

THE TALE
OF
THE GARDEN OF FLOWERS.

A STORY OF EGYPTIAN SOCIAL LIFE
IN THE NINETEENTH DYNASTY.

TRANSLATED BY
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THIS singular and graphic story, which like many other Egyptian MSS. is unfortunately only a fragment, is contained in one of the hieratic papyri belonging to the Museum at Turin. The original was published by MM. Pleyte and de Rossi, in *Le Papyrus de Turin*, Pl. 79, 80, 81, 82. It consists of several separate fragments which have been put in order by myself. My translation was first read before the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres at Paris, 17th April 1874, and published in *Les Comptes rendus*, 4e. serie, Tom. II, p. 117. It is substantially the same as that which is now presented in an English version. As illustrating the character of Egyptian social life, and as a parallel to the de-

scription of "The woman that flattereth with her lips" in the Book of Proverbs, this episode, short as it is, has a peculiar value.

Another tale of the same purport occurs among the papyri collected for the Museum at Boulaq by His Excellency Mariette-Bey, but it unfortunately is still in a far worse condition than the *Episode of the Garden of Flowers*. Of the original papyrus, which like the former belongs to the time of the Ramses, nearly cotemporary with the Exodus of the Jews, there remain only seventeen fragments, which are so short and imperfect that their sequence will always be a puzzle. What can be decyphered relates to an Egyptian who fell, like the hero of the tale of the flower garden, in a love net, and was entrapped by some *Messenger of love*. He followed the charmer to a place where he perceived several youths who were crowned with flowers and lying upon couches. Mention occurs of garments taken away, as in the story of Joseph. Colloquies abound and generally run on the subject of sweet or bitter recollections of the past, oaths, bliss never to be realized love-declarations and reproaches, intermingled with narratives of robberies and bastinadoes. There remains enough to awaken regret for the loss of a document which when entire, contained the most eventful romance yet found amongst the few remnants already known of the Egyptian literature.

THE TALE OF THE GARDEN OF FLOWERS.

- 1 SHE led me, hand in hand, and we went into her garden
to converse together.
- 2 There she made me taste (of) excellent honey.
- 3 The rushes (of the garden) were verdant and (all) its
bushes flourishing.
- 4 There were currant (trees) and cherries redder than
the ruby.¹
- 5 The ripe peaches² (of the garden) resembled bronze,
6 and the groves had the lustre of the stone *nashem*,³
- 7 The *menni*⁴ unshelled like cocoa nuts they brought
to us,
8 its shade was fresh and airy, and soft for the repose of
love.
- 9 When she met me, the daughter of the Chief (high)
Superintendent of the orchards
10 had sent her as the messenger of love,
11 "Come to me," she called unto me,
12 "and enjoy thyself a day in the room of a young girl who
belongs to me,
13 the garden is to-day in its glory⁵
14 there is a terrace and a parlour"⁶

[Here there is a lacuna of about one line. The messenger now
addresses herself to the seductive Phryne who has sent her.]

- 15 "When noble men behold thee, they are joyful, and thy
sight ravishes them,
16 let them come to thy habitation,

¹ Fruits termed *kaiou* and *tīpau*, which probably had nothing in
common with cherries and currants except their colour.

² The Persea fruit, a species of sacred almond.

³ Green felspar or (Amazon stone, *Leps. Todt.* c. 159). ⁴ An unknown fruit.

⁵ Literally, "in its day glory." ⁶ In the French text rendered *boudoir*.

- 17 and bring their precious jewels with them,
 18 that they may be intoxicated by thy embraces, without
 having been drunk.
 19 Hear me, they come with their riches,
 20 and they bring the liquor *hak*¹
 21 for all thy young maidens, (they bring)
 22 all kinds of bread for repast,
 23 cakes of yesterday, and fresh of to-day,
 24 and all the delicious fruits for parties of pleasure.
 25 Come, and make this a happy day."
 26 From the first to the third day she was seated in the
 shade
 27 her *Khenmès*² was at her right hand, and her servant³
 28 carried out all her orders.
 29 A cask of beer was placed upside down
 30 that she might drink thereof at her pleasure, and her
 brother⁴ also.
 31 Her servant was a sister in her rendezvous,
 32

[Here ends the second page, the commencement of the third is wanting as is also the first words of all the remaining lines ; from them we gather that the young lover, who is described as a prince, entered into the enjoyment of the voluptuous pleasures prepared for him by the lady, the messenger⁵ then comes to him to profit by his liberality while his good humour remains, and urges him to—]

- 33 "Bestow on her (the lady) a necklace of lapis lazuli, or
 of lilies⁶ and tulips,

¹ A kind of beer imported from Syria.

