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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CLEOPATRA

BEING

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FALL AND VENGEANCE
OF HARMACHIS, THE ROYAL EGYPTIAN, AS SET
FORTH BY HIS OWN HAND

BY

H. RIDER HAGGARD,

AUTHOR OF "KING SOLOMON'S MINES," "SHE," ETC.

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CLEOPATRA.



BOOK II.

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THAT same night Cleopatra summoned me to her private chamber. I went, and found her much troubled in mind; never before had I seen her so deeply moved. She was alone, and, like some trapped lioness, walked to and fro across the marble floor, while thought chased thought across her mind, each, as clouds scudding over the sea, for a moment casting its shadow in her deep eyes.

"So thou art come, Harmachis," she said, resting for a while, as she took my hand. "Counsel me, for never did I need counsel more. Oh, what days have the Gods measured out to me—days restless as the ocean! I have known

no peace from childhood up, and it seems none shall I ever know. Scarce by a very little have I escaped thy dagger's point, Harmachis, when this new trouble, that, like a storm, has gathered beneath the horizon's rim, suddenly bursts over me. Didst mark that tigerish fop? Well should I love to trap him! How soft he spoke! Ay, he purred like a cat, and all the time he stretched his claws. Didst hear the letter, too? it has an ugly sound. I know this Antony. When I was but a child, budding into womanhood, I saw him; but my eyes were ever quick, and I took his measure. Half Hercules and half a fool, with a dash of genius veining his folly through. Easily led by those who enter at the gates of his voluptuous sense; but if crossed, an iron foe. True to his friends, if, indeed he loves them; and oftentimes false to his own interest. Generous, hardy, and in adversity a man of virtue; in prosperity a sot and a slave to woman. That is Antony. How deal with such a man, whom fate and opportunity, despite himself, have set on the crest of fortune's wave? One day it will overwhelm him; but till that day he sweeps across the world and laughs at those who drown."

"Antony is but a man," I answered, "and a man with many foes; and, being but a man, he can be overthrown."

"Ay, he can be overthrown; but he is one of three, Harmachis. Now that Cassius hath gone where all fools go, Rome has thrown out a hydra head. Crush one, and another hisses in thy face. There's Lepidus, and, with him, that young Octavianus, whose cold eyes may yet with a smile of triumph look on the murdered forms of empty, worthless Lepidus, of Antony, and of Cleopatra. If I go not to Cilicia, mark thou! Antony will knit up a peace with these Parthians, and, taking the tales they tell of me for truth—and, indeed, there is truth in them—will fall with all his force on Egypt. And how then?"

"How then? Why, then we'll drum him back to Rome."

"Ah! thou sayest so, and, perchance, Harmachis, had I not won that game we played together some twelve days gone, thou, being Pharaoh, mightest well have done this thing, for round thy throne old Egypt would have gathered. But Egypt loves not me nor my Greek blood; and I have but now scattered that great plot of thine,

in which half the land was meshed. Will these men, then, arise to succour me? Were Egypt true to me, I could, indeed, hold my own against all the force that Rome may bring; but Egypt hates me, and had as lief be ruled by the Roman as the Greek. Still I might make defence had I the gold, for with money soldiers can be bought to feed the maw of mercenary battle. But I have none; my treasuries are dry, and though there is wealth in the land, yet debts perplex me. These wars have brought me ruin, and I know not how to find a talent. Perchance, Harmachis, thou who art, by hereditary right, Priest of the Pyramids," and she drew near and looked me in the eyes, "perchance, if long descended rumour does not lie, thou canst tell me where I can touch the gold to save thy land from ruin, and thy Love from the grasp of Antony? Say, is it so?"

I thought a while, and then I answered:

"And if such a tale were true, and if I could show thee treasure stored by the mighty Pharaohs of the most far off age against the needs of Khem, how can I know that thou wouldst indeed make use of that wealth to those good ends?"

"Is there, then, a treasure?" she asked curiously. "Nay, fret me not, Harmachis; for of a truth the very name of gold at this time of want is like the sight of water in the desert."

"I believe," I said "that there is such a treasure, though I myself have never seen it. But I know this, that if it still lie in the place where it was set, it is because so heavy a curse will rest upon him who shall lay hands on it wickedly and for selfish ends, that none of those Pharaohs to whom it has been shown have dared to touch it, however sore their need."

"So," she said, "they were cowardly aforetime, or else their need was not great. Wilt thou show me this treasure, then, Harmachis?"

"Perhaps," I answered, "I will show it to thee if it still be there, when thou hast sworn that thou wilt use it to defend Egypt from this Roman Antony and for the welfare of her people."

"I swear it!" she said earnestly. "Oh, I swear by every God in Khem that if thou showest me this great treasure, I will defy Antony and send Dellius back to Cilicia with sharper words than those he brought. Yes, I'll do more, Harmachis: so soon as may be, I will take thee to

husband before all the world, and thou thyself shalt carry out thy plans and beat off the Roman eagles."

Thus she spoke, gazing at me with truthful, earnest eyes. I believed her, and for the first time since my fall was for a moment happy, thinking that all was not lost to me, and that with Cleopatra, whom I loved thus madly, I might yet win my place and power back.

"Swear it, Cleopatra!" I said.

"I swear, beloved! and thus I seal my oath!" and she kissed me on the forehead. And I, too, kissed her; and we talked of what we would do when we were wed, and how we should overcome the Roman.

And thus I was again beguiled; though I believe that, had it not been for the jealous anger of Charmion—which, as shall be seen, was ever urging her forward to fresh deeds of shame—Cleopatra would have wedded me and broken with the Roman. And, indeed, in the issue, it had been better for her and Egypt.

We sat far into the night, and I revealed to her somewhat of that ancient secret of the mighty treasure hid beneath the mass of *Her*. Thither,

it was agreed, we should go on the morrow, and the second night from now attempt its search. So, early on the next day, a boat was secretly made ready, and Cleopatra entered it, veiled as an Egyptian lady about to make a pilgrimage to the Temple of Horemkhu. And I also entered, cloaked as a pilgrim, and with us ten of her most trusted servants disguised as sailors. But Charmion went not with us. We sailed with a fair wind from the Canopic mouth of the Nile; and that night, pushing on with the moon, we reached Sais at midnight, and here rested for a while. At dawn we once more loosed our craft, and all that day sailed swiftly, till, at last, at the third hour from the sunset, we came in sight of the lights of that fortress which is called Babylon. Here, on the opposite bank of the river, we moored our ship safely in a bed of reeds.

Then, on foot and secretly, we set out for the pyramids, which were at a distance of two leagues, Cleopatra, I and one trusted eunuch, for we left the other servants with the boat. Only I caught an ass for Cleopatra to ride that was wandering in a tilled field, and threw a cloak upon it. She sat on it and I led the ass by

paths I knew, the eunuch following us on foot. And, within little more than an hour, having gained the great causeway, we saw the mighty pyramids towering up through the moonlit air and awing us to silence. We passed on in utter silence, through the haunted city of the dead, for all around us stood the solemn tombs, till at length we climbed the rocky hill, and stood in the deep shadow of Khufu Khut, the splendid Throne of Khufu.

“Of a truth,” whispered Cleopatra, as she gazed up the dazzling marble slope above her, everywhere blazoned over with a million mystic characters—“of a truth, there were Gods ruling in Khem in those days, and not men. This place is sad as Death—ay, and as mighty and far from man. Is it here that we must enter?”

“Nay,” I answered, “it is not here. Pass on.”

I led the way through a thousand ancient tombs, till we stood in the shadow of Ur the Great, and gazed at his red, heaven-piercing mass.

“Is it here that we must enter?” she whispered once again.

“Nay,” I answered, “it is not here. Pass on.”

We passed on through many more tombs, till we stood in the shadow of *Her*,* and Cleopatra gazed astonished at its polished beauty, which for thousands of years, night by night, had mirrored back the moon, and at the black girdle of Ethiopian stone that circled its base about. For this is the most beautiful of all pyramids.

“Is it here that we must enter?” she said.

I answered, “It is here.”

We passed round between the Temple of the Worship of his Divine Majesty, Menkau-ra, the Osirian, and the base of the pyramid till we came to the north side. Here in the centre is graved the name of Pharaoh Menkau-ra, who built the pyramid to be his tomb, and stored his treasure in it against the need of Khem.

“If the treasure still remains,” I said to Cleopatra, “as it remained in the days of my great-great-grandfather, who was Priest of this Pyramid before me, it is hid deep in the womb of the mass before thee, Cleopatra; nor can it be come by without toil, danger, and terror of mind. Art

* The “Upper,” now known as the Third Pyramid.—ED.

thou prepared to enter—for thou thyself must enter and must judge?”

“Canst thou not go in with the eunuch, Harmachis, and bring the treasure forth?” she said, for a little her courage began to fail her.

“Nay, Cleopatra,” I answered, “not even for thee and for the weal of Egypt can I do this thing, for of all sins it would be the greatest sin. But it is lawful for me to do this. I, as hereditary holder of the secret, may, upon demand, show to the ruling monarch of Khem the place where the treasure lies, and show also the warning that is written. And if on seeing and reading, the Pharaoh deems that the need of Khem is so sore and strait that it is lawful for him to brave the curse of the Dead and draw forth the treasure, it is well, for on his head must rest the weight of this dread deed. Three monarchs—so say the records that I have read—have thus dared to enter in the time of need. They were the Divine Queen Hat-shepsu, that wonder known to the Gods alone; her Divine brother Tahutimes Men-Kheper-ra; and the Divine Rameses Mi-amen. But of these three Majesties, not one when they saw dared to touch; for, though sharp

their need, it was not great enough to consecrate the act. So, fearing lest the curse should fall upon them, they went hence sorrowing."

She thought a little, till at last her spirit overcame her fear.

"At the least I will see with mine own eyes," she said.

"It is well," I answered. Then, stones having been piled up by me and the eunuch who was with us on a certain spot at the base of the pyramid, to somewhat more than the height of a man, I climbed on them and searched for the secret mark, no larger than a leaf. I found it with some trouble, for the weather and rubbing of the wind-stirred sand had worn even the Ethiopian stone. Having found it, I pressed on it with all my strength in a certain fashion. Even after the lapse of many years the stone swung round, showing a little opening, through which a man might scarcely creep. As it swung, a mighty bat, white in colour as though with unreckoned age, and such as I had never seen before for bigness, for his measure was the measure of a hawk, flew forth and for a moment hovered over Cleopatra, then sailed slowly up and up in

circles, till at last he was lost in the bright light of the moon.

But Cleopatra uttered a cry of terror, and the eunuch, who was watching, fell down in fear, believing it to be the guardian Spirit of the pyramid. And I, too, feared, though I said nothing. For even now I believe that it was the Spirit of Menkau-ra, the Osirian, who, taking the form of a bat, flew forth from his holy House in warning.

I waited a while, till the foul air should clear from the passage. Then I drew out the lamps, kindled them, and passed them, to the number of three, into the entrance of the passage. This done, I went to the eunuch, and, taking him aside, I swore him by the living spirit of Him who sleeps at Abouthis that he should not reveal those things which he was about to see.

This he swore, trembling sorely, for he was very much afraid. Nor, indeed, did he reveal them.

This done, I clambered through the opening, taking with me a coil of rope, which I wound around my middle, and beckoned to Cleopatra to come. Making fast the skirt of her robe, she

came, and I drew her through the opening, so that at length she stood behind me in the passage which is lined with slabs of granite. After her came the eunuch, and he also stood in the passage. Then, having taken counsel of the plan of the passage that I had brought with me, and which, in signs that none but the initiated can read, was copied from those ancient writings that had come down to me through one-and-forty generations of my predecessors, the Priests of this Pyramid of *Her*, and of the worship of the Temple of the Divine Menkau-ra, the Osirian, I led the way through that darksome place towards the utter silence of the tomb. Guided by the feeble light of our lamps, we passed down the steep incline, gasping in the heat and the thick, stagnated air. Presently we had left the region of the masonry and were slipping down a gallery hewn in the living rock. For twenty paces or more it ran steeply. Then its slope lessened and shortly we found ourselves in a chamber painted white, so low that I, being tall, had scarcely room to stand; but in length four paces, and in breadth three, and cased throughout with sculptured panels. Here Cleopatra sank upon

the floor and rested awhile, overcome by the heat and the utter darkness.

“Rise!” I said. “We must not linger here, or we faint.”

So she rose, and, passing hand in hand through that chamber, we found ourselves face to face with a mighty door of granite, let down from the roof in grooves. Once more I took counsel of the plan, pressed with my foot upon a certain stone, and waited. Then, suddenly and softly, I know not by what means, the mass heaved itself from its bed of living rock. We passed beneath, and found ourselves face to face with a second door of granite. Again I pressed on a certain spot, and this door swung wide of itself, and we went through, to find ourselves face to face with a third door, yet more mighty than the two through which we had won our way. Following the secret plan, I struck this door with my foot upon a certain spot, and it sank slowly as though at a word of magic till its head was level with the floor of rock. We crossed and gained another passage which, descending gently for a length of fourteen paces, led us into a great chamber, paved with black marble, more than nine cubits

high, by nine cubits broad, and thirty cubits long. In this marble floor was sunk a great sarcophagus of granite, and on its lid were graved the name and titles of the Queen of Menkau-ra. In this chamber, too, the air was purer, though I know not by what means it came thither.

“Is the treasure here?” gasped Cleopatra.

“Nay,” I answered; “follow me,” and I led the way to a gallery, which we entered through an opening in the floor of the great chamber. It had been closed by a trap-door of stone, but the door was open. Creeping along this shaft, or passage, for some ten paces, we came at length to a well, seven cubits in depth. Making fast one end of the rope that I had brought about my body and the other to a ring in the rock, I was lowered, holding the lamp in my hand, till I stood in the last resting-place of the Divine Menkau-ra. Then the rope was drawn up, and Cleopatra, being made fast to it, was let down by the eunuch, and I received her in my arms. But I bade the eunuch, sorely against his will, since he feared to be left alone, await our return at the mouth of the shaft. For it was not lawful that he should enter whither we went.

CHAPTER XI.

OF THE TOMB OF THE DIVINE MENKAU-RA; OF THE WRITING ON THE BREAST OF MENKAU-RA; OF THE DRAWING FORTH OF THE TREASURE; OF THE DWELLER IN THE TOMB; AND OF THE FLIGHT OF CLEOPATRA AND HARMACHIS FROM THE HOLY PLACE.

We stood within a small arched chamber, paved and lined with great blocks of the granite stone of Syene. There before us—hewn from a single mass of basalt shaped like a wooden house and resting on a sphinx with a face of gold—was the sarcophagus of the Divine Menkau-ra.

We stood and gazed in awe, for the weight of the silence and the solemnity of that holy place seemed to crush us. Above us, cubit over cubit in its mighty measure, the pyramid towered up to heaven and was kissed of the night air. But we were deep in the bowels of the rock beneath its base. We were alone with the dead, whose rest we were about to break; and no sound of the mur-

muring air, and no sight of life came to dull the awful edge of solitude. I gazed on the sarcophagus: its heavy lid had been lifted and rested at its side, and around it the dust of ages had gathered thick.

"See," I whispered, pointing to a writing, daubed with pigment upon the wall in the sacred symbols of ancient times.

"Read it, Harmachis," answered Cleopatra, in the same low voice; "for I cannot."

Then I read: "I Rameses Mi-amen, in my day and in my hour of need, visited this sepulchre. But, though great my need and bold my heart, I dared not face the curse of Menkau-ra. Judge, O thou who shalt come after me, and, if thy soul is pure and Khem be utterly distressed, take thou that which I have left."

"Where, then, is the treasure?" she whispered. "Is that Sphinx-face of gold?"

"Even there," I answered, pointing to the sarcophagus. "Draw near and see."

And she took my hand and drew near.

The cover was off, but the painted coffin of the Pharaoh lay in the depths of the sarcophagus. We climbed the Sphinx, then I blew the dust

from the coffin with my breath and read that which was written on its lid. And this was written:

“Pharaoh Menkau-ra, the Child of Heaven.

“Pharaoh Menkau-ra, Royal Son of the Sun.

“Pharaoh Menkau-ra, who didst lie beneath the heart of Nout.

“Nout, thy Mother, wraps thee in the spell of Her holy name.

“The name of thy Mother, Nout, is the mystery of Heaven.

“Nout, thy Mother, gathers thee to the number of the Gods.

“Nout, thy Mother, breathes on thy foes and utterly destroys them.

“O Pharaoh Menkau-ra, who livest for ever!”

“Where, then, is the treasure?” she asked again.

“Here, indeed, is the body of the Divine Menkau-ra; but the flesh even of Pharaohs is not gold, and if the face of this Sphinx be gold how may we move it?”

For answer I bade her stand upon the Sphinx and grasp the upper part of the coffin while I grasped its foot. Then, at my word, we lifted, and the lid of the case, which was not fixed, came away, and we set it upon the floor. And there in the case was the mummy of Pharaoh, as

it had been laid three thousand years before. It was a large mummy, and somewhat ungainly. Nor was it adorned with a gilded mask, as is the fashion of our day, for the head was wrapped in cloths yellow with age, which were made fast with pink flaxen bandages, under which were pushed the stems of lotus-blooms. And on the breast, wreathed round with lotus-flowers, lay a large plate of gold closely written over with sacred writing. I lifted up the plate, and, holding it to the light, I read:

“I, Menkau-ra, the Osirian, aforetime Pharaoh of the Land of Khem, who in my day did live justly and ever walked in the path marked for my feet by the decree of the Invisible, who was the beginning and is the end, speak from my tomb to those who after me shall for an hour sit upon my Throne. Behold, I, Menkau-ra, the Osirian, having in the days of my life been warned of a dream that a time will come when Khem shall fear to fall into the hands of strangers, and her monarch shall have great need of treasure wherewith to furnish armies to drive the barbarian back, have out of my wisdom done this thing. For it having pleased the protecting Gods to give me

wealth beyond any Pharaoh who has been since the days of Horus—thousands of cattle and geese, thousands of calves and asses, thousands of measures of corn, and hundreds of measures of gold and gems; this wealth I have used sparingly, and that which remains I have bartered for precious stones—even for emeralds, the most beautiful and largest that are in the world. These stones, then, I have stored up against that day of the need of Khem. But because as there have been, so there shall be, those who do wickedly on the earth, and who, in the lust of gain, might seize this wealth that I have stored, and put it to their uses; behold, thou Unborn One, who in the fulness of time shalt stand above me and read this that I have caused to be written, I have stored the treasure thus—even among my bones. Therefore, O thou Unborn One, sleeping in the womb of Nout, I say this to thee! If thou indeed hast need of riches to save Khem from the foes of Khem, fear not and delay not, but tear me, the Osirian, from my tomb, loose my wrappings and rip the treasure from my breast, and all shall be well with thee; for this only do I command, that thou dost replace my bones within my hollow coffin.

But if the need be passing and not great, or if there be guile in thy heart, then the curse of Menkau-ra be on thee! On thee be the curse that shall smite him who breaks in upon the dead! On thee be the curse that follows the traitor! On thee be the curse that smites him who outrages the Majesty of the Gods! Unhappy shalt thou live, in blood and misery shalt thou die, and in misery shalt thou be tormented for ever and for ever! For, Wicked One, there in Amenti we shall come face to face!

“And to the end of the keeping of this secret I, Menkau-ra, have set up a Temple of my Worship, which I have built upon the eastern side of this my House of Death. It shall be made known from time to time to the Hereditary High Priest of this my Temple. And if any High Priest that shall be do reveal this secret to another than the Pharaoh, or Her who wears the Pharaoh’s crown and is seated upon the throne of Khem, accursed be he also. Thus have I, Menkau-ra, the Osirian, written. Now to thee, who, sleeping in the womb of Nout, yet shall upon a time stand over me and read, I say, judge thou! and if thou judgest evilly, on thee shall fall this the curse of Menkau-ra

from which there is no escape. Greeting and farewell."

"Thou hast heard, O Cleopatra," I said solemnly; "now search thy heart; judge thou, and for thine own sake judge justly."

She bent her head in thought.

"I fear to do this thing," she said presently. "Let us hence."

"It is well," I said, with a lightening of the heart, and bent down to lift the wooden lid. For I, too, feared.

"And yet, what said the writing of the Divine Menkau-ra?—it was emeralds, was it not? And emeralds are now so rare and hard to come by. Ever did I love emeralds, and I can never find them without a flaw."

"It is not a matter of what thou dost love, Cleopatra," I said; "it is matter of the need of Khem and of the secret meaning of thy heart, which thou alone canst know."

"Ay, surely, Harmachis; surely! And is not the need of Egypt great? There is no gold in the treasury, and how can I defy the Roman if I have no gold? And have I not sworn to thee that I will wed thee and defy the Roman; and

do I not swear it again—yes, even in this solemn hour, with my hand upon dead Pharaoh's heart? Why, here is that occasion of which the Divine Menkau-ra dreamed. Thou seest it is so, for else Hat-shepsu or Rameses or some other Pharaoh had drawn forth the gems. But no; they left them to this hour because the time was not yet come. Now it must be come, for if I take not the gems the Roman will surely seize on Egypt, and then there will be no Pharaoh to whom the secret may be told. Nay, let us away with fears and to the work. Why dost look so frightened? Having pure hearts, there is naught to fear, Harmachis."

"Even as thou wilt," I said again; "it is for thee to judge, since if thou judgest falsely on thee will surely fall the curse from which there is no escape."

"So, Harmachis, take Pharaoh's head and I will take his——Oh, what an awful place is this!" and suddenly she clung to me. "Methought I saw a shadow yonder in the darkness! Methought that it moved toward us and then straightway vanished! Let us be going! Didst thou see naught?"

“I saw nothing, Cleopatra; but mayhap it was the Spirit of the Divine Menkau-ra, for the spirit ever hovers round its mortal tenement. Let us, then, be going; I shall be right glad to go.”

She made as though to start, then turned back again and spoke once more.

“It was naught—naught but the mind that, in such a house of Horror, bodies forth those shadowy forms of fear it dreads to see. Nay, I must look upon these emeralds: indeed, if I die, I must look! Come—to the work!” and stooping, she with her own hands lifted from the tomb one of the four alabaster jars, each sealed with the graven likeness of the heads of the protecting Gods, that held the holy heart and entrails of the Divine Menkau-ra. But nothing was found in these jars, save only what should be there.

Then together we mounted on the Sphinx, and with toil drew forth the body of the Divine Pharaoh, laying it on the ground. Now Cleopatra took my dagger, and with it cut loose the bandages which held the wrappings in their place, and the lotus-flowers that had been set in them by loving hands, three thousand years before, fell down upon the pavement. Then we searched and

found the end of the outer bandage, which was fixed in at the hinder part of the neck. This we cut loose, for it was glued fast. This done, we began to unroll the wrappings of the holy corpse. Setting my shoulders against the sarcophagus, I sat upon the rocky floor, the body resting on my knees, and, as I turned it, Cleopatra unwound the cloths; and awesome was the task. Presently something fell out; it was the sceptre of the Pharaoh, fashioned of gold, and at its end was a pomegranate cut from a single emerald.

Cleopatra seized the sceptre and gazed on it in silence. Then once more we went on with our dread business. And ever as we unwound, other ornaments of gold, such as are buried with Pharaohs, fell from the wrappings—collars and bracelets, models of sistra, an inlaid axe, and an image of the holy Osiris and of the holy Khem. At length all the bandages were unwound, and beneath we found a covering of coarsest linen; for in those very ancient days the craftsmen were not so skilled in matters pertaining to the embalming of the body as they are now. And on the linen was written in an oval, “Menkau-ra, Royal Son of the Sun.” We could in no wise

loosen this linen, it held so firm on to the body. Therefore, faint with the great heat, choked with mummy dust and the odour of spices, and trembling with fear of our unholy task, wrought in that most lonesome and holy place, we laid the body down, and ripped away the last covering with the knife. First we cleared Pharaoh's head, and now the face that no man had gazed on for three thousand years was open to our view. It was a great face, with a bold brow, yet crowned with the royal uræus, beneath which the white locks, stained yellow by the spices, fell in long, straight wisps. Not the cold stamp of death, and not the slow flight of three thousand years, had found power to mar the dignity of those shrunken features. We gazed on them, and then, made bold with fear, stripped the covering from the body. There at last it lay before us, stiff, yellow, and dread to see; and on the left side, above the thigh, was the cut through which the embalmers had done their work, but it was sewn up so deftly that we could scarcely find the mark.

"The gems are within," I whispered, for I felt that the body was very heavy. "Now, if thy

heart fail thee not, thou must make an entry to this poor house of clay that once was Pharaoh," and I gave her the dagger—the same dagger which had drunk the life of Paulus.

"It is too late to doubt," she answered, lifting her white beauteous face and fixing her blue eyes all big with terror upon my own. She took the dagger, and with set teeth the Queen of this day plunged it into the dead breast of Pharaoh of three thousand years ago. And even as she did so there came a groaning sound from the opening to the shaft where we had left the eunuch! We leapt to our feet, but heard no more, and the lamp-light still streamed down through the opening.

"It is nothing," I said. "Let us make an end."

Then with much toil we hacked and rent the hard flesh open, and as we did so I heard the knife point grate upon the gems within.

Cleopatra plunged her hand into the dead breast and drew forth somewhat. She held it to the light, and gave a little cry, for from the darkness of Pharaoh's heart there flashed into light and life the most beauteous emerald that

ever man beheld. It was perfect in colour, very large, without a flaw, and fashioned to a scarabæus form, and on the under side was an oval, inscribed with the divine name of Menkau-ra, Son of the Sun.

Again, again, and yet again, she plunged in her hand and drew great emeralds from Pharaoh's breast bedded there in spices. Some were fashioned and some were not; but all were perfect in colour without a flaw, and in value priceless. Again and again she plunged her white hand into that dread breast, till at length all were found, and there were one hundred and forty and eight of such gems as are not known in the world. The last time that she searched she brought forth not emeralds, indeed, but two great pearls, wrapped in linen, such as never have been seen. And of these pearls more hereafter.

So it was done, and all the mighty treasure lay glittering in a heap before us. There it lay, and there, too, lay the regalia of gold, the spiced and sickly-scented wrappings, and the torn body of white-haired Pharaoh Menkau-ra, the Osirian, the ever living in Amenti.

We rose, and a great awe fell upon us, now that the deed was done and our hearts were no more upborne by the rage of search—so great an awe, indeed, that we could not speak. I made a sign to Cleopatra. She grasped the head of Pharaoh and I grasped his feet, and together we lifted him, climbed the Sphinx, and placed him once more within his coffin. I piled the torn mummy cloths over him and on them laid the lid of the coffin.

And now we gathered up the great gems, and such of the ornaments as might be carried with ease, and I hid them as many as I could, in the folds of my robe. Those that were left Cleopatra hid upon her breast. Heavily laden with the priceless treasure, we gave one last look at the solemn place, at the sarcophagus and the Sphinx on which it rested, whose gleaming face of calm seemed to mock us with its everlasting smile of wisdom. Then we turned and went from the tomb.

At the shaft we halted. I called to the eunuch, who stayed above, and methought that a faint mocking laugh answered me. Too smitten with terror to call again, and fearing that, should we

delay, Cleopatra would certainly swoon, I seized the rope, and being strong and quick mounted by it and gained the passage. There burnt the lamp: but the eunuch I saw not. Thinking, surely, that he was a little way down the passage, and slept—as, in truth, he did—I bade Cleopatra make the rope fast about her middle, and with much labour, drew her up. Then, having rested awhile, we moved with the lamps to seek for the eunuch.

“He was stricken with terror and has fled, leaving the lamp,” said Cleopatra. “O ye Gods! who is *that* seated there?”

I peered into the darkness, thrusting out the lamps, and this was what their light fell on—this at the very dream of which my soul sickens! There, facing us, his back resting against the rock, and his hands splayed on either side upon the floor, sat the eunuch—*dead!* His eyes and mouth were open, his fat cheeks dropped down, his thin hair yet seemed to bristle, and on his countenance was frozen such a stamp of hideous terror as well might turn the beholder’s brain. And lo! fixed to his chin, by its hinder claws, hung that grey and mighty bat, which, flying forth when we entered the pyramid, vanished in the sky, but,

returning, had followed us to its depths. There it hung upon the dead man's chin slowly rocking itself to and fro, and we could see the fiery eyes shining in its head.

Aghast, utterly aghast, we stood and stared at the hateful sight; till presently the bat spread his huge wings and, loosing his hold, sailed to us. Now he hovered before Cleopatra's face, fanning her with his white wings. Then with a scream, like a woman's shriek of fury, the accursed Thing flittered on, seeking his violated tomb, and vanished down the well into the sepulchre. I fell against the wall. But Cleopatra sank in a heap upon the floor, and, covering her head with her arms, she shrieked till the hollow passages rang with the echoes of her cries, that seemed to grow and double and rush along the depths in volumes of shrill sound.

