

ANSELMO

Written in 1849

By Christopher von Schmid

Chapter 1 Anselmo

One beautiful spring morning, Anselmo, a noble youth of sixteen, was returning along the sea shore from Salerno, at that time the seat of the most celebrated of all the Italian universities, for the purpose of spending the Easter holidays in his father's castle. The country was decked out in all the gorgeousness of spring, which, in that happy soil of Italy, is about a month earlier than with us. The sea sparkled under the deep red beams of the rising sun. Anselmo's heart glowed with pious emotion, and he could not refrain from kneeling down to adore the Creator of all these wondrous objects—the sun, the heaven, the earth, and the sea.

He remained a long time in this kneeling posture, then arose, and hastened joyously on, his heart full of the pleasure he should have in seeing his beloved parents once more. His family belonged to the old nobility, but their rich and extensive inheritance had suffered greatly in the war, and in consequence their circumstances were now very limited.

To their son, however, they gave what their means still allowed, and what is beyond all the riches of the world, an excellent education. From his tenderest childhood they taught him to know and love God, to trust in Him, and in Him to seek his only happiness. They procured for the young man, who was very talented, instructions in all the necessary acquirements, and even in the ornamental accomplishment suited to his rank. And they had sent him to the university, denying themselves many an indulgence, in order that he might be able to live there in a manner befitting his birth.

On his own side, he avoided every unnecessary expense, led a very frugal and retired life, and took no share in the costly amusements to which his young fellow-students, of the same age and condition, invited him. He did not conceal that his purse was not as well-stocked as theirs, and in truth, he was very glad that he was able to give so good an excuse and thus devote his time exclusively to his studies.

And now, with the view of saving his parents expense, he was journeying homeward, not on horseback, nor in a carriage, but on foot. And being stout and active, he found this pedestrian expedition extremely agreeable.

His path lay through a dense grove of laurel and wound around an angle of the cliff. On turning it, he observed, quite unexpectedly, a ship which lay at anchor. A number of swarthy-visaged men, in a strange and very remarkable costume, were drawing water at a fountain, which gushed forth from the rock. They were Algerine pirates! and no sooner did they espy the defenseless youth, than they sprang upon him, like tigers upon a lamb, seized him, dragged him into the ship, stripped him of his rich dress, put upon him a coarse sackcloth slave's dress, and a low-crowned hat, chained him hand and foot, and stowed him away among the other Christian prisoners whom they had captured at sea or on land.

The captives saluted their new and interesting fellow-prisoner with loud expressions of condolence, and some of them burst into floods of tears for the melancholy destiny which awaited them all in common.

When Anselmo had recovered from his first terror, he folded his hands, manacled as they were, and raised his eyes to heaven. His emotions quite overcame him.

“O merciful and all-powerful God,” he prayed aloud, “who didst make the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, Thou hast permitted this affliction to befall me. Grant me Thy grace to live resigned to Thy will, to pass unharmed through this ordeal, and to be found without blemish in Thy sight! Comfort my beloved parents and family. Alas! my father and mother expected my return tomorrow evening. They will come with my little brothers and sisters to meet me! O, how will they be distressed when they fail to meet me and cannot discover what has befallen me! Perhaps all their inquiries after me may prove fruitless. Nevertheless, I place my trust in Thee, dearest Father in heaven—Thou wilt restore me to their arms—Thou wilt change their tears and mine into joy once more—Thou forsakes not those who trust in Thee—the rocks may totter, and the mountains may fall into the sea, but Thy love and truth endure forever!”

His fellow-captives, who for the most part were Italians, heard and understood his prayer, and were deeply affected by his pious confidence in God. Throwing off all reserve towards the pious young man, they asked him his history, who he was, whence he was coming, and whither he had been travelling, and told him their own history in return. A young lawyer, of a tall and majestic figure, who knew Anselmo’s family, was very attentive to him. This man, of a worthy family and highly accomplished, having completed his studies under great difficulties (for he had been left an orphan and in great destitution), had just obtained, as he told Anselmo, with tears in his eyes, a judicial appointment, and was on his way to conduct his bride to the ship which was to bring her to her new home. “But alas!” said he, “instead of the tender bond which would have united me to her forever, I am doomed to wear these hateful chains!”

A young sailor bewailed nothing but his aged and helpless parents, whom he had hitherto maintained by the wages of his perilous and laborious calling. “Ah!” said he, “they must now be a prey to the most extreme want, famine, and distress.”

A fisherman, who was somewhat advanced in years, was the saddest of them all. Silent and abstracted, he sat at the farthest extremity of the ship, his head leaned upon his hand, and the tears streamed down his cheeks. He was the father of five young children and was overcome by anxious thoughts of what would now be their fate, and that of their pious and virtuous mother.

Anselmo drew near him, took him affectionately by the hand, reminded him of God’s holy providence, and how God turns all things to our good, and will never fail to justify His title—“Father of the widow and the orphan.” Even in the depth of their misery, the poor man and the other prisoners listened to him with great piety. The appearance of the handsome noble-looking youth, the wisdom of his words, the kindness which he displayed for all, and his cheerfulness under his bonds, by degrees aroused every one of his companions and gave them fresh courage. The old fisherman stood up, “Our good God,” he cried, “has sent us this youth to console us. Like him, we will put our trust in God. I myself now cherish the hope that God will convert our very chains into a blessing for us.”

The young sailor intoned the beautiful “Sicilian Mariner’s Hymn,” so famed for its soft and simple melody, and as all the prisoners in the ship were Christians, they joined in the chant, selecting those verses especially which were most adapted to afford consolation in their present affliction.

Chapter 2 The Slave

Meanwhile, Anselmo, as the ship sailed upon her voyage, watched with sorrowing eyes his native land, his beloved Italy, as it receded farther and farther from his sight. The hills and mountains, the churches and palaces, diminished gradually in size, and at last entirely disappeared, and nothing now met his gaze but the sky and sea around him.

