

The Persians left the vessel with many a nod and farewell word, and Bartja, looking round once more, missed his footing and fell on the landing-pier.

He sprang up in a moment without Zopyrus' help, who came running back, calling out, "Take care, Bartja! It's unlucky to fall in stepping ashore. I did the very same thing, when we left the ship that time at Naukratis."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

WHILE our friends were enjoying their row on the Nile, Cambyses' envoy, Prexaspes, had returned from a mission to the long-lived Ethiopians.<sup>174</sup> He praised their strength and stature, described the way to their country as almost inaccessible to a large army, and had plenty of marvellous tales to tell. How, for instance, they always chose the strongest and handsomest man in their nation for their king, and obeyed him unconditionally: how many of them reached the age of 120 years, and some even passed it: how they ate nothing but boiled flesh, drank new milk and washed in a spring the waters of which had the scent of violets, gave a remarkable lustre to their skins, and were so light that wood could not swim in them: how their captives wore golden fetters, because other metals were rare and dear in their country; and lastly, how they covered the bodies of the dead with plaster or stucco, over which a coating of some glass-like material was poured, and kept the pillars thus formed one year in

<sup>174</sup> Herod. II. 20-25.

their houses, during which time sacrifices were offered to them, and at the year's end they were placed in rows around the town.

The king of this strange people had accepted Cambyses' presents, saying, in a scornful tone, that he knew well his friendship was of no importance to the Persians, and Prexaspes had only been sent to spy out the land. If the prince of Asia were a just man, he would be contented with his own immense empire and not try to subjugate a people who had done him no wrong. "Take your king this bow," he said, "and advise him not to begin the war with us, until the Persians are able to bend such weapons as easily as we do. Cambyses may thank the gods, that the Ethiopians have never taken it into their heads to conquer countries which do not belong to them."

He then unbent his mighty bow of ebony, and gave it to Prexaspes to take to his lord.

Cambyses laughed at the bragging African, invited his nobles to a trial of the bow the next morning, and rewarded Prexaspes for the clever way in which he had overcome the difficulties of his journey and acquitted himself of his mission. He then went to rest, as usual intoxicated, and fell into a disturbed sleep, in which he dreamed that Bartja was seated on the throne of Persia, and that the crown of his head touched the heavens.<sup>175</sup>

This was a dream, which he could interpret without the aid of soothsayer or Chaldean. It roused his anger first, and then made him thoughtful.

He could not sleep, and such questions as the following came into his mind: "Haven't you given

<sup>175</sup> Herod. III. 30.

your brother reason to feel revengeful? Do you think he can forget that you imprisoned and condemned him to death, when he was innocent? And if he should raise his hand against you, would not all the Achæmenidæ take his part? Have I ever done, or have I any intention of ever doing anything to win the love of these venal courtiers? Since Nitetis died and that strange Greek fled, has there been a single human being, in whom I have the least confidence or on whose affection I can rely?"

These thoughts and questionings excited him so fearfully, that he sprang from his bed, crying: "Love and I have nothing to do with one another. Other men may be kind and good if they like; I must be stern, or I shall fall into the hands of those who hate me—hate me because I have been just, and have visited heavy sins with heavy chastisements. They whisper flattering words in my ear; they curse me when my back is turned. The gods themselves must be my enemies, or why do they rob me of everything I love, deny me posterity and even that military glory which is my just due? Is Bartja so much better than I, that everything which I am forced to give up should be his in hundred-fold measure? Love, friendship, fame, children,—everything flows to him as the rivers to the sea, while my heart is parched like the desert. But I am king still. I can show him which is the stronger of us two, and I will, though his forehead may touch the heavens. In Persia there can be only one great man. He or I,—I or he. In a few days I'll send him back to Asia and make him satrap of Bactria. There he can nurse his child and listen to his wife's songs, while I am winning glory in Ethiopia,

which it shall not be in his power to lessen. Ho, there, dressers! bring my robes and a good morning-draught of wine. I'll show the Persians that I'm fit to be King of Ethiopia, and can beat them all at bending a bow. Here, give me another cup of wine. I'd bend that bow, if it were a young cedar and its string a cable!" So saying he drained an immense bowl of wine and went into the palace-garden, conscious of his enormous strength and therefore sure of success.

