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**OUR LITTLE
TURKISH
COUSIN**

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Our Little Turkish Cousin

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Preface

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IN Europe and Asia there are two countries separated from each other by a narrow strip of water. One of these is spoken of as Turkey in Europe, and the other as Turkey in Asia. They are held together under one ruler called the Sultan. He has absolute power over his people, and can do with them as he likes. One word from his lips is enough to cause the death of any of his subjects. None dare to disobey him.

It is because his rule is not the best and wisest, and also because his kingdom is always in danger from the countries around it, that the Sultan is often spoken of as "The Sick Man of Europe."

Our little Turkish cousin lives in the city of Constantinople, not far from the Sultan's palace. He does not understand why some of his people live in wealth and luxury, while so many others spend their lives in begging for the food and clothing they must have. He has no thought but that the Sultan of Turkey is as great and noble as the ruler of any other land.

The child is brought up to love ease and comfort, the daintiest food and the richest clothing. He feels sorry for the poor and the homeless, but he does not know how to truly help them. He hears little about other countries where every one is free and can claim just treatment as his right. But as he grows older he may, perhaps, think for himself, and do some noble deed to save his country and make his people better and happier.

Let us open the doors of our hearts to him, and let him feel our love and sympathy.

Our Little Turkish Cousin

CHAPTER I.

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OSMAN

OF course Osman cannot remember his first birthday. He is a big boy now, with brown eyes and soft, dark hair. Ten years have rolled over his head since he lay in the little cradle by the side of his mother's grand bedstead.

He made an odd picture,—this tiny baby in cotton shirt and quilted dressing-gown. His head was encased in a cap of red silk. A tassel of seed-pearls hung down at one side. Several charms were fastened to the tassel. His mother thought they would keep harm and danger away from this precious baby boy.

He could not have felt very comfortable. His nurse had straightened out his arms and legs, and bound them tightly with bandages. After dressing him, she placed him in his little bed and covered him with several quilted wrappers. Last of all, a thin, red veil was spread over this little Turkish baby.

Do you think he could have enjoyed himself very much? I don't.

He was ready for visitors now. First of all, the proud and delighted father must come in to see his child. A boy, too! The grave man was doubly pleased when he thought of this. As he looked for the first time upon the tiny form done up in so many wrappers, he could hardly tell whether the boy was big or little, fat or thin.

He bent down over the cradle and lifted the child into his own strong arms. Holding him tenderly, he carried him from

the room. He stopped just outside the door. There he stood for a few moments while he repeated a short prayer and whispered the name "Osman" three times in the baby's ear.

This was the only christening the Turkish boy would ever receive. Osman would be his name for the rest of his life; and a fine name it was, his mother and friends all agreed.

When the baby was three days old, there was a grand celebration at his home.

Certain old women, called "bringers of tidings," went from one house to another where the lady friends of Osman's mother had their homes. Wherever they stopped, these old women left bottles of sherbet made of sugar-candy, spices, and water. As they presented the sherbet, they told of the good news about the new baby, of the name his father had given him, and of the feast to be held at Osman's home.

"Do come, do come. You will surely be welcome. You will be glad to see the child and rejoice with his mother."

In this way the invitations were given; and so it happened that many ladies found their way to Osman's house on the day named. No special hour was set for their visit. But, from morning till night, people were coming and going.

It was easy enough for passers-by to know something of interest was taking place inside. They could hear the band of music playing lively airs as the ladies drove up to the door and entered the house.

All the visitors wore long cloaks, with veils over their faces, hiding everything except their soft, dark eyes. For it is

still the fashion in Turkey that no lady shall be seen away from her home with her face uncovered.

Very few of these visitors came alone. They were attended by their slaves and servants, laden with baskets. These baskets were very pretty. They were trimmed with flowers and ribbons, and filled with all sorts of delicious sweets.

Of course they were presents for the new baby's mother. She lay in her grand state bed, smiling softly as the ladies came up, one by one, to greet her. Before they entered her chamber, they took off their veils and cloaks in an outside room.

"Mashallah! May the child live long and be happy," said the visitors, as they bent over the young mother. At each kind wish, she kissed the hands of the speaker. This was her way of thanking them. Strange to say, the ladies seemed hardly to notice the baby himself, in whose honour they had come to the house.

Do not think for a moment they had forgotten the tiny bundle done up in quilted cotton. No, indeed. But the anxious mother believed some bad fortune might come to Osman if he were examined too closely. She would worry if her friends should fondle the child or pay him much attention.

This is the reason most of them pretended not to see him. A few, however, were so curious they could not resist stopping for a moment at the cradle. But, instead of saying, "Oh, the darling little fellow!" or, "What a bright-looking child!" or other kind words, they exclaimed, "The ugly little