

THE INUNDATION OF THE RHINE

Written in 1898

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Chapter 1 The Inundation

About one hundred years ago, Martin Brown, a vine-dresser, lived in a pleasant little village on the banks of the Rhine. He was a very virtuous and industrious man, and his wife Otilia was a pious, careful, and affectionate woman.

Martin's house stood on the skirts of the village close by the banks of the river. A plantation of extremely choice vines clothed the sides of a steep and rocky hill that stretched out a little into the current of the river. Near the house in a beautiful meadow, washed on one side by the Rhine and enclosed on the other three by a green hedge and a row of shady poplars, Otilia kept a bleach-green, and by her care and attention made the linen so perfectly pure and white that all the housewives in the village and in the neighboring districts were anxious to have their linen bleached by her. By these means the industrious couple earned their daily bread and provided for all the wants of life.

The meadow, moreover, supplied pasture for two cows. A large black house-dog watched during spring and summer in the bleach-green; during August, while the grapes were ripening; in the vineyard and during the whole year round, but especially the long winter nights in the house and yard.

Martin and Otilia, united in affection, lived here happy and contented. But their greatest happiness and most precious treasure on earth were their five children, the youngest of whom was yet in the cradle. The good parents were not content with giving them clothes and food only. Their principal care was to educate them well. Both father and mother were most solicitous to accustom them from their tenderest infancy to labor and prayer.

"Prayer and labor," Martin used to remark, "are good both for this world and the next." The pious and industrious parents needed no foreign aid to train up their children to prayer and industry. Their own example was more efficacious than their words—the children were like their parents, they saw and knew nothing else. On the banks of the Rhine there was not, perhaps, a single family more happy and contented.

But this good and happy family was soon overwhelmed with the severest afflictions. One winter set in more severe and tempestuous than any within the memory of man. Enormous mountains of snow covered hill and valley, and the cold was intense. The Rhine was frozen deep and became hard as marble. Serious apprehensions were felt that the thaw would inevitably produce an inundation and lead to most fearful calamities.

A rapid thaw did at length set in, but no immediate danger was apprehended. Martin and his little family were buried in profound sleep. Suddenly, at midnight, he was startled from his sleep by the alarm bell—again and again he heard its dismal peals—he heard too a fearful rushing of waters. Springing suddenly out of bed, he flung on his clothes

and left the bedroom to see what was the matter. But already the water stood so high in the kitchen and hall that he was obliged almost to wade through it, and when he opened the door a torrent rushed against him with such force that he was almost thrown to the ground.

He rushed into the bedroom and cried out, "Oh! Ottilia, our children! Let us first save them!" Ottilia staggered up, half asleep, and scarcely knowing what she did, put on what clothes were barely necessary to cover her. Their children in their arms, their parents strove to make for the vineyard, but the swelling waters rolled with such force against them that it was impossible to gain it.

Then they endeavored to reach another eminence beyond the village. But the night was so dark that they could not see one step before them. The moon had set and heavy clouds darkened the stars. The rain fell in torrents and the storm howled in awful gusts. High waves swept through the streets of the village and overflowed all the roads and bridges. Every moment the poor parents were afraid that the next step would draw them into the main current. The children, who had been so suddenly startled from sleep by their afflicted parents, wept and screamed aloud. Shrieks of woe rung from every house in the village.

Meantime, there appeared through the village a number of blazing torches and in their deep red glare the frightful havoc, which as yet had told only to the ear, now flashed upon the sight. Hundreds of men strained with all their might to escape an awful death in the flood. On all sides, as far as the eye could reach, there was misery and woe. Here at a low window of a little cabin stood a trembling mother with her screaming children, whom she lifted out one by one to their father to save them, whilst he, standing breast high in the rushing waters, could scarcely hold himself on his feet. There, grown up sons and daughters were carrying out of a door their sick mother to rescue her from the invading flood. The unhappy party were in imminent danger of all perishing in the waves. But several active and humane men rushed bravely to their assistance and preserved them.

Ottilia, with a child on each arm, was dragged along by the fury of the waters. Her husband, encumbered with his two other children, could not give her any help. But two courageous men, who were passing by, rescued both mother and children and brought them safe to the father on the neighboring hill. Here a great fire was kindled under some fir trees, around which a group of people, drenched to the skin with the waves from which they had escaped, were endeavoring to dry themselves.

When Ottilia, exhausted and almost senseless, had reached the hill and recovered somewhat from her terror, she looked around her and screamed in agony, "Where is my youngest child—my Gaspar!" The child had been lying in its cradle near the mother's bed. The water had rushed in so suddenly and in such quantities, that probably the cradle floated and drifted off from its position. In the dark, the mother had darted instantly to seize the cradle, but when she found it was not in its place, she concluded that the father had secured both it and the child. All her attention was then absorbed in the rescue of her other children. But now, when she discovered her error, she raised and clapped her hands, and wept and shrieked so piteously, that it would move even a stone. She would instantly have started up and rushed through the heaving waters to her house, to snatch her darling infant from death in the flood, but her husband held her back.

"Stay, dearest Ottilia," said he, "you never could reach the house in safety. The water runs too strong—it would overpower you. I will try to save the poor infant. Our good

neighbors here will assist me.”

“With all our hearts,” cried the two men who had saved Otilia and her children. They provided themselves with long poles to feel their ground and support themselves, and started off immediately, one of them carrying a blazing torch.

