

but her tongue remained tied. When she recovered herself she said suddenly: 'Can I? How can I open? I am married. I cannot.' 'To whom, mother--to whom must you open?' She took me tremblingly in her arms, squeezed me to her, and pressed her burning cheek against mine. 'You are too little. You do not understand, my treasure!'

"And, after a while, talking more to herself, while the tears flowed slowly down her cheeks: 'At the fountain in Plaiu--it is long ago. We pledged our word--at dusk--God saw us; and in the end he made off one day, and I waited for him--years and years I waited. Now what does he want? I am married. What does he expect? Why did he come?'

"Thus much I remember. I fell asleep close to my mother. The next day she might just have got up after a long illness so white was she in the face, with fear shining in her eyes. When my father saw her he raised the thick bushy eyebrows which gave such a harsh appearance to his hairy face. 'There is something wrong, something has happened.'

"Could she deny it? They went into the room where the sofa stood, and soon after my father broke out with: 'From henceforth either I or he!' And he stormed about, taking long heavy strides while the weapons clattered on the wall. He swore, and added with a wild burst of laughter: 'Ha, ha! And the head and two hundred ducats!'

"From now on he no longer took the road; he remained on guard. Spies began to move about. Fierce-looking men knocked at the door. My father went out, exchanged some rapid words with them, among which could be continually heard the name of Zidra, and they disappeared. But what were those cries, those sharp whistles through the night? Often, too, across the hillocks came the sound of stones--stones striking one against the other, and my father replied in the same way. And the knocking sounds rose sonorous, ringing through the darkness as though some strange birds were rattling their beaks. I heard it in my sleep and shuddered. 'Have no fear,' whispered my mother, 'it is nothing, my dear one. Your father is talking--with some sentries.'

"A few weeks passed thus, until one midnight there appeared in the further room four men in black cloaks, carrying guns; they seemed to have sprung out of the ground. They shook hands and without a moment's pause began moving about in the ruddy, uncertain light of the pine-torch. In the silence outside--a silence caused by the fog which deadened all sound--their words could be overheard. As my father slung his scimitar over his shoulder, one of them said in a loud clear voice: 'At Sticótur, in the monastery.' 'Since when?' 'Since dinner-time to-day--he is eating and drinking.' 'The man is caught,' said another. 'He can't escape this time.'

"They went out quickly; they were lost in the black darkness which began to vibrate with the rising of the wind. The bushes rattled and bent beneath the rain--storms of rain beat and splashed against the window-panes, a sea of sound, storm after storm."

Here, as far as I can remember, Mitu Doła brought the story to a close. I asked:

"How did it end?"

"Didn't you hear the song? My father took the head and put it in his pouch. As he said, 'and the head and two hundred ducats.'"

GARDANA

By M. BEZA