

RUSKIN JOHN

PROSERPINA,

VOLUME 2

John Ruskin

Proserpina, Volume 2

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John Ruskin
Proserpina, Volume 2 / Studies of Wayside
Flowers, While the Air was Yet Pure
Among the Alps and in the Scotland
and England Which My Father Knew

CHAPTER I

VIOLA

1. Although I have not been able in the preceding volume to complete, in any wise as I desired, the account of the several parts and actions of plants in general, I will not delay any longer our entrance on the examination of particular kinds, though here and there I must interrupt such special study by recurring to general principles, or points of wider interest. But the scope of such larger inquiry will be best seen, and the use of it best felt, by entering now on specific study.

I begin with the Violet, because the arrangement of the group to which it belongs—Cytherides—is more arbitrary than that of the rest, and calls for some immediate explanation.

2. I fear that my readers may expect me to write something very pretty for them about violets: but my time for writing prettily is long past; and it requires some watching over myself, I find, to keep me even from writing querulously. For while, the older I grow, very thankfully I recognize more and more the number of pleasures granted to human eyes in this fair world, I recognize also an increasing sensitiveness in my temper to anything that interferes with them; and a grievous readiness to find fault—always of course submissively, but very articulately—with whatever Nature seems to me not to have managed to the best of her power;—as, for extreme instance, her late arrangements of frost this spring, destroying all the beauty of the wood sorrels; nor am I less inclined, looking to her as the greatest of sculptors and painters, to ask, every time I see a narcissus, why it should be wrapped up in brown paper; and every time I see a violet, what it wants with a spur?

3. What *any* flower wants with a spur, is indeed the simplest and hitherto to me unanswerablest form of the question; nevertheless, when blossoms grow in spires, and are crowded together, and have to grow partly downwards, in order to win their share of light and breeze, one can see some reason for the effort of the petals to expand upwards and backwards also. But that a violet, who has her little stalk to herself, and might grow straight up, if she pleased, should be pleased to do nothing of the sort, but quite gratuitously bend her stalk down at the top, and fasten herself to it by her waist, as it were,—this is so much more like a girl of the period's fancy than a violet's, that I never gather one separately but with renewed astonishment at it.

4. One reason indeed there is, which I never thought of until this moment! a piece of stupidity which I can only pardon myself in, because, as it has chanced, I have studied violets most in gardens, not in their wild haunts,—partly thinking their Athenian honour was as a garden flower; and partly being always fed away from them, among the hills, by flowers which I could see nowhere else. With all excuse I can furbish up, however, it is shameful that the truth of the matter never struck me before, or at least this bit of the truth—as follows.

5. The Greeks, and Milton, alike speak of violets as growing in meadows (or dales). But the Greeks did so because they could not fancy any delight except in meadows; and Milton, because he

wanted a rhyme to nightingale—and, after all, was London bred. But Viola's beloved knew where violets grew in Illyria,—and grow everywhere else also, when they can,—on a *bank*, facing the south.

Just as distinctly as the daisy and buttercup are *meadow* flowers, the violet is a *bank* flower, and would fain grow always on a steep slope, towards the sun. And it is so poised on its stem that it shows, when growing on a slope, the full space and opening of its flower,—not at all, in any strain of modesty, hiding *itself*, though it may easily be, by grass or mossy stone, 'half hidden,'—but, to the full, showing itself, and intending to be lovely and luminous, as fragrant, to the uttermost of its soft power.

Nor merely in its oblique setting on the stalk, but in the reversion of its two upper petals, the flower shows this purpose of being fully seen. (For a flower that *does* hide itself, take a lily of the valley, or the bell of a grape hyacinth, or a cyclamen.) But respecting this matter of petal-reversion, we must now farther state two or three general principles.

6. A perfect or pure flower, as a rose, oxalis, or campanula, is always composed of an unbroken whorl, or corolla, in the form of a disk, cup, bell, or, if it draw together again at the lips, a narrow-necked vase. This cup, bell, or vase, is divided into similar petals, (or segments, which are petals carefully joined,) varying in number from three to eight, and enclosed by a calyx whose sepals are symmetrical also.

An imperfect, or, as I am inclined rather to call it, an 'injured' flower, is one in which some of the petals have inferior office and position, and are either degraded, for the benefit of others, or expanded and honoured at the cost of others.

Of this process, the first and simplest condition is the reversal of the upper petals and elongation of the lower ones, in blossoms set on the side of a clustered stalk. When the change is simply and directly dependent on their position in the cluster, as in *Aurora Regina*,¹ modifying every bell just in proportion as it declines from the perfected central one, some of the loveliest groups of form are produced which can be seen in any inferior organism: but when the irregularity becomes fixed, and the flower is always to the same extent distorted, whatever its position in the cluster, the plant is to be rightly thought of as reduced to a lower rank in creation.

7. It is to be observed, also, that these inferior forms of flower have always the appearance of being produced by some kind of mischief—blight, bite, or ill-breeding; they never suggest the idea of improving themselves, now, into anything better; one is only afraid of their tearing or puffing themselves into something worse. Nay, even the quite natural and simple conditions of inferior vegetable do not in the least suggest, to the unblighted or unblighted human intellect, the notion of development into anything other than their like: one does not expect a mushroom to translate itself into a pineapple, nor a betony to moralize itself into a lily, nor a snapdragon to soften himself into a lilac.

8. It is very possible, indeed, that the recent phrenzy for the investigation of digestive and reproductive operations in plants may by this time have furnished the microscopic malice of botanists with providentially disgusting reasons, or demoniacally nasty necessities, for every possible spur, spike, jag, sting, rent, blotch, flaw, freckle, filth, or venom, which can be detected in the construction, or distilled from the dissolution, of vegetable organism. But with these obscene processes and prurient apparitions the gentle and happy scholar of flowers has nothing whatever to do. I am amazed and saddened, more than I can care to say, by finding how much that is abominable may be discovered by an ill-taught curiosity, in the purest things that earth is allowed to produce for us;—perhaps if we were less reprobate in our own ways, the grass which is our type might conduct itself better, even though *it* has no hope but of being cast into the oven; in the meantime, healthy human eyes and thoughts are to be set on the lovely laws of its growth and habitation, and not on the mean mysteries of its birth.

