

CHAPTER VII

OF THE AWAKING OF HARMACHIS; OF THE CEREMONY OF HIS CROWNING AS PHARAOH OF THE UPPER AND THE LOWER LAND; AND OF THE OFFERINGS MADE TO PHARAOH

Once again I woke--to find myself stretched at length upon the stone flooring of the Holy Place of Isis that is at Abouthis. By me stood the old Priest of the Mysteries, and in his hand was a lamp. He bent over me, and gazed earnestly upon my face.

"It is day--the day of thy new birth, and thou hast lived to see it, Harmachis!" he said at length. "I give thanks. Arise, royal Harmachis--nay, tell me naught of that which has befallen thee. Arise, beloved of the Holy Mother. Come forth, thou who hast passed the fire and learned what lies behind the darkness--come forth, O newly-born!"

I rose and, walking faintly, went with him, and, passing out of the darkness of the Shrines filled with thought and wonder, came once more into the pure light of the morning. And then I went to my own chamber and slept; nor did any dreams come to trouble me. But no man--not even my father--asked me aught of what I saw upon that dread night, or after what fashion I had communed with the Goddess.

After these things which have been written, I applied myself for a space to the worship of the Mother Isis, and to the further study of the outward forms of those mysteries to which I now held the key. Moreover,

I was instructed in matters politic, for many great men of our following came secretly to see me from all quarters of Egypt, and told me much of the hatred of the people towards Cleopatra, the Queen, and of other things. At last the hour drew nigh; it was three months and ten days from the night when, for a while, I left the flesh, and yet living with our life, was gathered to the breast of Isis, on which it was agreed that with due and customary rites, although in utter secrecy, I should be called to the throne of the Upper and the Lower Land. So it came about that, as the solemn time drew nigh, great men of the party of Egypt gathered to the number of thirty-seven from every nome, and each great city of their nome, meeting together at Abouthis. They came in every guise--some as priests, some as pilgrims to the Shrine, and some as beggars. Among them was my uncle, Sepa, who, though he clad himself as a travelling doctor, had much ado to keep his loud voice from betraying him. Indeed, I myself knew him by it, meeting him as I walked in thought upon the banks of the canal, although it was then dusk and the great cape, which, after the fashion of such doctors, he had thrown about his head, half hid his face.

"A pest on thee!" he cried, when I greeted him by his name. "Cannot a man cease to be himself for a single hour? Didst thou but know the pains that it has cost me to learn to play this part--and now thou readest who I am even in the dark!"

And then, still talking in his loud voice, he told me how he had travelled hither on foot, the better to escape the spies who ply to and fro upon the river. But he said he should return by the water, or take

another guise; for since he had come as a doctor he had been forced to play a doctor's part, knowing but little of the arts of medicine; and, as he greatly feared, there were many between Annu and Aboutis who had suffered from it.[*] And he laughed loudly and embraced me, forgetting his part. For he was too whole at heart to be an actor and other than himself, and would have entered Aboutis with me holding my hand, had I not chid him for his folly.

[*] In Ancient Egypt an unskilful or negligent physician was liable to very heavy penalties.--Editor.

At length all were gathered.

It was night, and the gates of the temple were shut. None were left within them, except the thirty-seven; my father, the High Priest Amenemhat; that aged priest who had led me to the Shrine of Isis; the old wife, Atoua, who, according to ancient custom, was to prepare me for the anointing; and some five other priests, sworn to secrecy by that oath which none may break. They gathered in the second hall of the great temple; but I remained alone, clad in my white robe, in the passage where are the names of six-and-seventy ancient Kings, who were before the day of the divine Sethi. There I rested in darkness, till at length my father, Amenemhat, came, bearing a lamp, and, bowing low before me, led me by the hand forth into the great hall. Here and there, between its mighty pillars, lights were burning that dimly showed the sculptured images upon the walls, and dimly fell upon the long line of the seven-and-thirty Lords, Priests, and Princes, who, seated upon carven

chairs, awaited my coming in silence. Before them, facing away from the seven Sanctuaries, a throne was set, around which stood the priests holding the sacred images and banners. As I came into the dim and holy place, the Dignitaries rose, and bowed before me, speaking no word; while my father led me to the steps of the throne, and in a low voice bade me stand before it.

