

## BYRON'S NAPOLEONIC POEMS



Of these, the first and best-known poem is post-Leipzig, but pre-Hundred Days, and the rest, less well-known, are post-Waterloo. When Byron wrote his *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, Napoleon was apparently defeated, and on his way to the island of Elba, but, though the world did not know it, had plenty left in him. When the rest of the poems were written, Napoleon had returned from Elba, expelled the Bourbons once again from France, but had lost Waterloo, been sent to the much more remote island of St Helena, and was finished. The result is a great difference in tone between the works. In the earlier *Ode* Byron criticises and mocks Napoleon for having promised so much, delivered so little, and ended so ingloriously. In the later poems, events since 1814 having invalidated his previous attitude, Byron has much more sympathy for him, especially in the light of his own intervening domestic misery. *Napoleon's Farewell* will come as a shock to those who know only the *Ode*, and should be read straight after it. It is in a more popular, Moore-ish idiom, is overtly empathetic, and may be intended as an act of atonement for having written the harsh *Ode*. The *Ode* itself is highly artificial, highly literary in inspiration. *Napoleon's Farewell* altogether less pretentious: "Gaul" becomes "France" again.

Most of the poems were at first published anonymously, and, despite the subtitles, none of them are translations.

The source for many of the ideas in the *Ode* are to be found in Byron's journal entries for April 8th-10th 1814:

*April 8th.*

Out of town six days. On my return, found my poor little pagod,<sup>1</sup> Napoleon, pushed off his pedestal; – the thieves are in Paris. It is his own fault. Like Milo,<sup>2</sup> he would rend the oak; but it closed again, wedged his hands, and now the beasts – lion, bear, down to the dirtiest jackall – may all tear him. The Muscovite winter *wedged* his arms; – ever since, he has fought with his feet and teeth. The last may still leave their marks; and "I guess now" (as the Yankees say) that he will yet play them a pass. He is in their rear – between them and their homes. Query – will they ever reach them?

*Saturday, April 9th, 1814.*

I mark this day!

Napoleon Buonaparte has abdicated the throne of the world. "Excellent well". Methinks Sylla<sup>3</sup> did better; for he revenged and resigned in the height of his sway, red with the slaughter of his foes – the finest instance of glorious contempt for the rascals upon record. Dioclesian did well too – Amurath not amis, had he become aught except a dervise – Charles V<sup>4</sup> but so so – but Napoleon, worst of all. What! wait till they were in his capital, and then talk of his readiness, to give up what is already gone!! "What whining monk art thou – what holy cheat?" 'Sdeath! – Dionysus at Corinth<sup>5</sup> was yet a king to this. The "Isle of Elba" to retire to! – Well – if it had been Caprea,<sup>6</sup> I

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1: See *Ode*, line 26.

2: See *Ode*, line 46.

3: See *Ode*, line 55.

4: See *Ode*, line 64.

5: See *Ode*, line 125.

6: The island to which the Emperor Tiberius retired, only to return to Rome later.

should have marvelled less. "I see men's minds are but a parcel of their fortunes." I am utterly bewildered – and confounded.

I don't know – but I think, *I*, even *I* (an insect compared with this creature), have set my life on casts not a millionth part of this man's. But, after all, a crown may not be worth dying for. Yet to outlive *Lodi* for this!! Oh that Juvenal<sup>7</sup> or Johnson<sup>8</sup> could rise from the dead! "Expende – quot libras in duce summo invenies?"<sup>9</sup> I knew they were light in the balance of mortality; but I thought their living dust outweighed more *carats*. Alas! this imperial diamond hath a flaw in it, and is now hardly fit to stick in a glazier's pencil: – the pen of the historian won't rate it worth a ducat.

Psha! "something too much of this." But I won't give him up even now; though all his admirers have, "Like the Thanes, fallen from him."

*April 10th.*

... To-day I have boxed one hour – written an Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte – copied it – eaten six biscuits – drunk four bottles of soda water – redde away the rest of my time ...<sup>10</sup>

In 1821 he summed up the poems for Thomas Medwin:

I told him I could never reconcile the contradictory opinions he had expressed of Napoleon in his poems.

