

"Then you have not heard that Petammon, one of your colleagues, has succeeded in cutting the skin, which covered the pupil of the eye and so restoring Amasis' sight?"

The Egyptian started and ground his teeth; recovered his presence of mind, however, in a moment, and answered: "Then the gods have punished the father through the children."

"In what way? Psamtik suits his father's present mood very well. It is true that Tachot is ill, but she prays and sacrifices with her father all the more for that; and as to Nitetis, you and I both know that her death will not touch him very closely."

"I really do not understand you."

"Of course not, so long as you fancy that I believe your beautiful patient to be Amasis' daughter."

The Egyptian started again, but Phanes went on without appearing to notice his emotion: "I know more than you suppose. Nitetis is the daughter of Hophra, Amasis' dethroned predecessor. Amasis brought her up as his own child—first, in order to make the Egyptians believe that Hophra had died childless; secondly, in order to deprive her of her rights to the throne; for you know women are allowed to govern on the Nile."<sup>41</sup>

"These are mere suppositions."

"For which, however, I can bring irrefragable proofs. Among the papers which your old servant Hib brought with him in a small box, there must be some letters

41. In the lists of kings of Egypt, the names of many queens occur who reigned in their own right, and these are corroborated by the monumental inscriptions. Lauth, indeed, in his *Manetho*, is of opinion that the divisions of the dynasties are connected with the reigns of the queens.

from a certain Sonnophre, a celebrated accoucheur,<sup>42</sup> your own father, which . . ."

"If that be the case, those letters are my property, and I have not the slightest intention of giving them up; besides which you might search Persia from one end to the other without finding any one who could decipher my father's writing."

"Pardon me, if I point out one or two errors into which you have fallen. First, this box is at present in my hands, and though I am generally accustomed to respect the rights of property, I must assure you that, in the present instance, I shall not return the box until its contents have served my purpose. Secondly, the gods have so ordained, that just at this moment there is a man in Babylon who can read every kind of writing known to the Egyptian priests. Do you perhaps happen to know the name of Onuphis?"

For the third time the Egyptian turned pale. "Are you certain," he said, "that this man is still among the living?"

"I spoke to him myself yesterday. He was formerly, you know, high-priest at Heliopolis, and was initiated into all your mysteries there. My wise countryman, Pythagoras of Samos, came to Egypt, and after

42. To judge from the pictures on the monuments and from the 1st Chap. of Exodus, it would seem that in ancient, as in modern Egypt, midwives were usually called in to assist at the birth of children; but it is also certain, that in difficult cases physicians were employed also. In the hieratic medical papyrus in Berlin, women are often spoken of as assisting at such times. In the medical Papyrus Ebers certain portions are devoted to diseases peculiar to women. There were special rooms set aside in private houses for the birth of children, as symbolical ones were reserved in the temples. These chambers were called *meschen*, and from them was derived the name given to midwives, *ta meschenu*.

submitting to some of your ceremonies,<sup>43</sup> was allowed to attend the lessons given in the schools for priests. His remarkable talents won the love of the great Onuphis and he taught him all the Egyptian mysteries,<sup>44</sup> which Pythagoras afterwards turned to account for the benefit of mankind. My delightful friend Rhodopis and I are proud of having been his pupils. When the rest

43. Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagoræ*, II. p. 18. ed. Kiessl. Diod. I. 98. Plutarch, *Quæst. conv.* VIII. 8. 2. Onuphis is also called Onuphis. In connection with this subject much is to be found in Röth, *Geschichte unserer abendländischen Philosophie*. It is a pity that this very clever book, which has been the result of such extended studies, should lose in value by the reckless boldness of its combinations.

