

The Godfather

AKA: The Godson, Alternate Translation

Leo Tolstoy

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Contents

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Part 1 | 4 |
| Part 2 | 5 |
| Part 3 | 6 |
| Part 4 | 7 |
| Part 5 | 8 |
| Part 6 | 10 |
| Part 7 | 11 |
| Part 8 | 12 |
| Part 9 | 14 |
| Part 10 | 15 |
| Part 11 | 17 |
| Part 13 | 19 |

“Ye have heard that it hath been said: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you: That ye resist not evil.” Matt. v. 38, 39.

“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” Rom. xii. 19.

A poor muzhik had a son born unto him. The muzhik rejoiced, and went to his neighbor to beg him to be a sponsor for his child. The neighbor refused; he would not be a sponsor to a poor man's child. Then the poor muzhik went to another neighbor, and he refused likewise. He went round the whole village, and nobody would be a sponsor for him. The muzhik set out for another village, and there met him on the road a wayfaring man, and the wayfaring man stopped and greeted him:

Part 1

“Hail to thee, little muzhik!” cried he, “whither away, in God’s name?”

“The Lord has given me a little child,” replied the muzhik, “to be the charge of my young manhood, the comfort of my old age, and the beadsman who shall pray for my soul when I am dead; but because of my poverty nobody will be my child’s sponsor, so I go searching for a godfather.”

And the wayfaring man said unto him: “Take me for thy child’s godfather.”

Then the heart of the muzhik rejoiced. He thanked the wayfaring man, and said, “But whom shall I have for a godmother?”

“For a godmother,” said the wayfaring man, “thou shalt take the merchant’s daughter. Go into the town to the stone house with the booths before it in the square; at the entrance of this house thou shalt ask the merchant to let his daughter come out to be thy child’s godmother.”

The muzhik smiled. “How shall I, my chosen godfather,” said he, “how shall I go to the rich merchant? He will not let his daughter come, and will only revile me.”

“Fear not, but go. By to-morrow morning let everything be ready; I will be at the christening.”

Then the poor muzhik returned home, and went into the town to the merchant’s house. He put up his horse in the courtyard, and the merchant himself came out.

“What dost thou want?” said he.

“Look now, my lord merchant,” replied the muzhik, “the Lord hath given me a little child to be the charge of my young manhood, the comfort of my old age, and my beadsman who shall pray for my soul when I am dead. I prythee let thy daughter come to be my child’s godmother.”

“And when, then, is the christening?”

“To-morrow morning.”

“Good! Depart in God’s name: to-morrow I will come to the feast”

And the next day the godmother came, and the godfather came likewise, and the child was christened. But no sooner was the child christened than the god-father went out, and none knew who he was, nor from that time forth did any man see him.

Part 2

Now the little lad began to grow up, and was a joy to his parents, for he was strong and labored willingly, and was both wise and gentle. And when the lad was ten years old his parents had him taught his letters, and the lad learned in one year what it takes other lads five years to learn.

Now, when Holy Week came, the lad went to his godmother to give her the Easter kiss, returned home again, and said: "My dear little father and mother, where does my godfather live? I should like to go to him and give him also the Easter kiss."

And his father said unto him: "We know not, my darling little son, where thy godfather liveth; we ourselves are distressed thereby. We have not seen him from the time when he stood sponsor for thee. We have not heard of him since, nor do we know where he lives or whether he be alive at all."

Then the son made obeisance to his father and mother, and said: "Let me go, dear little father and mother, to seek my godfather. I want to find him that I may give him the Easter kiss."

So the father and mother let their son go, and the little lad set forth to seek his godfather.

Part 3

The little lad left his home and went out upon the highway. For half a day he went on and on, and then there met him a wayfaring man. The wayfaring man stopped short.

“Hail to thee, my lad!” said he, “whither, in God’s name, art thou going?”

And the lad said: “I have just been to give my godmother the Easter kiss, and after that I came home again and said to my father and mother, ‘Where does my godfather dwell? for I want to give him the Easter kiss also.’ And my parents answered, ‘We know not, little son, where thy godfather liveth. From the time that he stood sponsor for thee he departed from us, and we know nothing of him nay, we know not even whether he be alive!’ ‘But I have a great desire to see my godfather, wherefore I now go seek him,”

And the wayfaring man said: “I am thy godfather.”

