

A Romance of the Days When the Lord Redcemed the Children of Israel From the Bondage of Egypt

Elizabeth Miller

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CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WAY TO THE SEA. ENKENES did not remain long in the apathy of amazement and helplessness. Consternation possessed him the instant he roused himself sufficiently to realize and speculate. He had saved the king and exposed Har-hat, but the accomplishing of this temporary good had forced the probable commission of a great evil. If death in some form did not overtake the fan bearer he could enrich and strengthen himself from Israel. Then, even if Meneptah's army did not continue to follow him, he would be enabled to buy mercenaries and return equipped to do battle with Meneptah, even as he had vowed. The flower of the military was with him; the Pharaoh was incapable and Egypt demoralized. The success of the traitor seemed assured. What then of Rachel, of his own father, of the faithful ministers, of all whom Kenkenes had loved or befriended? The thought filled him with resolution and vigor.

"If the Lord God of Israel overtakes him not," he said, returning to the king, "then must I! For in my good intent it seems that I have undone thee. Hotep," he continued, taking the scribe's hands, "let my father know that I died not with the firstborn; also thou seest the danger into which the nation hath descended in this hour. Help thou the king! I return not.

He kissed the scribe on the lips and, freeing himself from his clinging hands, ran through the broken line of the royal guards.

The army was already a compact cluster in the center of a rolling cloud of dust to the south.

When Nechutes had aroused him before daybreak the cupbearer had brought Hotep with him, and while the messenger broke his fast he had availed himself of the scribe's presence to learn many things. Not the smallest part of his information was the fact that the Pharaoh's scouts had located Israel encamped on a sedgy plain at the base of a great bill on the northeramost arm of the Red sea. Meneptalk's army had marched twenty-five miles due south of Pithom and pitched five miles from that point to Baal-Zephon or the hill before which Israel had camped. The fugitives had chosen the smoothest path for travel, keeping along the Bitter lakes, that their cattle might feed. Their track

led in a southeasterly direction.

But Har-hat, making off with the army, had struck due south. He had chosen this line for more than one advantage it offered. The Arabian desert approached the sea in a series of plateaus or steps. The most westerly was surmounted by a ridge of high hills, higher probably than any other chain within the boundaries of Egypt. The most easterly overlooked the seabeach and was originally, it may be, the old sea margin. At points the tableland advanced within sight of the water, at other localities an intervening space of several miles lay between it and the sea. The summit was flat, at least smooth enough for the passage of horsemen, and at all times it was a good field for strategic maneuverings by an army arrayed against anything which might be on the beach below. The slaves were entrapped. The pur-

suer had but to follow the pursued in the only open direction and overtake the starving, thirsting multitude at last. But from Har-hat's movement he had meant to continue along this platean out of sight of Israel until he had posted part of his army in the way of escape to the south. Kenkenes reached this conclusion without much pondering. He had his own maneuverings in mind. Of the captain of Israel, Prince Moses, he would discover, first, if the Lord God had prepared him against Har-hat. The grave question answered to the repose of his mind concerning the welfare of Israel, the path of his next duty would be clearly laid before him. He would join the army and take the life of the fan bearer for the sake of all he loved and Egypt. In the course of the day's events his motive had been exalted from the personal desire for revenge to the high intent of a patriot. He feit most confident that he would forfeit his cwn life in the act.

Not an instant did he hesitate. Ahead of him was the narrow bed of a miniature torrent which rolled out of the desert during the infrequent rains. Now it was dry, packed hard, free of all obstructions except the great bowlders and led in a comparatively straight line toward the sea. It was an ideal stretch for running.

