Study of the Portrait of General Blücher at Windsor Castle

James Ward, R.A.



REF: 3107

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Description

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James Ward, R.A. (1769-1859) after Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A.
Study of the Portrait of General Blücher at Windsor Castle

Signed and inscribed lower left: after Sir T Lawrence/JW RA
Pencil
22.7 by 13.7 cm., 8 ¾ by 5 ¼ in.

Provenance:
Iolo A. Williams (1890-1962), Kew Gardens, Surrey

The present study of Lawrence's full-length portrait of the Prussian, Field-Marshall Gebhert Leberecht von Blücher, Fürst von Wahlstatt (1742-1819), was probably drawn when the portrait was exhibited at the Royal Academy's Annual Exhibition in 1815. The exhibition contained several paintings intended to celebrate the end of the Napoleonic wars. However, Napoleon's escape from Elba in March 1815 and the resumption of hostilities proved the celebrations a little premature, with Napoleon's final defeat happening just days before the exhibition closed.

Napoleon's abdication and imprisonment on the Island of Elba in spring 1814, had been taken as a signal that the long period of war was over. Thanksgiving services were held at St Paul's Cathedral in London, Wellington was created Duke and the rulers, ministers, army leaders of the allied countries, and their entourages, visited London for the Congress of London, or Allied Sovereign's Visit, in June 1814. Various celebrations took place to mark the occasion.

Ward, like many of his contemporaries, was fascinated by events in London at this time and captured several of the allied figures including studies of costumes and portrait drawings of Gregory Yelloserf (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven and Private collection) and Tarmorfait Carborlof (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). In 1815, Ward exhibited Portraits of Prince Platoff's favourite charger and of Four of his Cossacks (collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle) at the Royal Academy.

Blücher led the Silesian army into Paris in 1814 and was thus instrumental in forcing Napoleon's first abdication. After Lawrence's portrait was painted, he became Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Lower Rhine and was crucial in helping win the Battle of Waterloo. He sat for Lawrence in 1814, when he was attending the Congress of London. The portrait seems to have always been intended for what became the 'Waterloo Chamber' at Windsor Castle. The chamber was commissioned by George IV as part of Wyatville's reworking of Windsor Castle and is lined with portraits of the key allied rulers and leaders, military and civilian that defeated Napoleon.

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