

tones and silvery trill make up for that lack.

It is indeed pleasant for Canadians to have this bond of union with Europe, and especially with England, the land of Shakespeare. In the more than six hundred references to birds in Shakespeare's plays, a score refer to the skylark. In *Cymbeline*, the delightful song "Hark, Hark! the Lark at Heaven's gate sings" has enchanted thousands of listeners, though Imogen herself vouchsafed no notice. In *Henry V* it sounds so natural and commonplace to have the Dauphin say: "from the rising of the lark to the lodging of the lamb."

As a small boy Shakespeare noted, as have all who know larks, that the first sound as he rises is loud and rather harsh, so in *King Lear* we read "The shrill-gorged lark so far cannot be seen or heard." In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia says "the crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark when neither is attended," and that humorous statement none can gainsay.

Bird-song seems to have been in every fibre of the man. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Helena says enviously to Hermia "your tongue's sweet air is more tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear," and the tragic note is struck in *Richard II* with:

Down Court! Down King!

For night owls shriek where mounting larks should sing.

Again, a different note when Troilus says to Cressida "the busy day, wake by the lark, hath roused the ribald crows."

Then in that touching scene of *Romeo and Juliet* where Juliet tries to persuade Romeo that he is listening to the nightingale, he responds "It was the lark, the herald of the morn — no nightingale — night candles are burnt out and jocund day stands tip-toe on the misty mountain tops."

In the fourteenth stanza of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, as the fretful sleepless man listens to Philomel the nightingale, singing, he moaningly wishes "her lays were tuned like the lark; for she doth welcome daylight with her ditty, and drives away dark dismal-dreaming night."

So all through his life the small town boy recalls the birds he knew and loved in his youth. These are only a few of the hundreds of references showing an accurate knowledge of those that came under Shakespeare's own observation, but they encourage one to take greater notice of those within one's own neighborhood.

Besant - A Memory

By ROSE McLAUGHLIN, Indian Head

Between Caron and Mortlach, Saskatchewan, there lies a scrubby stretch of pasture and wasteland, its choppy hillsides pitted with the sandy scars of eroding winds, and its brushy flats threaded by a trickle which swells into a flood in years of bountiful rainfall. Traversed today by the mainline of the C.N.R., and by Trans-Canada highways and skyways, it was likewise in the stream of man's earliest migrations, for this is the region known as Besant, happy hunting ground of our archaeologists.

In the *Blue Jay* I read of their comings and goings in Besant, and wonder nostalgically if their finds include a sheltered glade carpeted with lawn grass and tiny pink and white clover. Do they have any scientific theory for its presence in that wild and lonely spot? And do they spread their picnic cloth there

on the gentle bank by the stream edge, as we have done so often in summers past?

To dwellers of the plains, west of Moose Jaw, Besant was a place of enchantment where one might find again all the flora and fauna lost to the change-over to cultivation. Deer sometimes strayed into the open, and little gray ground squirrels nibbled furtively at our tossed crusts. Hawthorn, chokecherry, and saskatoon perfumed the air in spring, and sunflowers fused it with color in the fall. The profusion of wildflowers was divided by this frustrated naturalist into two classes: the common ones that everyone knows and the strangers that only one knows.

Nowhere have I seen the brevity of our prairie summer so emphasized as at Besant. In July when the queens of the summer — lily, ro

gaillardia, and harebell—are at their peak, one could still find late blossoms of violet and white anemone in the long grass under the trees, while at the same time goldenrod and sunflower were budding along the sunny railroad grade.

Besant had other attractions too. The creek, twisting dankly under a loose canopy of willow, widened into a wimming hole at one point, at another, just beside the velvety lawn rickles where the wee ones splashed. Excursions along its bank yielded a handful of wild strawberries, a hatful of raspberries or saskatoons. Girls gathered wild flowers along the grade, and little boys loved to roam the pitchy hills—but woe to the bare

foot that came down on a cactus! There was, too, an open pasture where an impromptu ball diamond could be laid out.

Here, I remember, in the dry, dry summer of 1948 a Sunday School picnic lunch lay spread, to its last detail, when a sudden splash of rain sent us running to the cars. Late that same summer we came to Besant once again for a cornfeed which almost didn't come off, because the cooks arrived with two coffee pots and no kettle for the corn. However, we cooked it in relays, packed upright in the larger coffee pot, and had a wonderful time. Food, fire, and friends by a sheltered stream still work their ancient, elemental spell.

Seen by a Seer

By J. BOSWELL BELCHER, Dilke, Sask.

This time I have three items to report which I thought were of some interest.

Considering the name of our magazine, I should probably first report the appearance of two Blue Jays in our shelter belt early in October of this year. They were the first I had ever seen, and the only ones I have heard of in our district.

The second incident occurred before the first, on a Saturday afternoon early in August. I had stopped cutting grain in order to make an adjustment on the swather, and I heard a most unusual chirping about me. Although there were many crickets in the fields, I thought it was a rather strange chirping for a cricket. However, I knew it wasn't my machine and surely wasn't interfering with its operation, so I gave it no more thought and went about my swathing. Monday when I stopped in the field the strange chirping was there again. It sounded so much like house sparrows that I glanced about to check, but no bird was in sight. As I walked around the swather I noticed the sound on the other side of me so I became curious and traced the sound right to its source, which seemed to be the heavy pipe frame at the back of the swather. When I realized I had a family of house sparrows with me which could not be reached without disassembling part of the machine. Each morning

after that I noticed the parents feeding the young as the swather sat in the yard. They had found the swather, though it was left standing at night some distance from where it had been when the nest was built. One day at noon I even noticed Mr. Sparrow sitting on the post with his beak full of insects waiting for me to come home. I was never home at night till after dark, so the little birds must have gone quite hungry. Fortunately for the sparrows, however, the crop was not maturing too fast and I only swathed during the afternoons most days for the first week. The sparrows kept on chirping as they rode around and around the fields until near the end of the week when they had cut over 200 acres and decided to leave their home on wheels.

Oddly the third incident occurred first. It was shortly after the middle of July and Dad was cutting hay in a very rough slough about a mile and a half from home. He was quite surprised when a little fawn, by its size and actions obviously only days old, scrambled up from behind the cutter bar and scampered into the wheat on his wobbly little legs. Quite aware of the probability of other fawns being near at hand. Dad thought he'd keep a more careful watch and not have that happen again. But a few rounds later he ran the cutter bar over another tiny fawn, again so well hidden in a