

Uarda, Volume 9.

Georg Ebers

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UARDA

Volume 9.

By Georg Ebers

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Once or twice Pentaur and his companions had had to defend themselves against hostile mountaineers, who rushed suddenly upon them out of the woods. When they were about two days' journey still from the end of their march, they had a bloody skirmish with a roving band of men that seemed to belong to a larger detachment of troops.

The nearer they got to Kadesh, the more familiar Kaschta showed himself with every stock and stone, and he went forward to obtain information; he returned somewhat anxious, for he had perceived the main body of the Cheta army on the road which they must cross. How came the enemy here in the rear of the Egyptian army? Could Rameses have sustained a defeat?

Only the day before they had met some Egyptian soldiers, who had told them that the king was staying in the camp, and a great battle was impending. This however could not have by this time been decided, and they had met no flying Egyptians.

"If we can only get two miles farther without having to fight," said Uarda's father. "I know what to do. Down below, there is a ravine, and from it a path leads over hill and vale to the plain of Kadesh. No one ever knew it but the Mohar and his most confidential servants. About half-way there is a hidden cave, in which we have often stayed the whole day long. The Cheta used to believe that the Mohar possessed magic powers, and could make himself invisible, for when they lay in wait for us on the way we used suddenly to vanish; but certainly not into the clouds, only into the cave, which the Mohar used to call his Tuat. If you are not afraid of a climb, and will lead your horse behind you for a mile or two, I can show you the way, and to-morrow evening we will be at the camp."

Pentaur let his guide lead the way; they came, without having occasion to fight, as far as the gorge between the hills, through which a full and foaming mountain torrent rushed to the valley. Kaschta dropped from his horse, and the others did the same. After the horses had passed through the water, he carefully effaced their tracks as far as the road, then for about half a mile he ascended the valley against the stream. At last he stopped in front of a thick oleander-bush, looked carefully about, and lightly pushed it aside; when he had found an entrance, his companions and their weary scrambling beasts followed him without difficulty, and

they presently found themselves in a grove of lofty cedars. Now they had to squeeze themselves between masses of rock, now they labored up and down over smooth pebbles, which offered scarcely any footing to the horses' hoofs; now they had to push their way through thick brushwood, and now to cross little brooks swelled by the winter-rains.

The road became more difficult at every step, then it began to grow dark, and heavy drops of rain fell from the clouded sky.

"Make haste, and keep close to me," cried Kaschta. "Half an hour more, and we shall be under shelter, if I do not lose my way."

Then a horse broke down, and with great difficulty was got up again; the rain fell with increased violence, the night grew darker, and the soldier often found himself brought to a stand-still, feeling for the path with his hands; twice he thought he had lost it, but he would not give in till he had recovered the track. At last he stood still, and called Pentaur to come to him.

"Hereabouts," said he, "the cave must be; keep close to me--it is possible that we may come upon some of the pioneer's people. Provisions and fuel were always kept here in his father's time. Can you see me? Hold on to my girdle, and bend your head low till I tell you you may stand upright again. Keep your axe ready, we may find some of the Cheta or bandits roosting there. You people must wait, we will soon call you to come under shelter."

Pentaur closely followed his guide, pushing his way through the dripping brushwood, crawling through a low passage in the rock, and at last emerging on a small rocky plateau.

"Take care where you are going!" cried Kaschta. "Keep to the left, to the right there is a deep abyss. I smell smoke! Keep your hand on your axe, there must be some one in the cave. Wait! I will fetch the men as far as this."

The soldier went back, and Pentaur listened for any sounds that might come from the same direction as the smoke. He fancied he could perceive a small gleam of light, and he certainly heard quite plainly, first a tone of complaint, then an angry voice; he went towards the light, feeling his way by the wall on his left; the light shone broader and brighter, and seemed to issue from a crack in a door.

By this time the soldier had rejoined Pentaur, and both listened for a few minutes; then the poet whispered to his guide:

"They are speaking Egyptian, I caught a few words."

"All the better," said Kaschta. "Paaker or some of his people are in there; the door is there still, and shut. If we give four hard and three gentle knocks, it will be opened. Can you understand what they are saying?"

"Some one is begging to be set free," replied Pentaur, "and speaks of some traitor. The other has a rough voice, and says he must follow his master's orders. Now the one who spoke before is crying; do you hear? He is entreating him by the soul of his father to take his fetters off. How despairing his voice is! Knock, Kaschta--it strikes me we are come at the right moment--knock, I say."

The soldier knocked first four times, then three times. A shriek rang through the cave, and they could hear a heavy, rusty bolt drawn back, the roughly hewn door was opened, and a hoarse voice asked:

"Is that Paaker?"

"No," answered the soldier, "I am Kaschta. Do not you know me again, Nubi?"

The man thus addressed, who was Paaker's Ethiopian slave, drew back in surprise.

"Are you still alive?" he exclaimed. "What brings you here?"

"My lord here will tell you," answered Kaschta as he made way for Pentaur to enter the cave. The poet went up to the black man, and the light of the fire which burned in the cave fell full on his face.

The old slave stared at him, and drew back in astonishment and terror. He threw himself on the earth, howled like a dog that fawns at the feet of his angry master, and cried out:

"He ordered it--Spirit of my master! he ordered it." Pentaur stood still, astounded and incapable of speech, till he perceived a young man, who crept up to him on his hands and feet, which were bound with thongs, and who cried to him in a tone, in which terror was mingled with a tenderness which touched Pentaur's very soul.

"Save me--Spirit of the Mohar! save me, father!" Then the poet spoke.

"I am no spirit of the dead," said he. "I am the priest Pentaur; and I know you, boy; you are Horus, Paaker's brother, who was brought up with me in the temple of Seti."

The prisoner approached him trembling, looked at him enquiringly and exclaimed:

"Be you who you may, you are exactly like my father in person and in voice. Loosen my bonds, and listen to me, for the most hideous, atrocious, and accursed treachery threatens us the king and all."

Pentaur drew his sword, and cut the leather thongs which bound the young man's hands and feet. He stretched his released limbs, uttering thanks to the Gods, then he cried:

"If you love Egypt and the king follow me; perhaps there is yet time to hinder the hideous deed, and to frustrate this treachery."

"The night is dark," said Kaschita, "and the road to the valley is dangerous."

"You must follow me if it is to your death!" cried the youth, and, seizing Pentaur's hand, he dragged him with him out of the cave.

As soon as the black slave had satisfied himself that Pentaur was the priest whom he had seen fighting in front of the paraschites' hovel, and not the ghost of his dead master, he endeavored to slip past Paaker's brother, but Horus observed the manoeuvre, and seized him by his woolly

hair. The slave cried out loudly, and whimpered out:

"If thou dost escape, Paaker will kill me; he swore he would."

"Wait!" said the youth. He dragged the slave back, flung him into the cave, and blocked up the door with a huge log which lay near it for that purpose.

When the three men had crept back through the low passage in the rocks, and found themselves once more in the open air, they found a high wind was blowing.

"The storm will soon be over," said Horus. "See how the clouds are driving! Let us have horses, Pentaur, for there is not a minute to be lost."

The poet ordered Kaschta to summon the people to start but the soldier advised differently.

"Men and horses are exhausted," he said, "and we shall get on very slowly in the dark. Let the beasts feed for an hour, and the men get rested and warm; by that time the moon will be up, and we shall make up for the delay by having fresh horses, and light enough to see the road."

"The man is right," said Horus; and he led Kaschta to a cave in the rocks, where barley and dates for the horses, and a few jars of wine, had been preserved. They soon had lighted a fire, and while some of the men took care of the horses, and others cooked a warm mess of victuals, Horus and Pentaur walked up and down impatiently.

"Had you been long bound in those thongs when we came?" asked Pentaur.

"Yesterday my brother fell upon me," replied Horus. "He is by this time a long way ahead of us, and if he joins the Cheta, and we do not reach the Egyptian camp before daybreak, all is lost."

"Paaker, then, is plotting treason?"

"Treason, the foulest, blackest treason!" exclaimed the young man. "Oh, my lost father!--"

"Confide in me," said Pentaur going up to the unhappy youth who had hidden his face in his hands. "What is Paaker plotting? How is it that your brother is your enemy?"

"He is the elder of us two," said Horus with a trembling voice. "When my father died I had only a short time before left the school of Seti, and with his last words my father enjoined me to respect Paaker as the head of our family. He is domineering and violent, and will allow no one's will to cross his; but I bore everything, and always obeyed him, often against my better judgment. I remained with him two years, then I went to Thebes, and there I married, and my wife and child are now living there with my mother. About sixteen months afterwards I came back to Syria, and we travelled through the country together; but by this time I did not choose to be the mere tool of my brother's will, for I had grown prouder, and it seemed to me that the father of my child ought not to be subservient, even to his own brother. We often quarrelled, and had a bad time together, and life became quite unendurable, when--about eight weeks since--Paaker came back from Thebes, and the king gave him to understand

that he approved more of my reports than of his. From my childhood I have always been softhearted and patient; every one says I am like my mother; but what Paaker made me suffer by words and deeds, that is--I could not--" His voice broke, and Pentaur felt how cruelly he had suffered; then he went on again:

"What happened to my brother in Egypt, I do not know, for he is very reserved, and asks for no sympathy, either in joy or in sorrow; but from words he has dropped now and then I gather that he not only bitterly hates Mena, the charioteer--who certainly did him an injury--but has some grudge against the king too. I spoke to him of it at once, but only once, for his rage is unbounded when he is provoked, and after all he is my elder brother.

"For some days they have been preparing in the camp for a decisive battle, and it was our duty to ascertain the position and strength of the enemy; the king gave me, and not Paaker, the commission to prepare the report. Early yesterday morning I drew it out and wrote it; then my brother said he would carry it to the camp, and I was to wait here. I positively refused, as Rameses had required the report at my hands, and not at his. Well, he raved like a madman, declared that I had taken advantage of his absence to insinuate myself into the king's favor, and commanded me to obey him as the head of the house, in the name of my father.