Then the youth rejoiced, and gave his godfather the Easter kiss.

“My darling godpapa,” said he, “whither art thou going? If thou art going in our direction, come, I prythee, and abide at our house; but if thou art going to thine own home I will go with thee.”

“I have no leisure to come to thy house just now, for I have the affairs of my estate to see to, but I shall be back at my own house to-morrow; come thou then to me.”

“And how shall I get to thee, good godfather?” “Go straight before thee towards sunrise and thou wilt come to a forest, and in the midst of this forest thou wilt see a little field. Sit down in this little field and rest thyself and observe what is there. As thou comest out of this forest thou wilt see a garden, and in this garden is a pavilion with a golden roof. That is my house. Go up to the gate and I will be there to meet thee.”

So spake the godfather, and vanished from before the eyes of his godson.

Part 4

The lad did as his godfather bade him. He went on and on till he came to the forest. He came out into the little field, and in the midst of the field he saw a pine-tree with a rope fastened to one of its branches, and an oaken block about three poods. A pood equals 40 lbs. in weight hung on the rope, and beneath the oaken block was a pitcher full of honey. The lad had just begun thinking to himself why the block of oak should be hung there and the honey set out, when he heard a crackling sound in the forest, and saw some bears coming towards the spot, the she-bear coming first, behind her a cub a year old, and still further behind three little bears. The she-bear put her snout into the honey, called to the little bears, who came leaping up and fell upon the pitcher. Then the block of oak began to swing to and fro a little, and as it swung back again it struck the little bears. The she-bear seeing this, hit it with her paw and sent it swinging back again. The block swung still further, and rebounded into the midst of the little bears, striking some on the head and others on the back. The young bears bellowed and leaped out of its way, but the she-bear grew angry, seized the block with both paws above her head, and sent it spinning away from her. The block flew high into the air, whereupon the one-year-old cub rushed to the pitcher, buried his snout into the honey, and began to gobble. The others made for it likewise, but before they could get up to it the block flew back again, struck the one-year-old cub on the head, and killed him. The she-bear was more furious than ever, and seizing hold of the block of wood, sent it flying back with all her might. The block flew this time higher than the branch that held it, and the rope by which it was tied grew slack. Then the she-bear went up to the pitcher again and all the little bears after her. The block flew higher, higher, then it stopped short and came down again, and the lower it came the swifter it went. Down it came upon the she-bear like lightning, crushing down upon her head. The she-bear fell over, wriggled with her legs, and expired. The little bears all ran away. The youth marveled at the sight and went on further.

Part 5

He next came to a large garden, and in this garden was a lofty pavilion with a golden roof, and at the gate stood his godfather with a smile on his face. He greeted the godson kindly, and led him through the gate into the garden. Not even in his dreams had the godson ever beheld such beautiful and such pleasant things as he now saw in the garden.

Then the godfather led his godson into the palace, and the palace was even better than the garden. The godfather led the youth through all the rooms; each one was better and more glorious than the one before it, and at last he led him to a sealed door.

“Dost see that door?” said he. “There is no lock upon it, but only a seal. ‘Twere easy for thee to open it, but I do not bid thee do so. Dwell here, and take thy pastime where thou wilt and how thou wilt; all the delights of this garden and palace are thine; there is but one thing I forbid thee enter not into that door. And if thou dost enter, remember what thou didst see in the wood.”

Thus spake the godfather and departed. The godson remained alone to live his new life, and so joyful and happy was he that it seemed to him as if he had only lived there three hours, while he had been living there thirty years. And when the thirty years had passed, the godson went up to the sealed door, and he thought to himself, “Why, I wonder, did my godfather tell me not to enter this room? Nay, but I will go in, if only to see what is there.”

