

ART. XLVIII.—Status quo: *A Retrospect.—A Few More Words by way of Explanation and Correction concerning the First Finding of the Bones of the Moa in New Zealand; also Strictures on the Quarterly Reviewer's Severe and Unjust Remarks on the Late Dr. G. A. Mantell, F.R.S., &c., in connection with the same.*

By W. COLENZO, F.R.S., F.L.S., &c.

Mark now, how plain a tale shall put you down.

SHAKESP., "K. Henry IV.," Part I., Act 2.

No pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage-ground of truth.  
BACON, Essay I., "Of Truth."

[Read before the Wellington Philosophical Society, 24th February, 1892.]

MY attention having lately been called to a book published at Wellington by the Government in 1889, entitled "The Literature relating to New Zealand: a Bibliography," by J. Collier, I obtained a copy.

In looking into it I was greatly surprised on reading the following remark made by the compiler (p. 134): "Dr. Mantell sought to claim for Mr. Colenso priority in the discovery of the struthious character of the moa. The *Quarterly Review*, xc., 404, 405, note, disposes of the claim. Professor Owen's first memoir was despatched to New Zealand in December, 1839, and received in 1840. Mr. C.'s paper, dated May 1, 1842, appeared in *Tasmanian Journal*, vol. ii., No. 8, 1844."\* And, although this note of the Quarterly Reviewer was made forty years ago, I had never before heard of it.

I much regret this, for I had again written on the moa in 1879,† fully and exhaustively, as I then supposed, and so had quite done with it.

On the other hand, I am pleased in now detecting that remark and the note, as I think I shall be able clearly to show its error, and this with respect to the late Dr. Mantell as well as to myself.

As a matter of course, I sought to know much more than Collier's brief remark communicated. I endeavoured to obtain a copy of the *Quarterly Review* vol. xc., but for some time failed. None were to be found in Napier, and, as far as I could learn by repeated inquiry, none in Wellington—save, probably, in the General Assembly Library. Consequently I

\* Corrected in a footnote to "No. 7, 1843."

† Trans. N.Z. Inst., vol. xii., p. 63.

made application there, and was promptly and courteously supplied with the volume required.

The Reviewer's "note" in question is a very long one, amounting to nearly a whole page in quantity and of very small type. It seems to me as if a certain infelicitous animus pervaded it, with particular reference to Dr. Mantell. Such, however, may have arisen from two causes on the part of the Reviewer—the one, his ignorance from not going deeply and fully into the subject; the other, his omitting to weigh and consider all matters in connection therewith: perhaps others might (in England) be assigned.

It is, however, given by the Reviewer as being necessary to his statement made in the body of his review, where he says, "All criticisms and misgivings as to the original audacious induction from the fragment of the supposed marrow-bone being thus quashed, *there remained only attempts at detraction from the merit of the discovery.* One of these amenities Mr. Owen has disposed of in a note to his third memoir, and *we shall devote a note to another.*" (*Loc. cit.*, p. 404.)

In order the better to take up and answer the charges made and implied in this long note, and as the book whence I extract it is both old and scarce here among us, and as the matter itself is purely, or mainly, a New Zealand one, I shall necessarily be obliged to quote it pretty largely:—

"Dr. Mantell, in a paper 'On the Fossil Remains of Birds collected in New Zealand by Mr. Walter Mantell' (*Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society* for August, 1848), says, 'I do not deem it necessary to enlarge on the question whether the *Dinornis* and *Palapteryx* still exist in New Zealand. On this point I would only remark that Mr. Colenso, who was the *first* observer that investigated the nature of the fossil remains with due care and the requisite scientific knowledge (having determined the struthious affinities of the birds to which the bones belonged, and pointed out their remarkable characters, ere any intelligence could have reached him of the result of Professor Owen's examination of the specimens transmitted to this country), has given in his masterly paper before quoted very cogent reasons for the belief that none of the true moas exist, though it is probable the last of the race was exterminated by the early inhabitants of those islands.' The emphasis of the italics is Dr. Mantell's; the paper he cites is from the number of the *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* for August, 1844. In it Mr. Colenso refers to a visit which he made in the summer of 1838 to the tribes of the East Cape district, and to the stories which he heard from them. . . . So much for the journey in 1838. In December, 1839, Professor Owen despatched to New Zealand