The pirates cruised about for several days, in the hope of meeting and capturing Christian ships. They were disappointed in their hopes, but on the contrary, to their terror they discovered one day the white sails of a large ship of war which followed in their track.

The Christian captives were secretly rejoiced, and cherished a hope of regaining their liberty. But the pirates compelled them with stripes to take up the oars and they themselves rowed with all their might, and set all sail upon the ship. The war-ship gained upon them somewhat, but she sailed too slowly to overtake them. Night came on and the Christians sighed to see their hopes thus prostrated to the earth, while the pirates exulted in the certain prospect of escaping.

When the morning dawned, the war-ship was no more to be seen. Anselmo, who had begun to think that his prayer was already heard, was very much downcast, and could not restrain his tears. But he soon recovered his spirits, and said to his fellow-captives, "Well, if God has not heard our prayer immediately, yet be assured He will not leave it unheard. He alone knows how to dispose the fitting time, and trust me, the hour shall yet come which will deliver me and you, my comrades in misfortune, from the hands of those unbelievers!"

Before the lapse of an hour, they saw the great city of Algiers rising up, as it were, from the sea, in the beams of the morning sun. Built on the declivity of a hill and rising street above street, the rows of houses came into view, one after another, in regular succession, and the Turkish mosques, surmounted by the glittering crescent, instead of the cross, were a bitter sight for poor Anselmo's piety.

The ship came into harbor, the prisoners were landed, and after a short repose were marched through the narrow, filthy streets of the city to the great market-place. Here they were exposed to inspection and sale, like cattle in a market. First came a crowd of the lowest rabble, gazing unfeelingly upon the captive Christians, and insulting and mocking them with loud laughter, and every most opprobrious name they could devise.

By and by, a number of the wealthy inhabitants of the city appeared. They passed amid the rows of the captives and examined them one after the other, as one, intending to purchase, will inspect a horse. Huge stones and beams lay in readiness upon the market-place, to prove the strength of the slaves who were submitted for sale. The Turks compelled them to lift these and carry them up and down the street, and then commenced eagerly to bargain about the price. Several sales were effected. The lawyer and the young sailor were sold for a very large price, but Anselmo, who could not lift any of the heavy stones, was laughed at. He was thought too feeble for slave-labor, and the purchasers passed him contemptuously by.

At a little distance stood an old wrinkled Jew, looking, as it seemed, with great indifference upon the sale. He was dressed in black, his beard was white as snow, and he wore a three-cornered hat. When all the slaves except Anselmo were sold off, he came forward, looked at him, with a shake of the head, asked to see his hands, and condemned them, as indicating by their whiteness that he was unused to labor.

"But I suppose," said he, in Italian, "you must have learned something. What have you applied yourself to?"

Anselmo thought that in his present condition it would not be right to conceal his talents, if he hoped to improve it. He said that it was chiefly in writing he had been employed, and that he could write both French and Italian.

“Hem!” said the Jew, “that is something. And what more do you know?” Anselmo answered that he knew Latin and Greek.

“Alas!” said the Jew, “that is worth nothing for the Turks. We have little use for such wares in this country. Do you know nothing more?”

Anselmo replied that he could play the lute and sing.

“It is a pity,” said the Jew, “that we have not a lute to try you. But at all events, you can sing us a pretty song.”

Anselmo, who had a charming voice, as well as exquisite taste in singing, forced himself to sing.

“Well,” said the Jew, “that is not so bad.” And he offered three gold pieces for Anselmo, which, after long bargaining, he advanced to ten. When the merchants still asked more and refused to conclude, he shrugged his shoulders, turned away, and was going home, when they called him back, and gave him their poor young prisoner for the ten pieces.

Anselmo was mortified that he was sold at so cheap a rate, compared with the other slaves, but he consoled himself by reflecting that Joseph and even Christ Himself were sold for a few paltry pieces of silver. “Yet,” said he, “Joseph’s being sold was, in the end, the source of blessings to himself and many others, and the scandalous sale of Christ was the salvation of the world. Perhaps, under God’s providence, mine also may lead to some good result.”

The Jew, whose name was Yussuf, was a merchant and a dealer in slaves, but only in a particular line. He would not have anything to do with slaves destined for vulgar and coarse employments, but he had the knack of finding out promising young persons capable of the higher occupations, which demand more skill and dexterity. He made it a point always to purchase cheaply, and had cleverness enough to dispose of them at a very high rate, and he hoped to make a large profit by Anselmo.

“The graceful and noble figure of this handsome youth,” said he to his bookkeeper, when he came home, “the talent which I think I can see in his eyes, his bearing, which, even in his slave’s dress, bespeaks good parentage—all inspire me with the hope that I shall be able to dispose of him as attendant or companion, or a sort of page in some distinguished family.”

He desired that Anselmo should be brought to a lute-maker, and told him to select the handsomest and best-toned lute he could find. At the same time, charging the servant to make as close a bargain as he could. Anselmo brought home an excellent instrument, and Yussuf said to him, “Now play and sing.” Anselmo chose a passage from one of the Psalms, many of which he knew by heart—

***“Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept
When we remembered Zion;
On the willows in the midst thereof we hung up our instruments.
For then they that led us into captivity required of us
The words of songs,
And they that carried us away, said, ‘Sing ye to us a
Hymn of the songs of Zion.’
How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my hand be forgotten,
Let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I do not remember thee;
If I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy.”***

Yussuf was greatly moved, and the tears stood in his eyes. “Oh, that is beautiful!” said he, “that is very beautiful—it touches the heart. For we, Israelites, still live, as our fathers once

did, under the willows of Babylon, far from our fatherland—yea, we are dispersed over the whole wide world.”

