

He began to chaff.

Wherever he found a man, Father Trandafir began to make him ridiculous, to make fun of him in every kind of way. If he passed a house that had not been re-roofed yesterday, he would say to the owner: "Oh, you are a clever man, you are! You have windows in the roof. You do love the light and the blessed sun!" If he found a woman in a dirty blouse: "Look at me! Since when have you taken to wearing stuff dresses?"

If he met an unwashed child: "Listen, good wife, you must have a lot of plum jam if you can plaster your children with it!" And if he came across a man lying in the shade he would say to him, "Good luck with your work! Good luck with your work!" If the man got up, he would beg him not to stop work, for his children's sake.

He began like this, but he carried it altogether too far. It got to such a pitch that the people did their utmost to get out of the priest's way. He became a perfect pest. The worst thing about it was that the people nicknamed him "Popa Tanda" because he chaffed them so. And "Popa Tanda" he has remained ever since.

To tell the truth, it was only in one way the people did not like the priest. Each one was ready to laugh at the others with the priest; no one was pleased, though, when the others laughed at him. That is human; every one is ready to saddle his neighbour's mare. In that way, Father Trandafir pleased his parishioners, but he was not content himself. Before the year was out, every man in the village had become a tease; there was not a person left of whom to make fun, and in the end the wags began to laugh at themselves. That put an end to it. Only one thing remained to do: the village to make fun of the priest.

Two whole years passed without Trandafir being able to stir up the people, even when he had passed from advising them to annoying them. They became either givers of advice or they were teasers: all day they stood in groups, some of them giving advice, others joking. It was a wonderful affair; the people recognized the right, despised the bad; but nothing altered them.

"Eh! say now, didn't Father Trandafir mind? Didn't he get angry, very angry?"

He did get wild. He began to abuse the people. As he had proceeded to advise them, and to chaff them, so now he proceeded to abuse them. Whenever he got hold of a man, he abused him. But he did not get far with this. At first the people allowed themselves to be insulted. Later on, they began to answer back, on the sly, as it were. Finally, thinking it was going too far, they began to abuse the priest.

From now on, things got a little involved. Everything went criss-cross. The people began to tell the priest that if he did not leave off laughing at them, and insulting them, they would go to the bishop and get him removed from the village. That is what the priest deserved. The people had hit on the very thing! Throw him out of Saraceni! The priest began to curse in earnest. Off he went; the people got in to their carts to go to the archdeacon, and from the archdeacon to the bishop.

In the Book of Wisdom, concerning the life of this world, there is a short sentence which says: our well-wishers are often our undoing and our evil-wishers are useful to us. Father Trandafir was not lucky in getting good out of his evil-wishers. The bishop was a good soul, worthy of being put in all the calendars all over the face of the earth. He took pity on the poor priest, said he was in the right, and scolded the people.

And so Popa Tanda stayed in Saraceni.

Misfortunes generally heap themselves upon mankind. One gives rise to