"I was sitting irresolute, when he went out of the cavern to call his horses; then my eyes fell on the things which the old black slave was tying together to load on a pack-horse--among them was a roll of writing. I fancied it was my own, and took it up to look at it, when--what should I find? At the risk of my life I had gone among the Cheta, and had found that the main body of their army is collected in a cross-valley of the Orontes, quite hidden in the mountains to the north-east of Kadesh; and in the roll it was stated, in Paaker's own hand-writing, that that valley is clear, and the way through it open, and well suited for the passage of the Egyptian war-chariots; various other false details were given, and when I looked further among his things, I found between the arrows in his quiver, on which he had written 'death to Mena,' another little roll of writing. I tore it open, and my blood ran cold when I saw to whom it was addressed."

"To the king of the Cheta?" cried Pentaur in excitement.

"To his chief officer, Titure," continued Horus. "I was holding both the rolls in my hand, when Paaker came back into the cave. 'Traitor!' I cried out to him; but he flung the lasso, with which he had been catching the stray horses, threw it round my neck, and as I fell choking on the ground, he and the black man, who obeys him like a dog, bound me hand and foot; he left the old negro to keep guard over me, took the rolls and rode away. Look, there are the stars, and the moon will soon be up."

"Make haste, men!" cried Pentaur. "The three best horses for me, Horus, and Kaschta; the rest remain here."

As the red-bearded soldier led the horses forward, the moon shone forth, and within an hour the travellers had reached the plain; they sprang on to the beasts and rode madly on towards the lake, which, when the sun rose, gleamed before them in silvery green. As they drew near to it they could discern, on its treeless western shore, black masses moving hither and thither; clouds of dust rose up from the plain, pierced by flashes of

light, like the rays of the sun reflected from a moving mirror.

"The battle is begun!" cried Horus; and he fell sobbing on his horse's neck.

"But all is not lost yet!" exclaimed the poet, spurring his horse to a final effort of strength. His companions did the same, but first Kaschta's horse fell under him, then Horus's broke down.

"Help may be given by the left wing!" cried Horus. "I will run as fast as I can on foot, I know where to find them. You will easily find the king if you follow the stream to the stone bridge. In the cross-valley about a thousand paces farther north--to the northwest of our stronghold--the surprise is to be effected. Try to get through, and warn Rameses; the Egyptian pass-word is 'Bent-Anat,' the name of the king's favorite daughter. But even if you had wings, and could fly straight to him, they would overpower him if I cannot succeed in turning the left wing on the rear of the enemy."

Pentaur galloped onwards; but it was not long before his horse too gave way, and he ran forward like a man who runs a race, and shouted the pass-word "Bent-Anat"--for the ring of her name seemed to give him vigor. Presently he came upon a mounted messenger of the enemy; he struck him down from his horse, flung himself into the saddle, and rushed on towards the camp; as if he were riding to his wedding.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

During the night which had proved so eventful to our friends, much had occurred in the king's camp, for the troops were to advance to the long-anticipated battle before sunrise.

Paaker had given his false report of the enemy's movements to the Pharaoh with his own hand; a council of war had been held, and each division had received instructions as to where it was to take up its position. The corps, which bore the name of the Sungod Ra, advanced from the south towards Schabatun,

[Kadesh was the chief city of the Cheta, i. e. Aramaans, round which the united forces of all the peoples of western Asia had collected. There were several cities called Kadesh. That which frequently checked the forces of Thotmes III. may have been situated farther to the south; but the Cheta city of Kadesh, where Rameses II. fought so hard a battle, was undoubtedly on the Orontes, for the river which is depicted on the pylon of the Ramesseum as parting into two streams which wash the walls of the fortress, is called Aruntha, and in the Epos of Pentaur it is stated that this battle took place at Kadesh by the Orontes. The name of the city survives, at a spot just three miles north of the lake of Riblah. The battle itself I have described from the Epos of Pentaur, the national epic of Egypt. It ends with these words: "This was written and made by the scribe Pentaur." It was so highly esteemed that it is engraved in stone twice at Luqsor, and once at Karnak. Copies of it on papyrus are frequent; for instance, papyrus Sallier III. and papyrus Raifet--unfortunately much injured--in the Louvre. The principal incident, the rescue of the king from the

enemy, is repeated at the Ramessetun at Thebes, and at Abu Simbel. It was translated into French by Vicomte E. de Rouge. The camp of Rameses is depicted on the pylons of Luq̄sor and the Ramesseum.]

so as to surround the lake on the east, and fall on the enemy's flank; the corps of Seth, composed of men from lower Egypt, was sent on to Arnam to form the centre; the king himself, with the flower of the chariot-guard, proposed to follow the road through the valley, which Paaker's report represented as a safe and open passage to the plain of the Orontes. Thus, while the other divisions occupied the enemy, he could cross the Orontes by a ford, and fall on the rear of the fortress of Kadesh from the north-west. The corps of Amon, with the Ethiopian mercenaries, were to support him, joining him by another route, which the pioneer's false indications represented as connecting the line of operations. The corps of Ptah remained as a reserve behind the left wing.

The soldiers had not gone to rest as usual; heavily, armed troops, who bore in one hand a shield of half a man's height, and in the other a scimitar, or a short, pointed sword, guarded the camp,

[Representations of Rameses' camp are preserved on the pylons of the temple of Luxor and the Ramesseum.]

where numerous fires burned, round which crowded the resting warriors. Here a wine-skin was passed from hand to hand, there a joint was roasting on a wooden spit; farther on a party were throwing dice for the booty they had won, or playing at morra. All was in eager activity, and many a scuffle occurred among the excited soldiers, and had to be settled by the camp-watch.

Near the enclosed plots, where the horses were tethered, the smiths were busily engaged in shoeing the beasts which needed it, and in sharpening the points of the lances; the servants of the chariot-guard were also fully occupied, as the chariots had for the most part been brought over the mountains in detached pieces on the backs of pack-horses and asses, and now had to be put together again, and to have their wheels greased. On the eastern side of the camp stood a canopy, under which the standards were kept, and there numbers of priests were occupied in their office of blessing the warriors, offering sacrifices, and singing hymns and litanies. But these pious sounds were frequently overpowered by the loud voices of the gamblers and revellers, by the blows of the hammers, the hoarse braying of the asses, and the neighing of the horses. From time to time also the deep roar of the king's war-lions

[See Diodorus, 1. 47. Also the pictures of the king rushing to the fight.]

might be heard; these beasts followed him into the fight, and were now howling for food, as they had been kept fasting to excite their fury.

In the midst of the camp stood the king's tent, surrounded by foot and chariot-guards. The auxiliary troops were encamped in divisions according to their nationality, and between them the Egyptian legions of heavy-armed soldiers and archers. Here might be seen the black Ethiopian with woolly matted hair, in which a few feathers were stuck--the handsome, well proportioned "Son of the desert" from the sandy Arabian shore of the Red Sea, who performed his wild war-dance flourishing his lance, with a peculiar wriggle of his--hips pale Sardinians, with metal helmets and

heavy swords--light colored Libyans, with tattooed arms and ostrich-feathers on their heads--brown, bearded Arabs, worshippers of the stars, inseparable from their horses, and armed, some with lances, and some with bows and arrows. And not less various than their aspect were the tongues of the allied troops--but all obedient to the king's word of command.

In the midst of the royal tents was a lightly constructed temple with the statues of the Gods of Thebes, and of the king's forefathers; clouds of incense rose in front of it, for the priests were engaged from the eve of the battle until it was over, in prayers, and offerings to Amon, the king of the Gods, to Necheb, the Goddess of victory, and to Mentu, the God of war.

The keeper of the lions stood by the Pharaoh's sleeping-tent, and the tent, which served as a council chamber, was distinguished by the standards in front of it; but the council-tent was empty and still, while in the kitchen-tent, as well as in the wine-store close by, all was in a bustle. The large pavilion, in which Rameses and his suite were taking their evening meal, was more brilliantly lighted than all the others; it was a covered tent, a long square in shape, and all round it were colored lamps, which made it as light as day; a body-guard of Sardinians, Libyans, and Egyptians guarded it with drawn swords, and seemed too wholly absorbed with the importance of their office even to notice the dishes and wine-jars, which the king's pages--the sons of the highest families in Egypt--took at the tent-door from the cooks and butlers.

The walls and slanting roof of this quickly-built and movable banqueting-hall, consisted of a strong, impenetrable carpet-stuff, woven at Thebes, and afterwards dyed purple at Tanis by the Phoenicians. Saitic artists had embroidered the vulture, one of the forms in which Necheb appears, a hundred times on the costly material with threads of silver. The cedar-wood pillars of the tent were covered with gold, and the ropes, which secured the light erection to the tent-pegs, were twisted of silk, and thin threads of silver. Seated round four tables, more than a hundred men were taking their evening meal; at three of them the generals of the army, the chief priests, and councillors, sat on light stools; at the fourth, and at some distance from the others, were the princes of the blood; and the king himself sat apart at a high table, on a throne supported by gilt figures of Asiatic prisoners in chains. His table and throne stood on a low dais covered with panther-skin; but even without that Rameses would have towered above his companions. His form was powerful, and there was a commanding aspect in his bearded face, and in the high brow, crowned with a golden diadem adorned with the heads of two Uraeus-snakes, wearing the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt. A broad collar of precious stones covered half his breast, the lower half was concealed by a scarf or belt, and his bare arms were adorned with bracelets. His finely-proportioned limbs looked as if moulded in bronze, so smoothly were the powerful muscles covered with the shining copper-colored skin. Sitting here among those who were devoted to him, he looked with kind and fatherly pride at his blooming sons.

The lion was at rest--but nevertheless he was a lion, and terrible things might be looked for when he should rouse himself, and when the mighty hand, which now dispensed bread, should be clenched for the fight. There was nothing mean in this man, and yet nothing alarming; for, if his eye had a commanding sparkle, the expression of his mouth was particularly gentle; and the deep voice which could make itself heard above the clash of fighting men, could also assume the sweetest and most winning tones. His education had not only made him well aware of his greatness and

power, but had left him also a genuine man, a stranger to none of the emotions of the human soul.

Behind Pharaoh stood a man, younger than himself, who gave him his wine-cup after first touching it with his own lips; this was Mena, the king's charioteer and favorite companion. His figure was slight and yet vigorous, supple and yet dignified, and his finely-formed features and frank bright eyes were full at once of self-respect and of benevolence. Such a man might fail in reflection and counsel, but would be admirable as an honorable, staunch, and faithful friend.

