

DON JUAN CANTO SEVENTH¹

edited by Peter Cochran

1.

Oh Love! O Glory! What are ye! who fly
Around us ever, rarely to alight?
There's not a Meteor in the polar Sky²
Of such transcendent or more fleeting flight;
Chill and chained to cold earth, we lift on high 5
Our eyes, in search of either lovely light;
A thousand and a thousand colours they
Assume, then leave us on our freezing way.

1: SOURCES FOR BYRON'S ACCOUNT OF RUSSIA: B. assures us, in the Preface to Cantos VI VII and VIII, that he has taken the military details for the poem from Castelnau's *Essai sur l'Histoire Ancienne et Moderne de la Nouvelle Russie* (Paris 1820); but it is possible to infer other sources: (i) William Coxe, *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark* (London 1792); (ii) Frederick Anthing, *History of the Campaigns of Count Alexander Suworow Rymnikski* (translated from the German, London 1799: for John Wright); (iii) sympathetic review of the above, incorporating all of its biographical introduction, *Anti-Jacobin* (October 1799, pp.133-8); (iv) William Tooke, *Life of Catherine II* (London 1800); (v) William Tooke, *History of Russia* (London ???); (vi) C.F.P.Masson, *Mémoires Secrets sur la Russie*, translated as *Secret Memoirs of the Court of Petersburg* (London 1800); (vii) "Jeanne-Louise Antoinette Polier, dite ordinairement dame de Cérenville", *Vie du Prince Potemkin, Feld-Maréchal* (Paris 1809); (viii) L.M.P. de Laverne, *Histoire du Feld-Maréchal Souwarof* (Paris 1809); (ix) reprint of (ii) for J. Davis, Military Chronicle and Military Classics Office (London 1813). For interest I have also read George Solovyetchik, *Potemkin: A Picture of Catherine's Russia* (Perceval Marshall 1949); Philip Longworth, *The Art of Victory: The Life and Achievements of Generalissimo Suworov* (Constable 1965); Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981) and John Alexander, *Catherine the Great, Life and Legend* (Oxford 1989). I have further "consulted" K.Osipov, *Suworov* (Moscow 1947); G.P. Meshcheryakov, *A.V.Suworov: Dokumenty* (Moscow 1949-53); and I.I.Rostunov, *Generalissimus A.V.Suworov* (Moscow 1989). I cannot tell whether the last corrects the Stalinist excesses of the previous two. Also A.S.Suworov: *Pisma*, ed. V.S.Lopatin (Moscow 1986).

2: *a Meteor in the polar Sky* and I.11, *A versified Aurora Borealis*: important poetic concepts in *Don Juan*, suggesting things which easy categories will not define. See note above to VI ll.573-4, where the conventional wisdom linking meteors and the Aurora is outlined, and both are linked to a woman's sexual awakening (see also above, II l.1132: and the last heroine of the poem is called Aurora Raby). St. 27 of *TVOJ* – describing the entrance of St. Michael through the gates of Heaven – contains B.'s most extended description of the Aurora:

*As things were in this posture, the gate flew
Asunder, and the flashing of its hinges
Flung over space an universal hue
Of many-coloured flame, until its tinges
Reached even our speck of earth, and made a new
Aurora Borealis spread its fringes
O'er the North Pole – the same seen, when ice-bound,
By Captain Parry's crews in "Melville's Sound."*

Another Aurora reference will be found below, at XII, ll.653-4.

2.

And such as they are, such my present tale is –
A non-descript and ever-varying rhyme – 10
A versified Aurora Borealis
Which flashes o'er a waste and icy clime;
When we know what all are we must bewail us,
But ne'ertheless,³ I hope it is no crime
To laugh at *all* things – for, I wish to know, 15
What, after *all*, are *all* things – but a *Show*?⁴

3.

They accuse me – *Me* – the present writer of
The present poem – of – I know not what –
A tendency to underrate and scoff 20
At human Powers and Virtue and all that –
And this they say in language rather rough;
Good God! I wonder what they would be at!
I say no more than has been said in Dante's
Verse; and by Solomon and by Cervantes,

4.

By Swift, by Machiavel, by Rochefoucault, 25
By Fénelon, and Luther, and by Plato,
And Tillotson, and Wesley, and Rousseau,
Who knew this life was not worth a Potato;
'Tis not their fault nor mine if this be so –
For my part I pretend not to be Cato – 30
Nor even Diogenes;⁵ – we live and die –
But which is best – you know no more than I. –

3: *But ne'ertheless*: tautologous.

4: *What*, after *all*, are *all* things – but a *Show*? That “reality” is an “illusion” is an idea at least as old as Plato (see next Stanza, and *The Republic*, end of Book VII); Jacques' speech at *As You Like It* II vii 139-66 and Prospero's at *The Tempest* IV i 146-63 may also weigh heavily on B.'s mind as he writes.

5: *Dante ... Solomon ... Cervantes ... Swift ... Machiavel ... Rochefoucault ... Fénelon ... Luther ... Plato ... Tillotson ... Wesley ... Rousseau ... Cato ... Diogenes*: fourteen writers and preachers both pagan and Christian, frequent denizens of Don Juan who consistently stressed the Nothingness of Life (see below, this Canto, line 48). The names of Fénelon, Rochefoucault, Swift and Wesley occur nowhere else in the poem (though see below for some uses to which B. puts them) but the rest make frequent marginal appearances. For Dante, see II 283-4n, 355-6n, 664, st. 89n, III, 75, IV 825 and 840, VI 595, X 211, and XVI 972; for Solomon, see XIII 226 and XIV 756; for Cervantes (or Don Quixote) see II 296n, IV 44, XIII 63, 81 and XIV 778; for Machiavel, see IV 650 and X 627-33; for Rochefoucault, see III 17-18n, and 31-2n; for Fénelon, see II 194, commentary; for Luther, see XVII 48; for Plato, see I 629, 885, 921, II 1691, V 8, IX 585, 601, XI 344, XV 685, and XVI 387; for Tillotson, see II 1317; for Rousseau, see II (rejected stanzas) 15, VIII 422, and XIV 600; for Cato, see VI 55, XIII 736, and XV 296; and for Diogenes, see XI 217 and XV 584.

5.

Socrates said our only knowledge was
“To know that nothing could be known,”⁶ a pleasant
Science enough – which levels to an Ass 35
Each Man of Wisdom, future, past or present;
Newton (that Proverb of the Mind) Alas!
Declared, with all his grand discoveries recent,
That *He* himself felt only “like a Youth –
“Picking up shells by the great Ocean, Truth!”⁷ 40

6.

Ecclesiastes said that all is Vanity⁸ –
Most modern Preachers say the same, or show it
By their examples of true Christianity;
In short, all know, or very soon may know it;
And in this Scene of all-confessed Inanity, 45
By Saint, by Sage, by Preacher, and by Poet,
Must I restrain me, through the fear of Strife,
From holding up the Nothingness of Life? –

7.

Dogs! or Men! (for I flatter you in saying
That ye are dogs – your betters far)⁹ Ye may 50
Read, or read not, what I am now essaying
To show ye what ye are in every way;
As little as the Moon stops for the baying
Of Wolves, will the bright Muse withdraw one ray
From out her Skies; then howl your idle wrath! 55
While She still silvers o’er your gloomy path. –

6: *Socrates said our only knowledge was* / “*To know that nothing could be known*”: according to Diogenes Laertius’ *Life*, II 32 (CPW). Socrates – if Plato is to be believed – frequently feigned ignorance of subjects, the better to draw out self-styled experts and to expose their real ignorance. Compare *CHP* II, ll.55-6:

Well didst thou speak, Athena’s wisest son!

“All that we know is, nothing can be known.”

7: ... *He himself felt only “like a Youth – / “Picking up shells by the great Ocean, Truth!”*: attributed to Newton by Joseph Spence: *Sir Isaac Newton, a little before he died, said, “I don’t know what I may seem to the world; but as to myself, I seem to to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”* (*Anecdotes*, ed. Malone, Murray 1820, pp.158-9. For another use of Spence, see above, V, B.’s Note on Bacon’s Apophthegms, n.6).

8: *Ecclesiastes said that all is Vanity*: Ecclesiastes 1, 2.

9: *dogs – your betters far*: in Islam the dog is unclean; but B. was unusually attached to them.

8.

“Fierce loves, and faithless Wars;”¹⁰ I am not sure
 If this be the right reading; ’tis no matter –
 The fact’s about the same, I am secure;
 I sing them both, and am about to batter 60
 A town which did a famous siege endure,
 And was beleagured both by land and water
 By Suvaroff, or Anglicè Suwarrow,¹¹
 Who loved blood, as an Alderman loves marrow.¹² –

9.

The Fortress is called Ismail, and is placed 65
 Upon the Danube’s left branch and left bank;¹³
 The buildings in the oriental taste,
 But still a fortress of the foremost rank,¹⁴
 Or was at least, unless ’tis since defaced,
 Which with your Conquerors is a common prank; 70
 It stands some eighty versts from the high Sea,
 And measures round in toises thousands three.¹⁵

10: “Fierce loves, and faithless Wars”: B. misquotes Spenser, a writer for whom he had little time. The *right reading* (next line) is “Fierce warres and faithfull loues shall moralize my song” (*The Faerie Queene*, Introduction, I, 9). Spenser was Southey’s favourite English poet.

11: *Suvaroff, or Anglicè Suwarrow*: more properly anglicised *Suvorov*. B. plays unscrupulous games with the different ways of transliterating his name from the Cyrillic, and the different rhyme-possibilities that exist. Alexander Vassilyevich Suvorov (1729-1800) is one of the most successful generals in history, and became with Kutuzov (below, VIII 553) a Russian folk-hero within his own lifetime. See notes below for more details. His name first appears in Hope’s *Anastasius* at II, 359.

12: *Who loved blood, as an Alderman loves marrow*: compare above, II 1256 and III 525.

13: *Ismail* lies now at the south-westernmost point of the Ukraine, on the border with Romania, about 190 km. from Odessa. It is on the northern bank of the Kilya, the northernmost tributary of the Danube, about 100 km. inland. B. may have first read about it II, 323 of Hope’s *Anastasius*.

