

COMIONS ON THE ROAD.

Life's milestones, marking year on year,
Pass ever swifter as we near
The final goal, the silent end
To which our fate, footsteps tend.
A year once seemed a century,
Now like a day it hurries by,
And doubts and fears our hearts oppress,
And all the way is weariness.

Ah me! how glad and gay we were,
Youth's sap in all our veins a stir,
How lively were with spirits high,
A happy careless company.
We started forth, when every thing
Wore the green glory of the spring,
And all the fair wide world was ours,
To gather as we would its flowers!

Then life almost eternal seemed,
And death a dream so vaguely dreamed,
That in the distance scarce it threw
A cloud-shade on the mountains blue,
That rose before us soft and fair,
Clothed in ideal hues of air.
To which we meant in after-day,
Strong in our manhood's strength, to climb.

How all has changed! Years have gone by,
And of that joyous company
With whom our youth first journeyed on,
Who—where are left? Alas, not one!
Love earliest loitered on the way,
Then turned his face and slipped away;
And after him with footstep light
The Sickle Graces took their flight,
And all the careless joys that lent
Their revelry and merriment
Grew silent, and, ere we knew,
Had smil'd their last and sad "adieu."

Hope faltering than with doubtful mind
Began to turn and look behind,
And we, half questioning, were fain
To go low with her back again,
But late still urged us on our way
And would not let us pause or stay.
Then to our side with plaintive eye,
In place of Hope came Memory,
And murmured of the past and told
Dear stories of the days of old,
Until its very dress seemed gold,
And Friendship took the place of Love,
And strove in vain to us to prove
That Love was light and insincerity—
Not worth a man's regretful tear.

Ah! all in vain—grat' twas a cheat,
No voice ever was so sweet—
No presence like to Love's who threw
Enchantment over all we knew;
And still we listen with a sigh,
And back, with fond tears in the eye,
We gaze to catch a glimpse again
Of that dear place—but all in vain.

Preach not stern Philosophy!
Nought we can have, and nought we see,
Will ever be pure, so glad,
So beautiful, as what we had.

Our steps are sad—our steps are slow—
Nothing is like the long ago,
Gone is the keen, intense delight—
The perfume faint and exquisite—
The glory and the influence
That haloed the enraptured sense,
When Faith and Love were at our side,
And common life was deified.

Our shadows that we used to throw
Behind us, now before us grow;
For once we walked towards the sun,
But now, Life's full meridian done,
They change, and in their chill we move,
Further away from Faerie and Love.
A change is in the air, more—
Our thoughts with joyous impulse soar,
But creep along the level way,
Waiting the closing of the day.
The future holds no wondrous prize
This side Death's awful mysteries;
Beyond, what waits for us who know?
New life, or infinite repose?

—W. W. Story, in Blackwood.

HOTSPUR ON A FOP.

My love, I did deny no prisoners;
But I remember, when the fight was done,
When I was dry with rage and extreme toll,
And nothing stronger than rain-water
Within forty miles, came there a certain lord,
Trimly dressed, nobly, in fact, with a cut-a-way coat.
Flasky neck-tie, and pants louder than the
Band-wagon of a circus, including the band;
He was fresh as a bridegroom—
To speak truly, but was a trifle too fresh.
His chin, which I advised him to wipe off,
Was newly reaped, and dressed like
Stubble-land at harvest-time.
He was scented like ice-cream
And dressed like fruit—with vanilla, musk,
Rose-water, cologne, hair-oil, etcetera,
And I can not pretend what else.
Twist his finger and his thumb he held
A pounce-t box (see Webster's Unabridged)
Which, ever and anon, he gave his nose,
And still he smiled and talked, and, as
The soldiers bore dead bodies by.
He called them untought knaves, unmannerly,
To bring a slovenly unhandsome corpse
Between the wind and his nobility.
With many holiday and snobbish terms,
Such as "Aw, wally," did you evah?
He addressed me among the rest,
Described my prisoner's in her Majesty's
Behalf. I then, all smarting with
My wounds, being galled to be so poster'd
With a seven-by-nine pinpinjay.
Out of my grief and my impatience,
I lifted him one abaf the wheel-house,
And you might have heard his little
Coat-tails crack as he passed
Over into the next county.
This bald, unjointed chat of his, my lord,
Disturbed my Dutch, and I beseech you
Let not his mysterious disappearance
Come between my love and your high majesty.
—Oil City Derrick.

AS COMPANION TO A LADY.

"I'm very sorry, Miss, but I'm only
a poor woman myself, and if you can't
pay the rent of this room, I don't see as
you can afford the rent of the one up
stairs."

Here the landlady rubbed her nose
viciously upon her apron, and stared
straight out of the very dirty window.

As this was evidently a challenge for
me to reply, I said, as firmly as I could,
a few words which brought out the rea-
son for the woman's visit that morning.

"Am I to understand, then, that you
wish me to leave?"

"If you please, Miss, at the end of the
week, for there's the gent on the first
floor would like to have this bed-room."

"Very well, Mrs. Ruddock," I said;

"I will find a room elsewhere."

