

Christmas, 1917

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We are again privileged to meet in annual reunion, through our customary family letter, at this holy Christmas time, to relate incidences and experiences of another year gone by. It is with gratitude that I am able to state that the greatest blessings--good health, contentment, and a reasonable degree of prosperity--have been the good fortune of our family during the year nineteen seventeen.

Our chief interest still pertains to matters of education, as most of our children are still attending educational institutions. That one of them, attending the University of Chicago, received a mark of 103, on a scale of 100, in the examination in trigonometry, is, I am sure you parents will admit, a source of pardonable pride to us.

At the beginning of the year Bertha took up a course to fit herself for the position of private secretary. The end of April she went to our farm to start the spring work.

In June Bertha and Helen went to Brooklyn to attend their cousin Lucile Hartmann's wedding. Helen was one of the bridesmaids. They visited Bert's family while East, and also a number of friends, and upon their return home related happy memories of their trip. After Bertha's return home, the family "toured" to the farm in the auto, to join their mother, who had been there alone, raising chicks, and looking after the farm. Bertha remained at the farm this fall, with Helen, to harvest the fruit. Since her return in November she has continued her business course.

Charlotte spent last year in Cleveland, taking advanced library training at Western Reserve. Uncle David made it so pleasant for her, that she left Cleveland regretfully. Bertha visited her in June. She now has a position at Marshall High School, not far from here. She has the responsibility of organizing this new branch of the Chicago Public Library, and likes her work very much.

Helen has had two office positions down town--one with the Marquette Cement Co., which she held until she went East, and the other with the Automobile Blue Book, where she is at present employed.

Constance attended the Northwestern University up to the end of the spring semester. This fall she became a junior in the University of Chicago, where Emily is an enthusiastic Sophomore. Ralph is still at Interlaken School.

The family spent the summer in Michigan, as usual. David was our most welcome visitor during the summer. I accepted his invitation to Charlotte, who was in Chicago at the time, to meet him in Detroit. I greatly enjoyed the ride from Detroit in David's new Buick. The roads were good, the weather seasonable, and the country most picturesque. David spent two weeks with us, and was a "handy-man" about the farm. He picked raspberries, did carpentry work, milked the cow, and rescued his nieces from despair when they had two blow-outs on one trip in the Abbott. We all missed him when he left, even Sammy, our collie.

We regret that none of the rest of you have visited us at the farm for we may not spend another season there, as we have put it on the market for sale, and have a prospective buyer in sight. The country around Saugatuck surpasses any other part of Michigan in its beauty. Cooper selected this portion of the West as a setting for his interesting, and what was still in our youth, a most popular novel--The Pathfinder. The disadvantages of the farm seem to overbalance the advantages, much as we enjoy the beautiful location, the lake and the attractive people. It is, however, too inaccessible for week end trips. The difficulty in securing help, the high cost of feed, and all farm equipment, have made a fruit growing an expensive proposition. For example: To pay \$100 for a horse one year, and to be offered \$200 for him the next, and then the third year he would not bring \$50 because of the scarcity of feed, (hay at \$22 a ton), is only one of the ups and downs of farming during these war times. We had a beautiful Guernsey cow, kept her over winter, and had her espouse prohibition, and go drier than the State of Michigan in which she lived. Had to swap her for a scrawny, hump-backed Myrtle, a producer of an inferior grade of lacteal fluid, and we finally had to dispose of her for \$40, half of what she cost in the Spring. I think, however, that our experience on the farm has been of benefit to us; it certainly has been educational in more ways than one.

A near tragedy occurred there one day. Ralph had bought a revolver from a neighboring farm hand to shoot english sparrows. He attempted to put it in his pocket while "not loaded" and half cocked. It went off, and sent a bullet through the palm of his hand at the third joint of the middle finger. I had visions of lockjaw, or at best a stiff finger, but was happily relieved that no bad results followed the accident.

The record of the year would not be complete without a mention of the fact that the United States is at war with Germany and Austria-Hungary. We women folks are trying to help our side by knitting in season and out of season. We have made many sweaters, socks, wristlets and helmets. I hope there will be peace on earth and good will between men before another Christmas!

Loveingly your Sister
Maggie