

23 February 1933.

Major L. Darwin, ScD.,
Cripps's Corner,
Forest Row,
Sussex.

Dear Major Darwin:

I think the main factor in infanticide in rodents is that the expectation of life is short, perhaps only about a fortnight for a male. Consequently, the prospect of the doe being ready in 2 days instead of 12 is very important. Against this great gain is the danger, confined to older mice, of slaughtering his own litter; so I suppose the instinct is inhibited by the feeling experienced only by fully mature mice, of being at home in his own territory. I fancy the means of dispersal are so great that the surrounding population with which there is effective competition is large, some thousand perhaps, so that it is competition for the use of a particular doe, rather than ^{for general} the means of subsistence which is effective.

I do not think I believe in the Oedipus complex, never having felt any inclination to patricide, or even its possibility as a "Bad dream". I doubt too, if in

Sophocles, the tragedy is other than an incredibly awful possibility which might be sprung on a mortal by malignant fate.

Returning to mice, a mother might with advantage kill her own young if it was certain that they would later be killed, she would then save herself some time and expense. Whether the mothers do join in the killing I have never been able to make out.

Yours sincerely,