

DON'T BE IN A HURRY TO GO.

Come, boys, I have something to tell you:
Come here, I would whisper it low;
You're thinking of leaving the homestead,
Don't be in a hurry to go.
The city has many attractions,
But think of the vices and sins,
When once in the vortex of fashion,
How soon the course downward begins.

You talk of the mines of Australia,
They're wealthy in treasures, no doubt,
But ah, there is gold in the farm, boys,
If only you'll shovel it out.
The mercantile life is a hazard,
The goods are first high and then low,
Better risk the old farm awhile longer—
Don't be in a hurry to go.

The great busy West has inducements,
And so has the busiest mart,
And wealth is not made in a day, boys,
Don't be in a hurry to start.
The banker and broker are wealthy—
They take in their thousands or so—
Ah, think of their frauds and deceptions;
Don't be in a hurry to go.

The farm is the safest and surest;
The orchards are loaded to-day;
You are free as the air of the mountain,
And monarch of all you survey.
But stay on the farm awhile longer,
Though profits come in rather slow,
Remember you've nothing to risk, boys,
Don't be in a hurry to go.

DESMORO;

OR,

THE RED HAND.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "TWENTY STRAWS," "VOICES
FROM THE LUMBER-ROOM," "THE HUMMING-
BIRD," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER IX.

Sixteen years have gone by since last we saw Colonel Symure. He was a young man then; now he is in the meridian of life, the indifferent husband of an affected, mindless, shrewish, selfish woman, who brought him wealth and unhappiness as well. He has no children: he has nothing under his roof save his frivolous wife, who is no companion to him, and wears his patience night and day.

Many and many a time has he regretted the loss of his child; but never once has he dared to dream of claiming it. The secret of his first marriage he must endeavor to conceal for ever. In order to preserve some little tranquillity on his domestic hearth, he is compelled to preserve that secret inviolate.

He has groaned often to think of the mask which he is forced to wear, without ever having the courage to pluck that mask off. He is entirely under the thrall of his rich wife, with whom he has no confidence whatever.

And he is now sitting here, in a paltry little theatre, belonging to an obscure country town, witnessing the performance of a troupe of strolling players, his own lawfully-begotten son being one of the principal members of that troupe.

Colonel Symure gnashed his teeth as he reflected on all this; and the color forsook his cheeks and lips as Desmoro's deep-toned voice, rich in its practised modulations, rose and sank in impassioned declamation.

What was he to do? How could he snatch his own offspring son from such a humiliating position?

This son of his was handsome as Apollo, and had the bearing of a prince. Colonel Symure would be proud indeed to own him, and take him to his heart; for time had much softened this man's breast, which had nothing to fill it now—nothing, save sorrowful memories of, and repinings for, the past.

Every pulse in Colonel Symure's body was throbbing fast and painfully, and he was longing to spring upon the stage, and fold the youth to his bosom. Had he but owned a different woman for his wife, he might, perhaps, have followed his inclinations, and revealed to her the existence of his son; as it was, he was almost distracted, and knew not how to act.

The hand of heaven seemed to have directed him to this place, in order to show him the trust he had so cruelly neglected—the child he dared not claim as his.

Not a single doubt of the youth's identity intruded itself upon the Colonel's mind. The name of Desmoro Desmoro, and the young stroller's red hand, were facts which at once established his relationship to that gentleman.

Never in all his life had Colonel Symure suffered such mental anguish as he was now suffering. But the all-end would not be here: he would probably be made to endure still more torture. Indeed, how could it possibly be otherwise with him, seeing that he was not the master of his own actions, that he was completely under the control of his vixenish wife.

Colonel Symure was truly thankful when the hour of ten arrived, and Mrs. Symure rose to depart. He helped her on with her shawl in

utter silence, gave her his arm, and conducted her out of the theatre; at the door of which was their waiting carriage, into which he assisted her without speaking a word.

"Caroline," he said, pausing at the door of the vehicle, "I—I don't feel exactly myself to-night; I think I'd rather walk home, if you have no objection to my doing so."

"No objection to your doing so, indeed!" repeated she. "And what's to become of me all the while you are from my side. Why, I'm to be moped in this close carriage, without a soul to exchange a syllable with. Not that you have been at all communicative this evening—a mouse could not have been more silent than yourself. I wonder what's the matter with you."

