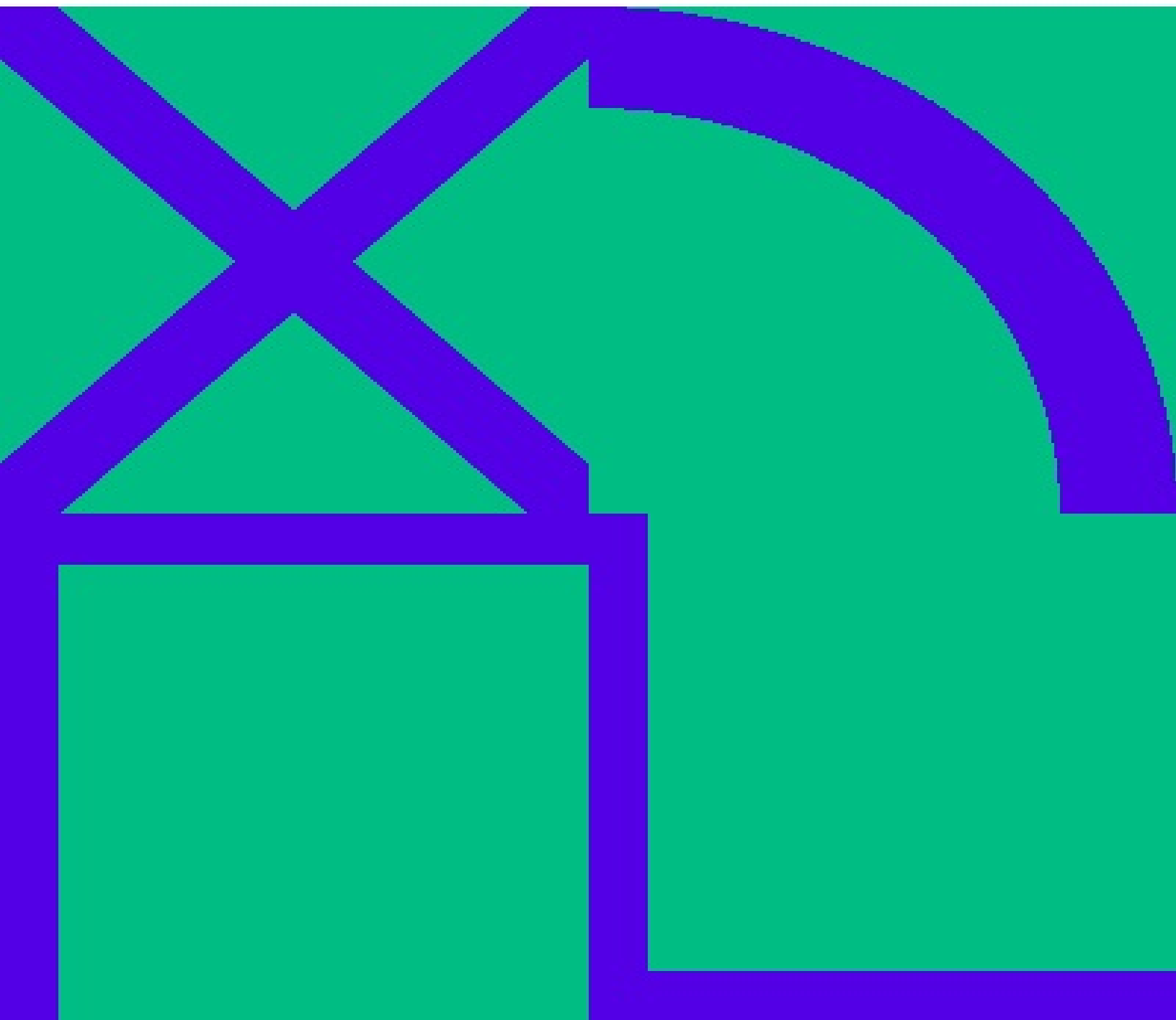


Violet

A Fairy Story

C. S. (Caroline Snowden) Guild



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VIOLET:

A FAIRY STORY.

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VIOLET'S STORY.

CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.

JUVENILE WORKS

PUBLISHERS' ADVERTISEMENT.

In the absence of any preface by the author, the publishers desire to call special attention to this most exquisite little story. It breathes such a love of Nature in all her forms, inculcates such excellent principles, and is so full of beauty and simplicity, that it will delight not only children, but all readers of unsophisticated tastes. The author seems to teach the gentle creed which Coleridge has imbodyed in those familiar lines,—

"He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man, and bird, and beast."



VIOLET: A FAIRY STORY.



CHAPTER I.

VIOLET'S HOME.

Once there was a gardener who lived in an old hut of a house, with one table inside, and some rough stools, and a large box that served for a bed, all of which he had made himself.

There was one window; but when it stormed the rain beat in so that the old lady, his wife, had to pin her shawl against it, and then the whole house was dark as night.

Every body thought these people poor except themselves; but they had one treasure which seemed to them better than a whole mountain of gold and all the splendid houses and gay carriages in the world. This was their little daughter Violet, whose presence in their home made it beautiful and stately, and whose absence, they thought, would have made a palace dull.

Violet was not as beautiful as some children. She was pale and slender, and her soft, light hair did not curl in ringlets, but floated over her shoulders like a golden veil. But O, she had such beautiful eyes! They were large, and so bright and clear, and such a deep, deep blue! Sometimes they made you think of a brook in the shady wood when gleams of sunshine have found their way to it; sometimes they were like nothing so much as the violets that grew beside the doorway of her own father's hut.

The old man had, besides his daughter, a garden, which was dear to him; and well it might be, for in summer it did one's eyes good to look at the blossoms all tangled together, and sprinkled over with great drops of pearly dew. Roses there were, and lilies, and fox-gloves, and mignonette, and a great many other flowers that had long names, which Violet could not remember. Then there were long, neatly-kept beds of vegetables and sweet herbs, which Reuben—for that was the gardener's name—carried to market.

Now, while Reuben was digging his vegetables, his wife and Violet would gather the prettiest flowers and buds, and tie them into bouquets with so much taste that soon the old gardener became famous for his flowers, and many rich people sought him out, promising to buy all he would bring to their houses.

Flowers only grow in summer time; and all the year round people must eat, and drink, and wear clothes; and then Reuben had to pay rent for his garden; so, notwithstanding their industry, Violet's friends were poor.

But they were happier than a great many rich people, and certainly loved Violet as well as though she had been a queen. They were so kind to her that sometimes the little girl thought, if there were such beings as fairies, they must look into her heart every day, find out her wishes, and tell them to her good parents.

Between you and me, there *were* two fairies—one named Love and the other Contentment—that lived all the time in Reuben's hut; and though Violet had never seen their faces, and did not even know their names, they were always doing something for her. It was because these excellent friends had touched her coarse garments that they looked fine and soft as velvet to her eyes; it was because they never left the old black hut that it looked so clean and sunny—cheerful as a palace.

You may wonder, if these fairies were so powerful, why they didn't have a palace of their own; but you must remember directly they enter a place it becomes a palace; and besides, Violet possessed a charm so

powerful that even the fairies could not fly away unless she gave them leave; and yet—wasn't it queer?—she did not know this herself.



CHAPTER II.

STRANGE PLAYFELLOWS.

Violet's birthday was very near; but she had forgotten all about it, birthdays came so far apart in her happy life. From morning until evening seemed long enough for a year to her; she found so much work to do, and such beautiful walks to take, and had so many playfellows, to say nothing of the two good fairies that always watched over and followed her.

Perhaps you wonder how the little girl found friends, living as she did away out in a lonesome field among the mountains. She could have described her pets to you better than I can, because the fairy Love dressed them up for her in jewels and rainbows, while to others they were only toads, and snakes, and flies, and trees, and brooks, and clouds.

Funny playfellows, you will think. There was one good thing about them—they never quarrelled or used bad words; and then it was sport for Violet, after her work was finished, to scamper away with them.

But if she ran ever so fast, the fairy Love always kept up with her; and it is well she did; for if she had staid at home, or fallen into a pit on the way, all Violet's dear playfellows would have changed in an instant—have grown ugly and coarse, and, what is worse, she would have trodden on them and crushed their wings—by mistake, I hope, for she never had been so wicked; and Violet herself would have changed into a little peevish girl, with a sickly face and loose yellow hair, and wearing a dress so coarse and rough you would not give it to a beggar child.

But Violet kept the charm locked safe in her heart, and therefore, wander wherever she would, the fairies had to follow. They were up with her early in summer mornings, for she loved dearly to watch the sun rise. She would climb a hill, at the foot of which Reuben's hut was built, and all alone up there, close, she thought, to the soft, rosy sky, would wait and watch, and at last clap her little hands for joy when the great golden sun came in sight above the woods. She would stand on tiptoe, and laugh aloud when she saw the shadows fly away, like frightened birds, before the sunshine, which flooded all the valley now, and which lay upon the beautiful wreaths of mist that went curling up to meet it from the ponds and brooks, brightening them to dazzling whiteness—so like the clouds in heaven that Violet half believed the earth about her was beautiful as that far-off blue sky.

So it would be if every little girl and boy kept two good fairies, like Love and Contentment, flying about with them.

How the grass glittered with dew! how the slender wild flowers were bowed down with its weight!—pearl and diamond beads strung all along the stems, and edging every petal. Children who keep in bed until eight o'clock know very little about the beauty of summer mornings. Perhaps, even if they did arise in time, they would be afraid of wetting their shoes in the grass; but Violet was very poor, you know, and never wore a shoe in her life, and lived out of doors so much that she was not in the least delicate.

As soon as the sunshine had crept near their nests among the green boughs of the wood, all the wild birds began to flutter about and sing such loud, clear, sweet songs that Violet could not help joining the chorus; and any one else would have known that fairies Love and Contentment were singing loudest of all. Violet

heard their music, but supposed it came from the birds. How she wanted to fly away with them, up among the beautiful rosy clouds! but Love whispered in her ear,—

"Won't your mother want you, little girl, at home? Cannot you help her there?" and just then a bird fluttered away from a dew-wet bough, dashing a whole shower of drops in Violet's face. Instead of being angry, she laughed, and shouted,—

"Do it again, bird. If I can't fly away with you, you may wash my face before you go. Do it again."

But the bird was soon out of sight among the clouds, and Violet, with these pearly dewdrops clustering in her golden hair, went dancing down the hill.



CHAPTER III.

THE MOUNTAIN BROOK.

Close beside the pathway ran a little murmuring brook, foaming and sparkling over its rocky bed, gliding just as merrily through the dark shadows as when its course lay open to the sun. It seemed as if fairy Contentment must have bathed in it, or planted some of the flowers along its brink; never was there a merrier little stream.