All his nobles were assembled waiting for him there, welcomed him with loud acclamations, and fell on their faces to the ground before their king.

Pillars, connected by scarlet cords, had been quickly set up between the closely-cut hedges and straight avenues.\* From these cords, suspended by gold and silver rings, yellow and dark blue hangings<sup>176</sup> fluttered in the breeze. Gilded wooden benches had been placed round in a large circle, and nimble cup-bearers handed wine in costly vessels to the company assembled for the shooting-match.

At a sign from the king the Achæmenidæ rose from the earth.

Cambyses glanced over their ranks, and his face brightened on seeing that Bartja was not there. Prexaspes handed him the Ethiopian bow, and pointed out a target at some distance. Cambyses laughed at the large size of the target, weighted the bow with his right hand, challenged his subjects to try their fortune

<sup>176</sup>. Book of Esther I. 6. There the hangings are white, green and blue or violet. (English version.) In the text we have given red, yellow and dark blue, because these were the Persian colors. See p. 266 and note 141.

\* See vol. I. note 7.

first, and handed the bow to the aged Hystaspes, as the highest in rank among the Achæmenidæ.

While Hystaspes first, and then all the heads of the six other highest families in Persia, were using their utmost efforts to bend this monster weapon in vain, the king emptied goblet after goblet of wine, his spirits rising as he watched their vain endeavors to solve the Ethiopian's problem. At last Darius, who was famous for his skill in archery, took the bow. Nearly the same result. The wood was inflexible as iron and all his efforts only availed to move it one finger's breadth. The king gave him a friendly nod in reward for his success, and then, looking round on his friends and relations in a manner that betokened the most perfect assurance, he said: "Give me the bow now, Darius. I will show you, that there is only one man in Persia who deserves the name of king;—only one who can venture to take the field against the Ethiopians;—only one who can bend this bow."

He grasped it tightly with his left hand, taking the string, which was as thick as a man's finger and made from the intestines of a lion, in his right, fetched a deep breath, bent his mighty back and pulled and pulled; collected all his strength for greater and greater efforts, strained his sinews till they threatened to break, and the veins in his forehead were swollen to bursting, did not even disdain to use his feet and legs, but all in vain. After a quarter of an hour of almost superhuman exertion, his strength gave way, the ebony, which he had succeeded in bending even farther than Darius, flew back and set all his further endeavors at naught. At last, feeling himself thoroughly exhausted, he dashed the bow on to the ground in a passion, crying: "The

Ethiopian is a liar! no mortal man has ever bent that bow. What is impossible for my arm is possible for no other. In three days we will start for Ethiopia. I will challenge the impostor to a single combat, and ye shall see which is the stronger. Take up the bow, Prexaspes, and keep it carefully. The black liar shall be strangled with his own bow-string. This wood is really harder than iron, and I confess that the man who could bend it, would really be my master. I should not be ashamed to call him so, for he must be of better stuff than I."

As he finished speaking, Bartja appeared in the circle of assembled Persians. His glorious figure was set off to advantage by his rich dress, his features were bright with happiness and a feeling of conscious strength. He passed through the ranks of the Achæmenidæ with many a friendly nod, which was warmly returned, and going straight to his brother, kissed his robe, looked up frankly and cheerfully into his gloomy eyes, and said: "I am a little late, and ask your forgiveness, my lord and brother. Or have I really come in time? Yes, yes, I see there's no arrow in the target yet, so I am sure you, the best archer in the world, cannot have tried your strength yet. But you look so enquiringly at me. Then I will confess that our child kept me. The little creature laughed to-day for the first time, and was so charming with its mother, that I forgot how time was passing while I watched them. You have all full leave to laugh at my folly; I really don't know how to excuse myself. *Séc*, the little one has pulled my star from the chain. But I think, my brother, you will give me a new one to-day if I should hit the bull's eye. Shall I shoot first, or will you begin, my Sovereign?"

