SAMUEL MILTON JONES: THE GOLDEN-RULE MAYOR.

By One Who Knew Him.

IT IS A pleasant thing in these days of corruption exposed in high places, when newspapers and magazines are filled with stories of the robbery of the people by those whom they have trusted, to turn to the life of the man, Samuel Milton Jones, known the world over as The Golden-Rule Mayor; the man who believed in the governing power of Love and acted always in accord with that belief. To read of one who so persistently and fearlessly obeyed the law of the Master, as he saw it, in all of the affairs of his busy life, is to gather inspiration for a greater effort to reach the high ideals which he showed in a practical way to be possible of attainment.

In the life of Thoreau by William Ellery Channing is written these words concerning the poet-naturalist:

"Never eager, with a pensive hesitancy he steps about his native fields, singing the praises of Music and Spring and Morning, *forgetful of himself*. . . . No bribe could have drawn him from his native fields, where his ambition was—a very honorable one—to fairly represent himself in his works, accomplishing *as perfectly as lay in his power* what he conceived his business."

The spirit of this affirmation, if not the letter, may well be applied to the life of Mr. Jones, especially of his later years. He was a man who, from comparative obscurity, stepped into the limelight of a national and even an international publicity. Curiously enough, this was brought about, not by any of those things that usually give name and fame to individuals, but by his belief in the possibility of following the teachings of the great Master in all of the affairs of life, and his persistent effort to make this ideal a proven reality. The business world was his "native field," and therein, forgetful of himself so far as personal ambitions were concerned, he wrought faithfully among his fellow-men, who were all—rich and poor alike—his brothers to whom he was bound to give loving service. This service represented his hopes, his desires, his aspirations, and no bribe however tempting and subtly offered, could ever have made him false to them or change their color and expression.

The life of such a man has in it a lesson invaluable in character-building. To know the circumstances and environment of his earlier as well as of his later years, is to gain some understanding of the process by which his intellectual, moral and spiritual nature was moulded into the strength and nobility that enabled him finally to exert such a powerful influence over all with whom he came in contact. It was the absolute sincerity of purpose underlying his simplest action which impressed itself upon everybody entering into his presence. That he should be so trusted was his earnest longing, which he expressed in the introduction to one of his books:

"Sometimes I think that nothing so completely separates the soul from God as the distrust, doubt and suspicion of our fellow-men that is the distinguishing feature of our present-day life, social, commercial and political; and I am sure there is no compensation or reward that I so earnestly long for as the consciousness that my fellows believe in me. Doubt my wisdom, question my judgment, deny the truth of my propositions, if you will, but for your own sake, and for the sake of humanity, I ask that you will not charge that I am false."

In a larger degree than comes to most men who are so constantly before the public, came to him, finally, the unquestioning faith in the purity of his motives

which he longed for and so dearly prized. Those who for years distrusted him; who believed him actuated solely by the selfish motives that move most men to action; who thought his persistent expressions of love and service to his fellows were what are roughly termed "playing to the galleries," came at last, for the most part, to understand that his every-day life was simply the flowering of a sincere desire and earnest purpose to follow in his Master's footsteps, and this in the most literal way possible. What has been said of him is absolutely true, that he was entirely free from conceit and acted without the slightest reference to appearances. To one who was familiar with his every-day life and action, as was the writer, he seemed to possess the simplicity of a child studying the problems of unfolding experience, a simplicity replaced when necessary by the keen judgment of a successful man of affairs. This characteristic made him unconscious of any inequality with his fellow-men, whether they were rich and aristocratic, or poor and perhaps criminal. He met all upon the ground of human brotherhood, and thus, in the end, drew out the best in those with whom he came in contact.

Mr. Jones was a Welshman by birth. In one of his books entitled *The Nine Right*, he says with regard to this event:

"I do not know of what particular consequence it is to the people who read this book just when, or where, or why I was born, but quoting from Copperfield and following the general custom, I will say that I was born, as I was told and have reason to believe, on August 3d, 1846, in a small stone house, still standing, known as Ty Mawr (big house) about three miles from the peaceful village of Bedd Gelert, Caernarvonshire, North Wales. Three years ago I had the privilege and pleasure of visiting the rude house where I was born, the floor of which was composed of rough flagstones, rougher by far than any I have ever seen used in a common sidewalk—yet worn smooth by the tramp of the feet of the tenantry that have polished them through their service, the main result of which has been that they have earned rent for the landlord and incidentally have eked out an existence for themselves. I am glad that I left the place at such an early age that I cannot recall any of the hard experiences that my parents must have had there."

