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WYSS**

**THE SWISS FAMILY
ROBINSON, TOLD
IN WORDS OF ONE
SYLLABLE**

Lucy Aikin

**The Swiss Family Robinson,
Told in Words of One Syllable**

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Lucy Aikin

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CHAPTER I

WHEN one has a good tale to tell, he should try to be brief, and not say more than he can help ere he makes a fair start; so I shall not say a word of what took place on board the ship till we had been six days in a storm. The barque had gone far out of her true course, and no one on board knew where we were. The masts lay in splints on the deck, a leak in the side of the ship let more in than the crew could pump out, and each one felt that ere long he would find a grave in the deep sea, which sent its spray from side to side of what was now but a mere hulk.

"Come, boys," said I to my four sons, who were with me, "God can save us if it please Him so to do; but, if this is to be our last hour, let us bow to His will—we shall at least go down side by side."

My dear wife could not hide the tears that fell down her cheeks as I thus spoke to my sons, but she was calm, and knelt down to pray, while the boys clung round her as if they thought she could help them.

Just then we heard a cry of "Land! land!" felt a shock, and it was clear that we had struck on a rock, for we heard a loud cry from one of the men, "We are lost! Launch the boat; try for your lives!"

I went at once on deck, and found that all the boats had been let down, and that the last of the crew had just left the ship. I cried out for the men to come back and take us with them, but it was in vain.

I then thought that our last chance was gone. Still, as I felt the ship did not sink, I went to the stern, and found, to my joy, that she was held up by a piece of rock on each side, and made fast like a wedge. At the same time I saw some trace of land, which lay to the south, and this made me go back with some hope that we had still a faint chance. As soon as I got down stairs I took my wife by the hand, and said, "Be of good cheer, we are at least safe for some time, and if the wind should veer round, we may yet reach the land that lies but a short way off."

I said this to calm the fears of my wife and sons, and it did so far more than I had a right to hope.

"Let us now take some food," said my wife. "We are sure to need it, for this will no doubt be a night to try our strength."

My wife got some food for her boys, which we were glad to see them eat, poor as it was; but we could not share their meal. Three out of the four were put to bed in their berths, and soon went to sleep; but Fritz, who was our first child, would not leave us. He said, like a good son, that he would try to be of some use, and think what could be done.

"If we could but find some cork," said Fritz to me in a low tone, "we might make floats. You and I will not need them, for we can swim, but the rest will want some such means to keep them up."

"A good thought," said I. "Let us try to find what things there are in the ship that we can thus make use of."

We soon found some casks and ropes, and with these we made a kind of float for each of the three boys, and then my wife made one for her own use. This done, we got some knives, string, and such things as we could make fast to our belts. We did not fail to look for and find a flint and steel, and the box in which the burnt rags were kept, for these were at that time in use as the means to strike a light.

Fritz, who was now well-nigh worn out, lay down on his bed and slept like the rest. As for me and my poor wife, we kept watch, each in fear lest the next wave should lift the ship off the rock and break it up.

I need not tell you how glad we were when we saw the first gleam of light. At dawn the wind did not blow so strong, the sky was clear of clouds, and we saw the sun rise, and with it rose our hopes. I soon had my wife and sons on deck.

"Where are the men?" said they. "How can we steer the ship?"

"My dear boys," said I, "He who has kept us safe till now will still aid us. Let all hands set to work, and leave the rest to God."

At these words we all went to work with a will. My wife went to feed the live stock; Fritz set off in search of arms, and the means to make use of them; and Ernest made his way to the tool chest. Jack ran to pick up what he could find, but as he got to one of the doors he gave it a push, and two huge dogs sprang out and leaped at him. He thought at first that they would bite him, but he soon found that they meant him no harm, and one of them let him get on his back and ride up to me as I came from the hold of the ship.

When the boys had done their search, and the spoil was brought on deck, we thought we had found all that we should need. "As for me," said my wife, "I have brought good news, for I find we have still on board a cow, an ass, two goats, six sheep, a ram, a pig, and a sow, and I have found food for them all."