44. Notwithstanding all the fables told about the Egyptian mysteries by the later Greek writers, especially the Neo-Platonists, we can get no clear idea of them. Much on this subject has been preserved in the papyri, but unfortunately whenever the mysteries are touched upon, the language of the priestly writers becomes so overburdened with metaphors and is made purposely so obscure, that it is very difficult to discover their meaning. The mysteries seem to have been the exclusive property of the priests, (see also Plut. *Isis and Osiris* 4-11.) and to have comprehended what was symbolized in the sacred ceremonies. The belief in one only god (as the Ritual of the Dead teaches also) seems to have been at the root of these mysteries, and they must have contained much that is noble and beautiful, as the wisest Greek philosophers, Lykurgus, Solon, Thales, Pythagoras, Demokritus, Plato, and many others, borrowed much from them in their teaching on political economy, geometry, astronomy and philosophy. Moses too owed many of his moral and sanitary laws to the acquaintance with these mysteries, which he made as pupil of the Egyptian priests. See Vol. I. note 251. A great deal of erudition has been spent by modern scholars on this subject, with but very small result; as, for instance, by I. G. Bremer, *Symbolische Weisheit der Aegypter*, &c.; R. Howard, *Revelations of Egyptian Mysteries*; F. Nork, *Andeutungen eines Systems der priesterlichen Mysterosophie und Hierologie*. &c. A thorough understanding of the Ritual of the Dead, (already translated by Birch in his English translation of Bunsen's *Egypt's Place in the History of the World*), and the publication of the existing hieratic papyri, which, in the present advanced state of Egyptian philology, must soon be compelled to yield their secrets to earnest students, will in many ways clear up these mysteries of mysteries, if not do away with them entirely. Much has been already gained in this direction, especially from the inscriptions belonging to the times of the Ptolemies, the 1st, 17th and 125th chapters of the Ritual of the Dead, the Pantheistic text in the tombs of the kings and the temples of the oases, the book of Athem, and many manuscripts, whose text can be restored by comparison.

of your caste heard that Onuphis had betrayed the sacred mysteries, the ecclesiastical judges determined on his death. This was to be caused by a poison extracted from peach-kernels. The condemned man, however, heard of their machinations, and fled to Naukratis, where he found a safe asylum in the house of Rhodopis, whom he had heard highly praised by Pythagoras, and whose dwelling was rendered inviolable by the king's letter. Here he met Antimenidas the brother of the poet Alcæus\* of Lesbos, who, having been banished by Pittakus, the wise ruler of Mitylene, had gone to Babylon, and there taken service in the army of Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Assyria. Antimenidas gave him letters to the Chaldæans. Onuphis travelled to the Euphrates, settled there, and was obliged to seek for some means of earning his daily bread, as he had left Egypt a poor man. He is now supporting himself in his old age, by the assistance which his superior knowledge enables him to render the Chaldæans in their astronomical observations from the tower of Bel. Onuphis is nearly eighty, but his mind is as clear as ever, and when I saw him yesterday and asked him to help me, his eyes brightened as he promised to do so. Your father was one of his judges, but he bears you no malice and sends you a greeting."

Nebenchari's eyes were fixed thoughtfully on the ground during this tale. When Phanes had finished, he gave him a penetrating look and said: "Where are my papers?"

"They are in Onuphis' hands. He is looking among them for the document I want."

"I expected to hear that. Be so good as to tell me

\* See vol. I. note 15. (Alcæus).

what the box is like, which Hib thought proper to bring over to Persia?"

"It is a small ebony trunk, with an exquisitely-carved lid. In the centre is a winged beetle, and on the four corners . . ."

"That contains nothing but a few of my father's notices and memorandums," said Nebenchari, drawing a deep breath of relief.

"They will very likely be sufficient for my purpose. I do not know whether you have heard, that I stand as high as possible in Cambyses' favor."

"So much the better for you. I can assure you, however, that the papers which would have been most useful to you have all been left behind in Egypt."

"They were in a large chest made of sycamore-wood and painted in colors."

"How do you know that?"

"Because—now listen well to what I am going to say, Nebenchari—because I can tell you (I do not swear, for our great master Pythagoras forbade oaths) that *this very chest*, with all it contained, was burnt in the grave of the temple of Neith, in Sais, by order of the king"

Phanes spoke slowly, emphasizing every syllable, and the words seemed to strike the Egyptian like so many flashes of lightning. His quiet coolness and deliberation gave way to violent emotion; his cheeks glowed and his eyes flashed. But only for one single minute; then the strong emotion seemed to freeze, his burning cheeks grew pale. "You are trying to make me hate my friends, in order to gain me as your ally," he said, coldly and calmly. "I know you Greeks very well. You are so intriguing and artful, that there is no lie, no fraud, too base, if it will only help to gain your purpose."