He summoned all his forces, gathering in a mighty mental effort, all that depended on his speed, and took the path with a leap. The dazed king and his ministers saw him with whom they had that moment talked stretch a vast and ever widening breach between them with a bat-like swoop, and while they watched he was swallowed up in

the distance. The bed of the torrent served him for the first few miles. Then it turned abruptly toward the Bitter lakes. He left it and entered the rougher country. Thereafter no great bursts of speed were possible, because the runner had to pick his way. He ran, not ing frantically for some sign to guide with a steady pace, each stride equal

to the preceding, but with bounds,

aside and forward, dimly calculating the safety of the footfall.

Suddenly a column of sand rose under his feet and he dashed through it. Blinded and choking, he cleared his eyes, caught his breath and ran on. A gust of wind, like a breath of flame, met him from the east and passed. Then he realized that the atmosphere had thickened, as if an opaque cloud of heat had enveloped the earth. He glanced at the sky and saw that it was strewn with fragmentary clouds, but a little south and east of him was the pillar, unmoving and gilded royally.

There was a storm in the air. Finally the region began to grow level, proving the proximity to the sea. In another moment he came upon the old sea bed. It was sandy, sedge grown, with here and there a palm, and tremendously trampled.

Israel had passed this way. The clash and ring of meeting metal fell on his ear. He looked and saw ahead of him two men fighting with a third. Three horses with empty sad-

dles nervously watched the fray. The single combatant was a soldier in the uniform of a common fighting man. One of the pair was a tall Nubian in a striped tunic; the other was an Egyptian, short, fat, purple of countenance-Unas!

With a furious exclamation, Kenkenes slackened his pace only long enough to undo the falchion at his side and rushed to the fight. It did not matter to him who the soldier was or what his cause. The fact that he was fighting the emissaries of Har-hat was sufficient indorsement of the lone soidier, but even as he sprang forward Unas sank on the sand, moved convuisively once or twice, and lay still.

The soldier staggered back from the second servitor and fell. The Nubian. standing over him, swung his heavy weapon aloft, but Kenkenes thrust his falchion over the fallen man and caught the blow as it descended upon the broad back of the blade.

"Set receive your cursed soul!" the Nublan snarled. Kenkenes leaped across the prostrate seldier, and simultaneously the weapons went up, descended and clashed. Then followed a wild and fearful battle.

The Egyptian falchion was nothing more than a sword shaped ax. Thereits tents for the night. It was twenty- fore these were not tongues of seel



The Nubian swung his heavy weapon aloit.

which would whip their supple length one across the other and fill the air with the lightning of their play and the devilish beauty of their music. The vanquished would not taste the nice death of a spitted heart. There was yet the method of the stone ax warriors in this battle, and he who fell would be a fearful thing to see.

Perhaps it was because Kenkenes was stronger and more agile; perhaps he remembered Deborah at that moment, or perhaps he was simply a better fighter. Whatever the cause, his blade went up and descended at last before the Nubian could parry, and the second servitor of Har-hat fell on his face and died.

Chilled by the instant sobering which follows the taking of life, the young man sickened and whirled away from the quivering flesh. Plunging his falchion in the sand to hide its stain, he went back to the fallen soldier.

He knew by the look on the gray face, by the dark pool that had grown beside him, that the warrior had fought his last fight. Kenkenes raised the man's head and heard these words

faintly spoken: "He sent them in pursuit. I knew he meant to do it, but I could not get near to kill him. So I followed them. But thou art her lover. Do thou protect her

"Her! Rachel?" Kenkenes cried. 'Who art thou?"

"Atsu, once her taskmaster, always her"- the voice died away.

"Where is she?" Kenkenes implored. "In the name of thy gods, go not yet! Where is she?"

