

Mary Seacole



Mary Seacole was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1805. Her father was a Scottish army officer and her mother ran a guest house in Kingston. Mary's mother also treated people who become ill. She was a great believer in the herbal medicines. These medicines were based on the knowledge of slaves brought from Africa. This knowledge was passed on to Mary.



In 1850 Kingston was hit by a cholera epidemic. Mary Seacole, used herbal medicines to fight this disease. She also helped combat a yellow fever outbreak in Jamaica. Her fame as a nurse grew and she was soon carrying out operations on people suffering from wounds caused by fighting in the wars.



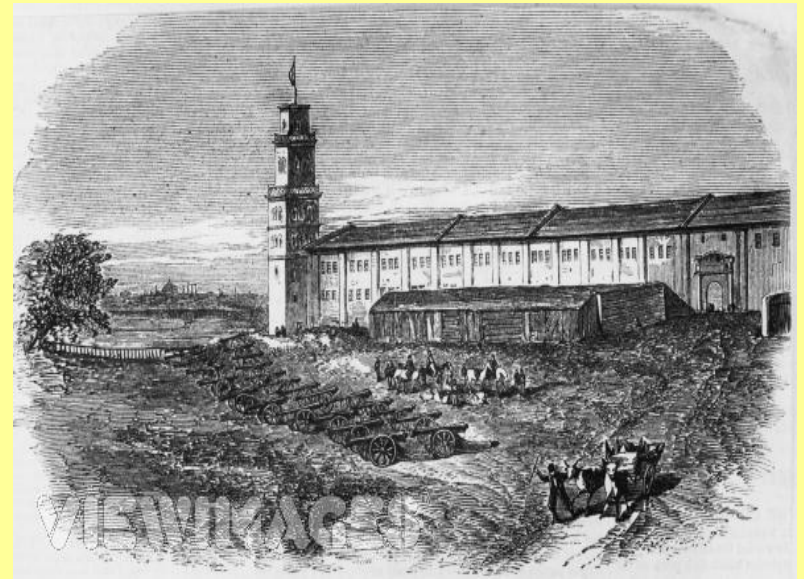
In 1853 Russia invaded Turkey. Britain and France, concerned about the growing power of Russia, went to help Turkey. This conflict became known as the Crimean War.

Soon after British soldiers arrived in Turkey, they began going down with cholera and malaria. Within a few weeks an estimated 8,000 men were suffering from these two diseases. At the time, disease was a far greater threat to soldiers than was the enemy.

When Mary Seacole heard about the cholera epidemic she wanted to help. She travelled to London to offer her help as a nurse to the British Army. Men did not want women to become involved in nursing and so they refused her help. When a newspaper called *The Times* publicised the fact that a large number of British soldiers were dying of cholera people became angry and so the government was forced to change its mind. It was not Mary Seacole but Florence Nightingale who was chosen to take a team of thirty-nine nurses to treat the sick soldiers. Mary had more experience in treating those with cholera,

Mary Seacole asked if she could join Florence Nightingale's team. She was told that she could not. Mary was rich because of her hard work in Jamaica. She decided that she would pay for her own ticket and travel to the Crimea.

Mary then visited Florence Nightingale at her hospital at Scutari. Again she offered to help but once again her help was refused.



Mary started up a British Hotel, a few miles from the battlefield. She sold food and drink to the British soldiers. With the money she earned from her business Mary bought medicine to help the injured soldiers. Florence Nightingale and her nurses worked miles away from the fighting but Mary Seacole treated her patients on the battlefield.



After the war ended in 1856 Mary Seacole returned to England. She died in London on May 14, 1881.

