

head with its close-fitting coils of hair. Her discarded hat lay on the heather at her feet. Close to her chosen rock sprang a young birch, its supple grace a replica of her own; its drooping plumes, stirred by the breeze, dappling her blue dress with tiny restless shadows.

Was it some day-dream that so held her, Mark wondered, or pure consideration for the trout that he had presumably come out to catch? Either way, her silence and abstraction had the effect of so intensifying his own emotion that speech seemed desecration. Besides—he had spoken already. Could there really be any need to tell her again how swiftly and strangely she had swept him from his moorings, so that life held nothing, momentarily, but his glorified vision of herself?

Last night the sound of her voice, echoing his own confession, had silenced the whispers of prudence that strove to curb his impetuous spirit, counselling delay. If only that confounded Miss O'Neill had given him a chance while the glamour was on them both, the whole thing might have seemed less egregiously precipitate. Now that he had schemed for half an hour's privacy; now that she sat there, only a few yards away, seemingly unaware of his existence, a shiver of uncertainty chilled him. A fortnight ago to-day, while he and Maurice were rambling in search of subjects, he had beheld her for the first time. For him that fortnight was an indefinable age. For her it might simply be fourteen days——

But this sort of hawering would never do. He was a strong man, not unschooled in suffering, but little used to be thwarted in his desire. And he did not seriously expect to be thwarted now. Deliberately he laid aside his fishing tackle, and leaning on one elbow looked up at the girl, whose rock was set a little higher along the sloping bank of the stream. For a few seconds he took his fill of her, from the