Otilia would have followed them, but the women who were at the fire with her, forcibly restrained her. “Have patience,” said they, “wait here, you would be but rushing on certain death!—the brave men will save your child if it be possible to do it.”

The group upon the height gazed with trembling hearts after the three men, until the torch disappeared behind a house. They still continued to gaze for a long time with straining eyes into the thick darkness, but they saw them no more, and heard nothing but the fearful roaring of the waters, the howling of the storm, and occasionally the crash of a falling roof. It was an awful moment for the poor people, and with one accord all raised their hands to heaven and fervently prayed—“O God have mercy on the good men and on the poor babe! Help them and do not let them perish! Thou alone canst save them.”

Chapter 2

New Calamities

Otilia looked forward in an agony of suspense to the return of her husband and his faithful companions. Nearly an hour had elapsed and yet there was no account of them. Her anxiety increased every moment. She fervently clasped her hands and knelt down under the fir tree not far from the fire. One of her children, whom she had wrapped in her apron, she held in her arms, while another, little George, stood near her, barefooted, in his shirt and shivering with cold. She prayed with all the strength of her soul and a sweat of agony rolled over her features.

Little George, who was watching her by the light of the fire, asked with childish simplicity, “How is this mother? you are perspiring and I am shivering with cold.” But the poor mother merely told him and his sister Mary (who was about a year older) to pray and they both raised up their little hands to heaven.

At last the father returned. His face was sad and he was drenched with water.

“Alas, neighbor,” said one of the men who had accompanied him, to Otilia, “it was impossible to reach your house. The water was too deep and rapid. We waded up to the shoulders and ran great risk of being lost.”

“Still,” said the other man, “all hope is not lost. Many good men whose houses were not in danger came to the assistance of their less fortunate neighbors. Before the flood had risen too high, they brought lanterns, and burst open several houses and rescued the families and their property. Perhaps they have saved your child also.” Many parties did, indeed, continue to come up on the hill, loaded with effects of all kinds saved from the flood, but the cradle did not appear, nor could the slightest trace of the babe be obtained.

At length this dreadful night was drawing to a close. The rain and storm ceased—the clouds dispersed and the stars flickered dimly here and there through the rent clouds, until the morning streaks appeared. A shriek of woe burst from the shivering groups around the fire on the height. Their beloved little village had been almost completely

swept away. Not a trace of Martin's house could be seen and other houses, with sunken thatch or inclining roofs, threatened every moment to fall in.

But while her companions were lamenting the loss of their property, Ottilia thought only of her child. "Though all we had in the world is gone," said she, "I would never think of it, if I had not lost my child." The father, too, was more inconsolable for the loss of his child, than for the total wreck of his property. Still he composed himself and raising his eyes devoutly to heaven, said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

"Dearest Ottilia," said he, approaching his wife, with tears in his eyes, "let us bow to the will of God. It is His will and we cannot change it. Whatever He does is for the best. Offer up your child to Him who has made it happy in heaven." The mother suppressed her grief, and her tears flowed more gently, as she exclaimed, "The will of the Lord be done." Her children, who had been crying bitterly, began to dry their tears. "Let us weep no more," said little Mary, "our infant brother is now a little angel in heaven. It is much better for him to be living there, where there can be no great floods like this anymore."

"That is very true," said George, "but still it is a great pity that our poor little brother was drowned in the flood—and our two fine cows too—and worse than all, our merry dog. He is certainly drowned or he would have been here with us before now. I grieve more for him than for my little brother."

"Oh fie," said Mary, "how can you say such a foolish thing? Let no one ever hear you saying so."

"And why not?" answered George, "our brother is in heaven, but the poor dog cannot go there."

The bystanders, who overheard this conversation of the children, could not, even in the midst of their sorrows, suppress a smile at their simplicity.

In the meantime, many inhabitants of the neighboring heights, which had not suffered from the flood, came down with provisions and clothes to the sufferers and offered them shelter in their own homes. This was very consoling and Martin, among others, expressed his most cordial thanks.

"But I only intend," said he, "to avail myself of your hospitable offer, while I am getting some food and clothes. I will then go to my brother, who lives in the mountains some miles away from us. You can scarcely have room for this large company of sufferers, but my brother has a large house in which he can easily accommodate me and my wife and children. As soon as good weather sets in and the spring returns, I shall come back and we will help each other to build up our houses. Be of good heart. God is never wanting to us when we do our duty. Mark my words—this great calamity will, in the end, bring blessings on us all!"

Chapter 3

The Faithful Dog

After Martin and Ottilia had fled from their house on the night of the flood, the swelling waters beat against the walls, which being made only of willows plastered with mud, soon gave way to the force of the torrent, which swept through the house and carried off all the furniture. The strong beams which supported the house resisted for a

short time. But before the roof fell in, the lost child had been carried in its cradle more than a mile from the current of the Rhine. But even there the flood had done great damage. All the villages and hamlets on the low lands were laid under water. Many persons ran imminent risk of their lives and the loss of property was enormous.

The cradle drifted towards a village situated on a height and thus secure from the raging waters. The inhabitants of the village beheld with terror furniture of all kinds carried down the current. Here a table or a chair—there chests and barrels—and on another side, the wheels of a mill and even entire roof-trees with the roof they supported.

