pylons of Luqsor and the Ramesseum.

The soldiers had not gone to rest as usual; heavily-armed troops, who bore in one hand a shield of half a man's height, and in the other a scimitar, or a short, pointed sword, guarded the camp,* where numerous fires burned, round which crowded the resting warriors. Here a wine-skin was passed from hand to hand, there a joint was roasting on a wooden spit; farther on a party were throwing dice for the booty they had won, or playing at morra. All was in eager activity, and many a scuffle occurred among the excited soldiers, and had to be settled by the camp-watch.

Near the enclosed plots, where the horses were tethered, the smiths were busily engaged in shoeing the beasts which needed it, and in sharpening the points of the lances; the servants of the chariot-guard were also fully occupied, as the chariots had for the most part been brought over the mountains in detached pieces on the backs of pack-horses and asses,** and now had to be put together again, and to have their wheels greased. On the eastern side of the camp stood a canopy, under which the standards were kept, and there numbers of priests were occupied in their office of blessing the warriors, offering sacrifices, and singing hymns and litanies. But these pious sounds were frequently overpowered by the loud voices of the gamblers and revellers, by the blows of the hammers, the hoarse braying of the asses, and the neighing of the horses. From time to time also the deep roar of the king's war-lions*** might be heard; these beasts followed him into the fight, and were now howling for food, as they had been kept fasting to excite their fury.

* Representations of Rameses' camp are preserved on the pylons of the temple of Luxor and the Ramesseum.

** The different parts of dismembered chariots are represented as being carried on asses in the picture of the camp in the Ramesseum.

*** See Diodorus, I. 47. Also the pictures of the king rushing to the fight.

In the midst of the camp stood the king's tent, surrounded by foot and chariot-guards. The auxiliary troops were encamped in divisions according to their nationality, and between them the Egyptian legions of heavy-armed soldiers and archers. Here might be seen the black Ethiopian with woolly matted hair, in which a few feathers were stuck—the handsome, well-proportioned “Son of the desert” from the sandy Arabian shore of the Red Sea, who performed his wild war-dance flourishing his lance, with a peculiar wriggle of his hips—pale Sardinians, with metal helmets and heavy swords—light colored Libyans, with tattooed arms and ostrich-feathers on their heads—brown, bearded Arabs, worshippers of the stars, inseparable from their horses, and armed, some with lances, and some with bows and arrows. And not less various than their aspect were the tongues of the allied troops—but all obedient to the king's word of command.

In the midst of the royal tents was a lightly constructed temple with the statues of the Gods of Thebes, and of the king's forefathers; clouds of incense rose in front of it, for the priests were engaged from the eve of the battle until it was over, in prayers, and offerings to Amon, the king of the Gods, to Necheb, the Goddess of victory, and to Menth, the God of war.

The keeper of the lions stood by the Pharaoh's sleeping-tent, and the tent, which served as a council-chamber, was distinguished by the standards in front of it; but the council-tent was empty and still, while in the kitchen-tent, as well as in the wine-store close by, all was in a bustle. The large pavilion, in which Rameses and his suite were taking their evening meal, was more brilliantly lighted than all the others; it was

a covered tent, a long square in shape, and all round it were colored lamps, which made it as light as day; a body-guard of Sardinians, Libyans, and Egyptians guarded it with drawn swords, and seemed too wholly absorbed with the importance of their office even to notice the dishes and wine-jars, which the king's pages—the sons of the highest families in Egypt—took at the tent-door from the cooks and butlers.

The walls and slanting roof of this quickly-built and movable banqueting-hall, consisted of a strong, impenetrable carpet-stuff, woven at Thebes, and afterwards dyed purple at Tanis by the Phœnicians. Saitic artists had embroidered the vulture, one of the forms in which Necheb appears, a hundred times on the costly material with threads of silver. The cedar-wood pillars of the tent were covered with gold, and the ropes, which secured the light erection to the tent-pegs, were twisted of silk, and thin threads of silver.* Seated round four tables, more than a hundred men were taking their evening meal; at three of them the generals of the army, the chief priests, and councillors, sat on light stools; at the fourth, and at some distance from the others, were the princes of the blood; and the king himself sat apart at a high table, on a throne supported by gilt figures of Asiatic prisoners in chains. His table and throne stood on a low dais covered with panther-skin; but even without that Rameses would have towered above his companions. His form was powerful, and there was a commanding aspect in his bearded face, and in the high brow, crowned with a golden diadem adorned with the heads of two Uræus-snakes, wearing the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt. A broad collar of precious stones

* Silk was certainly known in the time of the Ptolemies. The transparent *Bombyx* tissues of Cos were celebrated. Pariset, *Histoire de la Soie*, 1862.

covered half his breast, the lower half was concealed by a scarf or belt, and his bare arms were adorned with bracelets. His finely-proportioned limbs looked as if moulded in bronze, so smoothly were the powerful muscles covered with the shining copper-colored skin. Sitting here among those who were devoted to him, he looked with kind and fatherly pride at his blooming sons.

The lion was at rest—but nevertheless he was a lion, and terrible things might be looked for when he should rouse himself, and when the mighty hand, which now dispensed bread, should be clenched for the fight. There was nothing mean in this man, and yet nothing alarming; for, if his eye had a commanding sparkle, the expression of his mouth was particularly gentle; and the deep voice which could make itself heard above the clash of fighting men, could also assume the sweetest and most winning tones. His education had not only made him well aware of his greatness and power, but had left him also a genuine man, a stranger to none of the emotions of the human soul.

Behind Pharaoh stood a man, younger than himself, who gave him his wine-cup after first touching it with his own lips; this was Mena, the king's charioteer and favorite companion. His figure was slight and yet vigorous, supple and yet dignified, and his finely-formed features and frank bright eyes were full at once of self-respect and of benevolence. Such a man might fail in reflection and counsel, but would be admirable as an honorable, staunch, and faithful friend.

Among the princes, Chamus* sat nearest to the king;

* He is named Cha-em-Us on the monuments, *i. e.*, 'splendor in Thebes.' He became the Sam, or high-priest of Memphis. His mummy was discovered by Mariette in the tomb of Apis at Saqqarah during his excavations of the Serapeum at Memphis.

he was the eldest of his sons, and while still young had been invested with the dignity of high-priest of Memphis. The curly-haired Rameri, who had been rescued from imprisonment—into which he had fallen on his journey from Egypt—had been assigned a place with the younger princes at the lowest end of the table.

“It all sounds very threatening!” said the king. “But though each of you croakers speaks the truth, your love for me dims your sight. In fact, all that Rameri has told me, that Bent-Anat writes, that Mena’s stud-keeper says of Ani, and that comes through other channels—amounts to nothing that need disturb us. I know your uncle—I know that he will make his borrowed throne as wide as he possibly can; but when we return home he will be quite content to sit on a narrow seat again. Great enterprises and daring deeds are not what he excels in; but he is very apt at carrying out a ready-made system, and therefore I choose him to be my Regent.”

“But Ameni,” said Chamus, bowing respectfully to his father, “seems to have stirred up his ambition, and to support him with his advice. The chief of the House of Seti is a man of great ability, and at least half of the priesthood are his adherents.”

“I know it,” replied the king. “Their lordships owe me a grudge because I have called their serfs to arms, and they want them to till their acres. A pretty sort of people they have sent me! their courage flies with the first arrow. They shall guard the camp tomorrow; they will be equal to that when it is made clear to their understanding that, if they let the tents be taken, the bread, meat and wines-skins will also fall into the hands of the enemy. If Kadesh is taken by

storm, the temples of the Nile shall have the greater part of the spoil, and you yourself, my young high-priest of Memphis, shall show your colleagues that Rameses repays in bushels that which he has taken in handfuls from the ministers of the Gods."

"Ameni's disaffection," replied Chamus, "has a deeper root; thy mighty spirit seeks and finds its own way—"

"But their lordships," interrupted Rameses, "are accustomed to govern the king too, and I—I do not do them credit. I rule as vicar of the Lord of the Gods, but—I myself am no God, though they attribute to me the honors of a divinity; and in all humility of heart I willingly leave it to them to be the mediators between the Immortals and me or my people. Human affairs certainly I choose to manage in my own way. And now no more of them. I cannot bear to doubt my friends, and trustfulness is so dear, so essential to me, that I must indulge in it even if my confidence results in my being deceived."

The king glanced at Mena, who handed him a golden cup—which he emptied. He looked at the glittering beaker, and then, with a flash of his grave, bright eyes, he added:

"And if I am betrayed—if ten such as Ameni and Ani entice my people into a snare—I shall return home, and will tread the reptiles into dust."

His deep voice rang out the words, as if he were a herald proclaiming a victorious deed of arms. Not a word was spoken, not a hand moved, when he ceased speaking. Then he raised his cup, and said:

"It is well before the battle to uplift our hearts! We have done great deeds; distant nations have felt

our hand; we have planted our pillars of conquest by their rivers, and graven the record of our deeds on their rocks.* Your king is great above all kings, and it is through the might of the Gods, and your valor—my brave comrades. May to-morrow's fight bring us new glory! May the Immortals soon bring this war to a close! Empty your wine cups with me—To victory and a speedy return home in peace!”

“Victory! Victory! Long life to the Pharaoh! Strength and health!” cried the guests of the king, who, as he descended from his throne, cried to the drinkers:

“Now, rest till the star of Isis sets. Then follow me to prayer at the altar of Amon, and then—to battle.”

Fresh cries of triumph sounded through the room, while Rameses gave his hand with a few words of encouragement to each of his sons in turn. He desired the two youngest, Mernephtah and Rameri to follow him, and quitting the banquet with them and Mena, he proceeded, under the escort of his officers and guards, who bore staves before him with golden lilies and ostrich-feathers, to his sleeping-tent, which was surrounded by a corps d'élite under the command of his sons. Before entering the tent he asked for some pieces of meat, and gave them with his own hand to his lions, who let him stroke them like tame cats.

Then he glanced round the stable, patted the sleek necks and shoulders of his favorite horses, and decided

* Herodotus speaks of the pictures graven on the rocks in the provinces conquered by Rameses II., in memory of his achievements. He saw two, one of which remains on a rock near Beirut.

that 'Nura'* and 'Victory to Thebes' should bear him into the battle on the morrow.

When he had gone into the sleeping-tent, he desired his attendants to leave him; he signed Mena to divest him of his ornaments and his arms, and called to him his youngest sons, who were waiting respectfully at the door of the tent.

"Why did I desire you to accompany me?" he asked them gravely. Both were silent, and he repeated his question.

"Because," said Rameri at length, "you observed that all was not quite right between us two."

"And because," continued the king, "I desire that unity should exist between my children. You will have enemies enough to fight with to-morrow, but friends are not often to be found, and are too often taken from us by the fortune of war. We ought to feel no anger towards the friend we may lose, but expect to meet him lovingly in the other world. Speak, Rameri, what has caused a division between you?"

"I bear him no ill-will," answered Rameri. "You lately gave me the sword which Merneptah has there stuck in his belt, because I did my duty well in the last skirmish with the enemy. You know we both sleep in the same tent, and yesterday, when I drew my sword out of its sheath to admire the fine work of the blade, I found that another, not so sharp, had been put in its place."

"I had only exchanged my sword for his in fun," interrupted Merneptah. "But he can never take a joke, and declared I want to wear a prize that I had

* The horses driven by Rameses at the battle of Kadesh were in fact thus named.

not earned; he would try, he said, to win another and then—”

“ I have heard enough; you have both done wrong,” said the king. “ Even in fun, Merneptah, you should never cheat or deceive. I did so once, and I will tell you what happened, as a warning.

“ My noble mother, Tuaa, desired me, the first time I went into Fenchu* to bring her a pebble from the shore near Byblos, where the body of Osiris was washed. As we returned to Thebes, my mother’s request returned to my mind; I was young and thoughtless—I picked up a stone by the way-side, took it with me, and when she asked me for the remembrance from Byblos I silently gave her the pebble from Thebes. She was delighted, she showed it to her brothers and sisters, and laid it by the statues of her ancestors; but I was miserable with shame and penitence, and at last I secretly took away the stone, and threw it into the water. All the servants were called together, and strict enquiry was made as to the theft of the stone; then I could hold out no longer, and confessed every thing. No one punished me, and yet I never suffered more severely; from that time I have never deviated from the exact truth even in jest. Take the lesson to heart, Merneptah—you, Rameri, take back your sword, and, believe me, life brings us so many real causes of vexation, that it is well to learn early to pass lightly over little things if you do not wish to become a surly fellow like the pioneer Paaker; and that seems far from likely with a gay, reckless temper like yours. Now shake hands with each other.”

The young princes went up to each other, and

* Phœnicia: on monuments of the 18th dynasty.

Rameri fell on his brother's neck and kissed him. The king stroked their heads. "Now go in peace," he said, "and to-morrow you shall both strive to win a fresh mark of honor."

When his sons had left the tent, Rameses turned to his charioteer and said:

"I have to speak to you too before the battle. I can read your soul through your eyes, and it seems to me that things have gone wrong with you since the keeper of your stud arrived here. What has happened in Thebes?"

Mena looked frankly, but sadly at the king:

"My mother-in-law Katuti," he said, "is managing my estate very badly, pledging the land, and selling the cattle."

"That can be remedied," said Rameses kindly. "You know I promised to grant you the fulfilment of a wish, if Nefert trusted you as perfectly as you believe. But it appears to me as if something more nearly concerning you than this were wrong, for I never knew you anxious about money and lands. Speak openly! you know I am your father, and the heart and the eye of the man who guides my horses in battle, must be open without reserve to my gaze."

Mena kissed the king's robe; then he said:

"Nefert has left Katuti's house, and as thou knowest has followed thy daughter, Bent-Anat, to the sacred mountain, and to Megiddo."

"I thought the change was a good one," replied Rameses. "I leave Bent-Anat in the care of Bent-Anat, for she needs no other guardianship, and your wife can have no better protector than Bent-Anat."

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Mena with sincere emphasis. "But before they started, miserable things occurred. Thou knowest that before she married me she

was betrothed to her cousin, the pioneer Paaker, and he, during his stay in Thebes, has gone in and out of my house, has helped Katuti with an enormous sum to pay the debts of my wild brother-in-law, and—as my stud-keeper saw with his own eyes—has made presents of flowers to Nefert.”

The king smiled, laid his hand on Mena's shoulder, and said, as he looked in his face: “Your wife will trust you, although you take a strange woman into your tent, and you allow yourself to doubt her because her cousin gives her some flowers! Is that wise or just? I believe you are jealous of the broad-shouldered ruffian that some spiteful wight laid in the nest of the noble Mohar, his father.”

“No, that I am not,” replied Mena, “nor does any doubt of Nefert disturb my soul; but it torments me, it nettles me, it disgusts me, that Paaker of all men, whom I loathe as a venomous spider, should look at her and make her presents under my very roof.”

“He who looks for faith must give faith,” said the king. “And must not I myself submit to accept songs of praise from the most contemptible wretches? Come—smooth your brow; think of the approaching victory, of our return home, and remember that you have less to forgive Paaker than he to forgive you. Now, pray go and see to the horses, and to-morrow morning let me see you on my chariot full of cheerful courage—as I love to see you.”

Mena left the tent, and went to the stables; there he met Rameri, who was waiting to speak to him. The eager boy said that he had always looked up to him and loved him as a brilliant example, but that lately he had been perplexed as to his virtuous fidelity, for he had been informed that Mena had taken a strange

woman into his tent—he who was married to the fairest and sweetest woman in Thebes.

“ I have known her,” he concluded, “ as well as if I were her brother ; and I know that she would die if she heard that you had insulted and disgraced her. Yes, insulted her ; for such a public breach of faith is an insult to the wife of an Egyptian. Forgive my freedom of speech, but who knows what to-morrow may bring forth—and I would not for worlds go out to battle, thinking evil of you.”

Mena let Rameri speak without interruption, and then answered :

“ You are as frank as your father, and have learned from him to hear the defendant before you condemn him. A strange maiden, the daughter of the king of the Danaids,* lives in my tent, but I for months have slept at the door of your father’s, and I have not once entered my own since she has been there. Now sit down by me, and let me tell you how it all happened. We had pitched the camp before Kadesh, and there was very little for me to do, as Rameses was still laid up with his wound, so I often passed my time in hunting on the shores of the lake. One day I went as usual, armed only with my bow and arrow, and, accompanied by my grey-hounds,** heedlessly followed

* A people of the Greeks at the time of the Trojan war. They are mentioned among the nations of the Mediterranean allied against Rameses III. The Dardaneans, inhabitants of the Trojan provinces of Dardania, and whose name was used for the Trojans generally, are mentioned with the people of Pisidia (Pidasa), Mysia (Masa), and Ilion (Iliuna), as allies of the Cheta, in the epos of Pentaur. It is probable that the princes of the islands near the coast of Asia Minor would form alliances with those of western Asia. Brugsch, who sees in the nations allied with the Libyans against Rameses III. Caucasian mercenaries, attempts to place the Dardaneans in Kurdistan.

** Grey-hounds, trained to hunt hares, are represented in the most ancient tombs, for instance, the Mastaba at Meydum, belonging to the time of Snefru (four centuries B. C.). Birch treats the dogs used by the Egyptians in the “ Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology, 1875, pages 172-195.

a hare; a troop of Danaids fell upon me, bound me with cords, and led me into their camp. There I was led before the judges as a spy, and they had actually condemned me, and the rope was round my neck, when their king came up, saw me, and subjected me to a fresh examination. I told him the facts at full length—how I had fallen into the hands of his people while following up my game, and not as an enemy, and he heard me favorably, and granted me not only life but freedom. He knew me for a noble, and treated me as one, inviting me to feed at his own table, and I swore in my heart, when he let me go, that I would make him some return for his generous conduct.

“About a month after, we succeeded in surprising the Cheta position, and the Libyan soldiers, among other spoil, brought away the Danaid king’s only daughter. I had behaved valiantly, and when we came to the division of the spoils Rameses allowed me to choose first. I laid my hand on the maid, the daughter of my deliverer and host, I led her to my tent, and left her there with her waiting-women till peace is concluded, and I can restore her to her father.”

“Forgive my doubts!” cried Rameri holding out his hand. “Now I understand why the king so particularly enquired whether Nefert believed in your constancy to her.”