He shook the door, he picked off the seal, and entered. The godson entered, and he beheld a pavilion larger and better than all he had seen before, and in the midst of the pavilion stood a golden throne. The godson went up and down the rooms of the pavilion; he approached the throne, mounted the steps, and sat down. Then the godson perceived a scepter on the throne, and he stretched out his hand and seized the scepter. And no sooner had he taken the scepter than all four walls of the pavilion rolled away, and the godson looked around him and beheld the whole world, and all that people in the world are wont to do. He looked straight before him, and he saw the sea with ships sailing upon it. He looked to the right, and he saw strange unchristian nations dwelling there; he looked to the left, and there dwelt those Christians who were not Russians; then he looked to the fourth side, and there our Russian nation dwelt

“I should like,” cried he, “to see what is going on at home, and whether our crops are good.” Then he saw his own fields and the sheaves standing up-right within them. He began counting the sheaves to see if they were many, and then he saw a telyegaA peasant’s wagon driving across the fields, and in it sat a peasant. The godson thought it was his father going to gather together his sheaves at night, but on looking again, he perceived that it was the thief Vasily Kudryashov who was driving. He came up to the sheaves and began to put them in his cart. At this the godson was very angry, and cried out, “Daddy, daddy! they are stealing your sheaves from the field.” Then his father awoke in the night, and said, “Methinks they are stealing my sheaves, I will go and see.” And mounting his horse, away he went. He came to the field, saw Vasily, and called to the other muzhiks, and they beat Vasily, bound him, and carried him off to prison.

Then the godson beheld his own mother, and he saw how she lay asleep in her hut, and lo! a robber crept into the back part of the hut and began to break open the strong-box. His mother

awoke and cried out, but the robber, perceiving her, drew forth his ax and aimed at the mother, desiring to kill her. At this the godson was unable to contain himself, but aimed his scepter at the robber. It struck him full on the forehead and killed him on the spot.

Part 6

No sooner had the godson killed the robber than the walls came together again, and the pavilion was just as it had been before. Then the door opened, and in came the godfather. The godfather walked up to his godson, seized him by the arm, pulled him down from the throne, and said, "Thou hast not obeyed my commands, thou hast done an ill deed in opening the closed and forbidden door. A second ill deed thou didst when thou didst mount the throne and take my scepter into thy hand; and a third ill deed thou didst in adding much evil to the evil that is in the world already. If thou hadst sat on the throne another moment, thou wouldst have been the ruin of half the people of the earth."

Then the godfather again placed the godson on the throne, and put the scepter into his hand, and again the walls of the pavilion parted asunder, and they saw all things.

And the godfather said, "Look now, what thou hast done to thy father. Vasily has sat for a year in jail, and he has become the pupil of all manner of malefactors, and is now more wicked than them. all. Look! he is now driving away two of thy father's horses, and thou seest that his farm is in flames also. That is what thou hast done to thy father."

Then the godson perceived that his father's house was on fire; but his godfather hid it from him, and pointed to something lower down, and the godson saw the robber, and two guards were holding him before a dungeon. And the godfather said to him, " This man had slain nine souls. It had become necessary for him to redeem his sins, but you have killed him, so that you have taken all his sins upon yourself. > Now you have to answer for all his sins. That is what you have done to yourself! The she- bear struck the block once and it hurt the little bears; she struck it twice and it killed the one-year- old cub; she struck it a third time, and it slew herself. Thou hast now done the same thing. I now give thee a respite of thirty years. Go into the world and buy back the sins of the robber. If thou dost not redeem them thou wilt have to stand in his place."

And the godson said, "But how, then, am I to redeem his sins?"

And the godfather said, "When thou hast drawn as much sin out of the world as thou hast now put into it, then thou wilt have redeemed both thine own sins and the sins of the robber."

"But how, then, am I to draw evil out of the world?" asked the godson.

Then said the godfather, "Go right before thee towards the rising of the sun, and thou wilt come to a plain whereon dwell men. Observe what these people do, and teach them of thine own experience. Then go on further still, and observe what thou seest, and on the fourth day thou wilt come to a wood, and in this wood is a cell, and in this cell lives an old hermit; tell unto him all that has 'befallen thee. He will teach thee further. And when thou hast done all that the old hermit tells thee to do, then thou wilt have redeemed the robber's sins and thine own sins also."

Thus spake the godfather, and with that he put his godson outside the gate.

Part 7

The godson went on his way. As he went he thought to himself, "How am I to draw evil out of the world? They draw evil out of the world by banishing evil-doers, by shutting them in prisons and punishing them with punishments. How am I to set about removing the evil? I cannot take other people's sins upon my shoulders!" And the godson thought and thought, but he could not think the matter out for himself.