"How could it be otherwise?" said he. "Some of them were called translations, and I spoke in the character of a Frenchman and a soldier. But Napoleon was his own antithesis (if I may say so). He was a glorious tyrant, after all. Look at his public works: compare his face, even on his coins, with those of the other sovereigns of Europe. I blame the manner of his death: he shewed that he possessed much of the Italian character in consenting to live. There he lost himself in his dramatic character, in my estimation. He was master of his own destiny; of *that*, at least, his enemies could not deprive him. He should have gone off the stage like a hero: it was expected of him".<sup>11</sup>

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Those interested in reading a fuller account of Byron's attitude to Napoleon than can be given here are referred to the following essays by John Clubbe:

- 1: "Byron and Napoleon 1814-1816" in *Literaria Pragensia* 3 (1993) 42-57
- 2: "By the Emperor Possessed: Byron and Napoleon in Italy and Greece (1816-1824)" in Raizis (ed.) *Byron and the Mediterranean World*, 1995, 105-115; see also for an amplification of the above, "Between Emperor and Exile. Byron and Napoleon, 1814-1816" in *Napoleonic Scholarship*; the journal of the International Napoleonic Society, 1 (April 1997) 70-84
- 3: "Dramatic Hits: Napoleon and Shakespeare in Byron's 1813-1814 Journal" in Gassenmeier et al (eds.) *British Romantics as Readers*, Heidelberg 1998, 271-94
- 4: "Napoleon and the Young Byron" in Scotti Douglas (ed.) *L'Europa Scopra Napoleone*, Alessandria: dell'Orso, 1999, 1, 339-53
- 5: "The Fall of Napoleon: The Corsair Revisited" in Tessier (ed.) *Lord Byron: A Multi-Disciplinary Open Forum*, Versailles 1999 7-15
- 6: "Byron and Goya: Childe Harold I" in Raizis (ed.) *Byron a Poet For All Seasons*, Messalonghi 2000, 53-63
- 7: "Byron and Napoleon: The Obsession, the Daimonic, Transference and Imaginative Freedom" in the 2000 Nottingham Byron Conference book (not yet published).

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7: See *Ode*, first epigraph.

8: Johnson's *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is a modernised version of Juvenal's Tenth satire. See line 40n.

9: See *Ode*, first epigraph.

10: BLJ III 256-7.

11: Medwin ed. Lovell, pp.184-5.

## ODE TO NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE

[Byron wrote the poem in several stages. The earliest manuscript (at Texas) was created on April 10th 1814, and contains stanzas 1, 4, 6-12, and 14-16; Byron then added stanzas 5, 13, 2, and 3 to it. Stanzas 17, 18 and 19 were written – so it used to be said – at the request of John Murray, to increase the size of the book and thus to avoid paying stamp tax on it. But Andrew Nicholson, in *Napoleon's 'last act' and Byron's Ode*, (Romanticism 9.1, 2003, p.68) writes that there was no such condition attached to stamp tax.

The Ode was published at high speed, first anonymously (with fifteen stanzas) on April 16th 1814. All editions from the third onwards have an additional stanza 5. Not until the twelfth edition does Byron's name appear. Stanzas 17, 18, and 19 were not printed in Byron's lifetime. Byron wanted to dedicate the poem to Hobhouse, but Hobhouse declined.]

“Expende Annibalem:—quot libras in duce summo  
Invenies?—

JUVENAL, Sat.X.<sup>12</sup>

“The Emperor Nepos<sup>13</sup> was acknowledged by the *Senate*, by the *Italians*, and by the Provincials of *Gaul*; his moral virtues, and military talents, were loudly celebrated; and those who derived any private benefit from his government, announced in prophetic strains the restoration of public felicity.

\* \* \* \* \*

“By this shameful abdication, he protracted his life a few years, in a very ambiguous state, between an Emperor and an Exile, till———

*Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, vol. 6, p.220.

1.

'Tis done – but yesterday a King!  
And armed with Kings to strive –  
And now thou art a nameless thing:  
So abject – yet alive!  
Is this the Man of thousand thrones, 5  
Who strewed our earth with hostile bones,  
And can he thus survive?  
Since he, miscalled the Morning Star,<sup>14</sup>  
Nor man nor fiend hath fallen so far. –

2.

