

G. A. HENTY



# THE CAT OF BUBASTES

HISTORICAL NOVEL

**G. A. Henty**

# **The Cat of Bubastes (Historical Novel)**

**Enriched edition.**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Karl Jennings*

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# Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Historical Context](#)

**[The Cat of Bubastes \(Historical Novel\)](#)**

[Analysis](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

# Introduction

## [Table of Contents](#)

In *The Cat of Bubastes*, G. A. Henty stages a fraught contest between reverence for tradition and the claims of conscience, tracing how two youths—one a foreign captive thrust into service, the other the son of an Egyptian household—learn that loyalty, justice, and faith are tested most sharply when sacred emblems, civic order, and personal honor converge in a world where religion structures daily life, authority demands obedience, and small choices carry consequences that expand from private friendship to public crisis, forcing them to navigate the dangerous boundary between piety and compassion without losing either their integrity or their humanity.

*The Cat of Bubastes* is a historical adventure novel for young readers by G. A. Henty, set in ancient Egypt and centered on the cat-revering city known in the book as Bubastes. First issued in the late nineteenth century in Britain, it exemplifies Victorian juvenile fiction that mingles instruction with excitement. Henty frames the tale within the rhythms of Pharaonic society, describing household hierarchies, priestly influence, and crafts, while moving his protagonists through peril and discovery. The book belongs to his wider corpus of historically situated narratives, notable for clear plotting and for efforts to evoke place through the scholarship accessible to his time.

The premise follows a young noble taken captive after war and placed in the household of an Egyptian official, where he becomes close to the family's son, Chebron. Under the watch of tutors and attendants, the boys learn

languages, arts, and obligations, while observing the solemnity surrounding temples and the sacred animals associated with the city. Their bond strengthens across cultural divides, yet their world is fragile: a single, unforeseen incident involving a revered cat threatens to overturn safety, status, and plans. From this spark, the narrative unfolds into flight, resourcefulness, and moral testing without sacrificing attention to everyday life.

Readers will encounter a measured, third-person voice that balances explanation with action. Henty's prose favors clarity over ornament, pausing to sketch tools, diet, dress, and working methods before quickening into suspenseful sequences of pursuit, concealment, and negotiation. The tone is earnest, occasionally didactic, and hospitable to curiosity, so that lessons in geography or ritual feel integral to the plot rather than appended. Dialogue is straightforward, the pacing cumulative, and the atmosphere immersive, with scenes of festivals, workshops, and river travel providing texture. The result is a ride that feels instructive without dryness and adventurous without sensationalism.

Central themes include friendship across boundaries, the testing of duty against conscience, and the fragile balance between social order and humane judgment. The book probes how reverence can shade into fear, how civic rituals shape identity, and how adolescents negotiate inherited expectations as they move toward adult responsibility. It also examines power—priestly, familial, and political—and the ways power seeks legitimacy through sacred symbols. Ethical questions surface repeatedly: what loyalty demands, what justice permits, and what compassion risks. The sacred status of animals becomes a lens for considering cultural

meaning, not a pretext for caricature, urging readers to consider belief with sympathy.

For contemporary readers, the novel's value lies both in its vivid reconstruction of an ancient world and in the conversations it opens about culture, authority, and interpretation. Its pages model how public emotion can be organized around symbols, how rumor or outrage can determine outcomes, and how empathy can complicate allegiance. Reading it today also invites awareness of its Victorian vantage point, encouraging critical engagement with the assumptions and simplifications of its era. Used thoughtfully, the book can stimulate inquiry into primary sources, archaeology, and comparative religion, while fostering discussions about cross-cultural understanding, civic responsibility, and the ethics of reverence.

Within Henty's body of work, *The Cat of Bubastes* endures because it marries a taut, accessible plot with a conscientious interest in how people live, worship, and choose under pressure. It offers young and adult readers alike an introduction to ancient Egyptian settings framed by a narrative concerned with character and consequence. Approached with curiosity and judicious context, it rewards attention with scenes that entertain and ideas that persist beyond the final page. The story's tensions—between law and mercy, belonging and difference, tradition and reform—remain perennial, making this historical novel more than a period piece: a continuing invitation to think.