A party of boys waded, as far as they safely could, into the water to get a good view of the surrounding scene. Suddenly one of the most quick-sighted among them cried out, "Look—there's a cradle drifting in the middle of the current." Another who was equally sharp-sighted, answered, "Yes, and there is a dog swimming after it and striving to push it towards the bank."

"Ah, but the poor dog is striving in vain," added a third, "he appears almost exhausted. The force of the current is too strong. The floating blocks of ice must stop him." There were some men busily engaged dragging furniture of all sorts out of the water with iron hooks fixed to long poles, and one of them, a young fisherman, as soon as he saw the cradle, said, "The child is surely in it. The faithful dog would never give himself such trouble if he were not. Come boys, come, and save the child. Let not a dog put us to the blush!"

The man sprang into a little boat and was instantly followed by two others, though they were in imminent danger of being crushed to pieces by the tumbling masses of ice. They reached the cradle in safety—found the child in it—and lifting it into the boat, carried it to the shore.

Crowds of people gathered around the cradle to see the child. Amongst them it happened that there was a rich wine merchant, who had walked out with his wife to see the flood and the havoc it was doing. The lady was most anxious to see the child, and at the request of her husband, the crowds made way for her. "O my Lord and God!" said she, as she bent over the cradle, "what a beautiful child! How softly it sleeps, unconscious alike of its danger and of its preservation! Truly the eye of heaven watches over that child!"

Some weeks ago this good lady had buried her only child. "See, dear Daniel," said she, addressing her husband, "how very like this child is to our own lost babe. It is of the same age, too. I think that our merciful God, who has taken away our own child, has sent us this as a present in its place. Do you not think I ought to bring home this poor babe with me and rear and educate it, if its parents have been drowned?"

Mr. Blank, with a benevolent smile, nodded his head, "Well, well," said he, "do so. We ought not be less charitable than these three brave men or that affectionate dog."

The bystanders were affected even to tears by the generous charity of Mr. Blank and his wife, and whispered among themselves that God sends good fortune when men least expect it, and that if He makes orphans, He moves merciful hearts to supply the parents' place.

The three fishermen had been so solicitous for the rescue of the child and the preservation of their own lives, that they forgot the dog. But the faithful animal soon reached the land safely and shook himself two or three times so violently that all the bystanders were sprinkled with water. The dog then began to bark for joy and wag his tail and fawn by turns upon the three brave fishermen, as if to show his thanks for the preservation of the child.

“This dog’s gratitude,” said Mr. Blank, “is an example for us?” He then took six pieces of gold out of his pocket and offered two to each of the men. “No, no,” said they, “what we did was for Christian charity and not for the sake of gain.”

“True,” returned Mr. Blank, “you have not sought any reward for your noble action, but it would not become me to withhold from you the slight reward I can afford. He who has promised to reward even one glass of cold water given in His name—He will most certainly reward your noble action. But in the meantime accept what I give cheerfully in the name of humanity, of which you have deserved so well.

“Well,” said the young fisherman, “let us take the money and assist our afflicted brethren in the neighboring village. They have had severe losses by this flood.”

The dog had, in the meantime, worked his way through the crowds that surrounded the cradle. The child was awakened by its loud and cheerful barking, and began to cry, but Mrs. Blank took the babe affectionately into her arms and kissed it. The poor babe anxiously cast its little blue eyes around, as if in search of something. “You are looking for your mother,” said Mrs. Blank, “but heaven knows where she is, perhaps she is buried in the waves. But do not cry. I will be mother to you.”

She brought the child to her house, which was a very fine one and surrounded by a large garden. The cradle was carried after her by one of the fishermen and the faithful dog followed of his own accord.

Chapter 4 The Affectionate Foster Parents

Mrs. Blank brought the child into her own chamber and immediately provided it with something to eat. She was most anxious to supply the place of a mother to it. With a small silver spoon, she fed it with the most delicate food she could procure. Then wrapping it in the finest baby-linen, ornamented with rose-colored ribbons, she carried it into the office to her husband.

“Look,” said she, “what a beautiful child God has sent us, with its curling locks of gold, its bright blue eyes, and rosy cheeks! How fresh and healthy it is! But it is a great pity that we do not know the name of the lovely babe. We must give it some name. What name, then, do you wish to give it?”

“Call him Moses,” said Mr. Blank, “for as God watched over the rush-basket of the infant Moses, so has He watched over this child’s cradle. Both were rescued from the waves. Moses is, therefore, the most appropriate name, and let us call him by it.”

“Ah! no, no,” said Mrs. Blank, “that name does not please me. It is not usual among Christians. What—if we call him Daniel? That’s your own name, and it was the name of our own dear child. The same name will make this child still more dear to me.”

Mr. Blank smiled, for his wife appeared to forget that Daniel was also a Jewish name. But he made no remark.

“Well,” said he, “let him be called Daniel. The name is a good one, and appropriate also, for as God saved Daniel in the lions’ den, he has saved this poor child from the most imminent peril. God grant that this child may be as pious, as intelligent, and as full of filial confidence in God, and as obedient to his commands as the young Daniel himself.”

“Let us hope so,” answered Mrs. Blank, as she gazed affectionately on the child. “He will certainly be as beautiful and blooming as Daniel. But come, my little Daniel, I must make a soft and comfortable bed for you, ornamented with muslin and the finest lace. All the little caps, stockings, and clothes that I had for my own son, must be yours—you must inherit them—for I must dress you as elegantly as I can.”

