

THE DEATH OF THE PRINCE IMPERIAL.



It was in Zululand, on the evening of June 1, 1879. A little group of us were at dinner in the tent of General Marshall, who commanded the cavalry brigade in the British army which was marching on Ulundi, King Cetewayo's royal kraal. The sun was just going down when Colonel Harrison, the quartermaster-general, put his head inside the tent door, and called aloud in a strange voice, "Good God, the Prince Imperial is killed!" Harrison, though stolid, sometimes jested, and for the moment this announcement was not taken seriously. Lord Downe, Marshall's aide-de-camp, threw a crust of bread at his head, and Herbert Stewart, then brigade-major, afterward killed in the desert march in the Soudan, laughed aloud.

But sitting near the door, I discerned in the faint light of the dying day the horror in Harrison's face, and sprang to my feet instinctively. The news was only too fatally true, and when the dismal, broken story of the survivors of the party had been told, throughout the force there was a thrill of sorrow for the poor gallant lad, a burning sense of shame that he should have been so miserably left to his fate, and deep sympathy for the forlorn widow in England on whom fortune seemed to rejoice in heaping disaster on disaster, bereavement on bereavement.

I knew the Prince well. On the first two occasions I saw him, it was through a binocular from a considerable distance. On August 2, 1870, the day on which the boy of fourteen, in the words of his father, "received his baptism of fire," I was watching from the drill-ground above Saarbrück, in company with the last remaining Prussian soldiers, the oncoming swarm-attack of Bataille's *tirailleurs*, firing as they hurried across the plain. The *tirailleurs* had passed a little knoll which rose in the plain about midway between the Spicheren hill and where I stood, and presently it was crowned by two horsemen followed by a great staff. The glass told me that without a doubt the senior of the foremost horsemen was the Emperor Napoleon, and that the younger, shorter and slighter,—mere boy he looked,—was the Prince Imperial, whom we knew to be with his father in the field. A fortnight later, in the early morning of the 15th, the day before Mars-la-Tour, when the German army was still only

east and south of Metz, I accompanied a German horse-battery which, galloping up to within five hundred paces of the château of Longueville, around which was a French camp of some size, opened fire on château and camp. After a few shells had been fired, great confusion was observed about the château and in the camp, and I distinctly discerned the Emperor and his son emerge from the building, mount, and gallop away followed by suite and escort. Years later, in Zululand, when the day's work was done for both of us, and the twilight was falling on the rolling veldt, the Prince was wont occasionally to gossip with me about those early days of the great war which we had witnessed from opposite sides, and he told me his experiences on the morning spoken of. A crash awoke him with a start, and he was sitting up in bed, bewildered, when his father entered with the exclamation: "Up, Louis, up and dress! The German shells are crashing through the roofs." As the Prince looked out of the window while he hurriedly dressed, he saw a shell fall and burst in a group of officers seated in the garden at breakfast, and when the smoke lifted three of them lay dead. That the story of his nerves having been shattered by the bullet-fire at Saarbrück was untrue seems proved by an episode he related to me of that same morning an hour later. On the steep ascent of the *chaussée* up to Châtel the imperial party was wedged in the heart of a complete block of troops, wagons, and guns; a long delay seemed inevitable. But the lad had noticed a wayside gate whence a track led up through the vineyard. He followed it to the crest, and marked its trend; then riding back, he called aloud, "This way, papa!" The Prince's side-track turned the block, and presently the party were in the new quarters in the *auberge* of Gravelotte.

That excellent American publication, "Johnson's Universal Cyclopædia," errs for once in stating that after the downfall of the Empire the Prince "escaped with his mother to England." He never saw his mother after leaving Paris for the seat of war until she came to him in Hastings after the revolution in Paris. The wife who pressed her tortured husband to remain with the army to the bitter end by the telegraphed message, "Do not think of returning here—to have people saying that you were fleeing from danger," was also the mother who kept in the field her only son, and he a mere boy, by the curt instruction to his father, "For

reasons which I cannot here explain, I desire Louis to remain with the army." When the shadows were darkening on MacMahon's ill-fated march, the Emperor sent his son away from the front, and the story of the vicissitudes and dangers the lad encountered before reaching England after Sedan would make of itself a long article.

