

Pen & Quill

SIX MONTHS AT THE SEYCHELLES.

with the notes of the

L E T T E R

TO

A. SEARLE HART, LL.D., S.F.T.C.D.,

BY

E. PERCEVAL WRIGHT, M.D.

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SIX MONTHS AT THE SEYCHELLES,

&c., &c.

MUSEUM, 5, TRINITY, COLLEGE, DUBLIN,
October 9th, 1868.

DEAR DR. HART,—At your request, I proceed to give you, as briefly as possible, an account of my late journey to and from the Seychelles :—

In the Autumn of 1866, the General Committee of the British Association appointed a Committee, consisting of R. H. Scott, E. Whymper, Professor E. Newton, and myself, to proceed in the summer of 1867, to Disco Island, North Greenland, for the purpose of making a collection of the recent and fossil plants to be met with in that portion of the Arctic Circle. Early in 1867, Mr. Scott received the appointment of Director of the Meteorological Department in London, and was, therefore, obliged to give up all thoughts of the expedition. Mr. Whymper then proposed that the expedition should have for its main object the geographical exploration of the coast of Greenland; and believing that thus I would be precluded from making any large collections of the plants of that district, I declined to take any active part in the expedition, but still wishing to spend the summer of 1867 abroad, I made up my mind to proceed to the tropics, and to investigate the flora of that very little known group of islands in the South Indian Ocean, the Seychelles.

On the 1st of February, 1867, I applied, through you, to the Board for leave of absence from College, from the 1st of April, 1867, until the end of the long vacation next ensuing, which, being kindly granted to me, I at once proceeded to get ready a suitable outfit, forwarding it early in March, *via* Liverpool to Alexandria, there to await my arrival from Marseilles.

On the 23rd of March, I proceeded to London, and there, through the kindness of Sir Joseph Napier, Bart., I obtained from Lord Stanley, a circular note addressed to the captains in command of Her Majesty's ships of war in the Indian Ocean, requesting them to give me any aid that might be in their power in the prosecution of my Natural History researches; and from a friend of my father's, the Rev. W. Ellis, of the London Missionary Society, I obtained letters of introduction to the Governor of Tamatave, and to the Chamberlain of the Queen of Madagascar. Having passed the first few days of April in Paris, I left Marseilles on the 9th for Alexandria, in the "Moeris," one of the mail steamers of the Messageries Impériales, meeting on board the Bishop of Mauritius, and the Rev. Dr. Fallet, a Church of England clergyman, belonging to the Seychelles. On the 15th we arrived at Alexandria, where I received the intelligence of the shipwreck of the steam ship "Florida," and the total loss, with her, of all my heavy luggage. I had on board of this steam ship three large boxes, containing a large supply of botanical drying paper, dredges, entomological boxes, and all the necessary and various appliances for collecting; also a Dallmeyer's photographic camera, with stock of chemicals; a double barrellled breech-loader, a large number of books of reference, and of plates—in fact, everything that experienced travellers in the tropics had suggested to me as likely to be useful for my journey.

I heard of this loss by telegram from Liverpool, which, unfortunately, arrived too late to prevent my personal luggage, which was registered from London to Mahè, from going on from Alexandria to Suez, and from being placed on board the mail steamer which left on the 16th for the Mauritius. I have to thank the Bishop of that diocese for taking care of my luggage, and seeing it safely landed and stored at Mahè. I was thus left in Egypt without my luggage, both light and heavy. During the latter part of the month of April and the beginning of May I contrived, not without some difficulty and at some expense, to purchase a few articles necessary for collecting, without which it would have been only waste of time for me to have gone on to Mahè; besides I wrote to Dr. J. D. Hooker at Kew for botanical drying paper, and to Dublin for a fresh set of photographic instruments, books, &c. I profited by this forced sojourn in Egypt to make myself somewhat acquainted with the Flora of the neighbourhood of Alexandria, Ramlee, and Cairo, and though much disheartened by the loss of my things, many of which—especially of my books—were irreplaceable, I was

somewhat consoled by having with me my microscope. I had had it packed with my other things when I received a telegram from a friend in Florence, asking me to bring it with me, and stating that in hope of having an opportunity of seeing it he would meet me at Messina, where the steamer would stop for a few hours. It thus happened that when I landed at Alexandria I had my microscope in my hands. Through the kindness of Mr. Calvert, Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Alexandria, a well known botanist, and of some other friends, I was enabled to visit some of the very fine gardens, abounding in tropical plants, in the neighbourhood of Alexandria.

