

## IN BUSINESS

It was in Chicago in the winter of 1895-1896 that I made the acquaintance of Samuel Milton Jones. We had both been invited to some kind of a conference and were entertained at one of the "settlements" of the city. His fame had not reached me at that time, for he had not yet entered politics and the reports of his strange doings in the field of business had not traveled as far as New York, but I was attracted at once by the open and childlike way in which he expressed his extreme democratic views to everyone. There was in the house in which we stayed a crippled man of unprepossessing appearance who looked after the furnace and did other odd jobs in the cellar. He was, if I am not mistaken, a reclaimed tramp, one of the fruits of the good work of the residents. It was not long before Jones had discovered him, and they were soon old friends. By a certain instinct he carried his brotherly feeling where it was most needed and where it would be most valued. And

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I remarked then, as I often did afterward, that Jones, while frequently engrossed in his own experiences and in the problems arising from them, even to the exclusion of external suggestions, was, notwithstanding, entirely free from conceit, and acted without the slightest reference to appearances or to the opinion of the gallery. He followed out his own impulses as simply as a child.

I became naturally curious about this interesting man, and I heard some stories at this time from his own lips which I have never forgotten. But perhaps before I tell them it would be best to give a brief outline of his life. He was born on August 3, 1846, in a laborer's stone cottage in the village of Bedd Gelert, North Wales. When he was three years old his parents emigrated to America with their family, first taking up a collection among their friends to raise the necessary fare. They made the voyage in the steerage of a sailing vessel, and from New York they went by canal-boat up the Hudson and the Erie Canal to Utica and thence by wagon into Lewis County, New York, where his father found familiar work in the stone quarries, and still later became a tenant farmer. Sam went to the village school, and thirty months' attendance there constituted his entire formal education. He had a great dislike for

farm work, but he was obliged to take part in it as a lad. At ten years of age he worked for a farmer who routed him out of bed at four o'clock in the morning, and his day's work did not end till sundown, for all of which he received three dollars a month. At fourteen he was employed in a sawmill and his natural taste for mechanical work began to show itself. He had been considered lazy on the farm, but he assures us that he never had a lazy hair in his head, and he makes his own case the text for a sermon on the importance of finding congenial work for boys and men. From the sawmill he passed on to the post of "wiper and greaser" in the engine room of a steamboat on the Black River and learned a good deal about the management of engines. An engineer advised him to go to the oil regions of Pennsylvania, and soon after he arrived alone at Titusville, the center of that district, with fifteen cents in his pocket. For a short time he knew what it was to search for work and not find it, and all the rest of his life he felt the deepest sympathy with men in that sad condition. He had the greatest confidence in himself, however, and, as he often pointed out, it was much easier to get work then and there than it is now anywhere. On arriving he had registered in a good hotel, trusting to luck to earn money

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to pay his bill, and in a short time the bill was paid. Meanwhile he wrote a letter home to his mother, but did not have a cent to buy a stamp with. Seeing a gentleman on the way to the postoffice, he asked him to post his letter, and then pretended to examine his pockets for the necessary three cents, whereupon the man offered to pay for it himself, which was just what young Jones had hoped he would do. Afterward Jones condemned this deception of his, and cited it as proof of the evil effect of conditions which deny the right of work to anyone. During his weary tramp in quest of a place one employer whom he accosted spoke kindly to him and encouraged him, giving him a letter to a friend of his who had oil wells twelve miles away. These kind words Jones never forgot, and he always had at least a friendly smile for the "man out of a job." At last he found work and remunerative work, too, in managing an engine which pumped the oil from a well. He liked the work and advanced quickly, till, with occasional periods of hard times, and after doing all kinds of labor connected with boring for oil, he had saved a few hundred dollars. Then he started digging for himself, and became an employer. In 1875 he married and after a very happy married life of ten years his wife died, as did also his little

daughter. These blows were almost too great for Jones's strength, and he followed the advice of his friends and removed with his two boys to the oil regions of Ohio, in order to divert his mind by change of scene. Here he was very successful, as these oil fields were just opened and developed very rapidly. "I have simply taken advantage," he says, "of opportunities offered by an unfair social system and gained what the world calls success."

In 1892 Jones married again, and about the same time he invented several improvements in oil well appliances, which he offered to the "trust," but they refused to touch them. His experience is evidence of the fact that our "trust" system does not encourage invention, being often satisfied to let well enough alone, the managers sometimes buying up patents for the express purpose of suppressing them, and of thus saving the money already expended in old-fashioned plants. Jones was sure that his inventions were valuable, and hence he founded the "Acme Sucker-Rod Company" and began manufacturing at Toledo on his own account, and made that city his home. He had never lived in a city before, and Toledo, with its 150,000 inhabitants, proved to be a new world to him. City life was very different from the life he had hitherto

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known. In the oil fields society was simple and there was no great gulf between employer and employe, but in town it was altogether different. In the factories which he visited the men were mere "hands," and were not considered as human beings, and in each shop there was posted a long list of precise rules, invariably ending with the warning that immediate discharge would follow any infraction of them. This made Jones's blood boil and he determined to manage things otherwise in his factory. The idea occurred to him to put up the Golden Rule instead of a placard of regulations, but he fought against it in his mind, knowing that it might seem peculiar and that it would be misunderstood, but the thought took possession of him and finally up it went, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," or, as he was wont to translate it in conversation, "Do unto others as if you were the others."

