A YOKE AND A JOKE.

Father and mother had gone to Wolftown in the big wagon to meet the afternoon express train on the Kansas Pacific railroad and bring home Bruce and Jerry's cousin, Effie, who was coming alone all the way from Kansas City to visit them. Bruce and Jerry were left alone on the claim to look after things.

Bruce was fifteen; not very large of his age, but active and strong. Jerry was only two years younger than Bruce, but he was dwarfed by an affection of the spine, which kept him bent over like a hunchback.

When he was very small he was thrown from a horse. The accident contracted some of the spinal muscles, and it appeared that he was doomed to go through life with the humiliating appearance of having a chronic case of colic.

Bruce and Jerry were great friends, which is not always the case with brothers. This was not due to the fact that other boys were few in that thinly settled Kansas district; they were really very fond of each other.

All the morning after their father and mother left, Bruce was very busy making a small yoke, modeled after the one that was used on Tom and Red, the oxen they had brought with them when they emigrated from Indiana.

Jerry sat on the framework of the grindstone in front of the cabin and watched Bruce at his work with much interest. The yoke was now about completed and the young mechanic was very proud of his workmanship.

"It's a dandy an no mistake," he remarked, with satisfaction. "We'll have some fun, Jerry. I've been thinkin for a long time that the calves are big enough to break, an there's no time like the present. Won't it be a joke on pa and ma, though?"

"W'at'll be a joke?" asked Jerry.

"Why, to break Bell an Nancy while they're gone. Won't they be s'prised to find us driving 'em around like Tom an Red? Won't it be a joke, though?"

"Um," Jerry assented.

After the pie had all been washed down with a cup of milk, Bruce shouldered the yoke and led the way to the cow pen, where the meek eyed little heifers were lying in the sun.

Nancy and Bell were not in the least wild, for the boys had made pets of them, so there was no difficulty in approaching them. They were pretty animals: Bell was a "spot," of red and white, and Nancy was a deep red.

"Well, girlies," Bruce merrily saluted the heifers, "how do you find yourselves this fine, large day? Nice day, isn't it?—nicest in the neighborhood. Get up, now, and act your prettiest; there's company comin, and we want you to show off. Tie the string around Nancy's neck, Jerry."

While Jerry obeyed this instruction Bruce secured Bell, and then the heifers were led out of the cow lot to a little old cart that stood by the front yard fence.

"An we'll take Effie a-ridin along by the cornfield, an let her see the big tassels. I'll tell you what we'll do, Jerry; we'll go down the road an meet pa an ma, an we'll bring Effie home in our wagon. How's that?"

"First rate," said the little cripple.

"Well, it's done," Bruce announced presently. "Let's eat our pie first, and then we'll yoke 'em up."

They had been too busy to notice that it was past noon, but now hunger reminded them that their mother had left for each of them "a big hunk of pie." Very soon they were seated on the doorstep, munching their dinner.

This plan of yoking up the calves would have been instantly condemned by the father had he been at home, for, in the first place, the heifers were too young, and in the second place, they were intended for milch cows and not for beasts of burden, but it did not occur to the boys that he would object.

The little animals were docile and tractable enough; indeed, they were provokingly slow and sleepy in their movements.

"You'll get waked up very soon," Bruce remarked, half angry that Nancy would not "stand around."

It took some time to get them yoked satisfactorily to the cart, but at last Bruce announced that the arrangements for the start were complete. Jerry stood on one side, next to Bell, and Bruce on the other, by the side of Nancy.

"Get up, Bell!" called Jerry.

Both boys slapped the flanks of the heifers vigorously, and they moved on a few paces, in mild eyed wonder at this new situation. Still they evidently thought this a new way of petting them, and that it was all right.

The boys laughed delightfully.

"They're jest as easy goin as old Tom and Red," Bruce declared. "Get up, Nancy! Get up, Bell!"

There was some backing on the part of the team, and a mild inclination to turn around, and inspect the arrangements, but the boys, urging them on, succeeded in getting them to advance a few more paces.

"We'll get in an ride," Bruce decided. "They'll go better if they are talked to from behind."

He got a stick and sharpened the end of it for a goad and then the two clambered into the cart. Once more the driving process was begun.

"Move along now, Nancy! Get ahead there, Bell! Ain't this fun though, Jerry?"

"I didn't think it'd be so easy to break 'em. It's because they're pets, I guess."

"Ain't it a great old joke on pa and ma? Won't they be s'prised? Get ahead there, Bell!"