"You judge me and my countrymen in true Egyptian fashion; that is, they are foreigners, and therefore *must* be bad men. But this time your suspicions happen to be misplaced. Send for old Hib; he will tell you whether I am right or not."

Nebenchari's face darkened, as Hib came into the room.

"Come nearer," said he in a commanding tone to the old man.

Hib obeyed with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Tell me, have you taken a bribe from this man? Yes or no? I must know the truth; it can influence my future for good or evil. You are an old and faithful servant, to whom I owe a great deal, and so I will forgive you if you were taken in by his artifices, but I must know the truth. I conjure you to tell me by the souls of your fathers gone to Osiris!"

The old man's sallow face turned ashy pale as he heard these words. He gulped and wheezed some time before he could find an answer, and at last, after choking down the tears which had forced their way to his eyes, said, in a half-angry, half-whining tone: "Didn't I say so? they've bewitched him, they've ruined him in this wicked land. Whatever a man would do himself, he thinks others are capable of. Aye, you may look as angry as you like; it matters but little to me. What can it matter indeed to an old man, who has served the same family faithfully and honestly for sixty years, if they call him at last a rogue, a knave, a traitor, nay even a murderer, if it should take their fancy?"

And the scalding tears flowed down over the old man's cheeks, sorely against his will.

The easily-moved Phanes clapped his hand on the

shoulder and said, turning to Nebenchari: "Hib is a faithful fellow. I give you leave to call me a rascal, if he has taken one single obolus from me."

The physician did not need Phanes' assurance; he had known his old servant too well and too long not to be able to read his simple, open features, on which his innocence was written as clearly as in the pages of an open book. "I did not mean to reproach you, old Hib," he said kindly, coming up to him. "How can any one be so angry at a simple question?"

"Perhaps you expect me to be pleased at such a shameful suspicion?"

"No, not that; but at all events now you can tell me what has happened at our house since I left."

"A pretty story that is! Why only to think of it makes my mouth as bitter, as if I were chewing worm-wood."

"You said I had been robbed."

"Yes indeed: no one was ever so robbed before. There would have been some comfort if the knaves had belonged to the thieves' caste,<sup>45</sup> for then we should have got the best part of our property back again, and should not after all have been worse off than many another; but when . . ."

45. The cunning son of the architect, who robbed the treasure-house of Rhampsinitus was, according to Herodotus, (II. 120), severely punished; but in Diod. I. 80. and Aul. Gell. XI. 18. we see that when thieves acknowledged themselves to the authorities to be such, they were not punished, though a strict watch was set over them. According to Diodorus, there was a president of the thieves' caste, from whom the stolen goods could be reclaimed on relinquishment of a fourth part of the same. This strange rule possibly owed its rise to the law, which compelled every Egyptian to appear once in each year before the authorities of his district and give an account of his means of subsistence. Those who made false statements were punished with death. Diod. I. 77. Thus no one who valued his life could escape the watchful eye of the police, and the thief sacrificed the best part of his gains in order to save his life.

"Keep to the point, for my time is limited."

"You need not tell me that; I see old Hib can't do anything right here in Persia. Well, be it so, you're master; you must give orders; I am only the servant, I must obey. I won't forget it. Well, as I was saying, it was just at the time when the great Persian embassy came over to Sais to fetch Nitetis, and made everybody stare at them as if they were monsters or prodigies, that this shameful thing happened. I was sitting on the mosquito-tower just as the sun was setting, playing with my little grandson, my Baner's\* eldest boy—he's a fine strapping little lad now, wonderfully sharp and strong for his age. The rogue was just telling me how his father,—the Egyptians do that when their wives leave the children too much alone—had hidden his mother's shoes,<sup>46</sup> and I was laughing heartily, because my Baner won't let any of the little ones live with me, she always says I spoil them, and so I was glad she should have the trick played her—when all of a sudden there was such a loud knocking at the house-door, that I thought there must be a fire and let the child drop off my lap. Down the stairs I ran, three steps at a time, as fast as my long legs would carry me, and unbarred the door. Before I had time to ask them what they wanted, a whole crowd of temple-servants and policemen—there must have been at least fifteen of them—forced their

46. Plutarch writes that to walk barefoot in the streets was considered improper among the Egyptians. To make their wives domestic, therefore, the husbands hid their shoes. It was the women's duty, however, according to Herod. II. 35. to buy at market, which seems natural enough to us, but not at all so to the Greeks, as in their native country this duty was performed by the men.

