

## News and Views

Sir P. C. Rây, C.I.E.

SIR PRAFULLA RÂY has retired from the Palit professorship of chemistry at the University College of Science, Calcutta, a post which he has held since 1916, and has been elected professor emeritus. His retirement is a noteworthy event in Indian science. The whole of Sir Prafulla's active life has been spent in Calcutta. After receiving his early training in chemistry at the Presidency College under the late Sir Alexander Pedler, he worked for some years in Edinburgh under Prof. Crum Brown, graduating there with the degree of D.Sc. On returning to Calcutta he in due course succeeded Sir Alexander Pedler as professor of chemistry at the Presidency College, where he remained until his retirement from Government service in 1916. Sir Prafulla's own investigations, carried out in collaboration with numerous students, were for many years concerned mainly with the chemistry of the nitrites, to which he made a notable contribution, whilst more recently he has added to our knowledge of thio-compounds and metallic complexes. Sir Prafulla was the first to organize in India a true school of chemistry; he gathered around him a brilliant band of workers whom he imbued with his own enthusiasm for scientific research. Many of these have attained positions of eminence.

THE activities of Sir Prafulla Rây, however, have not been confined within the laboratory walls. He found time to write a history of Hindu chemistry, which has become a classic, and to found, and become honorary director of, a large chemical works, the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Company. In his later years he has been much interested in political and social questions. His students have for him an extraordinary veneration and affection, which is not surprising since he embodies all that is best of the true Indian "Guru". Outward marks of the esteem in which he is held have not been lacking; he was appointed C.I.E. in 1912 and knighted in 1919. He was president of the Chemistry Section of the Indian Science Congress in 1915 and of the Congress in 1921, whilst he was the first president of the Indian Chemical Society (1924-26). In 1933, in celebration of his seventieth birthday, the Society published a commemorative volume, to which contributions were made by chemists of all nationalities. Into his well-earned retirement Sir Prafulla will take with him the best wishes of all scientific workers.

### British Association: Mather Lecture

MR. G. RADFORD MATHER, to whom the British Association owes the foundation of the Radford Mather lecture, is a retired engineer, now living at Wellingborough. Mr. Mather, who combines wide scientific knowledge with a deep appreciation of the necessity for social service, has many and varied

interests. He has given special attention to the study of those forces which govern minimal surface relations, and it was during a correspondence dealing with such matters that the attention of Mr. Mather was directed to the increasing interest shown by the British Association in the repercussions of advances in scientific knowledge on the well-being of the community. Mr. Mather has endowed a triennial lecture, to be given in London or the provinces, to be called the Radford Mather lecture, and to deal, for the most part, with the social implications of the advancement of science. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald gave the first lecture of the foundation, and portions of his address appear elsewhere in this issue. The scientific world is much indebted to Mr. Radford Mather for this foundation, and it is a matter for regret that, in view of his great age—he celebrated the ninety-sixth anniversary of his birthday on October 17—he was unable to be present at Mr. MacDonald's address.

### Science and the Community

IN the first Radford Mather lecture of the British Association entitled "Science and the Community" delivered at the Royal Institution on October 22, the Right Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald paid an eloquent tribute to the value of the scientific method and its broad application to human needs. Science is one of the greatest creative forces of this generation, and the guidance of scientific research is indispensable in treating many of the ills arising in a civilization which is not a static state but one of dynamic energy calling for direction. The most lasting and fruitful of changes are those which arise from the failure or imperfections of existing conditions; discomfort and unrest in the community, like pain in the individual, are danger signals which call for scientific study and treatment. Such pain and unrest may even be preventable by scientific treatment, and while making no plea for the man of science as statesman, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald indicated a wide field in which the scientific method might assist in the development of a rational and broad policy. Health and the home life of the people are two directions in which fundamental changes and advances may be possible in this way, and he suggested, too, that the example of the scientific worker is in itself of value in steadying and clarifying the popular mind not only to complain eloquently but also to conclude wisely.

THE dual plea that the man of science as citizen should take a lively interest in the way his discoveries are used and that the contribution of science to social welfare depends upon an enlightened popular view of the value and significance of these researches and their uses, led to a final plea for a reinvigoration of social science, which is of special interest in view of Lord Nuffield's recent offer to the University of