

Story 853 (1965 Tape
erased on
field trip
after contents
transcribed)

Narrator: Nebiye Birkan, c. 55

Location: Taşköprü, kaza town of
Kastamonu Province

Date: July 1964

Deli Mehmet¹ with a Heavy Head

One day the padişah of that time was preparing to have some visitors at the palace, and he wished to impress these guests as favorably as possible. He therefore said to Deli Mehmet, his servant, "I want you to behave well in their presence."

"Have I ever disappointed you in this respect?" asked Deli Mehmet.

"All right, Mehmet. Just be sure to be heavy headed."²

After he had left the padişah's presence, Deli Mehmet wondered to himself, "How can I make my head heavy?" He thought about this for some time, and then he reached a decision about how to become heavy headed. He piled upon his head all of the mattresses and blankets that he could find.

Soon after his guests had arrived, the padişah called,

¹Deli Mehmet means Crazy Mehmet, but we have retained the Turkish because it refers to a type. He is not really crazy but rather a dummer, a simpleminded boy who takes all instructions very literally.

²To be heavy headed is to be serious, conservative, not flamboyant. This kind of anecdote that turns on a play on words is known as a nükte.

Deli Mehmet

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Story

"Mehmet, where are you?" There was no response and no sign of Deli Mehmet anywhere

searched the palace for him, and they finally found him lying in bed buried under a heap of mattresses and blankets. The padişah asked indignantly, "Mehmet, what are you doing there?"

"Your Majesty, you asked me to be heavy headed. I have in this way become a very heavy-headed man.