"I know what you're singing about," said Violet; "I know, Mr. Brook; you're trying to make me think you can run down the hill faster than any one else. Let us see;" and away she flew, and away the brook went after her, and by her side flew the fairies, and over her head the birds—all singing, "Success to Violet!" while the leaves "clapped their little hands" in favor of their friend the brook, and the young birds looked over the edge of their nests to find out what in the world this stir could be about.

Nobody ever knew which won the race. Up in the clouds the birds sang, "Good, good, good; it was Violet, Violet!" while the leaves whispered, "No, no, no, no; it was the brook!" But Violet and the brook were as good friends as were the birds and trees; so they all laughed together, instead of quarrelling.

When Violet reached home her breakfast was ready, and she sat down on the doorstep with her tin porringer of bread and milk. She was so hungry that it tasted better than a great many nicer breakfasts which have been eaten from silver cups; but, hungry as she was, she did not forget her kitten, who came, saying, plainly as she could purr, "Leave a little for me."

Violet had found out that it makes one quite as happy to be generous as to eat a good breakfast, and kitty had her share. Then she washed her porringer, hung it up in the sun to dry, and ran out in the garden, where her mother was picking flowers, whole baskets full of them, for the market, and told Violet to look among the thickly-clustering leaves of her namesakes, and gather all the blossoms she could find.

She found a whole apron full, white and blue violets, single and double ones; these she tied in bunches, with a few bright green leaves around each bouquet. The whole garden was scented with their fragrance, and Violet thought them the prettiest flowers in the world, as well as the sweetest, and wished in her heart that she could, just once, have one of these whole bunches for her own.

While she knelt on the ground admiring her lovely flowers, and wishing they need not all be sent away and sold, the fairy Love flew to her mother's side, and whispered in her ear all that Violet was thinking about. Then her mother remembered that to-morrow would be Violet's birthday, and on that occasion she never forgot to give her a present. But about this I must tell in another chapter.



CHAPTER IV.

TOADY.

Violet passed such long, long, busy days, talking all the time to her mother, her kitten, her toads, or the birds that alighted now and then upon a bush, and sang to her while she worked; for Violet's mother, though she gave her plenty of time to play, had taught her little girl to sew and read.

She might have forgotten to do this amid all her own hard work; but fairy Contentment whispered in her ear that, unless Violet became useful and industrious, *she* must fly away, never to return; and Love, close by, sang, "See—I have brought her these books; and I'll make the learning easy."

I told you that some of Violet's playfellows were toads—the same ugly brown toads you have seen hopping about your own garden walks. You must not think they were ugly to her; for, soon as they came in sight, it always happened that the shadow of Love's purple wings would fall upon them, and then their brown backs changed to crimson and violet, and the poisonous-looking spots became jewelled studs; and I will not say they were very graceful pets even then; but Violet loved them, and they loved her.

This is the way their acquaintance began: It was a hot day—blazing hot; so light too—not a shadow to be seen. Violet had been in the garden at work, and, as she hastened homeward through the scorching sun, almost fell over a great toad, that had been crossing the path, but was so dusty she had mistaken him for a stone or a ball of earth.

She stooped to see if she had injured him, and patting the toad's back, said,—

"You poor little dirty fellow, don't you know enough to keep out of the sun and dust?"

Toady looked up at her as if he would answer if he did but know how to talk; he only opened and shut, opened and shut, his great wide mouth; but Violet understood very well what he meant by this; for the fairy Love teaches a language that is not set down in books or studied in colleges. I have known of great scholars, who could talk in twenty or thirty different tongues, and who yet knew less about this language of Love, which is the very best in the whole wide world, than our poor little barefooted Violet.

"You're thirsty, are you, toady?" said she; "stand still, and I'll give you a drink."

The toad opened his mouth again, and Violet poured over him a few drops she had left in her watering pot. She was half afraid he would not be very well pleased with such a showering; but there he stood, stock still, blinking his round red eyes, and opening his mouth at her as if he would say, "More—more!"

"Well, wait," she said, laughing; "I'll go to the brook and bring you more water in welcome, just for the sake of seeing your face clean once."

Away she ran, and toady not only waited for her, but, when she came back, there, one on each side of him, were two smaller toads—the three ranged in a row, looking so sober and funny that Violet laughed louder than ever.

She sprinkled the poor dusty toads all over with cool, bright water from the mountain brook; and when they had enough, they began to shake their heads and hop away, without even saying, "Thank you," and hid

themselves in the grass.



CHAPTER V.

LOVE'S CHARM.

But the next day, (and this is a true story,) when it had grown so warm that Violet could not work any longer in the garden, and was going home with her hoe and watering pot, there stood the three toads again in the walk, just as they were the day before, with Toady, as she called him, between the two smaller ones. All three gave a little hop when Violet came in sight, and then stood still again.

This was their way of saying, "Good morning; we hope you haven't forgotten us."

And long afterwards, whenever Violet passed through the garden walk, especially if the day was warm, she was pretty sure of meeting her new acquaintances.

They even grew so tame that they would follow her about the garden; and often she would walk up and down the same path for half an hour at a time, just for the sake of seeing how soberly her droll little pets would hop along after her, turning whenever she turned, and waiting for her whenever she stopped.

Violet thought them the wisest and most loving toads that ever hopped. She did not know that Love, directly their mistress entered the garden, fastened them to her by a delicate silken cord, just the color of Love's own purple wings, and they could not very well help following her; though, if Violet had treated them unkindly, in an instant the purple cord would have lost all its strength, and grown slender as the slenderest thread in a spider web.

Now, my dear readers, though I hope with all my heart that you will try to be as good and loving as Violet, I don't want you to *do* every thing she did. All toads are not as fond of a sprinkling as Toady and his young brothers were; so you mustn't drown the poor things in water every time you meet one.

What you need is, to persuade the fairies Love and Contentment to live in your home, and trust to your keeping a charm like the one they had placed in Violet's heart.

Then, every morning of your lives, they will tell something which you can do, and no one else can do as well, to make others happy—kind deeds that will lighten misfortune, and loving words that may enter like music, and dwell in some lonely, sorrowing heart.

Believe always this one thing—that every kind deed you do for others will make *you* happier then and always, and every unkind deed will make you feel ashamed and sorry so long as you remember it. No matter to whom the kindness or unkindness may be done—a king or a butterfly, your own dear mother or a little toad in the garden walk. I have known children who could not bear to see even a lily broken down by rain, its beautiful white flowers all lying in the dirt. I have watched them prop it up with sticks, and gently wash the earth away from its delicate petals, and have said to myself, "Ah, little one, the fairy Love is nestling in your heart."

And I have seen the fairy Contentment start from her nest among the lilies, and follow the little one as she ran off to play.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW FAIRIES LOOK.

Do you want to know how Contentment looks? Some people think she is the most beautiful among all the fairies; (and there are hosts of them, and some of the bad ones, even, have handsome faces.) Her cheeks are not quite as rosy as Love's, and her mild eyes do not sparkle and glitter as brilliantly; but she has a smile even brighter than Love's own; this sheds a peaceful light about Contentment wherever she goes; and wherever it falls, beautiful flowers will blossom, and the air grow clear and fragrant.

She wears a wreath of starbeams, braided into a delicate but brilliant crown; and there is no place so dark but this will light a path through it. Her pure white wings look like two lily petals, and though always clean and fresh themselves, I suppose they have dusted away more heaps of care, and though so delicate, have lifted people safely over wider seas of trouble, than all the strong arms in the world—all the railroads and steamships put together.

She always carries in her hand an urn, from which a sweet and delicate odor arises like incense.

Perhaps you will be surprised when I tell where she found this urn. It was the largest and most perfect blossom on a branch of lilies of the valley. Did you ever notice what lovely little vases they form when you turn them stem side down? I never saw one half as pretty made of Parian; but, then, of course nothing *could* be as beautiful as a flower; they are God's vases, and his work is always the most perfect.

The lily never faded; nothing *can* fade in the light of Contentment's smile; and the modest little flower that might only have shed fragrance about its own green leaves, borne by the fairy, has sprinkled its incense odor through every land.

Love is more splendid than Contentment, but not any more beautiful; *her* wings are larger, richer, and more delicate. They are like petals of the fleur-de-lis, or iris, perhaps you call it—the splendid, feathery, purple flower, with leaves like long ribbon streamers. They are transparent too; and wherever Love goes, the light, shining through these wings, casts a rich purple glow about her—dyed, as you may have seen the sunshine in falling through the great stained window of some church. Love's crown is a broad band of golden sunshine, and she scatters roses and violets about every where.



CHAPTER VII.

THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

But I must tell you what happened to poor Toady one day, and see if you wonder that Violet felt badly.

She was sitting on the doorstep sewing, with kitty in her lap, sound asleep, and the three toads watching her from the walk—as happy a little girl as ever breathed.

It was her birthday; and when she awoke that morning, the first thing her eyes rested upon was the largest bunch of sweet violets she had ever seen in her life. They were set in a beautiful white cup, with VIOLET printed in gold letters on the front.

She hardly stopped to look twice at them, but, in her nightgown, ran to the door to find and thank her good, kind parents. They were not in the field or the garden; and then Violet remembered that this was market day, and they must have gone to the town, and might not be home again until afternoon.

It was an hour before Violet could dress herself. She looked at and smelt of the flowers a hundred times—set them in every corner and on every ledge to see where they would look prettiest—talked to them, and danced around them, and even pinched her finger to see if she could be awake.

All these beautiful, fragrant blossoms her own for a whole day—for a week—as long as they did not fade!

Then she went to the brook for water, and setting her basin on the bank, knelt down among the dewy flowers to wash her face and smooth her long, soft, golden hair, and as she went home, sang her morning hymn; for Violet knew that every morning the birds poured forth their songs, and the flowers their odors, and the brook its vapor wreaths, in gratitude to Heaven; and she had no idea of being the only ungrateful thing on earth.

She met kitty, and taking her in her arms, hurried into the house, thinking how surprised and delighted puss would be with the violets. But kitty was thinking of something else; she only sneezed when Violet put her nose among the wet flowers, and struggled to get away.

"Well, there—go," said Violet, a little hurt.

Puss had no thought of going; she purred louder than ever, and rubbed her white face against Violet's dress, and looked up at her wistfully.

"O, you greedy kit!" said Violet, at last; "you're thinking about breakfast, and not my flowers. I'll eat it right away, so as to leave you some."

But, for joy, she could hardly eat a spoonful; and however kitty slighted what was in the gilded cup, it was plain enough that she enjoyed the contents of the old tin porringer.

While puss was eating, Violet brought her flowers to the door again, and began to look about for the toads. Pretty soon out they hopped from the wet grass, half drowned themselves in dew, and hop, hop, hop they came towards Violet.

You may think she was very silly; but you must remember she was all alone out in the fields, and had no other playmates; so she made the most of these.

