

SCIENCE

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CHEMISTRY AND EDUCATION¹

By Professor WILLIAM McPHERSON

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL AND PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

NEARLY a century and a half has passed since chemistry was first recognized as a subject worthy of study in our colleges. Maclean in his "History of the College of New Jersey" states that this college as early as 1795 included chemistry among the subjects for the study of which provisions were made. Other reputable universities of that day soon followed, and early in the last century chemistry was a required study in the course in liberal arts at Columbia, Harvard and Princeton. This new-born infant, however, was not received with any great cordiality into the family of studies that had long constituted the essentials for the baccalaureate degree. Its growth was impeded in many ways, and there were times when there was some fear as to whether it would survive the rigors of doubt and suspicion to which it was exposed. Years were to pass before laboratory work was offered as an essential part of the course, and even then in some of

the colleges, at least, the students electing laboratory work were regarded with suspicion as to their sanity. They were thought by some of the classicists to be allied with the alchemists of old, who sought in secret places to transform the baser metals into gold, or to discover that mystic something that would bring perpetual youth to its fortunate possessor. Gradually the science won its way, even though there were few students and the library and laboratory facilities were very meager. The following quotations taken from the reports of the professor of chemistry, fifty years ago, in a university that to-day has a laboratory costing more than \$1,000,000, adequately equipped, and with an enrolment of 3,000 students in the department of chemistry, will serve to give us some insight into the conditions for studying chemistry at that time:

¹ Address of the president of the American Chemical Society, Cincinnati, September 10, 1930.

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