

SCIENCE

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THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE IN AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

DURING the past few years there have been several attempts to establish beyond question the value of a study of the history of science in American colleges. A little has been written in defense of the subject as a proper part of the curriculum, and a few science teachers have spared no effort in the critical study and presentation of the history of the particular phase of science with which they have been most familiar. And yet, the papers that have been written in English dealing at all directly with this history are so few in number that they all may be read in a very few hours. Of histories of science—books relating to the subject matter itself—there are even fewer, so it is not surprising that the otherwise busy teacher has not been drawn into this phase of his science by any sense of an ample amount of readily available material. At the same time, those who have considered the matter seriously have usually become strong advocates of the value of a study of the development of science, both for its service in explaining the present status and aims of science, and also for its value as a picture of human development that probably is not to be equalled in educational value by any survey of political or military movements.

With this conviction, the present writer undertook to ascertain in just how far the history of science was being studied in American colleges and universities. Questionnaires were sent to the deans or presidents of nearly four hundred institutions throughout the United States. While such instruments are necessarily imperfect, and the individual findings perhaps often unreliable, the total mass of material thus gathered together is not without point, and it indicates among other things, that inter-