

# Sir Jasper's Adventure.

Sir Jasper Peters was the fortunate son of a man who had made a large fortune in trade, and who had then devoted himself to one of the great political parties with so much doggedness that he had been rewarded by a baronetcy without ever having had to expose the defects of his early education by making a long speech in the house.

Whatever his party did was right; that was his motto, and he had lived up to it with a simplicity which had brought its inevitable reward. The consequence was that his only son was able to give up any active share in the business, and to play at being a country gentleman of patriarchal descent, while his wife could assume the airs of a Lady Bountiful on the one hand, and, outside all the great ladies of the neighborhood by her diamonds, on the other.

Peterscourt, the country seat of the distinguished pair, was of course an old place where many generations of ancestors of somebody else had lived their little day. It was a large, rambling, two-storied building, dating from some time in the reign of the Tudors, and in the castellated style in the early years of Victoria's reign.

Beautifully situated in the southern part of the country of Dorsetshire, it was a little too far away from London to be quite the fashion of the day, but it was ambitious of playing a great part in society, and who would often run up to town for a few days at a time while her husband was enjoying his dignified seclusion within the well-wooded grounds and park of Peterscourt.

It was on one of these occasions, when the baronet was sitting in solitary state in his great library after dinner, his little electric lamp on the table behind him and a pile of literature suitable to a country gentleman by his side, that he was disturbed in his leisurely perusal of his paper by the sound of a footstep on the gravel outside.

He had scarcely raised his head, when, to his surprise and alarm, a man in the unmistakable dress of a convict, panting, breathless, with starting eyes and hanging jaw, leaped upon the window ledge from outside, and then fell, exhausted, upon the carpet.

"By Jove!" cried Sir Jasper as he sprang up and made for the bell. "But the man was too quick for him. Panting still, indeed, but recovering himself sufficiently to stagger to his feet and across the floor, the unwelcome visitor threw himself upon the terrified baronet, and, stooping at the same moment for the poker, which he was near enough to reach, he growled out between his set teeth a threat to "do for" that unhappy gentleman if he so much as uttered a call for help.

Sir Jasper hurried out a promise to refrain, which he did not mean to keep, and the man thereupon let him down again into the arm-chair from which he had risen, and suddenly altered his threatening tone for one of abject entreaty.

"Look here, guv'nor," said he, in a thick, hoarse whisper, moistening his mouth as he spoke, still standing near and holding the poker in his hand, but no longer menacing, "I'm not so bad as what you'd think for to look at the dress I've got on."

"You're a convict!" stammered Sir Jasper, half timorous and half surly. "You've escaped from Portland!" The man frowned uneasily. "Well, so's a many more than me been convicts, and a many as deserve it a precious sight was nor what I do," said the man. And as he anxiously glanced toward the window by which he had entered, "But this ain't no time for to throw my fallings in my face. I'm a 'unted man, that's what I am. The warders is after me."

and clear-cut features; and, even as Sir Jasper called him, he was smitten by a sense of the inequality of the contest between this stalwart well-fed, handsome pursuer and the under-sized, lean, grizzled rascal of whom he was in pursuit.

"You are looking for a convict who has escaped?" said the baronet. "Yes, Sir Jasper." "You know me, then?" "Why, yes, to be sure, we all know Sir Jasper Peters," said the warder with a smile. "Have you seen anything of the man, sir?"

"Yes, yes; he's in my house at this moment," answered Sir Jasper instinctively lowering his voice with a sort of fear of retribution at the hands of the hunted man if he were to learn he was betrayed.

"Where, sir, where?" "Even before the baronet had finished the sentence the warder had put his hand on the window sill and sprang into the room. Sir Jasper pulled up the door.

"He got away through there the moment he heard you coming." The warder looked at him in consternation as he crossed the room. "Then I'll be bound he's riding your strong room, sir," said he. "The man's one of the cleverest safe thieves in England, and he's got some sort of tools with him. He's managed to make a hole as you have got plenty of stuff to steal. I'll be sworn he's having a shot at it."

"W—w—what!" stammered the startled baronet. "How can he know?" "Already he was leading the warder out of the room and across the hall, in the direction of the strong room. "These chaps know 'most everything. Goodness only knows how. Else why should he come straight here? It's miles from the prison, your house is, and there's many a place he might have took in on his way, instead of making straight for here! It was my guess to come this way, the only one of the lot to believe he'd get so far."

The baronet was hunting for his keys. They were standing together at the door which led into the basement, and as Sir Jasper turned the handle he said,—"We'd better have the butler with us, had we not?" The warder smiled and raised his carbine.

