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Torkom.

The Story of a Struggle Against Odds.

CHAPTER II.

TORKOM'S PARENTAGE.

THE village of Kara-Hissar stands under the lee of the northern range of hills in the valley dug out by the ancient Meander as it worked its way from the high plateau of Central Asia Minor to the sea. The Mendéré is now a small and insignificant stream wandering about through a wide plain, on both sides of which stand irregular chains of hills, once, no doubt, the banks of a majestic river. The railway follows the stream for many miles. The descent from the plateau to the plain is abrupt, down the rocky slopes of picturesque mountain sides. Occasionally the track crosses the bed of the small but now turbulent stream as it hastens by a more direct and precipitous path to the plain below. At the foot of the mountain is a little stone mill, the roof barely six feet high. A small stream, turned from the main channel of the Mendéré, pours in through a chute cut from a hollow log, and turns in its fall a large block of granite, flat and round as a cart wheel. And as this block turns on another one below it, it grinds to powder the grain that pours in through a hole in the centre. So, in the east between the upper and the nether mill-stone, do people grind corn, and governments grind people.

A little beyond the mill the train draws up at a station standing alone in the plain. The name is prominent in Turkish and in French. A picturesque limestone building with waiting room and telegraph office, flanked by a little garden and a pump, is the only building in sight; although well cultivated gardens have lined both sides of the railway ever since we left the mountains. But on the north side of the valley, half an hour's walk from the station is Kara-Hissar, once a prospering town, the centre of an agricultural district, but now only a cluster of about eighty small frame houses, none boasting more than a single story above the stable, plastered outside and in with a mixture of mud and straw. Here many years ago Torkom was born, the fifth child of poor parents. His father, a miller by trade, was however a very frugal and businesslike man. He had never learned to read or write, but he had a good memory and was quick at