

it. If you hear someone saying (as you sometimes do) that the nations are spending several million pounds every year on the League it is very useful to be able to tell them at once that in 1931, the highest year of all, they spent less than a million and a quarter pounds. And so on. You can readily convince people and make them believe in the League that way. If everyone who reads this letter tried that, I am quite certain that Western Australia as a whole would soon understand the League far better and believe in it far more. Why not try it? There are hundreds of thousands of us trying it over here in England.

Sincerely yours,

H. WILSON HARRIS.

FLOWERS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

No. XXV.—The Green Bird Flower.

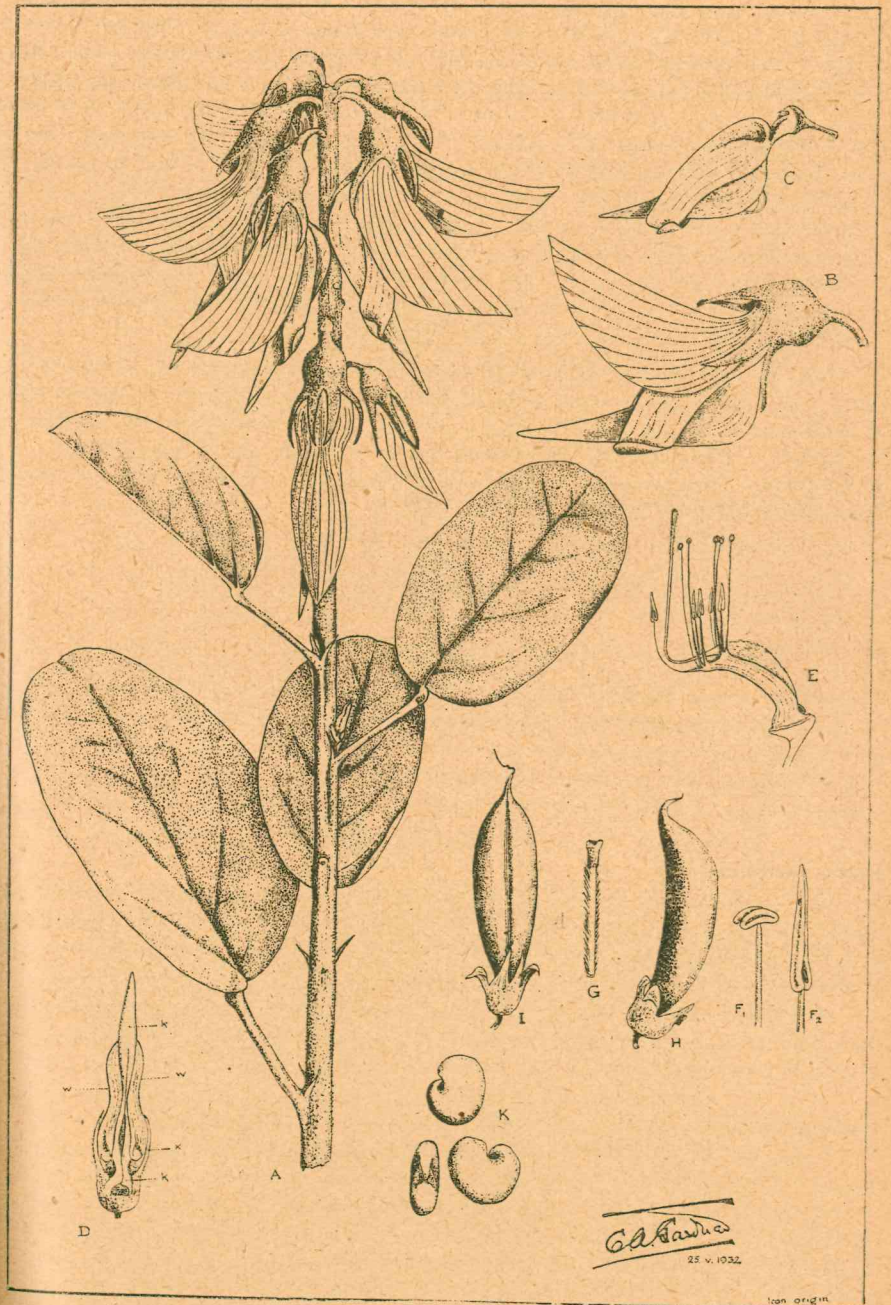
(*Crotalaria Cunninghamii*, R. Br.)

