

BOYS AND GIRLS

Rasmus, or the Making of a Man.

(By Julia McNair Wright.)

By special arrangement with the National Temperance Society and Publication House, who hold the American Copyright.

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

'Well, whatever is broke, here you'll be well taken care of, till you're mended. There's as nice a cool room as ever was, right up at the stair head, so come along and get quiet as soon as possible.'

Mr. Llewellyn did not feel very quiet. His arm was very painful, and this was a distressing check in his journey. He did not wish Rodney and Rasmus to go on without him. He was greatly interested in their fortunes; in two weeks he would be hardly able to go on, and carry his luggage alone, and he knew neither Rodney nor Rasmus were in funds to pay their board for a fortnight, and the extra tax on his own narrow means would be heavy. While he was lying, rolling his head from side to side, on his uneasy pillow, wondering what should be done, Rasmus came in, his face beaming like a full moon. Disasters seemed native air to Rasmus, and in them he thrived famously.

'Now, boss, you have done it, haven't you?' he said gaily, as he seated himself on the bedside. 'But you displayed your good judgment in finding a proper place for the fracas. Nice little hotel this—nice landlady. Rod's going to take care of you here, for two weeks, and if he don't do it well, him and me will make a settlement, to his disadvantage. I made mention to the landlady I couldn't lie round doing nothin' for two weeks, and she said a farmer right near town was in a dreadful way for extra help; and after supper I'll go strike a two weeks' bargain with him. I'll get my board, and be able to pay Rod's too. So you be easy.'

'I can pay my nurse's board, Rasmus, if you look out for yourself,' said Mr. Llewellyn.

'And I'm going to write here every evening, till I get up a letter to Miss Sally,' said Rasmus.

By the time Mr. Llewellyn could travel, this letter was written:

'Kind Miss Sally:
'This is to let you know we are all well, and hope you think about us as we do about you. And more is to be said some other time by your servant.

'RASMUS.'

CHAPTER XV.

The End In View.

'Ashore, ashore! weariness bringeth balm,
And tired souls thereby be doubly blessed.
Ashore, ashore! the Father, with His calm,
Granteth His toilers rest.'

Again the interrupted journey was resumed. The pockets of Rasmus rattled like castanets with fourteen dollars of wages, earned during the delay, and to this music, the thoughts of Rasmus worked upon brilliant plans for the future. The possession of an unencumbered fortune of fourteen dollars woke acquisitiveness in him. He turned on his mentor.

'Mr. Llewellyn, could a man ever save up a thousand dollars of earnings?'

'Certainly.'

'How long would it take?'

'It depends on the value of the earnings. Skilled workmen, as carpenters, joiners, plasterers, master masons, and others, who pursue valuable trades, get three or four dollars a day; so can a printer. But you, Rasmus, are in the ranks of unskilled labor. The days when you should have been at school, fitting for apprenticeship, you were allowed to run the city streets, picking up what few pennies you could. Later, when you should have been perfecting yourself in a handicraft, you have been wandering up and down the country. The most you could earn would

be two dollars a day—no doubt less. But put it at that figure, board, clothes, and so on, will at least take one dollar a day; then you save at most six dollars a week. Money does not accumulate fast now at interest, for interest is low on safe investments. But let us say, that in three years, all ordinary accidents and interruptions considered, you could save up a thousand dollars.'

'Then I tell you what I'd do. I'd buy a farm, and stock it, and have a house on it all furnished, and Robin should live with me—maybe I could get some one else, too, to come keep it; and I'd have a lot of little, poor kids from the city, that never see grass, nor have any chance for themselves, and I'd give 'em a start in life.'

'A thousand dollars is quite a large sum, but it would not do all that, I think, Rasmus.'

'Then I'd work six years, and make it two thousand. You see, dad, I've got used to looking a long while ahead, and to waiting for what I want.'

As the days went on, Rasmus planned more and more for the future, he seemed to take it for granted that he should surely find his lost Robin. His buoyant spirits rose, and he spent hours in explaining how he would furnish his house, and what color his cows should be, and what he would name them, and what kinds of fowls he would keep. What Robin should be and do puzzled him most. Were hump-back men ever lawyers or doctors or preachers? Would Robin be likely to write books?

Mr. Llewellyn began to fear for him, the reaction of disappointment, and encouraged him to look at the possibility of not finding Robin, and yet preparing a home, to which he might invite Sally.

On a charming August afternoon, Rodney was travelling along by himself some little time behind his two companions. They had overtaken an artist sketching in a field, and he had requested Rodney to stand for a figure in his picture. The point of meeting for six o'clock had been settled, and now Rodney was coming on by himself. Passing through a small village, he saw a familiar face at a window.

'I declare! I believe that is Ammi's youngest daughter, Miss Lucy,' he said to himself, and lifted his hat.

At once the girl left the window, and came flying down the walk to the gate. It was indeed Lucy, but looking much brighter and better than in the spring.

