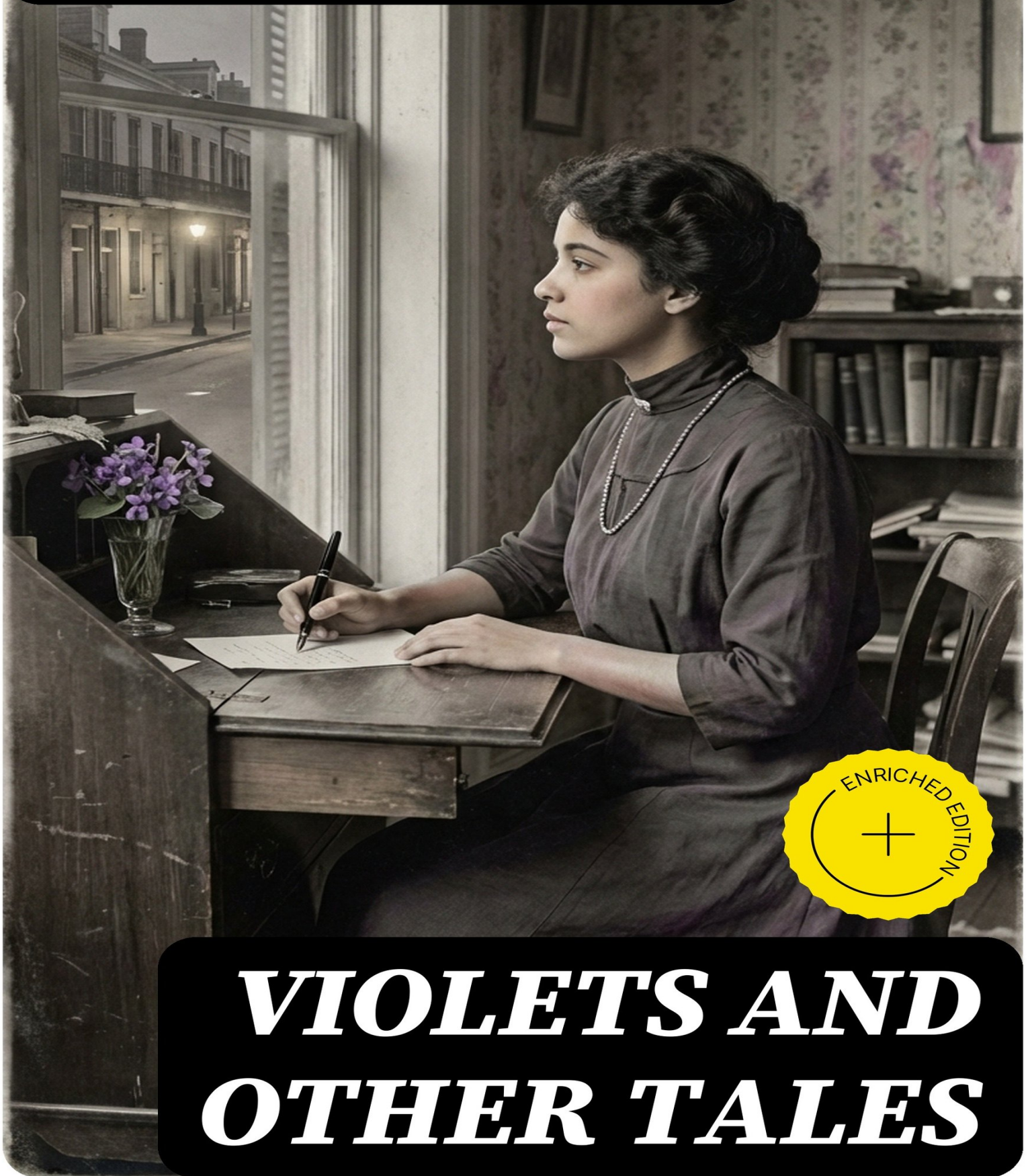
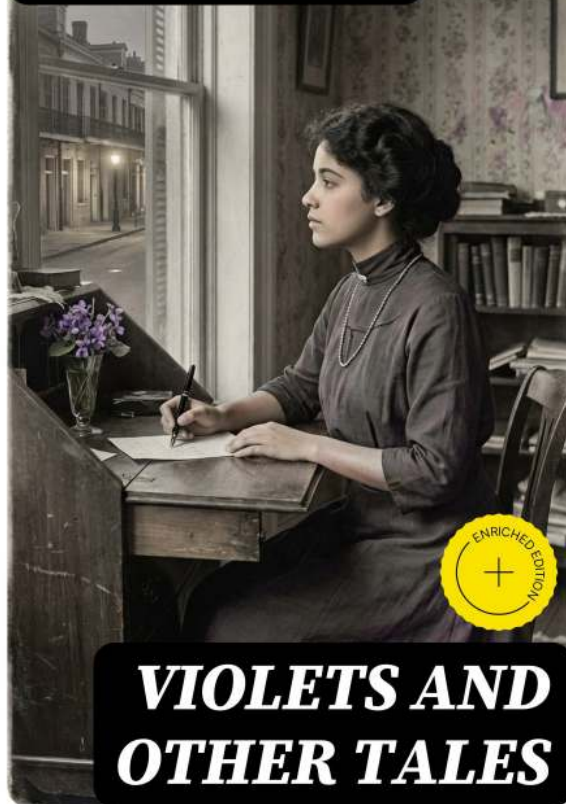


***ALICE MOORE
DUNBAR-NELSON***



***VIOLETS AND
OTHER TALES***

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Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson

Violets and Other Tales

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Liam Alcott

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Introduction

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Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson's *Violets and Other Tales* gathers poems, sketches, and stories into a single current shaped by the tension between intimacy and public life. The opening gesture, *To my friend of November 5th, 1892*, establishes an ethos of personal address, while INTRODUCTION. and PREFACE. present a reflective threshold. At the collection's heart, *VIOLETS.*, with its three movements I., II., and III., supplies a floral keynote of delicacy, persistence, and seasonal return. Around this motif cluster other pieces—*A PLAINT*, *IMPRESSIONS*, *AMID THE ROSES*—that reaffirm a unifying attention to fleeting sensation and durable feeling, to the way small moments illuminate larger human concerns.

Natural emblems recur with suggestive variety: *Love and the Butterfly*, *The Bee-Man*, and *AMID THE ROSES* trace metamorphosis, labor, and beauty, while *VIOLETS.* refines their fragrance into meditative sequence. Set against these pastoral intimations are scenes of civic energy and strain: *ANARCHY ALLEY*, *LEGEND OF THE NEWSPAPER*, *IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD*, and *A CARNIVAL JANGLE*. The collection thus choreographs a conversation between private reverie and streetwise observation, inviting readers to consider how the delicate and the tumultuous shape one another. This dialogue is not merely contrastive; it shows continuity between garden and thoroughfare, suggesting that

tenderness and tumult belong to the same imaginative climate.

Time is another thread that binds these pieces. *Ten Minutes' Musing* proposes a scale of attention measured in instants, while *New Year's Day* ritualizes transition and resolve. *At Eventide* and *In Memoriam* contemplate twilight and aftermath, as *Farewell*. and *If I Had Known* approach the ethics of parting and hindsight. The dated address *To my friend of November 5th, 1892* situates a moment with specificity, as *The Maiden's Dream* opens inward, subjective duration. Across these titles, the collection treats memory, anticipation, and regret as neighboring states, showing how the cadence of a day or a year can echo within a life.

Figures and roles also populate these pages, sketching the pressures and possibilities of identity. *The Woman*, *Little Miss Sophie*, and *The Idler* suggest contrasting stances toward agency, decorum, and leisure, while *A Story of Vengeance* signals the costs of grievance. *At Bay St. Louis* and *Chalmette*, as place-marked titles, imply settings where character meets locale, and *At Eventide* frames reflection within a temporal mood. Together, these works trace how individuals negotiate responsibility and desire within domestic, communal, and public spheres, not by programmatic thesis but through the felt textures of scene, gesture, and the understated drama of everyday encounters.

Dialogue with wider narratives and traditions is another hallmark. *Salamambo*. By *Gustave Flaubert* signals conversation with a named author, while *Paul to Virginia* reshapes address into literary echo. *The Unknown Life of*

Jesus Christ points toward sacred imagination and apocryphal curiosity, and Legend of the Newspaper considers how modern myth can emerge from reportage. Such titles suggest that these pieces speak both locally and across distances, pairing inherited stories with fresh vantage. The result is a web of allusion and inquiry in which memory, devotion, and public narrative are tested against personal sensibility.

The tonal register shifts with artful volatility. A Complaint and In Memoriam orient toward elegy, while A Carnival Jangle jingles with festivity edged by cacophony. Impressions signals attentiveness to fleeting detail, and Fin de Siecle hints at a poised, possibly ironic self-awareness at the turn of mood or manner. Anarchy Alley and Legend of the Newspaper introduce civic friction and media scrutiny, balanced by gentler pieces like Love and the Butterfly. Across these changes the writing remains cohesive, returning to the interplay of tenderness and strain, contemplation and bustle, composing a mosaic that invites rereading through different paths and seasons.

Read today, the collection's range speaks to enduring questions about how art surveys a world at once intimate and communal. Its attention to neighborhood, festival, rumor, and ritual anticipates later conversations about culture and belonging, while its lyric focus on flowers, dreams, and evening light affirms the value of inwardness. The friction of Anarchy Alley and the tenderness of Amid the Roses are not opposites but coordinates for thinking about care within conflict. Violets and Other Tales encourages sustained noticing, ethical tact, and imaginative sympathy,

offering forms that can nourish contemporary readers navigating complexity without surrendering nuance or grace.

Historical Context

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Socio-Political Landscape

Set in the fraught 1890s Gulf South, the collection's urban vignettes and coastal sketches register labor strife, immigration, and municipal modernization. Anarchy Alley hints at fears and solidarities surrounding radical politics, while In Our Neighborhood and Titee observe the precarious economies of children and the working poor amid policing and philanthropy. The dated salutation To my friend of November 5th, 1892 quietly anchors the book in a year of mass strikes and electoral tensions. Public space feels contested: streetcars, markets, and alleys act as stages where class anxieties and community surveillance collide, foreshadowing codified segregation and widening disparities.

Questions of race, gender, and citizenship surface in intimate frames. The Woman, The Maiden's Dream, and At Eventide probe respectability and desire, testing the era's constricting codes for middle-class women of color. Chalmetle invokes patriotic memory to interrogate who is permitted to claim the nation's glories, while Legend of the Newspaper exposes the sensational press shaping opinion, policing reputations, and disciplining dissent. New Year's Day and At Bay St. Louis juxtapose ritual gentility with the economics of leisure, revealing hierarchies that govern coastal hotels, parlors, and promenades. Together, these

pieces outline power's subtle choreography inside families, clubs, and commemorations.

Religious and moral debates, stirred by transatlantic controversy, also inflect the volume. *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ* channels popular fascination with apocrypha, hovering between reverence and skepticism in an age of comparative religion. *In Memoriam* registers ritualized mourning as a social script, while *A Story of Vengeance* contemplates justice beyond courts, mirroring anxieties about lynching, vigilantism, and legal unevenness without sensational detail. *Fin de Siècle* names the mood directly: end-of-century weariness, moral panics, and reformist zeal. Against this, *Anarchy Alley* and *The Idler* contrast civic alarm with everyday drift, mapping how public debate filters into private conscience and idle observation.