When his parents settled at Chiselhurst, the Prince, then in his fifteenth year, entered the Royal Academy of Woolwich to receive a scientific military education. He had not undergone the usual preparation, and he might have joined without the preliminary examination; but never then nor throughout the course would he accept any indulgence, and his "preliminary" was satisfactory, in spite of his want of familiarity with the language. In the United States West Point affords the same instruction to all cadets alike, those who are most successful passing into the scientific branches; but in England the cadets for the line are educated at Sandhurst, and the severer tuition of Woolwich is restricted to candidates for the engineer and artillery branches. The Prince took his chance with his comrades, both at work and play. His mathematical instructor has stated that he had considerable powers, evincing an undoubtedly clear insight into the principles of the higher mathematics; but he added that he often failed to bring out specifically his knowledge at examinations, owing to his imperfect grasp of the necessary formulæ and working details. Indeed, details wearied him, then and later. In Zululand he more than once told me that he "hated desk work," and M. Deleage, his countryman and friend, who accompanied the Zululand expedition, wrote that on the day before his death, after he had left the staff office tent, "Lieutenant Carey found the Prince's work done with so much haste and inattention that he had to sit up all night correcting it." In spite of this defect in steady concentration, at the end of his Woolwich course he passed seventh in a class of thirty-five, and had he gone into the English service he would have been entitled to choose between the Engineers and Artillery. He would have stood higher, but that, curiously enough, he comparatively failed in French. He was an easy first in equitation. During his Woolwich career he won the love and respect of his comrades; his instructors spoke warmly of his modesty, conscientiousness, and uprightness, and pronounced him truthful and honorable in a high degree.

After leaving Woolwich he lived mostly with his widowed mother at Chiselhurst, but traveled on the Continent occasionally, and mixed a good deal in London society, where from time to time I met him. After he attained

manhood, it was understood that a marriage was projected between him and the Princess Beatrice, the youngest of the Queen's offspring, who is now the wife of Prince Henry of Battenberg. The attainment of his majority was made a great occasion by the Imperialist adherents to testify their adherence to a cause which they refused to consider lost. More than 10,000 Frenchmen of all ranks and classes congregated on Chiselhurst Common that day, the tricolor waved along the route to the little Roman Catholic chapel on the outskirts of the quiet Kentish village, and as the members of the imperial family passed from Camden Place to the religious service, every head was uncovered, and shouts of "Vive l'Empereur!" rose from the ardent partisans, numbers of whom had already paid homage to the remains of their dead Emperor, which lay in the marble sarcophagus in front of the high altar of the chapel. Later in the day the large company of French people assembled in the park of Camden Place, in rear of the deputations from the different provinces of France, each deputation headed by a leader bearing the provincial banner. The Prince, with his mother by his side, stood forward; behind them the princes, nobles, and statesmen of the late empire, and many Imperialist ladies of rank. When the Duc de Padoue had finished reading a long address expressive of attachment and devotion, the young Prince spoke to his supporters with great dignity, earnestness, and modesty. I remember the last sentences of his speech, the manly tone of which I can never forget. "If the time should ever arrive when my countrymen shall honor me with a majority of the suffrages of the nation, I shall be ready to accept with proud respect the decision of France. If for the eighth time the people pronounce in favor of the name of Napoleon, I am prepared to accept the responsibility imposed upon me by the vote of the nation." Once again, and only once, I heard the Prince speak in public. It was at the annual dinner of an institution known as the "Newspaper Press Fund." Lord Salisbury, one of the most brilliant speakers of our time, was in the chair; Cardinal Manning, the silver-tongued; Lord Wolseley,—better speaker than general,—and Henry M. Stanley, fresh from "Darkest Africa" were among the orators, but, quite apart from his position, the short address made by the Prince Imperial was unanimously regarded as the speech of the evening.

