

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 08 eBook

Uarda : a Romance of Ancient Egypt — Volume 08 by Georg Ebers

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

An hour later, Ani, in rich attire, left his father's tomb, and drove his brilliant chariot past the witch's cave, and the little cottage of Uarda's father.

Nemu squatted on the step, the dwarf's usual place. The little man looked down at the lately rebuilt hut, and ground his teeth, when, through an opening in the hedge, he saw the white robe of a man, who was sitting by Uarda.

The pretty child's visitor was prince Rameri, who had crossed the Nile in the early morning, dressed as a young scribe of the treasury, to obtain news of Pentaur—and to stick a rose into Uarda's hair.

This purpose was, indeed, the more important of the two, for the other must, in point of time at any rate, be the second.

He found it necessary to excuse himself to his own conscience with a variety of cogent reasons. In the first place the rose, which lay carefully secured in a fold of his robe, ran great danger of fading if he first waited for his companions near the temple of Seti; next, a hasty return from thence to Thebes might prove necessary; and finally, it seemed to him not impossible that Bent-Anat might send a master of the ceremonies after him, and if that happened any delay might frustrate his purpose.

His heart beat loud and violently, not for love of the maiden, but because he felt he was doing wrong. The spot that he must tread was unclean, and he had, for the first time, told a lie. He had given himself out to Uarda to be a noble youth of Bent-Anat's train, and, as one falsehood usually entails another, in answer to her questions he had given her false information as to his parents and his life.

Had evil more power over him in this unclean spot than in the House of Seti, and at his father's? It might very well be so, for all disturbance in nature and men was the work of Seth, and how wild was the storm in his breast! And yet! He wished nothing but good to come of it to Uarda. She was so fair and sweet—like some child of the Gods: and certainly the white maiden must have been stolen from some one, and could not possibly belong to the unclean people.

When the prince entered the court of the hut, Uarda was not to be seen, but he soon heard her voice singing out through the open door. She came out into the air, for the dog barked furiously at Rameri. When she saw the prince, she started, and said:

"You are here already again, and yet I warned you. My grandmother in there is the wife of a paraschites."



"I am not come to visit her," retorted the prince, "but you only; and you do not belong to them, of that I am convinced. No roses grow in the desert."

"And yet: am my father's child," said Uarda decidedly, "and my poor dead grandfather's grandchild. Certainly I belong to them, and those that do not think me good enough for them may keep away."

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With these words she turned to re-enter the house; but Rameri seized her hand, and held her back, saying:

“How cruel you are! I tried to save you, and came to see you before I thought that you might—and, indeed, you are quite unlike the people whom you call your relations. You must not misunderstand me; but it would be horrible to me to believe that you, who are so beautiful, and as white as a lily, have any part in the hideous curse. You charm every one, even my mistress, Bent-Anat, and it seems to me impossible—”

“That I should belong to the unclean!—say it out,” said Uarda softly, and casting down her eyes.

Then she continued more excitedly: “But I tell you, the curse is unjust, for a better man never lived than my grandfather was.”

Tears sprang from her eyes, and Rameri said: “I fully believe it; and it must be very difficult to continue good when every one despises and scorns one; I at least can be brought to no good by blame, though I can by praise. Certainly people are obliged to meet me and mine with respect.”

“And us with contempt!” exclaimed Uarda. “But I will tell you something. If a man is sure that he is good, it is all the same to him whether he be despised or honored by other people. Nay—we may be prouder than you; for you great folks must often say to yourselves that you are worth less than men value you at, and we know that we are worth more.”

“I have often thought that of you,” exclaimed Rameri, “and there is one who recognizes your worth; and that is I. Even if it were otherwise, I must always—always think of you.”

“I have thought of you too,” said Uarda. “Just now, when I was sitting with my sick grandmother, it passed through my mind how nice it would be if I had a brother just like you. Do you know what I should do if you were my brother?”

“Well?”

“I should buy you a chariot and horse, and you should go away to the king’s war.”

“Are you so rich?” asked Rameri smiling.

“Oh yes!” answered Uarda. “To be sure, I have not been rich for more than an hour. Can you read?”

“Yes.”



“Only think, when I was ill they sent a doctor to me from the House of Seti. He was very clever, but a strange man. He often looked into my eyes like a drunken man, and he stammered when he spoke.”

“Is his name Nebsecht?” asked the prince.

“Yes, Nebsecht. He planned strange things with grandfather, and after Pentaur and you had saved us in the frightful attack upon us he interceded for us. Since then he has not come again, for I was already much better. Now to-day, about two hours ago, the dog barked, and an old man, a stranger, came up to me, and said he was Nebsecht's brother, and had a great deal of money in his charge for me. He gave me a ring too, and said that he would pay the money to him, who took the ring to him from me. Then he read this letter to me.”

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Rameri took the letter and read. “Nebsecht to the fair Uarda.”

“Nebsecht greets Uarda, and informs her that he owed her grandfather in Osiris, Pinem—whose body the kolchytes are embalming like that of a noble—a sum of a thousand gold rings. These he has entrusted to his brother Teta to hold ready for her at any moment. She may trust Teta entirely, for he is honest, and ask him for money whenever she needs it. It would be best that she should ask Teta to take care of the money for her, and to buy her a house and field; then she could remove into it, and live in it free from care with her grandmother. She may wait a year, and then she may choose a husband. Nebsecht loves Uarda much. If at the end of thirteen months he has not been to see her, she had better marry whom she will; but not before she has shown the jewel left her by her mother to the king's interpreter.”

“How strange!” exclaimed Rameri. “Who would have given the singular physician, who always wore such dirty clothes, credit for such generosity? But what is this jewel that you have?”

Uarda opened her shirt, and showed the prince the sparkling ornament.

“Those are diamonds—it is very valuable!” cried the prince; “and there in the middle on the onyx there are sharply engraved signs. I cannot read them, but I will show them to the interpreter. Did your mother wear that?”

“My father found it on her when she died,” said Uarda. “She came to Egypt as a prisoner of war, and was as white as I am, but dumb, so she could not tell us the name of her home.”

“She belonged to some great house among the foreigners, and the children inherit from the mother,” cried the prince joyfully. “You are a princess, Uarda! Oh! how glad I am, and how much I love you!”

The girl smiled and said, “Now you will not be afraid to touch the daughter of the unclean.”

“You are cruel,” replied the prince. “Shall I tell you what I determined on yesterday,—what would not let me sleep last night,—and for what I came here today?”

“Well?”

Rameri took a most beautiful white rose out of his robe and said:

“It is very childish, but I thought how it would be if I might put this flower with my own hands into your shining hair. May I?”

“It is a splendid rose! I never saw such a fine one.”



“It is for my haughty princess. Do pray let me dress your hair! It is like silk from Tyre, like a swan’s breast, like golden star-beams—there, it is fixed safely! Nay, leave it so. If the seven Hathors could see you, they would be jealous, for you are fairer than all of them.”

“How you flatter!” said Uarda, shyly blushing, and looking into his sparkling eyes.

“Uarda,” said the prince, pressing her hand to his heart. “I have now but one wish. Feel how my heart hammers and beats. I believe it will never rest again till you—yes, Uarda—till you let me give you one, only one, kiss.”

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The girl drew back.

"Now," she said seriously. "Now I see what you want. Old Hekt knows men, and she warned me."

"Who is Hekt, and what can she know of me?"

"She told me that the time would come when a man would try to make friends with me. He would look into my eyes, and if mine met his, then he would ask to kiss me. But I must refuse him, because if I liked him to kiss me he would seize my soul, and take it from me, and I must wander, like the restless ghosts, which the abyss rejects, and the storm whirls before it, and the sea will not cover, and the sky will not receive, soulless to the end of my days. Go away—for I cannot refuse you the kiss, and yet I would not wander restless, and without a soul!"

"Is the old woman who told you that a good woman?" asked Rameri.

Uarda shook her head.

"She cannot be good," cried the prince. "For she has spoken a falsehood. I will not seize your soul; I will give you mine to be yours, and you shall give me yours to be mine, and so we shall neither of us be poorer— but both richer!"

"I should like to believe it," said Uarda thoughtfully, "and I have thought the same kind of thing. When I was strong, I often had to go late in the evening to fetch water from the landing-place where the great water-wheel stands. Thousands of drops fall from the earthenware pails as it turns, and in each you can see the reflection of a moon, yet there is only one in the sky. Then I thought to myself, so it must be with the love in our hearts. We have but one heart, and yet we pour it out into other hearts without its losing in strength or in warmth. I thought of my grandmother, of my father, of little Scherau, of the Gods, and of Pentaur. Now I should like to give you a part of it too."

"Only a part?" asked Rameri.

"Well, the whole will be reflected in you, you know," said Uarda, "as the whole moon is reflected in each drop."

"It shall!" cried the prince, clasping the trembling girl in his arms, and the two young souls were united in their first kiss.

"Now do go!" Uarda entreated.

"Let me stay a little while," said Rameri. "Sit down here by me on the bench in front of the house. The hedge shelters us, and besides this valley is now deserted, and there are no passers by."

“We are doing what is not right,” said Uarda. “If it were right we should not want to hide ourselves.”

“Do you call that wrong which the priests perform in the Holy of Holies?” asked the prince. “And yet it is concealed from all eyes.”

“How you can argue!” laughed Uarda. “That shows you can write, and are one of his disciples.”

“His, his!” exclaimed Rameri. “You mean Pentaur. He was always the dearest to me of all my teachers, but it vexes me when you speak of him as if he were more to you than I and every one else. The poet, you said, was one of the drops in which the moon of your soul finds a reflection— and I will not divide it with many.”

