

An Empress in Zululand; The Pilgrimage in 1880 by the Empress Eugénie to the site of the death of her son, the Prince Imperial of France

Prof. John Laband

All the royal visitors from Prince Alfred in 1860 to King George VI in 1947 who toured through what is now the South African Province of KwaZulu-Natal were descended from Queen Victoria - with one exception. She was the exiled and widowed Empress Eugénie of France, and even then the purpose of her journey was identical with that of Queen Victoria's daughter Helena (the Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg) who travelled through Natal in 1904 on the way to Pretoria to visit the grave of her son, Maj. Prince Christian Victor ('Christle'), who had died in 1900 of typhoid fever during the Anglo-Boer War. For Eugénie was also making a pilgrimage - not to the grave - but to the place in Zululand where, the year before, on 1 June 1879, her only child, Louis Napoleon, the exiled Prince Imperial of France, had been killed in a minor skirmish near the Tshotshosi River while serving as an observer on the staff of Lt-Gen. Lord Chelmsford, the officer commanding the British forces invading the Zulu kingdom.

Those people close to the exiled Empress, who saw her utterly prostrated when on 20th June 1879 they brought her the news of the death nineteen days earlier of her son and the best hope of those working to restore the Bonapartes to the French throne, thought she would not long survive the devastating blow. Certainly, she did not think so herself. Nevertheless, she lived on a further 41 years, long enough to wish at the time of her 94th and last birthday in 1920 that she could have a flight in an aeroplane. She was, in fact, as this plucky desire demonstrates, an intrepid and venturesome woman of great strength of character, and in 1879 she soon threw off the worst of the terrible grief and depression that engulfed her.

The Prince's body had been brought back to England and buried on 12th July 1879, but the Empress felt she must visit Zululand, not only to see the place where her son had fallen, but to collect all the details relating to his last moments. That way she not only would be able to reconstruct to her own satisfaction the final scene in the exact surroundings where it had been played, but would be equipped to reassure the adherents of the Bonapartist cause that the imperial pretender had died a befittingly soldier's death in the military tradition of his dynasty. As she wrote to her secretary, Franceschini Pietri:

I feel myself drawn towards this pilgrimage as strongly as the Disciples of Christ must have felt drawn towards the Holy Places. The thought of seeing, of retracing the stages of my beloved son's last journey, of seeing with my own eyes the scene upon which his dying gaze has rested, of passing the anniversary of the 1st of June watching and praying alone with his memory, is for me a spiritual necessity and an aim in life.

Queen Victoria, who remembered the Empress in her glory and pitied her fallen state, remained a true friend and great solace. She sentimentally supported the idea of a pilgrimage, paid for and offered every facility for Eugénie's journey.

On the Queen's insistence and in accordance with Eugénie's wish, the Empress was accompanied by Brig-Gen. Sir Evelyn Wood, KCB, VC who had successfully commanded the Left and Flying Columns during the Anglo-Zulu War, and his wife, Paulina, Lady Wood. As early as September 1879 Eugénie had confided to Wood her plan of 'going out to see the spot where her son fell'. Wood, only too aware of the rigours of such a journey, had then done his best to dissuade her, but had declared his willingness to accompany the Empress to Zululand should the Queen approve. The Marquis de Bassano (the son of her chamberlain, the Duc de Bassano) was also of the party, as was Surgeon-Major Frederick Scott who had served on Chelmsford's Personal Staff and who, as Medical Officer in charge of Headquarters, had examined the Prince's body where it had fallen. They were joined by the Hon. Mrs Ronald Campbell. She was born Katherine Cloughton, the daughter of the Bishop of St Albans, and was the widow of Capt. the Hon. Ronald Campbell, Coldstream Guards, the second son of the Earl of Cawdor. He had been Wood's Principal Staff Officer and close friend, and had fallen by his side in the ill-executed assault on Hlobane Mountain on 28th March 1879. His death had left Wood with a burden of remorse, and Eugénie agreed to make a detour in Zululand to allow Mrs Campbell to visit her husband's grave. Two Royal Artillery officers who had served with distinction with No. II Battery, 7th Brigade with Wood's column during the Anglo-Zulu War, and who had been friends and comrades of the Prince (he was trained as an artilleryman in the tradition of the great Napoleon at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich) completed the suite. They were Capt. F.G. Slade and Capt. Arthur Bigge. A complete establishment of servants accompanied them.