"Rise!" I cried, "rise and let us hence before the Spirit shall return to haunt us? If thou dost suffer thyself to be overwhelmed in this place thou art lost for ever."

She staggered to her feet, and never may I forget the look upon her ashy face or in her glowing eyes. Seizing the lamps with a rush, we

passed the dead eunuch's horrid form, I holding her by the hand. We gained the great chamber, where was the sarcophagus of the Queen of Menkau-ra, and traversed its length. We fled along the passage. What if the Thing had closed the three mighty doors? No; they were open, and we sped through them; the last only did I stay to close. I touched the stone, as I knew how, and the great door crashed down, shutting us off from the presence of the dead eunuch and the Horror that had hung upon the eunuch's chin. Now we were in the white chamber with the sculptured panels, and now we faced the last steep ascent. Oh that last ascent! Twice Cleopatra slipped and fell upon the polished floor. The second time—it was when half the distance had been done—she let fall her lamp, and would, indeed, have rolled down the slide had I not saved her. But in doing thus I, too, let fall my lamp that bounded away into shadow beneath us, and we were in utter darkness. And perchance about us, in the darkness, hovered that awful Thing!

“Be brave!” I cried; “O love, be brave, and struggle on, or both are lost! The way, though steep, is not far; and, though it be dark, we can

scarce come to harm in this straight shaft. If the gems weight thee, cast them away!"

"Nay," she gasped, "that I will not; this shall not be endured to no end. I die with them!"

Then it was that I saw the greatness of this woman's heart; for in the dark, and notwithstanding the terrors we had passed and the awfulness of our state, she clung to me and clambered on up that dread passage. On we clambered, hand in hand, with bursting hearts, till there, by the mercy or the anger of the Gods, at length we saw the faint light of the moon, creeping through the little opening in the pyramid. One struggle more, now the hole was gained, and like a breath from heaven, the sweet night air played upon our brows. I climbed through, and, standing on the pile of stones, lifted and dragged Cleopatra after me. She fell to the ground and then sank down upon it motionless.

I pressed upon the turning stone with trembling hands. It swung to and caught, leaving no mark of the secret place of entry. Then I leapt down and, having pushed away the pile of stones, looked on Cleopatra. She had swooned, and notwithstanding the dust and grime upon her face, it

was so pale that at first I believed she must be dead. But placing my hand upon her heart I felt it stir beneath; and, being spent, I flung myself down beside her upon the sand, to gather up my strength again.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE COMING BACK OF HARMACHIS; OF THE GREETING OF CHARMION; AND OF THE ANSWER OF CLEOPATRA TO QUINTUS DELLIUS, THE AMBASSADOR OF ANTONY THE TRIUMVIR.

PRESENTLY I lifted myself, and, laying the head of Egypt's Queen upon my knee, strove to call her back to life. How fair she seemed, even in her disarray, her long hair streaming down her breast! how deadly fair she seemed in the faint light—this woman the story of whose beauty and whose sin shall outlive the solid mass of the mighty pyramid that towered over us! The heaviness of her swoon had smoothed away the falseness of her face, and nothing was left but the divine stamp of Woman's richest loveliness, softened by shadows of the night and dignified by the cast of deathlike sleep. I gazed upon her and all my heart went out to her; it seemed that I did but love her more because of the depth of

the treasons to which I had sunk to reach her, and because of the terrors we had outfaced together. Weary and spent with fears and the pangs of guilt, my heart sought hers for rest, for now she alone was left to me. She had sworn to wed me also, and with the treasure we had won we would make Egypt strong and free her from her foes, and all should yet be well. Ah! could I have seen the picture that was to come, how, and in what place and circumstance, once again this very woman's head should be laid upon my knee, pale with that cast of death! Ah! could I have seen!

I chafed her hand between my hands. I bent down and kissed her on the lips, and at my kiss she woke. She woke with a little sob of fear—a shiver ran along her delicate limbs, and she stared upon my face with wide eyes.

“Ah! it is thou!” she said. “I mind me—thou hast saved me from that horror-haunted place!” And she threw her arms about my neck, drew me to her and kissed me. “Come, love,” she said, “let us be going! I am sore athirst, and—ah! so very weary! The gems, too, chafe my breast! Never was wealth so hardly won!

Come, let us be going from the shadow of this ghostly spot! See the faint lights glancing from the wings of Dawn. How beautiful they are, and how sweet to behold! Never, in those Halls of Eternal Night, did I think to look upon the blush of dawn again! Ah! I can still see the face of that dead slave, with the Horror hanging to his beardless chin! Bethink thee!—there he'll sit for ever—there—with the Horror! Come; where may we find water? I would give an emerald for a cup of water!”

“At the canal on the borders of the tilled land below the Temple of Horemkhu—it is close by,” I answered. “If any see us, we will say that we are pilgrims who have lost our way at night among the tombs. Veil thyself closely, therefore, Cleopatra; and beware lest thou dost show aught of those gems about thee.”

So she veiled herself, and I lifted her on to the ass which was tethered near at hand. We walked slowly through the plain till we came to the place where the symbol of the God Horemkhu,*

* That is, “Horus on the horizon”; and signifies the power of Light and Good overcoming the power of Darkness and Evil incarnate in his enemy, Typhon.—ED.

fashioned as a mighty Sphinx (whom the Greeks call Harmachis), and crowned with the royal crown of Egypt, looks out in majesty across the land, his eyes ever fixed upon the East. As we walked the first arrow of the rising sun quivered through the grey air, striking upon Horemkhu's lips of holy calm, and the Dawn kissed her greeting to the God of Dawn. Then the light gathered and grew upon the gleaming sides of twenty pyramids, and, like a promise from Life to Death, rested on the portals of ten thousand tombs. It poured in a flood of gold across the desert sand—it pierced the heavy sky of night, and fell in bright beams upon the green of fields and the tufted crest of palms. Then from his horizon bed royal Ra rose up in pomp and it was day.

Passing the temple of granite and of alabaster that was built before the days of Khufu, to the glory of the Majesty of Horemkhu, we descended the slope, and came to the banks of the canal. There we drank; and that draught of muddy water was sweeter than all the choicest wine of Alexandria. Also we washed the mummy dust and grime from our hands and brows and made us clean. As she bathed her neck, stooping over

the water, one of the great emeralds slipped from Cleopatra's breast and fell into the canal, and it was but by chance that at length I found it in the mire. Then, once more, I lifted Cleopatra on to the beast, and slowly, for I was very weary, we marched back to the banks of Sihor, where our craft was. And having at length come thither, seeing no one save some few peasants going out to labour on the lands, I turned the ass loose in that same field where we had found him, and we boarded the craft while the crew were yet sleeping. Then, waking them, we bade them make all sail, saying that we had left the eunuch to sojourn awhile behind us, as in truth we had. So we sailed, having first hidden away the gems and such of the ornaments of gold as we could bring to the boat.

We spent four days and more in coming to Alexandria, for the wind was for the most part against us; and they were happy days! At first, indeed, Cleopatra was somewhat silent and heavy at heart, for what she had seen and felt in the womb of the pyramid weighed her down. But soon her Imperial spirit awoke and shook the burden from her breast, and she became herself

again—now gay, now learned; now loving, and now cold; now queenly, and now altogether simple—ever changing as the winds of heaven, and as the heaven, deep, beauteous, and unsearchable!

Night after night for those four perfect nights, the last happy hours I ever was to know, we sat hand in hand upon the deck and heard the waters lap the vessel's side, and watched the soft foot-fall of the moon as she trod the depths of Nile. There we sat and talked of love, talked of our marriage and all that we would do. Also I drew up plans of war and of defence against the Roman, which now we had the means to carry out; and she approved them, sweetly saying that what seemed good to me was good to her. And so the time passed all too swiftly.

Oh those nights upon the Nile! their memory haunts me yet! Yet in my dreams I see the moonbeams break and quiver, and hear Cleopatra's murmured words of love mingle with the sound of murmuring waters. Dead are those dear nights, dead is the moon that lit them; the waters which rocked us on their breast are lost in the wide salt sea, and where we kissed and clung there lips unborn shall kiss and cling! How beautiful was

their promise, doomed, like an unfruitful blossom, to wither, fall, and rot! and their fulfilment, ah, how drear! For all things end in darkness and in ashes, and those who sow in folly shall reap in sorrow. Ah! those nights upon the Nile!

And so at length once more we stood within the hateful walls of that fair palace on the Lochias, and the dream was done.

“Whither hast thou wandered with Cleopatra, Harmachis?” Charmion asked of me when I met her by chance on that day of return. “On some new mission of betrayal? Or was it but a love-journey?”

“I went with Cleopatra upon secret business of the State,” I answered sternly.

“So! Those who go secretly, go evilly; and foul birds love to fly at night. Not but what thou art wise, for it would scarce beseem thee, Harmachis, to show thy face openly in Egypt.”

I heard, and felt my passion rise within me, for I could ill bear this fair girl’s scorn.

“Hast thou never a word without a sting?” I asked. “Know, then, that I went whither thou

hadst not dared to go, to gather means to hold Egypt from the grasp of Antony."

"So," she answered, looking up swiftly. "Thou foolish man! Thou hadst done better to save thy labour, for Antony will grasp Egypt in thy despite. What power hast thou to-day in Egypt?"

"That he may do in my despite; but in despite of Cleopatra that he cannot do," I said.

"Nay, but with the *aid* of Cleopatra he can and will do it," she answered with a bitter smile. "When the Queen sails in state up Cydnus stream she will surely draw this coarse Antony thence to Alexandria, conquering, and yet, like thee, a slave!"

"It is false! I say that it is false! Cleopatra goes not to Tarsus, and Antony comes not to Alexandria; or, if he come, it will be to take the chance of war."

"Now, thinkest thou thus?" she answered with a little laugh. "Well, if it please thee, think as thou wilt. Within three days thou shalt know. It is pretty to see how easily thou art fooled. Farewell! Go, dream on Love, for surely Love is sweet."

And she went, leaving me angered and troubled at heart.

I saw Cleopatra no more that day, but on the day which followed I saw her. She was in a heavy mood, and had no gentle word for me. I spake to her of the defence of Egypt, but she put the matter away.

“Why dost thou weary me?” she said with anger; “canst thou not see that I am lost in troubles? When Dellius has had his answer to-morrow then we will speak of these matters.”

“Ay,” I said, “when Dellius has had his answer; and knowest thou that but yesterday, Charmion—whom about the palace they name the ‘Keeper of the Queen’s secrets’—Charmion swore that the answer would be ‘Go in peace, I come to Antony!’”

“Charmion knows nothing of my heart,” said Cleopatra, stamping her foot in anger, “and if she talk so freely the girl shall be scourged out of my Court, as is her desert. Though, in truth,” she added, “she has more wisdom in that small head of hers than all my privy councillors—ay, and more wit to use it. Knowest thou that I

have sold a portion of those gems to the rich Jews of Alexandria, and at a great price, ay, at five thousand sestertia for each one?* But a few, in truth, for they could not buy more as yet. It was rare to see their eyes when they fell upon them: they grew large as apples with avarice and wonder. And now leave me, Harmachis, for I am weary. The memory of that dreadful night is with me yet."

I bowed and rose to go, and yet stood wavering.

"Pardon me, Cleopatra; it is of our marriage."

"Our marriage! Why, are we not indeed already wed?" she answered.

"Yes; but not before the world. Thou didst promise."

"Ay, Harmachis, I promised; and to-morrow, when I have rid me of this Dellius, I will keep my promise, and name thee Cleopatra's Lord before the Court. See that thou art in thy place. Art content?"

And she stretched out her hand for me to kiss, looking on me with strange eyes, as though

* About forty thousand pounds of our money.—ED.

she struggled with herself. Then I went; but that night I strove once more to see Cleopatra, and could not. "The Lady Charmion was with the Queen," so said the eunuchs, and none might enter.

On the morrow the Court met in the great hall one hour before mid-day, and I went thither with a trembling heart to hear Cleopatra's answer to Dellius, and to hear myself also named King-consort to the Queen of Egypt. It was a full and splendid Court; there were councillors, lords, captains, eunuchs, and waiting-women, all save Charmion. The hour passed, but Cleopatra and Charmion came not. At length Charmion entered gently by a side entrance, and took her place among the waiting-ladies about the throne. Even as she did so she cast a glance at me, and there was triumph in her eyes, though I knew not over what she triumphed. I little guessed that she had but now brought about my ruin and sealed the fate of Egypt.

Then presently the trumpets blared, and, clad in her robes of state, the uræus crown upon her head, and on her breast, flashing like a star, that

great emerald scarabæus which she had dragged from dead Pharaoh's heart, Cleopatra swept in splendour to her throne, followed by a glittering guard of Northmen. Her lovely face was dark, dark were her slumbrous eyes, and none might read their message, though all that Court searched them for a sign of what should come. She seated herself slowly as one who may not be moved, and spoke to the chief of the heralds in the Greek tongue:

“Does the Ambassador of the noble Antony wait?”

The herald bowed low and made assent.

“Let him come in and hear our answer.”

The doors were flung wide, and, followed by his train of knights, Dellius, clad in his golden armour and his purple mantle, walked with cat-like step up the great hall, and made obeisance before the throne.

“Most royal and beauteous Egypt,” he said, in his soft voice, “as thou hast graciously been pleased to bid me, thy servant, I am here to take thy answer to the letter of the noble Antony the Triumvir, whom to-morrow I sail to meet at Tarsus, in Cilicia. And I will say this, royal

Egypt, craving pardon the while for the boldness of my speech—bethink thee well before words that cannot be unspoken fall from those sweet lips. Defy Antony, and Antony will wreck thee. But, like thy mother Aphrodité, rise glorious on his sight from the bosom of the Cyprian wave, and for wreck he will give thee all that can be dear to woman's royalty—Empire, and pomp of place, cities and the sway of men, fame and wealth, and the Diadem of rule made sure. For mark: Antony holds this Eastern World in the hollow of his warlike hand; at his will kings are, and at his frown they cease to be."

And he bowed his head and, folding his hands meekly on his breast, awaited answer.

For a while Cleopatra answered not, but sat like the Sphinx Horemkhu, dumb and inscrutable, gazing with lost eyes down the length of that great hall.

Then, like soft music, her answer came; and trembling I listened for Egypt's challenge to the Roman:

"Noble Dellius,—We have bethought us much of the matter of thy message from great Antony to our poor Royalty of Egypt. We have be-

thought us much, and we have taken counsel from the oracles of the Gods, from the wisest among our friends, and from the teaching of our heart, that ever, like a nesting bird, broods over our people's weal. Sharp are the words that thou hast brought across the sea; methinks they had been better fitted to the ears of some petty half-tamed prince than to those of Egypt's Queen. Therefore we have numbered the legions that we can gather, and the triremes and the galleys wherewith we may breast the sea, and the moneys which shall buy us all things wanting to our war. And we find this, that, though Antony be strong, yet has Egypt naught to fear from the strength of Antony."

She paused, and a murmur of applause of her high words ran down the hall. Only Dellius stretched out his hand as though to push them back. Then came the end!

"Noble Dellius,—Half are we minded there to bid our tongue stop, and, strong in our fortresses of stone, and our other fortresses built of the hearts of men, abide the issue. And yet thou shalt not go thus. We are guiltless of those charges against us that have come to the ears of

noble Antony, and which now he rudely shouts in ours; nor will we journey into Cilicia to answer them."

Here the murmur arose anew, while my heart beat high in triumph; and in the pause that followed, Delliuss spoke once more.

"Then, royal Egypt, my word to Antony is word of War?"

"Nay," she answered; "it shall be one of Peace. Listen: we said that we would not come to make answer to these charges, nor will we. But"—and she smiled for the first time—"we will gladly come, and that swiftly, in royal friendship to make known our fellowship of peace upon the banks of Cydnus."

I heard, and was bewildered. Could I hear aright? Was it thus that Cleopatra kept her oaths? Moved beyond the hold of reason, I lifted up my voice and cried:

"O Queen, *remember!*"

She turned upon me like a lioness, with a flashing of the eyes and a swift shake of her lovely head.

"Peace, Slave!" she said; "who bade thee break in upon our counsels? Mind thou thy stars,

and leave matters of the world to the rulers of the world!"

I sank back shamed, and, as I did so, once more I saw the smile of triumph on the face of Charmion, followed by what was, perhaps, the shadow of pity for my fall.

"Now that yon brawling charlatan," said Dellius, pointing at me with his jewelled finger, "has been rebuked, grant me leave, O Egypt, to thank thee from my heart for these gentle words——"

"We ask no thanks from thee, noble Dellius; nor lies it in thy mouth to chide our servant," broke in Cleopatra, frowning heavily; "we will take thanks from the lips of Antony alone. Get thee to thy master, and say to him that before he can make ready a fitting welcome our keels shall follow in the track of thine. And now, farewell! Thou shalt find some small token of our bounty upon thy vessel."

Dellius bowed thrice and withdrew, while the Court stood waiting the Queen's word. And I, too, waited, wondering if she would yet make good her promise, and name me royal Spouse there in the face of Egypt. But she said no-

thing. Only, still frowning heavily, she rose, and, followed by her guards, left the throne, and passed into the Alabaster Hall. Then the Court broke up, and as the lords and councillors went by they looked on me with mockery. For though none knew all my secret, nor how it stood between me and Cleopatra, yet they were jealous of the favour shown me by the Queen, and rejoiced greatly at my fall. But I took no heed of their mocking as I stood dazed with misery and felt the world of Hope slip from beneath my feet.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE REPROACH OF HARMACHIS; OF THE STRUGGLE OF HARMACHIS WITH THE GUARDS; OF THE BLOW OF BRENNUS; AND OF THE SECRET SPEECH OF CLEOPATRA.

AND at length, all being gone, I, too, turned to go, when a eunuch struck me on the shoulder and roughly bade me wait on the presence of the Queen. An hour past this fellow would have crawled to me on his knees; but he had heard, and now he treated me—so brutish is the nature of such slaves—as the world treats the fallen, with scorn. For to come low after being great is to learn all shame. Unhappy, therefore, are the Great, for they may fall!

I turned upon the slave with so fierce a word that, cur-like, he sprang behind me; then I passed on to the Alabaster Hall, and was admitted by the guards. In the centre of the hall, near the fountain, sat Cleopatra, and with her were

Charmion and the Greek girl Iras, and Merira and other of her waiting-ladies. "Go," she said to these, "I would speak with my astrologer." So they went, and left us face to face.

"Stand thou there," she said, lifting her eyes for the first time. "Come not nigh me, Harmachis: I trust thee not. Perchance thou hast found another dagger. Now, what hast thou to say? By what right didst thou dare to break in upon my talk with the Roman?"

I felt the blood rush through me like a storm; bitterness and burning anger took hold of my heart. "What hast *thou* to say, Cleopatra?" I answered boldly. "Where is thy vow, sworn on the dead heart of Menkau-ra, the ever-living? Where now thy challenge to this Roman Antony? Where thy oath that thou wouldest call me 'husband' in the face of Egypt?" And I choked and ceased.

"Well doth it become Harmachis, who never was forsworn, to speak to me of oaths!" she said in bitter mockery. "And yet, O thou most pure Priest of Isis; and yet, O thou most faithful friend, who never didst betray thy friends; and yet, O thou most steadfast, honourable, and up-

right man, who never bartered thy birthright, thy country, and thy cause for the price of a woman's passing love—by what token knowest thou that my word is void?"

"I will not answer thy taunts, Cleopatra," I said, holding back my heart as best I might, "for I have earned them all, though not from thee. By this token, then, I know it. Thou goest to visit Antony; thou goest, as said that Roman knave, 'tricked in thy best attire,' to feast with him whom thou shouldst give to vultures for their feast. Perhaps, for aught I know, thou art about to squander those treasures that thou hast filched from the body of Menkau-ra, those treasures stored against the need of Egypt, upon wanton revels which shall complete the shame of Egypt. By these things, then, I know that thou art forsworn, and I, who, loving thee, believed thee, tricked; and by this, also, that thou who didst but yesternight swear to wed me, dost to-day cover me with taunts, and even before that Roman put me to an open shame!"

"To wed thee? and I did swear to wed thee? Well, and what is marriage? Is it the union of the heart, that bond beautiful as gossamer and

than gossamer more light, which binds soul to soul, as they float through the dreamy night of passion, a bond to be, perchance, melted in the dews of dawn? Or is it the iron link of enforced, unchanging union whereby if sinks the one the other must be dragged beneath the sea of circumstance, there, like a punished slave, to perish of unavoidable corruption?* Marriage! *I* to marry! *I* to forget freedom and court the worst slavery of our sex, which, by the selfish will of man, the stronger, still binds us to a bed grown hateful, and enforces a service that love mayhap no longer hallows! Of what use, then, to be a Queen, if thereby I may not escape the evil of the meanly born? Mark thou, Harmachis: Woman being grown hath two ills to fear—Death and Marriage; and of these twain is Marriage the more vile; for in Death we may find rest, but in Marriage, should it fail us, we must find hell. Nay, being above the breath of common slander that enviously would blast those who of true virtue will not consent to stretch affection's links, I *love*, Harmachis; but I *marry* not!"

* Referring to the Roman custom of chaining a living felon to the body of one already dead.—ED.

“And yesternight, Cleopatra, thou didst swear that thou wouldst wed me, and call me to thy side before the face of Egypt!”

“And yesternight, Harmachis, the red ring round the moon marked the coming of the storm, and yet the day is fair! But who knows that the tempest may not break to-morrow? Who knows that I have not chosen the easier path to save Egypt from the Roman? Who knows, Harmachis, that thou shalt not still call me wife?”

Then I no longer could bear her falsehood, for I saw that she but played with me. And so I spoke that which was in my heart:

“Cleopatra!” I cried, “thou didst swear to protect Egypt, and thou art about to betray Egypt to the Roman! Thou didst swear to use the treasures that I revealed to thee for the service of Egypt, and thou art about to use them to be her means of shame—to fashion them as fetters for her wrists! Thou didst swear to wed me, who loved thee, and for thee gave all, and thou dost mock me and reject me! Therefore I say—with the voice of the dread Gods I say it!—that on *thee* shall fall the curse of Menkau-ra, whom thou hast robbed indeed! Let me go hence and work

out my fate! Let me go, O thou fair Shame! thou living Lie! whom I have loved to my doom, and who hast brought upon me the last curse of doom! Let me hide myself and see thy face no more!”

She rose in her wrath, and she was terrible to see.

“Let thee go to stir up evil against me! Nay, Harmachis, thou shalt not go to build new plots against my throne! I say to thee that thou, too, shalt come to visit Antony in Cilicia, and there, perchance, I will let thee go!” And ere I could answer, she had struck upon the silver gong that hung near her.

Before its rich echo had died away, Charmion and the waiting-women entered from one door, and from the other, a file of soldiers—four of them of the Queen’s bodyguard, mighty men, with winged helmets and long fair hair.

“Seize that traitor!” cried Cleopatra, pointing to me. The captain of the guard—it was Brennus—saluted and came towards me with drawn sword.

But I, being mad and desperate, and caring little if they slew me, flew straight at his throat, and dealt him such a heavy blow that the great

man fell headlong, and his armour clashed upon the marble floor. As he fell I seized his sword and targe, and, meeting the next, who rushed on me with a shout, caught his blow upon the shield, and in answer smote with all my strength. The sword fell where the neck is set into the shoulder and, shearing through the joints of his harness, slew him, so that his knees were loosened and he sank down dead. And the third, as he came, I caught upon the point of my sword before he could strike, and it pierced him and he died. Then the last rushed on me with a cry of "Taranis!" and I, too, rushed on him, for my blood was aflame. Now the women shrieked—only Cleopatra said nothing, but stood and watched the unequal fray. We met, and I struck with all my strength, and it was a mighty blow, for the sword shone through the iron shield and shattered there, leaving me weaponless. With a shout of triumph the guard swung up his sword and smote down upon my head, but I caught the blow with my shield. Again he smote, and again I parried; but when he raised his sword a third time I saw this might not endure, so with a cry I hurled my buckler at his face. Glancing from his shield it struck him

on the breast and staggered him. Then, before he could gain his balance, I rushed in beneath his guard and gripped him round the middle.

For a full minute the tall man and I struggled furiously, and then, so great was my strength in those days, I lifted him like a toy and dashed him down upon the marble floor in such fashion that his bones were shattered so that he spoke no more. But I could not save myself and fell upon him, and as I fell the Captain Brennus, whom I had smitten to earth with my fist, having once more found his sense, came up behind me and smote me upon the head and shoulders with the sword of one of those whom I had slain. But I being on the ground, the blow did not fall with all its weight, also my thick hair and broided cap broke its force; and thus it came to pass that, though sorely wounded, the life was yet whole in me. But I could struggle no more.

Then the cowardly eunuchs, who had gathered at the sound of blows and stood huddled together like a herd of cattle, seeing that I was spent, threw themselves upon me, and would have butchered me with their knives. But Brennus, now that I was down, would strike no more, but

stood waiting. And the eunuchs had surely slain me, for Cleopatra watched like one who watches in a dream and made no sign. Already my head was dragged back, and their knife-points were at my throat, when Charmion, rushing forward, threw herself upon me and, calling them "Dogs!" desperately thrust her body before them in such fashion that they could not smite. Now Brennus with an oath seized first one and then another and cast them from me.

"Spare his life, Queen!" he cried in his barbarous Latin. "By Jupiter, he is a brave man! Myself felled like an ox in the shambles, and three of my boys finished by a man without armour and taken unawares! I grudge them not to such a man! A boon, Queen! spare his life, and give him to me!"

"Ay, spare him! spare him!" cried Charmion, white and trembling.

Cleopatra drew near and looked upon the dead and him who lay dying as I had dashed him to the ground, and on me, her lover of two days gone, whose wounded head rested now on Charmion's white robes.

I met the Queen's glance. "Spare not!" I

gasped; "*væ victis!*" Then a flush gathered on her brow—methinks it was a flush of shame!

"Dost after all love this man at heart, Charmion," she said with a little laugh, "that thou didst thrust thy tender body between him and the knives of these sexless hounds?" and she cast a look of scorn upon the eunuchs.

"Nay!" the girl answered fiercely; "but I cannot stand by to see a brave man murdered by such as these."

"Ay!" said Cleopatra, "he is a brave man, and he fought gallantly; I have never seen so fierce a fight even in the games at Rome! Well, I spare his life, though it is weak of me—womanish weak. Take him to his own chamber and guard him there till he is healed or—dead."

Then my brain reeled; a great sickness seized upon me, and I sank into the nothingness of swoon.

Dreams, dreams, dreams! without end and ever-changing, as for years and years I seemed to toss upon a sea of agony. And through them a vision of a dark-eyed woman's tender face and

the touch of a white hand soothing me to rest. Visions, too, of a royal countenance bending at times over my rocking bed—a countenance that I could not grasp, but whose beauty flowed through my fevered veins and was a part of me—visions of childhood and of the Temple towers of Abouthis, and of the white-haired Amenemhat, my father—ay, and an ever-present vision of that dread hall in Amenti, and of the small altar and the Spirits clad in flame! There I seemed to wander everlastingly, calling on the Holy Mother, whose memory I could not grasp; calling ever and in vain! For no cloud descended upon the altar, only from time to time the great Voice pealed aloud: “Strike out the name of Harmachis, child of Earth, from the living Book of Her who Was and Is and Shall Be! *Lost! lost! lost!*”

And then another voice would answer:

“Not yet! not yet! Repentance is at hand; strike not out the name of Harmachis, child of Earth, from the living Book of Her who Was and Is and Shall Be! By suffering may sin be wiped away!”

I woke to find myself in my own chamber in the tower of the palace. I was so weak that I scarce could lift my hand, and life seemed but to flutter in my breast as flutters a dying dove. I could not turn my head; I could not stir; yet in my heart there was a sense of rest and of dark trouble done. The light from the lamp hurt my eyes: I shut them, and, as I shut them heard the sweep of a woman's robes upon the stair, and a swift, light step that I knew well. It was that of Cleopatra!

She entered and drew near. I felt her come! Every pulse of my poor frame beat an answer to her footfall, and all my mighty love and hate rose from the darkness of my death-like sleep, and rent me in their struggle! She leaned over me; her ambrosial breath played upon my face: I could hear the beating of her heart! Lower she leaned, till at last her lips touched me softly on the brow.

