

the day, was parted and hung in braids over her back and shoulders. Her face was of that beauty which once made famous the Roumanian women, but which is rarely found to-day, for it has degenerated through the mingling of foreign blood. She was also sad and languishing, like a flower exposed unshaded to the burning heat of the sun. She had seen her father die, had witnessed the abdication and withdrawal of one brother and the murder of another. She had first of all been destined by the community to be the wife of Jolde--whom she did not know--then she was forced by that same community, who disposed without question of her heart, to give her hand to Alexandru Voda whom she honoured and obeyed as her husband, and whom she would have been ready to love had she found in him the least trace of human feeling. Drawing near, she bent and kissed his hand. Lapushneanu took her by the waist, and lifting her as though she were a feather placed her upon his knee.

"What tidings, my fair lady?" he said, kissing her on the brow. "For what reason have you to-day, which is not a feast day, deserted your spinning-wheel? What has roused you so early?"

"The tears the widowed women shed at my door, and which cry to the Lord Christ and the Holy Virgin for vengeance for all the blood you shed."

Lapushneanu's face grew dark, and he unclasped his hands; Rucsanda fell at his feet.

"Oh, good my Lord! my brave husband!" she continued. "It is enough! You have spilt so much blood, made so many widows, so many orphans. Consider that your Highness is all powerful, and that a few poor boyars cannot harm you. What does your Highness lack? You are not at war with anyone; the land is quiet and submissive. I--God knows how much I love you! Your Highness's children are fair and young. Reflect that after life comes death, and that your Highness is mortal and must give account of his deeds, for blood is not redeemed by building monasteries; especially is it tempting and insulting God to deem that you can propitiate him by erecting churches and----"

"Thoughtless woman!" cried Lapushneanu, jumping to his feet, and from force of habit he put his hand to the dagger at his belt; but instantly controlling himself, he bent forward, and raising Rucsanda from the floor he said: "My wife, do not let such foolish words escape your lips, for God only knows what might happen. Be thankful to the great saint and martyr, Dimitric Isvoritor, of blessed memory, to whose honour we dedicate the church which we have built at Pangaratzi, that he has hindered us from committing a great sin, and caused us to remember that you are the mother of our children."

"Even though I know you will murder me I cannot keep silence. Yesterday when I wished to come in, a woman with five children threw herself in front of my carriage and stopped me to show me a head fastened to the courtyard gate. 'You will have to answer for it, Madam,' she said to me, 'if you allow your husband to behead our fathers, husbands and brothers. See, Madam, that is my husband, the father of these children who are left orphans! Look well.' And she showed me the gory head, and the head looked terribly at me! Ah, Sire, since then I see that head incessantly, and I am afraid! I cannot rest!"

"What will you?" asked Lapushneanu, smiling.

"I will that you spill no more blood, that you cease to kill, that I may see no more decapitated heads which make my heart break."

"I promise you that after the day after to-morrow you will see no more," replied Alexandru Voda, "and to-morrow I will give you a remedy for fear."

"What? What does that mean?"

"To-morrow you will see. Now, sweet lady, go and see your children, and attend to your house like a good mistress, and see to the preparations for a feast, for to-morrow I give a great dinner to the boyars."