

DRAWN BY MALCOM FRASER.

THE VILLAGE OF EL DORADO.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

## GLIMPSES OF VENEZUELA AND GUIANA.



Venezuelan Harp.

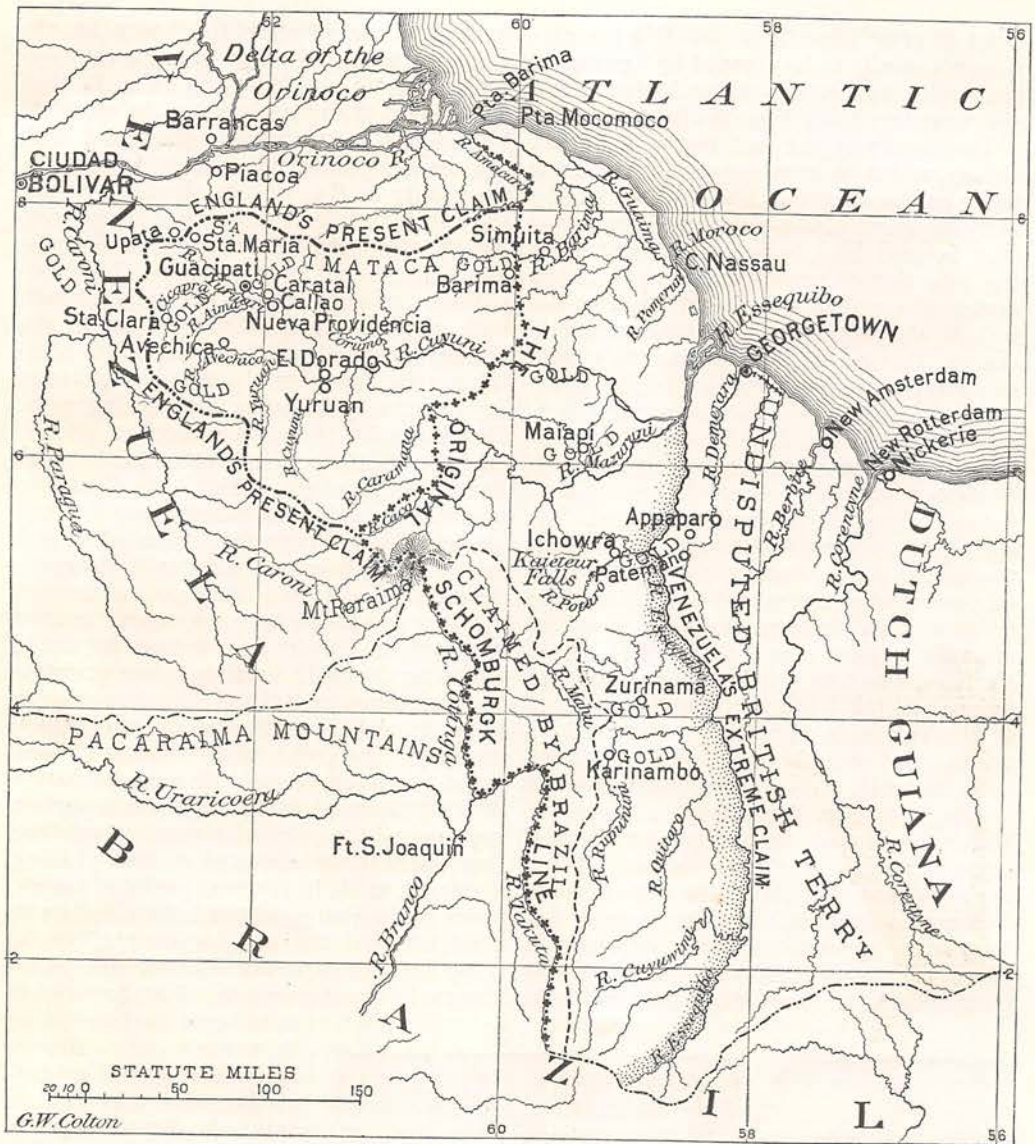
LEGENDS of the «golden city of Manoa» and of the «white lake» in the tropical wilderness between the basins of the Orinoco and the Essequibo, lured to Guiana, as early as the sixteenth century, adventurers from all climes; Spanish, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and English have struggled for supremacy over

of South America will one day belong to the English nation.»

