

"ON THE ROAD," BY A TRAMP.

BY TRACY LAYARD.

A northerly wind and a sky of gray,
And road we travel'd all day—day,
A biting blast from the northern sky, that jeers
And sneers as we make our way.

Along the hedge now leafless and brown,
Shivering beneath cold winter's frown.

In tattered and torn old shoes, trudging
Along to the distant town.

Shelter and warmth we tramps have none,
And heat don't come from the winter's sun.

The little birds twitted and quickly fly, and the
Toxos and weasels away have run.

Noboddy stops to ask after our health.

As we drag along just as if by stealth,
And long for the lights and streets of town,
Where we envy the bright happy homes
Of wealth.

Silently have we to bear our load,
Impelled by poverty's merciless goad.

Homes and homeless, and loveless, too, wan-

ders ever, we're "on the Road."

Winter and Summer, Autumn and Spring,
The same sad song we have to sing.

Now 'neath a hedgerow, now in a wood, and
Often the work-house bell we ring.

Forward, ay, forward, never at rest,
Never by so much as have been oppressed.

Onward we onward, together alone, by pen-

ury chanc'd, by charity blest.

Bagged and dirty, careless, forlorn,
Dismissed from each door with pitiless scorn.

Vagabonds, outcasts, the road is our home,
The long, long road, with our footmarks
worn.

So silently we must bear our load,
Impelled by poverty's merciless goad.

Homes and homeless, and loveless, too, wan-

ders ever, we're "on the Road."

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WRITTEN IN LETTERS OF GOLD.

BY ELLA DURAND.

CHAPTER I.

"I hope your father's friend will come soon," said the landlady, glancing toward the bed, and shaking her head ominously, "or he'll be too late, as Dr. Mayfair said."

The girl whom she addressed glanced at the sleeper, whose span of life the doctor's flat had limited to hours, moved restlessly, and answered: "He cannot live long now."

There was silence again in that sick chamber, only a small, back bedroom in a dingy London lodging house, broken only by the subdued sobbing of the beautiful, regal girl, whom the sick man called daughter, and the labored breathing of the dying man.

Lavater would have at once marked out the tall, slender form, and strangely high breed of Edith Fontenoy, as an index of a wild, wayward spirit, full of faults, impulsive, of a proud, passionate nature, full of noble instincts, impossible to drive, only to be won and controlled by a very strong hand.

Her father had never been able to read her nature aright; and, having been left with his motherless girl at an early age, spoiled her by humorizing her, when he should have been firm and obstinate, when he should have reasoned.

The landlady opened the door softly, which aroused the sleeper, when he asked eagerly, in a faint whisper, "Oh, has he come?"

"No, papa!" exclaimed the girl softly, "but it is near train time now, and he must soon be here."

No necessity for that, however, for even as she ceased speaking, a Brougham dashed up the street and stopped before the door. Steps were heard springing up the stairs, and the landlady's voice designating the room. The door opened and a tall commanding figure, in a soldier's cap and military cap, came into the room.

"Oh, Eric, Eric! is it you—you at last? Oh, God, I thank thee." And the sick man threw himself into the extended arms of his friend.

"Oh, Marshall, Marshall, why did you not let me know of this? I should have helped you long ago!" said the other, a ring of deep reproach in his tones.

"I felt ashamed to! You see it was lost by a little speculation, calculated to add to my daughter's store, when I should be no more. For you know, Eric, when I and you parted in India, I received a wound which, at the time, was not considered fatal, but which the surgeons said, might prove serious, if care was not taken to prevent its opening again. Well, I fell from my horse last week and you see the result. It is my daughter Eric, of whom I have written you so much, concerning."

Edith acknowledged the introduction with a little frigid bow, and immediately left the room, retiring to a small room adjoining the bedroom, and throwing herself wearily upon a stool at one of the windows, gave herself up to reflection.

Was this, then, the friend whom her father had thought so much of, of whom she had begun to imagine must be above the ordinary standard of mortals? Her large, violet eyes seemed gazing on space, and her fair, jeweled hands were locked together in her lap.

"I am dying, Eric," he resumed, "and, ere I go, I have one great request to make of you." He paused, exhausted in his efforts, and, quickly springing to the table, Eric Lennox seized the reviving drops, and held them to his lips. The dying man swallowed them with difficulty, and, after a moment's delay, reassured by the pressure of his friend's hand, he said: "I have sufficient confidence in you, my dear Eric, from our intimacy in former days, to entrust, unhesitatingly, to you my family secret, but with the request that you are not to disclose your knowledge of it to Edith, or she would never forgive me. My daughter is now 19 years of age, and at the early age of 16 met the first love of her youth, one Ernest Balfour. I greatly disapproved, and strove every way in my power to see to convince her that it was only fancy, the foolish fancy of youth upon both sides, and I thought that I succeeded. But ah, I fear that after I am dead and gone, he may come back again and overpersuade my poor Edith, blinded by love, and she will, doubtless, lead a very unhappy life."

Eric Lennox did not interrupt his old comrade, but kept his face slightly averted.

