

An Egyptian Princess, Volume 3.

Georg Ebers

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AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS, Part 1.

By Georg Ebers

Volume 3.

CHAPTER VII.

Psamtik went at once from his father's apartments to the temple of the goddess Neith. At the entrance he asked for the high-priest and was begged by one of the inferior priests to wait, as the great Neithotep was at that moment praying in the holiest sanctuary of the exalted Queen of Heaven.

[The temples of Egypt were so constructed as to intensify the devotion of the worshipper by conducting him onward through a series of halls or chambers gradually diminishing in size. "The way through these temples is clearly indicated, no digression is allowed, no error possible. We wander on through the huge and massive gates of entrance, between the ranks of sacred animals. The worshipper is received into an ample court, but by degrees the walls on either side approach one another, the halls become less lofty, all is gradually tending towards one point. And thus we wander on, the sights and sounds of God's world without attract us no longer, we see nothing but the sacred representations which encompass us so closely, feel only the solemnity of the temple in which we stand. And the consecrated walls embrace us ever more and more closely, until at last we reach the lonely, resonant chamber occupied by the divinity himself, and entered by no human being save his priest." Schnaase, *Kunstaeschirhtc* I. 394.]

After a short time a young priest appeared with the intelligence that his superior awaited the Prince's visit. Psamtik had seated himself under the shadow of the sacred grove of silver poplars bordering the shores of the consecrated lake, holy to the great Neith. He rose immediately, crossed the temple-court, paved with stone and asphalt, on which the sun's rays were darting like fiery arrows, and turned into one of the long avenues of Sphinxes which led to the isolated Pylons before the gigantic temple of the goddess. He then passed through the principal gate, ornamented, as were all Egyptian temple-entrances, with the winged sun's disc. Above its widely-opened folding doors arose on either side, tower-like buildings, slender obelisks and waving flags. The front of the temple, rising from the earth in the form of an obtuse angle, had somewhat the appearance of a fortress, and was covered with colored pictures and inscriptions. Through the porch Psamtik passed on into a lofty entrance-chamber, and from thence into the great hall itself, the ceiling of which was strewn with thousands of golden stars, and supported

by four rows of lofty pillars. Their capitals were carved in imitation of the lotus-flower, and these, the shafts of the columns, the walls of this huge hall, and indeed every niche and corner that met the eye were covered with brilliant colors and hieroglyphics. The columns rose to a gigantic height, the eye seemed to wander through immeasurable space, and the air breathed by the worshippers was heavy with the fragrance of Kyphi and incense, and the odors which arose from the laboratory attached to the temple. Strains of soft music, proceeding from invisible hands, flowed on unceasingly, only occasionally interrupted by the deep lowing of the sacred cows of Isis, or the shrill call of the sparrow-hawk of Horus, whose habitations were in one of the adjoining halls. No sooner did the prolonged low of a cow break like distant thunder on the ear, or the sharp cry of the sparrow-hawk shoot like a flash of lightning through the nerves of the worshippers, than each crouching form bent lower still, and touched the pavement with his forehead. On a portion of this pavement, raised above the rest, stood the priests, some wearing ostrich-feathers on their bald and shining heads; others panther-skins over their white-robed shoulders. Muttering and singing, bowing low and rising again, they swung the censers and poured libations of pure water to the gods out of golden vessels. In this immense temple man seemed a dwarf in his own eyes. All his senses even to the organs of respiration, were occupied by objects far removed from daily life, objects that thrilled and almost oppressed him. Snatched from all that was familiar in his daily existence, he seemed to grow dizzy and seek support beyond himself. To this the voice of the priests directed him and the cries of the sacred animals were believed to prove a divinity at hand.

Psamtik assumed the posture of a worshipper on the low, gilded and cushioned couch set apart for him, but was unable to pay any real devotion, and passed on to the adjoining apartment before mentioned, where the sacred cows of Isis-Neith and the sparrow-hawk of Horus were kept. These creatures were concealed from the gaze of the worshippers by a curtain of rich fabric embroidered with gold; the people were only allowed an occasional and distant glimpse of the adorable animals. When Psamtik passed they were just being fed; cakes soaked in milk, salt and clover-blossoms were placed in golden cribs for the cows, and small birds of many-colored plumage in the beautifully-wrought and ornamented cage of the sparrow-hawk. But, in his present mood, the heir to the throne of Egypt had no eye for these rare sights; but ascended at once, by means of a hidden staircase, to the chambers lying near the observatory, where the high-priest was accustomed to repose after the temple-service.

Neithotep, a man of seventy years, was seated in a splendid apartment. Rich Babylonian carpets covered the floor and his chair was of gold, cushioned with purple. A tastefully-carved footstool supported his feet, his hands held a roll covered with hieroglyphics, and a boy stood behind him with a fan of ostrich-feathers to keep away the insects.

The face of the old man was deeply lined now, but it might once have been handsome, and in the large blue eyes there still lay evidence of a quick intellect and a dignified self-respect.

His artificial curls had been laid aside, and the bald, smooth head formed a strange contrast to the furrowed countenance, giving an appearance of unusual height to the forehead, generally so very low among the Egyptians. The brightly-colored walls of the room, on which numerous sentences in hieroglyphic characters were painted, the different statues of the goddess painted likewise in gay colors, and the snow-white garments of the aged priest, were calculated to fill a stranger not

only with wonder, but with a species of awe.

The old man received the prince with much affection, and asked:

"What brings my illustrious son to the poor servant of the Deity?"

"I have much to report to thee, my father;" answered Psamtik with a triumphant smile, "for I come in this moment from Amasis."

"Then he has at length granted thee an audience?"

"At length!"

"Thy countenance tells me that thou hast been favorably received by our lord, thy father."

"After having first experienced his wrath. For, when I laid before him the petition with which thou hadst entrusted me, he was exceeding wroth and nearly crushed me by his awful words."

"Thou hadst surely grieved him by thy language. Didst thou approach him as I advised thee, with lowliness, as a son humbly beseeching his father?"

"No, my father, I was irritated and indignant."

"Then was Amasis right to be wrathful, for never should a son meet his father in anger; still less when he hath a request to bring before him. Thou know'st the promise, 'The days of him that honoreth his father shall be many.'

[This Egyptian command bears a remarkable resemblance to the fifth in the Hebrew decalogue, both having a promise annexed. It occurs in the Prisse Papyrus, the most ancient sacred writing extant.]

In this one thing, my scholar, thou erreth always; to gain thine ends thou usest violence and roughness, where good and gentle words would more surely prevail. A kind word hath far more power than an angry one, and much may depend on the way in which a man ordereth his speech. Hearken to that which I will now relate. In former years there was a king in Egypt named Snefru, who ruled in Memphis. And it came to pass that he dreamed, and in his dream his teeth fell out of his mouth. And he sent for the soothsayers and told them the dream. The first interpreter answered: 'Woe unto thee, O king, all thy kinsmen shall die before thee!' Then was Snefru wroth, caused this messenger of evil to be scourged, and sent for a second interpreter. He answered: 'O king, live for ever, thy life shall be longer than the life of thy kinsmen and the men of thy house!' Then the king smiled and gave presents unto this interpreter, for though the interpretations were one, yet he had understood to clothe his message in a web of fair and pleasant words. Apprehendest thou? then hearken to my voice, and refrain from harsh words, remembering that to the ear of a ruler the manner of a man's speech is weightier than its matter."

"Oh my father, how often hast thou thus admonished me! how often have I been convinced of the evil consequences of my rough words and angry gestures! but I cannot change my nature, I cannot . . ."

"Say rather: I will not; for he that is indeed a man, dare never again

commit those sins of which he has once repented. But I have admonished sufficiently. Tell me now how thou didst calm the wrath of Amasis."

"Thou knowest my father. When he saw that he had wounded me in the depths of my soul by his awful words, he repented him of his anger. He felt he had been too hard, and desired to make amends at any price."

"He hath a kindly heart, but his mind is blinded, and his senses taken captive," cried the priest. "What might not Amasis do for Egypt, would he but hearken to our counsel, and to the commandments of the gods!"

"But hear me, my father! in his emotion he granted me the life of Phanes!"

"Thine eyes flash, Psamtik! that pleaseth me not. The Athenian must die, for he has offended the gods; but though he that condemns must let justice have her way, he should have no pleasure in the death of the condemned; rather should he mourn. Now speak; didst thou obtain aught further?"

"The king declared unto me to what house Nitetis belongs."

"And further naught?"

"No, my father; but art thou not eager to learn ... ?"

"Curiosity is a woman's vice; moreover, I have long known all that thou canst tell me."

"But didst thou not charge me but yesterday to ask my father this question?"

"I did do so to prove thee, and know whether thou wert resigned to the Divine will, and wert walking in those ways wherein alone thou canst become worthy of initiation into the highest grade of knowledge. Thou hast told us faithfully all that thou hast heard, and thereby proved that thou canst obey--the first virtue of a priest."

"Thou knewest then the father of Nitetis?"

"I myself pronounced the prayer over king Hophra's tomb."

"But who imparted the secret to thee?"

"The eternal stars, my son, and my skill in reading them."

"And do these stars never deceive?"

"Never him that truly understands them."

Psamtik turned pale. His father's dream and his own fearful horoscope passed like awful visions through his mind. The priest detected at once the change in his features and said gently: "Thou deem'st thyself a lost man because the heavens prognosticated evil at thy birth; but take comfort, Psamtik; I observed another sign in the heavens at that moment, which escaped the notice of the astrologers. Thy horoscope was a threatening, a very threatening one, but its omens may be averted, they may . . ."

"O tell me, father, tell me how!"

"They must turn to good, if thou, forgetful of all else, canst live alone to the gods, paying a ready obedience to the Divine voice audible to us their priests alone in the innermost and holiest sanctuary."

"Father, I am ready to obey thy slightest word."

"The great goddess Neith, who rules in Sais, grant this, my son!" answered the priest solemnly. "But now leave me alone," he continued kindly, "lengthened devotions and the weight of years bring weariness. If possible, delay the death of Phanes, I wish to speak with him before he dies. Yet one more word. A troop of Ethiopians arrived yesterday. These men cannot speak a word of Greek, and under a faithful leader, acquainted with the Athenians and the locality, they would be the best agents for getting rid of the doomed man, as their ignorance of the language and the circumstances render treachery or gossip impossible. Before starting for Naukratis, they must know nothing of the design of their journey; the deed once accomplished, we can send them back to Kush.--[The Egyptian name for Ethiopia.] Remember, a secret can never be too carefully kept! Farewell." Psamtik had only left the room a few moments, when a young priest entered, one of the king's attendants.