“Oh!” said Anselmo, “all men alike here on earth are dwellers in a strange land. Our only true fatherland is heaven!”

“You are right,” said Yussuf. “That is true—quite true. You speak very sensibly. I did not imagine that you were so versed in our sacred hymns, and understood so well their hidden meaning. I am now doubly delighted with my purchase. Your style of singing, too, as far as I can judge, is very good. It will be the means of recommending you to a good place, and,” he inwardly thought, “will bring me a fine price.”

However, he was not in any hurry to dispose of Anselmo. He wished to train him first, as he had often done in similar cases, in the customs and usages of the Turks, and especially to teach him their language, that he might be able to speak with his future master, and to understand and execute his orders. He himself instructed him in the Turkish language, and he was amazed at the rapidity of his progress.

Those who knew Yussuf solely as a man of business, took him to be a very close, narrow-minded man, who calculated everything, even to a farthing. But in reality he was no miser, but rather liberal and benevolent. His treatment of Anselmo was very good, according to the usages of the country. He gave him rice and lamb, with dates and olives, and occasionally a slice of fat goose. To be sure there was in all this a view to his own interest. “I must not let the boy,” thought he, “lose his fair, healthy appearance, else his sale will be spoiled.”

The room which he assigned to Anselmo was one of the best in the house, but still, being designed for slaves, it had a gloomy and disagreeable appearance. And it was a hard task for the youth to reconcile himself to it, having always been accustomed to cheerful, pleasant, and richly-furnished apartments.

Writing a very fine hand, he was obliged to copy a great number of accounts and bills, and bitterly regretted the loss of the time which he might so much more profitably have devoted to his studies at the university. Often he was obliged, for a whole day long, to assist in the packing and unpacking of goods, which he found a very fatiguing occupation. But he accepted all these trials as from God’s hand, and bore them with patience, and he was always cheerful and gay like an angel of God.

Chapter 3

The Turkish Family

After the lapse of a year, Yussuf came in one day in high spirits, smiling and rubbing his hands with glee.

“I think,” said he to Anselmo, “I may now congratulate you. I have discovered a most capital place for you. I am sure you will find yourself quite happy there, and they will all be delighted with you.”

He provided him with a rich suit of the most becoming colors, desired him to take his lute, and brought him to a house in the city, which had quite the appearance of a palace. A servant, in rich livery, announced them, and in a short time returned, and showed them into a splendid apartment.

The master of the house, a handsome, high-complexioned Turk, magnificently attired in the national costume, was seated on a richly embroidered sofa, in front of which a variegated carpet was spread. He was smoking what seemed to be the finest tobacco from a long handsome pipe, and his coffee was placed beside him, served up in exquisite porcelain, upon a beautiful little table.

"I have been told," said the Turk to Anselmo, "that you are a good singer and play well upon the lute. Pray, let me have a specimen of your skill."

"I cannot sing in the language of this country," said Anselmo modestly. "I know no songs but Italian."

"Very well," said the Turk, "sing and play whatever you know best."

Anselmo, who found himself transplanted from the mild climate of Italy to the scorching sands of Africa, and who, among the prisoners in Algiers, had become acquainted with several that were natives of the cold north, sang thus—

***God, the Almighty Father, holds,
In His right hand this earthly ball,
And o'er the circling world proclaims
A Father's love to each and all.***

***O then, in every age and clime,
Let each his tuneful praise accord
To Him who rules the world in love,
And own a Father in his Lord.***

The Turk listened with great attention, smoked his pipe with a gratified air, nodded his approval repeatedly, and at the end of the song exclaimed, "Bravo! You quite surpass my expectation, and I am sure your other attainments, which Yussuf reported to me, must be equally satisfactory."

He put to him a vast number of questions and was pleased with Anselmo's replies.

"Very well," said he at last, "I believe you. I have no doubt you really possess all the qualities which I desire."

He stood up and went into a neighboring room, the door of which was half open. They heard him speak to someone, but could not hear what it was about. After a while he returned, and paid over upon the spot to Yussuf, who was delighted with his success, a hundred gold pieces. While it was being counted out, Yussuf stood by, stroking his beard. Then with an air of extreme delight, he put it into a leathern purse which he brought with him.

"Your excellency," said he to the Turk, "will be well-pleased with your bargain. And you, Anselmo, will, I am sure, show by your conduct that you are worth the money. Farewell! God the Father protect you!"

The Turk, in whose service Anselmo was thus placed, was called Achmed, and was a very wealthy and extensive merchant, as well as an official of high rank in the city. He told Anselmo that he would entrust to him chiefly his Italian and French correspondence, and mentioned to him the other duties which he would have to perform in the house. Among other things, it would be his office to attend at table, and as it was now dinner-hour, Achmed desired him to prepare the table, which he did with great neatness and taste.

Only four persons appeared at table—Achmed, his wife Fatima, and his two children, a boy of nine and a girl of six years old. The lady, who now raised the veil which had covered her features, was extremely beautiful, and the children, who seemed to be very well-bred and amiable, greeted the young stranger affectionately, and watched him with great curiosity.

Anselmo attended at table with great diligence and ease. He understood every signal and often anticipated their wishes. At the end of the meal. Achmed declared, that “they had never been served so well, with so much quickness and activity.”

The lady had already, from the next apartment, heard Anselmo’s singing and playing. “You sing and play very beautifully,” said she. “I should like to hear another of your pretty songs.”