"Poor Man!" I heard her murmur. "Poor, weak, dying Man! Fate hath been hard to thee! Thou wert too good to be the sport of such a one as I—the pawn that I must move in my play of policy! Ah, Harmachis! thou shouldst have

ruled the game! Those plotting priests could give thee learning; but they could not give thee knowledge of mankind, nor fence thee against the march of Nature's law. And thou didst love me with all thy heart—ah! well I know it! Man-like thou didst love the eyes that, as a pirate's lights, beckoned thee to shipwrecked ruin, and didst hang doting on the lips which lied thy heart away and called thee 'slave'! Well; the game was fair, for thou wouldst have slain me: and yet I grieve. So thou dost die? and this is my farewell to thee! Never may we meet again on earth; and, perchance, it is well, for who knows, when my hour of tenderness is past, how I might deal with thee, didst thou live? Thou dost die, they say—those learned long-faced fools, who, if they let thee die, shall pay the price. And where, then, shall we meet again when my last throw is thrown? We shall be equal there, in the kingdom that Osiris rules. A little time, a few years—perhaps to-morrow—and we shall meet; then, knowing all I am, how wilt thou greet me? Nay, here, as there, still must thou worship me! for injuries cannot touch the immortality of such a love as thine. Contempt alone, like acid,

can eat away the love of noble hearts, and reveal the truth in its pitiful nakedness. Thou must still cling to me, Harmachis; for, whatever my sins, yet I am great and set above thy scorn. Would that I could have loved thee as thou lovest me! Almost I did so when thou slewest those guards; and yet—not quite.

“What a fenced city is my heart, that none can take it, and even when I throw the gates wide, no man may win its citadel! Oh, to put away this loneliness and lose me in another’s soul! Oh, for a year, a month, an hour to quite forget policy, peoples, and my pomp of place, and be but a loving woman! Harmachis, fare thee well! Go join great Julius whom thy art called up from death before me, and take Egypt’s greetings to him. Ah well! I fooled thee, and I fooled Cæsar—perchance before all is done Fate will find me, and myself I shall be fooled. Harmachis, fare thee well!”

She turned to go, and as she turned I heard the sweep of another dress and the light fall of another woman’s foot.

“Ah! it is thou, Charmion. Well, for all thy watching the man dies.”

“Ay,” she answered, in a voice thick with grief. “Ay, O Queen, so the physicians say. Forty hours has he lain in stupor so deep that at times his breath could barely lift this tiny feather’s weight, and hardly could my ear, placed against his breast, take notice of the rising of his heart. I have watched him now for ten long days, watched him day and night, till my eyes stare wide with want of sleep, and for faintness I can scarce keep myself from falling. And this is the end of all my labour! The coward blow of that accursed Brennus has done its work, and Harmachis dies!”

“Love counts not its labour, Charmion, nor can it weigh its tenderness in the scale of purchase. That which it has it gives, and craves for more to give and give, till the soul’s infinity be drained. Dear to thy heart are these heavy nights of watching; sweet to thy weary eyes is that sad sight of strength brought so low that it hangs upon thy weakness like a babe to its mother’s breast! For, Charmion, thou dost love this man who loves thee not, and now that he is helpless thou canst pour thy passion forth over the unanswering darkness of his soul,

and cheat thyself with dreams of what yet might be."

"I love him not, as thou hast proof, O Queen! How can I love one who would have slain thee, who art as my heart's sister? It is for pity that I nurse him."

She laughed a little as she answered, "Pity is love's own twin, Charmion. Wondrous wayward are the paths of woman's love, and thou hast shown thine strangely, that I know. But the more high the love, the deeper the gulf whereinto it can fall—ay, and thence soar again to heaven, once more to fall! Poor woman! thou art thy passion's plaything: now tender as the morning sky, and now, when jealousy grips thy heart, more cruel than the sea. Well, thus are we made. Soon, after all this troubling, nothing will be left thee but tears, remorse, and—memory."

And she went forth.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE TENDER CARE OF CHARMION; OF THE HEALING OF HARMACHIS; OF THE SAILING OF THE FLEET OF CLEOPATRA FOR CILICIA; AND OF THE SPEECH OF BRENNUS TO HARMACHIS.

CLEOPATRA went, and for a while I lay silent, gathering up my strength to speak. But Charmion came and stood over me, and I felt a great tear fall from her dark eyes upon my face, as the first heavy drop of rain falls from a thunder cloud.

"Thou goest," she whispered; "thou goest fast whither I may not follow! O Harmachis, how gladly would I give my life for thine!"

Then at length I opened my eyes, and spoke as best I could:

"Restrain thy grief, dear friend," I said, "I live yet; and, in truth, I feel as though new life gathered in my breast!"

She gave a little cry of joy, and I never saw aught more beautiful than the change that came

upon her weeping face! It was as when the first lights of the day run up the pallor of that sad sky which veils the night from dawn. All rosy grew her lovely countenance; her dim eyes shone out like stars; and a smile of wonderment, more sweet than the sudden smile of the sea as its ripples wake to brightness beneath the kiss of the risen moon, broke through her rain of tears.

“Thou livest!” she cried, throwing herself upon her knees beside my couch. “Thou livest—and I thought thee gone! Thou art come back to me! Oh! what say I? How foolish is a woman’s heart! ’Tis this long watching! Nay; sleep and rest thee, Harmachis—why dost thou talk? Not one more word, I command thee straitly! Where is the draught left by that long-bearded fool? Nay, thou shalt have no draught! There, sleep, Harmachis; sleep!” and she crouched down at my side and laid her cool hand upon my brow, murmuring, “*Sleep! sleep!*”

And when I woke there she was still, but the lights of dawn were peeping through the casement. There she knelt, one hand upon my forehead, and her head, in all its disarray of curls, resting upon her outstretched arm.

“Charmion,” I whispered, “have I slept?”

Instantly she was wide awake, and, gazing on me with tender eyes, “Yea, thou hast slept, Harmachis.”

“How long, then, have I slept?”

“Nine hours.”

“And thou hast held thy place there, at my side, for nine long hours?”

“Yes, it is nothing; I also have slept—I feared to waken thee if I stirred.”

“Go, rest,” I said; “it shames me to think of this thing. Go rest thee, Charmion!”

“Vex not thyself,” she answered; “see, I will bid a slave watch thee, and to wake me if thou needest aught; I sleep there, in the outer chamber. Peace—I go!” and she strove to rise, but, so cramped was she, fell straightway on the floor.

I can scarcely tell the sense of shame that filled me when I saw her fall. Alas! I could not stir to help her.

“It is naught,” she said; “move not, I did but catch my foot. There!” and she rose, again to fall—“a pest upon my awkwardness! Why—I must be sleeping. ’Tis well now. I’ll send

the slave;" and she staggered thence like one overcome with wine.

And after that, I slept once more, for I was very weak. When I woke it was afternoon, and I craved for food, which Charmion brought me.

I ate. "Then I die not," I said.

"Nay," she answered, with a toss of her head, "thou wilt live. In truth, I did waste my pity on thee."

"And thy pity saved my life," I said wearily, for now I remembered.

"It is nothing," she answered carelessly. "After all, thou art my cousin; also, I love nursing—it is a woman's trade. Like enough I had done as much for any slave. Now, too, that the danger is past, I leave thee."

"Thou hadst done better to let me die, Charmion," I said after a while, "for life to me can now be only one long shame. Tell me, then, when sails Cleopatra for Cilicia?"

"She sails in twenty days, and with such pomp and glory as Egypt has never seen. Of a truth, I cannot guess where she has found the means to gather in this store of splendour, as a husbandman gathers his golden harvest."

But I, knowing whence the wealth came, groaned in bitterness of spirit, and made no answer.

“Goest thou also, Charmion?” I asked presently.

“Ay, I and all the Court. Thou, too—thou goest.”

“I go? Nay, why is this?”

“Because thou art Cleopatra’s slave, and must march in gilded chains behind her chariot; because she fears to leave thee here in Khem; because it is her will, and there is an end.”

“Charmion, can I not escape?”

“Escape, thou poor sick man? Nay, how canst thou escape? Even now thou art most strictly guarded. And if thou didst escape, whither wouldst thou fly? There’s not an honest man in Egypt but would spit on thee in scorn!”

Once more I groaned in spirit, and, being so very weak, I felt the tears roll adown my cheek.

“Weep not!” she said hastily, and turning her face aside. “Be a man, and brave these troubles out. Thou hast sown, now must thou

reap; but after harvest the waters rise and wash away the rotting roots, and then seed-time comes again. Perchance, yonder in Cilicia, a way may be found, when once more thou art strong, by which thou mayst fly—if in truth thou canst bear thy life apart from Cleopatra's smile; then in some far land must thou dwell till these things are forgotten. And now my task is done, so fare thee well! At times I will come to visit thee and see that thou needest nothing."

So she went, and I was nursed thenceforward, and that skilfully, by the physician and two women-slaves; and as my wound healed so my strength came back to me, slowly at first, then most swiftly. In four days from that time I left my couch, and in three more I could walk an hour in the palace gardens; another week and I could read and think, though I went no more to Court. And at length one afternoon Charmion came and bade me make ready, for the fleet would sail in two days, first for the coast of Syria, and thence to the gulf of Issus and Cilicia.

Thereon, with all formality, and in writing, I craved leave of Cleopatra that I might be left, urging that my health was so feeble that I could

not travel. But a message was sent to me in answer that I must come.

And so, on the appointed day, I was carried in a litter down to the boat, and together with that very soldier who had cut me down, the Captain Brennus, and others of his troop (who, indeed, were sent to guard me), we rowed aboard a vessel where she lay at anchor with the rest of the great fleet. For Cleopatra was voyaging as though to war in much pomp, and escorted by a fleet of ships, among which her galley, built like a house and lined throughout with cedar and silken hangings, was the most beautiful and costly that the world has ever seen. But I went not on this vessel, and therefore it chanced that I did not see Cleopatra or Charmion till we landed at the mouth of the river Cydnus.

The signal being made, the fleet set sail; and, the wind being fair, we came to Joppa on the evening of the second day. Thence we sailed slowly with contrary winds up the coast of Syria, making Cæsarea, and Ptolemais, and Tyrus, and Berytus, and past Lebanon's white brow crowned with his crest of cedars, on to Heraclea and across the gulf of Issus to the mouth of Cydnus. And ever

as we journeyed, the strong breath of the sea brought back my health, till at length, save for a line of white upon my head where the sword had fallen, I was almost as I had been. And one night, as we drew near Cydnus, while Brennus and I sat alone together on the deck, his eye fell upon the white mark his sword had made, and he swore a great oath by his heathen Gods. "An thou hadst died, lad," he said, "methinks I could never again have held up my head! Ah! that was a coward stroke, and I am shamed to think that it was I who struck it, and thou on the ground and with thy back to me! Knowest thou that when thou didst lie between life and death, I came every day to ask tidings of thee? and I swore by Taranis that if thou didst die I'd turn my back upon that soft palace life and then away for the bonny North."

"Nay, trouble not, Brennus," I answered; "it was thy duty."

"Mayhap! but there are duties that a brave man should not do—nay, not at the bidding of any Queen who ever ruled in Egypt! Thy blow had dazed me or I had not struck. What is it, lad?—art in trouble with this Queen of ours?"

Why art thou dragged a prisoner upon this pleasure party? Knowest thou that we are strictly charged that if thou dost escape our lives shall pay the price?"

"Ay, in sore trouble, friend," I answered; "ask me no more."

"Then, being of the age thou art, there's a woman in it—that I swear—and, perchance, though I am rough and foolish, I might make a guess. Look thou, lad, what sayest thou? I am weary of the service of Cleopatra and this hot land of deserts and of luxury, that sap a man's strength and drain his pocket; and so are others whom I know of. What sayest thou: let's take one of these unwieldy vessels and away to the North? I'll lead thee to a better land than Egypt—a land of lake and mountain, and great forests of sweet-scented pine; ay, and find thee a girl fit to mate with—my own niece—a girl strong and tall, with wide blue eyes and long fair hair, and arms that could crack thy ribs were she of a mind to hug thee! Come, what sayest thou? Put away the past, and away for the bonny North, and be a son to me."

For a moment I thought, and then sadly shook

my head; for though I was sorely tempted to be gone, I knew that my fate lay in Egypt, and I might not fly my fate.

“It may not be, Brennus,” I answered. “Fain would I that it might be, but I am bound by a chain of destiny which I cannot break, and in the land of Egypt I must live and die.”

“As thou wilt, lad,” said the old warrior. “I should have dearly loved to marry thee among my people, and make a son of thee. At the least, remember that while I am here thou hast Brennus for a friend. And one thing more; beware of that beauteous Queen of thine, for, by Taranis, perhaps an hour may come when she will hold that thou knowest too much, and then ——” and he drew his hand across his throat. “And now good-night; a cup of wine, then to sleep, for to-morrow the foolery——”

[*Here several lengths of the second roll of papyrus are so broken as to be undecipherable. They seem to have been descriptive of Cleopatra's voyage up the Cydnus to the city of Tarsus.*]

And—[*the writing continues*—]—to those who

could take joy in such things, the sight must, indeed, have been a gallant one. For the stern of our galley was covered with sheets of beaten gold, the sails were of the scarlet of Tyre, and the oars of silver touched the water to a measure of music. And there, in the centre of the vessel, beneath an awning ablaze with gold embroidery, lay Cleopatra, attired as the Roman Venus (and surely Venus was not more fair!), in thin robes of whitest silk, bound in beneath her breast with a golden girdle delicately graven over with scenes of love. All about her were little rosy boys, chosen for their beauty, and clad in naught save downy wings strapped upon their shoulders, and on their backs Cupid's bow and quiver, who fanned her with fans of plumes. Upon the vessel's decks, handling the cordage, that was of silken web, and softly singing to the sound of harps and the beat of oars, were no rough sailors, but women lovely to behold, some robed as Graces and some as Nereids—that is, scarce robed at all except in their scented hair. And behind the couch, with drawn sword, stood Brennus, in splendid armour and winged helm of gold; and by him others—I among them—in garments richly

worked, and knew that I was indeed a slave! On the high poop also burned censers filled with costliest incense, of which the fragrant steam hung in little clouds about our wake.

Thus, as in a dream of luxury, followed by many ships, we glided on toward the wooded slopes of Taurus, at whose foot lay that ancient city Tarshish. And ever as we came the people gathered on the banks and ran before us, shouting: "Venus is risen from the sea! Venus hath come to visit Bacchus!" We drew near to the city, and all its people—everyone who could walk or be carried—crowded down in thousands to the docks, and with them came the whole army of Antony, so that at length the Triumvir was left alone upon the judgment seat.

Dellius, the false-tongued, came also, fawning and bowing, and in the name of Antony gave the "Queen of Beauty" greeting, bidding her to a feast that Antony had made ready. But she made high answer, and said, "Forsooth, it is Antony who should wait on us; not we on Antony. Bid the noble Antony to our poor table this night—else we dine alone."

Dellius went, bowing to the ground; the feast

was made ready! and then at last I set eyes on Antony. He came clad in purple robes, a great man and beautiful to see, set in the stout prime of life, with bright eyes of blue, and curling hair, and features cut sharply as a Grecian gem. For he was great of form and royal of mien, and with an open countenance on which his thoughts were so clearly written that all might read them; only the weakness of the mouth belied the power of the brow. He came attended by his generals, and when he reached the couch where Cleopatra lay he stood astonished, gazing on her with wide-opened eyes. She, too, gazed on him earnestly; I saw the red blood run up beneath her skin, and a great pang of jealousy seized upon my heart. And Charmion, who saw all beneath her downcast eyes, saw this also and smiled. But Cleopatra spoke no word, only she stretched out her white hand for him to kiss; and he, saying no word, took her hand and kissed it.

“Behold, noble Antony!” she said at last in her voice of music, “thou hast called me, and I am come.”

“Venus has come,” he answered in his deep notes, and still holding his eyes fast fixed upon

her face. "I called a woman—a Goddess hath risen from the deep!"

"To find a God to greet her on the land," she laughed with ready wit. "Well, a truce to compliments, for being on the earth even Venus is ahungered. Noble Antony, thy hand."

The trumpets blared, and through the bowing crowd Cleopatra, followed by her train, passed hand in hand with Antony to the feast.

[Here there is another break in the papyrus.]

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE FEAST OF CLEOPATRA; OF THE MELTING OF THE PEARL; OF THE SAYING OF HARMACHIS; AND OF CLEOPATRA'S VOW OF LOVE.

ON the third night the feast was once more prepared in the hall of the great house that had been set aside to the use of Cleopatra, and on this night its splendour was greater even than on the nights before. For the twelve couches that were set about the table were embossed with gold and those of Cleopatra and Antony were of gold set with jewels. The dishes also were all of gold set with jewels, the walls were hung with purple cloths sewn with gold, and on the floor, covered with a net of gold, fresh roses were strewn ankle-deep, that as the slaves trod them sent up their perfume. Once again I was bidden to stand, with Charmion and Iras and Merira, behind the couch of Cleopatra, and, like a slave, from time

to time call out the hours as they flew. And there being no help, I went cold at heart; but this I swore—it should be for the last time, since I could not bear that shame. For though I would not yet believe what Charmion told me—that Cleopatra was about to become the Love of Antony—yet I could no more endure this ignominy and torture. For from Cleopatra now I had no words save such as a Queen speaks to her slave, and methinks it gave her dark heart pleasure to torment me.

Thus it came to pass that I, the Pharaoh, crowned of Khem, stood among eunuchs and waiting-women behind the couch of Egypt's Queen while the feast went merrily and the wine-cup passed. And ever Antony sat, his eyes fixed upon the face of Cleopatra, who from time to time let her deep glance lose itself in his, and then for a little while their talk died away. For he told her tales of war and of deeds that he had done—ay, and love-jests such as are not meet for the ears of women. But she took offence at nothing; rather, falling into his humour, she would cap his stories with others of a finer wit, but not less shameless.

At length, the rich meal being finished, Antony gazed at the splendour around him.

“Tell me, then, most lovely Egypt,” he said; “are the sands of Nile compact of gold, that thou canst, night by night, thus squander the ransom of a King upon a single feast? Whence comes this untold wealth?”

I bethought me of the tomb of the Divine Menkau-ra, whose holy treasure was thus wickedly wasted, and looked up so that Cleopatra’s eye caught mine; but, reading my thoughts, she frowned heavily.

“Why, noble Antony,” she said, “surely it is nothing! In Egypt we have our secrets, and know whence to conjure riches at our need. Say, what is the value of this golden service, and of the meats and drinks that have been set before us?”

He cast his eyes about, and hazarded a guess.

“Maybe a thousand sestertia.”*

“Thou hast understated it by half, noble Antony! But such as it is I give it thee and those with thee as a free token of my friend-

* About eight thousand pounds of English money.—ED.

ship. And more will I show thee now: I myself will eat and drink ten thousand sestertia at a draught."

"That cannot be, fair Egypt!"

She laughed, and bade a slave bring her white vinegar in a glass. When it was brought she set it before her and laughed again, while Antony, rising from his couch, drew near and set himself at her side, and all the company leant forward to see what she would do. And this she did. She took from her ear one of those great pearls which last of all had been drawn from the body of the Divine Pharaoh; and before any could guess her purpose she let it fall into the vinegar. Then came silence, the silence of wonder, and slowly the peerless pearl melted in the strong acid. When it was melted she lifted the glass and shook it, then drank the vinegar, to the last drop.

"More vinegar, slave!" she cried; "my meal is but half finished!" and she drew forth the second pearl.

"By Bacchus, no! that shalt thou not!" cried Antony, snatching at her hands; "I have seen

enough;" and at that moment, moved to it by I know not what, I called aloud:

"The hour falls, O Queen!—*the hour of the coming of the curse of Menkau-ra!*"

An ashy whiteness grew upon Cleopatra's face, and she turned upon me furiously, while all the company gazed wondering, not knowing what the words might mean.

"Thou ill-omened slave!" she cried. "Speak thus once more and thou shalt be scourged with rods!—ay, scourged like an evildoer—that I promise thee, Harmachis!"

"What means the knave of an astrologer?" asked Antony. "Speak, sirrah! and make clear thy meaning, for those who deal in curses must warrant their wares."

"I am a servant of the Gods, noble Antony. That which the Gods put in my mind that must I say; nor can I read their meaning," I answered humbly.

"Oh, oh! thou servest the Gods, dost thou, thou many-coloured mystery?" This he said having reference to my splendid robes. "Well, I serve the Goddesses, which is a softer cult. And there's this between us: that though what

they put in my mind I say, neither can I read their meaning," and he glanced at Cleopatra as one who questions.

"Let the knave be," she said impatiently; "to-morrow we'll be rid of him. Sirrah, begone!"

I bowed and went; and, as I went, I heard Antony say: "Well, he may be a knave—for that all men are—but this for thy astrologer: he hath a royal air and the eye of a King—ay, and wit in it."

Without the door I paused, not knowing what to do, for I was bewildered with misery. And, as I stood, some one touched me on the hand. I glanced up—it was Charmion, who in the confusion of the rising of the guests, had slipped away and followed me:

For in trouble Charmion was ever at my side.

"Follow me," she whispered; "thou art in danger."

I turned and followed her. Why should I not?

"Whither go we?" I asked at length.

"To my chamber," she said. "Fear not; we

ladies of Cleopatra's Court have small good fame to lose: if anyone by chance should see us, they'll think that it is a love-tryst, and such are all the fashion."

I followed, and, presently, skirting the crowd, we came unseen to a little side entrance that led to a stair, up which we passed. The stair ended in a passage; we turned down it till we found a door on the left hand. Charmion entered silently, and I followed her into a dark chamber. Being in, she barred the door and, kindling tinder to a flame, lit a hanging lamp. As the light grew strong I gazed around. The chamber was not large, and had but one casement, closely shuttered. For the rest, it was simply furnished, having white walls, some chests for garments, an ancient chair, what I took to be a tiring table, on which were combs, perfumes, and all the frippery that pertains to woman, and a white bed with a brodered coverlid, over which was hung a gnat-gauze.

"Be seated, Harmachis," she said, pointing to the chair. I took the chair, and Charmion, throwing back the gnat-gauze, sat herself upon the bed before me.

"Knowest thou what I heard Cleopatra say

as thou didst leave the banqueting-hall?" she asked presently.

"Nay, I know not."

"She gazed after thee, and, as I went over to her to do some service, she murmured to herself: 'By Serapis, I will make an end! I will wait no longer: to-morrow he shall be strangled!'"

"So!" I said, "it may be; though, after all that has been, I can scarce believe that she will murder me."

"Why canst thou not believe it, thou most foolish of men? Dost forget how nigh thou wast to death there in the Alabaster Hall? Who saved thee then from the knives of the eunuchs? Was it Cleopatra? Or was it I and Brennus? Stay, I will tell thee. Thou canst not yet believe it, because, in thy folly, thou dost not think it possible that the woman who has but lately been as a wife to thee can now, in so short a time, doom thee to be basely done to death. Nay, answer not—I know all; and I tell thee this: thou hast not measured the depth of Cleopatra's perfidy, nor canst thou dream the blackness of her wicked heart. She had surely slain thee in Alexandria

had she not feared that thy slaughter being noised abroad might bring trouble on her. Therefore has she brought thee here to kill thee secretly. For what more canst thou give her? She has thy heart's love, and is wearied of thy strength and beauty. She has robbed thee of thy royal birth-right and brought thee, a King, to stand amidst the waiting-women behind her at her feasts; she has won from thee the great secret of the holy treasure!"

"Ah, thou knowest that?"

"Yes, I know all; and to-night thou seest how the wealth stored against the need of Khem is being squandered to fill up the wanton luxury of Khem's Macedonian Queen! Thou seest how she has kept her oath to wed thee honourably. Harmachis—at length thine eyes are open to the truth!"

"Ay, I see too well; and yet she swore she loved me, and I, poor fool, I believed her!"

"She swore she loved thee!" answered Charmion, lifting her dark eyes: "now I will show thee how she loves thee. Knowest thou what was this house? It was a priest's college; and,

as thou wottest, Harmachis, priests have their ways. This little room aforetime was the room of the Head Priest, and the chamber that is beyond and below was the gathering-place of the other priests. The old slave who keeps the house told me all this, and also she revealed what I shall show thee. Now, Harmachis, be silent as the dead, and follow me!"

She blew out the lamp, and by the little light that crept through the shuttered casement led me by the hand to the far corner of the room. Here she pressed upon the wall, and a door opened in its thickness. We entered, and she closed the spring. Now we were in a little chamber, some five cubits in length by four in breadth; for a faint light struggled into the closet, and also the sound of voices, I knew not whence. Loosing my hand, she crept to the end of the place, and looked steadfastly at the wall; then crept back, and, whispering "Silence!" led me forward with her. Then I saw that there were eyeholes in the wall, which pierced it, and were hidden on the farther side by carved work in stone. I looked through the hole that was in front of me, and I saw this: six cubits below

was the level of the floor of another chamber, lit with fragrant lamps, and most richly furnished. It was the sleeping-place of Cleopatra, and there, within ten cubits of where we stood, sat Cleopatra on a gilded couch; and by her side sat Antony.

“Tell me,” Cleopatra murmured—for this place was so built that every word spoken in the room below came to the ears of the listener above—“tell me, noble Antony, wast pleased with my poor festival?”

“Ay,” he answered in his deep soldier’s voice, “ay, Egypt, I have made feasts, and been bidden to feasts, but never saw I aught like thine; and I tell thee this, though I am rough of tongue and unskilled in pretty sayings such as women love, thou wast the richest sight of all that splendid board. The red wine was not so red as thy beauteous cheek, the roses smelt not so sweet as the odour of thy hair, and no sapphire there with its changing light was so lovely as thy eyes of ocean blue.”

“What! Praise from Antony! Sweet words from the lips of him whose writings are so harsh! Why, it is praise indeed!”

“Ay,” he went on, “it was a royal feast, though I grieve that thou didst waste that great pearl; and what meant that hour-calling astrologer of thine, with his ill-omened talk of the curse of Menkau-ra?”

A shadow fled across her glowing face. “I know not; he was lately wounded in a brawl, and methinks the blow has crazed him.”

“He seemed not crazed, and there was that about his voice which rings in my ears like some oracle of fate. So wildly, too, he looked upon thee, Egypt, with those piercing eyes of his, like one who loved and yet hated through the love.”

“He is a strange man, I tell thee, noble Antony, and a learned. Myself, at times, I almost fear him, for he is deeply versed in the ancient arts of Egypt. Knowest thou that the man is of royal blood, and once he plotted to slay me? But I won him over, and slew him not, for he had the key to secrets that I fain would learn; and, indeed, I loved his wisdom, and to listen to his deep talk of all hidden things.”

“By Bacchus, I grow jealous of the knave! And now, Egypt?”

“And now I have sucked his knowledge dry, and have no more cause to fear him. Didst thou not see that I have made him stand these three nights a slave amid my slaves, and call aloud the hours as they fled in festival. No captive King marching in thy Roman triumphs can have suffered pangs so keen as that proud Egyptian Prince when he stood shamed behind my couch.”

Here Charmion laid her hand on mine and pressed it, as though in tenderness.

“Well, he shall trouble us no more with his words of evil omen,” Cleopatra went on slowly; “to-morrow morn he dies—dies swiftly and in secret, leaving no trace of what his fate has been. On this is my mind fixed; of a truth, noble Antony, it is fixed. Even as I speak the fear of this man grows and gathers in my breast. Half am I minded to give the word even now, for I breathe not freely till he be dead,” and she made as though to rise.

“Let it be till morning,” he said, catching her by the hand; “the soldiers drink, and the deed will be ill done. ’Tis pity, too. I love not to think of men slaughtered in their sleep.”

“In the morning, perchance, the hawk may

have flown," she answered, pondering. "He hath keen ears, this Harmachis, and can summon things to aid him that are not of the earth. Perchance, even now he hears me in the spirit; for, of a truth, I seem to feel his presence breathing round me. I could tell thee—but no, let him be! Noble Antony, be my tiring-woman and loose me this crown of gold, it chafes my brow. Be gentle, hurt me not—so."

He lifted the uræus crown from her brows, and she shook loose her heavy weight of hair that fell about her like a garment.

"Take back thy crown, royal Egypt," he said, speaking low, "take it from my hand; I will not rob thee of it, but rather set it more firmly on that beauteous brow."

"What means my Lord?" she asked, smiling and looking into his eyes.