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"How you are talking!" said Uarda. "Do you not honor your father, and the Gods? I love no one else as I do you—and what I felt when you kissed me—that was not like moonlight, but like this hot mid-day sun. When I thought of you I had no peace. I will confess to you now, that twenty times I looked out of the door, and asked whether my preserver—the kind, curly-headed boy—would really come again, or whether he despised a poor girl like me? You came, and I am so happy, and I could enjoy myself with you to my heart's content. Be kind again—or I will pull your hair!"

"You!" cried Rameri. "You cannot hurt with your little hands, though you can with your tongue. Pentaur is much wiser and better than I, you owe much to him, and nevertheless I—"

"Let that rest," interrupted the girl, growing grave. "He is not a man like other men. If he asked to kiss me, I should crumble into dust, as ashes dried in the sun crumble if you touch them with a finger, and I should be as much afraid of his lips as of a lion's. Though you may laugh at it, I shall always believe that he is one of the Immortals. His own father told me that a great wonder was shown to him the very day after his birth. Old Hekt has often sent me to the gardener with a message to enquire after his son, and though the man is rough he is kind. At first he was not friendly, but when he saw how much I liked his flowers he grew fond of me, and set me to work to tie wreaths and bunches, and to carry them to his customers. As we sat together, laying the flowers side by side, he constantly told me something about his son, and his beauty and goodness and wisdom. When he was quite a little boy he could write poems, and he learned to read before any one had shown him how. The high-priest Ameni heard of it and took him to the House of Seti, and there he improved, to the astonishment of the gardener; not long ago I went through the garden with the old man. He talked of Pentaur as usual, and then stood still before a noble shrub with broad leaves, and said, My son is like this plant, which has grown up close to me, and I know not how. I laid the seed in the soil, with others that I bought over there in Thebes; no one knows where it came from, and yet it is my own. It certainly is not a native of Egypt; and is not Pentaur as high above me and his mother and his brothers, as this shrub is above the other flowers? We are all small and bony, and he is tall and slim; our skin is dark and his is rosy; our speech is hoarse, his as sweet as a song. I believe he is a child of the Gods that the Immortals have laid in my homely house. Who knows their decrees?' And then I often saw Pentaur at the festivals, and asked myself which of the other priests of the temple came near him in height and dignity? I took him for a God, and when I saw him who saved my life overcome a whole mob with superhuman strength must I not regard him as a superior Being? I look up to him as to one of them; but I could never look in his eyes as I do in yours. It would not make my blood flow faster, it would freeze it in my veins. How can I say what I mean! my soul looks straight out, and it finds you; but to find him it must look up to the heavens. You are a fresh rose-garland with which I crown myself—he is a sacred persea-tree before which I bow."

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Rameri listened to her in silence, and then said, "I am still young, and have done nothing yet, but the time shall come in which you shall look up to me too as to a tree, not perhaps a sacred tree, but as to a sycamore under whose shade we love to rest. I am no longer gay; I will leave you for I have a serious duty to fulfil. Pentaur is a complete man, and I will be one too. But you shall be the rose-garland to grace me. Men who can be compared to flowers disgust me!"

The prince rose, and offered Uarda his hand.

"You have a strong hand," said the girl. "You will be a noble man, and work for good and great ends; only look, my fingers are quite red with being held so tightly. But they too are not quite useless. They have never done anything very hard certainly, but what they tend flourishes, and grandmother says they are 'lucky.' Look at the lovely lilies and the pomegranate bush in that corner. Grandfather brought the earth here from the Nile, Pentaur's father gave me the seeds, and each little plant that ventured to show a green shoot through the soil I sheltered and nursed and watered, though I had to fetch the water in my little pitcher, till it was vigorous, and thanked me with flowers. Take this pomegranate flower. It is the first my tree has borne; and it is very strange, when the bud first began to lengthen and swell my grandmother said, 'Now your heart will soon begin to bud and love.' I know now what she meant, and both the first flowers belong to you—the red one here off the tree, and the other, which you cannot see, but which glows as brightly as this does."

Rameri pressed the scarlet blossom to his lips, and stretched out his hand toward Uarda; but she shrank back, for a little figure slipped through an opening in the hedge.

It was Scherau.

His pretty little face glowed with his quick run, and his breath was gone. For a few minutes he tried in vain for words, and looked anxiously at the prince.

Uarda saw that something unusual agitated him; she spoke to him kindly, saying that if he wished to speak to her alone he need not be afraid of Rameri, for he was her best friend.

"But it does not concern you and me," replied the child, "but the good, holy father Pentaur, who was so kind to me, and who saved your life."

"I am a great friend of Pentaur," said the prince. "Is it not true, Uarda? He may speak with confidence before me."

"I may?" said Scherau, "that is well. I have slipped away; Hekt may come back at any moment, and if she sees that I have taken myself off I shall get a beating and nothing to eat."

“Who is this horrible Hekt?” asked Rameri indignantly.

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"That Uarda can tell you by and by," said the little one hurriedly. "Now only listen. She laid me on my board in the cave, and threw a sack over me, and first came Nemu, and then another man, whom she spoke to as Steward. She talked to him a long time. At first I did not listen, but then I caught the name of Pentaur, and I got my head out, and now I understand it all. The steward declared that the good Pentaur was wicked, and stood in his way, and he said that Ameni was going to send him to the quarries at Chennu, but that that was much too small a punishment. Then Hekt advised him to give a secret commission to the captain of the ship to go beyond Chennu, to the frightful mountain-mines, of which she has often told me, for her father and her brother were tormented to death there."

"None ever return from thence," said the prince. "But go on."

"What came next, I only half understood, but they spoke of some drink that makes people mad. Oh! what I see and hear!—I would be contentedly on my board all my life long, but all else is too horrible—I wish that I were dead."

And the child began to cry bitterly.

Uarda, whose cheeks had turned pale, patted him affectionately; but Rameri exclaimed:

"It is frightful! unheard of! But who was the steward? did you not hear his name? Collect yourself, little man, and stop crying. It is a case of life and death. Who was the scoundrel? Did she not name him? Try to remember."

Scherau bit his red lips, and tried for composure. His tears ceased, and suddenly he exclaimed, as he put his hand into the breast of his ragged little garment: "Stay, perhaps you will know him again—I made him!"

"You did what?" asked the prince.

"I made him," repeated the little artist, and he carefully brought out an object wrapped up in a scrap of rag, "I could just see his head quite clearly from one side all the time he was speaking, and my clay lay by me. I always must model something when my mind is excited, and this time I quickly made his face, and as the image was successful, I kept it about me to show to the master when Hekt was out."

While he spoke he had carefully unwrapped the figure with trembling fingers, and had given it to Uarda.

"Ani!" cried the prince. "He, and no other! Who could have thought it! What spite has he against Pentaur? What is the priest to him?"

For a moment he reflected, then he struck his hand against his forehead.

“Fool that I am!” he exclaimed vehemently. “Child that I am! of course, of course; I see it all. Ani asked for Bent-Anat’s hand, and she—now that I love you, Uarda, I understand what ails her. Away with deceit! I will tell you no more lies, Uarda. I am no page of honor to Bent-Anat; I am her brother, and king Rameses’ own son. Do not cover your face with your hands, Uarda, for if I had not seen your mother’s jewel, and if I were not only a prince, but Horus himself, the son of Isis, I must have loved you, and would not have given you up. But now other things have to be done besides lingering with you; now I will show you that I am a man, now that Pentaur is to be saved. Farewell, Uarda, and think of me!”

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He would have hurried off, but Scherau held him by the robe, and said timidly: Thou sayst thou art Rameses' son. Hekt spoke of him too. She compared him to our moulting hawk."

"She shall soon feel the talons of the royal eagle," cried Rameri. "Once more, farewell!"

He gave Uarda his hand, she pressed it passionately to her lips, but he drew it away, kissed her forehead, and was gone.

The maiden looked after him pale and speechless. She saw another man hastening towards her, and recognizing him as her father, she went quickly to meet him. The soldier had come to take leave of her, he had to escort some prisoners.

"To Chennu?" asked Uarda.

"No, to the north," replied the man.

His daughter now related what she had heard, and asked whether he could help the priest, who had saved her.

"If I had money, if I had money!" muttered the soldier to himself.

"We have some," cried Uarda; she told him of Nebsecht's gift, and said: "Take me over the Nile, and in two hours you will have enough to make a man rich.

[It may be observed that among the Egyptian women were qualified to own and dispose of property. For example a papyrus (vii) in the Louvre contains an agreement between Asklepias (called Semmuthis), the daughter or maid-servant of a corpse-dresser of Thebes, who is the debtor, and Arsiesis, the creditor, the son of a kolchytes; both therefore are of the same rank as Uarda.]

But no; I cannot leave my sick grandmother. You yourself take the ring, and remember that Pentaur is being punished for having dared to protect us."

"I remember it," said the soldier. "I have but one life, but I will willingly give it to save his. I cannot devise schemes, but I know something, and if it succeeds he need not go to the gold-mines. I will put the wine-flask aside—give me a drink of water, for the next few hours I must keep a sober head."

"There is the water, and I will pour in a mouthful of wine. Will you come back and bring me news?"

"That will not do, for we set sail at midnight, but if some one returns to you with the ring you will know that what I propose has succeeded."

Uarda went into the hut, her father followed her; he took leave of his sick mother and of his daughter. When they went out of doors again, he said: "You have to live on the princess's gift till I return, and I do not want half of the physician's present. But where is your pomegranate blossom?"

"I have picked it and preserved it in a safe place."

"Strange things are women!" muttered the bearded man; he tenderly kissed his child's forehead, and returned to the Nile down the road by which he had come.

The prince meanwhile had hurried on, and enquired in the harbor of the Necropolis where the vessel destined for Chennu was lying—for the ships loaded with prisoners were accustomed to sail from this side of the river, starting at night. Then he was ferried over the river, and hastened to Bent-Anat. He found her and Nefert in unusual excitement, for the faithful chamberlain had learned—through some friends of the king in Ani's suite—that the Regent had kept back all the letters intended for Syria, and among them those of the royal family.

