

of obtaining the spectra of refractory materials, such as silicates. The substance is mixed with sodium carbonate, placed on platinum foil heated by a Meker burner, and sparked. Perhaps his best-known work is the investigation of the *raies ultimes* of the elements; *i.e.* the spectrum lines which are most persistent when an element is gradually reduced in quantity. The presence of the *raies ultimes* is the readiest criterion of the presence of an impurity in a substance.

Spectroscopy at the present time is developing more rapidly on the theoretical than on the practical side, because the theoretical workers are more numerous. The loss of M. de Gramont is, therefore, particularly to be deplored. He leaves in the minds and hearts of those who knew him a memory cherished no less

because of his noble character and kindly disposition than because of his scientific eminence.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Capt. Alfred Bertrand, an honorary corresponding member of the Royal Geographical Society and of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, a well-known African traveller, on January 30, aged sixty-eight.

Sir Kennedy Dalziel, formerly professor of medical jurisprudence and public health, and also of surgery, at Anderson's College, Glasgow, on February 10, aged sixty-two.

Dr. H. Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle, the author of numerous philosophical works, on February 9, aged sixty-five.

Current Topics and Events.

QUITE recently a Committee, on which science was not represented, recommended curtailment of the operations of the Imperial Institute, including the closing of the public exhibition galleries, which contain representative collections of the natural products of the British Dominions and Colonies, and the reduction of its laboratory work to merely preliminary investigations. It is interesting in this connexion to see that the Dutch have opened recently a Colonial Institute in Amsterdam, which is to carry on for the Dutch Colonies work similar in type to that which the Imperial Institute has conducted for so many years for the British Empire. The new Institute is a handsome building containing excellent collections of Dutch Colonial produce, partly derived from the old Colonial Museum at Haarlem, which has been merged in the new organisation. Extensive laboratories have also been provided in which these products will be investigated systematically. The maintenance of the Institute is secured by annual grants from the Ministries of the Colonies and the Interior and the Municipality of Amsterdam. This Institute has long been under consideration in Holland, and before the War a number of the most earnest advocates for its establishment visited the Imperial Institute and accounts of the operations of the latter played a considerable part in propaganda for the opening of a similar institution in Holland. But in Holland scientific matters are dealt with by scientific men, and as a result the Dutch have, in Java and Sumatra, tropical agricultural industries, such as cinchona-planting, which other countries cannot hope to compete with, and in addition they are able in these Colonies to start the cultivation of such things as tea, rubber, and the oil palm, and by the superiority of their methods to attract British capital away from British Colonies, and to compete seriously with the latter even when their entry into the industry is belated.

VISITORS to the Royal Society's soirée in 1900 and also in 1921 will recall, perhaps, an exhibit of a large enclosed box with peep-holes at either end, through which one saw a painted representation of the interior of a Dutch house, approximately of seventeenth century date. This box belonged to the late Sir Henry Howorth. The authorities of the National

Gallery, who deem the box of high interest, have received it as a gift from Col. Howorth, the former owner's son. The chief interest of the interior, apart from its character as a painting, is that it is an extraordinary *tour de force* in perspective, since the picture is painted on three planes and there are no lenses in the holes. Sir Henry Howorth always considered the portrayal of the interior to be the most remarkable example of the application of the scientific principles of perspective extant.

THE British Science Guild is inaugurating on Monday, February 18, a science news service, to which a number of lay journals have already subscribed. It is intended that the service shall provide a weekly signed article dealing with some subject of special interest and a weekly column of science notes. It will also furnish reports of scientific progress. The possibilities of such a service doing useful work for science in promoting the dissemination of accurate information on scientific work are indeed great, but its success must depend on the extent to which it secures the co-operation of men of science. To this end, the Guild is asking for correspondents in the various laboratories throughout the country, in order that it may be possible to keep the public informed of the work that is being done by British men of science. Scientific workers who would be prepared to act as correspondents for the laboratories in which they are working are requested to communicate with Mr. Gordon D. Knox, 2 Guilford Street, London, W.C.1.

WE learn from *Science* that a Metric Standards Bill, providing for gradual adoption in the United States of the metric units of weights and measures in commerce, has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Mr. F. A. Britten, of Illinois, and in the Senate by Mr. E. F. Ladd, of North Dakota. More than 100,000 petitions, directly representing several millions of voters, and urging adoption of world units for weighing and measuring, have been prepared. According to the provisions of the Britten-Ladd bill, the buying and selling of goods, wares and merchandise will be in terms of the metric units after a period of ten years. Manufacturers