

## REVIEW.

## "THE LIFE OF SIR ROBERT JONES."\*

"The source of his most lasting happiness was in his passion for work . . . he believed in sustained toil as the greatest attribute of self expression, and the only enduring assurance of happiness."

"The Life of Sir Robert Jones" by Frederick Watson, will delight many outside that large circle of friends and disciples devoted to him personally, and inspired by his teaching, for Robert Jones, as Lord Dawson of Penn proclaimed in Liverpool Cathedral, was a "scientific thinker, inventive craftsman, teacher, leader of men, who gave himself, and through his disciples, great service to mankind. For him the thread of life was 'strung with the beads of thought and love.'" So richly endowed, and so lovable a personality must needs appeal to many who had not the good fortune to come into contact with his magic influence, and we are indebted to his son-in-law, Mr. Frederick Watson, for his delightful record of so full and rich a life.

## THE FATHER OF ROBERT JONES.

The father of Sir Robert Jones was the son of an elder in the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church, a successful architect and builder, who planned that his only son should follow in his footsteps, but the son thought otherwise. He married at the age of 19 a beautiful girl several years his senior; "their son Robert was born on June 28th, 1857, and additional children followed with regularity. The various ventures by which the young father endeavoured to keep the pot boiling seem to have been consistently unfortunate, so unfortunate indeed that one's admiration goes out to the extraordinary tenacity with which he kept his flag flying and preserved—whether justly or not—his freedom of action. At last, having decided to take even greater risks, he assembled his young family, and leaving a deeply aggrieved father and mother, and two extremely electrified and envious sisters, boarded the train for London.

"It was, on the surface, as desperate an undertaking as anyone could desire. Robert Jones the younger was then five years old, and for the next ten years became a Londoner. His parents settled in a house in Nelson Square, a back-water on the Surrey side of the Thames, and a favourite locality for journalists . . . and if a cheerful heart in a cheerful home means anything in childhood, it could be found in that small but ever-growing community in Nelson Square. Robert Jones, the journalist, possessed the gift of a persistently happy and volatile disposition, and the courage to know that financial stringency is to be envied in comparison with the parochial stagnation of a rural community."

## A CRITICAL INFLUENCE.

In 1864, Elizabeth, the second sister of Robert Jones, senior, married a young doctor named Hugh Owen Thomas, an event which brought a new and critical influence into the home and future of the Jones family, and cordial relations were soon established with them both in Liverpool.

"Thomas was, at this time, a man of thirty, and already by the force of circumstance and personality marked out for a solitary and dramatic career." Educated for the medical profession, he studied medicine both at Edinburgh University and University College, London, and after becoming a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, proceeded to Paris to study the methods of the French surgeons.

"In 1858 he had settled in Liverpool where he attempted

to assist his father, Evan Thomas, the last of the great bone-setters. He parted from his father upon grounds of incompatibility of temperament, and in 1859 set up practice for himself."

It was "to his house Robert Jones' father came at intervals from 1864 onwards until his death, and it was as a small boy that the son first met in his uncle by marriage the man who was so profoundly to influence his whole life and thought."

Later we get the following parental description of Robert Jones, junior, in a letter from his wholly charming father to his sister Mary giving an account of his children. "The boy? Talk of a boy. *He is a boy.* Looking at that boy's face will make the most miserable fellow happy. He is the essence of happiness . . . You cannot spoil him. He won't be spoiled, and of course he thinks your humble servant the most perfect and most exalted of beings."

Discussing the personality of Sir Robert Jones, the author writes: "Like father like boy. The source of a personality is most often to be discovered in its youth and even more in its environment.

## A CATHOLIC HORIZON.

"There was as a start a most catholic horizon. Those were days when many parents regarded the theatre more than dubiously. But before he was sixteen Robert Jones had seen Henry Irving, and within the same week had been taken by his father in order that he might compare him with Creswick in 'Hamlet.' They were times when religion was taken not merely seriously, which is right enough, but with strong denominational bias. And yet, as a schoolboy, Robert Jones had heard Archbishop Manning, Spurgeon, Joseph Parker and Moody and Sankey—all within a few weeks. Such freedom from convention was remarkable." A contrast indeed to the upbringing of his father as the son of an elder in the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church. An environment from which we know he broke free at the earliest possible moment, preferring freedom of soul at the price of straitened means. "If heredity and environment mean anything, there will be discovered in his indifference to money, in his liberty of thought, in his balance and optimism, the sources of his son's attitude towards the conduct of life."

"Sometime in 1873 father and son had set out from London for Liverpool, and arriving at Nelson Street were welcomed by Hugh and Elizabeth Thomas.

"It was a moment in surgical history reminiscent of the accidental encounters which mould human progress. To a boy of even moderate intelligence the personality of Hugh Owen Thomas must have been magnetic. He possessed most of the virtues which inspire loyalty. He was original to the point of eccentricity, autocratic and solitary. Individualism—whether superficial or sincere—makes an instant appeal to hero-worship, and Thomas possessed a spirit of inquiry which was a perpetual challenge. When Robert Jones left that congenial London home, he was ready for something more astringent than amiability. Thomas was not conventional in mind or appearance. Unlike the father of Robert Jones, he practised an intellectual austerly which was also a sleepless search for truth . . . During the next five years Robert Jones was to develop the faculty of testing what was durable in his father's good-natured philosophy."

"To spend what are called 'the impressionable years' with such a man counted much in the personality of Robert Jones. It enabled him to avoid the commonplace and sententious, which is a rare experience for any youth. Both with his father and with Thomas he was on terms of companionship not subordination." Here too he met James Rose, and laughter and fun and the gusto of life crossed the threshold of 32, Hardy Street, where such things had never been on equal terms before. "And they left

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