Among the princes, Chamus sat nearest to the king;

[He is named Cha-em-Us on the monuments, i. e., 'splendor in Thebes.' He became the Sam, or high-priest of Memphis. His mummy was discovered by Mariette in the tomb of Apis at Saqqarah during his excavations of the Serapeum at Memphis.]

he was the eldest of his sons, and while still young had been invested with the dignity of high-priest of Memphis. The curly-haired Rameri, who had been rescued from imprisonment--into which he had fallen on his journey from Egypt--had been assigned a place with the younger princes at the lowest end of the table.

"It all sounds very threatening!" said the king. "But though each of you croakers speaks the truth, your love for me dims your sight. In fact, all that Rameri has told me, that Bent-Anat writes, that Mena's stud-keeper says of Ani, and that comes through other channels--amounts to nothing that need disturb us. I know your uncle--I know that he will make his borrowed throne as wide as he possibly can; but when we return home he will be quite content to sit on a narrow seat again. Great enterprises and daring deeds are not what he excels in; but he is very apt at carrying out a ready-made system, and therefore I choose him to be my Regent."

"But Ameni," said Chamus, bowing respectfully to his father, "seems to have stirred up his ambition, and to support him with his advice. The chief of the House of Seti is a man of great ability, and at least half of the priesthood are his adherents."

"I know it," replied the king. "Their lordships owe me a grudge because I have called their serfs to arms, and they want them to till their acres. A pretty sort of people they have sent me! their courage flies with the first arrow. They shall guard the camp tomorrow; they will be equal to that when it is made clear to their understanding that, if they let the tents be taken, the bread, meat and wines-skins will also fall into the hands of the enemy. If Kadesh is taken by storm, the temples of the Nile shall have the greater part of the spoil, and you yourself, my young high-priest of Memphis, shall show your colleagues that Rameses repays in bushels that which he has taken in handfuls from the ministers of the Gods."

"Ameni's disaffection," replied Chamus, "has a deeper root; thy mighty spirit seeks and finds its own way--"

"But their lordships," interrupted Rameses, "are accustomed to govern the king too, and I--I do not do them credit. I rule as vicar of the Lord of the Gods, but--I myself am no God, though they attribute to me the honors of a divinity; and in all humility of heart I willingly leave it to them

to be the mediators between the Immortals and me or my people. Human affairs certainly I choose to manage in my own way. And now no more of them. I cannot bear to doubt my friends, and trustfulness is so dear, so essential to me, that I must indulge in it even if my confidence results in my being deceived."

The king glanced at Mena, who handed him a golden cup--which he emptied. He looked at the glittering beaker, and then, with a flash of his grave, bright eyes, he added:

"And if I am betrayed--if ten such as Ameni and Ani entice my people into a snare--I shall return home, and will tread the reptiles into dust."

His deep voice rang out the words, as if he were a herald proclaiming a victorious deed of arms. Not a word was spoken, not a hand moved, when he ceased speaking. Then he raised his cup, and said:

"It is well before the battle to uplift our hearts! We have done great deeds; distant nations have felt our hand; we have planted our pillars of conquest by their rivers, and graven the record of our deeds on their rocks.

[Herodotus speaks of the pictures graven on the rocks in the provinces conquered by Rameses II., in memory of his achievements. He saw two, one of which remains on a rock near Beirut.]

Your king is great above all kings, and it is through the might of the Gods, and your valor my brave comrades. May to-morrow's fight bring us new glory! May the Immortals soon bring this war to a close! Empty your wine cups with me--To victory and a speedy return home in peace!"

"Victory! Victory! Long life to the Pharaoh! Strength and health!" cried the guests of the king, who, as he descended from his throne, cried to the drinkers:

"Now, rest till the star of Isis sets. Then follow me to prayer at the altar of Amon, and then-to battle."

Fresh cries of triumph sounded through the room, while Rameses gave his hand with a few words of encouragement to each of his sons in turn. He desired the two youngest, Mernephtah and Rameri to follow him, and quitting the banquet with them and Mena, he proceeded, under the escort of his officers and guards, who bore staves before him with golden lilies and ostrich-feathers, to his sleeping-tent, which was surrounded by a corps d'elite under the command of his sons. Before entering the tent he asked for some pieces of meat, and gave them with his own hand to his lions, who let him stroke them like tame cats.

Then he glanced round the stable, patted the sleek necks and shoulders of his favorite horses, and decided that 'Nura' and 'Victory to Thebes' should bear him into the battle on the morrow.

[The horses driven by Rameses at the battle of Kadesh were in fact thus named.]

When he had gone into the sleeping-tent, he desired his attendants to leave him; he signed Mena to divest him of his ornaments and his arms, and called to him his youngest sons, who were waiting respectfully at the door of the tent.

Why did I desire you to accompany me?" he asked them gravely. Both were silent, and he repeated his question.

"Because," said Rameri at length, "you observed that all was not quite right between us two."

"And because," continued the king, "I desire that unity should exist between my children. You will have enemies enough to fight with tomorrow, but friends are not often to be found, and are too often taken from us by the fortune of war. We ought to feel no anger towards the friend we may lose, but expect to meet him lovingly in the other world. Speak, Rameri, what has caused a division between you?"

"I bear him no ill-will," answered Rameri. "You lately gave me the sword which Merneptah has there stuck in his belt, because I did my duty well in the last skirmish with the enemy. You know we both sleep in the same tent, and yesterday, when I drew my sword out of its sheath to admire the fine work of the blade, I found that another, not so sharp, had been put in its place."

"I had only exchanged my sword for his in fun," interrupted Merneptah. "But he can never take a joke, and declared I want to wear a prize that I had not earned; he would try, he said, to win another and then--"

"I have heard enough; you have both done wrong," said the King. "Even in fun, Merneptah, you should never cheat or deceive. I did so once, and I will tell you what happened, as a warning."

"My noble mother, Tuaa, desired me, the first time I went into Fenchu --[Phoenicia: on monuments of the 18th dynasty.]--to bring her a pebble from the shore near Byblos, where the body of Osiris was washed. As we returned to Thebes, my mother's request returned to my mind; I was young and thoughtless--I picked up a stone by the way-side, took it with me, and when she asked me for the remembrance from Byblos I silently gave her the pebble from Thebes. She was delighted, she showed it to her brothers and sisters, and laid it by the statues of her ancestors; but I was miserable with shame and penitence, and at last I secretly took away the stone, and threw it into the water. All the servants were called together, and strict enquiry was made as to the theft of the stone; then I could hold out no longer, and confessed everything. No one punished me, and yet I never suffered more severely; from that time I have never deviated from the exact truth even in jest. Take the lesson to heart, Merneptah--you, Rameri, take back your sword, and, believe me, life brings us so many real causes of vexation, that it is well to learn early to pass lightly over little things if you do not wish to become a surly fellow like the pioneer Paaker; and that seems far from likely with a gay, reckless temper like yours. Now shake hands with each other."

The young princes went up to each other, and Rameri fell on his brother's neck and kissed him. The king stroked their heads. "Now go in peace," he said, "and to-morrow you shall both strive to win a fresh mark of honor."

When his sons had left the tent, Rameses turned to his charioteer and said: "I have to speak to you too before the battle. I can read your soul through your eyes, and it seems to me that things have gone wrong with you since the keeper of your stud arrived here. What has happened in Thebes?" Mena looked frankly, but sadly at the king:

"My mother-in-law Katuti," he said, "is managing my estate very badly, pledging the land, and selling the cattle."

"That can be remedied," said Rameses kindly. "You know I promised to grant you the fulfilment of a wish, if Nefert trusted you as perfectly as you believe. But it appears to me as if something more nearly concerning you than this were wrong, for I never knew you anxious about money and lands. Speak openly! you know I am your father, and the heart and the eye of the man who guides my horses in battle, must be open without reserve to my gaze."

Mena kissed the king's robe; then he said:

"Nefert has left Katuti's house, and as thou knowest has followed thy daughter, Bent-Anat, to the sacred mountain, and to Megiddo."

"I thought the change was a good one," replied Rameses. "I leave Bent-Anat in the care of Bent-Anat, for she needs no other guardianship, and your wife can have no better protector than Bent-Anat."

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Mena with sincere emphasis. "But before they started, miserable things occurred. Thou knowest that before she married me she was betrothed to her cousin, the pioneer Paaker, and he, during his stay in Thebes, has gone in and out of my house, has helped Katuti with an enormous sum to pay the debts of my wild brother-in-law, and-as my stud-keeper saw with his own eyes-has made presents of flowers to Nefert."

The king smiled, laid his hand on Mena's shoulder, and said, as he looked in his face: "Your wife will trust you, although you take a strange woman into your tent, and you allow yourself to doubt her because her cousin gives her some flowers! Is that wise or just? I believe you are jealous of the broad-shouldered ruffian that some spiteful Wight laid in the nest of the noble Mohar, his father."

"No, that I am not," replied Mena, "nor does any doubt of Nefert disturb my soul; but it torments me, it nettles me, it disgusts me, that Paaker of all men, whom I loathe as a venomous spider, should look at her and make her presents under my very roof."

"He who looks for faith must give faith," said the king. "And must not I myself submit to accept songs of praise from the most contemptible wretches? Come--smooth your brow; think of the approaching victory, of our return home, and remember that you have less to forgive Paaker than he to forgive you. Now, pray go and see to the horses, and to-morrow morning let me see you on my chariot full of cheerful courage--as I love to see you."

Mena left the tent, and went to the stables; there he met Rameri, who was waiting to speak to him. The eager boy said that he had always looked up to him and loved him as a brilliant example, but that lately he had been perplexed as to his virtuous fidelity, for he had been informed that Mena had taken a strange woman into his tent--he who was married to the fairest and sweetest woman in Thebes.

"I have known her," he concluded, "as well as if I were her brother; and I know that she would die if she heard that you had insulted and disgraced her. Yes, insulted her; for such a public breach of faith is

an insult to the wife of an Egyptian. Forgive my freedom of speech, but who knows what to-morrow may bring forth--and I would not for worlds go out to battle, thinking evil of you."