In features, with his long, oval face, his black hair and eyes, attributes of neither of his parents, and his lean, shapely head, the Prince was a Spaniard of the Spaniards. One recognized in him no single characteristic of the Frenchman; he was a veritable *hidalgo*, with all the

pride, the melancholy, the self-restraint, yet ardor to shine, the courage trenching on an ostentatious recklessness, and indeed the childishness in trifles, which marked that now all but extinct type. Whether there was in his veins a drop of the Bonapartist blood (remembering the suspicious King Louis of Holland with regard to Hortense) is a problem now probably insoluble; certainly neither he nor his father had any physical feature in common with the undoubted members of the race. The Montijos, although the house in its latest developments had somewhat lost caste, and had a bourgeois strain on the distaff side, were ancestrally of the bluest blood of Spain; and it has always been my idea that the Prince Imperial illustrated the theory of atavism by throwing back to the Guzmans, the Corderas, or the Baros, all grand old Spanish families whose blood was in his veins. How strong was his self-restraint even in youth an anecdote told in Miss Barlee's interesting book¹ of his Woolwich days may evidence. Hearing one day that a Frenchman was visiting the academy, he sent to say that he should be glad to see his countryman. The person, who, as it happened, was a bitter anti-Imperialist, was presented, and the Prince asked from what part of France he came. The fellow, looking the youth straight in the face with a sarcastic smile, uttered the one word "Sedan," and grinningly waited for the effect of his brutality. The Prince flushed, and his eye kindled; then he conquered himself, and quietly remarking, "That is a very pretty part of France," closed the interview with a bow. I never saw dignity and self-control more finely manifested in union than when the lad, not yet seventeen, dressed in a black cloak over which was the broad red ribbon of the Legion of Honor, followed his father's coffin as chief mourner along the path lined by many thousand French sympathizers; and his demeanor was truly royal when later on that trying day the masses of French artisans hailed him with shouts of "Vive Napoleon IV.," and he stopped the personal ovation by saying: "My friends, I thank you, but your Emperor is dead. Let us join in the cry of 'Vive la France!'" baring at the same time his head, and leading off the acclamation. His craving for effect curiously disclosed itself during a parade in Scotland of a number of Clydesdale stallions at which were present the Prince of Wales and a number of noblemen and gentlemen. One horse, which was plunging violently, was described as never having allowed a rider to remain on its back. At the word the Prince Imperial vaulted on to the bare back of the animal, mastered

its efforts to dislodge him, and rode the conquered stallion round the arena amid loud applause.

The forced inaction of his life irked him intensely. His good sense and true patriotism induced him steadily to decline the urgency of young and ardent Imperialists that he should disturb the peace of France either by intrigue or more active efforts to restore the dynasty. It stung him to the quick that the scurrilous part of the French press taunted him with the quietness of his life, which it chose to attribute to cowardice and lack of enterprise. In Zululand he told me of a circumstance which I have nowhere seen mentioned, that a year before he had applied to the French government for permission to join the French troops fighting in Tonquin; that MacMahon, who was then President, was in his favor, but that the Ministry refused the request. The English war of 1879 in Zululand was his opportunity. His constant belief was that ten years would be the term of his exile. "Dix ans de patience, et après!" he used to mutter in his day-dreams. The ten years were nearly up, and what prestige would not accrue to him if he should have the good fortune to distinguish himself in the field, which he was resolved to do at any cost! The disaster of Isandlwana, to retrieve which troops were being hurried out, and the heroic defense of Rorke's Drift, were lost opportunities at which he chafed. He felt that he was forfeiting chances which, taken advantage of, might have acclaimed his path to the imperial throne. Determined to lose no more chances, he went to the British commander-in-chief and begged to be permitted to go on service to South Africa.

His attitude and yearnings were quite intelligible, and were in no sense blameworthy. He desired to obtain the means toward a specific and obvious end, if England only would give him the helping hand. But this ultimate aim of his being so evident, it was singularly improper and ill-judged on the part of the English authorities, by actively furthering his object, to give well-grounded umbrage to the friendly power across the channel. The Prince's campaign was nothing other than an intrigue of the English court, always naturally adverse to republicanism—an intrigue the purpose of which was to help toward changing republican France into imperial France, and to contribute toward the elevation of this young man to the throne which his father had lost. The commander-in-chief had his scruples, for he is a man of discretion; but they were overruled, and it was from Windsor, bidden God-speed by the sovereign, that the Prince departed to embark. France sullenly watched his career in South Africa—had it ended differently the mood

¹ "Life of the Prince Imperial," compiled by Helen Barlee: Griffith & Farran, London.

might have intensified. If it be asked why for the last fourteen years France has never for an hour worn a semblance of cordial accord with the insular power its neighbor, the answer is, that this attitude of chronic umbrage has its main source in the intrigue which sent the Prince Imperial to Zululand.

