

October 2, 1933, another part of Ecuador, namely, the Santa Elena Peninsula, was strongly shaken by an earthquake. Weak local shocks often occur in the area.

#### Michael Scot: Pioneer of Science

PROF. J. READ has contributed an interesting study of "Michael Scot: a Scottish Pioneer of Science" to *Scientia* (Oct.-Nov. 1938). Michael Scot lived in the early part of the thirteenth century and worked as a translator of Arabic writings in Spain and Sicily, where he was court astrologer and philosopher to the Emperor Frederick II. In later times he acquired the reputation of a magician and necromancer, and many legends have gathered around his name. Although our knowledge of him is fragmentary, Prof. Read shows that Michael Scot was a man of genuine scientific interests. His views on alchemy are interesting, since it is significant that he mentions neither transmutation nor the philosopher's stone, so that he followed the Greek-Egyptian sources rather than the later authors of western Europe. Of his other works, Scot's "Physionomia" had an extensive circulation in manuscript for 250 years and afterwards in several printed editions. He also wrote on astronomy, astrology and the art of prediction, and stands out as the most eminent Briton to secure a place in the history of medieval Italy.

#### The Imperial Institute

THE annual report of the Imperial Institute (South Kensington, London, S.W.7) for 1938 shows that an important side of the work of the Institute lies in the research departments which answer an increasing number of inquiries from all parts of the Empire. Queries concern both seeds and roots of economic value and various mineral samples. The Mineral Resources Department was particularly active and reported on samples from various colonies. Special interest attaches to the demand for high grade quartz crystals for both piezo-electric and optical purposes, but so far the search for new sources of this material has had little success. The oxide of titanium known as rutile which is used in the coating of electric welding rods has been found in various parts of the Empire. Many other examples of the usefulness of the Institute are recorded in this report.

#### A Virus Disease of the Elm

AMERICAN elm trees in the Ohio valley are subject to a new and deadly virus disease which is briefly described in a mail report from Science Service, Washington (Feb. 4, 1939). Leaves upon infected trees first shrivel and become brittle, then the roots and inner bark of the trunk rot away, and the tree dies within a few months. This is the first known instance where a virus disease has caused a fatal epidemic among trees. The outbreak appears to be even more serious than that of the so-called Dutch elm disease which has decimated elm trees in the neighbourhood of New York. It is reported that more than 1,000 out of about 1,800 elms in one particular locality have been killed by the virus

during three years. Means of dissemination of the pathogene have not yet been found, but the United States Division of Forest Pathology is taking energetic measures to trace the extent of the infection, and to limit it to one district, if possible.

#### Use of Electricity in Coal Mines

ON the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Safety in Coal Mines, the Secretary for Mines has appointed a Committee with the following terms of reference: "To be a committee to consider, in the light of experience and modern practice, what amendments are required in the General Regulations governing the use of electricity below ground and above ground at mines under the Coal Mines Act, 1911, taking into consideration the report of the Royal Commission on Safety in Coal Mines and the evidence on the subject submitted to that Commission". The following are members of the Committee: Prof. W. Cramp, Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Birmingham (chairman); Mr. J. A. B. Horsley, H.M. Electrical Inspector of Mines; Mr. A. M. Bell and Mr. A. B. Connell. The secretary to the Committee is Mr. R. Crawford, Mines Department, Mill House, 87-89 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.1.

#### Chemical Society Anniversary Meetings

THE anniversary meetings of the Chemical Society this year are to take place in London on March 29-31. On March 29 the Rutherford Memorial Lecture will be delivered by Sir Henry T. Tizard at the Royal Institution at 5 p.m., and fellows and guests will be entertained at a reception and dance at Imperial Chemical House from 8.45 until midnight. On Thursday, March 30, visits have been arranged in the morning to Bedford College for Women and to the Wellcome Research Institution, to view the laboratories and museums. The annual general meeting will be held at Burlington House at 2.30 p.m., and at 4 p.m. the presentation of the Longstaff Medal and of the Harrison Memorial Prize will be made and Prof. F. G. Donnan will give his presidential address. The anniversary dinner of the Society will be held at Grosvenor House the same evening at 7 for 7.30 p.m. On Friday, March 31, visits have been arranged in the morning to The British Drug Houses, Ltd., and to the Central Laboratories of the Shell Marketing Co., Ltd., and in the afternoon to the Research and Development Department of the Distillers' Company, Ltd. at Epsom, and to the laboratories of the Research Association of British Paint, Colour, and Varnish Manufacturers.

#### Royal Society of Edinburgh: Elections

At the ordinary meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, held on March 6, the following ordinary fellows were elected: Prof. Arthur B. P. Amies, Australian College of Dentistry, Melbourne; Dr. William G. Annan, Clinical Medical Officer, Durham County Council, Darlington; Prof. J. H. Baxter, Department of Ecclesiastical History, University of

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