"I think this will be protection enough for us both, Sir Jasper; and I wouldn't call the man if I was you. You're never quite sure, with men servants, whether they'll be a help or a hindrance."

So the two descended together into the basement, looking and listening, but without coming upon any trace of the escaped convict until they reached the strong room door. Sir Jasper turned up the electric light in the opposite wall, and heaved a sigh of relief as he saw that there was no sign of any attempt having been made to tamper with the lock. The warder, however, was stooping to listen at the tiny keyhole and making a sign to the baronet to keep quiet. Then he nodded and came toward him.

"Will you listen at that door, sir, and tell me if you hear anything?" he asked. Trembling, and sick with alarm, Sir Jasper took his place at the keyhole.

"I fancy I hear a kind of scratching," whispered he at last. The warder nodded. "That's it, sir. That's our man at work!" Sir Jasper stood up. "But how did he get in?" said he, with white lips. The warder shook his head. The baronet took his little key from his watch chain and proceeded to fit it in the lock.

"Now, sir, up with you and help me with him," cried the warder, while the convict muttered curses on them both and vainly struggled to get free.

It was some seconds even then before the warder was able to clap the handcuffs on the desperate prisoner, at the cost of much pain to himself from his wounded arm. But with the baronet's assistance he at last overpowered the wily rascal and dragged him upstairs, where with the help of the men servants, who now, hearing the noise of the scuffle, joined their aid to the master's, the convict, still defiant and sullen, was led out of the house and hoisted up into a light cart which happened to be within hail.

"To Portland," cried the warder, as barely remaining long enough to receive the congratulations of the baronet, he sprang up into the cart and laid a powerful detaining hand on the rascal's shoulder.

The Sir Jasper, who was somewhat dazzled as a result of these unwelcome exertions and excitements, turned back to the mansion with a sigh of relief and a distinct consciousness that he was considerably bruised.

He could not, however, wait to attend to his wounds or even to ascertain the extent of them, as he suddenly remembered that he had left the door of the strong room open, and that even the safe where his jewels were kept was still unlocked.

As the lights were burning both inside and outside the strong room, however, it was a matter of a few seconds only to retrace his steps and to regain the velvet nest where the gems lay.

What was his amazement, his horror, to find, on looking into the case which he had previously opened that the chief treasure of the collection, his wife's tiara of hung emeralds mounted in brilliants was gone!

The unfortunate baronet stood for a moment petrified by his discovery. He could not remember at what point of the hurried proceedings of the last half-hour it was that he gave up the opportunity of seizing the jewels; yet that he had made good use of some momentary chance was only too plain.

A trembling examination of the other cases showed that the rest of the collection was safe. Scarcely able to walk, the baronet made all safe and tottered upstairs.

"Order the phaeton around at once," said he to the first servant he met, and then, as he paced up and down the hall, he debated the chances of his ever recovering the property.

He knew well enough that if the rascal were to take the jewels back to Portland with him the search he would undergo would discover the stolen property; but his fears were that the man had some means of getting rid of them on the way. If they were to be flung into a ditch or into the sea, what was his chance of ever seeing them again?

## NATION GOBBLES NATION ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT MIGHT IS RIGHT.

Little Peoples Eaten Up by Great Countries During the Last Fifty Years.

FRANCE'S BIG MEAL. Algeria was the first to fall, after a long and bitter war, characterized on the part of the invaders by a savage ferocity, accompanied by such and so many acts of gross treachery, as have rarely been equalled, at least within the last century.

Tunis, with 51,000 square miles of territory, was gobbled up in 1882, and Madagascar so late as 1895, the conquest of this latter island adding 228,500 square miles to the colonial possessions of the Republic. It also extinguished in fire and blood one of the most unique negro civilizations of which we have any knowledge.

ATTACK OF INDIGESTION. The conquest of Annam, again, in the spring of 1884, and Tonkin in the latter part of the same year, gave France 5,000,000 new and unwilling subjects, and 115,000 square miles of territory. In putting on all this flesh, however, the country gave itself dyspepsia pretty badly, and ministries went and came and went again, with something of the dazzling persistence of a quick-change artiste in a modern music hall sketch.

The eating up of Dahomey was perhaps France's least palatable morsel. It was a despotism that richly deserved to be strangled, it was that established by the truculent gang of ruffians who claimed to rule over that unhappy land prior to the French conquest. The last native monarch, for instance, King Behanzin, whom the French defeated and dethroned, thought nothing of sacrificing a few dozen slaves before breakfast; while his meagre household consisted of a surplus of undesirable wives was to place them, bound and smeared all over with honey, in the track of an advancing column of the serui, or warrior ants, by whom the unhappy survivors were devoured in due season.