Ill-minded man! why scourge thy kind 10  
Who bowed so low the knee?  
By gazing on thyself grown blind,  
Thou taught'st the rest to see;  
With might unquestioned – power to save –  
Thine only gift hath been the grave 15  
To those that worshipped thee;  
Nor till thy fall could mortals guess

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**12:** “Put Hannibal in the scales: how many pounds will that peerless / General mark up today?” – tr. Peter Green. The first of many references to historical and mythical over-reachers with which B. cuts Napoleon down to size.

**13:** Julius Nepos, Emperor of the Western Roman Empire after it had ceased to exist. Killed by his own men.

**14: BYRON'S NOTE:** Lucifer was Satan's name before he rebelled and fell.

Ambition's less than littleness! –

3.

Thanks for that lesson – it will teach  
To after-warriors more 20  
Than high Philosophy can preach,  
And vainly preached before.  
That spell upon the minds of men  
Breaks, never to unite again,  
That led them to adore 25  
Those Pagod things of sabre-sway,  
With fronts of brass, and feet of clay.

4.

The triumph, and the vanity,  
The rapture of the strife \* –  
The earthquake-voice of Victory, 30  
To thee the breath of Life;  
The sword, the sceptre, and that sway  
Which Man seemed made but to obey,  
Wherewith Renown was rife –  
All quelled! – Dark Spirit! what must be 35  
The Madness of thy Memory!

\* *Certaminis gaudia*, the expression of Attila in his harangue to his army, previous to the battle of Chalons, given in Cassiodorus.<sup>15</sup>

5.<sup>16</sup>

The Desolator desolate!  
The Victor overthrown!  
The Arbiter of others' fate  
A Suppliant for his own!<sup>17</sup> 40  
Is it some yet imperial hope  
That with such change can calmly cope,  
Or dread of death alone?  
To die a Prince – or live a slave –  
Thy choice is most ignobly brave!<sup>18</sup> 45

6.

He \* who of old would rend the oak,  
Dreamed not of the rebound;  
Chained by the trunk he vainly broke –  
Alone – how looked he round?  
Thou, in the sternness of thy strength, 50

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**15:** Attila the Hun lost the battle of Challons (451 AD).

**16:** Received stanza 5 does not appear in the first editions.

**17:** Echoes Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, 213-14: *Condemn'd a needy Suppliant to wait, / While Ladies interpose, and Slaves debate*. A reference to Charles XII of Sweden, Johnson's equivalent to Juvenal's Hannibal.

**18:** Napoleon attempted suicide while this poem was in proof stage.



And Earth hath spilt her blood for him,  
 Who thus can hoard his own!  
 And Monarchs bowed the trembling limb,  
 And thanked him for a throne! 85  
 Fair Freedom! we may hold thee dear,  
 When thus thy mightiest foes their fear  
 In humblest guise have shown.  
 Oh! ne'er may tyrant leave behind  
 A brighter name to lure mankind! 90

11.

Thine evil deeds are writ in gore,  
 Nor written thus in vain –  
 Thy triumphs tell of fame no more,  
 Or deepen every stain:  
 If thou hadst died as Honour dies. 95  
 Some new Napoleon might arise,  
 To shame the world again –  
 But who would soar the solar height,  
 To set in such a starless night?

12.

Weighed in the balance, hero dust 100  
 Is vile as vulgar clay;  
 Thy scales, Mortality! are just  
 To all that pass away:  
 But yet methought the living great  
 Some higher sparks should animate, 105  
 To dazzle and dismay:  
 Nor deem'd Contempt could thus make mirth  
 Of these, the Conquerors of the earth.

13.

And she, proud Austria's mournful flower,  
 Thy still imperial bride;<sup>22</sup> 110  
 How bears her breast the torturing hour?  
 Still clings she to thy side?  
 Must she too bend, must she too share  
 Thy late repentance, long despair,  
 Thou throneless Homicide? 115  
 If still she loves thee, hoard that gem, –  
 'Tis worth thy vanished Diadem!

