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A Celebrated Family, The Orchids

Mrs. William Starr Dana

Do you know this pretty flower?

It is the yellow lady's slipper. It lives deep in the woods of May, perhaps part way up the mountain side. It has several sisters. One of these is the pink lady's slipper, which blossoms just a little later. Another is the white lady's slipper. This comes late in June, and is one of the loveliest of our wild flowers.

These three sisters belong to a celebrated family, that of the Orchids.



The Orchid family is noted for the beauty of its flowers, and for the pains which these take to attract the attention of the bees.

The building plan used by the orchids is too difficult for you to learn yet awhile. Perhaps the orchids take more trouble than any other flowers to have their pistils well dusted with pollen. A good landing place for the bee is provided; signs are hung out to point the way to the hidden nectar; and if directions are followed, the pistil is sure to receive the wished-for pollen.

This picture shows you an orchid which you see in the windows of flower shops during the winter. It comes to us from far South, not growing out of doors in our climate.

Its building plan would almost serve for a wayside tavern. You can see that the pocket would answer as a front doorstep, making a convenient landing place for bee or butterfly.



The dark spots on the upper flower leaf point downward to the refreshment room.

Even more curious than this one are other orchids which grow in far-away places.

In their efforts to please, they wear the most striking colors, and take on a

variety of fantastic shapes.

One of them dresses itself much like a bee. In this way perhaps it secures a visit from the real bee.

Another is called the baby orchid, because in the center of each flower is an object which really looks like a fairy baby.

There are some ten or twelve orchids which are common in our Northern woods. I hope you children will keep on the lookout for them all summer.

Just now you could not tell whether or not a flower was an orchid. But if you come across a plant whose flowers look as though they were built to serve as wayside taverns for the bees, why, carry them to your teacher, and ask her to find out for you whether they belong to the Orchid family.

But it is only fair to tell you that some of our orchids bear flowers so small and insignificant that you would hardly guess them to be members of so distinguished a family.



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