

The High School Pennant.

A FOURTH OF JULY STORY.

BY ANNE A. ROGERS.

Copyright, 1896, by S. S. McClure Co. "There he goes! Hurrah, boys! The touch-down of the Redwood! One, two, three, hip, hip, hooray! Kip, kuroo, kural, kura-y, kledwood," sang out the leader of a crowd of play boys as the hero of the Saturday foot ball game went down the long plank walk to the high school.

It was a stiff, unheroic looking fellow, his heavy shoulders bent with the pile of books thrown over them at the end of a strap, and his perfectly immobile face in no way answering to the position. He had just groggily made an early start to school this Monday morning to avoid the encomiums of his schoolmates along the way and this unexpected testimonial from the little boys of the grammar school brought him none of the keen pleasure they intended.

"I wonder if that little chap would like to know the sort of fellow they are cheering," he mused. "I don't believe even the smallest would yell for a boy that lets his mother carry a great heavy basket of clothes to the city while he is being carried on the shoulders of the crowd."

His spirits were low. The fact that he had won the Redwood game was small compensation for his neglect to reach home in time to carry his mother's work to the city. It was not until he had reached the building and swung the great door behind him. Only a few girls were in the study hall, but the suppressed whispers were all of the Saturday games.

"Will you dare me to congratulate him, girls?" cried one of them. "I'm not afraid of him if he is afraid of girls."

As he dropped his books on the desk, she said she would enthusiastically. "Oh, Mr. Larkin, that was fine! The pennant will surely be ours in a few days. These last few weeks, if only there was something girls could do to help you on! Girls and women always have to stand outside when the big things come. They can't do anything at all, and we just must have the pennant."

"Yes," he said, calmly. "It would be tough to lose it now; but we can't do anything without women—and girls," he added, and left her standing aghast.

"Girls, Ned Larkin's turned out!" she said as she went back to the crowd. "He talks like a cavalier of the age of chivalry. You'd never pick him out as the leader of our crew, but I believe that is the next championship he's in for."

The words did indeed fall strange from Ned Larkin's lips. He had never shown the least interest in the so-called social side of his school life. For the first three years he had scarcely looked up to the fact that there was a social side and now his fourth and last year found him not only aware of it, but keenly sensitive to its influence for it.

The new spirit that was dominating the school athletics had established social canons of which Redwood boys hitherto had never heard. Ned had never before realized that the fact that his widowed mother was a tailoress who worked long days and nights to educate him was not the highest passport to social prominence, but a disadvantage to present it. He was sure that it meant sacrifice and privation for her, but he was equally sure that it crippled both of them.

He eagerly longed for the time when he could take the burden from her shoulders, but she was so confident that education would be a big stock in trade for him that he decided to be patient till his course was finished. They had taken a cottage in the shadow of the great university and her advertisement among the students for clothing to clean and to mend had brought her enough work to fill up her evenings and add many comforts to the little home. Her faith in Ned never wavered and her hope in him made every care assent.

"He's as helpful as a girl," she often thought as she saw him doing the things she was ready to do for him. He was only 12 when he begged to lift the heavy iron for her, and it was not long till she found he could use them almost as successfully and far more easily than she. They had enlarged his range of capabilities and now he was almost a man—18—and nearly ready for his start here at college. "No college for me," he would say; "but

least not until I've earned it. I'm ready to take my turn at supporting the family as soon as I get my high school diploma."

The years at school had been a steady, growing delight to him. He was the acknowledged champion in the athletic sports, and this distinction was a new gift to him and he prized it with the conscious thrill of joy unknown to boys to whom "schooling" was a hardship. For a time he was manager of the athletics, and though eventually his out-of-school duties prevented his holding the office the games were practically under his direction. His discipline had been rigorous and success had seldom failed. It became a badge of moral distinction to be on one of the Redwood teams, for they were the self-controlled, temperate, non-smoking boys and invariably the boys of good standing in school work.

III. The assembly hall at the school was gay with trophies of conquest, for when the boys won a league pennant the girls were sure to testify their appreciation by hanging another by it. So things had gone for three years, but now they began to look different. The East Ends had determined to play the pennant game with the Redwood rivals on July 4. The Redwoods had lost one game during the school term and had lost it to a team of the East Ends. Conquered, to the hope was not entirely unfounded.

The games of the High School League were dignified by space and headlines in the city papers and the results were known in many homes remote from school affiliations. The game the Redwoods had lost had been spoken of as "a scattering one that would of course be retrieved by further practice," but retrieval had not followed as soon as prophesied. No other games had been held, but the playing had shown some of the strength of past years and this was why Ned's work on Saturday had met such round approval from every one who had seen it. It was old time playing; it renewed hope in the Redwoods' success and made ultimate victory possible. Yet it only showed more clearly to Ned himself how demoralized things had become. He had known all spring that his influence was waning and that his suggestions had less weight.

