

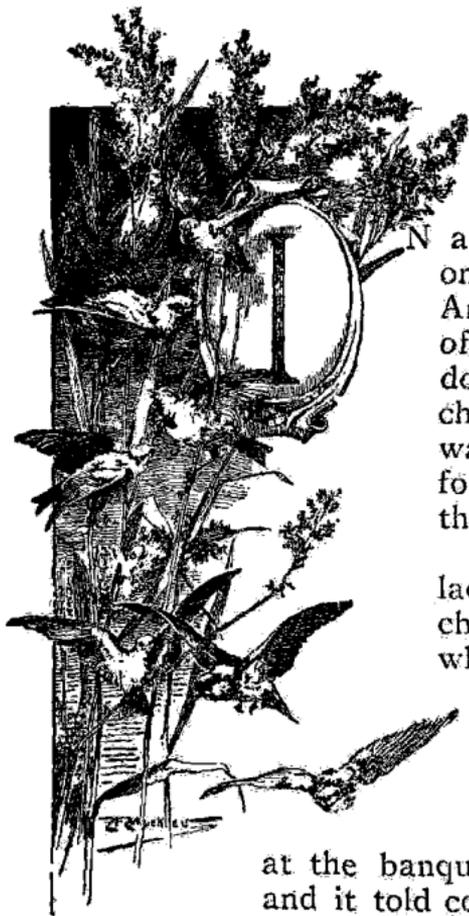
The Golden Casket and
the Casket of Silver.



By Miss I. L. TROTTER.

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D N a lonely and beautiful castle there lived once, long ago, the young son of a king. And the King, his father, was the master of great power, and had several kingdoms over which he reigned, and he chose that this little prince, whose name was Abd er Razeq, should be brought up for the most part in quietness, away from the cities.

So the time passed peacefully till the lad was seventeen, and the years of his childhood had gone from him. And when his beard had begun to grow, there came a day when a train of horsemen came from his father at the distant court, and they bore a great golden casket, and a letter.

And the letter was read that evening at the banqueting table, before all the household, and it told concerning the golden casket, that is to

say, that within it lay documents which the lad should read now that he had reached the age of manhood, and ought soon to take his part in life. And the letter told likewise that within the golden casket would be found the gift of a little silver casket containing keys, which would unlock certain royal treasure-stores, whereof till now Abd er Razeq had been ignorant.

And the young prince was pleased and excited, but he would not seem in a hurry, for that would be like a child, so he kept the messengers for three days, that they might rest and feast, and sent them back with a letter of gratitude; and when they were gone, he shut himself up in his private apartments with the treasure box.

But in those three days a terrible thing had happened in the castle. Among those who had served at supper the first night was an old servant of the King's, whose heart had turned traitor; and when all were wishing well to Abd er Razeq, he wished him but ill, and the venom of a viper was in his heart. And on the second day of the feasting, he went down to a cellar of the castle, and compounded drugs and sorceries, that had in them the breath of hell, and that night he mixed them secretly with the food of the Prince, with the intent that all blessing should die away out of the caskets, and that the light of his father's love might become darkness before his eyes.

And all unknown to poor Abd er Razeq, the drugs and spells, worked night and day, and when at last he shut himself up to

examine what the King had sent him, his brain and his spirit had become dulled and poisoned; and the golden casket seemed to have lost all beauty and interest.

However he opened it, and found the rolls of writing, and began to read them, and a few lines here and there that spoke of his father's power and dominion seemed to shine with light, but much of the rest grew black and crooked as he looked on it.

And when he took up the little silver casket that was hidden in the corner of the golden casket, he disliked it with a strange dislike and shrinking, and his hands shook as if with palsy as he opened it. And behold the keys inside looked like curling scorpions and serpents, as he shut it quickly, and closed down upon it the lid of the golden box, and hid all away where he could forget it. And in this he succeeded, for the sorceries of his enemy brought a torpor through his being.

Thus the days became weeks, and the King in his distant city saw that no further word had come from Abd er Razeq, and when he could no longer forbear he sent for tidings.

And the one who came from the King for tidings was the brother next in age above Abd er Razeq, and it was long since the brothers had met, and they had much to ask and to tell.

And the next day the brother, whose name was Abd el Halim, began to ask concerning the caskets, and he soon found that something had gone wrong, for darkness and trouble seemed to fill the room. And he could not tell what had happened, but he

felt that some evil power had laid hold on Abd er Razeq, and that it was useless to argue, and that the best hope lay in getting him away from the place.

So he said, "O my brother, we will not increase words about this thing; I know only that I received even such a casket within a casket, and that I have found therein nought but blessedness. But leave the matter, and come with me; I am living, as thou knowest, in the realm which the King our Father has committed to our eldest brother. And thou knowest not yet the full history concerning this our brother, and how long ago he made sacrifices that no tongue can tell for the welfare of his people, and that there is no love like his love, and no light like his light; and to those who come to him he has the skill as of a most skilful physician to find out at once what has gone wrong, and to set it right. It may be to him thou wilt unburden thy spirit which is sore and dark, and he will bring healing, and will make known to thee the heart of our Father."