# Synopsis

## Table of Contents

G. A. Henty's *The Cat of Bubastes*, first published in 1889, is a historical novel set in New Kingdom Egypt that blends adventure with instructional detail about ancient life. The narrative follows Amuba, a young prince from a conquered people, who is taken to Egypt as a captive and placed within a priestly household. There he forms a close bond with Chebron, the son of a high-ranking temple official. Through their friendship, the story examines identity, loyalty, and the weight of tradition, while guiding readers through Egypt's social order, religious customs, and the everyday textures of a powerful civilization.

The opening movement depicts defeat and displacement. Amuba's homeland falls to Egyptian arms, his father is killed in battle, and he and his faithful guardian, Jethro, are carried down the Nile. In Egypt, Amuba is trained as a companion rather than a drudge, learning the language, etiquette, and skills expected of an educated youth. The household's discipline, education in writing and craft, and the ceremonial rhythms of temple life provide a framework in which he and Chebron grow into thoughtful adolescents, navigating the privileges and limits imposed by status, law, and faith.

As the boys mature, Henty introduces intellectual and political currents within Egypt's elite. Chebron's father favors humane governance and measured inquiry, positions that earn both esteem and quiet opposition among rival officials. Debates over ritual, the interpretation of signs, and the duties of rulers reveal fissures in a system that prizes order yet fears dissent. Amuba, an outsider by birth,

observes how public piety intersects with personal conscience, and how ambition within priestly ranks can harden into suspicion, setting the stage for a conflict in which error, envy, and zeal may collide.

The narrative shifts to the city of Bubastes, renowned for the veneration of a sacred cat central to local worship. Henty carefully outlines the animal's ceremonial role and the severe penalties attached to sacrilege, underscoring the social bonds such cults create. During a moment of mischance, an inadvertent transgression involving the revered creature sparks outrage. What begins as a private calamity quickly escalates into a civic crisis, drawing the protagonists into a web of accusation and unrest in which reason struggles against fury and even respected officials are imperiled by public anger.

The aftermath forces flight and concealment. Amuba, Chebron, Jethro, and their companions negotiate river and desert, evading search parties and relying on practical ingenuity. Their route brings them into contact with diverse communities—farmers along the Nile, artisans in provincial towns, and foreign subjects under Egyptian rule—each encounter widening the novel's portrait of the empire's reach. Hospitality and betrayal are weighed against the pressure of law, while discussions of justice, mercy, and superstition deepen the characters' moral education amid the immediate demands of survival.

Henty uses the journey to test allegiance and character. Amuba confronts the duties of birth and the meaning of freedom; Chebron grapples with filial loyalty, spiritual doubt, and the cost of error. Jethro's steady courage anchors their efforts as they employ disguises, river craft, and careful timing to outmaneuver pursuit. Military outposts, trade routes, and frontier customs provide texture,

complementing episodes of narrow escape and negotiation. The prospect of return—to safety, to status, or to homeland—hovers over their plans, infusing decisions with urgency without foreclosing the uncertain paths ahead.

By entwining a personal drama with a richly drawn setting, *The Cat of Bubastes* offers both an engaging story and an introduction to ancient Egyptian society as imagined in late-Victorian historical fiction. Its enduring appeal lies in the interplay of cultural detail, ethical reflection, and adventure, presenting questions about law, conscience, and belonging that transcend era. The resolution affirms the values of integrity and friendship while respecting the gravity of the conflicts that precede it. Readers are left with a vivid sense of time and place and a model of how narrative can illuminate the past without sacrificing momentum.

# Historical Context

## Table of Contents

G. A. Henty sets his tale in ancient Egypt during the New Kingdom, a period of centralised monarchy and imperial expansion roughly dated c. 1550–1070 BCE. The Nile's flood cycles structured agriculture, taxation, and transport, binding together Delta centers such as Bubastis with royal and cultic hubs like Memphis and Thebes. The state rested on the authority of the pharaoh, supported by a literate bureaucracy of scribes, a hierarchised judiciary under the vizier, and extensive temple estates. Chariot warfare, fortified frontiers, and organized garrisons projected Egyptian power, while long-distance trade and diplomacy linked the court to the Levant, Nubia, and the broader eastern Mediterranean.

