

nearly half a century the two women still loved each other—this love having endured despite the fact that Myra, to her friend's intense dismay, had, by a Ritualistic path, 'gone over to Rome'; and that Stephen, her youngest son, was a graduate of a Catholic college.

Now, for a few moments, Sarah's gaze roved over the fields of young tobacco plants that extended down the hill; then her pleasant eyes came back to the twin white houses on the Menipenny home lot, with their pillared doorways and green blinds.

'Brother Hiram's boys and ours talk about cutting up the farms into budding plots,' she continued; 'but we older folk think it is as well to let things rest as they are.'

The summer visitor did not pursue the topic of the progress of Fair-Meadow, and the two women stood contemplating the beauty of the panorama before them, each busy with her own thoughts.

The original village had been in the plain below, hence its name. But danger from the Indians in Colonial times, and the menace of river floods, soon led to the removal to its present position on the brow of the hill. From beneath this vantage-ground, the Connecticut River valley extends for miles, far away to the Berkshire hills, like an open scroll written over the story of the bounteous providence of the Creator. Through the well-cultivated farms, the noble river, like the Spirit of Fertility, half veiled in azure mists, passes onward to the sea.

On this day the sun shone down in forenoon splendor upon the valley; but there, too, the hills cast their shadows, as in the plain of life. How often Sarah Menipenny had watched those shadows lengthen until darkness covered the valley! How often also had she seen the sunlight of a new day make all bright where there was gloom before!

'I suppose Silas and Hiram set as much store by each other as ever?' said Myra, at last breaking the silence.

Sarah laughed.

'There never were two brothers fonder,' she answered contentedly. 'It is going on forty years since Hiram married Satilda Judson and Silas married me.'

That same summer, you remember, they built these two houses and dug the well yonder. We needed but one, and its spring is the sweetest of any hereabout. The children of both families grew up together. And when Robert Flint came back to the meeting-house a newly-fledged preacher, and saw Silas and Hiram sitting together in the same pew, as they have most every Sabbath since they were boys, he forgot his text and preached instead on the beauty of living in harmony and brotherly love. As for their flower-growing, there is to be a Rose Show over to the Fair Grounds next week. It's a new idea of the young people, but everyone says either Silas or Hiram will take the prize.'

As Sarah paused for breath, there appeared down the road a horse and wagon, with a second horse in leading. In the wagon were two old men, grey-haired but strong, with a tinge of red in their withered cheeks, like the blush on a frost-bitten apple.

'Here they are now,' she went on. 'The bay mare lost a shoe yesterday; and as soon as Silas spoke of it, Hiram found his sorrel must be shod too.'

By this time the turnout had reached the driveway of the Menipenny place, and Silas drew rein at the gate in order that He and Hiram might greet Myra Folsom, whom they had not met since her arrival in the town two days earlier. Myra, as a blue-eyed little creature, had been a favorite with the girls and boys of her schooldays, and they still felt a pride in her. She was one of themselves who, by a fortunate marriage, had attained to wealth and social position. They regarded her as an example of what any one of Fair-Meadow's daughters might become if Fortune did but smile upon her.

'Well, well, Myry! Glad to see you—glad to see you!' repeated Silas, the larger and older of the brothers, as he extended a toil-hardened palm and closed it over her slender fingers. 'It seems a long while since all of us used to go berrying together through the pastures.'

'Ha, na! And the boys barefoot, too; just for the love of running wild,' put in Hiram, leaning across in turn to crush Myra's hand in a tight clasp. 'By Jonah, the picture is as fresh in my mind as though I looked on it yesterday! I can see Myry running through a field in her little pink cotton frock, her light hair blown by the wind all about her pretty face. I was thinking of it this morning as I watched the roses in the south-corner of my garden. By Jonah, they are the finest in the State!'

'I'll wager there are as fine in my rose patch,' protested Silas, abruptly.

Mrs. Folsom had winced a trifle at the homely reminiscences of the two old men. What a sensation the fraternal Damon and Pythias would make in her accustomed social circle were they transported to the city! But she had not lost her affection for the days these friends of her childhood recalled. Perhaps it was because the glamor of departed youth irradiated the scenes whereof they spoke that, even looked back upon through the sunlit mists of prosperous years, they yet seemed among the happiest of life.

'I'm going to exhibit my roses at the Show,' Hiram declared. 'And, by Jonah, I'll call them the Myra Folsom!'

The compliment evidently touched and pleased Mrs. Folsom; but, with the ready tact that in part accounted for her popularity, she said, at the same time smiling appreciation of his rural chivalry:

'Oh, thank you! But "the Satilda" has a far prettier sound, and will be quite like a florist's name for them, don't you think so?'

'Humph! Maybe you're right, Myry,' he ruefully admitted, upon second thought. 'For I won't gainsay but that some roses are thorny—powerful thorny.'

'Hiram must be getting old, he's so set,' Silas confided to his wife that same evening. 'How can he claim to have the finest roses when he has not seen mine since they blossomed out. Mine can't be beat, that is sure; and I am going to call them the Sarah Menipenny.'

His practical helpmate suddenly found her spectacles grown dim.

'Though it is, indeed, a faded rose Silas has at home, he has never changed for all that,' she said to herself, with a thrill of pride. 'But no more has Hiram, and I will allow he has had more to put up with. Satilda can be trying at times.'

The day of the Floricultural Exhibit came at last. Before it was over, all the visitors at the Fair Grounds were agreed that never before had such magnificent roses been grown in the county as those shown by Silas and Hiram. But alas for the latter's recent boast! On this occasion verily the thorns proved his portion. The judges decided in favor of his brother and the Sarah Menipenny roses.

The next summer when Myra Folsom came to the village, Fair-Meadow had a different tale to tell of the erstwhile exemplars of fraternal affection.

'It was the new stir in the place that did it,' Sarah confided to her friend. 'When Silas and Hiram got through arguing about their floral exhibit, the activity of the building companies set them to bickering over the boundaries of their lands. Hiram says the well is on his ground, and Silas declares it forms part of his property. Now they talk of going to law to settle the matter.'

Myra was resourceful. As a method of soothing over the difficulty she suggested that her son Stephen, who was studying engineering at the 'Technology,' should come up and survey the farms.

One September morning, accordingly, the owners of the two farms tramped over the fields with Stephen and his chum. Silas carried a time-yellowed deed, from which he read at intervals; Hiram followed with a map of the property, and the young surveyors measured and figured and drove stakes. At last the bounds were clearly defined down to the home lot, where stood the homesteads side by side.

Onward strode Stephen until he came to the well whence for so many years water had been drawn for both households—sweet spring water that yet, of late, had grown bitter to the taste of each brother because of their dispute as to which of them had the right to drink it.

'Here's the place! The line runs just to the off side of the well,' cried one eagerly, and as though he were speaking of a horse; while he followed the man with his index finger, pointing out the spring that lay on his side of the field.

'No, the line certainly runs on the nigh side,' protested the other. 'Hear what the deed says: "three hundred feet from the fence."'

Folsom silently continued his figuring. After a few moments he drove his last stake squarely in a line with the pump, and, standing erect, said as he met the look of amazement depicted on the faces of the two old men:

'Well, Uncle Silas and Uncle Hiram, the matter rests this way: the well was dug directly on the boundary that divides your farms. The line cuts the pump in two, leaving the handle on one side and the snout on the other. So, Uncle Hiram, you can pump all the water you have a mind to, but how are you going to make use of it unless Uncle Hiram lets