"Have I listened well, father?" he enquired of the old man.

"Perfectly, my son. Nothing of that which passed between Amasis and Psamtik has escaped thine ears. May Isis preserve them long to thee!"

"Ah, father, a deaf man could have heard every word in the ante-chamber to-day, for Amasis bellowed like an ox."

"The great Neith has smitten him with the lack of prudence, yet I command thee to speak of the Pharaoh with more reverence. But now return, keep thine eyes open and inform me at once if Amasis, as is possible, should attempt to thwart the conspiracy against Phanes. Thou wilt certainly find me here. Charge the attendants to admit no one, and to say I am at my devotions in the Holy of holies. May the ineffable One protect thy footsteps!"

[Isis, the wife or sister of Osiris, is the phenomena of nature, by means of which the god is able to reveal himself to human contemplation.]

.....

While Psamtik was making every preparation for the capture of Phanes, Croesus, accompanied by his followers, had embarked on board a royal bark, and was on his way down the Nile to spend the evening with Rhodopis.

His son Gyges and the three young Persians remained in Sais, passing the time in a manner most agreeable to them.

Amasis loaded them with civilities, allowed them, according to Egyptian custom, the society of his queen and of the twin-sisters, as they were called, taught Gyges the game of draughts, and looking on while the strong, dexterous, young heroes joined his daughters in the game of throwing balls and hoops, so popular among Egyptian maidens, enlivened

their amusements with an inexhaustible flow of wit and humor.

[The Pharaohs themselves, as well as their subjects, were in the habit of playing at draughts and other similar games. Rosellini gives its Rameses playing with his daughter; see also two Egyptians playing together, Wilkinson II. 419. An especially beautiful draught-board exists in the Egyptian collection at the Louvre Museum. The Egyptians hoped to be permitted to enjoy these pleasures even in the other world.]

[Balls that have been found in the tombs are still to be seen; some, for instance, in the Museum at Leyden.]

"Really," said Bartja, as he watched Nitetis catching the slight hoop, ornamented with gay ribbons, for the hundredth time on her slender ivory rod, "really we must introduce this game at home. We Persians are so different from you Egyptians. Everything new has a special charm for us, while to you it is just as hateful. I shall describe the game to Our mother Kassandane, and she will be delighted to allow my brother's wives this new amusement."

"Yes, do, do!" exclaimed the fair Tachot blushing deeply. "Then Nitetis can play too, and fancy herself back again at home and among those she loves; and Bartja," she added in a low voice, "whenever you watch the hoops flying, you too must remember this hour."

"I shall never forget it," answered he with a smile, and then, turning to his future sister-in-law, he called out cheerfully, "Be of good courage, Nitetis, you will be happier than you fancy with us. We Asiatics know how to honor beauty; and prove it by taking many wives."

Nitetis sighed, and the queen Ladice exclaimed, "On the contrary, that very fact proves that you understand but poorly how to appreciate woman's nature! You can have no idea, Bartja, what a woman feels on finding that her husband--the man who to her is more than life itself, and to whom she would gladly and without reserve give up all that she treasures as most sacred--looks down on her with the same kind of admiration that he bestows on a pretty toy, a noble steed, or a well-wrought wine-bowl. But it is yet a thousand-fold more painful to feel that the love which every woman has a right to possess for herself alone, must be shared with a hundred others!"

"There speaks the jealous wife!" exclaimed Amasis. "Would you not fancy that I had often given her occasion to doubt my faithfulness?"

"No, no, my husband," answered Ladice, "in this point the Egyptian men surpass other nations, that they remain content with that which they have once loved; indeed I venture to assert that an Egyptian wife is the happiest of women.

[According to Diodorus (I. 27) the queen of Egypt held a higher position than the king himself. The monuments and lists of names certainly prove that women could rule with sovereign power. The husband of the heiress to the throne became king. They had their own revenues (Diodorus I. 52) and when a princess, after death, was admitted among the goddesses, she received her own priestesses. (Edict of Canopus.) During the reigns of the Ptolemies many coins were stamped with the queen's image and cities were named for them. We notice also that sons, in speaking of their descent, more

frequently reckon it from the mother's than the father's side, that a married woman is constantly alluded to as the "mistress" or "lady" of the house, that according to many a Greek Papyrus they had entire disposal of all their property, no matter in what it consisted, in short that the weaker sex seems to have enjoyed equal influence with the stronger.]

Even the Greeks, who in so many things may serve as patterns to us, do not know how to appreciate woman rightly. Most of the young Greek girls pass their sad childhood in close rooms, kept to the wheel and the loom by their mothers and those who have charge of them, and when marriageable, are transferred to the quiet house of a husband they do not know, and whose work in life and in the state allows him but seldom to visit his wife's apartments. Only when the most intimate friends and nearest relations are with her husband, does she venture to appear in their midst, and then shyly and timidly, hoping to hear a little of what is going on in the great world outside. Ah, indeed! we women thirst for knowledge too, and there are certain branches of learning at least, which it cannot be right to withhold from those who are to be the mothers and educators of the next generation. What can an Attic mother, without knowledge, without experience, give to her daughters? Naught but her own ignorance. And so it is, that a Hellene, seldom satisfied with the society of his lawful, but, mentally, inferior wife, turns for satisfaction to those courtesans, who, from their constant intercourse with men, have acquired knowledge, and well understand how to adorn it with the flowers of feminine grace, and to season it with the salt of a woman's more refined and delicate wit. In Egypt it is different. A young girl is allowed to associate freely with the most enlightened men. Youths and maidens meet constantly on festive occasions, learn to know and love one another. The wife is not the slave, but the friend of her husband; the one supplies the deficiencies of the other. In weighty questions the stronger decides, but the lesser cares of life are left to her who is the greater in small things. The daughters grow up under careful guidance, for the mother is neither ignorant nor inexperienced. To be virtuous and diligent in her affairs becomes easy to a woman, for she sees that it increases his happiness whose dearest possession she boasts of being, and who belongs to her alone. The women only do that which pleases us! but the Egyptian men understand the art of making us pleased with that which is really good, and with that alone. On the shores of the Nile, Phocylides of Miletus and Hipponax of Ephesus would never have dared to sing their libels on women, nor could the fable of Pandora have been possibly invented here!"

[Simonides of Amorgos, an Iambic poet, who delighted in writing satirical verses on women. He divides them into different classes, which he compares to unclean animals, and considers that the only woman worthy of a husband and able to make him happy must be like the bee. The well-known fable of Pandora owes its origin to Simonides. He lived about 650 B. C. The Egyptians too, speak very severely of bad women, comparing them quite in the Simonides style to beasts of prey (hyenas, lions and panthers). We find this sentence on a vicious woman: She is a collection of every kind of meanness, and a bag full of wiles. Chabas, Papyr. magrque Harris. p. 135. Phocylides of Miletus, a rough and sarcastic, but observant man, imitated Simonides in his style of writing. But the deformed Hipponax of Ephesus, a poet crushed down by poverty, wrote far bitterer verses than Phocylides. He lived about 550 B. C. "His own ugliness (according to Bernhardt) is reflected in every one of his Choliambics."]

"How beautifully you speak!" exclaimed Bartja. "Greek was not easy to learn, but I am very glad now that I did not give it up in despair, and really paid attention to Croesus' lessons."

Who could those men have been," asked Darius, "who dared to speak evil of women?"

"A couple of Greek poets," answered Amasis, "the boldest of men, for I confess I would rather provoke a lioness than a woman. But these Greeks do not know what fear is. I will give you a specimen of Hipponax's Poetry:

"There are but two days when a wife,
Brings pleasure to her husband's life,
The wedding-day, when hopes are bright,
And the day he buries her out of his sight."

"Cease, cease," cried Ladice stopping her ears, that is too had. Now, Persians, you can see what manner of man Amasis is. For the sake of a joke, he will laugh at those who hold precisely the same opinion as himself. There could not be a better husband.

"Nor a worse wife," laughed Amasis. "Thou wilt make men think that I am a too obedient husband. But now farewell, my children; our young heroes must look at this our city of Sais; before parting, however, I will repeat to them what the malicious Siuionides has sung of a good wife:

"Dear to her spouse from youth to age she grows;
Fills with fair girls and sturdy boys his house;
Among all women womanliest seems,
And heavenly grace about her mild brow gleams.
A gentle wife, a noble spouse she walks,
Nor ever with the gossip mongers talks.
Such women sometimes Zeus to mortals gives,
The glory and the solace of their lives."

"Such is my Ladice! now farewell!"

"Not yet!" cried Bartja. "Let me first speak in defence of our poor Persia and instil fresh courage into my future sister-in-law; but no! Darius, thou must speak, thine eloquence is as great as thy skill in figures and swordsmanship!"

"Thou speakst of me as if I were a gossip or a shopkeeper,"--[This nickname, which Darius afterwards earned, is more fully spoken of]-- answered the son of Hystaspes. "Be it so; I have been burning all this time to defend the customs of our country. Know then, Ladice, that if Auramazda dispose the heart of our king in his own good ways, your daughter will not be his slave, but his friend. Know also, that in Persia, though certainly only at high festivals, the king's wives have their places at the men's table, and that we pay the highest reverence to our wives and mothers. A king of Babylon once took a Persian wife; in the broad plains of the Euphrates she fell sick of longing for her native mountains; he caused a gigantic structure to be raised on arches, and the summit thereof to be covered with a depth of rich earth; caused the choicest trees and flowers to be planted there, and watered by artificial machinery. This wonder completed, he led his wife thither; from its top she could look down into the plains below, as from the heights of

Rachined, and with this costly gift he presented her. Tell me, could even an Egyptian give more?"

[This stupendous erection is said to have been constructed by Nebuchadnezzar for his Persian wife Amytis. Curtius V. 5. Josephus contra Apion. I. 19. Antiquities X. II. 1. Diod. II. 10. For further particulars relative to the hanging-gardens, see later notes.]

