

THE DARWIN LETTERS AT SHREWSBURY SCHOOL

By A. E. GUNTHER

IN a paper in 1968 Sir Gavin de Beer enlarged on the influences that had played on Darwin's mind during the years of education, and gave transcripts of the fifteen letters in the possession of the Shrewsbury School Library (1). If at that time, when I was working on the life of Dr Albert C. L. G. Günther, F.R.S. (1830-1914), one time Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum, I had known of Sir Gavin's intention, I would have asked him to include in his paper transcripts of the letters Darwin wrote to my grandfather, which I would then have presented to my old school.

Of these, two were included in Francis Darwin's *Life and Letters* of 1887 (2), and another nine wholly or in part in a recent life of Albert Günther (3), but the whole series of thirty have never been transcribed or printed in their entirety. Their interest lies in showing the extent to which Darwin relied on the work of one, among many other naturalists, for the compilation of *The Descent of Man* (4).

Albert Günther was born in Esslingen, Wurttemberg and because his father died when the boy was four, he and his brother were brought up in their grandfather's parsonage at Vaihingen, a village on the hills south of Stuttgart where his father's love of animals was one of his earliest recollections. From the Gymnasium at Stuttgart, Günther proceeded with a bursary to the Evangelical College at Tübingen, since it was only by training for the Church that his pensioned mother could assure the boy an education, but from the first the call of natural history proved stronger than that of theology, and he would spend such spare time as he had roaming the countryside with Cuvier's *Règne Animal*. Nevertheless he did well enough in his theological examination to be granted a fifth year for the study of an approved subject outside theology, and choosing natural history secured within two years a doctorate on a thesis on the *Fishes of the Neckar*.

But still without the means of earning a living except as a Lutheran pastor, he embarked, as an insurance, on the study of medicine, and proceeded to Berlin, less on account of the reputation of the medical school, than on that of Professor Johannes Müller (1801-1858), one of the great naturalists of the period. After a year in Berlin, Günther continued his medical studies in Bonn, and finally returned to Tübingen for his medical degree.

Since, during these years, once a student had left theological college, bursary

grants were insufficient, to meet university fees and to keep body and soul together, Günther was dependent on what his mother could earn, and since the middle class could not then well enter service in Germany, she migrated to England, to seek employment as a teacher. It was on his first visit to her in 1855 that, armed with an introduction from his German professors, Günther met Dr J. E. Gray at the British Museum and Professor Owen at the Royal College of Surgeons. So that when, on the conclusion of his medical studies in 1857, Günther again found himself in England without employment, his first thought, rather than enter medical practice, was to apply to the British Museum. There, Gray, aiming to rival the collections at Paris, had filled the basement with bottles of fishes and frogs, which having no time himself, or staff, to set in order, offered Günther £40 to make a catalogue of the frogs, followed by one of snakes and by the *Catalogue of Fishes* which occupied the next ten years.

It was to the Spirit Room, in the dingy half-lit basement of the Bloomsbury building, that Gray would send visitors with enquiries, and one of these was Charles Darwin. From the issue in March 1858 of Günther's first catalogue on the *Colubrine Snakes*, and from the number and quality of papers presented to the Zoological Society, Darwin and others became aware that there was a new and highly trained hand at work in the British Museum, and it seems to have been a paper on a new snake from the Galapagos Islands that inspired Darwin's first letter:

Down, Bromley, Kent
March 6th [1860]

Dear Sir

I trouble you with this letter to say that I have looked to my original catalogue, & find that I collected 5 specimens of snakes at the Galapagos from Charles & James Islands. These snakes I briefly described as far as colour & stripes are concerned in my catalogue; & they differ somewhat in colour, & as when I published the 1st Edition no herpetologist had looked at the snakes, I was led into the blunder of supposing that there were several species. This blunder I corrected as soon as M. Bibron [i] had provisionally looked over my collection. Perhaps Mr. Bell [ii] may have some specimens of mine from the Galapagos.

Dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,
C. Darwin

(i) M. Bibron, French zoologist (1806-1848).

(ii) Thomas Bell (1792-1880), professor of zoology, King's College, London.

