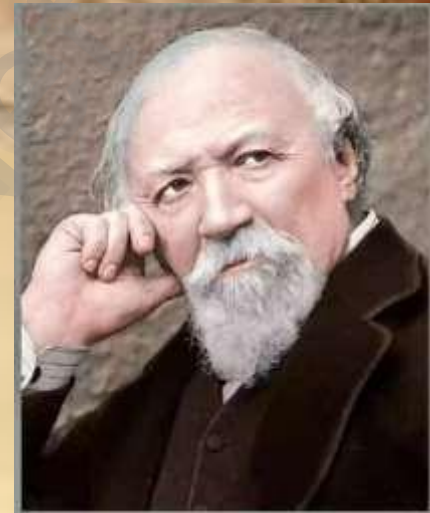


# **INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP**

**ROBERT BROWNING**

## ABOUT THE POET ROBERT BROWNING

**Robert Browning** (7 May 1812–12 December 1889) was an English poet and playwright whose mastery of the dramatic monologue made him one of the foremost, Victorian poets. He was born in Camberwell, a suburb of London on 7 May 1812. He was educated mainly at home, but he attended a short course in Greek at London University. His poems are known for their irony, characterisation, dark humour, social commentary, historical settings and challenging vocabulary and syntax. He developed a unique form of conversational, unrhymic verse. The collection 'Dramatis Personae' and the book-length epic poem "The Ring and the Book" made him a leading British poet. By 1881 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to literature, a literary society called Browning Society was established.



# RATISBON CITY



German city

# Battle of Ratisbon



You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:  
A mile or so away,

Stormed - **Sudden attack**



On a little mound, Napoleon  
Stood on our storming-day;  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
Legs wide, arms locked behind,

mound - **hillock/ hill**  
out-thrust - **extended forward**  
fancy - **imagine**



**As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind.**

prone - **inclined downward**  
oppressive - **harsh, domineering**



Just as perhaps he mused, 'My plans  
That soar, to earth may fall,  
Let once my army-leader Lannes  
Waver at yonder wall', –

mused - **thought deeply**

Lannes - **Duke of**

**Montebello, a general  
in Napoleon's army.**





**Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
A rider, bound on bound  
Full-galloping: nor bridle drew  
Until he reached the mound.**

**Galloping – fastest run of the  
horse**

**bridle - the head gear used to  
control a horse**

**compressed - pressed together**



Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
And held himself erect

Smiling joy – happiness  
Suspect - guess



By just his horse's mane, a boy:  
You hardly could suspect – (So tight he  
kept his lips compressed, Scarce any  
blood came through)  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
Was all but shot in two.

**compressed - pressed together**



**‘Well’, cried he, ‘Emperor, by God’s grace  
We’ve got you Ratisbon!  
The Marshal’s in the market-place  
And you’ll be there anon,**

**anon - soon**



To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
Where I, to heart's desire,  
Perched him!' The Chief's eye flashed;  
his plans Soared up again like fire.

**Flag-bird** – the imperial eagle  
on the french flag

**Perched** -- rested



The Chief's eye flashed; but presently  
Softened itself, as sheathes  
A film the mother-eagle's eye  
When her bruised eaglet breathes:

Sheath – covers  
Bruised - injury



**‘You’re wounded!’ ‘Nay’, his soldier’s pride  
Touched to the quick, he said:  
‘I’m killed, Sire!’ And, his Chief beside,  
Smiling, the boy fell dead.**







## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**a. Who do you think is the narrator of the poem?**

**The narrator is a French soldier**

**b. Where was the narrator when the incident happened?**

**The narrator was on the battle field when the incident happened**

**c. Who took the city of Ratisbon by storm? The French army took the city of Ratisbon by storm.**

**d. Where was Napoleon standing on the day of attack on the city of Ratisbon?**

**Napoleon was standing on a mound a mile away from the city of Ratisbon.**

**e. Describe the posture of Napoleon.**

**Napoleon was standing on the mound with his two legs apart, arms locked behind. He had his neck out thrust**

**f. Who came galloping on a horse to Napoleon?**

**A young soldier who was badly wounded came galloping on a horse to Napoleon.**

**g. What does the phrase 'full galloping' suggest?**

'Full galloping' suggests that the soldier was in a great hurry to meet Napoleon and to tell something.

**h. Why was the rider in a hurry?**

The wounded rider was in a hurry because he wanted to tell Napoleon the news of their victory before he died.

**i. What did the rider do when he reached Napoleon?**

When the rider reached Napoleon, he cried that they had conquered Ratisbon.

**j. Why did the rider keep his lips compressed ?**

The rider kept his lips compressed to stop the blood coming out of his mouth.

**k. Where did the rider plant the French flag after Ratisbon was captured?**

The rider planted the French flag in the market place after capturing Ratisbon.

**l. What was Napoleon's reaction on hearing the news of victory?**

On hearing the news of Victory, Napoleon's eyes flashed and his plans soared up again.

**m. When did the narrator find that the boy was badly wounded?**

The narrator found that the boy was badly wounded when he looked at him closely.

**n. Why did Napoleon's eyes become soft as a mother eagle's eyes?**

Napoleon found that the soldier was badly wounded. His eyes became soft like an eagle which found its wounded eaglet and was helpless to rescue it.

**o. How did the young soldier face his end?**

The young soldier did not show any sign of pain. He proudly told Napoleon that he was killed. After saying so, he died heroically by his side.

**Read the lines given below and answer the questions that follow.**

**a) Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind.**

**i. Whose action is described here?**

**Napoleon's action is described here.**

**ii. What is meant by prone brow?**

**Prone brow means he was thinking seriously.**

**iii. What is his state of mind?**

**He was thinking about his strategy and line of action.**

**b) 'You're wounded!' 'Nay', his soldier's pride  
Touched to the quick, he said:**

**i. Why did the boy contradict Napoleon's words?**

**Napoleon pitied that that the soldier was wounded. But the soldier proudly said that he was not wounded but was killed.**

**ii. Why was his pride touched?**

**He was happy that he could sacrifice his life for the country**

**c) A film the mother-eagle's eye When her  
bruised eaglet breathes**

**i. Who is compared to the mother eagle in the above  
lines?**

**Napoleon is compared to the mother eagle.**

**ii. Explain the comparison.**

**The feelings of Napoleon at that time was like a mother eagle whose eaglet was badly wounded. Like a mother eagle he was proud and sad as the soldier fought with a stronger enemy.**



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