9. I relieve, therefore, our presently inquiring souls from any farther care as to the reason for a violet's spur,—or for the extremely ugly arrangements of its stamens and style, invisible unless by

¹ Vol. i., p. 212, note.

vexatious and vicious peeping. You are to think of a violet only in its green leaves, and purple or golden petals;—you are to know the varieties of form in both, proper to common species; and in what kind of places they all most fondly live, and most deeply glow.

"And the recreation of the minde which is taken heereby cannot be but verie good and honest, for they admonish and stir up a man to that which is comely and honest. For flowers, through their beautie, varietie of colour, and exquisite forme, do bring to a liberall and gentle manly minde the remembrance of honestie, comeliness, and all kinds of vertues. For it would be an unseemely and filthie thing, as a certain wise man saith, for him that doth looke upon and handle faire and beautiful things, and who frequenteth and is conversant in faire and beautiful places, to have his mind not faire, but filthie and deformed."

10. Thus Gerarde, in the close of his introductory notice of the violet,—speaking of things, (honesty, comeliness, and the like,) scarcely now recognized as desirable in the realm of England; but having previously observed that violets are useful for the making of garlands for the head, and posies to smell to;—in which last function I observe they are still pleasing to the British public: and I found the children here, only the other day, munching a confection of candied violet leaves. What pleasure the flower can still give us, uncandied, and unbound, but in its own place and life, I will try to trace through some of its constant laws.

11. And first, let us be clear that the native colour of the violet *is* violet; and that the white and yellow kinds, though pretty in their place and way, are not to be thought of in generally meditating the flower's quality or power. A white violet is to black ones what a black man is to white ones; and the yellow varieties are, I believe, properly pansies, and belong also to wild districts for the most part; but the true violet, which I have just now called 'black,' with Gerarde, "the blacke or purple violet, hath a great prerogative above others," and all the nobler species of the pansy itself are of full purple, inclining, however, in the ordinary wild violet to blue. In the 'Laws of Fésole,' chap, vii., §§ 20, 21, I have made this dark pansy the representative of purple pure; the *viola odorata*, of the link between that full purple and blue; and the heath-blossom of the link between that full purple and red. The reader will do well, as much as may be possible to him, to associate his study of botany, as indeed all other studies of visible things, with that of painting: but he must remember that he cannot know what violet colour really is, unless he watch the flower in its *early* growth. It becomes dim in age, and dark when it is gathered—at least, when it is tied in bunches;—but I am under the impression that the colour actually deadens also,—at all events, no other single flower of the same quiet colour lights up the ground near it as a violet will. The bright hounds-tongue looks merely like a spot of bright paint; but a young violet glows like painted glass.

12. Which, when you have once well noticed, the two lines of Milton and Shakspeare which seem opposed, will both become clear to you. The said lines are dragged from hand to hand along their pages of pilfered quotations by the hack botanists,—who probably never saw *them*, nor anything else, *in* Shakspeare or Milton in their lives,—till even in reading them where they rightly come, you can scarcely recover their fresh meaning: but none of the botanists ever think of asking why Perdita calls the violet 'dim,' and Milton 'glowing.'

Perdita, indeed, calls it dim, at that moment, in thinking of her own love, and the hidden passion of it, unspeakable; nor is Milton without some purpose of using it as an emblem of love, mourning,—but, in both cases, the subdued and quiet hue of the flower as an actual tint of colour, and the strange force and life of it as a part of light, are felt to their uttermost.

And observe, also, that both, of the poets contrast the violet, in its softness, with the intense marking of the pansy. Milton makes the opposition directly—

"the pansy, freaked with jet,
The glowing violet."

Shakspeare shows yet stronger sense of the difference, in the "purple with Love's wound" of the pansy, while the violet is sweet with Love's hidden life, and sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes.

Whereupon, we may perhaps consider with ourselves a little, what the difference *is* between a violet and a pansy?

13. Is, I say, and was, and is to come,—in spite of florists, who try to make pansies round, instead of pentagonal; and of the wise classifying people, who say that violets and pansies are the same thing—and that neither of them are of much interest! As, for instance, Dr. Lindley in his 'Ladies' Botany.'

"Violets—sweet Violets, and Pansies, or Heartsease, represent a small family, with the structure of which you should be familiar; more, however, for the sake of its singularity than for its extent or importance, for the family is a very small one, and there are but few species belonging to it in which much interest is taken. As the parts of the Heartsease are larger than those of the Violet, let us select the former in preference for the subject of our study." Whereupon we plunge instantly into the usual account of things with horns and tails. "The stamens are five in number—two of them, which are in front of the others, are hidden within the horn of the front petal," etc., etc., etc. (Note in passing, by the '*horn of the front*' petal he means the '*spur of the bottom*' one, which indeed does stand in front of the rest,—but if therefore *it* is to be called the *front* petal—which is the back one?) You may find in the next paragraph description of a "singular conformation," and the interesting conclusion that "no one has yet discovered for what purpose this singular conformation was provided." But you will not, in the entire article, find the least attempt to tell you the difference between a violet and a pansy!—except in one statement—and *that* false! "The sweet violet will have no rival among flowers, if we merely seek for delicate fragrance; but her sister, the heartsease, who is destitute of all sweetness, far surpasses her in rich dresses and *gaudy!!!* colours." The heartsease is not without sweetness. There are sweet pansies scented, and dog pansies unscented—as there are sweet violets scented, and dog violets unscented. What is the real difference?

