

# THE HEARTHSTONE

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For the Hearthstone.

## MY GARDEN.

BY RAYB SYMOUR.

Only the commonest flowers  
Grow in my garden small,  
Like buttercups and bonning-bells,  
And hollyhocks by the wall,  
And sunflowers nodding their stately heads  
Like grenadiers so tall,  
But the purple pansy grows beneath,  
The sweetest flower of all,  
And tiny, feathery, filmy ferns,  
You scarce can see at all,  
From the shady side of the stones,  
So dainty fine and small.

Only the commonest flowers  
Grow in this garden of mine,  
The larkspur flaunts her sky-blue cap,  
And the twinkling columbine  
Shakes her jewels of frockled gold,  
And drinks her honey-wine,  
Making a cup of her lucent stem,  
So slender and so fine,  
For you hear the laughing waves thatal do,  
Slide—and shimmer—and shine  
Under her delicate slippered foot,  
My golden celandine.

The hands of the little children  
Gather them without fear,  
Wonders of beauty and gladness,  
To them my walks appear,  
I have seen them bend to listen,  
With poised and patient ear,  
The curlew chime of the fairies  
In the lily's bell to hear,  
Oh, blessed and innocent children,  
With eyes so crystal clear,  
That ye look with the dual vision  
Of the baby and the seer,  
To you the stars and the angels,  
And the heavens themselves are near—  
And the amarants of paradise,  
That blossom all the year,  
I would I could see what ye see—  
And hear what ye can hear.

## DESMORO ;

OR,

## THE RED HAND.

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

### CHAPTER I.

"DEAR DESMORO,—

"I am so glad to be permitted to write to you to tell you that you are now the father of a very fine boy whom I, his fond mother, think absolute perfection. But, strange to relate, the little fellow has been born with a red hand—one of his palms (the left one), and all the fingers belonging to that hand, being crimson as a poppy. At first I was quite alarmed when nurse showed me the extraordinary mark; but I am now growing used to the sight of it, and by-and-by perhaps, I shall not even notice it.

"He is very like you, my dear husband. Ah! you may laugh at me, but he is! He has your violet-coloured eyes, your forehead and chin; but his nose—well, as yet I can hardly say what that feature will be like. I am very proud of him, you may feel sure. All the mother is aroused in my heart, and I feel ready to risk my very life for my child—for that child which only a short fortnight ago I had not seen.

"But my own Desmoro must not be jealous of my new-born love. I do not prize my husband a whit the less because his son is nestling at my bosom.

"I am beginning to grow impatient for your return home. Has it been decided whether your regiment will be ordered? I do hope not to the West Indies, because of the unhealthiness of that climate. But whithersoever thou goest, my beloved, I will be by thy side."

"Feeling very giddy, I broke off a little while ago, and took a couple of hours' rest. Now baby is not very well, and nurse is advising me to have him baptised at once. Of course, I shall call him after his own papa, whose name is so musical to my ear that my tongue is ever hungering to pronounce it.

"You will soon return to me now, dearest, will you not? I fancy that the people here where I am lodging begin to look upon me with suspicion. The secrecy which you have obliged me to observe regarding your position has, I suppose, created in their minds distrust, which I perceive, now and then, peeping out in sundry ways.

"I trust you have broken the news of our marriage to your elder brother, as I am very anxious to communicate to my parents the name and the true position of my good husband. It is painful for me to remember that they refuse to credit the fact of our being man and wife unless I show them my wedding certificate, or disclose to them the name of the church in which the holy ceremony was performed, which you know I cannot do, having promised you most faithfully never to divulge to any one aught concerning our affairs, until you shall give me full permission to do so.

"But my Desmoro will recollect that he is a parent, and that it is now his duty to remove from his wife and child every shade of obscurity that may be likely to draw upon them either mistrust or impertinent observation.



FOUND IN THE SNOW.

"Although I have written you a very long letter, I could still find a great deal more to say to you, did I feel equal to the task of committing my words to paper. But my head is feeling very weak, and my hand is exceedingly tremulous as well, so I must conclude at once.

