

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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BOOK ONE

His Development

CHAPTER ONE

AS I KNEW HIM

The saddest task my love could perform is this tribute to my husband, and when I attempt to write the story of his life as I knew him, my heart is filled with sadness and my eyes with tears. I knew him in the most sacred relations of life. First as his sweetheart, his wife, his helpmeet, the companion of his youth, the mother of his children, whom he loved more than his own life, and then when the frost began to fall, as a mantle upon his head, and the weight of care and the burden of years to bend the precious shoulders that bore so many burdens for the care — worn and overburdened fellow man, whom he tried to help, and labored and wore himself out in a life of service to save — we were all the more to each other, and our love instead of diminishing grew and grew until it seems to me since he has gone from me so suddenly, slipped away from me, leaving me the sacred charge of following him, leading our children to the foot of the Cross — and finally reuniting on the morn of the resurrection — that until that day my life must remain incomplete. I could not tell of him as I knew him; no words, no language could describe him.

I have often heard him say in public life, as well as at home: “The highest ambition I have on earth is to have those who survive me say of me when I am dead and gone, ‘Sam Jones lived up to and died by his convictions; he was a true man, a good husband, a good father to his children, a good neighbor and a citizen without reproach!’”

I believe the supreme wish of his life has been granted. The people of Cartersville will testify that he was a neighbor and a citizen without reproach. The people all over the United States and Canada can testify that he lived up to his convictions, and was willing to suffer for them. His children will unite in declaring that he was the most patient, gentle and tender of fathers, and I feel sure that I will not weary the readers of this book when I declare to them that he was an ideal husband.

I have reason to know, for I have been his cherished companion, not only in the privacy of our home, but in public life, during all these years of his noble career.

It was in the home of Mr. Austin Dupuy, whose father owned the adjoining farm to my father's, that this young man was a visitor the eight months of his stay in Kentucky, during the Civil War. He was taken in as a son of the household, and soon became the most talked of personage in the neighborhood, for most of the people in that part of the country during the Civil War were in sympathy with the North. For this reason this young man, the son of a Confederate captain, created great interest among them. The Dupuys being such intimate friends of my father's family, it was perfectly natural that my brothers should very soon know this young man, and he was invited to our home; in fact, he was a constant visitor there during his entire stay in Kentucky.

It was on a Friday afternoon in January, 1864, that, in company with one of my young girl friends, it was my privilege to come home from the boarding-school in New Castle, Kentucky, and spend Sunday. When I got home my mother was full of praises for Sam Jones, the Georgia boy, who had come from the South with Lieutenant Dupuy, and when my brother came we were all delighted that he had brought him home with him to spend the night. My first introduction to him was by my mother, who said: "Laura, this is Sam Jones, of Georgia."

I looked and saw a bright-faced boy with large brown eyes and my heart went out to him in sympathy, for I had heard something from my mother of his history and separation from his family. This was my first sight of the boy who was, in after-years, to become my cherished companion, and whose name was destined to become a household word all over the land.

I often met him during the remainder of his stay in the community, and learned to like him. In the latter part of the year of 1864, it was made possible for him to return South and join his mother in Lumpkin, Georgia. After he left us, he corresponded with my younger brother, but it was quite a surprise when I received my first letter from him, after he had been away several months. From this time we corresponded regularly.

In 1867 Captain John Jones, Mr. Jones's father, was commissioned to go into the Middle States and solicit supplies for the people of the desolated South. Traveling through Kentucky he made it convenient to visit his son's friends in Henry county. He came to our home and made me very happy by chance allusions to his son Sam, whose image at this time was deeply graven on my girlish heart, and from whom I received frequent letters.

During this period of struggling poverty in the South, Mr. Jones was unable to return to Kentucky to see me, and for four years we corresponded, but did not become engaged until the spring of 1868. At this time he was studying law. He expected to be admitted to the bar the first of November in the same year, and we had decided that at this time we would marry.

After being admitted to the bar in the courts of Georgia, he took the first train for my home, and on November 24, 1868, we were married quietly, the ceremony being witnessed only by my mother, my brothers and a few relatives and friends.

My father refused to witness the ceremony because he had learned since Mr. Jones's return to Kentucky that he had become dissipated; but, thank God, long before my father's death he saw God's hand in my choice, and learned to love Mr. Jones as his own son.

My brothers were not entirely willing to entrust the care of their only sister, then a young girl of eighteen, to this young man of whom they knew so little; but my mother, high-bred and spirited woman that she was, said: "Now, Laura, you have promised to marry Sam Jones; he has come for you, and you are going to redeem your promise." She never regretted this advice, and through the long years of her widowhood he was her son in every respect, and she often said she knew no difference in her love for me and her love for Mr. Jones."

