

James Rodway History of British Guiana Vol 2 17882 - 1833 Edmonstone and Glen Extract txt  
Extract from History of British Guiana, from the Year 1668 to the Present Time  
Vol 2 17882 - 1833.

By James Rodway. Published in Georgetown, Demerara, by J. Thomson, 1893.

#### CHAPTER XVIII THE THREE RIVERS IN 1796.

The plantations— The Dutch proprietor— His manner of living — His housekeeper — His shires — Stabroek — The market — The Militia — The Fiscal and Secretary — Mynheer Bercheyck, a gentleman of the old school — Mynheer Vos, a rough planter — Old Glen, the Swedenborgian - Story of Kate Delaney — Boode, the richest planter in the three rivers — Prices of food and clothing — Berbice contrasted with Demerara and Essequibo

Bercheyck and Vos may be considered in some respects rather as types of two classes, tho' as eccentrics, but this cannot be said of James Glen, who certainly was peculiar in many respects. He was a Scotchman, and one of the little band of Swedenborgians who formed the Theosophical Society in London in 1784. Coming to Demerara as the mate of a merchant vessel, he received a grant of land, bought a few negroes and settled down as a planter. In about seven years he had attained an assured position, but going on board a vessel one day he found that the Captain, a Swedenborgian, was in possession of some of the books of the mystic writer. This revived Glen's old enthusiasm, which now possessed him to his own ruin. Obtaining the works of his beloved author he studied them until he became imbued with carelessness as to his temporal concerns. He also studied the Greek and Hebrew languages so as to be able to understand the Bible. His estate was neglected, everything went wrong, the negroes ran away or became careless and lazy, and every day Glen became poorer and poorer. Not having money to pay for a large shipment of his favourite books, his estate was levied upon and sold. Being now destitute, he set up as a preacher, but without much success either among the whites or negroes. We next find him in Berbice as a private soldier, where he fell into disgrace for sleeping when on duty, and was sentenced to 'run the gauntlet'. In pity the Commanding Officer would have remitted the punishment, but this Glen refused to allow, being so determined to suffer for his offence that he chided his comrades if they did not strike hard enough. Returning to Demerara he was offered a home at Warrow's Place, the wood-cutting establishment of Charles Edmonstone on the Mibiri Creek.

Here he built himself a benab and wandered about with no covering but a long shirt, trying to teach the Indians something of his mystical religion, with what success may be seen from the following extracts from his letters : —

'Few men have ever inquired by questions into the thoughts, ideas, and affections of negroes and Indians as I have ; and though they have seen me most desirous to pump all the knowledge I could out of them, yet I never yet found one who had the least desire to inquire after any knowledge of any kind by a single question put to me. Yea, I am certain, there is no Negro or Indian here, man or woman, who would not ten times rather choose a hand of tobacco, or a bottle of new rum, or five or six bits in dry money, than any kind of knowledge I could communicate; and as to spiritual knowledges of any kind, they are totally averse to them ; money and sensual pleasures and fine clothes are seated in the inmost chamber of their affections.

'It may be urged, instruct the negroes when young, and you will make them real Christians. I answer from the bottom of my heart, I believe a Negro or any kind of Indian child at six or seven years to be so full of hereditary evil, of pride and greed, of self and the world, of sensual and corporeal affections, that it would be as easy to turn a young dog into a young sheep, or a lime into a mango tree, as to make them real internal Christians.'

Before his death 'Old Glen' managed to secure a few followers, who established a little branch of the New Jerusalem Church in Demerara, which lasted thirty or forty years, but is now quite extinct.

Extract from History of British Guiana, from the Year 1668 to the Present Time Vol 2 17882 - 1833.

By James Rodway. Published in Georgetown, Demerara, by J. Thomson, 1893.