

21 March 1933.

Major Leonard Darwin, D.C.D.,  
Cripps's Corner,  
Forest Row,  
Sussex.

Dear Major Darwin:

Why do little dogs like to yap from a safe distance? Largely, I suppose because they have been selected as house-dogs; but there must have been some such propensity before men found any use for it. Besides men who have not, I suppose, been bred for it, show the same propensity. Liberty of speech seems to be an intoxicant, except to those who have exercised themselves in liberty of thought. I am thinking not only of the left wing in biology, which, like all left wings, must live by intellectual patricide; but of what I imagine is happening in Germany. I can guess that the mainspring of Nazi indignation against Jews and Communists lies in the propensity of those gentry, when they think they are safe, to blaspheme every loyalty that appeals to a decent German. Well they are not safe now, and much good liberty has been lost, sacrificed, I suggest, to their propensity for yelping.

I was induced by Calman to join in a discussion at the

Linnean on Friday on Salisbury's pet hobby of mortality among seedlings, which, he believes, precludes selection from acting on the adult structures of plants. My own remarks were halting and ineffectual enough; but what struck me about the discussion, before a very crowded meeting, was that nobody who spoke after us two, adduced any reason or tried to adduce any reason, for forming an opinion one way or the other on what we were supposed to be discussing. Calman's real motive for inducing me to attend was to get me to stand for election to the Society, which I refused to do for lack alike of money and time. But I could not feel that the walls would testify to intellectual progress in the 75 years since 1358. I may add that every mind was a tabula rasa as far as my own recent book is concerned, except, perhaps, an eccentric American's with whom I dined afterwards, who wants to develop a theory of evolution by an extension of the Kinetic Theory of Gases—an idea which might stand as quite a good caricature of my second chapter.

The best pointer I have grasped yet as to the cause of this very substantial failure comes from the amibale blatherers who cannot say that a lobster lays a hundred thousand eggs without a foreword to the effect that he hesitates to speak of mathematics in the presence of Dr. Fisher. At Leicester this year I shall try another tack by giving a short paper

with a lantern-slide for people to look at, on the subject of double-stocks, which has been discussed in English botanic circles for about 25 years, with an explanation, which I believe to be simple, of how the "ever-sporting" singles (from which, in each generation, the doubles are derived) have been built up by a selective process out of genetic ingredients which are now known to be present. I do not know if the psychologists have a name for the process by which an inhibition of thought is released, but, I suppose, if the brain is still healthy, the thing can be done.

Yours sincerely,

P.S. I should love to see either or both of your papers.