

passed through the town, passed by the Dry Valley and ran farther on to the Răpitița Valley. Where the roads met, at the conjunction of the two valleys, there was a mill on the Răpitița. Near Răpitița was a cross; close to the cross was a fountain, and by the fountain were eight fine sycamores. This spot was called "The Cross of Saraceni." From here to Saraceni was only about an hour by road. In spite of this, whenever he came from the town, the man of Saraceni pulled up here to water his horse, and waited a while, hoping that some wayfarer might come and ask: "What village is that where one sees that beautiful church with white walls and the glittering tower?" And when he is asked, he strokes his moustache, and looking proudly towards the place replies: "Up there on the Grofnița? That's our village--Saraceni; but you ought to hear the bells--what bells that tower contains! One can hear them a three hours' journey away!"

Where the road divided there stood a sign-post with two arms; on one arm was written, "To the Răpitița Valley," and on the other one, "Towards the Dry Valley." There was no road anywhere round about like the one that ran through the Dry Valley towards Saraceni.

It was as smooth as a table, and as solid as a cherry-stone. One could see the Saraceneses had constructed it lovingly. To right and left, at intervals of ten to fifteen paces, were some shady nut-trees which were a pleasure to look at. The river-bed lay on the right; the road ran along its bank, but higher up, so that the water could not disturb it. The Saraceneses had to destroy rock in their progress, but that they did cheerfully, for out of the rock they built the road.

From here on, the Saracene felt at home, and drove at a foot's pace. But he was not bored for a second. At every step almost he met an acquaintance with whom he exchanged words, "Where do you come from?" and "Where are you going?" One man had a cart full of lime, another a load of apples; then came a man carrying a trellis-work, and another with a wheelbarrow, a stave, or some other article made of wood.

From time to time, along the side of the road, one found the stone-masons at work, their trowels ringing from daybreak till sunset. This road was not a dreary one!

There were lime-kilns where the road ran along the valley. In one place there was a whole village. Some men were loading up lime, others unloading stone and wood; the masons were shaping the stones, the men at the kilns were throwing wood on to the fires; the foremen were making noise enough for five.

From this point one could see the village well. The gardens were full of trees; only between the bushes or beyond the trees did one catch a glimpse here and there of a bit of the walls or the roofs of the houses. The priest's house was just up by the church; one could only see five windows and a red roof with two chimney stacks. Opposite the church stood the school. The house, of which one could only see a piece of wall with two windows and a roof, belonged to Marcu Flori Cucu.

The big building visible lower down was the Town Hall. If the houses had lain less closely together the village would have looked very beautiful, but, as it was, one only caught a glimpse and must imagine the rest.

Every one had changed; Father Trandafir only had remained the same: fresh, gay, and busy. If his grey hair and grizzled beard had not betrayed his age, we might have thought that the little children with whom he played in the evening, on the seat in front of the house, were his own. One of them, whom he had lifted up to kiss, stole his hat from off his head and ran away with it. Mariuca opened the window and called out:

"My little Trandafir, don't leave grandfather bareheaded."

Then she flew from the window to catch Ileana, who had stolen her grandmother's bonnet and adorned herself with it, and was now