

The White Witch of Rosehall

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CHAPTER 1

The New Book-keeper

ROBERT RUTHERFORD reined in his horse at the stone and iron gates that opened into the estate; half a mile away, on an eminence that commanded a wide, sweeping view of canelands, hills and sea, stood a building, the fame of whose magnificence he had heard when in the town of Montego Bay, some ten miles to westward.

White in the golden light of the sun it stood, the Great House of Rosehall. It dominated the landscape; it imposed itself upon the gaze of all who might pass along the road that ran in front of the property; it indicated opulence. Young Rutherford knew that it represented the pride and arrogance of the planter caste which still ruled Jamaica, and whose word, on its own plantations, carried all the authority and sanction of an arbitrary will scarcely curbed by laws passed in recent years for the protection of the bondsmen. Behind him, a few paces from the outer edge of the road, rolled and glittered a vast expanse of sea, all blue and purple, with snowy breakers rolling lazily to the shore. Above him stretched a vault of azure flecked with clouds. It was eight o'clock in the morning. The month was December; the year, 1831.

The cane, full grown, flowed up to within a short distance of the Great House, a spreading carpet of vivid greens. In the midst