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A CLOSE CALL

BY THEODORE RUETE

PART II.

His voice sounded strange to him in the quiet of the empty, snow-covered country. He trudged mechanically forward, his hands, thickly mittened and encased in leathern pull-overs, clumsily clutching the reins and whip—half awake and half asleep from the all-pervading stillness, the monotony, and the numbing cold.

From the distance came the mournful howl of a coyote. Jack fell into a kind of daydream, as his thoughts went idly backward to that terrible night of his first winter on the prairie, when he had hatched it, while setting up a home for Esther.

Even as on the homesteads of his few and widely-separated neighbors, the little shack on the hillside of the prairie wilderness was, at that time, the sole evidence of human occupation of his acres of solitude. As one of his nearest companions, a huge, uncouth Icelandic, had crudely but truthfully expressed it, "no barn, no hay, no stock, no nothing."

Leaving town, on foot as usual, rather late one afternoon that winter, dusk fell while he had still a mile to go to reach his shack. It began to snow and a soft, feecy, white mist came down, making it impossible to steer a straight course. Darkness very soon set in, and for hours he wandered in the falling snow, followed by a coyote, which had been attracted by the smell of the bacon he was carrying home. How distinctly he remembered, again and again, the gleaming, little lights, shouting as loudly as possible—hoping to get rid of the brute before it should be joined perhaps by others, whom they might rush him for the meat. At last it made off, for he no longer saw the baleful eyes. Then the weather turned colder. If only it didn't freeze really hard and he could keep moving until daylight, he thought.

If weariness overcame him, he would soon freeze to death—how many such seasons had he not heard of round about, that cruel winter!

Every now and then he had stopped and shouted with all his might, every nerve strained to catch an answering sound. Silence—complete, profoundest silence alone had rewarded his efforts.

At last he had given it up and had been quiet for some time, when—what was that? Surely—yes—it was about—faint and distant. He had answered with all the force of his lungs and then had seen a light, toward which he had stumbled through the deep snow, bawling at the top of his voice: "I'm coming, I'm coming."

Two friendly homesteaders soon placed him to warm himself before their stove, while he told his story. They had not liked to go to bed without first showing a light, for they fancied they had heard shouts and seeing the thick night, felt that perhaps some one was actually lost in their neighborhood. They slept warm that night, for there had been three in a bed, or rather, bunk.

Jack started suddenly from his reverie. The trail! Dismay gripped him hard, as he realized that it was no longer beneath his feet. Before falling into his reverie he had had to keep pulling the oxen to make them stay on it and face the storm and—where was it now? Great Scott! Where was it now?

How long he had left it, he had not the faintest idea. A feverish search to windward soon discovered what Jack thought must be the trail. Once more, he started the stumbling oxen upon it, fervently praying that it might indeed be the right one.

"Come on, boys; we'll do it yet," he cried gaily to the oxen, shortly afterward, greatly cheered by some familiar signs close by, which were revealed by the momentary lifting of the curtain of snow.

to restore some feeling to it. His eyes still served him, but the uncovered part of his face was a mask of ice which he dared not touch—a pull at it soon showed him the uselessness and painfulness of any attempt to remove it.

"The Flaxcomb's place at last, thank Heaven!" Jack could hardly make out anything of the homestead of the chatty old widow with several grown-up sons, although he knew well that he had passed quite close to its fence.

Several hundred yards farther on lay the main road that divided his own farm into two parts, but to reach it he had to turn full face to the fury of the blizzard. With bent head, staggering and panting desperately, Jack at length got his team to this road, though several times he thought that they must unknowingly have crossed it.

Once or twice he even debated about turning back to Flaxcomb's place. But the trusty oxen knew when they had reached the road, if their master didn't, and promptly turned on to it.

And now, at last, the pioneer slowly but surely began to draw near his homestead. Suddenly something snapped.

"What I thought something would give way hereabouts," exclaimed Jack, savagely, as the harness-strap of the black ox's collar parted in twain at the first increase of up-grade strain.

"To be beaten and so nearly home!" he shivered—"but perhaps we're not done yet." With numb hands he searched his pockets for strap or cord with which to lash to the open collar. Ah, the whip. He worked the short length of bale-wire, that most ox-drivers use, off the end of the whip-lash and attempted to fix up the harness with it, but the clumpy, thick mittens hindered him in his haste.

