Books

The Intelligent Man's Guide to Science (2 vols.)

by Isaac Asimov

Basic Books $15

The Intelligent Man's Guide to Science is a rarity – an outline of science written so that it will inform the layman and, at the same time, retain the respect of the scientist. Of course, even two jumbo volumes (Volume I on The Physical Sciences, Volume II on The Biological Sciences) do not provide enough space to contain the whole history of, and recent discoveries in, all the major fields of science. But that's what the redoubtable Mr. Asimov has tried to crowd in here, and his book lives up to its title admirably; it is a comprehensive, readable – and even absorbing – *guide* to science.

Isaac Asimov is associate professor of biochemistry at Boston University, though he is probably even better known as one of the best of the contemporary science fiction writers. The book has an introduction by G. W. Beadle, professor of biology and acting dean of the faculty at Caltech. And it should be noted that *The Intelligent Man's Guide* is a particularly impressive physical specimen too – the text set in large, handsome type, and the two outsized volumes stoutly boxed.

The Major Achievements of Science

by A. E. E. McKenzie

Volume I $5.50
Volume II $3.50

Cambridge University Press

Mr. McKenzie, of Cambridge University, has also produced an outline of science – but with a difference. He directs his book first to the student, then to the general reader. And the book is not so much an outline of science, or even a history of science, as it is a history of scientific ideas, with secondary emphasis on biographical accounts of outstanding scientists. ("If it is right," says Mr. McKenzie, "that one of the main tasks of the educator is to bring youth face to face with greatness, science should be presented not only historically but biographically. In these egalitarian days, when it is thought almost unethical to work harder and to achieve more than the next man, it is well that youth should be reminded that the greatest scientific achievements have been the fruits of intense toil and self-sacrifice. Most of us, moreover, are far more interested in people than in ideas.")

Most of the chapters in Mr. McKenzie's book are devoted to outlining the development of various fundamental scientific theories – the Copernican theory, the circulation of the blood, the pressure of air, atomic theory, the conservation and dissipation of energy, relativity, cosmogony. But there is also considerable material here on the interaction of science with philosophy, religion, social change and so on.

Originally, Mr. McKenzie intended to add to each chapter of his book a series of extracts from original books and papers in which scientists gave their own accounts of their theories and discoveries. But the book got too unwieldy, and these accounts now make up a companion volume to the first.

The Autobiography of Science

edited by Forest Ray Moulton and Justus J. Schifferes

Doubleday $5.95

This large economy-size anthology of key passages from the master works of science presents "the life story of science in the original words of the men who made it." A first edition of the book appeared in 1945, but this second edition now runs all the way from the story of creation in Genesis, to Harrison Brown on the population explosion, and Willy Ley and Wernher von Braun on the exploration of Mars.

As the authors say, "there are six ways to read this book: as a storybook, a history book, a textbook, a reference book, a source book, or a chronicle." Most of all, they hope it will serve as an introduction to the history of science. It makes a good one.