Anselmo took his lute, and as he had remarked, with emotion, the love of these parents for their children, and the love of the two children for their parents, he sang with exquisite taste and feeling, in Italian, the following song—

***Their little ones when parents read
In holy fear and love,
And children round their parents dear
In filial reverence move,
Well-pleased the one Great Father o’er them bends,
And from above a heavenly peace descends.***

***From Him it is all blessings flow,
His love no tongue can tell,
Nor friend nor parent here below
Can love us half so well.
Theirs only is the streamlet in its course,
Which from th’ Almighty’s bosom takes its source.***

***And O, far more may He our love,
Than tenderest parents claim!
Then love Him truly, and improve
Each hour to praise His name.
So will this world become a heaven below
Where men, like angels, joys divine shall know.***

Achmed and his wife listened to him with great pleasure. The children were quite delighted. “The song is beautiful,” said the little boy. “What a pity that we don’t understand a word of it!”

“I should like to learn to sing so,” said the little girl.

“And I will learn to accompany you on the lute,” added her brother.

“Ah!” said his sister, “that must be very difficult. It is easier to sing—I can sing a little myself already,” and in her soft, sweet, little voice, she began a little Turkish song.

“Very good!” cried her father, “Anselmo shall instruct you.”

The children were delighted and Anselmo assured them that he would do so with pleasure. The children soon were quite attached to him, and this gratified the parents very much, and won for Anselmo their entire affection and their special confidence.

Chapter 4 The Lion

After a few weeks, Achmed and his family removed to their country residence, taking Anselmo with them. This property, which was a fine one, lay far in the interior, near the mountains, and Achmed had a large house upon it, and a garden which was almost a

paradise. Rich flower-beds of every variety of hue gave it a most captivating appearance, and the long rows of trees were laden with oranges, pomegranates, figs, and other delicious fruits.

The garden opened into a beautiful mulberry plantation, in which the silk-worms thrived without any care, and hung their webs, like golden fruits, upon the branches of the trees. Vines, trained high upon elms, clambered from tree to tree, adorning them with the richest clusters of grapes, which seemed as if they were the natural fruit of these forest trees. Farther off was a vast olive grove which also belonged to the estate, and a multitude of slaves were at that very time engaged in gathering the olives, which yielded olive oil of the choicest kind.

In the evening, when the heat of the day was somewhat abated, Achmed, accompanied by his wife, the two children, and Anselmo, went to visit the laborers. The sun had already gone down, and the wearied laborers sat at their supper, at some distance from the olive grove. A few steps farther on they had kindled a fire, at which they had cooked their supper, but which was now only a heap of red ashes, and had almost ceased to smoke.

Achmed and Fatima went on a little farther to look at the mountain, whose lofty cedar-crowned peak still gleamed in the evening sun, though the valley was already sunk in shade. The children ran about on the green sward. The little boy espied a bird singing its evening song upon a bush, and the little girl discovered a shrub, around which were hovering a number of insects, which were much prettier and more brilliant than fire-flies, and to the child had all the appearance of flying diamonds.

But on a sudden, there appeared, rushing down from the mountain, a fearful lion, with bristling mane and gaping jaws. Every one fled in consternation and pale as death, to the house, but little Almira, who could not run so fast, remained behind, and the terrible beast was very close upon her, when Anselmo seized from the fire, with sudden self-possession, a brand which still was red, and swung it around till it began to glow again, to sparkle, and at last to blaze furiously.

Whirling before him this fiery wheel, he advanced boldly against the fearful animal. He knew that such animals were afraid of fire. The lion paused, stood still, shook his mane menacingly, uttered a roar which echoed back like thunder from the mountain, and then, still looking with fiery eyes at the daring youth, retired a few steps. The savage beast stood still, once more uttered a still more terrific roar, and waited, as it were, prepared for a spring. Anselmo was not terrified, but still advanced with his fiery weapon. The lion quailed, stood still a third time, but turning, at last, trotted away to the mountain, and disappeared in the thickening gloom of the approaching night.

Almira, meanwhile, had reached her mother, who had turned around at the child's mournful cry, but paralyzed with fear, had tried in vain to come to her aid, though, in truth, she could have afforded her none. Almira sank, fainting, into the arms of her mother, who clasped her to her breast, and bathed her pale face with a mother's burning tears.

The father looked up gratefully to heaven, and embraced Anselmo with the liveliest emotion. Little Aladin patted his sister's cheek tenderly.

"Thank God!" said he, "that you have escaped alive. If Anselmo had not been there, the lion would have eaten you up, and I should have cried myself to death!" The father and mother advanced, and praised Anselmo's heroism, and he thought himself most happy in having saved the dear child's life, and as soon as he reached his little bedroom, threw himself on his knees, and thanked God for having given him courage and strength to save a fellow-creature's life.

Chapter 5 The Offered Reward

Anselmo never, in all his life, slept so well as on this night, nor did he ever rise so cheerfully as the next morning, in the consciousness of having achieved so noble an action on the preceding day. He repaired to the garden and watched the rising of the sun. He thought he had never seen it rise so gloriously before. The heavens never appeared to him so beautiful as a blue. The tints of the flowers appeared to him fresher and more vivid, and every drop of dew seemed to sparkle with greater brilliancy. Everything around proclaimed to him, more sweetly than ever, the bounty and goodness of God. Never before did the prayer come so devoutly from his heart. His prayer arose to heaven with the perfume of the flowers!

He now set about the occupation of the day and gathered flowers in a basket to fill the flower vases in the dining room. While he was thus engaged, Achmed, his master, came into the garden and bade him a most cordial good morrow.

“Come with me, my young hero,” he said. “I have an important matter to discuss with you.”

He took him affectionately by the hand, and led into a shaded alley, where they began to walk up and down. “Dearest Anselmo!” said he, after a short silence, “I am deeply grateful to you—you have saved the life of my child. Had it not been for your courage, your prompt self-possession, she would have been fearfully torn to pieces by the teeth of the lion. You shall not any longer be my slave—I regard you now as my son—your heart gives you a claim to this title. Henceforward you shall never wait at table. You shall sit with me and my children, and eat of one dish with me. You shall no longer dress as a slave, but just like myself. You belong, in every respect, to my own family. I will share all my business and all my pleasures with you, and I hope yet to make you a great and a distinguished man. But there is one condition necessary in the first instance—you must profess the faith of Mahomet!”