Mena let Rameri speak without interruption, and then answered:

"You are as frank as your father, and have learned from him to hear the defendant before you condemn him. A strange maiden, the daughter of the king of the Danaids,

[A people of the Greeks at the time of the Trojan war. They are mentioned among the nations of the Mediterranean allied against Rameses III. The Dardaneans were inhabitants of the Trojan provinces of Dardanin, and whose name was used for the Trojans generally.]

lives in my tent, but I for months have slept at the door of your father's, and I have not once entered my own since she has been there. Now sit down by me, and let me tell you how it all happened. We had pitched the camp before Kadesh, and there was very little for me to do, as Rameses was still laid up with his wound, so I often passed my time in hunting on the shores of the lake. One day I went as usual, armed only with my bow and arrow, and, accompanied by my grey-hounds, heedlessly followed a hare; a troop of Danaids fell upon me, bound me with cords, and led me into their camp.

[Grey-hounds, trained to hunt hares, are represented in the most ancient tombs, for instance, the Mastaba at Meydum, belonging to the time of Snefru (four centuries B. C.).]

There I was led before the judges as a spy, and they had actually condemned me, and the rope was round my neck, when their king came up, saw me, and subjected me to a fresh examination. I told him the facts at full length--how I had fallen into the hands of his people while following up my game, and not as an enemy, and he heard me favorably, and granted me not only life but freedom. He knew me for a noble, and treated me as one, inviting me to feed at his own table, and I swore in my heart, when he let me go, that I would make him some return for his generous conduct.

"About a month after, we succeeded in surprising the Cheta position, and the Libyan soldiers, among other spoil, brought away the Danaid king's only daughter. I had behaved valiantly, and when we came to the division of the spoils Rameses allowed me to choose first. I laid my hand on the maid, the daughter of my deliverer and host, I led her to my tent, and left her there with her waiting-women till peace is concluded, and I can restore her to her father."

"Forgive my doubts!" cried Rameri holding out his hand. "Now I understand why the king so particularly enquired whether Nefert believed in your constancy to her."

"And what was your answer?" asked Mena.

"That she thinks of you day and night, and never for an instant doubted you. My father seemed delighted too, and he said to Chamus: 'He has won there!'"

"He will grant me some great favor," said Mena in explanation, "if, when

she hears I have taken a strange maiden to my tent her confidence in me is not shaken, Rameses considers it simply impossible, but I know that I shall win. Why! she must trust me."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Before the battle,

[The battle about to be described is taken entirely from the epos of Pentaur.]

prayers were offered and victims sacrificed for each division of the army. Images of the Gods were borne through the ranks in their festal barks, and miraculous relics were exhibited to the soldiers; heralds announced that the high-priest had found favorable omens in the victims offered by the king, and that the haruspices foretold a glorious victory. Each Egyptian legion turned with particular faith to the standard which bore the image of the sacred animal or symbol of the province where it had been levied, but each soldier was also provided with charms and amulets of various kinds; one had tied to his neck or arm a magical text in a little bag, another the mystic preservative eye, and most of them wore a scarabaeus in a finger ring. Many believed themselves protected by having a few hairs or feathers of some sacred animal, and not a few put themselves under the protection of a living snake or beetle carefully concealed in a pocket of their apron or in their little provision-sack.

When the king, before whom were carried the images of the divine Triad of Thebes, of Menth, the God of War and of Necheb, the Goddess of Victory, reviewed the ranks, he was borne in a litter on the shoulders of twenty-four noble youths; at his approach the whole host fell on their knees, and did not rise till Rameses, descending from his position, had, in the presence of them all, burned incense, and made a libation to the Gods, and his son Chamus had delivered to him, in the name of the Immortals, the symbols of life and power. Finally, the priests sang a choral hymn to the Sun-god Ra, and to his son and vicar on earth, the king.

Just as the troops were put in motion, the paling stars appeared in the sky, which had hitherto been covered with thick clouds; and this occurrence was regarded as a favorable omen, the priests declaring to the army that, as the coming Ra had dispersed the clouds, so the Pharaoh would scatter his enemies.

With no sound of trumpet or drum, so as not to arouse the enemy, the foot-soldiers went forward in close order, the chariot-warriors, each in his light two-wheeled chariot drawn by two horses, formed their ranks, and the king placed himself at their head. On each side of the gilt chariot in which he stood, a case was fixed, glittering with precious stones, in which were his bows and arrows. His noble horses were richly caparisoned; purple housings, embroidered with turquoise beads, covered their backs and necks, and a crown-shaped ornament was fixed on their heads, from which fluttered a bunch of white ostrich-feathers. At the end of the ebony pole of the chariot, were two small padded yokes, which rested on the necks of the horses, who pranced in front as if playing with the light vehicle, pawed the earth with their small hoofs, and tossed and curved their slender necks.

The king wore a shirt of mail,

[The remains of a shirt of mail, dating from the time of Scheschenk I. (Sesonchis), who belonged to the 22d dynasty, is in the British Museum. It is made of leather, on which bronze scales are fastened.]

over which lay the broad purple girdle of his apron, and on his head was the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt; behind him stood Mena, who, with his left hand, tightly held the reins, and with his right the shield which was to protect his sovereign in the fight.

The king stood like a storm-proof oak, and Mena by his side like a sapling ash.

The eastern horizon was rosy with the approaching sun-rise when they quitted the precincts of the camp; at this moment the pioneer Paaker advanced to meet the king, threw himself on the ground before him, kissed the earth, and, in answer to the king's question as to why he had come without his brother, told him that Horus was taken suddenly ill. The shades of dawn concealed from the king the guilty color, which changed to sallow paleness, on the face of the pioneer--unaccustomed hitherto to lying and treason.

"How is it with the enemy?" asked Rameses.

"He is aware," replied Paaker, "that a fight is impending, and is collecting numberless hosts in the camps to the south and east of the city. If thou could'st succeed in falling on the rear from the north of Kadesh, while the foot soldiers seize the camp of the Asiatics from the south, the fortress will be thine before night. The mountain path that thou must follow, so as not to be discovered, is not a bad one."

"Are you ill as well as your brother, man?" asked the king. "Your voice trembles."

"I was never better," answered the Mohar.

Lead the way," commanded the king, and Paaker obeyed. They went on in silence, followed by the vast troop of chariots through the dewy morning air, first across the plain, and then into the mountain range. The corps of Ra, armed with bows and arrows, preceded them to clear the way; they crossed the narrow bed of a dry torrent, and then a broad valley opened before them, extending to the right and left and enclosed by ranges of mountains.

"The road is good," said Rameses, turning to Mena. "The Mohar has learned his duties from his father, and his horses are capital. Now he leads the way, and points it out to the guards, and then in a moment he is close to us again."

"They are the golden-bays of my breed," said Mena, and the veins started angrily in his forehead. "My stud-master tells me that Katuti sent them to him before his departure. They were intended for Nefert's chariot, and he drives them to-day to defy and spite me."

"You have the wife--let the horses go," said Rameses soothingly.

Suddenly a blast of trumpets rang through the morning air; whence it came

could not be seen, and yet it sounded close at hand.

Rameses started up and took his battle-axe from his girdle, the horses pricked their ears, and Mena exclaimed:

"Those are the trumpets of the Cheta! I know the sound."

A closed wagon with four wheels in which the king's lions were conveyed, followed the royal chariot. "Let loose the lions!" cried the king, who heard an echoing war cry, and soon after saw the vanguard which had preceded him, and which was broken up by the chariots of the enemy, flying towards him down the valley again.

The wild beasts shook their manes and sprang in front of their master's chariot with loud roars. Mena lashed his whip, the horses started forward and rushed with frantic plunges towards the fugitives, who however could not be brought to a standstill, or rallied by the king's voice--the enemy were close upon them, cutting them down.

"Where is Paaker?" asked the king. But the pioneer had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed him and his chariot.

The flying Egyptians and the death-dealing chariots of the enemy came nearer and nearer, the ground trembled, the tramp of hoofs and the roar of wheels sounded louder and louder, like the roll of a rapidly approaching storm.

Then Rameses gave out a war cry, that rang back from the cliffs on the right hand and on the left like the blast of a trumpet; his chariot-guard joined in the shout--for an instant the flying Egyptians paused, but only to rush on again with double haste, in hope of escape and safety: suddenly the war-cry of the enemy was heard behind the king, mingling with the trumpet-call of the Cheta, and out from a cross valley, which the king had passed unheeded by--and into which Paaker had disappeared--came an innumerable host of chariots which, before the king could retreat, had broken through the Egyptian ranks, and cut him off from the body of his army. Behind him he could hear the roar and shock of the battle, in front of him he saw the fugitives, the fallen, and the enemy growing each instant in numbers and fury. He saw the whole danger, and drew up his powerful form as if to prove whether it were an equal match for such a foe. Then, raising his voice to such a pitch, that it sounded above the cries and groans of the fighting men, the words of command, the neighing of the horses, the crash of overthrown chariots, the dull whirr of lances and swords, their heavy blows on shields and helmets, and the whole bewildering tumult of the battle--with a loud shout he drew his bow, and his first arrow pierced a Cheta chief.

His lions sprang forward, and carried confusion into the hosts that were crowding down upon him, for many of their horses became unmanageable at the roar of the furious brutes, overthrew the chariots, and so hemmed the advance of the troops in the rear. Rameses sent arrow after arrow, while Mena covered him with the shield from the shots of the enemy. His horses meanwhile had carried him forward, and he could feel the foremost of the Asiatics with his battle-axe; close by his side fought Rameri and three other princes; in front of him were the lions.

The press was fearful, and the raging of the battle wild and deafening, like the roar of the surging ocean when it is hurled by a hurricane against a rocky coast.

Mena seemed to be in two places at once, for, while he guided the horses forwards, backwards, or to either hand, as the exigences of the position demanded, not one of the arrows shot at the king touched him. His eye was everywhere, the shield always ready, and not an eyelash of the young hero trembled, while Rameses, each moment more infuriated, incited his lions with wild war-cries, and with flashing eyes advanced farther and farther into the enemy's ranks.

Three arrows aimed, not at the king but at Mena himself, were sticking in the charioteer's shield, and by chance he saw written on the shaft of one of them the words "Death to Mena."

A fourth arrow whizzed past him. His eye followed its flight, and as he marked the spot whence it had come, a fifth wounded his shoulder, and he cried out to the king:

"We are betrayed! Look over there! Paaker is fighting with the Cheta."

