

UARDA - VOLUME 4.

GEORG EBERS*

CHAPTER XV.

The afternoon shadows were already growing long, when a splendid chariot drew up to the gates of the terrace-temple. Paaker, the chief pioneer, stood up in it, driving his handsome and fiery Syrian horses. Behind him stood an Ethiopian slave, and his big dog followed the swift team with his tongue out.

As he approached the temple he heard himself called, and checked the pace of his horses. A tiny man hurried up to him, and, as soon as he had recognized in him the dwarf Nemu, he cried angrily:

"Is it for you, you rascal, that I stop my drive? What do you want?"

"To crave," said the little man, bowing humbly, "that, when thy business in the city of the dead is finished, thou wilt carry me back to Thebes."

"You are Mena's dwarf?" asked the pioneer.

"By no means," replied Nemu. "I belong to his neglected wife, the lady Nefert. I can only cover the road very slowly with my little legs, while the hoofs of your horses devour the way-as a crocodile does his prey."

"Get up!" said Paaker. "Did you come here on foot?"

"No, my lord," replied Nemu, "on an ass; but a demon entered into the beast, and has struck it with sickness. I had to leave it on the road. The beasts of Anubis will have a better supper than we to-night."

"Things are not done handsomely then at your mistress's house?" asked Paaker.

"We still have bread," replied Nemu, "and the Nile is full of water. Much meat is not necessary for women and dwarfs, but our last cattle take a form which is too hard for human teeth."

*PDF created by pdfbooks.co.za

The pioneer did not understand the joke, and looked enquiringly at the dwarf.

"The form of money," said the little man, "and that cannot be chewed; soon that will be gone too, and then the point will be to find a recipe for making nutritious cakes out of earth, water, and palm-leaves. It makes very little difference to me, a dwarf does not need much—but the poor tender lady!"

Paaker touched his horses with such a violent stroke of his whip that they reared high, and it took all his strength to control their spirit.

"The horses' jaws will be broken," muttered the slave behind. "What a shame with such fine beasts!"

"Have you to pay for them?" growled Paaker. Then he turned again to the dwarf, and asked:

"Why does Mena let the ladies want?"

"He no longer cares for his wife," replied the dwarf, casting his eyes down sadly. "At the last division of the spoil he passed by the gold and silver; and took a foreign woman into his tent. Evil demons have blinded him, for where is there a woman fairer than Nefert?"

"You love your mistress."

"As my very eyes!"

During this conversation they had arrived at the terrace-temple. Paaker threw the reins to the slave, ordered him to wait with Nemu, and turned to the gate-keeper to explain to him, with the help of a handful of gold, his desire of being conducted to Pentaur, the chief of the temple.

The gate-keeper, swinging a censer before him with a hasty action, admitted him into the sanctuary. You will find him on the third terrace," he said, "but he is no longer our superior."

"They said so in the temple of Seti, whence I have just come," replied Paaker.

The porter shrugged his shoulders with a sneer, and said: "The palm-tree that is quickly set up falls down more quickly still." Then he desired a servant to conduct the stranger to Pentaur.

The poet recognized the Mohar at once, asked his will, and learned that he was come to have a wonderful vision interpreted by him.

Paaker explained before relating his dream, that he did not ask this service for nothing; and when the priest's countenance darkened he added:

"I will send a fine beast for sacrifice to the Goddess if the interpretation is favorable."

"And in the opposite case?" asked Pentaur, who, in the House of Seti, never would have anything whatever to do with the payments of the worshippers or the offerings of the devout.

"I will offer a sheep," replied Paaker, who did not perceive the subtle irony that lurked in Pentaur's words, and who was accustomed to pay for the gifts of the Divinity in proportion to their value to himself.

Pentaur thought of the verdict which Gagabu, only two evenings since, had passed on the Mohar, and it occurred to him that he would test how far the man's superstition would lead him. So he asked, while he suppressed a smile:

"And if I can foretell nothing bad, but also nothing actually good?"—

"An antelope, and four geese," answered Paaker promptly.

"But if I were altogether disinclined to put myself at your service?" asked Pentaur. "If I thought it unworthy of a priest to let the Gods be paid in proportion to their favors towards a particular person, like corrupt officials; if I now showed you—you—and I have known you from a school-boy, that there are things that cannot be bought with inherited wealth?"

The pioneer drew back astonished and angry, but Pentaur continued calmly—

"I stand here as the minister of the Divinity; and nevertheless, I see by your countenance, that you were on the point of lowering yourself by showing to me your violent and extortionate spirit.

"The Immortals send us dreams, not to give us a foretaste of joy or caution us against danger, but to remind us so to prepare our souls that we may submit quietly to suffer evil, and with heartfelt gratitude accept the good; and so gain from each profit for the inner life. I will not interpret your dream! Come without gifts, but with a humble heart, and with longing for inward purification, and I will pray to the Gods that they may enlighten me, and give you such interpretation of even evil dreams that they may be fruitful in blessing.

"Leave me, and quit the temple!"

Paaker ground his teeth with rage; but he controlled himself, and only said as he slowly withdrew:

"If your office had not already been taken from you, the insolence with which you have dismissed me might have cost you your place. We shall meet again, and then you shall learn that inherited wealth in the right hand is worth more than you will like."

"Another enemy!" thought the poet, when he found himself alone and stood erect in the glad consciousness of having done right.

During Paaker's interview with the poet, the dwarf Nemu had chatted to the porter, and had learned from him all that had previously occurred.

Paaker mounted his chariot pale with rage, and whipped on his horses before the dwarf had clambered up the step; but the slave seized the little man, and set him carefully on his feet behind his master.

"The villain, the scoundrel! he shall repent it—Pentaur is he called! the hound!" muttered the pioneer to himself.

The dwarf lost none of his words, and when he caught the name of Pentaur he called to the pioneer, and said—

"They have appointed a scoundrel to be the superior of this temple; his name is Pentaur. He was expelled from the temple of Seti for his immorality, and now he has stirred up the younger scholars to rebellion, and invited unclean women into the temple. My lips hardly dare repeat it, but the gate-keeper swore it was true—that the chief haruspex from the House of Seti found him in conference with Bent-Anat, the king's daughter, and at once deprived him of his office."

"With Bent-Anat?" replied the pioneer, and muttered, before the dwarf could find time to answer, "Indeed, with Bent-Anat!" and he recalled the day before yesterday, when the princess had remained so long with the priest in the hovel of the paraschites, while he had talked to Nefert and visited the old witch.

"I should not care to be in the priest's skin," observed Nemu, "for though Rameses is far away, the Regent Ani is near enough. He is a gentleman who seldom pounces, but even the dove won't allow itself to be attacked in its own nest."

Paaker looked enquiringly at Nemu.

"I know," said the dwarf "Ani has asked Rameses' consent to marry his daughter."

"He has already asked it," continued the dwarf as Paaker smiled incredulously, "and the king is not disinclined to give it. He likes making marriages—as thou must know pretty well."

"I?" said Paaker, surprised.

"He forced Katuti to give her daughter as wife to the charioteer. That I know from herself. She can prove it to thee."

Paaker shook his head in denial, but the dwarf continued eagerly, "Yes, yes! Katuti would have had thee for her son-in-law, and it was the king, not she, who broke off the betrothal. Thou must at the same time have been inscribed in the black books of the high gate, for Rameses used many hard names for thee. One of us is like a mouse behind the curtain, which knows a good deal."

Paaker suddenly brought his horses to a stand-still, threw the reins to the slave, sprang from the chariot, called the dwarf to his side, and said:

"We will walk from here to the river, and you shall tell me all you know; but if an untrue word passes your lips I will have you eaten by my dogs."

"I know thou canst keep thy word," gasped the little man. "But go a little slower if thou wilt, for I am quite out of breath. Let Katuti herself tell thee how it all came about. Rameses compelled her to give her daughter to the charioteer. I do not know what he said of thee, but it was not complimentary. My poor mistress! she let herself be caught by the dandy, the ladies' man-and now she may weep and wail. When I pass the great gates of thy house with Katuti, she often sighs and complains bitterly. And with good reason, for it soon will be all over with our noble estate, and we must seek an asylum far away among the Amu in the low lands; for the nobles will soon avoid us as outcasts. Thou mayst be glad that thou hast not linked thy fate to ours; but I have a faithful heart, and will share my mistress's trouble."

"You speak riddles," said Paaker, "what have they to fear?"

The dwarf now related how Nefert's brother had gambled away the mummy of his father, how enormous was the sum he had lost, and that degradation must overtake Katuti, and her daughter with her.

"Who can save them," he whimpered. "Her shameless husband squanders his inheritance and his prize-money. Katuti is poor, and the little words "Give me! scare away friends as the cry of a hawk scares the chickens. My poor mistress!"

"It is a large sum," muttered Paaker to himself. "It is enormous!" sighed the dwarf, "and where is it to be found in these hard times? It would have been different with us, if-ah if-. And it would be a form of madness which I do not believe in, that Nefert should still care for her braggart husband. She thinks as much of thee as of him."

Paaker looked at the dwarf half incredulous and half threatening.

"Ay-of thee," repeated Nemu. "Since our excursion to the Necropolis the day before yesterday it was—she speaks only of thee, praising thy ability, and thy strong manly spirit. It is as if some charm obliged her to think of thee."

The pioneer began to walk so fast that his small companion once more had to ask him to moderate his steps.

They gained the shore in silence, where Paaker's boat was waiting, which also conveyed his chariot. He lay down in the little cabin, called the dwarf to him, and said:

"I am Katuti's nearest relative; we are now reconciled; why does she not turn to me in her difficulty?"

"Because she is proud, and thy blood flows in her veins. Sooner would she die with her child—she said so—than ask thee, against whom she sinned, for an "alms."