14.

Then haste thee to thy sullen Isle,<sup>23</sup>  
 And gaze upon the Sea;  
 That element may meet thy smile – 120  
 It ne'er was ruled by thee!<sup>24</sup>

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**22:** Napoleon's second wife, Maria Louisa, daughter of the Austrian Emperor.  
**23:** Elba.

Or trace with thine all idle hand  
 In loitering mood upon the sand  
 That Earth is now as free!  
 That Corinth's pedagogue<sup>25</sup> hath now  
 Transferred his by-word to thy brow. – 125

15.

Thou Timour! in his Captive's cage \*  
 What thoughts will there be thine,  
 While brooding in thy prisoned rage?  
 But one – "The World *was* mine!" 130  
 Unless, like he of Babylon,<sup>26</sup>  
 All Sense is with thy Sceptre gone,  
 Life will not long confine  
 That Spirit poured so widely forth –  
 So long obeyed – so little worth! 135

\* The cage of Bajazet, by order of Tamerlane.<sup>27</sup>

16.

Or, like the thief of fire \* from heaven,  
 Wilt thou withstand the shock?  
 And share with him, the unforgiven,  
 His vulture and his rock!  
 Foredoomed by God – by man accurst, 140  
 And that last act, though not thy worst,  
 The very Fiend's arch mock; †  
 He in his fall preserved his pride,  
 And, if a mortal, had as proudly died!

\* Prometheus.<sup>28</sup>

† "The fiend's arch mock—

"To lip a wanton, and suppose her chaste."—

*Shakespeare.*<sup>29</sup>

[17.

*There was a day – there was an hour,* 145

**24:** English naval victories, particularly those of Nelson, had destroyed French naval power.

**25:** Dionysus the Younger of Syracuse, the tyrant whom Plato tried to tutor, was expelled from the city and set himself up as a schoolteacher in Corinth.

**26:** Nebuchadnezzar.

**27: BYRON'S NOTE:** Legend has it that, upon defeating him, Tamburlaine the Great imprisoned Bajazet, the Turkish Emperor, in a travelling cage. Byron parallels Bajazet with Napoleon and Tamburlaine with Wellington.

**28: BYRON'S NOTE:** Prometheus, who was punished by Zeus for stealing fire from Heaven and giving it to Man. Fastened to a rock, he was visited daily by a vulture which ate his liver. B. wrote the following at some time in 1814, addressed to Napoleon, and referring to Prometheus:

Unlike the offence, though like would be the fate,  
*His* to give life, but *thine* to desolate;  
*He* stole from Heaven the flame, for which he fell,  
 Whilst *thine* was stolen from the native Hell. (CPW III 269)

**29: BYRON'S NOTE:** Iago's words at *Othello*, IV i 70-1.

*While earth was Gaul's – Gaul thine –  
 When that immeasurable power  
 Unsated to resign  
 Had been an act of purer fame  
 Than gathers round Marengo's name<sup>30</sup> 150  
 And gilded thy decline,  
 Through the long twilight of all time,  
 Despite some passing clouds of crime.*

18.

*But thou forsooth must be a King  
 And don the purple vest, 155  
 As if that foolish robe could wring  
 Remembrance from thy breast.  
 Where is that faded garment? where  
 The gewgaws thou wert fond to wear,  
 The star,<sup>31</sup> the string, the crest? 160  
 Vain froward child of Empire! say,  
 Are all thy playthings snatched away?*

19.

*Where may the wearied eye repose  
 When gazing on the Great;  
 Where neither guilty glory glows, 165  
 Nor despicable state?  
 Yes – One – the first – the last – the best –  
 The Cincinnatus of the West,<sup>32</sup>  
 Whom Envy dared not hate,  
 Bequeathed the name of Washington, 170  
 To make man blush there was but one!]<sup>33</sup>*

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**30:** Napoleon won the battle of Marengo in 1800.

**31:** For second thoughts here, see *On the Star of the Legion of Honour* (printed below).

**32:** Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus was always being called from his farm to rule Rome, and always returning. B. would have us see Washington as a similarly austere Republican hero, unlike Napoleon.