"What mean I? Why then, this: thou camest hither at my bidding to make answer of the charges laid against thee as to matters politic. And knowest thou, Egypt, that hadst thou been other than thou art thou hadst not gone back to queen it on the Nile; for of this I am sure, the charges against thee are true in fact. But, being

what thou art—and look thou! never did Nature serve a woman better!—I forgive thee all. For the sake of thy grace and beauty I forgive thee that which had not been forgiven to virtue, or to patriotism, or to the dignity of age! See now how good a thing is woman's wit and loveliness, that can make kings forget their duty and cozen even blindfolded Justice to peep ere she lifts her sword! Take back thy crown, O Egypt! It is now my care that, though it be heavy, it shall not chafe thee."

"These are royal words, most noble Antony," she made answer; "gracious and generous words, such as befit the Conqueror of the world! And touching my misdeeds in the past—if misdeeds there have been—I say this, and this alone—then I knew not Antony. For, knowing Antony, who could sin against him? What woman could lift a sword against one who must be to all women as a God—one who, seen and known, draws after him the whole allegiance of the heart, as the sun draws flowers? And what more can I say and not cross the bounds of woman's modesty? Why, only this—set that crown upon my brow, great Antony, and I will take it as a gift from thee, by

the giving made doubly dear, and to thy uses I will guard it.

“There, now I am thy vassal Queen, and through me all old Egypt that I rule does homage to Antony the Triumvir, who shall be Antony the Emperor of Rome and Khem’s Imperial Lord!”

And, having set the crown upon her locks, he stood gazing on her, grown passionate in the warm breath of her living beauty, till at length he caught her by both hands and drawing her to him kissed her thrice, saying:

“Cleopatra, I love thee, Sweet—I love thee as I never loved before.” She drew back from his embrace, smiling softly; and as she did so the golden circlet of the sacred snakes fell, being but loosely set upon her brow, and rolled away into the darkness beyond the ring of light.

I saw the omen, and even in the bitter anguish of my heart knew its evil import. But these twain took no note.

“Thou lovest me?” she said, most sweetly; “how know I that thou lovest me? Perchance it is Fulvia whom thou lovest—Fulvia, thy wedded wife?”

“Nay, it is not Fulvia, ’tis thou, Cleopatra, and thou alone. Many women have looked favourably upon me from my boyhood up, but to never a one have I known such desire as to thee, O thou Wonder of the World, like unto whom no woman ever was! Canst thou love me, Cleopatra, and to me be true, not for my place and power, not for that which I can give or can withhold, not for the stern music of my legions’ tramp, or for the light that flows from my bright Star of Fortune; but for myself, for the sake of Antony, the rough captain, grown old in camps? Ay, for the sake of Antony the reveller, the frail, the un-fixed of purpose, but who yet never did desert a friend, or rob a poor man, or take an enemy un-awares? Say, canst thou love me, Egypt? Oh! if thou wilt, why, I am more happy than though I sat to-night in the Capitol at Rome crowned absolute Monarch of the World!”

And, ever as he spoke, she gazed on him with wonderful eyes, and in them shone a light of truth and honesty such as was strange to me.

“Thou speakest plainly,” she said, “and thy words are sweet to mine ears—they would be

sweet, even were things otherwise than they are, for what woman would not love to see the world's master at her feet? But things being as they are, why, Antony, what can be so sweet as thy sweet words? The harbour of his rest to the storm-tossed mariner—surely that is sweet! The dream of Heaven's bliss which cheers the poor ascetic priest on his path of sacrifice—surely that is sweet! The sight of Dawn, the rosy-fingered, coming in his promise to glad the watching Earth—surely that is sweet! But, ah! not one of these, nor all dear delightful things that are, can match the honey-sweetness of thy words to me, O Antony! For thou knowest not—never canst thou know—how drear my life hath been, and empty, since thus it is ordained that in love only can woman lose her solitude! And I have *never* loved—never might I love—till this happy night! Ay, take me in thy arms, and let us swear a great vow of love—an oath that may not be broken while life is in us! Behold! Antony! now and for ever I do vow most strict fidelity unto thee! Now and for ever I am thine, and thine alone!”

Then Charmion took me by the hand and drew me thence.

“Hast seen enough?” she asked, when we were once more within the chamber and the lamp was lit.

“Yea,” I answered; “my eyes are opened.”

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE PLAN OF CHARMION; OF THE CONFESSION OF CHARMION; AND OF THE ANSWER OF HARMACHIS.

FOR some while I sat with bowed head, and the last bitterness of shame sank into my soul. This, then, was the end. For this I had betrayed my oaths; for this I had told the secret of the pyramid; for this I had lost my Crown, my Honour, and, perchance, my hope of Heaven! Could there be another man in the wide world so steeped in sorrow as I was that night? Surely not one! Where should I turn? What could I do? And even through the tempest of my torn heart the bitter voice of jealousy called aloud. For I loved this woman, to whom I had given all; and she at this moment—she was——Ah! I could not bear to think of it; and in my utter agony, my heart burst in a river of tears such as are terrible to weep!

Then Charmion drew near me, and I saw that she, too, was weeping.

“Weep not, Harmachis!” she sobbed, kneeling at my side. “I cannot endure to see thee weep. Oh! why wouldst thou not be warned? Then hadst thou been great and happy, and not as now. Listen, Harmachis! Thou didst hear what that false and tigerish woman said—to-morrow she hands thee over to the murderers!”

“It is well,” I gasped.

“Nay: it is not well. Harmachis, give her not this last triumph over thee. Thou hast lost all save life: but while life remains, hope remains also, and with hope the chance of vengeance.”

“Ah!” I said, starting from my seat. “I had not thought of that. Ay—the chance of vengeance! It would be sweet to be avenged!”

“It would be sweet, Harmachis, and yet this—Vengeance is an arrow that in falling oft pierces him who shot it. Myself—I know it,” and she sighed. “But a truce to talk and grief. There will be time for us twain to grieve, if not to talk, in all the heavy coming years. Thou must fly—before the coming of the light must thou fly. Here is a plan. To-morrow, ere the dawn, a

galley that but yesterday came from Alexandria, bearing fruit and stores, sails thither again, and its captain is known to me, but to thee he is not known. Now, I will find thee the garb of a Syrian merchant, cloak thee, as I know how, and furnish thee with a letter to the captain of the galley. He shall give thee passage to Alexandria; for to him thou wilt seem but as a merchant going on the business of thy trade. Brennus is officer of the guard to-night, and Brennus is a friend to me and thee. Perhaps he will guess somewhat; or, perhaps, he will not guess; at the least, the Syrian merchant shall safely pass the lines. What sayest thou?"

"It is well," I answered wearily; "little do I reckon the issue."

"Rest thou, then, here, Harmachis, while I make these matters ready; and, Harmachis, grieve not overmuch; there are others who should grieve more heavily than thou." And she went, leaving me alone with my agony which rent me like a torture-bed. Had it not been for that fierce desire of vengeance which from time to time flashed across my tormented mind as the lightning over a midnight sea, methinks my reason had left me

in that dark hour. At length I heard her foot-step at the door, and she entered, breathing heavily, for she bore a sack of clothing in her arms.

“It is well,” she said; “here is the garb with spare linen, and writing-tablets, and all things needful. I have seen Brennus also, and told him that a Syrian merchant would pass the guard an hour before the dawn. And though he made pretence of sleep, I think he understood, for he answered, yawning, that if they but had the password, ‘Antony,’ fifty Syrian merchants might go through about their lawful business. And here is the letter to the captain—thou canst not mistake the galley, for she is moored along to the right—a small galley, painted black, as thou dost enter on the great quay, and, moreover, the sailors make ready for sailing. Now I will wait here without, while thou dost put off the livery of thy service and array thyself.”

When she was gone I tore off my gorgeous garments and spat upon them and trod them on the ground. Then I put on the modest robe of a merchant, and bound the tablets round me, on my feet the sandals of untanned hide, and at

my waist the knife. When it was done Charmion entered once again and looked on me.

“Too much art thou still the royal Harmachis,” she said; “see, it must be changed.”

Then she took scissors from her tiring-table, and, bidding me be seated, she cut off my locks, clipping the hair close to the head. Next she found stains of such sort as women use to make dark the eyes, and mixed them cunningly, rubbing the stuff on my face and hands and the white mark in my hair where the sword of Brennus had bitten to the bone.

“Now thou art changed—somewhat for the worse, Harmachis,” she said, with a dreary laugh, “scarce myself should I know thee. Stay, there is one more thing,” and, going to a chest of garments, she drew thence a heavy bag of gold.

“Take thou this,” she said; “thou wilt have need of money.”

“I cannot take thy gold, Charmion.”

“Yes, take it. It was Sepa who gave it to me for the furtherance of our cause, and therefore it is fitting that thou shouldst spend it. Moreover, if I want money, doubtless Antony, who is henceforth my master, will give me more;

he is much beholden to me, and this he knows well. There, waste not the precious time in haggling o'er the pelf—not yet art thou all a merchant, Harmachis;" and without more words, she thrust the pieces into the leather bag that hung across my shoulders. Then she made fast the sack containing the spare garments, and, so womanly thoughtful was she, placed in it an alabaster jar of pigment, with which I might stain my countenance afresh, and, taking the broidered robes of my office that I had cast off, hid them in the secret passage. And so at last all was made ready.

"Is it time that I should go?" I asked.

"Not yet a while. Be patient, Harmachis, for but one little hour more must thou endure my presence, and then, perchance, farewell for ever."

I made a gesture signifying that this was no time for sharp words.

"Forgive me my quick tongue," she said; "but from a salt spring bitter waters well. Be seated, Harmachis; I have heavier words to speak to thee before thou goest."

“Say on,” I answered; “words, however heavy, can move me no more.”

She stood before me with folded hands, and the lamp-light shone upon her beauteous face. I noticed idly how great was its pallor and how wide and dark were the rings about the deep black eyes. Twice she lifted her white face and strove to speak, twice her voice failed her; and when at last it came it was in a hoarse whisper.

“I cannot let thee go,” she said—“I cannot let thee go unwitting of the truth.

“Harmachis, ’twas I who did betray thee!”

I sprang to my feet, an oath upon my lips; but she caught me by the hand.

“Oh, be seated,” she said—“be seated and hear me; then, when thou hast heard, do to me as thou wilt. Listen. From that evil moment when, in the presence of thy uncle Sepa, for the second time I set eyes upon thy face, I loved thee—how much, thou canst little guess. Think upon thine own love for Cleopatra, and double it, and double it again, and perchance thou mayst come near to my love’s mighty sum. I loved thee, day by day I loved thee more, till in thee and for thee alone I seemed to live. But

thou wast cold—thou wast worse than cold! thou didst deal with me not as a breathing woman, but rather as the instrument to an end—as a tool with which to grave thy fortunes. And then I saw—yes, long before thou knewest it thyself—thy heart's tide was setting strong towards that ruinous shore whereon to-day thy life is broken. And at last that night came, that dreadful night when, hid within the chamber, I saw thee cast my kerchief to the winds, and with sweet words cherish my royal Rival's gift. Then—oh, thou knowest—in my pain I betrayed the secret that thou wouldst not see, and thou didst make a mock of me, Harmachis! Oh! the shame of it—thou in thy foolishness didst make a mock of me! I went thence, and within me were rising all the torments which can tear a woman's heart, for now I was sure that thou didst love Cleopatra! Ay, and so mad was I, even that night I was minded to betray thee: but I thought—not yet, not yet; to-morrow he may soften. Then came the morrow, and all was ready for the bursting of the great plot that should make thee Pharaoh. And I too came—thou dost remember—and again thou didst put me away when I

spake to thee in parables, as something of little worth—as a thing too small to claim a moment's weighty thought. And, knowing that this was because—though thou knewest it not—thou didst love Cleopatra, whom now thou must straightway slay, I grew mad, and a wicked Spirit entered into me, possessing me utterly, so that I was myself no longer, nor could control myself. And because thou hadst scorned me, I did this, to my everlasting shame and sorrow!—I passed into Cleopatra's presence and betrayed thee and those with thee, and our holy cause, saying that I had found a writing which thou hadst let fall and read all this therein.”

I gasped and sat silent; and gazing sadly at me she went on:

“When she understood how great was the plot, and how deep its roots, Cleopatra was much troubled; and, at first, she would have fled to Sais or taken ship and run for Cyprus, but I showed her that the ways were barred. Then she said she would cause thee to be slain, there, in the chamber, and I left her so believing; for, at that hour, I was glad that thou shouldst be slain—ay, even if I wept out my heart upon thy

grave, Harmachis. But what said I just now?—Vengeance is an arrow that oft falls on him who looses it. So it was with me; for between my going and thy coming Cleopatra hatched a deeper plan. She feared that to slay thee would only be to light a fiercer fire of revolt; but she saw that to bind thee to her, and, having left men awhile in doubt, to show thee faithless, would strike the imminent danger at its roots and wither it. This plot once formed, being great, she dared its doubtful issue, and—need I go on? Thou knowest, Harmachis, how she won; and thus the shaft of vengeance that I loosed fell upon my own head. For on the morrow I knew that I had sinned for naught, that the burden of my betrayal had been laid on the wretched Paulus, and that I had but ruined the cause to which I was sworn and given the man I loved to the arms of wanton Egypt.”

She bowed her head awhile, and then, as I spoke not, once more went on:

“Let all my sin be told, Harmachis, and then let justice come. See now, this thing happened. Half did Cleopatra learn to love thee, and deep in her heart she bethought her of taking thee to

wedded husband. For the sake of this half love of hers she spared the lives of those in the plot whom she had meshed, bethinking her that if she wedded thee she might use them and thee to draw the heart of Egypt, which loves not her nor any Ptolemy. And then, once again she entrapped thee, and in thy folly thou didst betray to her the secret of the hidden wealth of Egypt, which to-day she squanders to delight the luxurious Antony; and, of a truth, at that time she purposed to make good her oath and marry thee. But on the very morn when Dellius came for answer she sent for me, and, telling me all—for my wit, above any, she holds at price—demanded of me my judgment whether she should defy Antony and wed thee, or whether she should put the thought away and come to Antony. And I—now mark thou all my sin—I, in my bitter jealousy, rather than I would see her thy wedded wife and thou her loving lord, counselled her most strictly that she should come to Antony, well knowing—for I had had speech with Dellius—that if she came, this weak Antony would fall like a ripe fruit at her feet, as, indeed, he has fallen. And but now I have shown thee the issue of the

scheme. Antony loves Cleopatra and Cleopatra loves Antony, and thou art robbed, and matters have gone well for me, who of all women on the earth to-night am the wretchedest by far. For when I saw how thy heart broke but now, my heart seemed to break with thine, and I could no longer bear the burden of my evil deeds, but knew that I must tell them and take my punishment.

“And now, Harmachis, I have no more to say; save that I thank thee for thy courtesy in hearkening, and this one thing I add. Driven by my great love I have sinned against thee unto death! I have ruined thee, I have ruined Khem, and myself also have I ruined! Let death reward me! Slay thou me, Harmachis—I will gladly die upon thy sword; ay, and kiss its blade! Slay thou me and go; for if thou slayest me not, myself I will surely slay!” And she threw herself upon her knees, lifting her fair breast toward me, that I might smite her with my dagger. And, in my bitter fury, I was minded to strike; for, above all, I thought how, when I was fallen, this woman, who herself was my cause of shame, had scourged me with her

whip of scorn. But it is hard to slay a fair woman; and, even as I lifted my hand to strike, I remembered that she had now twice saved my life.

“Woman! thou shameless woman!” I said, “arise! I slay thee not! Who am I, that I should judge thy crime, that, with mine own, doth overtop all earthly judgment?”

“Slay me, Harmachis!” she moaned; “slay me, or I slay myself! My burden is too great for me to bear! Be not so deadly calm! Curse me, and slay!”

“What was it that thou didst say to me just now, Charmion—that as I had sown so I must reap? It is not lawful that thou shouldst slay thyself; it is not lawful that I, thine equal in sin, should slay thee because through thee I sinned. As *thou* hast sown, Charmion, so must *thou* also reap. Base woman! whose cruel jealousy has brought all these woes on me and Egypt, live—live on, and from year to year pluck the bitter fruit of crime! Haunted be thy sleep by visions of thy outraged Gods, whose vengeance awaits thee and me in their dim Amenti! Haunted be thy days by memories of that man whom thy

fierce love brought to shame and ruin, and by the sight of Khem a prey to the insatiate Cleopatra and a slave to Roman Antony."

"Oh, speak not thus, Harmachis! Thy words are sharper than any sword; and more surely, if more slowly, shall they slay! Listen, Harmachis," and she grasped my robe: "when thou wast great, and all power lay within thy grasp, thou didst reject me. Wilt reject me now that Cleopatra hath cast thee from her—now that thou art poor and shamed and with no pillow to thy head? Still am I fair, and still I worship thee. Let me fly with thee, and make atonement by my lifelong love. Or, if this be too great a thing to ask, let me be but as thy sister and thy servant—thy very slave, so that I may still look upon thy face, and share thy trouble and minister to thee. O Harmachis, let me but come and I will brave all things and endure all things, and nothing but Death himself shall stay me from thy side. For I do believe that the love that sank me to so low a depth, dragging thee with me, can yet lift me to an equal height, and thee with me!"

"Wouldst tempt me to fresh sin, woman? And dost thou think, Charmion, that in some hovel

where I must hide, I could bear, day by day, to look upon thy fair face, and seeing, remember that those lips betrayed me? Not thus easily shalt thou atone! This I know even now: many and heavy shall be the lonely days of penance! Perchance that hour of vengeance yet may come, and perchance thou shalt live to play thy part in it. Thou must still abide in the Court of Cleopatra; and, while thou art there, if I yet live, I will from time to time find means to give thee tidings. Perhaps a day may dawn when once more I shall need thy service. Now, swear that, in this event, thou wilt not fail me a second time."

"I swear, Harmachis!—I swear! May everlasting torments, too hideous to be dreamed—more hideous even, by far, than those that wring me now—be my portion if I fail thee in one jot or tittle—ay, though I wait a lifetime for thy word!"

"It is well; see that thou keep the oath—not twice may we betray. I go to work out my fate; abide thou to work out thine. Perchance our divers threads will once more mingle ere the web be spun. Charmion, who unasked didst love me—and who, prompted by that gentle love of thine, didst betray and ruin me—fare thee well!"

She gazed wildly upon my face—she stretched out her arms as though to clasp me; then, in the agony of her despair, she cast herself at length and grovelled upon the ground.

I took up the sack of clothing and the staff and gained the door, and, as I passed it, I threw one last glance upon her. There she lay, with arms outstretched—more white than her white robes—her dark hair streaming down her, and her fair brows hidden in the dust.

And thus I left her, nor did I again set my eyes upon her till nine long years had come and gone.

[Here ends the second and largest roll of papyrus.]

BOOK III.

THE VENGEANCE OF HARMACHIS.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE ESCAPE OF HARMACHIS FROM TARSUS; OF HIS BEING CAST FORTH AS AN OFFERING TO THE GODS OF THE SEA; OF HIS SOJOURN IN THE ISLE OF CYPRUS; OF HIS RETURN TO ABOUTHIS; AND OF THE DEATH OF AMENEMHAT.

I MADE my way down the stair in safety, and presently stood in the courtyard of the great house. It was but an hour from dawn, and none were stirring. The last reveller had drunk his fill, the dancing-girls had ceased their dancing, and silence lay upon the city. I drew near the gate, and was challenged by an officer who stood on guard, wrapped in a heavy cloak.

“Who passes?” said the voice of Brennus.

“A merchant, may it please you, Sir, who, having brought gifts from Alexandria to a lady of the Queen’s household, and, having been enter-

tained of the lady, now departs to his galley," I answered in a feigned voice.

"Umph!" he growled. "The ladies of the Queen's household keep their guests late. Well; it is a time of festival. The pass-word, Sir Shop-keeper? Without the pass-word you must needs return and crave the lady's further hospitality."

"'Antony,' Sir; and a right good word, too. Ah! I've wandered far, and never saw I so goodly a man or so great a general. And, mark you, Sir! I've travelled far, and seen many generals."

"Ay; '*Antony*' 's the word! And Antony is a good general in his way—when it is a sober way, and when he cannot find a skirt to follow. I've served with Antony—and against him, too; and know his points. Well, well; he's got an armful now!"

And all this while that he was holding me in talk, the sentry had been pacing to and fro before the gate. But now he moved a little way to the right, leaving the entrance clear.

"Fare thee well, Harmachis, and begone!" whispered Brennus, leaning forward and speaking quickly. "Linger not. But at times bethink thee of Brennus who risked his neck to save thine,

Farewell, lad, I would that we were sailing North together," and he turned his back upon me and began to hum a tune.

"Farewell, Brennus, thou honest man," I answered, and was gone. And, as I heard long afterwards, when on the morrow the hue and cry was raised because the murderers could not find me, though they sought me everywhere to slay me, Brennus did me a service. For he swore that as he kept his watch alone an hour after midnight he saw me come and stand upon the parapet of the roof, that then I stretched out my robes and they became wings on which I floated up to Heaven, leaving him astonished. And all those about the Court lent ear to this history, believing in it, because of the great fame of my magic; and they wondered much what the marvel might portend. The tale also travelled into Egypt, and did much to save my good name among those whom I had betrayed; for the more ignorant among them believed that I acted not of my will, but of the will of the dread Gods, who of their own purpose wafted me to Heaven. And thus to this day the saying runs that "*When Harmachis comes again Egypt shall be free.*" But alas,

Harmachis comes no more! Only Cleopatra, though she was much afraid, doubted her of the tale, and sent an armed vessel to search for the Syrian merchant, but not to find him, as shall be told.

When I reached the galley of which Charmion had spoken, I found her about to sail, and gave the writing to the captain, who conned it, looking on me curiously, but said nothing.

So I went aboard, and immediately we dropped swiftly down the river with the current. And having come to the mouth of the river unchallenged, though we passed many vessels, we put out to sea with a strong favouring wind that before night freshened to a great gale. Then the sailor men, being much afraid, would have put about and run for the mouth of Cydnus again, but could not because of the wildness of the sea. All that night it blew furiously, and by dawn our mast was carried away, and we rolled helplessly in the trough of the great waves. But I sat wrapped in a cloak, little heeding; and because I showed no fear the sailors cried out that I was a wizard, and sought to cast me into the sea,

but the captain would not. At dawn the wind slackened, but ere noon it once more blew in terrible fury, and at the fourth hour from noon we came in sight of the rocky coast of that cape in the island of Cyprus which is called Dinaretum, where is a mountain named Olympus, and thitherwards we drifted swiftly. Then, when the sailors saw the terrible rocks, and how the great waves that smote on them spouted up in the foam, once more they grew much afraid, and cried out in their fear. For, seeing that I still sat unmoved, they swore that I certainly was a wizard, and came to cast me forth as a sacrifice to the Gods of the sea. And this time the captain was overruled, and said nothing. Therefore, when they came to me I rose and defied them, saying, "Cast me forth, if ye will; but if ye cast me forth ye shall perish."

For in my heart I cared little, having no more any love of life, but rather a desire to die, though I greatly feared to pass into the presence of my Holy Mother Isis. But my weariness and sorrow at the bitterness of my lot overcame even this heavy fear; so that when, being mad as brute beasts, they seized me and, lifting me,

hurled me into the raging waters, I did but utter one prayer to Isis and made ready for death. But it was fated that I should not die; for, when I rose to the surface of the water, I saw a spar of wood floating near me, to which I swam and clung. And a great wave came and swept me, riding, as it were, upon the spar, as when a boy I had learned to do in the waters of the Nile, past the bulwarks of the galley where the fierce-faced sailors clustered to see me drown. And when they saw me come mounted on the wave, cursing them as I came, and saw, too, that the colour of my face had changed—for the salt water had washed away the pigment, they shrieked with fear and threw themselves down upon the deck. And within a very little while, as I rode toward the rocky coast, a great wave poured into the vessel, that rolled broadside on, and pressed her down into the deep, whence she rose no more.

So she sank with all her crew. And in that same storm also sank the galley which Cleopatra had sent to search for the Syrian merchant. Thus all traces of me were lost, and of a surety she believed that I was dead.

But I rode on toward the shore. The wind shrieked and the salt waves lashed my face as, alone with the tempest, I rushed upon my way, while the sea-birds screamed about my head. I felt no fear, but rather a wild uplifting of the heart; and in the stress of my imminent peril the love of life seemed to waken again. And so I plunged and drifted, now tossed high toward the lowering clouds, now cast into the deep valleys of the sea, till at length the rocky headland loomed before me, and I saw the breakers smite upon the stubborn rocks, and through the screaming of the wind heard the sullen thunder of their fall and the groan of stones sucked seaward from the beach. On! high-throned upon the mane of a mighty billow—fifty cubits beneath me the level of the hissing waters; above me the inky sky! It was done! The spar was torn from me, and, dragged downwards by the weight of the bag of gold and the clinging of my garments, I sank struggling furiously.

Now I was under—the green light for a moment streamed through the waters, and then came darkness, and on the darkness pictures of the past. Picture after picture—all the long

scene of life was written here. Then in my ears I only heard the song of the nightingale, the murmur of the summer sea, and the music of Cleopatra's laugh of victory, following me softly and yet more soft as I sank away to sleep.

Once more my life came back, and with it a sense of deadly sickness and of aching pain. I opened my eyes and saw kind faces bending over me, and knew that I was in the room of a builded house.

"How came I hither?" I asked faintly.

"Of a truth, Poseidon brought thee, Stranger," answered a rough voice in barbarous Greek; "we found thee cast high upon the beach like a dead dolphin and brought thee to our house, for we are fisher-folk. And here, methinks, thou must lie a while, for thy left leg is broken by the force of the waves."

I strove to move my foot and could not. It was true, the bone was broken above the knee.

"Who art thou, and how art thou named?" asked the rough-bearded sailor.

"I am an Egyptian traveller whose ship has sunk in the fury of the gale, and I am named

Olympus," I answered, for these people called a mountain that we had sighted Olympus, and therefore I took the name at hazard. And as Olympus I was henceforth known.

Here with these rough fisher-folk I abode for the half of a year, paying them a little out of the sum of gold that had come safely ashore upon me. For it was long before my bones grew together again, and then I was left somewhat of a cripple; for I, who had been so tall and straight and strong, now limped—one limb being shorter than the other. And after I recovered from my hurt, I still lived there, and toiled with them at the trade of fishing; for I knew not whither I should go or what I should do, and, for a while, I was fain to become a peasant fisherman, and so wear my weary life away. And these people entreated me kindly, though, as others, they feared me much, holding me to be a wizard brought hither by the sea. For my sorrows had stamped so strange an aspect on my face that men gazing at me grew fearful of what lay beneath its calm.

There, then, I abode, till at length, one night as I lay and strove to sleep, great restlessness

came upon me, and a mighty desire once more to see the face of Sihor. But whether this desire was of the Gods or born of my own heart, not knowing, I cannot tell. So strong was it, at the least, that before it was dawn I rose from my bed of straw and clothed myself in my fisher garb, and, because I had no wish to answer questions, thus I took farewell of my humble hosts. First I placed some pieces of gold on the well-cleaned table of wood, and then taking a pot of flour I strewed it in the form of letters, writing:

“This gift from Olympus, the Egyptian, who returns into the sea.”

Then I went, and on the third day I came to the great city of Salamis, that is also on the sea. Here I abode in the fishermen’s quarters till a vessel was about to sail for Alexandria, and to the captain of this vessel, a man of Paphos, I hired myself as a sailor. We sailed with a favouring wind, and on the fifth day I came to Alexandria, that hateful city, and saw the light glancing on its golden domes.

Here I might not abide. So again I hired myself out as a sailor, giving my labour in return

for passage, and we passed up the Nile. And I learned from the talk of men that Cleopatra had come back to Alexandria, drawing Antony with her and that they lived together with royal state in the palace on the Lochias. Indeed, the boatmen already had a song thereon, which they sang as they laboured at the oar. Also I heard how the galley that was sent to search for the vessel which carried the Syrian merchant had foundered with all her crew, and the tale that the Queen's astronomer, Harmachis, had flown to Heaven from the roof of the house at Tarsus. And the sailors wondered because I sat and laboured and would not sing their ribald song of the loves of Cleopatra. For they, too, began to fear me, and mutter concerning me among themselves. Then I knew that I was a man accursed and set apart—a man whom none might love.

