

AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS

BOOK 1

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Freeditorial 

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CHAPTER I.

The Nile had overflowed its bed. The luxuriant corn-fields and blooming gardens on its shores were lost beneath a boundless waste of waters; and only the gigantic temples and palaces of its cities, (protected from the force of the water by dikes), and the tops of the tall palm-trees and acacias could be seen above its surface. The branches of the sycamores and plane-trees drooped and floated on the waves, but the boughs of the tall silver poplars strained upward, as if anxious to avoid the watery world beneath. The full-moon had risen; her soft light fell on the Libyan range of mountains vanishing on the western horizon, and in the north the shimmer of the Mediterranean could faintly be discerned. Blue and white lotus-flowers floated on the clear water, bats of all kinds darted softly through the still air, heavy with the scent of acacia-blossom and jasmine; the wild pigeons and other birds were at roost in the tops of the trees, while the pelicans, storks and cranes squatted in groups on the shore under the shelter of the papyrus-reeds and Nile-beans. The pelicans and storks remained motionless, their long bills hidden beneath their wings, but the cranes were startled by the mere beat of an oar, stretching their necks, and peering anxiously into the distance, if they heard but the song of the boatmen. The air was perfectly motionless, and the unbroken reflection of the moon, lying like a silver shield on the surface of the water, proved that, wildly as the Nile leaps over the cataracts, and rushes past the gigantic temples of Upper Egypt, yet on approaching the sea by different arms, he can abandon his impetuous course, and flow along in sober tranquillity.

On this moonlight night in the year 528 B. C. a bark was crossing the almost currentless Canopic mouth of the Nile. On the raised deck at the stern of this boat an Egyptian was sitting to guide the long pole-rudder, and the half-naked boatmen within were singing as they rowed. In the open cabin, which was something like a wooden summer-house, sat two men, reclining on low cushions. They were evidently not Egyptians; their Greek descent could be perceived even by the moonlight. The elder was an unusually tall and powerful man of more than sixty; thick grey curls, showing

very little attempt at arrangement, hung down over his short, firm throat; he wore a simple, homely cloak, and kept his eyes gloomily fixed on the water. His companion, on the contrary, a man perhaps twenty years younger, of a slender and delicate build, was seldom still. Sometimes he gazed into the heavens, sometimes made a remark to the steersman, disposed his beautiful purple chlanis in fresh folds, or busied himself in the arrangement of his scented brown curls, or his carefully curled beard.

[The chlanis was a light summer-mantle, worn especially by the more elegant Athenians, and generally made of expensive materials. The simpler cloak, the himation, was worn by the Doric Greeks, and principally by the Spartans.]

The boat had left Naukratis, at that time the only Hellenic port in Egypt, about half an hour before.

[This town, which will form the scene of a part of our tale, lies in the northwest of the Nile Delta, in the Saitic Nomos or district, on the left bank of the Canopic mouth of the river. According to Strabo and Eusebius it was founded by Milesians, and Bunsen reckons 749 B. C. It seems that in the earliest times Greek ships were only allowed to enter this mouth of the Nile in case of necessity. The entire intercourse of the Egyptians with the hated strangers was, at that time, restricted to the little island of Pharos lying opposite to the town of Thonis.]

During their journey, the grey-haired, moody man had not spoken one word, and the other had left him to his meditations. But now, as the boat neared the shore, the restless traveller, rising from his couch, called to his companion: "We are just at our destination, Aristomachus! That pleasant house to the left yonder, in the garden of palms which you can see rising above the waters, is the dwelling of my friend Rhodopis. It was built by her husband Charaxus, and all her friends, not excepting the king himself, vie with one another in adding new beauties to it year by year. A useless effort! Let them adorn that house with all the treasures in the world, the woman who lives within will still remain its best ornament!"

[We are writing of the month of October, when the Nile begins to sink. The inundations can now be accurately accounted for, especially since the

important and laborious synoptical work of H. Barth and S. Baker. They are occasioned by the tropical rains, and the melting of the snows on the high mountain-ranges at the Equator. In the beginning of June a gradual rising of the Nile waters can be perceived; between the 15th and 20th June, this changes to a rapid increase; in the beginning of October the waters reach their highest elevation, a point, which, even after having begun their retreat, they once more attempt to attain; then, at first gradually, and afterwards with ever increasing rapidity, they continue to sink. In January, February and March, the Nile is still drying up; and in May is at its lowest point, when the volume of its waters is only one-twentieth of that in October.]

The old man sat up, threw a passing glance at the building, smoothed the thick grey beard which clothed his cheeks and chin, but left the lips free,—[The Spartans were not in the habit of wearing a beard on the upper lip.]—and asked abruptly: "Why so much enthusiasm, Phanes, for this Rhodopis? How long have the Athenians been wont to extol old women?" At this remark the other smiled, and answered in a self-satisfied tone, "My knowledge of the world, and particularly of women, is, I flatter myself, an extended one, and yet I repeat, that in all Egypt I know of no nobler creature than this grey-haired woman. When you have seen her and her lovely grandchild, and heard your favorite melodies sung by her well-practised choir of slave-girls, I think you will thank me for having brought you hither."—"Yet," answered the Spartan gravely, "I should not have accompanied you, if I had not hoped to meet Phryxus, the Delphian, here."

"You will find him here; and besides, I cannot but hope that the songs will cheer you, and dispel your gloomy thoughts." Aristomachus shook his head in denial, and answered: "To you, sanguine Athenians, the melodies of your country may be cheering; but not so to me; as in many a sleepless night of dreams, my longings will be doubled, not stilled by the songs of Alkman."

[Alkman (Attic, Alkmaeon) flourished in Sparta about 650 B. C. His mother was a Lydian slave in Sardes, and he came into the possession of Agesides, who gave him his freedom. His beautiful songs soon procured him the rights of a Lacedaemonian citizen. He was appointed to the head-directorship in the entire department of music in Lacedaemon and succeeded in naturalizing the soft Lydian music. His language was the

Doric-Laconian. After a life devoted to song, the pleasures of the table and of love, he is said to have died of a fearful disease. From the frequent choruses of virgins (Parthenien) said to have been originally introduced by him, his frequent songs in praise of women, and the friendly relations in which he stood to the Spartan women (more especially to the fair Megalostrata), he gained the name of the woman's poet.]

"Do you think then," replied Phanes, "that I have no longing for my beloved Athens, for the scenes of our youthful games, for the busy life of the market? Truly, the bread of exile is not less distasteful to my palate than to yours, but, in the society afforded by this house, it loses some of its bitterness, and when the dear melodies of Hellas, so perfectly sung, fall on my ear, my native land rises before me as in a vision, I see its pine and olive groves, its cold, emerald green rivers, its blue sea, the shimmer of its towns, its snowy mountain-tops and marble temples, and a half-sweet, half-bitter tear steals down my cheek as the music ceases, and I awake to remember that I am in Egypt, in this monotonous, hot, eccentric country, which, the gods be praised, I am soon about to quit. But, Aristomachus, would you then avoid the few Oases in the desert, because you must afterwards return to its sands and drought? Would you fly from one happy hour, because days of sadness await you later? But stop, here we are! Show a cheerful countenance, my friend, for it becomes us not to enter the temple of the Charites with sad hearts." — [The goddesses of grace and beauty, better known by their Roman name of "Graces."]

As Phanes uttered these words, they landed at the garden wall, washed by the Nile. The Athenian bounded lightly from the boat, the Spartan following with a heavier, firmer tread. Aristomachus had a wooden leg, but his step was so firm, even when compared with that of the light-footed Phanes, that it might have been thought to be his own limb.

The garden of Rhodopis was as full of sound, and scent and blossom as a night in fairy-land. It was one labyrinth of acanthus shrubs, yellow mimosa, the snowy gelder-rose, jasmine and lilac, red roses and laburnums, overshadowed by tall palm-trees, acacias and balsam trees. Large bats hovered softly on their delicate wings over the whole, and sounds of mirth and song echoed from the river.

This garden had been laid out by an Egyptian, and the builders of the Pyramids had already been celebrated for ages for their skill in horticulture. They well understood how to mark out neat flower-beds, plant groups of trees and shrubs in regular order, water the whole by aqueducts and fountains, arrange arbors and summerhouses, and even inclose the walks with artistically clipped hedges, and breed goldfish in stone basins.

At the garden gate Phanes stopped, looked around him carefully and listened; then shaking his head, "I do not understand what this can mean," he said. "I hear no voices, there is not a single light to be seen, the boats are all gone, and yet the flag is still flying at its gay flag-staff, there, by the obelisks on each side of the gate."

[Obelisks bearing the name of the owner were sometimes to be seen near the gates of the Egyptian country-houses. Flags too were not uncommon, but these were almost exclusively to be found at the gates of the temples, where to this day the iron sockets for the flagstaff can still be seen. Neither were flags unknown to the Greeks. It appears from some inscriptions on the staffs of the Pylons, that if the former were not actually erected for lightning-rods, it had been noticed that they attracted the electricity.]

"Rhodopis must surely be from home; can they have forgotten?" — Here a deep voice suddenly interrupted him with the exclamation, "Ha! the commander of the body-guard!"

"A pleasant evening to you, Knakais," exclaimed Phanes, kindly greeting the old man, who now came up. "But how is it that this garden is as still as an Egyptian tomb, and yet the flag of welcome is fluttering at the gate? How long has that white ensign waved for guests in vain?"

"How long indeed?" echoed the old slave of Rhodopis with a smile. "So long as the Fates graciously spare the life of my mistress, the old flag is sure to waft as many guests hither as the house is able to contain. Rhodopis is not at home now, but she must return shortly. The evening being so fine, she determined on taking a pleasure-trip on the Nile with her guests. They started at sunset, two hours ago, and the evening meal is already prepared; they cannot remain away much longer. I pray you, Phanes, to have patience and

follow me into the house. Rhodopis would not easily forgive me, if I allowed such valued guests to depart. You stranger," he added, turning to the Spartan, "I entreat most heartily to remain; as friend of your friend you will be doubly welcome to my mistress."

The two Greeks, following the servant, seated themselves in an arbor, and Aristomachus, after gazing on the scene around him now brilliantly lighted by the moon, said, "Explain to me, Phanes, by what good fortune this Rhodopis, formerly only a slave and courtesan can now live as a queen, and receive her guests in this princely manner?"

[The mistresses (Hetaere) of the Greeks must not be compared with modern women of bad reputation. The better members of this class represented the intelligence and culture of their sex in Greece, and more especially in the Ionian provinces. As an instance we need only recall Aspasia and her well-attested relation to Pericles and Socrates. Our heroine Rhodopis was a celebrated woman. The Hetaera, Thargalia of Miletus, became the wife of a Thessalian king. Ptolemy Lagi married Thais; her daughter was called Irene, and her sons Leontiskus and Lagus. Finally, statues were erected to many.]

"I have long expected this question," answered the Athenian. "I shall be delighted to make you acquainted with the past history of this woman before you enter her house. So long as we were on the Nile, I would not intrude my tale upon you; that ancient river has a wonderful power of compelling to silence and quiet contemplation. Even my usually quick tongue was paralyzed like yours, when I took my first night-journey on the Nile."

"I thank you for this," replied the Spartan. "When I first saw the aged priest Epimenides, at Knossus in Crete, he was one hundred and fifty years old, and I remember that his age and sanctity filled me with a strange dread; but how far older, how far more sacred, is this hoary river, the ancient stream 'Aigyptos'! Who would wish to avoid the power of his spells? Now, however, I beg you to give me the history of Rhodopis."

Phanes began: "When Rhodopis was a little child playing with her companions on the Thracian sea-shore, she was stolen by some Phoenician mariners, carried to Samos, and bought by Iadmon, one

of the geomori, or landed aristocracy of the island. The little girl grew day by day more beautiful, graceful and clever, and was soon an object of love and admiration to all who knew her. AEsop, the fable-writer, who was at that time also in bondage to Iadmon, took an especial pleasure in the growing amiability and talent of the child, taught her and cared for her in the same way as the tutors whom we keep to educate our Athenian boys.

The kind teacher found his pupil tractable and quick of comprehension, and the little slave soon practised the arts of music, singing and eloquence, in a more charming and agreeable manner than the sons of her master Iadmon, on whose education the greatest care had been lavished. By the time she had reached her fourteenth year, Rhodopis was so beautiful and accomplished, that the jealous wife of Iadmon would not suffer her to remain any longer in the house, and the Samian was forced, with a heavy heart, to sell her to a certain Xanthus. The government of Samos at that time was still in the hands of the less opulent nobles; had Polykrates then been at the head of affairs, Xanthus need not have despaired of a purchaser. These tyrants fill their treasuries as the magpies their nests! As it was, however, he went off with his precious jewel to Naukratis, and there gained a fortune by means of her wondrous charms. These were three years of the deepest humiliation to Rhodopis, which she still remembers with horror.

Now it happened, just at the time when her fame was spreading through all Greece, and strangers were coming from far to Naukratis for her sake alone, that the people of Lesbos rose up against their nobles, drove them forth, and chose the wise Pittakus as their ruler.

[According to Herodotus the beauty of Rhodopis was so great that every Greek knew her by name.]

The highest families of Lesbos were forced to leave the country, and fled, some to Sicily, some to the Greek provinces of Italy, and others to Egypt. Alcaeus, the greatest poet of his day, and Charaxus, the brother of that Sappho whose odes it was our Solon's last wish to learn by heart, came here to Naukratis, which had already long been the flourishing centre of commercial communication between Egypt and the rest of the world. Charaxus saw Rhodopis, and soon

loved her so passionately, that he gave an immense sum to secure her from the mercenary Xanthus, who was on the point of returning with her to his own country; Sappho wrote some biting verses, derisive of her brother and his purchase, but Alcaeus on the other hand, approved, and gave expression to this feeling in glowing songs on the charms of Rhodopis. And now Sappho's brother, who had till then remained undistinguished among the many strangers at Naukratis, became a noted man through Rhodopis. His house was soon the centre of attraction to all foreigners, by whom she was overwhelmed with gifts. The King Hophra, hearing of her beauty and talent, sent for her to Memphis, and offered to buy her of Charaxus, but the latter had already long, though secretly, given Rhodopis her freedom, and loved her far too well to allow of a separation. She too, loved the handsome Lesbian and refused to leave him despite the brilliant offers made to her on all sides. At length Charaxus made this wonderful woman his lawful wife, and continued to live with her and her little daughter Kleis in Naukratis, until the Lesbian exiles were recalled to their native land by Pittakus. He then started homeward with his wife, but fell ill on the journey, and died soon after his arrival at Mitylene. Sappho, who had derided her brother for marrying one beneath him, soon became an enthusiastic admirer of the beautiful widow and rivalled Alcaeus in passionate songs to her praise.

After the death of the poetess, Rhodopis returned, with her little daughter, to Naukratis, where she was welcomed as a goddess. During this interval Amasis, the present king of Egypt, had usurped the throne of the Pharaohs, and was maintaining himself in its possession by help of the army, to which caste he belonged.

[Amasis, of whom much will be said in our text, reigned 570-526 B. C. His name, in the hieroglyphic signs, was Aahmes or young moon but the name by which he was commonly called was Sa-Nit "Son of Neith." His name, and pictures of him are to be found on stones in the fortress of Cairo, on a relief in Florence, a statue in the Vatican, on sarcophagi in Stockholm and London, a statue in the Villa Albani and on a little temple of red granite at Leyden. A beautiful bust of gray-wacke in our possession probably represents the same king.]

As his predecessor Hophra had accelerated his fall, and brought the army and priesthood to open rebellion by his predilection for the

Greek nation, and for intercourse with foreigners generally, (always an abomination in the eyes of the Egyptians), men felt confident that Amasis would return to the old ways, would rigorously exclude foreigners from the country, dismiss the Greek mercenaries, and instead of taking counsel from the Greeks, would hearken only to the commands of the priesthood. But in this, as you must see yourself, the prudent Egyptians had guessed wide of the mark in their choice of a ruler; they fell from Scylla into Charybdis. If Hophra was called the Greeks' friend, Amasis must be named our lover. The Egyptians, especially the priests and the army, breathe fire and flame, and would fain strangle us one and all, off hand, This feeling on the part of the soldiery does not disturb Amasis, for he knows too well the comparative value of their and our services; but with the priests it is another and more serious matter, for two reasons: first, they possess an unbounded influence over the people; and secondly. Amasis himself retains more affection than he likes to acknowledge to us, for this absurd and insipid religion—a religion which appears doubly sacred to its adherents simply because it has existed in this eccentric land—unchanged for thousands of years. These priests make the king's life burdensome to him; they persecute and injure us in every possible way; and indeed, if it had not been for the king's protection, I should long ago have been a dead man. But I am wandering from my tale! As I said before, Rhodopis was received at Naukratis with open arms by all, and loaded with marks of favor by Amasis, who formed her acquaintance. Her daughter Kleis, as is the case with the little Sappho now—was never allowed to appear in the society which assembled every evening at her mother's house, and indeed was even more strictly brought up than the other young girls in Naukratis. She married Glaucus, a rich Phocaeen merchant of noble family, who had defended his native town with great bravery against the Persians, and with him departed to the newly-founded Massalia, on the Celtic coast. There, however, the young couple both fell victims to the climate, and died, leaving a little daughter, Sappho. Rhodopis at once undertook the long journey westward, brought the orphan child back to live with her, spent the utmost care on her education, and now that she is grown up, forbids her the society of men, still feeling the stains of her own youth so keenly that she would fain keep her granddaughter (and this in Sappho's case is not difficult), at a greater distance from contact with our sex

than is rendered necessary, by the customs of Egypt. To my friend herself society is as indispensable as water to the fish or air to the bird. Her house is frequented by all the strangers here, and whoever has once experienced her hospitality and has the time at command will never after be found absent when the flag announces an evening of reception. Every Greek of mark is to be found here, as it is in this house that we consult on the wisest measures for encountering the hatred of the priests and bringing the king round to our own views. Here you can obtain not only the latest news from home, but from the rest of the world, and this house is an inviolable sanctuary for the persecuted, Rhodopis possessing a royal warrant which secures her from every molestation on the part of the police.

[A very active and strict police-force existed in Egypt, the organization of which is said to have owed much to Amasis' care. We also read in inscriptions and papyrus rolls, that a body of mounted police existed, the ranks of which were generally filled by foreigners in preference to natives.]

Our own songs and our own language are to be heard here, and here we take counsel on the best means for delivering Greece from the ever fresh encroachments of her tyrants.

In a word, this house is the centre of attraction for all Hellenic interests in Egypt, and of more importance to us politically, than our temple, the Hellenion itself, and our hall of commerce.

In a few minutes you will see this remarkable grandmother, and, if we should be here alone, perhaps the grandchild too; you will then at once perceive that they owe everything to their own rare qualities and not to the chances of good fortune. Ah! there they come! they are going towards the house. Cannot you hear the slave-girls singing? Now they are going in. First let them quietly be seated, then follow me, and when the evening is over you shall say whether you repent of having come hither, and whether Rhodopis resembles more nearly a queen or a freed bond-woman."

The houses was built in the Grecian style. It was a rather long, one-storied building, the outside of which would be called extremely plain in the present day; within, it united the Egyptian brilliancy of coloring with the Greek beauty of form. The principal door opened into the entrance-hall. To the left of this lay a large

dining-room, overlooking the Nile, and, opposite to this last was the kitchen, an apartment only to be found in the houses of the wealthier Greeks, the poorer families being accustomed to prepare their food at the hearth in the front apartment. The hall of reception lay at the other end of the entrance-hall, and was in the form of a square, surrounded within by a colonnade, into which various chambers opened. This was the apartment devoted to the men, in the centre of which was the household fire, burning on an altar-shaped hearth of rich Aeginetan metal-work.

It was lighted by an opening in the roof, which formed at the same time, an outlet for the smoke. From this room (at the opposite end to that on which it opened into the entrance-hall), a passage, closed by a well-fastened door, led into the chamber of the women. This was also surrounded by a colonnade within, but only on three sides, and here the female inhabitants were accustomed to pass their time, when not employed, spinning or weaving, in the rooms lying near the back or garden-door as it was termed. Between these latter and the domestic offices, which lay on the right and left of the women's apartment, were the sleeping-rooms; these served also as places of security for the valuables of the house. The walls of the men's apartment were painted of a reddish-brown color, against which the outlines of some white marble carvings, the gift of a Chian sculptor, stood out in sharp relief. The floor was covered with rich carpets from Sardis; low cushions of panthers' skins lay ranged along the colonnade; around the artistically wrought hearth stood quaint Egyptian settees, and small, delicately-carved tables of Thya wood, on which lay all kinds of musical instruments, the flute, cithara and lyre. Numerous lamps of various and singular shapes, filled with Kiki oil, hung against the walls. Some represented fire-spouting dolphins; others, strange winged monsters from whose jaws the flames issued; and these, blending their light with that from the hearth, illumined the apartment.

In this room a group of men were assembled, whose appearance and dress differed one from the other. A Syrian from Tyre, in a long crimson robe, was talking animatedly to a man whose decided features and crisp, curly, black hair proclaimed him an Israelite. The latter had come to Egypt to buy chariots and horses for Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah—the Egyptian equipages being the most

sought after at that time. Close to him stood three Greeks from Asia Minor, the rich folds of whose garments (for they wore the costly dress of their native city Miletus), contrasted strongly with the plain and unadorned robe of Phryxus, the deputy commissioned to collect money for the temple of Apollo at Delphi, with whom they were in earnest conversation. Ten years before, the ancient temple had been consumed by fire; and at this time efforts were being made to build another, and a more beautiful one.

Two of the Milesians, disciples of Anaximander and Anaximenes, were staying then in Egypt, to study astronomy and the peculiar wisdom of the Egyptians at Heliopolis, and the third was a wealthy merchant and ship-owner, named Theopompus, who had settled at Naukratis.

[Anaximander of Miletus, born 611-546, was a celebrated geometrician, astronomer, philosopher and geographer. He was the author of a book on natural phenomena, drew the first map of the world on metal, and introduced into Greece a kind of clock which he seems to have borrowed from the Babylonians. He supposes a primary and not easily definable Being, by which the whole world is governed, and in which, though in himself infinite and without limits, everything material and circumscribed has its foundation. "Chaotic matter" represents in his theory the germ of all created things, from which water, earth, animals, nereids or fish-men, human beings &c. have had their origin.]

Rhodopis herself was engaged in a lively conversation with two Samian Greeks: the celebrated worker in metals, sculptor and goldsmith Theodorus, and the Iambic poet Ibykus of Rhegium, who had left the court of Polykrates for a time in order to become acquainted with Egypt, and were bearers of presents to Amasis from their ruler. Close to the fire lay Philoinus of Sybaris, a corpulent man with strongly-marked features and a sensual expression of face; he was stretched at full-length on a couch covered with spotted furs, and amused himself by playing with his scented curls wreathed with gold, and with the golden chains which fell from his neck on to the long saffron-colored robe that clothed him down to his feet.

[Sybaris was a town in Lower Italy notorious throughout the ancient world for its luxury. According to Strabo it was founded by Achaeans

262. *About 510 it was conquered and destroyed by the Crotoniates and then rebuilt under the name of Thurii.]*

Rhodopis had a kind word for each of her guests, but at present she occupied herself exclusively with the two celebrated Sarnians; their talk was of art and poetry. The fire of youth still glowed in the eyes of the Thracian woman, her tall figure was still full and unbent; her hair, though grey, was wound round her beautifully formed head in luxuriant waves, and laid together at the back in a golden net, and a sparkling diadem shone above her lofty forehead.

Her noble Greek features were pale, but still beautiful and without a wrinkle, notwithstanding her great age; indeed her small mouth with its full lips, her white teeth, her eyes so bright and yet so soft, and her nobly-formed nose and forehead would have been beauty enough for a young maiden.

Rhodopis looked younger than she really was, though she made no attempt to disavow her age. Matronly dignity was visible in every movement, and the charm of her manner lay, not in a youthful endeavor to be pleasing, but in the effort of age to please others, considering their wishes, and at the same time demanding consideration in return.

Our two friends now presenting themselves in the hall, every eye turned upon them, and as Phanes entered leading his friend by the hand, the heartiest welcome met him from all sides; one of the Milesians indeed exclaimed: "Now I see what it is that was wanting to our assembly. There can be no merriment without Phanes."

And Philoinus, the Sybarite, raising his deep voice, but not allowing himself for a moment to be disturbed in his repose, remarked: "Mirth is a good thing, and if you bring that with you, be welcome to me also, Athenian."

"To me," said Rhodopis, turning to her new guests, "you are heartily welcome, but not more in your joy than if borne down by sadness. I know no greater pleasure than to remove the lines of care from a friend's brow. Spartan, I venture to address you as a friend too, for the friends of my friends are my own." Aristomachus bowed in silence, but Phanes, addressing himself both to Rhodopis and to

the Sybarite, answered: "Well then, my friends, I can content you both. To you, Rhodopis, I must come for comfort, for soon, too soon I must leave you and your pleasant house; Philoinus however can still enjoy my mirth, as I cannot but rejoice in the prospect of seeing my beloved Hellas once more, and of quitting, even though involuntarily, this golden mouse-trap of a country."

"You are going away! you have been dismissed? Whither are you going?" echoed on all sides.

"Patience, patience, my friends," cried Phanes. "I have a long story to tell, but I will rather reserve it for the evening meal. And indeed, dear friend, my hunger is nearly as great as my distress at being obliged to leave you."

"Hunger is a good thing," philosophized the Sybarite once more, "when a man has a good meal in prospect."

"On that point you may be at ease, Philoinus," answered Rhodopis. "I told the cook to do his utmost, for the most celebrated epicure from the most luxurious city in the world, no less a person than Philoinus of Sybaris, would pass a stern judgment on his delicate dishes. Go, Knakias, tell them to serve the supper. Are you content now, my impatient guests? As for me, since I heard Phanes' mournful news, the pleasure of the meal is gone." The Athenian bowed, and the Sybarite returned to his philosophy. "Contentment is a good thing when every wish can be satisfied. I owe you thanks, Rhodopis, for your appreciation of my incomparable native city. What says Anakreon?"

*"To-day is ours – what do we fear?
To-day is ours – we have it here.
Let's treat it kindly, that it may
Wish at least with us to stay.
Let's banish business, banish sorrow;
To the gods belongs to-morrow."*

"Eh! Ibykus, have I quoted your friend the poet correctly, who feasts with you at Polykrates' banquets? Well, I think I may venture to say of my own poor self that if Anakreon can make better verses, I understand the art of living quite as well as he, though he writes so

many poems upon it. Why, in all his songs there is not one word about the pleasures of the table! Surely they are as important as love and play! I confess that the two last are clear to me also; still, I could exist without them, though in a miserable fashion, but without food, where should we be?"

The Sybarite broke into a loud laugh at his own joke; but the Spartan turned away from this conversation, drew Phryxus into a corner, and quite abandoning his usually quiet and deliberate manner, asked eagerly whether he had at last brought him the long wished for answer from the Oracle. The serious features of the Delphian relaxed, and thrusting his hand into the folds of his chiton,—[An undergarment resembling a shirt.]—he drew out a little roll of parchment-like sheepskin, on which a few lines were written.

The hands of the brave, strong Spartan trembled as he seized the roll, and his fixed gaze on its characters was as if it would pierce the skin on which they were inscribed.

Then, recollecting himself, he shook his head sadly and said: "We Spartans have to learn other arts than reading and writing; if thou canst, read the what Pythia says."

The Delphian glanced over the writing and replied: "Rejoice! Loxias (Apollo) promises thee a happy return home; hearken to the prediction of the priestess."

*"If once the warrior hosts from the snow-topped mountains descending
Come to the fields of the stream watering richly the plain,
Then shall the lingering boat to the beckoning meadows convey thee
Which to the wandering foot peace and a home will afford.
When those warriors come, from the snow-topped mountains descending,
Then will the powerful Five grant thee what long they refused."*

To these words the Spartan listened with intense eagerness; he had them read over to him twice, then repeated them from memory, thanked Phryxus, and placed the roll within the folds of his garment.

The Delphian then took part in the general conversation, but Aristomachus repeated the words of the Oracle unceasingly to himself in a low voice, endeavoring to impress them on his memory, and to interpret their obscure import.

CHAPTER II.

The doors of the supper-room now flew open. Two lovely, fair-haired boys, holding myrtle-wreaths, stood on each side of the entrance, and in the middle of the room was a large, low, brilliantly polished table, surrounded by inviting purple cushions.

[It was most probably usual for each guest to have his own little table; but we read even in Homer of large tables on which the meals were served up. In the time of Homer people sat at table, but the recumbent position became universal in later times.]

Rich nosegays adorned this table, and on it were placed large joints of roast meat, glasses and dishes of various shapes filled with dates, figs, pomegranates, melons and grapes, little silver beehives containing honey, and plates of embossed copper, on which lay delicate cheese from the island of Trinakria. In the midst was a silver table-ornament, something similar to an altar, from which arose fragrant clouds of incense.

At the extreme end of the table stood the glittering silver cup in which the wine was to be mixed.

[The Greeks were not accustomed to drink unmingled wine. Zaleukus forbade to all citizens the pure juice of the grape under penalty of death, and Solon under very severe penalties, unless required as medicine. The usual mixture was composed of three-fifths water to two-fifths wine.]

This was of beautiful Aeginetan workmanship, its crooked handles representing two giants, who appeared ready to sink under the weight of the bowl which they sustained.

Like the altar, it was enwreathed with flowers, and a garland of roses or myrtle had been twined around the goblet of each guest.

The entire floor was strewn with rose-leaves, and the room lighted by many lamps which were hung against the smooth, white, stucco walls.

No sooner were the guests reclining on their cushions, than the fair-haired boys reappeared, wound garlands of ivy and myrtle around the heads and shoulders of the revellers, and washed their

feet in silver basins. The Sybarite, though already scented with all the perfumes of Arabia, would not rest until he was completely enveloped in roses and myrtle, and continued to occupy the two boys even after the carver had removed the first joints from the table in order to cut them up; but as soon as the first course, tunny-fish with mustard-sauce, had been served, he forgot all subordinate matters, and became absorbed in the enjoyment of the delicious viands.

Rhodopis, seated on a chair at the head of the table, near the wine-bowl, not only led the conversation, but gave directions to the slaves in waiting.

[The women took their meals sitting. The Greeks, like the Egyptians, had chairs with backs and arms. The form of the solia or throne has become familiar to us from the discoveries at Pompeii and the representations of many gods and distinguished persons. It had a high, almost straight back, and supports for the arms.]

She gazed on her cheerful guests with a kind of pride, and seemed to be devoting her attention to each exclusively, now asking the Delphian how he had succeeded in his mission, then the Sybarite whether he was content with the performances of her cook, and then listening eagerly to Ibykus, as he told how the Athenian, Phrynichus, had introduced the religious dramas of Thespis of Ikaria into common life, and was now representing entire histories from the past by means of choruses, recitative and answer.

Then she turned to the Spartan, remarking, that to him alone of all her guests, instead of an apology for the simplicity of the meal, she felt she owed one for its luxury. The next time he came, her slave Knakias, who, as an escaped Helot, boasted that he could cook a delicious blood-soup (here the Sybarite shuddered), should prepare him a true Lacedaemonian repast.

When the guests had eaten sufficiently they again washed their hands; the plates and dishes were removed, the floor cleansed, and wine and water poured into the bowl.

[The Symposium began after the real meal. Not till that was over did the guests usually adorn themselves with wreaths, wash their hands with Smegma or Smema (a kind of soap) and begin to drink.]

At last, when Rhodopis had convinced herself that the right moment was come, she turned to Phanes, who was engaged in a discussion with the Milesians, and thus addressed him:

"Noble friend, we have restrained our impatience so long that it must surely now be your duty to tell us what evil chance is threatening to snatch you from Egypt and from our circle. You may be able to leave us and this country with a light heart, for the gods are wont to bless you Ionians with that precious gift from your very birth, but we shall remember you long and sadly. I know of no worse loss than that of a friend tried through years, indeed some of us have lived too long on the Nile not to have imbibed a little of the constant, unchanging Egyptian temperament. You smile, and yet I feel sure that long as you have desired to revisit your dear Hellas, you will not be able to leave us quite without regret. Ah, you admit this? Well, I knew I had not been deceived. But now tell us why you are obliged to leave Egypt, that we may consider whether it may not be possible to get the king's decree reversed, and so keep you with us."

Phanes smiled bitterly, and replied: "Many thanks, Rhodopis, for these flattering words, and for the kind intention either to grieve over my departure, or if possible, to prevent it. A hundred new faces will soon help you to forget mine, for long as you have lived on the Nile, you are still a Greek from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, and may thank the gods that you have remained so. I am a great friend of constancy too, but quite as great an enemy of folly, and is there one among you who would not call it folly to fret over what cannot be undone? I cannot call the Egyptian constancy a virtue, it is a delusion. The men who treasure their dead for thousands of years, and would rather lose their last loaf than allow a single bone belonging to one of their ancestors to be taken from them, are not constant, they are foolish. Can it possibly make me happy to see my friends sad? Certainly not! You must not imitate the Egyptians, who, when they lose a friend, spend months in daily-repeated lamentations over him. On the contrary, if you will

sometimes think of the distant, I ought to say, of the departed, friend, (for as long as I live I shall never be permitted to tread Egyptian ground again), let it be with smiling faces; do not cry, 'Ah! why was Phanes forced to leave us?' but rather, 'Let us be merry, as Phanes used to be when he made one of our circle!' In this way you must celebrate my departure, as Simonides enjoined when he sang:

*"If we would only be more truly wise,
We should not waste on death our tears and sighs,
Nor stand and mourn o'er cold and lifeless clay
More than one day.*

*For Death, alas! we have no lack of time;
But Life is gone, when scarcely at its prime,
And is e'en, when not overfill'd with care
But short and bare!"*

"If we are not to weep for the dead, how much less ought we to grieve for absent friends! the former have left us for ever, but to the latter we say at parting, 'Farewell, until we meet again'"

Here the Sybarite, who had been gradually becoming more and more impatient, could not keep silent any longer, and called out in the most woe begone tone: "Will you never begin your story, you malicious fellow? I cannot drink a single drop till you leave off talking about death. I feel cold already, and I am always ill, if I only think of, nay, if I only hear the subject mentioned, that this life cannot last forever." The whole company burst into a laugh, and Phanes began to tell his story:

"You know that at Sais I always live in the new palace; but at Memphis, as commander of the Greek body-guard which must accompany the king everywhere, a lodging was assigned me in the left wing of the old palace.

"Since Psamtik the First, Sais has always been the royal residence, and the other palaces have in consequence become somewhat neglected. My dwelling was really splendidly situated, and beautifully furnished; it would have been first-rate, if, from the first moment of my entrance, a fearful annoyance had not made its appearance.

"In the day-time, when I was seldom at home, my rooms were all that could be wished, but at night it was impossible to sleep for the tremendous noise made by thousands of rats and mice under the old floors, and couches, and behind the hangings.

"Even in the first night an impudent mouse ran over my face.

"I was quite at a loss what to do, till an Egyptian soldier sold me two large cats, and these, in the course of many weeks, procured me some rest from my tormentors.

"Now, you are probably all aware that one of the charming laws of this most eccentric nation, (whose culture and wisdom, you, my Milesian friends, cannot sufficiently praise), declares the cat to be a sacred animal. Divine honors are paid to these fortunate quadrupeds as well as to many other animals, and he who kills a cat is punished with the same severity as the murderer of a human being."

Till now Rhodopis had been smiling, but when she perceived that Phanes' banishment had to do with his contempt for the sacred animals, her face became more serious. She knew how many victims, how many human lives, had already been sacrificed to this Egyptian superstition, and how, only a short time before, the king Amasis himself had endeavored in vain to rescue an unfortunate Samian, who had killed a cat, from the vengeance of the enraged populace.

[The cat was probably the most sacred of all the animals worshipped by the Egyptians. Herod tells that when a house was on fire the Egyptians never thought of extinguishing the fire until their cats were all saved, and that when a cat died, they shaved their heads in sign of mourning. Whoever killed one of these animals, whether intentionally or by accident, suffered the penalty, of death, without any chance of mercy. Diod. (I. 81.) himself witnessed the murder of a Roman citizen who had killed a cat, by the Egyptian people; and this in spite of the authorities, who in fear of the powerful Romans, endeavored to prevent the deed. The bodies of the cats were carefully embalmed and buried, and their mummies are to be found in every museum. The embalmed cat, carefully wrapped in linen bandages, is oftener to be met with than any other of the many animals thus preserved by the Egyptians. In spite of the great care bestowed on

cats, there can have been no lack of mice in Egypt. In one nomos or province the shrew-mouse was sacred, and a satirical, obscene papyrus in Turin shows us a war between the cats and mice; the Papyrus Ebers contains poisons for mice. We ourselves possess a shrew-mouse exquisitely wrought in bronze.]

"Everything was going well," continued the officer, "when we left Memphis two years ago.

"I confided my pair of cats to the care of one of the Egyptian servants at the palace, feeling sure that these enemies of the rats would keep my dwelling clear for the future; indeed I began to feel a certain veneration for my deliverers from the plague of mice.

"Last year Amasis fell ill before the court could adjourn to Memphis, and we remained at Sais.

"At last, about six week ago, we set out for the city of the Pyramids. I betook me to my old quarters; not the shadow of a mouse's tail was to be seen there, but instead, they swarmed with another race of animals not one whit dearer to me than their predecessors. The pair of cats had, during my two years' absence, increased twelve-fold. I tried all in my power to dislodge this burdensome brood of all ages and colors, but in vain; every night my sleep was disturbed by horrible choruses of four-footed animals, and feline war-cries and songs.

"Every year, at the period of the Bubastis festival, all superfluous cats may be brought to the temple of the cat-headed goddess Pacht, where they are fed and cared for, or, as I believe, when they multiply too fast, quietly put out of the way. These priests are knaves!