"She did think of me then?"

"At once; nor did she doubt thy generosity. She esteems thee highly—I repeat it; and if an arrow from a Cheta's bow or a visitation of the Gods attained Mena, she would joyfully place her child in thine arms, and Nefert believe me has not forgotten her playfellow. The day before yesterday, when she came home from the Necropolis, and before the letter had come from the camp, she was full of thee—

["To be full (meh) of any one" is used in the Egyptian language for "to be in love with any one."]

may called to thee in her dreams; I know it from Kandake, her black maid." The pioneer looked down and said:

"How extraordinary! and the same night I had a vision in which your mistress appeared to me; the insolent priest in the temple of Hathor should have interpreted it to me."

"And he refused? the fool! but other folks understand dreams, and I am not the worst of them—Ask thy servant. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred my interpretations come true. How was the vision?"

"I stood by the Nile," said Paaker, casting down his eyes and drawing lines with his whip through the wool of the cabin rug. "The water was still, and I saw Nefert standing on the farther bank, and beckoning to me. I called to her, and she stepped on the water, which bore her up as if it were this carpet. She went over the water dry-foot as if it were

the stony wilderness. A wonderful sight! She came nearer to me, and nearer, and already I had tried to take her hand, when she ducked under like a swan. I went into the water to seize her, and when she came up again I clasped her in my arms; but then the strangest thing happened—she flowed away, she dissolved like the snow on the Syrian hills, when you take it in your hand, and yet it was not the same, for her hair turned to water-lilies, and her eyes to blue fishes that swam away merrily, and her lips to twigs of coral that sank at once, and from her body grew a crocodile, with a head like Mena, that laughed and gnashed its teeth at me. Then I was seized with blind fury; I threw myself upon him with a drawn sword, he fastened his teeth in my flesh, I pierced his throat with my weapon; the Nile was dark with our streaming blood, and so we fought and fought—it lasted an eternity—till I awoke.”

Paaker drew a deep breath as he ceased speaking; as if his wild dream tormented him again.

The dwarf had listened with eager attention, but several minutes passed before he spoke.

”A strange dream,” he said, ”but the interpretation as to the future is not hard to find. Nefert is striving to reach thee, she longs to be thine, but if thou dost fancy that she is already in thy grasp she will elude thee; thy hopes will melt like ice, slip away like sand, if thou dost not know how to put the crocodile out of the way.”

At this moment the boat struck the landing-place. The pioneer started up, and cried, ”We have reached the end!”

”We have reached the end,” echoed the little man with meaning. ”There is only a narrow bridge to step over.”

When they both stood on the shore, the dwarf said,

”I have to thank thee for thy hospitality, and when I can serve thee command me.”

”Come here,” cried the pioneer, and drew Nemu away with him under the shade of a sycamore veiled in the half light of the departing sun.

”What do you mean by a bridge which we must step over? I do not understand the flowers of speech, and desire plain language.”

The dwarf reflected for a moment; and then asked, ”Shall I say nakedly and openly what I mean, and will you not be angry?”

”Speak!”

”Mena is the crocodile. Put him out of the world, and you will have passed the bridge; then Nefert will be thine—if thou wilt listen to me.”

"What shall I do?"

"Put the charioteer out of the world."

Paaker's gesture seemed to convey that that was a thing that had long been decided on, and he turned his face, for a good omen, so that the rising moon should be on his right hand.

The dwarf went on.

"Secure Nefert, so that she may not vanish like her image in the dream, before you reach the goal; that is to say, ransom the honor of your future mother and wife, for how could you take an outcast into your house?"

Paaker looked thoughtfully at the ground.

"May I inform my mistress that thou wilt save her?" asked Nemu. "I may?—Then all will be well, for he who will devote a fortune to love will not hesitate to devote a reed lance with a brass point to it to his love and his hatred together."

CHAPTER XVI.

The sun had set, and darkness covered the City of the Dead, but the moon shone above the valley of the kings' tombs, and the projecting masses of the rocky walls of the chasm threw sharply-defined shadows. A weird silence lay upon the desert, where yet far more life was stirring than in the noonday hour, for now bats darted like black silken threads through the night air, owls hovered aloft on wide-spread wings, small troops of jackals slipped by, one following the other up the mountain slopes. From time to time their hideous yell, or the whining laugh of the hyena, broke the stillness of the night.

Nor was human life yet at rest in the valley of tombs. A faint light glimmered in the cave of the sorceress Hekt, and in front of the paraschites' but a fire was burning, which the grandmother of the sick Uarda now and then fed with pieces of dry manure. Two men were seated in front of the hut, and gazed in silence on the thin flame, whose impure light was almost quenched by the clearer glow of the moon; whilst the third, Uarda's father, disembowelled a large ram, whose head he had already cut off.

"How the jackals howl!" said the old paraschites, drawing as he spoke the torn brown cotton cloth, which he had put on as a protection against

the night air and the dew, closer round his bare shoulders.

"They scent the fresh meat," answered the physician, Nebsecht. "Throw them the entrails, when you have done; the legs and back you can roast. Be careful how you cut out the heart—the heart, soldier. There it is! What a great beast."

Nebsecht took the ram's heart in his hand, and gazed at it with the deepest attention, whilst the old paraschites watched him anxiously. At length:

"I promised," he said, "to do for you what you wish, if you restore the little one to health; but you ask for what is impossible."

"Impossible?" said the physician, "why, impossible? You open the corpses, you go in and out of the house of the embalmer. Get possession of one of the canopi,

[Vases of clay, limestone, or alabaster, which were used for the preservation of the intestines of the embalmed Egyptians, and represented the four genii of death, Amset, Hapi, Tuamutef, and Khebsennuf. Instead of the cover, the head of the genius to which it was dedicated, was placed on each kanopus. Amset (tinder the protection of Isis) has a human head, Hapi (protected by Nephthys) an ape's head, Tuamutef (protected by Neith) a jackal's head, and Khebsennuf (protected by Selk) a sparrow-hawk's head. In one of the Christian Coptic Manuscripts, the four archangels are invoked in the place of these genii.]

lay this heart in it, and take out in its stead the heart of a human being. No one—no one will notice it. Nor need you do it to-morrow, or the day after tomorrow even. Your son can buy a ram to kill every day with my money till the right moment comes. Your granddaughter will soon grow strong on a good meat-diet. Take courage!"

"I am not afraid of the danger," said the old man, "but how can I venture to steal from a dead man his life in the other world? And then—in shame and misery have I lived, and for many a year—no man has numbered them for me—have I obeyed the commandments, that I may be found righteous in that world to come, and in the fields of Aalu, and in the Sun-bark find compensation for all that I have suffered here. You are good and friendly. Why, for the sake of a whim, should you sacrifice the future bliss of a man, who in all his long life has never known happiness, and who has never done you any harm?"

"What I want with the heart," replied the physician, "you cannot understand, but in procuring it for me, you will be furthering a great and useful purpose. I have no whims, for I am no idler. And as to what concerns your salvation, have no anxiety. I am a priest, and take your deed and its consequences upon myself; upon myself, do you understand?"

I tell you, as a priest, that what I demand of you is right, and if the judge of the dead shall enquire, 'Why didst thou take the heart of a human being out of the Kanopus?' then reply—reply to him thus, 'Because Nebsecht, the priest, commanded me, and promised himself to answer for the deed.'"

The old man gazed thoughtfully on the ground, and the physician continued still more urgently:

"If you fulfil my wish, then—then I swear to you that, when you die, I will take care that your mummy is provided with all the amulets, and I myself will write you a book of the Entrance into Day, and have it wound within your mummy-cloth, as is done with the great.

[The Books of the Dead are often found amongst the cloths, (by the leg or under the arm), or else in the coffin trader, or near, the mummy.]

That will give you power over all demons, and you will be admitted to the hall of the twofold justice, which punishes and rewards, and your award will be bliss."

"But the theft of a heart will make the weight of my sins heavy, when my own heart is weighed," sighed the old man.

Nebsecht considered for a moment, and then said: "I will give you a written paper, in which I will certify that it was I who commanded the theft. You will sew it up in a little bag, carry it on your breast, and have it laid with you in the grave. Then when Techuti, the agent of the soul, receives your justification before Osiris and the judges of the dead, give him the writing. He will read it aloud, and you will be accounted just."

[The vignettes of Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead represent the Last Judgment of the Egyptians. Under a canopy Osiris sits enthroned as Chief Judge, 42 assessors assist him. In the hall stand the scales; the dog headed ape, the animal sacred to Toth, guides the balance. In one scale lies the heart of the dead man, in the other the image of the goddess of Truth, who introduces the soul into the hall of justice Toth writes the record. The soul affirms that it has not committed 42 deadly sins, and if it obtains credit, it is named "maa cheru," i.e. "the truth-speaker," and is therewith declared blessed. It now receives its heart back, and grows into a new and divine life.]

"I am not learned in writing," muttered the paraschites with a slight mistrust that made itself felt in his voice.

"But I swear to you by the nine great Gods, that I will write nothing on the paper but what I have promised you. I will confess that I, the

priest Nebsecht, commanded you to take the heart, and that your guilt is mine.”

”Let me have the writing then,” murmured the old man.

The physician wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and gave the paraschites his hand. ”To-morrow you shall have it,” he said, ”and I will not leave your granddaughter till she is well again.”

The soldier engaged in cutting up the ram, had heard nothing of this conversation. Now he ran a wooden spit through the legs, and held them over the fire to roast them. The jackals howled louder as the smell of the melting fat filled the air, and the old man, as he looked on, forgot the terrible task he had undertaken. For a year past, no meat had been tasted in his house.