14 CASTELNAU: B. writes in his Preface to Cantos VI VII and VII that ‘The details of the Siege of Ismail in two of the following Cantos (i.e. the 7th. & 8th.) are taken from a French work called “*Histoire de la Nouvelle Russie*”. The work – published in 1820 – thus forms, with Dalyell’s *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea* and “*Tully’s Tripoli*”, one of the three most important factual sources for the poem. Little is known of its author, the Marquis Gabriel de Castelnau, except that he was “ancien surintendant des théâtres sous l’Empereur Paul” (Coleridge VI 264). Presumably an emigré aristocrat, he was friends with the Duc de Richelieu, who took part in the battle for Ismail and became Governor of Odessa. His book is an apologia for Russian expansion into the Ukraine and the Crimea. Ideologically it has nothing in common with *Don Juan*, which is part of the joke. A comparison shows how closely B. is following his source; he is as faithful as he was with Dalyell in Canto II: (Castelnau is quoting from the 1790 diary of the Duc de Richelieu): “*Ismael est situé sur la rive gauche du bras gauche du Danube, à peu près à quatre-vingts verstes de la mer: son premier nom était Forteresse de la grande armée; elle a près de trois milles toises de tour ... On a compris dans ces fortifications un faubourg moldave, situé à la gauche de la ville sur un hauteur qui la domine; l’ouvrage a été terminé par un Grec. Pour donner une idée des talens de cet ingénieur, il suffira de dire qu’il fit placer les palissades perpendiculairement sur le parapet, de manière qu’elles favorisaient les assiégeans, et arrêtaient le feu des assiégés*”. (II pp.201-2).

15: *versts ... toises*: a verst is a Russian measure signifying about two-thirds of a mile; a toise is a French military measure signifying six feet. B.’s use of the strange foreign terms is probably humorous.

10.

Within the extent of this fortification
A Borough is comprised along a height
Upon the left, which, from its loftier station, 75
Commands the City; and upon its site
A Greek had raised around the elevation
A quantity of palisades *upright*,
So placed as to *impede* the fire of those
Who held the place, and to *assist* the foe's. 80

11.

This Circumstance may serve to give a notion
Of the high talents of this new Vauban;¹⁶
But the town Ditch below was deep as Ocean,
The Rampart higher than you'd wish to hang;
But then there was a great want of precaution, 85
(Prithee, excuse this engineering Slang)
Nor work advanced, nor covered way was there
To hint at least "Here is no Thoroughfare."

16: *Vauban*: Sébastien le Prestre de Vauban (1633-1707) celebrated French military engineer who served Louis XIV. He surrounded France with a string of fortresses, and invented the socket-bayonet.

12.¹⁷

But a Stone Bastion with a narrow gorge,¹⁸
 And Walls as thick as Most Skulls born as yet, 90
 Two batteries, cap-à-pé as our Saint George,¹⁹
 Casemated one, and t'other "à barbette",²⁰
 Of Danube's bank took formidable charge;
 While two and twenty Cannon duly set
 Rose o'er the town's right side in bristling tier, 95
 Forty feet high, upon a Cavalier.²¹

17 CASTELNAU (II 202, quoting the 1790 manuscript diary of the Duc de Richelieu): "*Le rempart en terre est prodigieusement élevé à cause de l'immense profondeur du fossé; il est cependant absolument rasant; il n'y a ni ouvrage avancé, ni chemin couvert. Un bastion de pierres, ouvert par une gorge très-étroite et dont les murailles sont fort épaisses, a une batterie casementée et une à barbette; il défend la rive du Danube. Du côté droit de la ville est un cavalier de quarante pieds d'élévation à pic, garni de vingt-deux pièces de canon, et qui défend la partie gauche*".

18: B., in translating and versifying his source skilfully, may not himself have understood exactly what these artillery terms meant: like *versts* and *toises* (see 71-2nn above) they give the poem an authoritative air which is meant in part to blind us with military jargon. Compare his use of slang below, at XI st.19; or compare the words of Uncle Toby at Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, II 12: ... *when a ravelin, brother, stands before the curtain, it is a ravelin; and when a ravelin stands before a bastion, then the ravelin is not a ravelin; — it is a half-moon; — a half-moon likewise is a half-moon, and no more, so long as it stands before its bastion; — but was it to change place, and get before the curtain, — 'twould be longer a half-moon; a half-moon, in that case, is not a half-moon; — 'tis no more than a ravelin. — I think, quoth my father, that the noble science of defence has its weak sides, — as well as others.*

19: *cap-à-pé as our Saint George: cap-a-pie* (as the OED, in deference to the Old French, has it) is an expression from armoury or accoutrement meaning "from head to foot". See *Hamlet*, I ii 200. Saint George is normally depicted in full armour.

20: *Casemated one, and t'other "à barbette"*: one battery was positioned to fire through the *Stone Bastion* (89) from a specially-fortified chamber inside; the other was placed on an earthen rampart to fire over it (either that, or the bastion was low enough to make embrasures unnecessary).

21: *a Cavalier*: a raised gun emplacement so large as to command all the territory adjacent. To give some idea of Ismail's strength, the one referred to here held a thousand men (Anthing II 137).

13.

But from the River, the town's open quite,
Because the Turks could never be persuaded
A Russian vessel e'er would heave in sight,
And such their Creed was, till they were invaded, 100
When it grew rather late to set things right;
But as the Danube could not well be waded,
They looked upon the Muscovite Flotilla
And only shouted "Allah!"²² and "Bis Millah!"²³

14.

The Russians now were ready to attack²⁴ – 105
But oh, ye Goddesses of War and Glory!
How shall I spell the name of each Cossacque,
Who were immortal, Could one tell their Story –
Alas! What to their Memory can lack?
Achilles' Self²⁵ was not more grim and gory 110
Than thousands of this new and polished Nation,²⁶
Whose names want nothing but – Pronunciation.

22: CASTELNAU II 202-3: "Du côté du fleuve, la ville est absolument ouverte; les Turcs ne croyaient pas que les Russes pussent jamais avoir une flotille dans le Danube."

23: "Allah!" and "Bis Millah!": "God!" and "In the name of God the All-Merciful!" Islamic exclamations of amazement and fear. The second phrase prefixes all chapters of the Qu'ran but one. **Byron includes this attack – by Christian forces against an Islamic stronghold – in deference to his predecessors in the Italian epic tradition, Pulci, Ariosto, and Tasso. A European epic couldn't be complete unless its hero took part in such an attack. In Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* it's the Spanish city of Zaragossa; in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* it's the North African city of Bizerta; and in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, of course, it's Jerusalem.**

24: *The Russians now were ready to attack:* seriously misleading as a historical statement. The Russians besieged Ismail from May 1790 onwards; but they hoped to persuade the Turks to surrender through attrition and starvation, not by attack, which, given the strength of the fortifications, seemed impossible. Only with the arrival of Suvorov in December (see sts.39-40) was an attack decided on; and even then it remained so hazardous theoretically that the inspiration of Suvorov's personality alone reconciled the troops to attempting it (Longworth 165-6).

25: *Achilles' Self was not more grim and gory / Than thousands of this new and polished Nation:* Achilles is the violent protagonist of Homer's *Iliad*, killer of the mighty and magnanimous Hector; in comparing the Russian "heroes" – shortly to be catalogued, with difficulty – B. is at once elevating them to his level (such as it is) and bringing him down to theirs.

26: ... *polished nation:* almost certainly ironic. B. rarely mentions Russians in his letters, but he may have suspected, from his reading of, for example, Casti's *Il Poema Tartaro*, that for all the pretensions of Catherine the Great, and all the praise lavished on her by the French *philosophes* (see below, IX 181-2) civilisation had not advanced very deeply in Russia. See also below, IX 178-80.

15.²⁷

Still I'll record a few, if but to increase
 Our Euphony: there was Strongenoff, and Strokonoff,
 Meknop, Serge Lwow, Arseniew of modern Greece,²⁸ 115
 And Tschitsshakoff, and Roguenoff, and Chokenoff,²⁹
 And others of twelve Consonants apiece;
 And more might be found out, if I could poke enough
 Into Gazettes, but Fame (capricious Strumpet!)
 It seems, has got an ear, as well as trumpet,³⁰ 120

16.

And cannot tune those discords of Narration,
 Which may be names at Moscow, into rhyme;
 Yet there were several worth Commemoration
 As e'er was Virgin of a Nuptial Chime;
 Soft words too fitted for the Peroration 125
 Of Londonderry, drawling against Time,³¹
 Ending in "-ischskin," "-ousckin," "-iffsky," "-ouski,"
 Of whom we can insert but Rousamouski.³²

27 CASTELNAU, II 207: *La première attaque était composée de trois colonnades, commandées par les lieutenants-généraux Paul Potiemkin, Serge Lwow, les généraux-majors Maurice Lacsy, Théodore Meknop. Ces trois colonnes étaient fortes de cinq mille sept cent hommes. / Trois autres colonnes, destinées à la seconde attaque, avaient pour chefs le comte Samoïlow, les généraux Élie de Bezborodko, Michel Koutousow; les brigadiers Orlow, Platow, Ribaupierre. Dix milles trois cents combattans composaient celles-ci. / La troisième attaque par eau n'avait que deux colonnes, sous les ordres des généraux-majors Ribas et Arseniew, des brigadiers Markoff et Tchépéga. Ces deux colonnes réunissaient six milles sept cent hommes.*

28: *Meknop, Serge Lwow, Arseniew of modern Greece:* non-fictitious. All commanders mentioned by Castelnau.

29: *Strongenoff ... Strokonoff ... Tschitsshakoff ... Roguenoff ... Chokenoff:* strictly, fictitious and indecent; although B. would have found *Stroganof* at William Tooke's *Life of Catherine II*, Vol. I p.182, and both *Chitschagof* and *Tchitchoukof* at Vol. III pp.254 and 258.

30: *Fame (capricious Strumpet!) / It seems, has got an ear, as well as trumpet:* recalls Pope, 1743 *Dunciad*, IV 71: *And now had Fame's posterior Trumpet blown ...* See also below, XVI, 36, 3.

31: *Londonderry, drawling against Time:* Castlereagh's title was Marquis of Londonderry. For his rhetorical ineptitude, see above, V 695n.

32: *Rousamouski:* non-fictitious; a version of Andrei *Razoumovsky*, the Russian ambassador to Sweden.

17.

Scherematoff, and Chrematoff, Koklofty,
 Koclobski,³³ Kourakin, and Mouskin Pouskin³⁴ – 130
 All proper Men of weapons, as e'er scoffed high
 Against a foe, or ran a sabre through skin;
 Little cared they for Mahomet or Mufti,³⁵
 Unless to make their kettledrums a new skin
 Out of their hides, if parchment had grown dear, 135
 And no more handy substitute been near.

18.³⁶

Then there were foreigners of much renown,
 Of various Nations, and all Volunteers,
 Not fighting for their Country or its Crown,
 But wishing to be one day Brigadiers, 140
 Also to have the sacking of a town,
 A pleasant thing to young men in their years;
 'Mongst these were several Englishmen of pith –
 Sixteen called Thomson, and nineteen named Smith.

