

une fois l'équilibre détruit, les maladies et la mort arrivent incontestablement.

“ Voyez comme exemple dans le règne végétal la présence de tous ces animaux dévorant sans cesse, nos plantes les plus précieuses et s'attaquant à la fois aux racines, à la tige, aux fleurs et aux fruits. Voyez d'un autre côté les plantes à leur tour, détruisant les insectes, ainsi que le fait vient d'être constaté, et autre exemple bien plus frappant par sa singularité et dont nous sommes témoins chaque jour à Maurice. En effet, le *Campuleia coccinea* vulgairement appelé *Herbe rouge* pousse en parasite sur les racines adventives du maïs, se développe et grossit à ses dépens ; et l'on voit bientôt la plante tout entière s'étioler, flétrir et mourir infailliblement.

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Voici la pétition à laquelle il a été fait allusion au commencement du procès-verbal et la lettre du Dr Günther.

*To His Excellency The Honorable SIR ARTHUR HAMILTON GORDON, K.C.M.G., Governor and Commander in Chief of Mauritius and its Dependencies.*

1. We the undersigned respectfully beg to call the attention of the Colonial Government of Mauritius to the imminent extermination of the Gigantic Land Tortoises of the Mascarenes, commonly called “ Indian Tortoises.”

2. These animals were formerly abundant in the Mauritius, Reunion, Rodrigues and other islands of the Western part of the Indian Ocean. Being highly esteemed as food, easy of capture and transport, they formed for many years, a staple supply to ships touching at those islands for refreshment.

3. No means being taken for their protection they have become extinct in nearly all these islands, and Aldabra is now the only locality where the last remains of this animal form are known to exist in a state of nature.

4. We have been informed that the Government of Mauritius have granted a concession of Aldabra to parties who intend to cut the timber on this island. If this project be carried out, or if otherwise the island be occupied, it is to be feared, nay certain, that all the Tortoises remaining in this limited area will be destroyed by the workmen employed.

5. We would, therefore, earnestly submit it to the consideration of Your Excellency whether it would not be practicable that the Government of Mauritius should cause as many of these animals as possible to be collected before the wood cutting parties or others land with the view of their being transferred to the Mauritius or the Seychelle Islands, where they might be deposited in some enclosed ground or park belonging to the Government, and protected as property of the Colony.

6. In support of the statements above made and the plan now submitted to the Mauritius Government the following passages may be quoted from Grant's "History of Mauritius." (1801, 4) :

P. 194. "We (in Mauritius) possess a great abundance of both Land and Sea Turtle which are not only a great resource for the supply of our ordinary wants, but serve to barter with the crews of ships."

P. 100. "The best production of Rodriguez is the

land-turtle which is in great abundance. Small vessels are constantly employed in transporting them by thousands to the Isle of Mauritius for the service of the hospital."

P. 101. "The principal point of view (in Rodrigues) is, first, the French Governor's house, or rather that of the Superintendent, appointed by the Governor of the Isle of France, to direct the cultivation of the gardens there, and to overlook the park of land-turtles. Secondly, the park of land-turtles which is on the sea-shore facing the house."

7. The rescue and protection of these animals is, however, recommended to the Colonial Government less on account of their utility (which now-a-days might be questioned in consideration of their diminished number, reduced size and slow growth, and of the greatly improved system of provisioning ships which renders the crews independent of such casual assistance) than on account of the great scientific interest attached to them. With the exception of a similar tortoise in the Galapagos islands (now also fast disappearing) that of the Mascarenes is the only surviving link reminding us of those still more gigantic forms which once inhabited the Continent of India in a past geological age. It is one of the few remnants of a curious group of animals once existing on a large submerged continent of which the Mascarenes formed the highest points. It flourished with the Dodo and Solitaire, and whilst it is a matter of lasting regret that not even a few individuals of these curious birds should have had a chance of surviving the lawless and disturbed condition of past centuries, it is confidently hoped that the present Government and people who support the "Royal Society of Arts and

Sciences of Mauritius" will find the means of saving the last examples of a contemporary of the Dodo and Solitaire.

London, April 1874.

(Signed by)

JOS. D. HOOKER, P. R. S.

H. B. FERRIS, P. R. G. S. & R. A. S.

CHARLES DARWIN, T. R. S.

RICHARD OWEN.

JOHN KIRK, F. L. S., H. M. Political Agent  
and Consul General.

ALFRED NEWTON, M.A., F. R. S., V. P. Z. S.

Zoological Department, April 25th 1874.

Dear Sir,

"I beg to transmit to you as the President of the R. Society of Arts and Sciences of Mauritius a copy of a memorial signed by the Presidents of the Royal and R. Geographical Societies of London, and other gentlemen who have paid special attention to the Natural History of the Mascarenes; and forwarded by this mail to His Excellency Sir A. Gordon.

"The Society over which you preside, and you yourself have taken such an active interest in the elucidation of the History of the Fauna of those islands that I feel confident you will favourably receive and support the proposal conveyed in the memorial, if there are no serious obstacles to its being carried out.

"With our imperfect information as regards the period when Alalra will be occupied we thought it best to lose no time in presenting the memorial. But even if that period should be more distant than we were led to suppose, you

might agree with us in making it advisable, to remove the Tortoises at the earliest opportunity from a place, where no protection can be afforded to them, and where they continue to be exposed to the danger of extermination.

“From the general interest which these tortoises excited wherever they were met with, I cannot help thinking that the plan of forming a park of them is one of the legislature and people of Mauritius would take a pride in.

“The expenses necessary for the undertaking could not be very great; and considering that, at present, there is not a single perfect example in any of the European Museums, I have no doubt that, after the attention of Naturalists has once been directed to the value of these specimens, mature or full grown examples will be worth from £ 20 to £ 50, so that, if only twenty full grown tortoises were secured, the expenses could be recovered in time.

I remain,

Yours very truly,

A. GÜNTHER.

The Hon. EDWARD NEWTON,  
&c. &c. &c.

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SÉANCE DU SAMEDI 12 SEPTEMBRE 1874.

SOUS LA PRÉSIDENTE DU DOCTEUR E. LE JUGE.

Présents: MM. A. Daruty, Ev. Dupont, L. Le Juge,  
V. de Robillard, L. Bouton, Secrétaire.

M. L. Le Juge fait la lecture suivante du Rapport sur  
l'Exposition des 2 et 3 Octobre 1873 :

“ Bien que nous ayons remarqué une certaine abstention  
de la part des Exposants, la dernière Exposition dans son