

DUTCH GUIANA

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Dutch Guiana by W. G. Palgrave

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W. G. PALGRAVE

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DUTCH GUIANA

BY

W. G. PALGRAVE

AUTHOR OF 'A YEAR'S JOURNEY THROUGH CENTRAL AND EASTERN ARABIA'

"It was a chosen plott of fertile land,—
As if it had by Nature's cunning hand
Been choicely picked out from all the rest
And laid forth for ensample of the best" SPENSER

"It would be interesting to know the secrets of Dutch colonial management, which presents to an outside observer the aspect of minding one's own business, and inducing other people to mind theirs" *Saturday Review*

"Go to Egypt. It will suit you. I look upon you as an Oriental. If you like, go to South America. Tropical scenery will astonish and cure you" DISRAELI

WITH PLAN AND MAP.

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1876

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PREFACE.

DURING my residence in the West Indies, the hospitable instances of my friend, Mr. A. Cohen, at present Her Majesty's Consul for Surinam, seconded by a courteous invitation from his Excellency C. A. van Sypesteyn, Governor of that colony, determined me to pay a visit to Dutch Guiana. My stay there was, of necessity, a short one, not exceeding a fortnight, but during that period the forethought of my amiable hosts had prepared, and put at my disposal, all available means of collecting trustworthy information, both ocular and documentary, regarding the condition of the people and the country. To the kindness of those friends, accordingly, this work owes any interest or value it may possess.

Some inaccuracies, or, at least, some disputable points, may occur in the historical notices scattered through these pages. In the remote station of my present service, I have at hand no means for comparative investigation of the records

of the Guiana past; and am compelled, accordingly, to throw myself for such matters on the indulgence of my readers, by whom, if better informed, I shall be thankful to be corrected.

Conversant for many years with the negro races in those Eastern lands where they may be, from long domicilement, regarded as almost indigenous, I have felt a special interest in observing their present condition and probable future in their Western regions of more recent adoption. In no European colony have they been so completely identified with the soil as in Dutch Guiana; nowhere could they be studied to better advantage. To those, therefore, who feel interest, not in African geography only, but in African nationality, I commend the results of my observations on this subject; they are grounded on experience, and ratified by fact.

The Biblical paradise, judging by the records that have come down to us, though not, on the whole, a very progressive, was yet a very pleasant place. Much the same may be said of the Creole paradise—Dutch Guiana. The gates are open: enter.

St. Thomas, W. I.,
October 21, 1875.

