

The Project Gutenberg eBook of How the Fairy Violet Lost and Won Her Wings

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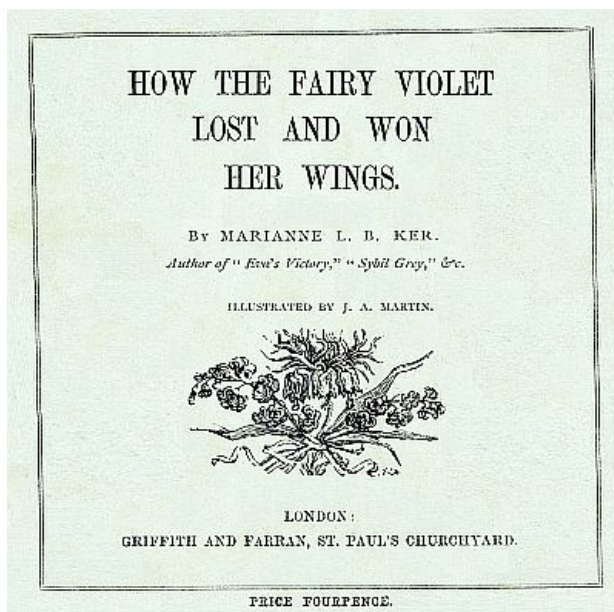
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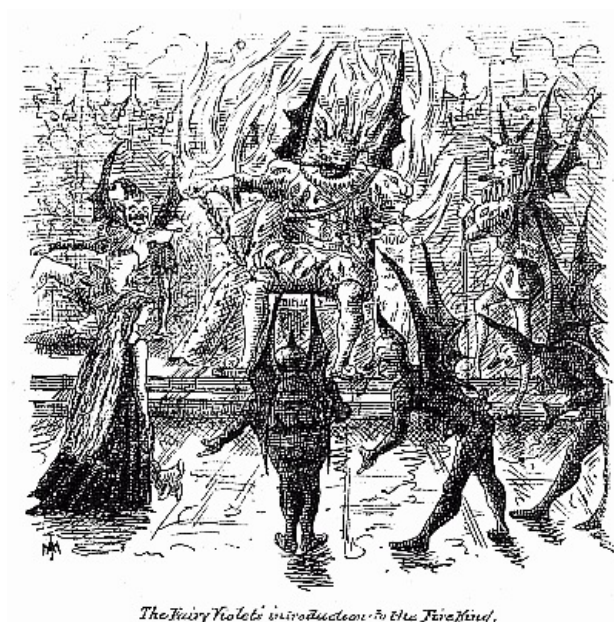
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HOW THE FAIRY VIOLET

LOST AND WON ON HER WINGS.