"All that you bring will be of use," said I; "but I fear that Jack's dogs will do us more harm than good."

"Not at all," said Jack, "for they can help us to hunt when we get to land."

"Well said, Jack. And now let us see what we can do that will aid us to get there."

We then took the casks that we had found, and Ernest and I soon cut them in half. With these tubs we made a kind of raft, though it was no slight task. The tubs, in fact, were a fleet of eight small round boats, made so fast to some planks that no one of them could float from the rest. The next thing to be done was to launch the raft. This we at length did, and when the boys saw it slide down the side of the ship and float on the sea, they gave a loud shout, and each one tried who should be the first to get on it. I made it fast to the ship, and there left it.

I then told my wife to change her dress for that of one of the crew which she had found, as her skirts would have got in her way when she had to climb. She did not at first like this, but did so as soon as she saw the truth of what I told her.

At last, when all was done, we went to bed, and slept as sound as if we had been on land.

CHAPTER II

WE were all up at the break of day, and knelt down to thank God that He had kept us from harm through the night.

We then put all the things on the raft, and ten live hens and two cocks were put in one of the tubs. Some ducks and geese we let go, in the hope that they would swim to the shore; and a pair of doves were set free, as they could fly to the land.

There was a place in the raft for each of us. In the first tub sat my wife; in the next Frank, who was eight years old; in the third Fritz, not quite twice the age of Frank; in the fourth were the fowls, and some old sails that would make us a tent; the fifth was full of good things in the way of food; in the sixth stood Jack, a bold lad, ten years old; in the next Ernest, twelve years of age, well taught, but too fond of self, and less fond of work than the rest; while I sat in the eighth, to guide the raft that was to save all that was dear to me in the world.

As soon as the dogs (Bill and Turk by name) saw us push off from the ship they leaped in the sea, swam near the raft, and kept well up with us.

The sea was calm; so that we felt quite safe. We made good use of the oars, and the raft bore its freight straight to the land; but as we drew near to the shore the sight of the bare rocks led us to think that we might still be in need of food and drink when that which we had was gone.

As we got near, the coast lost its bare look, and we were glad to see that there was no lack of trees. We soon found a bay, to which the ducks and geese had found their way, and here we saw a place where we could land.

As soon as we had made the raft fast with a strong rope, we took out all our wealth, and made a tent with the old sail cloth we had brought with us, and stuck a pole in the ground to keep it up. This done, I sent the boys to get some moss and dry grass to make our beds with. With the flint and steel we soon set fire to some dry twigs, and my wife made a pot of soup with what she had brought from the ship.

Fritz, who had charge of the guns, chose one, and took a stroll by the side of a stream, while Jack went in search of shell fish, which he thought he might find on the rocks. My share of the work was to save two large casks which were near the shore. While I was up to my knees in the sea I heard a shrill cry, which I knew to come from Jack. I got out at once, took up an axe, and ran to his help. I found him with his legs in a rock pool, where a large crab held him by his toes. It soon made off as I came near; but I struck at it with the axe, and brought it out of the pool. Jack then took it up, though it gave him a pinch or two ere he found out how to hold it, and ran off in high glee to show what he had caught.

When I got back to the tent, I found that Ernest had brought us news that he had seen salt in the chinks of the rocks, and that shell fish were not scarce.

"Well, my boy, if you are sure you saw them, I will ask you to go back for some. We must each do some work for the good of all."

He went, and soon found the salt, left by the sea on the rocks, which the sun had made quite dry. There was some sand with it, but my wife did not take long to find a way to cure that. She had been to a fresh stream with a large jug; from this I saw her pour some on the salt, strain it through a cloth, and let it drip in a cup, so that all the sand was left on the cloth.

When the soup was made hot we had each a taste, and all said that it was good.

"Be not in too great haste," said my wife, "we must wait for Fritz; but if he were here, I do not see how we are to take our soup, for we have no plates nor spoons."