“And what was your answer?” asked Mena.

“That she thinks of you day and night, and never for an instant doubted you. My father seemed delighted too, and he said to Chamus: ‘He has won there!’”

“He will grant me some great favor,” said Mena in explanation, “if, when she hears I have taken a

strange maiden to my tent her confidence in me is not shaken, Rameses considers it simply impossible, but I know that I shall win. Why! she must trust me."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

BEFORE the battle,* prayers were offered and victims sacrificed for each division of the army. Images of the Gods were borne through the ranks in their festal barks, and miraculous relics were exhibited to the soldiers; heralds announced that the high-priest had found favorable omens in the victims offered by the king, and that the haruspices foretold a glorious victory. Each Egyptian legion turned with particular faith to the standard which bore the image of the sacred animal or symbol of the province where it had been levied, but each soldier was also provided with charms and amulets of various kinds; one had tied to his neck or arm a magical text in a little bag, another the mystic preservative eye, and most of them wore a scarabæus in a finger-ring. Many believed themselves protected by having a few hairs or feathers of some sacred animal, and not a few put themselves under the protection of a living snake or beetle carefully concealed in a pocket of their apron or in their little provision-sack.

When the king, before whom were carried the images of the divine Triad of Thebes, of Menth, the God of War and of Necheb, the Goddess of Victory, reviewed the ranks, he was borne in a litter on the shoulders of twenty-four noble youths; at his approach the whole host fell on their knees, and did not rise till Rameses,

* The battle about to be described is taken entirely from the epos of Pentaur.

descending from his position, had, in the presence of them all, burned incense, and made a libation to the Gods, and his son Chamus had delivered to him, in the name of the Immortals, the symbols of life and power. Finally, the priests sang a choral hymn to the Sun-god Ra, and to his son and vicar on earth, the king.

Just as the troops were put in motion, the paling stars appeared in the sky, which had hitherto been covered with thick clouds; and this occurrence was regarded as a favorable omen, the priests declaring to the army that, as the coming Ra had dispersed the clouds, so the Pharaoh would scatter his enemies.

With no sound of trumpet or drum, so as not to arouse the enemy, the foot-soldiers went forward in close order, the chariot-warriors, each in his light two-wheeled chariot drawn by two horses, formed their ranks, and the king placed himself at their head. On each side of the gilt chariot in which he stood, a case was fixed, glittering with precious stones, in which were his bows and arrows. His noble horses were richly caparisoned; purple housings, embroidered with turquoise beads, covered their backs and necks, and a crown-shaped ornament was fixed on their heads, from which fluttered a bunch of white ostrich-feathers. At the end of the ebony pole of the chariot, were two small padded yokes, which rested on the necks of the horses, who pranced in front as if playing with the light vehicle, pawed the earth with their small hoofs, and tossed and curved their slender necks.

The king wore a shirt of mail,* over which lay the broad purple girdle of his apron, and on his head was the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt; behind him stood

* The remains of a shirt of mail, dating from the time of Scheschenk I. (Sesonchis), who belonged to the 22d dynasty, is in the British Museum. It is made of leather, on which bronze scales are fastened.

Mena, who, with his left hand, tightly held the reins, and with his right the shield which was to protect his sovereign in the fight.

The king stood like a storm-proof oak, and Mena by his side like a sapling ash.

The eastern horizon was rosy with the approaching sun-rise when they quitted the precincts of the camp; at this moment the pioneer Paaker advanced to meet the king, threw himself on the ground before him, kissed the earth, and, in answer to the king's question as to why he had come without his brother, told him that Horus was taken suddenly ill. The shades of dawn concealed from the king the guilty color, which changed to sallow paleness, on the face of the pioneer—unaccustomed hitherto to lying and treason.

“How is it with the enemy?” asked Rameses.

“He is aware,” replied Paaker, “that a fight is impending, and is collecting numberless hosts in the camps to the south and east of the city. If thou could'st succeed in falling on the rear from the north of Kadesh, while the foot soldiers seize the camp of the Asiatics from the south, the fortress will be thine before night. The mountain path that thou must follow, so as not to be discovered, is not a bad one.”

“Are you ill as well as your brother, man?” asked the king. “Your voice trembles.”

“I was never better,” answered the Mohar.

“Lead the way,” commanded the king, and Paakar obeyed. They went on in silence, followed by the vast troop of chariots through the dewy morning air, first across the plain, and then into the mountain range. The corps of Ra, armed with bows and arrows, preceded them to clear the way; they crossed

the narrow bed of a dry torrent, and then a broad valley opened before them, extending to the right and left and enclosed by ranges of mountains.

"The road is good," said Rameses, turning to Mena. "The Mohar has learned his duties from his father, and his horses are capital. Now he leads the way, and points it out to the guards, and then in a moment he is close to us again."

"They are the golden-bays of my breed," said Mena, and the veins started angrily in his forehead. "My stud-master tells me that Katuti sent them to him before his departure. They were intended for Nefert's chariot, and he drives them to-day to defy and spite me."

"You have the wife—let the horses go," said Rameses soothingly.

Suddenly a blast of trumpets rang through the morning air; whence it came could not be seen, and yet it sounded close at hand.

Rameses started up and took his battle-axe from his girdle, the horses pricked their ears, and Mena exclaimed—

"Those are the trumpets of the Cheta! I know the sound."

A closed wagon with four wheels in which the king's lions were conveyed, followed the royal chariot.

"Let loose the lions!" cried the king, who heard an echoing war cry, and soon after saw the vanguard which had preceded him, and which was broken up by the chariots of the enemy, flying towards him down the valley again.

The wild beasts shook their manes and sprang in front of their master's chariot with loud roars. Mena

lashed his whip, the horses started forward and rushed with frantic plunges towards the fugitives, who however could not be brought to a standstill, or rallied by the king's voice—the enemy were close upon them, cutting them down.

“Where is Paaker?” asked the king. But the pioneer had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed him and his chariot.

The flying Egyptians and the death-dealing chariots of the enemy came nearer and nearer, the ground trembled, the tramp of hoofs and the roar of wheels sounded louder and louder, like the roll of a rapidly approaching storm.

Then Rameses gave out a war cry, that rang back from the cliffs on the right hand and on the left like the blast of a trumpet; his chariot-guard joined in the shout—for an instant the flying Egyptians paused, but only to rush on again with double haste, in hope of escape and safety: suddenly the war-cry of the enemy was heard behind the king, mingling with the trumpet-call of the Cheta, and out from a cross valley, which the king had passed unheeded by—and into which Paaker had disappeared—came an innumerable host of chariots which, before the king could retreat, had broken through the Egyptian ranks, and cut him off from the body of his army. Behind him he could hear the roar and shock of the battle, in front of him he saw the fugitives, the fallen, and the enemy growing each instant in numbers and fury. He saw the whole danger, and drew up his powerful form as if to prove whether it were an equal match for such a foe. Then, raising his voice to such a pitch, that it sounded above the cries and groans of the fighting men, the words of

command, the neighing of the horses, the crash of overturned chariots, the dull whirr of lances and swords, their heavy blows on shields and helmets, and the whole bewildering tumult of the battle—with a loud shout he drew his bow, and his first arrow pierced a Cheta chief.

His lions sprang forward, and carried confusion into the hosts that were crowding down upon him, for many of their horses became unmanageable at the roar of the furious brutes, overthrew the chariots, and so hemmed the advance of the troops in the rear. Rameses sent arrow after arrow, while Mena covered him with the shield from the shots of the enemy. His horses meanwhile had carried him forward, and he could fell the foremost of the Asiatics with his battle-axe; close by his side fought Rameri and three other princes; in front of him were the lions.

The press was fearful, and the raging of the battle wild and deafening, like the roar of the surging ocean when it is hurled by a hurricane against a rocky coast.

Mena seemed to be in two places at once, for, while he guided the horses forwards, backwards, or to either hand, as the exigences of the position demanded, not one of the arrows shot at the king touched him. His eye was everywhere, the shield always ready, and not an eyelash of the young hero trembled, while Rameses, each moment more infuriated, incited his lions with wild war-cries, and with flashing eyes advanced farther and farther into the enemy's ranks.

Three arrows aimed, not at the king but at Mena himself, were sticking in the charioteer's shield, and

by chance he saw written on the shaft of one of them the words "Death to Mena."

A fourth arrow whizzed past him. His eye followed its flight, and as he marked the spot whence it had come, a fifth wounded his shoulder, and he cried out to the king:

"We are betrayed! Look over there! Paaker is fighting with the Cheta."

Once more the Mohar had bent his bow, and came so near to the king's chariot that he could be heard exclaiming in a hoarse voice, as he let the bowstring snap, "Now I will reckon with you—thief! robber! My bride is your wife, but with this arrow I will win Mena's widow."

The arrow cut through the air, and fell with fearful force on the charioteer's helmet; the shield fell from his grasp, and he put his hand to his head, feeling stunned; he heard Paaker's laugh of triumph, he felt another of his enemy's arrows cut his wrist, and, beside himself with rage, he flung away the reins, brandished his battle-axe, and forgetting himself and his duty, sprang from the chariot and rushed upon Paaker. The Mohar awaited him with uplifted sword; his lips were white, his eyes bloodshot, his wide nostrils trembled like those of an over-driven horse, and foaming and hissing he flew at his mortal foe. The king saw the two engaged in a struggle, but he could not interfere, for the reins which Mena had dropped were dragging on the ground, and his ungoverned horses, following the lions, carried him madly onwards.

Most of his comrades had fallen, the battle raged all round him, but Rameses stood as firm as a rock, held the shield in front of him, and swung the deadly

battle-axe; he saw Rameri hastening towards him with his horses, the youth was fighting like a hero, and Rameses called out to encourage him: "Well done! a worthy grandson of Seti!"

"I will win a new sword!" cried the boy, and he cleft the skull of one of his antagonists. But he was soon surrounded by the chariots of the enemy; the king saw the enemy pull down the young prince's horses, and all his comrades—among whom were many of the best warriors—turn their horses in flight.

Then one of the lions was pierced by a lance, and sank with a dying roar of rage and pain that was heard above all the tumult. The king himself had been grazed by an arrow, a sword stroke had shivered his shield, and his last arrow had been shot away.

Still spreading death around him, he saw death closing in upon him, and, without giving up the struggle, he lifted up his voice in fervent prayer, calling on Amon for support and rescue.

While thus in the sorest need he was addressing himself to the Lords of Heaven, a tall Egyptian suddenly appeared in the midst of the struggle and turmoil of the battle, seized the reins, and sprang into the chariot behind the king, to whom he bowed respectfully. For the first time Rameses felt a thrill of fear. Was this a miracle? Had Amon heard his prayer?

He looked half fearfully round at his new charioteer, and when he fancied he recognized the features of the deceased Mohar, the father of the traitor Paaker, he believed that Amon had assumed this aspect, and had come himself to save him.

"Help is at hand!" cried his new companion. "If

we hold our own for only a short time longer, thou art saved, and victory is ours."

Then once more Rameses raised his war-cry, felled a Cheta, who was standing close to him to the ground, with a blow on his skull, while the mysterious supporter by his side, who covered him with the shield, on his part also dealt many terrible strokes.

Thus some long minutes passed in renewed strife; then a trumpet sounded above the roar of the battle, and this time Rameses recognized the call of the Egyptians; from behind a low ridge on his right rushed some thousands of men of the foot-legion of Ptah who, under the command of Horus, fell upon the enemy's flank. They saw their king, and the danger he was in. They flung themselves with fury on the foes that surrounded him, dealing death as they advanced, and putting the Cheta to flight, and soon Rameses saw himself safe, and protected by his followers.

But his mysterious friend in need had vanished. He had been hit by an arrow, and had fallen to the earth—a quite mortal catastrophe; but Rameses still believed that one of the Immortals had come to his rescue.

But the king granted no long respite to his horses and his fighting-men; he turned to go back by the way by which he had come, fell upon the forces which divided him from the main army, took them in the rear while they were still occupied with his chariot-brigade which was already giving way, and took most of the Asiatics prisoners who escaped the arrows and swords of the Egyptians. Having rejoined the main body of the troops, he pushed forwards across the plain where the Asiatic horse and chariot-legions were en-

gaged with the Egyptian swordsmen, and forced the enemy back upon the river Orontes and the lake of Kadesh. Night-fall put an end to the battle, though early next morning the struggle was renewed.

Utter discouragement had fallen upon the Asiatic allies, who had gone into battle in full security of victory; for the pioneer Paaker had betrayed his king into their hands.

When the Pharaoh had set out, the best chariot-warriors of the Cheta were drawn up in a spot concealed by the city, and sent forward against Rameses through the northern opening of the valley by which he was to pass, while other troops of approved valor, in all two thousand five hundred chariots, were to fall upon him from a cross valley where they took up their position during the night.

These tactics had been successfully carried out, and notwithstanding the Asiatics had suffered a severe defeat—besides losing some of their noblest heroes, among them Titure their Chancellor, and Chiropasar,* the chronicler of the Cheta king, who could wield the sword as effectively as the pen, and who, it was intended, should celebrate the victory of the allies, and perpetuate its glory to succeeding generations. Rameses had killed one of these with his own hands, and his unknown companion the other, and besides these many other brave captains of the enemy's troops. The king was greeted as a god, when he returned to the camp, with shouts of triumph and hymns of praise.

Even the temple-servants, and the miserable troops from Upper Egypt—ground down by the long war, and

* These names and titles occur as those of fallen Chetas on the pylon of the Ramesscum,

bought over by Ani—were carried away by the universal enthusiasm, and joyfully hailed the hero and king who had successfully broken the stiff necks of his enemies.

The next duty was to seek out the dead and wounded; among the latter was Mena; Rameri also was missing, but news was brought next day that he had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and he was immediately exchanged for the princess who had been sheltered in Mena's tent.

Paaker had disappeared; but the bays which he had driven into the battle were found unhurt in front of his ruined and blood-sprinkled chariot.

The Egyptians were masters of Kadesh, and Chetasar, the king of the Cheta, sued to be allowed to treat for peace, in his own name and in that of his allies; but Rameses refused to grant any terms till he had returned to the frontier of Egypt. The conquered peoples had no choice, and the representative of the Cheta king—who himself was wounded—and twelve princes of the principal nations who had fought against Rameses, were forced to follow his victorious train. Every respect was shown them, and they were treated as the king himself, but they were none the less his prisoners. The king was anxious to lose no time, for sad suspicion filled his heart; a shadow hitherto unknown to his bright and genial nature had fallen upon his spirit.

This was the first occasion on which one of his own people had betrayed him to the enemy. Paaker's deed had shaken his friendly confidence, and in his petition for peace the Cheta prince had intimated that

Rameses might find much in his household to be set to rights—perhaps with a strong hand.

The king felt himself more than equal to cope with Ani, the priests, and all whom he had left in Egypt; but it grieved him to be obliged to feel any loss of confidence, and it was harder to him to bear than any reverse of fortune. It urged him to hasten his return to Egypt.

There was another thing which embittered his victory. Mena, whom he loved as his own son, who understood his lightest sign, who, as soon as he mounted his chariot, was there by his side like a part of himself—had been dismissed from his office by the judgment of the commander-in-chief, and no longer drove his horses. He himself had been obliged to confirm this decision as just and even mild, for that man was worthy of death who exposed his king to danger for the gratification of his own revenge.

Rameses had not seen Mena since his struggle with Paaker, but he listened anxiously to the news which was brought him of the progress of his sorely wounded officer.

The cheerful, decided, and practical nature of Rameses was averse to every kind of dreaminess or self-absorption, and no one had ever seen him, even in hours of extreme weariness, give himself up to vague and melancholy brooding; but now he would often sit gazing at the ground in wrapt meditation, and start like an awakened sleeper when his reverie was disturbed by the requirements of the outer world around him. A hundred times before he had looked death in the face, and defied it as he would any other enemy, but now it seemed as though he felt the cold hand of

the mighty adversary on his heart. He could not forget the oppressive sense of helplessness which had seized him when he had felt himself at the mercy of the unrestrained horses, like a leaf driven by the wind, and then suddenly saved by a miracle.

A miracle? Was it really Amon who had appeared in human form at his call? Was he indeed a son of the Gods, and did their blood flow in his veins?

The Immortals had shown him peculiar favor, but still he was but a man; that he realized from the pain in his wound, and the treason to which he had been a victim. He felt as if he had been respited on the very scaffold. Yes; he was a man like all other men, and so he would still be. He rejoiced in the obscurity that veiled his future, in the many weaknesses which he had in common with those whom he loved, and even in the feeling that he, under the same conditions of life as his contemporaries, had more responsibilities than they.

Shortly after his victory, after all the important passes and strongholds had been conquered by his troops, he set out for Egypt with his train and the vanquished princes. He sent two of his sons to Bent-Anat at Megiddo, to escort her by sea to Pelusium; he knew that the commandant of the harbor of that frontier fortress, at the easternmost limit of his kingdom, was faithful to him, and he ordered that his daughter should not quit the ship till he arrived, to secure her against any attempt on the part of the Regent. A large part of the material of war, and most of the wounded, were also sent to Egypt by sea.

CHAPTER XL.

NEARLY three months had passed since the battle of Kadesh, and to-day the king was expected, on his way home with his victorious army, at Pelusium, the stronghold and key of Egyptian dominion in the east.* Splendid preparations had been made for his reception, and the man who took the lead in the festive arrangements with a zeal that was doubly effective from his composed demeanor was no less a person than the Regent Ani.

His chariot was to be seen everywhere: now he was with the workmen, who were to decorate triumphal arches with fresh flowers; now with the slaves, who were hanging garlands on the wooden lions erected on the road for this great occasion; now—and this detained him longest—he watched the progress of the immense palace which was being rapidly constructed of wood on the site where formerly the camp of the Hyksos had stood,** in which the actual ceremony of receiving the king was to take place, and where the Pharaoh and his immediate followers were to reside. It had been found possible, by employing several thousand laborers, to erect this magnificent structure, in a few weeks,*** and nothing was lacking to it that could be desired, even by a king so accustomed as Rameses to

* See Lepsius' "Chronologie der Aegypter," p. 338, where all the assaults the Nile valley endured from the east are enumerated.

