

She gave her hat to Del to carry, and he splashed merrily through the water, which was not more than ankle-deep.

There was no room for helping across, for the stones would not allow of more than one person on them at a time, and, of course, Beryl needed no help.

So Deverell crossed first, and the girl, with every nerve quivering, followed. Deverell, with one foot on the projecting stone, the other one on the bank, leaned forward as Beryl reached the last stone, and opened his arms.

"Come!" he said.

How much or how little there may be in that one word! and how much there was in it now from his lips!

He could not help it; he was scarcely conscious that tone and manner and passionate eyes said:

"Come to me! Come to my heart!"

And she stood there, quivering from head to foot, with the wild-rose flush on her cheek, and the look of a frightened fawn in her eyes, the summer wind stirring the curls on her brow, behind her the green back ground of woods.

Ah, how lovely she was! enough to stir a man's pulses who had never seen her till this moment.

"Come!" Deverell repeated—only that word.

He could not say more, and Beryl dared hesitate no longer; she sprang forwards into his open arms.

They closed round her tightly, folding her close to the man's throbbing heart, and he bent his face to hers, and again and again pressed passionate kisses on her soft lips.

She could not, if she would, resist him; she could not even have cried out, so close and strong was the embrace that held her; it stilled her very trembling; but had Beryl any wish to resist?

Did not the passion that claimed her find full answer in her heart and give back every throb of the heart to which she was pressed? Was it not the very delirium of happiness to feel Max Deverell's arms about her, his kisses on her lips?

If she shrank at last, and would have hidden her burning face from him, it was only in the instinct of woman-shame.

But it recalled Deverell somewhat to himself, and he loosed his clasp a little.

"Forgive me!" he whispered. "Dearest, it was cruel to take you at a disadvantage; but my passion mastered me. Beryl, Beryl! I love you with all my soul! You do love me a little, my darling!"

He tried to lift her face to his, and for a moment she yielded to him; for a moment let her eyes meet his; but they fell before the look they met, and she hid her face again on his breast, clinging to him as once more he strained her closer, and bowed his head on hers in such a rush of emotion as made him almost dizzy.

But by-and-by he drew her a little way to where the bank sloped up.

"Sit here," he said; and as she obeyed, he threw himself beside her, and gathered her within his arms again.

"My love, my love!" he said passionately. "Oh, Beryl, I have been so starved of love all my life, I feel half afraid that you will melt away out of my arms! Darling, have I been too hasty, too impetuous? has my vehemence overborne you, and carried you out of yourself? You will not by-and-by feel that your heart is not wholly mine!"

"Oh, no, no!" cried Beryl, looking up to him bravely, though the flush on her cheek spread to her brow. "I—I—" Here the bravery evaporated, her head drooped. "I loved you before," she faltered. "That was why I was afraid. I did not know it."

"Sweetheart!" He could not but kiss the sweet lips again. "I know it, Beryl," he presently added softly. "I saw that you feared me, and it made me—ah, so happy! And just now, when you stood there, and would far rather have jumped right into the water than into my arms, how could I let you go when at last I had you? You will not find that hard to forgive, dear, will you?"

No. Beryl did not find it at all hard to forgive, and was more than content to lie in her lover's arms while he told her that his first meeting with her had made him her faithful lover, and that he had made up his mind then that the dark-eyed girl who sang the Irish ballads should be his wife. And then, after a while, he asked her if she had any idea who or what he was, beyond what he himself had told her.

Beryl looked up and saw that he was smiling.

"No," she said; "I never asked anyone. Why should I?"

"Why should you not, you trusting soul! See how short a time we have known each other. Well, you can ask Father Langholme all about me."

"Don't! don't!" cried Beryl, with starting tears. "As if I could doubt you!"

"Dearest, I did not think to pain you. Shall I tell you myself, then?"

"Yes, please."

"You don't care whether I am rich or poor, Beryl?"

"No; oh, no!"

"What a jewel you are! Well, then, Beryl dear, I am rich. Do you object to some eight thousand pounds a year, and a house in town, and an ancestral home in the country?"

"No," said Beryl soberly; "but I don't know. I think I am almost sorry."

Deverell pressed her to him in silence for a few minutes. When at last he could command himself to speak at all, his voice trembled.

"Beryl," he said, "somehow I seem hardly to regret my unloved childhood and youth, since in the end I have won such a heart as yours."

(To be Continued.)

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