Bubastis (Greek for Per-Bastet; modern Tell Basta, in the eastern Delta) was the principal cult center of the goddess Bastet. Classical writers, notably Herodotus (*Histories* 2), describe a renowned festival there, drawing large pilgrim crowds for processions and music. Bastet's iconography evolved from lioness to cat-headed forms, and reverence for cats became a widely attested feature of Egyptian religiosity. Greek accounts report severe social or legal consequences for harming sacred animals, and archaeologists have uncovered cat cemeteries and mummified remains at sites including Bubastis and the Saqqara Bubasteion. This religious environment informs the novel's title and the tensions surrounding sacrilege and communal order.

The New Kingdom's military machine shaped regional life. Egyptian armies deployed two-wheeled chariots, composite bows, and scimitars (khopesh), securing victories such as the celebrated campaign at Megiddo under Thutmose III and maintaining dominance in Nubia through fortified towns and viceroys. In the wake of campaigns, foreign captives were incorporated into Egyptian society as household servants, laborers, or soldiers, a practice documented in inscriptions and administrative texts. Diplomatic correspondence like the Amarna Letters reveals Egypt's overlordship and the circulation of persons, goods, and ideas. Such interactions—war, captivity, assimilation—form a credible backdrop for narratives of cross-cultural encounters and shifting loyalties.

Egyptian governance was framed by the ideal of Ma'at—truth, balance, and justice—embodied by the pharaoh and operationalized through courts overseen by the vizier. Tomb texts such as the "Installation of the Vizier" of Rekhmire outline judicial duties, while ostraca and papyri document disputes over property, labor, and ritual obligations. Penalties ranged from fines and beatings to forced labor; offenses against temples and sacred symbols carried particular severity. Greek testimonies describe mob violence or capital punishment for killing certain animals, reflecting the intertwining of law, communal sentiment, and piety. This legal-ethical matrix underpins the novel's exploration of offense, restitution, and authority.

Religion permeated economy and politics. Major temples—especially Amun's in Thebes—controlled land, workshops, and storage, employing priests, craftsmen, and administrators. Oracular consultations and public processions affirmed divine favor in civic life. At Bubastis, the temple of Bastet had long-standing cultic importance;

later monumental expansions, notably under Osorkon II in the Third Intermediate Period, left remains that 19th-century archaeologists studied. Across periods, animal cults, mummification practices, and festival circuits connected city and countryside. The prominence of priestly institutions, their wealth and influence, and the popular devotion surrounding sacred animals frame conflicts between bureaucratic discipline, religious authority, and local custom.

Daily life relied on the Nile's inundation, managed through irrigation and labor levies. Grain, flax, and vegetables formed staples, while workshops produced linen, faience, and metal goods. Scribes trained in hieratic script recorded accounts on papyrus and ostraca; artisan communities such as Deir el-Medina show organized labor, contracts, and strikes. Households balanced lineage ties, patronage, and servitude, with education and apprenticeship shaping advancement. International trade brought timber, copper, and luxury items, while gold from Nubia funded kingship and temples. This socioeconomic texture—hierarchy, mobility within limits, and the prestige of literacy—grounds the novel's depictions of households, training, and service.

Henty (1832–1902) published *The Cat of Bubastes* in 1889, amid Victorian Britain's intense fascination with Egypt. Egyptology had surged after Champollion's 1822 decipherment of hieroglyphs; by the 1880s, Flinders Petrie was pioneering stratigraphic field methods, and Édouard Naville excavated Bubastis (1887–1889) for the Egypt Exploration Fund, publishing the site's festival hall soon after. British occupation of Egypt began in 1882, with the Suez Canal underscoring strategic interest. Classical sources like Herodotus and new archaeological reports supplied vivid

material for popular history. Henty's juvenile adventure novels thrived in this milieu of imperial power, pedagogy, and antiquarian enthusiasm.

