

Current Literature.

THE ROSE

Very close to death he lay, The keen eyes were waxing dim, And he heard the whisperers say: "Time grows very short for him, And the far-famed healer knees, No hand that waving light could trim. There was nothing left to do; Yet, a want was in his eyes, Love has instincts quick and true. One who loved him saw it rise, That last yearning—forth she went, Calm in solemn sympathies. O'er the red rose bed she bent, The rose that she loved the best, For their charm of hue and scent. She chose the fairest from the rest, Plucked it very tenderly, Laid it on the sick man's breast. The deft hand hung uselessly; The voice would never speak again, But she read the grateful eyes. And knew her guess was not in vain; For a moment satisfied Was the look; then slowly, pain, Baffled longing, human pride, Thoughts of sweet but hopeful years, Bent with power that struggling died; Mocking doubts, and lurking fears, In the laboring boom woke, And the sudden rush of tears As the silent spirit spoke, Drowning all the pining face, In a passionate torrent broke. There was a silence in the place, Quiet lay the unconscious flower, And God took him to his grave, Our God who reads the dying hour. —All the Year Round.

Dave's Wife.

"So Dave has brought his wife home?" Deacon Somers cut a large chip from the stick he had been whittling down to a very fine point as he answered Deacon Bradlaw's query by the one monosyllable, "Ye-a-s." "Got home last night, I hear." "Ye-a-s," and the stick was coming down to a very fine point now, so assiduously was the deacon devoting all his energies to it. Deacon Bradlaw waited a moment with an expectant air; then he clasped one knee with both hands, and leaned forward toward his neighbor. "Well, what do you think of your boy's choice?" he asked. "What sort of a woman does she seem to be?" Deacon Somers was silent for a moment. Whirling the whittled stick around and around, he squinted at it, with one eye closed, to see if it was perfectly symmetrical. (Deacon Somers had a very mathematical eye, and he liked to have everything "plumb," as he expressed it. He had been known to rise from his knees at a neighbor's house in prayer meeting time and go across the room and straighten a picture which offended his eye by hanging "askew.") Having convinced himself that the stick was round, the deacon tilted back against the side of the country store where he and his companion were sitting and began picking his teeth with the aforesaid stick, as he answered Deacon Bradlaw's question by another and seemingly irrelevant one. "Do you remember Dave's horse trade?" "No," answered the deacon, surprised at the sudden turn in the conversation. "I can't say I do." "Wa'l, just after he come home from college, two years ago, he got dreadfully sick against the old bay mare that I drove. I'd had her for years, and she was a steady-going animal. We had a four-year-old colt, too, that I drove with her. Wa'l, Dave he thought it was a shame and a disgrace to drive such an ill-matched span. The young hoss was right up and off, and the bay mare she lagged behind about half a length. The young hoss was a short stepper. And the bay mare went with a long, easy lope. They wasn't a nice-matched span, I do confess. "Wa'l, Dave he kept a-talkin' trade to me till I giv' in. He said he knew of a mighty nice match for the young hoss, and if I would leave it to him he'd make a good trade. So I left it to him, and one day he come drivin' home in grand style. The old mare was traded off, and a dappled gray four-year-old was in her place. A pretty creature to look at; but I knew, the minute I set eyes on her, that she'd never pull a plow through the stubble ground. "Leet she a beauty, father?" said Dave. "'Yes,' says I; 'but handsome as a handsome does apply to hosses as well as to folks, I reckon. What can this 'ere mare do, Dave?' "Dave's face was all aglow. 'Dad,' says he, 'Why she can trot a mile in two minutes and three-quarters, father, and I only give \$75 to boot 'twix' her and the old mare.' "Wa'l, you see, I was just struck dumb at that there boy's folly, but I knew 'twix' no use to say a word then. I just waited, and it come out as I expected. The dapple-gray mare took us to church or to town in fine style—passed everything on the road slick as a pin. But she balked on the reaper, and give out entirely on the plow. And I had to buy another mare for the boss and let the dapple mare stand in the stable, except when we put her in the carriage." Deacon Somers passed, and his glance

