OBITUARY

WALTER JONES

WALTER JONES, professor emeritus of physiological chemistry at the Johns Hopkins University, died in Baltimore on February 28, 1935, at the age of seventy years. He is survived by his wife and daughter.

In 1927, when he retired because of ill health, Walter Jones had served the School of Medicine thirty-one years, first under the leadership of Professor John J. Abel and from 1908 as professor of physiological chemistry. He had received his A.B. from "The Hopkins" in 1888 and his Ph.D. in 1891. Thus he completed nearly a lifetime of association with a university founded in the city of his birth. There were short periods at Wittenberg College and Purdue University and of study abroad.

It was at Marburg, as an ardent student of the elder Kossel and an admirer of the pioneer Friedrich Miescher, that Jones found his field to be the chemistry of the nucleic acids. His monograph, "The Nucleic Acids," remained for a long time a standard treatise on this difficult subject in which center the clinically important topic, purine metabolism, and the cytologically important problems which are destined to depend upon the characterization of these cell constituents. One who has not lived with this subject will have difficulty in appraising the work of contributors and I shall leave to more competent hands a review of Jones's work. Yet I think it evident that his place can not be described merely by the naming of particular discoveries. He had a part in bringing a complicated subject out of obscurity. If, during the exposure and preliminary dissections, mistakes were made, they were of the sort which stimulated advances. In the final conclusions many of Jones's substantial contributions are embedded.

For his eminence as an investigator Dr. Jones was made a member of the National Academy of Sciences and twice president of the American Society of Biological Chemists.

An aspect of Walter Jones's character that deserves mention is found in his relation to students. Temperamentally impatient with mediocrity he attracted to his own field of research a select group of medical students as well as assistants. In his bibliography will be found as joint authors names remarkable for the preponderance of their association with later acquired distinctions. In short, Jones detected ability. Many a run-of-the-mine student had painful experiences, and yet Jones's colleagues attest to the care with which he prepared to meet the needs of raw recruits. This was particularly true of his lectures, and they were brilliant. It is not often that a lecturer can recapture the attention of those who have passed a required course. Yet upper classmen returned year after year to the old hall where Professor Jones presented the elements of physiological chemistry to first-year students. Doubtless they did so partly for the occasional entertainment; but, on the whole, it was clearly for the inspiration. Many, indeed, were the occasions when entertainment was afforded, as when a forgetful student was startled by the assertion that even a street-car conductor should know all the amino-acids or when a polemic with Schittenhelm was exposed in all its gory detail. It has been said that there were periods when a student might have gotten the impression that the whole of physiological chemistry was concerned with nucleic acids and related subjects. Doubtless weathering has made prominent the tougher strata of memories. Yet, even if the charge were true, it would be easy to find good reason. Intense concentration was Jones's habit. Furthermore, he hated bluff. He would offer admission of dim memory before admission was demanded. He would speak only fully catalyzed thoughts. He was never bound by classic definitions of his subject. Capable as he was of the exposition of diverse subjects he gave to his students only the best that was in him at the moment. In so doing he gave far more than the immediate subject-matter. The better students appreciated this at the time and in later years they bring back tales which make a fine tradition.

The high intensity at which Walter Jones's energy was displayed made him a person difficult to appreciate by those who were unprepared. A flame might burst forth at the lunch table or the bank teller's window. People grew nervously expectant. Unagile minds, like my own, seldom caught up with even the kindling of the flame, were left uneasy and inclined to avoid future consternation. Yet when the flame appeared after the rendering of a symphony or during the discussion of a book one knew that here was a man who had lived with the composer or achieved with the hero while holding the critic's appraisal of the work of art. To Walter Jones's unique synthesis of the emotional and the logical few could rise and those who could inevitably failed to sustain themselves. Perhaps it was when he detected evidence of lagging that he brought forth those prickings of belief and custom and convention that might awaken the dozing listener. Even so it may be doubted that any one could resolve the whimsical, the mischievous and the serious elements. It was, of course, inevitable that bits of the mischievous not always would harmonize with the amenities, but he who would make much of this should remember the unswerving loyalty of friends. This speaks volumes.