The novel reflects and filters its era's concerns. It dramatizes the weight of religious law, the prestige of priesthoods, and the vulnerability of foreigners within a powerful state, echoing documented New Kingdom institutions and Greek testimonies about animal cults. Simultaneously, it bears Victorian hallmarks: didactic celebration of courage, discipline, and loyalty; confidence in empirical description drawn from travelogues and excavations; and an imperial gaze that compares ancient dominion with contemporary empire. By aligning adventure to verifiable settings and rites, the work popularizes Egyptology while implicitly debating order, justice, and cross-cultural duty in a world of hierarchy and faith.

# **The Cat of Bubastes (Historical Novel)**

**[Main Table of Contents](#)**

Preface.

Chapter I. The King Of The Rebu.

Chapter II. The Siege Of The City.

Chapter III. Captive.

Chapter IV. An Easy Servitude.

Chapter V. In Lower Egypt.

Chapter VI. Fowling And Fishing.

Chapter VII. Hippopotamus And Crocodile.

Chapter VIII. The Conspiracy In The Temple.

Chapter IX. A Startling Event.

Chapter X. The Cat Of Bubastes.

Chapter XI. Dangers Thicken.

Chapter XII. The Death Of Ameres.

Chapter XIII. The Search For Mysa.

Chapter XIV. A Prince Of Egypt.

Chapter XV. Ameres Is Revenged.

Chapter XVI. Up The Nile.

Chapter XVII. Out Of Egypt.

Chapter XVIII. The Desert Journey.

Chapter XIX. Home At Last.

Chapter XX. The King Of The Rebu.

# **Preface.**

## [Table of Contents](#)

My Dear Lads: Thanks to the care with which the Egyptians depicted upon the walls of their sepulchers the minutest doings of their daily life, to the dryness of the climate which has preserved these records uninjured for so many thousand years, and to the indefatigable labor of modern investigators, we know far more of the manners and customs of the Egyptians, of their methods of work, their sports and amusements, their public festivals, and domestic life, than we do of those of peoples comparatively modern. My object in the present story has been to give you as lively a picture as possible of that life, drawn from the bulky pages of Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson and other writers on the same subject. I have laid the scene in the time of Thotmes III., one of the greatest of the Egyptian monarchs, being surpassed only in glory and the extent of his conquests by Rameses the Great. It is certain that Thotmes carried the arms of Egypt to the shores of the Caspian, and a people named the Rebu, with fair hair and blue eyes, were among those depicted in the Egyptian sculptures as being conquered and made tributary. It is open to discussion whether the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt took place in the reign of Thotmes or many years subsequently, some authors assigning it to the time of Rameses. Without attempting to enter into this much-discussed question, I have assumed that the Israelites were still in Egypt at the time of Thotmes, and by introducing Moses just at the time he began to take up the cause of the people to whom he belonged, I leave it to be inferred that the Exodus took place some forty years later. I

wish you to understand, however, that you are not to accept this date as being absolutely correct. Opinions differ widely upon it; and as no allusion whatever has been discovered either to the Exodus or to any of the events which preceded it among the records of Egypt, there is nothing to fix the date as occurring during the reign of any one among the long line of Egyptian kings. The term Pharaoh used in the Bible throws no light upon the subject, as Pharaoh simply means king, and the name of no monarch bearing that appellation is to be found on the Egyptian monuments. I have in no way exaggerated the consequences arising from the slaying of the sacred cat, as the accidental killing of any cat whatever was an offense punished by death throughout the history of Egypt down to the time of the Roman connection with that country.

Yours sincerely,  
G. A. HENTY.

# Chapter I.

## The King Of The Rebu.

### Table of Contents

The sun was blazing down upon a city on the western shore of the Caspian[1][1q]. It was a primitive city, and yet its size and population rendered it worthy of the term. It consisted of a vast aggregation of buildings, which were for the most part mere huts. Among them rose, however, a few of more solid build and of higher pretensions. These were the abodes of the chiefs and great men, the temples, and places of assembly. But although larger and more solidly built, these buildings could lay no claim to architectural beauty of any kind, but were little more than magnified huts, and even the king's palace was but a collection of such buildings closely adjoining each other.

