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**Sergeant William Jasper.**

By Charles C. Jones, Jr.

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# SERGEANT WILLIAM JASPER.

AN

## ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

IN

**Savannah, Georgia,**

ON

THE 3RD OF JANUARY, 1876.

BY

*Charles C. Jones, Jr.*  
CHARLES C. JONES, JR.

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"IN ACTION FAITHFUL, AND IN HONOUR CLEAR!  
WHO BROKE NO PROMISE, SERVED NO PRIVATE END,  
WHO GAIN'D NO TITLE AND WHO LOST NO FRIEND."  
*Pope.*

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GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY,  
*Savannah*, January 25th, 1876.

Col. C. C. JONES, JR.

*Dear Sir,*

I have the honor to inform you that at the last monthly meeting of this Society, a resolution was adopted conveying to you the thanks of the Society for your able, eloquent, and instructive account of the life and services of Sergeant Jasper, and requesting you to furnish the Society with a copy of the same for publication, and preservation among its archives.

Yours very respectfully,

W. GRAYSON MANN,  
*Corresponding Secretary.*

## SERGEANT WILLIAM JASPER.

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When the momentous question of a separation on the part of the American Colonies from the dominion of the Mother Country was seriously agitated, there arose in many communities a difference of sentiment most marked and violent. Between those who preferred to perpetuate their allegiance to the British Crown, and such as declared for the independence of the Confederation, occurred open rupture and decided hostility the cruel effects of which — experienced during the progress of the Revolution — were projected even beyond the final establishment of the Republic. No cause of quarrel can be more dangerous than that involving a conflict of opinion touching the relative rights of the governing and the governed: no calamities are so numerous as those engendered in a strife between peoples of kindred race, occupying the same territory, and enjoying privileges of citizenship emanating from the same fountain head. Such dissensions, in the language of Polybius, are to be dreaded much more than wars waged in a foreign country or against a common enemy.

Between the “Sons of Liberty” and the adherents of George III, no compromise could be either offered or accepted; and the line of demarkation was so sharply drawn that father was not infrequently arrayed against

son, and brother against brother. Perhaps in no part of the country was this conflict of allegiance more pronounced than in some of the Districts of South Carolina. During the progress of the Revolution it found expression in acts of violence which even now affright us by the severity and unrelenting hate which characterized them.

In the organization of the Second Regiment, South Carolina Foot, William Moultrie was selected as its Colonel, and Francis Marion as Captain of one of its companies. Commissions, made out in pursuance of the resolutions of the Provincial Congress, were signed by the Members of the Council of Safety then present. Marion's bore date on the 21st of June, 1775. Proceeding with all dispatch to enlist men for his company, Captain Marion, with his friend and compatriot Captain Horry intent upon a like mission, repaired to the neighborhoods of Georgetown, Black River and the Great Pedee. Here they were both well known, and in these localities the spirit of determined opposition to English rule was dominant. Among the earliest recruits of the youthful Captain,— afterwards so well known as the "Swamp Fox," always present when least expected and, although often pursued, never caught,— was WILLIAM JASPER, unknown to fame, of humble origin and slender means, without the advantages of education,<sup>1</sup> yet full of energy and daring, imbued with an earnest and

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<sup>1</sup> It has been alleged that Jasper could neither read nor write; but Bowen, in his *Life of Lincoln*, [p. 316] mentions a letter from him, "ill-written and worse spelt," dated at Purysburg, July 23d, 1779, in which he informs General Lincoln that in company with three of the Georgia Continentals he had gone up the river, two days before, hoping to surprise a picket guard. It turned out, however, to be only a patrolling party from which he had made four prisoners and brought off some negroes, all of whom he had sent to Charleston.



lofty patriotism, and destined to afford brilliant illustration of his supreme devotion to the cause of freedom. Of his antecedents and personal appearance we are not definitely informed, but General Moultrie tells us "he was a brave, active, stout, strong, enterprising man, and a very great partisan."<sup>1</sup> Evidently from the common walks of life, patient of labor, enured to hardships, accustomed to the woods, skilled in the use of weapons, self-reliant, quick of eye and bold of heart, he was just the stuff of which the hardiest and best soldiers are made. Appreciating his character and anticipating the value of his services, Marion at once advanced him to the grade of a Sergeant, and, with his assistance, in a short time succeeded in enlisting recruits for his company, to the number of fifty: that being the complement required by the regulations.

Three months had elapsed since the Provisional Congress ordered a levy of troops and resolved upon military measures looking to an expulsion of the King's forces from the Colony. As yet, however, no overt act of hostility had transpired. The Royal Governor still occupied his head quarters in Charleston, to a certain extent discharging the functions of his office and exacting the obedience due to his position. Armed vessels lay abreast of Sullivan's island and controlled the avenues of approach to the City. Fort Johnson on James' island was garrisoned by British regulars, and although both sides confidently anticipated an early precipitation of hostilities there existed a mutual reluctance to inaugurate the conflict.

Indecision and delay are most dangerous in launching revolutions. The resolution once formed must quickly

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<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, vol. II, p. 24, note. New York, 1802.

find expression in open act, else the enthusiasm inspired by the new movement will languish and speedily expire. Appreciating this fact, and wishing to commit the Colony, beyond retraction, to the policy of resistance, the Leaders of the Patriots resolved upon the immediate reduction of Fort Johnson. A strong detachment under Colonel Moultrie was detailed for the expedition. Marion's Company formed a part of this command. Anticipating a stout resistance, the troops, at midnight on the 14th of September, 1775, commenced crossing over to James' island. In consequence of the scarcity of boats and the small size of such as could be secured, the landing was not completed until broad daylight the next morning. Intermediately, the enemy, advised of the movement, had dismantled the fort, dismounted its cannon, and withdrawn the garrison in safety to the ships in the harbor; so that when the assault was made the Provincials were surprised by an easy capture. The same day Lord William Campbell, the Royal Governor, quitting Charleston, took refuge on board the sloop-of-war Tamar, whence he time and again threatened the rebellious Colonists with the vengeance of his Kingly Master.

