

"What is the matter?" she asked nervously.

"I've been out this morning looking for a house, found one to suit, and purchased it; and now I'm here to ask you to come and see it, as I—er—wish you to approve of it."

This was a little too much for her.

"I fail to see," she said hastily, "what difference it can possibly make to you, whether I like the house or not, as long as it pleases you."

This reply knocked the captain flat aback. Poor fellow! He thought he was getting on so well. But this short answer of hers had taken all the wind out of his sails, and left him stranded for the want of words. Suddenly the fear flashed through his mind that he could not be carrying out the business as the book relating to love directed. One chapter certainly dealt with getting the cage first, then the bird.

"I took it to be the house, then the wife," he soliloquised. "Perhaps that wasn't what it meant, after all, and I ought to have got the wife first!"

Miss Boyd noticed his confused manner, and really felt sorry for him.

"What are you thinking about, Captain?" she asked.

"To tell you the truth," Gray murmured, glancing up at her, "I am a little mixed up in this affair."

"What affair?"

"Getting married," he replied innocently.

"Why, Captain, who are you going to marry?" she asked in a tone of surprise.

"You," he answered, nearly encircling her in his arms.

She could not repress a scream.

"O Captain, how could you say such a thing to me?"

"O Lor'! What have I done now?" thought Gray. "Another blunder! This will never do. I shall never make any headway like this." Then aloud: "Will you allow me to explain in my own way. I have been going by the book—and made a mess of it!"

"Of what?"

"Oh! Here's a show," he thought. "Now for it—sink or swim!"

"You remember when first I met you?" he said aloud.

"Yes, Captain, three days ago."

"Well, from that moment I made up my mind to—er—propose to you. I went home and studied a bit about the business in a book that I have."

"What business?"

"The proposing business," he answered innocently.

"Oh!" And she laughed merrily.

"You may laugh if you like," said Gray to himself. "But I'm determined I'll keep on until I get it right."

"Will you allow me to explain what I want?" he asked her.

"I'm not stopping you, Captain."

"I—er—want—er—you to be—er—my wife," spluttered out the flustered skipper.

Miss Boyd smiled at the Captain's way of proposing.

"You've gone a round-about way to do it," she said. "As to accepting you, I haven't known you very long, and besides, I know very little about you. You were very kind to me during the trouble with Bess. I'll admit that I do not dislike you, and will promise to give you an answer in a day or two."

He grasped her by the hand. "Call me by my Christian name, Rose," he begged.

"Very well, if it will do you any good, Gerizam," she answered shyly.

Mrs. Newton came in and looked first at her niece, then at the skipper.

"Aunt, dear," said Miss Boyd, "the Captain wants me to look at some property he's bought."

"Very well, Rose. What time will you be back?"

"We shan't be very long, aunt."

She watched them disappear. "It looks very much like losing my niece," she said to herself. "Ah well, she isn't a child, and ought to know what she is about. The Captain is a bit wild, perhaps, but appears a