To comprehend fully what the control of a vast waterway threading the richest part of Guiana would mean to America and American interests, one must study carefully the map of South America. Geographers divide the southern continent into three great basins, those of the Amazon, the Orinoco, and the Plata. To dominate the mouth of any one of these great arteries of commerce would be to become the master of one third of South America. The Orinoco is navigable for vessels of the deepest draft to Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela's eastern metropolis. Within this distance of four hundred miles, twenty other navigable rivers swell the mighty current of the Orinoco, while, still farther into the interior, the eastern bank receives the waters of ninety-one large rivers, and the west those of thirty. Two of the former are navigable to the affluents of the Amazon, and many of the latter to the remote interior of the neighboring republics of Venezuela and Colombia. If she were to gain control of the Orinoco, England would possess the key to the entire eastern part of South America. This view has been advanced by ex-President Guzman Blanco in a recent publication. He attaches to the possession of Punta Barima the ability to dominate the Orinoco and the entire water-system which empties into it. Punta Barima is on the southeastern bank of the Orinoco, at its juncture with the sea, and is described as

it. Sir Walter Raleigh coveted the fabled treasures in the valley of the Orinoco, and led more than one expedition in search of the mythical «El Dorado.» In vain he attempted to persuade Queen Elizabeth that it was her manifest duty to tame the savages of Guiana. «The name of the august virgin,» he wrote, «who knows how to conquer empires should reach as far as the warlike women of the Orinoco and Amazon.» Failing to achieve his ends by flattery, under the cloak of defense from external enemies, he suggested that a garrison of four thousand English soldiers should be stationed in the town of the Incas, for which privilege the prince would be granted the honor of paying a tribute of three hundred thousand pounds annually. The distinguished Britisher concluded his report with the following words: «All the vast countries





MAP OF THE DISPUTED TERRITORY.

a high bluff which, when properly fortified, would control this entrance, the most navigable of all the mouths of the Orinoco. It would not be under water during the period of inundation, and, with a dockyard and three or four river gunboats, its master might lock up the Orinoco and all that vast tributary country. On the other hand, the counter-view is advanced, and should be stated, that the position of Punta Barima would enable the English to dominate only one pass by means of guns placed on fortifications on shore, since at least two of the other mouths of the Orinoco can be entered by vessels from the sea.

The best line of communication to-day between Trinidad and Ciudad Bolivar is by a side-wheel steamer, built in the United States, which passes through a mouth of the Orinoco far to the west of Punta Barima, on the bar of which there is at least eight feet of water. It therefore may be argued that fortifications at Punta Barima could not close the Orinoco, the control of which would depend upon vessels of war. England's strength as a sea power, with Trinidad as a base, gives her all necessary control of the river to-day. If British Guiana should develop into a great nation, claiming and owning one bank of the Orinoco, Punta Barima would become a

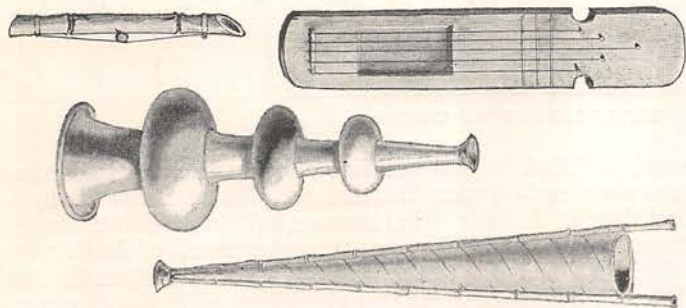


point of great importance; but this is a contingency hardly to be dreaded by Venezuela, since, with her superb natural advantages, she must inevitably keep the lead.

