

The Maple-Leaf and the Violet

by Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora A. Smith

“Story-telling must please children, so that it will influence, strengthen, and elevate their lives.”—FROEBEL

The Maple-tree lived on the edge of the wood. Beside and behind her the trees grew so thick and tall that there was plenty of shade at her roots; but as no one stood in front, she could always look across the meadows to the brown house where Bessie lived, and could see what went on in the world.

After the cold winter had gone by, and the spring had come again, the Maple-tree sent out thousands of tiny leaf-buds, that stretched themselves, and grew larger day by day in the warm sunshine. One little Bud, on the end of a tall branch, worked so hard to grow that by and by he finished opening all his folds, and found himself a tiny pale green leaf.

He was curious, as little folks generally are, and as soon as he opened his eyes wanted to see everything about him. First he looked up at the blue sky overhead, but the sky only looked quietly back at him. Then he looked across the meadows to where Bessie lived, but Bessie was at school and the house was still.

Then he gazed far down below him on the ground; and there, just beneath, was a little Violet, She had uncurled her purple petals a few days before, and was waiting to welcome the first leaf-bud that came out.

So when the Maple-leaf looked down, she smiled up at him and said, “Good-morning.” He answered her politely, but he was very little, and did not know quite what to say, so he didn't talk any more that day.

The next morning they greeted each other again, and soon they grew to be good friends, and talked together very happily all day. The Maple-leaf lived so high up in the tree that he could easily see across the fields, and he watched every day for Bessie as she started for school. When she came out of her door, he told the Violet, and the Violet always said every morning, “Dear Bessie! I should like to see her, too!”

Sometimes, when the day was chilly and it was almost too damp in the shade, the Violet used to wish she might be high up on the branch above her, waving about in the sunshine like the Maple-leaf; but she was a contented little thing, and never fretted long for what she could not have.

It was generally pleasant on the ground, and the bugs and caterpillars and worms, as they crawled about at her roots, often told her very interesting things about their families and their troubles.

One day it was very dry and warm. The Maple-leaf was not at all comfortable, high in the hot air, and he said to his mother, “Mother-tree, won't you let me go down by the Violet and be cool?”

Then the Maple-tree answered, “No, no, little leaf, not now; if I once let you go, you can never come back again. Stay quietly here; the time will soon come for you to leave me.”

The Maple-leaf told this to the Violet, and then they began to fear that when the mother-tree let him go, by and by, he might not be able to fall close beside the Violet.

So the next day, when the wind came whistling along, the Violet asked him if he would kindly take care of the leaf, and send him to her when the mother-tree let him go. The wind was rough and careless, and said he really didn't know. He couldn't be sure how he'd feel then. They would have to wait and see.

The two little friends were rather unhappy about this, but they waited quietly. By and by the weather grew cold. The air was so chill that the Maple-leaf shivered in the night, and in the morning, when the sun rose, and he could see himself, he found he was all red, just as your hands and cheeks are on a frosty morning. When the mother-tree saw him, she told him he would soon leave her now, and she bade him good-by. He was sorry to go, but then he thought of his dear Violet, and was happy again.

By and by a gust of cold wind came blowing by, and twisted the little leaf about, and fluttered him so that he could not hold to the tree any longer. So at last he blew off, and the wind took him up and danced with him and played with him until he was very tired and dizzy. But at last, for he was a kind wind after all, he blew the leaf back, straight to the side of the Violet. How close they cuddled to each other, and how happy they were! You would have been very glad if you had seen them together.

In the morning, when the sun rose yellow and bright, Bessie came into the woods with a basket and a trowel. It was nearly winter, and she knew that soon the snow would fall and cover all the pretty growing things. So she dug up, very carefully, roots of plummy fern and partridge berries with their leaves, and wintergreen and boxberry plants, to grow in her window-garden in the winter. She took the Violet too, bringing away so much of the earth around her roots that the little thing scarcely felt that she had been moved. As Bessie put her plants in the basket, she saw the little Maple-leaf resting close by the violet, but he looked so pretty, lying there, that she did not move him.

In the sunny window of the little brown house the Violet grew still more fresh and green. But each day, as the plants were watered, the Maple-leaf curled up a little more at the edges, and sank down farther into the earth, until soon he was almost out of sight, and by and by crumbled quite away. Still he was close beside his Violet, and all the strength he had he gave to her roots.

She always loved him just the same, though she could not see him any longer, and by and by, when she had lived her life, and her leaves withered away, each one, as it fell from the stem, sank into the earth where the Maple-leaf lay.

Source:

Wiggin, Kate Douglas, Nora A. Smith. "The Maple-Leaf and the Violet." *The Story Hour*. Electronic.