The town was surrounded by a lofty wall with battlements and loopholes, and a similar but higher wall girt in the dwellings of the king and of his principal captains. The streets were alive with the busy multitude; and it was evident that although in the arts of peace the nation had made but little progress, they had in every thing appertaining to war made great advances. Most of the men wore helmets closely fitting to the head and surmounted by a spike. These were for the most part composed of hammered brass, although some of the headpieces were made of tough hide studded with knobs of metal. All carried round shields—those of the soldiers, of leather stiffened with metal; those of the captains, of brass, worked with considerable elaboration.

In their belts all wore daggers, while at their backs were slung quivers of iron; painted bows hung over one shoulder, and some had at their waist a pouch of smooth flat stones and leather slings. Their chief garment was a sort of kilt falling to the knee. Above the waist some wore only a thin vest of white linen, others a garment not unlike the nightgown of modern times, but with short sleeves. The kilt was worn over this. Some had breastpieces of thick leather confined by straps behind; while in the case of the officers the leather was covered with small pieces of metal, forming a cuirass.

All carried two or three javelins in the left hand and a spear some ten feet long in the right. Horsemen galloped about at full speed to and from the royal palace, while occasionally chariots, drawn sometimes by one, sometimes by two horses, dashed along. These chariots were small, the wheels not exceeding three feet in height. Between them was placed the body of the vehicle, which was but just large enough for two men to stand on. It consisted only of a small platform, with a semicircular rail running round the front some eighteen inches above it. A close observer would have perceived at once that not only were the males of the city upon the point of marching out on a military expedition, but that it was no mere foray against a neighboring people, but a war on which the safety of the city depended.

Women were standing in tearful groups as they watched the soldiers making toward the gates. The men themselves had a resolute and determined look, but there was none of the light-hearted gayety among them which betokened the expectation of success and triumph. Inside the palace the bustle of preparation was as marked as without. The king and his principal councilors and leaders were assembled in the great circular hut which formed the audience-room and

council-chamber. Messengers arrived in close succession with news of the progress and strength of the enemy, or with messages from the neighboring towns and tribes as to the contingents they had furnished, and the time at which these had set out to join the army.

The king himself was a tall and warlike figure, in the prime of life. He had led his warriors on many successful expeditions far to the west, and had repulsed with great loss the attempts of the Persians to encroach upon his territory. Standing behind him was his son, Amuba, a lad of some fifteen years of age. The king and his councilors, as well as all the wealthier inhabitants of the city, wore, in addition to the kilt and linen jacket, a long robe highly colored and ornamented with fanciful devices and having a broad rich border. It was fastened at the neck with a large brooch, fell loosely from the shoulders to the ankles, and was open in front. The girdles which retained the kilts and in which the daggers were worn were highly ornamented, and the ends fell down in front and terminated in large tassels.

All wore a profusion of necklaces, bracelets, and other ornaments of gold; many of the chiefs wore feathers in their helmets, and the greater portion of all ranks had figures tattooed on their arms and legs. They were fair in complexion, with blue eyes; their hair was for the most part golden or red, and they wore their beards short and pointed. The young Prince Amuba was attired for the field; his helmet was of gold and his cuirass covered with plates of the same metal. He listened with suppressed impatience to the arguments of his elders, for he was eager to be off, this being the first time that he had been permitted to take part in the military expeditions of his country.

After listening for some time and perceiving that there was no prospect of the council breaking up, he retired to the

large hut adjoining the council-chamber. This served as the dwelling place of the ladies and their family. It was divided into several apartments by screens formed of hide sewn together and hidden from sight by colored hangings. In one of these a lady was seated on a low couch covered with panthers' skins.

"They have not done talking yet, mother. It has been a question as to where we shall assemble to give battle. It does not seem to me to make much difference where we fight, but they seem to think that it is most important; and of course they know more about it than I do. They have fixed upon a place at last—it is about fifteen miles from here. They say that the ground in front is marshy and can hardly be traversed by the enemy's chariots; but if they cannot get at us, it seems to me that we cannot get at them. Messengers have been sent off to order all the contingents to assemble at that spot. Six thousand men are to remain behind to guard the city, but as we mean to beat them I do not think there can be much occasion for that; for you think we shall beat them—don't you, mother?"

