

ST. HELENA.

WHILE there are some countries or districts which attract our attention by the natural peculiarities,—whether beautiful or otherwise,—which they present, there are others which derive all that renders them remarkable from the historical events with which they are connected. It happens that the Island of St. Helena combines both these attractions within itself; for while the natural features of the island are such as deserve the attention of all lovers of nature, the island is at the same time made a link in a great chain of historical events, by having been the last earthly resting-place of Napoleon Buonaparte,—the closing scene of his ambition,—his talents,—and his crimes.

St. Helena is situated in the Atlantic Ocean, in 5° 43' West long., and 15° 55' S. lat.: it is about twelve hundred miles distant from the west coast of Africa, and eighteen hundred from the east coast of America. Its greatest length is not more than ten miles and a half, breadth six and three quarters, and circumference twenty-eight. The whole area of the island contains about 30,000 acres, of which 14,000 are bare rock, or otherwise unimprovable, 8000 are waste lands, fit for trees or pasture, and only 3000 are considered fit for the plough. The island may be deemed to consist of one huge rock rising out of the bosom of the ocean, for it is bounded on nearly all sides by cliffs from six to twelve hundred feet in height. There is a chain of mountains running across the island from east to west, which is terminated at its eastern extremity by the Peak of Diana, rising to a height of 2700 feet. There are only four coves or openings at the shore; but rocks and shoals so abound, that there is only one of them at which a safe landing can be made, and it is at that spot where the only town on the island,—JAMES TOWN,—is situated; this is on the north-west side of the island.

The landing-place at James Town is like a half-moon, scarcely 500 paces wide between the two points; and close by the sea-side are strong batteries extending from one end of the bay to the other. The town is entered by an arched gateway, within which is a handsome parade about one hundred feet square: the road from the landing-place to this gateway passes over a drawbridge between double rows of guns. In the parade are situated the Government-house and the main-guard-room: within the former is the residence of the governor and the principal officers. The principal street in the town contains about thirty houses, most of which are neat and well built. There is also a church. The lofty headlands which command James Town, viz.: *Rupert's Hill* on the east, and *Ladder Hill* on the west, as well as every accessible portion of the coast, are strongly fortified.

There are some symptoms that the island is of volcanic origin, both from the nature of its mineral productions, and from the circumstance that slight shocks of earthquakes were felt in 1756, in 1782, and again in 1817. During a search for limestone, some years ago, a mineral was found which appeared to resemble gold-ore, and a reward of 250*l.* was offered for the discovery of a gold mine; but it was found that the mineral was *not* gold ore, nor have any symptoms of gold been since seen.

The principal animals on the island are cattle and goats, which were brought from England: pheasants and partridges are also very plentiful. There are scorpions and centipedes found in the valleys, but their sting is not dangerous. Sea-fowl, whales, and turtles occasionally appear on the coast; and there are about eighty species of fish found on the coast. It is remarkable, that although bees have frequently been brought to the island, they have never

flourished: it is believed that the high winds blow them away.

