My dear Fraser Roberts,

It is not everyone that can take criticism with goodwill, so I should like you to realize that I do appreciate the way you have taken my disappointing reaction to some of your proposals.

About your findings in the variability of intelligence, it does seem likely that you have posed a psychological more than a genetical problem, and such an analysis as you suggest might well help to elucidate it. If it be admitted, and I suppose it ought to be, that the two sexes do differ in childhood temperamentally, even though there may be no difference in intelligence, I think the secondary effect of the temperamental difference might create a difference in variability, supposing, of course, that temperamental differences can on occasion affect the test score one way or another. In particular, I should guess that little boys are more liable to showing off than little girls, that children like adults, though perhaps less so, do take the word intelligence rather seriously and that failure in the tests is felt as a blow to the amour-propre, while success is something of a stimulus. Now, if there is a sex difference in the intensity of these emotional reactions, so that though both boys and girls are encouraged by success and depressed or disheartened by failure, yet the boys are more so than the girls, then you might, I think, get such difference
in variability as the Scottish figures and your own Otis tests in Bath have fairly demonstrated, without there being any sex difference in the intelligence, sensu strictu, either in its mean or in its true distribution.

In putting forward this way of looking at your results, of course, I do not want to postulate that the distribution is necessarily exactly the same in the two sexes, for after all one of our 23 chromosomes does determine sex, but I am as unwilling to ascribe whole effect to the sex chromosome as I was in the corresponding case of the variability of the pigmentation of night flying moths, when the females were, if I remember right, about 30% more variable than the males, when examined in 20 or 30 different species. Again, superficially it might be a sex chromosome effect, but it seems much too large to be so really.

Yours sincerely,