TIE GREEDY RUSSIAN BEAR. Twenty-five or thirty years ago it used to be the custom of the Tsar to gobble up a Central Asian Khanate every few months. Most of these were, it is true, petty states and ill-governed; but some few of them were deserving of a better fate. Khiva, for instance, with its 700,000 starry peasants, and Bokhara with a population of nearly one hundred thousand square miles, both made a brave and protracted, though fruitless stand, against overwhelming odds.

One cannot help feeling a thrill of admiration, too, for the brave Tekke Turcomans, who in 1881, so gallantly defended themselves against the redoubtable General Sikandari, only to give in at last when their fortress, capital, Geok Tepe, was stormed and taken by the conqueror of Plevna.

But it was with the fate of the ancient kingdom of Poland that the Russian bear gobbled here reservedly, and finally conquered until many years afterwards, that the rest of Europe, and Britain especially, was chiefly concerned. Nearly all the great Powers, with the single exception of Austria, protested, coaxed, and threatened by turns; yet the Bear was, after all, permitted to finish his meal. But it was not a meal enjoyed in peace, at all events.

TENS OF THOUSANDS of the Tsar's soldiers were killed, millions on millions of roubles were expended, yet even so the Russian empire was not to be satisfied. The Provisional Government of the Polish Nation, after stating that 50,000 patriots had been slain, and 100,000 exiled to Siberia, still calling on the Poles to continue the struggle.

Islands, of course, are constantly being gobbled by the big powers; but they hardly count, unless they are, like Madagascar or New Guinea, of extra large size. Still the seizure of Hawaii, the Philippines, and Porto Rico by the United States, marks an era in the onward march of that lusty young much delighted Germany, which very much delighted with her share of Samoa, and still more at her acquisition of the beautiful and fertile Caroline Islands.

Indeed, there seems to be a peculiar satisfaction attached to the swallowing of little dependent islands; else why did John Bull go into such states as Fiji, Zanzibar, and other similar earth morsels.

BRITAIN'S BIG MOUTHFULS. Burma is the biggest of Britain's modern acquisitions, so far as mere mileage is concerned, leaving out of consideration, of course, her South African colonies, and Egypt and the Sudan Provinces, both of which latter are under our protection only within the British Empire of Burma dates from 1885, when the half-made and wholly wicked King Thebaw saw fit to wantonly massacre a number of peace-loving British traders, and to refuse to receive our Envoy. The result was, of course, war, which ended, so far as the British were concerned, in the capture of his capital, Mandalay, and his own deposition.

Ashanti, another independent state ruled by yet another bloodthirsty potentate, King Prempeh, was absorbed early in 1896, giving us 45,000 square miles more territory. Eighteen months previously Uganda had been gobbled—a country just about twice as big as Ashanti and fully twice as populous, and to it we have since added four other native "kingdoms," known as Usoga, Unyoro, Ankoli, and Koki. To attain our ends in these remote regions entailed almost perpetual fighting for some years, the brunt of which, however, was borne by black troops led by British officers.

## BOTHA TELLS OF COLENSO

WATCHED BRITISH FROM TUGELA HEIGHTS. British Bravery Astounding — "Men of Pluck and No Mistake."

The following interesting interview was granted by General Louis Botha to a special correspondent of the London Daily Mail, who accompanied him to England on board the Saxon.

"Four or five days before the battle of Colenso," he said, "I saw the Tugela heights that the British were massing in great numbers at Chieveley and neighborhood, and became convinced that a heavy engagement was imminent. According to my notion, there would be three points of conflict: the Imperial Light Horse and the British regulars came along with their rifles slung over their shoulders, in careless order, to within sixty yards of my men and guns—the hill of Hlangwani—before we opened fire. Then, as you may imagine, the slaughter was terrific and the discomfiture complete. That was the British right wing.

"The second point of attack was at the Bridge Drift, made by the British left wing, and distant about six miles up the river from Hlangwani. There one of the British generals—I don't know who—marched with a large force. Opposing them were the Zoutpansberg and Swaziland commandoes. My men allowed them to come within 200 yards, and then opened fire. The British did their best to get through, and I must say that I never saw anything more magnificent than their charges at this point, which was the main objective and easiest of attack. But all to no purpose. They were driven back after time, and though one or two stragglers got through the river, they were quickly taken prisoners. The main body was repulsed. No fewer than five times they charged, and I never want to see finer bravery than I saw there.

"The third point of attack was at the centre, near the railway line, in an attempt to get through the wagon road and over the wagon bridge. The British first of all moved their guns to the right of the railway line looking north, and fired on our near positions for some time. Getting no response—for I had issued strict orders on this point—they limbered up and came nearer, 700 yards from the railway bridge. The Krugersdorpers and Vryheidiers who were stationed here reservedly fired until the enemy were quite close; but when it did open the effect was terrific.