The physician Nebsecht, himself eating nothing but a piece of bread, looked on at the feasters. They tore the meat from the bones, and the soldier, especially, devoured the costly and unwonted meal like some ravenous animal. He could be heard chewing like a horse in the manger, and a feeling of disgust filled the physician’s soul.

”Sensual beings,” he murmured to himself, ”animals with consciousness! And yet human beings. Strange! They languish bound in the fetters of the world of sense, and yet how much more ardently they desire that which transcends sense than we—how much more real it is to them than to us!”

”Will you have some meat?” cried the soldier, who had remarked that Nebsecht’s lips moved, and tearing a piece of meat from the bone of the joint he was devouring, he held it out to the physician. Nebsecht shrank back; the greedy look, the glistening teeth, the dark, rough features of the man terrified him. And he thought of the white and fragile form of the sick girl lying within on the mat, and a question escaped his lips.

”Is the maiden, is Uarda, your own child?” he said.

The soldier struck himself on the breast. ”So sure as the king Rameses is the son of Seti,” he answered. The men had finished their meal, and the flat cakes of bread which the wife of the paraschites gave them, and on which they had wiped their hands from the fat, were consumed, when the soldier, in whose slow brain the physician’s question still lingered, said, sighing deeply:

”Her mother was a stranger; she laid the white dove in the raven’s nest.”

”Of what country was your wife a native?” asked the physician.

”That I do not know,” replied the soldier.

"Did you never enquire about the family of your own wife?"

"Certainly I did: but how could she have answered me? But it is a long and strange story."

"Relate it to me," said Nebsecht, "the night is long, and I like listening better than talking. But first I will see after our patient."

When the physician had satisfied himself that Uarda was sleeping quietly and breathing regularly, he seated himself again by the paraschites and his son, and the soldier began:

"It all happened long ago. King Seti still lived, but Rameses already reigned in his stead, when I came home from the north. They had sent me to the workmen, who were building the fortifications in Zoan, the town of Rameses.—[The Rameses of the Bible. Exodus i. ii.]—I was set over six men, Amus,—[Semites]—of the Hebrew race, over whom Rameses kept such a tight hand.

[For an account of the traces of the Jews in Egypt, see Chabas, Melanges, and Ebers, Aegypten und die Bucher Moses]

Amongst the workmen there were sons of rich cattle-holders, for in levying the people it was never: 'What have you?' but 'Of what race are you?' The fortifications and the canal which was to join the Nile and the Red Sea had to be completed, and the king, to whom be long life, health, and prosperity, took the youth of Egypt with him to the wars, and left the work to the Amus, who are connected by race with his enemies in the east. One lives well in Goshen, for it is a fine country, with more than enough of corn and grass and vegetables and fish and fowls, and I always had of the best, for amongst my six people were two mother's darlings, whose parents sent me many a piece of silver. Every one loves his children, but the Hebrews love them more tenderly than other people. We had daily our appointed tale of bricks to deliver, and when the sun burnt hot, I used to help the lads, and I did more in an hour than they did in three, for I am strong and was still stronger then than I am now.

"Then came the time when I was relieved. I was ordered to return to Thebes, to the prisoners of war who were building the great temple of Amon over yonder, and as I had brought home some money, and it would take a good while to finish the great dwelling of the king of the Gods, I thought of taking a wife; but no Egyptian. Of daughters of paraschites there were plenty; but I wanted to get away out of my father's accursed caste, and the other girls here, as I knew, were afraid of our uncleanness. In the low country I had done better, and many an Amu and Schasu woman had gladly come to my tent. From the beginning I had set my mind on an Asiatic.

"Many a time maidens taken prisoners in war were brought to be sold, but either they did not please me, or they were too dear. Meantime my money

melted away, for we enjoyed life in the time of rest which followed the working hours. There were dancers too in plenty, in the foreign quarter.

”Well, it was just at the time of the holy feast of Amon-Chem, that a new transport of prisoners of war arrived, and amongst them many women, who were sold publicly to the highest bidder. The young and beautiful ones were paid for high, but even the older ones were too dear for me.

”Quite at the last a blind woman was led forward, and a withered-looking woman who was dumb, as the auctioneer, who generally praised up the merits of the prisoners, informed the buyers. The blind woman had strong hands, and was bought by a tavern-keeper, for whom she turns the handmill to this day; the dumb woman held a child in her arms, and no one could tell whether she was young or old. She looked as though she already lay in her coffin, and the little one as though he would go under the grass before her. And her hair was red, burning red, the very color of Typhon. Her white pale face looked neither bad nor good, only weary, weary to death. On her withered white arms blue veins ran like dark cords, her hands hung feebly down, and in them hung the child. If a wind were to rise, I thought to myself, it would blow her away, and the little one with her.

”The auctioneer asked for a bid. All were silent, for the dumb shadow was of no use for work; she was half-dead, and a burial costs money.

”So passed several minutes. Then the auctioneer stepped up to her, and gave her a blow with his whip, that she might rouse herself up, and appear less miserable to the buyers. She shivered like a person in a fever, pressed the child closer to her, and looked round at every one as though seeking for help—and me full in the face. What happened now was a real wonder, for her eyes were bigger than any that I ever saw, and a demon dwelt in them that had power over me and ruled me to the end, and that day it bewitched me for the first time.

”It was not hot and I had drunk nothing, and yet I acted against my own will and better judgment when, as her eyes fell upon me, I bid all that I possessed in order to buy her. I might have had her cheaper! My companions laughed at me, the auctioneer shrugged his shoulders as he took my money, but I took the child on my arm, helped the woman up, carried her in a boat over the Nile, loaded a stone-cart with my miserable property, and drove her like a block of lime home to the old people.

”My mother shook her head, and my father looked as if he thought me mad; but neither of them said a word. They made up a bed for her, and on my spare nights I built that ruined thing hard by—it was a tidy hut once. Soon my mother grew fond of the child. It was quite small, and we called it Pennu—[Pennu is the name for the mouse in old Egyptian]—because it was so pretty, like a little mouse. I kept away from the foreign quarter, and saved my wages, and bought a goat, which lived in front of

our door when I took the woman to her own hut.

"She was dumb, but not deaf, only she did not understand our language; but the demon in her eyes spoke for her and understood what I said. She comprehended everything, and could say everything with her eyes; but best of all she knew how to thank one. No high-priest who at the great hill festival praises the Gods in long hymns for their gifts can return thanks so earnestly with his lips as she with her dumb eyes. And when she wished to pray, then it seemed as though the demon in her look was mightier than ever.

"At first I used to be impatient enough when she leaned so feebly against the wall, or when the child cried and disturbed my sleep; but she had only to look up, and the demon pressed my heart together and persuaded me that the crying was really a song. Pennu cried more sweetly too than other children, and he had such soft, white, pretty little fingers.

"One day he had been crying for a long time, At last I bent down over him, and was going to scold him, but he seized me by the beard. It was pretty to see! Afterwards he was for ever wanting to pull me about, and his mother noticed that that pleased me, for when I brought home anything good, an egg or a flower or a cake, she used to hold him up and place his little hands on my beard.

"Yes, in a few months the woman had learnt to hold him up high in her arms, for with care and quiet she had grown stronger. White she always remained and delicate, but she grew younger and more beautiful from day to day; she can hardly have numbered twenty years when I bought her. What she was called I never heard; nor did we give her any name. She was 'the woman,' and so we called her.

"Eight moons passed by, and then the little Mouse died. I wept as she did, and as I bent over the little corpse and let my tears have free course, and thought—now he can never lift up his pretty little finger to you again; then I felt for the first time the woman's soft hand on my cheek. She stroked my rough beard as a child might, and with that looked at me so gratefully that I felt as though king Pharaoh had all at once made me a present of both Upper and Lower Egypt.

"When the Mouse was buried she got weaker again, but my mother took good care of her. I lived with her, like a father with his child. She was always friendly, but if I approached her, and tried to show her any fondness, she would look at me, and the demon in her eyes drove me back, and I let her alone.

"She grew healthier and stronger and more and more beautiful, so beautiful that I kept her hidden, and was consumed by the longing to make her my wife. A good housewife she never became, to be sure; her hands were so tender, and she did not even know how to milk the goat. My

mother did that and everything else for her.

"In the daytime she stayed in her hut and worked, for she was very skillful at woman's work, and wove lace as fine as cobwebs, which my mother sold that she might bring home perfumes with the proceeds. She was very fond of them, and of flowers too; and Uarda in there takes after her.

"In the evening, when the folk from the other side had left the City of the Dead, she would often walk down the valley here, thoughtful and often looking up at the moon, which she was especially fond of.

"One evening in the winter-time I came home. It was already dark, and I expected to find her in front of the door. All at once, about a hundred steps behind old Hekt's cave, I heard a troop of jackals barking so furiously that I said to myself directly they had attacked a human being, and I knew too who it was, though no one had told me, and the woman could not call or cry out. Frantic with terror, I tore a firebrand from the hearth and the stake to which the goat was fastened out of the ground, rushed to her help, drove away the beasts, and carried her back senseless to the hut. My mother helped me, and we called her back to life. When we were alone, I wept like a child for joy at her escape, and she let me kiss her, and then she became my wife, three years after I had bought her.

"She bore me a little maid, that she herself named Uarda; for she showed us a rose, and then pointed to the child, and we understood her without words.

"Soon afterwards she died.

"You are a priest, but I tell you that when I am summoned before Osiris, if I am admitted amongst the blessed, I will ask whether I shall meet my wife, and if the doorkeeper says no, he may thrust me back, and I will go down cheerfully to the damned, if I find her again there."

"And did no sign ever betray her origin?" asked the physician.

