

Nov. 5th. 1930.

Prof. C. G. Darwin,  
14, Heriot Row,  
Edinburgh.

Dear Prof. Darwin,

Thanks for yours of Nov. 3rd. I do not wonder that your mind is full of things other than grouse locusts and snails. When I look at any quantum work I wonder whether anybody understands it, though I suppose that as a teacher you can get your first class material to go through the motions, and whether they can solve it or not, state any ordinary physical problem in the appropriate mathematical terms; and Fowler's article on metals in Nature a few weeks ago was really very intelligible. One only wondered whether the little enigmas enumerated by the wave equation and Pauli's principle ought to be called "electrons", unless in some way they have also a position in their specification. - but I expect it bores you to have an ignoramus talking about your mysteries.

You ask about Purnett. He is influenced by the traditional Batesonian views, and committed himself to them in an extreme form, and I think an extremely untenable form, in

his "Mimicry in butterflies" (1909). The Batesonic tradition includes a fear of, and a self-defensive expression of contempt for mathematics. A current reputed saying of Bateson is "The one subject on which I have never wished to know more is Mathematics". I think it is partly our own fault that such a remark should seem to have any point, because mathematical teachers <sup>do</sup> not always make it clear that mathematics is not a subject matter but a mode of thought, useful whenever one wants to think clearly about mechanics, physics, astronomy, the Income Tax, or anything else about which exact thought has so far been found possible.

There are really very few geneticists in this country, and the older of these will I think cling to the beliefs that Purnett is right as long as this is possible. The younger men are not very numerous, but I think they realise for the most part that our own country is relatively backward in the subject, and are prepared for new ideas. Some certainly are inclined to support me strongly, though I do not yet know how far Haldane will go. He is undoubtedly interested, and has been "talking dominance" non-committedly for the last year or two. I was very sorry to hear from the Editor that he was offended about the notice for the Eugenics Review. It appears that he was asked to do the notice; intended to do it, but never replied; as your name had been suggested in the meanwhile, it was sent to you, and the Editor never managed to soothe Haldane sufficiently to get from him what he had written,

though I believe he offered to publish that too.

It is amazing how incapable people are of stating correctly views with which they disagree. There are 8 misstatements of simple matters of fact as to what I say or do not say in Purnett's review, and with considerable misgivings I have written to Nature to correct some of them. It is very difficult to judge whether this course does any good, and I should be glad if you happen to read it, to hear (entirely frankly) how my letter strikes you.

Yours sincerely,