Once more the Mohar had bent his bow, and came so near to the king's chariot that he could be heard exclaiming in a hoarse voice, as he let the bowstring snap, "Now I will reckon with you--thief! robber! My bride is your wife, but with this arrow I will win Mena's widow."

The arrow cut through the air, and fell with fearful force on the charioteer's helmet; the shield fell from his grasp, and he put his hand to his head, feeling stunned; he heard Paaker's laugh of triumph, he felt another of his enemy's arrows cut his wrist, and, beside himself with rage, he flung away the reins, brandished his battle-axe, and forgetting himself and his duty, sprang from the chariot and rushed upon Paaker. The Mohar awaited him with uplifted sword; his lips were white, his eyes bloodshot, his wide nostrils trembled like those of an over-driven horse, and foaming and hissing he flew at his mortal foe. The king saw the two engaged in a struggle, but he could not interfere, for the reins which Mena had dropped were dragging on the ground, and his ungoverned horses, following the lions, carried him madly onwards.

Most of his comrades had fallen, the battle raged all round him, but Rameses stood as firm as a rock, held the shield in front of him, and swung the deadly battle-axe; he saw Rameri hastening towards him with his horses, the youth was fighting like a hero, and Rameses called out to encourage him: "Well done! a worthy grandson of Seti!"

"I will win a new sword!" cried the boy, and he cleft the skull of one of his antagonists. But he was soon surrounded by the chariots of the enemy; the king saw the enemy pull down the young prince's horses, and all his comrades--among whom were many of the best warriors--turn their horses in flight.

Then one of the lions was pierced by a lance, and sank with a dying roar of rage and pain that was heard above all the tumult. The king himself had been grazed by an arrow, a sword stroke had shivered his shield, and his last arrow had been shot away.

Still spreading death around him, he saw death closing in upon him, and, without giving up the struggle, he lifted up his voice in fervent prayer, calling on Amon for support and rescue.

While thus in the sorest need he was addressing himself to the Lords of

Heaven, a tall Egyptian suddenly appeared in the midst of the struggle and turmoil of the battle, seized the reins, and sprang into the chariot behind the king, to whom he bowed respectfully. For the first time Rameses felt a thrill of fear. Was this a miracle? Had Amon heard his prayer?

He looked half fearfully round at his new charioteer, and when he fancied he recognized the features of the deceased Mohar, the father of the traitor Paaker, he believed that Amon had assumed this aspect, and had come himself to save him.

"Help is at hand!" cried his new companion. "If we hold our own for only a short time longer, thou art saved, and victory is ours."

Then once more Rameses raised his war-cry, felled a Cheta, who was standing close to him to the ground, with a blow on his skull, while the mysterious supporter by his side, who covered him with the shield, on his part also dealt many terrible strokes.

Thus some long minutes passed in renewed strife; then a trumpet sounded above the roar of the battle, and this time Rameses recognized the call of the Egyptians; from behind a low ridge on his right rushed some thousands of men of the foot-legion of Ptah who, under the command of Horus, fell upon the enemy's flank. They saw their king, and the danger he was in. They flung themselves with fury on the foes that surrounded him, dealing death as they advanced, and putting the Cheta to flight, and soon Rameses saw himself safe, and protected by his followers.

But his mysterious friend in need had vanished. He had been hit by an arrow, and had fallen to the earth--a quite mortal catastrophe; but Rameses still believed that one of the Immortals had come to his rescue.

But the king granted no long respite to his horses and his fighting-men; he turned to go back by the way by which he had come, fell upon the forces which divided him from the main army, took them in the rear while they were still occupied with his chariot-brigade which was already giving way, and took most of the Asiatics prisoners who escaped the arrows and swords of the Egyptians. Having rejoined the main body of the troops, he pushed forwards across the plain where the Asiatic horse and chariot-legions were engaged with the Egyptian swordsmen, and forced the enemy back upon the river Orontes and the lake of Kadesh. Night-fall put an end to the battle, though early next morning the struggle was renewed.

Utter discouragement had fallen upon the Asiatic allies, who had gone into battle in full security of victory; for the pioneer Paaker had betrayed his king into their hands.

When the Pharaoh had set out, the best chariot-warriors of the Cheta were drawn up in a spot concealed by the city, and sent forward against Rameses through the northern opening of the valley by which he was to pass, while other troops of approved valor, in all two thousand five hundred chariots, were to fall upon him from a cross valley where they took up their position during the night.

These tactics had been successfully carried out, and notwithstanding the Asiatics had suffered a severe defeat--besides losing some of their noblest heroes, among them Titure their Chancellor, and Chiropasar, the chronicler of the Cheta king, who could wield the sword as effectively as

the pen, and who, it was intended, should celebrate the victory of the allies, and perpetuate its glory to succeeding generations. Rameses had killed one of these with his own hands, and his unknown companion the other, and besides these many other brave captains of the enemy's troops. The king was greeted as a god, when he returned to the camp, with shouts of triumph and hymns of praise.

Even the temple-servants, and the miserable troops from Upper Egypt-ground down by the long war, and bought over by Ani--were carried away by the universal enthusiasm, and joyfully hailed the hero and king who had successfully broken the stiff necks of his enemies.

The next duty was to seek out the dead and wounded; among the latter was Mena; Rameri also was missing, but news was brought next day that he had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and he was immediately exchanged for the princess who had been sheltered in Mena's tent.

Paaker had disappeared; but the bays which he had driven into the battle were found unhurt in front of his ruined and blood-sprinkled chariot.

The Egyptians were masters of Kadesh, and Chetasar, the king of the Cheta, sued to be allowed to treat for peace, in his own name and in that of his allies; but Rameses refused to grant any terms till he had returned to the frontier of Egypt. The conquered peoples had no choice, and the representative of the Cheta king--who himself was wounded--and twelve princes of the principal nations who had fought against Rameses, were forced to follow his victorious train. Every respect was shown them, and they were treated as the king himself, but they were none the less his prisoners. The king was anxious to lose no time, for sad suspicion filled his heart; a shadow hitherto unknown to his bright and genial nature had fallen upon his spirit.

This was the first occasion on which one of his own people had betrayed him to the enemy. Paaker's deed had shaken his friendly confidence, and in his petition for peace the Cheta prince had intimated that Rameses might find much in his household to be set to rights--perhaps with a strong hand.

The king felt himself more than equal to cope with Ani, the priests, and all whom he had left in Egypt; but it grieved him to be obliged to feel any loss of confidence, and it was harder to him to bear than any reverse of fortune. It urged him to hasten his return to Egypt.

There was another thing which embittered his victory. Mena, whom he loved as his own son, who understood his lightest sign, who, as soon as he mounted his chariot, was there by his side like a part of himself--had been dismissed from his office by the judgment of the commander-in-chief, and no longer drove his horses. He himself had been obliged to confirm this decision as just and even mild, for that man was worthy of death who exposed his king to danger for the gratification of his own revenge.

Rameses had not seen Mena since his struggle with Paaker, but he listened anxiously to the news which was brought him of the progress of his sorely wounded officer.

The cheerful, decided, and practical nature of Rameses was averse to every kind of dreaminess or self-absorption, and no one had ever seen him, even in hours of extreme weariness, give himself up to vague and melancholy brooding; but now he would often sit gazing at the ground in

wrapt meditation, and start like an awakened sleeper when his reverie was disturbed by the requirements of the outer world around him. A hundred times before he had looked death in the face, and defied it as he would any other enemy, but now it seemed as though he felt the cold hand of the mighty adversary on his heart. He could not forget the oppressive sense of helplessness which had seized him when he had felt himself at the mercy of the unrestrained horses, like a leaf driven by the wind, and then suddenly saved by a miracle.

A miracle? Was it really Amon who had appeared in human form at his call? Was he indeed a son of the Gods, and did their blood flow in his veins?

The Immortals had shown him peculiar favor, but still he was but a man; that he realized from the pain in his wound, and the treason to which he had been a victim. He felt as if he had been respited on the very scaffold. Yes; he was a man like all other men, and so he would still be. He rejoiced in the obscurity that veiled his future, in the many weaknesses which he had in common with those whom he loved, and even in the feeling that he, under the same conditions of life as his contemporaries, had more responsibilities than they.

Shortly after his victory, after all the important passes and strongholds had been conquered by his troops, he set out for Egypt with his train and the vanquished princes. He sent two of his sons to Bent-Anat at Megiddo, to escort her by sea to Pelusium; he knew that the commandant of the harbor of that frontier fortress, at the easternmost limit of his kingdom, was faithful to him, and he ordered that his daughter should not quit the ship till he arrived, to secure her against any attempt on the part of the Regent. A large part of the material of war, and most of the wounded, were also sent to Egypt by sea.

CHAPTER XL.

Nearly three months had passed since the battle of Kadesh, and to-day the king was expected, on his way home with his victorious army, at Pelusium, the strong hold and key of Egyptian dominion in the east. Splendid preparations had been made for his reception, and the man who took the lead in the festive arrangements with a zeal that was doubly effective from his composed demeanor was no less a person than the Regent Ani.

His chariot was to be seen everywhere: now he was with the workmen, who were to decorate triumphal arches with fresh flowers; now with the slaves, who were hanging garlands on the wooden lions erected on the road for this great occasion; now--and this detained him longest--he watched the progress of the immense palace which was being rapidly constructed of wood on the site where formerly the camp of the Hyksos had stood, in which the actual ceremony of receiving the king was to take place, and where the Pharaoh and his immediate followers were to reside. It had been found possible, by employing several thousand laborers, to erect this magnificent structure, in a few weeks, and nothing was lacking to it that could be desired, even by a king so accustomed as Rameses to luxury and splendor. A high exterior flight of steps led from the garden--which had been created out of a waste--to the vestibule, out of which the banqueting hall opened.

This was of unusual height, and had a vaulted wooden ceiling, which was

painted blue and sprinkled with stars, to represent the night heavens, and which was supported on pillars carved, some in the form of date-palms, and some like cedars of Lebanon; the leaves and twigs consisted of artfully fastened and colored tissue; elegant festoons of bluish gauze were stretched from pillar to pillar across the hall, and in the centre of the eastern wall they were attached to a large shell-shaped canopy extending over the throne of the king, which was decorated with pieces of green and blue glass, of mother of pearl, of shining plates of mica, and other sparkling objects.