Capt. Bigge went ahead to Cape Town to prepare for Eugénie's arrival, landing there on 2nd April 1880. However, Queen Victoria intended him to be more than simply the expedition's glorified quartermaster. She entrusted him with a special and confidential role in the Empress's entourage: he was to be nothing less than

the Queen's eyes and ears, and she commanded him to 'inform' her of its progress. He evidently fulfilled this delicate role to her entire satisfaction, for upon his return from South Africa he was appointed assistant to Sir Henry Ponsonby, the Principal Private Secretary to the Queen, and succeeded him in 1895. Other members of the Empress's suite also reported dutifully to the Queen, but it is his regular reports that provided her with the fullest picture.

Before she left for South Africa, on 6th March 1880 Eugénie returned Queen Victoria the letters her sympathetic royal friend had written her since the death of her son, and entrusted her with a 'small sealed packet to be opened in the case of her death'. For safety's sake Victoria carried the packet about with her everywhere while Eugénie was away. On her return, Eugénie insisted that the Queen open it and keep the contents, which turned out to be a splendid emerald cross, cut of a single stone without any joins, and set at the points with fine diamonds. The King of Spain had given it to Eugénie in 1853 when she married Napoleon III, and she had been keeping it to give the future wife of her son.

The party embarked at Southampton on 25th March 1880 on the Union Steamship Company's *German* which, since her first voyage in 1877, had established a high reputation for speed. Eugénie travelled incognito as Comtesse de Pierrefonds. To ensure her comfort and privacy, three first-class cabins on the port side were set aside for her exclusive use as a drawing room, bedroom and bathroom. They were 'fitted and upholstered in an exceedingly tasteful manner', being hung with silver grey silk crape and splendid mirrors, and furnished with an exquisite writing table in black and gold and other pieces fit for an empress. A crown was painted on the drawing-room door. Her suite occupied five other cabins. During the voyage she was more cheerful than at any time since the Prince's death, chatting with the officers of her party and engaging in fancy needlework on deck with her ladies, even though she found the heat oppressive and the voyage most monotonous. In all, Eugénie's health, as Lady Wood reported to the Queen, much improved on the voyage, although she grew 'a good deal thinner'.

However, by the time the *German* docked in Cape Town on 16th April, the realisation that she was about to view scenes once familiar to her son began sorely to oppress the Empress. At Government House in Cape Town, where the Prince had also stayed the year before, she avoided company and kept herself to the garden. Nevertheless, as the Governor of the Cape, Sir Bartle Frere, wrote to the Prince of Wales, although she liked 'to lead the conversation to anything relating to the poor Prince Imperial, and is often in tears in telling us about him', she managed to take a 'great interest in other things, especially in politics'. Not that Frere himself was in the mood to provide good company. His machinations had initiated the disastrous Anglo-Zulu War and his reputation as an administrator was in tatters in consequence. In August 1880 he would be recalled, his brilliant career over and his high hopes for a peerage dashed.

Eugénie, in Dr Scott's opinion, was continuing to improve greatly 'in health and spirits' when on 20th April she embarked on the *German* for Durban. She arrived there on 23rd April to be greeted by large crowds. Before disembarking she presented Captain Coxwell of the *German* with a handsome breast-pin as a memento of the voyage, and each of the officers with a photograph of herself.

In Durban the Empress stayed in the same rooms in Captain and Mrs Baynton's house which the Prince had occupied. She was much in tears despite the kind attentions of Lt-Gen. Sir Garnet Wolseley who was on his way back to England having, only two days previously (on 21st April), been succeeded as High Commissioner for South-East Africa and Governor of Natal by Sir George Pomeroy Colley. It was while in Durban that she had an encounter which betrayed her deep-seated apprehensions and abiding sense of horror in her son's death, and which gave Wood serious cause for concern. He reported the disquieting incident to the Queen:

We passed three black men running, and the Empress gave a start and a look of terror which made me anxious for her in Zululand. She shuddered, crying "Ce sont des Zulus". I shall of course be very careful not to let any Zulus approach her suddenly, but I fear she will be greatly distressed on first seeing them.