The pious Christian youth was horror-struck at the proposal. “Achmed!—master!” said he, “ask everything—ask life itself from me. I am ready to give it for you. But do not desire that I fall away from my faith and renounce Christ, my Lord. Never will I do so—not for all the riches of the world. He is my salvation—my sole happiness. I will remain true to Him, even unto death.”

Achmed pressed his proposal upon Anselmo at great length, and what surprised him very much, in the Italian language. Hitherto he had only let a few isolated Italian phrases escape him, but now he spoke it in an uninterrupted flow, with great beauty, fluency, and even with overpowering eloquence. He painted in the liveliest colors, the happiness which would be Anselmo’s, if he would be content to don the turban—that is, to become a Turk and abandon Christianity.

But Anselmo cried out with horror and with great vehemence, “No, no—never will I do so! To shorten the discussion,” said he, now resuming his mother-tongue, in which he spoke with most freedom, “let me give you one single reply—You are grateful to me for having risked my life to rescue your daughter from the claws of the lion. Now recollect that Christ, for me and for all men, not merely risked His sacred life, but actually sacrificed it. For me He shed His blood, for me He endured the most terrible of deaths. He has not merely rescued me from the jaws of a ferocious wild beast, but He has delivered me from a far more fearful death—from eternal perdition. He has not merely procured for me a short prolongation of my temporal life, He has prepared for me a happy life for all eternity. How could I abandon Him? What black ingratitude, what frightful treachery would it be to do so!”

Achmed was (though Anselmo was not aware of it, and though it was a secret in Algiers also) a renegade—that is, he had abandoned Christianity and adopted the creed of Mahomet. He had been brought up by pious, Christian parents, but in a voyage which he made for commercial purposes, he was taken captive by pirates, and sold as a slave at Constantinople.

There he had gained the confidence of his master, a Turk of distinction, and the affections of his daughter, and the hope of his master's rich inheritance and of his fair daughter's hand, had tempted him to abandon the Christian religion and embrace that of Mahomet.

Anselmo's pious discourse, therefore, went deeply to his heart, and made a powerful impression upon him. "I do not require of you," said he to Anselmo, "to abandon your faith in Christ. Inwardly you may still believe in Him. I only ask that outwardly you embrace the religion of Mahomet. Without this merely outward change of creed, you never can rise in this country or acquire wealth and distinction. The person who, in this country, opposes the opinions of the people, and does not adopt their usages and observances, has nothing to expect but contempt and persecution. You must, therefore, become a Mahometan, at least in appearance."

"Oh! no, no," repeated Anselmo, over and over again, "such hypocrisy would be unworthy of me—it would be but a public and most guilty falsehood. And ask yourself, is it possible for us to deny before men, one whom we love sincerely and from our hearts? Ah! when I reflect on the love of my Lord and Savior, how, before I was born, He gave His life for me, my soul burns with love for Him. To Him was I devoted and consecrated in baptism. My beloved parents trained me from my tenderest childhood to faith in Him. I know no greater happiness than the knowledge and love of Him. I recall with heavenly rapture, the blessed moment when I was first united with Him in the Lord's supper. Oh, how could I demean myself, as though I knew nothing, and wished to know nothing, of Him? How could I desert and forswear Him before the eyes of men? What pain—what scandal should I thus give to my Christian fellow-captives. Alas! were I to do so, I should never more in all my life enjoy a peaceful hour! Far from me be such a treason! That a Turk, who has never known Christ, to whom he has never been preached, who has only heard His name coupled with blasphemy and revilings, should not believe in Him, I cannot wonder. I can but pity him, and pity him sincerely. But a Christian, who should treacherously deny his Lord and Master, would be a worthless, reprobate wretch. Of that apostate disciple who betrayed Him for a pitiful sum of money, Christ said, 'It were better for him that he had never been born.' Your efforts to make me such a man are vain. Try it if you choose. Place here all your treasures, your gold and silver—offer me, besides, all this princely property—place on the other side the headsman with his naked sword, which has been stained with the blood of many an innocent Christian, and let me choose between them. You shall see whether I, rather than abandon my faith, will not offer my head to the death-stroke cheerfully and boldly!"

Anselmo's every word penetrated Achmed's heart like a two-edged sword. "Rest at peace," he said, "I honor your faith. I shall never again annoy you by such proposals." He turned away with pale and downcast countenance, and absorbed in thought, walked slowly towards the open fields.

Chapter 6 The Grateful Mother

Anselmo filled his flower basket and went into the room in which they ordinarily breakfasted. Fatima, in a white morning dress, sat upon a purple-covered sofa with her two children, awaiting her husband's return.

"Dear Anselmo!" she cried, as he came in, "your yesterday's feat was a noble one. You saved my dear Almira's life at the hazard of your own. It was a great and noble action!"

“Ah,” replied Anselmo, whose heart was still full of his conversation with his master Achmed, “it was but my duty as a Christian! Christ, who gave His life for us, has commanded us, ‘Love one another, as I have loved you!’”

“That is a noble precept!” said Fatima, “I should like to learn this religion of yours. Tell me of it, and tell me also your own history.”

Anselmo told with great feeling how his father and mother had instructed him from his childhood in the Christian religion. How they taught him to know God as the Father of all men, and Jesus Christ the well-beloved Son of God. How Christ has commanded us to love the Father in heaven above all, and to love as ourselves all men on earth, as God’s children and our brethren and sisters. With tears in his eyes, he told her all that had ever affected him most in the life, passion, and death of Jesus. He still remembered many a word which his tender mother, in the fulness of her pious heart, had spoken to him about the history of Jesus, and which remained indelibly imprinted on his memory. Many of these sayings he repeated word for word. He spoke with a kind of inspiration of the beauty and excellence of the Christian religion.

