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POETRY

It is quite likely that Mayor Jones's idea of America's leadership was learned from Walt Whitman, whose works, during the last years of his life, had great influence over him. He had many favorite authors, and his books are full of quotations from the Bible, William Morris, Edward Carpenter, Tolstoy, Lamennais, Mazzini, Victor Hugo, Bellamy, Mrs. Gilman, Herron, Longfellow, Browning and Lowell. But his special fondness was for poetry, and of all the poets Whitman was for him the chief. A volume of "Leaves of Grass" lay beside a Bible on his desk, and both books were well worn and penciled. On the walls of his office were the portraits of most of these authors, but of Whitman there were two. I take a little credit to myself for Jones's acquaintance with Whitman, although I acted as a mere instrument. In the summer of 1897 Mr. B. Fay Mills invited a few kindred spirits to a beautiful spot on Lake George known as Crosbyside, and Mayor Jones was one of the party. Mills told

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me that he wished to persuade Jones to like Whitman, and we both agreed that the Mayor was about as nearly Whitman's ideal comrade-man as could be found, and that it was a shame that he was not fond of "Leaves of Grass." So Mills contrived a plot according to which a dozen of us went up the funicular railway to the top of the mountain at the south end of the lake, and there in the midst of the most beautiful scenery and looking out on a glorious view, he made me read selections from Whitman for a half-hour, ostensibly for the general benefit, but really with a solitary eye to Jones. When I finished the Mayor remarked dryly that he didn't call that poetry, and that the kind of poetry that he liked was of the order of the lines:

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its fragrance on the desert air.

And of such poetry he could recite pages from memory. The experiment seemed to be a total failure, but you never can tell, and soon I was delighted to learn that Mayor Jones was quoting Whitman on all occasions, and referring to him as the best-beloved of his teachers. I understand that Mills had followed up the first attack, undaunted by its lack of results; but I claim an humble place beside him as the introducer of Mayor Jones to Walt Whitman. He had a sentiment

adapted from Whitman stamped on all the envelopes which he used in his correspondence, namely this: "I claim no privilege for myself or for my children that I am not doing my utmost to secure for all others on equal terms." I find him again quoting Whitman, for example, at the funeral of a tramp in February, 1902, in the back room of an undertaker's. The man was an old sailor who finished his course in the lodging house of the Toledo Humane Society. "When Mayor Jones arrived," says the Toledo Bee, "the dozen comrades, most of them feeble, shuffled into the room. It was a peculiar assemblage." Mayor Jones made the funeral address. He spoke of the recent death of his own brother, and said that he regarded this man as his brother, too. "I am quite sure," said he, "that he did the best he could, considering the limitations that surrounded him. . . . Death comes daily, hourly, everywhere. Yet it is nothing to be alarmed at. Sixty years is not the limit of life, nor sixty millions of years, but it goes on, and on, and on, through all the ceaseless ages—our life to be a part of all life. . . . I want to read you a few lines on what a grand old man, but lately passed beyond, Walt Whitman, has to say on death:

"Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world serenely,

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Arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate death!

“He looks very restful there in his coffin, doesn’t he? It was Tolstoy who said that the dead are always beautiful—that there’s not an expression of pain or fear upon the face, but rather that of astonishment. I can’t say, I will not say he is dead—he is only away. Good-bye, my brother, good-bye.” A few days later the Mayor was invited by a delegation from the Sailors’ Union to “do the funeral” for another old salt.

Devoted to poetry, like a true Kelt, Jones had something of the bard about him. He wrote many songs for his men to sing, and there is a simple power in some of his verses which gives them value. Here is a stanza from one of his songs:

We speak the word patriotic,
We sing the song of the free,
And tell the tale of a new time,
Of a world that surely will be,
When men will live comrades and lovers,
All rancor and hate under ban,
And the highest and holiest title,
Will be that you’re known as a man.

Chorus.

No title is higher than man,
No title is higher than man,
And the highest and holiest title
Will be that you’re known as a man.

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Another song is entitled "Freedom Day":

Haste, oh, haste, delightful morning
Of that glorious freedom day,
When from earth's remotest border
Tyranny has passed away.

Refrain.

Ever growing,
Swiftly flowing,
Like a mighty river,
Sweeping on from shore to shore,
Love will rule the wide world o'er.

The prose style of Mayor Jones, however, was far superior to his poetry, and he often uttered epigrams which summed up his thought tersely, vigorously and with humor. I cite a few of these aphorisms, collected here and there:

If there were to be improvements in sucker-rods, why may we not reasonably expect that there is room for improvement in social relations?

It would pay us a thousand times better to provide work for our own people than to purchase insurrections from Spain.

I was at a workhouse recently, and while there saw one-third of the men confined in the prison working at the brick-machines for the revolting and blood-curdling crime of jumping on freight trains.

The ideal robber—the lowest bidder.

Charity is twice cursed,—it curses him that gives and him that takes.

It is better to lift your whole city up an inch than to pull yourself up to the skies.

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After the fight is over we have to settle the difficulty. Let us learn to settle it first.

What heresy can be more fallacious than the prevailing one that superior ability entitles one to the right to live at the expense of his fellows?

We tie a balloon to one man and a saw-log to another, and then declare that they have an equal chance to rise in the world.

If millionaires were three miles high, if they were a class of higher beings upon whom we depended for our cleverest inventions . . . then the tremendous disparities in matters of wealth might be overlooked.

The best way to secure your own rights is to be diligent in securing the rights of others.

The rich man has no neighbors—only rivals and parasites.

It is only a lower-natured man who can be dazzled by the bauble, gold. Men who have discovered the true wealth of mind and character care little for the wampum of commerce.

I was born on foreign soil, but born an American. There are a lot of people born on American soil that are not yet half-way over from Europe.

It was a strange destiny which brought this man of Keltic, dreamy temperament into the business world and made him successful there. He was a machinist and an inventor, and yet he saw clearly the drawbacks of machinery and longed for a world of artistic craftsmanship. "Machinery," he says, "has added speed and intensity and discomfort to production, so that many a factory worker's life is almost equivalent to imprisonment at hard labor. Consider what a machinist's

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work is like during the hot summer months. In spite of the intense heat, the murky, impure air, the deafening roar of machinery, the grime and sweat and dust, when every second seems a minute and every minute seems an hour, he is expected, for ten long, weary hours every day, to be as accurate as a jeweler and as energetic as a blacksmith. . . . A mechanic's work is not physical only. It is brain work quite as much as the labor of many a professional man. . . . Machinery is almost driving some branches of art out of existence. It is leading us to lay stress on quantity, not quality. No nation could ever manufacture so many poor articles in so short a time as we can. The combination of machinery and long hours has worked against all that is artistic and original."