On the sixth day we drew nigh to Abouthis, where I left the craft, and the sailors were right glad to see me go. And, with a breaking heart, I walked through the fertile fields, seeing faces that I knew well. But in my rough disguise and limping gait none knew me. At length, as the sun sank, I came near to the great outer pylon

of the temple; and here I crouched down in the ruins of a house, not knowing why I had come or what I was about to do. Like a lost ox I had strayed from far, back to the fields of my birth, and for what? If my father, Amenemhat, still lived, surely he would turn his face from me. I dared not go into the presence of my father. I sat hidden there among the broken rafters, and idly watched the pylon gates, to see if, perchance, a face I knew should issue from them. But none came forth or entered in, though the great gates stood wide; and then I saw that herbs were growing between the stones, where no herbs had grown for ages. What could this be? Was the temple deserted? Nay; how could the worship of the eternal Gods have ceased, that for thousands of years had, day by day, been offered in the holy place? Was, then, my father dead? It well might be. And yet, why this silence? Where were the priests: where the worshippers?

I could bear the doubt no more, but as the sun sank red I crept like a hunted jackal through the open gates, and on till I reached the first great Hall of Pillars. Here I paused and gazed around me—not a sight, not a sound, in the dim

and holy place! I went on with a beating heart to the second great hall, the hall of six-and-thirty pillars where I had been crowned Lord of all the Lands: still not a sight or a sound! Thence, half fearful of my own footfall, so terribly did it echo in the silence of the deserted Hobbies, I passed down the passage of the names of the Pharaohs towards my father's chamber. The curtain still swung over the doorway; but what would there be within?—also emptiness? I lifted it, and noiselessly passed in, and there in his carven chair at the table on which his long white beard flowed down, sat my father Amenemhat, clad in his priestly robes. At first I thought that he was dead, he sat so still; but at length he turned his head, and I saw that his eyes were white and sightless. He was blind, and his face was thin as the face of a dead man, and woeful with age and grief.

I stood still and felt the blind eyes wandering over me. I could not speak to him—I dared not speak to him; I would go and hide myself afresh.

I had already turned and grasped the curtain, when my father spoke in a deep, slow voice:

“Come hither, thou who wast my son and art a traitor. Come hither, thou Harmachis, on whom Khem builded up her hope. Not in vain, then, have I drawn thee from far away! Not in vain have I held my life in me till I heard thy footfall creeping down these empty Hobbies, like the footfall of a thief!”

“Oh! my father,” I gasped, astonished. “Thou art blind: how knowest thou me?”

“How do I know thee?—and askest thou that who hast learned of our lore? Enough, I know thee and I brought thee hither. Would, Harmachis, that I knew thee not! Would that I had been blasted of the Invisible ere I drew thee down from the womb of Nout, to be my curse and shame, and the last woe of Khem!”

“Oh, speak not thus!” I moaned; “is not my burden already more than I can bear? Am I not myself betrayed and utterly outcast? Be pitiful, my father!”

“Be pitiful!—be pitiful to thee who hast shown so great pity? It was thy pity which gave up noble Sepa to die beneath the hands of the tormentors!”

“Oh, not that—not that!” I cried.

“Ay, traitor, that!—to die in agony, with his last poor breath proclaiming thee, his murderer, honest and innocent! Be pitiful to thee, who gavest all the flower of Khem as the price of a wanton’s arms!—thinkest thou that, labouring in the darksome desert mines, those noble ones in thought are pitiful to thee, Harmachis? Be pitiful to thee, by whom this Holy Temple of Abouthis hath been ravaged, its lands seized, its priests scattered, and I alone, old and withered, left to count out its ruin—to thee, who hast poured the treasures of *Her* into thy leman’s lap, who hast forsworn Thyself, thy Country, thy Birthright, and thy Gods! Yea, thus am I pitiful: Accursed be thou, fruit of my loins!—Shame be thy portion, Agony thy end, and Hell receive thee at the last! Where art thou? Yea, I grew blind with weeping when I heard the truth—sure, they strove to hide it from me. Let me find thee that I may spit upon thee, thou Renegade! thou Apostate! thou Outcast!”——and he rose from his seat and staggered like a living Wrath toward me, smiting the air with his wand. And as he came with outstretched arms, awful to see, suddenly his end found him, and with a cry he sank down upon

the ground, the red blood streaming from his lips. I ran to him and lifted him; and as he died, he babbled:

“He was my son, a bright-eyed lovely boy, and full of promise as the Spring; and now—and now——oh, would that he were dead!”

Then came a pause and the breath rattled in his throat.

“Harmachis,” he gasped, “art there?”

“Yea, father.”

“Harmachis, atone!—atone! Vengeance can still be wreaked—forgiveness may still be won. There’s gold; I’ve hidden it—Atoua—she can tell thee—ah, this pain! Farewell!”

And he struggled faintly in my arms and was dead.

Thus, then, did I and my holy father, the Prince Amenemhat, meet together for the last time in the flesh, and for the last time part.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE LAST MISERY OF HARMACHIS; OF THE CALLING DOWN OF THE HOLY ISIS BY THE WORD OF FEAR; OF THE PROMISE OF ISIS; OF THE COMING OF ATOUA, AND OF THE WORDS OF ATOUA.

I CROUCHED upon the floor gazing at the dead body of my father, who had lived to curse me, the utterly accursed, while the darkness crept and gathered round us, till at length the dead and I were alone in the black silence. Oh, how tell the misery of that hour! Imagination cannot dream it, nor words paint it forth. Once more in my wretchedness I bethought me of death. A knife was at my girdle, with which I might cut the thread of sorrow and set my spirit free. Free? ay, free to fly and face the last vengeance of the Holy Gods! Alas! and alas! I did not dare to die. Better the earth with all its woes than the quick approach of those unimagined terrors that,

hovering in dim Amenti, wait the advent of the fallen.

I grovelled on the ground and wept tears of agony for the lost unchanging past—wept till I could weep no more; but no answer came from the silence—no answer but the echoes of my grief. Not a ray of hope! My soul wandered in a darkness more utter than that which was about me—I was forsaken of the Gods and cast out of men. Terror took hold upon me crouching in that lonely place hard by the majesty of the awful Dead. I rose to fly. How could I fly in this gloom?—how find my path down the passages and amid the columns? And where should I fly who had no place of refuge? Once more I crouched down, and the great fear grew on me till the cold sweat ran from my brow and my soul was faint within me. Then, in my last despair, I prayed aloud to Isis, to whom I had not dared to pray for many days.

“O Isis! Holy Mother!” I cried; “put away Thy wrath, and of Thine infinite pity, O Thou all-pitiful, hearken to the voice of the anguish of him who was Thy son and servant, but who by sin hath fallen from the vision of Thy love. O

throned Glory, who, being in all things, hast of all things understanding and of all griefs knowledge, cast the weight of Thy mercy against the scale of my evil-doing, and make the balance equal. Look down upon my woe, and measure it; count up the sum of my repentance, and take Thou note of the flood of sorrow that sweeps my soul away. O Thou Holy, whom it was given to me to look upon face to face, by that dread hour of commune I summon Thee; I summon Thee by the mystic word. Come, then, in mercy, to save me; or, in anger, to make an end of that which can no more be borne."

And, rising from my knees, I stretched out my arms and dared to cry aloud the Word of Fear, to use which unworthily is death.

Swiftly the answer came. For in the silence I heard the sound of the shaken sistra heralding the coming of the Glory. Then, at the far end of the chamber, grew the semblance of the horned moon, gleaming faintly in the darkness, and betwixt the golden horns rested a small dark cloud, in and out of which the fiery serpent climbed.

My knees waxed loose in the presence of the Glory, and I sank down before it.

Then spake the small, sweet Voice within the cloud:

“Harmachis, who wast my servant and my son, I have heard thy prayer, and the summons that thou hast dared to utter, which on the lips of one with whom I have communed, hath power to draw Me from the Uttermost. No more, Harmachis, may we be one in the bond of Love Divine, for thou hast put Me away of thine own act. Therefore, after this long silence I come, Harmachis, clothed in terrors, and, perchance, ready for vengeance, for not lightly can Isis be drawn from the halls of Her Divinity.”

“Smite, Goddess!” I answered. “Smite, and give me over to those who wreak Thy vengeance; for I can no longer bear the burden of my woe!”

“And if thou canst not bear thy burden here, upon this upper earth,” came the soft reply, “how then shalt thou bear the greater burden that shall be laid upon thee there, coming defiled and yet unpurified into my dim realm of Death, that is Life and Change unending? Nay, Harmachis, I smite not, for not all am I wroth that thou hast dared to utter the awful Word

which calls Me down to thee. Hearken, Harmachis; I praise not, and I reproach not, for I am the Minister of Reward and Punishment and the Executrix of Decrees; and if I give, I give in silence; and if I smite, in silence I do smite. Therefore, I will add naught to thy burden by the weight of heavy words, though through thee it has come to pass that soon shall Isis, the Mother-Mystery, be but a memory in Egypt. Thou hast sinned, and heavy shall be thy punishment, as I did warn thee, both in the flesh and in my kingdom of Amenti. But I told thee that there is a road of repentance, and surely thy feet are set thereon, and therein must thou walk with a humble heart, eating of the bread of bitterness, till such time as thy doom be measured."

"Have I, then, no hope, O Holy?"

"That which is done, Harmachis, is done, nor can its issues be altered. Khem shall no more be free till all its temples are as the desert dust; strange Peoples shall, from age to age, hold her hostage and in bonds; new Religions shall arise and wither within the shadow of her pyramids, for to every World, Race, and Age the countenances of the Gods are changed. This is

the tree that shall spring from thy seed of sin, Harmachis, and from the sin of those who tempted thee!"

"Alas! I am undone!" I cried.

"Yea, thou art undone; and yet shall this be given to thee: thy Destroyer thou shalt destroy—for so, in the purpose of my justice, it is ordained. When the sign comes to thee, arise, go to Cleopatra, and in such manner as I shall put into thy heart do Heaven's vengeance on her! And now for thyself one word, for thou hast put Me from thee, Harmachis, and no more shall I come face to face with thee till, cycles hence, the last fruit of thy sin hath ceased to be upon this earth! Yet, through the vastness of the unnumbered years, remember thou this: that Love Divine is Love Eternal, which cannot be extinguished, though it be everlastingly estranged. Repent, my son; repent and do well while there is yet time, that at the dim end of ages thou mayst once more be gathered unto Me. Still, Harmachis, though thou seest Me not; still, when the very name by which thou knowest Me has become a meaningless mystery to those who shall be after thee; still I, whose hours are eternal

—I, who have watched Universes wither, wane, and, beneath the breath of Time, melt into nothingness; again to gather, and, re-born, thread the maze of space—still, I say, I shall companion thee. Wherever thou goest, in whatever form of life thou livest, there I shall be! Art thou wafted to the farthest star, art thou buried in Amenti's lowest deep—in lives, in deaths, in sleeps, in wakings, in remembrances, in oblivions, in all the fevers of the outer Life, in all the changes of the Spirit—still, if thou wilt but atone and forget Me no more, I shall be with thee, waiting thine hour of redemption. For this is the nature of Love Divine, wherewith it loves that which partakes of its divinity and by the holy tie hath once been bound to it. Judge then, Harmachis: was it well to put this from thee to win the dust of earthly woman? And, now, dare not again to utter the Word of Power till these things are done! Harmachis, for this season, fare thee well!"

As the last note of the sweet Voice died away, the fiery snake climbed into the heart of the cloud. Now the cloud rolled from the horns of light, and was gathered into the blackness.

The vision of the crescent moon grew dim and vanished. Then, as the Goddess passed, once more came the faint and dreadful music of the shaken sistra, and all was still.

I hid my face in my robe, and even then, though my outstretched hand could touch the chill corpse of that father who had died cursing me, I felt hope come back into my heart, knowing that I was not altogether lost nor utterly rejected of Her whom I had forsaken, but whom I yet loved. And then weariness overpowered me, and I slept.

I woke, the faint lights of dawn were creeping from the opening in the roof. Ghastly they lay upon the shadowy sculptured walls and ghastly upon the dead face and white beard of my father, the gathered to Osiris. I started up, remembering all things, and wondering in my heart what I should do, and as I rose I heard a faint footfall creeping down the passage of the names of the Pharaohs.

"*La! La! La!*" mumbled a voice that I knew for the voice of the old wife, Atoua. "Why, 'tis dark as the House of the Dead! The Holy

Ones who built this Temple loved not the blessed sun, however much they worshipped him. Now, where's the curtain?"

Presently it was drawn, and Atoua entered, a stick in one hand and a basket in the other. Her face was somewhat more wrinkled, and her scanty locks were somewhat whiter than aforetime, but for the rest she was as she had ever been. She stood and peered around with her sharp black eyes, for as yet she could see nothing because of the shadows.

"Now where is he?" she muttered. "Osiris—glory to His name—send that he has not wandered in the night, and he blind! Alack! that I could not return before the dark. Alack! and alack! what times have we fallen on, when the Holy High Priest and the Governor, by descent, of Abouthis, is left with one aged crone to minister to his infirmity! O Harmachis, my poor boy, thou hast laid trouble at our doors! Why, what's this? Surely he sleeps not, there upon the ground?—'twill be his death! Prince! Holy Father! Amenemhat! awake, arise!" and she hobbled towards the corpse. "Why, how is it! By Him who sleeps, he's dead! untended and

alone—*dead! dead!*” and she sent her long wail of grief ringing up the sculptured walls.

“Hush! woman, be still!” I said, gliding from the shadows.

“Oh, what art thou?” she cried, casting down her basket. “Wicked man, hast thou murdered this Holy One, the only Holy One in Egypt? Surely the curse will fall on thee, for though the Gods do seem to have forsaken us now in our hour of trial, yet is their arm long, and certainly they will be avenged on him who hath slain their anointed!”

“Look on me, Atoua,” I cried.

“Look! ay, I look—thou wicked wanderer who hast dared this cruel deed! Harmachis is a traitor and lost far away, and Amenemhat his holy father is murdered, and now I’m all alone without kith or kin. I gave them for him. I gave them for Harmachis, the traitor! Come, slay me also, thou wicked one!”

I took a step toward her, and she, thinking that I was about to smite her, cried out in fear:

“Nay, good Sir, spare me! Eighty and six, by the Holy Ones, eighty and six, come next

flood of Nile, and yet I would not die, though Osiris is merciful to the old who served him! Come no nearer—help! help!”

“Thou fool, be silent,” I said; “knowest thou me not?”

“Know thee? Can I know every wandering boatman to whom Sebek grants to earn a livelihood till Typhon claims his own? And yet—why, ’tis strange—that changed countenance!—that scar!—that stumbling gait! It is thou, Harmachis!—’tis thou, O my boy! Art come back to glad mine old eyes? I hoped thee dead! Let me kiss thee?—nay, I forget. Harmachis is a traitor, ay, and a murderer! Here lies the holy Amenemhat, murdered by the traitor, Harmachis! Get thee gone! I’ll have none of traitors and of parricides! Get thee to thy wanton!—it is not thou whom I did nurse.”

“Peace! woman; peace! I slew not my father—he died, alas!—he died even in my arms!”

“Ay, surely, and cursing thee, Harmachis! Thou hast given death to him who gave thee life! *La! la!* I am old, and I’ve seen many a trouble; but this is the heaviest of them all! I never liked

the looks of mummies; but I would I were one this hour! Get thee gone, I pray thee!”

“Old nurse, reproach me not! Have I not enough to bear?”

“Ah! yes, yes!—I did forget! Well; and what is thy sin? A woman was thy bane, as women have been to those before thee, and shall be to those after thee. And what a woman! *La! la!* I saw her, a beauty such as never was—an arrow pointed by the evil Gods for destruction! And thou, a young man bred as a priest—an ill training—a very ill training! ’Twas no fair match. Who can wonder that she mastered thee? Come, Harmachis; let me kiss thee! It is not for a woman to be hard upon a man because he loved our sex too much. Why, that is but nature; and Nature knows her business, else she had made us otherwise. But here is an evil case. Knowest thou that this Macedonian Queen of thine hath seized the temple lands and revenues, and driven away the priests—all, save the holy Amenemhat, who lies here, and whom she left, I know not why; ay, and caused the worship of the Gods to cease within these walls. Well, he’s gone!—he’s gone! and indeed he is better with Osiris, for his

life was a sore burden to him. And hark thou, Harmachis: he hath not left thee empty-handed; for, so soon as the plot failed, he gathered all his wealth, and it is large, and hid it—where, I can show thee—and it is thine by right of descent.”

“Talk not to me of wealth, Atoua. Where shall I go and how shall I hide my shame?”

“Ah! true, true; here mayst thou not abide, for if they found thee, surely they would put thee to the dreadful death—ay, to the death by the waxen cloth. Nay, I will hide thee, and, when the funeral rites of the holy Amenemhat have been performed, we will fly hence, and cover us from the eyes of men till these sorrows are forgotten. *La! la!* it is a sad world, and full of trouble as the Nile mud is of beetles, Come, Harmachis, come.”

CHAPTER III.

OF THE LIFE OF HIM WHO WAS NAMED THE LEARNED OLYMPUS, IN THE TOMB OF THE HARPERS THAT IS BY TÁPÉ; OF HIS COUNSEL TO CLEOPATRA; OF THE MESSAGE OF CHARMION; AND OF THE PASSING OF OLYMPUS DOWN TO ALEXANDRIA.

THESE things then came to pass. For eighty days I was hidden of the old wife, Atoua, while the body of the Prince, my father, was made ready for burial by those skilled in the arts of embalming. And when at last all things were done in order, I crept from my hiding-place and made offerings to the spirit of my father, and placing lotus-flowers on his breast went thence sorrowing. And on the following day, from where I lay hid, I saw the Priests of the Temple of Osiris and of the holy Shrine of Isis come forth, and in slow procession bear his painted coffin to the sacred lake and lay it beneath the funeral tent in the consecrated boat. I saw them celebrate the symbol of the trial of the dead, and name

him above all men just, and then bear him thence to lay him by his wife, my mother, in the deep tomb that he had hewn in the rock near to the resting-place of the most Holy Osiris, where, notwithstanding my sins, I, too, hope to sleep ere long. And when all these things were done and the deep tomb sealed, the wealth of my father having been removed from the hidden treasury and placed in safety, I fled, disguised, with the old wife, Atoua, up the Nile till we came to Tápé,* and here in this great city I lay a while, till a place could be found where I should hide myself.

And such a place I found. For to the north of the great city are brown and rugged hills, and desert valleys blasted of the sun, and in this place of desolation the Divine Pharaohs, my forefathers, hollowed out their tombs in the solid rock, the most part of which are lost to this day, so cunningly have they been hidden. But some are open, for the accursed Persians and other thieves broke into them in search of treasure. And one night—for by night only did I leave my hiding-place—just as the dawn was breaking on the mountain

* Thebes.—ED.

tops, I wandered alone in this sad valley of death, like to which there is no other, and presently came to the mouth of a tomb hidden amid great rocks, which afterwards I knew for the place of the burying of the Divine Rameses, the third of that name, now long gathered to Osiris. And by the faint light of the dawn creeping through the entrance I saw that it was spacious and that within were chambers.

On the following night, therefore, I returned, bearing lights, with Atoua, my nurse, who ever ministered faithfully to me as when I was little and without discretion. And we searched the mighty tomb and came to the great Hall of the Sarcophagus of granite, in which the Divine Rameses sleeps, and saw the mystic paintings on the walls: the symbol of the Snake unending, the symbol of Ra resting upon the Scarabæus, the symbol of Ra resting upon Nout, the symbol of the Headless men, and many others, whereof, being initiated, well I read the mysteries. And opening from the long descending passage I found chambers in which were paintings beautiful to behold, and of all manner of things. For beneath each chamber is entombed the master of the craft

of which the paintings tell, he who was the chief of the servants of that craft in the house of this Divine Rameses. And on the walls of the last chamber—on the left-hand side, looking toward the Hall of the Sarcophagus—are paintings exceeding beautiful, and two blind harpers playing upon their bent harps before the God Mou; and beneath the flooring these harpers, who harp no more, are soft at sleep. Here, then, in this gloomy place, even in the tomb of the Harpers and the company of the dead, I took up my abode; and here for eight long years I worked out my penance and made atonement for my sin. But Atoua, because she loved to be near the light, abode in the chamber of Boats—that is, the first chamber on the right-hand side of the gallery looking toward the Hall of the Sarcophagus.

And this was the manner of my life. On every second day the old wife, Atoua, went forth and brought water from the city and such food as is necessary to keep the life from failing, and also tapers made from fat. And one hour at the time of sunrise and one hour at the time of sunset did I go forth also to wander in the valley for my health's sake and to save my sight from

failing in the great darkness of the tomb. But the other hours of the day and night, except when I climbed the mountain to watch the course of the stars, I spent in prayer and meditation and sleep, till the cloud of sin lifted from my heart and once more I drew near to the Gods, though with Isis, my heavenly Mother, I might speak no more. And I grew exceeding wise also, pondering on all those mysteries to which I held the key. For abstinence and prayer and sorrowful solitude wore away the grossness of my flesh, and with the eyes of the Spirit I learned to look deep into the heart of things till the joy of Wisdom fell like dew upon my soul.

Soon the rumour was wafted about the city that a certain holy man named Olympus abode in solitude in the tombs of the awful Valley of the Dead; and hither came people bearing sick that I might cure them. And I gave my mind to the study of simples, in which Atoua instructed me; and by lore and the weight of thought I gained great skill in medicine, and healed many sick. And thus ever, as time went on, my fame was noised abroad; for it was said that I was also a magician and that in the tombs I had

commune with the Spirits of the Dead. And this, indeed, I did—though it is not lawful for me to speak of these matters. Thus, then, it came to pass that no more need Atoua go forth to seek food and water, for the people brought it—more than was needful, for I would receive no fee. Now at first, fearing lest some in the hermit Olympus might know the lost Harmachis, I would only meet those who came in the darkness of the tomb. But afterwards, when I learned how it was held through all the land that Harmachis was certainly no more, I came forth and sat in the mouth of the tomb, and ministered to the sick, and at times calculated nativities for the great. And thus my fame grew continually, till at length folk journeyed even from Memphis and Alexandria to visit me; and from them I learned how Antony had left Cleopatra for a while, and, Fulvia being dead, had married Octavia, the sister of Cæsar. Many other things I learned also.

And in the second year I did this: I despatched the old wife, Atoua, disguised as a seller of simples, to Alexandria, bidding her seek out Charmion, and, if yet she found her faithful,

reveal to her the secret of my way of life. So she went, and in the fifth month from her sailing returned, bearing Charmion's greetings and a token. And she told me that she had found means to see Charmion, and, in talk, had let fall the name of Harmachis, speaking of me as one dead; at which Charmion, unable to control her grief, wept aloud. Then, reading her heart—for the old wife was very clever, and held the key of knowledge—she told her that Harmachis yet lived, and sent her greetings. Thereon Charmion wept yet more with joy, and kissed the old wife, and made her gifts, bidding her tell me that she ever kept her vow, and waited for my coming and the hour of vengeance. So, having learned many secrets, Atoua returned again to Tápé.

And in the following year messengers came to me from Cleopatra, bearing a sealed roll and great gifts. I opened the roll, and read this in it:

“Cleopatra to Olympus, the learned Egyptian who dwells in the Valley of Death by Tápé—

“The fame of thy renown, O learned Olympus, hath reached our ears. Tell thou, then, this to us, and if thou tellest aright greater honour and

wealth shalt thou have than any in Egypt: How shall we win back the love of noble Antony, who is bewitched of cunning Octavia and tarries long from us?"

Now, in this I saw the hand of Charmion, who had made my renown known to Cleopatra.

All that night I took counsel with my wisdom, and on the morrow wrote my answer as it was put into my heart to the destruction of Cleopatra and of Antony. And thus I wrote:

"Olympus the Egyptian to Cleopatra the Queen—

"Go forth into Syria with one who shall be sent to lead thee; thus shalt thou win Antony to thy arms again, and with him gifts more great than thou canst dream."

And with this letter I dismissed the messengers, bidding them share the presents sent by Cleopatra among their company.

So they went wondering.

But Cleopatra, seizing on the advice to which her passion prompted her, departed straightway with Fonteius Capito into Syria, and there the thing came about as I had foretold, for Antony was subdued of her and gave her the greater

part of Cilicia, the ocean shore of Arabia Nabathæa, the balm-bearing provinces of Judæa, the province of Phœnicia, the province of Cœle-Syria, the rich isle of Cyprus, and all the library of Pergamus. And to the twin children that, with the son Ptolemy, Cleopatra had borne to Antony, he impiously gave the names of "Kings, the Children of Kings"—of Alexander Helios, as the Greeks name the sun, and of Cleopatra Selene, the moon, the long-winged.

These things then came to pass.

Now on her return to Alexandria Cleopatra sent me great gifts, of which I would have none, and prayed me, the learned Olympus, to come to her at Alexandria: but it was not yet time, and I would not. But thereafter she and Antony sent many times to me for counsel, and I ever counselled them to their ruin, nor did my prophecies fail.

Thus the long years rolled away, and I, the hermit Olympus, the dweller in a tomb, the eater of bread and the drinker of water, by strength of the wisdom that was given me of the avenging Power, became once more great in Khem. For

I grew ever wiser as I trampled the desires of the flesh beneath my feet and turned my eyes to heaven.

At length eight full years were accomplished. The war with the Parthians had come and gone, and Artavasdes, King of Armenia, had been led in triumph through the streets of Alexandria. Cleopatra had visited Samos and Athens; and, by her counselling, the noble Octavia had been driven, like some discarded concubine, from the house of Antony at Rome. And now, at the last, the measure of the folly of Antony was full even to the brim. For this Master of the World had no longer the good gift of reason; he was lost in Cleopatra as I had been lost. Therefore, in the event, Octavianus declared war against him.

And as I slept upon a certain day in the chamber of the Harpers, in the tomb of Pharaoh that is by Tápé, there came to me a vision of my father, the aged Amenemhat, and he stood over me, leaning on his staff, and spoke, saying:

“Look forth, my son.”

Then I looked forth, and with the eyes of my

Spirit saw the sea, and two great fleets grappling in war hard by a rocky coast. And the emblems of one were those of Octavian, and of the other those of Cleopatra and Antony. The ships of Antony and Cleopatra bore down upon the ships of Cæsar, and drove them on, for victory inclined to Antony.

I looked again. There sat Cleopatra in a gold-decked galley watching the fight with eager eyes. Then I cast my Spirit on her so that she seemed to hear the voice of dead Harmachis crying in her ear.

“Fly, Cleopatra,” it seemed to say, *“fly or perish!”*

She looked up wildly, and again she heard my Spirit’s cry. Now a mighty fear took hold of her. She called aloud to the sailors to hoist the sails and make signal to her fleet to put about. This they did wondering but little loath, and fled in haste from the battle.

Then a great roar went up from friend and foe.

“Cleopatra is fled! Cleopatra is fled!” And I saw wreck and red ruin fall upon the fleet of Antony and awoke from my trance.

The days passed, and again a vision of my father came to me and spoke, saying:

“Arise, my son!—the hour of vengeance is at hand! Thy plots have not failed; thy prayers have been heard. By the bidding of the Gods, as she sat in her galley at the fight of Actium, the heart of Cleopatra was filled with fears, so that, deeming she heard thy voice bidding her fly or perish, she fled with all her fleet. Now the strength of Antony is broken on the sea. Go forth, and as it shall be put into thy mind, so do thou.”

In the morning I awoke, wondering, and went to the mouth of the tomb, and there, coming up the valley, I saw the messengers of Cleopatra, and with them a Roman guard.

“What will ye with me now?” I asked, sternly.

“This is the message of the Queen and of great Antony,” answered the Captain, bowing low before me, for I was much feared of all men. “The Queen commands thy presence at Alexandria. Many times has she sent, and thou wouldst not come; now she bids thee to come,

and that swiftly, for she has need of thy counsel."

"And if I say Nay, soldier, what then?"

"These are my orders, most holy Olympus; that I bring thee by force."

I laughed aloud. "By force, thou fool! Use not such talk to me, lest I smite thee where thou art. Know, then, that I can kill as well as cure!"

"Pardon, I beseech thee!" he answered, shrinking. "I say but those things that I am bid."

"Well, I know it, Captain. Fear not; I come."

So on that very day I departed, together with the aged Atoua. Ay, I went as secretly as I had come; and the tomb of the Divine Rameses knew me no more. And with me I took all the treasure of my father, Amenemhat, for I was not minded to go to Alexandria empty-handed and as a suppliant, but rather as a man of much wealth and condition. Now, as I went, I learned that Antony, following Cleopatra, had, indeed, fled from Actium, and knew that the end drew nigh. For this and many other things I had foreseen in

the darkness of the tomb of Tápé, and planned to bring about.

Thus, then, I came to Alexandria, and entered into a house which had been made ready for me at the palace gates.

And that very night Charmion came to me—Charmion whom I had not seen for nine long years.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE MEETING OF CHARMION WITH THE LEARNED OLYMPUS; OF HER SPEECH WITH HIM; OF THE COMING OF OLYMPUS INTO THE PRESENCE OF CLEOPATRA; AND OF THE COMMANDS OF CLEOPATRA.