14. I turn to another scientific gentleman—*more* scientific in form indeed, Mr. Grindon,—and find, for another interesting phenomenon in the violet, that it sometimes produces flowers without any petals! and in the pansy, that "the flowers turn towards the sun, and when many are open at once, present a droll appearance, looking like a number of faces all on the 'qui vive.'" But nothing of the difference between them, except something about 'stipules,' of which "it is important to observe that the leaves should be taken from the middle of the stem—those above and below being variable."

I observe, however, that Mr. Grindon *has* arranged his violets under the letter A, and his pansies under the letter B, and that something may be really made out of him, with an hour or two's work. I am content, however, at present, with his simplifying assurance that of violet and pansy together, "six species grow wild in Britain—or, as some believe, only four—while the analysts run the number up to fifteen."

15. Next I try Loudon's Cyclopædia, which, through all its 700 pages, is equally silent on the business; and next, Mr. Baxter's 'British Flowering Plants,' in the index of which I find neither Pansy nor Heartsease, and only the 'Calathian' Violet, (where on earth is Calathia?) which proves, on turning it up, to be a Gentian.

16. At last, I take my Figuier, (but what should I do if I only knew English?) and find this much of clue to the matter:—

"Qu'est ce que c'est que la Pensée? Cette jolie plante appartient aussi au genre Viola, mais à un section de ce genre. En effet, dans les Pensées, les pétales supérieurs et lateraux sont dirigés en haut, l'inférieur seul est dirigé en bas: et de plus, le stigmate est urcéole, globuleux."

And farther, this general description of the whole violet tribe, which I translate, that we may have its full value:—

"The violet is a plant without a stem (tige),—(see vol. i., p. 154,)—whose height does not surpass one or two decimetres. Its leaves, radical, or carried on stolons, (vol. i., p. 158,) are sharp,

or oval, crenulate, or heart-shape. Its stipules are oval-acuminate, or lanceolate. Its flowers, of sweet scent, of a dark violet or a reddish blue, are carried each on a slender peduncle, which bends down at the summit. Such is, for the botanist, the Violet, of which the poets would give assuredly another description."

17. Perhaps; or even the painters! or even an ordinary unbotanical human creature! I must set about my business, at any rate, in my own way, now, as I best can, looking first at things themselves, and then putting this and that together, out of these botanical persons, which they can't put together out of themselves. And first, I go down into my kitchen garden, where the path to the lake has a border of pansies on both sides all the way down, with clusters of narcissus behind them. And pulling up a handful of pansies by the roots, I find them "without stems," indeed, if a stem means a wooden thing; but I should say, for a low-growing flower, quiet lankily and disagreeably stalky! And, thinking over what I remember about wild pansies, I find an impression on my mind of their being rather more stalky, always, than is quite graceful; and, for all their fine flowers, having rather a weedy and littery look, and getting into places where they have no business. See, again, vol. i., chap. vi., § 5.

18. And now, going up into my flower and fruit garden, I find (June 2nd, 1881, half-past six, morning.) among the wild saxifrages, which are allowed to grow wherever they like, and the rock strawberries, and Francescas, which are coaxed to grow wherever there is a bit of rough ground for them, a bunch or two of pale pansies, or violets, I don't know well which, by the flower; but the entire company of them has a ragged, jagged, unpurpose-like look; extremely,—I should say,—demoralizing to all the little plants in their neighbourhood: and on gathering a flower, I find it is a nasty big thing, all of a feeble blue, and with two things like horns, or thorns, sticking out where its ears would be, if the pansy's frequently monkey face were underneath them. Which I find to be two of the leaves of its calyx 'out of place,' and, at all events, for their part, therefore, weedy, and insolent.

19. I perceive, farther, that this disorderly flower is lifted on a lanky, awkward, springless, and yet stiff flower-stalk; which is not round, as a flower-stalk ought to be, (vol. i., p. 155.) but obstinately square, and fluted, with projecting edges, like a pillar run thin out of an iron-foundry for a cheap railway station. I perceive also that it has set on it, just before turning down to carry the flower, two little jaggy and indefinable leaves,—their colour a little more violet than the blossom.

These, and such undeveloping leaves, wherever they occur, are called 'bracts' by botanists, a good word, from the Latin 'bractea,' meaning a piece of metal plate, so thin as to crackle. They seem always a little stiff, like bad parchment,—born to come to nothing—a sort of infinitesimal fairy-lawyer's deed. They ought to have been in my index at p. 255, under the head of leaves, and are frequent in flower structure,—never, as far as one can see, of the smallest use. They are constant, however, in the flower-stalk of the whole violet tribe.

20. I perceive, farther, that this lanky flower-stalk, bending a little in a crabbed, broken way, like an obstinate person tired, pushes itself up out of a still more stubborn, nondescript, hollow angular, dogseared gas-pipe of a stalk, with a section something like this,





but no bigger than with a quantity of ill-made and ill-hemmed leaves on it, of no describable leaf-cloth or texture,—not cressic, (though the thing does altogether look a good deal like a quite uneatable old watercress); not salvian, for there's no look of warmth or comfort in them; not cauline, for there's no juice in them; not dryad, for there's no strength in them, nor apparent use: they seem only there, as far as I can make out, to spoil the flower, and take the good out of my garden bed. Nobody in the world could draw them, they are so mixed up together, and crumpled and hacked about, as if some ill-natured child had snipped them with blunt scissors, and an ill-natured cow chewed them a little afterwards and left them, proved for too tough or too bitter.

21. Having now sufficiently observed, it seems to me, this incongruous plant, I proceed to ask myself, over it, M. Figuiet's question, 'Qu'est-ce c'est qu'un Pensée?' Is this a violet—or a pansy—or a bad imitation of both?

Whereupon I try if it has any scent: and to my much surprise, find it has a full and soft one—which I suppose is what my gardener keeps it for! According to Dr. Lindley, then, it must be a violet! But according to M. Figuiet,—let me see, do its middle petals bend up, or down?

I think I'll go and ask the gardener what *he* calls it.

