

granite columns, colossal statues and obelisks in the great court, looked up, in obedience to the habits of a lifetime, at the starry heavens above, and in the midst of his woe a bitter smile parted his sunken lips, for the gods this night lacked the honors that were their due.

For on this night—the first after the new moon in the month of Pharmutec—the sanctuary in former years was wont to be gay with garlands of flowers. At the dawn of day after this moonless night the high festival of the spring equinox should begin, and with it the harvest thanksgiving.

At this time a grand procession marched through the city to the river and harbor, as prescribed by the Book of the Divine Birth of the Sun, in honor of the great goddess Neith, of Rennoot, who bestows the gifts of the field, and of Horus, at whose bidding the desert blooms; but to day the silence of death reigned in the sanctuary, whose courtyards should have been crowded at this hour with men, women and children, bringing offerings to place on the very spot where his grandson lay under the hand of death.

A broad beam of light suddenly fell into the vast court, which till now had been but dimly lighted by a few lamps. Could they be so mad as to think that the glad festival might be held in spite of the nameless horrors of the past night?

Only the evening before, the priests in council had determined that during this pitiless pestilence the temples were to be left unadorned and processions to be prohibited. By noon yesterday many had failed to attend because the plague had fallen on their households, and the terror had now come into this very sanctuary, while he, who could read the stars, had been watching them in their courses. Why else should it have been deserted by the watchmen and other astrologers, who had been with him at sunset, and whose duty it was to keep vigil here all night?

He turned once more to the suffering boy with tender anxiety, but instantly started to his feet, for the gates were opened wide, and the light of torches and lanterns poured into the temple court. A glance at the sky showed him that it was not long past midnight, and yet his fears were surely well grounded—these must be the priests crowding into the temple to prepare for the harvest festival.