"Thanky, Miss," she said, sharply;
and giving her nose another vicious rub,
she left me to my thoughts—and my
tears.

For I was weak, faint and heartick,
and the coins in my purse had dwindled
down, so that if I did not succeed in ob-
taining an engagement in a very few
days I had no resource but to creep back
to the country and avow my failure.

Just three months since and we were
all so happy in the little country vicarage;
and then, in visiting one of his
people, my poor father caught a dan-
gerous fever, while in tending him my
dear mother was stricken with the same
complaint, and ere three weeks had
passed Minna and I sat in the little study
alone, in deep black; for the strug-
gle had been brief, and those we loved lay
together in the green church-yard, and
we were only intruders now in the little
vicarage that had been our home.

We were nearly penniless, too, but a
brother-clergyman of my father's, quite
as poor, came forward and offered us a

temporary home till, as he said, some
opening should occur for us.

I gladly accepted it for Minna; but
for myself, I was determined to try
great London, and, unaided, battle for
myself. In two years John Murray was
to come back from Australia to fetch me
for his wife, and till then I would be in-
dependent. So the day came at last
when, with many tears, we two girls
had to separate, and with aching heart
I left the old Lincolnshire home, and
reached the great dreary void of Lon-
don early one afternoon.

I was not long in finding a place
where I could stay, in the shape of a
second-floor front room in one of those
heart-aching streets near the Founding—
streets that echo from morning to
night with mournful cries uttered by
venders whose goods it is impossible to
surmise, and with the dismal echoing
tones of the various organs. So painful
were these last to me, that often of an
evening, when I have returned from a
weary, disheartening search for an
engagement, and sat alone and hungry,
fearing to spend my money in any thing
beyond the tea and bread and butter upon
which I existed, these doleful strains
—cheering, maybe, to some—have had
such an effect upon me that I have sat
and sobbed till, utterly worn out, I have
fallen asleep, to wake, perhaps, hours
after, to find it very late, and crawl
shivering off to bed.

As the weeks passed on and my ad-
vertisements and fees paid to the various
registry offices had been without effect,
I used to crawl back to my room, grow-
ing more and more disheartened. I
was always a plain, sallow-looking girl,
and now in my fast-wearing black I be-
gan to feel that I was day by day grow-
ing more shabby and weary-looking,
and that my feeble chances of obtaining a
post were growing less and less.

I used to sit and ask myself whether I
had tried hard—and I knew I had—but
it was always the same. Whether I ad-
vertised for situation as governess, or
went from a registry office to offer my-
self as companion to a lady, it was al-
ways the same. I noticed a look of dis-
appointment as soon as I entered the
room, for I was neither pretty nor
bright-looking, and my mournful black
helped to sadden my aspect. It was al-
ways the same—the lady did not think
I should suit her, and in blank dis-
appointment I had to return.

And now it had come to this—that
my landlady had grown as tired of me
as the people at the registry offices,
where I had more than once been told
rudely that I was not likely to get a
place as governess or companion, but
had better look lower. That afternoon,
evidently suspicious of my ability to
pay, and perhaps disgusted with my
miserable way of living, and afraid I
should be left an invalid upon her hands,
she had—rudely, it seemed to me—re-
quested me to leave.

In my present circumstances I was
utterly prostrated by the news, for I dared
not take lodgings elsewhere; and I could
see nothing now but to sell a portion of
my scanty wardrobe and go back to
beg for assistance from my father's
friend.

What a change! and how soon had
my hopes of independent action been
blighted! I was heartbroken as I felt how
that in that great city there was wealth
being squandered and luxury around
me while I was literally starving; for my
poor living was telling upon me
fast. What should I do? What should
I do?

It was with weary iteration I had said
those words and wept till tears came no
more, and a dull, stolid feeling of de-
pair had come upon me. I had almost
shrunken away in the streets from the
bright-faced, happy girls I passed, and
at times I found myself asking what had
been my sin that I should be thus pun-
ished.

I lay awake that night for many hours,
watching the light from the street lamp
playing upon my ceiling; and at last,
towards morning, the remembrance of
words I had often heard came to me
with a sad sense of repose, trust and
resilience, and I believe I fell asleep at
last with a smile upon my lips, repeating
a portion of that comforting sentence
ending, "Are you not much bet-
ter than they?"

It was a bright, sunshiny morning
when I awoke, to hear some one knock-
ing at my door, and, hurrying on a few
things, I answered.

"Ah! I was just going to take 'em
down again," said my landlady harshly.
"Some folks can afford to lay in bed
all day; I can't. Here's two letters for
you. And mind this, Miss Laurie; I
never bargained to come tramping up
to the top of the house with letters and
messages for you."

"I am very much obliged, Mrs. Rud-
dock," I said gently, as I took the let-
ters with trembling hands, while, mut-
tering and complaining, their bearer
went down stairs. It seemed very hard
then, but I believe it was the woman's
habit, and that she was not bad at heart,
but warped and cankered by poverty,
hard work, and ill-usage from a drunken
husband, whom she entirely kept.