"I—I am not myself, Caroline."

"You said that before."

"I know I did; and I say it again and again."

"You're mysterious, Colonel Symure," she suspiciously rejoined. "You may well say you're not like yourself to-night."

"I shall be better after I've had a brisk walk and a few mouthfuls of fresh air."

"Whoever heard of night air doing a person any good? I'm certain I never did!"

But Colonel Symure was gone, and Mrs. Symure was compelled to return home wholly alone.

The gentleman strode along to the end of the street, until the equipage containing his wife was quite out of sight; then he sauntered back again into the theatre, and resumed his seat in the box he had just vacated.

But the tragedy was over, and Desmoro Desmoro was no longer to be seen.

Colonel Symure was very uneasy, and very unhappy, likewise, and he was thankful to be alone for awhile with his thoughts, when were harassing him as thoughts had seldom harassed him before.

Soon he left the theatre, and sauntered down a sort of alley, at the end of which was the stage-entrance, a dingy doorway guarded by a lame man, whom the townspeople called "Hopping Pidgeers," a singular character, whose aspect was repulsive in the extreme.

Colonel Symure peeped through the open doorway into a murky room of narrow dimensions, and glanced at its sole occupant, a wizened man, apparently old, but in reality not so,—crouching over the dying embers in a rusty, battered grate. There was a crazy table, on which a lamp was burning, and a pile of old playbills, disturbed by the draught from the open door, was fluttering on the blackened and cobwebbed wall opposite.

This was all the gentleman could see.

He drew his cloak around him, in order to hide his scarlet coat, pulled the military hat deep over his brow, and still lingered on the threshold, unable to make up his mind what to do; whether to enter there or to let it alone.

The figure hanging over the fire coughed once or twice, and rubbed its skinny hands together.

Colonel Symure watched and watched, until he was weary of watching, then he passed through the doorway, and stood in the presence of the Cerberus of the place, Hopping Pidgeers, who had started from his seat at the creaking of the stranger's boots.

The gentleman drew back and shuddered before the crooked form presented to his view.

"Weel, what dun yo want?" was the not over courteous interrogatory made by the Cerberus.

This question, so bluntly put, perplexed the gentleman for a second or two.

Pidgeers, whose little eyes looked in two separate directions, was narrowly scanning the appearance of the new-comer, examining him from head to foot.

"Can I do anythin' fur yo, sur?" he further demanded, in cracked and discordant accents, and with a strong Yorkshire dialect.

"I really don't know," stammered the Colonel. "I want to be informed where Mr. Desmoro Desmoro lives," he added, his tongue clinging to the roof of his mouth as he uttered the name.

"Oh, whereabouts Maister Desmoro Desmoro lives, yo wants to know?" repeated Pidgeers, with a cunning grin, all the while peering into the querist's face. "What can a soger-officer want wee a play-actor lad like him, um? Maybe, yo wants to him to goo an' list for a soger?" added he, eagerly.

"Perhaps I do?" half-laughed the Colonel. "Such a fine fellow as he would be a credit to any regiment in the world!"

"Foin feller!" mumbled the man. "Theer it be; alus yer foin fellers! I'd bet a penny yo'd not tak' me fur a soger!"

"No, I don't think I should!" was the dry and haughty rejoinder.

"Noa, in coorse yo wouldn't! Dang it, why beant one mon's back an' limbs as straight as another? Why should I be a Hoppin' Pidgeers, fur everybody to mak' gam on, an' this lad, Desmoro, so pretty that all that sees him mun luv him so? Theer be Miss Comfort Shavings—But, I suppose, you dunnot know her?"

"No, no; I merely wish to be informed where the young gentleman lives—nothing more."

"Young gentleman!" echoed the man, with a scornful laugh. "Why, he sticks up th' playbills on th' street walls, runs a arrands, clean the stage, lights the gas, an' does a schoor a other odd jobs! Gentleman, indeed! I shouldn't wonder but what yo'll be fur callin' me a gentleman!"

"I should not make such an egregious mistake, be assured," answered the Colonel, red-

dening, and feeling inclined to knock the insolent Pidgeers on the head.

