

BOYS AND GIRLS

'Our Anna.'

(By W. R. Rose, in Cleveland 'Plain Dealer'.)

The hour hand of the big clock in the counting room of the great Rulofson factory was just ten when the door of the private office opened, and the master appeared in the doorway. He beckoned the waiting messenger to him.

'Go to the cabinet shop,' he said, 'and tell the foreman to send Rudolph Jensen to me. Tell him I am waiting.'

The boy sped away and the master returned to his desk.

He was a tall man of perhaps two-and-thirty, with a well-knit figure and a resolute face. It was a kindly face, too, and as he sat drumming with his fingers on the mass of papers before him a smile played about the firm mouth. Evidently his thoughts for the moment were on some pleasant subject.

A low rap on the door drew his attention. 'Come in,' he called.

The door slowly opened and an old man entered. He was in his workingman's garb, bareheaded, and with lots of shavings clinging to his jacket and overalls. He stooped a little as he stepped forward.

'Good morning, Mr. Rulofson, sir,' he said with a slight German accent. 'You send for me?' His voice slightly quavered as he asked the question.

'Yes, Mr. Jensen,' replied the master; 'sit down here.' And he pointed to a chair close by the desk. As the old man stiffly seated himself the kindly smile lingered about the younger man's mouth, yet the old man looked at him with a troubled glance.

'You let me speak, Mr. Rulofson?' he asked, as he pulled nervously at his thick gray beard. 'Maybe I can make some explanations. I don't blame Peterson. Peterson is a good foreman. He did just right to report me. I was late twice, and I am not quite so quick with my hands as I was. I know it. I am sixty-four years old, Mr. Rulofson, sir.' He leaned a little forward and rubbed his gnarled fingers through his grizzly hair. 'Yes, yes, I know. That makes no difference. Work is work.'

He opened up his hands and held their palms upward before his breast. They were eloquent witnesses of a life of toil. Bent and gnarled and knotted, they told of continuous weary hours with tools and lathe. Rulofson looked at the old man's hands, and the smile on his pleasant face faded.

'Mr. Jensen,' he began.

'One moment, Mr. Rulofson, sir,' the old man interrupted, 'I don't haf nothing to say against Peterson. He is a very good workman, and a fine foreman. Yes, that is right. He is looking out for your interests, Mr. Rulofson. He says to himself, "The old man is getting clumsy. He is not worth what we pay him. A younger man could do the work for less money. He has been here a long time. I will not discharge him myself. I will report him to Mr. Rulofson. He was a friend of the old man Rulofson. The old man's boy will let him down easy."' He paused a moment and slowly rubbed his hand through his grizzled hair. But before the younger man could interrupt he hastily resumed. 'I was in the factory twenty years before Peterson came. Yes. When your father started out in business he sent for me and said, "Jensen, if you will promise to be a man, I will give you work." He was goot to me. I was always too fond of the beer, and the singing, and the gardens. Your father

was different, Mr. Rulofson. He was full of ambitions. He climbed up; I stood still. We were boys together; we came from the same town. But we were different. I stood still, but he went on until he was the great manufacturer, with his thousands of men and his millions.' The old man leaned back a little and sighed.