\* Baner signifies a palm-tree. Lepsius, *Denkm* IV. 74 c.

way into the house. Pichi,—you know, that impudent fellow from the temple of Neith,—pushed me back, barred the door inside and told the police to put me in fetters if I refused to obey him. Of course I got angry and did not use very civil words to them—you know that's my way when I'm put out—and what does that bit of a fellow do—by our god Thoth, the protector of knowledge who must know all, I'm speaking the truth—but order them to bind my hands, forbid me—me, old Hib—to speak; and then tell me that he had been told by the high-priest to order me five-and-twenty strokes, if I refused to do his bidding. He showed me the high-priest's ring, and so I knew there was nothing for it but to obey the villain, whether I would or no. And what was his modest demand? Why, nothing less than to give him all the written papers you had left behind. But old Hib is not quite so stupid as to let himself be caught in that way, though some people, who ought to know better, do fancy he can be bribed and is no better than the son of an ass. What did I do then? I pretended to be quite crushed into submission by the sight of the signet-ring, begged Pichi as politely as I could to unfasten my hands, and told him I would fetch the keys. They loosened the cords, I flew up the stairs five steps at a time, burst open the door of your sleeping-room, pushed my little grandson, who was standing by it, into the room and barred it within. Thanks to my long legs, the others were so far behind that I had time to get hold of the black box which you had told me to take so much care of, put it into the child's arms, lift him through the window on to the balcony which runs round the house towards the inner court, and tell him to put it at once into the pigeon-house. Then I opened the door

as if nothing had happened, told Pichi the child had had a knife in his mouth, and that that was the reason I had run upstairs in such a hurry, and had put him out on the balcony to punish him. That brother of a hippopotamus was easily taken in, and then he made me show him over the house. First they found the great sycamore-chest which you had told me to take great care of too, then the papyrus-rolls on your writing-table, and so by degrees every written paper in the house. They made no distinction, but put all together into the great chest and carried it downstairs; the little black box, however, lay safe enough in the pigeon-house. My grandchild is the sharpest boy in all Sais!

“When I saw them really carrying the chest downstairs, all the anger I'd been trying so hard to keep down burst out again. I told the impudent fellows I would accuse them before the magistrates, nay, even before the king if necessary, and if those confounded Persians, who were having the city shown them, had not come up just then and made everybody stare at them, I could have roused the crowd to take my side. The same evening I went to my son-in-law—he is employed in the temple of Neith too, you know,—and begged him to make every effort to find out what had become of the papers. The good fellow has never forgotten the handsome dowry you gave my Baner when he married her, and in three days he came and told me he had seen your beautiful chest and all the rolls it contained burnt to ashes. I was so angry that I fell ill of the jaundice, but that did not hinder me from sending in a written accusation to the magistrates. The wretches,—I suppose only because they were priests too,—refused to take any notice of me or my complaint. Then I sent in a petition

to the king, and was turned away there too with the shameful threat, that I should be considered guilty of high treason if I mentioned the papers again. I valued my tongue too much to take any further steps,<sup>47</sup> but the ground burnt under my feet; I could not stay in Egypt, I wanted to see you, tell you what they had done to you, and call on you, who are more powerful than your poor servant, to revenge yourself. And besides, I wanted to see the black box safe in your hands, lest they should take that from me too. And so, old man as I am, with a sad heart I left my home and my grandchildren to go forth into this foreign Typhon's land. Ah, the little lad was too sharp! As I was kissing him, he said: 'Stay with us, grandfather. If the foreigners make you unclean, they won't let me kiss you any more.' Baner sends you a hearty greeting, and my son-in-law told me to say he had found out that Psamtik, the crown-prince, and your rival, Petammon, had been the sole causes of this execrable deed. I could not make up my mind to trust myself on that Typhon's sea, so I travelled with an Arabian trading caravan as far as Tadmor, the Phœnician palm-tree station in the wilderness,<sup>48</sup> and then on to

