

of what was taking place, had been anxious. She did not understand the cause of the noise she heard, for, according to the custom of the time, women could not leave their apartment, and the servants could not risk going amongst soldiers of whose discipline they knew nothing. One among them, bolder than the others, had gone out, had heard it said that an attack had been made upon the Voda, and had carried these tidings to her mistress.

The gentle Princess was terrified, fearing the fury of the mob, and when Alexandru entered he found her praying before the Icon, with her children by her side.

"Ah," she cried, "our Lady be praised that I see you again! I have been greatly frightened."

"Wherefore? Because I promised I would prepare you a remedy for fear? Come with me, Madam."

"But those cries, those shouts we heard?"

"Nothing. The servants began to wrangle, but they are quiet now."

So saying he took Rucsanda by the hand, and led her to the dining-hall. She gave a cry of horror at the terrible sight and fainted.

"A woman is always a woman," said Lapushneanu, smiling, "instead of rejoicing, she is horrified."

He lifted her in his arms, and took her back to her apartment. Then he returned again to the hall where he found the captain of mercenaries and the esquire awaiting him.

"You can throw these corpses over the wall to the dogs, but set their heads upon the wall," he said to the mercenary. "And you," he said, addressing the esquire, "are to lay hands upon Spancioc and Stroici."

But Stroici and Spancioc were already close to the Dniester.

Their pursuers only caught up with them when they had crossed the frontier.

"Tell him who sent you," Spancioc shouted back, "that he will not see us till he is about to die!"

Four years passed since this scene, during which time Alexandru Lapushneanu, faithful to the promise made to the Princess Rucsanda, did not execute a single boyar. But, because he was unable to stifle his overmastering desire to witness human suffering, he invented various forms of torture.

He had eyes put out, noses cut off, he mutilated and maimed any person he suspected; even his suspicions were imaginary, for no one ventured to make the slightest complaint. All the same he was not at ease, for he could not lay hands on Spancioc and Stroici, who remained at Kamenitza, waiting, abiding their time. Although he had two highly-placed sons-in-law with great influence at the Polish court, he was anxious lest these two boyars should solicit the aid of the Poles, who were only seeking a pretext to invade Moldavia; but these two Roumanians were too good patriots not to reflect that war and the arrival of foreign soldiers would be the ruin of their native land.

Lapushneanu wrote to them many times in succession that if they would only return he would pledge himself, by the most sacred oath, to do them no harm; but they knew the value of his oath. In order to observe them more closely, he moved to the town of Hotin which he fortified with care, but he became ill from spleen here. The disease made rapid strides, and the tyrant soon saw himself at the portal of the tomb.