The family emigrated to the United States when the boy was but three years old, coming across in the steerage of a sailing-vessel, then going in a canal-boat from New York to Utica, and finally by wagon northwest into Lewis county, where were extensive stone-quarries in which his father found work. As soon as he was old enough, Sam., as he was called, was sent to the village-school, but his attendance there was limited to thirty months.

When he was only ten years old he worked for a farmer at three dollars a month, getting up at four o'clock in the morning and only ceasing his labor at sundown. He hated farm-work intensely, and was in constant revolt against the injustice of being compelled to do that which was so distasteful. It was the memory of these days which gave him always a ready sympathy with the boys and girls who were *being forced into* callings for which they had neither inclination nor fitness. He believed that many lives, which might have been prosperous and happy, and of service to humanity, have been distorted and perhaps ruined by this process.

It is not necessary to follow minutely these earlier years of his career, further than to show that the boy was father to the man, possessing in full the qualities of pluck and courage that belonged to his later years. At fourteen he was working twelve hours a day in a saw-mill which was more in accord with his mechanical turn of mind than farming. Then came what seemed to him a wonderful opportunity,—employment upon a steamboat,

about the engine of which he hoped to learn enough to become an engineer. After spending three summers in this way, the whole current of his life was changed by the advice of one who saw something of what was in the lad. "Sammy," he said, "you are a fool to spend your time on these steamboats; you should go to the oil-regions; you can get four dollars a day there."

The outcome was a journey to Titusville, Pennsylvania, when the oil excitement was at its height. He had just fifteen cents in his pocket when he started out to find something to do. He often spoke of the sense of desolation which he had while tramping from place to place seeking but finding no work. In his autobiography he calls it "the most disheartening of all errands that any child of God ever undertook, looking for a job among strangers—a task, too, that I do not believe God intends that a man shall waste his time on, for I fancy that in the Divine order, in the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, in the condition of social justice that is yet to prevail, there will be such a scientific ordering of the affairs of society that no man will waste time tramping from door to door in the heart-breaking, soul-destroying business of begging for work, looking for something to do."

Mr. Jones finally found a place in the oil-fields, and his energy and industry gave him remunerative employment until the time came when he was able to dig for oil himself, in which his ventures were successful. In 1875 he married—in his own words—"as sweet and helpful a soul as ever inhabited this world of ours." For ten years they lived a happy life together, and then came the sorrow of his little girl's death, followed soon by that of her mother.

Almost overwhelmed by these successive blows, he sought relief by removing with his two sons into new scenes, first to Bradford, Pennsylvania, and then to Lima, the center of the oil-fields in Ohio. In the latter place he entered extensively into the business of development and gained what the world terms success.

In 1892 he married Helen L. Beach, of Toledo, and soon after moved thither in order to develop in the larger place some of his inventions that he had vainly offered to the Standard Oil-Trust. Here he built a beautiful home in which, with his wife—a woman of rare intelligence and dignity of character and an accomplished musician—and his two sons he once more found happiness.

At this time came his first awakening to the great wrong of the existing social and industrial conditions. His eyes began to open with the crowds of applicants for work when the wheels were set in motion at his factory. He learned that men were working elsewhere for less than a dollar a day, and he studied upon the problem of how they could live decently upon such wages. Yet he found those who plead for the chance to toil under this condition. In his own factory he ordered that his men should be paid according to what the business would allow and without reference to the scale in other factories. Good wages and short hours were his rule as an employer.

Growing more and more troubled over social conditions, he came upon an article by George D. Herron upon the philosophy of the Lord's prayer, which impressed him greatly. "Our Father" means that all men are brothers: the tramp is brother of the railway president, the wild-hearted woman of sin is the sister of the clergyman, and her shame is his because she is his sister. He had never thought of it that way before, even though he had often said the prayer at his mother's knee, and repeated it in the church in later years.

Continued dwelling upon the wrong of social conditions impelled him to action. He said:

"For me to be contented with existing conditions would be to blaspheme the sacred name of Christ, and moreover would be a treason to the republic itself. I know the republic cannot endure and our mock Christianity must perish from

the face of the earth unless those of us who claim to be both patriotic and Christian are able to demonstrate by the sacrifice of service that our claims are well-founded."

He inaugurated about this time at his own expense, a series of addresses by noted speakers along these lines, given in the church of which he was a member and the minister of which was in sympathy with his growing thought. It was at one of these lectures, that given by Washington Gladden, I believe, that I first saw Mr. Jones. He was beginning to attract attention by his peculiar ideas regarding business and the Golden Rule, but had not then become "dangerous." I had also heard stories of nightly rides through the poorer parts of the city when the mercury was hovering around zero, to discover and relieve suffering.

