

## NOTES ON WILD FLOWERS.

By E. NAPIER.

### FIG. No. 1.

*Craterostigma plantagineum*, Hochst. (*Scrophulariaceae*).

SUGGESTED NAMES: Kenya Violet, Rainbow-flowers.

This species was described by Hochstetter in 1841; the name probably refers to the hollow between the two lips of the stigma. There are fourteen other species of this genus in Africa, including one which extends to Arabia.

*C. plantigenium* has a rosette of leaves, usually, though not always, closely adpressed to the ground, and resembling those of the British wayside weed known as "plantain" hence its specific name.

They are to be found making a carpet of all shades of blue and purple to pale pink on the edge of murrum or rock and poor pasture land. The flowers appear soon after the ground has been soaked with rain and cease when it dries up again.

LEAVES.—Prominently ribbed. These are purple or pink on the underside, and slightly hairy on both surfaces.

FLOWERS.—Of velvety texture, two lipped, the lower having an irregular white patch at the base, and two yellow tipped false stamens attached to it. The true stamens are united under the hood, where also lies the two lobed stigma.

STEMS.—Branched or unbranched with two bracts at the base of the branches, hairy, red or green, about two to three inches in height.

LOCALITY.—Almost universal on suitable soil between the altitudes of 5,000 to 8,000 feet.

### FIG. No. 2.

*Rhamphicarpa montana*, N. E. Br. (*Scrophulariaceae*).

SUGGESTED NAMES: Wild Petunia, Paper Flower.

This species was described by N. E. Brown in the *Kew Bulletin* in 1901, and is one of 25 species indigenous to South and Tropical Africa. It is widely distributed, extending from Rhodesia to Uganda between the altitudes of 4,000 feet and 7,500 feet.

The size, colour, and growth of this plant varies considerably, a large flowered white variety being common on the Athi Plains. The smaller variety (illustrated) comes from Naivasha and the higher



FIG. No. 1. *Craterostigma plantagineum*, Hochst.



FIG. No. 2. *Rhamphicarpa montana*, N. E. Br.

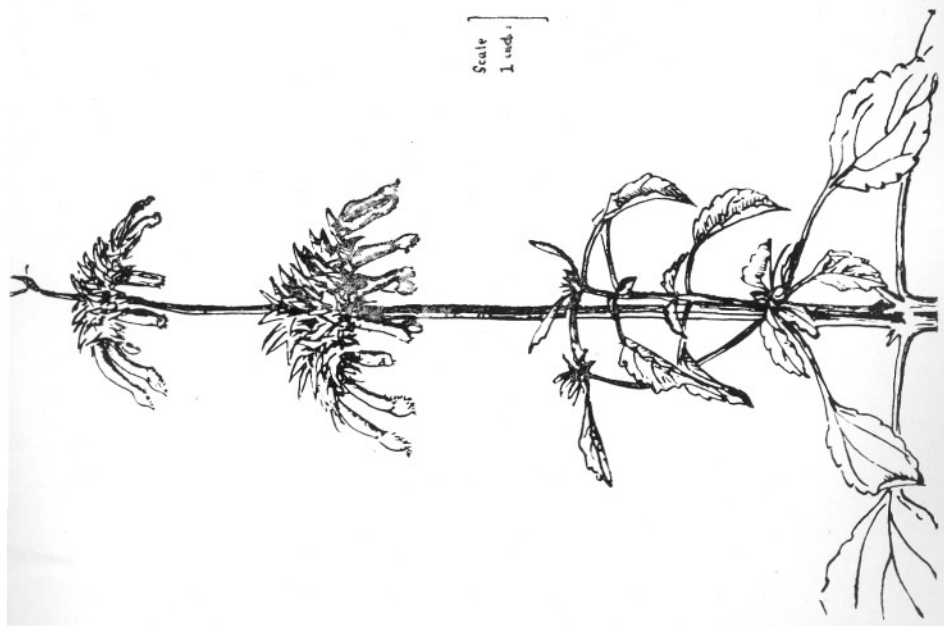


FIG. No. 3. *Leonotis nepetaefolia*, R. Br.