"With best love, believe me to be,  
"Ever your affectionate wife,  
"ANNA DESMORO."

The reader of this epistle, who was a remarkably handsome man of about six-and-twenty years of age, crushed the sheet of paper in his hand, and closing his fingers tightly on it, uttered aloud an impatient exclamation, which exclamation caused a gentleman present to suddenly look up from his breakfast-plate, and glance at the face opposite to him.

"What's the matter, Des?" he demanded, in a tone that was spiced with a little authority, at the same time fixing a pair of keen eyes upon the person thus addressed. "What's that letter about, eh? Got into some confounded scrape or other, I'll be bound; or is it one of the rascally tradesmen's bills that's annoying you?"

"Tradesmen's bill, indeed! As if such a thing as that could give me a moment's trouble of any kind!"

"Well, then, what is it that's making you look as if you had just seen a ghost?" Desmoro made no answer, but struck his clenched hand upon the table before him.

"Ah, I see! Another silly affair of the heart, Des! How the deuce do you contrive to remain such a fool?"

"Oh, as to that," replied the other, in piqued accents, "everybody hasn't your philosophy and adamantine breast; it is the weakness of some people to feel a little."

"Call it their misfortune rather than their weakness, Des," returned his companion, with considerable sarcasm. "But that is neither here nor there; it seems pretty plain that you've been suffering yourself to get entangled in some way; and, such being the case, I, as your elder brother, claim the privilege of addressing you on the subject. Whence came that missive which is now undergoing such ill-usage at your hands?"

"Percy, don't ask me!" stammered the other, his face now flushing deeply. "Elder brother of mine though you be, I cannot perceive what right you have to catechise me respecting any of my private affairs."

"Desmoro Symour, I am ten years your senior, and your guardian by the will of our late father, which facts furnish me with every right to prevent—if I can—your going astray. The truth is, Des, I've long been suspecting that something was wrong with you, and I have been waiting for a fitting opportunity of questioning you relative to—"

"It's of no earthly use your questioning me, Percy!" interrupted the young man, with an impatient burst. "I can't marry Miss Calthorpe, let that information satisfy you."

"You cannot marry Miss Calthorpe—a lady to whom you have actually engaged yourself? Why, Desmoro, you are taking leave of your senses, I verily do believe!"

"I should just like to know whether Percy Symour himself has always done the right thing—whether he has ever pursued the straight path! It strikes me very forcibly that in many respects he has been every bit as weak as others. Is it not so, my mentor?"

"That is not the question at the present instant, Des. I want to be informed wherefore you cannot marry Miss Calthorpe."

"No, I cannot be so black a villain as to do so," burst forth the younger brother "Heyday!"

"I cannot make up my mind to commit such a piece of wicked injustice—such a cruel sin."

"Wicked injustice—cruel sin!" echoed Percy Symour, in great astonishment. "You are delivering yourself in riddles, my dear fellow."

"Yes, yes; I daresay I am," replied Desmoro, through his closed teeth. "Well, never mind that; I can't help doing so. I've been a dolt, and I am to suffer for having been such, and there's an end of the matter, I reckon!"

"I fancy not, Des," answered the other, shaking his head. "If you're not in the very middle of the quagmire, you may yet be extricated from it."

"But I am not only in the middle of the quagmire, but up to my ears in it, and unable to stir one way or the other in order to free myself."

"Make me your confidant, Des; you cannot do a better thing than that."

"I—I dare not!" was the faltering rejoinder.

"Tush, nonsense! Two heads are sometimes better than one. As a commencement, give me a peep at that letter."

"No, no, Percy; that I cannot—will not do. In heaven's name, let us drop this subject, and turn to some other."

Then there ensued a pause of some few moments, during which time Percy Symour sipped his chocolate in cold indifference, having no suspicion of how seriously his brother had involved himself.

