

## SOME AMERICAN CATHOLIC NOVELISTS.

JOHN TALBOT SMITH.

## II.

Three years had elapsed after the publication of "A Woman of Culture," before Father Smith gave to the world his second novel, "Solitary Island." In these three years the author has made substantial progress, for all the qualities that made "A Woman of Culture," such a brilliant work of fiction, are to be found in "Solitary Island" in a higher degree. The canvas is larger, the figures are more distinct, and whereas in his first picture Father Smith neglected inanimate for animate nature, he has now taken a broader view of his work and proved himself a skilful delineator of landscapes as well as portraits.

"Solitary Island" is a great novel both in conception and execution. As mysterious and fascinating in its plot as either of the sensational productions of Archibald Clavering Gunter, it contains portraits which would not shame the brush of a Thackeray or Dickens.

The novel takes its name from one of the Thousand Islands, the home of an eccentric hermit-fisherman known as Scott. Between this hermit and some families on the American side of the river there is a friendship which seems to have arisen without any effort on the part of the former, for Scott, though not morose or unkindly in his manner, is sententious and reserved. Nevertheless he frequently receives visitors from Clayburg which, by the way, corresponds topographically with Clayton, Jefferson County, N.Y. Those who interest themselves most in the inhabitant of Solitary Island are Florian Wallace and his sister Linda, and Squire Pendleton and his daughter Ruth.

The Squire is a hot-headed old gentleman who has been "out" with Mackenzie, and ever afterwards imagines that his head is an object of great solicitude to two governments. Florian, a splendid young giant mentally and physically, and ardently attached to Ruth Pendleton, goes to New York by the advice of Scott, in order to obtain the Squire's pardon. In this he is successful, but his visit to the great city has aroused a spirit of unrest and a desire to quit the field which he thinks too narrow for his energies and too modest for his ambition. In the centre of the sterling gold of this young man's character, there runs a deep vein of selfishness, the extent of which surprises himself in after years, when it has to be broken into fragments and cast forth with much painful toil. Linda, a charming girl with a strange mixture of sunshine and gloom in her disposition, is the only one of his family whom Florian really loves; but she dies on one cold wintry afternoon, and then there is nothing to bind her brother to his home. The placid Mrs. Winifred says calmly but with a great sadness at her heart, "Seemingly, the boy will go," while the irascible Billy is of opinion that "Flory, the devil, will soon be ahead of them all in New York." Florian pays a farewell visit to Scott the hermit, and while sleeping in the rude cabin dreams that his father's tears and kisses fall on his cheeks and lips. He would gladly take Ruth Pendleton with him as his wife, but she is a Protestant, and Florian's ideas on mixed marriages are as yet strictly orthodox.

When we next meet him in New York, he is a successful lawyer and prospective Congressman. He has the *entrée* to the best society, and is beginning to look about for a wife suitable to a man in his position. Religion is no longer a necessary qualification, for Florian has grown broad-minded. The sound principles which had once guided his conduct have vanished one by one; an upheaval of passion has brought selfishness to the surface while pushing the nobler qualities out of sight. He laments the impossibility of gaining Barbara Merrion for his wife, as he is not prepared to incur the scandal of a divorce, and when death at last gives him the desired opportunity the fickle beauty has found a new lover in the profligate young Count Vladimir Behrenski. Frances Lynch, the daughter of a lady of the distinguished De Ponsonby family, who has been driven by fate to keep a fashionable boarding-house, is also honored with Florian's

attentions. She gives him her heart, but the course of their love is prevented from running smoothly by the machinations of Peter Carter, a clever, dissipated, eccentric journalist who is strangely allowed to reside at Madame Lynch's, and over whom she has some mysterious influence. Peter is determined that Frances shall not marry "the man wid a gizzard," and in order to avert such a misfortune attempts to unite her to Paul Rossiter, a fair-haired young poet, who, with a considerable quantity of brains, and a considerable scarcity of cash, occupies Madame Lynch's attic.

Any short sketch of a story whose plot contains so many complications and entanglements would fail to give an adequate idea of its interest.

As has already been said, the general characteristics of Father Smith's style, exhibited in his first novel, are intensified in "Solitary Island." Manly men and womanly women are those whom we meet in its pages, creatures of flesh and blood, with whom we can weep and laugh, so near akin are they to us. It is but a cold heart that can read of the death of Linda Wallace without emotion; perhaps it would not be too much to say that in its simplicity it is more genuinely pathetic than the death of Little Nell.

And those who love laughter will surely be gratified when they read of the extraordinary conduct of Mr. Billy Wallace towards "Lady Gwindoline Far-an-near" and her reverend husband; of the hob-nobbings and quarrelings of excitable Squire Pendleton and genial Peter Carter the scapegrace partner of Madame De Ponsonby Lynch; and of the torture of Count Vladimir Behrenski by the patriotic citizens of Clayburg, anxious to do honor to their "boy Flory" and his noble friend.

Peter Carter is certainly as amusing a combination of whimsical oddities as the famous Wilkins Micawber. Blanche Amory is not a more genuine creation than Barbara Merrion, while Vladimir Behrenski might have been drawn by the hand of Dumas the elder. And if any one thinks that the transformation of a Russian prince of the blood into an American solitary requires too strong an effort of the imagination, a reference to United States history will show that the career of the fictitious Prince Florian of Moscow is not a whit more strange and eventful than that of "the Apostle of Pennsylvania," Prince Demetrius Gallitzin.

"Solitary Island," which was first published as a serial in the *Catholic World*, has just been issued in book form by P. J. Kenedy, New York.

DAVID RONAYNE.

## STE. ANNE D'AURAY.

FROM THE ANNALS OF STE. ANNE DE BEAUPRE.

Away across the Atlantic ocean, in the department of Morbihan, Lower Brittany, there exists a little town called Auray seated on the river Auray, ten miles to the west of the somewhat more considerable town of Vannes, and described by geographers as having "an excellent port with fisheries and cottonspinning." A fact is generally given with it that here, in A.D. 1364, the famous Breton warrior, Du Guesclin was made a prisoner by the English. All this is of no interest to Canadian or Catholic readers, but for them the town of Auray possesses a far higher title to their consideration and remembrance, for does it not give its name to a celebrated shrine which has close connection with our own beloved and frequented shrine of St. Anne de Beaupré? and this is why we therefore purpose giving some account of it to the readers of the *Annals*.

About four miles then from the river-port of Auray, there existed for many centuries a village called *Ker-Anna*, Village of St. Anne. St. Meriadec, Bishop of Vannes, had erected a sanctuary, probably in the seventh century, and he had there placed a painted wooden statue of St. Anne to further the devotion of the faithful towards that great saint. Some years later, hordes of robbers overran that part of the country and destroyed the little sanctuary of St. Anne, which had already, it is supposed, become a place of pilgrimage and pious resort for those who claimed and frequently obtained the miraculous intervention of the Mother of