

# From the Osage hills

BY JOHN JOSEPH MATHEWS, '20

## Summer day

The breeze that has played in the black-jack leaves all the night dies down to a mere whisper. There is only a hint of coming light. A barred owl sends his haunting call once more along the creek bottom. Then silence. The air seems cooler and heavier; pleasing to the senses after the hot night. In the bushes on the hill-side a warbler begins to sing cheerily, and as the light becomes more than a vague promise a scarlet tanager pours forth with enthusiasm his notes of happiness. Only the early morning songs are heard and the activity is felt more than audible.

Later as the light spreads slowly there is a perfect bedlam of bird-song, and in the intervals the plop of a fish can be heard in the morning stillness of the bottom. In the distance a steer bawls his disfavor of things as they are, and a crow caws raucously from a tall sycamore; whether in protest or whether in greeting to the new day, one can not determine.

Slowly the bird-song dies. The light is full. The east is touched with pink, and silence reigns again. The shadows along the creek are cool. The reflections of the white boles of the sycamores break the uniformity of the dark water. A squirrel frisks along the ground, stopping to sit erect and stare with bead-like eyes. Another sits high upon an elm limb, absorbed in something edible, which he holds between his paws. A little sapsucker creeps along the trunk of a tree uttering dry little chirrupings of peace.

The sun climbs up the horizon. Its long ray-fingers creep into the deep shadows and dispel others. The heavy coolness of the morning disappears. The songs have ceased. The sleepiness of the mid-summer day creeps over all life. As the sun climbs higher the shade under the black-jacks becomes hot. The hot light finds its way to the water and flecks it with pale gold. The grasshoppers

rise and fly with ticking sound, or send up their stridulations which are so in harmony with heavy heat.

The blazing sun climbs higher. Somnolence reigns. The bowl of the sky is colorless, and seems to fit closely over the earth, preventing the circulation of the heated air. The feeble breeze which stirs in the tops of the trees, causes a dry rasping among the leaves as though they were complaining to the pitiless sun. The heat waves dance over the grass tops and blur the vision. Life becomes a sleepy murmur.

## Drought

There is something golden about August in the Osage. The grass has turned from emerald green to a pale green with a hint of yellow. It is predominantly green, yet there is something golden about the prairie stretches; an indefinite languor which brings the word golden to one's consciousness. Certainly there is the yellow "love-vine" to be seen here and there, and the yellow-white or grey seed pods waving at the top of the grasses, and the soft color of high summer mellowing the greens. However, the gold of August is not definite yet it is all pervading and atmospheric; it is felt perhaps rather than actually seen.

All colors are subdued. The sky is grey and hot. The sunsets are orange; the color of cooling metal that has been fired to white heat. The distant hills are grey-blue through the heat haze, and shimmer under the rays of the sun. In the fields the yellow corn tassels are turning white and lifeless under the pitiless rays, and the yellow is creeping up the stalks like a malady coming out of the ground, the dry fronds rasping in the furnace breath that whips over the prairie and whispers its song of heat in the leaves of the black-jacks. White limestone gleams in the beds of dry branches, and the sandstone radiates the heat it has absorbed.

Great cumulus clouds form and re-

form and march across the grey sky. Sometimes they gather in dark masses and growl and threaten, making the boastful promises of fancied importance. Lightning like a vivid etching plays against the dark mass. Night hawks (bull bats) rise from the sandstone boulders and the fence posts; they circle over the prairie uttering their sharp call, diving here and there after insects that have been disturbed by the threatening clouds. Large flocks of cliff swallows stir themselves to feed. The cicada continues his strident song; a shrill song that accentuates the discomfort of the sweltering world and gives a knife edge to the heat; the very symbol of drought and the high temperatures of August; the mocking voice of hopelessness. The clouds boast and threaten for an hour, then spit themselves out and move on, leaving the heat-song of the cicada unbroken; the blazing sun in its never-ending path across the heavens, and the hot winds whispering over a parched earth.

## Day in August

The grass is less green. The seed pods and the white clusters of white and yellow flowers give the whole a less vivid color; as though the grass were fading under the intense rays of the summer sun. Yet there is beauty; not the emerald, vivid beauty of spring, but a sadder, softer beauty which expresses the tranquility and calm of heat. Every voice is softened to harmonize completely with this lethargic calm; there are no echoes or sounds carried for a long distance, but are subdued by the heaviness of high temperatures.

