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# SOLITARY ISLAND

A NOVEL.  
BY REV. JOHN TALBOT SMITH

## CHAPTER XXV.—Continued.

"This never happened before in her whole life," said Billy, with tremulous lips, as she began to show signs of returning life. Florian whispered to the count, who followed him into the garden.

"It's a good thing to get away," he said. "That deputation would have kept us there till noon, when I wish you to see the islands and my hermit friend."

"Your mother—" began the count. "She is all right. I knew your mission would make her over-nervous, for she is very excitable."

They went down the street to the dock below the depot, and in a few minutes Florian had hired a boat and hoisted the sail to a favorable breeze. A few loungers stood on the shore and watched curiously the ordinary human motions of so queer creatures as a politician and a count.

"Rustics are the same the world over," said Vladimir. "I could fancy myself in a Russian village this morning and not draw heavily on imagination."

"But such colors!" said Florian, waving his hand to the scene and taking a deep, delighted breath. "I feel like an old, dust-covered, moth-eaten volume opened for the first time for years to the sunlight and fresh air."

"That is anything but a delightful feeling," said the count. "I am chilly. This water-wind is too fresh and heavy for the lungs."

"Not for me," said Florian, putting his hands to his mouth and giving a succession of wild whoops—a trick learned in his schoolboy days. An answer was faintly heard in the distance to their right, then to their left, and finally all around came shrill, tremulous cries, more or less distant.

"You see the strength of our traditions," said Florian. "That was the war-cry of the boys twenty years ago, and the new generation has not forgotten it."

"Was that informal reception of this morning a tradition?" said the count sarcastically.

"Washington went through it all fifty years ago," Florian answered. "It is one of the means by which we advance our popularity. The average American rates an honest hand shake highly."

"I would feel like Coriolanus if I had to ask such suffrages."

"And you would fare like Coriolanus, no doubt. Now, if you have any taste for natural beauty, look at this."

They had left the river and were entering the curved channel which passed into the Bay of Tears.

"It is a bow," said Florian, "and we are the arrow. See, now we shoot heavenward." And like a transformation scene the narrow passage, in which the waters mingled their murmurs with the sighing of the trees, widened on the instant into a glorious bay where the waters slept in the sunlight and a silver-white mist lingered in the air. Even the indifferent count was touched.

"Your hermit has a royal dwelling," said he, "when such a vestibule leads to it."

"We shall see," Florian replied. A short run up the Canadian side of the river brought them to the landing-place. "This is a royal residence," said he to the count, as they anchored. To the disappointment of both, the hermit was not at home, but everything was in its old place, even the copy of *Izaak Walton*; and Florian saw with delight the absence of change, as if he had been gone but a day!

"This is the nearest approach to eternity that man can make. There has been no change here in twenty years, and I suppose the furniture of his brain and his heart are in the same placid condition. Such a man endures death with philosophy."

"Nonsense!" the count said; "on the contrary, he is always unprepared for so violent a change. With me, a worldling, death is one of the incidents which make life charming. There is a risk in holding life's jewel. Now, this hermit, as I suppose, is wildly virtuous, an ascetic."

"No, no. He is sedate, stoical, serious, but not a devotee."

"Then he has taken to this life from a love of it, and not because a companion was struck dead by lightning at his side or because he had already exhausted the world?"

"I would like to hear himself answer those insinuations. It would take all your cynicism and wit to match him. Above all men he despises an indifferentist."

"What do you call this?" said the count, holding up a delicate handkerchief between his thumb and forefinger. "Was it not one such that damned poor Desdemona?"

"As I live," replied Florian, examining the article, "my hermit has strange visitors occasionally."

There were no marks by which its owner might be known, but the keen eyes of the count detected the letter "W" which had been worked with colored silk at one corner, and the color had faded.

"An initial belonging to you," said he, pointing it out. Florian looked at it thoughtfully for a few moments.

"It is just possible," he said, pressing the handkerchief to his lips, "that this is a relic of Linda—poor Linda! If so it would be a pity to deprive him of what must be dear to him. He thought so much of the child."

He put it between the leaves of *Izaak Walton* reverently.

"Then we shall not see him," said Vladimir.

Shaking his head for answer, Florian led the way to the boat. They were getting in the anchor when a curious kind of music reached their ears and drew their attention to a distant point around which a boat was sailing.

"It is a stringed instrument," said Florian, "or I would say we were to see a relic of the pipes which played before Moses. It is the melancholy jew's-harp, and an unskilful hand is playing the one string. Perhaps it may be the hermit."

