

One afternoon, several days later, could be seen slowly wending his way over the hill from Van Meters a man with a strong, bronzed countenance. As he reached the top of the hill, he paused and looked round about him.

It was a beautiful sight; behind him lay the sleepy little Dutch village which he had just left; before him the valley, with its fields, green with the new verdure or brown from the late ploughing, while along the road which trailed across it like a great brown serpent was here and there a cottage, from whose kitchen chimneys was already rising the smoke of the evening fires. But one not far away seemed most to attract his attention. There it stood, that same white little cottage, surrounded by the same trees, now like huge bouquets, and which seemed to wave their flowery branches in such a welcome manner.

He resumed his journey, and in a few minutes he had reached the house. How familiar, yet how strange everything appeared; the flowers were gone, the garden neglected; true, the old apple tree was there, but the seat was no longer beneath it. Half in fear, half in hope, he approached the door, where a strange woman answered his rap.

“Does Felix Filiatreault live here?”

“Filiatreault? O, old Felix has been dead these eight years,” she carelessly replied, and then, probably noticing a slight tremor pass over his features, she added: “The Widow Filiatreault still lives here. Do you know her?”

Did he know “her”—the “Widow Filiatreault?” Oh, who could know her better than he?

“Where is she? Take me to her!” he excitedly cried.

“In the front room,” she said, and then proceeded to direct him thither, but she was too slow for Pierre. He well knew the way. Brushing past her, he soon stood before an aged lady sitting by the window. She slowly raised her head.

“Pierre!”—“Mother!”

Before she could rise he had caught her up. She began sobbing, and in him, who had probably not shed a tear since the day he had left home, were opened up all the springs of his emotions—his heart melted, and the tears poured from his eyes. How he embraced her, how he stroked those gray hairs, and how he kissed her. What is sweeter, better on earth, than a mother, and what is so beautiful and imperishable as a mother’s love for her son, even though his hairs be gray?