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Napoleon.

Half a century has now rolled by, since Napoleon, the mighty corsican, was shaking the thrones of Europe, and agitating the civilized world. Bound in the humblest walks of life, he rose to the highest pinnacle of human greatness. Success attended every step he made, and glory fell upon him like summer showers! His genius overruled the nations, and his exploits dazzled the world. What he but touched, turned, as if by magic, into splendor, and what he but breathed upon sprung into life.

And when at this day, we look back to contemplate his character, struck with wonder at his stupendous achievements, and lost in admiration of his brilliant career, we lose sight of the monster, and are ready to crown him with laurels and honors. But when we burst the spell that binds us, - when we throw off the fetters that enchain our judgment, - when brilliant victories no longer cover the horrors of war, when truth and

fact take the place of imagery & fable
fancy, than it is, that we see his glorious
true character, blazoned, as it is, with
crime of every shade and degree.

And let no mind tell us that he has
passed away - that he sleeps the sleep of
death. - Let no one remind us that he
is not here to defend his virtue. - Let
no one tell us, that charity would
plead for forbearance. Duty and
justice, alike demand, that the virtues
of the good, and the wickedness of the
guilty, should be held up to the gaze
of men. Though we reverence the sanctity
of the grave & though we respect the sleep
of the dead, yet we cannot commit to
the same sacredness the crimes of men.
Our natures revolt against it, and God
who rules the affairs and guards the rights
of mankind would pour upon it. —

He who would tread a path to glory
and power, crimsoned with human gore -
who would slaughter his fellow men by
millions - who would tear from the bosoms
of a hundred thousand Mothers their loved
sons - who would make his country groan
and sweat beneath the weight and calamities
of war -

who would veil the world in sorrow
for the sufferings of humanity — who would
stab freedom to the heart, and with a
fiendish grin exult in its expiring
breath — he, who would be the champion
of such deeds, though wrapped in the
glare of glorious war, will never find
a sacred grave, or an unbroken sleep.

The jealous eye of the world will peer even
through the veil of death, and cast soon
upon the unhallowed dust. outraged
justice will drag him from the tomb to
the bar of humanity, and seal upon his
forehead the brand of infamy.

But what are the crimes of the great
Napoleon — what the unworthy deeds of
him who toiled and fought for liberty —
who made his eagle plume his pinions
for a loftier flight and kingdoms crumble
and tyrants crouch before it.

A voice comes up from Italy, from
Germany, from Austria, from Prussia, from
Russia, from Egypt, from stricken France
^{in state} her self, crying, they are legion.
In the name and under the banner of
liberty, he waged a war of oppression
and rapine, and with an eye solely

to honor, he achieved some of the most brilliant ~~exploits~~^{victories} ever recorded, so far transcending expectation, as to make the very powers under which he acted quail and tremble. On her fairest fields, he spilt her richest blood. He drained her treasures - despoiled her temples - and robbed her of those splendid works of art, which war, however barbarous and unfortunate, had hitherto held as sacred. And these outrages he committed in the name of liberty. Had he but used some other watchword, had he but unfurled some other banner over him, the world might yet forgive him.

Enraged now, by his achievements in Italy in the lists of fame, and conscious of his ^{own} inherent power, and big with dreams of empire, he next made Egypt his prey. Rivaling the glory of a Semiramis, or a Sesostris, he overwhelmed the people with war and slaughtered them by scores of thousands - he made her hills run red with blood, and strewed her valleys and plains with mangled bodies. He outstripped the sinner in terror and proved himself a monster in cruelty. The inhuman

Murderous slaughter of Jaffa, is a crime
of itself, black enough to wipe the lustre
from the brightest jewel, or sink in profoundest
infamy name.

But Europe saw him again upon her
shores. It was a dark and ominous cloud
that rose, and as its fearful fringes swept
along the sky, she trembled at the sight.
She belched forth her thousands to glut
his ambition, and spilt her richest,
noblest blood to satiate his thirst. She made
desolate widows, despoiling mothers, and
orphan children by millions, all wrapped
in sorrow and mourning countless hapless
earth. No prize was too sacred, no victim
too innocent to escape. No slaughter shocked
him, if he but gained his end — no pain, no
suffering, no blood shed deterred him, if
ambition called for the sacrifice. We are
told, that he would often weep over the
field of battle, but did ambition call
for greater carnage, it was never denied.
If he wept, it was because he had not
the dead to fight the morrow's battle.

But what did he do for France.
France, who loved him, cherished him,
and hailed him as the guardian of her

liberties, and the beam of the flag.
The sad story is told in the few words -
he enslaved her. If there be a crime
above another, worthy of everlasting
infamy, and of the just condemnation
of mankind, it is that of robbing one's
own Country of its liberties. And this
Napoleon did. He enslaved, depopulated
Corrupted and impoverished his own
native land while leaving on his bosom
for support. This was his master
piece of crime. And France at the present
day bleeds from the wounds he inflicted,
and groans beneath the despotism he
reigned.