Although Günther was present at the Linnean Society when Darwin's and Darwin's and Wallace's papers on evolution were read, and also at the Huxley-Wilberforce confrontation at the British Association at Oxford in 1860, he had arrived too late to offer any contribution to the *Origin of Species*. But in the late 1860s Darwin was engaged on *The Descent of Man* (1871) and it was his need of first-hand observation on fishes, batrachians and reptiles that led to an interesting series of letters, Darwin's relative dependence on the work of those he consulted being suggested by the space each occupies in the index. Following a visit to the Spirit Room, he wrote:

Down, Bromley, Kent, S.E.
May 12 [1867]

My dear Dr. Günther,

You were so kind as to say that I might ask you some questions. I have roughly written out my short discussion about the secondary sexual differences of fishes, chiefly from your information; & some points have occurred to me about which I would be grateful for answers. I enclose my queries; & I hope & think they will not cause you great trouble, for 'yes' or 'no' or 'do not know' will answer most of them. Will you write at back of my paper & put corresponding numbers to answers?

Be so kind as to give enclosed note to Mr. Ford [i], when next at the Museum, it is about figures of fishes.

When I saw you in London, you said that you would run down here. We shall be *most* happy to see you at any time, & you can come down on the Saturday evening or Sunday morning whichever suits you best, & sleep here & in all probability I can send you in some vehicle as early as you like on Monday morning to the station. Bromley is 6 miles distant; but Orpington (a new station on the S.E. Railway) is only about 3 miles distant, though more distant from London.

I shd like to hear whenever you have time & inclination to come here for this reason, that I may be idle in the morning, for if I do my full morning's work, I am generally dead tired in the evening,—my usual state being one of fatigue.

With most sincere thanks for all the very great kindness which you have shown towards me, pray believe me,

Yours vy sincerely,
C. Darwin.

- (i) George Henry Ford (1809–1876) was one of the most accurate and sensitive animal artists of the century. He was born on his father's farm in South Africa, and as a boy was found with a broken hip by Dr Andrew Smith (1797–1872) who cared for him, and during his convalescence encouraged him to draw the animals Smith was collecting. In 1837 Ford returned with Smith to England and was engaged by Gray at the British Museum later illustrating Günther's monographs, mainly on reptiles and fishes. (Günther, A. E. 1972. *The original drawings of George Henry Ford. J. Soc. Bibliophy nat. Hist.* (1972) 6 (3): 139–142.)

Günther's reply to this first letter asking for data for *The Descent of Man* was followed by another asking for similar information on the sexual differences in snakes, batrachians and lizards:

Down, Bromley, Kent S.E.
December 7 [1867]

My dear Sir,

I enclose, as you desired, my photograph. Allow me to thank you cordially for your great kindness in giving me so much information, which is of real value to me. Should any cases occur to you of well-marked sexual differences in snakes, batrachians, or lizards (about which I forgot to ask) will you have the kindness to make a memorandum on the subject. I think I remember that the males of certain lizards in S. America had a scarlet throat; but this may have been an error. In the Zoolog. gardens the keeper shewed me the males and females of the rattle-snake, and they differed considerably in colour; the males being much more yellow. He gave me positive evidence of the sexes, and said all that he had seen presented the same appearance. I have told my publisher to send you my book on "Variations &" [i] which will be published in 2 or 3 weeks, to you at the British Museum; but I much fear it will contain very little that can interest you.

Believe me

my dear Sir

your very sincerely

Charles Darwin

(in hand of Emma Darwin; signature only in Darwin's handwriting)

- (i) *The Variations of Animals and Plants under Domestication*. London: John Murray, 1868.

Down, Beckenham, Kent, S.E.

Sept. 21 1869

Mr dear Dr. Günther,

I am going to beg, I hope for the last time, a great deal of assistance from you. I enclose a whole string of queries, but most of these may be answered by a few words written after them. My only excuse for troubling you so much is that four-fifths of the facts which I give are quoted from you & from your works. To save you as much trouble as possible, I enclose an envelope directed.

