

#### IV

### LETTERS OF LOVE AND LABOR

Mayor Jones was a born orator in the best sense of the word, that is, he could think out loud before an audience in such a way as to reveal to all his love for them and his earnest desire to follow the right as he saw it. He drew crowds, and those who came from curiosity stayed to hear and learn. Mr. Whitlock gives an example of the way in which he reached the hearts of his hearers.

"What's the Polish word for liberty?" he asks of an audience of Polish workmen. They shout a word in reply. "Say it again," cries Jones, turning his head to listen. They shout it again still louder. He tries to pronounce it and fails, and they all laugh together. "Well, I can't say it," he says, "but it sounds good to me," and he proceeds to speak at length on freedom. And his frankness ensured him a good reception from all kinds of audiences. "I was at Cornell College yesterday," he wrote to me, "and made two speeches, spreading as much heresy as I could in the short space of time, and it was enthusiastically received."

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Mayor Jones was an author as well as a public speaker. His book, "The New Right" (namely, the right to labor), contains his autobiography, a work which for strength and simplicity of style is worthy of ranking with that of Benjamin Franklin. Jones had a natural taste for literature and as a youth was a leader in literary societies formed among his fellow workers, and his style was unconsciously modeled by his familiar use of the Bible and the English classics. He published two other volumes called "Letters of Love and Labor," containing letters which he wrote from week to week to his own employes, and handed to them with their pay envelopes. It is safe to say that no such communications have ever before been made from the hirer to the hired. One letter, for instance, is entitled "The Slavery of the Wages System."

"Dear friends," he writes, ". . . it is true that the present system of relation among men and women whereby some work for or serve others for hire is a system of modified slavery, the degree of slavery varying somewhat according to the master or mistress. . . . The most conspicuous evil of the present system is found in the fact that it gives some men arbitrary power over others, and this sort of power of one man over his fellow-men is in reality tyranny, no matter by what

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other name it may be called; and because it is tyranny, it is damaging alike to the ruler and the ruled. . . . Because I believe in equality—believe that you spring from the same divine source that I do—because of that, I believe that the natural impulse for you and for all men is to desire to do the right thing because it is right. Therefore we have been trying to direct the business of the Acme Sucker Rod Company from that standpoint. . . .”

Another letter is on the subject of “Love and Reason or Hate and Force,” and was called forth by the adoption of strict rules by the men to govern their insurance society, in fear of each other’s dishonesty. “We have the authority of the greatest teacher the world ever knew,” he writes, “for saying that the way to overcome evil is with good. The gospel of force and hatred as represented by laws, policemen’s clubs, constables, sheriffs, jails, prisons, armies, navies and legalized murder in many forms, has had its inning; and crime, wretchedness, misery and war still curse this beautiful earth. Let us try the other plan. Let us try, in a small way, to overcome evil with good—that is, to put out fire with water rather than with kerosene oil. Let us manifest our faith in God by our faith in the God (the good) in our fellow-men, by our faith in humanity. Be-

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lieve me, dear friends, there is good in every soul that breathes. All the rule that you really need is just enough to provide for Equality, that all shall be served alike, and I am sure that by trusting your fellow-men, trusting to the rule of love and reason and appealing to the manhood and honesty in them, you will be far more likely to succeed than by imitating lawmakers and rulers in an effort to 'force' men to be honest."

The object of these letters was "to lead to a more perfect understanding" between him and his employes, and he placed a box in the office in which letters of criticism, anonymous or signed, could be dropped by the men, a privilege which was sometimes availed of. These letters of Jones's treat of a great variety of topics. In them he advocates trade-unionism, although he declares that he is "far beyond" it. "I want a condition where there will be no war nor need of war measures." He deprecates the caste-feeling which exists among workmen, and the contempt which skilled labor exhibits toward that which is unskilled. He points out what he has been able to accomplish in the factory, to wit, a minimum wage of \$2 a day for every man who had been in the service of the company for a year, no child labor, men being paid to do "children's work," no "piece-work," no work "contracted out," no

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overtime, no timekeeper, each man reporting his own time, and a cash dividend of five per cent. on the year's wages at Christmas. In the oil-fields he was allowing full pay for an eight-hour day, while all other employers required twelve hours' work. In one letter he urges the claims of co-operative insurance upon the men. If the men agreed to leave one per cent. of their wages on deposit for this purpose, the company contributed a like amount for the same end, to be paid out as insurance in case of sickness or injuries. Still later a system by which the men could receive stock in the company was devised and put in operation. But he did not pretend to be satisfied with the relations which he had established with his men, and he longed ever for greater equality and democracy in business. He was only feeling his way. In 1902 he wrote to me as follows: "I am really beginning to see a way out of ownership through business. . . . I simply want to get things fixed so that I don't have to own it, and of course I want to do this intelligently—by that I mean in such a way that it will minister most largely to the common life." He did not live long enough to mature these plans.

His Christmas letters to the men perhaps go the deepest. One of them is on the "Christ principle" of love to enemies, doing

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good to those that hate you and overcoming evil with good. Another is devoted to "peace on earth and good will toward men." "My meaning will be made clearer," he says, "when I say that I am addressing Jones as much—perhaps more—than I am addressing anybody else. My very intimate acquaintance with Jones leads me to say that he has not yet come into that realization of 'peace on earth and good will toward men' that is his privilege, and the privilege of all who listen to and obey the promptings of the voice within. . . . The practical application of it is: You must live the Christ spirit, you must refuse to fight, you must refuse to kill, you must reject force, you must deny that under any condition a big man has a right to force a little man or a child, you must stand for love as the only arbiter of right, and you must stand for it at any cost. . . . I am hopeful to the last degree, for I can see that just as soon as the people awaken to the idea of oneness and unity, of brotherhood, the common soldiers will throw down their guns, and, refusing to fight, will fall into each other's arms and laugh at their masters, and thus all war will end just as soon as the common workingmen determine that they will not kill each other. This is the promise that the Christmas bells annually renew in our ears—'Peace on earth, good will toward men.'"