

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 01 eBook

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 01 by Georg Ebers

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Contents

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 01 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	6
Page 3.....	7
Page 4.....	9
Page 5.....	11
Page 6.....	12
Page 7.....	13
Page 8.....	15
Page 9.....	17
Page 10.....	19
Page 11.....	21
Page 12.....	23
Page 13.....	25
Page 14.....	27
Page 15.....	28
Page 16.....	30
Page 17.....	32
Page 18.....	33
Page 19.....	34
Page 20.....	36
Page 21.....	38
Page 22.....	40

Page 23.....	42
Page 24.....	44
Page 25.....	46
Page 26.....	48
Page 27.....	49
Page 28.....	51
Page 29.....	53
Page 30.....	55
Page 31.....	57
Page 32.....	59
Page 33.....	60
Page 34.....	62
Page 35.....	64
Page 36.....	66
Page 37.....	68
Page 38.....	70
Page 39.....	71
Page 40.....	73

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
PREFACE.		1
PREFACE		3
U A R D A.		4
CHAPTER I.		4
CHAPTER II.		12
CHAPTER III.		19
CHAPTER IV.		25
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		34
Information about Project Gutenberg (one page)		35
(Three Pages)		37

Page 1

PREFACE.

In the winter of 1873 I spent some weeks in one of the tombs of the Necropolis of Thebes in order to study the monuments of that solemn city of the dead; and during my long rides in the silent desert the germ was developed whence this book has since grown. The leisure of mind and body required to write it was given me through a long but not disabling illness.

In the first instance I intended to elucidate this story—like my “Egyptian Princess”—with numerous and extensive notes placed at the end; but I was led to give up this plan from finding that it would lead me to the repetition of much that I had written in the notes to that earlier work.

The numerous notes to the former novel had a threefold purpose. In the first place they served to explain the text; in the second they were a guarantee of the care with which I had striven to depict the archaeological details in all their individuality from the records of the monuments and of Classic Authors; and thirdly I hoped to supply the reader who desired further knowledge of the period with some guide to his studies.

In the present work I shall venture to content myself with the simple statement that I have introduced nothing as proper to Egypt and to the period of Rameses that cannot be proved by some authority; the numerous monuments which have descended to us from the time of the Rameses, in fact enable the enquirer to understand much of the aspect and arrangement of Egyptian life, and to follow it step by step through the details of religious, public, and private life, even of particular individuals. The same remark cannot be made in regard to their mental life, and here many an anachronism will slip in, many things will appear modern, and show the coloring of the Christian mode of thought.

Every part of this book is intelligible without the aid of notes; but, for the reader who seeks for further enlightenment, I have added some foot-notes, and have not neglected to mention such works as afford more detailed information on the subjects mentioned in the narrative.

The reader who wishes to follow the mind of the author in this work should not trouble himself with the notes as he reads, but merely at the beginning of each chapter read over the notes which belong to the foregoing one. Every glance at the foot-notes must necessarily disturb and injure the development of the tale as a work of art. The story stands here as it flowed from one fount, and was supplied with notes only after its completion.

A narrative of Herodotus combined with the Epos of Pentaur, of which so many copies have been handed down to us, forms the foundation of the story.

Page 2

The treason of the Regent related by the Father of history is referable perhaps to the reign of the third and not of the second Rameses. But it is by no means certain that the Halicarnassian writer was in this case misinformed; and in this fiction no history will be inculcated, only as a background shall I offer a sketch of the time of Sesostris, from a picturesque point of view, but with the nearest possible approach to truth. It is true that to this end nothing has been neglected that could be learnt from the monuments or the papyri; still the book is only a romance, a poetic fiction, in which I wish all the facts derived from history and all the costume drawn from the monuments to be regarded as incidental, and the emotions of the actors in the story as what I attach importance to.