"If we had but some large nuts," said Ernest, "we might cut them in half, and they would make good bowls."

"Quite true," said I; "but as there are none, we may as well wish for delf bowls and real spoons at once."

"Now I have it," quoth Ernest. "Let us use the shells I saw on the shore."

Off ran Jack to the shore, with Ernest at his heels, and back they both came with large and small shells for us all.

Just then Fritz came in, with a look of gloom on his face, which I could see was a sham.

"You do not mean to tell me you have come back with nought?" said I, as he put out his hands as if to prove that such was the case. But Jack, who had been round him, cried out, "No, no! he's got a pig!—such a fine one. Tell us where you found it."

Fritz now brought forth his prize. When I saw it, I knew, from what I had read, that it was not a pig, but a swift beast, known in these parts, that lives on fruit and nuts, and hides in the earth. (*The Agouti.)

"I like the place much more than I do this spot," said he. "The shore lies low, and there are planks, casks, chests, and all sorts of things, that the sea has thrown up. Why not leave this place at once, and go there?"

"There is a time for all things," said I. "We must at least rest here for one night."

We all sat down to take our soup with the shell spoons. Ernest took from his coat a large shell, which he had hid till now, put it in the soup, and then set it down to cool.

"You do not show want of thought," said I to him. "But I am not glad to see that you think so of your-self, and do so much for your own ease, when all the rest do so much for yours. Now, that shell full of soup you must give to our two dogs. We can all dip our small shells in the pot, and you must do as we do."

I knew he felt hurt at this, but he gave it to the dogs at once, and they soon made quick work of their share of the soup.

The sun was low when our meal came to an end. The fowls came round us to pick up the stray crumbs we had let fall, and my wife took out her bag of grain and fed the cocks and hens, and sent them to roost on the top of our tent.

We took care to load our fire-arms, in case we might need them in the night; sang a hymn of praise to God, and then left our fate in His hands.

CHAPTER III

As soon as I heard the cock crow, and saw by the light that it was break of day, I got out of bed and spoke to my wife as to what we should do next.

"First," said I, "Fritz and I will make a tour of the coast and try to find some of the men who left the ship, for if they are here they may be in want."

"But," said Fritz, who had heard me from his bed, "why should we search for those who left us to die on the wreck?"

"Well, I will tell you," said I. "First, we should do to them as we would wish them to do to us, not as they have done; next, we know that they took no food with them, and we should not leave them to starve; and last, it may be that they can help us, though now they stand more in need of our aid."

The boys were soon up, and we all sat down to a good meal. That done, Fritz and I got our guns. I put a pair of small arms in his belt, gave him a game bag, and told him to take an axe. I took some food for us both, and a full flask, out of which we could drink if we should stray far from a stream.

When we took our leave, my wife and the three boys were in tears. The dog Bill we left to guard the tent, but Turk went with us, and ran by our side.

We soon got to the banks of a stream; but then had to make our way down its course. It took us some time to reach the sea shore. There was not a boat to be seen, or any sign that the ship's crew had found the land. We left the shore, and went through a wood full of tall trees. Here Fritz struck some hard thing on the ground with his foot, which we found to be a CO-COA NUT. He gave it a blow with his axe, and broke the shell, and we both sat down to rest, and eat the nut.

At the end of the wood we came to a plain which gave us a clear view of the place. Fritz, who was on the look out, ran off with Turk to some strange trees that he saw on the right.

When I got up to him, it gave me no small joy to find that it was a gourd tree.

"Try," said I, "if you can get hold of one of those queer lumps that grow on it."

With that he brought one down, and we had a look at it.

"Now, of this," said I, "we can make a plate, a dish, or a flask. Wild men set great store by its shell, which they use to hold their food and drink."

We then set to work to make plates of the gourds. When we had made some eight or ten bowls, and some flat ones for plates, we laid them out in the sun to dry, and then went on our way.