“But let us resolve above all,” said Mr. Blank, “to give him a pious and solid Christian education, which will be more useful to him than all the finery in which you intend to dress him.”

His wife answered that he was perfectly right, and that they should make this their special care, and grasping his hand, as a sign of her assent, she retired with the child to her chamber.

The faithful dog followed her and soon began to be perfectly at ease, when he found that the child was in safe hands. After he had taken some food, he sprang out of the house, plunged into the Rhine and swimming to the opposite side, ran rapidly along the bank and disappeared.

“Take care, dear Hildegard,” said Mr. Blank to his wife, “you will soon lose your foster-child. The dog has certainly returned to the child’s parents, and will bring them here in a few days.”

“Ah!” replied his wife, with a sigh, “I can easily imagine the grief of the parents. I know, by experience, how afflicting it is to lose a child. I would willingly restore the babe to its afflicted parents—still it would cost me some pangs to give it up now.”

“Well, we shall see what is to be done,” her husband answered, “we will wait for the return of the dog, which, in all probability, will not return alone.”

In about three days’ time, as Mr. Blank and his wife, who had the child in her arms, were sitting on the sofa, conversing together, the well-known dog entered the room. He fawned on the child, and on Mr. and Mrs. Blank, and for a while testified his joy by barking and wagging his tail. But after some time, he hung his head and appeared in great trouble, and did not show any inclination to leave the house any more.

“It must be,” said Mr. Blank, “that the poor affectionate fellow was unable to find the child’s parents. Very probably they were lost in the great inundation. We must take great care of the faithful creature, for he has given the best proof of his fidelity. And now, we must faithfully discharge to this child all the obligations for which we have made ourselves responsible. We must give him as good an education as our means will allow.”

Though this education was very different from that which his parents could have given him, still it was the same in the essential point. Mr. Blank was a man who valued religion above everything else. He attended to his business with assiduous care, and by his incorruptible integrity and upright conduct, was universally admired as the model of all true citizens. His wife resembled him in her unaffected piety. From the earliest morning to the evening’s repose, she was busily engaged in her domestic concerns. She was the perfect pattern of a virtuous housewife and was very charitable to the poor.

The maxim of this excellent couple might be expressed in the two words, “Labor and pray.” Family prayer was never neglected and Mr. Blank, himself, usually read a prayer or some chapter of a spiritual book. Morning and evening prayer were always said in common, as well as grace before and after meals. All the domestics and servants were obliged to attend the church on Sundays and holy days. Mr. Blank, himself, often spoke to them on the subject of the day’s sermon and he never spoke of God or of holy things without the most profound reverence.

All the pious sentiments of our holy religion were thus developed in the young Daniel,

even from his infancy. The business to which he was destined was of quite a different character from that which would have been his lot under his father's roof, where his days would have been spent with his brothers and sisters, assisting his father and mother in their laborious toil, without a hope of rising beyond their humble sphere. He was now educated in all branches necessary for the enterprising merchant, whereas farming would have been his business had he been at home. But the industry and integrity in which he was trained by Mr. Blank were the same as if he had been under his father's eye. The boy was well-instructed in the Christian religion and was obliged to attend at an excellent school. He had also the aid of the best tutors at home to acquire a knowledge of the French language, geography, history, and the natural sciences.

Both his adopted parents directed their united care to his education. The solemn earnestness of the father aided the gentle persuasive solicitude of the mother. While the gentleness of the mother tempered the sternness of the father. Towards the latter, Daniel had the deepest feelings of filial reverence, but the mother was the object of his heartfelt and confiding love. Fear checked every evil propensity in the bud. Love developed all his better qualities and turned them to good.

In a short time, he became a fine blooming boy, and by talents of a superior order, diligently cultivated, soon held the highest place in the school, where he made it his chief pleasure to direct his conduct and studies so as to please his adopted parents. Both loved him as their own child, and he believed that he really was so. They did not wish to tell him and he had no means of knowing the truth.

For when he was scarce two years old, Mr. Blank, having inherited a fine house and mercantile establishment near Cologne, removed there and sold the place where he had formerly lived. Every man in the city thought that Daniel was Mr. Blank's son and in fact, before they returned from Cologne, Mr. Blank had really adopted him, called him by his own name, and made him heir to a large portion of his property—and well did Daniel prove himself worthy of this favor—for every day he reflected more credit on them and was the joy of their hearts.

Chapter 5

Another Proof of the Dog's Sagacity

By the time that young Blank, for so he was usually called, had attained his fourteenth year, he was able to make himself useful in several departments of his foster-father's business. He wrote so beautiful a hand that all the mercantile correspondence was entrusted to him, and Mr. Blank had no trouble but to sign it. Whatever commissions were entrusted to him were always discharged with the strictest punctuality.

One evening, Mr. Blank sent him down to the Rhine to settle some accounts at the custom house. As the evening was fine, Daniel was delighted with the prospect of an agreeable walk through the city. He sallied forth, dressed in his summer frock of fine sea-green cloth, with his grey beaver hat, and gold-headed cane, and was followed by the faithful dog that had saved him from the flood, and was still strong after so many years.

