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Trafford Strong.

BY FRANCIS CHURCHILL WILLIAMS.

The doctor linked his arm in Trafford's and they walked slowly down the box-bordered path toward the church.

"You wanted to say something to me, my boy?" said the doctor kindly.

"I did," answered Trafford slowly. "But I don't know how to begin."

"Come," said the doctor. "It never ought to be hard to tell me anything. Out with it!"

The young man hesitated. Then, all at once, he drew away his arm and faced about.

"Doctor, I love Daisy, and I want to make her my wife."

The doctor's face blanched, his kindly gray eyes grew piteous in their expression. He put out an arm as if to ward off a blow. A moment of silence. Then he laid a trembling hand on the other's shoulder.

"How could you do this?" he said.

Trafford raised his head, his eyes had been upon the ground, and tried to speak. But the words would not come, and the doctor went on.

"I have loved you Trafford, and let you see my daughter at all times. And what have you done? You have taught her to love you, you, a confessed agnostic! How could you?"

The last words were spoken in a whisper.

Trafford found his voice at last.

"I know," he said, "but don't be too hard on me. You must have seen it, and yet you said nothing."

"Because I did not see it," returned the doctor, "I had no thought of such a thing. But your eyes were open and you went on. What right had you to do it?"

"The right which every honest man has to love a woman," said Trafford. "When I first was certain I loved her it was too late. She knew I loved her then. What could I do? To have gone away would have done no good."

"She might have forgotten," replied the doctor.

"She is not that kind," returned Trafford. "I would have told you of this before, only I feared it would end ill. And now—"

"And now," repeated the doctor, "it must end as it would have ended before had I known about it."

The young man put out a hand.

"Wait, doctor," he broke out, almost fiercely. "You do not know what it means to love or you would not say this. What are your scruples against Daisy's happiness?"

"My scruples!" said the doctor quickly, "are the feelings of every true Christian. They were the feelings I was taught, to respect, and, thank God, I have strength to stand by them even in a time like this!"

"Then there is no way?" said Trafford, after a moment.

"One," the doctor answered; "the way I have labored to have, you take since I first knew you. To yield to truth, because it is truth. To accept what is most pure, noble and elevating."

Even as he heard the words the young man's face lost its first eager look.

"Trafford," the doctor continued, after an instant's pause, "why will you not see clearly? Sooner or later you will find the need for something beyond human reasoning. Why will you not learn now?"

"Doctor," said the young man, "you would not surrender an honest conviction?"

"Neither," answered the doctor, "would I hold a useless position against an enemy. Yet this is what you do. Does it reflect credit on you? You are able to confess only to ignorance."

He paused.

Trafford looked the other full in the face.

"To say I abandoned views of which I am convinced would be to lie!" he said. "You know my love for Daisy. She knows me, and yet she loves me. Will you refuse me what I ask?"

The doctor for an instant did not answer, at last he said:

"I must."

"Then," returned Trafford slowly, "good-bye. I will not see Daisy again. It will be better that way. Tell her I—left a good-bye for her."

He held out a hand. The doctor grasped it in both his own.

"God bless you, Trafford, my boy," he said in a low voice. "May he guide you! Remember that Daisy and I will think of you always; remember that!"

The young man looked hard in the other's eyes for a moment; his own were glistening. Then he turned upon his heel and walked rapidly down the winding path past the church, his shoulders erect, and was gone.

A steamer was ploughing her way westward through the Atlantic. In two days more she was due at New

York. A gale was blowing, and in his stateroom Trafford Strong lay, vainly trying to sleep. It was a year since he had left the doctor at the church, and in that time he had traveled fast in the hope of finding a fresh interest among new sights and new men. But now he was coming back with the same convictions, the same old sore at his heart, coming back, for what, he did not know. Presently he drifted into a light dose. An hour later he awakened with a feeling that something was wrong. The engines of the ship were no longer working. The vessel wallowed clumsily in the seas. Trafford pulled on his clothes hastily, and, steadying himself by the door-frame, passed out into the saloon. Many of the passengers were there, and to these an officer was explaining that a break had occurred in the shaft, but that it would be repaired, it was hoped, before long.

The next day it blew harder than ever, and on account of the heavy pitching of the vessel, work on the shaft was stopped for the time. The steamer was holding head-on to a sea anchor or drag, and so long as she was able to do this there seemed no immediate danger.

Early in the night Trafford raised himself and listened. A cry was ringing in his ears. Above the turmoil of the sea he heard a hurried running and a confused sound of voices. He jumped up and pulled open the door of his stateroom.

"What's the matter?" he asked of a man passing by.

"The drag's broken loose!" the man stammered, and then reeled forward. Trafford followed him.

In the main saloon he found a crowd of the passengers bewildered by the danger. The women were sobbing and fearful; the men white faced and anxious. The vessel plunged, rolled with a sudden, unsteady motion. At times the deck seemed to slip from under the feet, and the steamer lay over until she was almost on her beam ends. Overhead could be heard the thunder of volumes of water which the vessel, taking over her bow and rails, sent rolling back when she rose from the hollow of the seas. An officer vainly tried to stay the fast growing panic.

Trafford, braced against a pillar, watched the scene before him with a compassion in which there was no taint of that scorn which he usually had for fear. He realized the danger fully. He knew that the rising masses of green water which now were breaking over the vessel must soon open the deck seams and then—well, it would be all over quickly.