We could see, not far off, a grove of fine palm trees, but to reach them we should have to pass through reeds and long grass. I knew this was just the place to find snakes, so we each cut a cane, that we might beat them off should we meet with any. As I took hold of my staff, I felt a gum or juice ooze out of the end. I put my tongue to it, and found it of a sweet taste. This led me to suck the reed, and I then knew that we had met with the SUG-AR CANE. By this time Fritz had done the same, for I could see that he held his cane to his mouth.

"Do not suck too much of it," said I, "or it will make you ill; but let us cut some of the best and take them back with us, for those at home will prize so great a treat."

It did not take us long to reach the place where the palms grew, and then we sat down in the shade to eat the food we had brought with us.

"Do you see those nuts at the top of the trees, Fritz?" said I.

"To be sure I do; but they are far too high to reach. Look, look!" he cried, "there are some MON-KEYS; let me have a shot at them." "Do not do that," I said, and held his arm; "it will do us no good to kill them, and I think I can make use of them." With that I threw some stones up at the tree where they were, though they had got safe out of my reach. They then made a loud noise, took hold of the nuts that were near, and flung them straight at us. The trick made Fritz laugh, who soon had hard work to pick up the nuts that were thrown at him.

We broke some of the nuts, and put the juice of the canes in the thick white cream which forms close to the shell; and this made us a dish that Fritz said was fit for a king.

Fritz and I then made fast some nuts to a string, which I tied round my waist, while he took up his canes, and we both set off on our road home.

CHAPTER IV

ON our way back we took up the gourd bowls and plates, which we found quite dry and hard as bone, and put them in our bags. We had scarce got through the wood, when Turk made a dart in front of us, and we saw a troop of apes rush out of the way. But he gave a leap and brought down one that could not climb so fast as the rest, for she had a young one in her arms. Turk made short work of the poor thing, for ere Fritz could call the dog off, the ape was dead. The young one, as soon as it saw Fritz, sprang on his back, put its paws in his curls, and would not let go. I at length got the ape from Fritz's back, and took it up in my arms like a child. We found that it was too young to seek its own food, and, as Fritz said he should like to take it home, we put it on Turk's back. Turk did not at first like this, but we soon got him to bear the ape, which held so tight by the hair on the dog's neck that it could not well fall off. Fritz then led Turk with a string, that he might not stray out of sight, or throw off his charge, which I think he would have done had we not been on the watch.

It did not take us long to reach the bank of the stream near to our home.

I need not tell you how glad my wife and sons were to see us safe back, or with what joy the boys took the "real live ape" out of Fritz's arms.

At length, when they got more staid, I told them that we had brought them all sorts of good things, but that we had not met with any of the men of whom we went in search. "God's will be done," said my wife, "let us thank Him that you have come back safe to us. This day to me has been an age; but put down your loads, for we must now go in and hear what you have to tell."

Fritz and I then told them, by turns, where we found the things we brought with us, how we made and dried the plates and bowls, cut the canes, and caught the ape in the wood. Our tales had not come to an end when we were told that it was time to sup. Ernest had shot a wild goose, and some fish had been caught in the stream. With these, and the Dutch cheese that we brought from the ship, we made a good meal; but the boys would not rest till we broke some of the nuts, from which they drank the milk, made sweet with the juice of the canes. I must tell you that we ate our food in great state from our gourd rind plates, which my wife said she should prize more than if they were made of pure gold.

That night the ape went to bed with Jack and Fritz, and we all slept in peace till the cocks on the roof of the tent woke us up.

Next day Fritz and I went back to the wreck to save the live stock, and get what else we had left that might be of use to us. We found it no light task, for we had to make floats for the cow, the ass, the sheep, and the goats, throw them in the sea, and tie them with ropes to our raft. We put on board the raft a vast deal of food that had not been spoiled by the sea, though the waves had made a breach in the sides of the wreck. We then put to sea with our train of live stock made fast to the stern.

We had not gone far when I heard a loud cry of fear from Fritz, "We are lost! We are lost! See what a great shark is on its way to us!"

