

The Prairie

straw, dirt and manure. As needed in the winter, it was opened up and a supply taken out. The supply of spuds for daily use was kept in a sack in one corner of the house. On extremely cold nights they would take it to bed with them to keep them from freezing — the potatoes, I mean.

In the summertime, aside from twisting hay and gathering chips for fuel, the kids didn't have much to do. So perhaps Dad would let them pull weeds in the garden, or they might have to herd the cattle to keep them out of the crops. This herding the cattle was fun at first because they could snare gophers while they watched the cows. This would grow monotonous after a few days, although there were many interesting things happening around them all the time. They might find a prairie chicken nest, almost step on the mother bird before she would fly. Should she have a brood of little chicks, they would scatter and hide, and the mother would flutter off like she had a broken wing. Follow her a little ways and zoom, she was gone, her wing cured. The mother duck would have her nest in the fields a long way from the creek or slough. The little ducklings would have quite a journey to make before they took their first swim.

Ma did the family washing on the old scrub board in a wooden tub using home made soap. She would heat the water in the big kettles on the stove. It took a lot of elbow grease to do that rubbing and scrubbing.

What little ironing they had to do was done with a flat iron. It was cast all in one piece. When it got hot you had to have considerable padding on the handle to hold it. Dad had shaped a pine board. Ma padded this and laid it on the kitchen table to iron on. This, with a pail to carry in the water, constituted the laundry equipment. We had two wooden barrels sitting under the eaves of the house to catch the rain water in. It was fun for the kids to play with the mosquito wigglers in this barrel in the summer. A little ditty the kids would sing. "I don't like you any more. You can't slide down my cellar door. You can't holler down my rain barrel and you Can't climb my apple tree." The kids went barefoot from the time the frost went out until it froze again.

The hoppers took what little crop was planted the second, third and fourth years they were here. The first year the crop was good