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978-1-108-02443-3 - Secret History
Mary Hassal
Frontmatter
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Secret History

Leonora Mary Hassal Sansay (b. 1781), also known as Mary Hassal, was U.S. Vice-President Aaron Burr's niece. This work, first published in 1808, takes the form of a series of letters to her uncle, describing the events which she witnessed between 1802 and 1805 in the French colony of St Domingo, which became the Republic of Haiti in 1804 after a fierce revolution. A large French army under General Leclerc was sent by Napoleon to retake the colony from the ex-slave Toussaint Louverture and his army. Hassal depicts life under the French occupation, and also in Cuba and Jamaica, to which many settlers from St Domingo fled. She comments particularly on the position and occupations of women, but regrets their subjection to and dependence on men. The tone is anecdotal, but the volume will be of interest to social historians as an eyewitness account of a turbulent period.

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Secret History

*Or, The Horrors of St. Domingo,
in a Series of Letters*

MARY HASSAL



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SECRET HISTORY;
OR,
THE HORRORS OF ST. DOMINGO,
IN
A SERIES OF LETTERS,
WRITTEN BY A LADY AT CAPE FRANCOIS,
TO
COLONEL BURR,
LATE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
PRINCIPALLY DURING THE COMMAND OF
GENERAL ROCHAMBEAU.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY BRADFORD & INSKEEP.
R. CARR, PRINTER.

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1808.

PREFACE.



I AM fearful of having been led into an error by my friends, when taught by them to believe that I could write something which would interest and please ; and it was chiefly with a view to ascertain what confidence I might place in their kind assurances on this subject, that I collected and consented, though reluctantly, to the publication of these letters.

Should a less partial public give them a favourable reception, and allow them to possess some merit, it would encourage me to endeavour to obtain their further approbation by a little work already planned and in some forwardness.

THE AUTHOR.

Philadelphia, Nov. 30th, 1807.