"Unfortunately the journey to the said temple" did not occur during the time of our stay in Memphis; however, as I really could not tolerate this army of tormentors any longer, I determined at least to get rid of two families of healthy kittens with which their mothers had just presented me. My old slave Mus, from his very name a natural enemy of cats, was told to kill the little creatures, put them into a sack, and throw them into the Nile.

"This murder was necessary, as the mewling of the kittens would otherwise have betrayed the contents of the sack to the palace-warders. In the twilight poor Muss betook himself to the Nile through the grove of Hathor, with his perilous burden. But alas! the Egyptian attendant who was in the habit of feeding my cats, had noticed that two families of kittens were missing, and had seen through our whole plan.

"My slave took his way composedly through the great avenue of Sphinxes, and by the temple of Ptah, holding the little bag concealed under his mantle. Already in the sacred grove he noticed that he was being followed, but on seeing that the men behind him stopped before the temple of Ptah and entered into conversation with the priests, he felt perfectly reassured and went on.

"He had already reached the bank of the Nile, when he heard voices calling him and a number of people running towards him in haste; at the same moment a stone whistled close by his head.

"Mus at once perceived the danger which was threatening him. Summoning all his strength he rushed down to the Nile, flung the bag in, and then with a beating heart, but as he imagined without the slightest evidence of guilt, remained standing on the shore. A few moments later he was surrounded by at least a hundred priests.

"Even the high-priest of Ptah, my old enemy Ptahotep, had not disdained to follow the pursuers in person.

"Many of the latter, and amongst them the perfidious palace-servant, rushed at once into the Nile, and there, to our confusion, found the bag with its twelve little corpses, hanging entirely uninjured among the Papyrus-reeds and bean-tendrils. The cotton coffin was opened before the eyes of the high-priest, a troop of lower priests, and at least a thousand of the inhabitants of Memphis, who had hurried to the spot, and when the miserable contents were disclosed, there arose such fearful howls of anguish, and such horrible cries of mingled lamentation and revenge, that I heard them even in the palace.

"The furious multitude, in their wild rage, fell on my poor servant, threw him down, trampled on him and would have killed him, had

not the all-powerful high-priest-designing to involve me, as author of the crime, in the same ruin – commanded them to cease and take the wretched malefactor to prison.

"Half an hour later I was in prison too.

"My old Mus took all the guilt of the crime on himself, until at last, by means of the bastinado, the high-priest forced him to confess that I had ordered the killing of the kittens, and that he, as a faithful servant, had not dared to disobey.

"The supreme court of justice, whose decisions the king himself has no power to reverse, is composed of priests from Memphis, Heliopolis and Thebes: you can therefore easily believe that they had no scruple in pronouncing sentence of death on poor Mus and my own unworthy Greek self. The slave was pronounced guilty of two capital offences: first, of the murder of the sacred animals, and secondly, of a twelve-fold pollution of the Nile through dead bodies. I was condemned as originator of this, (as they termed it) four-and-twenty-fold crime.

[According to the Egyptian law, the man who was cognizant of a crime was held equally culpable with the perpetrator.]

"Mus was executed on the same day. May the earth rest lightly on him! I shall never think of him again as my slave, but as a friend and benefactor! My sentence of death was read aloud in the presence of his dead body, and I was already preparing for a long journey into the nether world, when the king sent and commanded a reprieve.

[This court of justice, which may be compared with the Areopagus at Athens, and the Gerusia at Sparta, (Diod. I, 75.), was composed of 30 judges taken from the priestly caste, (10 from Heliopolis, 10 from Memphis, 10 from Thebes). The most eminent from among their number was chosen by them as president. All complaints and defences had to be presented in writing, that the judges might in no way be influenced by word or gesture. This tribunal was independent, even of the king's authority. Much information concerning the administration of justice has been obtained from the Papyrus Abbott, known by the name of the 'Papyrus judiciaire'. Particulars and an account of their literature may be found in Ebers "Durch Gosen zum Sinai,".]

"I was taken back to prison. One of my guards, an Arcadian Taxiarch, told me that all the officers of the guard and many of the soldiers, (altogether four thousand men) had threatened to send in their resignation, unless I, their commander, were pardoned.

"As it was beginning to grow dusk I was taken to the king.

"He received me graciously, confirmed the Taxiarch's statement with his own mouth, and said how grieved he should be to lose a commander so generally beloved. I must confess that I owe Amasis no grudge for his conduct to me, on the contrary I pity him. You should have heard how he, the powerful king, complained that he could never act according to his own wishes, that even in his most private affairs he was crossed and compromised by the priests and their influence.

"Had it only depended on himself, he could easily have pardoned the transgression of a law, which I, as a foreigner, could not be expected to understand, and might (though unjustly) esteem as a foolish superstition. But for the sake of the priests he dare not leave me unpunished. The lightest penalty he could inflict must be banishment from Egypt.

"He concluded his complaint with these words: 'You little know what concessions I must make to the priests in order to obtain your pardon. Why, our supreme court of justice is independent even of me, its king!'

"And thus I received my dismissal, after having taken a solemn oath to leave Memphis that very day, and Egypt, at latest, in three weeks.

"At the palace-gate I met Psamtik, the crown-prince. He has long been my enemy, on account of some vexatious matters which I cannot divulge, (you know them, Rhodopis). I was going to offer him my parting salutation, but he turned his back upon me, saying: Once more you have escaped punishment, Athenian; but you cannot elude my vengeance. Whithersoever you may go, I shall be able to find you!' — 'That remains to be proved,' I answered, and putting myself and my possessions on board a boat, came to Naukratis. Here, by good fortune, I met my old friend Aristomachus of Sparta,

who, as he was formerly in command of the Cyprian troops, will most likely be nominated my successor. I should rejoice to know that such a first-rate man was going to take my place, if I did not at the same time fear that his eminent services will make my own poor efforts seem even more insignificant than they really were."

But here he was interrupted by Aristomachus, who called out: "Praise enough, friend Phanes! Spartan tongues are stiff; but if you should ever stand in need of my help, I will give you an answer in deeds, which shall strike the right nail on the head."

Rhodopis smiled her approval, and giving her hand to each, said: "Unfortunately, the only conclusion to be drawn from your story, my poor Phanes, is that you cannot possibly remain any longer in this country. I will not blame you for your thoughtlessness, though you might have known that you were exposing yourself to great danger for a mere trifle. The really wise and brave man never undertakes a hazardous enterprise, unless the possible advantage and disadvantage that may accrue to him from it can be reckoned at least as equal. Recklessness is quite as foolish, but not so blamable as cowardice, for though both do the man an injury, the latter alone can dishonor him.

"Your thoughtlessness, this time, has very nearly cost your life, a life dear to many, and which you ought to save for a nobler end. We cannot attempt to keep you here; we should thereby only injure ourselves without benefitting you. This noble Spartan must now take your place as head and representative of the Greek nation at the Egyptian court, must endeavor to protect us against the encroachment of the priests, and to retain for us the royal favor. I take your hand, Aristomachus, and will not let it go till you have promised that you will protect, to the utmost of your power, every Greek, however humble, (as Phanes did before you), from the insolence of the Egyptians, and will sooner resign your office than allow the smallest wrong done to a Hellene to go unpunished. We are but a few thousands among millions of enemies, but through courage we are great, and unity must keep us strong. Hitherto the Greeks in Egypt have lived like brothers; each has been ready to offer himself for the good of all, and all for each, and it is just this unity that has made us, and must keep us, powerful.

"Oh! could we but bestow this precious gift on our mother-country and her colonies! would the tribes of our native land but forget their Dorian, Ionian or AEolian descent, and, contenting themselves with the one name of Hellenes, live as the children of one family, as the sheep of one flock,—then indeed we should be strong against the whole world, and Hellas would be recognized by all nations as the Queen of the Earth!"

A fire glowed in the eyes of the grey-haired woman as she uttered these words; and the Spartan, grasping her hand impetuously and stamping on the floor with his wooden leg, cried: "By Zeus, I will not let a hair of their heads be hurt; but thou, Rhodopis, thou art worthy to have been born a Spartan woman."

"Or an Athenian," cried Phanes.

"An Ionian," said the Milesians, and the sculptor: "A daughter of the Samian Geomori —"

"But I am more, far more, than all these," cried the enthusiastic woman. "I am a Hellene!"

The whole company, even to the Jew and the Syrian, were carried away by the intense feeling of the moment; the Sybarite alone remained unmoved, and, with his mouth so full as to render the words almost unintelligible, said:

"You deserve to be a Sybarite too, Rhodopis, for your roast beef is the best I have tasted since I left Italy, and your Anthylla wine' relishes almost as well as Vesuvian or Chian!"

Every one laughed, except the Spartan, who darted a look of indignation and contempt at the epicure.

In this moment a deep voice, hitherto unknown to us, shouted suddenly through the window, "A glad greeting to you, my friends!"

"A glad greeting," echoed the chorus of revellers, questioning and guessing who this late arrival might prove to be.

They had not long to wait, for even before the Sybarite had had time carefully to test and swallow another mouthful of wine, the speaker, Kallias, the son of Phaenippus of Athens, was already standing by the side of Rhodopis. He was a tall thin man of over sixty, with a head of that oval form which gives the impression of refinement and intellect. One of the richest among the Athenian exiles, he had twice bought the possessions of Pisistratus from the state, and twice been obliged to surrender them, on the tyrant's return to power. Looking round with his clear keen eyes on this circle of acquaintances, he exchanged friendly greetings with all, and exclaimed:

"If you do not set a high value on my appearance among you this evening, I shall think that gratitude has entirely disappeared from the earth."

"We have been expecting you a long time," interrupted one of the Milesians. "You are the first man to bring us news of the Olympic games!"

"And we could wish no better bearer of such news than the victor of former days?" added Rhodopis. "Take your seat," cried Phanes impatiently, "and come to the point with your news at once, friend Kallias."

"Immediately, fellow-countryman," answered the other. "It is some time ago now since I left Olympia. I embarked at Cenchreae in a fifty-oared Samian vessel, the best ship that ever was built.

"It does not surprise me that I am the first Greek to arrive in Naukratis. We encountered terrific storms at sea, and could not have escaped with our lives, if the big-bellied Samian galley, with her Ibis beak and fish's tail had not been so splendidly timbered and manned.

"How far the other homeward-bound passengers may have been driven out of their course, I cannot tell; we found shelter in the harbor of Samos, and were able to put to sea again after ten days.

"We ran into the mouth of the Nile this morning. I went on board my own bark at once, and was so favored by Boreas, who at least at

the end of my voyage, seemed willing to prove that he still felt kindly towards his old Kallias, that I caught sight of this most friendly of all houses a few moments since. I saw the waving flag, the brightly lighted windows, and debated within myself whether to enter or not; but Rhodopis, your fascination proved irresistible, and besides, I was bursting with all my untold news, longing to share your feast, and to tell you, over the viands and the wine, things that you have not even allowed yourselves to dream of."

Kallias settled himself comfortably on one of the cushions, and before beginning to tell his news, produced and presented to Rhodopis a magnificent gold bracelet in the form of a serpent's, which he had bought for a large sum at Samos, in the goldsmith's workshop of the very Theodorus who was now sitting with him at table.

"This I have brought for you," he said, turning to the delighted Rhodopis, "but for you, friend Phanes, I have something still better. Guess, who won the four-horse chariot-race?"

"An Athenian?" asked Phanes, and his face glowed with excitement; for the victory gained by one citizen at the Olympic games belonged to his whole people, and the Olympic olive-branch was the greatest honor and happiness that could fall to the lot, either of a single Hellene, or an entire Greek tribe.

"Rightly guessed, Phanes!" cried the bringer of this joyful news, "The first prize has been carried off by an Athenian; and not only so, your own cousin Cimon, the son of Kypselos, the brother of that Miltiades, who, nine Olympiads ago, earned us the same honor, is the man who has conquered this year; and with the same steeds that gained him the prize at the last games.

[The second triumph won by the steeds of Cimon must have taken place, as Dunecker correctly remarks, about the year 528. The same horses won the race for the third time at the next Olympic games, consequently four years later. As token of his gratitude Cimon caused a monument to be erected in their honor in "the hollow way" near Athens. We may here remind our readers that the Greeks made use of the Olympic games to determine the date of each year. They took place every four years. The first

was fixed 776 B. C. Each separate year was named the 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th of such or such an Olympiad.]

"The fame of the Alkmaeonidae is, verily, darkening more and more before the Philaidae. Are not you proud, Phanes? do not you feel joy at the glory of your family?"

In his delight Phanes had risen from his seat, and seemed suddenly to have increased in stature by a whole head.

With a look of ineffable pride and consciousness of his own position, he gave his hand to the messenger of victory. The latter, embracing his countryman, continued:

"Yes, we have a right to feel proud and happy, Phanes; you especially, for no sooner had the judges unanimously awarded the prize to Cimon, than he ordered the heralds to proclaim the tyrant Pisistratus as the owner of the splendid team, and therefore victor in the race. Pisistratus at once caused it to be announced that your family was free to return to Athens, and so now, Phanes, the long-wished for hour of your return home is awaiting you."

But at these words Phanes turned pale, his look of conscious pride changed into one of indignation, and he exclaimed:

"At this I am to rejoice, foolish Kallias? rather bid me weep that a descendant of Ajax should be capable of laying his well-won fame thus ignominiously at a tyrant's feet! No! I swear by Athene, by Father Zeus, and by Apollo, that I will sooner starve in foreign lands than take one step homeward, so long as the Pisistratidae hold my country in bondage. When I leave the service of Amasis, I shall be free, free as a bird in the air; but I would rather be the slave of a peasant in foreign lands, than hold the highest office under Pisistratus. The sovereign power in Athens belongs to us, its nobles; but Cimon by laying his chaplet at the feet of Pisistratus has acknowledged the tyrants, and branded himself as their servant. He shall hear that Phanes cares little for the tyrant's clemency. I choose to remain an exile till my country is free, till her nobles and people govern themselves, and dictate their own laws. Phanes will never do homage to the oppressor, though all the Philaidae, the

Alkmaeonidae, and even the men of your own house, Kallias, the rich Daduchi, should fall down at his feet!"

With flashing eyes he looked round on the assembly; Kallias too scrutinized the faces of the guests with conscious pride, as if he would say:

"See, friends, the kind of men produced by my glorious country!"

Taking the hand of Phanes again, he said to him: "The tyrants are as hateful to me as to you, my friend; but I have seen, that, so long as Pisistratus lives, the tyranny cannot be overthrown. His allies, Lygdamis of Naxos and Polykrates of Samos, are powerful; but the greatest danger for our freedom lies in his own moderation and prudence. During my recent stay in Greece I saw with alarm that the mass of the people in Athens love their oppressor like a father. Notwithstanding his great power, he leaves the commonwealth in the enjoyment of Solon's constitution. He adorns the city with the most magnificent buildings. They say that the new temple of Zeus, now being built of glorious marble by Kallaeschrus, Antistates and Porinus (who must be known to you, Theodorus), will surpass every building that has yet been erected by the Hellenes. He understands how to attract poets and artists of all kinds to Athens, he has had the poems of Homer put into writing, and the prophecies of Musaeus collected by Onomakritus. He lays out new streets and arranges fresh festivals; trade flourishes under his rule, and the people find themselves well off, in spite of the many taxes laid upon them. But what are the people? a vulgar multitude who, like the gnats, fly towards every thing brilliant, and, so long as the taper burns, will continue to flutter round it, even though they burn their wings in doing so. Let Pisistratus' torch burn out, Phanes, and I'll swear that the fickle crowd will flock around the returning nobles, the new light, just as they now do around the tyrant.

"Give me your hand once more, you true son of Ajax; for you, my friends, I have still many an interesting piece of news untold.

"The chariot-race, as I have just related, was won by Cimon who gave the olive-branch to Pisistratus. Four finer horses than his I never saw. Arkesilaus of Cyrene, Kleosthenes of Epidamnus, Aster of Sybaris, Hekataeus of Miletus and many more had also sent

splendid teams. Indeed the games this time were more than brilliant. All Hellas had sent deputies. Rhoda of the Ardeates, in distant Iberia, the wealthy Tartessus, Sinope in the far East on the shores of Pontus, in short, every tribe that could boast of Hellenic descent was well represented. The Sybarite deputies were of a dazzling beauty; the Spartans, homely and simple, but handsome as Achilles, tall and strong as Hercules; the Athenians remarkable for their supple limbs and graceful movements, and the men of Crotona were led by Milo, strongest of mortal birth. The Samian and Milesian deputies vied in splendor and gorgeousness of attire with those from Corinth and Mitylene: the flower of the Greek youth was assembled there, and, in the space allotted to spectators, were seated, not only men of every age, class and nation, but many virgins, fair and lovely maidens, who had come to Olympia, more especially from Sparta, in order to encourage the men during the games by their acclamations and applause. The market was set up beyond the Alphaeus, and there traders from all parts of the world were to be seen; Greeks, Carthaginians, Lydians, Phrygians and shrewd Phoenicians from Palestine settled weighty business transactions, or offered their goods to the public from tents and booths. But how can I possibly describe to you the surging throngs of the populace, the echoing choruses, the smoking festal hecatombs, the bright and variegated costumes, the sumptuousness of the equipages, the clang of the different dialects and the joyful cries of friends meeting again after years of separation; or the splendid appearance of the envoys, the crowds of lookers-on and venders of small wares, the brilliant effect produced by the masses of spectators, who filled to overflowing the space allotted to them, the eager suspense during the progress of the games, and the never ending shouts of joy when the victory was decided; the solemn investiture with the olive-branch, cut with a golden knife by the Elean boy, (whose parents must both be living), from the sacred tree in the Altis planted so many centuries ago by Hercules himself; or lastly, the prolonged acclamations which, like peals of thunder, resounded in the Stadium, when Milo of Crotona appeared, bearing on his shoulders the bronze statue of himself cast by Dameas, and carried it through the Stadium into the Altis without once tottering. The weight of the metal would have crushed a bull to the earth: but borne by Milo it seemed like a child in the arms of its Lacedaemonian nurse.

"The highest honors (after Cimon's) were adjudged to a pair of Spartan brothers, Lysander and Maro, the sons of Aristomachus. Maro was victor in the foot race, but Lysander presented himself, amidst the shouts of the spectators, as the opponent of Milo! Milo the invincible, victor at Pisa, and in the Pythian and Isthmian combats. Milo was taller and stouter than the Spartan, who was formed like Apollo, and seemed from his great youth scarcely to have passed from under the hands of the schoolmaster.

"In their naked beauty, glistening with the golden oil, the youth and the man stood opposite to one another, like a panther and a lion preparing for the combat. Before the onset, the young Lysander raised his hands imploringly to the gods, crying: 'For my father, my honor, and the glory of Sparta!' The Crotonian looked down on the youth with a smile of superiority; just as an epicure looks at the shell of the languste he is preparing to open.

"And now the wrestling began. For some time neither could succeed in grasping the other. The Crotonian threw almost irresistible weight into his attempts to lay hold of his opponent, but the latter slipped through the iron grip like a snake. This struggle to gain a hold lasted long, and the immense multitude watched silently, breathless from excitement. Not a sound was to be heard but the groans of the wrestlers and the singing of the nightingales in the grove of the Altis. At last, the youth succeeded, by means of the cleverest trick I ever saw, in clasping his opponent firmly. For a long time, Milo exerted all his strength to shake him off, but in vain, and the sand of the Stadium was freely moistened by the great drops of sweat, the result of this Herculean struggle.

"More and more intense waxed the excitement of the spectators, deeper and deeper the silence, rarer the cries of encouragement, and louder the groans of the wrestlers. At last Lysander's strength gave way. Immediately a thousand voices burst forth to cheer him on. He roused himself and made one last superhuman effort to throw his adversary: but it was too late. Milo had perceived the momentary weakness. Taking advantage of it, he clasped the youth in a deadly embrace; a full black stream of blood welled from Lysander's beautiful lips, and he sank lifeless to the earth from the wearied arms of the giant. Democedes, the most celebrated physician of our

day, whom you Samians will have known at the court of Polycrates, hastened to the spot, but no skill could now avail the happy Lysander, — he was dead.

"Milo was obliged to forego the victor's wreath"; and the fame of this youth will long continue to sound through the whole of Greece.

[By the laws of the games the wrestler, whose adversary died, had no right to the prize of victory.]

I myself would rather be the dead Lysander, son of Aristomachus, than the living Kallias growing old in inaction away from his country. Greece, represented by her best and bravest, carried the youth to his grave, and his statue is to be placed in the Altis by those of Milo of Crotona and Praxidamas of Aegina". At length the heralds proclaimed the sentence of the judges: 'To Sparta be awarded a victor's wreath for the dead, for the noble Lysander hath been vanquished, not by Milo, but by Death, and he who could go forth unconquered from a two hours' struggle with the strongest of all Greeks, hath well deserved the olive-branch.'"

Here Kallias stopped a moment in his narrative. During his animated description of these events, so precious to every Greek heart, he had forgotten his listeners, and, gazing into vacancy, had seen only the figures of the wrestlers as they rose before his remembrance. Now, on looking round, he perceived, to his astonishment, that the grey-haired man with the wooden leg, whom he had already noticed, though without recognizing him, had hidden his face in his hands and was weeping. Rhodopis was standing at his right hand. Phanes at his left, and the other guests were gazing at the Spartan, as if he had been the hero of Kallias's tale. In a moment the quick Athenian perceived that the aged man must stand in some very near relation to one or other of the victors at Olympia; but when he heard that he was Aristomachus—the father of that glorious pair of brothers, whose wondrous forms were constantly hovering before his eyes like visions sent down from the abodes of the gods, then he too gazed on the sobbing old man with mingled envy and admiration, and made no effort to restrain the tears which rushed into his own eyes, usually so clear and keen. In those days men wept, as well as women, hoping to gain relief from the balm of their own tears. In wrath, in ecstasy of delight, in every

deep inward anguish, we find the mighty heroes weeping, while, on the other hand, the Spartan boys would submit to be scourged at the altar of Artemis Orthia, and would bleed and even die under the lash without uttering a moan, in order to obtain the praise of the men.

For a time every one remained silent, out of respect to the old man's emotion. But at last the stillness was broken by Joshua the Jew, who began thus, in broken Greek:

"Weep thy fill, O man of Sparta! I also have known what it is to lose a son. Eleven years have passed since I buried him in the land of strangers, by the waters of Babylon, where my people pined in captivity. Had yet one year been added unto the life of the beautiful child, he had died in his own land, and had been buried in the sepulchres of his fathers. But Cyrus the Persian (Jehovah bless his posterity!) released us from bondage one year too late, and therefore do I weep doubly for this my son, in that he is buried among the enemies of my people Israel. Can there be an evil greater than to behold our children, who are unto us as most precious treasure, go down into the grave before us? And, may the Lord be gracious unto me, to lose so noble a son, in the dawn of his early manhood, just at the moment he had won such brilliant renown, must indeed be a bitter grief, a grief beyond all others!"

Then the Spartan took away his hands from before his face; he was looking stern, but smiled through his tears, and answered:

"Phoenician, you err! I weep not for anguish, but for joy, and would have gladly lost my other son, if he could have died like my Lysander."

The Jew, horrified at these, to him, sinful and unnatural words, shook his head disapprovingly; but the Greeks overwhelmed the old man with congratulations, deeming him much to be envied. His great happiness made Aristomachus look younger by many years, and he cried to Rhodopis: "Truly, my friend, your house is for me a house of blessing; for this is the second gift that the gods have allowed to fall to my lot, since I entered it." — "What was the first?" asked Rhodopis. "A propitious oracle." — "But," cried Phanes, "you have forgotten the third; on this day the gods have blessed you with

the acquaintance of Rhodopis. But, tell me, what is this about the oracle?" — "May I repeat it to our friends?" asked the Delphian.

Aristomachus nodded assent, and Phryxus read aloud a second time the answer of the Pythia:

*"If once the warrior hosts from the snow-topped mountains descending
Come to the fields of the stream watering richly the plain,
Then shall the lingering boat to the beckoning meadows convey thee
Which to the wandering foot peace and a home will afford.
When those warriors come from the snow-topped mountains descending
Then will the powerful Five grant thee what they long refused."*

Scarcely was the last word out of his mouth, when Kallias the Athenian, springing up, cried: "In this house, too, you shall receive from me the fourth gift of the gods. Know that I have kept my rarest news till last: the Persians are coming to Egypt!"

At this every one, except the Sybarite, rushed to his feet, and Kallias found it almost impossible to answer their numerous questions. "Gently, gently, friends," he cried at last; "let me tell my story in order, or I shall never finish it at all. It is not an army, as Phanes supposes, that is on its way hither, but a great embassy from Cambyses, the present ruler of the most powerful kingdom of Persia. At Samos I heard that they had already reached Miletus, and in a few days they will be here. Some of the king's own relations, are among the number, the aged Croesus, king of Lydia, too; we shall behold a marvellous splendor and magnificence! Nobody knows the object of their coming, but it is supposed that King Cambyses wishes to conclude an alliance with Amasis; indeed some say the king solicits the hand of Pharaoh's daughter."

"An alliance?" asked Phanes, with an incredulous shrug of the shoulders. "Why the Persians are rulers over half the world already. All the great Asiatic powers have submitted to their sceptre; Egypt and our own mother-country, Hellas, are the only two that have been shared by the conqueror."

"You forget India with its wealth of gold, and the great migratory nations of Asia," answered Kallias. "And you forget moreover, that an empire, composed like Persia of some seventy nations or tribes of

different languages and customs, bears the seeds of discord ever within itself, and must therefore guard against the chance of foreign attack; lest, while the bulk of the army be absent, single provinces should seize the opportunity and revolt from their allegiance. Ask the Milesians how long they would remain quiet if they heard that their oppressors had been defeated in any battle?"

Theopompus, the Milesian merchant, called out, laughing at the same time: "If the Persians were to be worsted in one war, they would at once be involved in a hundred others, and we should not be the last to rise up against our tyrants in the hour of their weakness!"

"Whatever the intentions of the envoys may be," continued Kallias, "my information remains unaltered; they will be here at the latest in three days."

"And so your oracle will be fulfilled, fortunate Aristomachus!" exclaimed Rhodopis, "for see, the warrior hosts can only be the Persians. When they descend to the shores of the Nile, then the powerful Five,' your Ephori, will change their decision, and you, the father of two Olympian victors, will be recalled to your native land.

[The five Ephori of Sparta were appointed to represent the absent kings during the Messenian war. In later days the nobles made use of the Ephori as a power, which, springing immediately from their own body, they could oppose to the kingly authority. Being the highest magistrates in all judicial and educational matters, and in everything relating to the moral police of the country, the Ephori soon found means to assert their superiority, and on most occasions over that of the kings themselves. Every patrician who was past the age of thirty, had the right to become a candidate yearly for the office]

"Fill the goblets again, Knakias. Let us devote this last cup to the manes of the glorious Lysander; and then I advise you to depart, for it is long past midnight, and our pleasure has reached its highest point. The true host puts an end to the banquet when his guests are feeling at their best. Serene and agreeable recollections will soon bring you hither again; whereas there would be little joy in returning to a house where the remembrance of hours of weakness, the result of pleasure, would mingle with your future enjoyment." In

this her guests agreed, and Ibykus named her a thorough disciple of Pythagoras, in praise of the joyous, festive evening.

Every one prepared for departure. The Sybarite, who had been drinking deeply in order to counteract the very inconvenient amount of feeling excited by the conversation, rose also, assisted by his slaves, who had to be called in for this purpose.

While he was being moved from his former comfortable position, he stammered something about a "breach of hospitality;" but, when Rhodopis was about to give him her hand at parting, the wine gained the ascendancy and he exclaimed, "By Hercules, Rhodopis, you get rid of us as if we were troublesome creditors. It is not my custom to leave a supper so long as I can stand, still less to be turned out of doors like a miserable parasite!"

"Hear reason, you immoderate Sybarite," began Rhodopis, endeavoring with a smile to excuse her proceeding. But these words, in Philoinus' half-intoxicated mood, only increased his irritation; he burst into a mocking laugh, and staggering towards the door, shouted: "Immoderate Sybarite, you call me? good! here you have your answer: Shameless slave! one can still perceive the traces of what you were in your youth. Farewell then, slave of Iadmon and Xanthus, freedwoman of Charaxus!" He had not however finished his sentence, when Aristomachus rushed upon him, stunned him with a blow of his fist, and carried him off like a child down to the boat in which his slaves were waiting at the garden-gate.

CHAPTER III.

The guests were all gone. Their departing mirth and joy had been smitten down by the drunkard's abusive words, like fresh young corn beneath a hail storm. Rhodopis was left standing alone in the empty, brightly decorated (supper-room). Knakias extinguished the colored lamps on the walls, and a dull, mysterious half-light took the place of their brilliant rays, falling scantily and gloomily on the piled-up plates and dishes, the remnants of the meal, and the seats and cushions, pushed out of their places by the retiring guests. A cold breeze came through the open door, for the dawn was at hand, and just before sunrise, the air is generally unpleasantly cool in Egypt. A cold chill struck the limbs of the aged woman through her light garments. She stood gazing tearlessly and fixedly into the desolate room, whose walls but a few minutes before had been echoing with joy and gladness, and it seemed to her that the deserted guest-chamber must be like her own heart. She felt as if a worm were gnawing there, and the warm blood congealing into ice.

Lost in these thoughts, she remained standing till at last her old female slave appeared to light her to her sleeping apartment.

Silently Rhodopis allowed herself to be undressed, and then, as silently, lifted the curtain which separated a second sleeping apartment from her own. In the middle of this second room stood a bedstead of maplewood, and there, on white sheets spread over a mattress of fine sheep's wool, and protected from the cold by bright blue coverlets's, lay a graceful, lovely girl asleep; this was Rhodopis' granddaughter, Sappho. The rounded form and delicate figure seemed to denote one already in opening maidenhood, but the peaceful, blissful smile could only belong to a harmless, happy child.

One hand lay under her head, hidden among the thick dark brown hair, the other clasped unconsciously a little amulet of green stone, which hung round her neck. Over her closed eyes the long lashes trembled almost imperceptibly, and a delicate pink flush came and went on the cheek of the slumberer. The finely-cut nostrils rose and fell with her regular breathing, and she lay there, a picture of innocence, of peace, smiling in dreams, and of the slumber that the gods bestow on early youth, when care has not yet come.

Softly and carefully, crossing the thick carpets on tiptoe, the grey-haired woman approached, looked with unutterable tenderness into the smiling, childish face, and, kneeling down silently by the side of the bed, buried her face in its soft coverings, so that the girl's hand just came in contact with her hair. Then she wept, and without intermission; as though she hoped with this flood of tears to wash away not only her recent humiliation, but with it all other sorrow from her mind.

At length she rose, breathed a light kiss on the sleeping girl's forehead, raised her hands in prayer towards heaven, and returned to her own room, gently and carefully as she had come.

At her own bedside she found the old slave-woman, still waiting for her.

"What do you want so late, Melitta?" said Rhodopis, kindly, under her breath. "Go to bed; at your age it is not good to remain up late, and you know that I do not require you any longer. Good night! and do not come to-morrow until I send for you. I shall not be able to sleep much to-night, and shall be thankful if the morning brings me a short repose."

The woman hesitated; it seemed that she had some thing on her mind which she feared to utter.

"There is something you want to ask me?" said Rhodopis.

Still the old slave hesitated.

"Speak!" said Rhodopis, "speak at once, and quickly."

"I saw you weeping," said the slave-woman, "you seem ill or sad; let me watch this night by your bedside. Will you not tell me what ails you? You have often found that to tell a sorrow lightens the heart and lessens the pain. Then tell me your grief to-day too; it will do you good, it will bring back peace to your mind."

"No," answered the other, "I cannot utter it." And then she continued, smiling bitterly: "I have once more experienced that no one, not even a god, has power to cancel the past of any human

being, and that, in this world, misfortune and disgrace are one and the same. Good night, leave me; Melitta!"

At noon on the following day, the same boat, which, the evening before, had carried the Athenian and the Spartan, stopped once more before Rhodopis' garden.

The sun was shining so brightly, so warmly and genially in the dark blue Egyptian sky, the air was so pure and light, the beetles were humming so merrily, the boatmen singing so lustily and happily, the shores of the Nile bloomed in such gay, variegated beauty, and were so thickly peopled, the palm-trees, sycamores, bananas and acacias were so luxuriant in foliage and blossom, and over the whole landscape the rarest and most glorious gifts seemed to have been poured out with such divine munificence, that a passer-by must have pronounced it the very home of joy and gladness, a place from which sadness and sorrow had been forever banished.

How often we fancy, in passing a quiet village hidden among its orchards, that this at least must be the abode of peace, and unambitious contentment! But alas! when we enter the cottages, what do we find? there, as everywhere else, distress and need, passion and unsatisfied longing, fear and remorse, pain and misery; and by the side of these, Ah! how few joys! Who would have imagined on coming to Egypt, that this luxuriant, laughing sunny land, whose sky is always unclouded, could possibly produce and nourish men given to bitterness and severity? that within the charming, hospitable house of the fortunate Rhodopis, covered and surrounded, as it was, with sweet flowers, a heart could have been beating in the deepest sadness? And, still more, who among all the guests of that honored, admired Thracian woman, would have believed that this sad heart belonged to her? to the gracious, smiling matron, Rhodopis herself?

She was sitting with Phanes in a shady arbor near the cooling spray of a fountain. One could see that she had been weeping again, but her face was beautiful and kind as ever. The Athenian was holding her hand and trying to comfort her.

Rhodopis listened patiently, and smiled the while; at times her smile was bitter, at others it gave assent to his words. At last however she interrupted her well-intentioned friend, by saying:

"Phanes, I thank you. Sooner or later this last disgrace must be forgotten too. Time is clever in the healing art. If I were weak I should leave Naukratis and live in retirement for my grandchild alone; a whole world, believe me, lies slumbering in that young creature. Many and many a time already I have longed to leave Egypt, and as often have conquered the wish. Not because I cannot live without the homage of your sex; of that I have already had more than enough in my life, but because I feel that I, the slave-girl and the despised woman once, am now useful, necessary, almost indispensable indeed, to many free and noble men. Accustomed as I am, to an extended sphere of work, in its nature resembling a man's, I could not content myself in living for one being alone, however dear. I should dry up like a plant removed from a rich soil into the desert, and should leave my grandchild desolate indeed, three times orphaned, and alone in the world. No! I shall remain in Egypt.

"Now that you are leaving, I shall be really indispensable to our friends here. Amasis is old; when Psamtik comes to the throne we shall have infinitely greater difficulties to contend with than heretofore. I must remain and fight on in the fore-front of our battle for the freedom and welfare of the Hellenic race. Let them call my efforts unwomanly if they will. This is, and shall be, the purpose of my life, a purpose to which I will remain all the more faithful, because it is one of those to which a woman rarely dares devote her life. During this last night of tears I have felt that much, very much of that womanly weakness still lingers in me which forms at once the happiness and misery of our sex. To preserve this feminine weakness in my granddaughter, united with perfect womanly delicacy, has been my first duty; my second to free myself entirely from it. But a war against one's own nature cannot be carried on without occasional defeat, even if ultimately successful. When grief and pain are gaining the upperhand and I am well nigh in despair, my only help lies in remembering my friend Pythagoras, that noblest among men, and his words: 'Observe a due proportion in all things, avoid excessive joy as well as complaining grief, and seek to keep thy soul in tune and harmony like a well-toned harp.'"

[There is no question that Pythagoras visited Egypt during the reign of Amasis, probably towards the middle of the 6th century (according to our reckoning, about 536 B. C.) Herod. II. 81-123. Diod. I. 98. Rich information about Pythagoras is to be found in the works of the very learned scholar Roeth, who is however occasionally much too bold in his conjectures. Pythagoras was the first among Greek thinkers (speculators). He would not take the name of a wise man or "sage," but called himself "Philosophos," or a "friend of wisdom."]

"This Pythagorean inward peace, this deep, untroubled calm, I see daily before me in my Sappho; and struggle to attain it myself, though many a stroke of fate untunes the chords of my poor heart. I am calm now! You would hardly believe what power the mere thought of that first of all thinkers, that calm, deliberate man, whose life acted on mine like sweet, soft music, has over me. You knew him, you can understand what I mean. Now, mention your wish; my heart is as calmly quiet as the Nile waters which are flowing by so quietly, and I am ready to hear it, be it good or evil."

"I am glad to see you thus," said the Athenian. "If you had remembered the noble friend of wisdom, as Pythagoras was wont to call himself a little sooner, your soul would have regained its balance yesterday. The master enjoins us to look back every evening on the events, feelings and actions of the day just past."

"Now had you done this, you would have felt that the unfeigned admiration of all your guests, among whom were men of distinguished merit, outweighed a thousandfold the injurious words of a drunken libertine; you would have felt too that you were a friend of the gods, for was it not in your house that the immortals gave that noble old man at last, after his long years of misfortune, the greatest joy that can fall to the lot of any human being? and did they not take from you one friend only in order to replace him in the same moment, by another and a better? Come, I will hear no contradiction. Now for my request."

"You know that people sometimes call me an Athenian, sometimes a Halikarnassian. Now, as the Ionian, AEolian and Dorian mercenaries have never been on good terms with the Karians, my almost triple descent (if I may call it so) has proved very useful to me as commander of both these divisions. Well qualified as

Aristomachus may be for the command, yet in this one point Amasis will miss me; for I found it an easy matter to settle the differences among the troops and keep them at peace, while he, as a Spartan, will find it very difficult to keep right with the Karian soldiers.

"This double nationality of mine arises from the fact that my father married a Halikarnassian wife out of a noble Dorian family, and, at the time of my birth, was staying with her in Halikarnassus, having come thither in order to take possession of her parental inheritance. So, though I was taken back to Athens before I was three months old, I must still be called a Karian, as a man's native land is decided by his birthplace.