CLAD in my plain dark robe, I sat in the guest-chamber of the house that had been made ready for me. I sat in a carven lion-footed chair, and looked upon the swinging lamps of scented oil, the pictured tapestries, the rich Syrian rugs—and, amidst all this luxury, bethought me of that tomb of the Harpers which is at Tápé, and of the nine long years of dark loneliness and preparation. I sat; and crouched upon a rug, near to the door, lay the aged Atoua. Her hair was white as snow, and shrivelled with age was the wrinkled countenance of the woman who, when all deserted me, had yet clung to me, in her great love forgetting my great sins. Nine years! nine

long years! and now, once again, I set my foot in Alexandria! Once again in the appointed circle of things I came forth from the solitude of preparation to be a fate to Cleopatra; and this second time I came not forth to fail.

And yet how changed the circumstance! I was out of the story: my part now was but the part of the sword in the hands of Justice; I might no more hope to make Egypt free and great and sit upon my lawful throne. Khem was lost, and lost was I, Harmachis. In the rush and turmoil of events, the great plot of which I had been the pivot was covered up and forgotten; scarce a memory of it remained. The curtain of dark night was closing in upon the history of my ancient Race; its very Gods were tottering to their fall; I could already, in the spirit, hear the shriek of the Roman eagles as they flapped their wings above the furthest banks of Sihor.

Presently I roused myself and bade Atoua go seek a mirror and bring it to me, that I might look therein.

And I saw this: a face shrunken and pallid, on which no smile came; great eyes grown wan with gazing into darkness looking out beneath the

shaven head, empty, as the hollow eye-pits of a skull; a wizened halting form wasted by abstinence, sorrow, and prayer; a long wild beard of iron grey; thin blue-veined hands that ever trembled like a leaf; bowed shoulders and lessened limbs. Time and grief had done their work indeed; scarce could I think myself the same as when, the royal Harmachis—in all the splendour of my strength and youthful beauty—I first had looked upon the woman's loveliness that did destroy me. And yet within me burned the same fire as of yore; yet I was not changed, for time and grief have no power to alter the immortal spirit of man. Seasons may come and go; Hope, like a bird, may fly away; Passion may break its wings against the iron bars of Fate; Illusions may crumble as the cloudy towers of sunset flame; Faith, as running water, may slip from beneath our feet; Solitude may stretch itself around us like the measureless desert sand; Old Age may creep as the gathering night over our bowed heads grown hoary in their shame—yea, bound to Fortune's wheel, we may taste of every turn of chance—now rule as Kings, now serve as Slaves; now love, now hate; now prosper, and now perish.

But still, through all, we are the same; for this is the marvel of Identity.

And as I sat and thought these things in bitterness of heart, there came a knocking at the door.

“Open, Atoua!” I said.

She rose and did my bidding; and a woman entered, clad in Grecian robes. It was Charmion, still beautiful as of old, but sad faced now and very sweet to see, with a patient fire slumbering in her downcast eyes.

She entered unattended; and, speaking no word, the old wife pointed to where I sat, and went.

“Old man,” she said, addressing me, “lead me to the learned Olympus. I come upon the Queen’s business.”

I rose, and, lifting my head, looked upon her. She gazed, and gave a little cry.

“Surely,” she whispered, glancing round, “surely thou art not that ——” And she paused.

“That Harmachis whom once thy foolish heart did love, O Charmion? Yes, I am he and what thou seest, most fair lady. Yet is Harmachis

dead whom thou didst love; but Olympus, the skilled Egyptian, waits upon thy words!"

"Cease!" she said, "and of the past but one word, and then—why, let it lie. Not well, with all thy wisdom, canst thou know a true woman's heart, if thou dost believe, Harmachis, that it can change with the changes of the outer form, for then assuredly could no love follow its beloved to that last place of change—the Grave. Know thou, learned Physician, I am of that sort who, loving once, love always, and being not beloved again, go virgin to the death."

She ceased and, having naught to say, I bowed my head in answer. Yet though I said nothing and though this woman's passionate folly had been the cause of all our ruin, to speak truth, in secret I was thankful to her who, wooed of all and living in this shameless Court, had still through the long years poured out her unreturned love upon an outcast, and who, when that poor broken slave of Fortune came back in such unlovely guise, held him yet dear at heart. For what man is there who does not prize that gift most rare and beautiful, that one perfect thing which no gold can buy—a woman's unfeigned love?

“I thank thee that thou dost not answer,” she said; “for the bitter words which thou didst pour upon me in those days that long are dead, and far away in Tarsus, have not lost their poisonous sting, and in my heart is no more place for the arrows of thy scorn, new venomed through thy solitary years. So let it be. Behold! I put it from me, that wild passion of my soul,” and she looked up and stretched out her hands as though to press some unseen presence back, “I put it from me—though forget it I may not! There, ’tis done, Harmachis; no more shall my love trouble thee. Enough for me that once more my eyes behold thee, before sleep seals thee from their sight. Dost remember how, when I would have died by thy dear hand, thou wouldst not slay, but didst bid me live to pluck the bitter fruit of crime, and be accursed by visions of the evil I had wrought and memories of thee whom I have ruined?”

“Ay, Charmion, I remember well.”

“Surely the cup of punishment has been filled. Oh! couldst thou see into the record of my heart, and read in it the suffering that I have

borne—borne with a smiling face—thy justice would be satisfied indeed!”

“And yet, if report be true, Charmion, thou art the first of all the Court, and therein the most powerful and beloved. Does not Octavianus give it out that he makes war, not on Antony, nor even on his mistress, Cleopatra, but on Charmion and Iras?”

“Yes, Harmachis, and think what it has been to me thus, because of my oath to thee, to be forced to eat the bread and do the tasks of one whom so bitterly I hate!—one who robbed me of thee, and who, through the workings of my jealousy, brought me to be that which I am, brought thee to shame, and all Egypt to its ruin! Can jewels and riches and the flattery of princes and nobles bring happiness to such a one as I, who am more wretched than the meanest scullion wench? Oh, I have often wept till I was blind; and then, when the hour came, I must arise and tire me, and, with a smile, go do the bidding of the Queen and that heavy Antony. May the Gods grant me to see them dead—ay, the twain of them!—then myself I shall be content to die! Thy lot has been hard, Harmachis; but at least

thou hast been free, and many is the time that I have envied thee the quiet of thy haunted cave."

"I do perceive, O Charmion, that thou art mindful of thy oaths; and it is well, for the hour of vengeance is at hand."

"I am mindful, and in all things I have worked for thee in secret—for thee, and for the utter ruin of Cleopatra and the Roman. I have fanned his passion and her jealousy, I have egged her on to wickedness and him to folly, and of all have I caused report to be brought to Cæsar. Listen! thus stands the matter. Thou knowest how went the fight at Actium. Thither went Cleopatra with her fleet, sorely against the will of Antony. But, as thou sentest me word, I entreated him for the Queen, vowing to him, with tears, that, did he leave her, she would die of grief; and he, poor slave, believed me. And so she went, and in the thick of the fight, for what cause I know not, though perchance thou knowest, Harmachis, she made signal to her squadron, and, putting about fled from the battle, sailing for Peloponnesus. And now, mark the end! When Antony saw that she was gone, he, in his madness, took a galley, and deserting all, followed

hard after her, leaving his fleet to be shattered and sunk, and his great army in Greece, of twenty legions and twelve thousand horse, without a leader. And all this no man would believe, that Antony, the smitten of the Gods, had fallen so deep in shame. Therefore for a while the army tarried, and but now to-night comes news brought by Canidius, the General, that, worn with doubt and being at length sure that Antony had deserted them, the whole of his great force has yielded to Cæsar."

"And where, then, is Antony?"

"He has built him a habitation on a little isle in the Great Harbour and named it Timonium; because, forsooth, like Timon, he cries out at the ingratitude of mankind that has forsaken him. And there he lies smitten by a fever of the mind, and thither thou must go at dawn, so wills the Queen, to cure him of his ills and draw him to her arms; for he will not see her, nor knows he yet the full measure of his woe. But first my bidding is to lead thee instantly to Cleopatra, who would ask thy counsel."

"I come," I answered, rising. "Lead thou on."

And so we passed the palace gates and along the Alabaster Hall, and presently once again I stood before the door of Cleopatra's chamber, and once again Charmion left me to warn her of my coming.

Presently she came back and beckoned to me. "Make strong thy heart," she whispered, "and see that thou dost not betray thyself, for still are the eyes of Cleopatra keen. Enter!"

"Keen, indeed, must they be to find Harmachis in the learned Olympus! Had I not willed it, thyself thou hadst not known me, Charmion," I made answer.

Then I entered that remembered place and listened once more to the plash of the fountain, the song of the nightingale, and the murmur of the summer sea. With bowed head and halting gait I came, till at length I stood before the couch of Cleopatra—that same golden couch on which she had sat the night she overcame me. Then I gathered my strength, and looked up. There before me was Cleopatra, glorious as of old, but, oh! how changed since that night when I saw Antony clasp her in his arms at Tarsus!

Her beauty still clothed her like a garment; the eyes were yet deep and unfathomable as the blue sea, the face still splendid in its great loveliness. And yet all was changed. Time, that could not touch her charms, had stamped upon her presence such a look of weary grief as may not be written. Passion, beating ever in that fierce heart of hers, had written his record on her brow, and in her eyes shone the sad lights of sorrow.

I bowed low before this most royal woman, who once had been my love and my destruction, and yet knew me not.

She looked up wearily, and spoke in her slow, well remembered voice:

“So thou art come at length, Physician. How callest thou thyself?—Olympus? ’Tis a name of promise, for surely now that the Gods of Egypt have deserted us, we do need aid from Olympus. Well, thou hast a learned air, for learning goes not with beauty. Strange, too, there is that about thee which recalls what I know not. Say, Olympus, have we met before?”

“Never, O Queen, have my eyes fallen on

thee in the body," I answered in a feigned voice. "Never till this hour, when I come forth from my solitude to do thy bidding and cure thee of thy ills."

"Strange! and even in the voice——Pshaw! 'tis some memory that I cannot catch. In the body, thou sayest? then, perchance, I knew thee in a dream?"

"Ay, O Queen; we have met in dreams."

"Thou art a strange man, who talkest thus, but, if what I hear be true, one well learned; and, indeed, I mind me of thy counsel when thou didst bid me join my Lord Antony in Syria, and how things befell according to thy word. Skilled must thou be in the casting of nativities and in the law of auguries, of which these Alexandrian fools have little knowledge. Once I knew such another man, one Harmachis," and she sighed: "but he is long dead—as I would I were also!—and at times I sorrow for him."

She paused, while I sank my head upon my breast and stood silent.

"Interpret me this, Olympus. In the battle

at that accursed Actium, just as the fight raged thickest and Victory began to smile upon us, a great terror seized my heart, and thick darkness seemed to fall before my eyes, while in my ears a voice, ay, the voice of that long dead Harmachis, cried '*Fly! fly, or perish!*' and I fled. But from my heart the terror leapt to the heart of Antony, and he followed after me, and thus was the battle lost. Say, then, what God brought this evil thing about?"

"Nay, O Queen," I answered, "it was no God—for wherein hast thou angered the Gods of Egypt? Hast thou robbed the temples of their Faith? Hast thou betrayed the trust of Egypt? Having done none of these things, how, then, can the Gods of Egypt be wroth with thee? Fear not, it was nothing but some natural vapour of the mind that overcame thy gentle soul, made sick with the sight and sound of slaughter; and as for the noble Antony, where thou didst go needs must that he should follow."

And as I spoke, Cleopatra turned white and trembled, glancing at me the while to find my meaning. But I well knew that the thing was of

the avenging Gods, working through me, their instrument.

“Learned Olympus,” she said, not answering my words; “my Lord Antony is sick and crazed with grief. Like some poor hunted slave he hides himself in yonder sea-girt Tower and shuns mankind—yes, he shuns even me, who, for his sake, endure so many woes. Now, this is my bidding to thee. To-morrow, at the coming of the light, do thou, led by Charmion, my waiting-lady, take boat and row thee to the Tower and there crave entry, saying that ye bring tidings from the army. Then he will cause you to be let in, and thou, Charmion, must break this heavy news that Canidius bears; for Canidius himself I dare not send. And when his grief is past, do thou, Olympus, soothe his fevered frame with thy draughts of value, and his soul with honeyed words, and draw him back to me, and all will yet be well. Do thou this, and thou shalt have gifts more than thou canst count, for I am yet a Queen and yet can pay back those who serve my will.”

“Fear not, O Queen,” I answered, “this

thing shall be done, and I ask no reward, who have come hither to do thy bidding to the end."

So I bowed and went and, summoning Atoua, made ready a certain potion.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE DRAWING FORTH OF ANTONY FROM THE TIMONIUM BACK TO CLEOPATRA; OF THE FEAST MADE BY CLEOPATRA; AND OF THE MANNER OF THE DEATH OF EUDOSIUS THE STEWARD.

ERE it was yet dawn Charmion came again, and we walked to the private harbour of the palace. There, taking boat, we rowed to the island mount on which stands the Timonium, a vaulted tower, strong, small, and round. And, having landed, we twain came to the door and knocked, till at length a grating was thrown open in the door, and an aged eunuch, looking forth, roughly asked our business.

"Our business is with the Lord Antony," said Charmion.

"Then it is no business, for Antony, my master, sees neither man nor woman."

"Yet will he see us, for we bring tidings. Go

tell him that the Lady Charmion brings tidings from the army."

The man went, and presently returned.

"The Lord Antony would know if the tidings be good or ill, for, if ill, then will he none of it, for with evil tidings he has been overfed of late."

"Why—why, it is both good and ill. Open, slave, I will make answer to thy master!" and she slipped a purse of gold through the bars.

"Well, well," he grumbled, as he took the purse, "the times are hard, and likely to be harder; for when the lion's down who will feed the jackal? Give thy news thyself, and if it do but draw the noble Antony out of this hall of Groans, I care not what it be. Now the palace door is open, and there's the road to the banqueting-chamber."

We passed on, to find ourselves in a narrow passage, and, leaving the eunuch to bar the door, advanced till we came to a curtain. Through this entrance we went, and found ourselves in a vaulted chamber, ill-lighted from the roof. On the further side of this rude chamber was a bed

of rugs, and on them crouched the figure of a man, his face hidden in the folds of his toga.

"Most noble Antony," said Charmion drawing near, "unwrap thy face and hearken to me, for I bring thee tidings."

Then he lifted up his head. His face was marred by sorrow; his tangled hair, grizzled with years, hung about his hollow eyes, and white on his chin was the stubble of an unshaven beard. His robe was squalid, and his aspect more wretched than that of the poorest beggar at the temple gates. To this, then, had the love of Cleopatra brought the glorious and renowned Antony, aforetime Master of half the World!

"What will ye with me, Lady," he asked, "who would perish here alone? And who is this man who comes to gaze on fallen and forsaken Antony?"

"This is Olympus, noble Antony, that wise physician, the skilled in auguries, of whom thou hast heard much, and whom Cleopatra, ever mindful of thy welfare, though but little thou dost think of hers, has sent to minister to thee."

"And, can thy physician minister to a grief such as my grief? Can his drugs give me back

my galleys, my honour, and my peace? Nay! Away with thy physician! What are thy tidings?—quick!—out with it! Hath Canidius, perchance, conquered Cæsar? Tell me but that, and thou shalt have a province for thy guerdon—ay! and if Octavianus be dead, twenty thousand sestertia to fill its treasury. Speak—nay—speak not! I fear the opening of thy lips as never I feared an earthly thing. Surely the wheel of fortune has gone round and Canidius has conquered? Is it not so? Nay—out with it! I can no more!”

“O noble Antony,” she said, “steel thy heart to hear that which I needs must tell thee! Canidius is in Alexandria. He has fled fast and far, and this is his report. For seven whole days did the legions wait the coming of Antony, to lead them to victory, as aforetime, putting aside the offers of the envoys of Cæsar. But Antony came not. And then it was rumoured that Antony had fled to Tænarus, drawn thither by Cleopatra. The man who first brought that tale to the camp the legionaries cried shame on—ay, and beat him to the death! But ever it grew, until at length there was no more room to doubt; and then, O Antony, thy officers slipped one by

one away to Cæsar, and where the officers go there the men follow. Nor is this all the story; for thy allies—Bocchus of Africa, Tarcondimotus of Cilicia, Mithridates of Commagene, Adallas of Thrace, Philadelphus of Paphlagonia, Archelaus of Cappadocia, Herod of Judæa, Amyntas of Galatia, Polemon of Pontus, and Malchus of Arabia—all, all have fled or bid their generals fly back to whence they came; and already their ambassadors crave cold Cæsar's clemency."

"Hast done thy croaking, thou raven in a peacock's dress, or is there more to come?" asked the smitten man, lifting his white and trembling face from the shelter of his hands. "Tell me more; say that Egypt's dead in all her beauty; say that Octavianus lowers at the Canopic gate; and that, headed by dead Cicero, all the ghosts of Hell do audibly shriek out the fall of Antony! Yea, gather up every woe that can o'erwhelm those who once were great, and loose them on the hoary head of him whom—in thy gentleness—thou art still pleased to name 'the noble Antony!'"

"Nay, my Lord, I have done."

"Ay, and so have I done—done, quite done!"

It is altogether finished, and thus I seal the end," and snatching a sword from the couch, he would, indeed, have slain himself had I not sprung forward and grasped his hand. For it was not my purpose that he should die as yet; since had he died at that hour Cleopatra had made her peace with Cæsar, who rather wished the death of Antony than the ruin of Egypt.

"Art mad, Antony? Art, indeed, a coward?" cried Charmion, "that thou wouldst thus escape thy woes, and leave thy partner to face the sorrow out alone?"

"Why not, woman? Why not? She would not be long alone. There's Cæsar to keep her company. Octavianus loves a fair woman in his cold way, and still is Cleopatra fair. Come now, thou Olympus! thou hast held my hand from dealing death upon myself, advise me of thy wisdom. Shall I, then, submit myself to Cæsar, and, I, Triumvir, twice Consul, and aforetime absolute Monarch of all the East, endure to follow in his triumph along those Roman ways where I myself have passed in triumph?"

"Nay, Sire," I answered. "If thou dost yield, then art thou doomed. All last night I questioned

of the Fates concerning thee, and I saw this: when thy star draws near to Cæsar's it pales and is swallowed up; but when it passes from his radiance, then bright and big it shines, equal in glory to his own. All is not lost, and while some part remains, everything may be regained. Egypt can yet be held, armies can still be raised. Cæsar has withdrawn himself; he is not yet at the gates of Alexandria, and perchance may be appeased. Thy mind in its fever has fired thy body; thou art sick and canst not judge aright. See, here, I have a potion that shall make thee whole, for I am well skilled in the art of medicine," and I held out the phial.

"A potion, thou sayest, man!" he cried. "More like it is a poison, and thou a murderer, sent by false Egypt, who would fain be rid of me now that I may no more be of service to her. The head of Antony is the peace offering she would send to Cæsar—she for whom I have lost all! Give me thy draught. By Bacchus! I will drink it, though it be the very elixir of Death!"

"Nay, noble Antony; it is no poison, and I am no murderer. See, I will taste it, if thou wilt,"

and I held forth the subtle drink that has power to fire the veins of men.

“Give it me, Physician. Desperate men are brave men. There!—— Why, what is this? Yours is a magic draught! My sorrows seem to roll away like thunder-clouds before the southern gale, and the spring of Hope blooms fresh upon the desert of my heart. Once more I am Antony, and once again I see my legions’ spears asparkle in the sun, and hear the thunderous shout of welcome as Antony—beloved Antony—rides in pomp of war along his deep-formed lines! There’s hope! there’s hope! I may yet see the cold brows of Cæsar—that Cæsar who never errs except from policy—robbed of their victor bays and crowned with shameful dust!”

“Ay,” cried Charmion, “there still is hope, if thou wilt but play the man! O my Lord! come back with us; come back to the loving arms of Cleopatra! All night she lies upon her golden bed, and fills the hollow darkness with her groans for ‘Antony!’ who, enamoured now of Grief, forgets his duty and his love!”

“I come! I come! Shame upon me, that I dared to doubt her! Slave, bring water, and a

purple robe: not thus can I be seen of Cleopatra. Even now I come."

In this fashion, then, did we draw Antony back to Cleopatra, that the ruin of the twain might be made sure.

We led him up the Alabaster Hall and into Cleopatra's chamber, where she lay, her cloudy hair about her face and breast, and tears flowing from her deep eyes.

"O Egypt!" he cried, "behold me at thy feet!"

She sprang from the couch. "And art thou here, my love?" she murmured; "then once again are all things well. Come near, and in these arms forget thy sorrows and turn my grief to joy. Oh, Antony, while love is left to us, still have we all!"

And she fell upon his breast and kissed him wildly.

That same day, Charmion came to me and bade me prepare a poison of the most deadly power. And this at first I would not do, fearing

that Cleopatra would therewith make an end of Antony before the time. But Charmion showed me that this was not so, and told me also for what purpose was the poison. Therefore I summoned Atoua, the skilled in simples, and all that afternoon we laboured at the deadly work. And when it was done, Charmion came once more, bearing with her a chaplet of fresh roses, that she bade me steep in the poison.

This then I did.

That night at the great feast of Cleopatra, I sat near Antony, who was at her side, and wore the poisoned wreath. Now as the feast went on, the wine flowed fast, till Antony and the Queen grew merry. And she told him of her plans, and of how even now her galleys were being drawn by the canal that leads from Bubastis on the Pelusiatic branch of the Nile, to Clysma at the head of the Bay of Heroopolis. For it was her design, should Cæsar prove stubborn, to fly with Antony and her treasure down the Arabian Gulf, where Cæsar had no fleet, and seek some new home in India, whither her foes might not follow. But, indeed, this plan came to nothing, for the Arabs of Petra burnt the galleys, incited thereto

by a message sent by the Jews of Alexandria, who hated Cleopatra and were hated of her. For I caused the Jews to be warned of what was being done.

Now, when she had made an end of telling him, the Queen called on him to drink a cup with her, to the success of this new scheme, bidding him, as she did so, steep his wreath of roses in the wine, and make the draught more sweet. This, then, he did, and, it being done, she pledged him. But when he was about to pledge her back, she caught his hand, crying "*Hold!*" whereat he paused, wondering.

Now, among the servants of Cleopatra was one Eudosius, a steward; and this Eudosius, seeing that the fortunes of Cleopatra were at an end, had laid a plan to fly that very night to Cæsar, as many of his betters had done, taking with him all the treasure in the palace that he could steal. But this design being discovered to Cleopatra, she determined to be avenged upon Eudosius.

"Eudosius," she cried, for the man stood near; "come hither, thou faithful servant! Seest

thou this man, most noble Antony; through all our troubles he has clung to us and been of comfort to us. Now, therefore, he shall be rewarded according to his deserts and the measure of his faithfulness, and that from thine own hand. Give him thy golden cup of wine, and let him drink a pledge to our success; the cup shall be his guerdon."

And still wondering, Antony gave it to the man, who, stricken in his guilty mind, took it, and stood trembling. But he drank not.

"Drink! thou slave; drink!" cried Cleopatra, half rising from her seat and flashing a fierce look on his white face. "By Serapis! so surely as I yet shall sit in the Capitol at Rome, if thou dost thus flout the Lord Antony, I'll have thee scourged to the bones, and the red wine poured upon thy open wounds to heal them! *Ah!* at length thou drinkest! Why, what is it, good Eudosius? art sick? Surely, then, this wine must be as the water of jealousy of those Jews, that has power to slay the false and strengthen the honest only. Go, some of you, search this man's room; methinks he is a traitor!"

Meanwhile the man stood, his hands to his

head. Presently he began to tremble, and then fell, shrieking, to the ground. Anon he was on his feet again, clutching at his bosom, as though to tear out the fire in his heart. He staggered, with livid, twisted face and foaming lips, to where Cleopatra lay watching him with a slow and cruel smile.

“Ah, traitor! thou hast it now!” she said. “Prithee, is death sweet?”

“Thou wanton!” yelled the dying man, “thou hast poisoned me! Thus mayst thou also perish!” and with one shriek he flung himself upon her. She saw his purpose, and swift and supple as a tiger sprang to one side, so that he did but grasp her royal cloak, tearing it from its emerald clasp. Down he fell upon the ground, rolling over and over in the purple chiton, till presently he lay still and dead, his tormented face and frozen eyes peering ghastly from its folds.

“Ah!” said the Queen, with a hard laugh, “the slave died wondrous hard, and fain would have drawn me with him. See, he has borrowed my garment for a pall! Take him away and bury him in his livery.”

“What means Cleopatra?” said Antony, as the guards dragged the corpse away; “the man drank of my cup. What is the purpose of this most sorry jest?”

“It serves a double end, noble Antony! This very night that man would have fled to Octavianus, bearing of our treasure with him. Well, I have lent him wings, for the dead fly fast! Also this: thou didst fear that I should poison thee, my Lord; nay, I know it. See now, Antony, how easy it were that I should slay thee if I had the will. That wreath of roses which thou didst steep within the cup is dewed with deadly bane. Had I, then, a mind to make an end of thee, I had not stayed thy hand. O Antony, henceforth trust me! Sooner would I slay myself than harm one hair of thy beloved head! See, here come my messengers! Speak, what did ye find?”

“Royal Egypt, we found this. All things in the chamber of Eudosius are made ready for flight, and in his baggage is much treasure.”

“Thou hearest?” she said, smiling darkly. “Think ye, my loyal servants all, that Cleopatra

is one with whom it is well to play the traitor?
Be warned by this Roman's fate!"

Then a great silence of fear fell upon the
company, and Antony sat also silent.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE WORKINGS OF THE LEARNED OLYMPUS AT MEMPHIS; OF THE POISONINGS OF CLEOPATRA; OF THE SPEECH OF ANTONY TO HIS CAPTAINS; AND OF THE PASSING OF ISIS FROM THE LAND OF KHEM.

Now I, Harmachis, must make speed with my task, setting down that which is permitted as shortly as may be, and leaving much untold. For of this I am warned, that Doom draws on and my days are wellnigh sped. After the drawing forth of Antony from the Timonium came that time of heavy quiet which heralds the rising of the desert wind. Antony and Cleopatra once again gave themselves up to luxury, and night by night feasted in splendour at the palace. They sent ambassadors to Cæsar; but Cæsar would have none of them; and, this hope being gone, they turned their minds to the defence of Alexandria. Men were gathered, ships were built,

and a great force was made ready against the coming of Cæsar.

And now, aided by Charmion, I began my last work of hate and vengeance. I wormed myself deep into the secrets of the palace, counselling all things for evil. I bade Cleopatra keep Antony gay, lest he should brood upon his sorrows: and thus she sapped his strength and energy with luxury and wine. I gave him of my draughts—draughts that sank his soul in dreams of happiness and power, leaving him to wake to heavier misery. Soon, without my healing medicine he could not sleep, and thus, being ever at his side, I bound his weakened will to mine, till at last he would do little if I said not "It is well." Cleopatra, also grown very superstitious, leaned much upon me; for I prophesied falsely to her in secret.

Moreover, I wove other webs. My fame was great throughout Egypt, for during the long years that I had dwelt in Tápé it had spread through all the land. Therefore many men of note came to me, both for their health's sake and because it was known that I had the ear of Antony and the Queen; and, in these days of

doubt and trouble, they were fain to learn the truth. All these men I worked upon with doubtful words, sapping their loyalty; and I caused many to fall away, and yet none could bear an evil report of what I had said. Also, Cleopatra sent me to Memphis, there to move the Priests and Governors that they should gather men in Upper Egypt for the defence of Alexandria. And I went and spoke to the priests with such a double meaning and with so much wisdom that they knew me to be one of the initiated in the deeper mysteries. But how I, Olympus the physician, came thus to be initiated none might say. And afterwards they sought me secretly, and I gave them the holy sign of brotherhood; and thereunder bade them not to ask who I might be, but send no aid to Cleopatra. Rather, I said, must they make peace with Cæsar, for by Cæsar's grace only could the worship of the Gods endure in Khem. So, having taken counsel of the Holy Apis, they promised in public to give help to Cleopatra, but in secret sent an embassy to Cæsar.

Thus, then, it came to pass that Egypt gave but little aid to its hated Macedonian Queen.

Thence from Memphis I came once more to Alexandria, and, having made favourable report, continued my secret work. And, indeed, the Alexandrians could not easily be stirred, for, as they say in the market-place, "The ass looks at its burden and is blind to its master." Cleopatra had oppressed them so long that the Roman was like a welcome friend.

