



Muriel Wheldale's watercolours of snapdragons.

'Radiant like gems' – Wheldale's flowers

These images show Wheldale's artistic dexterity, as well as the inherent beauty of her subject. The watercolours that Wheldale made of snapdragons (*antirrhinums*) clearly impressed her mentor at Cambridge, **William Bateson** (1861-1926), who wrote to a colleague at the University of Sheffield that 'in respect of accuracy and appreciation of what scientific colouring should be, the quality of her painting far exceeds that of any professional whose work I know'.¹

Art met science in Wheldale's research. From her chemical analysis of snapdragons, she produced not only three separate books, but also delicate paintings and joyous poetry. In the verse 'To Colour', Wheldale marvelled at the flowers she studied, which she claimed shone 'radiant like gems'. The same absorption in the intricate natural variations in tone and hue is evident in her richly detailed scientific watercolours.

¹ John Innes Centre, William Bateson Letters, William Bateson to University of Sheffield (via Muriel Wheldale) 14 February 1908.