

GOTTFRIED
Or The Island Hermitage
Written in 1843

By Christoph von Schmid

[Chapter 1](#)
The Verdant Isle

At the age of twelve years, young Gottfried became a hermit. He lived far away from his family, in a cavern, surrounded by a frightful desert. His dress was a coarse, brown robe, fastened round the waist by a white hempen cord, and instead of shoes, he wore wooden sandals, which he tied on his bare feet with thick leather thongs. Fish, roots, and herbs were all his food. He never tasted bread, and at Easter only did he eat a few eggs. His drink was the pure water of the spring and he slept on a bed of moss.

All this sounds very marvellous and very singular. Those who hear it related will say that the poor boy was not in his right senses. They will blame his parents and accuse them of being unreasonable for allowing him, whilst so young, to live such an out-of-the-way life. This reproach, however, is quite unmerited, as we shall see in the sequel.

Moreover, it was chiefly owing to this very mode of life, which he was obliged so early to adopt, that he became a most excellent man, and had scarcely his equal for piety towards God and charity towards men. Our readers cannot but be interested in hearing how all this was accomplished.

Gottfried's parents, who were very worthy and pious people, had seven children, of whom Gottfried was the eldest. The father and mother did every thing in their power to feed and clothe their numerous family. The father, whose name was Christopher, kept his field, orchard, and meadow, in such excellent order that the family always had plenty of bread and milk, and all kinds of fruit. He kept bees also, and was clever and successful in his management of them. He was a very handy and industrious basket-maker, and his sons helped him in his work, by peeling the willow branches and by such like little jobs.

Besides all this, he assisted Thomas, the rich fisherman of the village, whenever he went out fishing, and always received a handsome share of what they caught. The mother kept house to the best of her ability—made the nets her husband required, and his daughters spun the hemp that was wanted for them. By this means the children had always something to do, but the great business of the parents was the bringing them up to piety and virtue. "A good education," they would say, "is the best inheritance we can leave them."

Gottfried, a child of great promise, was his parents' favorite. He had an intelligent

mind, was quick and clever at every thing he attempted. Industrious at his work, civil and obliging to everybody. His figure was tall and his face bright and blooming. His clear sparkling eyes, his arched eye-brows, and light-brown curly hair, gave great delicacy to his countenance. His little boatman's dress, as gray as a pike's skin, which his godfather Thomas had made for him, and his little jacket and trousers, became him exceedingly.

But with all his good qualities, Gottfried had his faults. He was obstinate. Considered himself always in the right and when contradicted, would get into such a passion that his parents were obliged to be very severe with him in order to bring him to obedience. He would domineer over his brothers and sisters, show both anger and pride when they disobeyed him, and would use harsh and intemperate language towards them. Being sometimes allowed to dine with his godfather, he became somewhat dissatisfied with the simple and frugal fare that his father gave him, and frequently grumbled over his meals. And it was much, if in his discontent, he would condescend to thank God and his parents for what he had just eaten.

His parents constantly reproved him for these faults. He would be sorry for them, and would repeatedly promise to amend, but he too often repeated the same faults. His father and mother were frequently in alarm lest the fond hopes for his future welfare, which they had cherished, should disappear. Ofttimes would the old fisherman, his godfather, say to him, "Gottfried, Gottfried, beware! God must train you in no common school, and must take you under His special guidance, if ever you are to be made worth anything."

Christopher's house was built on a hill, from the summit of which a vast expanse of sea was seen. A small island was visible from the windows of the principal room in the house, and was an object of great beauty. It was completely covered with bushy trees and shrubs of different shades of green, from which it had received the appellation of "the Verdant Isle." It was, however, quite uninhabited.

At times, Gottfried's father would repair thither to cut down boughs from the willow trees which abounded on the island for the purpose of basket making, and Gottfried, who was now old enough to help his father to row and to cut off the willow boughs, usually obtained leave to accompany him and was always delighted to go.

One evening his father said to him, "If the sea and sky remain as calm and peaceful tomorrow as they are now, we will go to 'the island' in the morning." Gottfried gave a bound to show his joy and the thoughts of the next day's excursion almost kept him from sleeping.

Scarcely had day dawned ere Gottfried was on foot, assiduously helping his mother to put into the boat all that his father wanted preparatory to their short voyage. These preparations were not trifling. For it happened once before that a sudden change in weather had obliged Gottfried and his father to spend three whole days on the island, while they suffered much from want of provisions. His mother, therefore, gave them a sufficient supply of bread, butter, and milk, and added to it an earthen and an iron pot, in order that, if necessary, they might cook for themselves.

She also put in her husband's large woolen cloak, that he and Gottfried might wrap

themselves up in it, if they were obliged to spend the night on the island. When everything was ready for their departure, Gottfried ran to fetch the new straw hat that his godfather Thomas had given him the last market-day, and on it his little sister, Martha, hastily pinned a pretty green ribbon, as a present from herself.

Then his father said to him, "Gottfried, take another basket or two. We shall have need of them." "For whom?" said Gottfried. "You will see," rejoined his father, smiling. "Have you not sufficient confidence in me to think that my intentions are reasonable? You here act precisely as many people do in still more important things. They want to know beforehand why God permits such and such things—do what I tell you, and you will see that it will be all right in the end." Gottfried ran and got the baskets.

The father and son at length set out. The mother and children accompanying them down to the water's edge and close to their little skiff, crying out to them, "A happy voyage and a safe return to you." Gottfried rowed for a long time with such force that he got quite heated and was obliged to throw off his jacket. They reached the island in safety and pulled round to the place where the best willows were to be found, and where they could land most conveniently. They there disembarked. The father fastened the boat to a neighboring willow and they both set to work immediately.

The father, with his hatchet, cut down boughs and tied them up into bundles with thin tender shoots, and they carried them to the boat, the father taking the heavy ones, and Gottfried the lighter. The assistance his son gave him delighted his father. "But after all," said he, "children ought to assist their parents to the utmost of their ability and strength. The father willingly takes the heaviest load and the child should cheerfully carry the lighter one."

When all the bundles had been put into the boat, Christopher said to Gottfried, "Now let us rest and have our dinner. Rest is sweet after labor, and our food is more agreeable when we have gained an appetite for it by working hard." Gottfried was pleased to wait upon his father. He brought the jug of milk to him to the place where he had seated himself, which was under a thick poplar near the sea-side, crumbled some bread into the earthen pot, and poured the milk upon it. After they had said a grace, as they were accustomed to do at home before they sat down to table, they began their frugal meal. The sweet, fresh milk, delighted them. And when they had emptied the porringer, they ate some slices of bread and butter, which they relished equally.

During the meal Gottfried's father related to him how his grandfather had formerly inhabited this island, and afterwards went to live on the mainland. "He was a virtuous man and one who feared God," added he. "The house which he built, close to the village, is still occupied by us his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren." "Well," said Gottfried, "my great-grandfather acted very rightly when he came near to the rest of mankind. Doubtless this island is very pretty, but I would not live here, away from everybody, for all the world."

When they had finished, Christopher said to his son, "Now I am going to give you a treat. Go and get the baskets that are in the boat and come with me." He then led Gottfried into the thicket copse, till they came, in the midst of it, upon a wide green

space, from the center of which rose a majestic walnut tree, which spread forth its branches, laden with fruit, to a great distance. Gottfried, at this unexpected sight, showed inexpressible joy. In fact, as the fruit had failed for many years, nothing was ever said about this tree, and Gottfried knew nothing of it.

“See,” said his father, “your great-grandfather planted this tree. There are scarcely any other trees of his planting. There below, near that rock, stood, long ago, the good man’s house.” Gottfried commended his great-grandfather for having planted this fine tree, and began immediately to pick up some nuts which had fallen from it and were scattered on the grass. He took off the green outer case with his teeth and tried with all his might to break the brown shell, so as to get at the kernel, but this was not done without trouble.

He said to his father, “Why has God shut up this nut, which is so good to eat, in two coverings, one as bitter as gall, and the other as hard as stone?” “My dear son,” said his father, “in so doing, God had the wisest possible intentions. By giving it so hard a shell, He would preserve the fruit, from which such a beautiful tree was to spring. And the bitter rind prevents the mice and other gnawing animals from eating the walnut out of it.

“And there is still another motive. We are taught by this image how we ought to look upon the hardships and troubles which we may be called upon to bear in this world. For, as we do not despise or reject these nuts, in spite of their hard and bitter shell, but look upon them as a gift of God because of their useful and pleasant fruit, so we ought to act with respect to our sufferings and annoyances. The outside part, which is the part that we taste, is truly hard and bitter, but we ought firmly to believe that the inside, the pleasant fruit, will be got at at last, and will be useful and beneficial to us.

The old man then ascended the tree and began to shake its branches one after another. Gottfried, with great glee, filled his basket with nuts that were showered down upon him. He did not mind their striking his head. He only laughed at it at first, but at length, “the shower of nuts,” as he called it, began to be too much for him, and he thought it best to get a little out of the way, without, however, quite desisting from picking them up.

Each time that his basket was full, he ran and emptied it into the boat, then came back to the tree with his empty basket, and still found plenty of walnuts on the grass. “How happy my mother will be,” said he, looking up at his father, “when she sees us bringing back such a quantity of nuts! How happy my brothers and sisters will be, too, when I begin to divide all these amongst them. The very thoughts of it makes me happy. There is no enjoyment greater than that of giving pleasure to others.”

Chapter 2 The Tempest

Whilst Gottfried and his father were occupied in this manner, large clouds arose from

the horizon unperceived by them. Gottfried had just entered the boat with his basket full of nuts. He had emptied it out and was contemplating with pleasure the incessantly-increasing heap, when, on a sudden, an impetuous wind sprang up, which bent the trees on the shore, lifted up the waves, and tearing away the boat from its fastenings, carried it into the midst of the sea.

Gottfried was terrified and called loudly on his father, who, frightened at hearing him, ran to the sea shore, and beheld his child already far off, calling in vain for aid. The agitated sea was roaring and the boat dashing onwards—was at one time lifted up on the top of a wave, and then plunged into the depths below, till it was no longer visible. Then it would reappear now and then, but each time at a greater distance. And still the unhappy father saw the boy stretching out his hands, now towards him, now towards heaven. His cry of agony could not reach him through the whistling of the storm in the trees and through the noise of the waves.

