

One day, Nicola sat pondering in his room while he smoked. What was to be done? He most certainly wanted to marry, and to take her for his wife; why would she not hear of it?

A few days before he had gone with Ciocirlie, the gipsy, and had sung desperately outside the walls. Alas, the courtyard remained still as stone! What the devil was to be done?

Boyar Nicola thought to himself: "You are not ugly, you are not stupid--what's the reason of it? Is she, perhaps, in love with some one else?" No. He watched for one whole night. Nobody entered, and nobody left the courtyard.

The boyar was angry. He rose, picked up a whip and went out. The grooms were grooming the horses in the yard.

"Is that horse supposed to be groomed?" he shouted, and slash! down came the whip on one of the grooms.

Farther on the gardener was resting from the heat.

"Is this how you look after the garden? Hey!" and swish! crack!

What next? Was it any use losing one's temper with the people? He went into the garden, and seated himself under a beautiful lime-tree. There, on the stone bench, he pondered again. His life was worthless if the woman he loved would not look at him! He watched the flight of the withered leaves in the still air; he heaved a sigh.

"Vasile! Vasile!" called the boyar. His voice rang sadly in the melancholy garden.

A sturdy old man came through the garden door, and went towards his master.

"Vasile," said the boyar, "what is to be done?"

The old man eyed his master, then he, too, sighed and scratched his head.

"What is to be done, Vasile?"

"How should I know, master?"

"You must find something. Many people have advised me, now you suggest something. I got nothing out of that old witch, and Ciocirlie was no good; cannot you propose something?"

"H'm----"

"Do not desert me, Vasile!"

"H'm, master, I'll tell you something if you will give me something."

"Take a ducat of mine, Vasilica--speak!"

Vasile did not let himself be put off by the mention of one ducat. He scratched his head again.

"If I knew you would give me two ducats, master, or even three, or many--you understand--that's how it is! What will be, will be! I say go right off to Frasini, go into the courtyard, through the courtyard into the lady's boudoir and steal her! That's what I say!"

"What are you talking about, good Vasile! Is it possible!"

Vasile said no more. The boyar thought deeply, his hand on his forehead; then he said:

"That's what I must do, Vasile! I know what I have to do! Bravo you,