The insects in the grass roots are sleepy-voiced, and the birds limit their calls to lazy communications; only the dickcissel sits in the dazzling sun and sends forth his weak call throughout the day. Even the cicada, the symbol of mid-summer somnolence, waits until four o'clock to start his chorus of shrill complaint to the gods of summer. On higher hills the leaves of the black-jacks stir periodically in whimsical little breezes, dappling the hot shade under them; the ragged shade which promises relief from the dancing heat devils, but cannot fulfill the promise of cool comfort. Along the streams the cattle stand with fretful stolidity in the thick bushes, silently defending themselves from the flies, while their forms are reflected vaguely in the sun-spotted water. A cicada falls buzzing from a sycamore into the water and spins there until some lazy bass or perch rises to gulp him down in a swirl, the concentric little waves making

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Now the score was Kansas 30, Oklahoma 29 and Doctor Allen was taking long draughts from the Jayhawk water bottle as the crowd bellowed insanely.

Two minutes of time remained. Kansas had the ball. Its players tried to stall but were hemmed in beneath their basket by the Sooners, in whose blood the virus of victory now flowed strongly. A Sooner slapped the ball from a Jayhawker's hands and first one team then the other carried it up and down the floor. Then the indefatigable Graalman passed perfectly to Anderson who took one dribble and scored. Oklahoma led by a point!

Now Oklahoma retreated to its back court to stall and it was the turn of the Kansas players to charge down the court and get the ball. Only a few seconds were left to play. Kansas shots were striking all around the Sooner goal but they were thrown too hurriedly. Then little Grady swooped down upon a loose ball, swept it up with one hand and dribbled up the floor.

A path seemed to open for him as he sprinted past the center circle, bouncing the ball fast in front of him. Now his way was clear. Another player in white was hot on his heels. It was Anderson. Grady drove straight for the basket and laid the ball squarely in the ring but is refused to be tamed and leaped out like something wild. But the roar of disappointment from the crowd became a scream of joy when Anderson, closely pursuing Grady, lifted himself into the air and flipped the descending ball back into the meshes. Then the gun and with it the hilarious realization that Oklahoma had broken its long losing streak and won, 33 to 30.

It was a game not to be forgotten overnight. Details of it doubtless still linger in the minds of those who saw it. Grady's pugnacious yet clean curbing of O'Leary that second half, holding him scoreless. Meyer's stern guarding of Bishop. The cold ferocity with which Graalman threw himself into every play. Anderson's quick breaking and his deadliness on short shots. Beck making those four long goals as easily as a fellow cutting himself a piece of pie.

And three weeks later this same Kansas team won the championship of the Big Six conference.

McDermott's men had slain another giant.

The Missouri defeat at Norman, the arithmetic of which has already been described, resulted in Captain Meyer twisting his ankle so severely that he was held out of the Iowa State game. Those Iowa State players came to Norman fresh from conquests over Kansas State by 46-31, over Missouri by 29-19 and over the league-leading Nebraskans, 42-28. They were cocky and straining at the leash. With Meyer out it looked bad for the Sooners.

Oklahoma was leading, 18 to 17 late in the second half when Coach McDer-

mott made ready to replace Roberts with Hatman. In fact Hatman had peeled off his sweat clothes and was crouching at McDermott's side for instructions when Roberts began an exhibition of driving and shooting that resulted in McDermott's leaving him in the contest and culminated in a Sooner victory, 26 to 21, and six field goals for the tall Deer Creek boy. Grady Jackson did an excellent job of guarding that night.

A trip into the north brought a victory over Washburn college, of Topeka, 30 to 27, and a defeat by Nebraska, 30 to 41, after which the team returned home to face the Kansas Aggies in the last contest of the season. The Wildcats needed a victory to tie Nebraska for second place. They had overwhelmed the Sooners 35 to 15 at Manhattan five weeks earlier.

They didn't do so well in the Fieldhouse. The Sooners were capturing Cronkite's tip-off so regularly that they ran up a 20-to-8 lead at one point of the contest and held a 33-to-18 advantage in the second half. Kansas State had lost Alex Nigro, its captain, in the first two minutes of play through an ankle injury yet when George Wiggins, a substitute guard, went in late in the second period he led a Purple rally that saw the courageous visitors pull up to within four points of Oklahoma at the gun.

Graalman's seven baskets set the scoring pace with Beck, Grady and Meyer feeding nicely and Roberts restricting Cronkite to three goals.

Practice for the 1932 season has already begun. Each afternoon at the Fieldhouse Coach McDermott and the outstanding freshmen performers, who will be varsity squad members next year, toil two hours daily. Few spectators watch as the black-shirted yearlings sprint up and down the court, trying to master the intricacies of the block and pivot, for the fans are naturally fed up on basketball and want to see the outdoor sports.

