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"Persevere and
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Christmas on the Farm.

WHILE the spirit of Christmas is in a large and true sense universal, it finds its most appropriate expression in the country home. The One whose day of birth it commemorates was born in a manger, and this fact seems from the beginning to associate the day and circumstance with the environment of the husbandman. Then, too, the joy, good-will and peace of the Yuletide season are so thoroughly in keeping with the prevailing winter spirit of the farm home that Christmas, in the northern hemisphere at least, comes as a fitting climax of the season.

There is that about the farm which draws one into sympathetic contact with nature. It stands as the antithesis of the mercenary tendency and artificiality of the city. The country home is nearest the ideal home, and Christmas has proportionately greater emphasis, meaning and seemliness there than anywhere else.

Nor must it be forgotten that the country has been, and to a certain extent will continue to be the recruiting-ground from which the leading spirits of the city are drawn. The old farmstead, therefore, is the parental or ancestral home of a large proportion of our celebrating population. All these facts combine to give special significance to Christmas on the farm, and lead bright and vivid prospect to the thought "Home for Christmas."

"Home for Christmas." How much those words foreshadow! They mean, first of all, reunion, greetings, fellowship, the warmth of sisterly and brotherly, fatherly and motherly love. The married brothers and sisters with their families, the maiden daughter at home, the boisterous brother, with the beaming elders who delight in the dual function of parent and grandparent; yes, Christmas is a time of pulsing heartbeats, heightening color, kindling eyes, and joy.

Also, it is a time of remembrance, of kindness and pleasant surprise. The children's toys, the parents' presents to each other, grandfather's slippers and grandmother's knitting-bag, the dozen tokens of kindly memory, all speak of thoughtfulness and generosity and love. In the city, mayhap, presents be sometimes given from considerations of formality and duty, but in the country we think the spirit of the presentation still receives emphasis rather than the value of the gift. For this let us be thankful.

Christmas is also a time of feast and merrymaking. Not that gluttony is its excuse or aim, but turkey and plum pudding are meant to be enjoyed, and the gratification of a healthy appetite is as proper and satisfying in its way as gratifying one's appreciation of beauty or his sense of wit. The Christmas dinner truly contributes to the Christmas spirit of gladness and good-will.

Such sports and opportunities for merrymaking as the country affords! What exercise can equal skating on a

broad pond, a creek, a river or a lake? What game is better than "shinny," and what sport surpasses coasting for healthfulness, conviviality, and genuine, unadulterated fun? What a treat is sleighing behind a pair of prancing roadsters, and who better enjoys it than the young folk from the city, tired of the buzz of trolleys and the honk of motor cars? Whether for sentiment, or abandonment to merriment and fun, the country leaves the city far behind, to adapt Burns' familiar phrase.

The Christmas visit renews the city-exile's interest in the farm. The deep-filled mows of hay and stacks of straw, the granary and the turnip cellar, telling of thrift and plenty as they do, hold a perennial interest for the son whose boyhood days were spent upon the land. The silo, with its mass of succulent feed, is an innovation with which previous visits have already familiarized him, while the numerous labor-saving implements and methods of modern agriculture are developments which he watches with approval. In the stables he finds much to excite his old interest in the stock, and follows with more or less connected precision the particulars which Fred vouchsafes as to the pedigree (recorded or otherwise, as the case may be) of this particular promising heifer or that well-proven cow. The individuals of the sheep-barn and the pigpen have less to connect with his recollections of the past, but in the horse stable he recognizes Tom and Pet, and observes the later stock old Jess has presented to the farm. Round and about, eyes sparkling, ears cocked, and gesture animated, dances the collie dog, sharing to its fullest degree the festivity and spirit of the occasion. The trip of inspection through the farm buildings strikes many pleasant strains on the chords of memory, and Jack returns to the house hoping that Fred will realize when he is well off, and stay by the farm.

After the day's jovial frolic and fun, come the pensive reminiscent hours of Christmas night. The recollection of early days, when Howard and Nellie were "small," and before Fred and Kate were born; days of more frugal economy, of harder and more exacting toil; days, however, of hope and confidence and thrift, days which so swiftly passed away—lead to a soft but quieter contemplation of the remaining years on the farther half of the grand meridian of life. But the vigor and hope of the prime of life, though softening into a more subdued energy, a riper judgment, and a mellow character, still avail to sustain the courage of the elderly couple. Promise has developed into fulfilment.

"The ancient bridegroom and the bride,
Smiling contented and serene
Upon the blithe, bewildering scene,
Behold, well pleased, on every side,
Their forms and features multiplied."

So ends Christmas day; and the Christmas spirit, opening with a swelling note of gladness, concludes with a cadence of Christian hope, happiness, peace and good-will.