The Fairy Violet lived in the heart of a beautiful forest, where, through the glad spring months, the sun shone softly, and the bright flowers bloomed, and now and then the gentle rain fell in silver drops that made every green thing on which they rested fresher and more beautiful still. At the foot of a stately oak nestled a clump of violets, and it was there the wee fairy made her home. She wore a robe of deep violet, and her wings, which were of the most delicate gauze, glistened like dew-drops in the sun. All day long she was busy at work tending her flowers, bathing them in the fresh morning dew, painting them anew with her delicate fairy brush, or loosening the clay when it pressed too heavily upon their fragile roots; and at night she joined the elves in their merry dance upon the greensward. She was not alone in the great forest; near her were many of her sister fairies, all old friends and playmates. There was the Fairy Primrose in a gown of pale yellow, and Cowslip, who wore a robe of the same colour, but of a deeper shade. There was the graceful Bluebell, and the wild Anemone, the delicate Woodsorrel, and the Yellow Kingcup. The Fairy Bluebell wore a robe the colour of the sky on a calm summer's day, Anemone and Woodsorrel were clad in pure white, while Kingcup wore a gown of bright amber. One day, as the Fairy Violet was resting from the noonday heat on the open leaves of her favourite flower, a noisy troop of boys, just set free from school, came dashing at full speed through the forest. "Hallo! there is a nest in that tree," cried one, and he trod ruthlessly on the violets as he sprang up the trunk of the ancient oak. The Fairy Violet was thrown to the ground, with a shock that left her for a time stunned and motionless. When she recovered, the boys were gone, and the flower in which she had been resting lay crushed and dying on the ground. Filled with tender pity at the sight, Fairy Violet hastened to tend her wounded charge, taking no thought for her own injuries. "Dear Violet, be comforted," she whispered softly, as she raised the drooping flower from the ground; "I will try to make you well." Then she took her fairy goblet and fetched a few drops of dew from a shady place which the sun had not yet reached, to revive the fainting flower, and bound up the broken stem with a single thread of her golden hair. But it was all in vain, and the fairy, after wrapping an acorn in soft moss, and placing it for a pillow beneath the head of the fast fading Violet, left it to try her skill on the other flowers. A faint fragrance from the dying flower thanked her, as she turned sadly away to pursue her labour of love. It was not till she had raised and comforted all the drooping flowers and bound up their wounds, that the Fairy Violet thought of herself. Then she discovered that her delicate gossamer wings were gone! Evidently they had been caught on a crooked stick as she fell to the ground and torn violently off, for there the remnants now hung, shrivelled and useless, flapping in the breeze. At this sight the hapless fairy threw herself by the side of the now withered Violet, and wept bitterly. When spring and the spring flowers were gone, and their work was ended, Violet and her sister fairies had been wont to spread their wings and fly back to fairy-land, to report to the Queen what they had done, and to receive from her reward or blame, according as they had performed their task well or ill. Now this happy prospect was over for poor Violet. "I shall never see fairy-land again!" she murmured, and wept anew at the thought.

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The violets whom she had tended so lovingly were very sorry for her grief, and shook their heads gently in the breeze, till their fragrance filled the air, and stole softly round the weeping fairy. But though they comforted, they could not help her. Presently she rose, and glided swiftly through the tall grass, till she reached the flower where the blue robed fairy was resting after her day's work.

"Oh, sister Blue Bell," she cried, "I have lost my wings! Where shall I get another pair, that I may fly back to fairy-land with you and my sisters when our work is done?" Then Bluebell shook her head sorrowfully, till all her sweet bells chimed—"I am sorry! I am sorry!" but she could not help her sister Violet.

"Perhaps Cowslip will know," she suggested.

But Cowslip bade her try what Woodsorrel would say, and Woodsorrel thought perhaps Kingcup might know, so Violet went about from one to another, till she was ready to cry again with vexation.

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Then all the fairies gathered round her and tried to comfort her.

"Let us ask the owl that sits in the hollow oak," said the gentle Anemone, gliding to Violet's side; "he must be very wise, for he never smiles, and seldom speaks more than three words at a time."

So that night, when the moon lit her silver lamp in the sky, instead of dancing, as was their wont, with the elves upon the greensward, they all repaired to the hollow oak to seek an audience of the owl. They had to repeat their errand two or three times before he understood it, for the owl was as slow of understanding as he was of speech, and then, having nodded his head solemnly for five minutes, and winked and blinked for quite ten, he said solemnly:—

"Try the King of the Fire Spirits!"

After which he relapsed into silence, and obstinately refused to say any more. Then the Fairy Violet bade farewell to all her friends, and set out on her journey to the King of the Fire Spirits. She had a long way to go, for the Fire-King held his court in the very centre of the earth, and she might have lost herself in the dark passages had not the glowworm lent her his lamp. She had saved him once when a hungry bird would have carried him off in her beak, and from that time the glowworm had loved the gentle fairy, and always burned brightest when she was by.

The Fairy Violet travelled very quickly, scarcely touching her feet to the ground, but passing onward with a swift gliding motion that was very beautiful; still it was three days and three nights before she reached the kingdom of the Fire Spirits, for she had four thousand miles to go. [7]

Had she not been a fairy, she must have been scorched to death as she entered the Fire-King's domain, for the streets were paved with molten iron, and flames kept bursting forth in all directions, in which she could perceive strange wild figures, some leaping to and fro in mad fantastic glee, playing at ball with lumps of burning coal; others manufacturing volcanic fire in their monstrous furnaces.