"In Athens, as a young nobleman, belonging to that most aristocratic and ancient family, the Philaidae, I was reared and educated in all the pride of an Attic noble. Pisistratus, brave and clever, and though of equal, yet by no means of higher birth, than ourselves, for there exists no family more aristocratic than my father's, gained possession of the supreme authority. Twice, the nobles, by uniting all their strength, succeeded in overthrowing him, and when, the third time, assisted by Lygdamis of Naxos, the Argives and Eretrians, he attempted to return, we opposed him again. We had encamped by the temple of Minerva at Pallene, and were engaged in sacrificing to the goddess, early, before our first meal, when we were suddenly surprised by the clever tyrant, who gained an easy, bloodless victory over our unarmed troops. As half of the entire army opposed to the tyrant was under my command, I determined rather to die than yield, fought with my whole strength, implored the soldiers to remain steadfast, resisted without yielding a point, but fell at last with a spear in my shoulder.

"The Pisistratidae became lords of Athens. I fled to Halikarnassus, my second home, accompanied by my wife and children. There, my name being known through some daring military exploits, and, through my having once conquered in the Pythian games, I was appointed to a command in the mercenary troops of the King of Egypt; accompanied the expedition to Cyprus, shared with Aristomachus the renown of having conquered the birthplace of

Aphrodite for Amasis, and finally was named commander-in-chief of all the mercenaries in Egypt.

"Last summer my wife died; our children, a boy of eleven and a girl of ten years, remained with an aunt in Halikarnassus. But she too has followed to the inexorable Hades, and so, only a few days ago I sent for the little ones here. They cannot, however, possibly reach Naukratis in less than three weeks, and yet they will already have set out on their journey before a letter to countermand my first order could reach them.

"I must leave Egypt in fourteen days, and cannot therefore receive them myself.

"My own intentions are to go to the Thracian Chersonese, where my uncle, as you know, has been called to fill a high office among the Dolonki. The children shall follow me thither; my faithful old slave Korax will remain in Naukratis on purpose to bring them to me.

"Now, if you will show to me that you are in deed and truth my friend, will you receive the little ones and take care of them till the next ship sails for Thrace? But above all, will you carefully conceal them from the eyes of the crown-prince's spies? You know that Psamtik hates me mortally, and he could easily revenge himself on the father through the children. I ask you for this great favor, first, because I know your kindness by experience; and secondly, because your house has been made secure by the king's letter of guarantee, and they will therefore be safe here from the inquiries of the police; notwithstanding that, by the laws of this most formal country, all strangers, children not excepted, must give up their names to the officer of the district.

"You can now judge of the depth of my esteem, Rhodopis; I am committing into your hands all that makes life precious to me; for even my native land has ceased to be dear while she submits so ignominiously to her tyrants. Will you then restore tranquillity to an anxious father's heart, will you — ?"

"I will, Phanes, I will!" cried the aged woman in undisguised delight. "You are not asking me for any thing, you are presenting me

with a gift. Oh, how I look forward already to their arrival! And how glad Sappho will be, when the little creatures come and enliven her solitude! But this I can assure you, Phanes, I shall not let my little guests depart with the first Thracian ship. You can surely afford to be separated from them one short half-year longer, and I promise you they shall receive the best lessons, and be guided to all that is good and beautiful."

"On that head I have no fear," answered Phanes, with a thankful smile. "But still you must send off the two little plagues by the first ship; my anxiety as to Psamtik's revenge is only too well grounded. Take my most heartfelt thanks beforehand for all the love and kindness which you will show to my children. I too hope and believe, that the merry little creatures will be an amusement and pleasure to Sappho in her lonely life."

"And more," interrupted Rhodopis looking down; "this proof of confidence repays a thousand-fold the disgrace inflicted on me last night in a moment of intoxication. — But here comes Sappho!"

CHAPTER IV.

Five days after the evening we have just described at Rhodopis' house, an immense multitude was to be seen assembled at the harbor of Sais.

Egyptians of both sexes, and of every age and class were thronging to the water's edge.

Soldiers and merchants, whose various ranks in society were betokened by the length of their white garments, bordered with colored fringes, were interspersed among the crowd of half-naked, sinewy men, whose only clothing consisted of an apron, the costume of the lower classes. Naked children crowded, pushed and fought to get the best places. Mothers in short cloaks were holding their little ones up to see the sight, which by this means they entirely lost themselves; and a troop of dogs and cats were playing and fighting at the feet of these eager sight-seers, who took the greatest pains not to tread on, or in any way injure the sacred animals.

[According to various pictures on the Egyptian monuments. The mothers are from Wilkinson III. 363. Isis and Hathor, with the child Horus in her lap or at her breast, are found in a thousand representations, dating both from more modern times and in the Greek style. The latter seem to have served as a model for the earliest pictures of the Madonna holding the infant Christ.]

The police kept order among this huge crowd with long staves, on the metal heads of which the king's name was inscribed. Their care was especially needed to prevent any of the people from being pushed into the swollen Nile, an arm of which, in the season of the inundations, washes the walls of Sais.

On the broad flight of steps which led between two rows of sphinxes down to the landing-place of the royal boats, was a very different kind of assembly.

The priests of the highest rank were seated there on stone benches. Many wore long, white robes, others were clad in aprons, broad jewelled collars, and garments of panther skins. Some had fillets adorned with plumes that waved around brows, temples, and the

stiff structures of false curls that floated over their shoulders; others displayed the glistening bareness of their smoothly-shaven skulls. The supreme judge was distinguished by the possession of the longest and handsomest plume in his head-dress, and a costly sapphire amulet, which, suspended by a gold chain, hung on his breast.

The highest officers of the Egyptian army wore uniforms of gay colors,⁹⁷ and carried short swords in their girdles. On the right side of the steps a division of the body-guard was stationed, armed with battleaxes, daggers, bows, and large shields; on the left, were the Greek mercenaries, armed in Ionian fashion. Their new leader, our friend Aristomachus, stood with a few of his own officers apart from the Egyptians, by the colossal statues of Psamtik I., which had been erected on the space above the steps, their faces towards the river.

In front of these statues, on a silver chair, sat Psamtik, the heir to the throne: He wore a close-fitting garment of many colors, interwoven with gold, and was surrounded by the most distinguished among the king's courtiers, chamberlains, counsellors, and friends, all bearing staves with ostrich feathers and lotus-flowers.

The multitude gave vent to their impatience by shouting, singing, and quarrelling; but the priests and magnates on the steps preserved a dignified and solemn silence. Each, with his steady, unmoved gaze, his stiffly-curved false wig and beard, and his solemn, deliberate manner, resembled the two huge statues, which, the one precisely similar to the other, stood also motionless in their respective places, gazing calmly into the stream.

At last silken sails, chequered with purple and blue, appeared in sight.

The crowd shouted with delight. Cries of, "They are coming! Here they are!" "Take care, or you'll tread on that kitten," "Nurse, hold the child higher that she may see something of the sight." "You are pushing me into the water, Sebak!" "Have a care Phoenician, the boys are throwing burs into your long beard." "Now, now, you Greek fellow, don't fancy that all Egypt belongs to you, because

Amasis allows you to live on the shores of the sacred river!" "Shameless set, these Greeks, down with them!" shouted a priest, and the cry was at once echoed from many mouths. "Down with the eaters of swine's flesh and despisers of the gods!"

[The Egyptians, like the Jews, were forbidden to eat swine's flesh. This prohibition is mentioned in the Ritual of the Dead, found in a grave in Abd-el-Qurnah, and also in other places. Porphyry de Abstin. IV. The swine was considered an especially unclean animal pertaining to Typhon (Egyptian, Set) as the boar to Ares, and swineherds were an especially despised race. Animals with bristles were only sacrificed at the feasts of Osiris and Eileithyia. Herod. I. 2. 47. It is probable that Moses borrowed his prohibition of swine's flesh from the Egyptian laws with regard to unclean animals.]

From words they were proceeding to deeds, but the police were not to be trifled with, and by a vigorous use of their staves, the tumult was soon stilled. The large, gay sails, easily to be distinguished among the brown, white and blue ones of the smaller Nile-boats which swarmed around them, came nearer and nearer to the expectant throng. Then at last the crown-prince and the dignitaries arose from their seats. The royal band of trumpeters blew a shrill and piercing blast of welcome, and the first of the expected boats stopped at the landing-place.

It was a rather long, richly-gilded vessel, and bore a silver sparrow-hawk as figure-head. In its midst rose a golden canopy with a purple covering, beneath which cushions were conveniently arranged. On each deck in the forepart of the ship sat twelve rowers, their aprons attached by costly fastenings.

[Splendid Nile-boats were possessed, in greater or less numbers, by all the men of high rank. Even in the tomb of Ti at Sakkara, which dates from the time of the Pyramids, we meet with a chief overseer of the vessels belonging to a wealthy Egyptian.]

Beneath the canopy lay six fine-looking men in glorious apparel; and before the ship had touched the shore the youngest of these, a beautiful fair-haired youth, sprang on to the steps.

Many an Egyptian girl's mouth uttered a lengthened "Ah" at this glorious sight, and even the grave faces of some of the dignitaries brightened into a friendly smile.

The name of this much-admired youth was Bartja.

[This Bartja is better known under the name of Smerdis, but on what account the Greeks gave him this name is not clear. In the cuneiform inscriptions of Bisitun or Behistun, he is called Bartja, or, according to Spiegel, Bardiya. We have chosen, for the sake of the easy pronunciation, the former, which is Rawlinson's simplified reading of the name.]

He was the son of the late, and brother of the reigning king of Persia, and had been endowed by nature with every gift that a youth of twenty years could desire for himself.

Around his tiara was wound a blue and white turban, beneath which hung fair, golden curls of beautiful, abundant hair; his blue eyes sparkled with life and joy, kindness and high spirits, almost with sauciness; his noble features, around which the down of a manly beard was already visible, were worthy of a Grecian sculptor's chisel, and his slender but muscular figure told of strength and activity. The splendor of his apparel was proportioned to his personal beauty. A brilliant star of diamonds and turquoises glittered in the front of his tiara. An upper garment of rich white and gold brocade reaching just below the knees, was fastened round the waist with a girdle of blue and white, the royal colors of Persia. In this girdle gleamed a short, golden sword, its hilt and scabbard thickly studded with opals and sky-blue turquoises. The trousers were of the same rich material as the robe, fitting closely at the ankle, and ending within a pair of short boots of light-blue leather.

The long, wide sleeves of his robe displayed a pair of vigorous arms, adorned with many costly bracelets of gold and jewels; round his slender neck and on his broad chest lay a golden chain.

Such was the youth who first sprang on shore. He was followed by Darius, the son of Hystaspes, a young Persian of the blood royal, similar in person to Bartja, and scarcely less gorgeously apparelled than he. The third to disembark was an aged man with snow-white hair, in whose face the gentle and kind expression of childhood was

united, with the intellect of a man, and the experience of old age. His dress consisted of a long purple robe with sleeves, and the yellow boots worn by the Lydians;—his whole appearance produced an impression of the greatest modesty and a total absence of pretension.

[On account of these boots, which are constantly mentioned, Croesus was named by the oracle "soft-footed."]

Yet this simple old man had been, but a few years before, the most envied of his race and age; and even in our day at two thousand years' interval, his name is used as a synonyme for the highest point of worldly riches attainable by mankind. The old man to whom we are now introduced is no other than Croesus, the dethroned king of Lydia, who was then living at the court of Cambyses, as his friend and counsellor, and had accompanied the young Bartja to Egypt, in the capacity of Mentor.

Croesus was followed by Prexaspes, the king's Ambassador, Zopyrus, the son of Megabyzus, a Persian noble, the friend of Bartja and Darius; and, lastly, by his own son, the slender, pale Gyges, who after having become dumb in his fourth year through the fearful anguish he had suffered on his father's account at the taking of Sardis, had now recovered the power of speech.

Psamtik descended the steps to welcome the strangers. His austere, sallow face endeavored to assume a smile. The high officials in his train bowed down nearly to the ground, allowing their arms to hang loosely at their sides. The Persians, crossing their hands on their breasts, cast themselves on the earth before the heir to the Egyptian throne. When the first formalities were over, Bartja, according to the custom of his native country, but greatly to the astonishment of the populace, who were totally unaccustomed to such a sight, kissed the sallow cheek of the Egyptian prince; who shuddered at the touch of a stranger's unclean lips, then took his way to the litters waiting to convey him and his escort to the dwelling designed for them by the king, in the palace at Sais.

A portion of the crowd streamed after the strangers, but the larger number remained at their places, knowing that many a new and wonderful sight yet awaited them.

"Are you going to run after those dressed-up monkeys and children of Typhon, too?" asked an angry priest of his neighbor, a respectable tailor of Sais. "I tell you, Puhor, and the high-priest says so too, that these strangers can bring no good to the black land! I am for the good old times, when no one who cared for his life dared set foot on Egyptian soil. Now our streets are literally swarming with cheating Hebrews, and above all with those insolent Greeks whom may the gods destroy!"

"Only look, there is the third boat full of strangers! And do you know what kind of people these Persians are? The high-priest says that in the whole of their kingdom, which is as large as half the world, there is not a single temple to the gods; and that instead of giving decent burial to the dead, they leave them to be torn in pieces by dogs and vultures."

[These statements are correct, as the Persians, at the time of the dynasty of the Achaemenidae, had no temples, but used fire-altars and exposed their dead to the dogs and vultures. An impure corpse was not permitted to defile the pure earth by its decay; nor might it be committed to the fire or water for destruction, as their purity would be equally polluted by such an act. But as it was impossible to cause the dead bodies to vanish, Dakhmas or burying-places were laid out, which had to be covered with pavement and cement not less than four inches thick, and surrounded by cords to denote that the whole structure was as it were suspended in the air, and did not come in contact with the pure earth. Spiegel, Avesta II.]

"The tailor's indignation at hearing this was even greater than his astonishment, and pointing to the landing-steps, he cried:

"It is really too bad; see, there is the sixth boat full of these foreigners!"

"Yes, it is hard indeed!" sighed the priest, "one might fancy a whole army arriving. Amasis will go on in this manner until the strangers drive him from his throne and country, and plunder and make slaves of us poor creatures, as the evil Hyksos, those scourges of Egypt, and the black Ethiopians did, in the days of old."

"The seventh boat!" shouted the tailor.

"May my protectress Neith, the great goddess of Sais, destroy me, if I can understand the king," complained the priest. "He sent three barks to Naukratis, that poisonous nest hated of the gods, to fetch the servants and baggage of these Persians; but instead of three, eight had to be procured, for these despisers of the gods and profaners of dead bodies have not only brought kitchen utensils, dogs, horses, carriages, chests, baskets and bales, but have dragged with them, thousands of miles, a whole host of servants. They tell me that some of them have no other work than twining of garlands and preparing ointments. Their priests too, whom they call Magi, are here with them. I should like to know what they are for? of what use is a priest where there is no temple?"

The old King Amasis received the Persian embassy shortly after their arrival with all the amiability and kindness peculiar to him.

Four days later, after having attended to the affairs of state, a duty punctually fulfilled by him every morning without exception, he went forth to walk with Croesus in the royal gardens. The remaining members of the embassy, accompanied by the crown-prince, were engaged in an excursion up the Nile to the city of Memphis.

The palace-gardens, of a royal magnificence, yet similar in their arrangement to those of Rhodopis, lay in the north-west part of Sais, near the royal citadel.

Here, under the shadow of a spreading plane-tree, and near a gigantic basin of red granite, into which an abundance of clear water flowed perpetually through the jaws of black basalt crocodiles, the two old men seated themselves.

The dethroned king, though in reality some years the elder of the two, looked far fresher and more vigorous than the powerful monarch at his side. Amasis was tall, but his neck was bent; his corpulent body was supported by weak and slender legs: and his face, though well-formed, was lined and furrowed. But a vigorous spirit sparkled in the small, flashing eyes, and an expression of raillery, sly banter, and at times, even of irony, played around his remarkably full lips. The low, broad brow, the large and beautifully-arched head bespoke great mental power, and in the changing color

of his eyes one seemed to read that neither wit nor passion were wanting in the man, who, from his simple place as soldier in the ranks, had worked his way up to the throne of the Pharaohs. His voice was sharp and hard, and his movements, in comparison with the deliberation of the other members of the Egyptian court, appeared almost morbidly active.

The attitude and bearing of his neighbor Croesus were graceful, and in every way worthy of a king. His whole manner showed that he had lived in frequent intercourse with the highest and noblest minds of Greece. Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus, Bias of Priene, Solon of Athens, Pittakus of Lesbos, the most celebrated Hellenic philosophers, had in former and happier days been guests at the court of Croesus in Sardis. His full clear voice sounded like pure song when compared with the shrill tones of Amasis.

[Bias, a philosopher of Ionian origin, flourished about 560 B. C. and was especially celebrated for his wise maxims on morals and law. After his death, which took place during his defence of a friend in the public court, a temple was erected to him by his countrymen.]

"Now tell me openly," began king Pharaoh—[In English "great house," the high gate or "sublime porte."]—in tolerably fluent Greek, "what opinion hast thou formed of Egypt? Thy judgment possesses for me more worth than that of any other man, for three reasons: thou art better acquainted with most of the countries and nations of this earth; the gods have not only allowed thee to ascend the ladder of fortune to its utmost summit, but also to descend it, and thirdly, thou hast long been the first counsellor to the mightiest of kings. Would that my kingdom might please thee so well that thou wouldst remain here and become to me a brother. Verily, Croesus, my friend hast thou long been, though my eyes beheld thee yesterday for the first time!"

"And thou mine," interrupted the Lydian. "I admire the courage with which thou hast accomplished that which seemed right and good in thine eyes, in spite of opposition near and around thee. I am thankful for the favor shown to the Hellenes, my friends, and I regard thee as related to me by fortune, for hast thou not also passed through all the extremes of good and evil that this life can offer?"

"With this difference," said Amasis smiling, "that we started from opposite points; in thy lot the good came first, the evil later; whereas in my own this order has been reversed. In saying this, however," he added, "I am supposing that my present fortune is a good for me, and that I enjoy it."

"And I, in that case," answered Croesus, "must be assuming that I am unhappy in what men call my present ill-fortune."

"How can it possibly be otherwise after the loss of such enormous possessions?"

"Does happiness consist then in possession?" asked Croesus. "Is happiness itself a thing to be possessed? Nay, by no means! It is nothing but a feeling, a sensation, which the envious gods vouchsafe more often to the needy than to the mighty. The clear sight of the latter becomes dazzled by the glittering treasure, and they cannot but suffer continual humiliation, because, conscious of possessing power to obtain much, they wage an eager war for all, and therein are continually defeated."

Amasis sighed, and answered: "I would I could prove thee in the wrong; but in looking back on my past life I am fain to confess that its cares began with that very hour which brought me what men call my good fortune."—"And I," interrupted Croesus, "can assure thee that I am thankful thou delayedst to come to my help, inasmuch as the hour of my overthrow was the beginning of true, unsullied happiness. When I beheld the first Persians scale the walls of Sardis, I execrated myself and the gods, life appeared odious to me, existence a curse. Fighting on, but in heart despairing, I and my people were forced to yield. A Persian raised his sword to cleave my skull—in an instant my poor dumb son had thrown himself between his father and the murderer, and for the first time after long years of silence, I heard him speak. Terror had loosened his tongue; in that dreadful hour Gyges learnt once more to speak, and I, who but the moment before had been cursing the gods, bowed down before their power. I had commanded a slave to kill me the moment I should be taken prisoner by the Persians, but now I deprived him of his sword. I was a changed man, and by degrees learnt ever more and more to subdue the rage and indignation which yet from time to time would boil up again within my soul, rebellious against my fate

and my noble enemies. Thou knowest that at last I became the friend of Cyrus, and that my son grew up at his court, a free man at my side, having entirely regained the use of his speech. Everything beautiful and good that I had heard, seen or thought during my long life I treasured up now for him; he was my kingdom, my crown, my treasure. Cyrus's days of care, his nights so reft of sleep, reminded me with horror of my own former greatness, and from day to day it became more evident to me that happiness has nothing to do with our outward circumstances. Each man possesses the hidden germ in his own heart. A contented, patient mind, rejoicing much in all that is great and beautiful and yet despising not the day of small things; bearing sorrow without a murmur and sweetening it by calling to remembrance former joy; moderation in all things; a firm trust in the favor of the gods and a conviction that, all things being subject to change, so with us too the worst must pass in due season; all this helps to mature the germ of happiness, and gives us power to smile, where the man undisciplined by fate might yield to despair and fear."

Amasis listened attentively, drawing figures the while in the sand with the golden flower on his staff. At last he spoke:

"Verily, Croesus, I the great god, the 'sun of righteousness,' 'the son of Neith,' 'the lord of warlike glory,' as the Egyptians call me, am tempted to envy thee, dethroned and plundered as thou art. I have been as happy as thou art now. Once I was known through all Egypt, though only the poor son of a captain, for my light heart, happy temper, fun and high spirits. The common soldiers would do anything for me, my superior officers could have found much fault, but in the mad Amasis, as they called me, all was overlooked, and among my equals, (the other under-officers) there could be no fun or merry-making unless I took a share in it. My predecessor king Hophra sent us against Cyrene. Seized with thirst in the desert, we refused to go on; and a suspicion that the king intended to sacrifice us to the Greek mercenaries drove the army to open mutiny. In my usual joking manner I called out to my friends: 'You can never get on without a king, take me for your ruler; a merrier you will never find!' The soldiers caught the words. 'Amasis will be our king,' ran through the ranks from man to man, and, in a few hours more, they came to me with shouts, and acclamations of 'The good, jovial

Amasis for our King!" One of my boon companions set a field-marshal's helmet on my head: I made the joke earnest, and we defeated Hophra at Momemphlis. The people joined in the conspiracy, I ascended the throne, and men pronounced me fortunate. Up to that time I had been every Egyptian's friend, and now I was the enemy of the best men in the nation.

"The priests swore allegiance to me, and accepted me as a member of their caste, but only in the hope of guiding me at their will. My former superiors in command either envied me, or wished to remain on the same terms of intercourse as formerly. But this would have been inconsistent with my new position, and have undermined my authority. One day, therefore, when the officers of the host were at one of my banquets and attempting, as usual, to maintain their old convivial footing, I showed them the golden basin in which their feet had been washed before sitting down to meat; five days later, as they were again drinking at one of my revels, I caused a golden image of the great god Ra be placed upon the richly-ornamented banqueting-table.

[Ra, with the masculine article Phra, must be regarded as the central point of the sun-worship of the Egyptians, which we consider to have been the foundation of their entire religion. He was more especially worshipped at Heliopolis. Plato, Eudoxus, and probably Pythagoras also, profited by the teaching of his priests. The obelisks, serving also as memorial monuments on which the names and deeds of great kings were recorded, were sacred to him, and Pliny remarks of them that they represented the rays of the sun. He was regarded as the god of light, the director of the entire visible creation, over which he reigned, as Osiris over the world of spirits.]

"On perceiving it, they fell down to worship. As they rose from their knees, I took the sceptre, and holding it up on high with much solemnity, exclaimed: 'In five days an artificer has transformed the despised vessel into which ye spat and in which men washed your feet, into this divine image. Such a vessel was I, but the Deity, which can fashion better and more quickly than a goldsmith, has made me your king. Bow down then before me and worship. He who henceforth refuses to obey, or is unmindful of the reverence due to the king, is guilty of death!'

"They fell down before me, every one, and I saved my authority, but lost my friends. As I now stood in need of some other prop, I fixed on the Hellenes, knowing that in all military qualifications one Greek is worth more than five Egyptians, and that with this assistance I should be able to carry out those measures which I thought beneficial.

"I kept the Greek mercenaries always round me, I learnt their language, and it was they who brought to me the noblest human being I ever met, Pythagoras. I endeavored to introduce Greek art and manners among ourselves, seeing what folly lay in a self-willed adherence to that which has been handed down to us, when it is in itself bad and unworthy, while the good seed lay on our Egyptian soil, only waiting to be sown.

"I portioned out the whole land to suit my purposes, appointed the best police in the world, and accomplished much; but my highest aim, namely: to infuse into this country, at once so gay and so gloomy, the spirit and intellect of the Greeks, their sense of beauty in form, their love of life and joy in it, this all was shivered on the same rock which threatens me with overthrow and ruin whenever I attempt to accomplish anything new. The priests are my opponents, my masters, they hang like a dead weight upon me. Clinging with superstitious awe to all that is old and traditionary, abominating everything foreign, and regarding every stranger as the natural enemy of their authority and their teaching, they can lead the most devout and religious of all nations with a power that has scarcely any limits. For this I am forced to sacrifice all my plans, for this I see my life passing away in bondage to their severe ordinances, this will rob my death-bed of peace, and I cannot be secure that this host of proud mediators between god and man will allow me to rest even in my grave!"

"By Zeus our saviour, with all thy good fortune, thou art to be pitied!" interrupted Croesus sympathetically, "I understand thy misery; for though I have met with many an individual who passed through life darkly and gloomily, I could not have believed that an entire race of human beings existed, to whom a gloomy, sullen heart was as natural as a poisonous tooth to the serpent. Yet it is true, that on my journey hither and during my residence at this court I have

seen none but morose and gloomy countenances among the priesthood. Even the youths, thy immediate attendants, are never seen to smile; though cheerfulness, that sweet gift of the gods, usually belongs to the young, as flowers to spring."

"Thou errest," answered Amasis, "in believing this gloom to be a universal characteristic of the Egyptians. It is true that our religion requires much serious thought. There are few nations, however, who have so largely the gift of bantering fun and joke: or who on the occasion of a festival, can so entirely forget themselves and everything else but the enjoyments of the moment; but the very sight of a stranger is odious to the priests, and the moroseness which thou observest is intended as retaliation on me for my alliance with the strangers. Those very boys, of whom thou spakest, are the greatest torment of my life. They perform for me the service of slaves, and obey my slightest nod. One might imagine that the parents who devote their children to this service, and who are the highest in rank among the priesthood, would be the most obedient and reverential servants of the king whom they profess to honor as divine; but believe me, Croesus, just in this very act of devotion, which no ruler can refuse to accept without giving offence, lies the most crafty, scandalous calculation. Each of these youths is my keeper, my spy. They watch my smallest actions and report them at once to the priests."

"But how canst thou endure such an existence? Why not banish these spies and select servants from the military caste, for instance? They would be quite as useful as the priests."

"Ah! if I only could, if I dared!" exclaimed Amasis loudly. And then, as if frightened at his own rashness, he continued in a low voice, "I believe that even here I am being watched. To-morrow I will have that grove of fig-trees yonder uprooted. The young priest there, who seems so fond of gardening, has other fruit in his mind besides the half-ripe figs that he is so slowly dropping into his basket. While his hand is plucking the figs, his ear gathers the words that fall from the mouth of his king."

"But, by our father Zeus, and by Apollo—"

"Yes, I understand thy indignation and I share it; but every position has its duties, and as a king of a people who venerate tradition as the highest divinity, I must submit, at least in the main, to the ceremonies handed down through thousands of years. Were I to burst these fetters, I know positively that at my death my body would remain unburied; for, know that the priests sit in judgment over every corpse, and deprive the condemned of rest, even in the grave."

[This well-known custom among the ancient Egyptians is confirmed, not only by many Greek narrators, but by the laboriously erased inscriptions discovered in the chambers of some tombs.]

"Why care about the grave?" cried Croesus, becoming angry. "We live for life, not for death!"

"Say rather," answered Amasis rising from his seat, "we, with our Greek minds, believe a beautiful life to be the highest good. But Croesus, I was begotten and nursed by Egyptian parents, nourished on Egyptian food, and though I have accepted much that is Greek, am still, in my innermost being, an Egyptian. What has been sung to us in our childhood, and praised as sacred in our youth, lingers on in the heart until the day which sees us embalmed as mummies. I am an old man and have but a short span yet to run, before I reach the landmark which separates us from that farther country. For the sake of life's few remaining days, shall I willingly mar Death's thousands of years? No, my friend, in this point at least I have remained an Egyptian, in believing, like the rest of my countrymen, that the happiness of a future life in the kingdom of Osiris, depends on the preservation of my body, the habitation of the soul.

[Each human soul was considered as a part of the world-soul Osiris, was united to him after the death of the body, and thenceforth took the name of Osiris. The Egyptian Cosmos consisted of the three great realms, the Heavens, the Earth and the Depths. Over the vast ocean which girdles the vault of heaven, the sun moves in a boat or car drawn by the planets and fixed stars. On this ocean too the great constellations circle in their ships, and there is the kingdom of the blissful gods, who sit enthroned above this heavenly ocean under a canopy of stars. The mouth of this great stream is in the East, where the sun-god rises from the mists and is born again as a child every morning. The surface of the earth is inhabited by human

beings having a share in the three great cosmic kingdoms. They receive their soul from the heights of heaven, the seat and source of light; their material body is of the earth; and the appearance or outward form by which one human being is distinguished from another at sight – his phantom or shadow – belongs to the depths. At death, soul, body, and shadow separate from one another. The soul to return to the place from whence it came, to Heaven, for it is a part of God (of Osiris); the body, to be committed to the earth from which it was formed in the image of its creator; the phantom or shadow, to descend into the depths, the kingdom of shadows. The gate to this kingdom was placed in the West among the sunset hills, where the sun goes down daily, – where he dies. Thence arise the changeful and corresponding conceptions connected with rising and setting, arriving and departing, being born and dying. The careful preservation of the body after death from destruction, not only through the process of inward decay, but also through violence or accident, was in the religion of ancient Egypt a principal condition (perhaps introduced by the priests on sanitary grounds) on which depended the speedy deliverance of the soul, and with this her early, appointed union with the source of Light and Good, which two properties were, in idea, one and indivisible. In the Egyptian conceptions the soul was supposed to remain, in a certain sense, connected with the body during a long cycle of solar years. She could, however, quit the body from time to time at will, and could appear to mortals in various forms and places; these appearances differed according to the hour, and were prescribed in exact words and delineations.]

"But enough of these matters; thou wilt find it difficult to enter into such thoughts. Tell me rather what thou thinkest of our temples and pyramids."

Croesus, after reflecting a moment, answered with a smile: "Those huge pyramidal masses of stone seem to me creations of the boundless desert, the gaily painted temple colonnades to be the children of the Spring; but though the sphinxes lead up to your temple gates, and seem to point the way into the very shrines themselves, the sloping fortress-like walls of the Pylons, those huge isolated portals, appear as if placed there to repel entrance. Your many-colored hieroglyphics likewise attract the gaze, but baffle the inquiring spirit by the mystery that lies within their characters. The images of your manifold gods are everywhere to be seen; they crowd on our gaze, and yet who knows not that their real is not their apparent significance? that they are mere outward images of

thoughts accessible only to the few, and, as I have heard, almost incomprehensible in their depth? My curiosity is excited everywhere, and my interest awakened, but my warm love of the beautiful feels itself in no way attracted. My intellect might strain to penetrate the secrets of your sages, but my heart and mind can never be at home in a creed which views life as a short pilgrimage to the grave, and death as the only true life!"

"And yet," said Amasis, "Death has for us too his terrors, and we do all in our power to evade his grasp. Our physicians would not be celebrated and esteemed as they are, if we did not believe that their skill could prolong our earthly existence. This reminds me of the oculist Nebenchari whom I sent to Susa, to the king. Does he maintain his reputation? is the king content with him?"

"Very much so," answered Croesus. "He has been of use to many of the blind; but the king's mother is alas! still sightless. It was Nebenchari who first spoke to Cambyzes of the charms of thy daughter Tachot. But we deplore that he understands diseases of the eye alone. When the Princess Atossa lay ill of fever, he was not to be induced to bestow a word of counsel."

"That is very natural; our physicians are only permitted to treat one part of the body. We have aurists, dentists and oculists, surgeons for fractures of the bone, and others for internal diseases. By the ancient priestly law a dentist is not allowed to treat a deaf man, nor a surgeon for broken bones a patient who is suffering from a disease of the bowels, even though he should have a first rate knowledge of internal complaints. This law aims at securing a great degree of real and thorough knowledge; an aim indeed, pursued by the priests (to whose caste the physicians belong) with a most praiseworthy earnestness in all branches of science. Yonder lies the house of the high-priest Neithotep, whose knowledge of astronomy and geometry was so highly praised, even by Pythagoras. It lies next to the porch leading into the temple of the goddess Neith, the protectress of Sais. Would I could show thee the sacred grove with its magnificent trees, the splendid pillars of the temple with capitals modelled from the lotus-flower, and the colossal chapel which I caused to be wrought from a single piece of granite, as an offering to the goddess; but alas! entrance is strictly refused to strangers by the

priests. Come, let us seek my wife and daughter; they have conceived an affection for thee, and indeed it is my wish that thou shouldst gain a friendly feeling towards this poor maiden before she goes forth with thee to the strange land, and to the strange nation whose princess she is to become. Wilt thou not adopt and take her under thy care?"

"On that thou may'st with fullest confidence rely," replied Croesus with warmth, returning the pressure of Amasis' hand. "I will protect thy Nitetis as if I were her father; and she will need my help, for the apartments of the women in the Persian palaces are dangerous ground. But she will meet with great consideration. Cambyses may be contented with his choice, and will be highly gratified that thou hast entrusted him with thy fairest child. Nebenchari had only spoken of Tachot, thy second daughter."

"Nevertheless I will send my beautiful Nitetis. Tachot is so tender, that she could scarcely endure the fatigues of the journey and the pain of separation. Indeed were I to follow the dictates of my own heart, Nitetis should never leave us for Persia. But Egypt stands in need of peace, and I was a king before I became a father!"

CHAPTER V.

The other members of the Persian embassy had returned to Sais from their excursion up the Nile to the pyramids. Prexaspes alone, the ambassador from Cambyses, had already set out for Persia, in order to inform the king of the successful issue of his suit.

The palace of Amasis was full of life and stir. The huge building was filled in all parts by the followers of the embassy, nearly three hundred in number, and by the high guests themselves, to whom every possible attention was paid. The courts of the palace swarmed with guards and officials, with young priests and slaves, all in splendid festal raiment.

On this day it was the king's intention to make an especial display of the wealth and splendor of his court, at a festival arranged in honor of his daughter's betrothal.

The lofty reception-hall opening on to the gardens, with its ceiling sown with thousands of golden stars and supported by gaily-painted columns, presented a magic appearance. Lamps of colored papyrus hung against the walls and threw a strange light on the scene, something like that when the sun's rays strike through colored glass. The space between the columns and the walls was filled with choice plants, palms, oleanders, pomegranates, oranges and roses, behind which an invisible band of harp and flute-players was stationed, who received the guests with strains of monotonous, solemn music.

The floor of this hall was paved in black and white, and in the middle stood elegant tables covered with dishes of all kinds, cold roast meats, sweets, well-arranged baskets of fruit and cake, golden jugs of wine, glass drinking-cups and artistic flower-vases.

A multitude of richly-dressed slaves under direction of the high-steward, busied themselves in handing these dishes to the guests, who, either standing around, or reclining on sumptuous seats, entertained themselves in conversation with their friends.

Both sexes and all ages were to be found in this assembly. As the women entered, they received charming little nosegays from the

young priests in the personal service of the king, and many a youth of high degree appeared in the hall with flowers, which he not only offered to her he loved best, but held up for her to smell.

The Egyptian men, who were dressed as we have already seen them at the reception of the Persian embassy, behaved towards the women with a politeness that might almost be termed submissive. Among the latter few could pretend to remarkable beauty, though there were many bewitching almond-shaped eyes, whose loveliness was heightened by having their lids dyed with the eye-paint called "mestem." The majority wore their hair arranged in the same manner; the wealth of waving brown locks floated back over the shoulders and was brushed behind the ears, one braid being left on each side to hang over the temples to the breast. A broad diadem confined these locks, which as the maids knew, were quite as often the wig-maker's work as Nature's. Many ladies of the court wore above their foreheads a lotus-flower, whose stem drooped on the hair at the back.

They carried fans of bright feathers in their delicate hands. These were loaded with rings; the finger-nails were stained red, according to Egyptian custom, and gold or silver bands were worn above the elbow, and at the wrists and ankles.

[This custom (of staining finger-nails) is still prevalent in the East; the plant Shenna, Laosonia spinosa, called by Pliny XIII. Cyprus, being used for the purpose. The Egyptian government has prohibited the dye, but it will be difficult to uproot the ancient custom. The pigment for coloring the eyelids, mentioned in the text, is also still employed. The Papyrus Ebers alludes to the Arabian kohl or antimony, which is frequently mentioned under the name of "mestem" on monuments belonging to the time of the Pharaohs.]

Their robes were beautiful and costly, and in many cases so cut as to leave the right breast uncovered. Bartja, the young Persian prince, among the men, and Nitetis, the Pharaoh's daughter, among the women, were equally conspicuous for their superior beauty, grace and charms. The royal maiden wore a transparent rose-colored robe, in her black hair were fresh roses, she walked by the side of her sister, the two robed alike, but Nitetis pale as the lotus-flower in her mother's hair.

Ladice, the queen, by birth a Greek, and daughter of Battus of Cyrene, walked by the side of Amasis and presented the young Persians to her children. A light lace robe was thrown over her garment of purple, embroidered with gold; and on her beautiful Grecian head she wore the Urmus serpent, the ornament peculiar to Egyptian queens.

Her countenance was noble yet charming, and every movement betrayed the grace only to be imparted by a Greek education.

Amasis, in making choice of this queen, after the death of his second wife, (the Egyptian Tentcheta, mother of Psamtik the heir to the throne,) had followed his prepossession in favor of the Greek nation and defied the wrath of the priests.

The two girls at Ladice's side, Tachot and Nitetis, were called twin-sisters, but showed no signs of that resemblance usually to be found in twins.

Tachot was a fair, blue-eyed girl, small, and delicately built; Nitetis, on the other hand, tall and majestic, with black hair and eyes, evinced in every action that she was of royal blood.

"How pale thou look'st, my child!" said Ladice, kissing Nitetis' cheek. "Be of good courage, and meet thy future bravely. Here is the noble Bartja, the brother of thy future husband."