The toads stood still when they came to the cup of violets, and looked up at her, winking their round, lazy eyes, until she felt sure they were trying to congratulate her and praise her flowers.

Then kitty came along, gaping, for she had eaten more breakfast than usual; and Love reminded Violet that she had work to do, although it was her birthday; so she took kitty in her lap, left the toads staring at her flowers, and seated herself on the doorstep to sew.



CHAPTER VIII.

VIOLET'S TROUBLES.

Just then she heard a light, rolling sound, which came nearer and nearer, till at last she saw a carriage, drawn by two white horses. This entered the green field, and, to Violet's surprise, stopped before old Reuben's little hut.

In the carriage were two children not much older than Violet, and their father, a tall, stately gentleman; besides, there were two footmen and a driver.

The carriage was painted in gay colors, and gilded so that it fairly glittered in the sun; and the little girl inside was so gayly dressed, in silks, and ribbons, and artificial flowers, that Violet thought it must be one of the dolls she had seen in a milliner's window.

But the doll, if it was one, spoke, tossing back her curls, and beckoning with her gloved hand to Violet, while the gentleman, placing a purse in his daughter's outstretched hand, said,—

"Buy as many flowers as you want, Narcissa. Meantime I will climb the hill yonder, which must overlook a fine prospect, it seems to me. What do *you* say, Alfred? Will you accompany me?"

Now, when the carriage stopped, the boy, Narcissa's brother, had taken a book from his pocket, and was reading it attentively; he appeared so unwilling to leave it, although he arose to follow his father, that the indulgent parent said,—

"Well, never mind; you can read on."

"Little girl," exclaimed Narcissa, "run quickly into the house and call your mother or father, or somebody; I want them."

"We are the only bodies here," said Violet, looking at her pets.

"Well, then, go and pick me all the violets in your garden; I shall pay for them."

"They were sent to market this morning," said Violet, stroking kitty's back, and not feeling very sorry at Narcissa's disappointment, for the little girl in the carriage did not seem to her well bred.

"But you must, you *shall*, find me some, girl," said Narcissa, in a rage. "Don't you know that I'm going to a fancy ball to-night, and my maid must have fifteen bunches of violets to dress me with, and we have only found twelve so far? I know you're not telling the truth, for there in the grass is a whole bunch of beautiful ones. Bring them to me," turning to the footman, "and kill those dirty toads in the path; I hate the sight of them."

Violet rushed to the rescue of her pets.

"O, no, no! they are mine—my own—my best friends—*my* toads and violets!" she screamed.

But in vain. The footman stepped on poor Toady, kicked him across and across the path, till, all bruised and bleeding, he lay still, and, Violet thought, dead, while Narcissa clapped her hands and laughed at

Violet's sorrow.

"*Your* toads and violets!" she said; "I should think you were crazy. But I don't want to hurt your feelings, girl. Go and bring me two more large handfuls of violets, and I will forgive all your impudence and wrong stories. Why don't you go? What are you staring at?"



CHAPTER IX.

FAIRIES AGAIN.

It had just come into Violet's head that this proud and imperious little mortal in the carriage must be a queen, such as her story books told about, and had a right to every body's service and every body's goods. What strengthened this belief was the fact that, fluttering about Narcissa's head, she saw (and though her face was wet with tears, she stared at it) the queerest little fairy; now, too, she saw another fairy perched on Alfred's arm as he read, and turning over the leaves of his book; while all about the carriage flew a third, the largest and most splendid of all; he trod upon the servant's heads, right over the crown of their hats; he would sit down to rest on the necks of the beautiful white horses, as they pawed the ground; he whirled round and round Narcissa, even daring to pull her own fairy's hair, while he patted Alfred's fairy on the back quite condescendingly.

This little imp was named Pride. He looked, as he flew, like a great scarlet cactus blossom, in his long rich cloak, with heavy tassels, that swept the ground, and left wherever they trailed a very fine dust of gold. In this dust the tassels were dipped continually—powdered over with it, finer than the yellow pollen you may have seen on the stamens of a lily.

The flower pollen is good for something, but not so pride's gold dust. He only scatters it because it is so expensive, and common people cannot do the same.

I have known persons who sold comfortable homes, cheerful hearts, and good consciences, all for a little gold, which they ground into this silly powder, and threw away.

I think Pride makes people a little insane; you must take care that none of his gold dust gets into *your* eyes.

The good thing about Pride—and there is something good about every body—was his affection for Alfred's fairy, Ambition. I cannot describe this being, he is so dazzlingly bright. He is the best and the worst fairy I know, for he is at times like each one, and often like all together.

It is ambition that makes men good as angels; and every one knows it is Ambition that makes Satan so bad. This fairy is useful; but he cannot be trusted for a moment; he may serve you faithfully through a long life, and at the end plunge you into some pitfall, just for mischief. He will whisper sweet words in your ear, and build you a glittering boat, and promise to row you down the pleasantest river to Paradise itself. Perhaps he will do all he promises; perhaps he will only land you in a madhouse or a jail.

Ambition had taken a fancy to Alfred, and never left his side. He would urge him away from his companions and sports, to work over books,—always to work and study,—and promised to make him a great and useful man.

There is one strange thing about these fairy people; beautiful and rich as they are, and free and powerful, they will follow and make their home with the poorest little child, and shelter him with their splendid wings, and light up his pathway with their gleaming crowns; but only on one condition—that the child follow wherever they lead, and is true to the fairies as they are true to him; which is but fair, you know. Who wants to give advice that is not followed?

We all, though at the time we do not know it, choose our own fairies, and, once chosen, they love us and make us love them so well that it is no easy matter to escape from them, or to avoid obeying their advice.

So, when you see any one—and grown-up men and women have fairies as well as children—who is led about by a wicked fairy, you must pity instead of blaming the sufferer; and if he offend you, you must take care that *his* fairy doesn't fly into your heart and frighten away your own, or make you forget, and give unkind answers back.

Be very sure no one *wants* to be bad; only if a spiteful little spirit perched on your shoulder, and whispered evil thoughts and angry words into *your* ear, don't you suppose that sometimes you would obey him and believe what he said?

Whenever you feel these wicked spirits near, call loud for Violet's fairy, Love. She will be sure to come; and they know very well they cannot live in her presence; for the light of her starry crown puts out their eyes, and the incense from Contentment's urn will take away their breath.

If Love come, Content will be sure to follow; so only keep these fairies near, and you are safe.



CHAPTER X.

THE STRANGERS.

But we were talking about Violet and poor Toady, who lay on the ground all bruised and bleeding, one of his legs so broken that it dragged along after him when he tried to hop, and one of his eyes torn out and hanging by the skin; while the poor thing quivered all over with pain, and looked up at Violet with his one eye, as if he would say, "*Do* help me, Violet. Why didn't you keep them away?"

She lifted him into the grass, smoothing it first into something like a nest; then she poured some water from her violet cup to wash away the dust and blood, and stroked his back gently, while Toady looked up at her, and shut and opened his one eye, and tried to hop, which was his way of thanking her, you know.

When she found how stiff and sore he was, Violet burst into tears again, and wondered if the little queen in the carriage was any happier for doing all this mischief. Let us see.

Having taken care of her pet, the little girl looked to see if the carriage had gone; and though she was almost as blind as Toady, her eyes were so full of tears, she knew plainly enough by the sound that it was waiting still; for Alfred had thrown his book aside, and he and Narcissa were talking angrily.

"You're an ugly, envious thing," said Alfred. "That poor little girl had nothing on earth but those few flowers and a miserable toad; and you, who have every thing you want, could not rest till you had stolen these. If I were king, I'd send you to state's prison."

"And if you were a queen, what would *you* do to the girl in the carriage?" asked Narcissa's father of Violet; for the gentleman had returned from his walk, and coming quietly behind, had been watching her as she wept and watched over Toady, who seemed to be fast asleep.

"O, I would send her away to the end of the world, so I might never see her again. *Do* take her away," she pleaded.

"But she *has* done wrong; she had no more right to hurt your toad than you have to hurt my horses in the carriage there. Shall I not punish her?"

"It wouldn't do me any good," said Violet, mournfully. "Tell her she may have the flowers in welcome *now*. I don't care about them or any thing else if Toady must die."

"And why do you care about Toady?"

"About *him*?" asked Violet, shaking away the golden hair as she looked up wonderingly with her beautiful blue eyes,—"*care about him*? Why, did you ever see such a handsome toad? And then I have known him so long, and he hops about after me and lets me feed him; and now, now, when I come here in the morning, how lonesome I shall be, for he can't come hopping out from the grass any more, all wet with dew, and winking his round eyes, as if he'd say, 'Good morning.'"

The gentleman laughed, and then looked very sober, as he said,—

"I can't see much beauty in your pet; but I like you, little girl, for loving him so well; and here is money to

pay for the harm my daughter has done."

"Why," said Violet, who had never seen any coin before, "I thought money was made to buy flour and meal with."

"So it is," replied the gentleman, "and to buy cake, and fine clothes, and artificial flowers like those in Narcissa's bonnet."

"I shouldn't want to look like *her*. I am not a queen," said Violet, "and I can find a great deal prettier flowers on the mountain than she wears, and prettier-looking stones than these;" and she looked at the silver carelessly; then, brightening up all at once, she asked,—

"Will they cure Toady's leg? O, if they will, I'll give you my flowers and the new cup both for them."

The gentleman shook his head.

"Then take them away. I don't want any thing."



CHAPTER XI.

THE DOCTOR DOCTORED.

If Narcissa's father had looked then, he would have seen the fairy Love bending over Violet till the sunny crown she wore brightened up her face, and made it look beautiful as an angel's, and Contentment, too, pouring perfume out of her lily urn.

But the gentleman had a great deal of Pride's gold dust in his eyes, and therefore he could not see very clearly.

He *did* see the beautiful love Violet had for her ugly little pet, and felt how much better it was to be contented, like Violet, with so little, than to have almost every thing, like Narcissa, and be always wishing for more.

And what do you think the fairies did? They looked out of Violet's eyes, right through them, into his; and whenever she spoke they flew into his heart with the words, till the proud man, who had not wept since Narcissa's mother died, long and long ago, felt great tears gathering in his eyes; and as these fell into the grass, Contentment took care to wash away all the pride dust with her own white wings.

"The money will not cure your toad," said he; "but *I* can mend his leg, for I am a physician, and know all about broken bones."

So he made the servant bring a case from the carriage, and taking a sharp little knife from it, he cut away the eye, which was too much crushed to be of any use, and then bound up the leg.

But Toady kicked, and struggled, and made such a time about it, and seemed in such pain, that Violet begged him to unfasten the bandage.

"Well, you are right," he said; "the limb cannot be cured, and if I cut it off it will be out of his way, at least."

He had no sooner done *this* than Toady hopped right out of his grassy nest, and looking at Violet, winked so drolly with his one eye that she laughed and cried at once, and thanked the doctor over and over again.