They ceased their employment when they saw Violet, and came and knelt before her in wondering admiration. She looked so beautiful as she came floating towards them in her soft violet robe, with her fair hair rippling in golden waves to her very feet, that they thought she must be an angel who had strayed down from among the bright stars to their gloomy dwelling-place, for they had never seen a fairy before.

They were moved with compassion when they heard her sad tale, and at once led her before their King, who was seated on a throne of molten gold, with red and yellow flames curling up and arching over him for a canopy, and a crown of fire on his head. He looked rather fierce, but received Violet very graciously, and at once ordered his head blacksmith to make the little fairy a new pair of wings. Violet was a little startled when she found that these were made of fire, and were to be fastened on her shoulders with bands of liquid gold, but the King assured her that they were the very best of their kind.

"There is nothing so powerful as fire," he cried, with a fierce exultant laugh; waving his fiery sceptre in the burning atmosphere so wildly, that though Violet thought he had been very kind to her, and bade him a very grateful farewell, she was yet not at all sorry to be safely out of his domains. [8]

How fresh and green the earth looked as she emerged from the dark caverns that led to the Fire-King's palace, and rested her hot feet on the cool grass! But when eager to tell her friends of her success, she began to try the Fire-King's present, a general cry of dismay and terror broke forth.

"Sister Violet, you are killing our flowers," cried the fairies, reproachfully.

"Oh, I am burning! I am burning!" shrieked the grass.

"Cruel fairy! you have killed us!" murmured the insects, as, with scorched wings, they fell helpless to the ground.

"Alas!" said Violet weeping, "I am bringing death and destruction wherever I go. I will fly back to fairy-land before I work more mischief."

But the birds looked down from their nests wild with terror at the thought.

"You will kill us if you fly up here with your burning wings," they chirped piteously. "You will scorch us to death," shouted the trees, tossing their heads angrily in the breeze.

"Ah, gentle fairy, have pity on us!" cooed the dove; "did I not comfort you when your pet violet died?"

"Have I not sung to you at night when you were weary with dancing?" warbled the nightingale.

"Have we not sheltered you from the fierce heat of the sun, and the beating of the pitiless rain?" rustled the trees, indignantly.

"Heartless!" muttered the wind, rushing rudely past her; "to injure those who love you so much." [9]

"I shall never see fairy-land again!" murmured Violet. But she had too gentle a heart to persist, so she sadly retraced her steps, and bade the Fire-King take back his fatal gift.

That evening, she and her sister fairies went to the owl and told him of the ill success of her mission. The owl heard her to the end with great gravity, and then said, severely: "Of course! Anyone with any sense would have known that wings forged by the Fire Spirits *must* burn everything they touched."

Violet would have liked to remind him that it was *he* who bade her go to the King of the Fire Spirits, but he looked so very severe, as he sat blinking solemnly in the moonlight, that she was afraid, and only said, humbly—

"Please what shall I do now?"

"Go to the King of the Snow Spirits, of course!" said the owl, rather crossly, for he wanted to go to sleep; "if fire is too hot, you had better try snow."

"Alas! what shall I do?" said Violet, very sadly. "The Snow-King lives far off by the North Pole, and I have no wings to bear me to him over the seas."

Then a gentle fluttering was heard in the trees, and a sea-bird alighted at Violet's feet.

"Beautiful fairy," he sang, softly, "do you not remember now, three springs ago, when the trees were clothing themselves anew in their green raiment, and the flowers were springing up among the fresh grass, you bound up my leg, which the hunter had wounded with his cruel gun; and fed me daily with luscious fruits, and gave me to drink of sparkling dew till I recovered? I vowed then that I would one day repay you, and now my chance has come. Mount on my back, sweet Violet, and I will carry you to the Snow-King."

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Then Violet thanked him joyfully, and seated herself on his back; and the sea-bird flew away with her far over the hills and vales, and pleasant fields, and beyond the great ocean till he reached the palace of the Snow-King.