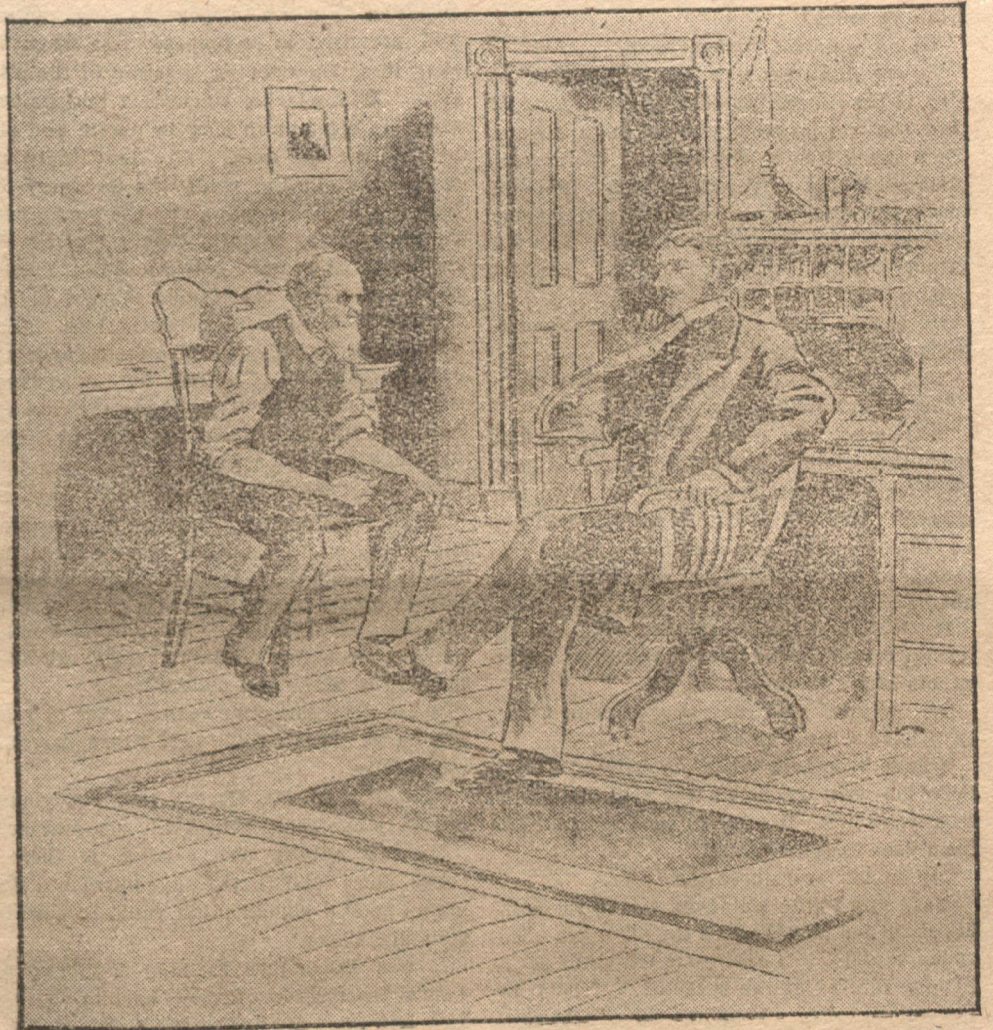
'I am quite sure my father never forgot you,' said the younger man.

'No, he never forgot me,' murmured the other. 'The last day he visited the factory he called from the doorway of the shop, "Hullo, there, Jensen, old fellow." I remember chust how he looked when he said it. Your father was always quite as goot to me as I deserved. It took me such a werry long time to settle down to work. I would go out with the young fellows and maybe it would

trian cavalry. Even the black sheep of the family, poor Rudolph Jensen, was a werry good cabinet-maker—in his day.'

He laughed a little harshly as he leaned forward.

'Mr. Rulofson, sir,' he slowly said, 'for three and twenty years I had no reason to ask a favor of your father. I did my tasks well. He had no better workman. Now it is different. I am old. My hand is no longer my trusty servant. I come to ask you a great favor, Mr. Rulofson, sir. Do not discharge me quite yet. Let me stay a little longer.' He held up his hands quickly as the younger man tried to speak, 'Wait, Mr. Rulofson, sir. I want to explain. I want to tell you why I ask this favor. It is not for myself. I haf a daughter. When my Lena went away, she left me a little girl, a littl'



LET ME STAY A LITTLE LONGER.

be two, three days before I would come back to the works. Yet your father kept me right along. Sometimes he would talk to me about my foolishness, sometimes he would only shake his head. But he kept me. And then I married Lena. Then I quit my old ways. But my chance was gone with my youth. I could never be anything but a cabinet-maker, Mr. Rulofson, and for three and twenty years your father had no employee more faithful than Rudolph Jensen.'

'I have heard my father speak of you in the kindest manner,' said the younger man. 'You know that the business cares were many and that in later years his health was poor. Yet I am quite sure he never forgot you.'

'I am glad to know it,' said the old man. 'We were very wide apart, yet we started together. My family was as good as yours, Mr. Rulofson, sir. My father was a chapelmeister, my oldest brother a professor at Bonn, my younger brother a captain of Aus-

Anna. For twenty years that child has been all there is in life for me. I was her nurse, her guide, her teacher, her friend. You can't understand this, Mr. Rulofson, sir. Nobody but a father can. Some day you may.'

He paused and wiped his forehead with a huge handkerchief that he dragged from an inner pocket. Philip Rulofson leaned back in his chair with his eyes fixed on the old man's troubled face and made no further effort to interrupt him.

'She grew up a beautiful girl,' the old man resumed. 'A beautiful girl and a dutiful girl. And as I watched her growing I made up my mind that she should be a lady. I would devote all I could earn to adding to my child's attractions. She had lessons in music, in German and French. Sometimes it pinched pretty hard, but I never wished to hold back a penny from her. No, I watched her grow up so beautiful, and gentle, and accomplished, and my heart swelled with joy. Sometimes I would whisper, "Look