** Pelusium is the Abaris of Manetho, traces of the ancient walls with fort-like projections still remain. According to Strabo its name was derived from "pelos," meaning the mud or marsh-city. See Ebers' "Aegypten und die Bücher Mose's," p. 209, and Lepsius' Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften, May 17th, 1866.

*** Herodotus speaks of this wooden palace as having been built at Daphnæ; Diodorus at Pelusium. I cannot agree with those who think that the conspiracy of the Regent occurred under Rameses III., and not under Rameses II. Sesostris. No doubt there was a petty conspiracy in the time of Rameses III. to place the king's brother on the throne, but these palace-plots are spoken of elsewhere and were not infrequent. For instance, under Ameneinha I. (12th dynasty), in Papyrus Sallier II.

luxury and splendor. A high exterior flight of steps led from the garden—which had been created out of a waste—to the vestibule, out of which the banqueting hall opened.

This was of unusual height, and had a vaulted wooden ceiling, which was painted blue and sprinkled with stars, to represent the night heavens, and which was supported on pillars carved, some in the form of date-palms, and some like cedars of Lebanon; the leaves and twigs consisted of artfully fastened and colored tissue; elegant festoons of bluish gauze were stretched from pillar to pillar across the hall, and in the centre of the eastern wall they were attached to a large shell-shaped canopy extending over the throne of the king, which was decorated with pieces of green and blue glass, of mother of pearl, of shining plates of mica, and other sparkling objects.

The throne itself had the shape of a buckler, guarded by two lions, which rested on each side of it and formed the arms, and supported on the backs of four Asiatic captives who crouched beneath its weight. Thick carpets, which seemed to have transported the sea-shore on to the dry land—for their pale blue ground was strewn with a variety of shells, fishes, and water plants—covered the floor of the banqueting hall, in which three hundred seats were placed by the tables, for the nobles of the kingdom and the officers of the troops.

Above all this splendor hung a thousand lamps, shaped like lilies and tulips, and in the entrance hall stood a huge basket of roses to be strewn before the king when he should arrive.

Even the bed-rooms for the king and his suite

were splendidly decorated; finely embroidered purple stuffs covered the walls, a light cloud of pale blue gauze hung across the ceiling, and giraffe skins were laid instead of carpets on the floors.

The barracks intended for the soldiers and body-guard stood nearer to the city, as well as the stable buildings, which were divided from the palace by the garden which surrounded it. A separate pavilion, gilt and wreathed with flowers, was erected to receive the horses which had carried the king through the battle, and which he had dedicated to the Sun-God.

The Regent Ani, accompanied by Katuti, was going through the whole of these slightly built structures.

"It seems to me all quite complete," said the widow.

"Only one thing I cannot make up my mind about," replied Ani, "whether most to admire your inventive genius or your exquisite taste."

"Oh! let that pass," said Katuti smiling. "If any thing deserves your praise it is my anxiety to serve you. How many things had to be considered before this structure at last stood complete on this marshy spot where the air seemed alive with disgusting insects—and now it is finished how long will it last?"

Ani looked down. "How long?" he repeated.

Then he continued: "There is great risk already of the plot miscarrying. Ameni has grown cool, and will stir no further in the matter; the troops on which I counted are perhaps still faithful to me, but much too weak; the Hebrews, who tend their flocks here, and whom I gained over by liberating them from forced labor, have never borne arms. And you know the

people. They will kiss the feet of the conqueror if they have to wade up to them through the blood of their children. Besides—as it happens—the hawk which old Hekt keeps as representing me is to-day pining and sick—”

“It will be all the prouder and brighter to-morrow if you are a man!” exclaimed Katuti, and her eyes sparkled with scorn. “You cannot now retreat. Here in Pelusium you welcome Rameses as if he were a God, and he accepts the honor. I know the king, he is too proud to be distrustful, and so conceited that he can never believe himself deceived in any man, either friend or foe. The man whom he appointed to be his Regent, whom he designated as the worthiest in the land, he will most unwillingly condemn. To-day you still have the ear of the king; to-morrow he will listen to your enemies, and too much has occurred in Thebes to be blotted out. You are in the position of a lion who has his keeper on one side, and the bars of his cage on the other. If you let the moment pass without striking you will remain in the cage; but if you act and show yourself a lion your keepers are done for!”

“You urge me on and on,” said Ani. “But supposing your plan were to fail, as Paaker’s well considered plot failed?”

“Then you are no worse off than you are now,” answered Katuti. “The Gods rule the elements, not men. Is it likely that you should finish so beautiful a structure with such care only to destroy it? And we have no accomplices, and need none.”

“But who shall set the brand to the room which

Nemu and the slave have filled with straw and pitch?" asked Ani.

"I," said Katuti decidedly. "And one who has nothing to look for from Rameses."

"Who is that?"

"Paaker."

"Is the Mohar here?" asked the Regent surprised.

"You yourself have seen him."

"You are mistaken," said Ani. "I should—"

"Do you recollect the one-eyed, grey-haired, black-man, who yesterday brought me a letter? That was my sister's son."

The Regent struck his forehead—"Poor wretch" he muttered.

"He is frightfully altered," said Katuti. "He need not have blackened his face, for his own mother would not know him again. He lost an eye in his fight with Mena, who also wounded him in the lungs with a thrust of his sword, so that he breathes and speaks with difficulty, his broad shoulders have lost their flesh, and the fine legs he swaggered about on have shrunk as thin as a negro's. I let him pass as my servant without any hesitation or misgiving. He does not yet know of my purpose, but I am sure that he would help us if a thousand deaths threatened him. For God's sake put aside all doubts and fears! We will shake the tree for you, if you will only hold out your hand to-morrow to pick up the fruit. Only one thing I must beg. Command the head butler not to stint the wine, so that the guards may give us no trouble. I know that you gave the order that only three of the five ships which brought the contents of your wine-lofts should be unloaded. I should have thought that

the future king of Egypt might have been less anxious to save!"

Katuti's lips curled with contempt as she spoke the last words. Ani observed this and said:

"You think I am timid! Well, I confess I would far rather that much which I have done at your instigation could be undone. I would willingly renounce this new plot, though we so carefully planned it when we built and decorated this palace. I will sacrifice the wine; there are jars of wine there that were old in my father's time—but it must be so! You are right! Many things have occurred which the king will not forgive! You are right, you are right—do what seems good to you. I will retire after the feast to the Ethiopian camp."

"They will hail you as king as soon as the usurpers have fallen in the flames," cried Katuti. "If only a few set the example, the others will take up the cry, and even though you have offended Ameni he will attach himself to you rather than to Rameses. Here he comes, and I already see the standards in the distance."

"They are coming!" said the Regent. "One thing more! Pray see yourself that the princess Bent-Anat goes to the rooms intended for her; she must not be injured."

"Still Bent-Anat?" said Katuti with a smile full of meaning but without bitterness. "Be easy, her rooms are on the ground floor, and she shall be warned in time."

Ani turned to leave her; he glanced once more at the great hall, and said with a sigh. "My heart is heavy—I wish this day and this night were over!"

"You are like this grand hall," said Katuti smiling,

“which is now empty, almost dismal; but this evening, when it is crowded with guests, it will look very different. You were born to be a king, and yet are not a king; you will not be quite yourself till the crown and sceptre are your own.”

Ani smiled too, thanked her, and left her; but Katuti said to herself:

“Bent-Anat may burn with the rest: I have no intention of sharing my power with her!”

Crowds of men and women from all parts had thronged to Pelusium, to welcome the conqueror and his victorious army on the frontier.* Every great temple-college had sent a deputation to meet Rameses, that from the Necropolis consisting of five members, with Ameni and old Gagabu at their head. The white-robed ministers of the Gods marched in solemn procession towards the bridge which lay across the eastern—Pelusiatic—arm of the Nile, and led to Egypt proper—the land fertilized by the waters of the sacred stream.**

The deputation from the temple of Memphis led the procession; this temple had been founded by Mena, the first king who wore the united crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, and Chamus, the king's son, was the high-priest. The deputation from the not less important temple of Heliopolis came next, and was followed by the representatives of the Necropolis of Thebes.

* A fine picture of such a festival, in honor of the father of this king when he returned from Syria, still exists on the north wall of the Temple of Karnak.

** According to Herodotus, the oracle of Amon declared to the inhabitants of Marca and Apis that all the land watered by the inundations of the Nile was Egypt.

A few only of the members of these deputations wore the modest white robe of the simple priest; most of them were invested with the panther-skin which was worn by the prophets. Each bore a staff decorated with roses, lilies, and green branches, and many carried censers in the form of a golden arm with incense in the hollow of the hand, to be burnt before the king. Among the deputies from the priesthood at Thebes were several women of high rank, who served in the worship of this God, and among them was Katuti, who by the particular desire of the Regent had lately been admitted to this noble sisterhood.*

Ameni walked thoughtfully by the side of the prophet Gagabu.

“How differently everything has happened from what we hoped and intended!” said Gagabu in a low voice. “We are like ambassadors with sealed credentials—who can tell their contents?”

“I welcome Rameses heartily and joyfully,” said Ameni. “After that which happened to him at Kadesh he will come home a very different man to what he was when he set out. He knows now what he owes to Amon. His favorite son was already at the head of the ministers of the temple at Memphis, and he has vowed to build magnificent temples and to bring splendid offerings to the Immortals. And Rameses keeps his word better than that smiling simpleton in the chariot yonder.”

“Still I am sorry for Ani,” said Gagabu.

“The Pharaoh will not punish him—certainly not,”

* The so-called Pallakidai, whom we frequently hear of as devoted to the service of Amon but sometimes also to that of the Goddesses Isis and Bast. Although they are called virgins on the tablet of Tanis, they are frequently married, and there is no reason why Katuti should not have belonged to them.

replied the high-priest. "And he will have nothing to fear from Ani; he is a feeble reed, the powerless sport of every wind."

"And yet you hoped for great things from him!"

"Not from him, but through him—with us for his guides," replied Ameni in a low voice but with emphasis. "It is his own fault that I have abandoned his cause. Our first wish—to spare the poet Pentaur—he would not respect, and he did not hesitate to break his oath, to betray us, and to sacrifice one of the noblest of God's creatures, as the poet was, to gratify a petty grudge. It is harder to fight against cunning weakness than against honest enmity. Shall we reward the man who has deprived the world of Pentaur by giving him a crown? It is hard to quit the trodden way, and seek a better—to give up a half-executed plan and take a more promising one; it is hard, I say, for the individual man, and makes him seem fickle in the eyes of others; but we cannot see to the right hand and the left, and if we pursue a great end we cannot remain within the narrow limits which are set by law and custom to the actions of private individuals. We draw back just as we seem to have reached the goal, we let him fall whom we had raised, and lift him, whom we had stricken to the earth, to the pinnacle of glory, in short we profess—and for thousands of years have professed—the doctrine that every path is a right one that leads to the great end of securing to the priesthood the supreme power in the land. Rameses, saved by a miracle, vowing temples to the Gods, will for the future exhaust his restless spirit not in battle as a warrior, but in building as an architect. He will make use of us, and we can always lead the

man who needs us. So I now hail the son of Seti with sincere joy."

Ameni was still speaking when the flags were hoisted on the standards by the triumphal arches, clouds of dust rolled up on the farther shore of the Nile, and the blare of trumpets was heard.

First came the horses which had carried Rameses through the fight, with the king himself, who drove them. His eyes sparkled with joyful triumph as the people on the farther side of the bridge received him with shouts of joy, and the vast multitude hailed him with wild enthusiasm and tears of emotion, strewing in his path the spoils of their gardens—flowers, garlands, and palm-branches.

Ani marched at the head of the procession that went forth to meet him; he humbly threw himself in the dust before the horses, kissed the ground, and then presented to the king the sceptre that had been entrusted to him, lying on a silk cushion. The king received it graciously, and when Ani took his robe to kiss it, the king bent down towards him, and touching the Regent's forehead with his lips, desired him to take the place by his side in the chariot, and fill the office of charioteer.

The king's eyes were moist with grateful emotion. He had not been deceived, and he could re-enter the country for whose greatness and welfare alone he lived, as a father, loving and beloved, and not as a master to judge and punish. He was deeply moved as he accepted the greetings of the priests, and with them offered up a public prayer. Then he was conducted to the splendid structure which had been prepared for him gaily mounted the outside steps, and from the top-

most stair bowed to his innumerable crowd of subjects; and while he awaited the procession from the harbor which escorted Bent-Anat in her litter, he inspected the thousand decorated bulls and antelopes* which were to be slaughtered as a thank-offering to the Gods, the tame lions and leopards, the rare trees in whose branches perched gaily-colored birds, the giraffes, and chariots to which ostriches were harnessed, which all marched past him in a long array.

Rameses embraced his daughter before all the people; he felt as if he must admit his subjects to the fullest sympathy in the happiness and deep thankfulness which filled his soul. His favorite child had never seemed to him so beautiful as this day, and he realized with deep emotion her strong resemblance to his lost wife.**

Nefert had accompanied her royal friend as fan-bearer, and she knelt before the king while he gave himself up to the delight of meeting his daughter. Then he observed her, and kindly desired her to rise. "How much," he said, "I am feeling to-day for the first time! I have already learned that what I formerly thought of as the highest happiness is capable of a yet higher pitch, and I now perceive that the most beautiful is capable of growing to greater beauty! A sun has grown from Mena's star."

Rameses, as he spoke, remembered his charioteer; for a moment his brow was clouded, and he cast down his eyes, and bent his head in thought.

Bent-Anat well knew this gesture of her father's; it

* The splendor of the festivities I make Ani prepare seems pitiful compared with those Ptolemy Philadelphus, according to the report of an eye witness, Callixenus, displayed to the Alexandrians on a festal occasion.

** Her name was Isis Nefert.

was the omen of some kindly, often sportive suggestion, such as he loved to surprise his friends with.

He reflected longer than usual; at last he looked up, and his full eyes rested lovingly on his daughter as he asked her:

“What did your friend say when she heard that her husband had taken a pretty stranger into his tent, and harbored her there for months? Tell me the whole truth of it, Bent-Anat.”

“I am indebted to this deed of Mena’s, which must certainly be quite excusable if you can smile when you speak of it,” said the princess, “for it was the cause of his wife’s coming to me. Her mother blamed her husband with bitter severity, but she would not cease to believe in him, and left her house because it was impossible for her to endure to hear him blamed.”

“Is this the fact?” asked Rameses.

Nefert bowed her pretty head, and two tears ran down her blushing cheeks.

“How good a man must be,” cried the king, “on whom the Gods bestow such happiness! My lord Chamberlain, inform Mena that I require his services at dinner to-day—as before the battle at Kadesh. He flung away the reins in the fight when he saw his enemy, and we shall see if he can keep from flinging down the beaker when, with his own eyes, he sees his beloved wife sitting at the table.—You ladies will join me at the banquet.”

Nefert sank on her knees before the king; but he turned from her to speak to the nobles and officers who had come to meet him, and then proceeded to the temple to assist at the slaughter of the victims, and to solemnly renew his vow in the presence of the priests and the people, to erect a magnificent temple in

Thebes as a thank-offering for his preservation from death. He was received with rapturous enthusiasm; his road led to the harbor, past the tents in which lay the wounded, who had been brought home to Egypt by ship, and he greeted them graciously from his chariot.

Ani again acted as his charioteer; they drove slowly through the long ranks of invalids and convalescents, but suddenly Ani gave the reins an involuntary pull, the horses reared, and it was with difficulty that he soothed them to a steady pace again.

Rameses looked round in anxious surprise, for at the moment when the horses had started, he too had felt an agitating thrill—he thought he had caught sight of his preserver at Kadesh.

Had the sight of a God struck terror into the horses? Was he the victim of a delusion? or was his preserver a man of flesh and blood, who had come home from the battle-field among the wounded!

The man who stood by his side, and held the reins, could have informed him, for Ani had recognized Pentaur, and in his horror had given the reins a perilous jerk.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE king did not return to the great pavilion till after sun-down; the banqueting hall, illuminated with a thousand lamps, was now filled with the gay crowd of guests who awaited the arrival of the king. All bowed before him, as he entered, more or less low,

each according to his rank; he immediately seated himself on his throne, surrounded by his children in a wide semicircle, and his officers and retainers all passed before him; for each he had a kindly word or glance, winning respect from all, and filling every one with joy and hope.

“The only really divine attribute of my royal condition,” said he to himself, “is that it is so easy to a king to make men happy. My predecessors chose the poisonous Uræus as the emblem of their authority, for we can cause death as quickly and certainly as the venomous snake; but the power of giving happiness dwells on our own lips, and in our own eyes, and we need some instrument when we decree death.”

“Take the Uræus crown from my head,” he continued aloud, as he seated himself at the feast. “To-day I will wear a wreath of flowers.”

During the ceremony of bowing to the king, two men had quitted the hall—the Regent Ani, and the high-priest Ameni.

Ani ordered a small party of the watch to go and seek out the priest Pentaur in the tents of the wounded by the harbor, to bring the poet quietly to his tent, and to guard him there till his return. He still had in his possession the maddening potion, which he was to have given to the captain of the transport-boat, and it was open to him still to receive Pentaur either as a guest or as a prisoner. Pentaur might injure him, whether Katuti's project failed or succeeded.

Ameni left the pavilion to go to see old Gagabu, who had stood so long in the heat of the sun during the ceremony of receiving the conqueror, that he had been at last carried fainting to the tent which he

shared with the high-priest, and which was not far from that of the Regent. He found the old man much revived, and was preparing to mount his chariot to go to the banquet, when the Regent's myrmidons led Pentaur past in front of him. Ameni looked doubtfully at the tall and noble figure of the prisoner, but Pentaur recognized him, called him by his name, and in a moment they stood together, hand clasped in hand. The guards showed some uneasiness, but Ameni explained who he was.

The high-priest was sincerely rejoiced at the preservation and restoration of his favorite disciple, whom for many months he had mourned as dead; he looked at his manly figure with fatherly tenderness, and desired the guards, who bowed to his superior dignity, to conduct his friend, on his responsibility, to his tent instead of to Ani's.

There Pentaur found his old friend Gagabu, who wept with delight at his safety. All that his master had accused him of seemed to be forgotten. Ameni had him clothed in a fresh white robe, he was never tired of looking at him, and over and over again clapped his hand upon his shoulder, as if he were his own son that had been lost and found again.