The history of the vast region known as Guiana, which in area equals France, is as misty as the clouds of Magellan, which the early Spaniards claimed always hovered over that favored land, believed by many to be the reflection of argentiferous rocks in the center of a «white lake,» shut off from the rest of the world by impassable mountain ranges. Though «El Dorado» and the «white lake» appear to be complements one of the other, the former has doubtless enjoyed as many mythical locations as the Garden of Eden. The words are erroneously supposed to mean «city of gold,» while in reality «dorado» is an adjective signifying gilded. The legend refers to a priest-king of Bogotá who was said to have covered his body with gold-dust and washed in a sacred lake, celebrating religious rites. In some stories he is spoken of as the «gilded man.» A Spaniard named Martinez, who was wrecked on the coast of Guiana and taken inland by the Indians, told of the splendors of a city governed by a prince allied with the Incas. The roofs and walls, he said, were covered with precious metals. Orellana confirmed the stories of Martinez, and spoke of having seen a land of fabulous wealth. Philip von Hutten followed the next year, and after him came Gonsalo Ximenes de Quesada, all giving more or less marvelous accounts of their experiences. These ridiculous stories so impressed the geographers of those days that mythical

were those who advanced the theory that the gold-dust used by El Dorado in his religious functions was nothing more valuable than mica, and in the long history of the attempts to find gold in this part of the world, with the one exception of the famous Callao mine, the reality at the back of all this romance has been painfully inadequate to compensate for the toil and the dangers undergone. There are to-day, in what is probably indisputable British territory, placer gold-washings of value, such as that shown in the accompanying illustration. Here an industrious man, if successful, can make handsome day's wages by his labor, but nothing more. The formation is known as pocket gold; in other words, the action of water has brought from some place gold, which has collected in pockets; so that when one of these is found the finder is well rewarded for his labor. But as yet in no place have sufficiently extensive deposits of gold been found to warrant the construction of the necessary works and the employment of hydraulic machines for use in obtaining the gold. This, therefore, prevents the entering of capital, the formation of large interests, and the production of gold in much quantity. The Callao mine, which is the one great exception, began with a capitalization of sixty thousand dollars, of which a portion represented the concession and the land. For four years it was operated without yielding dividends, while in the next period of twenty years it distributed fifteen million dollars in dividends, and the same amount of stock. After that period, so far as I am aware, no authentic information exists. Now, however, it

is believed that the mine is worked out. Apparently the «pocketing» formation also appeared in this lode; for the story is told that the lode ended one day, and no man could say whither it went. It did not run out; it simply stopped. One theory is that an earthquake disturbance caused a break, the lost portion being either lifted up or lowered down or moved sidewise, so that it



NATIVE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

cannot be told where it is. Therefore, in the disputed territory there may or there may not be valuable gold-fields. No one really knows. Nevertheless, the El Dorado legend has retained, in one shape or other, its mystic force even in our days; and during the last few years has been a part of the assets of

Even in the days of Spanish rule there

cities and lakes were actually located on the maps until the time of Humboldt. This distinguished traveler, to whom the world owes the most authentic report yet made on the Guiana country, said that if gold existed there in such abundance, he had not found it.



an American company, which obtained a concession of land in this region, and hoped to interest foreign capital to a great extent in its development. The legend was treated in much the same way. It was declared, and truthfully, that when you encountered the natives you could buy from them nuggets and flakes of alluvial gold. The imagination of the hearer drew the necessary inferences as to the enormous value of the tract. More definite inquiry produced the same result as in Raleigh's time; no one could say whence the gold came.

Any study of Guiana must be from the delta of the Orinoco or along the many streams that interlace the country. The reason is obvious. The country is almost as unknown as many regions in the heart of Africa.

There are no means of communication except the rivers, with here and there a few mule-paths extending from the right bank of the lower Orinoco to the mining-camps of the interior. In all this vast territory I doubt if there are more than twenty thousand inhabitants. Nine tenths of these are wandering tribes of uncivilized Indians, who respect neither law nor government. One man I met, who was familiar with the district, said that not over six thousand people live in the delta north and east of the Essequibo up as far as Ciudad Bolivar; but in the English statement of the case, reference is made to forty thou-



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

GOLD-WASHING IN BRITISH GUIANA.

sand British subjects. The vast majority of the inhabitants are Indians and half-breeds, who never heard of England. A friend of mine met Sargent Barnes on board a steamer, and Barnes told him that the one English family he personally knew of in his territory was an Englishman and his native wife and half-breed children. This population, moreover, is a floating one. A native house does not mean much work. When the boundary line is drawn, if the «forty thousand British subjects» do not like it, they can put themselves and their goods into a few canoes and move.





FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

NATIVES BUILDING A HOUSE IN VENEZUELAN GUIANA.

The vegetation of the Guianas is a devouring mass of green, which steadily encroaches, and is kept down only by the ceaseless warfare of one plant upon another. A tree springs up and finds its way to the top by its energy. It is no sooner established than a parasite begins to climb its trunk and lace itself around the tree, until finally the grip of the parasite kills the tree, and both

fall to ruin and decay, leaving a space which is immediately occupied by new forms. To penetrate such a jungle is impossible without the use of a machete and ax. To keep a path open requires constant cutting. If you shoot a bird or an animal, it falls perhaps not more than three hundred feet away; but it may require a half-hour or an hour to reach it, and unless you can shoot from a canoe,



and can drop the bird into the water, as a rule you cannot find your game after it is killed. Words cannot describe the beauty of this mass of green, vigorous vegetation, nor can one comprehend the difficulty of conquering such a wilderness unless one has actually grappled with it.

Those who know the country have been aroused by the grave comments as to the possibility of a conflict between troops in the disputed territory. It is doubtful if there have at any time been fifty men, on both sides, opposed to one another at any of the stations on the border, and as for anything like military operations, such a thing is out of the question. Mr. Chamberlain, in one period of the controversy, suggested to the colonists in Demerara that they should construct a military road from Guiana to one of the outposts, a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles, and should also divert the money needed for the Georgetown Fire Department to the increase of the colonists' forces. The colonists responded with a howl of indignation. To construct a road of one hundred and fifty miles within a period of three months would require a force of at least three hundred men, well equipped and

provided for, in addition to the time necessary to build any bridges that might be needed. To keep such a road open would require another force of one hundred men constantly engaged, with a large provision of transport animals and all the paraphernalia necessary for such work.

A typical Venezuelan village, such as that of El Dorado, consists of a dozen houses, which have thatched roofs, and walls made of mud, or of boards formed by splitting palm-trees and flattening them. The interior consists of one, two, or three rooms; the floor is of dirt. If the village is sufficiently large to have a street, the houses are arranged on each side of it. There are always a number of decrepit-looking dogs and contented and vigorous pigs roaming about, and equally contented and healthy-looking children. The children, of course, wear nothing, and the grown people very little more. In building a house, the walls are first formed by inclosing within a rude mold a space, which is filled with mud, rammed down until it is hard. This mud wall is about two feet thick. Sometimes sticks and crosspieces are inserted at intervals to stiffen the wall. After the wall reaches a height of ten or twelve feet,



DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

THE VENEZUELAN GUARD AT EL DORADO.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.



the roof is put on; first a framework of poles is tied together with vines or pieces of bark, then the thatching with the dry leaves of the palm begins. The thatching is generally done in a clever way, but the rest of the work is exceedingly rudimentary. The thatched roof runs to a peak in the center, and rises a distance of six or seven feet above the top of the walls. At its base it is tied together with poles, inserted crosswise, which prevent the whole structure from spreading, and which are subsequently used as a scaffolding or a second-story room for the children. The roof, on the whole, is a very good one for the climate, and has only one drawback—that it makes an agreeable place in which scorpions, and, in some parts of the country, little snakes take up their abode.

The Venezuela station on the right bank of the Coroco River is nothing more than a

also. The troops are sure to have a military cap and a gun of some kind, a machete, and, on full-dress parade, shoes; in ordinary life they would wear sandals. The private soldiers, as a rule, are of Indian type, and would undoubtedly make good soldiers if properly trained. They are fairly hardy, can subsist on very little food, and understand the country. When you have said that, you have said pretty much all. Such troops will consider themselves well off if they have always plenty of plantains for cooking; sometimes *tasaño*, which is a species of dried beef tougher than leather; occasionally, also, salt fish, and maize, which the women grind up and make into *arepas*. The *arepa* when well made is exceedingly good. It is nothing but maize freshly ground, made into a soft paste, with a little salt, and baked on a hot pan or stone. Add to the foregoing diet occasionally a drink of aguardiente,

or native rum, and your troops have all they expect in the way of supplies. Such a simple commissariat, with an absence of hospital service or any of the complicated necessities of modern warfare, somewhat compensates for the lack of training from the military point of view.