rested on Deacon Bradlaw's questioning, puzzled face. "Well?" interrogated Deacon Bradlaw. "Wa'l," continued Deacon Somers, "Dave's marriage is off the same piece as his hoss trade. Pretty creature, and can outstrip all the girls round here in playin' and singin' and paintin' and dressin', but when it comes to washin' and bakin' and steady work—why, we'll hev to get somebody else to do that, and let her sit in the parlor. Mother 'n' I both see that at a glance," and the deacon sighed. "I see, I see," mused Deacon Bradlaw, sympathetically. "Too bad! too bad! Dave knew her at college, I believe?" "Yes, they graduated in the same class. She carried off all the honors, and the papers gave her a long puff 'bout her elyction. Dave's head was completely turned, and he kept running back and forth to see her till I thought the best thing for him to do was to marry her and be done with it. But Sarah Jane Graves would have suited mother 'n' me better. You know Dave and she was pretty thick before he went off to college." "She's a powerful homely girl, though," Deacon Bradlaw said, "and the awkward critter I ever see stand in a church choir and sing. Seems to be all elbows somehow." "Ye-a-s—ye-a-s; a good deal like the bay mare Dave was so set against—awkward, but steady-gein' and useful—more for use than show. Wa'l, wa'l, I must be goin' home; all the chores to do, and Dave's billin' and cooin'. Good afternoon, deacon. Come over and see us." When Dave Somers and his bride walked up the church aisle the next Sunday morning, over Parson Elliott's congregation there passed that indefinable flutter which can only be compared to a breeze suddenly stirring the leaves of a poplar grove. Every eye was turned upon the handsome, strong-limbed young man and the fair, delicate girl at his side, who bore the curious glances of all these strangers with quiet, well-bred composure. After service people lingered in the aisle for an introduction, in the manner of country village churches, where Sunday is the day for quiet sociability and the interchange of civilities. And after the respective friends of the family had scattered to their several homes, Dave's wife was the one universal topic of discussion over the Sunday dinner. "A mighty pretty girl," "A face like a rose," "Too cute for anything," "Stylish as a fashion plate," "A regular little daisy," were a few of the comments passed by the young men of the congregation. To these remarks the ladies supplemented their critical observations after the manner of women: "Her nose isn't pretty," "Her mouth is too large," "Her face was powdered—I saw it," "Her hat was horrid!" "I don't like to see so much agony in a small place." But Sarah Jane Graves said: "She is lovely. I would give the world to be as pretty as she is. No wonder Dave loved her." And she choked down a lump in her throat as she said it. All the neighboring people called on Dave's wife during the next month, and with one or two exceptions, introduced the conversation by the question, "Well, how do you like Somerville?" To the monotony of this query Dave's wife varied her replies as much as was possible without contradicting herself. "I am quite delighted with the fertility of my mind," she laughingly remarked to Dave at the expiration of the first month. "To at least fifteen people who have asked me that one unvaried question I have invented at least ten different phrases in which to express my satisfaction with Somerville. I have said: 'Very much, thank you.' 'Oh, how highly pleased.' 'Far better than I anticipated even.' 'I find it very pleasant.' It has made a very agreeable impression upon me,' and oh, ever so many more changes I have rung on that one idea, Dave!" and the young wife laughed merrily. But under the laugh Dave seemed to hear a minor strain. His face grew grave. "I fear I did wrong to bring you here," he said. "I fear you are homesick already, Midge." "No, no; indeed you are wrong, Dave; indeed I am happy here, and like your friends," Midge protested, with untold earnestness. But as the months went by it was plain to all eyes that Dave's wife was not happy, that she did not assimilate with her surroundings. She made no intimate friendships; she sat silent at the sewing society, and would not take an interest in the neighborhood gossip which formed the main topic of conversation at these meetings. She would not take a class at Sunday school, claiming that she was not fitted to explain the gospel to any unfolding inquiring mind, as she was not at all sure that she understood it herself. "She's settin' a bad example to all of Somerville," Deacon Bradlaw declared. "My gal, Arminda's gittin' just as fussy and proud as a young peacock about her clothes; nothin' suits her now unless it looks stylish and etified. And I see there's a deal more extravagance in dress among all the women folks since Dave's wife come with her high heels and her bustles and her trimmings. You ought to labor with her, Brother Somers." Brother Somers sighed. "I do labor with her," he said, "but the poor thing don't know what to do. Her guardian—she was an orphan, you know—gave her the little money she had left after her schoolin' to buy her widdin' fixin's. She'd no idea what plain folks she was—omn' among. So she got her outfit accordin' to the way she'd been brought up. Lord! she's got things enough to last her ten years, and all trimmed to kill, and all fittin' her like a duck's foot in the mud; and what can she do but wear 'em, now she's got 'em, she says. I can't tell her to throw 'em away and buy new. 'Twouldn't she

