



Photograph by Walter Stoneman, 1947

WILLIAM HENRY SAMUEL JONES

WILLIAM HENRY SAMUEL JONES

1876-1963

WILLIAM HENRY SAMUEL JONES was born on 8 April 1876, the son of Samuel John Jones of Gravelly Hill near Birmingham, a commercial traveller. At the age of sixteen he was entered on the Foundation of King Edward's School, which had a strong Classical tradition and produced a series of sound scholars. Thence in 1894 he won a Classical exhibition at Selwyn College, Cambridge, and was soon promoted to be a Scholar. He won prizes in Classics and Divinity, contemplating at that time admission to holy orders. He gained a First in each part of the Classical Tripos with distinction in Philosophy in his Second Part. Herein was to be his main interest as a scholar.

His earlier career was in teaching. He became a tutor at the York Training College, and then at Stonyhurst, until, in a fortunate hour, he returned to Cambridge in 1902 to the staff of the Perse School, where Dr. W. H. D. Rouse had inaugurated the teaching of Latin and Greek by what was called the 'direct method'. It was his responsibility to introduce the younger boys to this procedure, which he did with an enthusiasm evinced by a pamphlet in which he urged its merits. In 1908 he was elected a Fellow of St. Catharine's and appointed Classical Lecturer. Also for two years he was on the staff of Selwyn. In his college teaching he emphasized the niceties of Latin prose composition against a wide background of literature. He took a great interest in his pupils and was repaid by their confidence.

Jones continued his work on Greek ethical ideas, in particular the part they played in the early progress of medicine in the formative period of the fifth century B.C. The medical writers were by then attracting fruitful attention to the interaction of close observation guided by a systematic speculation that was a by-product of the Ionian philosophers of the day.

When Jones became a Fellow the image of the college in the university was clouded by doubts which attended the election of a Master many years before. On this event Jones remained reticent. In his admirable *History* of the college, he wrote later with a sardonic touch that was rare in him: 'The historian must not invent, but the reader may, and he will derive great pleasure from his efforts.' St. Catharine's had been governed by a small

group of Fellows who lived in the past, and the time was ripe for an advance on this tradition. This went along with a notable expansion of the student body, in part dictated by financial needs in the period of reconstruction that followed the end of the First World War. In 1919 Jones was appointed Bursar, an office which he held until 1933. To this period he looked back in that most interesting part of his *History* which records its domestic affairs. There became visible a new vitality in which new college officers pressed on under the Master's leadership. The expansion in buildings, in numbers, and in intellectual activity was no small achievement in which Jones played a real, if unobtrusive, part. As Bursar he was most diligent in his cure, almost to a fault. He was meticulous and took nothing lightly, and it was a sign of his unremitting zeal for learning that he was able to pursue the researches on which his achievements as a scholar were to be based. He married in 1911 Norah Mary Kathleen, daughter of the Rev. Dr. Elliott of Shortlands, Kent. They lived contentedly domesticated in his house with their only child, a daughter, but he was never aloof from his pupils or his bursarial cares except for short periods of foreign travel.

His travels assisted him with a characteristic inquiry on the prevalence of malaria in the ancient world, and he wrote a book in which it was, not without reason, declared to be a neglected factor in the history of Greece and Rome. This appeared in 1907, followed by a more elaborate work restricted to Greek lands. He was conscious of the temptation to overrate its prevalence and effects and he was most scrupulous in stating the limits of knowledge in time and space and the varying validity of the ancient evidence. Since that time there has been much vigorous discussion by continental, especially Italian, scholars. No less discerning a critic than Plinio Fraccaro has declared in his *Opuscula* the durable quality of Jones's pioneer work. His two works attracted much attention and earned for him among his colleagues and their pupils the *nom de guerre*, 'Malaria Jones'. These studies had made Jones interested in the historical geography of Greece and later, together with H. A. Ormerod, he worked on Pausanias. In 1924 he published an essay on 'The Doctor's Oath'. Of the Greek medical writers he produced the first two and the fourth volumes of Hippocrates in the Loeb series. He was much occupied with his college duties, as he reveals in the Preface to the Fourth Volume. 'The work of preparing this volume has taken all my leisure for over five years.' How thoroughly he had sought to establish the best possible text

appears from his collation of eight manuscripts which had not received full attention from scholars. Along with this went a text and translation of Heraclitus, *On the Universe*. The occasional cryptic obscurity of this work challenged his critical skill, and the width of his studies was revealed by an essay entitled 'Intentional Obscurity in Ancient Writing', and his exposition of the varied accomplishments of the author. 'He was', he writes, 'a philosopher and a scientist, but he cannot help being at the same time an artist, a prose poet, and a religious reformer.' Jones found ancient polymathy congenial to him and continued the work of H. R. Rackham on Pliny's *Natural History*.

The width and precision of his learning did not fail of recognition, and in 1944 he was elected a Fellow of the Academy. He celebrated his election by contributing to the next year's *Proceedings* a notable contribution to the recalcitrant problem of the *Corpus Hippocraticum*. A good pure scholar himself, he stressed the prime importance of linguistic studies as the basis of the inquiry. How well Jones could put this into practice was further shown by his edition of the medical writings of the *Anonymus Londinensis* published in 1947 as one of the Cambridge Classical Studies. This, his last published work in this field, was the product of the leisure that followed his retirement from his college lectureship in 1943. It was dedicated to the memory of F. M. Cornford, who in the last years of his life was very generous with his help and counsel. It was a characteristic tribute to him which Jones wrote in the words 'Alienum opus tanquam suum curavit'.

In 1943 Jones was elected an Honorary Fellow of his college, a suitable recognition of his learning and of his services to St. Catharine's, of which he had been Bursar for so long, as also President in the reigns of two Masters. He was, in company, a silent man, gravely kind; his tall gaunt presence, now bowed with age, was a familiar figure as he moved about the courts and between college and his house, approachable though rather shy, and a partial recluse in his later years. He was deeply versed in the records of the college, of which he had written a *History* in 1936. This is a work that displayed much research, suffused with affection. There is to be found in it a note of pride that was not misplaced, though, as befitted him, his name hardly ever appears in its pages. It was followed in 1951 by the eminently readable *The Story of St. Catharine's College*. At last his health was broken and he withdrew to a nursing home near the Hampshire parish of his son-in-law until he died on 4 February 1963.

F. E. ADCOCK