

13th. March 1947.

My dear Madawar,

Thanks for sending me your article. I have just read the second section with a great deal of interest. I think your approach by considering a hypothetical organism with a constant death rate quite excellent as a step to understanding the situation that has come about in, I suppose, practically all animals, and to a quite surprisingly large extent in perennial plants. For by mechanisms that seem to be altogether obscure the fact well known to gardeners seems to be that most perennials go off or die out in comparatively few years, though they may be rejuvenated by cuttings or layers, like strawberries. This vegetative rejuvenation I find most surprising.

With forest trees, I suppose, the expectation of life increases up to a very considerable age, and one might imagine that the giants of a tropical forest 300 years old or so may have actually a greater expectation of life than they have ever had before. This situation would make a great difference to our attitude towards death. You can imagine the senior members of a common room saying of a newly-elected fellow, "poor chap, he's so young, I fear he has not many years to live", feeling themselves safe with an ample balance in the bank of life.

Yours sincerely,