

THE FRENCH PRINCE: FROM TRAGEDY TO TRANSFORMATION

by GLENN FLANAGAN

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GLENN Flanagan was awarded the highest honour in France with the medal of *L'Ordre de La Légion d'honneur* for her contribution to community outreach, and her research on the French Prince Imperial. Her book describes the narrative of the Prince Imperial, Louis Napoleon, from his birth on 16 March 1856 to his death on 1 June 1879. It posits that this narrative has been transformed from tragedy to transformation via the upliftment of a rural community who have endorsed the concept of tourism through the route that the Prince Imperial Napoleon followed leading to his death. This work then presents a fresh conceptual view of the events of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. The thesis of *The French Prince* is to give the reader a sensitive, nuanced view of this tragic event that unfolded in Natal and to explain how and demonstrate that the tragedy of the death of the Prince Imperial has transformed the lives of both the author and the community where this event happened. Ultimately it hopes to transform the reader by creating awareness and understanding of the past and how it can affect the present. Through diligent research by the author (with accurate referencing), this book is a valuable contribution to the canon of literature on the Anglo-Zulu War and colonial Natal, and thus presents a contemporary discourse about the links that can be forged between various people, cultures, languages and nations.

The volume is divided into eight chapters. Besides following the life

of the Prince Imperial from his birth, through his upbringing and education, it offers the reader valuable insight into societal attitudes of the time via letters that the Prince wrote to his mother while away from home. Despite their translation, these letters suggest a very close relationship between the Prince and his mother, Empress Eugenie, who after his death travelled to Natal and visited places her son had mentioned. At an estimated 1 200 kilometres in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal alone, it made for a considerable distance covered.

The many illustrations and colour photographs have been carefully curated and reproduced to add value to the main premise of the book. The effect of the visual sources adding value to the narrative corroborates the author's intention of showing the reader how the tragedy of this event (in which an Empress travels to another country to bid farewell at the resting place of her only son, the last Bonaparte) affects a community many years later. The community is thus able to be transformed by upliftment and generous donations through this association. Much needed material contributions such as rainwater tanks to store water in times of drought and developing a cultural tourism project with a Zulu-Franco link is described by the author, which is possibly less important than the intangible relationship between the author and the community. Significantly this link goes a long way in demonstrating necessary social cohesion.

This work deserves a place in community, school or university libraries, as well as on the bookshelves of ordinary South Africans who would like to learn more about this province and this original work.

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