

We remained in Spanish Town, the capital of Jamaica, where my father's office was, until the hot weather set in, about March, and then we all got ill one after the other. Papa was looking out for a cottage in the mountains, in which to spend the summer, when a friend who was going to England offered us the use of his country-place in the centre of the island. The climate was very cool there, but to get to it we had to cross a high range of mountains, and the lowest pass by which we could reach this part was so steep and dangerous that it still kept the name of "Monte del Diavolo," or "Devil's Mountain," by which the Spaniards had christened it nearly 300 years ago. When the time came to start on our journey, the English coachman was too ill to accompany us. My father therefore drove the britschka, Joe, the black groom, was on the box next him, and inside sat Mamma, Aunt Nelly, the nurse, and Jessie and I. We had a journey of fifty miles before us, but the horses were very valuable ones, and had just arrived from England: we therefore only travelled in the early morning and the cool evening, as they could not endure the tropical sun at mid-day. These horses had an unfortunate dislike or dread of the negro grooms, and when we began to ascend the Monte del Diavolo on the afternoon of the second day, my father gave strict orders to Joe not to leave the coach-box on any account, but to take the reins, and that he himself would go to their heads, if necessary. You must know that the road was exceedingly steep, and so narrow that even a man on horse-back could not pass a carriage. In several places a recess had been blasted by gunpowder out of the side of the mountain: a negro mounted on a mule preceded the carriage, and if any one was coming towards us he blew a shell loudly, and then either we or they drew up into one of these recesses till the other had passed. Child as I was at the time, I remember the grandeur of the scenery, and I jumped about the carriage from side to side, admiring first the steep cliff rising straight up from the narrow path along which we drove, and next the precipice, which sunk away almost from beneath the horses' feet; the tops of the tall cedar, mahogany, and cotton trees were on a level with the road, and numbers of bright-plumaged birds flitted about among their branches. At the bottom of this ravine there sparkled what looked like a thin thread of water. I immediately begged for some to drink, and Mamma was explaining to me that it really was a large river, and that it was because of its great distance below us that it appeared

to be only a brook, when my attention was attracted by hearing the warning notes of the shell. Whilst I was listening intently, Mamma tied the strings of my cottage-bonnet securely under my chin. You will see presently why I mention this. My little bonnet was very hot and uncomfortable, being exactly like those charity-school girls now wear; but in the days I write of it was quite fashionable. The hood of the carriage was still up, though the sun was sinking below the high hills towards the west, and I thrust my restless head beyond it to see what was going on. How well I remember it all! Just at that moment a second discordant blast came from the shell; the horses pricked up their ears and slightly started, enough to send one of the hind wheels to the very edge of the steep precipice. My father encouraged them with both voice and whip, and all would probably have been right, if poor well-meaning but stupid Joe had not forgotten all his master's cautions. He jumped off the coach-box, and was at the spirited animals' heads in a second. At the sight of a figure dressed entirely in white, with jet-black face, hands, and bare feet, the horses backed a little more, and the off hind wheel slipped over the edge of the precipice. What follows takes much longer to tell than it did to happen. The horses tried to drag the carriage up again, but in vain; every instant added to the weight. I can distinctly recollect my father's blanched face as I saw him fling down the useless reins and whip, and spring to the horses' heads to help Joe to drag them back by main force on to the road. We were all quite still and breathless inside the britschka. I remember the sensation of the carriage gradually slipping back and dragging the horses nearer the edge; their frantic struggles—I saw them dig their front hoofs, as a cat might its claws, into the bank over which their hind legs had now slipped. That was the last I saw, for we heard a sort of scream from the terrified animals, mingling with the men's voices of encouragement to them, and I felt Mamma suddenly snatch me into her arms and fold me tight with my head buried in her breast. Then came a swift rushing through the air, which soon took away my small senses; and I never can forget my amazement, on awaking from what I thought a deep sleep, to feel a soft weight preventing me from stirring. I must have made a slight movement, for Mamma gave me a little shake and asked me if I was alive. We have often laughed at that question since, but you must remember that our wits were rather scattered after such a fall. I assured her I was very much alive and anxious to get up,