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To Wise King Ehrenfest: Humorous Writings by Oskar Klein and Others from 1930s Copenhagen PAUL HALPERN, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia and Haverford College — In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Copenhagen, the center of the development of quantum physics, was also the home of abundant humor. As a respite from the intensive and highly competitive efforts taking place to characterize fundamental interactions on an atomic scale, physicists took the time to develop satirical letters, articles, plays and other works. Written in German, English and other languages, many of these efforts were quite pointed and clever. This paper will focus on several examples of these humorous contributions, including letters exchanged between Oskar Klein and Paul Ehrenfest in 1930, articles written for the “Journal of Jocular Physics,” and a well-known parody of Faust. We’ll show how these pieces reflect the political and scientific climate of the era, and attempt to characterize the personal styles of the some of the researchers involved.

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