

BOYS AND GIRLS

Rasmus, or the Making of a Man.

(By Julia McNair Wright.)

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CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

'And I'm going that very way myself, and I'd like to join you, till we get tired of each other,' said the little man.

'Two's company,' said Rasmus, looking rather suspicious.

The little man made no reply; he retired behind the boxes, and presently reappeared. He held out his hand. 'What's that?'

'Nothin' but a little red ant,' said Rasmus. The little man seemed to cage the little ant, and then handed the cage to Rasmus. 'What's that?'

'O fury! I do declare! ain't he big! Is that him? Why, that's witchcraft, dad, and you must be in league with the Wicked One; you've turned him into a raging lion. O look at his jaws, and his feet, and his hairs;'

'That's a microscope,' said Rodney sedately.

The little man took back his instrument, and returned it in a moment.

'What is that?'

'Wetwet, and jewelry, and feathers, and gold-dust,' said Rasmus in ecstasy.

'It is a bit of a butterfly's wing. This is spider-web.'

'I went through the silk-mills once,' said Rasmus; 'they ain't to be named along with that there spider's work.'

The little man went up to his state-room, and when he came back with a case of black wood, brass, and glass, he set it under the eye of Rasmus.

'Land!' shouted Rasmus, 'if there ain't tearin' fish, and crocodiles, and alligators and snakes, what's that?'

'Something that you drink,' said the little man.

'I don't drink it,' retorted Rasmus. 'It's brandy, sure, for it looks just like 'lirium trembles let loose.'

'It is not brandy. It is water out of this river.'

'If I ever!' cried Rasmus. 'But I don't drink this water if I can help it; dirty stuff in flood time, sure. But I've seen water sparklin' up out of a deep well, cold as ice, and clear as diamonds; and I've see springs tricklin' out of a rock, or out of a hollow like a moss cup, would make your heart glad only to look at 'em, they didn't have these wild beasts in 'em.'

'Not so many, but all some.'

'Well, I don't care,' said Rasmus, after meditation. 'My back is up. I ain't going to hate water, for all you may say.'

'I don't want you to hate it. I will explain all these things to you some day.'

'If such raging demons is in water, what's in beer and gin and rum?' demanded Rasmus.

'I'll show you sometime from beginning to end.'

'Say, boss, if we travels in company, will you take that witchcraft along with you, and let me look at it?'

'With pleasure. I will show you that little simple beetles carry files and saws and pocket-knives, rolled up tight as a round watch-spring, and inside of flowers I will show you a hundred things that you never dreamed were in them. You have, it seems, observed much of the birds, flowers, insects, along the way; you can tell me much that I do not know of their habits, perhaps, and I certainly can tell you much that you don't know about what they are. We will travel well together.'

'The boy must have his say,' said Rasmus, 'we're partners.'

'Im agreed,' said Rodney.

'But, boss, you're kind of a high-flier, maybe, and me and the boy are not high-fliers. We're not flush of money. We can't go to hotels. We've got to take it poor.'

'I'm poor myself,' said the little man. 'I travel round, in my observation-making, in the humblest way, for I am saving all the money I possibly can, to get out a great book on what I discover, and it costs a deal of money to have colored plates of flowers and insects made and printed. Still, to make such a book and leave it to the world, will be worth what I deny myself for it.'

'After all,' said Rasmus, 'if we find we don't agree, we can part, and that's better than married folks has it.'

'Or worse,' said the little man, 'for knowing that one can quarrel and part, may put a premium on altercation.'

'You talk too much dictionary for me,' said Rasmus resignedly; 'however, I'll put up with it, boss, and I may catch some crumbs of your conversation, suited to the size of my mouth.'

'And as you are fond of learning, and mean to have an education,' said the little man to Rodney, 'I may make the time we pass along the road useful to you. You were speaking of Greek and Latin.'

'Wot's them, agin?' demanded Rasmus.

'Why, languages; foreign languages,' said Rodney; 'people don't all talk the same language, you know.'

'No more they don't,' said Rasmus; 'I've heard 'em. I've heard men along the road talking a lingo I couldn't understand, nor no other sensible man couldn't. Italian they called it; blame nonsense, that's what it was, sure as I'm alive.'

Rodney laughed. 'Pshaw! it was as good talk for them, as ours is for us; but Italian, French, and so on, are not like Greek and Latin. Greek and Latin are dead languages.'

'I don't take stock in dead things, myself,' said Rasmus.