The lips parted in answer, but no worshiper, in this thy latest hour of sound came. The arm went up as if mystery." to point, but it fell limp without indicating direction, and with a sigh the

soldier turned his face away. Sobbing, wild with anxiety and grief, Kenkenes shook the inert body, plead- ward a faroff bill, barely outlined to Richel. But there was no

spense, for the dead speak not out

and stood up. It had come to him very plainly that but for Atsu already these dead servitors would have been beyond overtaking in pursuit of his love. of it the sea. West of it the army Though a worshiper of Israel's God, Kenkenes was still Egyptian in his instincts. The man who had died to save Rachel he could not bury uncoffined in a grave of sand, where the natural processes of dissolution would destroy him utterly. His and Rachel's debts to Atsu were great, and the demand was made upon him now to discharge all that was possible in the one act of caring for the dead soldier's remains. Kenkenes could not bear the body back to the group he had left about the king, for he had a mission which concerned all the living who were dear to him. Furthermore, the sky was threatening, the desert was a terrible place during high winds, and he dared not delay.

At last Kenkenes laid the body down

Suddenly a thought struck him. Travelers and seafaring men had told him that there were settlements along the Red sea. Might be not go forward on his way after Israel till he found one of these?

He led the largest horse past the dead servitors and, persuading it to stand, lifted the body of Atsu upon its back. With difficulty he mounted and, supporting the limp burden with one arm, turned again toward the south-

As he went forward Kenkenes meditated on the signs of this recent and tragic event. He had searched throughout the length and breadth of Goshen for Rachel, and none had seen her or heard of her since she had fled from Har-hat into the desert, eight months before he had seen her last. Israel was more ignorant of the whereabouts of Rachel than he. He could not tell whether Har-hat knew where she was, nor could he guess from the position of the fighters in which direction the servants had meant to ride. The tracks of their horses were not to be discovered in the great trampled roadway Israel had made.

Of this thing Kenkenes was sure. If Rachel were with Israel she had joined it after he had left Goshen. In that case he was going to her to ask after her safety when he inquired after all Israel. If she were still in Egypt he would stop Har-hat's search forever. This recollection added to his determination and intensified his zeal.

At the beginning of the great fields of sea grass he came upon a little hamlet. It was a considerable distance inland, and the chief industry of the people could have been only the gathering of sedge for hay or the curing of herb and root for medicines. Some of the villagers were in sight, but the most of them were out in the direction of the

lakes laboring in the marsh grass. In the course of the past year's events Kenkene, had learned to be a cautious and skillful fugitive. He did not care to be caught and taxed with

the death of the man whose body he bore. The village shrine was the structure nearest to him. It was built of sun dried brick, with three walls, the fourth side open to the sunrise. Kenkenes dismounted and reconnoitered. The shrine was empty, and none of the villagers was near.

He lifted the dead man from the horse and bore the body into the sanctuary. Before the image of Athor was a long table overlaid with a slab of red sandstone. Here the offerings were left and here Kenkenes laid Atsu, a true sacrifice to the love deity. Reverently the young man closed the eyes and straightened the chilling limbs. Going into his patrimony of jewels sewn in his beit, he took an emerald and, putting it in the hands, crossed them above the breast. Then he laid his mantle over the bier.

At the threshold he found a soft stone, and with that he wrote upon the head of the long table the name of the dead man and Mendes, his native city. Under this he wrote further to the villagers, charging them, in the name of the goddess, to care for the body reverently and return it to the tomb of Atsu's fathers. Having made note of the emerald as remuneration for their labors, he completed the inscription without signature.

Thus he insured the safety and preservation of the bones of Atsu, and in the eye of the average Egyptian he had served the soldier well. But Kenkenes was not satisfied.

As he left the shrine he muttered with trembling lips:

"Bless him! The fate is not kind which yields to such goodness no reward save gratitude. There must be, because of the great God's justness, some especial blessing laid up for

In the time he had spent in the sanctuary the atmosphere had grown hazy, and the sun shone obscurely. To the east were tumbled and darkening masses, which gathered even as he looked and joined till they stretched in a vast and unillumined sweep about the horizon. The wind had died, and the heat bathed him in perspiration.

