

SOLITARY ISLAND

A NOVEL.

BY REV. JOHN TALBOT SMITH

CHAPTER XIX.—Continued.

The squire had a great distrust of Barbara. What he feared from that lady he could not exactly tell, but as he compared her nature to that of a balky horse it could be inferred that he expected some treachery on her part at a critical moment. She was well aware of the squire's opinion of her and delighted to tease him into strong expressions which not all his daughter's warning looks could prevent when the humor came.

She had seen with a feeling of pleasure that a struggle of some kind was going on in Ruth's soul since the night on which they visited the cathedral together. What was its nature she could not define. Its importance in her eyes was purely negative. She had guessed only that it was injurious to the hopes which Florian so rashly entertained, but that it in any way was concerned with Paul she could not discover. It satisfied her simply to know that, for the present at least, society would not be apt to lose the bachelor charms of Mr. Wallace, and to secure this end Barbara was quite willing to do many more awkward things than consorting and conspiring with old idiots like Peter Carter. In her sly yet perfectly natural way she assisted circumstances in aggravating Ruth's condition. Ruth was sad, and she found means to make her sadder, inclined to keep much by herself—and Barbara gave her every opportunity of solitude—fond of talking of death and the importance of salvation when she talked at all; and Barbara was as deeply religious and solemn in word and look as a Quaker. All this time she was working in the dark, and only knew by instinct that it would come out as she wished. Had she for a moment suspected that Ruth's struggle was one of faith, and that she was considering a change to Catholicity, her whole soul would have been roused to prevent so dangerous a turn of affairs.

She would like to have seen Paul Rossiter again, and wondered why he had deserted them. She was becoming anxious. Paul was Florian's friend. Had he discovered, or had Peter made known to him, the dead-set which Florian was making against Ruth's heart, and had he kindly stepped aside at the expense of his own feelings, that his friend might have a clear field? It looked like it. But she had no intention of permitting such a scheme to succeed, and set about securing Paul's presence in Merriam house so determinedly that in a few days after she had picked him up while driving out and had brought him home to dinner, Ruth's face lightened up frankly at sight of him.

"You are a gift of the gods," said she, "rarely seen, and held but for a short time. What has deprived us of your company so long?"

"Some literary work," Barbara said. "It could not well be anything else."

"Managers are more exacting than ladies," he answered, "and I am not at all inclined to work. I have staid during the winter, and must make up for it now."

"I did not think I would see you again," said Ruth, when Barbara had gone away for a time. "I was very much disturbed that evening coming from church, and was half-resolved to go away from New York at once."

"But you have thought better of it, I see. The music and the solemn service on a moonlight night give one enthusiastic notions. I am inclined always after them to go away and be a hermit, but a sound sleep, or, better, an oyster supper on the way home, brings me back to my senses."

"Oh! but it was not the music, Mr. Rossiter. I had thought of many things a long time, until I knew not what to do, and I came to New York partly in the hope of forgetting my mental troubles. I was succeeding—yes, I think I was succeeding—when your words spoiled all. Were you enthusiastic that evening, Mr. Rossiter—were you too earnest?"

"I have thought so since," he said hesitatingly, "but what I said was in itself true. When persons are in a state of doubt they are bound to get out of it."

"But doubt is sometimes a temptation."

"It can be banished by prayer, then, or by removing the existing causes. But as I understood you, your doubt had only increased with time and thinking. There was some-

thing more in it than mere temptation. I know that even in that case an honorable doubt can be smothered, for there are many to whom such a grace was given, and of their own will they destroyed it. I would not be in their shoes for worlds."

"But now," added he playfully, and sorry to be so quickly drawn into this subject, "I shall frighten you again by my earnestness."

"No, no; I am utterly helpless, Mr. Rossiter, and confused, too. Let me tell you just the kind of doubts which trouble me. Your church has received so many Protestants that you must know something of their general state of mind, and perhaps you can help me. Pray do not refuse me," when he had begun to decline the honor. "I know what you would say, and it only urges me the more to speak to you. Remember, you are partly responsible for my late annoyances, and like an honest gentleman, you must help me out of my difficulties."

She did not give him time to raise any great objections, but poured out her story like water from a wide-mouthed urn. It was plainly and sensibly done, and he had no fault to find with her.

"I think," said he, "that you are in a state verging on conversion. I don't believe any advocate of Methodism can ever convince you of its truth again."

"Then you would advise me—"

"I would rather not take such a responsibility," he interrupted smilingly. "It is easy for you to draw inferences from what I have said. I can fancy your father and friends will not be very grateful to me for any advice."

"They are of very little account to me," she began, and then stopped. "What does it matter?" she continued. "And, indeed, I am hasty and unkind in dragging you into difficulty. I must beg your pardon and thank you for your kindness."

