

he ordered a tea-basket in the train. And I am not really tired at all, only——' here Joan looked up shyly at Craig from under her long eyelashes. She was conscious that he was watching her, and it added to her embarrassment. Oh, if she could only be alone with him and ask him what it all meant! But Lady Merriton had decided otherwise.

'Then we will have our little talk, dear, and I will send Craig away. Tell your father and Dorothy,' addressing her son, 'that I will see them later on, but just now Joan and I do not wish to be disturbed.'

'All right, mater,' and Craig gave Joan a quick glance which she could not meet. But as he closed the door his mood was so joyful that he broke into a boyish whistle which reached the girl's ear and made her tingle with delight.

'Take off your hat and your stole, my child, you will feel more comfortable.' And Joan mechanically obeyed. Then she took the low seat, so snugly screened from the fire, which stood beside the couch, and waited for Lady Merriton to begin the conversation.

Her first speech rather surprised the girl.

'I hope Madame Flaubert fitted you nicely, Joan, and that you like the dresses.'

'I thought them lovely—nothing could be in better taste. Oh, Lady Merriton, I think it is so good of you to allow me to be one of dear Dorothy's bridesmaids!'

'I mean to be more good to you than that, Joan. My dear, will you listen to me a moment? I want you to understand that Lord Merriton and I had no personal objection to you when we refused our consent to Craig's marriage with you.'