

Jones's Alphabet

(By Jay Benson Hamilton, D.D., in 'South-western Christian Advocate'.)

George Washington Jones was nineteen years of age before he learned his alphabet. It contained but three letters and they were all the same. He was an orphan who had managed to live in spite of being a waif, homeless and friendless. He had learned to read by some strange chance, exactly how, he never could explain. The little which he had read had awakened lofty ambitions in his boyish mind. His day-dreams would have filled with laughter all who knew him had they but known them. He treasured his purposes as the secrets of his own heart and brain and patiently and contentedly toiled, living from hand to mouth until he had reached the age of nineteen years.

His nineteenth birthday was his emancipation day. He was going to his daily work when he saw a fragment of a newspaper flitting before him, driven by the wind. He stopped and caught it, and read:

'Push with energy; plod with patience; endure with pluck; and you can do anything that God approves. With these P's, push, patience, pluck, as your alphabet, you can spell every word but F A I L.'

The boy became a man in a flash. He straightened himself to his full height and spoke aloud:

'I have learned my alphabet; now I will begin to spell.'

He looked again at the paper and saw that the words were a brief extract from an address by the president of Walden University. He said to himself, 'I do not know where Walden University is, but I will find it.'

One week from this birthday, he started on foot for Walden University. He carried in his hand a small bundle containing his scanty wardrobe. In his pocket were a few cents, his total fortune. His journey was filled with adventure, but he triumphed over all obstacles. He asked nothing and would receive nothing in charity. He earned his living by the way, but ever kept moving toward his goal. It took many weeks but he was ever cheerful and courageous. His smile was a sunbeam; his laugh was rich music; his song was a trumpet blast. He worked and smiled and sung his way, until wearied, foot-sore, shabby and gaunt with hunger he entered the city. He found the man whose words had changed the current of his life. He quietly stated his desire to secure an education and exhibited the soiled fragment of paper containing his alphabet.

He was encouraged and assured that if he would continue to spell as he had begun he could not fail to succeed. Disdaining to accept aid, Jones began to seek work to pay his way. He tried scores of places only to be refused. He bowed, lifted his fragment of a hat and smiled when each said 'No.' One man who had been unusually curt and surly was so amazed at the smile and bow that he muttered to himself:

'If he can do that when I say "No," what would he do if I were to say "Yes!" I'll try it as an experiment.'

When Jones was recalled, the man said, 'What kind of work do you want?'

'Anything!'

'I have work, but it is hard.'

'I am strong.'

'It is dirty.'

'I have soap in my pocket.'

'The pay will be small.'

'I do not need much.'

'Follow me!'

Jones had a job.

The cellar of a large warehouse was as gloomy as a dungeon. It was filled nearly to the ceiling with boxes and barrels. Refuse of every kind was piled in heaps.

'Clear this up. Break up the barrels and boxes that are useless. Pile neatly those that are good. Put this rubbish in barrels on the sidewalk. I will give you one dollar for the job. When will you begin?'

'Now!' said Jones. 'If you will let me sleep in the room we came through, I will not leave until the job is done. I saw an old blanket on the floor that will do for a bed.'

Permission being given, Jones had a job and lodgings. A few wisps of hay and a disreputably old horse-blanket served for a bed. Three nickels, his total wealth, purchased three loaves of bread. A faucet in an old sink furnished water, and Jones had a job, board and lodging. It took three days to complete the task. When it was finished the employer was asked to pass his approval upon the work.

Every bit of rubbish had been carried out and filled a row of barrels on the sidewalk. In one corner, boxes all ready for use were stored. In another, a similar pile of barrels was placed. In another corner, kindling wood from the broken barrels and boxes was heaped. In a box were two pailfuls of coal picked from the ashes; in another box were scores of bottles taken from the rubbish, all assorted as to sizes and carefully washed. The windows that had been obscured with dirt and cobwebs were washed clean and wiped dry and bright. By the aid of an old whitewash brush and a pail of discarded lime that had been discovered in the rubbish, the cellar had been carefully whitened, it was swept, light, clean and almost fit to live in. The owner looked about him silently for a few moments and said:

'If this is the way you do your work you will never want for a job. I have a pile of wood in my back yard that you can tackle and it is big enough to keep you busy for a year. I'll pay you the market price for the work.'

Jones looked at the silver dollar, smiled and bowed his thanks and asked to be shown the way to the wood pile. He worked his way through two years' preparatory training, four years' collegiate study at Walden University and three years of theological training at Gammon School of Theology. He applied his alphabet to his books as he did to his work and earned honorable recognition in every study.

He became a speaker and a writer of more than average ability. He developed into an all around athlete without a peer in his class. He could sprint faster on an errand; lift harder on a heavy load; knock out more tough obstacles and surmount greater difficulties than any man in either institution.

The day that he received his diploma from Gammon Theological Seminary he sat down in his room and carefully read the words on the fragment of paper that contained his alphabet and spelled out the words that were to form the motto of his future work in the world.

A medical journal says: 'When a young man begins to smoke cigarettes we no longer worry over his future. He has none.'

My Saviour.

Under an Eastern sky,
Amid a rabble cry,
A Man went forth to die

For me!

Thorn-crowned His blessed Head,
Blood-stained His weary tread,
Cross-laden on He sped

For me!

Pierced were His hands and feet,
Three hours, there o'er Him beat
Fierce rays of noontide heat

For me!

Thus wert Thou made all mine,
Lord! make me wholly Thine,
Grant grace and strength divine

To me!

In thought and word and deed,
Thy will to do, Oh! lead
My soul, e'en though it bleed,

To Thee!

—Selected.

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