In the spring of 1895 I contemplated a journey up the Orinoco and through the Rio Negro into Brazilian territory, intending to descend by means of the Amazon. I passed several weeks in the city of Caracas perfecting my plans, and



DRAWN BY HARRY FENY.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE VENEZUELA STATION ON THE COROCO RIVER.

shed of this description, more roughly built, and having no walls. Since all you need in this climate is shelter from the rain and from the sun, nothing more is necessary. Two or three hammocks, and places on which to hang clothes and weapons, comprise the furniture. The cooking is done at an open fireplace outside, with one or two pots and earthenware vessels. At such a station the troops will consist of perhaps twelve or fifteen men, commanded by a captain or a colonel, who may possess good-looking uniforms; possibly the troops may

obtaining all the information I could of the country and the means of communication. It was amazing to discover the ignorance of the government of Venezuela regarding this portion of its territory. So-called «Commissioners of the Supreme Government,» claiming to have journeyed over every inch of Guiana, did me the honor to call and suggest the best method of accomplishing my purpose. According to these persons, the trip would take anywhere from two months to two years, and had I followed the advice of one who apparently knew more than





DRAWN BY THOMAS MORAN, AFTER A PRINT.

MOUNT RORAIMA, BRITISH GUIANA.

all the others combined, my bones might now be whitening on the sandy shores of the Orinoco. It was suggested that I should ascend the Amazon, pass through the Rio Negro, and then descend the Orinoco. Owing to the strong current and numerous falls in the last-mentioned stream, it would be impossible, he said, to stem the current during the rainy season, which was then at its height. Another declared that a light canoe could be transported overland around the falls; while still another went so far as to say that my best plan would be to ascend the Orinoco, pass through the Rio Negro, carry my canoe across country, and descend the Essequibo to Georgetown, Demerara, the capital of British Guiana. This idea seemed by far the most feasible, giving me, at the same time, an opportunity of studying the physical features of the territory in dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela, until I learned that to reach the head-waters of the Essequibo from the Rio Negro I should be forced to transport my boat and supplies nearly five hundred miles through an unknown tropical forest, to say nothing of having to cross several chains of mountains of the altitude of which even geographers are ignorant.

These facts, coupled with the information that it would not be prudent to venture so far from civilization without a military escort, and that the government of Venezuela, rich

in promises but poor in fulfilment, had been assuring me for months, through its highest officials, that it would fit out an exploring party and place a number of soldiers at my disposal, and had never gotten past the point of promising, forced me to abandon the trip, and to content myself with such study of the Guiana country as could be made from the delta of the Orinoco.

Whatever discomforts the traveler may have to undergo in journeying through Guiana, he is compensated for them by the scenery, which is more enchanting than the loftiest flights of the imagination can picture. As soon as you leave the low swamps at the great mouth of the Orinoco, the land rises gradually toward the Imataca range, the peaks of which are clearly outlined against the clear tropic sky. Still farther into the interior, following the windings of the Rio Cuyuni, the green banks of which are bright with scarlet passion-flowers, you see more mountain peaks, and innumerable cascades and waterfalls tumbling and roaring over rocks that raise their black heads above the surface of the water. On all sides countless parasites entwine themselves in the most intricate and fantastic fashion around the branches of the lofty trees.

It was my good fortune to reach one of the loftiest of the Imataca peaks just at sunset, the hour that most impresses all travel-





DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

THE FALLS OF EL NEGRO ON THE CUYUNI.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

ers. To the south and east, as far as the eye could reach, the scene was one of indescribable beauty and grandeur. Below, the great Cuyuni, unknown to the world for so many generations, but now with a name in history, wound in and out of the green valley like a serpent of a thousand colors. The soft rays of the afternoon sun, glimmering through the mist of waters, fell upon the river in showers of rubies, sapphires, and diamonds. Soon darkness closed upon the valley, for in the tropics the twilight is as brief as it is entrancing; and on all sides the tiny camp-fires of the Indians twinkled like myriads of fireflies. Now and then the stillness was broken by the night cry of some wild animal in the distant jungle.