Colonel Symure put his hand into his pocket, and drawing forth a crown-piece, threw it on the table before him saying, "There, perhaps that may put a curb upon your too familiar tongue, and induce you to civilly answer my question relative to the abode of the young man I have before alluded to."

Pidgeers snatched up the coin, and immediately thrust it into the depths of his patched corduroys.

"We never tells nobody's addresses here; it be agin Maister Jollico's orders," he said, coolly, limping back to the fireside, and resuming his seat there.

The Colonel stamped his feet impatiently.

"Has Mr. Desmoro left the theatre?" he next demanded.

"Maybe he hev, and maybe he hev'nt—it aint fur me to say."

"You won't tell me."

"You don't want me to go agin my orders, an' so he shoved out on my place, do you?" asked the man.

"No, no; certainly not."

"Then don't ax me any moor on yer questions," returned Pidgeers, in the same rude manner as before. "It be 'leven o'clock, an' am gooin' to mak' my porridge, so as yo mayn't like the smell on it, yo'd better goo yer ways wham."

Colonel Symure paused, not knowing what to do.

"Look here, don't be obstinate, my man!" he said, approaching the crouching figure. "I'll make it well worth your while to serve me in this business. I want to see and speak to this young man, and if you will but instruct me where I may be likely to find him, I'll give you a piece of gold."

Pidgeers started at the mention of "gold;" then, with his elbows on his knees, and his chin supported in his palms, he sat reflecting a few moments.

"Dun you want him for a soger, say yes or noa?" he asked, suddenly jumping up.

"Well, honestly, no!" responded the Colonel. "I seek him only for his advantage, be assured on that point."

"His advantage!" slowly repeated Pidgeers, a dark frown puckering up his narrow brow. "Weel, yo mun coom here agin to-morrow, at this hour, an' then, mayhap, I'll tell 'en summat about him. Good night, maister, I mun mak' my porridge now."

Colonel Symure, full of disappointment and anger, now left the man, and found his way into the alley, and thence into the street once more.

Slowly he proceeded homeward, his heart heavy and sad within his breast.

He was recalling the particulars of the scene which had just taken place between the stage-door-keeper and himself, and bitterly reflecting on all he had heard concerning Desmoro's humiliating position.

Could it be possible that the lawfully-begotten son of a Symure was subjected to the degrading employment of a common billsticker?

The gentleman shuddered at the bare thought of such a disgrace being offered to one of his ancient and aristocratic name, and excitedly quickening his footsteps, soon reached home, where he was received with a scowling brow, Mrs. Symure's temper not being in its happiest vein.

On the following morning, Desmoro awoke unrefreshed and languid. His slumbers had been much disturbed by dreams of terror, and he was somewhat feverish and nervous in consequence thereof.

He kindled his fire, set his little sooty kettle on the hob, performed his morning ablutions, then, feeling easier, he seated himself before the grate, and began to think, and to congratulate himself as well—to congratulate himself on his ordeal being over—over with much credit to himself.

He became more like his old self as he mused; for he was reflecting that he had a treat in store for Comfort. He had a certain fresh volume to carry to her to-day—a volume which had come strangely into his possession, and which he had neglected until now—neglected because of the late, unexpected, and important task he had had to perform.

While he was thus sitting, occupied with many thoughts, Mrs. Polderbrant burst in upon him, and disturbed his cogitations.

"A good lad!" she exclaimed, after her peculiarly abrupt fashion—"a very good lad, indeed! What are you having for breakfast this morning? Not bread and water again, I trust?" she continued, sitting down, and making herself quite at home. "You got through your part admirably last night. I say so; and as I've seen the first of acting in my day, I ought to be a tolerable judge of that difficult art—able to know the difference 'twixt the good and the bad, at all events."

"I'm very much obliged to you, ma'am," stammered Desmoro; "not only for the kind assistance you rendered me last night, but for the possession of that book which I was coveting so much. I have neglected to thank you for it till now, because I have not had any fitting opportunity of so doing. I am very grateful to you, Mrs. Polderbrant."

"And you are really going to study Hume's 'Treatise on Human Nature'?" she laughingly asked. "Well, well, there's no accounting for some people's taste. Are there any other books that you want?" she stily inquired.

