

TRACK OF THE STORM.

By DORA RUSSELL, Author of "Footprints in the Snow," "The Broken Seal," &c.

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CHAPTER XL.—(Continued.)

In a little while Lucy mastered her emotion.

"It is selfish of me," she said, "I must go back to him—he must not see me cry."

"Here in the money," said Luke Smith abruptly, and he pushed an envelope full of notes in Lucy's hand.

"Thank you, you are very kind; and there is something I should say to you—but I can't remember what it is. I am sure you will understand."

"What is it?" asked Lucy, putting her hand to her forehead.

"It is about—Eddie," said Luke, with a sudden gasp, and she looked at him.

"Yes, about Eddie," repeated Lucy. "How is she, poor girl?"

"No better, I am very afraid. My sister is very ill, you know."

"Yes, good-bye. I shall tell Jack about the money; he will thank you very much."

"The letter is in the letter-box, and I will send it to you to-day."

"I am really Lucy," she answered, trying to smile, leaning down by the bedside, and taking his hand.

"And where am I?" he asked, looking round.

"You are in my room—I had brought her to bed after this—you know, dear, when you were wounded."

"A generous heart for her at once rushed into Jack's heart."

"Oh, Lucy! what will they say?" he said, looking at her earnestly.

"What will they say? What matter what they say?"

"But it is matter, Lucy, to me."

"Then you need not worry, Jack. I told them you were my brother; and—"

"You would rather have me near you, would you not?"

Lucy's voice sank into a whisper as she uttered the last words, and a faint colour crept into her pale cheeks, while Jack drew her hand up and laid it against his lips.

"Do you know what I prayed, Lucy, when I lay there bleeding to death?" he said in his faint accents.

"I have no recollection of it," she said, looking at him before he died—and I believe that prayer was answered, for a moment or two later those two young fellows came, and I remember asking them to go for you—and seeing your face."

"Yes, Jack."

"Then it all grew dark. I can remember nothing else distinctly. I suppose they brought me here."

"Yes; it came into my head quite suddenly to say you were my brother; and I was determined they should not part us, Jack."

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recognized the handwriting, and with an oath he snatched it up and tore open the envelope.

And as he read the lines it contained, his sister, who was watching him, started.

"Whatever is there in it, Luke?" she asked. "What makes you look like that?"

"But he made no answer. He was staring at the signature as if he could not believe his own eyes. It was a long letter, but Luke was not reading the light, flow, foolish, half-reproachful words. He was reading again and again the name that came at the end."

"Fred Harley."

"Fred Harley? Could it be—no!—and Luke started to rise, as if he would try to burst from his lips. Could it be—his son—his son?"

"Rachel! can it be?" he said, and he laid the letter down before his sister.

"The name is the same, and I understood what had broken her young cousin's heart."

"The bad son of a bad father," she said, sternly. "Luke, there is no mistake; see the crest on his ring; it is the same as yours. This is from our father's son, Fred Harley. That is his name, Luke Harley told me so. You must be sure, and you must be sure."

"But Luke Smith struck his forehead hard upon the table, and cursed both the father and the son."

"O mother was not enough, then?" he cried, fiercely. "This sounded would he ruin the child, and it has killed her! But he shall pay for it—pay for it with a bitter price!"

CHAPTER XLII.—THE SECOND LETTER.

Fred Harley had felt exceedingly disappointed when he answered to his first letter after their quarrel in the park, came from the beautiful girl whom he loved in his careless, selfish way.

He had felt so sure when he penned it that Eddie would forgive him, that she would meet him at the station, and that he would be able to break his promise to her. He had felt so sure that she would believe his letter had reached her. She was so gentle, so sweet, and she loved him, therefore how could she be so cold?

He waited impatiently day by day, telling himself she would weary of her assumed indifference; and many a time he was walking on the beach, and he would see the child lay stricken with the deadly illness that had fallen upon her from the rude awakening that had crushed her tender heart.

But he could not see her, and he dare not, of course, make any inquiries at the house. At last he determined to write again. This letter was more carefully worded than the first. In it he did not write anything about marrying or not marrying. He asked her to forgive him, to meet him, to love him a little still, and he prayed at least that she would send an early answer.

"This answer came sooner than he expected. Fred was lounging over his late breakfast in the dining-room, when the door opened, and Eddie, thinking of his letter, came in. He had it now, when the answer arrived."

Fred's room was luxuriously furnished—the room of a young man. There were several pictures on the wall, and a large vase of flowers in a vase on the table, and a fair woman without the pale. He had read these carefully enough, still thinking of the little girl, and he could not help but long to look once more on the sweet face and kiss the red lips.

"There is a gentleman outside who wishes to see you, sir," said a soldier servant who was entering the room and interrupting his love dreams.

"Who is he? What does he want?" asked Fred Harley, looking up with rather an annoyed expression on his usually good-tempered face.

"I have no answer to your questions," said a deep voice at the door; and the tall stalwart form of Luke Smith appeared there.

Though Luke was greatly changed—pale and thin, and his eyes, which had been so bright, were now dim, and a deep shadow lay on his face, and he rose rather nervously.

"—do not understand," he said, looking at the man who stood before him, sternly. "What I have got to say to you needs no listeners."

"You can go to your room, and I will call on you again, and all the same, he was angry and disturbed. His father's manner, too, had been changed of late. There had been anything in it. But he certainly was not."

"As the train ran into the station at Paddington, Fred impatiently threw down his newspaper, and glanced at the stern face opposite to him."

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changed and hollow voice, he faltered out a few broken words.

"Fred—I—I—never meant to wrong you in married life, but Louise Carter deceived me."

"Then," said Fred, with a gasp, as Sir William paused, as if unable to proceed, "you were married before—this man is your father?"

"Oh! my boy, my boy, would that it were not so!" cried Sir William, with something like a sob rising from his throat, and he was uttering words that were not meant to be heard.

"Yes, it is true—it has broken my heart—I—I—I would have spared you if I could have saved for you, Fred—you—you will have."

He never completed his sentence, but fell heavily forward the next moment into Fred's arms. Luke also at once running to his assistance.

He had taken a second fit, and as his eldest son stood by and looked at his death-like face, the poor wretch he did not expect to see again.

"Truly," he thought bitterly, "his sin has found him out."

(To be continued.)

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