The whole sky was soon covered with black clouds and the darkness of night spread itself over the sea, excepting at intervals, when a flash of forked lightning would light up both, and enable the old man again to distinguish the little boat dancing on the waves, and his unfortunate child with outstretched arms rendered clearly perceptible in the distance by the whiteness of his shirt sleeves. Soon a heavy shower fell like a curtain before him and entirely hid the sea from him, and he saw no more of his son or of the boat! He threw himself down under a willow in a state of desperation and spent the rest of the night in the deepest affliction.

Meanwhile, Margaret and the children, who had been left at home, were in the greatest possible alarm, the storm having come on so suddenly. The island was hidden from them by the shower and darkness, and Margaret, in much agitation, said to her children, “Let us pray, my children,” said she, “for your father and brother, lest this dreadful tempest may have overtaken them on the open sea. Were it indeed so, how dreadful it would be! May God have pity on them!”

She knelt down in the midst of her children and began to pray. As the storm dispersed and the island became visible again, they all took up their position at the window, with their eyes fixed upon the point whence they expected the bark. But no boat came.

Margaret spent the night in despair and could not close her eyes. Morning at last appeared, more clear and beautiful even than usual, but no boat returned. And when the sun had run the greater part of his course, and still there were no tidings of the lost ones, Margaret’s anguish reached its height and she ran in tears to Thomas the fisherman and told him of her distress.

He was much alarmed at her report and said, with a shake of the head, “Their long delay is a serious matter. I will repair to the island and see why they are so long coming.” And he immediately got into a boat and pulled towards the island.

In the meantime, Margaret and her children remained in a state of sad suspense. At last they saw the boat approaching in the distance. “God be praised!” exclaimed the mother. “Thomas is not returning alone. All is right!” and followed by the children, she

ran joyfully down to the shore. But when the boat neared the beach, she cried out, "Where is Gottfried?" Her husband, pale as death, looked at her with an air of grief, but was silent. His deep sorrow rendered him speechless. Thomas, however, spoke to her, saying, "God comfort you in your affliction! Gottfried has perished in the waves! Be resigned to the will of God. Whatever God does is for the best. Gottfried, though he had his faults, was a pious child, and was blessed with good dispositions, and is now, I hope, happier in heaven than we are upon earth."

The poor mother would not be comforted. Her grief was excessive. The children wept and wailed. They had forgotten Gottfried's faults and only remembered his endearing qualities. Their father, deeply grieved himself, could not soften their affliction. At length, however, both parents and children became more calm, and sought to comfort themselves under their loss, by saying, "This was God's will. God has taken him to Himself, and we must submit. We shall see our dear Gottfried again in heaven."

Chapter 3 The Rocky Island

While Gottfried's family were lamenting his death, he yet lived. Cast adrift on the sea, he had experienced, so to speak, the agony of death, thinking every moment that each fresh wave that broke over the boat would sink it into the deep. In his terror, he kept his hands stretched out towards heaven, asking mercy and protection of God, till the tempest at length carried his boat towards, and struck it against the shore of a rocky island.

Gottfried got out of the boat as soon as he felt that she had grounded, and soon reached the shore, completely drenched with rain and sea-water. In which state he climbed up a rock that was near him. When he had recovered a little from his terror and distress, he looked upon the stormy sea and finding himself in safety, he fell on his knees and thanked God with uplifted hands.

He then looked toward the boat, which the angry waves had thrown between two large rocks which formed a hollow. "Merciful God!" said he, "the most skillful boatman could not have profited better by this opening between the rocks! Who has guided the boat into this place with such skill, without even oars? Who has given intelligence, as it were, to the wind and waves which have guided me here? If the boat had struck more to the right or the left against these rocks, it would have been broken to pieces and I should have perished!"

The storm was clearing off and the sun, at its setting, burst through the clouds that concealed it. Gottfried cast his eyes over the immense extent of ocean which he beheld from the top of his rock. The green island, with its large bushy trees, appeared to him but as a handful of moss, which he could easily have covered with his hat. As to the mainland, which was at a still greater distance, he saw it at the extreme verge of the

horizon, where the earth and sky seemed to touch one another. The highest mountains resembled a low dark cloud, colored here and there with a purple hue by the setting sun. His father's cottage, and the hill on which it stood, were hidden from his sight by the surrounding trees.

"Alas!" said he, "at how great a distance I am from my parents, brothers, and sisters! These rocks that I am standing on cannot even be seen from the mainland. At least I never saw them, nor ever heard anyone speak of them. Indeed, people said there was no land whatever within fifty leagues in this direction. My parents, no doubt, imagine that I am drowned and will never think of coming here to look for me, and so I shall be forced to risk myself in this frail boat to return to them."

The tumultuous waves grew calm. The sea became insensibly smooth and again resembled a green mirror. And the boat, after the water had subsided, lay high and dry on the shore. Gottfried came down and got into it, when to his horror, he perceived that it was stove in! A great quantity of the nuts had rolled out of it and lay scattered over the sand. The sides of the boat were so much shattered that the planks hardly held together, so great had been the violence with which the tempest had thrown the boat against the island.

"Alas!" exclaimed the unhappy child, "the boat is not fit for further use and the oars also are both lost! so that I am now a prisoner, shut up in this wild island. I must stay here all my life, and shall not again behold in this world either my father or mother, brothers, or sisters." He wrung his hands, as he stood up in the boat. His face was pale with agitation and copious tears moistened his faded cheeks. At this moment there appeared, resting on the dark clouds which covered part of the sky, a beautiful rainbow, which, reflected in the sea, formed an immense and magnificent circle of seven rich colors.

Gottfried was enchanted at the sight. "My God," cried he, "gracious as Thou art in all Thy works, how can man be fearful and sad? This beautiful rainbow shall be to me now, as it was of old to Noah, a blessed sign of Thy protection and favor. Even as Thou sendest the sunbeams after rain—as Thou causest the beautiful rainbow to appear after thunder and lightning, so after grief Thou sendest fresh pleasures, and after adversity, more prosperous days. However great may be the cares and anxieties which come upon me, my sadness shall, nevertheless, be turned into joy. Thou hast snatched me from death. Why should I fear that Thou shouldst now abandon me? I will place my reliance on Thee and will take courage."

Before he did anything else, he bethought him of placing his small stock of provisions in safety. The nuts which had been scattered about he gathered up into a basket and carried it on his head to a level spot between two rocks, and threw them down there. And in this manner, he collected several baskets-full. The milk pots had been broken in the storm, with the exception of one earthen one. But the iron pot and one porringer fortunately remained. These he carried to the spot already mentioned and placed near them the few tools which he found in the boat, viz. the large and small axe, and one or two other implements. Also his jacket and a few other trifles. He was very glad that he

had put all that his father had desired him into the boat, the planks of which he now took one from another and carried them to a greater distance from the sea. "Who knows," thought he, "but that I may have need of them some time or other? It would be a pity that the sea should carry them away when the tide comes in again. He worked till night was very far advanced, by the help of the full moon, which lighted up the sea and the rocks. The labors of the day, and the terror and anguish which he had suffered, greatly fatigued him. He was at first frightened at the thought of spending the night in the open air. "But," then he reflected, "God has taken care of me till now, and He will surely continue to watch over me. Has not our Savior said, 'Take no thought for the morrow!'"

He then said his evening prayers, as usual, and lay down near his little valuables. But little rain had fallen on the island and besides, its rocky soil soon dried. So he wrapped himself up in his father's cloak and gently fell asleep, after having again commended himself to the divine protection.

Chapter 4 The Excursion

Gottfried, being very tired, slept all night long as soundly on his hard bed as he would have done on a bed of down. It is true that at first he was troubled with distressing dreams. He still thought he heard the pealing of the thunder and the roaring of the sea, and felt as if he was tumbling about in his boat. At times, he thought he was being engulfed in the roaring waves. Again he thought he saw his boat breaking against the points of the rocks, while he vainly endeavored to save himself from destruction by climbing up the steep shore.

But towards day-break, he had a very agreeable dream. He fancied he was returning to his father's house—his parents, his brothers, and sisters, were in the garden. All the trees were adorned with tender and verdant foliage, with rosy-cheeked apples, and golden pears, more lovely than any he had ever seen. His father was sitting on the branch of an apple tree, busy in shaking it. The apples which were falling from the tree shone like burning coals. His mother and the children were carefully collecting them into pretty baskets. As soon as they saw Gottfried they received him with inexpressible joy. His father descended hastily from the tree and folded him in his arms with the greatest tenderness. His mother offered him the finest of the apples that were heaped up in the baskets.

Just as Gottfried, in his pleasant dream, stretched out his hand to take an apple—he awoke. The scream of the sea birds, flying round and round the high rocks as day approached, roused him from his slumber. When he opened his eyes, and saw the rocks hanging in a threatening manner over his head, when he cast his eyes over the boundless expanse of ocean, where nothing was to be seen but sea and sky, he shuddered and was so deeply affected that he began to cry bitterly.

A flock of sea birds flew off towards the main land, with shrill but joyful cries. "You dear birds," thought Gottfried, "how I wish I could send a greeting to my parents through you! If you could but tell them that I am still alive and that I am here, surrounded with the sea, my kind father and godfather would, in spite of the danger, hazard their own lives to come and seek me out."

However, he summoned up courage and said his morning prayers with great earnestness. Then ate a few walnuts and a little bit of bread for breakfast. After which he resolved to examine minutely the island on which he was cast. "Perhaps," said he, "I shall find some fruit trees or some bushes by the help of which I may be able to live till God pleases to send me help. Nor is it impossible that there may be some men here. They may be acquainted with sailing too, and would, perhaps, be compassionate enough to carry me back to my home."

He put some bits of bread in his pocket and placed them carefully so as to turn the buttered side inwards, and added to them as many nuts as his pocket would hold, taking care to get rid of the rind, in order that he might carry the more. After which he chose a strong willow branch, cut it to a proper length with his hatchet, and began his journey, with his stick and provisions.

It was a dangerous and toilsome journey. He had to scale many a steep rock and often to descend into deep gullies. The whole island, indeed, was composed of enormous blocks of a blackish rock, which rose out of the sea, and became steeper and steeper as they approached the center of the island. Their fearful aspect made his heart beat. He was oftentimes at the bottom of a ravine, without being able to imagine how he should get out. And at last, found himself obliged to retrace his steps.

