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## “A LOVE-MAD MAN”: SENATOR CHARLES W. JONES OF FLORIDA

by JUDY NICHOLAS ETEMADI \*

FOLLOWING TEN YEARS of service in the United States Senate, Charles W. Jones of Pensacola was in a strong position to serve Florida when the forty-ninth Congress convened on December 7, 1885. As an Irish immigrant, he had used his background to aid Grover Cleveland's successful 1884 presidential campaign. A publicized trip to Ireland in the summer of 1883 and addresses to large audiences of Irish-Americans had channelled votes to the Democratic party.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Jones was regarded as a leader in the party.<sup>2</sup> The inauguration of a Democratic president, whose campaign he had materially assisted, vaulted Jones into a position to influence patronage in Florida.

Senator Jones was highly regarded in Florida for having obtained appropriations for the Pensacola naval base, additional postal routes, and public buildings, and because of his interest in land questions. He had endeared himself to his constituents by obtaining \$8,563.00 in a relief bill for the heirs of the ever-popular Richard Keith Call.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, as the first Democrat elected to the United States Senate after the Civil War, he was symbolic of the end of Republican rule in the state. In the Senate he had served as chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds and as a member of the committees on

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1. *New York Daily Times*, July 2, 1883; *London Times*, July 3, 1883.
2. "Charles William Jones," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 56 vols. (New York, 1898-1975), X, 383.
3. The United States government filed suit against Call in 1840 for the recovery of \$5,907.53 allegedly due from him as a receiver of public monies at Tallahassee. The jury ruled in favor of Call; the case was appealed and the decision reversed. At a new trial in 1847, the jury ruled Call was due the balance of \$8,563.37 for his services to the General Land Office. It can be inferred from the relief bill that Call never received the money. Herbert J. Doherty, Jr., *Richard Keith Call: Southern Unionist* (Gainesville, 1961), 121-22.

naval affairs and territories. He was also chairman of the Revolutionary claims committee.<sup>4</sup>

Both Charles Jones and Wilkinson Call, the junior senator, were present at Cleveland's inauguration on March 7, 1885. A week later Jones indicated strong interest in obtaining a seat on the commerce committee where he felt he could better promote Florida's interests.<sup>5</sup> His desire materialized a few days later.<sup>6</sup> Jones's past record and his plans for the future indicated only a continuation of service to the state. As a result, few Floridians became concerned when the newspapers first reported that the senator had not joined Congress when it met in December. Shortly, speculations about his mental health began to circulate and rumors of his unsuccessful pursuit of a wealthy spinster in Michigan provoked embarrassing headlines. By spring 1886 many doubted the senator had any intentions of returning to Washington before his term expired. It became apparent that very little would or even could be done to force him either to attend to his duties or to resign.

A Michigan newspaper described him as "A Love-Mad Man."<sup>7</sup> The Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union* asked, "Is Senator Jones Insane?" It often headlined stories about his activities, "Senator Jones's Wooing."<sup>8</sup> The *New York Times* defended him, assuring its readers that "Business and not Love Keeps him from Serving his Country."<sup>9</sup> As time passed and he did not appear in Washington, the stories grew more sensational and began to verge on the scandalous. In March 1886, the *Florida Times-Union* commented that Senator Jones was attracting more attention in his capacity as an unsuccessful lover than he ever did as a statesman.<sup>10</sup> Jones never really tried to defend himself against the charges. This left the task of separating truth from fiction to the public whose only sources of information were the comical and even sad stories issuing from Detroit, Michigan, where the senator seemed to be living.

4. *Congressional Record*, 46th Cong., 1st sess., 1879, vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 15; 49th Cong., 1st sess., 1885-1886, vol. 17, pt. 1, pp. 37, 309.

5. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, March 15, 1885.

6. *Congressional Record*, 49th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 17, pt. 1, p. 37.

7. *Grand Rapids Weekly Leader*, April 21, 1886, also cited in Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, April 29, 1886.

8. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, February 19, 21, March 7, April 20, 1886.

9. *New York Daily Times*, April 16, 1886.

10. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, March 9, 1886.



