

## REVIEW

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*Drawings of British Plants.* Stella Ross-Craig. Part IV: Resedaceae, Cistaceae, Violaceae, Polygalaceae, Frankeniaceae; 26 Plates. 1950. London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd.; 5/- net.

Reviewers of earlier parts have already described fully the method and form of this series; and it can be said at once that the drawings in this part, like their predecessors, are of a high standard, and fully adequate for the purposes of the general botanist. I propose to deal in this review only with the section *Nomimum* of the genus *Viola*, and to comment upon the drawings from the point of view of one who has studied this section in some detail.

Violets are difficult to draw; unless the greatest attention is paid to detail, characteristic differences are lost and the drawings mislead. I think that Miss Ross-Craig's drawings are the best that have been published in this country, but there are still some imperfections, to which attention should be drawn.

The plant of *V. odorata* which is illustrated is rather densely covered with spreading hairs; typically the hairs are fewer and more adpressed, and the peduncles are more or less glabrous. In *V. hirta*, the bracts are shown above the middle of the peduncle, and the dissected flower is shown with a straight spur; typically, the bracts are below the middle of the peduncle, and the spur is curved or hooked. In view of its very uncertain status, it might have been wise to omit the drawing of *V. calcarea*; in any case, the plant shown does not correspond closely with Gregory's description of the "species."

The drawing of *V. Reichenbachiana* is good, though a single-flowered plant is hardly typical. *V. Riviniana* is also good, but the omission of drawings of undehisced, ripe fruits of these two species is unfortunate. The petal drawings are presumably made from herbarium specimens; examination of fresh material would have revealed the characteristic difference between the species in the venation of the lower, spurred petals. *V. rupestris* is fairly successful, but the elusive yet characteristic shape of the rosette leaves has not quite been given.

I should have preferred to see *V. canina* var. *ericetorum* shown as a rather smaller plant. One regrets here, as so often in this series, that the locality and habitat of the specimen figured are not given. *V. lactea* is good, but the spur in drawing E is surely abnormal; it should be longer. *V. stagnina* is fairly well done; but it is not made clear that the species is soboliferous; and one of the fruiting branches shown (M) is possibly that of the hybrid *V. stagnina* × *canina*.

It would perhaps be unreasonable to ask for the inclusion of drawings of the commoner hybrids, such as *V. Reichenbachiana* × *Riviniiana* and *V. canina* × *Riviniiana*; but it might sometimes be possible to devote two plates to a single species. Many of these violets, such as *V. hirta*, *V. Riviniiana* and *V. canina*, are polymorphic; and if two or three of the commoner variants of each were shown, it would aid greatly in identification. It is noteworthy that the fenland form of *V. canina*, sometimes known as *V. montana* L., has been omitted.

These criticisms indicate the difficulties inherent in an attempt by one artist to cover a field as wide as that of the British Flora. Such a general work can hardly satisfy the specialists, who will always be able to pick holes in it. Nevertheless, provided a high standard is aimed at, it is right that the attempt should be made. Certainly Miss Ross-Craig is to be congratulated on this part, and I look forward to a series of worthy successors.

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