But Abd er Razeq answered, "My spirit is not sore, neither is it dark, and I know my lord the king, even as thou knowest him. I revere his power, and acknowledge that of his kingdom there will be no end. Leave me alone; my life is full of ease and pleasantness; thou seest the gardens full of musk and attar, and the groves of orange-trees and date palms, and the fishponds full of fish; and if the world grows tasteless here, there is the chase of

the mouflons in the mountains, and of the gazelles on the plain; all I ask is to remain undisturbed.”

And when Abd el Halim could prevail nothing in turning the mind of his brother to the two caskets, he sadly gathered the train of his followers, and left the castle.

And Abd er Razeq tried to forget his visit, but the sense of uneasiness remained, and he wished he could be rid of the caskets, and especially of the casket of silver, for that was his own property.

And some nights later sleep went from him, and he said, “it is enough—I will not thus torment myself—that silver casket shall be no longer.” So he rose, and took it from its hiding-place, and wrapped around him his bernows, and dropped the casket in the hood thereof: and he stole out in the moonlight through the white marble court, and the fragrant gardens, down the path of the fishponds, till he came to an olive wood that lay below. And among the olives was a deep, black pool—so deep that no one had ever sounded the bottom. And Abd er Razeq stood on the edge, and flung into the centre the silver casket, and it was gone from him for ever. And he went back through the gardens with a sense of awful loss, as if something had died within him. And as he passed the windows of the kitchens, he heard a low, wicked laugh of glee, but he could see no one, and said to himself, it must be a jackal in the bushes.

And he went up to his scented bed-chamber, saying “Now

I shall sleep at ease." But his sleep was broken and uneasy, and soon he was tossing with fever, for the air of the autumn night had smitten him with a deadly chill as he stood by the pool. And the fever increased day by day till all the world became a dream to him, and none of the physicians could heal him, and after nine days the poor young prince passed away.

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THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE.

O our brothers, the Moslems, there is for you a parable in this story, and we would that before reading further, ye would lift your hearts to God concerning the interpretation, for it is difficult for you to receive.

Now the interpretation is this—Ye have a Father Who is a great King, mighty and loving : He is God the Most High. And He has sent you the revelation of His Will, which is like the golden casket, and the rolls in the casket are like the holy books that are acknowledged by you as by us, that is to say the *Tourât* and the *Zaboor*, and these explain to you His Will, and you admire and reverence it, and never weary of repeating "*inshallah*" over every event of the day.

And God has given you a gift for yourselves, and this is your own will, that is the power to choose—and this is like the little silver casket which was enclosed in the golden one. Thus your

will is so to speak enclosed in the Will of God, and yet distinct from it, for He chooses that you should have the power to choose. And He would have you use this will, or power of choice, for it contains the keys, so to speak, by which ye may seek His heavenly treasures, and these treasures are the way of atonement for sin, and of victory over its power, and are found only by those who seek them.

But Satan is the enemy of your souls like the wicked servant in the story, and he breathes the spells of hell into your minds concerning the golden casket of God's Will, and twists into crookedness the truth concerning it, and darkens the light thereof, so that ye say that even the evil things ye do come of God's power and by His will. And Satan fills your minds also with his spells, concerning the silver casket of your own will so that ye abjure it, and say that ye must do according to that which is written in your foreheads, with no choice in the matter. And Satan is glad when these sorceries do their work, and ye drift along in palsy and apathy, seeking none of the treasures of God.

And now it has come to the time when we the *Massihîn* (i.e., Christians) have come as it were to call you. And we are like the elder brother of the Moslems, for we came first into the world. And we are under the authority which God our Father has deputed into the hands of our elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, and through His Presence with us in our hearts, all darkness of hell is banished, and we have the revelation of God, that

He is Love as well as Power, and that He would win us and draw us to seek Him, and choose Him, and follow Him, instead of forcing us to submit. And we do not wish to argue with you, O our brothers, but we would say "Come with us to Christ our Lord, Who has suffered even to the sufferings of death to be able to bring forth light and healing, and if ye will come to Him in your spirits even in darkness and perplexity, ye will find the day dawn. The one way to free yourselves from the spells of the devil is to escape to Him.

And what we fear for you, O our brothers the Moslems, is that if ye refuse to arise and come, and settle down to take your ease, the night may fall when ye will cast from you evermore this precious casket of your will, and be no more able to arouse yourselves till ye have slipped as in a dream from this world into eternity. So we say to you these words of God Most High :—

"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore CHOOSE LIFE that both thou and thy seed may live."



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