Senator Charles W. Jones. Courtesy of P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

Charles Jones had travelled a long and circuitous route from his birth in 1834 in Balbriggan, Ireland, to the halls of Congress. His father, a British army surgeon, died when Charles was still a child, and he was only ten when he emigrated to the United States with his mother. After attending schools in New York and St. Louis, he moved first to Louisiana in 1848 and then to Mississippi. In 1854, he had settled in Santa Rosa County, Florida. He worked as a carpenter, read law, and was admitted to the state bar in 1857. Relocating in Pensacola, he began to build a large

and lucrative practice.<sup>11</sup> During the Civil War, he was appointed tax assessor for Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.<sup>12</sup> He married Mary Ada Quigley of Mobile, Alabama, in 1861, and before her death in 1880 they had four children: Charles W., Jr., John B., Clarence, and Mary.<sup>13</sup> In later years Jones was described as a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a massive head and large, ungainly hands.<sup>14</sup>

Jones emerged into politics in 1872 as a Florida delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Baltimore.<sup>15</sup> He was defeated in the race for a seat in the Congress that year by Republican William J. Purman.<sup>16</sup> In 1874, he was elected from Escambia County to the Florida House of Representatives by the narrow margin of five votes.<sup>17</sup> In Tallahassee Jones cultivated a close relationship with the independent members of the legislature which later proved very important to his political career.

During the closing years of Reconstruction, Florida was closely divided between the Conservative-Democrats and the Republicans. Although Governor Marcellus Stearns was a Republican, the House and the Senate were so closely divided that four or five independents held the balance of power. When the legislature met jointly to elect a United States senator on January 26, 1875, it was obvious that the outcome was in the hands of a few legislators. Several candidates—Democrats Wilkinson Call, David, Walker, John A. Henderson, and Robert Bullock—battled to within a few votes of the necessary thirty-nine, but none were successful. On the fifteenth ballot, William Watson Hicks, a minister from Brooklyn and former missionary to India, who had recently been elected as a Democrat from Monroe County, switched his support from Samuel McLin, the Republican editor of the *Tallahassee Sentinel*, and nominated Jones.

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11. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1949* (Washington, D.C., 1950), 1384-85; "Charles William Jones," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, X, 383.
  12. M. Luther King, *History of Santa Rosa County: A King's Country* (Montgomery, Alabama, 1972), 53.
  13. Lucia Tryon, Pensacola Historical Society, and Virginia LeBeau, Pensacola, to author, May 12, 1971.
  14. *Grand Rapids Weekly Leader*, April 28, 1886.
  15. "Charles William Jones," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, X, 383; *Detroit Free Press*, September 10, 1885.
  16. Ben Perley Poore, comp., *The Political Registrar and Congressional Directory* (Boston, 1878), 473.
  17. *Tallahassee Weekly Floridian*, November 17, 1874.

On that ballot Jones received thirty-four votes. When the independents and a single Republican joined in, Jones was elected with forty votes on the twenty-fourth ballot.<sup>18</sup>

The newly-elected senator, symbolic of the resurgence of the Democratic party in Florida, was genuinely supported on all sides. The Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian* hailed his election as "light dawning," and endorsed him with "high satisfaction."<sup>19</sup> The *Jacksonville New South*, an independent Republican newspaper, remarked that since "fate" had decreed a Democratic senator, "the lot could not have fallen upon a more worthy member of the Democracy than C. W. Jones." His political opponents could "only regret his adhesion to the ranks of Democracy."<sup>20</sup>

Senator Jones reflected the views of the Conservative-Democrats who saw his election as the overthrowing of "carpetbag" rule in Florida. His maiden speech in Congress, delivered March 23, 1875, argued against the resolution calling for the continuing of the Republican policies in Louisiana.<sup>21</sup> Two years later, in January 1877, he opposed counting Florida's electoral votes for Republican presidential candidate Rutherford B. Hayes in the disputed election controversy.<sup>22</sup> A *New York Daily Times* article criticized him as a public speaker - "his delivery being slow and hesitating, and his manner cold and labored."<sup>23</sup> His committee work was good however, and the Florida legislature elected him to a second term in January 1881.<sup>24</sup>

There was no hint of behavioral or personality problems with Senator Jones before 1885. It was not until then that he began to behave strangely. Following the adjournment of the Congress in

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18. Governor Marcellus Stearns rewarded Hicks for bringing about the Democratic senatorial victory by appointing him State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Soon after Hicks began adamantly to oppose the Democratic Party. Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (Gainesville, 1974), 296; Jerrell H. Shofner, "Political Reconstruction in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLV (October 1966), 163; *Florida House Journal*, 1875, 138-240.

19. Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, February 16, 1875.

20. *Jacksonville New South*, February 10, 13, 1875; Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, February 16, 1875.

21. *Congressional Record*, 44th Cong., 1st sess., 1875-1876, vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 135-39.

22. *Ibid.*, 44th Cong., 1st sess., 1876-1877, vol. 5, pt. 2, pp.986-96.

23. *New York Daily Times*, March 24, 1875.

24. *Florida House Journal*, 1881, 96, 102.

the spring of 1885, after a hectic and tiring session, he decided that he would take a rest in Canada and Detroit. In September 1885, the *Detroit Free Press* reported an interview with him. When his vacation extended on into autumn, it attracted neither much attention nor comment. When Congress convened on December 7, Wilkinson Call explained that his colleague was absent because of illness.<sup>25</sup>

The *Florida Times-Union* correspondent in Washington reported in January that Jones was "still mysteriously absent." By that time gossip about his reason had begun to circulate in Washington and in Florida.<sup>26</sup> The *Baltimore Sun* reported that according to Washington speculators Jones was living in Detroit where he was pursuing the hand of a lady reputedly worth \$2,000,000, and that he would not be leaving until she "yields."<sup>27</sup> According to the *Jacksonville* paper, this amorous adventure was nothing new; two summers before he had followed a Boston beauty around the watering spots until he had been threatened with force to restrain his advances. "He is now off with the old love and on with the new, but with no better success, as it appears."<sup>28</sup> When a *Detroit Evening News* journalist inquired why he had not returned to Washington, "the Senator made an eloquent and convincing talk on the silver question, but as to his reasons for preferring Detroit to Washington he would not say."<sup>29</sup> The reporter noted, "It is to be regretted that the Senator from Florida who is so well equipped for the intelligent discussion of this great question, does not see fit to deliver these lucid observations from his place in the Senate of the United States instead of from the privacy of his room in the Russell House in Detroit."<sup>30</sup>

Several of his Republican Senate colleagues who were in Detroit in late February 1886 on political business called on Senator Jones to urge him to join them on their return to Washington. He refused, wondering why after ten year's devotion to his senatorial duties, he "should not now spend in relaxation

25. *Detroit Free Press*, September 10, 1885; *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union*, September 24, 1885; *Congressional Record*, 49th Cong., 1st sess., 1885-1886, vol. 17, pt. 1, p. 103.

26. *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union*, January 10, 1886.

27. *Baltimore Sun*, February 9, 1886.

28. *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union*, February 19, 1886.

29. *Detroit Evening News*, February 7, 1886.

and recreation without criticism." He named other senators who had remained away from their offices without incurring criticism. Three Republicans, John Logan of Illinois, Don Cameron of Pennsylvania, and W. Sharen of Nevada, were particularly guilty of these practices.<sup>31</sup>

North Carolina's Senator Zebulon Vance also visited Jones, suggesting his return but with no results. Jones "waived the subject," saying that he "didn't see why he should not have the privilege of a little rest if he choose [*sic*] to take it." The *Florida Times-Union* found this excuse "too thin," and demanded that he "either resign or go to a hospital for repairs." Rumors were circulating that Jones had become mentally unbalanced and that Vance had really gone to Detroit to take charge of him. Vance denied this though, stating that the senator appeared "rational enough" on "general topics."<sup>32</sup>

