

NEWS AND VIEWS

Prof. W. J. V. Osterhout

PROF. W. J. V. Osterhout has relinquished his post at the Rockefeller Institute in his seventieth year. One of the most prolific of contemporary writers on physiological subjects, Prof. Osterhout's name has been familiar to biologists since the opening years of this century. Many who associate Prof. Osterhout with problems of cell physiology may not be aware that his early interests lay elsewhere. During 1895-96 Osterhout studied in Strasburger's laboratory at Bonn and there investigated problems of nuclear cytology. Among Osterhout's contemporaries at Bonn were others destined for high place in botanical science: Prof. V. H. Blackman, recently retired from the chair of botany at the Imperial College of Science; Dr. R. A. Harper, who became professor of botany in Columbia University; and Dr. W. T. Swingle, who became a prominent member of the Bureau of Plant Industry, Washington. Those who knew him in these early days speak of the enthusiasm and zest with which Osterhout faced his life and work. These qualities have never flagged throughout a long career, and, even in retirement, we shall hope for more from his agile mind and ready pen. At the University of California, after contact with Jacques Loeb, Osterhout became engrossed in problems of cell physiology—problems which were to claim him for the rest of his very active career. Demonstrations that the then accepted facts of antagonism applied to plant, as well as animal, cells, and the development of quantitative methods for the measurement of cell permeability and the investigation of the factors which regulate this property, occupied him for many years.

Attracted by the possibilities for physiological investigation inherent in the genus *Valonia*, Osterhout contributed, in conjunction with a succession of research students and associates, a steady stream of papers on sap composition, salt accumulation, diffusion gradients across living membranes, bio-electric phenomena and on the investigation of diffusion and equilibria in various model systems so designed that they resemble special features of living cells. Confidence in physico-chemical interpretations of vital phenomena—in the tradition of Jacques Loeb—and a gift for ingenious experimentation, improvisation and interpretation, mark all the work with which Osterhout has been associated. These qualities were evident in one of his early books—"Experiments with Plants"—in which, in a manner still worthy of the attention of the teacher, Osterhout turned his attention to simple demonstrations of the essential facts of plant physiology. Prof. Osterhout has occupied teaching posts in the University of California and at Harvard. Many research students and post-graduate associates of Osterhout have attained prominence in American science, among them S. C. Brooks, M. M. Brooks, M. Irwin—who later became Mrs. Osterhout—L. R. Blinks and others. Latterly the claims of research ousted more general teaching. Since

1925, Prof. Osterhout has served the Rockefeller Institute, has been a trustee of the Wood's Hole Marine Biological Laboratory and a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of General Physiology*, in which much of his work is to be found. Future students of general physiology will not fail to see in Prof. Osterhout one of the outstanding figures of his day, and, as he relinquishes his post, his contemporaries wish him well.

University of Bristol: Air Raid Damage

THE most serious damage to the University of Bristol during recent air raids was the loss of the Great Hall, gutted by fire. This hall, opened by the King in 1925, was a fine architectural feature with a hammer-beam roof and linenfold panelling of old English oak. With other buildings in the same block, it was the gift of Messrs. G. A. and H. H. Wills, and wood and stone carvers of the highest skill were brought from all parts of Great Britain for its construction. Since the arrival of King's College, London, the Hall had been used as a library and reading room for King's students, and the books it contained were all destroyed. A lecture room in the same building was also burnt. Another building which has been burnt out housed the anatomical dissecting room and theatre, portions of the Department of Geography and a unique collection of finds and exhibits of the Spelæological Society, which for many years has been active in the exploration of Mendip caves. The efforts of the A.R.P. guard, headed by Prof. C. M. Yonge, prevented fires from spreading to other departments. The roof of a new building to be used as an extension of the Library was burnt, but fortunately the University had not yet transferred any material into it. Other buildings, including the laboratories of physics and chemistry, suffered loss of windows by blast.

Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

THE front part of the Natural History Museum, Bristol, which is an old building, has been entirely gutted by fire. The Geological Department was destroyed, but type specimens and much material in store were saved. Unfortunately, the fine collection of fossil saurian skeletons, especially those from the Lias of Street and Lyme Regis have been lost. The Zoology Department suffered considerably, but there is sufficient material left for reconstruction. Cases and contents in botany have gone, but some of the herbaria are intact. Cases and about half the contents, including glass and china, in the George Wills Hall have been destroyed.

An 1820 building which was the early home of the Bristol Institution and Museum and of the Literary and Philosophical Society was also gutted by fire. Humphry Davy contributed many lectures to the weekly series of the Society, of which Faraday and James Watt were honorary members.