The Empress and her suite departed for Pietermaritzburg as rapidly as they could, which meant on the first leg of the journey taking the train as far as it went. A regular train service between Durban and Botha's Hill had only been inaugurated on 24th March 1879, and the difficult stretch in the vicinity of Inchanga, where nine iron girder bridges and a short tunnel were required, had still to be completed. Thus it was not until 21st October 1880 that the rails finally reached Pietermaritzburg, and the Empress had to alight at the end of the line 35 miles from Durban at Bolton's Creek, where a makeshift platform had been hurriedly completed only 48 hours before. Escorted by the Natal Mounted Police, Eugénie proceeded the rest of the way to Pietermaritzburg by carriage.

In the colonial capital, the Empress was touched by the character of the crowds who maintained 'a respectful silence similar to that which one tries to maintain in a sickroom', while the men uncovered their

heads and the women curtseyed. However, all this studiously followed decorum was ruined by boys and men 'of the lower classes' who broke through the lines and rode up close to the Empress's carriage, 'staring in a most vulgar manner' into it.

She stayed at Government House where the Prince had also lodged, and a constable and an orderly were stationed at the entrance to prevent the public from entering the grounds - though no one was so crass as to make the attempt. Determined to tread in her son's footsteps, she walked as he had done the short way from Government House in Longmarket Street to St Mary's Roman Catholic Chapel in Loop Street. At the convent next door she visited the Holy Family Sisters who had prayed over her son's remains while he lay in state in St. Mary's, expressing her gratitude with a large donation. However, while she toured the convent with the Mother Superior she broke down utterly. Nor was it surprising that she did so for, as Bigge had put it when explaining to the Queen why Eugénie (despite the wishes of the local Roman Catholics) could never have stayed within the convent's walls, it was there that 'the ghastly operation of identifying and changing the body from one coffin to another was carried out'. While in the city the Empress assisted at Mass in the private chapel of Bishop Charles Jolivet, and visited the various Catholic schools where she presented the pupils with little gifts and photographs of the Prince. Although deeply affected, she carried out these duties in an affable and approachable manner. The mayor, Peter Davis, whose firm, P. Davis & Sons, was the Colony's leading printers and the owner of the *Natal Witness* newspaper, was granted a long interview. During the meeting, Eugénie made a point of expressing her sympathy over his son, Trooper Harry Davis of the Natal Carbineers who, at the age of twenty, had been killed at battle of Isandlwana. The Prince Imperial had been only 23.

The Empress left Pietermaritzburg quietly and unostentatiously on 29th April, and it took her 26 days to reach the Tshotshosi River. She travelled in a Spider carriage drawn by four (rather than the normal two) horses, with either Lady Wood or with Mrs Campbell as companion. Wood himself drove. The Spider was the South African version of the American buggy, so called because the light, small body of the carriage, slung on four disproportionately large but slender wheels, gave a distinctly spidery impression. But it was a comfortable vehicle, and its high wheels were good for negotiating rivers and drifts. The Spider and its occupants were escorted by a guard of honour of 20 Natal Mounted Police under Sgt Faddy. The whole party, including cooks, servants and wagon drivers, numbered 75 persons besides 200 horses, mules and other animals, most of which had been supplied by the Natal government. This caravan never travelled less than twelve miles a day, which was good going considering its size and the rough state of the state of the dirt tracks but, as Bigge reported to the Queen, the Empress complained of the slowness of her progress, though the moment she reached places visited by the Prince she became 'much less restless'.

