

as deputy head of pest control research at Geigy, he preferred above all else the work of a research chemist. After his retirement in 1961 he continued to devote his energy and enthusiasm to work in his private laboratory at his home in Oberwil, near Basle. He found relaxation

in his beloved countryside, in the Jura mountains and the Alps, and in family life. By his death, Basle and its chemical industry, and indeed the world of science, have lost a scientist whose personality and attainments will not soon be forgotten.

NEWS and VIEWS

The Royal Society:

PROF. P. M. S. BLACKETT, emeritus professor of physics, University of London, Senior Research Fellow, Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, and part-time scientific adviser to the Ministry of Technology, has been elected president of the Royal Society in succession to Lord Florey. The new physical secretary is Prof. M. J. Lighthill, Royal Society research professor at the Imperial College of Science and Technology. The new foreign secretary is Prof. H. W. Thompson, professor of chemistry in the Physical Chemistry Laboratory, Oxford. The officers re-elected for the ensuing year were: *Treasurer*, Lord Fleck, formerly chairman of Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd.; *Biological Secretary*, Prof. A. A. Miles, director of the Lister Institute and professor of experimental pathology in the University of London. Other members of Council elected (or re-elected, marked *) were: Prof. M. S. Bartlett, professor of statistics at University College, London; *Prof. D. H. R. Barton, professor of organic chemistry at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London; Lord Brain of Eynsham, consulting neurologist to the London Hospital and consulting physician to Maida Vale Hospital; *Dr. F. S. Dainton, vice-chancellor of the University of Nottingham and honorary director of the Cookridge High Energy Radiation Research Centre, University of Leeds; *Prof. K. C. Dunham, professor of geology in the University of Durham; *Prof. G. W. Harris, Dr. Lee's professor of anatomy at the University of Oxford; Dr. S. G. Hooker, technical director (aero), Bristol Siddeley Engines, Ltd.; *Prof. W. O. James, professor of botany at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London; Dr. J. C. Kendrew, deputy chairman of the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge; Dr. R. D. Keynes, director of the Institute of Animal Physiology, Babraham, Cambridge; *Sir Hans Krebs, Whitley professor of biochemistry at the University of Oxford; *Dr. N. Kurti, reader in physics, University of Oxford, and Senior Research Fellow, Brasenose College; *Dr. K. Mather, vice-chancellor of the University of Southampton; Prof. P. T. Matthews, professor of theoretical physics at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London; Dr. L. Rotherham, member for research, Central Electricity Generating Board; Sir Solly Zuckerman, chief scientific adviser to the Secretary of State for Defence, scientific adviser, Cabinet Office, and Sands Cox professor of anatomy in the University of Birmingham.

Prof. P. M. S. Blackett, C.H., P.R.S.

THE attainment of the highest scientific honour in the land crowns a distinguished career of more than forty years. Patrick Maynard Stuart Blackett has received many honours. A range of physical research, particularly an intensive study of cosmic rays by the cloud chamber method, led to his election as Fellow of the Royal Society in 1933, the award of a Royal Society Medal in 1940 and a Nobel Prize for Physics in 1948. He has three times served on the Council of the Royal Society—during 1940–42, during 1944–46, when he held the office of vice-

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president for a year, and during 1963–65. In 1946 he was awarded the American Medal of Merit for his work in operational research, and 10 years later he was again honoured by the Royal Society, receiving the Copley Medal for his work in the fields of cosmic rays and palaeomagnetism.

Blackett began his scientific career at Cambridge in the great days of the late Lord Rutherford. He had achieved an international reputation before he was thirty—a more remarkable achievement in that he started late, for he began life as a sailor. Born on November 18, 1897, Blackett was educated at the Royal Naval Colleges at Osborne and Dartmouth. He served in the Royal Navy throughout the First World War, taking part in the battles of Jutland and the Falkland Islands. His keen interest in science led him after the War to Cambridge, where he studied physics under Prof. Rutherford (as he then was). Blackett graduated in 1921, and 2 years later was made a Fellow of King's College. He worked in the Cavendish Laboratory from 1921 until 1933 when he became professor of physics at Birkbeck College. In 1937 he went to the University of Manchester as Langworthy professor of physics, succeeding Sir Lawrence Bragg who himself had succeeded Rutherford. During his 16 years at Manchester, Blackett presided over and greatly expanded a department which already had a fine tradition. This achievement was repeated by Blackett at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, which he joined in 1953 as professor of physics and head of the physics department, and was responsible for the planning and supervision of the College's fine new Physics Building which was opened in 1960. Perhaps Blackett's most important contribution to the growth of British academic physics during this period was his persuasive support for the College's campaign for a very substantial increase in the number of professors. This trend away from the old European concept of one professor towards the multi-professorial pattern forming a department with a broad field of study is now widely accepted. Blackett has served the Imperial College in many capacities. He was dean of the Royal College of Science from 1954 until 1960 and pro-rector from 1961 until 1963. On his retirement in September 1965, he was appointed a Senior Research Fellow and will continue to have a research laboratory in the physics department.

Blackett and those working with him have made significant contributions to three main fields of physical discovery: the interaction with matter of fast particles from radioactive sources, the nature of the particles in the cosmic rays, and the magnetism of the Earth. During 1921–31 he was chiefly occupied with the development and operation of automatic Wilson cloud chambers and their application to the precise measurement of the parameters involved in collisions between α -particles and atomic nuclei. He photographed for the first time the disintegration of a nucleus. From 1931 onwards he applied and extended the cloud-chamber technique to the study of the collisions involved in the cosmic rays, establishing with Occhialini the existence of showers of nearly equal numbers of positive and negative electrons. From 1947 onwards, Blackett revived interest in the old