"I fear you will think me timid," he said, "but in this country we are suspicious of converts. Religious thought is not very deep, and religious feeling not very steady. Women, too, are emotional creatures, especially in religion. Some very bad blunders have already been committed. I do not wish to add to them. Let God's grace work its way, and whatever I can do to aid it I shall do, but prudently."

"You speak wisely," she replied, and then the conversation ended with Barbara's entrance.

She was very desirous to discover from Ruth what the poet had to say, but Ruth had no wish just then to speak of such matters. Later on she told her, however, and Barbara was struck with dismay on hearing that religion was the source of the trouble. If Ruth were to become a Catholic, was not this one step nearer to Florian? She lost no time in unearthing Ruth's motives and opinions.

"Why," said she, "nothing could give greater pleasure to the squire than to hear of your becoming a Catholic."

"My father would not be at all pleased," said Ruth in some surprise. Barbara laughed cheerfully.

"You are innocent, Ruth. Do you not know how fondly your papa dreams of your marriage with Florian, and that he has engaged my services to bring it about? Have you not observed all the mysterious winks and phrases between us? Oh, you need not look so incredulous. I am one of a party of conspirators sworn to see you and Florian married before summer. I thought you saw through our designs long ago."

Ruth was very indignant at first at the bare idea of such a conspiracy, and was not inclined to believe it; next she felt hurt, that sensible Florian, who must have understood her manner towards him, should have lent himself to so silly a scheme. To Barbara she showed no feeling except surprise at her announcement.

"I know that papa always cherished the idea," she said, "but Florian and I understand each other very well. Any rate I must go away. Where I shall go, is the question."

Barbara was delighted at this determination, and gave the girl all the assistance possible in settling upon a place as remote from New York as was desirable.

CHAPTER XX

In his luxurious rooms Florian was sitting, arrayed in his dressing-



Daily Spasms.

St. Jacob's, Ont., Nov. 21, 1899. Since a child 6 years old I was subject to St. Vitus Dance and spasms, and seeing an advertisement of Pastor Koenig's Nerve Tonic I concluded to try it. Its effect has been wonderful for before using I had spasms almost daily, but since taking this remedy have not had an attack for twelve days, and shall continue its use.

MISS LYDIA RUDY.

Mr. W. F. Hackey, of Bathurst Village, N. B., says that his little girl had from two to three attacks a day for five or six months, but since she took Pastor Koenig's Nerve Tonic had only once in 10 months and none since.

Mr. C. Noyes, of Brockville, writes that he didn't have a fit in 15 weeks since he took Pastor Koenig's Nerve Tonic, while before that he had attacks every week.

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gown, his hands clasped idly on his lap, his gaze wandering and frightened; while before him stood the red, vexed, irritated squire, who had just brought in the news of Ruth's intended departure.

"What's to be done, Florian—what's to be done?" Florian knew there was but one thing to be done, and the utter hopelessness of success made him despondent. This was not as he would have had the scenery and properties when he came to declare his love. The squire had told him nothing more than that Ruth, disturbed by her old religious doubts, was going away to a convent. There was nothing to account for the train of thought and feeling which had led up to so surprising a course of action; if the squire knew anything he declined to talk about it.

"I had thought," said Florian helplessly, "of renewing an old proposal."

"Had you, my boy—had you?" cried Pendleton. "Then it's the only thing that can stop this flight—the only living, almighty thing."

"But it's useless to try it under such circumstances," Florian continued. "She is upset in mind; she has not shown any particular care for me since."

"What, Florian?" said the squire, "what are you talking of, lad? Not shown any particular care for you? Why, man, it has been nothing but Florian here and Florian there to her friends, to her acquaintances, and to strangers since she came to New York. Do you know Florian Wallace?"

"That was her first question, until Mrs. Merriam had to tell her it looked as if you were engaged still."

Florian sat listening in delight to these wanderings of the squire. His own shrewd sense told him that the squire's likings had taken the place of his powers of observation, but it was very sweet to know that some people thought Ruth willing to renew the old relationship. And she was going away? It might be the last chance of testing her feelings that he would have, and if the result was unfavorable there was no harm done. They would be sure to understand each other better.

A great slice of the romance of Florian's character had been devoured by the capacious jaws of his political ambition. Sensibility and delicacy were less fine, evidently, or he would have seen how very much injury this surrender of old principle would do him, and how hurtful it was to his own sense of honor and religion. He looked at the position, not as a lover torn with doubts as to the result of his action, but as a man of the world taking his chances, shrugging his shoulders at failure, mildly muttering bravo at success. It was not a thing to be mourned over, though.

"If you wouldn't insist on—on the old condition," the squire began. "Nonsense!" said Florian. "I've got over that. I'll take her, no matter how she comes."

"O Lord!" cried the delighted father, "then it's settled. She'll not go to the convent. Now, my lad, just brush up and get over to Barbara's for lunch, for she's packing and may be off at any moment."