Such a thick fog came up that they were obliged to go into the cabin to keep from being drenched by the penetrating, insidious dampness, and the steamer could not proceed. When Rodney woke next morning, the boat was still climbing the yellow current. However, soon after breakfast, Pittsburg's canopy of black smoke proclaimed the end of the boat trip. There was a rush and a bustle. The boat was a gallant sight. The sun smote the great gilt eagle hanging between the fancy-topped chimneys, and the kindred bird, wide-winged, above the pilot-house; the flag floated in splendid waves of color from the jack-staff; great volumes of smoke belched from the chimney, and rolled south-west in a dun plume; the furnace doors were open, and the red fires roared and glared; the crew shouted and crowded, and unhappily swore on the fore-castle; a deck-hand stood poised with a great coil of rope to fling on the wharf; the bell rang, the whistle screamed lustily; the passengers in gala dress of hats, shawls, and cloaks, were ready to rush over the gang-planks; the wheel churned the dirty water into snow-clean foam; the steamer backed lunged forward, and settled to her place; the gang-plank grated against the wharf; the hack-drivers and carmen rushed like eager friends to greet the stream of passengers; wheels grated, boys shouted, peddlers screamed, and almost alone on the hurricane deck stood Rodney, Rasmus, and the little man.

CHAPTER V.

ALONG THE ROAD.

'I take the land to my breast
In her coat with daisies fine;
For me the hills are best,
And all that is made is mine.'

'Now brother,' said Rasmus to Rodney, 'we must get our grip-sacks ready and start on our trip. It's about as good a day as ever I see for travelling.'

They went into the state-room, and Rasmus packed all his possessions tightly into the carpet-bag, and dressed himself for the road. 'These high-flyin' trousers will be my style for New York,' he remarked; 'the suit I got from our house takes my idee for the road.' And sure enough the redoubtable Rasmus made a fair figure for travelling.

The vest and trousers that had been Mr. Andrews', were of heavy green tartan plaid, narrow lines of red, yellow, and blue marking off the squares; his shoes were low and

wide, his hat a stiff-felt helmet, his coat a dark green flannel sack with various large pockets. He had bought from a deck-passenger two stout oak sticks or canes, and on one of these he carried his bag slung over his shoulder, the other he gave to Rodney.

'Let's look at your loadin', brother,' said Rasmus to the boy; 'you must go light, if you are makin' a long trip, an' if your things ain't neat packed they'll spoil, and not carry so easy, neither.'

Rodney emptied into the lower berth rather a promiscuous collection of goods, and Rasmus with great neatness began folding up shirts, kerchiefs, socks, and under-clothing. 'Another suit wouldn't have hurt you, brother, or a pair of breeches, at the least.'

'These are nearly new; they'll last till I get there,' said Rodney, unconscious of the length of the journey.

Rasmus shook his head, but prudently refrained from alarming the young traveller. 'What books is these?' he demanded, seizing two.

'That one is my Bible.'

'Books is heavy, pardner, and readin' ain't necessary on the road. Couldn't you get another like it some day?'

'I could, but I won't,' said Rodney. 'I sha'n't throw away my Bible—and besides, it was my mother's.'

'If it was your mother's, in course you'll keep it. I wish I had something of my mother's, poor soul. Now this 'ere book ain't your Bible too, is it?'

'No. It's a "Pilgrim's Progress."'

'What's that agin?'

'Well, it's a story—all about a man that went travelling.'

'Took the steam-cars like other fools I s'pose?'

'No, he walked ever so far.'

'That showed his sense. I wouldn't mind hearin' about him some day,' said Rasmus, turning the leaves curiously.

'Here's a picter. What's this on his back? I vow if it ain't his plunder, all done up mighty keelless. I could show him how to pack better than that! There, now, the duds is all in, and they're not too heavy. If I see you getting tired, I'll carry your truck 'long with mine. I wonder if dad is ready?'

'See here, you ought not to call him dad.'

'Why not?'

'Well, he isn't old enough to be your dad.'

'Yes, he is—just about. I'm twenty-six, and I reckon him up at fifty; he'd do me very well for a dad, and you too.'

'Well, he is not, and it is not a polite way to call him, nor boss, either. Boss means somebody who has men under them for work.'

'S'pose I try "Guv'nor," or "Yours Respectfully,"' said Rasmus. 'Any thing to make your mind easy?'

'That won't do. Let's call him professor.'

'What's a professor?'

'A man that knows a great deal, and studies, and teaches people what he knows—he said he'd teach us.'

'All right, if so be I can twist my tongue to it—Professor.'

They went into the main saloon, and found the little man with his property spread out on a large table. A small knapsack was so neatly packed with indispensable articles as to call forth the warm admiration of Rasmus.

'Here's too much baggage,' he added, coolly picking up a flat Japanese box, but finding it very light. The little man opened it; it was a case for carrying his specimens of flowers, beetles, and butterflies. In a leather bag, arranged with a strap to hang over his hip, he had chloroform, entomological pins, some square white cards, two note-books of very thin paper, two other books, and his microscope reduced to its smallest compass, also a very small case of very fine and sharp steel instruments. In his breast-pocket he had two little red books, his small microscope, a knife and pencil, also a pen with ink in the handle, which aroused all Rodney's admiration. His outfit was completed by two nets for catching beetles and butterflies, and a stout walking-stick.

'Well, dad—no—what's the title, pardner? Per—yes, Perfesser, you've got a grist of things in a small sibe; I couldn't pack better myself,' said Rasmus, amiably, 'and you look mighty proper too. Cordurov is high