22. My gardener, on appeal to him, tells me it is the 'Viola Cornuta,' but that he does not know himself if it is violet or pansy. I take my Loudon again, and find there were fifty-three species of violets, known in his days, of which, as it chances, Cornuta is exactly the last.

'Horned violet': I said the green things were *like* horns!—but what is one to say of, or to do to, scientific people, who first call the spur of the violet's petal, horn, and then its calyx points, horns, and never define a 'horn' all the while!

Viola Cornuta, however, let it be; for the name does mean *something*, and is not false Latin. But whether violet or pansy, I must look farther to find out.

23. I take the Flora Danica, in which I at least am sure of finding whatever is done at all, done as well as honesty and care can; and look what species of violets it gives.

Nine, in the first ten volumes of it; four in their modern sequel (that I know of,—I have had no time to examine the last issues). Namely, in alphabetical order, with their present Latin, or tentative Latin, names; and in plain English, the senses intended by the hapless scientific people, in such their tentative Latin:—

(1)	Viola Arvensis.	Field (Violet)	No. 1748
(2)	" Biflora.	Two-flowered	46
(3)	" Canina.	Dog	1453
(3b)	" Canina.	Var. Multicaulus (many-stemmed), a very singular sort of violet—if it were so! Its real difference from our dog-violet is in being pale blue, and having a golden centre	2646
(4)	" Hirta.	Hairy	618
(5)	" Mirabilis.	Marvellous	1045
(6)	" Montana.	Mountain	1329
(7)	" Odorata.	Odorous	309
(8)	" Palustris.	Marshy	83
(9)	" Tricolor.	Three-coloured	623
(9B)	" Tricolor.	Var. Arenaria, Sandy Three-coloured	2647
(10)	" Elatior.	Taller	68
(11)	" Epijsila.	(Heaven knows what: it is Greek, not Latin, and looks as if it meant something between a bishop and a short letter e)	2405

I next run down this list, noting what names we can keep, and what we can't; and what aren't worth keeping, if we could: passing over the varieties, however, for the present, wholly.

(1) Arvensis. Field-violet. Good.

(2) Biflora. A good epithet, but in false Latin. It is to be our *Viola aurea*, golden pansy.

(3) Canina. Dog. Not pretty, but intelligible, and by common use now classical. Must stay.

(4) Hirta. Late Latin slang for *hirsuta*, and always used of nasty places or nasty people; it shall not stay. The species shall be our *Viola Seclusa*,—Monk's violet—meaning the kind of monk who leads a rough life like Elijah's, or the Baptist's, or Esau's—in another kind. This violet is one of the loveliest that grows.

(5) Mirabilis. Stays so; marvellous enough, truly: not more so than all violets; but I am very glad to hear of scientific people capable of admiring anything.

(6) Montana. Stays so.

(7) *Odorata*. Not distinctive;—nearly classical, however. It is to be our *Viola Regina*, else I should not have altered it.

(8) *Palustris*. Stays so.

(9) *Tricolor*. True, but intolerable. The flower is the queen of the true pansies: to be our *Viola Psyche*.

(10) *Elatior*. Only a variety of our already accepted *Cornuta*.

(11) The last is, I believe, also only a variety of *Palustris*. Its leaves, I am informed in the text, are either "pubescent-reticulate-venose-subreniform," or "lato-cordate-repando-crenate;" and its stipules are "ovate-acuminate-fimbriato-denticulate." I do not wish to pursue the inquiry farther.

24. These ten species will include, noting here and there a local variety, all the forms which are familiar to us in Northern Europe, except only two;—these, as it singularly chances, being the *Viola Alpium*, noblest of all the wild pansies in the world, so far as I have seen or heard of them, —of which, consequently, I find no picture, nor notice, in any botanical work whatsoever; and the other, the rock-violet of our own Yorkshire hills.

We have therefore, ourselves, finally then, twelve following species to study. I give them now all in their accepted names and proper order,—the reasons for occasional difference between the Latin and English name will be presently given.

(1)	<i>Viola Regina</i> .	Queen violet.
(2)	" <i>Psyche</i> .	Ophelia's pansy.
(3)	" <i>Alpium</i> .	Freneli's pansy.
(4)	" <i>Aurea</i> .	Golden violet.
(5)	" <i>Montana</i> .	Mountain Violet.
(6)	" <i>Mirabilis</i> .	Marvellous violet.
(7)	" <i>Arvensis</i> .	Field violet.
(8)	" <i>Palustris</i> .	Marsh violet.
(9)	" <i>Seclusa</i> .	Monk's violet.
(10)	" <i>Canina</i> .	Dog violet.
(11)	" <i>Cornuta</i> .	Cow violet.
(12)	" <i>Rupestris</i> .	Crag violet.

25. We will try, presently, what is to be found out of useful, or pretty, concerning all these twelve violets; but must first find out how we are to know which are violets indeed, and which, pansies.

Yesterday, after finishing my list, I went out again to examine *Viola Cornuta* a little closer, and pulled up a full grip of it by the roots, and put it in water in a wash-hand basin, which it filled like a truss of green hay.

Pulling out two or three separate plants, I find each to consist mainly of a jointed stalk of a kind I have not yet described,—roughly, some two feet long altogether; (accurately, one 1 ft. 10½ in.; another, 1 ft. 10 in.; another, 1 ft. 9 in.—but all these measures taken without straightening, and

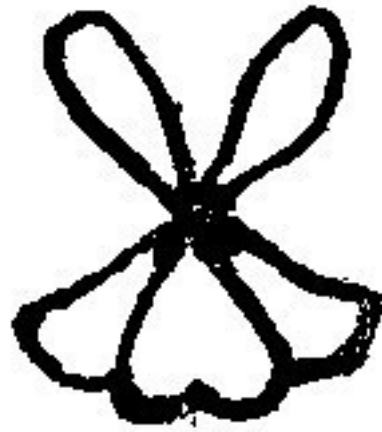
therefore about an inch short of the truth), and divided into seven or eight lengths by clumsy joints where the mangled leafage is knotted on it; but broken a little out of the way at each joint, like a rheumatic elbow that won't come straight, or bend farther; and—which is the most curious point of all in it—it is thickest in the middle, like a viper, and gets quite thin to the root and thin towards the flower; also the lengths between the joints are longest in the middle: here I give them in inches, from the root upwards, in a stalk taken at random.