She's been with us nigh onto a year now, and she's never asked Dave for a cent's worth of anything." "But she's no worker; anybody can see that. And you've had to keep a girl half the time since she's been with you," Deacon Bradlaw added, somewhat nettled that his neighbor made any excuses for Dave's wife, whose fair face and fine clothes and quiet reserve had inspired him with an angry resentment from the first. "Ye-a-s, ye-a-s, that's true," Deacon Somers confessed. "She's no worker, Lord! the way she tried to make cheese; and the cookin' she did! Mother had to throw the cheese curd into the pig's swill, and the bread and cake followed it. More waste from that experiment of hers than we've had in years; and she was flour from head to foot, and all of a perspiration, and sick in bed from cryin' over her failure into the bargain. The poor thing did try her very best. But it was like the dapple mare tryin' to pull the plow—she couldn't do it, wasn't built for it." When Deacon Somers reached home his brow was clouded. His good wife saw it and questioned him as to the cause. He shook his head. "I'm troubled about church matters, mother," he said. "The debt for the new steeple and altar, and all the rest of the expenses we've been to the last two years wons on me night an' day. And Deacon Bradlaw, he's gettin' mad at some of the trustees, and he says he'll never put another dollar into the church till they come forward and head a paper with fifty dollars apiece subscription. I know 'em all too well to think they'll ever do that, and Deacon Bradlaw, he's a regular mule. So the first we know our church'll be in a stew that will send half its members over to the rival church that's started up at Jonesville, with one of them sensation preachers that draws a crowd like a circus," and Deacon Somers sighed. "Isn't there something that can be done to raise the money?" asked Mother Somers, anxiously. "Can't we get up entertainments?" "That's old, and 'tain't strawberry season," sighed the deacon. "We couldn't charge more'n fifteen or twenty cents at the door, and that wouldn't bring in much for one entertainment, and nobody would turn out to a second. There don't seem to be no ingenuity among the young folks here 'bout gettin' up anything entertainin'. Our strawberry festival was just a dead failure—barely paid expenses." Dave's wife, sitting with her pale face, which had grown very thin and wan of late, bent over a bit of sewing, suddenly looked up. Her listless expression gave place to one of animated interest. "Father Somers," she began, timidly, "do you suppose—do you think—I could get up a reading?" "A what?" and Deacon Somers turned a surprised and puzzled face upon his daughter-in-law. It was so new for her to betray any interest in anything. "Father Somers," she began, timidly, "do you suppose—do you think—I could get up a reading?" "A what?" and Deacon Somers turned a surprised and puzzled face upon his daughter-in-law. It was so new for her to betray any interest in anything. "A reading. You know I took the prize for elocution when I graduated. I know ever so many things I could recite, and it might draw a crowd just from its being something new. We could charge twenty-five cents admission, and it would give the impression of something good at least. After they had heard me once they could decide for themselves if I am worth hearing again." Deacon Somers looked upon the glowing face and animated mien of Dave's wife with increasing wonder. Was this the listless girl he had seen a few moments before? "Ton my soul," he ejaculated, "I don't know but it might draw a crowd, just from curiosity. Everybody would go to see Dave's wife. Not that I hev much of an opinion of readin'; never heard any but once, and then I went to sleep. But it might draw, seein' it's you. You can try it if you want to." Dave's wife did try it. It was announced before service Sunday morning that Mrs. David Somers would give a reading in the church edifice on Thursday evening. Admission twenty-five cents. Proceeds to be applied toward the church debt. Again there was a breezy stir in the congregation, and scores of eyes were turned upon Dave's wife, who sat in her silent white composure, with her dark eyes lifted to the face of the clergyman. But Sarah Jane Graves could not help noticing, as she had not before, the marked change in the young wife's face since the day she entered that church a bride. "How she is fading! I wonder if she is unhappy?" she thought. Thursday night came fair and clear. As Deacon Somers had predicted, the announcement that Dave's wife was to give a reading had drawn a house; the church was literally packed. Dave's wife rose before her audience with no words of apology or introduction and began the recitation of the old, hackneyed, yet ever beautiful "Curfew shall not ring to-night." It was new to most of the audience, and certainly the manner of its delivery was new to them. They forgot themselves; they forgot their surroundings; they forgot that it was Dave's wife who stood before them. They were alone in the belfry tower, clinging with bleeding hands to the brazen tongue of the bell as it swung to and fro above the deaf old janitor's head. When the recitation was finished two or three of the audience found themselves on their feet. How they came there they never knew, and they sat down with a shame-faced expression. Sarah Jane Graves was in tears, and one or two others wiped their eyes fervently, and then the old church walls rang with cheers. So soon as they subsided Dave's wife arose, and with a sudden change of expression and voice, began to give a recital of "An Evening at the Quarters." It was in the negro dialect, and introduced one or two snatches of song and violin. To the astonishment of her audience, Dave's wife picked up a violin at the appropri-