At the close of the address, which was the concluding one of the series, the chairman of the meeting spoke of the value of what had been given through the generosity of Mr. Jones, and asked him to speak. A man, keen-eyed, strong-featured, with modest but earnest bearing, stepped reluctantly forward, and in a few brief sentences told of his object in bringing these subjects before the people, and of what seemed to him were some of the crying social needs of the day. I went away impressed with the thought that here was a man to be, in some way, reckoned with in the future.

As yet, however, he had not gotten his bearings, only that he knew and persistently declared that the Golden Rule could be applied to every relation of life, and in so far as this was done, the irregularities which bring sin and suffering would disappear. This was the only rule which he allowed placed upon the walls of his factory, nor would he ever permit the placard bearing the words "No More Help Wanted" to be hung there, because he desired to see all who were out of work and find if he could not give them help.

Other measures that he introduced were social gatherings by which he hoped to break down what he called "the absurd notion of social distinction between employer and employed"; the shortening of the term of labor to a fifty-hour week; profit-sharing at Christmas-time when, with the dividend, he sent to his employés a letter upon such subjects as "Peace on Earth and Good Will to Men," and the "Christ Principle of Overcoming Evil With Good."

He caused to be placed in the office of the factory, a box in which letters of criticism might be put by his workmen. These could be anonymous, or signed, as the writers chose. He himself wrote them letters from week to week regarding their relations to each other, which were enclosed in their pay-envelopes.

The vacant land next to his factory he turned into a park and a playground for the children. He named it Golden-Rule Park, and there, every Sunday, talks, often by men and women of national reputation were given, attended by the workmen with their families, and such of the townspeople as believed in "Jones" and the principles which he was trying to apply to life.

As a business man he had the peculiarity of an absolute disregard of recommendations. When men applied to him for work, presenting at the same time the written good-word of some former employer, Mr. Jones would refuse to look at it, saying: "If you have recommendations, anybody will help you to a place. I must help men who have none." Sometimes he added to this refusal: "Your face is good enough for me." He was a keen judge of character and rarely wrong in his estimate.

Naturally these things, so different from the usual methods, attracted the attention of the public, but it was by a seeming accident that he received the Republican nomination for mayor. To the politicians this was a matter of astonishment, that this man, a resident of Toledo for only four years, and wholly

unknown in the field of politics, should jump over the heads of those who had been toiling for many weary years to serve the party. He himself believed his nomination was due to "a little effort put forth to deal justly with his fellow-men."

Mr. Jones was elected, although vigorously opposed by the saloon-keepers because they feared a drastic policy, and by the wealthy class who considered him "dangerous on account of his belief in the Declaration of Independence." The story of his reëlection again, and yet again, upon an independent ticket, in the face of the most violent opposition of the Republican leaders and the newspapers, has been many times told and need not be here repeated, although it is full of interest.

His methods in his public career were the same that he used in his private, successful business. From what he believed was right he never swerved no matter how strongly it might seem to militate against his personal interests. He proved in both the possibility of making an every-day application of the Golden Rule to every affair of life. His factory flourished and his wealth constantly increased, though money passed through his fingers like water. His conduct of public business won for him among the people a constantly increasing confidence, while his reputation abroad grew apace.

It is true that in his own city he had bitter opposition. Good men could not understand his ideas regarding the treatment of criminals nor his attitude with respect to saloons and gambling-houses. It was repeatedly affirmed that the latter were allowed to run wide open, contrary to law, and that crime increased during his mayoralty. This was believed by those who did not know the facts. The records declare the contrary. Official figures show the number of saloons decreased and that there was less crime, instead of more, in the growing young city.

His conduct of affairs in his official capacity was unique. Everybody was received kindly and courteously, but there was not a shade more of deference to the moneyed man or powerful politician than to the laboring man, or the unfortunate and penniless. All were "just people" and his brothers, and each was spoken with in his turn. He never turned away from anyone who asked for help, regarding his wealth as a responsibility from which, if it could be rightfully done, he would have gladly shaken himself free. It is well known that he gave away each year far more than the salary of his office. Each day he lived in accord with this simple statement:

"I assure you that I have no other purpose than to be a Christian on the basis of loving my neighbor as myself, whether my neighbor is a church-member, or a non-church-member; a saloon-keeper or a store-keeper; a gambler or an oppressor of labor; always remembering that he *is* my neighbor, God's Child and my brother —an erring brother, perhaps, but my brother just the same."

At all times and seasons he was studying the problems of living, those which seemed to him of vital moment to the well-being of "all the people." He was an eager listener to the conclusions of others, weighing their arguments without prejudice, easily taking the attitude of a learner. Frankly he expressed his own convictions whether of agreement or difference, but with a simplicity that precluded offense.