Often, in attempting to climb the rocks, he found them so perpendicular that he could not mount higher, and he ran the greatest risks in getting down again. No traces of human footsteps were to be seen, nor even the marks of any animal's feet. He looked in vain for fruit trees and bushes. Nothing was to be found but moss, with which many of the rocks were carpeted. Every here and there he saw some clumps of fir trees, mere shrubs, which hardly grew on this stony soil. "Oh God!" said he, shuddering, and looking sorrowfully up to heaven, "if I stay longer in this frightful desert, without doubt I shall die of hunger."

Nevertheless, he continued his laborious excursion, hoping that things would improve. The sun darted his rays down upon these rocks with great force. The perspiration ran down from his brow and he began to be tormented with thirst, while the dry and barren rocks seemed scorched with fire. "Ah," exclaimed he, "perhaps I shall perish by thirst before I die of hunger. Have pity upon me, O God!" A few steps further on he heard the murmur of a stream and ran towards it immediately. The spring was scanty, but the water was pure, and as clear as crystal.

He sat down by it to rest himself and then drank at his ease. He ate some of his slices of bread and butter, with a few nuts, and then took another drink. He had never thought before that water was so great a blessing—water, of which we think so little, because we are so abundantly provided with it. "Great God," said he, "how good Thou

art!—how I thank Thee for this delicious drink! However long I may be here, I shall not want for something to drink, but will my bread and nuts last long? Yet Thou, who hast not allowed that I should die of thirst, will keep me from dying of hunger. All the helps that Thou hast hitherto given me are, as my mother used to say, an earnest of fresh blessings.”

He walked up the stream and found a small wood, whose trees were fresh and in good leaf. It was there, out of a rock, that the clear spring issued. The rock rose to a great height, and it took Gottfried a good half hour to reach the top of it. And when he had accomplished the ascent, he found that he was on the highest part of the island. He shuddered at seeing the immense extent of sharp-pointed rocks at his feet, varied only by patches of fir trees, and entirely surrounded by water.

“I am, then, quite alone here,” said he, “separated from all men by these waves, which spread themselves out farther than I can see. I am, so to speak, an exile on this wild and barren island, but I will not despair. The God who snatched me from the sea which the tempest raised is able to save me now. I will make my bed down there by the spring, and I will carry my provisions and my tools thither. But every day I will come and sit on the top of this rock and will look out for a vessel which chance may bring this way, and which may carry me back to the main land.”

The setting sun lit up the distant horizon. Gottfried thought he saw the mountains of his native land, shining like gold and purple. He gazed at the prospect with his eyes filled with tears, and said, “Thou, my heavenly Father, who hast conducted my boat hither, Thou canst easily direct the course of the largest ship, in such a manner that the crew should come to my relief, even though they know not of my existence, and carry me back to my own dear land. To Thee nothing is impossible. I put my confidence in Thy mercy.”

He left the rock with a calm mind, entered the thicket, lay down amongst the fir bushes, on some soft and tender moss, and his eyes were soon closed in peaceful sleep.

Chapter 5 The Scarcity

Gottfried supported himself upon the small quantity of bread that he still had, together with his walnuts. Day after day, seated on the top of his rock, he looked for the arrival of a merchant-vessel or fishing boat. He watched so closely as almost to impair his sight, but he could not perceive a single vessel upon the whole surface of the sea. And he became fearful of perishing of hunger on this desert island. He felt the necessity of managing his provisions with care, in order to make them last as long as possible. He took his knife and cut his bread into slices, one of which was to be his daily portion.

Each piece he ate was stale and hard as a stone, and he was obliged to soak it in

the stream before he could eat it. He counted over his walnuts with more care than a miser would his pieces of gold. And he ate very few a day. He never ate enough to satisfy himself, and yet his bread and nuts diminished visibly day by day. At last the day came on which he was forced to eat his last nut and his last bit of bread! That night he went to sleep in tears and awoke the next morning, suffering from hunger.

He began to search all over the island for roots and herbs fitted for satisfying his hunger. But as the soil was rocky, he found but few. Only near the spring, he found a little watercress. He eagerly ate up the green leaves and the juicy stalks, and gathered all of it that he could find from the head of the spring to the sea, but the whole was insufficient to appease his hunger. Exhausted for want of food, he sat down on a rock by the sea shore and looked across towards the main land.

“O God!” exclaimed he, “how many blessings did I receive from Thee on that shore, without being grateful for them—without thanking Thee for them from the bottom of my heart! There, bread, that precious gift, proceeds wonderfully from out of the earth. There, are found trees which bend down their branches laden with dainty apples and delicious pears, offering themselves, as it were, to our reach. There, rivers of milk and honey flowed for me. Forgive me, if I have not thanked Thee as I ought to have done! Alas, we do not feel the value of our blessings until we have lost them!”

Whilst he thus spoke, he perceived, through the transparent sea water a number of small fish, with red scales and black eyes, swimming gaily. “Ah,” said he, “how I wish I could catch some of these to appease the hunger which torments me, but I have got no nets and it is impossible to catch them in my hand.” It was a great grief to Gottfried to see these fish so close to him without being able to catch them, as he only knew how to fish with nets.

At this very moment, a little bird alighted on a fir tree, which grew out of a rock near the spot, and was reflected in the sea. This little bird had a small worm in his beak. “Heavenly Father!” cried Gottfried, “Thou feedest the birds of the air, even as Thy Son hath said, and as I see now with my own eyes. Oh do not let me, a poor helpless child, die of hunger!”

The little bird struck the writhing worm against the branch of the tree, but the worm fell into the sea. The fish immediately ran in shoals up to it, and one of them devoured it. “Well,” said Gottfried, “if a worm were fastened to a thread and a fish swallowed it, I might, perhaps, by means of the thread, draw the fish out of the water.”

His straw hat was lying by his side. Gottfried unraveled the ribbon that his sister had fastened round it, formed a long line of it, looked about for a worm, tied it to the line, and threw it into the water. But the fish were not in too great a hurry to seize upon it. He then fastened it to his stick and let the worm down into the water. A fish darted forward immediately and swallowed it, but Gottfried pulled back the line without worm or fish. “I see this will not do,” said he, “I must put a hook to the line, and then perhaps the fish will come up hanging to it.” He took a pin, with which the ribbon had been fastened to his straw hat, bent it, tied the string tightly round its head, put a small worm on the hook, and then threw it into the sea. A little fish swallowed it directly. Gottfried pulled it out

quickly and what was his joy at seeing a little silver fish struggling at the hook!

He took this one off and tried again, but without always succeeding. However he had soon caught about half a dozen little fish, and his happiness may be imagined. Amongst the utensils that had been in the boat was a tinder-box, a flint, and tinder. He collected some dry sticks and kindled a fire, in order to broil his little fish. And after having long suffered from hunger, he was able once more to appease it. He fell on his knees and thanked God for it. Gottfried was delighted with his discovery and now fished every day.

From the top of the rock where he sat, he saw some much larger fish swimming in the water. "Oh," said he, "if I could catch one of those, I might live upon it several days!" He was quite aware that such fish could not be caught with so weak a line and so small a hook as his, and he pondered on the means of getting a stronger hook. After a little while, he recollected that there were a great many long nails sticking in the planks of the boat. So he ran down to the remains of the boat, drew a nail from one of the planks, sharpened it carefully on a stone, bent it into a hook, plaited a line with the threads of his linen handkerchief, fastened the hook to it, stuck a great worm on the hook, and to his great joy succeeded in catching a large fish.

But Gottfried soon saw that his invention was far from being complete. It often happened that a fish, though drawn out of the water, would struggle so successfully as to get back into it again. It cost him much time and reflection to ascertain the cause of these accidents. Having, from his infancy, been eager to learn, and observant of things around him, he remembered that he had once seen an arrow in the hands of a sportsman, and that he had asked him why it was provided with a barb, and the sportsman had told him that it was for the purpose of keeping the arrow in the wound, as the barb prevented it from falling out. So Gottfried tried to barb one of his hooks. His two hatchets served him for hammer, anvil, and pincers. It cost him infinite pains and labor to fashion his barbed hook, but having at last succeeded in so doing, it rarely happened that he lost a fish that he had once hooked.

Many defects remained, however, to be avoided. It was very inconvenient to the little fisherman to keep his line always at the same height, and to give all his attention to see whether the fish took the bait, and then to withdraw the line immediately. One day, it so happened that a bit of wood got under his line, and Gottfried saw that he was not then obliged to hold his arm up at the same height, because the bit of wood prevented the hook from touching the ground. And he also saw that the wood made known to him, by its motion, the very moment that the fish bit, and he could then withdraw his line at the proper moment. So he tied a little bit of wood to his line and from this time, fishing became a real amusement to him. Experience and reflection taught him many other things besides, and he thanked God for having given to men such intelligence as to make them capable of inventing such useful things.

Nevertheless, Gottfried again suffered from want, and was greatly tormented by hunger for some days. The sea became so stormy that it was impossible for him to angle. The waves rose into the air with such a noise that he was even afraid of coming down to the shore. He then began to consider how he might guard against such scarcity

in future, and it came into his head to make a little enclosure for his fish. He found, at no great distance from the spring, a hollow formed by the rocks, into which he caused the stream to flow, and the pool was soon full of water. He put the fish that he caught into it, and he had soon made a considerable store, so that he no longer feared being short of food. "Oh how happy I am," said he, "now that I am not afraid of dying of hunger. How I thank Thee, most merciful God! I shall now remain willingly in this island as long as Thou dost order it, when Thou, in Thine own good time, wilt use the proper means of delivering me from my captivity!"

Chapter 6 The Cavern

Gottfried, no longer tormented by the want of provisions or the fear of being without food, longed more and more to be restored to his family. Every day, at every hour, he looked around him in every direction, still hoping to see a vessel approaching.

One morning, when he had once more climbed to the top of this rock, he suddenly perceived a large vessel about a mile off. Its outspread sails were tinged with red by the golden rays of the rising sun. Poor little Gottfried was transported with joy. He trembled with hope and fear. His eyes were fixed upon the vessel which was still coming on and making direct for the island. Gottfried ran off to get a large branch of fir, which he had prepared for this purpose, tied his pocket-handkerchief to it, and standing on the top of a rock, waved this little red banner all round him, to signify to the vessel that she should approach. But before she got within view of the signal, she suddenly changed her course and passed by within sight of the island!