In the second place, you most kindly offered to help me about illustrations. I now enclose a list somewhat different from my original one. Will you look it over, as some of the drawings cannot be made, unless you can supply the specimens. Mr. Ford wd do the drawings *incomparably* better than anyone else; but if his time is taken up with more important & original work, could you find any other artist who wd make accurate and neatly finished drawings. If Mr. Ford cd pledge himself to complete the drawings within 2 months, this wd do; otherwise I must search for someone else, but this wd be a grievous loss to me. I am not quite certain when I shall go to press, for it depends upon whether I shall add another subject, & this I cannot at present decide; but I shd so much regret being delayed by the want of the drawings, that I must get them done within the time specified. It will be a real kindness if you will assist me on this head. Pray forgive me for asking so many favours &

believe me

yours sincerely obliged

Ch. Darwin

(in hand of Emma Darwin; signature only in Darwin's handwriting)

These letters are interrupted by one recording Günther's loss of his young wife, Roberta, née M'Intosh (1843-1869) from puerperal fever after the birth of a son, Robert T. Günther, F.L.S. (1869-1940). Roberta was the youngest sister of William C. M'Intosh, F.R.S. (1838-1931) later professor of natural history at the University of St Andrews, and a pioneer in fisheries research who, when in London, used to call in at the Spirit Room to talk fish. Roberta had developed a talent for drawing her brother's marine specimens, and her water colours of the annelids described in his monograph are now in the British Museum (Natural History). In 1867 Günther was attending the meeting of the British Association at Dundee, and was attracted by Roberta's drawings illustrating her brother's lecture, and by the person of the young lady who painted them. They were married at Birnam, near Dunkeld in November 1868.

Down, Beckenham, Kent, S.E.
Sept. 25 69

My dear Dr. Günther

I have just received your letter, & am astonished & deeply grieved at its contents. You have my most entire sympathy. Your words so full of tenderness & resignation brought tears to my eyes. I have at present no comfort for you, & I can only wish you fortitude to bear the greatest loss, which a man can be given to bear.

I will write within a few days & in the meantime I thank you for all your very kind assistance, so kindly rendered.

Believe me, Yours very sincerely,
Ch. Darwin

Down, Beckenham, Kent, S.E.
Sept. 27th [1869]

My dear Dr. Günther,

Your answers to all my many queries are so full, clear & explicit that I have not a word more to ask, & they will be of the *greatest* use to me.

I would not on any account ask you to write to America about which sex of the Chromids sits on the nest [i]; but *if you write on any other subject*, I shd be vy much obliged if you would ask.

I am delighted to hear that Mr. Ford will undertake the drawings. I had forgotten about differences of size in sexes: no doubt the female must be in due proportion smaller. Any species of *Salmo*, which presents during the breeding season the differences in jaws will do vy well [ii].

Will you ask Mr. Ford whether he has done the drawings of the feathers of *Polyplectron* [ii] & Peacock [iv]. I hope so, otherwise I will have a terrible hunt to get out the specimens again.

With the most cordial thanks & sincere sympathy

Your's very truly

Ch. Darwin

PS. *Private*. I wish you had told me some news about your child, & how you succeed [v]. You have indeed a hard & cruel lot to bear.

- (i) *Descent of Man*, vol. II, p. 21.
- (ii) *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 3, 4, Fig. 26.
- (iii) *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 137 141, Figs. 54, 55.
- (iv) *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 137, Fig. 53.
- (v) The child had been left in St Andrews and Günther was anxious about it.

Down, Beckenham, Kent. S.E.

Jan. 13th [1870]

My dear Dr. Günther,

I am very much obliged to you. The sight of the proofs has pleased me more than anything which has happened to me for some weeks. Pray tell Mr. Ford (or show him this note) that I am delighted with their appearance. I hope you are pleased with them, for they all illustrate facts which I give wholly on your authority. I declare I think the sexual differences in the chamaeleons [i] look more wonderful in the figures than in the real specimens. They will make my chapter capital. Pray tell Mr. Ford that I am exceedingly pleased also with the feathers, [ii] which look far better than I thought possible. I long to see those of the Argus pheasant & peacock. There ought to be a drawing of the head of a *female* salmon.

Accept my cordial thanks for all your extraordinary kindness

Yours vy. sincerely,

Ch. Darwin.