"And did she recover?" asked Nitetis, without raising her eyes.

"She recovered health and happiness; and you too will soon feel well and happy in our country."

"And now," said Ladice with a smile, what, think you, contributed most to the young queen's recovery? the beautiful mountain or the love of the husband, who erected it for her sake?"

"Her husband's love," cried the young girls.

"But Nitetis would not disdain the mountain either," maintained Bartja, "and I shall make it my care that whenever the court is at Babylon, she has the hanging-gardens for her residence."

"But now come," exclaimed Amasis, "unless you wish to see the city in darkness. Two secretaries have been awaiting me yonder for the last two hours. Ho! Sachons! give orders to the captain of the guard to accompany our noble guests with a hundred men."

"But why? a single guide, perhaps one of the Greek officers, would be amply sufficient."

"No, my young friends, it is better so. Foreigners can never be too prudent in Egypt. Do not forget this, and especially be careful not to ridicule the sacred animals. And now farewell, my young heroes, till we meet again this evening over a merry wine-cup."

The Persians then quitted the palace, accompanied by their interpreter, a Greek, but who had been brought up in Egypt, and spoke both languages with equal facility.

[Psamtik I. is said to have formed a new caste, viz.: the caste of Interpreters, out of those Greeks who had been born and bred up in Egypt. Herod. II. 154. Herodotus himself was probably conducted by such a "Dragoman."]

Those streets of Sais which lay near the palace wore a pleasant aspect. The houses, many of which were five stories high, were generally covered with pictures or hieroglyphics; galleries with balustrades of carved and gaily-painted wood-work, supported by columns also brightly painted, ran round the walls surrounding the courts. In many cases the proprietor's name and rank was to be read on the door, which was, however, well closed and locked. Flowers and shrubs ornamented the flat roofs, on which the Egyptians loved to spend the evening hours, unless indeed, they preferred ascending the mosquito-tower with which nearly every house was provided. These troublesome insects, engendered by the Nile, fly low, and these little watch-towers were built as a protection from them.

The young Persians admired the great, almost excessive cleanliness, with

which each house, nay, even the streets themselves, literally shone. The door-plates and knockers sparkled in the sun; paintings, balconies and columns all had the appearance of having been only just finished, and even the street-pavement looked as if it were often scoured.

[The streets of Egyptian towns seem to have been paved, judging from the ruins of Alabastron and Memphis. We know at least with certainty that this was the case with those leading to the temples.]

But as the Persians left the neighborhood of the Nile and the palace, the streets became smaller. Sais was built on the slope of a moderately high hill, and had only been the residence of the Pharaohs for two centuries and a half, but, during that comparatively short interval, had risen from an unimportant place into a town of considerable magnitude.

On its river-side the houses and streets were brilliant, but on the hill-slope lay, with but few more respectable exceptions, miserable, poverty-stricken huts constructed of acacia-boughs and Nile-mud. On the north-west rose the royal citadel.

"Let us turn back here," exclaimed Gyges to his young companions. During his father's absence he was responsible as their guide and protector, and now perceived that the crowd of curious spectators, which had hitherto followed them, was increasing at every step.

"I obey your orders," replied the interpreter, "but yonder in the valley, at the foot of that hill, lies the Saitic city of the dead, and for foreigners I should think that would be of great interest."

"Go forward!" cried Bartja. "For what did we leave Persia, if not to behold these remarkable objects?"

On arriving at an open kind of square surrounded by workmen's booths, and not far from the city of the dead, confused cries rose among the crowd behind them.

[Artisans, as well among the ancient as the modern Egyptians, were accustomed to work in the open air.]

The children shouted for joy, the women called out, and one voice louder than the rest was heard exclaiming: "Come hither to the fore-court of the temple, and see the works of the great magician, who comes from the western oases of Libya and is endowed with miraculous gifts by Chunsu, the giver of good counsels, and by the great goddess Hekt."

"Follow me to the small temple yonder," said the interpreter, "and you will behold a strange spectacle." He pushed a way for himself and the Persians through the crowd, obstructed in his course by many a fallow woman and naked child; and at length came back with a priest, who conducted the strangers into the fore-court of the temple. Here, surrounded by various chests and boxes, stood a man in the dress of a priest; beside him on the earth knelt two negroes. The Libyan was a man of gigantic stature, with great suppleness of limb and a pair of piercing black eyes. In his hand he held a wind-instrument resembling a modern clarinet, and a number of snakes, known in Egypt to be poisonous, lay coiling themselves over his breast and arms.

On finding himself in the presence of the Persians he bowed low, inviting them by a solemn gesture to gaze at his performances; he then cast off

his white robe and began all kinds of tricks with the snakes.

He allowed them to bite him, till the blood trickled down his cheeks; compelled them by the notes of his flute to assume an erect position and perform a kind of dancing evolution; by spitting into their jaws he transformed them to all appearance into motionless rods; and then, dashing them all on to the earth, performed a wild dance in their midst, yet without once touching a single snake.

Like one possessed, he contorted his pliant limbs until his eyes seemed starting from his head and a bloody foam issued from his lips.

Suddenly he fell to the ground, apparently lifeless. A slight movement of the lips and a low hissing whistle were the only signs of life; but, on hearing the latter, the snakes crept up and twined themselves like living rings around his neck, legs and body. At last he rose, sang a hymn in praise of the divine power which had made him a magician, and then laid the greater number of his snakes in one of the chests, retaining a few, probably his favorites, to serve as ornaments for his neck and arms.

The second part of this performance consisted of clever conjuring-tricks, in which he swallowed burning flax, balanced swords while dancing, their points standing in the hollow of his eye; drew long strings and ribbons out of the noses of the Egyptian children, exhibited the well-known cup-and-ball trick, and, at length, raised the admiration of the spectators to its highest pitch, by producing five living rabbits from as many ostrich-eggs.

The Persians formed no unthankful portion of the assembled crowd; on the contrary, this scene, so totally new, impressed them deeply.

They felt as if in the realm of miracles, and fancied they had now seen the rarest of all Egyptian rarities. In silence they took their way back to the handsomer streets of Sais, without noticing how many mutilated Egyptians crossed their path. These poor disfigured creatures were indeed no unusual sight for Asiatics, who punished many crimes by the amputation of a limb. Had they enquired however, they would have heard that, in Egypt, the man deprived of his hand was a convicted forger, the woman of her nose, an adulteress; that the man without a tongue had been found guilty of high treason or false witness; that the loss of the ears denoted a spy, and that the pale, idiotic-looking woman yonder had been guilty of infanticide, and had been condemned to hold the little corpse three days and three nights in her arms. What woman could retain her senses after these hours of torture?--[Diodorus I. 77.]

The greater number of the Egyptian penal laws not only secured the punishment of the criminal, but rendered a repetition of the offence impossible.

The Persian party now met with a hindrance, a large crowd having assembled before one of the handsomest houses in the street leading to the temple of Neith. The few windows of this house that could be seen (the greater number opening on the garden and court) were closed with shutters, and at the door stood an old man, dressed in the plain white robe of a priest's servant. He was endeavoring, with loud cries, to prevent a number of men of his own class from carrying a large chest out of the house.

"What right have you to rob my master?" he shrieked indignantly. "I am the guardian of this house, and when my master left for Persia (may the gods destroy that land!) he bade me take especial care of this chest in which his manuscripts lay."

"Compose yourself, old Hib!" shouted one of these inferior priests, the same whose acquaintance we made on the arrival of the Asiatic Embassy. "We are here in the name of the high-priest of the great Neith, your master's master. There must be queer papers in this box, or Neithotep would not have honored us with his commands to fetch them."

"But I will not allow my master's papers to be stolen," shrieked the old man. "My master is the great physician Nebenchari, and I will secure his rights, even if I must appeal to the king himself."

"There," cried the other, "that will do; out with the chest, you fellows. Carry it at once to the high-priest; and you, old man, would do more wisely to hold your tongue and remember that the high-priest is your master as well as mine. Get into the house as quick as you can, or to-morrow we shall have to drag you off as we did the chest to-day!" So saying, he slammed the heavy door, the old man was flung backward into the house and the crowd saw him no more.

The Persians had watched this scene and obtained an explanation of its meaning from their interpreter. Zopyrus laughed on hearing that the possessor of the stolen chest was the oculist Nebenchari, the same who had been sent to Persia to restore the sight of the king's mother, and whose grave, even morose temper had procured him but little love at the court of Cambyses.

Bartja wished to ask Amasis the meaning of this strange robbery, but Gyges begged him not to interfere in matters with which he had no concern. Just as they reached the palace, and darkness, which in Egypt so quickly succeeds the daylight, was already stealing over the city, Gyges felt himself hindered from proceeding further by a firm hand on his robe, and perceived a stranger holding his finger on his lips in token of silence.

"When can I speak with you alone and unobserved?" he whispered.

"What do you wish from me?"

"Ask no questions, but answer me quickly. By Mithras," I have weighty matters to disclose."

"You speak Persian, but your garments would proclaim you an Egyptian."

"I am a Persian, but answer me quickly or we shall be noticed. When can I speak to you alone?"

"To-morrow morning."

"That is too late."

"Well then, in a quarter of an hour, when it is quite dark, at this gate of the palace."

"I shall expect you."

So saying the man vanished. Once within the palace, Gyges left Bartja and Zopyrus, fastened his sword into his girdle, begged Darius to do the same and to follow him, and was soon standing again under the great portico with the stranger, but this time in total darkness.

"Auramazda be praised that you are there!" cried the latter in Persian to the young Lydian; "but who is that with you?"

"Darius, the son of Hystaspes, one of the Achaemenidae; and my friend."

The stranger bowed low and answered, "It is well, I feared an Egyptian had accompanied you."

"No, we are alone and willing to hear you; but be brief. Who are you and what do you want?"

"My name is Bubares. I served as a poor captain under the great Cyrus. At the taking of your father's city, Sardis, the soldiers were at first allowed to plunder freely; but on your wise father's representing to Cyrus that to plunder a city already taken was an injury to the present, and not to the former, possessor, they were commanded on pain of death to deliver up their booty to their captains, and the latter to cause everything of worth, when brought to them, to be collected in the market-place. Gold and silver trappings lay there in abundance, costly articles of attire studded with precious stones . . ."

