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CHRISTMAS IN THE INDIAN SERVICE

Washington, Dec. 18.—Several thousand Indian children throughout this country are awaiting the coming of Christmas day with just as much eagerness and anticipation as the average American youngster.

For there is really a Santa Claus that brings joy to their hearts. The Indian children believe in Kris Kringle, but they do not know that he lives at the North Pole. They think he lives in Washington, that he is, in short Commissioner of Indian Affairs Valentine. And Commissioner Valentine does his best to live up the reputation, backed up by a paternal government that wants the children of Poor Lo to have all the advantages of civilization.

At all the Indian Reservations, Christmas Day is observed faithfully. There is always a big holiday dinner to which the grown-ups are invited as well as the children. The invitations are supplemented with a cake of soap. In this topsy turvy land it is the parents who eat with their fingers and the children who are well behaved so that the youngsters eat first and their seniors wait for

second table. Some of them, preferring to eat at home, bring sacks into which they dump turkey, cranberry, rice and dessert. If there is coffee, they pour that in too, on top of the other food.

When the weather is good the children who, during the winter, reside at the school, are allowed to go home for a vacation after the dinner. If they are kept in school, close watch is maintained, for of all things these children love their ponies, of all places their hills, and of all games, "hockey." In this their parents aid them by hitching a pony near the school yard. Suddenly a pupil is missing. He has galloped off and a week's hunt will be needed to locate the truant.

The Indians are fond of present giving. At the Tongus River reservation in Montana, at one time a sister to Sitting Bull was the guest of honor. Desirous of showing their appreciation the Indians, after many fine speeches, brought in her present. It was a dog.

That evening she entertained them at dinner, and they all said they greatly relished the canine stew.

In Phoenix, Arizona, there is a school of 700 children. Here it is very different