

The Adventures of Sanehat

By Unknown

The hereditary prince, royal seal-bearer, confidential friend, judge, keeper of the gate of the foreigners, true and beloved royal acquaintance, the royal follower Sanehat says:

I attended my lord as a follower of the King, of the house of the hereditary princess, the greatly favored, the royal wife, Ankhnet-Useratesen, who shares the dwelling of the royal son Amenemhat in Kanefer.

In the thirtieth year, the month Paophi, the seventh day the god entered his horizon, the King Sehotepabra flew up to heaven and joined the sun's disk, the follower of the god met his maker. The palace was silenced, and in mourning, the great gates were closed, the courtiers crouching on the ground, the people in hushed mourning.

His Majesty had sent a great army with the nobles to the land of the Temehu (Lybia), his son and heir, the good god King Useratesen as their leader. Now he was returning, and had brought away living captives and all kinds of cattle without end. The councillors of the palace had sent to the West to let the King know the matter that had come to pass in the inner hall. The messenger was to meet him on the road, and reach him at the time of evening: the matter was urgent. "A hawk had soared with his followers." Thus said he, not to let the army know of it. Even if the royal sons who commanded in that army send a message, he was not to speak to a single one of them. But I was standing near, and heard his voice while he was speaking. I fled far away, my heart beating, my arms failing, trembling had fallen on all my limbs. I turned about in running to seek a place to hide me, and I threw myself between two bushes, to wait while they should pass by. Then I turned me toward the south, not from wishing to come into this place—for I knew not if war was declared—nor even thinking a wish to live after this sovereign, I turned my back to the sycamore, I reached Shi-Seneferu, and rested on the open field. In the morning I went on and overtook a man, who passed by the edge of the road. He asked of me mercy, for he feared me. By the evening I drew near to Kher-ahau (? old Cairo), and I crossed the river on a raft without a rudder. Carried over by the west wind, I passed over to the east to the quarries of Aku and the land of the goddess Herit, mistress of the red mountain (Gebel Ahtnar). Then I fled on foot, northward, and reached the walls of the prince, built to repel the Sati. I crouched in a bush for fear of being seen by the guards, changed each day, who watch on the top of the fortress. I took my way by night, and at the lighting of the day I reached Peten, and turned me toward the valley of Kemur. Then thirst hastened me on; I dried up, and my throat narrowed, and I said, "This is the taste of death." When I lifted up my heart and gathered strength, I heard a voice and the lowing of cattle. I saw men of the Sati, and one of them—a friend unto Egypt—knew me. Behold he gave me water and boiled me milk, and I went with him to his camp; they did me good, and one tribe passed me on to another. I passed on to Sun, and reached the land of Adim (Edom).

When I had dwelt there half a year Amu-an-shi—who is the Prince of the Upper Tenu—sent for me and said: "Dwell thou with me that thou mayest hear the speech of Egypt." He said thus for that he knew of my excellence, and had heard tell of my worth, for men of Egypt who were there with him bore witness of me. Behold he said to me: "For what cause hast thou come hither? Has a matter come to pass in the palace? Has the King of the two lands, Sehetepabra, gone to heaven? That which has happened about this is not known." But I answered with concealment, and said: "When I came from the land of the Tamahu, and my desires were there changed in me, if I fled away it was not by reason of remorse that I took the way of a fugitive; I have not failed