"Give him the bow, Prexaspes," said Cambyses, not even deigning to look at his brother.

Bartja took it and was proceeding to examine the wood and the string, when Cambyses suddenly called out, with a mocking laugh: "By Mithras, I believe you want to try your sweet looks on the bow, and win its favor in that fashion, as you do the hearts of men. Give it back to Prexaspes. It's easier to play with beautiful women and laughing children, than with a weapon like this, which mocks the strength even of real men."

Bartja blushed with anger and annoyance at this speech, which was uttered in the bitterest tone, picked up the giant arrow that lay before him, placed himself opposite the target, summoned all his strength, bent the bow, by an almost superhuman effort, and sent the arrow into the very centre of the target, where its iron point remained, while the wooden shaft split into a hundred shivers.<sup>177</sup>

Most of the Achæmenidæ burst into loud shouts of delight at this marvellous proof of strength; but Bartja's nearest friends turned pale and were silent; they were watching the king, who literally quivered with rage, and Bartja, who was radiant with pride and joy.

Cambyses was a fearful sight at that moment. It seemed to him as if that arrow, in piercing the target, had pierced his own heart, his strength, dignity and honor. Sparks floated before his eyes, in his ears was

<sup>177</sup> Herodotus tells this story (III. 30.), and we are indebted to him also for our information of the events which follow. The following inscription, said to have been placed over the grave of Darius, and communicated by Onesikritus, (Strabo 730.) proves that the Persians were very proud of being reputed good archers: "I was a friend to my friends, the best rider and archer, a first-rate hunter; I could do every-thing."

a sound like the breaking of a stormy sea on the shore; his cheeks glowed and he grasped the arm of Prexaspes who was at his side. Prexaspes only too well understood what that pressure meant, when given by a royal hand, and murmured: "Poor Bartja!"

At last the king succeeded in recovering his presence of mind. Without saying a word, he threw a gold chain to his brother, ordered his nobles to follow him, and left the garden, but only to wander restlessly up and down his apartments, and try to drown his rage in wine. Suddenly he seemed to have formed a resolution and ordered all the courtiers, except Prexaspes, to leave the hall. When they were alone, he called out in a hoarse voice and with a look that proved the extent of his intoxication: "This life is not to be borne! Rid me of my enemy, and I will call you my friend and benefactor."

Prexaspes trembled, threw himself at the king's feet and raised his hands imploringly; but Cambyses was too intoxicated, and too much blinded by his hatred to understand the action. He fancied the prostration was meant as a sign of devotion to his will, signed to him to rise, and whispered, as if afraid of hearing his own words: "Act quickly and secretly; and, as you value your life, let no one know of the upstart's death. Depart, and when your work is finished, take as much as you like out of the treasury. But keep your wits about you. The boy has a strong arm and a winning tongue. Think of your own wife and children, if he tries to win you over with his smooth words."

As he spoke he emptied a fresh goblet of pure wine, staggered through the door of the room, calling out as he turned his back on Prexaspes: "Woe be to you if

that upstart, that woman's hero, that fellow who has robbed me of my honor, is left alive."

Long after he had left the hall, Prexaspes stood fixed on the spot where he had heard these words. The man was ambitious, but neither mean nor bad, and he felt crushed by the awful task allotted to him. He knew that his refusal to execute it would bring death or disgrace on himself and on his family; but he loved Bartja, and besides, his whole nature revolted at the thought of becoming a common, hired murderer. A fearful struggle began in his mind, and raged long after he left the palace. On the way home he met Crœsus and Darius. He fancied they would see from his looks that he was already on the way to a great crime, and hid himself behind the projecting gate of a large Egyptian house. As they passed, he heard Crœsus say: "I reproached him bitterly, little as he deserves reproach in general, for having given such an inopportune proof of his great strength. We may really thank the gods, that Cambyses did not lay violent hands on him in a fit of passion. He has followed my advice now and gone with his wife to Sais. For the next few days Bartja must not come near the king; the mere sight of him might rouse his anger again, and a monarch can always find unprincipled servants . . ."

