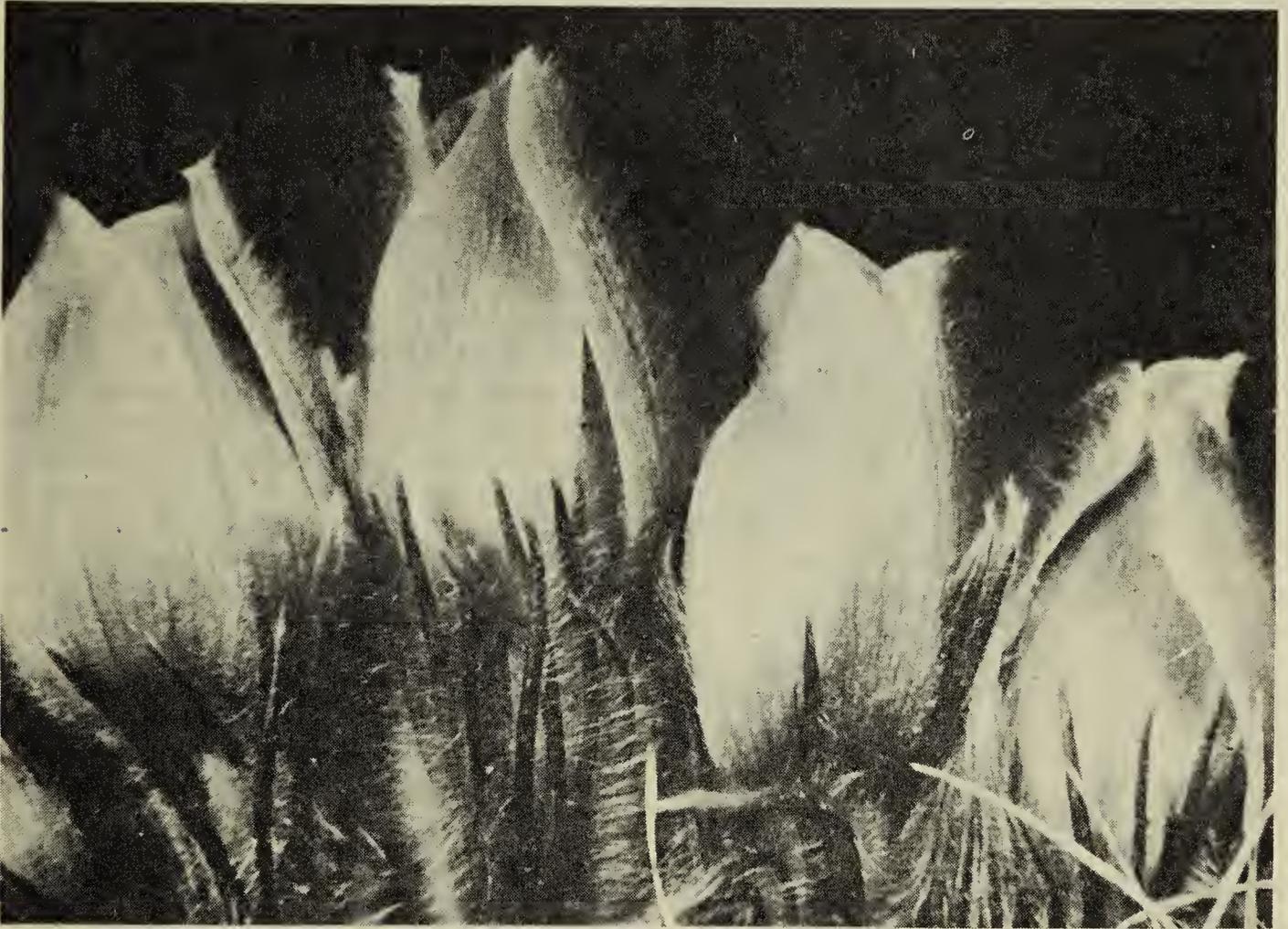


Flower of the Month

By R. B. WILLEMS, Edenwold, Sask.



April is the poet's month and we were not disappointed to see its mercurial sweetness emerge in large lavender blossoms with their rich golden centres.