copies of his first memoir, as printed in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society; and they were received before the close of 1840. Mr. Colenso's paper is dated the 1st May, 1842. 'In 1841-42,' proceeds Mr. Colenso, 'I again visited those parts.' He procured from the natives some bones declared by them to be true moa-bones. 'These bones, seven in number, were all imperfect, and comprised five femora and one tibia, and one which I have not been able satisfactorily to determine. . . . Leaving Waiapu, and proceeding by the coast towards the south, I arrived at Poverty Bay, where the Rev. W. Williams resided. This gentleman had had the good fortune to procure a nearly whole tibia of an immense bird, without, however, the entire processes of either end. Mr. Williams wishing to send this unique relic to Oxford, I left a pair of femora to accompany it, in order, if possible, to obtain from that seat of learning some light on these interesting remains.' . . . Dr. Mantell, who takes no account of the influence of the dispersion of the first memoir in New Zealand between 1839 and 1841-42, seems only to be acquainted with Mr. Colenso's paper as printed in the *Annals of Natural History* in 1844. We have been at the pains to look through the numbers of the *Tasmanian Journal*, and we find Mr. Colenso's account of his excursion in 1841-42, in vol. ii., No. 8, printed in 1844. From this it appears that Mr. Colenso embarked on the excursion which led to his *first* recognition of the remains of large birds in New Zealand on the 19th November, 1841—just two years after the publication of Owen's first memoir on the New Zealand struthious birds. . . . The statement of these facts detracts nothing from the merit of Mr. Colenso's observations; but what becomes of Dr. Mantell's affirmation 'that Mr. Colenso was the *first* observer that investigated the nature of the fossil remains with due care and the requisite scientific knowledge'?" (*L.c.*, pp. 404, 405.)

Here it is apparent that the Reviewer hits Dr. Mantell very hard; but I cannot see any real grounds for his so doing—rather, much to the contrary. No doubt, had Dr. Mantell wholly ignored, or slightingly, or even slightly, mentioned Professor Owen's early discovery, the Reviewer would have had fair grounds for his heavy charges. But Dr. Mantell could not do that. And now, what did Dr. Mantell say? (I quote from *the very same paper* that the Reviewer had quoted from—*Quarterly Journal Geographical Society*, August, 1848.)

The doctor thus begins his very excellent paper "On the Fossil Remains of Birds collected in Various Parts of New Zealand by Mr. Walter Mantell, of Wellington:" "It is not a little remarkable that one of the most interesting palæontological discoveries of our times—namely, the former existence of a race of colossal ostrich-like birds in the islands of New

Zealand—though made in a British colony, and announced to the scientific world by an eminent British physiologist, has not hitherto been brought under the immediate notice of the Geological Society of London. . . . The first relic of this kind was made known to European naturalists by Professor Owen in 1839. It consisted of the shaft of a femur, or thigh-bone, but a few inches long, and with both its extremities wanting; and this fragment so much resembled in its general appearance the marrow-bone of an ox as actually to have been regarded as such by more than one eminent naturalist of this metropolis. And if I were required to select from the numerous and important deductions of palæontology the one which of all others presents the most striking and triumphant instance of the sagacious application of the principles of the correlation of organic structure enunciated by the illustrious Cuvier—the one that may be regarded as the *experimentum crucis* of the Cuvierian philosophy—I would unhesitatingly adduce the interpretation of this fragment of bone. I know not among all the marvels which palæontology has revealed to us a more brilliant example of successful philosophical induction—the felicitous prediction of genius enlightened by profound scientific knowledge. The specimen was put into Professor Owen's hands for examination, . . . and from this mere fragment the Hunterian Professor arrived at the conclusion 'that there existed, and perhaps still exists, in those distant islands a race of struthious birds of larger and more colossal stature than the ostrich or any other known species.' . . . In 1843 the correctness of these views was confirmed in every essential particular by a large collection of bones obtained by the Rev. W. Williams, and transmitted to the Dean of Westminster; and still further corroborated by another interesting series brought to England in 1846 by Percy Earl, Esq., and by the collection which forms the immediate subject of this communication." (*L.c.*, p. 226.)

