

At the edge of the town was a workshop above which was a sign, which read
KETHYNS VALETING SERVICE. ONE SHILLING PER ITEM.

"Oh I say," said Hector, "shall we get our swords sharpened and polished? We really should if we're going to fight a dragon." The others agreed, and they entered the yard.

A grubby looking man with his back to them was bending over a pile of rusty armour. He wore a short shirt, and his trousers had slipped down so you could see his underpants, and he had to keep pulling them up over his huge belly.

"What can I be doing for you then?" he asked.

"We'd like our swords sharpened and polished," replied Cuthbert.

"Four swords, that'll be four shillings. What about shields?"

"Yes, we should get them polished too," said Hugo.

"That's two items each then, that'll be eight shillings."

"We could get our helmets polished as well," suggested Hector.

"Three items, times four is twelve shillings."

"Boots which bear their burden over rock and stone without complaint should be given their due respect." It was Sir Eloquence of course, his moustache trembling with excitement.

"Boots polished. That's five items each. Five fours is twenty."

"Surely a pair of boots is one item? Four times four is sixteen." Hugo protested.

"A pair is two, five items altogether, five fours is twenty. Tell you what, I'll count a pair of spurs as one item as they're quite small." The knights nodded. "So that's six items each. Six fours is twenty four."

Danny was amazed at how clever Kethyn was at doing multiplication. He was cleverer than the knights who seemed to agree to just about anything he said.

"What about our breastplates?" asked Cuthbert. "We really should have shiny breastplates if we're going dragon hunting."

"So that's seven items each. Seven four's is twenty eight shillings. What about the daggers, should have them sharpened too you know." Everyone agreed. "Eight items. Eight times four is thirty two. Anything else?"

"I could do with some fresh underpants, I've had these on for six months at least," said Hector.

"Sorry mate. Don't do underpants, you'll 'ave to make do a bit longer. Now, anything else, how about the saddles?"

"It's all on expenses, so we don't mind what we spend really, it just means the king gets less tax." Hugo explained to Danny as he wrote in his book. The knights had just agreed to the additional expense of having their saddles cleaned and polished.

"So the saddles makes it nine items each. Nine four's thirty six. Tell you what I could do a nice shampoo and blow dry on the 'orses make 'em nice and smart. That would be one more item each. Make it a nice round forty. Ten four's being forty like."

The knights of course agreed and piled everything up for Kethyn to polish.

"Tell you what. These 'orses shoes is gettin' a bit worn. Be as well to 'ave 'em done while you're at it. Four shoes on four 'orses, four four's is sixteen, plus forty is fifty six. Tell you what I'll do the whole job for fifty shillings. Come back in an hour."

Four Twits, a Dragon and a Princess - A Story About Learning the Four Times Table by Professor Paradox