On the 15th of May, in company with Mr. Churchill, C.B., the new Consul-General at Zanjibar, I left Suez for Aden in the "Emirne." After a very hot journey down the Red Sea we reached Aden on the 23rd. Here a stop of several hours gave me an opportunity of landing and making a collection of the few native plants that are to be met with in the neighbourhood of the coaling depot, and between it and the tanks, some gatherings from these latter have furnished me with some very interesting species of Diatomaceæ—the more interesting as these immense tanks are supplied only with rain water, and are filled on an average but once in three years. I have given this collection of Diatoms to the Rev. Eugene O'Meara for description, and one set of all the species will be added to the series already in the Trinity College Herbarium. Having left the Gulf of Aden, and rounded Cape Guardafui, we encountered a severe gale from the south-west, but in a few days the weather moderated, and we dropped anchor in the harbour of Port Victoria about two o'clock on the morning of the 30th of May. We found Her Majesty's Ship "Lyra," Captain Parr, and the "Thule," steam yacht of the Sultan of Zanjibar, in the roadstead, and after a short delay we landed in Mr. Ward's boat at the commodious little quay of the town of Victoria.

The next morning I found that on the recommendation of Colonel Playfair, now H. M. Consul-General at Algiers, and of the Bishop of Mauritius, I had been appointed by the Governor-General of the Mauritius, acting Government medical officer to the Seychelles, an appointment that gave me many opportunities of visiting some of the more distant islands of the group, and that committed to my care the island called Curieuse, the headquarters of that very rare palm, the *Lodoicea sechellarum*, and the seat of the only leper establishment supported by the British Government. It would appear that shortly before the passing of the act for the emancipation of slaves in the British

Colonies, it had been represented to the then Ministers of the Crown, that very many unfortunate lepers were living in a state of utter destitution on many of the smaller Coral Islands, so numerous in the Indian Ocean. All, or at least the great majority of these had been conveyed to and abandoned on these islands by their masters, who thought in this way to stop the spread of leprosy among their gangs of slaves. The first effect of these representations was the selection of the Isle Curieuse for a leper establishment, and the building of two leper camps on its western side, at a place well sheltered, and where a little stream runs down into the sea—that on the right side of the stream for the male, and that on the left side for the female lepers. Thither, in October, 1829, George Forbes, an active and intelligent native of Scotland, being appointed as overseer, proceeded, bringing with him one leper. In a very short time afterwards the brig “Hebe” having visited the different islands inhabited by lepers, arrived off Curieuse, and landed some two hundred more. In Mr. Forbes’ letters of instructions special directions are given not to permit the leaves of the *Coco de Mer* to be cut, or the nuts to be eaten; and he is desired to plant, once a month, all mature nuts found on the ground; he is also urgently admonished to be kind and forbearing to the unfortunate beings placed under his care; and I may, perhaps, even in this letter, be permitted to mention that, according to the statements of many Governors, who have presided over the Seychelles from that time until the present, Mr. Forbes has acted for now nearly forty years up to the spirit as well as the letter of his instructions, both as regards the beautiful palm tree and the disease-stricken inhabitants of Curieuse.

The Seychelle Islands are about thirty in number, of which the two largest are called Mahè and Praslin, lying about twenty-five miles distant the one from the other. The town of Victoria is situated on the eastern side of Mahè, where the mountains slope gradually down to the sea. The port is nearly landlocked, and is about three miles wide, and about eight or nine miles in length. On one side is a portion of the Island of Mahè, and on the other a chain of islands, of which St. Anne and Isle au Cerf are the largest. The mountains rise behind the town of Victoria to a height of about 3000 feet, and, viewed from the sea, this harbour is thought by many to be one of the loveliest in the Indian Ocean. The town itself lies partly buried between two low hills, up which, on either side, it is gradually encroaching. One broad road runs from the water’s edge up the gorge, and, crossing over the mountain, makes its way to Anse