Surely this language is clear enough. Dr. Mantell, the Vice-President of the Geological Society, voluntarily and largely gives to Professor Owen the highest possible meed of scientific praise for *his being the first to announce* to the scientific world at Home his great discovery.

After this, Dr. Mantell goes fully into the large and rare collection of moa-bones he had then recently received from his son here in New Zealand, containing 900 specimens. And, in his doing so, he further says, "I will now describe in general terms the most interesting specimens in the collection formed by my son; the anatomical details, and the important physiological inferences resulting therefrom, will be laid before the Zoological Society by Professor Owen, to whom, as a tribute of respect due for his masterly interpretation of the bones pre-

viously transmitted from New Zealand, I have offered the examination and description of every object in the series that he may consider worthy his attention." (*L.c.*, p. 231.)

Then Dr. Mantell takes up seriatim my paper on the moa, and quotes therefrom—not merely with reference to the few bones of the moa that I had obtained, but also the many and sundry other particulars I had brought forward relative to their places of deposit (geologically), their apparent age, whether the moa was still living or extinct, researches, inquiries, traditions of the Maoris, &c.; and finally he says, "I do not deem it necessary," &c., as quoted in full above; which has caused the onslaught of the Reviewer.

Now, knowing, as I do, so much of the olden time—"fifty years ago"—in New Zealand, including the very, very few and isolated Europeans then resident who cared for scientific matters at all, and our seeking the moa's remains, I must again say that Dr. Mantell, in so writing, meant to say, and verily says, that I was "the *first*" person to do so out here at the Antipodes, and that this saying had nothing whatever to do with Professor Owen's masterly scientific deductions previously made in England, and already, very properly, prominently, and kindly, brought forward by Dr. Mantell in the beginning of the very same paper.

Indeed, I can hardly comprehend why the Reviewer should have so chosen to run his head bang against a post unless his eyes were shut; for (as I read them) Dr. Mantell had chosen several words in his sentence which would not so well apply to Professor Owen and his deductions from his *one* small and broken fragment—*e.g.*, "first *observer* that *investigated* the nature of the *fossil remains*" (*plural*) "with *due care*," &c.

And this is yet further and clearly shown in Dr. Mantell's words on the same subject in his work on "The Fossils of the British Museum" (published several years after, in 1851, and almost certainly before the Reviewer penned his aggression), in which the doctor says (writing on the moa), "The first European who appears to have taken cognisance of these facts, and paid attention to the native traditions on the subject, was the Rev. W. Colenso," &c. Then Dr. Mantell (again) goes on to say ("History of the Discovery"), "In November, 1839, British naturalists were first made acquainted with the discovery of bones of colossal ostrich-like birds in New Zealand, by the fragment of a thigh-bone of a bird much larger than that of the ostrich, which had been brought to England by a Mr. Rule, who lent the specimen to Professor Owen, by whom it was described in the Zoological Transactions." (*L.c.*, pp. 93, 94.)

Moreover, Dr. Mantell says, "The first collection sent to England by my son, in 1847, consisted of nearly nine

hundred specimens. I gave Professor Owen the exclusive privilege of describing the specimens." And then, in a footnote, Dr. Mantell adds, "The following is an extract from a letter now before me from Professor Owen, dated 'Royal College of Surgeons, Christmas Day, 1847': 'I feel very sensibly the mark of kindness and confidence which you have given me in placing your son's unique rarities in my hands for description; the more so as this liberal and generous conduct contrasts with that of others from whom I had expected better things.'" (*L.c.*, "Appendix," p. 487.)