Thus the time passed on, and every night found Cleopatra with fewer friends than that which had gone before, for in evil days friends fly like swallows before the frost. Yet she would not give up Antony, whom she loved; though to my knowledge Cæsar, by his freedman, Thyreus, made promise to her of her dominions for herself and for her children if she would but slay Antony, or even betray him bound. But to this her woman's heart—for still she had a heart—would not consent, and, moreover, we counselled her against it, for of necessity we must hold him to her, lest, Antony escaping or being slain, Cleopatra might ride out the storm and yet be Queen of Egypt. And this grieved me, because Antony, though weak, was still a brave man, and a great; and, moreover, in my own heart I read the

lesson of his woes. For were we not akin in wretchedness? Had not the same woman robbed us of Empire, Friends, and Honour? But pity has no place in politics, not could it turn my feet from the path of vengeance it was ordained that I should tread. Cæsar drew nigh; Pelusium fell; the end was at hand. It was Charmion who brought the tidings to the Queen and Antony, as they slept in the heat of the day, and I came with her.

“Awake!” she cried. “Awake! This is no time for sleep! Seleucus hath surrendered Pelusium to Cæsar, who marches straight on Alexandria!”

With a great oath, Antony sprang and clutched Cleopatra by the arm.

“Thou hast betrayed me—by the Gods I swear it! Now thou shalt pay the price!” And snatching up his sword he drew it.

“Stay thy hand, Antony!” she cried. “It is false—I know naught of this!” And she sprang upon him, and clung about his neck, weeping. “I know naught, my Lord. Take thou the wife of Seleucus and his little children, whom I hold

in guard, and avenge thyself. O Antony, Antony! why dost thou doubt me?"

Then Antony threw down his sword upon the marble, and, casting himself upon the couch, hid his face, and groaned in bitterness of spirit.

But Charmion smiled, for it was she who had sent secretly to Seleucus, her friend, counselling him to surrender forthwith, saying that no fight would be made at Alexandria. And that very night Cleopatra took all her great store of pearls and emeralds—those that remained of the treasure of Menkau-ra—all her wealth of gold, ebony, ivory, and cinnamon, treasure without price, and placed it in the mausoleum of granite which, after our Egyptian fashion, she had built upon the hill that is by the Temple of the Holy Isis. These riches she piled up upon a bed of flax, that, when she fired it, all might perish in the flame and escape the greed of money-loving Octavianus. And she slept henceforth in this tomb, away from Antony; but in the daytime she still saw him at the palace.

But a little while after, when Cæsar with all his great force had already crossed the Canopic mouth of the Nile and was hard on Alexandria,

I came to the palace, whither Cleopatra had summoned me. There I found her in the Alabaster Hall, royally clad, a wild light in her eyes, and, with her, Iras and Charmion, and before her guards; and stretched here and there upon the marble, bodies of dead men, among whom lay one yet dying.

“Greeting, thou Olympus!” she cried. “Here is a sight to glad a physician’s heart—men dead and men sick unto death!”

“What doest thou, O Queen?” I said affrighted.

“What do I? I wreak justice on these criminals and traitors; and, Olympus, I learn the ways of death. I have caused six different poisons to be given to these slaves, and with an attentive eye have watched their working. That man,” and she pointed to a Nubian, “he went mad, and raved of his native deserts and his mother. He thought himself a child again, poor fool! and bade her hold him close to her breast and save him from the darkness which drew near. And that Greek, he shrieked and, shrieking, died. And this, he wept and prayed for pity, and in the end, like a coward, breathed his

last. Now, note the Egyptian yonder, he who still lives and groans; first he took the draught—the deadliest draught of all, they swore—and yet the slave so dearly loves his life he will not leave it! See, he yet strives to throw the poison from him; twice have I given him the cup and yet he is athirst. What a drunkard have we here! Man, man, knowest thou not that in death only can peace be found? Struggle no more, but enter into rest.” And even as she spoke, the man, with a great cry, gave up the spirit.

“There!” she cried, “at length the farce is played—away with those slaves whom I have forced through the difficult gates of Joy!” and she clapped her hands. But when they had borne the bodies thence she drew me to her, and spoke thus:

“Olympus, for all thy prophecies, the end is at hand. Cæsar must conquer, and I and my Lord Antony be lost. Now, therefore, the play being wellnigh done, I must make ready to leave this stage of earth in such fashion as becomes a Queen. For this cause, then, I do make trial of these poisons, seeing that in my person I must soon endure those agonies of death that to-day I

give to others. These drugs please me not; some wrench out the soul with cruel pains, and some too slowly work their end. But thou art skilled in the medicines of death. Now, do thou prepare me such a draught as shall, pangless, steal my life away."

And as I listened the sense of triumph filled my bitter heart, for I knew now that by my own hand should this ruined woman die and the justice of the Gods be done.

"Spoken like a Queen, O Cleopatra!" I said. "Death shall cure thy ills, and I will brew such a wine as shall draw him down a sudden friend and sink thee in a sea of slumber whence, upon this earth, thou shalt never wake again. Oh! fear not Death: Death is thy hope; and, surely, thou shalt pass sinless and pure of heart into the dreadful presence of the Gods!"

She trembled. "And if the heart be not altogether pure, tell me — thou dark man — what then? Nay, I fear not the Gods! for if the Gods of Hell be men, there I shall Queen it also. At the least, having once been royal, royal I shall ever be."

And, as she spoke, suddenly from the palace

gates came a great clamour, and the noise of joyful shouting.

“Why, what is this?” she said, springing from her couch.

“Antony! Antony!” rose the cry; “Antony hath conquered!”

She turned swiftly and ran, her long hair streaming on the wind. I followed her, more slowly, down the great hall, across the court-yards, to the palace gates. And here she met Antony, riding through them, radiant with smiles and clad in his Roman armour. When he saw her he leapt to the ground, and all armed as he was, clasped her to his breast.

“What is it?” she cried; “is Cæsar fallen?”

“Nay, not altogether fallen, Egypt: but we have beat his horsemen back to their trenches, and, like the beginning, so shall be the end, for, as they say here, ‘Where the head goes, the tail will follow.’ Moreover, Cæsar has my challenge, and if he will but meet me hand to hand, the world shall soon see which is the better man, Antony or Octavian.” And even as he spoke and the people cheered there came the cry of “A messenger from Cæsar!”

The herald entered, and bowing low, gave a writing to Antony, bowed again, and went. Cleopatra snatched it from his hand, broke the silk and read aloud:

“Cæsar to Antony, greeting.

“This answer to thy challenge: Can Antony find no better way of death than beneath the sword of Cæsar? Farewell!”

And thereafter they cheered no more.

The darkness came, and before it was midnight, having feasted with those friends who to-night wept over his woes and to-morrow should betray him, Antony went forth to the gathering of the captains of the land-forces and of the fleet, attended by many, among whom was I.

When all were come together, he spoke to them, standing bareheaded in their midst, beneath the radiance of the moon. And thus he most nobly spoke:

“Friends and companions in arms! who yet cling to me, and whom many a time I have led to victory, hearken to me now, who to-morrow may lie in the dumb dust, disempired and dishonoured. This is our design: no longer will we

hang on poised wings above the flood of war, but will straightway plunge, perchance thence to snatch the victor's diadem, or failing, there to drown. Be now but true to me, and to your honour's sake, and you may still sit, the most proud of men, at my right hand in the Capitol of Rome. Fail me now, and the cause of Antony is lost and lost are ye. To-morrow's battle must be hazardous indeed, but we have stood many a time and faced a fiercer peril, and ere the sun had sunk, once more have driven armies like desert sands before our gale of valour and counted the spoil of hostile kings. What have we to fear? Though allies be fled, still is our array as strong as Cæsar's! And show we but as high a heart, why, I swear to you, upon my princely word, to-morrow night I shall deck yonder Canopic gate with the heads of Octavian and his captains!

“Ay, cheer, and cheer again! I love that martial music which swells, not as from the indifferent lips of clarions, now 'neath the breath of Antony and now of Cæsar, but rather out of the single hearts of men who love me. Yet—and now I will speak low, as we do speak o'er

the bier of some beloved dead—yet, if Fortune should rise against me and if, borne down by the weight of arms, Antony, the soldier, dies a soldier's death, leaving you to mourn him who ever was your friend, this is my will, that, after our rough fashion of the camp, I here declare to you. You know where all my treasure lies. Take it, most dear friends; and, in the memory of Antony, make just division. Then go to Cæsar and speak thus: 'Antony, the dead, to Cæsar, the living, sends greeting; and, in the name of ancient fellowship and of many a peril dared, craves this boon: the safety of those who clung to him and that which he hath given them.'

“Nay, let not my tears—for I must weep—overflow your eyes! Why, it is not manly; 'tis most womanish! All men must die, and death were welcome were it not so lone. Should I fall, I leave my children to your tender care—if, perchance, it may avail to save them from the fate of helplessness. Soldiers, enough! to-morrow at the dawn we spring on Cæsar's throat, both by land and sea. Swear that ye will cling to me, even to the last issue!”

“We swear!” they cried. “Noble Antony, we swear!”

“It is well! Once more my star glows bright; to-morrow, set in the highest heaven, it yet may shine the lamp of Cæsar down! Till then, farewell!”

He turned to go. As he went they caught his hand and kissed it; and so deeply were they moved that many wept like children; nor could Antony master his grief, for, in the moonlight, I saw tears roll down his furrowed cheeks and fall upon that mighty breast.

And, seeing all this, I was much troubled. For I well knew that if these men held firm to Antony all might yet go well for Cleopatra; and though I bore no ill will against Antony, yet he must fall, and in that fall drag down the woman who, like some poisonous plant, had twined herself about his giant strength till it choked and mouldered in her embrace.

Therefore, when Antony went I went not, but stood back in the shadow watching the faces of the lords and captains as they spoke together.

“Then it is agreed!” said he who should lead the fleet. “And this we swear to, one and all,

that we will cling to noble Antony to the last extremity of fortune!"

"Ay! ay!" they answered.

"Ay! ay! "I said, speaking from the shadow; "cling, and *die!*"

They turned fiercely and seized me.

"Who is he?" quoth one.

"'Tis that dark-faced dog, Olympus!" cried another. "Olympus, the magician!"

"Olympus, the traitor!" growled another; "put an end to him and his magic!" and he drew his sword.

"Ay! slay him; he would betray the Lord Antony, whom he is paid to doctor."

"Hold a while!" I said in a slow and solemn voice, "and beware how ye try to murder the servant of the Gods. I am no traitor. For myself, I abide the event here in Alexandria, but to you I say, Flee, flee to Cæsar! I serve Antony and the Queen—I serve them truly; but above all I serve the Holy Gods; and what they make known to me, that, Lords, I do know. And I know this: that Antony is doomed, and Cleopatra is doomed, for Cæsar conquers. Therefore, because I honour you, noble gentlemen, and think

with pity on your wives, left widowed, and your little fatherless children, that shall, if ye hold to Antony, be sold as slaves—therefore, I say, cling to Antony if ye will and die; or flee to Cæsar and be saved! And this I say because it is so ordained of the Gods.”

“The Gods!” they growled; “what Gods? Slit the traitor’s throat, and stop his ill-omened talk!”

“Let him show us a sign from his Gods or let him die: I do mistrust this man,” said another.

“Stand back, ye fools!” I cried. “Stand back—free mine arms—and I will show you a sign;” and there was that in my face which frightened them, for they freed me and stood back. Then I lifted up my hands and putting out all my strength of soul searched the depths of space till my Spirit communed with the Spirit of my Mother Isis. Only the Word of Power I uttered not, as I had been bidden. And the holy mystery of the Goddess answered to my Spirit’s cry, falling in awful silence upon the face of earth. Deeper and deeper grew the terrible silence; even the dogs ceased to howl, and in the city men

stood still afeared. Then, from far away, there came the ghostly music of the sistra. Faint it was at first, but ever as it came it grew more loud, till the air shivered with the unearthly sound of terror. I said naught, but pointed with my hand toward the sky. And behold! bosomed upon the air, floated a vast veiled Shape that, heralded by the swelling music of the sistra, drew slowly near, till its shadow lay upon us. It came, it passed, it went toward the camp of Cæsar, till at length the music died away, and the awful Shape was swallowed in the night.

“It is Bacchus!” cried one. “Bacchus, who leaves lost Antony!” and, as he spoke, there rose a groan of terror from all the camp.

But I knew that it was not Bacchus, the false God, but the Divine Isis who deserted Khem, and, passing over the edge of the world, sought her home in space, to be no more known of men. For though her worship is still upheld, though still she is here and in all Earths, Isis manifests herself no more in Egypt. I hid my face and prayed, but when I lifted it from my robe, lo! all had fled and I was alone.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE SURRENDER OF THE TROOPS AND FLEET OF ANTONY BEFORE THE CANOPIC GATE; OF THE END OF ANTONY, AND OF THE BREWING OF THE DRAUGHT OF DEATH.

ON the morrow, at dawn, Antony came forth and gave command that his fleet should advance against the fleet of Cæsar, and that his cavalry should open the land-battle with the cavalry of Cæsar. Accordingly, the fleet advanced in a triple line, and the fleet of Cæsar came out to meet it. But when they met, the galleys of Antony lifted their oars in greeting, and passed over to the galleys of Cæsar; and they sailed away together. And the cavalry of Antony rode forth beyond the Hippodrome to charge the cavalry of Cæsar; but when they met, they lowered their swords and passed over to the camp of Cæsar, deserting Antony. Then Antony grew mad with rage and terrible to see. He shouted to his legions to stand

firm and await attack; and for a little while they stood. One man, however—that same officer who would have slain me on the yesternight—strove to fly; but Antony seized him with his own hand, threw him to the earth, and, springing from his horse, drew his sword to slay him. He held his sword on high, while the man, covering his face, awaited death. But Antony dropped his sword and bade him rise.

“Go!” he said. “Go to Cæsar, and prosper! I did love thee once. Why, then, among so many traitors, should I single thee out for death?”

The man rose and looked upon him sorrowfully. Then, shame overwhelming him, with a great cry he tore open his shirt of mail, plunged his sword into his own heart and fell down dead. Antony stood and gazed at him, but he said never a word. Meanwhile the ranks of Cæsar’s legions drew near, and so soon as they crossed spears the legions of Antony turned and fled. Then the soldiers of Cæsar stood still mocking them; but scarce a man was slain, for they pursued not.

“Fly, Lord Antony! fly!” cried Eros, his

servant, who alone with me stayed by him. "Fly ere thou art dragged a prisoner to Cæsar!"

So he turned and fled, groaning heavily. I went with him, and as we rode through the Canopic gate, where many folk stood wondering, Antony spoke to me:

"Go, thou, Olympus; go to the Queen and say: 'Antony sends greeting to Cleopatra, who hath betrayed him! To Cleopatra he sends greeting and farewell!'"

And so I went to the tomb, but Antony fled on to the palace. When I came to the tomb I knocked upon the door, and Charmion looked forth from the window.

"Open," I cried, and she opened.

"What news, Harmachis?" she whispered.

"Charmion," I said, "the end is at hand. Antony is fled!

"It is well," she answered; "I am aweary."

And there on her golden bed sat Cleopatra.

"Speak, man!" she cried.

"Antony has fled, his forces are fled, Cæsar draws near. To Cleopatra the great Antony sends greeting and farewell. Greeting to Cleopatra who hath betrayed him, and farewell."

"It is a lie!" she screamed; "I betrayed him not! Thou Olympus, go swiftly to Antony and answer thus: 'To Antony, Cleopatra, who hath not betrayed him, sends greeting and farewell. Cleopatra is no more.'"

And so I went, following out my purpose. In the Alabaster Hall I found Antony pacing to and fro, tossing his hands toward the heaven, and with him Eros, for of all his servants Eros alone remained by this fallen man.

"Lord Antony," I said, "Egypt bids thee farewell. Egypt is dead by her own hand."

"Dead! dead!" he whispered, "and is Egypt dead? and is that form of glory now food for worms? Oh, what a woman was this! E'en now my heart goes out towards her. And shall she outdo me at the last, I who have been so great; shall I become so small that a woman can overtop my courage and pass where I fear to follow? Eros, thou hast loved me from a boy—mindest thou how I found thee starving in the desert, and made thee rich, giving thee place and wealth? Come, now, pay me back. Draw that sword thou wearest and make an end of the woes of Antony."

"Oh, Sire," cried the Greek, "I cannot! How can I take away the life of godlike Antony?"

"Answer me not, Eros; but in the last extreme of fate this I charge thee. Do thou my bidding, or begone and leave me quite alone! No more will I see thy face, thou unfaithful servant!"

Then Eros drew his sword and Antony knelt down before him and bared his breast, turning his eyes to heaven. But Eros, crying "I cannot! oh, I cannot!" plunged the sword to his own heart, and fell dead.

Antony rose and gazed upon him. "Why, Eros, that was nobly done," he said. "Thou art greater than I, yet I have learned thy lesson!" and he knelt down and kissed him.

Then, rising of a sudden, he drew the sword from the heart of Eros, plunged it into his bowels, and fell, groaning, on the couch.

"O thou, Olympus," he cried, "this pain is more than I can bear! Make an end of me, Olympus!"

But pity stirred me, and I could not do this thing.

Therefore I drew the sword from his vitals, staunched the flow of blood, and, calling to those

who came crowding in to see Antony die, I bade them summon Atoua from my house at the palace gates. Presently she came, bringing with her simples and life-giving draughts. These I gave to Antony, and bade Atoua go with such speed as her old limbs might to Cleopatra, in the tomb, and tell her of the state of Antony.

So she went, and after a while returned, saying that the Queen yet lived and summoned Antony to die in her arms. And with her came Diomedes. When Antony heard, his ebbing strength came back, for he was fain to look upon Cleopatra's face again. So I called to the slaves—who peeped and peered through curtains and from behind pillars to see this great man die—and together, with much toil, we bore him thence till we came to the foot of the Mausoleum.

But Cleopatra, being afraid of treachery, would no more throw wide the door; so she let down a rope from the window and we made it fast beneath the arms of Antony. Then did Cleopatra, who the while wept most bitterly, together with Charmion and Iras the Greek, pull on the rope with all their strength, while we lifted from below till the dying Antony swung in the air, groaning

heavily, and the blood dropped from his gaping wound. Twice he nearly fell to earth: but Cleopatra, striving with the strength of love and of despair, held him till at length she drew him through the window-place, while all who saw the dreadful sight wept bitterly, and beat their breasts—all save myself and Charmion.

When he was in, once more the rope was let down, and, with some aid from Charmion, I climbed into the tomb, drawing up the rope after me. There I found Antony, laid upon the golden bed of Cleopatra; and she, her breast bare, her face stained with tears, and her hair streaming wildly about him, knelt at his side and kissed him, wiping the blood from his wounds with her robes and hair. And let all my shame be written: as I stood and watched her the old love awoke once more within me, and mad jealousy raged in my heart because—though I could destroy these twain—I could not destroy their love.

“O Antony! my Sweet, my Husband, and my God!” she moaned. “Cruel Antony, hast thou the heart to die and leave me to my lonely

shame? I will follow thee swiftly to the grave. Antony, awake! awake!”

He lifted up his head and called for wine, which I gave him, mixing therein a draught that might allay his pain, for it was great. And when he had drunk he bade Cleopatra lie down on the bed beside him, and put her arms about him; and this she did. Then was Antony once more a man; for, forgetting his own misery and pain, he counselled her as to her own safety: but to this talk she would not listen.

“The hour is short,” she said; “let us speak of this great love of ours that hath been so long and may yet endure beyond the coasts of Death. Mindest thou that night when first thou didst put thine arms about me and call me ‘Love’? Oh! happy, happy ‘night! Having known that night it is well to have lived—even to this bitter end!”

“Ay, Egypt, I mind it well and dwell upon its memory, though from that hour fortune has fled from me—lost in my depth of love for thee, thou Beautiful. I mind it!” he gasped; “then didst thou drink the pearl in wanton play, and

then did that astrologer of thine call out his hour —‘The hour of the coming of the curse of Menkau-ra.’ Through all the after-days those words have haunted me, and now at the last they ring in my ears.”

“He is long dead, my love,” she whispered.

“If he be dead, then I am near him. What meant he?”

“He is dead, the accursed man!—no more of him! Oh! turn and kiss me, for thy face grows white. The end is near!”

He kissed her on the lips, and for a little while so they stayed, to the moment of death, babbling their passion in each other’s ears, like lovers newly wed. Even to my jealous heart, it was a strange and awful thing to see.

Presently, I saw the Change of Death gather on his face. His head fell back.

“Farewell, Egypt; farewell!—I die!”

Cleopatra lifted herself upon her hands, gazed wildly on his ashen face, and then, with a great cry, she sank back swooning.

But Antony yet lived, though the power of speech had left him. Then I drew near and, kneeling, made pretence to minister to him. And as I ministered I whispered in his ear:

“Antony,” I whispered, “Cleopatra was my love before she passed from me to thee. I am Harmachis, that astrologer who stood behind thy couch at Tarsus; and I have been the chief minister of thy ruin.

“Die, Antony!—the curse of Menkau-ra hath fallen!”

He raised himself, and stared upon my face. He could not speak, but, gibbering, he pointed at me. Then with a groan his spirit fled.

Thus did I accomplish my revenge upon Roman Antony, the World-loser.

Thereafter, we recovered Cleopatra from her swoon, for not yet was I minded that she should die. And taking the body of Antony, Cæsar permitting, I and Atoua caused it to be most skillfully embalmed after our Egyptian fashion, cover-

ing the face with a mask of gold fashioned like to the features of Antony. Also I wrote upon his breast his name and titles, and painted his name and the name of his father within his inner coffin, and drew the form of the Holy Nout folding her wings about him.

Then with great pomp Cleopatra laid him in that sepulchre which had been made ready, and in a sarcophagus of alabaster. Now, this sarcophagus was fashioned so large that place was left in it for a second coffin, for Cleopatra would lie by Antony at the last.

These things then happened. And but a little while after I learned tidings from one Cornelius Dolabella, a noble Roman who waited upon Cæsar, and, moved by the beauty that swayed the souls of all who looked upon her, had pity for the woes of Cleopatra. He bade me warn her—for, as her physician, it was allowed me to pass in and out of the tomb where she dwelt—that in three days she would be sent away to Rome, together with her children, save Cæsarion, whom Octavian had already slain, that she might walk in the triumph of Cæsar. Accordingly I went in,

and found her sitting, as now she always sat, plunged in a half stupor, and before her that blood-stained robe with which she had staunched the wounds of Antony. For on this she would continually feast her eyes.

“See how faint they grow, Olympus,” she said, lifting her sad face and pointing to the rusty stains, “and he so lately dead! Why, Gratitude could not fade more fast. What is now thy news? Evil tidings is writ large in those dark eyes of thine, which ever bring back to me something that still slips my mind.”

“The news is ill, O Queen,” I answered. “I have this from the lips of Dolabella, who has it straight from Cæsar’s secretary. On the third day from now Cæsar will send thee and the Princes Ptolemy and Alexander and the Princess Cleopatra to Rome, there to feast the eyes of the Roman mob, and be led in triumph to that Capitol where thou didst swear to set thy throne.”

“Never, never!” she cried, springing to her feet. “Never will I walk in chains in Cæsar’s triumph! What must I do? Charmion, tell me what I can do!”

And Charmion, rising, stood before her, looking at her through the long lashes of her down-cast eyes.

“Lady, thou canst die,” she said quietly.

“Ay, of a truth I had forgotten; I can die. Olympus, hast thou the drug?”

“Nay; but if the Queen wills it, by to-morrow morn it shall be brewed—a drug so swift and strong that not the Gods themselves can hold him who drinks it back from sleep.”

“Let it be made ready, thou Master of Death!”

I bowed, and withdrew myself; and all that night I and old Atoua laboured at the distilling of the deadly draught. At length it was done, and Atoua poured it into a crystal phial, and held it to the light of the fire; for it was white as the purest water.

“*La! la!*” she sang, in her shrill voice; “a drink for a Queen! When fifty drops of that water of my brewing have passed those red lips of hers, thou wilt indeed be avenged of Cleopatra, O Harmachis! Ah, that I could be there to see

thy Ruin ruined! *La! la!* it would be sweet to see!"

"Vengeance is an arrow that ofttimes falls upon the archer's head," I answered, bethinking me of Charmion's saying.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE LAST SUPPER OF CLEOPATRA; OF THE SONG OF CHARMION; OF THE DRINKING OF THE DRAUGHT OF DEATH; OF THE REVEALING OF HARMACHIS; OF THE SUMMONING OF THE SPIRITS BY HARMACHIS; AND OF THE DEATH OF CLEOPATRA.

On the morrow Cleopatra, having sought leave of Cæsar, visited the tomb of Antony, crying that the Gods of Egypt had deserted her. And when she had kissed the coffin and covered it with lotus-flowers she came back, bathed, anointed herself, put on her most splendid robes, and, together with Iras, Charmion, and myself, she supped. Now as she supped her spirit flared up wildly, even as the sky lights up at sunset; and once more she laughed and sparkled as in bygone years, telling us tales of feasts which she and Antony had eaten of. Never, indeed, did I see her look more beauteous than on that last fatal night of vengeance. And thus her mind

drew on to that supper at Tarsus when she drank the pearl.

“Strange,” she said; “strange that at the last the mind of Antony should have turned back to that night among all the nights and to the saying of Harmachis. Charmion, thou dost remember Harmachis the Egyptian?”

“Surely, O Queen,” she answered slowly.

“And who, then, was Harmachis?” I asked; for I would learn if she sorrowed o’er my memory.

“I will tell thee. It is a strange tale, and now that all is done it may well be told. This Harmachis was of the ancient race of the Pharaohs, and, having, indeed, been crowned in secret at Abydus, was sent hither to Alexandria to carry out a great plot that had been formed against the rule of us royal Lagidæ. He came and gained entry to the palace as my astrologer, for he was very learned in all magic—much as thou art, Olympus—and a man beautiful to see. Now this was his plot—that he should slay me and be named Pharaoh. In truth it was a strong one, for he had many friends in Egypt, and I had few. And on that very night when he should carry out his purpose, yea, at the very hour, came Charmion

yonder, and told the plot to me; saying that she had chanced upon its clue. But, in after days—though I have said little thereon to thee, Charmion—I misdoubted me much of that tale of thine; for, by the Gods! to this hour I believe that thou didst love Harmachis, and because he scorned thee thou didst betray him; and for that cause also hast all thy days remained a maid, which is a thing unnatural. Come, Charmion, tell us; for naught it matters now at the end.”

Charmion shivered and made answer: “It is true, O Queen; I also was of the plot, and because Harmachis scorned me I betrayed him; and because of my great love for him I have remained unwed.” And she glanced up at me and caught my eyes, then let the modest lashes veil her own.

“So! I thought it. Strange are the ways of women! But little cause, methinks, had that Harmachis to thank thee for thy love. What sayest thou, Olympus? Ah, and so thou also wast a traitor, Charmion? How dangerous are the paths which Monarchs tread! Well, I forgive thee, for thou hast served me faithfully since that hour.

“But to my tale. Harmachis I dared not slay, lest his great party should rise in fury and cast me from the throne. And now mark the issue. Though he must murder me, in secret this Harmachis loved me, and something thereof I guessed. I had striven a little to draw him to me, for the sake of his beauty and his wit; and for the love of man Cleopatra never strove in vain. Therefore when, with the dagger in his robe, he came to slay me, I matched my charms against his will, and need I tell you, being man and woman, how I won? Oh, never can I forget the look in the eyes of that fallen prince, that forsworn priest, that discrowned Pharaoh, when, lost in the popped draught, I saw him sink into a shameful sleep whence he might no more wake with honour! And, thereafter—till, in the end, I wearied of him, and his sad learned mind, for his guilty soul forbade him to be gay—a little I came to care for him, though not to love. But he—he who loved me—clung to me as a drunkard to the cup which ruins him. Deeming that I should wed him, he betrayed to me the hidden wealth of the pyramid of *Her*—for at the time I much needed treasure—and together we dared the

terrors of the tomb and drew it forth, even from dead Pharaoh's breast. See, this emerald was a part thereof!"—and she pointed to the great scarabæus that she had drawn from the holy heart of Menkau-ra.