The rest of the sentence died away in the distance, but the words he had heard were enough to make Prexaspes start, as if Crœsus had accused him of the shameful deed. He resolved in that moment that, come what would, his hands should not be stained with the blood of a friend. This resolution restored him his old erect bearing and firm gait for the time,

but when he reached the dwelling which had been assigned as his abode in Sais his two boys ran to the door to meet him. They had stolen away from the play-ground of the sons of the Achæmenidæ, (who, as was always the case, had accompanied the king and the army), to see their father for a moment. He felt a strange tenderness, which he could not explain to himself, on taking them in his arms, and kissed the beautiful boys once more on their telling him that they must go back to their play-ground again, or they should be punished. Within, he found his favorite wife playing with their youngest child, a sweet little girl. Again the same strange, inexplicable feeling of tenderness. He overcame it this time for fear of betraying his secret to his young wife, and retired to his own apartment early.

Night had come on.

The sorely-tried man could not sleep; he turned restlessly from side to side. The fearful thought, that his refusal to do the king's will would be the ruin of his wife and children, stood before his wakeful eyes in the most vivid colors. The strength to keep his good resolution forsook him, and even Crœsus' words, which, when he first heard them had given his nobler feelings the victory, now came in as a power on the other side. "A monarch can always find unprincipled servants." Yes, the words were an affront, but at the same time a reminder, that though he might defy the king's command a hundred others would be ready to obey it. No sooner had this thought become clear to him, than he started up, examined a number of daggers which hung, carefully arranged, above his bed, and laid the sharpest on the little table before him.

He then began to pace the room in deep thought, often going to the opening which served as a window, to cool his burning forehead and see if dawn were near.

When at last daylight appeared, he heard the sounding brass\* calling the boys to early prayer. That reminded him of his sons and he examined the dagger a second time. A troop of gaily-dressed courtiers rode by on their way to the king. He put the dagger in his girdle; and at last, on hearing the merry laughter of his youngest child sound from the women's apartments, he set the tiara hastily on his head, left the house without taking leave of his wife, and, accompanied by a number of slaves, went down to the Nile. There he threw himself into a boat and ordered the rowers to take him to Sais.

A few hours after the fatal shooting-match, Bartja had followed Cræsus' advice and had gone off to Sais with his young wife. They found Rhodopis there. She had yielded to an irresistible impulse and, instead of returning to Naukratis, had stopped at Sais. Bartja's fall on stepping ashore had disturbed her, and she had with her own eyes seen an owl fly from the left side close by his head. These evil omens, to a heart which had by no means outgrown the superstitions of the age, added to a confused succession of distressing dreams which had disturbed her slumbers, and her usual wish to be always near Bartja and Sappho, led her to decide quickly on waiting for her granddaughter at Sais.

Bartja and Sappho were delighted to find such a

\* See vol. I. p. 239.

welcome guest, and after she had dandled and played with her great grandchild, the little Parmys,<sup>178</sup> to her heart's content, they led her to the rooms which had been prepared for her. They were the same in which the unhappy Tachot had spent the last months of her fading existence. Rhodopis could not see all the little trifles which showed, not only the age and sex of the former occupant, but her tastes and disposition, without feeling very sad. On the dressing-table were a number of little ointment-boxes and small bottles for perfumes, cosmetics, washes and oils.<sup>179</sup> Two larger boxes, one in the form of a Nile-goose,<sup>180</sup> and another on the side of which a woman playing on a lute had been painted, had once contained the princess's costly golden ornaments, and the metal mirror with a handle in the form of a sleeping maiden,<sup>181</sup> had once reflected her beautiful face with its pale pink flush. Everything in the room, from the elegant little couch resting on lions' claws, to the delicately-carved ivory combs<sup>182</sup> on the toilet-table, proved that the outward adornments of life had possessed much charm for the former owner of these rooms. The golden *sistrum* and the delicately-wrought

178. Herodotus states, that beside Atossa, &c., Darius took a daughter of the deceased Bartja, named Parmys, to be his wife. Herod. III. 88. She is also mentioned VII. 78.

