

only had to say: "You have made the solution too weak," for Sandu, although he knew it was not true, to be unhappy all the week, and often his heart was full of fear that the skins would not come out yellow enough or creased enough to please the mistress.

But he felt comforted when he noticed that, when he came into the workshop, Master Dinu asked only him how many hides were being worked, and when they would be ready, for at such and such a fair he would need so many, because a customer was trying to get in touch with him.

"They'll be ready when they are wanted; don't worry," Sandu would reply.

And away Master Dinu would go, quite content, and quite sure that the hides would be ready when they were wanted for the fair, or had to be despatched to some customer.

He saw that everything went very well since Sandu entered the workshop. The skins were kept in the pits just long enough for the hair to come off easily and not burn in the lime; the solution was boiled enough, not too hot and not too strong; the poles were in their places; the stretching-pegs were in a neat pile, and the workshop was cleaner than it had ever been before.

And Master Dinu knew the value of a good workman in a place where there were many workers, and where work was plentiful.

"There is only one thing he lacks," he said to himself, "he would be a man in a thousand, but he is too diffident."

But, even in spite of his diffidence, he thought so highly of him that had he asked for four florins a week he would gladly have given it sooner than let him go away.

So he said to himself, but Sandu did not dream of asking for much more than he had. All his life he had worked for the same wage.

It is true that had he done as the others did, and drawn out money every Sunday, he might, perhaps, have felt it was hard to see Master Dinu paying out a great deal more to the others than to him, but he did not ask for his money. On one occasion only did he draw two florins from his pay, and that was because, on a certain Tuesday, his mother had sent greetings to him and had asked him if possible to send her a little help.

Sandu ran off at once to the market-place to find Master Dinu to ask for all the money he was entitled to for his work, that he might send it to his mother. Master Dinu, not knowing what he wanted it for, nor how much he needed, asked whether two florins would be enough.

"Yes," he said, and with the coins in his hand he went to the man from his village. He wrapped up the money and begged him to lose no time in giving it to his mother and in telling her how much he longed for her, and that, perhaps, she might come to him, for he was working for a good master, and up to now he had not been idle for a single day.

A fortnight passed and he received no tidings of his mother. But on Tuesday, the day of the weekly fair, while he was spreading out the skins, the man came to tell him he had given the money and had brought a letter written by "Peter the Chinaman."

Sandu took the letter and would have liked to open it, but he caught the mistress's eye and involuntarily thrust it into his breast.

"Look at him," she cried, "we are longing to finish the work quickly, and he thinks only of reading lines from his sweetheart."

"I have no sweetheart," replied Sandu gently.

"Who writes to you then?"