He went on and on, till he came to a field, and in the field corn was growing good thick corn and it was harvest-time. And the godson saw how a calf was wandering in the corn, and people who saw this also had mounted their horses, and were driving the calf about in the corn from side to side. And when- ever the calf was about to spring out of the corn, someone or other came up and frightened the calf so that it went back into the corn again, and then they also plunged after it into the corn again. And in the road stood an old woman weeping. "They are chiveying my calf about!" she cried.

And the godson began to speak to the muzhiks, and he said to them, "Why do ye thus? Go all of you out of the corn, and let the owner of the calf call it herself."

Then the people obeyed, and the old woman went to the corner of the field and began to call, "Come hither, come hither, my little brownie!" Then the calf pricked up its ears and listened, and then it came running up to the old woman and thrust its nose against her, and did not even kick her with its feet. And the muzhiks were glad, and the old woman was glad, and the calf was glad likewise.

The godson went on further, and thought to himself. "I see now that evil multiplies evil. The more people pursue evil, the more they spread evil abroad. It is impossible to remove evil by evil. But how remove it then? I know not. It was well that the calf listened to the old woman; but if he had not listened, how then could he have gone out?"

The godson thought and thought the matter over, but it was of no use, he could not get to the bottom of it by thinking, so he went on further.

Part 8

He went on and on, until he came to a village. He asked for a night's lodging at a wayside hut. The woman who owned the hut was plainly very poor. There was nothing at all in the hut but the woman herself, and she was washing.

The godson went in, got on to the stove, and began to watch what the woman was doing. He watched and saw that when she had washed the hut, she began to wash the table. Presently she finished washing the table, and began wiping it with a dirty clout. She began to wipe one corner of it, and the table would not get clean, for the dirty clout left long streaks of dirt upon the table. She set to drying it on the other side, and in wiping off the streaks of dirt she left others in their place. Then she began wiping it all over again, with the same result. She kept smearing it with the dirty clout; whenever she wiped off one piece of dirt she left another in its stead. The godson kept on looking and looking, at last he spoke.

"What art thou doing there, mistress?" said he.

"Canst thou not see?" said she. "I am making ready against the feast. I cannot get the table thoroughly washed by any means it is all dirty. I weary myself in vain."

"But thou shouldst rinse out thy clout," said he, "and then thou wouldst be able to clean thy table."

So she did so, and speedily got the table clean and dry. "I thank thee for thy teaching," said she.

In the morning the godson took leave of the woman, and went on further. He went on and on until he came to a wood, and there he saw some muzhiks trying to bend a hoop. The godson went near to look at them, and there were the muzhiks going round and round, but they could not bend the hoop. And looking more closely the godson perceived that the block on which they were working rushed round with them, so that there was no staying power in it. And the godson looked at them, and said,

"What do ye, my brethren?"

"We would fain bend this hoop," said they; "twice have we brought the ends together, but we weary ourselves in vain it will not bend."

"But, my brethren, first make fast the block, for now ye go round with it."

And the muzhiks obeyed him, and made fast the block, and then the work was easily done.

The godson passed the night with them, and then went on further. All day and all night he went on, and just before dawn he came up with some cattle-dealers. He joined himself to them, and then he saw that the dealers had let out their cattle to graze, and were lighting a fire. They took dry branches and kindled them, but they did not give them time to burn up, but piled wet twigs on the fire. The twigs hissed and spluttered, and then the fire went out. The cattle-dealers took more dry branches, lighted them, and again piled on wet twigs, and again the fire died out. For a long time they labored, and all to no purpose they could not light the fire.

And the godson said, "Be not over hasty in piling on the fuel, but first let the fire burn up merrily. When the flame is clear and strong, then pile on the fuel. And the cattle-dealers did so;

they made the fire burn up vigorously, and then they piled on the firewood. The firewood caught, and the whole pile blazed up. So when the godson had stayed with them for a while, he went on further. And the god-son thought and thought to himself to what end he had seen these three things and he could not under-stand it

Part 9

The godson went on and on, and the day passed away. He came to a forest, and in this forest was a cell. The godson went up to the cell and knocked, and a voice out of the cell cried, "Who is there?"

