

work of Michelson is the application of his interferometer to determine if possible the motion of the earth through the ether. The speed expected was of the order one-ten-thousandth of the velocity of light; but since the journey of the light in the instrument is a to-and-fro journey—one half-beam going as nearly as possible with and against the hypothetical stream of ether, while the other half-beam goes at right angles to that direction—the amount to be measured was not one-ten-thousandth but the square of that quantity; that is to say, the observer had to measure one part in a hundred million—no easy matter. The interferometer was mounted on a stone slab floating in mercury, and the whole observation conducted with great care.

The result was zero; and that zero was used afterwards as the corner-stone of the great and beautiful edifice of relativity."

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Mr. St. George Littledale, who was awarded the Patron's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1896 for three important journeys in the Pamirs and central Asia, on April 16, aged seventy-nine years.

Sir Charles Lucas, lately chairman of the Royal Empire Society (formerly the Royal Colonial Institute), distinguished as a historian of British colonial development, on May 7, aged seventy-seven years.

Mr. Emil Torday, a distinguished authority on the anthropology of Africa, on May 9, aged fifty-six years.

News and Views.

THE question of the introduction of twenty-four hour reckoning for railway time-tables has recently been discussed in Parliament. The subject is a well-worn one. It is nearly half a century since the late Sir William Christie made efforts in this direction. He suggested that, if it were done, astronomers might meet the public by reckoning astronomical time from midnight, a change that was actually made in 1925. A few years ago a committee appointed by the Council of the Royal Astronomical Society interviewed the railway authorities, endeavouring to persuade them to adopt the 24-hour system in time-tables, pointing out that the method was already in use in many countries. The companies, however, refused to make the change unless clear evidence was submitted to them that the public desired it. It is, however, fairly obvious that the public is inarticulate in matters of this kind. There was little enthusiasm for the summer-time scheme until it came about as a war-time economy; but once it was tried, it was welcomed with enthusiasm by all except a small minority. If the 24-hour scheme were adopted there would be no need to have new clock dials; the addition of 12 hours is an easy mental operation: moreover, the use of the new time for time-tables and public announcements would entail no obligation to use it in private life.

FOR some little time the attention of the public has been specially directed to eastern affairs in such a way as to emphasise the need for appreciation of the distinctive features in Oriental culture as a basis of understanding. More recently, however, the success of the exhibition of Persian art has given undue stress to the æsthetic side, which scarcely comes within the scope of NATURE. It is for this reason that we have refrained from comment on the various suggestions for the foundation of a museum for Oriental or Asiatic art which have appeared in the correspondence columns of the daily press. A proposal of a more comprehensive and scientific character is now put forward by the Royal Anthropological Institute. At a recent meeting of the Institute's Joint Committee on Teaching and Research, which includes representatives from all the universities and institutions interested in anthropological and archæological studies, it was strongly urged that a central institute is needed to

serve and guide the study of Indian and Oriental cultures as an expression of the thought and life of the people; and that such an institute should include, as recommended by the Royal Commission on the National Collections, provision for the study and exhibition of the national collections from the scientific and technological as well as from the æsthetic point of view. It was added that provision should be made in the Institute for the endowment of advanced teaching and research, and that its constitution should be on a federal basis, to permit the closest co-operation with existing institutions devoted to such studies.

THE bearing of the last suggestion is elaborated in a memorandum by Prof. J. L. Myres which was circulated to the Committee and is published in *Man* for April. It is there pointed out that the provision of a chair of Indian cultural studies, which has been suggested, is scarcely practicable, in view of the wide range of studies to be covered; while a series of chairs "in some British University" would not necessarily stand in the desired relation to the national collections. On the other hand, there are in other university cities, as well as in London, long-established and well-supported centres of Oriental study, such as the Indian Institute at Oxford. This institute, as founded by Monier-Williams, did indeed, on a small scale, anticipate the combination of library, museum, and provision for teaching and research such as is now contemplated and could alone cover adequately the study of art and technology, illustrate the thought and social structure of the people, and in the literature provide the interpretation of their culture. A national institution of the type suggested might then be linked federally to all existing establishments by the structure of its directorate and the composition of its staff.

THE Patent Office has recently made changes in the method of publishing its abridgments of specifications which should be noted by all who have to search through British patent literature. Hitherto, the weekly official journal has always contained, in numerical sequence, the week's series of abridgments, the whole from year to year forming a complete numerical set for immediate reference purposes. In addition, the abridgments allotted to each of the 271 classes into which the subject matter of inventions