

SOLITARY ISLAND A NOVEL BY REV. JOHN TALBOT SMITH

CHAPTER XLII.—Continued.

"I have done you and your daughter a great wrong, madame," Florian said with simple directness...

"You were forgiven at that time," said madame, gently,—so gently that Paul's heart leaped with hope.

"I owe it to you to say," continued Florian, bowing, "that my feelings towards Miss Lynch have never changed. They have only been obscured. I believe sincerely that at one time these feelings your daughter returned. Although she has released me from the engagement, I do not think she lost those rights on me which it gave her. I am glad to make the poor restitution of renewing the offer which I once had the honor to make to her. I do it fully conscious of my own unworthiness. I beg of you not to misunderstand my motives."

Madame never hesitated in her reply, although while Florian was speaking she had caught the petitions of three appealing faces, the third being now visible through the half-open door, where Peter was listening, impatient and interested.

"I do not pretend to know your motives," she said calmly, "but we reject for good reasons. It is quite impossible that my daughter should ever again consider marriage with you."

The face of Frances grew pale as death, but her lips were pressed tight in determination. Paul growled and Peter started forward, then drew back. Madame crushed these signs of rebellion by her proud and confident indifference.

"Perhaps it is best," Florian said after a pause. He had received her answer without any surprise, as if he considered it a very proper thing. "There have been many changes in my life which might not be agreeable to you. In no way am I the same as when I first had the honor of proposing for your daughter's hand. I will never again be the same, I trust. I have done all that I know how to do in atoning for a great injury. You have forgiven me. It would be a great pleasure to know that in your opinion I have done all that is possible."

His wistful gaze and simple words disconcerted mamma considerably. She was half convinced that the man was acting, but his motives were hidden, nor could she discover them. There was no adequate motive to explain all this masquerade.

"You could not have done more," she answered steadily in a tone that closed the interview. Florian rose and bowed his farewell.

world mistook wisdom for folly. He jumped from the train before it reached the depot, and made his way across the fields to the river. It was now the first week of May and the ice was gone, but the chilly air blew sharply across the water, and the shore resounded under the breakers. He stood on the hill for a moment with his eyes fixed on Linda's resting place, where the tall monument pierced the sky. His resolution had been to look no more to the past, to leave its sad reflections in the grave, and to keep his eyes on the future, while his thoughts engaged the present and made what they could out of it. At this moment it was impossible. Back went his recollection to the hour when Linda was in the meridian of her health and beauty, when he was young and full of hope and unstained by sin, when Ruth was his by love's clear title. The intervening years were like a nightmare—ignorance at the beginning, murder at the end, and mystery everywhere. Was he not dreaming now?

At a convenient spot along the shore he found a boat, whose he knew not, but used it as if it were his own. It was a long and weary pull against a north wind until he reached the shelter of the channel; longer and wearier across Eel Bay to the anchorage below the cabin and the night reminded him of that blustering, raw evening when with Ruth he had first set foot on his island. First to the grave and then to the house! He lit the fire and drew the curtain, fondled Isaac Walton, and, settling close to the log blaze, felt himself at home. His home! He was cut off from the world at last and forever. His next flight he hoped would be heavenward.

Ruth quickly received word of his return and the events preceding it, and had a long conversation with Pere Rougevin touching the new hermit. As a part of a plan which she had conceived, and the pere improved and perfected, the squire was informed of Florian's presence in Clayburg.

"Where is he stopping," said the old man doubtfully, "What's he doing here at this time of the year? What's he come for?"

"He is living by himself on Solitary Island," said Ruth. "For the rest you had better ask himself."

"What!" murmured the squire, and he said a queer word under his breath, "have you Jesuits got hold of him again?"

"The news came from New York," Ruth replied indifferently. "I know nothing more about it, papa."

"Well, you'll know more after I get back, girl. Living on Solitary Island, hey? I'll build that island to the cats. It's made more trouble, for a little two-acre mud-hen that it is, than old Grindstone! Does the pere know of this?"

"I told him, papa."

"Of course you did. You and he are always plotting and planning. He's a sneaky Jesuit, that pere, and I'll tell him so when I see him. And mark me, Ruth, don't let me hear of you or the priest visiting that boy without my permission. You're both free and independent, but, by the shade of McKenzie! I'm sheriff, and I'll make you both feel it if I'm disobeyed."

squire shook off a tendency to faint with disgust. "Flory," said he sternly, "I've sworn by you since you were born, because there was not a year nor an hour of your life that I couldn't put my hand down and say, He is just so. I can't do that now. What's come over you? Why are you here instead of in New York? Who's been bewitching you? What has happened to you? Good God?" cried he in an excess of feeling, standing up to hit the table into fragments with his fist, "tell me something, or I'll think you've been dead and come to life again."