Some one put a hand on Trafford's arm. He turned. Beside him was a woman, scarcely more than a girl. She nervously clasped his arm and looked at him with frightened eyes.

"May I stay with you?" she asked. "I am by myself, and I am so afraid."

There was an appeal in her voice which went to his heart. Instinctively he put his arm about her.

"Of course you can," he said. "We will stay here; it is as safe a place as any."

After a moment she said:

"I know I am a coward. But it would be so hard to die."

"We mustn't think of that yet," returned Trafford, "and maybe when it does come it will not be so hard. It is only for once, you know."

"Yes," she answered, with an indrawn breath, and then they were silent and stood together there watching those about them.

Trafford's mind wandered over the past. He was hardly conscious of what was going on. Then, all at once the hand within his tightened, and he heard a man's voice, calm and subdued, yet with a commanding dignity.

"For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee."

Trafford raised his head and looked for the speaker. He was a tall man with white hair. His long black coat bespoke the clergyman. His head was thrown back. His eyes were gentle and kindly, yet they expressed no fear. A strange hush had fallen upon the panic-stricken men and women who now bowed their heads and seemed content to listen. Trafford felt that this man had brought calm and comfort by his presence and words, and he listened.

"Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

A question arose in Trafford's mind. Despite his undisturbed acceptance of the future, he found himself forced to ask:

"Did he fear no evil? Who was with him to comfort him?"

The speaker's words came again to him, clear and strong, above even the thunder of the sea.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust."

Trafford groped for an answer to the questions tugging at his heart. He tried to reason against them. But reasoning was vain. And then, all at once, there burst upon him a great light and he saw clearly. Faith—only faith could help him in this extremity.

For the moment he was overwhelmed by the tumult of his emotions. He heard the words, "Let us pray." He felt the woman slip from his arm. Then he saw that all the rest were kneeling. Opposite him was the black-clothed figure of the clergyman, his hand loosely locked in front of him; beside him was the woman who a few minutes before had come to him for encouragement and protection. Every one of those about him was finding hope and comfort. Only he had nothing to look forward to. A sense of his loneliness came to him as never before, and he dropped on his knees and covered his eyes with one hand that no one might see the tears which wet his face. But the woman saw them, and he felt a hand put into his free hand, and a strange peacefulness filled him. There came back to him a verse of which his mother, long years ago, had been so fond: "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy wisdom."

The words of the clergyman appealed to Trafford with searching force, and, when the prayer was done, his Amen came from a heart in which there were new hopes, new strength, and, more than all, faith.

An hour later the grumbling note of a foghorn answered that of the crippled steamer, and, a few hours afterward, in spite of the heavy sea running, a hawser had been stretched between the vessels, and the disabled liner was in a comparatively safe position. By daylight the sea had lessened considerably. Three days later the broken machinery having been repaired, both vessels came into port.

The last notes of a hymn were dying on the air when a man came quickly up the middle aisle to the doctor's pew. Only Daisy was in the pew, and her head was lowered so that she did not see this man until he had dropped on his knees beside her. Then as the doctor's voice rose in prayer she looked up and into the face of Trafford Strong, and what she saw there made her slip a hand into his with a joy she had never known before.—New York Observer.

The Mouse Family.

BY AMY E. HOPE.

"Now, my dears, wake up! Rouse yourselves, and get out of your warm nest. It is night, and high time to be up and nibbling." So spoke Mrs. Mother Mouse to her three little mouse darlings—Furry, Flurry, and Worry.

But Furry, Flurry and Worry only cuddled down the closer in their comfortable hole behind the mantelpiece, and didn't stir. They were shy young mice, the last of a family of six; but mother mouse was very strict with them, nevertheless, and made them work for themselves.

Breakfast she found for them, and brought it to the hole behind the mantelpiece; but dinner they had to get for themselves.

Now, of course, you understand that among the mouse tribe night is considered a very much better time for work than day.

You see, all the human beings go to bed then, and the house is quiet, and mice people have a chance to forage around and get something to eat.

Mrs. Mouse never allowed her little mouselings to go downstairs alone. She always managed to find some suitable food for them to eat on the upper floors of the house in which they lived. Downstairs resided that dreadful monster and terror to all mice, the house-cat, wicked Mr. Grey who delighted in killing and eating tender mouselings, and could crush Mrs. Mother Mouse with one clutch of his white-tipped paw.

And that was why I found my stick of cold cream on my dressing-table nibbled off, my candy-box invaded, and the baby's toys chewed on the ends.

These were the efforts of Furry, Flurry and Worry to find food for themselves.

"My dear Furry," said Mrs. Mother Mouse, as she pinched her oldest child by the ear affectionately to make him get up, "I wish you to try the scrap basket to-night. I think there are some apple-cores in the bottom of it, thrown there by the baby today, and I am sure I saw some scraps of paper with flour paste on them lying loose on top."

"Flurry can look on the lowest shelf in the closet, and feed himself on those bird-wings in the new hat which is lying there without a covering; but Worry will have to go back to that old stick of cocoa butter which is on the dressing table."

Mrs. Mouse did not leave her nest until all three mice had gotten up and prepared themselves for the hunt by smoothing their ears, patting their whiskers, and

straightening carefully out their shelves, sniffed again, and finally from the pantry to the pantry.

Flurry, Furry for themselves.

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