

## A CURIOUS VARIATION IN THE COMMON MILKWEED.

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During the first half of August, 1917, while spending a few weeks at home, I found a variant milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca* L., which was so unusual that it was removed to the back yard of my parents' home for further observation. During the next summer, 1918, two other similar plants were discovered by my mother and transferred to the yard by my father. These three plants and some seedlings from the first of the three are now growing there. I have not seen them during the growing season since 1917<sup>1</sup>; but as there seems to be no prospect of my being in a position to investigate their behavior soon, it appears to be worth while at this time to note their occurrence, with such notes as the very imperfect observations warrant.

The first plant was discovered along the village street about a hundred yards north of the Methodist church in the village of Blooming Grove, Franklin County, Indiana. The distinguishing feature of the plant was the peculiar irregularity of most of the leaf margins, with an accompanying narrowing of the leaves. Many leaves consisted of but little more than the midrib. They had much the appearance of having been partially eaten by chickens, and it was only a careful examination that showed another cause to be responsible.

The plant contained a few fruits and it seemed desirable to save seed and determine whether or not the progeny would show the same character, but before the seed were ripe the plant was cut off by some workman engaged in mowing weeds. However, one stem with the fruits was recovered and placed in water. By this means a number of viable seeds was secured. The other stems were recovered for a herbarium specimen, and the plant itself was transplanted to the back yard.

In 1918 the peculiar leaf characteristic was largely absent. At best it was represented by no more than a slight narrowing, since my mother wrote me that I must have obtained the wrong plant the summer before, as the leaves were normal. Furthermore, as noted above, she found two more abnormal plants. These were transplanted the same season near the first one. All three of these plants have had the abnormal leaves during the seasons of 1919 and 1920. The first one also produced seed in 1920. Figs. 1 and 2 show the first plant as it appeared in the summer of 1919. Fig. 3 shows Nos. 2 and 3 as they appeared at the same time. Figs. 4-6 show tracings of some of the leaves of No. 1, made from the herbarium specimen already mentioned. These show clearly the extreme narrowing of many of the leaves and the irregularities of the margins.

On April 18, 1918, one hundred four of the immature seeds secured the autumn before were planted in a shallow box. A number of seedlings were secured from them and set out a short distance from the mother plant. Of these seedlings about a dozen are still living. None of them shows the leaf character so evident in the parent. The leaves may possibly show a

<sup>1</sup>I am indebted to my mother, Mrs. A. C. Ludwig, for the observations made since 1917, and for the photographs reproduced with this paper.

slight narrowing; but they are not noticeably irregular, for they were reported as appearing normal.

As was mentioned above there seems to be little chance of my being able at any time soon to investigate adequately the behavior of these aberrant plants. For that reason I am willing to turn over my material and notes to anyone who is willing and in a position to do the work.



Fig. 1.—Upper part of plant No. 1, summer of 1919.

Fig. 2.—Same plant, showing a larger portion of the plant. Note that the bottom and apical leaves approach the normal in shape.

Fig. 3.—Upper part of plants 2 and 3, summer of 1919.



Fig. 4.—Lower side of leaf of plant No. 1 (summer, 1917) from herbarium specimen.

Figs. 5 and 6.—Upper side of leaves from same specimen.

Figs. 4, 5, and 6 are one-half natural size.

