

A Common Benefactor

Medicine

["Baltimore, Jan. 10.—It was announced today that a gift of \$195,000 (£39,000) had been made to the Johns Hopkins University here for the study of 'the origin, nature and possible cure of the common cold.'—*Punch*.]

High praise to science we accord
For knowing how to ease
The pains of people who are floored
By a first-class disease;
Nor do we grudge our leech the fee
That in his pocket jingles
When his attentions set us free
From gout, pneumonia, pleurisy,
Clergyman's throat or shingles.

But all researches, new or old,
Into the cause and cure
Of just the common vulgar cold
Have left the thing obscure;
And none can teach us, though the
quacks
Purvey their patent wheezes,
To dodge a plain catarrh's attacks,
Inducing shivers down our backs
With intermittent sneezes.

Cynics, of course, will say that those
Who undertook the quest
Of remedies for running nose
Have never tried their best;
For, if they ever hit upon
The means to make a fellow
Immune when winter's worst
comes on,
Their occupation would be gone,
Like that of poor *Othello*.

But lo! from Transatlantic parts
Great tidings we have heard
That promise cheer to chilly hearts
Long sick with dope deferred;
Those dirty germs will soon be
downed
Under a rude corrective,
Now a philanthropist has found
Something like forty-thousand pound
With that humane objective.

For Mr. Coolidge our regard
Can surely never cease
While he is building cruisers hard
To push the cause of Peace;
But he that aims at killing dead
The common cold—we must exalt
him o'er
Even the Presidential head,
This gentleman of whom we've read
Such balmy news from Baltimore.
O. S.

Science News-Letter, March 17, 1928

The New Atomic Theory

Physics

BERTRAND RUSSELL, in *Philosophy* (Norton):

The newer theory has been put forward mainly by two physicists, Heisenberg and Schrödinger, in forms which look different, but are in fact mathematically equivalent. It is as yet an impossible task to describe this theory in simple language, but something can be said to show its philosophical bearing. Broadly speaking, it describes the atom by means of the radiations that come out of it. In Bohr's theory, the planetary electrons are supposed to describe orbits over and over again while the atom is not radiating; in the newer theory, we say nothing at all as to what happens at these times. The aim is to confine the theory to what is empirically verifiable, namely radiations; as to what there is where the radiations come from, we cannot tell, and it is scientifically unnecessary to speculate. The theory requires modifications in our conception of space, of a sort not yet quite clear. It also has the consequence that we cannot identify an electron at one time with an electron at another, if in the interval, the atom has radiated energy. The electron ceases altogether to have the properties of a "thing" as conceived by common sense; it is merely a region from which energy may radiate.

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The main point for the philosopher in the modern theory is the disappearance of matter as a "thing." It has been replaced by emanations from a locality—the sort of influences that characterize haunted rooms in ghost stories. . . . The theory of relativity leads to a similar destruction of the solidity of matter, by a different line of argument. All sorts of events happen in the physical world, but tables and chairs, the sun and moon, and even our daily bread, have become pale abstractions, mere laws exhibited in the successions of events which radiate from certain regions.

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One of the United States Army's Fokker tri-motor monoplanes has been rigged up as a flying laboratory for testing of instruments, radio, and other equipment.

Botanists are seeking a promising seedless persimmon to develop for an orchard fruit.

Different races have characteristic types of fingerprints, an investigation indicates.

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