Desmoro was sitting with his elbows resting on the table, his chin supported in the palm of his left hand, the letter still clutched in the other. His mind was in a perfect tumult, and he was wholly at a loss to know what to do or what to leave undone in the business now before him. At length his tightened fingers gave way, and the crumpled missive was tossed across the board close to Percy Symour, who immediately took it up, smoothed out its creases, and commenced to peruse its irregularly traced characters.

With a loud-beating heart, Desmoro watched his brother's changing features as he read. Desmoro was drawing Percy's anger and reproaches. He knew that he was deserving of all his brother's wrath, and that he should not be able to find any words wherewith to justify either himself or his conduct.

"Well!" cried Percy, severely frowning. "Well! you have pretty disgracefully disgraced yourself and our old family name. Whom have you married? Who is this woman who thus writes to you, calling you her husband?" he asked, abruptly.

"Her father is a schoolmaster—at a place near which I was quartered some twelve months ago," was the stammering reply.

"And you are really married to the schoolmaster's daughter?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so, Percy; the truth is, I was desperately in love with the girl, and—"

"And seeing the simpleton she had to deal with, the made the best of the opportunity—um?"

"Yes, I suppose so, Percy."

"Confound her, and you too, Des!" exclaimed he. "But you were surely mad; knowing that another woman legally claims you, to enter into an engagement to wed Miss Calthorpe."

"I think I have been mad, Percy; but I was

fancying that I could get out of the other affair."

"Get out of it! How, I should like to be informed?"

"Well, you must know, Percy, that I didn't marry her in my own name; and—and—"

"Go on," said the other, in a low tone, as he glanced towards the door of the apartment.

"She, herself, knows neither my name, nor the regiment to which I belong; and, what is more, I do not think that she will ever succeed in finding me out. She is only a simple country girl, possessed of very little knowledge of any kind."

"And dare you venture upon taking a second wife, your first being still alive?"

"I have been thinking that I might do so," hesitated Desmoro, half-abashed at his wicked confession. "But now, I—I am losing my courage. There's a child you see; and, positively, I don't know what to do at all. I wish to heaven I could be spirited away, somewhere, out of this bother and difficulty! I've repented and repented the deed over and over again, until I'm fairly tired of repenting, and that's the plain truth of the matter, Percy!" he added, impudently.

Mr. Symour was sitting biting his nails, deep in reflection. "Look here, Des," he commenced; "if this projected marriage of yours with Miss Calthorpe be broken off, I shall also lose my chance with her sister Lucy, which loss, in the present state of my finances, would be the absolute ruin of me."

"I'm deuced sorry, Percy; I am, upon my honour! But I really think if we were to put our heads together, we might keep that mistake of mine in the dark, and hush her voice entirely. She might be told that I'm dead; she'd not be able to prove to the contrary. Of course, I'd have to give her a sum of money; then she'd go back to her father, and all the danger would be over."

"I'll undertake the task," returned Mr. Symour, with sudden alacrity. "Give me this woman's address, and leave me to manage all the rest."

"She is living at Noleman's Hill."

"And where is that, in the name of wonder?"

"In Yorkshire; about two hundred miles distant from London."

"A nice journey for me to have to take in this abominable wintry weather. Why, I shall not reach the place in less than nine or ten days. The letter, I perceive, is a fortnight old."

"Yes; but I suppose it has been lying some time at the London post-office (where all her communications have been addressed), and I have neglected to tell Ransom to call for it," explained this very honourable young gentleman.

"Ay, ay, I understand! And how am I to inquire after this person; what does she call herself?"

"Mrs. Desmoro Desmoro."

Percy laughed, and his brother proceeded to instruct him respecting the locality of Noleman's Hill, and on other important points for his particular observance.

While the brothers were yet concocting their wicked plans, Ransom, Desmoro Symour's valet, presented himself.

"If you please, sir, I'm so sorry," he began, twirling 'twixt his fingers a silver salver, on which was lying a clumsily folded letter, fastened with a large black wax, and a little patch of sealing-wax of the same hue, "but I forgot to give you this. There were two letters waiting for you at the post-office."

"Careless fellow!" exclaimed his master, snatching the missive from the valet.