The most interesting relics of past ages that one encounters in the Guiana country are immense stones containing hieroglyphic inscriptions. These are to be found on the sides of the mountains, and upon many of the rocks in the rivers throughout British and Venezuelan Guiana, and have evoked a great deal of discussion among ethnologists. No theory regarding their origin has yet been accepted, though they are said to be

similar to those found in the exploration of Phenicia. Dr. Maracano of Paris, after a careful study of the skulls found in an old Indian burial-ground of the upper Orinoco, says that they are similar to those discovered in the Egyptian tombs, from which is deduced the theory of Phœnician origin, and a confirmation of the existence, in former times, of the Atlantis Archipelago, by which one could cross from the African coast to South America in small boats.

Interest in the Guiana country naturally centers about the most fertile region, that which commands the mouth of its great waterway. As you approach the Orinoco from the gulf of Paria, you still see that picturesque sight to which Humboldt refers in his travels, «innumerable fires in the tall palm-trees» — the dwelling-places of the peaceful Guaraunos. The legend that this strange tribe of Indians, once the masters of the Orinoco, live in trees the entire year, results from the great annual rise of the Orinoco. At Ciudad Bolivar, three hundred miles up, this amounts sometimes, in a contracted place, to ninety feet. On the broader delta it is always sufficient to cover islands



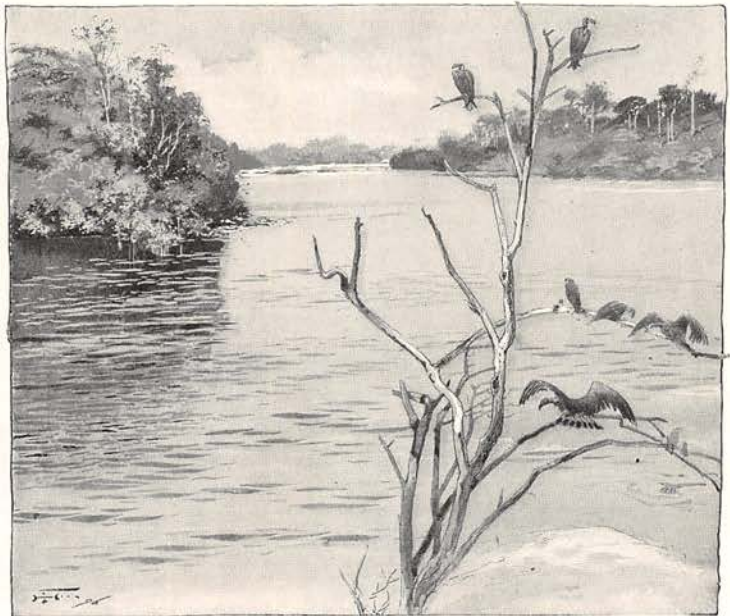
and low ground; therefore the inhabitants very wisely build their houses well above the ground. For this purpose four tall palm-trees are selected, and the crosspieces which form the foundation for the houses are lashed to the main support by pieces of a tough vine indigenous to the delta. Upon these is laid the flooring, and then the sides and roof are thatched with large palm-leaves, to which the Indians have given the poetic name of "feather-of-the-sun." There are many advantages which this particular palm-leaf possesses over others of the same family, the principal one being its similarity to asbestos in the quality of resisting fire. In the location of his house the Guarauno takes another wise precaution in building, and it is one that carries with it a lesson for the government under whose sovereignty he lives.

The one idea that dominates the lives of these poor Indians is to avoid their greatest enemy, the Christians. These they consider far more dangerous than fire, flood, alligators, or wild beasts, and every step that they take has one object in view—to make their simple homes so inaccessible that civilized man can never approach them. From the times of the early conquerors to the present day so many crimes have been committed under the cloak of religion and civilization, so many traditions of robbery and bloodshed have been handed down from father to son, that it will require centuries of kind treatment and fair dealing before the Guarauno will be content to live "within the sound of the bell."