Pentaur was at once required to relate all that had happened to him, and the poet told the story of his captivity and liberation at Mount Sinai, his meeting with Bent-Anat, and how he had fought in the battle of Kadesh, had been wounded by an arrow, and found and rescued by the faithful Kaschta. He concealed only his passion for Bent-Anat, and the fact that he had preserved the king's life.

"About an hour ago," he added, "I was sitting

alone in my tent, watching the lights in the palace yonder, when the watch who are outside brought me an order from the Regent to accompany them to his tent. What can he want with me? I always thought he owed me a grudge."

Gagabu and Ameni glanced meaningly at each other, and the high-priest then hastened away, as already he had remained too long away from the banquet. Before he got into his chariot he commanded the guard to return to their posts, and took it upon himself to inform the Regent that his guest would remain in his tent till the festival was over; the soldiers unhesitatingly obeyed him.

Ameni arrived at the palace before them, and entered the banqueting-hall just as Ani was assigning a place to each of his guests. The high-priest went straight up to him, and said, as he bowed before him:

"Pardon my long delay, but I was detained by a great surprise. The poet Pentaur is living—as you know. I have invited him to remain in my tent as my guest, and to tend the prophet Gagabu."

The Regent turned pale, he remained speechless and looked at Ameni with a cold ghastly smile; but he soon recovered himself.

"You see," he said, "how you have injured me by your unworthy suspicions; I meant to have restored your favorite to you myself to-morrow."

"Forgive me, then, for having anticipated your plan," said Ameni, taking his seat near the king.

Hundreds of slaves hurried to and fro loaded with costly dishes. Large vessels of richly wrought gold and silver were brought into the hall on wheels, and set on

the side-boards. Children were perched in the shells and lotus-flowers that hung from the painted rafters; and from between the pillars, that were hung with cloudy transparent tissues, they threw roses and violets down on the company. The sounds of harps and songs issued from concealed rooms, and from an altar, six ells high, in the middle of the hall, clouds of incense were wafted into space.

The king—one of whose titles was “Son of the Sun,”—was as radiant as the sun himself. His children were once more around him, Mena was his cup-bearer as in former times, and all that was best and noblest in the land was gathered round him to rejoice with him in his triumph and his return. Opposite to him sat the ladies, and exactly in front of him, a delight to his eyes, Bent-Anat and Nefert. His injunction to Mena to hold the wine cup steadily seemed by no means superfluous, for his looks constantly wandered from the king’s goblet to his fair wife, from whose lips he as yet had heard no word of welcome, whose hand he had not yet been so happy as to touch.

All the guests were in the most joyful excitement. Rameses related the tale of his fight at Kadesh, and the high-priest of Heliopolis observed: “In later times the poets will sing of thy deeds.”

“Their songs will not be of my achievements,” exclaimed the king, “but of the grace of the Divinity, who so miraculously rescued your sovereign, and gave the victory to the Egyptians over an innumerable enemy.”

“Did you see the God with your own eyes? and in what form did he appear to you?” asked Bent-Anat.

“It is most extraordinary,” said the king, “but he

exactly resembled the dead father of the traitor Paaker. My preserver was of tall stature, and had a beautiful countenance; his voice was deep and thrilling, and he swung his battle-axe as if it were a mere plaything."

Ameni had listened eagerly to the king's words, now he bowed low before him and said humbly: "If I were younger I myself would endeavor, as was the custom with our fathers, to celebrate this glorious deed of a God and of his sublime son in a song worthy of this festival; but melting tones are no longer mine, they vanish with years, and the ear of the listener lends itself only to the young. Nothing is wanting to thy feast, most lordly Ani, but a poet, who might sing the glorious deeds of our monarch to the sound of his lute, and yet—we have at hand the gifted Pentaur, the noblest disciple of the House of Seti."

Bent-Anat turned perfectly white, and the priests who were present expressed the utmost joy and astonishment, for they had long thought the young poet, who was highly esteemed throughout Egypt, to be dead.

The king had often heard of the fame of Pentaur from his sons and especially from Rameri, and he willingly consented that Ameni should send for the poet, who had himself borne arms at Kadesh, in order that he should sing a song of triumph. The Regent gazed blankly and uneasily into his wine cup, and the high-priest rose to fetch Pentaur himself into the presence of the king.

During the high-priest's absence, more and more dishes were served to the company; behind each guest stood a silver bowl with rose water, in which from time to time he could dip his fingers to cool and clean

them; the slaves in waiting were constantly at hand with embroidered napkins to wipe them,* and others frequently changed the faded wreaths, round the heads and shoulders of the feasters, for fresh ones.

“How pale you are, my child!” said Rameses turning to Bent-Anat. “If you are tired, your uncle will no doubt allow you to leave the hall; though I think you should stay to hear the performance of this much-lauded poet. After having been so highly praised he will find it difficult to satisfy his hearers. But indeed I am uneasy about you, my child—would you rather go?”

The Regent had risen and said earnestly :

“Your presence has done me honor, but if you are fatigued I beg you to allow me to conduct you and your ladies to the apartments intended for you.”

“I will stay,” said Bent-Anat in a low but decided tone, and she kept her eyes on the floor, while her heart beat violently, for the murmur of voices told her that Pentaur was entering the hall. He wore the long white robe of a priest of the temple of Seti, and on his forehead the ostrich-feather which marked him as one of the initiated. He did not raise his eyes till he stood close before the king; then he prostrated himself before him, and awaited a sign from the Pharaoh before he rose again.

But Rameses hesitated a long time, for the youthful figure before him, and the glance that met his own, moved him strangely. Was not this the divinity of the fight? Was not this his preserver? Was he again deluded by a resemblance, or was he in a dream?

The guests gazed in silence at the spellbound king, and at the poet; at last Rameses bowed his head,

* Napkins (*ἐκμαγεῖα*) are mentioned in several of the Greek papyri in the Louvre; and in the pictures of banquets in ancient times servants carry them over their arms.

Pentaur rose to his feet, and the bright color flew to his face as close to him he perceived Bent-Anat.

“You fought at Kadesh?” asked the king.

“As thou sayest,” replied Pentaur.

“You are well spoken of as a poet,” said Rameses, “and we desire to hear the wonderful tale of my preservation celebrated in song. If you will attempt it, let a lute be brought and sing.”

The poet bowed. “My gifts are modest,” he said, “but I will endeavor to sing of the glorious deed, in the presence of the hero who achieved it, with the aid of the Gods.”

Rameses gave a signal, and Ameni caused a large golden harp to be brought in for his disciple. Pentaur lightly touched the strings, leaned his head against the top of the tall bow of the harp, for some time lost in meditation; then he drew himself up boldly, and struck the chords, bringing out a strong and warlike music in broad heroic rhythm.

Then he began the narrative: how Rameses had pitched his camp before Kadesh, how he ordered his troops, and how he had taken the field against the Cheta, and their Asiatic allies. Louder and stronger rose his tones when he reached the turning-point of the battle, and began to celebrate the rescue of the king; and the Pharaoh listened with eager attention as Pentaur sang:*

“Then the king stood forth, and, radiant with courage,
He looked like the Sun-god armed and eager for battle.
The noble steeds that bore him into the struggle—
‘Victory to Thebes’ was the name of one, and the other
Was called ‘contented Nura’—were foaled in the stables
Of him we call ‘the elect,’ ‘the beloved of Amon,’
‘Lord of truth,’ the chosen vicar of Ra.

* A literal translation of the ancient Egyptian poem called “The Epos of Pentaur.”

Up sprang the king and threw himself on the foe,
 The swaying ranks of the contemptible Cheta.
 He stood alone—alone, and no man with him.
 As thus the king stood forth all eyes were upon him,
 And soon he was enmeshed by men and horses,
 And by the enemy's chariots, two thousand five hundred.
 The foe behind hemmed him in and enclosed him.
 Dense the array of the contemptible Cheta,
 Dense the swarm of warriors out of Arad,
 Dense the Mysian host, the Pisidian legions.
 Every chariot carried three bold warriors,
 All his foes, and all allied like brothers.

“Not a prince is with me, not a captain,
 Not an archer, none to guide my horses!
 Fled the riders! fled my troops and horse—
 By my side not one is now left standing.”
 Thus the king, and raised his voice in prayer.
 “Great father Amon, I have known Thee well.
 And can the father thus forget his son?
 Have I in any deed forgotten Thee?
 Have I done aught without Thy high behest
 Or moved or staid against Thy sovereign will?
 Great am I—mighty are Egyptian kings—
 But in the sight of Thy commanding might,
 Small as the chieftain of a wandering tribe.
 Immortal Lord, crush Thou this unclean people;
 Break Thou their necks, annihilate the heathen.

And I—have I not brought Thee many victims,
 And filled Thy temple with the captive folk?
 And for Thy presence built a dwelling place
 That shall endure for countless years to come?
 Thy garner overflow with gifts from me.
 I offered Thee the world to swell Thy glory,
 And thirty thousand mighty steers have shed
 Their smoking blood on fragrant cedar piles.
 Tall gateways, flag-decked masts, I raised to Thee,
 And obelisks from Abu I have brought,
 And built Thee temples of eternal stone.
 For Thee my ships have brought across the sea
 The tribute of the nations. This I did—
 When were such things done in the former time?

For dark the fate of him who would rebel
 Against Thee: though Thy sway is just and mild.
 My father, Amon—as an earthly son
 His earthly father—so I call on Thee.
 Look down from heaven on me, beset by foes,
 By heathen foes—the folk that know Thee not.
 The nations have combined against Thy son;
 I stand alone—alone, and no man with me.
 My foot and horse are fled, I called aloud
 And no one heard—in vain I called to them.
 And yet I say: the sheltering care of Amon
 Is better succor than a million men,
 Or than ten thousand knights, or than a thousand
 Brothers and sons though gathered into one.

And yet I say: the bulwarks raised by men
 However strong, compared to Thy great works
 Are but vain shadows, and no human aid
 Avails against the foe—but Thy strong hand.
 The counsel of Thy lips shall guide my way;
 I have obeyed whenever Thou hast ruled;
 I call on Thee—and, with my fame, Thy glory
 Shall fill the world, from farthest east to west.”

Yea, his cry rang forth even far as Hermonthis,
 And Amon himself appeared at his call; and gave him
 His hand and shouted in triumph, saying to the Pharaoh:
 “Help is at hand, O Rameses. I will uphold thee—
 I thy father am he who now is thy succor,
 Bearing thee in my hands. For stronger and readier
 I than a hundred thousand mortal retainers;
 I am the Lord of victory loving valor?
 I rejoice in the brave and give them good counsel,
 And he whom I counsel certainly shall not miscarry.”

Then like Menth, with his right he scattered the arrows,
 And with his left he swung his deadly weapon,
 Felling the foe—as his foes are felled by Baal.
 The chariots were broken and the drivers scattered,
 Then was the foe overthrown before his horses.
 None found a hand to fight: they could not shoot
 Nor dared they hurl the spear but fled at his coming—
 Headlong into the river.—*

A silence as of the grave reigned in the vast hall,
 Rameses fixed his eyes on the poet, as though he
 would engrave his features on his very soul, and com-
 pare them with those of another which had dwelt
 there unforgotten since the day of Kadesh. Beyond
 a doubt his preserver stood before him.

Seized by a sudden impulse, he interrupted the
 poet in the midst of his stirring song, and cried out
 to the assembled guests:

“Pay honor to this man! for the Divinity chose
 to appear under his form to save your king when he
 ‘alone, and no man with him,’ struggled with a thou-
 sand.”

* I have availed myself of the help of Prof. Lushington’s translation in
 “Records of the past,” edited by Dr. S. Birch. *Translator.*

“Hail to Pentaur!” rang through the hall from the vast assembly, and Nefert rose and gave the poet the bunch of flowers she had been wearing on her bosom.

The king nodded approval, and looked enquiringly at his daughter; Bent-Anat’s eyes met his with a glance of intelligence, and with all the simplicity of an impulsive child, she took from her head the wreath that had decorated her beautiful hair, went up to Pentaur, and crowned him with it, as it was customary for a bride to crown her lover before the wedding.

Rameses observed his daughter’s action with some surprise, and the guests responded to it with loud cheering.

The king looked gravely at Bent-Anat and the young priest; the eyes of all the company were eagerly fixed on the princess and the poet. The king seemed to have forgotten the presence of strangers, and to be wholly absorbed in thought, but by degrees a change came over his face, it cleared, as a landscape is cleared from the morning mists under the influence of the spring sunshine. When he looked up again his glance was bright and satisfied, and Bent-Anat knew what it promised when it lingered lovingly first on her, and then on her friend, whose head was still graced by the wreath that had crowned hers.

At last Rameses turned from the lovers, and said to the guests:

“It is past midnight, and I will now leave you. To-morrow evening I bid you all—and you especially, Pentaur—to be my guests in this banqueting hall. Once more fill your cups, and let us empty them—to a long time of peace after the victory which, by the help of the Gods, we have won. And at the same

time let us express our thanks to my friend Ani, who has entertained us so magnificently, and who has so faithfully and zealously administered the affairs of the kingdom during my absence."

The company pledged the king, who warmly shook hands with the Regent, and then, escorted by his wand-bearers and lords in waiting, quitted the hall, after he had signed to Mena, Ameni, and the ladies to follow him.

Nefert greeted her husband, but she immediately parted from the royal party, as she had yielded to the urgent entreaty of Katuti that she should for this night go to her mother, to whom she had so much to tell, instead of remaining with the princess. Her mother's chariot soon took her to her tent.

Rameses dismissed his attendants in the ante-room of his apartments; when they were alone he turned to Bent-Anat and said affectionately:

"What was in your mind when you laid your wreath on the poet's brow?"

"What is in every maiden's mind when she does the like," replied Bent-Anat with trustful frankness.

"And your father?" asked the king.

"My father knows that I will obey him even if he demands of me the hardest thing—the sacrifice of all my happiness; but I believe that he—that you love me fondly, and I do not forget the hour in which you said to me that now my mother was dead you would be father and mother both to me, and you would try to understand me as she certainly would have understood me. But what need between us of so many words. I love Pentaur—with a love that is not of yesterday—with the first perfect love of my heart and he has

proved himself worthy of that high honor. But were he ever so humble, the hand of your daughter has the power to raise him above every prince in the land."

"It has such power, and you shall exercise it," cried the king. "You have been true and faithful to yourself, while your father and protector left you to yourself. In you I love the image of your mother, and I learned from her that a true woman's heart can find the right path better than a man's wisdom. Now go to rest, and to-morrow morning put on a fresh wreath, for you will have need of it, my noble daughter."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE cloudless vault of heaven spread over the plain of Pelusium, the stars were bright, the moon threw her calm light over the thousands of tents which shone as white as little hillocks of snow. All was silent, the soldiers and the Egyptians, who had assembled to welcome the king, were now all gone to rest.

There had been great rejoicing and jollity in the camp; three enormous vats, garlanded with flowers and overflowing with wine, which spilt with every movement of the trucks on which they were drawn by thirty oxen, were sent up and down the little streets of tents, and as the evening closed in tavern-booths were erected in many spots in the camp, at which the Regent's servants supplied the soldiers with red and white wine. The tents of the populace were only divided from the pavilion of the Pharaoh by the hastily-constructed garden in the midst of which it stood, and the hedge which enclosed it.

The tent of the Regent himself was distinguished from all the others by its size and magnificence; to the right of it was the encampment of the different priestly deputations, to the left that of his suite; among the latter were the tents of his friend Katuti, a large one for her own use, and some smaller ones for her servants. Behind Ani's pavilion stood a tent, enclosed in a wall or screen of canvas, within which old Hekt was lodged; Ani had secretly conveyed her hither on board his own boat. Only Katuti and his confidential servants knew who it was that lay concealed in the mysteriously shrouded abode.

While the banquet was proceeding in the great pavilion, the witch was sitting in a heap on the sandy earth of her conical canvas dwelling; she breathed with difficulty, for a weakness of the heart, against which she had long struggled, now oppressed her more frequently and severely; a little lamp of clay burned before her, and on her lap crouched a sick and ruffled hawk; the creature shivered from time to time, closing the filmy lids of his keen eyes, which glowed with a dull fire when Hekt took him up in her withered hand, and tried to blow some air into his hooked beak, still ever ready to peck and tear her.

At her feet little Scherau lay asleep. Presently she pushed the child with her foot. "Wake up," she said, as he raised himself still half asleep. "You have young ears—it seemed to me that I heard a woman scream in Ani's tent. Do you hear any thing?"

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed the little one. "There is a noise like crying, and that—that was a scream! It came from out there, from Nemu's tent."

“Creep through there,” said the witch, “and see what is happening!”

The child obeyed: Hekt turned her attention again to the bird, which no longer perched in her lap, but lay on one side, though it still tried to use its talons, when she took him up in her hand.

“It is all over with him,” muttered the old woman, “and the one I called Rameses is sleeker than ever. It is all folly and yet—and yet! the Regent’s game is over, and he has lost it. The creature is stretching itself—its head drops—it draws itself up—one more clutch at my dress—now it is dead!”

She contemplated the dead hawk in her lap for some minutes, then she took it up, flung it into a corner of the tent, and exclaimed:

“Good-bye, King Ani. The crown is not for you!” Then she went on: “What project has he in hand now, I wonder? Twenty times he has asked me whether the great enterprise will succeed; as if I knew any more than he! And Nemu too has hinted all kinds of things, though he would not speak out. Something is going on, and I—and I? There it comes again!”

The old woman pressed her hand to her heart and closed her eyes, her features were distorted with pain; she did not perceive Scherau’s return, she did not hear him call her name, or see that, when she did not answer him, he left her again. For an hour or more she remained unconscious, then her senses returned, but she felt as if some ice-cold fluid slowly ran through her veins instead of the warm blood.

“If I had kept a hawk for myself too,” she muttered, “it would soon follow the other one in the corner! If only Ani keeps his word, and has me embalmed!

But how can he when he too is so near his end. They will let me rot and disappear, and there will be no future for me, no meeting with Assa."