"Quick, quick, our time is short," interrupted Gyges.

"You are right. I must be more brief. By keeping for myself an ointment-box sparkling with jewels, taken from your father's palace, I forfeited my life. Croesus, however, pleaded for me with his conqueror Cyrus; my life and liberty were granted me, but I was declared a dishonored man. Life in Persia became impossible with disgrace lying heavily on my soul; I took ship from Smyrna to Cyprus, entered the army there, fought against Amasis, and was brought hither by Phanes as a prisoner-of-war. Having always served as a horse-soldier, I was placed among those slaves who had charge of the king's horses, and in six years became an overseer. Never have I forgotten the debt of gratitude I owe to your father; and now my turn has come to render him a service."

"The matter concerns my father? then speak--tell me, I beseech you!"

"Immediately. Has Croesus offended the crown prince?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Your father is on a visit to Rhodopis this evening, at Naukratis?"

"How did you hear this?"

"From himself. I followed him to the boat this morning and sought to cast myself at his feet."

"And did you succeed?"

"Certainly. He spoke a few gracious words with me, but could not wait to hear what I would say, as his companions were already on board when he arrived. His slave Sandon, whom I know, told me that they were going to Naukratis, and would visit the Greek woman whom they call Rhodopis."

"He spoke truly."

"Then you must speed to the rescue. At the time that the market-place was full."

[The forenoon among the Greeks was regulated by the business of the market. "When the market-place begins to fill, when it is full, when it becomes empty." It would be impossible to define this division of time exactly according to our modern methods of computation, but it seems certain that the market was over by the afternoon. The busiest hours were probably from 10 till 1. At the present day the streets of Athens are crowded during those hours; but in Summer from two to four o'clock are utterly deserted.]

"Ten carriages and two boats, full of Ethiopian soldiers under the command of an Egyptian captain, were sent off to Naukratis to surround the house of Rhodopis and make captives of her guests."

"Ha, treachery!" exclaimed Gyges.

"But how can they wish to injure your father?" said Darius. "They know that the vengeance of Cambyses--"

"I only know," repeated Bubares, "that this night the house of Rhodopis, in which your father is, will be surrounded by Ethiopian soldiers. I myself saw to the horses which transport them thither and heard Pentaur, one of the crown-prince's fan-bearers, call to them, 'Keep eyes and ears open, and let the house of Rhodopis be surrounded, lest he should escape by the back door. If possible spare his life, and kill him only if he resist. Bring him alive to Sais, and you shall receive twenty rings of gold.'"

[It is no longer a matter of question, that before the time of the Persians, and therefore at this point of our history, no money had been coined in Egypt. The precious metals were weighed out and used as money in the shape of rings, animals, etc. On many of the monuments we see people purchasing goods and weighing out the gold in payment; while others are paying their tribute in gold rings. These rings were in use as a medium of payment up to the time of the Ptolemies. Pliny XXXIII. 1. Balances with weights in the form of animals may be seen in Wilkinson. During the reigns of the Ptolemies many coins were struck.]

"But could that allude to my father?"

"Certainly not," cried Darius.

"It is impossible to say," murmured Bubares. "In this country one can never know what may happen."

"How long does it take for a good horse to reach Naukratis?"

"Three hours, if he can go so long, and the Nile has not overflowed the road too much."

"I will be there in two."

"I shall ride with you," said Darius.

"No, you must remain here with Zopyrus for Bartja's protection. Tell the servants to get ready."

"But Gyges--"

"Yes, you will stay here and excuse me to Amasis. Say I could not come to the evening revel on account of headache, toothache, sickness, anything you like."

"I shall ride Bartja's Nicaean horse; and you, Bubares, will follow me on Darius's. You will lend him, my brother?"

"If I had ten thousand, you should have them all."

"Do you know the way to Naukratis, Bubares?"

"Blindfold."

"Then go, Darius, and tell them to get your horse and Bartja's ready! To linger would be sin. Farewell Darius, perhaps forever! Protect Bartja! Once more, farewell!"

CHAPTER VIII.

It wanted two hours of midnight. Bright light was streaming through the open windows of Rhodopis' house, and sounds of mirth and gaiety fell on the ear. Her table had been adorned with special care in Croesus' honor.

On the cushions around it lay the guests with whom we are already acquainted: Theodorus, Ibykus, Phanes, Aristomachus, the merchant Theopompus of Miletus, Croesus and others, crowned with chaplets of poplar and roses.

Theodorus the sculptor was speaking: "Egypt seems to me," he said, "like a girl who persists in wearing a tight and painful shoe only because it is of gold, while within her reach he beautiful and well-fitting slippers in which she could move at ease, if she only would."

"You refer to the Egyptians' pertinacity in retaining traditional forms and customs?" asked Croesus.

"Certainly I do," answered the sculptor. "Two centuries ago Egypt was unquestionably the first of the nations. In Art and Science she far excelled us; but we learnt their methods of working, improved on them, held firm to no prescribed proportions, but to the natural types alone, gave freedom and beauty to their unbending outlines, and now have left our masters far behind us. But how was this possible? simply because the Egyptians, bound by unalterable laws, could make no progress; we, on the contrary, were free to pursue our course in the wide arena of art as far as will and power would allow."

"But how can an artist be compelled to fashion statues alike, which are meant to differ from each other in what they represent?"

"In this case that can be easily explained. The entire human body is

divided by the Egyptians into 21 1/4 parts, in accordance with which division the proportion of each separate limb is regulated. I, myself, have laid a wager with Amasis, in presence of the first Egyptian sculptor, (a priest of Thebes), that, if I send my brother Telekles, in Ephesus, dimensions, proportion and attitude, according to the Egyptian method, he and I together can produce a statue which shall look as if sculptured from one block and by one hand, though Telekles is to carve the lower half at Ephesus, and I the upper here in Sais, and under the eye of Amasis."

[These numbers, and the story which immediately follows, are taken from Diodorus I. 98. Plato tells us that, in his time, a law existed binding the Egyptian artists to execute their works with exactly the same amount of beauty or its reverse, as those which had been made more than a thousand years before. This statement is confirmed by the monuments; but any one well acquainted with Egyptian art can discern a marked difference in the style of each epoch. At the time of the ancient kingdom the forms were compressed and stunted; under Seti I. beauty of proportion reached its highest point. During, and after the 20th dynasty, the style declined in beauty; in the 26th, under the descendants of Psammetichus, we meet with a last revival of art, but the ancient purity of form was never again attained.]

"And shall you win your wager?"

"Undoubtedly. I am just going to begin this trick of art; it will as little deserve the name of a work of art, as any Egyptian statue."

"And yet there are single sculptures here which are of exquisite workmanship; such, for instance, as the one Amasis sent to Samos as a present to Polykrates. In Memphis I saw a statue said to be about three thousand years old, and to represent a king who built the great Pyramid, which excited my admiration in every respect. With what certainty and precision that unusually hard stone has been wrought! the muscles, how carefully carved! especially in the breast, legs and feet; the harmony of the features too, and, above all, the polish of the whole, leave nothing to be desired."

"Unquestionably. In all the mechanism of art, such as precision and certainty in working even the hardest materials, the Egyptians, though they have so long stood still in other points, are still far before us; but to model form with freedom, to breathe, like Prometheus, a soul into the stone, they will never learn until their old notions on this subject have been entirely abandoned. Even the pleasing varieties of corporeal life cannot be represented by a system of mere proportions, much less those which are inner and spiritual. Look at the countless statues which have been erected during the last three thousand years, in all the temples and palaces from Naukratis up to the Cataracts. They are all of one type, and represent men of middle age, with grave but benevolent countenances. Yet they are intended, some as statues of aged monarchs, others to perpetuate the memory of young princes. The warrior and the lawgiver, the blood-thirsty tyrant and the philanthropist are only distinguished from each other by a difference in size, by which the Egyptian sculptor expresses the idea of power and strength. Amasis orders a statue just as I should a sword. Breadth and length being specified, we both of us know quite well, before the master has begun his work, what we shall receive when it is finished. How could I possibly fashion an infirm old man like an eager youth? a pugilist like a runner

in the foot-race? a poet like a warrior? Put Ibykus and our Spartan friend side by side, and tell me what you would say, were I to give to the stern warrior the gentle features and gestures of our heart-ensnaring poet."

"Well, and how does Amasis answer your remarks on this stagnation in art?"

"He deplores it; but does not feel himself strong enough to abolish the restrictive laws of the priests."

"And yet," said the Delphian, "he has given a large sum towards the embellishment of our new temple, expressly, (I use his own words) for the promotion of Hellenic art!"

"That is admirable in him," exclaimed Croesus. "Will the Alkmaeonidae soon have collected the three hundred talents necessary for the completion of the temple? Were I as rich as formerly I would gladly undertake the entire cost; notwithstanding that your malicious god so cruelly deceived me, after all my offerings at his shrine. For when I sent to ask whether I should begin the war with Cyrus, he returned this answer: I should destroy a mighty kingdom by crossing the river Halys. I trusted the god, secured the friendship of Sparta according to his commands, crossed the boundary stream, and, in so doing, did indeed destroy a mighty kingdom; not however that of the Medes and Persians, but my own poor Lydia, which, as a satrapy of Cambyses, finds its loss of independence a hard and uncongenial yoke."

"You blame the god unjustly," answered Phryxus. It cannot be his fault that you, in your human conceit, should have misinterpreted his oracle. The answer did not say 'the kingdom of Persia,' but 'a kingdom' should be destroyed through your desire for war. Why did you not enquire what kingdom was meant? Was not your son's fate truly prophesied by the oracle? and also that on the day of misfortune he would regain his speech? And when, after the fall of Sardis, Cyrus granted your wish to enquire at Delphi whether the Greek gods made a rule of requiting their benefactors by ingratitude, Loxias answered that he had willed the best for you, but was controlled by a mightier power than himself, by that inexorable fate which had foretold to thy great ancestor, that his fifth successor was doomed to destruction."

