

SING A SONG OF SEASONS

ELIZABETH CRUICKSHANG,
Regina

And as we sing we remember the
gems in the melody.

Last winter when the air held brilliance by day and the stars by night, we dreamed of "ferns and soft green mosses, and small wild feet tiptoeing down a hill." Then the Gates of Eden swung wide!

In April two fox sparrows, rufous tails flashing, rested a day in our yard.

Do we ever hear bird song without the heart being lightened? It is not so much the song always, but the associations conjured up. How intense were the impressions on the screen of the soul when we lived without worry!—filtered sunshine under leafy trees—apple orchards—lambs on green hillsides. We know distance lends enchantment to the view, but how often we seek the quiet places just to remember.

In the summer we made our first acquaintance with Black Henbane and wondered if a skunk had got in the car!

And Dragon flies—some evenings the air itself was quivering over the prairie with hovering dragons, slim shimmering sapphire ones, bronze ones, gilded green ones, polished crimson ones and fragile colourless ones, all elegant wee creatures.

Then in no time at all the "gay scenes of summer were over and millions of warblers had fled in the train of the sun-seeking swallows."

Restless Snow Buntings appeared like silver ornaments, misplaced in sunny stubble fields, one moves, all follow.

By the river bed, where waters murmured tranquilly in spring, we spied a shelf fungi under a dead stump. Judy climbed easily but wee Nancy needed help. We lost our footing and sliding down the bank disturbed a porcupine. Fogarty suffered only one quill, but we had a fine view of the large mushroom, beautiful in its copper, coffee and buff tones.

Juncos were flocking in the ravine. Their twittering among the as-

pens, gold-brown spotted—here was lyric poetry visible.

David Grayson says "Everyone is a magnet highly and singularly sensitized. Some draw to them fields and woods and hills and are drawn in return."

Oh, sing a song of seasons—the magnet's pull is felt in all of them.

BEAUTY IS ALWAYS PRESENT

By RAY PETERSON
R.R. 2, Tofield, Alberta

"And the third snow is winter," an old maxim expounds. Perhaps, the nature prophet who theorized thus could not see the year 1953 in his crystal ball. Our third offering of snow this fall has come and nearly left us in the lingering warmth of a long Indian summer.

Yesterday morning was highlighted by a walk about the farm. The countryside was a pleasant landscape of browns, greys, and weathered yellows, with snow-powdered hollows and ice-silvered ponds. The air seemed exceptionally sweet and fresh, braced with the tang of an early fog.

A great flock of ducks, roused from nearby Hastings Lake, swept high over the poplar woods. Quack! Quack! The sound of the south-bound ducks touched a poignant note.

From the safety of a willow thicket, a dapper villain of the bird world swore derisively. As I drew nearer, however, the magpie's usual caution replaced its harsh boldness. In a graceful display of sleek, black and white lines, it retreated to a more discreet distance.

Our collie suddenly bounded away from me and dashed excitedly across a meadow. Rather curiously, I followed him to where he was stirring up a great uproar in a heavy stand of trees. I didn't need to follow his pointing nose. An indignant squirrel shouted for attention as he chir-r-red loudly from the tip of a rather isolated sapling. Close by, on a large, dead poplar, its companion, as though ignoring the din, was curled in a contented-looking ball of fur. I was pleased to see the little ani-

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THE ARCHEOLOGIST'S STICK

PETER W. GRANT, Winnipeg

The archeologist's stick is a great help, and it varies with the work and locality. It may be a few inches long to shoulder high. You pick up anything handy for small jobs—a piece of lath, a broken bit of branch or a stout length of wire or rod. Anything will do that will save your back from bending and your finger nails from digging. You use it to scratch, and poke, and turn over the interesting objects you see in your search for artifacts.

A short stick is best for very small artifacts, so you can bend over close to the job, and scratch and poke in the mud and gravel. A short stick is also useful in a site that has been well picked over and the large and easily found articles removed. That means that only small and well hidden articles are left, and you must scratch and get down close to see them.

A long and strong stick is best for rough and rocky ground, down-timber, and drift-wood on a beach. Cut a stout one that reaches to your shoulder and put a spike in the end. A spike may be made by sawing the head off a big nail and driving it into the end of your stick with the sharp end outward. This spike is handy for testing leaves and bark that look like artifacts, and with it you can tell by the sound whether an article is stone or pottery. Remember, you bend down and pick up many, many times a day; and anything that will save you bend-downs and pick-ups is a friend indeed.

Your long stick is handy for sounding boggy spots. It is useful when climbing down or wind-fall timber or driftwood, and the end spike keeps it from slipping off loose bark, slimy logs, or roots.

The strong staff with its spike helps you up and down when climbing rock outcrop or broken rock. You can use it as a third leg to test a loose rock for roll and slip, before taking the weight off your other foot. Along the Pinawa Channel in Manitoba the huge pieces of blasted rock to be climbed over are piled up thirty or forty feet high, with no soil whatever; and in places like

that you will find a strong spiked staff very useful.

You can poke your long staff into the mud and use it for a boat anchor when nothing else offers. Stood up, it can be used as a marker or reference point. It is useful to knock water off drenched weeds and brush, and very handy in parting weeds and grass that grow up around artifacts. It is also handy to hang a pot over the camp fire, and, when tired, you can use it for a staff to lean on, or help you on your way.

Green birch makes a good staff and it dries out quickly when peeled. It is then light, strong, and so "Good to the feel" that you hope and pray it will find for you at least one artifact per hour. Choose the thickness by your weight, but be sure it is strong enough to take all your weight without breaking. There are times and places where a broken staff might cause a bad fall and serious injury. It might also let you down when climbing rock faces over deep, swift and dangerous water. The long staffs of the old-time shepherds who scrambled over the rocks of Palestine were not carried for ornament.

BEAUTY IS ALWAYS PRESENT

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mals. Squirrels are uncommon on our spruce-shy farm.

I crossed a rabbit run tunneling through a dense patch of sun-cured peavine and bristling rose bushes. A coyote had passed that way too. His tracks showed plainly in a strip of shallow snow.

I halted for a moment by a flat slab of granite. A few shreds of a scarlet rose hip were scattered on the rock's grey surface. A mouse, no doubt, had dined at this, "table in the wilderness".

Nearing home, I discovered a few white heads of spicy yarrow, and a number of short-stemmed dandelions upon a sheltered sidehill. How beautiful these unexpected flowers seemed. A November bouquet, a token to remind us that beauty is always present if we but stop to see it.