So that it appears the utmost kindness, disinterestedness, and liberality was existing and active between Dr. Mantell and Professor Owen—not only at that early time (and during a long subsequent period), but with especial reference to the discovery of the moa and of the moa-bones, when the Reviewer so diligently laboured to place Dr. Mantell's conduct in the most malevolent light. And to call Dr. Mantell's few simple and truthful remarks "*attempts at detraction from the merit of the discovery*"! *Jam satis!*

Before I leave this portion I would also observe, seeing so much stress is apparently laid by the Reviewer on my paper on the moa in the *Annals of Natural History* for 1844, as being the only one known to Dr. Mantell, that that very paper was kindly inserted in that serial by Professor Owen himself (who had received it from Sir W. J. Hooker, the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew),\* who also subsequently favourably refers to it in his large work (*passim*).† Moreover, I know not of any difference in that paper as published in England, and dated "May 1, 1842," and the same published in the *Tasmanian Journal* in the previous year. And, further, the Reviewer takes care to tell us that my paper ("Account of my Excursion," &c., in 1841-42, being mainly botanical) in the *Tasmanian Journal* was "*printed in 1844*;" but he omits to state what is given by the editor, within brackets, at the head of my paper—namely, "The following paper was transmitted by the author twelve months ago, but its publication in the *Tasmanian Journal* has been unavoidably postponed" (*l.c.*, p. 210). And, since the Reviewer also says, "We have been at the pains to look through the numbers of the *Tasmanian Journal*, and we find" (as above), why did he not notice what is pro-

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\* Sir W. J. Hooker thus mentions it in the *London Journal of Botany*: "We have lately received from Mr. Colenso a valuable monograph of several new ferns of New Zealand; and an admirable memoir on the fossil bones of a bird allied to the ostrich, which, together with the specimens of the bones themselves, I have placed in the hands of Professor Owen" (*loc. cit.*, vol. iii., p. 3, Jan. No., 1844).

† "Memoirs on the Extinct Wingless Birds of New Zealand," vol. i., p. 115.

minently stated at only two leaves before my paper on the moa—namely, “Government House, 17th May, 1843.—Present: Sir John Franklin, &c. Three communications had been received from Mr. Colenso, one of November 4th, 1842, with an amended copy of his paper on the moa” (*l.c.*, vol. ii., p. 77)?

Then the Reviewer goes on to say, in his note, “In December, 1839, Professor Owen despatched to New Zealand copies of his first memoir, as printed in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society, and they were received before the close of 1840. Mr. Colenso’s paper is dated May 1, 1842. . . . Dr. Mantell, who takes no account of the influence of the dispersion of the first memoir in New Zealand between 1839 and 1841–42, seems only to be acquainted with Mr. Colenso’s paper as printed in the *Annals of Natural History* in 1844.” He had previously said in the body of his review, “Copies of the memoir were despatched forthwith to many residents in New Zealand, and special letters were addressed to the few personally known to Mr. Owen, strongly urging the prosecution of inquiries among the natives as to the existence of such fossil or semi-fossil remains” (*l.c.*, p. 402). Assuming, of course, that Professor Owen’s *first* memoir had been received here in New Zealand, that it had been distributed, and that I had seen it, &c.—*ergo*, my paper!

The Reviewer does indeed say, “The statement of these facts detracts nothing from the merit of Mr. Colenso’s observations;” but no other person, I suppose, reading them could so think with him. On the contrary, if all that might be reasonably inferred therefrom was true, then, of course, my paper and myself should be dealt with accordingly.

Now, I positively affirm that I not only never saw Professor Owen’s *first* memoir, but that I had never once heard of it, neither did I ever hear of any resident in New Zealand who had seen it. And it must not be overlooked that, residing as I was then in the Bay of Islands, in a part of New Zealand where no moa-remains had ever been found, and where the name was unknown, very far away from Cook Strait, the head-quarters of the New Zealand Land Company, and also distant from Auckland, the seat of Government, with only few and far-apart means of communication between our localities, and that only by small coasting-vessels, I was not in the way of receiving or hearing information of that kind.

But (apart from this negative statement) those assumptions and insinuations of the Reviewer are best answered by Professor Owen himself in his own words (please note particularly *dates*):—

“A fragment of bone was brought for sale to the College

of Surgeons in 1839. . . . Drawings of it, with my descriptions and conclusions, were submitted to the Zoological Society, London, November 12th, 1839. . . . There was some hesitation in the Publication Committee as to the admission of the paper, with the plate, into the Transactions.