"In the first days of my adversity I needed those words far more than now," interrupted Croesus. "There was a time when I cursed your god and his oracles; but later, when with my riches my flatterers had left me, and I became accustomed to pronounce judgment on my own actions, I saw clearly that not Apollo, but my own vanity had been the cause of my ruin. How could 'the kingdom to be destroyed' possibly mean mine, the mighty realm of the powerful Croesus, the friend of the gods, the hitherto unconquered leader? Had a friend hinted at this interpretation of the ambiguous oracle, I should have derided, nay, probably caused him to be punished. For a despotic ruler is like a fiery steed; the latter endeavors to kick him who touches his wounds with intent to heal; the former punishes him who lays a hand on the weak or failing points of his diseased mind. Thus I missed what, if my eyes had not been dazzled, I might easily have seen; and now that my vision is clearer, though I have nothing to lose, I am far more often anxious than in the days when none could possibly lose more than I. In comparison with those days, Phryxus, I may be called a poor man now, but Cambyses does not leave me to famish, and I can still raise a talent for your temple."

Phryxus expressed his thanks, and Phanes remarked "The Alkmaeonida; will be sure to erect a beautiful edifice, for they are rich and ambitious, and desirous of gaining favor with the Amphiktyons, in order, by their aid, to overthrow the tyrants, secure to themselves a higher position than that of the family to which I belong, and with this, the guidance of state-affairs."

"Is it true, as people say," asked Ibykus, "that next to Agarista with whom Megakles received so rich a dowry, you, Croesus, have been the largest contributor to the wealth of the Alkmaeonidae?"

"True enough," answered Croesus laughing.

"Tell us the story, I beg," said Rhodopis.

"Well," answered Croesus, "Alkmaeon of Athens once appeared at my court; his cheerfulness and cultivation pleased me well, and I retained him near me for some time. One day I showed him my treasure-chambers, at the sight of which he fell into despair, called himself a common beggar and declared that one good handful of these precious things would make him a happy man. I at once allowed him to take as much gold away as he could carry. What think you did Alkaemmon on this? sent for high Lydian riding-boots, an apron and a basket, had the one secured behind him, put the others on, and filled them all with gold, till they could hold no more. Not content with this, he strewed gold-dust in his hair and beard and filled his mouth to that extent that he appeared in the act of choking. In each hand he grasped a golden dish, and thus laden dragged himself out of the treasure-house, falling exhausted as he crossed the threshold. Never have I laughed so heartily as at this sight."

"But did you grant him all these treasures?" said Rhodopis.

"Yes, yes, my friend; and did not think even then, that I had paid too dearly for the experience that gold can make fools even of clever men."

"You were the most generous of monarchs," cried Phanes.

"And make a tolerably contented beggar," answered Croesus. "But tell me, Phryxus, how much has Amasis contributed to your collection?"

"He gave fifty tons of alum."

"A royal gift!"

"And the prince Psamtik?"

"On my appealing to him by his father's munificence, he turned his back on me, and answered with a bitter laugh: 'Collect money for the destruction of your temple, and I am ready to double my father's donation!'"

"The wretch!"

"Say rather: the true Egyptian! to Psamtik everything foreign is an abomination."

"How much have the Greeks in Naukratis contributed?"

"Beside munificent private donations, each community has given twenty minae."

"That is much."

"Philoinus, the Sybarite, alone sent me a thousand drachmm," and accompanied his gift with a most singular epistle. May I read it aloud, Rhodopis?"

"Certainly," answered she, "it will show you that the drunkard has repented of his late behaviour."

The Delphian began: "Philoinus to Phryxus: It grieves me that at Rhodopis' house the other night I did not drink more; for had I done so I should have lost consciousness entirely, and so have been unable to offend even the smallest insect. My confounded abstemiousness is therefore to blame, that I can no longer enjoy a place at the best table in all Egypt. I am thankful, however, to Rhodopis for past enjoyment, and in memory of her glorious roastbeef (which has bred in me the wish to buy her cook at any price) I send twelve large spits for roasting oxen, --[Rhodopis is said to have sent such a gift to Delphi. Herod.]--and beg they may be placed in some treasure-house at Delphi as an offering from Rhodopis. As for myself, being a rich man, I sign my name for a thousand drachmae, and beg that my gift may be publicly announced at the next Pythian games. To that rude fellow, Aristomachus of Sparta, express my thanks for the effectual manner in which he fulfilled my intention in coming to Egypt. I came hither for the purpose of having a tooth extracted by an Egyptian dentist said to take out teeth without causing much pain.

[The Egyptian dentists must have been very skilful. Artificial teeth have been discovered in the jaws of mummies. See Blumenbach on the teeth of the ancient Egyptians, and on mummies.]

Aristomachus, however, knocked out the defective tooth and so saved me from an operation, the thought of which had often made me tremble. On recovering consciousness, I found that three teeth had been knocked into my mouth, the diseased one and two others, which though healthy, would probably at some future time have caused me pain. Salute Rhodopis and the handsome Phanes from me. You I invite to an entertainment at my house in Sybaris, this day year. We are accustomed to issue invitations somewhat early, on account of my necessary preparations. I have caused this epistle to be written by my slave Sophotatus in an adjoining chamber, as merely to behold the labor of writing causes cramp in my fingers."

A burst of laughter arose at these words, but Rhodopis said: "This letter gives me pleasure; it proves that Philoinus is not bad at heart. Brought up a Sybarite" . . . She was suddenly interrupted by the voice of a stranger, who had entered unperceived, and, after apologizing to the venerable hostess and her guests for appearing without invitation among them, continued thus: "I am Gyges the son of Croesus; and it has not been merely for pastime, that I have ridden over from Sais in two hours lest I should arrive too late!"

"Menon, a cushion for our guest!" cried Rhodopis. "Be welcome to my house and take some repose after your wild, thoroughly Lydian, ride."

"By the dog, Gyges!" exclaimed Croesus.

[An oath of Rhadamanthus used in order to avoid mentioning the names of the gods. Schol. Aristoph. Aves. 520.]

"What brings thee here at this hour? I begged thee not to quit Bartja's side . . . But how thou look'st! what is the matter? has aught happened? speak, speak!"

In the first moment Gyges could not answer a word. To see his beloved father, for whose very life he had been in such anxiety, a safe and happy guest at this rich banquet, seemed to rob him of his speech a second time. At last, however, he was able to say: "The gods be praised, my father, that I see thee safe once more! Think not I forsook my post thoughtlessly. Alas! I am forced to appear as a bird of evil omen in this cheerful assembly. Know at once, ye guests, for I dare not lose time in preparing my words, that a treacherous assault awaits ye!"

They all sprang up as if struck by lightning. Aristomachus silently loosened his sword in its scabbard; Phanes extended his arms as if to discern whether the old athletic elasticity still dwelt there.

"What can it be?--what is their design?" echoed from all sides.

"This house is surrounded by Ethiopian soldiers!" answered Gyges. "A faithful fellow confided to me that the crown-prince had designs on one of your number; he was to be taken alive if possible, but killed if he resisted. Dreading lest thou shouldst be this victim, my father, I sped hither. The fellow had not lied. This house is surrounded. My horse shied on reaching your garden-gate, Rhodopis, jaded as he was. I dismounted, and could discern behind every bush the glitter of weapons and the eager eyes of men lying in ambush. They allowed us, however, to enter unmolested."

At this moment Knakias rushed in crying, "Important news! On my way to the Nile to fetch water with which to prepare the wine-cup, I have just met a man who, in his haste, nearly ran over me.

[The water of the Nile has a very agreeable flavor. It is called by one traveller the champagne among the waters. The ladies of the Sultan's harem send for this water even from Constantinople, and the Arabs say, that if Mahomet had drunk thereof he would have desired to live for ever.]

It was an Ethiop, one of Phanes' boatmen, and he tells that just as he sprang out of the boat to bathe, a royal bark came alongside and a soldier asked the rest of the crew in whose service they were. On the helmsman answering, 'in Phanes' service,' the royal boat passed on slowly. He, however, (the rower who was bathing), seated himself in fun on the rudder of the royal boat, and heard one Ethiopian soldier on board say to another, 'Keep that craft well in sight; now we know where the bird sits, and it will be easy to catch him. Remember, Psantik has promised us fifty gold rings if we bring the Athenian to Sais dead or alive.' This is the report of Sebek, who has been in your service seven years, O Phanes."

To both these accounts Phanes listened calmly. Rhodopis trembled. Aristomachus exclaimed, "Not a hair of your head shall be touched, if Egypt perish for it!" Croesus advised prudence. A tremendous excitement had mastered the whole party.

At last Phanes broke silence, saying: "Reflection is never more necessary than in a time of danger. I have thought the matter over, and see clearly that escape will be difficult. The Egyptians will try to get rid of me quietly. They know that I intend going on board a Phoecean trireme, which sets sail for Sigeum at a very early hour to-morrow morning, and have therefore no time to lose, if they will seize me. Your garden, Rhodopis, is entirely surrounded, and were I to remain here, your house would no longer be respected as a sanctuary; it would be searched and I taken in it. There can be no doubt that a watch has been set over the Phoecean ship also. Blood shall not be shed in vain on my account."

"But you dare not surrender!" cried Aristomachus.

"No, no, I have a plan," shouted Theopompus the Milesian merchant. "At sunrise to-morrow a ship sails for Miletus laden with Egyptian corn, but not from Naukratis, from Canopus. Take the noble Persian's horse and ride thither. We will cut a way for you through the garden."

"But," said Gyges, "our little band is not strong enough to carry out such an attempt. We number in all ten men, and of these only three have swords; our enemies, on the other hand, number at least a hundred, and are armed to the teeth."

"Lydian!" cried Aristomachus, "wert thou ten times more fainthearted than thou art, and were our enemies double their number, I at least, will fight them!"

Phanes grasped his friend's hand. Gyges turned pale. This brave warrior had called him fainthearted; and again he could find no words to answer; for at every stirring emotion his tongue failed him. Suddenly the blood mounted to his face; his words came quickly and with decision: "Athenian, follow me! and thou, Spartan, who art not wont to use words heedlessly, call no man fainthearted again before thou knowest him. Friends, Phanes is safe, Farewell, father!"

The remaining guests surveyed these two departing men in silent wonder. As they stood there, silently listening, the sound of two horses galloping swiftly away fell on their ear, and after a longer interval a prolonged whistle from the Nile and a cry of distress.

"Where is Knakias?" said Rhodopis to one of her slaves.