Suddenly there came the waking up which Bruce had predicted. A realization of their unprecedented situation seemed to dawn on the minds of the heifers, and as they felt the sharp goad in their tender flesh it occurred to them that being yoked up was not as much fun as they had supposed.

All at once there was a tossing of hornless heads, a low bellow, a backing and fidgeting, an angry switching of tails and then the heifers started off on a swift run, frightened and ungovernable.

Bruce and Jerry looked into each other's faces with fear and astonishment. The old cart jerked and bumped over the ground, and faster and faster ran the unruly heifers.

The course was across the unfenced meadow field toward the corn. In less than a minute the calves were going at a reckless pace, bellowing madly at every jump, their heels and tails flying in the air.

"Whoa, Nancy! Whoa, Bell!" yelled Bruce, desperately. Of course the command served only to frighten the animals the more. The cart was in danger of being turned over and wrecked at any instant. Any sudden turn of the runaway team would upset it, and the boys might be crippled or killed.

For the little cripple the situation was especially serious. A fall meant to him a terrible injury perhaps. He clung to the seat with all his strength, his face white as wool. That other awful accident which had injured and pained him so was still strong in his memory, and it increased his fear tenfold.

"We've got to jump," Bruce declared, regaining somewhat his presence of mind. He sprang to his feet. "I can do it all right, but you, Jerry—let me"——

Just what assistance he meant to lend Jerry did not appear, for at that moment there was a sudden lurch of the vehicle, and Bruce went flying into the air. He turned a somersault and hit the ground with a violent shock.

When he caught his breath and sat up he saw the heifers dashing along by the corn, with Jerry still clinging to the seat.

Truly the little cripple was in a most perilous position.

He did not dare to jump for fear the strain on his back would kill him. The fall—oh, he could never stand the fall! To suffer again that way—to know that horrible pain for weeks and weeks, to lie in one position day and night and endure again that awful anguish—the very thought of it blanched his delicate face and sent a thrill of dread and terror to his heart.

The mad heifers did not halt nor slacken their speed. But presently they gave a sharp turn and plunged into the corn.

The sudden movement overturned the wagon and Jerry was sent tumbling from his seat to the ground.

He fell heavily and lay quite still.

The overturning of the wagon threw one of the calves on its side, where it was pinned down by the tongue, and this performance brought an end to the runaway.

Bruce reached Jerry's side hatless and breathless, and his heart almost stopped beating as he bent anxiously above the white, inanimate figure of his brother.

"Oh, Jerry!" he cried. "Oh, Jerry! are you hurt? Oh, it's awful! I'm afeard he's killed! Oh, Jerry, open your eyes—open your eyes, Jerry!"

Bruce was almost frantic. In a few moments Jerry opened his eyes, otherwise he did not move.

"Are you hurt much, Jerry?" Bruce asked again and again. Finally Jerry answered:

"I reckon not."

Then a strange thing happened. Jerry got up on his feet and stood straight—as straight as he used to stand before he was thrown from the horse; straight like Bruce!

The fall, instead of injuring him anew, had done a wonderful thing for him. It had somehow strained the cords of his back, or jerked them into their normal position, and he was a cripple no longer; weak and faint, but a cripple no longer.

Bruce carried him on his back to the house, where he put him upon the bed, and then went to the relief of the calves.

One of them had scrambled to her feet, and the other lay flat on her side under the cart tongue. Both were once more in a very meek mood, and Bruce had little difficulty in releasing them and leading them back to the cow pen.

When their parents came home they were told all about the dreadful event of the day, which, strangely enough, had resulted happily instead of fatally.

"So you thought it would be a good joke to break the heifers while your pa and ma were away?" said Effie, laughing. "I should think the joke is on you."

But they all rejoiced over Jerry's wonderful cure, which proved permanent. Jerry is now a lithe, strong man.—Arthur C. Grisson in Youth's Companion.

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The steamer San Jose, from Panama, brought the report of the discovery of an important deposit of that rare metal known as vanadium in the province of Mendoza, Argentine Republic. This metal is one of the rarest and most valuable known, and is used for setting dyes in silks, ribbons, hosiery and other fine goods. The principal source of supply, until recently, has been a small deposit in the Ural mountains, and it has been held as high as $1,500 per ounce. This deposit in Mendoza will therefore be recognized as of great importance.—San Francisco Examiner.

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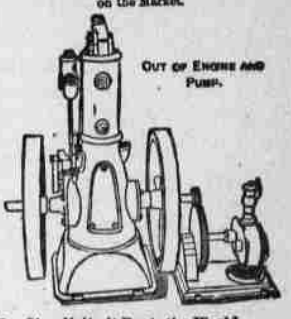

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