But I must be allowed to make one observation. From studying the conventional mode of execution of ancient Egyptian art—which was strictly subject to the hieratic laws of type and proportion—we have accustomed ourselves to imagine the inhabitants of the Nile-valley in the time of the Pharaohs as tall and haggard men with little distinction of individual physiognomy, and recently a great painter has sought to represent them under this aspect in a modern picture. This is an error; the Egyptians, in spite of their aversion to foreigners and their strong attachment to their native soil, were one of the most intellectual and active people of antiquity; and he who would represent them as they lived, and to that end copies the forms which remain painted on the walls of the temples and sepulchres, is the accomplice of those priestly corrupters of art who compelled the painters and sculptors of the Pharaonic era to abandon truth to nature in favor of their sacred laws of proportion.

He who desires to paint the ancient Egyptians with truth and fidelity, must regard it in some sort as an act of enfranchisement; that is to say, he must release the conventional forms from those fetters which were peculiar to their art and altogether foreign to their real life. Indeed, works of sculpture remain to us of the time of the first pyramid, which represent men with the truth of nature, unfettered by the sacred canon. We can recall the so-called “Village Judge” of Bulaq, the “Scribe” now in Paris, and a few figures in bronze in different museums, as well as the noble and characteristic busts of all epochs, which amply prove how great the variety of individual physiognomy, and, with that, of individual character was among the Egyptians. Alma Tadelna in London and Gustav Richter in Berlin have, as painters, treated Egyptian subjects in a manner which the poet recognizes and accepts with delight.

Many earlier witnesses than the late writer Flavius Vopiscus might be referred to who show us the Egyptians as an industrious and peaceful people, passionately devoted it is true to all that pertains to the other world, but also enjoying the gifts of life to the fullest extent, nay sometimes to excess.

Page 3

Real men, such as we see around us in actual life, not silhouettes constructed to the old priestly scale such as the monuments show us—real living men dwelt by the old Nile-stream; and the poet who would represent them must courageously seize on types out of the daily life of modern men that surround him, without fear of deviating too far from reality, and, placing them in their own long past time, color them only and clothe them to correspond with it.

I have discussed the authorities for the conception of love which I have ascribed to the ancients in the preface to the second edition of “An Egyptian Princess.”

With these lines I send Uarda into the world; and in them I add my thanks to those dear friends in whose beautiful home, embowered in green, bird-haunted woods, I have so often refreshed my spirit and recovered my strength, where I now write the last words of this book.

Rheinbollerhutte, September 22, 1876.

Georg Ebers.

PREFACE

To the fifth German edition.

The earlier editions of “Uarda” were published in such rapid succession, that no extensive changes in the stereotyped text could be made; but from the first issue, I have not ceased to correct it, and can now present to the public this new fifth edition as a “revised” one.

Having felt a constantly increasing affection for “Uarda” during the time I was writing, the friendly and comprehensive attention bestowed upon it by our greatest critics and the favorable reception it met with in the various classes of society, afforded me the utmost pleasure.

I owe the most sincere gratitude to the honored gentlemen, who called my attention to certain errors, and among them will name particularly Professor Paul Ascherson of Berlin, and Dr. C. Rohrbach of Gotha. Both will find their remarks regarding mistakes in the geographical location of plants, heeded in this new edition.

The notes, after mature deliberation, have been placed at the foot of the pages instead of at the end of the book.

So many criticisms concerning the title “Uarda” have recently reached my ears, that, rather by way of explanation than apology, I will here repeat what I said in the preface to the third edition.



This title has its own history, and the more difficult it would be for me to defend it, the more ready I am to allow an advocate to speak for me, an advocate who bears a name no less distinguished than that of G. E. Lessing, who says:

“Nanine? (by Voltaire, 1749). What sort of title is that? What thoughts does it awake? Neither more nor less than a title should arouse. A title must not be a bill of fare. The less it betrays of the contents, the better it is. Author and spectator are both satisfied, and the ancients rarely gave their comedies anything but insignificant names.”

Page 4

This may be the case with “Uarda,” whose character is less prominent than some others, it is true, but whose sorrows direct the destinies of my other heroes and heroines.