"You needn't thank *me*," he said; "for it seems you knew better what would suit him than I did, little girl. I wonder who taught you."

Then Love and Contentment looked at each other and smiled; *they* knew very well who had taught Violet, and they knew besides that Violet was teaching the proud, rich, learned man a lesson better than he could find in all his books or buy with all his money; for the sweet smile of Contentment and the beautiful words of Love, which had come to him through the lips of the little berry girl, Violet, would be remembered for long years, and prompt him to perform kind deeds, and thus to forget his pride and his cares, and be sometimes light-hearted as a little child.

CHAPTER XII.

WHO ARE HAPPIEST.

Do you know, dear children, that as soon as people have grown up they begin to wish they were young again, and had not troublesome servants to manage, and great houses to take care of, and purses full of money to spend or to save, and, worst of all, whole troops of wicked fairies? *They* call them habits; but fairies they are, for all that.

These spirits lead into so much mischief that there are very few men and women who don't sometimes fold their hands and say, "O, dear! if I could go back and be a little child once more!"

Ask your mother if she wouldn't give all her jewels away in exchange for as pure a heart as children have. Ask your father whether he wouldn't give all his bonds and railroad stocks if that would make him as merry and free from care as you are when you climb upon his knee to ask the question.

And if they say "No," ask them which fairy they would rather *you* took for a friend—Pride or Truth.

Now, here you are, children still; and if I were you, I'd enjoy being young while it lasts. I'd make friends with as many good fairies, and scare away as many bad ones, as I could find. Scare them away! I wouldn't wait to look at them or hear them talk; for some have pretty faces and sweet words, but they are dreadful cheats.

I would find out ever so many things,—and there's no end to the number there *are*,—ever so many things which are right, and good, and beautiful. I wouldn't look for any thing else, but would be so happy among these that other people would notice it, and look after them too; and then I would give them as many as they wanted of my treasures, and teach them where to find more; for fairy Love takes care that the more we give the more we shall have; and even if we didn't, who wants to be a miser?

Think how much God has given us!—this whole great world, all the sky over your head, and the air, and sunshine, and woods, and gardens full of flowers, and fathers and mothers to love and take care of us, and a million other things.

And what do we give God? Every thing that we give away at all we give to him just as much as if we laid it in his hand.

Don't you know that Christ called the poor and ignorant God's little children, and declared he loved them all *better* than your mother and father love you?

And not only this, God cares when even a bird falls to the ground with his wing broken, and is watching to see how much you are willing to do for his creature.



CHAPTER XIII.

VIOLET BERRYING.

I called Violet a little berry girl, and I'll tell you why.

On the great hill above their hut, all over one side of it, were blackberry vines; and in autumn, when the berries were ripe, Violet and her mother would spend hours and hours picking them.

The sun would be scorching hot sometimes, and the thorny vines would tangle into Violet's dress and tear her arms, and mosquitos would buzz around her, until she was ready to cry or to declare she *could* not pick any more.

Poor Violet! *You* think, perhaps, that it is hard to walk to school under your parasol these sunny days; and she had, day after day, to stand out there among the vines, picking, and picking, and picking, till the two great water pails were full of berries.

But when she grew tired, Love would point to her poor old mother working so patiently, and looking so tired and warm; and when the fairy whispered, "Will you leave her here to finish the work *alone*?" Violet would forget in a minute her own weariness, and sing and laugh so merrily, and tell so often how fast her pail was filling up, that the mother would forget *her* weariness too, and only think how fortunate and how rich she was to have such a good, bright child.

When she found a place where the berries grew thick and large, Violet would call her mother to pick there; and old Mary, Reuben's wife, said that "somehow she never could find such splendid places as Violet did."

So, leaving her there, the little girl would move on; and no matter how low she found the bushes, or how thinly covered with fruit, fairy Contentment, hovering over her head, would sing, "Who cares? The fewer, the sweeter."

What with Contentment's singing, and that of Violet, and the crickets and locusts, and the bees and bobolinks, there was music enough in the blackberry pasture; and it all chimed together just like the instruments in an orchestra.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE BIRDS' HARVEST TIME.

But I was telling you about Violet's birthday; so let us go back to the doorstep of her father's little hut.

Narcissa called impatiently that she was tired of waiting; so her father, bidding good by to his new acquaintance, sprang into the carriage, and it rolled lightly through the green field once more.

Violet sat watching until it was out of sight, and she could no longer see Narcissa's feathers and flowers fluttering in the wind. Some how she never thought of her afterwards, except as a whole bunch of lace and finery, with a little girl inside of it.

Then she looked around for her violets; they were gone, and in their place lay the stranger's money.

But Toady hopped in sight just then, looking so brisk, and getting about so well on his three legs, she thought her flowers were little enough to pay for so much good as he had received.

So, happy as ever, Violet took her pail and went towards the blackberry hill.

It seemed to her the berries were never so thick and large; she soon had enough, and setting them in a shady place, she went to the brook to wash her hands.

There were long, deep scratches on her arms. How they smarted when the water touched them! but Violet only thought how much worse Toady's scratches and bruises were; and then she loved to be clean, for she had watched how the birds wash in the brook a dozen times a day, and how smooth the squirrels keep their fur, and how the flowers and leaves bathe their faces every morning in dew. She didn't want the leaves and birds to be ashamed of her.

The little girl strolled on towards the wood, singing and laughing, and talking to every thing she met, but most of all to kitty, who followed after her; while whole troops of grasshoppers and little yellow butterflies flew before, and settled in advance of Violet, and when she came up, flew a little farther, as if they wanted to lead her on.

Then there were flocks and flocks of birds; the ground seemed alive with them, for it was harvest time, and they came for the ripe grain which had fallen when the farmers cut their crops, and was scattered all over the fields.

The thistle seeds were ripe too; and the birds, and butterflies, and bees seemed to love this best of all. Violet stood watching them eat, and laughed as she told puss that must be where she learned to be so greedy.

The bees went buzzing down into the very heart of the purple flowers, and took such long, deep honey draughts, and went back again and again, as if they could never have enough, and hurried away to their hives, for the sake of hurrying back for more.

The birds were not much better. They would hover an instant over the whole thistle bed, and then, selecting a good large flower, they would fly at it, fanning away with their fluttering wings till they were

lost in a cloud of down, and tear out the rich, ripe seeds, swallowing them so fast it seemed as if they were eating for all winter.

Violet was never tired of watching, for she loved to see every creature happy, and knew, besides, that the birds and bees only have so good a chance to eat once in the year; and therefore, though she laughed at it, she couldn't blame them for their greediness.

There were such handsome yellow birds, with black spots and stripes over their bright breasts and wings. They buried their black and golden heads away in among the thistle down, while they clung to the stem with claws and wings, and were so busy eating that they did not see how near Violet crept to them.

Then a beautiful great butterfly, its rich brown wings spotted with blue and orange, settled upon a flower, and sipped daintily, and fluttered away again to take another sip somewhere else, and then went sailing off into the sunshine. So she skipped along after it, kitty running close behind her, until they came to a bank covered with white everlasting flowers—so many it looked a little way off like snow; and Violet, whose mother had told her that in heaven flowers did not fade, but were *all* everlasting, wondered if the door of heaven had not been left ajar, some day, long enough for a whole shower of seed to blow down towards this hill, and planting itself, come up in these pearl-white flowers.

Ah, Violet! the commonest seeds sprang up into heavenly flowers if they fell in *your* pathway.



CHAPTER XV.

WHERE THE SQUIRREL LED VIOLET.

While Violet stood wondering thus, she saw a squirrel on the fence, nibbling upon a nut. As soon as she stirred, he darted along a rail or two, and then, waiting till she came up with him, went nibbling again.

"You needn't feel so grand with your spry legs. I guess I can run as well as you," said Violet.

The squirrel tucked the nut under one arm, and with a whisk of his bushy tail, darted like lightning along the rails, leaving Violet so far behind she thought he had gone into the wood; but when she had reached far enough herself, there he sat, quietly nibbling at his nut again, and soon as he saw her, whisked up into a tree, and from among the high boughs called, "Cheep, cheep, chip! Which beat, little girl?"

Violet could not see him, he went so fast and far; and as she looked up among the leafy boughs, he dropped the nut right into her face, and ran round and round the limb, and called "Cheep, cheep, chip!" again, as if he were laughing at her.

Violet laughed too, and threw the nut back at him, looking first to see how clean he had eaten out the meat.

Away darted squirrel, without waiting to chip this time, and Violet called, as he ran,—

"It's all very fine to whisk along so fast, mister; but I should like to know how much good your travelling does. I know you can't see a thing, any more than they can in the rail cars I've heard about. You're welcome to your legs so long as you leave the brook, and the flowers, and birds for puss and me."

But he only answered by dropping another nut from directly over her head, and she followed him into the wood—the beautiful, cool, still wood. Violet left off singing as she entered it; for she loved to hear the rustle of the ripe leaves, and to watch the tiny fibres falling lightly from the pines, and hear the nuts and acorns rattle down, and to see the spider webs and insects glitter wherever a gleam of sunshine had stolen through the boughs.

Her hands were full of flowers, which she had gathered on the way; for she did not mean her new cup should be empty when the good parents came home.

So she had picked such a splendid bunch!—bright red cardinal flowers from the swamp; and along by the brook side, where it was sunniest, she found beautiful blue fringed gentians; and farther on branches of golden rod, that looked like little elm trees changed to gold; and on farther still, by the edge of the wood, where, as they waved, they seemed beckoning her, she found plenty of asters, white as snow, with little yellow eyes twinkling out among the petals, or else rich purple with deep gold inside; and she had some of the everlasting flowers too, like bunches of pure pearls.

Violet crept under the deep shade of the boughs, where the brook was gurgling over its mossy stones, and laid the stems of her flowers there to keep them fresh, making a wall of pebbles around them, so that the water, which tripped along so fast, should not carry them away.

For once, when she forgot to do this, she had no sooner placed her flowers in the brook than off they sailed down stream, and scattered so fast and far she couldn't think of finding them all again.

Violet laughed when she remembered that day, and how the brook, full of its mischief, had run away with her treasures, and scattered them any and every where along its banks, setting some upright, as if they were growing again, and wedging some under the stones, and tangling some under the fence, and floating some down the hill and through the sunny field, so fast they seemed chasing the little fish that made their home in the brook.

Even away down by Reuben's house a few had strayed, and reached home so much before Violet that she began to think the waves had, after all, as spry feet as her own.



CHAPTER XVI.

ALONE IN THE WOOD.

Her flowers safe in the water, the little girl seated herself on a stone that seemed made purposely for her, it was cushioned so softly with moss; and overhead the boughs of the great trees bent towards her, and rustled and waved like so many fans, and shut her in so closely from the rest of the wood that you might have passed close by, and never guessed she was there.