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A lord in waiting, who was devoted to the king, had been encouraged by the chamberlain to communicate to Bent-Anat other things, which hardly allowed any doubts as to the ambitious projects of her uncle; she was also exhorted to be on her guard with Nefert, whose mother was the confidential adviser of the Regent.

Bent-Anat smiled at this warning, and sent at once a message to Ani to inform him that she was ready to undertake the pilgrimage to the "Emerald-Hathor," and to be purified in the sanctuary of that Goddess.

She purposed sending a message to her father from thence, and if he permitted it, joining him at the camp.

She imparted this plan to her friend, and Nefert thought any road best that would take her to her husband.

Rameri was soon initiated into all this, and in return he told them all he had learned, and let Bent-Anat guess that he had read her secret.

So dignified, so grave, were the conduct and the speech of the boy who had so lately been an overhearing mad-cap, that Bent-Anat thought to herself that the danger of their house had suddenly ripened a boy into a man.

She had in fact no objection to raise to his arrangements. He proposed to travel after sunset, with a few faithful servants on swift horses as far as Keft, and from thence ride fast across the desert to the Red Sea, where they could take a Phoenician ship, and sail to Aila. From thence they would cross the peninsula of Sinai, and strive to reach the Egyptian army by forced marches, and make the king acquainted with Ani's criminal attempts.

To Bent-Anat was given the task of rescuing Pentaur, with the help of the faithful chamberlain.

Money was fortunately not wanting, as the high treasurer was on their side. All depended on their inducing the captain to stop at Chennu; the poet's fate would there, at the worst, be endurable. At the same time, a trustworthy messenger was to be sent to the governor of Chennu, commanding him in the name of the king to detain every ship that might pass the narrows of Chennu by night, and to prevent any of the prisoners that had been condemned to the quarries from being smuggled on to Ethiopia.

Rameri took leave of the two women, and he succeeded in leaving Thebes unobserved.

Bent-Anat knelt in prayer before the images of her mother in Osiris, of Hathor, and of the guardian Gods of her house, till the chamberlain returned, and told her that he had persuaded the captain of the ship to stop at Chennu, and to conceal from Ani that he had betrayed his charge.

The princess breathed more freely, for she had come to a resolution that if the chamberlain had failed in his mission, she would cross over to the Necropolis forbid the departure of the vessel, and in the last extremity rouse the people, who were devoted to her, against Ani.

The following morning the Lady Katuti craved permission of the princess to see her daughter. Bent-Anat did not show herself to the widow, whose efforts failed to keep her daughter from accompanying the princess on her journey, or to induce her to return home. Angry and uneasy, the indignant mother hastened to Ani, and implored him to keep Nefert at home by force; but the Regent wished to avoid attracting attention, and to let Bent-Anat set out with a feeling of complete security.

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“Do not be uneasy,” he said. “I will give the ladies a trustworthy escort, who will keep them at the Sanctuary of the ‘Emerald-Hathor’ till all is settled. There you can deliver Nefert to Paaker, if you still like to have him for a son-in-law after hearing several things that I have learned. As for me, in the end I may induce my haughty niece to look up instead of down; I may be her second love, though for that matter she certainly is not my first.”

On the following day the princess set out.

Ani took leave of her with kindly formality, which she returned with coolness. The priesthood of the temple of Amon, with old Bek en Chunsu at their head, escorted her to the harbor. The people on the banks shouted Bent-Anat’s name with a thousand blessings, but many insulting words were to be heard also.

The pilgrim’s Nile-boat was followed by two others, full of soldiers, who accompanied the ladies “to protect them.”

The south-wind filled the sails, and carried the little procession swiftly down the stream. The princess looked now towards the palace of her fathers, now towards the tombs and temples of the Necropolis. At last even the colossus of Anienophis disappeared, and the last houses of Thebes. The brave maiden sighed deeply, and tears rolled down her cheeks. She felt as if she were flying after a lost battle, and yet not wholly discouraged, but hoping for future victory. As she turned to go to the cabin, a veiled girl stepped up to her, took the veil from her face, and said: “Pardon me, princess; I am Uarda, whom thou didst run over, and to whom thou hast since been so good. My grandmother is dead, and I am quite alone. I slipped in among thy maid-servants, for I wish to follow thee, and to obey all thy commands. Only do not send me away.”

“Stay, dear child,” said the princess, laying her hand on her hair.

Then, struck by its wonderful beauty, she remembered her brother, and his wish to place a rose in Uarda’s shining tresses.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Two months had past since Bent-Anat’s departure from Thebes, and the imprisonment of Pentaur. Ant-Baba is the name of the valley, in the western half of the peninsula of Sinai,

[I have described in detail the peninsula of Sinai, its history, and the sacred places on it, in my book “Durch Gosen zum Sinai,” published in 1872. In depicting this scenery in the present romance, I have endeavored to reproduce the reality as closely as possible. He who has wandered through this wonderful mountain wilderness can never

forget it. The valley now called “Laba,” bore the same name in the time of the Pharaohs.]

through which a long procession of human beings, and of beasts of burden, wended their way.

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It was winter, and yet the mid-day sun sent down glowing rays, which were reflected from the naked rocks. In front of the caravan marched a company of Libyan soldiers, and another brought up the rear. Each man was armed with a dagger and battle-axe, a shield and a lance, and was ready to use his weapons; for those whom they were escorting were prisoners from the emerald-mines, who had been convoyed to the shores of the Red Sea to carry thither the produce of the mines, and had received, as a return-load, provisions which had arrived from Egypt, and which were to be carried to the storehouses of the mountain mines. Bent and panting, they made their way along. Each prisoner had a copper chain riveted round his ankles, and torn rags hanging round their loins, were the only clothing of these unhappy beings, who, gasping under the weight of the sacks they had to carry, kept their staring eyes fixed on the ground. If one of them threatened to sink altogether under his burden, he was refreshed by the whip of one of the horsemen, who accompanied the caravan. Many a one found it hard to choose whether he could best endure the suffering of mere endurance, or the torture of the lash.

No one spoke a word, neither the prisoners nor their guards; and even those who were flogged did not cry out, for their powers were exhausted, and in the souls of their drivers there was no more impulse of pity than there was a green herb on the rocks by the way. This melancholy procession moved silently onwards, like a procession of phantoms, and the ear was only made aware of it when now and then a low groan broke from one of the victims.

The sandy path, trodden by their naked feet, gave no sound, the mountains seemed to withhold their shade, the light of day was a torment—every thing far and near seemed inimical to the living. Not a plant, not a creeping thing, showed itself against the weird forms of the barren grey and brown rocks, and no soaring bird tempted the oppressed wretches to raise their eyes to heaven.

In the noontide heat of the previous day they had started with their loads from the harbor-creek. For two hours they had followed the shore of the glistening, blue-green sea,

[The Red Sea—in Hebrew and Coptic the reedy sea—is of a lovely blue green color. According to the Ancients it was named red either from its red banks or from the Erythraeans, who were called the red people. On an early inscription it is called “the water of the Red country.” See “Durch Gosen zum Sinai.”]

then they had climbed a rocky shoulder and crossed a small plateau. They had paused for their night's rest in the gorge which led to the mines; the guides and soldiers lighted fires, grouped themselves round them, and lay down to sleep under the shelter of a cleft in the rocks; the prisoners stretched themselves on the earth in the middle of the valley without any shelter, and shivering with the cold which suddenly succeeded the glowing heat of the day. The benumbed wretches now looked forward to the crushing misery of

the morning's labor as eagerly as, a few hours since, they had longed for the night, and for rest.

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Lentil-broth and hard bread in abundance, but a very small quantity of water was given to them before they started; then they set out through the gorge, which grew hotter and hotter, and through ravines where they could pass only one by one. Every now and then it seemed as if the path came to an end, but each time it found an outlet, and went on—as endless as the torment of the wayfarers.

Mighty walls of rock composed the view, looking as if they were formed of angular masses of hewn stone piled up in rows; and of all the miners one, and one only, had eyes for these curious structures of the evervarious hand of Nature.

This one had broader shoulders than his companions, and his burden Weighed on him comparatively lightly. “In this solitude,” thought he, “which repels man, and forbids his passing his life here, the Chnemu, the laborers who form the world, have spared themselves the trouble of filling up the seams, and rounding off the corners. How is it that Man should have dedicated this hideous land—in which even the human heart seems to be hardened against all pity—to the merciful Hathor? Perhaps because it so sorely stands in need of the joy and peace which the loving goddess alone can bestow.”

“Keep the line, Huni!” shouted a driver.

The man thus addressed, closed up to the next man, the panting leech Nebsecht. We know the other stronger prisoner. It is Pentaur, who had been entered as Huni on the lists of mine-laborers, and was called by that name. The file moved on; at every step the ascent grew more rugged. Red and black fragments of stone, broken as small as if by the hand of man, lay in great heaps, or strewed the path which led up the almost perpendicular cliff by imperceptible degrees. Here another gorge opened before them, and this time there seemed to be no outlet.

“Load the asses less!” cried the captain of the escort to the prisoners. Then he turned to the soldiers, and ordered them, when the beasts were eased, to put the extra burthens on the men. Putting forth their utmost strength, the overloaded men labored up the steep and hardly distinguishable mountain path.

The man in front of Pentaur, a lean old man, when half way up the hill-side, fell in a heap under his load, and a driver, who in a narrow defile could not reach the bearers, threw a stone at him to urge him to a renewed effort.

