

in silence amid the luminous spray that filled the old building.

"Good health to you, my old friend Simone!"

"Thank you, sir. How goes it with the land? Grinding good flour?"

This was the old man's usual question: was the country grinding good flour?

"Good, my old friend Simone!"

"Praise be to God!" said the old fellow. "But how are you, sir? You never come to see us. The duck give you no peace!"

"No, they give me no peace. I mean to lie in wait on the bank to-night. Perhaps luck will come my way."

"Good; may it be as you wish. See, Zamfira will show you the way."

Just at that moment appeared the miller's niece. She was a strange girl of sixteen years of age; of middle height and thin, but with well-developed muscles: her cheeks were sunburnt, and she had two grey eyes, eyes so restless and so strange, and of such beauty and such brilliance as I have never seen since. She had not regular features, but the grey eyes beneath the heavy, arched brows gave her an unusual and radiant beauty.

At the old man's words she stopped suddenly, and said quickly with twinkling eyes:

"I don't want to show him the way!"

"Why not?" I asked with surprise, while the old man smiled.

"Because I don't want to!" said Zamfira, looking at me askance.

"Very well," said the old man quietly, "don't take him!"

The girl looked at me searchingly, through half-closed eyelids, and then cried sharply:

"I'll take him, after all!"

Old Simone began to laugh softly, turned round, and pursued his way to the mill bridge, but Zamfira remained in front of me, erect, her hands by her sides. Her head was bent down, but the grey eyes flashed at me from beneath the eyebrows. Her head was bare, her chestnut hair was drawn smoothly back from the temples into a thick plait, tied at the nape of the neck; a white water-lily, beautiful, as though cut out of silver, was fastened among her rich tresses. Beneath a white chemise her bosom rose and fell, a blue skirt fell plainly to her ankles.

Suddenly she raised her head and looked shyly at me as she smiled. Her teeth shone between her thin lips. Then, with her eyes, she gave me the signal: "Come!"

I followed her. She moved swiftly; her well-developed form was clearly outlined beneath her thin garments. From time to time she turned her head, and her teeth flashed. She untied the boat, jumped in and said curtly:

"Follow me!"

After I was seated, she braced herself for the effort, thrust in the long pole, and set the boat in motion. For some time we glided through reeds and rushes, and above great beds of weed. When we reached open water she put down the pole, and took to the oars. The boat cleft the deep water which glowed with flames from the fire of the setting sun. The oars splashed softly with a musical sound. The girl's whole body moved with a rhythmic grace that was unspeakably fascinating. The silver lily quivered in the luxuriant chestnut hair.