The kitten went fast asleep in her lap, and Violet, folding her hands, looked up among the leaves, and across where the boughs parted a little into the wood, and down at her feet, where the grass grew so long and fine, and was sprinkled over with such pretty little leaves—as tiny, some of them, as Violet's finger nails, and yet as beautifully scalloped or pointed, and as perfectly finished, as the stoutest laurel or broadest oak leaf in the wood; and, noticing this, Violet wondered if God, who had taken as much pains in making little leaves as big ones, had not taken as much pains with, and didn't care as much for, little *people* as big ones.

Who knew but he loved her, in her ragged dress, just as well as Narcissa in all her finery, or even the tall, rich doctor, who tried to mend Toady's leg?

Then she listened, and felt how still it was there alone with the trees; and the sweet, low sounds that came through this stillness were beautiful as music.

Far off she could hear the cool, sparkling brook foaming and hurrying over its stony bed; and then the air came breathing through the trees, as if they sighed for joy; and each leaf trembled, and seemed rising to meet the air and fly away with it, and then, falling back again, nestled closer to its neighbor leaves, and whispered softly, as if it were making love to them.

But there came a louder rustling among the boughs, and a flutter of wings, and then burst forth a clear, wild song, so near that Violet held her breath; for a golden oriole had alighted close beside her, and chirped, and twittered, and trilled, as if he meant to say aloud what the leaves and the brook had been whispering.

When he paused, the leaves all clapped their hands for more; and oriole understood them, for he gave another and another song, waiting between each to wet his bill in some bunch of bright, juicy berries.

Violet did not suspect that the reason the sunshine looked so bright, and the shadows so cool and refreshing, and the leaves and brook so wide awake and so musical, was because the good fairies Love and Contentment were watching over her; and the beautiful purple light from Love's wings, and from Contentment's starry crown, and the fragrance from her lily urn, would make any, the dullest place, bright.

But as the bird flew away, Fairy Love whispered inside of Violet's heart, "The bird has gone to her nest. Isn't it time for Violet to be thinking about *her* nest, and the good mother, who will be there first if she does not make haste and run home?"

Love's voice was lower than the whisper of the leaves or the far-off murmur of the brook; but the little girl heard and obeyed it for all that.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KITTEN'S BATH.

Violet had picked a whole apron full of leaves, reaching up in the trees for the largest and handsomest, and then, kneeling where they grew close to the ground, had collected the lovely, delicate ones that were so small you would not notice unless you were looking for them—broad, shining oak leaves, long, graceful chestnut leaves, and some from the fluttering poplar, and some from the hemlocks and pines, tall ferns, and maiden's-hair, and grass, clover, sorrel, ground pine, and hundreds more.

Violet had been counting how many kinds there were; and as I have forgotten, the first time you go into the woods you must try yourself, and lay them side by side, as she did, to see which is prettiest.

But away flew all the leaves, as, directly she heard Love's voice, the little girl sprang to her feet, waking puss out of her nap so suddenly that she spit, and put up her back, and her hair stood all on end with fright.

Then you might have heard Violet's laughter ringing merrily enough through the silent wood.

Such an unusual noise startled a whole flock of crows, where, hid in a tall pine tree, they had, like pussy, been taking a nap, and scolded well because they were awakened.

Violet wondered if it would help the matter to make such a noise about it with their hoarse voices, which sounded as if they were made on purpose to scold—so grating and shrill.

She went to the brook for her flowers, while the kitten followed, gaping such great gapes that Violet told her she'd better take care, or she wouldn't be able to close her mouth again. And looking back among the trees, as she climbed the stone wall and was going out into the sunshine again, Violet wondered if God *could* have made that beautiful place for no one but her; no one else entered it, she knew.

"I guess God thinks it's no matter how small I am, so long as I'm large enough to love it all," she thought; and I don't believe Violet was wrong.

As they went home, a great cricket flew from under the kitten's feet and frightened her again, for she was hardly awake. Away she sprang to catch it, and away sprang the cricket, while Violet had to run fast to keep up with them, laughing to see how puzzled puss would be when the cricket hid under the long grass; and while she was pawing, and purring, and looking up to Violet as if she'd ask, "Where is he?" out he'd spring again, directly past her nose, and in among the grass would hide, and peep at her, while she looked every where but in the right place.

At last, in her eagerness, the kitten jumped rather too far, and went into the brook; and in her fright I don't know what would have happened next if Violet had not seized her just as, mewling and trembling, the water was washing her down stream.

She lapped Violet's face and purred as the little girl tried to dry her fur and warm her again in her bosom; but she was a wilful puss, and preferred creeping along in the sunshine, shaking each of her four paws at every step in the drollest fashion. But she didn't chase any more crickets *that* day.

This affair of the kitten's, and waiting to look for her berries, which Violet had hid among the bushes so

safely she could not find them herself at first, delayed her so long that she almost flew the rest of the way; for when the old people went to market with their goods, they always came home tired and hungry, and were very glad of a cup of warm tea.

So she did not stop flying until a fire was made and the table set; and just then she heard voices at the door.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRICE OF TOADY'S LEG.

Reuben and Mary had come; and glad enough Violet was to see them; but this, like all her days, had been so long that she forgot to say a word about her flowers and the gilded cup; she could not remember back to the morning, until her mother asked if she knew whose birthday this was; and then it all came back, and she gave more thanks and kisses than there had been flowers in the cup.

"But why is it empty?" asked Reuben.

And Violet told about the carriage, and Narcissa, and Toady's misfortune, and the kind doctor, who had waited to mend the mischief his daughter had done, and how he took her violets, leaving money in their stead.

You should have seen the old people hold up their hands when Violet showed them the coin she had only looked upon as so many bright stones.

Their marketing had not sold as well as usual, and the winter was to be a hard one for poor people, every one said; and they had been telling each other, as they came home, that if Providence had not taken care of them so well thus far, they should certainly expect to starve now.

And here stood Violet with six silver dollars! They could hardly believe their eyes. Some fairy must have given it to the child.

True enough, old Reuben—the fairy LOVE!

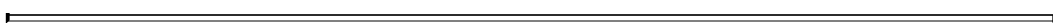
The rich doctor might have given six times as much, and never have felt the loss enough to remember it. But I cannot tell you how many comforts his money procured for the poor old people.

Mary had a new warm gown, and Reuben a pair of rubbers and some flannel, and Violet a blanket shawl, and what was left they spent in tea, rice, flour, and molasses.

Every afternoon, when the old lady sat down to sew that winter, feeling warmer than she had for many a cold month, and seeing so beautifully, too, from the light that came in at a new window they had bought for the hut where they lived, Mary would bless the rich man, and the good child God had given her.

And every time Reuben waded through the snow towards town, and did not wet his feet, nor come home with rheumatism, as he used to the winter before, he, too, would think of the rich man, and thank God for his little daughter, and wonder if ever *any* one had so many blessings as he.

Violet too, with her thick, warm shawl, could go to the district school; and very soon she learned more out of books than Reuben and Mary had known in all their lives.



CHAPTER XIX.

GOING TO SCHOOL.

Violet's years were like her days—busy and joyous; for they were spent in making all about her happy, and in finding new wonder and beauty in the world.

Winter evenings she would sit on her cricket at the old people's feet, and amuse them by telling her adventures on the way to and from school, or the wonderful things she had learned there.

Perhaps it had stormed, and she would describe how beautiful it was to see every thing folded in a mantle of white snow, and to run through the pearly dust, and scatter it far and wide, and to see it gathering like a world of blossoms in the branches of the dark pine trees.

Then she would tell how, when it cleared away, every thing shone, and glittered, and stood so still in the cold, blue air, and she could not hear her own footsteps any more than those of the squirrels that darted along the stone wall, and how she had sung, and shouted, and clapped her hands for company.

Or she had found a half-frozen bird, and, picking it up with her own half-frozen hands, had warmed it to life, while she felt its little frightened heart beating beneath her shawl—that heart and her own the only moving things in the wide, white silence.

And then how glad it made her feel when her bird sprang forth into the sky again, and she watched his shadow circling round and round her, until he alighted in a tree just as she passed underneath, and, with his fluttering wings sent down a shower of snow flakes all over her.

This, she supposed, was the only way he had of telling how well and strong he felt, and how he loved her for what she had done to him.

But Violet could hardly make the old folks believe what she heard at school about far-off countries and strange animals—snakes large enough to crush a horse and rider in their folds, and fishes so huge that half a dozen people could sit inside of them.

Every child knows these things now, and has pictures of them in his books; but when Reuben and Mary were young there were few schools; and they, poor people, had to work instead of study.

On summer mornings, after her work was done, Violet would bring home roots from her favorite wood, and plant them about the house, until you would hardly know it, it was so buried in beautiful green vines.

You could not have made Violet think there was a pleasanter home on earth than hers, when the clematis was starred all over with white blossoms, and the honeysuckle she had trained over the door was full of bright yellow flowers, and the hop vine hung full of its beautiful cones, and among all shone the bright pink wild roses, and the whole air was sweet with her own favorite violets.

Birds built nests within the vine, and hatched their young, and sang loudly and sweetly to their friends in the hut as often as they cared to hear.

CHAPTER XX.

OLD REUBEN DEAD.

Nothing pleased Reuben half as much as to sit in the shadow of the vines, watch the flowers grow, and feel that all this beauty was Violet's work; for the old gardener loved flowers dearly; and when he had grown too old to work himself, he was so glad to feel that his garden pets need not be smothered up in weeds, and die.

So there he sat in the sun day after day, while he grew thinner and more feeble; and one pleasant afternoon, when Violet thought he had taken too long a nap, she went to waken him for fear he might take cold.

But she paused to look at the good old man as he sat there with his hands folded on his bosom, and such a beautiful smile on the wrinkled face, and the wind stirring the gray locks, while his head rested among the fresh summer leaves.

Reuben never awoke; he was dead.

Violet burst into tears, and wished for a moment that she could die herself; but she thought of the mother who was too infirm to take care of herself, and who had lived with Reuben longer and would feel his loss more than she.

Just then a bird flew from his nest in the vine, and soaring slowly, sang low at first, and sweetly, and then louder and louder, till he was lost among the clouds.

And Violet remembered what her father had said so often, that one of these days he should shake off the old aching body, and soar as lightly as any bird, and live as happily, up in that calm heaven.

They buried Reuben under a great elm tree in sight of his own garden, and where he had often rested after his work, and watched the orioles building their nests or teaching their young to sing.

Lonely and sad enough it was in the hut when Violet and her mother went home and saw the old man's empty chair, and his garden tools hanging on the wall.

"It won't be long before I shall follow him," said old Mary, "and then God will take care of our child."

