

The Last Egyptian

"Rameses the Second," said he, "reigned sixty-five years, and—"

"Sixty-seven years," corrected Winston. "It is written."

"In the inscriptions, which are false," explained the Egyptian. "My ancestor concealed the death of Rameses for two years, because Meremptah, who would succeed him, was a deadly enemy. But Meremptah discovered the secret at last, and at once killed Ahtka-Rā, who was very old and unable to oppose him longer. And after that the treasure cities of Pithom and Raamses, which my ancestor had built, were seized by the new king, but no treasures were found in them. Even in death my great ancestor was able to deceive and humble his enemies."

"Listen, Kāra," said Winston, his voice trembling with suppressed eagerness; "to know that which you have told to me means that you have discovered some sort of record hitherto unknown to scientists. To us who are striving to unravel the mystery of ancient Egyptian history this information will be invaluable. Let me share your knowledge, and tell me what you require in exchange for your secret. You are poor; I will make you rich. You are unknown; I will make the name of Kāra famous. You are young; you shall enjoy life. Speak, my brother, and believe that I will deal justly by you—on the word of an Englishman."

The Egyptian did not even look up, but continued