

VII

HIS DEATH

For the last few years of his life Mayor Jones was a sufferer from asthma, and he had one or two bad attacks of illness which were nearly fatal and left him a shadow of his former self. In search of health he adopted a system of physical culture and diet from which he undoubtedly obtained benefit. He fondly believed that he had cured himself, but no one who knew him could share this belief. He also began to sleep in the open air, putting a bed upon his veranda in Toledo, and there he passed every night until a short time before his death, when he was obliged to retreat to his room and accept the devoted attentions of his wife. He died on July 12, 1904. The last time that I saw him was on a Sunday in the April or May before his death. He had come to New York with a delegation of city officials to study a municipal question of waterworks or something of the kind, and he stopped over for half a day at my country home to see me. He thought he was in per-

His Death

fect health and performed some difficult athletic feats in the garden (among others that of standing comfortably upon his head), for he had great muscular strength. But illness was written upon his face, and going to his room for a half hour's nap, he slept heavily for three hours, and I had to rouse him so that he could catch his train. Not many weeks later came the telegram announcing his death.

His funeral, which I was unable to attend, was a wonderful sight. As his friend, Graham Taylor, said: "His spirit had been abroad before, strangely permeating and uniting his fellow-men, but never as upon that day." All places of business were closed and the houses were generally draped in black. His photograph, quotations from his speeches and songs, were displayed in shop windows. Some of the mottoes were taken from the Mayor's office, where he had hung his favorite quotations on the wall, including the text, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," burnt in wood by his own hand. His body lay in state in Memorial Hall, where he had often addressed the people. Flowers came from all classes of citizens, from all nationalities and trades and associations. It was estimated that 55,000 men, women and children filed past the coffin to look on his face for the last time. A great procession of

Golden Rule Jones

people followed the body to his home, and there 15,000 were gathered in the streets to await the funeral ceremony. In the procession were the labor unions, the policemen and firemen, the postmen, and officials of several cities, musical and fraternal and benevolent societies, and a great throng of private citizens of both sexes and all ages, but as Mr. Taylor remarks, there was no military company or implement of war to mar the scene. The newsboys turned out to the number of 600, and their band played "Nearer, My God, to Thee." At the funeral St. Paul's chapter on love was read from his own Bible, and this was followed by his best-loved passages from his copy of "Leaves of Grass." There were several addresses, and songs were sung by his workmen. In the cemetery thousands more were waiting at the grave, and as the earth fell upon his coffin a German singing society broke out into a farewell hymn. The crowd in the streets stood for hours bare-headed in the hot sunshine, the tears rolling down the faces of many of them. So ended the life of Golden Rule Jones, and after taking part in the funeral and seeing the wonderful outburst of popular sympathy for the man who had tried to live as a brother to all men, Mr. Whitlock says suggestively: "It began to look as if there might be something in it after all."

His Death

And there was something in it. No one who has felt the thrill of brotherhood as expressed by such a man can doubt the reality of the force, any more than a man who has come into contact with a "live" wire can have doubts about the power of electricity. What are we to think of Mayor Jones? He made no claims to consistency. He only felt his way and from day to day did the best thing that he saw was practicable. He admitted that his conduct was far from perfect. "Your labor has made these things possible," he wrote to his men, "and I do not claim that a just distribution has been made even yet—indeed, I am sure that a *just* distribution cannot be made under existing conditions, and the little I am doing is simply an earnest of my belief in the coming of a better day—a day when democracy, liberty, equality and brotherhood will no longer be a dream, but an actuality." He disapproved of the patent laws under which he manufactured his machines and appliances, and declared that he would abolish these rights and all special privileges if he could. He had the utmost contempt for mere "things," as he called property, and his personal tastes were those of an anchorite. "With respect to the private property that I seem to be under the necessity of 'owning,' I have this to say," he writes, "I am doing the

very best that I know to manage it for the best interest of all of the people—not the best that you know or that any other person may know, simply the best that I know;” and he invites suggestions from his political opponents. He is said to have left an estate of two or three hundred thousand dollars, and, although I understand that his schemes for betterment are to be carried out in his business by his widow and heirs, he would have been the first to acknowledge that his relations to men and things were not ideal, from his own point of view. He was called insincere and dishonest and a demagogue and a charlatan, as well as a lunatic, an anarchist and a crank. But he was, nevertheless, the very soul of sincerity. His political position was equally anomalous. Condemning force absolutely, he was still the head of the police department and a magistrate. I recall advising him to give up an office which seemed to conflict with his principles, but I am glad now that he did not follow my advice. He had to live his own life in his own way, and it taught a lesson which could not have been taught otherwise. He might have kept out of office. He might have turned over his shop to the men, who would have certainly failed. He might have relinquished his monopoly business and washed his hands of the dirt of trade. He might have given

His Death

away his savings without the consent of his family. Perhaps in this way his conscience might have been clearer (although I doubt it), but he would have ceased to be a unique example of the attempt to apply the Golden Rule to an established order founded on what he called the Rule of Gold. I look upon him as a sort of visitor from some other planet where brotherhood and harmony have been realized in the common life, dropped down here in a semi-barbarous world and calmly taking his place in the midst of its crude and cruel institutions. And he had the manners of another planet, too, for of all the reformers I have ever seen or heard of, he is almost the only one who never uttered a harsh word against anyone, and he gently expostulated with me for being too inconsiderate. "Draw the sting," was his counsel to his political speakers. It was a quaint and moving spectacle, that of this childlike man making his way among men of the world and astounding them by his disingenuousness. Day by day he pointed out the iniquities of our organized social life and showed how impossible it was to realize our highest ideals and yet leave our social and industrial system unchanged. For a dozen years he was sowing the seed of a new harvest, and we may be sure that it is silently ripening in many a heart. His was the ever-

Golden Rule Jones

lasting effort to make the outer world fit the inner vision—that effort after the impossible which is the essence of life itself. “I have done nothing as I believe,” he said, “other than is the common practice of all who try to be at peace with themselves.” But no individual can win that peace in a world full of ugliness and injustice; he can only strive and suffer and strive again. But while that peace may ever remain a vision, it is none the less continually reshaping the world more and more in its own image. And Mayor Jones had laid hold of the creative force itself. “Equal and exact justice can only come through perfect love,” he says at the end of a Christmas letter to his men. “This is the force that is yet to rule and govern the world.” And his life was a foretaste of the event.