Perhaps the freshmen basketekers, too, are fed up on basketball and would much rather pound a tennis ball or stroll shirt-sleeved down a locust lane with a co-ed on one arm. It's almost a cinch that McDermott would welcome a temporary divorce from the sport. However he isn't satisfied with the team's showing this past season so the long spring practices go on.

There are easier ways of spending an April afternoon.

## WET AND DRY

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right out of those huge rocks. Mr Copeland looked for a pipe organ, but there was no place for one out there. So we began to ask questions, and found out that the Western Electric Co. had installed a musi-

cal apparatus near the top of the bridge and that that was responsible for the pipe organ music we had been hearing.

We went back to the college, and that night we debated on our favorite subject of prohibition. The debaters from Washington and Lee let it be known in no uncertain manner that they were opposed to the eighteenth amendment, and that if a man wanted to drink a little that it was his own business, and it was apparent that he was expressing the sentiments of most of the student body. Mr Epton rejoined by saying that it would not be so bad if they would drink just a little, but the fact was that before prohibition most people who drank didn't know when to stop. They replied "that some people ate too much, and didn't know when to stop, but that we didn't hear anyone suggesting that we ought to pass a law against eating." So back and forth the arguments went, and when the debate closed the Oklahoma debaters were convinced that prohibition was a good thing, and the Washington and Lee debaters were convinced that prohibition was a bad thing, and the audience was convinced that hard chairs and seats were not suitable for a person to sleep in.

In spite of all the arguments in favor of drinking we left Lexington completely sober. We were in a hurry to get back to Soonerland. We had been away practically a month, and were getting kind of tired of travelling all over the country. We were glad to get back to the University of Oklahoma, and we arrived here with the feeling that in spite of the excellence of eastern schools, and in spite of the charges of immorality that this school was the best after all.

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## FROM THE OSAGE HILLS

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the reflection of trees and cattle crazily animated.

Then as the sun slides down the hazy blue bowl of the sky, the pastel colors of summer come forth to paint pictures never seen on canvas. The haze of heat softens the colors and outlines of the trees and the hills, until the former appear as indistinct clumps on the distant ridges and the latter seem intangible in mauve and lilac. They become more evanescent and unreal as the sun approaches the horizon and changes to orange, adding to the dream picture a touch of pink. The foreground is dotted with cattle, grazing with that detachment that is peculiarly bovine.

The heat of the day is over. Soon the great red moon appears on the eastern horizon, as material and distinct as a plaque of brass; brick-red as though scorched; climbing out of the prairie to liberate itself from the earthly heat.

It climbs higher and soon becomes a

small bright disc, flooding the Osage with its silver; making ragged shadows under the trees, and causing the rocks to float in the eerie light. The heat of the day is forgotten as a breeze springs up and rest is found in the magic beauty of a summer's night.



### Autumn

It is impossible. Words cannot be used to interpret the emotions inspired by Autumn in the Osage. The gold, the old gold, the mellow gold, the fire reds, the soft crimson, the orange, the flaming reds and the dark and light greens, all in riotous display. The sparkling, abandoned, melancholy gypsy dance of the death of a season. Hillsides gleaming in the sun, fantastically painted in colors and combinations never seen on a palette; colors never reproduced by man. Hillsides dressed for the festival of Nature's Mardi gras; changing as the sun climbs the sky and descends behind the high prairie of the west; changing as the moon climbs and floods them with cold silver and eerie silence. colors giving the impression of the madness and rapture of abandoned living; summer losing herself in the emotions of extravagant farewell. Yet these colors give the impression of melancholy and tranquility.

Under the calm that settles over the hills and prairies as they lay gleaming peacefully and sadly in the brilliant sun, there is the muffled hum of activity. The drone of the insects; the impatient hammering of the woodpecker family; the restlessness of the squirrels and other rodents, each expressing himself in subdued language; the little sapsucker voicing sadness and determination as he runs up and down the tree trunks. Then there is the almost inaudible rasping of the falling leaves, and the dry rattle of the fallen leaves worried by crazy little breezes; the muffled thud of falling nuts and the creaking branches of close growing sycamores and elms; a voice in the autumnal woods not easily located; seemingly disembodied like the voice of a diurnal ghost, with the slight sound of the falling leaves as his foot-steps.

Then when the moon beams search out and expose things hidden in the inky shadows, the 'coon walks calmly with assurance along the waters edge, stopping to fish out with dexterous hand-like paw anything that glints in the ghostly light. The barred and horned owls vie with each other among the shadows, and the coyote's voice comes from the prairie in petulant controversy with his kind. The insect chorus is silent; there is no voice from the grass roots except on very rare occasions, the frightened squeak of a mouse.