The throne itself had the shape of a buckler, guarded by two lions, which rested on each side of it and formed the arms, and supported on the backs of four Asiatic captives who crouched beneath its weight. Thick carpets, which seemed to have transported the sea-shore on to the dry land-for their pale blue ground was strewn with a variety of shells, fishes, and water plants-covered the floor of the banqueting hall, in which three hundred seats were placed by the tables, for the nobles of the kingdom and the officers of the troops.

Above all this splendor hung a thousand lamps, shaped like lilies and tulips, and in the entrance hall stood a huge basket of roses to be strewn before the king when he should arrive.

Even the bed-rooms for the king and his suite were splendidly decorated; finely embroidered purple stuffs covered the walls, a light cloud of pale blue gauze hung across the ceiling, and giraffe skins were laid instead of carpets on the floors.

The barracks intended for the soldiers and bodyguard stood nearer to the city, as well as the stable buildings, which were divided from the palace by the garden which surrounded it. A separate pavilion, gilt and wreathed with flowers, was erected to receive the horses which had carried the king through the battle, and which he had dedicated to the Sun-God.

The Regent Ani, accompanied by Katuti, was going through the whole of these slightly built structures.

"It seems to me all quite complete," said the widow.

"Only one thing I cannot make up my mind about," replied Ani, "whether most to admire your inventive genius or your exquisite taste."

"Oh! let that pass," said Katuti smiling. "If any thing deserves your praise it is my anxiety to serve you. How many things had to be considered before this structure at last stood complete on this marshy spot where the air seemed alive with disgusting insects and now it is finished how long will it last?"

Ani looked down. "How long?" he repeated. Then he continued: "There is great risk already of the plot miscarrying. Ameni has grown cool, and will stir no further in the matter; the troops on which I counted are perhaps still faithful to me, but much too weak; the Hebrews, who tend their flocks here, and whom I gained over by liberating them from forced labor, have never borne arms. And you know the people. They will kiss the feet of the conqueror if they have to wade up to there through the blood of their children. Besides--as it happens--the hawk which old Hekt keeps as representing me is to-day pining and sick--"

"It will be all the prouder and brighter to-morrow if you are a man!" exclaimed Katuti, and her eyes sparkled with scorn. "You cannot now retreat. Here in Pelusium you welcome Rameses as if he were a God, and he accepts the honor. I know the king, he is too proud to be distrustful, and so conceited that he can never believe himself deceived in any man, either friend or foe. The man whom he appointed to be his Regent, whom he designated as the worthiest in the land, he will most unwillingly condemn. Today you still have the car of the king; to-morrow he will listen to your enemies, and too much has occurred in Thebes to be blotted out. You are in the position of a lion who has his keeper on one side, and the bars of his cage on the other. If you let the moment pass without striking you will remain in the cage; but if you act and show yourself a lion your keepers are done for!"

"You urge me on and on," said Ani. "But supposing your plan were to fail, as Paaker's well considered plot failed?"

"Then you are no worse off than you are now," answered Katuti. "The Gods rule the elements, not men. Is it likely that you should finish so beautiful a structure with such care only to destroy it? And we have no accomplices, and need none."

"But who shall set the brand to the room which Nemu and the slave have filled with straw and pitch?" asked Ani.

"I," said Katuti decidedly. "And one who has nothing to look for from Rameses."

"Who is that?"

"Paaker."

Is the Mohar here?" asked the Regent surprised.

"You yourself have seen him."

"You are mistaken," said Ani. "I should--"

"Do you recollect the one-eyed, grey-haired, blackman, who yesterday brought me a letter? That was my sister's son."

The Regent struck his forehead--"Poor wretch" he muttered.

"He is frightfully altered," said Katuti. "He need not have blackened his face, for his own mother would not know him again: He lost an eye in his fight with Mena, who also wounded him in the lungs with a thrust of his sword, so that he breathes and speaks with difficulty, his broad shoulders have lost their flesh, and the fine legs he swaggered about on have shrunk as thin as a negro's. I let him pass as my servant without any hesitation or misgiving. He does not yet know of my purpose, but I am sure that he would help us if a thousand deaths threatened him. For God's sake put aside all doubts and fears! We will shake the tree for you, if you will only hold out your hand to-morrow to pick up the fruit. Only one thing I must beg. Command the head butler not to stint the wine, so that the guards may give us no trouble. I know that you gave the order that only three of the five ships which brought the contents of your winelofts should be unloaded. I should have thought that the future king of Egypt might have been less anxious to save!"

Katuti's lips curled with contempt as she spoke the last words. Ani observed this and said:

"You think I am timid! Well, I confess I would far rather that much which I have done at your instigation could be undone. I would willingly renounce this new plot, though we so carefully planned it when we built and decorated this palace. I will sacrifice the wine; there are jars of wine there that were old in my father's time--but it must be so! You are right! Many things have occurred which the king will not forgive! You are right, you are right--do what seems good to you. I will retire after the feast to the Ethiopian camp."

"They will hail you as king as soon as the usurpers have fallen in the flames," cried Katuti. "If only a few set the example, the others will take up the cry, and even though you have offended Ameni he will attach himself to you rather than to Rameses. Here he comes, and I already see the standards in the distance."

"They are coming!" said the Regent. "One thing more! Pray see yourself that the princess Bent-Anat goes to the rooms intended for her; she must not be injured."

"Still Bent-Anat?" said Katuti with a smile full of meaning but without bitterness. "Be easy, her rooms are on the ground floor, and she shall be warned in time."

Ani turned to leave her; he glanced once more at the great hall, and said with a sigh. "My heart is heavy--I wish this day and this night were over!"

"You are like this grand hall," said Katuti smiling, "which is now empty, almost dismal; but this evening, when it is crowded with guests, it will look very different. You were born to be a king, and yet are not a king; you will not be quite yourself till the crown and sceptre are your own."

Ani smiled too, thanked her, and left her; but Katuti said to herself:

"Bent-Anat may burn with the rest: I have no intention of sharing my power with her!"

Crowds of men and women from all parts had thronged to Pelusium, to welcome the conqueror and his victorious army on the frontier. Every great temple-college had sent a deputation to meet Rameses, that from the Necropolis consisting of five members, with Ameni and old Gagabu at their head. The white-robed ministers of the Gods marched in solemn procession towards the bridge which lay across the eastern-Pelusiatic-arm of the Nile, and led to Egypt proper--the land fertilized by the waters of the sacred stream.

The deputation from the temple of Memphis led the procession; this temple had been founded by Mena, the first king who wore the united crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, and Chamus, the king's son, was the high-priest. The deputation from the not less important temple of Heliopolis came next, and was followed by the representatives of the Necropolis of Thebes.

A few only of the members of these deputations wore the modest white robe of the simple priest; most of them were invested with the panther-skin which was worn by the prophets. Each bore a staff decorated with roses,

lilies, and green branches, and many carried censers in the form of a golden arm with incense in the hollow of the hand, to be burnt before the king. Among the deputies from the priesthood at Thebes were several women of high rank, who served in the worship of this God, and among them was Katuti, who by the particular desire of the Regent had lately been admitted to this noble sisterhood.

Ameni walked thoughtfully by the side of the prophet Gagabu.

"How differently everything has happened from what we hoped and intended!" said Gagabu in a low voice. "We are like ambassadors with sealed credentials--who can tell their contents?"

"I welcome Rameses heartily and joyfully," said Ameni. "After that which happened to him at Kadesh he will come home a very different man to what he was when he set out. He knows now what he owes to Amon. His favorite son was already at the head of the ministers of the temple at Memphis, and he has vowed to build magnificent temples and to bring splendid offerings to the Immortals. And Rameses keeps his word better than that smiling simpleton in the chariot yonder."

"Still I am sorry for Ani," said Gagabu.

"The Pharaoh will not punish him--certainly not," replied the high-priest. "And he will have nothing to fear from Ani; he is a feeble reed, the powerless sport of every wind."

"And yet you hoped for great things from him!"

"Not from him, but through him--with us for his guides," replied Ameni in a low voice but with emphasis. "It is his own fault that I have abandoned his cause. Our first wish--to spare the poet Pentaur--he would not respect, and he did not hesitate to break his oath, to betray us, and to sacrifice one of the noblest of God's creatures, as the poet was, to gratify a petty grudge. It is harder to fight against cunning weakness than against honest enmity. Shall we reward the man who has deprived the world of Pentaur by giving him a crown? It is hard to quit the trodden way, and seek a better--to give up a half-executed plan and take a more promising one; it is hard, I say, for the individual man, and makes him seem fickle in the eyes of others; but we cannot see to the right hand and the left, and if we pursue a great end we cannot remain within the narrow limits which are set by law and custom to the actions of private individuals. We draw back just as we seem to have reached the goal, we let him fall whom we had raised, and lift him, whom we had stricken to the earth, to the pinnacle of glory, in short we profess--and for thousands of years have professed--the doctrine that every path is a right one that leads to the great end of securing to the priesthood the supreme power in the land. Rameses, saved by a miracle, vowing temples to the Gods, will for the future exhaust his restless spirit not in battle as a warrior, but in building as an architect. He will make use of us, and we can always lead the man who needs us. So I now hail the son of Seti with sincere joy."

Ameni was still speaking when the flags were hoisted on the standards by the triumphal arches, clouds of dust rolled up on the farther shore of the Nile, and the blare of trumpets was heard.

First came the horses which had carried Rameses through the fight, with the king himself, who drove them. His eyes sparkled with joyful triumph

as the people on the farther side of the bridge received him with shouts of joy, and the vast multitude hailed him with wild enthusiasm and tears of emotion, strewing in his path the spoils of their gardens-flowers, garlands, and palm-branches.

Ani marched at the head of the procession that went forth to meet him; he humbly threw himself in the dust before the horses, kissed the ground, and then presented to the king the sceptre that had been entrusted to him, lying on a silk cushion. The king received it graciously, and when Ani took his robe to kiss it, the king bent down towards him, and touching the Regent's forehead with his lips, desired him to take the place by his side in the chariot, and fill the office of charioteer.