The *Callionymus* [iii] also is beautiful. I lately saw someone who said he did not believe fishes ever differed much sexually!

- (i) *Descent of Man*, vol. II, p. 35, Figs. 35, 36.
- (ii) *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 137 149, Figs. 53 59.
- (iii) *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 8, Fig. 28.

Down, Beckenham, Kent. S.E.

Jan 15 [1870]

My dear Dr. Günther

Do you feel inclined as yet to leave town? A little change wd be good for you. Newton [i] of Cambridge (& I hope Hooker [ii] and Swinhoe [iii]) is coming here next Saturday Jan 22nd to dine and to stay till Monday morning. Will you join us: it wd give me great pleasure if you can prevail on yourself to come. I enclose memorandum about best trains.

Yours vy sincerely

C. Darwin

Many thanks for your last note.

- (i) Alfred Newton (1829-1907), F.R.S., professor of zoology and comparative anatomy, Cambridge.
- (ii) Sir Joseph Hooker (1817-1911), F.R.S., Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens.
- (iii) Lt. Gen. F.W. Swinhoe R.A. (1821-1907), traveller and collector.

Down, Beckenham, Kent
March 23 [1870]

Dear Günther,

As I do not know Mr. Ford's address, will you hand him the note, which is written solely to express my unbounded admiration of the woodcuts. I fairly gloat over them. Their only evil is that they will make all the other woodcuts look very poor! They are all excellent, & for the feathers I declare I think it the most wonderful woodcut I ever saw: I cannot help touching it to make sure that it is smooth. How I wish to see the two others & even more important ones of the feathers & the four other reptiles etc. Once again accept my very sincere thanks for all your kindness. I am greatly indebted to Mr. Ford. Engravings have always hitherto been my greatest misery & now they are a real pleasure to me.

Yours very sincerely
Ch. Darwin.

I thought I shd. have been in the press by this time, but my subject has branched off into sub-branches which have cost me infinite time, & Heaven knows when I shall have all my work ready, but I am never idle [i].

(i) Included in Darwin, Francis, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. III, p. 122. London: John Murray (1887).

4 Chester Place
Regent's Park, N.W.

March 23 [1870]

Dear Günther

Will you be so kind as to give the enclosed slip to Mr. Ford, as I forgot to give it.

I have been thinking of your case of the branded snake; & though I do not want the fact at present, it is so good that I shd. like to secure it.

What is the name of the snake? Do the longitudinal bands become interrupted and pass into transverse bands in the vars. of the *same* species, or in allied species?

In the same *genus* or in closely allied genus, are some species always longitudinally & other speceis always transversely banded?

I shd. be grateful for an answer at any time.

Yours vy truly obliged
Charles Darwin

P.S. Please ask Mr. Ford to keep my rough sketches of feathers & my notes, as I am much puzzled what to do about the letters of reference to the different marks & dots.

Down, Beckenham, Kent.

My 15th [1870]

My dear Dr. Günther,

Sincere thanks. Your answers are wonderfully clear and complete. I have some analogous questions on reptiles & which I will send in a few days & then I think I shall cause no more trouble. I will get the books you refer me to.

The case of the *Solenostoma* [i] is magnificent, so exactly analogous to that of those birds in which the female is the more gay, but ten times better for me, as she is the incubator. As I crawl on with the successive classes I am astonished to find how similar the rules are about the nuptial or 'wedding dress' of all animals. The subject has begun to interest me in an extraordinary degree; but I must try not to fall into my common error of being too speculative. But a drunkard might as well say, he would drink a little, and not too much! My essay, as far as fishes, batrachians and reptiles are concerned, will be in fact yours, only written by me.

With hearty thanks

Yours vy sincerely

Ch. Darwin [ii]

Remember whenever so inclined how glad we shall be to see you here. Thanks for proof plates; I shall be vy glad indeed to see the paper.

- (i) *Descent of Man*, 1871, vol. II, p. 22.
- (ii) Included in Darwin, Francis, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. III, p. 123. London: John Murray (1887).

Down, Beckenham, Kent. S.E.