Nord-Ouest, or the north-west bay. For about the distance of a mile, this road runs through the town; many small streets crossing it at right angles. In them will be found the houses of the natives; these are generally neat one-storeyed edifices, built of white coral, roofed with timber; some few possess verandahs. They stand shaded by tall cocoa-nut trees, or by the more leafy bread-fruit trees. Many of them look very gay, with their gardens full of roses, yellow allamandas, bright red and drooping rousellias, and flaming heads of *Alpinia majestica*, all intermingled and growing as in a wilderness. Scattered here and there through the town are to be found large trees of a species of *Plumieria*; the powerful odour of the blossoms of this tree perfume the air. Magnificent specimens of the "Flamboyant," as large as English oaks, are also very common; and when covered with their immense trusses of flowers, scarlet, yellow, and orange, they appear, especially when glittering in the bright sunshine, as if on fire. There are, as might be expected, but few notable buildings in this little town; but the Government House, surrounded by its beautiful gardens and charming pleasure-grounds; the Church of St. Paul, a neat structure built at the expense of Miss Burdett Coutts, and capable of holding three hundred people; the new Roman Catholic Chapel, and the Hospital, are all sufficiently striking objects. The town, thanks to the Civil Commissioner, is well paved, and well supplied with water; there is also an excellent market place, where, between the hours of five and seven o'clock, A. M., turtle flesh—the beef of the creoles—fish, fruits, and vegetables, are sold. The population of the group amounts to about 7800 souls; about 6200 of this number live on Mahè: there is, besides the yearly addition of births, an annual addition of some 100 to 150 slaves. Acute diseases are rare; epidemics are unknown. Many of the native inhabitants live to a great age, and leprosy is the only disease of great importance prevalent in the islands.

The "Lyra" and the "Thule" having taken their departure for Zanjibar, I accepted the invitation of the Civil Commissioner, Swinburn Ward, Esq., to accompany him on a tour of inspection around the Island of Praslin: here I may add, that as on this, so on many other occasions, Mr. Ward left nothing undone to advance the objects of my journey, and that, whatever success has attended my expedition, it must, to a considerable extent, be ascribed to his kindness. As we crossed the dangerous coral reef that surrounds Praslin, at about the distance of half a mile from the shore, the first object that met my view was a clump of the well-known Seychelles Palm, the *Lodoicea sechellarum*.

To study the structure of this plant, to find out all I could about its life history, had been one of the chief objects of my visit to these islands. For centuries the history of this tree was involved in mystery; its strange-shaped fruits were found, from time to time, on the shores of the Maldivé Islands, or floating on the Indian Ocean; but its native country, or what kind of a plant it was that produced such a fruit, were unknown: tradition said it was a production of the sea; and sailors told stories of how they had seen trees growing beneath the waters, with great bunches of these cocoa-nuts hanging from their boughs; hence, the name of *Coco de Mer*. Immense sums were given for perfect specimens, and wonderful properties were assigned to a decoction of the inner portion of the nut. But at last the trees producing these rare nuts were found on the two most eastern islands of the Seychelle (then the Labourdonais) group, and they were found to belong to one of the tallest and most remarkable of the palm tribe. No sooner was one series of mythical conjectures set at rest by this discovery, than another series took its place. The very limited geographical distribution of so very large a plant (trees of this palm are met with in Praslin nearly 100 feet high), connected with the difficulty of procuring fresh specimens, or of knowing anything with certainty as to the probable age of the trees, or of their time of flowering, and of ripening of their fruit, gave rise to a series of ingenious but absurd statements, to only one or two of which I can allude here. One tree, of the known age of twenty-five years, was found to have a stem of but six inches in height, and hence it was asserted, and generally believed, that a stem of 100 feet high was at least 5000 years old. The large male catkins were said to last in flower for five or six years, and the fruit was supposed to take twice as many years to come to perfection. Some mysterious relation was supposed to exist between the upright stem and that portion near the ground called the "bowl," by which the stem of this palm tree could grow only straight; but the language of science failed to describe in what this relation differed from that met with in other palms. Many of these strange statements had been explained away prior to my visit; some of them still remain unexplained; but I trust that my investigations will, in some measure, settle those points that have been hitherto unsettled, and that in my work on the Seychelles I may be enabled to clear up whatever is still indistinct in the history of the *Lo-doicea*. I have presented to the College Herbarium the fruit in all its stages, a complete specimen of the young palm, and a section from the summit through the centre of the stem, to the termi-