47. The Egyptian law decreed the cutting out of the tongue as punishment for high treason. Diod. I. 78.

48. Tadmor, afterwards called Palmyra, was probably built by Solomon, though the Arabian legends give it a still earlier date. Schultens. *Index geogr.* Solomon's attention, as a wise king and enterprising trader, was more likely directed to this oasis in the midst of the Syrian deserts as a resting-place for his caravans, than as a place of defence against the attacks of the Syrians and Arabians, as Winer imagines in the third edition of his *Biblischen Realwörterbuch*. Palmyra rose quickly from small beginnings to great splendor, and to this day travellers are astonished at the size and beauty of its ruins. See R. Wood, *The Ruins of Palmyra*.—Carchemish on the Euphrates, famous for the battle between Necho and Nebuchadnezzar, Jerem. 46. 2.—the Circesium of later times—is named as the principal station on the road to Babylon by Palmyra. Josephus, *Ant.* VIII. 6. X. 6. Movers. *Das phönizische Alterthum*, II. 40. Ritter, *Erdkunde*, XI. p. 690. See also Maspero's treatise on this city.

Carchemish, on the Euphrates, with merchants from Sidon. The roads from Sardis and from Phœnicia meet there, and, as I was sitting very weary in the little wood before the station, a traveller arrived with the royal post-horses, and I saw at once that it was the former commander of the Greek mercenaries."

"And I," interrupted Phanes, "recognized just as soon in you, the longest and most quarrelsome old fellow that had ever come across my path. Oh, how often I've laughed to see you scolding the children, as they ran after you in the street whenever you appeared behind your master with the medicine-chest. The minute I saw you too I remembered a joke which the king once made in his own way, as you were both passing by. 'The old man,' he said, 'reminds me of a fierce old owl followed by a flight of small teasing birds, and Nebenchari looks as if he had a scolding wife, who will some day or other reward him for healing other people's eyes by scratching out his own!'"

"Shameful!" said the old man, and burst into a flood of execrations.

Nebenchari had been listening to his servant's tale in silence and thought. He had changed color from time to time and on hearing that the papers which had cost him so many nights of hard work had been burnt, his fists clenched and he shivered as if seized by biting frost.

Not one of his movements escaped the Athenian. He understood human nature; he knew that a jest is often much harder to bear than a grave affront, and therefore seized this opportunity to repeat the inconsiderate joke which Amasis had, it is true, allowed himself to make in one of his merry moods. Phanes had calculated rightly, and had the pleasure of seeing, that as he

uttered the last words Nebenchari pressed his hand on a rose which lay on the table before him, and crushed it to pieces. The Greek suppressed a smile of satisfaction, and did not even raise his eyes from the ground, but continued speaking: "Well, now we must bring the travelling adventures of good old Hib to a close. I invited him to share my carriage. At first he refused to sit on the same cushion with such a godless foreigner, as I am, gave in, however, at last, had a good opportunity at the last station of showing the world how many clever processes of manipulation he had learnt from you and your father, in his treatment of Oropastes' wounded brother; he reached Babylon at last safe and sound, and there, as we could not get sight of you, owing to the melancholy poisoning of your country-woman, I succeeded in obtaining him a lodging in the royal palace itself. The rest you know already."

Nebenchari bowed assent and gave Hib a sign to leave the room, which the old man obeyed, grumbling and scolding in a low tone as he departed. When the door had closed on him, Nebenchari, the man whose calling was to heal, drew nearer to the soldier Phanes, and said: "I am afraid we cannot be allies after all, Greek."

"Why not?"

"Because I fear, that your revenge will prove far too mild when compared with that which I feel bound to inflict."

