

Story #524 (Milli Kütüphane Tape)

Narrator: Saliha Arel

Location: Sivas

Date: Collected in 1950's by a student of P. N. Boratav; translated in April 1962 by Neriman Hızır and Barbara K. Walker

The Willful Son

Once there was a rough, naughty boy. He never heeded anyone; he never obeyed any orders. He had a father and a mother. When he was old enough to go to school, they got him dressed nicely, and they fixed his hair and they fixed his shoes and put him in very good order. Then they gave him his çanta¹ and they took him to school. He went to school for three days, he didn't go to school for five days, and finally he stopped going to school. He played truant. And the whole year passed along that way. He played truant all the time. And they said, "Well, he's a child, after all."

And the next year, the same thing happened. His father gave him his çanta and his books, and they dressed him nicely and had him all in order from tip to toes, and they took him to school and left him there. But the same thing happened again. He went for three days, and then he didn't go for five days, and then he started not to go at all.

So the father decided, "This is the kind who will never learn. So it's better to put him out as an apprentice to a shoemaker." He took him to the shoemaker and he said, "Here is a boy for you. His flesh is yours, and his bones are mine."² It's up to you to make a man out of him." - 123

¹A small bag or satchel, open at the top and fitted with handles, usually homemade; often used as a shopping bag, here it is a schoolbag.

²A proverbial expression used to indicate that whatever form of discipline is needed may be administered; often said to a child's teacher.

And the shoemaker said 'All right Sir We will

So the boy started again He three days and he didn't go
five he went for five days and he didn't go for ten. Whatever the
shoemaker did to make out him didn't work

They finally took him away and his mother gave him as an apprentice
to tinsmith. The thing happened again. He went for two days and he
didn't go for three he went for five days, and he didn't go for ten. They
beaten him and they complained and they came and told his father but nothing
made any difference

Since whatever they did didn't help him any his mother gave
him good beating and good talking-to. Well now the child wouldn't
go to school the child was no good at the shoemaker the child was no
good at the tinsmith. The father became disgusted with him that he
gave him another last beating and then he said "You're no good mine
and he put him out of doors and he said "Go away and do whatever you like

So he began to think what he could do. He thought and he thought. Now
he was well dressed. He had his head and he had his feet. There
was a village nearby and he started to go there. When he came to the village
he knocked at the door of the houses and they opened the door and
asked him in.

They said "What do you want

"Well, he said, "nothing

They said "What does nothing Nothing doesn't mean anything

Tell me where do you come from and who are your parents, and what do you want?"

"Nothing," the boy kept saying

And they said, "Well, it's a pity. You're a boy just growing, and

there must be something the matter with you."

"Well, all right," he said. "I'll tell you. When I was of the age to go to school, my father and mother got me dressed nicely, and they fixed my hair and they fixed my shoes and they put me in very good order. Then they gave me my canta and they took me to school. I went to school for three days, I didn't go to school for five days, and finally I stopped going to school. I played truant. And that whole year passed along that way. I played truant all the time. And my father and mother said, 'Well, he's a child, after all.'

"And the next year, the same thing happened. My father gave me my canta and my books, and my parents dressed me nicely and had me all in good order, and they took me to school and left me there. But the same thing happened again. I went for three days and then I didn't go for five days, and then I started not to go at all.

"So he took me out of there and he gave me as an apprentice to the shoemaker. 'Here is a boy for you.' he said. 'His flesh is yours, and his bones are mine. Make a man of him.' *Proved*

"But I started again. I went for three days, and I didn't go for five; I went for five days, and I didn't go for ten. They beat me, and they complained, and they went and told my father, but nothing made any difference. I was no good there.

"Then he tried the tinsmith, but the same thing happened again. I went for two days, and I didn't go for three; I went for five days, and I didn't go for ten. They beat me, too, and they complained, and they went and told my father, but nothing made any difference. I was no good there.

"And finally he gave me a good beating and he threw me out of doors.

Now I have no place to go, and I don't know what to do."

And the answer was, "The child who is no good to his mother and father is no good to anyone." They shut him out, but they gave him a good beating before he went.

The boy started going from one village to the other, on very cold winter days, his feet bare, and his body trembling with cold. Finally he came to another village, and he knocked on the door of one of the houses, and a woman opened the door. At that time, the boy was almost frozen to death. And the woman saw a boy, almost become a young man, who was frozen stiff, so stiff that he could hardly talk.

"What happened to you, Son?" she said.

And the poor boy couldn't say anything. She was a kind woman, so she had pity on him and took him in, and she put him on a mattress near the fire, and she covered him well, and went to boil some milk. She came back and said, "Do you want some thick³?"

And the boy said, "Oh, no! I don't want any thick. No, no! I've had too much of it! I don't want any."

"Why won't you eat some thick?" the woman kept on saying.

And the boy kept crying, "No, no! I don't want any more thick. I don't want any of it."

And she said, "Why don't you want it? It's so good. I made it nice and hot for you. I'll put some pieces of bread in it and it will taste so good!"

Then the boy understood that it was not a beating with a stick that

³The Turkish word used by the woman for "boiled milk" has a second meaning ("stick," or "beating with a stick") in many parts of Turkey. It was in the latter sense that the boy understood the word the woman used.

she was talking about. He'd been hungry for three or four days anyway, so he said, "I've been hungry for a length of time."

She had boiled the milk, and now she broke the bread into pieces and dropped them in the milk, and she put much sugar in it, and so he ate it.

He stayed there that night, and the next morning when he was ready to go, the woman gave him some good advice. She said, "A boy who is no good to his parents⁴ and who doesn't listen to their advice comes to no good end. Look at yourself! Now, this is what you are going to do. You go back home and kiss your mother's hand and kiss your father's hand, and beg their pardon. Then ask them to get you a new job, and then stick to it."

So the boy came home, and he kissed his parents' hands and their feet, and he begged their forgiveness. He said, "I did wrong. Please don't you do wrong to me."

So they put him to a new job. He was wiser now, and he did whatever work he was given to do. And he lived long and happily.

⁴ Apparently the telling of this story was truncated: the kind woman had not--in this telling--been provided with the young man's account of his past, yet the woman appears to know that he is "no good to his parents."