33: E.H.Coleridge first pointed out that B.'s Russian name-list echoes one even more infantile in a poem by Southey: *The March to Moscow* (1813):

*Oscharoffsky and Rostoffsky,
 And all the others that end in offsky;
 And Platoff he play'd them off,
 And Shouvaloff he shovell'd them off,
 And Markoff he mark'd them off
 And Krosnoff he cross'd them off ... etc.*

34: *Scherematoff, and Chrematoff, Koklofty, / Koclobski, Kourakin, and Mouskin Pouskin*: a mixture of the fictitious and the real. Koklofty and Koclobski are there merely to cause offence (though John Hely-Hutchinson, 1757-1832, was the 1st Baron Hutchinson of Alexandria and Knocklofty); but Scherematoff is to be found at William Tooke's *History of Russia*, II 464, Chrematoff (as *Cherematoff*) at Castelnau, I 314, Kourakin (as *Kurakin*) at Tooke's *Life of Catherine II* I 133, and Mouskin Pouskin (as *Moushkin-Poushkin*) at Tooke's *Life*, III 254. B.'s pretence of journalistic authenticity is wearing thin, for none of them were at Ismail. See note to st.18.

35: *Little cared they for Mahomet or Mufti*: part of B.'s intention in Cantos VII and VIII is anti-Christian and pro-Islam. *Mahomet* is, as usual, bisyllabic; a *Mufti* is a Moslem religious leader.

36: Stanza 18: the point of B.'s joke about how the unpronounceability of Russian names matches Russian ferocity in conquest becomes clear by the couplet; but only one English mercenary is recorded by Castelnau as having taken part in the siege of Ismail (see VIII 639 and n). The English government had by 1789 become sufficiently alarmed at Russian expansion towards the Mediterranean to forbid English officers from joining the Russian navy, at least.

19.

Jack Thomson, and Bill Thomson – all the rest 145
 Had been called “Jemmy” after the great bard;³⁷
 I don’t know whether they had arms or Crest,
 But such a Godfather’s as good a Card;³⁸
 Three of the Smiths were Peters, but the best
 Amongst them all, hard blows to inflict or ward, 150
 Was *he*, since so renowned “in Country quarters
 At Halifax;”³⁹ but now he served the Tartars.

20.

The rest were Jacks and Gills, and Wills and Bills,
 But when I’ve added that the elder Jack Smith
 Was born in Cumberland amongst the hills, 155
 And that his father was an honest Blacksmith,⁴⁰
 I’ve said all *I* know of a name which fills
 Three lines of the dispatch in taking “Schmacksmith” –
 A village of Moldavia’s waste, wherein⁴¹
 He fell, immortal in a bulletin. – 160

37: *all the rest / Had been called “Jemmy” after the great bard:* James Thomson, Anglo-Scots poet (1700-48) author of *The Seasons* and *The Castle of Indolence*, a possible quotation from which is at III 492 above. A model for B.’s Spenserian stanzas in *Childe Harold*.

38: *such a Godfather’s as good a Card:* that is, as good an introduction into polite society.

39: *he, since so renowned “in Country quarters / At Halifax”:* a quotation, as John Wright points out, from the farce *Love Laughs at Locksmiths* by George Colman the Younger (1762-1836). Captain Smith (sic Coleridge; DJP has “Risk”) sings:

*A Captain bold in Halifax,
 That dwelt in country quarters,
 Seduc’d a maid who hang’d herself
 One Monday in her garters.*

B. quotes from the play in letters at BLJ V 233-4 and VIII 246.

40: *the elder Jack Smith / Was born in Cumberland amongst the hills, / And ... his father was an honest Blacksmith:* makes the mercenary Jack Smith into a character from a Wordsworth poem. Unfortunately for B.’s polemic, the eighteenth-century Russian army had only peasant conscripts in its ranks, and the only mercenaries were officers.

41: *“Schmacksmith” – / A village of Moldavia’s waste:* Moldavia is modern Moldova, just north of Ismail, and much fought-over by Turks, Prussians, Austrians and Russians throughout the eighteenth century. I am unable to find any place there with a name resembling *Schmacksmith*, or any report of a military action at such a place.

21.

I wonder (although Mars no doubt's a God I
Praise) if a man's name in a *bulletin*
May make up for a *bullet* in his body?
I hope this little question is no Sin,
Because, though I am but a simple Noddy,⁴² 165
I think One Shakespeare puts the same thought in
The mouth of some one in his plays so doating,⁴³
Which many people pass for Wits by quoting.

22.

Then there were Frenchmen, gallant, young, and gay⁴⁴ –
But I'm too good a patriot to record 170
Their Gallic names upon a Glorious day –
I'd rather tell ten lies than say a word
Of truth; such truths are treason; they betray
Their Country, and as traitors are abhorred,
Who name the French in English, save to show 175
How Peace should make John Bull a Frenchman's foe.

23.⁴⁵

The Russians, having built two batteries on
An Isle near Ismail, had two ends in view –
The first was to bombard it, and knock down
The public buildings – and the private too, 180
No matter what poor souls might be undone –
The City's shape suggested this, 'tis true,
Formed like an Amphitheatre; each dwelling
Presented a fine mark to throw a shell in. –

42: *a simple Noddy*: a noddy is a seabird too foolish to fly away when attacked. See above, II 655 and n.

43: *I think One Shakespeare puts the same thought in / The mouth of some one in his plays so doating*: presumably a reference to Falstaff's "Honour" speech at the end of Henry IV I, V i.

44: *Frenchmen, gallant, young, and gay*: as all the Frenchmen named by Castelneau are senior commanders, it is difficult to see where B. gets his information from.

45: **CASTELNAU, II 203**: *On s'était proposé deux buts également avantageux, par la construction de deux batteries sur l'île qui avoisine Ismail: le premier, de bombarder la place, d'en abattre les principaux édifices avec du canon de quarante-huit, effet d'autant plus probable, que la ville étant bâtie en amphithéâtre, presque aucun coup ne serait perdu. Le second objet était de profiter de ce moment d'alarme pour que la flotille, agissant en même temps, pût détruire celle des Turcs. Un troisième motif, et vraisemblablement le plus plausible, était de jeter la consternation parmi les Turcs, et de les engager à capituler.*

24.

The second object was to profit by 185
 The moment of the general Consternation,
To attack the Turk's Flotilla, which lay nigh,
 Extremely tranquil, anchored at its station;
But a third motive was, as probably,
 To frighten them into Capitulation, 190
A Phantasy which sometimes seizes Warriors,
Unless they're Game as Bulldogs or Fox-terriers.

25.

A habit rather blameable, which is
 That of despising those we combat with,
Common in many cases, was in this 195
 The cause of killing Tchitchitzkoff and Smith –
One of those valorous "Smiths" whom we shall miss
 Out of those nineteen who late rhymed to "pith";
But 'tis a name so spread o'er "Sir" and "Madam"
That One would think the *first* who bore it, "*Adam*."⁴⁶ – 200

26.

The Russian batteries were incomplete
 Because they were constructed in a hurry;
Thus the same cause that makes a verse want feet,
 And throws a cloud o'er Longman and John Murray⁴⁷ –
When the sale of new books is not so fleet 205
 As they who print them think is necessary –
May likewise put off for a time what Story
Sometimes calls "Murder," and at others "Glory."

46: *One would think the first* who bore it, "*Adam*": simultaneous references to Our First Parent and to the eighteenth-century Scots economist Adam Smith.

47: *the same cause that makes a verse want feet, / And throws a cloud o'er Longman and John Murray:* causes embarrassment to publishers because in their greed to get the book out they have not allowed the poet time to polish his scansion. Longman was Southey's publisher; John Murray had been B.'s.

27.⁴⁸

Whether it was their engineers' stupidity,
Their haste, or waste, I neither know nor care, 210
Or some Contractor's personal cupidity,⁴⁹
Saving his Soul, by cheating in the Ware
Of Homicide; but there was no Solidity
In the new batteries erected there;
They either missed, or they were never missed -- 215
And added greatly to the missing list.

28.

A sad miscalculation about distance
Made all their naval matters incorrect;
Three fire-ships lost their amiable existence
Before they reached a spot to take effect; 220
The Match was lit too soon, and no assistance
Could remedy this lubberly defect;
They blew up in the middle of the river,
While, though 'twas dawn, the Turks slept fast as ever.

48 CASTELNAU II 203: ... *on voulait agir promptement, et on négligea de donner aux ouvrages la solidité qu'ils exigeaient: le même esprit fit manquer l'effet de trois brûlots; on calcula mal la distance, on se pressa d'allumer la mèche, ils brûrèrent au milieu du fleuve, et, quoiqu'il fût six heures du matin, les Turcs, encore couchés, n'en prirent aucun ombrage.* B. uses Castelnau to start this and the previous stanza, then leaves the source to wander off on his own.

49: ... *some Contractor's personal cupidity:* the Russians are unlikely to have employed civilian contractors for the erection of important artillery works.

29.⁵⁰

At seven they rose, however, and surveyed 225
 The Russ Flotilla getting under way;
 'Twas nine when, still advancing undismayed,
 Within a cable's length their vessels lay
 Off Ismail, and commenced a cannonade,
 Which was returned with interest, I may say – 230
 And by a fire of Musquetry and Grape,
 And Shells and Shot of every size and shape.⁵¹

30.

For six hours bore they without intermission
 The Turkish fire, and, aided by their own
 Land-batteries, worked their guns with great precision; 235
 At length they found mere Cannonade alone
 By no means would produce the town's submission,
 And made a signal to retreat at One;
 One bark blew up; a second, near the works
 Running aground, was taken by the Turks. – 240

50 CASTELNAU II 203-4: (1er décembre 1790.) *Cette opération manquée, la flotille russe s'avança vers les sept heures; il en était neuf lorsqu'elle se trouva à cinquante toises de la ville; elle souffrit, avec une constance calme, un feu de mitraille et de mousqueterie pendant près de six heures. Un courage aussi brillant mérita les plus grands éloges les batteries de terre secondait la flotille; mais on reconnut alors que les cannonades ne suffiraient pas pour réduire la place, on fit la retraite à une heure. Un lançou sauta pendant l'action, un autre dériva par la force du courant, et fut pris par l'ennemi.*

51: *And by a fire of Musquetry and Grape, / And Shells and Shot of every size and shape:* the naïve list takes *Don Juan* momentarily back to the world of Hookham Frere's *Whistlecraft*, the poem which in 1817 had first opened B.'s eyes to the possibility of anglicising ottava rima. Compare:

*Such strange experiments true Britons try
 In sieges, and in skirmishes afloat,
 In storming heights, and boarding from a boat. (II, XL, 6-8)*
 or:
*... Which left those tribes unciviliz'd and rude,
 Naked and fierce, and painted and tattoo'd. (III, X, 7-8)*

31.⁵²

The Moslem too had lost both ships and men,
 But when they saw the enemy retire,
 Their Delhis⁵³ manned some boats and sailed again,
 And galled the Russians with a heavy fire,
 And tried to make a landing on the main; 245
 But here the effect fell short of their desire –
 Count Damas drove them back into the water
 Pell Mell, and with a whole Gazette of Slaughter.⁵⁴

32.⁵⁵

“If” (says the Historian here) “I could report
 “All that the Russians did upon this day, 250
 “I think that several volumes would fall short,
 “And I should still have many things to say.”
 And so he says no more – but pays his court
 To some distinguished Strangers in that fray:
 The Prince de Ligne, and Langeron, and Damas,⁵⁶ 255
 Names great as any that the Roll of Fame has.