Once again his eyes sought the pillar and found it above him, still somewhat to the east, yet in form unchanged, in hue undimmed. Something within him associated the column of cloud with Israel and Israel's

He went to his horse and found him terrified and unmanageable. After vain efforts to soothe the creature he walked away a little space, clasping

"O thou mysterious God, by these tokens thy hand is upon the earth and upon the heavens! Even as thou hast shielded me thus far, withdraw not thy sheltering hand from about me, thy

with frightened peasants, and took the path of Israel.

It led in a southeasterly direction tosettled and over the sea the souther bastion of !

cloud heaved its sooty bulk up the sky. The air stagnated, and the whole

desert was soundless.

If Meneptah's scouts had reported truly, Israel had behind it a hill, east would approach. South only could it flee into a torrid, arid, uninhabited

A round and tumbled mass, blue black, but attended by a copper colored rack, detached itself from a shelflike stratum of cloud and, elongating, seemed to descend to the surface of the sea. Daylight went out instantly, and a prolonged moan came from the distant east Blinding flashes of lightning illuminated the whirling mass and almost absolute darkness fell after each bolt. Out of the inky midnight toward the east came an ever increasing sound of a maddened sea, gathering in volume and fury and menace. Kenkenes flung himself on his face and waited. He did not have long to walt.

With a noise of mighty rending, reenforced by a continuous roll of savage thunder, the storm struck. A spinning cone of wind caught a great expanse of sand and, lifting the loose covering, carried a huge twisting column inland-deam and entombment for any living thing it met. With it went a great blast of spray, stones, seaweed, masses of sedge uprooted bodily, much wreckage, palm trees, small huts which went to pieces as they were carried along, wild and domestic animals, anything and everything that lay in the path of the storm.

The rotary movement passed with the first whirl, but a hurricane, blowing with overcoming velocity, pressed like a wall against anything that strove to face it. Its boarse raving filled Kenkeries' ears with titanic sound. The breath was snatched from his nostrils. His eyelids, tightly closed, were stung with sharply driven sand. Though he struggled to his feet and attempted to proceed, he staggered and wandered and was prone to turn away from the solid breast of the mighty blast. He could not hope to make headway blinded, yet he dared not lift his face to the sand. He could make a shelter over his eye that he might watch his feet, but he could not discover path and direction in this manner.

The day was far advanced, and already the army had outstripped him. Might not Har-hat at this hour be descending with his veterans, seasoned against the simooms of Arabia, upon Israel, demoralized in the storm?

Desperate, the young man dropped his hands and flung up his head.

He was standing in a soft light very faintly diffused about him, but narrowing ahead of him, brightening, as it contracted, into almost daytime brilliance to the south. The illuminated strip was not wide, the plat au to the west was dark, the farther east likewise storm obscured. Takin; courage. he raised his eyes for an instant. The drifting sand would not per uit a lon-

ger contemplation, but in that fleeting glimpse he discovered the source of the supernatural radiance. The pillar was tinged like a cloud in the sunset with a mellow and benign fire.

Kenkenes did not marvel and was not perplexed. The miracles no longer amazed him, but he had not become indifferent or unthankful. Each forward step he took was a declaration of faith; the thrill of relief in his veins, a psalm of thanksgiving. The stones were as many and as sharp, the way as untender, and the mighty tempest strove against him as powerfully, but he followed the ray, trusting implicitly.

Night fell unnoticed, for it merged with the supernatural darkness of the

At the summit of the slope which led down to the water's edge he paused. Below him was a gentle declivity ending to the south in darkness. There was not a glimmer of radiance on the sea. Far to the east could be heard the sound of infuriated 'surges, storming the rocks, but dense darkness shrouded all the distance. Only the beach directly under him was alight. The shadows cast were blacker than daylight shadows, and the radiance had a touch of gold, which gilded everything beneath it. The poorest object was enriched, the gaudiest subdued.

Had the number of Israel been 10,000 or even 100,000 Kenkenes might have had some conception of the multitude. The millions massed below him on the sand were not to be looked on except as a vast unit.