in my duty, my mouth has not said any bitter words, I have not heard any evil counsel, my name has not come into the mouth of a magistrate. I know not by what I have been led into this land.” And Amu-an-shi said: “This is by the will of the god (King of Egypt); for what is a land like if it know not that excellent god, of whom the dread is upon the lands of strangers, as they dread Sekhet in a year of pestilence?” I spake to him, and replied: “Forgive me; his son now enters the palace, and has received the heritage of his father. He is a god who has none like him, and there is none before him. He is a master of wisdom, prudent in his designs, excellent in his decrees, with good-will to him who goes or who comes; he subdued the land of strangers while his father yet lived in his palace, and he rendered account of that which his father destined him to perform. He is a brave man, who verily strikes with his sword; a valiant one, who has not his equal; he springs upon the barbarians, and throws himself on the spoilers; he breaks the horns and weakens the hands, and those whom he smites cannot raise the buckler. He is fearless, and dashes the heads, and none can stand before him. He is swift of foot, to destroy him who flies; and none who flees from him reaches his home. His heart is strong in his time; he is a lion who strikes with the claw, and never has, he turned his back. His heart is closed to pity; and when he sees multitudes, he leaves none to live behind him. He is a valiant one who springs in front when he sees resistance; he is a warrior who rejoices when he flies on the barbarians, He seizes the buckler, he rushes forward, he never needs to strike again, he slays and none can turn his lance; and when he takes the bow the barbarians flee from his arms like dogs; for the great goddess has given to him to strike those who know he; not; and if he reaches forth he spares none, and leaves naught behind. He is a friend of great sweetness, who knows how to gain love; his land loves him more than itself, and rejoices in him more than in its own god; men and women run to his call. A king, he has ruled from his birth; he, from his birth, has increased births, a sole being, a divine essence, by whom this land rejoices to be governed. He enlarges the borders of the South; but he covets not the lands of the North: he does not smite the Sati, nor crush the Nemaushau. If he descends here, let him know thy name, by the homage which thou wilt pay to his majesty. For he refuses not to bless the land which obeys him.”

And he replied to me: “Egypt is indeed happy and well settled; behold thou art far from it, but whilst thou art with me I will do good unto thee.” And he placed me before his children, he married his eldest daughter to me, and gave me the choice of all his land, even among the best of that which he had on the border of the next land. It is a goodly land, Iaa is its name. There are figs and grapes; there is wine commoner than water; abundant is the honey, many are its olives; and all fruits are upon its trees: there are barley and wheat, and cattle of kinds without end. This was truly a great thing that he granted me, when the prince came to invest me, and establish me as prince of a tribe in the best of his land. I had my continual portion of bread and of wine each day, of cooked meat, of roasted fowl, as well as the wild game which I took, or which was brought to me, beside what my dogs captured. They made me much butter, and prepared milk of all kinds. I passed many years, the children that I had became great, each ruling his tribe. When a messenger went or came to the palace, he turned aside from the way to come to me; for I helped every man. I gave water to the thirsty, I set on his way him who went astray, and I rescued the robbed. The Sati who went far, to strike and turn back the princes of other lands, I ordained their goings; for the Prince of the Tenu for many years appointed me to be general of his soldiers. In every land which I attacked I played the champion, I took the cattle, I led away the vassals, I carried off the slaves, I slew the people, by my sword, my bow, my marches and my good devices. I was excellent to the heart of my prince; he loved me when he knew my power, and set me over his children when he saw the strength of my arms.

A champion of the Tenu came to defy me in my tent: a bold man without equal, for he had vanquished the whole country. He said, "Let Sanehat fight with me"; for he desired to overthrow me; he thought to take my cattle for his tribe. The prince counselled with me. I said: "I know him not. I certainly am not of his degree, I hold me far from his place. Have I ever opened his door, or leaped over his fence? It is some envious jealousy from seeing me; does he think that I am like some steer among the cows, whom the bull overthrows? If this is a wretch who thinks to enrich himself at my cost, not a Bedawi and a Bedawi fit for fight, then let us put the matter to judgment. Verily a true bull loves battle, but a vainglorious bull turns his back for fear of contest; if he has a heart for combat, let him speak what he pleases. Will God forget what he has ordained, and how shall that be known?" I lay down; and when I had rested I strung my bow, I made ready my arrows, I loosened my poniard, I furbished my arms. At dawn the land of the Tenu came together; it had gathered its tribes and called all the neighboring people, it spake of nothing but the fight. Each heart burnt for me, men and women crying out; for each heart was troubled for me, and they said: "Is there another strong one who would fight with him? Behold the adversary has a buckler, a battle-axe, and an armful of javelins." Then I drew him to the attack; I turned aside his arrows, and they struck the ground in vain. One drew near to the other, and he fell on me, and then I shot him. My arrow fastened in his neck, he cried out, and fell on his face: I drove his lance into him, and raised my shout of victory on his back. While all the men of the land rejoiced, I, and his vassals whom he had oppressed, gave thanks unto Mentu. This prince, Amuan-shi, embraced me. Then I carried off his goods and took his cattle, that which he had wished to do to me, I did even so unto him; I seized that which was in his tent, I spoiled his dwelling. As time went on I increased the richness of my treasures and the number of my cattle.