

Pagan Tales

shalt fulfil month after month on this island until thou hast completed four months. Then a ship shall come from the Court with a crew wherewith thou art acquainted, and thou shalt go with them to the Court and shalt die in thine own town."<sup>1</sup>

[THE DRAGON RELATES AN EPISODE IN HIS OWN LIFE]

"With what gladness doth any man relate the story of an experience of his, when the [threatened] calamity hath passed! Therefore I will now tell thee all about an event which happened on this very island. I was living on it with my brethren, among whom were young children, and together with my children and my brethren we numbered seventy-five dragons (or serpents), without reckoning the daughter of a woman who was brought to me [in a miraculous fashion]. Then a star fell and all these were burnt up because of it. It chanced that I was not there. Everyone else was burnt up, but I was not among them. And by reason of my grief for them when I found them all lying there a heap of dead bodies, I wellnigh died.

"If thou art a brave man control thy heart, and thou shalt again embrace thy children, and smell (i.e. kiss) thy wife, and see thine house. Thou shalt arrive at the Court, and shalt live there among thy brethren."

Then I stretched myself out on the ground flat on my belly, and I did homage before him, and I said unto him: "I will describe thy fame to the King, and report to him concerning thy greatness. I will cause to be brought to thee unguents, oil, nard, perfume and incense (of the kind which is offered in the temples) whereat every god is glad. I will relate what hath happened to me, and describe what I have seen of thy might. Then, before the officials of the whole country, the God shall be thanked for thee. I will slaughter bulls for burnt offerings, and I will offer to thee feathered fowl (geese?). I will cause ships to sail to thee,

<sup>1</sup> As long as the old canal from Cairo to the Red Sea was working a man could travel by water from any port on the Red Sea to Memphis (Cairo).

It burnt of  
down in  
"Egyptian"

## The Shipwrecked Sailor's Adventures

laden with all the priceless things of Egypt, as should be done for the god who is a lover of men in a land which is far away and which men do not know."

Then he laughed at me and at the things which I had said, being in his opinion folly. And he said unto me: "Thou hast not overmuch *anti* (myrrh), for thou possessest only the common incense (frankincense?). But I am the Prince of Punt,<sup>1</sup> where I have myrrh. Whilst as concerneth *hekenu* oil which thou sayest thou wilt have brought to me, that is the principal product of this island. And it shall come to pass that when thou hast departed from this place that thou shalt never see this island again, for it shall turn into water."

### [THE SALVAGE SHIP FROM EGYPT ARRIVES]

And then came that ship even as he had already made known, and I rose up and climbed into a high tree and recognized the crew that were therein. Then I went to announce the arrival to [the Dragon] and I found that he already knew it. And he said unto me: "Get thee back safely, my little one, get thee back to thy house and see thy children again, and give a good name to me in thy town. Behold, thou hast my wishes." Then I threw myself down flat on my belly with my two hands raised in adoration of him. And he gave me as a gift myrrh, *heken* oil, nard, perfume, and scented oil, and a mass of black eye-paint, tails of giraffes, a large quantity of incense, tusks of elephants, hunting dogs, monkeys and baboons, and all kinds of valuable goods. And I loaded them on the ship. And when I had cast myself on my belly to offer him my thanks, he said unto me: "Behold, thou shalt reach the Court in two months, and thou shalt hold thy children in thy arms, and thou shalt be provided with a good burial and shalt rest [in thy tomb]."

<sup>1</sup> The name given to a large but ill-defined district in the southern part of the Egyptian Sūdān, which produced the famous *anti* gum used largely in the making of mummies. Immense quantities of this gum (the gum-arabic of commerce) are exported from the Sūdān at the present day.

## *Pagan Tales*

### [THE EGYPTIAN SAILOR RETURNS TO EGYPT]

Then I went down to the shore where the ship lay. And I hailed the crew (or, the escort) that were in the ship, and on the shore I ascribed praise to the lord of this island, and those who were on the ship did likewise. Then we sailed northwards to the Court of the King, and we reached our native town in two months; everything happening as he had said. Then I entered the presence of the King, and gave him all the gifts which I had brought with me. Then he thanked the God for me in the presence of the officials of the whole land. Then I was promoted to be a chief officer (member of the royal bodyguard?) and slaves of his were given to me.

[Here ends the story of the shipwrecked sailor who now renews his attempt to cheer up his chief, who is sorely afraid that he has incurred the King's displeasure.]

Now look at me after I reached port and had considered all that I had gone through, listen to what I am saying [to thee], for behold, it is good for people to hearken.

Then the officer said unto me: "Be not anxious [about me], O my most excellent friend. Who would [dream of] giving water at dawn to the goose which he is going to kill in the morning?"

### [COLOPHON]

Here endeth the book, from the beginning to the end thereof, as it is found in the old papyri, in the writing of the experienced fingers of the scribe whose name is Ameni, the son of Ameni, life, strength, health, be to him!