179. Wilkinson III. 381. 383. We learn from the monuments, that the Egyptians were accustomed to anoint themselves in divers ways from a very early period. We read of a paint for the eyes called *Mes-tem* as early as the 12th dynasty. The staining of the finger-nails so customary still in Egypt, though forbidden, was practised in the time of the Pharaohs, (this can be proved by the mummies), and perfumed locks were indispensable to a beauty of those days. *Papyr. d'Orb.* 9. 3. Plut. *Isis and Osiris* 15.

180. From Wilkinson II. 360. Leyden Museum.

181. From the handle of a saucer or vase used for ornaments, in Wilkinson II. 359. See also Wilkinson III. 386. 1. 2.

182. Combs found at Thebes. Wilkinson III. 381.

*nabla*, the strings of which had long ago been broken, testified to her taste for music, while the broken spindle\* in the corner, and some unfinished nets of glass beads<sup>183</sup> shewed that she had been fond of woman's usual work.

It was a sad pleasure to Rhodopis to examine all these things, and the picture which she drew in her own mind of Tachot after the inspection, differed very little from the reality. At last interest and curiosity led her to a large painted chest. She lifted the light cover and found, first, a few dried flowers; then a ball, round which some skilful hand had wreathed roses and leaves, once fresh and bright, now, alas, long ago dead and withered. Beside these were a number of amulets in different forms, one representing the goddess of truth, another containing spells written on a strip of papyrus and concealed in a little golden case. Then her eyes fell on some letters written in the Greek character. She read them by the light of the lamp. They were from Nitetis in Persia to her supposed sister, and were written in ignorance of the latter's illness. When Rhodopis laid them down her eyes were full of tears. The dead girl's secret lay open before her. She knew now that Tachot had loved Bartja, that he had given her the faded flowers, and that she had wreathed the ball with roses because he had thrown it to her. The amulets must have been intended either to heal her sick heart, or to awaken love in his.

As she was putting the letters back in their old

<sup>183</sup>. Bead-work has been found on very many of the mummies in almost all the larger museums. In Wilkinson III. 90. 101. is a drawing of the celebrated large glass bead, in which a hieroglyphic inscription had been cut.

\* See note 104.

place, she touched some cloths which seemed put in to fill up the bottom of the chest, and felt a hard round substance underneath. She raised them, and discovered a bust made of colored wax, such a wonderfully-exact portrait of Nitetis, that an involuntary exclamation of surprise broke from her, and it was long before she could turn her eyes away from Theodorus' marvellous work.

She went to rest and fell asleep, thinking of the sad fate of Nitetis, the Egyptian Princess.

The next morning Rhodopis went into the garden—the same into which we led our readers during the lifetime of Amasis—and found Bartja and Sappho in an arbor overgrown with vines.

Sappho was seated in a light wicker-work chair. Her child lay on her lap, stretching out its little hands and feet, sometimes to its father, who was kneeling on the ground before them, and then to its mother whose laughing face was bent down over her little one.

Bartja was very happy with his child. When the little creature buried its tiny fingers in his curls and beard, he would draw his head back to feel the strength of the little hand, would kiss its rosy feet, its little round white shoulders and dimpled arms. Sappho enjoyed the fun, always trying to draw the little one's attention to its father.

Sometimes, when she stooped down to kiss the rosy baby lips, her forehead would touch his curls and he would steal the kiss meant for the little Parnys.

Rhodopis watched them a long time unperceived, and, with tears of joy in her eyes, prayed the gods that they might long be as happy as they now were. At last she came into the arbor to wish them good-morn-

ing, and bestowed much praise on old Melitta for appearing at the right moment, parasol in hand, to take her charge out of the sunshine before it became too bright and hot, and put her to sleep.