“And because of what was written in the tomb, and of that Thing which we saw in the tomb—ah, pest upon it! why does its memory haunt me now?—and also because of policy, for I would fain have won the love of the Egyptians, I was minded to marry this Harmachis and declare his place and lineage to the world—ay, and by his aid hold Egypt from the Roman. For Dellius had then come to call me to Antony, and after much thought I determined to send him back with sharp words. But on that very morning, as I tired me for the Court, came Charmion yonder, and I told her this, for I would see how the matter fell upon her mind. Now mark, Olympus, the power of jealousy, that little wedge which yet has strength to rend the tree of Empire, that secret sword which can carve the fate of Kings! This she could in nowise bear—deny it, Charmion, if thou canst, for now it is clear to me!—that the man she loved should be given to me as husband

—me, whom *he* loved! And therefore, with more skill and wit than I can tell, she reasoned with me, showing that I should by no means do this thing, but journey to Antony; and for that, Charmion, I thank thee, now that all is come and gone. And by a very little, her words weighed down my scale of judgment against Harmachis, and I went to Antony. Thus it is through the jealous spleen of yonder fair Charmion and the passion of a man on which I played as on a lyre, that all these things have come to pass. For this cause Octavian sits a King in Alexandria; for this cause is Antony discrowned and dead; and for this cause I, too, must die to-night! Ah! Charmion! Charmion! thou hast much to answer for, for thou hast changed the story of the world; and yet, even now—I would not have it otherwise!”

She paused awhile, covering her eyes with her hand; and, looking, I saw great tears upon the cheek of Charmion.

“And of this Harmachis,” I asked; “where is he now, O Queen?”

“Where is he? In Amenti, forsooth—making his peace with Isis, perchance. At Tarsus I saw

Antony, and loved him; and from that moment I loathed the sight of the Egyptian, and swore to make an end of him; for a lover done with should be a lover dead. And, being jealous, he spoke some words of evil omen, even at that Feast of the Pearl; and on the same night I would have slain him, but before the deed was done, he was gone."

"And whither was he gone?"

"Nay; that know not I. Brennus—he who led my guard, and last year sailed North to join his own people—Brennus swore he saw him float to the skies; but in this matter I misdoubted me of Brennus, for methinks he loved the man. Nay, he sank off Cyprus, and was drowned; perchance Charmion can tell us how?"

"I can tell thee nothing, O Queen; Harmachis is lost."

"And well lost, Charmion, for he was an evil man to play with—ay, although I bettered him I say it! Well he 'served my purpose; but I loved him not, and even now I fear him; for it seemed to me that I heard his voice summoning me to fly, through the din of the fight at Actium.

Thanks be to the Gods, as thou sayest, he is lost, and can no more be found."

But I, listening, put forth my strength, and, by the arts I have, cast the shadow of my Spirit upon the Spirit of Cleopatra so that she felt the presence of the lost Harmachis.

"Nay, what is it?" she said. "By Serapis! I grow afraid! It seems to me that I feel Harmachis here! His memory overwhelms me like a flood of waters, and he these ten years dead! Oh! at such a time it is unholy!"

"Nay, O Queen," I answered, "if he be dead then is he everywhere, and well at such a time—the time of thy own death—may his Spirit draw near to welcome thine at its going."

"Speak not thus, Olympus. I would see Harmachis no more; the count between us is too heavy, and in another world than this more evenly, perchance should we be matched. Ah, the terror passes! I was but unnerved. Well the fool's story hath served to while away that heaviest of our hours, the hour which ends in death. Sing to me, Charmion, sing, for thy voice is very

sweet, and I would soothe my soul to sleep. The memory of that Harmachis has wrung me strangely! Sing, then, the last song that I shall hear from those tuneful lips of thine, the last of so many songs."

"It is a sad hour for song, O Queen!" said Charmion; but nevertheless, she took her harp and sang. And thus she sang, very soft and low, the dirge of the sweet-tongued Syrian Meleager:

*Tears for my lady dead,
Heliodore!
Salt tears and strange to shed,
Over and o'er;
Go tears and low lament
Fare from her tomb,
Wend where my lady went,
Down through the gloom—
Sighs for my lady dead,
Tears do I send,
Long love remembered,
Mistress and friend!
Sad are the songs we sing,
Tears that we shed,
Empty the gifts we bring—
Gifts to the dead!
Ah, for my flower, my Love,
Hades hath taken,*

*Ah, for the dust above,
Scattered and shaken!
Mother of blade and grass,
Earth, in thy breast
Lull her that gentlest was
Gently to rest!*

The music of her voice died away, and it was so sweet and sad that Iras began to weep and the bright tears stood in Cleopatra's stormy eyes. Only I wept not; my tears were dry.

"'Tis a heavy song of thine, Charmion," said the Queen. "Well, as thou saidst, it is a sad hour for song, and thy dirge is fitted to the hour. Sing it over me once again when I lie dead, Charmion. And now farewell to music, and on to the end. Olympus, take yonder parchment and write what I shall say."

I took the parchment and the reed, and wrote thus in the Roman tongue:

"Cleopatra to Octavianus, greeting.

"This is the state of life. At length there comes an hour when, rather than endure those burdens that overwhelm us, putting off the body we would take wing into forgetfulness. Cæsar, thou hast conquered: take thou the spoils of

victory. But in thy triumph Cleopatra cannot walk. When all is lost, then we must go to seek the lost. Thus in the desert of Despair the brave do harvest Resolution. Cleopatra hath been great as Antony was great, nor shall her fame be minished in the manner of her end. Slaves live to endure their wrong; but Princes, treading with a firmer step, pass through the gates of Wrong into the royal Dwellings of the Dead. This only doth Egypt ask of Cæsar—that he suffer her to lie in the tomb of Antony. Farewell!”

This I wrote, and having sealed the writing, Cleopatra bade me go find a messenger, despatch it to Cæsar, and then return. So I went, and at the door of the tomb I called a soldier who was not on duty, and, giving him money, bade him take the letter to Cæsar. Then I went back, and there in the chamber the three women stood in silence, Cleopatra clinging to the arm of Iras, and Charmion a little apart watching the twain.

“If indeed thou art minded to make an end, O Queen,” I said, “the time is short, for presently Cæsar will send his servants in answer to thy letter,” and I drew forth the phial of white and deadly bane and set it upon the board.

She took it in her hand and gazed thereon. "How innocent it seems!" she said; "and yet therein lies my death. 'Tis strange."

"Ay, Queen, and the death of ten other folk. No need to take so long a draught."

"I fear," she gasped—"how know I that it will slay outright? I have seen so many die by poison and scarce one has died outright. And some—ah, I cannot think on them!"

"Fear not," I said, "I am a master of my craft. Or, if thou dost fear, cast this poison forth and live. In Rome thou mayst still find happiness: ay, in Rome, where thou shalt walk in Cæsar's triumph, while the laughter of the hard-eyed Latin women shall chime down the music of thy golden chains."

"Nay, I will die, Olympus. Oh, if one would but show the path."

Then Iras loosed her hand and stepped forward. "Give me the draught, Physician," she said. "I go to make ready for my Queen."

"It is well," I answered; "on thy own head be it!" and I poured from the phial into a little golden goblet.

She raised it, curtsied low to Cleopatra, then,

coming forward, kissed her on the brow, and Charmion she also kissed. This done, tarrying not and making no prayer, for Iras was a Greek, she drank, and, putting her hand to her head, instantly fell down and died.

“Thou seest,” I said breaking in upon the silence, “it is swift.”

“Ay, Olympus; thine is a master drug! Come now, I thirst; fill me the bowl, lest Iras weary in waiting at the gates!”

So I poured afresh into the goblet; but this time, making pretence to rinse the cup, I mixed a little water with the bane, for I was not minded that she should die before she knew me.

Then did the royal Cleopatra, taking the goblet in her hand, turn her lovely eyes to heaven and cry aloud:

“O ye Gods of Egypt! who have deserted me, to you no longer will I pray, for your ears are shut unto my crying and your eyes blind to my griefs! Therefore, I make entreaty of that last friend whom the Gods, departing, leave to helpless man. Sweep hither, Death, whose winnowing wings enshadow all the world, and give me ear! Draw nigh, thou King of Kings! who,

with an equal hand, bringest the fortunate head to one pillow with the slave, and by thy spiritual breath dost waft the bubble of our life far from this hell of earth! Hide me where winds blow not and waters cease to roll; where wars are done and Cæsar's legions cannot march! Take me to a new dominion, and crown me Queen of Peace! Thou art my Lord, O Death, and in thy kiss I have conceived. I am in labour of a Soul: see—it stands new-born upon the edge of Time! Now—now—go, Life! Come, Sleep! Come, Antony!”

And, with one glance to heaven, she drank, and cast the goblet to the ground.

Then at last came the moment of my pent-up vengeance, and of the vengeance of Egypt's outraged Gods, and of the falling of the curse of Menkau-ra.

“What's this?” she cried; “I grow cold, but I die not! Thou dark physician, thou hast betrayed me!”

“Peace, Cleopatra! Presently shalt thou die and know the fury of the Gods! *The curse of Menkau-ra hath fallen!* It is finished! Look

upon me, woman! Look upon this marred face, this twisted form, this living mass of sorrow! *Look! look! Who am I?*”

She stared upon me wildly.

“Oh! oh!” she shrieked, throwing up her arms; “at last I know thee! By the Gods, thou art Harmachis!—Harmachis risen from the dead!”

“Ay, Harmachis risen from the dead to drag thee down to death and agony eternal! See, thou, Cleopatra: *I* have ruined thee as thou didst ruin me! I, working in the dark, and helped of the angry Gods, have been thy secret spring of woe! I filled thy heart with fear at Actium; I held the Egyptians from thy aid; I sapped the strength of Antony; I showed the portent of the Gods unto thy captains! By my hand at length thou diest, for I am the instrument of Vengeance! Ruin I pay thee back for ruin, Treachery for treachery, Death for death! Come hither, Charmion, partner of my plots, who betrayed me, but, repenting, art the sharer of my triumph, come watch this fallen wanton die.”

Cleopatra heard, and sank back upon the golden bed, groaning “And thou, too, Charmion!”

A moment so she sat, then her Imperial spirit burnt up glorious before she died.

She staggered from the bed, and, with arms outstretched, she cursed me.

“Oh! for one hour of life!” she cried—“one short hour, that therein I might make thee die in such a fashion as thou canst not dream, thou and that false paramour of thine, who betrayed both me and thee! And thou didst love me! Ah, *there* I have thee still! See, thou subtle, plotting priest”—and with both hands she rent back the royal robes from her bosom—“see, on this fair breast once night by night thy head was pillowed, and thou didst sleep wrapped in these same arms. Now, put away their memory *if thou canst!* I read it in thine eyes—that mayst thou not! No torture which I bear can, in its sum, draw nigh to the rage of that deep soul of thine, rent with longings never, never to be reached! Harmachis, thou slave of slaves, from thy triumph-depths I snatch a deeper triumph, and conquered yet I conquer! I spit upon thee—I defy thee—and, dying, doom thee to the torment of thy deathless love! O Antony! I come, my Antony!—I come to thy own dear arms! Soon I shall find thee, and, wrapped in a

love undying and divine, together we will float through all the depths of space, and, lips to lips and eyes to eyes, drink of desires grown more sweet with every draught! Or if I find thee not, then I shall sink in peace down the poppied ways of Sleep: and for me the breast of Night, whereon I shall be softly cradled, will yet seem thy bosom, Antony! Oh, I die!—come, Antony—and give me peace!”

Even in my fury I had quailed beneath her scorn, for home flew the arrows of her winged words. Alas! and alas! it was *true*—the shaft of my vengeance fell upon my own head; never had I loved her as I loved her now. My soul was rent with jealous torture, and thus I swore she should not die.

“Peace!” I cried; “what peace is there for thee? Oh! ye Holy Three, hear now my prayer. Osiris, loosen Thou the bonds of Hell and send forth those whom I shall summon! Come Ptolemy, poisoned of thy sister Cleopatra; come Arsinoë, murdered in the sanctuary by thy sister Cleopatra; come Sepa, tortured to death of Cleopatra; come Divine Menkau-ra, whose body Cleopatra tore and whose curse she braved for greed; come

one, come all who have died at the hands of Cleopatra! Rush from the breast of Nout and greet her who murdered you! By the link of mystic union, by the symbol of the Life, Spirits, I summon you!"

Thus I spoke the spell; while Charmion, affrighted, clung to my robe, and dying Cleopatra, resting on her hands, swung slowly to and fro, gazing with vacant eyes.

Then the answer came. The casement burst asunder, and on fluttering wings that great bat entered which last I had seen hanging to the eunuch's chin in the womb of the pyramid of *Her*. Thrice it circled round, once it hovered o'er dead Iras, then flew to where the dying woman stood. To her it flew, on her breast it settled, clinging to that emerald which was dragged from the dead heart of Menkau-ra. Thrice the grey Horror screamed aloud, thrice it beat its bony wings, and lo! it was gone.

Then suddenly within that chamber sprang up the Shapes of Death. There was Arsinoë, the beautiful, even as she had shrunk beneath the butcher's knife. There was young Ptolemy, his features twisted by the poisoned cup. There was

the majesty of Menkau-ra, crowned with the uræus crown; there was grave Sepa, his flesh all torn by the torturer's hooks; there were those poisoned slaves; and there were others without number, shadowy and dreadful to behold! who, thronging that narrow chamber, stood silently fixing their glassy eyes upon the face of her who slew them!

“Behold! Cleopatra!” I said. “*Behold thy peace, and die!*”

“Ay!” said Charmion. “Behold and die! thou who didst rob me of my honour, and Egypt of her King!”

She looked, she saw the awful Shapes—her Spirit, hurrying from the flesh, mayhap could hear words to which my ears were deaf. Then her face sank in with terror, her great eyes grew pale, and, shrieking, Cleopatra fell and died: passing, with that dread company, to her appointed place.

Thus, then, I, Harmachis, fed my soul with vengeance, fulfilling the justice of the Gods, and yet knew myself empty of all joy therein. For

though that thing we worship doth bring us ruin,
and Love being more pitiless than Death, we in
turn do pay all our sorrow back; yet we must
worship on, yet stretch out our arms towards our
lost Desire, and pour our heart's blood upon the
shrine of our discrowned God.

For Love is of the Spirit and knows not
Death.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE FAREWELL OF CHARMION; OF THE DEATH OF CHARMION; OF THE DEATH OF THE OLD WIFE, ATOUA; OF THE COMING OF HARMACHIS TO ABOUTHIS; OF HIS CONFESSION IN THE HALL OF SIX-AND THIRTY PILLARS; AND OF THE DECLARING OF THE DOOM OF HARMACHIS.

CHARMION unclasped my arm, to which she had clung in terror.

“Thy vengeance, thou dark Harmachis,” she said, in a hoarse voice, “is a thing hideous to behold! O lost Egypt, with all thy sins thou wast indeed a Queen!

“Come, aid me, Prince; let us stretch this poor clay upon the bed and deck it royally, so that it may give its dumb audience to the messengers of Cæsar as becomes the last of Egypt’s Queens.”

I spoke no word in answer, for my heart was very heavy, and now that all was done I was weary. Together, then, we lifted up the body

and laid it on the golden bed. Charmion placed the uræus crown upon the ivory brow, and combed the night-dark hair that showed never a thread of silver, and, for the last time, shut those eyes wherein had shone all the changing glories of the sea. She folded the chill hands upon the breast whence Passion's breath had fled, and straightened the bent knees beneath the broidered robe, and by the head set flowers. And there at length Cleopatra lay, more splendid now in her cold majesty of death than in her richest hour of breathing beauty!

We drew back and looked on her, and on dead Iras at her feet.

"It is done!" quoth Charmion; "we are avenged, and now, Harmachis, dost follow by this same road?" And she nodded toward the phial on the board.

"Nay, Charmion. I fly—I fly to a heavier death! Not thus easily may I end my space of earthly penance."

"So be it, Harmachis! And I, Harmachis—I fly also, but with swifter wings. My game is played. I, too, have made atonement. Oh! what a bitter fate is mine, to have brought misery

on all I love, and, in the end, to die unloved! To thee I have atoned; to my angered Gods I have atoned; and now I go to find a way whereby I may atone to Cleopatra in that Hell where she is, and which I must share! For she loved me well, Harmachis; and, now that she is dead, methinks that, after thee, I loved her best of all. So of her cup and the cup of Iras I will surely drink!" And she took the phial, and with a steady hand poured that which was left of the poison into the goblet.

"Bethink thee, Charmion," I said; "yet mayst thou live for many years, hiding these sorrows beneath the withered days."

"Yet I may, but I will not! To live the prey of so many memories, the fount of an undying shame that night by night, as I lie sleepless, shall well afresh from my sorrow-stricken heart!—to live torn by a love I cannot lose!—to stand alone like some storm-twisted tree, and, sighing day by day to the winds of heaven, gaze upon the desert of my life, while I wait the lingering lightning's stroke—nay, that will not I, Harmachis! I had died long since, but I lived on to serve thee; now no more thou needest me, and I

go. Oh, fare thee well!—for ever fare thee well! For not again shall I look upon thy face, and where I go thou goest not! For thou dost not love me who still dost love that queenly woman thou hast hounded to the death! Her thou shalt never win, and thee I shall never win, and this is the bitter end of Fate! See, Harmachis: I ask one boon before I go and for all time become naught to thee but a memory of shame. Tell me that thou dost forgive me so far as thine it is to forgive, and in token thereof kiss me—with no lover's kiss, but kiss me on the brow, and bid me pass in peace."

And she drew near to me with arms outstretched and pitiful trembling lips and gazed upon my face.

"Charmion," I answered, "we are free to act for good or evil, and yet methinks there is a Fate above our fate, that, blowing from some strange shore, compels our little sails of purpose, set them as we will, and drives us to destruction. I forgive thee, Charmion, as I trust in turn to be forgiven, and by this kiss, the first and the last, I seal our peace." And with my lips I touched her brow.

She spoke no more; only for a little while she stood gazing on me with sad eyes. Then she lifted the goblet, and said:

“Royal Harmachis, in this deadly cup I pledge thee! Would that I had drunk of it ere ever I looked upon thy face! Pharaoh, who, thy sins outworn, yet shalt rule in perfect peace o’er worlds I may not tread, who yet shalt sway a kinglier sceptre than that I robbed thee of, for ever, fare thee well!”

She drank, cast down the cup, and for a moment stood with the wide eyes of one who looks for Death. Then He came, and Charmion the Egyptian fell prone upon the floor, dead. And for a moment more I stood alone with the dead.

I crept to the side of Cleopatra, and, now that none were left to see, I sat down on the bed and laid her head upon my knee, as once before it had been laid in that night of sacrilege beneath the shadow of the everlasting pyramid. Then I kissed her chill brow and went from the House of Death—avenged, but sorely smitten with despair!

“Physician,” said the officer of the Guard as I went through the gates, “what passes yonder in the Monument? Methought I heard the sounds of death.”

“Naught passes—all hath passed,” I made reply, and went.

And as I went in the darkness I heard the sound of voices and the running of the feet of Cæsar’s messengers.

Flying swiftly to my house I found Atoua waiting at the gates. She drew me into a quiet chamber and closed the doors.

“Is it done?” she asked, and turned her wrinkled face to mine, while the lamplight streamed white upon her snowy hair. “Nay, why ask? I—I know that it is done!”

“Ay, it is done, and well done, old wife! All are dead! Cleopatra, Iras, Charmion—all save myself!”

The aged woman drew up her bent form and cried: “Now let me go in peace, for I have seen my desire upon thy foes and the foes of Khem. *La! la!*—not in vain have I lived on beyond the years of man! I have seen my desire upon thy enemies—I have gathered the dews of Death,

and thy foe hath drunk thereof! Fallen is the brow of Pride! the shame of Khem is level with the dust! Ah, would that I might have seen that wanton die!"

"Cease, woman! cease! The Dead are gathered to the Dead! Osiris holds them fast, and everlasting silence seals their lips! Pursue not the fallen great with insults! Up!—let us fly to Abouthis, that all may be accomplished!"

"Fly thou, Harmachis!—Harmachis, fly—but I fly not! To this end only I have lingered on the earth. Now I untie the knot of life and let my spirit free! Fare thee well, Prince, the pilgrimage is done! Harmachis, from a babe have I loved thee, and love thee yet!—but no more in this world may I share thy griefs—I am spent. Osiris, take thou my Spirit!" and her trembling knees gave way and she sank to the ground.

I ran to her side and looked upon her. She was already dead, and I was alone upon the earth without a friend to comfort me!

Then I turned and went, no man hindering me, for all was confusion in the city, and departed from Alexandria in a vessel I had made ready,

On the eighth day, I landed, and, in the carrying out of my purpose, travelled on foot across the fields to the Holy Shrines of Abouthis. And here, as I knew, the worship of the Gods had been lately set up again in the Temple of the Divine Sethi: for Charmion had caused Cleopatra to repent of her decree of vengeance and to restore the lands that she had seized, though the treasure she restored not. And the temple having been purified, now, at the season of the Feast of Isis, all the High Priests of the ancient Temples of Egypt were gathered together to celebrate the coming home of the Gods into their holy place.

I gained the city. It was on the seventh day of the Feast of Isis. Even as I came the long array wended through the well-remembered streets. I joined in the multitude that followed, and with my voice swelled the chorus of the solemn chant as we passed through the pylons into the imperishable halls. How well known were the holy words:

*“Softly we tread, our measured footsteps falling
Within the Sanctuary Sevenfold;
Soft on the Dead that liveth are we calling:*

*'Return, Osiris, from thy Kingdom cold!
Return to them that worship thee of old.'*

And, then, when the sacred music ceased, as aforetime on the setting of the majesty of Ra, the High Priest raised the statue of the living God and held it on high before the multitude.

With a joyful shout of

"Osiris! our hope, Osiris! Osiris!"

the people tore the black wrappings from their dress, showing the white robes beneath, and, as one man, bowed before the God.

Then they went to feast each at his home; but I stayed in the court of the temple.

Presently a priest of the temple drew near, and asked me of my business. And I answered him that I came from Alexandria, and would be led before the council of the High Priests, for I knew that the Holy Priests were gathered together debating the tidings from Alexandria.

Thereon the man left, and the High Priests, hearing that I was from Alexandria, ordered that I should be led into their presence in the second Hall of Columns—and so I was led in. It was

already dark, and between the great pillars lights were set, as on that night when I was crowned Pharaoh of the Upper and the Lower Land. There, too, was the long line of Dignitaries seated in their carven chairs, and taking counsel together. All was the same; the same cold images of Kings and Gods gazed with the same empty eyes from the everlasting walls. Ay, more; among those gathered there were five of the very men who, as leaders of the great plot, had sat here to see me crowned, being the only conspirators who had escaped the vengeance of Cleopatra and the clutching hand of Time.

I took my stand on the spot where once I had been crowned and made me ready for the last act of shame with such bitterness of heart as cannot be written.

"Why, it is the physician Olympus," said one. "He who lived a hermit in the Tombs of Tápé, and who but lately was of the household of Cleopatra. Is it, then, true that the Queen is dead by her own hand, Physician?"

"Yea, holy Sirs, I am that physician; also Cleopatra is dead by *my* hand."

"By thy hand? Why, how comes this?—

though well is she dead, forsooth, the wicked wanton!"

"Your pardon, Sirs, and I will tell you all, for I am come hither to that end. Perchance among you there may be some—methinks I see some—who, nigh eleven years ago, were gathered in this hall to secretly crown one Harmachis, Pharaoh of Khem?"

"It is true!" they said; "but how knowest thou these things, thou Olympus?"

"Of the rest of those seven-and-thirty nobles," I went on, making no answer, "are two-and-thirty missing. Some are dead, as Amenemhat is dead; some are slain, as Sepa is slain; and some, perchance, yet labour as slaves within the mines, or live afar, fearing vengeance."

"It is so," they said: "alas! it is so. Harmachis the accursed betrayed the plot, and sold himself to the wanton Cleopatra!"

"It is so," I went on, lifting up my head. "Harmachis betrayed the plot and sold himself to Cleopatra; and, holy Sirs—*I am that Harmachis!*"

The Priests and Dignitaries gazed astonished. Some rose and spoke; some said naught.

"I am that Harmachis! I am that traitor, trebly steeped in crime!—a traitor to my Gods, a traitor to my Country, a traitor to my Oath! I come hither to say that I have done this. I have executed the Divine vengeance on her who ruined me and gave Egypt to the Roman. And now that, after years of toil and patient waiting, this is accomplished by my wisdom and the help of the angry Gods, behold I come with all my shame upon my head to declare the thing I am, and take the traitor's guerdon!"

"Mindest thou of the doom of him who hath broke the oath that may not be broke?" asked he who first had spoken, in heavy tones.

"I know it well," I answered; "I court that awful doom."

"Tell us more of this matter, thou who wast Harmachis."

So, in cold clear words, I laid bare all my shame, keeping back nothing. And ever as I spoke I saw their faces grow more hard, and knew that for me there was no mercy; nor did I ask it, nor, had I asked, could it have been granted.

When, at last, I had done, they put me

aside while they took counsel. Then they drew me forth again, and the eldest among them, a man very old and venerable, the Priest of the Divine Hatshepu at Tápé, spoke, in icy accents:

“Thou Harmachis, we have considered this matter. Thou hast sinned the threefold deadly sin. On thy head lies the burden of the woe of Khem, this day enthralled of Rome. To Isis, the Mother Mystery, thou hast offered the deadly insult, and thou hast broken thy holy oath. For all of these sins there is, as well thou knowest, but one reward, and that reward is thine. Naught can it weigh in the balance of our justice that thou hast slain her who was thy cause of stumbling; naught that thou comest to name thyself the vilest thing who ever stood within these walls. On thee also must fall the curse of Menkau-ra, thou false priest! thou forsworn patriot! thou Pharaoh shameful and discrowned! Here, where we set the Double Crown upon thy head, we doom thee to the doom! Go to thy dungeon and await the falling of its stroke! Go, remembering what thou mightest have been and what thou art, and may those Gods who through thy evil doing shall perchance ere long cease to be

worshipped within these holy temples, give to thee that mercy which we deny! Lead him forth!"

So they took me and led me forth. With bowed head I went, looking not up, and yet I felt their eyes burn upon my face.

Oh! surely of all my shames this is the heaviest!

CHAPTER X.

OF THE LAST WRITING OF HARMACHIS, THE ROYAL
EGYPTIAN.

THEY led me to the prison chamber that is high in the pylon tower and here I wait my doom. I know not when the sword of Fate shall fall. Week grows to week, and month to month, and still it is delayed. Still it quivers unseen above my head. I know that it will fall, but when I know not. Perchance, I shall wake in some dead hour of midnight to hear the stealthy steps of the slayers and be hurried forth. Perchance, they are now at hand. Then will come the secret cell! the horror! the nameless coffin! and at last it will be done! Oh, let it come! let it come swiftly!

All is written; I have held back nothing—my sin is sinned—my vengeance is finished. Now all things end in darkness and in ashes,

and I prepare to face the terrors that are to come in other worlds than this. I go, but not without hope I go: for, though I see Her not, though no more She answers to my prayers, still I am aware of the Holy Isis, who is with me for evermore and whom I shall yet again behold face to face. And then at last in that far day I shall find forgiveness; then the burden of my guilt will roll from me and innocency come back and wrap me round, bringing me holy Peace.

Oh! dear land of Khem, as in a dream I see thee! I see Nation after Nation set its standard on thy shores, and its yoke upon thy neck! I see new Religions without end calling out their truths upon the banks of Sihor, and summoning thy people to their worship! I see thy temples—thy holy temples—crumbling in the dust: a wonder to the sight of men unborn, who shall peer into thy tombs and desecrate the great ones of thy glory! I see thy mysteries a mockery to the unlearned, and thy wisdom wasted like waters on the desert sands! I see the Roman Eagles

stoop and perish, their beaks yet red with the blood of men, and the long lights dancing down the barbarian spears that follow in their wake! And then, at last, I see Thee once more great, once more free, and having once more a knowledge of thy Gods—ay, thy Gods with a changed countenance, and called by other names, but still thy Gods!

The sun sinks over Abouthis. The red rays of Ra flame on temple roofs, upon green fields, and the wide waters of father Sihor. So as a child I watched him sink; just so his last kiss touched the further pylon's frowning brow; just that same shadow lay upon the tombs. All is unchanged! I—I only am changed—so changed, and yet the same!

Oh, Cleopatra! Cleopatra, thou Destroyer! if I might but tear thy vision from my heart! Of all my griefs, this is the heaviest grief—still must I love thee! Still must I hug this serpent to my heart! Still in my ears must ring that low laugh

of triumph—the murmur of the falling fountain
—the song of the nightingale—

[Here the writing on the third roll of papyrus abruptly ends. It would almost seem that the writer was at this moment broken in upon by those who came to lead him to his doom.]



THE END.



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