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The Robin and the Violet.



THE ROBIN AND THE VIOLET.

Once upon a time a robin lived in the greenwood. Of all the birds his breast was the brightest, his music was the sweetest, and his life was the merriest. Every morning and evening he perched himself among the berries of the linden-tree, and carolled a song that made the whole forest joyous; and all day long he fluttered among the flowers and shrubbery of the wild-wood, and twittered gayly to the brooks, the ferns, and the lichens.

A violet grew among the mosses at the foot of the linden-tree where lived the robin. She was so very tiny and so very modest that few knew there was such a pretty little creature in the world. Withal she was so beautiful and so gentle that those who knew the violet loved her very dearly.

The south wind came wooing the violet. He danced through the shrubbery and ferns, and lingered on the velvet moss where the little flower grew. But when he kissed her pretty face and whispered to her, she hung her head and said, "No, no; it cannot be."

"Nay, little violet, do not be so cruel," pleaded the south wind; "let me bear you as my bride away to my splendid home in the south, where all is warmth and sunshine always."

But the violet kept repeating, "No, it cannot be; no, it cannot be," till at last the south wind stole away with a very heavy heart.

And the rose exclaimed, in an outburst of disgustful indignation: "What a foolish violet! How silly of her to refuse such a wooer as the south wind, who has a beautiful home and a patrimony of eternal warmth and sunshine!"

But the violet, as soon as the south wind had gone, looked up at the robin perched in the linden-tree and singing his clear song; and it seemed as if she blushed and as if she were thrilled with a great emotion as she beheld him. But the robin did not see the violet. His eyes were turned the other way, and he sang to the clouds in the sky.

The brook o'erleapt its banks one day, and straying toward the linden-tree, it was amazed at the loveliness of the violet. Never had it seen any flower half so beautiful.

"Oh, come and be my bride," cried the brook. "I am young and small now, but presently you shall see me grow to a mighty river whose course no human power can direct, and whose force nothing can resist. Cast thyself upon my bosom, sweet violet, and let us float together to that great destiny which awaits me."

But the violet shuddered and recoiled and said: "Nay, nay, impetuous brook, I will not be your bride." So, with many murmurs and complaints, the brook crept back to its jealous banks and resumed its devious and prattling way to the sea.

"Bless me!" cried the daisy, "only to think of that silly violet's refusing the brook! Was there ever another such piece of folly! Where else is there a flower that would not have been glad to go upon such a wonderful career? Oh, how short-sighted some folks are!"

But the violet paid no heed to these words; she looked steadfastly up into the foliage of the linden-tree where the robin was carolling. The robin did not see the violet; he was singing to the tops of the fir-trees over yonder.

The days came and went. The robin sang and fluttered in the greenwood, and the violet bided among the mosses at the foot of the linden; and although the violet's face was turned always upward to where the robin perched and sang, the robin never saw the tender little flower.

One day a huntsman came through the greenwood, and an arrow from his cruel bow struck the robin and pierced his heart. The robin was carolling in the linden, but his song was ended suddenly, and the innocent bird fell dying from the tree. "Oh, it is only a robin," said the huntsman, and with a careless laugh he went on his way.

The robin lay upon the mosses at the foot of the linden, close beside the violet. But he neither saw nor heard anything, for his life was nearly gone. The violet tried to bind his wound and stay the flow of his heart's blood, but her tender services were vain. The robin died without having seen her sweet face or heard her gentle voice.

Then the other birds of the greenwood came to mourn over their dead friend. The moles and the mice dug a little grave and laid the robin in it, after which the birds brought lichens and leaves, and covered the dead body, and heaped earth

over all, and made a great lamentation. But when they went away, the violet remained; and after the sun had set, and the greenwood all was dark, the violet bent over the robin's grave and kissed it, and sang to the dead robin. And the violet watched by the robin's grave for weeks and months, her face pressed forward toward that tiny mound, and her gentle voice always singing softly and sweetly about the love she never had dared to tell.

Often after that the south wind and the brook came wooing her, but she never heard them, or, if she heard them, she did not answer. The vine that lived near the chestnut yonder said the violet was greatly changed; that from being a merry, happy thing, she had grown sad and reticent; she used to hold up her head as proudly as the others, but now she seemed broken and weary. The shrubs and flowers talked it all over many and many a time, but none of them could explain the violet's strange conduct.

It was autumn now, and the greenwood was not what it had been. The birds had flown elsewhere to be the guests of the storks during the winter months, the rose had run away to be the bride of the south wind, and the daisy had wedded the brook and was taking a bridal tour to the seaside watering-places. But the violet still lingered in the greenwood, and kept her vigil at the grave of the robin. She was pale and drooping, but still she watched and sang over the spot where her love lay buried. Each day she grew weaker and paler. The oak begged her to come and live among the warm lichens that protected him from the icy breath of the storm-king, but the violet chose to watch and sing over the robin's grave.

One morning, after a night of exceeding darkness and frost, the boisterous north wind came trampling through the greenwood.

"I have come for the violet," he cried; "she would not have my fair brother, but she must go with *me*, whether it pleases her or not!"

But when he came to the foot of the linden-tree his anger was changed to compassion. The violet was dead, and she lay upon the robin's grave. Her gentle face rested close to the little mound, as if, in her last moment, the faithful flower had stretched forth her lips to kiss the dust that covered her beloved.

1884.

[End of *The Robin and the Violet* by Eugene Field]