When, on opening his shop, he sat down with his foreman to make out the payroll, the latter took from his pocket a statement of the wages paid by other companies. "Put that away," cried Jones. "What has that got to do with it? What can we afford to pay?" And the result of this novel plan was that he always paid the highest wages for the shortest hours of any employer in

Toledo. One of those kindly critics who invariably find fault with honest efforts to do good, blamed him once for paying high wages when so many men were out of employment.

"You might employ twice as many if you cut down their wages one-half," he said.

"If there is to be any cutting down," was the answer, "it seems to me it ought to come out of my share, and not from men who are getting much less than I am."

Once when he was visiting the factory of a neighbor the latter said to him: "See here, Jones, here is a case that troubles me. How would you treat it according to your new ideas? I have a man here who has spoiled three sets of castings in a week and that means a loss of so much. What would you do with him?"

"The first thing I would do," Jones replied, "would be to imagine myself in his place. How long have you employed him?"

"Two years, isn't it?" answered the proprietor, turning to his bookkeeper.

"Yes, sir, two years and three months."

"Has he ever spoiled a casting before?" asked Jones.

"No."

"How much vacation has he had since he came?"

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"Look at the books and see," said the employer to the clerk.

"Let me see," answered the latter, taking down a blank book and turning over the pages, "two, three—just five days in all."

"Why, I understand it very well," said Jones with a smile. "His nerves have got out of order with continual wear and tear. If I were you I would give him a fortnight's vacation!" And in his own shop every employe had a week's holiday each summer with full pay, an unheard-of luxury until he introduced it.

On one occasion one of Jones's workmen got drunk and injured a horse belonging to the company by driving it into a telegraph pole. The next day the foreman came into the office and said, "Of course Brown must be discharged to-day."

"Why?" asked Jones. "He was dead drunk, wasn't he, with no more sense than a stick or a stone? Now, suppose we could take a stick or a stone and make a good citizen for the State of Ohio out of it, don't you think it would be even better than making sucker rods? Send Brown to me when he comes in." And when at last Brown came, shamefaced and repentant, into the private office, Jones said nothing, but took down his Testament from the shelf and read the story of the woman who was accused before



Jesus, ending with the words, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." And that was all the reproof the man received. He was often blamed for keeping intemperate men in his employ, but his object was to reclaim them. "It would be an easy matter to 'fire out' every drinking man in the shop and fill their places with sober men," he says. "That would be easy. Any 'good business man' could do that. But to make conditions in and about a shop that will make life so attractive and beautiful to men as to lead them to live beautiful lives for their own sake and for the sake of the world about them, this is a task calling for qualifications not usually required of the 'successful business manager.'"

Such were the anecdotes which I heard with regard to Jones when I first met him at Chicago. And the strange thing was that his business methods were completely successful. He turned the vacant land next to his factory—space which was sorely needed for his increasing business—into a park and playground and named it Golden Rule Park. He established an eight-hour day, although none of his competitors followed his example, and yet his business and his income grew. "If I don't look out," he said to me once, "I'll become a millionaire, and what should I do with a million? It's

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a curious fact that while I never thought of such a thing, this Golden Rule business has helped the company. People give me four hundred dollars for engines which they won't pay over three hundred and fifty dollars for to other manufacturers. I don't understand it at all." I was present once at his office in Toledo while he and two of his managers were discussing what to do with a recalcitrant debtor. They had delivered a machine to this man a year before, and, although he was amply able to pay, he had never sent the money. The two men were trying to persuade Jones to bring suit against him, but he would not look at the case in that light. He did not like the idea of going to law, and would only promise to think it over. One thing which troubled him was the handsome house in which he lived, and which he had built or bought before his democratic nature had fully matured. The "settlement" idea impressed him at Chicago. "If I had only known of this before," he said, "I would have built my house down among the homes of our workmen." He felt like an exile in the fashionable quarter of Toledo, and he made it a point to take his midday meal with the men in "Golden Rule Hall," over the factory, where he organized a common dining-room for them at cost.

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Jones actually loved his fellowmen, not in theory only, but by instinct, and it is interesting to watch a man who acts upon such unusual principles, for you are always wondering what he will do next. What would a lover of his kind do under such and such circumstances? It is as interesting as a chess problem, "white to play and check in three moves." He dropped in upon a co-operative restaurant once in New York and found the young men and women employed there with two or three hours of leisure on their hands. He solved the problem on the spot by taking all hands off to a baseball match, and a merry and unconventional party they must have been.

In his "Autobiography," which forms an introduction to his book, "The New Right," published in 1899, Jones gives us his first impressions of business life in Toledo. "I think," he says, "the first real shock to my social consciousness came when the swarms of men swooped down upon us begging for work, soon after signs of life began to manifest themselves around the abandoned factory which we rented for our new enterprise. I never had seen anything like it; their piteous appeals and the very pathos of the looks of many of them stirred the deepest sentiments of compassion within me. I felt keenly the degradation and

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shame of the situation; without knowing why or how, I began to ask myself why I had a right to be comfortable and happy in a world in which other men, by nature quite as good as I, and willing to work, willing to give their service to society, were denied the right even to the meanest kind of existence. . . . I soon discovered that I was making the acquaintance of a new kind of man. Always a believer in the equality of the Declaration of Independence, I now for the first time came into contact with workingmen who seemed to have a sense of social inferiority, wholly incapable of any conception of equality, and this feeling I believed it was my duty to destroy. Without any organized plan, and hardly knowing what I was doing, I determined that this groveling conception must be overcome; so we began to take steps to break down this feeling of class distinction and social inequality." He arranged for an occasional picnic or excursion, to which the men came with their families, and he invited them to his fine house at receptions to which his wealthier friends were also bidden.