Governor Edward A. Perry of Florida, a long-time friend of Jones, was asked if he thought the senator was insane. Perry diplomatically replied that while he did not wish to believe so, neither did he like to believe that "in his right mind he would thus subject the State to inconvenience and probable loss and himself and friends to merciless ridicule and destroy his own political future." Perry urged that the "painful subject" be dropped.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, William G. Thompson, former mayor of Detroit and also reportedly a friend of Jones, said that people in Michigan thought the senator was mad.<sup>34</sup>

In April, the *Florida Times-Union* revealed details of Miss Clothilde Palms, "a plain looking woman of 35 years," with whom the senator was in love. She and Jones had met at a dinner in the home of Mayor Thompson, a relative by marriage. When Jones first arrived in Detroit in the fall of 1885, he had called on her daily. "At first he was pleasantly received," but when he kept on "calling at all sort of inopportune times, sent passionate notes and bo[u]quets until the violence of the courtship showed that he was not a fit person to be received . . . Mr. [Francis] Palms [her father] put a stop to it." The Jacksonville paper described the source of information as "a prominent Detroit gentleman." According to him, the senator was no longer

31. *New York Daily Times*, February 25, 1886.

32. *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union*, February 27, 28, 1886.

33. *Ibid.*, March 20, 1886.

34. *Baltimore Sun*, March 15, 1886.



troubling the Palms family; he was spending most of his time in the lobby and on the steps of his hotel.<sup>35</sup>

A Grand Rapids, Michigan, newspaper had a different story. It reported that the senator did not even know Miss Palms by sight; he had passed her twenty times upon the street without recognizing her. Yet, dressed "like a dandy," he would walk up and down in front of the Palms mansion, and would send the object of his affection flowers and *billets-doux*. The latter were quickly rejected. In his rooms, the paper claimed, the senator made "long, vigorous, and lusty" speeches in front of a large mirror, and people on the street outside could observe him. "His self vanity is boundless. He struts up and down before the glass in a pompous manner, making sweeping gestures and oratorical flourishes."<sup>36</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church found itself involved in the growing scandal. Jones, it was reported, had sought assistance when Miss Palms, also a Catholic, had refused him. Jones had quarrelled with two priests over the matter, but when he appealed to the Right Reverend Bishop Borgess, he was reprimanded in "one of the most scorching replies ever penned by mortal man."<sup>37</sup> One William H. Hughes wrote the *Grand Rapids Weekly Leader* in rebuttal and denied the Bishop's reprimand which the paper had printed under the headline, "Love-Mad Man." Nor, the writer continued, had the senator "denounced the whole Catholic Church as a vast conspiracy to prevent his marrying an heiress." According to Hughes, Jones was a "high-minded and courageous gentleman," and the abuse that he had been receiving was "unwarranted and scandalous."<sup>38</sup>

In March 1886, Jones's presence was needed to break a tie vote in the commerce committee on the question of public aid to the Eads Ship Railway Project. In an interview in Detroit he

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35. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, April 9, 1886. See also *ibid.*, March 2, 7, April 20, 24, 1886. Francis Palms made a fortune in land speculation in Michigan and Wisconsin during the 1830s and 1840s. At one time he ranked as one of the largest landholders in the United States. He had two heirs-his daughter Clothilde, and her half-brother Francis F. Palms. *Grand Rapids Weekly Leader*, April 28, 1886; Clarence M. Burton, *The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922*, 5 vols. (Detroit-Chicago, 1922), III, 24-29.

36. *Grand Rapids Weekly Leader*, April 29, 1886.

37. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1886; Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, March 7, 1886.

38. *Grand Rapids Weekly Leader*, April 28, 1886; Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, April 29, 1886.

stated that "were he now on duty," the committee would vote against the bill. He did not believe, he said, in taxing the people to aid private corporations.<sup>39</sup> When an education bill failed passage because Jones and twenty-eight other senators were absent, the *Detroit Evening News* commented, March 6, 1886, that those "who have made Senator Jones the subject of so many pointed remarks on absenteeism might find plenty of material elsewhere for comment, if they would look at the senate record. There is no justice in laying the sign of the whole 29 on one man's shoulders."

