

# Life and Sayings of Sam P. Jones:

A Minister of the Gospel

The Only Authorized and Authentic Work

By his wife  
Assisted by  
Rev. Walt Holcomb, a  
Co-worker of Mr. Jones

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

### APPRECIATIONS FROM DISTINGUISHED MEN

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Sam Jones Dead!

Hon. John Temple Graves

If the brief, startling message of the morning wires be verified by later dispatches, Sam Jones, of Georgia, the most famous evangelist of modern times, has been gathered swiftly and suddenly into reward and rest.

If it be true — and there are few possibilities of mistake — the end has come as Sam Jones would have it come. In the full flush of a glorious and militant life, on the march, in full harness, with eyes bright, with record clear, with the conscience clean, with the echoes of applause and laughter and cheers yet ringing in his ears, the dauntless evangel, the vital reformer, the militant preacher, the eloquent orator, the unequalled humorist, without suffering, without waiting and without anxiety, answers the instant roll-call and is dismissed from present service and promoted to a higher and a nobler sphere.

A brave man physically, Sam Jones was a brave man morally, and spiritually without fear. The problem of death had faced him as an imminent issue more than once during the years of feeble health about him, and we may be sure there were no coward tremors and no shrinking back when the death angel swooped with his sudden summons to the great tribunal where men must give account.

And the great evangel had small need to fear the verdict of the Supreme Justice who presided there. His was a faithful and a fearless life. He had been true since the plighting of his faith to Christ. To strike and spare not, was the motto with which he faced the sinner.

To help and rescue, was the second motto which redeemed the fearless first. He was as swift to succor as he was to smite. He was as tender in healing as he was terrible in arousement. And the terror of many an awakened sinner had been softened in the tenderness of a penitent's forgiven tears. And through terror and through conscience, through tenderness and tears, he had fought the Master's fight, he had gathered the Master's people, and roused and comforted, and wounded and healed, and in the crowds that followed him, and in the multitudes which heard him, as they heard his Master, gladly, he had justified the commission which had been given him to preach a real gospel to a dying world.

If in the darkness and loneliness of a night upon the rushing rail, the brave, bright soul of the evangelist went out to meet its Maker all alone, we may be sure that the tears and the tenderness, the love and the laughter, the fear and the faith, the hope and the heartfulness of the thousands who had followed him through life, were crowned by the "well done" of the Elder Brother who held his hand as they walked through the last shadows to the light and beauty of the Father's throne.

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By Hon. William Jennings Bryan

"Sam Jones, the famous evangelist, died last week, and his death removes from the scene of action a man whose life-work resulted in great and permanent good to the world. His earnestness, his evident sincerity and his plain, common-sense way of putting things, made him a favorite with the people. No one ever was in doubt as to where Sam Jones stood on any question confronting the people, and many of his quaint and blunt sayings have passed into proverbs.

"Many years ago Sam Jones was engaged in a great union revival meeting at Plattsburg, Mo. One of the visiting ministers asked him one day why he did not use better language and refrain from so many 'slang' expressions. 'My dear brother,' replied Mr. Jones, 'I am a fisher of men. I judge the efficacy of my bait by the results I get. When one of your soft-spoken, namby-pamby little preachers can show a bigger string of fish than I can I'll try his kind of bait.'

"For a quarter of a century Sam Jones was a prominent figure in the pulpit and on the lecture platform, and if life is measured by what men put into it, instead of what men get out of it, then Sam Jones's life was a success.

"Sam Jones had a great mind, directed by a great heart; an eloquent tongue enlisted on the side of humanity; a marvelous energy employed for the improvement of society."

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In Memoriam — Sam Jones  
by Hon. Thomas E. Watson

“That was bad about Sam Jones, wasn’t it?” he asked, meaning, of course, the sudden death of the great evangelist on a railway car.

No, it was not bad. It was, in many respects, an ideal departure from this terrible world. He had lived his brightest day, had done his best work — and he fell in the midst of his renown, before the benumbing murmur began to buzz in his ears, “He is not what he once was.”

He had just closed a great series of religious meetings. For days and days he had been doing the Master’s work, living face to face with the Most High. Not lecturing for money. No! Preaching the Gospel of the good life; of the salvation free for all.

With the benediction on his lips he passed away. With a prayer in his soul, his great heart ceased to throb.

Like the soldier who falls in the battle-line, after he has fought a good fight and won the field, so fell Sam Jones.

Bad? No, by the splendor of God! It was a glorious death, a beautiful death, an enviable death.

The night before he was killed, Caesar heard his companions discussing the question of what kind of death was most to be desired. He was busy with affairs of state, but he paused in his work to express his opinion of the death which was most to be desired: “That which is least expected.” Next day he got it.

Think of what was spared to Sam Jones. There was no heartrending torture of protracted pain. There was no dreary martyrdom of bedridden sickness. The wife of his youth was at his side; the infinite peace of God was in his heart.

What more? There had been no pitiable decay of intellect, no saddening decline of influence, no loss of the ear of the world, no dropping away of friends.

Yet he must have known that, if he continued to live, from year to year, inexorable fate would drag him nearer the bleak regions of old age wherein one’s joys steadily diminish and one’s sorrows remorselessly multiply.

