

# The World's Last "Terra Incognita"

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**W**HEN Sir Henry M. Stanley, the famous African explorer, last visited America, an ardent Harvard undergraduate is said to have asked him at a reception:

"How can I become a great traveler, like you? I want to be one, but I don't know where to begin."

"Try the moon," said Stanley, with a laugh. "That's about the only place left to explore nowadays."

But Stanley exaggerated. It is true that such reputations as those of Humboldt, Livingstone and Stanley himself can no longer be made; but several tracts of the world's surface are still unexplored. Of all the continents, South America undoubtedly offers the most virgin ground to the adventurous traveler. "Explorers have gone up the rivers and come down again," a writer on the subject correctly observes, "but they have not penetrated any distance overland across the jungle-covered watersheds."

It is strange how little the inhabitants of South America know about their own countries. If you ask a Venezuelan at La Guayra, a Brazilian at Rio, a Colombian at Panama, or an Ecuadorian at Guayaquil to tell you about the interior, he will shrug his shoulders and answer: "Quien sabe, Senor?"

Certainly he does not know. If you told him that the dwellers in the unsettled, unexplored parts of his own country were "anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," he could not contradict you.

"They are reported to have their eyes in their shoulders, and their mouths in the middle of their breasts, and that a long train of hair groweth back between their shoulders." That is the account Sir Walter Raleigh gave in the seventeenth century, of a tribe of Indians living on the banks of the River Caura in Venezuela. Of course, people do not believe such travelers' tales nowadays as they did in the days of Queen Elizabeth; but, as a matter of fact, nothing more definite is known today of this very tribe. The region in which they live remains in this twentieth century the "terra incognita" that it was in the days of Raleigh.

Never a month passes without an expedition leaving the confines of civilization and plunging into the heart of some unexplored region in South America. Little or nothing is heard of these expeditions, except in social and commercial circles in cities like Caracas, Bogota, Sucre and Port of Spain, Trinidad; but each of them would furnish material for a thrilling book if the adventurers cared to write about their experiences. Usually they do not. They have other fish to fry. They are orchid hunters, gold prospectors, diamond seekers or government officials engaged in delimiting boundaries between the various republics and colonies of South America.

Three months, six months, a year, perhaps three years after they left the last settlement on the fringe of the unknown, half of them return, tanned, haggard, half starved, fever stricken. The rest have been lost in the jungle, to perish miserably of hunger and thirst, or drowned in the rapids of some mighty river, or killed by hostile Indians, jaguars or sting rays. The South American explorer lives in the midst of alarms and there are a thousand ways in which he may meet a sudden and violent death.

The survivors always tell the same story: "We have seen some wonderful things, but they were not even the thousandth part of that which lies beyond. We climbed such and such a mountain, ascended such and such a river, dwelt among such and such a tribe; but we heard of other mountains, other rivers, other tribes far stranger and more interesting in the remoter regions to which we could not penetrate."

Take, for example, the immense range of unknown mountains which runs along the hinterland of the three Guianas.

"The best known of these so-called inaccessible mountains is undoubtedly Roraima," said Eugene Andre of Trinidad, a well known explorer of Venezuela, Colombia, and the Guianas. "Since the Spectator for April, 1877, wrote, 'Will no one explore Roraima and bring us back the tidings which it has been waiting these thousands of years to give us?' the mountain has been ascended and the secrets of its summit laid bare. To the Quelch-McConnell expedition is due the honor of having performed the most valuable scientific work in the exploration of this interesting mountain."

"Considering that Roraima is only one of a whole series of such masses, the existence of some of which may not even be suspected, we can form some idea of what remains to be done in the exploration of this little known part of South America. When we consider, moreover, that the summits of these mountains are plateaus, isolated from the surrounding country during countless ages, we cannot help thinking that each of them must be a field of absorbing interest to the naturalist and botanist."

Andre himself, in 1901, tried in vain to scale the mighty heights of Mount Ameba,

on the River Mereyari, in Venezuela. This mountain has never been climbed, nor have its companions, Mount Arichi and Mount Arawa. The country all around them is unknown, and so are the more distant Parime mountains, which are said to be the home of tribes of Indians utterly unlike any of those already known in South America.

Speaking from the depths of his own bitter experiences, Andre explains why this vast region is still an unsolved riddle.

"Three centuries have passed away," he said, "since the first adventurers tried to reach the golden land supposed to exist somewhere near the sources of the Caroni and the Caura, and yet our knowledge of the far interior of the Guianas remains shadowy and indefinite."

"It was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that Humboldt finally dispelled the mythical beliefs which clung to the Eldorado of the 'conquistadores.' The veil of the enchantment which shrouds the unexplored interior of Guiana has, it is true, been torn aside. In place of the fairy city gleaming with gold and precious stones we now know that there is an immense stretch of impenetrable forest, interspersed here and there with open savannas, with mountains of fantastic shape and surpassing grandeur, rising abruptly from the surrounding country—a region of abundant rains and rapid rivers, thinly peopled by small tribes of Indians, who for centuries have carried on a series of cruel blood

feuds with their neighbors—a region rich in bird, insect and vegetable life, but difficult of access and deadly in climate."

"Beyond this our knowledge is vague and uncertain, and is likely to remain so for some time to come. The difficulty of navigating rivers, which consist of a series of rapids and falls; the utter absence of population for considerable distances on their banks, the almost impossible task of transporting a sufficiency of provisions where only boats of no great size can be employed on account of the frequent portages, make the exploration of these regions an undertaking replete with danger and hardships."

"Added to these natural difficulties there is a rooted disinclination on the part of the natives to undertake long and arduous journeys outside of the immediate district with which they are familiar."