The Senate leadership, on April 12, 1886, ruled that Jones's place on the various committees was "temporarily" vacant, and began assigning others in his stead. His position on the commerce committee was vital to Floridians, since the committee had charge of all river and harbor legislation. When Jones learned what had happened, he wrote that he was "very much hurt at the action of the Senate in filling his place on the commerce committee with Senator [Randall] Gibson." He wanted to know whether his "removal" was not an action without precedent. He was informed that he had not been removed, and that upon his return to Congress he would be reinstated to his committee posts.<sup>40</sup>

Jones's Democratic colleagues were of the opinion that the threat of losing his committee posts would bring him to his senses. The *Florida Times-Union* viewed the situation as a "pretty conclusive indication of the view the Senators take of his willful and prolonged absence." The paper urged Governor Perry to declare Jones's seat vacant and to appoint someone to fill the vacancy.<sup>41</sup>

There was no established tradition for replacing a senator who had not been declared physically or mentally incompetent by medical authorities. The *Florida Times-Union* had called for a replacement as early as February 1886. It was important for the Democrats to have full representation, and since Jones had been elected the voters had the right to demand his presence in the Congress or at least an adequate explanation for his absence. "No man is so highly placed that he can afford to assume this

39. *Washington Evening Star*, March 17, 1886.

40. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, April 13, 14, 28, 1886. Senator Gibson was a Louisiana Democrat. The Republicans also tried to remove Jones's appointees within the Senate. *Ibid.*, April 22, 1886.

41. *Ibid.*, March 16, 1886.

lofty air of indifference to legitimate criticism of his conduct as a public man."<sup>42</sup> If Jones could not or would not fill the post and perform the duties, then the voters should be informed and the vacancy filled in a constitutional manner.<sup>43</sup>

The *Florida Times-Union*, continuing its criticism of Jones, pointed out a constitutional clause providing that "If vacancies happen by resignation or otherwise during the recess of a Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary appointment until the next meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such vacancies." The provision was ample enough to cover the situation involving Senator Jones, the *Times-Union* believed, and it proposed that the governor take immediate steps toward ascertaining Jones's intentions toward performing his duties.<sup>44</sup>

Governor Perry did not act on the *Florida Times-Union* suggestion. Instead the governor announced that he had written Jones a "warm, friendly letter urging him to repair to his post," but that he had received no reply. Perry contended that he could not legally declare a vacancy because he did not have any definite knowledge that the senator was incompetent nor had he resigned. "I know of no way in which the Governor of the State can interfere officially." He cited the example of Alabama's Senator G. T. Goldthwaite who had remained in office although "all he could do was to sit in his seat and count his fingers."<sup>45</sup> Goldthwaite had not resigned, nor could the Senate expel him, "anymore than it can expel Senator Jones." It was Florida's misfortune not to have full representation, but it would have to be endured. Perry argued that he could not interfere officially in a matter in which he lacked the power to enforce his decrees. To declare a vacancy "would be an assumption of power, and not the exercise of a prerogative of my office." The only thing to do, he felt, was to "wait with patience until the Senator himself, the Senate, or death makes a vacancy, or he returns to duty."<sup>46</sup>

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42. *Ibid.*, February 17, 1886.

43. *Ibid.*, February 20, 1886.

44. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1886.

45. Senator George Goldthwaite was elected to the Senate in 1870 "upon the crest of a premature 'White man's movement' in state politics." He retired at the end of his first term because of ill health. Albert B. Moore, "George Goldthwaite," *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20 vols. (New York, 1928-1937), VII, 368.

46. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, March 20, 1886.