The soldier had hidden his face in his hand; he was weeping aloud, and did not hear the question. But, the paraschites answered:

"She was the child of some great personage, for in her clothes we found a golden jewel with a precious stone inscribed with strange characters. It is very costly, and my wife is keeping it for the little one."

CHAPTER XVII.

In the earliest glimmer of dawn the following day, the physician Nebsecht having satisfied himself as to the state of the sick girl, left the paraschites' hut and made his way in deepest thought to the Terrace Temple of Hatasu, to find his friend Pentaur and compose the writing which he had promised to the old man.

As the sun arose in radiance he reached the sanctuary. He expected to hear the morning song of the priests, but all was silent. He knocked and the porter, still half-asleep, opened the door.

Nebsecht enquired for the chief of the Temple. "He died in the night," said the man yawning.

"What do you say?" cried the physician in sudden terror, "who is dead?"

"Our good old chief, Rui."

Nebsecht breathed again, and asked for Pentaur.

"You belong to the House of Seti," said the doorkeeper, "and you do not know that he is deposed from his office? The holy fathers have refused to celebrate the birth of Ra with him. He sings for himself now, alone up on the watch-tower. There you will find him."

Nebsecht strode quickly up the stairs. Several of the priests placed themselves together in groups as soon as they saw him, and began singing. He paid no heed to them, however, but hastened on to the uppermost terrace, where he found his friend occupied in writing.

Soon he learnt all that had happened, and wrathfully he cried: "You are too honest for those wise gentlemen in the House of Seti, and too pure and zealous for the rabble here. I knew it, I knew what would come of it if they introduced you to the mysteries. For us initiated there remains only the choice between lying and silence."

"The old error!" said Pentaur, "we know that the Godhead is One, we name it, 'The All,' 'The Veil of the All,' or simply 'Ra.' But under the name Ra we understand something different than is known to the common herd; for to us, the Universe is God, and in each of its parts we recognize a manifestation of that highest being without whom nothing is, in the heights above or in the depths below."

"To me you can say everything, for I also am initiated," interrupted Nebsecht.

"But neither from the laity do I withhold it," cried Pentaur, "only to

those who are incapable of understanding the whole, do I show the different parts. Am I a liar if I do not say, 'I speak,' but 'my mouth speaks,' if I affirm, 'Your eye sees,' when it is you yourself who are the seer. When the light of the only One manifests itself, then I fervently render thanks to him in hymns, and the most luminous of his forms I name Ra. When I look upon yonder green fields, I call upon the faithful to give thanks to Rennut, that is, that active manifestation of the One, through which the corn attains to its ripe maturity. Am I filled with wonder at the bounteous gifts with which that divine stream whose origin is hidden, blesses our land, then I adore the One as the God Hapi, the secret one. Whether we view the sun, the harvest, or the Nile, whether we contemplate with admiration the unity and harmony of the visible or invisible world, still it is always with the Only, the All-embracing One we have to do, to whom we also ourselves belong as those of his manifestations in which lie places his self-consciousness. The imagination of the multitude is limited"

"And so we lions,

["The priests," says Clement of Alexandria, "allow none to be participators in their mysteries, except kings or such amongst themselves as are distinguished for virtue or wisdom." The same thing is shown by the monuments in many places]

give them the morsel that we can devour at one gulp, finely chopped up, and diluted with broth as if for the weak stomach of a sick man."

"Not so; we only feel it our duty to temper and sweeten the sharp potion, which for men even is almost too strong, before we offer it to the children, the babes in spirit. The sages of old veiled indeed the highest truths in allegorical forms, in symbols, and finally in a beautiful and richly-colored mythos, but they brought them near to the multitude shrouded it is true but still discernible."

"Discernible?" said the physician, "discernible? Why then the veil?"

"And do you imagine that the multitude could look the naked truth in the face,

[In Sais the statue of Athene (Neith) has the following, inscription: "I am the All, the Past, the Present, and the Future, my veil has no mortal yet lifted." Plutarch, Isis and Osiris 9, a similar quotation by Proclus, in Plato's Timaeus.]

and not despair?"

"Can I, can any one who looks straight forward, and strives to see the truth and nothing but the truth?" cried the physician. "We both of us know that things only are, to us, such as they picture themselves in the prepared mirror of our souls. I see grey, grey, and white, white, and

have accustomed myself in my yearning after knowledge, not to attribute the smallest part to my own idiosyncrasy, if such indeed there be existing in my empty breast. You look straight onwards as I do, but in you each idea is transfigured, for in your soul invisible shaping powers are at work, which set the crooked straight, clothe the commonplace with charm, the repulsive with beauty. You are a poet, an artist; I only seek for truth."

"Only?" said Pentaur, "it is just on account of that effort that I esteem you so highly, and, as you already know, I also desire nothing but the truth."

"I know, I know," said the physician nodding, "but our ways run side by side without ever touching, and our final goal is the reading of a riddle, of which there are many solutions. You believe yourself to have found the right one, and perhaps none exists."

"Then let us content ourselves with the nearest and the most beautiful," said Pentaur.

"The most beautiful?" cried Nebsecht indignantly. "Is that monster, whom you call God, beautiful—the giant who for ever regenerates himself that he may devour himself again? God is the All, you say, who suffices to himself. Eternal he is and shall be, because all that goes forth from him is absorbed by him again, and the great niggard bestows no grain of sand, no ray of light, no breath of wind, without reclaiming it for his household, which is ruled by no design, no reason, no goodness, but by a tyrannical necessity, whose slave he himself is. The coward hides behind the cloud of incomprehensibility, and can be revealed only by himself—I would I could strip him of the veil! Thus I see the thing that you call God!"

"A ghastly picture," said Pentaur, "because you forget that we recognize reason to be the essence of the All, the penetrating and moving power of the universe which is manifested in the harmonious working together of its parts, and in ourselves also, since we are formed out of its substance, and inspired with its soul."

"Is the warfare of life in any way reasonable?" asked Nebsecht. "Is this eternal destruction in order to build up again especially well-designed and wise? And with this introduction of reason into the All, you provide yourself with a self-devised ruler, who terribly resembles the gracious masters and mistresses that you exhibit to the people."

"Only apparently," answered Pentaur, "only because that which transcends sense is communicable through the medium of the senses alone. When God manifests himself as the wisdom of the world, we call him 'the Word,' 'He, who covers his limbs with names,' as the sacred Text expresses itself, is the power which gives to things their distinctive forms; the scarabaeus, 'which enters life as its own son' reminds us of the ever

self-renewing creative power which causes you to call our merciful and benevolent God a monster, but which you can deny as little as you can the happy choice of the type; for, as you know, there are only male scarabei, and this animal reproduces itself.”

Nebsecht smiled. “If all the doctrines of the mysteries,” he said, “have no more truth than this happily chosen image, they are in a bad way. These beetles have for years been my friends and companions. I know their family life, and I can assure you that there are males and females amongst them as amongst cats, apes, and human beings. Your ‘good God’ I do not know, and what I least comprehend in thinking it over quietly is the circumstance that you distinguish a good and evil principle in the world. If the All is indeed God, if God as the scriptures teach, is goodness, and if besides him is nothing at all, where is a place to be found for evil?”

“You talk like a school-boy,” said Pentaur indignantly. “All that is, is good and reasonable in itself, but the infinite One, who prescribes his own laws and his own paths, grants to the finite its continuance through continual renewal, and in the changing forms of the finite progresses for evermore. What we call evil, darkness, wickedness, is in itself divine, good, reasonable, and clear; but it appears in another light to our clouded minds, because we perceive the way only and not the goal, the details only, and not the whole. Even so, superficial listeners blame the music, in which a discord is heard, which the harper has only evoked from the strings that his hearers may more deeply feel the purity of the succeeding harmony; even so, a fool blames the painter who has colored his board with black, and does not wait for the completion of the picture which shall be thrown into clearer relief by the dark background; even so, a child chides the noble tree, whose fruit rots, that a new life may spring up from its kernel. Apparent evil is but an antechamber to higher bliss, as every sunset is but veiled by night, and will soon show itself again as the red dawn of a new day.”

“How convincing all that sounds!” answered the physician, “all, even the terrible, wins charm from your lips; but I could invert your proposition, and declare that it is evil that rules the world, and sometimes gives us one drop of sweet content, in order that we may more keenly feel the bitterness of life. You see harmony and goodness in everything. I have observed that passion awakens life, that all existence is a conflict, that one being devours another.”

“And do you not feel the beauty of visible creation, and does not the immutable law in everything fill you with admiration and humility?”

“For beauty,” replied Nebsecht, “I have never sought; the organ is somehow wanting in me to understand it of myself, though I willingly allow you to mediate between us. But of law in nature I fully appreciate the worth, for that is the veritable soul of the universe. You call the One ‘Temt,’ that is to say the total—the unity which is reached by the

addition of many units; and that pleases me, for the elements of the universe and the powers which prescribe the paths of life are strictly defined by measure and number—but irrespective of beauty or benevolence.”

”Such views,” cried Pentaur troubled, ”are the result of your strange studies. You kill and destroy, in order, as you yourself say, to come upon the track of the secrets of life. Look out upon nature, develop the faculty which you declare to be wanting, in you, and the beauty of creation will teach you without my assistance that you are praying to a false god.”

”I do not pray,” said Nebsecht, ”for the law which moves the world is as little affected by prayers as the current of the sands in your hour-glass. Who tells you that I do not seek to come upon the track of the first beginning of things? I proved to you just now that I know more about the origin of Scarabei than you do. I have killed many an animal, not only to study its organism, but also to investigate how it has built up its form. But precisely in this work my organ for beauty has become blunt rather than keen. I tell you that the beginning of things is not more attractive to contemplate than their death and decomposition.”