"I hope so, Amuba, but I am very fearful."

"But we have several times repulsed them when they have invaded our country, mother; why should we not do so this time?"

"They are much stronger than they have ever been before when they have come against us, my boy, and their king is a great warrior who has been successful in almost every enterprise he has undertaken."

"I cannot think why he wants to conquer us, mother. They say the riches of Egypt are immense and the splendor of their temples and buildings such as we have no idea of. We have no quarrel with them if they will but let us alone."

“No country is so rich that it does not desire more, my son. We have gold and are skilled in the working of it, and no doubt they anticipate that they will capture much treasure in the land; besides, as you say, their expeditions against the Rebu[2] have been several times repulsed, and therefore their monarch will reap all the greater honor if he should defeat us. As to their having no quarrel with us, have we not made many expeditions to the west, returning with captives and much booty? And yet the people had no quarrel with us—many of them, indeed, could scarcely have known us by name when our army appeared among them. Some day, my son, things may be managed differently; but at present kings who have power make war upon people that are weaker than themselves, spoil them of their goods, and make slaves of them.

“I hope, Amuba, you will not expose yourself too much in the conflict. You have not come to man’s strength yet; and remember you are my only child. See that your charioteer covers you with his shield when you have entered the battle, for the Egyptians are terrible as archers. Their bows carry much further than do ours, and the arrows will pierce even the strongest armor. Our spearmen have always shown themselves as good as theirs—nay, better, for they are stronger in body and full of courage. It is in the goodness of her archers and the multitude of her chariots that the strength of Egypt lies. Remember that although your father, as king, must needs go into the thick of the battle to encourage his soldiers, there is no occasion why you, who are yet a boy, should so expose yourself.

“It will doubtless be a terrible battle. The Egyptians have the memory of past defeats to wipe out, and they will be fighting under the eye of their king. I am terrified, Amuba. Hitherto when your father has gone out to battle I have

never doubted as to the result. The Persians were not foes whom brave men need dread; nor was it difficult to force the hordes passing us from the eastward toward the setting sun to respect our country, for we had the advantage in arms and discipline. But the Egyptians are terrible foes, and the arms of their king have been everywhere victorious. My heart is filled with dread at the thought of the approaching conflict, though I try to keep up a brave face when your father is with me, for I would not that he should deem me cowardly."

"I trust, mother, that your fears are groundless, and I cannot think that our men will give way when fighting for their homes and country upon ground chosen by themselves."

"I hope not, Amuba. But there is the trumpet sounding; it is the signal that the council have broken up and that your father is about to start. Bless you, my dear boy, and may you return safe and sound from the conflict!"

The queen fondly embraced her son, who left the apartment hastily as his father entered in order that the latter might not see the traces of tears on his cheeks. A few minutes later the king, with his captains, started from the palace. Most of them rode in chariots, the rest on horseback. The town was quiet now and the streets almost deserted. With the exception of the garrison, all the men capable of bearing arms had gone forth; the women with anxious faces stood in groups at their doors and watched the royal party as it drove out.

The charioteer of Amuba was a tall and powerful man; he carried a shield far larger than was ordinarily used, and had been specially selected by the king for the service. His orders were that he was not to allow Amuba to rush into the front line of fighters, and that he was even to disobey the

orders of the prince if he wished to charge into the ranks of the enemy.

“My son must not shirk danger,” his father said, “and he must needs go well in the fight; but he is still but a boy, not fit to enter upon a hand-to-hand contest with the picked warriors of Egypt. In time I hope he will fight abreast of me, but at present you must restrain his ardor. I need not bid you shield him as well as you can from the arrows of the Egyptians. He is my eldest son, and if aught happens to me he will be the king of the Rebu; and his life is therefore a precious one.”

Half an hour later they came upon the tail of the stragglers making their way to the front. The king stopped his chariot and sharply reproved some of them for their delay in setting out, and urged them to hasten on to the appointed place. In two hours the king arrived at this spot, where already some forty thousand men were assembled. The scouts who had been sent out reported that although the advance-guard of the Egyptians might arrive in an hour's time, the main body were some distance behind and would not be up in time to attack before dark.