The old woman remained silent for a long time; at last she murmured hoarsely with her eyes fixed on the ground:

"Death brings release, if only from the torment of remembrance. But there is a life beyond the grave. I do not, I will not cease to hope. The dead shall all be equally judged, and subject to the inscrutable decrees.—Where shall I find him? Among the blest, or among the damned? And I? It matters not! The deeper the abyss into which they fling me the better. Can Assa, if he is among the blest, remain in bliss, when he sees to what he has brought me? Oh! they must embalm me—I cannot bear to vanish, and rot and evaporate into nothingness!"

While she was still speaking, the dwarf Nemu had come into the tent; Scherau, seeing the old woman senseless, had run to tell him that his mother was lying on the earth with her eyes shut, and was dying. The witch perceived the little man.

"It is well," she said, "that you have come; I shall be dead before sunrise."

"Mother!" cried the dwarf horrified, "you shall live, and live better than you have done till now! Great things are happening, and for us!"

"I know, I know," said Hekt. "Go away, Scherau—now, Nemu, whisper in my ear what is doing?"

The dwarf felt as if he could not avoid the influence of her eye, he went up to her, and said softly—

"The pavilion, in which the king and his people are sleeping, is constructed of wood; straw and pitch

are built into the walls, and laid under the boards. As soon as they are gone to rest we shall set the tinder thing on fire. The guards are drunk and sleeping."

"Well thought of," said Hekt. "Did you plan it?"

"I and my mistress," said the dwarf not without pride.

"You can devise a plot," said the old woman, "but you are feeble in the working out. Is your plan a secret? Have you clever assistants?"

"No one knows of it," replied the dwarf, "but Katuti, Paaker, and I; we three shall lay the brands to the spots we have fixed upon. I am going to the rooms of Bent-Anat; Katuti, who can go in and out as she pleases, will set fire to the stairs, which lead to the upper story, and which fall by touching a spring; and Paaker to the king's apartments."

"Good—good, it may succeed," gasped the old woman. "But what was the scream in your tent?"

The dwarf seemed doubtful about answering; but Hekt went on:

"Speak without fear—the dead are sure to be silent."

The dwarf, trembling with agitation, shook off his hesitation, and said:

"I have found Uarda, the grandchild of Pinem, who had disappeared, and I decoyed her here, for she and no other shall be my wife, if Ani is king, and if Katuti makes me rich and free. She is in the service of the Princess Bent-Anat, and sleeps in her ante-room, and she must not be burnt with her mistress. She insisted on going back to the palace, so, as she would fly to the fire like a gnat, and I would not have her risk being burnt, I tied her up fast."

"Did she not struggle?" said Hekt.

"Like a mad thing," said the dwarf. "But the

Regent's dumb slave, who was ordered by his master to obey me in everything to-day, helped me. We tied up her mouth that she might not be heard screaming!"

"Will you leave her alone when you go to do your errand?"

"Her father is with her!"

"Kaschta, the red-beard?" asked the old woman in surprise. "And did he not break you in pieces like an earthenware pot?"

"He will not stir," said Nemu laughing. "For when I found him, I made him so drunk with Ani's old wine that he lies there like a mummy. It was from him that I learned where Uarda was, and I went to her, and got her to come with me by telling her that her father was very ill, and begged her to go to see him once more. She flew after me like a gazelle, and when she saw the soldier lying there senseless she threw herself upon him, and called for water to cool his head, for he was raving in his dreams of rats and mice that had fallen upon him. As it grew late she wanted to return to her mistress, and we were obliged to prevent her. How handsome she has grown, mother; you cannot imagine how pretty she is."

"Aye, aye!" said Hekt. "You will have to keep an eye upon her when she is your wife."

"I will treat her like the wife of a noble," said Nemu. "And pay a real lady to guard her. But by this time Katuti has brought home her daughter, Mena's wife; the stars are sinking and—there—that was the first signal. When Katuti whistles the third time we are to go to work. Lend me your fire-box, mother, it is better than mine."

“Take it,” said Hekt. “I shall never need it again. It is all over with me! How your hand shakes! Hold the wood firmly, or you will drop it before you have brought the fire.”

The dwarf bid the old woman farewell, and she let him kiss her without moving. When he was gone, she listened eagerly for any sound that might pierce the silence of the night, her eyes shone with a keen light, and a thousand thoughts flew through her restless brain. When she heard the second signal on Katuti's silver whistle, she sat upright and muttered:

“That gallows-bird Paaker, his vain aunt and that villain Ani, are no match for Rameses, even when he is asleep. Ani's hawk is dead; he has nothing to hope for from Fortune, and I nothing to hope for from him. But if Rameses—if the real king would promise me—then my poor old body—Yes, that is the thing, that is what I will do.”

She painfully raised herself on her feet with the help of her stick, she found a knife and a small flask which she slipped into her dress, and then, bent and trembling, with a last effort of her remaining strength she dragged herself as far as Nemu's tent. Here she found Uarda bound hand and foot, and Kaschta lying on the ground in a heavy drunken slumber.

The girl shrank together in alarm when she saw the old woman, and Scherau, who crouched at her side, raised his hands imploringly to the witch.

“Take this knife, boy,” she said to the little one. “Cut the ropes the poor thing is tied with. The papyrus cords are strong,* saw them with the blade.”

* Papyrus was used not only for writing on, but also for ropes. The bridge of boats on which Xerxes crossed the Hellespont was fastened with cables of papyrus.

While the boy eagerly followed her instructions with all his little might, she rubbed the soldier's temples with an essence which she had in the bottle, and poured a few drops of it between his lips. Kaschta came to himself, stretched his limbs, and stared in astonishment at the place in which he found himself. She gave him some water, and desired him to drink it, saying, as Uarda shook herself free from the bonds :

“The Gods have predestined you to great things, you white maiden. Listen to what I, old Hekt, am telling you. The king's life is threatened, his and his children's; I purpose to save them, and I ask no reward but this—that he should have my body embalmed and interred at Thebes. Swear to me that you will require this of him when you have saved him.”

“In God's name what is happening?” cried Uarda.

“Swear that you will provide for my burial,” said the old woman.

“I swear it!” cried the girl. “But for God's sake—”

“Katuti, Paaker, and Nemu are gone to set fire to the palace when Rameses is sleeping, in three places. Do you hear, Kaschta! Now hasten, fly after the incendiaries, rouse the servants, and try to rescue the king.”

“Oh fly, father!” cried the girl, and they both rushed away in the darkness.

“She is honest and will keep her word,” muttered Hekt, and she tried to drag herself back to her own tent; but her strength failed her half-way. Little Scherau tried to support her, but he was too weak; she sank down on the sand, and looked out into the distance. There she saw the dark mass of the palace, from which rose a light that grew broader and broader,

then clouds of black smoke, then up flew the soaring flame, and a swarm of glowing sparks.

“Run into the camp, child,” she cried, “cry fire, and wake the sleepers.”

Scherau ran off shouting as loud as he could.

The old woman pressed her hand to her side, she muttered: “There it is again.” “In the other world—Assa—Assa,” and her trembling lips were silent for ever.

CHAPTER XLIII.

KATUTI had kept her unfortunate nephew Paaker concealed in one of her servants' tents. He had escaped wounded from the battle at Kadesh, and in terrible pain he had succeeded, by the help of an ass which he had purchased from a peasant, in reaching by paths known to hardly any one but himself, the cave where he had previously left his brother. Here he found his faithful Ethiopian slave, who nursed him till he was strong enough to set out on his journey to Egypt. He reached Pelusium, after many privations, disguised as an Ismaelite camel-driver; he left his servant, who might have betrayed him, behind in the cave.

Before he was permitted to pass the fortifications, which lay across the isthmus which parts the Mediterranean from the Red Sea, and which were intended to protect Egypt from the incursions of the nomad tribes of the Chasu,* he was subjected to a strict interrogatory, and among other questions was asked whether he had nowhere met with the traitor Paaker, who was

* Ebers, *Aegypten und die Bücher Mose s*, p. 78.

minutely described to him. No one recognized in the shrunken, grey-haired, one-eyed camel-driver, the broad-shouldered, muscular and thick-legged pioneer. To disguise himself the more effectually, he procured some hair-dye*—a cosmetic known in all ages—and blackened himself. Katuti had arrived at Pelusium with Ani some time before, to superintend the construction of the royal pavilion. He ventured to approach her disguised as a negro beggar, with a palm-branch in his hand. She gave him some money and questioned him concerning his native country, for she made it her business to secure the favor even of the meanest; but though she appeared to take an interest in his answers, she did not recognize him; now for the first time he felt secure, and the next day he went up to her again, and told her who he was.

The widow was not unmoved by the frightful alteration in her nephew, and although she knew that even Ani had decreed that any intercourse with the traitor was to be punished by death, she took him at once into her service, for she had never had greater need than now to employ the desperate enemy of the king and of her son-in-law.

The mutilated, despised, and hunted man kept himself far from the other servants, regarding the meaner folk with undiminished scorn. He thought seldom, and only vaguely of Katuti's daughter, for love had quite given place to hatred, and only one thing now seemed to him worth living for—the hope of working with others to cause his enemies' downfall, and of being the in-

* In my papyrus there are several recipes for the preparation of hair-dye; one is ascribed to the Lady Schesch, the mother of Teta, wife of the first king of Egypt. The earliest of all the recipes preserved to us is a prescription for dyeing the hair.

strument of their death; so he offered himself to the widow a willing and welcome tool, and the dull flash in his uninjured eye when she set him the task of setting fire to the king's apartments, showed her that in the Mohar she had found an ally she might depend on to the uttermost.

Paaker had carefully examined the scene of his exploit before the king's arrival. Under the windows of the king's rooms, at least forty feet from the ground, was a narrow parapet resting on the ends of the beams which supported the rafters on which lay the floor of the upper story in which the king slept. These rafters had been smeared with pitch, and straw had been laid between them, and the pioneer would have known how to find the opening where he was to put in the brand even if he had been blind of both eyes.

When Katuti first sounded her whistle he slunk to his post; he was challenged by no watchman, for the few guards who had been placed in the immediate vicinity of the pavilion, had all gone to sleep under the influence of the Regent's wine. Paaker climbed up to about the height of two men from the ground by the help of the ornamental carving on the outside wall of the palace; there a rope ladder was attached, he clambered up this, and soon stood on the parapet, above which were the windows of the king's rooms, and below which the fire was to be laid.

Rameses' room was brightly illuminated. Paaker could see into it without being seen, and could hear every word that was spoken within. The king was sitting in an arm-chair, and looked thoughtfully at the ground; before him stood the Regent, and Mena stood

by his couch, holding in his hand the king's sleeping-robe.

Presently Rameses raised his head, and said, as he offered his hand with frank affection to Ani:

“Let me bring this glorious day to a worthy end, cousin. I have found you my true and faithful friend, and I had been in danger of believing those over-anxious counsellors who spoke evil of you. I am never prone to distrust, but a number of things occurred together that clouded my judgment, and I did you injustice. I am sorry, sincerely sorry; nor am I ashamed to apologize to you for having for an instant doubted your good intentions. You are my good friend—and I will prove to you that I am yours. There is my hand—take it; and all Egypt shall know that Rameses trusts no man more implicitly than his Regent Ani. I will ask you to undertake to be my guard of honor to-night—we will share this room. I sleep here; when I lie down on my couch take your place on the divan yonder.”

Ani had taken Rameses' offered hand, but now he turned pale as he looked down. Paaker could see straight into his face, and it was not without difficulty that he suppressed a scornful laugh.

Rameses did not observe the Regent's dismay, for he had signed to Mena to come closer to him.

“Before I sleep,” said the king, “I will bring matters to an end with you too. You have put your wife's constancy to a severe test, and she has trusted you with a childlike simplicity that is often wiser than the arguments of sages, because she loved you honestly, and is herself incapable of guile. I promised you that I would grant you a wish if your faith in her was justified. Now tell me what is your will?”

Mena fell on his knees, and covered the king's robe with kisses.

"Pardon!" he exclaimed. "Nothing but pardon. My crime was a heavy one, I know; but I was driven to it by scorn and fury—it was as if I saw the dishonoring hand of Paaker stretched out to seize my innocent wife, who, as I now know, loathes him as a toad—"

"What was that?" exclaimed the king. "I thought I heard a groan outside."

He went up to the window and looked out, but he did not see the pioneer, who watched every motion of the king, and who, as soon as he perceived that his involuntary sigh of anguish had been heard, stretched himself close under the balustrade. Mena had not risen from his knees when the king once more turned to him.

"Pardon me," he said again. "Let me be near thee again as before, and drive thy chariot. I live only through thee, I am of no worth but through thee, and by thy favor, my king, my lord, my father!"

Rameses signed to his favorite to rise. "Your request was granted," said he, "before you made it. I am still in your debt on your fair wife's account. Thank Nefert—not me, and let us give thanks to the Immortals this day with especial fervor. What has it not brought forth for us! It has restored to me you two friends, whom I regarded as lost to me, and has given me in Pentaur another son."

A low whistle sounded through the night air; it was Katuti's last signal.

Paaker blew up the tinder, laid it in the hole under

the parapet, and then, unmindful of his own danger, raised himself to listen for any further words.

“I entreat thee,” said the Regent, approaching Rameses, “to excuse me. I fully appreciate thy favors, but the labors of the last few days have been too much for me; I can hardly stand on my feet, and the guard of honor—”

“Mena will watch,” said the king. “Sleep in all security, cousin. I will have it known to all men that I have put away from me all distrust of you. Give me my night-robe, Mena. Nay—one thing more I must tell you. Youth smiles on the young, Ani. Bent-Anat has chosen a worthy husband, my preserver, the poet Pentaur. He was said to be a man of humble origin, the son of a gardener of the House of Seti; and now what do I learn through Ameni? He is the true son of the dead Mohar, and the foul traitor Paaker is the gardener’s son. A witch in the Necropolis changed the children. That is the best news of all that has reached me on this propitious day, for the Mohar’s widow, the noble Setchem, has been brought here, and I should have been obliged to choose between two sentences on her as the mother of the villain who has escaped us. Either I must have sent her to the quarries, or have had her beheaded before all the people—In the name of the Gods, what is that?”

They heard a loud cry in a man’s voice, and at the same instant a noise as if some heavy mass had fallen to the ground from a great height. Rameses and Mena hastened to the window, but started back, for they were met by a cloud of smoke.

“Call the watch!” cried the king.

“Go, you,” exclaimed Mena to Ani. “I will not leave the king again in danger.”

Ani fled away like an escaped prisoner, but he could not get far, for, before he could descend the stairs to the lower story, they fell in before his very eyes; Katuti, after she had set fire to the interior of the palace, had made them fall by one blow of a hammer. Ani saw her robe as she herself fled, clenched his fist with rage as he shouted her name, and then, not knowing what he did, rushed headlong through the corridor into which the different royal apartments opened.

The fearful crash of the falling stairs brought the king and Mena also out of the sleeping-room.

“There lie the stairs! that is serious!” said the king coolly; then he went back into his room, and looked out of a window to estimate the danger. Bright flames were already bursting from the northern end of the palace, and gave the grey dawn the brightness of day; the southern wing of the pavilion was not yet on fire. Mena observed the parapet from which Paaker had fallen to the ground, tested its strength, and found it firm enough to bear several persons. He looked round, particularly at the wing not yet gained by the flames, and exclaimed in a loud voice:

“The fire is intentional! it is done on purpose.— See there! a man is squatting down and pushing a brand into the woodwork.”

He leaped back into the room, which was now filling with smoke, snatched the king’s bow and quiver, which he himself had hung up at the bed-head, took careful aim, and with one cry the incendiary fell dead.

A few hours later the dwarf Nemu was found with the charioteer’s arrow through his heart. After setting

fire to Bent-Anat's rooms, he had determined to lay a brand to the wing of the palace where, with the other princes, Uarda's friend Rameri was sleeping.

Mena had again leaped out of window, and was estimating the height of the leap to the ground; the Pharaoh's room was getting more and more filled with smoke, and flames began to break through the seams of the boards. Outside the palace as well as within every one was waking up to terror and excitement.

"Fire! fire! an incendiary! Help! Save the king!" cried Kashta, who rushed on, followed by a crowd of guards whom he had roused; Uarda had flown to call Bent-Anat, as she knew the way to her room. The king had got on to the parapet outside the window with Mena, and was calling to the soldiers.

"Half of you get into the house, and first save the princess; the other half keep the fire from catching the south wing. I will try to get there."

But Nemu's brand had been effectual, the flames flared up, and the soldiers strained every nerve to conquer them. Their cries mingled with the crackling and snapping of the dry wood, and the roar of the flames, with the trumpet calls of the awakening troops, and the beating of drums. The young princes appeared at a window; they had tied their clothes together to form a rope, and one by one escaped down it.

Rameses called to them with words of encouragement, but he himself was unable to take any means of escape, for though the parapet on which he stood was tolerably wide, and ran round the whole of the building, at about every six feet it was broken by spaces of about ten paces. The fire was spreading and growing,

and glowing sparks flew round him and his companion like chaff from the winnowing fan.

“Bring some straw and make a heap below!” shouted Rameses, above the roar of the conflagration.

“There is no escape but by a leap down.”

The flames rushed out of the windows of the king's room; it was impossible to return to it, but neither the king nor Mena lost his self-possession. When Mena saw the twelve princes descending to the ground, he shouted through his hands, using them as a speaking trumpet, and called to Rameri, who was about to slip down the rope they had contrived, the last of them all.

“Pull up the rope, and keep it from injury till I come.”

Rameri obeyed the order, and before Rameses could interfere, Mena had sprung across the space which divided one piece of the balustrade from another. The king's blood ran cold as Mena, a second time, ventured the frightful leap; one false step, and he must meet with the same fearful death as his enemy Paaker.

While the bystanders watched him in breathless silence—while the crackling of the wood, the roar of the flames, and the dull thump of falling timber mingled with the distant chant of a procession of priests who were now approaching the burning pile, Nefert roused by little Scherau knelt on the bare ground in fervent and passionate prayer to the saving Gods. She watched every movement of her husband, and she bit her lips till they bled not to cry out. She felt that he was acting bravely and nobly, and that he was lost if even for an instant his attention were dis-

tracted from his perilous footing. Now he had reached Rameri, and bound one end of the rope made out of cloaks and handkerchiefs, round his body; then he gave the other end to Rameri, who held fast to the window-sill, and prepared once more to spring. Nefert saw him ready to leap, she pressed her hands upon her lips to repress a scream, she shut her eyes, and when she opened them again he had accomplished the first leap, and at the second the Gods preserved him from falling; at the third the king held out his hand to him, and saved him from a fall. Then Rameses helped him to unfasten the rope from round his waist to fasten it to the end of a beam.

