

# The Guzzana

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# Necklace . . .



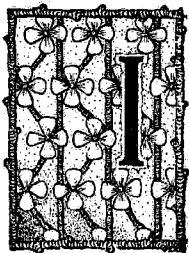
By I. LILIAS TROTTER.

# The Guzzana and the Decklace.

A STORY FOR WOMEN.

BY I. LILLAS TROTTER.

*(Translated from Arabic.)*



IN a town of the Sahel there lived a woman named Baiya, who was prosperous and ambitious. Her husband kept a grocer's shop, and was in friendliness with the great ones of the place, and they were in the act of opening negotiations for the betrothal of their eldest girl with the son of Si Mokhtar, who owned a large farm in the mountains.

And it came to pass that the day drew near for the yearly Ziara\* at a Marabouts, not far from Si Mokhtar's farm, and Baiya made up her mind to go, with the intent of pushing forward the matter of the betrothal.

And without doubt she must go with all the best clothes she could find or borrow, and as she thought on the possessions of

\*Periodical visitation of a Saint's tomb.

her neighbours, she remembered that the wife of the Mufti had a beautiful collar of doubloons, worth 400 francs, and she would certainly not be needing it, as she was ill, and unable to go to the Ziara.

And as the Mufti's wife was a kind-hearted woman, she lent the collar without difficulty, and Baiya took two candles of a duro each from her husband's store-room, and hired a mule, and went with the little caravan of townswomen to the Shrine among the olive trees on the mountain.

And she was pleased to find that several women were there from Si Mokhtar's house, and she felt with joy that they were admiring her head handkerchief of green and gold, and her bracelets, and above all her necklace, and she was glad to see that no one else in the room was as beautified as herself.

And while she was talking to the women, there was a stir in the doorway, and there entered two or three Guzzana women,† of whom one could tell by their tall headdresses and gay draperies that they came from far away.

And it entered Baiya's mind that it would be a good thing to find out from them, before matters went any further, whether the marriage into Si Mokhtar's family would be a success. So after

† Travelling fortune-tellers.

a time, when they had all eaten Couscous, and some were beginning to lie down to sleep, Baiya took the head Guzzana into a corner of the arcade, and put a franc in her hand, and asked her how all would turn out.

And the Guzzana brought her sieve and gave her the two beans to name, and shook them with the rest of the beans and the cowryshell and the sugar and the charcoal, and said, "Behold, O my mother, how well they lie, the sugar and the cowry are close to them and the charcoal is far away. The young man will see in thy daughter a pearl of the sea and a rose of the garden, and will kiss the earth on which she treads; and they will have six sons and three daughters, who will be the wonder of the land for beauty. Fear not to go forward in the matter, all the signs bespeak good fortune.

And Baiya in her foolishness believed it, and began planning in her mind how the preliminaries might be settled next day. And as she thought on all with a light heart, one more question came to her mind, and she asked, "I pray thee tell me one thing more. My husband has a shop, and he owes much for his merchandize, and I fear he will not be able to give me all I shall want for the feast of the betrothal. Tell me, shall I be able to make such a feast as I desire?"

A sudden look of cunning joy crossed the face of the Guzzana, but Baiya did not notice it. And she shook the sieve again and said: "I see Couscous as mountains and Sherba as the sea, and teremir and kaboul and safri of all kinds. It will be the grandest feast that thy town has ever seen."

"Canst thou tell me how this will come about?" asked Baiya.

"I can tell thee the way I see open before me as thou speakest," answered the Guzzana. "Let the collar that thou wearest sleep under my pillow, and by the blessing of heaven every coin will be doubled by the morning: So shalt thou have enough and to spare."

And Baiya was so excited and elated by the prospect before her, that her good sense fled from her, and she took off the necklace and gave it into the Guzzana's hand, and watched her as she lay down with it under her pillow, and then she herself sank to sleep with dreams all night long of such a feast as had never been seen in the land before.

As soon as it was dawn, and the guests began to stir, Baiya was awake and longing to count over the new coins that would have come down from heaven in the night. But when she looked towards the Guzzana's corner, behold it was empty. After the

first moment of surprise and fear, she said to herself, "Of course she would not show me the treasure before the neighbours: she will be waiting for me outside." So she went out in the stillness of the dawn, and searched round among the olives, expecting every moment to find her, but, to her dismay and terror, she found her not, nor did anyone in that place ever see her again. For before midnight she and her companions were far away, having got a child to let them out and bolt the door after them.

And so poor Baiya's dreams of splendour vanished as do dreams of all kinds. For her husband was so angered that he would hear nothing of the marriage, and long before they had saved enough to replace the collar, Si Mokhtar's son had taken a bride from elsewhere, and the visions of the Guzzana were worth no more than the handful of beans in which she saw them.

O my sister, thou dost pity Baiya in her folly and her shame, but have a care that thine be not greater. For there is one with more cunning than the Guzzana, who works on thy love of admiration, and thy desire for wealth and this world's goods, to thine eternal ruin. Thine adversary is Satan, and ever since by his lies he robbed our father Adam and our mother Eve of the garden of Paradise, he has practised many ways of cunning, and has robbed millions of souls who have listened to him.

And even now he is whispering in thine ear, it maybe, that if thou wilt listen to him he will increase thy pleasures and thy prospects, and in thy folly thou dost believe his lies and try his ways : and woe be to the day when thou dost awake in the morning of life to come, and find that, instead of increasing them, he has stripped thee of all. And this would be a terrible thing if thy life were thine own : but like Baiya's necklace, thy soul with its powers of enjoyment has been but lent to thee for a little season, and if thou dost give it into the hands of Satan, thou art robbing God, and this is a great sin.

There is only one whom God has sent into the world into whose keeping thou canst give thyself, and trust thyself, this is our Lord the Messiah. When hearts and lives are given up into His hands and into His keeping, they find all their powers and all their joys not doubled only, but increased and multiplied without end.

I would speak specially to the girls and younger women who read this story. You want to have all the best things that life can bring you, and you do well. God wants to fill your hearts with love and gladness that will last and go on increasing as the years go by, so that you shall have no fear about growing old and uncared for. Satan's purpose is to drag down your days

till they end like an autumn evening. Christ our Lord longs to lift them up till they end like a spring dawn, with the beautiful morning of heaven to follow. He has said in the Holy Gospel "the thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy—I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Into His hands may your souls be brought, and by His keeping may they be kept till that full and perfect day of heaven begins.

