



Person: Thomas Baxter (1809 – 1873)
 Description: Discovery of *Elodea Canadensis* in
 Worcestershire
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LOCAL INTELLIGENCE.

Extraordinary Water Weed.—The remarkable water plant, the ¹*Anacharis Alsinastrum*, which is now making such progress in the British fresh waters, and has become so notorious the botanical world, was discovered by Mr. Baxter, on the 19th inst. (as stated in our last), in a small pool, the remains of a clay pit, near Severe Island, about three miles the river Severn; and as it has now made its way into this neighbourhood, a short description of it, and account of its history in this island, may not be uninteresting. The plant grows submerged in the water, in large tangled masses, and is so specifically heavy that when a piece broken off it sinks to the bottom. The stalks are long, slender, and stringy, with numbers of small leaves growing round the stem, in threes, which at once distinguishes it from other water plants. It was first found this island on the 3rd of August, 1842, Dr. George Johnston, of Berwick-on-Tweed, in the lake of Dunse Castle, which is on tributary of the Whiteadder. It was however not much noticed till the autumn of 1847, when it was again discovered Miss Kirby in some reservoirs adjoining Foxton Locks, near Market Harborough, Leicestershire. This re-discovery awakened attention, and Mr. Babington published description of the plant in the "Annals of Natural History for February, 1848 ; and Dr. Johnston, on reading the account, at once recognised the plant he had found in 1842. In the same season, but later, Mr. James Mitchel found it in great profusion in the Lene, near Nottingham, and in November of the same year it was found Mr. Kirk at Watford Locks, in Northamptonshire. In August, 1849, it was discovered in Derbyshire and Staffordshire, growing abundantly in the Trent and the canal near Burton, by Mr. Edwin Brown. At Christmas, 1850, Mr. Kirk found it at Rugby, and in July, 1850, in the Oxford Canal near Wyken Colliery. In Mr. W. Marshall noticed it in the Ouse at Ely, and last year it had made its way to Stratford on-Avon, where it was discovered Mr. W. Cheshire, junior, of that town, who also found it in June this year in the same river Evesham, which was the first time it had been noticed in Worcestershire. Now all these midland counties stations are connected, and are, in fact, part of the same water system, and the plant, therefore, once established at Rugby or Watford, might be expected to reach any of the other places, especially as it grows with such surprising rapidity ; and indeed an account of this plant Mr. W. Marshall, published in (to which are indebted for many of the facts related here), he says, while speaking of its probable extension, " few detached sprigs ' travelling ' would enter the Severn via Rugby and Warwick." But the mystery how it got up the Severn to the pool where it was discovered on Friday last; for the same gentleman observes " that the plant is only now descending these rivers is evident." The way in which the Cam came to be infested by it is supposed to be this. 1848 a piece was placed the conduit stream in the Cambridge Botanic Gardens by the late Mr. Murray, the curator, and a portion doubtless escaped through the water-pipe and down the brook in the river. The plant under our notice is dioecious, i. e., it has its stamens on one plant and the pistils on another. The nature of plants of this order that unless some means the stigma of the one class fertilised by

¹ *Anacharis Alsinastrum* Bab. is now known as *Elodea canadensis* Michx. - Canadian Pondweed.

the pollen of the other no seed can arrive at maturity. It singular that all the specimens found in this country are female, that is, having pistils only, and we are led to believe from this that the plant a foreigner that has by some chance been introduced, very likely with timber from Canada. The most remarkable circumstance connected with the Anacharis the rapidity of its growth; for although, for the reason above stated, it cannot here propagate itself by seed, its powers of increase are prodigious, and every fragment is capable of becoming an independent plant, producing roots and stems, and extending itself indefinitely all directions. "Most of our water-plants," says Mr. Marshall, require, in order to their increase, to be rooted to the bottoms or sides of the river or drain which they are found; but this is independent altogether of that condition, and actually grows as it travels slowly down the stream after being cut.'" an instance of its wonderful increase we may take the manner in which it has spread in Cambridgeshire, where the small piece, supposed to have escaped from the Cambridge Botanical Garden, in four years only multiplied to such extent as to impede both navigation and drainage. The plant is now found everywhere in the Cam from Cambridge downwards, choking up the mouths of docks, sluices, and watercourses. Universal complaints have been made by the watermen of the obstructed state of the Cam. Mr. Marshall says, I am told that the river the back of the Colleges has been so blocked, that extra horses had to be yoked on before barges could get to Foster's mills." The Railway Dock at Ely became so choked with the weed, that boats could not enter till several tons of it had been lifted out. Rowers and swimmers find that it much interferes with their recreations, and correspondent of the Cambridge Chronicle remarks " That the weed will upset a 'funny' first, and then prevent the rower swimming to land." Fishermen complain that they cannot ply their nets as easily they used, and that they have been obliged to discontinue setting their hook-lines, because the " new weed" either carries them away, or strips them of their baits and fish. The Rev. A. Bloxam also says that the increase of the weed the Trent between Repton and Castle Donnington within the last few years has been such as entirely to prevent the use of nets. Mr. Human, sen., experienced gentleman the Cambridge district, says "that although the waters this season (1852) have been run off at Denver sluice foot lower than in previous years, the average height of the water below Cambridge has been a foot higher than ordinary seasons,'" and he refers at least half of this difference to the obstruction occasioned the Anacharis. As the weed has now reached us it is hoped that all persons will be very careful about making any attempts to propagate it, for if it once gets into any water, it will not easily, perhaps never, be eradicated, and all that can be done will be to try to keep it under by raking it out on the banks. But we trust it will long confine itself to its present locality, and not extend itself either into the river or the canals, where it would prove a very disagreeable intruder.