The king's eyes were moist with grateful emotion. He had not been deceived, and he could re-enter the country for whose greatness and welfare alone he lived, as a father, loving and beloved, and not as a master to judge and punish. He was deeply moved as he accepted the greetings of the priests, and with them offered up a public prayer. Then he was conducted to the splendid structure which had been prepared for him gaily mounted the outside steps, and from the top-most stair bowed to his innumerable crowd of subjects; and while he awaited the procession from the harbor which escorted Bent-Anat in her litter, he inspected the thousand decorated bulls and antelopes which were to be slaughtered as a thank-offering to the Gods, the tame lions and leopards, the rare trees in whose branches perched gaily-colored birds, the giraffes, and chariots to which ostriches were harnessed, which all marched past him in a long array.

[The splendor of the festivities I make Ani prepare seems pitiful compared with those Ptolemy Philadelphus, according to the report of an eye witness, Callexenus, displayed to the Alexandrians on a festal occasion.]

Rameses embraced his daughter before all the people; he felt as if he must admit his subjects to the fullest sympathy in the happiness and deep thankfulness which filled his soul. His favorite child had never seemed to him so beautiful as this day, and he realized with deep emotion her strong resemblance to his lost wife.--[Her name was Isis Nefert.]

Nefert had accompanied her royal friend as fanbearer, and she knelt before the king while he gave himself up to the delight of meeting his daughter. Then he observed her, and kindly desired her to rise. "How much," he said, "I am feeling to-day for the first time! I have already learned that what I formerly thought of as the highest happiness is capable of a yet higher pitch, and I now perceive that the most beautiful is capable of growing to greater beauty! A sun has grown from Mena's star."

Rameses, as he spoke, remembered his charioteer; for a moment his brow was clouded, and he cast down his eyes, and bent his head in thought.

Bent-Anat well knew this gesture of her father's; it was the omen of some kindly, often sportive suggestion, such as he loved to surprise his friends with.

He reflected longer than usual; at last he looked up, and his full eyes rested lovingly on his daughter as he asked her:

"What did your friend say when she heard that her husband had taken a

pretty stranger into his tent, and harbored her there for months? Tell me the whole truth of it, Bent-Anat."

"I am indebted to this deed of Mena's, which must certainly be quite excusable if you can smile when you speak of it," said the princess, "for it was the cause of his wife's coming to me. Her mother blamed her husband with bitter severity, but she would not cease to believe in him, and left her house because it was impossible for her to endure to hear him blamed."

"Is this the fact?" asked Rameses.

Nefert bowed her pretty head, and two tears ran down her blushing cheeks.

"How good a man must be," cried the king, "on whom the Gods bestow such happiness! My lord Chamberlain, inform Mena that I require his services at dinner to-day--as before the battle at Kadesh. He flung away the reins in the fight when he saw his enemy, and we shall see if he can keep from flinging down the beaker when, with his own eyes, he sees his beloved wife sitting at the table.--You ladies will join me at the banquet."

Nefert sank on her knees before the king; but he turned from her to speak to the nobles and officers who had come to meet him, and then proceeded to the temple to assist at the slaughter of the victims, and to solemnly renew his vow in the presence of the priests and the people, to erect a magnificent temple in Thebes as a thank-offering for his preservation from death. He was received with rapturous enthusiasm; his road led to the harbor, past the tents in which lay the wounded, who had been brought home to Egypt by ship, and he greeted them graciously from his chariot.

Ani again acted as his charioteer; they drove slowly through the long ranks of invalids and convalescents, but suddenly Ani gave the reins an involuntary pull, the horses reared, and it was with difficulty that he soothed them to a steady pace again.

Rameses looked round in anxious surprise, for at the moment when the horses had started, he too had felt an agitating thrill--he thought he had caught sight of his preserver at Kadesh.

Had the sight of a God struck terror into the horses? Was he the victim of a delusion? or was his preserver a man of flesh and blood, who had come home from the battle-field among the wounded!

The man who stood by his side, and held the reins, could have informed him, for Ani had recognized Pentaur, and in his horror had given the reins a perilous jerk.

CHAPTER XLI.

The king did not return to the great pavilion till after sun-down; the banqueting hall, illuminated with a thousand lamps, was now filled with the gay crowd of guests who awaited the arrival of the king. All bowed before him, as he entered, more or less low, each according to his rank; he immediately seated himself on his throne, surrounded by his children in a wide semicircle, and his officers and retainers all passed before

him; for each he had a kindly word or glance, winning respect from all, and filling every one with joy and hope.

"The only really divine attribute of my royal condition," said he to himself, "is that it is so easy to a king to make men happy. My predecessors chose the poisonous Uraeus as the emblem of their authority, for we can cause death as quickly and certainly as the venomous snake; but the power of giving happiness dwells on our own lips, and in our own eyes, and we need some instrument when we decree death."

"Take the Uraeus crown from my head," he continued aloud, as he seated himself at the feast. "Today I will wear a wreath of flowers."

During the ceremony of bowing to the king, two men had quitted the hall--the Regent Ani, and the high-priest Ameni.

Ani ordered a small party of the watch to go and seek out the priest Pentaur in the tents of the wounded by the harbor, to bring the poet quietly to his tent, and to guard him there till his return. He still had in his possession the maddening potion, which he was to have given to the captain of the transport-boat, and it was open to him still to receive Pentaur either as a guest or as a prisoner. Pentaur might injure him, whether Katuti's project failed or succeeded.

Ameni left the pavilion to go to see old Gagabu, who had stood so long in the heat of the sun during the ceremony of receiving the conqueror, that he had been at last carried fainting to the tent which he shared with the high-priest, and which was not far from that of the Regent. He found the old man much revived, and was preparing to mount his chariot to go to the banquet, when the Regent's myrmidons led Pentaur past in front of him. Ameni looked doubtfully at the tall and noble figure of the prisoner, but Pentaur recognized him, called him by his name, and in a moment they stood together, hand clasped in hand. The guards showed some uneasiness, but Ameni explained who he was.

The high-priest was sincerely rejoiced at the preservation and restoration of his favorite disciple, whom for many months he had mourned as dead; he looked at his manly figure with fatherly tenderness, and desired the guards, who bowed to his superior dignity, to conduct his friend, on his responsibility; to his tent instead of to Ani's.

There Pentaur found his old friend Gagabu, who wept with delight at his safety. All that his master had accused him of seemed to be forgotten. Ameni had him clothed in a fresh white robe, he was never tired of looking at him, and over and over again clapped his hand upon his shoulder, as if he were his own son that had been lost and found again.

Pentaur was at once required to relate all that had happened to him, and the poet told the story of his captivity and liberation at Mount Sinai, his meeting with Bent-Anat, and how he had fought in the battle of Kadesh, had been wounded by an arrow, and found and rescued by the faithful Kaschta. He concealed only his passion for Bent-Anat, and the fact that he had preserved the king's life.

"About an hour ago," he added, "I was sitting alone in my tent, watching the lights in the palace yonder, when the watch who are outside brought me an order from the Regent to accompany them to his tent. What can he want with me? I always thought he owed me a grudge."

Gagabu and Ameni glanced meaningfully at each other, and the high-priest then hastened away, as already he had remained too long away from the banquet. Before he got into his chariot he commanded the guard to return to their posts, and took it upon himself to inform the Regent that his guest would remain in his tent till the festival was over; the soldiers unhesitatingly obeyed him.

Ameni arrived at the palace before them, and entered the banqueting-hall just as Ani was assigning a place to each of his guests. The high-priest went straight up to him, and said, as he bowed before him:

"Pardon my long delay, but I was detained by a great surprise. The poet Pentaur is living--as you know. I have invited him to remain in my tent as my guest, and to tend the prophet Gagabu."

The Regent turned pale, he remained speechless and looked at Ameni with a cold ghastly smile; but he soon recovered himself.

"You see," he said, "how you have injured me by your unworthy suspicions; I meant to have restored your favorite to you myself to-morrow."

"Forgive me, then, for having anticipated your plan," said Ameni, taking his seat near the king. Hundreds of slaves hurried to and fro loaded with costly dishes. Large vessels of richly wrought gold and silver were brought into the hall on wheels, and set on the side-boards. Children were perched in the shells and lotus-flowers that hung from the painted rafters; and from between the pillars, that were hung with cloudy transparent tissues, they threw roses and violets down on the company. The sounds of harps and songs issued from concealed rooms, and from an altar, six ells high, in the middle of the hall, clouds of incense were wafted into space.

The king--one of whose titles was "Son of the Sun,"--was as radiant as the sun himself. His children were once more around him, Mena was his cupbearer as in former times, and all that was best and noblest in the land was gathered round him to rejoice with him in his triumph and his return. Opposite to him sat the ladies, and exactly in front of him, a delight to his eyes, Bent-Anat and Nefert. His injunction to Mena to hold the wine cup steadily seemed by no means superfluous, for his looks constantly wandered from the king's goblet to his fair wife, from whose lips he as yet had heard no word of welcome, whose hand he had not yet been so happy as to touch.

All the guests were in the most joyful excitement. Rameses related the tale of his fight at Kadesh, and the high-priest of Heliopolis observed
In later times the poets will sing of thy deeds."

"Their songs will not be of my achievements," exclaimed the king, "but of the grace of the Divinity, who so miraculously rescued your sovereign, and gave the victory to the Egyptians over an innumerable enemy."

"Did you see the God with your own eyes? and in what form did he appear to you?" asked Bent-Anat. "It is most extraordinary," said the king, "but he exactly resembled the dead father of the traitor Paaker. My preserver was of tall stature, and had a beautiful countenance; his voice was deep and thrilling, and he swung his battle-axe as if it were a mere plaything."

Ameni had listened eagerly to the king's words, now he bowed low before

him and said humbly: "If I were younger I myself would endeavor, as was the custom with our fathers, to celebrate this glorious deed of a God and of his sublime son in a song worthy of this festival; but melting tones are no longer mine, they vanish with years, and the ear of the listener lends itself only to the young. Nothing is wanting to thy feast, most lordly Ani, but a poet, who might sing the glorious deeds of our monarch to the sound of his lute, and yet--we have at hand the gifted Pentaur, the noblest disciple of the House of Seti."

Bent-Anat turned perfectly white, and the priests who were present expressed the utmost joy and astonishment, for they had long thought the young poet, who was highly esteemed throughout Egypt, to be dead.

The king had often heard of the fame of Pentaur from his sons and especially from Rameri, and he willingly consented that Ameni should send for the poet, who had himself borne arms at Kadesh, in order that he should sing a song of triumph. The Regent gazed blankly and uneasily into his wine cup, and the high-priest rose to fetch Pentaur himself into the presence of the king.