The Washington *Evening Star* supported the *Times-Union* suggestion that the governor make a temporary appointment. If Jones was normal, this paper contended, "his deliberate refusal to perform the duties of his office is equivalent to a resignation, or at least to a vacation of his place. If he is insane-as the more charitable of his friends would have us believe-his malady is a disqualification fully warranting his supersession." It noted that senatorial courtesy would probably force Jones's colleagues to defend his seat. Thus, the only way to settle the matter would be to let the governor appoint a senator until the legislature next met. Then, if the Senate declined to seat the new appointee, it would be forced to resolve the problem of a state's losing its constitutional representation when one of its elected officials "plays the part of a frog."<sup>47</sup> The New York *Evening Post* wondered whether Governor Perry could really do anything "if vacancies happen, by resignation or otherwise." If it was impossible to force a senator to attend to his duties, a law "might and ought to be enacted" authorizing a state to fill a vacancy caused by prolonged and inexcusable neglect of duties.<sup>48</sup>

As it turned out, nothing was done to relieve Senator Jones of his post, and Florida remained without his services until his term expired in March 1887. The New York *Herald* had announced that the senator planned to vindicate his actions before the Florida legislature and to explain his lengthy stay in Detroit. The *Times-Union* did not believe the rumors that he again planned to run for the Senate; no one but the senator himself "could be induced to view his candidacy seriously."<sup>49</sup>

Governor Perry appointed General Jesse J. Finley of Civil War fame to fill the Senate seat during the interval between the expiration of Jones's term and the election of a new senator. The *Times-Union* stated: "Exit Senator Jones; enter Senator Finley. A good change for Florida." It was sad, the paper noted, that Senator Jones's career "should close thus amid the shadows of public disapprobation, . . . and yet, if we refuse to accept the theory of mental unsoundness, it must be admitted that few men have been more distinctly the architects of their own mis-

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47. Washington *Evening Star*, March 20, 1886.

48. New York *Evening Post*, March 25, 1886.

49. New York *Herald*, cited in Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, March 6, 1887.

fortunes." The kindest view to be taken was that the former-senator was "mentally irresponsible."<sup>50</sup>

With the expiration of his term, Jones's salary was terminated, and his standard of living quickly plummeted. In November 1887 it was reported that he had reached the limit of his credit and that he was in "absolute want." The proprietors of the Russell House in Detroit had evicted him two months before, and he had taken up residence at the cheaper Griswold House. He was turned out from that establishment also, together with his son, for not paying his bills. He was in debt to many restaurants which refused now to serve him. Detective Patrick O'Neil, a prominent worker in the Irish cause, took him in for a few days. A New York paper wrote: "For months he has done nothing but eat, smoke, and walk with little sleep. He is a vigorous eater and sits down to the table as many as six times a day. The ex-Senator is a wreck mentally."<sup>51</sup> Another announced that he was "practically a beggar upon the streets."<sup>52</sup> The *New York Times* wrote, in the spring of 1888, that he had become "seedy and would not be recognized by anyone who previously knew him." Unshaven and wearing last summer's threadbare clothes, he had become an object of charity.<sup>53</sup>

The story continued towards its tragic end. In November 1887, physicians attending Jones had informed his son, John B., that they would sign a certificate of insanity to the probate court. The family were still unable to convince Jones to return to Florida, and so the probate court in Detroit in May 1890, granted the son's petition to restrain his father.<sup>54</sup> A Michigan correspondent for the *New York Times* confirmed earlier reports that Jones had been living a vagabond life and that he had come to believe that there was a conspiracy against him to prevent his marrying a wealthy lady. At the probate hearing, "It was shown conclusively that he was a monomaniac." While the proceedings were underway, Jones walked in and handed the judge his petition in the form of an affidavit, "asserting that he was about to be adjudged insane and deprived of his liberty on false

50. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, March 1, 4, 1887.

51. *New York Tribune*, November 23, 1887.

52. *New York Daily Times*, November 24, 1887.

53. *Ibid.*, March 24, 1888.

54. *New York Daily Times*, November 24, 1887. John B. Jones served as city attorney for Pensacola for thirty-three years. He also held the position of state attorney from 1915 to 1919. Pensacola Historical Society to author, May 12, 1971.

testimony." Then he turned and walked out of the court. Shortly after the court's ruling, the sheriff took Jones into custody and transported him to a Roman Catholic retreat near Detroit.<sup>55</sup>