All that he said, but especially his mother’s words, made a deep impression upon Fatima’s maternal heart, and the hearts of her children. Little Almira wept for pity that Jesus, who was so good, should have been put to death, and little Aladin cried, “Oh, had I been as powerful as He, I should have dashed the villains to pieces with a thunderbolt.” Anselmo told him that Jesus had suffered entirely of His own free will, for the love of man. That He permitted Himself to be put to death in order to deliver us from eternal death and perdition, and that even when he was dying, He prayed to heaven for His murderers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”

The dying Savior’s love so moved the hearts of mother and children, that all three burst into tears.

“That is a truly God-like love,” said Fatima. “This Jesus was, in all that He did and suffered, love and mercy itself.”

Fatima still wished to hear how Anselmo had come to Algiers. He told her how he had been going to visit his parents. How the pirates fell on him and dragged him to their ship, treated him barbarously, and sold him as a slave. “What troubles me most,” said he, busting into tears, “is the affliction of my dear parents and my little brother and sister, who are not much older than these dear children here. Ah! how anxiously must they have expected my return. How bitterly must they have wept over my long absence. And how sorely do they still grieve, to think that they shall never more hear of their Anselmo!”

“I pity your poor parents,” said Fatima. “It was barbarous in the pirates to drag you off from them. You Christians must surely regard the Turks as your greatest enemies and hate them bitterly.”

“O no,” said Anselmo, “we, Christians, must not hate any man—we must love all—Turks and Jews, else we would not deserve the name of Christians.”

“Your religion pleases me very much,” said Fatima. “I admire it greatly.” She sat for a long time in a silent and meditative mood. “Indeed,” thought she, “the Christians’ religion is better than that of the Turks. Mahomet, our prophet, preached hatred against those who differed with him in faith. Christ, the Founder of the Christian religion, preached nothing but love. Mahomet shed the blood of many thousands, in order to propagate his religion. Christ shed His blood for the love of men, and forbade His religion to be propagated by the sword. I must confess that Christ is infinitely above Mahomet!” For the time, however, she did not venture to say all this aloud.

What comes from the heart, goes to the heart again. It was therefore that Anselmo’s words had made such a deep impression upon Fatima. Besides, her whole heart was penetrated

with joy for the rescue of her darling child, and with gratitude to her magnanimous deliverer. "Come, dear Almira," she said, "do you also thank this noble youth, to whom you owe your life."

The little girl went over to him, looked up to him with tears in her eyes, offered him her little hand, and said, "I thank you, dear Anselmo! God is great and mighty—may He reward you!"

"Dear Anselmo," said her mother, "when I was a little girl of that age, I had a Christian slave as my nurse. She was extremely gentle, and all tenderness and love towards me. She told me a great many stories about a divine Child, at whose birth the angels rejoiced, praising God and congratulating men. These and such like stories, are among the sweetest recollections of my childhood. She used to sing for me, too, some of her pious hymns, which have always been floating in my memory, and which were the occasion of your being taken into our house, as being so charming a singer.

"Even at that early age, there was stirred up in my heart a leaning towards the Christian religion, but when my parents observed this, they removed my pious nurse, Christina. Loving her almost as my mother, I wept and refused to part with her, and at my earnest prayers, my parents gave her her liberty, and sent her back to her native land, where, as I was told, she arrived safely. Her gentle, pale face is even still before me. She wept bitterly as she was parting from me and her last word was, 'Believe me, Fatima, you will yet be a Christian.'"

Chapter 7

A Great Resolve and its Execution

While Fatima was engaged in this conversation, two hours flew by almost like minutes, but the children now began to feel hungry, for the breakfast remained upon the table untouched. The mother became uneasy at her husband not making his appearance for breakfast, and could not conceive where he remained so long. But as he was in the habit of taking a long walk every morning, the fearful idea occurred to her that he might have fallen in the way of the lion.

Meanwhile, however, he had been pacing up and down in the olive wood with folded arms. His apostacy from the Christian religion now filled his heart with so much remorse. "This pious youth," said he, "has, without aiming them at me, pierced my heart to the very core with his simple words, as with so many barbed arrows. I have never been at ease, it is true, but now my condition is intolerable. I will make up my mind to return to my native land and to the bosom of the church. With Fatima, perhaps, I shall have a hard contest. Would that I could persuade her to return with me and to embrace the Christian religion! True, I would fly alone, but it would be too painful to abandon her, without caring though my son and my daughter should be brought up in Mahomedanism. I will therefore declare to her my resolution once for all—and this very instant! Perhaps Anselmo's heroism may dispose her to yield more readily to it!"

With a serious and gloomy air, he walked into the apartment to disclose his resolve to her, not knowing how happily Anselmo had prepared the way for him.

"Oh my dear Achmed!" she cried, as he entered the room, "I wish you had been here just now—Anselmo in a short time has said so much to me about the excellence of the Christian religion, that I was wishing from my heart I could become a Christian. I confess that, were I in your place, nothing in the world would have moved me to abandon so glorious a religion."

Achmed's countenance brightened when he heard these words.

"God be praised," said he, "that these are your sentiments! I think as you do, and I am just come for the purpose of speaking more at length with you on this subject."

Fatima desired Anselmo to bring the children into another apartment to eat their breakfast, and then said to Achmed, "What occasion is there for a long conversation? I am resolved to accompany you, with our children, to your native country."

Achmed was delighted with this intelligence, but still anticipated many difficulties in carrying the project into effect. But Fatima at once suggested a plan.

