

"Well, do you agree? Will you stay or not?" scolded the mistress as she appeared in the doorway.

"I will stay," replied Sandu, scarcely knowing what he said.

The master looked at her, and turned to Sandu.

"Have you had your dinner?"

"Did he come for you to feed him," his wife interrupted him.

"Woman, you----"

The mistress threw him a look full of meaning, and disappeared into the yard.

"You can start work to-morrow."

Sandu turned and went out after the master; they walked side by side. When they reached the yard gate they stopped. The master would have liked to say something about the pay. One and a half florins a week seemed so very little to him, but Sandu was simple and glad to get work, and he did not ask for much.

"Master, I will go now. Good luck to you!"

"Good luck to you!" replied the master, and he seemed as though he would like to call him back and say another word to him.

In rather over a month Sandu had had time to get back into his old ways, and to work hopefully at his trade, but during this time he had, little by little, come to see that in his master's house the cock by no means ruled the roost. Sharp-tongued and ill-tempered, Mistress Veta was often dissatisfied with the work. Now it was because the skins had not come out of the vat yellow enough, and had not enough creases; now it was because a range of skins needed mending as the workmen had not been sufficiently careful; and so on and so on, always hard words for the workmen who worked eagerly and with all their might that the skins might be well tanned, and the mistress have no chance to grumble.

At first Sandu found these abusive words hard to bear, and all day long the thought worried him that the mistress only spoke so to him, and that it was with him only that she was dissatisfied. At one time even he was seized with the desire to go away so that he might hear her no longer, and the other men might not be worried on his account, for he said to himself that only since he entered the workshop had the work gone so badly, and the mistress's tongue chided so unceasingly.

But, all unperceived by himself, he grew somewhat accustomed to the ways of the house, and when a workman told him that the mistress had always been just the same, and that no matter how well the hides were dressed she always found some fault, he took heart and dismissed the idea of quitting the workshop of Talpoane, the master-tanner.

He was up almost before daylight, and never let his work out of his hand till it was dinner-time. He washed his hands clean, and took his usual place at his employers' table--for from olden times it had been the custom for the masters not to keep aloof from the workmen or to dine apart.

Silent at his work, he was, also, silent at meals. Only when he was spoken to did Sandu reply, gently and with dignity. The other men talked and laughed, and when they realized that it pleased the mistress to make fun of Sandu they began to crack every kind of joke at his expense.

At first Sandu opened his eyes wide. He looked at them and could not understand them, but when he took it in he, too, laughed with them, a laugh full of kindness and friendliness. He lived on good terms with the workmen; only one of them, Iotza, embittered the days. He