



Daily Alta California, Volume 6, Number 77, 22 March 1855 — The Power of Russia. [ARTICLE]

**The Power of Russia.**

BY THOMAS CAMPBELL.

The events of the past year give to the following verses the force of prophecy. The piece first appeared in the *Metropolitan*, (of which Campbell was the editor.) in 1831 or '32.

So all this gallant blood has gush'd in vain ?  
 And Poland by the Northern Condor's beak  
 And talons torn, lies prostrated again.  
 O, British patriots, that were wont to speak  
 Once loudly on this theme, now hush'd or meek !  
 O, heartless men of Europe—Goth and Gaul  
 Cold, adder-deaf to Poland's dying shriek ;—  
 That saw the world's last land of heroes fall—  
 The brand of burning shame is on you all—all—all !

But this is not the drama's closing act !  
 Its tragic curtain must uprising anew.  
 Nations, mute accessories to the fact !  
 That Upas tree of power, whose fostering dew  
 Was Polish blood, has yet to cast o'er you  
 The lengthening shadow of its head elate—  
 A deadly shadow, darkening Nature's hue.  
 To all that's halo'd, righteous, pure and great,  
 Wo ! wo ! when they are reach'd by Russia's withering hate.

Russia, that on his throne of adamant,  
 Consults what nation's neck sha l yet be gored :  
 He on Polonia's Golgotha will plant  
 His standard fresh : and, horde succeeding horde,  
 On patriot tombstones he will whet the sword,  
 For more stupendous slaughters of the free.  
 Then Europe's realms, when their best blood is pour'd,  
 Small miss thee, Poland ! as they bend the knee,  
 All—all in grief, but none in glory likening thee.

Why smote ye not the giant whilst he reel'd ?  
 O, fair occasion, gone forever by !  
 To have lock'd his lances in their northern field,  
 Innocuous as the phantom chivalry  
 That flames and hurtles from yon borean sky !  
 Now wave thy pennon, Russia, o'er the land  
 Once Poland ; build thy bristling castles high ;  
 Dig dungeons deep ; for Poland's wrested brand  
 Is now a weapon new to widen thy command—

An awful width! Norwegian woods shall build  
 His fleets the Swede his vassal, and the Dane;  
 The glebe of fifty kingdoms shall be till'd  
 To feed his dazzling, desolating train,  
 Camp'd sunless, 'twixt the Black and Baltic main:  
 Brute hosts I own; but Sparta could not write,  
 And Rome, half-barbarous, bound Achaia's chain:  
 So Russia's spirit, midst Sclavonic night,  
 Burns with a fire more dread than all your polish'd light.

But Russia's limbs (so blinded state-men say)  
 Are crude, and too colossal to cohere.  
 O, lamentable weakness! reckoning weak  
 The stripling Titan, strengthening year by year.  
 What implement lacks he for war's career,  
 That grows on earth, or in its floods and mines,  
 (Eighth sharer of the inhabitable sphere)  
 Whom Persia bows to, China ill confines,  
 And India's homage waits, when Albion's star declines!

But time will teach the Russ, ev'n conquering War  
 Has handmaid arts: ay, ay, the Russ will woo  
 All sciences that speed Bellona's car,  
 All murder's tactic arts, and win them too;  
 But never holier muses shall imbue  
 His breast, that's made of nature's basest clay:  
 The sabre, knout, and dungeon's vapor blue  
 His laws and ethics: far from him away  
 Are all the lovely Nine, that breathe but Freedom's day.

Say, e'en his serfs, half-humanized, should learn  
 Their human rights,—will Mars put out his flame  
 In Russian bosoms? no, he'll bid them burn  
 A thousand years for naught but martial fame,  
 Like Romans:—yet forgive me, Roman name!  
 Rome could impart what Russia never can;  
 Proud civic rights to salve submission's shame.  
 Our strife is coming; but in Freedom's van  
 The Polish eagle's fall is big with fate of man.

Proud bird of old! Mohammed's moon recoil'd  
 Before thy swoop: had we been timely bold,  
 That swoop, still free, had stun'd the Russ, and foil'd  
 Earth's new oppressors, as it foil'd her old,  
 Now thy majestic eyes are shut and cold:  
 And colder still Polonia's children find  
 The sympathetic hands, that we withhold.  
 But, Poles, when we are gone, the world will mind,  
 Ye bore the brunt of fate, and bled for humankind.

So hallow'dly have ye fulfill'd your part,  
 My pride repudiates ev'n the sigh that blends  
 With Poland's name—name written on my heart.  
 My heroes, my grief-consecrated friends!  
 Your sorrow, in nobility, transcends,  
 Your conqueror's joy: his cheek may blush; but shame  
 Can tinge not yours, though exile's tear descends;  
 Nor would ye change your conscience, cause, and name,  
 For his, with all his wealth, and all his felon fame.

Thee, Niemcewicz, whose song of stirring power  
 The Czar forbids to sound in Polish lands;  
 Thee, Czartoryski, in thy banish'd bower,  
 The patricide, who in thy palace stands,  
 May envy; proudly may Polonia's bands  
 Throw down their swords at Europe's feet in scorn,  
 Saying—"Russia from the metal of these brands  
 Shall forge the fetters of your sons unborn;  
 Our setting star is your misfortunes' rising morn."

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