**33:** The following two spurious stanzas were printed in *The Morning Chronicle* of April 27th 1814:

20.

Yes! better to have stood the storm,  
 A Monarch to the last!  
 Although that heartless fireless form  
 Had crumbled in the blast:  
 Than stoop to drag out Life's last years,  
 The nights of terror, days of tears  
 For all the splendour past;  
 Then, – after ages would have read  
 Thy awful death with more than dread.

21.

A lion in the conquering hour!  
 In wild defeat a hare!  
 Thy mind hath vanished with thy power,  
 For Danger brought despair.  
 The dreams of sceptres now depart,  
 And leave thy desolated heart  
 The Capitol of care!  
 Dark Corsican, 'tis strange to trace

**NAPOLEON'S FAREWELL**  
**From the French**

*[First published anonymously in The Examiner, July 30th 1815. Reprinted in Poems (1816), pp. 37-8.]*

1.

Farewell to the Land, where the gloom of my Glory  
Arose and o'ershadowed the earth with her name –  
She abandons me now – but the page of her story,  
The brightest and blackest, are due to my fame.  
I have warred with a World which vanquished me only       5  
When the meteor of Conquest allured me too far –  
I have coped with the Nations – which dread me thus lonely,  
The last single Captive to Millions in war. –

2.

Farewell to thee, France! when thy diadem crowned me,  
I made thee the gem and the wonder of earth;       10  
But thy weakness decrees I should leave as I found thee,  
Decayed in thy glory – and sunk in thy worth.  
Oh for the veteran hearts that were wasted  
In strife with the storm – when their battles were won –  
Then the Eagles whose gaze in that moment were blasted       15  
Had still soared with eyes fixed on Victory's Sun. –

3.

Farewell to thee, France! but when Liberty rallies  
Once more in thy regions, remember me then –  
The Violet still grows in the depth of thy valleys –  
Though withered, thy tears will unfold it again –       20  
Yet – yet – I may baffle the hosts that surround us  
And yet may thy heart leap awake to my voice –  
There are links which must break in the chain that has bound us,  
*Then* turn thee and call on the Chief of thy choice!

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Thy long deceit and last disgrace.

## ODE (FROM THE FRENCH)

[First published anonymously in *The Morning Chronicle*, March 15th 1816; reprinted in *Poems* (1816), pp. 25-30.]

The French have their *Poems* and *Odes* on the famous Battle of Waterloo as well as ourselves.<sup>34</sup> – Nay, they seem to glory in the battle as the source of great events to come. We have received the following poetical version of a poem, the original of which is circulating in Paris – and which is ascribed (we know not with what justice) to the muse of M. de Chateaubriand.<sup>35</sup> If so, it may be inferred that, in the Poet’s eye, a new change is at hand – and he wished to prove his secret indulgence of old principles, by reference to this effusion.

### 1.

We do not curse thee, Waterloo!  
Though Freedom’s blood thy plain bedew,  
There ’twas shed – but is not sunk –  
Rising from each gory trunk  
Like the Water Spout from Ocean 5  
With a strong and growing motion,  
It soars – and mingles in the air  
With that of lost LABEDOYERE<sup>36</sup> –  
With that of him whose honoured grave  
Contains the “bravest of the brave.”<sup>37</sup> 10  
A Crimson Cloud, it spreads and glows  
But shall return to whence it rose –  
When ’tis full ’twill burst asunder –  
Never yet was heard such Thunder  
As then shall shake the world with wonder – 15  
Never yet was seen such Lightning  
As o’er Heaven shall then be bright’ning.  
Like the Wormwood Star foretold \*  
By the sainted Seer of old,  
Showering down a fiery flood, 20  
Turning rivers into blood.

\* See Revelations, chap. viii. verse 7, &c. “The first angel sounded, and there followed fire and hail mingled with blood,” &c. Verse 8. “And the second Angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood,” &c. Verse 10. “And the third Angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp; and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters.” Verse 11. “And the name of the star is called *Wormwood*: and the third part of the waters became *wormwood*; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.”