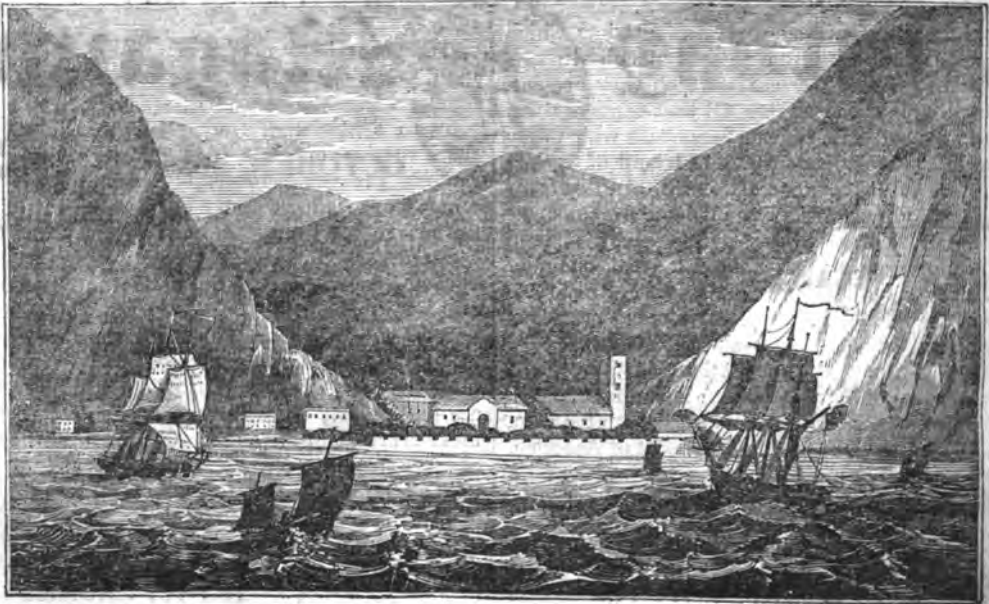
The general soil of the country consists of a rich mould, which fosters a great number of plants, among which are three species of gum-trees, which grow to a height of from three to thirty feet. All these species contain a highly aromatic gum, which renders the wood extremely pleasant as fuel, for which purpose it is chiefly cultivated; although it is not altogether unfit for building, if protected from the weather. From one of the species a sweet-flavoured liquor, called by the natives *toddy*, issues spontaneously; and a bottle, so placed as to catch the natural exudation, may be filled in the course of a night. Oaks, cypress, ferns, myrtles, and other plants, flourish in considerable abundance. Fruits are particularly abundant, as it is stated that on almost every farm are to be found vines, figs, limes, oranges, lemons, citrons, guavas, bananas, peaches, quinces, pomegranates, tamarinds, mulberries, melons, and pumpkins. Many of our English fruits have been introduced, and have not succeeded; but there is a remarkable exception to this with respect to the common *blackberry*. This was introduced in 1780, and it found the soil and climate so congenial, that it completely overspread large tracts of ground; and, as the only remedy against its encroachments, a public order was issued, and has uniformly been in force, for its entire extirpation.

The approach to the country, from James Town, has been thus described:—

The town contains many little gardens, groves, and shady walks, and extends the whole length of the valley, which gradually decreases in breadth, till at last there is room only for a single house. The view on each side from the streets, is awfully sublime, and discovers enormous masses of rock impending over the valley in a manner sufficiently alarming to the mind of a stranger. The roads which give access to the interior of the island, and which have been formed with incredible labour, by blowing up the rocks, are carried along the sides of *Rupert's* and *Ladder Hill* in a zig-zag direction, and the ascent to the summit is so easy, that oxen and carts pass along the apparently perpendicular precipice, without difficulty or danger. For the space of two miles, nothing but naked sterility and a rocky wilderness meets the eye of the traveller; but the sight is soon gratified by the sudden prospect of woody heights, verdant lawns, cultivated plantations, and handsome little country seats. The summit of *High Knoll*, particularly, presents a beautiful series of such prospects, surrounded by a lofty ridge of hills and precipices, which completely close in the view, and finely contrast with the softer and richer scenes which they disclose. On the south side of the knoll, about three miles from the town, is the governor's country residence, called *Plantation House*, a handsome and well-built edifice.

St. Helena is a very healthy spot: the temperature in the open country is never so hot as an English summer, nor so cold as an English winter: there have been years in which the highest summer temperature was 72°, and the general temperature of winter 55°. The atmosphere is generally so clear that a ship may be descried at a distance of sixty miles.