At the news of Isandlwana I had hurried from the Khyber Pass to South Africa, and the Prince had already joined the army when first I met him in May, 1879, at Sir Evelyn Wood's camp of Kambula, which he was visiting with Lord Chelmsford and the headquarters staff. The Duke of Cambridge had specially confided him to his lordship's care. But poor Lord Chelmsford's nerve had been sore shaken by the tragedy of Isandlwana, after which he had begged to be relieved. Like Martha, he was careful and troubled about many things; his will-power was limp and fickle, and the Prince was to him in the nature of a white elephant. The latter, for his part, was ardent for opportunities of adventurous enterprise, while the harassed Chelmsford had been bidden to dry-nurse him assiduously. The military arrangements were lax, and the Prince had been able to share in several somewhat hazardous reconnaissances, in the course of which he had displayed a rash bravery which disquieted the responsible leaders. After one of those scouting expeditions in which he actually had come to close quarters with a party of Zulus, and it was said had whetted his sword, he was said to have remarked naïvely: "Such skirmishes suit my taste exactly; yet I should be *au désespoir* did I think I should be killed in one. In a great battle, if Providence so willed it, all well and good; but in a petty reconnaissance of this kind—ah! that would never do."

His penultimate reconnaissance was with a detachment of Frontier Light Horse, under the command of Colonel Buller, V. C., now Sir Redvers Buller, Adjutant-General of the British army. The Zulus gathered, and a fight seemed impending, to the Prince's great joy; but they dispersed. A few, however, were seen skulking at a distance, and against them he rode *ventre à terre* in a state of great excitement. He had to be supported, which occasioned inconvenience; during the night, which was bitterly cold, and during which the Prince's excitement continued, he tramped up and down constantly, singing at intervals, "Malbrook s'en va-t-en-guerre," not wholly to the contentment of the more phlegmatic Britons around him. Colonel Buller reported his inconvenient recklessness, protested against accepting responsibility for him when his military duties called for all his attention, and suggested that he should be employed in camp on staff duty instead of being permitted to risk himself on re-

connaissance service. Thereupon Lord Chelmsford detailed him to desk-work in the quartermaster-general's department, and gave Colonel Harrison a written order that the Prince should not quit the camp without the express permission of his lordship. The Prince, made aware of this order, obeyed, for he had a high sense of discipline; but he did not conceal his dislike to the drudgery of plan-making in a tent. He was fond of and expert in sketching in the field.

The orders issued to the little army in the Koppie Allein camp on the 31st of May for the morrow were, that the infantry should march direct to a camping-ground on the Itelezi Hill about eight miles forward, the cavalry to scout several miles further, and then to fall back to the Itelezi camp. Early on the morning of June 10 the Prince, dead tired of routine desk-work, begged Colonel Harrison to allow him to make a sketching expedition with an escort, beyond the ground to be covered by the cavalry. The matter was under discussion, Harrison reluctant to consent, when Lieutenant Carey, a staff-officer of the department, suggested that he should accompany the Prince, and proposed that the expedition should extend into the Ityotyози valley, where the next camp beyond the Itelezi was to be, and a sketch of which he (Carey) had two days previously left unfinished. Harrison then made no further objection, consenting the more readily because the whole terrain in advance had been thoroughly scouted over recently. He instructed Carey to requisition a mounted escort of six white men and six Basutos, and he subsequently maintained that he had intrusted the command of the escort to Carey. This Carey denied, repudiating all responsibility in regard to the direction of the escort, since the Prince, in his rank of honorary captain, was his senior officer, and maintaining that his function as regarded the latter was simply that of friendly adviser. I was afterward told that before leaving camp, the Prince wrote a letter—the last he ever wrote—to his mother, and that, hearing I was about to ride back to the post-office at Sandemann's Drift, he left the message for me, with his best regards, that he should be greatly obliged by my carrying down his letter. As it happened, I did not quit the camp until I did so as the bearer to the telegraph-wire of the tidings of the Prince's death.