Why should I conceal the fact? The character of “Uarda” and the present story have grown out of the memory of a Fellah girl, half child, half maiden, whom I saw suffer and die in a hut at Abu el Qurnah in the Necropolis of Thebes.

I still persist in the conviction I have so frequently expressed, the conviction that the fundamental traits of the life of the soul have undergone very trivial modifications among civilized nations in all times and ages, but will endeavor to explain the contrary opinion, held by my opponents, by calling attention to the circumstance, that the expression of these emotions show considerable variations among different peoples, and at different epochs. I believe that Juvenal, one of the ancient writers who best understood human nature, was right in saying:

“Nil erit ulterius, quod nostris moribus addat
Posteritas: eadem cupient facientque minores.”

Leipsic, October 15th, 1877.

U A R D A.

CHAPTER I.

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

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

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

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

Page 5

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

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

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

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

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

Any one climbing the hill and looking down would form the notion that there lay below him a number of neighboring villages, each with its lordly manor house. Looking from the plain up to the precipice of the western hills, hundreds of closed portals could be seen, some solitary, others closely ranged in rows; a great number of them towards the foot of the slope, yet more half-way up, and a few at a considerable height.

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

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

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

Page 6

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

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

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

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

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

Page 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page 8

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

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

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

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

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

A man of sturdy build, in sumptuous dress, was knocking at the brass-covered temple door with the metal handle of a whip, so violently that the blows rang far and loud through the night. Near him stood a litter, and a chariot, to which were harnessed two fine horses. In the litter sat a young woman, and in the carriage, next to the driver, was the tall figure of a lady. Several men of the upper classes and many servants stood around the litter and the chariot. Few words were exchanged; the whole attention of the strangely lighted groups seemed concentrated on the temple-gate. The darkness concealed the features of individuals, but the mingled light of the moon and the torches was enough to reveal to the gate-keeper, who looked down on the party from a tower of the Pylon, that it was composed of persons of the highest rank; nay, perhaps of the royal family.

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

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



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

Page 9

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

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

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

“Thou hast been into his house, Princess?”

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

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

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

“And the princess?” asked the priest.

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

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

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

Page 10

"Thou?" said the chamberlain.

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

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

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

"Thou hast said."

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

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

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

"What dost thou command?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page 11

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

Paaker remained alone with his two slaves; the commission with which the princess had charged him greatly displeased him. So long as the moonlight enabled him to distinguish the litter of Mena's wife, he gazed after it; then he endeavored to recollect the position of the hut of the paraschites. The captain of the watch still stood with the guard at the gate of the temple.

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

"What do you want with him?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page 12

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

CHAPTER II.

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

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

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

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

An extensive library, in which thousands of papyrus-rolls were preserved, and to which a manufactory of papyrus was attached, was at the disposal of the learned; and some of them were intrusted with the education of the younger disciples, who had been prepared in the elementary school, which was also dependent on the House—or

university—of Seti. The lower school was open to every son of a free citizen, and was often frequented by several hundred boys, who also found night-quarters there. The parents were of course required either to pay for their maintenance, or to send due supplies of provisions for the keep of their children at school.

Page 13

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page 14

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

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

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

This remarkable prelate, Ameni the son of Nebket, a scion of an old and noble family, was far more than merely the independent head of the temple-brotherhood, among whom he was prominent for his power and wisdom; for all the priesthood in the length and breadth of the land acknowledged his supremacy, asked his advice in difficult cases, and never resisted the decisions in spiritual matters which emanated from the House of Seti—that is to say, from Ameni. He was the embodiment of the priestly idea; and if at times he made heavy—nay extraordinary—demands on individual fraternities, they were submitted to, for it was known by experience that the indirect roads which he ordered them to follow all converged on one goal, namely the exaltation of the power and dignity of the hierarchy. The king appreciated this remarkable man, and had long endeavored to attach him to the court, as keeper of the royal seal; but Ameni was not to be induced to give up his apparently modest position; for he contemned all outward show and ostentatious titles; he ventured sometimes to oppose a decided resistance to the measures of the Pharaoh,