It was this high level of intensity, at which alone

his abilities would work, that explains Walter Jones's premature disappearance from the annals of biochemistry. After his official retirement and when better health permitted, he was ushered into a new laboratory planned for his use. For a moment the old eagerness returned; for a few hours laboratory equipment took form; then a sudden disappearance and no return. A more placid mind could have given us those slowly ripening fruits of age that are needed by a generation accustomed to the strenuous life. Walter Jones knew only and loved only the strenuous life, and when the body could no longer respond fully to the iron will he felt his career to be ended. Thenceforth a complete silence in all scientific matters must have concealed what we can only guess.

If a mind so independent can be said to have harbored ambitions for recognition, three such ambitions were fulfilled. Walter Jones attained an honorable and honored place in the history of his chosen science. He commanded the respect of his students as an inspiring lecturer. He won the loyalty of those who labored with him. These are not the least of possible attainments, and from an imperfect acquaintance enriched at his fireside in the hills of Maryland I am led to suspect another, more satisfying to the man himself. It must have been that had the gods permitted the removal of disguise he could have told us something of Olympus; for there were moments in his discussion of great matters in literature and music when he spoke as one who feels that "it is given to the gods to know one another when they meet."

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ALBERT MANN
1853–1935

THE Diatomaceae have but few students in North America, in fact throughout the world, due, somewhat, to the difficulties attending their study. The passing of one of these students, recognized not only as the dean, but also as the foremost authority here, is of inestimable loss to those enthusiasts who have been attracted by the beauty and symmetry of these lowly plants.

Dr. Albert Mann died at his home in Middletown, Conn., on February 1, 1935. He was born at Hoboken, N. J., on June 30, 1853, the son of Albert and Lydia Helen (Everett) Mann. Educated at Wesleyan University, Middletown, he graduated in 1879, where later the degrees of M.A. and Sc.D. were conferred; and then continued studies for the ministry at Drew Theological Seminary until 1880. On October 6, of that year, he was married to Jennie F. Yard, of Trenton, N. J., who survives him with a son Albert, born in 1883, and now professor at Wesleyan University. From 1880 to 1892, Dr. Mann was pastor of various churches, in Philadelphia, Verona, N. J., Bloomfield, N. J., and Newark, N. J.

It was in the early years of his pastorate, in Philadelphia, that he met the late Charles H. Kain, a well-known diatomist of his day, and then began that interest in the diatoms which continued throughout his life. While resident in New Jersey, he was active in microscopical circles as member and vice-president of the old Essex County Microscopical Society, specializing in the diatoms, and in the last year of his pastorate in St. Luke's M. E. Church, Newark, he prepared his first paper on the group, entitled, "List of Diatomaceae from a Deep-sea Dredging in the Atlantic Ocean off Delaware Bay by the U. S. Fish Commission Steamer Albatross." The paper was published in the Proceedings of the United States National Museum, Vol. XVI, pages 303–312, 1893.

Severing his official connections with St. Luke's M. E. Church to enter on a scientific career, he left for Germany in 1892 to study at the University of Munich, where, on graduation in 1894, he received the degree of Ph.D. On his return to the United States he was tendered the chair of professor of botany at Ohio Wesleyan University, which he filled until 1900. The following years, up to 1905, were spent as collaborator of the University of Munich, and in scientific investigations at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. The spare hours were used for the research work necessary to the preparation of the exhaustive "Report on the Diatoms of the Albatross Voyages in the Pacific Ocean, 1888–1904," which appeared in 1907. In 1905 he commenced the long services, lasting 14 years, as a scientific specialist in the U. S. Department of Agriculture, in Washington, and in the early part of that period was also professor of botany at the George Washington University.

It was not until 1919 that Dr. Mann realized the fulfilment of his dream—the establishment in Washington of a laboratory, solely for diatom research, with himself in charge as an associate of the Carnegie Institution. Suitably installed in the Smithsonian Building, it soon became headquarters—as he called it—for students and others interested in the economic uses of the diatoms. With more time at his disposal, the large, important, taxonomic paper on the "Marine Diatoms of the Philippine Islands" was published in 1925. Many smaller papers were written then and during earlier periods of his life, on diatoms and other subjects related to his professional work, but space will not permit the listing here. Research work commenced and unfinished at the time of his death will be continued, it is hoped, by one of his associates at the laboratory.