Gottfried followed the vessel with his eyes till it was out of sight, and then threw himself on the rock sad and despairing! Having wept bitterly for a long time, he recollected what his father had said to him one day, when he had been disappointed, "Often, in adversity, God's help seems near to us and yet suddenly disappears. But we must not, on that account, lose our courage. It is a trial by which God proves our trust in Him and by which He puts our patience to the test. And He helps us afterwards all the more strikingly. Yes, if He should even leave us to perish in our distress, our confidence in His paternal tenderness should still be unshaken. For everything that God allows to happen to us is for our good, if not in this world yet in the next." These words of his father comforted the boy and gave him fresh courage. Neither was he without hope that another vessel might near the island and take him off.

The weather was growing daily more severe. The end of autumn arrived and brought with it almost incessant rain. The leafy boughs of the fir, which had hitherto afforded him shelter from the rain, were no longer sufficient for his protection. On the contrary, he was, as it were, beneath the spout of a gutter, and the ground got so thoroughly wet that there remained not a dry spot in the whole grove. These heavy rains were not, however,

of long duration, but winter was drawing near. The gusts of wind which now visited the island were cold and biting, and the little fir-wood was not thick enough to break their force. Gottfried shivered with cold all night long, and thought within himself, as he lay on the cold ground, "If this severe weather be but the beginning of winter, what shall I not have to endure when it is well set in? If I have to sleep in the wood on the frozen ground, I shall certainly be frozen too."

He then set himself to work without loss of time, to find out a shelter such as he required. There lay between the highest rock on the island (the one which Gottfried scaled every day), and another which was nearly as high, a small green valley. He had often looked down into it and admired it from the top of his favorite observatory, but he had never been able to make out a way into it. It was impossible to get into it by sliding down the face of one of the rocks, so he tried again to find an entrance in to it.

After considerable examination, he perceived, about a hundred paces off, a rock which was cleft, as it were, in two, from top to bottom. He succeeded in getting to it, and passing through the opening, he reached the narrow valley in safety and perceived, in one of the rocks that surrounded it, a cavern, whose mouth was overshadowed by two old fir trees.

He entered the cave, which was roomy enough, and exclaimed, in an ecstasy of joy, "It is made for me! I can easily here shelter myself from the rain and freezing winds. Thy solicitude extends over everything, oh my God! Ever since I have been here, Thou hast provided me with food! Thou hast pointed out a spring to me in which I may quench my thirst, and now, also, I am furnished with a protection against the cold. Great, indeed, as is the trial to which Thou hast subjected me, I still recognize Thy fatherly tenderness in it, and cannot sufficiently thank and praise Thee."

The grateful, and now happy, boy set to work to collect a heap of moss, which he dried in the sun (for, though the nights were cold, the sun still gave out some heat during the day), and when, by evening time, the heap was well-dried, he carried it to his cave and in this his new abode, on this soft bed, he spent his first night most comfortably.

He made the best arrangement he could of his hermitage. Carried thither his pitcher, his iron pot, his porringer, and all his tools. And remembering the near approach of winter, he also removed into it all the wood he had already cut, prepared more pieces, and heaped them up against the rock. He tried to make a fire in his cave, but the smoke having nearly suffocated him, he was obliged to give that up and to content himself with protecting the entrance to it from the harsh wind.

For this purpose he wove a kind of door of the willow branches which yet remained, using the trunks of the young first for stakes, which he hammered into the ground, close to the mouth of his cave. In the place of iron hinges, he substituted osier twigs, so managed as that the door opened and shut with perfect ease. He stopped up all the chinks with moss, and left only a small opening through which the light might enter. From this time he was warm enough at night.

He then chose for his fire-place a dry corner, which he found at one end of the valley, under a jutting rock. And there he always contrived to keep a few live embers, by means

of which and some dried branches, he could make a fire whenever he pleased, and use it for the purpose of cooking his fish, boiling his pot, or warming himself. He would not use his flint and steel, but in the last extremity. And as for his matches, he looked upon them as treasures which no amount of gold would have tempted him to part with. "Without these matches," said he, "I should have been forced to eat my fish raw. Yes, without this little bit of Sulphur, no larger than a barley-corn, I should, perhaps, have died of cold long ago. My steel and flint have been also very useful to me.

Winter came. Gottfried perceived, on going out of his cave one morning, that it had snowed. Another time he saw the rocks and trees covered with a white hoar-frost and felt the more thankful to God that he had a fire to warm himself by.

When, during the long winter evenings, Gottfried was seated by his fireside, and watched the sparks as they flew upwards, or the smoke ascending towards the sky, while the rocks and trees, covered with icicles, sparkled around him like diamonds, but remained ever cold and insensible, how he would look back with regret to his father's hearth! His eyes would fill with tears at the recollection of the happy moments he had spent in the bosom of his family, when his father was wont to tell little stories to them, as he wove his baskets. While his sisters, seated round him, were busily spinning the hemp from which his mother made the fishing nets, and while she herself was preparing their frugal supper of nuts or baked apples. "Oh! I would give a finger off my hand," would he say, "for the pleasure of being amongst them again, were it but for one hour!"

He tried his hand during the winter at various little works. He manufactured a small table and bench from the remains of his boat, without much difficulty. He placed them both, as well as he could, against the outer edge of the wall of his cave, and then roofed it over with planks, that he might on rainy days, without fear of getting wet, sit there and plait his fish-lines, sharpen his hooks, take the scales off his fish, and busy himself in other occupations, or else take his meals there. He smoothed the turf in front of the cave, and picked up all the stones that were scattered over it. He also improved the path that led to the spring, and in many rough and steep places he contrived to put little steps.

When the spring returned, and the mews and other seabirds began to lay their eggs amongst the rocks which were nearest the sea, he succeeded in taking a few of their eggs, and they appeared to him as delicious as they were rare. They also reminded him of Easter eggs and of the holy festival which had now arrived. Wild cress and the tender leaves of the chain-flower formed his salad, and the roots of these plants were an agreeable food. The sea salt, which he found on the seashore, came very opportunely to give flavor to his food. Though he ate but little, his health was good, and he daily grew stronger and stouter. "How little is necessary for man," would he often say, "to keep him in life and health!"

When he was neither fishing, cooking, cutting wood, or doing other things of the kind, Gottfried employed himself in collecting along the sea shore those shells which contained pearls, and which the waves threw up upon the beach. As no one came near the island to pick them up, he found them in great numbers and amongst them some of

wonderful beauty. He also made a great collection of corals of all kinds, and to keep them and his pearls in safety, he wove little rush baskets with close-fitting covers to put them in. "I hope," said he, "that God will someday take me back to my parents, then I will give them my little treasure, which will be quite a provision for them in their old age. It will also help to establish my brothers and sisters honestly. How I should like to assist them in all their work, now that I am tall and strong! But alas, I am too far from them! Perhaps, however, I am useful to them in collecting these pearls and corals. I am still laboring for them and there is no occupation more agreeable for a child than that of laboring for his dear parents."

Chapter 7

The Friend in Solitude

Gottfried lived in his rocky island as contented and happy as so lively and intelligent a child could be, in such complete solitude. Thanks to his constant occupation, the time never seemed too long. Now and then, indeed, when the rainy weather forced him to sit under his wooden shed, or when furious tempests, frost, and intense cold, obliged him to shut himself up in his cave, he would say, with a sigh, "Alas, it is indeed sad to have no one to speak to! How happy I was at home with my dear parents!"

He would even see them sometimes in his dreams. Once his father appeared to him in a manner that strongly awakened his feelings. An affectionate smile played over his venerable features. With indescribable tenderness, he called him his dear Gottfried, and stretched out his arms to him. Gottfried awoke, and finding himself alone in his cave, began to cry so bitterly that the tears streamed down his cheeks.

"Oh my kind father!" said he, "how much he always loved me when I was with him. He always spoke to me so affectionately and was so good to me! How sad it is to be now so far from him. No longer to see his beloved face and how painful the fear that we shall never meet again in this world! Alas, he does not even know that I am still alive!" But he soon remembered that, though far from his earthly parent, he had still a Father in heaven, and remembering this, he was comforted.

Gottfried said his daily prayers with much devotion, as well as those before and after his solitary meals. And he thanked God for every gift. His solitude was so complete, and there was so little to engage his attention, that he examined with more particular care the few objects that surrounded him and thus learned more and more to know the Almighty by His works.

He often climbed the summit of the highest rock to see the sun rise. Then, the sky and sea appeared, as it were, on fire, and the clouds radiant with gold, and when at length the sun rose in the air, like a flaming globe, his heart would swell with pious joy. He fell on his knees and addressed his prayers to the Author of so glorious a spectacle. Could it have been possible to paint the pious child in this attitude, whilst kneeling on the

rock, with the golden rays of the rising sun shining brightly on his face and hands, it would have made a lovely picture. He often said his evening prayer while gazing on the setting sun. "My Heavenly Father!" he would exclaim, "it is Thou who commandest the sun to rise and set, in order to supply light to men, Thy children, and to give to everything that breathes, blossoms, and buds, heat, growth, and vigour."

He also frequently contemplated, with secret delight, the soft and peaceful moon, whose increase and decrease interested him the more, as he had formerly paid but little attention to it. On clear nights, when there was no moon, he found great pleasure in observing the twinkling stars, and often scaled his favorite rock, the more easily to contemplate the studded sky. Now that his attention was more awakened, he perceived that some stars rose and set, and ran as wide a course as the sun, whilst others rolled in an orbit of slight extent, and never set, and that the entire starry vault seemed to revolve round one fixed star. He further remarked that, each day, the stars rose a little earlier, and that, from month to month, new ones arose, which he had not before noticed, and also that at the end of a year the first appeared again.

All this gave him infinite pleasure. It was, especially, on nights clear and sparkling with constellations, that he would contemplate with holy reverence and profound awe, the heavenly vault, glittering, as it were, with sparks of fire. "How true it is," he would say, that "the heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth His handy-work!"

The earthly works of the Almighty, such as Gottfried beheld in his wild and sterile island, tended to excite in him holy thoughts and to awaken religious fervor. "Even as above the sky is spangled with stars," said he, one spring day, "so the verdant grass, which extends to the entrance of my cavern, is spangled with beautiful gold-colored flowers, whose tender leaves resemble rays of light." Often, in his early childhood, Gottfried had amused himself with his play-fellows, in making long chains with the stalks of these flowers. Often, also, with infantine pleasure, he had blown upon the light, feathery balls which succeeded them, and danced with joy to see the little tufts fly off and flutter in the air.

