

The Law-suit of
Chadoudja . .

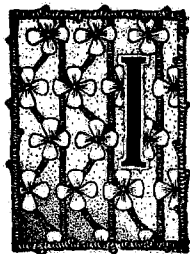
A STORY FOR WOMEN



By I. LILIAS TROTTER

The Law-suit of Chadoudja.

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(Adapted from a story told long ago by Canon Aitken.)

IN a farm at the foot of the hills there lived once a widow named Chadoudja. Her children were only daughters, and they were still young, and her anxieties were great, for a cousin wished to seize the property, and he was rich and powerful, and had in his hands many means of succeeding in his purpose.

Chadoudja resisted him to the extent of her ability, and called to her help the men of the family who were on her side, and they did their best for her, even so far as to appear on her behalf before the Cadi of the district. But her enemy was wily, and point by point he gained ground, till fear came into Chadoudja's heart that unless she could find someone more powerful to defend her, her cause would be lost.

So she took her journey to the chief town of the land to seek advice, and some friends at whose house she had descended told

her that there was one above all others who could help her. He was an Advocate named Sidi El Kouider, and was so mighty in wisdom and skill that he had never been known to lose a cause entrusted to him.

So Chadoudja's hopes began to awake, and the next day she went with her friends to see Sidi El Kouider. And when they brought her into his presence, she saw a man with a face full of power and gentleness, and her trust went towards him, and she spread her case before him, and showed him her papers, and the false claims of the enemy.

And after he had considered the matter he said: "O woman, if thou wilt leave thy cause in my hands I will plead for thee and bring thee through. It is not the first time I have had to do with thy enemy. I have conquered him and his wiles in many a contest, and I know that I can conquer him for thee.

"But I must tell thee that it will not be without sacrifice to thee. I give thee my services freely, for that thou art poor and oppressed, but there will be costs in other directions that may come heavy on thee. Thou mayest count on me that I will not let them be more than thou canst meet, and that victory will be on thy side, but thou must trust me enough to obey me in all things."

And a change came on the face of Chadoudja, and she answered: "I find my life difficult enough as it is, I can risk no more claims; the men of my family who are helping me ask nothing of me."

And Sidi El Kouider answered her: "They ask nothing, and they can give nothing. Thy case needs to be brought into a higher court, where their pleading would not be heard, and where I alone have the right to appear. It is useless for thee to bring them with thee there."

And Chadoudja was silent, and her heart was troubled. And in vain her friends who had brought her urged her to trust Sidi El Kouider, and to cast her cause into his hands.

And he also, though much work of other kinds was upon him, waited patiently, and urged her to commit herself to him without fear.

But at last she said, "Against another day, O my Lord. I will consult my family and send thee our reply."

And Sidi El Kouider looked at her sadly, and said: "O woman, let not the time run out whilst thou dost consider and consult. Now is the day of salvation and its evening will come."

But Chadoudja would not hear, and when she returned with

her friends to their house, they pleaded with her till they were weary ; but she answered them only : “ I know not what the man may ask of me—I will tell you bye and bye.”

So she went back to her farm and consulted her family, and they said they were sure they could help her, and that she did not know into what complications she might be entrapped if she entered on the strange ways of the town. And she did not give up all hope of Sidi El Kouider's help, only she would still wait and see.

But while she waited her enemy went on gaining point after point, for which he was striving, till suddenly, one day, Chadoudja saw that there was only one more step lacking on his side and he would seize her property. So she went off by the night diligence, and arrived in the morning white and weary at her friends' house. “ Take me once more to Sidi El Kouider,” she said ; “ there is no time to be lost.” And they took her straight to his dwelling.

But when he saw her he looked at her sorrowfully and said : “ O woman, I remember thee well, and how near thou wast to committing thy cause to me. But now it is too late, I can no longer plead for thee. Yesterday I was made judge, and now I can but ratify the decisions of the lower courts, the work of

pleading is out of my hands for ever. Oh, if thou hadst hearkened unto me while yet there was time—now it has passed for me and for thee.”

And with her heart broken for her own folly Chadoudja went out from his presence and back to her farm, and found that her enemy was in the act of throwing her goods out on the high road, and that she was a wanderer and a beggar till her life's end.

O my sister, have a care that thou dost not follow her path. For thou hast an enemy, who is Satan, whose whole interest is to rob thee of thine inheritance of God's favour now and hereafter. And the prophets, upon them be Salaams, are but as the men of thy family, who have no power or right to intercede for thee in the high court of Heaven, for they belong to this earth like thyself.

But there is One Who has access to the high court of Heaven, for it is His abode from everlasting, He is Jesus, the Messiah. And because on the human side He is Son of Man, and on the divine side Son of God, He can be our Advocate, and by His death for us he has the right to undertake our cause.

And if thou wilt cast thyself on Him, O my sister, He will plead for thine acceptance with God, His Father, and avenge thee

of thine adversary, the devil, and establish thee in God's favour here and for eternity. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And this, like Sidi El Kouider in the story, He will do freely on His side, for it is His heart's desire to save thee. Only He does not hide from thee that there will be conditions for thee to fulfil, that may be costly to thee, they may mean earthly loss and severance from the love and esteem of thy friends, but He says, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul." He will see to it that nothing beyond thy power to give will be asked of thee, and "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Therefore, fear not, O my sister, to throw thyself on His power and His mercy as thy Saviour and thy Intercessor.

And be warned of the danger of thy state if thou dost wait on as thou art. For every fresh delay increases the power of thine adversary, the devil, over thee, and the day that is coming is a day to be feared.

For in the coming day, that is when thy life on earth is ended, and the day of eternity begins, Christ the Lord will be no more to be found as an Advocate, He will have become the Judge, and

the day of His intercession will be passed for ever. And it will be no passing earthly inheritance that will be forfeited but the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, which is the life of Heaven.

Therefore, O my sister, see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh, "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation."

