

NOBODY KNOWS BUT MOTHER.

How many buttons are missing to-day?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many playthings are strewn in her way?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many thimbles and spoons has she missed?
How many burns in each fat little fist?
How many bumps to be cuddled and kissed?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many hats has she hunted to-day?
Nobody knows but mother.
Carelessly hiding themselves in the bay?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many handkerchiefs wilfully strayed?
How many ribbons for each little maid,
How, for her care, can a mother be paid?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many mucky shoes all in a row?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many stockings to darn, do you know?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many little torn aprons to mend,
How many hours of toil must she spend,
What is the time when her day's work shall end?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many lunches for "Tommy" and "Sam"?
Nobody knows but mother.
Cookies and apples and blackberry jam.
Nobody knows but mother.
Nourishing dainties for every "sweet tooth".
Todding "Dottie" or dignified Ruth,
How much we sweeten the labor, for sooth?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many cares does a mother bear know?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many joys from her mother-love flow?
Nobody knows but mother.
How many tears for her baby have she shed?
Nobody knows but mother.
—Mary Morrison, in Housekeeper.



People called him "Rambling Robin." You could have seen him almost any day walking along with his head hanging down, and his eyes fixed on the ground. Nobody spoke to him, nor did he speak to anybody. His clothes were in rags. He wore no collar. Sometimes a red scarf was fastened round his neck, but oftener than not his neck and chest were bare to the cutting winds. Nobody knew where he came from, and nobody cared.

Some said he had been an actor at one time—others that he had been a doctor, while many maintained that he was a man who had gambled away a large fortune. Whatever he might have been, we could all see that he was no common vagrant.

I do not know whether the peace and good will which are supposed to come to all men at Christmas time had anything to do with it, but when I passed by him on Christmas eve a few years ago, as I was hurrying off home, a sudden impulse led me to stop.

"Will you come home with me and have your supper, Robin?" I said.

He stopped and lifted up his head. Poor fellow! I noticed the tears spring to his eyes. Kind words were strangers to him.

"My—my supper?" he gasped. "I never have any supper."

I quite believed him. In fact, if he had said he never had anything to eat, at any time I should not have contradicted him.

"But make an exception to-night!" I urged. "Christmas time, you know. People break the ordinary routine of their lives at Christmas. Come along."

He made no answer; at least, not with words, but his eyes spoke plainly enough, and, quickening his pace, we strode along together toward my home.

At last we reached the house, and my wife opened the door. My little Mabel came toddling to meet me, and as I lifted her up and carried her back on my shoulder, I told my wife I had brought a friend home for supper.

Robin and I sat talking together while Annie was getting the meal ready. His face had brightened, and his brilliant conversation confirmed the opinion I had formed of him, that he was a man of culture.

Mabel climbed down from my knee and went across to Robin.

"Have no little girl!" she hissed. He stroked her hair gently, and shook his head.

"And no mamma?" she asked, looking first at me and then at the smiling face of my wife.

Robin turned his face away. Trust a child for finding the way to a man's heart.

"No, no mamma," he replied, after a pause.

Mabel sighed, and came across to me.

"Is eo poor man?" she asked.

The intervention of my wife with the information that supper was ready saved me from replying.

The meal over, my wife rose to take Mabel to bed, but before she left the room the little girl ran back, and climbing on Robin's knee, kissed him "good night." Then Robin and I pulled our chairs to the fire. His eyes were shining. He seemed a different man. I handed him a cigar, and we sat smoking for awhile without speaking.

"Would you like to hear the history of Rambling Robin?" he asked, leaning forward. "If you would, I will tell you the first part. The second part only begins to-night. * * * You shall hear that in a year or two."

I did not quite understand him, but I nodded and waited for him to start.

"Two lines," he began, "frequently occur to me. You remember them: 'Who falls from all he knows of bliss, Care little into what abysms.'

"They are the truest lines ever written," he said, and I stared into the fire for a time without speaking.

"Listen, and I will tell you how I fell. Five years ago I was a young man—do I look young now?" and he pointed to his sunken cheeks and gray-streaked hair. "And yet five years have made the difference."