. . . . Ultimately the admission of this paper into the Transactions, with one plate, was carried at the committee, the responsibility of the paper 'resting exclusively with the author.' On the publication of the volume in 1838\* (*sic*) one hundred extra copies of the paper were struck off, and these I distributed to every quarter of the Islands of New Zealand where attention to such evidences was likely to be attracted. In this distribution I was efficiently aided by Colonel William Wakefield, at that period zealously carrying out in New Zealand the principles of colonisation advocated by his brother, Mr. Edward Gibbon Wakefield; by J. R. Gowen, Esq., a director of the then recently-established 'New Zealand Company;' by my friend Sir William Martin, the first Chief Justice; and by the Right Rev. Dr. Selwyn, the first Bishop of the Islands." ("Memoirs on the Extinct Wingless Birds of New Zealand," vol. i., pref., pp. iv., v.)

I copy again from Professor Owen's large work: "*Addendum*.—J. R. Gowen, Esq., a director of the New Zealand Company, has obligingly forwarded to me the subjoined indication of a further discovery of the bones of the *Dinornis* from a new locality in New Zealand: Extract of a letter from Colonel William Wakefield to J. R. Gowen, Esq., dated Wellington, 19th September, 1843.—'I received lately your letter respecting the moa, with Professor Owen's notice. I have taken steps to procure some of the bones, which are much larger than the one represented in the sketch.'"

This, I think, sufficiently answers the Reviewer's hasty conclusion as to "the influence of the dispersion of the *first* memoir in New Zealand between 1839 and 1841-42"—that is, as far as what had been made known and done throughout that period by the New Zealand Land Company.

The Chief Justice, Sir William Martin, arrived in New Zealand by the ship "Tyne," in 1841. His residence was at Auckland; and I have good reason for believing that both he and the officers of the Land Company had vastly too much of higher and more important public matters to attend to. The Bishop of New Zealand, with the Rev. W. C. Cotton, did not arrive in New Zealand until June, 1842, after my paper on the moa was written.

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\* This is an error: it may be 1839, but is more likely (considering the former date mentioned by Professor Owen, and what followed—including "the publication of the *volume*" of 1839) to be 1840.



Professor Owen also says the replies to his letters, &c., "anxiously expected through the years 1840, 1841, and 1842, at length arrived, in the letter from Rev. William Cotton, in that from Colonel Wakefield" (*supra*), "and in the collection of bones transmitted by the Rev. W. Williams, and received in 1843 by the Rev. Dr. Buckland at Oxford" (*l.c.*, p. v.): And, again, "The first letter received by me from New Zealand, confirming this announcement, and acquainting me with the existence of the specimens" (above mentioned), "was written by my friend the Rev. William Cotton, M.A., 10th January, 1843" (*l.c.*, p. 74).

Dr. Dieffenbach, the naturalist attached to the New Zealand Land Company, who was in New Zealand during the years 1839, 1840, and 1841, certainly never heard while here of Professor Owen's *first* memoir. During his last year in New Zealand he lodged in a house very near mine at Paihia, and we often conversed on the moa and on kindred matters.

In 1842 Dr. Sinclair (afterwards Colonial Secretary) lodged at that same house, and with him I was also well acquainted; and I am pretty sure that Dr. Sinclair during that time had not seen Professor Owen's *first* memoir. And so, I think, I may say of Sir J. D. Hooker and the other officers of the discovery-ships "Erebus" and "Terror," which wintered there in the Bay of Islands in that same year—that they had not then seen a copy of it while in New Zealand.

Also, the Rev. W. Williams I may mention here, drawing my inferences from his communications with me while staying several days at his house, and from his letters to me; and more particularly from his long and interesting letter to the Rev. Dr. Buckland which accompanied the collection of bones (*supra*), in which letter Mr. Williams is not only wholly silent respecting Professor Owen and his "first memoir," but says, "If the bones are found to be of sufficient interest, I leave it to your judgment to make what use of them you think proper; but if the duplicates reach you, perhaps one set may with propriety be deposited in our museum at Oxford." And Mr. Williams concludes his letter with these words: "Should I obtain anything more perfect, you will not fail to hear from me; and, in the meantime, may I request the favour of your opinion on these bones, and also *the information whether any others of similar character have been found elsewhere?*" (*L.c.* pp. 75, 76.) This letter is given *in extenso* by Professor Owen, and is dated "Feb. 28th, 1842."

