

protecting them by a furious and most powerful cannonade. The fire of the guns was sufficient to baffle the desperate attacks which Napoleon still persisted in making, for the Allied artillery was now superior to his both in numbers and position. And he was soon obliged to direct his attention to a part of the field farther north, where his troops were being forced back almost to the gates of Leipzig. Though the fighting was most desperate in this northern direction, nothing that the French Emperor could do sufficed to check the enemy; and when night fell, his position had become quite untenable, and there was nothing for it but to move off as fast and in as good order as he could.

Do you remember that consulting with his generals on the field after nightfall, the exhausted Emperor fell asleep in his chair, and, on waking up after a few minutes, had lost all recollection of where he was and what had happened? I cannot find out exactly where this council was held, but think it merits a stone to mark it as well as any spot on the field. These few moments of insensibility were all the sleep he got that night; he hurried back to the town at eight o'clock, and was occupied till morning in ascertaining the state of his army and in arranging for the continuance of the retreat, and its protection by a rear guard. It was not his way to acknowledge deficiency on his own part; but I fancy that he must have felt very keenly how the misery in which he and his were now sunk was owing to his own obstinacy and the castles in the air which he had allowed himself to dote upon. Where was now his hope of chastising Prussia, for which he had suffered every dictate of prudence? Where was his cherished *prestige*, relying on which he had declined and neglected to provide any way against adversity? In what a condition was his empire, put together with so much blood and treasure! already falling to pieces, and that which was nominally subject territory not even affording him a safe and unmolested passage back to France? The more I reflect on the condition to which he had now brought himself, the more damaged does his character as a general and ruler appear.

The battles of the 16th and 18th were remarkable for hard fighting rather than for brilliant strokes of generalship. Both leaders had disposed their forces advantageously, and both were prompt at bringing up supports to a disputed point. Wherever a ground of vantage was contended for, thither did each commander accumulate masses of men until the action ceased in that direction, not so much because any marked advantage had been gained as because human effort in that quarter could do no more. The Allies were superior in artillery and cavalry, and the Cossacks, in the course of the 18th, succeeded in overlapping and threatening Napoleon's left flank; but it was on the north, where the Allies had been largely reinforced since the 16th, that the principal impression was made and the French were driven into the suburbs in such sort, that but for the coming of night it might have been hard to secure the town and the line of retreat. Napoleon watched, as of old, for some mistake or some omission on his enemy's part, which might enable him to deliver one of his master strokes and thus to secure the victory; but he watched in vain.

Before he fought the battle of Leipzig, Napoleon must have known that the greatest advantage he could reasonably hope for from fighting was an undisturbed retreat to France. In case of his not being able to deliver a severe check to the Allies he

would of course still have to retreat, but amid circumstances not much more favorable than those which attended his retreat from Russia the year before. Any facility, therefore, which by the skill of his engineers and the exertions of his troops could have been provided for a rapid exodus from Leipzig should have been sought after by him with the utmost earnestness. But it is a truth, never explained, that to the very last he persisted in refusing attention to his line of retreat. When pressed by his generals and staff, he sent Bertrand to keep open the one road to Weissenfels; but beyond this he did nothing. In the marshes to the westward of Leipzig the rivers Pleisse and Elster, often separating and reuniting, run in several channels. The great road crosses several of these channels over bridges; but for a long way north and south of this great road there was in those days no bridge. To make temporary bridges at other points was therefore an obvious necessity if an immense force were to be moved rapidly from the city towards the Rhine. But no representation could induce the Emperor to give attention to this important matter. He might have made bridges before the battle began; he might have made them on the 17th October, which intervened between the two terrible days of fighting; he might have even made them on the night between the 18th and 19th,—but he did not. His mind seemed to turn with some unconquerable aversion from this from this disagreeable duty—among many proofs a most glaring one that his capacity was no longer of that uniform excellence which it once had been. Thus, when the inevitable retreat was ordered, the whole of his immense force, with artillery and baggage, had to depart by one narrow street, the Frankfurter Strasse, which led over the bridges, and so on by the great highway to Lindenau.