The old man cried out at the blow, and at the cry—the paraschites stricken down with stones—his own struggle with the mob—and the appearance of Bent Anat flashed into Pentaur’s Inernory. Pity and a sense of his own healthy vigor prompted him to energy; he hastily snatched the sack from the shoulders of the old man, threw it over his own, helped up the fallen wretch, and finally men and beasts succeeded in mounting the rocky wall.

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The pulses throbbed in Pentaur's temples, and he shuddered with horror, as he looked down from the height of the pass into the abyss below, and round upon the countless pinnacles and peaks, cliffs and precipices, in many-colored rocks—white and grey, sulphurous yellow, blood-red and ominous black. He recalled the sacred lake of Muth in Thebes, round which sat a hundred statues of the lion-headed Goddess in black basalt, each on a pedestal; and the rocky peaks, which surrounded the valley at his feet, seemed to put on a semblance of life and to move and open their yawning jaws; through the wild rush of blood in his ears he fancied he heard them roar, and the load beyond his strength which he carried gave him a sensation as though their clutch was on his breast.

Nevertheless he reached the goal.

The other prisoners flung their loads from their shoulders, and threw themselves down to rest. Mechanically he did the same: his pulses beat more calmly, by degrees the visions faded from his senses, he saw and heard once more, and his brain recovered its balance. The old man and Nebsecht were lying beside him.

His grey-haired companion rubbed the swollen veins in his neck, and called down all the blessings of the Gods upon his head; but the captain of the caravan cut him short, exclaiming:

"You have strength for three, Huni; farther on, we will load you more heavily."

"How much the kindly Gods care for our prayers for the blessing of others!" exclaimed Nebsecht. "How well they know how to reward a good action!"

"I am rewarded enough," said Pentaur, looking kindly at the old man. "But you, you everlasting scoffer—you look pale. How do you feel?"

"As if I were one of those donkeys there," replied the naturalist. "My knees shake like theirs, and I think and I wish neither more nor less than they do; that is to say—I would we were in our stalls."

"If you can think," said Pentaur smiling, "you are not so very bad."

"I had a good thought just now, when you were staring up into the sky. The intellect, say the priestly sages, is a vivifying breath of the eternal spirit, and our soul is the mould or core for the mass of matter which we call a human being. I sought the spirit at first in the heart, then in the brain; but now I know that it resides in the arms and legs, for when I have strained them I find thought is impossible. I am too tired to enter on further evidence, but for the future I shall treat my legs with the utmost consideration."

"Quarrelling again you two? On again, men!" cried the driver.

The weary wretches rose slowly, the beasts were loaded, and on went the pitiable procession, so as to reach the mines before sunset.

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The destination of the travellers was a wide valley, closed in by two high and rocky mountain-slopes; it was called Ta Mafka by the Egyptians, Dophka by the Hebrews. The southern cliff-wall consisted of dark granite, the northern of red sandstone; in a distant branch of the valley lay the mines in which copper was found. In the midst of the valley rose a hill, surrounded by a wall, and crowned with small stone houses, for the guard, the officers, and the overseers. According to the old regulations, they were without roofs, but as many deaths and much sickness had occurred among the workmen in consequence of the cold nights, they had been slightly sheltered with palm-branches brought from the oasis of the Alnalckites, at no great distance.

On the uttermost peak of the hill, where it was most exposed to the wind, were the smelting furnaces, and a manufactory where a peculiar green glass was prepared, which was brought into the market under the name of Mafkat, that is to say, emerald. The genuine precious stone was found farther to the south, on the western shore of the Red Sea, and was highly prized in Egypt.

Our friends had already for more than a month belonged to the mining-community of the Mafkat valley, and Pentaur had never learned how it was that he had been brought hither with his companion Nebsecht, instead of going to the sandstone quarries of Chennu.

That Uarda's father had effected this change was beyond a doubt, and the poet trusted the rough but honest soldier who still kept near him, and gave him credit for the best intentions, although he had only spoken to him once since their departure from Thebes.

That was the first night, when he had come up to Pentaur, and whispered: "I am looking after you. You will find the physician Nebsecht here; but treat each other as enemies rather than as friends, if you do not wish to be parted."

Pentaur had communicated the soldier's advice to Nebsecht, and he had followed it in his own way.

It afforded him a secret pleasure to see how Pentaur's life contradicted the belief in a just and beneficent ordering of the destinies of men; and the more he and the poet were oppressed, the more bitter was the irony, often amounting to extravagance, with which the mocking sceptic attacked him.

He loved Pentaur, for the poet had in his keeping the key which alone could give admission to the beautiful world which lay locked up in his own soul; but yet it was easy to him, if he thought they were observed, to play his part, and to overwhelm Pentaur with words which, to the drivers, were devoid of meaning, and which made them laugh by the strange blundering fashion in which he stammered them out.

“A belabored husk of the divine self-consciousness.” “An advocate of righteousness hit on the mouth.” “A juggler who makes as much of this worst of all possible worlds as if it were the best.” “An admirer of the lovely color of his blue bruises.” These and other terms of invective, intelligible only to himself and his butt, he could always pour out in new combinations, exciting Pentaur to sharp and often witty rejoinders, equally unintelligible to the uninitiated.

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Frequently their sparring took the form of a serious discussion, which served a double purpose; first their minds, accustomed to serious thought, found exercise in spite of the murderous pressure of the burden of forced labor, and secondly, they were supposed really to be enemies. They slept in the same court-yard, and contrived, now and then, to exchange a few words in secret; but by day Nebsecht worked in the turquoise-diggings, and Pentaur in the mines, for the careful chipping out of the precious stones from their stony matrix was the work best suited to the slight physician, while Pentaur's giant-strength was fitted for hewing the ore out of the hard rock. The drivers often looked in surprise at his powerful strokes, as he flung his pick against the stone.

The stupendous images that in such moments of wild energy rose before the poet's soul, the fearful or enchanting tones that rang in his spirit's ear—none could guess at.

Usually his excited fancy showed him the form of Bent-Anat, surrounded by a host of men—and these he seemed to fell to the earth, one-by-one, as he hewed the rock. Often in the middle of his work he would stop, throw down his pick-axe, and spread out his arms—but only to drop them with a deep groan, and wipe the sweat from his brow.

The overseers did not know what to think of this powerful youth, who often was as gentle as a child, and then seemed possessed of that demon to which so many of the convicts fell victims. He had indeed become a riddle to himself; for how was it that he—the gardener's son, brought up in the peaceful temple of Seti—ever since that night by the house of the paraschites had had such a perpetual craving for conflict and struggle?

The weary gangs were gone to rest; a bright fire still blazed in front of the house of the superintendent of the mines, and round it squatted in a circle the overseers and the subalterns of the troops.

"Put the wine-jar round again," said the captain, "for we must hold grave council. Yesterday I had orders from the Regent to send half the guard to Pelusium. He requires soldiers, but we are so few in number that if the convicts knew it they might make short work of us, even without arms. There are stones enough hereabouts, and by day they have their hammer and chisel. Things are worst among the Hebrews in the copper-mines; they are a refractory crew that must be held tight. You know me well, fear is unknown to me—but I feel great anxiety. The last fuel is now burning in this fire, and the smelting furnaces and the glass-foundry must not stand idle. Tomorrow we must send men to Raphidim

[The oasis at the foot of Horeb, where the Jews under Joshua's command conquered the Amalekites, while Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms. Exodus 17, 8.]

to obtain charcoal from the Amalekites. They owe us a hundred loads still. Load the prisoners with some copper, to make them tired and the natives civil. What can we do to procure what we want, and yet not to weaken the forces here too much?"

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Various opinions were given, and at last it was settled that a small division, guarded by a few soldiers, should be sent out every day to supply only the daily need for charcoal.

It was suggested that the most dangerous of the convicts should be fettered together in pairs to perform their duties.

The superintendent was of opinion that two strong men fettered together would be more to be feared if only they acted in concert.

“Then chain a strong one to a weak one,” said the chief accountant of the mines, whom the Egyptians called the ‘scribe of the metals.’ “And fetter those together who are enemies.”

“The colossal Huni, for instance, to that puny spat row, the stuttering Nebsecht,” said a subaltern.

“I was thinking of that very couple,” said the accountant laughing.

Three other couples were selected, at first with some laughter, but finally with serious consideration, and Uarda’s father was sent with the drivers as an escort.

On the following morning Pentaur and Nebsecht were fettered together with a copper chain, and when the sun was at its height four pairs of prisoners, heavily loaded with copper, set out for the Oasis of the Amalekites, accompanied by six soldiers and the son of the paraschites, to fetch fuel for the smelting furnaces.

They rested near the town of Alus, and then went forward again between bare walls of greyish-green and red porphyry. These cliffs rose higher and higher, but from time to time, above the lower range, they could see the rugged summit of some giant of the range, though, bowed under their heavy loads, they paid small heed to it.

The sun was near setting when they reached the little sanctuary of the ‘Emerald-Hathor.’

A few grey and black birds here flew towards them, and Pentaur gazed at them with delight.

How long he had missed the sight of a bird, and the sound of their chirp and song! Nebsecht said: “There are some birds—we must be near water.”

And there stood the first palm-tree!

Now the murmur of the brook was perceptible, and its tiny sound touched the thirsty souls of the travellers as rain falls on dry grass.



On the left bank of the stream an encampment of Egyptian soldiers formed a large semicircle, enclosing three large tents made of costly material striped with blue and white, and woven with gold thread. Nothing was to be seen of the inhabitants of these tents, but when the prisoners had passed them, and the drivers were exchanging greetings with the out-posts, a girl, in the long robe of an Egyptian, came towards them, and looked at them.

Pentaur started as if he had seen a ghost; but Nebsecht gave expression to his astonishment in a loud cry.

At the same instant a driver laid his whip across their shoulders, and cried laughing:

“You may hit each other as hard as you like with words, but not with your hands.”