The Palace was built of blocks of ice, filled in with snow, and arched over with a graceful snowdrift for a roof; while lofty colonnades of snow, supported by pillars of ice, led the way to the audience chamber, which glistened with diamonds and crystals of the most sparkling brilliancy. The Snow-King wore on his head a crown of ice-diamonds, while from his shoulders hung gracefully a pure white cloak, fringed with glittering icicles and fastened at the neck with a crystal brooch.

Violet shivered a little as she entered this coldly beautiful palace, for she was accustomed to bask all day long in the warm sunshine, and had never trod on anything colder than the soft grass; but she quickly recovered herself, and gliding with a swift graceful movement to the foot of the Snow-King's throne, she bent on one knee before him, and told him for what she had come.

Then the Snow-King looked kindly upon the little fairy, and raised her gently with his ice-cold hands.

"Beautiful fairy," he said, "you are the first of your race who ever visited my kingdom, and never have I seen aught so radiantly lovely before. Your wish is granted, I only would it were twice as costly;" and, turning to the snow-spirits, who were gathering lovingly round the bright being who had ventured so boldly into their ice-bound regions, he bade them mould wings of the purest and most delicate snow for their fairy visitant. Then the King lay back on his throne, and looked at the sweet modest face of the little fairy, and at her graceful form, with the bright hair rippling in sunny waves over the violet robe, till, moved by some sudden impulse, he came and knelt down at Violet's feet.

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"Sweet fairy," he said, as Violet turned her wondering eyes upon him, "I have long ruled as monarch among my Snow-Spirits, and I have been very proud of the cold splendour of my palace, with its glittering crystals and pillars of ice, and I have laughed when the Fire-King has taunted me from afar with its lack of warmth and colour, for I cared not for either; but now it seems to me that the bright gleam of your golden hair, and the warm glow of your violet robe, are far more beautiful than my ice-diamonds and sparkling crystals, and that my palace will be very bleak and desolate when you have gone. Stay with us, gentle fairy, and be my queen!"

Then all the Snow-Spirits gathered eagerly round Violet, and cried, "Stay with us, and be our Queen!"

Violet shivered as their icy-breath blew upon her, and her hand grew cold in the Snow-King's frozen clasp; but she turned to him, and said, very gently, for she was sorry to give him pain, "I cannot leave my beautiful fairy-land to become your Queen. I should pine away in your beautiful ice-palace, for I love the warm sunshine and the bright flowers, and the soft breath of balmy spring, and this cold air would kill me. So do not ask me again, noble King, for I cannot say yes, and it grieves me to say no."

Then the Snow-King urged her no more, but went back to his throne, and watched her with such sad, wistful eyes, that Violet's heart ached, and she was glad when they brought her the wings that she might fly away.

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They were very beautiful, made of soft feathery snow, and fastened to her shoulders with crystal buckles.

Violet knelt down and kissed the King's hand, thanking him gratefully for his kindness, and praying him to forgive her any pain she had caused him; and then flew away side by side with her faithful bird. The Snow-King watched her till the bright sheen of her hair, and the soft flutter of her wings could no longer be seen, and then turned back, sad and lonely, to his palace.

But Violet was very happy; "I shall see fairy-land again; bright, beautiful fairy-land!" she sang softly to herself over and over.

But when the frozen seas were past, and she was hovering once more above the land, the sun shone full upon her, the snow-wings melted away, and she fell helplessly to the ground.

"Dear Violet, are you hurt?" asked the Fairy Anemone, by whose side she had fallen. But Violet could not speak. She hid her face in Anemone's white robe, and wept bitterly.

"Dear sister Violet," said Anenome, winding her arms lovingly round the weeping fairy, "be comforted. This night we will go together and seek an audience of the Owl. Perhaps he will give us wiser counsel this time."

"The Owl only mocks me," said Violet; "I will not ask counsel from him again."