52 CASTELNAU II 204: *Les Turcs perdirent beaucoup de monde et plusieurs vaisseaux. A peine la retraite des Russes fut-elle remarquée, que les plus braves d’entres le ennemis se jetèrent dans de petites barques et essayèrent une descente; le comte de Damas les mit en fuite et leur tua plusieurs officers et grand nombre de soldats.*

53: *Delhis:* beserk soldiers indifferent to the prospect of death. See CHP II, 685-8:

*Dark Muchtar his son to the Danube is sped,
 Let the yellow-hair’d Giaours view his horse-tail with dread;
 When his Delhis come dashing in blood o’er the banks,
 How few shall escape from the Muscovite ranks!*

B. notates 687, *Delhis: Horsemen, answering to our forlorn hope.* The “forlorn hope” was normally the group of soldiers sent to lead the vanguard of the attack, and thus to almost certain death. See also *The Siege of Corinth*, 189-96: ... *the chosen van / Of Tartar and of Mussulman, / The full of hope, misnamed “forlorn”, / Who hold the thought of death in scorn, / And win their way with falchion’s force, / Or pave the path with many a corse, / O’er which the following brave may rise, / Their stepping-stone – the last who dies!* See also below, VII 490 and VIII 579.

54: *Pell Mell, and with a whole Gazette of Slaughter:* the Pall Mall Gazette was a fashionable London newspaper.

55 CASTELNAU II 204: *On ne tarirait pas si on voulait rapporter tout ce que les Russes firent de mémorable dans cette journée; pour conter les hauts faits d’armes, pour particulariser toutes les actions d’éclats, il faudrait composer des volumes. Parmi les étrangers, le Prince de Ligne se distingua de manière à mériter l’estime générale; de vrais chevaliers français, attirés par l’amour de la gloire, se montrèrent dignes d’elle: les plus marquans étaient le jeune duc de Richelieu, les comtes de Langeron et de Damas.*

56: *The Prince de Ligne, and Langeron, and Damas:* three distinguished Western European mercenary officers, de Ligne being Belgian and the other two French *émigrés*. For de Ligne, see below, this Canto, 263-4, and VIII 73. Notice that B. substitutes de Ligne for the duc de Richelieu, listed by Castelnau. This may in part be because Juan’s adventures are based in part on those of Richelieu, whose historical presence B. must therefore play down. See below, VIII sts.91-103nn.

33.

This being the case, may show us what Fame is,
 For out of these three *preux Chevaliers*,⁵⁷ how
 Many of common readers give a guess
 That such existed (and they may live now, 260
 For aught we know)? Renown's all hit or miss;
 There's Fortune even in Fame, we must allow;
 'Tis true, the Memoirs of the Prince de Ligne
 Have half withdrawn from *him* oblivion's screen.⁵⁸

34.

But here are Men, who fought in gallant actions 265
 As gallantly as ever Heroes fought;
 But buried in the heap of such transactions,
 Their names are rarely found, nor often sought;
 Thus even Good Fame may suffer sad contractions,
 And is extinguished sooner than She ought; 270
 Of all our modern battles, I will bet
 You can't repeat nine names from each Gazette.

57: *preux Chevaliers*: gallant knights. A phrase from the *Chanson de Roland*, describing Roland, Oliver and Turpin, who, italianised, subsequently feature in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. B. thus tries with a straight face to make us accept de the mercenaries de Ligne, Langeron and Damas (see above, 1.255) as modern upholders of the ideals of epic chivalry. See below, XIII 683 and XV 610, for more overtly ironical usages of the term. For all his anti-French irony (174-6 above) B. has been misled by his supposedly reliable source into an overstatement of the part played by Western European commanders at Ismail. Suvorov's five infantry columns, which attacked by land, early in the morning of December 20 1790, were commanded by Generals Samoïlov and Paul Potemkin (unmentioned by B.) and were led by General Lvov, and by Major-Generals Lascy, Kutuzov, Meknob, and Bezborodko (B. doesn't mention him either); the only mercenary commander of foremost importance was Admiral de Ribas, a Neapolitan-Spaniard, who was in charge of the flotilla attempting a frontal assault across the Danube: see Castelnau II 207, quoted below, p.1024 (also Longworth 167-71; Meshcheryakov II 543-7).

58: *the Memoirs of the Prince de Ligne / Have half withdrawn from him oblivion's screen*: Charles-Lamoral Joseph, prince de Ligne (1735-1814) Belgian aristocrat, soldier, lover, and dilettante, friend of (*inter alia*) Goethe, Voltaire, Rousseau, Madame du Barry, Marie Antoinette (with whom he claimed to have been in love), Casanova, the Emperor Joseph II of Austria, and Catherine the Great (whose actual lover he may have been). Four years previous to Ismail he had assisted Potemkin (see sts.36 and 37 below) at the almost equally bloody siege and capture of Otchakhov. A famous wit, he christened Suvorov "Alexander Diogenes" (Longworth, p.135). In 1808 Madame de Staël had published *Lettres et Pensées du Maréchal le prince de Ligne* – to his annoyance, as, disapproving of his conversational style, she had rewritten them. B.'s *half withdrawn* may refer to the thoroughness of her ghosting; but is more likely to mean that the *Lettres et Pensées* were much too chaste for accuracy. de Ligne was not at Ismail, and should not be confused with *The Prince de Ligne* who is *wounded in the knee* below at VIII 73. This is his son, also called Charles, who commanded what Russian artillery there was at Ismail; he was subsequently killed fighting the revolutionary French forces in 1792. In 1814 Hobhouse obtained the autograph of the elder de Ligne, with whom he had become intimate, and sent it to Lady Byron (BLJ IV 283 and n, and BB 116 n1, 166, and 176-7).

35.⁵⁹

In short, this last attack, though rich in glory,
 Showed that *somewhere, somehow*, there was a fault;
 And Admiral Ribas (known in Russian Story) 275
 Most strongly recommended an Assault,
 In which he was opposed by young and hoary,
 Which made a long debate – but I must halt,
 For if I wrote down every Warrior’s Speech,⁶⁰
 I doubt few readers e’er would mount the breach. 280

36.

There was a Man,⁶¹ if that he was a Man,
 Not that his Manhood could be called in question,
 For had he not been Hercules, his Span
 Had been as short in youth as Indigestion
 Made his last illness, when, all worn and wan, 285
 He died beneath a tree, as much unblest on
 The soil of the Green province he had wasted,
 As e’er was Locust on the land it blasted.

59 CASTELNAU II 204-5: *Ce serait être injuste que de refuser à l’amiral de Ribas une constance imperturbable et un génie entreprenant au-dessus des considérations minutieuses et des événements timidement calculés; il déclara, en plein conseil, que ce n’était qu’en donnant l’assaut qu’on obtiendrait la place: cet avis parut hardi; on lui opposa milles raisons auxquelles il répondit par de meilleures. Ce projet, remis à un autre jour, éprouva encore les plus grandes difficultés; son courage les surmonta; il ne s’agissait que de déterminer le prince Potiemkin; il y réussit.*

60: *every Warrior’s Speech:* the conventions of epic poetry demand that every time there is a war counsel, everyone’s speeches should be reported in full. B. – partly for reasons examined in the commentary opposite – refrains from following suit in his new-model epic.

61: B. brings Potemkin into the poem – to prepare for 1.320 below – rather suddenly. He derived his description of Potemkin’s death from the following: *As soon as the empress had intelligence that he was sick, she sent off to him two of the most experienced physicians at Petersburg. He disdained their advice, and would follow no regimen. He carried even his intemperance to an uncommon height[;] his ordinary breakfast was the greater part of a smoke-dried goose from Hamburgh, slices of hung-beef or ham, drinking with it a prodigious quantity of wine and Dantzic-liqueurs, and afterwards dining with equal voracity. He never controlled his appetites in any kind of gratification. He frequently had his favourite sterlet-soup, [a sterlet is a small sturgeon] at seasons when that fish is so enormously dear, that this soup alone, which might be considered only as the overture to his dinner, stood him in three hundred rubles ... With this sort of diet it is no wonder that he perceived his distemper to be daily gaining ground[;] he thought, however, to get well by moving from Yassy. Accordingly he resolved to set out for Nicolayef, a town which he had built at the confluence of the Ingul with the Bogue. Scarcely had he gone three leagues of his journey when he found himself much worse. He alighted from his carriage in the midst of the highway, threw himself on the grass, and died under a tree, in the arms of the Countess Branicka, his favourite niece. (William Tooke, *Life of Catherine II*, pp.322-4. For B.’s schoolboy reading of this book, standard through much of the nineteenth century, see CMP 4.)*

37.

This was Potemkin⁶² – a great thing in days
When Homicide and Harlotry made great; 290
If Stars and Titles could entail praise,
His Glory might half-equal his Estate;
This fellow, being six foot high, could raise
A kind of phantasy proportionate
In the then Sovereign of the Russian people, 295
Who measured men, as you would do a Steeple.⁶³

38.⁶⁴

While things were in abeyance, Ribas sent
A Courier to the Prince, and he succeeded
In ordering matters after his own bent;
I cannot tell the way in which he pleaded, 300
But shortly he had cause to be content;
In the mean time the batteries proceeded –
And fourscore Cannon on the Danube's border
Were briskly fired, and answered, in due order.

62: *This was Potemkin:* Grigori Alexandrovich Potemkin (1736-91) is less well-known now than the battleship to which his name was given a century later. Catherine the Great's secret husband, certainly her most important lover, her constant adviser and champion (and pimp) once their liaison had ended, he was a character so much larger than life that one regrets that B. felt able to devote only two stanzas to him. It was under his leadership that Russia annexed the Ukraine and the Crimea, with a view to getting access to the Black Sea and, ultimately, to taking Constantinople: the project celebrated by Castelnau in his *Histoire ... de la Nouvelle Russie*.

