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Ririro

IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

Ririro

Robinson Crusoe: Building the Boat (3/6)

Now that I had trained my mind to accept my fate and make the best of it, I no longer constantly scanned the sea for a ship, but instead tried to find a way of living that would make things as easy for me as possible.

My dwelling consisted of a tent beneath the side of a rock. I had built a sort of turf wall around it on the outside. Later, after a year and a half, I covered it with reeds and branches from the trees, which helped to keep out the rain, which could be very heavy at certain times of the year.

I had already seen how I could bring all my goods here and store them in the cave that I had made behind me.

Everything took up a lot of space, and I had no room to turn around. So I wanted to enlarge my cave by digging further into the earth. It was a loose sandy rock, so digging was possible. When I discovered that I was



reasonably safe from wild animals, I started using the entrance and exit as well as the store-room.

Now I began to focus on making some necessary things, especially a chair and a table. Without them I could not write, eat, or do various other things. So I got to work. Any man can become a master of any mechanical art over time, if he uses his mind. I had never used tools in my life, yet over time, through practice and ingenuity, I discovered I could work with them. I made an abundance of things, even without tools. But if, for example, I wanted a plank, I had no other way than to chop down a tree, place it in front of me, and chop it flat on both sides with my axe, until it was as thin as a plank. This required a lot of patience and time, but I had plenty of time anyway.

So I first made a table and a chair from the short planks that I had brought with me on my raft from the ship. Then I made shelves on the wall to put all my tools, nails, and ironwork on. I also hammered pieces into the rock wall to hang my guns on. This way I had everything at hand, and I could easily find everything I needed from my supplies.

I also started keeping a diary of my daily activities. In the beginning, I was in a hurry with my work, but I was also very desperate. My diary would be filled with this, day in and day out.

You understand that I often thought about the land I had seen from the other side of the island. I secretly wished that I would go ashore there and that it was

the mainland and that it was inhabited, and that I could escape in that way.

I did not take into account the dangers of such an enterprise. I could fall into the hands of savages or lions and tigers. I could be killed and eaten. I had hardly anything to defend myself with. I only thought about an escape plan later. At first, I was very happy with the idea of an escape.

I wished I still had my boat and the dinghy, but this was in vain. I went to look at the dinghy of our ship. It was almost where it used to be, but now against a high ridge of rough sand. If I had been strong enough to push it back into the water, I could use the boat. But I had no chance of doing so. I went to the forest and chopped off levers and rollers and brought them to the boat, determined to try what I could. I thought to myself that if I could repair the damage, it would be a very good boat to use at sea.

For three or four weeks, I worked as hard as I could, but I couldn't get the boat loose and push it into the water. I didn't have enough strength. I gave up hope for the boat. But my desire to go to the mainland grew stronger.

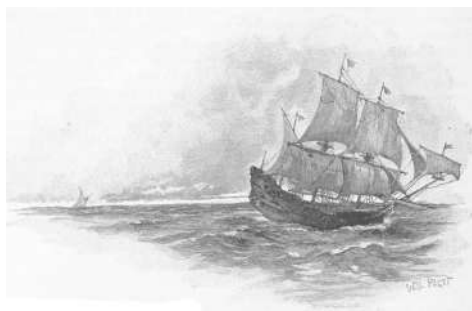
Finally, I began to think whether it was possible for me to make a canoe myself, as the natives did, without tools. This didn't seem impossible to me and even a great idea. The only thing that would be difficult was getting the canoe into the water by myself, once it was ready. Then I found the tree, which I had cut down with great effort, hollowed it out from the inside, and made a boat out of it, but then I was not able to get

the canoe into the water. That would be a huge disappointment. But during the making, I did not think further about this. My thoughts were focused on the sea voyage. But the journey overland might be even more difficult than the journey by sea...

I worked on this boat, it was perhaps the most foolish thing I, as a man, ever did. I was satisfied with the design and thought, "I'll make the boat first, then I guarantee myself that I will find a way to get it in the water." This was perhaps a strange way of thinking, but my imagination had taken over. I cut down a very large thick cedar tree. I was working on this for twenty days. Then I worked on the branches for another fourteen days. Then it took me a month to get a model in it. I needed three months for the interior. I worked only with my hammer and chisel. Then I had a boat, big enough for twenty-six people, so certainly big enough for me and my cargo. I was enormously happy when I had done this work. The boat was larger than any canoe I had ever seen. If I could get it in the water, this would be the most unlikely journey anyone has ever undertaken. But all my attempts to get the canoe into the water failed. I didn't get further than a hundred meters into the water. To keep my spirits up, I decided to dig earth and make a slope. This work hurt my arms, but for a release, I would do anything. But still, I didn't get any movement in the boat. Then I came up with the plan to make a channel so that the water could flow to the boat. But it would take ten long years for me to succeed. So, reluctantly, I gave up this plan too.

This made me very sad; I saw, too late, the foolishness of my plan. Thus, my fourth year in this place ended, and I celebrated my birthday in the same way and with the same little comfort as in previous years.

I was indeed far removed from all the evil of the world in this place. But I also missed human contact and a purpose to live for. At the same time, I had nothing else to desire. I was the lord of my mansion, and if I wished, I could proclaim myself the king or emperor of my land. There were no enemies. No one could command me. I grew exactly what I needed. I had an abundance of turtles. I had enough wood to build a whole fleet of ships. Everything I had, I could use and was therefore



valuable. I had enough to eat to meet my needs. If I killed more meat than I could eat, a dog or other vermin had to eat it. If I sowed more grain than I could eat, it would soon spoil. If I cut down more trees, they would lie

on the ground and rot. I could only use them for fuel. Eating and clothing myself were the only things left for me to do. In one word, this experience and the nature of things taught me, after some time of contemplation, that all the good things of this world are only as good for us as we can use them. And that whatever we gather for others, we can only enjoy what we can use, and not more. Even the most miserable person in this world would know no more greed if he were in my shoes. I possessed infinitely more than I could ever use.