"A great sinner," replied the godson. "I go about to make good the sins of other people."

Then an old man came out of the cell, and said, "What then are these sins of other people that are laid upon thee?"

So the godson told him all. He told him of his godfather, and of the bear and her cubs, and of the throne in the sealed palace, and of what the god-father had commanded him to do, and of how he had seen the muzhiks in the field treading down the corn, and how the calf came to its mistress of its own accord.

"I have understood," said he, "that evil cannot be destroyed by evil; but I cannot understand how then it is to be destroyed. Teach me."

And the old man said, "Tell me now what else thou hast seen on thy way."

And the godson told him of the old woman, and how she washed, and of the muzhiks, and how they bent the hoop, and of the herdsmen, and how they kindled the fire. The old man heard him out, turned back into his cell, and brought out a wretched, worn-out little ax. "Let us go!" said he.

The old man went from his cell along the road, and pointed to a tree. "Strike!" said he. The godson struck away at it, and the tree fell

"Now cut it into three parts."

The godson cut it into three. Then the old man went back into his cell and brought out fire.

"Burn these three fagots," said he.

The godson kindled a fire and burnt the three pieces of wood, and three smoldering firebrands remained.

"Bury them half in the earth, like that."

The godson buried them.

' Look now! at the foot of that mountain is a stream; bring thence water in thy mouth and water them. Water these embers, just as thou didst teach the old woman. Water it just as thou didst teach the herdsmen, and water it as thou didst teach the coopers. When all three shoot up, and three apple-trees grow out of the charred stumps, then thou wilt understand how to destroy evil in men; then thou wilt be able to redeem sins."

Thus spake the old man, and went back into his cell. The godson thought and thought, but he could not understand what the old man said to him. Yet did he as he was bidden.

Part 10

The godson went to the river, took a mouthful of water, poured it forth on the charred brand; again and again he watered it thus, and so did he to the other two. The godson grew exhausted with the work, and a strong desire to eat came upon him. He went to the old man's cell to ask for food. He opened the door, and there the old man lay dead on his little plank bed. The godson looked around him. He found hard bread, and he ate thereof; he found a spade also, and he began to dig the old man's grave. At night he drew water and watered the stumps, and in the daytime he dug at the grave. He had finished digging out the grave, and was about to begin the burial, when there came people out of the village, bringing food for the old man.

The people perceived that the old man was dead, and the godson blessed them in his stead. The people buried the old man, and left the bread with the godson, they promised to bring him still more; and so they departed.

And the godson lived there in the place of the old man. There lived the godson, and fed himself with the food that the people brought him; and he did as he had been bidden, inasmuch as he brought water in his mouth from the stream, and watered the charred stumps.

So there the godson lived for a whole year, and many people resorted to him. And the fame of him spread abroad, that he was living there in the forest, a holy man, who was saving his soul, and bringing water in his mouth from the foot of the mountains to water the charred stumps. And a multitude of people resorted to him. Yea, and rich merchants came there also and brought gifts. But the godson took nothing for himself but what was necessary, and what they gave to him he gave away to other poor people. And thus the godson went on living; one half of the day he carried water in his mouth to water the charred stumps, and the other half of the day he rested, and received those who came to see him.

And the godson began to think that perchance he had been bidden to live so, that thereby he might redeem bad with good, and buy back sins. So the godson lived after this manner for another year, and he let not a day pass without watering the stumps, and yet, for all that, not one of them began to sprout.

One day he was sitting in his cell, when he heard a man coming along on horseback, singing songs. The godson went out to see what manner of man it was, and he saw that he was a young man, and sturdy. The raiment he wore was goodly, and the horse he sat upon of great price. The godson stopped him and asked him what manner of man he was, and whither he was going.

The man stopped. "I am a robber," said he; "I go along the roads and slay people, and the more people I slay the merrier songs I sing."

The godson was horrified, and he thought within himself, "How is it possible to redeem the evil in such a man as this? It is good for me to talk to those who come to me and repent, but this man boasts him of the evil." The godson had nothing to say for himself, but he kept on thinking, "How will it be now? This man has made it his business to wander about here, and he will frighten the people, and they will cease coming to me. It will be no profit to him, and as for me, how shall I live also?"