Just as Daniel had done his business in the custom house, a ship cast anchor at the

pier. She had come up the Rhine and was to return next morning to Holland. The passengers landed and were instantly surrounded by a crowd of boys and porters, offering to carry their luggage and show them the way to the best hotel.

There was one respectable looking, but poorly dressed passenger, and when he was asked by one of the boys at which hotel he intended to stop, "Ah," said he, "a hotel would be too dear for me. I spend the night on board. I have a piece of brown bread for my supper and the well, or if necessary, the Rhine water will serve as my drink."

Daniel took pity on the poor man, who appeared to be a really intelligent and upright person, and approaching him nearer, said with a slight blush, "I hope you will not be offended if I offer you some of my pocket money to get a glass of wine. Wine is better for a tired traveler than water, especially river water."

"Kind young gentleman," answered the man, "I have never taken alms. But since you are so friendly and generous, I cannot refuse your offer. This is the first time that I have ever accepted alms. May heaven reward your kindness."

Before Daniel had accosted the stranger, the dog had gone to drink in the river, but the moment he came back, he sprung on the stranger, barked with all his might, and frisked and bounded, as if he were gone mad. "Waldi," exclaimed the man in amazement, "can this be you? After so many years have I found you at last? What brought you here?"

"This dog appears to know you well," said Daniel. "Did he ever belong to you?" "Indeed he did," answered the man. "I thought that my poor Waldi, my faithful dog, was lost fourteen years ago in the flood that destroyed my house. I never expected to see him again. But alas," continued he, brushing away the tears, "I had at that time a much heavier loss, which can never be repaired in this world."

Daniel asked what was this great affliction and was told how, in the great inundation that laid waste the banks of the Rhine, the poor traveller's house was destroyed. How himself and his wife, startled in the dead of night from their sleep, strained every nerve to save their four children, how their youngest child was left behind them in the confusion, and not remembered until it was too late, and how the poor infant was buried under the ruins of the house and the swollen waves of the river, and was never seen or heard of more.

The kind-hearted Daniel was affected to tears at the hapless fate of the poor child. He knew not that he himself was the very person whom he commiserated. He comforted the afflicted father and told him to bear his misfortune with submission to the will of God, who can turn even our ills to our greatest advantage. He then kindly shook hands with the traveler and was going to depart, but on retiring a few steps, found that the dog, notwithstanding all his efforts, would not leave his old master. It was evident, too, that the faithful creature was unwilling that Daniel should go away. He bounded before him and stood in his path as if to keep him back by force, and then returned to his old master.

When Daniel at last stood still, the dog remained midway between both and looked mournfully now to one and then to the other, as if to tell them to remain together and never more be separated. Again, when Daniel retired a few steps, and called the dog, he ran about as if in the greatest agony, but could not be induced to leave the man. This scene continued for half an hour and night was beginning to fall, when at last Daniel said, "I know not how to act. If the dog were mine, I would give him to you with pleasure, but he belongs to my father, Mr. Blank. Come along with me and let him decide the matter."

As they were returning together, the faithful dog testified his joy by his loud barking and merry frisking and fawning on his two masters.

Chapter 7

Meetings and Recognitions

Mr. Blank and his wife waited dinner until Daniel's return. He introduced the stranger and brought him into the parlor, which was lighted by two wax tapers that stood on a table covered with rich silver plate. As soon as Mr. Blank asked Daniel the cause of his delay, Daniel told the whole adventure of the dog, which was at once received as a sufficient apology.

Mr. Blank then asked the stranger how he had lost the dog, and the poor man, with visible emotion, told how, on that dreadful night of the inundation of the Rhine, he had lost not only his dog, but what afflicted him much more, his beloved child, a poor helpless infant. The thought at once struck Mr. Blank and his wife that the child must be their dear foster-child, Daniel, but Mr. Blank, like a prudent and cautious merchant, wished to know the full particulars of the matter. He sent Daniel into the office to make out an account for a foreign wine merchant, who had called for it in the morning, but was obliged to go away in a hurry without it to a distant country. As soon as Daniel retired, Mr. Blank asked the stranger his name and place of abode, the year and month, and all the circumstances of that terrible night, and among other things, asked him whether the dog had a collar on his neck.

"Certainly," answered the man, "he had a collar of red leather, marked with the letters J.M.B., the initials of my name, John Martin Brown."

"And what sort was the cradle in which the child lay?" asked Mrs. Blank. "It was made of deal," answered the man, "but it was painted red and blue."

Mr. Blank and his wife now fixed their eyes attentively on the stranger, and notwithstanding the wrinkles with which care and sorrow had furrowed his brow, discovered what they believed to be a striking resemblance to their adopted child.

"I have not the least doubt," at length Mr. Blank resumed, "that your son, who was swept away thirteen years ago in that flood of the Rhine, was saved from death and is still alive."

"What? how?" cried the man in the greatest amazement. "Oh, where is he? Where is he? Bring me to him at once."

"You saw him but a moment ago," Mr. Blank answered, "he is that very boy that brought you here."

"What?" cried the man, "that fine, generous youth! O my God, how wonderful are Thy ways!" Then, clasping his hands, and raising his eyes to heaven, he was silent for a time, till at length, bursting into a flood of tears, he eagerly inquired, "How was he preserved? How was he placed in this house and in this happy state?" Mr. Blank told in a few words how the child had been saved by the fidelity of the dog.