Though pale with fright, he took aim with his gun, and shot the fish in the head. It sank at once, but left a track of blood in the sea, which I knew to be a sign that we were once more safe. We then got to land, and made fast our freight to the shore. Ere we had done this our friends came to give us what help they could to get the beasts out of the stream, and take them up to the tent. The poor things were well nigh worn out; but we took good care of them, and put them to rest on some dry grass that my wife had laid out for them.

That night we did not sup on the ground. My wife had spread a cloth on the top of a cask, and we each sat on a tub. With the knives and forks that we had found in the ship we ate a dish of hot ham and eggs, nor did we fail to test the wine that I had brought with me in a small cask from the wreck.

Ere bed-time my wife had told me that while I was at the wreck she had gone in search of some place in which we could build a house.

"And did you find one, my dear?" I said.

"Oh, yes," said she. "We can take you to a great tree that will serve us well, if we can but get across the stream with our goods."

"But would you have us roost, like fowls, in a tree? How do you think we could get up to our perch?"

"Was there not a large lime tree in our town in which they built a ball room, with stairs up the trunk?"

"To be sure there was," said I; "and if we can not build in it, we can at least make use of its shade, and dwell in a hut on the roots."

Ernest said that he took a string, and found that it was twelve yards round. This led me to think that my wife's scheme was by no means a bad one, and that I would have a look at the tree the next day.

When I had heard all they had to tell, we knelt down to pray, and then sought a good night's rest, which the toils of the day made us much in need of.

CHAPTER V

WHEN I rose from my bed the next day, I said to my wife: "Does it not seem, my dear, as if God had led us to this place, and that we should do wrong to leave it?"

"What you say may be quite true, so far as it goes," she said; "but I must tell you that the mid-day heat is more than we can bear, and that if we stay here we may have to keep watch at night, for there are, no doubt, wild beasts of some kind that will find us out; and we should not trust too much to our dogs, who may lose their lives in a fight with them."

"I dare say you are right," said I; "but I do not yet see how we can cross the stream. We shall first have to build a bridge."

The boys were now all out of their beds; and while my wife went to milk the cow and cook some food, I made my plans known to them. They were all glad when they heard that we were to leave, and each said he, would help to build the bridge.

The first thing to be done was to find some strong planks; and Fritz, Ernest, and I went down to the shore, and got in the boat, which the tide took down to the bay.

On a piece of land which lay to the left we could see some large dark thing, round which flew a flock of sea gulls. We put up a sail and caught a gust of wind which had sprung up, and this soon brought the boat to the spot. We made no noise, but crept up the shore step by step, and we got so near that Ernest brought down some of the birds with a stick. Fritz was the first to find out that what the sea gulls had just left was the huge fish he had shot in the sea. We cut off some rough skin, which we thought might serve for files, and then went back to the boat. I took a glance at the shore ere I got in, and to my great joy saw some of the planks and spars from the wreck lay on the ground not far off. Our next care was to bind these so as to make a raft, which we tied to the stern of the boat, and then, by the use of our oars, soon made our way up the stream to the place where the bridge was to be built. Our young friends were glad to see us back so soon, and ran to meet us; Jack had a cloth in his hand, in which was a store of cray fish and crabs just caught in some of the nooks of a rock up the stream.

"Do not fail to give God thanks," said I, "that our lot has been cast where we can pick up more food than we can eat."

It would take a long time to tell how we brought all the wood up to the spot, built piers of stone in the stream, and put the planks one by one in the place; it was late at night when we left off work, and once more sought our tent.

The next day we saw the sun rise, and took our first meal in haste, for we knew we should have a long day's toil. All the stores that we could not take with us were laid by in the tent, the door of which was made safe by a row of casks, that we put round it. My wife and Fritz soon led the way; the cow went next; then the ass, with Frank on its back. Jack led the goats, and on the back of one of them sat the ape. Ernest took charge of the sheep, and I brought up the rear as chief guard. We took care to cross the bridge one at a time, and found it bore our weight well; but once or twice we thought the cow would step in the stream, or fall off the boards, when she went to the sides to drink.