63: *A kind of phantasy proportionate / In the then Sovereign of the Russian people, / Who measured men, as you would do a Steeple:* CPW comments, *The lines probably involve an obscene suggestion.*

64 CASTELNAU II 205: *Tandis qu'il se démenait pour l'exécution du projet agréé, on construisait de nouvelles batteries, on comptait, le 12 décembre, quatre-vingts pièces de canon sur le bord du Danube, et cette journée se passa en vives canonnades.*

But on the thirteenth, when already part 305
 Of the troops reembarked the siege to raise,
 A Courier on the Spur inspired new heart
 Into all panthers for Newspaper praise,
 As well as Dilettanti in War's Art,
 By his dispatches, couched in pithy phrase, 310
 Announcing the appointment of that lover of
 Battles, to the command, Field Marshal Souvaroff.⁶⁶ –

65 CASTELNAU II 205: *Le 13, une partie des troupes était embarquée; on allait lever le siège: un courrier arrive; il est témoin des cris de joie du Turc, qui se croyait à la fin de ses maux. Ce courrier annonce, de la part du prince [that is, Potemkin] que le maréchal Souvarow va prendre le commandement des forces réunies sous Ismaïl.*

66: ... *that lover of / Battles, to the command, Field Marshal Souvaroff:* B. must have known that “lover of battles” was not a phrase quite adequate to describing Suvorov; for action in a good cause (see ll.314-16 below) was a sphere in which he would himself have preferred to excel, and such an example as Suvorov’s would have been fascinating to him. In *The Anti-Jacobin* for October 1799, he might have read: *His [Suvorov’s] principal occupation, and, at the same time, his favourite diversion, is war and its duties. However severe he may be with his soldiers, whether in their discipline and manœuvres, or the incredible marches (sometimes of ten German miles a day), by which he has given such éclat and effect to his campaigns, they all regard him with an affection which borders on idolatry; and under his command they are inspired with a courage that renders them invincible: but whether they are engaged in the hurry of a campaign, or enjoying the repose of winter quarters, their necessary wants and appropriate comforts are the constant objects of his protecting attention. With respect to his character, he is a man of the most incorruptible probity, immovable in his purposes, and inviolable in his promises. Nor do these sturdy virtues disqualify him from possessing the most engaging manners. He is continually striving to moderate a violence of temper, which he has not been able to extinguish. An effervescent spirit of impatience continues to predominate in his character; and it, perhaps, never happened, that the execution of any of his orders has been equal to the rapidity of his wishes* (Anthing pp.xxxii and xxxv, quoted *Anti-Jacobin*, October 1799 pp.133-8). Certain aspects of Suvorov’s character strikingly resemble B.’s; and one may guess that among B.’s models for his new role at Missolonghi, Suvorov may have figured no less than Washington, Leonidas and Boone (see below, VIII 34 and sts.61-7).

40.

The letter⁶⁷ of the Prince to the same Marshal
Was worthy of a Spartan, had the cause
Been one to which a good heart could be partial – 315
Defence of Freedom – Country – or of Laws –
But as it was mere lust of Power, to o'erarch all
With its proud brow, it merits slight applause,
Save for its Style, which said all in a trice:
“You will take Ismail at whatever price.”⁶⁸ – 320

41.

“Let there be light!” said God! and there was light!⁶⁹
“Let there be blood!” says Man – and there’s a Sea!
The Fiat of this spoilt Child of the Night
(For Day ne’er saw his merits) could decree
More evil in an hour, than thirty bright 325
Summers could renovate, though they should be
Lovely as those which ripened Eden’s fruit;
For War cuts up not only branch, but root. –

42.

Our friends the Turks, who with loud “Allahs” now
Began to signalize the Russ retreat, 330
Were damnably mistaken; few are slow
In thinking that their Enemy is beat

67 CASTELNAU II 205: *La lettre du Prince Potemkin à Souvarow est très-courte; elle peint le caractère de ces deux personnages. La voici dans toute sa teneur: <<Vous prendrez Ismail à quel prix que ce soit.>>* [Note:] *Nous répétons que toutes ces correspondances sont dans nos mains.*

68: “*You will take Ismail at whatever price*”: the Second Turkish War (1787-94) seemed in its last stages, and the Russians needed a spectacular victory to determine its outcome. Whoever controlled Ismael controlled the Danube, and had maximum freedom throughout Moldavia and modern-day Rumania and Bulgaria. Here is the background to the dispatch which settled the issue, in the version B. would have known: *Ismail still held out. Prince Potemkin had been besieging this place for seven months, and now began to grow impatient that he had not yet reduced it. Living in his camp like one of those ancient satraps, whom he alone in our days has equalled, perhaps surpassed, in luxury, he was surrounded by a crowd of courtiers and women, who employed every effort to amuse him. One of these women [note: Madame de Witt] pretending to read the decrees of fate in the arrangement of a pack of cards, predicted that he would take the town at the end of three weeks. Prince Potemkin answered, smiling, that he had a method of divination far more infallible. At that instant he sent his orders to Suvarof to take Ismail within three days.* – Tooke, *Life of Catherine II*, III, p.282. The note is mentioned by Laverne (p.178) who quotes Potemkin as instructing Suvorov “... de reduire cette place à tout prix”. However, Anthing, having paraphrased it, adds (p.142) that Potemkin – who was nothing if not vacillating and inconsistent – subsequently wrote again, ... representing “that if he [Suvorov] were not certain of success, it were better not to risk the assault;” to which Suworow replied, in few words, “My plan is fixed. The Russian army has already twice been at the gates of Ismailow, and it would be shameful from them to retreat from them a third time, without entering the place.” It looks as if Potemkin shared with B. the skill of manoeuvring people into positions where they would do as desired, but would have to take the blame if it went wrong.

69: “*Let there be light!*” said God! and there was light!: see Genesis I, 3.

(Or *beaten* – if *you* insist on Grammar, though
I never think about it in a heat)
But here I say the Turks were much mistaken, 335
Who hating *hogs*, yet wished to save their *bacon*.⁷⁰

43.⁷¹

For on the sixteenth, at full gallop, drew
In sight two horsemen, who were deemed Cossagues
For some time, till they came in nearer view;
They had but little baggage at their backs, 340
For there were but *three* shirts between the two;⁷²
But *on* they rode, upon two Ukraine Hacks,
Till, in approaching, were at length descried
In this plain pair, Suwarrow and his Guide.

44.

“Great joy to London now!” says some great fool, 345
When London had a grand illumination,⁷³
Which to that bottle-Conjuror, John Bull,⁷⁴
Is of all dreams the first hallucination;
So that the Streets of coloured lamps are full,
That Sage (*said* John) surrenders at discretion 350
His purse, his soul, his sense, and even his *nonsense*,
To gratify, like a huge Moth, this *one* sense. –

70: *Who hating hogs, yet wished to save their bacon*: a joke about Turkish attitudes to pigs, which, like dogs in Islam generally (see above, this canto, l.50) were regarded by them with acute distaste.

71 CASTELNAU: *Le 16, on voit venir de loin deux hommes courant à toute bride: on les prit pour les Kozaks; l'un était Souvarow, et l'autre son guide, portant un paquet gros comme le poing, et renfermant le bagage du général.* (For 332-9, see passages quoted above as apparatus to sts.25 and 30: B. is returning to the material there.)

72: *For there were but three shirts between the two*: The detail is not merely an inference from Castelnau: It is not to be supposed that the toilet occupies any portion of his [Suvorov's] time; but when he is not on active service, he is clean in his person, and frequently washes himself in the course of the day. He confines his dress to an uniform, and a kind of close jacket, called a gurtka: but robes de chambre, and riding coats, are banished from his wardrobe, and he never suffers the indulgence of gloves, or a pelisse, but when a winter's march compels him to use them (Anthing, p.xxx: quoted *Anti-Jacobin*, October 1799 pp.133-8).

73: “*Great joy to London now!*” says some great fool, / *When London had a grand illumination*: a reference to London illuminations during, for example, the visits of the Tsar and the Kings of France and Prussia in 1814. The *great fool* is identified by Andrew Nicholson (*Byron V*, p.165) as Southey, whose 1805 poem *The Death of Wallace* begins, *Joy, joy in London now!*

74: *that bottle-Conjuror, John Bull*: a bottle-conjuror was a professional magician; but the point of the stanzas seems to imply John as magician's dupe.

45.

'Tis strange that he should further "damn his eyes,"⁷⁵
 For they *are* damned; that once all famous oath
 Even to the Devil is now no further prize,⁷⁶ 355
 Since John has lately lost the use of both;⁷⁷
 Debt he calls Wealth, and Taxes Paradise,
 And Famine, with her gaunt and boney Growth,
 Which stare him in the face, he won't Examine –
 Or swears that Ceres hath begotten Famine.⁷⁸ – 360

46.

But to the tale: Great Joy unto the Camp!⁷⁹
 To Russian, Tartar, English, French, Cossacque,
 O'er whom Souwarrow shone like a Gas lamp,⁸⁰
 Presaging a most luminous attack;
 Or like a Wisp along the marsh so damp, 365
 Which leads beholders on a boggy walk,⁸¹
 He flitted to and fro, a dancing light,
 Which all who saw it followed – wrong or right.

75: 'Tis strange that he should further "damn his eyes": compare above, I ll.111-12.

76: ... that once all famous oath / Even to the Devil is now no further prize, / Since John has lately lost the use of both: compare TVOJ, 63-4:

*He [George III] died – but left his subjects still behind,
 One half as mad, and t'other no less blind.*

77: or the words of Sathan at TVOJ, 324-8:

*... they [mankind] are grown so bad
 "That Hell has nothing better left to do
 "Than leave them to themselves, so much more mad
 "And evil by their own internal curse –
 "Heaven cannot make them better – nor I worse.*

78: *Ceres hath begotten Famine:* Ceres is the goddess of harvest and thus of plenty. The English, in this analysis, are so unwilling to protest against the way the government makes them suffer that they bless it when any other nation would curse it.

79 CASTELNAU II 206: *Les succès multipliés de Souwarow, sa bravoure à toute épreuve, la confiance que le soldat avait en lui, produisirent un enthousiasme général: une salve des batteries du camp et de la flotte célébrèrent son arrivée, et l'espoir du succès ranima les esprits.*

80: *O'er whom Souwarrow shone like a Gas lamp:* refers back to the *illumination* jokes in st.44.

81: *Or like a Wisp along the marsh so damp, / Which leads beholders on a boggy walk:* again makes Suvorov a fake luminary. Compare the description of Southey at TVOJ, ll.836-9:

*light as an Elf,
 Or Wisp that flits o'er a Morass – he lurks
 It may be, still, like dull books on a shelf
 In his own den ...*

The joke also involves an inversion of all B.'s Aurora references – see above, this canto, 3, 11 and nn; where *Don Juan* illuminates, and denies the force of categories, Suvorov would reduce all things to the lowest categorical denominator, death. However, in st.47, B. is sufficiently impressed by Suvorov to employ only the tiniest of jokes in his transcription (see next note but one).