The tribes were divided, the herds were collected at the rear or inland side, and the lepers were isolated, but no order in detail was possible. Tents were down, goods were being gathered and much commotion was apparent. Even at a distance Kenkenes could see that consternation and dismay were rife among Israel. The whole valley was murmurous with subdued outcry. and a multitudinous lowing and bleating of the herds swept up, blown wildly by the hurricane.

The senses, too, are limited in their grasp, even as the brain has bounds upon its conception. The dimensions, movement and sound of the multitude overtaxed the eye and ear.

Was it the storm or the army that had frightened them?

Slipping and sliding in his haste, he descended the slope without care for the sound he made. The hillocks and hollows that interposed irritated him. His impatience made him forget his great weariness. Israel's helpless ones to the sword, Israel's treasure open to the enrichment of a traitor, Israel's fighting men driven to rally to his standard-Rachel's people to be mastered by Har-hat!

Great was his intent and its scope, and how cheaply attained if it cost but two lives bis enemy's and his own! enthusiasm and zeal put out of his He skirted the village, now filling sight all his young reluctance to surhave explained truthfully from his chosen—these men of little faith!" own feelings what it is that enables men to suffer an eager martyrdom.

> the camp halted him. "I bring fidings to your captain," be

explained. The answer was swept



"I bring tidings to your captain." from the speaker's lips and carried astray by the wind, but he caught

these words: "Thou art an Egyptian. Thy kind hath no friendship for Israel."

"I am of Egypt, but I am one with you in faith. Conduct me to the prince,

I pray you." "Take him," said one to the other.

'He is but one." The Hebrew thus addressed motioned Kenkenes to follow him and turned toward the encampment.

They passed through a lane between two tribes. Kenkenes guessed, looking first upon one and then the other. that there were 100,000 in the two. Strip a city of her plan and shape, her houses, her pleasures and commerce; leave only her people, their smallest possessions and all their fears; beset such a city with an army on three sides, the sea on the fourth and a furious hurricane over all-and in such state and of such appearance were these two tribes.

Kenkenes fortified himself and resisted with all his might the contagious panic that seemed about to attack him. As well as he might he concentrated his mind upon other things. He noted that the shadows were long, like those of afternoon. Turning his head, he saw that the pillar stood behind the encampment and that its light was thrown forward and downward, not backward and outward. Very manifestly the benefits of the miracle were only for the believers in Jehovah. The marvel brought into the young man's mind some natural speculation concerning the great miracle worker to whom his guide was leading him. look upon-a sorcerer, a trafficker in

horrors, a confounder of men? Abead, particularly Humined by the celestial light, was a group of elders-

fleeces of their own beards. They bent firmly against the blast, and the broad streaming of their ample drapings added much to the idea of supernatural power and resistance they inspired.

The Hebrew leading Kenkenes slackened his step, as if hesitating to approach so venerable a council, when suddenly the group separated, revealing a majestic man about whom it had been clustered.

After a word in his own tongue, delivered with bent head and deferential attitude, the Hebrew stood aside.

Kenkenes prepared to meet a prince of Egypt, whatever the personality of the Israelite. He dropped on one knee, bent his head and extended his hand with the palm toward Moses. The great man took the fingers and bade the young Egyptian arise. Forty years a courtier, forty years a shepherd, but the graces of the one had not been forgotten in the simplicities of the other. When Kenkenes gained his feet, lo, he faced the wondrous stranger he had seen in the tomb of the incomparable

At a sign from Moses, Kenkenes came near to him, that the howl of the tempest and the turmoil of Israel might not drown their voices.

"Thou art weary, my son," the Israelite said, glancing at the tired face and dusty raiment. "Hast thou come

from afar?" "From Goshen to Tanis and hither, O prince."

"Afoot?" "Even sa."

