

thousand slaves who were upon the pyramid set their feet firmly upon the polished stone and threw the weight of their bodies upon the ropes. Slowly, slowly, amid the creaking and groaning of the ropes, the great stone left the earth. The musicians played and the people shouted, for never before in all Egypt had so great a stone been raised. But suddenly the shouting ceased, and the music was hushed, and a stillness like the sleep of Nut fell over the plain. All the people gazed upward, and the heart of Khem grew sick as they looked. The great stone had risen half way, the lifting ropes were firm as the pillars of heaven, but one of the ropes which held the stone in place gave way and stretched, and the great stone which was the pride of the land, was settling at one end and slipping from its fastenings. The slaves crouched upon the pyramid, the builders spoke no word, and the people turned their eyes from the stone, that they might not see it fall. As I looked up, I saw a man running rapidly along the tier of the pyramid opposite the rocking stone. I knew his face to be the face of the stranger whom I saw speaking with the king. He threw off his garments as he ran, and at the edge of the stone tier he paused for a moment, he crouched low, gathering all his strength, then suddenly straightening his body he threw back his head and shot straight forward, like an arrow shot from the bow, over eighteen cubits, and fell lightly upon his feet on the uppermost end of the stone. He stood with both hands clenched at his side, his right foot a little before his left, erect and fair as the statue of Houris, watching the farther end of the stone. For a little the stone stood still, then swung back and lay evenly as when all was well, and then the end upon which the youth stood, sank. He thrust his right foot further forward, his toes clinging to the polished stone, and clasping his hands about his waist above the hips, slowly bowed his great frame forward. The stone slab felt its master and swung slowly back, and again the end on which the youth stood was uppermost. So

he stood, his dusky limbs showing clear against the white stone, his every muscle quivering, the sweat pouring from his body, swaying the great stone. The great white desert seemed to rock and sway, the sun grew hotter and stood still in heaven, the sky and the sea of faces seemed to whirl and reel, then blend into one awful face, grinning horribly. The slaves, not daring to breath, crouched upon the tomb, the multitude stood still and gazed upward, and earth and heaven and men were as dumb as if the gods had smitten them mad with thunder. Then a great cry rang out:

“In the name of Ptahah and of your father’s souls, pull!”

It was the voice of Kufu. Slowly, like men awakened from a dream, the slaves drew up that swinging stone, and he that stood upon it. Below the king stood, his hands clutching the front of his chariot, and his eyes strained upon the stone. When the slab reached the top of the shaft on which the pulley hung, it was swung back over the pyramid, and the descent began. The slaves, sick with fear, lost control of it, and the great stone plunged down faster and faster. I wondered if the mortar spread upon the top was thick enough to break its fall. Just as it struck the top in safety, he who stood upon it, gathering all his strength leaped high into the air to break the shock and fell motionless upon the stone. Then such a cry as went up, never before roused old Nilus from his dreams, or made the walls of the city to tremble. They bore him down from the tomb and placed him in the chariot of the king. Then the king’s trumpeter sounded, and then Kufu spake:

“We have this day seen a deed the like of which we have never seen before, neither have our fathers told us of such a thing. Know, men of Egypt that he, the Shepherd stranger, who has risen upon the swinging stone, shall build the great pyramid, for he is worthy in my sight. The king has said.”

Then the people cheered, but their faces were dark. And the charioteer of the king