

The Music of Springtime

By Elizabeth Cruickshank



PHOTO BY L. T. CARMICHAEL

LATE IN APRIL, a flock of Mountain Bluebirds was reported to be at Craven. A hurried trip, to record another page for my book of memories, was fruitless. A high wind made the "bits of heaven on wings" seek a secluded shelter.

But the color and beauty of spring, that is forever new, smiled a welcome. Held near the tops of the hills, snow looked out of place in contrast to the fresh green leaves, red and yellow catkins, mauve crocuses the gay procession of spring on the lower slopes.

Two weeks later we climbed the hills—Judy in search of new flower faces, Forgarty in search of gophers, and the quest for new species always urging me on. Perhaps some day I may chance on even a little patch of Shooting-Star—who knows? Faded grass made dull background for the starry moss phlox. All flowers were white though one patch had a blue tinge. We found no deep blue or lavender ones, like some of Mr. Budd's specimens.

Near the still water of the little pool, left behind by winter's snow—sequined now by the high sun we found the grey gold-blossomed Silverweed feathered out, gooseberry bushes in delicate flower and leaf, Song and Clay-coloured sparrows flitting in and out among the willow and poplar catkins, while Saskatoon blossoms gleamed like pearls in the sunshine. Killdeer rushed about on the flat below, oblivious to intruders.

Crocus in seed, Golden Pea, Musineon and Phlox embroidered the sunny slope—cloud shadows adding pattern and strength to the picture.

In a clump of trees, well hidden, near a spring, a Mallard's nest held eight eggs of its own and a Cowbird egg. In an old Crow's nest overhanging the creek another duck had laid its eggs. On the pasture hill we found our first little glabrous buttercup; not our only first that day for, enjoying the company of Early Cinquefoil, Townsendia blossoms attracted our attention. As we neared the farmyard a large bunch of Yellow Violets, beside a rock, held Judy's gaze. They draped a little tunnel entrance. "We'll just leave them Gram—they look so happy—anyway the gopher needs them," said the little conservationist, reared in the companionship of the quiet hills.

Happy the children who know and love the country; who build up a storehouse of joy for the later years when only in memories will they hear the music of springtime.

We love the Valley, but our walks on the prairie provide, like a serial story, a new interesting instalment each day. On the 24th of May we found on the bit of native meadow, south of Regina's Gyro golf course, fifteen different flowers in bloom.

As we watched swallows following Fogarty and the insects he stirred up in the grass, twittering Longspurs overhead warned us of their nest at our feet. The clear whistle of the Upland Plover came to us. We watched him land on an old oil can, wings over back, as he posed—a model for a sculptor.

As I fastened my flower press, I noticed the host of crocuses—their seeds caught like little lavender smoke puffs in the slanting rays of the setting sun—as beautiful a picture as when they were in flower.

I thought of Tagore's words: "God, the great giver, can open the whole universe to our gaze in the space of a single lane." How truly he spoke.

We came home in the dusk—enjoying a peace of mind that passes understanding.