The boat coming into sight showed Pere Rougevin's short, stately form at the tiller and a farmer's boy, with his feet dangling in the water, sitting in the bow. The priest was the musician, and the tune, which he still continued to play with vigor, "Yankee Doodle."

"You must know him," said Florian, finging out a signal to the other boat; "he is a leading man in this northern country, and can tell you more about Paris than you know."

"Or he knows," said the count ironically. "Is he the parish priest?" Before Florian could answer the boats were alongside, and Pere Rougevin stepped into theirs and shook Florian's hand warmly.

"You can return," he said to the boy. "I shall get home in this boat—that is, if you gentlemen are bound for Clayburg."

Florian assured him on that point, and introduced him to the count immediately.

As they went along, Florian told him of the motive of their visit to Clayburg, and, without expressing any emotion save amusement, the old gentleman went on to point out to the count the various objects of interest on their route, and the anecdotes, tragic or otherwise, connected with them.

"You probably visited the greatest curiosity of this region, but did not find him at home."

"You mean the hermit?" said the count. "No, we did not see him. This place seems like a domain of chance. You can find no one in the places usually allotted to them. All are wanderers."

"That is its principal charm. But there is some method in chance, after all. As a good old lady remarked to me some time ago: 'Do you miss your prayers in the morning?' said I. 'No, father, I don't; but bein' kind o' busy with hayin' and the fishin', I puts 'em off till night, sir.' Work is done, and not fitfully."

The sound of distant music of a powerful and brassy quality reached their ears and drew their attention to the town, which from that spot looked very pretty with its white buildings and steeples shining in the sun. A crowd had gathered on one of the wharves, and a band was playing under the shadow of imnumerable flags, and banners, while cheering, shouts and yells were faintly borne over the water.

"You will have the opportunity of seeing a political turnout," said Florian to the count. "There stands the deputation awaiting us, and hundreds of gentle hearts are palpitating now with the delightful thought of seeing a real Russian count. Mrs. Buck has taken the greatest pains to set your charms in the brightest light before all the ladies of the town."

A boat had now put off from the dock to meet them, with the squire's red visage in the bow, and they sailed into port in his company amid the most frantic cheers of the multitude.

"Nothing, this, to Parisian en-



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thustiasm," said the priest, as they stepped ashore, "but more sincere and lasting, perhaps."

A carriage was in waiting, and, all having entered, they took the last place in a procession of which the band had the first, and did it justice. The ride was short. They were transferred to a hotel balcony, which gave them an opportunity of seeing their admirers in an agony of exhaustion, sitting on the curbstones of the street, on barrels and boxes and staircases, and leaning out of windows in heart-breaking attitudes, while the sun beat down on them, and the band blared about and through them, dividing with the count the attention of the multitude.

Every one was red, and every one had a handkerchief with which the mopped and reddened the more his perspiring face. Only one cool, shaded spot stood in view, on the opposite side of the street, where, under a protecting canopy sat the well-dressed leading ladies of the town, headed by Reverend Mrs. Buck and levelling opera-glasses at the titled victim of one part of this ovation.

The squire, as chairman and general manager of the reception, was in a new place every instant, mopping industriously at his blooming face and swearing in secret at the intense heat. His exertions to have the affair proceed smoothly were nobly seconded by the father of the Honorable Florian, who, while he thought himself the very centre of observation, was of no more consequence to the crowd than if he had been his son's remotest relative.

When the brass band had wound up its disturbance with one prolonged crash of powdered melody, the squire stepped forward amid cheers. With his back to Florian and his face to the crowd he welcomed to his native town this admirable specimen of the political youth of the time, congratulated him on the eminence he had won in the service of his country, prophesied his future glories and the glories he would reflect on Clayburg, and pledged to him the eternal, the undying, the immortal, solid, uninterrupted fidelity and esteem of the citizens of the town.

Amid a second tremendous round of cheering Florian took his place and endeavored to out-adjudge the squire in one of his most telling stump-and-spread-eagle speeches.

There was frequent applause and so-called cries of "That's so," "Rah for our boy!" "Flory knows where his bread and butter be," "Hayseed forever!" until the count writhed like a man taking a whipping.

When the speaker had ended the count was introduced by the chairman as a foreigner who much admired republican institutions and would tell them what he thought about them plump and plain. So the count intended sharpening his weapons of sarcasm and wickedly determined to inflict some suffering on those who had not spared him. But the mood of the people had apparently changed. Their humorous vulgarity disappeared, a polite silence reigned, broken only by very modest applause: and the surprised nobleman spoke pleasantly to these rough people, who had tact enough to understand that their free American ways might be offensive to a Russian. What gentleman could do more? And the ladies were so delicately attentive and sympathetic, catching the most veiled and diplomatic allusions to their beauty and worth, and applauding with such discrimination!