"My name is Robin Alerne. I was living with my father in Scotland and it was there I met my flora. I can see her now, as she was the first day I met her. It was a glorious day in June. I had sauntered out with my rod in the morning, and was whipping the stream which ran along the outskirts of the wood, when the sound of sweet music fell on my ear. I turned round and saw a woman. She had not seen me, and as she came along she sang in a voice as sweet and pure as the water itself."

"Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotted, like a bonny O!
The opening goes to the wifew.
Nae purer is than Nannie, O!"

"She was slinging her sun bonnet in her hand, and the sun was playing

with her golden hair. Her neck was bare, its whiteness contrasting with her bonnie, sunburst face.

"When she saw me she stopped and blushed. Then she threw on her sunbonnet and walked on hurriedly.

"She was a girl from the neighboring farm. I fell in love with her, and we met in the wood, unknown to any one. Then my father heard. He forbade me to see her, and told me if I disobeyed him he would turn me from the house.

"I met Flora the same night, and persuaded her, on that glorious moonlight night, to be my wife. We came south together, and I married her. I was successful in obtaining a clerkship, and after my work at the office was done, my wife would sit in the little chair by my side, while I sat writing at my desk.

"For I had the gift of writing bits of stories, and often when the night had drawn on, and work was put away,

Flora and I would sit talking of the future, of the day when I should be a famous author, and the drudgery of the office should be a thing of the past.

"Our happiness was too great to last.

"But the news of my darling's face became facts, and though she tried to smile away my fears, I felt sure she was going to be ill.

"Then one night when I came from the office, I found her ill in bed. In despair I sat down to write a story, which, if accepted, would enable me to get her away into the country, or to the seaside. I worked at it all night, and finished it. Then a week later I received a letter at the office from the editor telling me that my story had been accepted, including a check and asking for more stories.

"Flora had been growing worse each day, but now, I thought, she should soon be better. I cashed the check and bought some luxuries for her, and passing a flower shop, I went in and obtained a spray of lilies. They were her favorite flowers.

"Then I hurried away home. I could hardly walk fast enough, but at last I reached my little house, and entered. I ran upstairs and threw open her bedroom door.

"'Flora,' I cried. 'Success at last, my darling. You shall go away for a few days now.'

"She did not answer me. 'She must be asleep,' I thought, and noiselessly I walked across the room.

"I stood over the bed, looking at my sweetheart's lovely face. It was so calm, so beautiful, so pure. There was



ROBIN TELLS HIS STORY.

a sweet smile on her lips, and her hair was hanging down, framing her face in gold. My thoughts wandered back to that day in June, and the words of the song came back to me.

"I knelt at the side of the bed, and placing the spray of lilies in my Flora's little hand, waited in silence, watching and praying—praying that she would soon be restored to health again.

"She awoke with a little start.

"'I am so glad you have come, Robin,' she said, as I kissed her. 'I have had such a glorious dream. I was dreaming that you had written a book, and that the world was ringing with your name.'

"'Look unto me and be ye saved,' said she, knowing how easy God has made man's part in being saved.

"Important Papers.

Queen Victoria has given so many proofs of the possession of sterling virtues that no one ever expects her to

swerve from the path approved by her judgment and her conscience. When she first became queen, however, the world had yet to learn how determined the young girl ruler could be.

Lord Melbourne, her prime minister, is said to have declared that he would rather have ten kings to manage than one queen.

On one occasion he arrived at Wind-sor late on Saturday night, and informed the Queen, "A minister will be here to-morrow morning, and I must see him at once." The Queen, however, was unable to withstand the invasion of his territory by the piano and the piano agent? We fear so. We hear of him very seldom now; whereas in the times gone, at Christmas his name was on every tongue, and his bow was a scepter wielded over many willing subjects.

Happily for him that he found suitable eulogists before his type was extinct, Dr. George W. Bagby, that great humorist and player upon the heart strings of men, in numerous sketches, and the founder of this paper, in his delightful, realistic reminiscences, have both described and immortalized the old Virginia fiddler.

He was the important functionary at every dance, and called out the figures in an unchangeable voice, which grew fiercer and fiercer as he warmed up to his work. Has his old friend disappeared? Is his fiddle cracked and his bow unstrung? Has he been unable to withstand the invasion of his territory by the piano and the piano agent? We fear so. We hear of him very seldom now; whereas in the times gone, at Christmas his name was on every tongue, and his bow was a scepter wielded over many willing subjects.

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