*Like lilac flames its color grows
Tender and yet so clearly bright,
And far off village children shout
To see the welcome sight.*

Again the Willemses were on their annual *Expedition Crocus*. Since the prairie crocus flourishes on burned over prairies and is particularly conspicuous on railways right-of-way, we took advantage of a dry, inviting road the railway offered amidst the fast disappearing drifts of snow. As we admired the mauve and pale blue flowers, each with its mass of yellow stamens and numerous pistils in the centre, we felt the surge of spring within our own hearts. Now, that "blossom by blossom the spring begins,"

*We will forget the cruel frost and
the winter's wrong;
None can be glad as we are unless
they have waited as long.*

The silvery haired fur coat with which each flower is provided, was a reminder that at twilight, temperatures would soon again drop, and that we had better direct our footsteps along the homeward path. Pleasantly weary after our ramble, with one's mind filled with the quiet beauty of the spring landscape mellowed by the saffron sunset tinged with rose, one could hardly forget the flowers, which earlier in the afternoon had lent so much charm to the spring fields. Since the rays of the sun were no longer imping their radiant energy upon the crocus anemone, its petals will consequently have closed. Adorned in an attire of silver and lavender, its corolla nestled in the soft fur calyx, the "crocus" was prepared to spend the night in quiet repose.

The closing blossom has aforesaid appealed to the imagination of nature lovers — even poets have been inspired by the contemplation of the nodding flower:

*Soft shades and dews have shed their
blended power
On drooping eyelid and the closing
flower.*

An idea offering such poetic possibilities, as that of the repose of these spring blossoms, is one, which one is naturally reluctant to pass by. To record these sleeping beauties in the tulip-form you see in the accompanying photograph, necessitated another walk after dusk, to the habitat of these comely blossoms. After the most perfect ones had been singled out by means of a flashlight and carefully carried home, they were duly photographed. Since the crocus anemone responds readily to room temperature and photo-flood lights, they were placed in a refrigerator until the camera, reflector-flood lights, and a crepe-paper background had been set up, ready for the actual photographing.

Everyone knows and loves the well-known "crocus" of the prairie. With our admiration is combined a warmer feeling, since early flowers in the first floral pageant of the year are especially welcome. They are loveable flowers: some, a charming lilac, others, blushing lavender. To complete the charm when presented in such romantic association, it is no wonder that these demure blossoms stole the hearts of the judges in a recent kodachrome slide contest. Unfortunately, the black-and-white copy from the kodachrome transparency hardly conveys the color and charm one would wish it to express.

As the flower is so bountifully endowed to ensure the successful perpetuation of its kind, let us not forget the "crocus" after the blossoms go. The feathery plume-like fruit, which appears after the true leaves are out, taking on the effect of low waves of smoke moving across the prairie, are no less calculated to call forth our wonder and admiration. May this floral gem lead us to frequent invocation to Him, who in a moment of ecstasy fashioned the flower — and when He had finished, it is recorded that He declared, "It is good."

That All Might See . . .

By Elizabeth Cruickshank, Regina

Are we born with a love of Nature?
Or is it taught as someone has said
by infection?

A grandmother told me that among her golden memories were the spring-times, for then her Danish grandfather, on whose farm they lived, gave each of the children a bird as they arrived. To them the gift was real and sad farewells were waved, each to his own, when Autumn came. "So naturally," she said "I've loved birds all my life."

For ourselves we need only to close our eyes to smell the Mayflowers of home or the fern-odours of cool dark woods, where little rustlings were a challenge for investigation; to see the abundant starry Gold-thread in the cedar swamp, the first wood Violets or Lady's Slipper or the Jack-in-the-pulpits.

How often doing the daily chores can we see the daisied fields, buttercup gold-studded; or hear the moonlight sonatas of frogs and murmuring brooks; or taste the sharp sweet low-bush cranberry or go in imagination on a nature hike, when the city confined us, with a teacher who felt the importance of hearing from the White-throats' own throat "I love Canada, Canada, Canada!" and of seeing the Trillium and the Dog-tooth Violet in their own home surroundings.

But here again is Spring on the prairie! Here again is the

*"Brown earth yielding birth
To the laughing legions
Of Spring's mirth."*

Crocuses everywhere! Judy in the Valley watching her young visitors to see that only one blossom is picked from the large clumps — none from the small ones. She is of Millay's mind

*"I will be the gladdest thing under
the sun —
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one."*

Today the Box-Elder at my kitchen window prepares its display of flimsy cascades of green and gold. A little company of Myrtle Warblers investigate the bushes in the yard. A robin splashes with a song sparrow