

that idea! God or the devil will make me well again, and----"

"Unhappy man, do not blaspheme," said the Metropolitan, cutting him short. "Do not forget you are in the hour of death! Reflect, sinful man, that you are a monk, you are no longer Ruler! Reflect that such ravings and yells are frightening this innocent woman, and this child in whom rests the hope of Moldavia."

"Infernal hypocrite!" added the sick man, endeavouring to rise from his bed. "Hold your tongue; it was I who made you Metropolitan, and I unfrock you. You tried to make me a priest but I will put that right. There are many I will make into priests. But as for that bitch, I will cut her into four pieces with her pup so that they may never again listen to the advice of hypocrites or to my enemies. He lies who says I am a monk. I am no monk--I am Ruler. I am Alexandru Voda! Help! Help! Where are my soldiers? Fetch them! Fetch them all! I will command them. Kill all these people. Let none escape. Ah! I am choking! Water! Water! Water!" And he fell back exhausted, gasping with excitement and fury.

The Princess and the Metropolitan retired. At the door they came face to face with Stroici and Spancioc.

"Madam," said Spancioc, seizing Rucsanda's hand, "that man must die at all costs. See this powder, pour it into his drink."

"Poison," she cried with a shudder.

"Poison!" pursued Spancioc. "Unless this man dies at once, the lives of your Highness and your son are in danger. The father has lived long enough and done enough. Let the father die that the son may live."

A servant came out of the room.

"What is it?" asked the Princess.

"The sick man has roused and asks for water and his son. He bade me not to return without him."

"Oh, they wish to kill him," groaned the wretched mother, pressing her son passionately to her breast.

"There is not time for hesitation, Madam," added Spancioc. "Think of the wife of Voda Shtefanitza and choose between father and son."

"What say you, Father?" said the poor woman, turning towards the Metropolitan, with her eyes full of tears.

"This man is cruel and fierce, my daughter; may the Lord God give you counsel. As for me, I go to prepare for our departure with our new Ruler; for our late Prince, may God pardon him, and also forgive you."

With these words the holy Teofan departed.

Rucsanda took a silver cup full of water, which was handed to her by the servant, and then, amid the entreaties and arguments of the boyars, poured the poison into it. The boyars pushed her into the sick man's room.

"What is he doing?" asked Spancioc of Stroici, who pushed open the door again and looked in.

"He asks for his son--he says he wishes him to come to him--he asks for a drink--the Princess trembles--she gives him the cup--he will not take it!"

Spancioc starts and draws his dagger from his belt.

"But yes, he takes it, he drinks. May it do your Highness good!"

Rucsanda emerged shaking and livid, and supporting herself against