Wednesday, October 29 '58

Dear George:

The letter I dictated last Friday and mailed Monday was just a formal reply to your card; over the weekend I had my first hint of the nectar you have been brewing for me, and just last night there was a press release foretelling the announcement of the Karolinska Institutet faculty scheduled for tomorrow. (If this proves to be wrong, this letter will be the least of my embarrassments, and I will discount the possibility for the moment.)

George, I hardly know what to say! I am full of appreciation to you for your inevitable part in proposing the Nobel award, and for the fuss and hard work it must have meant for you. That our personal friendship can have played no role whatever in a matter of this kind does not diminish its additional warmth on the occasion, and I am sure also that we are equally delighted to accomplish this recognition for genetics and especially for genetics in relation to medicine.

I should say too that the significance of the award is not in the identity of the donor or even of the distinguished selection committees or of the honorarium itself, but in the character of its choices: on this occasion more than most I would take real pride, in being associated with Beadle and Tatum, from whom in fact I have learned so much, and whose work was the very foundation of my own.

Nor can I easily overestimate the help that this distinction will be (not to me personally, since I can hardly aspire to a more satisfactory position than the one I am taking at Stanford) but to the development of the Genetics department at Stanford. And indirectly, by simplifying the chores of financing and justifying this program, it may help save more of my own time for the laboratory.

For all these benefices I am very grateful to you, but no more than for your friendship and hospitality last summer which made our visit to Stockholm a memorable pleasure. Against all of them, my grievances are very petty, perhaps petulant. But after all, you put me in a very difficult position: I still feel as a matter of principle that a system of personal rewards of this kind in science is misguided, if noble. But, to tell the truth I would not have thought of applying such a principle to Beadle and Tatum, as my sentiments there quickly overrule my reasoning. The same consideration puts out of question any thought I might ever have had of publicly voicing such a complaint on this occasion. And I must say that the utter surprise with which I received the news makes the affair as painless as it could ever be for myself. Well, George, on balance how can I match these considerations against the pleasure and benefit of the award? So probably I will not scandalize you after all, and for the moment will keep these thoughts entre nous. It is a wonderful occasion (apart from the press) and Esther and I look forward to sharing it withyou and Eva and our other friends. So we should see you before the end of the year, and not in the US as I had interpreted your penultimate letter.

All the best!

P.S. I know you will send me reams of information on the practical details! Can I rent a formal suit for the occasion in Stockholm?