

The Last Egyptian

were far less imposing in construction; but all had the appearance of great antiquity, and those at the north and south edges of the huddle were unoccupied and more or less ruined and neglected. Tradition said that Fedah, in spite of its modern Arabic name, was as old as ancient Qes, and there was no reason to doubt the statement. Its location was admirable in summer, for the mountain shaded it during the long hot afternoons; but around it was nothing but sand and rock, and the desert stretched in front as far as the borders of Al-Kusiyeh.

Kāra, entering the short and narrow street between the hovels, pushed a goat from his path and proceeded calmly toward his dwelling. As he entered its one room, he paused to allow his eyes to grow accustomed to the gloom and then gazed around with an expression of mild surprise.

In one corner, upon a bed of dried rushes, lay the form of an old woman. Her single black cotton garment was open at the throat, displaying a wrinkled, shrunken bosom that rose and fell spasmodically, as if the hag breathed with great effort. Her eyes were closed and the scant, tousled locks of fine gray hair surrounding her face gave it a weird and witch-like expression. In spite of her age and the clime in which she had lived, Hatatcha's skin was almost as white as that of Europeans, its tint being so delicate as to be scarcely noticeable.

Upon a short wooden bench beside the rushes sat a girl with a palm branch, which she swayed back and