

as though he had not the strength to bear hearing one of the tanners tell him he had no place for him; it would be such a catastrophe that he would sink into the earth.

Not knowing what he did he moved forward; but when he approached the first booth he lost confidence, and had not the courage to greet the master.

He passed on. He walked round the booths two or three times, but could not summon up courage to ask whether one of the tanners had a situation open or not.

"Now I will go," he said very firmly to himself, to give himself strength, but when he moved he saw a peasant go up to the booth. "I will let him make his purchase and then I will go."

But he did not stir, he was afraid, especially when the master, not being able to come to terms with the peasant, undid the box, and flung the sandals violently into it. He did nothing; it seemed terrible to him to have to go up to the booth. He did not know why. He felt angry with himself that it should be so. And as he asked himself why he was like this, he recalled to mind various acquaintances who were so very bold and fearless. If only he could be like that! But he could not be so, his nature did not allow it.

"Now you good-for-nothing, you are wandering about here like a sheep in a pen," a tanner, small of stature, with brown eyes and a harsh voice, said roughly to him.

"I?" stammered Sandu. "I am not a good-for-nothing."

"No? Then why do you keep coming round? Haven't I seen you? You walk a bit, you stand still, you have been round us several times, and now you are standing still again; it is as though you had some evil intention!"

"Master, I am not----"

"Go, whatever you are or are not, else you will see I will get rid of you."

Sandu could hardly stand, a sort of mist darkened his eyes, and his heart was bursting. He would have cried, but he was ashamed for a grown man to be walking across the market-place with tears in his eyes. He suffered and would gladly have told how deeply the words he had listened to had hurt him, but he had no one to whom he could open his heart.

He returned to the innkeeper with whom he was lodging. Tired and spent he threw himself on the bench.

"What is it?" asked the innkeeper.

Sandu looked vaguely at him, then, as if afraid to hear the sound of his own voice, he said:

"Nothing."

The innkeeper felt sorry for him.

"Have you found a situation?"

"I did not ask for one."

"Then how can you hope to get one?"

Sandu remained silent. The innkeeper looked strangely at him, shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, and went to attend to his duties.

With his elbows on the table, and his head resting in his hands, Sandu gazed in front of him, and who knows where his thoughts would have led him if the innkeeper had not said to him: