

**MAUD SUMMERS, THE
SIGHTLESS: A NARRATIVE
FOR THE YOUNG**

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Maud Summers, the sightless: a narrative for the young by John Absolon

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JOHN ABSOLON

**MAUD SUMMERS, THE
SIGHTLESS: A NARRATIVE
FOR THE YOUNG**



MAUD AND THE VIOLETS.

MAUD SUMMERS

THE SIGHTLESS.

A NARRATIVE FOR THE YOUNG.

"No life falls fruitless: none can tell
How vast its power may be,
Nor what results unfolded lie
Within it silently."

With Illustrations by John Absolon.

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MAUD SUMMERS THE SIGHTLESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE BANK UNDER THE BEECH-TREE.

"Where the purple violet grows,
Where the bubbling water flows,
Where the grass is fresh and fine."—CHILDREN'S SONG.

UNDER the shade of a venerable beech-tree, which stood on the outskirts of a small wood, two little girls were seated on a fine morning in the early summer. They had chosen a very pretty spot for their resting-place, for the bank on which they sat was covered with bright green moss, which made it as soft as a velvet cushion, and the yellow primroses were peeping out from it here and there. There were many bees flying about among the blossoms of the tree above them, and they kept up a constant humming which was quite as pretty in its way as the music which the birds were making in the wood behind. Butter-

flies, too, found something that they liked in the flowers, and were as restless, though not quite so noisy, as the hard-working bees. There was a little stream also at no great distance, which made much babbling as it tumbled along over the stones and pebbles,—and a very refreshing sound it was upon such a day, making one feel cooler only to hear it. Altogether it was a very pleasant place; and if I had been choosing a spot for a holiday excursion or a gipsy-party, I do not know of one that I should have preferred to this,—the old beech at Broadlands, as it was called.

“There are some violets not far off, Ellen,” said one of the children,—“let us make a posy; I do so love violets.”

Ellen looked carefully round without discovering any.

“I think you must be mistaken, Maudie dear; I cannot see any sign of them.”

“Oh, yes, I can smell them quite distinctly. That way,”—and she pointed with her hand. “You did not go far enough.”

Ellen set off in that direction, and after some search found a large patch of beautiful violets, white and purple mingled together. She came

back delighted, and taking her companion by the hand, led her to the spot.

If you had seen how carefully she chose the way—how she went some distance round, instead of taking Maud across that narrow ditch which she herself had stepped over so easily just before—how she warned her to take care when they were passing through the furze, you would have wondered what was the matter with Maud, that she should require so much attention. She was quite as tall as Ellen; she did not look more delicate in health; and yet Ellen was as careful of her as if she had been a little sickly child. If you had asked Ellen, she would have told you that poor Maudie was blind. Her eyes were not closed up, like those of some blind persons; they were as wide open, though not quite so bright, as her companion's. To an ordinary observer there was no evident sign of disease to be traced in them; but if you looked at them carefully, you would see that they did not move from one object to another, as your own eyes would do, but they seemed to look straight at one thing. When she spoke, she did not turn her eyes towards you; she always looked before her, as if

she saw something a long way off,—so that, although her eyes were open, and although they were pretty, yet you would soon have seen that they had no sight in them.

When the two girls reached the violets, Maud sat down on the grass, and began to make a fragrant nosegay. Her little fingers moved very busily amongst the flowers, feeling them out, and separating them from the grass and dried leaves which mingled with them; and in a short time she had collected quite a large handful, much larger than Ellen had gathered, for she was continually seeing something a little way off that she must go and examine;—now a large cowslip, brighter and more full of flowers than any that were near her,—now something in a furze bush that looked like a bird's nest, but which turned out on examination to be a root of dried grass,—and now a playful squirrel, that sat very quietly till she came near, and then darted swiftly up the nearest tree, and peered down with saucy eyes upon her from behind the branches. Ellen was always coming back from these short excursions with some new adventure to describe to her patient little friend, who went