

Germany and Russia closing them in, and bent on giving no relaxation to their desperate foe.

The struggle was at an end. Longer resistance would have been madness. Napoleon ordered a retreat. But the Elster had to be crossed, and only a single bridge remained for the passage of the army and its stores. All night long the French poured across the bridge with what they could take of their wagons and guns. Morning dawned with the rush and hurry of the retreat still in active progress. A strong rear-guard held the town, and Napoleon himself made his way across the bridge with difficulty through the crowding masses.

Hardly had he crossed when a frightful misfortune occurred. The bridge had been mined, to blow it up on the approach of the foe. This duty had been carelessly trusted to a subaltern, who, frightened by seeing some of the enemy on the river-side, set fire hastily to the train. The bridge blew up with a tremendous explosion, leaving a rear-guard of twenty-five thousand men in Leipsic cut off from all hope of escape. Some officers plunged on horse-back into the stream and swam across. Prince Poniatowsky, the gallant Pole, essayed the same, but perished in the attempt. The soldiers of the rear-guard were forced to surrender as prisoners of war. In this great conflict, which had continued for four days, and in which the most of the nations of Europe took part, eighty thousand men are said to have been slain. The French lost very heavily in prisoners and guns. Only a hasty retreat to the Rhine saved the remainder of their army from being