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THE Dr. Ruldolph*

PHYTOLOGIST: 263B+Z

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POPULAR

BOTANICAL MISCELLANY.

CONDUCTED BY

GEORGE LUXFORD, A.L.S., F.B.S.E.

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and their inflorescence in other respects differs so much from that of any other species of *Maxillaria* with which I am acquainted, that they may be considered as forming a very distinct group of the genus.

FRED. WESTCOTT.

ART. III. — *Description of a Primula, found at Thames Ditton, Surrey, exhibiting characters both of the Primrose and the Cowslip.* By HEWETT COTTRELL WATSON, Esq., F.L.S. &c.

THE circumstances under which this oxlip was found, rather than any peculiar character in the plant itself, induced me to exhibit it at the meeting of the London Botanical Society on Friday last.

For several years past I have been in the custom of traversing the fields and coppices of Thames Ditton and the adjoining parishes, and have particularly looked out for oxlips, but until the present spring not a single plant of the kind has been observed, while cowslips and primroses are abundant in many places. The oxlip in question was found in an old orchard, where the ground is very damp, and in summer much shaded by trees. Numerous plants with the true cowslip and primrose characters were growing about this solitary oxlip; and I could not see another specimen on again visiting the spot a week later, when more of the cowslips had come into flower. It should be remarked, however, that as I had never before been within the orchard, I cannot say that oxlips had not grown there in preceding years. I had frequently walked down a lane which runs alongside the orchard, and observed that it contained both cowslips and primroses; and was again doing so, when the showy flowers of the oxlip attracted my attention, and induced me to cross the hedge for it. The mention of an orchard might lead to a supposition that the plant had been introduced; but this appears to me improbable, since the fruit-trees grow in grass only, there being neither dug ground, nor any garden plants except the fruit-trees, which are chiefly apples. All the circumstances lead to a reasonable presumption, that this solitary oxlip had originated from a seed either of the cowslip or primrose; yet its characters are so completely intermediate between the two, that I can give only the slightest preponderance in favour of the cowslip.

The plant I imagine to have been of three years' growth, and that this is the second year of its flowering. It had four umbels, only one of them having the flowers expanded when the plant was taken up. Besides these umbels there were half-a-dozen solitary flowers and buds

on as many separate scapes; all the single-flowered scapes springing from the same point amongst the leaves clustered on the head of the root, or rather, subterranean stem. The calyx is intermediate between those of the cowslip and primrose. The corolla has the deep colour of the cowslip flower, but in size, and in the flatness of the limb, approaches much nearer to that of the primrose. The leaves of the present year have the colour and nearly the form of those of the cowslip, but two or three large half-withered leaves, of last year as far as can be now ascertained, resembled more decidedly those of the primrose. If these old leaves had not been seen, I should have pronounced the plant a cowslip, notwithstanding the size and flatness of the corolla, and the few single-flowered scapes.

The specimen exhibited at the meeting was only half the plant; the other part is planted in my garden, where I hope to watch its flowers next spring.

After finding this one specimen, I examined the cowslip and primrose localities all around with renewed diligence, and found a second oxlip a mile or two from the first, and in a situation very different, except in being damp. It was growing amongst many cowslips in a pasture field, with primroses not many yards distant, and in every respect resembled the other cowslips, except that the corolla had the pale tint and almost the shape of the primrose; being considerably larger than the cowslip, but smaller than the primrose. This plant had been crushed under the foot of a cow; and its leaves were small and the scapes short, and bearing few flowers: it was obviously injured and unhealthy.

Primroses, self-sown, spring up freely in my garden, and the seedlings occasionally produce umbelliferous scapes; but in other respects they have hitherto retained all the characters of the wild primrose, except varying in colour from pale yellow to different shades of red, and occasionally exhibiting monstrosities in the calyx.

I may remark that young botanists sometimes mistake a late state of the common cowslip for the oxlip. After the germen is fertilized, the flowers of the former become erect; the limb of the corolla loses its concave form, and when large and vigorous it bears at this stage some resemblance to a small primrose flower.

Thames Ditton,

April 19, 1841.

HEWETT C. WATSON.