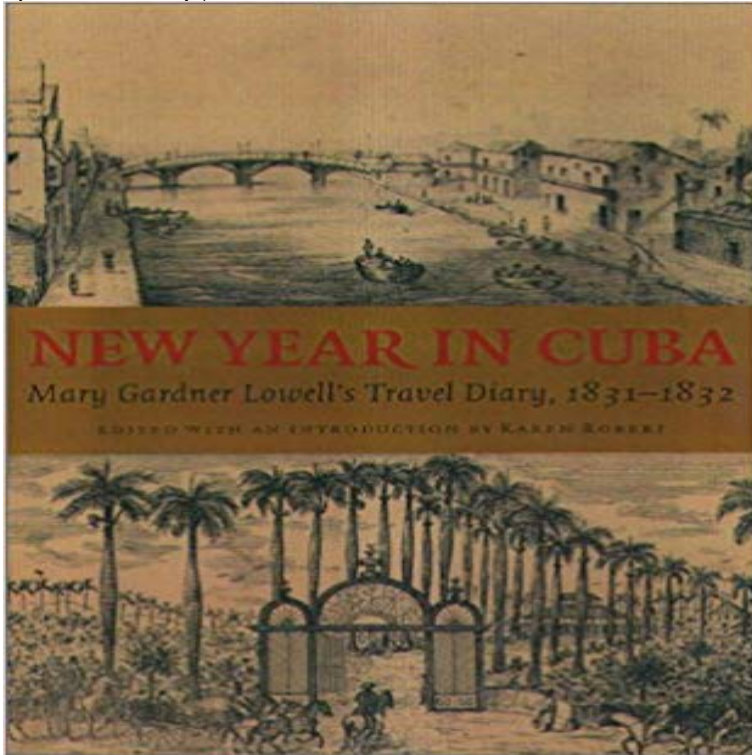


New Year in Cuba: Mary Gardner Lowells Travel Diary, 1831-1832 (New England Womens Diaries Series)



In late 1831, at the age of 29, Mary Gardner Lowell and her young son George accompanied her husband, the leading Boston financier and merchant Francis Cabot Lowell II, on a voyage to Cuba, a newly popular destination for the Boston gentry. They spent several weeks on the island travelling from the bustling commercial city of Havanna to the slave plantations of Matanzas province, before making their way up the Mississippi River by steamboat on the return home. Lowell's journal of the adventure that took her from the safe and comfortable environs of Beacon Hill is published here in its entirety. She describes in vivid detail each event and observation of a journey that crossed many boundaries: between abolitionist Boston and slave-owing Cuba, between the parlour and the sugar mill; between refined Boston and the hinterlands of the Caribbean and river towns of the Mississippi Valley. As befitting a woman of her privileged class, Lowell's diary includes chronicles of social calls, parties and invitations, as well as intimate descriptions of domestic and family life. She also comments extensively on the different social conventions for American and Spanish women, and provides astute accounts of the workings of the cane sugar mills, the brutal living and working conditions of the slaves and the tensions involved in managing the slave population. Lowell is a colourful storyteller who writes with precision and a critical eye, salting the narrative with gossip and a good dose of humour about her experience throughout the trip. Her journals are filled with stories of arrogant Spanish men, shipwrecks, slave uprisings, business deals gone bad and scandalous marriages. The diary brings Mary Gardner Lowell and her times to life and offers illuminating insights into class, race and gender relations as well as the evolving relationship between the USA and Cuba in the antebellum period.

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