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Charlottetown P. E. I., Oct. 2—3mo eod

## A FAIRY GODMOTHER.

MADAME DUPONT, wrapped in a loose robe of some soft gray material, a faded cashmere shawl partly covering her, lay on the lounge before the bay window that formed almost the entire front of her cottage. Her large black eyes, their brightness somewhat dimmed by her long sickness, dwelt with dreamy pleasure on the landscape spread before her.

It was a very commonplace landscape, such as can be seen in any country place on any Summer day—only a broad field, white with daisies, among which two or three brown cows patiently sought for their tender blades of grass, with one tall, stout tree standing midway, solitary and alone, and a background of dense, tangled brushwood, to most eyes scarce worth a careless glance; but to hers, so long shut out from sight of earth or sky, a scene most beautiful. The slender, white, wrinkled hands folded on her breast were yet too weak to hold even one of her beloved books, and the small feet still lacked sufficient strength to sustain the small body. But, thank Heaven! the cruel pain had gone, and in its stead had come a blissful rest.

And through the fickle months of Spring, taking no heed whether they smiled or wept, she had never raised her weary head from the pillow.

The snow-drops, crocuses, scilla, hyacinths and tulips had grown, budded and blossomed in her little garden, and she, who had hoped to watch them grow from the first green leaf to the perfect blossom, had only seen the few Viola had plucked and brought to her bedside, where, seen through a cloud of suffering, a shadow had fallen upon their beauty.

It was the heart of June now, and the roses, gay in every shade of pink, climbing about the window, looked in and entreated her to come out. But no; she could not hope to walk among the flowers until the roses had faded and the lilies had begun to reign. And perhaps, even this hope would not have been hers had it not been for the love and care and cheering words of Viola, the eldest daughter of the big farmhouse. Kate, the strong, rough Irish servant-maid, was kind and faithful in her way; but hers was money service, and left to it alone she might have died; but Viola served for love (she had loved the pretty old Madame since first they met), and love brings faith and hope and patience, and many other beautiful things.

For weeks the young girl came morn, noon and eve, to stay an hour each time, and her visits were the only gleam of brightness that lightened that darkened room. And many the wee loaf of whitest bread, and golden pat of butter, and drink of rich, sweet milk, and fresh-laid, pink-tinted egg, she brought to tempt the languid appetite; and many the song she sung, soft and low, to woo for the sick woman the angel of sleep.

And yet not only were they kith and kin, but she knew naught of Madame Dupont save that she had built the four-roomed cottage the preceding Spring, and had lived there since the last July in the humblest way.

There was a large family at the farmhouse, and much work to be done—hard, unlovely work—the very thought of which often made the young girl, waking in the gray morning from pleasant dreams, clasp her hands and cry out: "Is this to be my life forever?" And had it not been for the glimpses of beauty she caught about her home, the far-off river gleaming in the sunlight or moonlight, the orchard trees, white with blossoms in spring, and laden with fruit in summer and autumn, the shady woods where countless shy, wild flowers hid from the glare of the world, the songs of the distant hills, she would have been heart-weary indeed. For she loved everything beautiful. And especially did she love music, with all the tenderness of a creator, as Madame discovered one day—the day they first saw each other; in fact, when Viola, coming on some errand to the cottage, stopped, entranced, on the threshold of the door to listen to the plaintive melody in a minor key, feebly but beautifully played on the old-fashioned upright piano.

"You love music?" said Madame, turning slowly and confronting her.  
"With all my heart," answered the girl, the vivid blush that was ever ready to appear flushing her sweet young face.  
"You play?"  
"A little—a very little; but I have had no piano for three years, since my own mother died."  
"Let me hear you."  
"O Madame, I dare not try after you!"  
But the old lady rose and gently led her to the instrument. There were two or three keys entirely dumb, and the rest were not in perfect tune, but the spirit of music so guided the long, slender fingers that they reproached the minor melody Madame had played, so daintily enwrapped in bird-like thrills and rippling runs, that she, in turn, stood entranced.

"After me, indeed!" she said, as the girl struck the last chord. "I had to learn, but you—it is part of you. And you have no piano? Ah, that is sad. Could I give you mine it would be yours. But it belonged to my dear husband, who died twenty years ago, and I could not bear to part with it. He was a Frenchman, and a professor of music. I was an American girl, and one of his pupils. When I married him I helped him to teach others, and so came to be called 'madame.' We loved each other very much. But I shall be glad my dear—very glad—to have you come here and play as often as you will."

"Could I come as often as I would," said the girl, with a bright smile, "I am afraid I should soon tire you. But I will come as often as I can. And oh, madame—suddenly kissing the soft, wrinkled cheek—"I cannot tell how much I think of you!"

But the often proved very seldom, for some of the summer boarders staid until the end of October, and the butter had to be churned and the fruit canned, and the young sisters to be prepared each day for school—and the twin boys—nothing to speak of in point of years, but perfect Methuselahs in mischief—to be looked after from morning until night, and winter wardrobes to be made, and a thousand and one things to be done.

Then Madame fell sick, and all the time Viola could spare she spent at her bedside.

"Time that had much better be spent at home," scolded her stepmother, "for there's a servant there; and one servant is enough to take care of two such houses as that, and their mistresses, too; sick or well, I have no servant!"

"You have me," Viola could have replied, "and no servant ever worked harder or for less wages," but she set her lips firmly together and said nothing. But she rose earlier than ever thereafter, that she might not leave undone the slightest of her tasks, and thus merit no reproach for the few hours each day she gave her dear old friend.