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Then he turned to his companions, and said: "Did you see the pretty girl there, in front of the tent?"

"It is nothing to us!" answered the man he addressed. "She belongs to the princess's train. She has been three weeks here on a visit to the holy shrine of Hathor."

"She must have committed some heavy sin," replied the other. "If she were one of us, she would have been set to sift sand in the diggings, or grind colors, and not be living here in a gilt tent. Where is our red-beard?"

Uarda's father had lingered a little behind the party, for the girl had signed to him, and exchanged a few words with him.

"Have you still an eye for the fair ones?" asked the youngest of the drivers when he rejoined the gang.

"She is a waiting maid of the princess," replied the soldier not without embarrassment. "To-morrow morning we are to carry a letter from her to the scribe of the mines, and if we encamp in the neighborhood she will send us some wine for carrying it."

"The old red-beard scents wine as a fox scents a goose. Let us encamp here; one never knows what may be picked up among the Mentu, and the superintendent said we were to encamp outside the oasis. Put down your sacks, men! Here there is fresh water, and perhaps a few dates and sweet Manna for you to eat with it.

["Man" is the name still given by the Bedouins of Sinai to the sweet gum which exudes from the *Tamarix mannifera*. It is the result of the puncture of an insect, and occurs chiefly in May. By many it is supposed to be the Manna of the Bible.]

But keep the peace, you two quarrelsome fellows—Huni and Nebsecht."

Bent-Anat's journey to the Emerald-Hathor was long since ended. As far as Keft she had sailed down the Nile with her escort, from thence she had crossed the desert by easy marches, and she had been obliged to wait a full week in the port on the Red Sea, which was chiefly inhabited by Phoenicians, for a ship which had finally brought her to the little seaport of Pharan. From Pharan she had crossed the mountains to the oasis, where the sanctuary she was to visit stood on the northern side.

The old priests, who conducted the service of the Goddess, had received the daughter of Rameses with respect, and undertook to restore her to cleanness by degrees with the help of the water from the mountain-stream which watered the palm-grove of the Amalekites, of incense-burning, of pious sentences, and of a hundred other ceremonies. At last the Goddess declared herself satisfied, and Bent-Anat wished to start for the north and join her father, but the commander of the escort, a grey-headed Ethiopian field officer—who had been promoted to a high grade by Ani— explained to

the Chamberlain that he had orders to detain the princess in the oasis until her departure was authorized by the Regent himself.

Bent-Anat now hoped for the support of her father, for her brother Rameri, if no accident had occurred to him, might arrive any day. But in vain.

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The position of the ladies was particularly unpleasant, for they felt that they had been caught in a trap, and were in fact prisoners. In addition to this their Ethiopian escort had quarrelled with the natives of the oasis, and every day skirmishes took place under their eyes— indeed lately one of these fights had ended in bloodshed.

Bent-Anat was sick at heart. The two strong pinions of her soul, which had always borne her so high above other women—her princely pride and her bright frankness—seemed quite broken; she felt that she had loved once, never to love again, and that she, who had sought none of her happiness in dreams, but all in work, had bestowed the best half of her identity on a vision. Pentaur's image took a more and more vivid, and at the same time nobler and loftier, aspect in her mind; but he himself had died for her, for only once had a letter reached them from Egypt, and that was from Katuti to Nefert. After telling her that late intelligence established the statement that her husband had taken a prince's daughter, who had been made prisoner, to his tent as his share of the booty, she added the information that the poet Pentaur, who had been condemned to forced labor, had not reached the mountain mines, but, as was supposed, had perished on the road.

Nefert still held to her immovable belief that her husband was faithful to his love for her, and the magic charm of a nature made beautiful by its perfect mastery over a deep and pure passion made itself felt in these sad and heavy days.

It seemed as though she had changed parts with Bent-Anat. Always hopeful, every day she foretold help from the king for the next; in truth she was ready to believe that, when Mena learned from Rameri that she was with the princess, he himself would come to fetch them if his duties allowed it. In her hours of most lively expectation she could go so far as to picture how the party in the tents would be divided, and who would bear Bent-Anat company if Mena took her with him to his camp, on what spot of the oasis it would be best to pitch it, and much more in the same vein.

Uarda could very well take her place with Bent-Anat, for the child had developed and improved on the journey. The rich clothes which the princess had given her became her as if she had never worn any others; she could obey discreetly, disappear at the right moment, and, when she was invited, chatter delightfully. Her laugh was silvery, and nothing consoled Bent-Anat so much as to hear it.

Her songs too pleased the two friends, though the few that she knew were grave and sorrowful. She had learned them by listening to old Hekt, who often used to play on a lute in the dusk, and who, when she perceived that Uarda caught the melodies, had pointed out her faults, and given her advice.

"She may some day come into my hands," thought the witch, "and the better she sings, the better she will be paid."

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Bent-Anat too tried to teach Uarda, but learning to read was not easy to the girl, however much pains she might take. Nevertheless, the princess would not give up the spelling, for here, at the foot of the immense sacred mountain at whose summit she gazed with mixed horror and longing, she was condemned to inactivity, which weighed the more heavily on her in proportion as those feelings had to be kept to herself which she longed to escape from in work. Uarda knew the origin of her mistress's deep grief, and revered her for it, as if it were something sacred. Often she would speak of Pentaur and of his father, and always in such a manner that the princess could not guess that she knew of their love.

When the prisoners were passing Bent-Anat's tent, she was sitting within with Nefert, and talking, as had become habitual in the hours of dusk, of her father, of Mena, Rameri, and Pentaur.

"He is still alive," asserted Nefert. "My mother, you see, says that no one knows with certainty what became of him. If he escaped, he beyond a doubt tried to reach the king's camp, and when we get there you will find him with your father."

The princess looked sadly at the ground. Nefert looked affectionately at her, and asked:

"Are you thinking of the difference in rank which parts you from the man you have chosen?"

"The man to whom I offer my hand, I put in the rank of a prince," said Bent-Anat. "But if I could set Pentaur on a throne, as master of the world, he would still be greater and better than I."

"But your father?" asked Nefert doubtfully.

"He is my friend, he will listen to me and understand me. He shall know everything when I see him; I know his noble and loving heart."

Both were silent for some time; then Bent-Anat spoke:

"Pray have lights brought, I want to finish my weaving."

Nefert rose, went to the door of the tent, and there met Uarda; she seized Nefert's hand, and silently drew her out into the air.

"What is the matter, child? you are trembling," Nefert exclaimed.

"My father is here," answered Uarda hastily. "He is escorting some prisoners from the mines of Mafkat. Among them there are two chained together, and one of them—do not be startled—one of them is the poet Pentaur. Stop, for God's sake, stop, and hear me."



Twice before I have seen my father when he has been here with convicts. To-day we must rescue Pentaur; but the princess must know nothing of it, for if my plan fails—”

“Child! girl!” interrupted Nefert eagerly. “How can I help you?”

“Order the steward to give the drivers of the gang a skin of wine in the name of the princess, and out of Bent-Anat’s case of medicines take the phial which contains the sleeping draught, which, in spite of your wish, she will not take. I will wait here, and I know how to use it.”

Nefert immediately found the steward, and ordered him to follow Uarda with a skin of wine. Then she went back to the princess’s tent, and opened the medicine case.

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[A medicine case, belonging to a more ancient period than the reign of Rameses, is preserved in the Berlin Museum.]

"What do you want?" asked Bent-Anat.

"A remedy for palpitation," replied Nefert; she quietly took the flask she needed, and in a few minutes put it into Uarda's hand.

The girl asked the steward to open the wine-skin, and let her taste the liquor. While she pretended to drink it, she poured the whole contents of the phial into the wine, and then let Bent-Anat's bountiful present be carried to the thirsty drivers.

She herself went towards the kitchen tent, and found a young Amalekite sitting on the ground with the princess's servants. He sprang up as soon as he saw the damsel.

"I have brought four fine partridges,"

[A brook springs on the peak called by the Sinaitic monks Mr. St. Katherine, which is called the partridge's spring, and of which many legends are told. For instance, God created it for the partridges which accompanied the angels who carried St. Katharine of Alexandria to her tomb on Sinai.]

he said, "which I snared myself, and I have brought this turquoise for you—my brother found it in a rock. This stone brings good luck, and is good for the eyes; it gives victory over our enemies, and keeps away bad dreams."

"Thank you!" said Uarda, and taking the boy's hand, as he gave her the sky-blue stone, she led him forward into the dusk.

"Listen, Salich" she said softly, as soon as she thought they were far enough from the others. "You are a good boy, and the maids told me that you said I was a star that had come down from the sky to become a woman. No one says such a thing as that of any one they do not like very much; and I know you like me, for you show me that you do every day by bringing me flowers, when you carry the game that your father gets to the steward. Tell me, will you do me and the princess too a very great service? Yes? —and willingly? Yes? I knew you would! Now listen. A friend of the great lady Bent-Anat, who will come here to-night, must be hidden for a day, perhaps several days, from his pursuers. Can he, or rather can they, for there will probably be two, find shelter and protection in your father's house, which lies high up there on the sacred mountain?"

"Whoever I take to my father," said the boy, "will be made welcome; and we defend our guests first, and then ourselves. Where are the strangers?"

"They will arrive in a few hours. Will you wait here till the moon is well up?"

“Till the last of all the thousand moons that vanish behind the hills is set.”

“Well then, wait on the other side of the stream, and conduct the man to your house, who repeats my name three times. You know my name?”

“I call you Silver-star, but the others call you Uarda.”

“Lead the strangers to your hut, and, if they are received there by your father, come back and tell me. I will watch for you here at the door of the tent. I am poor, alas! and cannot reward you, but the princess will thank your father as a princess should. Be watchful, Salich!”

