

Story #512 (Tape #12, 1970)

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Ahmet Vefik Pasha¹ Acknowledges the Wisdom of a Shrewd Peasant

One day a man presented himself before Ahmet Vefik Pasha and reported that he had climbed to the top of Uludağ,² which in those days was called Keshish Dağ.³ Ahmet Vefik Pasha ordered his secretary to reward this man with five liras. They brought five liras for the man, and then he left.

This man was a loose talker. He talked about this incident here and there, and everywhere he went, he told people, "I told him I had climbed Uludağ, and he rewarded me for that with five liras."

An open-eyed man [a sharper] heard this and thought that he could gain a great amount of money in this way. After overcoming some difficulties and obstacles, he found his way to the pasha's presence and said, "Your excellency, your humble servant has climbed Keshish Dağ ten times."

The pasha called his secretary and said, "See to it that this man gets five hundred rods."

This puzzled the man. He said, "One man climbs the mountain and

¹See UW #511 for identification of this person.

²Uludağ is the Turkish Mount Olympus. Today it is one of Turkey's favorite skiing areas.

³There were different monastic groups who at one time or another had quarters on this mountain. Besides Christian groups, there were Moslem tekkes there, among them some of the Nakshi Bende order of dervishes. Üftade, originally a Nakshi Bende, started an order of his own in the Bursa area, building his tekke or monastery on the slopes of Uludağ.

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gets five liras. I climbed it ten times and get five hundred rods, though I should have been rewarded with at least five hundred liras." Failing to understand his reward, he said, "Your excellency, I beg your pardon. Your excellency either does not know arithmetic or he has never been beaten with a stick in his life."

The pasha was impressed with this answer and asked the man what he meant by it.

The man explained, "Sir, if I am struck by five hundred rods, there will not be a healthy spot on my whole body. Therefore, please forgive me."

"All right, then, get out of here!"

This anecdote also shows the intelligence of simple people. It is amazing that a man of Ahmet Vefik Pasha's ability should find himself unable to answer a man of such lowly status.