Rameri now loosened the other end, and followed Mena's example; he too, practised in athletic exercises in the school of the House of Seti, succeeded in accomplishing the three tremendous leaps, and soon the king stood in safety on the ground. Rameri followed him, and then Mena, whose faithful wife went to meet him, and wiped the sweat from his throbbing temples.

Rameses hurried to the north wing, where Bent-Anat had her apartments; he found her safe indeed, but wringing her hands, for her young favorite Uarda had disappeared in the flames after she had roused her and saved her with her father's assistance.

Kashta ran up and down in front of the burning pavilion, tearing his hair; now calling his child in tones of anguish, now holding his breath to listen for an answer. To rush at random into the immense burning building would have been madness. The king observed the unhappy man, and set him to lead the soldiers, whom he had commanded to hew down the wall of Bent-Anat's rooms, so as to rescue the girl who

might be within. Kaschta seized an axe, and raised it to strike.

But he thought that he heard blows from within against one of the shutters of the ground-floor, which by Katuti's orders had been securely closed; he followed the sound—he was not mistaken, the knocking could be distinctly heard.

With all his might he struck the edge of the axe between the shutter and the wall, and a stream of smoke poured out of the new outlet, and before him, enveloped in its black clouds, stood a staggering man who held Uarda in his arms. Kaschta sprang forward into the midst of the smoke and sparks, and snatched his daughter from the arms of her preserver, who fell half smothered on his knees. He rushed out into the air with his light and precious burden, and as he pressed his lips to her closed eyelids his eyes were wet, and there rose up before him the image of the woman who bore her, the wife that had stood as the solitary green palm-tree in the desert waste of his life. But only for a few seconds—Bent-Anat herself took Uarda into her care, and he hastened back to the burning house.

He had recognized his daughter's preserver; it was the physician Nebsecht, who had not quitted the princess since their meeting on Sinai, and had found a place among her suite as her personal physician.

The fresh air had rushed into the room through the opening of the shutter, the broad flames streamed out of the window, but still Nebsecht was alive, for his groans could be heard through the smoke. Once more Kaschta rushed towards the window, the bystanders could see that the ceiling of the room was

about to fall, and called out to warn him, but he was already astride the sill.

“I signed myself his slave with my blood,” he cried, “Twice he has saved my child, and now I will pay my debt,” and he disappeared into the burning room.

He soon reappeared with Nebsecht in his arms, whose robe was already scorched by the flames. He could be seen approaching the window with his heavy burden; a hundred soldiers, and with them Pentaur, pressed forward to help him, and took the senseless leech out of the arms of the soldier, who lifted him over the window sill.

Kaschta was on the point of following him, but before he could swing himself over, the beams above gave way and fell, burying the brave son of the paraschites.

Pentaur had his insensible friend carried to his tent, and helped the physicians to bind up his burns.

When the cry of fire had been first raised, Pentaur was sitting in earnest conversation with the high-priest; he had learned that he was not the son of a gardener, but a descendant of one of the noblest families in the land. The foundations of life seemed to be subverted under his feet, Ameni's revelation lifted him out of the dust and set him on the marble floor of a palace; and yet Pentaur was neither excessively surprised nor inordinately rejoiced; he was so well used to find his joys and sufferings depend on the man within him, and not on the circumstances without.

As soon as he heard the cry of fire, he hastened to the burning pavilion, and when he saw the king's danger, he set himself at the head of a number of sol-

diers who had hurried up from the camp, intending to venture an attempt to save Rameses from the inside of the house. Among those who followed him in this hopeless effort was Katuti's reckless son, who had distinguished himself by his valor before Kadesh, and who hailed this opportunity of again proving his courage. Falling walls choked up the way in front of these brave adventurers; but it was not till several had fallen choked or struck down by burning logs, that they made up their minds to retire—one of the first that was killed was Katuti's son, Nefert's brother.

Uarda had been carried into the nearest tent. Her pretty head lay in Bent-Anat's lap, and Nefert tried to restore her to animation by rubbing her temples with strong essences. Presently the girl's lips moved: with returning consciousness all she had seen and suffered during the last hour or two recurred to her mind; she felt herself rushing through the camp with her father, hurrying through the corridor to the princess's rooms, while he broke in the doors closed by Katuti's orders; she saw Bent-Anat as she roused her, and conducted her to safety; she remembered her horror when, just as she reached the door, she discovered that she had left in her chest her jewel, the only relic of her lost mother, and her rapid return which was observed by no one but by the leech Nebsecht.

Again she seemed to live through the anguish she had felt till she once more had the trinket safe in her bosom, the horror that fell upon her when she found her escape impeded by smoke and flames, and the weakness which overcame her; and she felt as if the strange white-robed priest once more raised her in his arms. She remembered the tenderness of his eyes as

he looked into hers, and she smiled half gratefully but half displeased at the tender kiss which had been pressed on her lips before she found herself in her father's strong arms.

“How sweet she is!” said Bent-Anat. “I believe poor Nebsecht is right in saying that her mother was the daughter of some great man among the foreign people. Look what pretty little hands and feet, and her skin is as clear as Phœnician glass.”

CHAPTER XLIV.

WHILE the friends were occupied in restoring Uarda to animation, and in taking affectionate care of her, Katuti was walking restlessly backwards and forwards in her tent.

Soon after she had slipped out for the purpose of setting fire to the palace, Scherau's cry had waked up Nefert, and Katuti found her daughter's bed empty when, with blackened hands and limbs trembling with agitation, she came back from her criminal task.

Now she waited in vain for Nemu and Paaker.

Her steward, whom she sent on repeated messages of enquiry whether the Regent had returned, constantly brought back a negative answer, and added the information that he had found the body of old Hekt lying on the open ground. The widow's heart sank with fear; she was full of dark forebodings while she listened to the shouts of the people engaged in putting out the fire, the roll of drums, and the trumpets of the soldiers calling each other to the help of the king.

To these sounds now was added the dull crash of falling timbers and walls.

A faint smile played upon her thin lips, and she thought to herself: "There—that perhaps fell on the king, and my precious son-in-law, who does not deserve such a fate—if we had not fallen into disgrace, and if since the occurrences before Kadesh he did not cling to his indulgent lord as a calf follows a cow."

She gathered fresh courage, and fancied she could hear the voice of Ethiopian troops hailing the Regent as king—could see Ani decorated with the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, seated on Rameses' throne, and herself by his side in rich though unpretending splendor. She pictured herself with her son and daughter as enjoying Mena's estate, freed from debt and increased by Ani's generosity, and then a new, intoxicating hope came into her mind. Perhaps already at this moment her daughter was a widow, and why should she not be so fortunate as to induce Ani to select her child, the prettiest woman in Thebes, for his wife? Then she, the mother of the queen, would be indeed unimpeachable, and all-powerful. She had long since come to regard the pioneer as a tool to be cast aside, nay soon to be utterly destroyed; his wealth might probably at some future time be bestowed upon her son, who had distinguished himself at Kadesh, and whom Ani must before long promote to be his charioteer or the commander of the chariot warriors.

Flattered by these fancies, she forgot every care as she walked faster and faster to and fro in her tent. Suddenly the steward, whom she had this time sent to the very scene of the fire, rushed into the tent, and with every token of terror broke to her the news that

the king and his charioteer were hanging in mid air on a narrow wooden parapet, and that unless some miracle happened they must inevitably be killed. It was said that incendiaries had occasioned the fire, and he, the steward, had hastened forward to prepare her for evil news as the mangled body of the pioneer, which had been identified by the ring on his finger, and the poor little corpse of Nemu, pierced through by an arrow, had been carried past him.

Katuti was silent for a moment.

“And the king’s sons?” she asked with an anxious sigh.

“The Gods be praised,” replied the steward, “they succeeded in letting themselves down to the ground by a rope made of their garments knotted together, and some were already safe when I came away.”

Katuti’s face clouded darkly; once more she sent forth her messenger. The minutes of his absence seemed like days; her bosom heaved in stormy agitation, then for a moment she controlled herself, and again her heart seemed to cease beating—she closed her eyes as if her anguish of anxiety was too much for her strength. At last, long after sunrise, the steward reappeared.

Pale, trembling, hardly able to control his voice, he threw himself on the ground at her feet crying out:

“Alas! this night! prepare for the worst, mistress! May Isis comfort thee, who saw thy son fall in the service of his king and father! May Amon, the great God of Thebes, give thee strength! Our pride, our hope, thy son is slain, killed by a falling beam.”

Pale and still as if frozen, Katuti shed not a tear;

for a minute she did not speak, then she asked in a dull tone :

“ And Rameses ? ”

“ The Gods be praised ! ” answered the servant, “ he is safe—rescued by Mena ! ”

“ And Ani ? ”

“ Burnt !—they found his body disfigured out of all recognition ; they knew him again by the jewels he wore at the banquet . ”

Katuti gazed into vacancy, and the steward started back as from a mad woman when, instead of bursting into tears, she clenched her small jewelled hands, shook her fists in the air, and broke into loud, wild laughter ; then, startled at the sound of her own voice, she suddenly became silent and fixed her eyes vacantly on the ground. She neither saw nor heard that the captain of the watch, who was called “ the eyes and ears of the king,” had come in through the door of her tent followed by several officers and a scribe ; he came up to her, and called her by her name. Not till the steward timidly touched her did she collect her senses like one suddenly roused from deep sleep.

“ What are you doing in my tent ? ” she asked the officer, drawing herself up haughtily.

“ In the name of the chief judge of Thebes,” said the captain of the watch solemnly. “ I arrest you, and hail you before the high court of justice, to defend yourself against the grave and capital charges of high treason, attempted regicide, and incendiarism . ”

“ I am ready,” said the widow, and a scornful smile curled her lips. Then with her usual dignity she pointed to a seat and said :

“ Be seated while I dress . ”

The officer bowed, but remained standing at the door of the tent while she arranged her black hair, set her diadem on her brow, opened her little ointment chest, and took from it a small phial of the rapid poison strychnine, which some months before she had procured through Nemu from the old witch Hekt.

“My mirror!” she called to a maid servant, who squatted in a corner of the tent. She held the metal mirror so as to conceal her face from the captain of the watch, put the little flask to her lips and emptied it at one mouthful. The mirror fell from her hand, she staggered, a deadly convulsion seized her—the officer rushed forward, and while she fixed her dying look upon him she said :

“My game is lost, but Ameni—tell Ameni that he will not win either.”

She fell forward, murmured Nefert’s name, struggled convulsively and was dead.

When the draught of happiness which the Gods prepare for some few men, seems to flow clearest and purest, Fate rarely fails to infuse into it some drop of bitterness. And yet we should not therefore disdain it, for it is that very drop of bitterness which warns us to drink of the joys of life thankfully, and in moderation.

The perfect happiness of Mena and Nefert was troubled by the fearful death of Katuti, but both felt as if they now for the first time knew the full strength of their love for each other. Mena had to make up to his wife for the loss of mother and brother, and Nefert to restore to her husband much that he had been robbed of by her relatives, and they felt that they had

met again not merely for pleasure but to be to each other a support and a consolation.

Rameses quitted the scene of the fire full of gratitude to the Gods who had shown such grace to him and his. He ordered numberless steers to be sacrificed, and thanksgiving festivals to be held throughout the land; but he was cut to the heart by the betrayal to which he had fallen a victim. He longed—as he always did in moments when the balance of his mind had been disturbed—for an hour of solitude, and retired to the tent which had been hastily erected for him. He could not bear to enter the splendid pavilion which had been Ani's; it seemed to him infested with the leprosy of falsehood and treason.

For an hour he remained alone, and weighed the worst he had suffered at the hands of men against that which was good and cheering, and he found that the good far outweighed the evil. He vividly realized the magnitude of his debt of gratitude, not to the Immortals only, but also to his earthly friends, as he recalled every moment of this morning's experience.

“Gratitude,” he said to himself, “was impressed on you by your mother; you yourself have taught your children to be grateful. Piety is gratitude to the Gods, and he only is really generous who does not forget the gratitude he owes to men.”

He had thrown off all bitterness of feeling when he sent for Bent-Anat and Pentaur to be brought to his tent. He made his daughter relate at full length how the poet had won her love, and though he frequently interrupted her with blame as well as praise, his heart was full of fatherly joy when he laid his darling's hand in that of the poet.

Bent-Anat laid her head in full content on the breast of the noble Assa's grandson, but she would have clung not less fondly to Pentaur the gardener's son.

"Now you are one of my own children," said Rameses; and he desired the poet to remain with him while he commanded the heralds, ambassadors, and interpreters to bring to him the Asiatic princes, who were detained in their own tents on the farther side of the Nile, that he might conclude with them such a treaty of peace as might continue valid for generations to come. Before they arrived, the young princes came to their father's tent, and learned from his own lips the noble birth of Pentaur, and that they owed it to their sister that in him they saw another brother; they welcomed him with sincere affection, and all, especially Rameri, warmly congratulated the handsome and worthy couple.

The king then called Rameri forward from among his brothers, and thanked him before them all for his brave conduct during the fire. He had already been invested with the robe of manhood* after the battle of Kadesh; he was now appointed to the command of a legion of chariot-warriors, and the order of the lion to wear round his neck was bestowed on him for his bravery.** The prince knelt, and thanked his father; but Rameses took the curly head in his hands and said:

"You have won praise and reward by your splendid deeds from the father whom you have saved and

* The naval officer Ahmes relates in the biographical inscription in his tomb at el Kab that he was invested with the robe of manhood, and "took a house," or in other words married.

** The distinction called "the order of the lion" was received by commander-in-chief Amen em Heb, who lived under Thotmes III. The very interesting inscription on his tomb which I discovered, I translated and treated in detail in the "Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1876 and 1877.

filled with pride. But the king watches over the laws,* and guides the destiny of this land, the king must blame you, nay perhaps punish you. You could not yield to the discipline of school, where we all must learn to obey if we would afterwards exercise our authority with moderation, and without any orders you left Egypt and joined the army. You showed the courage and strength of a man, but the folly of a boy in all that regards prudence and foresight—things harder to learn for the son of a race of heroes than mere hitting and slashing at random; you, without experience, measured yourself against masters of the art of war, and what was the consequence? Twice you fell a prisoner into the hands of the enemy, and I had to ransom you.

“The king of the Danaids gave you up in exchange for his daughter, and he rejoices long since in the restoration of his child; but we, in losing her, lost the most powerful means of coercing the seafaring nations of the islands and northern coasts of the great sea** who are constantly increasing in might and daring, and so diminished our chances of securing a solid and abiding peace.

“Thus—through the careless wilfulness of a boy, the great work is endangered which I had hoped to have achieved. It grieves me particularly to humiliate your spirit to-day, when I have had so much reason to encourage you with praise. Nor will I punish you, only warn you and teach you. The mechanism of the state is like the working of the cogged wheels which move the water-works on the shore of the Nile—if one tooth is missing the whole comes to a stand-still

* A title frequently given to the Pharaohs.

** The Mediterranean Sea.

however strong the beasts that labor to turn it. Each of you—bear this in mind—is a main-wheel in the great machine of the state, and can serve an end only by acting unresistingly in obedience to the motive power. Now rise! we may perhaps succeed in obtaining good security from the Asiatic king, though we have lost our hostage.”

Heralds at this moment marched into the tent, and announced that the representative of the Cheta king and the allied princes were in attendance in the council tent; Rameses put on the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt and all his royal adornments; the chamberlain who carried the insignia of his power, and his head scribe with his decoration of plumes marched before him, while his sons, the commanders in chief, and the interpreters followed him. Rameses took his seat on his throne with great dignity, and the sternest gravity marked his demeanor while he received the homage of the conquered and fettered kings.

The Asiatics kissed the earth at his feet, only the king of the Danaids did no more than bow before him. Rameses looked wrathfully at him, and ordered the interpreter to ask him whether he considered himself conquered or no, and the answer was given that he had not come before the Pharaoh as a prisoner, and that the obeisance which Rameses required of him was regarded as a degradation according to the customs of his free-born people, who prostrated themselves only before the Gods. He hoped to become an ally of the king of Egypt, and he asked would he desire to call a degraded man his friend?

Rameses measured the proud and noble figure before him with a glance, and said severely:

“I am prepared to treat for peace only with such of my enemies as are willing to bow to the double crown that I wear. If you persist in your refusal, you and your people will have no part in the favorable conditions that I am prepared to grant to these, your allies.”

The captive prince preserved his dignified demeanor, which was nevertheless free from insolence, when these words of the king were interpreted to him, and replied that he had come intending to procure peace at any cost, but that he never could nor would grovel in the dust at any man's feet nor before any crown. He would depart on the following day; one favor, however, he requested in his daughter's name and his own—and he had heard that the Egyptians respected women. The king knew, of course, that his charioteer Mena had treated his daughter, not as a prisoner but as a sister, and Praxilla now felt a wish, which he himself shared, to bid farewell to the noble Mena, and his wife, and to thank him for his magnanimous generosity. Would Rameses permit him once more to cross the Nile before his departure, and with his daughter to visit Mena in his tent.

Rameses granted his prayer: the prince left the tent, and the negotiations began.

In a few hours they were brought to a close, for the Asiatic and Egyptian scribes had agreed, in the course of the long march southwards, on the stipulations to be signed; the treaty itself was to be drawn up after the articles had been carefully considered, and to be signed in the city of Rameses called Tanis—or, by the numerous settlers in its neighborhood, Zoan. The Asiatic princes were to dine as guests with

the king; but they sat at a separate table, as the Egyptians would have been defiled by sitting at the same table with strangers.

Rameses was not perfectly satisfied. If the Danaids went away without concluding a treaty with him, it was to be expected that the peace which he was so earnestly striving for would before long be again disturbed; and he nevertheless felt that, out of regard for the other conquered princes, he could not forego any jot of the humiliation which he had required of their king, and which he believed to be due to himself—though he had been greatly impressed by his dignified manliness and by the bravery of the troops that had followed him into the field.

The sun was sinking when Mena, who that day had leave of absence from the king, came in great excitement up to the table where the princes were sitting and craved the king's permission to make an important communication. Rameses signed consent; the charioteer went close up to him, and they held a short but eager conversation in a low voice.