"We adopted the tender babe," he continued, "as our child and educated him. He has

always conducted himself well, and been to us the source of much happiness. We left him under the impression that he was really our child, and he still believes it. We must now tell him the whole truth, but as the secret is important, we must prepare him gradually for it. You, my friend, require some moments to refresh yourself. Daniel is coming, retire to this next chamber.”

“Most willingly,” answered the delighted father, “I am happy to be left a few moments alone to thank God on my bended knees for so unspeakable a blessing.”

Daniel entered the parlor with the account drawn up, and remarked, when he saw the dog and missed the stranger, “I hope, father, you have been able to send the poor man away happy.”

“My dear Daniel,” said Mr. Blank, “I have something to tell you. Sit down near me.” Then, after a brief introduction, he told him, “Those whom you have hitherto called father and mother are not your parents.”

Daniel was astounded at this announcement. So great was his astonishment that for several minutes he could not articulate a word. At last he cried, “Oh, how extraordinary has been your kindness, how unspeakable your love towards me. How can they ever be repaid by an adopted child! Henceforth my whole life shall be devoted to you. But why have you kept this secret so long? Surely you do not now intend to discard me.”

“Certainly not, but listen for a while,” said Mr. Blank. “You are the very child that was saved from the flood. The stranger you met below at the ship is your father.”

“That man!” exclaimed Daniel in amazement, “he appeared to me to be a very excellent and most amiable person.”

But in order to put Daniel’s affection to the test, Mr. Blank said, “That may be the fact, but then he is very poor, and by our care you are very rich. You have no need of him. In truth, in his present poor appearance, he would be no credit to you. I have a notion of giving him some money and sending him home.”

“Ah, my Lord and God,” exclaimed Daniel, starting from his seat, “surely it cannot be that you have sent him off to the ship already? O, let me go see him. I must once more gaze on the face of my father and weep in his arms. Ah, you were not serious in what you said. Though he were the poorest and most unfortunate man in the world, still he is my father. I would not be ashamed of him. I would divide all I have with him.”

The father overheard these words, which Daniel spoke in a loud and impassioned tone, and rushing from the chamber seized his son in his arms—“My son!” “My father!” were the only words that could be heard, as they hung upon each other shedding tears of joy.

Chapter 7 Beneficence and Gratitude

Mrs. Blank now ordered dinner. The stranger was hospitably entertained and soon convinced his kind host, by his animated and intelligent conversation, that he was a sensible and prudent man.

Among many other questions, he was asked what was the cause of his long journey. He told them that he was on his way to Holland to take possession of a small inheritance which had fallen to him. “Before the fatal flood,” he continued, “I was in very comfortable

circumstances, but that terrible blow brought me to the ground. I was obliged to rebuild my house and out-offices from the foundation, to provide new furniture, and to put a new stock on my farm, vineyard, and bleach-green. This I could not do without running into debt. The ten following years, owing to the severity of the preceding winters, were unfavorable to my vines, and ever since we have had but few productive vintages, so that notwithstanding all my industry and economy I could not clear off my debts. The news of a legacy even of some hundred florins was most welcome. But as some difficulty was raised against my taking possession, I resolved to go in person to manage the affair. Whether I shall succeed in getting the money or not, is a question which cannot be settled for some time."

"Of course you have procured all the necessary documents," asked Mr. Blank.

"Certainly," Martin answered, taking out his pocket-book and submitting all his papers to Mr. Blank, who ran over them rapidly and found them all correct. Still it was very doubtful whether Martin could make good his claim, at least it was certain that he should be obliged to make some considerable reduction, and all things considered, the expenses of his journey, of his support in Holland, and of the law costs, very little of the original claim would be available to him.

But Mr. Blank, who was generous as he was rich, resolved to assist him. "It occurs to me," said he, "that this journey to Holland is very severe on you. You may be detained there for a considerable time and have some trouble in securing this money. I will pay you the full amount of your claim, provided you give me a commission to prosecute it and I can employ my correspondent in Hamburg to get the money for me."

Martin was glad to embrace this good offer and returned his most hearty thanks to his kind host, though he was not aware of the real extent of the favor received, nor that the greater part of the money was really a donation.

Mrs. Blank, who was as kind and affectionate as her husband, now made many inquiries after Martin's wife and his other children. "Now, Martin," said she, "since you need not go to Holland, you must remain a few days with us. Daniel shall then accompany you home and spend some time with you, for as he was so happy as to find his dear father, he must also see his long lost mother. His sisters, too, how happy will he be to see them! We shall get an opportunity for you, my dear friend, on returning with your child to your own home."

Martin was so overwhelmed with joy that he could not suppress his emotions and often declared that he did not think such good people could be found on earth. The tears rolled down his cheeks as he repeated, "Never can I be sufficiently grateful to that good God who has so mercifully rescued my child from the waves, and placed him in the hands of such virtuous persons, who have brought him up in piety, to be restored now, almost miraculously, to my arms."

Daniel, whose breast glowed with the purest joy and most filial love, gazed intently on the face of his now happy father. He was impatient to hear more of his mother than had been told in the preceding conversation. But so long as Mr. Blank continued to speak, modesty forbade him to put any questions. Now, however, he asked his father to give him more news of his mother and sisters.