### 2.

The Chief has fall’n – but not by you,  
Vanquishers of Waterloo;  
When the Soldier-Citizen  
Swayed not o’er his fellow men 25

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**34:** In fact there were few, if any, French poems about Waterloo.

**35:** One of B.’s few references to Chateaubriand. It is of course a joke and a fib.

**36:** The Comte de la Bédoyère; went over to Napoleon when he left Elba and was later shot for treason.

**37:** Marshal Ney, Napoleon’s finest general, also deserted the Bourbons in 1815 and was also shot.

Save in deeds that led them on;  
 Where Glory smiled on Freedom's son,  
 Who of all the Despots banded  
     With that youthful chief competed?  
     Who could boast o'er France defeated,                     30  
 Till lone Tyranny commanded?  
 Till, goaded by Ambition's sting,  
 The Hero shrunk into the King?  
 Then he fell – so perish all  
 Who would men by Man enthrall!                             35

3.

And thou, too, of the snow white plume –  
 Whose realms refused thee even a tomb! \*  
 Better had'st thou still been leading  
 France o'er Hosts of hirelings bleeding,  
 Than sold thyself to death and shame                     40  
 For a meanly royal name,  
 Such as He of Naples<sup>38</sup> wears  
 Who thy blood-bought title bears.  
 Little did'st thou deem, when dashing  
     On thy warhorse through the ranks,                     45  
     Like a stream which bursts its banks,  
 While Helmets cleft, and sabres clashing  
 Shone and shivered fast around thee –  
 Of the fate at last which found thee. –  
 Was that haughty plume laid low                     50  
 By a slave's dishonest blow?  
 Once, as the Moon sways o'er the tide,  
 It rolled in air, the warrior's guide;  
 Through the smoke-created night  
 Of the black and sulphurous fight,                     55  
 The soldier raised his reeking eye  
 To catch that crest's ascendancy;  
 And as it onward rolling rose,  
 So moved his heart upon our foes.  
 There, where Death's brief pang was quickest             60  
 And the battle's wreck lay thickest,  
 Strewed beneath the advancing banner  
     Of the Eagle's burning crest –  
 (There, with Thunder-clouds to fan her,  
     Who her could then her wing arrest,                     65  
     Victory beaming on her breast?)  
 Where the broken line enlarging  
     Fell or fled along the plain –  
 There be sure was MURAT charging –  
     There he ne'er shall charge again!                     70

\* Murat's remains are said to have been torn from the grave and burnt.<sup>39</sup>

**38:** Ferdinand I , the Bourbon King of Naples, who replaced Murat. A reactionary, to understate the case.

**39:** Joachim Murat, Napoleon's cavalry commander, his brother-in-law, made by him King of Naples. After Waterloo he was hunted down and shot.

## 4.

O'er glories gone the invaders march –  
 Weeps Triumph o'er each levelled arch;  
 But Let Freedom rejoice  
 With her heart in her voice –  
 But, her hand on her sword, 75  
 Doubly shall she be adored –  
 France hath twice too well been taught  
 The “Moral lesson” dearly bought<sup>40</sup> –  
 Her Safety sits not on a throne  
 With CAPET or NAPOLEON! 80  
 But in equal rights and laws,  
 Hearts and hands in one great cause,  
 Freedom such as God hath given  
 Unto all beneath his heaven  
 With their breath, and from their birth, 85  
 Though Guilt would sweep it from the earth,  
 With a fierce and lavish hand  
 Scattering nations' wealth like sand;  
 Pouring nations' wealth like water  
 In imperial seas of Slaughter. – 90

## 5.

But the heart and the mind  
 And the voice of mankind  
 Shall arise in communion –  
 And who shall resist that proud union?  
 The time is past when swords subdued; 95  
 Man may die – the soul's renewed –  
 Even in this low world of care  
 Freedom ne'er shall want an heir;  
 Millions breathe but to inherit

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**40:** ... *great moral lessons*: a prime example of English cant. Compare *Don Juan* XII 434-6:

*My Muses do not care a pinch of rosin  
 About what's called success – or not succeeding –  
 Such thoughts are quite below the strain they've chosen;  
 'Tis a “great moral lesson” they are reading ...*