But now his mind was filled with other thoughts. "I see," said he, "even in these despised flowers, the wisdom and goodness of God. Each of these flakes contains a little seed, and each of these seeds is, as one may say, a bark furnished with sails, which, leaving the main land, has floated thus far through the air. And the ease with which the wind bears them along accounts for the circumstance of the steep sides of these rocks being covered with similar flowers, and it is in this way that, long before my arrival here, flowers have been almost everywhere sown, whose stalks and roots now serve me for food."

The fir tree, the only kind he found on the island, pleased him extremely. "Without these trees," said he, "my kitchen would be badly provided with fuel, and I should never be able to survive the severities of winter." On attentively examining the brown, scaly, polished cone of the fir tree, which had often been his toy in infancy, he found that, beneath each scale which he detached with the help of his knife, were two grains of

winged seed. "These seeds," said he, "have likewise been transported from the mainland by the wind, and lodged on this island. The firs which clothe these rocks have been planted in the same manner as these yellow flowers, otherwise the seeds would never have been wafted to such a height.

"Their roots are also admirably suited to cling to the hard and naked rocks. They often wind to a distance, and as though gifted with intelligence, seem to look on all sides for some split or crevice in which to fix themselves firmly. The trunks of the fir tree rise tall and tapering, and are so flexible that they bend to the storm, but seldom break, which is just what is wanting to give them firmness and solidity at such a height. Their boughs and branches are green, even in the depth of winter, and when all other trees are stripped of their foliage, they offer a shelter to thousands of little birds.

"Besides, the fir is a very handsome tree, either when its young stem is crowned with fresh leaves, or when it towers tall and straight to the very heavens. And when I stand before my cave, and look upward through the dark green leaves of the fir trees, the sky seems to me to assume a deeper blue." Gottfried, therefore, spared the two fir trees that grew near his cave and went to a little distance to fetch his wood.

The soft green moss, which in former times, Gottfried had scarcely looked at, became now an object of minute examination. "Ah," said he, "how wisely God has disposed everything! Even the smallest scrap of moss is a marvel, showing forth His wisdom and goodness. It resembles a tiny fir tree, and the leaves, when examined in the light, are exquisitely firm and delicate. The finest tissue formed by the hand of man would appear rough and coarse in comparison." Observing the little cases enclosing the seeds, he exclaimed, "What pretty little boxes! They are like the minutest cups covered with lids, and the seed may be compared to the finest dust. The lids fall off as soon as the seed is ripe and the wind carries them away.

"What a countless multitude of little branches of moss it has taken to form my bed! Had it been less abundant, how many wretched nights I should have spent on these rocks, and how difficult I should have found it to protect my cave from the biting cold! Yes, bountiful God! all, from the tall fir tree to the creeping moss, from the sun to a grain of dust—all announce Thy power. The whole world is filled with Thy glory. The heavens and the earth are, so to speak, the temples of Thy greatness, and my heart shall be as an altar, dedicated to Thy service!"

Although Gottfried looked upon the heavens and the earth as temples of God, yet this was not enough—it was not without much sorrow that he found himself unable to attend any church. "But at least, I ought," said he, "to possess some Christian symbol here, which may recall pious thoughts and excite me to devotion." To this end, he formed a cross with a little fir branch, the brown bark of which was covered all over with tender moss of a pale-green color, and erected it not far from his cave on a fine rock also adorned with moss.

The cross—that sacred emblem of our holy faith—is so simple, that it can be made anywhere with the greatest ease. And yet how beautifully and unceasingly it recalls to our mind the adorable Savior who died for our salvation! Though crosses are often

ornamented with gold and precious stones, yet a little humble moss would not here dishonor the holy emblem, nor be at all unsuitable to the humble dwelling of a hermit. Gottfried often said his morning and evening prayers before the rock he had thus, as it were, consecrated. He called it his private altar and a stone rolled close to it served him to kneel upon.

Gottfried's parents had stored his memory with a variety of short, but beautiful prayers which happily he still recollected and repeated. He found that they filled his mind with good thoughts and helped, as it were, to wing his soul toward heaven. "Without doubt," he would say, "when God grants us special favors, or we are in any great danger, we do not require to know prayers by heart. Distress or emotion will at such times teach us to pray. These prayers, I may consider as a book of devotion which my parents have given me on my pilgrimage. I have it always about me and I cannot lose it."

He had, also by his parents' desire, committed to memory a great number of passages of Holy Scripture. These, especially such as related to our Lord Jesus Christ, he frequently repeated in order to prevent his forgetting them, knowing that he had no book by which to refresh his memory. He meditated on these sentences, which both instructed and consoled him. "To me," he said, "they are a casket of jewels, causing me infinite delight, and possessing a value which no one can take away."

In his seclusion, Gottfried often thought of John the Baptist in the wilderness. "It was surely," thought he, "by God's will that John, who performed much good among men, spent his youth in the desert. Solitude, then, has its advantages. So it is certainly not without some motive that God has placed me here." And in truth his solitary life was to him a blessing and even in this silent and desert island, he grew in wisdom and piety.

Chapter 8 Fresh Troubles

Up to this period, Gottfried had not suffered from illness ever since his arrival on the island. But one day a sharp-pointed fragment of shell entered very deep into the sole of his foot, for the rocky soil had long since worn out his shoes, and they were no longer of service to him.

The wound smarted terribly and gave him great pain. He became feverish and felt almost incapable of moving. It was with the utmost difficulty, even with the aid of a stick, that he could get as far as the spring, and return with a pitcher of water to quench his burning thirst. Fortunately for him, he was not hungry, for it would have been almost impossible for him to get a fish from the pool and afterwards to prepare it. He had no linen to dress his wound. Our poor hermit was, indeed, much to be pitied!

Thus languishing, stretched on his bed of moss, tormented by a burning fever, destitute of all help, in his gloomy cavern, he thought of his family with more than

ordinary anguish of mind. "Alas!" said he, "whenever I used to be the least indisposed, how tenderly I was watched over by my parents. My father himself would fetch a physician and my mother, with kind entreaties, would beg me to take the medicine he ordered, would bring my soup, and make my bed. My brothers and sisters vied with each other in their efforts to amuse and console me, while all united in prayers for my recovery. But here I am alone, deserted by everyone. Oh, how terrible to think of dying thus solitary and abandoned!"

He now felt, more than ever, how much he had failed both in gratitude and docility towards his kind parents. "Ah! merciful God!" he exclaimed, "perhaps Thou hast banished me to this island only to make me see my faults and amend them. Oh! pardon me, and if ever Thou dost lead me back to my home, I will show all love and gratitude to my parents, and obey them with my whole heart." With sorrow he recalled to mind how often he had quarreled with his brothers and sisters, and spoken to them with unjust severity. "Oh! how truly I now repent of it," said he. "Forgive me, O my heavenly Father, and restore me to them. I will be an affectionate brother to them, and we will dwell together in the most perfect harmony."

"Alas!" he added, "I knew not how to appreciate my happiness, when living with such kind parents, such affectionate brothers and sisters. How often have I distressed them by my obstinacy and ill-behavior. Grant, O my God, that I may one day see them again, if only to ask their forgiveness, if only to give them joy by my better conduct, and in some degree at least, to requite them for the goodness they have shown me."

Such were the prayers poor Gottfried often breathed during the period of his illness. God, at length, restored him to health. The fever gradually diminished, and soon entirely left him. When, for the first time, he found himself able to leave his cave without support, he fell on his knees and returned thanks to God for his restoration to health.

When Gottfried found his health completely re-established, his first thought was to manufacture some kind of covering for his feet to guard against further accidents of this kind. With the help of his hatchet and knife, he contrived to make strong soles out of one of the planks of the boat, while the leather of his old shoes furnished him with straps, which he nailed to his wooden soles. These new kind of shoes, usually called sandals, answered as well as could be expected, considering the imperfection of his tools.

Gottfried also stood much in need of new clothing. His old clothes were too short, and so torn and ragged that they no longer protected him from the frosty air. When it was very cold, he shivered, and his teeth chattered to such a degree that he sometimes dreaded a renewal of his illness. It is true, that at such times he would wrap himself in his father's cloak, but it was much too long and trailed on the ground behind him. Besides which, the sleeves fell over the end of his fingers, and even when he turned them up, they incommoded him while at work.

He therefore resolved to turn the cloak into a kind of long robe, forming a complete dress. In a word, such a one as he had once seen described as worn by a hermit. "But," said he, "what shall I do for a needle, and thread, and scissors?" He made a needle of a broken nail, which he sharpened, and after great difficulty, contrived to pierce a hole

through it by means of a pointed nail. He had, fortunately, remarked one day in a blacksmith's forge, that iron when well-heated became soft, and moreover when plunged red-hot into cold water was rendered extremely hard.

And he, at last, succeeded in making a pretty good needle, though decidedly better adapted for stitching bales than making clothes. For thread, he unraveled the remnant of a stocking which he had long since thrown aside as unfit for use. And his knife, which he carefully sharpened on a stone, served him in place of scissors. He then set to work, cut out his dress on a board, and put it together as well as he could. His belt was formed of the cord with which the boat had been fastened ashore, now well-bleached by alternate rain and sunshine.

As his straw hat was quite worn out, he made an attempt to plait another with broom, in which he succeeded very well, especially as he knew something of the art of basket-making. His new costume being completed, he put it on, and really, with his white girdle, his broom hat, which he had fastened up on either side, and a willow wand in his hand, he was by no means unlike an anchorite. He walked to the water's edge, looked at himself in the smooth clear water, and could not forbear laughing at his grotesque appearance.

Whilst working at his dress, Gottfried made many interesting discoveries. "Before I came here," thought he, "I never dreamed of the advantages resulting from the society of others. How many thousand persons are employed in dressing a single individual as well as I used to be dressed at home! Here is my old straw hat, for instance. How many hands have been in motion before a single ear of corn could be produced!

"Before the peasant can till his ground, he must have a plough, the plough-share has been dug out of mines, then melted and forged in the foundry. What labor has been required to prepare the different tools and machines necessary for the mines, the forge, and the foundry! The wheelwright makes the wheels and frame-work of the plough, for which purpose wood must be cut down in the forest, and that again with the aid of a hatchet. How many iron instruments the wheelwright requires to shape the wood and pierce it with holes, all which has required the help of men!

