

## Autumn

IN THE VALLEY OF THE ASSINIBOINE

By John E. Nixon, Wauchope

Not one false note in all the eye perceives,  
 No jarring contrast and no line untrue,  
 From that wide arch of opalescent blue  
 Down to the valley where the river weaves  
 Its winding course and in far distant cleaves  
 The lessening hills. This scene the Indian knew  
 In long dead autumns when October grew  
 Like multitudes of red and golden leaves.  
 Surely a spirit harbors in this place,  
 Haunting lost paths and hearthstones overthrown,  
 Making dim pasts to our tomorrows join —  
 Some lingering echo of that vanished race,  
 Too soon forgotten and too late unknown,  
 That whispers in the word Assiniboine.

## Cranberry Hike

By RAY PETERSON, Tofield, Alberta

It was a grey, still day, with occasional bursts of sunlight smiling through the low clouds. Micheal and Colin trotted happily along beside us as Kathryn and I started off towards the muskegs. The third week in October is a bit late to pick cranberries, perhaps, but the notion had struck us and off we went.

The countryside, already stripped of its gay autumn colors, was clothed in warm browns and greys, trimmed here and there with the hardy greens of short, second-growth grasses, and the old-gold of a few remaining willow leaves. The water in a large slough we passed was a dark mirror blue-grey, cracked in the centre by the wake of a cruising muskrat. As we crunched through a long stretch of woodland, Kathryn scuffed a foot in the thick covering of fallen leaves. "It's like walking on a thick carpet of cornflakes," she said.

We ducked through a ring of tangled willows and entered a small muskeg. It was a pretty place with its humps of Labrador Tea, the small

clumps of white birch sapling. Clustered on small-leaved plants was the small, richly-red fruit of the Dry Ground Cranberry. It was lunch time. We perched on mounds of moss, holstered with spagnum moss, and ate the sandwiches we had brought. How few they seemed, and how good they tasted, especially the cheese ones garnished with a liberal sprinkling of the tangy, juicy cranberries.

After picking a few quarts of the small, bright berries, we crossed to a larger muskeg. Here we found the larger fruit of the Swamp or Bog Cranberry. Its fruit, often mottled and speckled before fully ripe, hangs from the ground on fine threads and grows in assorted shapes, spherical, oblong, and pendant-shaped.

Scattered over the muskeg were great quantities of dried mushrooms, too brown and shrivelled to be identified. Large clumps of grey lichens dotted the muskeg. Here too, were a few clusters of tiny, dark-green lichens that poked up in slender, pointed miniature fingers that looked