

# HE SETTLED WITH JOE

How a Box of Beauty Roses Made Farmer Dave Twenty Dollars Short in His Quarterly Payment

By MISS MABEL BURKHOLDER

It was not until Farmer Dave was coming from the barn to the house, the team unhitched, the bags of feed safely stored in the granary, the groceries sent ahead to the house by the eager children who always ran to meet him on his return from town, that he remembered how cross and ill-tempered he had left Maggie at noon. Perhaps it was the very infrequency of the situation which disturbed him, for, usually, Maggie was the most patient and loving of wives, easily deferring to his opinion in all matters that seemed of importance in their quiet, uneventful lives. But deep water, when thoroughly stirred by a storm, takes the longer to settle, and Maggie would not easily forget that he had refused her request so emphatically expressed.

It was about money, of course. Women were always so foolish about money. If they could get all the little trifles they seemed to set their hearts on, what would become of the big things demanding payments at stated intervals of the year? Why couldn't they see that when a man was niggarding along trying to pay the debt off his house and land, his one thought was for the wife and children? And why would they insist that a man found pleasure in handling money, when all he did was to pass it over the counter of the grocery store for the bare necessities of life?

By the time Farmer Dave had reached this point in his reflections he had arrived at the wood-shed door. A basin of water stood on a bench and a towel hung over it. Here the men were in the habit of washing off the worst stains of toil, and absent-mindedly Dave reached up to the shelf above for the soap. The action brought his face into close proximity with the little window which opened into the kitchen.

Supper was on the table and the three children played peacefully in front of the fire. The kettle poured forth a cloud of white steam, and the lamp on the mantle was trimmed and burning brightly. It was a perfect scene of domestic content.

But where was Maggie? Farmer Dave's eyes searched the room rather apprehensively until he discovered that his wife was standing apart from the rest, smoothing her hair before the mirror. What in the mischief was she doing anyway? By all the shades of the departed, she was twining a rose in her hair. A rose in November. Where in the world did it come from?

His eyes traveled lower and discovered that there was a whole box of them lying on the table beneath her hand. No stunted and half grown specimens were they. They were great gorgeous American Beauties, which filled the whole corner of the room with color as she lifted them up into her arms with passionate tenderness. Then, like one afraid of being caught in a foolish action, she gave them a quick kiss and crushed them into the box again.

Farmer Dave stood like a man transfixed. It struck him with terrific force that Maggie was still a very pretty woman, that while he was going his slow, plodding way, other people had their eyes open to her charms. The warm flush on her round cheek, the sparkle of her soft brown eyes certainly indicated a lively interest in the sender of the flowers, whoever he might be. Ah, watch how the roses would take their departure for some unused store-room or cupboard, when the rightful lord and master of the domain announced his presence. With a cold perspiration starting from his brow, he opened the door and walked in.

But strange to say, Maggie gave no self-conscious start, nor did she try to hurry the flowers out of sight. The beautiful glow of her cheek deepened as he approached her, and she coquettishly turned her head to display to best advantage the bud in her hair.

"You're looking rather gay to-night," said Dave.

"Just see what night it is!" she laughed happily.

Then Dave, with another jolt, woke up to the fact that it was her birthday. He should have brought her some little gift. But the date had not entered his head since last year, when he had also forgot to get her anything. One thing was plain, however. While he was forgetting somebody else had been remembering. An unaccountable wave of resentment made him as sore-headed as a bear.

The sore-headedness must have communicated itself to Maggie by that delicate sixth sense of which many women are possessed. As soon as she perceived that something was not right she contritely drew near his side.

"Maybe I shouldn't have opened the box," she whispered. "But I knew it was flowers—and I was so curious."

"It didn't matter," he said huskily.

And then, to his utter surprise, she threw her head down on his shoulder and burst into tears.

"I was so nervous and cross the whole after-

merriment was at its highest, his sharpened ear noon," she sobbed. "Nothing went right after dinner, and—forgive me, dear—it seemed to me you did not care. Then, to think you had me in mind all the time, and brought me those beautiful roses for my birthday. I kept saying all day that you would never think of it, that you were only interested in large things like houses and land, that I ought not to have been such a child as to expect anything. But I was just hungry for something that wasn't a necessity in the house, something that was frivolous, and sweet, and girlish; then when your flowers came—forgive me, Dave—I had to cry, I was so happy."

Farmer Dave's mind was doing some lightning calculation, until, finally, out of all the details of the day's business was evolved a sentence which seemed to throw a little light on the subject.

The sentence was this: "Dave, I'm throwing a parcel into your rig—I'll get it when you reach home."

The sentence had been spoken by young Joe Harkness, his nephew, from a distant part of the country, who had hired with him during the busy summer season and who would finish the remainder of the fall ploughing before he went back home. Joe had also been in town during the day, but was going to walk out later. Wednesday afternoon was Joe's day off. They seldom counted on seeing him home for supper. They had their private opinion that he got that meal over at the home of the black-eyed Jennie Brown, to whom he had been paying attention



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all summer.

