

A Pair of Yellow Lady Slippers

By MARION NIXON, Wauchope, Sask.



Yellow lady slippers are late in blooming, this cold spring. Their season often begins at the end of the first week in June, but this year they were not seen till June 15th. However, they have made up for lost time, for I have never seen so many clumps nor so many stalks of bloom per clump. Six to eight are common, and I found one root that bore 18 lady slippers. Perhaps it is partly due to the fact that a prairie fire ran over the pasture land this spring, so the lady slippers have less competition from animals. Single blooms,

invariably, are much larger than the slippers from a crowded clump. On an average year, this flower is still as common as it was 30 years ago, if one knows where to look for it; but this year there are clumps started much farther away from the slough rims of poplar bluff, and on open rises of ground between the sheltered sloughs, than I have ever seen before. Of course, on the quarter-section over which I strolled, I was never more than fifty yards from a bluff in some direction, so the lady slippers had ample protection, even on the grassy open, and the whole quarter is riddled with sloughs linked up by beaver channels and dammed so the willows have gradually drowned. Plants anywhere have damp roots. We used to see the lady slippers along the sunken gardens where ditches remained at each side of a slough, after a grade had been built on our market road. They prefer a clay rather than gravelly soil. Now, those early roots seem to have died out, but the plants must have set seed copiously in some year to be so widespread on the land that is eastward from those original roots. I am sure I saw well over 1000.

The flower has a waxy, tough texture, and the stalk is sturdy, so the flower has a long individual period of bloom, and lasts well in water. It is hard to resist picking them, but this should not be done unless from a clump of bloom one or two stalks are picked to get the flower; and if there is only one lady slipper growing from the root, that root will die for lack of leaves to gather food for winter, and the making of next year's bloom "Don't gather any unless there are many," is a good slogan to follow.

Thus it was with mixed feeling I examined a lady slipper that was brought to me to-day. It was a twin, something none of us had ever seen before in all our experience of yellow lady slippers. Now it cannot be watched next year, to see if the twinning would be repeated, nor can we divide the plant to propagate the rarity. It was found in a secluded spot, seldom travelled, so was plucked and brought to me because of my known interest in wild life.

I enclose a sketch of the first "pair of slippers" I have ever seen on one stalk. The slippers are undersized, compared to those that flower on single stalks, where conditions are favorable.

Hail Storm

*A Summer breeze on a Prairie plain.
Rustling its song through a field of
grain.*

*A field of beauty and good for a
haul*

Of forty bushels or more next Fall.

*But that was yesterday afternoon.
Today it all lay in a heat wave
swoon.*

*The slate coloured clouds lunged up
overhead*

*In currents that swirled them like
molten lead.*

*The thunderstorm broke with a hell-
like flash,*

Reverberating with rending crash.

*Like burst of sudden machine gun
rain*

*The hail storm flattened the field of
grain.*

*The sun shone out from a clearing
sky,*

*And I saw the glittering hailstones
lie*

*In ridges and drifts where the storm
held sway,*

*Like the beauty that glints on a
Winter day.*

*Are labour and hope, in this field
'laid bare,*

*All come to such end in a blank
despair?*

*We'll turn in the cattle to salvage
the feed,*

*Then plow the good soil for the
Springtime seed.*

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S.N.H.S. Annual Meeting at Yorkton, October 23

Do your part to make our Society strong and active. Attend the annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society at Castle Hall, Yorkton, on Saturday, October 23rd. The Yorkton Natural History Society will act as host, and it is hoped there will be a good representation from all parts of the province. There will be morning, afternoon and evening sessions following registration at 9:30 a.m. C.S.T. There will be short illustrated talks on nature subjects and the annual business meeting. Those with resolutions for the consideration of the meeting should send them NOW to Dr. Stuart Houston, Box 279, Yorkton. Further information about any aspect of the meeting may be obtained from Dr. Houston.

This is your opportunity to meet your fellow naturalists and to further the work of the "BLUE JAY." Plan now to attend.