"It is but a few days," she said, "since you told several of your relations and commercial friends, that a very pressing business would oblige you to go to Venice in person. I shall announce that you must immediately set out upon this voyage, which you have often spoken of before. They will easily understand, as will everyone else, that you could not resist my desire, my pressing entreaty, to be permitted to accompany you on your journey. And it is very natural that I should not like to leave my children behind me.

"Our bringing our gold and silver plate, our pearls, diamonds, and other jewelry will create no suspicion, for the Turks will wish that we should appear there with as much splendor as possible. We shall also be able to pack up among the merchandise and carry with us, without exciting observation, many of our treasures. And as regards our property here, I openly begged of you before all our people last night to sell it, because our children could hardly longer venture out into the open air, and because their lives would not be safe in the neighborhood of the lion. No one will blame an affectionate mother for these anxious fears. Sell your property, therefore, collect all your capital, and make every possible preparation as soon as you can to quit Algiers forever."

Achmed applauded his wife's prudent suggestion, sold the estate, chartered a ship, embarked all his moveable property on board of her, and set sail with his wife, his children, Anselmo, and several Christian slaves. And his heart grew much lighter, as the hateful city of Algiers disappeared from his eyes.

He landed at Salerno. There he and his wife and children were to recruit after the fatigue of the voyage. He laid aside the Turkish costume and resumed his Christian attire. In Salerno, there was another great solemnity—Fatima and her children were solemnly baptized. They appeared splendidly attired in their Turkish costume and Achmed himself officiated in person at the sacred ceremony. An immense multitude of people assembled in the church and every eye was fixed upon the fair and noble looking lady, who, in all her splendor, approached with so much humility. There people were almost more charmed to see her two sweet children, who received baptism with folded hands and with visible emotion.

As they were returning from the church, and indeed, wherever they appeared in the city upon that or the following days, the mother and children were saluted with loud cheers by the warm-hearted Italians and every one prayed for happiness and benediction upon their heads.

Chapter 8 The Two Happy Families

Anselmo, the moment he reached Salerno, had despatched to his parents a trusty friend, whom he had known during his collegiate studies, who prepared them for Anselmo's return, brought them letters from him, and told them the principal part of the adventures of their beloved son. But he was unable, as yet, to determine for them the day of his return from Salerno to his father's house.

One evening, as the sun was just beginning to sink, the affectionate parents were sitting with their two children, under the pine trees in front of their ancient castle. Their sole subject of conversation was their dear Anselmo. A young man in a pilgrim's garb, came with hasty steps

towards them. It was Anselmo, but they did not recognize him at once. He was much taller and his complexion had become a deeper brown. And his mother, too, had expected from the account of his young friend, that her son would have come in a splendid carriage and in the company of the rich family.

But when she and his father recognized him, the joy both of his parents and of his brother and sister was beyond description. They all led him, as if in triumph, into the castle. He laid aside his staff, his scallop-hat, and his pilgrim's clothing, and stood before them attired in a manner becoming his station. He had but put on the pilgrim's habit, in order to be able to travel more quietly and more agreeably, according to his own fashion. His mother directed a festal banquet to be prepared, and they all sat together until midnight. Anselmo told them his entire history at full length. And his parents could not cease telling him their grief—now, thanks to God, at an end—and their present happiness.

Three days afterwards arrived Achmed (now no longer called by that name, but by his former name, Guido) with his wife and children, to visit Anselmo's parents. Their common faith in Christ, and the bond of Christian love, soon made them all one family. Guido honored Anselmo's father, a venerable and rather aged man, as his own. And Fatima (now called Mary) and Anselmo's mother, soon became bosom friends. Anselmo's brother and sister heartily enjoyed themselves with Aladin and Almira (now called Clara and Ignatius). They were indefatigable in talking to one another about Italy and Africa, in which special mention was made of the terrible lion.

Anselmo's father, seeing himself thus surrounded by so many happy friends, could not refrain from adoring and praising the holy providence of God with a loud voice. "Merciful Father in heaven!" he said, "how wisely and well Thou doest dispose all things! For me and my dear wife it was a hard blow, that our beloved son was taken from us, and we were sorely afflicted thereby. For him, too, it was a great trial. But this brief sorrow has brought many to salvation and has been to us all a source of indescribable happiness. Who is there that must not adore Thee in gratitude, Thou infinitely wise and merciful God?"

Guido knew that Anselmo's parents had lost much by the war, that their castle had often been plundered, their valuable effects pillaged, and their property utterly ruined. He handed over to them, therefore, one day, a paper by which the half of his entire extensive property was legally secured to them. "For," said he, "as we owe to you and your son, whom you educated so well, our participation in the goods of eternity, it is no more than just that we should share our earthly goods with you."

"No!" replied Anselmo's father. "Far be it from me to take a single farthing from you. It is true, we possess no wealth. Like many other families which were more wealthy than we, we must dispense with the splendor and the luxuries which the nobility once enjoyed. But this is a thing of no moment—it rather has its own advantage. Alas! wealth too easily seduces men and leads us to prize external pomp more than true intrinsic worth, and to strive after the enjoyments of sense, more than the more elevated and only true pleasures of the spirit. Yet though we are not rich, still neither are we poor. We have, thanks to God, a competent income, and that is sufficient. I have always prayed, and taught my children to pray with Solomon, 'Poverty and riches give me not, O LORD!' Grant me to enjoy my humble daily bread, while here on earth, else might I, if too rich, become an idle braggart and say, 'Who is the LORD?'—or if too poor, strive for the wealth of others, and blaspheme the name of God by perjury."