The Green Bird Flower, sometimes known as the North-West Bird Flower, ranges over the tropical or subtropical areas of Western Australia, the Northern Territory, and South Australia. In South Australia it is also known as the Parrot Plant or Stuart's Pea. It is commonest, however, along the north-west coast of Australia between North-West Cape and Broome. Here it is fairly common on the sandy dune country near the seashore, being a conspicuous shrub amongst the wattles and spinifex. It is, however, found some distance inland, especially in the Fortescue district, but is always an inhabitant of sandy country.

The plant receives its common name of "bird-flower" because of the rather striking resemblance of the opened flower to a small bird in flight; the calyx representing the head and neck of the "bird," the straight stalk or pedicel the beak, the standard the two uplifted wings, and the pointed straight keel the body and tail. The two wing-petals are incorporated in the body of the "bird." The legs of this floral "bird" are not provided for, but in any case would not be a conspicuous feature when the bird was in flight.

The Green Bird Flower is a shrub of from three to five feet in height, with few erect or slightly spreading tomentose branches. The rather large leaves are alternately arranged and usually distant along the branches, and vary in length from two to three inches. They are ovate in outline, obtuse, prominently few-veined underneath, densely tomentose or pubescent on both surfaces, and provided with stalks or petioles of from half to one inch in length. The petiole has a joint about three quarters of its length from the base, and this may be of interest, since most species of the genus *Crotalaria* have trifoliate or clover-like leaves, and the joint represents the point from which the two lateral leaflets, if present, would arise; but the Bird Flower only has the one leaflet, which is thus a simple leaf. The small bristle-like stipules arise from the sides of the dilated base of the leaf-stalk, and the branchlets are angular from the points where these stipules arise.

The flowers are borne in terminal racemes which are small and spike-like when in the young bud stage. At this stage of growth the bracts which resemble the stipules, but are much larger, are prominent, and completely hide the young flower buds; but they fall early when the flowers develop, so that long before the flowers



GREEN BIRD FLOWER (*Crotalaria Cunninghamii*).

(A) Twig, showing habit; (B) Flower (natural size); (C) Flower with the calyx and standard removed; (D) Dorsal view of flower with the standard removed—(k) keel, (w) wing, (x) calyx lobe; (E) Reproductive organs (enlarged) showing the arrangement of the stamens, alternately long and short, the staminal sheath and the style; (F1) Versatile anther of the longer stamens; (F2) Erect anther of the shorter stamens; (G) Summit of style showing stigma covered with pollen grains; (H) Lateral view of pod; (I) Dorsal view of pod showing the suture; (K) Seeds; (E), (F), (G), and (K) enlarged; (B) natural size, the others reduced.

Perth, W.A., from a cultivated specimen.

Icon. origin.

have opened they have disappeared. The racemes vary from two or three inches in length to above ten inches. The flowers are green in colour with dark purple streaks. The greyish-white calyx consists of partially united sepals which form a tube of about a quarter of an inch, and narrow pointed lobes which are slightly longer than the united portion of tube. The uppermost petal or standard is erect and more or less folded, and pointed; the wings are much shorter, with about three fine purple lines, and the intermediate keel, usually of a lighter colour, is broad in the lower half, but quickly tapers to a long straight point. The ten stamens are united into a sheath which is split along the upper side, and the whitish anthers are alternately long and erect, or short and versatile. All are much shorter than the keel in length. The small stalked villous ovary develops ultimately into a club-shaped pod which is hard and velvety, and contains usually fourteen or sixteen light yellow roundish but flattened seeds.

The name *Crotalaria* is taken from the Greco-Latin *crotalum*—a castanet or rattle—an allusion to the small seeds which rattle in the hard pod. This character is, however, more marked in some of the handsome yellow-flowered species of Kimberley. The name *Cunninghamii* commemorates Alan Cunningham, the botanist who accompanied Captain King on his survey expedition to the North-West and Kimberley between 1818 and 1820.