Then he spoke:

"Lords, Priests, and Princes of the ancient orders of the land of Khem--Nobles from the Upper and the Lower Country, have gathered in answer to my summons, hear me: I present to you, with such scant formality as the occasion can afford, the Prince Harmachis, by right and true descent of blood the descendant and heir of the ancient Pharaohs of our most unhappy land. He is priest of the inmost circle of the Mysteries of the Divine Isis, Master of the Mysteries--Hereditary Priest of the Pyramids, which are by Memphis, Instructed in the Solemn Rites of the Holy Osiris. Is there any among you who has aught to urge against the true line of his blood?"

He paused, and my uncle Sepa, rising from his chair, spoke: "We have made examination of the records and there is none, O Amenemhat. He is of the Royal blood, his descent is true."

"Is there any among you," went on my father, "who can deny that this royal Harmachis, by sanction of the very Gods, has been gathered to Isis, been shown the way of the Osiris, been admitted to be the

Hereditary High Priest of the Pyramids which are by Memphis, and of the Temples of the Pyramids?"

Then that old priest rose who had been my guide in the Sanctuary of the Mother and made answer: "There is none; O Amenemhat; I know these things of my own knowledge."

Once more my father spoke: "Is there any among you who has aught to urge against this royal Harmachis, in that by wickedness of heart or life, by uncleanness or falsity, it is not fit or meet that we should crown him Lord of all the Lands?"

Then an aged Prince of Memphis arose and made answer:

"We have inquired of these matters: there is none, O Amenemhat."

"It is well," said my father; "then naught is wanting in the Prince Harmachis, seed of Nekt-nebf, the Osirian. Let the woman Atoua stand forth and tell this company those things that came to pass when, at the hour of her death, she who was my wife prophesied over this Prince, being filled with the Spirit of the Hathors."

Thereon old Atoua crept forward from the shadow of the columns, and earnestly told those things that have been written.

"Ye have heard," said my father: "do you believe that the woman who was my wife spake with the Divine voice?"

"We do," they answered.

Now my uncle Sepa rose and spoke:

"Royal Harmachis, thou hast heard. Know now that we are gathered here to crown thee King of the Upper and the Lower Lands--thy holy father, Amenemhat, renouncing all his right on thy behalf. We are met, not, indeed, in that pomp and ceremony which is due to the occasion--for what we do must be done in secret, lest our lives, and the cause that is more dear to us than life, should pay the forfeit--but yet with such dignity and observance of the ancient rites as our circumstance may command. Learn, now, how this matter hangs, and if, after learning, thy mind consents thereto, then mount thy throne, O Pharaoh--and swear the oath!

"Long has Khemi groaned beneath the mailed heel of the Greek, and trembled at the shadow of the Roman's spear; long has the ancient worship of its Gods been desecrated, and its people crushed with oppression. But we believe that the hour of deliverance is at hand, and with the solemn voice of Egypt and by the ancient Gods of Egypt, to whose cause thou art of all men bound, we call upon thee, Prince, to be the sword of our deliverance. Hearken! Twenty thousand good and leal men are sworn to wait upon thy word, and at thy signal to rise as one, to put the Grecian to the sword, and with their blood and substance to build thee a throne set more surely on the soil of Khem than are its ancient pyramids--such a throne as shall even roll the Roman legions back. And for the signal, it shall be the death of that bold harlot,

Cleopatra. Thou must compass her death, Harmachis, in such fashion as shall be shown to thee, and with her blood anoint the Royal throne of Egypt.

"Canst thou refuse, O our Hope? Doth not the holy love of country swell within thy heart? Canst thou dash the cup of Freedom from thy lips and bear to drink the bitter draught of slaves? The emprise is great; maybe it shall fail, and thou with thy life, as we with ours, shalt pay the price of our endeavour. But what of it, Harmachis? Is life, then, so sweet? Are we so softly cushioned on the stony bed of earth? Is bitterness and sorrow in its sum so small and scant a thing? Do we here breathe so divine an air that we should fear to face the passage of our breath? What have we here but hope and memory? What see we here but shadows? Shall we then fear to pass pure-handed where Fulfilment is and memory is lost in its own source, and shadows die in the light which cast them? O Harmachis, that man alone is truly blest who crowns his life with Fame's most splendid wreath. For, since to all the Brood of Earth Death hands his poppy-flowers, he indeed is happy to whom there is occasion given to weave them in a crown of glory. And how can a man die better than in a great endeavour to strike the gyves from his Country's limbs so that she again may stand in the face of Heaven and raise the shrill shout of Freedom, and, clad once more in a panoply of strength, trample under foot the fetters of her servitude, defying the tyrant nations of the earth to set their seal upon her brow?

