

SOLITARY ISLAND A NOVEL BY REV. JOHN TALBOT SMITH

CHAPTER XXXVII.—Continued.

"And so Florian Wallace was here again," said Barbara, with an arch look at Ruth. "Oh, Ruth dear! was there ever a man more faithful to the love of his youth? And tell me, tell me truly, did you refuse him a second time—why, no, a third time, is it not?"

since you were born, girl. You didn't know Barbary? She isn't one bit different from what she was twenty years ago, for all her turning papist like yourself! Do you know what I said?"



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through this town!" "And if you do," roared the squire, "I'll publish your character to Flory in all the colors of the rainbow. How will he like to know that the woman he's going to marry came up to Clayburg and made a circus of herself and him to everybody, running here and there with a story of an engagement? O Barbary! you're a bad one, and I always knew it, in spite of your dainty ways and your perfumed trickery."

"What! kick you, you devil?" said Billy. "I can do that, tall or short. What's the cause of it all?" "A woman, old boy. She kissed me and petted me, and I caved in. A woman, and, I may add it, a widow."



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in spite of her enemies, discovered Florian, and, at the least, wounded Ruth's sterling modesty, if not altogether destroyed its existence in the mind of sensitive Paul Rossiter. Paul went out into the open air in a daze of happiness. Ruth loved him; his fate was no longer uncertain, but he was very sorry that her tender secret had found a resting-place in Barbara's bosom. He could not see the motives of the latter's coarse revelation of it to him. He was sure, however, that malice prompted both the coarseness and the revelation, and he had a dim suspicion that something might have happened since Barbara's arrival in town to bring it to pass. Perhaps Ruth knew and dreaded that Barbara would do something of the kind. How would she ever look in his face again, suspecting that Barbara had so ruthlessly exposed her? The more the poet looked at the matter the stronger his suspicions grew, and alongside of them grew the determination to leave Clayburg that night as quietly as he had entered it months before. Ruth would then feel easier in the belief that her shame had not been made public, or even whispered to him. In time he could come himself to press the suit in which he had altogether despaired; and if it was hard to forbear flying to her then and soliciting a surrender of the secret which rightfully belonged to him, its compensation was that the delicacy of his wife-to-be would not be so cruelly injured. She loved him and had sought for him and was grieved at his absence. He did not want more; but he walked near the house just after twilight, and saw her sitting at one side of the parlor table, with the squire at the other, her calm, peaceful face as sweet in its repose as if the nun's veil hung about it.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. In the whirlpool of city life again! Paul realized it with a sense of delight as unexpected as it was pleasant; for he had never a great love towards the metropolis, and his many sorrows there had embittered him against it forever. Not quite forever, as he now felt. He had the secret of his misfortunes in his grasp and nevermore could Russian spies go about whispering slanders and bribing the managers of theatres because of his likeness to the Prince of Cracow. There was a fair field before him. He would haunt his old dens of misery where his poor lived, without being compelled to live in them, and the aristocratic seclusion of the famous boarding-house would open to him again. A few months' absence had banished the mists that once hung round him. One manager was glad to have him back, and another, and a third. In fact, a few calls in the course of the day filled the poet with inordinate vanity; and it was with a light head that he entered a restaurant to have an early supper. It was a cheap place, cheap even for that time, but the eatables were good, with a country sincerity in the bread and meat and potatoes and butter. An immense quantity was served to each customer. Paul was intoxicated enough to have withstood a weightier meal than was set before him, and was half-way through it when—"It's his ghost! Lord be merciful to me that sees it!" cried a stout but shaking voice at a distant table; and, looking up, Paul saw the rubicund, rotund Peter, red in the face from weakness and fright—even in physicals Peter was contrary—staring at him, fascinated and groaning deeply.

"I am real flesh and blood, Peter," said he; "drop your nonsense, and shake hands in memory of old friendship." (To be continued.)

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