"Yes, Eric, old friend, I am dying, and what will become of my poor, innocent, inexperienced darling? Will you promise, my dear friend, to take charge of her, and keep her from the wolf, who will be sure to seek her? My precious lamb, my darling child!"

Col. Lennox did not answer immediately, but sat pondering over the case, and turning the probability over in his mind of taking charge of a young girl but ten years younger than himself.

His silence and averted face were interpreted by the anxious parent for re-

fusal, and he said, bitterly and despairingly: "You start, turn aside, do not answer. Oh, Eric; he will come again when I am dead, and persuade her that the fancy of it was love, and marry her to break her heart. Oh, Eric, take care of my child; take her away from here."

After a slight pause, continued: "I have asked too much, and—oh, God! This is bitterness of death indeed. I thought—I hoped—"

"Hush, Marshall; don't mistake me so cruelly!"

Low and stern came the words, as if one crushing down a wild tempest were, and Col. Lennox walked to the mantel-piece and stood there moments, seemingly hours, to the dying man, who had not dared, after all, to express the greatest desire of his heart.

Eric took his former seat at the bedside of his dying comrade, and said, as he stilled back a pang of pain from his heart: "My dear Marshall, you know not what you ask! Consider one moment, and read the imprudent and improper step, in the eyes of Mrs. Grundy, which you are beseeching me to take in behalf of your child. But are you quite sure that the love affair was a mere fancy? Are you confident that she did not think more of him than you dream—handsome, young fellow of but one year her senior?"

"Yes, for she has since led me to believe as much. But I fear he might possibly have some influence over her if they were to meet again."

"Has she ever seen him, or met him since she was 16?"

"No, never; Edith's is a nature to openly dare, not deceive me."

Eric bent a little nearer the sinking man, and said:

"Marshall, you ask me to take care of your daughter, but do it what way you will, the world will talk. She young, handsome, and, you say, quite penniless; I—well, not too old, even for 40."

"Eric, Eric, they dare not—they—"

"They dare do anything. They dare slander the name of purity itself. Now, my friend," he said, while the blood almost stopped circulating around his heart, "there is but one way in which I can, prudently, take care of your child!"

"And that is—"

"Cannot you guess? Make her my wife at once, and then defy the world!"

"Eric!" He actually started up in bed in his frantic joy and relief. "Make my darling wife! Oh heaven, I thank thee! It is all that I have ever hoped for from her birth; that she might become noble Eric's wife before I died. Great God be praised. And now—and now—fetch her."

"Marshall, be calm! I must tell her—speak to her myself first."

CHAPTER II.

Such deeds of valor strong
That neither history or song
Can count them all.

"Where is she?" he quickly asked.

"You will find her in the little room next to this, and all we have," replied the sick man in a feeble tone of voice.

Edith was sitting before the fireless grate, lost in thought. Her large blue eyes appeared much darker than they really were, with the intensity of her reverie; her hands were clasped listlessly in her lap; her face was pale almost to ghastliness; her hair hung in careless negligence over her shoulders, and strayed in little willful tendrils of gold over her smooth, chaste brow. She was a picture for an artist to covet, all unconscious as she was of it all.

A light, soft tap came at the door. Her calm and indifferent "Come in," was followed by the entrance of her father's idolized friend, Eric Lennox.

He noiselessly strode to the opposite side of the grate from which she was sitting, and calmly folding his arms waited for her to break the silence.

"How is my father, now?" she asked, in a strangely calm tone, lifting her mystic eyes to his face as she spoke.

"Not any better, poor child!" he said in pitying tones, answering the wistful, soulful look.

"And he will die, my father?" she exclaimed, tearlessly. "Ah! what, then, will become of me?"

"Do not despair," he said, while his look, his tone, were as tender as a woman's to a suffering child. "I have left him to speak to you, for you have it in your power to make his death-bed very, very happy."

"Col. Lennox!" the great sorrowful eyes were turned upon him, now filled with amazement. "It is only you, your coming, could do that."

"Partly, Edith; he has told me his circumstances, and for your future he is grieving, and surely breaking his heart."

What a shy, half appealing expression stole into the beautiful eyes. How the heart beat, and how restless the hands became, as she said:

"Oh, no, no, not for me—he must not. I can earn my own living."

"In what way, Edith? You are highly educated, and accomplished, I am well aware from the letters I have received from your dear father; but if you think of teaching—"

"Yes, I can teach—"

"Firstly, my child," said the soft eloquent voice, his very soldier's soul touched by her innocent inexperience, "teaching is very laborious work, and very unsatisfactory; also, very hard to get to do, even by experienced teachers, and you would starve—literally starve, before you could earn a penny. Secondly—beg pardon, my dear, but I am considerably older than you, and this is no time for mere ceremony—very your youth and beauty stand dead in your way. No one having daughters would take you to rival them; and no one having sons would want you."

The girl crimsoned to her brow and shrank back, with a sort of fear coming into her eye, for she knew that the words spoken so friendly were but too true.

She covered her face, almost cowering. It was cruel—cruel of him to force all of that on her now.