One letter I saw from a glance was
from Minna, the other was in a strange
crumpled hand; and I longed to read
them; but exercising my self-denial, I
dressed, lit my fire, and prepared my
very frugal breakfast before sitting
down and devouring Minna's news.

What right had I to murmur as I did
last night, I asked myself, when she was
evidently so happy and contented? and
then I opened with fluttering hand, the
other letter, and was puzzled by it at
first; but at last I recalled the fact that
three weeks before I had answered an
advertisement in the *Times*, where a lady
wanted a companion.

The note was very brief and curt and
ran as follows:

"If Miss Laurie is not engaged she can call

upon Mrs. Langton Porter, 47 Morton Street,
Park Village South, at 11 o'clock to-morrow
(Thursday)."

"At last!" I said to myself joyfully,
and with beating heart I prepared my-
self for my journey, for the appointment
was for that morning.

Just as I had pretty well timed myself
for my walk a sudden squall came on,
the sky was darkened and snow fell
heavily, and in place of a morning in
spring we seemed to have gone back in-
to winter, for the snow lay thickly in a
very short time, and the branches of the
trees in the squares were whitened.

Weak as I was, this disheartened me,
but I fought my way bravely on, and
at 11 rang timidly at the door of an
important looking house, and was suc-
cessfully shown, by a stout tall foot-
man in drab livery, into a handsomely
furnished room. Every thing in the
place I noticed was rich and good; heavy
curtains hung by window and door,
skins and Eastern rugs lay on the
polished wood floor, and a tremendous
fire blazed in a great brass fire-place,
and the flames danced and were reflected
from the caustic tiles with which it
was surrounded.

"I'll take your note in," said the foot-
man, as I handed it. "You can sit
down."

I preferred to stand, and as soon as I
was alone I shivered with fear and cold,
as I caught a glance of my pale, sallow
face in a great mirror. Every moment
I expected to see the owner of the place,
but I remained standing wearily for an
hour, and then I sighed and turned
wistfully to look at the door, wonder-
ing whether the footman had taken in
the note which I had given him as my
pass.

I started, for close behind me, hav-
ing entered unheard, was a rather plump
tall lady in black. She was dressed as
if for going out, and well wrapped in
furs.

"Oh! you are waiting" she said,
hastily, and a shade of displeasure
crossed her face as she looked full at
me till my eyes dropped. "There,
There—Miss—Miss—Miss—"

"Laurie," I suggested.

"Yes, yes; I know," she said, sharp-
ly; "it is in my note. Pray, why in the
name of common sense did you not sit
down? Take that chair. Now, then,
have you been companion to a lady be-
fore?"

"No, ma'am," I replied; and then,
in answer to her questions, all very
sharply given, I told her so much as
was necessary of my story.

"I don't think you will suit me,"
she said; "I've had misery enough,
and I want some one cheerful and pleasant,
a lady whom I can trust and who
will be a pleasant companion. There, I'm sure there is not such a body
in London, for the way I've been im-
posed upon is dreadful! I've had six in
six months, and the number of applica-
tions I have had nearly drove me out
of my senses. I have had one since you
wrote to me—a creature whose sole idea
was herself. I want one who will make
me her first consideration. I don't
mind what I pay, but I want some one
tall and lady-like; and you are not pret-
ty, I think."

I shook my head sadly.

"Humph! Well!" she went on,
"you won't be so giddy, and be always
thinking of getting married. There,
you need not blush like that; it's what
all the companions I have had seem to
think about. You don't, I suppose?"

"I am engaged to be married," I said,
hanging down my head, "in a couple of years."

"Ho! Well, he mustn't come here,
for I'm a very selfish, pragmatical old
woman; and if I engaged you—which I
don't think I shall do—I should want
you all to myself. What is he?"

"A settler—abroad," I faltered.

"Ho! That's better; and perhaps
he'll settle there altogether without
you."

I looked at her indignantly, and she
laughed.

"Ah! I know, my good girl. I haven't
lived to eight and forty for nothing.
How old are you?"

"Twenty," I said, shivering, for her
rough way repelled me, and I longed to
bring the interview to an end.

"Why, the girl's cold," she said,
roughly.

"H'm, twenty! Here,

go up to the fire, and have a
good warm; it's dreadful weather.

There! pull off your bonnet and jacket.

Put them on that chair, and go

closer to the fire; I've a deal to say to

you, for I'm not going to engage

any young person and have to change
directly."

I obeyed her, trembling the while,

for I was very weak; and she went on
asking me questions and making com-
ments.

"I don't like your appearance at all;
you look pale and unhealthy. Not a bit
like a girl from the country."

"I am very sorry," I said; "but, in-
deed, ma'am, I have excellent health."

"Then your face tells stories about
you. You play, of course?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You're warm now. Go and play
something. Can you sing?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then sing, too; and look here, Miss

Miss—Miss—"

I was about to tell her my name, but
remembering the last rebuff I was silent.

"Now look here, my good young
lady, how am I to remember your
dreadful name? What is it?"

"Laurie, ma'am," I replied.

"Of course it is; I remember it quite

well. Now go and play and sing some-
thing, and mind, I don't want my ears
deafened with fireworks, and the drums
split with parrot-shriek bravuras. Sing