

### English Conversations Note on Misquoting

It is always a good idea to trace quotations to their original source.

#### As Commonly Quoted

*The more important fundamental laws and facts of physical science have all been discovered, and these are now so firmly established that the possibility of their ever being supplanted in consequence of new discoveries is exceedingly remote... Our future discoveries must be looked for in the sixth place of decimals* A. A. Michelson (1894)

#### Original Quotation

*It is never safe to affirm that the future of physical science has no marvels in store which may be even more astonishing than those of the past; but it seems probable that most of the grand underlying principles have now been firmly established and that further advances are to be sought chiefly in the rigorous application of these principles to all the phenomena which come under our notice ... An eminent physicist has remarked that the future truths of physical science are to be looked for in the sixth place of decimals.* (A. A. Michelson University of Chicago Quarterly Calendar 10 (August 1894): 15)

Notice my ... which represents a gap of several hundred words. The identification of the “eminent physicist” is still controversial. Some suggest Kelvin’s address to the BAAS meeting at the turn of the 19th century but that is disputed.

For a complete review of this, and a number of other famous misquotations see:

**Mis/Adventures in Mis/Quoting** David Henige, J. Schol. Publ. **32** No.3 (2001)

The entire article can be downloaded at:-

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