'O, it is really you, Rodney! I'm so glad to see you! I saw two passing a while ago that were just like Mr. Llewellyn and that funny Mr. Rasmus, but I was not quite sure. How are you all?'

'O, we are very well, and you look much better, Miss Lucy,' said Rodney.

'I feel quite different, I assure you. I have been here a month. In a week we are going to Pittsburg. Matilda married, finally, and we came here to visit her new family.'

'And—how are—all at your home, Miss Lucy?'

'Things are better there, at last. A little after you left, father had a terrible wild time, and we had to keep two men on the watch. It ended in a kind of fit, and an illness, and when he came out of that he was paralyzed, so he can't move from his chair, nor use his hands much. But his mind became much better, and he talks reasonably, and he likes to sit in a big chair and watch the road, or see the work going on; and he talks very pleasantly. So, poor mother says she is seeing better times than she has had for years. And, indeed, he is now not so different from other paralytics, and in comparison with the cage and the screaming, and the terror of being murdered, why, it is quite heavenly.'

'That's good news.'

'And my sister Louisa can now come home from the hospital, since she can live with mother without being frightened out of her life; and the doctor says the country air will be much better for her than where she is.'

'And that, too, is good.'

'It's good of its kind,' said Miss Lucy; 'but it's a poor kind. Why, here where we are, my brother-in-law's father is just my father's age, and not so well educated as my father, and started much poorer, and he's a member of legislature, and all the people round here

look up to him, and he is an office-bearer in the church, and he is as fine and hearty-looking a man as one could see. And to think of my poor father, sitting crippled in his chair, and having been years like a wild beast shut in a cage! It's dreadful!'

'I wouldn't look at that side of it, seeing it will do no good,' said Rodney, philosophically. 'I'd think that now he is pretty comfortable, and that it is a good thing that he never killed anybody.' 'I suppose that is the best way,' said Miss Lucy. 'I'd like to ask you in, but my sister and the rest are off for a ride, only the lady of the house, and she has a very bad nervous headache, and our talk would disturb her. I'll tell you what I will do, I'll give you some late Pittsburg papers!'

Miss Lucy seemed to regard this as such a splendid offer, that Rodney felt that it would be discourteous to say that he did not care for Pittsburg papers, as he did not know the name of a street or person in that grimy and busy city. Miss Lucy ran back to the sitting-room for the papers, and assured Rodney that there was 'lots of reading in them.'

Having said 'good-bye,' Rodney continued his pursuit of his fellow-travellers, carrying his papers under his arm. He found his party camped in an ancient mill. The wheel was broken and motionless; no water came through the dry race; holes were in the roof, and the boarding had been ripped off in places from the sides. Some of the flooring was intact, and several great logs that had never found their way to the saws, lay across the beams. The mill had been for grist as well as for lumber, and two or three worn-out grindstones lay in the cellar, having fallen through the rotted portions of the floor. The rats had deserted their ancient haunts, but high up in the eaves pigeons and swallows lived in concord.

'Why are there so many of these ruined mills? We have seen three or four; one would think the country was going to decay,' said Rodney.

'Decay and growth have much the same initial processes,' said Mr. Llewellyn. 'The seed sown, rots and dies in the process of germination and renewed life. These deserted mills mark not the decay of trade, but trade, taking larger strides by means of steam; for several of these small and inefficient mills we have now, in some favorable locality, the great steam-mill, with all modern improvements.'

Rodney narrated his interview with Miss Lucy.

Rasmus, whose fire had now burnt down to coals, so that he could arrange for the baking of potatoes, said: 'Now, Rod, it will take a proper while for them 'taters to cook themselves to my notion. Let's hear what's in them papers while we're waiting.'

'There's nothing in them, I guess,' said Rodney, unfolding the journals, and looking them over. 'Why, yes there is! Here are some letters from a village, or town. Let me see. O, Mr. Llewellyn, do you remember our hermit, up on Chestnut Ridge?'

'Certainly, he is an old friend of mine.'

'Well, let me run this over, and tell you about it. I am glad she gave me these papers. Why, this is fine! Now, see here. It says that about four weeks ago, a party of idle fellows got on a spree there, and took a jug of whiskey to the woods, to get a drunk as they liked; and one of them got a fall, and got killed. It was near the hermit's place, and he helped the others—who were so scared they got sober—to weave a hurdle, or a kind of bier, and they carried it to town. There they set it down in the middle of the main street, and the hermit made a great speech over it, telling the people to come and see what the whiskey that they allowed did for people. The burgesses were having a meeting in the hall, and the hermit had the bier with the dead man carried there, and he made a speech to the burgesses, telling them that it was all very fine, the roadmaster looking after the highways, and leaving liquor-shops along them like pits and rocks, and wild beasts, to destroy the passers-by; and he said it was fine for the poor-master to be talking of the cheapest and best way to provide for paupers, and they licensing the shops that were mere mills to turn