In after-years the homestead came into my possession, but my mother made it her home as long as she lived, spending her winters with us in Georgia, and her summers in Kentucky, and so it was made possible for me to go and spend a portion of the time with her.

Mr. Jones would frequently take a day or two from his many engagements, and come to the home of my girlhood, to live over the old scenes of the happiness of our youthful days, when we saw in the future none of life's cares, responsibilities or perplexities, but thought only of our abiding love growing stronger day by day.

I was called to my home one day in August, 1895, to see my mother before she passed away. Mr. Jones was in Baltimore, engaged in a camp-meeting at Emory Grove, and our eldest daughter, Mrs. Turner, was in the Johns Hopkins Hospital, very ill. He immediately joined me to pay the last tribute to her whom he had loved as a mother, and to whom he had shown every respect. When she left us we went to the little church where she had worshiped, and Mr. Jones made a beautiful talk, thrilling those who had gathered to pay their last tribute of love.

My mother loved and stood by him and had indeed been his friend since he came to Kentucky in 1868 to claim her only daughter as his wife.

After our marriage we left at once for Georgia. In those days traveling facilities were very inferior to those of the present day, and it took us three days to make the trip from Eminence, Kentucky, to Cartersville, Georgia, which was to be our home for a time. We were welcomed by Mr. Jones's family, and were entertained for some weeks in his father's home.

Never will I forget those days. I was a proud, high-spirited Kentucky girl, who had been raised in affluence, and these new surroundings were so different from any to which I had been accustomed. On the first Sunday after our marriage Mr. Jones and I went to church with his father and mother, and when we got to the door of the church a sudden shyness seemed to come over him.

After starting up the aisle, he left me to walk alone and sit with his parents, and he went back and sat near the door during the service. I am glad to say in all the thirty-eight years of our married life this was the first and only time he deserted me. He said I taught him better when I got him home that memorable day.

Mr. Jones had been admitted to the bar before our marriage, and his prospects seemed bright for the future, but in the South the times were very hard, and professional men of experience often suffered from lack of employment and poor pay for service they rendered; so a young man necessarily had little advantage.

Thinking he would be more successful elsewhere, we decided to go to Dallas, go into a little home of our own, and live in a very modest way. There our little girl Beulah was born, October 31, 1869. We remained in Dallas only a few months, going from there to Alabama, where we lived until Mr. Jones's father expressed a desire that we return to Cartersville, as he needed his son's assistance in his sickness, having been an invalid for many months, from lung trouble contracted during the terrible exposures of the war.

It was in August, 1871, that God, in His wisdom, saw fit to take unto Himself our little Beulah, who was then twenty-one months old, and it seemed to us, in our young lives, that the sunshine of life had surely gone out, leaving all so dark and desolate. Mr. Jones's grief was great over the loss of our beautiful little girl whom he loved so tenderly. I have never seen any man so fond of little babies as he.

Each child that came into our home brought joy and gladness to his heart, from the first to the last. A few weeks after the death of Beulah, our second daughter, Mary, now Mrs. Turner, was born, September 10, 1871.

At this time we lived in a little cabin which is only a short distance from our present home in Cartersville. It was at the Cartersville tabernacle meeting, September, 1906, that Mr. Jones stopped in the middle of his sermon and gave a few pages from his early life, dwelling upon the fact that God would bless a man if he lived right and walked humbly before Him, and told how he was converted and started out in the ministry, that we were living in this humble home, and how through the years of his faithfulness — as he believed he had been faithful — God had blessed him, not only in a spiritual, but in a material way as well; how God had, through friends, given us this beautiful home, wherein we now dwell, and that we had dedicated it to God and had tried through the years to be faithful to our vows of dedication.

During the period to which reference has just been made Mr. Jones was not so dissipated as he had been for the first two years of our married life, but he had abandoned his law practice altogether, and it was by his daily labor that we were enabled to live. He worked for many months, firing a furnace, three miles from Cartersville, having his dinner at 11 a. m. and returning home at one o'clock in the morning. Often in after-years he would say to me:

“Wife, I never look up at the stars at night that I don't think of the months I fired that old Bartow furnace. It seemed to me that I counted, hundreds of times, each star in the heavens and thought of the Great Beyond.”

Did any whisper of his future greatness come to him? Did he realize the undeveloped power which lay dormant in him? The power which would sway the multitudes as no other man had swayed them since our Divine Christ lived among men? No man ever mounted the pinnacle of fame more rapidly, and yet no man ever seemed so unconscious of his greatness.