Then Anenome was silent, for she knew not what else to advise, and only tried to show her pity by tender words and caresses. But Fairy Kingcup lifted up her bright face, and said, cheerily:—

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"Why not try the Wizard of the Black Rock? He lives a long way off, but he is the wisest magician that ever lived; and if any one can help our sister Violet, it is he."

Violet shook her head sorrowfully.

"I do not know the way," she said.

"I will lead you," hummed a bee, from the deep cup of a cowslip.

"And I will sing you my merriest songs to cheer you by the way," warbled a thrush, circling lovingly round her head.

"And I," cried the glowworm, "will light you at night with my golden lamp."

"We all love you, Fairy Violet, because you are so gentle and good," they sang in chorus; and Violet lifted her head, comforted, and smiled a sweet, joyous smile, as she bade farewell to her sister fairies.

It was a long journey that she undertook, for the Wizard of the Black Rock lived quite at the other end of the earth.

Sometimes a benighted traveller, hurrying homewards, fancied he saw a golden light flash like lightning past his dazzled eyes, or heard a warbling of sweet music, delighting for an instant his bewildered ears; but light and music were gone in a moment, and he never guessed that it was the Fairy Violet who had passed him as she glided onward with her three faithful attendants to seek the Wizard of the Black Rock.

At length they reached the great Black Rock, which rose up, grim and forbidding, from a wide, desolate plain. The bee sank down humming cheerfully, at the base, the thrush perched himself on a projecting ridge, and the glowworm hid himself behind a tuft of withered grass.

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Violet advanced boldly to the small black door, studded with iron nails, which was standing open, guarded only by a black dwarf of preternatural ugliness. He turned as the beautiful fairy came floating towards him, and led the way silently through dark long passages, and up narrow winding stairs to his master's chamber. It was a small dark room, lighted only by a silver lamp of great brilliancy, which stood on a table by the fire-place, where, though the month was May, and the weather bright and sunny, there burned a dim, smouldering fire. The Wizard, whose silvery locks contrasted strangely with the surrounding gloom, bent over a book; its jewelled clasps were rusted with age, each page was enriched with coloured tracery. He was very old. More than a hundred years had elapsed since it was first rumoured that a famous magician had taken up his abode in the Black Rock, and all that time he had spent in studying the great black book of magic spells that lay open before him. No wonder he was wise and learned!

The dwarf shut the door with a sullen resentful clang, and Violet was left alone with the great magician.

She glided to his side, and knelt down meekly before him.

But the Wizard, deep in his abstruse studies, did not hear her; and Violet felt a sensation of awe creeping over her as she noted his abstracted gaze, and looked on the high, arched forehead wrinkled with centuries of years and study. Suddenly the magician turned, muttering some strange words in an unknown tongue, and, as he did so, his eyes fell upon Violet.

A remembrance of some by-gone spell of grace and beauty seemed to stir the Wizard as he looked upon the bright-haired fairy, to whose upturned face the light of the silver lamp had lent a fairer radiance, for his deep voice softened as he spoke to her, and he laid his hand gently on her head while she told her story.

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When she had finished, he remained musing for some time in silence.

"I know no spells that will serve where the Spirits of Snow and of Fire have failed," he said at length, with unwonted gentleness. "No one can help thee here but thine own loving heart. Kind words, gentle deeds, faithful service, patient waiting—from these alone can be wrought the wings, which will be slight enough for thy delicate frame to bear, and yet powerful enough to withstand every trial. Go forth then, gentle fairy, to thy daily tasks, and wait patiently till the great Mother Nature herself give thee thy reward."

"Thanks, kind magician," said Violet, with a bright smile; "you have given me a pleasant task to do."

Then kissing gratefully his withered hand, she went on her way, and the aged Magician thought his silver lamp burned dimly, and his cell grew dark when she had left.

"Could not the great wizard help you?"



The Fairy Violet visits the Magicians.

cried her three friends, sorrowfully, as, gliding past the black dwarf that guarded the entrance, she stepped out into the open air.

"Could he not help you?" echoed her sister fairies, when she re-entered once more the old forest.

"Alas! is there no help for you, sweet Violet?" wept the wind, wandering in and out among the lofty trees, rocking and swaying them like slender bulrushes in his fierce sorrow.