ate time and played the air through in perfect time and tune; and then the house resounded to another round of cheers, and the entire audience was convulsed with laughter. Everything which followed, grave or gay, pathetic or absurd, was met with nods of approval, or the clapping of hands and the drumming of feet. Somerville had never known such an entertainment before. The receipts for the evening proved to be over forty dollars. During the next three months Dave's wife gave two more readings, the proceeds of which paid half the church debt, and this so encouraged the members that old grudges and quarrels were forgotten, and Deacon Bradlaw and the others made up the remaining half, and Somerville church was free from debt. Yet Deacon Bradlaw was heard to say that while he was glad and grateful for all that Dave's wife had done, he did not in his heart approve of turning the house of God into a theater. "She performed exactly like them women whose pictures are in the store windows in town," he said, "a-makin' everybody laugh or cry with their monkey-shines. I don't think it a proper way to go on in the house of God. Never would have given my consent to it if I'd known what sort of an entertainment it was to be." "Dave's wife ever been a actress?" he asked Deacon Somers when they next met. "Actress? No. What put that into your head?" answered Deacon Somers with some spirit. "Oh, nothin', nothin', only her readin' seemed a powerful sight like a theater I went to once. Didn't know but she'd been on the stage; it's gettin' fashionable nowadays. Anyway, she's missed her callin'. Wait a minute, neighbor; don't hurry off so. I want to talk church matters." "Can't," responded Deacon Somers, whipping up his horse. "Dave's wife is sick in bed, and I came to the store to get a few things for her—bitters, and some nourishin' things to eat. She's sort of run down with the exertion she made in them readin's. She used to be just drippin' with perspiration when she got home." Dave's wife was ailing for months, unable to do more than sit in her room and paint an hour or two each day. The house was filled with her paintings. They ornamented brackets, and stood in corners, and peeped from the folds of furs, and smiled from Dave's china coffee cup. One day Dave proposed to his wife that she should go to her old home—the home of her guardian—and make a visit. "We've been married fifteen months now," he said, "and you've never been away. I think a change will do you good. You seem to be running down every day." Poor Dave! He had come to realize that his marriage was a great mistake. To be sure he loved Midge yet, but the romance of his youthful attachment had all passed away in the dull, commonplace routine of his domestic life, where Midge had proved such an inefficient helpmeet. He had been blindly in love with his divinity; elated with the fact that he had won her away from two or three other suitors. Midge was a brilliant scholar and a belle, and with the blind faith of young love, Dave had believed that she would excel in domestic duties as in intellectual pursuits. Her ignominious failure, her utter uselessness, and his mother's constant and indisputable reference to her inefficiency about the farm-work, had presented her to his eyes in a new light. The brilliant girl who was the pride of the college, and the helpless, thrifless wife, whose husband was regarded with pity by a sympathetic neighborhood, were two distinct individuals, as were also the young eloquentist carrying off the honors of her class, and the tired, tearful woman weeping over her soggy bread and melted butter. The success in her readings had revived his old pride in her for a time. But her consequent illness and listlessness had discouraged him. Mrs. Somers saw the express package, and inquired what it was. Dave told her, remarking at the same time that he did not know what use she intended to make of them. "Maybe she's going to give 'em away to those who will appreciate 'em," suggested his mother. "I'm sure we've no room for such rubbish. But her time's no more'n a settin' 'em, and she might as well spend it in that way as any other. She can't do nothin' that amounts to anything." "I think her readings amounted to a good deal," Dave responded, glad that he could once speak authoritatively of his wife's usefulness. "Oh, yes, for that emergency. But it's steady work that tells. Lor' pity you and father, I couldn't do nothin' but give readings! Wonder where your meals would come from. Your marriage and your horse trade were 'bout off one piece, Dave. Your wife's pretty in the parlor or on the floor readin', and your mare looks nice and drives nice in the buggy. But they can't work." Dave's wife came home at the expiration of a month, looking fresher and feeling stronger, she said. And she did not bring her paintings. Deacon Somers came into Dave's room the night after her return to talk about a certain piece of land that was for sale. It "cornered on" to the deacon's farm, and a stream of water ran across it. "It will be worth a mint of money to me," he said, "for I can turn that field into a pasture and all my stock will water itself. But the man who's sellin' wants \$150 down. He's goin' west, and nuth' have that amount this week. I don't see the way clear to pay it, for expenses have been a good deal of late, take'n Dave's bills and hired help and all my consideration, and my needs wons on me now. Do you think of