Through these years of trial and poverty, we found that our friends were not so numerous, but there was one of whom he always loved to speak, who was ever faithful, and that was an old colored woman. Aunt Ann Mickens, who lived near-by (we having only one or two near neighbors) . She was a woman who had given her heart to God, and was a faithful Christian. She and her husband lived on the hill, and had known Mr. Jones all the years he lived in Cartersville, and loved him devotedly. She would come night and morning during my sickness and minister unto me and give me all the help possible, praying constantly for us that God might lead us into better and more useful lives.

It was our privilege, in after-years when God had blessed us, to minister in turn to her and her husband, who was helpless for many years. In Mr. Jones's visits home she was among the number that he always visited; and he contributed to her support, trying to make her latter years as comfortable as possible. It was during one of his visits home that he went to see her before leaving, and she said to him: "God bless you, Marse Sammy. When you gits back from this trip I will be gone, but I will be sitting right inside the gates of heaven when you comes, waiting to welcome you, and tell the Lord Jesus how good you was to an old lady down here."

Many other beautiful incidents of the same kind in his life might be related, showing how he spent his time and money, and how he blessed the lives of so many people.

In 1872, in the month of August, Mr. Jones's father died. This was the turning-point in his life. He gave the sacred promise to his dying father that he would give his heart to God and meet him in heaven. No promise given by man was ever so sacredly kept. He gave his life, his heart, his all, to God, and in his simple childlike faith and trust followed Him all the days of his life. He at once felt that he was called of God to preach the gospel, and three months after his conversion was admitted to the North Georgia Conference and given one of the poorest circuits in the conference, the old Van Wert circuit, five churches composing the charge. He was not discouraged, but gladly went.

When we got to Van Wert, which is in Polk county, we found utter desolation. No home prepared for us, winter and every discouragement facing us, but through it all Mr. Jones was cheerful and hopeful, and above all grateful to God for giving him a field in which to labor. We came to realize "**that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.**" He gladly, therefore, gave his life fully to the work, trusting to God for the result.

It was on the Van Wert circuit. May 11, 1873, Annie, our daughter, now Mrs. Ruohs Pyron, was born. Our oldest son, Sam Paul, was born May 31, 1875. Our second son, Robert W. Jones, was born on Christmas Eve, 1876, while we were on the De Soto circuit. Our fourth daughter, Laura, now Mrs. Sloan, was born in October, 1881, at Social Circle, Georgia.

So eight happy and useful, years were spent in the itinerancy, beginning at Van Wert, 1872, and ending at Monticello, 1880. At the conference that year Mr. Jones was first appointed agent for the North Georgia Orphans' Home, Decatur, Georgia, and was reappointed the following year.

With our five children and the added cares and responsibilities which had multiplied, and which were necessarily upon me, Mr. Jones felt that we must locate permanently, where he could leave us in comfort in a little home of our own. We considered both Marietta and Cartersville, but Mr. Jones was especially drawn to the home of his boyhood, where so many of his people lived.

In our Cartersville home, our youngest daughter, Julia Baxter, was born, in April, 1885. No father ever loved little children more than he, and the coming of our last child brought special delight to his heart, as there had not been a baby in our home for the last four and a half years. Our grandchildren, of whom five are living.

Laura and Eva Mays, Samuel Paul Jones, Robert Porter Jones and Sam Jones Sloan, were a constant source of love and pleasure to him. When the last little one came, just one year ago, we hesitated to name him Sam Jones, as the other boys had been given his name in part. Mr. Jones was away from home at the time and when he returned after a few days the subject was mentioned and we saw that he was delighted at the idea of calling this sturdy little fellow Sam Jones Sloan. He was particularly devoted to this boy all the days that followed.

He wrote to the Atlanta Journal, saying: "With the advent of another grandson in our home comes great joy and rejoicing, and I am pleased beyond measure with the fact that he is named plain, flat-footed Sam Jones."

He seemed to grow fonder of this little fellow as the days went by. On the eve of our leaving home for Oklahoma City he took the dear little boy in his arms and said to me: "I would love to live to see the day when this dear little fellow will be grown and take up the work that I am now doing."

The people in Nashville where he held that memorable meeting offered to give him a beautiful home, but after considering and praying over it, he decided to remain in Cartersville.

Then the citizens of Nashville made a donation for the purpose of improving our Cartersville home, and through this generous gift our home was completed.