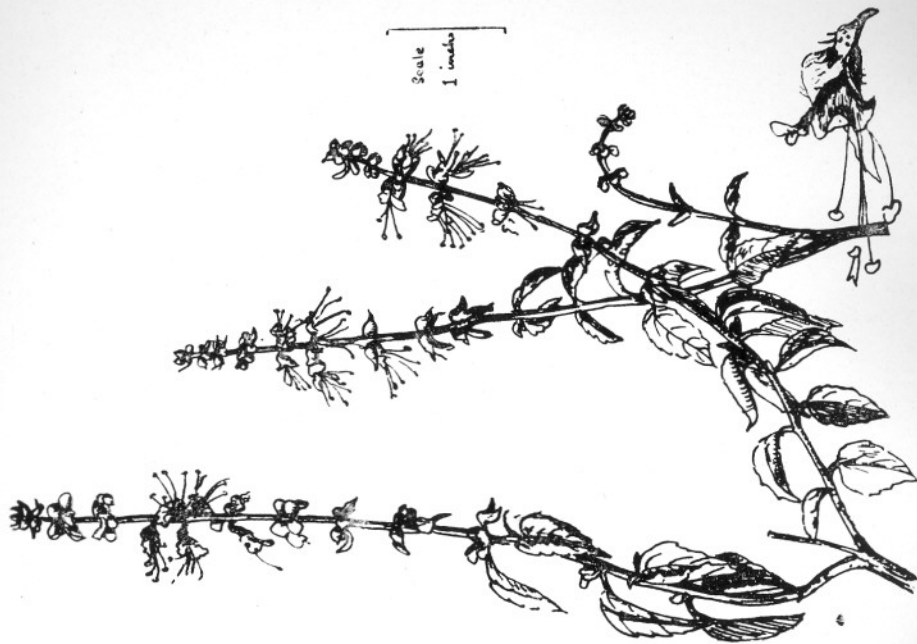


FIG. No. 4. *Ocimum americanum*, Mill.

altitudes where it is common, growing prostrate in grassland. The flowers are dull mauve, fading to dirty white, or pure white.

At the beginning of the rains, when the grass is short, the flowers appear like pieces of paper strewn over the plain.

**LEAVES.**—Usually narrow irregularly toothed, from half inch to two inches long without a leaf stalk, opposite, on a stem which spreads along the ground.

**FLOWERS.**—The five large petals are thin in texture and easily bruised; a hairy, greenish-pink corolla tube contains the four stamens and the stigma. The mauve coloured varieties have a white patch on the lower lobes. A slender stem from the axil of the leaves raises the flower to the height of the surrounding grass, i.e. about three inches.

FIG. No. 3.

*Leonotis nepetaefolia*, R. Brown (*Labiatae*).

SUGGESTED NAMES: Lion's ears, being the English form of the generic name.

This species was described before 1900 by R. Brown. It is now cosmopolitan in the tropics, there being 29 other species in Tropical and South Africa. Some are used as ornamental or medicinal plants.

*L. nepetaefolia* is an erect branched annual 4 ft. to 6 ft. in height. It is found from East to West Tropical Africa, but is not usually seen above 6,000 feet. At this altitude it gives way to another species. The tall flower spikes with dense prickly whorls of orange flowers form a great attraction for sunbirds and ants.

The leaves often hang drooping from their stiff leafstalks on a hot day; this plant grows on road sides, rubbish heaps or waste land.

**LEAVES.**—Thin in texture, dark green, edges serrated, the leafstalks vary from one to three inches in length; they spring in opposite pairs at right angles to the quadrangular slightly hairy stem.

**FLOWERS.**—Velvet-like in texture, bright orange-yellow in colour. The corolla tube hangs downwards from the prickly five-toothed calyx. The essential organs are concealed under the upper lip which protrudes considerably and is densely hairy. The lower lip soon withers to an almost brown petal scarcely noticeable.

The stamens are in two pairs of different lengths. The style springs from the centre of four nutlets (seeds) at the bottom of the corolla tube and terminates in the forked stigma clasped by the stamens.

FIG. No. 4.

*Ocimum americanum*, Mill. (Labiatae).

SUGGESTED NAMES: Nil.

There are 75 species of this genus in Tropical and South Africa, some being used as pot-herbs, medicinal or ornamental plants, as substitutes for tea and for preparing essential oil.

*O. americanum* was first described by Miller in 1755 from a West African specimen. In Kenya it forms with *Lippia sp.* and *Lantana sp.* the greater part of the scrub which borders grassland, or anthills or the outskirts of forest land, from 2,000 feet to 6,000 feet.

It has been described as a shrublet, or woody herb. It varies in height from 1 ft. to 3 ft.; the whole plant is aromatic; the flower spikes often remain brown and erect long after the flowers have died, giving the plant an untidy appearance.

LEAVES.—Hoary green, without gloss, pale beneath, somewhat limp, and covered with oil glands.