His faith in the individual was supreme. He saw in the poorest and lowest that something which will make for good, if aroused, and this was always his purpose. One day a poorly-dressed man came into the office and asked of him money enough to pay his railroad fare to a place where he hoped to secure the work for which he had been vainly seeking in Toledo. Instantly Mr. Jones' hand went into his pocket, but, as was often the case because of his quick generosity, he found nothing there. Application to his clerk and his secretary produced no result. Then he took out his

mileage-book and handed it to the man whom he had never before seen, telling him to send it back when he reached his destination. The remonstrances of his clerk—who was also his devoted friend and helper—he answered with a smile, turning to his desk in dismissal of the subject. Some time after, so long that there was a chance he had been deceived, the book came back, with the amount of fare enclosed in a poorly-written but most earnest letter of thanks. Anything like this naturally brought him in conflict with the railroads, but he would settle the difficulty by paying the difference in fare, remarking: "The very rich man can ride in a private car; the moderately wealthy may ride on a pass; and the well-to-do is able to buy a mileage-book at two cents a mile. It is only the poor man who is compelled to pay the full price."

One cold winter morning three men came in and asked for money to get a Salvation-Army dinner, saying they were out of work. He drew out a five-dollar bill and gave them, telling them to bring back the change, as he had none. "You will never see that money again," remarked his clerk.

Late in the afternoon they returned, but Mr. Jones being out, they handed what was left to Mr. Voit.

"Is it all right?" asked the latter.

They hesitated. "All but twenty cents," one said at last. "We took a drink out of what was left and thought we would run away with the rest, but we concluded we could n't treat a man like that in so mean a way."

Through all the years I knew him and when he was under the hottest fire of criticism, I never heard him speak unkindly of his enemies. And in his public life, through his political campaigns his condemnation was always of methods and measures, never of men.

Much of interest regarding the life of this man must necessarily be omitted from this article. I have said little of his political campaigns, carried on with no bribing of voters, no promises given for influence and work, without appeal to partisan feeling, and with no catering to any class of society.

From the closing of his first term as Mayor, the magic of his name would call together crowds of eager listeners, the majority of whom were working-men and women, to whom he would talk simply and naturally of their duties to each other and to the community in which they lived. "The ideal government," he would say, "is one where the strongest will always help the weakest." Without cant, but with an intense earnestness that held the attention of the most careless, he presented the highest religious ideal as the practical one to live by.

The Golden Rule he declared to be an exact science. "It is really the physical law of action and reaction expressed in morals. It is the law of life, of relation—*and it works.*"

"I intend to be always in politics," he often declared, "working and voting for those candidates who seem to me to be looking most toward the light of liberty and equality."

Letters of commendation from thinkers and reformers came to him from all over the world. "It is a great joy to me," wrote Tolstoi, after the third election of Mr. Jones, "to know that such ideas as are expressed in your address are approved by a great majority of your people."

"The work you are doing for human welfare," wrote Edwin Markham, "is far larger than the orbit in which you move; it is an object-lesson to the world."

In similar vein were letters from W. D. Howells, R. Heber Newton, Edward Everett Hale, Thomas Wentworth Higginson and almost countless others whose names are familiar household words.

Perhaps the letters which touched him most deeply, for which he cared most, were those from children telling him their troubles and asking him for all sorts of things, expressing their childish faith in his will to do what they desired. He loved children and they knew and loved him with fervor.

The life of Mr. Jones, both public and private, has the deepest moral significance from every point of view.

The man whose whole aim under every condition was to do every thing in his power to help unfortunate men and women to live better lives and do nothing to hinder them, finally won the love and trust of the great body of the people to a most unprecedented degree. And even though there were those who bitterly opposed him as dangerous; though the legislature repealed the law by which a mayor could take the place of the police-judge, because of the rulings which he made in that position with regard to criminals, few indeed were they who questioned the sincerity of his motives or doubted his integrity.

The outpouring of the people upon the day of his funeral was such as has been rarely witnessed in any city. Thousands stood for hours in the hot July sun upon the lawn before the house and in the avenues leading thither, sorrowfully awaiting the moment when the body of their friend should be borne to its final resting-place. And all along the route to the cemetery groups of men and women stood with bared heads—many with tears streaming down their faces—while the procession slowly passed by. They loved him so—these people.

Nor do they forget him, nor the things for which he worked. His name is one to conjure with to-day, and the lesson of brotherhood which he taught will remain a living influence even when the memory of the personal man has grown dim by the passing of the years. They will recall that by his life he exemplified this thought:

"Shun sorrow not; be brave to bear
The world's dark weight of sin and care;
Spend and be spent, yearn, suffer, give,
And in thy brethren learn to live."