McGann (CPW VI 673) refers us to Scott, *The Field of Waterloo*, Conclusion, 6, 3: *Write, Britain, write the moral lesson down*; but the quotation is minus a word, as it would be at the other echo McGann favours (see CPW V 754) namely the Preface to Cantos VI VII and VIII: *In his life he [Castlereagh] was - what all the world knows - and half of it will feel for years to come - unless his death prove a moral lesson to the surviving Sejani of Europe*. The phrase is in fact from a despatch which Wellington wrote to Castlereagh from Paris on 23rd September, 1815. It concludes:

*It is, besides, on many accounts, desirable, as well for their own happiness as for that of the world, that the people of France, if they do not already feel that Europe is too strong for them, should be made sensible of it; and that, whatever may be the extent, at any time, of their momentary and partial success against any one, or any number of individual powers in Europe, the day of retribution must come.*

*Not only, then, would it, in my opinion, be unjust in the Sovereigns to gratify the people of France on this subject, at the expense of their own people, but the sacrifice they would make would be impolitic, as it would deprive them of the opportunity of giving the people of France a great moral lesson. / Believe me, &c. / WELLINGTON Wellington, *Dispatches*, ed Lieut. Colonel Gurwood, London, John Murray (1838) vol. XII pp. 645-6).*

Her for ever bounding Spirit –  
When once more her hosts assemble,  
Tyrants shall believe and tremble;  
Smile they at this idle threat?  
Crimson tears will follow yet. –

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## ON THE STAR OF THE “LEGION OF HONOUR” From the French

[First published anonymously in *The Examiner*, April 7th 1816. Republished in *Poems* (1816), pp. 34-6.]

The friend who favoured us with the following lines, the poetical spirit of which wants no trumpet of ours, is aware that they imply more than an impartial observer of the late period might feel, and are written rather as by Frenchman than Englishman: – but certainly neither he, nor any other lover of liberty, can help feeling and regretting, that in the latter time, at any rate, the symbol he speaks of was once more comparatively identified with the cause of freedom.

1.

Star of the brave! – whose beam hath shed  
Such glory o’er the quick and dead –  
Thou radiant and adored deceit!  
Which millions rushed in arms to greet, –  
Wild meteor of immortal birth! 5  
Why rise in Heaven to set on Earth?

2.

Souls of slain heroes formed thy rays;  
Eternity flashed through thy blaze;  
The music of thy martial sphere  
Was fame on high and honour here; 10  
And thy light broke on human eyes,  
Like a Volcano of the skies.

3.

Like lava rolled thy stream of blood,  
And swept down empires with its flood;  
Earth rocked beneath thee to her base, 15  
As thou did’st lighten through all space;  
And the shorn Sun grew dim in air,  
And set while thou wert dwelling there.

4.

Before thee rose, and with thee grew,  
A rainbow of the loveliest hue 20  
Of three bright colours, each divine,\*  
And fit for that celestial sign;  
For Freedom’s hand had blended them,  
Like tints on an immortal gem.

\*The tri colour.

5.

One tint was of the sunbeam’s dyes; 25  
One, the blue depth of Seraph’s eyes;  
One, the pure Spirit’s veil of white

Had robed in radiance of its light;  
The three so mingled did beseem  
The texture of a heavenly dream. 30

6.

Star of the brave! thy ray is pale,  
And darkness must again prevail!  
But, oh thou Rainbow of the free!  
Our tears and blood must flow for thee.  
When thy bright promise fades away, 35  
Our life is but a load of clay.

7.

And Freedom hallows with her tread  
The silent cities of the dead;  
For beautiful in death are they  
Who proudly fall in her array; 40  
And soon, oh Goddess! may we be  
For evermore with them or thee!



All thou calmly dost resign 30  
Could he purchase with that throne  
Hearts like those that still to thine?

5.

My Chief – my King – my Friend – adieu –  
Never did I droop before –  
Never to my Sovereign sue, 35  
As his foes I now implore –  
All I ask is to divide  
Every peril he must brave –  
Sharing by the hero's side  
His fall – his exile – and his grave. – 40