

CHRISTMAS ON THE FARM

Winter on the farm in holiday was a revelation and what a joy when Christmas morning arrived, following a very mysterious Christmas eve when everybody talked about Santa Claus and the hanging up of stockings. What long stockings they were -- and how much they could hold.

Everyone seemed to go to bed early, at least we thought so, as were hustled off to the upstairs, where for a time we clung to the long stovepipe which entered the room directly from the kitchen stove below. Soon, though we were fast asleep on a feather mattress which seemed to envelope every part of the body, just leaving the head to show. What sweet dreams!

We were up much earlier than usual Christmas morning and jumping into our clothes went scrambling down the cold stairs and

dashed out to the kitchen. There sure enough Santa had been and young eyes popped with excitement as the stockings were taken down and handed to each one. Always there was a large orange bulging out at the top, followed by a candy stick of real brown molasses and all kinds of nuts. Perhaps there was a handkerchief, a mouth organ, a top, and a picture book with lots of candy of the old fashioned bulls' eye type and large chunks of candy canes with roman stripes and all kinds of colors right into the centre. The pieces were too large for the mouth but we managed to get one in and then what a crunching of the teeth followed.

Soon each one was busy with a picture book, or a musical top, or a mouth organ or a Jew's harp, while others played with beautifully colored marbles and alleys.

Breakfast was soon served and we can never forget with what reverence Uncle Henry said the blessings and how impressive the blessing was even to us children. Breakfast consisted of porridge, brown sugar and lots of milk. That was the best breakfast we ever had.

CHRISTMAS SUNDAY

Christmas Sunday on the farm was almost awe inspiring. There was a sanctity and christianlike atmosphere about the home all day.

Church was held in the little school house two or three miles distant and it seemed as though every family in the countryside was there.

Farmers drove up with their fast-stepping teams of carriage horses, for almost every farmer loved to have a good carriage team. Teams were tied to a long manger in the church shed and soon the building reeked of horse flesh and the steaming bodies of the animals.

Before the preacher entered the pulpit, everybody gathered around the large box stove as close as they could, and once in a while someone opened the door and tossed in a three-foot log. Soon the oil discolored stove radiated heat in all directions, then the preacher took his place behind the teacher's desk and the service started.

It was a good service and a fine sermon, not a sermon about wars and a troubled world, or prayers for a king and a nation, but a simple sermon about the love of the Master and a sermon reminding sinners of the error of their ways.

With the service over, it seemed like an hour before the last member of the little flock left the school room, for there was a cordial friendship all around. It was a visiting party with enquiries for all members of the family, especially the elderly and the ill.

SUNDAY EVENING,

Christmass Sunday evening on the farm was a time for the gathering of the family clan around the little old organ in the front room parlor. Here we sat on overstuffed chairs or the old black horse-hair sofa, furniture now considered antique.

A couple of coal-oil lamps were lighted and placed on the little round shelves on each end of the keyboard, and mother sat down to play. After pulling ou several stops to get the right com-

bination, mother began pumping the foot pedals and a sweet melodious strain came forth and the chords of familiar tunes and hymns were heard.

Starting off with her soprano, mother was soon joined by Uncle Frank with the bass, Aunt Mary with the alto and Uncle Tom with the tenor. Others joined in and that was the best choir I ever heard. They sang with fervor as if they meant every word, and they did. It was good to hear the voices blending on "The Sweet Bye and Bye", "Shall We Gather at the River", "Onward Christian Soldiers", "How Firm a Foundation", "O Happy Day" and "God Be with You Till We Meet Again", and other grand old hymns, never-to-be-forgotten but often discarded by today's generation.