

Journal of a West India Proprietor (Oxford World's Classics)



Matthew Lewis
Journal of a West India Proprietor

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



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出版者:Oxford University Press, USA

出版时间:2008-09-15

装帧:Paperback

isbn:9780199549658

Every man of humanity must wish that slavery, even in its best and most mitigated form, had never found a legal sanction, and must regret that its system is now so incorporated with the welfare of Great Britain as well as of Jamaica, as to make its extirpation an absolute impossibility, without the certainty of producing worse mischiefs than the one which we annihilate. Matthew Lewis is best remembered as the author of the sensational Gothic novel *The Monk* (1796). He was also a slave-owner, inheriting two large plantations and visiting Jamaica twice in 1815-16 and 1817-18, primarily to investigate the living and working conditions of his slaves. His anecdotal record, the *Journal of a West India Proprietor*, was not published until 1834, nearly twenty years after his death from yellow fever on the second return voyage. Warmly praised by Coleridge, the *Journal*'s vivid descriptions and lively, self-deprecating tone make it one of the most readable accounts from a slave-owners perspective of plantation life. Yet, although Lewis emerges as a humane and enthusiastic chronicler, his omissions are as significant as the carnivalesque vignettes he sketches, and, for all his geniality, he is unable to break through the framework of imperialist discourse. Situated between the eradication of slavery under British imperialism in 1807 and emancipation in 1834-1838, the *Journal of a West India Proprietor* records a colonial encounter, between slave-holder and slaves, at a significant historical moment. This unique edition provides full contextual background and includes Lewis's verse narrative *The Isle of Devils*, as well as a telling last letter and extract from his papers.

作者介绍:

目录:

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