"He went into the garden with Phanes and the Persian," was the answer, and as it was being spoken, the old slave re-entered, pale and trembling.

"Have you seen my son?" cried Croesus. "Where is Phanes?"

"I was to bid you farewell from them both."

"Then they are gone.--Whither? How was it possible?" . . .

"The Athenian and the Persian," began the slave, "had a slight dispute in the anteroom. This over, I was told to divest both of their robes. Phanes then put on the stranger's trousers, coat and girdle; on his own curls he placed the pointed Persian cap. The stranger wrapped himself in the Athenian's chiton and mantle, placed the golden circlet above his brow, caused the hair to be shaved from his upper lip, and ordered me to follow him into the garden. Phanes, whom in his present dress, none

could imagine to be other than a Persian, mounted one of the horses still waiting before the gate; the stranger called after him, 'Farewell Gyges, farewell beloved Persian, a pleasant journey to thee, Gyges!' The servant, who had been waiting, followed on the other horse. I could hear the clatter of arms among the bushes, but the Athenian was allowed to depart unmolested, the soldiers, without doubt, believing him to be a Persian.

"On returning to the house the stranger's orders were: 'Accompany me to Phanes' bark, and cease not to call me by the Athenian's name.' 'But the

boatmen will betray you,' I said. 'Then go alone to them,' he answered, 'and command them to receive me as their master, Phanes.' Then I prayed him to allow me to take the dress of the fugitive and become a prey to the pursuers; but he would by no means allow this, and said my gait and carriage would betray me. There alas! he spoke truly, for only the free man can walk erect; the neck of the slave is bent; the schools in which the noble and the freeborn learn grace and beauty of movement are not for him. And so it must remain, the children must be even as the fathers; can the unclean onion-root produce a rose, or the unsightly radish a hyacinth? Constant bondage bows the neck of the slave, but the consciousness of freedom gives dignity to the stature."

"But what has become of my son?" interrupted Croesus.

"He would not accept my poor offer, and took his seat in the bark, sending a thousand greetings unto thee, O king! I cried after him, 'Farewell Phanes! I wish thee a prosperous journey, Phanes!' At that moment a cloud crossed the moon; and from out the thick darkness I heard screams, and cries for help; they did not, however, last long, a shrill whistle followed, then all was silent; and the measured strokes of oars were the only sounds that fell on my ear. I was on the point of returning to relate what I had seen, when the boatman Sebek swam up once more and told as follows: The Egyptians had caused a leak to be made in Phanes' boat, and at a short distance from land it had filled and began to sink. On the boatmen crying for help, the royal bark, which was following, had come up and taken the supposed Phanes on board, but had prevented the rowers from leaving their benches. They all went down with the leaking boat, the daring Sebek alone excepted. Gyges is on board the royal boat; Phanes has escaped, for that whistle must have been intended for the soldiers in ambush at the garden-gate. I searched the bushes, the soldiers were gone, and I could hear the sound of their voices and weapons on their way back to Sais."

The guests listened with eager attention to this tale. At its close a mingled feeling of relief and anxiety was felt by all; relief that their favorite companion had escaped so fearful a danger, anxiety for the brave young Lydian who had risked his life to save him. They praised his generosity, congratulated Croesus on possessing such a son, and finally agreed in the conclusion, that, when the crown-prince discovered the error into which his emissaries had fallen, he must certainly release Gyges, and even make him compensation for what he had suffered at their hands.

The friendship already shown by Amasis, and the fear in which he evidently stood of the Persian power, were the thoughts which had power to calm Croesus, who soon left, in order to pass the night at the house of Theopompus, the Milesian merchant. At parting, Aristomachus said: "Salute Gyges in my name; tell him I ask his forgiveness, and hope one

day either to enjoy his friendship, or, if that cannot be, to meet him as a fair foe on the field of battle."

"Who knows what the future may bring?" answered Croesus giving his hand to the Spartan.

CHAPTER IX.

The sun of a new day had risen over Egypt, but was still low in the east; the copious dew, which, on the Nile, supplies the place of rain, lay sparkling like jewels on the leaves and blossoms, and the morning air, freshened by a north-west wind, invited those to enjoy it who could not bear the heat of mid-day.

Through the door of the country-house, now so well known to us, two female figures have just passed; Melitta, the old slave, and Sappho, the grandchild of Rhodopis.

The latter is not less lovely now, than when we saw her last, asleep. She moves through the garden with a light quick step, her white morning robe with its wide sleeves falling in graceful drapery over her lithe limbs, the thick brown hair straying from beneath the purple kerchief over her head, and a merry, roguish smile lurking round her rosy mouth and in the dimples of her cheeks and chin.

She stooped to pick a rose, dashed the dew from it into the face of her old nurse, laughing at her naughty trick till the clear bell-like tones rang through the garden; fixed the flower in her dress and began to sing in a wonderfully rich and sweet voice--

Cupid once upon a bed
Of roses laid his weary head;
Luckless urchin! not to see
Within the leaves a slumbering bee.
The bee awak'd--with anger wild
The bee awak'd, and stung the child.
Loud and piteous are his cries;
To Venus quick he runs, he flies;
"Oh mother! I am wounded through--
"I die with pain--in sooth I do!
"Stung by some little angry thing.
"Some serpent on a tiny wing,
"A bee it was--for once, I know,
"I heard a rustic call it so."

"Isn't that a very pretty song?" asked the laughing girl. "How stupid of little Eros to mistake a bee for a winged snake! Grandmother says that the great poet Anacreon wrote another verse to this song, but she will not teach it me. Tell me, Melitta, what can there be in that verse? There, you are smiling; dear, darling Melitta, do sing me that one verse. Perhaps though, you don't know it yourself? No? then certainly you can't teach it me."

"That is a new song," answered the old woman, evading her darling's question, "I only know the songs of the good old times. But hark! did not you hear a knock at the gate?"

[The last lines which contain the point of this song are:

Thus he spoke, and she, the while,
Heard him with a soothing smile;
Then said, "My infant, if so much
"Thou feel the little wild bee's touch,
"How must the heart, ah! Cupid be,
"The hapless heart that's stung by thee?"

--Translation from one of Anacreon's songs]

"Yes, of course I did, and I think the sound of horses' hoofs too. Go and see who seeks admission so early. Perhaps, after all, our kind Phanes did not go away yesterday, and has come to bid us farewell once more."

"Phanes is gone," said Melitta, becoming serious, "and Rhodopis has ordered me to send you in when visitors arrive. Go child, that I may open the gate. There, they have knocked again."

Sappho pretended to run in, but instead of obeying her nurse's orders, stopped and hid herself behind a rose-bush, hoping to catch sight of these early guests. In the fear of needlessly distressing her, she had not been told of the events of the previous evening, and at this early hour could only expect to see some very intimate friend of her grandmother's.

Melitta opened the gate and admitted a youth splendidly apparelled, and with fair curling hair.

It was Bartja, and Sappho was so lost in wonder at his beauty, and the Persian dress, to her so strange, that she remained motionless in her hiding-place, her eyes fixed on his face. Just so she had pictured to herself Apollo with the beautiful locks, guiding the sun-chariot.

As Melitta and the stranger came nearer she thrust her little head through the roses to hear what the handsome youth was saying so kindly in his broken Greek.

She heard him ask hurriedly after Croesus and his son; and then, from Melitta's answer, she gathered all that had passed the evening before, trembled for Phanes, felt so thankful to the generous Gyges, and again wondered who this youth in royal apparel could possibly be. Rhodopis had told her about Cyrus's heroic deeds, the fall of Croesus and the power and wealth of the Persians, but still she had always fancied them a wild, uncultivated people. Now, however, her interest in Persia increased with every look at the handsome Bartja. At last Melitta went in to wake her grandmother and announce the guest, and Sappho tried to follow her, but Eros, the foolish boy whose ignorance she had been mocking a moment before, had other intentions. Her dress caught in the thorns, and before she could disengage it, the beautiful Bartja was standing before her, helping her to get free from the treacherous bush.

Sappho could not speak a word even of thanks; she blushed deeply, and stood smiling and ashamed, with downcast eyes.

Bartja, too, generally so full of fun and spirit, looked down at her without speaking, the color mounting to his cheeks.

The silence, however, did not last long, for Sappho, recovering from her fright, burst into a laugh of childish delight at the silent stranger and the odd scene, and fled towards the house like a timid fawn.

In a moment Bartja was himself again; in two strides he reached the young girl, quick as thought seized her hand and held it fast, notwithstanding all her struggles.

"Let me go!" she cried half in earnest and half laughing, raising her dark eyes appealingly to him.

"Why should I?" he answered. "I took you from the rose-bush and shall hold you fast until you give me your sister there, the other rose, from your bosom, to take home with me as a keepsake."

"Please let me go," repeated Sappho, "I will promise nothing unless you let my hand go."

"But if I do, you will not run away again?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, I will give you your liberty, but now you must give me your rose."

"There are plenty on the bush yonder, and more beautiful ones; choose whichever you like. Why do you want just this one?"

"To keep it carefully in remembrance of the most beautiful maiden I ever saw."

"Then I shall certainly not give it to you; for those are not my real friends who tell me I am beautiful, only those who tell me I am good."

"Where did you learn that?"

"From my grandmother Rhodopis."

"Very well, then I will tell you you are better than any other maiden in the whole world."

"How can you say such things, when you don't know me at all? Oh, sometimes I am very naughty and disobedient. If I were really good I should be indoors now instead of talking to you here. My grandmother has forbidden me ever to stay in the garden when visitors are here, and indeed I don't care for all those strange men who always talk about things I cannot understand."

"Then perhaps you would like me to go away too?"

"Oh no, I can understand you quite well; though you cannot speak half so beautifully as our poor Phanes for example, who was obliged to escape so miserably yesterday evening, as I heard Melitta saying just this minute."

"Did you love Phanes?"

"Love him? Oh yes,--I was very fond of him. When I was little he always brought me balls, dolls ninepins from Memphis and Sais; and now that I am

older he teaches me beautiful new songs."

[Jointed dolls for children. Wilkinson II. 427. Note 149. In the Leyden Museum one of these jointed toys is to be seen, in very good preservation.]