47.⁸²

But certes, Matters took a different face;
 There was Enthusiasm and much applause; 370
 The fleet and Camp saluted with Much grace,
 And all presaged Good Fortune to their cause;⁸³
 Within a Cannon-shot length of the place
 They drew; constructed ladders, repaired flaws
 In former works, made new; prepared fascines,⁸⁴ 375
 And all kinds of benevolent Machines.⁸⁵

48.

'Tis thus the Spirit of a single Mind
 Makes that of Multitudes take one direction,
 As roll the waters to the breathing Wind,
 Or roams the herd beneath the Bull's protection, 380
 Or as a little dog will lead the blind,
 Or a bell-Weather form the flock's connection
 By tinkling sounds when they go forth to victual;
 Such is the sway of your Great Men o'er little. –

82 CASTELNAU II 206: *Les choses prennent le même jour une autre tournure; le camp se rapproche et s'établit à la portée du canon de la place; on prépare les fascines, on construit des échelles, on établit des batteries nouvelles, et l'on envoie sommer la place.*

83 CASTELNAU II 206: *L'ardeur de Souvarow, son incroyable activité, son mépris des dangers, sa presque certitude de réussir, son âme enfin s'est communiqué à l'armée; il n'est pas jusqu'au dernier goujat qui ne desire d'obtenir l'honneur de monter à l'assaut. E.H.Coleridge (VI 317) quotes from the still-more-authentic diary of the duc de Richelieu at this point): L'arrivée du comte Souvorow produisait un grand effet parmi les troupes ... La manière d'être plus que simple, puis-qu'il logeait sous une canonnière, et qu'il n'avait pas même de chaises dans sa tente, son affabilité, sa bonhomie lui conciliaient l'affection de tous les individus de son armée. Cet homme singulier qui rassemble plus à un chef de cosaques ou de Tartares, qu'au général d'une armée européenne, et doué d'une intrepidité et d'une hardiesse peu communes ... La manière de vivre, de s'habiller et de parler du comte Souvorow, est aussi singulière que ses sentiments militaires ... Il mangeait dans sa tente assis par terre autour d'une natte sur laquelle il prenait le plus détestable repas. L'après-midi, un semblable repas lui servait de souper, il s'endormait ensuite pendant quelques heures, passait une partie de la nuit à chanter, et à la pointe du jour il sortait presque nu et se roulait sur l'herbe assurant que cet exercice lui était nécessaire pour le préserver des rhumatismes ... Sa manière de s'exprimer dans toutes les langues est aussi singulière que toute sa façon d'être, ses phrases sont incohérentes, et s'il n'est pas insensé, il dit et fait du moins tout ce qu'il faut pour le paraître; mais il est heureux et cette qualité dont le Cardinal Mazarin faisait tant de cas, est, à bon droit, fort estimée de l'Impératrice et du Prince Potemkin ...*

84: *fascines:* stick-bundles used for all purposes, as sand-bags are today.

85: *... constructed ladders, repaired flaws / In former works, made new; prepared fascines, / And all kinds of benevolent Machines:* another faux-naïf Whistlecraft-type list. See above, this canto, ll.321-2n.

49.

The whole Camp rung with joy; you would have thought 385
 That they were going to a Marriage-feast
 (This Metaphor, I think, holds good as aught,
 Since there is Discord after both at least)
 There was not now a luggage boy but sought
 Danger and spoil, with ardour much increased; 390
 And why? because a little, odd, old Man,⁸⁶
 Stript to his shirt, was come to lead the Van.

50.⁸⁷

But so it was, and every preparation
 Was made with all alacrity; the first
 Detachment of three Columns took its station, 395
 And waited but the signal's voice to burst
 Upon the foe; the second's ordination
 Was also in three Columns, with a thirst
 For Glory gaping o'er a Sea of Slaughter;
 The third (in Columns two) attacked by water. – 400

86: ... a little, odd, old Man: Au physique, Souvarof était maigre et sec, son corps dans de petites proportions, était tout de nerfs; l'habitude de la fatigue et de continuel exercices, avait encore ajouté à sa vigueur naturelle. Sa physionomie était mequine, son nez était écrasé, sa bouche large, ses yeux petits; mais c'était dans l'expression de ces yeux que se retrouvait le caractère martial. Vifs et perçans d'ordinaire, ils devenaient au feu, menaçans et terrible, et c'était là que les soldats lisaient: morts à l'ennemi, victoire!" – de Laverne, pp.449-50.

87 CASTELNAU II 207: La première attaque était composée de trois colonnes, commandées par les lieutenants-généraux Paul Potiemkin, Serge Lwow, les généraux-majors Maurice Lascy, Théodore Meknop. Ces trois colonnes étaient fortes de cinq mille sept cent hommes. / Trois autres colonnes, destinées à la seconde attaque, avaient pour chefs le comte de Samoïlow, les généraux Élie de Bezbododko, Michael Koutousow; les brigadiers Orlow, Platow, Ribaupierre. Dix mille trois cents combattans composaient celles-ci. / La troisième attaque par eau n'avait que deux colonnes, sous les ordres des généraux-majors Ribas et Arseniew, des brigadiers Markoff et Tchérpéga. Ces deux colonnes réunissaient six milles sept cent hommes.

51.⁸⁸

New batteries were constructed; was held
A general Council, in which Unanimity,
That Stranger to most councils, here prevailed,
As sometimes happens in a great extremity;
And, every difficulty being dispelled, 405
Glory began to dawn with due Sublimity,
While Souvaroff, determined to obtain it,
Was teaching his recruits to use the bay'net. *

* Note: fact; Souvaroff did this in person.

52.

It is an actual fact,⁸⁹ that He, Commander
In Chief, in proper person, deigned to drill 410
The awkward Squad, and could afford to squander
His time, a Corporal's duty to fulfil;
Just as you'd break a sucking Salamander⁹⁰
To swallow flame, and never take it ill;
He showed them how to mount a ladder (which 415
Was not like Jacob's)⁹¹ or to cross a ditch. –

88 CASTELNAU II 207-8: *On construisit de nouvelles batteries le 18, sous la direction de Prince de Ligne. On tint un conseil de guerre, on y examina les plans pour l'assaut, proposés par M. de Ribas; ils réunirent tous les suffrages. Le 19 et le 20, Souvarow exerça les soldats; il leur montra comment il fallait s'y prendre pour escalder; il enseigna aux recrues la manière de donner le coup de baïonnette: pour les exercices d'un nouveau genre, il se servit de fascines disposées de manière à représenter un Turc. [Note:] J'ai rendu au maréchal de Souvarow toute la justice qu'il appartient à un homme impartial d'exprimer; mais je trouve cet exercice, ces leçons de carnage, au-dessous d'un maréchal; n'y avait-il pas assez de bas officiers dans son armée pour qu'il se crût obligé de remplir la plus inhumaine de leurs fonctions?*

89: *It is an actual fact:* Even while conceding the efficacy of Suvorov's drilling his conscripts in person (see couplet to next stanza, and n) B. cannot help sharing Castelnau's aristocratic disdain for it. Suvorov is efficient at the expense of class.

90: *Just as you'd break a sucking Salamander / To swallow flame, and never take it ill:* the salamander was a lizard-like creature, sufficiently cold-blooded to be able to live in fire; hence an apt metaphor for soldiers in battle. See below, XIV 661-2.

91: *He showed them how to mount a ladder (which / Was not like Jacob's):* see the ladder of which Jacob dreams at *Genesis* 28, 10-19; it leads up to heaven, and is a symbol of divine blessing.

53.

Also he dressed up, for the nonce, fascines
Like men, with turbans, Scimitars and dirks,
And made them charge with bayonet these machines,
By way of lesson against actual Turks; 420
And when well practised in these mimic scenes,
He judged them proper to assail the Works;
At which your wise men sneered in phrases witty;⁹²
He made no answer: but he took the City.

54.

Most things were in this posture on the Eve 425
Of the Assault, and all the Camp was in
A stern repose, which you could scarce conceive,
Yet men resolved to dash through thick and thin
Are very silent when they once believe
That all is settled; there was little din, 430
For some were thinking of their homes and friends,
And others of themselves and latter ends.⁹³

92: *At which your wise men sneered in phrases witty:* Suvorov's charismatic brilliance in personnel management – the way he got the common soldiers to identify with him – was disdained by many of the aristocrats by whom he was surrounded. For examples, see the extract from the memoirs of Richelieu, printed above on page 1022, or Castelnau's own note, printed opposite. B. evidently shares their contempt for the mere professional.

93: *For some were thinking of their homes and friends, / And others of themselves and latter ends:* recalls, in the absence of documentation from Castelnau, the night before Agincourt in *Henry V*: see IV i.

Suwarrow chiefly was on the alert,
 Surveying, drilling, ordering, jesting, pondering;⁹⁴
 For the Man was, we safely may assert, 435
 A thing to wonder at beyond most wondering;
 Hero, buffoon,⁹⁵ half demon and half dirt,⁹⁶
 Praying, instructing, desolating, plundering;
 Now Mars, now Momus,⁹⁷ and when bent to storm
 A Fortress, Harlequin in Uniform. – 440

94: *Par ces plaisanteries de différens gens et les contes qu'il leur faisait, il amusait ses soldats, et se faisait adorer de ces hommes grossiers encore et enfans [sic] de la nature. Habile à saisir les nuances du caractère des nations, il ne se comporta pas avec les Autrichiens, comme il le faisait avec les Russes, et il aurait eu encore d'autres procédés qu'avec ces derniers s'il eût commandé des Français. Mais avec tous il aurait été familier, parce qu'il n'y a jamais d'inconvéniens et qu'il peut y avoir, au contraire, de précieux avantages à ce qu'un général communique avec ses soldats.* – (L.M.P. de Laverne, *Histoire du Feld-Maréchal Souvarof* p.464.)

95: *Hero, buffoon, half demon and half dirt:* CPW, characteristically, directs us to *Manfred*, I i 301, a line which does not exist (the lines referred to are CPW's). However, it also directs us to B.'s reflections on Burns, in the Journal entry for December 13 1813 (BLJ III 239): "**Allen ... has lent me a quantity of Burns's unpublished, and never-to-be-published, Letters. They are full of oaths and obscene songs. What an antithetical mind! – tenderness, roughness – delicacy, coarseness – sentiment, sensuality – soaring and grovelling – dirt and deity – all mixed up in that one compound of inspired clay!**" B. senses an *alter ego* in the Scotsman; and in this analysis the similarly Protean and uncategorisable Suvorov functions in the same way. See note on his poetry, below, VIII ll.1063-4n.