At Fort Johnson Sergeant Jasper saw his earliest active service, and for the first time confronted the Loyalists who, from their war vessels, daily menaced a repossession of that work. Two months were occupied in remounting the guns and strengthening the defenses. Charleston was now in the hands of the Provincials, and Hog-island channel had been practically closed by sinking hulks in that narrow strait.

With a view to expelling the British vessels from the roadstead where they remained exceedingly troublesome,

seizing all craft within their reach, whether entering or departing from the port, Colonel Moultrie, with some Provincials and the Charleston Artillery, occupied Haddrell's Point where, by a well directed fire, he succeeded in driving them out to sea. The fortification of the harbor was further prosecuted by the completion of an entrenched camp at Haddrell's Point, by the erection of a new fort on James' island, and by the commencement of a heavier work on Sullivan's island which should command the water-approaches to the City from that direction.

Near the head of navigation on the Ashley river, about twenty miles above Charleston, and at the ancient and now deserted town of Dorchester, a military post was established for the preservation of the public records and the accumulation of stores. To Marion was the command entrusted, and thither was his force transferred from Fort Johnson. This quiet duty was pleasing however, neither to him nor his men, and at his own solicitation he was soon ordered to Charleston where he could take an active part in the development of the defenses which were being pressed forward as rapidly and as efficiently as the means at hand would permit. Dispatched thence to Fort Johnson, he remained in charge of that work until the spring of 1776 when he was directed to repair to Fort Sullivan within point blank shot of Maffitt's channel. He was now the Major of the Second regiment, and Colonel Moultrie being in general command at Haddrell's Point and on Sullivan's island, the conduct of that regiment devolved mainly upon Marion. When occupied by the Second South Carolina, this fort existed

little more than in outline, and its early completion was recognized as a matter of prime importance. During these changes of location Sergeant Jasper was continuously with his company, faithfully discharging all duties devolved upon him and confirming himself in the confidence and esteem of officers and men.

Seldom does it happen that a subaltern lifts himself above the memories which belong to the general file of an army. Rarely are the acts of non-commissioned officers and privates so signal as to attract the gaze of the entire command, evoke the personal commendation of the Chief Captain, and furnish episodes which History cherishes among memorable events. The names of Miltiades and the war-ruler Callimachus have been handed down through the dim centuries, and their deeds are mentioned among the proudest expressions of human courage and valor; but who can now from out the Athenian and Platæan ranks nominate a single one of those brave subalterns who, in full view of the fountain of Macaria and upon the plain already rendered illustrious by the exploits of Theseus, with their strong swords dissipated the spell of Persian invincibility, preserved the intellectual treasures of Athens and perpetuated the independence of Greece? That almost obliterated earth mound marking the spot where the noblest heroes of antiquity, the *Μαραθωνόμαχοι*, repose, bears upon its bosom neither statue nor inscription.

Does tradition bequeath the name of a single private soldier of the Macedonian Phalanx? And yet it was by the indomitable valor, perfect discipline, and heroic endurance of the veterans who composed it that the fiery Conqueror established his universal empire.

Know you those Narnian Horsemen upon panting steeds, themselves worn by the dangers and struggles of the battle, who first announced in the camp of observation in Umbria, "We have destroyed Hasdrubal and his army: our Legions are safe; our Consuls unhurt?" To Livius and Nero, the heroes of the Metaurus, public triumphs were decreed by the Roman Senate, but where is the muster-roll of the brave soldiers who followed them to victory?

Armenius has been well-nigh deified, but who has erected monuments to the lion-hearted Germans who beat to pieces those trained Legions under Varrus?

Harold we know, but who was that Saxon wrestler with his heavy hatchet doing great mischief to the Normans in the battle of Hastings and well-nigh striking off the head of Duke William himself? Men of Kent and Essex, who plied so valiantly the ghastly blow in defense of country and your patriot king, have your names been forgotten by the Muse of History?

Enshrined in the heart of the world is the wonderful memory of the virgin martyr of France, but nameless forevermore are the inspired soldiers who constituted her martial train: unknown the grave of that Biscayan who so fearlessly bore her snow-white banner on that famous day when she raised the siege of Orleans.

In the very nature of things it must thus occur that

"A thousand glorious actions that might claim  
Triumphant laurels and immortal fame,  
Confused in clouds of glorious actions lie,  
And troops of heroes undistinguished die."

Nevertheless, noted exceptions do sometimes occur, and one of these belongs to our annals.

On the first of June, 1776, Sir Peter Parker, with a fleet of more than fifty sail anchored a few miles to the northward of Charleston bar. The King was resolved to repossess himself of the Colony of South Carolina which had always been reckoned among his most pleasant plantations, and hence this formidable demonstration. President Rutledge and General Armstrong repaired in person to the harbor fortifications, calling everything into requisition, judiciously disposing men and materials of war for the protection of the city and its approaches, and urging every possible preparation to resist the threatened invasion. A general alarm was sounded. The militia from the interior was ordered to the coast, and aid invoked from sister colonies. So prompt and generous was the response, that by the 11th of June forces aggregating six thousand five hundred and twenty-two men of all arms had been concentrated for the defense of Charleston. On the caps of the officers and privates of the first South Carolina regiment appeared crescents with the words *ultima ratio* engraven thereon, while the word *Liberty* shone resplendent on the helmets of the men of the second.

