

Grandpa and The Toughest School in North America.

The home on the prairie, electrically lit, oil heated, air conditioned is ^{except for the roar of the wind} quiet ~~interior~~, seen through the thermopane windows a white wall of snow, driven by a forty mile an hour wind, rushes by. Visibility through the window is less than 100 yds.

As I watch, three small figures ^{in line} on snow shoes, ^{materially out of the weather} tramp by, and are lost in ~~an~~ enveloping white ~~swirls~~. They are not the same size. The latter of the three is in the lead, then the smallest one ~~and~~ then the middle sized. Heads bent before the storm, ~~tongues~~ pulled over head and ears, wooden scarves across mouths and chin, the ends blown behind by the wind, winter coats, pull over mitts arctic socks and moccasins with felt soles. They ^{are} ~~make~~ ^{is} no sound except the steady crunch and squeak of snow shoes. It takes less time than writing this and they have vanished into the mists and roar of the storm.

Not compass guided. The lead figure with bent head and eyes half blinded by the stinging snow and cold followed a track ^{packed} ~~trodden~~ hard by many trips to and from the country school three miles away. The two others tramped silently behind the first. No one spoke. The wind tore at the breath and snatched it away. They were warm but very

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tired. Home was only a mile ahead
and there would be bread ~~fresh~~ ~~from~~ the
oven with butter or perhaps hot gravy.
The snow would have drifted under the
back porch door. The drinking water ~~was~~
might have a bit of ice on it even in
the kitchen. Dad would have been in
several times, leaving his work at the barn
to ask "Those kids not home yet." Gruffness
trying to hide anxiety. The mother, who
could usually see the three small figures
for the last quarter of a mile, would not
even look at the window ^{with its exterior blind} out of which
nothing could be seen of flying snow.

"What an awful storm!" It got up
so suddenly!

"Lucky its not too cold. No use me
taking the team and sleighs after them. They've
have left the school before this started. They
won't get lost, But will see to that and
they know enough now to keep on their
beaten track. Don't worry mother!" The wind
will blow their track clear for them. Anyway
a storm like this will help make more of
them.

"Oh, you! This country! This climate! Talk of
making men out of children!"

"Children are but men in the making!"

"Your own father, captain of the largest ketch afloat knows what it ~~is~~ to furl sails in a howling blizzard. That is why he is on his own deck now"

"Oh! I know! I know! But those children out there in this awful storm! Listen! There's Tip barking! He always barks when he hears the boys. Oh Matt, they're home!"

The door bursts open and three snow and ice coated figures stumble in the smallest of the three not waiting to take his snow shoes off manages to clatter in with them on.

"Hi Master, Hi Dad. Just what an awful storm. But we made it! Say Mom what's to eat, Gee its good to be home and out of that! Yeh we're O.K.! Pretty hard to see the track at times! Bob kept us on it, and you know what? Bob let us take turns leading when we could see better. Gee I'm hungry! What's to eat!"

The storms of the intervening years have been many. The comfortable homes in which ~~written~~ ^{it} ~~this is written~~ are due in some part to

to the creak of the snow shoe and
the persistence of the men of vision
and purpose who wore them.

Roaring caterpillars ^{tractors} pulling long lines
of sleighs are conquering Canadian north
land. No longer the silent places, the
stutter of motorized toboggans is heard more
often than the ^{crunch} ~~crack~~ of snow shoes and the
yap of dog teams. Contrails in the sky and
the drone of planes more often than the
pail and creak of the toboggan over the snow
but before all these? young fellow leaning against
door jamb.

I listen and I hear the
chattering roar of exhausts from
heavily loaded tractors. The
screed of steel sledsleighs
echos from the ringed lakes

Exhaust ^{Vapor} contrails floats far
behind on the foamy air. Ahead
the contrails from a giant plane,
hang on the bound for airports
round our globe, hang on the grey-
blue background of the sky.

In the mind's eye a group of
men emerge, some tramping steadily
over snow packed tundra. Snow
shoes on their feet. ^{packs on their backs.} Others similarly
clad jog too steadily behind dog
sleighs laden with furs. Others still,

wield paddles in birch bark canoes
at their feet piles of the same
precious trade goods. Unknown to
them they cross tundra, lakes
and rivers whose areas will disclose
to their grandchildren riches undreamed
of by the voyageurs. The lakes
provide pleasure and play for
countless thousands of visitors and
the mighty rivers turn great
turberies that light and heat the
homes of grandchildren who sit
and wait for what is past.

Out of the silence of thought
comes again the creak of the
snowshoe, the crackle of foot
underfoot, the plunge of the
paddle & gurgle of water under
the prow. It is well it is well.