Another voice of the autumnal nights is the bell-like baying of trailing hounds, echoing along the bottoms, fading out in the distance or approaching as the tortuous trail is worked out, the change of voice telling the hunter of the vicissitudes of the chase; working up a crescendo of emotion which reaches its apex in the excited medley which means "treed."



### Moonlight

How natural it was for primitive people to worship the moon. The soft light flooding the open spaces and creating ghost-lights and shadows in the woods, and spreading over all, benignant tranquility with the voices of hundreds of small petitioners floating up from the grass-roots and from the shelter of the trees; voices soft with a touch of sadness, paying homage to the mellow light which with its own weight seems to smother harshness.

On the prairie where no yellow lights flash or the puffs of a laboring train and the roar of a motor break the peace, the silence is almost audible and the calm almost oppressive. The scattered limestone rocks seeming to float in the eerie light. The distance beckoning to unearthly adventure. A primeval world whose valleys are filled with velvety silence; ragged inky shadows reaching down their sides and patches of water in the center, silvered and unrippled. A world far removed from clanking steel and startling disharmony.

On the sandstone hills, the black-jacks standing in dark masses, their leaves like polished metal, unstimulating in the ghostly quiet. Their shadows dense and irregular lying like fringed garments of sable black. From the grass comes the stridulations of the insects in many keys, but in perfect harmony with the dreaming world. The whip-poor-will mournfully repeating his plea like a petulant child convinced of his own virtue. And then as though to make the stillness more perfect, the romance of the night more sad and appealing, from far back in the blackness of the trees, a screech owl complaining in quavering tones to the moon.

Man has counted and named the stars; he knows much of the nature of the sun and the origin of the planets, yet his attitude is akin to worship when the moon floods the Osage with silver.



### The storm

The grass of the prairie seems to be a brighter green when it is contrasted with the mauve shadows of cumulus clouds moving across the valleys and hills. The air is still and humid. Not a leaf is stirring on the black-jack ridge. The

voices are hushed except for the dickcissel swaying on a nearby weed, and the croaking of a cuckoo in the creek bottom. The discomfort in the latter's voice would lead one to believe that he stands wretchedly on a limb with mouth open and wings extended suffering from the heat. A lone frog starts in a high pitched voice from some nearby seepage, but as no frog chorus follows his lead he falls into silence.

Several heavy clouds have obscured the sun for a short time and have moved on to the east, and on account of the perspective, seem to have consolidated there. The clouds grow heavier and in numbers; the shadows become mauve blotches on the green, moving slowly. Some nameless insect starts a chorus from the grass roots. The cuckoo lapses into silence and the air becomes heavy and is devoid of all movement. The dickcissel vies with insects in the grass roots.

The sun appears less frequently now. There is a solid dark mass on the western horizon, and the clouds overhead begin to coalesce, their ragged edges whipped by crazy winds. The stillness seems ominous. The leaves of the black-jack appear glossy, almost metallic in the strange light. The insects in the grass roots suddenly become quiet, and the dickcissel with one last burst of weak song flits off hurriedly across the prairie and is immediately lost in the dim light.

The silence becomes complete. Against the dark background on the western horizon a luminous, crinkled string appears for a second. The profound silence is broken by the distant bawling of a steer; the bawl carries uneasiness and uncertainty. Suddenly the dark background in the west is lighted up by a grotesque, leafless tree, traced down the branches, along the trunk to the horizon by orange glow. Thunder rolls along the hills. The light is greenish. Large rain drops spatter on the stones. A deafening roar of thunder; the wind comes into life again, and the rain makes the hills look intangible and the black-jacks on the ridge become phantoms.

Rain pours heavily on the prairie and the sandstone ridges of the Osage, and yellow water gurgles down its ravines. The lightning flashes reveal a ghostland dim of outline, and the thunder roars and reverberates. A Wagnerian opera on Nature's gigantic stage!



### October

The dreamy, lazy gold of August, the glowing yellow and gold of September; then the mellow gold and flaming reds of October which make the Osage a land of enchantment for a few days.

First the sumac appears in a brilliant

flash of crimson against the background of black-jacks; against fields of brown, and along the roads. The scarlet groups on the hillsides appearing like blood oozing wounds.

Later the cottonwoods change to pale yellow, and then the black-jacks seem to go mad in rivalry for frenzied gaiety before the winter death. Tranquil and glinting in the mid-day sun, expressing the richness of maturity, with a hint of the sadness of mutability and mortality which gives life much of its interest; the symbol of that bitter-sweetness which has much to do with the romance of living. As the setting sun turns the horizon to orange and red, and the mauve of twilight floods the distant hills, the mad colors stand out boldly and crazily like colored bits of material dropped from the sky by the hand of some careless pagan god.

