

Story 1676 (Dictated)

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The Hoca¹ and the New Barber

One day when Nasreddin Hoca went to his favorite barber to be shaved, he found a new barber doing the shaving that day. Still, the Hoca needed a shave, so he sat down facing the mirror as the young apprentice fitted the napkin around his neck and began to work.

Aman!² The apprentice's hand shook and the razor slipped, taking a little of the Hoca's left cheek with it

"One moment, sir!" said the apprentice, and he stuck a bit of cotton on the cut. In the next stroke of the razor, another bit of the Hoca's cheek went with it. "One moment, sir!" said the young barber, and he stuck a bit of cotton on that second cut. With each stroke of the razor, another bit of cotton was added to the crop sprouting on the Hoca's left cheek. "Now," said the new barber, "I'll shave the other side."

¹A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training. Nasreddin Hoca, who dates from the Ottoman era, is the most popular Turkish comic folk figure.

²Turkish for Alas!

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"One moment, young man!" said the Hoca as he gazed at the bits of cotton that dotted his left cheek. "Stop right there! I believe I'll plant wheat on the other cheek!"