The crash of the broken furniture sobered him for an instant. Florian looked with slight displeasure at the ruin. "There is no need of excitement," he said, soothingly, and the tone cut the squire to the heart. He sat down trembling, almost crying, as a suspicion of Florian's sanity entered his head.

"I was dead," continued Florian, "and I came to life again. You are very shrewd, squire."

He paused, and Pendleton waited long for further information, but none came. The hermit sat gazing into the dying embers of a fire, and at times moved naturally around the cabin, arranging odd articles or brushing them. The squire stared at him with a feeling, as he said afterwards, that Rev. Mr. Buck was pouring ice water down his spine.

"I suppose it surprises you, old friend," Florian said, with sudden cordiality, "but I have come here to live for good. You know who lived here before me. I am not better than he, am I? It pleases me to follow him, and I don't think the world has any reason to make a fuss over it."

The squire considered this expression of a future policy some moments, and then, reverting to the words, "I am not better than he, am I?" said emphatically: "Yes, you air, Flory, and don't you forget it." Here a pause while he gathered himself for another burst, and then, "Better than him! Why, what was he more than a slave of the Russian Empire—with all respect to him as your father—a fellow that didn't dare call his life his own? And you are an American citizen, a governor, almost, of the greatest State in the Union, and a Clayburg boy. Flory, this looks like insanity. Flory, I don't know what to say to you. I'm groping. Can't you look and talk for one minute as you used to. Flory?"

This appeal made no further impression on the hermit than to illuminate his pallid face with a smile. The squire made a few more weak attempts upon the hermit's defences, and then rushed in sudden and overpowering disgust for the door.

"I've got to think," said he, "and I can't do it looking at a corpse." He did not hear Florian's laugh as he banged the door—the first laugh that had passed his lips since the night of Vladimir's revelations. After an hour he returned and resumed his seat with a determination written all over him.

"I must know the ins and outs of this thing," he said quietly; "and I'm going to put some questions as the sheriff of Jefferson County, What's to prevent me from jailing you?"

"Nothing," said Florian, "unless the consequences—jailing yourself."

CAUGHT COLD ON THE C.P.R.

A. E. Mumford tells how Psychine cured him after the Doctors gave him up

"It is twelve years since Psychine cured me of galloping consumption." The speaker was Mr. A. E. Mumford, six feet tall, and looking just what he is a husky healthy farmer. He works his own farm near Magnetawan, Ont.

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"Now, Flory, be reasonable and answer squarely. Have you thrown up politics for good and all?" "I have, squire."

"Are you going to live on this island for the next forty years or so?" "With God's will, yes."

"H'm! that smacks of the Jesuits. What's the reason of this, Flory. Did you get a pious stroke?" "I suppose it was that," said Florian, meditating, as if a new question had touched his soul.

"Is it in the papist line, lad, something like your father? I hoped you were working away from the Jesuits?" A faint blush spread over Florian's face.

"I am nearer to the Jesuits than ever, squire, but not as near as I could wish."

"So I thought," said the squire, shaking his head—"so I thought. And I must say my opinion of the Jesuits is considerably smaller than it was an hour ago."

He reflected a few moments, and saw that Florian's curiosity was aroused. "Had I been the boss of the Jesuit corporation," said he, aiming his eyes and finger at Florian's reason, "I think I could have done a smarter bit of business than has been done in letting you bury yourself out of sight. When you got your pious stroke and came to me to have it utilized, put in the market, so to speak, I'd have thought in this way: 'Here's a man as clever as the devil, a speaker, a wire-puller, a statesman; knows the ins and outs of everything. Here we are, papists, without much standing, with no politicians to speak on our side, nobody to look after us when the spoils are dividing and the Methodists are gobbling everything; nobody with the ears of the nabobs between his finger and thumb to tell our story there. Here's a man dying to get such a job.' And I'd give it to you and send you out, if you did nothing else than educate young papists to do as you did, Flory," said the squire solemnly.

"Could you let me have the name or the daguerrotype of the boss Jesuit? I've heard and seen a great many fools in my time, but I put him down as the completest fool that was ever born."

It was an impressive speech and had a meaning which Florian seized upon quickly. The squire might have retired at that moment with honor. His mission was fully accomplished, and he had sent home like an arrow a thought which had not yet broken upon Florian's mental vision. But the squire buzzed and buzzed a thousand commonplaces in the hermit's ears for another period, and departed, out of humor with himself and the world, only when Florian politely showed an inclination to lead him down to his boat. Ruth rejoiced when she had heard the substance of the conversation stormily poured from his lips. His one sensible objection to Florian's idea of a solitary life tickled him much, and he was never done describing the effect it had upon Florian, all unconscious of how innocently yet successfully he had played the part intended for him by those scheming Jesuits, his daughter and the priest. In fear that he might spoil the effect which he had created Ruth forbade further visits to the island until the hermit had time to revolve the thought in his mind.

