

MY AQUARIUM.

BY H. B. SMALL.

(Read March 2nd, 1893.)

In a work that I published on "The Fresh Water Fish of Canada," I quoted on the title page, the following passage from W. Scrope, a writer in the early part of the century, where he says:—"I like the society of fish, and as they cannot with any convenience to themselves visit me on dry land, it becomes me in a point of courtesy to pay my respects to them in their native element." Quaintly as he expressed it, it forshadowed the study of their habits. Now Nature opposes certain obvious obstacles to the pursuit of knowledge in the water, which renders it difficult for the ardent naturalist, however much he may be so disposed, to carry on his observations with the same facility as in the case of birds and mammals. Still, by observation here and experiment there, watching through a sheet of plate glass, naturalists manage to piece together a considerable mass of curious and interesting information of an out of the way sort, about the domestic habits and manners of sundry members of the finny tribe. To the eye of the mere casual observer, every fish would seem at first sight to be a mere fish, and to differ but little from all the rest of his kind. But when one comes to look closer into their ways, one finds fish are in reality as various and as variable in their modes of life, as any other great group in the animal kingdom. Concealed under stones in babbling brooks, hiding in the grassy margin of purling streams, buried in the depths of silent ponds, roaming in the submerged forests of aquatic vegetation, is a multiplicity of animal life that may profitably be made a study, and to thoroughly explain which would require a lifetime.

In 1850, Mr. Robert Warrington addressed to the Chemical Society of London, a series of observations on the fact announced by Ingraham in 1778, that plants immersed in water when exposed to the action of light, emit oxygen, and the consequent necessity of their presence for the preservation of animal life. He reported placing two small gold-fish in a glass, having first planted in sand and earth at the bottom, a small plant of valisneria. The latter, as the leaves decayed,