Presently the king stood up and said, speaking to his daughter:

“This day which began so horribly will end joyfully. The fair child who saved you to-day, but who so nearly fell a victim to the flames, is of noble origin.”

“She comes of a royal house,” said Rameri, disrespectfully interrupting his father. Rameses looked at him reprovingly. “My sons are silent,” he said, “till I ask them to speak.”

The prince colored and looked down; the king signed to Bent-Anat and Pentaur, begged his guests to

excuse him for a short time, and was about to leave the tent; but Bent-Anat went up to him, and whispered a few words to him with reference to her brother. Not in vain: the king paused, and reflected for a few moments; then he looked at Rameri, who stood abashed, and as if rooted to the spot where he stood. The king called his name, and beckoned him to follow him.

CHAPTER XLV.

RAMERI had rushed off to summon the physicians, while Bent-Anat was endeavoring to restore the rescued Uarda to consciousness, and he followed them into his sister's tent. He gazed with tender anxiety into the face of the half suffocated girl, who, though uninjured, still remained unconscious, and took her hand to press his lips to her slender fingers, but Bent-Anat pushed him gently away; then in low tones that trembled with emotion he implored her not to send him away, and told her how dear the girl whose life he had saved in the fight in the Necropolis had become to him—how, since his departure for Syria, he had never ceased to think of her night and day, and that he desired to make her his wife.

Bent-Anat was startled; she reminded her brother of the stain that lay on the child of the paraschites and through which she herself had suffered so much; but Rameri answered eagerly:

“In Egypt rank and birth are derived through the mother and Kaschta's dead wife—”

“I know,” interrupted Bent-Anat. “Nebsecht has

already told us that she was a dumb woman, a prisoner of war, and I myself believe that she was of no mean house, for Uarda is nobly formed in face and figure."

"And her skin is as fine as the petal of a flower," cried Rameri. "Her voice is like the ring of pure gold, and—Oh! look, she is moving. Uarda, open your eyes, Uarda! When the sun rises we praise the Gods. Open your eyes! how thankful, how joyful I shall be if those two suns only rise again."

Bent-Anat smiled, and drew her brother away from the heavily-breathing girl, for a leech came into the tent to say that a warm medicated bath had been prepared and was ready for Uarda. The princess ordered her waiting-women to help lift the senseless girl, and was preparing to follow her when a message from her father required her presence in his tent. She could guess at the significance of this command, and desired Rameri to leave her that she might dress in festal garments; she could entrust Uarda to the care of Nefert during her absence.

"She is kind and gentle, and she knows Uarda so well," said the princess, "and the necessity of caring for this dear little creature will do her good. Her heart is torn between sorrow for her lost relations, and joy at being united again to her love. My father has given Mena leave of absence from his office for several days, and I have excused her from her attendance on me, for the time during which we were so necessary to each other really came to an end yesterday. I feel, Rameri, as if we, after our escape, were like the sacred phoenix which comes to Heliopolis and burns itself to death only to soar again from its ashes young and radiant—blessed and blessing!"

When her brother had left her, she threw herself before the image of her mother and prayed long and earnestly; she poured an offering of sweet perfume on the little altar of the Goddess Hathor, which always accompanied her, had herself dressed in happy preparation for meeting her father, and—she did not conceal it from herself—Pentaur, then she went for a moment to Nefert's tent to beg her to take good care of Uarda, and finally obeyed the summons of the king, who, as we know, fulfilled her utmost hopes.

As Rameri quitted his sister's tent he saw the watch seize and lead away a little boy; the child cried bitterly, and the prince in a moment recognized the little sculptor Scherau, who had betrayed the Regent's plot to him and to Uarda, and whom he had already fancied he had seen about the place. The guards had driven him away several times from the princess's tent, but he had persisted in returning, and this obstinate waiting in the neighborhood had aroused the suspicions of an officer; for since the fire a thousand rumors of conspiracies and plots against the king had been flying about the camp. Rameri at once freed the little prisoner, and heard from him that it was old Hekt who, before her death, had sent Kaschta and his daughter to the rescue of the king, that he himself had helped to rouse the troops, that now he had no home and wished to go to Uarda.

The prince himself led the child to Nefert, and begged her to allow him to see Uarda, and to let him stay with her servants till he himself returned from his father's tent.

The leeches had treated Uarda with judgment, for under the influence of the bath she recovered her senses;

when she had been dressed again in fresh garments and refreshed by the essences and medicines which they gave her to inhale and to drink, she was led back into Nefert's tent, where Mena, who had never before seen her, was astonished at her peculiar and touching beauty.

"She is very like my Danaid princess," he said to his wife; "only she is younger and much prettier than she."

Little Scherau came in to pay his respects to her, and she was delighted to see the boy; still she was sad, and however kindly Nefert spoke to her she remained in silent reverie, while from time to time a large tear rolled down her cheek.

"You have lost your father!" said Nefert, trying to comfort her. "And I, my mother and brother both in one day."

"Kaschta was rough but, oh! so kind," replied Uarda. "He was always so fond of me; he was like the fruit of the doom palm; its husk is hard and rough, but he who knows how to open it finds the sweet pulp within. Now he is dead, and my grandfather and grandmother are gone before him, and I am like the green leaf that I saw floating on the waters when we were crossing the sea; anything so forlorn I never saw, abandoned by all it belonged to or had ever loved, the sport of a strange element in which nothing resembling itself ever grew or ever can grow."

Nefert kissed her forehead. "You have friends," she said, "who will never abandon you."

"I know, I know!" said Uarda thoughtfully, "and yet I am alone—for the first time really alone. In Thebes I have often looked after the wild swans as

they passed across the sky; one flies in front, then comes the body of the wandering party, and very often, far behind, a solitary straggler; and even this last one I do not call lonely, for he can still see his brethren in front of him. But when the hunters have shot down all the low-flying loiterers, and the last one has lost sight of the flock, and knows that he never again can find them or follow them he is indeed to be pitied. I am as unhappy as the abandoned bird, for I have lost sight to-day of all that I belong to, and I am alone, and can never find them again."

"You will be welcomed into some more noble house than that to which you belong by birth," said Nefert, to comfort her.

Uarda's eyes flashed, and she said proudly, almost defiantly:

"My race is that of my mother, who was a daughter of no mean house; the reason I turned back this morning and went into the smoke and fire again after I had escaped once into the open air—what I went back for, because I felt it was worth dying for, was my mother's legacy, which I had put away with my holiday dress when I followed the wretched Nemu to his tent. I threw myself into the jaws of death to save the jewel, but certainly not because it is made of gold and precious stones—for I do not care to be rich, and I want no better fare than a bit of bread and a few dates and a cup of water—but because it has a name on it in strange characters, and because I believe it will serve to discover the people from whom my mother was carried off; and now I have lost the jewel, and with it my identity and my hopes and happiness."

Uarda wept aloud; Nefert put her arm around her affectionately.

“Poor child!” she said, “was your treasure destroyed in the flames?”

“No, no,” cried Uarda eagerly. “I snatched it out of my chest and held it in my hand when Nebsecht took me in his arms, and I still had it in my hand when I was lying safe on the ground outside the burning house, and Bent-Anat was close to me, and Rameri came up. I remember seeing him as if I were in a dream, and I revived a little, and I felt the jewel in my fingers then.”

“Then it was dropped on the way to the tent?” said Nefert.

Uarda nodded; little Scherau, who had been crouching on the floor beside her, gave Uarda a loving glance, dimmed with tears, and quietly slipped out of the tent.

Time went by in silence; Uarda sat looking at the ground, Nefert and Mena held each other's hands, but the thoughts of all three were with the dead. A perfect stillness reigned, and the happiness of the reunited couple was darkly overshadowed by their sorrow. From time to time the silence was broken by a trumpet-blast from the royal tent; first when the Asiatic princes were introduced into the Council-tent, then when the Danaid king departed, and lastly when the Pharaoh preceded the conquered princes to the banquet.

The charioteer remembered how his master had restored him to dignity and honor, for the sake of his faithful wife; and gratefully pressed her hand.

Suddenly there was a noise in front of the tent, and an officer entered to announce to Mena that the Danaid king and his daughter, accompanied by a

body-guard, requested to see and speak with him and Nefert.

The entrance to the tent was thrown wide open. Uarda retired modestly into the back-ground, and Mena and Nefert went forward hand in hand to meet their unexpected guests.

The Greek prince was an old man, his beard and thick hair were grey, but his movements were youthful and light, though dignified and deliberate. His even, well-formed features were deeply furrowed, he had large, bright, clear blue eyes, but round his fine lips were lines of care. Close to him walked his daughter; her long white robe striped with purple was held round her hips by a golden girdle, and her sunny yellow hair fell in waving locks over her neck and shoulders, while it was confined by a diadem which encircled her head; she was of middle height, and her motions were measured and calm like her father's. Her brow was narrow, and in one line with her straight nose, her rosy mouth was sweet and kind, and beyond everything beautiful were the lines of her oval face and the turn of her snow-white throat. By their side stood the interpreter who translated every word of the conversation on both sides. Behind them came two men and two women, who carried gifts for Mena and his wife.

The prince praised Mena's magnanimity in the warmest terms.

"You have proved to me," he said, "that the virtues of gratitude, of constancy, and of faith are practised by the Egyptians; although your merit certainly appears less to me now that I see your wife, for he who owns the fairest may easily forego any taste for the fair."

Nefert blushed.

“Your generosity,” she answered, “does me more than justice at your daughter’s expense, and love moved my husband to the same injustice, but your beautiful daughter must forgive you and me also.”

Praxilla went towards her and expressed her thanks; then she offered her the costly coronet, the golden clasps and strings of rare pearls which her women carried; her father begged Mena to accept a coat of mail and a shield of fine silver work. The strangers were then led into the tent, and were there welcomed and entertained with all honor, and offered bread and wine. While Mena pledged her father, Praxilla related to Nefert, with the help of the interpreter, what hours of terror she had lived through after she had been taken prisoner by the Egyptians, and was brought into the camp with the other spoils of war; how an older commander had asserted his claim to her, how Mena had given her his hand, had led her to his tent, and had treated her like his own daughter. Her voice shook with emotion, and even the interpreter was moved as she concluded her story with these words: “How grateful I am to him, you will fully understand when I tell you that the man who was to have been my husband fell wounded before my eyes while defending our camp; but he has recovered, and now only awaits my return for our wedding.”

“May the Gods only grant it!” cried the king, “for Praxilla is the last child of my house. The murderous war robbed me of my four fair sons before they had taken wives, my son-in-law was slain by the Egyptians at the taking of our camp, and his wife and new-born son fell into their hands, and Praxilla is

my youngest child, the only one left to me by the envious Gods."

While he was still speaking, they heard the guards call out and a child's loud cry, and at the same instant little Scherau rushed into the tent holding up his hand exclaiming.

"I have it! I have found it!"

Uarda, who had remained behind the curtain which screened the sleeping room of the tent—but who had listened with breathless attention to every word of the foreigners, and who had never taken her eyes off the fair Praxilla—now came forward, emboldened by her agitation, into the midst of the tent, and took the jewel from the child's hand to show it to the Greek king; for while she stood gazing at Praxilla it seemed to her that she was looking at herself in a mirror, and the idea had rapidly grown to conviction that her mother had been a daughter of the Danaids. Her heart beat violently as she went up to the king with a modest demeanor, her head bent down, but holding her jewel up for him to see.

The bystanders all gazed in astonishment at the veteran chief, for he staggered as she came up to him, stretched out his hands as if in terror towards the girl, and drew back crying out:

"Xanthe, Xanthe! Is your spirit freed from Hades? Are you come to summon me?"

Praxilla looked at her father in alarm, but suddenly she, too, gave a piercing cry, snatched a chain from her neck, hurried towards Uarda, and seizing the jewel she held, exclaimed:

"Here is the other half of the ornament, it belonged to my poor sister Xanthe!"

The old Greek was a pathetic sight, he struggled hard to collect himself, looking with tender delight at Uarda, his sinewy hands trembled as he compared the two pieces of the necklet; they matched precisely—each represented the wing of an eagle which was attached to half an oval covered with an inscription; when they were laid together they formed the complete figure of a bird with out-spread wings, on whose breast the lines exactly matched of the following oracular verse—

“Alone each is a trifling thing, a woman’s useless toy—
But with its counterpart behold! the favorite bird of Zeus.”

A glance at the inscription convinced the king that he held in his hand the very jewel which he had put with his own hands round the neck of his daughter Xanthe on her marriage-day, and of which the other half had been preserved by her mother, from whom it had descended to Praxilla. It had originally been made for his wife and her twin sister who had died young. Before he made any enquiries, or asked for any explanations, he took Uarda’s head between his hands, and turning her face close to his he gazed at her features, as if he were reading a book in which he expected to find a memorial of all the blissful hours of his youth, and the girl felt no fear; nor did she shrink when he pressed his lips to her forehead, for she felt that this man’s blood ran in her own veins. At last the king signed to the interpreter; Uarda was asked to tell all she knew of her mother, and when she said that she had come a captive to Thebes with an infant that had soon after died, that her father had bought her and had loved her in spite of her being dumb, the prince’s conviction became certainty; he acknowledged

Uarda as his grandchild, and Praxilla clasped her in her arms.

Then he told Mena that it was now twenty years since his son-in-law had been killed, and his daughter Xanthe, whom Uarda exactly resembled, had been carried into captivity. Praxilla was then only just born, and his wife died of the shock of such terrible news. All his enquiries for Xanthe and her child had been fruitless, but he now remembered that once, when he had offered a large ransom for his daughter if she could be found, the Egyptians had enquired whether she were dumb, and that he had answered "no." No doubt Xanthe had lost the power of speech through grief, terror, and suffering.

The joy of the king was unspeakable, and Uarda was never tired of gazing at his daughter and holding her hand.

Then she turned to the interpreter.

"Tell me," she said. "How do I say 'I am so very happy?'"

He told her, and she smilingly repeated his words. "Now 'Uarda will love you with all her heart?'" and she said it after him in broken accents that sounded so sweet and so heart-felt, that the old man clasped her to his breast.

Tears of emotion stood in Nefert's eyes, and when Uarda flung herself into her arms she said:

"The forlorn swan has found its kindred, the floating leaf has reached the shore, and must be happy now!"

Thus passed an hour of the purest happiness; at last the Greek king prepared to leave, and he wished to take Uarda with him; but Mena begged his permission

to communicate all that had occurred to the Pharaoh and Bent-Anat, for Uarda was attached to the princess's train, and had been left in his charge, and he dared not trust her in any other hands without Bent-Anat's permission. Without waiting for the king's reply he left the tent, hastened to the banqueting tent, and, as we know, Rameses and the princess had at once attended to his summons.

On the way Mena gave them a vivid description of the exciting events that had taken place, and Rameses, with a side glance at Bent-Anat, asked Rameri:

"Would you be prepared to repair your errors, and to win the friendship of the Greek king by being betrothed to his granddaughter?"

The prince could not answer a word, but he clasped his father's hand, and kissed it so warmly that Rameses, as he drew it away, said:

"I really believe that you have stolen a march on me, and have been studying diplomacy behind my back!"

Rameses met his noble opponent outside Mena's tent, and was about to offer him his hand, but the Danaid chief had sunk on his knees before him as the other princes had done.

"Regard me not as a king and a warrior," he exclaimed, "only as a suppliant father; let us conclude a peace, and permit me to take this maiden, my grandchild, home with me to my own country."

Rameses raised the old man from the ground, gave him his hand, and said kindly:

"I, can only grant the half of what you ask. I, as king of Egypt, am most willing to grant you a faithful compact for a sound and lasting peace; as regards this

maiden, you must treat with my children, first with my daughter Bent-Anat, one of whose ladies she is, and then with your released prisoner there, who wishes to make Uarda his wife."

"I will resign my share in the matter to my brother," said Bent-Anat, "and I only ask you, maiden, whether you are inclined to acknowledge him as your lord and master?"

Uarda bowed assent, and looked at her grandfather with an expression which he understood without any interpreter.

"I know you well," he said, turning to Rameri. "We stood face to face in the fight, and I took you prisoner as you fell stunned by a blow from my sword. You are still too rash, but that is a fault which time will amend in a youth of your heroic temper. Listen to me now, and you too, noble Pharaoh, permit me these few words; let us betroth these two, and may their union be the bond of ours, but first grant me for a year to take my long-lost child home with me that she may rejoice my old heart, and that I may hear from her lips the accents of her mother, whom you took from me. They are both young; according to the usages of our country, where both men and women ripen later than in your country, they are almost too young for the solemn tie of marriage. But one thing above all will determine you to favor my wishes; this daughter of a royal house has grown up amid the humblest surroundings; here she has no home, no family-ties. The prince has wooed her, so to speak, on the highway, but if she now comes with me he can enter the palace of kings as suitor to a princess, and the marriage feast I will provide shall be a right royal one."

“What you demand is just and wise,” replied Rameses. “Take your grandchild with you as my son’s betrothed bride—my future daughter. Give me your hands, my children. The delay will teach you patience, for Rameri must remain a full year from to-day in Egypt, and it will be to your profit, sweet child, for the obedience which he will learn through his training in the army will temper the nature of your future husband. You, Rameri, shall in a year from to-day—and I think you will not forget the date—find at your service a ship in the harbor of Pelusium, fitted and manned with Phœnicians, to convey you to your wedding.”

“So be it!” exclaimed the old man. “And by Zeus who hears me swear—I will not withhold Xanthe’s daughter from your son when he comes to claim her!”

When Rameri returned to the princes’ tent he threw himself on their necks in turn, and when he found himself alone with their surly old house-steward, he snatched his wig from his head, flung it in the air, and then coaxingly stroked the worthy officer’s cheeks as he set it on his head again.

CHAPTER XLVI.

UARDA accompanied her grandfather and Praxilla to their tent on the farther side of the Nile, but she was to return next morning to the Egyptian camp to take leave of all her friends, and to provide for her father’s interment. Nor did she delay attending to the last wishes of old Hekt, and Bent-Anat easily persuaded her father, when he learnt how greatly he had been indebted to her, to have her embalmed like a lady of rank.

