

News and Views

Prof. F. J. Cole, F.R.S.

PROF. F. J. COLE will be retiring from the chair of zoology in the University of Reading in September next, after a tenure of thirty-two years. Prof. Cole built up the Zoology Department from very small beginnings; to-day the University can regard with pride the results of his work and inspiration. The Museum of Comparative Anatomy, though small, is without a rival among those of the younger universities, and the preparations, dissections and models have been executed in the Department. Even the printing of the labels is done there. This Museum has justifiably achieved widespread fame; recently a former keeper of zoology in the British Museum (Natural History) referred to it as the "gem" among British museums of comparative anatomy. Although assisted by a very small, but efficient staff, the organization of the teaching side of the Department has always been of the first class. Until comparatively recently, few students entered a university with even the most elementary knowledge of zoology; but those who were fortunate enough to study the subject at Reading soon became infected with the enthusiasm of Prof. Cole and his staff, and by far the majority became sincere students of the subject, not merely candidates reading for an examination.

PROF. COLE'S researches on the nervous system and lateral line system of fishes and on the general morphology of the myxinoid fishes are well known. In recent years his strong literary bent, scholarly mind and acquisitive love of books have combined to interest him in the history of zoology. He has lectured and written on the biologists of the past, extending to them the same sympathetic understanding of their difficulties and mistakes that he offers to young people struggling along the paths of original investigation under his care, yet always, after the manner of Gibbon, relieving the tedium of instruction with an apt analogy or an appropriate anecdote. Last year, with the collaboration of Mr. Robert Gibbings, he produced a facsimile reprint of a very rare book—"Observationes Anatomicae Selectiores. Amstelodamensium. 1667-73" (see NATURE, 142, 235; 1938). His researches into the writings of Leeuwenhoek and Swammerdam have taken him to the old towns and museums of Holland. As a result several papers have appeared in the *Annals of Science* and other journals devoted to the history of science. As Prof. Cole will now be able to devote all his time to his unique collections of early medical books we look forward to more of his delightful studies of the biologists of the past.

Prof. Otto Hahn

ON March 8, Prof. Otto Hahn, director of the Kaiser Wilhelm-Institut for Chemistry, at Dahlem near Berlin, will reach his sixtieth birthday. To mark this event, a special number of the *Zeitschrift für*

physikalische Chemie will appear, in which all the articles will be contributed by members of his laboratory. A celebration of a more intimate nature is also contemplated in the Institute itself. Prof. Hahn's friends in other countries, among whom are many readers of NATURE, will wish to join with his colleagues in offering their warmest congratulations. To workers and students in the field of radioactivity the names of Otto Hahn and Lise Meitner are almost indissolubly linked together. Readers of NATURE will remember that Frl. Lise Meitner celebrated her sixtieth birthday last November, and it is most fitting that where one has led the other should not be far behind. Prof. Hahn's first work in radioactivity was an investigation of the activity of thorianite, carried out under Ramsay at University College, London. This work led to the discovery of a new radioactive substance, radiothorium. Attracted by the rapidly growing fame of Rutherford, he then went to Montreal for a year (1905-6). There he discovered a new body, radioactinium, in the actinium series and showed that there were marked similarities between the products of thorium and actinium. On his return to Berlin, there followed the discovery of mesothorium and some striking experiments on the use of the recoil phenomenon as a method of separating radioactive products. It was at this time that his association with Frl. Meitner began. Together they examined the radiations from many radioelements and later, with von Baeyer, they discovered the presence of homogeneous groups in the β -radiation of some products, the first indication of the now well-known β -ray spectra.

Hahn and Meitner also made investigations on the origin of the actinium series and, in 1918, they discovered, simultaneously with Soddy and Cranston in Great Britain, the immediate parent of actinium, protactinium. Later Hahn prepared this new element in a pure state in quantity sufficient for an atomic weight determination. In pursuing his investigations of the disintegration products of uranium, Hahn found a very curious branching of uranium X_1 , which gave rise to two bodies—uranium X_2 , already known, and uranium Z, a new product of the same mass and charge as uranium X_2 but with different radioactive properties. This was in fact the first example of a pair of nuclear isomers, many of which have recently been found as a result of artificial transformations. In recent years, much of Prof. Hahn's work has been devoted to a study of the artificial transformations resulting from the bombardment of uranium and thorium by neutrons. Only a few weeks ago he was able to show, on chemical evidence, that one of the products of the disintegration of uranium was not, as previously supposed, an isotope of radium but an isotope of barium, pointing to a really dramatic disintegration of the uranium nucleus. This startling conclusion has been confirmed by very striking