If you stood in the Frankfurter Strasse, you would soon perceive that, such a host pressing into it, a jam could hardly be avoided by any regulation or arrangement; and, if you considered that, while the French were pushing through it, a victorious enemy was forcing his way into the town behind them, you would quite realize the dire confusion which entangled everything in that outpouring. Guns, carriages, cavalry horses, foot soldiers, and camp followers, all struggling along together; narrow bridges in front over which no more than one carriage could pass at a time; an almost endless crowd in rear pressing on with frantic energy. Very soon the parallel and cross streets must have been choked with them too. Then fancy the Allied forces charging into this helpless mass, or mowing them down with case-shot wherever a view of them could be got! Scarcely could soldiers be in a more miserable plight. If the streams had been bridged on ten lines the French army could not have escaped without heavy loss; but when all had to pass by one series of narrow bridges, what a problem was presented! No leader was ever guilty of more unpardonable neglect than Napoleon in this matter. As long as the rear-guard could keep the assailants at bay, the foremost corps continued to hurry across the streams; but it was soon apparent that if any more could get away with their lives for a prey, as the Scripture expresses it, that was as much as could be effected; no more vehicles could pass. So the wretched beings set fire to their waggons and essayed to flee unencumbered. Then when all attempt at resistance was relinquished, and the only remaining hope of evading the enemy was in

the speed of their flight, occurred the dreadful catastrophe with which Cruikshank's pencil made my infant eyes familiar. One of the bridges, whose demolition had been designed to arrest the enemy's pursuit, was, by a plunder, prematurely blown up. This was the incident which crowned the disaster. The small semblance of discipline or order which had remained up to this period was now dissolved. The men rushed into the dark waters, and, being unable to combat the stream, or sinking in the deep mud of its bed, were drowned in numbers. The enemy in great force was on their flank and rear, and the only alternative was death or surrender. Another great French army was ruined, and but a few shattered remains of it were on their way back to tell the tale of woe.

The modern bridge, does not, I imagine, bestride exactly the same space as did this bridge of fate. But close to it there is a pillar commemorating the demolition. The span of it is very moderate; indeed, as you stand looking at it you fancy it does not very much exceed some of the long jumps that you now and then hear of. It happens too, sometimes, that the river has shrunk to a scanty stream, and looks of such a moderate depth that it could hardly present much difficulty to determined men essaying to cross. Everything, however, seems to have conspired on this fatal 19th October, 1813, to make the wreck of the French army complete. A deep flood was rolling between the steep and slippery banks, and the river must have been full for some days, from the depth of mud which is reported.

Among the few who escaped after the explosion was Marshal Macdonald, who boldly swam his horse across; and among the drowned was the brave Poniatowski, who also tried to cross the channel on horseback, but slipped back on attempting to climb the further bank. His body having been found and recognized, was carried to a room in the basement story of the Rath-haus to await burial, which it received with great solemnity and honour from the Allied sovereigns. It did not, however, remain long in Leipzig, but was exhumed and carried to Warsaw, where it was again entombed. Finally in 1816, it was, by permission of the Emperor Alexander, awarded a resting place at Cracow among the kings and heroes of Poland. I have in vain endeavored to discover the grave in which it temporarily rested in Leipzig; and I am not astonished that there is no record of this particular grave, seeing that within and without the walls there must have been pits and trenches open, into which the dead were being put from morning till night.

The retreat of Napoleon's back to France, across Germany, seems on a careless view to contradict a well-known maxim of war, which affirms that a general whose communications with his base are interrupted, while at the same time he is confronted or followed by a superior force whose communications are complete, is checkmated. The Emperor had undoubtedly been severely beaten at Leipzig; on his rear and on his flank were his victorious enemies; except some magazines at Erfurt, which lay on his route, he had nothing to fall back on; and the Bavarians, in force between him and the Rhine, were waiting to bar his passage. Yet the game was not at an end. He made a retreat, such as it was, to France, and brought a small number of famished and diseased wretches to languish in the fortresses on the Rhine. But I believe his condition, if surveyed carefully, was checkmated. It must be remembered, I am told,