There was some mixed speaking afterwards on the part of noteworthy elders anxious to put their opinions on record; and a very smart youth, whose kind has notably increased in the country, disgusted every one by his cheek, his vulgarity and his affectation; to whom the crowd paid no attention, but, with many sharp criticisms on their defects, with many wishes that the dinner might not interfere with their

talking powers, and with considerable laughing, scattered homewards, while the tired and heated count was led into the dining-room and placed at his seat amid a hubbub too horrible for description.

These hot, red-faced, perspiring Yankees were still full of spirits and appetite. It was dreadful for the count to see what hungry looks they cast at the dishes, as if the noise and confusion of the procession and the speech-making were incentives to appetite. Knives, tongues and dishes clattered in unison; waiters ran hither and thither, in and out, tripped and sprawled, as if their reputations depended on the absurdities they were performing; the elders upset gravy-bowls and vinegar cruets with social equanimity; everything was put on the table at once; everybody shouted his thoughts to his neighbor; steam rose from every dish like a cloud, and around each man's plate was grouped an army of smaller dishes, to which his neighbor helped himself with genial freedom! The count groaned helplessly. And there sat the Honorable Florian, the cause of all the trouble, calm, cool, and elegant, full of good spirits, his pleasant voice rising above the din and roaring encouragement at his friend, until the band broke loose and sat upon all rivalry with a completeness of triumph and penetration that made the count feel as if he were eating that awe-inspiring music.

"Down South they call this a barbecue," the squire shouted at him across the table, where he struggled with a roast standing; "this is, of course, a little milder."

"Oh! considerably milder," said an ancient—"considerably, squire."

"Ya's," drawled another. "I suppose it's only a shadow of a real barbecue. The Southerners air apt to dew things with a rush, bein' a little fiery."

"That's where you'd see the fun," continued the squire. "But still this is a pretty good specimen of a high old time. Of course with—"

A burst from the band crushed the words back into his mouth; but the squire continued to roar, and the count nodded politely while pretending not to see his neighbor carrying off his green peas. The gentleman had said, unheard by the count: "Seem' as you don't take to them 'ear, I'll try 'em."

After a time Vladimir passed into a dreamy state in which he seemed to be the centre of a revolving machine. He rather liked it on the whole, and as the motion grew slower and slower he began to realize that the table was cleared, the Yankees satisfied, and Florian speaking in the midst of a great and pleasant silence. Some comic singing followed, there was a general handshaking, of which he had a share, and finally he was conducted to the quiet of the Wallace home.

"How did you like it?" said Florian, when they had changed their clothing and sat looking at the sun shedding his last glories on the river.

"I feel as if I had been through a campaign. If my greatest enemy had done this his revenge could not have been more complete. And this is the government of the people! O Coriolanus, Coriolanus!"

And the fellow who ate my peas! Florian, take me away out of this at once and forever, and never, never, never drag me into such a barbecue again. It is well named. We have been here but twenty-four hours. I feel as if it had been as many years."

"We go to-morrow," said Florian, with a sigh. "I would like it to last forever."

"Since it can't," answered the count solemnly, "amen!"

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

When Florian returned to New York he took with him the determi-

nation at once to set about his wooing of Frances Lynch, and to propose as soon as convenient afterwards. The task which he contemplated was not irksome. The courtship would be more prosaic than if he were an anxious lover, but a beautiful, high-bred, elegant woman was a treasure any man might seek with eagerness and lose with pain. When he had the pleasure of next seeing the young lady—she was with Peter in the parlor—he took occasion to greet her with as much warmth and tenderness as was permissible. Under the restraint of his presence Peter grew silent, and, when he did speak, gave broad hints about people with gizzards instead of hearts. Florian had never taken kindly to the old man, and, having a suspicion that the fault was his own, was apt to be inconsiderate and harsh towards him. When Frances withdrew he turned upon him severely.

"You have a habit of making peculiar remarks in my presence," said he, "which I cannot but think applicable to myself."

"If the cap fits ye, put it on," Peter answered sullenly; "there's many of 'em seems just made for you."

"If that is so," said Florian, "I wish it understood that you are not to put them on."

"Why can't ye let another man's property alone, then," said Peter, with a frightened gasp, "and 'tend to yer Protestants an' convent girls?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"What do I mean! What can I mean but that ye are interfering where ye have no right?" And jumping up, Peter began to walk the floor excitedly. "What business have ye smiling so tenderly on a girl whose heart already belongs to another?"

