

A Wild Robin.

(By Flora L. Stenild, in the Ave Marie.)

No one knew least of all herself, why Ruth Danlop liked better the wild young Robin Marden than the did the staid youths who walked in the old beaten paths with dignity and circumspection. Perhaps it was the careless look of hair that was always falling over his tanned forehead, or his utter disregard of all convention, or the fashion he had of suddenly forsaking the high, clear tones he generally employed and whispering some gentle words, or it may have been just because he was Robin, the wail who had laughed his way into the hearts of a kind couple when little more than a baby. They had found him at an orphan asylum in Boston, and passed by scores of dozens little boys and girls to choose this tiny young rascal, who stuck at them when they would have crossed him, but smiled like a seraph as they turned away dismayed. The smile settled the matter, and he was born away for good or so, by those whom it had charmed.

There was no mystery about Robin's parentage. This is not the record of a putridus beading reared by plain people. His father had been a political refugee from a Russian province, whose wife had shared his opinions as well as his exile. So far as we know, they had possessed no religious faith, but were advocates of a pronounced Socialism which was their undoing; for it kept them in a squalid poverty, tuberculosis found them easy victims.

The Mardens had no need to complain of monotony after the little Robin was one of their household; for he became the terror not only of the neighborhood but of the entire village. Indeed his reputation as a mischief-maker was so firmly established that he received much discredit that was not his due, as is the way of the world. But he deserved enough. It was rarely he who tolled the merrymaking bell when the postmaster took a new wife; who hid a pile of cards in the minister's hat; who dressed the statue upon the soldier's monument in M. Marden's Sunday gown; and who wheeled a neighbor's baby wagon to the top of the mountain and left it there.

As he grew older other gifts besides these troublesome ones began to develop, a deft twist of the tongue among them; and he would harangue a crowd of boys with wild thoughts that surged in his brain, or tell them fanciful stories born of his fertile imagination. He was ready, too, with his muscular young fists when occasion arose, quick to fight, but quick to forgive when sober second thought assured him that his cause had been wrong. His adopted father often shook his head and foreboded disaster when some wilder prank than usual set the village to laughing and blaming; but Mrs. Marden, ignoring all laws of heredity, firmly believed, that the Socialist's child would eventually become a respectable and God-fearing member of society.

With the narrow theology of the region he would have nothing to do, but he enjoyed out of his own mind such unanswerable questions that the village parson at last gave him up as incurable, at which he was pleased. When however he began frequenting the good little village boys with his queer ideas, not only of doctrine but of the rights to hold property their parents quickly withdrew them from the charms of his society.

Robin's work, like his study, was fitful and irregular. He would swing the scythe for days with a sort of fury, then lie down by the river and dream through a golden week. And so the years wore on.

He was about twenty when the observing ones began to notice that it was Ruth Danlop with whom he danced most often at the rural gatherings, and the same fair girl who sat at one side with him when the delicious merrymaking went on. Amos Sargent the schoolmaster, resented this most bitterly, for, in his still, grave way, he had for years thought of Ruth as the young mistress of the household, and the light of his somewhat lonely life; and that a wail, a stray, a "vagabond" from no one knew where, should supersede him was unbelievable. And then fortune at one fell stroke favored him, at the same time striking down the tall youth who laughed at decent people's stern ways.

"Robin Marden had stolen thirty dollars from his father," his was what the village people whispered to each other. "And, what is more, he has confessed it."

"Yes, Sir," he said; "I took it. I meant to pay it back."

"So they all say," so finally replied the father. "And you didn't end to steal it. You might have had it for the asking. I've never been stingy with you."

"Nay," said R. bin, "You've been too generous. And I've taken money before."

"Don't tell me, Robin," don't tell me!"

"Oh, I must tell you! Do not think me better than I am. There hasn't been a time when I have gone to town with things to sell that I haven't taken a little. I was on a book or a bit of ribbon or a bunch of roses."

"Ribbons! Roses!"

An Ancient Foe

To health and happiness is Scrofula—as ugly as ever since time immemorial. It causes blemishes in the neck, disfigures the skin, inflames the mucous membrane, wastes the muscles, weakens the bones, reduces the power of resistance to disease and the capacity for recovery, and develops into consumption.