Camping mainly at suitable sites by the road, and setting out early each morning to avoid the heat of the day, the party travelled north by way of Greytown, Mooi River, Umsinga, Helpmekaar, Dundee, Landman's Drift, Utrecht and Conference Hill to Khambula Hill. At these places Eugénie visited every site - whether camp, laager or house - that was associated with the Prince. At a small roadside inn at Mooi River on 4th May the Empress was again - as she had been in Durban - thrown into emotional turmoil when confronted by a party of Zulus. Bigge described the encounter to Queen Victoria:

Suddenly the well know cry of respectful greeting "*Inkose*" was heard and a body of about 50 natives carrying assegais and sticks appeared - Poor Empress, as we who know her best anticipated, the first sight of the assegai caused her great emotion and it was truly a sad scene, she overwhelmed with grief with these almost naked natives sitting in a semi-circle before her ignorant of the sorrow caused by their presence.

However, it was best, Bigge reflected, that the 'inevitable trial' of coming face-to-face with Zulu armed with the very sort of weapons that had killed the Prince 'should be got over'. At Landman's Drift Melmoth Osborn, the British Resident in Zululand, who presided ineffectually over the thirteen weak but quarrelsome chiefdoms into which the British had fragmented the once powerful Zulu kingdom after their victory in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, was waiting on Sir Garnet Wolseley's orders to accompany the Empress through Zululand. But, as Bigge explained to the Queen, Eugénie did not wish 'any strangers' to join her party, so Osborn returned rather ignominiously 'to his station'. In any case, the Empress was not ready yet to east head for Zululand and the Tshotshosi River. Not only were there still places in the Transvaal to visit associated with her son, but she had undertaken to go on to Hlobane so that Mrs Campbell could place her tribute on her husband's grave. So when on 8 May her party crossed over the Blood (Ncome) River at Landman's Drift into the Transvaal Colony, it turned north towards Utrecht. Ostensibly to avoid unnecessary 'public demonstrations', Eugénie handled Sir Owen Lanyon, the Administrator of the Transvaal, as she had Osborn, and turned down his dutiful offer to escort her over the Transvaal border.

The Empress travelled to Utrecht by way of Balte Spruit on 11th May. There she visited the house

where the Prince had stayed, and had lunch with Gerhardus Rudolph, the Landdrost of Utrecht, who was held in some suspicion by his fellow Boers for his pro-British stance. Turning south, on 12 May she saw the fort built in May 1879 at Conference Hill named 'Fort Napoleon in her son's honour, and finally crossed the Blood (Ncome) river into Zululand on 13th May, reaching Khambula Hill the following day.

At Khambula on 16th May, Wood proudly showed the Empress where, on 29th March 1879, he had broken the Zulu army in the decisive battle of the Anglo-Zulu War. Both Bigge and Slade had gallantly fought their guns in the same action. Wood's feelings must have been rather different on 21st May when he rode and walked up the eastern end of Hlobane Mountain with the Empress and Mrs Campbell. That had been a disastrous affray, and Wood was fortunate that the battle of Khambula the next day had effectively obliterated criticism of his unquestionably inept generalship on 28th March 1879. The party retraced his route on the day of the battle, and Wood supervised the erection of a stone headstone for Mrs Campbell's husband or replaced the wooden headboard erected by the family of Llewellyn Lloyd (Wood's Political Assistant in 1879) who had fallen in the same engagement and been buried alongside Campbell.

From the moment the expedition had left Pietermaritzburg, the ladies dressed in white helmets and dust coats, and wore top boots and skirts made somewhat shorter than usual as a precaution against snake-bite. The Empress continued volatile, seeming to Bigge at times 'bright and cheerful but oftentimes sorely depressed'. She was sleeping badly. At times she sat in her tent, reading and re-reading letters written her by her son; at others she walked miles in the evening after the party had bivouacked for the night. She was torn between impatience to arrive at the Tshotshosi River and dread at what awaited her. For some days she suffered from a fever that reached its height in the bitterly cold weather at Khambula where her 'wonderfully arranged' tent was nearly swept away in heavy rain and winds.