1st (nearest root)	$0\frac{3}{4}$
2nd	$0\frac{3}{4}$
3rd	$1\frac{1}{2}$
4th	$1\frac{3}{4}$
5th	3
6th	4
7th	$3\frac{1}{4}$
8th	3
9th	$2\frac{1}{4}$
10th	$1\frac{1}{2}$
	1 ft. $9\frac{3}{4}$ in.

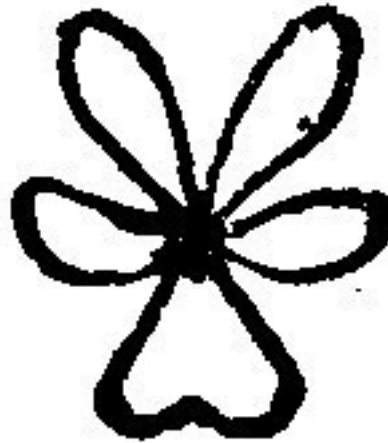
But the thickness of the joints and length of terminal flower stalk bring the total to two feet and about an inch over. I dare not pull it straight, or should break it, but it overlaps my two-foot rule considerably, and there are two inches besides of root, which are merely underground stem, very thin and wretched, as the rest of it is merely root above ground, very thick and bloated. (I begin actually to be a little awed at it, as I should be by a green snake—only the snake would be prettier.)

The flowers also, I perceive, have not their two horns regularly set *in*, but the five spiky calyx-ends stick out between the petals—sometimes three, sometimes four, it may be all five up and down—and produce variously fanged or forked effects, feebly ophidian or diabolic. On the whole, a plant entirely mismanaging itself,—reprehensible and awkward, with taints of worse than awkwardness; and clearly, no true 'species,' but only a link.² And it really is, as you will find presently, a link in two directions; it is half violet, half pansy, a 'cur' among the Dogs, and a thoughtless thing among the thoughtful. And being so, it is also a link between the entire violet tribe and the Runners—pease, strawberries, and the like, whose glory is in their speed; but a violet has no business whatever to run anywhere, being appointed to stay where it was born, in extremely contented (if not secluded) places. "Half-hidden from the eye?"—no; but desiring attention, or extension, or corpulence, or connection with anybody else's family, still less.

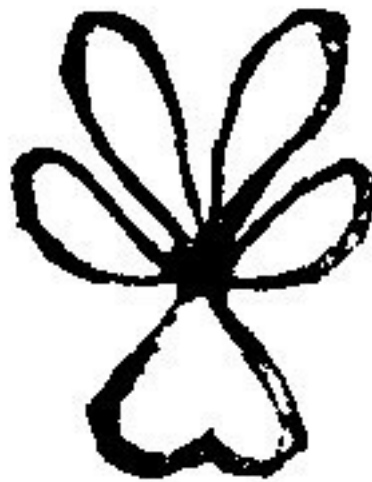
² See 'Deucalion,' vol. ii., chap. i., p. 12, § 18.



A



B



C

FIG. II.

26. And if, at the time you read this, you can run out and gather a *true* violet, and its leaf, you will find that the flower grows from the very ground, out of a cluster of heart-shaped leaves, becoming here a little rounder, there a little sharper, but on the whole heart-shaped, and that is the proper and essential form of the violet leaf. You will find also that the flower has five petals; and being held down by the bent stalk, two of them bend back and up, as if resisting it; two expand at the sides; and one, the principal, grows downwards, with its attached spur behind. So that the front view of the flower must be *some* modification of this typical arrangement, Fig. M, (for middle form). Now the statement above quoted from Figuier, § 16, means, if he had been able to express himself, that the two lateral petals in the violet are directed downwards, Fig. II. A, and in the pansy upwards, Fig. II. C. And that, in the main, is true, and to be fixed well and clearly in your mind. But in the real orders, one flower passes into the other through all kinds of intermediate positions of petal, and the plurality of species are of the middle type. Fig. II. B.³

27. Next, if you will gather a real pansy *leaf*, you will find it—not heart-shape in the least, but sharp oval or spear-shape, with two deep cloven lateral flakes at its springing from the stalk, which, in ordinary aspect, give the plant the haggled and draggled look I have been vilifying it for. These, and such as these, "leaflets at the base of other leaves" (Balfour's Glossary), are called by botanists 'stipules.' I have not allowed the word yet, and am doubtful of allowing it, because it entirely confuses the student's sense of the Latin 'stipula' (see above, vol. i., chap. viii., § 27) doubly and trebly important in its connection with 'stipulor,' not noticed in that paragraph, but readable in your large Johnson; we shall have more to say of it when we come to 'straw' itself.

28. In the meantime, one *may* think of these things as stipulations for leaves, not fulfilled, or 'stumps' or 'sumphs' of leaves! But I think I can do better for them. We have already got the idea of *crested* leaves, (see vol. i., plate); now, on each side of a knight's crest, from earliest Etruscan times down to those of the Scalas, the fashion of armour held, among the nations who wished to make themselves terrible in aspect, of putting cut plates or 'bracts' of metal, like dragons' wings, on each side of the crest. I believe the custom never became Norman or English; it is essentially Greek, Etruscan, or Italian,—the Norman and Dane always wearing a practical cone (see the coins of Canute), and the Frank or English knights the severely plain beavered helmet; the Black Prince's at Canterbury, and Henry V.'s at Westminster, are kept hitherto by the great fates for us to see. But the Southern knights constantly wore these lateral dragon's wings; and if I can find their special name, it may perhaps be substituted with advantage for 'stipule'; but I have not wit enough by me just now to invent a term.

