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# PATENTS

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### ELECTRICITY.

Why It is Difficult For the Layman to Understand What It Is.

"What is electricity?" is a favorite query with people who desire to "get a rise" out of a scientific man. And when he fails to answer it in the same simple fashion that he might treat the question "What is a biscuit?" the questioner cries out: "Aha! You profess to know all about electricity. Why, you can't even tell what it is!"

Now, to "tell what a thing is"—that is, to define it—is to state its relations with something more familiar. The particular familiar thing that the questioner is thinking of in this case is ordinary matter. Heat has been explained to him as a vibration of material particles. Light, he has been told, is a wave motion in the ether, and he understands the ether to be a kind of matter or a substance resembling matter in some particulars.

It is not to be denied that no such simple general relationship can be stated between electricity and matter. But, this being so, it would be just as correct to say that we do not know what matter is as that we do not know what electricity is. As a matter of fact, we do not know what matter is, and the latest plausible theory of it builds it up on an electric basis, so that on this theory the idea of electricity is more fundamental than that of matter. Unfortunately our senses have been evolved by contact with matter and are trained to detect only matter. Electricity they know only secondarily, through its action upon matter—the light or heat that it causes matter to give out, the attraction that it causes certain substances to exert, and so on. To the man in the street, therefore, matter is familiar, and he demands a statement of the latter in terms of the former, illogical though this may be. After the scientist has stated all this the reply comes back, "Yes, I understand all that, and it is most clear, I am sure, but tell me, then, what is electricity anyway?"

Another source of confusion to the lay mind is that scientific men do not always use the word "electricity" to mean the same thing. The engineer often employs it to express the thing that the theoretical electrician calls "electric energy."

To find the energy of electricity—that is, its ability to do work—the electrician multiplies the quantity of electricity by the potential or tension under which it exists. But to the engineer this product itself measures the thing that he calls "electricity."

The work that a pound of water may do by falling a foot is one foot pound. The water is the same after falling as before, though its energy is less. So to the electrician a quantity of electricity at 100 volts is precisely the same as at one volt, though the former is able to do a hundred times as much work.

This difference in meaning causes thousands of disputes among students. "Electricity is a form of energy," says one, "just like light or heat." "Oh, no!" is the reply. "It is not energy at all, though it may possess or convey energy." One disputant is talking about the electricity of the physical and the other about that of the engineer; hence their dispute is merely a matter of definition, though they do not know it. What wonder that some people are still content to regard the whole subject as a civilized Mumbo Jumbo?—St. Louis Republic.

His Plea.



"You don't look like a man who had fasted for three days."  
"Appearance is again me, lady; but, ah, if you only knew how many pairs of pants I got on."—Philadelphia Press.

Baked Shad.

Clean a shad and stuff with mashed potatoes to which is added a teaspoon of finely minced parsley. Lay the fish on a baking dish on several slices of salt pork. Bake and baste often with the fat from the pork.

The Care of Carpets.

Sponge carpets occasionally with hot water in which either common salt or powdered alum has been dissolved. This not only brightens the carpets, but prevents moths.

### THE WAYS OF JAPAN.

You Are Never Sure of Privacy, Even While Taking a Bath.

As one steps before the wide open doors of the reception room or into the court or the kitchen, the ease may be, the host approaches and greets with a low bow followed by the hostess and usually one or more of the maids, who kneeling, bend to the floor. The salutations are returned, a word exchanged perhaps about the room or the meal that is to be prepared and the guest seats himself on the low porch or platform that surrounds the entrances and removes his shoes or sandals, leaving them on the ground. If one wears the Japanese cloth shoe and straw sandals, as I did some of the time, the feet are always washed in a wooden basin of water brought by a maid who comes clattering around the outside of the house on wooden clogs to bring it and sets it down before one on the ground. A little towel is brought, too, unless one, as usual, has this most useful of articles about his person.

Then the guest steps in, in stocking feet or barefoot, and, preceded by a servant, passes through the open rooms, often between a double line of all the people of the house who are bowing to the floor. He enters the room allotted to him and there seats himself cross legged on a cushion on the matted floor before a tiny charcoal fire in a brazier and rests—at least pretends to rest if he is a foreigner—until disengaged for ceremony gets the better of him and he adopts an easier position. Presently comes a demure or smiling little maid, with rosy cheeks and fancifully colored silk kimono, who kneels outside and slides open the paper door, enters, kneels and closes it, brings tea things to the center of the room and, kneeling, pours out a wee cup of tea to the guest or each of the guests. This done, she bends her forehead to the floor and patters out, opening and closing the door, as before. If the guest is an honored one some dairy, such as bean jelly or cakes of raw dough rolled in pink or green powder, is brought with the tea. Then the guest steps out to the porch to wash, and as he dries his face he looks at the little cultured garden or off to the distant valley or forest or mountain or sea.

Returning to his room, he is most of the time alone until the coming of the meal or, if it chanced to be afternoon or evening, until the announcement comes that "the bath is ready." One is never entirely alone. Access to the room is always free on several sides, and host, visitor or servant may come in at any time. One becomes used to this and learns to like it for many ways. There is nothing hidden. It makes life simple and informal and more natural. We found it a disadvantage sometimes when we had too many visitors whose curiosity got the better of them, but we always took it in good part, finding it amusing rather than annoying.—Robert Van Vleck Anderson in Popular Science Monthly.

Dead to the World.



Humorist—I've just written fifteen jokes on the man who doesn't advertise.  
Poet—That's wrong. You shouldn't jest about the dead.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

He Knew.

They were country people pure and simple, but they had read the papers and thought they were educated up to all the improvements of a city. When they went to Washington they went through the navy department and saw the models of our ships of war. Pointing to a companion ladder hanging over the side of one of the boats, she asked her better half what it was.  
"Oh, that's the fire escape," replied the husband.—Lippincott's.

He Got the Girl.

He had gone to ask her father for her hand in marriage.  
"Well, sir, what is it?" snapped out the old man. "Remember, I am a man of few words."  
"I don't care if you are a man of only one word if it's the right one," replied the suitor.  
He got the girl.

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