"I hope, sir, you'll be so good as to overlook my neglect of duty," returned the man.

"Yes, yes; only be more careful another time! That will do."

"Thank you, sir," and the valet was gone.

"What on earth is that?" exclaimed Percy Symour. "Is that also a communication from the person at Noleman's Hill?"

"Wait a moment, and I'll tell you. The superscription is plainly is not in her hand," Desmoro answered, as he tore open the sheet, and prepared to examine its contents. "Great heavens, Percy, do you think she's dead?" he continued, his eyes devouring the written characters, his face becoming pale as ashens. Yes—yes, she is dead!"

"What! Mrs. Desmoro Desmoro?"

"Ay; read it for me, for I am unable to do so; my head is reeling round and round."

Percy took the communication out of his brother's trembling hand, and perused the following lines, which were penned in a flourishing copy-book style:

"Noleman's Hill, Yorkshire.

"February 21, 1815.

"To Desmoro Desmoro, Esq.

"Sir,—

"I am both shocked and grieved to be the communicator of unhappy tidings to you. Your dear wife, whom I, her most attentive, imagined to be progressing most favourably, took a sudden chill, from which she never recovered. She died this morning very peacefully, and with but little suffering; I am glad to say. The enclosed note, which was found in the deceased lady's desk, addressed to yourself, instructed me how to forward to you this sad intelligence.

"The infant, I rejoice to tell you, is doing remarkably well without its maternal nurse, and, such being the case, if I might presume to offer unasked advice, I should recommend you to leave him for a while in the kind hands into which he has fallen.

"I have taken the liberty of writing to Mrs. Desmoro's parents, living at Shellington Moor, to inform them of this sudden and sorrowful event. To them, also, I have enclosed a letter, found in the before-mentioned desk. I hope that I have acted in accordance with your wishes, and that you will hasten hither as soon as possible, as I do not like to take upon myself any further arrangements in this matter.

"Obediently yours,  
"JAMES BROWNLOW."

"Well, Des, I must say that you're one of the luckiest fellows alive! Here you are as free as air again, with nothing to apprehend from any one!"

"Poor girl!" sighed Desmoro, his eyes cast upon the ground. "She was wondrously pretty, Percy, with such a beautiful head of hair, of a colour I can scarcely describe."

"Well, then, don't trouble yourself to do so, I beg," laughed the elder brother, quite elated at the late news. "Pshaw! how relieved I feel! That journey to Noleman's Hill would have been no joke for me to perform."

"How do you counsel me to act in this business, Percy?"

"What do you mean?"

"Respecting the funeral, and the child's future?"

"Will you promise to do exactly as I shall instruct you?"

"Certainly."

"Then take no notice whatever of this communication, and endeavour to forget, as soon as possible, all about Noleman's Hill."

"But Percy—"

"Not a word more," interrupted the brother, abruptly rising from the table. "Come, it's past twelve o'clock, Miss Calthorpe will be expecting us to accompany her in her morning ride."

"And Lucy, likewise, Percy," said Desmoro, forcing a smile.

"Precisely."

And away these two gentlemen went, to prepare themselves for a ride on horseback in St. James's Park.

### CHAPTER II.

Poor Anna was consigned to the grave by her parents, who carried the motherless infant home to take the place left vacant in their hearts by their departed daughter, who had been their only child, their only joy on earth.

And years and years passed on, but no father came to claim the little boy, who thrived amazingly, and made the wintry days seem all sunshine beneath his grandfather's roof.

How the old couple loved him, and how he was cherished and petted, to be sure! Shellington Moore had not another boy like Desmoro Desmoro!

When Desmoro was just fourteen years old, his good grandmother died; and soon after that event another woman took her place at the schoolmaster's fireside, and domiciled over his humble household. She was many years younger than her husband, and rather a showy-looking woman, but a perfect vixen in disposition.

Poor Desmoro soon began to experience a sad alteration in everything at home, and he was learning to dread the very sight of his new grandmother, who was ever scolding and buffeting him whenever he came within her reach.