"You know Flory," she said to him—"how when you present him a new idea he thinks and thinks about it until he knows it to the core. Let him think upon it for a week. It was such a very good idea."

"Wasn't it now?" said the gleeful squire. "I'd like to present him with one more, and that would fetch him."



SURPRISE SOAP A PURE HARD SOAP

"I do," said the priest promptly, "and I have my doubts still, but I thought it better to leave this work to yourself."

"Would you mind telling me why you think my vocation is doubtful?" "Why," said the pere, with hesitation, "on general principles we need in this country more of the active, less of the contemplative life. With regard to your case we need such a man as you in public life, you can see that without further explanation."

"I have thought of it," said Florian, and there was a touch of sadness in his voice and in the droop of his head.

"Your circumstances are so peculiar that I hardly dared decide upon the matter. I think yet it is best to trust it to yourself, and if you need any advice upon particular points I can give it to you."

"Thank you," said the hermit. And with so few words the work was done.

The pere said but one sentence to Ruth when he met him at the dock: "The occasion is ripe for you, miss," and went on his way smiling.

Ruth had some difficulty in restraining the squire up to this point, and still more difficulty in persuading him to accept her company on the proposed visit to Florian. He declared he had no confidence in her since she became a Jesuit, did not know but that she would intrigue to keep his boy on the island, and had a general feeling against her saying or doing anything in so delicate an affair. Ruth vowed solemnly that her only desire and aim was to restore to a loving and grieving and injured heart the one man who could bring peace to it, and sealed her declaration with an all-conquering kiss on the rough, paternal face.

"You know what'll fetch me every time," said the squire; "and since there's another woman in the pie, come along."

Ruth could hear her heart beat as she approached the cabin above the boulder. What would the final result be? They could not keep from Florian the secret of their assault upon his determination to do penance as a solitary. Would the knowledge drive him into obstinacy? She did not yet know the extent of the change which had taken place in him. Florian opened the door for them.

"If your visitors are all as persistent as we are," said she, smiling, "you will not have much of your solitude."

"Now, papa!" said Ruth, bringing the boiling volcano down to a harmless simmer. "You ought not, Florian, if there would be no danger to yourself in holding a power which was to you so strong a temptation." (To be continued.)

WANTED THE RECEIPT.

A very aggressive and highly successful crusade in favor of temperance has recently been going on in a certain Scottish city, and a young minister, whose eloquence is marred only by the unfortunate remarks he sometimes makes, has persuaded several heavy drinkers to enter the temperance fold.

Meeting one of his converts one afternoon he stopped him and inquired how he was getting along. The man kept well back and the minister's suspicions were aroused. "Ah, Robert," said the reverend gentleman, sadly, "I'm afraid you've been drinking. I can smell it in your breath."

Robert didn't deny the impeachment—in fact, he couldn't—and just remained speechless, his eyes fixed on the ground in front of him.

"Now, Robert," continued the minister, "you never smell the odor of liquor in my breath."

"No, sir, I never did," was Robert's reply; then, in a most anxious tone of voice, he added: "What d'ye dae for it?"

OUTSIDE TESTIMONY

The following from the sermon of a Unitarian minister, Rev. O. J. Nelson, of Bellingham, Wash., is a rather notable admission for a Protestant clergyman:

"Strictly speaking, none but the Catholic has an infallible Bible, and none but the Catholic can be rightly called an orthodox Christian. Theoretically all other Christians assume the right to exercise private judgment, but in fact what they really have done ever since the reformation has been to select a council, which is but a poor imitation of the Catholic council, to decide what is orthodox."

"There is but one Christian church of real and consistent authority, and that is the Catholic Church, so I appreciate the chuckle of amusement from a friend of mine, a Catholic priest, when he commented on the Dr. Crapsey trial. Said the priest: 'Several heretics trying another heretic!' And so it was. I imagine the trials for heresy among the so-called Protestants provide amusement for the thoughtful Catholic. A scholarly priest in Illinois said the time would come when but two churches would remain—the Catholic Church—the Church of authority, and the liberal church—the church of private judgment. I believe that prophecy, and let me say in passing that the Catholic Church commands my intellectual respect, for they are what they assume to be, a church of authority, orthodox, in fact as well as in name, and their priests occupy a logical and consistent position in that they teach in unmistakable terms what they are authorized to teach and preach, the doctrines of the Church."

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