IV. It was the advent of the Warrens that

had changed the policy of the team. These two brothers had come from a wealthy western home to prepare for college at Redwood, when their father's illness made necessary their mother's constant attendance in his travels, and they were an element that brought charm as well as destruction. The girls were captivated by their manners and their fine clothes, and the boys fell under their influence differently but quite as effectively. They had come from a home of luxury and indulgence, and self-restraint in any form was unknown to them. They entered the athletic lists with fresh vigor and John, the eldest, soon became captain of the football eleven.

He had seen enough college games to give points to Camp, he said, and he knew enough tricks to wipe any foe off the field. In spite of Ned Larkin's protests the tricks were exploited instead of the subtleties of honest playing and the first game had been secured for the Warrens. Ned was invited to a consolation special in the Warrens' rooms and the general merriment of the evening

minimized the seriousness of defeat and the old time prejudices appear in new colors. "We didn't seem to work the right dodges this time," John said, "but we haven't tried them all yet, and we'll spring some new ones next time."

There had been endless feasting when John threw himself in a big arm chair and languidly lit a cigarette.

"Don't be afraid to smoke," boys; it's a man's business to draw pipes and bore fruit in manifold directions, self-restraint, but its value as a factor in discipline, and indulgence made itself felt in the character both of the boys and their work. They did not dare make open profession of renouncing old dogmas, but one could never know they were the same boys to see them gathered in a mighty meeting at the Warren headquarters.

Ned Larkin never was present but was a subject of frequent reference. "What do you suppose I saw him doing when I went to tell him of the special meeting tonight?" John said. "Well, he had a great iron in his hand and went pressing. I'll be blist if he didn't, and 'twas my clothes, too. I tell you he looked as though he was pressing me instead of my clothes," he said, growling and exclaiming.

"Any fellow that puts a flat iron over the grillion will come out of the small end of the horn Saturday."

"What do you say to making him a lame duck? Parker's a good man and we'll run him in double quick," suggested a renegade in the corner.

"You are a tramp, Stevens! The very thing," John cried. "He isn't on to any of the dodges we are working for the last game and he will be as good as pressed. I'll be blist if he didn't, and 'twas my clothes, too. I tell you he looked as though he was pressing me instead of my clothes," he said, growling and exclaiming.

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went back to it amusement, but suddenly he had collapsed. The doctors had ordered him carried out of the room to the nearest place of refuge, which proved to be Mrs. Larkin's cottage, and there for weeks he remained. She could not let him go back to his own desolate rooms, for he had been strong enough to be moved. He had been badly kicked and his brain had been injured by his fall so the complications made recovery slow.

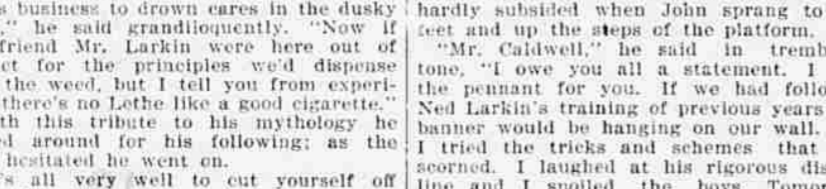
Mrs. Warren had to be spared the anxiety of knowing his real condition for her husband's illness would not permit her leaving him, so in the humble home of the Larkins Frank was nursed back to health—nursed by rough but tender hands. Mrs. Larkin directed the care, but Ned and John executed most of it. John saw Ned from an entirely new point of view and with the larger knowledge came deep respect and admiration. His own superficial polish seemed wretched beside Ned's honest plainness. He watched him performing the little menial offices of the home and of the sick room and his heart was thrilled with pride in the manliness of the noble fellow. Ned dignified the homeliest duties by his care and thoroughness, and about his home sweet with his hearty cheerfulness.

John begged to be taken into the already crowded home and to share its burdens, and no complaint of the cramped and inconvenient living escaped his lips. He was happier than he had ever been in his life; for the companionship of Ned was the sweetest and most strengthening influence he had ever known.

