

shining eyes burned me up, as flame burns stubble. In an hour, a week, a day, I can no more say within what time than I can describe what befel me before I was born—for if that was a sleeping, this was a dream, and passed swift and confused as one—I was madly and desperately in love. Her face brilliant, mischievous, alluring, rose before the thumbed grammar by day, and the dim casement of the fetid, crowded bedroom by night, and filled the slow, grey dawns, now with joy and now with despair. For the time, I thought only of her, lived for her, did my work in dreams of her. I kept no count of time, I gave no heed to what passed round me; but I went through the routine of my miserable life, happy as the slave that, rich in the possession of some beneficent drug, defies the pains of labour and the lash. I say my miserable life; but I say it, so great was the change, in a figure only and in retrospect. Mrs. D—— might scorn me now, and the boys squabble round me, yet that life was no longer miserable nor dull, whereof every morning flattered me with hopes of seeing my mistress, and every third day or so fulfilled the promise.

With all this, and though from the moment her eyes met mine across the fence, her beauty possessed me utterly, a full fortnight elapsed before I spoke with her. In the interval I saw her three times, and always in the wretched guise in which she had first appeared to me; which, so far from checking my passion, now augmented it by the full measure of the mystery with which the sordidness of her dress, in contrast with her beauty, invested her in my mind. But, for speaking with her, that was another matter, and one presenting so many difficulties (whereof, as the boys' constant presence and Mrs. D——'s temper were the greatest, so my bashfulness was not the least) that I think we might have gone another fortnight, and perhaps a third to that, and not come to it, had not a certain privilege on which Mr. D——'s good lady greatly