nation of the roots, of a full grown, though dwarfed specimen, from the Island of Curieuse. I need only here add, that from the number of these fine palm trees that are to be met with on the property of Mr. Campbell, and on the property of which Mr. Osucree is agent. there need be no apprehension as to their extermination. The little Island of Curieuse is also Government property, and, therefore, as long as it keeps above the encroaching waters of the Indian Ocean it will be the home, as it is the cradle, of this species.

The western portion of Praslin is mountainous, the ground sloping towards the sea : on the eastern side there are some extensive plains, which, dry during the summer, or cool season, are flooded by the winter rains. In between the mountains are some lovely valleys, each with its own rivulet. A month was very pleasantly spent in investigating the forests of Praslin, and in searching along the sides of the rivers, and by the margin of the sea, and my researches were rewarded by the discovery of many interesting species. *Casuarina equisetifolia* grows wild on many of the hills, and furnishes a very useful timber for the construction of bridges. Three beautiful Palms (*Verschauffeldia*, *Stevensonia*) are very commonly met with in the forests; and there is also a tree fern, with stems from thirty to forty feet in height. A species of trailing Orchid clung to the stems of the "Capucin" trees, throwing festoons over their branches; the large waxy flowers of a white colour, delicately tinged with pink, hanging in great branches from the liana-like stems. Over the more exposed surface of the mountain's side a species of *Sarcostemma* grew, with deliciously perfumed flowers, and an inextricably matted mass of stems. In the shade by the rivers great tufts of *Alpinia magnifica*, and of the tall graceful *A. nutans*, grew side by side; the damp rocks, where not covered by water, being richly carpeted by a species of *Trichomanes*.

On my return to Mahè I commenced a methodical exploration of the forests of this the largest island. Here the land, from the sea edge up to some eight or nine hundred feet high on the mountain side, is in the possession of the inhabitants, who hold their property for the most part by leases from Government, and in some few cases by Crown Patents, granted in the time of Geo. III. ; but the land, from the height just mentioned up to the summit of the mountains, and the valleys between these mountains, remain still the property of the Government. Hence there is a very marked difference between these two regions. The lower zone has been, to a very great extent, cleared of all its

native trees and plants, and in their stead will now be found plantations of cocoa-nut trees, coffee, chocolate, cloves and cinnamon, bread-fruit and jack-fruit trees, mangoes, plantains of many varieties, vanilla, pine apples, and custard apples, not to mention fields of manihot, maize, sweet potato and rice—these struggle on the one side with the mangrove trees, which extend out for half a mile into the sea; and on the other, towards the summit, with the tree ferns, palm trees, and other indigenous plants.

However interesting it might be to one unaccustomed to the tropics to see and to study the productions of the cultivated zone of these islands, in which the finest tropical fruit trees of both the old and new world, being introduced, grow as if on their native soil, the more distant zone, with its indigenous Flora, was that which chiefly engaged my attention. It was my custom on two or three days in each week, two hours before sunrise, to leave Victoria, attended by some six or seven black servants (chiefly slaves from the Mozambique district), and climbing up the steep sides, now of one mountain, now of another, we reached the shelter of the trees in the valleys, a little after sunrise. Some two hours were then spent in collecting whatever plants were in flower, or were needed for my collection. When, halting by the side of the nearest river, breakfast was discussed: the specimens collected were roughly trimmed, arranged, and noted; and being placed between paper and strapped together, the collecting baskets were ready for a fresh supply of specimens. After a rest, another portion of the forest was explored, and more plants gathered. At this period of the year a fine species of *Angræcum* was in full flower, and I have counted twenty spikes of flower on one specimen of this showy orchidaceous plant. It was chiefly found growing on the granite boulders which filled the beds of the mountain torrent, and was somewhat shaded by the overhanging fronds of an *Alsophila*, and the luxuriant leaves of a *Begonia*. Returning home by sunset, the soft-tissued plants were arranged at once, and the others left to be settled until the cool hour that is met with before sunrise. During the months of June and July I had many difficulties to contend with—I had no good drying paper, and the ants and mildew made sad havoc with my specimens.

