

Mary was nineteen when she met William Mason Scharlieb, a barrister whom she married on 19 December 1865; shortly afterwards they sailed for India. She bore him two sons (1866 and 1870) and a daughter (1868).

While in India, Scharlieb helped her husband collate material and write précis for the *Madras Jurist* journal that he was editing. She reviewed Sir Joseph Frayer's article, which concerned the plight of Mahometan and Hindu women during childbirth, under the strict rules of purdah. Consequently, she studied midwifery and became a nurse in training at the lying-in hospital in Madras. She later persuaded her husband's professional contacts to support the right of women patients to have female medical practitioners. She was one of four new women students at the Madras Medical College, where she graduated in 1878 with a licentiate in medicine, surgery and midwifery. Later that year she returned to England and enrolled at the newly founded London School of Medicine for Women (LSMW). In 1882 she graduated MB from the University of London, the first woman to be awarded the Gold Medal and Exhibition in Obstetric Medicine.

On her return to India in 1883 Scharlieb saw the need for a hospital for women. With British Royal support, the government set up the Royal Victoria Caste and Gosha Hospital, where Scharlieb worked. She also lectured on midwifery, gynaecology and diseases of children at Madras Medical College.

Scharlieb returned to London in 1887 and became the first woman to lecture in medical jurisprudence at the LSMW. In 1888 she was appointed Lecturer in Diseases of Women, became the first female medical practitioner in Harley Street, and in December of that year she graduated MD from London and MS in 1897, being the first woman to secure these degrees.

In 1892 Scharlieb was appointed gynaecologist to the Royal Free Hospital and thus became the first female member of staff of a London general hospital. She was also lecturer to the Queen's Nurses and examiner to woman

candidates of the civil service. Ten years later she was appointed gynaecological surgeon at the Royal Free and in 1908 was made consulting gynaecological surgeon. Scharlieb became President of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Section at the 1910 Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association. In 1917 she was elected to the presidency of the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women.

Scharlieb was concerned with issues arising out of nineteenth-century debates on race regeneration and social purity, and she sat on the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases (1913–16). An advocate of state support for women who produced healthy children, she published several books and pamphlets on eugenics and the importance of the mother's role in improving the next generation. In August 1917 she was awarded a CBE and in 1926 was created Dame of the British Empire.

Although she became a suffragist only towards the end of her life, due to her distinguished career as a gynaecological surgeon and her academic accolades, she was an asset to the women's movement and an inspiration to the next generation of women medical students.

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SCHOMBURGK, Robert Herman (or Hermann: 1804–65)

Robert H. Schomburgk was born in Freiburg, Saxony, Germany on 5 June 1804 and died in Berlin on 11 March 1865. From the German lands he came, and to them he returned in the end, but scientific collecting, cartographic surveying and civil service to the Crown of Victoria led this anglicized Prussian on a career of global peregrination. After the age of twenty-two, when he made his way to Virginia on a commercial venture, Schomburgk seldom resided in Europe: from the United States, to the Caribbean, South America and South-East Asia, he spent most of his life at the margins of expanding European colonial power in the nineteenth century.

Though apparently without formal training in hydrography, Schomburgk came to the attention of the nascent Royal Geographical Society in the early 1830s, when he submitted to them a detailed chart of Anegada, a treacherous, low, outlying cay in the British Virgin Islands, notorious for its wrecks and wreckers. Approbation and publication followed. In search of, as he put it, 'a more ample field ... as a naturalist and geographer', he then volunteered his services to the Society by mail, expressing an interest in the botany of the Louisiana territories, but leaving no doubt that he would be content with any position offsetting his expeditionary expenses (RGS Archive, Schomburgk Correspondence, Schomburgk to RGS 1832). By 1833 opportunity beckoned, and plans were afoot to send Schomburgk to northern South America on an expedition of geographical investigation and plant collecting that would depart from the British colony of Demerara, and that might reach Bogota, traversing regions made familiar to English and Continental readers by the publication of Alexander Von Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent*. Wrote Schomburgk, 'what advantage might science reap from such a field, which since Raleigh's time has created the

greatest interest with geographers and haunted the imagination of adventurers' (RGS Archive, Schomburgk Correspondence, Schomburgk to RGS 1833). So began nearly a decade of intensive travel, surveying, natural history and ethnographic research in British Guiana and its environs. Through his publications (e.g., *A Description of British Guiana, Geographical and Statistical*, 1840; *Twelve Views in the Interior of Guiana*, 1841), his public exhibition of artefacts, specimens and even living Amerindians, and his communications with the Colonial Office, the Colonial Society, missionary organizations, and other institutions, Schomburgk was largely responsible for nineteenth-century metropolitan understanding of Britain's unique colony on the South American mainland.

Successful in his efforts to draw attention to the ambiguous extent of British territory, Schomburgk received a Crown commission in 1840 to survey and mark the boundaries of the colony, work that preoccupied him for half a decade, and that would see him knighted on his return to England in 1844. This work remains Schomburgk's most significant, if controversial, legacy: the boundaries of what has become the independent nation of Guyana have been a source of considerable discord, and the 'Schomburgk Line' was at issue in major international disputes at the turn of the century, disputes which have attracted partisans ever since.

Involved in railroad projecting in the Caribbean in the late 1840s, Schomburgk returned to the region, and composed a well-regarded study of the history, commercial prospects and natural productions of Barbados. In 1848 he became British consul in Santo Domingo, where, in addition to pursuing his scientific avocations (charting, botany, ornithology, ethnography) he embarked on a diplomatic career. His success defending and extending British trading interests in the Dominican Republic led to a further posting as British consul in Siam in 1857. Continuing to publish notes on the natural history, he was made a

Fellow of the Royal Society in 1859. Though his health never fully recovered from his arduous South American years, he remained active in geographical exploration and what might fairly be called imperial reconnaissance. Pensioned in 1864, he returned to Europe, where, fêted with a variety of honours, he spent his final year.