"Why do you bother me so? I have time enough to think of the impossibilities."

"Poor little one!" Col. Lennox said, bending forward and taking the two little quivering hands in his strong clasp. "You know not what you are saying; you forget what I began to say; and remember this, my child, what is

dear to you is equally dear to Eric Lennox; what is his wish is mine. He has had one wish all of your life which you and I alone now can grant, and which will give him peace and happiness."

"I would do anything for my father," she answered, the tears swelling into her eyes. "Oh, why has he not told me of this wish before? What is it, Col. Lennox?"

"The wish is that you are left under my guardianship," said Eric, slowly, "and in my care, in the only way in which it can be done."

Did she have any vague suspicion of what was meant, that she blushed so painfully—that she looked so startled?"

"And that one way is—is—"

"Under the shadow of my name—my wife."

Every drop of blood seemed to leave, drop by drop; the beautiful face; even the hands which he held grew cold and bloodless, as she sank cowering, a figure of supplication at his feet, releasing her hands as she did so. Passionate tears and sobs shook her slight frame, while bitter, reproachful words broke out from proud, wounded womanhood.

"No, no, your generous pity, your noble heroine, strive to veil the truth of my shame—yes, mine, mine," she sprang to her feet exclaiming wildly. "For I know that in his blind love for me my father forgot my womanhood, and offered me—heaven! how can I say it!—forced me upon you."

"Hush, Edith!" he exclaimed, sternly. "He did not, as heaven is my witness. He did not intimate to me anything of the kind until I broached the subject myself. Then only did he betray to me that had been the one passionate wish of his life, of eighteen years, to see his daughter the wife of his loved and trusted friend, before he died. I ask the honor at your own hands, my dear, and if you wish will now return to your father, and thus give you time to make up your mind whether you will accept or reject. In a short time I will return for my answer."

This was all, and Edith was once more alone. Alone to think while her brain was in a whirl, and her heart seemed almost pulseless. He was knightly to the core, gentlemanly to a fault, and, oh, so regardful of her feelings.

She walked the floor of the narrow room, like a young wild deer, longing for a larger field to scatter her sorrow in.

The door opened softly, and she gave a violent start as she stopped suddenly in her walk, and shrank back a little as Col. Lennox entered the room. He crossed the floor and paused at a small table, bending his head over it, not acting in the whole attitude of dignified deference, and sweet, grave voice and manner; it was only simple nature in this chivalrous gentleman to take the role of suppliant to this girl, whom he was forced to woo in this strange manner.

Thoughts rapid and humiliating were chasing each other through the brain of Edith as she stood there with folded hands, and the color coming and going in her beautiful face. Some thought, some memory of Cyril Balfour, pride, womanhood, desperately wounded by the very pity, the generosity which she knew, despite all he could say, had dictated the offer. She thought he must despise her for being mercenary, and all too soon as a burden forced on him for life. And yet, through it all, stood in letters of fire that it was her father's dying wish, one hope, that—that he was lying now in the next room in agony of suspense for her answer; and how could she, how could she—cost her what it might—embitter his last moments? What could be worse than the remorse that must then haunt her forever?

"Is it my answer what I may dare hope? Is it my wife?"

The blood mounted to the fair face and back again, leaving it deathly white, and she tried to speak, but only a voiceless whisper quivered over the trembling lips.

"Forgive—bear with me—I will try to—to—to—"

One step forward and she was enveloped in his arms, and the warm lips pressed a kiss—a grave kiss on her brow—not a lover's clasp, not a lover's kiss, but it scarcely needed the added language of those lips, steadfast low-spoken words, as her tears fell fast and heavy on his breast.

"Heaven helping me, I will try to do my duty by this young life thus given to me, and make good every vow my lips must so soon speak for her."

"Hush, my child!" Once more he touched her brow, and gently loosened her. "Go to your father, for I must go to once to Dr. Morton's, and to the Clergy-House of St. Alphage."

He knew what for, and moved toward the door, which he held open for her to pass through.

CHAPTER III.

AN ORPHAN.

"My darling, is that you?" the dying man exclaimed. "Bless you for this hour." Edith, wound her arms around her father's neck, her tears falling thick and fast, her heart like lead in her bosom.

The Colonel passed the landlady on the stairs, as he was descending, and spoke something in a low tone to her, which set her heart to fluttering, and caused her to hasten to her wardrobe to don her Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes.

The sick-room door opened softly, but Edith was all unconscious, until a light hand upon her shoulder aroused her from her intense grief.

"Are you ready? A clergyman awaits in the next room. Shall I call to him now?" asked the anxious voice of Eric Lennox, as he perceived the great change about to take place with the dying man.

"Yes, I am quite ready," Edith said with assumed calmness.

A few words only, but, ah, Edith Lennox was no more, while Edith Lennox had just begun to exist. Scarce-was the ceremony performed when, extending his arms toward his best loved ones on earth, the dying man exclaimed:

"Edith, Eric, I am going! God—bless—you—bo—"

Eric Lennox had caught the form of his dying friend and comrade