MEERLESS FUSILLADE. "Meanwhile the main body of British infantry was proceeding on the left side of the railway line towards the river. There I had stationed some men on a kopje under Oosthuizen and Kemp, of Krugersdorp. The infantry at this point were subjected to the most merciless fusillade, and when the plight of the guns was seen they made desperate attempts to get across the line to their succor. Five times they tried, but it was beyond human possibility to go through the hail of lead. As soon as one lot was shot down, another rushed forward, but all to no avail. I do not believe, as I have seen stated, that the infantry were urged to charge forward, but I did see the officers riding up and down, towards the end, in the futile endeavor to make them charge again. But it was more than human flesh and blood could bear, and eventually they desisted. Meanwhile the guns of the Armstrong batteries had been shot down, and I sent Lieutenant Pohlmann with the Johannesburg police to reinforce the Krugersdorpers, so as to stop any attempt to retake the guns. In this they were successful. The battle raged from daybreak until four in the afternoon, when the British retired and left us the field.

"How did I know that the struggle was long pending, would take place that day? Easily enough. A scout came in at one o'clock in the morning with the news that the whole British camp was alight, and I knew then that the attack would be made that morning.

"When day broke and it was clear enough to see, there they were deploying into the three different lines of attack in three divisions, their front extending over six miles. I calculated that their main division numbered 8,000 men. Their bravery was astounding. Sometimes they advanced at a walk, in regular order, and when they were moved down those that were left simply dropped in the grass and waited till the next lot came up. They were men of pluck and no mistake!"

TOWARDS TUGELA. "After Colenso, the British kept quiet for some time. Then they commenced shifting portions of their camp up towards the Little Tugela. Eventually they made a big

movement from Frere Camp—first to Pont's Drift and afterwards to Tichard's Drift. They relinquished whatever intention they might have had of crossing at Pont's Drift on the discovery that we were strongly entrenched there.

"The British then moved further westward to Trichard's Drift, where they erected a pontoon. There they crossed the river and went on, in a northwesterly direction, to force Holmes's farm, where they struck the main road which runs into Ladysmith over the open veldt from the direction of Oliver's Hoek.

"That night I was preparing to leave the colenso front for Pretoria on a few days' holiday; but before setting out I received the President's instructions to go at once west towards the Upper Tugela, and there take charge of the forces.

"This was at seven o'clock in the evening, and after having immediately despatched the necessary reinforcements I rode over, arriving at General Burger's camp between two and three in the morning. Along with General Burger, General Cronje of the Free State, and some of the commandants, I drove over and reviewed the menaced Boer positions.

"We discovered that from the positions the British had taken up, adjacent to the main road, there was nothing to do but to prepare for immediate battle.

"So the next day we worked carefully into the British positions, and the fighting waged fast and furious for three days and nights on the plateau to the right of Spion Kop. I took up different points, though never for long, but kept moving my men about, strengthening here and reducing there. All the time the British were trying to force us away through, and it was warm work, I can tell you.

"On the evening of the fifth day the enemy suddenly retired in the direction of Trichard's Drift; but instead of recrossing the river, they occupied Spion Kop, which is on the north side.

"I and General Burger then agreed that an attempt should be made to retake the kop, which was of considerable strategic value, in the morning—the attack to be made from two sides, one by myself and the other by General Burger.

"We selected our men during the night from different points, took up our positions, and in the morning commenced the perilous, arduous ascent. We had only 850 men engaged, the others being in different positions, to support, if need should be. Commandant Prinsloo, with the Caroleans burghers, went in front, and they bore the brunt of the attack. They were the first to gain the summit, and they lost pretty well all their men in doing so, killed and wounded. The Caroleans were supported by drafts from various other district commandoes, and it was by their united bravery, second to the help from God himself, that the victory of Spion Kop was gained. They succeeded in gaining their objective, and drove out the enemy, though greatly outnumbered, and after seizing the position held it all through the battle. It would be impossible to speak too highly of the splendid dash and courage of these men.

"To give you some idea of the sanguinary nature of the affair, when the mist that hung over the mountain during the ascent lifted, the burghers found themselves close on the enemy's trenches, and many of them seized the soldier's rifles, as they were preparing to fire, on the alarm being sounded. So close were the combatants that the smoke of their rifles intermingled, and for some time there was confusion.

"Eventually, however, we gained the day, and as night descended we had taken some 200 prisoners. The balance of the British force of 3,000—those who were not killed—got away with their wounded during the night."

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