Division of the History of Chemistry
American Chemical Society

Citation for Chemical Breakthrough

The Discovery of Nuclear Fission

Nature **1939**, *143*, 239-240.

Disintegration of Uranium by Neutrons: a New Type of Nuclear Reaction

In making chemical assignments, it was always assumed that these radioactive bodies had atomic numbers near that of the element bombarded, since only particles with one or two charges were known to be emitted from nuclei.

Hahn and Strassmann[4] found that a group of at least three radioactive bodies, formed from uranium under neutron bombardment, were chemically similar to barium

It seems therefore possible that the uranium nucleus has only small stability of form, and may, after neutron capture, divide itself into two nuclei of roughly equal size

The whole 'fission' process can thus be described in an essentially classical way,

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