

ZOE.

A ROMANCE OF EGYPT.

How long I had been lying in agony on the hard earth I know not—minutes and hours were alike to me since that cruel shot had struck me down.

I could keep no account of time, when each minute seemed to me an hour of intense suffering.

The burning sun, as it rose high in the heavens, set my whole being on fire, and the thirst that I felt was a torment.

I could hardly restrain a smile at this unconventional idea, but the situation was an embarrassing one, and I was at my wit's end.

"Oh, no, no! If you go you will never come back!" I silenced her remonstrances with kisses, and very reluctantly she allowed me to leave her.

Once again in the open air, I hurried to headquarters, where I was welcomed as one risen from the dead.

After various matters had been discussed I went apart and wrote to Zoe, saying good-bye to her and telling her I had made up my mind.

I opened my eyes to find myself in a luxurious bed, with silk curtains round me, downy pillows under my head, and strange, sweet odors filling the apartment.

Then I went out and bought her a handsome diamond ornament, in which I set my own letter, and sent it to her house.

The next day I was on the point of embarking, when a native servant presented me with a letter.

It ran thus: "You have broken my heart! But grant me, at least, this request, My servant, Assim, longs to see England—take him with you—you are not strong yet, and he will look after you."

gently released myself? Oh, ye gods! what should I not suffer if the blue eyes of a fair woman at home could rest upon this scene?

"Zoe," I said, "I don't think you understand. I must go back with my regiment, and though I would gladly marry you if I could I cannot—I have a wife already waiting for me at home."

"Zoe," I said, "I must tell you my plans. You say you love me, then you would not like me to be disgraced among my comrades, so you must let me go. I must see my commanding officer, who no doubt believes me dead; but I will come back to-night, and then we will arrange about your journey with me."

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This trial was mercifully averted, for I woke in my right mind.

"And Zoe?" I asked him. "I had her buried the next morning and have kept the whole matter as quiet as possible; and do you know, as good fortune would have it, one of the sailors was about to close your skylight at the very moment the poor girl stabbed herself and was an eye witness to the whole proceeding, which is a good thing for you, my boy, for otherwise I am afraid this might have proved an awkward business."

I pressed his hand; it was the only answer I could give. Beautiful, laughing Zoe, dead with the green water rushing over her sweet face! Never do I close my eyes at night but I seem to hear those green waves sounding in my ears, and remember that far below their treacherous surface lies the heart that preferred a violent death to a life without my love.

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