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THE STRATEGY OF RUFUS STONE

(Continued from page 22)

"What's this? What's this? What's the matter?" cried Mr. Stone.

"We've come to pick up taters!" announced Billy Jones.

"You have? Who sent you?" demanded Mr. Stone.

"Why, Rufe hired us last night," Billy answered.

"Oh, he did, eh? All right, then, if Rufus hired you, go to work. Go to the far end with these barrels and baskets and pick up clean, and mind you sort the little ones out properly." And so the boys set to work at the piece, where two hundred barrels of potatoes lay in long white rows waiting to be stored; and the hired men, only too glad to be rid of the demeaning "picking up," trudged off to begin operations on the Sandy Hill field.

The school house bell rang at five minutes to nine, and again at nine; again at five minutes past nine. At ten minutes past nine the teacher sat down in wonder. Not a child in the school-room—not a child in the yard! Such a thing was unprecedented in the annals of her teaching. She rang the bell again, loud and furiously. The boys in the field yelled. The teacher in the school house marvelled. Not a child answered the summons. Half past nine, and the bell clanged so it could be heard a mile down the road.

There was a knock at the school house door. The teacher opened it and Rufus stood there, his hat in his hand and humility in his eyes.

"Good morning," he glanced past her. "What's the matter? Where are the children?"

"I'm sure I don't know what can be the matter," she cried. "The girls have gone to Lena Johnston's picnic, but the boys were in the yard a while ago, and not one of them has answered the bell, though I've rung and rung till I'm tired."

"Then I suppose there is no school," said Rufus.

"Well, I have called the roll and marked them all absent, but how can there be school without scholars?" answered the teacher.

"Well, don't you think as you have a holiday you'd better come to the Stanley Fair with me?" Rufus' voice was very quiet, but his eyes were very bold.

Into the pretty teacher's eyes too there came a light, and maybe there was something besides comprehension there. Rufus was a masterful young man.

She took her hat down from the peg, and stepping outside turned the key in the door. Then she laughed softly, but she asked no questions.

As they drove down the first stretch of road on their way home that night the Stanley band in the distance played a quaint unusual air.

"What's that piece?" inquired Rufus, turning to the pretty teacher beside him.

"Oh, that old thing, 'Love will find a way,'" she answered, and was glad that it was dark so he could not see how conscious she looked.

"Yes, that's it," said Rufus, and he softly sang—

"Though dangers may be mountains high
Love will find a way."

Then he gently put his arm around her. They had turned the corner and no one was in sight.

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