At the end of August a box with drying paper arrived from Kew, and by this time, too, experience had taught me how to combat with my animal and vegetable foes. When the distance to the collecting ground was beyond a two hours' walk, it was necessary to start very early in the morning, and to row in a pirogue across the bay, or along the shore, until the place se-

lected for the day's excursion was reached. Sometimes it was necessary to stay out all night, returning the following day. Oftentimes it was necessary to cut a path through the forest, in order to reach some promising or inviting spot; and it was after a laborious undertaking of this kind, and after climbing a mountain's side for three hours, over the stems of *Verschaffeldia grandiflora*, with their long hard spines, and the stems and leaves of many gigantic screw Pines, that I reached the place, where I found quite a forest of a new species of *Nepenthes*. This plant, growing over the summit of the highest mountain in Mahè, is the only pitcher plant as yet discovered, or I think likely to be discovered, in any of the African Islands—very far distant though it be from its congeners in the East India Islands, it is still undoubtedly an Asiatic type. It was found in some quantity overgrowing a small Myrtaceous plant. Though I arrived at the spot a few moments after sunrise, yet I found the countless pitchers empty of water, though many of them were half filled with insects (Diptera and Hemiptera); and though I gathered many bunches of male flowers, I did not succeed in getting a branch of either female flowers or fruit. It would be tedious and unnecessary to allude in detail to the many plants and flowers met with on these occasions; but my time was thus fully occupied, unless on the days of the arrival or departure of our monthly mail. In September I visited the most eastern islands—Silhouette and Isle Nord: the former is a fine island, for the greater part under cultivation, and it contains one of the finest cocoa-nut plantations in the group—a plantation that, after paying all the expenses of its very excellent management, yields to its non-resident proprietor an income of over £5,000 a year. Here, amid several hundred thousand cocoa-nut trees, two or three were pointed out to me producing strangely modified and monstrous nuts, an account of which I have given to Dr. J. D. Hooker, who is engaged on a memoir on the subject. In this island all the tobacco consumed in the Seychelles is grown; and there are large plantations of coffee trees. In a valley on the north-east side of the island there are large groves of orange, shaddock and lime trees—one delicious variety of the orange, with a thin skin and no pips, in my mind as far surpasses the well known oranges of Malta and Setubal, as they do the more ordinary sweet varieties; and I have hopes of being able to introduce it into Algiers, or to Lisbon. Isle Nord consists of a somewhat extensive plain, amid three small mountains; the fertility of its soil is very great, and its chief crop is rice. Here I have seen a second crop

of rice reaped off the one sowing. A few sheep are kept on the island, and they are the only sheep to be met with in the Seychelles, except a few also kept on Isle aux Frigates. The first crop of rice for the season was reaped during my stay, and a sheep was killed for the occasion—it may be thought too trifling a fact to mention, but it was a fact of some importance to one who for four months had been condemned to eat no flesh but that of turtle.

It was between this island and the eastern coast of Mahè that I had the good fortune to meet with the “Chagrin.” I had often heard stories of this monstrous fish; but at first I attached as little credit to them as I do to the stories told by Bishop Pontoppidan about the “Kraken;” however, Mr. Ward having measured one that somewhat exceeded forty-five feet in length, I felt bound to believe this evidence, longing all the while to corroborate it by my own personal experience. This I was able to accomplish, and, thanks to Mr. Ward’s exertions, and to the offer of a reward of twelve dollars for the first specimen, successfully harpooned and brought to shore, I was enabled to take photographs of two specimens, male and female, of this remarkable shark, and to preserve all the more important portions of each for more careful examination in Dublin. This shark, which is—the north-whale excepted—the largest of living animals, would appear to have a very limited geographical distribution, and, contrary to the general habits of the true sharks, is not a carnivorous but a herbivorous fish. I have seen specimens that I believe to have exceeded fifty feet in length, and many trustworthy men, accustomed to calculate the length of the sperm whale (one of the most important stations for this cetacean is off Isle Dennis, one of the Seychelle group), have told me of specimens measuring upwards of seventy feet in length; it is a quiet, harmless fish, with a mouth of immense width, furnished with small teeth; it now and then rubs itself against a large pirogue, as a consequence upsetting it, but, under such circumstances, it never attacks or molests the men, and while it reigns as a monster among the sharks, is not, despite its size, as formidable as the common dog-fish. A stray specimen, about seventeen feet long, was found, many years ago, floating near Capetown and was named by Sir A. Smith, *Rhinodon typicus*, but it would appear that nothing more has until now been known about this fish.

