March 30, 1942

Dear Mother,

many thanks for your letter and enclosures from Dobzhansky and Burlington. I am returning the two latter.

I am heartily glad that Dobzhansky persuaded Burlington to drop the last two paragraphs, where he introduced the curious dogma that natural selection will favour any arrangement which increases the number of fertile eggs laid by the adult population. (As though the species' media forit by selection didn't.)

The fact is, and this is a case which illustrates it well, that people hear the phrase "natural selection", and perhaps some trivial example of its action, and at an early age persuade themselves that they understand how it works. Usually, indeed, when first heard of in childhood it is expounded by someone who not only does not understand it, but does not know that there is anything to understand.

So far as I can see, Dobzhansky, though right in suppressing the paragraphs, has advised this course principally for the wrong reasons, for the statements he makes as to differences between North and South, high and low stations, Winter and Summer, are in no way evidence for or against a stable selective balance, although
what he seems to say at first as to great fluctuations in
the gene ratio, if this can be interpreted as meaning fluctuations
not due to the larger factors he mentions, would be evidence of
instability, or at least evidence that not in all conditions was
the gene ratio stable.

However, the great thing is that the cytological discussion
has not been marred by such an unhappy adversion to the selective
problem. I have been looking through Skogan's thesis, and I think
he expresses himself well, in decent English, reflecting intelligible
ideas. This is really more than can be said of most Ph.D. candidates,
but you will know better than I whether he has a real understanding
of what he is writing about.

A viva, though not now compulsory, is, I imagine, always desirable.
What do you think of coming to lunch some day and examining him here
in the afternoon. You might be able to bring some Lythrum families
at the time. I want, if I can, to get these planted out before the
16th, if they are sufficiently hardened, so perhaps they should be
sent in advance of your visit, if you are able to make one.

Yours sincerely,