coastguards and receivers of wrecks, all strandings of whales noted around the coasts of Britain. This led to a great increase in the amount of material available for study by specialists on the Cetacea, and as a result to important advances in knowledge. Mention must also be made of Harmer's long and active interest in the Marine Biological Association and the work of the Plymouth laboratory.

On retiring from the directorship of the Museum in 1927, Harmer was able to concentrate upon his *Siboga* Report, of which Parts 1 and 2 had appeared in 1915 and 1926. Parts 3 and 4 were duly completed, but the text and illustrations of Part 4 unfortunately reached Holland just before the German occupation of that country, and their supposed loss was a blow from which Harmer never really recovered. When eventually news came of their safety, it was too late to bring relief. Happily they are now in the capable hands of Dr. Anna Hastings, and the publication of this concluding part of Harmer's great work should not be long delayed.

Harmer's last years were spent at Melbourn and then at Cambridge, where he died. He is survived by his wife, Laura, daughter of A. P. Howell, and by their son and daughter.

His scientific work received wide recognition. He was knighted in 1920. Elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1898, he served on the Council and was vice-president during 1922–24. Fellow of University College, London; honorary fellow of King's College, Cambridge; president of the Linnean Society of London; foreign member of the Norwegian and Swedish Academies; honorary member of the Boston Society of Natural History and the Société Zoologique de France; gold medal of the Linnean Society of London; these were among his long list of distinctions. JOHN GRAHAM KERR

NEWS and VIEWS

Nobel Prize for Chemistry for 1950: Prof. O. Diels and Prof. K. Alder

THE Nobel Prize for Chemistry for 1950 has been awarded jointly to Prof. Otto Diels and his former pupil, Prof. Kurt Alder, for their work on the diene synthesis. This award will be acclaimed by organic chemists generally as a fitting acknowledgment of one of the outstanding achievements of organic chemistry. The names of Diels and Alder will be inseparably linked in the annals of chemistry, and their combined names with the diene synthesis which they developed. Prof. Diels, who will shortly celebrate his seventy-fifth birthday, has been professor of chemistry at the University of Kiel since 1916. Prof. Alder now occupies the chair of chemistry and chemical technology in the University of Cologne. Their first paper on the reaction of dienes with quinones was published in 1928. Similar additions had already been recorded by other workers, and in particular by von Euler and Josephson, who in 1920 described the reaction of isoprene with benzoquinone and correctly formulated the product. It was Diels and Alder, however, who provided the first experimental proof of the nature of the reaction and who appreciated and demonstrated its wide application to the synthesis of ring compounds of many types. The ease with which the diene synthesis occurs, without the need for powerful chemical reagents, is one of its most remarkable features, and study of the reaction has also contributed greatly to knowledge of polymerization processes by which plastic materials of great practical value have been obtained. It is probable that many plant products are formed in Nature by diene additions. Prof. Alder, who is still actively working on the diene synthesis, has made important contributions to the stereochemistry and the energetics of the process. Prof. Diels is also noted for his work on other aspects of organic chemistry, and in particular for his studies on cholesterol, which culminated in his discovery of the method of dehydrogenation with selenium.

Royal Society: Medal Awards for 1950

H.M. THE KING has been graciously pleased to approve recommendations made by the Council of the Royal Society for the award of the two Royal Medals for 1950 as follows: Sir Edward Appleton, for his work on the transmission of electromagnetic waves round the earth and for his investigations of the ionic state of the upper atmosphere; Dr. C. F. A. Pantin, for his contributions to the comparative physiology of the Invertebrata, particularly his work on nerve conduction in Crustacea and Actinozoa.

The following awards of Medals have been made by the President and the Council of the Royal Society: Copley Medal to Sir James Chadwick, for his outstanding work in nuclear physics and in the development of atomic energy, especially for his discovery of the neutron; Rumford Medal to Air Commodore Sir Frank Whittle, for his pioneering contributions to the jet propulsion of aircraft; Davy Medal to Sir John Simonsen, for his distinguished researches on the constitution of natural products, especially the plant hydrocarbons and their derivatives; Darwin Medal to Prof. F. E. Fritsch, for his distinguished contributions to the study of algology; Hughes Medal to Prof. M. Born, for his contributions to theoretical physics in general and to the development of quantum mechanics in particular.

Royal Observatory, Cape of Good Hope: Dr. J. Jackson, F.R.S.

DR. JOHN JACKSON has recently retired from the post of H.M. Astronomer and Director of the Royal Observatory, Cape of Good Hope. Dr. Jackson was appointed chief assistant at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, in 1914. He edited the double-star observations made at Greenwich, which he used together with observations elsewhere for the investigation of the orbits of many binaries and for the determination of dynamical parallaxes. In conjunction with Mr. Bowyer he made a study of the performance of the Shortt free-pendulum clocks; the effect of the short-period nutation terms was shown, and it became necessary to introduce the conception of mean or uniform sidereal time. The reduction, jointly with Dr. H. Knox-Shaw, of the observations made by Hornsby at the Radcliffe Observatory, Oxford, in the years 1774–98 was an important contribution to fundamental astronomy. In 1933 Dr. Jackson was appointed H.M. Astronomer at the Cape, and has fully maintained the high traditions of that important southern Observatory. The stellar parallax programme and the photographic determinations of star places were vigorously continued.