In October I visited Isle Aride, Isle Marianne, Isle Felicité, and Isle aux Frigates. Isle Aride is one of the most northerly of the group, and is chiefly remarkable for the enormous flocks of

birds that resort to it for breeding purposes. The most common species is *Sterna velox*. Tens of thousands of this tern live and breed on the island. So tame are the birds that you may lift them off their nests without their flying away, and there is scarcely a foot of ground or a bough of a tree that is not covered over with their nests. During a two days' sojourn on this island, my men captured and ate nearly two hundred of the fat young birds; but, had ten times that number been slain, it would have produced no sensible diminution in their numbers. Good crops of cotton and excellent melons are produced on this island.

Isle Felicité is the only island at present in the possession of the Government (excepting Isle Curieuse, and a little island in the harbour, used as a quarantine station); it abounds in timber, which is in constant demand for building bridges and for other works. The island called Marianne is one of the most easterly, and it would seem as if all the birds from the other islands had taken refuge, by common consent, in it. Here ~~is~~ ^{are} to be heard all day long the chirping notes of *Foudia sechellarum* (E. Newton); the cooings of *Turtur rostratus* (Bp.); the shrill, harsh cries of *Hypsipetes crassirostris* (E. Newton); and the pleasant, plaintive whistling of the *Pie chanteuse*, *Copsychus sechellarum* (A. Newton). Some pleasant days were spent, on this island, though I was obliged to return to Felicité each evening, and to submit each morning to the danger of crossing the coral reef, which clings very closely to the shore at Marianne, and to the certainty of a complete drenching, as the boat shot through the passage amid the coral. Here, as elsewhere, I felt, too, the inconvenience of being obliged to do all the work of collecting and arranging by myself; for I never succeeded in getting a black to render me any assistance, except indeed in the matter of fishing.

The last island that I visited was Isle aux Frigates, the property of Mr. F. Savi. This is one of the most fertile islands of this very fertile group—indeed it may be said to be the garden of the Seychelles. It is not easy to describe the luxuriance of the vegetation of this island. I have seen bunches of bananas grown here, which were almost too heavy for a man to carry; a man of average height might hide in the rice fields, and the mangos grow to the size of large forest trees. Mr. Savi has very extensive sugar plantations on this island, where I have measured canes upwards of nineteen feet in height. The sugar used on the island is made on Mr. Savi's farm, and all the rum consumed at Mahè is manufactured at his distillery; from 20,000

to 30,000 gallons of this spirit being distilled here each year. Thus, in visiting these islands, and in collecting, drying, and arranging their plants and flowers, my time was fully occupied from the 1st of June until the 22nd of November, so that it was quite impossible for me to visit, as I had intended, either Zanzibar or Madagascar.

My original intention was to leave Mahè by the September mail, so as to arrive in Dublin shortly after the commencement of Michaelmas Term, 1867; but unfortunately I was summoned as a Crown witness in a case of murder perpetrated on the beach, before my verandah, and bound over to appear at the Criminal Court in Port Louis, in October. I at once (22nd of August) wrote to the Provost, explaining to him the circumstances of the case, and asking leave to appoint Professor M'Dowel as my *locum tenens* until my return in December. With this request the Provost most kindly complied. I was not, however, compelled to visit the Mauritius, as the local government sent a Commission on it on the spot; but as it was then too late to catch the September mail, and as, had I gone by the October mail, I would not have arrived until the Michaelmas Term Lectures were nearly over, I determined to stay on until the November mail, and to finish the investigation of some of the more distant islands.