"But I will take care of my mother first, for a great many years," said Violet, drawing closer, and putting her arms around Mary protectingly; for Violet, though still young, was no longer a little child, as when we knew her first. The blue eyes, though, were just as bright and as full of love and tenderness; and the light hair, which was folded now in wavy bands over a calm white forehead, when the light touched it, had the same golden look as of old. She had grown tall too, and healthy, and was graceful as a bird, and had a low, musical voice like the brook, and a smile like sunshine, and, in short, was beautiful as a fairy herself.

While she sat there, with her low, sweet voice, trying to console her mother, and now and then her own sunny smile breaking through even her tears, the door opened, and their landlord entered.

He had sold the pasture and the whole blackberry hill to a rich man who would build there immediately;

and they must move this very night, for the hut stood in his way.



CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW HOME AND OLD FRIENDS.

Trouble seemed to come all at once; they had no money and no place to store their humble furniture; but Violet always hoped for the best, and only smiled when they began to move the rough chairs and table her father had nailed together.

"There's one comfort," she said; "our things are not so fine that a little dew will hurt them. We may leave them here till we find a better place."

But it did make her heart ache to see the men tear away her vines, even from above old Reuben's seat, and then, with a few axe strokes, batter down the wall, till nothing was left of the dear old home but a little pile of boards.

"We had better go to this rich man and tell our story," said her mother, as they walked sadly out of the pasture for, as they thought, the last time.

"He was boarding," the landlord said, "at a hotel in the village where Reuben had carried his marketing, only three or four miles thence."

So, leaning on Violet's arm, old Mary crept along the dusty road, farther than she had walked for many a day, and was tired enough when they reached the hotel door.

Not so Violet, who was full of hope, and had in her head more plans than one for finding a new home.

They asked for the stranger, Dr. Story, were led to his parlor, and told their simple tale. He was interested at once, and very angry that they had been treated so badly on his account, and offered to give them money, while he hardly took his eyes from Violet's face.

"No," she said, smiling; "we did not come to beg, but thought, as we had lost our home through you, you might be willing to help us find another."

"And how shall I do that?" asked the doctor.

Then Violet told him that she had studied evenings so long it seemed to her she could teach in the village school; but she was poor, and had no friends to speak a good word for her with the committee.

"What is your name?" asked the gentleman, suddenly.

"Violet."

"I thought so; and what has become of Toady?"

It was the doctor who had mended Toady's leg so many years ago, and the young man who sat reading on the sofa was no other than Alfred, his son, with the fairy Ambition still keeping him hard at work, and making him care for little else but books.

He looked up though, and listened to Violet's story, and, as he watched her, actually closed his book, and

always afterwards closed it if she entered the room; for fairy Love was stronger than Ambition, and he could no more see in the purple light which fell from her wings than an owl could in broad noonday.

"But where is Narcissa?" asked Violet.

The father's face grew sad as he told how, the very day they were at the hut, in riding home the carriage was overturned, and Narcissa not only lamed for life, but thrown against a tree, one of whose branches entered her eye and put it out.

When Violet heard of this her eyes filled with tears, and forgetting all the unkindness she had received from this girl, she only remembered how handsome Narcissa was, and how happy she seemed as they drove away.

And the fairy Love shed such a beautiful light around the poor berry girl, that Ambition hid in a corner, and Alfred didn't think of his books again that day.



CHAPTER XXII.

THE NEW OLD HOME.

The doctor lent them money enough to hire a pleasant, sunny room in the village street, where her mother could sit and watch the passers by when she was tired of knitting and reading, for she was alone now almost all the day, and Violet was mistress of the village school.

One morning, as Mary sat in her comfortable chair, and was wishing old Reuben could see what a beautiful home she had, a carriage drove to the door below, and then came a knock at her own door, and Dr. Story entered.

"I have come to give you a ride this pleasant day," he said. "We will call for Violet. Wouldn't you like to see how I have improved the old blackberry field?"

Mary was delighted. She had never ridden in a carriage in her life; and to go in that splendid one of the doctor's, with velvet cushions, and footmen behind! She sat very straight, you may be sure, and kept tucking in her gown; for though it was new, she was afraid it might harm the seats, and her wrinkled face was shining all over with smiles.

They met Violet on her way home from school, and she was almost as much pleased as the old lady with her ride.

But what was their surprise to find, instead of the little footpath, a broad avenue through the pasture, with young trees on each side, and the hill where the blackberry vines had been, covered with waving oats, and in front of Violet's own beloved wood a beautiful great house large as a palace!

"But now look on the other side," said Dr. Story.

Where the old hut had stood was the prettiest little cottage you ever saw, with the very clematis, and honeysuckle, and wild roses Violet had planted trained over it; and there was Reuben's garden all in order, just as they had left it; and under the great elm tree there was his grave, with a new white stone at the head, and the old man's name and age cut in it.

They alighted at the cottage door, and Violet noticed how the air was perfumed with her own favorite flowers. While Alfred stooped to gather some of these for Violet, his father said,—

"Do you remember, Mary, whose birthday this is?"

"Sure enough, it's Violet's!" exclaimed the old woman.

"And this," said the doctor, "is Violet's birthday present—this house and garden, and these beds of flowers."

But before they could thank him, he added,—

"In return, you are to give up your school, and teach my own children. Will you do it, Violet? They are so young it will be easy at first, and meantime you shall have teachers yourself."

Pleased as Violet and Mary were, I don't think they were half as glad as Alfred, who threw his book down into the grass so suddenly at his father's speech, I should not be surprised if it broke fairy Ambition's head.



CHAPTER XXIII.

ALFRED.

The cottage was all furnished, and had even a foot stove for the old lady, and a soft, stuffed easy chair in the parlor, while on the woodshed wall hung Reuben's tools; and what do you think hopped up from under a board as Violet stood looking at these? Toady, on his three legs, who winked his one round eye at her, as if he would say, "Isn't all this fine?"

Then there was a school room, where Violet's pupils came every morning, and learned to love her as if she were their own sister.

After school she would tell them stories about the birds, and squirrels, and flowers, among which she had lived so long, or take them to walk in the old pleasant places.

They told their sister Narcissa, who, like Violet, was grown to a young lady now, so much about the new teacher, that one pleasant day she went to the cottage with them.

Violet was grieved to see how the handsome face was scarred and spoiled; but Narcissa said,—

"It was the best thing that ever happened to me, Violet—that accident; it cured me of pride and selfishness."

And it had, truly. Narcissa was so gentle and patient, you would not have known her for the same person. She grew as fond of Violet as the children were; and when they were busy in the school room, studying, she would often sit and read to the old lady in the sunny little room where she slept and spent almost all her time. This room looked out towards the violet beds, and over it the vines grew most luxuriantly; their blossoms looked in at her window, and their shadows flickered over the bright-red carpet; while old Mary sat in her easy chair thinking of Reuben, who was dead and gone, and rejoicing that she could live and die where every thing reminded her of him, and be buried by his side.

By his side she *was* buried, under the great elm tree, but not until she had lived many years in the cottage with Violet—the happiest years of her life.

Then Violet's friends at the great house said she had better go and live with them, it was so lonely in the old place now; and about this time Alfred came home from India, where he had lived long enough to grow very sickly and very rich.

He told Violet that he had been earning money to take care of her, and now, if she would be his wife, they might still live in the cottage and be happy all their days.

But Alfred's father was proud and ambitious, and would not be satisfied to have his son marry a poor berry girl. This Violet knew well enough; so she never told Alfred that she loved him, but only said "No" to his offers, at which he felt so badly he threatened to shoot himself.

But instead of this, he concluded afterwards to marry some one else—a lady, rich, and accomplished, and gay, who made the great house merrier than it had ever been before she went to it.

There were balls, and parties, and concerts, strangers coming and going constantly; there was no such thing as quiet.

Violet was unwilling to exchange for this her pleasant, sunny little cottage; the vines and the elm tree and crowded garden beds had grown so dear to her, and the very birds and squirrels seemed to know and love Violet, and sing and chip to her, "*Do stay.*"

How could she refuse? Who would take care of poor Toady if she went? and who would feed the old faded cat lying now on the doorstep half asleep, opening half an eye sometimes to watch her kittens play, and then going off into a doze again like a worn-out grandmother, as she had become.

Who will believe it?—she was the same kitten that followed Violet into the wood about the time our story began, and wasn't old enough then to catch a cricket or keep from drowning in the brook.



CHAPTER XXIV.

NARCISSA.

While Violet sat on the doorstep wondering whether to please Alfred and his father by going to live with them or to stay with her favorites in the cottage, Narcissa came in sight.

She was limping along with her crutches through the grass, and looked very pale and tired; for the walk from the wood to the cottage, which was nothing to Violet, was a great undertaking to the lame girl. She never walked as far in any other direction; but some how the path to Violet's seemed the smoothest and easiest.

Shall I tell you why? Because the fairy Love went before her, picking up every rough stone and bur or brier, and when the sun was hottest, shaded the invalid with her delicate purple wings.

Violet, too, had taught Narcissa how many pleasant things there are in the world even for one who is sick. So, instead of fretting because the way was dusty and the sunshine hot, Narcissa looked up at the cool green leaves which were fanning her, and watched along all the way to see what beautiful flowers the heat and light were opening. She, too, had learned to love the cool song of the brook; to be glad—though she could not follow them herself, poor cripple!—that the butterflies could flutter about and drink honey from all the flowers, and the squirrels could dart away with their nuts, and the birds go sailing and singing up into the far blue sky.

Her old fairy, Envy, was banished forever from Narcissa's heart, and in its place dwelt Violet's fairy, Love, and Contentment, Love's unfailing friend.

The moment these fairies came, her heart began to grow larger and purer; for it only takes a small soul to hold such a miserable little sprite as Envy, who is so mean and poor that he makes every place poor into which he enters, though he looks fine enough in his cloak streaked with purple, gold, and red, like the gaudiest of tulips.

No wonder Narcissa was glad to make the exchange of friends; for Love soon taught her that the way to be happy is to forget all about ourselves, and be glad whenever another is glad, no matter how humble a thing. So when she watched the sunshine creep towards a flower that had been waiting for it in the shade, or when she saw a young bird fly for the first time, or, in frosty mornings that made her sick frame shiver, when she heard the nuts rattle down, and knew the frost had opened their burs, and that the children would be glad, Narcissa's heart would be so full of sympathy that I am not sure but she was the happiest of all.



CHAPTER XXV.

NEW PLANS.

Violet saw Narcissa's white dress among the trees,—for the young elms in the avenue had grown so high as to meet now overhead,—and ran out to welcome her.

She helped the invalid into her house, brought her mother's easy chair out to the porch, and a footstool and fan, and last of all a little table, upon which she placed fresh flowers and a new book that had been given her, and then hurried away to mix a cooling drink, of which Narcissa was very fond.