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The girl vanished, and went to the drivers of the gang of prisoners, wished them a merry and pleasant evening, and then hastened back to Bent-Anat, who anxiously stroked her abundant hair, and asked her why she was so pale.

“Lie down,” said the princess kindly, “you are feverish. Only look, Nefert, I can see the blood coursing through the blue veins in her forehead.”

Meanwhile the drivers drank, praised the royal wine, and the lucky day on which they drank it; and when Uarda’s father suggested that the prisoners too should have a mouthful one of his fellow soldiers cried: “Aye, let the poor beasts be jolly too for once.”

The red-beard filled a large beaker, and offered it first to a forger and his fettered companion, then he approached Pentaur, and whispered:

“Do not drink any-keep awake!”

As he was going to warn the physician too, one of his companions came between them, and offering his tankard to Nebsecht said:

“Here mumbler, drink; see him pull! His stuttering mouth is spry enough for drinking!”

CHAPTER XXXV.

The hours passed gaily with the drinkers, then they grew more and more sleepy.

Ere the moon was high in the heavens, while they were all sleeping, with the exception of Kaschta and Pentaur, the soldier rose softly. He listened to the breathing of his companions, then he approached the poet, unfastened the ring which fettered his ankle to that of Nebsecht, and endeavored to wake the physician, but in vain.

“Follow me!” cried he to the poet; he took Nebsecht on his shoulders, and went towards the spot near the stream which Uarda had indicated. Three times he called his daughter’s name, the young Amalekite appeared, and the soldier said decidedly: “Follow this man, I will take care of Nebsecht.”

“I will not leave him,” said Pentaur. “Perhaps water will wake him.” They plunged him in the brook, which half woke him, and by the help of his companions, who now pushed and now dragged him, he staggered and stumbled up the rugged mountain path, and before midnight they reached their destination, the hut of the Amalekite.

The old hunter was asleep, but his son aroused him, and told him what Uarda had ordered and promised.

But no promises were needed to incite the worthy mountaineer to hospitality. He received the poet with genuine friendliness, laid the sleeping leech on a mat, prepared a couch for Pentaur of leaves and skins, called his daughter to wash his feet, and offered him his own holiday garment in the place of the rags that covered his body.

Pentaur stretched himself out on the humble couch, which to him seemed softer than the silken bed of a queen, but on which nevertheless he could not sleep, for the thoughts and fancies that filled his heart were too overpowering and bewildering.

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The stars still sparkled in the heavens when he sprang from his bed of skins, lifted Nebsecht on to it, and rushed out into the open air. A fresh mountain spring flowed close to the hunter's hut. He went to it, and bathed his face in the ice-cold water, and let it flow over his body and limbs. He felt as if he must cleanse himself to his very soul, not only from the dust of many weeks, but from the rebellion and despondency, the ignominy and bitterness, and the contact with vice and degradation. When at last he left the spring, and returned to the little house, he felt clean and fresh as on the morning of a feast-day at the temple of Seti, when he had bathed and dressed himself in robes of snow-white linen. He took the hunter's holiday dress, put it on, and went out of doors again.

The enormous masses of rock lay dimly before him, like storm-clouds, and over his head spread the blue heavens with their thousand stars.

The soothing sense of freedom and purity raised his soul, and the air that he breathed was so fresh and light, that he sprang up the path to the summit of the peak as if he were borne on wings or carried by invisible hands.

A mountain goat which met him, turned from him, and fled bleating, with his mate, to a steep peak of rock, but Pentaure said to the frightened beasts:

"I shall do nothing to you—not I"

He paused on a little plateau at the foot of the jagged granite peak of the mountain. Here again he heard the murmur of a spring, the grass under his feet was damp, and covered with a film of ice, in which were mirrored the stars, now gradually fading. He looked up at the lights in the sky, those never-tarrying, and yet motionless wanderers-away, to the mountain heights around him-down, into the gorge below—and far off, into the distance.

The dusk slowly grew into light, the mysterious forms of the mountain-chain took shape and stood up with their shining points, the light clouds were swept away like smoke. Thin vapors rose from the oasis and the other valleys at his feet, at first in heavy masses, then they parted and were wafted, as if in sport, above and beyond him to the sky. Far below him soared a large eagle, the only living creature far or near.

A solemn and utter silence surrounded him, and when the eagle swooped down and vanished from his sight, and the mist rolled lower into the valley, he felt that here, alone, he was high above all other living beings, and standing nearer to the Divinity.

He drew his breath fully and deeply, he felt as he had felt in the first hours after his initiation, when for the first time he was admitted to the holy of holies—and yet quite different.

Instead of the atmosphere loaded with incense, he breathed a light pure air; and the deep stillness of the mountain solitude possessed his soul more strongly than the chant of the priests.

Here, it seemed to him, that the Divine being would hear the lightest murmur of his lips, though indeed his heart was so full of gratitude and devotion that his impulse was to give expression to his mighty flow of feelings in jubilant song. But his tongue seemed tied; he knelt down in silence, to pray and to praise.

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Then he looked at the panorama round him. Where was the east which in Egypt was clearly defined by the long Nile range? Down there where it was beginning to be light over the oasis. To his right hand lay the south, the sacred birth-place of the Nile, the home of the Gods of the Cataracts; but here flowed no mighty stream, and where was there a shrine for the visible manifestation of Osiris and Isis; of Horns, born of a lotus flower in a thicket of papyrus; of Rennut, the Goddess of blessings, and of Zeta? To which of them could he here lift his hands in prayer?

A faint breeze swept by, the mist vanished like a restless shade at the word of the exorcist, the many-pointed crown of Sinai stood out in sharp relief, and below them the winding valleys, and the dark colored rippling surface of the lake, became distinctly visible.

All was silent, all untouched by the hand of man yet harmonized to one great and glorious whole, subject to all the laws of the universe, pervaded and filled by the Divinity.

He would fain have raised his hand in thanksgiving to Apheru, "the Guide on the way;" but he dared not; and how infinitely small did the Gods now seem to him, the Gods he had so often glorified to the multitude in inspired words, the Gods that had no meaning, no dwelling-place, no dominion but by the Nile.

"To ye," he murmured, "I cannot pray! Here where my eye can pierce the distance, as if I myself were a god—here I feel the presence of the One, here He is near me and with me—I will call upon Him and praise him!"

And throwing up his arms he cried aloud: "Thou only One! Thou only One! Thou only One!" He said no more; but a tide of song welled up in his breast as he spoke—a flood of thankfulness and praise.

When he rose from his knees, a man was standing by him; his eyes were piercing and his tall figure had the dignity of a king, in spite of his herdsman's dress.

"It is well for you!" said the stranger in deep slow accents. "You seek the true God."

Pentaur looked steadily into the face of the bearded man before him.

"I know you now," he said. "You are Mesu.—[Moses]—I was but a boy when you left the temple of Seti, but your features are stamped on my soul. Ameni initiated me, as well as you, into the knowledge of the One God."

"He knows Him not," answered the other, looking thoughtfully to the eastern horizon, which every moment grew brighter.

The heavens glowed with purple, and the granite peaks, each sheathed in a film of ice, sparkled and shone like dark diamonds that had been dipped in light.

The day-star rose, and Pentaur turned to it, and prostrated himself as his custom was. When he rose, Mesu also was kneeling on the earth, but his back was turned to the sun.

When he had ended his prayer, Pentaur said, "Why do you turn your back on the manifestation of the Sun-god? We were taught to look towards him when he approaches."

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"Because I," said his grave companion, "pray to another God than yours. The sun and stars are but as toys in his hand, the earth is his foot-stool, the storm is his breath, and the sea is in his sight as the drops on the grass."

"Teach me to know the Mighty One whom you worship!" exclaimed Pentaur.

"Seek him," said Mesu, "and you will find him; for you have passed through misery and suffering, and on this spot on such a morning as this was He revealed to me."

The stranger turned away, and disappeared behind a rock from the enquiring gaze of Pentaur, who fixed his eyes on the distance.

Then he thoughtfully descended the valley, and went towards the hut of the hunter. He stayed his steps when he heard men's voices, but the rocks hid the speakers from his sight.

Presently he saw the party approaching; the son of his host, a man in Egyptian dress, a lady of tall stature, near whom a girl tripped lightly, and another carried in a litter by slaves.

Pentaur's heart beat wildly, for he recognized Bent-Anat and her companions. They disappeared by the hunter's cottage, but he stood still, breathing painfully, spell-bound to the cliff by which he stood—a long, long time—and did not stir.

He did not hear a light step, that came near to him, and died away again, he did not feel that the sun began to cast fierce beams on him, and on the porphyry cliff behind him, he did not see a woman now coming quickly towards him; but, like a deaf man who has suddenly acquired the sense of hearing, he started when he heard his name spoken—by whose lips?

"Pentaur!" she said again; the poet opened his arms, and Bent-Anat fell upon his breast; and he held her to him, clasped, as though he must hold her there and never part from her all his life long.

Meanwhile the princess's companions were resting by the hunter's little house.

"She flew into his arms—I saw it," said Uarda. "Never shall I forget it. It was as if the bright lake there had risen up to embrace the mountain."

"Where do you find such fancies, child?" cried Nefert.

"In my heart, deep in my heart!" cried Uarda. "I am so unspeakably happy."

"You saved him and rewarded him for his goodness; you may well be happy."

"It is not only that," said Uarda. "I was in despair, and now I see that the Gods are righteous and loving."

Mena's wife nodded to her, and said with a sigh:

"They are both happy!"

"And they deserve to be!" exclaimed Uarda. "I fancy the Goddess of Truth is like Bent-Anat, and there is not another man in Egypt like Pentaur."

Nefert was silent for awhile; then she asked softly: "Did you ever see Mena?"