I was with Stewart, the cavalry brigademajor, when Carey came to him with Harrison's warrant for an escort. Carey did not mention, nor did the document state, that the escort was for the Prince Imperial. Stewart ordered out six men of Beddington's Horse,—a curiously mixed handful of diverse nationalities,—and he told Carey that he would send

Captain Shepstone an order for the Basuto detail of the escort; but that time would be saved if Carey himself, on his way back to headquarters, would hand Shepstone the order and give his own instructions. Carey chose the latter alternative, and departed. An hour later, while I was still with Stewart, the six Basutos paraded in front of his tent. Either Carey or Shepstone had blundered in the instructions given them, that was clear; but nothing could now be done but to order the Basutos to hurry forward and try to overtake the balance of the escort. Meanwhile the Prince had been impatient, and he, Carey, and the white section of the escort had gone forward. Carey made no demur to the scant escort, since nothing was to be apprehended, and since he himself had been recently chaffed for being addicted to requisitioning inordinately large escorts. Harrison later met the party some miles out, and sanctioned its going forward, notwithstanding that the Basutos had not joined, which, indeed, they never succeeded in doing. The party then consisted of the Prince, Carey, a sergeant, a corporal, four troopers, and a black native guide — nine persons in all.

WHEN Harrison had announced the tidings of the tragedy, I went to my tent, and sent for each of the four surviving troopers in succession. They were all bad witnesses, and I could not help suspecting that they were in collusion to keep something back. All agreed, however, that Lieutenant Carey headed the panic-flight; and next day it transpired that when a mile away from the scene, and still galloping wildly, he was casually met by Sir Evelyn Wood and Colonel Buller, to whom he exclaimed, "Fly! Fly! the Zulus are after me, and the Prince Imperial is killed!" The evidence I took on the night of the disaster, and that afterward given before the court of inquiry and the court-martial on Carey, may now be briefly summarized.

The site of the intended camp having been planned out by the Prince and Carey, the party ascended an adjacent hill, and spent an hour there in sketching the contours of the surrounding country. No Zulus were visible in the wide expanse surveyed from the hilltop. At its base, on a small plain at the junction of the rivers Tambakala and Ityotyosi, was the small Zulu kraal of Etuki, the few huts of which, according to the Zulu custom, stood in a rough circle, which was surrounded on three sides at a little distance by a tall growth of "mealies" (Indian corn), and the high grain known as "Kafir corn." The party descended to this kraal, off-saddled, fed the horses, made coffee, ate food, and then reclined, resting against the wall of a hut, in full sense of assured safety. Some

dogs skulking about the empty kraal, and the fresh ashes on the hearths, might have warned them, but they did not heed the suggestion thus afforded. About three o'clock Corporal Grubbe, who understood the Basuto language, reported the statement of the guide that he had seen a Zulu entering the mealie-field in their front. Carey proposed immediate saddling-up. The Prince desired ten minutes longer rest, and Carey did not expostulate. Then the horses were brought up and saddled. Carey stated that at this moment he saw black forms moving behind the screen of tall grain, and informed the Prince. Throughout the day the latter had acted in command of the escort; and he now in soldierly fashion gave the successive orders, "Prepare to Mount!" "Mount!" Next moment, according to the evidence, a volley of twenty or thirty bullets — one witness said forty bullets — were fired into the party.

Let me be done with Carey for good and all. He had mounted on the inner, the safe, side of the hut, and immediately galloped off. On the night of the event, he expressed the opinion that the Prince had been shot dead at the kraal, but owned that the first actual evidence of misfortune of which he became cognizant was the Prince's riderless horse galloping past him. The men were either less active or less precipitate than was the officer. One of their number fell at the kraal, another on the grassy level some 150 yards across, between the kraal and a shallow "donga," or gully, across which ran the path toward the distant camp. As to the Prince, the testimony was fairly unanimous. Sergeant Cochrane stated that he never actually mounted, but had foot in stirrup when, at the Zulu volley, his horse, a spirited gray sixteen hands high and always difficult to mount, started off, presently broke away, and later was caught by the survivors. Then the Prince tried to escape on foot, and was last seen by Cochrane running into the donga, from which he never emerged. Another trooper testified that he saw the Prince try to mount, but that, not succeeding, he ran by his horse's side for some little distance, making effort after effort to mount, till he either stumbled or fell in a scrambling way, and seemed to be trodden on by his horse. But the most detailed evidence was given by trooper Lecocq, a Channel-islander. He stated that after their volley the Zulus bounded out of cover, shouting "Usuta!" ("Cowards!") The Prince was unable to mount his impatient horse, scared as it was by the fire. One by one the troopers galloped by the Prince, who, as he ran alongside his now maddened horse, was endeavoring in vain to mount. As Lecocq passed, lying on his stomach across his saddle, not yet having got his seat, he called to the