So the godson stopped and spoke to the robber. "People come hither to me," said he, "not to boast them of their evil deeds, but to repent of their sins, and pray for forgiveness. Repent thou, also, if thou hast any fear of God; but if thou wilt not repent, depart hence and never come back again; disturb me not, and frighten not the people away from me. But if thou hearken not unto me, God will punish thee."

The freebooter began to laugh. "I fear not God," said he, "and I will not hearken to thee. Thou art not my master. Thou dost live by thy praying, they say; I live by my plundering. We must all live somehow. Thou art an old woman, and canst teach, if thou wilt, those that come to thee; but it is no good teaching me. And as for thy warnings to me concerning God, to-morrow I mean to slay two people whom none will miss. And I would slay thee now, save that I would not soil my hand. But be-ware of me in future."

Thus the freebooter threatened, and with that he rode away. But the freebooter passed no more that way, and the godson went on living quietly as before for eight years.

Part 11

Once the godson went to water his charred stumps at night, then he returned to his cell to sit down and rest; he looked along the narrow footpath, and fell a-wondering whether it would be long before people came that way. But not a single person came by that day. The godson sat there all alone till evening, and he felt vexed and weary, and began to ponder over the whole course of his life. And it occurred to him how the freebooter had reproached him for living by his praying. And the godson looked back upon his whole life. "I do not live," thought he, "as the old man bade me live. The old man laid a penance on me, and I make my living out of it, and glory among men to boot. And so perverted am I already, that I feel weary and sad when the people don't come to me. And when the people do come to me, I am only glad because they laud my saintliness. Not so ought I to live. I am entangled in the meshes of human praise. Instead of redeeming my former sins, I add new sins to the old. I will go into the forest, to another place, that the people may not find me. I will live alone, so that I may wipe out the old sins, and not saddle myself with new ones."

Thus thought the godson, and he took his little sack of biscuits and his spade, and went away from his cell into the deep ravine, so that he might dig out for himself a little habitation in the dreary place, and hide himself from mankind.

So the godson set out with his little bag and his spade, when lo! a robber fell upon him. The godson was frightened; he would have run away, but the robber was too quick for him.

"Whither goest thou?" said he.

Then the godson told him that he wished to get away from people, and go into a place whither nobody would follow him; the robber marveled greatly. "But what wilt thou live upon when people no longer come to thee?" he asked.

Now the godson had not thought of this before, but when the robber asked him this question, he recollected that there was such a thing as food also.

"I will live upon what God gives me," said he.

The freebooter said nothing, but went on further.

"What is this?" thought the godson. "I said nothing to him concerning his life. What if he should now bethink him of repenting. It seems as if he were now a little milder, and he does not threaten to slay me." And the godson shouted after the freebooter, "Hearken now! Above all, it becomes thee to repent, and not turn away from God."

The freebooter turned his horse. He drew his knife from his girdle and shook it at the godson. The godson was frightened, and ran into the bushes. But the freebooter did not pursue him; he only said, "Twice have I forgiven thee, old man beware of the third time, for then I will kill thee!" This he said, and rode off. In the evening the godson went to water his stumps, and lo! one of them was putting forth shoots. A little apple-tree was growing out of it.

Part 12

So the godson hid himself from men, and lived alone. One day his biscuits failed him. "Well," thought he, "now I must go and seek for roots." So he arose to seek them, and no sooner had he

done so than he perceived a bag of biscuits hanging from a bough, and he took and ate. And when these biscuits were all gone, there came another basketful on the selfsame bough. So the godson lived on from day to day. One grief only plagued him the fear of the freebooter. No sooner did he 'hear a freebooter coming than he hid himself, "lest he should slay me," thought he, "before I have the time to redeem my sins." Thus he went on living for ten years. One apple-tree also grew up, but as for the other two stumps, stumps they remained.

One day the godson rose up early and went to do his task, moistening the earth round the stump, and sat him down to rest. There he sat resting, and he bethought him, "I have sinned, I begin to fear death; if God so wills it, I will redeem my sins by my death." No sooner had he thought this than he heard something - it was the robber coming along, cursing and swearing. The godson listened, and then he thought, "Save it be God's will, nothing good or bad can befall me from anyone " and he went forth to meet the robber. And he saw that the freebooter was not alone, but was dragging after him another man, and both the hands and the mouth of this man were tied up. The man was silent, and the robber was cursing him. And the godson went up to the freebooter, and stopped in front of his horse.