Nitetis raised her dark, thoughtful eyes and fixed them long and enquiringly on the beautiful youth. He bowed low before the blushing maiden, kissed her garment, and said:

"I salute thee, as my future queen and sister! I can believe that thy heart is sore at parting from thy home, thy parents, brethren and sisters; but be of good courage; thy husband is a great hero, and a powerful king; our mother is the noblest of women, and among the Persians the beauty and virtue of woman is as much revered as the life-giving light of the sun. Of thee, thou sister of the lily Nitetis, whom, by her side I might venture to call the rose, I beg forgiveness, for robbing thee of thy dearest friend."

As he said these words he looked eagerly into Tachot's beautiful blue eyes; she bent low, pressing her hand upon her heart, and gazed on him long after Amasis had drawn him away to a seat immediately opposite the dancing-girls, who were just about to display their skill for the entertainment of the guests. A thin petticoat was the only clothing of these girls, who threw and wound their flexible limbs to a measure played on harp and tambourine. After the dance appeared Egyptian singers and buffoons for the further amusement of the company.

At length some of the courtiers forsook the hall, their grave demeanor being somewhat overcome by intoxication.

[Unfortunately women, as well as men, are to be seen depicted on the monuments in an intoxicated condition. One man is being carried home, like a log of wood, on the heads of his servants. Wilkinson II. 168. Another is standing on his head II. 169. and several ladies are in the act of returning the excessive quantity which they have drunk. Wilkinson II. 167. At the great Techu-festival at Dendera intoxication seems to have been as much commanded as at the festivals of Dionysus under the Ptolemies, one of whom (Ptolem Dionysus) threatened those who remained sober with the punishment of death. But intoxication was in general looked upon by the Egyptians as a forbidden and despicable vice. In the Papyrus Anastasi IV., for instance, we read these words on a drunkard: "Thou art as a sanctuary without a divinity, as a house without bread," and further: "How carefully should men avoid beer (hek)." A number of passages in the Papyrus denounce drunkards.]

The women were carried home in gay litters by slaves with torches; and only the highest military commanders, the Persian ambassadors and a few officials, especial friends of Amasis, remained behind. These were retained by the master of the ceremonies, and conducted to a richly-ornamented saloon, where a gigantic wine-bowl standing on a table adorned in the Greek fashion, invited to a drinking-bout.

Amasis was seated on a high arm-chair at the head of the table; at his left the youthful Bartja, at his right the aged Croesus. Besides these and the other Persians, Theodorus and Ibykus, the friends of Polykrates, already known to us, and Aristomachus, now commander of the Greek body-guard, were among the king's guests.

Amasis, whom we have just heard in such grave discourse with Croesus, now indulged in jest and satire. He seemed once more the wild officer, the bold reveller of the olden days.

His sparkling, clever jokes, at times playful, at times scornful, flew round among the revellers. The guests responded in loud, perhaps often artificial laughter, to their king's jokes, goblet after goblet was emptied, and the rejoicings had reached their highest point, when suddenly the master of the ceremonies appeared, bearing a small gilded mummy; and displaying it to the gaze of the assembly, exclaimed. "Drink, jest, and be merry, for all too soon ye shall become like unto this!"

[Wilkinson gives drawings of these mummies hundreds of which were placed in the tombs, and have been preserved to us. Lucian was present at a banquet, when they were handed round. The Greeks seem to have adopted this custom, but with their usual talent for beautifying all they touched, substituted a winged figure of death for the mummy. Maxims similar to the following one are by no means rare. "Cast off all care; be mindful only of pleasure until the day cometh when then must depart on the journey, whose goal is the realm of silence!" Copied from the tomb of Neferhotep to Abd-el-Qurnah.]

"Is it your custom thus to introduce death at all your banquets?" said Bartja, becoming serious, "or is this only a jest devised for to-day by your master of the ceremonies?"

"Since the earliest ages," answered Amasis, "it has been our custom to display these mummies at banquets, in order to increase the mirth of the revellers, by reminding them that one must enjoy the time while it is here. Thou, young butterfly, hast still many a long and joyful year before thee; but we, Croesus, we old men, must hold by this firmly. Fill the goblets, cup-bearer, let not one moment of our lives be wasted! Thou canst drink well, thou golden-haired Persian! Truly the great gods have endowed thee not only with beautiful eyes, and blooming beauty, but with a good throat! Let me embrace thee, thou glorious youth, thou rogue! What thinkest thou Croesus? my daughter Tachot can speak of nothing else than of this beardless youth, who seems to have quite turned her little head with his sweet looks and words. Thou needest not to blush, young madcap! A man such as thou art, may well look at king's daughters;

but wert thou thy father Cyrus himself, I could not allow my Tachot to leave me for Persia!"

"Father!" whispered the crown-prince Psamtik, interrupting this conversation. "Father, take care what you say, and remember Phanes." The king turned a frowning glance on his son; but following his advice, took much less part in the conversation, which now became more general.

The seat at the banquet-table, occupied by Aristomachus, placed him nearly opposite to Croesus, on whom, in total silence and without once indulging in a smile at the king's jests, his eyes had been fixed from the beginning of the revel. When the Pharaoh ceased to speak, he accosted Croesus suddenly with the following question: "I would know, Lydian, whether the snow still covered the mountains, when ye left Persia."

Smiling, and a little surprised at this strange speech, Croesus answered: "Most of the Persian mountains were green when we started for Egypt four months ago; but there are heights in the land of Cambyses on which, even in the hottest seasons, the snow never melts, and the glimmer of their white crests we could still perceive, as we descended into the plains."

The Spartan's face brightened visibly, and Croesus, attracted by this serious, earnest man, asked his name. "My name is Aristomachus."

"That name seems known to me."

"You were acquainted with many Hellenes, and my name is common among them."

"Your dialect would bespeak you my opinion a Spartan."

"I was one once."

"And now no more?"

"He who forsakes his native land without permission, is worthy of death."

"Have you forsaken it with your own free-will?"

"Yes."

"For what reason?"

"To escape dishonor."

"What was your crime?"

"I had committed none."

"You were accused unjustly?"

"Yes."

"Who was the author of your ill-fortune?"

"Yourself."

Croesus started from his seat. The serious tone and gloomy face of the Spartan proved that this was no jest, and those who sat near the speakers, and had been following this strange dialogue, were alarmed and begged Aristomachus to explain his words.

He hesitated and seemed unwilling to speak; at last, however, at the king's summons, he began thus:

"In obedience to the oracle, you, Croesus, had chosen us Lacedaemonians, as the most powerful among the Hellenes, to be your allies against the might of Persia; and you gave us gold for the statue of Apollo on Mount Thornax. The ephori, on this, resolved to present you with a gigantic bronze wine-bowl, richly wrought. I was chosen as bearer of this gift. Before reaching Sardis our ship was wrecked in a storm. The wine-cup sank with it, and we reached Samos with nothing but our lives. On returning home I was accused by enemies, and those who grudged my good fortune, of having sold both ship and wine-vessel to the Samians. As they could not convict me of the crime, and had yet determined on my ruin, I was sentenced to two days' and nights' exposure on the pillory. My foot was chained to it during the night; but before the morning of disgrace dawned, my brother brought me secretly a sword, that my

honor might be saved, though at the expense of my life. But I could not die before revenging myself on the men who had worked my ruin; and therefore, cutting the manacled foot from my leg, I escaped, and hid in the rushes on the banks of the Furotas. My brother brought me food and drink in secret; and after two months I was able to walk on the wooden leg you now see. Apollo undertook my revenge; he never misses his mark, and my two worst opponents died of the plague. Still I durst not return home, and at length took ship from Gythium to fight against the Persians under you, Croesus. On landing at Teos, I heard that you were king no longer, that the mighty Cyrus, the father of yonder beautiful youth, had conquered the powerful province of Lydia in a few weeks, and reduced the richest of kings to beggary."

Every guest gazed at Aristomachus in admiration. Croesus shook his hard hand; and Bartja exclaimed: "Spartan, I would I could take you back with me to Susa, that my friends there might see what I have seen myself, the most courageous, the most honorable of men!"

"Believe me, boy," returned Aristomachus smiling, "every Spartan would have done the same. In our country it needs more courage to be a coward than a brave man."

"And you, Bartja," cried Darius, the Persian king's cousin, "could you have borne to stand at the pillory?" Bartja reddened, but it was easy to see that he too preferred death to disgrace.

"Zopyrus, what say you?" asked Darius of the third young Persian.

"I could mutilate my own limbs for love of you two," answered he, grasping unobserved the hands of his two friends.

With an ironical smile Psamtik sat watching this scene—the pleased faces of Amasis, Croesus and Gyges, the meaning glances of the Egyptians, and the contented looks with which Aristomachus gazed on the young heroes.

Ibykus now told of the oracle which had promised Aristomachus a return to his native land, on the approach of the men from the

snowy mountains, and at the same time, mentioned the hospitable house of Rhodopis.

On hearing this name Psamtik grew restless; Croesus expressed a wish to form the acquaintance of the Thracian matron, of whom AEsop had related so much that was praiseworthy; and, as the other guests, many of whom had lost consciousness through excessive drinking, were leaving the hall, the dethroned monarch, the poet, the sculptor and the Spartan hero made an agreement to go to Naukratis the next day, and there enjoy the conversation of Rhodopis.

CHAPTER VI.

On the night following the banquet just described, Amasis allowed himself only three hours' rest. On this, as on every other morning, the young priests wakened him at the first cock-crow, conducted him as usual to the bath, arrayed him in the royal vestments and led him to the altar in the court of the palace, where in presence of the populace he offered sacrifice. During the offering the priests sang prayers in a loud voice, enumerated the virtues of their king, and, that blame might in no case light on the head of their ruler, made his bad advisers responsible for every deadly sin committed in ignorance.

They exhorted him to the performance of good deeds, while extolling his virtues; read aloud profitable portions of the holy writings, containing the deeds and sayings of great men, and then conducted him to his apartments, where letters and information from all parts of the kingdom awaited him.

Amasis was in the habit of observing most faithfully these daily-repeated ceremonies and hours of work; the remaining portion of the day he spent as it pleased him, and generally in cheerful society.

The priests reproached him with this, alleging that such a life was not suited to a monarch; and on one occasion he had thus replied to the indignant high-priest: "Look at this bow! if always bent it must lose its power, but, if used for half of each day and then allowed to rest, it will remain strong and useful till the string breaks."

Amasis had just signed his name to the last letter, granting the petition of a Nornarch—[Administrator of a Province]—for money to carry on different embankments rendered necessary by the last inundation, when a servant entered, bringing a request from the crown-prince Psamtik for an audience of a few minutes.

Amasis, who till this moment had been smiling cheerfully at the cheering reports from all parts of the country, now became suddenly serious and thoughtful. After long delay he answered: "Go and inform the prince that he may appear."

Psamtik appeared, pale and gloomy as ever; he bowed low and reverentially, on entering his father's presence.

Amasis nodded silently in return, and then asked abruptly and sternly: "What is thy desire? my time is limited."

"For your son, more than for others," replied the prince with quivering lips. "Seven times have I petitioned for the great favor, which thou grantest for the first time to-day."

"No reproaches! I suspect the reason of thy visit. Thou desirest an answer to thy doubts as to the birth of thy sister Nitetis."

"I have no curiosity; I come rather to warn thee, and to remind thee that I am not the only one who is acquainted with this mystery."

"Speakest thou of Phanes?"

"Of whom else should I speak? He is banished from Egypt and from his own country, and must leave Naukratis in a few days. What guarantee hast thou, that he will not betray us to the Persians?"

"The friendship and kindness which I have always shown him."

"Dost thou believe in the gratitude of men?"

"No! but I rely on my own discernment of character. Phanes will not betray us! he is my friend, I repeat it!"

"Thy friend perhaps, but my mortal enemy!"

"Then stand on thy guard! I have nothing to fear from him."

"For thyself perhaps nought, but for our country! O father, reflect that though as thy son I may be hateful in thine eyes, yet as Egypt's future I ought to be near thy heart. Remember, that at thy death, which may the gods long avert, I shall represent the existence of this glorious land as thou dost now; my fall will be the ruin of thine house, of Egypt!"

Amasis became more and more serious, and Psamtik went on eagerly: "Thou knowest that I am right! Phanes can betray our land to any foreign enemy; he is as intimately acquainted with it as we are; and beside this, he possesses a secret, the knowledge of which would convert our most powerful ally into a most formidable enemy."

"There thou art in error. Though not mine, Nitetis is a king's daughter and will know how to win the love of her husband."

"Were she the daughter of a god, she could not save thee from Cambyzes' wrath, if he discovers the treachery; lying is to a Persian the worst of crimes, to be deceived the greatest disgrace; thou hast deceived the highest and proudest of the nation, and what can one inexperienced girl avail, when hundreds of women, deeply versed in intrigue and artifice, are striving for the favor of their lord?"

"Hatred and revenge are good masters in the art of rhetoric," said Amasis in a cutting tone. "And think'st thou then, oh, foolish son, that I should have undertaken such a dangerous game without due consideration? Phanes may tell the Persians what he likes, he can never prove his point. I, the father, Ladice the mother must know best whether Nitetis is our child or not. We call her so, who dare aver the contrary? If it please Phanes to betray our land to any other enemy beside the Persians, let him; I fear nothing! Thou wouldst have me ruin a man who has been my friend, to whom I owe much gratitude, who has served me long and faithfully; and this without offence from his side. Rather will I shelter him from thy revenge, knowing as I do the impure source from which it springs."

"My father!"

"Thou desirest the ruin of this man, because he hindered thee from taking forcible possession of the granddaughter of Rhodopis, and because thine own incapacity moved me to place him in thy room as commander of the troops. Ah! thou growest pale! Verily, I owe Phanes thanks for confiding to me your vile intentions, and so enabling me to bind my friends and supporters, to whom Rhodopis is precious, more firmly to my throne."

"And is it thus thou speakest of these strangers, my father? dost thou thus forget the ancient glory of Egypt? Despise me, if thou wilt; I know thou lovest me not; but say not that to be great we need the help of strangers! Look back on our history! Were we not greatest when our gates were closed to the stranger, when we depended on ourselves and our own strength, and lived according to the ancient laws of our ancestors and our gods? Those days beheld the most distant lands subjugated by Rameses, and heard Egypt celebrated in the whole world as its first and greatest nation. What are we now? The king himself calls beggars and foreigners the supporters of his throne, and devises a petty stratagem to secure the friendship of a power over whom we were victorious before the Nile was infested by these strangers. Egypt was then a mighty Queen in glorious apparel; she is now a painted woman decked out in tinsel!"

[Rameses the Great, son of Sethos, reigned over Egypt 1394-1328 B. C. He was called Sesostris by the Greeks; see Lepsius (Chron. d. Aegyptier, p. 538.) on the manner in which this confusion of names arose. Egypt attained the zenith of her power under this king, whose army, according to Diodorus (I. 53-58). consisted of 600,000 foot and 24,000 horsemen, 27,000 chariots and 400 ships of war. With these hosts he subdued many of the Asiatic and African nations, carving his name and likeness, as trophies of victory, on the rocks of the conquered countries. Herodotus speaks of having seen two of these inscriptions himself (II. 102-106.) and two are still to be found not far from Bairut. His conquests brought vast sums of tribute into Egypt. Tacitus annal. II. 60. and these enabled him to erect magnificent buildings in the whole length of his land from Nubia to Tanis, but more especially in Thebes, the city in which he resided. One of the obelisks erected by Rameses at Heliopolis is now standing in the Place de la Concorde at Paris, and has been lately translated by E. Chabas. On the walls of the yet remaining palaces and temples, built under this mighty king, we find, even to this day, thousands of pictures representing himself, his armed hosts, the many nations subdued by the power of his arms, and the divinities to whose favor he believed these victories were owing. Among the latter Ammon and Bast seem to have received his especial veneration, and, on the other hand, we read in these inscriptions that the gods were very willing to grant the wishes of their favorite. A poetical description of the wars he waged with the Cheta is to be found in long lines of hieroglyphics on the south wall of the hall of columns of Rameses II. at Karnal, also at Luxor and in the Sallier Papyrus, and an epic poem referring to his mighty deeds in no less than six different places.]

"Have a care what thou sayest!" shouted Amasis stamping on the floor. "Egypt was never so great, so flourishing as now! Rameses carried our arms into distant lands and earned blood; through my labors the products of our industry have been carried to all parts of the world and instead of blood, have brought us treasure and blessing. Rameses caused the blood and sweat of his subjects to flow in streams for the honor of his own great name; under my rule their blood flows rarely, and the sweat of their brow only in works of usefulness. Every citizen can now end his days in prosperity and comfort. Ten thousand populous cities rise on the shores of the Nile, not a foot of the soil lies untilled, every child enjoys the protection of law and justice, and every ill-doer shuns the watchful eye of the authorities.

"In case of attack from without, have we not, as defenders of those god-given bulwarks, our cataracts, our sea and our deserts, the finest army that ever bore arms? Thirty thousand Hellenes beside our entire Egyptian military caste? such is the present condition of Egypt! Rameses purchased the bright tinsel of empty fame with the blood and tears of his people. To me they are indebted for the pure gold of a peaceful welfare as citizens—to me and to my predecessors, the Saitic kings!"

[The science of fortification was very fairly understood by the ancient Egyptians. Walled and battlemented forts are to be seen depicted on their monuments. We have already endeavored to show that, on the northeast, Egypt defended from Asiatic invasion by a line of forts extending from Pelusium to the Red Sea.]

"And yet I tell thee," cried the prince, "that a worm is gnawing at the root of Egypt's greatness and her life. This struggle for riches and splendor corrupts the hearts of the people, foreign luxury has given a deadly blow to the simple manners of our citizens, and many an Egyptian has been taught by the Greeks to scoff at the gods of his fathers. Every day brings news of bloody strife between the Greek mercenaries and our native soldiery, between our own people and the strangers. The shepherd and his flock are at variance; the wheels of the state machinery are grinding one another and thus the state itself, into total ruin. This once, father, though never again, I must speak out clearly what is weighing on my heart. While

engaged in contending with the priests, thou hast seen with calmness the young might of Persia roll on from the East, consuming the nations on its way, and, like a devouring monster, growing more and more formidable from every fresh prey. Thine aid was not, as thou hadst intended, given to the Lydians and Babylonians against the enemy, but to the Greeks in the building of temples to their false gods. At last resistance seemed hopeless; a whole hemisphere with its rulers lay in submission at the feet of Persia; but even then the gods willed Egypt a chance of deliverance. Cambyzes desired thy daughter in marriage. Thou, however, too weak to sacrifice thine own flesh and blood for the good of all, hast substituted another maiden, not thine own child, as an offering to the mighty monarch; and at the same time, in thy soft-heartedness, wilt spare the life of a stranger in whose hand he the fortunes of this realm, and who will assuredly work its ruin; unless indeed, worn out by internal dissension, it perish even sooner from its own weakness!"

Thus far Amasis had listened to these revilings of all he held dearest in silence, though pale, and trembling with rage; but now he broke forth in a voice, the trumpet-like sound of which pealed through the wide hall: "Know'st thou not then, thou boasting and revengeful son of evil, thou future destroyer of this ancient and glorious kingdom, know'st thou not whose life must be the sacrifice, were not my children, and the dynasty which I have founded, dearer to me than the welfare of the whole realm? Thou, Psamtik, thou art the man, branded by the gods, feared by men—the man to whose heart love and friendship are strangers, whose face is never seen to smile, nor his soul known to feel compassion! It is not, however, through thine own sin that thy nature is thus unblessed, that all thine undertakings end unhappily. Give heed, for now I am forced to relate what I had hoped long to keep secret from thine ears. After dethroning my predecessor, I forced him to give me his sister Tentcheta in marriage. She loved me; a year after marriage there was promise of a child. During the night preceding thy birth I fell asleep at the bedside of my wife. I dreamed that she was lying on the shores of the Nile, and complained to me of pain in the breast. Bending down, I beheld a cypress-tree springing from her heart. It grew larger and larger, black and spreading, twined its roots around thy mother and strangled her. A cold shiver seized me,

and I was on the point of flying from the spot, when a fierce hurricane came from the East, struck the tree and overthrew it, so that its spreading branches were cast into the Nile. Then the waters ceased to flow; they congealed, and, in place of the river, a gigantic mummy lay before me. The towns on its banks dwindled into huge funereal urns, surrounding the vast corpse of the Nile as in a tomb. At this I awoke and caused the interpreters of dreams to be summoned. None could explain the vision, till at last the priests of the Libyan Ammon gave me the following interpretation 'Tentcheta will die in giving birth to a son. The cypress, which strangled its mother, is this gloomy, unhappy man. In his days a people shall come from the East and shall make of the Nile, that is of the Egyptians, dead bodies, and of their cities ruinous heaps; these are the urns for the dead, which thou sawest.'

Psamtik listened as if turned into stone; his father continued; "Thy mother died in giving birth to thee; fiery-red hair, the mark of the sons of Typhon, grew around thy brow; thou becam'st a gloomy man. Misfortune pursued thee and robbed thee of a beloved wife and four of thy children. The astrologers computed that even as I had been born under the fortunate sign of Amman, so thy birth had been watched over by the rise of the awful planet Seb. Thou..." But here Amasis broke off, for Psamtik, in the anguish produced by these fearful disclosures had given way, and with sobs and groans, cried:

"Cease, cruel father! spare me at least the bitter words, that I am the only son in Egypt who is hated by his father without cause!"

Amasis looked down on the wretched man who had sunk to the earth before him, his face hidden in the folds of his robe, and the father's wrath was changed to compassion. He thought of Psamtik's mother, dead forty years before, and felt he had been cruel in inflicting this poisonous wound on her son's soul. It was the first time for years, that he had been able to feel towards this cold strange man, as a father and a comforter. For the first time he saw tears in the cold eyes of his son, and could feel the joy of wiping them away. He seized the opportunity at once, and bending clown over the groaning form, kissed his forehead, raised him from the ground and said gently:

"Forgive my anger, my son! the words that have grieved thee came not from my heart, but were spoken in the haste of wrath. Many years hast thou angered me by thy coldness, hardness and obstinacy; to-day thou hast wounded me again in my most sacred feelings; this hurried me into an excess of wrath. But now all is right between us. Our natures are so diverse that our innermost feelings will never be one, but at least we can act in concert for the future, and show forbearance one towards the other."

In silence Psamtik bowed down and kissed his father's robe "Not so," exclaimed the latter; "rather let my lips receive thy kiss, as is meet and fitting between father and son! Thou needest not to think again of the evil dream I have related. Dreams are phantoms, and even if sent by the gods, the interpreters thereof are human and erring. Thy hand trembles still, thy cheeks are white as thy robe. I was hard towards thee, harder than a father...."

"Harder than a stranger to strangers," interrupted his son. "Thou hast crushed and broken me, and if till now my face has seldom worn a smile, from this day forward it can be naught but a mirror of my inward misery."

"Not so," said Amasis, laying his hand on his son's shoulder. "If I wound, I can also heal. Tell me the dearest wish of thy heart, it shall be granted thee!"

Psamtik's eyes flashed, his sallow cheeks glowed for a moment, and he answered without consideration, though in a voice still trembling from the shock he had just received: "Deliver Phanes, my enemy, into my power!"

The king remained a few moments in deep thought, then answered: "I knew what thou wouldst ask, and will fulfil thy desire: but I would rather thou hadst asked the half of my treasures. A thousand voices within warn me that I am about to do an unworthy deed and a ruinous—ruinous for myself, for thee, the kingdom and our house. Reflect before acting, and remember, whatever thou mayst meditate against Phanes, not a hair of Rhodopis' head shall be touched. Also, that the persecution of my poor friend is to remain a secret from the Greeks. Where shall I find his equal as a commander, an adviser and a companion? He is not yet in thy power, however,

and I advise thee to remember, that though thou mayst be clever for an Egyptian, Phanes is a clever Greek. I will remind thee too of thy solemn oath to renounce the grandchild of Rhodopis. Methinks vengeance is dearer to thee than love, and the amends I offer will therefore be acceptable! As to Egypt, I repeat once again, she was never more flourishing than now; a fact which none dream of disputing, except the priests, and those who retail their foolish words. And now give ear, if thou wouldst know the origin of Nitetis. Self-interest will enjoin secrecy."

Psamtik listened eagerly to his father's communication, indicating his gratitude at the conclusion by a warm pressure of the hand.

"Now farewell," said Amasis. "Forget not my words, and above all shed no blood! I will know nothing of what happens to Phanes, for I hate cruelty and would not be forced to stand in horror of my own son. But thou, thou rejoicest! My poor Athenian, better were it for thee, hadst thou never entered Egypt!"

Long after Psamtik had left, his father continued to pace the hall in deep thought. He was sorry he had yielded; it already seemed as if he saw the bleeding Phanes lying massacred by the side of the dethroned Hophra. "It is true, he could have worked our ruin," was the plea he offered to the accuser within his own breast, and with these words, he raised his head, called his servants and left the apartment with a smiling countenance.

Had this sanguine man, this favorite of fortune, thus speedily quieted the warning voice within, or was he strong enough to cloak his torture with a smile?

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 asphalte, 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. Harken 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. magique Harris. 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 bad. 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?"

"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 sallow 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 clarionet, 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. I. 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 $21 \frac{1}{4}$ 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 roast-beef (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.]

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.]

"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, Psamtik 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?"]*

"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 Cambyzes' 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 Cambyzes 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 Cambyzes 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 Cambyzes 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.

CHAPTER XI.

Three days before the time fixed for the departure of Nitetis, Rhodopis had invited a large number of guests to her house at Naukratis, amongst whom Croesus and Gyges were included.

The two lovers had agreed to meet in the garden, protected by the darkness and the old slave, while the guests were occupied at the banquet. Melitta, therefore, having convinced herself that the guests were thoroughly absorbed in conversation, opened the garden-gate, admitted the prince, brought Sappho to him, and then retired, promising to warn them of any intruder by clapping her hands.

"I shall only have you near me three days longer," whispered Sappho. "Do you know, sometimes it seems to me as if I had only seen you yesterday for the first time; but generally I feel as if you had belonged to me for a whole eternity, and I had loved you all my life."

"To me too it seems as if you had always been mine, for I cannot imagine how I could ever have existed without you. If only the parting were over and we were together again!"

"Oh, believe me, that will pass more quickly than you fancy. Of course it will seem long to wait—very long; but when it is over, and we are together again, I think it will seem as if we had never been parted. So it has been with me every day. How I have longed for the morning to come and bring you with it! but when it came and you were sitting by my side, I felt as if I had had you all the time and your hand had never left my head."

"And yet a strange feeling of fear comes over me, when I think of our parting hour."

"I do not fear it so very much. I know my heart will bleed when you say farewell, but I am sure you will come back and will not have forgotten me. Melitta wanted to enquire of the Oracle whether you would remain faithful; and to question an old woman who has just come from Phrygia and can conjure by night from drawn cords, with incense, styrax, moon-shaped cakes, and wild-briar leaves; but I would have none of this, for my heart knows better than the

Pythia, the cords, or the smoke of sacrifice, that you will be true to me, and love me always."

"And your heart speaks the truth."

"But I have sometimes been afraid; and have blown into a poppy-leaf, and struck it, as the young girls here do. If it broke with a loud crack I was very happy, and cried, 'Ah! he will not forget!' but if the leaf tore without a sound I felt sad. I dare say I did this a hundred times, but generally the leaf gave the wished-for sound, and I had much oftener reason to be joyful than sad."

"May it be ever thus!"

"It must be! but dearest, do not speak so loudly; I see Knakias going down to the Nile for water and he will hear us."

"Well, I will speak low. There, I will stroke back your silky hair and whisper in your ear 'I love you.' Could you understand?"

"My grandmother says that it is easy to understand what we like to hear; but if you had just whispered, 'I hate you,' your eyes would have told me with a thousand glad voices that you loved me. Silent eyes are much more eloquent than all the tongues in the world."

"If I could only speak the beautiful Greek language as you do, I would.."

"Oh, I am so glad you cannot, for if you could tell me all you feel, I think you would not look into my eyes so lovingly. Words are nothing. Listen to the nightingale yonder! She never had the gift of speech and yet I think I can understand her."

"Will you confide her secret to me? I should like to know what Gulgul, as we Persians call the nightingale, has to talk about to her mate in the rose-bush. May you betray her secret?"

"I will whisper it softly. Philomel sings to her mate 'I love thee,' and he answers, (don't you hear him?), 'Itys, ito, itys.'"

"And what does that mean, 'Ito, ito?'"

"I accept it."

"And Itys?"

"Oh, that must be explained, to be rightly understood. Itys is a circle; and a circle, I was always taught, is the symbol of eternity, having neither beginning nor end; so the nightingale sings, 'I accept it for eternity.'"

"And if I say to you, 'I love thee?'"

"Then I shall answer gladly, like the sweet nightingale, 'I accept it for to-day, to-morrow, for all eternity!'"

"What a wonderful night it is! everything so still and silent; I do not even hear the nightingale now; she is sitting in the acacia-tree among the bunches of sweet blossoms. I can see the tops of the palm-trees in the Nile, and the moon's reflection between them, glistening like a white swan."

"Yes, her rays are over every living thing like silver fetters, and the whole world lies motionless beneath them like a captive woman. Happy as I feel now, yet I could not even laugh, and still less speak in a loud voice."

"Then whisper, or sing!"

"Yes, that is the best. Give me a lyre. Thank you. Now I will lean my head on your breast, and sing you a little, quiet, peaceful song. It was written by Alkman, the Lydian, who lived in Sparta, in praise of night and her stillness. You must listen though, for this low, sweet slumber-song must only leave the lips like a gentle wind. Do not kiss me any more, please, till I have finished; then I will ask you to thank me with a kiss:

*"Now o'er the drowsy earth still night prevails,
Calm sleep the mountain tops and shady vales,
The rugged cliffs and hollow glens;*

*The wild beasts slumber in their dens;
The cattle on the bill. Deep in the sea
The countless finny race and monster brood*

*Tranquil repose. Even the busy bee
Forgets her daily toil. The silent wood
No more with noisy hum of insect rings;
And all the feathered tribe, by gentle sleep subdued,
Roost in the glade and hang their drooping wings."*

"Now, dearest, where is my kiss?"

"I had forgotten it in listening, just as before I forgot to listen in kissing."

"You are too bad. But tell me, is not my song lovely?"

"Yes, beautiful, like everything else you sing."

"And the Greek poets write?"

"Yes, there you are right too, I admit."

"Are there no poets in Persia?"

"How can you ask such a question? How could a nation, who despised song, pretend to any nobility of feeling?"

"But you have some very bad customs."

"Well?"

"You take so many wives."

"My Sappho..."

"Do not misunderstand me. I love you so much, that I have no other wish than to see you happy and be allowed to be always with you. If, by taking me for your only wife, you would outrage the laws of your country, if you would thereby expose yourself to contempt, or even blame, (for who could dare to despise my Bartja!) then take other wives; but let me have you, for myself alone, at least two, or perhaps even three years. Will you promise this, Bartja?"

"I will."

"And then, when my time has passed, and you must yield to the customs of your country (for it will not be love that leads you to bring home a second wife), then let me be the first among your slaves. Oh! I have pictured that so delightfully to myself. When you go to war I shall set the tiara on your head, gird on the sword, and place the lance in your hand; and when you return a conqueror, I shall be the first to crown you with the wreath of victory. When you ride out to the chase, mine will be the duty of buckling on your spurs, and when you go to the banquet, of adorning and anointing you, winding the garlands of poplar and roses and twining them around your forehead and shoulders. If wounded, I will be your nurse; will never stir from your side if you are ill, and when I see you happy will retire, and feast my eyes from afar on your glory and happiness. Then perchance you will call me to your side, and your kiss will say, 'I am content with my Sappho, I love her still.'"

"O Sappho, wert thou only my wife now! —to-day! The man who possesses such a treasure as I have in thee, will guard it carefully, but never care to seek for others which, by its side, can only show their miserable poverty. He who has once loved thee, can never love another: I know it is the custom in my country to have many wives, but this is only allowed; there is no law to enjoin it. My father had, it is true, a hundred female slaves, but only one real, true wife, our mother Kassandane."

"And I will be your Kassandane."

"No, my Sappho, for what you will be to me, no woman ever yet was to her husband."

"When shall you come to fetch me?"

"As soon as I can, and am permitted to do so."

"Then I ought to be able to wait patiently."

"And shall I ever hear from you?"

"Oh, I shall write long, long letters, and charge every wind with loving messages for you."

"Yes, do so, my darling; and as to the letters, give them to the messenger who will bring Nitetis tidings from Egypt from time to time."

"Where shall I find him?"

"I will see that a man is stationed at Naukratis, to take charge of everything you send to him. All this I will settle with Melitta."

"Yes, we can trust her, she is prudent and faithful; but I have another friend, who is dearer to me than any one else excepting you, and who loves me too better than any one else does, but you —"

"You mean your grandmother Rhodopis."

"Yes, my faithful guardian and teacher."

"Ah, she is a noble woman. Croesus considers her the most excellent among women, and he has studied mankind as the physicians do plants and herbs. He knows that rank poison lies hidden in some, in others healing cordials, and often says that Rhodopis is like a rose which, while fading away herself, and dropping leaf after leaf, continues to shed perfume and quickening balsam for the sick and weak, and awaits in patience the wind which at last shall waft her from us."

"The gods grant that she may be with us for a long time yet! Dearest, will you grant me one great favor?"

"It is granted before I hear it."

"When you take me home, do not leave Rhodopis here. She must come with us. She is so kind and loves me so fervently, that what makes me happy will make her so too, and whatever is dear to me, will seem to her worthy of being loved."

"She shall be the first among our guests."

"Now I am quite happy and satisfied, for I am necessary to my grandmother; she could not live without her child. I laugh her cares and sorrows away, and when she is singing to me, or teaching me how to guide the style, or strike the lute, a clearer light beams from

her brow, the furrows ploughed by grief disappear, her gentle eyes laugh, and she seems to forget the evil past in the happy present."

"Before we part, I will ask her whether she will follow us home."

"Oh, how glad that makes me! and do you know, the first days of our absence from each other do not seem so very dreadful to me. Now you are to be my husband, I may surely tell you everything that pains or pleases me, even when I dare not tell any one else, and so you must know, that, when you leave, we expect two little visitors; they are the children of the kind Phanes, whom your friend Gyges saved so nobly. I mean to be like a mother to the little creatures, and when they have been good I shall sing them a story of a prince, a brave hero, who took a simple maiden to be his wife; and when I describe the prince I shall have you in my mind, and though my little listeners will not guess it, I shall be describing you from head to foot. My prince shall be tall like you, shall have your golden curls and blue eyes, and your rich, royal dress shall adorn his noble figure. Your generous heart, your love of truth, and your beautiful reverence for the gods, your courage and heroism, in short, every thing that I love and honor in you, I shall give to the hero of my tale. How the children will listen! and when they cry, 'Oh, how we love the prince, how good and beautiful he must be! if we could only see him? then I shall press them close to my heart and kiss them as I kiss you now, and so they will have gained their wish, for as you are enthroned in my heart, you must be living within me and therefore near to them, and when they embrace me they will embrace you too."

"And I shall go to my little sister Atossa and tell her all I have seen on my journey, and when I speak of the Greeks, their grace, their glorious works of art, and their beautiful women, I shall describe the golden Aphrodite in your lovely likeness. I shall tell her of your virtue, your beauty and modesty, of your singing, which is so sweet that even the nightingale is silent in order to listen to it, of your love and tenderness. But all this I shall tell her belongs to the divine Cypris, and when she cries, 'O Aphrodite, could I but see thee!' I too shall kiss my sister."

"Hark, what was that? Melitta surely clapped her hands. Farewell, we must not stay! but we shall soon see each other again."

"One more kiss!"

"Farewell!"

Melitta had fallen asleep at her post, overcome by age and weariness. Her dreams were suddenly disturbed by a loud noise, and she clapped her hands directly to warn the lovers and call Sappho, as she perceived by the stars that the dawn was not far off.

As the two approached the house, they discovered that the noise which had awakened the old slave, proceeded from the guests, who were preparing for departure.

Urging her to make the greatest haste, Melitta pushed the frightened girl into the house, took her at once to her sleeping-room, and was beginning to undress her when Rhodopis entered.

"You are still up, Sappho?" she asked.

"What is this, my child?"

Melitta trembled and had a falsehood ready on her lips, but Sappho, throwing herself into her grandmother's arms, embraced her tenderly and told the whole story of her love.

Rhodopis turned pale, ordered Melitta to leave the chamber, and, placing herself in front of her grandchild, laid both hands on her shoulders and said earnestly, "Look into my eyes, Sappho. Canst thou look at me as happily and as innocently, as thou couldst before this Persian came to us?"

The girl raised her eyes at once with a joyful smile; then Rhodopis clasped her to her bosom, kissed her and continued: "Since thou wert a little child my constant effort has been to train thee to a noble maidenhood and guard thee from the approach of love. I had intended, in accordance with the customs of our country, to choose a fitting husband for thee shortly myself, to whose care I should have committed thee; but the gods willed differently.

[The Spartans married for love, but the Athenians were accustomed to negotiate their marriages with the parents of the bride alone.]

Eros mocks all human efforts to resist or confine him; warm AEolian blood runs in thy veins and demands love; the passionate heart of thy Lesbian forefathers beats in thy breast.

[Charaxus, the grandfather of our heroine, and brother of the poetess Sappho, was, as a Lesbian, an AEolian Greek.]

What has happened cannot now be undone. Treasure these happy hours of a first, pure love; hold them fast in the chambers of memory, for to every human being there must come, sooner or later, a present so sad and desolate, that the beautiful past is all he has to live upon. Remember this handsome prince in silence, bid him farewell when he departs to his native country, but beware of hoping to see him again. The Persians are fickle and inconstant, lovers of everything new and foreign. The prince has been fascinated by thy sweetness and grace. He loves thee ardently now, but remember, he is young and handsome, courted by every one, and a Persian. Give him up that he may not abandon thee!"

