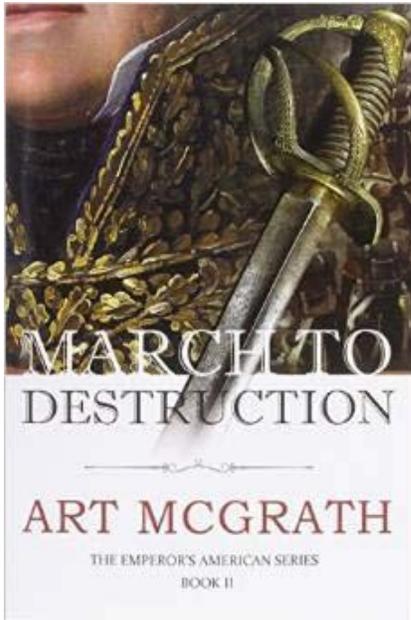


The Napoleon Series Reviews

March to Destruction

McGrath, Art. *March to Destruction* (The Emperor's American Series, Book II). Tucson, AZ: Fireship Pr., 2014. 283 p. ISBN# 9781611793390. 283 p. Softcover. \$17.50



The plot thickens...

Having been shipwrecked on the shores of France when a British warship sank his armed merchantman, American sailor Pierre Burns found himself drafted into the French army awaiting the invasion of England. Placed on the staff of Michel Ney as a translator, Burns finds himself hunting down British landing parties hoping to disrupt France's invasion plans. Burn's fights against the British brought him to the attention of the Napoleon and earned him the soubriquet "The Emperor's American."

In volume 2 of Art McGrath's *The Emperor's American* series, we find Burns in the midst of the *Grande Armée* marching east to oppose the Austrians and Russians massing to destroy the newly created Imperial regime. Still an aide-de-camp to Marshal Ney, Burns is ordered to accompany Napoleon's spymaster Savary and master spy Schulmeister to reconnoiter the army's route across Germany. Burns, still the enemy of 'perfidious Albion', sees the fight against the Austrians and Russians, Britain's paid allies, an extension of that war. Back with the army Burns throws himself full-heartedly into the campaign, volunteering for one dangerous mission after another to prove his worth to his adopted country.

Burns has made friends in the French army, but he has also made enemies both in and out of the army as well. He still remains high on the enemies list of the British, as well as disgruntled French émigrés. The discovery of Pitt's gold in the possession of assassins is evidence that British agents are not only financing the war against Napoleon, but are still determined to eliminate the rogue American. His duties on Ney's staff places him in the middle of the rivalries between the Marshals and their respective staffs. Even some of Ney's staff resent Burns, considering him Ney's pet American.

If all these enemies aren't dangerous enough, Burns also finds himself in the front ranks of the fighting between the French Army and the Austrians. In the first volume of the series Burns had been fighting a dirty war against British raiders.

Now Burns is involved in a real military campaign as the *Grande Armée* marches to meet the Austrian army and the "unfortunate Mack" at Ulm. The war not only lets Burns make personal gains, but there are losses as well.

McGrath has become more assured as a writer. He does a better job integrating the historical details into the flow of his prose. A common flaw of beginning historical novelists is to let their historical research overwhelm the narrative. McGrath has more confidence in story and uses his historical background appropriately. McGrath has also limited the use of French language to spice up the flavor without overwhelming the reader. McGrath has also worked many real historical figures into the narrative that Burns interacts with either positively or negatively. The book moves fast and leaves the reader waiting impatiently for Burns' adventures at Austerlitz. One suggestion I'd have would be including notes the way George MacDonald Fraser did with the Flashman books giving some historical background of events and people.

March to Destruction is available through Amazon and other online retailers. Fireship Press has a website where you can find out more about their historical novels at [Fireship Press](#)

Reviewed by [Tom Holmberg](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: March 2015