The stores and ware-houses on the wharves were levelled so as to uncover a defensive line along East Bay armed with musketry and cannon. The streets were strongly traversed. Leaden weights from the windows were freely given up to be run into musket balls. Masters and servants heartily united in the construction of fortifications, and all cannon which could be secured were mounted at convenient points whence their converging fire might most surely impede the advance of the enemy. At this trying moment the patriotism of the Carolinians was conspicuous.

Major General Charles Lee, recently assigned to the command of this department and newly arrived, accompanied by Brigadier General Howe and some other officers, shortly after the 4th of June made a careful inspection of the defenses at Haddrell's Point and on Sullivan's island. At this time Fort Sullivan was finished only in front and on one side. Its rear was open, and the troops assigned to its occupancy were encamped behind the work "in huts and booths covered with palmetto leaves." The force on the island consisted of some twelve hundred men. Ten thousand pounds of powder had been there accumulated for the service of small arms and the heavy guns. So impressed was General Lee with the insecurity of the position that he openly declared Fort Sullivan "could not hold out half an hour." Its platform he pronounced "but a slaughtering stage." He even suggested to President Rutledge the advisability of evacuating both the fort and the island. This proposition, however, was indignantly rejected by that distinguished South Carolinian. Unwilling to assume the responsibility of ordering an abandonment, General Lee contented himself with diminishing the forces and withdrawing a considerable amount of the ammunition. Haddrell's Point was strongly reinforced by Continental and Colonial troops under General Armstrong, and a bridge was thrown from that post, across the cove, to Sullivan's island. A heavy traverse was ordered for the protection of the rear of Fort Sullivan. Evidently anticipating, in the event of an attack, the speedy reduction of that work, General Lee directed his attention mainly to securing avenues of retreat for the forces disposed on that side of the harbor. His communications were all of a depressing character; and, upon the mind of a weak-

kneed lieutenant would doubtless have exerted a pernicious influence. Not so however, with Colonel Moultrie, who, in his Memoirs, writes as follows: "Gen. Lee one day on a visit to the fort took me aside and said, 'Col. Moultrie, do you think you can maintain this post?' I answered him 'yes, I think I can!' That was all that passed on the subject between us. Another time, Capt. Lamperer, a brave and experienced seaman, who had been master of a man of war, and captain of a very respectable privateer many years ago, visited me at the fort after the British ships came over the bar. While we were walking on the platform looking at the fleet, he said to me, 'well Colonel, what do you think of it now.' I replied 'that we should beat them.' 'Sir,' said he, 'when those ships (pointing to the men of war) come to lay alongside your fort, they will knock it down in half an hour,' (and that was the opinion of all the sailors). 'Then,' I said, 'we will lay behind the ruins and prevent their men from landing.'" <sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding these discouraging apprehensions and the dangers attendant upon his advanced position, Colonel Moultrie preserved the "easy temper habitual to him," inspiring his men with confidence and infusing into their breasts a strong impression of final victory. The traverse for the protection of the rear of the fort had been finished, but the work was in an incomplete condition when the British men of war opened their broadsides upon it. Dr. Drayton <sup>2</sup> furnishes the following description of the fort at the time of its memorable bombardment. "The fort was

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<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the American Revolution, etc.*, vol. I, pp. 143, 144. New York, 1802.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of the American Revolution, etc.*, vol. II, p. 290. Charleston, 1821.



a square, with a bastion at each angle, sufficiently large to contain, when finished, one thousand men. It was built of palmetto logs laid one upon the other, in two parallel rows, at sixteen feet distance, bound together, at intervals, with timber dove-tailed and bolted into the logs. The spaces between the two lines of logs were filled up with sand: and the merlons were walled entirely by palmetto logs, notched into one another at the angles, well bolted together, and strengthened with pieces of timber. They were sixteen feet thick, filled in with sand, and ten feet high above the platforms: and the platforms were supported by brick pillars. The fort was only finished on the front or south-eastern curtain and bastions, and on the south-west curtain and bastion; the north-eastern curtain and the north-western curtain and bastions were unfinished; being logged up only about seven feet high. Necessity, however, devised an expedient for making the unfinished parts tenable against an escalade by placing thick, long planks upright against the unfinished outside wall, but inclined and projecting over it, which raised the height ten or fifteen feet more, and through which loopholes were cut for the use of rifles or musketry. The platform therefore, as finished, only extended along the south-eastern front of the fort, and its south-western side. Upon these platforms the cannon were mounted. On the south-east bastion the flag-staff was fixed, bearing a blue flag with a white crescent on which was emblazoned the word LIBERTY: and three 18 and two 9-pounders were mounted there. On the south-east curtain six 26 French pounders, and three 18 English pounders were placed; and on the western bastion connected with it, three 26 French pounders and two 9-pounders were stationed. On

the south-west curtain six cannon were mounted, 12 and 9-pounders. Connected with the front angle of each rear-bastion of the fort, lines of defense, called cavaliers, were thrown up for a small distance on the right and left of the fort; and three 12-pounders were mounted in each of them. So that the whole number of cannon mounted in the fort and cavaliers on each side, was thirty-one; of which only twenty-five, at any possible time, could bear upon the enemy stationed in front of the fort; and even then four 9-pounders on the two inner sides of the front bastions could be scarcely used. Narrow platforms or banquettes were placed along the walls, where the plank was raised against them, for the men to stand upon and fire through the loop-holes. Such was the situation of Fort Sullivan on the 27th day of June; and its garrison consisted of the Second South Carolina regiment of infantry, amounting to 413 of all ranks, and a detachment of the Fourth South Carolina regiment of artillery of 22, amounting together to 435: the whole being under the command of Colonel William Moultrie of the above second regiment."

