

views, St. Helena has existed as an island from a very remote epoch; some obscure proofs, however, of the elevation of the land are still extant. I believe that the central and highest peaks form parts of the rim of a great crater, the southern half of which has been entirely removed by the waves of the sea: there is, moreover, an external wall of black basaltic rocks, like the coast-mountains of Mauritius, which are older than the central volcanic streams. On the higher parts of the island, considerable numbers of a shell, long thought a marine species, occur imbedded in the soil. It proves to be a *Cochlogena*, or land-shell of a very peculiar form;¹ with it I found six other kinds; and in another spot an eighth species. It is remarkable that none of them are now found living. Their extinction has probably been caused by the entire destruction of the woods, and the consequent loss of food and shelter, which occurred during the early part of the last century.

The history of the changes which the elevated plains of Longwood and Deadwood have undergone, as given in General Beatson's account of the island, is extremely curious. Both plains, it is said, in former times were covered with wood, and were therefore called the Great Wood. So late as the year 1716 there were many trees, but in 1724 the old trees had mostly fallen; and, as goats and hogs had been suffered to range about, all the young trees had been killed. It appears also from the official records that the trees were unexpectedly, some years afterward, succeeded by a wire grass, which spread over the whole surface.² General Beatson adds that now this plain "is covered with fine sward, and is become the finest piece of pasture on the island." The extent of surface, probably covered by wood at a former period, is estimated at no less than two thousand acres; at the present day scarcely a single tree can be found there. It

¹ It deserves notice that all the many specimens of this shell found by me in one spot, differ, as a marked variety, from another set of specimens procured from a different spot.

² Beatson's *St. Helena*. Introductory chapter, p. 4.