But to each and all Violet replied only by a glad quiet smile.

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"Patience!" she said, gently; "Mother Nature will help me in her own time."

So she returned to her work among the violets; and when they had all died, and the spring had gone, and her sister fairies flew away to fairy-land, she still smiled, though a

little sadly, and bade them farewell without a shade of discontent in her brave, gentle voice.

"Now, I must find some work," she said to herself, when her wistful eyes could no longer discern the flutter of their wings in the azure sky.

And she soon found plenty to do.

Now it was binding up the wound of some stricken bird, or raising some crushed flower, and sprinkling its drooping leaves with cooling dew, and now it was closing the eyelids of a tired child who had thrown himself down to rest beneath the forest shade, and singing softly in his ear a fairy lullaby, till he fell asleep. Sometimes she would perch herself on the shoulder of some sleeping wayfarer by the roadside, and whisper in his ear sweet and tender words that made him dream of his home, and of the mother sleeping so peacefully in the churchyard far away, till he started from his sleep and went on his way with a touched and softened heart. Every day Fairy Violet found some kindly deed to do, and every day Mother Nature, looking lovingly on her child, saw the time was drawing nearer when she should receive her reward.

One day as she was wandering through one of the by-streets of a crowded city, she was attracted by a plaintive voice that proceeded from one of the low-roofed, badly built houses.

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"Put the geranium where I can see it, mother," the voice was saying, "I love to lie back and watch it."

A woman came forward at these words and altered the position of the plant, which Fairy Violet had already noticed as being rather faded, and in want of her skill to brighten the colours.

"It is very washy-like," she said regretfully, "I doubt this stuffy air is killing it."

"Will it live as long as I shall?" asked the plaintive voice.

There was no answer, but Violet saw that the mother's hands shook as they busied themselves with the flower.

"I hope it will," the voice continued, with a sort of wistful eagerness, "for it is such a pleasure to me to watch it. It seems to comfort me, when the pain is very bad, and I lie awake through the long weary night, to look at it and wonder what the little garden is looking like in the old home you have told me of so often, mother, and whether the moon is shining as sweetly there as over our poor house here. I sometimes wonder, too, whether the flowers there are so very much more beautiful than my poor sickly geranium, and whether if I saw them I should care for it no longer; and then I think no, that no flower could ever be so beautiful to me as my flower, and that I love it far better, rearing its pretty head so bravely in this dull stuffy room, than if it bloomed in the loveliest garden that was ever planted. And many a time when I have felt a little downhearted, with being a burden to you, mother, and the pain seeming as if it was more than I could bear, it has seemed to say; 'Patience! poor little Faith, it will be over soon.' Do you think there will be flowers in heaven, mother?"

"Like enough, child," said the woman, dreamily; "there will be everything that is beautiful there, I expect," and she heaved a deep sigh. Poor woman! there was little of beauty in her present life, and the country home of which her child had spoken was but a far off recollection to her now.

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"I should like to have it near me when I die," the sick girl went on, "I have never had a friend you know, mother, but my flower has seemed to stand in the place of one to me, and I should like to look at it just at the last."

"Lord love you, child! don't talk of dying; unless you want to break my heart," said the mother, with a tone of sharp impatience in which there was more of grief than of anger.

While she was speaking, Fairy Violet glided in at the open door.

The room was poor, but scrupulously clean, and the scanty furniture was as bright as diligent rubbing could make it. On a rude couch, opposite the open window, lay a girl of about sixteen years of age, but with a wan-pinchèd face that made her look ten years older. Constant pain had blanched all the colour she might once have possessed, and the blue veins showed clearly through the thin transparent skin. She turned her head as Violet entered, and a faint flush of pleasure rose on her pale cheeks.

"Mother! do you smell the violets?" she exclaimed, eagerly, "the room seems filled with fragrance."

"It must be your fancy, child," said the woman wearily; "I smell nought."

By this time Violet had settled herself in one of the blossoms of the geranium, and was busy at work.

