

"And you believed that?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

He stood for a moment, silent and thoughtful.

"Did Claire also tell you that I was everything that was evil? That I was hard and cruel?"

"I think she did."

"And did you believe that?" he asked, reaching out for my hand.

I didn't want to seem afraid of him. So I had to look him honestly and openly in the eye.

"Did you believe that?" he repeated.

"No!" I finally replied. Yet it wasn't what I had intended answering.

"And are you going to believe those other foolish things of me?" he went on. He was much stronger than I was, so I had no way of keeping him from drawing me closer to him.

"Are you?" he repeated.

"No!" I said in a whisper, beginning to feel like a snow-man in a March rain-shower. He was no longer humble, by this time, but his old masterful self again.

"And do you hate me?" he demanded, taking me in his arms.

I tried to speak calmly, but I wasn't able to.

"No," I said, with a sob of surrender. And hav-