

# SCIENCE

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## ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

By Sir HENRY DALE, C.B.E.

FULLERIAN PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE LABORATORIES OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTION, LONDON

WE are to-day within a few weeks of the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of Isaac Newton. Wherever the progress of our Western science and philosophy has become effective, men will remember what that event was to mean for the world. Newton, as we shall hear, at the age of forty-three, when he had determined to abandon all further concern with natural philosophy, was induced at length, by Halley's friendly insistence, to give written form and system to the mathematical discoveries with which his amazing mind had been occupied over a period of some twenty years. The result was one of the greatest intellectual achievements in the history of mankind—the "Principia," providing for more than two centuries a framework for the mechanical interpretation of the universe and a basis for the building of physical

science, and therewith of the material structure of our modern civilization.

We in Britain regard Isaac Newton as still, beyond challenge, the greatest of our men of science. Nor should the claim be limited to this island or to the British commonwealth of nations; for it was not till nearly half a century after Newton's death that former British colonists in North America began their development of an independent nation; and Newton is theirs as well as ours.

But, while we may proudly claim him as the countryman of all who share the birthright of the English tongue, the discoveries of science have belonged, and must belong again, to the whole world, and Newton's achievement is a part of the common heritage of all peoples. It can not be doubted that, if it had fallen in normal times, this tercentenary would have been

<sup>1</sup> Anniversary meeting, November 30, 1942.

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