

was, and people stood still and looked after her when she passed by, sweet and modest as a rosebud.

"Why let yourself be unhappy, my dear?" she said, getting up to go, "when every one's heart swells when they see Ana, as if she were not the pride of us all when we see her going about with gentlemen's daughters. Ana is just herself, and there is no one like her, so why give yourself bad moments because of the tittle-tattle of a man like Costa?"

Mistress Veta accompanied Lena to the door, and came back asking herself what was to be done.

Master Dinu came back just at the right moment.

Without much hesitation his wife told him everything with various additions and improvements.

"Eh! And what of it?" he said. "Don't the people know us and our daughter, and don't they know what Costa's words are worth? Only Costa says it."

Mistress Veta looked furiously at him.

"What! The town is talking about your daughter, and you don't mind?"

"It isn't that I don't mind! Of course I mind, but what would you have me do? Go and kill him? Don't be like this."

"Not be like this? I'd better be like you and not care when they insult my daughter!"

"Come now, what am I to do?"

"What are you to do? Woe betide the house where the man is not a real man! Find out, discover to whom he has said it, collect witnesses, and see he never opens his mouth again."

"I will see about it."

"Don't see about it, find him."

Master Dinu knew that his wife must always have the last word, so he said nothing; he would have been glad not to be at home, but he could not go now. A few minutes later he said:

"Listen, Veta, all right, I will find witnesses, but supposing it's true?"

"True?" screamed his wife, and looked as though she could have thrown herself upon him and struck him. "True? Why doesn't God strangle the word in your throat?" she snarled, and hurriedly left the room.

A few seconds later she returned with Ana.

"Ana, hear your father say that it is true you took warm wine to Sandu."

The haste with which her mother had called her, and her father's expression so overcame her, that she stood with drooping head, and raising a corner of her apron began to cry.

"So this is where we have got to--get out of my sight that I may never see you again."

Mistress Veta sank exhausted on to a chair, while Ana sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Why all this to-do even if she did take wine to the poor man? What is the great harm in that? She took him wine because he was cold, and because I told her to go," said Master Dinu, going up to Ana. "Don't