"The blacksmith must provide the iron, the plough, and the wheels, for which he must have had a pair of bellows, a hammer, pincers, and an anvil—all which instruments require the united labor of many persons. Before it is possible to put the horses to the plough, ropes are required, and various other articles. Thus the saddler and the rope-maker must give their assistance, besides which many others have made tools or worked to tan the leather, sew, dry, and twist the hemp. Thus the peasant sows the wheat, the reaper cuts it down, the thresher beats the grain out of the ear, and all this before the hat-maker can have the straw requisite to make the hat."

In the same manner he reflected on the infinite number of hands occupied in making either with wool or flax, cloths of various colors, as well as linen, and innumerable multitude of instruments and different kinds of machinery, such as spinning-wheels, the weaver's loom, machines for bleaching and dying, etc. How many workmen were required in doing everything that was necessary before one could take the scissors and

needle in order to complete the dress!

“And the work which a single needle costs,” added he, “I now know from experience, and yet several can be bought for a halfpenny, because men help each other in their labors. What a grand sight to see thousands of men working for a single individual! Every one ought, then, on his part, to do his utmost to contribute, by his labor, to the happiness of his neighbor, in order that this grand association may continue to subsist. Each one will gain by helping another. So the highest should not despise the most humble, nor the latter, in his turn, envy the former. Thus each one must live by and for his neighbor. Such as do not work, do not deserve to be fed. God has disposed things in this manner, in order that men who are so dependent on each other, should also love each other and live together in unity.

“Oh, yes, it is indeed a happy thing to live in human society and one is truly unfortunate in being separated from it, and it often makes one feel sadly destitute. If I should ever return to the society of my fellow-creatures, I will work with untiring ardor and will, by indefatigable industry, contribute to the general good!”

Chapter 9 A Great Misfortune

Gottfried being now quite recovered and dressed in a complete suit, once more lived a quiet and contented life in his barren island, but the desire to see his dear parents still filled his heart and increased more and more. Several times each day he climbed to the top of the rock and turning his gaze in every direction, watched for the arrival of some ship. He saw more than one making, as he thought, straight towards him, when his heart would throb with joy. But they each time turned either to the right or left, without nearing the island, and took quite a different direction. Gottfried no longer doubted that in this they acted designedly, but why so? For a long time it appeared inexplicable to him. However, at length, he guessed the true motive.

All around the island numerous rocks projected above the surface of the water, beneath which were hidden a still greater quantity. This was easily conjectured by the sound the waves made in breaking over them. It was, no doubt, to avoid striking on these reefs that the sailors would not venture to approach nearer. One day, a vessel in full sail was seen advancing towards the island, when it suddenly stopped, shifted sail, and taking to its oars, pulled away in another direction. Poor Gottfried was sadly afflicted. However, he resigned himself to the will of God. “God,” said he, “has decreed that I should remain yet awhile on this island. His will be done! When the hour comes, in which it pleases Him to permit my departure, He will easily find a way to deliver me from my captivity.”

Gottfried began to fear lest he should be obliged to spend another winter on his island, and consequently made new preparations. He felled a considerable quantity of

firs, split the wood, and piled it against a rock not far from his cave. He also heaped together a great mass of dry branches, which he brought to the same place, knowing that they would be useful, should occasion require it, in enabling him the more easily to kindle his fire.

One day, with the help of his hatchet, he had succeeded in cutting down a fir tree which grew on a high rock at some distance from his valley. The tree fell with a great crash into a deep gully. He worked from daybreak to divide it into logs, and as he had no saw, and was obliged to chop it in pieces with the hatchet. He found it such a very difficult job, that it caused him to perspire profusely. By his appetite, he began to feel that it was noon, so he prepared to return to his cave, bearing on his shoulders as many logs as he could carry. When, just as he issued from the ravine, what was his horror on seeing clouds of smoke rising from the center of the rocks in the midst of which was his cave? Two fearful red flames, thick and high as two towers, ascended in the air with a great noise.

Gottfried had often heard of mountains vomiting fire at uncertain intervals of time, and he feared that this might be the eruption of a subterranean fire which might possibly destroy the whole island. Suddenly he cast down his load, and with trembling steps, approached the entrance of his valley, where he stopped in dismay. Nothing was to be seen but smoke and flames, the crackling of which was quite deafening. However, he was not a little consoled to find that the flames did not proceed out of the earth.

He soon discovered the cause of the fire. The dry branches which he had heaped on the grass before his cavern, had been placed too near the fire which he had left burning. A few twigs had been blown towards it by the wind, which suddenly catching fire communicated it to the rest. The flames had invaded his heap of wood, the wicket-door of his cave, his table and bench, as well as the wooden shed, which fell with a crash. The two tall and aged fir trees also caught fire and appeared like two monstrous flaming torches.

At first Gottfried was scarcely conscious of the irreparable injury he had suffered from the fire. He bitterly reproached himself for not having guarded better against such an accident. He deplored the loss of his kitchen utensils, the wood he had collected, and his furniture. "Alas!" said he, "the fallen roof has broken my iron pot! I have now no means of cooking fish! My pitcher is likewise destroyed, and I shall be obliged, whenever I am thirsty, to go all the way to the spring! I have neither bench nor table, and now that my wooden shed is consumed, I shall be obliged to crouch down in my cave, whenever it rains, as I have now no other place to take shelter in from the wet!"

However, he soon perceived what was the most unfortunate part of the affair. "What a cruel misfortune, poor child that I am!" he cried. "My fishing lines, without which I cannot possibly angle, and which I hung in the shed to dry are also burned! What shall I do now? I used all the linen and all the twine I had to make into lines, and woolen threads are not strong enough. What shall I now use for the future? I know not where to turn for help and I am again in danger of being starved to death!"

Gottfried entered the valley, but could not remain long there. The earth was burning

hot, the atmosphere was very sultry, the melted resin fell in streams of fire from the top of the flaming fir trees and the smoke was suffocating. "Ah!" he cried, "though it is said that good proceeds from evil, yet when I look on this frightful devastation, I cannot conceive it possible that good can result from this disastrous blow. I see no end of my misfortunes!"

He left his dear valley and sitting down at a little distance on a rock, leaned his head on his hand and said, with a sigh, "If I was now living in the midst of men, how soon the damage caused by the fire would be repaired! With a few halfpence I could buy an iron pot, a pitcher, and some twine. And even if I had not a halfpenny, I should not fail to meet with some good-natured person who would find a pleasure in giving me a few scraps of twine and some earthen pots, or would at least lend me money to buy them. But here, cut off from everyone, my loss is irreparable. A little twine would save me from death, but where is it to be procured? Oh! what happiness there is in living with others! How easy for one man to relieve the distresses of another! and how little is oftentimes required to snatch one's neighbor from the depths of wretchedness and render him happy! But to be forsaken in a solitude is like being condemned to death. Oh, if I should ever again live among my fellow-creatures, with what pity I would succour the unfortunate! How lovely, how affecting, is the feeling of compassion which the Almighty has planted in the human heart, and which He renders more tender and thoughtful by the afflictions He sends us! Ah, if this fine, this noble sentiment should ever be extinguished, unfortunate man would be as much deserving of pity in the midst of his equals, as I, a poor child, am in my solitary isle!"

Poor Gottfried remained plunged in sad reflections until nightfall, when he felt anxious to return to his cave. He entered the valley. The flames, indeed, were extinguished, but the smoke still rose thickly, and the ashes were quite hot. He was obliged, therefore, to seek elsewhere a place in which to pass the night. When collecting his wood, he had thoughtlessly destroyed the little thicket which shaded the spring, so he was forced to lie down in the open air, on a hard and naked rock. However, his sorrow was too great to permit him to close his eyes. "Alas!" he said sadly, "I am like a little bird driven from its nest!" He more than ever regretted his home and with increased desire longed to see his family.

With moistened eyes he looked upward. The night was beautiful, not the least cloud was to be seen, and the stars were shining in all their brightness. "O my God!" he cried, "how lovely heaven must be! And how happy shall we one day be with Thee! Heaven alone is our country, our paternal home! Even as here, in this harsh and sterile island, where I am so lonely, I long to live on the mainland, where beautiful gardens, adorned with lovely flowers and delicious fruits, are spread to view, and where my father is ready to welcome me with open arms, so also I long to be above, with Thee, my heavenly Father!"

"The whole earth resembles this rocky island. Men have many things to torment them on earth, as I have here. Sorrow, cold, hunger, sickness, and at last, death! But in heaven, with Thee, there is neither pain nor sorrow. Nothing but true and perfect joy. Oh,

if ever I should be restored to my beloved parents, what matters all my sufferings here! If a mariner was to arrive today from the mainland to convey me to my father, I should be transported with joy. So I will rejoice when the time comes for me to depart from this world, when angels shall convey me to a better world in heaven!”

Chapter 10 Friends in the Distance

Three years had now elapsed since the tempest drove poor Gottfried on the desert island. His parents no longer doubted of his death and never hoped to meet him but in heaven. They were, however, very happy in their other children. Elizabeth, who approached her fourteenth year, was a very industrious girl, and Frederick, who was only nine at the time that Gottfried was carried off, now actively assisted his father. They were both of them good and well brought up.

One day (it was about the time when walnuts are ripe), the father said to them, “Today, my children, as the sky is so serene and the sea so calm, we will take a trip to the Green Island. I am much in want of willow boughs and you can employ yourselves in gathering some baskets full of walnuts. The harvest will be as abundant this year as it was three years ago, when our dear Gottfried was still alive.”

They all proceeded to the island, and after cutting down a sufficient quantity of willow branches, they sat down under a tree and partook of some bread and milk. “My dear children,” said their father, “it was under this very poplar that I dined for the last time with your brother.” He again related to them what had then passed, describing with much emotion the awful storm, as well as the utter desolation of Gottfried. “Look,” said he, shuddering, and stretching his right arm toward the sea, “just in that spot I saw him disappear amidst the rising waves!” His eyes filled with tears. Frederick turned to hide his grief, but Elizabeth wept bitterly. They afterwards went to the walnut tree and filled their baskets. “How delighted my mother will be,” said Frederick, “to see so many nuts!” “Alas!” answered Elizabeth, “she is always sad about the time when the nuts are ripe. It makes her think of poor Gottfried. I am sure she will cry when she sees these.”

Their father was now ready to depart. When Frederick said to his father, “Will you accompany us to the top of this high hill. I am sure there must be a very extensive view of the mainland from such a height.” Their father ascended with them. The day was delightfully clear and serene. The sky of so bright a blue and the atmosphere so transparent that they could see to a great distance on every side.

