

P.S. A letter to be read at your lecture, and
needing no answer whatever

Cripps's Corner. Front Row. Surrey.

June. 17 37

Dear Fisher.

You told me not to hesitate to write if by chance any ideas did come into my head - not that you put it exactly in that way - so your blood be on your own head.

If you have ^{seen} enclosed, throw it away. If not, it does seem to me to be a new and clever way of consoling useless characters with fitness. It amounts, no doubt, that to live to an old age is a sign of fitness, which in my rather rare pessimistic moods I have been inclined to doubt!

It is obvious that natural selection will cause flowers to be noticeably different from leaves and therefore to be readily seen by insects. But on your principles, will it not also make insects to be attracted by what ever kind of peculiarity the flower is showing? And will not these double effects, ^{producing} what you have called a run-away result, thus producing uselessly large modifications?

If this be the origin of the sense of beauty, there is no logical reason to suppose that it is one of the ultimate values, whatever that may mean. It may be rather attributed to one of Nature's many blunders. It must be remembered, however, that when there are several different-genetical methods of advance towards a valuable quality, their simultaneous utilization may result in some individuals acquiring the quality to a degree which is not useful, though it must be harmful. In this way the extreme complications of the musical sense may have been produced. But on all these matters I am hardly logical; for I have been long convinced that Science cannot tell us what we ought to do, and that for our basis of morality we must look elsewhere. But where?

Here is a last thought. In a pass exam., in which classics and mathematics are compulsory subjects, the good mathematician will pull the bad classic over the fence. Amongst those who pass, mathematical ability will be negatively correlated with classical ability, whilst amongst

the failures, the opposite conclusion will be produced. If this is both, what follows is both also. In the same way, amongst those who rise in the social scale, ability will tend to be positively correlated with fertility, whilst these qualities will tend to be negatively correlated from their cause amongst those who fail to rise. But in the mass of the population, these two influences will tend to a considerable extent to cancel each other out, the effect of the promotion to a richer class neutralizing the effect of the addition from a poorer class. The main effect will be that in the highest social class, ability and fertility will be correlated to a less extent than we should otherwise have suspected, whilst in the poorest stratum the correlation ~~will~~^{will} be greater. This tends to emphasize my belief that actual pressure of some kind will be necessary to lessen the fertility of the markedly inferior.

This leaves me only 4 lines to say that I hope all goes well with you as human beings. We have both been a bit out of sorts, but are well again now.

Yours sincerely

Leonard Darwin