"But how can I, grandmother? I have sworn to be faithful to him for ever."

"Oh, children! Ye play with eternity as if it were but a passing moment! I could blame thee for thus plighting thy troth, but I rejoice that thou regardest the oath as binding. I detest the blasphemous proverb: 'Zeus pays no heed to lovers' oaths.' Why should an oath touching the best and holiest feelings of humanity be regarded by the Deity, as inferior in importance to asseverations respecting the trifling questions of mine and thine? Keep thy promise then,—hold fast thy love, but prepare to renounce thy lover."

"Never, grandmother! could I ever have loved Bartja, if I had not trusted him? Just because he is a Persian and holds truth to be the highest virtue, I may venture to hope that he will remember his oath, and, notwithstanding those evil customs of the Asiatics, will take and keep me as his only wife."

"But if he should forget, thy youth will be passed in mourning, and with an embittered heart..."

"O, dear kind grandmother, pray do not speak of such dreadful things. If you knew him as well as I do, you would rejoice with me, and would tell me I was right to believe that the Nile may dry up and the Pyramids crumble into ruins, before my Bartja can ever deceive me!"

The girl spoke these words with such a joyful, perfect confidence, and her eyes, though filled with tears, were so brilliant with happiness and warmth of feeling, that Rhodopis' face grew cheerful too.

Sappho threw her arms again round her grandmother, told her every word that Bartja had said to her, and ended the long account by exclaiming: "Oh, grandmother, I am so happy, so very happy, and if you will come with us to Persia, I shall have nothing more to wish from the Immortals."

"That will not last long," said Rhodopis. "The gods cast envious glances at the happiness of mortals; they measure our portion of evil with lavish hands, and give us but a scanty allowance of good. But now go to bed, my child, and let us pray together that all may end happily. I met thee this morning as a child, I part from thee to-night a woman; and, when thou art a wife, may thy kiss be as joyful as the one thou givest me now. To-morrow I will talk the matter over with Croesus. He must decide whether I dare allow thee to await the return of the Persian prince, or whether I must entreat thee to forget him and become the domestic wife of a Greek husband. Sleep well, my darling, thy grandmother will wake and watch for thee."

Sappho's happy fancies soon cradled her to sleep; but Rhodopis remained awake watching the day dawn, and the sun rise, her mind occupied with thoughts which brought smiles and frowns across her countenance in rapid succession.

The next morning she sent to Croesus, begging him to grant her an hour's interview, acquainted him with every particular she had heard from Sappho, and concluded her tale with these words: "I know not what demands may be made on the consort of a Persian king, but I can truly say that I believe Sappho to be worthy of the first monarch of the world. Her father was free and of noble birth, and I have heard that, by Persian law, the descent of a child is

determined by the rank of the father only. In Egypt, too, the descendants of a female slave enjoy the same rights as those of a princess, if they owe their existence to the same father."

"I have listened to you in silence," answered Croesus, "and must confess, that, like yourself, I do not know in this moment whether to be glad or sorry for this attachment. Cambyses and Kassandane (the king's and Bartja's mother) wished to see the prince married before we left Persia, for the king has no children, and should he remain childless, the only hope for the family of Cyrus rests on Bartja, as the great founder of the Persian empire left but two sons,—Cambyses, and him who is now the suitor of your granddaughter. The latter is the hope and pride of the entire Persian nation, high and low; the darling of the people; generous, and noble, handsome, virtuous, and worthy of their love. It is indeed expected that the princes shall marry in their own family, the Achaemenidae; but the Persians have an unbounded predilection for everything foreign. Enchanted with the beauty of your granddaughter, and rendered indulgent by their partiality for Bartja, they would easily forgive this breach of an ancient custom. Indeed, if the king gives his approval, no objection on the part of his subjects can be entertained. The history of Iran too offers a sufficient number of examples, in which even slaves became the mothers of kings. The queen mother, whose position, in the eyes of the people, is nearly as high as that of the monarch himself, will do nothing to thwart the happiness of her youngest and favorite son. When she sees that he will not give up Sappho,—that his smiling face, in which she adores the image of her great husband Cyrus, becomes clouded, I verily believe she would be ready to sanction his taking even a Scythian woman to wife, if it could restore him to cheerfulness. Neither will Cambyses himself refuse his consent if his mother press the point at a right moment."

"In that case every difficulty is set aside," cried Rhodopis joyfully.

"It is not the marriage itself, but the time that must follow, which causes me uneasiness," answered Croesus.

"Do you think then that Bartja...?"

"From him I fear nothing. He has a pure heart, and has been so long proof against love, that now he has once yielded, he will love long and ardently."

"What then do you fear?"

"You must remember that, though the charming wife of their favorite will be warmly received by all his friends of his own sex, there are thousands of idle women in the harems of the Persian nobles, who will endeavor, by every artifice and intrigue in their power, to injure the newly-risen star; and whose greatest joy it will be to ruin such an inexperienced child and make her unhappy."

"You have a very bad opinion of the Persian women."

"They are but women, and will naturally envy her, who has gained the husband they all desired either for themselves or for their daughters. In their monotonous life, devoid of occupation, envy easily becomes hatred, and the gratification of these evil passions is the only compensation which the poor creatures can obtain for the total absence of love and loss of freedom. I repeat, the more beautiful Sappho is, the more malicious they will feel towards her, and, even if Bartja should love her so fervently as not to take a second wife for two or three years, she will still have such heavy hours to encounter, that I really do not know whether I dare congratulate you on her apparently brilliant future."

"That is quite my own feeling. A simple Greek would be more welcome to me than this son of a mighty monarch."

In this moment Knakias brought Bartja into the room. He went to Rhodopis at once, besought her not to refuse him the hand of her granddaughter, spoke of his ardent love, and assured her that his happiness would be doubled, if she would consent to accompany them to Persia. Then turning to Croesus, he seized his hand and entreated forgiveness for having so long concealed his great happiness from one who had been like a father to him, at the same time begging him to second his suit with Rhodopis.

The old man listened to the youth's passionate language with a smile, and said: "Ah, Bartja, how often have I warned thee against love! It is a scorching fire."

"But its flame is bright and beautiful."

"It causes pain."

"But such pain is sweet."

"It leads the mind astray."

"But it strengthens the heart."

"Oh, this love!" cried Rhodopis. "Inspired by Eros, the boy speaks as if he had been all his life studying under an Attic orator!"

"And yet," answered Croesus, "these lovers are the most unteachable of pupils. Convince them as clearly as you will, that their passion is only another word for poison, fire, folly, death, they still cry, 'Tis sweet,' and will not be hindered in their course."

As he was speaking Sappho came in. A white festal robe, with wide sleeves, and borders of purple embroidery, fell in graceful folds round her delicate figure, and was confined at the waist by a golden girdle. Her hair was adorned with fresh roses, and on her bosom lay her lover's first gift, the flashing diamond star.

She came up modestly and gracefully, and made a low obeisance to the aged Croesus. His eyes rested long on the maidenly and lovely countenance, and the longer he gazed the kindlier became his gaze. For a moment he seemed to grow young again in the visions conjured up by memory, and involuntarily he went up to the young girl, kissed her affectionately on the forehead, and, taking her by the hand, led her to Bartja with the words: "Take her, thy wife she must be, if the entire race of the Achaemenidae were to conspire against us!"

"Have I no voice in the matter?" said Rhodopis, smiling through her tears.

On hearing these words, Bartja and Sappho each took one of her hands, and gazed entreatingly into her face. She rose to her full stature, and like a prophetess exclaimed: "Eros, who brought you to each other, Zeus and Apollo defend and protect you. I see you now like two fair roses on one stem, loving and happy in the spring of life. What summer, autumn and winter may have in store for you, lies hidden with the gods. May the shades of thy departed parents, Sappho, smile approvingly when these tidings of their child shall reach them in the nether world."

Three days later a densely packed crowd was once more surging round the Sais landing-place. This time they had assembled to bid a last farewell to their king's daughter, and in this hour the people gave clear tokens that, in spite of all the efforts of the priestly caste, their hearts remained loyal to their monarch and his house. For when Amasis and Ladice embraced Nitetis for the last time with tears—when Tachot, in presence of all the inhabitants of Sais, following her sister down the broad flight of steps that led to the river, threw her arms round her neck once more and burst into sobs—when at last the wind filled the sails of the royal boat and bore the princess, destined to be the great king's bride, from their sight, few eyes among that vast crowd remained dry.

The priests alone looked on at this sad scene with unmoved gravity and coldness; but when the south wind at last bore away the strangers who had robbed them of their princess, many a curse and execration followed from the Egyptians on the shore; Tachot alone stood weeping there and waving her veil to them. For whom were these tears? for the play-fellow of her youth, or for the handsome, beloved prince?

Amasis embraced his wife and daughter in the eyes of all his people; and held up his little grandson, Prince Necho, to their gaze, the sight eliciting cries of joy on all sides. But Psamtik, the child's own father, stood by the while, tearless and motionless. The king appeared not to observe him, until Neithotep approached, and leading him to his father, joined their hands and called down the blessing of the gods upon the royal house.

At this the Egyptians fell on their knees with uplifted hands. Amasis clasped his son to his heart, and when the high-priest had

concluded his prayer, the following colloquy between the latter and Amasis took place in low tones:

"Let peace be between us for our own and Egypt's sake!"

"Hast thou received Nebenchari's letter?"

"A Samian pirate-vessel is in pursuit of Phanes' trireme."

"Behold the child of thy predecessor Hophra, the rightful heiress of the Egyptian throne, departing unhindered to a distant land!"

"The works of the Greek temple now building in Memphis shall be discontinued."

"May Isis grant us peace, and may prosperity and happiness increase in our land!"

The Greek colonists in Naukratis had prepared a feast to celebrate the departure of their protector's daughter.

Numerous animals had been slaughtered in sacrifice on the altars of the Greek divinities, and the Nile-boats were greeted with a loud cry of "Ailinos" on their arrival in the harbor.

A bridal wreath, composed of a hoop of gold wound round with scented violets, was presented to Nitetis by a troop of young girls in holiday dresses, the act of presentation being performed by Sappho, as the most beautiful among the maidens of Naukratis.

On accepting the gift Nitetis kissed her forehead in token of gratitude. The triremes were already waiting; she went on board, the rowers took their oars and began the Keleusma.

Ailinos rang across the water from a thousand voices. Bartja stood on the deck, and waved a last loving farewell to his betrothed; while Sappho prayed in silence to Aphrodite Euploia, the protectress of those who go down to the sea in ships. A tear rolled down her cheek, but around her lips played a smile of love and hope, though her old slave Melitta, who accompanied her to carry her parasol, was weeping as if her heart would break. On seeing, however, a few leaves fall from her darling's wreath, she forgot her tears for a

moment and whispered softly: "Yes, dear heart, it is easy to see that you are in love; when the leaves fall from a maiden's wreath, 'tis a sure sign that her heart has been touched by Eros.

CHAPTER XII.

Seven weeks after Nitetis had quitted her native country, a long train of equipages and horsemen was to be seen on the king's highway from the west to Babylon, moving steadily towards that gigantic city, whose towers might already be descried in the far distance.

[The great road called the "king's road," of which we shall have more to say, was made by Cyrus and carefully kept up by Darius.]

The principal object in this caravan was a richly-gilded, four-wheeled carriage, closed in at the sides by curtains, and above by a roof supported on wooden pillars. In this vehicle, called the Harmamaxa, resting on rich cushions of gold brocade, sat our Egyptian Princess.

[Harmamaxa – An Asiatic travelling carriage. The first mention of these is in Xenophon's Anabasis, where we find a queen travelling in such a vehicle. They were later adopted by the Romans and used for the same object.]

On either side rode her escort, viz.: the Persian princes and nobles whom we have already learnt to know during their visit to Egypt, Croesus and his son.

Behind these, a long train, consisting of fifty vehicles of different kinds and six hundred beasts of burden, stretched away into the distance, and the royal carriage was preceded by a troop of splendidly-mounted Persian cavalry.

The high-road followed the course of the Euphrates, passing through luxuriant fields of wheat, barley and sesame yielding fruit two, and sometimes even three, hundred-fold. Slender date-palms covered with golden fruit were scattered in every direction over the fields, which were thoroughly irrigated by means of canals and ditches.

It was winter, but the sun shone warm and bright from a cloudless sky. The mighty river swarmed with craft of all sizes, either transporting the products of Upper Armenia to the plains of

Mesopotamia, or the wares of Greece and Asia Minor from Thapsakus to Babylon.

[Thapsakus – An important commercial town on the Euphrates, and the point of observation from which Eratosthenes took his measurements of the earth.]

Pumps and water-wheels poured refreshing streams over the thirsty land, and pretty villages ornamented the shores of the river. Indeed every object gave evidence that our caravan was approaching the metropolis of a carefully governed and civilized state.

Nitetis and her retinue now halted at a long brick house, roofed with asphalte, and surrounded by a grove of plane-trees.

[Asphalte – Nearly all authorities, ancient as well as modern, report that bitumen, which is still plentifully found in the neighborhood of Babylon, was used by the Babylonians as mortar. See, besides the accounts of ancient writers, W. Vaux, 'Nineveh and Persepolis'. Burnt bitumen was used by Assyrians for cement in building.]

Here Croesus was lifted from his horse, and approaching the carriage, exclaimed: "Here we are at length at the last station! That high tower which you see on the horizon is the celebrated temple of Bel, next to the Pyramids, one of the most gigantic works ever constructed by human hands. Before sunset we shall have reached the brazen gates of Babylon. And now I would ask you to alight, and let me send your maidens into the house; for here you must put on Persian apparel, to appear well-pleasing in the eyes of Cambyses. In a few hours you will stand before your future husband. But you are pale! Permit your maidens to adorn your cheeks with a color that shall look like the excitement of joy. A first impression is often a final one, and this is especially true with regard to Cambyses. If, which I doubt not, you are pleasing in his eyes at first, then you have won his love for ever; but if you should displease him to-day he will never look kindly on you again, for he is rough and harsh. But take courage, my daughter, and above all, do not forget the advice I have given you." Nitetis dried her tears as she answered: "How can I ever thank you, O Croesus, my second father, my protector and adviser, for all your goodness? Oh, forsake me not in

the days to come! and if the path of my life should lead through grief and care, be near to help and guide me as you did on the mountain-passes of this long and dangerous journey. A thousand times I thank thee, O my father!"

And, as she said these words, the young girl threw her arms around the old man's neck and kissed him tenderly.

On entering the court-yard, a tall stout man, followed by a train of Asiatic serving-maidens, came forward to meet them. This was Boges, the chief of the eunuchs, an important official at the Persian court. His beardless face wore a smile of fulsome sweetness; in his ears hung costly jewelled pendants; his neck, arms, legs and his effeminately long garments glittered all over with gold chains and rings, and his crisp, stiff curls, bound round by a purple fillet, streamed with powerful and penetrating perfumes.

Making a low and reverential obeisance before Nitetis, and holding, the while, his fat hands overloaded with rings before his mouth, he thus addressed her: "Cambyses, lord of the world, hath sent me to thee, O Queen, that I may refresh thy heart with the dew of his salutations. He sendeth thee likewise by me, even by me the lowest of his servants, Persian raiment, that thou, as befitteth the consort of the mightiest of all rulers, mayest approach the gates of the Achaemenidae in Median garments. These women whom thou seest are thy handmaidens, and only await thy bidding to transform thee from an Egyptian jewel into a Persian pearl."

The master of the caravansary then appeared, bearing, in token of welcome, a basket of fruits arranged with great taste.

Nitetis returned her thanks to both these men in kind and friendly words; then entering the house laid aside the dress and ornaments of her native land, weeping as she did so, allowed the strangers to unloose the plait of hair which hung down at the left side of her head, and was the distinctive mark of an Egyptian princess, and to array her in Median garments.

[In almost all the Egyptian pictures, the daughters and sons of the Pharaohs are represented with these locks of hair, plaited and reaching from the forehead to the neck. Rosellini, Mon. stor. II. 123. Lepsius,

Denkmaler. The daughter of Rameses II. is drawn thus, and we have examples of the same in many other pictures.]

In the meantime, a repast had been commanded by the princes who accompanied her. Eager and agile attendants rushed to the baggage-waggon, fetching thence, in a few moments, seats, tables, and golden utensils of all kinds. The cooks vied with them and with each other, and as if by magic, in a short space of time a richly-adorned banquet for the hungry guests appeared, at which even the flowers were not wanting.

During the entire journey our travellers had lived in a similar luxury, as their beasts of burden carried every imaginable convenience, from tents of water-proof materials inwrought with gold, down to silver foot-stools; and in the vehicles which composed their train were not only bakers, cooks, cup-bearers and carvers, but perfumers, hair-dressers and weavers of garlands. Beside these conveniences, a well-fitted up caravansary, or inn, was to be found about every eighteen miles along the whole route, where disabled horses could be replaced, the plantations around which afforded a refreshing shelter from the noonday heat, or their hearths a refuge from the snow and cold on the mountain-passes.

The kingdom of Persia was indebted for these inns (similar to the post-stations of modern days) to Cyrus, who had endeavored to connect the widely-distant provinces of his immense dominions by a system of well-kept roads, and a regular postal service. At each of these stations the horseman carrying the letter-bag was relieved by a fresh man on a fresh steed, to whom the letters were transferred, and who, in his turn, darted off like the wind, to be again replaced at a similar distance by another rider. These couriers, called Angari, were considered the swiftest horsemen in the world.

[Herodotus V. 14. 49-52. Persian milestones are still to be found among the ruins of the old king's road, which led from Nineveh to Ecbatana. The Kurds call them keli-Shin (blue pillars).]

Just as the banqueters, amongst whom Boges had taken his seat, were rising from table, the door opened, and a vision appeared, which drew prolonged exclamation of surprise from all the Persians present. Nitetis, clad in the glorious apparel of a Median princess,

proud in the consciousness of her triumphant beauty, and yet blushing like a young girl at the wondering admiration of her friends, stood before them.

The attendants involuntarily fell on their faces before her, according to the custom of the Asiatics, and the noble Achaemenidae bowed low and reverentially; for it seemed as if Nitetis has laid aside all her former bashfulness and timidity with her simple Egyptian dress, and with the splendid silken garments of a Persian princess, flashing as they were with gold and jewels, had clothed herself in the majesty of a queen.

The deep reverence paid by all present seemed agreeable to her, and thanking her admiring friends by a gracious wave of the hand, she turned to the chief of the eunuchs and said in a kind tone but mingled with a touch of pride; "Thou hast performed thy mission well; I am content with the raiment and the slaves that thou hast provided and shall commend thy circumspection to the king, my husband. Receive this gold chain in the meanwhile, as a token of my gratitude."

The eunuch kissed the hem of her garment, and accepted the gift in silence. This man, hitherto omnipotent in his office, had never before encountered such pride in any of the women committed to his charge. Up to the present time all Cambyses' wives had been Asiatics, and, well aware of the unlimited power of the chief of the eunuchs, had used every means within their reach to secure his favor by flattery and submission.

Boges now made a second obeisance before Nitetis, of which, however, she took no notice, and turning to Croesus said: "Neither words nor gifts could ever suffice to express my gratitude to you, kindest of friends, for, if my future life at the court of Persia prove, I will not venture to say a happy, but even a peaceful one, it is to you alone that I shall owe it. Still, take this ring. It has never left my finger since I quitted Egypt, and it has a significance far beyond its outward worth. Pythagoras, the noblest of the Greeks, gave it to my mother, when he was tarrying in Egypt to learn the wisdom of our priests, and it was her parting gift to me. The number seven is engraved upon the simple stone. This indivisible number represents

perfect health, both to soul and body for health is likewise one and indivisible.

[Seven, the "motherless" number, which has no factor below ten.]

The sickness of one member is the sickness of all; one evil thought, allowed to take up its abode within our heart, destroys the entire harmony of the soul. When you see this seven therefore, let it recall my heart's wish that you may ever enjoy undisturbed bodily health, and long retain that loving gentleness which has made you the most virtuous, and therefore the healthiest of men. No thanks, my father, for even if I could restore to Croesus all the treasures that he once possessed, I should still retrain his debtor. Gyges, to you I give this Lydian lyre; let its tones recall the giver to your memory. For you, Zopyrus, I have a golden chain; I have witnessed that you are the most faithful of friends; and we Egyptians are accustomed to place cords and bands in the hands of our lovely Hathor, the goddess of love and friendship, as symbols of her captivating and enchaining attributes. As Darius has studied the wisdom of Egypt and the signs of the starry heavens, I beg him to take this circlet of gold, on which a skilful hand has traced the signs of the Zodiac.

[Diodorus (I. 49.) tells, that in the tomb of Osymandyas (palace of Rameses II. at Thebes) there lay a circle of gold, one ell thick and 365 ells in circumference, containing a complete astronomical calendar. The circle of the zodiac from Dendera, which is now in Paris, – an astronomical ceiling painting, which was believed at the time of its discovery to be of great age, is not nearly so ancient as was supposed, dating only from the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Letronne was the first to estimate it correctly. See Lepsius, Chron. p.63. and Lauth, 'les zodiaques de Dendera'. Munich 1865.]

And lastly, to my dear brother-in-law Bartja I commit the most precious jewel in my possession—this amulet of blue stone. My sister Tachot hung it round my neck as I kissed her on the last night before we parted; she told me it could bring to its wearer the sweet bliss of love. And then, Bartja, she wept! I do not know of whom she was thinking in that moment, but I hope I am acting according to her wishes in giving you her precious jewel. Take it as a gift from Tachot, and sometimes call to mind our games in the Sais gardens."

Thus far she had been speaking Greek, but now, addressing the attendants who remained standing in an attitude of deep reverence, she began in broken Persian: "Accept my thanks also. In Babylon you shall receive a thousand gold staters." Then turning to Bogen, she added: "Let this sum be distributed among the attendants at latest by the day after to-morrow. Take me to my carriage, Croesus."

The old king hastened to do her bidding, and as he was leading her thither she pressed his arm and whispered gently, "Are you pleased with me, my father?"

"I tell you, girl," the old man answered, "that no one but the king's mother can ever be your equal at this court, for a true and queenly pride reigns on your brow, and you have the power of using small means to effect great ends. Believe me, the smallest gift, chosen and bestowed as you can choose and bestow, gives more pleasure to a noble mind than heaps of treasure merely cast down at his feet. The Persians are accustomed to present and receive costly gifts. They understand already how to enrich their friends, but you can teach them to impart a joy with every gift. How beautiful you are to-day! Are your cushions to your mind, or would you like a higher seat? But what is that? There are clouds of dust in the direction of the city. Cambyses is surely coming to meet you! Courage, my daughter. Above all try to meet his gaze and respond to it. Very few can bear the lightning glance of those eyes, but, if you can return it freely and fearlessly, you have conquered. Fear nothing, my child, and may Aphrodite adorn you with her most glorious beauty! My friends, we must start, I think the king himself is coming." Nitetis sat erect in her splendid, gilded carriage; her hands were pressed on her throbbing heart. The clouds of dust came nearer and nearer, her eye caught the flash of weapons like lightning across a stormy sky. The clouds parted, she could see single figures for a moment, but soon lost them as the road wound behind some thickets and shrubs. Suddenly the troop of horsemen appeared in full gallop only a hundred paces before her, and distinctly visible.

Her first impression was of a motley mass of steeds and men, glittering in purple, gold, silver and jewels. It consisted in reality of a troop of more than two hundred horsemen mounted on pure white Nicaean horses, whose bridles and saddle-cloths were

covered with bells and bosses, feathers, fringes, and embroidery. Their leader rode a powerful coal-black charger, which even the strong will and hand of his rider could not always curb, though in the end his enormous strength proved him the man to tame even this fiery animal. This rider, beneath whose weight the powerful steed trembled and panted, wore a vesture of scarlet and white, thickly embroidered with eagles and falcons in silver.

The lower part of his dress was purple, and his boots of yellow leather. He wore a golden girdle; in this hung a short dagger-like sword, the hilt and scabbard of which were thickly studded with jewels. The remaining ornaments of his dress resembled those we have described as worn by Bartja, and the blue and white fillet of the Achaemenidae was bound around the tiara, which surmounted a mass of thick curls, black as ebony. The lower part of his face was concealed by an immense beard. His features were pale and immovable, but the eyes, (more intensely black, if possible, than either hair or beard), glowed with a fire that was rather scorching than warming. A deep, fiery-red scar, given by the sword of a Massagetan warrior, crossed his high forehead, arched nose and thin upper lip. His whole demeanor expressed great power and unbounded pride.

Nitetic's gaze was at once riveted by this man. She had never seen any one like him before, and he exercised a strange fascination over her. The expression of indomitable pride, worn by his features, seemed to her to represent a manly nature which the whole world, but she herself above all others, was created to serve. She felt afraid, and yet her true woman's heart longed to lean upon his strength as the vine upon the elm. She could not be quite sure whether she had thus pictured to herself the father of all evil, the fearful Seth, or the great god Ammon, the giver of light.

The deepest pallor and the brightest color flitted by turns across her lovely face, like the light and shadow when clouds pass swiftly over a sunny noonday sky. She had quite forgotten the advice of her fatherly old friend, and yet, when Cambyzes brought his unruly, chafing steed to a stand by the side of her carriage, she gazed breathless into the fiery eyes of this man and felt at once that he was the king, though no one had told her so.

The stern face of this ruler of half the known world relaxed, as Nitetis, moved by an unaccountable impulse, continued to bear his piercing gaze. At last he waved his hand to her in token of welcome, and then rode on to her escort, who had alighted from their horses and were awaiting him, some having cast themselves down in the dust, and others, after the Persian manner, standing in an attitude of deep reverence, their hands concealed in the wide sleeves of their robes.

He sprang from his horse, an example which was followed at once by his entire suite. The attendants, with the speed of thought, spread a rich purple carpet on the highway, lest the foot of the king should come in contact with the dust of the earth, and then Cambyses proceeded to salute his friends and relations by offering them his mouth to kiss.

He shook Croesus by the right hand, commanding him to remount and accompany him to the carriage, as interpreter between himself and Nitetis.

In an instant his highest office-bearers were at hand to lift the king once more on to his horse, and at a single nod from their lord, the train was again in motion.

Cambyes and Croesus rode by the side of the carriage.

"She is beautiful, and pleases me well," began the king. "Interpret faithfully all her answers, for I understand only the Persian, Assyrian and Median tongues."

Nitetis caught and understood these words. A feeling of intense joy stole into her heart, and before Croesus could answer, she began softly in broken Persian and blushing deeply: "Blessed be the gods, who have caused me to find favor in thine eyes. I am not ignorant of the speech of my lord, for the noble Croesus has instructed me in the Persian language during our long journey. Forgive, if my sentences be broken and imperfect; the time was short, and my capacity only that of a poor and simple maiden."

[Diodorus tells us that Themistocles learnt the Persian language during the journey to Susa. We are not, therefore, requiring an impossibility of Nitetis.]

A smile passed over the usually serious mouth of Cambyses. His vanity was flattered by Nitetis' desire to win his approbation, and, accustomed as he was to see women grow up in idleness and ignorance, thinking of nothing but finery and intrigue, her persevering industry seemed to him both wonderful and praise worthy. So he answered with evident satisfaction: "I rejoice that we can speak without an interpreter. Persevere in learning the beautiful language of my forefathers. Croesus, who sits at my table, shall still remain your instructor."

"Your command confers happiness!" exclaimed the old man. "No more eager or thankful pupil could be found, than the daughter of Amasis."

"She justifies the ancient report of the wisdom of Egypt," answered the king, "and I can believe that she will quickly understand and receive into her soul the religious instructions of our Magi."

Nitetis dropped her earnest gaze. Her fears were being realized. She would be compelled to serve strange gods.

But her emotion passed unnoticed by Cambyses, who went on speaking: "My mother Kassandane will tell you the duties expected from my wives. To-morrow I myself will lead you to her. The words, which you innocently chanced to hear, I now repeat; you please me well. Do nothing to alienate my affection. We will try to make our country agreeable, and, as your friend, I counsel you to treat Boges whom I sent as my forerunner, in a kind and friendly manner. As head over the house of the women, you will have to conform to his will in many things."

"Though he be head over the house of the women," answered Nitetis, "surely your wife is bound to obey no other earthly will than yours. Your slightest look shall be for me a command; but remember that I am a king's daughter, that in my native land the weaker and the stronger sex have equal rights, and that the same pride reigns in my breast, which I see kindling in your eyes, my lord and king! My

obedience to you, my husband and my ruler, shall be that of a slave, but I can never stoop to sue for the favor, or obey the orders of a venal servant, the most unmanly of his kind!"

Cambyses' wonder and satisfaction increased. He had never heard any woman speak in this way before, except his mother; the clever way in which Nitetis acknowledged, and laid stress on, his right to command her every act, was very flattering to his self-love, and her pride found an echo in his own haughty disposition. He nodded approvingly and answered: "You have spoken well. A separate dwelling shall be appointed you. I, and no one else, will prescribe your rules of life and conduct. This day the pleasant palace on the hanging-gardens shall be prepared for your reception."

"A thousand, thousand thanks," cried Nitetis. "You little know the blessing you are bestowing in this permission. Again and again I have begged your brother Bartja to repeat the story of these gardens, and the love of the king who raised that verdant and blooming hill, pleased us better than all the other glories of your vast domains."

"To-morrow," answered the king, "you can enter your new abode. But tell me now how my messengers pleased you and your countrymen."

"How can you ask? Who could know the noble Croesus without loving him? Who could fail to admire the beauty of the young heroes, your friends? They have all become dear to us, but your handsome brother Bartja especially, won all hearts. The Egyptians have no love for strangers, and yet the gaping crowd would burst into a murmur of admiration, when his beautiful face appeared among them."

At these words the king's brow darkened; he struck his horse so sharply that the creature reared, and then turning it quickly round he galloped to the front and soon reached the walls of Babylon.

Though Nitetis had been brought up among the huge temples and palaces of Egypt, she was still astonished at the size and grandeur of this gigantic city.

Its walls seemed impregnable; they measured more than seventy-five feet—[Fifty ells. The Greek ell is equal to one foot and a half English.]—in height and their breadth was so great, that two chariots could conveniently drive abreast upon them. These mighty defences were crowned and strengthened by two hundred and fifty high towers, and even these would have been insufficient, if Babylon had not been protected on one side by impassable morasses. The gigantic city lay on both shores of the Euphrates. It was more than forty miles in circumference, and its walls enclosed buildings surpassing in size and grandeur even the Pyramids and the temples of Thebes.

[These numbers and measurements are taken partly from Herodotus, partly from Diodorus, Strabo and Arrian. And even the ruins of this giant city, writes Lavard, are such as to allow a very fair conclusion of its enormous size. Aristotle says Babylon's dimensions were not those of a city, but of a nation.]

The mighty gates of brass, through which the royal train entered the city, had opened wide to receive this noble company. This entrance was defended on each side by a strong tower, and before each of these towers lay, as warder, a gigantic winged bull carved in stone, with a human head, bearded and solemn. Nitetis gazed at these gates in astonishment, and then a joyful smile lighted up her face, as she looked up the long broad street so brightly and beautifully decorated to welcome her.

The moment they beheld the king and the gilded carriage, the multitude burst into loud shouts of joy, but when Bartja, the people's darling, came in sight, the shouts rose to thunder-peals and shrieks of delight, which seemed as if they would never end. It was long since the populace had seen Cambyzes, for in accordance with Median customs the king seldom appeared in public. Like the Deity, he was to govern invisibly, and his occasional appearance before the nation to be looked upon as a festival and occasion of rejoicing. Thus all Babylon had come out to-day to look upon their awful ruler and to welcome their favorite Bartja on his return. The windows were crowded with eager, curious women, who threw flowers before the approaching train, or poured sweet perfumes from above as they passed by. The pavement was thickly strewn with myrtle and palm

branches, trees of different kinds had been placed before the house-doors, carpets and gay cloths hung from the windows, garlands of flowers were wreathed from house to house, fragrant odors of incense and sandal-wood perfumed the air, and the way was lined with thousands of gaping Babylonians dressed in white linen shirts, gaily-colored woollen petticoats and short cloaks, and carrying long staves headed with pomegranates, birds, or roses, of gold or silver.

The streets through which the procession moved were broad and straight, the houses on either side, built of brick, tall and handsome. Towering above every thing else, and visible from all points, rose the gigantic temple of Bel. Its colossal staircase, like a huge serpent, wound round and round the ever-diminishing series of stories composing the tower, until it reached the summit crowned by the sanctuary itself.

The procession approached the royal palace. This corresponded in its enormous size to the rest of the vast city. The walls surrounding it were covered with gaily-colored and glazed representations of strange figures made up of human beings, birds, quadrupeds and fishes; hunting-scenes, battles and solemn processions. By the side of the river towards the north, rose the hanging-gardens, and the smaller palace lay toward the east on the other bank of the Euphrates, connected with the larger one by the wondrous erection, a firm bridge of stone.

Our train passed on through the brazen gates of three of the walls surrounding the palace, and then halted. Nitetis was lifted from her carriage by bearers; she was at last in her new home, and soon after in the apartments of the women's house assigned to her temporary use.

Cambyzes, Bartja and their friends already known to us, were still standing in the gaily-carpeted court of the palace, surrounded by at least a hundred splendid dignitaries in magnificent dresses, when suddenly a sound of loud female voices was heard, and a lovely Persian girl richly dressed, her thick fair hair profusely wreathed with pearls, rushed into the court, pursued by several women older than herself. She ran up to the group of men; Cambyzes with a smile placed himself in her path, but the impetuous girl slipped adroitly

past him, and in another moment was hanging on Bartja's neck, crying and laughing by turns.

The attendants in pursuit prostrated themselves at a respectful distance, but Cambyzes, on seeing the caresses lavished by the young girl on her newly-retained brother, cried: "For shame, Atossa! remember that since you began to wear ear-rings you have ceased to be a child!

[Ear-rings were given to the Persian girls in their fifteenth year, the marriageable age. Vendid. Farlard XIV. 66. At this age too boys as well as girls were obliged to wear the sacred cord, Kuctl or Kosti as a girdle; and were only allowed to unloose it in the night. The making of this cord is attended with many ceremonies, even among the Persians of our own day. Seventy-two threads must be employed, but black wool is prohibited.]

It is right that you should rejoice to see your brother again, but a king's daughter must never forget what is due to her rank, even in her greatest joy. Go back to your mother directly. I see your attendants waiting yonder. Go and tell them, that as this is a day of rejoicing I will allow your heedless conduct to pass unpunished, but the next time you appear unbidden in these apartments, which none may enter without permission, I shall tell Boges to keep you twelve days in confinement. Remember this, thoughtless child, and tell our mother, Bartja and I are coming to visit her. Now give me a kiss. You will not? We shall see, capricious little one!" And so saying the king sprang towards his refractory little sister, and seizing both her hands in one of his own, bent back her charming head with the other and kissed her in spite of her resistance. She screamed from the violence of his grasp, and ran away crying to her attendants, who took her back to her apartments.

When Atossa had disappeared, Bartja said; "You were too rough with the little one, Cambyzes. She screamed with pain!"

Once more the king's face clouded, but suppressing the harsh words which trembled on his lips, he only answered, turning towards the house: "Let us come to our mother now; she begged me to bring you as soon as you arrived. The women, as usual, are all impatience. Nitetis told me your rosy cheeks and fair curls had bewitched the Egyptian women too. I would advise you to pray

betimes to Mithras for eternal youth, and for his protection against the wrinkles of age!"

"Do you mean to imply by these words that I have no virtues which could make an old age beautiful?" asked Bartja.

"I explain my words to no one. Come."

"But I ask for an opportunity of proving, that I am inferior to none of my nation in manly qualities."

"For that matter, the shouts of the Babylonians today will have been proof enough, that deeds are not wanted from you, in order to win their admiration."

"Cambyses!"

"Now come! We are just on the eve of a war with the Massagetae; there you will have a good opportunity of proving what you are worth."

A few minutes later, and Bartja was in the arms of his blind mother. She had been waiting for her darling's arrival with a beating heart, and in the joy of hearing his voice once more, and of being able to lay her hands again on that beloved head, she forgot everything else—even her first-born son who stood by smiling bitterly, as he watched the rich and boundless stream of a mother's love flowing out to his younger brother.

Cambyses had been spoiled from his earliest infancy. Every wish had been fulfilled, every look regarded as a command; and thus he grew up totally unable to brook contradiction, giving way to the most violent anger if any of his subjects (and he knew no human beings who were not his subjects) dared to oppose him.

His father Cyrus, conqueror of half the world—the man whose genius had raised Persia from a small nation to the summit of earthly greatness—who had secured for himself the reverence and admiration of countless subjugated tribes—this great king was incapable of carrying out in his own small family-circle the system of education he had so successfully adopted towards entire countries. He could see nought else in Cambyses but the future king

of Persia, and commanded his subjects to pay him an unquestioning obedience, entirely forgetful of the fact that he who is to govern well must begin by learning to obey.

Cambyses had been the first-born son of Kassandane, the wife whom Cyrus had loved and married young; three daughters followed, and at last, fifteen years later, Bartja had come into the world. Their eldest son had already outgrown his parents' caresses, when this little child appeared to engross all their care and love. His gentle, affectionate and clinging nature made him the darling of both father and mother: Cambyses was treated with consideration by his parents, but their love was for Bartja. Cambyses was brave; he distinguished himself often in the field, but his disposition was haughty and imperious; men served him with fear and trembling, while Bartja, ever sociable and sympathizing, converted all his companions into loving friends. As to the mass of the people, they feared the king, and trembled when he drew near, notwithstanding the lavish manner in which he showered rich gifts around him; but they loved Bartja, and believed they saw in him the image of the great Cyrus the "Father of his people."

Cambyses knew well that all this love, so freely given to Bartja, was not to be bought. He did not hate his younger brother, but he felt annoyed that a youth who had as yet done nothing to distinguish himself, should be honored and revered as if he were already a hero and public benefactor. Whatever annoyed or displeased him he considered must be wrong; where he disapproved he did not spare his censures, and from his very childhood, Cambyses' reproofs had been dreaded even by the mighty.