He tore them off. Instantly his hands became utterly numb and he had painfully to draw on the mittens again. Once more he tried, forcing himself to be patient, and this time he succeeded in closing the collar so that the ox could pull.

Off again! At last he was at the top of the hill, where he stopped to let the oxen get their wind, before turning from the road toward his homestead.

But the little black ox was now nearly exhausted, and would not start the load again. The pace at which Jack had driven him, the storm, the clutching, heavy snow, and at last the ill-fitting collar, had done their work, and he refused to budge.

Jack flogged the team and urged the beast with shouts and encouragements, but all in vain. He was straining at the wheel, trying to assist the oxen a little when he slipped violently and lurched forward to the ground—his head striking a large stone which protruded from the side of the road.

(To be concluded.)

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A beautiful turning to God in prayer. At the break of day, be it dull or fair; A beautiful word when a chance occurs.

Instead of gossip that hurts and slurs; A beautiful deed, not one or two, But just as many as you can do; A beautiful thought in the mind to keep.

Where otherwise evil and sin might creep; A beautiful smile! how it helps and cheers, And coaxes from others their frowns and tears; A beautiful song in praise of Him, When the windows fall and the light grows dim.

If followed, you'll find it a beautiful way, To make—and so easy—a beautiful day!

Woman's Interests

Is It Mischief?

It was exasperating. Little daughter sat on the floor of the sewing room surrounded by a litter of gay-colored pieces of cloth from mother's piece bag, spoils of silk and thread and twist unbound and tangled, colored buttons of every size and shape, and a glittering array of pins, needles and scissors.

"Naughty girl!" said the little one's mother as she gathered up the disordered mass. "Yesterday you took all the tin plates and covers from the pantry shelf, and the day before you pulled the ribbons out of mother's bureau drawer. You're a naughty girl!"

Little daughter's baby brow puckered in a puzzled frown, her mouth drooped in hurt lines, and two big tears spilled from her blue eyes.

"I'm not naughty!" little daughter cried; and she was right. To be naughty—to do wrong willfully—was farthest from her thought. When she balanced herself upon a step-ladder, and carefully lifted off the saucers, the plates, the cookie cutters and the bowls from her mother's immaculate shelves, and when she piled ribbons in a colorful heap on her mother's bureau, or delved into the depths of piece bag, work-basket and button box, she had but one impulse in mind, and that was not willful mischief but mere, the instinct to educate herself through her sense of touch.

As she fumbled with the scraps of velvet, linen, woolen or cambric and crumpled them in her eager little fingers, she was experiencing new sensations—those of roughness, smoothness, softness and stiffness. The telegraph wires of her nerves carried them to her brain, which registered them there and so helped her to think more clearly.

Those fascinating, shiny tin utensils in the pantry had interested the little girl because of their form. Some were round, and some were square; some were thick and some were thin; some were deep and some were shallow.

As the child had taken each from its shelf, she had run her finger round its edge, felt of it, learned its form; and looking out of the pantry window from her perch on the step-ladder, she discovered, suddenly, that the garden gate was square, that the maple tree beside it had a curved contour, and that up in the sky hung a cloud that looked like a big, shallow bowl.

If her mother had asked little daughter what she saw when she looked out of the window, and why she liked to handle the ribbons and the scraps, she would not have been able to put her answer into words. But she did subconsciously resent—and so does every child—being taken to task for trying to educate herself.

Our houses are filled with toy material, grotesque figures that when wound up go through their ordained motions, elaborate toy railway systems and dolls whose clothes are sewed to their bodies; and in their instinctive efforts to educate their fingers children break and mar and tear and batter their playthings, not for the sake of mischief but to get at the root of things; to find out how they are made, and so to educate their senses.

The play materials that will serve to educate the senses are so simple that their importance is often overlooked. They are those playthings that give children an opportunity to handle and feel different forms and textures and to perceive different colors. They include a roomy sand box, also lined, so that the sand may be dampened for moulding, many blocks of different shapes and sizes, picture puzzles, modeling clay, books with colored pictures, large colored crayons and a home blackboard, colored pencils and paints, blunt scissors and stiff paper for cutting out colored paper dolls and animals, dolls' dishes of all kinds and shapes, a tool box for the boy and a well-equipped sewing basket for the girl. Such things are the child's first textbooks in the important art of training the senses.