Pentaur looked at the physician enquiringly.

”I also for once,” continued Nebsecht, ”will speak in figures. Look at this wine, how pure it is, how fragrant; and yet it was trodden from the grape by the brawny feet of the vintagers. And those full ears of corn! They gleam golden yellow, and will yield us snow-white meal when they are ground, and yet they grew from a rotting seed. Lately you were praising to me the beauty of the great Hall of Columns nearly completed in the Temple of Amon over yonder in Thebes.

[Begun by Rameses I. continued by Seti I., completed by Rameses II. The remains of this immense hall, with its 134 columns, have not their equal in the world.]

How posterity will admire it! I saw that Hall arise. There lay masses of freestone in wild confusion, dust in heaps that took away my breath, and three months since I was sent over there, because above a hundred workmen engaged in stone-polishing under the burning sun had been beaten to death. Were I a poet like you, I would show you a hundred similar pictures, in which you would not find much beauty. In the meantime, we have enough to do in observing the existing order of things, and investigating the laws by which it is governed.”

”I have never clearly understood your efforts, and have difficulty in comprehending why you did not turn to the science of the haruspices,” said Pentaur. ”Do you then believe that the changing, and—owing to the conditions by which they are surrounded—the dependent life of plants and animals is governed by law, rule, and numbers like the movement of the

stars?"

"What a question! Is the strong and mighty hand, which compels yonder heavenly bodies to roll onward in their carefully-appointed orbits, not delicate enough to prescribe the conditions of the flight of the bird, and the beating of the human heart?"

"There we are again with the heart," said the poet smiling, "are you any nearer your aim?"

The physician became very grave. "Perhaps tomorrow even," he said, "I may have what I need. You have your palette there with red and black color, and a writing reed. May I use this sheet of papyrus?"

"Of course; but first tell me"

"Do not ask; you would not approve of my scheme, and there would only be a fresh dispute."

"I think," said the poet, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, "that we have no reason to fear disputes. So far they have been the cement, the refreshing dew of our friendship."

"So long as they treated of ideas only, and not of deeds."

"You intend to get possession of a human heart!" cried the poet. "Think of what you are doing! The heart is the vessel of that effluence of the universal soul, which lives in us."

"Are you so sure of that?" cried the physician with some irritation, "then give me the proof. Have you ever examined a heart, has any one member of my profession done so? The hearts of criminals and prisoners of war even are declared sacred from touch, and when we stand helpless by a patient, and see our medicines work harm as often as good, why is it? Only because we physicians are expected to work as blindly as an astronomer, if he were required to look at the stars through a board. At Heliopolis I entreated the great Urma Rahotep, the truly learned chief of our craft, and who held me in esteem, to allow me to examine the heart of a dead Amu; but he refused me, because the great Sechet leads virtuous Semites also into the fields of the blessed.

[According to the inscription accompanying the famous representations of the four nations (Egyptians, Semites, Libyans, and Ethiopians) in the tomb of Seti I.]

And then followed all the old scruples: that to cut up the heart of a beast even is sinful, because it also is the vehicle of a soul, perhaps a condemned and miserable human soul, which before it can return to the One, must undergo purification by passing through the bodies of animals. I was not satisfied, and declared to him that my great-grandfather

Nebsecht, before he wrote his treatise on the heart, must certainly have examined such an organ. Then he answered me that the divinity had revealed to him what he had written, and therefore his work had been accepted amongst the sacred writings of Toth,

[Called by the Greeks "Hermetic Books." The Papyrus Ebers is the work called by Clemens of Alexandria "the Book of Remedies."]

which stood fast and unassailable as the laws of the world; he wished to give me peace for quiet work, and I also, he said, might be a chosen spirit, the divinity might perhaps vouchsafe revelations to me too. I was young at that time, and spent my nights in prayer, but I only wasted away, and my spirit grew darker instead of clearer. Then I killed in secret—first a fowl, then rats, then a rabbit, and cut up their hearts, and followed the vessels that lead out of them, and know little more now than I did at first; but I must get to the bottom of the truth, and I must have a human heart."

"What will that do for you?" asked Pentaur; "you cannot hope to perceive the invisible and the infinite with your human eyes?"

"Do you know my great-grandfather's treatise?"

"A little," answered the poet; "he said that wherever he laid his finger, whether on the head, the hands, or the stomach, he everywhere met with the heart, because its vessels go into all the members, and the heart is the meeting point of all these vessels. Then Nebsecht proceeds to state how these are distributed in the different members, and shows—is it not so?—that the various mental states, such as anger, grief, aversion, and also the ordinary use of the word heart, declare entirely for his view."

"That is it. We have already discussed it, and I believe that he is right, so far as the blood is concerned, and the animal sensations. But the pure and luminous intelligence in us—that has another seat," and the physician struck his broad but low forehead with his hand. "I have observed heads by the hundred down at the place of execution, and I have also removed the top of the skulls of living animals. But now let me write, before we are disturbed."

[Human brains are prescribed for a malady of the eyes in the Ebers papyrus. Herophilus, one of the first scholars of the Alexandrine Museum, studied not only the bodies of executed criminals, but made his experiments also on living malefactors. He maintained that the four cavities of the human brain are the seat of the soul.]

The physician took the reed, moistened it with black color prepared from burnt papyrus, and in elegant hieratic characters

[At the time of our narrative the Egyptians had two kinds of

writing-the hieroglyphic, which was generally used for monumental inscriptions, and in which the letters consisted of conventional representations of various objects, mathematical and arbitrary symbols, and the hieratic, used for writing on papyrus, and in which, with the view of saving time, the written pictures underwent so many alterations and abbreviations that the originals could hardly be recognized. In the 8th century there was a further abridgment of the hieratic writing, which was called the demotic, or people's writing, and was used in commerce. Whilst the hieroglyphic and hieratic writings laid the foundations of the old sacred dialect, the demotic letters were only used to write the spoken language of the people. E. de Rouge's *Chrestomathie Egyptienne*. H. Brugsch's *Hieroglyphische Grammatik*. Le Page Renouf's shorter hieroglyphical grammar. Ebers' *Ueber das Hieroglyphische Schriftsystem*, 2nd edition, 1875, in the lectures of Virchow Holtzendorff.]

wrote the paper for the paraschites, in which he confessed to having impelled him to the theft of a heart, and in the most binding manner declared himself willing to take the old man's guilt upon himself before Osiris and the judges of the dead.

When he had finished, Pentaur held out his hand for the paper, but Nebsecht folded it together, placed it in a little bag in which lay an amulet that his dying mother had hung round his neck, and said, breathing deeply:

"That is done. Farewell, Pentaur."

But the poet held the physician back; he spoke to him with the warmest words, and conjured him to abandon his enterprise. His prayers, however, had no power to touch Nebsecht, who only strove forcibly to disengage his finger from Pentaur's strong hand, which held him as in a clasp of iron. The excited poet did not remark that he was hurting his friend, until after a new and vain attempt at freeing himself, Nebsecht cried out in pain, "You are crushing my finger!"

A smile passed over the poet's face, he loosened his hold on the physician, and stroked the reddened hand like a mother who strives to divert her child from pain.

"Don't be angry with me, Nebsecht," he said, "you know my unlucky fists, and to-day they really ought to hold you fast, for you have too mad a purpose on hand."

"Mad?" said the physician, whilst he smiled in his turn. "It may be so; but do you not know that we Egyptians all have a peculiar tenderness for our follies, and are ready to sacrifice house and land to them?"

"Our own house and our own land," cried the poet: and then added

seriously, "but not the existence, not the happiness of another."

"Have I not told you that I do not look upon the heart as the seat of our intelligence? So far as I am concerned, I would as soon be buried with a ram's heart as with my own."

"I do not speak of the plundered dead, but of the living," said the poet. "If the deed of the paraschites is discovered, he is undone, and you would only have saved that sweet child in the hut behind there, to fling her into deeper misery."

Nebsecht looked at the other with as much astonishment and dismay, as if he had been awakened from sleep by bad tidings. Then he cried: "All that I have, I would share with the old man and Uarda."

"And who would protect her?"

"Her father."

"That rough drunkard who to-morrow or the day after may be sent no one knows where."

"He is a good fellow," said the physician interrupting his friend, and stammering violently. "But who 'would do anything to the child? She is so so She is so charming, so perfectly-sweet and lovely."

With these last words he cast down his eyes and reddened like a girl.

"You understand that," he said, "better than I do; yes, and you also think her beautiful! Strange! you must not laugh if I confess-I am but a man like every one else-when I confess, that I believe I have at length discovered in myself the missing organ for beauty of form-not believe merely, but truly have discovered it, for it has not only spoken, but cried, raged, till I felt a rushing in my ears, and for the first time was attracted more by the sufferer than by suffering. I have sat in the hut as though spell-bound, and gazed at her hair, at her eyes, at how she breathed. They must long since have missed me at the House of Seti, perhaps discovered all my preparations, when seeking me in my room! For two days and nights I have allowed myself to be drawn away from my work, for the sake of this child. Were I one of the laity, whom you would approach, I should say that demons had bewitched me. But it is not that,"-and with these words the physician's eyes flamed up-"it is not that! The animal in me, the low instincts of which the heart is the organ, and which swelled my breast at her bedside, they have mastered the pure and fine emotions here-here in this brain; and in the very moment when I hoped to know as the God knows whom you call the Prince of knowledge, in that moment I must learn that the animal in me is stronger than that which I call my God."