The old slave had been appointed head-nurse to the high-born child, and acquitted herself in her new office with an amount of importance which was very comical. Hiding her old limbs under rich Persian robes, she moved about exulting in the new and delightful right to command, and kept her inferiors in perpetual motion.

Sappho followed Melitta into the palace, first whispering in her husband's ear with her arm round his neck: "Tell my grandmother everything and ask whether you are right."

Before he could answer, she had stopped his mouth with a kiss, and then hurried after the old woman who was departing with dignified steps.

The prince smiled as he watched her graceful walk and beautiful figure, and said, turning to Rhodopis: "Does not it strike you, that she has grown taller lately?"

"It seems so," answered Rhodopis. "A woman's girlhood has its own peculiar charm, but her true dignity comes with motherhood. It is the feeling of having fulfilled her destiny, which raises her head and makes us fancy she has grown taller."

"Yes," said Bartja, "I think she is happy. Yesterday our opinions differed for the first time, and as she was leaving us just now, she begged me, privately, to lay the question before you, which I am very glad to do, for I honor your experience and wisdom just as much, as I love her childlike inexperience."

Bartja then told the story of the unfortunate shoot-

ing-match, finishing with these words: "Croesus blames my imprudence, but I know my brother; I know that when he is angry he is capable of any act of violence, and it is not impossible that at the moment when he felt himself defeated he could have killed me; but I know too, that when his fierce passion has cooled, he will forget my boastful deed, and only try to excel me by others of the same kind. A year ago he was by far the best marksman in Persia, and would be so still, if drink and epilepsy had not undermined his strength. I must confess I feel as if I were becoming stronger every day."

"Yes," interrupted Rhodopis, "pure happiness strengthens a man's arm, just as it adds to the beauty of a woman, while intemperance and mental distress ruin both body and mind far more surely even than old age. My son, beware of your brother; his strong arm has become paralyzed, and his generosity can be forfeited too. Trust my experience, that the man who is the slave of one evil passion, is very seldom master of the rest; besides which, no one feels humiliation so bitterly as he who is sinking—who knows that his powers are forsaking him. I say again, beware of your brother, and trust the voice of experience more than that of your own heart, which, because it is generous itself, believes every one else to be so."

"I see," said Bartja, "that you will take Sappho's side. Difficult as it will be for her to part from you, she has still begged me to return with her to Persia. She thinks that Cambyses may forget his anger, when I am out of sight. I thought she was over-anxious, and besides, it would disappoint me not to take part in the expedition against the Ethiopians."



"But I entreat you," interrupted Rhodopis, "to follow her advice. The gods only know what pain it will give me to lose you both, and yet I repeat a thousand times: Go back to Persia, and remember that none but fools stake life and happiness to no purpose. As to the war with Ethiopia, it is mere madness; instead of subduing those black inhabitants of the south, you yourselves will be conquered by heat, thirst and all the horrors of the desert. In saying this I refer to the campaigns in general; as to your own share in them, I can only say that if no fame is to be won there, you will be putting your own life and the happiness of your family in jeopardy literally for nothing, and that if, on the other hand, you should distinguish yourself again, it would only be giving fresh cause of jealousy and anger to your brother. No, go to Persia, as soon as you can."

Bartja was just beginning to make various objections to these arguments, when he caught sight of Prexaspes coming up to them, looking very pale.

After the usual greeting, the envoy whispered to Bartja, that he should like to speak with him alone. Rhodopis left them at once, and he began, playing with the rings on his right hand as he spoke, in a constrained, embarrassed way. "I come from the king. Your display of strength irritated him yesterday, and he does not wish to see you again for some time. His orders are, that you set out for Arabia to buy up all the camels<sup>184</sup> that are to be had. As these animals can

<sup>184</sup>. Camels are never represented on the Egyptian monuments, whereas they were in great use among the Arabians and Persians, and are now a necessity on the Nile. They must have existed in Egypt, however. Hekekyan-Bey discovered the bones of a dromedary in a deep bore. Representations of these creatures were probably forbid-

bear thirst very long, they are to be used in conveying food and water for our army on the Ethiopian campaign. There must be no delay. Take leave of your wife, and (I speak by the king's command) be ready to start before dark. You will be absent at least a month. I am to accompany you as far as Pelusium. Kassandane wishes to have your wife and child near her during your absence. Send them to Memphis as soon as possible; under the protection of the queen-mother, they will be in safety."