And this is the man whom many
veraunce and adore - this is the man whose
philanthropy, whose patriotism, and whose love
of liberty, are held up for our admiration -
philanthropy, that ^{would} have sunk humanity
in ruin - patriotism, that led him to murder
his country, and a love of liberty, that would
have enslaved the world.

Noah Bowles
Middletown
Md.

Commencement

July 13th

1854

Commencement Oration of Noah Bowlus, Class of 1854

Transcribed by Chris Altieri, June 2008

Edited by Tristan Deveney, June 2008

Napoleon

Half a century has now rolled by, since Napoleon, the mighty Corsican, was shaking the thrones of Europe, and agitating the civilized world. Born in the humblest walks of life, he rose to the highest pinnacle of human greatness. Success attended every step he made, and gladly fell upon him like summer showers! His genius overawed the nations, and his exploits dazzled the world. What he but touched, turned, as if by magic, into splendor, and what he but breathed upon sprung into life.

And when at this day, we look back to contemplate his character, struck with wonder at his stupendous achievements, and lost in admiration of his brilliant career, we lose sight of the monster, and are ready to crown him with laurels and honors. But when we burst the spell that binds us,—when we throw off the fetters that enchain our judgment—when brilliant victories no longer cover the horrors of war, when truth and

fact take the place of imagery and fancy, then it is, that we see Napoleons true character, blurred, as it is, with crime of every [illegible word] and degree.

And let no remind us that he has passed away—that he sleeps the sleep of death.—Let no one remind us that he is not here to defend his virtue—Let no one tell us, that charity would plead for forbearance. Duty and justice, alike demand, that the virtues of the good, and the wickedness of the guilty, should be held up to the gaze of men. Though we reverence the sanctity of the grave & though we respect the sleep of the dead, yet we cannot commit to the same sacredness the crimes of men Our natures revolt against it, and God who rules the affairs and guards the rights of mankind would frown upon it.—

He who would tread a path to glory and power, crimsoned with human gore—who would slaughter his fellow men by millions—who would tear from the bosoms of a hundred thousand mothers their loved sons—who would make his country groan and sweat beneath the weight and calamities of war—

who would veil the world in sorrow for the sufferings of humanity—who would stab freedom to the heart, and with a fiendish grin exult in its expiring breath—he, who would be the champion of such deeds, though wrapped in the glare of glorious war, will never find a sacred grave, or an unbroken sleep. The jealous eye of the world will peer even through the veil of death, and cast scorn upon the unhallowed dust. Outraged justice will drag him from the tomb to the bar of humanity, and seal upon his forehead the brand of infamy.

But what are the crimes of the great Napoleon—what the unworthy deeds of him who toiled and fought for liberty—who made his eagle plume his pinions for a loftier flight and kingdoms crumble and tyrants crouch before it.

A voice comes up from Italy, from Germany, from Austria, from Prussia, from Russia, from Egypt, from stricken France her self, crying, they are legion. In Italy in the

name and under the banner of liberty, he waged a war of oppression and rapine, and with an eye solely

to honor, he achieved some of the most brilliant victories ever recorded, so far transcending expectation, as to make the very powers under which he acted quail and tremble. On her fairest fields, he spilt her richest blood. He drained her treasures—despoiled her temples—and robbed her of those splendid works of art, which war, however barbarous and unfortunate, had hitherto held as sacred. And these outrages he committed in the name of liberty. Had he but used some other watchword, had he but unfurled some other banner over him, the world might yet forgive him.

Enrolled now, by his achievements in Italy in the lists of fame, and conscious of his own inherent power, and big with dreams of empire, he next made Egypt his prey. Rivalling the glory of a Semiramis, or a Scipio and claiming to be the equal of Mohammad, he overwhelmed the people with war and slaughtered them by scores of thousands—He made her hills run red with blood, and strewed the valleys and plains with mangled bodies. He outstripped the simoon in terror and proved himself a monster in cruelty. The inhuman

murderous slaughter of Jaffa, is a crime of itself, black enough to wipe the luster from the brightest jewel, or sink in profoundest infamy name.

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liberties, and the bearer of her flag. The sad story is told in the few words—he enslaved her. If there be a crime above another, worthy of everlasting infamy, and of the just condemnation of mankind, it is that of robbing one's own country of its liberties. And this Napoleon did. He enslaved, depopulated, corrupted and impoverished his own native land while leaning on his bosom for support. This was his masterpiece of crime. And France at the present day bleeds from the wounds he inflicted, and groans beneath the despotism he reared.

And this is the man whom many reverence and adore—this is the man whose philanthropy, whose patriotism, and whose love of liberty, are held up for our admiration—philanthropy, that would have sunk humanity in ruins—patriotism that led him to murder his country, and a love of liberty, that would have enslaved the world.

July 13th
1854

Middletown
Md.