Prince, "Dépêchez-vous, s'il vous plait, Monseigneur!" The Prince made no reply, and was left alone to his fate. His horse strained after that of Lecocq, who then saw the doomed Prince holding his stirrup-leather with one hand, grasping reins and pommel with the other and trying to remount on the run. No doubt he made one desperate effort, trusting to the strength of his grasp on the band of leather crossing the pommel from holster to holster. That band tore under the strain. I inspected it next day, and found it no leather at all, but paper-faced—so that the Prince's fate really was attributable to shoddy saddlery. Lecocq saw the Prince fall backward, and his horse tread on him and then gallop away. According to him, the Prince regained his feet, and ran at full speed toward the donga on the track of the retreating party. When for the last time the Jerseyman turned round in the saddle, he saw the Prince still running, pursued only a few yards behind by some twelve or fourteen Zulus, assagais in hand, which they were throwing at him. None save the slayers saw the tragedy enacted in the donga.

Early next morning the cavalry brigade marched out to recover the body, for there was no hope that anything save the body was to be recovered. As the scene was neared, some of us rode forward in advance. In the middle of the little plain was found a body savagely mutilated; it was not that of the Prince, but of one of the slain troopers. We found the dead Prince in the donga, a few paces on one side of the path. He was lying on his back, naked, save for one sock; a spur bent out of shape was close to him. His head was so bent to the right that the cheek touched the sword. His hacked arms were lightly crossed over his lacerated chest, and his face, the features of which were in no wise distorted, but wore a faint smile that slightly parted the lips, was marred by the destruction of the right eye from an assagai-stab. The surgeons agreed that this wound, which penetrated the brain, was the first and the fatal hurt, and that the subsequent wounds were inflicted on a dead body. Of those there were many, in throat, in chest, in side, and on arms, apart from the nick in the abdomen, which is the Zulu fetish-custom invariably prac-

tised on slain enemies as a protection against being haunted by their ghosts. His wounds bled afresh as we moved him. Neither on him nor on any of the three other slain of the party was found any bullet-wound; all had been killed by assagai-stabs. Round the poor Prince's neck his slayers had left a little gold chain, on which were strung a locket set with a miniature of his mother, and a reliquary containing a fragment of the true cross which was given by Pope Leo III. to Charlemagne when he crowned that great prince emperor of the West, and which dynasty after dynasty of French monarchs had since worn as a talisman. Very sad and solemn was the scene as we stood around, silent all and with bared heads, looking down on the untimely dead. The Prince's two servants were weeping bitterly, and there was a lump in many a throat. An officer, his bosom friend at Woolwich, detached the necklet, and placed it in an envelop, with several locks of the Prince's short dark hair, for transmission to his mother, who a year later made so sad a pilgrimage to the spot where we now stood over her dead son. Then the body, wrapped in a cloak, was placed on the lance-shafts of the cavalymen, and on this extemporized bier the officers of the brigade bore it up the ascent to the ambulance-wagon which was in waiting. The same afternoon a solemn funeral service was performed in the Itezezi camp, and later in the evening the body, escorted by a detachment of cavalry, began its pilgrimage to England, in which exile, in the chapel at Farnborough, where the widowed wife and childless mother now resides, the remains of husband and son now rest side by side in their marble sarcophagi. The sword worn in South Africa by the Prince, the veritable sword worn by the first Napoleon from Arcola to Waterloo,—in reference to which the Prince had been heard to say, "I must earn a better right to it than that which my name alone can give me,"—had been carried off by his Zulu slayers, but was restored by Cetewayo when Lord Chelmsford's army was closing in upon Ulundi.

To be slain by savages in an obscure corner of a remote continent was a miserable end, truly, for him who once was the Son of France!

Archibald Forbes.





ENGRAVED BY T. JOHNSON.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY THE LONDON STEREOSCOPIC CO.

THE PRINCE IMPERIAL, IN ARTILLERY UNIFORM.