"Ah, Mrs. Polderbrant," sighed the youth,

"I do not like to think of the many, many works I should like to have."

"Books are expensive articles, Desmoro; yet I fancy I could find the means to buy you any you might desire. But never mind, Desmoro, only you continue as you've begun, and you'll soon be able to purchase a whole library for yourself. Think of that, my lad—think of that! You have talents—rare and excellent talents—which, if properly used, will lead you away from your present erratic way of life up to high fortune and the London boards!"

The young man's ears tingled as these pleasing and encouraging words entered them. Dared he believe that he would one day become known to fame, and hold an honorable and proud position in the world?

He would like to do so, not for his own sake, but for that of dear Comfort.

Desmoro was longing for the world's admiration and applause, and that all tongues should speak of him. But, although he was full of ambitious yearnings, he had not an atom of selfishness in his nature, for generous, honest, noble, and good he was in all things.

Now, Mrs. Polderbrant, eccentric as she undoubtedly was, was a shrewd reader of character. She understood Desmoro's thoroughly, and understanding it, she could not help admiring and appreciating it. She had a rugged heart in her bosom; but he, the parentless one, was fairly inside it, filling its every corner.

But she did not make any affectionate professions to the lad, over whom she now felt a positive joy in watching. She did not tell him that she was learning to love him with almost the same sort of tenderness as she had loved her own son—that son whose head the cold earth had long since pillowed. No; she cared for him silently and well.

Quite elated, Desmoro sought Comfort's presence; and together the young teacher and his pupil pored over their newly-acquired treasure. The girl's face wore a puzzled, vexed expression, while that of her companion was filled with interest and gratification.

To speak the truth, Comfort was perplexed over the volume's contents, but she did not like to say so; she did not like to confess that they were as mysterious to her as the Greek alphabet; so she went on listening to Desmoro as he read and read, with her pure, girlish features full of wonderment and awe, hearing every word he repeated, but failing to comprehend their proper meaning.

Desmoro saw that he had brought a work far above the understanding of his pupil, and he resolved never to commit such a mistake again. He was disappointed certainly, for he had expected to produce a great effect on Comfort's mind, he had been hoping that she would derive vast benefit from the perusal of such a learned and thought-fraught production, and that she, like himself, would be yearning for others similar to it.

"You don't like this book, Comfort," he said, suddenly closing its pages.

"If it had been history, I should have liked it immensely, Desmoro!" she replied, almost at a loss what to say, and fearful of offending him in any way. "But I am not clever enough to receive the meaning of these treatises, which only make my head ache, and vex my heart!"

"I forgot, Comfort; I forgot that woman's tastes, in nine cases out of ten, differ from those of men."

"We cannot help our nature, Desmoro!"

"No more than we can help ours?"

"I wonder whether they would take back the book, and give us another in lieu of it?" spoke he. "You'd like Goldsmith's 'History of England,' if I could get it, wouldn't you?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, if you could get it, Desmoro!" answered she. "But we must not dream of being able to procure a peep at that work for many and many a year to come; so let us make ourselves as contented as we can without it. We must not further impose upon Mrs. Polderbrant's good nature, for she like ourselves has nothing but what she works hard for!"

Desmoro shook his head sceptically.

"You think otherwise, eh?" queried she.

"I do, Comfort!" he replied. "I fancy she's quite rich!"

"Rich, Desmoro!" exclaimed his companion. "How can she possibly be so? She has always been a country actress; and report says that she had an idle husband, and an extravagant and worthless son, for both of whom she was barely able to support them. I know that she belongs to an excellent family, but I do not imagine the members of it ever assist her in any way. How then, as I said before, can she be rich?"

"She offered to buy me any book you wished, which offer she would surely not have made unless she had had the means of keeping her word."

"Offered to buy you any book you wished, Desmoro! I fancy she must be a little mad, I really do, Desmoro!" laughed the maiden.

"I cannot agree with you in that opinion, Comfort. I adhere to my former, idea, that she has some money, a secret board, somewhere."

"Well, well, time will prove all things."

CHAPTER X.

It was near eleven o'clock at night when Colonel Symure, no longer attired in military garments, entered the dingy alley leading to the stage-door of the theatre.

He had his large cloak wrapped about him, and his hat was pulled far over his brow,