"As a parting gift he brought me a tiny Sicilian lapdog, which I am going to call Argos, because he is so white and swiftfooted. But in a few days we are to have another present from the good Phanes, for . . . There, now you can see what I am; I was just going to let out a great secret. My grandmother has strictly forbidden me to tell any one what dear little visitors we are expecting; but I feel as if I had known you a long time already, and you have such kind eyes that I could tell you everything. You see, when I am very happy, I have no one in the whole world to talk to about it, except old Melitta and my grandmother, and, I don't know how it is, that, though they love me so much, they sometimes cannot understand how trifles can make me so happy."

"That is because they are old, and have forgotten what made them happy in their youth. But have you no companions of your own age that you are fond of?"

"Not one. Of course there are many other young girls beside me in Naukratis, but my grandmother says I am not to seek their acquaintance, and if they will not come to us I am not to go to them."

"Poor child! if you were in Persia, I could soon find you a friend. I have a sister called Atossa, who is young and good, like you."

"Oh, what a pity that she did not come here with you!--But now you must tell me your name."

"My name is Bartja."

"Bartja! that is a strange name! Bartja-Bartja. Do you know, I like it. How was the son of Croesus called, who saved our Phanes so generously?"

"Gyges. Darius, Zopyrus and he are my best friends. We have sworn never to part, and to give up our lives for one another," and that is why I came to-day, so early and quite in secret, to help my friend Gyges, in case he should need me."

"Then you rode here for nothing."

"No, by Mithras, that indeed I did not, for this ride brought me to you. But now you must tell me your name."

"I am called Sappho."

"That is a pretty name, and Gyges sings me sometimes beautiful songs by a poetess called Sappho. Are you related to her?"

"Of course. She was the sister of my grandfather Charaxus, and is called the tenth muse or the Lesbian swan. I suppose then, your friend Gyges speaks Greek better than you do?"

"Yes, he learnt Greek and Lydian together as a little child, and speaks them both equally well. He can speak Persian too, perfectly; and what is more, he knows and practises all the Persian virtues."

"Which are the highest virtues then according to you Persians?"

"Truth is the first of all; courage the second, and the third is obedience; these three, joined with veneration for the gods, have made us Persians great."

"But I thought you worshipped no gods?"

"Foolish child! who could live without a god, without a higher ruler? True, they do not dwell in houses and pictures like the gods of the Egyptians, for the whole creation is their dwelling. The Divinity, who must be in every place, and must see and hear everything, cannot be confined within walls."

"Where do you pray then and offer sacrifice, if you have no temples?"

"On the grandest of all altars, nature herself; our favorite altar is the summit of a mountain. There we are nearest to our own god, Mithras, the mighty sun, and to Auramazda, the pure creative light; for there the light lingers latest and returns earliest."

[From Herodotus (I. 131 and 132.), and from many other sources, we see clearly that at the time of the Achaemenidae the Persians had neither temples nor images of their gods. Auramazda and Angramainjus, the principles of good and evil, were invisible existences filling all creation with their countless train of good and evil spirits. Eternity created fire and water. From these Ormusd (Auramazda), the good spirit, took his origin. He was brilliant as the light, pure and good. After having, in the course of 12000 years, created heaven, paradise and the stars, he became aware of the existence of an evil spirit, Ahriman (Angramainjus), black, unclean, malicious and emitting an evil odor. Ormusd determined on his destruction, and a fierce strife began, in which Ormusd was the victor, and the evil spirit lay 3000 years unconscious from the effects of terror. During this interval Ormusd created the sky, the waters, the earth, all useful plants, trees and herbs, the ox and the first pair of human beings in one year. Ahriman, after this, broke loose, and was overcome but not slain. As, after death, the four elements of which all things are composed, Earth, Air, Fire and Water, become reunited with their primitive elements; and as, at the resurrection-day, everything that has been severed combines once more, and nothing returns into oblivion, all is reunited to its primitive elements, Ahriman could only have been slain if his impurity could have been transmuted into purity, his darkness into light. And so evil continued to exist, and to produce impurity and evil wherever and whenever the good spirit created the pure and good. This strife must continue until the last day; but then Ahriman, too, will become pure and holy; the Diws or Daewa (evil spirits) will have absorbed his evil, and themselves have ceased to exist. For the evil spirits which dwell in every human being, and are emanations from Ahriman, will be destroyed in the punishment inflicted on men after death. From Vuller's Ulmai Islam and the Zend-Avesta.]

"Light alone is pure and good; darkness is unclean and evil. Yes, maiden, believe me, God is nearest to us on the mountains; they are his favorite resting-place. Have you never stood on the wooded summit of a high mountain, and felt, amid the solemn silence of nature, the still and

soft, but awful breath of Divinity hovering around you? Have you prostrated yourself in the green forest, by a pure spring, or beneath the open sky, and listened for the voice of God speaking from among the leaves and waters? Have you beheld the flame leaping up to its parent the sun, and bearing with it, in the rising column of smoke, our prayers to the radiant Creator? You listen now in wonder, but I tell you, you would kneel and worship too with me, could I but take you to one of our mountain-altars."

"Oh! if I only could go there with you! if I might only once look down from some high mountain over all the woods and meadows, rivers and valleys. I think, up there, where nothing could be hidden from my eyes, I should feel like an all-seeing Divinity myself. But hark, my grandmother is calling. I must go."

"Oh, do not leave me yet!"

"Is not obedience one of the Persian virtues?"

"But my rose?"

"Here it is."

"Shall you remember me?"

"Why should I not?"

"Sweet maiden, forgive me if I ask one more favor."

"Yes, but ask it quickly, for my grandmother has just called again."

"Take my diamond star as a remembrance of this hour."

"No, I dare not."

"Oh, do, do take it. My father gave it me as a reward, the first time that I killed a bear with my own hand, and it has been my dearest treasure till to-day, but now you shall have it, for you are dearer to me than anything else in the world."

Saying this, he took the chain and star from his breast, and tried to hang it round Sappho's neck. She resisted, but Bartja threw his arms round her, kissed her forehead, called her his only love, and looking down deep into the eyes of the trembling child, placed it round her neck by gentle force.

Rhodopis called a third time. Sappho broke from the young prince's embrace, and was running away, but turned once more at his earnest entreaty and the question, "When may I see you again?" and answered softly, "To-morrow morning at this rose-bush."

"Which held you fast to be my friend."

Sappho sped towards the house. Rhodopis received Bartja, and communicated to him all she knew of his friend's fate, after which the young Persian departed for Sais.

When Rhodopis visited her grandchild's bed that evening, she did not find her sleeping peacefully as usual; her lips moved, and she sighed deeply,

as if disturbed by vexing dreams.

On his way back, Bartja met Darius and Zopyrus, who had followed at once on hearing of their friend's secret departure. They little guessed that instead of encountering an enemy, Bartja had met his first love. Croesus reached Sais a short time before the three friends. He went at once to the king and informed him without reserve of the events of the preceding evening. Amasis pretended much surprise at his son's conduct, assured his friend that Gyges should be released at once, and indulged in some ironical jokes at the discomfiture of Psamtik's attempt to revenge himself.

Croesus had no sooner quitted the king than the crown-prince was announced.

CHAPTER X.

Amasis received his son with a burst of laughter, and without noticing Psamtik's pale and troubled countenance, shouted: "Did not I tell thee, that a simple Egyptian would find it no easy task to catch such a Greek fox? I would have given ten cities to have been by, when thy captive proved to be the stammering Lydian instead of the voluble Athenian."

Psamtik grew paler and paler, and trembling with rage, answered in a suppressed voice: "Is it well, my father, thus to rejoice at an affront offered to thy son? I swear, by the eternal gods, that but for Cambyses' sake that shameless Lydian had not seen the light of another day. But what is it to thee, that thy son becomes a laughing-stock to these beggarly Greeks!"

"Abuse not those who have outwitted thee."

"Outwitted! my plan was so subtly laid, that . . ."

"The finer the web, the sooner broken."

"That that intriguing Greek could not possibly have escaped, if, in violation of all established precedents; the envoy of a foreign power had not taken it upon himself to rescue a man whom we had condemned."

"There thou art in error, my son. We are not speaking of the execution of a judicial sentence, but of the success or failure of an attempt at personal revenge."

"The agents employed were, however, commissioned by the king, and therefore the smallest satisfaction that I can demand of thee, is to solicit from Cambyses the punishment of him who has interfered in the execution of the royal decrees. In Persia, where men bow to the king's will as to the will of a god, this crime will be seen in all its heinousness. The punishment of Gyges is a debt which Cambyses owes us."

"But I have no intention of demanding the payment of this debt," answered Amasis. "On the contrary, I am thankful that Phanes has escaped. Gyges has saved my soul from the guilt of shedding innocent blood, and thine from the reproach of having revenged thyself meanly on a man, to whom thy father is indebted."

"Wilt thou then conceal the whole affair from Cambyses?"

"No, I shall mention it jestingly in a letter, as my manner is, and at the same time caution him against Phanes. I shall tell him that he has barely escaped my vengeance, and will therefore certainly endeavor to stir up the power of Persia against Egypt; and shall entreat my future son-in-law to close his ears to this false accuser. Croesus and Gyges can help us by their friendship more than Phanes can injure by his hatred."

"Is this then thy final resolve? Can I expect no satisfaction?"

"None. I abide by what I have said."

"Then tremble, not alone before Phanes, but before another--before one who holds thee in his power, and who himself is in ours."

"Thou thinkest to alarm me; thou wouldst rend the bond formed only yesterday? Psamtik, Psamtik, I counsel thee to remember, that thou standest before thy father and thy king."

"And thou, forget not that I am thy son! If thou compell'st me to forget that the gods appointed thee to be my father--if I can hope for no help from thee, then I will resort to my own weapons."

"I am curious to learn what these may be."

"And I need not conceal them. Know then that the oculist Nebenchari is in our power."

Amasis turned pale.

"Before thou couldst possibly imagine that Cambyses would sue for the hand of thy daughter, thou sentest this man to the distant realm of Persia, in order to rid thyself of one who shared thy knowledge of the real descent of my, so-called, sister Nitetis. He is still there, and at a hint from the priests will disclose to Cambyses that he has been deceived, and that thou hast ventured to send him, instead of thine own, the child of thy dethroned predecessor Hophra. All Nebenchari's papers are in our possession, the most important being a letter in thine own hand promising his father, who assisted at Nitetis' birth, a thousand gold rings, as an inducement to secrecy even from the priests."