The physician, agitated and excited, had fixed his eyes on the ground

during these last words, and hardly noticed the poet, who listened to him wondering and full of sympathy. For a time both were silent; then Pentaur laid his hand on his friend's hand, and said cordially:

"My soul is no stranger to what you feel, and heart and head, if I may use your own words, have known a like emotion. But I know that what we feel, although it may be foreign to our usual sensations, is loftier and more precious than these, not lower. Not the animal, Nebsecht, is it that you feel in yourself, but God. Goodness is the most beautiful attribute of the divine, and you have always been well-disposed towards great and small; but I ask you, have you ever before felt so irresistibly impelled to pour out an ocean of goodness on another being, whether for Uarda you would not more joyfully and more self-forgetfully sacrifice all that you have, and all that you are, than to father and mother and your oldest friend?"

Nebsecht nodded assentingly.

"Well then," cried Pentaur, "follow your new and godlike emotion, be good to Uarda and do not sacrifice her to your vain wishes. My poor friend! With your-enquiries into the secrets of life, you have never looked round upon itself, which spreads open and inviting before our eyes. Do you imagine that the maiden who can thus inflame the calmest thinker in Thebes, will not be coveted by a hundred of the common herd when her protector fails her? Need I tell you that amongst the dancers in the foreign quarter nine out of ten are the daughters of outlawed parents? Can you endure the thought that by your hand innocence may be consigned to vice, the rose trodden under foot in the mud? Is the human heart that you desire, worth an Uarda? Now go, and to-morrow come again to me your friend who understands how to sympathize with all you feel, and to whom you have approached so much the nearer to-day that you have learned to share his purest happiness."

Pentaur held out his hand to the physician, who held it some time, then went thoughtfully and lingeringly, unmindful of the burning glow of the mid-day sun, over the mountain into the valley of the king's graves towards the hut of the paraschites.

Here he found the soldier with his daughter. "Where is the old man?" he asked anxiously.

"He has gone to his work in the house of the embalmer," was the answer. "If anything should happen to him he bade me tell you not to forget the writing and the book. He was as though out of his mind when he left us, and put the ram's heart in his bag and took it with him. Do you remain with the little one; my mother is at work, and I must go with the prisoners of war to Harmontis."

CHAPTER XVIII.

While the two friends from the House of Seti were engaged in conversation, Katuti restlessly paced the large open hall of her son-in-law's house, in which we have already seen her. A snow-white cat followed her steps, now playing with the hem of her long plain dress, and now turning to a large stand on which the dwarf Nemu sat in a heap; where formerly a silver statue had stood, which a few months previously had been sold.

He liked this place, for it put him in a position to look into the eyes of his mistress and other frill-grown people. "If you have betrayed me! If you have deceived me!" said Katuti with a threatening gesture as she passed his perch.

"Put me on a hook to angle for a crocodile if I have. But I am curious to know how he will offer you the money."

"You swore to me," interrupted his mistress with feverish agitation, that you had not used my name in asking Paaker to save us?"

"A thousand times I swear it," said the little man.

"Shall I repeat all our conversation? I tell thee he will sacrifice his land, and his house-great gate and all, for one friendly glance from Nefert's eyes."

"If only Mena loved her as he does!" sighed the widow, and then again she walked up and down the hall in silence, while the dwarf looked out at the garden entrance. Suddenly she paused in front of Nemu, and said so hoarsely that Nemu shuddered:

"I wish she were a widow." "The little man made a gesture as if to protect himself from the evil eye, but at the same instant he slipped down from his pedestal, and exclaimed:

"There is a chariot, and I hear his big dog barking. It is he. Shall I call Nefert?"

"No!" said Katuti in a low voice, and she clutched at the back of a chair as if for support.

The dwarf shrugged his shoulders, and slunk behind a clump of ornamental plants, and a few minutes later Paaker stood in the presence of Katuti, who greeted him, with quiet dignity and self-possession.

Not a feature of her finely-cut face betrayed her inward agitation, and after the Mohar had greeted her she said with rather patronizing

friendliness:

"I thought that you would come. Take a seat. Your heart is like your father's; now that you are friends with us again it is not by halves."

Paaker had come to offer his aunt the sum which was necessary for the redemption of her husband's mummy. He had doubted for a long time whether he should not leave this to his mother, but reserve partly and partly vanity had kept him from doing so. He liked to display his wealth, and Katuti should learn what he could do, what a son-in-law she had rejected.

He would have preferred to send the gold, which he had resolved to give away, by the hand of one of his slaves, like a tributary prince. But that could not be done so he put on his finger a ring set with a valuable stone, which king Seti I., had given to his father, and added various clasps and bracelets to his dress.

When, before leaving the house, he looked at himself in a mirror, he said to himself with some satisfaction, that he, as he stood, was worth as much as the whole of Mena's estates.

Since his conversation with Nemu, and the dwarf's interpretation of his dream, the path which he must tread to reach his aim had been plain before him. Nefert's mother must be won with the gold which would save her from disgrace, and Mena must be sent to the other world. He relied chiefly on his own reckless obstinacy—which he liked to call firm determination—Nemu's cunning, and the love-philter.

He now approached Katuti with the certainty of success, like a merchant who means to acquire some costly object, and feels that he is rich enough to pay for it. But his aunt's proud and dignified manner confounded him.

He had pictured her quite otherwise, spirit-broken, and suppliant; and he had expected, and hoped to earn, Nefert's thanks as well as her mother's by his generosity. Mena's pretty wife was however absent, and Katuti did not send for her even after he had enquired after her health.

The widow made no advances, and some time passed in indifferent conversation, till Paaker abruptly informed her that he had heard of her son's reckless conduct, and had decided, as being his mother's nearest relation, to preserve her from the degradation that threatened her. For the sake of his bluntness, which she took for honesty, Katuti forgave the magnificence of his dress, which under the circumstances certainly seemed ill-chosen; she thanked him with dignity, but warmly, more for the sake of her children than for her own; for life she said was opening before them, while for her it was drawing to its close.

"You are still at a good time of life," said Paaker.

"Perhaps at the best," replied the widow, "at any rate from my point of view; regarding life as I do as a charge, a heavy responsibility."

"The administration of this involved estate must give you many, anxious hours—that I understand." Katuti nodded, and then said sadly:

"I could bear it all, if I were not condemned to see my poor child being brought to misery without being able to help her or advise her. You once would willingly have married her, and I ask you, was there a maiden in Thebes—nay in all Egypt—to compare with her for beauty? Was she not worthy to be loved, and is she not so still? Does she deserve that her husband should leave her to starve, neglect her, and take a strange woman into his tent as if he had repudiated her? I see what you feel about it! You throw all the blame on me. Your heart says: 'Why did she break off our betrothal,' and your right feeling tells you that you would have given her a happier lot."

With these words Katuti took her nephew's hand, and went on with increasing warmth.

"We know you to-day for the most magnanimous man in Thebes, for you have requited injustice with an immense benefaction; but even as a boy you were kind and noble. Your father's wish has always been dear and sacred to me, for during his lifetime he always behaved to us as an affectionate brother, and I would sooner have sown the seeds of sorrow for myself than for your mother, my beloved sister. I brought up my child—I guarded her jealously—for the young hero who was absent, proving his valor in Syria—for you and for you only. Then your father died, my sole stay and protector."

"I know it all!" interrupted Paaker looking gloomily at the floor.

"Who should have told you?" said the widow. "For your mother, when that had happened which seemed incredible, forbid us her house, and shut her ears. The king himself urged Mena's suit, for he loves him as his own son, and when I represented your prior claim he commanded;—and who may resist the commands of the sovereign of two worlds, the Son of Ra? Kings have short memories; how often did your father hazard his life for him, how many wounds had he received in his service. For your father's sake he might have spared you such an affront, and such pain."

"And have I myself served him, or not?" asked the pioneer flushing darkly.

"He knows you less," returned Katuti apologetically. Then she changed her tone to one of sympathy, and went on:

"How was it that you, young as you were, aroused his dissatisfaction, his dislike, nay his—"

"His what?" asked the pioneer, trembling with excitement.

"Let that pass!" said the widow soothingly. "The favor and disfavor of kings are as those of the Gods. Men rejoice in the one or bow to the other."

"What feeling have I aroused in Rameses besides dissatisfaction, and dislike? I insist on knowing!" said Paaker with increasing vehemence.

"You alarm me," the widow declared. "And in speaking ill of you, his only motive was to raise his favorite in Nefert's estimation."

"Tell me what he said!" cried the pioneer; cold drops stood on his brown forehead, and his glaring eyes showed the white eye-balls.

Katuti quailed before him, and drew back, but he followed her, seized her arm, and said huskily:

"What did he say?"

"Paaker!" cried the widow in pain and indignation. "Let me go. It is better for you that I should not repeat the words with which Rameses sought to turn Nefert's heart from you. Let me go, and remember to whom you are speaking."

But Paaker gripped her elbow the tighter, and urgently repeated his question.

"Shame upon you!" cried Katuti, "you are hurting me; let me go! You will not till you have heard what he said? Have your own way then, but the words are forced from me! He said that if he did not know your mother Setchem for an honest woman, he never would have believed you were your father's son—for you were no more like him than an owl to an eagle."

Paaker took his hand from Katuti's arm. "And so—and so—" he muttered with pale lips.

"Nefert took your part, and I too, but in vain. Do not take the words too hardly. Your father was a man without an equal, and Rameses cannot forget that we are related to the old royal house. His grandfather, his father, and himself are usurpers, and there is one now living who has a better right to the throne than he has."

"The Regent Ani!" exclaimed Paaker decisively. Katuti nodded, she went up to the pioneer and said in a whisper:

"I put myself in your hands, though I know they may be raised against me. But you are my natural ally, for that same act of Rameses that disgraced

and injured you, made me a partner in the designs of Ani. The king robbed you of your bride, me of my daughter. He filled your soul with hatred for your arrogant rival, and mine with passionate regret for the lost happiness of my child. I feel the blood of Hatasu in my veins, and my spirit is high enough to govern men. It was I who roused the sleeping ambition of the Regent—I who directed his gaze to the throne to which he was destined by the Gods. The ministers of the Gods, the priests, are favorably disposed to us; we have—”

At this moment there was a commotion in the garden, and a breathless slave rushed in exclaiming ”The Regent is at the gate!”

