

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 07 eBook

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 07 by Georg Ebers

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characteristic marked him in all things, even in his outward demeanor; in the sound of his voice, in his broad features, in the swaggering gait of his stumpy figure.

In camp he could conduct himself as he pleased; but this was not permissible in the society of his equals in rank; for this reason, and because those faculties of quick remark and repartee, which distinguished them, had been denied to him, he felt uneasy and out of his element when he mixed with them, and he would hardly have accepted Ameni's invitation, if it had not so greatly flattered his vanity.

Mohar. It seemed to Paaker that the Regent was excusing himself for having given him so high a place of honor.

property was then easily recovered, and restored to the owner on the payment of one fourth of its value, which was given to the thief. A similar state of things existed at Cairo within a comparatively short time.]

so we simply take their booty from them, and let them go. But say, Paaker, what devil of amiability took possession of you down by the river, that you let the rascal escape unpunished.”

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

“Yes; tell it!” cried the guests.

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

“Heed not time, how it may linger, or how swiftly take its flight,
Wail thy sorrows only to the wine before thee gleaming bright.

spare a lady who is more like a goddess than a woman, and who, to save an unworthy wretch like me, stooped from a throne to the dust."

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

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

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

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

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

lamentation from the Ethiopian slave, for the dog which he had trained for Paaker's father, and which he had loved.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

in the seventh limbo of the damned. Listen to me! But, before I speak, promise me that whatever I tell thee, thou wilt leave me in peace, and will see that I am embalmed when I am dead. Else I will not speak.”

I could not take my eyes off him, and—thou canst tell the rest! no! Well, no woman before



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

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

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

city. On the Nile they met Paaker's boat, and Ani caused it and his own to be stopped, while he requested Paaker to visit him shortly at the palace.

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

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

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

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



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

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

Nefert turned pale, and Bent-Anat asked for particulars. The prince repeated all he had gathered, and added laughing: “Ani depose my father! It is as if I tried to snatch the star of Isis from the sky to light the lamps—which are much wanted here.”

“It is more comfortable in the dark,” said Nefert. “No, let us have lights,” said Bent-Anat. “It is better to talk when we can see each other face to face. I have no belief in the foolish talk of the people; but you are right—we must bring it to my fathers knowledge.”

“I heard the wildest gossip in the City of the Dead,” said Rameri.

“You ventured over there? How very wrong!”

“That we will see, my little mother!” He answered laughing; then he turned grave.



"You are to call him steward," said he.

"Good," muttered the old woman. "The ostrich puts his head under his feathers when he does not want to be seen."

"Was the young prince long with Uarda yesterday?"

"No, you fool," laughed the witch, "the children play together. Rameri is a kid without horns, but who fancies he knows where they ought to grow. Pentaur is a more dangerous rival with the red-headed girl. Make haste, now; these stewards must not be kept waiting!"

The old woman gave the dwarf a push, and he hurried back to Ani, while she carried the child, tied to his board, into the cave, and threw the sack over him.

A few minutes later the Regent stood before her. She bowed before him with a demeanor that was more like the singer Beki than the sorceress Hekt, and begged him to take the only seat she possessed.

When the little man had disappeared, Ani asked:

“Have you still a heart true to the old royal house, to which your parents were so faithfully attached?” The old woman nodded.

“Then admit that thou gavest the order,” exclaimed Hekt. “Explain that thou hadst learned what they proposed doing with Pentaur at Chennu, and that thy word indeed was kept, but that a criminal could not be left unpunished. They will make further enquiries, and if Assa’s grandson is found still living thou wilt be justified. Follow my advice, if thou wilt prove thyself a good steward of thy house, and master of its inheritance.”



“Now the fool will take care of me for the sake of his bird! That smiling, spiritless, indolent-minded man would rule Egypt! Am I then so much wiser than other folks, or do none but fools come to consult Hekt? But Rameses chose Ani to represent him! perhaps because he thinks that those who are not particularly clever are not particularly dangerous. If that is what he thought, he was not wise, for no one usually is so self-confident and insolent as just such an idiot.”

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