Between the 4th and 8th of June, thirty-six of the enemy's vessels crossed the bar and anchored in Five-Fathom-Hole. Simultaneously Major General Clinton effected a landing on Long island with some three thousand infantry, and under a flag of truce sent a characteristic proclamation — dated June 6th, on board the "Sovereign Transport" — in which he exhorted an immediate return to duty, and offered in his Majesty's name free pardon to all who would lay down their arms and submit to the laws. This proclamation was addressed to "the Magistrates of the Province of South Carolina, to be

by them made public." It is scarcely necessary to state that this august document failed to produce the slightest impression upon the minds, or in any wise to modify the action of the Patriots.

On the morning of the 28th of June, the British squadron bore down upon Fort Sullivan. Between ten and eleven o'clock the engagement was opened by the Thunder-bomb ship, covered by the Friendship of twenty-six guns. Soon afterwards, the Active of twenty-eight guns, the Bristol and the Experiment of fifty guns each, and the Solebay of twenty-eight guns, came into position and participated in the bombardment. The Syren and the Acteon, each carrying a battery of twenty-eight guns, and the Sphinx of twenty guns, forming a line parallel with and in rear of the first, and opposite the intervals, united in the heavy cannonade against the low-lying Palmetto fort from which issued a deliberate, sure, and destructive return fire.

After a bombardment of more than an hour failing to silence the fort, the British commander ordered the Acteon, the Sphinx, and the Syren to pass the work and occupy a position in Rebellion Road towards the cove of Sullivan's island whence the front platforms of the south-east curtain and its two bastions, the fire from which had been particularly damaging to the attacking ships, could be enfiladed. Had this movement been accomplished, there is little doubt but that the cannoneers would have been speedily driven from their guns and the pieces themselves dismounted. In attempting, however, to stand well over towards the lower Middle-Ground opposite the fort, so as to pass clear of the front line of ships then closely engaged,

these vessels became entangled on the shoal. There the Acteon remained immovably fixed in the sand, having first run foul of the Sphinx and caused the loss of her bow-sprit. Freeing themselves from their dangerous situation, the Syren and the Sphinx retired behind the line of battle and beyond the range of the fort's guns, until they could fit themselves for a renewal of the contest. After throwing some fifty or sixty shells, which caused no material injury to the fort, the recoil of the heavily charged mortars so shattered their beds and endamaged the ship that the Thunder-bomb became useless for further service. Meanwhile the engagement had been vigorously maintained at short range by the Active, the Bristol, the Experiment, and the Solebay. During the afternoon their fire was again reinforced by that of the Syren and the Friendship. Slackening with the setting sun, the cannon-ading on both sides ceased entirely at half past nine o'clock. Slipping their cables at eleven o'clock, the British ships, — their decks wet with blood, and their hulls battered with the well-directed shots from the fort, — silently and sullenly retired with the last of the ebb to their former station near Five-Fathom Hole. The native palmetto had withstood the assault of foreign oak. The new-levies of an unformed Republic had repulsed the attack of the boasted Mariners of England. General Clinton, who purposed a descent upon the north-eastern end of Sullivan's island defended by Colonel Thomson, supported by Colonel Muhlenberg, perceiving that his difficult advance would be stoutly disputed, abandoned his intention and remained a passive spectator of the action.

The attention of the fort was mainly directed to the Bristol and the Experiment, both 50 gun ships, and the

former the flag-ship of Sir Peter Parker. They encountered a loss of one hundred and sixty-four in killed and wounded. Among the latter was Sir Peter himself. But for the scarcity of powder in the fort, the damage inflicted upon the enemy would have been far greater. Officers and men behaved with the utmost coolness and courage.

During the severest stage of the bombardment the flag-staff of the fort, formerly a ship's mast, from the head of which floated the garrison flag eagerly watched by the thousands who lined the Battery in Charleston, anxious spectators of the exciting scene, and by those who held the fortifications in the harbor, was shot away, and fell with the colors outside the fort. Sergeant Jasper, perceiving the misfortune, sprang from one of the embrasures and deliberately walking the entire length of the front of the fort until he reached the fallen colors on the extreme left, detached them from the mast, called to Captain Horry for a sponge-staff, and having with a thick cord lashed them to it, returned within the fort and amid a shower of balls planted the staff on the summit of the merlon. This done, waving his hat, he gave three cheers, and then shouting "God save liberty and my country forever," retired unhurt to his gun<sup>1</sup> where he continued to

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<sup>1</sup> Bancroft thus commemorates this occurrence: "In the fort, William Jasper, a sergeant, perceived that the flag had been cut down by a ball from the enemy and had fallen over the ramparts. 'Colonel,' said he to Moultrie, 'don't let us fight without a flag.' 'What can you do,' asked Moultrie, 'the staff is broken off.' 'Then,' said Jasper, 'I'll fix it on a halberd and place it on the merlon of the bastion next the enemy,' and leaping through an embrasure and braving the thickest fire from the ship, he took up the flag, returned with it safely, and planted it, as he had promised, on the summit of the merlon.—*History of the United States*, vol. VIII, p. 406. Boston, 1860.

fight throughout the engagement. This flag so gallantly reinstated had been designed by Colonel Moultrie, and consisted of a blue field with a white crescent on which was emblazoned the word LIBERTY. Its restoration revived the hopes of many at a distance who, ignorant of the cause of its disappearance, feared the fort had struck.

