

feeling; it seemed to him that her eyes were wonderful.

"I want to ask your forgiveness," she said.

"My forgiveness?" he was taken aback, "you have done everything for me, been everything to me; it is I who should ask forgiveness for having been a burden here."

She put aside his thanks with a gesture at once gracious and significant, and the sweetness of her smile arrested the words on his lips. "Nevertheless I ask your pardon," she said, "for — for my stupidity, my ignorance, my want of manners long ago, when you came here to the house and I treated you with discourtesy. You were always fine; I was hateful. You must have despised me!"

He smiled sadly. "I think you know that I did not," he said.

"I deserved it. But since then I have learned to value your friendship, to honor you for the fight you have made."

He turned toward her; his tall gaunt figure seemed to have lost some of its awkwardness, and the homely sweetness of his haggard face had never been more apparent. "You know," he paused, and then went on with deep emotion, "I recognized then, I do still, the gap between our lives, but it cannot change the one inevitable fact of my existence, my love for you."

The color rose from her chin to the arch of her lovely brow, but her lips quivered. "You know that