Scientifically speaking, Schomburgk is probably best understood as (in the words of Roderick MURCHISON, commending him) 'one of those ... formed in the school of Humboldt,' and Schomburgk did indeed correspond with his countryman, receiving encouragement and praise for his work in South America (*Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. 14, 1844, p. xcvi). Schomburgk's Humboldtian preoccupations extended from comparative mythology and Amerindian linguistic genealogies to geological hypothesizing, ichthyological systematics, Amazonian floristics and the precise establishment of geographical coordinates by means of careful astronomical observations. Best of all were those rare problems that demanded some synthesis of these diverse, cosmos-embracing inquiries. The legend of El Dorado provided such a problem, and Schomburgk closely studied Humboldt's meticulous textual-cartographic-geophysical reasoning concerning the 'true site' of Manoa, the site that had given rise to European obsessions with an inland sea and a golden city somewhere up the Orinoco or Essequibo rivers. Following Humboldt's analysis, Schomburgk made his way to the heart of the legend, confirmed to his satisfaction that Humboldt's analysis was correct, and thereby became, in a peculiar sense, the first European to 'reach' El Dorado. This putative wellspring of Raleigh's infatuation was known to locals as Pirara, a village that became a much disputed point in the geography of the region. Schomburgk's interest in these matters extended to his editing of the Hakluyt edition of Raleigh's *Discovery of the Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* in 1848, a text he annotated with details of his travels in the area.

Schomburgk's name remains attached to a number of plants and animals that he and his brother, Richard (also a skilled botanist, who accompanied Robert on part of his South American journeys, and who would go on to head the Botanical Garden at Adelaide), helped bring to taxonomic attention. Robert's greatest botanical coup, however, wears the name of the sovereign he took pride in serving: the giant water lily once known as the *Victoria regia*, now *Victoria amazonica*. In 1837, during a singularly unsuccessful effort to reach the Guayana highlands on the Corentyne river, Schomburgk came upon a pool that harboured this 'vegetable wonder' whose leaves can spread to a diameter of eight feet and whose blossoms are as large as a man's head. Deftly, the Royal Geographical Society offered the flower (or, rather, a painting of it) to Victoria on her accession to the throne, and the giant lily would go on to become a Victorian sensation, particularly after the duke of Devonshire's redoubtable gardener, Joseph PAXTON, succeeded in cultivating a live bud in the hothouse of Chatsworth in 1849. Paxton would later claim that he based his design for the Crystal Palace on the plant's marvellous structure, sealing the *Victoria regia* in the glass and steel pantheon of the Victorian age. It would be remiss not to note that several other botanical explorers, not to mention countless Amerindians, had plausible claims to priority on the discovery of this remarkable, but not particularly rare, plant. On botanical matters, particularly concerning orchids, Schomburgk provided observations of interest to Charles DARWIN, whom he would presumably have met when presenting his 'Remarks on the Geology of British Guiana' to the Geological Society of London in 1839, during Darwin's tenure as Secretary. In February 1848 Darwin wrote of inviting the Guiana explorer for the weekend to Down, though it appears he did not attend the gathering in question. Darwin would, however, later draw on Schomburgk's ethnographic observations of the Taruma in the important discussion of 'savage' selection in *The Variation of Animals*

and *Plants under Domestication* (1868), and cited his work on birds and plants in other publications.

While extensive geographical exploration through very difficult terrain, and the maps that came of this work, must be accounted Schomburgk's greatest achievement (he was awarded the Patron's Medal by the Royal Geographical Society in 1840), he should also be remembered for his sympathetic view of the Amerindian communities he encountered in those travels. Though increasingly pessimistic about their possibilities for survival, and always committed to Christian missionary work in their midst, he nevertheless consistently expressed concern about the well-being of these peoples, and worked to draw the attention of those in power to their plight. His long periods traversing the interior in the company of Makushi, Akawaio, Patamuna, and Taruma guides enhanced his appreciation for the skills and local knowledge of the inhabitants of the region, from whom he consistently drew intelligence, and on whom he often depended.

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SCHORLEMMER, Carl (1834–92)

Carl Schorlemmer was born in Darmstadt, Germany on 30 September 1834 and died in Manchester on 27 June 1892. Born to a poor master carpenter, Johann, and his Jewish wife, Schorlemmer demonstrated a proclivity for mathematics and physics at Darmstadt's Volksschule and Realschule. When he attended the Gewerbeschule, he met his lifelong friend, Wilhelm Dittmar, who encouraged him to take up scientific study. However, the wish of Schorlemmer's father that his eldest son should pursue a craft led to a family dispute, since his mother supported his pursuit of science. To compromise, Schorlemmer became an apothecary's apprentice in Gross-Umstadt (Hesse) for two and a half years, until his passage through the Assistant's Examination gave him the passport to Heidelberg in 1855.

Whilst still formally an assistant pharmacist in Heidelberg, Schorlemmer attended Robert Bunsen's lectures and became reacquainted with Dittmar, now Bunsen's assistant. The influence of Bunsen stimulated such an interest in chemistry that Schorlemmer moved to study under Heinrich Will and Hermann Kopp at the University of Giessen in May 1858. It is often suggested that his interest in the history of chemistry developed under Kopp, though his political philosophy also underlined the importance of historical study. When Dittmar took up the post of demonstrator at Owens