

The Last Egyptian

"It is the last, my Hatatcha. You know that no more can be procured," he said, in protest.

"I shall need no more," she answered, with much difficulty. "It is the last time. Be quick, Kāra!" Her voice died away in an odd gurgle, and her chest fluttered as if the breath was about to leave it.

Kāra, watching her curiously, as a dog might, was impressed by the symptoms. He turned to Nephthys.

"Go out," he commanded, in Coptic, and the girl arose and passed under the arch.

Then he went to a part of the wall and removed a loose stone, displaying a secret cavity. From this he took a small vase, smooth and black, which had a stopper of dull metal. Carrying it to Hatatcha, he knelt down, removed the stopper and placed the neck of the vase to her lips. The delicate, talon-like fingers clutched the vessel eagerly and the woman drank, while Kāra followed the course of the liquid down her gullet by watching her skinny throat.

When it was done, he carried the empty vase back to the crypt and replaced the loose stone. Then he returned to the bedside and sat down upon the bench. A bowl containing some bits of bread stood near. He stooped and caught a piece in his fingers, munching it between his strong teeth while he stared down upon Hatatcha's motionless form.

It was quite dark in the room by this time, for twilights are short in Egypt. But the pupils of the man's eyes expanded like those of a cat, and he could follow