

Cripps's Corner, Forest Row, Sussex.

Dec-23-28

Dear Fisher.

You say you feel better than you have done since reading my last letter! Is it your insides which have been playing you tricks? Or did my letter cause some mental indigestion? I guess the latter, and am very glad you are recovering from the dose.

Many thanks for the R.S. paper, which I have examined with appreciation from a safe distance. Real congratulations.

Now for the other parts of your letter. If I have stimulated you to re-think over these problems, that is as much as I hope for. I do not mean this to imply doubt, but in these new and difficult regions, reconsideration is nearly always useful.

I will only make a few general remarks. ^{One} ~~Some~~ of your points I could only deal with at all properly if I had your chapter again before me. I agree as to there being an ideal organism, developed from a lion, which would probably ^{be} unlike any existing animal; this, I presume, is an unchanging environment. In other cases, with simple organisms, the real and ideal might be much alike. Natural Selection ~~is~~, having a limited scope of action, must concentrate chiefly on the qualities which ~~are~~, in

their range of variations, have the most clearly marked peaks of advantage. These peaks will be most likely to occur where the conditions are most simple, conditions in the organism and in the surroundings; and these conditions seem to us petty. It is here that we get the quickest action, and therefore specific differences. May we not ^{say} that - ~~the~~ 'fundamental' ^{such as these} differences between the qualities of orders, are such as affect the coordination of many parts of the organism? I am here putting your ideas, as I apprehend them, into my words. It is going over the same ground again. But it won't take you long to read.

I have not begun Chap III yet.

Thanks for Galton address. I am very glad you like it, as it gives me confidence. I think that dinner rather, as I am getting old.

I have a lady here who is living with a Miss Allan[†], who will, I understand, come under you next year - if I have caught the situation right. This is an odd chance. Stella - seems to be a nice girl.

Yours sincerely,

L. Darwin.

* An Australian Student of Newham, with some sort of scholarship.

P.S. The ideal lion can be no further evolved by N.S. What is then to set evolution again working? It can only be a change of environment. If organisms often reached their ideal stage, changes of environment would be of great importance. Organisms living in the sea ought ^{then} to be much less evolved than organisms living on land. This is not markedly the case. They are less differentiated rather than less evolved. There is no land animal which has a lantern on its snout to light up its prey. Hence I think changes of environment ~~are~~ ^{are} probably not of supreme importance.

This is a poor sort of a Xmas greeting. Give my kind regards to your wife, and I hope all the children are well, especially the girls.