"In whose hands are these papers?" asked Amasis in a freezing tone.

"In the hands of the priesthood."

"Who speak by thy mouth?"

"Thou hast said it."

"Repeat then thy requests."

"Entreat Cambyses to punish Gyges, and grant me free powers to pursue the escaped Phanes as it shall seem good in mine eyes."

"Is that all?"

"Bind thyself by a solemn oath to the priests, that the Greeks shall be

prevented from erecting any more temples to their false gods in Egypt, and that the building of the temple to Apollo, in Memphis, shall be discontinued."

"I expected these demands. The priests have discovered a sharp weapon to wield against me. Well, I am prepared to yield to the wishes of my enemies, with whom thou hast leagued thyself, but only on two conditions. First, I insist that the letter, which I confess to have written to the father of Nebenchari in a moment of inconsideration, be restored to me. If left in the hands of thy party, it could reduce me from a king to the contemptible slave of priestly intrigue."

"That wish is reasonable. The letter shall be returned to thee, if....."

"Not another if! on the contrary, know that I consider thy petition for the punishment of Gyges so imprudent, that I refuse to grant it. Now leave me and appear not again before mine eyes until I summon thee! Yesterday I gained a son, only to lose him to-day. Rise! I demand no tokens of a love and humility, which thou hast never felt. Go to the priests when thou needest comfort and counsel, and see if they can supply a father's place. Tell Neithotep, in whose hands thou art as wax, that he has found the best means of forcing me to grant demands, which otherwise I should have refused. Hitherto I have been willing to make every sacrifice for the sake of upholding Egypt's greatness; but now, when I see that, to attain their own ends, the priests can strive to move me by the threat of treachery to their own country, I feel inclined to regard this privileged caste as a more dangerous enemy to Egypt, than even the Persians. Beware, beware! This once, having brought danger upon Egypt through my own fatherly weakness, I give way to the intrigues of my enemies; but, for the future, I swear by the great goddess Neith, that men shall see and feel I am king; the entire priesthood shall be sacrificed rather than the smallest fraction of my royal will! Silence --depart!"

The prince left, but this time a longer interval was necessary, before the king could regain even outward cheerfulness sufficient to enable him to appear before his guests.

Psamtik went at once to the commander of the native troops, ordered him to banish the Egyptian captain who had failed in executing his revengeful plans, to the quarries of Thebais, and to send the Ethiopians back to their native country. He then hurried to the high-priest of Neith, to inform him how much he had been able to extort from the king,

Neithotep shook his head doubtfully on hearing of Amasis' threats, and dismissed the prince with a few words of exhortation, a practice he never omitted.

Psamtik returned home, his heart oppressed and his mind clouded with a sense of unsatisfied revenge, of a new and unhappy rupture with his father, a fear of foreign derision, a feeling of his subjection to the will of the priests, and of a gloomy fate which had hung over his head since his birth.

His once beautiful wife was dead; and, of five blooming children, only one daughter remained to him, and a little son, whom he loved tenderly, and to whom in this sad moment he felt drawn. For the blue eyes and laughing mouth of his child were the only objects that ever thawed this man's icy heart, and from these he now hoped for consolation and courage

on his weary road through life.

"Where is my son?" he asked of the first attendant who crossed his path.

"The king has just sent for the Prince Necho and his nurse," answered the man.

At this moment the high-steward of the prince's household approached, and with a low obeisance delivered to Psamtik a sealed papyrus letter, with the words: "From your father, the king."

In angry haste he broke the yellow wax of the seal bearing the king's name, and read: "I have sent for thy son, that he may not become, like his father, a blind instrument in the hands of the priesthood, forgetful of what is due to himself and his country. His education shall be my care, for the impressions of childhood affect the whole of a man's later life. Thou canst see him if thou wilt, but I must be acquainted with thy intention beforehand."

[Signet rings were worn by the Egyptians at a very early period. Thus, in Genesis 41. 42., Pharaoh puts his ring on Joseph's hand. In the Berlin Museum and all other collections of Egyptian antiquities, numbers of these rings are to be found, many of which are more than 4000 years old.]

Psamtik concealed his indignation from the surrounding attendants with difficulty. The mere wish of a royal father had, according to Egyptian custom, as much weight as the strictest command. After reflecting a few moments, he called for huntsmen, dogs, bows and lances, sprang into a light chariot and commanded the charioteer to drive him to the western marshes, where, in pursuing the wild beasts of the desert, he could forget the weight of his own cares and wreak on innocent creatures his hitherto baffled vengeance.

Gyges was released immediately after the conversation between his father and Amasis, and welcomed with acclamations of joy by his companions. The Pharaoh seemed desirous of atoning for the imprisonment of his friend's son by doubling his favors, for on the same day Gyges received from the king a magnificent chariot drawn by two noble brown steeds, and was begged to take back with him to Persia a curiously-wrought set of draughts, as a remembrance of Sais. The separate pieces were made of ebony and ivory, some being curiously inlaid with sentences, in hieroglyphics of gold and silver.

Amasis laughed heartily with his friends at Gyges' artifice, allowed the young heroes to mix freely with his family, and behaved towards them himself as a jovial father towards his merry sons. That the ancient Egyptian was not quite extinguished in him could only be discerned at meal-times, when a separate table was allotted to the Persians. The religion of his ancestors would have pronounced him defiled, had he eaten at the same table with men of another nation.

[Herodotus II. 41. says that the Egyptians neither kissed, nor ate out of the same dish with foreigners, nay, indeed, that they refused to touch meat, in the cutting up of which the knife of a Greek had been used. Nor were the lesser dynasties of the Delta allowed, according to the Stela of Pianchi, to cross the threshold of the Pharaohs because they were unclean and ate fish. In the book of Genesis, the brethren of Joseph were not allowed to eat bread with

the Egyptians.]

When Amasis, at last, three days after the release of Gyges, declared that his daughter Nitetis would be prepared to depart for Asia in the course of two more weeks, all the Persians regretted that their stay in Egypt was so near its close.

Croesus had enjoyed the society of the Samian poets and sculptors. Gyges had shared his father's preference for Greek art and artists. Darius, who had formerly studied astronomy in Babylon, was one evening observing the heavens, when, to his surprise, he was addressed by the aged Neithotep and invited to follow him on to the temple-roof. Darius, ever eager to acquire knowledge, did not wait to be asked twice, and was to be found there every night in earnest attention to the old priest's lessons.

On one occasion Psamtik met him thus with his master, and asked the latter what could have induced him to initiate a Persian in the Egyptian mysteries.

"I am only teaching him," answered the high-priest, "what is as well known to every learned Chaldee in Babylon as to ourselves, and am thereby gaining the friendship of a man, whose stars as far outshine those of Cambyses as the sun outshines the moon. This Darius, I tell thee, will be a mighty ruler. I have even seen the beams of his planet shining over Egypt. The truly wise man extends his gaze into the future, regards the objects lying on either side of his road, as well as the road itself. Thou canst not know in which of the many houses by which thou passest daily, a future benefactor may not have been reared for thee. Leave nought unnoticed that lies in thy path, but above all direct thy gaze upward to the stars. As the faithful dog lies in wait night after night for thieves, so have I watched these pilgrims of the heavens fifty years long--these foretellers of the fates of men, burning in ethereal space, and announcing, not only the return of summer and winter, but the arrival of good and bad fortune, honor and disgrace. These are the unerring guides, who have pointed out to me in Darius a plant, that will one day wax into a mighty tree."

To Bartja, Darius' nightly studies were especially welcome; they necessitated more sleep in the morning, and so rendered Bartja's stolen early rides to Naukratis, (on which Zopyrus, to whom he had confided his secret, accompanied him), easier of accomplishment. During the interviews with Sappho, Zopyrus and the attendants used all their endeavors to kill a few snipes, jackals or jerboas. They could then, on their return, maintain to their Mentor Croesus, that they had been pursuing fieldsports, the favorite occupation of the Persian nobility.

The change which the power of a first love had wrought in the innermost character of Bartja, passed unnoticed by all but Tachot, the daughter of Amasis. From the first day on which they had spoken together she had loved him, and her quick feelings told her at once that something had happened to estrange him from herself. Formerly his behavior had been that of a brother, and he had sought her companionship; but now he carefully avoided every approach to intimacy, for he had guessed her secret and felt as if even a kind look would have been an offence against his loyalty to Sappho.

In her distress at this change Tachot confided her sorrows to Nitetis. The latter bade her take courage, and the two girls built many a castle in the air, picturing to themselves the happiness of being always

together at one court, and married to two royal brothers. But as the days went by, the visits of the handsome prince became more and more rare, and when he did come, his behavior to Tachot was cold and distant. Yet the poor girl could not but confess that Bartja had grown handsomer and more manly during his stay in Egypt. An expression of proud and yet gentle consciousness lay beaming in his large eyes, and a strange dreamy air of rest often took the place of his former gay spirits. His cheeks had lost their brilliant color, but that added to his beauty, while it lessened hers, who, like him, became paler from day to day.

Melitta, the old slave, had taken the lovers under her protection. She had surprised them one morning, but the prince had given her such rich presents, and her darling had begged, flattered and coaxed so sweetly, that at last Melitta promised to keep their secret, and later, yielding to that natural impulse which moves all old women to favor lovers, had even given them every assistance in her power. She already saw her "sweet child" mistress of a hemisphere, often addressed her as "my Princess" and "my Queen" when none were by to hear, and in many a weak moment imagined a brilliant future for herself in some high office at the Persian court.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A kind word hath far more power than an angry one
Abuse not those who have outwitted thee
Cannot understand how trifles can make me so happy
Confess I would rather provoke a lioness than a woman
Curiosity is a woman's vice
I cannot . . . Say rather: I will not
In this immense temple man seemed a dwarf in his own eyes
Know how to honor beauty; and prove it by taking many wives
Mosquito-tower with which nearly every house was provided
Natural impulse which moves all old women to favor lovers
Sent for a second interpreter
Sing their libels on women (Greek Philosophers)
Those are not my real friends who tell me I am beautiful
Young Greek girls pass their sad childhood in close rooms

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