I left Mahè on the 23rd of November, 1867, bringing with me on board the "Erymanthe" two large ward-cases of Orchids, ferns, &c.; three *Coco de Mer* trees in three large tubs; one tin box with a collection of dried plants; one barrel of fruits preserved in fluid; four barrels of fish and reptiles; two large boxes of bird skins, star fish, shells, &c.; ten copper store jars of insects, crustacea, sponges, &c.; two bird cages with some three dozen birds; one glass jar with the beautiful fresh water fish peculiar to Mahè (*Haplochilus Playfairii*, Gthr.), and one live leopard. With the exception of the birds, all reached Egypt in safety. At Suez I was annoyed by the custom-house officers, who wanted to charge duty for my live plants; ~~and~~ to pierce holes in all my barrels to test the quality of the rum, ~~as well as~~ to kill my leopard; but thanks to Mr. West, Vice-Consul at Suez, and the intervention of Colonel Stainton, Her Majesty's Consul-General at Egypt, I succeeded in getting all safely across the desert to Alexandria. Here I left the *Coco de Mer* trees—destined for the College Botanic Gardens, the Royal Gardens at Kew, and the Imperial Gardens at Paris—in charge of my friend, Mr. Calvert, in hopes that they would live through the winter in the mild

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climate of Egypt; and proceeding myself at once to Dublin, left my heavy luggage to be sent on *via* Liverpool. I called on the Provost to report myself on the 23rd of December last, and gave him a brief account of my tour.

On the arrival of my collections, I gave the Lichens to my friend the late Admiral Jones, and he had just before his death arranged a set of specimens which has been presented to the College Herbarium. A large collection of Diatoms was made; a complete set shall be given to the College Herbarium; but to name and arrange this collection will take some two or three years. I reserve my collection of flowering plants and ferns in my own hands to describe, as a contribution towards a Flora of the Seychelles. It is my intention to present one-half of the collection to the College Herbarium, and the other half to the Royal Herbarium at Kew.

I have already presented to the College Botanic Gardens a few rare ferns and palms from Mahè, and I hope to add from time to time many more, as since my return, I have succeeded in rearing, a good many species; but from having some practical knowledge of the conditions requisite to grow these, I prefer to keep them until well established under my own superintendence.

My collection illustrative of the Fauna of the Seychelles numbers about three thousand specimens. This collection I intend to keep in my own hands for the present; for, while I have felt no diffidence in presenting the Herbarium of my college with a series illustrative of the Seychelles Flora, I did so knowing that the receiving and keeping of the same would entail no expense on the College: it is quite different with the Zoological collection, which, for the present, I require to have near me while engaged in writing an account of my journey, under the title of "Six months at the Seychelles," in which work I hope to give some detailed accounts of the flora and fauna of the group. In addition to this work, and in order to give some full-sized illustrations of the more remarkable plants, I have in the press, and hope to publish in November, the first part of a quarto volume on the flora of the Seychelles. This part will contain a description, accompanied by four or five plates, of some of the more remarkable species already placed by me in the College Herbarium.

Dr. J. D. Hooker, writing from Kew (August 9, 1868), says—that "it gives me great pleasure to bear testimony to the zeal with which you have followed out the botanical investigation of the Seychelle Islands, and to the *very great value* of the collections you have brought from these islands, which have

thrown much light on the flora of a group, previously almost unknown to botanists."

In conclusion, I have to apologise for the length to which this letter has run. I have tried to condense my facts within a reasonable limit, in order to give you, in as brief a space as was possible, the information spread through the many pages of my note-books. I trust that it may appear to you and to the members of the Board, that I have made good use of the opportunity afforded me by the leave of absence which they so kindly granted. The journey was undertaken altogether at my own expense, and the losses I suffered in the month of April very seriously crippled my resources all through; still I have the satisfaction of returning to my own College, with by far the most perfect collection of the Flora and Fauna of this group of islands that, as yet, has ever been brought together; to arrange and describe these will be the occupation of all my available time for the next two or three years.

Hoping that this letter may be sufficiently explicit for your purpose, and assuring you that I would have written it long since, had I known the wishes of the Board on the subject,

I remain, dear Dr. Hart,

Very faithfully yours,

ED. PERCEVAL WRIGHT, M. D.

To A. Searle Hart, LL. D., S. F. T. C. D.

&c., &c., &c.

