

THE TALE  
OF  
THE DOOMED PRINCE.

FROM A PAPYRUS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

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TRANSLATED BY  
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THIS singular romance which is unfortunately imperfect is contained in four pages on the reverse of the *Harris Papyrus*, No. 500, now in the collection at the British Museum. The conclusion of the narrative is wanting, and owing to the fragile condition of the MSS. there are several serious lacunæ, but these I have endeavoured to fill up as far as I could safely do so by an examination of the context.

The date of the composition is uncertain, but from

the simplicity of its style I should feel inclined to place it in the XVIIIth Dynasty. The translation here given is that which I read before the Society of Biblical Archæology in March, 1874, in whose *Transactions*, Vol. III., part i., it is also printed with exegetical notes.



HARRIS PAPYRUS 500—VERSO PAGE Ö.  
TRANSLATION.

The words in parentheses supply the lacunæ of the text from conjecture.

- 1 It is told (that there was once) a King, who had no male offspring. (He prayed for an heir) and the gods listened to his request.
- 2 They decreed that one should be born to him. He lay with his wife in the night, and behold (she became) pregnant. She completed the month
- 3 of parturition, and then brought forth a male child. When the Hathors<sup>1</sup> came to greet him at his birth, they said
- 4 that he would either die by a crocodile, a serpent, or by a dog. When the people who were about the child heard it, they went (and told) these
- 5 things to His Majesty. His Majesty was exceedingly grieved at the evil tidings. His Majesty gave orders (to shut the child up in) a house
- 6 in the country, provided with attendants and all kinds of good things from the King's palace, and that the child should not go out abroad. (Now it came to pass
- 7 after some time) when the child grew big, he ascended to the roof of the house, and he saw a dog, which was following a person who
- 8 was going along the road. He said to his attendant,

<sup>1</sup> The seven Hathors who attend at the birth of children, and predict their future fate, are mentioned also in the *Tale of the Two Brothers*, where they unanimously foretell a violent death to the woman who was formed by the creator Chnum to be the wife of Batau. These mysterious beings are the prototypes of the *Parcæ* or Fates of the ancients. In the *Book of the Dead*, cap. cxlviii., they are represented as cows, and their names are given at length.

who was beside him, "What is that which (follows the person going along) the road." He  
 9 said to him, "That is a dog." The child said to him, "Let one be brought to me like it." The attendant went and repeated these things  
 10 to His Majesty. His Majesty said, "Let there be got for him a boar-hunting dog, to run before him." Then they got for him  
 11 a dog. Now it came to pass some time after this, the child became like a Prince, in all his limbs. He  
 12 sent to his father, saying, "Why is it that I still remain shut up. I am destined (to die by one of three deaths . . . . .<sup>1</sup>)  
 13 . . . . .<sup>1</sup> Let God do whatsoever pleases him." He went and . . . . .<sup>1</sup>

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1 all kinds of weapons . . . . .<sup>1</sup> to serve him. The man conducted him to the East.  
 2 He said to him, "Go now whithersoever thou wilt." (He went off) and the dog with him. He went up to the country according to his will, he lived upon the best of  
 3 all the beasts of the field. He arrived at the country of the Prince of Naharanna.<sup>2</sup> Now there was no child of the Prince of  
 4 Naharanna,<sup>2</sup> excepting one daughter. He had built a house for her, of which the window was distant  
 5 . . . . .<sup>1</sup> cubits from the ground. He had sent for all the sons of all the Princes of the land of Chara<sup>3</sup> and said to them,  
 6 "Whoever shall scale the window of my daughter, she shall be his wife." It came to pass many days after this,

<sup>1</sup> Lacuna.<sup>2</sup> Mesopotamia.<sup>3</sup> Syria.

- 7 while they were engaged in their daily occupations, the youth rode up to them. They  
 8 received the youth into their house, washed him, they gave fodder to his  
 9 horse, they did all sorts of things for the youth. They lodged him, they shod his feet, they  
 10 brought him to their . . . . .<sup>1</sup> they said to him in the way of conversation, "Whence comest thou,  
 11 thou good youth?" He said to them, "I am the son of one of the horsemen of the land of Egypt. My mother died, and my  
 12 father took another wife, a step-mother. Thereupon she hated me, and I fled from before her." He  
 13 was silent (?). They kissed him . . . . .<sup>1</sup> He said to the  
 14 youths, "What shall I do . . . . ."<sup>1</sup> (they tell him about the daughter of the King of Naharanna).

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- 1 . . . . .<sup>1</sup> to scale the window of the tower. Now it came to pass many days after this . . . . .<sup>1</sup>  
 2 . . . . .<sup>1</sup> he said to them, "Do ye go out; I will call<sup>2</sup> I will go to climb<sup>3</sup>  
 3 among you." They went to climb, according to their custom every day. The youth  
 4 stood afar off looking on. The maid-servant of the daughter of the Prince of Naharanna was upon it (the tower). Now it came to pass some time after this,  
 5 the youth went to climb with the children of the Princes; he climbed  
 6 and he reached the window of the daughter of the

<sup>1</sup> Lacuna.<sup>2</sup> Or conjure some deity.<sup>3</sup> The word here translated *climb* almost implies *to fly*, if one could believe in the invention of aerostatics before the time of Icarus.