Before Uarda left the Egyptian camp, Pentaur came to entreat her to afford her dying preserver Nebsecht the last happiness of seeing her once more; Uarda acceded with a blush, and the poet, who had watched all night by his friend, went forward to prepare him for her visit.

Nebsecht's burns and a severe wound on his head caused him great suffering; his cheeks glowed with fever, and the physicians told Pentaur that he probably could not live more than a few hours.

The poet laid his cool hand on his friend's brow, and spoke to him encouragingly; but Nebsecht smiled at his words with the peculiar expression of a man who knows that his end is near, and said in a low voice and with a visible effort:

"A few breaths more and here, and here, will be peace." He laid his hand on his head and on his heart.

"We all attain to peace," said Pentaur. "But perhaps only to labor more earnestly and unweariedly in the land beyond the grave. If the Gods reward any thing it is the honest struggle, the earnest seeking after truth;—if any spirit can be made one with the great Soul of the world it will be yours, and if any eye may see the Godhead through the veil which here shrouds the mystery of His existence yours will have earned the privilege."

"I have pushed and pulled," sighed Nebsecht, "with all my might, and now when I thought I had caught a glimpse of the truth the heavy fist of death comes down upon me and shuts my eyes. What good will it do me to see with the eye of the Divinity or to share in his omniscience? It is not seeing, it is seeking that is

delightful—so delightful that I would willingly set my life there against another life here for the sake of it.”

He was silent, for his strength failed, and Pentaur begged him to keep quiet, and to occupy his mind in recalling all the hours of joy which life had given him.

“They have been few,” said the leech. “When my mother kissed me and gave me dates, when I could work and observe in peace, when you opened my eyes to the beautiful world of poetry—that was good!”

“And you have soothed the sufferings of many men, added Pentaur, “and never caused pain to any one.”

Nebsecht shook his head.

“I drove the old paraschites,” he muttered, “to madness and to death.”

He was silent for a long time, then he looked up eagerly and said: “But not intentionally—and not in vain! In Syria, at Megiddo I could work undisturbed; now I know what the organ is that thinks. The heart! What is the heart? A ram’s heart or a man’s heart, they serve the same end; they turn the wheel of animal life, they both beat quicker in terror or in joy, for we feel fear or pleasure just as animals do. But Thought, the divine power that flies to the infinite, and enables us to form and prove our opinions, has its seat here—here in the brain, behind the brow.”

He paused exhausted and overcome with pain. Pentaur thought he was wandering in his fever, and offered him a cooling drink while two physicians walked round his bed singing litanies; then, as Nebsecht raised himself in bed with renewed energy, the poet said to him:

“The fairest memory of your life must surely be that of the sweet child whose face, as you once confessed to me, first opened your soul to the sense of beauty, and whom with your own hands you snatched from death at the cost of your own life. You know Uarda has found her own relatives and is happy, and she is very grateful to her preserver, and would like to see him once more before she goes far away with her grandfather.”

The sick man hesitated before he answered softly :

“Let her come—but I will look at her from a distance.”

Pentaur went out and soon returned with Uarda, who remained standing with glowing cheeks and tears in her eyes at the door of the tent. The leech looked at her a long time with an imploring and tender expression, then he said :

“Accept my thanks—and be happy.”

The girl would have gone up to him to take his hand, but he waved her off with his right hand enveloped in wrappings.

“Come no nearer,” he said, “but stay a moment longer. You have tears in your eyes; are they for me or only for my pain?”

“For you, good noble man! my friend and my preserver!” said Uarda. “For you dear, poor Nebsecht!”

The leech closed his eyes as she spoke these words with earnest feeling, but he looked up once more as she ceased speaking, and gazed at her with tender admiration; then he said softly :

“It is enough—now I can die.”

Uarda left the tent, Pentaur remained with him listening to his hoarse and difficult breathing; suddenly

Nebsecht raised himself, and said: "Farewell, my friend,—my journey is beginning, who knows whither?"

"Only not into vacancy, not to end in nothingness!" cried Pentaur warmly.

The leech shook his head. "I have been something," he said, "and being something I cannot become nothing. Nature is a good economist, and utilizes the smallest trifle; she will use me too according to her need. She brings everything to its end and purpose in obedience to some rule and measure, and will so deal with me after I am dead; there is no waste. Each thing results in being that which it is its function to become; our wish or will is not asked—my head! when the pain is in my head I cannot think—if only I could prove—could prove—"

The last words were less and less audible, his breath was choked, and in a few seconds Pentaur with deep regret closed his eyes.

Pentaur, as he quitted the tent where the dead man lay, met the high-priest Ameni, who had gone to seek him by his friend's bed-side, and they returned together to gaze on the dead. Ameni, with much emotion, put up a few earnest prayers for the salvation of his soul, and then requested Pentaur to follow him without delay to his tent. On the way he prepared the poet, with the polite delicacy which was peculiar to him, for a meeting which might be more painful than joyful to him, and must in any case bring him many hours of anxiety and agitation.

The judges in Thebes, who had been compelled to sentence the lady Setchem, as the mother of a traitor,

to banishment to the mines* had, without any demand on her part, granted leave to the noble and most respectable matron to go under an escort of guards to meet the king on his return into Egypt, in order to petition for mercy for herself, but not, as it was expressly added—for Paaker; and she had set out, but with the secret resolution to obtain the king's grace not for herself but for her son.

Ameni had already left Thebes for the north when this sentence was pronounced, or he would have reversed it by declaring the true origin of Paaker; for after he had given up his participation in the Regent's conspiracy, he no longer had any motive for keeping old Hekt's secret.

Setchem's journey was lengthened by a storm which wrecked the ship in which she was descending the Nile, and she did not reach Pelusium till after the king. The canal which formed the mouth of the Nile close to this fortress and joined the river to the Mediterranean, was so over-crowded with the boats of the Regent and his followers, of the ambassadors, nobles, citizens, and troops which had met from all parts of the country, that the lady's boat could find anchorage only at a great distance from the city, and accompanied by her faithful steward she had succeeded only a few hours before in speaking to the high-priest.

Setchem was terribly changed; her eyes, which only a few months since had kept an efficient watch over

* Agatharchides, in Diodorus III. 12, says that in many cases not only the criminal but his relations also were condemned to labor in the mines. In the convention signed between Rameses and the Cheta king it is expressly provided that the deserter restored to Egypt shall go unpunished, that no injury shall be done "to his house, his wife or his children, nor shall his mother be put to death."

the wealthy Theban household, were now dim and weary, and although her figure had not grown thin it had lost its dignity and energy, and seemed inert and feeble. Her lips, so ready for a wise or sprightly saying, were closely shut, and moved only in silent prayer or when some friend spoke to her of her unhappy son. His deed she well knew was that of a reprobate, and she sought no excuse or defence; her mother's heart forgave it without any. Whenever she thought of him—and she thought of him incessantly all through the day and through her sleepless nights—her eyes overflowed with tears.

Her boat had reached Pelusium just as the flames were breaking out in the palace; the broad flare of light and the cries from the various vessels in the harbor brought her on deck. She heard that the burning house was the pavilion erected by Ani for the king's residence; Rameses she was told was in the utmost danger, and the fire had beyond a doubt been laid by traitors.

As day broke and further news reached her, the names of her son and of her sister came to her ear; she asked no questions—she would not hear the truth—but she knew it all the same; as often as the word "traitor" caught her ear in her cabin, to which she had retreated, she felt as if some keen pain shot through her bewildered brain, and shuddered as if from a cold chill.

All through that day she could neither eat nor drink, but lay with closed eyes on her couch, while her steward—who had soon learnt what a terrible share his former master had taken in the incendiarism, and who now gave up his lady's cause for lost—sought

every where for the high-priest Ameni; but as he was among the persons nearest to the king it was impossible to see him that day, and it was not till the next morning that he was able to speak with him. Ameni inspired the anxious and sorrowful old retainer with fresh courage, returned with him in his own chariot to the harbor, and accompanied him to Setchem's boat to prepare her for the happiness which awaited her after her terrible troubles.

But he came too late, the spirit of the poor lady was quite clouded, and she listened to him without any interest while he strove to restore her to courage and to recall her wandering mind. She only interrupted him over and over again with the questions: "Did he do it?" or "Is he alive?"

At last Ameni succeeded in persuading her to accompany him in her litter to his tent, where she would find her son. Pentaur was wonderfully like her lost husband, and the priest, experienced in humanity, thought that the sight of him would rouse the dormant powers of her mind. When she had arrived at his tent, he told her with kind precaution the whole history of the exchange of Paaker for Pentaur, and she followed the story with attention but with indifference, as if she were hearing of the adventures of others who did not concern her. When Ameni enlarged on the genius of the poet and on his perfect resemblance to his dead father she muttered:

"I know—I know. You mean the speaker at the Feast of the Valley," and then although she had been told several times that Paaker had been killed, she asked again if her son was alive.

Ameni decided at last to fetch Pentaur himself.

When he came back with him, fully prepared to meet his heavily-stricken mother, the tent was empty. The high-priest's servants told him that Setchem had persuaded the easily-moved old prophet Gagabu to conduct her to the place where the body of Paaker lay. Ameni was very much vexed, for he feared that Setchem was now lost indeed, and he desired the poet to follow him at once.

The mortal remains of the pioneer had been laid in a tent not far from the scene of the fire; his body was covered with a cloth, but his pale face, which had not been injured in his fall, remained uncovered; by his side knelt the unhappy mother.

She paid no heed to Ameni when he spoke to her, and he laid his hand on her shoulder and said as he pointed to the body:

“This was the son of a gardener. You brought him up faithfully as if he were your own; but your noble husband's true heir, the son you bore him, is Pentaur, to whom the Gods have given not only the form and features but the noble qualities of his father. The dead man may be forgiven—for the sake of your virtues; but your love is due to this nobler soul—the real son of your husband, the poet of Egypt, the preserver of the king's life.”

Setchem rose and went up to Pentaur, she smiled at him and stroked his face and breast.

“It is he,” she said. “May the Immortals bless him!”

Pentaur would have clasped her in his arms, but she pushed him away as if she feared to commit some breach of faith, and turning hastily to the bier she said softly:

Poor Paaker—poor, poor Paaker!”

“Mother, mother, do you not know your son?” cried Pentaur deeply moved.

She turned to him again: “It is his voice,” she said. “It is he.”

She went up to Pentaur, clung to him, clasped her arm around his neck as he bent over her, then kissing him fondly—

“The Gods will bless you!” she said once more.

She tore herself from him and threw herself down by the body of Paaker, as if she had done him some injustice and robbed him of his rights.

Thus she remained, speechless and motionless, till they carried her back to her boat, there she lay down, and refused to take any nourishment; from time to time she whispered “Poor Paaker!” She no longer repelled Pentaur, for she did not again recognize him, and before he left her she had followed the rough-natured son of her adoption to the other world.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE king had left the camp, and had settled in the neighboring ‘city of Rameses’ Tanis, with the greater part of his army. The Hebrews, who were settled in immense numbers in the province of Goshen, and whom Ani had attached to his cause by remitting their task-work, were now driven to labor at the palaces and fortifications which Rameses had begun to build.

At Tanis, too, the treaty of peace was signed and was presented to Rameses inscribed on a silver tablet

by Tarthisebu, the representative of the Cheta king, in the name of his lord and master.*

Pentaur followed the king as soon as he had closed his mother's eyes, and accompanied her body to Heliopolis, there to have it embalmed; from thence the mummy was to be sent to Thebes, and solemnly placed in the grave of her ancestors. This duty of children towards their parents, and indeed all care for the dead, was regarded as so sacred by the Egyptians, that neither Pentaur nor Bent-Anat would have thought of being united before it was accomplished.

On the 21st day of the month Tybi, of the 21st year of the reign of Rameses,** the day on which the peace was signed, the poet returned to Tanis, sad at heart, for the old gardener, whom he had regarded and loved as his father, had died before his return home; the good old man had not long survived the false intelligence of the death of the poet, whom he had not only loved but revered as a superior being bestowed upon his house as a special grace from the Gods.

It was not till seven months after the fire at Pelusium that Pentaur's marriage with Bent-Anat was solemnized in the palace of the Pharaohs at Thebes; but time and the sorrows he had suffered had only united their hearts more closely. She felt that though he was the stronger she was the giver and the helper, and realized with delight that like the sun,

* This remarkable document is preserved on the huge fragment which remains of the south wall of the temple of Karnak. The silver tablet on which it was engraved is mentioned and described in the 4th line of the treaty. It was rectangular, and had a loop at the top to hang it up by. The best translation is by Chabas, in "Voyage d'un Egyptien." The hieroglyphic text was published by Burton, Lepsius and Brugsch. A translation of this treaty is found in Egger's "Études sur les traités publics," p. 243; but this is inferior to the later ones by Chabas.

** According to the date of the treaty of peace this is the 29th January.

which when it rises invites a thousand flowers to open and unfold, the glow of her presence raised the poet's oppressed soul to fresh life and beauty. They had given each other up for lost through strife and suffering, and now had found each other again; each knew how precious the other was. To make each other happy, and prove their affection, was now the aim of their lives, and as they each had proved that they prized honor and right-doing above happiness their union was a true marriage, ennobling and purifying their souls. She could share his deepest thoughts and his most difficult undertakings, and if their house were filled with children she would know how to give him the fullest enjoyment of those small blessings which at the same time are the greatest joys of life.

Pentaur finding himself endowed by the king with superabundant wealth, gave up the inheritance of his fathers to his brother Horus, who was raised to the rank of chief pioneer as a reward for his interposition at the battle of Kadesh; Horus replaced the fallen cedar-trees which had stood at the door of his house by masts of more moderate dimensions.

The hapless Huni, under whose name Pentaur had been transferred to the mines of Sinai, was released from the quarries of Chennu, and restored to his children enriched by gifts from the poet.

The Pharaoh fully recognized the splendid talents of his daughter's husband; she to his latest days remained his favorite child, even after he had consolidated the peace by marrying the daughter of the Cheta king, and Pentaur became his most trusted adviser, and responsible for the weightiest affairs in the state.

Rameses learned from the papers found in Ani's tent, and from other evidence which was only too abundant, that the superior of the House of Seti, and with him the greater part of the priesthood, had for a long time been making common cause with the traitor; in the first instance he determined on the severest, nay bloodiest punishment, but he was persuaded by Pentaur and by his son Chamus to assert and support the principles of his government by milder and yet thorough measures. Rameses desired to be a defender of religion—of the religion which could carry consolation into the life of the lowly and over-burdened, and give their existence a higher and fuller meaning—the religion which to him, as king, appeared the indispensable means of keeping the grand significance of human life ever present to his mind—sacred as the inheritance of his fathers, and useful as the school where the people, who needed leading, might learn to follow and obey.

But nevertheless no one, not even the priests, the guardians of souls, could be permitted to resist the laws of which he was the bulwark, to which he himself was subject, and which enjoined obedience to his authority; and before he left Tanis he had given Ameni and his followers to understand that he alone was master in Egypt.

The God Seth, who had been honored by the Semite races since the time of the Hyksos, and whom they called upon under the name of Baal, had from the earliest times never been allowed a temple on the Nile, as being the God of the stranger; but Rameses—in spite of the bold remonstrances of the priestly party who called themselves the 'true believers'—raised a

magnificent temple to this God in the city of Tanis* to supply the religious needs of the immigrant foreigners. In the same spirit of toleration he would not allow the worship of strange Gods to be interfered with, though on the other hand he was jealous in honoring the Egyptian Gods with unexampled liberality. He caused temples to be erected in most of the great cities of the kingdom, he added to the temple of Ptah at Memphis, and erected immense colossi** in front of its pylons in memory of his deliverance from the fire. In the Necropolis of Thebes he had a splendid edifice constructed—which to this day delights the beholder by the symmetry of its proportions***—in memory of the hour when he escaped death as by a miracle; on its pylon he caused the battle of Kadesh to be represented in beautiful pictures in relief, and there, as well as on the architrave of the great banqueting-hall, he had the history inscribed of the danger he had run when he stood “alone and no man with him!”

By his order Pentaur rewrote the song he had sung at Pelusium; it is preserved in three temples, and, in fragments, on several papyrus-rolls which can be made to complete each other. It was destined to become the national epic—the Iliad—of Egypt.

Pentaur was commissioned to transfer the school of the House of Seti to the new votive temple, which was called the House of Rameses, and arrange it on a different plan, for the Pharaoh felt that it was requisite to form a new order of priests, and to accustom the ministers of the Gods to subordinate their own designs to the laws of the country, and to the decrees of their guardian

* This temple is frequently mentioned.

** One of these is still in existence. It lies on the ground among the ruins of ancient Memphis.

*** Known as the Ramesseum.

and ruler, the king. Pentaur was made the superior of the new college, and its library, which was called "the hospital for the soul," was without an equal; in this academy, which was the prototype of the later-formed museum and library of Alexandria, sages and poets grew up whose works endured for thousands of years—and fragments of their writings have even come down to us. The most famous are the hymns of Anana, Pentaur's favorite disciple, and the tale of the Two Brothers, composed by Gagabu, the grandson of the old Prophet.

Ameni did not remain in Thebes. Rameses had been informed of the way in which he had turned the death of the ram to account, and the use he had made of the heart, as he had supposed it, of the sacred animal, and he translated him without depriving him of his dignity or revenues to Mendes, the city of the holy rams in the Delta, where, as he observed not without satirical meaning, he would be particularly intimate with these sacred beasts; in Mendes Ameni exerted great influence, and in spite of many differences of opinion which threatened to sever them, he and Pentaur remained fast friends to the day of his death.

In the first court of the House of Rameses there stands—now broken across the middle—the wonder of the traveller, the grandest colossus in Egypt, made of the hardest granite, and exceeding even the well-known statue of Memnon in the extent of its base. It represents Rameses the Great. Little Scherau, whom Pentaur had educated to be a sculptor, executed it, as well as many other statues of the great sovereign of Egypt.

A year after the burning of the pavilion at Pelusium Rameri sailed to the land of the Danaids, was

married to Uarda, and then remained in his wife's native country, where, after the death of her grandfather, he ruled over many islands of the Mediterranean and became the founder of a great and famous race. Uarda's name was long held in tender remembrance by their subjects, for having grown up in misery she understood the secret of alleviating sorrow and relieving want, and of doing good and giving happiness without humiliating those she benefited.

THE END.

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