

Roberts
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Seacole

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The personality with whose story I close this series was undoubtedly the best-known Jamaican woman in the world at large, during the middle years of the last century. I refer to Mary Seacole. They called her the Jamaican Florence Nightingale and also the Female Ulysses, names of which she was proud, for she had always ~~prided~~^{plumed} herself on being a nurse and a traveller. She was not a great woman, but she was an extremely interesting ~~man~~^{person} and she had one of the kindest hearts that ever beat in a human breast.

Mary was born early in the eighteenth century, in Kingston, perhaps in the hotel called Blundell Hall on East Street, which was run by her mother. The latter's name has been forgotten, though it could probably be discovered by a careful search through the civic records of the time. Mary herself did nothing to clear up the mystery. In an autobiography which she published, and to which I shall refer later, she excused herself for failing to give the date of her birth, remarking that that was a feminine privilege. She went on to state simply that her mother was a Creole and her father a Scottish soldier.

The truth appears to have been that Mary was illegitimate. It is likely that the Scottish father was ~~named~~^{called} Day, for she afterward alluded to a cousin of that name on the paternal side. The hotel, which at first was little more than a glorified boarding-house, was very popular with sailors and the military from Up Park Camp and Newcastle. A unique feature was, that Mary's mother had a reputation as a healer and was known as the "Doctress." Many guests were cured of tropical ^{maladies}