Florian felt as he dressed that his position was similar to that of a noble in the Reign of Terror arraying himself for decapitation. But he proceeded calmly and heroically to his doom, and at one o'clock that afternoon was lunching with Barbara and Ruth in the pretty dining-room in Brooklyn. Ruth was pale and worn, but determined. Florian knew that look of old and what it meant much better than her father. He received notice of her departure with an air of well-bred surprise. "There is one consolation in it," Barbara said—"it's the end of the season. But then there was so much for Ruth to see which does not belong to fashionable life, and

so many people will be disappointed."

"The disappointment of the many troubles Ruth very little," said he, with pointed reference to her indifferent expression.

"I never thought of them," Ruth answered wearily, "and I'm sure they never once thought of me; nor do I care."

"You never did," said Florian, and both ladies felt an iciness in the tone that gave a double meaning to the words. When the lunch was ended Barbara left them together.

"This sudden flight," said Florian, "looks remarkable, but I know you never do anything hastily. Is it a homeward flight?"

"No," said Ruth frankly, "it goes heavenward—at least I hope so."

"You are always flying in that direction," he said, with quiet sarcasm.

"Not always, but I am to make a good effort this time." And her lips were compressed for an instant.

"I am disgusted with my own doubts and I am going to rid myself of them forever. I am on a search for certainty."

"I offered it to you once," he said indifferently.

"And I am sure I did well in refusing it then, Florian."

Why did she put such stress on that last word? It made his heart bound like a frightened deer, but he was silent until she added: "And don't you think so too?"

"Why should I? If it was for your benefit, I say yes; but if it has condemned me to a course of suffering that ambition alone could smother—"

Her amused laugh interrupted him. "Then you smothered it with ambition?"

"With the aid of hopelessness," he answered bitterly. "Did I not know you well and myself too?"

"I must say you did, and I am sorry to think I did not know you better. Through all this winter I was afraid you would propose again."

"The winter is not over yet, Ruth."

"But I am gone from the world. Florian, I shall never come to New York again. I like home best, and if I come into the world once more it will be to live and die outside of this turmoil and uproar. You cannot applaud that decision?"

"No, for I had hoped to induce you to remain in it as long as I would."

His face, in spite of his self-control, grew for one moment ashen pale, and the tone which accompanied the words brought Ruth to her feet flushing with pain.

"O Florian!" she cried, "you surely don't mean to—"

"Why not?" he answered severely. "You may have cast aside my love easily enough, but I find it rather harder to forget. Ruth, I have not ceased to love you since I left Clayburg, nor have I ceased to hope. You will find them here."

And he held out his arms invitingly.

"If you were not so very sincere," she said, "I could laugh at you, Mr. Wallace, this is the language of silly sentiment."

"It is the language of love," he replied; and there was a restrained and awkward silence for a long time until both came slowly to their cooler selves.

"You have honored me, Florian," she said, gently; "but it is an honor I cannot accept. I am still a Protestant."

USED MEN AT THE OFFICE UP AND TIRED OUT

Every day in the week and every week in the year men, women and children feel all used up and tired out. The strain of business, the cares of home and social life, and the task of study cause terrible suffering from heart and nerve troubles. The efforts put forth to keep up to the modern "high pressure" mode of life in this age soon wear out the strongest system, shatters the nerves and weakens the heart. Thousands find life a burden and others an early grave. The strain on the system causes nervousness, palpitation of the heart, nervous prostration, sleeplessness, faint and dizzy spells, skip beats, weak and irregular pulse, smothering and sinking spells, etc. The blood becomes weak and watery and eventually causes decline.

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testant—"Pray let that pass," he said hastily. "I do not insist upon you becoming a Catholic. My love has risen above such distinctions."

The hand which she had placed on his shoulder fell from it suddenly, and, looking up, he saw an expression of grief and surprise on her face and quickly interpreted it.

"I had always thought that a principle with you," she said slowly.

"Principles suffer from the wear of time," he answered, "as well as ourselves, though we are immortal."

"O Florian!" She spoke the words in deepest sorrow. "I hope there are very few things to which you cling as poorly. That is one of my principles yet. You accused me a moment ago of forgetting, but that I have not forgotten."

"It is because I love you," he lied sadly; "and I fear I could forget much more because of you."

"I am not worthy of it, Florian."

"O Ruth!" Her two hands were on her lap and he seized them passionately. "Is there no hope? Can we never resurrect that sweet past that lies buried with Linda by the river?"

"Never"—she said the words with an effort—"no more than we can resurrect Linda."

He dropped her hands with a long look of grief and pain, and a shuddering sigh; he realized fully that he was losing her for ever, and her last words put this sentence in its best form so that he could not misunderstand it.

