EASY LESSONS IN EINSTEIN: A DISCUSSION OF THE MORE INTELLIGIBLE FEATURES OF THE THEORY OF THE RELATIVITY

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EDWIN E. SLOSSON

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Wide World Photos.

DR. ALBERT EINSTEIN IN HIS STUDY AT BERLIN.

EASY LESSONS IN EINSTEIN

A DISCUSSION OF THE MORE INTELLIGIBLE FEATURES OF THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY

BY

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With an Article by Albert Einstein and a Bibliography

ILLUSTRATED

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1920

Deepest of all illusory Appearances, for hiding Wonder, as for many other ends, are your two grand fundamental world-enveloping Appearances, Space and Time. —CARLYLE.

Henceforth Space in itself and Time in itself sink into mere shadows and only a kind of union of the two can be maintained as self-existent.—MINKOWSKI.

A PREFATORIAL DIALOGUE

(The Purpose of which is to Prevent the Prospective Reader from buying the Book under False Pretenses)

SCENE: A street car in uniform movement of translation in any direction.

TIME: The present.

The Reader (looking over the top of a morning paper): Here's something queer—a whole page taken with a new discovery in physics—"Eclipse Observations Confirm Einstein's Theory of Relativity." Anything about it in your paper?

The Author: Yes. Here's a cartoon on it by McCutcheon.

The Reader: Must be something to it then. McCutcheon always knows what's news. (Reads on with audible fragments) "Most sensational discovery in the history of science"—"Greatest achievement of the human intellect"—"Upsets Galileo, Newton, and Euclid"—"Revo-

lution in philosophy and theology." It looks as though I ought to know something about this, doesn't it?

The Author: I think you will have to sometime. And you might as well do it now and get it over with.

The Reader (running down the column and hitting the high spots): "Parallel lines meet" —"a man moving with the speed of light never grows old"—"gravitation due to a warp in space"—"length of a measuring stick depends upon direction of its motion"—"mass is latent energy"—"time as a fourth dimension"—why, the man is crazy, isn't he?

The Author: Well, definitions of insanity are so uncertain that it is not safe to say who is crazy. But it seems there's method in his madness—otherwise how could he have hit upon the exact extent of the sun's attraction on light?

The Reader: (Picks up his paper and reads aloud with concentrated attention) "Postulate I. Every law of nature which holds good with respect to a coördinate system K must also hold good

for any other system K′, provided that K and K′ are in uniform movement of translation." Say, do you know anything about this business?

The Author: Well, yes, a little. I have followed the controversy—at a safe distance—for a number of years.

The Reader: Can you tell me in plain language what it is all about?

The Author: Yes. Just that. I can tell you what it is *about,* though I can't tell you what it *is.* Einstein says that there are only twelve men in the world capable of understanding his latest paper.

The Reader: Are you one of the twelve?

The Author: No, nor the thirteenth. But without plunging into the mathematics of it, we might talk over some of the interesting aspects of the theory of relativity and in the end I could put you on track of the twelve so you could read up on the subject if you liked.

The Reader: All right. That's fair. This is a slow car anyhow. Go ahead.

The Author: (See following pages)—