"Two of my children had scrofula some which kept growing deeper and kept them from going to school for three months. Distinct and medicines did no good until I began giving them Hood's Sarsaparilla. This medicine caused the sores to heal, and the children have shown no signs of scrofula since." J. W. McGraw, Woodstock, Ont.

Hood's Sarsaparilla

will rid you of it, radically and permanently, as it has rid thousands.

"Yes; for Ruth Danlop. She thought I earned them. And now I'm going away. I have never cared for the people here."

"I know it," said Mr. Marden, sadly.

"I am going to find my own kind, my own sort of work. I'm tired of living among strangers. And now that they know I am a thief (his lips curled) it would be harder than ever. But I will come back to scrofula and to take Ruth away. Put aside your glum look dear old chap! And his arms were about his father's neck, and his shortcoats forgiven. No one whom he chose to conquer could resist him.

The next morning came; and the sun rising from behind the hills, shone upon two dejected old people; and farther up the valley a fair-haired girl's face was sad. R. bin had gone.

They heard from him twice. He was in Boston, hopeful and happy; had found some congenial and helpful friends, and would write again. But he never did and in a year Ruth Danlop married Amos Sargent, and thought of him almost forgotten the foreign lad who had had such power to stir her heart. And yet when the scent of roses came from the garden, or the harvest moon was in the sky, or a minor strain of music came stealing down the wind, it was as if Robin called to her, never reproaching her but just calling; singing a bit of Russian folk-song, or blowing as he banded her a rose, or bidding her look at the round harvest moon as he recited the famous lines with which Shakespeare has forever woven its beams.

The New England conscience has become almost the theme of jokes but it is no less reality; and when over the image of the absent Robin appeared before the mental eye of this daughter of the Parishes she began to reproach herself. After the birth of her little son there were for a while no vagrant thoughts; but when he was old enough to be at play with the other lads, and her husband was busy with his books, here would come to her at odd moments the vision of a dark face, with waving hair tumbling over the brow and vivid tenderness in the laughing eyes. Then she would call her little Amos, or would busy herself with some intricate household problem until she was her own calm minded self again.

Ten years after her marriage her husband became ill, and never was man nursed more faithfully. There was no vagrant thought of Robin now. The true Ruth, the better Ruth, had it seemed banished him from her memory; and with him had gone the minor music and the tumbling hair and the smile that had served so well when he had forfeited esteem. She learned, too, what Amos had been to her; the bald head and near-sighted eyes; the no longer evoked her secret decision. She remembered with shame how she had rebelled because his boots squeaked, and had been provoked, because he insisted upon cooling his tea on a saucer. Then one day, after the doctor had told her that he could not get well, here came a swift thought of Robin. It was smothered almost before it was born, but it had breathed.

"This is the end," said Ruth to herself, and set her thin lips firmly together. "I am no better than a murderer."

Amos died, and there were further whippers all at in Hiltop.

"Will Robin Marden come back?" She's free now. "He's been seen lately, speerifying like a crank."

"You'd better lock up your bureau drawers," "It's an awful risk adopting children,"—these and other things were freely said when neighbors met upon the winding, elm-shaded street.

Ruth had worn her widow's dress for two years. She would, she thought, never lay it on aside. It should be part of her penance for that one wild moment when she thought, "If Amos dies, Robin may come back."

It was late in June, and the sun, having in that region so brief a summer in which to shed his beams, had wrapped the village in a garment almost like flame. Ruth had laid aside

her black stuff gown and replaced it with white,—a little reproachful of herself as she felt the comfort it gave. Little Amos was down by the river, watching the water as it slipped over the shining pebbles. The birds were still; the butterflies seemed drowsy, and then—Robin came! She did not know him at first as he stood in the open door with his face in the shadow, that thin face, the wavy lock a bit grey!

"Madame," he began, in the conventional tone of a book agent; then— "Ruth, Ruth!"

She extended her hand, staidly and calmly.

"I am glad to see you, Robin."

"Not a very cordial greeting after all these years," he answered sullenly. "Will you come in and tell me of yourself?" she asked, with as little enthusiasm as if he had been gone but a fortnight.

"Thank you I will not," he replied. "I have no fancy to meet your husband, the schoolmaster."

