

Story 854 (1964 Tape erased on field trip after contents transcribed) Narrator: Nebiye Birkan, c. 55
Location: Taşköprü, a kaza town of Kastamonu Province
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Deli Mehmet¹ Turns the Shoes

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 called Deli Mehmet to him and said, "Mehmet, after our guests have arrived, you will go downstairs to the door and turn their shoes."²

"Yes, Your Majesty, I shall turn them right away," said Deli Mehmet.

There were many guests who came to the palace that evening, and after they had all arrived, Deli Mehmet went downstairs to the front door to turn their shoes. He did not really know what was meant by the expression turn the

¹ Deli 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 literally.

² Upon entering most houses and apartments in Turkey, one removes his/her shoes. They are left either just outside or just inside the door. In order to make it easy for guests to put their shoes back on at departure, many hosts will have someone turn the shoes around so that the departing guest can just step into them. Many Turks smash down the upper leather just above the heels, and so it is possible to step into these shoes as if they were bedroom slippers or moccasins.

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shoes, and he imagined that it must mean to turn them inside out. He tried to turn all of the guests' shoes inside out, but this was extremely difficult work. The soft shoes he managed to turn completely inside out, but the hard shoes and the boots resisted his efforts. He struggled with these, bloodying his hands in the process, but could do no more than get them partially turned. After he had done all that he could do, he went upstairs and reported to the padişah "Your Majesty, I have turned some of the shoes, but I have been unable to turn the rest."

When the padişah heard this and observed that Deli Mehmet was covered with blood, he thought that he had better go downstairs himself to see what the situation was. When he looked at the many shoes, he found that some of them were turned inside out, some of them were intact, and many of them were torn to pieces. As a result, the padişah bought new shoes for many of his guests