

# *This Golden Land*

By ELIZABETH CRUICKSHANK

"An immensity of empty desolation" so a traveler described the prairie 100 years ago.

We thought of this observation as we passed the rich fields on our way to the valley on one of those other-worldly days in mid-summer. Near Fairy Hill the Qu'Appelle had in reality become an amazing fairy-land of marsh and movement, the road a causeway crowded on both sides with water fowl in unbelievable numbers. Along the valley bitterns froze on our trail. Quite near us great herons stood still and solemn. The trees, their feet in water wore too early autumn tints of every hue, while their branches were often heavy with black-crowned night herons.

This birders' Utopia, awesome in its splendour, suddenly became of violent interest: a large white heron, colour contrast making it loom larger, stood unconcerned surrounded great blues. An albino or American Egret? (strays on the check list). Later, our joy exultant beyond words, we saw five egrets sharing the kingfishers' favourite haunts.

On a fall day with prairie stubble glowing like grounded sunshine be-

side a shallow slough we watched american pipits, our first sight of these tailwaggers. The same day to fill the cup to overflowing with "wine from the wells of beauty" we met, in close formation creeping along black summerfallow, a flock of yellow-headed blackbirds intent on preparing for their migration miracle.

On a warm and friendly Indian Summer day we sat by Judy's ravine, now full of shadows soft and still, crushed mint pungent at our feet, the sky a blue arch above this woodland theatre. Again a shining moment as the frostberry tree bedecked with scarlet berries became alive with a company of purple finches. Around us gay leaves fluttered down as "hope enchanted smiled and waved her golden hair;" not Good-bye but Au Revoir.

Caught in the spell of the purifying sense of beauty, freed from the intensities of living we felt vaguely, yet as in a glory, that at this moment we were enjoying a foretaste of our eternal inheritance.

The prairie immense? Yes, in promise and in beauty; empty? desolate? not this rich, this golden land.

## Indian Summer

Purple are the distant hills  
Through a smoky screen  
And gentle winds with sweet caress  
Touch the earth as with a breath  
of summer.

A drowsy hush — an autumn sigh,  
And on the traceless sky-lands high  
That beckon south, the wild geese  
fly,

The sun shines with a softer glow,  
And shorter hours of daylight grow  
To deepening shadows and the night  
O deep blue-velvet shining bright.  
A million diamonds swing and sway  
Along the path of milky-way.  
Delightful days, and nights agleam  
When nature in a mood serene  
Has Indian Summer paint a scene

Lillian Mona Smith  
Macdowall, Sask.

## To a Pine Grosbeak

You stole a bit of rosy dawn,  
And pink of evening glow,  
Blended them into a coat  
Which, etched against the snow,  
Makes beauty in a world of white  
To gladden hearts of those who  
might

Find life quite dreary, when about  
Stark branches are a-stretching out  
And life is hushed . . .

And when your whistle low and  
sweet

Sounds from out the pine's retreat,  
Or when you search upon a limb  
For food to keep your beauty trim,  
A blushing warmth pervades the  
place

And winter dons a cheery face.

Lillian Mona Smith  
Macdowall, Sask.