anybody that'll be likely to lend us that amount for three months, Dave?" But before Dave could reply Dave's wife spoke. "Father Somers," she said, "I can let you have the money—not as a loan, but as a gift. I have been of so little use to you, and have made you so much expense, I shall be very, very happy if you will let me do this for you." And rising up, she came and laid a little silken purse in Deacon Somers' hands. "But where did you get it, child?" asked the wandering deacon, looking from the plerotic little purse to her face, which had flushed a rosy red. "I sold my paintings," Dave's wife answered. "A gentleman happened to see a little thing I painted, and he said he knew where I could dispose of any quantity of such work. And, sure enough, I sold every one of those things I painted when I was sick for good prices. And I decorated some plates for a lady, who paid me well for it. So I have \$175 in that purse, which you are more than welcome to." Deacon Somers removed his spectacles and mopped them with his silk handkerchief. "I can't do it, my child," he said; "it wouldn't be right. You must keep your own money." "But I have no use for it," cried Dave's wife. "I intended to spend it all in Christmas gifts for the family, but this is better. I have everything I need. All I ask or desire is to be of some use—and to have you all love me," she added softly. "A hundred and seventy-five dollars for that trash! Well, the world is full of fools!" Mrs. Somers ejaculated when she was told of what had occurred. But she looked at Dave's wife with an expression of surprised interest after that, as it was just dawning upon her that one might be of use in the world who could neither cook nor make cheese. Deacon Somers' farm boasted of a fine stone quarry, and he was very busily at work every spare moment quarrying stone for the foundation of a new barn he was to build. One day Dave drove to town, ten miles distant, with a load of grain for market. It was September, and the market had risen during the last few days. All the neighboring farmers had turned out and hurried their grain away. Deacon Somers remained home quarrying stone. Mrs. Somers rang the great bell at noon time, but he did not come. Then she grew alarmed. "Some one must go up to the quarry and see if anything has happened," she said. And Dave's wife was off like a young deer before the words were out of her mouth. It did not seem three minutes before she stood at the door again, with white lips, her dark eyes large with fright. "Father is wedged in under a great boulder," she said. "You and the girl must go to him. Take the camphor and ammonia; it may sustain his strength until I can bring relief. I am going to ride the dapple mare to the village and rouse the whole neighborhood." "We have no saddle," gasped Mrs. Somers; "and the mare will break your neck." "I can ride anything," Dave's wife answered, as she sped away. "It was taught me with other useless accomplishments." A moment later she