The natives know that when they venture far from their home with an exploring party, it is an even chance whether they will return. On Andre's last expedition six men perished of starvation, and the rest crawled back to civilization more dead than alive.

In 1901 J. J. Quelch, of Georgetown, British Guiana, one of the two Englishmen who climbed Mount Roraima, penetrated alone into the settlements of the Macusi Indians in the unexplored Kanaku mountains on the borderland between British Guiana and Brazil.

"I thought I was the first white man who had ever visited that region," said Mr.

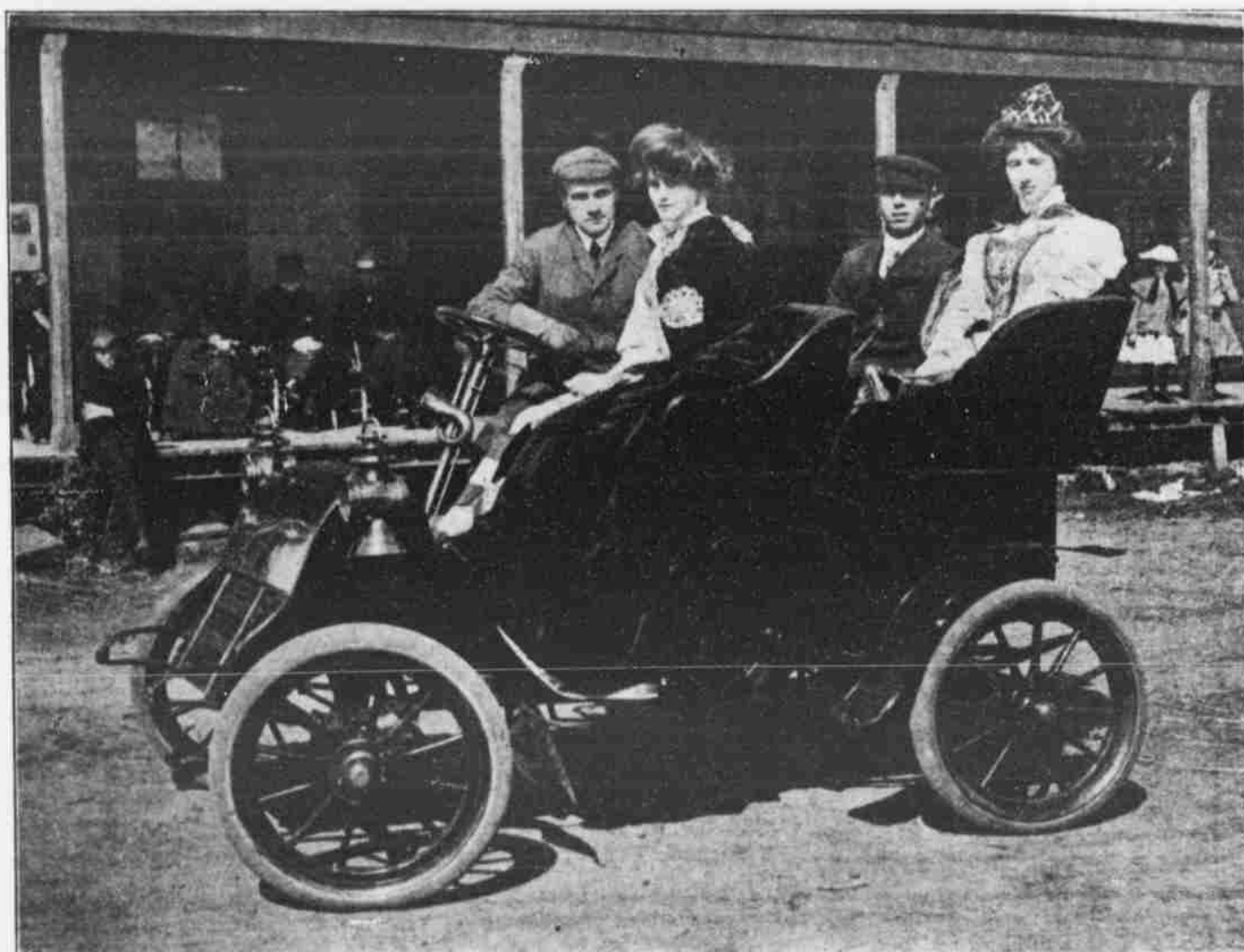
Quelch to his friends in Georgetown on his return. "But I found a couple of Germans settled on what is regarded as the British side of the frontier, although the Brazilians claim the territory as belonging to their republic."

"They told us that the Brazilian government had sent them, years before, to explore the country and introduce civilization among the Macusi Indians. But the Indians uncivilized them instead. They had taken native wives, renounced all their prospects of advancement under the Brazilian government, turned their back forever on civilization, and were contentedly leading the peaceful, pastoral life of the Indians."

"These men spoke of some strange beasts which they called the Warakabra tigers. They said these tigers roamed about the country in large numbers, hunting in packs and attacking any animals, including human beings, that crossed their path. The Germans asserted that the only way to escape from these beasts was to get into running water, where they would not follow you."

Mr. Quelch's expedition was undertaken on behalf of the British museum. He discovered several small mammals hitherto unknown to science, including a new kind of guinea pig and a new adouri, an animal of the rabbit tribe. He also discovered a number of new orchids of wonderful beauty. "But what I have found," he told

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Fannie Freeman, maid of honor.  
Clarke Powell, royal charioteer.  
C. F. Bump, queen.  
Hert Wattles, royal equerry.  
QUEEN EOLEPTNA AND HER ESCORT AT THE CARNIVAL AND FAIR AT NELIGH.



DECORATED CARRIAGE DRIVEN BY MRS. GEORGE DUNN, WHICH WON THE FIRST PRIZE IN THE FLOWER PARADE AT DEWITT, Neb.—Photo by Hare.