"Thou hast journeyed farther than Israel, and Israel is most weary. I trust thy journey is done." And this was the confounder of

Egypt, the vicar of God-this kindly

"Not yet, O prince, but its dearest mission endeth here. I come of the blood of the oppressors, but I am full of pity for thy people's wrongs. Knowest thou that the Egyptians pursue thee? Is thy hand made strong with resource? Hath the Lord God prepared thee against them?"

"From whom art thou sent?" the Israelite asked pointedly.

"I am come of mine own accord." "Wherefore?" "Because I am one with Israel in

The great lawgiver surveyed him in silence for a moment, but the pene-

trative brilliance in his eyes softened. "Wast thou taught?" he asked at

"In casting away the idols, nay; in finding the true God I was." In the pause that followed Israel lifted up its voice, and to Kenkenes it

seemed that the people besought their great captain urgingly and chidingly. The lawgiver listened for a little How much depended upon him! His space. His gaze was absent, the lines of his face were sad. Something in his attitude seemed to say: "What profitrender life and the world. He could eth all thy care, O Lord? Behold thy

Then, as if some thought of the young proselyte, the Egyptian, arose Two Hebrews outside the limits of In contrast, his eyes came back to Kenkenes again.

'Thou hast filled me with gladness, my son," he said simply.

Kenkenes bowed his head and made no answer. Presently the Israelito spoke to the panic stricken people nearest to him. In the tone and the words he used there was a world of paternal kindness, a composite of confidence, reassurance and implied pro-

tection that should have soothed. "Fear ye not. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, for the Egyptians ye have seen this day ye shall see again no more forever."

At the words Kenkenes lifted his head quickly. The Hebrew had answered his question, but how enigmatically! Was Israel to escape, or Har-hat to be destroyed? In either ease the young man wondered concerning himself. Again the eyes of the lawgiver returned to him, as if the sight of the young Egyptian was grateful to him.

"Abide with us," he said. "Saith not thy faith, 'Fear not, the Lord shall fight for thee?"

Kenkenes' face wore a startled expression. How had the Israelite divined his purpose? "Saith not thy faith?" Faith? He confessed faith, but faith had not spoken that thing to him. Slowly and little by little it began to, manifest itself to him that he had wavered in his trust; that the purpose of his visit to Israel had questioned the fidelity of his God's care; that so surely had he doubted he had defied danger and fought with death to ask after the intent of the Lord; that he had meant to. perform the duty which the Lord had left undone. The realization came with a rush of shame. In the asking he had betrayed his wavering, and Moses had tactfully told him of it. A surge of

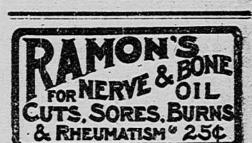
color swept over his face. "Thou hast recalled my trust to me, my prince," he said in a lowered tone. "Till now I knew not that it had failed me. But remember thou it was my love for Israel-oh, and my love for mine own-that made me fear. Forgive me, I pray thee."

The lawgiver laid his band on the young man's shoulder, but did not answer at once. The growing clamor about them had reached the acme of insistence. The nearest people pressed through the tripal lines and, rushing forward, began to throw themselves on their knees, tumbling in circles about the majestic Hebrew. Others kept their feet and, with arms and clinched. hands above their heads, shouted vehemently. Their cries were partly in-Egyptian, partly in their own tongue, but the cause of their terror and the burden of their supplications were the same. The Egyptians were upon them! Even the dumb beasts were swept into the panic, and the illuminated beach: shook with sound.

After a little sad contemplation of the clamoring borde about him the lawsaid in his ear, because the tumult drowned his voice:

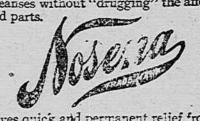
"The Lord will fight for thee; thing enemy cannot fee his strong band. great, grave more misted in the flying Wait upon him and behold his tri-

Kenkenes bowed his head in acqui-



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