"Stop a moment!" cried Florian sternly. "Do you say that Miss Lynch is engaged to any gentleman?"

"I say what I say," snorted Peter, "an ye have no business courtin' a girl that another has courted, is courtin', and will marry, please God, if I have anything to do with it."

"May I ask who the gentleman is?" soothingly.

"Oh! it's well ye know, then," said Peter, with supreme scorn. "Who else would it be but Paul?"

"Paul!" muttered Florian, feeling the frown which he did not permit to appear on his face; and while Peter tramped the room with slowly reddening face and a continuous stream of talk in Paul's behalf, he allowed the fountain of his bitterness to open and pour out its waters on the memory of his friendship for the poet. He had connected Paul in some way with his failure to win Ruth the second time. Barbara was always talking of the matrimonial fitness of Ruth and the poet for each other, and Ruth herself admired him. It was his advice which had brought about her conversion. And now here he was again interfering with his matured designs. The lawyer shut his teeth with the bitter determination to destroy whatever affection existed between Paul and Frances. He knew and felt his own ungenerous spirit; but generosity of soul was not at present a strong point in his character. Peter meanwhile was walking, asserting, and working himself into a comfortable rage.

"D'ye think I'd see a pretty, decent girl married to a thief of the faith like you, an infidel!"

"Stop!" thundered Florian with his most tremendous frown.

"That for yer stop," said Peter, snapping his fingers and executing a Tipperary leap into the air. "D'ye think for one moment I'd stand by and see her give herself to a man that has no more Catholicity about him than the coat on his back, that goes to Mass only when it pleases him, that's betrayin' his religion for the sake of the world's honors, an' uses his talents to discredit the mother that bore him? D'ye think I would—d'ye think—I WOULD?"

By this time he was beside Florian with his hot, sullen face and panting lips. For the first time the real fun of the scene reached the politician, for he laughed suddenly and heartily in Peter's face.

"Oh!—ah!" said Peter, withdrawing to a distance, half-afraid that he had made a fool of himself. Then Florian said politely:

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Carter; I think I have made a mistake, and I am sorry for it."

"Ye have made a mistake," said Peter doubtfully, "and I don't know as apologies cover it, either. Well, I can't be less than a gentleman, anyhow; I never was. But ye'd better make up yer mind to leave the field to Paul. No good can come of you interfering."

Florian bowed with a tolerating smile, which cut Peter so smartly that he stepped impressively to the other's side.



## SURPRISE

A PURE HARD SOAP

"Believe me," he said in a whisper, "you will never marry Frances Lynch while I live."

With another bow, which was but an expression of polite scorn, Florian withdrew, leaving Peter to gloomy meditation in the parlor. "He thinks I can't do it," he muttered. "Well, let us see."

At four o'clock each afternoon Florian's quick, firm step was heard in the hall. Frances at that hour was either in the parlor with a visitor or in her mother's rooms, but wherever she chanced to be he sought her company, always compelled to suffer the chagrin of finding Peter present or seeing him trot in stubbornly afterwards. They looked over engravings together, or he turned her music while she played and sang, or she accompanied him when singing, and Peter also, who had not a bad voice and was fond of showing it. Their conversation was chiefly on literary matters. Peter had lately read and criticized a novel by a new American author, and had cut it to pieces in his slashing way.

"Full of the new idea of crime and divorce and socialism," said he. "The heroine is a man in woman's clothing, forward, indecent, unblushing, impertinent, crammed with ideas of woman's freedom, woman's rights, and woman's nonsense. No model for our young women. A piece to be in a lunatic asylum. I tore it to shreds."

"Did you read it?" said Frances to the politician.

"Yes," said Florian, "and I thought it very well written, but a little exaggerated and improbable. The heroine could find no place except in a novel, but she was a very pathetic representative of some bitter restraints on women."

"Yes," grunted Peter—"pathetic indeed! Moaning because she had a beautiful lover that daren't ask her to marry him, an' she not able to do it for him. The writer would remove such restraints, and have us dancing jigs with mile-stones to keep out o' women's way when they got the power of asking."

"It was very sad," said Florian, "and very well described. I agreed with the author. Women should meet us half-way."

"I do not think so," said Frances, fixing her clear eyes upon him. "I am a firm believer in the Christian idea of female modesty. It may entail much suffering, but it also cuts off much misery. Society has indicated certain signs whereby a man may know if his suit is acceptable, and they serve their purpose better than going half-way and doing violence to woman's greatest protection—her modesty. The women among whom you were educated held those ideas, did they not?"

"Yes, indeed," said Florian, "with one exception, and she was very charming."

(To be continued.)

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