The enthusiastic shouts of the populace, the overflowing love of his mother and sister, and above all, the warm encomiums expressed by Nitetis, had excited a jealousy which his pride had never allowed hitherto. Nitetis had taken his fancy in a remarkable degree. This daughter of a powerful monarch, like himself disdaining everything mean and inferior, had yet acknowledged him to be her superior, and to win his favor had not shrunk from the laborious task of mastering his native language. These qualities, added to her peculiar style of beauty, which excited his admiration

from its rare novelty, half Egyptian half Greek, (her mother having been a Greek), had not failed to make a deep impression on him. But she had been liberal in her praise of Bartja; that was enough to disturb Cambyses' mind and prepare the way for jealousy.

As he and his brother were leaving the women's apartments, Cambyses adopted a hasty resolution and exclaimed: "You asked me just now for an opportunity of proving your courage. I will not refuse. The Tapuri have risen; I have sent troops to the frontier. Go to Rhagae, take the command and show what you are worth."

"Thanks, brother," cried Bartja. "May I take my friends, Darius, Gyges and Zopyrus with me?"

"That favor shall be granted too. I hope you will all do your duty bravely and promptly, that you may be back in three months to join the main army in the expedition of revenge on the Massagetae. It will take place in spring."

"I will start to-morrow."

"Then farewell."

"If Auramazda should spare my life and I should return victorious, will you promise to grant me one favor?"

"Yes, I will."

"Now, then, I feel confident of victory, even if I should have to stand with a thousand men against ten thousand of the enemy." Bartja's eyes sparkled, he was thinking of Sappho.

"Well," answered his brother, "I shall be very glad if your actions bear out these glowing words. But stop; I have something more to say. You are now twenty years of age; you must marry. Roxana, daughter of the noble Hydarnes, is marriageable, and is said to be beautiful. Her birth makes her a fitting bride for you."

"Oh! brother, do not speak of marriage; I..." "You must marry, for I have no children."

"But you are still young; you will not remain childless. Besides, I do not say that I will never marry. Do not be angry, but just now, when I am to prove my courage, I would rather hear nothing about women."

"Well, then, you must marry Roxana when you return from the North. But I should advise you to take her with you to the field. A Persian generally fights better if he knows that, beside his most precious treasures, he has a beautiful woman in his tent to defend."

"Spare me this one command, my brother. I conjure thee, by the soul of our father, not to inflict on me a wife of whom I know nothing, and never wish to know. Give Roxana to Zopyrus, who is so fond of women, or to Darius or Bessus, who are related to her father Hydarnes. I cannot love her, and should be miserable..."

Cambyses interrupted him with a laugh, exclaiming: "Did you learn these notions in Egypt, where it is the custom to be contented with one wife? In truth, I have long repented having sent a boy like you abroad. I am not accustomed to bear contradiction, and shall listen to no excuses after the war. This once I will allow you to go to the field without a wife. I will not force you to do what, in your opinion, might endanger your valor. But it seems to me that you have other and more secret reasons for refusing my brotherly proposal. If that is the case, I am sorry for you. However, for the present, you can depart, but after the war I will hear no remonstrances. You know me."

"Perhaps after the war I may ask for the very thing, which I am refusing now—but never for Roxana! It is just as unwise to try to make a man happy by force as it is wicked to compel him to be unhappy, and I thank you for granting my request."

"Don't try my powers of yielding too often!—How happy you look! I really believe you are in love with some one woman by whose side all the others have lost their charms."

Bartja blushed to his temples, and seizing his brother's hand, exclaimed: "Ask no further now, accept my thanks once more, and farewell. May I bid Nitetis farewell too, when I have taken leave of our mother and Atossa?"

Cambyzes bit his lip, looked searchingly into Bartja's face, and finding that the boy grew uneasy under his glance, exclaimed abruptly and angrily: "Your first business is to hasten to the Tapuri. My wife needs your care no longer; she has other protectors now." So saying he turned his back on his brother and passed on into the great hall, blazing with gold, purple and jewels, where the chiefs of the army, satraps, judges, treasurers, secretaries, counsellors, eunuchs, door-keepers, introducers of strangers, chamberlains, keepers of the wardrobe, dressers, cup-bearers, equerries, masters of the chase, physicians, eyes and ears of the king, ambassadors and plenipotentiaries of all descriptions — were in waiting for him.

[The "eyes and ears" of the king may be compared to our police-ministers. Darius may have borrowed the name from Egypt, where such titles as "the 2 eyes of the king for Upper Egypt, the 2 ears of the king for Lower Egypt" are to be found on the earlier monuments, for instance in the tomb of Amen en, heb at Abd el Qurnah. And in Herodotus II. 114. the boy Cyrus calls one of his playfellows "the eye of the king,"]

The king was preceded by heralds bearing staves, and followed by a host of fan, sedan and footstool-bearers, men carrying carpets, and secretaries who the moment he uttered a command, or even indicated a concession, a punishment or a reward, hastened to note it down and at once hand it over to the officials empowered to execute his decrees.

In the middle of the brilliantly-lighted hall stood a gilded table, which looked as if it must give way beneath the mass of gold and silver vessels, plates, cups and bowls which were arranged with great order upon it. The king's private table, the service on which was of immense worth and beauty, was placed in an apartment opening out of the large hall, and separated from it by purple hangings. These concealed him from the gaze of the revellers, but did not prevent their every movement from being watched by his eye. It was an object of the highest ambition to be one of those who ate at the king's table, and even he to whom a portion was sent might deem himself a highly-favored man.

As Cambyzes entered the hall, nearly every one present prostrated themselves before him; his relations alone, distinguished by the blue

and white fillet on the tiara, contented themselves with a deferential obeisance.

After the king had seated himself in his private apartment, the rest of the company took their places, and then a tremendous revel began. Animals, roasted whole, were placed on the table, and, when hunger was appeased, several courses of the rarest delicacies followed, celebrated in later times even among the Greeks under the name of "Persian dessert."

[Herodotus writes that the Persians fancied the Greeks' hunger was never satisfied, because nothing special was brought to the table at the end of the meal.]

Slaves then entered to remove the remains of the food. Others brought in immense jugs of wine, the king left his own apartment, took his seat at the head of the table, numerous cup-bearers filled the golden drinking-cups in the most graceful manner, first tasting the wine to prove that it was free from poison, and soon one of those drinking-bouts had begun under the best auspices, at which, a century or two later, Alexander the Great, forgot not only moderation but even friendship itself.

Cambyzes was unwontedly silent. The suspicion had entered his mind, that Bartja loved Nitetis. Why had he, contrary to all custom, so decidedly refused to marry a noble and beautiful girl, when his brother's childlessness rendered marriage an evident and urgent duty for him? Why had he wished to see the Egyptian princess again before leaving Babylon? and blushed as he expressed that wish? and why had she, almost without being asked, praised him so warmly?

It is well that he is going, thought the king; at least he shall not rob me of her love. If he were not my brother I would send him to a place from whence none can return.

After midnight he broke up the banquet. Boges appeared to conduct him to the Harem, which he was accustomed to visit at this hour, when sufficiently sober.

"Phaedime awaits you with impatience," said the eunuch.

"Let her wait!" was the king's answer. "Have you given orders that the palace on the hanging-gardens shall be set in order?"

"It will be ready for occupation to-morrow."

"What apartments have been assigned to the Egyptian Princess?"

"Those formerly occupied by the second wife of your father Cyrus, the deceased Amytis."

"That is well. Nitetis is to be treated with the greatest respect, and to receive no commands even from yourself, but such as I give you for her."

Boges bowed low.

"See that no one, not even Croesus, has admission to her before my.... before I give further orders."

"Croesus was with her this evening."

"What may have been his business with my wife?"

"I do not know, for I do not understand the Greek language, but I heard the name of Bartja several times, and it seemed to me that the Egyptian had received sorrowful intelligence. She was looking very sad when I came, after Croesus had left, to inquire if she had any commands for me."

"May Ahriman blast thy tongue," muttered the king, and then turning his back on the eunuch he followed the torch-bearers and attendants, who were in waiting to disrobe him, to his own private apartments.

At noon on the following day, Bartja, accompanied by his friends and a troop of attendants, started on horseback for the frontier. Croesus went with the young warriors as far as the city gates, and as their last farewells and embraces were being exchanged, Bartja whispered to his old friend: "If the messenger from Egypt should have a letter for me in his bag, will you send it on?"

"Shall you be able to decipher the Greek writing?"

"Gyges and love will help me!"

"When I told Nitetis of your departure she begged me to wish you farewell, and tell you not to forget Egypt."

"I am not likely to do that."

"The gods take thee into their care, my son. Be prudent, do not risk your life heedlessly, but remember that it is no longer only your own. Exercise the gentleness of a father towards the rebels; they did not rise in mere self-will, but to gain their freedom, the most precious possession of mankind. Remember, too, that to shew mercy is better than to shed blood; the sword killeth, but the favor of the ruler bringeth joy and happiness. Conclude the war as speedily as possible, for war is a perversion of nature; in peace the sons outlive the fathers, but in war the fathers live to mourn for their slain sons. Farewell, my young heroes, go forward and conquer!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Cambyses passed a sleepless night. The feeling of jealousy, so totally new to him, increased his desire to possess Nitetis, but he dared not take her as his wife yet, as the Persian law forbade the king to marry a foreign wife, until she had become familiar with the customs of Iran and confessed herself a disciple of Zoroaster.

[Zoroaster, really Zarathustra or Zerethoschtro, was one of the `greatest among founders of new religions and lawgivers. His name signified "golden star" according to Anquetil du Perron. But this interpretation is as doubtful, as the many others which have been attempted. An appropriate one is given in the essay by Kern quoted below, from zara golden, and thwistra glittering; thus "the gold glittering one." It is uncertain whether he was born in Bactria, Media or Persia, Anquetil thinks in Urmi, a town in Aderbaijan. His father's name was Porosehasp, his mother's Dogdo, and his family boasted of royal descent. The time of his birth is very, — Spiegel says "hopelessly" — dark. Anquetil, and many other scholars would place it in the reign of Darius, a view which has been proved to be incorrect by Spiegel, Duncker and v. Schack in his introduction.]

According to this law a whole year must pass before Nitetis could become the wife of a Persian monarch? but what was the law to Cambyses? In his eyes the law was embodied in his own person, and in his opinion three months would be amply sufficient to initiate Nitetis in the Magian mysteries, after which process she could become his bride.

To-day his other wives seemed hateful, even loathsome, to him. From Cambyses' earliest youth his house had been carefully provided with women. Beautiful girls from all parts of Asia, black-eyed Armenians, dazzlingly fair maidens from the Caucasus, delicate girls from the shores of the Ganges, luxurious Babylonian women, golden-haired Persians and the effeminate daughters of the Median plains; indeed many of the noblest Achaemenidae had given him their daughters in marriage.

Phaedime, the daughter of Otanes, and niece of his own mother Kassandane, had been Cambyses' favorite wife hitherto, or at least the only one of whom it could be said that she was more to him than

a purchased slave would have been. But even she, in his present sated and disgusted state of feeling, seemed vulgar and contemptible, especially when he thought of Nitetis.

The Egyptian seemed formed of nobler, better stuff than they all. They were flattering, coaxing girls; Nitetis was a queen. They humbled themselves in the dust at his feet; but when he thought of Nitetis, he beheld her erect, standing before him, on the same proud level as himself. He determined that from henceforth she should not only occupy Phaedime's place, but should be to him what Kassandane had been to his father Cyrus.

She was the only one of his wives who could assist him by her knowledge and advice; the others were all like children, ignorant, and caring for nothing but dress and finery: living only for petty intrigues and useless trifles. This Egyptian girl would be obliged to love him, for he would be her protector, her lord, her father and brother in this foreign land.

"She must," he said to himself, and to this despot to wish for a thing and to possess it seemed one and the same. "Bartja had better take care," he murmured, "or he shall know what fate awaits the man who dares to cross my path."

Nitetis too had passed a restless night.

The common apartment of the women was next to her own, and the noise and singing there had not ceased until nearly midnight. She could often distinguish the shrill voice of Boges joking and laughing with these women, who were under his charge. At last all was quiet in the wide palace halls and then her thoughts turned to her distant home and her poor sister Tachot, longing for her and for the beautiful Bartja, who, Croesus had told her, was going tomorrow to the war and possibly to death. At last she fell asleep, overcome by the fatigue of the journey and dreaming of her future husband. She saw him on his black charger. The foaming animal shied at Bartja who was lying in the road, threw his rider and dragged him into the Nile, whose waves became blood-red. In her terror she screamed for help; her cries were echoed back from the Pyramids in such loud and fearful tones that she awoke.

But hark! what could that be? That wailing, shrill cry which she had heard in her dream, — she could hear it still.

Hastily drawing aside the shutters from one of the openings which served as windows, she looked out. A large and beautiful garden, laid out with fountains and shady avenues, lay before her, glittering with the early dew.

[The Persian gardens were celebrated throughout the old world, and seem to have been laid out much less stiffly than the Egyptian. Even the kings of Persia did not consider horticulture beneath their notice, and the highest among the Achaemenidae took an especial pleasure in laying out parks, called in Persian Paradises. Their admiration for well-grown trees went so far, that Xerxes, finding on his way to Greece a singularly beautiful tree, hung ornaments of gold upon its branches. Firdusi, the great Persian epic poet, compares human beauty to the growth of the cypress, as the highest praise he can give. Indeed some trees were worshipped by the Persians; and as the tree of life in the Hebrew and Egyptian, so we find sacred trees in their Paradise.]

No sound was to be heard except the one which had alarmed her, and this too died away at last on the morning breeze. After a few minutes she heard cries and noise in the distance, then the great city awaking to its daily work, which soon settled down into a deep, dull murmur like the roaring of the sea.

Nitetis was by this time so thoroughly awakened from the effect of the fresh morning air, that she did not care to lie down again. She went once more to the window and perceived two figures coming out of the house. One she recognized as the eunuch Boges; he was talking to a beautiful Persian woman carelessly dressed. They approached her window. Nitetis hid herself behind the half-opened shutter and listened, for she fancied she heard her own name.

"The Egyptian is still asleep," said Boges. "She must be much fatigued by the journey. I see too that one of her windows is still firmly closed."

"Then tell me quickly," said the Persian. "Do you really think that this stranger's coming can injure me in any way?"

"Certainly, I do, my pretty one."

"But what leads you to suppose this?"

"She is only to obey the king's commands, not mine."

"Is that all?"

"No, my treasure. I know the king. I can read his features as the Magi read the sacred books."

"Then we must ruin her."

"More easily said than done, my little bird."

"Leave me alone! you are insolent."

"Well, but nobody can see us, and you know you can do nothing without my help."

"Very well then, I don't care. But tell me quickly what we can do."

"Thanks, my sweet Phaedime. Well, for the present we must be patient and wait our time. That detestable hypocrite Croesus seems to have established himself as protector of the Egyptian; when he is away, we must set our snares."

The speakers were by this time at such a distance, that Nitetis could not understand what they said. In silent indignation she closed the shutter, and called her maidens to dress her. She knew her enemies now—she knew that a thousand dangers surrounded her, and yet she felt proud and happy, for was she not chosen to be the real wife of Cambyses? Her own worth seemed clearer to her than ever before, from a comparison with these miserable creatures, and a wonderful certainty of ultimate victory stole into her heart, for Nitetis was a firm believer in the magic power of virtue.

"What was that dreadful sound I heard so early?" she asked of her principal waiting-woman, who was arranging her hair.

"Do you mean the sounding brass, lady?"

"Scarcely two hours ago I was awakened by a strange and frightful sound."

"That was the sounding brass, lady. It is used to awaken the young sons of the Persian nobles, who are brought up at the gate of the king. You will soon become accustomed to it. We have long ceased even to hear it, and indeed on great festivals, when it is not sounded, we awake from the unaccustomed stillness. From the hanging-gardens you will be able to see how the boys are taken to bathe every morning, whatever the weather may be. The poor little ones are taken from their mothers when they are six years old, to be brought up with the other boys of their own rank under the king's eye."

"Are they to begin learning the luxurious manners of the court so early?"

"Oh no! the poor boys lead a terrible life. They are obliged to sleep on the hard ground, to rise before the sun. Their food is bread and water, with very little meat, and they are never allowed to taste wine or vegetables. Indeed at times they are deprived of food and drink for some days, simply to accustom them to privations. When the court is at Ecbatana or Pasargadae, and the weather is bitterly cold, they are sure to be taken out to bathe, and here in Susa, the hotter the sun, the longer and more difficult the marches they are compelled to take."

[The summer residences of the kings of Persia, where it is sometimes very cold. Ecbatana lies at the foot of the high Elburs (Orontes) range of mountains in the neighborhood of the modern Hamadan; Pasargadae not far from Rachmet in the highlands of Iran]

"And these boys, so simply and severely brought up, become in after life such luxurious men?"

"Yes, that is always the case. A meal that has been waited for is all the more relished when it comes. These boys see splendor and magnificence around them daily; they know how rich they are in reality, and yet have to suffer from hunger and privation. Who can wonder, if, when at last they gain their liberty, they plunge into the pleasures of life with a tenfold eagerness? But on the other hand, in

time of war, or when going to the chase, they never murmur at hunger or thirst, spring with a laugh into the mud regardless of their thin boots and purple trousers, and sleep as soundly on a rock as on their beds of delicate Arabian wool. You must see the feats these boys perform, especially when the king is watching them! Cambyes will certainly take you if you ask him."

"I know those exercises already. In Egypt the girls as well as the boys are kept to such gymnastic exercises. My limbs were trained to flexibility by running, postures, and games with hoops and balls.

"How strange! Here, we women grow up just as we please, and are taught nothing but a little spinning and weaving. Is it true that most of the Egyptian women can read and write?"

"Yes, nearly all."

"By Mithras, you must be a clever people! Scarcely any of the Persians, except the Magi and the scribes, learn these difficult arts. The sons of the nobles are taught to speak the truth, to be courageous, obedient, and to reverence the gods; to hunt, ride, plant trees and discern between herbs; but whoever, like the noble Darius, wishes to learn the art of writing, must apply to the Magi. Women are forbidden to turn their minds to such studies. — Now your dress is complete. This string of pearls, which the king sent this morning, looks magnificent in your raven-black hair, but it is easy to see that you are not accustomed to the full silk trousers and high-heeled boots. If, however, you walk two or three times up and down the room you will surpass all the Persian ladies even in your walk!"

At this moment a knock was heard and Boges entered. He had come to conduct Nitetis to Kassandane's apartments, where Cambyes was waiting for her.

The eunuch affected an abject humility, and poured forth a stream of flattering words, in which he likened the princess to the sun, the starry heavens, a pure fount of happiness, and a garden of roses. Nitetis deigned him not a word in reply, but followed, with a beating heart, to the queen's apartment.

In order to keep out the noonday sun and produce a salutary half-light for the blind queen's eyes, her windows were shaded by curtains of green Indian silk. The floor was covered with a thick Babylonian carpet, soft as moss under the foot. The walls were faced with a mosaic of ivory, tortoise-shell, gold, silver, malachite, lapis-lazuli, ebony and amber. The seats and couches were of gold covered with lions' skins, and a table of silver stood by the side of the blind queen. Kassandane was seated in a costly arm-chair. She wore a robe of violet-blue, embroidered with silver, and over her snow-white hair lay a long veil of delicate lace, woven in Egypt, the ends of which were wound round her neck and tied in a large bow beneath her chin. She was between sixty and seventy years old; her face, framed, as it were, into a picture by the lace veil, was exquisitely symmetrical in its form, intellectual, kind and benevolent in its expression.

The blind eyes were closed, but those who gazed on her felt that, if open, they would shine with the gentle light of stars. Even when sitting, her attitude and height showed a tall and stately figure. Indeed her entire appearance was worthy the widow of the great and good Cyrus.

On a low seat at her feet, drawing long threads from a golden spindle, sat the queen's youngest child Atossa, born to her late in life. Cambyzes was standing before her, and behind, hardly visible in the dim light, Nebenchari, the Egyptian oculist.

As Nitetis entered, Cambyzes came towards her and led her to his mother. The daughter of Amasis fell on her knees before this venerable woman, and kissed her hand with real affection.

"Be welcome here!" exclaimed the blind queen, feeling her way to the young girl's head, on which she laid her hand, "I have heard much in your praise, and hope to gain in you a dear and loving daughter."

Nitetis kissed the gentle, delicate hand again, saying in a low voice: "O how I thank you for these words! Will you, the wife of the great Cyrus, permit me to call you mother? My tongue has been so long accustomed to this sweet word; and now after long weeks of silence, I tremble with joy at the thought that I may say 'my mother'

once more! I will indeed try to deserve your love and kindness; and you—you will be to me all that your loving countenance seems to promise? Advise and teach me; let me find a refuge at your feet, if sometimes the longing for home becomes too strong, and my poor heart too weak to bear its grief or joy alone. Oh, be my mother! that one word includes all else!"

The blind queen felt the warm tears fall on her hand; she pressed her lips kindly on the weeping girl's forehead, and answered: "I can understand your feelings. My apartments shall be always open to you, my heart ready to welcome you here. Come when you will, and call me your mother with the same perfect confidence with which I, from my whole heart, name you my daughter. In a few months you will be my son's wife, and then the gods may grant you that gift, which, by implanting within you the feelings of a mother, will prevent you from feeling the need of one."

"May Ormuszd hear and give his blessing!" said Cambyses. "I rejoice, mother, that my wife pleases you, and I know that when once she becomes familiar with our manners and customs she will be happy here. If Nitetis pay due heed, our marriage can be celebrated in four months."

"But the law—" began his mother.

"I command—in four months, and should like to see him who dare raise an objection. Farewell! Nebenchari, use your best skill for the queen's eyes, and if my wife permit, you, as her countryman, may visit her to-morrow. Farewell! Bartja sends his parting greetings. He is on the road to the Tapuri."

Atossa wiped away a tear in silence, but Kassandane answered: "You would have done well to allow the boy to remain here a few months longer. Your commander, Megabyzus, could have subdued that small nation alone."

"Of that I have no doubt," replied the king, "but Bartja desired an opportunity of distinguishing himself in the field; and for that reason I sent him."

"Would he not gladly have waited until the war with the Massageta; where more glory might be gained?" asked the blind woman.

"Yes," said Atossa, "and if he should fall in this war, you will have deprived him of the power of fulfilling his most sacred duty, of avenging the soul of our father!"

"Be silent!" cried Cambyses in an overbearing tone, "or I shall have to teach you what is becoming in women and children. Bartja is on far too good terms with fortune to fall in the war. He will live, I hope, to deserve the love which is now so freely flung into his lap like an alms."

"How canst thou speak thus?" cried Kassandane. "In what manly virtue is Bartja wanting? Is it his fault, that he has had no such opportunity of distinguishing himself in the field as thou hast had? You are the king and I am bound to respect your commands, but I blame my son for depriving his blind mother of the greatest joy left to her in her old age. Bartja would have gladly remained here until the Massagetan war, if your self-will had not determined otherwise."

"And what I will is good!" exclaimed Cambyses interrupting his mother, and pale with anger, "I desire that this subject be not mentioned again."

So saying, he left the room abruptly and went into the reception-hall, followed by the immense retinue which never quitted him, whithersoever he might direct his steps.

An hour passed, and still Nitetis and the lovely Atossa were sitting side by side, at the feet of the queen. The Persian women listened eagerly to all their new friend could tell them about Egypt and its wonders.

"Oh! how I should like to visit your home!" exclaimed Atossa. "It must be quite, quite different from Persia and everything else that I have seen yet. The fruitful shores of your great river, larger even than the Euphrates, the temples with their painted columns, those huge artificial mountains, the Pyramids, where the ancient kings be

buried—it must all be wonderfully beautiful. But what pleases me best of all is your description of the entertainments, where men and women converse together as they like. The only meals we are allowed to take in the society of men are on New Year's Day and the king's birthday, and then we are forbidden to speak; indeed it is not thought right for us even to raise our eyes. How different it is with you! By Mithras! mother, I should like to be an Egyptian, for we poor creatures are in reality nothing but miserable slaves; and yet I feel that the great Cyrus was my father too, and that I am worth quite as much as most men. Do I not speak the truth? can I not obey as well as command? have I not the same thirst and longing for glory? could not I learn to ride, to string a bow, to fight and swim, if I were taught and inured to such exercises?"

The girl had sprung from her seat while speaking, her eyes flashed and she swung her spindle in the air, quite unconscious that in so doing she was breaking the thread and entangling the flax.

"Remember what is fitting," reminded Kassandane. "A woman must submit with humility to her quiet destiny, and not aspire to imitate the deeds of men."

"But there are women who lead the same lives as men," cried Atossa. "There are the Amazons who live on the shores of the Thermodon in Themiscyra, and at Comana on the Iris; they have waged great wars, and even to this day wear men's armor."

"Who told you this?"

"My old nurse, Stephanion, whom my father brought a captive from Sinope to Pasargadae."

"But I can teach you better," said Nitetis. "It is true that in Themiscyra and Comana there are a number of women who wear soldier's armor; but they are only priestesses, and clothe themselves like the warlike goddess they serve, in order to present to the worshippers a manifestation of the divinity in human form. Croesus says that an army of Amazons has never existed, but that the Greeks, (always ready and able to turn anything into a beautiful myth), having seen these priestesses, at once transformed the armed virgins dedicated to the goddess into a nation of fighting women."

"Then they are liars!" exclaimed the disappointed girl.

"It is true, that the Greeks have not the same reverence for truth as you have," answered Nitetis, "but they do not call the men who invent these beautiful stories liars; they are called poets."

"Just as it is with ourselves," said Kassandane. "The poets, who sing the praises of my husband, have altered and adorned his early life in a marvellous manner; yet no one calls them liars. But tell me, my daughter, is it true that these Greeks are more beautiful than other men, and understand art better even than the Egyptians?"

"On that subject I should not venture to pronounce a judgment. There is such a great difference between the Greek and Egyptian works of art. When I went into our own gigantic temples to pray, I always felt as if I must prostrate myself in the dust before the greatness of the gods, and entreat them not to crush so insignificant a worm; but in the temple of Hera at Samos, I could only raise my hands to heaven in joyful thanksgiving, that the gods had made the earth so beautiful. In Egypt I always believed as I had been taught: 'Life is asleep; we shall not awake to our true existence in the kingdom of Osiris till the hour of death;' but in Greece I thought: 'I am born to live and to enjoy this cheerful, bright and blooming world.'"

"Ah! tell us something more about Greece," cried Atossa; "but first Nebenchari must put a fresh bandage on my mother's eyes."

The oculist, a tall, grave man in the white robes of an Egyptian priest, came forward to perform the necessary operation, and after being kindly greeted by Nitetis, withdrew once more silently into the background. At the same time a eunuch entered to enquire whether Croesus might be allowed to pay his respectful homage to the king's mother.

The aged king soon appeared, and was welcomed as the old and tried friend of the Persian royal family. Atossa, with her usual impetuosity, fell on the neck of the friend she had so sorely missed during his absence; the queen gave him her hand, and Nitetis met him like a loving daughter.

"I thank the gods, that I am permitted to see you again," said Croesus. "The young can look at life as a possession, as a thing understood and sure, but at my age every year must be accepted as an undeserved gift from the gods, for which a man must be thankful."

"I could envy you for this happy view of life," sighed Kassandane. "My years are fewer than yours, and yet every new day seems to me a punishment sent by the Immortals."

"Can I be listening to the wife of the great Cyrus?" asked Croesus. "How long is it since courage and confidence left that brave heart? I tell you, you will recover sight, and once more thank the gods for a good old age. The man who recovers, after a serious illness, values health a hundred-fold more than before; and he who regains sight after blindness, must be an especial favorite of the gods. Imagine to yourself the delight of that first moment when your eyes behold once more the bright shining of the sun, the faces of your loved ones, the beauty of all created things, and tell me, would not that outweigh even a whole life of blindness and dark night? In the day of healing, even if that come in old age, a new life will begin and I shall hear you confess that my friend Solon was right."

"In what respect?" asked Atossa.

"In wishing that Mimnermos, the Colophonian poet, would correct the poem in which he has assigned sixty years as the limit of a happy life, and would change the sixty into eighty."

"Oh no!" exclaimed Kassandane. "Even were Mithras to restore my sight, such a long life would be dreadful. Without my husband I seem to myself like a wanderer in the desert, aimless and without a guide."

"Are your children then nothing to you, and this kingdom, of which you have watched the rise and growth?"

"No indeed! but my children need me no longer, and the ruler of this kingdom is too proud to listen to a woman's advice."

On hearing these words Atossa and Nitetis seized each one of the queen's hands, and Nitetis cried: "You ought to desire a long life for our sakes. What should we be without your help and protection?"

Kassandane smiled again, murmuring in a scarcely audible voice: "You are right, my children, you will stand in need of your mother."

"Now you are speaking once more like the wife of the great Cyrus," cried Croesus, kissing the robe of the blind woman. "Your presence will indeed be needed, who can say how soon? Cambyzes is like hard steel; sparks fly wherever he strikes. You can hinder these sparks from kindling a destroying fire among your loved ones, and this should be your duty. You alone can dare to admonish the king in the violence of his passion. He regards you as his equal, and, while despising the opinion of others, feels wounded by his mother's disapproval. Is it not then your duty to abide patiently as mediator between the king, the kingdom and your loved ones, and so, by your own timely reproofs, to humble the pride of your son, that he may be spared that deeper humiliation which, if not thus averted, the gods will surely inflict."

"You are right," answered the blind woman, "but I feel only too well that my influence over him is but small. He has been so much accustomed to have his own will, that he will follow no advice, even if it come from his mother's lips."

"But he must at least hear it," answered Croesus, "and that is much, for even if he refuse to obey, your counsels will, like divine voices, continue to make themselves heard within him, and will keep him back from many a sinful act. I will remain your ally in this matter; for, as Cambyzes' dying father appointed me the counsellor of his son in word and deed, I venture occasionally a bold word to arrest his excesses. Ours is the only blame from which he shrinks: we alone can dare to speak our opinion to him. Let us courageously do our duty in this our office: you, moved by love to Persia and your son, and I by thankfulness to that great man to whom I owe life and freedom, and whose son Cambyzes is. I know that you bemoan the manner in which he has been brought up; but such late repentance must be avoided like poison. For the errors of the wise the remedy is reparation, not regret; regret consumes the heart, but the effort to repair an error causes it to throb with a noble pride."

"In Egypt," said Nitetis, "regret is numbered among the forty-two deadly sins. One of our principal commandments is, 'Thou shalt not consume thine heart.'"

[In the Ritual of the Dead (indeed in almost every Papyrus of the Dead) we meet with a representation of the soul, whose heart is being weighed and judged. The speech made by the soul is called the negative justification, in which she assures the 42 judges of the dead, that she has not committed the 42 deadly sins which she enumerates. This justification is doubly interesting because it contains nearly the entire moral law of Moses, which last, apart from all national peculiarities and habits of mind, seems to contain the quintessence of human morality—and this we find ready paraphrased in our negative justification. Todtenbuch ed. Lepsius. 125. We cannot discuss this question philosophically here, but the law of Pythagoras, who borrowed so much from Egypt, and the contents of which are the same, speaks for our view. It is similar in form to the Egyptian.]

"There you remind me," said Croesus "that I have undertaken to arrange for your instruction in the Persian customs, religion and language. I had intended to withdraw to Barene, the town which I received as a gift from Cyrus, and there, in that most lovely mountain valley, to take my rest; but for your sake and for the king's, I will remain here and continue to give you instruction in the Persian tongue. Kassandane herself will initiate you in the customs peculiar to women at the Persian court, and Oropastes, the high-priest, has been ordered by the king to make you acquainted with the religion of Iran. He will be your spiritual, and I your secular guardian."

At these words Nitetis, who had been smiling happily, cast down her eyes and asked in a low voice: "Am I to become unfaithful to the gods of my fathers, who have never failed to hear my prayers? Can I, ought I to forget them?"

"Yes," said Kassandane decidedly, "thou canst, and it is thy bounden duty, for a wife ought to have no friends but those her husband calls such. The gods are a man's earliest, mightiest and most faithful friends, and it therefore becomes thy duty, as a wife, to honor them, and to close thine heart against strange gods and superstitions, as thou wouldst close it against strange lovers."

"And," added Croesus, "we will not rob you of your deities; we will only give them to you under other names. As Truth remains eternally the same, whether called 'maa', as by the Egyptians, or 'Aletheia' as by the Greeks, so the essence of the Deity continues unchanged in all places and times. Listen, my daughter: I myself, while still king of Lydia, often sacrificed in sincere devotion to the Apollo of the Greeks, without a fear that in so doing I should offend the Lydian sun-god Sardon; the Ionians pay their worship to the Asiatic Cybele, and, now that I have become a Persian, I raise my hands adoringly to Mithras, Ormuzd and the lovely Anahita. Pythagoras too, whose teaching is not new to you, worships one god only, whom he calls Apollo; because, like the Greek sun-god, he is the source of light and of those harmonies which Pythagoras holds to be higher than all else. And lastly, Xenophanes of Colophon laughs at the many and divers gods of Homer and sets one single deity on high—the ceaselessly creative might of nature, whose essence consists of thought, reason and eternity.

[A celebrated freethinker, who indulged in bold and independent speculations, and suffered much persecution for his ridicule of the Homeric deities. He flourished at the time of our history and lived to a great age, far on into the fifth century. We have quoted some fragments of his writings above. He committed his speculations also to verse.]

"In this power everything has its rise, and it alone remains unchanged, while all created matter must be continually renewed and perfected. The ardent longing for some being above us, on whom we can lean when our own powers fail,—the wonderful instinct which desires a faithful friend to whom we can tell every joy and sorrow without fear of disclosure, the thankfulness with which we behold this beautiful world and all the rich blessings we have received—these are the feelings which we call piety—devotion.

"These you must hold fast; remembering, however, at the same time, that the world is ruled neither by the Egyptian, the Persian, nor the Greek divinities apart from each other, but that all these are one; and that one indivisible Deity, how different soever may be the names and characters under which He is represented, guides the fate of men and nations."

The two Persian women listened to the old man in amazement. Their unpractised powers were unable to follow the course of his thoughts. Nitetis, however, had understood him thoroughly, and answered: "My mother Ladice was the pupil of Pythagoras, and has told me something like this already; but the Egyptian priests consider such views to be sacrilegious, and call their originators despisers of the gods. So I tried to repress such thoughts; but now I will resist them no longer. What the good and wise Croesus believes cannot possibly be evil or impious! Let Oropastes come! I am ready to listen to his teaching. The god of Thebes, our Ammon, shall be transformed into Ormuzd,—Isis or Hathor, into Anahita, and those among our gods for whom I can find no likeness in the Persian religion, I shall designate by the name of 'the Deity.'"

Croesus smiled. He had fancied, knowing how obstinately the Egyptians clung to all they had received from tradition and education, that it would have been more difficult for Nitetis to give up the gods of her native land. He had forgotten that her mother was a Greek, and that the daughters of Amasis had studied the doctrines of Pythagoras. Neither was he aware how ardently Nitetis longed to please her proud lord and master. Even Amasis, who so revered the Samian philosopher, who had so often yielded to Hellenic influence, and who with good reason might be called a free-thinking Egyptian, would sooner have exchanged life for death, than his multiform gods for the one idea "Deity."

"You are a teachable pupil," said Croesus, laying his hand on her head, "and as a reward, you shall be allowed either to visit Kassandane, or to receive Atossa in the hanging-gardens, every morning, and every afternoon until sunset."

This joyful news was received with loud rejoicings by Atossa, and with a grateful smile by the Egyptian girl.

"And lastly," said Croesus, "I have brought some balls and hoops with me from Sais, that you may be able to amuse yourselves in Egyptian fashion."

"Balls?" asked Atossa in amazement; "what can we do with the heavy wooden things?"

"That need not trouble you," answered Croesus, laughing. "The balls I speak of are pretty little things made of the skins of fish filled with air, or of leather. A child of two years old can throw these, but you would find it no easy matter even to lift one of those wooden balls with which the Persian boys play. Are you content with me, Nitetis?"

[In Persia games with balls are still reckoned among the amusements of the men. One player drives a wooden ball to the other, as in the English game of cricket. Chardin saw the game played by 300 players.]

"How can I thank you enough, my father?"

"And now listen to my plan for the division of your time. In the morning you will visit Kassandane, chat with Atossa, and listen to the teaching of your noble mother."

Here the blind woman bent her head in approval. "Towards noon I shall come to teach you, and we can talk sometimes about Egypt and your loved ones there, but always in Persian. You would like this, would you not?"

Nitetis smiled.

"Every second day, Oropastes will be in attendance to initiate you in the Persian religion."

"I will take the greatest pains to comprehend him quickly."

"In the afternoon you can be with Atossa as long as you like. Does that please you too?"

"O Croesus!" cried the young girl and kissed the old man's hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next day Nitetis removed to the country-house in the hanging-gardens, and began a monotonous, but happy and industrious life there, according to the rules laid down by Croesus. Every day she was carried to Kassandane and Atossa in a closely shut-up litter. Nitetis soon began to look upon the blind queen as a beloved and loving mother, and the merry, spirited Atossa nearly made up to her for the loss of her sister Tachot, so far away on the distant Nile. She could not have desired a better companion than this gay, cheerful girl, whose wit and merriment effectually prevented homesickness or discontent from settling in her friend's heart. The gravity and earnestness of Nitetis' character were brightened by Atossa's gaiety, and Atossa's exuberant spirits calmed and regulated by the thoughtful nature of Nitetis.

