

I have not got it right. This is hot weather anyhow. I presume the passage in "quotes" is from some of Sir J. J. Thomson's writings. I do not want Dr. McCoy to think that I am blaming him. But if so, what are all these papers of Thomson's and Wien's on positive rays about? Being an old foggy, I sometimes feel that there are too many electrons about, and that one of the wonderful fly-traps that you read so much about in the papers ought to be devised to catch them. I remember (dimly) that when I was a boy in college I had a great aversion to molecules. I had never seen one, and didn't like them. And now I have the same queer feeling about electrons. But perhaps I shall see one some day. Rutherford has. But the one he saw was positive. Wasn't it? I am not positive.

Speaking of chemists, I think the best joke ever made by a chemist was when Mendelejeff undertook to consider the ether as a chemical element! Why not have the ether made of electrons? To which of these hypotheses should we incline? I answer in the words of Dr. Holmes, "To ether."

ARTHUR GORDON WEBSTER

WORCESTER, MASS.,

August 4, 1911

#### THE SCIENCE OF GOVERNMENT

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: Investigations are the order of the day, not only by scientific men, but (save the mark) by Congress. Your quotation from the *Independent* with regard to Dr. Wiley encourages me to express the hope that this incident may lead to an investigation (by both classes of persons) of the whole question of the relation of the government to science. Every interest in the country that has votes enough and can log-roll enough support is looked after by the government, and eventually gets a cabinet officer, why not science? I suppose there is no doubt that our government spends more on science than any other. I suppose there is equally no doubt that it gets less for its money than any other, and that there are many abuses unworthy of a civilized régime which ought to be abolished. Of these the chief one is, why are not scientific

affairs managed by scientific men? I suppose it is because members of congress do not believe that scientific men are worth more than \$9 a day. As long as scientific men are willing to tolerate such an assumption I do not much blame the congressmen.

But there is another reason, hinted at in your quotation. It is that the atmosphere of Washington is not only rotten (I have treated the atmosphere elsewhere) for science, but it is infested with a most dangerous parasite, the *red-tape-worm*, I do not rightly know whether to call it a protozoan, a microtome, or a cyto-blast, but either Dr. Charles Hookworm Stiles or Dr. L. Culex Howard can tell. This worm eats the vitals out of the scientist, and leads him to pretend that he didn't do the research, but that the man higher up did. Washington is a charming city, full of statues of men on horseback, waving cocked hats, but when every scientist has to have an assimilated rank, so that he shall know whether he is a captain or a major-general, the results can only be painful. I am glad that I did not coin the phrase, "Washington Science," and equally glad that some one else did. By the way, not all Washington science is done under the government. I hope this letter may provoke discussion, but I do not wish to take part in it. Like all brave anarchists, I wish merely to explode the bomb, and then run like . . . !

ARTHUR GORDON WEBSTER

WORCESTER, MASS.,

August 4, 1911

#### DUE—

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: Due to the death of my imaginary stenographer, I am able to write you but a few lines. This is a quotation from any one of several hundred scientific contributions that I have read lately. The object of my writing now, Mr. Editor, is to ask of you (for the first time) a favor, and that is that you will refuse to print any communication in which the adjective "due" appears in any way except as agreeing (I think that is the word) with some noun or pronoun. As I believe that one who does not do research himself may do good by suggesting subjects