² The *khenmès* or *Master*, was the so called *Leno* ; possibly the same as the "keeper" in Canticles.

³ A favourite maiden.

⁴ The word brother seems here to be used in the same sense, as the term *frater* sometimes is in Latin poetry.

⁵ *L'entremetteuse*, in the French translation.

⁶ Probably a collar of gold lotus blossoms inlaid with precious stones or enamelled *en cloisonné*.

- 34 give enough for all her maidens,
 35 and let this be a day of joyfulness."
 [The Prince now speaks.]
 36 "I came forth from the shady bower, from the secret
 place,
 37 and the maidens perceived me and said,
 38 'Behold him, he is really going away,
 39 come let us caress him, and make him fulfil his day;'
 40 let us use all our arts to retain him.'
 41 She had in her mouth a sycamore fruit.
 42 Her gardener came and said unto her,
 43 'Attention, (listen) it is the brother of the Queen
 44 thou art then comparable to this august lady.'
 45 If there is no servant, I myself will be the waiter,
 46 who will serve thee when those whom thy love captivates.
 (upon this)
 47 she suffered him to place her in her pavillion in the
 grove,
 48 She offered me no coarse (common) beverage to drink.
 49 I did not fill my stomach with river water.
 50 We amused ourselves by jesting and saying: 'All drinking
 is forbidden here'³
 51 By my life my well-beloved one, bring me close to thee.
 52 The sycamore fig⁴
 [Here ends the lower part of page three. From the fragments
 that remain the following sentences may be restored.]
 53 Give me the sycamore fig that thy lips have tasted
 54 and let me eat of it.
 55 I do not kiss with my lips only."
⁵

¹ Gen. xxix. 37.

² The gardener addresses the Prince; this frequent and interrupting change of person is common in Egyptian composition.

³ Ironically as if it were a sacred place, wine being forbidden to be drunk in the temples, see *Herod. Euterpe*, 63, *Plutarch, de Isid*, 6, and *Goodwin Hierati Writing*, 1858.

⁴ Lacuna.

⁵ The original is too anomalous for translation even in a Latin dress.

- 56
 57 such were my pleasures in the Pavillion of the grove.
 58 There I rested all the while;
 59 she was with me as a sister with her brother.
 60 Then came there other lovers (to her bower),
 61 they were intoxicated with *mustum*;¹
 62 they made themselves drunk with palm wine,
 63 and the perfumed drink of *Kemi*.²
 64 All desire to depart forsook me,
 65 and I stayed in that garden twelve months.
 66 (Then I perceived at last that they deceived me.)
 67 Then I threw away the tulip,
 68 the one that I had placed the evening before in my
 chamber.³
 69 (I reproached myself.)
 70 I who am a great military Chief!⁴
 71 They look upon me as an inferior Captain.
 72 if they recommence this (rude) behaviour
 73 I will not be silent to them about it⁴
 74 (At the next interview)
 75 The crime is discovered (and)
 76 I undergo the punishment of thy love
 77 That TUM⁵”⁴

[These are the last words of the text which are now visible. The prince seems to charge (some deity) to avenge him. The Tale implies a longer termination which may be however considered as irretrievably lost.]

¹ In French *moût*.

² A composite liquor like *Metheglin*.

³ The tulip was probably more particularly mentioned in that portion of the story which is missing, it may have been a love token.

⁴ *Lacunæ*.

⁵ Tum, or Atum, the god of the setting sun, perhaps the deity who should avenge the Prince on the courtesans.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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