

Child of Storm

By

H. Rider Haggard

DEDICATION

Dear Mr. Stuart,

For twenty years, I believe I am right in saying, you, as Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal, and in other offices, have been intimately acquainted with the Zulu people. Moreover, you are one of the few living men who have made a deep and scientific study of their language, their customs and their history. So I confess that I was the more pleased after you were so good as to read this tale--the second book of the epic of the vengeance of Zikali, "the Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born," and of the fall of the House of Senzangakona[*]--when you wrote to me that it was animated by the true Zulu spirit.

[*--"Marie" was the first. The third and final act in the drama is yet to come.].

I must admit that my acquaintance with this people dates from a period which closed almost before your day. What I know of them I gathered at the time when Cetewayo, of whom my volume tells, was in his glory, previous to the evil hour in which he found himself driven by the clamour of his regiments, cut off, as they were, through the annexation of the Transvaal, from their hereditary trade of war, to match himself against the British strength. I learned it all by personal observation

in the 'seventies, or from the lips of the great Shepstone, my chief and friend, and from my colleagues Osborn, Fynney, Clarke and others, every one of them long since "gone down."

Perhaps it may be as well that this is so, at any rate in the case of one who desires to write of the Zulus as a reigning nation, which now they have ceased to be, and to try to show them as they were, in all their superstitious madness and bloodstained grandeur.

Yet then they had virtues as well as vices. To serve their Country in arms, to die for it and for the King; such was their primitive ideal. If they were fierce they were loyal, and feared neither wounds nor doom; if they listened to the dark reds of the witch-doctor, the trumpet-call of duty sounded still louder in their ears; if, chanting their terrible "Ingoma," at the King's bidding they went forth to slay unsparingly, at least they were not mean or vulgar. From those who continually must face the last great issues of life or death meanness and vulgarity are far removed. These qualities belong to the safe and crowded haunts of civilised men, not to the kraals of Bantu savages, where, at any rate of old, they might be sought in vain.

Now everything is changed, or so I hear, and doubtless in the balance this is best. Still we may wonder what are the thoughts that pass through the mind of some ancient warrior of Chaka's or Dingaan's time, as he suns himself crouched on the ground, for example, where once stood the royal kraal, Duguza, and watches men and women of the Zulu blood

passing homeward from the cities or the mines, bemused, some of them, with the white man's smuggled liquor, grotesque with the white man's cast-off garments, hiding, perhaps, in their blankets examples of the white man's doubtful photographs--and then shuts his sunken eyes and remembers the plumed and kilted regiments making that same ground shake as, with a thunder of salute, line upon line, company upon company, they rushed out to battle.

Well, because the latter does not attract me, it is of this former time that I have tried to write--the time of the Impis and the witch-finders and the rival princes of the royal House--as I am glad to learn from you, not quite in vain. Therefore, since you, so great an expert, approve of my labours in the seldom-travelled field of Zulu story, I ask you to allow me to set your name upon this page and subscribe myself,

Gratefully and sincerely yours,

H. RIDER HAGGARD.

Ditchingham, 12th October, 1912.

To James Stuart, Esq., Late Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs,
Natal.