Paaker stood in stupid perplexity, but he collected himself with an effort and would have gone, but Katuti detained him.

”I will go forward to meet Ani,” she said. ”He will be rejoiced to see you, for he esteems you highly and was a friend of your father’s.”

As soon as Katuti had left the hall, the dwarf Nemu crept out of his hiding-place, placed himself in front of Paaker, and asked boldly:

”Well? Did I give thee good advice yesterday, or no?”

Put Paaker did not answer him, he pushed him aside with his foot, and walked up and down in deep thought.

Katuti met the Regent half way down the garden. He held a manuscript roll in his hand, and greeted her from afar with a friendly wave of his hand.

The widow looked at him with astonishment.

It seemed to her that he had grown taller and younger since the last time she had seen him.

”Hail to your highness!” she cried, half in joke half reverently, and she raised her hands in supplication, as if he already wore the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. ”Have the nine Gods met you? have the Hathors kissed you in your slumbers? This is a white day—a lucky day—I read it in your face!” ”That is reading a cipher!” said Ani gaily, but with dignity. ”Read this despatch.”

Katuti took the roll from his hand, read it through, and then returned it.

”The troops you equipped have conquered the allied armies of the Ethiopians,” she said gravely, ”and are bringing their prince in fetters to Thebes, with endless treasure, and ten thousand prisoners! The Gods be praised!”

"And above all things I thank the Gods that my general Scheschenk—my foster-brother and friend—is returning well and unwounded from the war. I think, Katuti, that the figures in our dreams are this day taking forms of flesh and blood!"

"They are growing to the stature of heroes!" cried the widow. "And you yourself, my lord, have been stirred by the breath of the Divinity. You walk like the worthy son of Ra, the Courage of Menth beams in your eyes, and you smile like the victorious Horus."

"Patience, patience my friend," said Ani, moderating the eagerness of the widow; "now, more than ever, we must cling to my principle of over-estimating the strength of our opponents, and underrating our own. Nothing has succeeded on which I had counted, and on the contrary many things have justified my fears that they would fail. The beginning of the end is hardly dawning on us."

"But successes, like misfortunes, never come singly," replied Katuti.

"I agree with you," said Ani. "The events of life seem to me to fall in groups. Every misfortune brings its fellow with it—like every piece of luck. Can you tell me of a second success?"

"Women win no battles," said the widow smiling. "But they win allies, and I have gained a powerful one."

"A God or an army?" asked Ani.

"Something between the two," she replied. "Paaker, the king's chief pioneer, has joined us;" and she briefly related to Ani the history of her nephew's love and hatred.

Ani listened in silence; then he said with an expression of much disquiet and anxiety:

"This man is a follower of Rameses, and must shortly return to him. Many may guess at our projects, but every additional person who knows them may be come a traitor. You are urging me, forcing me, forward too soon. A thousand well-prepared enemies are less dangerous than one untrustworthy ally—"

"Paaker is secured to us," replied Katuti positively. "Who will answer for him?" asked Ani.

"His life shall be in your hand," replied Katuti gravely. "My shrewd little dwarf Nemu knows that he has committed some secret crime, which the law punishes by death."

The Regent's countenance cleared.

That alters the matter," he said with satisfaction. "Has he committed a murder?"

"No," said Katuti, "but Nemu has sworn to reveal to you alone all that he knows. He is wholly devoted to us."

"Well and good," said Ani thoughtfully, but he too is imprudent—much too imprudent. You are like a rider, who to win a wager urges his horse to leap over spears. If he falls on the points, it is he that suffers; you let him lie there, and go on your way."

"Or are impaled at the same time as the noble horse," said Katuti gravely. "You have more to win, and at the same time more to lose than we; but the meanest clings to life; and I must tell you, Ani, that I work for you, not to win any thing through your success, but because you are as dear to me as a brother, and because I see in you the embodiment of my father's claims which have been trampled on."

Ani gave her his hand and asked:

"Did you also as my friend speak to Bent-Anat? Do I interpret your silence rightly?"

Katuti sadly shook her head; but Ani went on: "Yesterday that would have decided me to give her up; but to-day my courage has risen, and if the Hathors be my friends I may yet win her."

With these words he went in advance of the widow into the hall, where Paaker was still walking uneasily up and down.

The pioneer bowed low before the Regent, who returned the greeting with a half-haughty, half-familiar wave of the hand, and when he had seated himself in an arm-chair politely addressed Paaker as the son of a friend, and a relation of his family.

"All the world," he said, "speaks of your reckless courage. Men like you are rare; I have none such attached to me. I wish you stood nearer to me; but Rameses will not part with you, although—although—in point of fact your office has two aspects; it requires the daring of a soldier, and the dexterity of a scribe. No one denies that you have the first, but the second—the sword and the reed-pen are very different weapons, one requires supple fingers, the other a sturdy fist. The king used to complain of your reports—is he better satisfied with them now?"

"I hope so," replied the Mohar; "my brother Horus is a practised writer, and accompanies me in my journeys."

"That is well," said Ani. "If I had the management of affairs I should treble your staff, and give you four—five—six scribes under you, who should be entirely at your command, and to whom you could give the

materials for the reports to be sent out. Your office demands that you should be both brave and circumspect; these characteristics are rarely united; but there are scribes by hundreds in the temples."

"So it seems to me," said Paaker.

Ani looked down meditatively, and continued—Rameses is fond of comparing you with your father. That is unfair, for he—who is now with the justified—was without an equal; at once the bravest of heroes and the most skilful of scribes. You are judged unjustly; and it grieves me all the more that you belong, through your mother, to my poor but royal house. We will see whether I cannot succeed in putting you in the right place. For the present you are required in Syria almost as soon as you have got home. You have shown that you are a man who does not fear death, and who can render good service, and you might now enjoy your wealth in peace with your wife."

"I am alone," said Paaker.

"Then, if you come home again, let Katuti seek you out the prettiest wife in Egypt," said the Regent smiling. "She sees herself every day in her mirror, and must be a connoisseur in the charms of women."

Ani rose with these words, bowed to Paaker with studied friendliness, gave his hand to Katuti, and said as he left the hall:

"Send me to-day the—the handkerchief—by the dwarf Nemu."

When he was already in the garden, he turned once more and said to Paaker

"Some friends are supping with me to-day; pray let me see you too."

The pioneer bowed; he dimly perceived that he was entangled in invisible toils. Up to the present moment he had been proud of his devotion to his calling, of his duties as Mohar; and now he had discovered that the king, whose chain of honor hung round his neck, undervalued him, and perhaps only suffered him to fill his arduous and dangerous post for the sake of his father, while he, notwithstanding the temptations offered him in Thebes by his wealth, had accepted it willingly and disinterestedly. He knew that his skill with the pen was small, but that was no reason why he should be despised; often had he wished that he could reconstitute his office exactly as Ani had suggested, but his petition to be allowed a secretary had been rejected by Rameses. What he spied out, he was told was to be kept secret, and no one could be responsible for the secrecy of another.

As his brother Horus grew up, he had followed him as his obedient assistant, even after he had married a wife, who, with her child, remained in Thebes under the care of Setchem.

He was now filling Paaker's place in Syria during his absence; badly enough, as the pioneer thought, and yet not without credit; for the fellow knew how to write smooth words with a graceful pen.

Paaker, accustomed to solitude, became absorbed in thought, forgetting everything that surrounded him; even the widow herself, who had sunk on to a couch, and was observing him in silence.

He gazed into vacancy, while a crowd of sensations rushed confusedly through his brain. He thought himself cruelly ill-used, and he felt too that it was incumbent on him to become the instrument of a terrible fate to some other person. All was dim and chaotic in his mind, his love merged in his hatred; only one thing was clear and unclouded by doubt, and that was his strong conviction that Nefert would be his.

The Gods indeed were in deep disgrace with him. How much he had expended upon them—and with what a grudging hand they had rewarded him; he knew of but one indemnification for his wasted life, and in that he believed so firmly that he counted on it as if it were capital which he had invested in sound securities. But at this moment his resentful feelings embittered the sweet dream of hope, and he strove in vain for calmness and clear-sightedness; when such cross-roads as these met, no amulet, no divining rod could guide him; here he must think for himself, and beat his own road before he could walk in it; and yet he could think out no plan, and arrive at no decision.

He grasped his burning forehead in his hands, and started from his brooding reverie, to remember where he was, to recall his conversation with the mother of the woman he loved, and her saying that she was capable of guiding men.

"She perhaps may be able to think for me," he muttered to himself. "Action suits me better."

He slowly went up to her and said:

"So it is settled then—we are confederates."

"Against Rameses, and for Ani," she replied, giving him her slender hand.

"In a few days I start for Syria, meanwhile you can make up your mind what commissions you have to give me. The money for your son shall be conveyed to you to-day before sunset. May I not pay my respects to Nefert?"

"Not now, she is praying in the temple."

"But to-morrow?"

"Willingly, my dear friend. She will be delighted to see you, and to thank you."

"Farewell, Katuti."

"Call me mother," said the widow, and she waved her veil to him as a last farewell.

CHAPTER XIX.

As soon as Paaker had disappeared behind the shrubs, Katuti struck a little sheet of metal, a slave appeared, and Katuti asked her whether Nefert had returned from the temple.

"Her litter is just now at the side gate," was the answer.