96: *A thing to wonder at beyond most wondering; / Hero, buffoon, half demon and half dirt:* Suvorov, though an aristocrat himself, was often described as gross and half-mad by those – mainly aristocrats – who disliked his success, and appreciated neither his style nor the pressures under which he worked; and, as he was the exclusive and willing tool of absolutism, liberals were anxious to malign him as well. The following descriptions, one distasteful, the other laudatory, are typical of the writing about him which was current for B. to read: *A stranger, who has heard the name of Suvarof, wishes, on his arrival [in St. Petersburg], to see this hero. An old man is pointed out, of a weather-beaten and shrivelled figure, who traverses the apartments of the palace, hopping on one foot, or is seen in the streets, followed by a troop of boys, to whom he throws apples, to make them scramble and fight, crying himself, "I am Suvarof! I am Suvarof!" If the stranger should fail to discover in this old madman the conqueror of the Turks and the Poles, he will at least, in his haggard and ferocious eyes, his foaming and horrid mouth, readily discern the butcher of the inhabitants of Prague [Praga, a suburb of Warsaw, attacked by Suvorov's troops in 1794]. Suvarof would be considered as the most ridiculous buffoon, if he had not shown himself the most barbarous warrior. He is a monster, with the body of an ape and the soul of a bull-dog. Attila, his countryman, and from whom he is perhaps descended, had neither his good fortune nor his ferocity. His gross and ridiculous manners have inspired his soldiers with the blindest confidence, which serves him instead of military talents, and has been the real cause of all his success.* (C.F.P.Masson, *Mémoires Secrets sur la Russie:* 1800 English translation entitled *Secret Memoirs of the Court of Petersburg*, pp.318-19.)

97: *Now Mars, now Momus:* Mars is the god of war, Momus the god of satire.

56.⁹⁸

The day before the assault, while upon drill,
For this great Conqueror played the Corporal,
Some Cossacques, hovering like hawks round a hill,⁹⁹
Had met a party towards the twilight's fall,
One of whom spoke their tongue, or well, or ill; 445
'Twas much that he was understood at all,
But whether from his voice, or speech, or manner,
They found that he had fought beneath their banner.¹⁰⁰

57.

Whereon immediately, at his request,
They brought him and his comrades to head quarters; 450
Their dress was Moslem, but you might have guest
That these were merely masquerading Tartars,
And that beneath each Turkish-fashioned vest
Lurked Christianity, who sometimes barter
Her inward Grace for outward show, and makes 455
It difficult to shun some strange mistakes. –

58.

Suwarrow, who was standing in his Shirt,¹⁰¹
Before a company of Calmucks, drilling,¹⁰²
Exclaiming, fooling, swearing at the Inert,
And lecturing on the noble art of killing, 460
For deeming human clay but common dirt,
This great philosopher was thus instilling
His maxims¹⁰³ – which to Martial Comprehension
Proved death in battle equal to a pension.

98 CASTELNAU: B. is returning to his fictional narrative, and makes no further use of the *Histoire de la Nouvelle Russie* in this Canto.

99: *Some Cossacques, hovering like hawks round a hill:* B. shared the traditional prejudice against Cossacks, seeing them as only partly human. See below, VIII sts.92-3.

100: *he had fought beneath their banner:* but Johnson subsequently (below, this canto, l.480) says that he served in the *Nicolaew regiment*, which was not a Cossack unit.

101: *Suwarrow ... in his Shirt:* Suvorov's preference for plain dress was legendary.

102: *Calmucks ... Cossacques:* it is not clear that B. knew the difference between Calmucks – a mongoloid tribe of nomads from Central Asia – and Cossacks, who had been settled for much longer in the Ukraine. Probably he just associated both words with Asiatic barbarism. Lenin – a radically unByronic Russian figure – was half-Calmuck.

103: *the noble art of killing ... His maxims:* in 1795 Suvorov wrote an extremely influential booklet – in simple Russian so that all soldiers could understand it – called *The Science of Victory (Nauka Pobezhdat)*. It includes such advice as, *Die for the Virgin, for your mother the Empress, for the royal family. The Church will pray to God for the dead. The survivor has honour and glory!*

59.

Suwarrow, when he saw this Company 465
 Of Cossacques and their prey, turned round, and cast
 Upon them his slow brow and piercing eye –
 “Whence come ye?” – “From Constantinople last,
 “Captives just now escaped,” was the reply.
 “What are ye?” “What you see us” – briefly past 470
 Their dialogue, for he who answered knew
 To whom he spoke, and made his words but few.

60.

“Your Names?” – “Mine’s Johnson, and my Comrade’s Juan,
 “The other two are women,¹⁰⁴ and the third
 “Is neither man nor woman.” The Chief threw on 475
 The party a slight glance, then said, “I have heard
 “Your name before, the second is a new one;
 “To bring the other three here was absurd,
 “But let that pass. I think I heard your name –
 “In the Nikolaiew regiment?”¹⁰⁵ – “The same.” – 480

61.

“You served at Widin?”¹⁰⁶ – “Yes.” – “You led the attack?”
 “I did.” – “What next?” – “I really hardly know –”
 “You were the first i’ the breach?”¹⁰⁷ – “I was not slack
 “At least to follow those who might be so.”
 “What followed?” – “A shot laid me on my back, 485
 “And I became a prisoner of the foe.”
 “You shall have vengeance, for the town surrounded,
 “Is twice as strong as that where you were wounded.¹⁰⁸

104: *The other two are women:* B.’s indifference to these characters’ fates – or even to their identities – has never troubled critics much. Presumably one of them is Dudù; some have asserted the other to be Gulbeyaz, although if her emotions in the company of the other two are imagined, it seems unlikely. They are never seen in the poem again.

105: *the Nikolaiew regiment:* a grenadier regiment reported by Castelnau (II 207) as serving at Ismail.

106: “*You served at Widin?*” – “*Yes.*”: Johnson (now given a surname, at least) refers to his capture at Widin (where Suvorov conducted an unsuccessful siege in 1789) in his first conversation with Juan on the slave market at V 120 above. The name occurs at II, 329, 356, 370, 371, 383, and 389 of Hope’s *Anastasius*.

107: “*You were the first i’ the breach?*”: a double Shakespearean allusion, to *Othello* I iii 136 (... *hairbreadth scapes i’ th’ imminent deadly breach*) and to *Henry V* III i 1 (*Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more ...*)

108: ... *the town surrounded,* / “*Is twice as strong as that where you were wounded:* Ismail’s defences made it theoretically impregnable.

62.

“Where will you serve?” – “Where’er you please.” – “I know
“You like to be the Hope of the Forlorn,¹⁰⁹ 490
“And doubtless would be foremost on the foe
“After the hardships you’ve already borne –
“And this young fellow? Say, what can he do?
“He with the beardless chin, and garments torn?”
“Why, General, if he hath no greater fault 495
“In War than Love, he had better lead the assault.”¹¹⁰

63.

“He shall if that he dare.” Here Juan bowed
Low as the Compliment deserved;¹¹¹ Suwarrow
Continued, “Your old regiment’s allowed
“By special providence to lead tomorrow, 500
“Or it may be, tonight, the assault; I have vowed
“To several saints, that shortly Plough or Harrow
“Shall pass o’er what was Ismail,¹¹² and its tusk¹¹³
“Be unimpeded by the proudest Mosque.

64.

“So now, my lads, for Glory!” here he turned 505
And drilled away in the most Classic Russian,
Until each high heroic bosom burned
For cash and conquest, as if from a Cushion¹¹⁴
A Preacher had held forth (who nobly spurned
All Earthly goods save tithes) and bade them push on 510
To slay the Pagans who resisted battering
The Armies of the Christian Empress Catherine.

109: *the Hope of the Forlorn*: a vanguard action designed to draw the enemy’s fire, and thus having only a minimal chance of survival. See above, this canto, 243n.

110: ... *if he hath no greater fault* / “*In War than Love, he had better lead the assault*: Juan, like Orlando or Odysseus, is as effective a lover as he is a warrior. But where their versatility often causes moral conflicts, he never has any such problem – sign of his unheroic modernity.

111: *Juan bowed / Low as the Compliment deserved*: Suvorov, like B., was a skilled linguist; but as this conversation must be assumed to be in Russian, a language unknown to Juan, it is not clear how he understands the compliment.

112: *I have vowed ... the proudest Mosque*: anti-Christian and pro-Islamic polemic. Suvorov, though a faithful Orthodox Christian, was not famous for intolerance or racism. The “vow” is imagined by B.: it is neither in Castelnau, nor in any other document relating to the general.

113: *tusk*: the tusk of the plough, says E.H.Coleridge, is the coulter or share.

114: *from a Cushion*: that is, over a pulpit-cushion; from the pulpit. Suvorov – B.’s simile implies remotely – was motivated by parson-like greed in his conquests; a theory history does not support.

65.

Johnson, who knew by this long colloquy
Himself a favourite, ventured to address
Suwarrow, though engaged with accents high 515
In his resumed amusement: "I confess
"My debt in being thus allowed to die
"Among the foremost, but if you'd express
"Explicitly our several posts, my friend
"And Self would know what duty to attend." – 520

66.

"Right – I was busy, and forgot; why, you
"Will join your former regiment, which should be
"Now under arms – ho, Katskoff! take him to –"
(Here he called up a Polish Orderly)¹¹⁵
"His post – I mean, the regiment Nikolaiew – 525
"The stranger Stripling may remain with me –
"He's a fine boy;¹¹⁶ the Women may be sent
"To the other baggage, or to the Sick Tent."

67.

But here a sort of Scene began to ensue;
The ladies, who by no means had been bred 530
To be disposed of in a way so new,
Although their Haram Education led
Doubtless to that – of doctrines of the most true –
Passive Obedience,¹¹⁷ now raised up the head
With flashing eyes, and starting tears; and flung 535
Their arms, as Hens their wings athwart their young

115: *a Polish Orderly*: Suvorov, no friend to Poland, is unlikely to have had any such. B. needs a Polish name for his indecent polyglot joke ("Katskoff" – "Catzo").

116: "*The stranger Stripling may remain with me – / "He's a fine boy; the Women ...*: a remote and a-historical implication of homosexuality, to go with the Sultan's interest in Juan at V 1239-40 above.

117: *that – of doctrines of the most true – / Passive Obedience*: multiple irony, at the very idea of women being passively obedient to anyone.

68.

O'er the promoted couple of brave men
Who were thus honoured by the greatest Chief
That ever peopled Hell with heroes slain,
Or plunged a province or a realm in grief; 540
Oh, foolish Mortals! always taught in vain!
Oh Glorious Laurel! since for one sole leaf
Of thine Imaginary Deathless Tree,
Of blood and tears must flow the unebbing Sea.¹¹⁸

69.

Suwarrow, who had small regard for tears, 545
And not much sympathy for blood, surveyed
These women with their hair about their ears
And natural agonies, with a slight shade
Of Feeling; for, however Habit sears
Men's hearts against whole Millions, when their trade 550
Is butchery, sometimes a single Sorrow
Will touch even Heroes, and such was Suwarrow.¹¹⁹ –

70.