"How should I?" replied the girl. "Wait a little while, and your turn will come. I believe that to-day I can read the future like a prophetess. But let us see if Nebsecht lies there, and is still asleep. The draught I put into the wine must have been strong."

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"It was," answered Nefert, following her into the hut.

The physician was still lying on the bed, and sleeping with his mouth wide open. Uarda knelt down by his side, looked in his face, and said:

"He is clever and knows everything, but how silly he looks now! I will wake him."

She pulled a blade of grass out of the heap on which he was lying, and saucily tickled his nose.

Nebsecht raised himself, sneezed, but fell back asleep again; Uarda laughed out with her clear silvery tones. Then she blushed—"That is not right," she said, "for he is good and generous."

She took the sleeper's hand, pressed it to her lips, and wiped the drops from his brow. Then he awoke, opened his eyes, and muttered half in a dream still:

"Uarda—sweet Uarda."

The girl started up and fled, and Nefert followed her.

When Nebsecht at last got upon his feet and looked round him, he found himself alone in a strange house. He went out of doors, where he found Bent-Anat's little train anxiously discussing things past and to come.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The inhabitants of the oasis had for centuries been subject to the Pharaohs, and paid them tribute; and among the rights granted to them in return, no Egyptian soldier might cross their border and territory without their permission.

The Ethiopians had therefore pitched Bent-Anat's tents and their own camp outside these limits; but various transactions soon took place between the idle warriors and the Amalekites, which now and then led to quarrels, and which one evening threatened serious consequences, when some drunken soldiers had annoyed the Amalekite women while they were drawing water.

This morning early one of the drivers on awaking had missed Pentaur and Nebsecht, and he roused his comrades, who had been rejoined by Uarda's father. The enraged guard of the gang of prisoners hastened to the commandant of the Ethiopians, and informed him that two of his prisoners had escaped, and were no doubt being kept in concealment by the Amalekites.

The Amalekites met the requisition to surrender the fugitives, of whom they knew nothing, with words of mockery, which so enraged the officer that he determined to search the oasis throughout by force, and when he found his emissaries treated with scorn he advanced with the larger part of his troops on to the free territory of the Amalekites.

The sons of the desert flew to arms; they retired before the close order of the Egyptian troops, who followed them, confident of victory, to a point where the valley widens and divides on each side of a rocky hill. Behind this the larger part of the Amalekite forces were lying in ambush, and as soon as the unsuspecting Ethiopians had marched past the hill, they threw themselves on the rear of the astonished invaders, while those in front turned upon them, and flung lances and arrows at the soldiers, of whom very few escaped.

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Among them, however, was the commanding officer, who, foaming with rage and only slightly wounded, put himself at the head of the remainder of Bent-Anat's body-guard, ordered the escort of the prisoners also to follow him, and once more advanced into the oasis.

That the princess might escape him had never for an instant occurred to him, but as soon as the last of her keepers had disappeared, Bent-Anat explained to her chamberlain and her companions that now or never was the moment to fly.

All her people were devoted to her; they loaded themselves with the most necessary things for daily use, took the litters and beasts of burden with them, and while the battle was raging in the valley, Salich guided them up the heights of Sinai to his father's house.

It was on the way thither that Uarda had prepared the princess for the meeting she might expect at the hunter's cottage, and we have seen how and where the princess found the poet.

Hand in hand they wandered together along the mountain path till they came to a spot shaded by a projection of the rock, Pentaur pulled some moss to make a seat, they reclined on it side by side, and there opened their hearts, and told each other of their love and of their sufferings, their wanderings and escapes.

At noonday the hunter's daughter came to offer them a pitcher full of goat's milk, and Bent-Anat filled the gourd again and again for the man she loved; and waiting upon him thus, her heart overflowed with pride, and his with the humble desire to be permitted to sacrifice his blood and life for her.

Hitherto they had been so absorbed in the present and the past, that they had not given a thought to the future, and while they repeated a hundred times what each had long since known, and yet could never tire of hearing, they forgot the immediate changes which was hanging over them.

After their humble meal, the surging flood of feeling which, ever since his morning devotions, had overwhelmed the poet's soul, grew calmer; he had felt as if borne through the air, but now he set foot, so to speak, on the earth again, and seriously considered with Bent-Anat what steps they must take in the immediate future.

The light of joy, which beamed in their eyes, was little in accordance with the grave consultation they held, as, hand in hand, they descended to the hut of their humble host.

The hunter, guided by his daughter, met them half way, and with him a tall and dignified man in the full armor of a chief of the Amalekites.

Both bowed and kissed the earth before Bent-Anat and Pentaur. They had heard that the princess was detained in the oasis by force by the Ethiopian troops, and the desert-prince, Abocharabos, now informed them, not without pride, that the Ethiopian soldiers, all but a few who were his prisoners, had been exterminated by his people; at the same time he assured Pentaur, whom he supposed to be a son of the king, and Bent-Anat, that he and his were entirely devoted to the Pharaoh Rameses, who had always respected their rights.

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"They are accustomed," he added, "to fight against the cowardly dogs of Kush; but we are men, and we can fight like the lions of our wilds. If we are outnumbered we hide like the goats in clefts of the rocks."

Bent-Anat, who was pleased with the daring man, his flashing eyes, his aquiline nose, and his brown face which bore the mark of a bloody sword-cut, promised him to commend him and his people to her father's favor, and told him of her desire to proceed as soon as possible to the king's camp under the protection of Pentaur, her future husband.

The mountain chief had gazed attentively at Pentaur and at Bent-Anat while she spoke; then he said: "Thou, princess, art like the moon, and thy companion is like the Sun-god Dusare. Besides Abocharabos," and he struck his breast, "and his wife, I know no pair that are like you two. I myself will conduct you to Hebron with some of my best men of war. But haste will be necessary, for I must be back before the traitor who now rules over Mizraim,—[The Semitic name of Egypt]—and who persecutes you, can send fresh forces against us. Now you can go down again to the tents, not a hen is missing. Tomorrow before daybreak we will be off."

At the door of the hut Pentaur was greeted by the princess's companions.

The chamberlain looked at him not without anxious misgiving.

The king, when he departed, had, it is true, given him orders to obey Bent-Anat in every particular, as if she were the queen herself; but her choice of such a husband was a thing unheard of, and how would the king take it?

Nefert rejoiced in the splendid person of the poet, and frequently repeated that he was as like her dead uncle—the father of Paaker, the chief-pioneer—as if he were his younger brother.

Uarda never wearied of contemplating him and her beloved princess. She no longer looked upon him as a being of a higher order; but the happiness of the noble pair seemed to her an embodied omen of happiness for Nefert's love—perhaps too for her own.

Nebsecht kept modestly in the background. The headache, from which he had long been suffering, had disappeared in the fresh mountain air. When Pentaur offered him his hand he exclaimed:

"Here is an end to all my jokes and abuse! A strange thing is this fate of men. Henceforth I shall always have the worst of it in any dispute with you, for all the discords of your life have been very prettily resolved by the great master of harmony, to whom you pray."

“You speak almost as if you were sorry; but every thing will turn out happily for you too.”

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"Hardly!" replied the surgeon, "for now I see it clearly. Every man is a separate instrument, formed even before his birth, in an occult workshop, of good or bad wood, skilfully or unskilfully made, of this shape or the other; every thing in his life, no matter what we call it, plays upon him, and the instrument sounds for good or evil, as it is well or ill made. You are an AEolian harp—the sound is delightful, whatever breath of fate may touch it; I am a weather-cock—I turn whichever way the wind blows, and try to point right, but at the same time I creak, so that it hurts my own ears and those of other people. I am content if now and then a steersman may set his sails rightly by my indication; though after all, it is all the same to me. I will turn round and round, whether others look at me or no—What does it signify?"

When Pentaur and the princess took leave of the hunter with many gifts, the sun was sinking, and the toothed peaks of Sinai glowed like rubies, through which shone the glow of half a world on fire.

The journey to the royal camp was begun the next morning. Abocharabos, the Amalekite chief, accompanied the caravan, to which Uarda's father also attached himself; he had been taken prisoner in the struggle with the natives, but at Bent-Anat's request was set at liberty.

At their first halting place he was commanded to explain how he had succeeded in having Pentaur taken to the mines, instead of to the quarries of Chennu.

"I knew," said the soldier in his homely way, "from Uarda where this man, who had risked his life for us poor folks, was to be taken, and I said to myself—I must save him. But thinking is not my trade, and I never can lay a plot. It would very likely have come to some violent act, that would have ended badly, if I had not had a hint from another person, even before Uarda told me of what threatened Pentaur. This is how it was.

