

'I am not going to propose to you a third time, Joan,' he said in her ear; 'it is your turn now to say something.'

'Oh, Craig!'

'I shall want more than that,' kissing the soft hair that rested against his shoulder, 'so you may as well be quick about it.'

'Oh, Craig, I don't know what to say!'

'Then I will tell you, and you can repeat it after me, as they do in the marriage service. I, Joan Leigh, promise in all good faith and sincerity to take Craig Bastow as my wedded husband, and to love him all the days of my life.' And he would not let her off, and Joan had actually to say the words, though he could hardly hear them.

Craig laughed a little triumphantly as he kissed her. 'Joan, what a darling you are, but I never saw you quite so shy with me before.'

'It is your fault,' she said unsteadily.

'Come and sit down and let us talk comfortably,' he said coaxingly, for he wished to put her at her ease. It was sweet to make love to her, but he wanted her to be her old frank self, and above all it was necessary for him to find out what she thought of his mother's plan; so he put the question to her.

Joan hesitated for a moment.

'I told Lady Merriton that I would do what you wished. Are you sure that it will suit you, Craig?'

'It will suit me down to the ground,' he said cheerfully, 'for it will enable us to get married as soon as we like. We might have had to wait a year or two if there had been a question of a second establishment.'

'I think your mother really wishes it,' she whispered.