Generally, though, the Empress was happier than when she had been subjected to the curious stares from the crowds in Cape Town, Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Unavoidably, though, her Zululand pilgrimage was newsworthy, and she was hard put to evade a sensationalist and extremely tenacious woman writer and correspondent for the *New York Herald* who went by the name of 'Lady Avonmore'. This journalist had arrived in Natal, Bigge indignantly explained to the Queen, with the intention writing a biography of the Prince Imperial, and she wanted - in emulation of the Empress - to visit the sites associated with him. That was intrusive enough, but she unpardonably claimed to be 'a dear friend' of the Empress and 'personally known' to her, insisting on being allowed to join her to 'testify her sympathy and affection'. Eugénie had never heard of the importunate journalist, and would have nothing to do with her. Since Sir Bartle Frere was determined to secure the Empress from intrusions by journalists, a heavy-weight deputation consisting of Wood and the Natal Colonial Secretary, Lt. Col C.B.H. Mitchell, intervened in an attempt to head 'Lady Avonmore' off in Durban and to dissuade her from starting in pursuit of Eugénie. Undeterred, she travelled north to Rorke's Drift on the Buffalo (Mzinyathi) River, and Bigge had then to make a special expedition south all the way from the camp at Munhla Hill (midway between Khambula and the Tshotshosi River) to cut her off. Adept at dissimulation, she persuaded the honourable Bigge that she would 'desist' but, as events were to prove, had no intention of keeping her lightly given word.

At last, on 25th May, Eugénie reached the Tshotshosi River from Khambula by way of Munhla Hill, very much the route Wood's Flying Column had followed in May 1879, and a part of Zululand the Prince had participated in reconnoitring. Wood telegraphed Queen Victoria of her safe arrival, reporting she was as well as could be expected. The empathetic Queen understood Eugénie's likely state of mind and commented in her Journal: '...under such mental trial poor dear Empress, it must be too awful!' Indeed it must have been. For a week the grief-stricken Eugénie stayed at the Tshotshosi, sleeping badly, sustaining herself with beef tea and little else, and praying on the spot where her son had fallen. She walked up and down the path from Sobhuza's homestead where, on the fatal day, the prince and his patrol had dismounted and refreshed themselves, and where her tent was pitched, to the donga where the Prince, unable to mount his horse and cravenly abandoned by his companions, had been speared to death by the Zulu party who had ambushed them.

Unhappily, the Empress was, as the Marquis of Bassano reported, disappointed with her impression of the spot where her son had died. Several well-meaning British efforts to tidy it up had made it resemble in its orderliness more an English graveyard than the wild and romantic scene of carnage Eugénie had imagined. Initially, men of the 1st (the King's) Dragoon Guards, who had recovered the Prince's body on the day following his death, had built a small stone cairn over the place where the Prince's stripped, stabbed and ritually slit body had lain. The 2/21st Regiment (Royal Scots Fusiliers) who, like the Dragoon Guards, were part of the Second Division invading Zululand, had subsequently erected a temporary wooden board on the site commemorating the Prince's death.

Then, in preparation for the Empress's visit, Sir Garnet Wolseley had despatched a party of Commissariat men and horses commanded by Major Henry Sparke Stabb, 32nd Foot - who had fought at the

battle of Ulundi and who had remained in Natal as president of a board investigating and settling claims made by the colonists for losses suffered during the Anglo-Zulu War - to make a determined assault on the site between 18th and 29th March. Behind the cairn Stabb's men erected a stone cross (made by Jesse Smith of 25 Loop Street, Pietermaritzburg, the Colony's leading stonemason, at the cost of £35.12s.5d) to replace the 21st Regiment's board, and settled it firmly in a broad foundation of concrete. In doing so, they were following Queen Victoria's specific instructions for, as Stabb expressed it in his full report on the expedition, 'Her Majesty desired [the cross] to be placed to mark the spot' where the Prince fell. This 'private and personal act of the Queen', as Sir Henry Ponsonby (her Principal Private Secretary) characterised it, unfortunately caused some annoyance in Natal circles. The prickly colonial authorities considered themselves snubbed and believed that they ought to have been 'officially entrusted' with the work instead of the Queen commissioning Lady Frere to do it privately on her behalf.

Having placed the cross, which Bigge in his report on the expedition to the Queen referred to as 'Your Majesty's Memorial Cross', Stabb's work party, to prevent the summer rains washing their handiwork away, used dynamite to redirect the course of the donga. Then, as the finishing touches, they planted a few 'hardy trees' obtained from the Pietermaritzburg Botanical Gardens and built a stone wall to surround the whole site.