Both Croesus and Kassandane were pleased and satisfied with their new daughter and pupil, and Oropastes extolled her talents and industry daily to Cambyes. She learnt the Persian language unusually well and quickly; Cambyes only visited his mother when he hoped to find Nitetis there, and presented her continually with rich dresses and costly jewels. But the highest proof of his favor consisted in his abstaining from visiting her at her house in the hanging-gardens, a line of conduct which proved that he meant to include Nitetis in the small number of his real and lawful wives, a privilege of which many a princess in his harem could not boast.

The grave, beautiful girl threw a strange spell over this strong, turbulent man. Her presence alone seemed enough to soften his stubborn will, and he would watch their games for hours, his eyes fixed on her graceful movements. Once, when the ball had fallen into the water, the king sprang in after it, regardless of his costly apparel. Nitetis screamed on seeing his intention, but Cambyes handed her the dripping toy with the words: "Take care or I shall be obliged to frighten you again." At the same time he drew from his neck a gold chain set with jewels and gave it to the blushing girl, who thanked him with a look which fully revealed her feelings for her future husband.

Croesus, Kassandane and Atossa soon noticed that Nitetis loved the king. Her former fear of this proud and powerful being had

indeed changed into a passionate admiration. She felt as if she must die if deprived of his presence. He seemed to her like a glorious and omnipotent divinity, and her wish to possess him presumptuous and sacrilegious; but its fulfilment shone before her as an idea more beautiful even than return to her native land and reunion with those who, till now, had been her only loved ones.

Nitetis herself was hardly conscious of the strength of her feelings, and believed that when she trembled before the king's arrival it was from fear, and not from her longing to behold him once more. Croesus, however, had soon discovered the truth, and brought a deep blush to his favorite's cheek by singing to her, old as he was, Anacreon's newest song, which he had learnt at Sais from Ibykus

*"We read the flying courser's name
Upon his side in marks of flame;
And by their turban'd brows alone
The warriors of the East are known.
But in the lover's glowing eyes,
The inlet to his bosom lies;
Through them we see the tiny mark,
Where Love has dropp'd his burning spark"*
— Paegnion 15

And thus, in work and amusement, jest, earnest, and mutual love, the weeks and months passed with Nitetis. Cambyzes' command that she was to be happy in his land had fulfilled itself, and by the time the Mesopotamian spring-tide (January, February and March), which succeeds the rainy month of December, was over, and the principal festival of the Asiatics, the New Year, had been solemnized at the equinox, and the May sun had begun to glow in the heavens, Nitetis felt quite at home in Babylon, and all the Persians knew that the young Egyptian princess had quite displaced Phaedime, the daughter of Otanes, in the king's favor, and would certainly become his first and favorite wife.

Boges sank considerably in public estimation, for it was known that Cambyzes had ceased to visit the harem, and the chief of the eunuchs had owed all his importance to the women, who were compelled to coax from Cambyzes whatever Boges desired for himself or others. Not a day passed on which the mortified official

did not consult with the supplanted favorite Phaedime, as to the best means of ruining Nitetis, but their most finely spun intrigues and artifices were baffled by the strength of king's love and the blameless life of his royal bride.

Phaedime, impatient, mortified, and thirsting for vengeance, was perpetually urging Boges to some decided act; he, on the contrary, advised patience.

At last, however, after many weeks, he came to her full of joy, exclaiming: "I have devised a little plan which must ruin the Egyptian woman as surely as my name is Boges. When Bartja comes back, my treasure, our hour will have arrived."

While saying this the creature rubbed his fat, soft hands, and, with his perpetual fulsome smile, looked as if he were feasting on some good deed performed. He did not, however, give Phaedime the faintest idea of the nature of his "little plan," and only answered her pressing questions with the words: "Better lay your head in a lion's jaws, than your secret in the ears of a woman. I fully acknowledge your courage, but at the same time advise you to remember that, though a man proves his courage in action, a woman's is shown in obedience. Obey my words and await the issue in patience." Nebenchari, the oculist, continued to attend the queen, but so carefully abstained from all intercourse with the Persians, that he became a proverb among them for his gloomy, silent ways. During the day he was to be found in the queen's apartments, silently examining large rolls of papyri, which he called the book of Athotes and the sacred Ambres; at night, by permission of the king and the satraps of Babylon, he often ascended one of the high towers on the walls, called Tritantaechmes, in order to observe the stars.

The Chaldaean priests, the earliest astronomers, would have allowed him to take his observations from the summit of the great temple of Bel, their own observatory, but he refused this offer decidedly, and persisted in his haughty reserve. When Oropastes attempted to explain to him the celebrated Babylonian sun-dial, introduced by Anaximander of Miletus into Greece, he turned from the Magian with a scornful laugh, saying: "We knew all this, before you knew the meaning of an hour."

Nitetis had shown Nebenchari much kindness, yet he took no interest in her, seemed indeed to avoid her purposely, and on her asking whether she had displeased or offended him, answered: "For me you are a stranger. How can I reckon those my friends, who can so gladly and so quickly forget those they loved best, their gods, and the customs of their native land?"

Boges quickly discovered this state of feeling on the part of Nebenchari, and took much pains to secure him as an ally, but the physician rejected the eunuch's flatteries, gifts, and attentions with dignity.

No sooner did an Angare appear in the court of the palace with despatches for the king, than Boges hastened to enquire whether news from the Tapuri had arrived.

At length the desired messenger appeared, bringing word that the rebels were subdued, and Bartja on the point of returning.

Three weeks passed—fresh messengers arrived from day to day announcing the approach of the victorious prince; the streets glittered once more in festal array, the army entered the gates of Babylon, Bartja thanked the rejoicing multitude, and a short time after was in the arms of his blind mother.

Cambyses received his brother with undisguised warmth, and took him to the queen's apartments, when he knew that Nitetis would be there.

For he was sure the Egyptian girl loved him; his previous jealousy seemed a silly fancy now, and he wished to give Bartja an opportunity of seeing how entirely he trusted his bride.

Cambyses' love had made him mild and gentle, unwearied in giving and in doing good. His wrath slumbered for a season, and around the spot where the heads of those who had suffered capital punishment were exhibited as a warning to their fellow-men, the hungry, screeching crows now wheeled, in vain.

The influence of the insinuating eunuchs (a race who had never been seen within the gates of Cyrus until the incorporation of

Media, Lydia and Babylon, in which countries they had filled many of the highest offices at court and in the state), was now waning, and the importance of the noble Achaemenidae increasing in proportion; for Cambyses applied oftener to the latter than to the former for advice in matters relating to the welfare of the country.

The aged Hystaspes, father of Darius, governor of Persia proper and cousin to the king; Pharnaspes, Cambyses' grandfather on the mother's side; Otanes, his uncle and father-in-law. Intaphernes, Aspathines, Gobryas, Hydarnes, the general Megabyzus, father of Zopyrus, the envoy Prexaspes, the noble Croesus, and the old warrior Araspes; in short, the flower of the ancient Persian aristocracy, were now at the court of Cambyses.

To this must be added that the entire nobility of the realm, the satraps or governors of the provinces, and the chief priests from every town were also assembled at Babylon to celebrate the king's birthday.

[The king's birthday was the principal feast among the Persians, and called "the perfect feast." Herod. I. 133. Birthdays were held in much honor by the ancients, and more especially those of their kings. Both the great bilingual Egyptian tablets, which we possess mention the celebration of the birthday of one of the Ptolemies; and even of Rameses II., so early as the 14th century B.C. we read: "There was joy in heaven on his birthday."]

The entire body of officials and deputies streamed from the provinces up to the royal city, bringing presents to their ruler and good wishes; they came also to take part in the great sacrifices at which horses, stags, bulls and asses were slaughtered in thousands as offerings to the gods.

At this festival all the Persians received gifts, every man was allowed to ask a petition of the king, which seldom remained unfulfilled, and in every city the people were feasted at the royal expense. Cambyses had commanded that his marriage with Nitetis should be celebrated eight days after the birthday, and all the magnates of the realms should be invited to the ceremony.

The streets of Babylon swarmed with strangers, the colossal palaces on both shores of the Euphrates were overfilled, and all the houses stood adorned in festal brightness.

The zeal thus displayed by his people, this vast throng of human beings,—representing and bringing around him, as it were, his entire kingdom, contributed not a little to raise the king's spirits.

His pride was gratified; and the only longing left in his heart had been stilled by Nitetis' love. For the first time in his life he believed himself completely happy, and bestowed his gifts, not only from a sense of his duty as king of Persia, but because the act of giving was in itself a pleasure.

Megabyzus could not extol the deeds of Bartja and his friends too highly. Cambyses embraced the young warriors, gave them horses and gold chains, called them "brothers" and reminded Bartja, that he had promised to grant him a petition if he returned victorious.

At this Bartja cast down his eyes, not knowing at first in what form to begin his request, and the king answered laughing: "Look, my friends; our young hero is blushing like a girl! It seems I shall have to grant something important; so he had better wait until my birthday, and then, at supper, when the wine has given him courage, he shall whisper in my ear what he is now afraid to utter. Ask much, Bartja, I am happy myself, and wish all my friends to be happy too." Bartja only smiled in answer and went to his mother; for he had not yet opened his heart to her on the matter which lay so near it.

He was afraid of meeting with decided opposition; but Croesus had cleared the way for him by telling Kassandane so much in praise of Sappho, her virtues and her graces, her talents and skill, that Nitetis and Atossa maintained she must have given the old man a magic potion, and Kassandane, after a short resistance, yielded to her darling's entreaties.

"A Greek woman the lawful wife of a Persian prince of the blood!" cried the blind woman. "Unheard of! What will Cambyses say? How can we gain his consent?"

"On that matter you may be at ease, my mother," answered Bartja, "I am as certain that my brother will give his consent, as I am that Sappho will prove an ornament and honor to our house."

"Croesus has already told me much in favor of this maiden," answered Kassandane, "and it pleases me that thou hast at last resolved to marry; but never-the-less this alliance does not seem suitable for a son of Cyrus. And have you forgotten that the Achaemenidae; will probably refuse to recognize the child of a Greek mother as their future king, if Cambyses should remain childless?"

"Mother, I fear nothing; for my heart is not set upon the crown. And indeed many a king of Persia has had a mother of far lower parentage than my Sappho. I feel persuaded that when my relations see the precious jewel I have won on the Nile, not one of them will chide me."

"The gods grant that Sappho may be equal to our Nitetis!" answered Kassandane, "I love her as if she were my own child, and bless the day which brought her to Persia. The warm light of her eyes has melted your brother's hard heart; her kindness and gentleness bring beauty into the night of my blind old age, and her sweet earnestness and gravity have changed your sister Atossa from an unruly child into a gentle maiden. But now call them, (they are playing in the garden), and we will tell them of the new friend they are to gain through you."

"Pardon me, my mother," answered Bartja, "but I must beg you not to tell my sister until we are sure of the king's consent."

"You are right, my son. We must conceal your wish, to save Nitetis and Atossa from a possible disappointment. A bright hope unfulfilled is harder to bear than an unexpected sorrow. So let us wait for your brother's consent, and may the gods give their blessing!" Early in the morning of the king's birthday the Persians offered their sacrifices on the shores of the Euphrates. A huge altar of silver had been raised on an artificial hill. On this a mighty fire had been kindled, from which flames and sweet odors rose towards heaven. White-robed magi fed the fire with pieces of daintily-cut sandal-wood, and stirred it with bundles of rods.

A cloth, the Paiti-dhana, was bound round the heads of the priests, the ends of which covered the mouth, and thus preserved the pure fire from pollution by human breath.

[The Persians were ordered to hold this little square piece of cloth before their mouths when they prayed. It was from 2 to 7 fingers broad. Anquetil gives a drawing of it in his Zend-Avesia. Strabo speaks of the Paiti-dhana. He says the ends of the cloth used as a covering for the head hung down over the mouth.]

The victims had been slaughtered in a meadow near the river, the flesh cut into pieces, sprinkled with salt, and laid out on tender grasses, sprouts of clover, myrtle-blossoms, and laurel-leaves, that the beautiful daughter of Ormuzd, the patient, sacred Earth, might not be touched by aught that was dead or bleeding.

Oropastes, the chief Destur, — [Priest] — now drew near the fire and cast fresh butter into it. The flames leapt up into the air and all the Persians fell on their knees and hid their faces, in the belief that the fire was now ascending to their great god and father. The Magian then took a mortar, laid some leaves and stalks of the sacred herb Haomas within it, crushed them and poured the ruddy juice, the food of the gods, into the flames.

After this he raised his hands to heaven, and, while the other priests continually fed the flames into a wilder blaze by casting in fresh butter, sang a long prayer out of the sacred books. In this prayer the blessing of the gods was called down on everything pure and good, but principally on the king and his entire realm. The good spirits of light, life and truth; of all noble deeds; of the Earth, the universal giver; of the refreshing waters, the shining metals, the pastures, trees and innocent creatures, were praised: the evil spirits of darkness; of lying, the deceiver of mankind; of disease, death and sin; of the rigid cold; the desolating heat; of all odious dirt and vermin, were cursed, together with their father the malignant Ahriman. At the end all present joined in singing the festival prayer: "Purity and glory are sown for them that are pure and upright in heart."

The sacrificial ceremony was concluded with the king's prayer, and then Cambyses, arrayed in his richest robes, ascended a

splendid chariot drawn by four snow-white Nicoean horses, and studded with topazes, cornelian and amber, and was conveyed to the great reception-hall, where the deputies and officers from the provinces awaited him.

As soon as the king and his retinue had departed, the priests selected, for themselves, the best pieces of the flesh which had been offered in sacrifice, and allowed the thronging crowd to take the rest.

The Persian divinities disdained sacrifices in the light of food, requiring only the souls of the slaughtered animals, and many a poor man, especially among the priests, subsisted on the flesh of the abundant royal sacrifices.

The prayer offered up by the Magian was a model for those of the Persian people. No man was allowed to ask anything of the gods for himself alone. Every pious soul was rather to implore blessings for his nation; for was not each only a part of the whole? and did not each man share in the blessings granted to the whole kingdom? But especially they were commanded to pray for the king, in whom the realm was embodied and shadowed forth. It was this beautiful surrender of self for the public weal, that had made the Persians great. The doctrines of the Egyptian priesthood represented the Pharaohs as actual divinities, while the Persian monarchs were only called "sons of the gods;" yet the power of the latter was far more absolute and unfettered than that of the former; the reason for this being that the Persians had been wise enough to free themselves from priestly domination, while the Pharaohs, as we have seen, if not entirely under the dominion of the priestly caste, were yet under its influence in the most important matters.

The Egyptian intolerance of all strange religions was unknown in Asia. The conquered Babylonians were allowed by Cyrus to retain their own gods, after their incorporation in the great Asiatic kingdom. The Jews, Ionians and inhabitants of Asia Minor, in short, the entire mass of nations subject to Cambyses remained unmolested in possession of their hereditary religions and customs.

Beside the great altar, therefore, might be seen many a smaller sacrificial flame, kindled in honor of their own divinities, by the envoys from the conquered provinces to this great birthday feast.

Viewed from a distance, the immense city looked like a gigantic furnace. Thick clouds of smoke hovered over its towers, obscuring the light of the burning May sun.

By the time the king had reached the palace, the multitude who had come to take part in the festival had formed themselves into a procession of interminable length, which wandered on through the straight streets of Babylon towards the royal palace.

Their road was strewn with myrtle and palm-branches, roses, poppy and oleander-blossoms, and with leaves of the silver poplar, palm and laurel; the air perfumed with incense, myrrh, and a thousand other sweet odors. Carpets and flags waved and fluttered from the houses.

Music too was there; the shrill peal of the Median trumpet, and soft tone of the Phrygian flute; the Jewish cymbal and harp, Paphlagonian tambourines and the stringed instruments of Ionia; Syrian kettle-drums and cymbals, the shells and drums of the Arians from the mouth of the Indus, and the loud notes of the Bactrian battle-trumpets. But above all these resounded the rejoicing shouts of the Babylonian multitude, subjugated by the Persians only a few short years before, and yet, like all Asiatics, wearing their fetters with an air of gladness so long as the fear of their tyrant was before their eyes.

The fragrant odors, the blaze of color and sparkling of gold and jewels, the neighing of the horses, and shouts and songs of human beings, all united to produce a whole, at once bewildering and intoxicating to the senses and the feelings.

The messengers had not been sent up to Babylon empty-handed. Beautiful horses, huge elephants and comical monkeys; rhinoceroses and buffaloes adorned with housings and tassels; double-humped Bactrian camels with gold collars on their shaggy necks; waggon-loads of rare woods and ivory, woven goods of exquisite texture, casks of ingots and gold-dust, gold and silver vessels, rare plants for

the royal gardens, and foreign animals for the preserves, the most remarkable of which were antelopes, zebras, and rare monkeys and birds, these last being tethered to a tree in full leaf and fluttering among the branches. Such were the offerings sent to the great king of Persia.

They were the tribute of the conquered nations and, after having been shown to the king, were weighed and tested by treasurers and secretaries, either declared satisfactory, or found wanting and returned, in which case the niggardly givers were condemned to bring a double tribute later.

[At the time of which we are writing, the kings of Persia taxed their kingdom at whatever time and to whatever extent seemed good in their own eyes. Cambyzes' successor, Darius, was the first to introduce a regular system of taxation, in consequence of which he was nicknamed "the shopkeeper." Up to a much later period it still remained the duty of certain districts to send natural products to the court Herod.]

The palace-gates were reached without hindrance, the way being kept clear by lines of soldiers and whipbearers stationed on either side of the street.

If the royal progress to the place of sacrifice, when five hundred richly-caprisoned horses had been led behind the king's chariot, could be called magnificent, and the march of the envoys a brilliant spectacle, the great throne-room presented a vision of dazzling and magic beauty.

In the background, raised on six steps, each of which was guarded, as it were, by two golden clogs, stood the throne of gold; above it, supported by four golden pillars studded with precious stones, was a purple canopy, on which appeared two winged discs, the king's Feruer.

[The Feruer or Ferwer is the spiritual part of every man-his soul and reason. It was in existence before the man was born, joins him at his birth and departs at his death. The Ferwer keeps up a war with the Diws or evil spirits, and is the element of man's preservation in life. The moment he departs, the body returns to its original elements. After death he becomes immortal if he has done well, but if his deeds have been evil he is cast into

hell. It is right to call upon the Ferwer and entreat his help. He will bring the prayer before God and on this account is represented as a winged disc.]

Fan-bearers, high in office at the court, stood behind the throne, and, on either side, those who sat at the king's table, his relations and friends, and the most important among the officers of state, the priestly caste and the eunuchs.

The walls and ceiling of the entire hall were covered with plates of burnished gold, and the floor with purple carpets.

Before the silver gates lay winged bulls, and the king's body-guard-their dress consisting of a gold cuirass under a purple overcoat, and the high Persian cap, their swords in golden scabbards glittering with jewels, and their lances ornamented with gold and silver apples, were stationed in the court of the palace. Among them the band of the "Immortals" was easily to be distinguished by their stately forms and dauntless bearing.

Officers, whose duty consisted in announcing and presenting strangers, and who carried short ivory staves, led the deputies into the hall, and up to the throne, where they cast themselves on the ground as though they would kiss the earth, concealing their hands in the sleeves of their robes. A cloth was bound over the mouth of every man before he was allowed to answer the king's questions, lest the pure person of the king should be polluted by the breath of common men.

Cambyses' severity or mildness towards the deputations with whose chiefs he spoke, was proportioned to the obedience of their province and the munificence of their tribute-offerings. Near the end of the train appeared an embassy from the Jews, led by two grave men with sharply-cut features and long beards. Cambyses called on them in a friendly tone to stop.

The first of these men was dressed in the fashion of the Babylonian aristocracy. The other wore a purple robe woven without seam, trimmed with bells and tassels, and held in at the waist by a girdle of blue, red and white. A blue garment was thrown over his shoulders and a little bag suspended around his neck

containing the sacred lots, the Urim and Thummin, adorned with twelve precious stones set in gold, and bearing the names of the tribes of Israel. The high-priest's brow was grave and thoughtful. A white cloth was wound round his head, the ends of which hung down to the shoulders.

"I rejoice to behold you once more, Belteshazzar," exclaimed the king to the former of the two men. "Since the death of my father you have not been seen at my gate."

The man thus addressed bowed humbly and answered: "The favor of the king rejoices his servant! If it seem good unto thee, to cause the sun of thy favor to shine on me, thine unworthy servant, so hearken unto my petition for my nation, which thy great father caused to return unto the land of their fathers' sepulchres. This old man at my side, Joshua, the high-priest of our God, hath not feared the long journey to Babylon, that he might bring his request before thy face. Let his speech be pleasing in thine ears and his words bring forth fruit in thine heart."

"I foresee what ye desire of me," cried the king. "Am I wrong, priest, in supposing that your petition refers to the building of the temple in your native land?"

"Nothing can be hidden from the eyes of my lord," answered the priest, bowing low. "Thy servants in Jerusalem desire to behold the face of their ruler, and beseech thee by my mouth to visit the land of their fathers, and to grant them permission to set forward the work of the temple, concerning which thine illustrious father (the favor of our God rest upon him), made a decree."

The king answered with a smile: "You have the craft of your nation, and understand how to choose the right time and words for your petition. On my birthday it is difficult for me to refuse my faithful people even one request. I promise you, therefore, so soon as possible to visit Jerusalem and the land of your fathers."

"By so doing thou wilt make glad the hearts of thy servants," answered the priest; "our vines and olives will bear more fruit at thine approach, our gates will lift up their heads to receive thee, and

Israel rejoice with shouts to meet his lord doubly blessed if as lord of the building— "

"Enough, priest, enough!" cried Cambyses. "Your first petition, I have said it, shall not remain unfulfilled; for I have long desired to visit the wealthy city of Tyre, the golden Sidon, and Jerusalem with its strange superstitions; but were I to give permission for the building now, what would remain for me to grant you in the coming year?"

"Thy servants will no more molest thee by their petitions, if thou grant unto them this one, to finish the temple of the Lord their God," answered the priest.

"Strange beings, these men of Palestine!" exclaimed Cambyses. "I have heard it said that ye believe in one God alone, who can be represented by no likeness, and is a spirit. Think ye then that this omnipresent Being requires a house? Verily, your great spirit can be but a weak and miserable creature, if he need a covering from the wind and rain, and a shelter from the heat which he himself has created. If your God be like ours, omnipresent, fall down before him and worship as we do, in every place, and feel certain that everywhere ye will be heard of him!"

"The God of Israel hears his people in every place," exclaimed the high-priest. "He heard us when we pined in captivity under the Pharaohs far from our land; he heard us weeping by the rivers of Babylon. He chose thy father to be the instrument of our deliverance, and will hear my prayer this day and soften thine heart like wise. O mighty king, grant unto thy servants a common place of sacrifice, whither our twelve tribes may repair, an altar on the steps of which they can pray together, a house in which to keep their holy feasts! For this permission we will call down the blessing of God upon thine head and his curse upon thine enemies."

"Grant unto my brethren the permission to build their temple!" added Belteshazzar, who was the richest and most honorable and respected of the Jews yet remaining in Babylon; a man whom Cyrus had treated with much consideration, and of whom he had even taken counsel from time to time.

"Will ye then be peaceable, if I grant your petition?" asked the king. "My father allowed you to begin the work and granted the means for its completion. Of one mind, happy and content, ye returned to your native land, but while pursuing your work strife and contention entered among you. Cyrus was assailed by repeated letters, signed by the chief men of Syria, entreating him to forbid the work, and I also have been lately besought to do the same. Worship your God when and where ye will, but just because I desire your welfare, I cannot consent to the prosecution of a work which kindles discord among you."

"And is it then thy pleasure on this day to take back a favor, which thy father made sure unto us by a written decree?" asked Belteshazzar.

"A written decree?"

"Which will surely be found even to this day laid up in the archives of thy kingdom."

"Find this decree and show it me, and I will not only allow the building to be continued, but will promote the same," answered the king; "for my father's will is as sacred to me as the commands of the gods."

"Wilt thou allow search to be made in the house of the rolls at Ecbatana?" asked Belteshazzar. "The decree will surely be found there."

"I consent, but I fear ye will find none. Tell thy nation, priest, that I am content with the equipment of the men of war they have sent to take the field against the Massagetae. My general Megabyzus commends their looks and bearing. May thy people prove as valiant now as in the wars of my father! You, Belteshazzar, I bid to my marriage feast, and charge you to tell your fellows, Meshach and Abednego, next unto you the highest in the city of Babylon, that I expect them this evening at my table."

"The God of my people Israel grant thee blessing and happiness," answered Belteshazzar bowing low before the king.

"A wish which I accept!" answered the king, "for I do not despise the power of your wonder-working great Spirit. But one word more, Belteshazzar. Many Jews have lately been punished for reviling the gods of the Babylonians. Warn your people! They bring down hatred on themselves by their stiff-necked superstition, and the pride with which they declare their own great spirit to be the only true God. Take example by us; we are content with our own faith and leave others to enjoy theirs in peace. Cease to look upon yourselves as better than the rest of the world. I wish you well, for a pride founded on self-respect is pleasing in mine eyes; but take heed lest pride degenerate into vainglory. Farewell! rest assured of my favor."

The Jews then departed. They were disappointed, but not hopeless; for Belteshazzar knew well that the decree, relative to the building of the temple, must be in the archives at Ecbatana.

They were followed by a deputation from Syria, and by the Greeks of Ionia; and then, winding up the long train, appeared a band of wild-looking men, dressed in the skins of animals, whose features bespoke them foreigners in Babylon. They wore girdles and shoulderbands of solid, unwrought gold; and of the same precious metal were their bow-cases, axes, lance-points, and the ornaments on their high fur caps. They were preceded by a man in Persian dress, whose features proved him, however, to be of the same race as his followers.

The king gazed at first on these envoys with wonder; then his brow darkened, and beckoning the officer whose duty it was to present strangers, he exclaimed "What can these men have to crave of me? If I mistake not they belong to the Massagetae, to that people who are so soon to tremble before my vengeance. Tell them, Gobryas, that an armed host is standing on the Median plains ready to answer their demands with the sword."

Gobryas answered, bowing low: "These men arrived this morning during the sacrifice bringing huge burdens of the purest gold to purchase your forbearance. When they heard that a great festival was being celebrated in your honor, they urgently besought to be admitted into your presence, that they might declare the message entrusted to them by their country."

The king's brow cleared and, after sharply scrutinizing the tall, bearded Massageta, he said: "Let them come nearer. I am curious to know what proposals my father's murderers are about to make me."

Gobryas made a sign, and the tallest and eldest of the Massagetae came up close to the throne and began to speak loudly in his native tongue. He was accompanied by the man in a Persian dress, who, as one of Cyrus' prisoners of war, had learnt the Persian language, and now interpreted one by one the sentences uttered by the spokesman of this wandering tribe.

"We know," began the latter, "that thou, great king, art wroth with the Massagetae because thy father fell in war with our tribe—a war which he alone had provoked with a people who had done naught to offend him."

"My father was justified in punishing your nation," interrupted the king. "Your Queen Tomyris had dared to refuse him her hand in marriage."

"Be not wroth, O King," answered the Massagetan, "when I tell thee that our entire nation approved of that act. Even a child could see that the great Cyrus only desired to add our queen to the number of his wives, hoping, in his insatiable thirst for more territories, to gain our land with her."

Cambyzes was silent and the envoy went on. "Cyrus caused a bridge to be made over our boundary river, the Araxes. We were not dismayed at this, and Tomyris sent word that he might save himself this trouble, for that the Massagetae were willing either to await him quietly in their own land, leaving the passage of the river free, or to meet him in his. Cyrus decided, by the advice of the dethroned king of Lydia, (as we learnt afterwards, through some prisoners of war) on meeting us in our own land and defeating us by a stratagem. With this intention he sent at first only a small body of troops, which could be easily dispersed and destroyed by our arrows and lances, and allowed us to seize his camp without striking a blow. Believing we had defeated this insatiable conqueror, we feasted on his abundant stores, and, poisoned by the sweet unknown drink which you call wine, fell into a stupefied slumber, during which his soldiers fell upon us, murdered the greater number of our warriors

and took many captives. Among the latter was the brave, young Spargapises, our queen's son.

"Hearing in his captivity, that his mother was willing to conclude peace with your nation as the price of his liberty, he asked to have his chains taken off. The request was granted, and on obtaining the use of his hands he seized a sword and stabbed himself, exclaiming: 'I sacrifice my life for the freedom of my nation.'"

"No sooner did we hear the news that the young prince we loved so well had died thus, than we assembled all the forces yet left to us from your swords and fetters. Even old men and boys flew to arms to revenge our noble Spargapises, and sacrifice themselves, after his example, for Massagetaen freedom. Our armies met; ye were worsted and Cyrus fell. When Tomyris found his body lying in a pool of human blood, she cried: 'Methinks, insatiable conqueror, thou art at last sated with blood!' The troop, composed of the flower of your nobility, which you call the Immortals, drove us back and carried your father's dead body forth from our closest ranks. You led them on, fighting like a lion. I know you well, and that wound across your manly face, which adorns it like a purple badge of honor, was made by the sword now hanging at my side."

A movement passed through the listening crowd; they trembled for the bold speaker's life. Cambyses, however, looked pleased, nodded approvingly to the man and answered: "Yes, I recognize you too now; you rode a red horse with golden trappings. You shall see that the Persians know how to honor courage. Bow down before this man, my friends, for never did I see a sharper sword nor a more unwearied arm than his; and such heroic courage deserves honor from the brave, whether shown by friend or foe. As for you, Massagetae, I would advise you to go home quickly and prepare for war; the mere recollection of your strength and courage increases my longing to test it once more. A brave foe, by Mithras, is far better than a feeble friend. You shall be allowed to return home in peace; but beware of remaining too long within my reach, lest the thought of the vengeance I owe my father's soul should rouse my anger, and your end draw suddenly nigh."

A bitter smile played round the bearded mouth of the warrior as he made answer to this speech. "The Massagetae deem your father's

soul too well avenged already. The only son of our queen, his people's pride, and in no way inferior to Cyrus, has bled for him. The shores of the Araxes have been fertilized by the bodies of fifty thousand of my countrymen, slain as offerings for your dead king, while only thirty thousand fell there on your own side. We fought as bravely as you, but your armor is better able to resist the arrows which pierce our clothing of skins. And lastly, as the most cruel blow of all, ye slew our queen."

"Tomyris is dead?" exclaimed Cambyses interrupting him. "You mean to tell me that the Persians have killed a woman? Answer at once, what has happened to your queen?"

"Tomyris died ten months ago of grief for the loss of her only son, and I have therefore a right to say that she too fell a sacrifice to the war with Persia and to your father's spirit."

"She was a great woman," murmured Cambyses, his voice unsteady from emotion. "Verily, I begin to think that the gods themselves have undertaken to revenge my father's blood on your nation. Yet I tell you that, heavy as your losses may seem, Spargapises, Tomyris and fifty thousand Massagetae can never outweigh the spirit of one king of Persia, least of all of a Cyrus."

"In our country," answered the envoy, "death makes all men equal. The spirits of the king and the slave are of equal worth. Your father was a great man, but we have undergone awful sufferings for his sake. My tale is not yet ended. After the death of Tomyris discord broke out among the Massagetae. Two claimants for the crown appeared; half our nation fought for the one, half for the other, and our hosts were thinned, first by this fearful civil war and then by the pestilence which followed in its track. We can no longer resist your power, and therefore come with heavy loads of pure gold as the price of peace."

"Ye submit then without striking a blow?" asked Cambyses. "Verily, I had expected something else from such heroes; the numbers of my host, which waits assembled on the plains of Media, will prove that. We cannot go to battle without an enemy. I will dismiss my troops and send a satrap. Be welcome as new subjects of my realm."

The red blood mounted into the cheeks of the Massagetan warrior on hearing these words, and he answered in a voice trembling with excitement: "You err, O King, if you imagine that we have lost our old courage, or learnt to long for slavery. But we know your strength; we know that the small remnant of our nation, which war and pestilence have spared, cannot resist your vast and well-armed hosts. This we admit, freely and honestly as is the manner of the Massagetae, declaring however at the same time, that we are determined to govern ourselves as of yore, and will never receive laws or ordinances from a Persian satrap. You are wroth, but I can bear your angry gaze and yet repeat my declaration."

"And my answer," cried Cambyses, "is this: Ye have but one choice: either to submit to my sceptre, become united to the kingdom of Persia under the name of the Massagetan province, and receive a satrap as my representative with due reverence, or to look upon yourselves as my enemies, in which case you will be forced by arms to conform to those conditions which I now offer you in good part. To-day you could secure a ruler well-affected to your cause, later you will find in me only a conqueror and avenger. Consider well before you answer."

"We have already weighed and considered all," answered the warrior, "and, as free sons of the desert, prefer death to bondage. Hear what the council of our old men has sent me to declare to you:—The Massageta; have become too weak to oppose the Persians, not through their own fault, but through the heavy visitation of our god, the sun. We know that you have armed a vast host against us, and we are ready to buy peace and liberty by a yearly tribute. But if you persist in compelling us to submit by force of arms, you can only bring great damage on yourselves. The moment your army nears the Araxes, we shall depart with our wives and children and seek another home, for we have no fixed dwellings like yours, but are accustomed to rove at will on our swift horses, and to rest in tents. Our gold we shall take with us, and shall fill up, destroy, and conceal the pits in which you could find new treasures. We know every spot where gold is to be found, and can give it in abundance, if you grant us peace and leave us our liberty; but, if you venture to invade our territory, you win nothing but an empty desert and an enemy always beyond your reach,—an enemy

who may become formidable, when he has had time to recover from the heavy losses which have thinned his ranks. Leave us in peace and freedom and we are ready to give every year five thousand swift horses of the desert, besides the yearly tribute of gold; we will also come to the help of the Persian nation when threatened by any serious danger."

The envoy ceased speaking. Cambyses did not answer at once; his eyes were fixed on the ground in deep thought. At last he said, rising at the same time from his throne: "We will take counsel on this matter over the wine to-night, and to-morrow you shall hear what answer you can bring to your people. Gobryas, see that these men are well cared for, and send the Massagetan, who wounded me in battle, a portion of the best dishes from my own table."

CHAPTER XV.

During these events Nitetis had been sitting alone in her house on the hanging-gardens, absorbed in the saddest thoughts. To-day, for the first time, she had taken part in the general sacrifice made by the king's wives, and had tried to pray to her new gods in the open air, before the fire-altars and amidst the sound of religious songs strange to her ears.

Most of the inhabitants of the harem saw her to-day for the first time, and instead of raising their eyes to heaven, had fixed them on her during the ceremony. The inquisitive, malevolent gaze of her rivals, and the loud music resounding from the city, disquieted and distracted her mind. Her thoughts reverted painfully to the solemn, sultry stillness of the gigantic temples in her native land where she had worshipped the gods of her childhood so earnestly at the side of her mother and sister; and much as she longed, just on this day, to pray for blessings on her beloved king, all her efforts were in vain; she could arouse no devotional feeling. Kassandane and Atossa knelt at her side, joining heartily in the very hymns which to Nitetis were an empty sound.

It cannot be denied, that many parts of these hymns contain true poetry; but they become wearisome through the constant repetition and invocation of the names of good and bad spirits. The Persian women had been taught from childhood, to look upon these religious songs as higher and holier than any other poetry. Their earliest prayers had been accompanied by such hymns, and, like everything else which has come down to us from our fathers, and which we have been told in the impressionable time of childhood is divine and worthy of our reverence, they were still sacred and dear to them and stirred their most devotional feelings.

But for Nitetis, who had been spoilt for such things by an intimate acquaintance with the best Greek poets, they could have but little charm. What she had lately been learning in Persia with difficulty had not yet become a part of herself, and so, while Kassandane and Atossa went through all the outward rites as things of course and perfectly natural to them, Nitetis could only prevent herself from forgetting the prescribed ceremonials by a great mental effort, and

dreaded lest she should expose her ignorance to the jealous, watchful gaze of her rivals.

And then, too, only a few minutes before the sacrifice, she had received her first letter from Egypt. It lay unread on her dressing-table, and came into her mind whenever she attempted to pray. She could not help wondering what news it might bring her. How were her parents? and how had Tachot borne the parting from herself, and from the prince she loved so well?

The ceremony over, Nitetis embraced Kassandane and Atossa, and drew a long, deep breath, as if delivered from some threatening danger. Then ordering her litter, she was carried back to her dwelling, and hastened eagerly to the table where her letter lay. Her principal attendant, the young girl who on the journey had dressed her in her first Persian robes, received her with a smile full of meaning and promise, which changed however, into a look of astonishment, on seeing her mistress seize the letter, without even glancing at the articles of dress and jewelery which lay on the table.

Nitetis broke the seal quickly and was sitting down, in order to begin the difficult work of reading her letter, when the girl came up, and with clasped hands, exclaimed: "By Mithras, my mistress, I cannot understand you. Either you are ill, or that ugly bit of grey stuff must contain some magic which makes you blind to everything else. Put that roll away and look at the splendid presents that the great king (Auramazda grant him victory!) has sent while you were at the sacrifice. Look at this wonderful purple robe with the white stripe and the rich silver embroidery; and then the tiara with the royal diamonds! Do not you know the high meaning of these gifts? Cambyzes begs, (the messenger said 'begs,' not 'commands') you to wear these splendid ornaments at the banquet to-day. How angry Phaedime will be! and how the others will look, for they have never received such presents. Till now only Kassandane has had a right to wear the purple and diamonds; so by sending you these gifts, Cambyzes places you on a level with his mother, and chooses you to be his favorite wife before the whole world.' O pray allow me to dress you in these new and beautiful things. How lovely you will look! How angry and envious the others will feel! If I could only be there when you enter the hall! Come, my mistress, let me take off

your simple dress, and array you, (only as a trial you know,) in the robes that as the new queen you ought to wear."