Intellectual & Aesthetic Currents

Stylistically, the book blends local color with refined lyricism, favoring precise surfaces over dialect caricature. *Titee*, *In Our Neighborhood*, and *At Bay* St. Louis rely on sensory detail—humidity, street cries, and shoreline shimmer—to locate readers within Creole New Orleans and its Gulf satellites. *Chalmetle* uses commemorative landscape as character, while *At Eventide* modulates light and sound like painterly studies. *Ten Minutes' Musing* and *Impressions* tilt toward the prose-poem, registering fleeting sensations and ethical afterthoughts. This aesthetic of tact and indirection resists voyeuristic regionalism, insisting on interiority and decorum even when the subject is poverty, desire, or the edge of violence.

Transatlantic currents wash through the selection. *Salamambo*. By Gustave Flaubert foregrounds admiration for French historical exoticism—filtered here as synopsis, homage, or exercise in mood—while *Paul to Virginia* recasts a familiar colonial idyll as intimate address. *Fin de Siècle* draws on decadent and symbolist atmospheres, its languor echoed by *Amid the Roses and Violets*, where flowers become emblems of memory, class, and the ethics of gift-giving. Allegorical miniatures like *Love and the Butterfly* and *The Bee-Man* distill moral lessons into graceful tableaux. The result is a cosmopolitan palette: French-inflected cadence married to American scene, producing polished brevity rather than sprawling realism.

Formally, the volume experiments with print culture's new speeds and fragmentations. *Legend of the Newspaper* treats journalism as a technological and ethical system, anticipating debates about rumor, circulation, and responsibility. *A Carnival Jangle* orchestrates Mardi Gras as cacophonous montage—masks, brass, and electric illumination—suggesting how festival compresses class and race encounters into ritualized misrule. *Anarchy Alley* leans toward naturalist observation, while *If I Had Known* and *Farewell* refine the miniature to an aphoristic sting. *Across I., II., III.* in *Violets* and in *In Unconsciousness*, interior monologue and free-indirect shadings appear, advancing a modern, psychological surface beneath the genteel finish.

Legacy & Reassessment Across Time

On publication, the collection's polish and restraint drew attention within New Orleans's Creole circles but circulated

modestly beyond them. Subsequent decades prized more overt protest or folkloric modes, and these quiet studies were long sidelined. Later readers reassessed their tactical decorum: the genteel veneer is now read as a method for smuggling racial critique and feminist insight into venues that demanded propriety. *Anarchy Alley* has been reappraised as early urban social fiction, while the inclusion of *Salamambo*. By Gustave Flaubert signals a deliberate cosmopolitanism rather than mere imitation. Scholars trace how the book models professional authorship for women navigating racialized markets.

Contemporary scholarship engages the book across multiple lenses. Feminist and queer-inflected readings consider the charged intimacies of *Violets* and *To my friend of November 5th, 1892*, noting coded attachments and the politics of address. Media historians revisit *Legend of the Newspaper* for early ethics-of-journalism discourse; memory studies explore *Chalmetle* as a case of contested national remembrance. Eco-critical approaches attend to littoral ecologies in *At Bay St. Louis* and *Eventide* sketches, reading weather as social pressure. Performance scholars parse *A Carnival Jangle* as a festival text staging civic negotiation. The collection thus endures as a compact laboratory of modernity's forms and dilemmas.

Synopsis (Selection)

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To my friend of November 5th, 1892

A brief dedicatory address that frames the collection with intimacy, gratitude, and carefully held memory.

Its personal warmth foreshadows the elegiac notes of Farewell and In Memoriam while opening the book's theme of private feeling voiced in public form.

INTRODUCTION.

A framing note that situates the volume's blend of lyric, sketch, and story as a unified exploration of mood and place.

It prepares readers for shifts in register that recur from impressionistic poems to social vignettes like In Our Neighborhood.

PREFACE.

A succinct statement of aims that foregrounds sensibility, locality, and a woman's perspective.

It aligns the book's method with reflective pieces such as The Woman and Ten Minutes' Musing, signaling a balance of art and observation.

VIOLETS (I-III)