

Guild Caroline Snowden

Violet: A Fairy Story



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Содержание

VIOLET: A FAIRY STORY	5
CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	7
CHAPTER III.	9
CHAPTER IV.	10
CHAPTER V.	11
CHAPTER VI.	12
CHAPTER VII.	13
CHAPTER VIII.	14
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	15

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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 than 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?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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