Sir Walter Raleigh, and the horde of other adventurers that preceded him, are not alone to blame for this lack of confidence in the breasts of these people—who are as kind, as gentle, and as humane as are to be found anywhere in the world. The early Spaniards who undertook the conquest and civilization of Guiana, and won the implicit confidence of these poor creatures, betrayed them in the most shameful manner. Even at the present

day armed bodies of men seek out the secluded dwellings of the Indians, and enter the villages to exchange their wares for hammocks, skins, and articles made from wild grasses and the fiber of the palm-tree. The exchange consists in taking whatever they fancy, and leaving whatever they please.

The Guaraunos are to be found all over the delta of the Orinoco. They eat little, and wear less. Many authorities claim that they subsist on the *moriche* palm-tree alone. Whether this be true or not, the tree in question is without doubt an indispensable factor in the problem of life. Not only does it furnish a safe elevation for a home, but gives a nutritious sago, or meal, from which bread is made, a tree fifteen years old yielding six hundred pounds of this meal. In addition, the juice furnishes a kind of wine, and out of the fiber is made cord, rope, hammocks, and a rude species of cloth. This tree, owing to the many and various purposes



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

JUNCTION OF THE YURUAN AND CUYUNI RIVERS.

it serves, was called by the early missionaries the "tree of life."

The Guaraunos, if the number of males in a family and its connections are sufficiently great, will build their houses on high ground where they are comparatively accessible, for then they have no fear of being attacked. Should the family be small, however, they seek a spot that none but a Guarauno could find, intrenching themselves behind marshes



with approaches by water that can be passed over only when the tide is full.

According to many writers, Guiana is populated with nomadic tribes of uncivilized Indians. Though this may be the character of some living in the interior and along the banks of the upper Orinoco and Rio Negro, it is not true of the Guaraunos.

Among the Arecunas, another tribe, both men and women encourage personal vanity to an extraordinary degree, and pass the greater part of the day decorating their naked bodies with all the colors they can obtain. These they prepare from different fruits, that of the *cusarapéu* producing a bright scarlet, and the bark of the *cuaré* a deep black. Around the wrists, forearms, and ankles, the women wear bracelets made from the teeth of wild animals, and they paint the legs, breasts, and, last but not least, the faces. The designs are often artistic, and enable them to conceal their ages more successfully than all the modern lotions, powders, and «blooms of youth.»

I had often wondered at the innumerable little fires that I saw in every Indian village and encampment along the banks of the different rivers, until I learned that it was a religious duty for each female to make a separate fire to prepare the food for those of

her own blood, and that, under no circumstances, would she dare cook over her fire food for one not of her immediate family.

The culmination of ludicrous and weird customs, however, occurs during the marriage and funeral festivities. Upon these occasions it is the duty of every one present to indulge in copious drafts of a peculiar champagne made from *pachire*. You have not properly expressed your joy or grief, as the case may be, so long as you are able to stand. During the ceremony the bride and the groom alone retain their senses, and the dance is kept up until every guest is stretched out on the ground.

When an Indian dies, there is the traditional wake, at which every one becomes thoroughly intoxicated, and wild cries of grief and anguish awake the echoes of the surrounding forest. Should the deceased be a child, and the weather admit, the body is sometimes loaned from neighbor to neighbor, each inviting all his friends, as well as the relatives of the dead child, to come and properly express their sorrow.

Guiana, then, is a vast wilderness of forest and plain, wild, unknown, penetrated only by canoes, containing possibly hidden treasures, a floating population, and mysteries which to-day tempt the imagination as they did in the old days of the conquistadors.

*W. Nephew King.*

## ROSEMARY.

GREEN bud-stars spangle  
The dead, black tree;  
Bloom's in a tangle  
On orchard and lea:  
Now elm-boughs shade me,  
Now birds have sung,  
Shall the heart persuade me  
I still am young?

Ah, no; heart, hush thee!  
Be wise, serene,  
Lest snow-wreaths crush thee  
Ere Hallowe'en;  
Though June be jolly,  
Though flowers be sweet.  
'T is all but folly,  
And blind deceit.

Heart, thou hast finished  
With joys that fade;  
Thy strength diminished;  
Thy light decayed;  
The brain is an ember;  
The blood is cold—  
My heart, remember  
We both are old.

*Edmund Gosse.*