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# **Violets and Other Tales**

Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson

# Imprint

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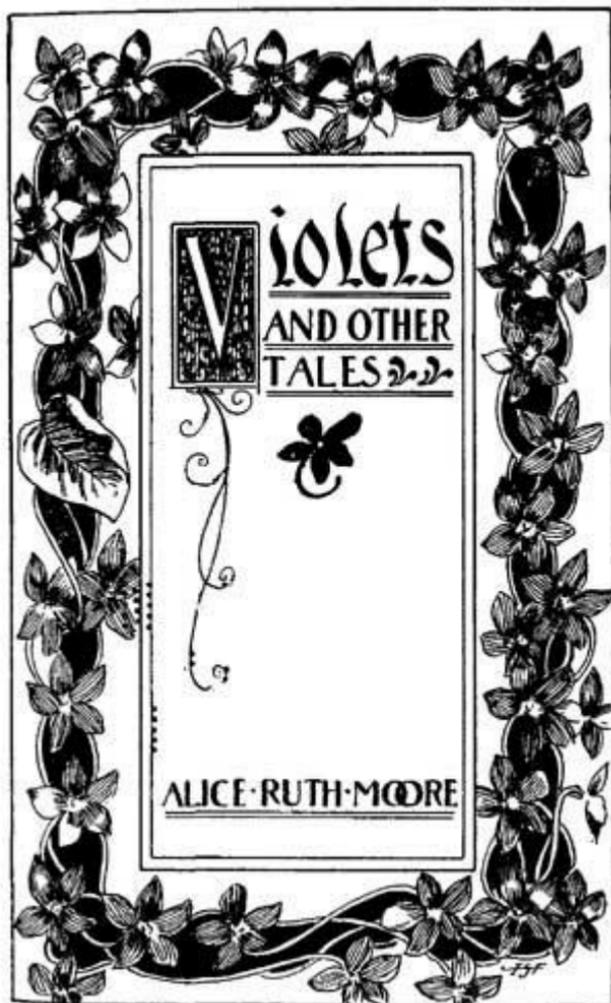
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**To my friend of November 5th, 1892**



## INTRODUCTION.

In this day when the world is fairly teeming with books, — good books, books written with a motive, books inculcating morals, books teaching lessons, — it seems almost a piece of presumption too great for endurance to foist another upon the market. There is scarcely room in the literary world for amateurs and maiden efforts; the very worthiest are sometimes poorly repaid for their best efforts. Yet, another one is offered the public, a maiden effort, — a little thing with absolutely nothing to commend it, that seeks to do nothing more than amuse.

Many of these sketches and verses have appeared in print before, in newspapers and a magazine or two; many are seeing the light of day for the first time. If perchance this collection of idle thoughts may serve to while away an hour or two, or lift for a brief space the load of care from someone's mind, their purpose has been served — the author is satisfied.

A. R. M.



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## PREFACE.

These fugitive pieces are launched upon the tide of public opinion to sink or swim upon their merit. They will float for a while, but whether they will reach the haven of popularity depends upon their enduring qualities. Some will surely perish, many will reach some port, but time alone will tell if any shall successfully breast the ocean of thought and plant its standard upon the summit of fame.

When one enters the domain of authorship, she places herself at the mercy of critics. Were she as sure of being commended by the best and most intelligent of her readers, as she is sure of being condemned by the worst and most ignorant, there would still be a thrill of pleasure in all criticism, for the satisfaction of having received the praise of the first would compensate for the harshness of the latter. Just criticism is wholesome and never wounds the sensibilities of the true author, for it saves her from the danger of an excess of pride which is the greatest foe to individual progress, while it spurs her on to [Pg 10] loftier flights and nobler deeds. A poor writer is bad, but a poor critic is worse, therefore, unjust criticism should never ruffle the temper of its victim. The author of these pages belongs to that type of the "brave new woman who scorns to sigh," but feels that she has something to say, and says it to the best of her ability, and leaves the verdict in the hands of the public. She gives to the reader her best thoughts and leaves him to accept or reject as merit may manifest itself. No author is under contract to please her readers at all times, nor can she hope to control the sentiments of all of them at any time, therefore, the obligation is reciprocal, for the fame she receives is due to the pleasure she affords.

The author of these fugitive pieces is young, just on the threshold of life, and with the daring audacity of youth makes assertions and gives decisions which she may reverse as time mellows her opinions, and the realities of life force aside the theories of youth, and prosy facts obscure the memory of that happy time when the heart overflowing with — —

"The joy  
Of young ideas painted on the mind,  
In the warm glowing colors Fancy spreads

On objects, not yet known, when all is new,  
And all is lovely."

There is much in this book that is good; much[Pg 11] that is crude; some that is poor: but all give that assurance of something great and noble when the bud of promise, now unfolding its petals in the morning glow of light, will have matured into that fuller growth of blossoming flower ere the noonday sun passes its zenith. May the hope thus engendered by this first attempt reach its fruition, and may the energy displayed by one so young meet the reward it merits from an approving public.

**Sylvanie F. Williams.**

[Pg 13][Pg 12]

# VIOLETS.

## I.

"And she tied a bunch of violets with a tress of her pretty brown hair."

