

## THE HIGH HEART

"He's willing to forget what you've said—what my daughter Ethel has said; and I'm willing to forget it, too."

"Do you mean as to my being in love with some one else? But I am."

"Not more than you were at the beginning of the evening. You were willing to marry him then."

"But he didn't know then what he's had to learn since. I hoped to have kept it from him always. I may have been wrong—I suppose I was; but I had nothing but good motives."

There was a strange drop in his voice as he said, "I know you hadn't."

I couldn't help taking a step nearer him.

"Oh, do you? Then I'm so glad. I thought—"

He turned slightly away from me, toward a huge ugly fish in a glass case, which Mr. Rossiter believed to be a proof of his sportsmanship and an ornament to the hall.

"I've had great trials," he said, after a pause—"great trials!"

"I know," I agreed, softly.

He walked toward the fish and seemed to be studying it.

"They've—they've—broken me down."

"Oh, don't say that, sir!"

"It's true." His finger outlined the fish's skeleton from head to tail. "The things I said to-night—" He seemed hung up there. He traced the fish's skeleton back from tail to head. "Have we been unkind to you?" he demanded, suddenly, wheeling round in my direction.

I thought it best to speak quite truthfully.

"Not unkind, sir—exactly."

"But what did Ethel mean? She said we'd been brutes to you. Is that true?"