

Cripps's Corner. Forest Row

Sussex. [late September 1926]

JMC

My dear Fisher.

I have read your paper with great interest. I have often told you that my head is becoming less mathematical with age, and I do not pretend to have taken it all in at one go. I hope to read it again <sup>See P.S.</sup> in print. Ah I will now say that it increases my wish that you should deal with the whole problem or select in mathematically. You will have a small audience, but it will gradually be realized that many of these problems can be ~~not~~ attacked in no other way.

I don't know why you expect me to disagree with you about men of science and their critics. It is an odd fact that only a week ago I was asking my sister if she did not agree with me that it would be worth reprinting the first edition of the Origin of Species (you can't now easily get it to read, & I have never read it, I believe) because it was written before my father had been subject to any criticism whatever. His extraordinarily modest nature made him especially liable to pay too much attention to what others

P.S. What I have said is not true! Your paper is not mathematical, and it is clear, as I find on re-reading. Some passages require thought to those like me who are not quite familiar with evolutionism.

said. Somewhere he declared that - he had made the mistake at first - of paying too little attention to the effects of environment - the direct effects; and it is tacitly assumed that his second opinion must have more weight than his first. I should like the first edition republished with a few notes as to where it would be very generally allowed that the last edition was better, and what the changes implied.

I am really away from home, but going back tomorrow, where I expect to find the copy of my huge review. I hope you will criticize the Evolutionary Theory part. Like I wrote it out I had not realized in how many different directions selection may be acting simultaneously. I wonder if you will agree. One sentence, which I will note with [ ] in pencil is, on consideration, very doubtful. It may be better that a number of qualities should all be harmoniously differentiated in the wrong direction, rather than that there should be disharmony between them. My remarks gratefully received. You will see that in the last para I deal with the point about criticism.

One trifling remark about your paper.  
Would it be worth at the beginning,  
when first you mention 'Batesian' and  
'Mullerian', to slip in a brief reminder  
as to the two ideas? Of course it may  
be best only to write for experts, who  
keep these things clear in their heads.

Yours sincerely

L. Darwin

As to what you say in your letter about the  
evolution of unpalatableness, I had not  
thought of the point till you mentioned it.  
Suppose a bird is in doubt, when food is  
plentiful, which would be the choicest morsel,  
a butterfly or a fly - let him select to go for  
the butterfly, and to find it a regular bit bit.  
Will he not immediately repeat his attempt?  
On the other hand, let him be slightly  
disappointed in the taste, and will he not go  
for a fly next time, possibly returning later to  
the butterfly hunt? May one not assume that  
the more quickly the one attack follows the other,  
the greater the probability that the two victims  
will be close blood relations? If so does not  
this open the road to selection?

I will send you *Nomophanes* by post