

Amish Sunday school

Since it is the Sunday off from church, we have to prepare for Sunday School. We, the younger members of the family, are sitting at home in the living room, with our Bibles in our laps. As preparation for the gathering later this day, we all read loud from the Scripture, two verses each. We know which section that will be emphasised during Sunday School today, which makes it easier for us to prepare ourselves. After the reading of these, we sing a hymn. When we have finished our preparations for today's gathering, we jump in the horse-and-buggy and are on our way to the farm where Sunday School takes place today. The girls are sitting in the back and their younger brother is driving. As we arrive at the farm, he lets us off at the entrance to the house, while he parks the horse. The women gather in the kitchen while the men are gathered outside. All members of the church give each other the Holy Kiss. After a little while we enter the basement by gender and age. Benches have been organised so that everyone will have a seat, and we are also seated by gender and age; the women and men facing each other. Before the ceremony begins the church leaders shake hands with everybody present. We sing a German song, a minister preaches in deitsch, and we all turn and kneel over the bench to pray. Afterwards we are divided into groups according to gender and age group. The second and third graders leave together, as well as the fourth and sixth graders. Those who attend the seventh grade gather with Amish up until the age of sixteen. I enter the attic with the young folks. And just as was prepared for at home, all read two verses each from John, Chapters 19 and 20. Because of my presence, the deacon explains the Scripture in English to ease my understanding. The practise in this settlement is that if anyone is present who does not understand deitsch/High German well an explanation is given in English. The subject today is about the Amish and their place in this world, and the deacon explains the Amish stance towards non-Amish; the Amish are not of this country, but of God's Kingdom. He continues to explain that this is also why they are not supposed to go to war and defend the country they live in and why they prefer not to pay taxes. They are strangers here, and do not take part in any of the patriotism of their non-Amish neighbours. After a little while we return to the basement and are seated by the same pattern as before. One of the ministers continues to explain some of the subjects lectured on today. Then the group kneels and prays. Afterwards two more songs are sung, and the Sunday School session is over.