

An Unusual New Epidendrum from Nicaragua

Alex D. Hawkes

Caespitose plants to 50 cm long, somewhat pendent on tree trunks. Roots fleshy, whitish, about 3 mm in diameter. Stems slender, simple, leafy in upper part, somewhat compressed above, terete below, 1 mm in diameter below, 2 mm above. Leaves articulate, narrowly linear, acuminate, up to 15 cm long, near base 3-5 mm broad, somewhat drooping and grass-like, with recurved margins and a sharp ventral keel which extends onto the red leaf-sheaths, the dorsal surface glabrous and dark green, the ventral glaucous. Inflorescence terminal, somewhat pendulous, the peduncle filiform, extremely fractiflex, up to 8 cm long, with nodes at intervals of 1.5 cm, concealed by ancipitous sheathing bracts which are compressed basally, initiated above, 2 cm long, 0.5 mm broad at base, and 3 mm broad at truncate apex; rachis sometimes has a simple branch. Pedicel filiform, 3-8 mm long, less than 1 mm broad; ovary 1.7 cm long, the lower third translucent and inflated to 2 mm in diameter, gradually tapering to 1 mm at its junction with the column. Flowers produced successively either from new green rachis, or from old dry ones, even on leafless stems; flowers to 6 cm across, spreading, pendent, white, occasionally with purplish shading on sepals, petals, and upper part of pedicellate ovary; floral bracts ovate, acute, 1 mm long. Sepals somewhat glutinous so that the revolute margins adhere to form a tube except in apical portions, 3 cm long, the dorsal 3 mm broad when spread out, linear, acute, the laterals 4 mm broad above middle, linear-oblongate. Petals 3 cm long, 2 mm broad medially, 1 mm broad at base, similar in shape to sepals. Lip somewhat cordate in general outline, up to 1.6 cm long and 1.6 cm broad when spread out, 3-lobed above middle, with the apex sharply reflexed to touch lip-base; lateral lobes dolabriform, obtuse, with 2-3 costae branching out on each side at base; midlobe 6 mm long, 8 mm broad at base, triangular, acute; disc with two erect calli, these continuing on as thickened nerves to base of midlobe, the median nerve also elevated from base to apex. Column elongate, 1.4-1.7 cm long, clavate, 1 mm broad basally, 3-4 mm broad apically, where 3-lobed, with obtuse lateral lobes and a broad posterior lobe; anther 4-celled, orbicular; pollinia 4, yellow.

NICARAGUA: Dept. Chontales: La Libertad district, El Chamarro Mine, alt. 1950 feet, December 1959, A. H. Heller 1075 (Type in Chicago Natural History Museum). Near same locality, in bloom December, A. H. Heller & A. D. Hawkes 5825. Babilonia Mine, on isolated tree with *Neo-Urbania* sp. nov. and *Dimerandra emarginata* (G.Mey.) Hoehne, alt. 1900 feet, A. H. Heller 6953.

Epidendrum hellerianum is a remarkable orchid of the section *Euepidendrum*, known to date solely from one locality in Nicaragua, where it is not infrequent.

In its vegetative appearance, it is not identical to any other Central American representative of this huge genus. And in the odd flowers of *E. hellerianum*, particularly in

Epidendrum hellerianum A. D. Hawkes, sp. nov.

Planta gracilis, subpendens, epiphytica. Caulis caespitosus, ancipitis foliosisque supra medio. Folia anguste linearis, acuminatis. Inflorescentia fere fractiflexa. Pedicellis filiformibus, ovariis inflatis translucentibus. Floris patentibus, pendentibus. Sepala petalique linearibus. Labellum subcordatum, laeve trilobatum; calli duobus, erectis. Columna clavata, elongata.

their prominent inflated translucent ovaries, I find it to be distinguished from all other described members of *Epidendrum* with which I am acquainted.

I take pleasure in naming this unusual and oddly attractive novelty in honor of my long-time colleague, Mr. A. H. Heller, of Monte Fresco, Nicaragua, with whom I visited the spectacular type locality and re-collected the species. The accompanying plate is from Mr. Heller's pen, and his notes and specimens have formed the basis for my diagnosis.