During the second day's bombardment, about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, while the enemy's solid shots were battering the walls of Fort Pulaski, and mortar shells bursting above, within, and around, were scattering their fragments everywhere, the halyards of the garrison flag which floated from the staff planted upon the parapet just over the sally-port were carried away by a hostile projectile and the colors fell. Lieutenant Hussey of the Montgomery Guards, and Private Latham of the Washington Volunteers, advancing along the parapet, swept at all points by deadly missiles, and freeing the flag from its fallen and entangled position, bravely bore it to the north-eastern angle of the fort where, rigging a temporary staff on a gun-carriage, they again, amid the smoke and din of the conflict, unfolded in proud defiance the Stars and Bars of the Confederacy. After a lapse of more than three-quarters of a century History repeated herself, and that right valiantly, on a kindred shore. Until we cease to admire the constancy of Edward de Almeyda, the gallant standard-bearer of Portugal, and forget to praise the devotion of those trusty Northmen who perished in the defense of the land-waster of Harald Hardrada, these brave incidents will never be effaced from our grateful recollection.

As Sergeant McDaniel of Captain Huger's company,—his stomach and bowels carried away by a cannon shot,—lay dying at his gun, summoning his last energies he ex-

claimed: "Fight on my brave boys; don't let liberty expire with me to-day." [Almost the very words of the dying Bartow as, upon the ensanguined field of the First Manassas, he yielded up his gallant life in illustration of the manhood of Georgia and her devotion to the Confederate cause.]

Dr. Gordon<sup>1</sup> tells us that Sergeant Jasper, when removing from the blood-stained platform the body of his dead compatriot, cried out to the powder-begrimed cannoneers, "Revenge this brave man's death."

Although the fort was struck by many shots, the spongy texture of the palmetto logs received them without giving off splinters, and consequently less injury was encountered than would otherwise have occurred. Only twelve of the garrison were killed and twenty-five wounded.

More than forty years afterwards, perpetuating the impressions of this signal victory, Dr. Drayton<sup>2</sup> thus paints the scene. "The morning of the 29th of June presented a humiliating prospect to British pride. To the southwest of the fort, at the distance of near a mile, lay the *Acteon* frigate fast ashore on the Lower-Middle-Ground. Below the fort, about two miles and a half, the men of war and transports were riding at anchor opposite Morris' island, while Sir Peter Parker's broad pendant was hardly to be seen on a jury main-top-mast considerably lower than the fore-mast of his ship. And on the left General Clinton was kept in check by the troops under Colonels Thomson and Muhlenburg. On the con-

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<sup>1</sup> *History, etc., of the United States*, vol. II, p. 287. London, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of the American Revolution, etc.*, vol. II, p. 304. Charleston, 1821.

trary, how glorious were the other points of view? The azure colors of the fort, fixed on a sponge-staff, waved gently on the winds. Boats were passing and repassing in safety from and to the fort and Charlestown, and the hearts of the people were throbbing with gratitude and the most exhilarating transports."

Congratulations upon this important victory flowed in from every quarter. General Lee, on the 30th, reviewed the garrison and in person thanked officers and men "for their gallant defense of the fort." The wife of Major Barnard Elliott presented to the second regiment "an elegant pair of embroidered colors." They were received by Colonel William Moultrie and Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Motte. In tendering them "as a reward justly due" she said, "I make not the least doubt, under Heaven's protection, you will stand by them as long as they can wave in the air of liberty." Colonel Moultrie promised "that they should be honorably supported and never tarnished by the Second Regiment." He then handed one of them to Sergeant Jasper, who, smiling as he received the precious emblem, "vowed he would never give it up but with his life."<sup>1</sup> How nobly he afterward redeemed this pledge the sequel will show.

On the 4th of July Governor Rutledge visited the fort and in the name of the young commonwealth tendered sincerest thanks and congratulations. Publicly commending the heroic behavior of Jasper, he removed from his side his own sword, and presented it to him "as a reward for his bravery and an excitement to farther deeds of valour."

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<sup>1</sup> *Horry's Life of Marion*, p. 43.



The Governor also then tendered him a commission which was modestly declined. "Were I made an officer," said he, "my comrades would be constantly blushing for my ignorance, and I should be unhappy feeling my own inferiority. I have no ambition for higher rank than that of a Sergeant."

By authority of the President the name of Moultrie was conferred upon the fort, and on the 20th of July a resolution of thanks was passed by Congress then in session in Philadelphia.

Six days after this memorable victory, the United Colonies were declared free and independent. Commingled with the exultations which greeted this momentous proclamation, was universal joy at thought of this great success on the low-lying shores of Carolina. Among the incidents of that gallant defense none was more widely disseminated or more enthusiastically applauded than the replacement of the fort's colors by the intrepid Jasper.

His heroic conduct at Fort Sullivan brought Jasper prominently into notice, and made his name a synonym for all that was quick in conception and fearless in execution. Born for adventure, restless in his activity, ever ready to encounter danger and always meeting it with entire self-possession, thoroughly reliable, responsive to every trust reposed, of unquestioned loyalty to the cause of the Revolutionists, and abounding withal, in sagacity, moderation and humanity, he was eminently fitted for the duties of a scout. Recognizing his uncommon worth, his commanding officers did not attempt to confine him within the limited sphere of an ordinary subaltern of his rank. "Through every subsequent period of the war," says Garden, "his conduct was exemplary; but in the

details which I have seen, carries too much the air of romance to be dwelt upon. He was a perfect Proteus in ability to alter his appearance; perpetually entering the camp of the enemy, without detection, and invariably returning to his own with soldiers he had seduced, or prisoners he had captured.”<sup>1</sup>