The Autumn is the beginning of death, the last glorious manifestation of life before the silence of winter; the Mardi gras of Nature, it is a season of activity and excitement.

The tragedies and emotions of reproduction hold the insect world, but the humming activity of Autumn has a different meaning from the lazy humming of the Spring. The voices of the woodpeckers are heard throughout the day, storing winter foods; the squirrels make many trips a day along the ground and up and down trees in the creek bottoms and along the ridges where the sun dappled shadows are athrill with life. The honking geese travelling in V's and etched against the orange glow of the Autumnal sunset, gives life to a picture already replete with color. The bluebirds with soft voices of vague restlessness are forming in flocks. The robins call to each other in tones of pathos and discontent, and the vulgar bluejay cries in hoarse impatience, his thoughts divided between this strange restlessness and his alert watchfulness for the unique. The ever present crow flies high above the painted trees and makes a fuss out of all proportion to the seriousness of his existence. The coyote complains of his lot to the cold, uninterested moon, and the little screech owl quaveringly appeals to the eerie spirits of the night, while the great barred owl sends his booming hunting call echoing along the still creek bottoms, freezing the furry hunters of the lower world in their tracks.

Color, extravagant and exuberant display; fevered activity and restlessness; the assembling of Nature's cast in the drama of Life, before the final curtain of winter.



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## R. O. T. C. and the university

BY CARL ALBERT, '31

The students of the University of Oklahoma are justly proud of their R. O. T. C. unit. Its standing among others of the Eighth Corps Area and of the country, the progress it has made during the last four years, and the splendid opportunities it offers for needed training in different fields deserve the commendation of every citizen of this state.

My personal contact with the Department of Military Science here has revealed to me that, as least as far as this particular unit is concerned, R. O. T. C. is endeavoring to teach university men in the fundamentals of cooperation, of fellowship, and of leadership. It is therefore training a group of civilians, not only to be able to defend the colors in times of crisis, but also to be leaders in their communities in times of peace.

We use here the same general plan found among all units. Work is divided between class room instruction and drill. The entire course consists of basic and advanced training. It serves as a sort of balance wheel for freshmen. When the average boy matriculates in college he goes out of the reach of the eyes of his parents for the first time. New temptations are shoved in his face. His father is not there to make him study his lessons or attend his classes. With his desire to accommodate his attitudes to those of the new situation, with his ambition to prolong the thrills of rush week, with his attempts to make himself immediately a "typical college lad" he faces the danger of losing sight of the things that are most essential to the progress of the individual.

Military training helps to supply this deficiency. Two hours of close order drill every week has a disciplinary value that is not found in any other activity. This fact of discipline alone justifies the existence of compulsory military training for freshmen and sophomores.

In the summer, following the junior year, the advanced course students spend six weeks in camp at Fort Sill. There they are organized in batteries and trained in all the elements of field artillery work. They act both in the capacity of cannon-eers and of battery commanders observing and conducting actual fire on the range.

It was the pleasure and good fortune of

my class to attend camp last summer. I have heard it said by any number of those who were there that the six weeks at Sill constituted one of the most enjoyable vacations that they have ever had.

There, we not only received the training and the exercise which go along with military duties but received from our officers many favors that will be long appreciated and remembered. We were served food far above the class of any I have ever found at any other camp. We had weekly social functions and were privileged one evening with a dance at the Officers Club. In addition to this we spent the afternoons swimming or competing in different sports with the rival infantry units made up of cadets from Oklahoma Military Academy and Oklahoma A. and M. During the evenings and week ends we were free to go to Lawton or to Medicine Park, a nearby summer resort. With the regularity and discipline of the camp, with plenty of intensive work and exercise, with ample recreation and entertainment, the six weeks passed hurriedly by and left in our minds the memory of an exceedingly well spent vacation.

At school, as well as in camp, may be found many encouraging activities connected with the Department of Military Science. Our polo team, for example, was brought here by reason of the establishment of this unit. It is trained by one of our army officers and has developed into one of the finest in the Southwest. Our pistol team won the national championship last year. We also have competitive drills offering prizes to winning batteries. Then at the end of each school year splendid awards are given to outstanding students of the department. In addition to this, we are fortunate in having riding clubs and an annual horse show in which competition is always keen.

It would be difficult to estimate the value of these activities to the student, the unit, and the school. Suffice to say that they have a tremendous effect upon the morale of the students. They certainly have furnished no small part of the incentive which have caused the cadets to work hard and consistently and to obtain thereby the rank that the unit now holds.

Four years ago the R. O. T. C. here was