



# **The If Man: Dr Leander Starr Jameson, the Inspiration for Kipling's Masterpiece**

*Chris Ash*

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If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too:  
If you can ...

A rollicking biography of Dr Leander Starr Jameson-hero, rogue and rascal of Empire and the man who inspired Kipling to write this masterpiece, 'If'

This famous poem by Rudyard Kipling is said to be based on the life of Jameson, and the suffering he endured as a result of the 1896 raid that he and his Rhodesian and Bechuanaland policemen carried out on Paul Kruger's Transvaal Republic. In this engaging biography in the style of Wilbur Smith-meets-Louis l'Amour, Ash recounts the life of this colonial statesman known as 'Dr Jim' or simply 'The Doctor'. He was an enigmatic man. When he died The Times estimated that his astonishing personal sway over his followers was equaled only by that of Parnell, the Irish patriot; from the fervor of the Kimberley diamond fields where he had established a small medical practice in 1878. It was through Jameson's relationship with Lobengula that the chief granted a concession to Rhodes' agents that led to the formation of the British South Africa Company. When the company proceeded to open up Mashonaland, Jameson joined the pioneer expedition of 1890. He was instrumental in securing the greater part of what would eventually become Mozambique for the Portuguese who were laying claim to it and in 1893 was named administrator of Mashonaland, playing a key role in the First Matabele War. Despite his many escapades and adventures Jameson is probably most known for his role in 'The Jameson Raid'. Despite the raid, Jameson had a successful political life. He died on 26 November 1917 in London. His body was laid in a vault at Kensal Green Cemetery where it remained until the end of the First World War. Ian Colvin (1923) writes that Jameson's body was then "... carried to Rhodesia and on 22 May 1920, laid in a grave cut in the granite on the top of the mountain which Rhodes had called 'The View of the World', close beside the grave of his friend.

## REVIEWS

"Dr Jameson was a very remarkable man - an unashamed creator and risk-taker who understood the true meaning of loyalty - and in Chris Ash he has found his ideal biographer." Andrew Roberts, bestselling author of *The History of the English-speaking Peoples* and *The Storm of War*

"The book is much more than a biography - there is extensive history of southern Africa to be gleaned here... In all, Jameson's life was so extraordinary it could read like a Wilbur Smith novel, which is no bad thing. It may be hard to view Jameson as a hero in these politically correct times, but Chris has done a great job in making his work an entertaining read and I heartily recommend it."

Geoffrey Hay, *The Shetland Times*

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