"I think these sentiments extremely wise, beautiful, and noble," said Guido. "I know by experience how dangerous the desire of riches is. But Anselmo is too well-versed to be endangered by the possession of wealth. Though you decline my offer, this shall not prevent me from discharging my debt to your noble son, Anselmo. He saved my daughter's life. I have

to thank him that I am returned to the road to heaven, whence I had wandered, and that my wife and children now walk thereon with me. You, therefore, dearest Anselmo, must accept the half of my fortune.”

“Neither can I,” said Anselmo, “accept your munificent present, more than my father, for I have made a firm resolve to look only to eternal goods and to teach other men, by instruction, word, and example, to turn their eyes on Him alone. I will venture, however, to make a claim on your generosity and to make a proposal to you.

“I have told you of my fellow-captives on board the pirate’s ship and especially of a young lawyer, a poor sailor, and a fisherman, who are most deserving of compassion. I often inquired after them in Algiers, but never could learn anything of their fate. In Italy, however, I have learned that they still pine in captivity.

“On my way hither from Salerno, I visited the “Order for the Redemption of Captives,” and begged to see the list of the captives for whose release they were at that moment laboring. To my consolation, I found on it the names of my fellow-captives, but the venerable men had not yet been able to collect, by charitable contributions, the sum required for their ransom. And now I beg, dearest Guido, that you will apply to the ransom of these unfortunates, a part of the sum you had destined for me. Do so, I pray! A greater work of charity you cannot perform!”

“Not a part only will I give,” said Guido, “but the whole sum, for the ransom of these three and the rest of your fellow-captives, and of many other slaves also. They shall receive their freedom, which I have already granted to the Christian slaves, whom I brought from Algiers.”

Anselmo was greatly delighted at this. “The Lord, said he, “will reward you richly for this. On that great day, He will place you along with those upon His right hand, to whom He will say, ‘I was a captive and you ransomed Me! For, amen, I say unto you, as long as you did it to one of these least ones, you did it unto Me!’”

Chapter 9

Another Affecting Visit

Guido purchased a beautiful country residence, a few miles from Anselmo’s father’s castle. The two families lived in the happiest union and often visited each other. And Anselmo, by Guido’s assistance, continued his studies at Salerno and Rome, always, however, spending the holidays with his parents.

One day, at Easter, he was at home upon a visit, and Guido with his family had come to see him. Guido brought with him a letter from the captive lawyer, expressing his warmest gratitude to him for his release, and also greeting most affectionately the generous youth, Anselmo, his former fellow-prisoner.

The following day, as they were sitting happily together at table, the servants announced the old fisherman and the young sailor, who had been Anselmo’s fellow-prisoners, but were now at liberty, and had come to thank the generous Guido. This was their native district, and the sailor had brought his old parents, and the fisherman, his five children and their mother, along with him. It was most affecting to see how they all shed plenteous tears of joy and heartfelt gratitude.

“Do not thank me,” said Guido to them, “but this youth! To him you are indebted for your freedom, and I and my children for something far more precious. This noble youth, who was your fellow-captive, is your deliverer!”

They had not at once recognized Anselmo, but they now remembered him.

“Yes, yes,” said the old fisherman, “this is the youth who, in our deep distress aboard the pirate ship, appeared to us like an angel, and tenderly comforted us. O my children, my dear wife, and you, neighbor, as well as your aged parents, offer him your grateful thanks.”

They all encircled Anselmo and tried to kiss his hands and his clothes. But he drew back from them, and said, “Thank my beloved parents for it. It was they who, by word and example, inspired these sentiments into my heart, and taught me to act thus. All that I am, comes, under God, from the good education they have given me.”

Anselmo’s father stepped into the midst, and took off his cap reverently, “All the praise and thanks,” he said, raising his eyes to heaven, “are due to God alone! He, as is ever His custom, has ‘done all things well.’ He, in permitting that my son should fall into the pirates’ hands, has turned the affliction, which we suffered at home, and you aboard the ship, to the advantage of us all. By these afflictions I think we are all made more pious, wiser, and better—God prepared for us great sorrows, but also great joys. If a son turn to proper account the good education which his parents and masters bestow, if he apply well the talents which God lends to him, if he remain humble withal, seek not his own, but God’s glory and yield himself to the guidance of God’s Spirit, God can work great things by his hands, and make him an instrument of blessing to many, not alone for this short life, but still more for eternity. To Him be honor, praise, and thanks, now and forever more! Amen.”

Anselmo devoted himself to the study of theology and determined to enter, after the completion of his studies, the group which is specially devoted to the ransoming of Christian captives from Turkish slavery, and is therefore called, “The Order for the Redemption of Captives,” and he transferred his paternal estate to his younger brother. This he announced in a letter to his parents, in which he solicited their approbation of his choice.

“Having seen,” said he, “with my own eyes in Algiers the misery of the Christian slaves, I have conceived a special predilection for this order, which, as you know was founded by John De Matha, an ecclesiastic of noble birth and distinguished equally for learning, for piety towards God, and for love of his fellow-man. What a noble object is that to which this order is devoted—the instruction of the ignorant, the tending of the sick, and above all, the redemption of the captive! I have myself seen that its members are austere to themselves, but indulgent and beneficent to all else besides. They are content with the humblest fare and seek nothing but to be permitted to devote all that they possess or can acquire, nay even their very selves, with joyful hearts, for the service of their fellow-men.”

Anselmo’s pious parents applauded his resolve and both (especially his mother) were delighted. “The cross,” said Anselmo, “reminds us that, with faith in Him who died for us upon the cross, we ought to bear our own sorrows patiently and charitably alleviate the sorrows of others...to burn with charity for all men, especially for those in affliction.”

“This is substantially the duty of all men,” said his father, “and it is also our own. It perfectly coincides with the exhortation of James, ‘Religion, clear and undefiled before God the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one’s self unspotted from this world.’”

THE END

Edited by Pam Takahasi

www.eternallifeministries.org