



WONDERFUL ADVENTURES OF MRS SEACOLE IN MANY LANDS

MARY JANE GRANT (later SEACOLE) was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1805 to Jamaican Scottish parents. By the age of twelve, she was assisting her 'doctress' mother to nurse British officers and their wives stationed at nearby military camps. A self-declared 'female Ulysses', Seacole travelled to London, New Providence, Haiti and Cuba before marrying Mr Seacole some time in the 1830s. Her husband did not live long, and after his death Seacole resumed her work nursing military personnel. In the early 1850s, Seacole established a 'British Hotel' in Cruces, Panama, where she catered for American gold-seekers. Reports of war in the Crimea inspired Seacole with the wish to become 'a Crimean *heroine*', and she travelled directly to England from Panama. Having encountered widespread rejection in her attempts to be recruited as one of Florence Nightingale's 'Angel Band' of military nurses, Seacole went to the Crimea in partnership with Thomas Day, a distant relative of her husband. By March 1855, they had established another British Hotel near the battlefield at Spring Hill, where Seacole catered for army personnel of all ranks and nursed the sick and the wounded.

The firm of Seacole and Day went bankrupt after the Crimean War, but a fund was quickly established to rescue Seacole from

economic hardship. *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* was published in 1857, and later that year a series of highly publicized benefits was held at the Royal Surrey Gardens. By this time, Seacole had been decorated for her services to the British army, and a second edition of *Wonderful Adventures* was published in 1858. The proceeds from book and benefits were evidently not sufficient to keep Seacole from 'want': another fundraising effort was made on her behalf in 1867, after which Seacole disappeared from public view. There are posthumous reports of her connections with the Royal family, and by the time Seacole made her will in London at the age of seventy-one she owned a considerable fortune and two properties in Kingston, Jamaica. She died in London of apoplexy at the age of seventy-six.

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Edited and with an Introduction by

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Chronology

1805 Born Mary Jane Grant, Kingston, Jamaica, to Scottish father and Creole mother. She is brought up by an 'old lady'.

1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act.

1811 Bill making slave trading a felony.

c.1817 Helps mother to nurse officers and their wives from Up-Park Camp and Newcastle military station.

? Visits London twice as a young woman for a total of three years. Shortly afterwards travels to New Providence, Haiti and Cuba 'with a view to gain'.

1831 Slave revolts in Jamaica.

1833 Partial abolition of slavery in the colonies.

1834 Institution of 'apprenticeship' system as the first stage of emancipation.

1836 Marries Mr Seacole, identified in her will as Viscount Nelson's godson.

1838 Full emancipation instituted in all British colonies.

1844 The Seacoles move to Black River, where they establish a store. They return to Seacole's mother's house in Kingston; Mr