Just as we had left the bridge, Jack cried out, "Be quick! here is a strange beast with quills as long as my arm." The dogs ran, and I with them, and found a large POR-CU-PINE, in the grass. It made a loud noise, and shot out its quills at the dogs, and made them bleed. At this Jack shot at the beast, which fell dead on the spot. My wife's first thought was to dress the wounds made by the quills, which had stuck in the nose of one of the dogs, while the boys made haste to pluck some of the quills from the skin of their strange prize.

At last our march came to an end, and I saw for the first time the great trees that my wife had told me of. They were of vast size, and were, I thought, fig trees. "If we can but fix our tent up there," I said, "we shall have no cause to dread, for no wild beasts can reach us." We sent Frank off to find

sticks, with which to make a fire, and my wife made some soup of the flesh of the beast we had slain, though we did not like it so well as we did the ham and cheese we brought with us.

CHAPTER VI

THE meal at an end, my first thought was to make some steps by means of which we could reach the first strong branch of the tree. Ernest and I went in search of some thick canes that grew in the sands hard by. These we cut down, bound them to four long poles, and thus made a pair of steps that would, we thought, reach far up the trunk.

On our way back from the sands, one of the dogs made a dart at a clump of reeds, and a troop of large birds rose on the wing with a loud noise. Fritz let fly at them, and brought down two at a shot. One of them fell quite dead, but its mate, though hurt in the wing, made use of its long legs so well that it would have got off if Bill had not held it. The joy of Fritz, to have caught such a strange bird, was so great that he would have us at once bind it by the neck and take it back with us. "Look," said Ernest, "what fine plumes he has, and you see he has web feet like a goose, and has long legs like a stork: thus he can run on land as fast as he can swim."

"Yes," said I, "and he can fly with more speed through the air, for these birds have great strength in their wings. In fact, few birds have such means of flight as the FLA-MIN-GO."

My wife thought the great bird might need more food than we could spare. I told her that it would feed on small fish and worms, and not rob our geese of their grain. I then tied him to a stake near the stream; and in a few days we were glad to find that he knew us, and would come at a call, like a tame bird.

While I sat on the grass with my sons, late in the day, I thought I would try to make a bow and thus save our shot. This I did with a long cane and a piece of string, and then made a dart with a sharp point, which I shot off and found it would go straight. The branch of the tree on which we were to fix our hut was so high that our steps would not near reach it. I tied some strong thread to the dart, and shot it over the branch; then tied a piece of rope to the end of the thread, and drew that up, and at last made a long row of cane steps, with a rope at each side, which we drew up to the first strong branch. The boys were now all in haste to climb the tree, but I chose that Jack, who was light of build and sure of foot, should go up first and try the strength of our work. Fritz went up next with some nails, and made the ropes fast to the tree, while I drove stakes in the ground to keep them firm at the foot. It was now time for me to mount, and up I went with an axe to lop off the twigs and smooth the bough that was to form the ground of our new house. I sent the boys down out of my way, and kept hard at work till it was late, for the sky was clear, and the moon lent me her beams of light to see by.

When I came down my wife spread a good meal on the ground, which we ate as best we could, and then made our beds of dry moss, round which we put heaps of twigs. These we set light to, as watch fires to keep off wild beasts and snakes. The toils of the day had made the boys tired, and they were soon in a sound sleep, but my wife and I took it in turns to watch through the whole night.

We were all out of bed as soon as light was in the sky, and set to work to hoist up the planks that were to form the floor of our hut. These we laid down on the branch, with their ends made fast to a cross piece of wood that we had to fix to the trunk of the tree. Our nails were long, and we drove each one of them home, so that we had no cause to fear the strength of our work. By the time we had done this the day was far spent, and we were all glad to lay by our tools and rest our limbs. That night we lit our fires round the tree, tied the dogs to the roots, and went up to sleep out of harm's way for the first time since we left the ship. When the steps were drawn up we all felt that we were now safe at last, and that we had brought the toils of the day to a good end.

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