Jy. 15th [1870]

My dear Dr. Günther

I do not know which species of triton, Mr. Ford has drawn for me. [Fig. 31, *T. cristatus*]. I describe briefly in my MS *T. punctatus*. Will you kindly write name on proofs and slip them in the enclosed envelope, without troubling yourself to write a word. My chapt. on fishes and reptiles, wd. have been much the worst in my volume, had it not been for your kind and most valuable assistance, & now I think it will be one of the best illustrated.

Yours vy sincerely,

Ch. Darwin.

Down, Beckenham, Kent. S.E.
Jan 21st [1871]

My dear Dr. Günther

Will you give us the pleasure of seeing you here on Saturday 28th & stay till Sunday. Mr. Winwood Reade [i] & I hope Swinhoe and Hooker will be here. If you can come, the best plan will be by train which leaves Charing Cross at 5° 5 & reaches Orpington at 5° 47', when our carriage will meet you.

Yours vy sincerely
Ch. Darwin

(i) W. Winwood Reade (1838–1875), African traveller, correspondent, novelist.

Down, Beckenham, Kent
Sept. 28 [1871]

My dear Dr. Günther

I am going to beg a very great favour of you. I know how wide is your knowledge, & I do not know to whom else to apply. Will you answer, as far as lies in your power, the 4 enclosed and very miscellaneous queries. I enclose an envelope all ready addressed to save you as much trouble as possible. When last in London I called at B.Mus., but found that you had just started for your summer holidays. I have been vy unwell for many weeks, with my head much affected, and I have been able to do vy little work, indeed none for 6 weeks. Forgive me for trespassing on your great kindness, and believe me.

Yours vy sincerely
Ch. Darwin

Down, Beckenham, Kent
Oct 3rd [1871]

My dear Dr. Günther

I thank you truly for all the great trouble which you have taken for me with so much kindness. All your answers, except about the ears of the Mus, are amply sufficient and most useful to me. By chance I knew about the mice, on the old authority of Prof. Henslow [i], and it was to illustrate the very point that I wanted to know about other Rodents!!

Vy many thanks for answers about the Galaxias [ii] etc.

I am *certain* I read quite lately in some good journal about the ears of the Mus, & I said to myself the author (I think a German) seems quite wanting of trust. Would it be asking too great a favour to beg you just to mention the case to any naturalists whom you may come across?

I send another copy (I have plenty) of Chauncey Wright [iii]: he is *not* a naturalist, but an [unreadable] mathematician & [? unreadable] [& I believe metaphysician]. I republished his essay although ill-expressed [iv], as I wished to show that Mr. Mivart does not, in my opinion, & as I now find in the opinion of some others, state the case fairly against me. There are, as it seems to me, many clever remarks in Wright's essay.

Once again let me thank you for your information & for your very kind note. What a wonderfully interesting creature you found the *Ceratodus* [v] to be. Its paddles interest me particularly. The light thrown on the classification of fishes seems all-important.

Yours most truly
Ch. Darwin

- (i) Henslow, Rev. J. S. (1796–1861), Cambridge, professor of mineralogy 1822–7; recommended Darwin, his pupil, as naturalist on H.M.S. *Beagle*; botanist, vicar of Hitcham, Suffolk 1839.
- (ii) *Galaxias*, fresh-water fish inhabiting two continents, South America and Tasmania-New Zealand, see *Origin of Species*, 6th ed., p. 343.
- (iii) Wright, Chauncey (1830–1875), American philosopher and mathematician who, though an independent thinker, wrote in support of Darwin's hypothesis, and against George St Mivart's thesis in *Genesis of Species* (1871).
- (iv) Darwin is referring to an article Wright contributed to the *North American Review*, July 1871, entitled: 'Darwinism, being an Examination of Mr. George St. Mivart's *Genesis of Species*', with Additions. He had it reprinted by John Murray, and himself distributed it as a separate.
- (v) *Ceratodus*, the Australian lung-fish: a genus of Ganoid discovered in Rivers of Queensland, Australia, *Proc. Roy. Soc. Lond.* **19**, 377–379 (1871).