"I was to convoy the prisoners, who were condemned to work in the Mafkat mines, across the river to the place they start from. In the harbor of Thebes, on the other side, the poor wretches were to take leave of their friends; I have seen it a hundred times, and I never can get used to it, and yet one can get hardened to most things! Their loud cries, and wild howls are not the worst—those that scream the most I have always found are the first to get used to their fate; but the pale ones, whose lips turn white, and whose teeth chatter as if they were freezing, and whose eyes stare out into vacancy without any tears—those go to my heart. There was all the usual misery, both noisy and silent. But the man I was most sorry for was one I had known for a long time; his name was Huni, and he belonged to the temple of Amon, where he held the place of overseer of the attendants on the sacred goat. I had often met him when I was on duty to watch the laborers who were completing the great pillared hall, and he was respected by every one, and never failed

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in his duty. Once, however, he had neglected it; it was that very night which you all will remember when the wolves broke into the temple, and tore the rams, and the sacred heart was laid in the breast of the prophet Rui. Some one, of course, must be punished, and it fell on poor Huni, who for his carelessness was condemned to forced labor in the mines of Mafkat. His successor will keep a sharp look out! No one came to see him off, though I know he had a wife and several children. He was as pale as this cloth, and was one of the sort whose grief eats into their heart. I went up to him, and asked him why no one came with him. He had taken leave of them at home, he answered, that his children might not see him mixed up with forgers and murderers. Eight poor little brats were left unprovided for with their mother, and a little while before a fire had destroyed everything they possessed. There was not a crumb to stop their little squalling mouths. He did not tell me all this straight out; a word fell from him now and then, like dates from a torn sack. I picked it up bit by bit, and when he saw I felt for him he grew fierce and said: 'They may send me to the gold mines or cut me to pieces, as far as I am concerned, but that the little ones should starve that—that,' and he struck his forehead. Then I left him to say good bye to Uarda, and on the way I kept repeating to myself 'that-that,' and saw before me the man and his eight brats. If I were rich, thought I, there is a man I would help. When I got to the little one there, she told me how much money the leech Nebsecht had given her, and offered to give it me to save Pentaur; then it passed through my mind—that may go to Hum's children, and in return he will let himself be shipped off to Ethiopia. I ran to the harbor, spoke to the man, found him ready and willing, gave the money to his wife, and at night when the prisoners were shipped I contrived the exchange Pentaur came with me on my boat under the name of the other, and Huni went to the south, and was called Pentaur. I had not deceived the man into thinking he would stop at Chennu. I told him he would be taken on to Ethiopia, for it is always impossible to play a man false when you know it is quite easy to do it. It is very strange! It is a real pleasure to cheat a cunning fellow or a sturdy man, but who would take in a child or a sick person? Huni certainly would have gone into the fire-pots of hell without complaining, and he left me quite cheerfully. The rest, and how we got here, you yourselves know. In Syria at this time of year you will suffer a good deal from rain. I know the country, for I have escorted many prisoners of war into Egypt, and I was there five years with the troops of the great Mohar, father of the chief pioneer Paaker."

Bent-Anat thanked the brave fellow, and Pentaur and Nebsecht continued the narrative.

"During the voyage," said Nebsecht, "I was uneasy about Pentaur, for I saw how he was pining, but in the desert he seemed to rouse himself, and often whispered sweet little songs that he had composed while we marched."

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"That is strange," said Bent-Anat, "for I also got better in the desert."

"Repeat the verses on the Beytharan plant," said Nebsecht.

"Do you know the plant?" asked the poet. "It grows here in many places; here it is. Only smell how sweet it is if you bruise the fleshy stem and leaves. My little verse is simple enough; it occurred to me like many other songs of which you know all the best."

"They all praise the same Goddess," said Nebsecht laughing.

"But let us have the verses," said Bent-Anat. The poet repeated in a low voice:

"How often in the desert I have seen
The small herb, Beytharan, in modest green!
In every tiny leaf and gland and hair
Sweet perfume is distilled, and scents the air.
How is it that in barren sandy ground
This little plant so sweet a gift has found?
And that in me, in this vast desert plain,
The sleeping gift of song awakes again?"

"Do you not ascribe to the desert what is due to love?" said Nefert.

"I owe it to both; but I must acknowledge that the desert is a wonderful physician for a sick soul. We take refuge from the monotony that surrounds us in our own reflections; the senses are at rest; and here, undisturbed and uninfluenced from without, it is given to the mind to think out every train of thought to the end, to examine and exhaust every feeling to its finest shades. In the city, one is always a mere particle in a great whole, on which one is dependent, to which one must contribute, and from which one must accept something. The solitary wanderer in the desert stands quite alone; he is in a manner freed from the ties which bind him to any great human community; he must fill up the void by his own identity, and seek in it that which may give his existence significance and consistency. Here, where the present retires into the background, the thoughtful spirit finds no limits however remote."

"Yes; one can think well in the desert," said Nebsecht. "Much has become clear to me here that in Egypt I only guessed at."

"What may that be?" asked Pentaur.

"In the first place," replied Nebsecht, "that we none of us really know anything rightly; secondly that the ass may love the rose, but the rose will not love the ass; and the third thing I will keep to myself, because it is my secret, and though it concerns all the world no one would trouble himself about it. My lord chamberlain, how is this? You know

exactly how low people must bow before the princess in proportion to their rank, and have no idea how a back-bone is made.”

“Why should I?” asked the chamberlain. “I have to attend to outward things, while you are contemplating inward things; else your hair might be smoother, and your dress less stained.”

The travellers reached the old Cheta city of Hebron without accident; there they took leave of Abocharabos, and under the safe escort of Egyptian troops started again for the north. At Hebron Pentaur parted from the princess, and Bent-Anat bid him farewell without complaining.

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Uarda's father, who had learned every path and bridge in Syria, accompanied the poet, while the physician Nebsecht remained with the ladies, whose good star seemed to have deserted them with Pentaur's departure, for the violent winter rains which fell in the mountains of Samaria destroyed the roads, soaked through the tents, and condemned them frequently to undesirable delays. At Megiddo they were received with high honors by the commandant of the Egyptian garrison, and they were compelled to linger here some days, for Nefert, who had been particularly eager to hurry forward, was taken ill, and Nebsecht was obliged to forbid her proceeding at this season.

Uarda grew pale and thoughtful, and Bent-Anat saw with anxiety that the tender roses were fading from the cheeks of her pretty favorite; but when she questioned her as to what ailed her she gave an evasive answer. She had never either mentioned Rameri's name before the princess, nor shown her her mother's jewel, for she felt as if all that had passed between her and the prince was a secret which did not belong to her alone. Yet another reason sealed her lips. She was passionately devoted to Bent-Anat, and she told herself that if the princess heard it all, she would either blame her brother or laugh at his affection as at a child's play, and she felt as if in that case she could not love Rameri's sister any more.

A messenger had been sent on from the first frontier station to the king's camp to enquire by which road the princess, and her party should leave Megiddo. But the emissary returned with a short and decided though affectionate letter written by the king's own hand, to his daughter, desiring her not to quit Megiddo, which was a safe magazine and arsenal for the army, strongly fortified and garrisoned, as it commanded the roads from the sea into North and Central Palestine. Decisive encounters, he said, were impending, and she knew that the Egyptians always excluded their wives and daughters from their war train, and regarded them as the best reward of victory when peace was obtained.

While the ladies were waiting in Megiddo, Pentaur and his red-bearded guide proceeded northwards with a small mounted escort, with which they were supplied by the commandant of Hebron.

He himself rode with dignity, though this journey was the first occasion on which he had sat on horseback. He seemed to have come into the world with the art of riding born with him. As soon as he had learned from his companions how to grasp the bridle, and had made himself familiar with the nature of the horse, it gave him the greatest delight to tame and subdue a fiery steed.

He had left his priest's robes in Egypt. Here he wore a coat of mail, a sword, and battle-axe like a warrior, and his long beard, which had grown during his captivity, now flowed down over his breast. Uarda's father often looked at him with admiration, and said:

“One might think the Mohar, with whom I often travelled these roads, had risen from the dead. He looked like you, he spoke like you, he called the men as you do, nay he sat as you do when the road was too bad for his chariot,

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[The Mohars used chariots in their journeys. This is positively known from the papyrus Anastasi I. which vividly describes the hardships experienced by a Mohar while travelling through Syria.]

and he got on horseback, and held the reins.”

None of Pentaur’s men, except his red-bearded friend, was more to him than a mere hired servant, and he usually preferred to ride alone, apart from the little troop, musing on the past—seldom on the future—and generally observing all that lay on his way with a keen eye. They soon reached Lebanon; between it and and Lebanon a road led through the great Syrian valley. It rejoiced him to see with his own eyes the distant shimmer of the white snow-capped peaks, of which he had often heard warriors talk.

The country between the two mountain ranges was rich and fruitful, and from the heights waterfalls and torrents rushed into the valley. Many villages and towns lay on his road, but most of them had been damaged in the war. The peasants had been robbed of their teams of cattle, the flocks had been driven off from the shepherds, and when a vine-dresser, who was training his vine saw the little troop approaching, he fled to the ravines and forests.

The traces of the plough and the spade were everywhere visible, but the fields were for the most part not sown; the young peasants were under arms, the gardens and meadows were trodden down by soldiers, the houses and cottages plundered and destroyed, or burnt. Everything bore the trace of the devastation of the war, only the oak and cedar forests lorded it proudly over the mountain-slopes, planes and locust-trees grew in groves, and the gorges and rifts of the thinly-wooded limestone hills, which bordered the fertile low-land, were filled with evergreen brushwood.

At this time of year everything was moist and well-watered, and Pentaur compared the country with Egypt, and observed how the same results were attained here as there, but by different agencies. He remembered that morning on Sinai, and said to himself again: “Another God than ours rules here, and the old masters were not wrong who reviled godless strangers, and warned the uninitiated, to whom the secret of the One must remain unrevealed, to quit their home.”

The nearer he approached the king’s camp, the more vividly he thought of Bent-Anat, and the faster his heart beat from time to time when he thought of his meeting with the king. On the whole he was full of cheerful confidence, which he felt to be folly, and which nevertheless he could not repress.

Ameni had often blamed him for his too great diffidence and his want of ambition, when he had willingly let others pass him by. He remembered this now, and smiled and understood himself less than ever, for though he resolutely repeated to himself a

hundred times that he was a low-born, poor, and excommunicated priest, the feeling would not be smothered that he had a right to claim Bent-Anat for his own.

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And if the king refused him his daughter—if he made him pay for his audacity with his life?

Not an eyelash, he well knew, would tremble under the blow of the axe, and he would die content; for that which she had granted him was his, and no God could take it from him!

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

An admirer of the lovely color of his blue bruises
Called his daughter to wash his feet
Desert is a wonderful physician for a sick soul
He is clever and knows everything, but how silly he looks now
If it were right we should not want to hide ourselves
None of us really know anything rightly
One falsehood usually entails another
Refreshed by the whip of one of the horsemen

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