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JOINT MEETING OF
CHEMICAL SOCIETIES

Doctor Richards Speaks on Radio-Active Lead At Harvard Union

Last Friday evening the second of the Joint Meeting of the Boylston Chemical Club and the Technology Chemical Society, was held at the Harvard Union. Over one hundred students and visitors were present. The many members of the Boylston Club brought the total up to a considerable figure.

The occasion was the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Boylston Chemical Club. Doctor Richards of Harvard, the first speaker, welcomed the Technology visitors, and proceeded with a short history of the Harvard Society, of which he had been one of the original founders. He spoke of the prosperity of the club in past years, and of its help in fostering at Harvard the deep interest in technology that has enabled the university to develop this science or “Uncracking the Inscrutables” to its utmost. He then took up “Radio-Active Lead” as the subject of his talk.

Dr. Richards explained the hypothesis, which is now commonly accepted, of the decomposition of Uranium, by the loss of electrons and successive atoms of helium, through Uranium, Radium, Niton or Radium emanation, through Radiums A to G, and finally to Lead. All these substances behave chemically as elements, and each is lighter than the one preceding by an atom or two of helium. The atomic weight of Uranium is 238. After it has lost eight atoms of helium, atomic weight is seen, giving off more helium, and passing from Uranium to Niton or Uranium. The atomic weight would be almost exactly 238. The best results of men working independently, with the greatest possible specimens of nuclear activity, have fixed the atomic weight at 238.06, which is near enough to the correct weight to verify the theory. This eventual substance has chemical properties exactly similar to those of lead, but has an atomic weight considerably larger. The one mysterious fact that has not been explained, and which leads one to believe that there has been opened up a large and entirely new field for Chemical Research.

Doctor Noyes, of the Institute, was the next speaker. He took this subject “Research in America.” He explained that the advancement of the American science, as a whole, is dependent upon the type of education that is afforded to the workers in this field. The first nations to perceive the importance and real meaning of education, “the acquirement of power to solve problems,” was Germany. Her universities gave their students the power of original solution by affording them privileges at least equal to those of Europe. This fact explains her supremacy in scientific fields, notably in Physics. The United States, however, although it was in the lead in the important work of this phase of education, was swift to adopt it when once fully assured. Such excellent work in this line is being done in universities like Johns Hopkins, Harvard, our own Institute, and in the state colleges of Illinois, Indiana, and others, that the output of students to Germany has been almost entirely checked. The spirit of research has even spread through to many large industrial firms. The work of the laboratory of the General Electric Company at Schenectady has been especially noteworthy.

After the addresses, refreshments were served, and the men of the two institutions had an opportunity to become acquainted with one another.

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