29. Whatever we call them, the things themselves are, throughout all the species of violets, developed in the running and weedy varieties, and much subdued in the beautiful ones; and generally the pansies have them, large, with spear-shaped central leaves; and the violets small, with heart-shaped leaves, for more effective decoration of the ground. I now note the characters of each species in their above given order.

30. I. VIOLA REGINA. Queen Violet. Sweet Violet. 'Viola Odorata,' L., Flora Danica, and Sowerby. The latter draws it with golden centre and white base of lower petal; the Flora Danica, all purple. It is sometimes altogether white. It is seen most perfectly for setting off its colour, in group with primrose,—and most luxuriantly, so far as I know, in hollows of the Savoy limestones, associated with the pervenche, which embroiders and illumines them all over. I believe it is the earliest of its race, sometimes called 'Martia,' March violet. In Greece and South Italy even a flower of the winter.

"The Spring is come, the violet's *gone*,
The first-born child of the early sun.

³ I am ashamed to give so rude outlines; but every moment now is valuable to me: careful outline of a dog-violet is given in Plate X.

With us, she is but a winter's flower;
The snow on the hills cannot blast her bower,
And she lifts up her dewy eye of blue
To the youngest sky of the selfsame hue.

And when the Spring comes, with her host
Of flowers, that flower beloved the most
Shrinks from the crowd that may confuse
Her heavenly odour, and virgin hues.

Pluck the others, but still remember
Their herald out of dim December,—
The morning star of all the flowers,
The pledge of daylight's lengthened hours,
Nor, midst the roses, e'er forget
The virgin, virgin violet."⁴

3. It is the queen, not only of the violet tribe, but of all low-growing flowers, in sweetness of scent—variously applicable and serviceable in domestic economy:—the scent of the lily of the valley seems less capable of preservation or use.

But, respecting these perpetual beneficences and benignities of the sacred, as opposed to the malignant, herbs, whose poisonous power is for the most part restrained in them, during their life, to their juices or dust, and not allowed sensibly to pollute the air, I should like the scholar to re-read pp. 251, 252 of vol. i., and then to consider with himself what a grotesquely warped and gnarled thing the modern scientific mind is, which fiercely busies itself in venomous chemistries that blast every leaf from the forests ten miles round; and yet cannot tell us, nor even think of telling us, nor does even one of its pupils think of asking it all the while, how a violet throws off her perfume!—far less, whether it might not be more wholesome to 'treat' the air which men are to breathe in masses, by administration of vale-lilies and violets, instead of charcoal and sulphur!

The closing sentence of the first volume just now referred to—p.254—should also be re-read; it was the sum of a chapter I had in hand at that time on the Substances and Essences of Plants—which never got finished;—and in trying to put it into small space, it has become obscure: the terms "logically inexplicable" meaning that no words or process of comparison will define scents, nor do any traceable modes of sequence or relation connect them; each is an independent power, and gives a separate impression to the senses. Above all, there is no logic of pleasure, nor any assignable reason for the difference, between loathsome and delightful scent, which makes the fungus foul and the vervain sacred: but one practical conclusion I (who am in all final ways the most prosaic and practical of human creatures) do very solemnly beg my readers to meditate; namely, that although not recognized by actual offensiveness of scent, there is no space of neglected land which is not in some way modifying the atmosphere of *all the world*,—it may be, beneficently, as heath and pine, —it may be, malignantly, as Pontine marsh or Brazilian jungle; but, in one way or another, for good and evil constantly, by day and night, the various powers of life and death in the plants of the desert are poured into the air, as vials of continual angels: and that no words, no thoughts can measure, nor imagination follow, the possible change for good which energetic and tender care of the wild herbs of the field and trees of the wood might bring, in time, to the bodily pleasure and mental power of Man.

⁴ A careless bit of Byron's, (the last song but one in the 'Deformed Transformed'); but Byron's most careless work is better, by its innate energy, than other people's most laboured. I suppress, in some doubts about my 'digamma,' notes on the Greek violet and the Ion of Euripides;—which the reader will perhaps be good enough to fancy a serious loss to him, and supply for himself.

32. II. VIOLA PSYCHE. Ophelia's Pansy.

The wild heart's-ease of Europe; its proper colour an exquisitely clear purple in the upper petals, gradated into deep blue in the lower ones; the centre, gold. Not larger than a violet, but perfectly formed, and firmly set in all its petals. Able to live in the driest ground; beautiful in the coast sand-hills of Cumberland, following the wild geranium and burnet rose: and distinguished thus by its power of life, in waste and dry places, from the violet, which needs kindly earth and shelter.

Quite one of the most lovely things that Heaven has made, and only degraded and distorted by any human interference; the swollen varieties of it produced by cultivation being all gross in outline and coarse in colour by comparison.

It is badly drawn even in the 'Flora Danica,' No. 623, considered there apparently as a species escaped from gardens; the description of it being as follows:—

"Viola tricolor hortensis repens, flore purpureo et cœruleo, C.B.P., 199." (I don't know what C.B.P. means.) "Passim, juxta villas."

"Viola tricolor, caule triquetro diffuso, foliis oblongis incis, stipulis pinnatifidis," Linn. Systema Naturæ, 185.

33. "Near the country farms"—does the Danish botanist mean?—the more luxuriant weedy character probably acquired by it only in such neighbourhood; and, I suppose, various confusion and degeneration possible to it beyond other plants when once it leaves its wild home. It is given by Sibthorpe from the Trojan Olympus, with an exquisitely delicate leaf; the flower described as "triste et pallide violaceus," but coloured in his plate full purple; and as he does not say whether he went up Olympus to gather it himself, or only saw it brought down by the assistant whose lovely drawings are yet at Oxford, I take leave to doubt his epithets. That this should be the only Violet described in a 'Flora Græca' extending to ten folio volumes, is a fact in modern scientific history which I must leave the Professor of Botany and the Dean of Christ Church to explain.

