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## Three botanical prints by Eugène Bléry

James J. White

Eugène Stanislas Alexandre Bléry (1805–1887) is remembered as the teacher of Charles Méryon (1821–1868), who became a master of etching. Bléry might well have been mentioned in any of the standard references on botanical art and illustration because his realistic and romanticized landscapes include remarkable habitat studies of the vegetation found growing on a few feet of earth. From

a hare's-eye perspective similar to that of Dürer's meadow turf—and not uncommon in 19th-century travel books—Bléry focused on one or two common plants growing on mounds, sometimes including remnants of man-made structures.

Bléry's work with intaglio began in 1836 after he made sketches of landscapes on his travels around southern France. He further



Figure 1. "Bardane et Bryone" by Eugène Bléry.



Figure 2. "Patience d'eau à la petite vanne" by Eugène Bléry.

popularized the technique of drawing onto a metal plate and subsequently obtaining a line by corroding the plate with acid.

Three fine examples of Bléry's mixed intaglio prints of plant subjects are now in the Hunt Institute's art collection. Others are located in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, the S. P. Avery Collection at the New York Public Library (including the print "Bardane et Bryone") and the Prints and Photographs Division at the Library of Congress. With the aid of Henri Béraldi's catalogue, compiled from Bléry's gift of his whole work to the Cabinet des Estampes in Paris, we have been able to learn more about our acquisitions.

Figure 1 is "Bardane et Bryone—No 1"

(Béraldi 141), or Burdock (*Arctium* in Compositae family) and *Bryonia* (Cucurbitaceae family) from Bléry's "Deux Études," dated 1840. Figure 2 is "Patience d'eau à la petite vanne—No 2" (Béraldi 142), or Spinach dock (*Rumex* in Polygonaceae family) beside water with a sluice gate, also from this folio. Figure 3 probably is "La Fougère au plantain d'eau—No 8" (Béraldi 148), or *Alisma* (Alismataceae family) from "Plantes variés, par Eugène Bléry," dated 1845.

"E. Bléry. delt & sculpt" is located at the bottom left of each print. In addition we note the following transcriptions from and sizes (plate marks preceded by sheet sizes) of our three prints: Figure 1: aqua forti 1840 (b.r.); 20.5 cm. × 28.5 cm., 28 cm. × 39 cm.; Figure





Figure 3. Probably "La Fougère au plantain d'eau," by Eugène Bléry.

2: aqua forti 1840 (b.r.); 20 cm.  $\times$  28.5 cm., 28 cm.  $\times$  39.5 cm.; Figure 3: aqua forti 1845 (b.r.); 16.5 cm.  $\times$  22 cm., 27.5 cm.  $\times$  35.5 cm.

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