- Prince of Naharanna. She kissed him, she embraced him in  
 7 all his limbs. Some one went to congratulate her father, and said to him, "A man has scaled the window  
 8 of thy daughter." The Prince inquired about him, saying, "The son of which of the Princes is it?" They said to him,  
 9 "It is the son of a horseman, who has run away from the land of Egypt, (from the face) of a step-mother." The  
 10 Prince of Naharanna was exceedingly angry. He said, "How can I give my daughter to a runaway  
 11 from Egypt. Let him go back again." They went and said (to the youth "Go back) to the place from whence thou camest."  
 12 But the girl clung to him. She swore by God, saying, "By the name of the Sun HORUS, (if I am prevented) from keeping him  
 13 with me, I will neither eat nor drink. She was on the point of dying. A messenger  
 14 went to announce all that she had said to her father. The Prince sent men to slay him (the youth).  
 15 He was in his house. The girl said, "By the Sun if he is slain . . . .<sup>1</sup> I will die too,  
 16 I will not pass an hour of life (without) him. One went (and told all these things) to her father. (The Prince of Naharanna causes the youth to be brought to him).

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- 1 (The result is favourable) . . . .<sup>1</sup> The fear of him  
 2 came upon the Prince. He embraced him, and kissed him in all his limbs. He said to him, "Behold thou art  
 3 unto me as a son." He replied to him, "I am the child of a horseman of the land of Egypt. My mother died, my father took

<sup>1</sup> Lacuna.

- 4 to himself another wife . . . . .<sup>1</sup> she hated me. I ran away from before her." He gave him his daughter to wife. He
- 5 (gave him a handsome establishment.) Now it came to pass some time after this, that the youth
- 6 said unto his wife, "I am predestined to one of three deaths ; either by a crocodile, a serpent, or a dog." She said to him, "Let
- 7 (some precautions be taken)." He replied, "I will not cause my dog to be killed. How should he do it?"
- 8 The woman (urged) her husband greatly. He would not allow him (the dog?) to go out alone.
- 9 (He goes a journey to some place) in the land of Egypt to catch birds. Behold a crocodile<sup>2</sup>
- 10 he was at the door of his house in the village, in which the
- 11 (youth had formerly dwelt). Behold there was a giant by him. The giant did not suffer him to go out
- 12 . . . . .<sup>1</sup> (he shut up) the crocodile. The giant went out to walk. Now when the dawn
- 13 appeared (the youth) went . . . . .<sup>1</sup> every day for the space of two months. Now it
- 14 came to pass some time after this, that the youth was sitting and making a feast in his house. Now it happened that
- 15 when night approached, the youth lay down upon his mat, and sleep overcame his limbs.

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- 1 His wife was engaged in (some occupation connected with the bath). (There came a serpent)
- 2 from a hole to bite the youth. Behold his wife was sitting beside him ; she was not reposing. Then the (servants came and presented something),<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lacuna.<sup>2</sup> Probably a sacred animal.<sup>3</sup> Probably wine.

- 3 to the serpent. He drank of it to intoxication.<sup>1</sup> He lay down overcome. (The woman kills him and throws him)
- 4 . . . . .<sup>2</sup> into her bath. Then they awoke her husband (and told him what had happened).
- 5 She said to him, Behold thy God hath given one of thy dooms into thy hand. He proceeded to make
- 6 offerings to God, to worship him, and exalt his presence, every day. Now it came to pass some time after this,
- 7 the youth went out to walk, at a distance from his dwelling. He did not . . . . .<sup>2</sup>
- 8 Behold his dog followed him. His dog seized the head of (some animal)
- 9 He began to run (after) him, he approached (a place near) the sea. He proceeded to the . . . . .<sup>2</sup>
- 10 the dog was standing (near) the crocodile. He led him to where the giant was . . . . .<sup>2</sup>
- 11 the crocodile (said) to the youth "I am thy doom, I am come after thee . . . . .<sup>2</sup>
- 12 . . . . .<sup>2</sup> with the giant. But, behold, I will remember thee . . . . .<sup>2</sup>
- 13 . . . . .<sup>2</sup> thou mayest bewitch me (like) the giant. But if thou seest . . . . .<sup>2</sup>
- 14 . . . . .<sup>2</sup> Now it came to pass after two months that (the youth) went . . . . .<sup>2</sup>

Here unfortunately the fragment breaks off. Considering the rapidity with which the story is developed in these five pages, it may be presumed that at most not more than five others are required to complete the catastrophe which, one cannot help feeling, is in some way or other brought to pass by the faithful dog.

<sup>1</sup> See Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptians*, Vol. V., 240, 241, for the feeding of sacred serpents on cakes and honey.

<sup>2</sup> Lacuna.



# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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