34. The English varieties seem often to be yellow in the lower petals, (see Sowerby's plate, 1287 of the old edition), crossed, I imagine, with Viola Aurea, (but see under Viola Rupestris, No. 12); the names, also, varying between tricolor and bicolor—with no note anywhere of the three colours, or two colours, intended!

The old English names are many.—'Love in idleness,'—making Lysander, as Titania, much wandering in mind, and for a time mere 'Kits run the street' (or run the wood?)—"Call me to you" (Gerarde, ch. 299, Sowerby, No. 178), with 'Herb Trinity,' from its three colours, blue, purple, and gold, variously blended in different countries? 'Three faces under a hood' describes the English variety only. Said to be the ancestress of all the florists' pansies, but this I much doubt, the next following species being far nearer the forms most chiefly sought for.

35. III. VIOLA ALPINA. 'Freneli's Pansy'—my own name for it, from Gotthelf's Freneli, in 'Ulric the Farmer'; the entirely pure and noble type of the Bernese maid, wife, and mother.

The pansy of the Wengern Alp in specialty, and of the higher, but still rich, Alpine pastures. Full dark-purple; at least an inch across the expanded petals; I believe, the 'Mater Violarum' of Gerarde; and true black violet of Virgil, remaining in Italian 'Viola Mammola' (Gerarde, ch. 298).

36. IV. VIOLA AUREA. Golden Violet. Biflora usually; but its brilliant yellow is a much more definite characteristic; and needs insisting on, because there is a 'Viola lutea' which is not yellow at all; named so by the garden florists. My Viola aurea is the Rock-violet of the Alps; one of the bravest, brightest, and dearest of little flowers. The following notes upon it, with its summer companions, a little corrected from my diary of 1877, will enough characterize it.

"June 7th.—The cultivated meadows now grow only dandelions—in frightful quantity too; but, for wild ones, primula, bell gentian, golden pansy, and anemone,—Primula farinosa in mass, the pansy pointing and vivifying in a petulant sweet way, and the bell gentian here and there deepening all,—as if indeed the sound of a deep bell among lighter music.

"Counted in order, I find the effectively constant flowers are eight;⁵ namely,

"1. The golden anemone, with richly cut large leaf; primrose colour, and in masses like primrose, studded through them with bell gentian, and dark purple orchis.

"2. The dark purple orchis, with bell gentian in equal quantity, say six of each in square yard, broken by sparklings of the white orchis and the white grass-flower; the richest piece of colour I ever saw, touched with gold by the geum.

"3 and 4. These will be white orchis and the grass flower.⁶

"5. Geum—everywhere, in deep, but pure, gold, like pieces of Greek mosaic.

"6. Soldanella, in the lower meadows, delicate, but not here in masses.

"7. Primula Alpina, divine in the rock clefts, and on the ledges changing the grey to purple, —set in the dripping caves with

"8. Viola (pertenax—pert); I want a Latin word for various studies—failures all—to express its saucy little stuck-up way, and exquisitely trim peltate leaf. I never saw such a lovely perspective line as the pure front leaf profile. Impossible also to get the least of the spirit of its lovely dark brown fibre markings. Intensely golden these dark fibres, just browning the petal a little between them."

And again in the defile of Gondo, I find "Viola (saxatilis?) name yet wanted;—in the most delicate studding of its round leaves, like a small fern more than violet, and bright sparkle of small flowers in the dark dripping hollows. Assuredly delights in shade and distilling moisture of rocks."

I found afterwards a much larger yellow pansy on the Yorkshire high limestones; with vigorously black crowfoot marking on the lateral petals.

37. V. VIOLA MONTANA. Mountain Violet.

Flora Danica, 1329. Linnæus, No. 13, "Caulibus erectis, foliis cordato-lanceolatis, floribus serioribus apetalis," *i.e.*, on erect stems, with leaves long heart-shape, and its later flowers without petals—not a word said of its earlier flowers which have got those unimportant appendages! In the plate of the Flora it is a very perfect transitional form between violet and pansy, with beautifully firm and well-curved leaves, but the colour of blossom very pale. "In subalpinis Norvegiæ passim," all that we are told of it, means I suppose, in the lower Alpine pastures of Norway; in the Flora Suecica, p. 306, habitat in Lapponica, juxta Alpes.

38. VI. VIOLA MIRABILIS. Flora Danica, 1045. A small and exquisitely formed flower in the balanced cinquefoil intermediate between violet and pansy, but with large and superbly curved and pointed leaves. It is a mountain violet, but belonging rather to the mountain woods than meadows. "In sylvaticis in Toten, Norvegiæ."

Loudon, 3056, "Broad-leaved: Germany."

Linnæus, Flora Suecica, 789, says that the flowers of it which have perfect corolla and full scent often bear no seed, but that the later 'cauline' blossoms, without petals, are fertile. "Caulini vero apetalii fertiles sunt, et seriores. Habitat passim Upsaliæ."

I find this, and a plurality of other species, indicated by Linnæus as having triangular stalks, "caule triquetro," meaning, I suppose, the kind sketched in Figure 1 above.

39. VII. VIOLA ARVENSIS. Field Violet. Flora Danica, 1748. A coarse running weed; nearly like Viola Cornuta, but feebly lilac and yellow in colour. In dry fields, and with corn.

Flora Suecica, 791; under titles of Viola 'tricolor' and 'bicolor arvensis,' and Herba Trinitatis. Habitat ubique in *sterilibus* arvis: "Planta vix datur in qua evidentius perspicitur generationis opus, quam in hujus cavo apertoque stigmati."

It is quite undeterminable, among present botanical instructors, how far this plant is only a rampant and over-indulged condition of the true pansy (Viola Psyche); but my own scholars are to

⁵ Nine; I see that I missed count of *P. farinosa*, the most abundant of all.