FLOWERS.—In whorls on a straight stem from three to five inches long. Petals pale mauve, small, forming two lips, the upper one recurved and short. Stamens four, two long and two shorter, protruding from the flower. Anthers a curious shade of pinky-orange. Stigma forked, slightly longer than the stamens. There are scented oil glands dotted about the calyx which is irregularly five-toothed and dull purple-green in colour.

STEM.—Square, woody and much branched at the base, green or purple brown and erect at the top.

FIG. No. 5.

*Asclepias macrantha*, Hochst. (Asclepiadaceae).

SUGGESTED NAMES: Field lamps.

The genus is widely spread in Central and South Africa. Some species yield rubber and fibre from the bark; others vegetable silk from the hairy seeds, or medicaments.

*A. macrantha* was first described by Hochstetter in 1844. This species is found in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika Territory, and is common on vleis and in marshy ground from 2,000 feet to 6,000 feet. It is conspicuous on account of its brilliant flame-coloured flowers. The recurved petals and curious angular "table" in the centre of the flower are characteristic of the genus. There are no stamens proper, but as in the orchids, there are "pollinia" which are carried away bodily on the legs or antennae of insects who alight on the table and search for honey in the many crevices around it. In doing this they deposit any previously collected pollinia, as the table is sticky in places, and so cross fertilization takes place.

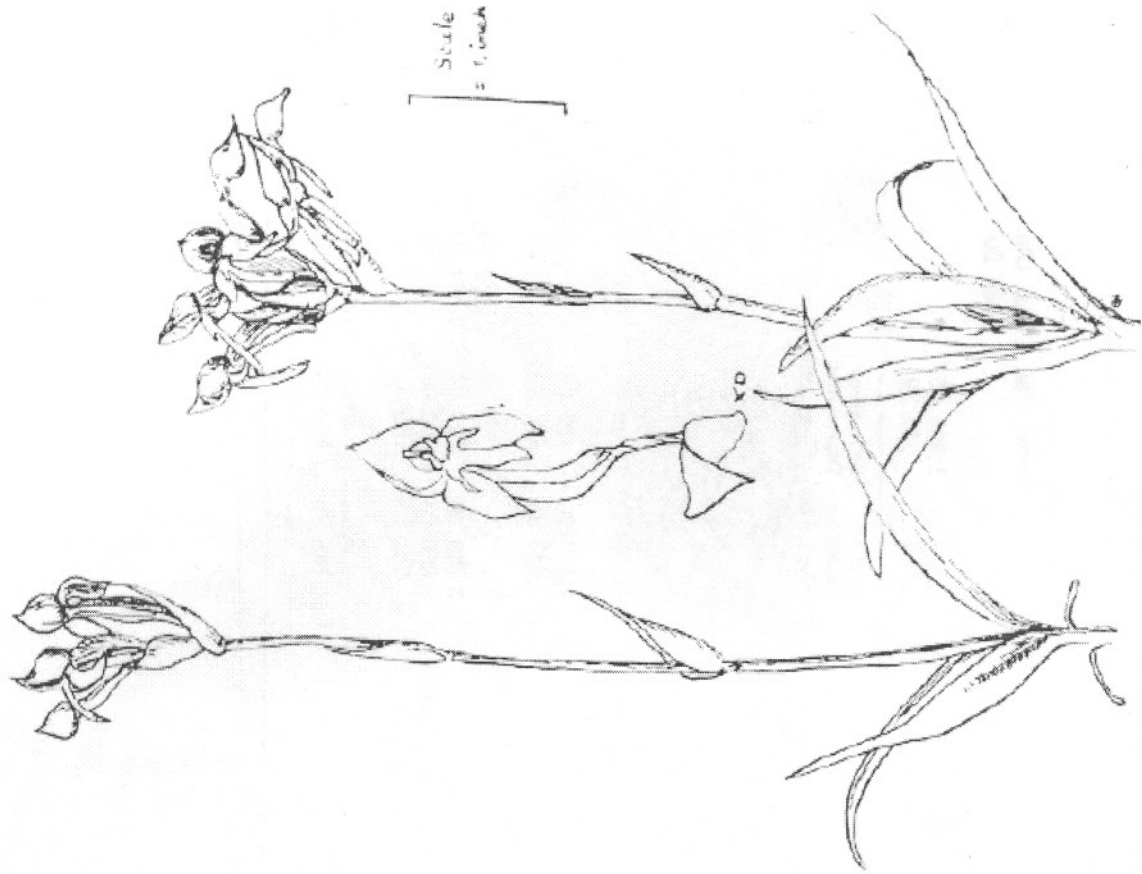


FIG. No. 6. *Platycoryne montis-elsoni*, Summerhayes.