shot by the door and down the road toward the village. She had bridled the mare and buckled on a blanket and surcingle. She sat like a young Indian princess, her face white, her eyes large and dark, looking straight ahead and urging the mare to her highest speed. Faster, faster she went, until the woods and fields seemed flying pictures shooting through the air. Half-way to the village, which was more than two miles distant, she met Tom Burgess, the blacksmith. She roused up the mare so suddenly she almost sat her down on her haunches. "Deacon Somers has fallen under a boulder in his quarry," she cried. "Go to him—quick! Dave is away!" Then she rode on. At the village she roused half a dozen men, and to the strongest and most muscular she said: "Take this mare and put her to her highest speed. Tom Burgess is already there. You two can lift the boulder, perhaps. I will ride back with Dr. Evans." The man mounted the mare and was off like a great bird swooping close to the earth. He swept away and out of sight. When Dr. Evans reined his reeking horse at the quarry, Tom Burgess, and Jack Smith, who had ridden the mare from the village, were propping up the boulder with iron bars, while Mrs. Somers and her help were trying to remove the deacon's inanimate form. The doctor and Dave's wife sprang to their assistance. In another moment he was free from his perilous situation, and Dr. Evans was applying restoratives. "He will live," he said; "but in five minutes more, if help had not come, he would have been a dead man. It is very fortunate you had a swift horse in the stable and a rider who could keep her seat," and he glanced around at Dave's wife just in time to see her fall in a limp heap. Deacon Somers was quite restored to his usual health in a few days. "Dave's wife and the dappled mare saved my life," he said to Deacon Bradlaw, who came to call. "So the boy didn't make so poor a bargain either time, neighbor, as I once thought." The deacon recovered rapidly, and just as rapidly Dave's wife lost strength and color. She faded before their eyes like some frail plant, and at last one day with a tired sigh, she drifted off into the Great Unknown, and with her went the bud of another life, destined never to blossom on earth. After they came home from the churchyard, where they had laid her to sleep, Dave found the dappled mare cast in her stall; her halter strap had become loose about her slender throat. She was quite dead. Over the low mound where Dave's

wife" sleeps the marble mockery of a tall monument smiles in irony at those who pause to read its flattering inscription. It is so easy to praise the dead! And the memorial window sacred to her memory in Somerville church—a proposition of Deacon Bradlaw—flashes in crimson shame while suns rise and set. And a sturdy farm-horse pulls the plow through Dave's stubble field, and Sarah Jane drives the work in his kitchen. —Ella Wheeler in Harper's Bazar.

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