Jones remained at St. Joseph's Retreat in Dearborn until his death on October 11, 1897, at the age of sixty-three. His one daughter, Mary Ada, accompanied the body to Pensacola where it was interred in St. Michael's Cemetery. The *Tampa Morning Tribune* recalled that during the senator's stay in Detroit he had become "mentally unbalanced, necessitating his incarceration in the Dearborn retreat." The paper established the "prime cause of the senator's mental trouble" as his "unrestricted infatuation for a Detroit lady." The *Florida Times-Union and Citizen* mentioned Miss Palms, and felt that the senator had been "undoubtedly of unsound mind" at that time. The paper noted that "during the time of his sound mentality" Jones had been "considered one of the ablest men from the South in the United States Senate, and his energy and influence secured recognition for this State in many important matters."<sup>56</sup>

There is still a mystery about Senator Jones's sudden decline. There is no logical explanation for his strange behavior unless he was a victim of some physical or mental disorder. Jones himself never offered any reasons. The *New York Tribune* reported that he felt "his enemies were dogging him," but who his antagonists were was never made clear.<sup>57</sup> Jones, according to the *Times*, was "pursued with the idea that some enemies, whom he never names, are following him, and that he will yet 'down them.'"<sup>58</sup> Once, when asked why he had absented himself from Congress, Jones claimed that six of his juniors, "none of them my superiors in any respect," were promoted over him on the judiciary committee. He was in line for the chairmanship of the Committee on Naval Affairs, and he was passed over. Just as the Committee on Public Lands was to begin an investigation of railroad grants, "I was taken from my place on that committee next to the Chairman, which it took me 10 years to reach, and

55. *New York Daily Times*, May 20, 1890. In 1889 Miss Palms married Dr. James Burgess Book, a Detroit physician and surgeon. Burton, *City of Detroit*, IV, 321.

56. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, October 14, 1897; Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union and Citizen*, October 13, 1897. See also *Pensacola Daily News*, October 13, 14, 1897.

57. *New York Tribune*, November 23, 1887.

58. *New York Daily Times*, November 24, 1887.

placed as the heel on the Committee on Territories."<sup>59</sup> It would appear that Jones, while in Detroit, had begun to think that he was being discriminated against, even being threatened with political destruction. However, the Congressional records do not list Jones as a member of the judiciary committee during the sessions that he served.<sup>60</sup> Presumably, this belief that he had been passed over was a mental delusion.

His one communication with the United States Senate in April 1886 had been to inquire about the permanence and legality of his committee replacements after he had been absent from Washington some four months. Jones complained that he was being unjustly criticized for his "vacation" while other senators often absented themselves without comment. There was also the question of a possible physical problem that may not have been diagnosed. Years later one report stated that soon after the beginning of Cleveland's administration, Senator Jones's "health began to decline, the result of overwork."<sup>61</sup> A contemporary explained that Jones had found it "beneath his dignity" to seek out places and appointments within the government. So long as the Republicans were in power, there was little pressure from individuals seeking jobs and favors. Then with the election of a Democratic president, "the pressure from his constituents became so tremendous and urgent that he fled from Washington in disgust and is himself away beyond the reach of personal visits and letters."<sup>62</sup>

Although newspaper accounts of the meeting of Jones and Miss Palms appear factual enough, the reported daily deluge of flowers and *billets-deux* and her father's stern action seem to be embellishments. Especially is the latter, questionable since Francis Palms had suffered a paralytic stroke in 1875, a full ten years before Jones arrived in Detroit. Palms died in November 1886, following the height of the scandal.<sup>63</sup> Whatever the truth may have been in regard to Charles Jones's unsuccessful courtship, the headline and news stories effectively destroyed his political

59. *Ibid.*, March 24, 1888.

60. *Congressional Record*, 47th Cong., 1st sess., 1881-1882, vol. 13, pt. 1, pp. 31, 146; 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1883-1884, vol. 15, pt. 1, p. 49; 49th Cong., 1st sess., 1885-1886, vol. 17, pt. 1, pp. 37, 309.

61. "Charles William Jones," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, X, 383.

62. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, May 16, 1886.

63. Burton, *City of Detroit*, IV, 321.

career and his personal life. They also embarrassed and disappointed the people of Florida, the voters who had so confidently sent their first post-war Democrat to the United States Senate only a decade after the Civil War.