

THE HIGH HEART

been able to help it. I've always felt that there was something big and fine in you—if you'd only set it free."

His reply to this was to turn away from his contemplation of the fish and say:

"Why don't you come back?"

I was sure it was best to be firm.

"Because I can't, sir. The episode is—is over. I'm sorry, and yet I'm glad. What I'm doing is right. I suppose everything has been right—even what happened between me and Hugh. I don't think it will do him any harm—Cissie Boscobel is there—and it's done me good. It's been a wonderful experience; but it's over. It would be a mistake for me to go back now—a mistake for all of us. Please let me go, sir; and just remember of me that I'm—I'm—grateful."

He regarded me quietly and—if I may say so—curiously. There was something in his look, something broken, something defeated, something, at long last, kind, that made me want to cry.

I was crying inwardly when he turned about, without another word, and walked toward the door.

It must have been the impulse to say a silent good-by to him that sent me slowly down the hall, though I was scarcely aware of moving. He had gone out into the dark and I was under the Oriental lamp, when he suddenly reappeared, coming in my direction rapidly. I would have leaped back if I hadn't refused to show fear. As it was, I stood still. I was only conscious of an overwhelming pity, terror, and amazement as he seized me and kissed me hotly on the brow. Then he was gone.

But it was that kiss which made all the difference in my afterthought of him. It was a confession on his part, too, and a bit of self-revelation. Behind it lay a nature of