This was welcome news, for before night the rest of the forces of the Rebu, fully thirty thousand more, would have joined. The king at once set out to examine the ground chosen by his general for the conflict. It sloped gently down in front to a small stream which ran through soft and marshy ground, and would oppose a formidable obstacle to the passage of chariots. The right rested upon a dense wood, while a village a mile and a half distant from the wood was held by the left wing.

A causeway which led from this across the marsh had been broken up, and heavy blocks of stone were scattered thickly upon it to impede the passage of chariots. The

archers were placed in front to harass the enemy attempting to cross. Behind them were the spearmen in readiness to advance and aid them if pressed. The chariots were on the higher ground in the rear ready to dash in and join in the conflict should the enemy succeed in forcing their way through the marsh.

The visit of inspection was scarcely finished when a cloud of dust was seen rising over the plain. It approached rapidly. The flash of arms could be seen in the sun, and presently a vast number of horses were seen approaching in even line.

“Are they horsemen, father?” Amuba asked.

“No, they are chariots, Amuba. The Egyptians do not, like us, fight on horseback, although there may be a few small bodies of horsemen with the army; their strength lies in their chariots. See, they have halted; they have perceived our ranks drawn up in order of battle.”

The chariots drew up in perfect line, and as the clouds of dust blew away four lines of chariots could be made out ranged at a distance of a hundred yards apart.

“There are about a thousand in each line,” the king said, “and this is but their advance-guard. We have learned from fugitives that there are fully fifteen thousand chariots with their army.”

“Is there no other place where they can pass this swamp, father?”

“Not so well as here, Amuba; the valley deepens further on, and the passage would be far more difficult than here. Above, beyond the wood, there is a lake of considerable extent, and beyond that the ground is broken and unsuited for the action of chariots as far as the sea. Besides, they have come to fight us, and the pride of their king would not permit of their making a detour. See, there is some great

personage, probably the king himself, advancing beyond their ranks to reconnoiter the ground.”

A chariot was indeed approaching the opposite brow of the depression; there were two figures in it; by the side walked numerous figures, who, although too far off to be distinguished, were judged to be the attendants and courtiers of the king. The sun flashed from the side of the chariot, which appeared at this distance to be composed of burnished gold. Great fans carried on wands shaded the king from the heat of the sun.

He drove slowly along the edge of the brow until he reached a point opposite the wood, and then, turning, went the other way till he reached the causeway which passed on through the village. After this he rode back to the line of chariots and evidently gave a word of command, for instantly the long line of figures seen above the horses disappeared as the men stepped off the chariots to the ground. No movement took place for an hour; then there was a sudden stir, and the long lines broke up and wheeled round to the right and left, where they took up their position in two solid masses.

“The main army are at hand,” the king said. “Do you see that great cloud, ruddy in the setting sun? That is the dust raised by their advance. In another hour they will be here, but by that time the sun will have set, and assuredly they will not attack until morning.”

The front line were ordered to remain under arms for a time; the others were told to fall out and prepare their food for the night. The Egyptian army halted about a mile distant, and as soon as it was evident that no further movement was intended, the whole of the soldiers were ordered to fall out. A line of archers were placed along the edge of the swamp, and ere long a party of Egyptian bowmen took up their post

treated as religiously important, and harming one could provoke strong communal or legal response.

**50** Refers to a temple cat associated with the cult centre Bubastis (Per-Bast) and the goddess Bastet; in ancient Egypt cats kept in connection with a deity were treated as sacred and harming one could be regarded as a serious religious offense.

**51** Historically, an Israelite denotes a member of the ancient Hebrew people or the tribes of Israel described in biblical and Near Eastern sources; in the novel the term marks characters of that ethnic and religious background.

**52** Pthylus is a character in the chapter described as the “high priest of Osiris”; in ancient Egypt a high priest was the senior temple official who led rituals and could hold considerable social and political influence.

**53** Syene is the classical name for a town at Egypt’s southern frontier (modern Aswan); in antiquity it marked an important Nile trading and military frontier in Upper Egypt.