General Moultrie’s testimony is even more emphatic: “I had such confidence in him that when I was in the field I gave him a roving commission and liberty to pick out his men from my brigade. He seldom would take more than six: he went often out and returned with prisoners before I knew he was gone. I have known of his catching a party that was looking for him. He has told me that he could have killed single men several times, but he would not, he would rather let them off. He went into the British lines at Savannah and delivered himself up as a deserter, complaining at the same time of our ill-usage to him. He was gladly received (they having heard of his character) and caressed by them. He stayed eight days; and, after informing himself well of their strength, situation, and intentions, he returned to us again; but that game he could not play a second time.”<sup>2</sup>

In consequence of the feeble and ill-contrived resistance offered by General Robert Howe, Savannah, in December, 1778, fell into the hands of the British. The Americans retired with a loss of about one hundred killed in action or drowned in the retreat, and thirty-eight officers and four hundred and fifteen privates were captured. Among the

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<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes of the American Revolution*, vol. I, p. 77 — *Field’s Reprint*. Brooklyn, 1865.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of the American Revolution, etc.*, vol. II, p. 24. Note. New York, 1802.

substantial trophies of this victory were forty-eight cannon and twenty-three mortars. It was generally conceded that if proper dispositions had been made, General Howe could, with certainty, have repulsed Colonel Campbell's column boldly but imprudently led. Although Savannah could, at this time, boast of not more than four hundred and thirty houses, most of them small and constructed of wood, it was nevertheless the principal town and capital of Georgia wherein were concentrated the public stores, the pride, the intelligence and the material and social wealth of the state, and its capture entailed upon the vanquished not only serious misfortune but intense mortification. The entire coast region of the state was thus laid bare, and the English were not slow in occupying it and exacting the severest tribute.

Advanced posts were subsequently established by Prevost at Ebenezer, Abercorn, and at other points in the interior. Select parties were pushed forward in the direction of Augusta. General Lincoln located his headquarters at Purysburg, on the opposite side of the Savannah river, and just above Abercorn where Col. Campbell lay with a strong force. To General Ashe was assigned a defensive line along Brier creek. Between the two armies, thus distributed, stretched a debatable region over which parties from both sides continually scouted and occasionally came into conflict.

While the American and English troops were occupying the positions we have indicated, an incident occurred which again brought the name and prowess of Sergeant Jasper into bold relief and confirmed that reputation for enterprise and daring which, to him, had already been so fully accorded. The Second South Carolina regiment formed a

part of General Lincoln's command at Purysburg. Jasper's brother, who had espoused the Royal cause and held the rank of a Sergeant in the British army, was at Ebenezer. Jasper resolved to visit him, and succeeded in making his way into the English camp where he represented himself as no longer an American soldier. When urged to accept service with the King of England's men he replied, that although he "found but little encouragement in fighting for his own country, he had not the heart to take up arms against her." Having spent several days in his brother's company and ascertained the strength and plans of the enemy, he eluded the sentinels and repaired to Purysburg where he gave full information of all he had seen and heard. A few weeks afterwards he was encouraged to repeat his visit, and on this occasion took with him a comrade — Sergeant Newton — as brave of heart and strong in body as himself. Hospitably entertained by the Tory brother, they lingered for several days about the encampment without exciting the suspicions of the English troops who regarded and welcomed them as recruits from the ranks of the Rebels. While there, some American prisoners were brought in who, having at the outbreak of the Rebellion professed loyalty to the British Crown and, on the approach of the Continental Troops, subsequently espoused the cause of the Revolutionists, were now charged with the grievous offense of having broken faith with their captors. They were pinioned, under guard, and on their way to Savannah for trial and punishment. Over them hung the danger of "short shrift and sudden cord."<sup>1</sup> A wife of one of the prisoners, with her child, accompanied

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<sup>1</sup> See *Simms's Life of Marion*, p. 83. New York, 1846.

the sorrowful party. Moved by their distress, and anxious to avert the sad fate which manifestly awaited them, Jasper and his companion resolved upon their deliverance. So soon as these captives, in charge of a sergeant, a corporal, and eight privates, commenced their journey towards Savannah, Jasper and Newton left Ebenezer, taking however, a route different from that selected by the guard. The two American sergeants were unarmed, while the guard, ten in number, carried loaded muskets. This overwhelming disparity was more than sufficient to have given pause to the stoutest hearts, however sympathetic and ready to intervene for the relief of the helpless. The achievement of their humane object must have seemed well-nigh, if not absolutely impossible. The adventure was certainly desperate in the extreme; and its conception could have originated only with one of Jasper's admitted daring. Sergeant Newton, as General Horry informs us, "was the son of an old Baptist preacher, and a young fellow, for strength and courage, just about a good match for Jasper himself."<sup>1</sup>

Striking across the country and carefully concealing themselves from observation, the two friends followed closely upon the heels of the party. Familiar with the route, conjecturing that the guard would stop to refresh themselves and their charge at a spring near the Augusta road, distant about two miles from Savannah, whose cooling waters were even then well known and appreciated, and selecting this as the most favorable spot for the contemplated rescue, Jasper and Newton rapidly traversing the woods reached the spring in advance of the prisoners and their armed

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<sup>1</sup> *Horry's Life of Marion*, p. 54.