The children were enchanted. “Oh!” exclaimed Frederick, with astonishment, “how beautifully distinct, how brilliant and magnificent, although in miniature, are these valleys, mountains, rocks, forests, villages, these castles, and towers which I see all around me. No painting could equal them!”

“And our village,” said Elizabeth, “how little it appears to us in the distance! How

pretty and smiling it looks! And our cottage—do you see it yonder, Frederick?—how white and shining it seems, in the midst of those green trees! Oh, how small it is! The windows are like black specks. See how the tints of autumn have variegated the green forests. And those mountains yonder, towering to the sky, we cannot see them from our cottage, as the intervening wooded mountains hide them from our view.”

Frederick afterwards turned towards the open sea and exclaimed with astonishment, “Father, what is that yonder? I see a thick smoke rising from the water!” His father did, indeed, perceive a column of smoke undulating through the air, the wind blowing it in an oblique direction. “I know not what it means,” said the father, “but I fear it may be some vessel on fire.” “Alas!” said Elizabeth, “that would be terrible! May God have pity on the poor people! They cannot escape the fire without perishing in the waves!”

Her father continued to gaze in that direction. The sun was setting on his left and the sea shone like molten silver. “It appears to me,” said he, shading his eyes with his hand, “that I see a brown spot on the ocean, from which the smoke is rising. Do you not perceive it?” “Oh, yes,” said Elizabeth, whose sight was excellent, “I see it clearly. It is terminated by two points.”

“I see it also,” cried Frederick, “one point is higher than the other.” “It is not a ship,” said his father, “a ship is differently shaped, and would not appear so large at such a distance. It must be an island, of whose existence I have heretofore been ignorant. And there must be people there or there would be no smoke.” “My dear father!” said Elizabeth, “may it not be possible that our Gottfried is living there?” “Indeed,” said Frederick, “it might be, and it was in that very direction that he was driven by the tempest.” “Oh, what happiness if he lived!” exclaimed his sister, turning pale with joy and surprise.

“Nothing is impossible with God,” said their father, “it may indeed be that divine Providence has preserved our Gottfried.” “Well then,” said Frederick, “let us go at once and seek for him!” “That cannot be done in such a hurry, my dear boy,” replied his father, “yet I will do it, but I must first procure a larger boat and experienced seamen. Let us hasten home.”

The father rowed hard, anxious to get home with his children as quickly as possible. They all, with one voice, communicated their happy conjectures to their mother, who eagerly seized on such a gleam of hope—hope which to her seemed certainty. The younger children screamed aloud with joy. The father and mother assembled their neighbors, but their opinions were very different.

“What!” exclaimed one of the most talkative. “I should like to know where the island comes from. I never in my life heard talk of it. No doubt it was some ship on fire.” “No,” cried a second, who wished to appear more knowing than the rest, “It was no ship, but a mountain vomiting fire. I have heard say that during the night, similar mountains have often been seen on the ocean. Evil will befall us if we venture to go there. The flames and red hot stones issuing from the mountain will soon destroy us.” “Whether it be a ship or a mountain,” said a third, “I would not, for a hundred pounds, venture such a distance in our slight boats.” “Christopher,” added a fourth, “if you will give me ten pounds I will

venture, but not for less.”

Honest old Thomas now interrupted them, first imposing silence on all around. “Well,” said he, “neighbor, I will accompany you. Gottfried was a good lad and he was my godson. To say the truth, it is anything but certain, or even probable, that he should still be living, but it is, at all events, possible. We will, therefore, undertake the perilous voyage. He who inspires us with courage will also grant us success.” A young man, named Peter, then said, “As you are going, Thomas, so will I. I have often risked my life for the sake of catching a few worthless fish, why not now to accomplish a good work? But I won’t expose my life for money—I want no payment, but shall rejoice as long as I live if I have assisted in rescuing this poor lost child.”

“God grant us such happiness!” exclaimed Thomas. “Should the wind and weather prove as favorable tomorrow as they are today, we will start by daybreak.” The other men walked off, shaking their heads, and predicting all kinds of misfortunes, while the brave Thomas and Peter remained for a while conversing with Gottfried’s father about their intended voyage. Margaret, the mother, set to work to prepare a sufficient quantity of provisions, when Thomas said to her, “Do not trouble yourself about it. I intend to take my large fishing boat and will not fail to have it well-stored with provisions.”

The next morning was beautiful and the wind proved favorable. The mother and her children accompanied the three intrepid mariners to the seashore and when they had embarked, she said to them, looking fervently toward heaven, “We will not cease to pray till your happy return. God grant you may bring me back our dear Gottfried.”

They spread their sails to the wind and passing by the “Verdant Isle,” steered their course in the direction of the brown spot, which they could not yet perceive. When about a league from the Green Island, they came in sight of it and as they approached it, it appeared larger and more distinct. “My brothers,” said Peter, “it is indeed an island. Let us spread all sail and pull away as hard as we can.” They now advanced rapidly, when Thomas suddenly cried out, “Halt! Take in the sails. There are rocks ahead and we must use every precaution to prevent our striking.”

At length, after considerable fatigue and hard work, the three mariners succeeded in their enterprise. They safely landed and fastened the boat by a strong cable to an enormous block of stone.

Thomas looked around at the frightful barren rocks, then shook his head, saying, “It would not be pleasant to live here. If poor Gottfried had been thrown on these rocks, he can never have lived here for three years.” They then proceeded to examine the island, scaling rocks, and descending deep gulleys.

At length, they came upon a beaten pathway, which they followed. The father walked first, his heart agitated by hope and fear. “Great Father!” he exclaimed, “if the poor child still lives, it is truly a miracle of Thy Almighty goodness!”

Chapter 11

The Visit

Gottfried had passed a sad and sleepless night, but as day began to dawn, and the sweet light of morning to spread insensibly over the heavens, his heart grew more calm and serene. "Bountiful God!" said he, "it is Thou who dost make the smiling morn to follow the darkness of night. So wilt thou also cause joy to follow the sorrow that now oppresses me. Alas! when I had eaten my last nut, I was in despair. I feared to die of hunger and shed many bitter tears, but Thou didst not forsake me. Thou didst help to sustain my life in providing me abundance of fish. And now that I can no longer catch fish, now that I am once more without any means of subsistence, Thou wilt still take care of me. Thou dost not abandon those who put their trust in Thee."

When the sun had arisen in all his radiance, Gottfried repaired to the valley to examine the ravages caused by the fire. The turf was covered with ashes and some smouldering brands, hidden beneath, still emitted smoke. The rocks around were all blackened with smoke and resin, everything of wood was consumed, and the two firs which stood before the cave were burned to the ground. The cross alone, which stood on the ridge of a rock, had been spared by the fire, and remained untouched. "Beautiful emblem!" said he. "When all else shall become a wreck, when the entire universe shall be burned up, our salvation which we owe to Him who died for us on the cross, will still remain!"

He knelt down before the cross and prayed, "O my God! pardon my cowardly fears. Pardon me for not having at once recalled to mind the example of Thy beloved Son. In His last agony He entirely resigned Himself to Thy will. I am no doubt much afflicted, and I tremble to think I can no longer live, yet I will say, like Him, 'Father, not my will but thine be done; if it be possible, take this cup from me—but if Thou wilt not, grant me at least some consolation. It would be too much to ask of Thee a strengthening angel.'"

Whilst Gottfried was praying thus, the three mariners entered the valley and saw him kneeling before the cross, his hands extended toward heaven, but in the fervor of his prayer, he did not notice them. The brave Peter was the first to perceive him and said in a low tone to his companions, "Look at that hermit praying yonder. Can it be Gottfried?"

Gottfried, astonished and alarmed at so unexpectedly hearing a human voice pronounce his name, turned quickly round. Oh, joy! He saw his father and ran and threw himself on his bosom crying out, "O my father!" They shed sweet tears of happiness and it was long indeed before either could speak, so completely were they overcome with sudden joy.

"Well, well," said Thomas at last, "will you not spare a glance at your father's companions? Dear Gottfried, have you forgotten your godfather?" Gottfried then embraced his godfather in the most affectionate manner. "God bless you, dear Gottfried!" said Peter, "come, allow me too to have a look at you. Really you are looking well and are much grown. But where did you find this hermit's dress, and how have you managed to live on this island, which may truly be called a wilderness?"

Gottfried, instead of answering these questions, asked, "How is my dear mother and my brothers and sisters? And how did you get here in so unexpected and un hoped-for a manner?" "They are all quite well," answered Thomas, "and will be delighted beyond measure to see you again. But no more questions or there will be no end to it. About yourself first, Gottfried. Tell us your whole history now, from beginning to end. And we will tell you afterwards everything that has happened at home since you left us. Yonder there, near the cross, the rock is covered with moss and quite free from ashes. Let us go and sit there."

As soon as they were seated, Gottfried proceeded to relate to them all that had happened to him from the time he had last seen his father up to the present happy moment, in which he met him once more. He shed many tears during his recital and his father often wiped his eyes. "Thanks be to God, my dear boy," said he, "that we have found you and my joy is increased to find that your residence here has had the effect of improving you in piety and wisdom."

Thomas, who had listened with the greatest attention and had made frequent signs of approbation, now said, "Yes, dear Gottfried, you have certainly become better by living in this island. Do you recollect my telling you one day that God would surely place you in some peculiar school to correct your faults? Well, my prediction is accomplished. Yes, truly, the school of affliction is the best of all. It has taught you to know God, to implore His assistance, to love and thank Him for all His mercies.

"I also rejoice to think that, feeling more deeply than formerly the love the Almighty deserves from us, you should, in this desert isle, have received such proofs of His bounty and goodness, although nothing grows here but firs, moss, and such flowers as we would scarcely care to make a nosegay of. Yet in our gardens and fields how many additional reasons shall we find to admire the wisdom and goodness of God—sometimes when admiring an apple-tree loaded with fruit and flowers, at others, the green enameled meadows or fields covered with the golden harvest!

"And I am, moreover, pleased to find that you have learned better to value the mutual services which men render to each other. If you had not preserved some product of man's industry, a needle or a pin, you must, no doubt, have perished here. And on the other hand, how unhappy you would have been had you not, before you came here, been taught to know God and to love your Savior, without which you might have given way to despair!

"The most interesting part of your history to me is that about the worm in the little bird's beak, and the smoke which arose from your island. What is more vile than a worm or more changeable than smoke? And yet the worm gave you the idea of catching fish and prevented your dying of hunger. While the smoke was to us as a proof sent from heaven that there was an island here and further that it contained a human being who might possibly be our dear Gottfried.