From One Housekeeper to Another.

To wash raisins or other small fruits put them in a corn popper and shake in a pan of water.—Mrs. R. G.

To take the best possible care of your cook book, take a pane of window glass, bind the edges with paste partout binding or even with paper or cloth, and when using the book lay it open on the table with the glass on top. The glass, being heavy, keeps the book open, does not obscure the print, and also serves to keep any spatters from the book.—E. L. L.

To clean tarnished silver apply kerosene with either a brush or cloth. Rub well, then rinse in scalding water and the tarnished pieces will take on a fine and lasting luster.—Mrs. J. J. O'C.

To cure a felon, a paste made of equal parts of lard, saltpetre and brimstone bound on will bring relief in a short time.—M. A. P.

During muddy weather when the shoes often become very wet it is necessary to resort to stringent measures to keep them soft and shapely. Clean the shoes and stuff them with newspapers. To restore the softness to the leather rub them with castor oil or sweet oil; apply oil with a sponge and rub it into the leather thoroughly with the fingers.—Mrs. J. J. O'C.

After stuffing a fowl, do not sew up

Earth Likened to Top.

All spinning bodies possess curious properties, which they do not possess when in the state of rest. Stand a top on its peg and it will immediately fall over, but spin the top and it will stand up so long as the spinning motion is present. Spinning bodies seem to possess or acquire a rigidity when they are spinning; for example, a steel chain, placed over a wheel which is spinning at a high rate of speed, and suddenly jerked off, will go running along the street like a hoop, and will only collapse into a limp pile of chain when its spinning motion comes to a stop. Our earthenware all the curious properties which spinning bodies do. It points to the pole star, like all spinning bodies, for every spinning body—a top, a wheel, anything—if under no restraint in its movement will gradually turn on its axis and point to the pole star. If our earth were to stop spinning it would immediately fall into the sun! Spinning bodies have a tendency to stand up on end—that is, on their long axis. If you

Shrink Cotton Goods.

It always pays to shrink cotton material before making up. In fact, it is the only practical thing to do. It is hard enough to keep up with growing girls without having the material shrink. Put a large handful of barrel salt in a dishpan of cold water and lay the material in it without unfolding. Keep turning until it is thoroughly saturated, then allow it to remain for an hour. Squeeze out as much water as possible by rolling in the hands, but do not wring. Hang on a broom stick, laid over the backs of two chairs, or outside over a clothes line in a shady spot. Do not string it along on the line, but keep it in the folds, though of course they can be opened up a little. Keep turning from one side to the other until about half dry. Roll up for a few minutes and then iron with a moderately hot iron.

For white material, lay them in the dishpan (and be very sure there are no rust spots in it), pour boiling water over it and allow it to stand until the water is cold. Squeeze as dry as possible and roll up in a heavy bath towel. Leave it for an hour and then iron with a real hot iron. If you follow these directions, you need never worry over a new garment shrinking the first time it is laundered.

A Girl's First Name.

Very soon in life you came Into one good legacy— Your particular sweet name.

You can make it what you choose: Spoken, but an empty sound, Or a word made dear with use:

Written, letters in a line— Only that—or characters— Brightly on the page ashine: Just a trifle hearts forget,— Or, in earth's old garden, sweet As the lasting magnigonette.

You can use it as you will: Hoard and hide—and waste its worth; Wisely spend—and have it still.

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Hearing Ears.

A certain naturalist who maintains that we hear only that to which our ears are attuned tells how once, in a noisy city street, he heard the sound of a cricket hidden in a basement window. No one else appeared to hear it, though every passer-by promptly stopped and looked round when the naturalist tossed a dime on the sidewalk a few seconds later. Although that particular test perhaps was not altogether fair, the following anecdote also bears out the theory:

Arthur Sullivan, the composer, and Sir Alexander Mackenzie once found that they had forgotten the number of a house to which they were invited. Sir Alexander protested that all he knew was that the door scraper was E flat. So "away they went, kicking the door scrapers along the row," until at last Arthur Sullivan exclaimed, "Here we are; this is E flat!" It was the right house.

All that a poor boy has to do to become famous nowadays is to remain on the farm.