**54** Meroe was the capital of the Kingdom of Kush (in what is now northern Sudan), known in antiquity for its royal cemeteries, ironworking and long-distance trade with Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa.

**55** The ‘embalmer’s’ refers to the practitioners and workshops responsible for mummification and funerary preparation in ancient Egypt, who carried out complex rituals and specialized preservation techniques.

**56** Ameres is a person mentioned in the chapter whose recent death and funeral are discussed; within the narrative

he is a notable deceased individual undergoing embalming and ceremonial rites.

**57** Abyssinia is an older name for the region broadly corresponding to parts of modern Ethiopia and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa; the term appears in historical and nineteenth-century sources.

**58** 'cere-clothes' refers to burial wrappings used in the embalming and mummification process (related to cerements), often treated with wax or resin to preserve the corpse.

**59** A cataract in Nile terms is a stretch of rocky rapids or shallow water that impedes navigation; classical geography traditionally recognizes six such cataracts between Aswan (Syene) and Sudan.

**60** Amun is a principal Egyptian god associated with kingship and creation; 'Phre' is an older spelling of the sun god commonly written Re or Ra in modern texts.

**61** A name borne by several Egyptian pharaohs (most famously Ramesses II of the 13th century BCE); in literature it commonly denotes a powerful New Kingdom ruler.

**62** An alternate or older spelling of the Egyptian goddess Hathor, who was associated with love, music, fertility, and motherhood; spellings vary in older translations.

**63** An Egyptian deity associated with writing, knowledge, and the moon, often depicted with the head of an ibis or a baboon and linked to scribal and judicial functions.

**64** A frontier site on the Nile (often spelled Semna in modern scholarship) near the Second Cataract that marked a southern boundary of ancient Egyptian control in what is now northern Sudan.

**65** Older English spelling of Aksum (Axum), the principal city of the Aksumite Kingdom in northern Ethiopia (historically called Abyssinia), which was a major trading and political power from about the 1st to the 7th centuries CE.

**66** A coastal town named in the text as lying at the head of the gulf (the eastern arm of the Red Sea); in classical sources this name (often spelled Aela or Aelana) likely refers to the settlement at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba, corresponding to modern Aqaba (Jordan) or Eilat (Israel).

**67** Refers to the ancient seafaring and trading peoples of the Levantine coast (roughly modern Lebanon, coastal Syria and northern Israel), noted from about the second millennium BCE through the early first millennium BCE for maritime trade and merchant colonies across the Mediterranean.

**68** In this passage the 'Salt Lake' refers to the large saline basin into which the River Jordan flows, commonly known today as the Dead Sea, a hypersaline lake between modern Jordan and Israel/Palestine.

**69** A mountain in the Sinai Peninsula traditionally associated in biblical accounts with Moses receiving the Ten Commandments; the exact identification of the biblical Mount Sinai is uncertain and several peaks have been proposed.

**70** An ancient city in what is now southern Jordan, famous as the capital of the Nabateans and for its rock-cut architecture; Petra was an important caravan and trade center from at least the Hellenistic period into Roman times.

**71** Moab was an ancient kingdom located east of the Dead Sea in modern Jordan, frequently mentioned in biblical and Near Eastern sources; its principal historical phases span the Late Bronze and Iron Ages (roughly second and first millennia BCE).

**72** Palmyra is an oasis city in present-day central Syria that served as an important caravan and trade hub linking the Roman world with inland trade routes; it is best known for its prominence in the Roman Imperial period (approximately 1st–3rd centuries CE), though the site was occupied earlier.

**73** In this novel, 'the Rebu' denotes the local people or nation ruled by Amuba who resist Egyptian domination; the name is used by the author as a tribal or national designation rather than a clearly identified historical ethnic group.

**74** A regular payment or levy imposed by a dominant power on a subject people; in ancient contexts like Egypt this could be money, produce, or labor paid to acknowledge submission and support the ruling state.

**75** Military 'standards' are emblems, flags, or symbolic poles carried by troops to indicate their unit, loyalty, or the gods they honor; losing or retaining standards had strong implications for honor in ancient armies.

**76** Bullocks are male cattle (often castrated) used as draft animals or for meat; in historical contexts they were