

Plantago, *Mesembryanthemum*, *Pelargonium*, *Pharnaceum*, and *Tripteris*, these still occurring on the outer and lower zone near the sea, with perhaps the addition of the Rosemary (*Phyllica ramosissima*) and Gumwood (*Commidendron robustum*), which now occupy an intermediate zone between the outskirts and the central highest parts of the islands, where all the rest of the remaining indigenous plants grow. This vegetation was probably so thick as to prevent the existence of grass, the absence of which is remarkable in the native flora,¹ only one species being found, and that confined to the high land.

"Viewing, in the present day, the dry, barren, soilless, frowning, lichen-coated, rocky outskirts of the island, it would require strong faith to realise its ever having been green with vegetation were it not that the record of such a fact is endorsed by the Ebony trunks and stems still existing where no vestige of life can now be found; and also by the manuscripts preserved at the castle, telling of localities where Ebony was gathered for fuel, and Gumwood felled for building purposes, where now no trace of either can be seen. Persons living on the island can also recollect losing their way in the Gumwood forests at Longwood, where now grassy plains with scarcely a tree exist."²

"Of the low land plants, the Scrubwood (*Commidendron rugosum*) is perhaps the most abundant now remaining; and next to that the *Frankenia*. Most of the others are found only as isolated individuals; but all of those which occupy the outer portion of the island are scarcer than *Phyllica ramosissima* and *Commidendron robustum*, which are plants of the mid-altitude; and these in their turn are less plentiful than some of the high land species. The most abundant indigenous plant at present is undoubtedly the Whitewood Cabbage-tree (*Petrobium arborcum*); the Blackwood or Black Cabbage-tree (*Melanodendron integrifolium*) is the next; while next in order of quantity comes the He Cabbage-tree (*Senecio leucadendron*), followed by the She Cabbage-tree (*Senecio prenanthiflora*), with the Dogwood (*Hedyotis arborca*) perhaps taking the next position. Some species have dwindled down to a single plant; this is the case with *Psiadia rotundifolia*, which had almost been classed with the extinct species, until after long and patient search I experienced the great delight of finding one tree³ of it in the Black field at Longwood Gate. It is an old tree, probably the only one alive anywhere, and likely soon to share the fate of the Ebony and Stringwood (*Acalypha rubra*), both of which, after much careful seeking for them, I am inclined to believe exist no longer.

"I saw the Ebony once about twenty years ago. It was growing in a garden on the high land, a miserable little plant only six inches in height, and yet it blossomed.

"The beautiful little Stringwood I last saw about fourteen years ago, growing as a carefully tended plant in the garden at Oakbank. It was only about eighteen inches high, though flowering freely."⁴

From the foregoing it is clear that the native element in the present vegetation, although still represented by at least sixty endemic species of vascular plants, without counting twenty-four others that are probably or possibly indigenous, is inappreciable, except in a few localities and especially high up in the Central Ridge.

¹ We recognise three native grasses, of which only one is at all common.

² From the manuscript records quoted by Melliss, we learn that if the goats and exotic plants introduced into St Helena are largely answerable for the destruction of the native vegetation, man himself is much to blame for completing it, for he certainly cut down large areas of the original forests.

³ This still existed in 1883, when Mr Morris brought home a few branchlets bearing flowers.

⁴ In the enumeration of the plants Melliss adds, "but is now no longer there."