She sat in the yellow glow of the lamplight softly humming these words. It was Easter evening, and the newly risen spring world was slowly sinking to a gentle, rosy, opalescent slumber, sweetly tired of the joy which had pervaded it all day. For in the dawn of the perfect morn, it had arisen, stretched out its arms in glorious happiness to greet the Saviour and said its hallelujahs, merrily trilling out carols of bird, and organ and flower-song. But the evening had come, and rest.

There was a letter lying on the table, it read:

"Dear, I send you this little bunch of flowers as my Easter token. Perhaps you may not be able to read their meaning, so I'll tell you. Violets, you know,[Pg 14] are my favorite flowers. Dear, little, human-faced things! They seem always as if about to whisper a love-word; and then they signify that thought which passes always between you and me. The orange blossoms—you know their meaning; the little pinks are the flowers you love; the evergreen leaf is the symbol of the endurance of our affection; the tube-roses I put in, because once when you kissed and pressed me close in your arms, I had a bunch of tube-roses on my bosom, and the heavy fragrance of their crushed loveliness has always lived in my memory. The violets and pinks are from a bunch I wore to-day, and when kneeling at the altar, during communion, did I sin, dear, when I thought of you? The tube-roses and orange-blossoms I wore Friday night; you always wished for a lock of my hair, so I'll tie these flowers with them—but there, it is not stable enough; let me wrap them with a bit of ribbon, pale blue, from that little dress I wore last[Pg 15] winter to the dance, when we had such a long, sweet talk in that forgotten nook. You always loved that dress, it fell in such soft ruffles away from the throat and bosom,—you called me your little forget-me-not, that night. I laid the flowers away for awhile in our favorite book,—Byron—just at the poem we loved best, and now I send

them to you. Keep them always in remembrance of me, and if aught should occur to separate us, press these flowers to your lips, and I will be with you in spirit, permeating your heart with unutterable love and happiness."

## II.

It is Easter again. As of old, the joyous bells clang out the glad news of the resurrection. The giddy, dancing sunbeams laugh riotously in field and street; birds carol their sweet twitterings everywhere, and the heavy perfume of flowers scents the golden atmosphere with inspiring fragrance. One long,[Pg 16] golden sunbeam steals silently into the white-curtained window of a quiet room, and lay athwart a sleeping face. Cold, pale, still, its fair, young face pressed against the satin-lined casket. Slender, white fingers, idle now, they that had never known rest; locked softly over a bunch of violets; violets and tube-roses in her soft, brown hair, violets in the bosom of her long, white gown; violets and tube-roses and orange-blossoms banked everywhere, until the air was filled with the ascending souls of the human flowers. Some whispered that a broken heart had ceased to flutter in that still, young form, and that it was a mercy for the soul to ascend on the slender sunbeam. To-day she kneels at the throne of heaven, where one year ago she had communed at an earthly altar.

## III.

Far away in a distant city, a man, carelessly looking among some papers,[Pg 17] turned over a faded bunch of flowers tied with a blue ribbon and a lock of hair. He paused meditatively awhile, then turning to the regal-looking woman lounging before the fire, he asked:

"Wife, did you ever send me these?"

She raised her great, black eyes to his with a gesture of ineffable disdain, and replied languidly:

"You know very well I can't bear flowers. How could I ever send such sentimental trash to any one? Throw them into the fire."

And the Easter bells chimed a solemn requiem as the flames slowly licked up the faded violets. Was it merely fancy on the wife's

part, or did the husband really sigh,—a long, quivering breath of remembrance?[Pg 18]



## THREE THOUGHTS.

### FIRST

How few of us  
In all the world's great, ceaseless struggling strife,  
Go to our work with gladsome, buoyant step,  
And love it for its sake, whate'er it be.  
Because it is a labor, or, mayhap,  
Some sweet, peculiar art of God's own gift;  
And not the promise of the world's slow smile  
of recognition, or of mammon's gilded grasp.  
Alas, how few, in inspiration's dazzling flash,  
Or spiritual sense of world's beyond the dome  
Of circling blue around this weary earth,  
Can bask, and know the God-given grace  
Of genius' fire that flows and permeates  
The virgin mind alone; the soul in which  
The love of earth hath tainted not.  
The love of art and art alone.

[Pg 19]

### SECOND

"Who dares stand forth?" the monarch cried,  
"Amid the throng, and dare to give  
Their aid, and bid this wretch to live?  
I pledge my faith and crown beside,  
A woeful plight, a sorry sight,  
This outcast from all God-given grace.

What, ho! in all, no friendly face,  
No helping hand to stay his plight?  
St. Peter's name be pledged for aye,  
The man's accursed, that is true;  
But ho, he suffers. None of you

Will mercy show, or pity sigh?"

Strong men drew back, and lordly train  
Did slowly file from monarch's look,  
Whose lips curled scorn. But from a nook  
A voice cried out, "Though he has slain  
That which I loved the best on earth,  
Yet will I tend him till he dies,  
I can be brave." A woman's eyes  
Gazed fearlessly into his own.

[Pg 20]

### **THIRD**

When all the world has grown full cold to thee,  
And man – proud pygmy – shrugs all scornfully,  
And bitter, blinding tears flow gushing forth,  
Because of thine own sorrows and poor plight,  
Then turn ye swift to nature's page,  
And read there passions, immeasurably far  
Greater than thine own in all their littleness.  
For nature has her sorrows and her joys,  
As all the piled-up mountains and low vales  
Will silently attest – and hang thy head  
In dire confusion, for having dared  
To moan at thine own miseries  
When God and nature suffer silently.

[Pg 21]