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## Source Books in Science

AS LONG ago as 1924 I conceived a plan for the preparation and publication of source books in the history of science. The aim was to present the most significant passages from the works of outstanding men in mathematics and the physical sciences from about 1400 to 1900. Later it seemed advisable to add a volume dealing with the scientific contributions of the ancient Greeks and another for medieval science. A volume containing important selections from the same fields of science from 1900 to 1950 is now under way.

The books of this series were not intended to be textbooks, although several have been used in that way. The primary goal was to make the most important scientific material readily available for courses in the history of science. With such works at hand, any teacher could give practically as good a course as those offered at large universities where original source material is preserved. Furthermore, since the material was to be selected by experts in their respective fields, a decided advantage would attach to the "Source Books."

With the original idea in mind, I began search for an advisory board which, ultimately, was composed of seven eminent scientists and an equal number of prominent philosophers, including:

Joseph S. Ames, *The Johns Hopkins University*  
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The suggestions given by these men collectively and

individually have been invaluable. The helpful advice of the late J. McKeen Cattell and William S. Learned, of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, cannot be overestimated. The endorsements, too, of several learned societies added considerably to the momentum of the undertaking in its early stages.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York granted \$10,000 as a revolving fund to help finance the project, and the McGraw-Hill Book Company undertook the publication and distribution of the entire series. The fact that approximately 18,000 copies of the several works have been sold indicates that the series is serving a useful purpose.

The first volume, *A Source Book in Astronomy*, edited by Shapley and Howarth, came from the press early in 1929 and was followed by *A Source Book in Mathematics*, edited by David Eugene Smith. *A Source Book in Physics*, by W. F. Magie, appeared in 1935, and *A Source Book in Geology*, by Mather and Mason, followed in 1939. World War II interrupted publication, but in 1948 *A Source Book in Greek Science*, by Cohen and Drabkin, was placed on the market. *A Source Book in Animal Biology*, edited by Thomas S. Hall, appeared in 1951, and *A Source Book in Chemistry*, by Henry M. Leicester, is in press. *A Source Book in Botany* is in preparation, and, as already indicated, *A Source Book in Medieval Science*, by McKeen and Claggett, is partly in manuscript form. The *Source Book in Twentieth Century Science (1900-1950)* is in the hands of Harlow Shapley, Kirtley F. Mather, Garrett Birkhoff, Henry Margenau, Thomas S. Hall, and Henry M. Leicester.

These volumes, now on the market, range from about 500 to 700 pages each. Initially they sold for about \$5.00 but, thanks to unfortunate economic conditions, the prices of the more recent ones have risen. It is hoped that the project, which is now nearing completion, has added something of permanent value to the literature of science.

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