"Look, look, mother!" cried the sick girl again, "this at least is no fancy;" and mother and daughter gazed at the flower in amazement as the faded colour grew bright under the fairy's magic touch. "'Tis the moving it to a sunnier spot, or mayhap 'twas the water I gave it this morning," said the woman, recovering herself with a start. "I'll give it a drop more," and she bustled off to get some, while her daughter lay back and watched the flower with a quiet, restful smile on her patient lips.

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"There is work for me to do here," said Violet to herself, feeling quite happy as she glided from blossom to blossom, touching and re-touching with her delicate brush. So she stayed, and day by day the flower grew more radiantly beautiful beneath her loving hands, sweetest fragrance filled the room, and softest murmuring of fairy music floated on the air, which, though the dull senses of mother and daughter failed to interpret rightly, yet stole into their hearts and gave them comfort. Sometimes a vision would come before her of the radiant fairy-land from which she was banished, or of her beautiful forest-home where fragrant flowers had wrapt her in their dewy leaves, where birds had sung to her from the leafy bower above her head, and the bright sun had shone upon her with genial warmth. But she would quickly banish such thoughts, and gliding round the room would touch every dull corner with her fairy wand till it shone and brightened with a magic charm, would cast a spell upon the smouldering fire, so that it burned and crackled cheerily, would lay her cool hand upon the sick girl's throbbing brow till the pain abated, and would cast a fairy haze before her languid eyes, so that they saw beautiful visions in the changeful sky.

So day by day passed by, till one morning, bending over a glass that stood beneath the flower she was painting, Fairy Violet saw her own reflection in the clear water. But she saw something more! A pair of wings of the most delicate gossamer, tipped with silver and sparkling with a marvellous radiance, had sprung from her shoulders and rose almost on a level with her tiny head! Fairy Violet had won her wings at last, and the golden gates of Fairy-land, where the woods and forests were always green, and the valleys ever radiant with beautiful flowers, were open to her once more.

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Wild with joy, she darted out of the window, and was already far above the tops of the smoky chimneys, when she remembered the patient suffering girl whose life was slowly wasting away in the close confined atmosphere of her miserable home. Then her wings drooped and her bright face clouded over.

"I must not leave my work unfinished," she said, and with a wistful glance at the white fleecy clouds that seemed to beckon lovingly to her, she returned to the cottage; and the dying girl's last days were brightened by the fairy presence of which she was so unconscious.

She knew not that it was from Violet the murmuring music came that delighted her wondering ears, that it was to her she owed the sweet fragrance that filled the air, and the soft fresh colouring of the flower at which she loved to gaze; but though the gentle fairy got no thanks, she felt well rewarded for her labour of love when she saw the peaceful smile that rested on Faith's wasted face, and the light that beamed in her dark eyes.

At last the end came. One evening as the sun was sinking to rest in great waves of crimson and gold, Faith asked for her flower to be brought to her, smiled faintly as her dim eyes rested on it for the last time, laid her head on her mother's breast, and died. A low wailing cry broke from the mother as she felt that never again would the dark eyes be raised lovingly to hers, or the wan face brighten at her approach; but Violet saw what the mother failed to see, that white-robed angels had gathered round the death-bed, and were now bearing away the freed spirit with strains of triumphant joy. So she framed the glorious vision into a song, which she sang in the woman's ear, and the mother was comforted, though she knew not why.

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"'Tis better so, my poor lamb," she murmured, while tears dropped slowly one by one down her sunken cheeks. "There is no pain where thou art gone, nor hunger either, and I will join thee there by-and-bye."

Then Violet knew that her work was done, and she flew out of the open window, and up into the clear sky, far above the tops of the tall chimneys, and some men, who were looking up from the dusty streets at the sunset, wondering whether the next day would be fine or wet, caught a sudden gleam of her silver-tipped wings, and thought it was a flash of summer lightning, and

were conscious at the same moment of a delicious fragrance as of violets, and said the wind must be from the west, for it was wafting to them country scents. Fairy Violet laughed as she heard their blundering guesses, a laugh that rippled out on the still air like the chiming of silver bells, and then flew joyously on to thank the Wizard of the Black Rock for his wise counsel.