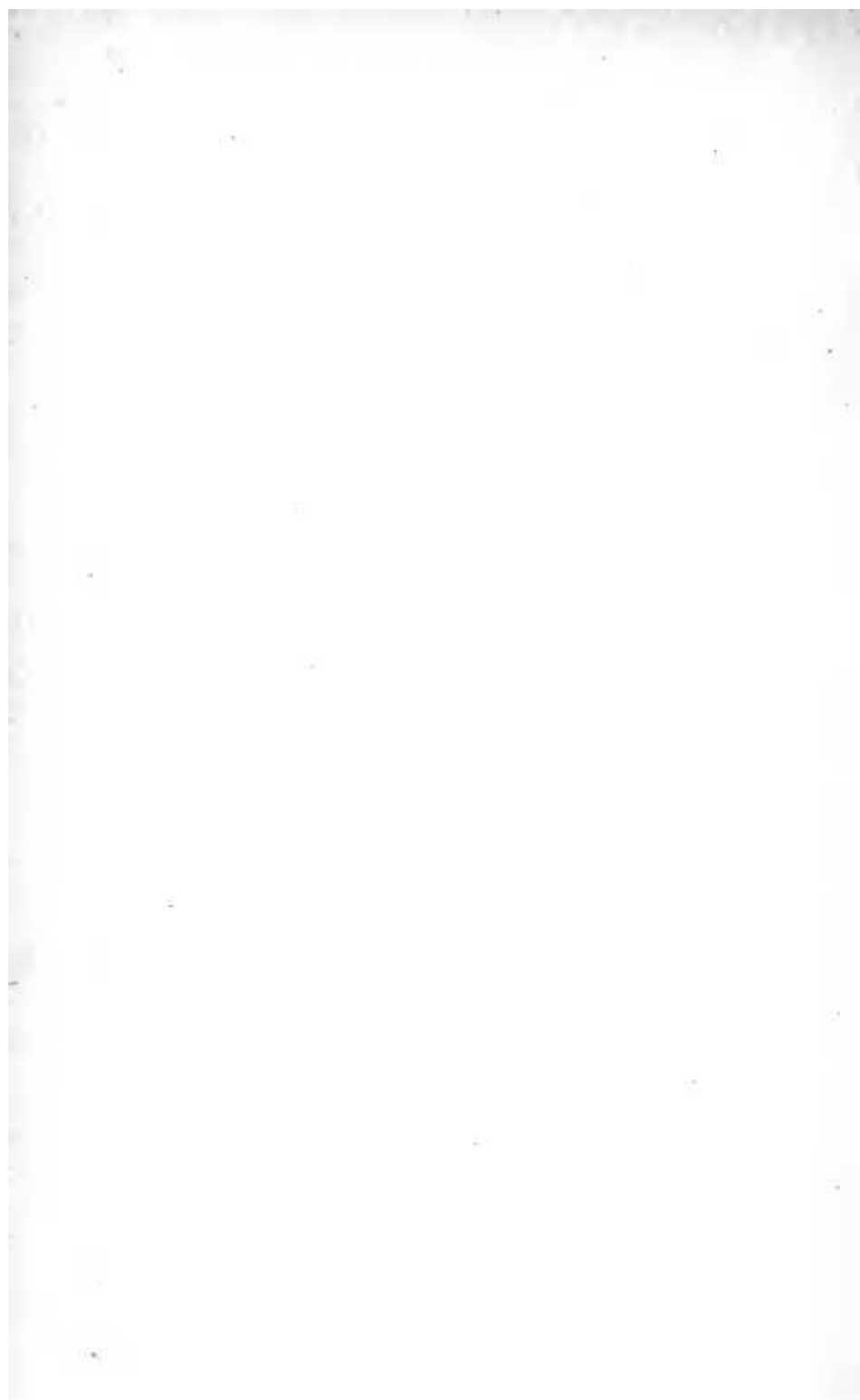
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MAP OF DUTCH GUIANA (SURINA).

PLAN OF PARA ARIBO, CAPITAL OF SURINAM.



DUTCH GUIANA.

CHAPTER I.

THE COAST.

Then creeping carefully along the beach,
The mouth of a green river did they reach,
Clearing the sands, and on the yellow bar
The salt waves and the fresh waves were at war.

MORRIS.

EVERY one who has read—and who has not?—the incomparable story of ‘Guy Mannering’ knows that the predetermining thread of our existence, whether spun by Meg Merrilies or a Clotho, is, like the life it measures, a many-coloured twine of differing hues. My own particular Clotho, whoever she be, had kindly unreeled for me a fortnight’s length, or nearly so, of the very whitest hank ever allotted to mortal, in a region not incorrectly styled by Mr. Anthony Trollope, in his West-Indian reminiscences, the “true and

actual Utopia of the Caribbean Seas, namely, British Guiana"—a region additionally blessed, at the time of my visit, with that almost Utopian piece of colonial good fortune, the right man in the right place, in the person of its present Governor.

But with British Guiana and the good things thereof my present tale has, except in the way of introduction, little to do. George Town and Berbice, sugar-estates and canals, coolies and vacuum-pans, hospitable planters and not less hospitable townsmen, are they not written, and well written too, in the book above alluded to—the 'Book of the West Indies and the Spanish Main'? At any rate I was soon in some manner acquainted, however superficially, with all these; and now my principal desire was to acquire some knowledge of the neighbouring cousin-colony, if "mother" be not the fitter title—Dutch Guiana.

"'Tis known, at least it should be," that Surinam, geographically indicated by the easterly slice of Guiana placed between our own South American possessions, on the one side, and French Cayenne on the other, is up to the present day under Dutch rule; while Demerara, or, to speak more correctly,