⁶ "A feeble little quatrefoil—growing one on the stem, like a Parnassia, and looking like a Parnassia that had dropped a leaf. I think it drops one of its own four, mostly, and lives as three-fourths of itself, for most of its time. Stamens pale gold. Root-leaves, three or four, grass-like; growing among the moist moss chiefly."

remember that the true pansy is full purple and blue with golden centre; and that the disorderly field varieties of it, if indeed not scientifically distinguishable, are entirely separate from the wild flower by their scattered form and faded or altered colour. I follow the *Flora Danica* in giving them as a distinct species.

40. VIII. VIOLA PALUSTRIS. Marsh Violet. *Flora Danica*, 83. As there drawn, the most finished and delicate in form of all the violet tribe; warm white, streaked with red; and as pure in outline as an oxalis, both in flower and leaf: it is like a violet imitating oxalis and anagallis.

In the *Flora Suecica*, the petal-markings are said to be black; in '*Viola lactea*' a connected species, (Sowerby, 45,) purple. Sowerby's plate of it under the name '*palustris*' is pale purple veined with darker; and the spur is said to be 'honey-bearing,' which is the first mention I find of honey in the violet. The habitat given, sandy and turfy heaths. It is said to grow plentifully near Croydon.

Probably, therefore, a violet belonging to the chalk, on which nearly all herbs that grow wild—from the grass to the bluebell—are singularly sweet and pure. I hope some of my botanical scholars will take up this question of the effect of different rocks on vegetation, not so much in bearing different species of plants, as different characters of each species.⁷

41. IX. VIOLA SECLUSA. Monk's Violet. "*Hirta*," *Flora Danica*, 618, "*In fruticetis raro*." A true wood violet, full but dim in purple. Sowerby, 894, makes it paler. The leaves very pure and severe in the Danish one;—longer in the English. "*Clothed on both sides with short, dense, hoary hairs*."

Also belongs to chalk or limestone only (Sowerby).

X. VIOLA CANINA. Dog Violet. I have taken it for analysis in my two plates, because its grace of form is too much despised, and we owe much more of the beauty of spring to it, in English mountain ground, than to the *Regina*.

XI. VIOLA CORNUTA. Cow Violet. Enough described already.

XII. VIOLA RUPESTRIS. Crag Violet. On the high limestone moors of Yorkshire, perhaps only an English form of *Viola Aurea*, but so much larger, and so different in habit—growing on dry breezy downs, instead of in dripping caves—that I allow it, for the present, separate name and number.⁸

42. 'For the present,' I say all this work in '*Proserpina*' being merely tentative, much to be modified by future students, and therefore quite different from that of '*Deucalion*,' which is authoritative as far as it reaches, and will stand out like a quartz dyke, as the sandy speculations of modern gossiping geologists get washed away.

But in the meantime, I must again solemnly warn my girl-readers against all study of floral genesis and digestion. How far flowers invite, or require, flies to interfere in their family affairs—which of them are carnivorous—and what forms of pestilence or infection are most favourable to some vegetable and animal growths,—let them leave the people to settle who like, as *Toinette* says of the Doctor in the '*Malade Imaginaire*'—"y mettre le nez." I observe a paper in the last '*Contemporary Review*,' announcing for a discovery patent to all mankind that the colours of flowers were made "to attract insects!"⁹ They will next hear that the rose was made for the canker, and the body of man for the worm.

43. What the colours of flowers, or of birds, or of precious stones, or of the sea and air, and the blue mountains, and the evening and the morning, and the clouds of Heaven, were given for—they only know who can see them and can feel, and who pray that the sight and the love of them may be prolonged, where cheeks will not fade, nor sunsets die.

⁷ The great work of Lecoq, '*Geographic Botanique*,' is of priceless value; but treats all on too vast a scale for our purposes.

⁸ It is, I believe, Sowerby's *Viola Lutea*, 721 of the old edition, there painted with purple upper petals; but he says in the text, "Petals either all yellow, or the two uppermost are of a blue purple, the rest yellow with a blue tinge: very often the whole are purple."

⁹ Did the wretch never hear bees in a lime tree then, or ever see one on a star gentian?

44. And now, to close, let me give you some fuller account of the reasons for the naming of the order to which the violet belongs, 'Cytherides.'

You see that the Uranides, are, as far as I could so gather them, of the pure blue of the sky; but the Cytherides of altered blue;—the first, Viola, typically purple; the second, Veronica, pale blue with a peculiar light; the third, Giulietta, deep blue, passing strangely into a subdued green before and after the full life of the flower.

All these three flowers have great strangenesses in them, and weaknesses; the Veronica most wonderful in its connection with the poisonous tribe of the foxgloves; the Giulietta, alone among flowers in the action of the shielding leaves; and the Viola, grotesque and inexplicable in its hidden structure, but the most sacred of all flowers to earthly and daily Love, both in its scent and glow.

Now, therefore, let us look completely for the meaning of the two leading lines,—

"Sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath."

45. Since, in my present writings, I hope to bring into one focus the pieces of study fragmentarily given during past life, I may refer my readers to the first chapter of the 'Queen of the Air' for the explanation of the way in which all great myths are founded, partly on physical, partly on moral fact,—so that it is not possible for persons who neither know the aspect of nature, nor the constitution of the human soul, to understand a word of them. Naming the Greek gods, therefore, you have first to think of the physical power they represent. When Horace calls Vulcan 'Avidus,' he thinks of him as the power of Fire; when he speaks of Jupiter's red right hand, he thinks of him as the power of rain with lightning; and when Homer speaks of Juno's dark eyes, you have to remember that she is the softer form of the rain power, and to think of the fringes of the rain-cloud across the light of the horizon. Gradually the idea becomes personal and human in the "Dove's eyes within thy locks,"¹⁰

¹⁰ Septuagint, "the eyes of doves out of thy silence." Vulgate, "the eyes of doves, besides that which is hidden in them." Meaning—the *dim* look of love, beyond all others in sweetness.

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