attendants. Carefully concealing themselves in the dense foliage they there, with brave but palpitating hearts, awaited an auspicious moment for the execution of their hazardous plan. They had correctly surmised for, in a little while, upon the arrival of the party, the guard was halted in the road just opposite the spring. Attended by a corporal and four men the prisoners were conducted near the water, while the sergeant in command, having caused the rest of his detail to stack arms in the road, brought up the rear. Over the muskets two men were posted to keep watch. Tired and dejected the prisoners threw themselves upon the ground. The weary child fell asleep in the lap of its weeping mother. Hope had fled from the hearts of the captives; and their guards, confident in the early accomplishment of their duty, cherished no apprehension of impending danger. Approaching the spring and leaning their weapons against a tree, two of the soldiers stooped to fill their canteens. The coveted moment had come. Springing like tigers from their ambush, in the twinkling of an eye and before the astonished enemy could realize the situation, Jasper and Newton seized these muskets and shot down the two men on duty. Then clubbing their weapons, they rushed upon the amazed soldiers, and, felling the first who opposed them, succeeded in obtaining possession of the loaded muskets. Before the presented weapons the rest of the guard yielded instantaneous surrender. It was the rapid work of a short moment, the shock of a thunderbolt from a clear sky, the marvelous achievement of cool calculation, prompt valor, and vigorous action all the more astounding because exhibited in the teeth of such overwhelming odds. To unbind and arm the prisoners, to transform captors into captives, to restore

freedom to the enchained and bring joy to the sorrowing, hope to the despairing, was the quick sequel to this dramatic exploit. Before the flush had faded from the manly brows of our bold Sergeants,—amazement and consternation still sitting upon the countenances of the British soldiers, and tears of gladness overrunning the cheeks of the delivered—the entire party was moving towards the Savannah river which it crossed in safety. Under the sure guidance of Jasper and Newton, both the rescued and the captured were conducted to the American Camp at Purysburg to the inexpressible astonishment and delight of all.

Embosomed in the wild woods and unmarked by monumental stone, this spring still offers the generous tribute of its sweet waters emblematic of the modesty, the unostentatious merit, and the never failing humanity of those whose names are so honorably, so gratefully, and so indissolubly associated with the spot.

Until the disastrous assault upon Savannah, Jasper still held his roving commission, now under Lincoln, now under Moultrie, again under Marion, at one time in the neighborhood of Black-Swamp, at another, amid the morasses of the Coosawhatchie and the Tulifinnee, on the retreat to Charleston, and subsequently during the pursuit of Prevost as he retired upon Savannah. An invaluable scout, a faithful eye and ear to his commanding officer, his services throughout this period of general depression, weakness, and discouragement, were at all times appreciated and highly commended. Turn we now to the closing scene in the short life of this brave Sergeant.

The Viscount de Fontanges who, in the frigate Amazon commanded by the famous navigator La Perouse, had been dispatched by Count D'Estaing, then with his fleet nearing

the coast of Georgia, to confer with General Lincoln, arrived in Charleston on the 4th of September, 1779. A concert of action was quickly agreed upon between the French and Americans. Boats were sent from Charleston to assist in landing troops and ordnance, and Colonel Cambray of the Engineers, Major Thomas Pinckney, aid to General Lincoln, and Captain Gadsden were ordered to return with the Viscount and aid Count D'Estaing in the debarkation. On Sunday, the 12th of September, the first detachment, numbering twelve hundred men and drawn from various regiments conveyed in the French fleet, landed without opposition at Beaulieu. By the 15th the French Army had advanced and established a camp within three miles of Savannah. The 12th and 13th were occupied by General Lincoln in crossing his command over the Savannah river at Zubly's ferry. On the afternoon of the 13th General McIntosh, with his troops from Augusta, formed a junction with Lincoln. Three days afterward the French and American forces were united for future operations against Savannah.

Flushed with his recent victory over Lord Macartney at Grenada, Count D'Estaing, without waiting for the cooperation of the American army under General Lincoln, summoned General Prevost to surrender "to the arms of his Majesty the King of France." Twenty-four hours were requested for deliberation, and this demand was imprudently granted. Of this interval the English commander took advantage by strengthening his batteries, confirming his defensive lines, and introducing Colonel Maitland who, with a detachment of eight hundred fine troops, had been summoned from Beaufort. Thus strengthened Prevost, who had temporized that he might increase



his fortifications and concentrate within his lines this formidable reinforcement, with its gallant and accomplished leader, responded, "the unanimous determination has been that though we cannot look upon our post as absolutely impregnable yet, that it may and ought to be defended; therefore the evening gun to be fired this evening at an hour before sun-down shall be the signal for recommencing hostilities agreeable to your excellency's proposal." Instead of assaulting on the moment, D'Estaing committed the grave error of resorting to the slow process of an investment and siege.

When the French fleet first appeared off the Georgia coast the English had but twenty-three pieces of artillery mounted upon their works around Savannah. On the day of the assault one hundred and twenty-three guns had been placed in position. Intelligent British officers who participated in the defense admitted that the French army, unaided, could have carried the city in ten minutes, without the assistance of artillery, had the attack been made at the earliest moment. The energy and skill displayed by the English in strengthening the old and erecting new works, in transferring guns from the war-vessels in the river to the batteries erected to the east, south, and west of Savannah, and, above all, the introduction of Colonel Maitland's forces into the city at a most opportune hour, reflect great credit upon those charged with the conduct of affairs. If Count D'Estaing had insisted upon an immediate response to his summons, the probability is General Prevost would have acceded to his demand. Had he refused, there is a little doubt but that the investing army could speedily have swept over the unfinished entrenchments and restored the capital of Georgia to the possession

of the Revolutionists. Delay proved fatal to the enterprise.

Eight days were consumed in opening trenches and in erecting batteries with which to bombard the city. Commencing on the 25th of September, the bombardment was irregularly maintained until the 8th of October, at which time it seemed fairly demonstrated that no permanent or decided impression could be produced upon the English works which were low, strong, and constructed of sand. The length of time requisite for the successful prosecution of the siege in the face of such formidable opposition, the exhaustion of the supplies of his fleet, and the risk encountered in keeping his vessels at an insecure anchorage at such a tempestuous season of the year, decided Count D'Estaing to attempt the capture of the city by general assault.