Then another of Joe's sentences came back to Farmer Dave with startling distinctness. It was a gloomy confidence, uttered while his nephew was at work with him in the field.

"I tell you Jennie Brown is no easy girl to hold. She's as stubborn as a balky colt. I don't know this very minute whether she'll turn me down the next time I go to see her or not."

Two and two are four the world over. Joe had bought the roses as a peace offering for the shrine of his irate goddess. And the box which now lay on the table was, without any doubt, the parcel he had thrown into Dave's rig before it left town.

A wave of helplessness swept over Farmer Dave. Joe would be in any minute demanding the box which Maggie persisted in hugging to her heart. If he attempted to confess, one would make him out a liar and the other would make him out a thief. It was a difficult situation, but the state of affairs in his home at that moment was a blissful that he felt like making a desperate effort to retain it at all hazards.

While he pondered his precarious position, Maggie bade him sit up to the table. She had taken an old-fashioned jug down from the mantle, filled it with the roses, and placed it as a centerpiece on their humble board. The effect was gorgeous. The children squealed, with delight, and the roses on Maggie's cheeks were as lovely as any in the vase.

Farmer Dave might have been sitting on pins for

all the comfort he got out of that meal. When he caught the sound of Joe returning from town. He rose from the table and started to the door with a savage look on his face, as if he expected to encounter a burglar in the hall. But Joe, who had come in the front way, passed on upstairs. He would dress for the evening first.

"It's only Joe," laughed Maggie.

"So it is," said Dave, subsiding into his chair.

"I suppose," said Maggie, as she buried her nose in the fragrant rose petals for the hundredth time, "I suppose there is no use asking you where you got these beauties, or how much you paid for them."

"No use," Dave responded nervously.

From the room above came the sound of a dropping shoe. Dave fancied he could see his nephew cramming his feet into his Sunday-best.

"It would seem that Joe hadn't a minute to spare," he observed, squirming on his chair.

"I think Jennie is pretty exacting with him," smiled his wife.

Farmer Dave was constrained to get up and walk around the room. He felt like opening the window to get a long breath. Young Tootsie was playing with the box the flowers had come in. She had arranged the tissue-paper within to her liking, and then had closed down the lid and tied the ribbon across in a fair imitation of the original bow. "Here's a box of flowers for oo," she lisped, toddling to her father.

Joe was descending the stairs in mad haste, striking a match to see if his treasured box had been left on the hall stand. Dave was seized with a sudden inspiration.

"Take the box to Joe, dear," he whispered, as Maggie went to the kettle for a cup of hot water.

The child obeyed, trotting out into the hall and leaving the door dangerously wide open. Hastening to close it, Dave was in time for the last half of the harangue in process without.

"See here! That's mighty careless of you, Dave. The kid might have got it untied!"

"So she might," confessed Dave, as if he had just thought of it.

As he turned back into the room he looked straight into the eyes of his wife. She was not wise.

"I can't understand," said Maggie, meeting her husband in the kitchen the next morning, "why Joe did not come back last night. His bed has not been occupied."

"Truth to tell," confessed Farmer Dave, "I had a little difference with Joe when he came in last night."

"What, you? Did you sit up then till his return?"

"I did. He was not late."

"Did you sit up with the express intention of having a difference with him?" asked his wife wonderingly.

"I sat up with the intention of settling a difference with him. But there was no settlement in him. He was in a desperate humor."

"Jennie had turned him down in all probability."

"So it came out."

"Well, I hope he didn't blame you for that!" exclaimed Maggie, indignantly.

"I believe, in the course of his remarks he even went so far," muttered Dave.

"How absurd!"

"I offered to pay him three times the price of the—of the—that is he demanded a month's wages in advance, and rather than have a quarrel between our families. I gave it to him."

## French Fabrics

FABRIC favorites are clearly indicated. Taffetas, taffetas, and still more taffetas, is the cry on every hand—plain, changeable and chamdeon taffetas, taffetas broche, splendid faille taffetas—never before was there such a taffeta season. Tussore and crepe shantung are as yet touched more cautiously. A covert cloth is again being used; both Bechoff-David and Drecoll are showing smart models for automobile coats in this material made severely plain, with collar, cuffs and buttons of the material. In a pretty unlined suit of white crepon shown by Drecoll, the collar, cuffs and buttons were of glace kid in a dull shade of red.

Crystal buttons are here to stay. Premet obtains a very rich pompadour effect by applying upon plain taffeta large medallions, square or diamond shaped, beaded or embroidered in heavy silk upon net.

Quantities of pearls, in bands of beadings or long ropes, are being used as trimming; several Drecoll evening gowns show three-quarter tunics of net, entirely covered with long loops made from chains of large, colored pearl beads; the effect is barbarically oriental.