"How good you are, Violet," said Narcissa when she came back, "and how little I deserve so much from you! A toad just hopped over the step—the queerest old fellow—looked as if he had been through a dozen wars, with his one eye and a missing leg. I could have laughed, we were so much alike; and yet I couldn't, for he made me think of that first day we came to your father's house, and——"

"O, yes," interrupted Violet; "and only think how much good has come to *us* from that first visit—how comfortably we have lived ever since!—your father was so kind."

"But *I* wasn't kind," said Narcissa, looking very sorrowful; "I did you nothing but harm; and think what you have done for me."

"Brought you a chair and a fan," laughed Violet; "wonderful deeds!"

"You may laugh if you will," answered the lady; "but I would not give what I have gained from you in exchange for a hundred times what I ever had before. My beauty only made me vexed if I was not admired; my health and strength made me restless, kept me always in search of what I could not find nor buy. Beauty, and health, and money are good for nothing by themselves. O Violet, you have given health and beauty to my *heart*, and now I am rich and happy because no living thing can be glad but I grow richer by sharing its joy—those cool cloud shadows flickering over the grass—this sweetness the air has caught from your violet beds; and look how that humming bird enjoys the dew and honey he is drinking out of the roses, hanging among them by his long, slim bill; I can almost taste it with him as clearly as I smell the odor he shakes from the roses with his glittering wings; and I feel, too, the coolness the shadows must bring to the heated grass. For all of this, my friend, I thank you constantly."

Violet was not fond of hearing herself praised; she thought it pleasure enough to help any one; so she changed the subject by offering Narcissa some more of the refreshing drink. She answered,—

"Not now, I thank you; but pray where do you buy this cordial?—it is so much pleasanter to me than the rich wines we have at home, which always make me sick."

When Violet told how she had made the cordial herself from wild raspberries of her own picking, had pressed the juice out with her own white hands, and that the same hands had made the light biscuit she brought with it, and arranged the tasteful bouquet, and nailed up the luxuriant rosebushes, Narcissa was quite enchanted, and wished she could live as independently herself.

"O," she said, "I am so tired of the noise and confusion at home, and so many new faces, such rich food. If

I could live here, Violet, with you!"

"Why not make me a visit? and if you are contented with my simple fare, I shall be very glad to have you stay as long as you will. We might have beautiful times together."

"Are you in earnest?" asked Narcissa, eagerly. "I shall be so happy and so independent here! and I won't be in the way either, for you shall teach me to work, and I can paint, and draw, and play on the piano, and read ever so many languages. All these I will teach you." She smiled, and Violet asked why.

"I was thinking that the accomplishment of which I was proudest once must be taught by some one else."

"Why?"

"Every one praised my dancing; but how in the world could I teach you with my wooden leg? I will learn of you to work, to help others, to find out the best things in books, and the most beautiful things every where. Why, we shall be like two fairy queens in our little cottage palace."

Narcissa's father, instead of objecting to this plan, was very much pleased with it—said the change would be better than any medicine for the invalid.



CHAPTER XXVI.

SPRING AT THE COTTAGE.

Love and Contentment waved their bright wings now; for the two friends became so fond of each other they were not contented apart. Narcissa even grew beautiful again, there was such a peaceful smile upon her face, and such an earnest, loving look within her eyes.

It was a real pleasure for Violet to comfort and amuse this friend, from whom she was constantly learning some new thing.

Narcissa painted beautifully, and Violet would bring her the freshest and loveliest flowers to copy; so there was hardly a blossom or a green leaf in the neighborhood, from April to November, but you could find it almost living again in their portfolio.

They would watch the birds too, find out all their names, and their different notes, and how they fed and taught their young; and Violet worked in her garden more than ever now, because Narcissa's maid took care of the cottage, and kept it as neat as even its mistress wished.

She had the lawn before the house enclosed in a border shaped like the half of a great ring, and this was planted full of snowdrops, which blossom quite early, you know, and are very delicate and beautiful. It was like a ring of living pearls; and when these wilted, odors began to steal towards the cottage door, which tempted Violet to look under another border thick with green leaves, and there would be more violets than you could count; so the pearl ring changed to one of emerald and amethyst.

Meantime the sweetbrier by the doorway would begin to have pale green buds on its brown stems, and the honeysuckle and bitter-sweet came forth in fresh green shoots, until there were so many new, tender, fragrant leaves, and buds, and blossoms that the birds were sure to select it as the place for their nests.

Narcissa loved to watch them while Violet was busy with her work. A flock of robins would settle upon the plum tree in the garden, peck at the gum, and dig insect eggs out from the bark, and then fly away towards the wood, singing all together; but soon two would steal back to the plum tree, and chirp and twitter to each other, and look at the cottage, and then at the wood, and then at the thickest boughs of the plum.

Presently both would fly together towards the house, one settling on the sweetbrier, and one on the roof, and then on the chimney, and then hop along the porch, and then back both would go to have another talk in the plum tree, and then fly off to find their brothers and sisters in the wood.

But sure as another morning came, back would come the birds too, looking with their little bright eyes all about the cottage, and always settling at last on that one sweetbrier branch.

Then they would begin to bring straws and hair, which they wove together into a soft little nest, working away as busy and happy as birds could be, now and then going back to the plum tree, as if from a distance to admire their tiny home.

Before very long, looking out of the cottage window, you might find the nest full of little cunning eggs; but

you could not see these often, for the birds kept them almost constantly sheltered with their own warm breasts, waiting until the little things within should grow strong enough to break and creep out of their shells.

All this time the father bird would bring the mother food—bring her ripe cherries, seeds, buds, and worms; and sometimes he would take her place, letting her fly away for a look at the woods, or a drink from the sparkling brook.

But some bright morning you would hear the old birds twittering so joyfully, you might know something had come to pass; and the first time they flew away, if you looked from the window again, there would be, instead of the eggs, a little heap of the homeliest things in the world, with great eyes, and great legs and claws, and long red necks, and mouths half as large as the bodies, gaping at you—not a feather to be seen except a little down, like whiskers, about their ears.

Birds grow very fast; you would be surprised to find how soon they began to fill, and more than fill, the nest, until some morning one after another would hop out among the sweetbrier stems, and show you their glossy backs and speckled breasts, while the old birds watched so proud and happy, and began teaching them to fly and to sing.

One morning towards the last of May, when Violet was in the garden transplanting her forget-me-nots, and Narcissa, in the porch, sat watching her, enjoying the cool, fresh air, the new life that budded forth from every thing, and the freedom and joy of the golden orioles as they flashed in and out among the elm boughs, and twittered forth their wild and plaintive melodies, her attention was caught by a stir and fluttering in the sweetbrier, and then a song from the larch tree opposite. These sounds came from two yellow birds, a mother and her little one. The young one would go, "Twe-te-twee," timidly and sweetly, with such a tired tremble at the end; then forth poured the old bird a clear, connected strain, half repeated it, and then paused; and the little sweet voice came again, "Pee-te-wee—pee-te-wee—twee-te-wee." It was too cunning, and the old bird took up the trembling, broken strain so clearly, with such ease, "Twitter, witter, witter—wee-te-twee-te-twee—twitter, witter, witter"—"Wee-te-twee," ended the young one, with that same little tremble in the midst, the same baby sweetness, just such as in a child would make you snatch it up and kiss it—"twee-te-wee." Narcissa wondered if there could have been more exquisite music in paradise.



CHAPTER XXVII.

VIOLET'S SCHOLARS.

Violet still had her little school of Narcissa's brothers and sisters; but she was so gentle and patient that study was never very hard to them, though the lessons might be long; and then at recess time the boys would go out and pick cherries, or apples, or plums, from the garden, bring them in on fresh green leaves, and they would all sit in the porch and have a little feast together.

Saturday afternoons they would take a walk in the woods; and Violet taught them how to weave oak leaves into crowns, and to make necklaces out of dandelion stems and lilac flowers, and baskets of rushes.

They always took something home to Narcissa, who could not enjoy long walks because of her lameness. One would pick up a pocket full of checkerberries, and one a handful of the young, spicy leaves; and the prettiest branch of hawthorn, the longest-stemmed violets, the largest-leaved bough of oak, were sure to go home for her.

When it grew late in the year, they had such sport gathering chestnuts, hazelnuts, and shagbarks; the boys climbed the trees, and shook or beat them with long poles, and down the nuts would come rattling by baskets full. These were stored away in the cottage; for they all knew that what Violet kept for them was safe.

When they came near the cottage again after one of these excursions, looking so bright, with their rosy cheeks, and flying hair, and laughing faces, Narcissa's smiling face was always at the window watching, and quickly appeared at the door to welcome them. Sometimes they all went home crowned with autumn leaves, sometimes with woodbine or ground pine, and early in spring with bloodroots, violets, or anemones.

But the prettiest crown, and the rarest flower, and the juiciest bunch of berries were always for Narcissa.

In stormy days, or when the ground was covered with snow, Violet still made the holidays pleasant for her scholars; they would play games and sing in the afternoon. She would teach the girls how to dress their dolls, and the boys how to make pasteboard boxes and kites, and how to put puzzles together. Then at evening they would gather around the fireplace, with Narcissa's great chair in the midst of the circle, and she or Violet would tell stories for hours together.

One of these stories Narcissa liked so much that she wrote it down, and after Violet was dead,—for, like the snowdrops and wild roses, our Violet died at last,—she read it to me. I will try and remember it for you; but first I must tell what sorrow there was in the great house on the hill, and not there only, but among all the poor in the neighborhood, when Violet went to heaven.

Under the elm tree they buried her, beside Mary and Reuben; and the orioles she loved to watch still hatch their young and sing sweet songs above her grave.

Alfred wanted to build a great marble monument over her; for he said the whole world did not contain a better or lovelier woman. But Narcissa said,—

"No; she has built her own monument of good deeds, which will last after marble has mouldered away. Let us cover her grave with her own sweet violets, that whenever we pass we may think of *our* Violet."

Long afterwards, even to this day, when any who knew her witness a kind action, or meet one with a cheerful, hopeful spirit, and a sunny smile, they say, "It is just like Violet."

So, dear children, let us try to make friends with her fairies, Love and Contentment, and let us remember that whenever the thought of her urges *us* to be cheerful, contented, and loving, we, too, shall plant a flower on Violet's grave.



VIOLET'S STORY.



CHAPTER I.

It was a snowy night, and the children, as we gathered around the fire, began to ask for stories. I told them a queer dream of my own, and then they insisted that Violet should give one of her fairy tales.

While she was puzzling her brain for a new one, my little sister Mabel, who had climbed upon the sofa and was nestling close to her, asked,—

"What makes you love violets so much? Here even in winter time you have some in your bosom. Aren't you sweeter than these little homely things?"

"Narcissa," she answered, "has told a dream, and now I will tell one. It's a kind of fairy story besides, and partly true. You must not ask any questions about the little girl, or make any guesses. Her name happened to be just like yours, Mabel."