He said, and in the kindest Calmuck tone,¹²⁰
“Why, Johnson, what the devil do you mean
“By bringing women here? They shall be shown 555
“All the attention possible, and seen
“In safety to the waggons – where alone
“In fact they can be safe; you should have been
“Aware this kind of baggage never thrives;
“(Save Wed a year) I hate recruits with wives.” 560

118: *Oh Glorious Laurel! since for one sole leaf / Of thine Imaginary Deathless Tree, / Of blood and tears must flow the unebbing Sea:* perhaps a reference simultaneously to the Laurel-tree, which gives forth the leaf with which victors' brows were bound, and to the Deathless Tree on which Christ died, and in the name of which so many wars have been fought.

119: ... *such was Suwarrow:* a rare concession on B.'s part.

120: *Calmuck:* see above, this canto, 458n. B. now wishes to make Suvorov himself appear Calmuck (he was of Swedish descent).

71.

“May it please your Excellency,” thus replied
Our British friend, “these are the wives of others,
“And not our own; I am too qualified
“By service with my military brothers
“To break the rules by bringing one’s own bride 565
“Into a Camp; I know that Nought so bothers
“The hearts of the heroic in a charge
“As leaving a small family at large.

72.

“But these are but two Turkish ladies, who,
“With their attendant, aided our escape, 570
“And afterwards accompanied us through
“A thousand perils in this dubious shape;
“To me this kind of life is not so new;
“To them, poor things, it is an awkward scrape –
“I therefore, if you wish me to fight freely, 575
“Request that they may both be used genteelly.”

73.

Meantime these two poor Girls, with swimming eyes,
Looked as if in doubt if they could trust
Their own protectors – nor was their Surprize
Less than their Grief (and truly not less just) 580
To see an old Man, rather wild than wise
In aspect; plainly clad, besmeared with dust,
Stript to his waistcoat, and *that, not too clean,*¹²¹
More feared than all the Sultans ever seen:

121: ... *besmeared with dust, / Stript to his waistcoat, and that, not too clean:* B., when he prepared himself for military endeavour (not many months after writing this canto) thought sartorial elegance much more important than did Suvorov – and had a Homeric helmet designed for himself by a theatrical supplier (though, when he went to Greece, he never wore it).

74.

For every thing seemed resting on his Nod, 585
As they could read in all eyes; now to them,
Who were accustomed, as a Sort of God,
To see the Sultan, rich with many a Gem,
Like an Imperial Peacock, stalk abroad,
(That royal bird, whose tail's a diadem)¹²² 590
With all the Pomp of Power, it was a doubt
How Power could condescend to do without.

75.

John Johnson, seeing their extreme dismay,
Though little versed in feelings Oriental,
Suggested some slight comfort, in his way; 595
Don Juan, who was much more sentimental,
Swore they should see him by the dawn of day,
Or that the Russian army should repent all;
And, strange to say, they found some consolation
In this, for Females like Exaggeration. – 600

76.

And then with tears, and sighs, and some slight kisses,
They parted for the present, these to await,
According to the Artillery's hits or misses,
What Sages call Chance, Providence, or Fate;
Uncertainty is one of many blisses – 605
A Mortgage on Humanity's estate;
While their beloved friends began to arm
To burn a town which never did them harm.

122: (*That royal bird, whose tail's a diadem*): recalls the impression made by the Sultan above, V, sts.146-54.

77.

Suwarrow, who but saw things in the Gross,
 Being much too gross to see them in detail,¹²³ 610
 Who calculated life as so much dross,
 And as the Wind a widowed Nation's wail,
 And cared as little for his army's loss
 (So that their efforts should at length prevail)
 As wife and friends did for the boils of Job¹²⁴ – 615
 What was't to him to hear two women sob? –

78.

Nothing. – The Work of Glory still went on
 In preparation for a Cannonade
 As terrible as that of Ilion,¹²⁵
 If Homer had found Mortars ready made – 620
 But now, instead of slaying Priam's Son,¹²⁶
 We only can but talk of Escalade,¹²⁷
 Bombs, drums, guns, bastions, batteries, bay'nets,¹²⁸ bullets,
 Hard words! which stick in the soft Muses' Gullets.

79.

Oh thou Eternal Homer! who could'st charm 625
 All Ears, though long,¹²⁹ all Ages, though so short,
 By merely wielding with poetic arm
 Arms to which Men will never more resort,
 Unless Gunpowder should be found to harm
 Much less than is the hope of every Court 630
 Which now is leagued young Freedom to annoy,
 But – they will not find Liberty a Troy. –

123: *Suwarrow, who but saw things in the Gross, / Being much too gross to see them in detail:* an historical libel of the most glaring kind. As with all successful soldiers, Suvorov's obsessive eye for the kind of detail which counted for him was part of his recipe for success – as B.'s illustrations at sts.52-3 above show.

124: *As wife and friends did for the boils of Job:* those who came to comfort Job in his distress only lectured him, with a view to increasing their own sense of moral virtue and complacency (hence "Job's comforters"). B. implies that Suvorov did not really experience grief over his soldiers' losses – in fact, he preferred quick campaigns, because of the relative lightness of the losses when contrasted with those sustained during a prolonged siege, such as had been occurring here at Ismail since the start of 1790.

125: *Ilion:* citadel of Troy in Homer's *Iliad*.

126: *slaying Priam's Son:* the death of Hector (son of Priam, King of Troy) at the hands of Achilles occurs in *Iliad*, Book XXII.

127: *Escalade:* assault with scaling-ladders.

128: *bay'nets:* a bisyllable.

129: *All Ears, though long:* implies admirers of Homer to be asses. See the reference to Coleridge at *English Bards*, 264: *He brays the Laureat of the long-ear'd kind!*

80.

Oh Thou eternal Homer, I have now
To paint a Siege, wherein more men were slain,
With deadlier engines, and a speedier blow 635
Than in thy Greek Gazette of that Campaign;¹³⁰
And yet, like all men else, I must allow,
To vie with thee would be about as vain
As for a brook to cope with Ocean's flood;
But still We Moderns equal you in blood. 640

81.

If not in poetry, at least in fact –
And as for truth – the grand desideratum!¹³¹
Of which howe'er the Muse describes each act,
There should be ne'ertheless a slight substratum,¹³²
But now the town is going to be attacked – 645
Great deeds are doing – how shall I relate 'em?
Souls of immortal Generals! Phoebus¹³³ watches
To colour up his rays from your dispatches! –

82.

Oh! ye grand bulletins of Buonaparte!
Oh! ye less grand long lists of killed and wounded! 650
Shade of Leonidas,¹³⁴ who fought so hearty
When my poor Greece was once, as now, surrounded!
Oh! Cæsar's Commentaries!¹³⁵ now impart Ye
Shadows of Glory! (lest I be confounded)
A portion of your fading twilight hues,¹³⁶ 655
So beautiful, so fleeting, to the Muse!

130: *thy Greek Gazette of that Campaign:* that is, the *Iliad*. B. had borrowed from the *Odyssey* in Canto II especially. To reduce Homer to a suspect gazeteer – or to elevate suspect gazeteers into epic writers – is part of his intention in the poem.

131: *truth – the grand desideratum:* that which is desired of poetry above all. For B.'s attitude to Homer's truth, see above, IV, sts.75-8.

132: *... howe'er the Muse describes each act, / There should be ne'ertheless a slight substratum:* hence B.'s use of, for instance, Castelnau (here in abeyance). See also the couplet to this stanza.

133: *Phoebus:* Phoebus Apollo, god of poetry.

134: *Leonidas:* King of Sparta, who fought the invading Persians at Thermopylae (480 B.C.) See above, III, *The Isles of Greece*, verse 7.

135: *Caesar's Commentaries:* his histories of the Gallic and Civil Wars.

136: *... now impart Ye ... / A portion of your fading twilight hues:* irony at the expense of war commentaries (not noted for twilight hues) and at the expense of poetry (not noted for accuracy over historical detail).

83.

When I call “*fading*” Martial Immortality,
I mean that every Age, and every Year,
And almost every Day, in sad reality,
Some sucking Hero is compelled to rear 660
Who, when we come to sum up the totality
Of deeds to Human Happiness most dear,
Turns out to be a butcher in great business,
Afflicting young folks with a sort of dizziness. –

84.

Medals, Ranks, Ribbons, Lace, Embroidery, Scarlet, 665
Are things immortal to immortal Man,
As Purple to the Babylonian harlot;¹³⁷
An uniform to boys is like a fan
To women; there is scarce a crimson varlet
But deems himself the first in Glory’s Van;¹³⁸ 670
But Glory’s Glory; and if you would find
What *that* is – ask the Pig who sees the Wind!¹³⁹

85.

At least *he feels it*, and some say he *sees*,
Because he runs before it like a pig,
Or if that simple sentence should displease, 675
Say – that he scuds before it like a brig,
A Schooner – but it is time to ease
This Canto, ere my Muse perceives fatigue;
The Next shall ring a peel to shake all people,
Like a Bob Major from a Village Steeple.¹⁴⁰ 680

137: *As Purple to the Babylonian harlot:* see *Revelations*; 17, 3: the Whore of Babylon (normally in scarlet, not purple) is interpreted as Political Power, the foe to spiritual understanding and love.

138: *Glory’s Van:* in the front line of attack, for the sake of Glory.

139: *the Pig who sees the Wind:* pigs were said to be more sensitive to approaching bad weather than most creatures, perhaps because they saw the wind as streaks of fire. B. may be alluding to Butler’s *Hudibras*, III, ii, 1107-8: [Mahomet, Jews, and Sectarians] *Had lights where better eyes were blind, / As pigs are said to see the wind.* The implication is that, as pigs see that which has no visual image to be seen, so men see Glory where no Glory is.

140: *a Bob Major:* campanological term, meaning a change rung on eight bells – the largest and longest change possible.

86.¹⁴¹

Hark! through the Silence of the cold dull Night,
The Hum of Armies gathering rank on rank,
And dusky Masses steal in dubious Sight
Along the leaguered wall, and bristling bank
Of the armed River, while with straggling light 685
The Stars peep through the vapours dim and dank
Which curl in curious wreathes – How soon the Smoke
Of Hell shall pall them in a deeper Cloak!

87.

Here pause We for the present, as even then
That awful pause dividing life from death 690
Struck for an instant on the hearts of men,
Thousands Of whom were drawing their last breath; –
A moment, and all will be Life again!
The March! the Charge! the shouts of either faith!
Hurra! and Allah! and – one moment more – 695
The Death-Cry drowning in the Battle's roar!

End of Canto VII

/
/NB/ 1822
/

141: Sts. 86-7 should be compared with the famous “Eve of Waterloo” stanzas (21-8) in *Childe Harold III*. The effect is strangely similar.