But when she reached the Black Rock, she found the magician, wearied out with a succession of sleepless nights spent in abstruse study and deep research, had fallen fast asleep, with his venerable head resting on the mysterious book, and the black dwarf at his feet jealously guarding his slumber. So she trimmed his silver lamp for him afresh, so that it burned with a yet more wonderful brilliance, laid a cluster of sweet flowers beside him, and then gladly flitting from the gloomy rock, spread her glistening wings, and darted up into the air; up, up, far above the tops of the lofty trees, flashing like a bright vision through the now darkening night. She passed the silver moon, which was shining calmly down upon the world she had just left; she threaded her way in and out among the golden stars; on, on she went till she saw the beautiful radiant light that never dims, and heard the soft murmuring of sweet music, and smelled the delicious fragrance of Fairy-land. [22]

As she passed through the golden gates she heard a great shout of, "'Tis the Fairy Violet!" and instantly all the bells of Fairy-land began to ring, and a gay procession of radiant fairies, all dressed in their fairest robes, came to meet her, and pressed round her with loving welcome and congratulation. "Come to our Queen, for she is waiting for you," they cried; and led her in triumph up the shining steps of the Fairy Palace, and into the Hall of Pearl, where the Queen was seated on her throne dispensing the graceful wreaths, which, woven by her own hand, were the choicest rewards bestowed in Fairy-land. It was easy to adjudge the crowns of merit among the fairies, for their beauty increased, or waned, according as they had done well or ill.

Now, every one looking on the Fairy Violet saw that she was the most beautiful of all, for her face was so radiantly lovely, that none but the purest fairies could look on it undazzled. So when the Queen, after greeting Violet with her sweetest smiles, had asked, "To whom shall I give the fairest crown?" they all shouted unanimously, "To our Sister Violet!" [23]

But Violet lifted her gentle face with a pleading gesture.

"May it please your Majesty," she said, earnestly, "I do not deserve to be so highly honoured; my sisters have all done as well as I have."

"No, little Violet," said the Queen, smiling, "you have done best of all. We well know what your work has been.—Listen!"

Then Violet listened, and she heard a wondrous song, which, rising and falling with each change of the fitful breeze, now broke into a wild strain of piercing sweetness, and anon died away into a soft musical murmur like the rippling of fairy streams.

"That song, little Violet," said the Queen, "is the record of your life on earth.—Listen again."

They all listened, while the marvellous strain sang of Violet's gentle life on earth.

Not a loving word she had ever said, not a kind deed she had ever done, not a smile her loving arts had brought to the lips of the dying girl, not a blessing uttered by the mother unconscious to whom she owed the peace and quiet of her daughter's last days; not a fragrant breath from rescued flower, not a song from grateful bird, but added its sweet note to that marvellous song.

Had there been one unkind word, one selfish thought, one cruel deed, the song would have been broken by jarring discords; but all was harmony, not one harsh note disturbed the rippling melody.

As one by one Violet's beautiful secrets were brought to light, the fairies looked on her with loving admiration, but Violet was quite ashamed at being praised so openly, and hid her blushing face on Anenome's shoulder. [24]

When the story of Violet's deeds was ended, and the wild mysterious music had lulled into inarticulate murmuring, the Fairy Queen looked round upon her subjects, and asked once more, "To whom shall I give the fairest crown?"

And all the fairies cried again, more eagerly than ever—

"To Violet! To Violet!"

Then Violet could refuse no longer, but bent gracefully on one knee before the throne, while the Queen placed the crown on her shining hair.

The wonderful music died away into silence, and was never heard again, but the court-minstrel who had listened eagerly to its wild strains, caught the beautiful melody, and repeated it on his harp; and to this day, at fairy-feast and revel, the favourite legend is that which tells how the Fairy Violet lost and won her wings.



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ILLUSTRATED BY J. A. MARTIN.

1. HOW THE FAIRY VIOLET LOST AND WON HER WINGS.

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