

*Jamaica's Florence Nightingale.*

THE EDITOR: Sir,—The account of "Mother Seacole" by K. M. Rowley in your last Saturday's issue is very good as far as it goes—except for the end. Her last days were certainly not spent in obscurity and want. I retain a few very vivid memories of her in those days. She was a valued friend of Capt. Cooper, R.N., and his sister and one afternoon she was at their home when a carriage drove up with a "Big Gun" resplendent in gold lace and a string of medals—on his way from some function at King's House he had called in for a chat with his old comrade. As he entered the drawing room the old lady sprang up, "Oh, my dear!" holding out her hands. In a moment the big man's arms were round her and he was hugging and kissing her like his long lost mother." When their excitement quieted down a little he told us: "But for this little woman I would not be here today. Her nursing saved my life in the Crimea." And I remember hearing that many other great soldiers and sailors said the same thing. This must have been about '68 or '69.

Mrs. Seacole did not own "Blundell Hall." That was the property of her sister, Miss Louisa Grant, another notable woman. It was the premier hotel of Jamaica in those days, much frequented by the "country Squires" of that day and their families.

After the Rebellion, Mrs. Seacole bought a piece of land in Duke Street—between Charles and North Streets—on the left going up and there she built herself a charming little bungalow. But that did not tie her down to Jamaica. In '73 she was in England for many months. Hearing Captain Cooper would be going over on furlough in the summer she wrote asking him to bring her a basket of mangoes "on the ice" as she wanted them for her "dear Princess" (the then Princess of Wales, Alexandra). The Princess wished to taste Jamaica mangoes and she had promised to get some for her. As Superintendent of the Royal Mail Company Capt. Cooper easily got them "on the ice" and on his arrival in London sent her the basket.

I was with him when she called a few days after to "report" and thank him. She had taken them to Marlborough House and delivered them "personally" to her old friend, "the dear Princess," who was so pleased with them that she had at once eaten one and said she enjoyed it! I impertinently enquired of Mrs. Seacole if she had made a nice curtsy when she entered the reception room.

"Oh, me dear child, I don't go there. When I go to see the Princess, I go up to her private sitting room and we sit and talk like the old friends we are."

Later a gentleman connected with the Court told Capt. Cooper that Mrs. Seacole was a privileged guest at Marlborough House and highly thought of there. Neglected or forgotten she never was by those who had learnt to love and value her in the past—truly one of her children of whom Jamaica may well be proud. There are so few now-a-days!

I am etc.

(MRS.) K. STEWART

2, Trevennion Road, Cross Roads, August 25, 1939.

National Library of Jamaica