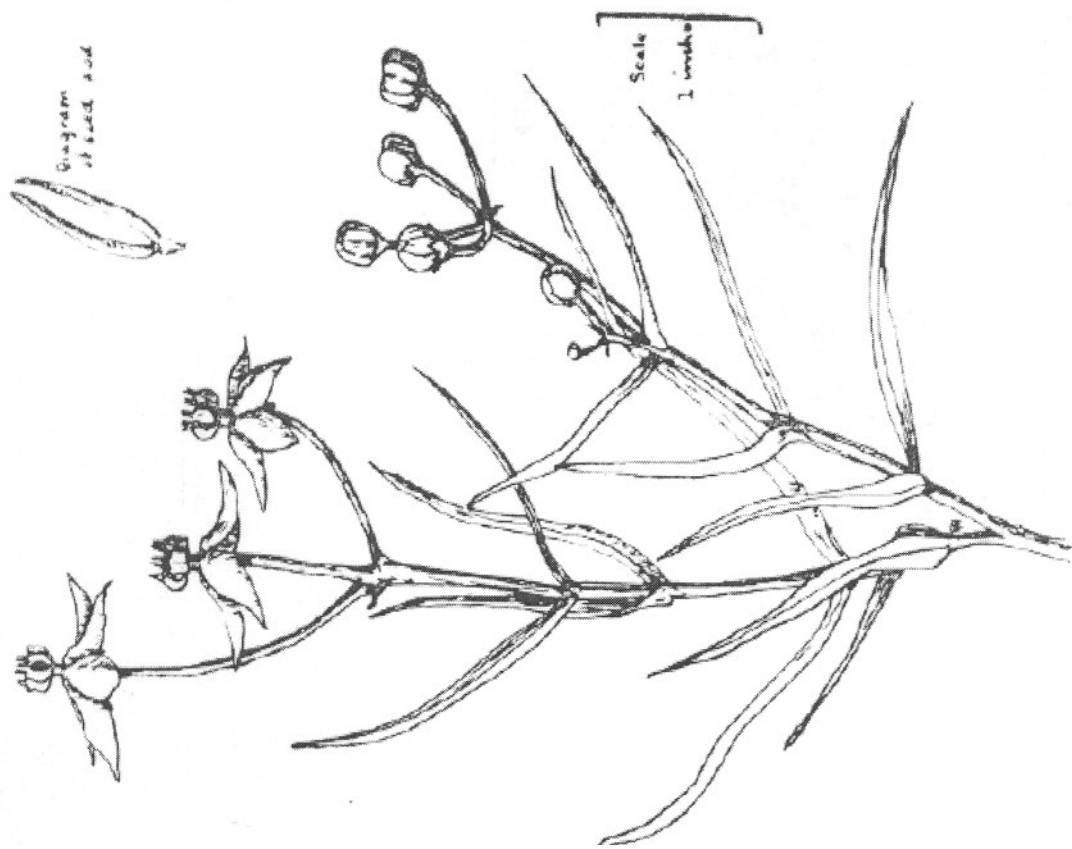


FIG. No. 5. *Asclepias macrantha*, Hochst.

The leaves are long, narrow, and green, in pairs up the stems. The seed consists of two long "horns," which split and let loose light seeds with hairy appendages which are soon carried away on the wind.

FIG. No. 6.

*Platycoryne montis-elgon*, Summerhayes (*Habenaria montis-elgon*)  
(*Orchidaceae*.)

SUGGESTED NAMES: Nil.

A small genus consisting of nine species confined to Tropical Africa.

*P. montis-elgon*, as its name denotes is found around Mt. Elgon in Uganda and in Kenya Colony. It has also been found in Kipkarren and at Kiminini at an altitude of about 6,000 feet.

It grows in masses near pools and in grassland. Height, four inches to about eight inches. The young flowers are pure golden yellow, but turn to orange as they mature.

The leaves are mostly basal, and are from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 inches long, and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide. The flowers consist of an upright yellow hood, two broad petals, one on either side of it, and a central sword-like petal, with an attachment at the top resembling the hilt of a sword. The ovary is not twisted as in some genera, but the flower stem is twisted. Each flower is protected by a leafy bract. The rostellum is placed at the base of the hood, and is not very prominent.