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, than 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 Glek 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 be was offered a home
at Warrow's Place, the wood-cutting establishment of Charles Edmonstonb 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 qnestions into the thoughts, ideas, and
affiections 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
bitts 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.