Mr. Jones was so grateful to God and to friends for the home that he decided to dedicate it to the Lord. On Christmas day, 1885, the house was formally dedicated at 2.30 p.m.. Rev. T. R. Kendall, of Trinity church, Atlanta, conducting the service.

After an appropriate hymn and prayer by Dr. Kendall, Mr. Jones arose and in a most touching and earnest manner presented the home to Dr. Wendall as a minister of God for dedication to His service. The officiating minister then read several appropriate passages of Scripture and, after commending the action, expressed the hope that many others would follow the example. He accepted the home in the name of the Lord.

He then called upon Rev. W. A. Dodge, our pastor at that time, who offered a fervent prayer for God's blessings upon the home and family. Four generations of Mr. Jones's family were present, including his venerable grandfather, uncles, brothers, sisters, his mother and my mother.

Mr. Jones's beautiful thoughts concerning home and home-life and the blessings of God in the home were so sacred and sublime that every one present saw him in an entirely different light from what the world had seen him. Someone who was present, in writing of the rearrangement of the home, said:

“I was struck with something about Sam Jones's home which is typical of his life. When he built this present home he had the old one, which was a one-story frame building, raised and the new portion built under it. The old homestead is there, but it is elevated and made beautiful by the new part, which is a handsome foundation. So it is with the life of the owner. The old Sam Jones has been lifted up with a new mind and a firm foundation, the maker and builder of which is God, while the entire new structure is beautiful to behold, yet the old Sam Jones is still there, with all his humor and his boyishness and a love for all mankind.”

In his social life Mr. Jones was always a marvel and a source of untold delight to the friends that gathered in our home. We celebrated several occasions of note. Among the first was our twenty-fifth marriage anniversary, thirteen years ago, the twenty-fourth day of November. This was a notable occasion in our lives, and we began to look forward to the fiftieth mile-post, hoping it would be God's will to let us journey together these few more years.

He so often spoke of what a God-given privilege for a man and his wife to journey together for fifty years and at the end of that time celebrate their golden wedding. It was on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of our friend and neighbor, Bill Arp, that he said: “How glad I would be if God would let me live to celebrate with you, my beloved wife, the fiftieth anniversary of our marriage.”

The greatest occasion of the gathering together of our friends was at the time of Mr. Jones's fiftieth birthday, just nine years before he celebrated his fifty-ninth birthday in that glorious city where many of those who were with him on the occasion of this anniversary had gone on before, and I imagine it was a reunion of great joy and gladness. Mr. Jones's happiness on the dawn of his birthday knew no bounds. He was like a schoolboy come home to spend the holidays. The day dawned clear and beautiful. Forty-nine of his friends gathered with him and he said this was the happiest day of his life. We also had a Christmas dinner for the boys of Cartersville that he might bring them in closer touch with himself, and also a dinner for railroad men from many places. He loved railroad men tenderly and wanted to help them because of their great kindness to him. Although Mr. Jones was a very busy man, having only a few weeks in the year to spend with his people, he enjoyed beyond measure these memorable occasions. He loved his home and his home people and his association with them.

While the past seems dim before my tear-filled eyes, and the present great sorrow overwhelms me, it is sweet to remember the gladsome look on his face, and to know that he appreciated the efforts made in his home to add to his pleasure by these various anniversaries.

But it was in the time of sickness and bereavement that his real heart was seen. I was taken violently ill on the twelfth day of November, 1887, in Rochester, New York, as I was traveling with Mr. Jones on one of his extended lecture trips, and I remained in New York five weeks.

At the expiration of this time the doctor who was in attendance upon me told Mr. Jones that I would die, but as my anxiety was so great to see my children, he advised him to take me home. The friend with whom we were staying was the president of the Delaware and Hudson River Railroad, and he offered Mr. Jones his private car for the journey. His wife, a physician and four other friends attended us. When we arrived in Atlanta, having telegraphed for Dr. Bizell to meet us, he did so and accompanied us home. Immediately upon our arrival here he performed an operation, which was of a very serious nature, and my life hung in the balance for many weeks. The physicians held out little hope for my recovery.

Mr. Jones was well-nigh prostrated, and his tender solicitude as he watched at my bedside touched deeply the hearts of those who were near him. As he often expressed it, this was the most sorrowful experience in his life, for no man, I think I may truly say, ever loved more truly, more tenderly than he. He not only loved me with all the affection of his nature, but he depended on me. Outside of his love for God, I think his love for me was the greatest thing in his life. While my life was swinging in the balance, he divided his time watching by my bedside and praying God to spare me to him.