"This fire, which seemed the worst of all misfortunes has in reality ended them all. Does not the finger of God appear visibly in the matter? And is it not by such trifling means that God accomplishes great things? Let us adore His divine providence!" They

all silently adored that God who, in human affairs, so wonderfully reveals His infinite wisdom.

Gottfried inquired if it was from the mainland they had remarked the smoke? “No, that would have been impossible,” replied his father, who then told him how he had crossed to the “Verdant Isle,” taking with him Frederick and Elizabeth for the purpose of gathering walnuts, and had afterwards ascended the hill with them.

“Do you recollect,” said Gottfried, “the fine comparison you made to me beneath the shade of the great walnut tree? ‘Our sufferings,’ you said, ‘resemble a nut, whose hard bitter shell encloses a pleasant fruit.’ How right you were! My exile has indeed been hard and bitter, but I now enjoy the pleasant fruit. My abode here has been very salutary to me and my sorrows are followed by joy.” “Well,” said Peter, laughing, “I have often met with these hard bitter nuts, but I shall never crack one in future without thinking of this comparison.”

Gottfried showed his guests his cave, the spring, and pool, and promised to regale them with some fish. “They are very fine ones,” said Peter, “and we will not refuse them, but you must be our guest today, for we have brought plenty of provisions. I will take this path, which seems a better one than that by which I came and go and prepare a good dinner for you.” He hastened towards the boat, the mast of which was seen rising behind a distant rock, while the others, still conversing, walked slowly after.

By the time they had arrived, Peter told them dinner was ready. “This mossy carpet,” said he, “must do for us instead of table and chairs.” There was bread and milk, butter, and cold meat, besides fried fish, and a variety of other things. At the sight of bread, Gottfried was so transported with joy that he began to cry and kiss it. “Precious gift!” said he, “for three years I have not ceased to regret you, most wholesome food of man! How sincerely do I thank God that I see you again! Oh, we ought never to eat a morsel of bread without thanking God for it!”

They sat down beside each other and made a happy meal. Their conversation never flagged, even although the evening was advanced, and the moon, shedding her beams on the dishes and vessels strewed around them, cast long shadows across the mossy turf. “This is enough for today,” said Thomas, at length, “tomorrow, I am pretty certain, the wind will change, when we will set sail to return home. Our anxious families will doubtless be expecting us with impatience. Let us now retire to rest, which will better enable us to rise early in the morning.”

Thomas and Peter returned to the boat, forming a kind of awning of the sail, beneath which they slept. Gottfried and his father retired to the cave, the former delighted to think that his dear father was in reality with him where he had so often seen him in his dreams. They continued to converse together for a length of time, and it was not until past midnight that they could think of sleep, before which they devoutly returned thanks to God, who had vouchsafed them such a happy day.

Chapter 12

Joy After Sorrow

Next morning, by day break, Peter came to the cave. "Make haste and get up!" he cried, "the wind is as favorable as we could possibly desire. Let us embark at once and set sail." They both hurried out, but Gottfried begged a few minutes' delay. Before leaving the island, he wished once more to thank God for the blessings He had showered upon him for the last three years, and also for the sufferings it had pleased Him to make him endure. He knelt down and when he arose he was ready to bid a last farewell to his abode.

They proceeded to the shore. Thomas had already cut down a small fir tree and ornamented it with blue, white, red, and yellow ribbons, which he had brought with him for this purpose. Gottfried asked, wonderingly, what he was going to do with this tree, so prettily adorned with ribbons. "At our departure," answered Thomas, "I promised your anxious mother to hoist this signal of our good fortune, if we were happy enough to find you. Oh! how happy she will be when she perceives from afar this joyous token!" He fastened the little tree to the mast-head, and when they had all partaken of a hasty breakfast prepared by Peter, they entered the boat and set sail. The passage was a happy one and when Gottfried at length perceived his father's house, his heart bounded with joy.

The happy hearts on shore were not less powerfully affected. All the family were assembled on the beach and stood with outstretched arms, addressing ardent prayers to heaven for his safe return. The villagers, young and old, were collecting from all parts, calling out, "They have indeed found him and are bringing him home!" and on his landing, they welcomed him with loud acclamations of joy. But his mother's delight is not to be described. She could only press her dear Gottfried to her heart, whom for three long years she had mourned as dead.

The joy of Elizabeth and Frederick was excessive, but the younger ones had quite forgotten their brother and his strange appearance at first intimidated them, but a little encouragement from their parents soon made them more friendly, and in a short time, they became so familiar that they began to frolic about him. From every side, men and women, young men and girls, pressed near to shake him by the hand, bidding him welcome, and congratulating him on his happy return. Gottfried was quite overcome. "O my Lord!" thought he, "I cannot imagine greater joy than this, excepting indeed that which we shall experience when the spirits of the blest shall receive us into heaven with a like degree of love and friendship!"

Gottfried's mother was very anxious to hear his adventures and wished to bring him to the house, but the villagers would not consent to it. "We are also anxious to hear the marvelous things that have happened to him," they exclaimed and they led him beneath a lime tree, which grew in the center of the village so that every one might see and hear him, where, as soon as he was seated on a bench, they entreated he would relate his

history to them.

They all crowded round him and every eye was fixed on him. The gentle and affable manners of the young hermit, together with his handsome, smiling countenance, pleased them infinitely. They whispered among themselves and some of them even said aloud, "The hermits we have always heard of were old and wrinkled with long beards and bald heads, but this one has a blooming countenance and rosy cheeks. His curly hair falls softly on his shoulders and his long brown dress, though coarse, is exceedingly becoming."

Gottfried, after he had finished his narrative, expressed his joy at finding himself once more in the midst of friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, all of whom took so lively an interest in all that happened to him. They then separated and Gottfried, surrounded by his family, once more reached his home. After so long an absence, he could not look on that threshold without shedding tears of joy. On entering, what was their astonishment to find the table spread with a feast, which the generous Thomas had prepared against their return, so that on this day at least the fond mother might be free of all care and expense.

Gottfried sat down between his happy parents. Thomas was placed on their right and Peter on their left, then came Elizabeth, Frederick, and the younger children. Many dishes were served which Gottfried had almost forgotten. What especially delighted him, who for so long a period had seen no fruit but the cone of the fir tree, was the sight of baskets full of rosy apples, mellow pears, plums, and brown nuts, but above all, red and white grapes.

"These delicious fruits," said he, "are only found among the habitations of mankind. Without human industry, the country surrounding our villages would be as barren as the island on which I lived. Wherever I look, I find new motives for rejoicing and thanking God, who has placed me once more among my fellow-creatures!"

After dinner, Gottfried went and brought a parcel, containing his old clothes, which he had placed in a corner of the room. "Look here," said he, smiling, "see what I have brought from the island with me. His parents, anything but pleased with the look of this present, could not conceive his meaning. His brothers smiled. Thomas shook his head and Peter said to him, "Gottfried, what are you doing? Surely you might have left these old rags in the island."

Gottfried, in his turn, opened the parcel and took out his rush baskets. As he had preserved them in his cave, they had fortunately escaped the fire, and before quitting the island, he had wrapped them up secretly in his old things. He placed the baskets on the table and took off the covers, while all around were astonished at the immense quantity of beautiful pearls and coral which they contained.

"Oh! ho!" cried Thomas, "these are indeed treasures! These pearls are worth many hundred pieces of gold and the branches of coral are also very valuable, for many among them are of remarkable size and beauty. Well, my dear friends, you are now relieved from your difficulties, and will be able to discharge the debts you contracted in purchasing your little property, and besides have it in your power to leave something to

your children.”

“Not so!” exclaimed Christopher, “you and Peter, my brave comrades, have both, as brothers, partaken the danger of the voyage. It is but just that you should also partake the profits. Without your succor and friendship, we should never have recovered our dear Gottfried, nor have now been in possession of these pearls and corals. I will divide them into three parts, of which you shall take your choice, commencing with Thomas. The remaining third shall be for me, my wife, and children.”

Towards the end of dinner, two of the countrymen who had refused to accompany Gottfried’s father to the rocky island, had, without invitation, entered the room, hoping, no doubt, to come in for some nice bits. “Really,” said one of them, (he who had asked ten pounds as a reward for going) “we should have made more than ten pounds by it. I could tear my hair with vexation, to think I didn’t go.” “Oh!” said the other, “it would have been worth more than a hundred pounds to us and that was well worth risking one’s life for.”

“Begone, begone,” said Thomas, “neither of you are worthy of anything. Covetous and cowardly souls, who would move neither hand nor foot, without being paid for it, even though it were to save a fellow-creature’s life! Go, you deserve to depart empty-handed!”

“As for me,” continued Thomas, “I will not accept these pearls. Gottfried has six brothers and sisters, and his parents are not rich. I should think it a sin to take a single pearl from them. I am sufficiently rich, but Peter must receive his destined portion—he is actually in want, and the courage with which he braved an imminent danger merits a good recompence.” Peter received the valuable reward offered him.

In the excess of their gratitude, Gottfried’s parents again pressed Thomas to take his portion of the pearls. “Do not press me about it,” he answered, “I care little for these riches, but Gottfried has brought with him what is infinitely more precious—the knowledge of God, trust in God, and love to God and man. These are the true pearls spoken of in the Gospel. These it is that we should all desire!

“I candidly confess that Gottfried’s history has strengthened me in many respects, and especially in my confidence in God. A great gain for me, to which not all the corals of the ocean are, in my opinion, to be compared. Yes, my dear friends, grace and divine mercy are more difficult to measure and to fathom than the sea from which these pearls have been taken. Let our confidence, then, in Him be as fixed as the coral rocks on the sea shore, whose foundations are unshaken.”

Gottfried once more mixed in human society. Whatever he had learned by meditation in his lonely island, he now put in practice. He dressed himself like the other young lads of the village, wove baskets with his father, and went to fish with his godfather, Thomas. He became a pattern of virtue and was the delight, the support, and ornament of his family.

Thomas, who had no children, bequeathed to him all his property, as well as his business as a fisherman. Gottfried grew up an excellent man, full of love toward God and his fellow-creatures. As the father of a family and as the zealous protector of the

village poor, he was invaluable. During his life, he enjoyed the general esteem of all and his memory continued to be blessed long after his death.

THE END

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