"He does not know?" she thought, and in a way saw her way clear. "He would welcome you if he were here," she returned but did not repeat her invitation to come in, and to take Ruth away. "How has time used you, R. bin?" "As well as I deserved. I have been cold and hungry, but happy in a way. And now I am going to die. My natural parents, having it to be side to leave me, bequeathed me a body that does not take kindly to hardships. For a month I have been tramping through the mountains, selling a book now and then; but it has not helped me. Next week I start on a sea voyage,—a long cruise. I came here to say good-bye to my father. His mind, you know, is gone. He had forgotten me, and I am leaving Hiltop. I did not think to see you. Is your husband good to you, Ruth?"

"He has always been," she replied, turning a shade pale at the end of a question.

"And you are happy?" "Quite, quite happy."

"Have you children?" "One little boy."

"Well, I trust that he will be a credit to you both, is that his violin?"

"I lay upon a table in the hall,—brows, male thing of infinite possibilities."

"Yes; he shows a fondness for music."

"May I play you one tune?" She banded him the violin without a word, and the old minor air floated from it and into the house bereft for years of its master; but Ruth's calm was that of a statue.

Robin returned the instrument to her, and she wiped a bit of dust from it in a housewifely way.

"That is my good-bye," he said, "I leave you to your schoolmaster. If it were not for him, I might wish to linger and you would be annoyed. Some nights when I am on the sea Ruth, I shall pick out the coldest star and look at it and think of you. It will be no farther from me than you are, with your sacred books, but Madam (with a quick change of tone), "as I can not induce you to appreciate the volume which I am offering you at a positively ruinous price, I will not urge you further. Good-bye!"

He bowed like the mixture of vagabond and courtier that he was, and turned away.

"Robin!" she cried, overcast with sudden compunction—he was so thin and changed,—"I hope God will bless you."

He only laughed, a hollow laugh. "I am glad you can pray," he said, and, gathering one red rose from the bush beside the door, went down the path.

It was a very thoughtful mother that Amos came back home to when the shadows grew long. She put on her widow's hat again; but in spite of it her heart knew a strange peace. That one wild moment was as if it had never been.

"You look happy and spry, both," said the boy.

"I shall be happy," she answered, "and never sorry, if you become a good man like your father. There is nothing worth striving for but goodness,—nothing. And now, while I get supper you may cut some roses and we shall take them to the graveyard. But do not gather any from the bush by the door."

A sailor, straying into Hiltop a long time afterwards, told Ruth that Robin died at sea.

"He got awful gentle toward the last," he said, "I never saw a peaceful man than he was. He used to be out on deck and look at the stars, and before he turned in he'd always say 'God bless her!' He seemed to set great store by a little faded rose; and when we wrapped him up to bury him, we put it on his hand. There's folks worse than Robin that's thought a lot of. He was sort of born wild and couldn't settle down and be steady. Well poor fellow, I hope he's found peace at last."

"Amen," said Ruth, softly.

Family Politeness.

The best test for politeness is the behavior of a man or woman in the family. It doesn't much matter whether you know the exact number of cards to be left at Mrs. Black Jones' reception if you forget to pass the bread to your father. It isn't quite so necessary to know just how

A COLD However Slight MAY TURN INTO BRONCHITIS.

You should never neglect a cold, however slight. If you do not treat it in time it will, in all possibility, develop into bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, or some other serious throat or lung trouble.

On the first sign of a cold or cough it is advisable to cure it at once, and not let it run on for an indefinite period.

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large an engraved invitation should be if you are not considerate enough to give your chair to the old folks.

Politeness in the home is a true index of good breeding. It, like charity, begins at home, and, like charity, grows in the widening circles of influence.

Young people should never forget the respect due to their elders. Never mind whether Aunt Mary is a prim 'old maid' (although I object very much to that term); she needs respectful consideration—well, because she is a human being. The fact that she is in the family should warrant a more thoughtful treatment of her. It is but natural to be able to make allowances for one whose life you know.

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"Hub," snorted the collector. "I guess you never started out to look for antique furniture."

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She—"Yes, I agree with you. We can't."

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Brilliant Young Man—"It is probably urged on by the spar of the moment."

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