Nitetis listened in silence to the chattering girl, and admired the gifts with a quiet smile. She was woman enough to rejoice at the sight, for he, whom she loved better than life itself, had sent them; and they were a proof that she was more to the king than all his other wives;—that Cambyses really loved her. The long wished-for letter fell unread to the ground, the girl's wish to dress her was granted without a word, and in a short time the splendid toilette was completed. The royal purple added to her beauty, the high flashing tiara made her slender, perfect figure seem taller than it really was, and when, in the metal mirror which lay on her dressing table, she beheld herself for the first time in the glorious likeness of a queen, a new expression dawned on her features. It seemed as if a portion of her lord's pride were reflected there. The frivolous waiting-woman sank involuntarily on her knees, as her eyes, full of smiling admiration, met the radiant glance of Nitetis,—of the woman who was beloved by the most powerful of men.

For a few moments Nitetis gazed on the girl, lying in the dust at her feet; but soon shook her beautiful head, and blushing for shame, raised her kindly, kissed her forehead, gave her a gold bracelet, and then, perceiving her letter on the ground, told her she wished to be alone. Mandane ran, rather than walked, out of the room in her eagerness to show the splendid present she had just received to the inferior attendants and slaves; and Nitetis, her eyes glistening and her heart beating with excess of happiness, threw herself on to the ivory chair which stood before her dressing-table, uttered a short prayer of thanksgiving to her favorite Egyptian goddess, the beautiful Hathor, kissed the gold chain which Cambyses had given her after plunging into the water for her ball, then her letter from home, and rendered almost over-confident by her great happiness, began to unroll it, slowly sinking back into the purple cushions as she did so and murmuring: "How very, very happy I am! Poor letter, I am sure your writer never thought Nitetis would leave you a quarter of an hour on the ground unread."

In this happy mood she began to read, but her face soon grew serious and when she had finished, the letter fell once more to the ground.

Her eyes, whose proud glance had brought the waiting-maid to her feet, were dimmed by tears; her head, carried so proudly but a few minutes before, now lay on the jewels which covered the table. Tears rolled down among the pearls and diamonds, as strange a contrast as the proud tiara and its unhappy, fainting wearer.

The letter read as follows:

"Ladice the wife of Amasis and Queen of Upper and Lower Egypt, to her daughter Nitetis, consort of the great King of Persia.

"It has not been our fault, my beloved daughter, that you have remained so long without news from home. The trireme by which we sent our letters for you to AEgae was detained by Samian ships of war, or rather pirate vessels, and towed into the harbor of Astypalaea.

"Polykrates' presumption increases with the continual success of his undertakings, and since his victory over the Lesbians and Milesians, who endeavored to put a stop to his depredations, not a ship is safe from the attacks of his pirate vessels.

"Pisistratus is dead," but his sons are friendly to Polykrates. Lygdamis is under obligations to him, and cannot hold his own in Naxos without Samian help. He has won over the Amphiktyonic council to his side by presenting the Apollo of Delos with the neighboring island of Rhenea. His fifty-oared vessels, requiring to be manned by twenty-thousand men, do immense damage to all the seafaring nations; yet not one dares to attack him, as the fortifications of his citadel and his splendid harbor are almost impregnable, and he himself always surrounded by a well-drilled body-guard.

"Through the traders, who followed the fortunate Kolxus to the far west, and these pirate ships, Samos will become the richest of islands and Polykrates the most powerful of men, unless, as your

father says, the gods become envious of such unchanging good fortune and prepare him a sudden and speedy downfall.

"In this fear Amasis advised Polykrates as his old friend, to put away from him the thing he held dearest, and in such a manner that he might be sure of never receiving it again. Polykrates adopted this advice and threw into the sea, from the top of the round tower on his citadel, his most valuable signet-ring, an unusually large sardonyx held by two dolphins. This ring was the work of Theodorus, and a lyre, the symbol of the ruler, was exquisitely engraved on the stone."

"Six days later, however, the ring was found by Polykrates' cooks in the body of a fish. He sent us news at once of this strange occurrence, but instead of rejoicing your father shook his grey head sadly, saying: 'he saw now it was impossible for any one to avoid his destiny!' On the same day he renounced the friendship of Polykrates and wrote him word, that he should endeavor to forget him in order to avoid the grief of seeing his friend in misfortune.

"Polykrates laughed at this message and returned the letters his pirates had taken from our trireme, with a derisive greeting. For the future all your letters will be sent by Syria.

"You will ask me perhaps, why I have told you this long story, which has so much less interest for you than any other home news. I answer: to prepare you for your father's state. Would you have recognized the cheerful, happy, careless Amasis in that gloomy answer to his Samian friend?

"Alas, my husband has good reason to be sad, and since you left us, my own eyes have seldom been free from tears. My time is passed either at the sick-bed of your sister or in comforting your father and guiding his steps; and though much in need of sleep I am now taking advantage of night to write these lines.

"Here I was interrupted by the nurses, calling me to your sister Tachot, your own true friend.

"How often the dear child has called you in her feverish delirium; and how carefully she treasures your likeness in wax, that

wonderful portrait which bears evidence not only of the height to which Greek art has risen, but of the master hand of the great Theodorus. To-morrow it will be sent to AEgina, to be copied in gold, as the soft wax becomes injured from frequent contact with your sister's burning hands and lips.

"And now, my daughter, you must summon all your courage to hear what I need all my strength of mind to tell-the sad story of the fate which the gods have decreed for our house.

"For three days after you left us Tachot wept incessantly. Neither our comforting words nor your father's good advice—neither offerings nor prayers—could avail to lessen her grief or divert her mind. At last on the fourth day she ceased to weep and would answer our questions in a low voice, as if resigned; but spent the greater part of every day sitting silently at her wheel. Her fingers, however, which used to be so skilful, either broke the threads they tried to spin, or lay for hours idle in her lap, while she was lost in dreams. Your father's jokes, at which she used to laugh so heartily, made no impression on her, and when I endeavored to reason with her she listened in anxious suspense.

"If I kissed her forehead and begged her to control herself, she would spring up, blushing deeply, and throw herself into my arms, then sit down again to her wheel and begin to pull at the threads with almost frantic eagerness; but in half an hour her hands would be lying idle in her lap again and her eyes dreamily fixed, either on the ground, or on some spot in the air. If we forced her to take part in any entertainment, she would wander among the guests totally uninterested in everything that was passing.

"We took her with us on the great pilgrimage to Bubastis, during which the Egyptians forget their usual gravity, and the shores of the Nile look like a great stage where the wild games of the satyrs are being performed by choruses, hurried on in the unrestrained wantonness of intoxication. When she saw thus for the first time an entire people given up to the wildest and most unfettered mirth and enjoyment, she woke up from her silent brooding thoughts and began to weep again, as in the first days after you went away.

"Sad and perplexed, we brought our poor child back to Sais.

"Her looks were not those of a common mortal. She grew thinner, and we all fancied, taller; her complexion was white, and almost transparent, with a tender bloom on her cheek, which I can only liken to a young rose-leaf or the first faint blush of sunrise. Her eyes are still wonderfully clear and bright. It always seems to me as if they looked beyond the heaven and earth which we see.

"As she continued to suffer more and more from heat in the head and hands, while her tender limbs often shivered with a slight chill, we sent to Thebes for Thutmes, the most celebrated physician for inward complaints.

"The experienced priest shook his head on seeing your sister and foretold a serious illness. He forbade her to spin or to speak much. Potions of all kinds were given her to drink, her illness was discussed and exorcised, the stars and oracles consulted, rich presents and sacrifices made to the gods. The priest of Hathor from the island of Philae sent us a consecrated amulet, the priest of Osiris in Abydos a lock of hair from the god himself set in gold, and Neithotep, the high-priest of our own guardian goddess, set on foot a great sacrifice, which was to restore your sister to health.

"But neither physicians nor charms were of any avail, and at last Neithotep confessed that Tachot's stars gave but little ground for hope. Just then, too, the sacred bull at Memphis died and the priests could discover no heart in his entrails, which they interpreted as prognosticating evil to our country. They have not yet succeeded in finding a new Apis, and believe that the gods are wroth with your father's kingdom. Indeed the oracle of Buto has declared that the Immortals will show no favor to Egypt, until all the temples that have been built in the black land for the worship of false gods are destroyed and their worshippers banished.

[Egypt was called by its ancient inhabitants Cham, the black, or black-earthed.]

"These evil omens have proved, alas, only too true. Tachot fell ill of a dreadful fever and lay for nine days hovering between life and death; she is still so weak that she must be carried, and can move neither hand nor foot.

"During the journey to Bubastis, Amasis' eyes, as so often happens here, became inflamed. Instead of sparing them, he continued to work as usual from sunrise until mid-day, and while your sister was so ill he never left her bed, notwithstanding all our entreaties. But I will not enter into particulars, my child. His eyes grew worse, and on the very day which brought us the news of your safe arrival in Babylon, Amasis became totally blind.

"The cheerful, active man has become old, gloomy and decrepit since that day. The death of Apis, and the unfavorable constellations and oracles weigh on his mind; his happy temper is clouded by the unbroken night in which he lives; and the consciousness that he cannot stir a step alone causes indecision and uncertainty. The daring and independent ruler will soon become a mere tool, by means of which the priests can work their will.

"He spends hours in the temple of Neith, praying and offering sacrifices; a number of workmen are employed there in building a tomb for his mummy, and the same number at Memphis in levelling the temple which the Greeks have begun building to Apollo. He speaks of his own and Tachot's misfortunes as a just punishment from the Immortals.

"His visits to Tachot's sick-bed are not the least comfort to her, for instead of encouraging her kindly, he endeavors to convince her that she too deserves punishment from the gods. He spends all his remarkable eloquence in trying to persuade her, that she must forget this world entirely and only try to gain the favor of Osiris and the judges of the nether world by ceaseless prayers and sacrifices. In this manner he only tortures our poor sick child, for she has not lost her love of life. Perhaps I have still too much of the Greek left in me for a queen of Egypt; but really, death is so long and life so short, that I cannot help calling even wise men foolish, when they devote the half of even this short term to a perpetual meditation on the gloomy Hades.

"I have just been interrupted again. Our great physician, Thutmes, came to enquire after his patient. He gives very little hope, and seems surprised that her delicate frame has been able to resist death so long. He said yesterday: 'She would have sunk long ago if not kept up by her determined will, and a longing which gives her no

rest. If she ceased to care for life, she could allow death to take her, just as we dream ourselves asleep. If, on the other hand, her wish could be gratified, she might, (though this is hardly probable) live some years yet, but if it remain but a short time longer unfulfilled, it will certainly wear her to death.

"Have you any idea for whom she longs so eagerly? Our Tachot has allowed herself to be fascinated by the beautiful Bartja, the brother of your future husband. I do not mean to say by this that he has employed magic, as the priest Ameneman believes, to gain her love; for a youth might be far less handsome and agreeable than Bartja, and yet take the heart of an innocent girl, still half a child. But her passionate feeling is so strong, and the change in her whole being so great, that sometimes I too am tempted to believe in the use of supernatural influence. A short time before you left I noticed that Tachot was fond of Bartja. Her distress at first we thought could only be for you, but when she sank into that dreamy state, Ibykus, who was still at our court, said she must have been seized by some strong passion.

"Once when she was sitting dreaming at her wheel, I heard him singing softly Sappho's little love-song to her:

*"I cannot, my sweet mother,
Throw shuttle any more;
My heart is full of longing,
My spirit troubled sore,
All for a love of yesterday
A boy not seen before."*

"She turned pale and asked him: 'Is that your own song?'

"'No,' said he, 'Sappho wrote it fifty years ago.'

"'Fifty years ago,' echoed Tachot musingly.

"'Love is always the same,' interrupted the poet; 'women loved centuries ago, and will love thousands of years to come, just as Sappho loved fifty years back.'

"The sick girl smiled in assent, and from that time I often heard her humming the little song as she sat at her wheel. But we carefully avoided every question, that could remind her of him she loved. In the delirium of fever, however, Bartja's name was always on her burning lips. When she recovered consciousness we told her what she had said in her delirium; then she opened her heart to me, and raising her eyes to heaven like a prophetess, exclaimed solemnly: 'I know, that I shall not die till I have seen him again.'

"A short time ago we had her carried into the temple, as she longed to worship there again. When the service was over and we were crossing the temple-court, we passed some children at play, and Tachot noticed a little girl telling something very eagerly to her companions. She told the bearers to put down the litter and call the child to her.

"'What were you saying?' she asked the little one.

"'I was telling the others something about my eldest sister.'

"'May I hear it too?'" said Tachot so kindly, that the little girl began at once without fear: "Batau, who is betrothed to my sister, came back from Thebes quite unexpectedly yesterday evening. Just as the Isis-star was rising, he came suddenly on to our roof where Kerimama was playing at draughts with my father; and he brought her such a beautiful golden bridal wreath."

"Tachot kissed the child and gave her her own costly fan. When we were at home again she smiled archly at me and said: 'You know, mother dear, that the words children say in the temple-courts are believed to be oracles.' So, if the little one spoke the truth, he must come; and did not you hear that he is to bring the bridal-wreath? O mother, I am sure, quite sure, that I shall see him again.'

"I asked her yesterday if she had any message for you, and she begged me to say that she sent you thousands of kisses, and messages of love, and that when she was stronger she meant to write, as she had a great deal to tell you. She has just brought me the little note which I enclose; it is for you alone, and has cost her much fatigue to write.

"But now I must finish my letter, as the messenger has been waiting for it some time.

"I wish I could give you some joyful news, but sadness and sorrow meet me whichever way I turn. Your brother yields more and more to the priests' tyranny, and manages the affairs of state for your poor blind father under Neithotep's guidance.

"Amasis does not interfere, and says it matters little whether his place be filled a few days sooner or later by his successor.

"He did not attempt to prevent Psamtik from seizing the children of Phanes in Rhodopis' house, and actually allowed his son to enter into a negotiation with the descendants of those two hundred thousand soldiers, who emigrated to Ethiopia in the reign of Psamtik I. on account of the preference shown to the Greek mercenaries. In case they declared themselves willing to return to their native land, the Greek mercenaries were to have been dismissed. The negotiation failed entirely, but Psamtik's treatment of the children of Phanes has given bitter offence to the Greeks. Aristomachus threatened to leave Egypt, taking with him ten thousand of his best troops, and on hearing that Phanes' son had been murdered at Psamtik's command applied for his discharge. From that time the Spartan disappeared, no one knows whither; but the Greek troops allowed themselves to be bribed by immense sums and are still in Egypt.

"Amasis said nothing to all this, and looked on silently from the midst of his prayers and sacrifices, while your brother was either offending every class of his subjects or attempting to pacify them by means beneath the dignity of a ruler. The commanders of the Egyptian and Greek troops, and the governors of different provinces have all alike assured me that the present state of things is intolerable. No one knows what to expect from this new ruler; he commands today the very thing, which he angrily forbade the day before. Such a government must soon snap the beautiful bond, which has hitherto united the Egyptian people to their king.

"Farewell, my child, think of your poor friend, your mother; and forgive your parents when you hear what they have so long kept secret from you. Pray for Tachot, and remember us to Croesus and

the young Persians whom we know. Give a special message too from Tachot to Bartja; I beg him to think of it as the last legacy of one very near death. If you could only send her some proof, that he has not forgotten her! Farewell, once more farewell and be happy in your new and blooming home."

CHAPTER XVI.

Sad realities follow bright anticipations nearly as surely as a rainy day succeeds a golden sunrise. Nitetis had been so happy in the thought of reading the very letter, which poured such bitter drops of wormwood into her cup of happiness.

One beautiful element in her life, the remembrance of her dear home and the companions of her happy childhood, had been destroyed in one moment, as if by the touch of a magician's wand.

She sat there in her royal purple, weeping, forgetful of everything but her mother's grief, her father's misfortunes and her sister's illness. The joyful future, full of love, joy, and happiness, which had been beckoning her forward only a few minutes before, had vanished. Cambyzes' chosen bride forgot her waiting, longing lover, and the future queen of Persia could think of nothing but the sorrows of Egypt's royal house.

It was long past mid-day, when the attendant Mandane came to put a last touch to Nitetis' dress and ornaments.

"She is asleep," thought the girl. "I can let her rest another quarter of an hour; the sacrifice this morning has tired her, and we must have her fresh and beautiful for the evening banquet; then she will outshine the others as the moon does the stars."

Unnoticed by her mistress she slipped out of the room, the windows of which commanded a splendid view over the hanging-gardens, the immense city beneath, the river, and the rich and fruitful Babylonian plain, and went into the garden.

Without looking round she ran to a flower-bed, to pluck some roses. Her eyes were fixed on her new bracelet, the stones of which sparkled in the sun, and she did not notice a richly-dressed man peering in at one of the windows of the room where Nitetis lay weeping. On being disturbed in his watching and listening, he turned at once to the girl and greeted her in a high treble voice.

She started, and on recognizing the eunuch Boges, answered: "It is not polite, sir, to frighten a poor girl in this way. By Mithras, if I had

seen you before I heard you, I think I should have fainted. A woman's voice does not take me by surprise, but to see a man here is as rare as to find a swan in the desert."

Boges laughed good-humoredly, though he well understood her saucy allusion to his high voice, and answered, rubbing his fat hands: "Yes, it is very hard for a young and pretty bird like you, to have to live in such a lonely corner, but be patient, sweetheart. Your mistress will soon be queen, and then she will look out a handsome young husband for you. Ah, ha! you will find it pleasanter to live here alone with him, than with your beautiful Egyptian."

"My mistress is too beautiful for some people's fancy, and I have never asked any one to look out a husband for me," she answered pertly. "I can find one without your help either."

"Who could doubt it? Such a pretty face is as good a bait for a man, as a worm for a fish."

"But I am not trying to catch a husband, and least of all one like you."

"That I can easily believe," he answered laughing. "But tell me, my treasure, why are you so hard on me? Have I done anything to vex you? Wasn't it through me, that you obtained this good appointment, and are not we both Medes?"

"You might just as well say that we are both human beings, and have five fingers on each hand and a nose in the middle of our faces. Half the people here are Medes, and if I had as many friends as I have countrymen, I might be queen to-morrow. And as to my situation here, it was not you, but the high-priest Oropastes who recommended me to the great queen Kassandane. Your will is not law here."

"What are you talking about, my sweet one? don't you know, that not a single waiting-woman can be engaged without my consent?"

"Oh, yes, I know that as well as you do, but..."

"But you women are an unthankful race, and don't deserve our kindness."

"Please not to forget, that you are speaking to a girl of good family."

"I know that very well, my little one. I know that your father was a Magian and your mother a Magian's daughter; that they both died early and you were placed under the care of the Destur Ixabates, the father of Oropastes, and grew up with his children. I know too that when you had received the ear-rings, Oropastes' brother Gaumata, (you need not blush, Gaumata is a pretty name) fell in love with your rosy face, and wanted to marry you, though he was only nineteen. Gaumata and Mandane, how well the two names sound together! Mandane and Gaumata! If I were a poet I should call my hero Gaumata and his lady-love Mandane."

"I insist on your ceasing to jest in this way," cried Mandane, blushing deeply and stamping her foot.

"What, are you angry because I say the names sound well together? You ought rather to be angry with the proud Oropastes, who sent his younger brother to Rhagar and you to the court, that you might forget one another."

"That is a slander on my benefactor."

"Let my tongue wither away, if I am not speaking the truth and nothing but the truth! Oropastes separated you and his brother because he had higher intentions for the handsome Gaumata, than a marriage with the orphan daughter of an inferior Magian. He would have been satisfied with Amytis or Menische for a sister-in-law, but a poor girl like you, who owed everything to his bounty, would only have stood in the way of his ambitious plans. Between ourselves, he would like to be appointed regent of Persia while the king is away at the Massagetan war, and would therefore give a great deal to connect himself by marriage in some way or other with the Archemenidae. At his age a new wife is not to be thought of; but his brother is young and handsome, indeed people go so far as to say, that he is like the Prince Bartja."

"That is true," exclaimed the girl. "Only think, when we went out to meet my mistress, and I saw Bartja for the first time from the window of the station-house, I thought he was Gaumata. They are

so like one another that they might be twins, and they are the handsomest men in the kingdom."

"How you are blushing, my pretty rose-bud! But the likeness between them is not quite so great as all that. When I spoke to the high-priest's brother this morning..."

"Gaumata is here?" interrupted the girl passionately. "Have you really seen him or are you trying to draw me out and make fun of me?"

"By Mithras! my sweet one, I kissed his forehead this very morning, and he made me tell him a great deal about his darling. Indeed his blue eyes, his golden curls and his lovely complexion, like the bloom on a peach, were so irresistible that I felt inclined to try and work impossibilities for him. Spare your blushes, my little pomegranate-blossom, till I have told you all; and then perhaps in future you will not be so hard upon poor Boges; you will see that he has a good heart, full of kindness for his beautiful, saucy little countrywoman."

"I do not trust you," she answered, interrupting these assurances. "I have been warned against your smooth tongue, and I do not know what I have done to deserve this kind interest."

"Do you know this?" he asked, showing her a white ribbon embroidered all over with little golden flames.

"It is the last present I worked for him," exclaimed Mandane.

"I asked him for this token, because I knew you would not trust me. Who ever heard of a prisoner loving his jailer?"

"But tell me at once, quickly – what does my old playfellow want me to do? Look, the-western sky is beginning to glow. Evening is coming on, and I must arrange my mistress's dress and ornaments for the banquet."

"Well, I will not keep you long," said the eunuch, becoming so serious that Mandane was frightened. "If you do not choose to believe that I would run into any risk out of friendship to you, then fancy that I forward your love affair to humble the pride of

Oropastes. He threatens to supplant me in the king's favor, and I am determined, let him plot and intrigue as he likes, that you shall marry Gaumata. To-morrow evening, after the Tistar-star has risen, your lover shall come to see you. I will see that all the guards are away, so that he can come without danger, stay one hour and talk over the future with you; but remember, only one hour. I see clearly that your mistress will be Cambyses' favorite wife, and will then forward your marriage, for she is very fond of you, and thinks no praise too high for your fidelity and skill. So to-morrow evening," he continued, falling back into the jesting tone peculiar to him, "when the Tistar-star rises, fortune will begin to shine on you. Why do you look down? Why don't you answer? Gratitude stops your pretty little mouth, eh? is that the reason? Well, my little bird, I hope you won't be quite so silent, if you should ever have a chance of praising poor Boges to your powerful mistress. And what message shall I bring to the handsome Gaumata? May I say that you have not forgotten him and will be delighted to see him again? You hesitate? Well, I am very sorry, but it is getting dark and I must go. I have to inspect the women's dresses for the birthday banquet. Ah! one thing I forgot to mention. Gaumata must leave Babylon to-morrow. Oropastes is afraid, that he may chance to see you, and told him to return to Rhage directly the festival was over. What! still silent? Well then, I really cannot help you or that poor fellow either. But I shall gain my ends quite as well without you, and perhaps after all it is better that you should forget one another. Good-bye."

It was a hard struggle for the girl. She felt nearly sure that Boges was deceiving her, and a voice within warned her that it would be better to refuse her lover this meeting. Duty and prudence gained the upper hand, and she was just going to exclaim: "Tell him I cannot see him," when her eye caught the ribbon she had once embroidered for her handsome playfellow. Bright pictures from her childhood flashed through her mind, short moments of intoxicating happiness; love, recklessness and longing gained the day in their turn over her sense of right, her misgivings and her prudence, and before Boges could finish his farewell, she called out, almost in spite of herself and flying towards the house like a frightened fawn: "I shall expect him."

Boges passed quickly through the flowery paths of the hanging-gardens. He stopped at the parapet end cautiously opened a hidden trap-door, admitting to a secret staircase which wound down through one of the huge pillars supporting the hanging-gardens, and which had probably been intended by their original designer as a means of reaching his wife's apartments unobserved from the shores of the river. The door moved easily on its hinges, and when Boges had shut it again and strewed a few of the river-shells from the garden walks over it, it would have been difficult to find, even for any one who had come with that purpose. The eunuch rubbed his jeweled hands, smiling the while as was his custom, and murmured: "It can't fail to succeed now; the girl is caught, her lover is at my beck and call, the old secret flight of steps is in good order, Nitetis has been weeping bitterly on a day of universal rejoicing, and the blue lily opens to-morrow night. Ah, ha! my little plan can't possibly fail now. And to-morrow, my pretty Egyptian kitten, your little velvet paw will be fast in a trap set by the poor despised eunuch, who was not allowed, forsooth, to give you any orders."

His eyes gleamed maliciously as he said these words and hurried from the garden.

At the great flight of steps he met another eunuch, named Neriglissar, who held the office of head-gardener, and lived at the hanging-gardens.

"How is the blue lily going on?" asked Boges.

"It is unfolding magnificently!" cried the gardener, in enthusiasm at the mere mention of his cherished flower. "To-morrow, as I promised, when the Tistar-star rises, it will be in all its beauty. My Egyptian mistress will be delighted, for she is very fond of flowers, and may I ask you to tell the king and the Achaemenidae, that under my care this rare plant has at last flowered? It is to be seen in full beauty only once in every ten years. Tell the noble Achaemenidae; this, and bring them here."

"Your wish shall be granted," said Boges smiling, "but I think you must not reckon on the king, as I do not expect he will visit the hanging-gardens before his marriage with the Egyptian. Some of the Archimenidae, however, will be sure to come; they are such lovers

of horticulture that they would not like to miss this rare sight. Perhaps, too, I may succeed in bringing Croesus. It is true that he does not understand flowers or doat on them as the Persians do, but he makes amends for this by his thorough appreciation of everything beautiful."

"Yes, yes, bring him too," exclaimed the gardener. "He will really be grateful to you, for my queen of the night is the most beautiful flower, that has ever bloomed in a royal garden. You saw the bud in the clear waters of the reservoir surrounded by its green leaves; that bud will open into a gigantic rose, blue as the sky. My flower..."

The enthusiastic gardener would have said much more in praise of his flower, but Boges left him with a friendly nod, and went down the flight of steps. A two-wheeled wooden carriage was waiting for him there; he took his seat by the driver, the horses, decked out with bells and tassels, were urged into a sharp trot and quickly brought him to the gate of the harem-garden.

That day was a busy, stirring one in Cambyses' harem. In order that the women might look their very best, Boges had commanded that they should all be taken to the bath before the banquet. He therefore went at once to that wing of the palace, which contained the baths for the women.

While he was still at some distance a confused noise of screaming, laughing, chattering and tittering reached his ears. In the broad porch of the large bathing-room, which had been almost overheated, more than three hundred women were moving about in a dense cloud of steam.

The half-naked forms floated over the warm pavement like a motley crowd of phantoms. Their thin silken garments were wet through and clung to their delicate figures, and a warm rain descended upon them from the roof of the bath, rising up again in vapor when it reached the floor.

Groups of handsome women, ten or twenty together, lay gossiping saucily in one part of the room; in another two king's wives were quarrelling like naughty children. One beauty was screaming at the top of her voice because she had received a blow

from her neighbor's dainty little slipper, while another was lying in lazy contemplation, still as death, on the damp, warm floor. Six Armenians were standing together, singing a saucy love-song in their native language with clear-toned voices, and a little knot of fair-haired Persians were slandering Nitetis so fearfully, that a bystander would have fancied our beautiful Egyptian was some awful monster, like those nurses used to frighten children.

Naked female slaves moved about through the crowd, carrying on their heads well-warmed cloths to throw over their mistresses. The cries of the eunuchs, who held the office of door-keepers, and were continually urging the women to greater haste,—the screeching calls of those whose slaves had not yet arrived,—the penetrating perfumes and the warm vapor combined to produce a motley, strange and stupefying scene.

A quarter of an hour later, however, the king's wives presented a very different spectacle.

They lay like roses steeped in dew, not asleep, but quite still and dreaming, on soft cushions placed along the walls of an immense room. The wet perfumes still lay on their undried and flowing hair, and nimble female slaves were busied in carefully wiping away, with little bags made of soft camels' hair, the slightest outward trace of the moisture which penetrated deep into the pores of the skin.

Silken coverlets were spread over their weary, beautiful limbs, and a troop of eunuchs took good care that the dreamy repose of the entire body should not be disturbed by quarrelsome or petulant individuals. Their efforts, however, were seldom so successful as to-day, when every one knew that a disturbance of the peace would be punished by exclusion from the banquet. They had probably been lying a full hour in this dreamy silence, when the sound of a gong produced another transformation.

The reposing figures sprang from their cushions, a troop of female slaves pressed into the hall, the beauties were annointed and perfumed, their luxuriant hair ingeniously braided, plaited, and adorned with precious stones. Costly ornaments and silken and woolen robes in all the colors of the rainbow were brought in, shoes

stiff with rich embroidery of pearls and jewels were tied on to their tender feet, and golden girdles fastened round their waists.

[Some kings gave their wives the revenues of entire cities as "girdle-money" (pin-money).]

By the time Boges came in, the greater number of the women were already fully adorned in their costly jewelry, which would have represented probably, when taken together, the riches of a large kingdom.

He was greeted by a shrill cry of joy from many voices. Twenty of the women joined hands and danced round their smiling keeper, singing a simple song which had been composed in the harem in praise of his virtues. On this day it was customary for the king to grant each of his wives one reasonable petition. So when the ring of dancers had loosed hands, a troop of petitioners rushed in upon Boges, kissing his hands, stroking his cheeks, whispering in his ear all kinds of requests, and trying by flattery to gain his intercession with the king. The woman's tyrant smiled at it all, stopped his ears and pushed them all back with jests and laughter, promising Amytis the Median that Esther the Phoenician should be punished, and Esther the same of Amytis, — that Parmys should have a handsomer set of jewels than Parisatys, and Parisatys a more costly one than Parmys, but finding it impossible to get rid of these importunate petitioners, he blew a little golden whistle. Its shrill tones acted like magic on the eager crowd; the raised hands fell in a moment, the little tripping feet stood still, the opening lips closed and the eager tumult was turned into a dead silence.

Whoever disobeyed the sound of this little whistle, was certain of punishment. It was as important as the words "Silence, in the king's name!" or the reading of the riot-act. To-day it worked even more effectually than usual. Boges' self-satisfied smile showed that he had noticed this; he then favored the assembly with a look expressive of his contentment with their conduct, promised in a flowery speech to exert all his influence with the king in behalf of his dear little white doves, and wound up by telling them to arrange themselves in two long rows.

The women obeyed and submitted to his scrutiny like soldiers on drill, or slaves being examined by their buyer.

With the dress and ornaments of most he was satisfied, ordering, however, to one a little more rouge, to another a little white powder to subdue a too healthy color, here a different arrangement of the hair—there a deeper tinge to the eyebrows, or more pains to be taken in anointing the lips.

When this was over he left the hall and went to Phaedime, who as one of the king's lawful wives, had a private room, separated from those allotted to the concubines.

This former favorite,—this humbled daughter of the Achaemenidae, had been expecting him already some time.

She was magnificently dressed, and almost overloaded with jewels. A thick veil of gauze inwrought with gold hung from her little tiara, and interlaced with this was the blue and white band of the Achaemenidae. There could be no question that she was beautiful, but her figure was already too strongly developed, a frequent result of the lazy harem life among Eastern women. Fair golden hair, interwoven with little silver chains and gold pieces, welled out almost too abundantly from beneath her tiara, and was smoothed over her white temples.

She sprang forward to meet Boges, trembling with eagerness, caught a hasty glance at herself in the looking-glass, and then, fixing her eyes on the eunuch, asked impetuously: "Are you pleased with me? Will he admire me?"

Boges smiled his old, eternal smile and answered: "You always please me, my golden peacock, and the king would admire you too if he could see you as you were a moment ago. You were really beautiful when you called out, 'Will he admire me?' for passion had turned your blue eyes black as night, and your lip was curled with hatred so as to show two rows of teeth white as the snow on the Demawend!"

Phaedime was flattered and forced her face once more into the admired expression, saying: "Then take us at once to the banquet,

for I know my eyes will be darker and more brilliant, and my teeth will gleam more brightly, when I see that Egyptian girl sitting where I ought to sit."

"She will not be allowed to sit there long."

"What! is your plan likely to succeed then? Oh, Boges, do not hide it any longer from me—I will be as silent as the grave—I will help you—I will—"

"No, I cannot, I dare not tell you about it, but this much I will say in order to sweeten this bitter evening: we have dug the pit for our enemy, and if my golden Phaedime will only do what I tell her, I hope to give her back her old place, and not only that, but even a higher one."

"Tell me what I am to do; I am ready for anything and everything."

"That was well and bravely spoken; like a true lioness. If you obey me we must succeed; and the harder the task, the higher the reward. Don't dispute what I am going to say, for we have not a minute to lose. Take off all your useless ornaments and only wear the chain the king gave you on your marriage. Put on a dark simple dress instead of this bright one; and when you have prostrated yourself before Kassandane, bow down humbly before the Egyptian Princess too."

"Impossible!"

"I will not be contradicted. Take off those ornaments at once, I entreat you. There, that is right. We cannot succeed unless you obey me. How white your neck is! The fair Peri would look dark by your side."

"But—"

"When your turn comes to ask a favor of the king, tell him you have no wishes, now that the sun of your life has withdrawn his light."

"Yes, that I will do."

"When your father asks after your welfare, you must weep."

"I will do that too."

"And so that all the Achaemenidae can see that you are weeping."

"That will be a fearful humiliation!"

"Not at all; only a means by which to rise the more surely. Wash the red color from your cheeks and put on white powder. Make yourself pale – paler still."

"Yes, I shall need that to hide my blushes. Bogen, you are asking something fearful of me, but I will obey you if you will only give me a reason."

"Girl, bring your mistress's new dark green robe."

"I shall look like a slave."

"True grace is lovely even in rags."

"The Egyptian will completely eclipse me."

"Yes, every one must see that you have not the slightest intention of comparing yourself with her. Then people will say: 'Would not Phaedime be as beautiful as this proud woman, if she had taken the same pains to make herself so?'"

"But I cannot bow down to her."

"You must."

"You only want to humble and ruin me."

"Short-sighted fool! listen to my reasons and obey. I want especially to excite the Achaemenidae against our enemy. How it will enrage your grandfather Intaphernes, and your father Otanes to see you in the dust before a stranger! Their wounded pride will bring them over to our side, and if they are too 'noble,' as they call it, to undertake anything themselves against a woman, still they will be more likely to help than to hinder us, if I should need their

assistance. Then, when the Egyptian is ruined, if you have done as I wish, the king will remember your sad pale face, your humility and forgetfulness of self. The Achaemenidae, and even the Magi, will beg him to take a queen from his own family; and where in all Persia is there a woman who can boast of better birth than you? Who else can wear the royal purple but my bright bird of Paradise, my beautiful rose Phaedime? With such a prize in prospect we must no more fear a little humiliation than a man who is learning to ride fears a fall from his horse."

And she, princess as she was, answered: "I will obey you."

"Then we are certain of victory," said the eunuch. "There, now your eyes are flashing darkly again as I like to see them, my queen. And so Cambyses shall see you when the tender flesh of the Egyptian shall have become food for dogs and the birds of the air, and when for the first time after long months of absence, I bring him once more to the door of your apartments. Here, Armorges! tell the rest of the women to get ready and enter their litters. I will go on and be there to show them their places."

The great banqueting-hall was bright as day—even brighter, from the light of thousands of candles whose rays were reflected in the gold plates forming the panelling of the walls. A table of interminable length stood in the middle of the hall, overloaded with gold and silver cups, plates, dishes, bowls, jugs, goblets, ornaments and incense-altars, and looked like a splendid scene from fairy-land.

"The king will soon be here," called out the head-steward of the table, of the great court-lords, to the king's cup-bearer, who was a member of the royal family. "Are all the wine-jugs full, has the wine been tasted, are the goblets ranged in order, and the skins sent by Polykrates, have they been emptied?"

"Yes," answered the cup-bearer, "everything is ready, and that Chian wine is better than any I ever tasted; indeed, in my opinion, even the Syrian is not to be compared to it. Only taste it."

So saying he took a graceful little golden goblet from the table in one hand, raised a wine-pitcher of the same costly metal with the other, swung the latter high into the air and poured the wine so

cleverly into the narrow neck of the little vessel that not a drop was lost, though the liquid formed a wide curve in its descent. He then presented the goblet to the head-steward with the tips of his fingers, bowing gracefully as he did so.

The latter sipped the delicious wine, testing its flavor with great deliberation, and said, on returning the cup: "I agree with you, it is indeed a noble wine, and tastes twice as well when presented with such inimitable grace. Strangers are quite right in saying that there are no cupbearers like the Persian."

"Thanks for this praise," replied the other, kissing his friend's forehead. "Yes, I am proud of my office, and it is one which the king only gives to his friends. Still it is a great plague to have to stay so long in this hot, suffocating Babylon. Shall we ever be off for the summer, to Ecbatana or Pasargada?"

"I was talking to the king about it to-day. He had intended not to leave before the Massagetan war, and to go straight from Babylon into the field, but to-day's embassy has changed matters; it is probable that there may be no war, and then we shall go to Susa three days after the king's marriage—that is, in one week from the present time."

"To Susa?" cried the cup-bearer. "It's very little cooler there than here, and besides, the old Memnon's castle is being rebuilt."

"The satrap of Susa has just brought word that the new palace is finished, and that nothing so brilliant has ever been seen. Directly Cambyses heard, it he said: Then we will start for Susa three days after our marriage. I should like to show the Egyptian Princess that we understand the art of building as well as her own ancestors. She is accustomed to hot weather on the Nile, and will not find our beautiful Susa too warm.' The king seems wonderfully fond of this woman."

"He does indeed! All other women have become perfectly indifferent to him, and he means soon to make her his queen."

"That is unjust; Phaedime, as daughter of the Achaemenidae, has an older and better right."

"No doubt, but whatever the king wishes, must be right."

"The ruler's will is the will of God."

"Well said! A true Persian will kiss his king's hand, even when dripping with the blood of his own child."

"Cambyses ordered my brother's execution, but I bear him no more ill-will for it than I should the gods for depriving me of my parents. Here, you fellows! draw the curtains back; the guests are coming. Look sharp, you dogs, and do your duty! Farewell, Artabazos, we shall have warm work to-night."

Freeditorial 