"On that head there is no need for solicitude," answered the Athenian. "May I call you my ally then?"

"Yes," answered the other; "but only on one condition."

"And that is—?"

"That you will procure me an opportunity of seeing our vengeance with my own eyes."

"That is as much as to say you are willing to accompany Cambyses' army to Egypt?"

"Certainly I am; and when I see my enemies pining in disgrace and misery I will cry unto them, 'Ah ha, ye cowards, the poor despised and exiled physician, Nebenchari, has brought this wretchedness upon you!' Oh, my books, my books! They made up to me for my lost wife and child. Hundreds were to have learnt from them how to deliver the blind from the dark night in which he lives, and to preserve to the seeing the sweetest gift of the gods, the greatest beauty of the human countenance, the receptacle of light, the seeing eye. Now that my books are burnt I have lived in vain; the wretches have burnt me in burning my works. O my books, my books!" And he sobbed aloud in his agony. Phanes came up and took his hand, saying: "The Egyptians have struck you, my friend, but me they have maltreated and abused—thieves have broken into your granaries, but my hearth and home have been burnt to ashes by incendiaries. Do you know, man, what I have had to suffer at their hands? In persecuting me, and driving me out of Egypt, they only did what they had a right to do; by their law I was a condemned man; and I could have forgiven all they did to me personally, for I loved Amasis, as a man loves his friend. The wretch knew that, and yet he suffered them to commit a monstrous, an incredible act—an act that a man's brain refuses to take in. They stole like wolves by night into a helpless woman's house—they seized my children, a girl and boy, the pride, the joy and comfort of my homeless,

wandering life. And how think you, did they treat them? The girl they kept in confinement, on the pretext that by so doing they should prevent me from betraying Egypt to Cambyses. But the boy—my beautiful, gentle boy—my only son—has been murdered by Psantik's orders, and possibly with the knowledge of Amasis. My heart was withered and shrunk with exile and sorrow, but I feel that it expands—it beats more joyfully now that there is a hope of vengeance.”

Nebenchari's sullen but burning glance met the flashing eye of the Athenian as he finished his tale; he gave him his hand and said: “We are allies.”

The Greek clasped the offered hand and answered: “Our first point now is to make sure of the king's favor.”

“I will restore Kassandane's sight.”

“Is that in your power?”

“The operation which removed Amasis' blindness was my own discovery. Petammon stole it from my burnt papers.”

“Why did you not exert your skill earlier?”

“Because I am not accustomed to bestow presents on my enemies.”

Phanes shuddered slightly at these words, recovered himself, however, in a moment, and said: “And I am certain of the king's favor too. The Massagetan envoys have gone home to-day; peace has been granted them and . . .”

While he was speaking the door was burst open and one of Kassandane's eunuchs rushed into the room crying: “The Princess Nitetis is dying! Follow me at once, there is not a moment to lose.”

The physician made a parting sign to his confederate,

and followed the eunuch to the dying-bed of the royal bride.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE sun was already trying to break a path for his rays through the thick curtains, that closed the window of the sick-room, but Nebenchari had not moved from the Egyptian girl's bedside. Sometimes he felt her pulse, or spread sweet-scented ointments on her forehead or chest, and then he would sit gazing dreamily into vacancy. Nitetis seemed to have sunk into a deep sleep after an attack of convulsions. At the foot of her bed stood six Persian doctors, murmuring incantations under the orders of Nebenchari, whose superior science they acknowledged, and who was seated at the bed's head.

Every time he felt the sick girl's pulse he shrugged his shoulders, and the gesture was immediately imitated by his Persian colleagues. From time to time the curtain was lifted and a lovely head appeared, whose questioning blue eyes fixed at once on the physician, but were always dismissed with the same melancholy shrug. It was Atossa. Twice she had ventured into the room, stepping so lightly as hardly to touch the thick carpet of Milesian wool, had stolen to her friend's bedside and lightly kissed her forehead, on which the pearly dew of death was standing, but each time a severe and reproving glance from Nebenchari had sent her back again into the next room, where her mother Kassandane was lying, awaiting the end.

Cambyses had left the sick-room at sunrise, on see-