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EDWARD ORTON, GEOLOGIST*

By Professor A. C. SWINNERTON

ANTIOCH COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

SCIENTISTS whose names survive are associated mostly with innovations. Newton and gravitation, Darwin and evolution, Agassiz and glaciation, are inseparable. Recognition is seldom granted the humbler role of the interpreter. Now and again, however, there arises an interpreter whose knowledge is so broad, whose judgment is so sound, whose touch with common folk is so full of understanding and whose integrity is so far beyond reproach that recognition is given spontaneously.

Edward Orton was an interpreter. As one studies his life one finds that Orton's contributions to education, to the state and to science lay largely in the

* Part of an address delivered at the dedication of a monument and park—a memorial to Edward Orton—presented to the State of Ohio by Hugh Taylor Birch, of Yellow Springs, Ohio, October 26, 1938.

wisdom gained from the discoveries of others, in the perception of values and in the interpretation of them to his fellow men. His contributions in geology can be understood and appraised only by an examination of the man himself; hence this review of his career in science must include a survey of his early years.

I. EARLY YEARS

Edward Orton was born on March 9, 1829, when the presidency of the swashbuckling Andrew Jackson was but five days old. When he went to Hamilton College in 1845, conflict with Mexico was stirring emotions. All through his early years many conflicting views raged over political, economic and regional issues. The emotional tensions of people must have been similar in quality to those of our present day, the primary causes similar, though differing immensely in their applications. Candor in speech, honesty and objectivity in

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