We must now say a few words respecting the history of the island. John de Nova, a Portuguese commander, discovered St. Helena on St. Helen's day, May 21st, 1501. There were no human beings on the island, and he merely announced the discovery, without founding a colony. About twelve years afterwards, some Portuguese noblemen, having offended against the Portuguese authorities in India, were cruelly mutilated by having their noses, ears, and right hands cut off, and in this pitiable state they were sent back to Europe. One of them, *Fernandez Lopez*, unable to bear the idea of appearing in his native country in such a state, was, at his own request, landed



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with a few slaves, on the lonely island of St. Helena. His countrymen endeavoured to alleviate his condition, by supplying him with goats, hogs, poultry, partridges, pheasants, guinea-fowls; as well as figs, oranges, lemons, peach trees, and vegetables, for planting. These succeeded so well, that in four years the little island began to have a cheerful appearance.

The government now began to perceive that the island might make a valuable halting-place for ships going from Portugal to India; by which they might have a supply of water, and fresh provisions, &c.: they therefore dismissed Lopez, and made the island a government station. They succeeded in concealing the situation of St. Helena from other countries for many years; but in 1588 Cavendish visited it in his return from his voyage round the world. It was soon after visited by the Spaniards and the Dutch, who wantonly destroyed the produce of the island. As the Portuguese gradually acquired settlements on the western coast of Africa, they left St. Helena in a desolate condition.

In 1651 the English East India Company formed a settlement on the island, which was confirmed to them ten years afterwards by a charter from Charles the Second. Many settlers were induced, by the offer of lands, to emigrate thither from England; and slaves were imported from Madagascar to work in the plantations. About fourteen years afterwards, the Dutch attacked and took the island; but were obliged to restore it shortly afterwards; and in the following year, 1666, many of the families which had been ruined by the fire of London, took refuge at St. Helena. Once again was it taken by the Dutch, and once again re-taken by the English.

The moral and internal economy of the island was in a very depressed state until about the year 1700, when several judicious means were resorted to for improving the morality of the inhabitants; and since that period the exertions of the successive governors have been directed to the improvement of the place. Repeated charters from the Crown vested the island to the East India Company, who govern it by a governor and council.

The importation of slaves into St. Helena ceased in 1792, and by the year 1810, it was thought necessary to import 50 Chinese labourers in order to proceed

with the agricultural operations. This number was gradually increased, and in 1823 the population was divided as follows:—white inhabitants 1201, civil and military establishment 911, slaves 1074, free blacks 729, Chinese 442, Lascars 24; making in all, 4381.

In 1815 St. Helena became the scene of much interest, from having been selected as the asylum or prison of Napoleon. Early in the year he had escaped from Elba, and it was therefore deemed necessary, after the battle of Waterloo, to select a strongly fortified place as his future residence. On the 7th of August, Napoleon was placed on board of the *Northumberland*, which then sailed for St. Helena, where it arrived on the 16th of October. The Allied Powers had given the custody of Bonaparte's person to England, and in July, 1816, Sir Hudson Lowe arrived at the island in the capacity of governor. Buonaparte was dissatisfied with the first residence allotted to him; and a house was afterwards built for him on the highest plain on the island, 1760 feet above the level of the sea: this was called *Longwood*. Here he lived until the 5th of May, 1821, when he died of an ulcer in the stomach, the effect of which was heightened by the irritation and dissatisfaction which constantly preyed upon his mind during the last three years he remained on the island. His remains were interred with military honours in Slane's valley, near a fountain overhung with weeping willows. The grave was afterwards enclosed by a railing, and a sentry has been since appointed to guard the spot.

EPITAPH ON A MISER.

HERE lies one who lived unloved and died unlamented; who denied plenty to himself, assistance to his friends, and relief to the poor; who starved his family, oppressed his neighbours, and plagued himself to gain what he could not enjoy; at last Death, more merciful to him than he was to himself, released him from care and his family from want; and here he lies with the muck-worm he imitated, and with the dirt he loved, in fear of a resurrection, lest his heirs should have spent the money he left behind; having laid up no treasure where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

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