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My first scientific Experiment Title 5

This took place at home, not in the school's chemistry laboratory. I must have reached puberty by about 1930, and was naturally intrigued about sex. It was not my father, the doctor, who explained to me the anatomical facts about coitus which everyone wants to know at such an age. This explanation came from an older school boy and took place in the school lavatory, accompanied by gestures with fingers. It could not have been cruder and did not create any desire in me to experiment with a girl.

What intrigued me at the time were the self-ejaculations at night, which had become a not unusual event. If the lavatory explanation had been correct, these ejaculations must have contained my own sperms and they might become visible under a microscope. Nothing was easier, as my father had one for his medical tests. These were carried out behind a mysterious screen in his consulting room. There, test tubes in a small rack were ready for simple urine analysis. This room contained at the same time his large medical library, his desk, a sofa, and a round table in the corner for other, social events.

All I needed to do was to produce an ejaculation, and transfer a small sample unto a glass slide to be put under the microscope. I was utterly amazed by the sight of uncountable spermatozoa wiggling and jiggling for an indefinite time, as it seemed to me—they would of course have died in due course. My father must have been visiting patients at the time of this truly remarkable revelation—I am sure he would have encouraged me in this experiment, as he was a man of great liberal views and had always helped me in my work, whatever it was.

I can only assume now that the encouragement I received from my chemistry master at school and from my father at home, were the decisive factors which turned the boyhood curiosity later in life into a university study of science. And even much later, after receiving a Bachelor of Science degree and then a Ph D, not without some difficulties, I always retained my basic curiosity. This characteristic is of course one of the most essential qualifications for a scientist, asking forever what, why and how, as Kipling expressed it so well in his verse. [See Prolegomena, Title 1]

I was never interested in making money to become rich, to buy large and fast cars, although once I was given a superb classic model, a Lagonda, which my wife gave me as a wedding present. (It cost £ 1000 in 1945). For many years it gave Ann and me great pleasure. But in spite of being relatively poor, I have had 85 years of the most interesting life that any curious scientist can have. Perhaps reading this tale may persuade others to follow a scientific career!

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To... Rich chemists and how they enjoyed their wealth. Title 6.