

AN EVENING'S WALK

By Ray Peterson, R.R.2, Tofield, Alberta



A Prairie Sunset by Doug Gilroy.

One fine, early May evening, Kathryn and I enjoyed a leisurely stroll around the farm.

The meadows were soggy and resilient underfoot and the fresh green of new grass was rapidly replacing the drab stubble of last year's hay crop. A more than average quota of water gleamed in every slough and pothole. Wild ducks seemed to be everywhere. Mallards and slim, graceful Pintails, by virtue of their early arrival, were in a marked majority. A beautiful Bufflehead, a masterpiece in black and white, skipped across a stretch of water, took wing in a burst of spray.

We sat down near a good-sized pond. The water lay in the meadow's hollow like a silvered screen. Creeping steadily from the far end of the slough, the shadows of approaching dusk was gradually erasing the reflections of hills and trees. At its head the soft hues of a mauve and peach sunset changed into bars of rose and grey.

A tiny silhouette on the tip of a

willow bush, a Song Sparrow, rendered musical respects to another departed day. A Killdeer called plaintively, and the thrum! thrum! of a Ruffed Grouse throbbed elusively in the twilight. From every slough, frogs piped a vigorous chorus, as though each amphibian orchestra was trying to outdo the others.

A dark shape slipped smoothly over a nearby alfalfa field. As it topped the crest of a hill its shaggy form was etched clearly against the skyline, a coyote. Quacking noisily, a pair of ducks coasted in for a landing and disappeared magically as they touched the shadow-curtained water.

We rose reluctantly. It was time to leave. The last faint shimmer of light faded into a soft, balmy darkness. An owl drifted overhead, and a cowbell tinkled in the distance.

Here, in a few spare moments, we had shared beauty of sight and mind. Nature as always, had something to offer. In unison we thought, "We must do this more often."