It was at the close of vacation when Frank was brought to school for the first



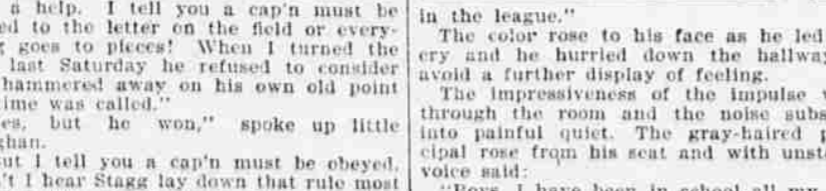
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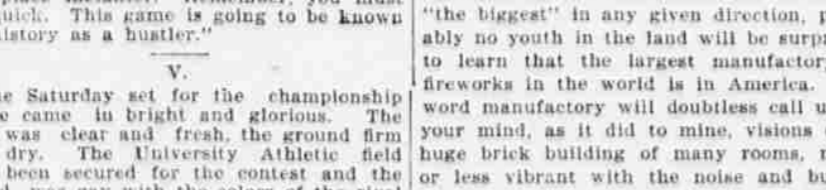
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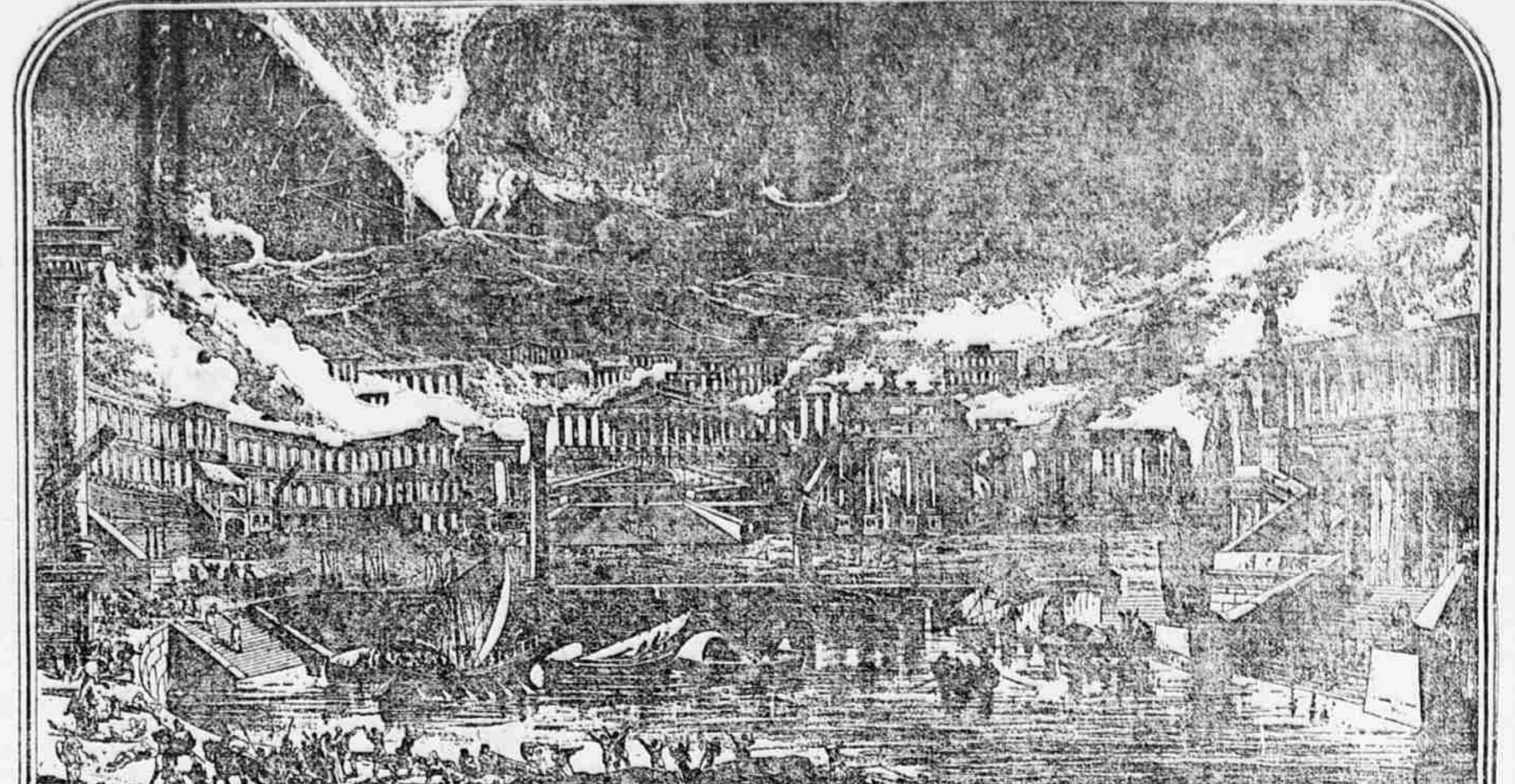


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