

BOTANICAL REMINISCENCES

IN

BRITISH GUIANA

BY

RICHARD SCHOMBURGK, Dr. Phil., Director,

KNIGHT OF THE IMP. ORDER OF THE CROWN, THE ORDER OF MERIT OF PHILLIP THE MAGNANIMOUS AND THE ORDER OF THE CROWN OF ITALY; MEMB. OF THE IMPER. CAROL. LEOPOLDIN. ACADEMY; COR. MEMB. ZOOL. SOC., LONDON; COR. MEMB. ROYAL BOT. SOC., LONDON; COR. MEMB. BOT. SOC., EDINBURGH; COR. MEMB. GEOG. SOC., VIENNA, BERLIN, AND DRESDEN; COR. MEMB. SOC. NATIONALB, CHERBOURG, FRANCE; COR. MEMB. SOC. PHYSICO. MEDICA, ERLANGEN; COR. MEMB. HORT. SOC., BERLIN AND FRANKFORT-ON-MAIN; HON. MEMB. HORT. SOC., VICTORIA; HON. MEMB. BOT. SOC., MAGDEBURG; HON. MEMB. ROYAL SOC., SYDNEY, &c., &c., &c.

ADELAIDE:

W. C. COX, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, NORTH-TERRACE.

1876.

The cold temperature drove us by daybreak from our hammocks, the thermometer showing 60° Fahrenheit. We were now 3,930 feet above the level of the sea.

The intense interest for the grand spectacle in store for us, united with the cold, we hastened to the great fall, about three miles distant. The road to it was most interesting in regard to botany. The air was filled with fragrance. Between *Thibaudias*, *Andromedas*, *Ternstroemias*, and *Befarias* magnificent *Orchids*, trees of *Ladenbergias*, extended along our road.

With every step the wild roar of the falling water increased, until we saw before us the unfettered element in volumes of foam, rushing over the steep precipice, and witnessed one of the most picturesque waterfalls of British Guiana. Over 120 feet high, perfect perpendicular precipice of red jasper, the mass of water, which, when it had reached half-way, already dissolved in foam and vapour, rushes down to a layer of jasper, when, after this mighty fall, it forms ten other cascades of a perpendicular height of six to forty feet, and then, after the whole fall of 220 feet, it unites its water with that of the River Kukenam.

Struck with amazement, captivated by the awfully grand and imposing spectacle, we looked down into the wild drift of chasing waves, which with deafening thunder devoured any other sound.

Not without difficulty we made a road downward to the basis of the great fall through the wall-like vegetation, which, from the pressure of the air of the falling waters, waved in wild emotion, and covered us with flakes of foam. Looking upwards on the beautiful cascades, through the crystal water, tinged by the dark-brown red and pink colored layers of the Jasper, which showed through it in beautiful variegated colors, and through a vegetation which only a tropical climate and the ever humid atmosphere can produce.

Mosses, *Lichens*, and *Ferns* covered the gigantic rocks of *gneis*, which appeared here and there along the banks with a green swelling bolster, while creeping *Aroids*, *Monstera*, *cannaefolia*, Schott., *Anthurium gracile*, Lindl., and other creepers like garlands were spread over the ground. The most beautiful fern-trees appeared amongst the large stone blocks, and the shadows of their moving fronds danced like fairies over the green carpet,

Even the crevices of the slippery masses of Jasper were not without living vestment; small luxuriant vegetating ferns,

Jungermannias, which in more or less dense turflike masses adhered to the red wall. *Cypripedium Schomburgkianum*, Klotzsch and Reichb., and the pretty *Angelonia salicariaefolia*, Humb. and Bonpl., had taken their places in the crevices. The vegetations on both sides of the banks consisted of *Qualea rosea*, Aubl., *Kielmeyera angustifolia*, Pohl., *Gomphia*, *Vochysia*, white flowering species of *Psidium*s and *Laurus*, above which rose proud slender palms, gracefully moved by the pressure of the air from the falling waters.

In returning to the summit by another road, we found a dense thicket of the remarkable *Rapatea Friderici Augusti*, Schomb., gigantic *Cyperaceen*, especially *Diplasia karataefolia*, Rich., *Cyperus ferox*, Rich., with its pine-apple-like leaves, five to six feet long, *Tillandsia bromeliaefolia*, Rudge, &c.

The River Rué comes from the north towards the precipice, having a width of thirty to forty feet. The fall and the junction of the Rué with the Kukenam is situated under the $4^{\circ} 43' 4''$ N. latitude, and $61^{\circ} 5'$ W. longitude.

Enraptured with what we had seen through the beautiful magic garden of flowers, we were especially interested by seeing large trees of the *Ladenbergia*. At the Humirida Mountains, in an altitude of 3,690 feet above the level of the sea, we found them only as shrubs, here we met them as trees.

No other order of plants could probably show a more abundant literature than the Cinchoneae, and yet the knowledge of the geographical distribution in South America of this valuable tree is very limited, as every new traveller has added other discoveries.

Many are the causes ascribed to the discovery of its wonderful effects of alleviating the sufferings of humanity. No doubt assertion made in proof of it belongs to the region of legends, by which generally an important discovery is accompanied. According to Geoffroy, an Indian afflicted with fever drank out of a pool into which had fallen trees of the fever bark, and by drinking had been cured of his illness. According to Condamine (although he himself doubts the truth of it), the American tigers, the pumas, were the first that drew the attention of men to it, because these animals, which are supposed to be attacked by fever, cured themselves by gnawing the bark of the Cinchona trees. Some of the oldest authors assert that the Indians were acquainted with the qualities of the bark before the arrival of the Spaniards; while others again maintain that they did not know its valuable quality.

It has been proved by later travellers, especially through