In May 1872, J. E. Gray's brother, G. R. Gray, Assistant Keeper and ornithologist, died, and Günther applied for the post with the support of many British and Continental naturalists, among them Darwin:

Down, Beckenham, Kent.
May 11th 1872

My dear Dr. Günther,

I am not aware of the rules followed in the British Museum with respect to the promotion of the officers; nor how far special studies are attached to each particular post; but I have the greatest pleasure in expressing my deliberate opinion that you hold a very high position amongst the first naturalists of Europe; and that you have most justly earned this high position by your various publications.

Allow me to add that I have been invariably struck and have greatly profited by the freedom and kindness with which you have always placed your extraordinary amount of knowledge at my disposal

Pray believe me,
Yours very truly,
Charles Darwin.

Down, Beckenham, Kent
My 13 [1872]

My dear Dr. Günther

Will you have the kindness to answer me a simple question. Is the Horned Toad of Oregon, the *Tapaya Douglasii*, a Batrachian or Lizard? I ask because I believe that the Horned Frog of California, the *Phrynosoma cornuta* is a Lizard. If the names are synonymous, which is right; and have I spelled them rightly? [i]

I shall be anxious to hear, as I sincerely hope may be the case, that you are successful about promotion in the B. Museum. I do not know whether I judged wisely but I thought my form of Testimonial would be the best for the Trustees, as many of them know nothing of science, but would regard a European reputation.

Yours vy sincerely
C. Darwin

- (i) Today *Tapaya Douglasii* (Short Horned Lizard) and *Phrynosoma cornuta* (Texas Horned Lizard) both belong to the group of Horned Lizards, genus *Phrynosoma*, family Iguanidae.

Günther's appointment as Assistant Keeper was dated 12 June.

Down, Beckenham, Kent
June 21 [1872]

My dear Dr. Günther

One word to say how heartily and sincerely I rejoice at your appointment,

Yours vy sincerely
Ch. Darwin

Down, Beckenham, Kent
Nov. 23 1872

My dear Dr. Günther

Many thanks for the Pop. Sc. Review; but I am a subscriber and read yr article with the greatest interest some time ago [i]. Therefore I return it, as you might like to give it to some one else, erasing my name. I have to thank you for a most kind letter received a little time ago, and which pleased me much. But I did not answer it as I hope to be in London before very long and shall then see you.

Believe me
yours very sincerely
Ch. Darwin

[In hand of Emma Darwin, except signature]

- (i) An Account of a Ganoid Fish from Queensland (*Ceratodus*) *Pop. Science Review*, **II**, pp. 257–266, pl. lxxxvi.

Down, Beckenham, Kent
June 14 [1873]

Dear Günther

I observed your statement in the *Annals* [i], but I am not the less obliged to you for informing me. Sidney Smith [ii] used to tell Francis Horner [iii] that he looked so good a man that he might commit any crime and no Jury would convict him; & I feel the same about your accuracy; you might make half a dozen slips & I shd always maintain that you were the most accurate of men. No one can be safe from so trifling an error as that about the frogs.

I hope *Phrynosoma* will flourish: do you keep it in a green house or Hot-house: I observe that such places suit toads excellently; but as I write it occurs to me (?) this *Phrynosoma* is a Lizard. I never heard of the odd statement which you make about its eyes.

Yours most sincerely,
Ch. Darwin

- (i) Paper on *Megalophrys*, *Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.* **II**, 417-9 (1873).
- (ii) Smith, Sidney (1771-1845) Canon of St Pauls, reformer and wit.
- (iii) Horner, Francis (1778-1817), M.P., lawyer, political economist, one of the founders of the *Edinburgh Review*, 1802.

Down, Beckenham, Kent
Feb. 12 1874

My dear Dr. Günther

If you have no objection will you be so kind as to sign the enclosed and return it to me. If Dr. Gray knows Mr. Swinhoe, perhaps you will be so good as to ask him whether he will also sign it.

Yours very sincerely,
Ch. Darwin

[In hand of Emma Darwin, except signature]

Down, Beckenham, Kent
Feb 25 1874

My dear Dr. Günther

I have given, in my *Descent*, vol. 2 p. 12, an account from you of the curious brushes on the sides of the 2 sexes of *Monacanthus* [i]. Now you no doubt will have seen an acct in the *American Naturalist* (1871 p. 119) [ii] of the brush-like scales with which the males alone of *Mallotus villosus* are provided, by which apparently 2 males hold . . . (following in Darwin's hand at foot of page) . . . the female during the act of spawning.