"Khem calls thee, Harmachis. Come then, thou Deliverer; leap like Horus from the firmament, break her chains, scatter her foes, and rule a

Pharaoh on Pharaoh's Throne----"

"Enough, enough!" I cried, while the long murmur of applause swept about the columns and up the massy walls. "Enough; is there any need to adjure me thus? Had I a hundred lives, would I not most gladly lay them down for Egypt?"

"Well said, well said!" answered Sepa. "Now go forth with the woman yonder, that she may make thy hands clean before they touch the sacred emblems, and anoint thy brow before it is encircled of the diadem."

And so I went into a chamber apart with the old wife, Atoua. There, muttering prayers, she poured pure water over my hands into a ewer of gold, and having dipped a fine cloth into oil wiped my brow with it.

"O happy Egypt!" she said; "O happy Prince, that art come to rule in Egypt! O Royal youth!--too Royal to be a priest--so shall many a fair woman think; but, perchance, for thee they will relax the priestly rule, else how shall the race of Pharaoh be carried on? O happy I, who dandled thee and gave my flesh and blood to save thee! O royal and beautiful Harmachis, born for splendour, happiness, and love!"

"Cease, cease," I said, for her talk jarred upon me; "call me not happy till thou knowest my end, and speak not to me of love, for with love comes sorrow, and mine is another and a higher way."

"Ay, ay, so thou sayest--and joy, too, that comes with love! Never talk

lightly of love, my King, for it brought thee here! La! la! but it is always the way--'The goose on the wing laughs at crocodiles,' so goes their saying down at Alexandria; 'but when the goose is asleep on the water, it is the crocodiles that laugh.' Not but what women are pretty crocodiles. Men worship the crocodiles at Anthribis--Crocodilopolis they call it now, don't they?--but they worship women all the world over! La! how my tongue runs on, and thou about to be crowned Pharaoh! Did I not prophesy it to thee? Well, thou art clean, Lord of the Double Crown. Go forth!"

So I went from the chamber with the old wife's foolish talk ringing in my ears, though of a truth her folly had ever a grain of wit in it.

As I came, the Dignitaries rose once more and bowed before me. Then my father, without delay, drew near me, and placed in my hands a golden image of the divine Ma, the Goddess of Truth, and golden images of the arks of the God Amen-Ra, of the divine Mout, and the divine Khons, and spoke solemnly:

"Thou swearest by the living majesty of Ma, by the majesty of Amen-Ra, of Mout, and of Khons?"

"I swear," I said.

"Thou swearest by the holy land of Khem, by Sihor's flood, by the Temples of the Gods and the eternal Pyramids?"

"I swear."

"Remembering thy hideous doom if thou shouldst fail therein, thou swearest that thou wilt in all things govern Egypt according to its ancient laws, that thou wilt preserve the worship of its Gods, that thou wilt do equal justice, that thou wilt not oppress, that thou wilt not betray, that thou wilt make no alliance with the Roman or the Greek, that thou wilt cast out the foreign Idols, that thou wilt devote thy life to the liberty of the land of Khem?"

"I swear."

"It is well. Mount, then, the throne, that in the presence of these thy subjects, I may name thee Pharaoh."

I mounted upon the throne, of which the footstool is a Sphinx, and the canopy the overshadowing wings of Ma. Then Amenemhat drew nigh once again and placed the Pshent upon my brow, and on my head the Double Crown, and the Royal Robe about my shoulders, and in my hands the Sceptre and the Scourge.

"Royal Harmachis," he cried, "by these outward signs and tokens, I, the High Priest of the Temple of Ra-Men-Ma at Aboutthis, crown thee Pharaoh of the Upper and Lower Land. Reign and prosper, O Hope of Khemi!"

"Reign and prosper, Pharaoh!" echoed the Dignitaries, bowing down before me.

Then, one by one, they swore allegiance, till all had sworn. And, having sworn, my father took me by the hand; he led me in solemn procession into each of the seven Sanctuaries that are in this Temple of Ra-Men-Ma, and in each I made offerings, swung incense, and officiated as priest. Clad in the Royal robes I made offerings in the Shrine of Horus, in the Shrine of Isis, in the Shrine of Osiris, in the Shrine of Amen-Ra, in the Shrine of Horemku, in the Shrine of Ptah, till at length I reached the Shrine of the King's Chamber.

Here they made their offering to me, as the Divine Pharaoh, and left me very weary--but a King.

[Here the first and smallest of the papyrus rolls comes to an end.]