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B/0 - SEACOLE,

MARY

YOUR REF:-  
IR3/5/83

18th. July, 1983

Dear Miss Johnson,

Over two months ago you were good enough to write to the "Blue Peter" television programme about the bust of Mrs. Seacole which I lent to them. I would have replied to your letter more promptly, but felt it more useful, if less polite, to delay writing to you until I had found out as much as I could about her life in London.

You may know already all that I am enclosing in this letter, but since Blue Peter had been able to find so little I hope that I have been able to disinter some forgotten facts.

I am enclosing:-

A copy of her will, and my typescript copy  
An extract from the 1881 Census, showing her last address  
Some quotes from the "Times" of 1856 and 1857

I have had my terracotta bust (which is, incidentally,  $11\frac{3}{4}$ " high) for some years, as I have always been very interested in military research and collecting, but to my amazement I found, when discussing the Blue Peter programme with some fellow-collectors, that another specimen was in the collection of one of these friends. I managed to persuade him to exchange it for some other items which I had, and now have the two copies. They appear to be identical except for some minute differences in the hand-finishing of some of the details, and I wonder if Count Gleichen made three copies, for himself, Major Fane Keane, and Lord Rokeby, the three Trustees of Mrs Seacole's Fund.

The B B C told me that there is a "Mrs Seacole Appreciation Society" at Warwick University, and that they were very anxious to contact me, in the hope of borrowing my bust for an exhibition they intend to mount at the University this Autumn. However, I have not heard from them, so do not know how keen they are, or what interests them in our heroine.

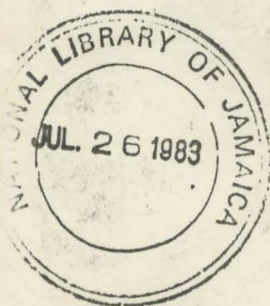
Thank you for the additional information you sent me; we all seem to have snippets unknown to each other.

Incidentally, it was kind of you to promote me to Col., but I never reached higher than Sgt. Major, a rank of which I am sufficiently proud.

With best wishes, and the hope that some of this mass of paper is of use or interest, I remain,

Yours Sincerely,

(J. V. Webb)



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MRS. MARY SEACOLE ( contd )

The 1872 Exhibition of the Royal Academy had five sculptures by Count Gleichen, No. 1457, "Mrs Seacole, the celebrated Crimean heroine", being the only one executed in terracotta.

Her will (copy attached hereto) includes a lot of interesting facts:-

1. Her late husband had been a god-son of Lord Nelson
2. In spite of statements that she left all her jewellery and property to persons of title, she left only the Nelson ring to Count Gleichen, and money for mourning rings to her other trustees, apart from the Gleichen girls
3. The "Thomas Day " of 38 & 39 Gracechurch St was presumably the T Day who had been her partner in the Crimes (or his son?). This address was occupied in 1876 (when she made the will) by Robinson & Dymond, Auctioneers, so presumably Day was a partner in the firm
4. Mrs Seacole appears to have been unable to read the will (blindness or illiteracy?), as it was read over to her.

As requested in her will, Mrs Seacole was buried in St Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery at Kensal Green, on the 21st May 1881. I traced her grave to Plot 6830, but have been unable to identify the plot. There are acres of neglected graves of this period, mostly overgrown with brambles and grass, and with the gravestones weathered completely smooth. I will try again to find if there is a map of the grave numbers, and if Mrs Seacole's grave can be identified. If this can be done, I will photograph whatever is there.

Although the address on her will is Upper George St., Mrs Seacole survived just long enough to be included in the 1881 Census, a copy of the relevant extract being appended hereto. No. 3 Cambridge St probably still exists, although it is now named "Arundel St"

On the Census she gives her age as 71, but in the Register of Deaths a few weeks later her age is stated to be 77.