

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 nightinga----

[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.]