For this movement orders were issued and dispositions made on Saturday night the 8th of October, 1779. The general plan of attack was as follows. The French army was to form in three columns. The first, under the command of Dillon, and accompanied by Count D'Estaing, was to assault the right centre of the British lines near the Spring-Hill redoubt. The second, under Colonel Steding, was directed to move to the left and attack on the extreme right where the English works rested upon the Savannah river. The third, in charge of the Viscount de Noailles, was to act as a reserve corps and take position at a convenient point whence it might move, as occasion required, in support of either of the other two. The troops occupying the trenches, assisted by the chasseurs of Martinique, were, under the leadership of M. de Sablière, to make a feigned attack upon the centre.

The Americans were divided into two columns. One, composed of the Light Infantry, the Second South Carolina regiment, and the first battalion of Charleston Militia, under the command of Colonel John Laurens, was to accompany and act in concert with Dillon's column. The other, consisting of the First and Fifth South Carolina regiments, and some other troops, conducted by General Lachlan McIntosh, was to attack on the right between the two points of assault designated for the French columns. General Huger, with Williams' Brigade and some independent companies aggregating about five hundred men, was directed to demonstrate strongly against the enemy's extreme left. If successful he was ordered at once to convert his feint into a real attack, and pursue his advantage to the utmost.

The Cavalry, under Count Pulaski, was to precede Dillon's column to the edge of the woods, and there, uncovering to the left, take post whence, so soon as a practicable way should be opened through the hostile line of entrenchments, it might charge into the city.

The rest of the American troops were to unite with the reserve forces under Noailles; General Lincoln, as senior officer, being in command.

Advised of the plans of the Allied Army by Sergeant Major Curry, of the Charleston Grenadiers, who deserted to the enemy during the night of the 8th, Prevost, leaving on his left a force sufficient to check Huger's demonstration, concentrated his best troops in the vicinity of the Spring-Hill and Ebenezer redoubts, and assigned Colonel Maitland to their command.

The following morning, after wading half a mile through the rice-fields which bordered the city on the

east, General Huger reached his point of attack; and, at the designated hour, entered upon the assault. The enemy being on the alert, he was received with music, and a heavy fire of musketry and cannon before which he retreated with a loss of twenty-eight men.

Sablière's sortie from the trenches produced no impression on the English centre. It was feebly maintained, and was easily repulsed by the North Carolina Loyalists under Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton.

Baron de Steding's column, while traversing the swamp to the west of the City, became so involved in mud and water and brambles, that it lost its formation. In crossing the Augusta road it was terribly torn by a fire of grape and musketry, and finally retreated to the high-ground beyond the Springfield plantation.

With the details of the bloody and disastrous assaults made by the columns of D'Estaing, McIntosh, Laurens, and Pulaski, we are familiar and they need not be here repeated. The Augusta road, the outlying abattis, and the ditches in front of the Spring-Hill and Ebenezer redoubts were choked with the maimed and the dead, while the plain intervening between the enemy's works and the woods from which the assaulting columns advanced in the gray of that fatal morning, was covered with the slain, cut to pieces by chain-shot, cannister, scraps of iron, and knife-blades hurled at short range and in quick succession from the insatiate mouths of cannon doubly charged for the slaughter.

During the assault the colors of the Second South Carolina regiment, which had been presented by Mrs. Elliott just after the battle of Fort Moultrie, were borne, one by Lieutenant Bush, supported by Sergeant Jasper, and the

other by Lieutenant Grey, supported by Sergeant McDonald. Under the inspiring leadership of Colonel Laurens they were both planted upon the slope of the Spring-Hill redoubt. So terrific, however, was the enemy's fire that the brave assailants melted before it. Lieutenant Grey was mortally wounded just by his colors, and Lieutenant Bush lost his life under similar circumstances. When the retreat was sounded Sergeant McDonald plucked his standard from the redoubt where it had been floating on the furthest verge of the crimson tide, and retired with it in safety. Jasper, already sore wounded, was at the moment endeavoring to replace upon the parapet the colors which had been struck down upon the fall of Lieutenant Bush, when he encountered a second and a mortal hurt. Recollecting however, even in this moment of supreme agony, the pledges given when from fair hands this emblem of hope and confidence had been received, and summoning his expiring energies for the final effort, he snatched those colors from the grasp of the triumphant enemy and bore them from the bloody field.

Hearing that he was fatally wounded, Major Horry, when the battle was over, hastened to the rude couch of the bleeding Sergeant and thus details the conversation which ensued. "I have got my furlough," said he, and, pointing to his sword, continued: "That sword was presented to me by Governor Rutledge for my services in the defense of Fort Moultrie. Give it to my father and tell him I have worn it with honor. If he should weep, say to him his son died in the hope of a better life. Tell Mrs. Elliott that I lost my life supporting the colors which she presented to our regiment." Then, from out the bright visions of his former achievements as they floated for the

last time before his dying memory, selecting his success at the spring and repeating the names of those whom he there rescued, he added; "should you ever see them, tell them that Jasper is gone, but that the remembrance of the battle he fought for them brought a secret joy to his heart when it was about to stop its motion forever."

Thus thinking and thus speaking the gallant Sergeant and the true patriot closed his eyes upon the Revolution and entered into peace. The place of his sepulture is unmarked. He sleeps with the brave dead of the siege who lie beneath the soil of Savannah. Although no monumental shaft designates his grave, his heroic memory is perpetuated in the gentle murmurs of that perennial spring at our very doors near which one of his most generous deeds was wrought. His name is day by day repeated in a ward of this beautiful city of Oglethorpe whose liberation he died to achieve, is inscribed upon the flag of one of our volunteer companies, and dignifies a county of Georgia whose independence he gave his life to maintain.

~~DUE APR 14 1917~~

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