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EPISODES AND PERSONALITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIOLOGY AT BROWN

By Dr. A. D. MEAD

BROWN UNIVERSITY

In the diamond jubilee number of the Atlantic Monthly, issued in November, 1932, seventeen articles selected from the 900 monthly issues of the Atlantic were reprinted. One of them was Dallas Lore Sharp's famous paper on "Turtle Eggs for Agassiz" (1910), which already had been reprinted many times and which, incidentally, has been read by Dr. Walter to his class in comparative anatomy in Brown every year for a quarter of a century. Now this touches my subject at several points: The hero of the episode was J. W. P. Jenks, the first teacher of zoology at Brown. Jenks was a lifelong disciple of Agassiz and widely disseminated his doctrines at Brown and elsewhere. Sharp was a student at Brown (1895) and a special protégé of Professor Jenks, from whom, while at Brown, he got the tale about the turtle eggs. Again, Sharp's own colorful career at Brown, if as adequately written up, would win a place in literature. And finally, his introduction to the turtle egg paper provides the theme, which is at least implied, of this post-prandial talk, namely, that the progress of a science in a period of years, like a game of golf in an afternoon, is not completely recorded in the mere enumeration of the end results and the scores, but that personalities and minor dramatic incidents are a vital and substantial part of the story.

Sharp found the clue to his story in Agassiz's four volumes of "Contributions to the Natural History of the United States." "The volumes," he said, were "massive, heavy, weathered as if dug from the rocks,"