"But you must know why I am going, Florian," she said after a pause, "for you are my best friend, and, although you have hurt me by this scene, I cannot but feel that you have honored me beyond deserving. Do you know that, while I could not join the Catholic Church or leave my own, I always had a doubt as to the truth of Methodism, but it took long to convince me that my position of doubt was sinful. I have found out at last that to remain willingly in that state is sin, and by the grace of God I am going to rid myself of it forever."

"If you had had that feeling in the old days," said Florian, "what a happy story ours would have been!"

"Why did you not give me the feeling," she said sharply. "Why did you leave it to Mr. Rossiter to do?"

"It was an oversight," he said in surprise. "But I was not aware that Paul talked religion to you. He is stricter even than I am in such matters."

"Well, it happened oddly enough, too. Mrs. Merriam and I had been at the cathedral, and met Mr. Rossiter and others on our way home. He accompanied us some distance and spoke to me of his surprise at seeing me there. Then I told him of my former nearness to the Church and he lectured and scolded me for not making proper use of the graces I had then received, and filled me with dread of my present position. It has rankled in my heart since that night. It has led to my present determination. Ah! he has the poet's soul."

"It was a moonlight night?" questioned Florian.

"I think so. Yes, I remember now it was. His eyes shone so when he bade me good-night, and he stood looking upward."

"I thought it," he said quietly; and she did not notice the sarcasm, for her memory was dwelling on the splendor of the poet's eyes.

"And so you are going away to hunt up the blessed certainty of the faith! Is it not a queer place to settle one's doubt in a hot-bed of Catholicity? For instance, if I went to the Whigs to learn the strength of some doubts I had concerning Democracy?"

"I am certain of this," said she: "that Methodism is not Christianity, and I am going to investigate Catholicity where it shines brightest, and take that as the standard."

"Well, that is wise. When you return to Clayburg I shall be sure to meet you, for I am going up there some day. I shall wait until you shall return, or maybe longer."

if politics offer me inducements."

"You say that because you think I would say it," she replied. "You will never go to Clayburg to see anybody, Florian; you will never see it again, unless on business or when brought there to die. If you can prophesy for me, why not I of you? Good-by. Why did you not bring your poet along with you?"

"He knows nothing of your departure. You would have gone without a word to him, to whom you should be ever grateful."

"I shall be," she said very tenderly, "always."

And so they parted. Barbara met him in the hall on his way out, and was surprised and pleased to see no evidence of strong emotion about him. She had looked for a romantic love-storm.

"Now that we are losing Ruth," said she, "I trust we shall not also lose the pleasure of seeing you frequently."

"That would be a distinction I never could have deserved," said Ruth. "Florian can never forget your kind hospitality."

"True," said Florian; "if I could I would be sadly wanting in gratitude."

"Is it so amicably settled?" whispered Barbara to him at the door; and when he nodded, she said, "I am so very glad. We shall not lose you entirely." And Florian departed, puzzled, disappointed, yet pleased by the tender tone of her voice.

CHAPTER XXI.

With the flight of Ruth the second act in the comedy ended, and the curtain was rung down on Madame Lynch's boarding-house. Very much like a deserted play-house it looked in the days that followed. Florian was deep in law and the excitement of a Congressional campaign with his name at the head of the ticket, so that he was rarely seen in the handsome rooms where hung the yachting picture. Frances, buoyed up by a hope which love only could hold out to her, was touched at times with the green melancholy, but smiled often and was happy at a word or a look from her ideal of manhood. Paul worked away in the attic at plays, essays, and poems, and was troubled because of a sudden coldness which had sprung up between him and Florian. Peter and the squire alone seemed to retain that boisterous spirit of frolic and intrigue which had enlivened the winter, but for want of encouragement displayed very little of it. Every spirit was dulled, and life seemed to have met with so unpleasant a lull that a storm was necessary to arouse the people who floated in it like motes in a hot sunbeam.

The summer passed and lengthened into fall. Florian's run for Congress set the house in a ferment. It was a great thing to have one of the boarders graduating from the front parlor into Congress, and when the election had passed and he was returned by a handsome majority the reception tendered him by Madame Lynch was superb. All the world was there, and in some way it began to be understood that Frances was the lucky woman who would draw the lion of the evening in the matrimonial lottery. It was on the evening of this reception that two gentlemen called upon Florian while he was engaged among the guests. It was after eleven, and, unless the matter was urgent, the great man could not be seen till after midnight.

(To be Continued.)

WHY HE CRIED.

The little boy came out of the room in which his father was tacking down a carpet. He was crying lustily.

"Why, Tommy, what's the matter?" asked his mother.

"P-p-papa hit h-h-his finger with the h-h-hammer," answered Tommy.

"Well, you should not cry at a thing like that," said his mother.

"Why didn't you laugh?"

"I did," sobbed Tommy.