Martin was happy to comply. It was a topic on which he was eloquent. He praised the piety, industry, economy, and other domestic virtues of his wife. He told, with a father's pride, the good qualities and bright promise of his two sons and two daughters, their attention to their religious duties, their reverence for their parents, their modest, sensible, and industrious conduct. So eloquent was he on this subject, so heartfelt and

impassioned his praise of his family, that all listened to him with delight, nor was there the slightest doubt that what he said was true and that he himself was the head of a happy family, where peace and contentment had fixed their abode.

Daniel was overjoyed at this intelligence and looked forward with delight to his meeting with his mother and sisters.

When they began to speak of the journey, Daniel expressed a wish to bring some presents to his mother and sisters. "It is fortunate," said he, "that my pocket money is abundant. I would be doubly happy in expending it, if I knew what would please them."

"I must help you to make your purchases," said Mrs. Blank, "and you must also bring a few presents from myself." Mr. Blank, also, insisted that he should be allowed to offer his contribution.

Next morning, Mrs. Blank and Daniel purchased several valuable articles for the father and selected what they knew would be the most welcome presents to the mother and her daughters. The servants of the warehouse came home loaded with the purchases, and even Daniel himself had two parcels under his arm. When they arrived, and when Mrs. Blank had exhibited her presents on a long table, Daniel's father was agreeably surprised. He would have expressed his gratitude when Mrs. Blank pointed out what was intended for himself, but Mr. Blank interrupted him, "Not a word!" said he. "To what purpose has God given some persons more wealth than they want, if they are not willing to share with those who have less? Rich men, if they could but understand it, could purchase more real pleasure by generosity than by a thousand other things on which they waste their money. They would feel, by happy experience, how perfectly true are the words of our divine Redeemer, 'It is happier to give than to receive.'"

Chapter 8

Other Happy Events

A friend of Mr. Blank, who had some business in Maintz, offered to accompany Daniel and his father. From that town they were to take the mail for home and all the necessary expenses were defrayed by Mr. Blank. The faithful dog followed the coach, or when he was tired, sat very composedly by the coachman's side. Daniel had got the old collar newly covered with red leather, and the initials J.M.B., together with the other brass ornaments, were all restored with the most brilliant polish. And as Daniel observed, "The faithful dog deserved it well."

When they approached home and saw the white linen glistening through the green trees around the bleach, the dog recognized the spot and dashed on before them. Ottilia and her daughters happened to be watering the linen and the two sons were employed in the vineyard. The dog leaped on Ottilia, its old mistress, and showed its joy by loud barking and merry friskings. Ottilia was at a loss to know how the dog, that had never made his appearance since the terrible night, could have found them at last. The eldest daughter remembered him, but he did not know her. The two sons who had seen him from the vineyard, came down, but the eldest boy, George, was sadly grieved to receive no sign of recognition from his old play-fellow, Waldi.

Before the mother and her children had recovered from their surprise at the unexpected return of the dog, they heard the merry notes of the postilion's horn. The

horses dashed rapidly through the little village and suddenly drew up at Martin's house. "What can this be?" said Ottilia. "What does the coach want here? It must be some blunder of the coachman?" As she approached the coach, she was met by her husband. They embraced affectionately, but then earnestly looking about her, she anxiously inquired, "For heaven's sake, Martin, what can be the meaning of this? Travelling by extra post—and yourself dressed out in gorgeous finery—and that rich collar on poor Waldi. You must have paid dearly for them. I certainly had a better opinion of your management. This legacy, I fear, has turned your head. If you begin to live in this costly way, you shall soon find the bottom of your purse."

Martin answered with a smile, "Don't be angry now, dear Ottilia. Let me unpack my affairs—you will find there is not one penny of the legacy spent." He opened the box, which the postilion was just bringing in, and taking up a heavy purse, emptied its contents on the table. "Oh! kind heaven!" exclaimed Ottilia. "I never saw such a heap of money in my whole life. It dazzles my eyes and almost turns my head. But tell me, then, how did you dress yourself out in this gay fashion?"

"That is not all," said he, "you and the children shall be so too." He then unpacked the rich presents which Mrs. Blank had provided to suit the tastes of the mother and her two sons and daughters. The table was scarcely able to hold them. "Oh! this is too much," Ottilia exclaimed, "I am at a loss to know what to think. Do tell me how you got all these costly articles?" "From my fellow-traveler," answered Martin, pointing at the same time to Daniel.

Chapter 9

The Happiness of Good Parents and Good Children

Up to this moment, Daniel had stood at one side, almost totally unobserved by the mother and children. He enjoyed the transports of his mother and sisters, and was delighted to see them look so happy and well. His mother, whom he had yearned to see, now turned full towards him and looking intently at him, "This fine young man," said she, "brought us all these presents. Who then, can he be?"

Martin raised his eyes to heaven, clasped his hands, and said with the animation and solemnity of a father, who had something great to announce, "Hear, and be astonished, and adore the holy providence of God. See, dear Ottilia," he continued, "this good, noble young man, is your son Gaspar—the son whom we believed lost in that terrible flood. A rich merchant—a most generous man—has adopted him as his own son, and Gaspar, or as he is now called, Daniel, has it in his power to provide for his sisters, and secure for his parents a happy old age." The mother and sisters were so prepared for all kinds of happiness, by what they had already seen and heard, that the sudden announcement of this crowning happiness was not attended with any bad effect.