To the Empress, who had imagined that she would see the vestiges of the grass trodden by her son in his dying moments, it was a dreadful blow to find the concrete layer and the very soil of the donga carefully raked for her inspection. Understanding her dismayed response, Captain Slade removed the layer of concrete which so offended her and restored the site to something closer to the natural terrain the Empress had nourished in her mind's eye. In accordance with her own conception of how the place where her son had died should be embellished, Eugénie planted the willow and ivy she had brought from Camden Place, the house at Chislehurst which, since September 1870, had been the home in exile for herself and her son, and where Napoleon III had died on 9th January 1873.

While at the Tshotshosi River the Empress could not sleep for, as she told Pietri in a letter of 30th May, her soul was 'full of bitterness, regrets and sorrow'. She could only find some peace when near the spot where the Prince had fallen. On the afternoon of 31st May she insisted on finding the site the Prince had selected during the course of his fatal patrol for the next camp of the advancing Second Division, and where he had made his last sketch. The place was three hours away on foot but, as Bassano who accompanied her reported, she walked 'with a sort of feverish strength', eating absolutely nothing on the way. On horseback and in the company of Wood and the other officers, Eugénie also crossed the donga through which Lt Carey and the survivors of the patrol had galloped on 1st June 1879. She was overwhelmed with bitterness when she contemplated how Carey had so obviously and cravenly left her precious son to be 'so wantonly sacrificed'.

One of the Empress's main purposes in visiting Zululand was to gain definitive proof for herself and her followers that her son had died a brave and gallant soldier in the Bonapartist tradition to which he was heir. However, she could not bear to see any of the Zulu who had been involved in the fatal skirmish, so while she communed with her son's memory in the vicinity of the donga where the Prince had died, Wood took the opportunity between 26 May and 1 June to examine thirteen of the Zulu involved, inducing them to testify (Bigge informed the Queen) with 'presents of blankets, beads and money'. Later, on the return journey from Zululand, Wood elicited a statement from a fourteenth Zulu in the Batshe valley near Isandlwana on 3rd June, and from a fifteenth in Durban on 24th June. By command of Queen Victoria the statements were kept confidential.

The Zulu witnesses' evidence was remarkably consistent, and Wood was able to assure the Empress and proud mother that without the shadow of a doubt her son had indeed stood his ground and, in the words of Langalibalele, who had seen him fall, 'fought like a lion'. But this knowledge was in itself bitter. She could not restrain herself when giving vent to her anguish in a letter to Pietri on 30th May from deploring most ungraciously that the only witnesses to her son's courage were 'a handful of savages one degree removed from the brute!'

The evidence collected by Wood also had the unfortunate effect, as had earlier the sanitised condition of the donga where the Prince had been killed, of cruelly dispelling a romantic image that the Empress had formed in her own mind. She had imagined her son lying dead with his sword in his hand, and was considerably taken aback when Wood told her that the Prince had evidently lost his sword in the mêlée, and had fought to the end with his revolver and a spear seized from his foes. Slade found it difficult to persuade her that it was actually braver for him to have stoutly defended himself in that way than with his own sword.

Ironically, as the dread day of the anniversary of her son's death finally dawned, the shameless 'Lady Avonmore' had the beneficial effect of taking the Empress's mind off the Prince for a few moments. On 1st June she camped five miles from the Empress, and Wood, Bassano and Bigge went across determined to see her off on this, of all days. As ever, she was full of lies and evasions that were remorselessly exposed as such at every turn, but everyone remained civil and she agreed finally to keep her distance - but not before quite

astonishing Bigge with her 'audacity'.

The Empress marked the anniversary of her son's death by passing the whole night of 1st–2nd June in prayer by the cairn. Speaking of it later, she clearly believed it had been a mystical experience:

More than once I noticed black forms on the top of the banks, which moved silently about and watched me through the tall grasses. This scrutiny was full of curiosity, but it was not hostile. I believe these savages wished rather to express their sympathy and their pity! And doubtless these were the very same men who had killed my son on the same spot...Towards morning a strange thing happened. Although there was not a breath of air, the flames of the candles were suddenly deflected, as if someone wished to extinguish them, and I said to him: "Is it indeed you beside me? Do you wish me to go away?"

