



CHAPTER III.



FTER a refreshing night's sleep and an early breakfast, the love-afflicted Captain Gray went house-hunting. On the outskirts of Breakham he looked at the first house on his list, and decided it would do. It was surrounded with a lovely garden, and the grounds contained a snug coach-house and stable. He immediately made the necessary arrangements to purchase it. Then he hurried off to call on his lady-love. As an excuse he decided to ask her advice about it. It never struck him that the subject might be a delicate one.

Mrs. Newton answered the door and greeted him cordially. He was invited into the drawing-room. Woman-like, her curiosity was aroused as to why he had made such an early call. He, poor man, was in a terrible dilemma. He was with the wrong lady, and he did not exactly know what to say. He made a bold attempt at conversation.

"Nice day, Mrs. Newton," he said uneasily.

"Yes, Captain, very."

"Er— I came to—er—to see Miss Boyd," he blurted out. "Is she at home?"

"Yes, Captain," replied the old lady, looking solemnly at him. "She'll be down in a few minutes."

Her glance made him feel decidedly uncomfortable. What would she think of him, an acquaintance of three days, calling again so soon?

Miss Boyd was surprised to see him as she entered the room. Blushing slightly, she shook hands with him.

"Rose, my dear, the Captain has come to see you. I'm going into the garden," said the aunt glancing at her niece.

Poor Rose looked slightly embarrassed as her relative left the room. Not so the worthy skipper, Mrs. Newton's absence, on the contrary, afforded him considerable relief.

"You'll pardon me, I hope, Miss—er—Rose, I mean, but I've come to see you on a very important matter," he said.

Miss Boyd's heart palpitated rapidly.