Prexaspes' short, constrained way of speaking did not strike Bartja. He rejoiced at what seemed to him great moderation on the part of his brother, and at receiving a commission which relieved him of all doubt on the question of leaving Egypt, gave his friend, (as he supposed him to be), his hand to kiss and an invitation to follow him into the palace.

In the cool of the evening, he took a short but very affectionate farewell of Sappho and his child, who was asleep in Melitta's arms, told his wife to set out as soon as possible on her journey to Kassandane, called out jestingly to his mother-in-law, that at least this time she had been mistaken in her judgment of a man's character, (meaning his brother's), and sprang on to his horse.

As Prexaspes was mounting, Sappho whispered to him, "Take care of that reckless fellow, and remind him of me and his child, when you see him running into unnecessary danger."

"I shall have to leave him at Pelusium," answered den. We know this was the case with the cock, of which bird there were large numbers in Egypt. It is remarkable, that camels were not introduced into Barbary until after the birth of Christ. H. Barth, *Wanderungen am Gestade des Mittelmeers* p. 3 and following.

the envoy, busying himself with the bridle of his horse in order to avoid meeting her eyes.

"Then may the gods take him into their keeping!" exclaimed Sappho, clasping her husband's hand, and bursting into tears, which she could not keep back. Bartja looked down and saw his usually trustful wife in tears. He felt sadder than he had ever felt before. Stooping down lovingly from his saddle, he put his strong arm round her waist, lifted her up to him, and as she stood supporting herself on his foot in the stirrup, pressed her to his heart, as if for a long last farewell. He then let her safely and gently to the ground, took his child up to him on the saddle, kissed and fondled the little creature, and told her laughingly to make her mother very happy while he was away, exchanged some warm words of farewell with Rhodopis, and then, spurring his horse till the creature reared, dashed through the gateway of the Pharaohs' palace, with Prexaspes at his side.

When the sound of the horses' hoofs had died away in the distance, Sappho laid her head on her grandmother's shoulder and wept uncontrollably. Rhodopis remonstrated and blamed, but all in vain, she could not stop her tears.

#### CHAPTER XV.

ON the morning after the trial of the bow, Cambyses was seized by such a violent attack of his old illness, that he was forced to keep his room for two days and nights, ill in mind and body; at times raging

like a madman, at others weak and powerless as a little child.

On the third day he recovered consciousness and remembered the awful charge he had laid on Prexaspes, and that it was only too possible he might have executed it already. At this thought he trembled, as he had never trembled in his life before. He sent at once for the envoy's eldest son, who was one of the royal cup-bearers. The boy said his father had left Memphis, without taking leave of his family. He then sent for Darius, Zopyrus and Gyges, knowing how tenderly they loved Bartja, and enquired after their friend. On hearing from them that he was at Sais, he sent the three youths thither at once, charging them, if they met Prexaspes on the way, to send him back to Memphis without delay. This haste and the king's strange behavior were quite incomprehensible to the young Achæmenidæ; nevertheless they set out on their journey with all speed, fearing that something must be wrong.

Cambyses, meanwhile, was miserably restless, inwardly cursed his habit of drinking and tasted no wine the whole of that day. Seeing his mother in the palace-gardens, he avoided her; he durst not meet her eye.

The next eight days passed without any sign of Prexaspes' return; they seemed to the king like a year. A hundred times he sent for the young cup-bearer and asked if his father had returned; a hundred times he received the same disappointing answer.

At sunset on the thirteenth day, Kassandane sent to beg a visit from him. The king went at once, for now he longed to look on the face of his mother; he fancied it might give him back his lost sleep.