His suspense and sorrow were terrible. Calling the children together one day, he told them that they must be prepared for the greatest sorrow that could come to their lives, although he was still praying to God to save me, and he said: "I have promised God that if he will give your mother back to us I will never while I live give her a moment's pain or speak a cross or impatient word to her."

Soon after this an improvement was noted in my condition, as though God had accepted the promise of my beloved husband, and I believe he did. While Mr. Jones was always tender and thoughtful before, it was literally true that from that day to the last day of his life he kept his promise to God.

At another period in his life his faith in God was tested.

Our daughter Mary was ill for many weeks at the birth of her oldest daughter, and he saw that all human help was powerless. He went to God in prayer and called upon some of his friends whom he knew lived close to the throne to pray with him. Among them was Brother L. P. Brown, of Meridian, Mississippi, who gives a very beautiful experience in his own life, when he took this girl to God in prayer, and how he had the assurance from God Himself that her life would be spared. Although many people came to Mr. Brown and told him they had seen in the papers that Mary was dead, he said he knew it was not true, for God had assured him that she would live; and it is in answer to these prayers that she lives to-day.

He was never heard to utter an impatient word to his wife, and his faithfulness to God has been known to the people throughout the land.

In January, 1888, after this trying period of my illness, Mr. Jones went to Kansas City to hold a meeting, which had been postponed several weeks on account of my sickness.

Having been there a short while, he became so homesick to see me that he left the meeting in the hands of his brother, Rev. Joe Jones, and Rev. Sam Small, and came over a thousand miles to spend one day with me. Although it was his custom to write me daily, at times he was so homesick he would cancel his engagements to come and spend a few hours with us.

I knew him as a sweetheart, a husband and a father. He was loving, kind, generous to a fault, but above all things, faithful to God. He related in one of his talks at the last tabernacle meeting in Cartersville this little incident, which aptly illustrates his faith in God.

He said that a great temptation had come to him only a few months before and he felt that his grip on God was being loosened. He told how he had gone to God in his great distress and poured out his soul in earnest prayer. God came into his room and lifting the burden from his heart gave him assurance of victory. With that assurance came these words in an almost audible tone, as if the voice was straight from heaven:

“When through the deep waters I call thee to go.
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless.
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.”

He went through life bearing burdens, yet filling life with kind deeds and always giving pleasure and happiness to others. The time had come, many years ago, when everything was dated to and from the time “when Daddy comes home.” We always saved the best of everything for him, and when the time came for his arrival, we met him at the depot, the children always scrambling for the first kiss.

When the train pulled into our station he would be standing on the lowest step of the car, waiting to receive our welcome. I can see him now in memory, as his face would light up with that wonderful smile, so dear to me, when he would catch the first glimpse of his wife, children and grandchildren, waiting to welcome him home.

Oh, those homecomings! They were so dear to me, and although we will be denied the earthly pleasure of his home-comings, thank God, he waits at the terminal station of life's great railway, there to welcome each of his loved ones, with a joy that no homecoming could have given him on earth.

The last weeks I knew him were in our home and in his final work in Oklahoma City. After the strain and burden of the tabernacle meeting, I was quite unwell, and felt that a few days or weeks rest would benefit me greatly, and thought I would remain at home and not accompany Mr. Jones to Oklahoma City, as two of our children were not well at the time. But he seemed unusually determined to have me go with him. I hesitated at first, but finally made up my mind to go and the journey proved more pleasant than I anticipated. I improved so much while in Oklahoma City and our companionship was so delightful. We were together more, without the presence of others than we had been in the same given time for years.

Did God, in His merciful tenderness, give me those two happy weeks to try to soften the terrible blow He knew was coming?

The afternoon we left Oklahoma City, October fourteenth, for home, it was raining and dreary, but Mr. Jones seemed cheerful and happy, and I never dreamed he would leave me so soon. I do thank God that He made it possible for me to be with him to the very last, and I know His goodness and mercy followed him to the last days of his life, and he now dwells, and will forever dwell, in the house of the Lord.

Although I cannot express in words what he was to me, or how I loved him, I want the world to know, as many thousands already know, that although he was the greatest man of the nineteenth century in public life — pure, true, honorable and kind to all his fellow men — his greatness was in greater evidence in the place he loved above all else — his home.

This separation is an inexplicable providence as I now see it. But for my faith in God and my knowledge of Mr. Jones's strong and abiding faith in God, and my profound belief in the excellency of his character, and the purity of his motives, all mingled with the hope of a glad reunion in the great beyond, how could I bear this great loss, or be able to say, “Lord, Thy will be done?”

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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