



# **A Year in Jamaica: Memoirs of a girl in Arcadia in 1889**

*Diana Lewes, Nicholas Noble*

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A Year in Jamaica is a complex memoir telling the story of two simultaneous journeys: Diana Lewes's 1889 trip from England to visit her family's sugar plantations in the Caribbean and, more intriguingly, the internal rite of passage of a Victorian girl on her journey to adulthood. For it is in Jamaica that Miss Lewes tries to find a place for herself in the mysterious adult world, to understand its coded rules and hidden passions. Set primarily on a plantation called Arcadia, overlooking the sea and a distant Cuba from on high, Miss Lewes alternates between the acceptable pursuits of a Victorian gentlewoman -sewing, social visits, riding -and trying to find a more meaningful role for herself in this man's world. She delights in the exhilarating freedom of careering across the countryside on horseback with her sister, is cowed by the roaring rains and horrified at watching a hen peck a lizard to death. And against this background, we see an intelligent and competent young woman appraising the society around her, and struggling with its contradictions. Quite how complex those contradictions were is only finally revealed in the publisher's afterword.

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