
“MIGHTY ATOM” IN A MAGIC BOX.

BERLIN SCIENTISTS HOAXED.

Herr Willi von Unruh, a Leipzig engineer, has lately fluttered the German scientific doves as they have not been fluttered since the finding of radium, says the Berlin correspondent of the “Daily Chronicle.”

He announced a discovery towards which the whole scientific world has for years been earnestly striving, a discovery which would revolutionise the world to an extent almost beyond human imagination.

Herr Unruh said he had found a method of breaking up the atom. What he claimed to have done is what nature does over an infinitely extended period of time, and on an extremely small scale, in the case of radium.

By breaking up the atom, or disintegrating it, and harnessing the pent-up power in it, a boundless source of energy would be tapped.

Such a discovery, as science knows, would open up endless possibilities. Each person could release from among his ordinary possessions enough motive energy to make him his own millionaire.

In his cigarette case he could store enough force to carry him in an aeroplane round the world.

Everything, indeed, would be revolutionised to a degree which would make the harnessing of steam and electricity appear by comparison to be the merest trifles.

Ever since Professor Curie and his wife discovered radium, the breaking up of the atom has been one of the ultimate aims of science.

Little wonder, then, that German scientists rushed in a body, as one might say, to see Herr Willi von Unruh. Was German science again to astound and lead the world?

Herr von Unruh received a large number of savants, and arranged for a demonstration of his wonderful machine.

When a great box was exhibited to those experts, most of them were, according to one professor present, “speechless with astonishment.”

There in front of them was an enormous case, into which they could see. There was the curious machinery which broke up the atom and produced an electric current which kept five lamps, each of 1000 candle power, burning for hours on end.

Some of the spectators were inclined to fall on each other’s necks and weep tears of joy at their good fortune in being present on such an historic occasion. Other experts were a trifle less ready to

accept the statement that they stood on the threshold of unthinkable things.

Certainly everything appeared all right. There was no evidence that the electric current was introduced into the case from outside.

Could they examine the case and machine to make quite sure, they asked. Herr Willi von Unruh replied that at that time he could hardly permit such an examination; he had to protect his astounding secret. That was, of course, judged to be a reasonable attitude, and the savants dispersed to ponder over and discuss the terrific discovery.

Following on this exhibition some Bavarian newspapers hinted there was something wrong with Herr Willi von Unruh’s machine. When he failed to reply, they declared he was not quite honest. When they failed to draw him they boldly proclaimed he was simply an impostor.

So the scientists came on the scene again. Could they see Herr Willi von Unruh? That was impossible they were told, as he was unwell.

A few days later, when a British inquirer was somewhat more persistent the grim truth came out; Herr Willi von Unruh was in gaol.

So the world will not be revolutionised for a while yet, and Herr Willi will go down in history with Signor Ulivi, who six years ago played the role of great inventor imposture about wonderful “ultra-red” rays.

By reason of his “invention,” Ulivi managed to elope with an admiral’s beautiful daughter, but Herr Willi added no such romance to his fraud. He has been mundane enough to make his alleged discovery the means of obtaining a considerable amount of other people’s money, it is said, and so it is that his romance ends undramatically in a dull prison cell.

For some time to come certain German professors will be exceedingly snappy on the subject of breaking up the atom.