Martin then told how the cradle must have found its way through the broken walls of his house. How it floated down the stream and was followed by the dog, who endeavored, but in vain, to rescue the child. How the attention of the people on shore was, at length, attracted to the poor baby, which thus owed its life to the fidelity of the dog.

"But why do I speak of the dog," said he, "however much I must esteem his fidelity?"

Without the consent of God, not even a sparrow falls to the ground—it was He that preserved my child—it is He that in His boundless wisdom and goodness, has made the animals of the earth subservient to the uses of man—Him, the merciful and Almighty Father of men, we should all bless—to Him alone our thanks are due.” The father, mother, Daniel himself, his brothers and sisters, even the postilion, who was still waiting, were deeply affected and with tears streaming down their cheeks, returned ardent thanks to the Supreme Ruler of the World.

Daniel could restrain himself no longer. He fell upon his mother’s bosom, while she clasped him in her arms, and wept over him such tears as she had never shed before. He then embraced his sisters—but who can describe the happiness of that family?

Daniel’s brothers and sisters were, at first, somewhat shy. They feared he might be too high for them to feel perfectly at ease with him. They could, as yet, scarcely believe that he was their brother. No doubt, there was a very striking difference between him and his brothers. His elegant clothes, made in the fashion of a citizen of the first rank, his delicate complexion, correct accent, and the ease and grace of his whole deportment, contrasted forcibly with the rustic plainness, weather-beaten complexions, and homely address of his two brothers. Yet, so perfectly free was he from pride, so affable and modest, so cordial and friendly, that the brothers and sisters were soon at home with him, and conversed as intimately as if they had never been separated.

They brought him through the farm, the vineyard, and the surrounding country. They pointed out to him all the charms of a country life. He knew many things, and spoke of many things, of which they were totally ignorant. But they, also, knew many other things to which he was entirely a stranger. Having been brought up in a city and rarely outside its gates, he scarcely could tell the different kinds of the most common grain, while they knew, by name, every little flower of the field.

As they were walking near a small field of flax, when he saw its beautiful blossoms, he asked, with surprise, “What was the use of all the tender blue flowers? For what were they planted?” He had often smiled at their simplicity, but it was their turn now. For whether they willed or no, they could not suppress a hearty laugh at his expense. But the moment they perceived a blush of shame kindling on his cheeks, they checked their merriment, and the two sisters gave him a full history of the flax, from the small grain of seed which is deposited in the earth, up to the yellow wreaths of soft fibers that look like golden hair, and then the long, delicate threads, which are woven together into fine linen of all sorts, like those he had brought with him from Mr. Blank. “There are many things I see,” said Daniel, “which I know nothing of. But it must be so, every man must know his own business.”

“That is very true,” observed the father, “but however different your education may be in other respects, piety and industry must be always paramount. These ought to be equally prized by all ranks, by the farmer after his plow, the merchant or student at his desk, and the king upon his throne.”

One morning, the father, mother, and sisters accompanied Daniel to the top of the hill, whither they had retreated on the awful night of the inundation. The mother told her son what anguish she had suffered, and how she had wept for his loss, and what universal woe oppressed the group on that hill when they looked down upon the angry waves, sweeping over the ruins of their little town.

“But,” said the father, “it has been rebuilt and is now handsomer than before. I said at the time this great calamity would lead to good, and has it not come to pass? Our villagers and neighbors are more trustful in prayer and in their dependence on God.

They are more firmly convinced of their obligations to Him and of His all presiding power. Their industry, which a long course of prosperity had relaxed, acquired a fresh stimulus and many, whom wealth and abundance had made proud and prodigal, have from that time become mild, humble, and industrious.

“By that calamity God called into action many generous hearts to relieve our necessities, for the very morning after the flood, good men were ready to help us. I could enumerate a thousand noble instances. We have had also since that time more harmony and love in our village—enmities ceased—every one strove to forget past feuds, and we assisted each other cordially in our necessities.

“But how can I tell what good God has done to me and my family? Who could think that we should ever see, and in such happy circumstances, that infant whom we mourned as lost? Who could imagine, when we were huddled together on this hill during that dreadful night, that we should all meet on this same spot this joyful morning? But even then God ordained this happiness for us, and saw us together as He beholds us now. Hence, my constant maxim was—‘Never despair, no matter how ill things may go. They shall be brought to good at last. God turns all things to good either in this world or the next.’”

But to conclude. Mr. Blank having satisfied himself of Martin’s integrity, and of his skill in the culture of vines, gave him charge of the large vineyard where he himself lived before Daniel had been saved from the flood. Martin accordingly resigned his own vineyard and bleach-green to his eldest son, and taking with him his wife and remaining children, came to live to the property entrusted to him by Mr. Blank. Daniel, on whom all the property in trade was made over, was established in the city, where he had the best means of providing for his sisters, which he faithfully effected. Many a time had the old pair, Martin and Ottilia, with hearts full of gratitude, good reason to say, “God not only saved our child from the flood, but even made that very flood the source of innumerable blessings to our whole family. Had not that blow fallen on us, we could have done but very little for them, but now all are happily provided. God is the never-failing guardian in the hour of need!”

Their children continued to the last to be their pride and their joy. Daniel was a dutiful son, the prop and consolation of their declining years, and through his entire life never failed to illustrate the precious fruits of a good early education.

The End

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