During the high-priest's absence, more and more dishes were served to the company; behind each guest stood a silver bowl with rose water, in which from time to time he could dip his fingers to cool and clean them; the slaves in waiting were constantly at hand with embroidered napkins to wipe them, and others frequently changed the faded wreaths, round the heads and shoulders of the feasters, for fresh ones.

"How pale you are, my child!" said Rameses turning to Bent-Anat. "If you are tired, your uncle will no doubt allow you to leave the hall; though I think you should stay to hear the performance of this much-lauded poet. After having been so highly praised he will find it difficult to satisfy his hearers. But indeed I am uneasy about you, my child--would you rather go?" The Regent had risen and said earnestly, "Your presence has done me honor, but if you are fatigued I beg you to allow me to conduct you and your ladies to the apartments intended for you."

"I will stay," said Bent-Anat in a low but decided tone, and she kept her eyes on the floor, while her heart beat violently, for the murmur of voices told her that Pentaur was entering the hall. He wore the long white robe of a priest of the temple of Seti, and on his forehead the ostrich-feather which marked him as one of the initiated. He did not raise his eyes till he stood close before the king; then he prostrated himself before him, and awaited a sign from the Pharaoh before he rose again.

But Rameses hesitated a long time, for the youthful figure before him, and the glance that met his own, moved him strangely. Was not this the divinity of the fight? Was not this his preserver? Was he again deluded by a resemblance, or was he in a dream?

The guests gazed in silence at the spellbound king, and at the poet; at last Rameses bowed his head,

Pentaur rose to his feet, and the bright color flew to his face as close to him he perceived Bent-Anat.

"You fought at Kadesh?" asked the king. "As thou sayest," replied Pentaur.

"You are well spoken of as a poet," said Rameses, "and we desire to hear the wonderful tale of my preservation celebrated in song. If you will attempt it, let a lute be brought and sing."

The poet bowed. "My gifts are modest," he said, "but I will endeavor to sing of the glorious deed, in the presence of the hero who achieved it, with the aid of the Gods."

Rameses gave a signal, and Ameni caused a large golden harp to be brought in for his disciple. Pentaur lightly touched the strings, leaned his head against the top of the tall bow of the harp, for some time lest in meditation; then he drew himself up boldly, and struck the chords, bringing out a strong and warlike music in broad heroic rhythm.

Then he began the narrative: how Rameses had pitched his camp before Kadesh, how he ordered his troops, and how he had taken the field against the Cheta, and their Asiatic allies. Louder and stronger rose his tones when he reached the turning-point of the battle, and began to celebrate the rescue of the king; and the Pharaoh listened with eager attention as Pentaur sang:--[A literal translation of the ancient Egyptian poem called "The Epos of Pentaur"]

"Then the king stood forth, and, radiant with courage,
He looked like the Sun-god armed and eager for battle.
The noble steeds that bore him into the struggle
'Victory to Thebes' was the name of one, and the other
Was called 'contented Nura'--were foaled in the stables
Of him we call 'the elect,' 'the beloved of Amon,'
'Lord of truth,' the chosen vicar of Ra.

Up sprang the king and threw himself on the foe,
The swaying ranks of the contemptible Cheta.
He stood alone-alone, and no man with him.
As thus the king stood forth all eyes were upon him,
And soon he was enmeshed by men and horses,
And by the enemy's chariots: two thousand five hundred.
The foe behind hemmed him in and enclosed him.
Dense the array of the contemptible Cheta,
Dense the swarm of warriors out of Arad,
Dense the Mysian host, the Pisidian legions.
Every chariot carried three bold warriors,
All his foes, and all allied like brothers.

"Not a prince is with me, not a captain,
Not an archer, none to guide my horses!
Fled the riders! fled my troops and horse
By my side not one is now left standing."
Thus the king, and raised his voice in prayer.
"Great father Amon, I have known Thee well.
And can the father thus forget his son?
Have I in any deed forgotten Thee?
Have I done aught without Thy high behest
Or moved or staid against Thy sovereign will?
Great am I--mighty are Egyptian kings
But in the sight of Thy commanding might,
Small as the chieftain of a wandering tribe.
Immortal Lord, crush Thou this unclean people;

Break Thou their necks, annihilate the heathen.

And I--have I not brought Thee many victims,
And filled Thy temple with the captive folk?
And for thy presence built a dwelling place
That shall endure for countless years to come?
Thy garners overflow with gifts from me.
I offered Thee the world to swell Thy glory,
And thirty thousand mighty steers have shed
Their smoking blood on fragrant cedar piles.
Tall gateways, flag-decked masts, I raised to Thee,
And obelisks from Abu I have brought,
And built Thee temples of eternal stone.
For Thee my ships have brought across the sea
The tribute of the nations. This I did--
When were such things done in the former time?

For dark the fate of him who would rebel
Against Thee: though Thy sway is just and mild.
My father, Amon--as an earthly son
His earthly father--so I call on Thee.
Look down from heaven on me, beset by foes,
By heathen foes--the folk that know Thee not.
The nations have combined against Thy son;
I stand alone--alone, and no man with me.
My foot and horse are fled, I called aloud
And no one heard--in vain I called to them.
And yet I say: the sheltering care of Amon
Is better succor than a million men,
Or than ten thousand knights, or than a thousand
Brothers and sons though gathered into one.
And yet I say: the bulwarks raised by men
However strong, compared to Thy great works
Are but vain shadows, and no human aid
Avails against the foe--but Thy strong hand.
The counsel of Thy lips shall guide my way;
I have obeyed whenever Thou hast ruled;
I call on Thee--and, with my fame, Thy glory
Shall fill the world, from farthest east to west."

Yea, his cry rang forth even far as Hermonthis,
And Amon himself appeared at his call; and gave him
His hand and shouted in triumph, saying to the Pharaoh:
"Help is at hand, O Rameses. I will uphold thee--
I thy father am he who now is thy succor,
Bearing thee in my hands. For stronger and readier
I than a hundred thousand mortal retainers;
I am the Lord of victory loving valor?
I rejoice in the brave and give them good counsel,
And he whom I counsel certainly shall not miscarry."

Then like Menth, with his right he scattered the arrows,
And with his left he swung his deadly weapon,
Felling the foe--as his foes are felled by Baal.
The chariots were broken and the drivers scattered,
Then was the foe overthrown before his horses.
None found a hand to fight: they could not shoot
Nor dared they hurl the spear but fled at his coming
Headlong into the river."

[I have availed myself of the help of Prof. Lushington's translation in "Records of the past," edited by Dr. S. Birch. Translator.]

A silence as of the grave reigned in the vast hall, Rameses fixed his eyes on the poet, as though he would engrave his features on his very soul, and compare them with those of another which had dwelt there unforgotten since the day of Kadesh. Beyond a doubt his preserver stood before him.

Seized by a sudden impulse, he interrupted the poet in the midst of his stirring song, and cried out to the assembled guests:

"Pay honor to this man! for the Divinity chose to appear under his form to save your king when he 'alone, and no man with him,' struggled with a thousand."

"Hail to Pentaur!" rang through the hall from the vast assembly, and Nefert rose and gave the poet the bunch of flowers she had been wearing on her bosom.

The king nodded approval, and looked enquiringly at his daughter; Bent-Anat's eyes met his with a glance of intelligence, and with all the simplicity of an impulsive child, she took from her head the wreath that had decorated her beautiful hair, went up to Pentaur, and crowned him with it, as it was customary for a bride to crown her lover before the wedding.

Rameses observed his daughter's action with some surprise, and the guests responded to it with loud cheering.

The king looked gravely at Bent-Anat and the young priest; the eyes of all the company were eagerly fixed on the princess and the poet. The king seemed to have forgotten the presence of strangers, and to be wholly absorbed in thought, but by degrees a change came over his face, it cleared, as a landscape is cleared from the morning mists under the influence of the spring sunshine. When he looked up again his glance was bright and satisfied, and Bent-Anat knew what it promised when it lingered lovingly first on her, and then on her friend, whose head was still graced by the wreath that had crowned hers.

At last Rameses turned from the lovers, and said to the guests:

"It is past midnight, and I will now leave you. To-morrow evening I bid you all--and you especially, Pentaur--to be my guests in this banqueting hall. Once more fill your cups, and let us empty them--to a long time of peace after the victory which, by the help of the Gods, we have won. And at the same time let us express our thanks to my friend Ani, who has entertained us so magnificently, and who has so faithfully and zealously administered the affairs of the kingdom during my absence."

The company pledged the king, who warmly shook hands with the Regent, and then, escorted by his wandbearers and lords in waiting, quitted the hall, after he had signed to Mena, Ameni, and the ladies to follow him.

Nefert greeted her husband, but she immediately parted from the royal party, as she had yielded to the urgent entreaty of Katuti that she should for this night go to her mother, to whom she had so much to tell, instead of remaining with the princess. Her mother's chariot soon took

her to her tent.

Rameses dismissed his attendants in the ante-room of his apartments; when they were alone he turned to Bent-Anat and said affectionately.

"What was in your mind when you laid your wreath on the poet's brow?"

"What is in every maiden's mind when she does the like," replied Bent-Anat with trustful frankness.

"And your father?" asked the king.

"My father knows that I will obey him even if he demands of me the hardest thing--the sacrifice of all my--happiness; but I believe that he--that you love me fondly, and I do not forget the hour in which you said to me that now my mother was dead you would be father and mother both to me, and you would try to understand me as she certainly would have understood me. But what need between us of so many words. I love Pentaur--with a love that is not of yesterday--with the first perfect love of my heart and he has proved himself worthy of that high honor. But were he ever so humble, the hand of your daughter has the power to raise him above every prince in the land."

"It has such power, and you shall exercise it," cried the king. "You have been true and faithful to yourself, while your father and protector left you to yourself. In you I love the image of your mother, and I learned from her that a true woman's heart can find the right path better than a man's wisdom. Now go to rest, and to-morrow morning put on a fresh wreath, for you will have need of it, my noble daughter."

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

He who looks for faith must give faith
I have never deviated from the exact truth even in jest
Learn early to pass lightly over little things
Trustfulness is so dear, so essential to me

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