"I await her here," said the widow. The slave went away, and a few minutes later Nefert entered the hall.

"You want me?" she said; and after kissing her mother she sank upon her couch. "I am tired," she exclaimed, "Nemu, take a fan and keep the flies off me."

The dwarf sat down on a cushion by her couch, and began to wave the semi-circular fan of ostrich-feathers; but Katuti put him aside and said:

"You can leave us for the present; we want to speak to each other in private."

The dwarf shrugged his shoulders and got up, but Nefert looked at her mother with an irresistible appeal.

"Let him stay," she said, as pathetically as if her whole happiness depended upon it. "The flies torment me so, and Nemu always holds his tongue."

She patted the dwarf's big head as if he were a lap-dog, and called the white cat, which with a graceful leap sprang on to her shoulder and stood there with its back arched, to be stroked by her slender fingers.

Nemu looked enquiringly at his mistress, but Katuti turned to her daughter, and said in a warning voice:

"I have very serious things to discuss with you."

"Indeed?" said her daughter, "but I cannot be stung by the flies all the

same. Of course, if you wish it—”

”Nemu may stay then,” said Katuti, and her voice had the tone of that of a nurse who gives way to a naughty child. ”Besides, he knows what I have to talk about.”

”There now!” said Nefert, kissing the head of the white cat, and she gave the fan back to the dwarf.

The widow looked at her daughter with sincere compassion, she went up to her and looked for the thousandth time in admiration at her pretty face.

”Poor child,” she sighed, ”how willingly I would spare you the frightful news which sooner or later you must hear—must bear. Leave off your foolish play with the cat, I have things of the most hideous gravity to tell you.”

”Speak on,” replied Nefert. ”To-day I cannot fear the worst. Mena’s star, the haruspex told me, stands under the sign of happiness, and I enquired of the oracle in the temple of Besa, and heard that my husband is prospering. I have prayed in the temple till I am quite content. Only speak!—I know my brother’s letter from the camp had no good news in it; the evening before last I saw you had been crying, and yesterday you did not look well; even the pomegranate flowers in your hair did not suit you.”

”Your brother,” sighed Katuti, ”has occasioned me great trouble, and we might through him have suffered deep dishonor—”

”We-dishonor?” exclaimed Nefert, and she nervously clutched at the cat.

”Your brother lost enormous sums at play; to recover them he pledged the mummy of your father—”

”Horrible!” cried Nefert. ”We must appeal at once to the king;—I will write to him myself; for Mena’s sake he will hear me. Rameses is great and noble, and will not let a house that is faithfully devoted to him fall into disgrace through the reckless folly of a boy. Certainly I will write to him.”

She said this in a voice of most childlike confidence, and desired Nemu to wave the fan more gently, as if this concern were settled.

In Katuti’s heart surprise and indignation at the unnatural indifference of her daughter were struggling together; but she withheld all blame, and said carelessly:

”We are already released, for my nephew Paaker, as soon as he heard what threatened us, offered me his help; freely and unprompted, from pure

goodness of heart and attachment.”

”How good of Paaker!” cried Nefert. ”He was so fond of me, and you know, mother, I always stood up for him. No doubt it was for my sake that he behaved so generously!”

The young wife laughed, and pulling the cat’s face close to her own, held her nose to its cool little nose, stared into its green eyes, and said, imitating childish talk:

”There now, pussy—how kind people are to your little mistress.”

Katuti was vexed daughter’s childish impulses.

”It seems to me,” she said, ”that you might leave off playing and trifling when I am talking of such serious matters. I have long since observed that the fate of the house to which your father and mother belong is a matter of perfect indifference to you; and yet you would have to seek shelter and protection under its roof if your husband—”

”Well, mother?” asked Nefert breathing more quickly.

As soon as Katuti perceived her daughter’s agitation she regretted that she had not more gently led up to the news she had to break to her; for she loved her daughter, and knew that it would give her keen pain.

So she went on more sympathetically:

”You boasted in joke that people are good to you, and it is true; you win hearts by your mere being—by only being what you are. And Mena too loved you tenderly; but ’absence,’ says the proverb, ’is the one real enemy,’ and Mena—”

”What has Mena done?” Once more Nefert interrupted her mother, and her nostrils quivered.

”Mena,” said Katuti, decidedly, ”has violated the truth and esteem which he owes you—he has trodden them under foot, and—”

”Mena?” exclaimed the young wife with flashing eyes; she flung the cat on the floor, and sprang from her couch.

”Yes—Mena,” said Katuti firmly. ”Your brother writes that he would have neither silver nor gold for his spoil, but took the fair daughter of the prince of the Danaids into his tent. The ignoble wretch!”

”Ignoble wretch!” cried Nefert, and two or three times she repeated her mother’s last words. Katuti drew back in horror, for her gentle, docile, childlike daughter stood before her absolutely transfigured beyond all

recognition.

She looked like a beautiful demon of revenge; her eyes sparkled, her breath came quickly, her limbs quivered, and with extraordinary strength and rapidity she seized the dwarf by the hand, led him to the door of one of the rooms which opened out of the hall, threw it open, pushed the little man over the threshold, and closed it sharply upon him; then with white lips she came up to her mother.

"An ignoble wretch did you call him?" she cried out with a hoarse husky voice, "an ignoble wretch! Take back your words, mother, take back your words, or—"

Katuti turned paler and paler, and said soothingly:

"The words may sound hard, but he has broken faith with you, and openly dishonored you."

"And shall I believe it?" said Nefert with a scornful laugh. "Shall I believe it, because a scoundrel has written it, who has pawned his father's body and the honor of big family; because it is told you by that noble and brave gentleman! why a box on the ears from Mena would be the death of him. Look at me, mother, here are my eyes, and if that table there were Mena's tent, and you were Mena, and you took the fairest woman living by the hand and led her into it, and these eyes saw it—aye, over and over again—I would laugh at it—as I laugh at it now; and I should say, 'Who knows what he may have to give her, or to say to her,' and not for one instant would I doubt his truth; for your son is false and Mena is true. Osiris broke faith with Isis—but Mena may be favored by a hundred women—he will take none to his tent but me!"

"Keep your belief," said Katuti bitterly, "but leave me mine."

"Yours?" said Nefert, and her flushed cheeks turned pale again. "What do you believe? You listen to the worst and basest things that can be said of a man who has overloaded you with benefits! A wretch, bah! an ignoble wretch? Is that what you call a man who lets you dispose of his estate as you please!"

"Nefert," cried Katuti angrily, "I will—"

"Do what you will," interrupted her indignant daughter, "but do not vilify the generous man who has never hindered you from throwing away his property on your son's debts and your own ambition. Since the day before yesterday I have learned that we are not rich; and I have reflected, and I have asked myself what has become of our corn and our cattle, of our sheep and the rents from the farmers. The wretch's estate was not so contemptible; but I tell you plainly I should be unworthy to be the wife of the noble Mena if I allowed any one to vilify his name under his own roof. Hold to your belief, by all means, but one of us must quit this

house—you or I.”

At these words Nefert broke into passionate sobs, threw herself on her knees by her couch, hid her face in the cushions, and wept convulsively and without intermission.

Katuti stood behind her, startled, trembling, and not knowing what to say. Was this her gentle, dreamy daughter? Had ever a daughter dared to speak thus to her mother? But was she right or was Nefert? This question was the pressing one; she knelt down by the side of the young wife, put her arm round her, drew her head against her bosom, and whispered pitifully:

”You cruel, hard-hearted child; forgive your poor, miserable mother, and do not make the measure of her wretchedness overflow.”

Then Nefert rose, kissed her mother’s hand, and went silently into her own room.

Katuti remained alone; she felt as if a dead hand held her heart in its icy grasp, and she muttered to herself:

”Ani is right—nothing turns to good excepting that from which we expect the worst.”

She held her hand to her head, as if she had heard something too strange to be believed. Her heart went after her daughter, but instead of sympathizing with her she collected all her courage, and deliberately recalled all the reproaches that Nefert had heaped upon her. She did not spare herself a single word, and finally she murmured to herself: ”She can spoil every thing. For Mena’s sake she will sacrifice me and the whole world; Mena and Rameses are one, and if she discovers what we are plotting she will betray us without a moment’s hesitation. Hitherto all has gone on without her seeing it, but to-day something has been unsealed in her—an eye, a tongue, an ear, which have hitherto been closed. She is like a deaf and dumb person, who by a sudden fright is restored to speech and hearing. My favorite child will become the spy of my actions, and my judge.”

She gave no utterance to the last words, but she seemed to hear them with her inmost ear; the voice that could speak to her thus, startled and frightened her, and solitude was in itself a torture; she called the dwarf, and desired him to have her litter prepared, as she intended going to the temple, and visiting the wounded who had been sent home from Syria.

”And the handkerchief for the Regent?” asked the little man.

”It was a pretext,” said Katuti. ”He wishes to speak to you about the matter which you know of with regard to Paaker. What is it?”

"Do not ask," replied Nemu, "I ought not to betray it. By Besa, who protects us dwarfs, it is better that thou shouldst never know it."

"For to-day I have learned enough that is new to me," retorted Katuti. "Now go to Ani, and if you are able to throw Paaker entirely into his power—good—I will give—but what have I to give away? I will be grateful to you; and when we have gained our end I will set you free and make you rich."

Nemu kissed her robe, and said in a low voice: "What is the end?"

"You know what Ani is striving for," answered the widow. "And I have but one wish!"

"And that is?"

"To see Paaker in Mena's place."

"Then our wishes are the same," said the dwarf and he left the Hall.

Katuti looked after him and muttered:

"It must be so. For if every thing remains as it was and Mena comes home and demands a reckoning—it is not to be thought of! It must not be!"