

MASDEVALLIA PLATYRACHIS, *Rolfe, n. sp.*

This is a new and very remarkable species of *Masdevallia*, and one which presents such a series of anomalous characters that it appears to constitute a totally new section of the genus. In the first place, the scape is flattened and sword-like; hence the specific name proposed. Then the tube of the sepals is so extremely short as to be almost obsolete, while the free portions of the sepals are not prolonged into tails, as in the majority of the species. The very short tube is seen in the group containing *M. swertiaefolia*, *gibberosa*, *ochthodes*, and some five others, but in this group the lip is uppermost, not underneath, as in the present species (and, indeed, in all except the little group above-named), while there are other characters which do not agree. The plant was imported from Costa Rica by Mr. Shuttleworth, and sent to Kew in 1884, in which year a scape was produced. It has now become fully established and is bearing several scapes, the first flower having recently expanded. The following description will explain its character:—

Plant densely tufted. Leaves oblanceolate-oblong, minutely tridenticulate, the midrib sharply keeled behind at the apex, attenuate below into the short petiole, light green, 2—6 inches long, 8—12 lines broad. Scape flattened, 6—9 inches long, $1\frac{1}{4}$ line broad, bearing about four empty bracts below the flowering portion, each about equidistant from each other, and about six flowers in succession, about three-quarters of an inch long. Bracts 3 lines long, the lower half sheathing, the upper half free, but the sides oppressed together; thus laterally flattened, triangular-lanceolate, subobtuse. Pedicels 5 lines long. Ovary $1\frac{1}{2}$ line, sharply triangular, the angles almost winged. Tube of sepals barely one-third line long, the free portions lanceolate, acute, 3-nerved, the central nerve keeled, margin reflexed; upper two-thirds distinctly verrucose inside, three-

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quarters of an inch long, light buff, paler towards base of dorsal sepal, becoming orange on the same portion of the lateral ones, nerves green. Lateral sepals connate for $2\frac{1}{2}$ lines, somewhat falcate, almost parallel, a little narrower than dorsal one. Petals narrowly linear, obtuse, slightly falcate, $2\frac{1}{2}$ lines long, chestnut-brown, the central nerve darker than the rest. Lip $1\frac{1}{2}$ line broad at base, gradually narrowing from apex of side lobes to an acute point; flat behind, sharply recurved from the apex of the side lobes, at which point a pair of acute keels leave the margin, and run parallel with it to near apex, the keels themselves gradually approaching each other; light yellowish-brown, inclining towards reddish, the central nerve, and the lateral pair which run into the keels, being of a slightly darker shade. Column green, with a pair of broad rounded wings, which are buff on the margin. Pollen masses two, precisely as in the genus. The lip of this remarkable plant is attached by a delicate hinge and oscillates up and down with the slightest movement. The flowers open about three-quarters of an inch from apex of dorsal sepal to that of the lateral ones. The singular aspect of the plant will be at once apparent from the above details, there being no single species with which it can be compared, either in structure or colour. I am not aware if any other plants are in existence in the country. *R. A. Rolfe.*