

to detect the precise cause of this brightness which may perhaps proceed from a reflecting surface produced by the decomposition of mica slate.

When M. Bompland and I returned from the banks of the Rio Negro, we ventured to pass the latter or lower half of the Raudal of Atures with the loaded canoe, often leaving it for the rocky dikes which connect one island with another. Sometimes the waters rush over these dikes, and sometimes they fall with a hollow thundering sound into cavities, and flowing for a time through subterranean channels, leave large pieces of the bed of the river dry. Here the golden *Pipra rupicola* makes its nest; it is one of the most beautiful of tropical birds, with a double moveable crest of feathers, and is as pugnacious as the East Indian domestic cock.

In the Raudal of Canucari the rocky dike or weir consists of piled-up granite spheres. We crept into the interior of a grotto, the damp walls of which were covered with *conferve* and shining *Bryozoa*, and where the river rushed high above our heads with deafening noise.

We had accidentally more time than we desired for the enjoyment of this grand scene of nature. The Indians had left us in the middle of the cataract, proposing to take the canoe round a long narrow island, below which we were to re-embark. We waited an hour and a-half under a heavy tempestuous rain; night was coming on, and we sought in vain for shelter between the masses of granite. The little monkeys, which we had carried with us for months in wicker cages, by their mournful cries attracted crocodiles, whose size and leaden-grey colour shewed their great age. I should not here notice an occurrence so usual in the Orinoco, if the Indians had not assured us that no crocodiles were ever seen in the cataracts; and in dependence on this assurance we had even ventured repeatedly to bathe in this part of the river. Meanwhile our anxiety lest we might be forced to pass the long tropical night in the middle of the Raudal, wet through and deafened by the thundering noise of the falling waters, increased every moment; until at last the Indians reappeared with our canoe. From the low state of the waters, they had found the steps by which they had intended to let themselves down inaccessible, and had been forced to seek among the labyrinth of channels for a more practical passage.—
Humboldt's Aspects of Nature.

PICTOU, October 24, 1860.

Aware of the Colonial Committee's anxiety regarding the Mission field, I shall endeavor to furnish a brief account of that portion of it assigned to me.

From the extent of bounds prescribed for me, I am almost always on the move from place to place. In company with the Rev. Mr. Herdman and John McKay, Esq., one of our elders, I spent a month in Cape Breton, where we found a large number strongly attached to our Church, and who received us gladly. A month's visit was rather insufficient, but it was all that could be afforded, to ascertain the probable number and the social circumstances of our adherents there. Enough however, had been discovered during that short visit to have warranted us in making the application which the Presbytery, acting on our report, has made to the Committee.

I am exceedingly glad to understand that the application has been taken into favorable consideration; and I pray that one or two missionaries may be found disposed to come to our aid, and cheer the hearts of our people, whose hopes have, by reason of our visit, been revived. I know that some object to the planting of Missions in an unproductive soil, and are of opinion that Cape Breton, being in the rear of other colonies in prosperity and general improvement, should be neglected. The objection comes with a very bad grace from any in communion with the Church of Scotland, which is emphatically the Church of the poor. The truth, however, is, that, judging from the circumstances generally of the inhabitants of that island, the proposed Mission would soon be self-sustaining.

For the last four months I have been, for the most part, assisting at the celebration of the Lord's Supper in various places, and had, therefore, an unusual share of labor to bear; but the number—always a large concourse—the interest, and gratitude of the people, are themselves a great alleviation of toil.

A pleasing feature of congregations here is the avidity with which they hear the word of God. It is seldom or ever necessary to urge attendance on public worship, as they are extremely eager at every opportunity to go to the house of prayer, and their decorous conduct there cannot be surpassed. Another characteristic is their most intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures. Though their advantages, from the public ministrations of the sanctuary, have been few indeed, their knowledge of holy truth is most varied and correct; and though their powers of utterance are, as may be perceived at prayer meetings, surpassingly great, I am not aware that any one has ever elevated himself into the lay preacher's office. They have too much reverence for the ministerial office to do so. This fact is a happy proof that lay preaching is the offspring of superficial knowledge and misguided zeal, and that these qualities cannot be predicated of our people in this quarter. The

LETTER FROM MR. SINCLAIR TO COLONIAL COMMITTEE.

The Colonial Committee have received the following letter from the Rev. J. Sinclair, one of their Gaelic speaking missionaries in Nova Scotia:—