

"Send him away? Why? Just now when we are greatly in need of men? I rack my brains to try and get another hand for the work, and don't know where to find one, while you are longing to get rid of Sandu, and in the long run, for no reason. You must not be like this."

They were still talking when Nitza Burencea came to ask if he was going to the fair at Devi.

That evening, after supper, the mistress stopped Sandu as she wanted to send him somewhere.

"Sandu, why did you want to leave your work? Are you not satisfied with our food?"

"Quite satisfied."

"Or don't we give you enough whisky in the evening?"

"I don't drink whisky."

"Don't drink it? But, you silly man, why didn't you tell me? And those other two said nothing about it--you don't think it rains whisky with us, do you? They have drawn your share all these days. But I'll wipe their mouths for them. Why did you not tell me long ago?"

"You never asked me."

"Well, go where I tell you; and, listen, if I send you it is because I have not got so much confidence in the others; do just what I have told you."

"I will do so, mistress," replied Sandu, with a much lighter heart.

When he reached the street he told himself the mistress was not so bad after all.

An hour later, when he returned, only Ana was downstairs.

After saying good evening, seeing that Ana was by herself, he prepared to go out again.

Ana, who saw he was about to open the door, asked him:

"What do you want, Sandu? Whom are you looking for?"

"For the mistress."

"Then wait for her, she will soon come. Sit down."

Sandu seated himself on the edge of a chair.

Ana was sewing; he watched her hands with their rapid movements, and his eyes were absorbed in looking at something more beautiful than he had ever seen before. Ana felt she was being watched. This idea seemed to hurry her, and she grasped her needle and began to sew quickly. The more intently he watched her, the more embarrassed did Ana become, and a rosy flush mantled her cheeks. A sort of fever came over her, and in her innermost soul she was picturing Sandu to herself, how he was sitting on the chair with his black eyes fixed upon her, and his eyes were so beautiful and so eloquent, and Sandu was good-looking. She could bear it no longer, his look seemed to burn her.

"Sandu, why do you look at me like that?"

"I--I--was not looking."

A long silence followed. Their souls seemed to draw near each other in the silent room; they spoke no word, but it was as though they told each other many things and understood each other very well. He was very conscious of her, so near to him, her light breath was almost