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

Page 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page 16

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

Ameni wore a fine pleated robe of snow-white linen, which reached to his ankles, round his hips was a scarf adorned with fringes, which in front formed an apron, with broad, stiffened ends which fell to his knees; a wide belt of white and silver brocade confined the drapery of his robe. Round his throat and far down on his bare breast hung a necklace more than a span deep, composed of pearls and agates, and his upper arm was covered with broad gold bracelets. He rose from the ebony seat with lion's feet, on which he sat, and beckoned to a servant who squatted by one of the walls of the sitting-room. He rose and without any word of command from his master, he silently and carefully placed on the high-priest's bare head a long and thick curled wig,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Is the daughter of Pharaoh sick?” asked the prelate.

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

“She entered the dwelling of the unclean.”

“Thou hast said.”

“And she now asks to be purified?”

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

Page 17

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

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

"It is the poet Pentaur that speaks," said the prelate, "and not the priest to whom the privilege was given to be initiated into the highest grade of the sages, and whom I call my brother and my equal. I have no advantage over you, young man, but perishable learning, which the past has won for you as much as for me—nothing but certain perceptions and experiences that offer nothing new, to the world, but teach us, indeed, that it is our part to maintain all that is ancient in living efficacy and practice. That which you promised a few weeks since, I many years ago vowed to the Gods; to guard knowledge as the exclusive possession of the initiated. Like fire, it serves those who know its uses to the noblest ends, but in the hands of children—and the people, the mob, can never ripen into manhood—it is a destroying brand, raging and unextinguishable, devouring all around it, and destroying all that has been built and beautified by the past. And how can we remain the Sages and continue to develop and absorb all learning within the shelter of our temples, not only without endangering the weak, but for their benefit? You know and have sworn to act after that knowledge. To bind the crowd to the faith and the institutions of the fathers is your duty—is the duty of every priest. Times have changed, my son; under the old kings the fire, of which I spoke figuratively to you—the poet—was enclosed in brazen walls which the people passed stupidly by. Now I see breaches in the old fortifications; the eyes of the uninitiated have been sharpened, and one tells the other what he fancies he has spied, though half-blinded, through the glowing rifts."

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

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

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

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

Page 18

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

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

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

Page 19

“Heaven has bestowed on you a gifted soul. Strive for that which is wanting to you—the strength to subdue, to crush for One—and you know that One—all things else—even the misguiding voice of your heart, the treacherous voice of your judgment.—But stay! send leeches to the house of the paraschites, and desire them to treat the injured girl as though she were the queen herself. Who knows where the man dwells?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III.

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

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

[What is here stated with regard to the medical schools is principally derived from the medical writings of the Egyptians themselves, among which the “Ebers Papyrus” holds the first place, “Medical Papyrus I.” of Berlin the second, and a hieratic *Ms.* in London

which, like the first mentioned, has come down to us from the 18th dynasty, takes the third. Also see Herodotus II. 84. Diodorus I. 82.]

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

Page 20

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page 21

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page 22

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“He will not want it out there.”

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

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

“Nonsense.”

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

“And do not you?”

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

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

Nebsecht shrugged his shoulders.

“Perhaps!” he said.

“I thought you must know.”

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

Page 23

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“In my operations there is a ‘better’ and a ‘worse;’” said Nebsecht, “but there is nothing ‘good.’”

“Then we must be satisfied with the ‘better,’ and I have come to claim it,” said Pentaur.

“Are you ill?”

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

“The royal family has its own physicians.”

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

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

“Here. She is in fact the daughter of a paraschites.”

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

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

“That is my affair; but I will go. What is the man’s name?”

“Pinem.”

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

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

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

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

Page 24

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

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

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

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

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

"Certainly."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I think to the north. Paaker, the king’s pioneer, will show you the way.”

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

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

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

Page 25

"The night is warm," said Pentaur.

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

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

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

Teta, with his friend as singer of the litany.