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spin an egg-shaped body it will always endeavor to "stand on its hind legs," so to speak, and spin on one of its ends.

Couldn't Oblige.

Mother—"Johnny, did you go and ask Mrs. Naylor for the loan of her washbasin, as I told you?"

Johnny—"Yes, mother. She said she is very sorry, but the hands of the tub are loose and the bottom is out and it is full of soapy water."

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BIRDS AND THE MAN

The birds were discussing man and his indebtiness to them.

"I sing to him," said the nightingale.

"So do I," said the thrush and the blackbird and the canary.

"Yes, but I sing best," said the nightingale.

"But only for a few weeks," said the canary, "and then he has to go out at night to hear you. I sing to him in his home all the year round."

"You do!" said the sparrow grimly. "And haven't I seen him throw a handkerchief over your cage to stop the din?"

"Very seldom," said the canary. "Meanwhile perhaps you'll tell us what your own services to man are, besides destroying his crops."

"Mine?" said the sparrow. "Oh, I cheer him up. He'd miss me horribly if I left his roof and roadways. He doesn't value me much now, maybe, but if I went he'd be miserable."

"I lay expensive eggs for him to feed pretty women with," said the plover.

"I provide feathers for his pretty women's hats," said the kingfisher.

"I prevent him from overeating himself on green peas," said the jay.

"He gets his notion of wisdom from me," said the owl.

"I saved the Capitol," said the goose.

"Yes," said the sparrow, "but what a long time ago! Tell us what you've done lately."

"I set him ringing," said the lark; "odes and things. Also, I make him look up, which is good for him."

"I beautify his ornamental waters," said the swan.

"And I his terraces," said the peacock.

"I am the making of his Christmas," said the turkey.

"Don't forget the postman," said the sparrow.

"Very well, then," said the turkey, "I and the postman."

"I am the cartoonists' support," said the eagle.

"I am the gunsmiths' standby," said the partridge. "and the sportsman's hope. I provide him first with fun and exercise and, after, with food."

"Yes," said the sparrow, "and haven't I seen him break a tooth on one of your pellets?"

"I am glad to hear it," said the partridge.

"Me, too," said the pheasant.

"And me?" said the grouse.

"I keep him company while he digs or chops wood," said the robin.

"I solve his problem. What to do with the cold mutton fat," said the tomcat.

"And what of our long-legged friend here?" said the sparrow.

"Oh, me?" said the heron. "I make him talk to strangers."

"How so?" said the sparrow.

"Why, on railway journeys, when he sees me from the window, he says to the man opposite whom he hasn't spoken to before, 'There's a heron.' I'm the only bird that can do that. He wouldn't bother to say, 'There's a plover,' or 'There's a gull,' or 'There's a sparrow,'—you're all too common,—but he can't help saying, 'There's a heron.' Otherwise I am not aware of being of use to him."

"Nor want to be?" said the sparrow.

"No, nor want," said the heron.

My Little Lad.

When my little lad comes in, Clad in his roundabout, There's such a rollicome, rollicome din, Song and laugh and shout. If the house were dull before, It seems to take on a grin From the cellar floor to the attic door When my little lad comes in.

When my little lad comes in, He brings a breath of the breeze That sets the dancer leaves aspin. On the topmost boughs of the trees You see the glows of the rose. On his chubby cheek and his chin, And you hear the twinkling tread of his toes When my little lad comes in.

When my little lad comes in, Comes in from his romp and play, Wherever Mother and I may have been Then Care takes a holiday Till closes the twilight hour, And the flames on the hearth grow thin, And his eyelids droop like a sleepy flower When my little lad comes in.

Queer Wedding Presents.

The following are a few of the many curious wedding presents that have been received by those about to enter the bonds of matrimony.

A well-known author received on his marriage, from a rival man of letters, a scrapbook containing a collection of all the adverse criticisms his works had ever received; while a popular artist was on a similar occasion presented with a set of elementary works upon self-instruction in drawing and painting.

Unusually vexatious was the gift received from his neighbors by an infirm octogenarian who had married a pleasure-loving woman more than fifty years his junior. It took the form of a large brass cage, "intended"—so ran the accompanying note—"to restrain the wayward flight of a giddy young wife who had married a decrepit old fool for his money."