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Professor Matthew Meselson
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Dear Matt,

Thank you for the reprint on yellow rain. By strange coincidence, I had just put down my copy of Scientific American and was thinking of your Southeast Asian sojourn when your letter arrived. Then, some days later, I noted the piece in the Wall Street Journal. Confusion now hath made his masterpiece...

You may be amused to hear that The Economist is about to launch a newspaper for scientists. If it did nothing else, the brief Nieman stay in Cambridge seems to have triggered a certain scientific infection of our geriatric body politic in London. We thought long and hard about launching a business magazine for corporate folks needing to keep abreast of developments emanating from laboratories. A large mailing test last year revealed it to be viable but formidably expensive.

So, back to the drawingboard, chastened but determined nevertheless to leverage our few hard-earned publishing skills somehow in this area (odd though it may seem, culturally and demographically scientists have much in common with The Economist's existing circulation).

Our latest wheeze is to launch a biweekly (ie, fortnightly) tabloid for laboratory professionals. The aim is not to compete with any of the existing journals reporting on the substance of science. We will try to concentrate instead on what we do modestly well: analysis and commentary about the process of affairs -- in this case, the affairs of science. To help us see in the dark, we will do this in conjunction with the Institute for Scientific Information of Philadelphia.

This is more now than just another development project. I've got the \$3m for the launch and started hiring last week. We will test a premier issue in January and then roll out the publication proper in March. I hope we can persuade you to be a frequent contributor? Will keep you posted.

Best wishes,
Nick
Nicholas Valery