CHAPTER IV.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page 26

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

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

"We know how to value our call to Thebes," said the elder of the strangers from Chennu, Tuauf, whose essays were frequently used in the schools,—[Some of them are still in existence]—"for while, on one hand, it brings us into the neighborhood of the Pharaoh, where life, happiness, and safety flourish, on the other it procures us the honor of counting ourselves among your number; for, though the university of Chennu in former times was so happy as to bring up many great men, whom she could call her own, she can no longer compare with the House of Seti. Even Heliopolis and Memphis are behind you; and if I, my humble self, nevertheless venture boldly among you, it is because I ascribe your success as much to the active influence of the Divinity in your temple, which may promote my acquirements and achievements, as to your great gifts and your industry, in which I will not be behind you. I have already seen your high-priest Ameni—what a man! And who does not know thy name, Gagabu, or thine, Meriapu?"

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

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

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

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

And again—

Page 27

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Thou bringest sand to the desert, and sugar to sprinkle over honey,” exclaimed Gagabu, and his lips began to twitch. “Nothing is now as it ought to be, and there will be a hard battle to fight; not with the sword, but with this—and this.” And the impatient man touched his forehead and his lips. “And who is there more competent than my disciple? There is the champion of our cause, a second cap of Hor, that overthrew the evil one with winged sunbeams, and you come and would clip his wings and blunt his claws! Alas, alas, my lords! will you never understand that a lion roars louder than a cat, and the sun shines brighter than an oil-lamp? Let Pentaur alone, I say; or you will do as the man did, who, for fear of the toothache, had his sound teeth drawn. Alas, alas, in the years to come we shall have to bite deep into the flesh, till the blood flows, if we wish to escape being eaten up ourselves!”

“The enemy is not unknown to us also,” said the elder priest from Chennu, “although we, on the remote southern frontier of the kingdom, have escaped many evils that in the north have eaten into our body like a cancer. Here foreigners are now hardly looked



upon at all as unclean and devilish.”—[“Typhonisch,” belonging to Typhon or Seth.—Translator.]

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

Page 28

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

may, on the throne of the successors of Ra sits a descendant—”

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

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

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

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

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

“Have our troops sustained a defeat?”

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

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

“What do you mean to do?”

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

“It was my turn,” said the chief of the haruspices.

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

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

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

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

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

Page 29

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Children are so cruel!" said Ameni. "They judge only by appearances, and never enquire into the causes of them. The deficient are as guilty in their eyes as the idle, and Paaker could put forward small claims to their indulgence. I encourage freedom and merriment," he continued turning to the priests from Cheraw, "among our disciples, for in

fettering the fresh enjoyment of youth we lame our best assistant. The excrescences on the natural growth of boys cannot be more surely or painlessly extirpated than in their wild games. The school-boy is the school-boy's best tutor."

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

Page 30

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Was he of noble race?"

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

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

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

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

Page 31

The high-priest bowed and left the feast.

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

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

“He was a steady learner, but of moderate ability.”

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

“By no means.”

“How then is it—?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page 32

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

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

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

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

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

Page 33

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yet the Immortals must have thought his remonstrances less unjustifiable, and have stricter views as to the inviolable nature of a betrothal than you," said the treasurer, "for Nefert, during four years of married life, has passed only a few weeks with her

wandering husband, and remains childless. It is hard to me to understand how you, Gagabu, who so often absolve where we condemn, can so relentlessly judge so great a benefactor to our temple.”

Page 34

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

A dirty road serves when it makes for the goal
Colored cakes in the shape of beasts
Deficient are as guilty in their eyes as the idle
For fear of the toothache, had his sound teeth drawn
Hatred between man and man
Hatred for all that hinders the growth of light



How tender is thy severity
Judge only by appearances, and never enquire into the causes
Often happens that apparent superiority does us damage
Seditious words are like sparks, which are borne by the wind
The scholar's ears are at his back: when he is flogged
Title must not be a bill of fare
Youth should be modest, and he was assertive

Page 35

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