Now will you be so kind as to tell me to what families the *Monocanthus* and *Mallotus* belong; that is, whether they are allied? Am I right in supposing that the use of the brush-like scales is the same in these 2 genera? I should be very much obliged for an information & remain

Yours sincerely
C.h Darwin

P.S. It seems that with many *Cyprinidae* [iii] two males attend on one female: what an odd anomaly this seems to be.

[In hand of Emma Darwin, except signature and seven words indicated.]

- (i) *The Descent of Man*, 1871, vol. 2, p. 12.
- (ii) The case of the Salomoid *Mallotus villosus* was included in the 2nd edition of *The Descent . . .*, 1883, vol. 2, p. 331.
- (iii) *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 249; relating to Carps.

Down, Beckenham, Kent.
c. March 1874 (?)

My dear Günther

The circular will explain the predicament I am in. Is there anyone expecting Prof. Owen in the Museum in addition to Dr. Gray whom you wd get to sign on general knowledge.

I have been very remiss in not having thanked you before for your *very valuable* letter, but I have been overwhelmed with things to do. The account of the *Mallotus* in the *American Nat.* seems to me trustworthy. You will find references about the *Cyprinidae* in my *Descent of Man* [1871] Vol. 1 p. 309 in haste.

Yours very sincerely,
Ch. Darwin

[In hand of Emma Darwin; signature and 'excepting Prof. Owen' and 'in addition to' instead of 'besides' in Darwin's handwriting.]

Down, Beckenham
Ap. 7 [1874?]

Dear Dr. Günther

We should be so glad if you would come to us on Saturday next and stay over the Sunday with us. In case we may hope to see you I wd recommend the 4.12 train from Charing Cross to Orpington which is the one we generally meet.

With Mr. Darwin's kind regards,
very truly yours
Emma Darwin

In 1872, Günther's interest in giant tortoises (he had long kept tortoises from Aldabra and Galapagos as pets), was stimulated by the arrival of an immense carapace, found some years before on the island of Mauritius, and he spent such time as he could spare in 1873 visiting museums where tortoise remains were, with a view to a monograph on them, which eventually appeared in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society* in June 1874 (i). The following letter is likely to date from 1874.

Down, Beckenham, Kent
April 12th [1874?]

My dear Günther

I find that I did not bring home any Tortoises from the Galapagos, as several were brought home by the surgeon and Fitzroy [ii]. I have vague remembrance that specimens were given to the Military Institution in Whitehall (where there is a larger model of the Battle of Waterloo) & I daresay Dr. Gray knows whether this keeps any specimens.

I am sorry that you were not able to come any day to lunch with us. I shd have come & seen you again at the Museum; but unexpected business occupied *all* my time during my last week in London.

Yours vy sincerely
Ch. Darwin

- (i) *Proc. R. Soc. Lond.*, **22**, 421-2 (1874). *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond.*, **165**, 251-284 (1875).
(ii) Robert Fitzroy (1805-1865) F.R.S. Vice-Admiral in command of H.M.S. *Beagle*.

John Edward Gray retired as Keeper of the Zoological Department on 24 December 1874, after 50 years' service at the British Museum, and recommended Günther as his successor, the formal appointment following on 3 February 1875. In applying for the Keepership Günther had asked to be allowed to re-submit the testimonials used in his application as Assistant Keeper in 1872, so that Darwin, among others, was not asked a second time for a recommendation. After the appointment Darwin wrote:

Down, Beckenham, Kent

Railway Station
Orpington, S.E.R.
Feb 9 1875

My dear Dr. Günther

I rejoice at the news in your letter, and heartily congratulate you in being fixed I hope for a long life in so honorable & important a position. Be so kind as to give my sincere congratulations to Mr. F. Smith [i].

Believe me to remain
Yours very truly
Ch. Darwin

[In hand of unknown; signature in Darwin's handwriting]

- (i) Mr Frederick Smith promoted to Assistant Keeper.

