

turns up and down the room, then stopped abruptly before Dorothy, who was rocking herself to and fro in a monotonous way and beating a tattoo on the arm of her chair with her fingers, and seemed to be looking at everything in the room except the Squire.

"Miss Dorothy," he said, his voice having an unpleasant ring in it. "I have been thinking lately that I would like—I should like to settle down, and in fact, (here he stopped and wiped his face vigorously with a flaming bandana) I want to get married."

"You-want-to-get-married?" said Dorothy, gazing at him in astonishment. She had ceased her monotonous rocking, and sat bolt upright in her chair, and solemnly shaking her curly head with each word as she repeated his words after him.

"Yes," he went on, "I want to get married, and the young lady I want to marry lives right here, here in this house, and I thought," he went on, nervously, "I thought you might help me," gazing steadily at her, as she resumed her rocking. "Do you think you could?"

"I—I—think I could, Mr. Romney," she said without looking up, and nervously pleating the corner of her handkerchief between her fingers.

"And," continued the Squire, not noticing the interruption, "you will never regret it, for I am a rich man. Of course there is a difference in our ages, and it must appear strange that I should want to marry one so young," he paused.

"Yes," murmured Dorothy behind her handkerchief.

"And," went on the Squire, "I'll give you plenty of time, say three or four days, to find out if there is any hope for me at all, and then let me know. I repeat it again, you shall never have cause to regret it, for I am a rich man."

"Oh! Mr. Romney! Dear—dear—Mr. Romney," said Dorothy, getting up and going towards him, and smiling up in his face. "I didn't know you loved me; I really didn't know it. Of course you don't think I did?" regarding him anxiously. "Indeed you must believe me; I didn't know you loved, yes really and truly loved me. I am so glad—so happy, and it don't matter one bit about your being so—so old," she finally wound up.

"Merciful Heavens!" gasped the discomfited Squire, "is the girl crazy? (backing towards the door) who said I loved you? Who—who—?"

"And," continued Dorothy without seeming to have heard what he said, "We can have a double wedding. Of course you have heard that Nina and Ned Dorsey are to be married just after the holidays; he will be here next week."

At this the Squire fairly groaned, and, having reached the door by this time, he rushed out banging the door after him. As he stopped in the hall to get his hat and coat he heard Dorothy singing in a clear, sweet voice:

"A squire went a courting,  
A courting of a maiden,  
A maiden young and handsome;  
The squire he was old."

"She shall pay for this," muttered the Squire as he went out. "See if she don't."

From the window Dorothy watched him ride hurriedly away, and then sinking into the nearest chair she gave way to uncontrollable laughter. Slipping her hand in the pocket of her dress, she gave a slight start, tapped the floor impatiently with her foot, then went in search of Nina. She found her in her room, and Dorothy going in, shut the door carefully behind her, and going up to Nina put her hands on her shoulders. "He proposed to you, and you said no."

"He! what, Squire Romney?" said Nina. "How do you know?"

"It is hard on him, very hard, poor old dear," at last said Dorothy, as she paced up and down the room, her hands clasped behind her, trying hard not to laugh. "But of course, Nina, you know best, but for my part I'd much prefer being an old man's darling than—"

"Dorothy! Dorothy! Don't! Oh, how can you?" and Nina sank flushed upon a chair and began to cry almost hysterically.

"Nina!" cried Dorothy, "stop your crying. I'm going to tell you something that will surprise you, but the truth of the matter is this, I—accepted—the Squire—myself; there—there don't excite yourself," as Nina tried to speak. And then she told her of her interview with Squire Romney. "Now, what do you think of that?" and then laughed merrily.

Nina buried her head in the sofa cushion and shook with a kind of helpless laughter. "Oh, Dorothy, how could you?" said Nina. "What will people think?"

"They won't think anything," replied Dorothy. "I am very sure I'm not going to tell them, and I hardly think Mr. Romney will. See here, Nina, is something for you," taking the letter from her pocket and holding it up for Nina to see. "I got it at the office as I came from the river, but when I came in and found you and the Squire enjoying each other's society so much, I forgot all about it."

"Give it to me, Dorothy, please do, there's a good girl," said Nina, holding out her hand for it.

"No, Nina, you can't have it till you promise me, honor bright, you won't tell Tom how I accepted the Squire, now promise and the letter is yours, if not—"

"I promise, Dorothy; yes, honor bright."

"Well, take it, read it, and be happy; it's from Ned." And with that Dorothy went out, leaving her sister alone.

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The next evening Tom informed them, at the supper table, that he heard in town that morning that Squire Romney had gone South to spend the rest of the winter.