Once the fatal anniversary had passed, the Empress was anxious to be gone, though suffering from an attack of sciatica brought on by the strain and cold of her vigil. On 3rd June the party moved south to encamp at the Batshe River while the Empress inspected the countryside which had been sketched by the Prince when out on patrol in late May 1880. The next bivouac was formed on 5th June at the battlefield of Isandlwana, half a mile away from the stricken British camp of 22nd January 1879, where some of the bones of the British dead still lay unburied, despite the efforts of several burial parties over the preceding months. Eugénie insisted that they stop and spend a day covering the poor remains with earth, and for two hours she took part in the work.

The Empress and her party pressed forward on 8th June to Rorke's Drift where they crossed back into Natal from Zululand. Her mission accomplished, the Empress allowed herself to sink into a deep depression and was very irritable to her companions. Wood reported to the Queen on 10th June that over the previous three days Eugénie had been 'very low and desponding' and had ceased to eat. But the journey had to continue. By way of Estcourt (where on 16th June she paid a visit to Maj.-Gen. B.P.Lloyd, who had been in command of Colonial Defensive District No II during the Anglo-Zulu War), and on through Howick, the Empress's party regained Pietermaritzburg on 19th June. Seemingly well but slightly sunburned (so the local newspaper commented), Eugénie stayed less than two days at Government House. Outside the main gates, in Longmarket Street, a tent was erected in which the 'leading residents' of the City could enter their names in the visitors' book. On the Sunday she attended Mass celebrated by Bishop Jolivet. Afterwards, at her request, she had an interview over several hours with John Colenso, the first Anglican Bishop of Natal. His unorthodox theology had led to his excommunication and a schism in the Anglican community, and his protests against the unjustness of the Anglo-Zulu War had brought him into conflict with the military authorities and with many colonists. But he was a man of immense character, learning and integrity, and it says well for the Empress that she wanted to meet him, despite the disapproval this must have occasioned in many local colonial circles.

On Monday, 21st June Wood drove the Empress and Lady Wood from Pietermaritzburg to Botha's Hill, the terminus of the railway back to Durban. Wood had barely started on his way back after taking leave the Empress when the connecting rod which fastened the fore-carriage to the after part of the Spider snapped in two. Fortunately for Wood, the horses were only going at a steady trot, but if he had been cantering as he had been earlier with the Empress, who liked to travel fast, she most likely would have suffered a dangerous accident. In Durban Eugénie spent the night in the home of the sympathetic Bayntons, before embarking on the *Asiatic* the next morning, transshipping at Algoa Bay on 26th June to the Union Company's steam-ship *Trojan*, bound for Southampton.

On the way home the Empress landed on 12th July at Jamestown on St Helena, the island where the British had held the great Napoleon captive after Waterloo, and where he had died in 1821. The exiled and widowed Empress toured the houses where he had lived, staying more than an hour at Longwood where he had died, minutely inspecting every room. Fresh from Zululand where the current hope of the dynasty had perished, she commented: 'I am the only person named Bonaparte who will have visited the place where the founder of our race died'.

The *Trojan* docked in Plymouth in the early hours of 27th July, and the Empress went straight home to Chislehurst. The next morning, 'tired and worn' after a 'bad night', she wrote at once to Queen Victoria, her empathetic friend who had exercised her royal influence to marshal the support necessary to ease and finance Eugénie's every step on her pilgrimage to Zululand. Her words were ungrammatical but deeply felt: 'Thank [sic] most heartily for constant solicitude'. A few days after the first anniversary of her pilgrimage, on 5th June 1881, a more collected Empress wrote to Wood, gratefully thanking him for his kindness and sympathy, and for all the trouble he had taken in making her journey to the Tshotshosi River possible. She concluded sadly of her pilgrimage that 'altho trying, it was some consolation in my ever lasting sorrow'.