Down, Beckenham, Kent

Jany 1 1879

My dear Friend

I must thank you cordially for your most kind little note & I sincerely return your good wishes.

Believe me

Yours vly truly

Ch. Darwin

Down, Beckenham, Kent

Dec. 22nd [1880]

My dear Dr. Günther

I am extremely anxious that you should consider a Memorial which will be sent to you in 2, 3, or 4 days. It has just occurred to me that you may not be at the Museum towards the close of this week & as delay would be very injurious will you kindly send me on a Post Card your address for Friday & the few succeeding days. I trust that you will forgive me for bothering you & remain,

yours sincerely

Ch. Darwin

Down, Beckenham, Kent

Dec. 27 1880

My dear Dr. Günther

Enclosed is the Memorial, about which I take a very deep interest.

Will you kindly read and consider it, & if you approve, I hope that you will sign, appending your official title at the Museum.

We intend to get only few signatures, viz of men who from their special studies, or as Pres. of scientific Socs. have some claim to be heard. Hooker, Lubbock [i] & Huxley will sign. The D. of Argyll [ii] has written to Mr. Gladstone that he highly approves of the Memorial. Now I want to ask a favour of you, unless for any reason you dislike granting it, namely, to send the Memorial to Owen; you might say that you had been asked to lay it before him, as his signature wd carry great weight. If he asks who originated the Memorial you will of course have to tell him that it was I; and this wd

I fear prejudice him against it as I have not spoken to him for 20 years. I enclose an envelope for the return of the Memorial; time is of consequence on account of the meeting of Parl.

Pray forgive me for troubling you and believe me

my dear Dr. Günther
yours very faithfully
Charles Darwin

I thank you much for giving me your address so fully. There has been great delay owing to the disturbance of the Post. Lord Aberdeen [iii] signed it on 23rd. & I have received it only this morning [iv].

[In hand of Emma Darwin, except signature; P.S. in Darwin's handwriting]

- (i) Sir John Lubbock (1834–1913) F.R.S., Baron Avebury. President of the British Association, 1881. York.
- (ii) Duke of Argyll (1823–1900) F.R.S., politician and educationalist.
- (iii) Earl of Aberdeen and Tremain (1847–1934): Gordon, John Campbell, liberal statesman who contributed to social welfare.
- (iv) It is not known to which this Memorial refers.

Down, Beckenham, Kent
Dec. 19 1881

My dear Dr. Günther

I am going to beg a favour of you, namely to ask what are the best steps to take to recommend a man (in whom I take much interest) as a messenger or other such post in the B. Museum. The circumstances are as follows: a man of the name of Surman lived with my late Brother as his butler for about 2 years & attended to him most carefully; so that my Brother left him a Legacy, which I doubled as a mark of my respect and gratitude. He is in every way thought respectable and pleasant mannered, & he came to my Brother with the highest possible character. He now wishes for some post, instead of going into service again. I shd therefore take it as a great kindness, if you would inform me how I can aid Surman in obtaining the desired situation.

Dear Dr. Günther
Yours sincerely
Ch. Darwin

P.S. I do not even know to whom I ought to address the character which I would give of the man, or to whom he ought to apply.

(1) de Beer, Sir Gavin, *The Darwin Letters at Shrewsbury School. Notes & Records R. Soc. Lond.*, **23**, 68-85 (1968).

(2) Darwin, Francis, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, 3 volumes, London: John Murray (1887).

The only mention of Günther in Darwin, F. and Seward, A. C. *More Letters of Charles Darwin*, (1903) occurs in Vol. 2 p. 359 in a letter written on 12 May [1870] to F. Müller: 'The only scientific man I have seen for months is Kölliker, who came here with Günther, and whom I liked extremely.'

This dates a story told about Kölliker's visit which was for the purpose of a trawling expedition in the English Channel, but the professor was so completely disabled by sea sickness that Günther had to do the job for him.

(3) Gunther, A. E., *A Century of Zoology at the British Museum, 1815-1914*. London: Dawsons of Pall Mall (1975).

(4) Darwin, Charles, *The Descent of Man*, 2 volumes. London: John Murray (1871).