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## THE KAIETEUR FALL, GUIANA.

This waterfall, till yesterday ranked as the loftiest in the world—of all those, at least, which are supplied by a river of any considerable magnitude—was discovered, on April 24, 1870, by Mr. Charles Barrington Brown, of the Geological Survey of British Guiana.

The river Potaro, which displays this fall, is a tributary of the Essequibo, into which it flows from the west, about one hundred miles from its mouth. The Essequibo flows from north to south in a wide valley, fringed on each bank with the perpetual verdure of a South American forest. High above it, on the west, is an elevated sandstone tract, rising into mountains of the most remarkable aspect, and descending by vast steps of precipices, at intervals, to the plain. Down the last of these giant steps the Potaro leaps, in the wonderful Kaieteur cataract, of which a view, taken from a sketch by Mr. Brown, is given on this page.

The dimensions of the fall have been ascertained by Mr. Brown. Its height is 822 ft., of which 741 ft. is traversed by the water in one perpendicular leap; but the remaining 81 ft. belong to a second stage in the descent. The width of the river-bed, at the top of the fall, is 369 ft.; the greatest depth of the stream, above the fall, is 20 ft.

Mr. Brown discovered this cataract while returning from an expedition, in the region to the south-west, where he sought to trace the western tributaries of the Essequibo and to examine the geological character of the land. This is the country so eagerly resorted to by Sir Walter Raleigh and other Elizabethan adventurers in quest of the fabled El Dorado.

Mr. Brown was prevented, by want of provisions, from staying to measure and examine the waterfall on his first visit, in April; but he made a second visit, in the following July, accompanied by Mr. F. E. King, of the Colonial Secretary's office, British Guiana, Mr. Charles Mitchell, of Trinidad, and Sir George Young, Bart. The fall was now somewhat less in volume than in April, but it was a magnificent sight. Above, the river glides smoothly to the brink, along a slight depression in the table of conglomerate sand. It disappears over the edge without turbulence or foam. The central portion, which is never dry, forms a small horseshoe bend; and the water in this part preserves



THE KAIETEUR FALLS, BRITISH GUIANA.

its consistency for a short distance from the edge. But everywhere else, and here also, at a few feet from the top all semblance of water disappears; it breaks up or blossoms into the well-known rocket-like forms of the Staubach and similar waterfalls, but multiplied a thousand times, and descends into a small dark pool, over a semi-circular curtain of precipice, deeply hollowed by the action of the spray.

The cavern behind the fall is the abode of myriads of swallows, which issue from it in the morning, and may be watched for many minutes returning in a continuous multitude at night. The fall itself is one enormous column of a fine, dry-looking, snow-white substance, bearing some resemblance, in colour and consistency, to an avalanche, but surpassing all avalanches immeasurably in size, and in the beauty of the forms taken by the mass of spray as it falls. Rainbows of great splendour may be observed; one in the morning, crossing the fall, as it is here represented; the other in the afternoon, from the summit; but this last is reverted, as it were, forming a vast loop or ring, into which the whole mass seems to precipitate itself and disappear behind the illuminated spray, and reissue, black and foaming, at the outlet of the pool. It then may be seen wandering many miles, through the deep gorge in the hills by which the traveller has arrived.

The expedition took fifteen days in ascending the Essequibo and Potaro to Kaieteur, from the penal settlement on the Mayaruni, the outpost of civilisation in the colony. This time was prolonged by the Essequibo being in flood; and the return was effected by the same route, in only four days and a half. Five ordinary cataracts have to be surmounted on the Potaro, but the greatest is not above 20 ft. in height. The scenery is throughout most beautiful, and the vegetation is wonderful.

From the same plateau other great rivers descend in similar fashion to the Essequibo. It is believed that these streams are mainly supplied from the immense condensation of aqueous vapour which takes place night after night throughout the year in so moist a climate. Sir George Young, who sent us Mr. Brown's sketch, has just announced the discovery, by that gentleman, of another waterfall, seen at a distance, believed to be 2000 ft. in height. This astonishing cataract is on the north-west precipice of the Reraima mountain. It belongs to the Caruni river, a tributary of the Orinoco, in the territory of Venezuela.