"Whither dost thou carry this man?" said he.

"I am leading him into the forest. He is the son of a merchant. He will not say where his father's treasures are hid. I mean to torment him till he does tell me." And the freebooter would have gone on, but the godson would not let him, for he seized the horse by the bridle. The freebooter was very wroth with the godson, and shook his fist at him. "Hey!" cried he, "and dost thou wish the same for thyself? Hence, or I'll murder thee too, I promise thee."

But the godson was not afraid. "I will not let thee go," he cried. "I fear thee not; God alone I fear. But God has not commanded me to let thee go. Release that man, I say."

The robber's brow grew dark; he drew forth his knife, cut through the cords, and let go the merchant's son. "Be off, the pair of you," cried he, "for I'll not spare either if I fall in with you another time."

Then the son of the merchant bounded to his feet and ran away. The freebooter also would have gone on his way, but still the godson held him, and he began to tell him that he must let go his evil life likewise. The freebooter stopped and listened to all he said, then he went away, but never a word spake he.

In the morning the godson went to water his tree- stumps. And lo! the second one also had sent forth shoots, and a little apple-tree was growing out of it

Part 13

Another ten years passed by. Again the godson was sitting down alone. He desired nothing, he was afraid of nothing, and his heart was joyful within him. And the godson thought within himself, "How gracious God is to men, and yet they vex themselves about nothing. Why are they not content to live, and be happy in living?" And he began reflecting on all the evil deeds of men, and how they torment themselves. And he felt sorry for his fellow-men.

"Living thus, I live in vain," thought he; "I will go and tell the people what I know."

And while he was thus thinking, he heard something, and listened; it was the freebooter passing by. He let him pass by, and said to himself, "What can I say to him? he will not understand." Thus he thought at first, but presently he thought better of it, and went forth into the road. The freebooter was going moodily along, and his eyes were cast down to the ground. The godson looked at him and felt sorry, so he ran up to him and caught him by the knee.

"Dear brother," cried he, "have compassion on thy poor soul. Look now! the spirit of God is within thee, and yet thou dost torment thyself, and dost torment others, and wilt torment thyself yet more. But God loves thee, and of His merciful goodness there is no end! Do not ruin thyself, my brother! Change thy life!"

The robber looked darker than ever. He turned away. "Be off!" cried he.

But the godson caught the freebooter still more tightly round the knee, and burst into tears. The freebooter raised his eyes and fixed them on the godson. He looked and looked, dismounted from his horse, and fell down on his knees before the godson.

"Old man!" cried he, "thou hast conquered me. Twenty years have I striven with thee, and thou hast prevailed against me. I have now no power over myself. Do with me as it seemeth best to thee. When thou didst persuade me for the first time?"

continued he, "I was only more wroth than ever with thee. Only then did I begin to ponder over thy words when thou didst withdraw thyself from men, and I understood that thou hadst no need of aught from them. And from thenceforth I began to hang up biscuits for thee on the boughs."

And the godson called to mind that the old woman was only able to wash the tables when she had well wrung out the clout. He had only ceased to worry about himself when he had cleansed his heart and began to cleanse the hearts of others.

And the freebooter said moreover, "Only then did my heart begin to turn within me, when thou didst not fear death."

And the godson called to mind that only then did the coopers succeed in bending the hoop when they had made fast the block; and he had only ceased to fear death when he had made firm his life in God, and had subdued his stubborn heart.

And the freebooter said moreover, "But my heart only melted altogether within me when thou hadst compassion upon me, and didst begin to weep over me."

Then the godson rejoiced greatly. And he took the freebooter along with him to the place where were the stumps of the tree. Thither they went, and lo! a little apple-tree had shot up also

out of the last of the stumps. And then the godson called to mind that only then had the damp wood of the ox-herds burnt up when they had kindled a great fire; only when his own heart had kindled within him had he made the heart of this other burn also.

And the godson rejoiced greatly at the thought that now he had bought back sins.

All this he told to the freebooter, and then he died. But the freebooter buried him, and began to live as the godson bade him live, and so he taught the people.

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