"Little girl! I thought 'twas a *dream*," said Mabel.



MABEL'S DREAM.

"Listen, then: A little girl went out one day in search of strawberries. She went into a wide green field that

was starred all over with dandelions, and clusters of wild lilies hanging like bells around their stems, and violets, and blue-eyed grass.

"There was not a living being in this place except the birds, and little fishes in the brook; for through the long grass all around the field ran a stream of clearest water over a dark-brown, pebbly bed.

"Rising on every side, so as to shut the field in by itself, were hills closely covered with trees and vines. Here birds sang all day long, and flowers bloomed, and nuts and berries ripened; the ground was in some places slippery with fallen pine leaves, and in others soft with a carpet of fresh moss.

"It was shady in these woods, but in the field the sun shone, opened the lilies, ripened the strawberries, and made the little girl feel bright and glad, although it was so warm.

"Strawberries are tiny things to pick; the little girl thought it would take a million to fill her pail; and often she longed to leave them and gather flowers, or play with the fish in the brook, or rest in the cool wood.

"But she had always loved violets, just as I love them; and a gardener's wife had promised Mabel that the first time she brought a pail full of strawberries to her, she should have in return a whole bunch of these fragrant flowers.

"So, stooping among the lilies, which were almost as tall as herself, and picking one by one, one by one, the bright sun pouring its heat down upon her, after a great while her pail was heaped with berries. Almost as fragrant as violets they were, too, and looked, upon their long green stems, like little drops of coral.

"Mabel's work was not over now; she climbed half way up the hill, found a beautiful shady place, where the grass was long, and the roots of a great tree had coiled themselves into a seat, which was cushioned over with moss.

"She threw aside her sun bonnet, and began to pick off the green hulls from her fruit, while the broad oak leaves overhead kept fanning her, and lifting the matted curls from her warm forehead.

"But then came a great mosquito, and then another, and another; they would whirl around her head, buzzing and buzzing, and fly from her forehead to her nose, and from nose to hand, and hand to shoulder, and then creep into the curly hair, and buzz so close to her ear it frightened her.

"Twenty times she had a mind to throw her berries into the brook and run home; but then she thought of the violets—how splendid it would be to have them all to herself; she should not give away one flower, not one, she had worked so hard for them.

"Throwing the stems away lowered the contents of her pail so much that Mabel had to go out in the hot field and pick again, and then back to the wood where the mosquitoes were, and work another hour. She never had such a long, hard task before.

"But the little girl travelled home at last with her pail brimful in one hand, and a splendid great bunch of lilies in the other. This last served as a parasol till she reached the gardener's gate.

"Then, taking her violets, Mabel hurried home. There were more of them, and they were larger and sweeter, than she had even hoped. She hardly took her eyes from them until she reached her mother's door.

"While she was placing her flowers in water, a woman came up the hot, dusty road, with a young child in her arms. She looked tired and warm, and said she had eaten nothing all day long. Mabel looked in the

closet; there was plenty of bread, but she dared not give it without her mother's leave. She looked in all the rooms; but her mother was not to be found; and when the poor woman had rested a little, Mabel watched her creep out into the blazing sun again, dragging the little child after her. She could not bear to think that while she had every thing to make her happy, others must go hungry and tired; and 'Suppose it were my mother,' Mabel thought; 'I *must* do something for her; yet I have nothing in the world to give.'

"Except the violets," whispered something inside of Mabel's heart. Snatching them from the table, she ran after the beggar, and said,—

"There, I gave a whole pail of strawberries for these; perhaps you can sell them for a loaf of bread."

The poor woman looked so pleased, and thanked Mabel so heartily, that she felt the violets could never have caused her so much joy as it had done to give them away.



CHAPTER II.

"Not many days after these events, Mabel went again to the field where the lilies and strawberries grew, played about in the sun until she was tired, and then seated herself under a shady tree to rest, and hear the birds and rustling leaves, and watch the brook glide through the grass.

"The grass about her was long, and fine, and soft as any bed; it was cool too, and Mabel, listening to the quiet murmur of the brook, fell fast asleep; but all the while she thought herself wide awake, and wondered why the sound of the rippling of water changed to something like the tread of tiny feet; and then there came the sweetest, most delicate music; and all at once—could it be?—she saw a multitude of little beings marching through the very pathway her footsteps had made in the grass, and approaching her. They were hardly taller than a grasshopper would be if he could stand up like a man, and had formed themselves into the drollest little procession.

"First came the musicians; there were flute players, using each a joint of grass stem for instrument, bell ringers, jingling lilies of the valley, and trumpeters tooting through white lilac blossoms. Then came the guards, dressed in uniform, and bearing each a fern leaf for banner at once and parasol. With these leaves they shaded a group of little women, who marched along as dignified as nuns until they came to a bunch of fennel leaves that grew near Mabel's resting-place. Towards this they flew, for the tiny people had wings; they climbed the stems and clung to the feathery leaves, and then all at once, espying Mabel, trooped towards her, and ranged themselves upon a platform of plantain leaves.

"They were funny little women—tall, and prim, and slim, wearing green mantles and such big purple hoods. They were more polite than some larger people, and did nothing but bow, and courtesy, and smile to Mabel, who asked them who they were and whence they came.

"They shook their heads, and laughed, while the air was filled with sweetest odor. At last one said,—

"'We are flower spirits. Every year we come to earth and live in some blossom, which we fill with beauty and fragrance; but when it withers we go back to Fairyland until another spring. We have, besides our fairy queen, a queen whom we choose every year among mortals, and serve her faithfully. We have just returned from working in her service.'

"'Are you not hungry?' asked Mabel. 'I have brought luncheon. Won't you eat some of my gingerbread?'

"The fairies laughed again. 'We live,' they said, 'upon flower dust and dewdrops; we should not relish mortal food.'

"Then they called from the attendants who lingered among the fennel leaves their steward and butler; and it was Mabel's turn to laugh when she saw how queerly they ate.

"Some blossoms from the elder bush, little ivory urns, served them for goblets. These were set upon a mushroom, and some red clover blossoms were rolled around the table for seats. The little men had tried in vain to break these blossoms off; so they caught a caterpillar, whipped him along with grass blades, and made him use his teeth for a knife. Then they had caught a toad, and heaped his round back with the blossoms, which rolled off as fast as they could be picked up again; and by the time they reached their mistresses, the fairy servants were warm and red in the face as any hay makers.

"The fairies grew so hungry with waiting that they even tasted a crumb of Mabel's gingerbread; but not liking this very well, they took out from among the provisions that were packed in a wild rose, the petals nicely fastened together with cobweb threads, some poppy and caraway seeds, upon which they began to gnaw with their little white teeth.

"'You must have lived in violets,' said Mabel. 'Every time you shake your bonnets and laugh, the air is full of their odor. Can't you smell it?'

"'Yes, for we were violets once ourselves, and all blossomed in the same garden; some of us grew from the same root, and a queer life we have led in the last few days. One hot day this very week the gardener's wife picked us in the greatest haste, and tied us together so tightly we were all but smothered for a while. The woman gave us to a little girl, who was just putting our stems in some cool water, and we half dead with thirst, when she must needs give us away to a beggar woman.'

"'Why,' exclaimed Mabel, 'were you *my* violets?'

"The fairies only laughed.

"'The woman held us in her hot hands until we were all but wilted, and she gave one or two of my sisters to the poor tired child that followed her through the dust.'

"'What is the matter?' asked Mabel; 'your eyes are full of tears.'

"'I am thinking of my sisters, whom we shall never meet again;' and the tears ran down the fairy's little cheeks. 'The child was overtired, and so warm that when they came to a resting-place, and she lay down to sleep, she never awoke again. A lady who had taken pity upon her laid the little body out for burial, and finding those few violets still clinched in the dead hand, would not remove them; so my sisters were buried in her grave, and must remain there no one knows how long; for while we live on earth we must take care of these bodies, frail flowers though they be. If we omit this, all our happiness and usefulness are gone. The kind lady who buried the beggar child bought us from the woman, all wilted as we were. In her shady parlor we soon grew refreshed, lifted our heads again, and in gratitude breathed forth odors, till the room was all perfumed. A lovely girl came to visit the lady, and said so much about our sweetness, that, to our joy, we were divided with her. She took us to her home, a splendid place, all light, and gilding, and flowers, curtains, and cushions, and velvet carpets, and marble stands. Upon one of these last we were placed, in a white Parian cup, but hardly had time to regain our breath when one of the maiden's lovers came, selected me from among the rest, and twirled me around his finger as he talked, until my stem was broken, and I all but dead. In a lucky hour he let me fall, and, lame as I was, I caught by the leg of a great fly, who whizzed me out of the window in a second, buzzing so all the while that he almost stunned me. I have just found my friends here, and have not had time to ask about their adventures.'

"The little woman, tired with talking so long, sank into her seat on the plantain leaf, and taking a caraway seed from her pocket, began nibbling, while her companions finished the story.

"'We have had less trouble,' they said. 'The benevolent lady took us to a dismal prison, to be sure, and we were shut up for a while with a man who had murdered another, and was waiting to be hung. He had forgotten his own mother and his early home; but when he looked at us, the past came back to him. He remembered the little garden by his father's house, and felt for a moment like an innocent boy again. From that hour he grew penitent, and he may be forgiven in consequence by God.'

"'But didn't the jailer forgive him?' asked Mabel.

"No; he was hung. We belonged to no one then, so we caught our withering bodies under our arms, and flew away through the iron gratings of his cell. But, Mabel, what are you thinking about?" ended the fairy.

"Thinking," said Mabel, "how much better it was to give away my violets than to keep them. I little dreamed they would do so much good in the world. But, fairy, what is the name of the earthly queen you told me about?"

"Mabel," answered all the little voices; and the fern leaf banners waved, and violet odors filled the air again, while the tiny flutes and trumpets made sweet music at the mention of their queen.

"Why, that is my name," said the little girl.

"And you are our queen," said the fairies. "It is a kind and loving heart that gives one power like a fairy wand, and can win all good spirits to serve its owner. This will change selfishness into benevolence, and sin to penitence, and hatred to forgiveness; it will transform—haven't you done it?—a prison into a dewy garden, and put love and penitence into a murderer's heart. Whoever uses us to best purposes is our queen; and *this* summer our queen is Mabel."

"Mabel reached forward to take her little subjects from the leaf; but lo, it was only a handful of violets. In her surprise, she awoke, with a dim feeling still that she had watched the little procession wind away through her foot tracks in the grass, the fern leaf banners waving over it, while mingled with violet odors came back triumphant music from the tiny flutes and timbrels. Low but clear were the fairy voices; and Mabel never forgot the words they sang, which ended,—

'All of us, whoe'er we be,
May carve us out such royalty.'"



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