And now Madame was getting well, and with the strength of her strong servant-maid could go from room to room; but she was best satisfied as yet to be in the wee parlor on the lounge before the high window.

Here Viola made her appearance the day the roses were beckoning, with a merry greeting and a dish of luscious strawberries smothered in cream; but in spite of the merry greeting there was a hint of a shadow on her bonny face that did not escape Madame's keen black eyes.

"Tell me about it, dear," she said, in her sweet, trembling voice.  
Viola knelt beside her.  
"You must be a fairy, madame," she said, "for none but a fairy could have guessed that I was a little sorry to-day. And for such a trifling cause I'm ashamed to speak of it." But the old lady insisting with gentle persistence, she began: "It is a ball I would like to go to, but cannot. I have never been to a ball, and this one—you remember the young lady who boarded at our house last Summer with her father and sister—"

"And brother," suggested Madame.  
"And her brother," repeated Viola, never lowering her frank, blue eyes, but blushing from the tip of her round chin to the curls shading her brow. "Well, she and I were good friends then, but I never dreamed she would remember me after she went away, for he—she, I mean—is rich, and I am poor, and our ways in life lie very, very far apart. But she has not forgotten me. See, madame, here is an invitation to a ball to be given on her nineteenth birthday at her aunt's house, only a few miles away. And her brother signs it, too. He writes a handsome hand, does he not madame?"

"A strong, handsome hand, my dear, and he is a strong manly fellow. I do not forget the messages he used to bring me from you, and deliver with such courtly grace. You must go to the ball."  
"O, madame it is impossible! I could not go if it were the simplest of parties, and it is to be a fancy dress. I have nothing to wear. You know the crops failed last year on account of the drought. But what folly to let so slight a thing distress me for a moment, when all at home have health and strength, and you are fast getting well!"

"For which we should be, and no doubt we are, devoutly thankful," said the old lady, "and all the more reason why you should go to the ball. You said just now I must be a fairy. I will prove my right to the title by being a fairy godmother. You did not know that my name was Violet. Take the key you will find under the clock on the mantle, and open the ottoman that stands yonder."

"Open the ottoman, Madame?"  
"Yes; it is simply a chest in disguise, and in it lies your ball dress."

The lid of the disguised chest was raised, a long box was lifted out and opened. An exclamation of delight burst from Viola's lips. There was a satin dress of creamy whiteness. It unfolded into a miracle of old-fashioned loveliness. Purple violets were scat-

tered here and there upon the scant skirt, as though dropped from some careless hand, and the puffed sleeves and short waist were made of a wealth of amber-hued lace. And then came a large, quaint fan of sandle-wood and peacock feathers, a necklace of pearls, a high tortoise-shell comb, a pair of satin shoes with low flat heels and queer, pointed toes.

"But you never mean that I should wear these, madame?" said Viola.  
"That I do, most surely," said Madame gayly. "I wore them, child, many years ago, and now another Violet needs them. There is fate in it. And I will put a spell upon them, and who knows? they may help you win a true lover as they did me so long ago."

"But the shoes, madame; they are too small, I'm sure."  
"Try them, my dear."  
Viola slipped one on.  
"It binds across the instep," said she.

"Take the scissors and cut it, then."  
"O, madame, it would spoil them."  
"Do as I bid you. Fairy godmother must be obeyed. Now take the rosettes still remaining in the box and fasten one over each shoe to hide the damage done."

And with the beautiful rosettes of satin and lace, with "V" encircled in seed pearls in the centre of each, hiding the gaps the scissors had made, the toilet was complete.

So Viola went to the ball, not in a fine carriage drawn by prancing steeds, but in her father's covered wagon, behind the old farm horse. But when she appeared in the brilliantly lighted room it was rather late, for the old horse travelled slowly—the creamy white satin dress clinging to her slight, graceful figure, the pearls clustering around her smooth throat, her golden hair wound about the tortoise-shell comb, her dimpled arms and shoulders still showing through the ancient lace, her innocent blue eyes looking shyly over the painted fan, and her feet clad in the queer pointed shoes, half hidden by the great rosettes—the gay crowd felt, some of them (the fair maidens these), with bitter envy, that an unknown princess of great beauty was among them.

The prince of the reigning house quickly followed his sister to welcome her, leaving a knight with diamond stars to sparkle for some faithful worshipper. Again and again he and the unknown princess danced together until near day-break, when, a servant summoning her hastily—for the father farmer was tired of waiting—she flew to the dressing-room, and one of the rosettes bursting from its fastenings on the way, away went the shoe it had helped to hold in place, down, down through the well of the winding staircase, to regions far below.

Viola, having the enchantment of the night still upon her, never missed it, but hastily drawing on her stout boots ran to the old wagon, jumped in, and drove away, in the dim first light of the morning, from the prince and fairyland.

But when she awoke from the deep sleep into which she sank as soon as she reached home—the sun was on its westward way—she discovered the loss, and while she was bewailing it the prince rang at the door.  
"I have found a slipper or shoe or something of the kind," he said, taking it from the breast pocket of his fur-trimmed coat, "and as it will not fit either of my sisters, or my cousins, or any of the lady friends who with them bide, I thought it might fit you."

"It does not, really," said Viola, with a lovely blush; "I could not have worn it had it not been cut open in the instep—I have not an aristocratic foot—and that is how, the stitches that held the friendly rosette giving way, I came to lose it."  
"That I, thank fortune, might find it. And now, Viola dearest—"

But what need of saying more? You can all end the story for yourselves, I am sure, even to guessing that Madame lived to be a hundred years old, and that never was a fairy godmother so loved and petted as she.

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