I may here briefly remark that I was not a little surprised to find that the Rev. W. Williams had not specially mentioned in his interesting letter to Dr. Buckland the pair of femora

I had left with him for Oxford;\* seeing too that I had recently brought them from the East Cape, sixty miles further north and in a different geological country.

Moreover, I may here fairly quote from Professor Owen's *first* letter to me, as affording an additional gleam of light on my present inquiry. It is a long letter, a large portion of it being occupied with the *Apteryx*: "Royal College of Surgeons, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, 23rd October, 1843.—Sir,—I am encouraged by Sir William Hooker to hope that you may interest yourself in transmitting me information and specimens relative to a point in natural history which I have been for some years endeavouring to elucidate—viz., the nature and affinities of the gigantic bird which appears to have become extinct, like the dodo of the Mauritius, within the historical period in the North Island of New Zealand. The Proceedings of the Zoological Society for January, 1843, which I take the liberty to transmit, will put you in possession of the amount of information which I had obtained on the subject of the *Dinornis* at that period." And, at the close, "As soon as I have published the memoir I am now preparing on the *Dinornis*, I shall forward it to the Rev. W. Williams and to yourself."

That letter, sent through some private hand, only reached me on the "17th January, 1846"!† I never received the Proceedings of the Zoological Society therein mentioned; but I did subsequently receive from Professor Owen a copy of his paper, "On *Dinornis* (Part II.). Read June 26, 1846;" which is also contained in his larger work above quoted, vol. i., pp. 115–137.

In conclusion, I confess to a feeling of disappointment at my never having seen Professor Owen's *first* paper, with the drawings of the first fragment of bone of *Dinornis* that had been taken to England; which disappointment was increased on my finding that such were not contained in his large work on "The Extinct Wingless Birds of New Zealand." An "abstract," however, of that paper is given by him in the "Introduction" to his "Memoir on the *Dinornis*," in that work (*l.c.*, pp. 73, 74).

The review is headed "Progress of Comparative Anatomy," and includes fifteen of Professor Owen's works, from 1830 to 1849;‡ it extends over fifty pages of the

\* Mentioned above, p. 470.

† As per my indorsement thereon. Here is, also, a kind of confirmation of what I have stated above, at p. 474.

‡ Omitting many special memoirs and monographs. The chief of them, however, are enumerated in another very long footnote in two pages, 370 and 371.

*Quarterly*, from p. 362 to p. 413, containing many lengthy extracts, and is certainly a very ably written one. Indeed, a thought (or something more fixed and stable) has occurred to me that the reviewer of those able works, who wrote the body of the said review, did not write the long note at pp. 404, 405, the tenor, tone, and language are so very different, so discourteous, so largely exceptional, so far from truth!

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ART. XLIX.—*The Tradition respecting the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Whakatane.*

By the late Lieut.-Colonel ST. JOHN.

Communicated by T. Kirk.

[Read before the Auckland Institute, 2nd November, 1891.]

TURNING over an old note-book, I came across a note given to me in 1872 by the late Lieut.-Colonel St. John, and, as it seems worth preserving, notwithstanding its extreme brevity, I send a copy of it, herewith. If read at a meeting of the Institute it may elicit a fuller account. It is as follows:—

The first man who landed was Toe, of Ngapuhi. Disembarking at Kohi Point, and the clouds obscuring the sun, he found it cold, and sang a *waiata* (preserved by tradition) for the clouds to clear off. On Kohi, between Kapu and the point of the headland, existed, at his landing, a pa containing aborigines, with whom he dwelt until the arrival of the next party, which came from Hauwhaiki, under a man named Taukata, who introduced kumaras. The aborigines knew of no other food than mamaku and fern-root, and did not know how to light a fire.

The remainder of the tradition is merely a genealogical table accounting for the ancestors of the various tribes in the Bay of Plenty, with fabulous accounts of their doings.

The Whakatane natives still point out a spot on the summit of the hill as the original pa found by Toe. If trenches were opened on this site some implements or skulls might be found which would throw light on the original population of New Zealand.

The tradition expressly states that the aborigines remained in their own pa, while Taukata took up his dwelling on the beach. After Toe's arrival they seem to have been absorbed into Toe's tribe, Rahiri of Ngapuhi, and eventually left Whakatane for the Bay of Islands.