

## Biography - Rev. Dr. Hugh Croskery (1835 – 1886)

From the Kingston Roundabout, November 1, 1966

KINGSTON ROUNDABOUT

Tuesday November 1, 1966 - R.J.R.

There is no trace now of the old house at 85 East St., where today you will find a new building occupied by Reckitt & Coleman (Overseas) Ltd. But the old building was occupied nearly a century ago by someone whose name will perhaps have an oddly familiar ring for you.

The Rev. Hugh Croskery died at the age of 51, but almost everything about his not very long life was unusual, including his death.

Croskery was an Irishman, an Ulsterman, born in 1835. He started as a naval surgeon, of all things, and on the strength of a medical degree became a District Medical Officer in Jamaica. That was as early as 1857, and he stayed many years at Chapelton, where he married the daughter of the Rev. Charles Hall, who was at Chapelton for quarter of a century. In 1871 he became an Anglican deacon and served at Chapelton as curate to his father-in-law. He continued to practice as a doctor, and is about the nearest I can find to a medical missionary in Jamaica. He wrote a book, The Gospel of the Kingdom, which was published in 1877, and he also became a priest.

It was in 1878 that he came to Kingston and to 85 East Street, where he set up in private practice. He was appointed Medical Officer to the City Dispensary, which, as you may remember, was started about that time. At first he had a salary of £300, a year, but when the Dispensary ran into financial difficulties he agreed to be paid on the basis of the number of patients he treated.

Croskery's connection with 85 East St. was not long. For in 1880 he took a surprising resolution. He had in no way lost his interest in church work, and frequently acted as rector of St. George's, next door to No. 85. But he had heard of the special needs of the Anglican mission amongst the East Indians of British Guiana, and in 1880 he left for that country.

I suppose this meant that he had to start learning Hindustani, but probably that had no terrors for him - he seems to have been a man who rather liked new challenges.

The Rev. Hugh Croskery lived for half-a-dozen years in British Guiana. In 1886 he died there, and his widow and her children returned to Jamaica, where their descendants are still amongst us. One of them happens to be called Hugh, which will explain why the name sounded familiar to you, if it did.

For we may say that the Rev. Hugh Croskery is pretty well forgotten in Jamaica today. We are apt to forget the sacrifices that people made in former times, and to think that we are much ahead of them in the sense of social responsibility. But a man like Croskery must have made considerable sacrifices for the things he believed in. If the City Dispensary paid him £300 a year, and presumably thought they were undervaluing his services at that sum, his private practice must have been worth a good deal in an age when the Medical Officer at Port Royal, with very great responsibilities, received only £500.

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