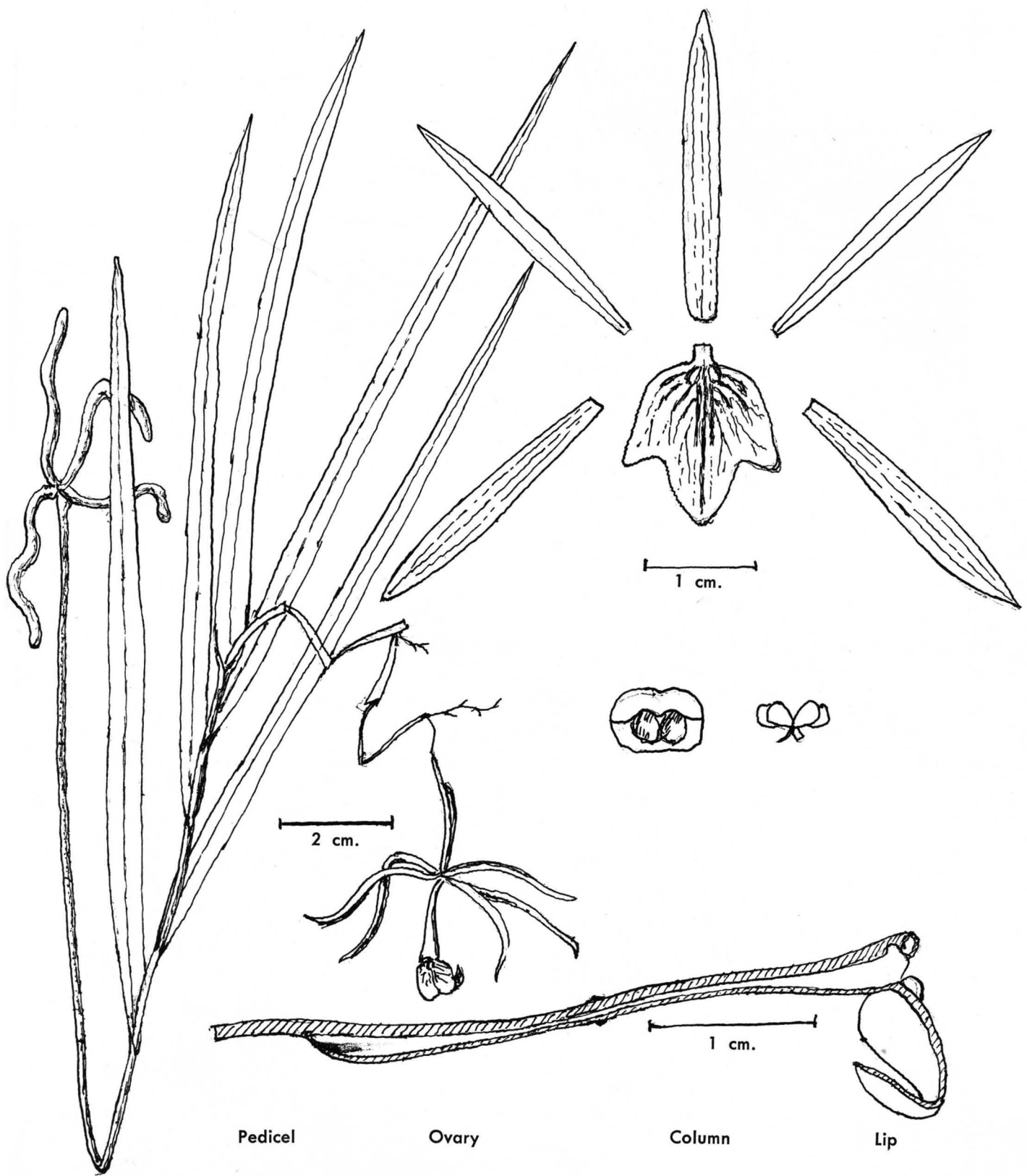
The seemingly restricted region in which *Epidendrum hellerianum* occurs is a long-inhabited one, with largely spent gold mines dotting the cut-over rolling or rather sharp hills and valleys. Certain of the mines date from before the arrival of the Spaniards, while others are far more recent. The elevation for this species averages around 1900 feet, where humid and rather rainy conditions prevail for virtually the entire year.

The collected specimens of this plant occur either on large isolated trees in grassy pastures, or on shorter trees in small copses, where it has such orchidaceous companions as a new species of *Neo-Urbania*, soon to be described, the pretty pink-flowered *Dimerandra emarginata* (G.Mey.) Hoehne (formerly *Epidendrum stenopetalum* Hk., and so designated in my recent *Encyclopaedia*), a fine phase of the showy *Hexisea bidentata* Ldl., the lovely *Maxillaria fulgens* (Rchb.f.) L. O. Wms. (new to Nicaragua), etc. Innumerable bromeliads of various genera (principally *Vriesea*, *Guzmania*, and *Catopsis*), a wide array of ferns (*Polypodium*, *Campyloneurum*, *Vittaria*, *Elaphoglossum*, and occasional *Trichomanes*, among others), Peperomias, aroids (*Anthurium* and *Philodendron*), gesneriads (*Columnnea*), a *Begonia* or two, and multitudinous lichens and mosses, all join in the arboreal array.

In his notes, Mr. Heller states that "it is probable that before 1850, and prior to the advent of mining in this area, this species was more abundant, but the clearing of most of the virgin forest for mining timbers caused the destruction of most of the orchids in the area. Practically all of the forest is now of secondary growth, on the trees of which few epiphytic growths now exist."

Even during the dry season, in December, when I visited the type locality, rain fell with annoying frequency, and

Epidendrum hellerianum A. D. Hawkes



in the mornings heavy chill fogs (even at this elevation) were commonplace. As a result, the accessory umbrage was vividly green and set with showy *Heliconias*, huge gingers,

lovely dwarf palms (including the delightful *Reinhardtias*), and a marvelous wealth of ferns. This in distinct contrast to the sere scenery but a half-hour's drive distant.

P. O. Box 435, Coconut Grove, Fla.