Bad? No, it was not bad. Providence let him win success when it was still sweet to the taste, and then mercifully took him away from the horrors of that pathetic decay, that appalling process of going back to childhood — that second childhood which has all the helplessness of the first, with nothing to disguise, alleviate or offset its repulsiveness.

Did I not see the once lordly Robert Toombs totter about in the care of a man-servant, too feeble of mind and body to be trusted to travel alone? Did not Alexander H. Stephens linger upon the stage until it gave one the heartache to hear him try to make a speech?

Would it not have been a mercy of heaven if the stroke of paralysis which struck down William H. Crawford at the height of his fame, and powers, had stretched him dead? What did it leave of that greatest of Georgians but a broken mind in a broken body?

Ah, give me that beautiful death which saves me from the unutterable miseries of senility and decay.

God knows there's little enough in life, even at its best; but the, cruelest weakness which nature curses us with is the timorous clinging to life when there's nothing left to live for.

Marlborough in his dotage — too melancholy to contemplate!

Dean Swift a driveller and a show — the mind recoils from the spectacle.

Sir Walter Scott was still trying to write when all the force and fire and creative genius were gone — pitiful to the last degree.

Napoleon in captivity, fat to unwieldiness, querulous, vainly beating his broken wings against the bars of his cage, garrulously holding forth upon the glories of his past — it is too sad for words. Better, a thousand times better, had he died at Waterloo with his face to the front — spur on heel, blade in hand.

Mozart died beautifully — while they chanted the Requiem which marked the high-tide of his genius.

Mirabeau died grandly — while he still stood in the midst of the French people, an Atlas bearing social order upon his back.

William Pitt died enviably — in the prime of his strength while still the uncrowned monarch of Great Britain.

Stonewall Jackson died gloriously — with the praise of his chief warming his heart, the shouts of victory gladdening his ears, and the faith of a Christian robbing death of its sting.

Henry Grady died a lamentable death — for he seemed to die too soon. His serious life-work seemed just begun. To be stricken down and consigned to chill darkness and forgetfulness when his youthful strength was so abundant, his blood so warm and eager, his feet so ardent for the march, his arm so strong for the fight — it seemed a hard, unmeaning fate.

But Sam Jones was nearing threescore years.

The heat and burden of the day were behind. The best of his strength was spent. The glory of the afternoon had come — and the twilight could not be far away. Better that he should wear out and not rust out, better that he should fall with his armor on, victorious to the last, than fret and pine away amid the shadows of mocking memories.

To me, then, it seems that he died as he would have chosen to die — in a blaze of glory. Sooner or later the few, the very few, who really love us must weep at our graves — a difference of a few days, or a few months, will not lessen the sorrow. Not all the preaching since Adam has made death other than death; and the grief of those who survive the beloved dead is a burden which humanity allows no affectionate soul to escape.

God pity the bereaved wife! God pity the stricken children.

As to Sam Jones himself, he had lived a great life, and he met a glorious death. No braver soldier of the cross ever stormed the citadel of sin. No uniformed follower of Lee or Grant ever marched with greater purpose or fought with greater pluck. Against vice in all its forms, he brought every weapon known to the armory of right, and he used them with a force and skill and tireless energy which made him the most powerful evangel of Christ that recent history has known.

Brilliant, witty, wise, eloquent, profound in his knowledge of the human heart, no man ever faced an audience who could so easily master it.

From laughter to tears, from indifference to enthusiasm, from levity to intense emotion, he could lead the multitude at his will. Under his magnetism and will-power the brazen libertine blushed for shame, the hardened criminal trembled in fear, smug respectability saw its shortcomings, sham Christians forgot to be self-complacent, social hypocrites fell upon their knees, and the miser opened his purse.

I met Sam Jones in 1879, when he was poor and unknown. He came, unheralded, to conduct a revival in our town. I heard him preach a few times, recognized a genius, and predicted his renown. His wonderful career, afterwards, was no surprise to me. Since that day, in 1879, when we took each other by the hand — two poor and unknown young men — I have been his admirer, and his friend; ever glorying in his rise.

Yet, in all our passing to and fro, we met but twice in the subsequent twenty-seven years, and then for a moment only. Now and then we hailed each other from a distance, through the newspapers, but we met no more. He moved in his orbit, I in mine, and each had his work to do. And now his is done, and well done.

He was the greatest Georgian this generation has known; the greatest, in some respects, that any generation has known.

“Duty is the sublimest word in the language,” said Robert E. Lee, himself the flower of Anglo-Saxon manhood.

That Sam Jones fell at the post of sacred duty — died with the Master's message to erring man fresh from his lips — seems to me beautifully fitting, superbly appropriate.

Once he said, touchingly, "When all grows dark and doubtful — human wisdom failing — and I cannot see my way, I lift my helpless hand, and pray: 'Father, take Thou my hand.'

Somehow somewhere, it must be that heroic souls find, in better worlds than this, tasks which are worthy of their diviner gifts. All this, and more, someday we'll understand. "Father, take Thou my hand," the loyal soul prayed; and now, in His own good time, He has taken it.

**~ end of chapter 34 ~**

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