

The Rockwood Review

VARIED COMMENTS.

Burford Township,
February 12, 1902.

Two young men when in pursuit of minks in a wild swampy piece of woods in this township about a month ago report that they noticed growing in a secluded bog a considerable number of specimens of the wild Canadian holly whose bright red berries profusely adorned the slender branches of the shrub (*Prinos Verticellata* of Linnaeus) The berries are nearly of the same size and color as those of the well known "Mountain Ash," but rarely remain on the branches so late in the winter season as did those above referred to which the observers stated, (this was about the middle of January) had a beautiful appearance contrasting with the snow covered surroundings, The scarlet berries of this holly are said to be insipid to the taste, but are sometimes eaten by robins, pine grosbeaks, cedar birds and jays. To the early Canadian settlers the fruit of this shrub was frequently referred to under the name of "Pigeon Berries" and the writer of this paper has been assured that in days bygone the American wild pigeons were frequently seen to regale themselves on this showy fruit of the wilderness; After severe frosts the leaves fall off, but in sheltered and unfrequented nooks, not much penetrated by winds or animal intruders, the red coralline berries are known to adorn the branches of the shrub until midwinter—the plant sometimes grows to the height of 7 feet, but requires a water-soaked soil to thrive in, yet

grows readily if transplanted ; its chief exigencies seeming to be an abundance of moisture.

Among the most noticeable characteristics of the passing winter is the universal presence all over this district of flocks of the pine grosbeaks' which have been seen by numbers of people: the grosbeaks come to the orchards in parties of a dozen to fifteen or more, and seem attracted to dried, withered apples wherever such scanty neglected fruit remains on the trees. The birds also eat many tree buds, and many fruit growers drive the birds away under the impression that the grosbeaks destroy the blossom buds. In the latter portion of the winter the grosbeaks nibble off the maple buds, too, and those of other garden shrubs such as those of the "*Pyrus sorbifolia*" and of the genus *prunus* and *crategeus*—the grosbeaks only come here at intervals of perhaps 7 or 8 years, in very noticeable numbers ; and in one of their visitations the birds entirely stripped of their buds, several thrifty growing specimens of *spirea sorbifolia* that ornamented our shrubbery, yet we were glad to discover, when summer returned, that our spireas leafed out and blossomed as profusely as in ordinary summers, and we were unable to perceive that the bird's winter visits had been detrimental to the vigor or prosperity of the shrubs. Yet the European Bullfinch which is thought to be a near relative to our pine grosbeak has a bad reputation among English orchardists.

W. YATES.